

HOW COULD HE HELP IT ?

OR,

The Heart Triumphant.

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*Wm. N. P. ...*

OR,

*Great  
Chicago*

THE HEART TRIUMPHANT.

BY A. S. ROE.

AUTHOR OF "I'VE BEEN THINKING," "A LONG LOOK AHEAD,"  
ETC. ETC.

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## HOW COULD HE HELP IT?

### CHAPTER I.

"WELL, poor Jones is gone!"

"Ah, indeed! When did he die?"

"Yesterday, so the papers say."

"Left nothing, I suppose."

"I suppose not."

"When is the funeral to be?"

"This afternoon. Be there, will you not?"

"Yes, must try to; up town somewhere, I believe."

"Corner Elm and ——— streets. Poor fellow, never seemed to get along much."

"Hadn't the knack of making money—wasn't up to it!"

"Well, good morning!"

"Good day to you!"

And the two gentlemen walked each his separate way. They were well conditioned to look at—fresh—plump—rosy—well dressed—just from their snug homes—and on the way to their commercial establishments. They were prosperous men. Had either of them been lying in his funeral dress, it would have been said, without hesitation, concerning him, that "he had left all of four hundred thousand!"

The time had been when they and "Poor Jones" were intimate friends; Jones the more prominent of the three—originally from a higher stock—with more money at command and a heart many times larger. But as one of them remarked, and truly so, "He never had the knack of making money, poor fellow!" No, he had not;

but he was strictly honorable, his sensibilities keen—too keen to risk the obligation of indebtedness. On that account he dared not venture on the broad ocean, out of sight of land. He did not care to get the advantage in a bargain; he could not be hard with his debtors, and no doubt was deficient in many qualities which belong to the money-making and truly business man—qualities which are valuable, intrinsically valuable, but possessed only by a few.

"Poor Jones" therefore had not succeeded. He had commenced as an importing merchant; from that to a wholesale grocery, and at last to a small concern in what was then the upper part of the city, where the families of the neighborhood, and those by no means wealthy, might obtain the few articles they needed in the grocery line.

It was a mighty downfall, indeed! so the world thought, and acted upon the idea, as a fact of consequence. For the world—that is the portion of it more particularly connected with "Poor Jones"—as he began to go down, commenced letting him alone, until all those who once were his companions and bosom friends, avoided him as one with whom it might not be safe to be too intimate! Appearances were against him! he was not prosperous! he might want aid!

But "Poor Jones" never solicited aid—much as he needed it. Aid, with counsel and such warm brotherly interest which takes hold of the heart, might have saved him many an hour of distracting thought; have kept the furrows from his brow, and his hair from being prematurely grey, and himself from a premature grave. But it is well for such men as "Poor Jones" that they *can* die—that the gripe of care cannot always retain its hold—that an hour comes when the heartache ceases—when the shadow that has followed them so long, and shut up their spirits in its gloomy folds, gives place to the streaming light from the life above—when that rest which never blessed them here, lulls their wearied hearts and hushes all their anxieties—cradling them, as in infant days, for a long, long sleep.

"Poor Jones" had not indeed the knack of making

money! But he learned—it took him many years to do so—many weary years—for he was slow to gather home the teachings of his kind instructor, and many admonitions did he suffer, and when these were severe and lengthened out, hard thoughts would be aroused, and desperate resolves to break away! But he learned at last that what he thought was substance, and for which his soul had pined, and on account of which he had suffered grievous pain, was but the shadow, and that all reality—all that could satisfy man's aching, grasping spirit was yet to come—was on the other side of that dark portal we call Death.

"Poor Jones" had, as his friends remarked, "left nothing"—nothing in their account. But he had left a few bleeding hearts behind him—he had left the memory of a life of kindness—a true father's heart, and many, many sad hours suffered on their account. A treasury of love he had bequeathed, and it will last them long. And he had left, in one just verging toward manhood, the teachings of his life's experience, and they are graven on that young heart, and sealed there by a father's dying words.

"*Poor Jones is dead!*" but all the good which he had gathered out of life survives. It will meet him—it has met him—he has grasped it on that other shore, and it will bud and blossom even here in one at least of those who bear his name and carry on his life.

There is no danger now to those who once were friends, from owning they know the man. His pale cold lips can ask no favor, and his calm, mild eye cast no reproachful glance—the lids are closed—friends can gaze now with unblanched cheek upon the cold, cold sleeper—no one to rebuke them but the monitor within, and that, perhaps, is gently quieted by the thought that they have condescended much in coming to his poor abode to grace his funeral.

A line of carriages has been arranged along the street—the hearse has been before the door—the weeping widow and her children have been escorted to the place where the dead is laid from sight. The drama of "Poor Jones" has closed—the curtain dropped—and dropped



forever to the multitude. His early life is canvassed by a few as they drive cheerfully to their homes. They speak of him as one that once was gayest of the gay—as having had a noble, generous spirit—proud in his bearing, but kind in feeling, and of most courteous manners. But he had gone down—not to dishonor! “*He had left nothing!*” and of course the world could take no interest in his death.

## CHAPTER II.

ALAS for the widow of the fatherless, when deprived of their head and stay, and left to provide for their necessities amid the multitudes of a great city! Beyond the circle of immediate relatives, no sympathy can be expected; all have their own cares; their own exhausting burdens, or alluring pleasure. How can they waste their thoughts on others' woes, when stern necessity is at their heels, urging them along to ceaseless toil? or why should they poison their own enjoyments, when, should they strip themselves of every comfort, and let their hearts bleed in sympathy, it would be but a drop taken from the ocean of human misery?

The widow and her little family have given two days to their dead. Two days sacred to tears and tender thoughts, and deep, deep grief. The world can afford no longer space; the landlord will want to know “how his rent is to be paid?” and creditors, even if their dues are small, will want their money now, and food and raiment are to be provided, and they have no father or husband now; he has left his burdens a legacy for them; so, let their hearts ache as they may, their throes of agony must be repressed. The world with its stern demands is at their door; and “how they are to meet them” is a question to be answered without delay.

It was the evening of the second day; they had been to the place of graves to deposit their dead, and the little family was gathered in a small, back room adjoining their store—all but one.

“And now, my children, the great question comes up and must be answered by us. What are we to do?”

For some minutes there was utter silence; at length the mother continued:

“I mean, more particularly, what are you to do, Herbert? and myself and the little ones? Henry is provided for; he has a situation and can take care of himself.”

"I hardly know, mother; I have been thinking much about it; I might, no doubt, get a place in some store; but for a year or two I cannot hope to get more than sufficient to provide for my own necessities."

"I am sensible of that, my son. If you can even do that, it will be as much as can be expected—at least for some years. I have thought sometimes of going into the country to some small village, where I could hire a room for a moderate sum, and take in sewing; I might possibly in that way support myself and Willie and Ellen; and then again I have thought of Uncle Lambert's; but they have quite a family, and in both cases I must be far away from you and Henry, and you both among strangers. Alas! alas! it is a day of darkness—deep, deep darkness!"

And the widow sighed heavily, and putting her handkerchief to her face, commenced rocking her chair, as though to give vent to the tumult within.

The boy, for he was but seventeen years of age, although quite tall for that age, also seemed deeply absorbed in thought. He sat with his hands before him, and his feet stretched toward the fire. It was the spring of the year; yet it had been a chilly day. He was indeed troubled by the words his mother had just spoken. To have her cast herself upon friends where she might not be heartily welcome, or to have her laboring in a strange place for her own support; either idea was abhorrent to his feelings. His brother seemed never to have any of his wages to spare; his own necessities absorbed the whole; and should he himself be so fortunate as to procure a situation where he could barely sustain himself for two years to come, it would be all he could anticipate.

Thus they sat for some time in silence; a kitten was at play about the room, and a large old-fashioned clock was swinging its pendulum, and ticking in the corner. The daughter, about twelve years of age, was holding the little one, a boy of perhaps four years, who had fallen asleep upon her lap.

Presently the door was opened and a young man entered. He was dressed in deep black; but his clothes

were made after the newest fashion; his air was foppish, and there was no appearance of the mourner about him, except the color of his garments and the long black band upon his hat. He was good looking—some might say handsome; but there was a cold aspect to his countenance that would make one who cared much what kind of a heart he had, suffer some apprehension. His age about twenty, and although not tall, he seemed to have attained his full stature.

"Henry, my son, we have been looking for you some time. It seems so pleasant to be all together this evening! Have you been to the store?"

"To the store? No. What makes you ask?"

"Oh, well! I thought they would hardly expect you there to day."

"I shouldn't care if they did; I have not been there anyhow; I have been walking with some friends. It looks gloomy here. Why don't you have a light?"

"I have not thought about that; Herbert and I have been conversing about our situation, and the fire-light has been all-sufficient; indeed rather more congenial to our feelings than a brighter one; but if you wish it, I will light the lamps."

And Mrs. Jones at once arose to do what always seemed a pleasure—to gratify the wishes of a child.

"You needn't light them on my account; I can only stay a few minutes; I must be going down town."

"But surely, Henry, you will stay with us to night. I wish to talk with you a little about our affairs; you know something must be done immediately."

"Well, I can stay a little while!"

And the young man laid his hat on the table, and took a seat, but as though willing to divert the conversation to a different channel, began remarking upon the funeral.

"A large funeral, wasn't it? I had no idea so many of the big bugs would have turned out! I should have thought they would have been almost shy about having their carriages standing so long in Elm street—quite out of place for most of them!"

"Yes, my son; with most of these people your father and I were once on familiar terms; but"—

"But what, mother?"

"Oh, well! It matters but little now. I was intending to say, however, that a change in circumstances makes a great change in our intimacies."

"I do not see why it should be so, mother!" said Herbert. "Father was equal to the best of them any day."

"That may be, my son; nor would I intimate that any of those to whom I have alluded had any feelings that would have hindered or broken off our intimacies. But you know we have secluded ourselves very much from all society for some years past. Your father was highly sensitive; he could never thrust himself into notice; and in truth, situated as we have been, how could we, with any heart, go into company, when we were not able to receive it at our own house?"

"Better if you had," replied the elder son; "a good deal better if you had held your heads up among folks, and that father had kept on with his wholesale business, and lived as we used to live when I can remember."

"And perhaps have failed and injured other people, and had a load of debt pressing upon him!"

"A load of debt! Well, what of that? Other people do so. People don't change their style of living if they do fail. They soon get agoing again and it's all forgotten."

"I know that, Henry; but your father was not one of that class. Failing was the great terror of his life. The idea of being so situated as not to be able to pay everything he might owe, was a terrible idea to him. He might possibly, had he risked more, have succeeded better; but I cannot blame him now, nor have I ever done so."

"Henry, I think father did right; he kept out of debt; that is, he never owed more than he had the means to pay after awhile, and I mean to do so too."

"You will never get ahead then, I can tell you."

"Well then, I can keep down."

"I guess you'll have to, no mistake about that. People that are afraid of their shadow must expect to keep down—'nothing venture, nothing have.' You'll see me

go it one of these days—the world owes me a living, and I mean to have it."

"Henry! oh, Henry! do not talk so, my son! I know you cannot mean what you say; but I would not accustom myself to use such language. The world owes you nothing but fair treatment. You owe to your employers all your energies, and to the world in general, a spirit of kindness, and a helping hand whenever and wherever an object that needs your aid comes in your way."

"There is no way, mother, but to do as other people do. How much better are we off now than if father had kept on in a large business? What if the business had wound up bad; what then? You would have had the satisfaction of having lived like other folks, and you would have been surrounded with your old cronies, and we should all have had a chance to see life a little, and should not be looked down upon as we now are—living here in an out-of-the-way place—keeping a little corner grocery. I feel mean whenever I come home."

"I am sorry, my son, that you have such feelings; you will have different views of life one of these days. It is not worth while for us now, Henry, to criticise the past. Your poor father acted conscientiously, and I feel happier that he did so. It will not be such a long step for me nor for any of us to take, now, in order to come down to the reality of our condition, and go to work with our own hands and earn a living."

"You earn your living!"

"What else can we do, Henry?"

"Do! Why, do as other people do. Herbert can go in a store, and you, and Ellen, and Bill go to Uncle Lambert's; the old curmudgeon is rich enough. I can find you in clothes, at any rate, if he won't launch out. I haven't got anything ahead as yet, but I shall have eight hundred dollars next year, and out of that I guess I can pay for all the clothes you will want up in the woods."

Mrs. Jones made no reply to this last remark of her son. She did not doubt but he meant well, and thought he could accomplish what he had proposed. But for the last year he had received seven hundred dollars, and yet

he had been barely able to support himself. She must have something more certain to depend upon than such a reliance. The proposition, too, that she should throw herself with her little ones upon her friends was less and less pleasing to her the more she reflected upon it. Her uncle was indeed well off, and he would no doubt welcome her as he had always done; but she knew that he had now a large family; herself and two children would be quite an addition. He was her mother's brother, and was far advanced toward that period of life when burdens press heavily. She would be a mere dependent upon his bounty. No, she could not do it! Not until every other way was hedged up.

Silence again reigned in the little circle. The mother could think of no other plan than that she had already mentioned. Henry made no other proposition, and Herbert, if he had any definite plan in his mind, did not, perhaps, feel willing just then to make it known. The little ones had dropped to sleep together, and the clock and kitten alone gave any signs of life. At length Henry rose.

"Must you go, my son?"

"Yes—it's time—it's a long walk; and it wants but a few minutes of nine o'clock."

"You will be here, then, to-morrow evening?"

"Well—yes—that is, if I can. Let's see—well, I'll try to drop in for a few minutes at least."

"I wish you would, my son, we may need your advice; and perhaps by that time we may hit upon some course that we shall be satisfied with as best. My own mind is too confused at present to follow any thought far, and we all need rest; but I wish you could stay to-night."

"Can't, mother. Well, good night."

"Good night, good night."

Soon after the departure of Henry, Herbert arose, kissed his mother, as was his custom, and then taking his younger brother in his arms, retired to his room. How he envied the little unconscious fellow, when, having undressed and laid him in his place, he listened to his sound breathing. He had not waked during all the process of preparation for his pillow.

Herbert's mind was too keenly alive to his present cir-

cumstances to allow of sleep. He felt conscious that upon himself now devolved the principal care of those whom his father had left dependent. His elder brother manifested a strange indifference to their condition; he had been shocked by it, and he was at first almost ready to indulge hard thoughts toward him, but he soon checked them by drawing a contrast between the circumstances in which he and Henry had been placed.

"Henry," he said to himself, "has not been with us; he has not witnessed the many anxious hours through which father has passed. He has not heard his many sighs, nor watched his troubled countenance, nor known to what straits, at times, he has been reduced. No, I will not believe it. Henry is not indifferent! He will enter with all his heart into our circumstances, when he comes to know just how we are situated."

Alas! poor boy, he does not reflect upon all the influences which have been doing their unhappy work upon that brother's heart.

Henry had gone into a store at fourteen years of age. For the first few years he lived in the family of his employer, and then, when his salary was large enough, had boarded near his place of business. There was a necessity for it, or Henry said there was. He had gained the good will of his employers, for he was very competent, and was, therefore, liberally paid. His parents' home had, in time, and by degrees, lost its attraction for him. He felt under some restraint when in his father's presence. He did not relish the counsels which his mother was so apt to pour into his ear; and, perhaps, as he said, felt at times almost ashamed of the plain house in which they lived, and of the low business which his father was carrying on. He was surrounded with engaging companions too, who claimed his evenings. They were pleasure-seekers—fond of roaming the streets, and looking into forbidden places. Perhaps they had not yet fallen into vicious courses, but they were on the track that leads to them.

Henry never seemed to have any money at command—not that his parents ever asked him for any, but there were times when he could not well have been ignorant

of their necessities. A few dollars of his earnings, and which he could well have spared from his salary beyond what all reasonable expenses demanded, placed in his mother's hands, would often have supplied those comforts which she and her little ones were obliged to dispense with. But it had never been done. From year to year, as his pay increased, he did indeed hold out the hope of abundant aid, and yet each year, as it came round and passed away, found him still as short of means as ever. Sources of expense opened and made their demands full as fast as his income advanced. Seldom was it that he had five dollars above the salary due him that was not appropriated.

Whether his father had drawn the reins too tight in his childhood, as parents are apt to do with their first-born, especially if a son; or, whether he had been more humored than the rest, we cannot say, but for some reason he did not seem so happy beneath their eye as did the other children—his home never seemed a resting-place for him. He preferred to make short calls, and those not very frequent; and as he grew to man's estate, seemed almost entirely to have lost that respect for them, at least in manner, which is in itself so beautiful and so truly grateful to a parent's heart.

Herbert's conduct offered a complete contrast to that of his elder brother. His manner was kind and tender, and seemed to be but the outflow of an affectionate heart. He took a deep interest in their welfare, and was untiring in his efforts to relieve them to the extent of his ability, both from care and labor. He had been the assistant of his father in their little store from quite a lad, and taken, even then, all the drudgery of the business upon himself, and of late almost the entire charge had devolved upon him; for, misfortune had, in a great measure, destroyed whatever of energy his father had possessed, and he was most of the time so borne down with hopeless gloom as to unfit him for the least exertion. Life's joys had passed away, and naught seemed to be above and beneath him but wintry skies and withered leaves. The kind attentions of this son and of his loving wife would, indeed, at times give a cheer to his heart and

bring back for a short space the vivacity of former days; but these were only as meteor flashes in a dark night. He was not negligent of his business, and shrunk not from any of its duties; yet it was very evident that he did not look upon it as a means by which he or his could ever rise again to prosperity—a plain, poor living was all that could be expected from it, and even this, at times, he feared would fail to be accomplished. No wonder, then, if his mind drooped and his energies were unstrung. Nor is it strange that, under such circumstances, the feeling heart of Herbert should have stimulated him to exert every nerve that he might sustain the faltering spirit of his parent, relieve him from care and toil, and try to make him feel that one, at least, of those who called him father, was at hand to lighten his burden and cheer his dark way.

Herbert was tall for his age, of slender build, but well proportioned; his countenance open and manly, with an eye of peculiar brightness; his hair a light brown, and his complexion very fair, somewhat pale, but easily flushed, for his feelings were extremely sensitive; rather diffident and yet quite self-possessed; his mind ready and his voice clear and pleasant; his manners were engaging, for his disposition was amiable, and he possessed that kind of benevolence which led him to enter readily into the feelings of others without respect to their rank or condition. What few customers the store had, seemed gratified when he was there to wait upon them. Had his merits been known he would have been sought for by some Broadway shopkeeper; he would certainly have secured customers if he did not draw them.

How much Herbert slept that night he could not have told, for his mind had become absorbed with an idea which the more he thought upon it the brighter it appeared to him, and whatever difficulties presented themselves, were by his sanguine imagination easily put aside.

It is one thing, however, to paint a scene of life, and satisfactorily arrange all its circumstances in our own mind; but a very different matter when we attempt to make our combinations answer their purpose in actual life, where other minds are to have their part in the

play. We often find that motives all-powerful with us have no effect upon them; if not even exerting an influence to a different end.

Herbert did not sleep, however, for he was conscious that the theme he had been dwelling upon when he retired to rest had been strangely mixed up with persons and things which had really nothing to do with the matter; he had been dreaming them; he knew it must have been so.

As the larger part of their trade was done in the early part of the day—quite early—Herbert was up as the day was breaking and prepared everything, as he was in the habit of doing, and was in readiness to wait upon any who might call; and, having more calls than usual, he did not get time to take his morning meal until late; and as the rest of the little family had finished before he sat down, it afforded him the opportunity he needed for a private interview with his mother.

"I have been thinking, mother, of a plan which, if it can be accomplished, will perhaps enable us all to keep together, and prevent the necessity for your throwing yourself upon friends, or trying to earn your own living."

His mother did not reply, but fixed her eye in an earnest gaze upon her son, as though anxious to hear what it could be, and yet doubtful of its possibility.

"I have been thinking, mother, that possibly some arrangement could be made so that I can keep on with the store, just as we have done."

"Why, Herbert!"

"I feared, mother, that you would be startled; but listen to my plan, and then you can judge of its feasibility."

And for some time the mother listened to the story of her son, without making any reply; at length, when he paused, her countenance assumed an expression of doubt, or rather of indifference. She seemed by no means elated, as he fondly hoped she would be—it was a severe blow to his sanguine thoughts.

"You do not favor it, mother?"

"There are other things to be thought of, Herbert,

than merely my comfort or wishes, or even your present benefit. I am happy, indeed, to know that you feel so resolute, and also that you manifest so much interest for us all. But, in the first place, I beg you not to be too sanguine as to the practicability of your plan. You are very young yet, to have such a charge; and although I do believe you might possibly carry on the business, yet others will, no doubt, think differently, and when men are called upon to risk anything, in general they are alive to all dangers and ready to offer reasonable excuses for declining. You can never hope to obtain that accommodation from those merchants with whom your father traded which he was enabled to do; it is not to be expected—indeed, under the circumstances, hardly worth while to ask it. They would, of course, say that your responsibility was worth nothing, and that your judgment is not matured, and that you would be more likely to get yourself into difficulties, than to be of any benefit to those dependent upon you. I entreat you not to allow your hopes to be excited."

Herbert was so much affected with the earnest manner in which his mother brought to him the objections which he knew might very naturally arise in the minds of business men, that he could, for the moment, make no answer.

"But, aside from all this, my son, would it be best, after all, even if the thing was possible? Will you not be able to take a much higher stand—make a much better position for yourself in life—by getting a situation with some respectable firm, and thus working your way into a larger business. I fear, if you begin low, you may never reach such a station as I think you are capable of."

Herbert had thought of this last consideration, but it had no weight in his mind. He was too young to calculate how far a man's business might affect his station in society, or even to care about it; he readily replied, therefore:

"As to that, mother, I do not think it can be of much consequence. Will my station in society not depend more upon my integrity and industry, than upon the



mere question whether I am engaged in a large or small business?"

"With some, no doubt, it will; but not with the mass, in such a city as this. You know how it affected your father."

"Yes, mother, that was a different case. Father had once occupied such a different position. It was, indeed, a sort of degradation for him—I always felt that it was; and it was painful to me to see him waiting upon all sorts of people—his very personal appearance made it seem wrong; he was not truly in his right place—I always felt so. But I, you know, am young; I have not had to come down; I can do a great many things that no one would have wished to see father do. And then, mother, only to think if it could be! If I could go on with the store, and you and Ellen, and Willie and myself could all keep together—how happy we should be! It is absolutely dreadful to think of—that you should be living among friends, dependent upon them, and perhaps made conscious that they felt it, too; or, that you should be obliged to work for your own support—although, of the two, I should prefer the latter."

Mrs. Jones had not felt less on this matter of dependence upon friends than her son; and yet, to earn her own living, when she thought of all the difficulties in the way, with the care of her two children in addition, seemed almost a hopeless undertaking. But still she feared to encourage hopes in Herbert which she felt conscious would end in disappointment.

"You will not object, mother, to my trying? I can but try; if this way is shut up, we must then do the best we can."

There was such earnestness in the voice and look of Herbert, as he made this request, that, in spite of her incredulity in his success, she had not the heart to say nay.

"I will not, if your mind is so bent upon it, Herbert, withhold my consent to your making the trial; but I fear, my son, that you will only meet with disappointment."

### CHAPTER III.

"MR. BLAGG, will you turn to the account of Jasper Jones, and see how it stands. I see, by the paper, that he is dead."

Mr. Blagg was the bookkeeper of the firm of Bangs, Toodle & Co., wholesale grocers in Front street, New York. Both Bangs and Toodle had not only made their fortunes and retired, they had also gone to give an account of their stewardship. The names, however, of the old firm still continued over the door, and immediately beneath was that of D. Granite—the D. standing for Demetrius. The owner, however, either disliking the name which had been given to him in baptism, or being a man rather given to expedition in doing business, did not care to have the trouble of making so many extra letters every time he was called upon to sign his name, was satisfied with the initial letter. All business matters, however, went on in the name of the firm of which he had once been a junior partner; and although D. Granite was known by all those with whom the concern had any transactions to be at present the sum total of the establishment, they were well pleased with the responsibility which that name afforded; for Mr. Granite was not only very correct and very shrewd in business matters, he had also become quite a man of property.

Mr. Blagg had been in his present position, now, he told every one who asked, "for five-and-twenty years, and if he lived, and our Mr. Granite lived, he might be there—he wouldn't say how long, for there was no knowing." "He liked his seat," he said, "by the old desk, and he liked the prospect from it (it was was not an extensive prospect: a back yard, twenty by twenty-five feet, with a high board fence, and, for a background, the tall brick walls of stores in the adjoining street); the sun didn't trouble him much in summer, and it had a cool look." Mr. Blagg said, also, "That he liked the flavor from the

store, for he had been used to it so many years; he liked keeping books, too, and he didn't like doing anything else—and he never meant to do anything else.”

Mr. Blagg was not only very efficient in his department, he was also a man of clear discernment, correct in judgment, and well versed in all matters of business, and with an extensive knowledge of men and things in the great city; and was, therefore, quite an aid to Mr. Granite, who treated him rather as a partner in the concern than an assistant.

Mr. Blagg had for many years been in the receipt of a good salary; he had laid up money, was a single man, and always intended to be—so he said; and upon the whole had quite a comfortable berth for his life's voyage.

Mr. Granite sat reading the paper, and had almost forgotten about the account of Jasper Jones, for Mr. Blagg never would do things in a hurry. “Figures must be handled carefully, or a deal of mischief might be done,” was a favorite saying of Mr. Blagg's, and he certainly carried out his theory into practice.

“Jasper Jones' account stands debtor eighty dollars, sixty-two and one-half cents;” and Mr. Blagg closed his ledger, and replaced it in its stall.

“That all! are you sure, Mr. Blagg?”

“Very sure, sir—that is if there is any dependence upon figures.”

Mr. Blagg's very positive manner was sufficient to stop all further inquiry. Indeed, had Mr. Granite expressed any doubt of the result, or had he, as certainly he had a right to do, have asked the liberty of running over the figures himself, it would no doubt have been considered by the accountant a very strange proceeding, almost an insult. Mr. Granite had too much consideration for Mr. Blagg's feelings and his own interest to do any such thing.

“Perhaps you are not aware, sir,” continued Mr. Blagg, “that of late he has sent down frequently small sums; he, no doubt believing that he was not long for this world, felt anxious to have all balances against his estate reduced as low as possible—just as all men should do—it saves trouble to those that come after us.

“Very true, Mr. Blagg; very likely to be the case. Jones was just the man to feel so. A very honest man was Jones, and I have no doubt, as you suggest, he has been anxious to settle the claim as fast as he could. For you know when a man dies, creditors must be settled with, and if there is not cash on hand, goods etc. have to be sold at a sacrifice—often a great sacrifice.”

“Most cruelly so sometimes, sir. Not by our firm though, sir; the five-and-twenty years I have been at this desk, and had the charge of these accounts, there has never been a grinding of the faces of the poor, nor a spoiling of the widow and fatherless—never, sir!”

“I trust there never will be, Mr. Blagg.”

“I trust not, sir. Substantial as the firm is, it could not afford to do that, sir.”

“I know it, I know it, Mr. Blagg, and I hope we have not the heart to do it, either. Some, you know, say there must be no friendship in trade. I will agree to that in the case of indorsements, but can't go it altogether, Mr. Blagg.”

“You are right, sir. Just as if a man, because he happens to be in trade, must cut his heart out and throw it away! I tell you, Mr. Granite, candidly, I have had oftentimes sad thoughts, very sad thoughts indeed, sir, when that poor man has been in here to purchase some articles for his small store up town. He seemed to be a person entirely unfitted for such a position. Why, sir, I can remember, and perhaps you do too, sir, when Jasper Jones was among the first in Pearl street—an importer of English dry goods! How he has come down so I cannot say; he never failed to my knowledge, but has been going down gradually from step to step; no doubt he was never much of a business man—a thorough gentleman though, and very, very strictly honest. A man of sorrow, too, he seemed; it is a great pity he has not had friends.”

“Perhaps, Mr. Blagg, he was too proud to ask aid!”

“So much the more he ought to have had it, then, from those who know him.”

“Right, Mr. Blagg—you are right there. Mr. Blagg”——

“Sir!”



"I think it likely that poor man has left nothing for his family; by the way, that son of his is a very fine young fellow; what do you think of him?"

"A noble boy, sir! very apt, sir! sees well to what he is about—good manners—well brought up, I take it, and of the very best principles."

"I was going to say, Mr. Blagg, they have traded with us first and last to quite an amount; now if his son should come in here and ask for the account, and I am not in, do you just make it out and give a receipt in full. It may be quite an item for the family, and it is not much to us; we shall not miss it at the end of the year."

Mr. Blagg made no reply; he was just then fumbling about his desk for something he could not find, and was not likely to find there; at length he drew it from his coat pocket; it was a nicely folded bandana. He very seldom had occasion for the article, for he neither snuffed nor chewed. But Mr. Blagg had a very sensitive heart; easily wounded, and very, very easily wrought up—melted—"broken all to pieces." No one would have judged so who did not know him, for his aspect was somewhat stern, and not very prepossessing, having but one whole eye, the other having been lost by an accident in his youth, and being moreover lame in one knee, which had been stiffened by the rheumatism, and probably was at times the cause of more or less pain. That, in addition to the blemish in his features, no doubt often affected his countenance. It is hard for one who has occasional twinges, either in body or mind, to maintain a very placid look. But all who knew him laid no stress whatever either upon a sharp word from Mr. Blagg, or a severe scowl; not even the lads in the store—there were so many real kindnesses meted out to them from his hand, that they never had any faith in his ill nature. They could not forget how punctual he was with their salaries, and how often little additions were made in the shape of Christmas or New Year presents. And since we have stopped so long in our story to talk about Mr. Blagg, we will presume a little further upon the patience of the reader, and say that he was a strict disciplinarian. He never allowed any confusion in his

office, nor any disarranging of his papers, nor any loud talking; that is, by the clerks. He was not given to talking himself when there, and during business hours; nor could they take the liberty of lolling in the chairs—he would only allow two of that article to be there—nor wear their hats, even, upon their heads, in his presence; nor was any laughing or jesting allowed there. "Business was business," Mr. Blagg often said. "It was a serious matter—great interests were at stake, and the mind must be intent upon it, or there may, as like as not, be mischief done." But if any of the boys were sick, and their parents far off in the country, Mr. Blagg would very soon be at their bedside, and no parent could have seen more carefully to their necessities; no wonder then if they yielded readily to his laws, and did not believe in his hard words or sour looks.

Mr. Granite would not of his own accord have been quite so strict, and at times, no doubt, felt a little under restraint himself, for he was very much disposed to be easy, although subject to fits of excitement. He continued, however, to fall in quite pleasantly with Mr. Blagg's arrangement.

But to resume our story. After Mr. Blagg had fumbled away with his bandana for a while, he made out to say:

"That boy, sir, ought to have some good situation. I wish we had one to offer him."

"I know it, Mr. Blagg; he seems very apt; we are full though, I suppose. What do you think?"

"Full sir—quite full; the last we took in is almost a supernumerary. . . . There, upon my word, he is coming now, sir!"

Mr. Blagg, from his perch at the desk, had a clear view through the glass partition over the whole store in front.

As Herbert entered he received a kind welcome from Mr. Granite; Mr. Blagg also descended from his stool—a compliment he seldom paid to any; he put out his hand and pressed that of the young man, but said nothing. Herbert must have been satisfied, however, that both gentlemen sympathized with him under his present circumstances.

"Take a seat, Master Herbert," and the voice of Mr. Granite had nothing of its usual business tone. The offer of a seat too was an unusual thing; never before had such a favor been extended—not there.

"Mr. Granite," said Herbert, with rather a trembling tone, "I thought I would come down this morning and see how matters stood with those we have dealt with, that I may know what arrangements I must make for payment."

"Ah, indeed! well, how have things been left, my son? Are there many debts?"

"Not many, sir. We have dealt more largely here than elsewhere; something, however must be due at Winstead & Co.'s—not much I think; at other places most usually we paid cash. You know, sir, our purchases were not large."

"I know it—and I had supposed your sales were small."

"My father disliked very much buying on credit, although sometimes we were obliged to go in debt for the heavier articles."

"I know—he was very careful—very careful. We are very sorry for your loss; very sorry indeed; a great loss. And have you thought what you shall do now? I suppose, of course, the business must be given up. Have you any plan for yourself for the future?"

"Thank you, sir; I have been thinking of something which I might possibly do; but whether it can be accomplished, I cannot say. My greatest anxiety, sir, is in reference to my mother and the children. For myself, I have no doubt I could, after a while, procure a situation; but you know, sir, that for the first year or two I cannot expect to get more than barely enough for my own support; and they must depend upon my exertions in some way, or be thrown upon friends; which, you know, sir, is very unpleasant; or would be so in our case."

"Have you near relatives, that are able?"

"My mother has an uncle; he is well off, but he is now an old man, and although he has always seemed fond of her, yet his family is large, and they are all grown up, and most of them at home. *They* may not be so

ready to bid her welcome, perhaps. It would be very unpleasant indeed, you know, sir, to run the risk of that."

"I know it; it would so."

"And I have been thinking, if I should sell off our stock, it would bring but little; fixtures, and so forth, cost considerable when you have to buy them, but they would sell for a mere song at auction."

"For nothing at all."

"I have been thinking, if I could only keep on with the store"—

"You mean until you could sell off what you have on hand. That might be best, certainly."

What a flush spread over the pale face of the youth!

"I was not thinking of just that, sir. What I meant was, if it could be so, that in some way I might go on with the business just as it has been carried on."

Mr. Blagg stopped writing for a moment and turned his face toward the speaker. One might have thought, from the motion of that gentleman's lips just then, that he was about to whistle a tune.

"You know, Mr. Granite," Herbert continued, "that for some months, pretty much all the out-door business has been done by me; and most of the in-door, too. My father had to leave it to me; he could not attend to it; his health and his spirits both seemed to go together; he had no resolution; or at least his heart failed him; it was painful to see him try to do anything; so that I was compelled to take the care and responsibility of many things upon myself. I have no doubt, if I could go on, and make some little changes, by fixing things up and keeping a little larger assortment, and having some articles of a finer quality than we have been in the habit of keeping, to suit some families of better standing who have lately moved into the neighborhood, that I could do full as well as we have done; and, I think, even better."

"You think you could?"

"I do, sir; and then, it would be so much better than to have my mother and the children go off and be dependent upon friends."

Mr. Blagg shook his head quite violently. He designed, no doubt, to express a decided negative; but what he would or would not do, no one could have said.

Herbert ceased speaking; he was, in fact, about to the end of what he had to say. He had not said the half which he had been thinking he should say, nor in the order he had planned. The very staid manner of Mr. Granite, whose countenance manifested anything but approbation of the measure, and whose keen eye was immovably fixed upon him while he was speaking, somewhat confused him and damped his ardor.

"How old are you?" Mr. Granite asked, as Herbert paused.

"Nearly eighteen, sir."

"Ah! indeed. The oldest child?"

"No, sir; I have a brother living with Tilsit & Co. He is twenty."

"Ah! an older brother. What salary does he get?"

"He gets a good salary, sir; seven hundred dollars."

"That is well; he can't spend that. Does he live at home?"

"No, sir; he has not lived with us since he was fourteen. He is obliged to live near the store, and it requires all his salary to pay his board and meet other expenses."

"Is he home often?"

"Not very often, sir; not so often as we could wish."

"Mr. Blagg?" and Mr. Granite looked toward that gentleman, no doubt to see whether he was too busy just then to answer a question. Mr. Blagg was not, at that moment, doing anything of consequence, and therefore he was ready to respond, which he did by merely turning his face toward Mr. Granite.

"Is that the young man I spoke to you about the other day?"

"The same, sir."

Mr. Granite looked at his watch, and perceiving that it was the time for winding it, proceeded in a very deliberate manner to perform that operation. And Mr. Blagg, reminded by the act that he had a duty to perform of the same nature, opened the glass door of a small

clock that stood within reach, and commenced winding that up, too; while Herbert waited in sad suspense, observing the motions on the part of the gentlemen, with the certainty almost that his proposition was in their minds quite Utopian, or a matter that they, at least, had nothing to do with.

As Mr. Granite returned his watch to its usual resting-place, he again fixed his eye upon the youth.

"Master Herbert, I wish to have a little free conversation with you, and I want you to feel perfect confidence in speaking or answering questions. Mr. Blagg and myself both feel very friendly toward you. I think I see a little how matters stand with you. You feel, I rather imagine, that you must, in some way, be the main stay of the family. You do not expect much aid from your brother. It is so, is it not?"

"He has not been able to do anything as yet, sir."

"And I fear never will be able. I speak plain, you see. It is better for you, and for all of us, to know just what we have to depend upon, that we may not make wild calculations. I think you will not be very likely to receive any assistance from your brother that can be relied upon. A young man that requires seven hundred dollars a year to support him at twenty years of age, will find a thousand dollars much too little for that purpose when he gets to be twenty-one. But that you cannot help; only you nor your mother had better make any calculations based upon what he may hope to do; it will all prove to be flummery. You think it very desirable that you should all keep together; you would prefer it to having your mother and her little family thrown upon relatives?"

"Oh, yes, sir! most certainly; we would be willing to live in the most saving manner; I would rather myself, sir, live on bread and water and work hard night and day."

Herbert's voice trembled with emotion; he spoke with much earnestness. Mr. Blagg had his bandana out again, but nobody looked to see what he was doing with it.

"And you think, by going on with the business, you

could manage so as to keep things about as they have been, and make a living out of it?"

"I feel sure I could, sir."

"And I may conclude that your object in wishing to talk with me about your designs is, that you may know whether the same accommodation we afforded your father could be afforded to you? You have not, indeed, asked the question, but I infer that is your meaning?"

"It is, sir."

"Have you seen Winstead & Co.?"

"I have not, sir."

"Winstead & Co. have a good many articles in your line, that we do not keep. It will be necessary for you to see them, to ascertain how they would feel about the matter. They are a good house for you to deal with. I suppose you are aware that your age will be an objection—a serious one on some accounts. We can have no legal redress if you do not choose to pay us."

"But, Mr. Granite"—

"So, so; I know—legally, I said—we could not compel you to pay, if you were not disposed to do so. But to be honest with you, Master Herbert, we have no fears, personally, I mean, on that score"—and laying his hand kindly on the shoulder of the youth—"we have the utmost confidence in your integrity. Rest assured of that, my boy; we would not fear to trust you ten times the amount you will want from our store."

Herbert tried to say something in return by way of thanks, but he made sad work of it, and had like to have upset Mr. Blagg altogether.

"We do not think that you will ever need the arm of the law stretched over you to compel you to pay an honest debt. And to make the matter short, I say to you at once, that you may go to Mr. Winstead and tell him your story, and say to him that we are ready to do all you wish about this matter."

"Don't you think," interrupted Mr. Blagg, "that it might be better for you, Mr. Granite, to see Mr. Winstead; he is a little crusty sometimes. He is a good man, but a very little puts him out of humor. You, sir, can tell the whole story to better advantage."

Mr. Granite did not reply to this suggestion any further than merely looking at Herbert, saying:

"Shall I? Would it be more agreeable to you than to go there yourself?"

"I should esteem it a great favor, sir, indeed; but it is putting you to too much trouble!"

Again he put his hand on Herbert's shoulder

"Never mind about that, my boy. We are all bound to help one another. Keep up a good heart; perhaps we shall get things fixed to your mind yet. You just sit here with Mr. Blagg until I return."

Mr. Blagg had been so much interested in the subject of conversation, that he had made but slow progress with the bill against the estate of Jasper Jones; so, as soon as Mr. Granite went out, he went at the work in good earnest.

Mr. Granite was gone much longer than might have been expected, and Mr. Blagg evidently manifested signs of restlessness. He had finished the bill and done up some other jobs of writing, besides being often hindered by questions and requests from the young men who occasionally came in from the outer store to get directions for goods, or to ask him to make out bills, or to do some other jobs which they were too busy to attend to.

A full hour had elapsed, and during all that time Mr. Blagg maintained the most imperturbable silence toward Herbert. He was not given to asking questions without he had something of consequence to elicit by thus doing, and he had heard enough already to give him a deep interest in the affairs of the young man. Questions of a nature to gratify merely an impertinent curiosity he never asked.

At length, Mr. Blagg, after looking at his clock the twentieth time, exclaimed almost in a tone of dismay:

"Can't see what keeps him! Winstead must be in one of his queer humors, or maybe he is out."

He had scarcely finished the sentence when he perceived Mr. Granite enter the front door. A few moments longer he was detained by some business matters there.

As he entered the office he placed his hat upon the

table, and commenced making an apology to Herbert for staying so long.

"It is well, however, that Mr. Blagg suggested the idea of my going. Winstead was on the point of leaving town, but I made him stop long enough to hear my story. Mr. Blagg, have you made out that account?"

Mr. Blagg immediately drew forth the article from beneath a marble slab on the desk, handed it to Mr. Granite, but said nothing.

"Ay, that is right; you have done as I have said. Well, Master Herbert, I have had a long talk with Mr. Winstead about your affairs. Winstead is peculiar about some things; a sharp man of business, rather blunt sometimes; but it seems the dealings you have had there have given him quite a favorable impression, and when I told him how things were, just as you told me, he said at once: "Granite, let the boy go on—let him try it; whatever he wants here on credit he shall have at the lowest cash price." So, you see, that part of the business is settled; and now, Master Herbert, here is our account. It is not large—not so large as I had supposed—only about eighty dollars. Here it is, and Mr. Blagg has receipted it."

Herbert was about to express his thanks for Mr. Granite's kind interposition on his behalf, when the account, receipted, somewhat startled him. He knew he had not the money with him; he did not expect it would have been demanded so soon.

"Oh, thank you, sir; but I have not the funds with me to pay it all this morning. I think I can soon collect"—

"Oh, it is all right. Mr. Blagg has receipted it at my request. I know, of course, what with sickness and other things, you have of late had many extra expenses—you must have had. No; consider this bill as settled, and now we will begin a new account. Whatever you want in our line you shall have at a trifling advance, and every three months we will have a settlement, and a specified time fixed for the payment of whatever balance may be then due. Will that suit you?"

As Mr. Granite saw that Herbert was under deep excitement, and not very able to make a reply, he continued:

"And now do you go on and do just as you have proposed; fix up things as well as you can; enlarge your assortment to meet the demands of the better sort of customers, give short credits when you give any; customers who are worth having would as lief pay every three months as once a year, and rather too. And here is a check for one hundred dollars to help you along with the extras—it will cost you something to rig up a little—and if ever you get to be well above-board, you can give it to some young fellow like yourself, who is beginning the world in a small way. Keep up a good heart, and when you want a friend, come to me."

Herbert could contain his feelings no longer; he was but a boy, and this unexpected treatment was more than his sensitive spirit could bear. The fullness of his heart must have vent. It was not merely the fact that his plan had met with acceptance, nor the additional manifestations of kindness in gifts bestowed; beyond all this, there was that which, in his bereft state, was more highly appreciated than aught beside. He had found a friend—a wise, a substantial friend. Ah, blessings on you, D. Granite, for that last sentence: "*When you want a friend, come to me.*" May you never want one to soothe your spirit when it shall be floundering amid the trials which no estate of prosperity can shield us from. May this outburst from your own honest heart—this casting of your mantle around a friendless orphan boy—be among those deeds which, in the hour when life shall be reviewed and its last account made up, will neither fill you with shame nor regret. Those tears which that youth is shedding by your side are richer jewels than any mine has ever yielded; they are such as angels prize—rare indeed on earth, but of great value in the courts above.

When Herbert had left the place where such unexpected kindness had been shown him, Mr. Blagg came down from his seat and stood by the railing which inclosed his high desk.

"Mr. Granite, you will let me charge one half of that check to my account."

"Oh no, by no means; charge it to me—personal expenses."

"Only half of it, sir; that is all I ask?"

"But why so, Mr. Blagg?"

"Well, I think it a good investment, and should a little rather than not have a share in it."

"You will never see it again; it will be lost money. You know I told him if ever he was able, he might give it to some one else that needed it."

"For that very reason, sir, I should like to have an interest in it. The bank that deposit is made in, depend upon it, Mr. Granite, will never stop payment, and its dividends will come to hand just when we shall need them most."

Mr. Granite looked more than usually serious at this remark. He no doubt understood its reference; but he had not been conscious of doing anything worth thinking about. For a moment he stood as though absorbed in deep thought, and then replied:

"Just as you please, Mr. Blagg."

"Thank you, sir," and Mr. Blagg resumed his seat, apparently quite well pleased.

## CHAPTER IV.

MRS. JONES had experienced many changes during her life, but they had been all in one direction.

She had, until married, been accustomed to mingle with what was then with some propriety called the higher class. Higher in the social scale, not because possessed of great wealth—for many who ranked high in that day had no superabundance of property.

Their position was marked out by stronger lines than any which separate the classes in our day, and those lines were not easily crossed, from the fact that the distinction was founded on substantial differences, and not on the mere possession of a larger or smaller amount of gold and silver.

She had been accustomed to the elegances of life, and those refinements which social intercourse then exhibited—much of which has now given place to luxurious living and gaudy display.

By her marriage she did not elevate her position in the opinion of many, and some even thought she had taken a step beneath her. But thus she never felt. She knew well the noble qualities of him she had chosen to be her life's guide and stay, and when misfortune came, she shrunk not from its pressure, but step by step descended with him—cheering him by the way, and doing all in her power to make each new phase in the downward path as pleasant as circumstances would permit.

Mr. Jones had inherited quite a handsome property from his father, which he invested in trade, and for a time did a large business—but to no profit—and being peculiarly tenacious of his personal dignity, and fearing pecuniary obligations which he might not be able to meet, he watched closely the state of his affairs, and when he found, after a few years, that a large part of his capital had been sunk, he changed his business for one



he thought more sure; but here again he met with reverses from a sudden decline in goods and a general bankruptcy among merchants—nearly all that he had once possessed was swept away. To go on in his present business could be done by borrowed capital on a fictitious credit—he could stoop to neither course, and his only resort for a living was finally to the small business which he followed until death released him from responsibility and care.

Mrs. Jones had never troubled her husband by repining over their losses or contrasting the present with the past. She may indeed have regretted that he was not more successful in his plans; but those regrets were never uttered. Her husband's peace was more dear to her than all extraneous circumstances, and to the last his heart trusted in her; and her smile was often the only light that could kindle a spark of gladness in his desponding spirit.

The house in which they now lived was a small building, two stories indeed, but quite low and plainly built; a wooden frame, with a brick front. The lower part, with the exception of a small back sitting-room, and a still smaller bed-room, was taken up with the store. The house had been erected some years, and was now wearing a rusty appearance; the store too had by no means an inviting look—it was evidently the last resort of one who had lost all worldly hope—whose ambition had died out, and who only expected by a small trade to meet the more urgent necessities of life.

When Herbert first made known to his mother his plan for continuing where they were, her heart shrank from the idea—for his sake more particularly. But as she reflected upon their situation, and upon the possibility that thereby she and her children might be kept together, and be saved from humiliating dependence upon relations, the plan seemed to gain brightness. She felt some confidence, too, that Herbert could actually manage, perhaps, better than his father had been able to. She knew that for some time almost the entire care had devolved upon him—he was young—ambitious to do the most that could be done there—and much liked by all

the customers, and, as he had said, the neighborhood was improving.

She had not encouraged him, as we have seen, but after he left her that morning, and for the purpose she knew of making an effort to carry out his view, she became at first quite reconciled to it, and finally very solicitous that he should succeed; and yet she knew the world better than he did; she knew that business men were not apt to encourage schemes when they would be called upon to run some risk for a small gain.

As the time approached when she might reasonably anticipate his return, her feelings began to be much excited, and in spite of all her endeavors to be calm, and even to be hopeless that he would succeed, she would often find herself on the lookout, and anxiously peering among the pedestrians in Elm street for a sight of his much-loved form.

At length her boy is in sight—he is walking rapidly, and seems regardless of persons and things around him—hope bounds within her heart—she runs to meet him at the door—a smile lightens up his fine countenance—he is in her arms.

“Oh, mother, you have got a home yet!”

“My dear, dear boy! I am so rejoiced, for your sake! You have succeeded?”

“Better, mother—much better than I had any reason to expect!”

They retire to their little room, and as he goes over with his story she sits and folds her hands and looks with pride upon his sparkling eyes. Her boy has the confidence of men shrewd in business; and he has gained an interest in their hearts too. Long has he been her comfort—he is now to be her stay—together they are to strive for an honest livelihood, and with hope to stimulate their efforts, and means to carry out their plans! Light has broken upon the darkness in which they have been enveloped—the clouds are breaking, and streaks of sunshine are visible—she is happier than she has been for many long years.

No time was lost by Herbert in putting a new face on the aspect of the store—he knew well that appear-

ances go a great way with the multitude. Through the day, and even until midnight for some days, he worked incessantly—doing everything with his own hands that he had the skill to perform; new shelves were substituted for the old ones, and trimmed with paint; a new oil-cloth covered the counter; the old scales were scoured to their original brightness, and new ones added; barrel covers were painted in uniformity with the shelves; the window and doorway were filled with samples of the best foreign fruits, mingled with Chinese tea-caddies and loaves of the purest sugar. An awning, new and ample, spread over the walk in front, and the pavement was cleansed as it had never been before, and finally cards were hung out enumerating some of the choice articles to be had within, and at the lowest price.

These details may appear very insignificant to the reader, especially if unacquainted with city matters, and anxious for the development of our story; but stories, as well as other things, must have a beginning, and sometimes very small matters have an important bearing upon the whole tenor of our lives. These minutiae, however, were by no means small matters to those immediately concerned. It was an effort by a brave youth to sustain those who were dearer to him than his own standing in society; to preserve from the hand of charity, even if it was the charity of relations, her who had watched with untiring care his childhood and youth—to provide for her a home where she could still be mistress and mother, and no will but her own to interfere with those whom God had given her to counsel and guide.

Go on, brave boy! you are doing a good work. It is a humble station indeed that you have chosen in which to begin your life's labor! The rich may pass your little establishment with regardless interest, and youth, with money in their purses and no care upon their minds, may look with pity or even contempt on you as they pass and see you busily employed with your apron on. And your promise for wealth or independence may not be very flattering. Yet, go on, we say. There are consolations in your path the idle and the wealthy know not of—well springs they never drink from. There are watchers

about you whose smile of approbation you may not see, but whose record will be of vast moment to you—and it will never be blotted out. You are weary at times, we know you are; for you have long walks to take, and you must make them with speed, and you have cares that sometimes trouble you; and when the day is past and your shutters closed for the night, you may have aching limbs. But in that little back room there is refreshment for you. A mother's beaming smile and cheering words, a little sister, beauteous as an opening flower, to lay her head upon your lap, and give you a loving kiss; and a little brother to nestle by you in your bed. And they are all looking up to you, leaning upon your care; their hearts are cherishing your image, and you are loving them with a tenderness that will grow more and more entrancing, and you are preparing for yourself a home in their affections enduring as their life and yours. Go on, we say, and keep up a cheerful heart!

Henry called in, as he had been requested to do by his mother, on that next evening. It was rather late, however. Herbert was closing his shutters for the night. His mother's first salutation was:

"Well, Henry, have you heard the good news? Has Herbert told you?"

"News, no. What news? Has he been down town to-day?"

"Oh, yes. But here he comes, he must tell you himself."

And as Herbert entered the room Henry looked earnestly at him.

"Have you been down town to-day? Why didn't you give us a call?"

"I had no time, brother Henry; Mr. Granite detained me so long, and I was in such a hurry to get back and tell mother."

"Old Granite! What did he keep you for? he's an old griper. He and old Blagg are of a piece—curmudgeons both of them—afraid they will lose something, I suppose. Do you owe them much?"

"Dear Henry, I beg of you say nothing unkind or disrespectful of those gentlemen. They have always



treated your father with courtesy, and now they have acted most nobly."

"Nobly! Why, mother, they are skinflints, both of them. Always charged father the highest prices, I know they did. Old Blagg is always poking his one eye into other people's business; pity that was not out, too."

"Henry, Henry! you must not talk so; you do not know what sort of persons you are talking against. Herbert do tell your brother all about it. Just hear Herbert's story, and you will then have a very different opinion of those gentlemen."

"Gentlemen! Well, go on with your story."

Herbert made no comments on the remarks of his brother, but began in a very calm, straightforward manner, and repeated the scene that had passed. He did it with much more composure than he was able to maintain when telling it to his mother. He was then too much under the influence of excitement to give more than the outline. There was no change in the countenance of Henry during the whole recital, nor did he attempt in the least to interrupt his brother by any act or word. As soon as the latter had closed, however, slapping his hand with much emphasis on his knee:

"The old sharpers! I see through the whole of it! A trick—a mere bait! They have hooked you, Herbert! Depend upon it, you are a caught fish!"

"How so, brother Henry?"

"How so! Why I'll tell you, if you can't see through it. It is all for their interest. They want to make as many customers for their goods as they can. They believe you are honest, and they know you will make great efforts to sell all you can, and will no doubt in the course of the year be quite a customer. They know well enough you can't make anything, or not much, at any rate—not at the prices they will put on the goods. But what do they care! They will, by their blarneying, and so on, have you under their thumb, and when you get to the end of the rope, and have your goods all trusted out, and can't pay them promptly, they'll just slap on to you, take the goods that's left, and the debts, too, and let others whistle for their pay; and you'll be turned off a

broken merchant before you're twenty, to help yourself as you can."

"I do not believe them to be such men, Henry. Their conduct to me does not look very much like such proceedings."

"Never trust a cat with a mouse, Herbert, if you don't want her to kill it. She may play with it awhile, but it's a gone mouse when once in her claws."

"I have not the slightest apprehension, Henry, that your suspicions will be realized."

"I know you have not, but I have; mind I told you so. And you intend really to go on with the old concern, and disgrace yourself and all of us! We have been disgraced long enough already with this little up-town concern. I should think, mother, you would remember a little how you once lived, and that we are entitled to a different station in life. I'll quit, if it's going to be so. I am not going to be mortified by telling folks that my brother is an up-town grocer—a smart boy that can get a living anywhere."

"I suppose I could, Henry; but in the meantime what is to become of mother and the children?"

"Why, I have told you. Mother and the children can go up to Uncle Lambert's. Next year I shall have eight hundred dollars, and in a year or two you might be getting a good salary, and we might both together do something to help the rest."

"In the meantime we should be broken up, and mother would have no home, and we should all be scattered. I know I can make a living for us here. The neighborhood is growing better; a whole new row of houses has just been finished, and people of good circumstances are moving in, and when I get fixed up and a right assortment of goods in, I know I shall do much more than we have done yet."

"Well, go on if you and mother say so. But mind what I say—I know how it will end. Besides, you ain't old enough to do the business. You haven't judgment, and those old codgers know it."

"I shall take advantage of the offer that Mr. Granite has made me, and consult him as I go along. He cer-

tainly has experience, and he is not only a kind-hearted man and a true gentleman, but his interest surely would be to give me wise counsel."

"Well, go your own way. I shall quit—that's all—I'll quit for good."

And Henry rose to depart.

"My dear son, I beg you to make no rash resolve. You have not been able you know as yet to do anything for us, and it may be so hereafter."

"I have taken care of myself, mother, and have been no expense to anybody—that's something."

Mrs. Jones felt keenly this unkind remark, but she suffered not a word of reproach to escape her lips. She would do nothing to loosen the bonds between them. He yet needed a mother's watch and counsel. Alas! that he had been so long withdrawn from it, or had become so impatient under it.

The parting, that evening, was not a very pleasant one, although Ellen would have her kiss, and the mother, too. Henry was evidently in an unhappy frame of mind. Whether his pride was hurt because his brother seemed decided in the step he had taken, or his conscience reproved him for not having done more in days past for the relief of his parents, we know not. There was doubtless a combination of unpleasant thoughts. He must have been conscious that he had not acted a truly filial part, and that consideration was enough of itself to trouble the heart and shade the brow of youth or age.

"Why is it, mother," said Herbert, soon after Henry had departed, "that Henry never seems to be happy when he comes home, and does not even seem to care to come? He has his evenings to himself. He might be home every evening if he felt so disposed. He seems happy enough when he is with young men—more lively than any of them. I don't believe they do him any good."

It was some moments before his mother replied.

"It is, no doubt, Herbert, one of the bitter fruits of poverty."

"How so, mother? surely Henry gets well paid."

"I mean the straitened circumstances in which we have been for some years. Had we been differently situated, we never should have allowed one of our sons at fourteen years of age to leave our care, and be placed under *such* influences as Henry has been under. And then again it is good for children sometimes to suffer with their parents. Their sympathies are excited and the best feelings of the heart kept alive. You, Herbert, perhaps owe much of that tender interest you feel for us all, to the fact that you have been familiar with our trials. You have aided your father. You have witnessed his depressed feelings, and have done your best at such times to comfort and cheer him. You have known all our straits and necessities, our privations and trials of various kinds, and the very efforts you have made, although hard upon you at times, have created an interest in your home—a deep interest in our welfare—and now you are reaping some of the good fruits of such discipline. You are made doubly happy by your success to-day, because you feel that we are sharers with you."

Herbert felt that his mother's words were true. He was conscious that the joy he felt that evening was enhanced, beyond all calculation, by the knowledge that his mother, and those two little ones beside her, were to be benefited by his new arrangements.

He remembered, too, how often he had almost envied the lightheartedness of Henry. How free he seemed from care or anxious thoughts about matters at home, while his own spirits were weighed down as by a heavy burden. His mother was no doubt right; and now he could not regret that his way had been so often amid the darkness, for he was truly happy.

## CHAPTER V.

ONE evening, some months after the scenes described in the last chapter, Herbert was standing by his little desk, and preparing to balance his cash for the day, a customer entered, and he immediately stepped before the counter to be in readiness for any demand. A girl of about fifteen came up to the counter, and asked—in a tone of voice a little broken, as though affected by diffidence, or, as Herbert thought, agitated by having walked some distance, or made unusual haste—for some rice.

He made a slight obeisance, as he asked:

"How many pounds?"

She seemed somewhat confused by the question, and her face, which was extremely beautiful, became at once highly flushed.

"How many pounds?—indeed I can hardly say—for how much a pound do you sell it?"

"Six cents."

"Oh, well then, if you please, give me two pounds."

The article was soon put up; that is, as soon as circumstances would permit; for extra pains had to be taken that it should be put up in the neatest manner. Whether it was that the character of the individual he thought was such as merited extra attention, or he hoped by making a little longer job of the matter to have some questions asked or some opportunity afforded for hearing the tones of that voice, we cannot say; one thing we can say—those tones seemed to him very melodious, and the lips through which they came the most exquisitely finished lips that he had ever seen—any sound from them that could not please the ear would have been a discord indeed. The little bundle was at length completed to his satisfaction; and as he handed it to her, instead of dropping the piece of money, which was the exact pay for the rice, on the counter, she dropped it, with much delicacy in the operation, into his hand.

"Is there nothing else I can serve you with, this evening?"

"Thank you, nothing else."

And making a slight salutation, which was returned by him in a more marked manner, she withdrew, and was soon out of sight.

Herbert did not go at once to his desk, and, in fact, strange as it may seem, was almost on the point of putting on his hat, and, at a distance, watching whither she went; but his better sense prevented any such Quixotic action, although his better sense could not drive the apparition from his mind—for, in contrast with any who had ever been in his store, or were likely to come in from that vicinity, she might fairly be called such.

Her dress, indeed, was plain, quite plain; but that she was something very superior to what her dress indicated, he did not doubt a moment. Her form was most graceful, her step airy and dignified, and her manner that of one quite unused to any such common business as she had come upon that evening—he was very sure of that. His imagination may have magnified things a little, or rather thrown a halo about the person, but he was very certain he had never before seen such a face—that is, such finely formed features, with such an expression from the eye. To enter into particulars would be preposterous; he had but one or two glances at her—that is, at her face; he was too well bred to attempt to gratify his curiosity by staring at a lady under such circumstances. We are only now speaking of the impression made upon his mind by this very short interview.

For some time he remained just where he stood when she left the store; and when he came to himself, found that he had been groping through quite a round of probabilities and possibilities, as to where she came from, and under what circumstances she was placed. He felt somewhat ashamed of himself as he started to his desk, and resolved, as he took up his pen to complete the work he had been at, to think no more about the occurrence in any way, and with an effort drove, as he supposed, the vision clear out of his thoughts forever. He would probably have succeeded in so doing if it had not been that

a few days after, quite early in the morning, the same vision appeared to him again—the same dress, the same little straw bonnet fully exposing the features, and the same delicate, ladylike manner.

He made a more decided obeisance this time, and was greeted pleasantly by the young lady. He had not been deceived by the light of his lamps in reference to her beauty—there could be no mistake this time—the searching light of a clear morning, with the sun streaming through his door and window, only tended to reveal more truly the exquisite delicacy of complexion, the fine mold of her form and features, and more especially the tender brilliancy of her hazel eye.

Two different articles were now wanted, so that he had more time to examine matters, if he had dared to do so—that is, if his own delicate sense of propriety had allowed him. And yet the fact of having a double article to put up did certainly afford him, without in the least violating the proprieties, a double opportunity for a full, fair view.

As the young lady—for we must call her so, and he felt her to be such—was not disposed, or did not manifest any desire to say more than was absolutely necessary, few words passed between them. It was not, he believed, proper for him, stranger as he was, to intrude any remarks of his own—nothing further than was necessary as a matter of attention to a customer. The parcels were not very large, and yet he could not help the feeling that such delicate little hands ought not to be burdened even with so slight a load; he therefore asked:

“Shall I not send these home for you?”

“Oh, thank you, by no means.”

This little attention, on his part, was certainly felt by her, and justly appreciated; for on departing she turned, and, with a pleased look, although without a smile, said:

“I thank you very much for your offer.”

It was daylight, or he would most certainly have gratified a most intense desire he had to know whither she was bound; but he dared not even watch her from his own door; he would not, for any consideration, have violated

the rules of propriety where there was the least possibility that the individual herself might notice the act.

The conclusion he came to respecting her, for he had to think of her for some time—he could not help it—was, that she, in some way, was out of her true position. He thought, from various circumstances which forced themselves upon his notice, that she or her friends, if she had any, were poor, but that poverty had not always been their lot. In fact, so much did he feel on this point that he threw away all the profit he might justly have made on the articles he put up, by giving extra weight, and if he had dared, would have given back the money in the bargain.

Herbert was somewhat fanciful with all his straight-forward business habits. His imagination was quite active, and would at times make wide, and even wild ranges. It is not to be wondered at, then, if with such an object to start upon and fire it, he should conjure up quite a romance in real life, and make this heroine play a part in some most mysterious and out-of-the-way freaks of fortune. How high he placed her in the scale of human life, it is hardly worth while to say; nor have we time now to give even an outline of the scenes through which he carried her; the only trouble that he met with in carrying the matter to its climax was, that by no possible theory that he could invent was his mind satisfied as to her present circumstances or position. He could not station her in any condition that would accord with the fitness of things. So that, let him fancy what he pleased as to the past, the reality of her personal bearing, connected with the fact of her performing the low office of an errand girl, confused all his ideas, and brought his imagination to a stand-still. In fact, he could make nothing of it. He had hopes, however, that light would yet dawn upon the case, and he believed, when it did, that he should find many of his visions to be near the reality.

One day, not long after this second visit, as Herbert was walking at some little distance from his store, he felt very sure that, not far in advance of him, he could distinguish, among several persons who were just then upon

the sidewalk—some going in the same direction he was, and others approaching him—the individual who had so attracted his attention. She was among the latter, and they must soon meet. As they drew near each other, he obtained a full view of her. He knew it was she; he was deeply agitated, and was preparing to make his obeisance, when suddenly she turned into an alley that led from the street. She did not see him—he felt conscious of that; and as he was about to pass by the place into which she had turned, he could not resist the impulse to look after her. She stepped along, carefully picking her way through the heaps of filth that lay piled in her path, and proceeding to the further end of the yard, ascended the steps of one of the wretched buildings that stood there, and entered the dwelling.

He stood a moment, and looked round upon the tokens of poverty and vice that were so manifest about that dreary place. It had a name, he knew, of being one of those leprous spots which so defile the great city; not, indeed, so distinguished for violence and crime as such places have been of late years. It was merely a cluster of old buildings running back, for some distance, from the street, in which were congregated persons of all colors and characters, many of them very unlike in all things except their poverty. The name given to the locality was Hunker's Alley. Some who dwelt there visited his store occasionally, and he had reason to believe they were decent, honest people, struggling with the miseries of life; too poor to procure better accommodation, and even glad to find a shelter from the weather and from the street, in that place of outcasts.

Utterly confounded by this new development in reference to that lovely young creature, he passed on his way; his thoughts troubled him; he made resolves about the case—he must know more—he must search into it; some strange mystery was, no doubt, involved in it. Youth, beauty, grace, loveliness, breathing that foul air! sheltered beneath such covering! clustered with such inmates! It was horrible to think of! He would know the truth yet.

## CHAPTER VI.

ROBERT KIRKLAND was a very proud man, and the owner of a vast property. The estate on which he lived had been in the family for more than one hundred years. It was part of an immense tract of land which had been given to one of his ancestors by the king of England for services rendered to the government. It extended for miles along the Hudson River and for some distance back into the adjoining country. For some years it had been held under the sole ownership of the original lord of the manor; but in process of time became divided among heirs, cut up into large farms and sold to those who wished it for cultivation, until all the original grant had passed into the hands of strangers with the exception of one thousand acres, the most beautiful and valuable of the whole manor. This had been retained by the more prudent ancestors of Robert Kirkland, and at last became vested in him as an only son and heir.

Robert Kirkland prided himself not only upon the respectability of his family in consequence of its connection with the great ones in the Fatherland; but also in the fact that neither he nor his had ever been obliged to descend to what he named the menial occupations—that is—doing any honest business for a living. He had the same contempt for merchants, except it may have been for those who were largely engaged in foreign commerce, as he had for any of the lower callings of life, and looked upon the whole concern of traders, mechanics or laborers of any kind as far beneath him.

Besides the large landed estate, with its noble manor house, he owned considerable property in the city of New York, some of it productive, and yielding, for those days, a large income, and some in vacant lots, which in the course of years would become in their turn of great value.

He was not a close man, but managed his affairs with



prudence, and in consequence his estate became every year more and more productive.

One son and two daughters were to be the sole inheritors of all his worldly goods when he should be called to relinquish his hold upon them.

In process of time his son Gerald Kirkland married—not an heiress, but a lady of fine qualities and allied to a family that according to his father's ideas were his equals.

Not long after his marriage, and before his settlement in a house of his own, this son died and a little grandchild was born to Robert Kirkland under his own roof, where the widow had remained at his request. Gertrude Kirkland was a sweet baby, and soon won the affection of aunts and grandparents. She grew up to be a beautiful girl, and was the pet and plaything of the whole family. At ten years of age she lost her kind and judicious mother, and a sad loss it was for the lively romping girl.

The aunts now became her guardians; for her grandmother deceased a few months after she had lost her mother—and more unfit persons for one whose age and disposition required the wisest care, cannot well be imagined. They were maiden aunts, and likely to be so; whether they had either of them ever received an offer of marriage was only known to themselves or their own family; probabilities however were against any such event, for what with the pride of their father, and his care that no one should be allowed to be on intimate terms with them but such as he deemed respectable, and their own very stiff bearing—the chances for them to change their condition were small indeed.

For some years the little Gertrude was the mere plaything of the family; every luxury was allowed her, and her wishes were never crossed. The darling of her grandfather, she was his constant companion when walking over his beautiful grounds as they lay spread out along the picturesque banks of the Hudson, or when sitting on the wide piazza of his noble mansion watching the white sails that flitted past, or the changing clouds creeping along the sides of the Katskills, and envelop-

ing their summits with their dark masses—tokens of the coming storm—or tinged with the gorgeous hues of the setting sun.

What a high place he marked out for her among the distinguished circles of the land! for she was then beautiful; and even the partial eye of a grandfather was not mistaken in the promise she gave of her wealth of beauty when a few more years should have passed by.

As we sow, we must expect to reap. Under such influences it was not to be expected that the Gertrude of fifteen could be quite as tractable as the little child whose wishes were bounded by her playthings. Gertrude began even a year younger to chafe under the restraint which her aunts now deemed necessary to throw around her. She was fond of associates of her own age, and whether male or female—whether of high or low degree—that is, low in the estimation of her guardians—it did not matter. Her bounding spirit was ready to hail any playmate and her guileless heart could not discern the nice distinctions of which her friends were so tenacious; and as but few, very few families of their rank could be found in their immediate neighborhood, it was not to be wondered at if the young girl would, when an opportunity, offered mingle with the pretty daughters of the common farmers that surrounded them. Farmers not indeed equal to that independent class of men who in our happy land own the soil they live on and cultivate, for these were but tenants of the great man. But still many of them had families as free from low ideas as his own.

At fifteen a beautiful pony had been purchased for the favorite, and when once able to manage him with safety, Gertrude was allowed to ride him at her pleasure, and she would often ramble far off by herself.

One day as she was passing by a wood on the estate not very far from the house, a swarm of bees, which for some reason had become disorganized and was in a broken and angry state, attacked her horse. The little beast, frantic with pain, broke beyond her control and dashed away with her at full speed. A cross road passed the one she was on, but a few rods from the spot where

the mischief began. As she was flying past this road a young gentleman on horseback was riding leisurely upon it. He was near at hand—he saw that her horse was unmanageable, and heard her cry for help. In an instant his spurs were in his horse's sides and the fine beast was put to his full speed. He was not long in overtaking the pony, and seizing the bridle, endeavored by a violent jerk too suddenly to stop his course. The consequence was that the lady was thrown from her saddle and fell upon a clay bottom, baked by the sun almost to the hardness of stone.

In an instant he had dismounted, and, the horses fastened, he flew to her side. She was not insensible, but had no power to move. He ran to a brook near at hand, and filling his hat with water, commenced bathing her hands and temples, and doing what he could to restore her energies, using all the encouraging words and soothing expressions at his command. At length, to his infinite satisfaction, he found his efforts accomplishing some good, and with his assistance she was enabled to sit up, although complaining of great pain in her limbs.

"Shall I leave you now," he asked, "and ride to the nearest dwelling for a conveyance to carry you home?"

"Oh no, thank you, it would alarm my aunts. If I could once be placed upon my horse I think I could walk him home."

"I fear not miss, and he is still very restless. I am at your service though, and if you prefer to try your horse, I will walk by his side and perhaps can keep him quiet."

"Oh, thank you! but"—a sudden pallor spread over her features—her head dropped; he caught her in his arms, or she would have fallen to the ground; he gently laid her there, and again had recourse to the water.

"I am very weak;" she scarce spoke above a whisper; "I fear I shall die here!"

Without another word on the part of the gentleman, he immediately unfastened his horse, placed him by the stone fence, and taking up the lovely burden in his arms, with some difficulty made out to mount his steed, and as

fast as he dared to ride, proceeded to the manor house. She had told him where was her home.

The consternation at the mansion can be better conceived than described. The gentleman told all he knew of the circumstances, and then offered to go for a physician. His offer was accepted very cordially, and he started on his errand at full speed. The physician pronounced her to be severely bruised, but without any fracture; and that a few days would doubtless find her quite restored.

The young gentleman, on his return, had brought home the fractious pony. All were profuse with their thanks for his gallantry; and so pleased was the old gentleman with the graceful bearing of the young man, that he observed toward him marked attention; insisted upon his remaining to dinner; and, after the cloth was removed, and the wine placed upon the table, and the ladies had retired, he took occasion to inquire more particularly into his circumstances. His name was Manners; he was from the city of New York; was not engaged in business; had no relatives living, his father having deceased two years since; he spent his summers in the country, etc.; and, in fact, was a gentleman at leisure. Of course, the supposition in the mind of Mr. Kirkland was, that he must be a man of property. He was of fine appearance, over the medium height, had dark hair, a handsome face, was possessed of good conversational powers, seemed well read, and, upon the whole, made a very favorable impression upon both the grandfather and aunts of Miss Gertrude.

In a few days, Gertrude was able to take her seat in the parlor, and as Mr. Manners called every day to inquire for her welfare, and as so much had been said about the solicitude he manifested, it was not to be wondered at that the young girl should feel something more than mere curiosity to see one who had rendered her such essential service, and of whom she had a very indistinct recollection.

Much had been said, too—very thoughtfully, indeed! maiden aunts will sometimes be thoughtless—about his very fine appearance and his gentlemanly manners.

All this, no doubt, helped materially what of romantic feeling Gertrude had in the matter, with reference to one who had proved such a gallant knight, and so opportunely; and when it was announced that he had called again to inquire for the health of the young lady, and when she heard her aunts order the servant to ask the gentleman into the parlor where she was sitting, there might very naturally have been a fluttering at her heart and a deep flush on her beautiful, fair cheek, which remained there for some time after he entered.

He made scarcely any reference to the accident; said nothing of the assistance he had rendered, thinking, no doubt, it might recall unpleasant sensations on her part; and when she attempted to express her thanks for his attention, and that she had every reason to fear a fatal result would have been the consequence had he not interposed as he did, he earnestly entreated her not to trouble herself by recalling any particulars of the adventure, so far as he had any concern in it; and he seemed so ready to turn the conversation to some other topic, that she was affected by his delicacy; and, altogether, a very favorable impression as to the qualities of his heart was made upon her young mind.

For a while, Mr. Manners was a welcome visitor, and as soon as Miss Gertrude was able to mount her pony, Mr. Manners was ready to accompany her, and she was heard to say, on her return, that she had never so well enjoyed a ride before.

"It was so pleasant to have one to converse with by the way, and see to the horse, and all that."

What peculiar circumstance led to a change of feeling toward the young man on the part of her aunts, Gertrude did not know. Whether they saw anything in him which alarmed them, or that their fears were aroused by some inconsiderate expressions of their niece in reference to him, she knew not. She was not always careful of her words before them; sometimes exposing her real feelings, and again using words in jest, for the sake of playing upon their sensitive nerves. But, whatever was the cause, suddenly and without any previous notice, they all disapproved of her intimacy with Mr. Manners;

she was in a peremptory manner forbidden to accept any attentions from him; nor could he be allowed to wait upon her in any of her excursions; and she was also told that it would not be agreeable to them, nor to her grandfather, that she should do anything to encourage his visits at their house. To Mr. Manners, an apology was made for her non-appearance, when he called the next day; not very polite, as he thought, but certainly quite plain. He knew now that his company there was no longer desirable.

Unaccustomed to have her will so suddenly thwarted, and feeling that she was treated too much as though she was yet a little child, a storm was raised in the breast of Gertrude that could not very easily be allayed. It did not break out into any violence, nor could her aunts tell that she resented their treatment, but it worked within slowly, gathering its forces for overwhelming effects when at its maturity.

At first she began by reasoning with herself on the manner in which she had been dealt with. "Not the least explanation had been given her. And was she always thus to bow to their will, let her own wishes be what they might? Already had they attempted to sever her from all society, except that of those as precise and uninteresting to her as themselves. Even the bounds within which she might ride had been prescribed; and now, when a little pleasant scene in her monotonous life had opened to her, that, too, for no cause that she could define but their own whim, was to be closed."

And when she learned that the young man—she learned the fact through her favorite maid—had been treated so rudely that he would not be likely to trouble them with his presence again—he, so kind, so polite, so delicate in all his attentions, and to whom she was, no doubt, indebted for her life! It was the drop too much for her determined spirit.

Gertrude was yet too young to think of consequences, or to take counsel of prudence. The future of life was a field her mind seldom wandered into. She had ardent feelings, and they had been severely wounded. She had



never thought much about love; nor had the question occurred to her, whether she was not attached to this youth?—not until she found a sudden check to intercourse with him. Forbidden fruit is too apt to have a tempting look.

With some reason on her side, and with feelings highly wrought up, she now resolved that, although she would not seek his society, no earthly power should prevent their intercourse, should circumstances again throw them together.

Mr. Manners had also some will of his own in reference to this matter. He had discernment enough to understand the reason why his visits were no longer acceptable. He had, however, become most deeply interested in the beautiful girl into whose society he had been thrown by such peculiar circumstances; and he believed he was not altogether unthought of by her. He had learned, also, enough of the family to be satisfied that insurmountable obstacles would, no doubt, be presented to the accomplishment of his wishes, should he make an open and manly declaration of his feelings to her natural guardians. He at once decided to accomplish his end by secret measures.

All the means used need not now be related. Methods for communication were devised and executed; secret interviews were held; and finally, their wrong measures were consummated by a clandestine marriage.

Gertrude did not leave the roof of her loving old grandfather without some sad misgivings of conscience, and, it may be, some forebodings of evil. But she was consoled by the confident assurance of her lover that there would be only a few weeks' separation; that the old gentleman was too fond of her to retain any hostile feelings when he found that the deed was past recall, and that she was actually married; that all the blame would soon be laid upon her aunts, who had so tyrannized over her. And no doubt the young man believed the result would be as he said, or we cannot think that he would have persuaded a helpless girl, and one educated as Gertrude had been, to leave a home and friends where every luxury her heart craved had been so cheerfully provided;

for he himself had nothing—or comparatively nothing. He no doubt felt very sure that family pride, if nothing else, would compel an early settlement of the rupture, and that he and his lovely wife would soon be installed not only in the affections of the family, but also share in the comforts of a splendid home. Such things, he knew, were of common occurrence.

Immediately after their marriage, therefore, a letter was written by them jointly; or rather, Mr. Manners wrote a letter most respectful in its tenor, detailing some of the reasons for the step he had taken, and placing his own conduct in as plausible a light as it would possibly bear. Within this was one from Gertrude to her grandfather, couched in the most tender terms, not a word of which but expressed the true feelings of her heart.

The purport of both letters was to ask permission for one or both to see him, in order to explain some things which could not so well be explained by letter, and personally to ask his forgiveness for taking a step without his consent, which to them seemed unavoidable.

But Mr. Manners little knew the man he had to deal with. Their letters were answered. Gertrude was not upbraided with ingratitude, nor were any harsh expressions used toward her. To Mr. Manners fewer words were said; these few were in a tone not harsh, but of so decided a character as at once and forever to preclude the hope that he could be recognized hereafter even as a gentleman.

As Gertrude had been receiving from her grandfather, now for two years past an annuity of three hundred dollars for her private expenses, he inclosed to her in his letter a check on his bankers in New York for five thousand dollars, at the same time most solemnly assuring her that it would be the last farthing which she would ever receive from him under any circumstances. The last sentence was doubly underscored. And as he should now do his best to drive from his memory the fact that she had ever been, he would never read again a line that should be written by her to him, or which should be written for her. The chapter in their lives so far as their

connection was concerned, was now closed at once and forever.

It was a hard deed for a grandfather, and manifested too clearly that Robert Kirkland, although possessed of warm feelings, yet had in his composition a species of pride that could over-ride all the affections of the heart and trample them to the dust. Gertrude had erred—she had acted an undutiful, ungrateful part; she had violated the feelings of one who loved her tenderly, who had been a father to her, and even more loving and tender than parents often are. But she was yet a mere child, too young to weigh justly the consequences of the step she had taken, and under an influence which all who know the female heart know to be irresistible. But Robert Kirkland was not the man to be moved by any such reasoning.

Gertrude shed many tears—bitter tears of remorse. But they for a time only relieved the agony of her heart. Those tears she shed alone, too; they were the outpourings of her secret sorrow which her husband must not witness, lest he should think her heart was not all his.

Once after this—once in the course of sixteen years that she lived after her marriage, in an hour of severe trial, when she was drinking the dregs of the bitter cup—the bitterest cup that life can put to our lips—from the window of a poor dwelling which she inhabited she saw a carriage stop—an old-fashioned carriage. She recognized it; her whole frame was at once excited; it was their old family carriage, and an aged man was seated therein. Could it be? Yes. “Oh, I must see him! I must see him, if I die in the attempt!” It was her grandfather! She was alone just then, and scarcely able to retain her seat upon the chair, so feeble had she become through want and sickness. But as his old, kind face—sometimes stern to others, but ever kind to her—looked from the window of the carriage up toward the building where she then was, she sprung to her room door and attempted to descend the stairs. Her strength failed her; she clung to the banisters and seated herself upon the upper step—she could go no further. The obstruction which had caused the carriage to halt

was removed, and it passed on. She never saw him again.

But we must not anticipate too much.

Mr. Manners was somewhat displeased as well as disappointed when he read the letter directed to himself; but he put on an appearance of lightheartedness.

“It is always so,” he said; “the old gentleman, no doubt, feels a little hurt. He will get over it in a few months.”

Gertrude, however, did not thus think, although she made no reply. She had a juster knowledge of her grandfather. However, she assumed a cheerful demeanor, and as they had taken rooms in a fashionable boarding-house, and everything about them was agreeable, for a while she seemed almost to forget that there was a thorn in her pillow that might yet cause her exquisite pain.

Mr. Manners had inherited from his father about ten thousand dollars. His father had been a master builder, and was a man of ability and energy, and would, no doubt, had his life been prolonged, have accumulated a large property. But he was cut off in his prime, leaving this only son, whom he had taken much pains to educate, to inherit what little he had accumulated.

Horatio Manners was a graduate of Columbia College, and had just completed his course when his parents died. He was therefore sole master of his own actions, and with means enough, if he had possessed the needful energy, to have pushed his way to independence. But this he lacked.

The sum which Gertrude received from her grandfather, together with what Mr. Manners possessed in his own right, tempted him to feel quite at ease for the present; and as neither he nor Gertrude had been in the habit of inquiring into the cost of any luxury they craved, so they continued—every wish was gratified—money glided freely from their purses, although fully aware that it was drawn from their principal.

Gertrude trusted to her husband's judgment, and he trusted to the baseless hope that time would do its work in the heart of her grandfather, and that a reconciliation would take place.

Some little business he was doing, or said he was; but Gertrude did not trouble herself enough about such matters to inquire into the particulars. She did not know that they were travelling a down-hill road.

For a year they remained at board; and then, for special reasons, rooms in a respectable part of the city were taken, and furniture purchased to supply their need. The rooms and furniture were not what Gertrude would have wished. They were very plain, but her husband said:

"They were only for the present use; the next year he would take a whole house, and have it furnished to suit her taste."

A little daughter, the image of herself, was given to her, and a new spring in her heart was opened. She thought less than she had of the smallness of their rooms or the plainness of their furniture.

Years rolled on, and as each year passed, Gertrude realized more and more that life was a troubled stream. To her it was, and she wondered whether others had the same experience. Her husband was not unkind, but she knew that he was not happy. She knew that he found it more and more difficult to supply her demands, and therefore she made as few as possible. What business he followed she did not know; she had on one or two occasions asked the question, but his first answer had been evasive, and the next time he had answered rather impatiently, so she let the matter drop. But she could not help wishing that, whatever the business was, it might not keep him from his home so late at night.

She noticed, also, often a strange excitement in his manner when he came in, and that the morning light revealed a pale and haggard look. He was silent, moody—at times morose—and often her heart was chilled.

All this came on so gradually, that it was only as she at times contrasted what he once was with his present aspect and demeanor, that she became fully aware of the great change which had taken place.

A crisis at length came. Officers of the law called upon him in his own room, and the fact became known to her that the husband of her youth—the man for whom

she had left kind friends and a splendid home—was an assistant in a low gambling-house. That it had been broken up, that he must go to the police office as a witness, and he departed with them.

The gulf of wretchedness into which the unhappy Gertrude had fallen, now frowned horribly around her; and as she clasped her little girl of twelve years to her arms, she felt that but for her the grave would be a welcome retreat!—yea, a sweet resting-place for her agonized heart.

## CHAPTER VII.

MR. BLAGG was seated on his usual perch, very busy in posting up the journal for the month, when Mr. Granite, who had just come in, and was looking over the morning paper, interrupted his proceedings by asking:

"Have you called yet to see our young merchant, Mr. Blagg?"

"I have, sir; I was there last evening."

"How do things look?"

Mr. Blagg put his pen behind his ear, and turned quite round upon his stool.

"Things look well—remarkably well."

"Got everything snug, has he?"

"Very, sir; everything is in order. And that is not all, he is going to make a first-rate merchant, sir."

"Ay, indeed! Well I am truly glad to hear it. Seems to understand himself?"

"He does, sir, I can assure you. He has everything in perfect order, everything in its place; takes great care about the wastage. You know, sir, in that kind of business a deal of money slips away by that means if one is not exceedingly careful. A little here and a little there, it mounts up in the course of the year to quite a loss."

"Very true, Mr. Blagg; it about ruins some fellows."

"It does, indeed, sir; those little leaks are bad things. He is going to be a fine accountant, too, sir. He showed me his books, and neater work I don't care to see. Every article he sells is put down, and I don't believe a pound of cheese goes into the family that is not charged. He does it, he says, that he may know exactly what it costs them to live."

"An excellent plan, Mr. Blagg."

"And he has a very pleasant way with him toward all who came in, be they rich or poor, black or white; prompt, too, in his movements; no useless words; civil,

though—very—he keeps no chair either for loungers. I think he is going to be the thing, sir."

"Does he sell much?"

"Why, sir, he must sell considerable; his account with us is double what it was in his father's day. He has paid us already quite an amount in cash, and to-morrow is settling day. He is ready for us; so he told me. It is a great hit, that plan of his, and a very good thing that you gave him the lift you did. It is the happiest little family I have seen for many a day."

"You saw his mother, then?"

"That I did, sir. He would make me go in, that is after he had shown me a little about the store. A fine lady that—few such, I'm thinking. Quite handsome, too, for her years. But, sir, I never felt more put upon my good behavior than in her presence, plain as was everything about the room. Order, sir, order, Mr. Granite, is the great thing, depend upon it, whether it be a house or a counting-room."

"I suppose she was very lady-like; in fact any one might know from the manners of Herbert what kind of a mother he has."

"Just so, sir. And what struck me very forcibly, Mr. Granite, was this: that folks miss it very much by thinking if they only have money enough to rig up their rooms with fine furniture, it is all that is necessary to make people who visit them set them down as genteel folks. It is a great mistake, sir. That lady—that Mrs. Jones—will make you feel more on your guard to say the right thing and do the right thing when in her presence, even if the room had no carpet on it, and the chairs were of plain white wood, than many ladies that I know of who walk over Turkey carpets or loll on velvet sofas. A deal of expense might be saved if folks only knew what really makes one genteel—for that they are all striving for."

"Well you give me such a good account of matters, Mr. Blagg, I must call there myself one of these days."

"It will do your heart good, sir. But there comes our boy now."

And Mr. Blagg turned round to his desk, took his pen from its resting-place, and resumed his work.

As Herbert entered, Mr. Granite rose to receive him.

"Ah! good morning, sir—good morning, Mr. Jones. I suppose I ought to give you that title now, as Mr. Blagg has just been giving me such a fine account of things up your way. He thinks your management would not discredit an old merchant. But you are not well this morning?"

Herbert was very pale; he did not reply to the salutation of Mr. Granite. He seemed out of breath from the haste he had made, and Mr. Granite perceived, on taking his hand, that it was quite cold.

"You are not well, my son, this morning; sit down."

But Herbert did not take the chair which was offered to him. At length he said:

"I am well, sir; but—but I am in great trouble."

"Come, sit down—quiet yourself a little—tell me all about it—don't be alarmed—sit down, my good fellow—you are among friends, you know. Perhaps it may not be so bad as you imagine—calm yourself."

"I cannot sit, sir."

He was about to say something, but the kind manner in which he was addressed, deeply affected his feelings under his present circumstances. He took one or two turns about the office, and was evidently struggling hard to keep down his excited feelings. In the mean time Mr. Blagg had left his seat, too; and, placing his hand upon Herbert's shoulder, said:

"Tell us the whole of it; what has happened?"

"I am ruined, sir! My money is gone—taken from my desk!"

"How much?" said Mr. Granite, in a tone of voice remarkably dispassionate. He did not wish to add to the young man's excitement by any appearance of alarm, or as though he thought it a matter of great consequence.

"All I have got, sir—three hundred dollars! You know, Mr. Blagg, I told you last evening that I should be down the fifteenth, which will be to-morrow, to settle my account here."

"You did so."

"I keep my money in our back room, in a small desk I have there. The last thing I did before going to bed was to open the desk and deposit there twenty dollars I had received that day. I then locked my desk, and put the key in my pocket. This morning I found it was necessary for me to go down town, and concluded I might as well take the money with me and settle with you to-day; it would save an extra walk. So, after the morning business was over, I went to get my money, but every dollar of it was gone!"

"Do you think you have made a thorough search?"

"We have searched everywhere, sir, but to no purpose."

"Well, come sit down now, and since we know the worst of it, let us go over the thing calmly. You are very sure that you saw your money in the desk when you placed the twenty dollar bill there?"

"As sure, sir, as I can possibly be of anything."

"And the key, where did you keep that?"

"In my pocket, sir."

"Was it in your pocket this morning?"

"It was in my pocket, but not in the pocket where I always keep it. I felt sure at the time that I placed it where I always do, but I must have put it in the other. I certainly never did such a thing before."

"The lock was all right?"

"Yes, sir; it opened and shut as usual."

"Windows and doors all safe?"

"All shut this morning, sir. Although I noticed that the hook which fastens the shutters in our back room was not pressed down, it lay on the top of the catch; but if any one had shut the window from the outside, it could scarcely by any possibility have been so placed."

"What kind of a servant have you?"

"A little girl; a most faithful, honest child."

For a few moments nothing further was said. Herbert had told all he knew about the matter, and both gentlemen seemed to be deeply pondering over the case. At length Mr. Blagg beckoned Mr. Granite from the

office—he wished to have a word with him in private. And while they are conferring together, we may as well go over with some of the scenes of the last evening.

It had been quite a prosperous day, and Herbert and his mother had been highly gratified by a visit from Mr. Blagg. Mr. Blagg stood very high in their estimation. After he left, Henry called in. He was unusually pleasant; he seemed to have quite forgotten all he had once said and felt about the store—indeed of late his views in regard to it had materially changed. Things appeared so different from what they once did, and Herbert gave such a good account of what he was doing, that Henry was not only reconciled, but frankly acknowledged that he had greatly underrated Herbert's abilities.

This evening particularly he was profuse in his praises of the neatness which pervaded the whole concern, and the air of comfort there was about the house. He entered with spirit, too, into all Herbert's plans, and as brothers are apt to do where there is no reserve, they talked freely together about all matters in which they had a mutual interest. They sat thus in pleasant converse until it was quite late, their mother with the children having retired and left them to enjoy a *tête-à-tête* by themselves.

As time had run on to past ten, Henry remarked that he had a mind to stay all night, as it was later than he had supposed. And Herbert, falling in with the suggestion, urged him by all means to do so.

Herbert soon prepared to retire by taking a look round the store, as was his custom; and then, as he told Mr. Granite, opening his desk, made a deposit there of twenty dollars, locked it, and placed the key in his pocket.

"You must wake me early, Herbert," said Henry, "for I must get down town to breakfast."

And Herbert promised so to do, that is, as early as he should awake himself.

But when Herbert awoke next morning, Henry was already up and about to depart, remarking that he didn't feel well, and hadn't slept much. "Didn't you hear me go down in the night?"

"Go down-stairs! no, I have heard nothing since I laid my head on the pillow, until I heard you just now move the chair. I generally sleep very sound."

"Well, I tried to make as little noise as possible. But I went down to the cupboard to get a drink of water, I was so confounded thirsty."

"I am never thirsty at night."

"Well, I am, and I always take some water up with me, but last night I forgot it."

"You *do* look pale, Henry; wait till after breakfast, and let mother give you something to take. I am going down town, and we can go together."

"Can't wait a minute—good morning."

And with a quick step he hurried from the house.

Herbert was unusually cheerful at breakfast that morning, and remarked upon the pleasant time he had with Henry the last evening—and how glad he was to have him feel so different from what he had done—he felt now really as if he had a brother—but expressed fears that he was not well, for he looked so very pale."

Mrs. Jones did not make much reply to what Herbert said about his brother. She was, no doubt, glad to observe any signs of a return to the right way in regard to his relative duties, but her heart was by no means at rest concerning him; her maternal eye could discern cause for anxiety which another might not notice. She felt sure that Henry's manner for some time past was not natural, for some reason he was not himself; and when Herbert mentioned the fact of his looking so pale, when he got up, it only confirmed her fears.

But it could do no good to trouble Herbert with her anxieties about his brother; it only caused her to regret, as she had many times before, that Henry had been separated from her care when too young to be his own guardian against evil, and especially that he had been placed under influences so unfavorable to the cultivation of good habits.

Mr. Tilsit was a money-making man, but loose in his manners and principles, and careless of his example before those under his protection. He had risen from a very low estate—first keeping a dram-shop, then a drink-



ing saloon, the same in substance although a little higher in degree, and at length united himself with one who had been a clerk in a wholesale grocery, and opened quite a large establishment of the latter class. Mr. Tilsit had made a handsome capital by dram-selling. He had by degrees changed his style of dress and his style of living. He lived in a respectable street, in a three-story house, furnished gaudily. It suited well the taste of his wife, who was a woman of his own rank in society. They had married when quite young. She was pretty, but without education or refinement. To make a display was the height of Mrs. Tilsit's ambition; but neither she nor her husband knew how to do that otherwise than by some showy article of dress or furniture. They had children who were growing up in the likeness of their parents. Mr. and Mrs. Tilsit gave large parties, and as they were esteemed rich, people of a much higher grade did not hesitate to attend them, although equally ready to criticise the peculiarities of the entertainments and of those who gave them.

Mr. Tilsit was well received on Change, where he was distinguished by a swaggering manner, a flashy vest, a shiny hat, rather rough boots, and a very heavy watch chain and seal.

Mr. Tilsit was not very careful in the use of language, at home or elsewhere, and decent people did not hesitate to say that he was a foul-mouthed man.

But his check was never examined at the bank, nor his notes thrown out; and he was a large purchaser from commission merchants, and of course, under all these circumstances, Mr. Tilsit "was a good fellow," and a situation with the firm of Tilsit & Co. a very desirable situation for a young man. So Mr. Jones had been told, for he knew not the gentleman personally; and, when he succeeded in placing Henry under his care, believed that he had done well for his son.

Henry was taken by Mr. Tilsit into his own family. He was a bright-eyed, handsome boy, and, having been hitherto taught to behave with propriety, and being quick to learn, soon became quite a pet both in the store and the house.

But the constant intercourse with vulgarity, whether robed in splendid habiliments or draped with rags, is not safe for a child of fourteen. This the parents of Henry discovered when it was too late to repair the mischief or change his views. The fine feelings which had been nurtured at home were sadly blunted, and that keen sense of right and wrong, which had a prominent place in his parental teachings, seemed to have been entirely lost.

Mrs. Jones was fully aware of the loss her son had suffered, and would gladly have torn him from a situation where she feared he would make a wreck of all moral principle, but how could she do it, without means of her own, without influence with those who could give him employment, and with his own determined will against any such measure.

She could only mourn over the sad mistake which had been made, and earnestly hope that as he grew older he would, as many do, recall the instructions of his earlier days, and turn into the better way.

But we have detained the reader a little longer than Mr. Granite and Mr. Blagg left Herbert by himself.

"Herbert," said Mr. Granite, "Mr. Blagg and I have been talking over this matter a little, and we have come to the conclusion that the shortest way will be at once to place this business in the hands of the police; and, if you have no objections, I will go and explain the circumstances of the case to one of them with whom I am well acquainted. He is a shrewd man, and if any one can ferret out the thief, he can. For that your money was stolen, there can be no doubt."

"I am perfectly willing, sir, and feel very thankful to you for your readiness to assist me."

"Well, then, he and I will call at your house in a short time. It will be necessary for him to see the premises and make inquiries to satisfy himself. Do you go home; say nothing to any one of what has taken place. Perhaps the thing will be all righted yet. Keep up your courage, and order whatever you want this morning just as if nothing had happened."

The encouraging words of the kind-hearted man acted

like a charm on Herbert's mind. Until he reached their store that morning he had looked upon his situation as desperate—he feared an end had suddenly come to all his bright hopes.

Mrs. Jones did not seem so much relieved when Herbert informed her of the interest Mr. Granite had taken in the matter, and of his determination to find the thief. She turned deadly pale and was much agitated, although she strove hard to hide her feelings from her son. Alas for her mother's heart! She had fears which Herbert knew not of.

Mr. Granite and the officer called much sooner than Herbert had reason to expect; and the latter had a long interview with Mrs. Jones after Herbert had given him all the particulars which it was in his power to give. As the officer was leaving the room, Herbert distinctly heard him say:

"Depend upon it, madam, your feelings shall be consulted as far as it is possible to do so."

"Mr. Granite," said the officer, "just after leaving the store, I want you to make a call with me this evening. I feel very confident about this case, but would prefer to have you see for yourself, that you may better judge what grounds I have for my suspicions. Will you meet me this evening at the corner of Reade street and Broadway?"

"I will, certainly, although I cannot surmise what you want of me."

"I want to show you a little sight—that's all."

"I will be there; but at what hour?"

"At half-past eight; be there as near that time as you can."

Punctually at the time appointed the two gentlemen were at the spot, and, after a few moments' conversation, they turned down Reade street toward the North River, the officer walking a few paces in advance. Soon he turned into an alley, the gate of which stood ajar, and Mr. Granite followed. It proved to be a covered passage, some distance in length, and their steps were guided by a very small lamp hung against a side of the wall at its further end. It did not give sufficient light

to distinguish objects, but seemed to be merely a beacon to tell which way to steer.

The officer paused as he reached the lamp until Mr. Granite came up; for that gentleman, not being accustomed to the ground, as the former was, had to walk cautiously.

"I could have taken you into the house by the street-door, but we should be more likely to meet some of the visitors here, and our object will be better accomplished by having a look at them without their knowing it."

Close by the light, a door was visible in the side wall, which the officer entered without knocking. Again he spoke:

"I have a free entrance here at all times. The landlord and I understand each other perfectly. So long as he manages matters in a certain way, he is safer for my knowledge of his affairs; and it is a convenience for me at times to have a peep at his customers. We run many a fox to earth here."

Thus saying, he began ascending a short flight of steps which led to a small gallery, into which several doors opened. At one of these the officer tapped.

A man opened the door carefully, just so far as to admit his own person, and then stood for a moment looking at the officer, with marks of alarm on his countenance.

"It's me, Jemmy, don't be frightened!"

"Well, I was a little startled, for coming out of the light, so, a body don't see very straight. What's the word to-night?"

"Much company here?"

"You mean in the long room?"

"Yes, up-stairs here."

"Well, so-so—not crowded."

"You have no objection to my taking a peep, to-night, with this friend of mine, through your sky-light?"

"You must do as you please, you know. It is no business of mine; or, at least, it ain't in my power to keep you from doing as you please. You are boss always, when you get inside these premises."

"I understand, Jemmy, I understand. It is not for you to be playing Jack Ketch with any of your custom-



ers. All right, my boy. I'll do the catching, and they never the wiser what part you had in it."

"That's it." The man spoke in a very hoarse voice, like one with a bad cold, just waked from sleep.

"I don't want to do any catching to-night, however. All I want is just to take an observation—you understand?"

"Both of you?"

"Yes, both of us, Jemmy. I only want to convince this gentleman that there are some things in the great city which he has not seen—long as he has lived here!"

"Come in, then; make as little noise as possible—our floors squeak like the mischief."

"We'll tread softly, never fear, Jemmy. I am pretty well used to them; they won't squeak with me, I guess."

With as much care as though he was treading among eggs, the owner of the premises led them into an apartment that seemed to have been once a portion of a large garret, but a partition had been run along some little distance from the eaves, so as to form a square, or rather oblong room, in the centre.

The gentlemen were obliged to stoop a little, for they feared, lest, walking too near the partition, they might rub against it, and possibly disturb the inmates.

"Step here, Granite."

Mr. Granite stepped up, and perceived through the rents in an old baize curtain that hung in front of a glass window or door, he knew not which, that the officer was taking a view of matters and things inside.

"Just step here, and see if you do not recognize a certain individual?"

Mr. Granite was much longer taking an observation. His eye seemed riveted upon the scene which burst upon his view; and when he withdrew, his whole frame trembled with excitement.

"Are you satisfied?" said the officer.

"I have seen enough, sir!"

"So have I."

They immediately retired, and were soon again in the street.

"You are convinced, now, Mr. Granite, that I am correct?"

"I think it very probable you may be."

"Will you be at your office in the morning?"

"I expect to be there."

"At what hour shall I call upon you?"

"Any hour after nine o'clock."

"Half-after, then. At half-past nine, I will be there."

Mr. Granite walked on his way toward home, with an aching heart. He had, indeed, become satisfied that the suspicions of the officer were well grounded; but he had also witnessed a sight that sent a pang to his heart more acute than had ever been caused by the severest trial he had yet endured.

The establishment in question was one of those places of resort in the city, where persons of all ages and ranks could find associates in gambling. There were several apartments in the building, all devoted to the same purpose, but fitted up in different styles, and calculated for the accommodation of different classes.

One was entirely a private concern—a certain number of gentlemen alone had access to it. It was handsomely fitted up, well furnished with the choicest wines and segars, and always a table spread for a dainty supper. These were generally heads of families, men of respectable standing in society, and who did not care to practise the vice to which they were addicted before the faces of their children, or to let the wives they had promised to comfort and cherish know how debased they were. It was a happy device—happy for wife and children! A father who must skulk in secret places to enjoy the tastes he dare not exhibit before his family, is better out of their way than in it. Here large sums were won and lost, and many a ruined family charged to the decline in stocks and the speculations in Wall street the losses which knowing ones could have told them were all made in this room.

Another apartment—and that under ground—was not so secluded. It was designed for adventurers of the lower sort, where liquor was dealt out plentifully, and for which nearly all the winnings were expended.

The one we have had more particularly in view was designed to be concealed from all observation. It was the resort of those who were just beginning the career of vice—young men who had parents or guardians—not so watchful, indeed, as they ought to have been, but who would have been horror-stricken to have had a view of them in that den of evil.

Some were clerks whose salaries were never large enough to meet their wants, although larger than many families expended, and lived comfortably, too—who were always “hard-up” when sisters or younger brothers needed aid.

Some were here whose locks were already beginning to show the work of time—men who should have been guides to a purer path. Shame to their manhood! Prostituting the experience of age to the cause of evil, they have no pity for the fledglings of their race! youth has no hold upon their sympathy! Have they found the path so pleasant, which they travel, that they are willing to encourage youth and inexperience to go the same road? Do not their own desolate homes, their broken-hearted wives and abandoned orphans, ever stalk in dark vision before their polluted minds? Cursed are ye from the ground on which you tread! Quickly to the grave with you—happier will all connected with you be when your haggard frame shall lie hidden beneath the clods of the valley!

## CHAPTER VIII.

MR. GRANITE was looking at his watch, to see whether the hour of appointment was near at hand, when the gentleman who had accompanied him the past evening made his appearance.

“Good morning, sir—good morning Mr. Peckham.” We have not given the officer’s name before.

“Am I at the hour?”

Mr. Granite held out his watch.

“Look for yourself.”

“Almost to a minute—we have to count minutes; a minute sometimes makes the difference between life and death. Well, sir, what is your mind, this morning? what do you, upon reflection, think we had best do? I know how you feel about the case; you do not, for the sake of others, wish an exposure. I know, too, it is a serious matter to bring a man out before the world—a young man, too—and brand him with a felon’s mark, and tell him to go to the dogs, as he must do in that case—no help for him!”

“If it was he, alone, that was to suffer, Mr. Peckham—that would make some difference, too. But it is” —

“I know, I know—my heart is not all petrified, Mr. Granite, although I am a police officer. Many a tear have I dropped, when I have had a young fellow under my thumbscrews. It is a pretty hard world to get along in, Mr. Granite, if a man has any feelings.”

“If there is no way, Mr. Peckham, to manage this matter, but by a public exposure, the young fellow ruined, and his friends mortified and branded, and made wretched, I say let it drop; I had rather make up the loss in some way out of my own pocket.”

“That is one view of the case. It comes hard, I know it does, confounded hard on friends who are innocent. But, then, there is another side to look at: suppose we should let this matter drop where it is—what next? Is

it not better to check a fire before it gets burning too bad? A bucket of water at first might accomplish what ten engines could not do, an hour after."

"I know it, Mr. Peckham, you are right—you are right there."

"It may be, after all, that my suspicions are wrong. *I hope they are*—most truly do I. But you do not know all that I do. There is a sad state of things in the city, among young men. And why parents and guardians, and merchants who have clerks, don't see the thing, nor think about it more than they do, is a mystery to me. Now, Mr. Granite, I am morally certain that there are—I was going to say hundreds—but there is a good round number of young men in this city who spend, over and above their salaries, or the pocket-money which their parents give them, thousands of dollars. It must come out of somebody's pocket!" And Mr. Peckham looked with such earnestness at Mr. Granite, as he said this, that the latter gentleman arose from his seat, and, in much agitation, walked once or twice across the office; and then coming up to the officer—

"You must manage this matter as you see fit. All I have to say is—if possible, keep it quiet; you know my reasons. Something, as you say, ought to be done, and must be done. If the one you suppose is the guilty one, why—why—I declare, Peckham, it is a hard case!"

"I understand, Mr. Granite, leave it with me. I may be wrong, but if I can manage the matter without any noise being made about it, and yet straighten things so as to put a stop to certain courses—what would be your mind?"

Before Mr. Granite could reply, an interruption occurred by the entrance of Herbert.

"I have come across one of my bills, Mr. Granite."

"Ah, indeed! How! where?"

"I will tell you, sir. I usually mark my bills that are from some bank of the city which I do not know. This bill was paid to me the day before yesterday by one of my customers, and see here, sir! I marked R on one corner of it with red ink, that if it should turn out not to be good I might know from whom I received it."

"Well how did you come by it now?"

"A young girl—a young lady rather; who has been several times to the store lately, purchased a few things this morning, and handed me this bill, and I gave her the change."

"What sort of a girl, or young lady as you call her?"

This question was asked by Mr. Peckham.

"Oh, sir! she is very beautiful—very!"

"Pretty, is she?" and the officer looked at Mr. Granite, and smiled. "I hope you asked where she got it."

"Indeed, sir, I thought of it—but—but she seemed so genteel, so lady-like, and bashful, I didn't like to question her; but I think I know where she lives."

"Near your store?"

"Not a great way from it, sir. I believe she lives in Hunker's Alley."

"Hunker's Alley!" and the officer again looked at Mr. Granite. "A young lady you say, and lives in Hunker's Alley! A great place for ladies, that, I should think!"

"I believe she is a lady for all that, sir. I expect some great calamity has befallen her family (this was one of Herbert's dreams); she certainly has never been used to such society as that."

"Well, well, we have got a clew now to the thing, that is certain. How old was this person?"

"I should think about fourteen or fifteen."

"Pity you hadn't spunk enough to question her; she would no doubt have told the truth about it, without she is more cute than you think for. But we will find out something about it in short order. You will go with me there?"

"Oh, certainly, sir."

"Come on then, let us lose no time."

And without ceremony the officer took his hat, and motioned to Herbert that he should follow him.

When they left the store, Mr. Granite, after a few words with Mr. Blagg, also went out on his way toward his own home.

Mr. Granite had been prosperous in business; he had

become, if not wealthy, at least very independent. But he was not for that reason perfectly happy. He had married young, and enjoyed much happiness for some years; but losing his wife, he had placed at the head of his family a maiden aunt of his own. In years she was not much his senior. She was a very efficient lady in the matter of housekeeping, and everything in that line was managed with much care; the most perfect neatness was observed, and no waste of any kind allowed. She was notable for order, too, and in that respect carried matters a little further than Mr. Granite could have wished. He liked order well enough himself; but when the principle went so far as to make his house seem more like a garrison than a home, he chafed under it. This, however, would not have been of so much consequence, if other interests more dear to him than his own comfort had not been involved.

He had four children; two sons and two daughters. The oldest was a son of eighteen, and the youngest a son of eight years. The daughters' ages, fourteen and eleven.

A maiden aunt could not of course be supposed to know much of the nature of parental feeling, and would be very likely to run to the extreme of strictness or of indulgence. It was to the former Aunt Jerusha leaned, and in an especial manner did she feel it her duty to keep a strict hand with Herman, although toward them all she observed a distance and a hauteur of manner, and from them all she required the most exact conformity to her rules, which were not always very easily complied with. Mr. Granite yielded to her will, and enforced her commands; for the reason, that he did not wish, for the good of the children, that they should think their aunt and he were not perfectly agreed.

With these general hints, the reader can readily imagine how a home could be rendered disagreeable, if not absolutely a hated place.

Herman, the elder son, was a youth of warm feelings, fond of social intercourse, and of a kind and genial nature. He was perhaps a little too ready to yield to the influence of companions, and not always sufficiently careful in the selection of friends.

No doubt his aunt observed this failing, and on that account felt the necessity of drawing the lines more tightly. And he not being much inclined to yield under such circumstances, not only caused frequent contentions between him and his aunt, but was also the cause of much annoyance to his father. So many complaints were continually being made of Herman's breach of rules, of his bringing rowdy young men into the house (rowdy according to Aunt Jerusha's judgment), of his being out late at nights, etc.; and thus was Mr. Granite often warned.

"You see, cousin"—Miss Jerusha always called Mr. Granite cousin—"it is not for my own sake I tell you this. These are motherless children. You are their father; the blame of their ruin will come upon you. I do what I can, but what can a woman do—a woman in my situation? Herman thinks he knows better than I do. But I know one thing, and you will know it yet to your sorrow. 'Beat a child with rods,' the Scripture says, 'and his folly will depart from him.'"

"But my good gracious, Aunt Jerusha! what would you have me do? Would you have me to beat Herman—a young man almost grown up? And what shall I beat him for? He is very respectful and obedient to me, and I hope he is to you. I certainly will not allow"—

"Oh, it's no use of talking, cousin, I see that! Time will show. Mind my words, Herman will break your heart yet."

"Tell me what I shall do then. Must I take him from college, and shut him up at home, and let him see no one without a certificate from me?"

"It is no use talking, I see. Well let it go. Time will show who is right. I am not his father; if I was"—

"Well, if you were? Now come, tell me what would you do—come, aunt, tell me."

"What would I do! You would see very soon what I would do. I would, in the first place, prescribe his hours. At such an hour he should rise in the morning, and sit steadily at his book till breakfast, and then to his college. When that is out, home again directly. At

eight o'clock every evening he must be in his room, and at nine or half-past nine go to bed. I would see to it that no young men were tramping up to his room, laughing and talking, and playing their flutes and fiddles, and whirling him off, no one knows where, but to ruin, no doubt. He should be made to feel that he has got to come under rules, that his main business is to study and attend to the regulations of his family. That's the way I should do. That's the way my father did with his boys."

As Mr. Granite thought he had some little knowledge of human nature, and as he could yet vividly recall the feelings of youth—he was not too old for that—Aunt Jerusha's views did not appear to him at all feasible, so he made no reply.

But still her warnings gave him some uneasiness, and at times when he thought Herman was a little too fond of company, he felt disposed to check him. But having an indulgent disposition, he postponed the duty for some better opportunity, when the fault should be more glaringly developed.

An event had now occurred, which brought to his mind all the warnings he had received from his aunt, and caused him to feel that the time had come when it was necessary for him to act.

Alas, for him and the son he loved most dearly, that no mother's interposition was at hand to moderate the aroused feelings of the father! To have whispered in his ear, "That he must call to mind the days of his own youth; that perhaps a kind word, a gentle admonition, would answer every purpose; that their son was not a reprobate—he had been misled—he had been thoughtless—that if he saw his father's heart was grieved, it would be enough. That Herman's feelings were acute—that angry words might drive him to despair, while love and kindness would, no doubt, win him back to the right path."

But no such gentle influence was at hand—even Aunt Jerusha was not consulted—perhaps he did not wish to let her know that some of her forebodings had been realized.

He had passed a sleepless night, and when he left his house that morning, Herman was not up. On his return home his son was just rising from the breakfast table. he accosted him sternly, and requested him to come into his private room.

The scene which followed we will not record. A father's wrath, and the tortured feelings of a son, conscious of his wrong-doing, and burning with shame, yet with the worst passions of his nature called into exercise, can neither be agreeable, nor of any profit to the reader.

Mr. Granite left the room with the consciousness that he had lost a son. That all his past love and care for that boy had gone for naught, and that one great source of joy in his past prosperity, and all stimulus to future labor now was taken from him.

Herman left his home, fully resolved that, come to him what might, his foot should never pass its threshold again.

## CHAPTER IX.

"Is this the place where the girl went in?"

"No sir, the door beyond."

And Mr. Peckham, with a quick step, advanced to the door which Herbert designated, and gave a loud knock.

A woman rather rough in appearance, both as to her countenance and her dress, opened the door and asked—

"What's your will?"

"Do you occupy all this house?"

"Me occupy! I have this room—there's more in the back room and there's more on 'em yet up the stairs."

"Have you a young girl with you?"

"Girl! yes two on 'em. What's wanting with em? Here Jude and Lizzy, come out here."

And two little girls with tattered garments and unwashed faces made their appearance.

"It was neither of them," Herbert whispered.

"These are all you have, my good woman, are they?"

"It is all the girls I have. There's a boy, but he's not to home. What is the to-do now?"

"Oh nothing—nothing that concerns *you*. Has the family in the back room any girls?"

"Yes—two on 'em—and wild enough they are, too! I hope you'll take 'em; they're big enough to work and smart enough, and lazy enough into the bargain."

But this was said when she had returned to her own room, and while the officer was on his way to the other apartment. Here too they were doomed to disappointment. The girls by no means answered Herbert's description—the officer remarked, as he ascended the stairs—

"The old woman I guess is right about these girls—they are samples, I tell you!"

The upper story, which they had now reached, was much more decent in appearance. It looked cleanly, and

a narrow strip of carpet ran through the small passage from the stairs to the only door that opened into it.

A gentle knock was immediately followed by the opening of the door, and Herbert instinctively took off his hat as he recognized "the beautiful young creature" as he had several times styled her to the officer.

"Will you please walk in," she said, with almost a smile upon her countenance, for she, too, recognized the youth who had waited upon her with so much courtesy at his store."

Conscious that he was in very different company from what he had visited below, Mr. Peckham took off his hat likewise as he entered the room.

"This is the young gentleman, mamma, that keeps the store at the corner of Elm street. And as Herbert was thus introduced he bowed to the lady, who was seated in an easy-chair, and was pleasantly greeted by her. The lady had evidently been once beautiful too, and was even now quite handsome, although emaciated by sickness. She seemed very feeble, and the tone of her voice, although remarkably sweet, manifested great debility. Her complexion was very fair and her cheeks slightly tinged with red, but it was evidently not the hue of health. Her eye was bright, her hair a rich brown neatly arranged, and her apparel plain but tastefully made. She did not seem to be past thirty years of age.

The daughter was also in a plain dress; but one well fitted to her fine form. Her hair, which was of a darker hue than the mother's, hung upon her white neck in natural curls—her feet, remarkably small, were cased in neat slippers, and all her motions easy and graceful; had she been surrounded with the splendors of the most richly furnished room, her deportment would have been in perfect keeping.

A carpet much worn, nearly covering the floor, a few fancy chairs, a small round table with a glass suspended behind it, comprised the furniture; everything looked clean and in order.

For a moment the officer fixed his eye upon the young girl. And as he told Herbert, after they had left the



house, "he couldn't help it, for he had never seen any thing so beautiful before."

Herbert was the first to speak.

"I believe, miss, you gave me this bill this morning when you paid me for the articles you purchased;" and so saying he placed it in her hand.

"Yes this looks like it. It was a one dollar bill, I remember. Is it not good?"

"Oh, yes, perfectly good, but"—

Herbert at once felt how embarrassing it would be to put the question he wished to ask, and therefore looked at Mr. Peckham, who was accustomed to manage such matters.

Mr. Peckham immediately turned to the mother, whose countenance he perceived was highly flushed, and expressive of the utmost anxiety.

"You need give yourself no uneasiness madam, the bill is no doubt a good one. I merely wish to trace it a little."

And then turning to Herbert—

"Mr. Jones, you need be detained no longer—you may be wanted at the store."

Herbert hesitated for a moment, as though reluctant to depart, but thinking that possibly Mr. Peckham had some peculiar reasons for wishing to be alone, he therefore made his obeisance to the mother and daughter, saying to the latter, as she accompanied him to the door of the room, that he should be very happy to wait upon her at his store for anything they might want.

She merely replied, "Thank you sir," and he went on his own way.

The officer then resumed the conversation.

"As I said madam, all I wished to know was from whom you received this bill; I have some curiosity to trace it a little—perhaps you can remember. Have you had it long?"

"I only received it this morning sir; a gentleman who has been owing me a small balance for services which my deceased husband had rendered him—sent it to me. I wrote to him yesterday that I needed it very much, and he has at last paid me. Whether the bill came directly

from him I cannot say, for a stranger to me called and paid the bill and took a receipt in full. The person who owed the money was Mr. James Bills."

"Lives in Reade street? Jemmy Bills?"

"Mr. Bills lives in Reade street."

"Do you know what business he follows madam?" Mr. Peckham asked this question rather for the purpose of getting a little insight to the character and views of the lady herself.

"I do not sir. But I believe he keeps a boarding house, or tavern. There was a bar there, however, for I believe my husband tended the bar. It was not a business we would have chosen. But something, you know, sir, must be done to obtain an honest living."

"I think I can find the place madam, and you need give yourself no uneasiness about the matter. It is all right, I have not the least doubt, so far as you are concerned, and I am only sorry to have felt under the necessity of asking you any questions about the bill. But one thing more. Allow me to ask, madam, what name shall I say to Mr. Bills this money was sent to?"

"Manners, sir—Mrs. Gertrude Manners."

"Nothing further. Good morning, madam."

And the officer bowed very respectfully to the lady, as well as to her daughter. He knew they must be poor, very poor, to be compelled to occupy an apartment in such a rude tenement, it being a mere back building, the passage to which was through a dirty gangway, and the inhabitants of the lowest order. There was, however, an air of good breeding that could not be mistaken. They did not belong to the social class among whom he found them, of this he felt very certain. How this mother and daughter had been reduced to this position Mr. Peckham was at no loss to understand. "The husband and father must have been degraded indeed, to be a bar-keeper for Jemmy Bills."

Poor Gertrude! we have found you at last. An outcast still! Bearing the bitter penalty of the mistake of your childhood. While he who once dandled you on his knee, and called you his "pretty pet," is lying on a bed

of sickness stricken by the palsy. His faculties are broken, and although he eats and drinks and sleeps, and is like to linger this side the grave, no one can say how long, yet for all the happiness he enjoys or all the benefit he is those about him, or to the world at large, might as well be at rest in the grave.

Poor Gertrude! your way is now dark indeed; Death too has set his mark upon you, and poverty has overtaken you in its most terrible form, for you are not fitted to meet the rough duties which it demands, even if blessed with health. But now your frame is wasting day by day, and you can only sit helpless in your chair or reclining on your bed, watching the approach of evils from which your feeble nerves cause you to shrink with horror. Gradually you have withdrawn from those who knew you, until, secluded among the refuse of a large city; you are as dead to all the world. And were you but alone—could you know that the ills which have come upon you would end with your last breath, that would be a mighty alleviation to your agony. But a dearer self will still live! That blooming beauty, who has so long filled your heart, whose gentle hand now ministers to your weakness, whose soft kind words you hear trying to soothe your troubled spirit, she is to linger after you are at rest, to meet alone the struggles of existence in a world where deception and temptation and cold-blooded selfishness may meet her at any unguarded moment.

You have written to him who once was a loving father to you, and while asking for no pity for yourself, have supplicated as a penitent on your knees for her who never wronged him. And you hope, and have long hoped, that he would forgive and take the orphan to his heart. But your hope is vain. And those who have read your urgent plea have no hearts to feel. Long steeped in pride and selfishness, they have thrust your burning words among the rubbish of their drawers, and forget that you have been.

They will doubtless meet their reward, but their judgment will not alleviate your anguish. God be gracious unto you, poor Gertrude.

You have lost, too, him on whose arm you once leaned,

and in whom you trusted with your whole heart that he would be unto you a sure protector. Who vowed before the minister of God to love and cherish you—"to keep you in sickness and health, and be unto you a true and loving husband."

In his poor way, perhaps, he tried to keep this vow. He is in the grave now, and we will not recall him in imagination to taunt him for his want of manly energy, or for any want of care and love for you.

It may be that he had to struggle against weaknesses which others more fortunate know nothing of. It may be that his heart yielded too soon to circumstances which he might have overcome, and thus dragged you down to ruin; and yet there may have been untold agony in that heart. Taunt him not, fellow-mortal, whose happier lot enables you to look far down upon his low condition. Perhaps you owe more than you now imagine to the circumstances which surrounded your start in life. One thing is sure, she who has suffered most and knew him best has never uttered a complaining word—not against him. She believed most truly that he did what he could, and while we mourn with her, we will let him rest in peace.

And now, dear reader, we would not have you think that we are portraying this sad scene from the wild region of fancy only. There is a realm within the city's wilderness of houses and human beings where many a "poor Gertrude" may be found. We have searched these haunts of wretchedness in days past, and, if we would, could harrow up your feelings with a sadder tale than this. But if you still want faith in what we say, just leave your pleasant fireside for one short hour; the walk will not be long. Go where the poor are congregated—where festering filth and sickness taint the air—where vice has lost its shame—where fallen humanity, in its most hideous forms, will send the thrill of horror through your veins, and in some wretched garret, or some out-house sty you will find "poor Gertrude." Her heart as pure as yours, her form as fair, her prospects once brighter than your own. There she lies! shut out from sympathy of kindred spirits, cut off from hope, inclosed in her den of

misery from all the beautiful things of life! Once she could enjoy them as heartily as you; and perhaps could even now! Be quick! for you may rescue her from a beggar's grave, and her darling from a life of shame and sorrow! Be quick!

But we must leave poor Gertrude to her sorrows, and mingle with the multitude in the busy world.

It was about twelve o'clock on the same day that Mr. Peckham visited Mrs. Manners, that a young man entered the store of Messrs. Tilsit & Co., in Front street, and handed a sealed note to Mr. Henry Jones. Young Jones opened the letter, and as he read, his face became deadly pale, and his hand which held the paper trembled like a leaf in the breeze. It was not noticed by any but the youth who brought it.

The contents of the letter were embraced in few words. They were merely a request that he would call at the house of Mr. Peckham, in Leonard street, at three o'clock that afternoon.

"Tell Mr. Peckham I will be there."

Henry has been busy at his books, but his mind now is in no condition for accounts, yet he must keep his work before him, for his employers may be in at any moment. The little note had been thrust hastily into his pocket; he has gotten its purport, and need not read it again. He knew the writer, he knew what office he held, and his conscience is busy! There was no intimation in the note as to the nature of the business for which he was requested to call. But there was a foul spot upon his soul, and fears had taken fast hold upon him. They came rushing on like a strong man armed. Terrible images began to spread about his path. As the panorama of a whole past life flashes with electric speed through the mind of one falling from a giddy height, so did dire evils flash on his pained vision.

For one awful moment he thought of death! Death would end the trouble! And his trembling hand seized the sharp knife that lay on the desk before him! But he had been early taught that after death was judgment!

He threw the weapon beyond his reach, and leaned his throbbing head upon his hands, and groaned aloud! He could not weep. Tears, those tokens of a bruised heart, were fast sealed up. Tears are for the penitent—a contrite heart alone can call them forth.

But now he reasons: "No one saw him do the deed; he will deny it stoutly, and threaten a heavy penalty on him who dares to charge him with it. The worst can only be the worst! Let it come if it must! Until then he would be resolute!"

And now he almost wonders that he should have been so much alarmed! One of his employers enters, and his hand turns over a leaf in the ledger. He works away, but often turns his eye up at the clock. How slowly time moves. He dreads the interview, yet wishes for the hour to come. He wants to know the worst. It cannot be more horrible than this prolonged suspense!

Slow and sure the hour-hand goes round. It is time, at last, that he should be on his way.

How often, during that long walk, did he think of Herbert and the home which he had despised! How gladly would he have been his own brave brother, toiling in obscurity, earning his scant living by dealing out small items to those who had but shillings to expend! Where were now all his own bright prospects? For they had been bright. Confided in by those with whom he lived, and treated by them as an equal, and often plainly told that one day, if he staid, his name would be added to the firm, had not his prospects been bright—at least for wealth or independence? Now, where have they fled?

At length he has reached the door of the house in Leonard street. A single, loud knock—his thoughts rush into confusion—the door is opened. He is ushered into the room, and sits waiting for the master of the house—and for his destiny.

Mr. Peckham was a sharp officer, but a kind-hearted man. He had seen much of life—that kind of life which often demanded within its precincts the officer of justice. He had many times stood between the stern demands of law and some misguided youth, whose principles he be-

lieved were not yet spoiled, and whom he hoped might yet be saved to himself and the world.

He was shrewd in distinguishing between the hardened reprobate, and the man who, under a strong temptation, had, contrary to his better feelings, been guilty of a wrong act.

Mr. Peckham had been thinking hard, as well as Henry Jones. He, too, dreaded this meeting; for although he had a plain duty to perform for the public, whose servant he was, yet he had, in reference to this case, not only feelings of compassion toward the young man, whose whole future life might be affected by his decision, and his standing in society utterly ruined; but other hearts, more pure and virtuous than his, would suffer untold anguish. The course he, Mr. Peckham, should feel it best to take under such circumstances was of vast moment, and he felt it to be so.

Mr. Peckham had naturally somewhat of a stern countenance, and perhaps his peculiar calling may have had a tendency to give a harder cast to his features. But he could assume a very bland expression that at once gained your confidence, and it was with the latter mark upon his countenance that he entered the room and gave his hand to the young man.

"I sent a request for you to call here, Mr. Jones, that I might have a little talk with you in private about the sad affair that happened to your brother."

Henry assumed a look of great astonishment, but Mr. Peckham did not give him time to say anything until he had finished his remark.

"I mean the loss of his money."

"His money!" The words were spoken in a peculiar tone, not by any means a confident one.

"Yes; you doubtless have heard about it."

"He has not said a word to me about it; in fact I have not seen him for some days."

"Not since yesterday morning."

"Yesterday morning! Oh, ay—yes, I saw him a moment merely. He was not up when I left."

"I know he was not. Yes, he has lost three hundred dollars."

Mr. Peckham was now looking at the young man with his keen and searching eye, "and what is very strange about the whole matter is, his desk was locked just as he left it the previous evening. You remember you were present, and must have seen him lock it. You did, did you not?"

There was a little hesitancy in the reply.

"Yes, yes; I think I did. Yes, I certainly did."

"And you saw him put the key in his pocket?"

"I think I did."

"Well in the morning the key was still in his pocket, but not in the pocket where he always places it, and where he feels very sure he placed it the evening before. Herbert, your brother, I find, is very systematic—he is in the habit of doing things by method—a good plan for young or old, especially if in any business."

That keen eye did not relinquish its hold for an instant, and that or something else was causing the perspiration to stand in large drops on the forehead of his listener. Mr. Peckham had noticed *that*, too; but he had not finished what he had to say. "As I was saying, the key was in his pocket, but when he opened the desk the money was gone—every dollar of it! But that is not all. He was in the habit of marking his bills—a very good habit, too. Well, wonderful to relate! one of these bills was this morning handed to him for the purchase of some articles at his store! I have taken the trouble to trace this bill, and find that it came from Jemmy Bills, who also, at my request, showed me more of his bank notes, and among them I discovered several with marks on them in red ink, similar to the mark on the other bill. Do you know Jemmy Bills?"

No answer was returned to this question. The miserable young man had settled back in his chair, his eyes fixed upon the floor, his face pale as though the hand of death had touched him.

Mr. Peckham had no need to probe any deeper to satisfy his own mind. He was perfectly assured that the criminal was before him. But still he continued:

"Jemmy Bills has now gone to the length of the rope, and measures are being taken to have his establish-

ment broken up. It ought to have been stopped before this. It has been the ruin of too many young men already. Do you not think so?"

No answer still. But the head has dropped, and as though conscious of guilt and powerless to resist or deny. As a culprit clearly revealed, he sat with his hands clinched resting on his knee; he seemed to feel that he was already manacled with the felon's iron bond.

"You are not well?" and Mr. Peckham paused, as though he had for the first time noticed his appearance.

"I am not, sir."

The officer stepped to his closet, and mingling some wine with water, handed it to the young man; his trembling hand just raised it to his lips, and then he handed it back.

"Take a little of it."

"No, sir—never again while I live, come what will. I will rather die than taste again what has been"—

"That is one good resolution, at any rate," and drawing his chair close to the youth, he took his hand kindly in his own; there was no need for reserve any longer; the tear-drop had gathered and was about to fall. "Henry—excuse me for addressing you thus familiarly—but I have had my eye on you for some time. I have seen you many a time that you know little of; and perhaps I ought to have warned you of your danger. But now I am going to talk plainly to you. I wish to save, not to ruin you. I have it in my power to blast your name forever. But if I had no feeling for you, I cannot but feel for that good brother of yours, who is laboring like a man to keep things together at home, and who is almost completely discouraged by this loss; and for that mother of yours, who is bearing the reverse of fortune so nobly. I have known nothing of either of them until these few days past, yet from what has been told me, and from what I have myself witnessed, my feelings are deeply interested for them; and I wish to save you for their sake, as well as your own."

Henry could keep back the storm no longer, but gave way to a full flood of tears. His pride was completely

humbled; his haughty spirit bowed before the resistless power of the better feelings.

For some time not a word was spoken. Mr. Peckham knew full well that the point had been reached at which he was aiming; he would let the subdued heart have full time to unburden itself of the agony within.

When the outburst of feeling had somewhat subsided, Mr. Peckham began:

"I want you now to make a clean breast to me; you are in my power to be sure, and, as an officer of the law, it might be my duty to carry this matter to extremities, but it would pain me exceedingly to do so. I wish, as I have said, to save you if I can."

"You cannot save me, Mr. Peckham. I am lost. Let the thing take its course. I am only fit for a prison. Oh, if I had only died before this had happened!"

"True, true, that would on some accounts have been much better—certainly better for those who love you; for you must know that the stain on you will attach to them. They can never, when this comes out, hold up their heads as an honest family again. It will be very likely the means of breaking them up; for Herbert has such keen feelings, he is so very sensitive that he will not dare again to ask for credit. The loss, too, is a great loss for him; his means are very small. He tells me if the money cannot be recovered, that he *must* give up. It will be a terrible addition to the calamity, when he comes to know that his brother has thus injured him, and cast such a dark stain upon all connected."

"I know it, sir. But what to do or where to look I cannot tell. Oh, do take me, Mr. Peckham—shut me up in a cell—let no one see me! There let me die! I never again can look a human being in the face. Oh! do, sir, if you have any pity for me."

"I have pity for you, because you are a young man. You have ability, and I hope, yes, I feel sure that you have some right feelings yet. Have you parted with the money?"

"All of it, sir; every dollar of it, and more, too!"

"No salary due you?"

"Not a dollar, sir. Oh, sir, *that Hell!* It is a Hell!"

I have suffered in it more than my tongue can tell you. It has drained all my earnings. It has hardened my heart. It has driven me to drink. Yes, sir, I should very soon have died a drunkard, if I had not died by my own hands! You cannot save me, sir! No one can save me! I am a poor, miserable, degraded wretch, and" —

"Have you debts that you cannot pay besides this?"

"Yes, sir, some."

"How much? Come, now, tell me the whole—be open—be candid; let me know the worst of your condition. How much do you owe besides this? Think before you speak."

"Probably near two hundred dollars!"

"Honest debts?"

"Some of them. One hundred dollars I lost last night at Bills'. I believe the man cheated me in playing—but I am bound for all that."

"Who is he?"

"Sammis."

"A great rogue. But he will get his deserts to-night. Let that go; you need not count that—I will see to it. One hundred then will clear off all your indebtedness—besides the three hundred?"

The mention of the latter amount again brought on a terrible burst of feeling. Mr. Peckham did not attempt to allay the storm, but sat silently absorbed in thought, as though devising some plan whereby he could accomplish what his heart was set upon. At length Henry spoke:

"Mr. Peckham, I do not wish to extenuate my fault. I am a guilty wretch, I own it to you. But only listen one moment, while I relate the whole matter. Bad as I am, I never designed to wrong my brother. I had been very unlucky in play for two evenings before; some of the money I took from our store—two hundred of it. This money I knew would be wanted yesterday; if it was not replaced, I should be found out and ruined there. Another hundred I owed to Bills, and he threatened if it was not paid he would sue me; and to be sued by him you know, Mr. Peckham, would be such an exposure—

that would be ruin, too. I knew Herbert had the money, for of late he talked freely with me about his business. That evening I designed to ask him for the loan of it, but he mentioned in the course of our conversation that he owed such an amount—I think he said about two hundred and eighty dollars—to Mr. Granite. 'But,' said he, 'I have enough to pay it with, and next day after to-morrow I shall go down and settle with him.' I knew it would not do to ask him to loan it under such circumstances; but I felt very sure, if I had the money, I could, if I had luck last evening, replace it, and perhaps Herbert know nothing about the matter. The more I thought of it in the night, and of the terrible situation I was in, the more desperate my case appeared, until finally I resolved to run the risk. I had done so twice before in taking money from the firm, and won enough to make it all straight. This, sir, is the true story—it is bad enough I know. I never designed that Herbert should lose his money; but the game is up, and I have destroyed myself and brought misery upon him."

"Do you think, if this money could be raised, and the matter all settled, so that no suspicion should attach to you, and your character saved, you could turn over a new leaf and be a new man? Can you do it?"

Henry turned his eye full upon the officer, and his hand convulsively grasped his arm.

"Oh, Mr. Peckham! if such a thing could be! Oh, if it could be done! Oh, sir, with God's help, if this stain could be washed out, I should be willing to undergo any hardship, to toil night and day, only so that I might keep an honest name, and be able to look every man in the face, as Herbert can!"

"That will take time, Henry. A clear conscience, a firm, pure heart are not regained in a day. I believe you really feel now that an honest name is something worth possessing; but *an honest name, without an honest heart*, is in danger of being lost at any time. To enjoy the privilege of feeling that you are, indeed, a true man, there must often be severe struggles and mighty sacrifices. For instance: suppose now, in order that you



may gain this uprightness which you think so desirable, it should be necessary for you to break off from all your companions?"

"Oh, sir, I can do it; I am resolved to do it. Not one—no, sir, not one with whom I have been intimate can I regard as a friend."

"Again: suppose it might be thought necessary for you to give up your present situation and begin anew in strange place, with nothing to rely upon but your own energies—would this seem desirable, if thereby you could have a fair chance to make a pure and upright name?"

"In a moment, sir; this moment, sir, I am ready to do it. Oh, Mr. Peckham, you do not know—or I hope you do not—what it is to have guilt upon your heart and hands; to have no rest, only by drowning thought in—drink; to have no peace; to feel conscious of meanness and duplicity; to be at the mercy of any accident; forever fearful of exposure, of being branded as a villain, and forever—forever cut off from all honest and honorable people! Oh, sir, if you can rescue me from this peril I am in—if in some way, I know not how, you can only place me on my feet, just to have a fair chance to be a man—an honest man—it is all I would ever ask of a human being again. Oh, for one hour's consciousness that I am free from guilt!"

"Do you know that Tilsit gambles?"

"Not certainly—but I have suspected it."

"*I know it.* He gains and loses large sums. There is little doubt, I think, where he will land. You have been under bad influences, Henry, and so long as you remain there you are not safe. There is no fear of God, nor a proper regard for man, in that concern. I know they think highly of you, and I have no doubt, should you remain, you would one day be made a partner. But take my word for it, unless you have stronger resolution than most young men, it will be a very, very dangerous place for you. What do you think, yourself?"

"I have not thought much, sir, about the future, or anything else, in a calm, healthful, judicious manner. All I know is, I have been very unhappy. There has seemed to be nothing pleasant, or safe, or satisfactory in the

world. Everything has appeared out of joint. I have felt displeased with myself, and with every one else. I have neither cared for my employers, nor for my relatives, nor for my companions, only for the sake of some excitement for the moment. Everything in the world has seemed to me to be a great mistake, and often I have wished that I had not been born."

"I have no doubt you speak the truth. It cannot be otherwise. A mind that is not conscious of its own integrity, and is not at peace with itself, can find no enjoyment, no satisfaction from the outer world, but casts its own shadow on all things else, and colors life with its own dark hues. I will tell you now, plainly, what I can do for you, and what I think you had better do for yourself. I think I can promise you the amount of your indebtedness; that is, four hundred dollars. It will not come out of my pocket. I am, comparatively, a poor man. But I have a friend who has abundant means, and who knows that many opportunities come in my way of doing good by the advance of small sums of money. You will not know him, nor will he know you, in this matter. Your brother shall be paid, and neither he nor any one else shall know who took it nor who has returned it. Rest easy about that. I am accustomed to such matters, and have learned how to keep my own secrets, and other people's, too. If it were not so, some men in this city, who are now well off and respected, and worthy of respect, too, might have had a black mark upon their name they never could get rid of. A little kindness and a little money at the right time, saved them—saved them from ruin."

"Oh, sir, how happy you must be!"

"Well, upon the whole, I am happy—I acknowledge it. I see a great deal of evil, and am compelled, at times, to inflict a great deal of suffering. It can't be helped. But when there is hope that a reformation can be effected, and a youth and respectable connections saved from disgrace, it is enough to make one happy just to have a hand in it. I must say to you, however, that this money must be considered by you as a loan, to be refunded when you get in circumstances to do so."

"I will do it, sir, if there be any honor in man; that is, if my life is spared for a few months. Every dollar which I shall receive, beyond a bare living, shall be devoted to it."

"The time will be of no consequence, and it is probable some years may elapse; especially if you leave the city, which I most sincerely advise you at once to do. It will be the only way to break off from troublesome companions."

"Mr. Peckham, I shall leave the city; I am resolved upon that. In fact, sir, I have thought much of doing so before to-day. It is decided now. One thing I wish, sir, if you will agree to it. I wish, if this money for Herbert can be raised, to go with you, and when you place it in his hands, then and there to make a full confession to him and my dear mother, of not only this guilty deed, but of all my past coldness and indifference to them. Can it be done, sir?"

Mr. Peckham looked a moment at Henry; his own heart was almost too full to be able to reply. Indeed, the young man was brought to a right state of feeling. Nothing but a true sense of the wrong he had done, and a firm resolve to begin a new course, could have excited him to such a terrible ordeal.

"Well, Henry, I am glad for your sake, and those connected with you, that you are willing to do this. It will, indeed, be the first best thing you can do. It will be a severe trial; but the end will be peace. When will you be ready to go there?"

"That depends entirely upon yourself, sir."

"This evening, then, at eight o'clock. Call here and we will go there together; or, perhaps you would not wish me to be present. I can trust you, Henry; that the money will be paid, I have no fears."

Henry took the hand of Mr. Peckham.

"I thank you for your confidence. I don't deserve it; although I do not fear but I should have resolution to pay the money to its rightful owner, and to make a full acknowledgment, yet I should prefer to have you present. I wish to let them see that I regard you, next to them, as the dearest friend I have on earth."

Mr. Peckham warmly pressed the hand he held, but only said in reply—

"At eight o'clock."

"I will be here."

That afternoon, the kind-hearted officer was seated with Mrs. Jones and Herbert in their little room back of the store. We need not go over with the particulars of his errand. He had come to anticipate for Henry the recital of the sad story; and as he handed Herbert his money, after having unfolded the mystery and its final development, he merely said:

"Sometimes things can only be set right by such a trial as this. Your tears, madam (turning to Mrs. Jones), I know cannot be so bitter as they might have been had not all happened as it has. You can hope, now, that your lost son—for he was nearly lost—has been found. He will be here to-night to make a full confession, and I doubt not you will be ready to receive him with open arms."

At the appointed hour, Henry called at Mr. Peckham's, who himself was ready to give him admittance; and as he ushered his visitor into the same room where the former interview was held, Herbert, his own brother Herbert, arose and threw his arms around him.

"My dear, dear brother Henry!"

"Oh, Herbert! do you know all? Can you forgive me?"

"Henry, Henry, never speak of it again! You are now my dear brother! Oh, Henry, may we ever be one, after this; please say nothing—we have heard all. But come, go home with me—to your home as well as mine, Henry—and get mother's, dear mother's kiss. Oh, how she wants to see you!"

Mr. Peckham came up, and taking Henry's hand—

"You will excuse me for taking things a little into my own hands. I thought I could tell the story better than you; and as you insisted on my being present, I knew you could not object to this interference. Go to your home, now—hold up your head like a man, and I have no doubt your sleep will be sweeter to-night than it has been for those twelve months past."

"But will you not go with me?"

"No occasion—not now. I shall step in there, in a day or two."

We need not describe the meeting between the mother and her returned prodigal. Her heart had suffered most intensely; for from the first, her fears had been excited. She had not told Herbert of them, but bore the agony alone. And when her lost Henry came in, with Herbert leaning on his arm, and when her arms were clasped around him, and she pressed him fondly to her breast, she felt that her prayers for him and for herself had been answered—not, indeed, in the way she had hoped they might be—but God knew best; and now she praised Him for his wonderful mercy to her and her orphan boy.

In a few days, Henry left his situation and his friends, and, in a vessel bound to the northwest coast, and from there to China, was making a new start for a life-business.

## CHAPTER X.

It was the evening of the day in which Henry had sailed, that Herbert was busy as usual at his desk, when, as he supposed, a stranger entered the store, and walked up to the counter. It was apparently a female, rather coarsely dressed. An old shawl, much worn, covered her person, and a hood, much too large for the wearer, almost entirely concealed her face.

As he stepped down to wait upon her, she laid a twenty-five cent piece upon the counter, saying:

"Will you please give me some tea, and some rice, and some biscuits, and some raisins—just as much as this will pay for."

The voice at once assured him who the customer was.

"Excuse me, Miss Manners—I did not recognize you. Certainly—which article would you like to have the most of?"

"Tea, if you please. Mamma is so very sick," and her voice trembled as she spoke, "the doctor wishes her to have some rice boiled with raisins in it; but she likes tea and crackers best."

"Your mother is worse, then, than when I saw her?"

"Oh, yes, I fear she is; she grows weaker every day."

It was with apparent difficulty she said this, and Herbert forbore to put any more questions, but made all the haste he could in putting up the different articles. He took no notice of the money then lying on the counter. He felt very sure it must be all they had, or he would not have been requested to apportion the articles needed to that amount. He put them all up without regard to price or quantity, and altogether they made quite a bundle. He then seized his hat, and, taking up the parcels, said:

"It is very dark, and you will be troubled to carry all these—allow me to accompany you."

"Oh, no, thank you; I can find the way. But have you not put up more than the money will pay for?"

"Oh, no, this will cover the whole," and he took the quarter in his hand. "But I cannot bear to have you return alone; the night is very dark, and a storm is at hand—please do not object."

"You are very kind, indeed; I should certainly feel safer," and her beautiful eye was fixed upon him with such an expression of confidence that it almost electrified him; "but it is giving you too much trouble."

"It will be a pleasure, rather than a trouble to me."

The way was not only dark, but bright flashes of lightning betokened a coming storm. And Herbert thought, at each coruscation, he felt her arm, which he had drawn within his own, cling with a closer grasp. "How rejoiced he was that he had insisted upon going! she had never—he knew she had not—been accustomed to meet any such scene alone; and they must, indeed, be in an extremity, or she would not have been compelled to venture out, under such circumstances." The distance, indeed, was not great, yet a whole block had to be passed on which were vacant lots, and many of the houses on their way not very respectable. And Herbert shuddered as he thought of her as alone, perhaps fearful and trembling amid the rude buildings and ruder inhabitants. He could but say to himself, "How glad I am that I am by her side!" And as he thought of her delicate and beautiful form and features, and heard the soft tones of her voice, he could not but contrast them with persons and things around her, and wonder, as he had done before, what mysterious providence had thrown her and her mother into the midst of such scenes! His heart was very sad.

He kept her arm through the alley and up the steps, and would have held her by him up the stairs, too, if they had not been too narrow for any such proceeding; so she tripped up before him, and stood ready at the door of her room to take the articles which he had insisted on carrying. As she received them from his hands, something dropped on the floor. It sounded like a piece of money. The room was not very light, and

the girl, throwing off her hood and shawl, caught up a small lamp, whose feeble glimmer could only give distinctness to a very small circle indeed; and she was feeling round for the article which had fallen—Herbert, all the while, saying:

"It is nothing, miss—it is of no kind of consequence."

"Oh, yes, it is; I will find it very soon. It is money, I know, and it must belong to you!"

Although he said it was nothing, or of no consequence, yet he made no attempt to move from the spot; the most natural thing for him to have done, was to have gone on his way; but he seemed riveted there, as under some spell or fascination which he had no power to resist.

It always takes some time to find a piece of money, especially if it happens to fall upon its edge; presently, he heard a voice feebly say:

"Gertrude, come here."

A few words passed, of which Herbert did not hear the meaning; and then Gertrude (for we shall call her by name, after this) stepped up to Herbert:

"Mamma would be glad to see you; will you walk in?"

Mrs. Manners was in bed, and as Herbert came up to her, he was much shocked to see how very, very pale she looked, and how very short was her breathing! A great change had taken place since he first saw her. She must be near to death! and he now understood why the daughter had looked so very sad and pale.

The sick lady raised her hand from the bed toward him, and he took it. It was soft and delicate—but, ah, how cold!

Herbert's heart was easily affected—somewhat too easily for the roughness which man must encounter; it will, no doubt, become more rigid by and by; but now it easily took fire. His face flushed as he felt her pressure, and heard her say, in feeble tones:

"I thank you for your politeness, for your kindness to my dear child."

He could not reply; the whole scene was all too sad for him. He believed, from what had transpired that evening, and from what he had witnessed before, that

they were destitute of friends; and he believed that piece of money was their only means of helping themselves. He thought so at the time he was putting up the articles Gertrude called for, and he could not have taken it! Oh, no! it would have pained his heart to do so. He took it from the counter, indeed, and thought he had secured it in a fold of one of the papers. He meant they should find it again.

But Gertrude has found it now, and hands it to him.

"It is yours—it is the very piece I gave you in the store."

He could not deny that it was, and he dared not avow that he had tried to give it back to them—not there, he could not, near to that feeble mother. It might wound her feelings! it might excite her, to know that strangers guessed at her necessities!

But when Gertrude said this to him, he noticed that she spoke almost in a whisper, as though she could not say to *him* what she did not care to let her mother hear. It gave him confidence; and when she lighted him into the passage, and was removed a few steps from the door, and he put out his hand to bid her good night, and which she did not hesitate to take, he pressed within her little palm some silver pieces.

"Please do take this—oh, do, do!"

He was in earnest, and his bright eye glittering with the tears of tenderness, told her so. She understood his feelings. She appreciated his kind, his delicate act. She held the money—her eye fixed upon him—but she spoke not. He saw the tears roll from those long lashes—he wanted no other thanks. No richer reward than that sweet, sad, confiding, almost painful look. It was enough. And then he asked:

"Can I do anything for you?"

No other reply but a shake of the head.

"Can I not help you in some way?"

"No, no! not now."

"Will you let me know if I *can* do anything?"

"I will—thank you. Oh, thank you! thank you—you are very kind!"

Herbert hastened home, for the storm was about to

descend, and he was anxious, very anxious, to see his mother, and have a talk with her.

As he entered, his mother was seated within her room, but so near to the store, that she could be in readiness to wait upon any who should come in. She had become familiar with the business, so that Herbert could feel comparatively easy when obliged to be absent.

He came in almost out of breath.

"Why, my son, you need not have made such haste."

"Why, mother, I made haste partly to escape the rain, but more particularly to talk with you about that lady."

"What lady, my son?"

"Whom I spoke to you about the other day."

"The one who you said looked so delicate."

"But she is a great deal worse now, dear mother. I fear she is almost dying."

"Have you been there?"

"I have just come from there."

"What has taken you there to-night, Herbert?"

"I went to accompany her daughter. She came here a little while ago to purchase some things; and she is such a delicate little creature, and seems so unfit to be out all alone—so very dark and threatening as it is too—and she had so many little parcels to carry, and you know the way there is so lonely, and so many rough people living about there, I begged her to allow me to wait upon her home; and I am so glad I did, mother!"

"Why so, Herbert?"

"Oh, mother, she is very low—I mean the mother. She looks as pale as death—her hands are so cold, too, and her breathing very short. She cannot live long, I am sure of that; and it is so sad to see such a beautiful lady lying there in such a miserable place. I know she has been accustomed to a very different state of things—I am sure of it. And then there is no one there to take care of her, or do anything for her, but her little daughter, and she does not look fit to do any work. You never saw anything like her, mother, she is so graceful, so very beautiful!"

Mrs. Jones did not seem so much interested in this relation as Herbert expected she would. She knew

more about the world than he did, and was not quite so ready to let her sympathies be excited. She had doubts, too, about the propriety of his being so ready to wait upon any pretty girl that might happen in the store of an evening, even if it was dark or rainy.

She had not seen the person, and of course could not decide as to the propriety of his doing so in this case. But she wished to have him on his guard, and not be so easily run away with by his ardent feelings.

She knew that Herbert had a soft spot in his heart, although his head was sound, and on that account was not very well fitted to decide as to the propriety or impropriety of attention to females under certain circumstances. She therefore, without taking her eye off her needle, merely remarked:

"They, no doubt, have friends; that is, if they are worthy people. A lady, if she be such, with a little daughter, such as you describe, is not likely to be abandoned in such a way, and left under such circumstances, without some good reason."

"I don't know, mother, about the reasons why they are left so; but I am very sure if you could see them, and see how very beautiful the lady is, and how very delicate and refined are her manners, and how sick, and poor, and helpless she is—I don't believe, mother, they have a dollar in the house to help themselves with—I am sure you would not be easy a moment until you went there and found out something about them. You may depend upon it, mother, they have been brought up in high life, and by some terrible accident have been reduced to want."

This last idea seemed to have touched a chord in the widow's heart. She laid down her work and looked at her son; his countenance manifested much feeling. What he had witnessed, must, indeed, have made a deep impression on his mind.

There was certainly truth, too, in the idea he suggested, that by some terrible accident they had been reduced to want. It was so sometimes—such things did occur. Friends do not always follow the unfortunate beyond a certain point in the road to poverty. That,

she knew well. This might be such a case. If so, it demanded sympathy. It could do no harm, at any rate, to visit "the fatherless and the widow in their affliction." At all events her noble boy ought to be gratified if possible.

"Do you think she is very sick?"

"I do, mother—very sick. Her hands are cold, her breathing very short. I think she may not live through the night."

"Is it not time to close the store?"

"Yes, mother, quite time."

"I will get ready then, and we will go round and see them."

Herbert flew with alacrity to perform his part in the preparation, and had everything fastened and arranged for the night by the time his mother was ready to accompany him. The rain, which had been pouring down quite violently, was not yet over. They were guarded against it, however, and heeded not the few drops which were falling.

As they reached the alley and were about to enter, Mrs. Jones could not help exclaiming:

"Oh, dear! what a terrible place this must be to live in!"

"Or to die in!" said Herbert.

"What is that noise, Herbert?"

"Oh, nothing. It's nothing, mother, but some of them quarreling—they seem to have nothing else to do most of the time."

"Do let us hasten, my son! Is it much further back?"

Herbert paused, and pointed to a room just above them, through the windows of which could be seen a mere glimmering of light. The front door of the house was open, and as they ascended the steps, a woman was coming down the upper stairs. She was the one from whom Herbert and Mr. Peckham had made inquiries on the day of their visit.

The door below was open, and there was just light enough from it to enable the individuals to distinguish each other. The woman was in her ordinary dress,



although her hair was somewhat more dishevelled. She appeared to have risen from her bed in a hurry. Her countenance, too, was quite forbidding; so much so, that Mrs. Jones stepped a little behind Herbert, and nearer the outer door.

"Ah, my young gentleman, you are here again! And is it to see the poor sick lady ye are wanting?"

The voice was so much milder than the countenance, that Mrs. Jones felt encouraged to ask:

"How is she, my good woman? Have you been up to see her?"

"I have, my lady. You see, they seem to be lone bodies, and no creetur but that little darling of a miss, her daughter; and she never been used, as I'm thinking, to do much anyway—that is in the way of cooking and sich-like—so I goes up once the while jist to make a little rice broth, or something a little strengthening and savory. But it's little she eats, madam. She's not long for this world, depend upon it."

"Has she no friends that can help her—does no one call upon her?"

"Not a soul has been to the place, madam, to my knowledge, since they have been here. But there must be friends somewhere. Perhaps they don't care to be seen in these parts. Or it may be the poor creetur has crept away from them where they wouldn't be very likely to look in upon her, and see her in her low estate. You know, madam, some have such feelings—they get cast down, and the world has gone all wrong with them, and their means is taken away, and their heart is sore, and all broken up, and they can't hold up their heads no more; and so they git out of the way, where kinsfolk and friends ain't likely to come. It is my mind, madam, that the poor delicate creetur has had a great down-fall some day—she is never used to living as she now lives. Are you going up to see her, madam?"

"I am."

"Stay then, and I'll light you."

So saying she rushed into her own room, and in a moment was holding a very thin candle nearly burned to the socket, high above her head. Herbert turned

round and thanked her for her kindness. Her untidy dress, and tumbled hair, were nothing in his eyes. The outside might be rough, and no doubt she could take her own part among the roughest there, but beneath the unseemly outside, he felt sure there was a true woman's heart.

His mother, too, had listened with interest to the remarks which had fallen from the plain woman, and a deep feeling had been awakened in her breast—she was now intensely anxious to see and judge for herself.

Gertrude opened the door at their slight knock, and, with but a glance at Herbert, she fixed an earnest gaze upon the countenance of his mother. She had never seen her before; she was an utter stranger, and yet a sort of home feeling came over the child. Oh! it was so good to see one whose personal bearing was so unlike those with whom they had been cast, and were of late surrounded! An utter stranger! and yet she seemed to the lovely girl like a long-lost friend come back—come back to sympathize with them in their sorrowful condition—to help them in the hour of their deepest distress; and Mrs. Jones needed but a single glance to convince her that Herbert had guessed rightly. A surprise at the deep interest he manifested was gone at once. Yet all this was but the flashing of thought from the first glance of the eye, on the part of each, and before Herbert had time to introduce his mother—

"This is my mother, Miss Manners."

The little hand was at once in that of Mrs. Jones, and she led the lady up to the bed. It was a moment of intense interest to both. The feeble one no sooner fixed her eye upon the visitor than a light seemed to glance over her pale features; and as Mrs. Jones pressed the delicate hand which had been stretched out to her, to her lips, both felt and acknowledged the tie which bound them together. It was not the tie of relationship, nor of former acquaintance, or friendship—they had never met before—but it was the tie of kindred spirits, breaking through all the surroundings of the outer world, and asserting its power without regard to place or circum-

stance. Few words passed between them before Mrs. Jones stepped up to her son.

"Herbert, you can go home. I shall spend the night here."

He was about to depart, when Gertrude, who had remained by the bedside, came up to him.

"Will you please come to mamma? she wishes to see you."

As he came to the bedside he perceived that the cheek was more hollow, and the breathing more disturbed. She appeared worse than she had an hour ago. Her eye, however, was more bright, and, as she fixed it earnestly upon him, his dropped before it.

"Why you have been sent here, I know not! May God bless you to your latest day, and in your darkest hour may you never want a friend. Thank you—thank you for bringing your dear mother. Good —"

Whether she said good bye or good night, he did not hear. It was, however, her final salutation to him. He saw her not again.

## CHAPTER XI.

ROBERT KIRKLAND had, as his two maiden daughters and all who knew him long concluded, done with all business for this world. He was conscious indeed, and in full possession of his reason, but unable to rise from his bed except by the assistance of those about him. His principal attendant was one who had been with him for many years, and, although rather an ungracious person in his bearing toward others, had always maintained a respectful bearing toward his employer.

Randolph Hudson, or Randi, as Mr. Kirkland always called him, and by which name he usually went among the neighbors, was a thoroughly honest man, not only that he was a safe man to whom might be intrusted untold money, but he was honest in the expression of his opinion. He never would say what he did not think. He was not apt to intrude his advice or opinion upon his employer, but, when asked, never hesitated to give it in all plainness, no matter how much in opposition it might be to that of him who asked it.

As Robert Kirkland was not one who could very well bear such plain dealing, it often had happened that some harsh expressions would follow the answer which Randi had given, and the master would walk away apparently in anger; but the next salutation would be as kind and familiar as though nothing had ever happened to mar the harmony between them.

Randi had, in his earlier days, been intrusted with the general superintendence of the large estate; that is, he saw to it that the directions of Mr. Kirkland were carried out, and kept a careful watch over the management of the tenants, and to collecting the rents either in money or in kind, as may have been agreed upon; and sometimes, when his employer was disabled by sickness or absent from home for any length of time, keeping his

accounts—a matter which Mr. Kirkland would have intrusted to no one in whom he had not the utmost confidence. To himself and Randi alone were any of the secrets of his affairs known, so far as his books or papers could reveal them.

Of late Randi had been released from all out-door responsibilities, and was confined to the more immediate attendance upon his master—we say master, because in his earlier days Randi had styled him so, and even now occasionally used the term. When speaking of him to others, “the master” was the title which in general he gave when expressing to any of the underlings of the establishment the will or commands of Mr. Kirkland; and he would use it sometimes when speaking of him to strangers or persons not immediately in their employ.

But not as a servant did Mr. Kirkland regard Randi. He was now a friend; one whom he could confide in to the uttermost, in whose judgment he relied, and in whose love he had stronger faith than in that of any other human being. His presence therefore gave him comfort; and in fact the society of Randi was about the only source of happiness which this rich man had through a long life gathered and saved from the world which he had loved so much.

Randi, as he had advanced in years, had much improved in his feeling as well as his appearance. He was some years younger than Mr. Kirkland, and was, although advanced in life, still a robust and hale-looking man. And no doubt as he witnessed the feebleness of him who once commanded all under him with a lordly air, his compassion was excited and his manner became very gentle. And, although as tenacious as ever of speaking just what he believed to be truth, and obliged in all honesty to depart from the opinion of Mr. Kirkland, or even to deny his wishes, yet he would either contrive to move the question or manage matters so skillfully that for some years no outbreak had occurred between them.

With the daughters of Mr. Kirkland, Randi had but little to do. They, for some reason, never fancied him—perhaps he never flattered *them*. They never con-

descended to call him by any other name than Randolph or Hudson. They had their own servants, and never called upon him for assistance, except upon an emergency. They had, and he knew it, too, used what influence they had with their father to have him dismissed, but to no purpose. To him their favor or displeasure was of no account. He maintained a uniformly respectful bearing toward them; and, with the exception that he was not careful to be obsequious, nor to abstain from speaking his mind freely about anything which concerned their father's immediate comfort, his bearing toward them was most respectful, and they could find no special fault with him, only that they thought he was “too proud for his station in life, and took airs upon himself.”

Randi felt quite independent of their good will, from the fact that Mr. Kirkland had some years since, in consideration of his faithful services, deeded to him a valuable farm on the outskirts of his estate, and which Randi had managed judiciously, and had out of the income from it, together with his usual wages, laid up a handsome sum which was out at interest, well secured by mortgage. Being a bachelor, too, he felt very independent in regard to worldly matters, and neither feared the power, nor was particularly anxious about the favor, of man or woman.

He loved Mr. Kirkland, and so long as he could render him any assistance, and be assured that his presence was desired by him, no consideration could have induced him to stir one foot from his bedside.

Randi might not have been esteemed a pious man by some. He never talked about his religion; he was not given to talk much on any subject except the crops. These he always took a deep interest in, and perhaps was a little too much in the habit of watching the weather, and sometimes uttering complaints about it. That, however, was a natural weakness—very wrong, no doubt, but a failing which many wiser people than Randi, and from whom better things might be expected, are subject to.

He had, however, a great reverence for sacred things; and, as he advanced in life, had taken more to his

prayer-book and Bible. In fact the latter had become quite a study with him, and there is every reason to suppose that much of that softening down of the asperities of his earlier life may be attributed to that cause.

Mr. Kirkland, we are grieved to say, had, during his long life, manifested but little regard for those matters which after all are the chief end of our existence here.

Those rich consolations which he might have enjoyed; which would have hallowed his worldly prosperity, and opened his heart in gratitude to Him who had filled his coffers with abundance; and then as a natural result have opened it in sympathy with his fellow-man—he had never possessed. *He knew not God*, and of course true happiness had never been his portion. That vast field which had lain open before him where earth's richest pleasures are to be reaped, where the heart may revel in the luxury of an approving conscience, and a sense of peace with God—where he might have surrounded himself with those who had been made joyful by his bounty—where struggling manhood, borne down with care, might have been released from its killing pressure, and helpless orphanage nurtured, and feeble, tottering age sighing in destitution, been made glad—this field he had never entered. He never traversed its hard pressed paths nor even ventured within its precincts. His presence stirred no heart with gratitude, no blessing broke forth from the poor man's lips when his voice was heard. With all his wealth, his enjoyments had been confined to a noble mansion, a large income, a round of heartless visitors, and the cringing obeisance of those who court the rich man for the power which he wields.

But Robert Kirkland has been now for some time on a sick-bed. He can go no more out nor in. He can receive no more calls of ceremony, nor mingle with those who are mentioned with himself among the rich.

He had not, for some time after he was prostrated, believed that this was to be his last sickness. But two years have passed, and he has begun to fear that possibly the tale of life is nearly told, and the part he has taken in it, and all the responsibility incurred, about to be summed up for the reckoning day.

His faithful Randi had occasionally thrown out some hints in reference to the great matter. But whether they had been understood, or personally applied, he had no means of knowing, although, to use Randi's own expression, "He thought he felt a nibbling of the bait sometimes."

One day when his faithful attendant, supposing the patient to be asleep, was in his own way going over with some of the services in his prayer-book (Randi had of late paid more attention to those which had reference to persons in dangerous sickness), and perhaps being somewhat more than commonly exercised with the subject, as he closed one of the prayers, he quite unconsciously repeated the "Amen" aloud!

"What's that you say?"

Randi started in alarm and came quickly to the bedside.

"What are you doing? saying your prayers?"

"Oh, well, well—yes, I was just reading a little."

"What did you say 'Amen' for?"

Randi was sorely tempted to depart from his usual straightforward course, and confirm the answer he had already given, but his better thought prevailed.

"I was reading a prayer sir."

"What prayer? A morning prayer?"

"It was the prayer, sir, for one in dangerous sickness."

"Dangerous sickness! ah well, I remember I have seen it."

A moment the sick man paused.

"Dangerous sickness!"

Another pause, and a clasping together of his hands.

"Randi—come—read that for me."

With a measured step and one or two hitches at the waistband of his small clothes—for Randi followed the fashions of his master—he walked to the table where he had been sitting, and, taking up his prayer-book, returned to the bedside, composed himself in a large easy-chair which stood there, and pulled down his spectacles from his forehead, preparatory to commencing the exercise, when the sick man spoke.

"Don't you kneel down when you pray?"

It was a new idea to Randi, a new way of doing things which at once startled him. He had been accustomed, indeed, when in church to do as the rest did. But in private he had satisfied his conscience, and as he supposed complied with every requirement, by simply reading the exercises and fixing his mind earnestly upon the petition. But to go so far into the matter as to get upon his knees, and make a serious business of it, had not been his practice. The thought immediately occurred to him, if things had come to this pass, it might be better to send at once for the minister. He knew, indeed, that Mr. Kirkland had not much respect for ministers in general, except, as agreeable visitors he liked their company, when they were men of polished manners, but had paid little regard to them as spiritual advisers. His mind might have undergone a change in this respect. Randi ventured to propose the measure.

"Might I not send, sir, for our minister? It would be more comely."

"No no, Randi, you are an honest man; and I know when you pray for me you will be in right earnest; no one can do it so well as yourself, not for me."

Randi had two difficulties to encounter. The first, and that not so easily overcome by one in advanced life as the youthful reader may imagine, *to bow down as a humble suppliant for mercy*. He had never done it before since he was a child. The other was even more trying,—to hear his own voice, in the presence of another, in the act of supplication. That it would in fact be quite another thing from merely reading it to himself, or reading it aloud to another, he felt well assured. But how could he decline? He had certainly been thinking much of late about the situation of the sick man; he felt certain that he was not improving; signs of increased debility were manifesting themselves on each new day; the eyes were more sunken and the cheeks more hollow; he was evidently soon to depart into the unseen world, and with no preparation for the great event!

And now for the first time he has manifested a sense

of his dangerous situation, and made a request that shows he has a consciousness that a Higher Power is dealing with him, and that he is a poor dependent upon divine care. How can Randi, then, under such circumstances, refuse the request which the sick master had made?

It was a desperate effect, but down he went upon his knees and offered the prayer. It was not probably uttered in so melodious a tone, nor with such proper emphasis as might have been heard from one more accustomed to the exercise. But no doubt to Him who looketh at the heart it arose as sweet incense, for it was uttered in all sincerity and truth.

When Randi arose and took his seat by the bedside, Mr. Kirkland said to him:

"I have little hope, Randi, that so much of that prayer as related to my restoration to health will ever be answered."

Randi was silent; he was of the same opinion himself. He could give no encouragement; he would therefore say nothing. Mr. Kirkland continued:

"With the latter part of the prayer, I am more concerned—'that when this painful life is ended!' Oh, Randi, those are true words—'this painful life'—true words!"

"You do not suffer much now, Mr. Kirkland?"

"Not much bodily pain, now. But what is life—I mean when we look back upon it? Just a few troublesome scenes—all haste and excitement, and disappointment, and vexation, and at the end, pain, and weakness and death!"

"Not altogether, sir. You have had some bright spots: your youth, and your majority, and your marriage, and your young children. You have seen a good many happy days in all, Mr. Kirkland."

No reply was made to those suggestions, and for some time Mr. Kirkland lay, apparently absorbed in deep thought; at length he broke the silence.

"Randi, I have been thinking of late about my poor Gertrude. She did wrong, no doubt; but she was young, very young; and perhaps her aunts were a little too strict with her! I wish I knew her condition. She may possibly be poor—who knows?—perhaps suffering. I wish I knew about her."

"Did you never see her last letter, sir?"

"Last letter! She never wrote me but one, and that was just after her foolish marriage; I answered that one, but I fear it was too harsh, too hasty!"

"The letter I mean, sir, you have never answered to my knowledge. You certainly sir have not been able to write an answer yourself, and if any one has done so at your bidding it is unbeknown to me."

"What letter do you mean then?"

"I mean, sir, a letter was received about a year since. The way I came to know anything about it is this: you sent me, not long ago, to look over your secretary in the parlor for a paper which you wished to see; and I had to overhaul almost every bundle before I could find it, the drawers and all. In the big drawer among the letters was one that struck me at once as being Miss Gertrude's handwriting."

"Directed to me?"

"Yes, sir."

"Had it been opened?"

"Yes, sir; and it had been put away in the very back part of the drawer, under all the other papers. When I saw it, thinking I never remembered handing you such a letter, I opened it to see the date, and found it was dated just about a year ago. I then looked at the signature, and sure enough it was from her."

"Is it there now?"

"I suppose it is in the secretary, sir; but I did not replace it just where I found it. My intention was at some time to say something to you about it, so I put it where it might be come at handily. It struck me at the time very strange that it should have been placed where it was, for you know, sir, all the letters to you go through my hands, and are regularly filed away according to date. This letter was never before in my hands, I am very sure."

"Go, bring it to me. Go, go quickly!"

Randi was not long in finding the letter, and at Mr. Kirkland's request, read it aloud to him.

His heart must have been hard indeed not to have been touched by the appeal of poor Gertrude in that hour of

distress. It was not on her own behalf. She was indeed poor—poorer than she wished to reveal to him or to any one who had ever known her—but her plea was for the helpless orphan, her little daughter, who would no doubt soon be an outcast, dependent upon the hand of charity.

When Randi had finished the letter, he looked at his master, and perceived that he was greatly agitated; his hands were tightly clasped together, and large drops stood upon his forehead.

"What can I do, Randi?"

"Something ought to be done, sir, and quickly, too; for the poor thing may be dying or suffering. Alas, alas! Gerald's own child, too!"

This allusion to his son and favorite child produced a fresh manifestation of excited feeling. Randi bathed his face and administered a stimulant to which he was accustomed, and then for a while he lay with his eyes closed, no doubt pondering the past and considering what course he had best pursue. Randi wished to say something, for he had always loved Gertrude, and his heart was now deeply stirred up, too; but he knew it would be better to let the matter work its own way.

Mr. Kirkland at length spoke.

"I cannot hope for mercy, or for any part in that better world, without I do all I know to be right while I am in this, or do my best to undo whatever wrong I may have been guilty of. My will, you know, has been made years ago. It will entirely exclude her or her heirs from any share in it; and to have a new one written would take time, and I have no time to spare. I am very feeble—too feeble to go through with any such business; and I may be taken away at any moment. I do not believe I could live through the excitement and worry it would cause. And then, too, you know, Randi, no such thing could be done without great disturbance. My daughters would be alarmed. Oh, dear! This world—how much trouble we give ourselves for it!"

"It would seem right that something should be done, Mr. Kirkland."

"Yes, oh, yes; things must not remain as they are for another day, nor for another hour. Randi, I have



made up my mind what to do. It will be the shortest way. Go at once, bring me my tin box."

Randi knew well what precious documents the tin box held; but he had no conception what use could be made of anything therein in the present condition of Mr. Kirkland, and without the presence of a lawyer. He hastened, however, to do as he was bid. In a few moments he returned, bearing the casket which contained all the more valuable papers of the rich man.

"Open it, Randi, and take out my will."

The document was soon produced.

"Now, Randi, get me a light."

For a moment Randi paused.

"May I ask, Mr. Kirkland, what you want with a light? It is mid-day, sir; and it can be of no use while the sun is shining so bright through the windows."

"To burn it, Randi—to burn the will. The law can make a will that will put all things to rights, let this paper only once be out of existence."

Randi fairly started; he was thoroughly alarmed.

"As you hope for mercy, Mr. Kirkland, in the other world, don't do that, sir! I have been a faithful servant to you, sir, these many, many years, and I will never leave you while I have breath to keep life in me. But, sir, unless you wish to leave me, when you are gone, in a hell here, don't do it! Don't do it!"

"You have no interest in it; you are well provided for, you know."

"I know that, sir; your kindness has left me nothing to ask for on my own account. It is not for that. But you know well, sir, that neither Miss Lizzy nor Miss Gerty have ever favored me. They know, and others know, that they have been made by this will sole heirs to your whole estate. What they will do with it, or why they crave it so much, the Lord only knows. But when they find that the will has been destroyed, and no one knowing to it but myself, they will be greatly enraged. I shall be hunted with law until they have not only stripped me of every cent, but it may be—for money will do almost anything—it may be they will even be able to charge me with crime and send me to prison;

for everybody knows that I alone have access to your private papers. A place of torment will the earth be to me, Mr. Kirkland, should you do this."

"You do it by my orders."

"Who can testify to that, sir, when your tongue is silent? And should it be known while you live, I fear, sir, you will have great trouble. But if it must be done, sir, let it be done in the presence of some person outside of the family, who can have no possible interest in the matter in any way. Let the squire himself be sent for, or any one else Mr. Kirkland may prefer."

The effort of speaking, and the agitation of mind under present circumstances, seemed so to have exhausted Mr. Kirkland, that for some time he lay with his eyes closed, and his breathing faint and quick. Randi was alarmed; he almost feared his master was sinking away, and since the reading of that letter, he had become extremely anxious that something should be done for the relief of Gertrude. She had been his pet, as well as that of her grandparent. He most heartily wished the paper destroyed; but he knew too well the violent temper, the indomitable pride, and revengeful spirit of the present heirs, and their dislike of him, on whom, no doubt, their fury would be poured out.

Mr. Kirkland, however, continued so long in an apparently oblivious state, that Randi almost wished he had run the risk, let the consequences be what they might; he verily feared it was now too late. He resolved at last to say something.

"Would it be your wish, Mr. Kirkland, that I should send for any one out of the house?"

"Yes, yes; send for Squire Rhind and for Mr. McBride."

Randi lost no time in getting off one of the servants in a very private manner, so as to create no alarm in the family, nor give occasion for particular inquiries.

Why Mr. Kirkland should have sent for the latter gentleman he could not imagine. He was not one with whom his master had been intimate, and was supposed to entertain views and principles both on the subject of religion and politics, very different from those of Mr. Kirkland.

He went to a different church, also; and Randi remembered very decidedly hearing Mr. McBride spoken of in a disparaging way.

But he also knew that the gentleman had a high reputation for honor and integrity; he was a man of property, and stood high in the estimation of people in general.

It was as much a matter of surprise to Mr. McBride as it could possibly have been to Randi that he should receive a request to call at the house of the great man. He had only been a resident of the place for a few years; he had retired from business, and was living on an abundant income. His manners were easy without any pretensions to that formality which distinguished the master of Kirkland Place. He was a true gentleman at heart, with a cultivated mind and of a noble and generous spirit.

Mr. McBride was also an active Christian; not, as many who obtain that title, meddling with things properly beyond his sphere, but ever ready to give that aid and counsel which a truly good and enlightened man has abundant opportunity to minister without any rude intrusion. His personal appearance was commanding—tall of stature, with a serious cast of countenance, very natural to one who had struggled through the vicissitudes of an active business life.

Mr. McBride had been upon speaking terms with Mr. Kirkland, and, for aught he knew, their feelings toward each other were kind and neighborly—nothing further. The summons, therefore, took him by surprise, although he did not hesitate to comply immediately with the request, and in a very short time thereafter he was by the bedside of the sick man.

As Mr. Kirkland put out his hand to welcome his visitor, he said, though in very feeble tones:

"I thank you, sir, for coming; and am sorry to be under the necessity of making such a demand upon you."

"I have come, Mr. Kirkland, with the greatest pleasure, and only regret that I find you still so feeble. I am ready to serve you, sir, in any way that my ability will allow."

"To me, personally, sir, but little service can be rendered. I have sent for you for the sake of others. Some-

times, sir, we feel compelled to undo, on a dying bed, so far as we can, what measures we have pursued in life and health."

"True, sir—very true."

"Things appear in a different light to us."

"Many things do, sir, very different. It would be well for us, Mr. Kirkland, to be able to look at things when we are amid the active scenes of life, as they will appear to us when we are about to meet the responsibility we are then incurring. Happy for us, though, if even at a late hour, we have the correct view."

"It may be too late, though, for some things."

"Some mistakes may, indeed, be beyond repairing; they can only be mourned over and repented of. Repentance is our privilege; it need only be genuine to be accepted."

"Think you so, sir?"

The conversation was here interrupted by the entrance of Miss Gertrude Kirkland, the youngest daughter. The lady was richly dressed in a dark brocade silk. Her hair, which was of a deep brown, not dressed after the fashion of that day, but combed back so as fully to expose her forehead and temples, and frizzed or curled behind, and lying rather carelessly just below her neck. Her neck was quite bare, but finely formed and worthy of being fully exposed. Her arms bare to the elbows, where a rich lace fringe bounded the border of her sleeves. The arms, also, were fair and round as those of a girl of eighteen. Her features, though not handsome, were well formed. Her complexion was still fresh, and had the expression of her eye been a little more mild, her fine figure and graceful carriage might certainly have stood for any deficiency in the beauty of her face.

She made a slight obeisance to Mr. McBride, who arose as she entered, and made way for her at the bedside, to which she immediately approached, and leaning over her sick parent, commenced conversing with him in a very low tone of voice.

Mr. McBride, when he withdrew to give place to the lady, retired to a distant corner of the room, where Randi was standing, and entered into a familiar converse

with him about the crops and the weather. Randi, however, was in no mood for talking; he only answered in monosyllables. His eye was fixed on the figure by the bedside, and his ear intent upon catching the sounds from that quarter. But the room was very spacious, and although he could plainly see that both Mr. Kirkland and his daughter were much excited, yet all his efforts to hear what passed were in vain.

At length the lady, after standing a moment and looking at her father, having doubtless said all she had to say, turned and walked toward Mr. McBride, and he made a few steps in advance to meet her. Her countenance now was highly flushed, and although the color was no doubt caused by feelings not very commendable, yet it certainly added quite an interest to her looks. She addressed Mr. McBride in a very mild manner, and spoke quite low.

"I understand from my father, sir, that you have called at his request, and that Squire Rhind has also been sent for. I may presume he has already made you acquainted with the object for which you have been summoned."

"I assure you, Miss Kirkland, I am as yet entirely ignorant for what special purpose I am here; and also was I ignorant, until you informed me, that any other person was expected."

There was something, no doubt, in the manner of the gentleman that had a soothing influence; for the lady, as she replied, put on a much more gracious look, and even seemed confused in her ideas. She probably did not wish to say what she had at first designed. She was not quite ready, however, to give up entirely the subject which agitated her.

"Ah—well, sir—indeed—my father is quite low; you must be conscious of that; he is very feeble; hardly himself. Do you think he has his mind?"

"Perfectly—perfectly, I should think. He appears to me to be very rational, and seems to have a just appreciation of his condition, and correct views in reference to it."

"Not able, though, to attend to the arrangement of any complicated business?"

"Indeed, I cannot say as to that, Miss Kirkland; our conversation hitherto has been confined rather to spiritual than temporal matters."

"Oh! aye, indeed, sir; you will pardon me for this intrusion."

Mr. Rhind now entered the room, and the lady almost immediately withdrew.

The esquire passed a few words of commonplace inquiry with the sick man, and then both gentlemen were requested to come by the bedside.

"Randi, will you hand Esquire Rhind that paper?"

The paper was immediately withdrawn from the tin box, and placed in the hands of the lawyer.

"I wish you to look at that instrument, Esquire Rhind; do you recognize it?"

"Certainly, sir," opening it and running his eye over the document and at the signature. "This, Mr. Kirkland, is your last will and testament."

"It was, sir. But I now wish to have it destroyed, and for that purpose I have sent for you, gentlemen, in order that no blame may attach to my faithful old friend here, when I am gone. I want you to witness that it is done at my request. I have special reasons for wishing it out of the way, as it does not, in my present state of mind, meet my views of justice."

"But why not, my good sir, have a new instrument drawn up; it can soon be done?"

"No, no, Esquire Rhind. I do not care to trouble my mind about such matters now. I have had enough—quite enough—of trouble and vexation about this world—too much—too much. There are other things which demand the little time and strength that are left to me. I am near the grave, sir, very near to it. The law of the land will make an equitable division of my worldly effects, and I am content there to leave them."

"Are there any heirs beside your daughter, Mr. Kirkland?"

"I cannot say, sir; I hope so. Let this matter be done at once.—Randi."

Randi was quickly by his side.

"Now bring the light."

Nothing further was said. Mr. McBride being merely, as he perceived, needed as a witness, of course did not feel called upon under the circumstances to interfere in any way. And the esquire, probably taking into account the fact that a good long job was in preparation for himself in a suit for division by a court of chancery, had no interest in trying to stop the proceedings.

In a few moments, the will of Robert Kirkland, involving an estate worth a million of dollars, was lying in ashes on the hearth.

As soon as it was over, Randi wiped away the drops which had gathered on his master's forehead. In his weak condition, the excitement produced by an act that might accomplish he knew not how much of good or ill, was almost too much for him; he was greatly exhausted, and had scarcely strength enough, as the gentlemen were taking their leave, to ask Mr. McBride to remain by him for a short time; and when the esquire left the room, that gentleman took his seat beside the sick man.

"I fear that what I have to do must be done quickly. I believe, if I judge rightly concerning you, Mr. McBride, you love to do a kindness; I have a great favor to ask of you."

"Anything, sir, that is in my power to do, I am ready for, especially if it will be a relief to your mind."

"You are very kind. My man here will tell you what are my desires. Perhaps they cannot be accomplished; but if they can, let no time be lost. It may give you some trouble, sir, but you will not regard that, if thereby you can impart comfort or relief to one or more persons whom I fear are now in want and suffering."

"It will be no trifling matter, I assure you, Mr. Kirkland, that will cause me to shrink from the office under such circumstances."

"Thank you, sir, for that assurance. You relieve my mind greatly. But let it be done without delay—without delay—and now just a few words more. I am a dying man. I want to ask you, can one who has spent a long life only for his own gratification—there was quite a pause—"have any hope of mercy?"

"We are all poor fallen creatures, Mr. Kirkland. Our

best works have no merit in them. Our hearts are very deceitful, very worldly. The only hope for any of us, is in simply looking up to Him who hung upon the cross—simply looking to Him! He can save us—he only can save us. The blood of Christ is the only atonement by which God can be reconciled to us, and his blood is all sufficient for the vilest sinner that looks to him for mercy!"

He held the hand of the sick man as he said this. A moment he watched his heaving chest and pallid countenance. He thought of his past prosperity, his vast estate, his worldliness and pride—all as nothing now, all absorbed in that one question, "Can there be hope?"

And how could he help thinking of those words which our Saviour uttered—oh! how full of meaning now:

"What will it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? What will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

## CHAPTER XII.

FROM the noble mansion of Robert Kirkland, and the large and richly furnished room in which its owner was counting the last sands of a long life, to the filthy lane and mean dwelling, and confined apartment in which Gertrude Manners lay, is a vast change. Yet to each the present circumstances which surround them are scarcely the subject of a moment's thought.

Sumptuous drapery, costly furniture, gilded ornaments, attract no notice. Even the bed of down cannot ease the restless frame. It matters little upon what kind of couch we meet the great destroyer—one touch from his hand places the beggar and the prince on a level.

Gertrude "passed a more comfortable night," she said, "than she had for some time." It seemed so good to have one by her to whom she could say the few things she had to say, and who could talk with her about those things which one in her situation needed.

Herbert had been in to escort his mother home, but she could not make up her mind to leave just then. In fact she had determined, except to get her meals, not to leave the poor sufferer until the last struggle should be over. Her heart had become most deeply interested as she listened, during the wakeful moments of the sick one, to the sad tale of her eventful life. And Gertrude Manners seemed to her like a lost sister found at last—a sister in refinement of feeling and those nicer shades of character, which so distinctly separate individuals from that class among which they may by accident have been thrown. She could not leave her in loneliness to be waited on by ruder hands.

Gertrude had gone home with Herbert. She was to breakfast with his little family, and then return to wait upon her mother, while Mrs. Jones should spend an hour or so in arranging matters in her own dwelling.

And since the scene of the last evening, a strange intimacy seemed to have sprung up between this youthful pair. Her necessity and his generous impulses had, as they met, thrown around them both a charm all-powerful in its hold on their youthful feelings. Her eye rested upon him with all the confidence she might have felt in an own brother. She could have told him every thought of her heart, and every scene of her past life; while to him she seemed like some lonely flower, which he had come across in a spot where flowers never bloom—rare it was, too, as well as beautiful. His wonder was, where had it been reared, and how it should have been separated from that rich parterre it was intended to adorn.

Every moment he was in her company, the wonder and the charm increased. He was not then conscious of it. He had no purpose, no plan, no present wish, no images of the future floating in his mind. He thought not of her dress, how plain it was; and even had that perfect form been robed in costliest silks, it is doubtful, so far as we can know his mind, whether it would have pleased him better. He thought not of her poverty. Ah! she never could be poor—as that word signifies to most—never in his eyes. She was some costly jewel, rich in value, lost from its casket. He had no doubt of that, from the first moment that he saw her. And how he should delight to have her always there!—to hear that voice, it was so musical! And what a privilege it would be to shield her as he would his darling sister, who was seated by her side, and never, never more, let her be exposed to want or danger, that his arm could relieve or ward off.

But the breakfast is over, and she must return. He cannot accompany her, for it is the busiest part of the day with him. And as she goes, her hand is given to him, and she says, "Good bye," as though they may not meet again. She knows not what is before her. Upon him she has no claim, and he and his have been so kind, so very kind, already! All this she says in that parting look. Her heart spoke plainly those very words, and Herbert heard them, and he could have answered to

them, had not his own heart just then been so full. That look had stirred its depths.

"My dear Herbert," said Mrs. Jones, as she came into the store, and walked up to him behind the counter, "this is a case of real distress. I am so glad you persuaded me to go there last night! Ah, I would not leave that poor, feeble, lovely, sensitive creature, to die alone there, for any earthly consideration."

"I am glad you went, mother; I was very sure you would think as I did, when you once saw her."

"She cannot live long, Herbert—I think not more than a day or two; and then what is that dear young creature to do? Where is she to go? Ah, what a story that mother has told me! It would make your heart ache to hear it! They have been cast off—no friends!"

"Mother, let her come here—you must, mother. I can never rest, should that lovely girl be obliged to go to"——

Herbert could not bring himself to mention the terrible name of the only refuge that seemed likely to be her home.

"Well, my son, I did not know but you would almost blame me—that you would think we had cares and burdens enough already; but I could not help it. I hope you will not be discouraged—there will be some way provided—but I have ventured to tell that poor sufferer that her daughter should be taken to our home—that I would be a mother to her. And, oh, if you could have seen the look she gave me! She drew me down to her, and put her arms about me, and"——

But Mrs. Jones could say nothing further. She had said enough to fill the heart of Herbert with a strange medley. He, too, was ready to weep for the suffering mother, and the tear did gather in his eye. And yet, the thought that *she* was to be an inmate of his own home—that his energies were to have such a stimulus added to what he already felt! *Her* support! it would be no task, for her presence would only make his happy home more happy than ever!

Mrs. Jones had attended to what matters needed her care at home, and returned to the bedside of Mrs. Man-

ners. The business of the store for the morning was pretty much over, and Herbert engaged at his desk, when his attention was called to two gentlemen, who had stopped at his corner, and were looking up for a sign. But as no such article had as yet been put out—Herbert concluding that it would not be necessary, as his father had not done so—the gentlemen walked leisurely into the store. One was quite tall, and somewhat advanced in life; the other, a young man, apparently not much older than the owner of the premises; he was of medium stature, with quite a delicate cast of countenance.

The elder gentleman was in advance of the other, and as he came up to the counter, asked:

"Does Mr. Herbert Jones live here?"

"That is my name, sir."

The stranger looked somewhat surprised, but immediately added:

"Are you the principal of the store?"

"Yes, sir."

"Indeed! you have begun trade early, my young friend!" and turning his eye around the room, with a scrutinizing glance, "but you have things very nicely arranged—very nicely indeed! I did not expect to find so young a hand, when I was directed to you as keeping a store at this corner. Excuse me, but is there business enough here to warrant you in giving your time to it? Methinks one who understands himself, as appearances indicate, might have a better chance in a more thickly-settled part of the city."

"Circumstances seemed to make it best for me to try it here, sir."

"You will pardon my suggestion—I know it must appear somewhat rude; but I feel peculiar interest in young men starting for themselves. I am not yet too old to remember the time when I first started, and with very little to start upon, I assure you—very little, indeed! But I am forgetting my errand, as well as my manners. I was directed to *you*, as I presume, by a Mr. Peckham. You know the gentleman?"

"I do, sir."

"He told me that you could, no doubt, give me some



information about a Mrs. Manners, who resided somewhere in this neighborhood—in some alley or other, I forget the name he gave it.”

“Hunker’s Alley, I suppose, sir.”

“Yes, that sounds like it. Do you know a family there of that name?”

“Do you mean a widow lady and her daughter?”

“Widow!—turning to his companion—“can it be that her husband is dead! A young widow, Mrs. Jones?”

“Not very young, sir—if it is the one I know. She must be about thirty.”

“About thirty! And I suppose to you that seems quite far on the journey of life. To me, who can look back to thirty, as a long time ago, it seems quite young. So we judge of life! She has a daughter, you say! How old is she?”

“About fifteen, I should judge, sir.”

“Fifteen—fifteen! And the mother about thirty; perhaps thirty-two. That would coincide with my data.” These remarks seemed to be made by the gentleman to himself, in a kind of soliloquy. Herbert had just stepped into the adjoining room, from whence he brought a couple of chairs.

“Gentlemen, will you not take seats?”

“Thank you, sir, I will with pleasure; I have walked quite a stretch this morning, and somehow I get more easily tired on the pavements than I once did. But I want to make a few more inquiries about these people. Have they lived long in this neighborhood?”

“Not long, I imagine, sir.”

And then Herbert recounted what he knew about them—beginning with his first notice of a young girl, and relating all the particulars in the case, with the exception of some items in which he had rather a personal interest.

As he proceeded, the stranger became evidently much interested—for his eye was fixed intently on Herbert—and the moment the latter had finished what he had to say, the gentleman started to his feet.

“I must go there this instant. If it should turn out

to be the person I am in search of, I shall regret I have spent a moment talking about other matters. Can you direct me so that I can find the house?”

“I will show you the way myself, sir. It will be a difficult matter to direct you.”

“Will you accompany, me, Mr. Ashton, or wait here until I return?”

“I will remain here; that is, with your leave,”—turning to Herbert.

“It will be quite agreeable to me, sir, and if any one should come in, will you please say, I will be absent but a few moments.”

As Herbert and the gentleman walked rapidly, they were not long in reaching Hunker’s Alley. And as they turned into it, and its unsightly habitations and rough looking inhabitants met their view, the latter exclaimed:

“Terrible! terrible! What a place! Can it be—can it be that she whom I seek is about to end her days here! Mysterious! mysterious are the ways of God!”

Up the steps and the narrow stairs he followed Herbert. A gentle tap at the door, and it was instantly opened by Mrs. Jones.

For a moment her eye was fixed upon the stranger, her face colored, and she seemed almost ready to call him by name. The gentleman was evidently taken by surprise, also; but he was the first to speak.

“Pardon me, madam—if I am mistaken—but can it be—Mrs. Jones! Once Lucy Lansing?”

“The same, sir. I believe I see James McBride!”

“You do, madam.” And immediately their hands were clasped. The door was nearly closed, for Mrs. Jones had stepped outside the room the moment she saw that Herbert was not alone. They could converse, therefore, without the danger of disturbing the sick one.

“I little thought, when conversing with your son, a few moments since, that I was in the company of one so nearly related to you. It is long, long since we have met, and strange, strange indeed, that we should have met here!”

Mr. McBride had known the lady in the heyday of her youth, and would have gladly sought her hand, but for the consciousness that his own standing was then too low down. He could not indulge the hope that any such attempt would be successful. Since then their positions had been reversed. He had risen to independence, and she, as we have seen, through causes beyond her control, had drooped down into the vale of poverty. If he had ever heard whom she married—it had long ago passed from his mind—the stream of life had carried them widely apart; and now they met again very unlike in their external circumstances, but their hearts subdued by the Spirit of God, and both intent in doing his will. They met where the disciples of the meek and lowly Jesus should oftener find each other—among the poor and the sick, and the outcasts of the earth.

There was no time now, however, for speaking of the past or renewing friendly relations.

"Is Mrs. Manners living?" was asked by the gentleman, immediately after their short introduction to each other.

"She is living—but is very low!"

"Able to converse?"

"Oh, yes. Her reason bright and clear as ever. And she is so lovely! Alas, that she must die—and under such circumstances! Do you know her?"

"I do not—I have never seen her. But I am a messenger of good tidings for her—that is, if she is the Gertrude Manners I am in search of. Grand-daughter of old Robert Kirkland, of Kirkland Manor."

"The same. You have found her; and you say you have good tidings?"

"I have come at the request of her aged grandfather, who is now on his dying-bed."

"Come in, then, for you have no time to lose."

Mrs. Manners had been gently sleeping; the noise awakened her, soft as were their footsteps—and as they approached her bed she fixed her bright eye on the tall form of Mr. McBride—and Mrs. Jones immediately said:

"A friend, my dear Mrs. Manners."

He took the delicate hand which was raised from the

covering to bid him welcome, and drew the chair offered him close by her side. A few questions he asked, in order to assure himself that she was in reality the Gertrude Manners he was in search of.

They were answered to his entire satisfaction.

"I am a messenger to you from your old grandfather."

"And does he yet live?"

"He is alive—probably—but his end is near. I have come at his request, and bring you good tidings. The past is gone—it cannot now be recalled; but my orders were to search you out, and when I found you, to say, that all he can do now is to ask your forgiveness. In future, you and yours are provided for."

Gertrude clasped her pale hands together, and closed her eyes. No tears trickled from them. Her weeping days were over—but her lips moved, and doubtless to that Being upon whom she had learned to lean amid the terribly dark scenes through which she had passed, she was pouring out her hearty thanks. Not for herself. No amount of friendship or worldly good could now avail for her—but her dearer self still lived. For her, agony unknown to others—not like her, alone and friendless—racked her heart. God had appeared—the Great Deliverer. He was Jehovah Jireh still, the God of all consolation and grace!

She then called for Gertrude, and placing her hand in that of Mrs. Jones, who stood weeping by her side:

"To you I commit her. You have offered to receive her and take care of her when you expected no remuneration; when she was an—outcast! God will reward you for that—it took a terrible burden from my poor heart. Now, no doubt, there will be abundant means for her support, but more will be needed than what money can purchase. A mother's heart! A mother's watch and care! For that want I have suffered, and am now lying here among outcasts—a wreck, tossed by tempests—oh, how tossed! But rest is near. You hear me, sir, what I say. I commit my dear child to the keeping of this"—

Her strength failed, and she paused, her eye anxiously

fixed on the gentleman to whom this last address was made.

"I hear you, my dear madam, I understand your request, and what I can do to accomplish it, I promise you shall be done."

"May God bless you, too!"

And then she drew her Gertrude to her arms, and their cheeks were closely pressed; and warm tears dropped upon that pale face; and that young heart will never forget the deep, deep, thrill of feeling which brought them forth. She has heard the good news, too; but alas for her life's future comfort, it has come too late. What anguish of heart might have been saved! What degradation might have been avoided! What torturing fears, and bitter burning tears, might all have been allayed and dried, had this news, so pleasing now, only come a few years, or even a few months earlier!

All this the weeping daughter thinks of and feels. She has been with this suffering mother through the dreary past. She is old enough to have her memory seared, and there on her young heart, through all her future journey, will the scar remain, a dark spot on the mind's mirror; and this shadow will ever be upon her path; often it will hush the song of gladness, and cause the heart to droop amid its most joyful hours.

Oh! ye who can, spare the young heart from sorrow! Be a covering to it from the keen darts which misery sends so recklessly about. Shield it until maturity shall have given the needed strength to bear the heavy burden; and let not its young affections be poisoned at their birth, and doomed to bear through all its days these tokens of a dreary childhood. Oh, shield the young from care and sorrow!

And now Mrs. Jones tenderly removes the weeping child, and, to gratify the mother, sits close beside her bed and lays her hand on hers; and Mr. McBride tells all that he has been commissioned to say, and explains, as far as he is able, why relief has been withheld so long.

It did not seem greatly to affect the dying one; but what her feelings were, could only be surmised. Perhaps all other thoughts were merged in the one grand idea—

that God rules and orders all events; for once, while she lay so still and seemingly unconscious of present things around her, she spoke in tones quite audible:

"Oh, how good is God!"

No doubt, to her there was now coming over the dark cloud, whose shadow she had been so long under, the clear rainbow streak; and its tints will grow brighter and more distinct as the Heavenly home is neared.

"Oh, how good is God!"

Glorious testimony! It was the last sentence she uttered, and although the spirit lingered for awhile, weaker and weaker grew the earthly tenement; more gently passed the flickering breath, until, with a slight sigh, the spirit bade adieu to earth.

William Ashton, the young man who had accompanied Mr. McBride, and whom we now introduce to the reader, was but a few months past his majority. He had just come into possession of a large fortune by the death of his father, his last surviving parent. He had never been trained to business, any further than as he occupied a situation in his father's office, keeping his books, and attending to outdoor matters in closing up the large shipping business in which the latter had been engaged. Mr. Ashton did not live to complete his plans, and his son, in company with the executor, was left to finish what yet remained to be done. In this way the young man had learned whatever knowledge he possessed of mercantile affairs.

He had no motive for engaging in trade after the death of his father, as the fortune, to which he was the sole heir, was ample beyond all that a rational style of living could demand; and he had no taste for business, sufficient to induce him to engage in it for its own sake. He was, therefore, in that situation in which many a youth of his age turns toward pleasure as the chief object of life, and soon makes a sad wreck of health, character and fortune.

He was not gifted with what is generally called strength of mind. His disposition was amiable, his natural talents fair; and thus far his character was unstained by any of those vices, or even follies, to which so

many youth, situated as he had been, yield before attaining his age. Beyond all other traits of character, as yet developed, was a generous, benevolent spirit; and almost the first object which engrossed his mind, when he found himself in possession of large resources, was the alleviation of the want and misery which were so obvious, and which one possessed of a feeling heart could not help noticing amid the teeming multitudes of a great city.

His heart was formed for friendship, but as yet he had met with no one of his own age with whose views and feelings he sympathized. Perhaps the fault had been his; he was of a retiring disposition, diffident of his own abilities, and the circumstances in which he had been placed for some years had tended to habits of seclusion. With this general introduction, we must leave the reader to judge how likely it would be that Herbert Jones and William Ashton should find many subjects of common interest to converse about, and learn, as the heart of each was exposed to the other, that there was a similarity of views most grateful to them both.

We all know how readily in early years the heart yields its sympathy, and is ready to embrace in its confidence such as manifest corresponding emotions; and the two hours which these young men spent in conversation during the absence of Mr. McBride, did more to draw them into bonds of intimacy than in later years would have been effected by many long interviews.

There were few things, indeed, relating to their personal feelings, that were not brought out; and so satisfied were they that much enjoyment might be realized by frequent intercourse, that they mutually agreed to embrace every opportunity for that purpose.

"I cannot promise you, though," said Herbert, "that I can do my part in visiting; my time is not my own; but if you will condescend to come here—it is not a very inviting place, to be sure"—

"Not a word of that—true friendship is not affected by such matters—I should feel unworthy of your regard, and utterly ashamed of myself, if any such consideration could affect my mind. I am well aware, from what you have told me, that your time must be much occupied.

All I want is the privilege of dropping in at any time, day or evening, and that you will not allow my presence to interfere with anything you may have to do."

"I will promise you that; and as I hope to introduce you to my mother, she will be able to entertain you should I be occupied."

"Oh, I thank you; I should dearly like that. As I have told you, I have no mother, and my aunt and cousins, with whom I live, are fond of certain kinds of company that I do not fancy. They are very kind and attentive to me, but we have few feelings in common on most subjects. It is my home, however, and I try to make the best of it. But from what you tell me of your mother, I think I should enjoy a good talk with her."

The striking of the clock in the adjoining room, now reminded young Ashton of other matters.

"Mr. McBride has an appointment down town at one; I fear he has forgotten it."

Scarcely had this remark been made, before Mr. McBride entered, accompanied by Mrs. Jones and Gertrude. The latter with her face covered and leaning on the arm of her friend.

Nothing was said; for Mrs. Jones led Gertrude immediately into the back-room, but Herbert was well satisfied that the end had come, and that the poor sufferer was at rest.

Mr. McBride stepped up to young Ashton, and in a low voice said:

"Willie, I must ask the favor of you, to bear my compliments to Mr. Granite, and say to him, that he must excuse me from meeting him as I engaged to do. I must of necessity be detained in this vicinity awhile yet."

And then when he saw the young men, as they were about to separate, take each other's hands in a very cordial manner, and heard Herbert say, "Remember your promise," he put a hand on the shoulder of each:

"I have an idea, young gentlemen, that you two may find in each other, yet, a valuable friend. I want you to cultivate acquaintance."

"Oh, sir, we have been doing that these two hours!

I think we know each other pretty well now. We are friends already—are we not?" and young Ashton looked at Herbert to confirm what he had said.

"I hope we are—I am very sure we are."

"Well, well—that is doing up things quickly, to be sure! But such things are more easily done when we are in youth. This Master Jones, I find, is a son of an old friend of mine. His good mother and I were in our youth very intimate—and although circumstances have separated us for many years, yet I trust we are friends still. This boy is of a good stock—no better in the country—and if he has in him the principles which I feel assured both his father and mother have inculcated, he will be a safe friend for you, Willie; and that is what you want. But before you go, I must introduce you to his mother."

Mrs. Jones just then came into the store to speak with Herbert, and Mr. McBride, taking young Ashton by the arm, led him up to her.

"Mrs. Jones, I wish to introduce to you a young friend of mine, whom I take some interest in. He has no mother, and I hope if he and your son should be intimate, as they now think they shall, you will, as you see occasion, drop into his ear a mother's counsel. It does a world of good, sometimes—Mr. William Ashton. I think you must have known his father!"

"Mr. Ralph Ashton?"

"Yes—of Hudson, formerly."

"Oh, yes—certainly—I knew him well, that is, in former years. A long time ago, it seems now!"

"So it is. We get strangely jumbled about in this world. Friends in youth take different paths, and diverge so widely as to seem doomed never to meet again; and then as strangely they are thrown together in after life, having gathered wisdom from experience, and become more firmly knit than ever."

Mrs. Jones gave young Ashton a warm greeting, and expressed the hope that he would feel free to visit them at their "poor place" whenever so disposed.

Herbert had been, from the time the little company came in, under very strong excitement. He was anxious

to know whether the gentleman had become satisfied that Mrs. Manners was indeed the person for whom he was in search. That she was no more he believed, or Gertrude and his mother would not have left—though not a word had as yet been whispered of her death. But he could hear the heavy sobs from the next room, and he saw that his mother had been weeping. And Mr. McBride looked very sad, and spoke in low subdued tones, as one is apt to do, when fresh from a dying scene. As soon, however, as young Ashton had departed, he whispered to his mother:

"Is her mother dead?"

"Poor Gertrude! Her mother is no more. But I have great news to tell you—by and by you shall know; I must go now and see to that dear child."

As soon as Mrs. Jones had passed into the adjoining room, Mr. McBride stepped up and laid his hand upon Herbert's shoulder.

"The friends of that poor young woman have great reason to thank you, and remember you all their days, for the interest you and your good mother have taken in her. But I think it very likely you will never get even thanks from them. Still it will be a consolation to you, to know that you have thus interposed your kind offices. The reward will be in your own hearts."

"We could not have done less, sir."

"No, you could not—not with the feelings which I believe you have—I know you could not. But although the friends may, as I have said, not even thank you for your unselfish aid to one whom they had cast out—yet that daughter will not—no, I am satisfied she never will forget your kindness. She is a lovely creature—lovely in her person, and still more so in mind, if I judge her rightly. But what a strange development of fortune, or I ought to say, of Providence, in her case! You flew to her relief, supposing her to be a poor friendless child—and so she was then, and but for the over-ruling hand of God, so she would have been now. A few days later, and her rights would have been lost forever. She is now a wealthy heiress—a very wealthy heiress, indeed!"

Had an electric shock, without the least previous



notice, passed through the frame of Herbert Jones, he could not have been more affected, than by these last words that fell upon his ear.

He had, indeed, been somewhat curious to know for what intent the gentleman was seeking Mrs. Manners; and was a little uneasy. Why, he could not perhaps have told—or he might not have been willing to do so. Some strange fears had troubled him—fears that his own surmises had been correct, and that this mother and daughter had friends—friends of distinction somewhere. That they had been high-up in life, he was perfectly convinced; and perhaps these friends were now in pursuit, and about to rescue them from poverty. But, oh, shame! Yes, these words he used: “Shame to me for my selfishness! Should I not wish it thus to be? Should I not rejoice to know that help has come?” Yes, he would be glad of it—he would put down every selfish thought and feeling!

He had, however, been more deeply agitated by the few words his mother whispered in his ear, and again his spirits droop, and his fears are waked up, and the airy castle he had been building began to fade from his view.

Herbert was very apt to be engaged in fairy visions—as most young people are. Some of them, indeed, doing more in that way than with their hands in the real work of life. But Herbert never allowed his day-dreams to interfere with his labors or plans for the hour before him, or to cause him to neglect the smallest minutiae of his business.

Yet he would have his spells of being up in the clouds, and away out of sight, sometimes. And this very day, he had been thus engaged, ever since the early interview with his mother, and his walk with Gertrude to his own home that morning, and her presence at his own table. His mind had been all alive with fancies; and a beautiful structure had been reared—too beautiful ever to be real—he might have known that, young as he was, and saved himself some trouble. He knows it now. For in a flash it has vanished—all vanished like a broken bubble. The poor orphan whom he had thought to cherish so

tenderly, proves to be a rich heiress—“very rich, indeed!” Of course there will be friends enough and open houses to receive her—better houses than his poor place. It would be an insult, now, to ask her even to spend a day with them. She would be led into another circle, far enough removed from that in which he could expect to move. The beautiful flower, the costly jewel, has found an owner—it will be reclaimed, and he and his forgotten.

Much quicker than these lines have been written, did such thoughts flash through his mind, and cause it to droop and be sad. Alas, for our selfish hearts! How their baseness crops out through all the better impulses; evident to ourselves if unknown to others.

Herbert had been deeply grieved for her poverty; he ought to have rejoiced in her prosperity, and hailed with delight every ray of gladness which might cheer her amid the gloom and sorrow that still o’ershadowed her.

And she has need of all the cheer her friends can impart. Her young heart has been sorely smitten. To her it seems of little moment that the good tidings have come, since they have come too late; and that is the burden of her cry—“*Too late! too late!* The news has come too late!”

The present has little interest for her now. Her young heart dwells upon the past; those long months and years of sorrow; and when they tell her that she will be independent; that abundant means will be at her command, it springs no joy, it takes not away the sting, that bitter sting, which the remembrance of the past inflicts. One thought alone gives any value to the certainty of her changed condition; and could Herbert have known its purport, and how deeply graven on her heart were those scenes which had passed between him and her, and what was the real value to her of aught she now possessed, and for what end she prized it, he would have felt most thoroughly ashamed.

Herbert, although sorely confounded by the words which Mr. McBride had spoken, did not hesitate at once to reply—

“Indeed, sir, can it be so?”



"Truly, it is; and I have been intrusted with means, so that nothing for her comfort need be denied to her. It was, indeed, more immediately designed for the mother, but she has gone beyond the reach of friends; all will now, of course, be used for the benefit of the child; so that the generous offer you and your mother have made, will be more valuable to yourselves, now, than to her. You will not lose your reward."

"We have not anticipated any reward, sir."

"I am aware of that; but your kind act will not be overlooked at the great reckoning; and I cannot but hope you may yet, in this world, receive that return which is your due."

Mr. McBride, as the reader knows, had been a witness to the destruction of the last will and testament of Robert Kirkland; and had also been requested to undertake the task of hunting up Mrs. Manners and her husband, for the purpose of affording them at once all that was necessary to place them in circumstances of comfort. This had been communicated to him by Randolph Hudson, at Mr. Kirkland's request, and funds to the amount of five thousand dollars placed in his hands, with the assurance that abundant provision would henceforth be made for them, should his life be extended, and that at his death they would share equally with his two daughters.

The letter which Mrs. Manners had written to her grandfather, was a partial guide to him in his search for her; but he could only trace her removal to two other places of residence; each place clearly indicating to him the fact that she and her husband were gradually sinking down among the very dregs of the city's population. Baulked, at length, in his efforts, he had applied to an old friend, Mr. D. Granite, who introduced him to Mr. Peckham, as the person most likely to afford the requisite aid; and this latter gentleman, being much pressed for time just then, referred him to Herbert Jones, who he knew was acquainted with a Mrs. Manners living in his neighborhood.

The errand upon which Mr. McBride had come, as things had turned out, involved more care and responsibility than he anticipated when he so readily agreed to

undertake it. Mrs. Manners, the peculiar object of interest, was now beyond the reach of human sympathy; but the earthly remains must be cared for. His first thought was to have them removed at once to her native home, but he knew not what might be the condition of things there, and a scene of confusion might be the consequence of such a step. He therefore concluded to procure a temporary abode for the body in a vault attached to St. Mark's church, from whence it could, at some future time, be removed at the pleasure of her daughter. And on the morrow after the day of her decease, the hearse was at the door of Mrs. Jones's dwelling, whither the corpse had been removed, and a single carriage, with four mourners, followed it to the place of graves.

### CHAPTER XIII.

RANDOLPH HUDSON felt that a great work had been accomplished when Mr. McBride started on his way to the city, in search of her who had once been the light of Kirkland Place; but his mind was not quite at ease; he had strong suspicions that the matter would not be allowed to rest where it was, and that trouble, in some shape, would come out of it. Mr. Kirkland, he knew, had been, during the latter part of his sickness, peculiarly under the influence of his daughters; and it was a great wonder to him, how his old master had gathered strength of purpose sufficient to enable him to carry out, in such a decided manner, the act of destroying his will; especially after the interview with one of the ladies. He was also much surprised that Miss Gerty had, on that occasion, conducted with such apparent calmness. That she suspected something wrong, was very certain; and that her father had allowed her to believe that he designed making some change in the disposition of his property, he was also sure; but how far he had informed her, Randolph could not guess. He was not, however, long in doubt.

On the morning after the scene of destroying the will, as recorded in a previous chapter, Randolph had been away for more than two hours from the room of Mr. Kirkland, on some special business abroad; a very unusual occurrence, and, of course, it must be a very serious matter; something of consequence, or he would not have been spared so long.

His return was, therefore, watched, and before he could get into the sick-chamber, a private servant of one of the ladies requested him, at the order of her mistress, to come into their presence. He did not like the purport of the message, and for a moment was on the point of declining; but never before having ventured upon such resistance to their authority, and fearing the conse-

quence, not so much on his own account as for that of Mr. Kirkland, he resolved to obey. Both ladies were in the room, and apparently waiting his attendance. Their looks were not very gracious, and he noticed a tremor in the voice of Miss Gerty, who was the chief speaker, a circumstance which he construed as menacing evil.

"You have been a long time absent from your master this morning. Is it your own business that has called you away?"

"No, Miss Gerty, no special business of my own."

"On whose account, then, have you been for so long a time away from the sick-room?"

"I went at the request of your father, Miss Gerty."

"What business can he have to transact now? He is too near his end to be able to give directions about business matters."

"It is because he thinks himself near his end, Miss Gerty, that he was so anxious to have it done."

"Have what done?"

"Why that business respecting his grand-daughter, Mrs. Mannors. Mr. McBride was going off this morning, and I had some matters to arrange with him before he went. That is all, I assure you, Miss Gerty."

"What has Mr. McBride to do with it?"

"Oh, well, somebody must go. You know, Miss Gerty, that she is in trouble, or was, a good while ago; and Mr. Kirkland is very unhappy on her account, and has been ever since he has seen that letter."

"What letter?"

"Oh, a letter I found among his papers. He had never seen it. It was dated a year ago. She was in distress and in poverty, and begged that he would, for the sake of her child, do something for their help."

There was a pause of some moments after this reply, and Randi had great hopes that the ordeal was through. But he was not to get off so easily.

"And on that account we are to conclude that he has been making an alteration in his will?"

Randi had nothing to say.

"You no doubt assisted. You must have helped him make it, and were one of the witnesses?"

Again no reply.

"You have the will in your possession, or at least you know where it is kept?"

"It is not in my possession, Miss Gerty."

"It is in your possession, as all my father's papers are, and you know it; and it is a shame for you, a man of your age, to prevaricate. It does no credit to your grey hairs."

This was a sensitive point with Randi. The truth in its simplicity he had ever prided himself upon. He was now conscious that he was going round it. Hit or miss, kill or cure, they should know the whole just as he knew it.

"If you must know the whole, Miss Gerty, I can tell you; but mind I do it not of my own accord; it is your own seeking—*there is no will anywhere*. It is destroyed."

Both ladies started to their feet, and made such motions toward Randi that he was fain to take a few steps backward. He seemed to feel it might be safe to be near the door.

An angry woman is one of the most appalling sights men are often called to look upon. They were never made to exhibit the rougher passions. We do not expect such exhibitions from them. They are associated in the minds of the sterner sex with all that is lovely. When we think of them, we think of gentleness, and peace, and calm, sweet smiles, and soft, musical tones, and tears that take hold of our hearts, and stir them from their very depths—of lilies, hiding their beauty beneath glassy green leaves, and violets blooming in the shade, and rose-buds opening in beauty and dripping with the morning dew—filling the air with fragrance. To them we go to get our own passions lulled, and to lose the savor of worldly strife in their sweet communion.

No wonder, then, if when we see, as sometimes in this crooked state of things we do, that face, which was designed to be to us a token of what angelic beings are, all lighted up with the fires of hell, and flashing forth the fury of the demons there, we should shrink from the

sight, and even have terrors take hold upon us, like those which curdle the heart at contact with a wanderer from the pit.

Among the ruder inmates of our world, it does not so much surprise us to see even woman, debased and trodden in the mire, as she must needs be where all is filth and wretchedness, put on the unseemly garb of man, and show his baser passions. But where elegance has spread its charms, and education and refinement of manners had full chance to work a better result—where all that has connection with the baser sort is scorned and kept at bay—to see on the fair brow the bitter scowl, the eye flashing with rage, and the cheek flushed with angry blood, is a sight so monstrous that no man should be blamed if he retreat even in fear and terror.

Randi was no coward, because he had an honest heart. He had never feared his master in his sternest moods; but he had seen enough in his long sojourn with that family, to know that there were passions lurking, in secret from the common world, within the breasts of some of its members, that might be dangerous when aroused. And now he believed, as he afterward said, "that the devil had broke his chain, and nothing but mischief could be looked for."

"You vile, ungrateful miscreant!" and both ladies made at him as they said this, their hands clinched and raised, "you—you—you reptile of the earth, who have wormed yourself from the dust into your master's favor—you—you—you have done this, and you shall rue it to your dying day. You shall—you shall—out of the way—out—out—go quickly!"

Randi had been stepping backward toward the door, he felt it to be the safest way. Big drops had gathered on his brow, and he was conscious that his hair was moving; to speak would only incense them more—that he knew; yet he was so tempted, by his aroused temper, that he essayed to let out something, but for some reason he never could explain, the words would not come. It was better for him, no doubt, that his tongue was mute. As soon as he heard the mandate to depart, he seized the knob, and backward still, rushed out, and went, he said, he

knew not whither or how, but he found himself in the coach-house, dusting the old family carriage; when his reason returned to him, and he remembered that was not his business, and that he was out of his place, and that his master would be wondering where he stayed so long.

He had been thoroughly alarmed. Never before had he felt so humiliated, so completely cowed down; and as he retraced his steps to the house, and walked straight on his way to the sick-room, he feared lest at any turn he might meet those angry faces, and hear those scathing sounds—"Depart—go quickly." But he reached his watch-tower in safety, and for the present felt a little at ease; he could not believe they would pursue him there.

Randi was, however, not wholly at rest. He did not believe the matter would stop there; he knew them too well; but what measures would be taken he could not conjecture.

For two days thereafter more stir was manifest than had been usual for some time. Messengers were sent abroad, and visitors were coming to the house. Squire Rhind, Randi heard, had been sent for, but could not, or more probably preferred not, to come. A lawyer, however, from a distance had been summoned, and had spent some hours in the house in close consultation with the ladies. He was a dubious character, some hesitating not to call him by very hard names. And the physician, Doctor Weatherbee, was apparently quite engaged in matters one side of tending the sick man. Randi, to be sure, did not think very strange of that. The doctor had been for some time in the habit of spending long hours with the ladies, and there were guesses through the family, "that there was business on the carpet between the doctor and Miss Gerty."

He was, and had been for some time, quite a favored visitor. A dashing fellow was Dr. Weatherbee. He was somewhat tall, with large whiskers, a bushy head of hair, very thick lips, good teeth, frequently displayed; white hands, quite small, and delicate feet for so large a man. He rode a fine horse, and rode him well, and he had a flow of talk—rather small talk—and knew enough

to make himself agreeable; and that his company was quite agreeable to Miss Gerty, had been told to Randi by one of the waiting-maids who was in Randi's confidence.

Strange! but so it is sometimes. Miss Gerty might certainly have made a choice among her equals in the world; at least she could easily have done so at an earlier date. Perhaps she regretted this had not been done, and was willing now to take what offered in a decent shape.

The doctor was younger than Miss Gerty—some said ten years—but ten years! of what consequence would that be as an offset to Kirkland Place, with its broad acres and noble manor-house, besides other doweries, no telling how great? It would be much easier work, tending an aged wife, even should she live, than riding with saddle-bags behind him and making pills. No doubt the doctor thought of this, and made his calculations "wisely, if not well."

But the doctor was a favorite, and he felt at home about the premises, and Randi knew it, and said to himself, if not aloud: "He's welcome to her, but if they both don't rue the day, I'll miss my guess."

Therefore, the fact of Dr. Weatherbee's having been there, and stayed a little longer than common, and even the fact of his holding a consultation with the lawyer, did not so much disturb Randi. It was rather a relief to his mind, for he thought it not unlikely that Miss Gerty and the doctor might be bringing matters to a close; perhaps they might wish to do it now, before the father's death; and in some way Randi imagined things might be made smoother by such an event. He had the idea, probably, that they would have enough to do when once linked together to attend to some personal matters between themselves—at least so he afterward said.

The evening had closed in, and Randi had arranged all things for the night, and prayed beside the bed the usual prayer; when, as he arose from his knees and fixed his eye upon the sick man, he thought he could plainly see that his end was drawing near; the signs were more manifest now than they had been at any time before.

He had been growing weaker daily; he could no more be taken from his bed, and his mind, for some days, had manifested the imbecility of childhood. It was sane, indeed, but seemed to have lost all power of resistance to the will of another. So different from what it formerly was, or had been, until the few days past. And Randi thought, as he looked at him, how easy it would be, if physical strength had been left to him to use his pen, for the daughters to accomplish whatever design they chose. He would, no doubt, sign any instrument they should place before him. That they had some such design, he yet believed.

There was a gentle tap at the door, and he stepped to open it. He perceived that it was Margaret, the maid already alluded to as in his confidence. She stood at some little distance from the door, and beckoned him toward her, and as he came up, he saw that she was deadly pale.

Oh, Randi! Randi! what shall be done? There is the strange lawyer, and the doctor, and another man, and Miss Gerty, and Miss Lizzy! and they are all getting ready to come up here and make Mr. Kirkland sign something or another. I don't know what it is, but I've overheard them planning it all out, and I'm afraid there'll be trouble. It will be the death of the master; don't you think so? And they will be up here soon, mind my words!"

Randi, for a moment, was scarcely able to stand. His knees smote together, and almost refused to sustain their burden. "The Lord help us!" he inwardly exclaimed; but not a word did he utter that Margaret could hear. She surely thought he had lost his senses.

"What shall be done, Randi? Do think of something, and it must be done quick, too."

"Do you go to Will, and tell him for me to jump on the best horse and ride as for his life to Mr. McBride's, and if he is at home ask him to come here as quick as possible, and then tell him to hurry on to Squire Rhind, and summon him and tell him I sent for him."

"I will;" and the girl hurried away, and Randi again entered the room.

Randi was about to say something to Mr. Kirkland, but checked himself; he knew it could do no good, for if the daughters chose, now, they could persuade him to anything. His only hope was that his weakness would prevent the signing of any paper—"he could not do that if it was to save his soul." But Randi little knew to what lengths pride and avarice will lead even children in the accomplishment of their own base ends.

In justice, however, to those daughters we must say, it was pride rather than love of money which had aroused their feelings and was leading them on. They did indeed love money; but that alone would never have induced them to take unjustifiable measures to accomplish the end they had now in view. A division of the property by law, would place them very much in the hands of strangers, and especially where there was an heir on an equal footing with themselves.

The manorial estate, too, which had been so long held in a body, must, in that case, be broken up. The dwelling, also, what was to become of that? Together, the two sisters might inhabit it, as they had hitherto, even should one of them choose to marry; but a third party would defeat any such arrangement.

These reasons were doubtless the moving cause to all the disturbance they suffered; and had they, at the right time, put down their selfish feelings, and, when they knew that she who had an equal right with them was suffering in poverty, exerted their influence to have abundant provision made for the sufferer, all their present disquiet might have been avoided—"When we sow to the wind, we must expect to reap the whirlwind."

Margaret had prophesied truly: whatever was to be done, must be done quickly. She had not been long gone, before footsteps were heard approaching the room. The door was quietly opened. Dr. Weatherbee, with a smile on his face, entered and walked up to the bed-side, and commenced, in quite a loud tone, asking questions of the sick man which he had asked hundreds of times before. No answer was made to them, and none was probably expected. The ladies followed immediately



after the doctor, and the two strangers made up the rear. As they clustered about the bed, Mr. Kirkland looked at each in turn, and then at his daughters for an explanation.

In the most gentle and soothing tone, Gerty, who was the managing partner on all such important occasions, thus addressed him:

"You know, dear father, you told me to-day that you were willing to do what I requested. I have had the paper drawn, and all is ready; and these gentlemen"—they did not look much like gentlemen—"have come here, at my request, to witness your signature. You need give yourself no uneasiness about the matter. You know you have my promise that all shall be made right in reference to your grand-daughter, Gertrude."

At the mention of that name, new ideas seemed to cross the mind of the dying man.

"Poor child! We must take care of her. She must be sent for."

"She shall be, father. You leave all the care of that to me—to your Gerty. I have promised, you know."

"Oh, yes, promised, so you did; what did you promise?"

"That I would see to it—and Lizzy has promised too—to see to it that Gertrude shall never want."

Randi had withdrawn somewhat from his usual station, but he was near enough to see and hear what passed. A shudder ran over his frame as this last remark came out in such honeyed tones. He was sorely tempted to speak his mind, but his better judgment decided to keep quiet and await the issue.

Mr. Kirkland made no reply to the last remark of his daughter, but seemed to be sinking again into that dreamy state in which he lay when they entered the room. That he was in a dying condition must have been evident to all.

The doctor, seeing, no doubt, how matters were, touched the arm of Miss Gerty, and she stepped back while he whispered a few words. Their purport no one but herself could hear, but immediately thereafter she proceeded to business, and putting her arms around her

father, attempted to raise him up. It was, however, a task beyond her strength.

"Randolph, here, raise my father—you are used to it."

Randolph Hudson, however, had made up his mind that, come what would, not a finger of his should meddle with the business, so he remained stationary, not even making a reply. Again Miss Gerty spoke, in a much sterner tone.

"Randolph, Randolph, do you hear?—assist in raising my father."

As every eye was now turned toward him, he felt called upon to let them know what he thought of the case.

"He is in no condition to be lifted, madam." (He had never in his life before used that term to either of the ladies.) "He is a dying man, and it is shameful to disturb him—shameful!"

Without in the least noticing this reply, Miss Gerty motioned to the doctor. He was a stout man, and yet it was with no small effort that he accomplished the task; and as the poor sufferer arose, Miss Gerty sprang upon the bed behind him, and his person rested for support against her. He made no resistance, and was evidently unable to make any. His head hung drooping to his breast, his under jaw relaxed with the death slime dripping from his chin. His arms lay helpless on the bed, as powerless as if bandaged for the grave.

All now was haste; the paper, spread upon a tablet, was placed immediately before him—the pen was placed between his fingers, and Miss Lizzy clasped them, and was in the act of putting the instrument to the paper, when a sudden twitch startled her. She looked at his face, and uttering a scream, dropped the pen and seized his head—there was a slight hiccough—and Robert Kirkland was no more.

The consternation and confusion of the moment can better be conceived than described. Miss Lizzy had fainted, and was borne away by the servants, who were immediately called, while the doctor was absorbed in endeavoring to allay the excitement of the younger



daughter, who was almost bereft of reason—at least had no power to restrain her feelings. They—that is—the daughters, had not anticipated the probable consequences of their rash attempt, or we must believe they would never have been guilty of it. They were not without natural affection—they had certainly ever manifested a filial spirit. Doubtless they persuaded themselves that a great wrong had been done to them; and that, at the instigation of others, they would be justified in any measures which would place matters as they had been formerly arranged. All this we must hope. But when the fact broke upon them that they had disturbed their father in the very act of dying—when they felt the quiver that shook his frame, and saw the stamp of death flash over his features—the feelings of the child overpowered all other considerations, and nature assumed her sway.

The strangers soon slunk away; they saw there was no further business for them. And soon Randi was left in sole charge of the remains of his old master.

Mr. McBride and Esquire Rhind did not reach the house until all was over, and as they perceived what catastrophe had taken place, were not surprised that Randi had sent for them in such haste. They had both offered their aid at any time he should need it; so when they came into the room, they merely said to the old man:

"We have come too late! Had he his reason?"

"Yes, but he dropped off sudden—sooner than I thought for."

"What can we do for you now?"

"Nothing, to-night. But in the morning, if you can be here, no doubt your services, gentlemen, will be very acceptable, to take some measures for the funeral."

Yes, the rich man must be buried; he has at last been brought down to the common level; the same decay of vital energy, the same breaking off from earth, and letting go of earthly care and earthly joy; the same dark cloud that shuts down upon the outcast and the wretched on their bed of straw, has shut down upon him; he has gone as the humblest, the vilest must go, and the last

throe was as bitter to him as though he had never owned a title deed to a larger space of land, than sufficient to receive his lifeless body.

But he must be buried—for he had been rich—and friends must be notified, and all things must be done consistently with his high position and his vast estate. Mourners might or might not be there; but the trappings of woe must by no means be forgotten.

He had done little to benefit mankind—his heart had never yearned over the poor or the unfortunate—nor been thrilled with the consciousness of having poured oil of consolation into some wounded spirit.

When his name was spoken, no tongue blessed it—and no heart was made sad, when in the place where he had lived and was best known, the tidings spread, "that Robert Kirkland was no more."

For himself he had lived. Abundance had always been at his command, and every wish he indulged which money could procure had been gratified. But had he been happy? Had life been to him that fairy scene which its external surroundings symbolized. Those green lawns and venerable shades, those picturesque views through opening vistas, the noble river sparkling in beauty from every part of vision, the grand old mansion, so strong, so well proportioned, so replete with comforts and stored with treasures of art—all these had failed to fill his heart with one joyous gush of feeling. He knew not what stores of enjoyment were at his command, and had been through his long life—what untold means of happiness were under his lock and key. Those thousands beyond what his want demanded—oh, how many hearts would they have lightened! how many brows furrowed by the pressing cares of life would they have smoothed! how many homes saved from desolation, where orphans might have been clustered beneath a mother's care, who, by the unsparing hand of penury, had been scattered among heartless relatives; or, alone in the wide world, amid its temptations, pined for a spot where they could nestle near a loving heart. How many struggling with their manhood's might, against the swift, strong tide of ruin, might, with a fraction of his

unused wealth, have breasted the sweeping current, and escaped the whirlpool and the cataract. What a band of strong hands and warm hearts he might have gathered around his pathway of life, ready to bless his hoary locks, and steady his tottering steps; to smooth his dying pillow; to pray for his departing spirit; to bear him tenderly to the grave; and then, to stand and shed the tear of sorrow that they should see his face no more. Alas, for his wasted life!—wasted with all his means for making it a blessing to his kind.

But he must be buried. And there was a large gathering at the old manor house—and costly wines were served by liveried servants; and a long procession in solemn silence followed the splendid coffin to the old churchyard—and the service for the dead was chanted, and ashes to ashes, and dust to dust, pronounced with becoming reverence, and the earth was piled above him. But no orphan nor widow's tear fell upon his grave.

## CHAPTER XIV.

MR. McBRIDE had made arrangements with Mrs. Jones, for the present, that Gertrude should remain under her care; leaving in her hands abundant means to satisfy herself for the board of the young lady, and for other wants which her new situation might require.

To Gertrude it was, indeed, a sweet resting spot, after the care, and toil, and privation to which she had been so long exposed; and could she have forgotten the past, she would have been almost too happy; for her heart clung with strong attachment to that lovely woman, who, with a mother's gentleness and care, was constant with every attention that the young mourner could need. Gertrude did not, indeed, trouble the friends about her with needless lamentations; she bore up, as they all felt, with much resolution under her loss; she threw herself, with her whole heart, into their interest, and was ever ready, with her own hands, to engage in anything that could administer to their mutual comfort.

The change in her circumstances did not appear to have wrought any change in the simplicity of her character. She was arrayed, indeed, in a very different style from that in which she had been first introduced to their notice; and doubtless her appearance, in the eyes of many, was much improved; and her purse was well filled and her little room handsomely furnished. But all these changes made no apparent difference in her behavior; nor could they heal the sore in that young heart; her day of sorrow and humiliation had been too severe to be obliterated by any present prosperity.

Through the day, Herbert was fully employed, and never indulged himself with the pleasure of joining the little circle in the back room; but when the evening had begun to draw to a close, he would have the door opened, and placing himself within call, should a customer come in, give himself up to full enjoyment. Willie would then

come, and placing a stool beside his brother, busy himself with the kitten; and Ellen, as near him on the other side as she could be, for she loved that good brother dearly, and seemed to feel so happy in looking up to him as she used to do to her loving father. Herbert had, indeed, taken more than a brother's place in her heart; and no wonder; for his treatment of these two lambs of the flock had been most tender; for since their father's death he had taken the place of a protector, and his heart was nerved with fresh energy whenever he looked upon them and thought of their dependence on his efforts. Mrs. Jones and Gertrude, too, would remove their seats to be as near him as they could; and after the little scenes of the day had been talked over, a book was taken up; for Herbert had acquired a taste for reading, and they all loved to hear him read aloud; and sometimes, when *she* thought that he must be tired, Gertrude would offer to supply his place, and as her voice was so musical, and Herbert said he could remember better when he heard another read, this often was the case. But whether he listened to the subject of the book, or was lulled into pleasant musings by those sweet tones, does not matter now. Those evenings were fascinating to his young heart—they made a deep impress there—never to be erased during the sorrows and changes of his future life.

One day—it was long enough after the trying scenes she had passed through at the death of her mother to be able to recur to them with composure—she had been sitting alone in the little back room, Mrs. Jones having walked abroad with the children; hearing no footsteps in the store, and judging that Herbert was alone, she arose and opened the door. Herbert was at his desk, but seeing Gertrude, he immediately left his post and walked toward her. She looked unusually serious, and he thought he could perceive the marks of recent tears. As he came up, she put out her hand, and he at once clasped it. They had not thus embraced since she had been an inmate of his family.

In a moment his face flushed deeply, for he felt that there was something else in his grasp beside that fleshy

treasure. She noticed the change in his countenance, and feared she had done wrong; but, looking at him with intense interest, she said:

"Oh, pardon me, if I have hurt your feelings; but do, do, please do, take it."

Her voice trembled greatly. He released her hand, and gave a glance at the deposit she had left, and saw at once that, for every silver piece he had once given her, a piece of gold was in its place.

At once his spirit rose, and thoughts with which he was now often troubled flew into his mind. He thought—ah, how ungenerous it was!—that she felt desirous of cancelling an obligation; and Herbert was too apt, when much excited, to let out his feelings:

"This will much more than cancel that debt—if as such you have regarded it."

The manner in which she had placed it in his hands, and the words she used—the very words which, in his noble earnestness, he had spoken at the time—assured him that this act of hers was intended to remind him of that deed of his.

"Oh, my brother!" Gertrude had used that title of late; and although Herbert did not, for reasons of his own, fancy being thus addressed by her, yet he could not object, although he never called her sister Gertrude—in fact, he seldom called her by any name. He was peculiar in his treatment of her sex—"Miss Gertrude," it was at first; and then, at her request, he dropped the miss, and had, perhaps on one or two occasions, called her Gertrude; but, in general, all names or titles were omitted. But to her, it seemed quite easy to say "brother," and sometimes, but not often, it was "brother Herbert," although she always blushed when she called him so. Why, it might be difficult to say. Perhaps it seemed to her too great a liberty; for she respected him, and could easily have called him "Mr. Jones," if it would not have sounded strangely to those around her. "Brother," she found no difficulty in saying—and appeared to like the sound of it. In the agony of her feelings, now, she brought him, in her own mind, at least, nearer to her.

"Oh, my brother! can you suppose I meant"—She could not, for a moment, proceed further; she could only fix her eyes, glistening with tears, steadily upon him:

"Oh, can you suppose I ever expect to cancel that debt? No, never—never! Do you think that I have set a price upon an act so noble; or that I would wish to drive from my memory that deed of love? Oh, judge me not so, dear brother!"

Herbert grasped her hand again.

"Forgive me—oh, do forgive me! It was only a thought that came up at the moment. I know, now, it was an ugly thought. I am too sensitive, I know I am, about my circumstances. I am poor now, and you are rich—our situations are so different that, before I am aware, I am affected by it. I am proud—naughty—and you are"—

"Your dear sister; and such I will ever be—that is, if you will let me—if you wish me so to be."

He could not—no, even then, in all honesty he could not answer yea. But he held her hand, and she was made to feel that indifference to her had no place in the thoughts that were passing through his heart, and she continued:

"Rich and poor! And you place me in contrast with yourself. You say I am rich and that you are poor; and yet you allow me to call you brother, and you acknowledge me, I know you do, as your dear sister. I am sure your heart does, although you never speak the word. And do you think, because I cannot now take all that may be mine, and place it in your hands, and say, 'Here, dear brother, take this, and let me feel from this hour a dependent upon you, and come to you for all I want,' that it would not be my pleasure so to do?"

"Gertrude, dear Gertrude, please say no more; only pardon me."

"And will you never feel again, nor ever say the hateful words, that I am rich and you are"—She would have added "poor," but she could not say it, her whole heart had been so stricken by his past kindness—by that simple act of love for her, when he believed she was in

want, and did not wish to tell him of it, when he could not, by any possibility, have expected a return; and beyond all that, his conduct toward her had been so tender, and so courteous!—a boon which poverty, she knew, had no right to ask. For all this, she felt, no amount of wealth was too much—no service she could render too costly—her life only of value, and its means of enjoyment too, only as he could be a participant; and how could she, feeling thus, speak the word that would sunder them so widely, even in imagination?

Herbert saw how deeply she was affected, and again he said:

"I never will do anything to give you pain, dear Gertrude."

"Say sister; do—do for once. I want to hear you acknowledge me as such; I do not remember that you have called me by that title yet."

What could he do?

"Dear, dear sister!" and he sealed the title with a—

How could he help it? She was looking up to him with so much simple earnestness, love speaking from every feature of her beautiful countenance. He had never, indeed, taken such a liberty before. But how could he help it now? Nor did she seem to feel that he had gone beyond the bounds, or overstepped the proper mark. She blushed, indeed, but without prudery accepted the token that, as brother and sister, they were now united.

"And now this naughty business is over, I want to ask a favor of you."

"Anything in my power to grant."

"I want you to accompany me this evening to that place where once you went with me—that terribly dark and sorrowful night, when you carried my bundles and let me lean upon your arm. Oh! you little knew then how very, very glad I was to have some one by me. I was so weak and faint, and everything was so terribly, terribly sad! Did you not think strange that I leaned so heavily upon you?"

"Oh, no; I only imagined that at times, when the

lightning was so vivid, you pressed my arm more closely, as though you were somewhat timid."

"I was afraid—how much I suffered then, no one will ever know!—not from fear alone, although in general I am timid in a thunder storm. But I cannot tell you how very, very awful the clouds then looked to me; and every flash of lightning, and every mutter of the distant thunder, seemed as though God was angry with me! And then so sick was dear mamma, and all our means exhausted! You can never know how bad I felt when I came in here and laid my money down, and asked you for those things. Did I not act strangely?"

"By no means; only you seemed confused, and you looked very sad, and I thought, perhaps, you were alarmed by the darkness, and the coming storm, and"—

"You pitied me; and you thought, too, of other things that troubled me—I know you did. I have never seen you since look just as you did then; and I shall never, never forget it. Nor shall I forget how secure I felt when walking beside you. I was sure then that you must have been used to waiting on a little sister of your own. How little did I then think that I should ever be your sister too, and call you brother, and know that it was all in earnest, too!"

"But I am forgetting what I was going to say to you. I want to see that good woman who lived under our room, and used to come up so kindly and help me. I can't forget her. She looked not very nice, poor woman, but no doubt she could not help that—and she was rough spoken—but not to me; she could not help that either—so very poor—and obliged to work so hard—and among such rough people—and rough doings all around her. I want to see her—will you go with me there?"

"Oh, certainly, by all means, with pleasure."

"This evening, then—and I will tell you, on the way, what I design to do for her. Will you have leisure?"

"No doubt—as well this evening as any other."

Herbert was seldom away from his store of an evening, except for a few moments at a time. But when he felt it necessary that he should spend an hour or so

abroad, he had a resource in a neighbor with whom he had become quite intimate—a young man, but yet some years older than Herbert. He had been unfortunate in business down town, and was now out of employ. He had taken a fancy to Herbert, and what few stores he needed for his family he had purchased from him. He was quite a business character, and had been in many ways of essential service to the young store-keeper, and was always ready, when there, to give a helping hand, and in this way had become familiar with the customers, and with the locality, and prices of the various articles for sale. He was a free, off-hand fellow—a little rough in his manners, and somewhat too much so in his language, although for some reason quite guarded before Herbert. He had a generous heart, high notions of honor and integrity, although rather loose in religious matters; he had imbibed a prejudice against ministers and professors of religion, but seldom let out his views so as to trouble any one who did not in some way provoke him to an utterance of his views and feelings. Why James Vanblarcom—for that was the gentleman's name—should have taken such a fancy to Herbert, and why the presence of one so much younger than himself should have been a restraint upon him in any way, can only be accounted for from the fact, that being, with all his peculiarities, an honest man at heart, and one whose judgment was affected rather by the conduct of men than by their speech or profession, he saw that in Herbert which commanded his respect, and he readily yielded it. We shall meet Mr. Vanblarcom again in the course of our story, and therefore have been thus particular in giving an outline of his character.

Herbert found his friend at leisure, and ready to be his substitute for the short time he designed to be absent.

The most direct route to Hunker's Alley, we fear, was not selected by Herbert that evening, for it took more than twice the usual time to get there. He was very willing to extend the walk to any length, if only for the pleasure of having that—shall we call her sister?—leaning on his arm, and telling him some little plans she had



in view, and asking his opinion, and submitting all her own views to what she was pleased to call his better judgment. It was moonlight, too—and moonlight even in New York has witchery in it, when the heart is young and free from care. So, if their walk was somewhat circuitous, Gertrude did not notice it, or if she did, seemed very willing that it should be so.

Hunker's Alley, however, is reached at last; and the bright queen of heaven sheds her sweet beams as freely here as on and around the dwellings of the rich—alas! only to light up and make more hideous the dens of misery there clustered.

Gertrude heaved a sigh as she entered the unsightly place, and grasped the arm she leaned upon more closely, but neither spoke.

"Good morning, Mrs. Kelly."

"Good morning to you, miss."

But the good woman, although answering the salutation at once, still stood with the door ajar, and herself filling up its entrance, as though not ready to welcome the visitors, or in doubt whether they had any intention of coming in. Mrs. Kelly seldom had visitors of their appearance.

"You have not forgotten me!"

It was not very light, and the lady being dressed in black, and her veil partly obscuring her face, it is not to be wondered at that the person addressed should have doubts whether she and her visitor had ever met before. She glanced her eye, however, toward the gentleman, and then exclaimed:

"Can it be you, you dear love, and I not knowing you!" And then throwing wide her door, "Will you be coming in? I'm 'most afraid to ask you—it's no very decent place—but it's welcome you are, anyhow."

Mrs. Kelly had seized Gertrude's hand with both of hers, and seemed almost about to take her in her arms and give her a hug. If it had not been for the change in the appearance of the young lady, this would no doubt have been the next step in her reception.

The two young persons without hesitation walked in, and were both surprised at seeing how much more tidy

things were than formerly. The floor had evidently been well scrubbed, and the table had a white cloth upon it, and the bed, in which lay two of her children, was orderly. And Mrs. Kelly herself had on a clean cap and a new dress, and her face, as she held the candle up to survey Miss Gertrude, after she had taken a seat, looked as though a new skin had also been put upon that.

"Do you believe me, miss, I was just waiting for my Bill to come home—for I daren't leave the children alone—to come round to see you, and this young gentleman, too, to thank you, and the mother, and all of you, for the token ye sent me. Ah! you dear young lady, may God bless you!"

And Mrs. Kelly had to take her apron, and sit down, and have a little time of it. Gertrude could say nothing just then; so for some moments there was silence in the little room. With rather a broken voice, Mrs. Kelly at length began:

"You think of the poor, I see! The Lord bless you for that."

"I have reason to think of *you*, Mrs. Kelly. I do not know what I should have done without your kind aid. And you gave us help when you could have expected no return—no compensation."

"Don't speak of it, my dear love—don't speak of that! It is not much, you know, that poor folks like us can do. But when I see your poor, dear mother that's gone—poor, dear love—the Lord rest her soul—lying there, and you, poor thing, a trying to do your best, and no friends coming near you, till this dear young gentleman brought his mother that last night, how could I help doing what in me lay? Ah! none knows but the poor, what it is to be friendless and alone. Oh, it is a hard world that some of us have!"

The reference to her mother had stirred up the smothered feelings of Gertrude, and she, too, for a time, had to give way to her tears. As soon as she could command her feelings, she replied:

"I have come round this evening to talk with you, Mrs. Kelly, and see what it is I can do for your comfort."



"Oh, you love, have you not done enough already—and more than enough? It has put me clean on my feet again, and given me a little heart. You see, miss, I got almost broke down and discouraged. It's hard work making one's way all alone, and the childer so young, and the rents so high, and the money so hard to be come at. But when this young gentleman—the Lord bless him for his kind heart, for I see the tear in his eye—when he took out the ten dollars which you sent, and said it was for me, an angel from heaven couldn't have looked brighter to me than he did—I knew for certain he was gladder than if it had been given to himself."

And Mrs. Kelly had to pause again; her feelings were all on fire.

"You see, miss, it's very hard to make the ends meet—work to be sure I have, but it's small pay at the best. And then you know folks that one works for don't always think how much a poor person wants the little they earn. It's many a hard day's work I've done, miss, and walked may be a mile to do it, taking clothes home that I have washed—or may be working by the day; and then when all is done, word will be sent down by the servant that the mistress has no change, or may be she'll be gone out and left nothing to pay me. And many is the time I've come home and given the childer what might be on hand, and myself gone to bed with not a morsel to stay my hunger; and then I have to watch for the rent day—it comes by the week, and if it is not on hand, I'm liable to be shifted into the street, and not a covering for my head or my childer with me. Oh, dear! oh, dear! it's a weary world—it is for them that has to live by the good will of others."

"What rent do you pay, Mrs. Kelly?"

"Why, my young gentleman, it may seem but a little to you, but to my mind it's a high rent for such a poor place—it's ten shillings a week for this room—you see what it is. But I am fain glad to keep it, for landlords is suspicious, and them that have more decenter places to rent, they want security or the pay in advance, and the like of me can do neither one nor the other."

"And this is not a good place, I should think, for you to get work?"

"No, sir, the place is not very respectable. I don't know that the folks are so bad at heart, but they are poor, and some on 'em is lazy, and they are rough in their speech, and no very decent in their behavior sometimes, and rich folks and them that wants our work are loth to come here; but it's the best we can do. I know some think we are all a bad set, and need correcting, and they bring us tracts and so on, and talk about our going to church and all that. They mean well, no doubt, but sometimes, I think, if they would leave us a bit of money, or do something to help us out of the mire we are in, we might have more heart to the good books and the good advice. It's hard minding other things when the cupboard has no food in it, and the childer is hungry, and the rent day at hand, and the money wanting."

"Well, Mrs. Kelly," said Gertrude, "I have come, as I told you, to see what I can do to help you. I want to get you into some better place. Don't you think if Mr. Jones here could find a room for you where the neighborhood is more respectable, a decent room, and where you could have the use of a good well of water in the yard, and conveniences for drying clothes, and where your rent would be paid for you, do you think, under such circumstances, by taking in washing, you can earn enough to support yourself and children comfortably?"

"Oh, miss, what is it you are saying?" and Mrs. Kelly raised both her hands and looked at Gertrude, as though she was in great doubt whether she at all understood what she had said.

"Well, I'll tell you the whole of it now, Mrs. Kelly. I am not satisfied with what little I have done to recompense you for the kindness you showed to me when I was in great need of your help, and I have engaged my friend, here, to look up a place for you. He knows of one that he thinks you will be pleased with. It is a small house near to where we live; it has two rooms in it, the neighborhood is good, and there is quite a yard to it, and a well of water in it, and to-morrow morning he is to engage it—to you it will be rent free—and"—

But Gertrude could proceed no further, for Mrs. Kelly had sunk on her knees and was clasping the dear young girl in his arms, and sobbing like a child.

"May Heaven bless you, you dear love, and is it true that you are saying to me, and can you do it?"

"I can, dear Mrs. Kelly; and while I live, you shall never want."

The poor woman was quite overcome, and for some time could only pour out her feelings in loud crying.

It was to both the sympathizing youth a lesson which doubtless they will not forget. This woman had, to appearance, a stern and rough temper. Herbert had thought so when he first saw her; and no doubt to many others she would have seemed far beyond that point where the soft and gentle feelings can have play. And they might have felt that she was a proper subject for a tract on profane swearing, or Sabbath-breaking, or on cleanly habits. And they might have talked to her about the propriety of setting an example to her family, of reverence for the holy day, or on the necessity of preparing for death. And possibly her answers might not have been very gracious, and they would have parted from her with the belief that she was a hardened reprobate, and have sighed over her indifference to religious truth, and consoled their own consciences with the thought that they had done their duty, and felt relieved when they retired from her presence. Ah! could they have seen these tears flowing like rain, and the whole fountain of her being, as it were, gushing forth its fullness, and her arms encircling that lovely girl, and heard her ardent cry to Him who made us all, for his richest blessings on her young life, they would have learned that there is a better way to reach the hearts of the poor and wretched. That while the pressure of want bears its heavy weight upon the heart, and hope has fled, and destitution and misery are before the sufferer, it is very hard to put on a cheerful air, or a mild demeanor, or to pay much heed to that which has not immediate connection with the wants of the present hour. Amid the unseemliness of all around her, she has still a human heart! It has been embittered because of

impositions she has suffered, and she has often cursed the rich in her heart, and no doubt with her lips, too; and she has been regardless of appearances, because all about her was unseemly, and no one cared for her state. She has, perhaps, not even been as careful of the little which she had as she might have been, because that little was so far beneath her necessities, and the prospect of adding to it so hopeless. But her heart has not been hardened. The better feelings are still alive; they are testifying to the fact by that impassioned embrace and those floods of tears. All have come forth at the touch of kindness and sympathy, to claim kindred with the pure and true.

As Mrs. Kelly relinquished her hold of Gertrude, and arose, still wiping away her tears, she said:

"I'm most afraid you will be quite ashamed of me, and think I have been unmannerly in my outbreak, miss. But how can I help it?"

"Oh, Mrs. Kelly, I would not have you help it. I am only too happy to know that I can do anything that will aid and comfort you. And if you will come round to where we live to-morrow morning, I will go with you and show you the house, and my—Mr. Jones, here, will, I know, help you to get a cartman, and you can move in, right away; for, if he has no objections, we will go round that way to-night and secure the house for you. And remember, your rent will all be paid in advance for a year; so you will have no trouble on your mind on that account."

"It's a great kindness that you are doing for me, miss, and it makes me feel very strange, I assure you. I cannot tell you all now. But it seems as though the dark night had all at once lifted up and the day was breaking—just, too, when I was thinking how long, and dark, and cold, and dreary it was to be. The Lord is good, after all, though I have sometimes had hard thoughts. He is good—for although I thank *you*, dear love, and feel that my hand shall ever be raised at your need, no matter what it may be, and that my heart will always bless you; yet, you'll pardon me if I say that it is the Lord has put this into your young heart—it is his

doings. You will not be thinking hard of me for saying it."

"Far from it, Mrs. Kelly. Oh, I am so glad to have you feel just as you say you do! To-morrow morning, then, I may expect to see you?"

"Sure as the day comes, and I am alive to see it! But there will be no sleeping to be done this night; for I shall be afeard when I awake that it will seem but like a dream together. I shall want to keep fast hold of things—for it is all too good to be real and true. I shall be there early, you may depend on that. And are you always a-going to live where you are? I have heard tell that you are related to great folks; and I've been thinking that may be they would be for taking you among them."

"I shall stay where I am, at present."

"You will have a blessing, be where you may—and you too, my young gentleman."

The walk home was apparently not so pleasant as might have been anticipated after the scene they had witnessed—both seemed to be absorbed in thought. A shadow had suddenly come over the brightness of the landscape, like the mist that gathers over the noonday sun, when no clouds have been seen floating in the sky.

## CHAPTER XV.

It is evening, and Mr. Blagg has not yet finished his labors for the day. The store is closed, and he is alone in the office, balancing his cash. Everything is in order about the room. It is well lighted, and as the weather is becoming cool, a fire is in the grate. The outer door of the store is opened, and he hears a sprightly step advancing; he turns his eye to the clock, and, as a young man enters his office, he nods his head, and says:

"Good evening—you are punctual."

"Am I? Well, I have tried to be, uncle. How do you do this evening?"

"Bright as a dollar—sit down—be ready for you in a moment—cash one half cent short—some mistake in addition."

And Mr. Blagg runs his hand up and down a column of figures.

"Ah, I see—thought it must be so—all straight now."

And the books are closed and placed behind him in the iron safe—the lock springs—the key goes into his inside pocket, and, limping as he steps away from his stool, he takes his seat beside the youth.

"How are all the folks this evening?"

"All well—but they have a house full of company, and I was glad to be able to say I had an appointment. I get tired of so much company."

"You must get married, my boy, one of these days—get into a house of your own, and have a room there for your old uncle, and I'll come and live with you."

"Will you though, Uncle Blagg?"

"True as time, I will. You and I can live together, I know—that is if the wife is all right. There will be the rub, my boy!"

"Oh, how glad I should be, uncle! But I fear it will be a long time first—I see no girls that I fancy."

"What is the matter with them?"

"Oh, I don't know—perhaps the matter is with me; but at any rate I shall not try to force the business. I have always believed in falling in love. I don't know that I ever shall; but if I do not, we can have a house, you know—build one just to suit ourselves—have plenty of servants, and you and I keep bachelor's hall together."

"You are young yet—time enough; you will come across the right one, one of these days. I hope she will be poor, though; for you don't want the bother of any more money than you have got of your own. On some accounts it's only a plague when a man has more than he reasonably wants to spend—don't you think so?"

"I don't like to say so, uncle; for I see so many ways in which money is needed, and I see so many ways in which people can be made happy by it, that I feel it to be a great favor to have means."

"You may well say so. I wish you could have seen Vanblarcom when he came from your office to-day."

"Have you seen him?"

"He came straight here, and took me by the hand, and looked me right in the face, and kept shaking my hand, but not a word did he speak; only his face was swollen and his eyes winked. I saw how it was; so I made him sit down, and when he got a little over it, says he—'Mr. Blagg, I have done—I have done swearing, and I have done talking against Christians.'"

"I'll tell you how it was, Willie. You see I've known Vanblarcom from a boy. An honest fellow never lived. He went into business young, but having no capital of his own, he was obliged, you know, to get accommodations, and buy on credit, and borrow money, and fuss along as many do. But for all that, he is such a driving fellow, that he really began to make headway—he'd got some thousands ahead; but the plague of it was, some of the folks that he had received accommodations from—why as soon as Van got into good credit, and his notes went fair at the banks, they, you see, came to him for the same favors; and what could he do? If a man asks favors, why he must grant them; and that is one of the very worst things in all this credit system; you have got to be involved with some one or other.

Well, you see, these friends during these last troubles just keeled up and swept poor Van clean off his legs. There he was—what little he had made was gone; his credit gone, and his courage all broken down. Every thing was straight; creditors all satisfied; for he showed them his books, and they could see as well as he could what the matter was. He gave them all he had, and they gave him a release. I met him the other day, and saw that he looked down-hearted. Says I, Van, what's the matter—you look sober?" "Sober," said he; "you would look sober, I guess, if you had a wife and children on your hands, no money in your pocket, and what is worse, nothing to do. I most wish I was out of the world, or had never come into it." And then he let off a whole string of not very Christian words; or at least they didn't manifest a very Christian spirit; in fact, he felt bad—worse than ever I remember seeing him.

"Says I, 'Van, swearing won't help the matter; and cursing yourself and all the rest of mankind—why, it may, for all I know, relieve your stomach a little, but it hurts my ears dreadfully. Now,' said I, 'you come round and see me this evening, and we will talk over matters a little. May be,' said I—'may be I can put you in a way to help yourself.' Well, he promised, and sure enough about 7 o'clock in he came.

"Now," said I, "what do you want to do?"

"I want to get a situation where I can earn bread for my family, and enough to pay for two rooms to put them in; and any place this side of"—

"Stop," said I, "Van; there's no use of talking so—speak softly—speak calmly—keep cool! Now you want what is not easily obtained. Places where a man with a family can get enough to support himself are not soon found, and besides you are too good a fellow to be a clerk."

"Good! there ain't nothing good about me."

"What I mean, is," said I, "you are too much a man business—too capable of making money, to be cooped up like an old cripple, as I am, on a stool, with your nose hanging over account-books. You are young, active, keen, and industrious; you can make money in the busi-

ness you are acquainted with, if anybody can. You have done it, have you not?"

"Yes—no. Why I made money, and if it hadn't been for those"—

"Stop now, stop—no use—no use cursing folks. I know just what you are going to say. I know all about how your troubles came! Not your fault—no one blames you; you had to get accommodations, and of course you had to grant them—could not help yourself—not and be honorable. But don't you think if you had a capital now, a cash capital, of say five thousand dollars, and another five thousand dollars to fall back upon as your business increased, so that you could have at your command ten thousand dollars, don't you think you could pay four per cent. annual interest, refund one thousand every year, and make money?"

"If I couldn't I ought to be kicked into the poor house. But what the d—"

"Don't don't," said I.

"No harm in that. Devil ain't swearing, I hope."

"Don't—don't," said I; "let him alone; ain't fit for decent company. Now suppose," said I, "that I could put you in the way of getting such a lift, would you feel that you had a fair chance to get aboveboard and make yourself independent?"

"He looked at me sharp for some time—said nothing; I saw he was getting to feel queer—he didn't know what to make of me; at last says he:

"Mr. Blagg, you know that I am a poor man, and sadly in want of something to do; and if you don't know it, I can tell you; I have no friends to whom I can apply, who could or would be security for me for any such sum. And you ought to know that without security of some kind, money here is never loaned—so talking about what I could do under such and such circumstances, is idle."

"Well," said I, "you don't believe I generally trifle with folks?"

"No, you never did with me."

"You don't believe I would be apt to trifle with a poor man's feelings—do you?"

"No, I do not."

"Well then, I will give you a line to a friend of mine on whom you can call to-morrow morning, and I believe you will be able to make an arrangement such as I think will be satisfactory to you. Will you go?"

"Who is it?"

"Perhaps you know him—he is a young man; something younger than yourself. A clever fellow, prompt, just, honorable. William Ashton, of Park Place."

"He shook his head. 'Yes, I know him; that is, I know about him. He has plenty of money, no doubt, but you know well enough, Mr. Blagg, that he is one of those men who would never be very apt to favor such a fellow as I am. Perhaps if I was one of your praying folks, and should go whining about him, calling him Brother Ashton, and telling him a pitiful story about my being poor, and all that, he might give me a hundred dollars, may be. But if I should tell him I never went to church, and swore when I felt like it, and hated praying people, and called them a set of canting hypocrites, why he would very politely show me the door, and I should very likely give him a volley and walk out. No, no—that card won't work.'

"But you would not feel called upon to say that?"

"Yes, I should. I am not going to deceive any one. He would, no doubt, want to know where I went to church, and whether we had a revival among us; and may be ask me to go with him to a prayer-meting. I know all about your Christians, you can't tell me."

"Well, I can tell you, Van, he is a gentleman, born and bred. I shall not say anything further about him. You must find out what else he is, yourself. My own opinion is, he will put no questions to you of that kind at all; and if he does, you, I know, are honest enough, and have enough of the gentleman in you, to answer him correctly. But if, you will take my advice as a friend, you will do as I propose. I will write a line in a few minutes—it will introduce you fairly and honorably—you can hear what he has to say, and if things are to your mind, I have no doubt the security he will ask, you will be able to give."



He made no reply, and I at once went to the desk and wrote the few lines he handed you, sealing them up. As I handed the note to him, he said:

"If it was any other man but yourself, Mr. Blagg, I shouldn't venture to go on such an errand—it will be a fool's errand—but I will go if you say so."

"And now, Willie, I want to hear your story."

"I will tell you, uncle: I was sitting in my office, writing, about 9 o'clock in the morning, when he came in. I knew him, from your description; and seeing he looked rather confused, I at once arose and tried to put on as pleasant a manner as possible, and handed him a seat, while I read your note, which he handed me on entering."

"I then told him that you had partially explained to me the object of his visit, and requested him to be free to state whatever he wished; and he candidly, and without hesitation, made known his circumstances, and also the fact that you had encouraged him to call, with the expectation that some arrangement might be made for his benefit. I then said to him:

"Mr. Vanblarcom, it is true, what Mr. Blagg has told you, as to my readiness to loan money; but I presume he has not made known the conditions."

"He has not, sir."

"I will state them, then, sir, and will say to you at once, that ten thousand dollars is the extent to which I go—that is, as a permanent loan—for which I charge four per cent. interest per annum, one thousand dollars to be returned at the close of the first year, and so for every succeeding year, until the debt is cancelled. I require promptness, both in payment of interest every six months, and in the payment of the annual installment of principal on the very day it shall become due. These are the requisitions, so far as payment is concerned. I then require the most open and frank exposure to me, each year, of your standing, as your books exhibit it. I require your promise to give your name to no one, as security—to be implicated in responsibility with no other house or individual. You are neither to borrow money nor a name, without first applying to me, should you be

so straitened at any time as to need assistance. In fine, I am to be your confidential friend in business matters, and no one else—you understand all this?"

"I do, sir, clearly."

"And you are ready to pledge your word, as a gentleman, that these requisitions shall be faithfully complied with?"

"I am, certainly, sir; they are reasonable and just."

"Well, sir, the money will be ready for you at any time. I suppose one-half the amount will be sufficient to commence with, and the rest will be at your call whenever needed. You will not be charged interest until you receive the money."

"For a moment, he made no reply, but sat and looked at me as a man might under the influence of a nightmare. At last he said:

"I do not quite comprehend you, sir. I have no doubt of your ability to advance the funds, but—but—you have said nothing, as yet, about security—that, of course, you require; and I have no possible way, that I know of, to provide that—no name to give, and no property. I am perfectly poor, sir, and destitute of friends that I can ask any such favor of."

"That is the very reason, sir, why the loan is made to you—if made at all. My object is to help those who have no other means of help; and as to security, that you have already given me in this letter from our mutual friend."

"He started up, and looked quite wild."

"James Blagg—my security! has he offered his name for me?"

"Oh, no, sir; he knows that I require no other security than the honor of the individual to whom I make the loan. Read this, sir, and you will understand what I mean;" and I handed your note to him. After he had read it, he looked at me. I saw that his face had begun to swell, and I didn't know but he was getting angry.

"And you are willing, sir, to let me have this capital, on the strength of these few lines?"

"I am, sir, and shall feel as secure, Mr. Vanblarcom, as if I had a mortgage on fast property."

"He took my hand, and was about to speak, but the



effort was too much for him; and the fact is, knowing a little, from what you told me about him, what kind of feelings he had, to see him so overcome, took hold of me, and I suppose he noticed it, for he sat down and covered his face. Uncle Blagg, if I should lose every dollar of that money, I should feel that the emotions which were excited in that poor man, and in my own heart at that moment, were a full compensation! Oh, it must be a terrible thing to be poor!—I mean it must be a terrible thing to have feelings such as many have—noble, generous, honorable, ambitious—and yet to be pressed down under care and want, and no one to hold out a hand for help, except for that which the poor man has not! Uncle, I wept with him—how could I help it?”

“How could you help it?—ashamed of you if you hadn’t.” And Mr. Blagg began to blow his nose, quite violently.

“Well, tell the rest of it.”

“He sat, for some time, with his head down; he seemed to be thinking very seriously. I said nothing. At length, said he:

“‘I believe I understand the terms, Mr. Ashton, which you have proposed. They are certainly very strange and very unexpected; but I believe I can see a little into your motives, and comprehend the feelings which prompt you; and a man must be a villain, indeed, that would not consider every dollar he receives, under such circumstances, sacred as the dearest tie he has to life. I cannot promise you, sir, that I shall succeed as I hope to—I cannot promise you that all your money will be paid back to you; circumstances may come beyond all I can foresee, to prevent that. But, sir, I pledge you all that is true in your manhood, that I shall do nothing in which this trust is concerned, contrary to the stipulations you have made.’

“‘I have the most perfect confidence, sir, that thus it will be. One thing further I wish to be understood, Mr. Vanblarcom: I am not a money-lender, in the common acceptation of that term; I do not wish to be known as such, and this arrangement between you and me must

be *strictly private*. You can realize how unwise it would be, to have it generally known that I loan money without usual security. It would lay me open to imposition. But if you at any time should meet with one who may be situated as you have been—whom you know as well as my Uncle Blagg thinks he knows you, and whom you can say as much for as he could say for you—you are at liberty to bring him to me. All that I have set apart for this purpose is not yet exhausted, and some of the funds I have loaned out are beginning to come in.’

“He did not say much, after this. I thought there was something upon his mind that he wished to let out; but perhaps he thought he had said enough. You cannot think, Uncle Blagg, how glad I was that you sent him! not one do I feel so much confidence in, and so much pity for. He has a proud spirit, and such people must suffer more when they are placed in circumstances of need.”

“I can tell you, Willie, you have done more good by that one loan, than some men do all their lives. James Vanblarcom is an altered man. He has had a long talk with me. I asked him whether he said anything about his hatred to Christians, and of his not going to church, and all that.

“‘Mr. Blagg,’ said he, ‘I was on the point of doing so, and should have done so, but for one reason: my eyes were opened to see where I had been wrong. I saw before me a living witness that religion was no farce. I know enough of what Christianity teaches, to know that that young man was acting upon its principles—he had a Christian heart, as well as a kind one—he knew that he was manifesting that kind of love to me which would have a stronger hold of my feeling, and do more to win me to the right side, than any amount of good advice. I felt ashamed of myself, alongside of him, and I resolved that, so far as respect for all the outward forms of religion were concerned, after this, I should be a different man; I have already taken a pew in church, and I mean to be there constantly, and my family shall be there with me, and if ever you hear me use a profane word again, or say a word against those who profess

religion, little as I respect many of them, you are at liberty to reprove me sharply.'

"So much has been done you see, Willie, and I guess better things will follow it. The fact is, Vanblarcom is a keen man—he can see into things pretty straight; he has unfortunately been cast among those who, although strenuous about some things, yet when their interest was concerned, they were as grasping, and as tight-fisted, and as exacting, and as ready to take advantage in a bargain, and as eager for gain, as though they were striving to gain the world as the one thing needful. They would be much affected with a good sermon, and very active in outward religious duties; but in business, you couldn't tell them from other people. Vanblarcom has seen all this, and, being a man who thinks for himself, and judges from acts rather than words, how could he help it?—he hated them, not as Christians, but as dissemblers.

"But, poor fellow, you cannot think how much he has suffered. You see he gave up everything, and when he got through, there he was! A wife and two or three children to support, and nothing but his bare hands to do it with; and no one can know how very difficult it is, at times, for a man, no matter how competent, to get a situation that yields salary enough to support a family. He hired two rooms in the upper part of the town, and has been living as closely, he says, as it is best for decent folks to live; and when he went home and told his wife, after he had seen you, all about matters, he says she sat down and cried like a baby, and begged him just once to bring you there, that she might tell you with her own lips how her heart blesses you. Ah, Willie! I don't mind seeing you so soft-hearted, and the tear so ready to start—thank God you have got such a heart, and that he has given you the means. You may at times make a miss and be imposed upon, but depend upon it, those tears which have been forced from your fellows by acts of kindness, will be worth more to you than the most costly jems that a monarch ever wore—I had rather have them. But how go on your buildings?"

"Briskly—up to the second story. That is one thing

I want to talk to you about, uncle. Jacobus, my builder, advises me to run them up three stories; the cost, he says, will be no great addition, and he thinks they will bring a higher rent in proportion to the outlay."

"That may or may not be—I think not. If you put up three-story houses, you will need to lay out more in their finish. Those who can afford to hire such houses, will want a finer article. What you want is, to build a row of houses that will be substantial, and of a respectable appearance, and yet with no useless ornament or finishing—houses that will answer for people who wish to live somewhat genteelly, but cannot afford a high rent. Such a man as Vanblarcom, now, will be able, when he gets a going, to hire such a house. You can afford to let them, if you build as I proposed to you, for three hundred and fifty dollars, can you not?"

"Oh, yes, and pay a fair interest."

"Then stick to that; they will let easily, and such are needed for people in moderate circumstances. There is some good to be done in *this* way, although people in general don't think of it. Those who can afford to pay large rents, can find houses enough; but many a young family is obliged to go to board, which is no living at all, or to hire part of a house, which is almost as bad, because so few houses of moderate rent, in a decent part of the city, are to be obtained. Three of the men you have helped, I know, would jump at having a chance to hire each a house such as we have talked about. They are now boarding out. No, no; just try the experiment on this row, and the next, if you please, you may put up for those who want fine residences. I say, let those who are able look out for the interests of the poor and new beginners, the rest can take care of themselves."

"One would think, Uncle Blagg, that you had been very poor once yourself, and had learned how to sympathize with them. You seem to know how they feel and what they want."

"Thank the Lord, Willie, I never was what I call poor, nor do I ever expect to be rich. I have always had a good situation, and received a little more every year than I have spent. But my situation as a clerk has

given me an opportunity to become acquainted with many who have been in difficulties—who have been up, and then been brought down—of many who have been straitened for means even to procure the necessities of life—men of fine feelings and of good parts—they would make free to converse with me, when they might not feel like doing so with the principals. I tell you, people may say what they please about a man being able to take care of himself, and that if it was their case they would do so and so—if they could not do one thing they would do another. It is easy to talk, and easy to advise—much easier than to be at the trouble and expense of a little aid. But I know I have seen many a man as good as the best among them, his sensibilities as acute, his sentiments as refined, his bearing in every way as gentlemanly, with a wife and children whom he was as tender of, and as anxious to shield from the roughnesses of life as the wealthiest can possibly be; and I have known that, for the want of a little of those means which are accumulating in the hands of men who profess to follow the example of Him who, for our sakes, became poor, and who went about doing good, has gone on struggling and suffering through his whole life. Could he have had the aid he needed at the right time, his life might have been passed in usefulness and peace, with some sunshine upon it, instead of despondency, privation, a broken spirit, and a premature grave! No, no, Willie, I am no leveller. I believe most truly that all men were not born equal, and that it would not be best that all should be on an equality as to circumstances, and that the rich should not be grudged their wealth if justly come by; but I do believe that he who subscribes his name as a follower of Christ—who goes to the table of the Lord, and there, with those sacred emblems in his hands, swears before heaven and earth that he will follow in the footsteps of his master, and hopes for salvation through his atoning blood, and at the same time has his thousands accumulating, year by year, beyond what he can fairly use, is not what he should be, nor what he thinks he is. He may subscribe largely to benevolent societies, and his name may be lauded as a model of charity, but until

he unlocks those treasures he has piled up beyond his necessities, and stretches out his hand to those who are struggling under difficulties, and does what in him lies to bind up broken hearts, and shed light around the path of the desponding, and make his wealth a fountain of blessing, he may be saved 'so as by fire,' but he shows a miser's heart, and must expect the miser's curse, 'The rust of your gold and silver shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire.'"

William Ashton looked at his relative with a steady gaze, as with his hand outstretched, and his face at a glow, he poured forth his feelings; and he had not realized, before, what energy the old man could manifest when his heart was engaged. He knew him to be a wise counsellor and a kind friend, but he had no idea, till then, what fire was in him.

"Well, Uncle Blagg, I must go now; I have an engagement up town."

"How far?—I have, too."

"Up in Elm street; I am going to see young Jones—Herbert Jones."

"Herbert Jones! Do you know him?"

"I have lately become acquainted with him, and am getting very fond of him."

"Glad of that; he is just such a young fellow as one, whether old or young, is apt to get fond of—a first-rate chap. Come, then, let us jump into a hack and go there together—he is the very one I was going to see."

## CHAPTER XVI.

GERTRUDE was very busy now-a-days, for being handy with her needle, she found it a pleasant employment to use her skill in making up garments, under the guidance of Mrs. Jones, for the children of the widow for whom she had provided a decent home. All things in the little house had been put in a comfortable state—not exactly as Gertrude would have fixed it; for, if left to herself, she would have carpeted the rooms, and furnished them almost in genteel style. But Mrs. Jones had cautioned her against going too far.

"You have done a noble deed, dear Gertrude, in providing such a house, and you can further aid Mrs. Kelly by assisting her in procuring better garments, and some few necessary articles in housekeeping, and with such conveniences as she needs in carrying on her regular business. She has now plenty of work, and her washing can also be done to advantage, for she has water hard by, and is not compelled to carry it from such a distance, and she has decent pails and tubs, and tools to iron and plait with. It is better for her to feel that she still must depend upon her own exertions; and every dollar she lays by will encourage her to go on, and when she gets able to make things look better about her, and purchases the articles with her own money, she will enjoy them much more. She is in good health, and is strong to work. To aid the poor is better than to make them feel that they can lean entirely on us; and besides, my dear, you have spoken of others you have seen who are even more wretched and helpless than Mrs. Kelly."

"I know I have; but, Aunt Jones, it seems such a hopeless task. There are so many of them, and then that poor woman is so weakly, she can sew only half a day at a time; and her little girl is a cripple, and has

to lie abed most of the time, and worst of all, she has a husband, and he drinks. What can we do for them?"

"We can do but little—a few shillings put into the woman's hand occasionally—just so as to see that she does not suffer for the want of food."

"And then there is that that old man—he seems to be a good man—but he has to be in the same room with two or three swearing, drunken creatures, and he says they sit up late at night carousing and making a noise. He says he often feels it would be a blessed thing for him to be quiet in the grave. Oh, Aunt Jones, I wish I was a man!"

"What would you do, my dear?"

"Oh, I hardly know; but I think I should try to get the poor creatures all out of that wretched place. Why, aunt, how can they have any courage to do better while they are all living huddled together so—everything so dirty, so unpleasant, where there is not one agreeable thing for them to look at? Do you not think if the houses could be torn down, and things fixed decently, and they encouraged a little—ever so little—that they would, may be, act differently?"

"Some of them would, no doubt; but I fear the evil with many of them is not to be eradicated that way. The most that can be done, and I think that might be accomplished—there are rich men enough to whom it would be very easy, and no loss of property or interest—if those who own so much vacant ground would put up plain, decent houses, with conveniences for poor people, to assist them in doing their work, and have the rent so reasonable that those who are disposed to work might have an opportunity to get out of these sinks of filth and profanity, and every kind of evil. And if wealthy and judicious people would take the pains to hunt up such cases, and give them a little assistance—it only needs a very little—oh, what a deal of suffering might be relieved! All cannot be helped; the degradation of many is beyond the reach of human power; but there is no doubt thousands that might be saved, who are fast sinking into a state of hopeless misery. The rich, however, must answer for themselves; they will have their own account

to render to Him who has given them their wealth, and will bring them to a strict account for the use they have made of it."

"Well, Aunt Jones, when I get my property, I shall not rest until something is done."

Mrs. Jones did not reply. She knew that Gertrude was yet young. She was just fresh from an experience among the poor. She would no doubt soon be transported to other scenes, and long before that anticipated day other views and feelings would doubtless possess her mind; and perhaps the facts in her past history be too painful and too humiliating for her to wish by any means to recall them.

"Well, aunt, I have finished these garments, and this evening Herbert has promised to go with me to Mrs. Kelly's." Somehow of late Gertrude had left off the title which, in the first warmth of her feelings, she had given to Herbert, and he seemed much better satisfied with it. "Don't you think she will be pleased? And now I think of it, I am so glad you have procured such plain stuff! It will answer much better than the fine calico I wished to purchase—it will be more appropriate. I see now that it is much better to have things suitable to their situation, and then, when they are worn out and she has to purchase garments herself, she will not feel that she must get costly articles, which perhaps she will not be able to buy."

"That is true, Gertrude. It requires wisdom in trying to do good, as in anything else; and Mrs. Kelly must not be encouraged to feel, that because you have helped her so far, she must depend on you for the future. I know, my dear, how you feel"—Mrs. Jones saw that the countenance of Gertrude looked quite sad—"you feel under special obligations to Mrs. Kelly, and that is all well. You can always keep a watch over the family, and be ready at any emergency to extend your hand for their aid; but if you should, by undue liberality, hinder her self-reliance, you might do her a positive evil."

"I should be sorry to do that, Aunt Jones; but when I think how she helped us when she did not expect the slightest return, how can I help feeling so?"

And Mrs. Jones saw the big tear start from her lovely eye—and how could she help it? She pressed the dear girl to her bosom, and imprinted a warm kiss on her fair cheek, and wiped the tears away.

"Dear Gertrude, may you ever retain the same just and tender heart. I know how you feel, and would not blunt your tender sympathies, nor diminish your just sense of gratitude. You shall relieve your heart by doing what you desire; but only keep in mind that you want to do Mrs. Kelly a benefit that will be lasting. You may be removed, my dear, far away from the city, and from all opportunity to watch over that kind-hearted woman; and remember you will not for some years be your own mistress, and may not be able to dispense as you please."

"How so, Aunt Jones?" And the color at once left the cheek of Gertrude, as she looked with intense interest for a reply.

Mrs. Jones had for some days been waiting for just such an opportunity to communicate some tidings to her ward, which she feared would shock her; now she thought the time had come.

"You know, my dear, that your grandfather is dead?"

"Oh, yes; we have heard that, some time since."

"You know likewise that he has left no will, and that you of course are an heir to his estate jointly with your two aunts?"

"Yes, that you have told me."

"Of course, as you are not of age, a guardian must be appointed over you, until you are of age, to act for you, and to direct your affairs as though you had a father living?"

"Must I submit to that?"

"There is no help for it; and at the solicitation of your aunts, who are your nearest kindred, a gentleman has been appointed who has lately married your aunt Gertrude, Dr. Weatherbee."

"A good man?"

"I am not acquainted with his character, my dear; but from what Mr. McBride writes, I fear he may not be



just such a one as we could wish; but your aunts will no doubt see to it that you are well taken care of, as you will be with them."

"How so—cannot I remain here—can you not keep me?"

The poor girl was deeply agitated; she could scarcely utter the sentence. Her whole frame shook with emotion. Mrs. Jones was equally moved, but was enabled to command her feelings. She loved Gertrude most tenderly, and for many reasons would gladly have permitted things to remain as they had been, but her judgment told her that it would not be best they should. And even had there been no obstacle on her part, she knew that those who now had the legal control of her would by no means allow it. But for her own sake, and that of one member of her family, she felt that, however trying the separation might be, it had better take place soon. Mrs. Jones, with a mother's keen eye, had perceived that a strong attachment was growing in the heart of Herbert for this lovely young girl—how far it was reciprocated on the part of Gertrude she could not tell. That she loved Herbert there could be no doubt. Thrown with him as she had been, constantly in his company, excluded from all others, and feeling under such recent obligations, she no doubt felt an interest in him. But whether her feelings were strong enough to be permanent, of course she could not tell. Herbert she knew thoroughly; she knew what ardent feelings he possessed—how susceptible he was to the tender passion, and she could not be mistaken in the tokens he manifested of a strong and growing attachment on his part, and, as a wise mother, she concluded that, if possible, a stop must be put to it, before the passion had gained such an ascendancy that his happiness for life, and perhaps his future usefulness, might be endangered. He was yet too young to be allowed to indulge in such feelings when they were becoming serious; and what hope could there be that anything would result from it but disappointment and anguish of heart to this son of her pride and her hope. Gertrude was still younger than he. She had now been placed by Providence in a different sphere of

life. She would be surrounded by the trappings of wealth. She would no doubt be introduced into the gay world, educated in principles different from those which she had endeavored to instill into his mind. She would be known as a wealthy heiress, and all the allurements of admirers with whom Herbert could not compete, would be daily thrown in her way, to tempt her acceptance; and what could be rationally expected from any girl of her present age under such circumstances? And, moreover, Herbert's acquaintance might, and most probably would be, rather an inconvenience to Gertrude. He had known her in a state of degradation, which her friends most surely would do all in their power to make her forget, and which she herself might also wish obliterated. It was but judging fairly of human nature to believe all this. And Mrs. Jones felt that her duty was plain, and that to encourage any feelings between two young persons thus situated would be the extreme of folly—madness. Her mind had resolved these ideas, and she was ready to act upon them. And yet her heart was deeply pained in performing the task. In reply to Gertrude's searching question, she therefore answered in as calm a manner as she could.

"It would be hardly possible, my dear Gertrude, even if we could keep you and do justice to you, under your circumstances. Your friends would, no doubt, be utterly opposed to it."

Gertrude was full of sensibility; she thought the manner of Mrs. Jones was constrained. It no doubt was, for she had to put on an extra amount of resolution, in order to do what she felt to be her duty, but which went sadly against her warm heart; and it flashed upon the mind of the young girl at once, that for some reason, she could not tell what, Mrs. Jones did not really wish her to stay, and that the opposition of her friends to such a measure was merely an apology. She could say no more, but, overcome by a rush of feeling, gave way to a flood of tears. Mrs. Jones expected nothing less. She could have wept with her, but she feared to manifest too much sympathy, lest Gertrude should be encouraged to enter further into particulars. But she had not yet said all



she felt constrained to say. She knew that on any day Gertrude might be sent for, and it would be better now to make the fact known. As soon, therefore, as the violence of her feelings had in some measure been spent, Mrs. Jones resumed:

"I tell you these things, dear Gertrude, that you may be prepared for the event. I cannot tell how soon this may take place; but you are liable at any time to be sent for. I wish you to make up your mind for the event, so that you may not be taken by surprise, and manifest a reluctance to the change; it might be a source of trial to your friends, and consequently a source of annoyance, in future, to yourself."

"I thank you; oh, I have much to thank you for—much that I can never repay; that I shall never forget! But, oh, it will be so sad! Does Herbert know that I am going away?"

Herbert had been in remarkably good spirits for a few days. He and Gertrude had so much business to transact together; there were so many little things to do for Mrs. Kelly, that Gertrude could not do without his assistance; they had so many little runs to take, and it was so pleasant for him, so very pleasant, to be with her alone; to feel her arm leaning on him in so much confidence, and to have her look at him with that pleasant smile, that now was so easily started, around those cherry lips; and to have her talk so confidently about her plans for the future, in which she, without any art or thought of impropriety, connected him with herself, that he almost entirely forgot the fact, that she was no longer the friendless orphan, dependent upon his exertions for support, but a wealthy heiress, with friends who, no doubt, would soon be clustering about her. And he was happy, oh, how happy! and how could he help showing it, and how could she help noticing it? and when she asked this question, a strange thought had crossed her mind—"Had he known all this? and if so, was he happy in the idea that she would not much longer be a burden to them?" She, therefore, looked with unwonted earnestness at his mother; but Mrs. Jones perceived the sudden flash that suffused her cheeks; she answered

with hesitancy, for she herself was somewhat confused:

"Does he know it? You mean, my dear, what I have just told you?"

"That I am going away."

"Oh! he doubtless knows how you are situated, and that you have friends; and, no doubt, he expects that some change will be made by them in reference to you. Why do you ask, my dear?"

Mrs. Jones was constrained by a natural curiosity to put this question. Perhaps she wished to catch Gertrude off her guard, and be able, by her reply, to probe more deeply her feelings. A mother's vanity will sometimes outtop her judgment. She really, under the circumstances, would have sincerely regretted that any feelings had been engendered in either of them, of a serious nature; and yet she could not help being a little curious to know how Gertrude really felt. But she soon found that she had a woman's nature to deal with, although embodied in one so young. True to her instincts, the dear girl blushed more deeply than ever, for she at once perceived the inference which might be drawn from her previous question. She replied, almost instantly:

"Oh, because he spoke about going next week to the Museum, and he asked me to accompany him; but if I am liable on any day to be called for, it would not be prudent for me to be away; so I must tell him the reason why I cannot accept his invitation."

"That is true, my dear; it may not be so well, just now, to be far out of the way. I will speak to Herbert about it. Perhaps, upon the whole, you had better let me acquaint him with the circumstances."

"Just as you please, aunt."

Mrs. Jones had a more difficult task to accomplish, as she felt it her duty to let Herbert know at once how matters stood. She feared, in some way, Gertrude would mention it before him, or directly to him, and she did not wish to have him thus taken by surprise. It might be that, at such a moment, he would unguardedly say that which would expose his feelings, and in consequence

he might suffer a severe mortification. But she would have no opportunity for doing so until late in the evening; she and Herbert had their seasons for private conference after the family had retired.

The business which Mr. Blagg had with Herbert that evening, was somewhat of a private nature; and in order to explain more fully its purport, we must go back a little in our story. It will be remembered, that at the time when the dénouement in reference to Henry Jones took place, Herman Granite left his home, fully resolved never more to enter it. It had, indeed, been very unlike a home to him. The unwise strictness of his aunt; her want of sympathy in the feelings of youth, and her fretfulness whenever he had invited associates to his home, all conspired to wean him from it. Had his father been more domestic in his habits, a little more familiar with his son, sacrificed some hours of business or relinquished some of the many engagements of a public nature, and devoted more time and manifested a deeper interest in him whose welfare he was bound to seek, things would, probably, never have resulted in such a sad separation. But we must tell our story, and leave our readers to draw their own conclusions.

A few weeks after the departure of his brother, Herbert was returning one evening to his store, after a short absence, when, not far from Hunker's Alley, he saw a person leaning against the board fence, apparently sick, or under the influence of liquor. A moment he paused, his curiosity being arrested. He saw that he was a young man, and very soon stepped up and accosted him.

It was, indeed, a sad spectacle! A youth of fair countenance, well dressed, evidently no common rowdy. Herbert addressed him, but received no answer; at the same time the young man attempted to move from his hold upon the fence, and would have fallen to the pavement, had not Herbert seized him. He was terribly under the influence of liquor. He had probably felt its power overcoming him, and had resorted to the fence for support. Herbert judged, likewise, that in some way the youth had been taken unawares; either enticed by

companions, or, ignorant of the effect of strong drink by personal experience, had, for some reason—perhaps it might have been as a remedy for pain or sudden sickness—taken more than he was equal to. But he could not be a habitual drinker; for by the light which the lamp afforded, Herbert could plainly perceive that his countenance was very fair—it was, moreover, quite handsome, although now deadly pale. To leave a youth of his own age, under such circumstances, his heart would not allow. To all the questions which he put, as to his name and place of residence, no answer could be got; and fearing that the inability of the young man to help himself was increasing, Herbert determined to make all the haste he could, and lead him to his own premises. They were near at hand, and preferring not to enter the store, as persons might be in there, he opened the door in the side street, which admitted him at once into their back room. The children had retired, and his mother was seated in the store. He called her, and as she entered the room put up both hands, but said nothing; all Herbert said, was:

"The bed in the small room."

Mrs. Jones had perfect confidence in Herbert, that he knew to whom he was affording a shelter, and stopped not to ask questions. The door into this room opened immediately from the sitting-room, and in a few moments the unhappy youth was laid at rest upon the bed. No attempt was made to take off any part of his clothing, and almost immediately he was asleep. As they closed the door, and reentered their room, Mrs. Jones, with an expression of deep anguish on her countenance, said, in a low voice:

"My dear Herbert, who is it?"

"I do not know; I never saw him before." And as his mother looked with much astonishment at him, surprised that he should bring a stranger into the house in such a situation, he at once related the circumstances under which he found him.

"I might have left him, I suppose, and spoken to a watchman, and he would have taken him to the watch-house, and then he would have been exposed to the

public, and perhaps his friends dreadfully mortified, and himself, too, and materially injured. He certainly is not used to drink, and I thought I would run the risk and bring him home, and keep him through the night. I don't know but I have done wrong, mother. But how could I help it? I could not leave him in the street, could I?"

Mrs. Jones felt disposed, when he commenced the narrative, to say to him that he had done wrong, but her views changed before he closed it.

"You have done the right thing, my son. How dreadfully his parents would feel, if he had been made a public spectacle! And, as you say, my son, he certainly cannot have been long in such habits. What a fine countenance he has, and how very fair his complexion! Who knows?—perhaps he has no mother!"

Herbert slept that night on the old sofa in their sitting-room; he did not care to leave the lower part of the house under such circumstances. When the morning came, he quietly opened the door. The young man had just awoke—for he was surveying the room, and apparently trying to define his position. Herbert addressed him affably, offering his hand, which the youth readily took, Herbert asking him at the same time:

"Do you feel better?"

"I feel better, thank you; but where am I?"

"You are among friends, although I believe we are strangers to each other."

"How came I here?" and then, as though recalling some scene, of which he had a faint recollection, he uttered an exclamation of anguish, and covered his face with his hands. Herbert was glad to see what effect his slight consciousness of the past had on him, but he had no time to spend with him just then.

"I must leave you now. But do you lie still. Be assured that no one besides myself and my mother knows anything about the circumstances of your coming, and no one else shall know it from us." The young man put out his hand, and grasping that of Herbert, pressed it warmly.

"Oh, thank you, thank you! I must, indeed, have

fallen among friends, although I never have seen you before, as I know of. You have a mother?"

"Oh, yes, thank the Lord, I have a mother—a dear, good mother."

"You may well thank him"—but he could say no more; he covered his face and sobbed audibly.

"I will come to you again as soon as I can be released; feel at your ease, and if I or my mother can do anything for you, rest assured we will do it."

When Herbert went in again, he carried a small server, on which was a fresh cup of tea and some buttered toast.

"Oh, how kind you are!" The young man had risen, and was seated by the side of the bed, resting his head upon his hands.

"I would have asked you to breakfast with us, but I thought probably you would prefer being quiet for a time."

"You are very considerate as well as kind! I have money enough to pay for all this, but your gentlemanly treatment forbids my offering compensation in that way. If I'm not mistaken, your care of me has saved me from an exposure which no amount of money could ever have blotted out."

"You are perfectly safe in that respect; and as to my compensation, I shall feel richly rewarded to learn from your own lips that my services have, as I supposed, saved you from public notoriety, and that the circumstances in which I found you were as new and as abhorrent to your feelings as they were painful to me."

"I believe I can say so in all truth. I have much to be sorry for—much that I could wish had never been; and perhaps, had I possessed a friend, such as I think you might have been, this never would have happened. I blame nobody, however; I have known better than I have done."

"We can all say that; but if you have a sense of having done wrong, that is a great thing, you know. You and I are of an age in which we can hope bad habits may be broken off. A whole life is before us."

There was something so delicate in the coupling together of himself with one who but so lately had been in such a degraded condition, such a smoothing over of his fault, and such a hopeful expression concerning him, that the young man again seized his hand.

"I do not know even your name; to me you are a stranger; but if I might hope to win your confidence and have your friendship, I should feel that the world would yet be a new place to me."

"Perhaps we may be friends. I have but very few myself. However, I can promise you one thing, in whatever way I can serve you, so far as it is in my power, I certainly am ready to do so."

"Would your mother be willing to see me? She saw me, you say, last evening, and I want to try to convince her that I am not what I must have seemed to her then; and, oh!"—

There was again a pause; he could not go on; his emotions overpowered him.

"My mother will gladly see you. I will call her."

In a few moments Herbert returned, his mother following him. He had told how the young man felt, and her heart was already burning with pity for him. He arose as she entered; he was the size of her own Herbert, and apparently his age; his face delicate as that of a female, and finely formed. His eyes were suffused with tears. She put out her hand, and his tender look at her worked up all the mother in her heart.

"My poor, dear child!" and saying this, she imprinted a mother's kiss upon his cheek. This was more than his feelings could resist: he laid his head upon her shoulder while her arm embraced him.

"Oh!" said he, scarcely able to articulate his words, "since I was three years old, I have never known what it was to have a mother's kiss!"

"I have thought so, my child. But be of good cheer; your heart is not lost yet. Don't be ashamed of your tears; they tell me there is hope for you. What we can do for you shall be done with all our heart. I have no money, and doubtless you do not want that; but I know how much a son of your age needs a mother, and

you may repose with perfect confidence upon my readiness to do all the good that is in my power to do."

"Oh, bless you, bless you for these kind words! I have never heard such sounds before; and if I may only have such a friend to whom I can tell all I feel, there will be something worth living for. You saw me last night?"

"Hush! hush! we will not talk about that. At some future day, when this dark shadow has disappeared, and your mind has become more calm, and you know us better, then, if you wish, you can tell us all about it. But let it, for the present, be obliterated. Only let us know in what way we can be of service to you. Remain here for the present, or go home, just as you think best."

"I have no home!"

"No home?"

A moment, Mrs. Jones looked at him in silence. He, surely, did not look like an outcast; he was genteelly dressed, and his whole appearance that of one who had been well cared-for, and accustomed to good society. At length, she said:

"Sit down by me, now, and tell me all you wish to say; if it will relieve you to unburden your mind, you can safely do so, either to myself or my son—he feels deeply interested in you."

Herbert had left the room. The young man took his seat, and Mrs. Jones sat beside him. He did not give his name; for the present, he said, it was the only thing he would withhold. He did not seem disposed to extenuate his faults; nor did he seem to magnify what he thought had been harsh treatment. It was, on many accounts, a painful story; but Mrs. Jones could understand how a little harshness, under peculiar circumstances, might lead an irritated child to speak unadvisedly. That he had done so, she, in her kind way, told him; and he was ready to confess it, and she advised him to go to his father, and frankly acknowledge his wrong. He was ready, he said, so to do, but thought it better, first, to let some weeks pass. His father was a very determined man, his mind not easily turned, and he was, no doubt, highly incensed.

The reader need scarcely be told that this young man was Herman Granite. On leaving his father's residence, in order to avoid all his friends, he had procured board in the suburbs of the city, and had kept himself quite secluded, only going out in certain parts of the day, when he knew that those with whom he had associated would be engaged, and not likely to come in his way. He had made up his mind to go to sea, and having fallen in with a young mate of a vessel about to sail to China, had formed an intimacy with him, and had resolved, through his persuasion, to engage as a common sailor for the voyage. He had not seen the captain, nor the vessel; and having made a confidant of this sailor, it was concluded that his name could be enrolled on the ship's books, and that he could go on board just as she was about to sail. The time for her departure had arrived; he had purchased his clothes and packed his trunk, and, the next day, was to go over to Brooklyn, and from thence be conveyed to the vessel. He had not given his real name, for his design was, if possible, to prevent any chance for a discovery by his father of his whereabouts. The mate had called for him, early that evening, as he said, "to take a short cruise," and, no doubt, with the design of leading the unhappy youth into haunts of infamy, had insisted upon his drinking with him. Herman had never been addicted to stimulants—he had no taste for them; but willing to show that he was not afraid of trifles, he drank when urged. And when the poison had begun to have its natural effect, of exciting his temperament, he was more easily induced to take more. He was at first ignorant of the nature of the den into which he had been led; but, happily, before his reason left him, he ascertained the truth; and while his companion was engaged with some of the wretched inmates, he passed from among them and made all the haste he could, if possible to get to his boarding-house before he should be entirely overcome by the liquor he had taken. In this, however, he was unsuccessful, and was found at last by Herbert Jones, in the condition which we have described.

With the omission of his name, all these particulars

he frankly told to Mrs. Jones, and then added, as he closed:

"The scenes of the past night have opened my eyes as to the character of those with whom I was about to associate, and my mind revolted then; and now the idea of being connected with creatures so debased, is perfectly abhorrent to my feelings. I am conscious that I am not fallen so low, as my father said I had; and I feel more sure than I have ever been, that evil practices and evil companions lead to a depth of degradation of which I had no conception. Oh, I hope!—yes, I know—I am not quite lost; and your kind words, and the kind treatment I have received from yourself and your dear son, I trust have touched my better feelings. I shall try, in some way, to begin a new life."

"You will not go to sea, then?"

"Not as a common sailor—nothing but the most dire necessity can tempt me to do that."

"But if you return to your lodgings, will you not be subjected to annoyance by that man—the officer of the vessel?"

"I have thought of that; I must try, if possible, for a few days, to avoid him, until the vessel sails. If I could only"—

He was going to say, if he could only remain where he was for a short time, or even permanently, how happy he should be! But he felt a delicacy in doing so. It might not be convenient, or agreeable. But the kind lady by his side anticipated what he would have said; in fact, she had become so interested in the relation of his history, that she was anxious not only to shield him from the present evil, but, if possible, to do something toward restoring him to his family. As he paused at the unfinished sentence, she said:

"Perhaps, if you could be contented to remain where you now are, for a day or two, it may answer your purpose?"

"Oh, it is asking too much! But could you keep me?"

"Our house is small, and its accommodations not many; but if you wish to remain for a few days, we shall certainly be glad to have you."



And he remained there for a full week, and mingled in their happy family scenes. He witnessed the pure love which seemed to pervade the very atmosphere of their dwelling; became much attached to every member of the family, and they to him; for all the better feelings of his own heart had been awakened into life, until it seemed to himself a strange thing that he should ever have indulged the angry passions. He learned, too, what charms a true home has, and how the mutual interchange of kind words and acts—the letting forth of the heart's warm feelings—sheds a halo around the common circles, far more enchanting than all the glitter of most costly appointments; that a true home is made not merely by the pleasant things which wealth can gather under the domestic roof, but by that Christian order which gives to each his proper place, and that holy love which acts spontaneously, as each fulfills his part. He learned, too, that neatness could be maintained without severity or constant complaint; and that gentility of manners was not necessarily connected with rich dresses and distant reserve. A new world of thought had opened to him, too, in reference to that which should give a man his true standing in life. Among all the friends, or rather acquaintances, he had formed—and those had been from families in comfortable circumstances, and who, no doubt, would have shrunk from the idea of associating with one who merely kept a corner grocery—not one did he know to be more truly a gentleman than Herbert Jones—not one of them all did he respect so much for his judgment and mental improvement, and not one of them all did he esteem as half so dear and valuable to him as a friend. He had seen a new phase of life, one which he could not have supposed to exist. Hereafter he will have a new standard to judge by.

It was only a week that he remained as an inmate, but every fine evening he had called in, and made one in their little circle. His views, too, had been materially modified in reference to his duty to his father. He was not satisfied with his own conduct. He saw now where he had been wrong. That delicate attention which Herbert constantly paid to his mother; his respect for the

slightest intimation of her wishes; his constant regard to her pleasure and comfort; and even the soft and pleasant tones of voice in which he addressed her, offered such a contrast to his own habit, that he could now see clearly how far he had come short. There was a beauty in filial and parental intercourse that he had never noticed before. To be sure, he had no mother, and his father's manner seemed cold; but yet he could not believe it was from any want of affection on his parent's part; and even he began to think that the harsh language which his father had used at their last interview was an evidence how strong his love had been. So Mrs. Jones had told him. It might be so; and perhaps, even now, deep anguish was wringing that parent's heart, and day by day he mourned in secret over his blasted hopes. He had never thought before how much a parent loved, until this lovely woman, in soft and touching tones, unveiled the depths of the parental fountain.

He had talked freely with Herbert, and resolved, at last, to do his duty. He made known his name and that of his father.

"How strange it is that we have never met!" said Herbert; "do you never visit the store?"

"Not often, and then only to ask for money; but do you know my father?"

"Oh, yes. It was his kindness that enabled me to go on with the store. Without his aid we should have been broken up, and scattered in different places, all of us without a home, and I without my mother. Oh, how thankful am I that this little home has been a refuge for his son—how strange!"

"Strange, strange indeed!" and Herman Granite bowed his head upon his hands, and seemed deeply touched.

"Your father is a noble, kind-hearted man, or he would never have dealt with one who had no claims upon him as he has dealt with me; and in all my dealings with him, he treats me more like one he wishes to befriend, than as a merchant who wants to sell his goods. And now I can understand what Mr. Blagg told me a few



days since, when I asked him if Mr. Granite was not well, for he was so silent and downcast. 'His heart is sick,' said Mr. Blagg; 'domestic trouble, I fear, will break his heart—but do not speak of it;' and I have not, even to my mother. Oh, you will go back, will you not, and tell him you regret that you have ever given him any cause of sorrow, and that henceforth it will be your happiness to conform to all his will?"

"I am ready to do so. I would go this moment if I thought he might not suppose it was merely because my means were exhausted, and that necessity, not a sense of duty, drove me back. But if you would see Mr. Blagg, and tell him all, and let him tell my father, and that you believe my heart is truly penitent, he might be better satisfied."

And it was for this purpose that Mr. Blagg had come this evening. He knew not for what purpose Herbert wished him to call; supposing it was merely some business matter. That alone would not have taken him; but he enjoyed a chat with the young grocer, and he could have one more free from disturbance than in his own counting room. Herbert was always in a hurry when there.

"Well done, Vanblarcom!—turned retail grocer, ha? But where's your principal?" This was Mr. Blagg's salutation as he entered the store and saw Mr. Vanblarcom weighing out some small article for a little girl who was waiting patiently for the movements of the gentleman; he, never having attended much to such small matters, was not very rapid in his movements.

"Herbert has gone out, but will be in soon; in about five minutes he will be here, for he is expecting you this evening."

The meeting between William Ashton and Mr. Vanblarcom was peculiarly cordial, especially on the part of the former. What he had learned from Mr. Blagg of the particulars of Vanblarcom's situation and feelings, had given him a deep interest for that gentleman, and the fact that he was thus giving his time to serve a friend, added to the respect he entertained for him.

Within the time specified Herbert entered, and along

with him Gertrude Manners. They both appeared with a very serious countenance; indeed, Gertrude had evidently been weeping, but only a glance could be had at her face, for she immediately entered the sitting-room, without waiting to be introduced to any one.

Mr. Vanblarcom now left his place behind the counter, and addressing young Ashton:

"I don't know, sir, but you will think I am presuming on your kindness; but my wife is so very anxious to see you, in order that she may express to you personally her sense of the obligations we are under to you, that I have had to promise I would ask you to my home the first opportunity. We live close by, and it will intrude upon your time only a few moments. We don't ask you as a visitor, for we are in no trim to see visitors."

"I will go, certainly, with pleasure; but please ask your wife to say nothing about our business matters. I should like to make her acquaintance, for I wish to be on visiting terms with the families of those I do business with."

"William had been told by Mr. Blagg that Vanblarcom lived in a small house in the upper part of the city, but he was somewhat surprised, as they ascended the steps, to see how very unpretending indeed were the premises—a small frame building, sadly in need of painting, and much out of repair. Part of such a house, and for a family, did, indeed, manifest straitened circumstances!

The rooms they occupied were on the ground floor—a front and back, with a small chamber in the attic, in case they needed at any time a spare bed-room.

The pleasant tones of a sweet voice were heard accompanying the rocking of a cradle. Ashton instinctively caught the arm of his companion; the tune or the voice had taken a mighty hold upon him—he feared to disturb the music.

"It is only Fanny," was the reply, and at once his hand was upon the latch, and the melody ceased. As they entered, the eye of the visitor was fixed upon a young lady seated beside a cradle. He knew that she must have been the singer, and his curiosity was no

doubt excited to see whether the instrument accorded with the lovely sounds it had sent forth. But the glance he gave was at once withdrawn, for his name had been mentioned, and a lady, who was seated beside a small stand engaged with her needle, arose and approached him. She was young—apparently not over twenty-one—somewhat pale, but quite handsome, plainly dressed, but in excellent taste, and her form graceful, and when Mr. Vanblarcom said, "My wife, Mr. Ashton," he was taken by surprise. Mr. Vanblarcom was, doubtless, when well dressed, a good-looking man; but his business habits had made him rather negligent of his personal appearance, and of late his trying circumstances had preyed upon his mind, and gave an additional rough aspect to the outer man. Therefore Mr. Ashton may be excused, being himself quite a young man, and with no experience in matrimonial life, if he should have anticipated somewhat of a nearer resemblance to the plain specimen which the husband presented. It was a pleasing disappointment, however; for the heart of man, whether old or young, instinctively asserts its interest in a lovely woman. As Mrs. Vanblarcom took his hand, he noticed that her eye was glistening with moisture; and that, no doubt, added to the charm, for he afterward said "he never looked at anything so beautiful before." Mrs. Vanblarcom, too, was taken by surprise. She had heard her husband speak of Mr. Ashton as a man of large property, and although she had asked no questions as to his personal appearance, being altogether absorbed in the fact of his open-hearted liberality, yet she had pictured to herself a person corresponding to what she knew of his qualities and circumstances, and as she afterward told her husband, "fancied a middle-aged, large man, with a benevolent countenance, and a few grey hairs." Instead thereof, she was standing face to face with one apparently of her own age, somewhat taller, indeed, but with a countenance fair and pleasing, and at the moment highly flushed, for he was bashful withal, and his feelings were highly excited.

Mrs. Vanblarcom had so much she wished to say, that she never anticipated there could be any want of words

on her part, if she should ever be so fortunate as to meet this benefactor. But here, too, the reality was altogether different from her imaginings. Not a word could she utter, and after standing thus *vis à vis* with a young gentleman, with the consciousness, too, that tears were stealing from their hiding-place, and even falling upon her cheeks, she quietly withdrew her hand, and taking a seat, for a few moments had to let the excited emotions have vent.

That she felt much more free to converse with him, and much less embarrassed, than if he had been such a one as her imagination conceived, there could be no doubt. Even the circumstance of her being obliged to let out her feelings, in the way she was doing, was not so trying, for youth has sympathies all its own, and she knew well enough that he could understand her; and, moreover, she felt very certain that she saw something in his eye that dimmed its lustre, and that too, no doubt, had its effect upon her. They understood each other—she knew they did—much better than if there had been a score or two of years between them.

Mr. Ashton—we would prefer taking the liberty which Mr. Blagg alway did, and call him Willie, for it is a pretty name, and we love him dearly, but we must conform to the proprieties, and since he has a "large property," and is manfully using his talents and exerting such a mighty influence over the destinies and hearts of many much older than himself, we must treat him with all due respect, at least in public—Mr. Ashton placed his chair near to his fair hostess; for he had come purposely to see her, and at her own request.

"You will pardon me," she said, "I wished to see you, but did not realize how I should feel."

"No apology is needed, I assure you. Your reception has richly repaid me for all I have done, should every dollar of the money be lost. I think I have gained two friends; and if I mistake not, we have certain feelings in common that will make us *good* friends."

"You have—you *have*; if our hearts' love can be any object to you, you have it most truly."

The tears on that pretty face—more pretty now than

ever—were not yet all dried away; and she said *we*, because she was aware how her husband felt; and although she was not then looking at him, she knew by certain signs that he could not contradict her if he wished to. Mr. Vanblarcom was a tender husband; he loved his wife much better than he loved all the world beside; infinitely better than he loved himself. No labor, for her, was too severe; for her, his sympathies were alive, ready to take fire; and Mr. Vanblarcom was peculiar as to the manifestation of feeling. He could not—as some persons, blessed or cursed, just as you please to term it, with acute sensibilities and very susceptible to the gentler emotions—open the natural flood-gates and let the stream have vent. He would swell up and choke, and look very stern; and only one intimately acquainted with his peculiarities could, at such times, comprehend exactly what ailed him. He might be angry, or unwell, or about to strangle, or go off into apoplexy; any of these causes would suggest themselves, rather than the true one. His wife, however, knew him, and when she said *we*, she did so not only because it was highly proper, under such circumstances, to connect him with herself in expressions of gratitude, but because she wished to relieve him from the necessity of saying anything. She knew that the talking for both must be done by her.

"You have done more for us, Mr. Ashton, than you can now imagine; much more than relieving our temporal distress. I cannot tell you now, but at some future opportunity I may be able to do so. This world has its interests, and they take, necessarily, an intense hold upon us; but there are some things of more importance than they can ever be; and I trust, ah, I do know you have"—

"Please, Mrs. Vanblarcom, let this matter drop; I am not insensible to the fact that the aid I have afforded you, is material aid; and that you should feel thankful to me, and look upon me as a friend, is, I acknowledge, very grateful to my feelings. You have already assured me of this. I am satisfied, so far as my sympathies are concerned, with the compensation I have received. But we must both keep in mind, that our obligations end not

with the gratification of these. I feel myself to be but a dispenser of a trust committed to me by my Heavenly Father, for the purpose of cheering those of my brethren who may be cast down. He is the real benefactor; and whatever I do that may bring praise to him, I desire to thank him for; and every token of his hand that you see in this, demands from you love, obedience, gratitude to him—there let it rest."

Mrs. Vanblarcom could not but look upon the young man, as he addressed her, with thrilling interest. So young, so wise, she thought—so elevated by wealth, yet so humble in his demeanor; alive to human sympathy, so sensitive to love and gratitude from his fellows, and yet manifesting so just a sense of his true position as a mere almoner of God's bounty; and pointing the recipients of favors which were in his own power to grant or withhold, away from himself, to the only proper object of our hearts' love and reverence. Surely, she could perceive the very spirit which manifested the true character of the apostles, when they said, "Look not ye on us as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk." Had he been her brother, she would have hung upon his neck and wept out the fullness of her heart; all she could do, now, was to accept his offer of friendship.

The point to which Mrs. Vanblarcom had alluded, and for which she was about to express her sense of obligation as of especial consequence, was the effect which had been produced upon the mind of her husband by the treatment he received at the hands of Mr. Ashton. This has been spoken of before, as the reader knows; we merely allude to it now in its connection with this young wife. She was the daughter of a clergyman living in the country. She was but seventeen years of age, when, on a visit to New York, she became acquainted with her future husband. It was entirely a love match; for when he told her how much he loved—and he told her the truth—he also let her know that he had no property; nothing but his knowledge of business, and energy, and physical strength. He had not been religiously trained, and yet had been brought up in a professedly

religious family. But the terrible discrepancy between their profession in public and their domestic character, had the effect to give him a contemptuous opinion of all professors. This, connected, unhappily, with a few instances, in his business experience, of gross meanness and duplicity on the part of those who made considerable noise in the world of religious enterprise, had so soured his mind, that he threw the whole concern up as a humbug; and was very ready to let all the world know that he would have no hand nor part with any religious institution whatever.

It had been a source of sore trial to the parents of Etta Marshall, that she had allowed her affections to be captivated by one who evidently had no regard to divine things; but she thought she knew him better than they did; she knew that he had many of the elements of true religion, which were so imbued in his nature as to be controlling principles. He had a sacred regard for truth, and no fear of any consequences would keep him from letting it out—the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. He had the strictest regard for integrity in business; honesty was something more than a name, with him. He had an abhorrence of anything that bordered upon meanness, either in dealing or in talking; what he had against an individual, he would say to his face, if necessary to say it at all; and he had a heart unsullied by any of those baser passions with which men with fairer outsides are too often tainted.

Etta Marshall thought she had discovered all this in him—and she thought rightly. She respected him, she loved him dearly, and she felt perfectly conscious that his heart was hers, and although she could not persuade her parents so as to take away all their fears for her happiness, yet they consented to her union. She had been happy, very happy; but one thing was yet wanting; she felt it year by year more sensibly. She had not been deceived by the man she had given herself to; nor did ever a mother, with the tenderest heart, cherish a beloved daughter with more untiring devotion, than did he his Etta. But still, he turned his back upon what she held to be most sacred; and the little ones were grow-

ing in years, and they must be trained to reverence their father, and to feel that all he did was right; and the task was getting to be more difficult and painful—painful to him and to her. And as she looked ahead through life, she feared the evil day had not come yet, and that dark clouds would by and by be gathering over her and the objects on which heart was centered.

But suddenly a light had come down upon his path—it was more resplendent than the noon-day sun—it exposed, even to the strong-willed and prejudiced man, his own obliquities, by the striking contrast. His heart recoiled, his self-confidence was broken. He had not been a hypocrite; he had avoided that evil. But it was one thing to stand on guard against a false profession, and quite another to come boldly forward, amid a carping world, and with no motive but that of alleviating the many ills of humanity, extend the helping hand, and cry, "cheer up," to the desponding and downcast. James Vanblarcom was well versed in all the views and feelings which men of business and men of the world possess. He knew that William Ashton, by thus setting at naught the maxims of trade, and casting his treasures forth upon the bare honor of a poor and helpless man, was laying himself open to the sneers of the wise and crafty. He would be derided—behind his back, indeed, but earnestly so—as weak-minded, foolish; and he knew that the multitude would shout a loud huzza if, as they believed it would be, his inherited wealth should be scattered to the winds, although squandered in the cause of the suffering and helpless. Yes, Vanblarcom knew this well; and when he contrasted his own narrow policy, hitherto, with the noble deeds and daring of this youth, he was utterly abashed. He knew there must be a power behind the curtain, a principle which comes not from the natural heart, which produced such a moral prodigy; and his views have changed; his confidence in himself is broken up; his opposition to the services of religion dropped; there is a reality to it, and no longer will he, by word or act, do aught to hinder its advancement either in his own heart or that of others. And all this his wife knew, and life had opened a new page for her; and

she had strong hopes, ah, how strong! that its record would be untold happiness. And she wanted to tell their benefactor all this; and perhaps she yet may do so, for they will often meet, and their sympathies be more and more intertwined, for good or ill. But we have interrupted the scene longer than we anticipated.

As if willing to change the subject, Mr. Ashton now turned toward Vanblarcom, who designedly had kept a little in the back ground.

"I have been thinking, Mr. Vanblarcom, while sitting here, that you must be one of my tenants. I hope you will have no objections to me for a landlord."

"By no means; but how a tenant? You have no houses, I hope, as poor as this?"

"This house answers a good turn; it is not in good repair, that is wrong. But for many persons, such houses are needed. You, no doubt have felt it a fortunate circumstance that such a tenement could be obtained. Those who have but limited means need houses, as well as the forehanded and wealthy. It will be a sad state of things when all our city shall be covered with such rows of buildings as are now being put up in several of our more populous streets."

"It will, indeed—they must leave the city."

"And when we drive out all those who are compelled to labor, in consequence of straitened circumstances, where shall we?"

"True—that's true. Our most useful citizens are those who are obliged to buckle to it for a living, and high rents will either drive them away, or tempt them to go beyond their means; and when men do that, the next step is bankruptcy, or robbery in some shape or other."

"I have thought of this; or I will not say *I* have thought of it, but Uncle Blagg, you know, is a shrewd, calculating man, as well as very kind-hearted."

"He is one of the best souls that is breathing in this city. Not much to look at, but a big heart, and a wise head, too."

"I go to him as my counsellor. He has suggested to me the propriety of putting up, on my vacant lots in

Broome street, a row of plain two-story houses, genteel, strong buildings, such as will not get out of fashion either, and yet finished in such a style, that men of moderate incomes can afford to live in them. And I shall have them completed soon. Now I propose that you take a look at them."

Mr. Vanblarcom shook his head.

"It would be of no use. I have noticed them; they will command more money than I shall be able to afford."

"They will, probably, not command more than I choose to ask for them."

"What is that?"

"Three hundred dollars."

"Three hundred! Every house there will let at once for four hundred."

"No, they will not, for I do not intend to let them to the highest bidder. They will pay me at present what I am satisfied with as a fair interest, at that price. I intend, however, to have the choice of my tenants. I do not intend to let them to men who want to save money by hiring a house twenty-five per cent. less than it is worth; but to those who have been accustomed to a certain style of living, whose business and standing in society entitle them to a fair rank, but whose means are limited. I have ten of them in that row. Four of them are already engaged, and you shall have the next choice; what say you to it?"

Mrs. Vanblarcom did not look at her husband. She did not care to add the influence of her wishes against what might be his judgment. But if it could be so! She had noticed these buildings, too; she and her husband had walked together past them, and he had said how neat and snug they looked, and how pleasant was the street, and what pleasant yards the children would have to play in! but she had not replied. She felt it all, but far, far off, then, was any prospect that he and she, and their little ones, could be so housed. And now her heart was all stirred up. What could she ask beyond such a home?—but she would be still.

"You truly are kind, sir. It would be, of all things, the

one wish of my heart to be able to put my family in such quarters. But you know all my circumstances. I can only hope I may succeed; and if I do, the rent would not be much; but if not"—

"That venture I take upon myself. So, if you do not object, I shall put your name down for one of them, and you and your lady can go and select just which you please; and any little conveniences which Mrs. Vanblarcom may suggest, shall be attended to. But I must be going, or my uncle will lose his patience." And as he rose to depart, the wife and husband stood beside him, and he gave each a hand. All had been said that was needful, but not all that their full hearts wanted to say. Mrs. Vanblarcom, however, must have one word more.

"I was going to ask—but I know it is hardly civil—our accommodations are so cramped; but it would be so pleasant to see you here, sometimes!"

"You know we are to be friends. I attach a real meaning to that word when I use it; and I assure you, when I have leisure, I shall feel quite ready to make you a call."

We have purposely omitted all mention of the young lady whose voice had so attracted the notice of Mr. Ashton, and who was seated beside the cradle when he came in, because we wish to finish one part of the scene first. He had a fair look at her when he entered, and received from her a slight inclination of her head, as his name was mentioned. But during his reception by Mrs. Vanblarcom she stepped from the room, and he could only give a glance at her retiring form. She did not return; no doubt he thought, "she heard my name, and supposing Mr. and Mrs. Vanblarcom might wish to be alone with me, kept out of the way; or, being only a neighbor, returned home." He was on the point, several times, of asking some questions respecting her, but feared it might seem like rudeness, especially as she so immediately withdrew. He had a secret hope she might return, and, perhaps, if the truth was known, was willing to prolong his stay on that account. A strange feeling had come over him at the first sight of her. It was not

that she was so handsome. Her countenance was certainly very pleasing, but he had been accustomed to mingle with ladies with much higher pretensions to beauty, and yet the sight of her affected him, as that of no other lady ever had; but for what reason, he could not tell. After he had left, the house and the scene there in its particulars would recur: her form, and gait, and look; the peculiar glance of her eye; even her finely-molded neck and glossy hair; minutiae which he had not thought of at the time would all come back, as it were, uncalled for, and her image be thrust before him, and his attention diverted at once from other objects. It would seem that the look which he gave her must have been much more intense than he was conscious of at the time; and the thought that thus it might have been, would trouble him. "Was it possible he had stopped and gazed upon her! could he have been guilty of so unmanly an act! And might it be possible that, touched by his rudeness, she had purposely abstained from coming into the room during his stay?" It is strange how the mind will work up something to trouble itself with! And often that night, when awake, her image would present itself, until he fancied he could tell the color of her eyes, and the peculiar manner in which her hair was braided. No doubt much of it was fancy, and he tried, at times, to persuade himself that so it was. But many of our fancies become realities; and getting fast hold upon the mind, work themselves into a niche there, and become part and parcel of our being, accompanying us when real persons and scenes are withdrawn, and fill, at last, a necessary place in our affections.

A few days after this, he met his friend, Vanblarcom, and the whole affair had, in one way or another, troubled him so much, that he resolved, if possible, to break the spell, or, at least, to find out whether he had been the cause why the young lady absented herself during his presence. After conversing a while with him about business matters, just as he was about to go on his way, Mr. Ashton inquired particularly about his family.

"All well, very well; my wife is always talking about your pleasant call, and is longing to see you again."



"I almost feared I might have intruded too long that evening, and kept your friend away from your circle."

"Oh, by no means! it was only my wife's sister. She was going away the next morning, and had to be busy making preparations. She has been preparing herself as a teacher, and has gone off to Ohio to take a school."

"Oh, well! I only thought I might have been in the way—good day."

"Gone off to Ohio!" this he said to himself, "to be a teacher!" His dream was suddenly dissipated. "Thus ends that chapter," he said again, and tried to think of something else.

And our chapter is long enough quite; we will close that, too.

## CHAPTER XVII.

MR. BLAGG had a saying which he sometimes whispered to his more intimate friends, in reference to the great subject of setting things in the moral world straight. "The world is crooked, no doubt of it—the machinery is apt to get out of order; but when you set to work to straighten things, do it softly, else there'll be mischief."

Mr. Blagg was a true philosopher, although he made no pretensions to be anything more than a mere book-keeper. But his friend and patron looked upon him in both characters. Mr. Blagg's word as to the principles by which an account should be made out, or what course of conduct should be pursued in any given affair of life, was, with Mr. Granite, in general, conclusive; he never went further for advice; and as the latter gentleman was apt, at times, to make rather hasty conclusions, being of impetuous turn, it was a very happy thing for him that he had always near at hand such a balance-wheel as Mr. Blagg's counsel.

When Mr. Granite had discovered, as he had good reason for supposing, that his elder son was already gone to ruin, and, in his desperation, had fairly driven him from his home, and, as he thought at the time, from his heart, too, a mighty lever seemed to have been suddenly torn away from beneath him, and all his stimulus to labor withdrawn. He had been an indulgent father, but had never manifested that tender interest which some parents do. He saw that all their wants were abundantly supplied, and was kind in his treatment. Business had absorbed his attention; he had prospered in it, and when business is prosperous, there is a fascination about it that is very apt to engage the whole heart. Money-making very often, indeed, supplies the place of "wife, children, and friends." Mr. Granite, for some years, had been without a wife; his eldest child, the son, of whom

he was beginning to be quite proud, was in college, and his other children he left to the care and control of their aunt, his sister. He saw them only at meals, and not always then. His evenings were occupied either with gentlemen calling upon him, or he upon them; so that, however much he may have loved his children, one thing is certain, they were not necessary, or seemingly so, for the repose of his heart, and his presence was not a rallying point for them.

Had nothing transpired to open his eyes as to the strength of his parental love, he would never have understood the true relation he bore to his children.

But when suddenly one of them, the eldest, just as he is approaching manhood, becomes recreant to a fair character, and is ready to fall into the gulf of dissipation, his heart sinks!—the world loses its pleasant aspect, gain offers no allurement, and a dark shadow settles around his path! For a few days he broods over his catastrophe, and his drooping spirits are manifest to all about him. His old friend and assistant, no longer able to bear the change in silence, takes the opportunity, when they are alone, to inquire "whether he is not well?"

"I am well in body, Mr. Blagg, but my mind is almost distracted. I am going to give up business!"

Mr. Blagg at once left his seat at the desk, and took a chair beside his employer.

"You are not in earnest?"

"I am—I have no heart to do business any longer. You have heard about Herman, I suppose?"

"Not a word. Is he sick?"

"Worse than that—he's a—he has gone to ruin, and I have turned him out of my house."

"Softly, softly—don't say so! What has he done, sir?"

"Done, sir!—he has blasted his reputation, and brought disgrace upon me and all my family! He is an associate with the lowest blacklegs in the city—a gambler, sir!"

"Can't be!"

"It is true, Mr. Blagg! and when I reproved him, he

turned upon me, sir! twitted me with not caring for him, and neglecting him!—and I have turned him off!"

"Softly, softly!—wouldn't do that, by any means—ruin him at once!—softly, softly—patience, patience—very young yet!—imprudent, that is all, depend upon it."

"But it is done already—he is gone, and I haven't seen him for some time."

"We must find him, then—where can he be?"

Mr. Granite made no reply; his mind had been so taken up with the trial itself, that the result, in reference to his son, had scarcely been thought of.

"You see, my dear sir, young men, or big boys, are very much like young horses—they will flounder and tear round, and thrash things about, and ready to break their own necks and everybody's else, when the bits are first put on; but we mustn't let them hurt themselves, at any rate. He will come back, I guess."

"Never, sir, I fear; probaby he has gone to sea, and will turn out a vagabond."

"No, no, no!—softly, softly. May he not have gone to your friends in the country?"

"I have written to them—he is not there; and I have walked days, and half of some nights, about town, looking for him. I have watched from dusk until ten o'clock, about the places where he would be likely to resort, but all in vain. It is that college, Mr. Blagg. College, sir, is a great humbug—it is only a place to ruin young men."

"They need watching, I know, sir; but in the city, here, sir, they trust the boys pretty much to their parents' care."

Mr. Granite was silent again. This was a home thrust, and Mr. Blagg meant it as such; and as he believed it had taken effect, he thought it could do no harm to follow it up.

"I have pitied Herman, sometimes; and I pity young folks in general, especially if they have parents who are able to allow them plenty of spending-money, and are indulgent enough to do so. They don't know the world; their minds are springy, and on the jump for amusement; and they don't stop to think, when they are on a chase, where it may land them. And if they don't have a father

or mother to keed fast hold of them, there is another thing. Herman has no mother—never has had, you may say; and, to tell the whole truth, he don't like his aunt. She may do well for your interest, in taking care of things, and saving the odds and ends, and all that; but she hasn't been a mother to Herman. He don't feel free before her—he don't make a confident of her; and young folks, like him, want some one at home to whom they can let out all their mind, and who will wind a cord of love about their heart, and pour in good counsel, through sweet and tender words; no one can do it like a mother—may be you did not think of that. We must go softly, softly, in dealing with the young."

Their conversation was now interrupted by the entrance of the clerks, and Mr. Blagg was not sorry that it had stopped just where it did; he knew that there were some things which he had said, that Mr. Granite would be apt to think of, and they might do him good.

On the very day in which Herbert Jones had called to invite Mr. Blagg to his house, the subject had been brought up again, and Mr. Granite, discouraged and desperate, had fully resolved to throw up his business and retire from the city. He would never risk another son within the reach of such temptations as the city afforded!

He had made up his mind that Herman had gone to sea; the hard feelings he at first indulged had long since died away. The folly of the youth was entirely absorbed in the agony the father felt when he thought of him exposed to the rough world, a stranger, an outcast, and so unfitted, by his previous life, for the hard struggle. Oh, how he regretted that he had not pursued a different course—that he had not, by mild and winning measures, endeavored to entice his boy from the path of evil, and rather taken him to his heart in warmer love than he had ever shown to him! and then he could have shielded him from the destroyer. Now, his impetuous wrath had, no doubt, driven him away off into the dreary desert of a wide world!

Mr. Blagg could afford him but little comfort by anything he could say; it would do no good now to reproach

the suffering father by good advice, as to how children and youth should be nurtured. The evil done, he feared, was truly past amending; and he had made up his mind that Mr. Granite was right in his conjecture—"Herman had, no doubt, gone to sea!" The idea of giving up business was, however, an unpleasant thought to Mr. Blagg. He did not feel like relinquishing work himself, although his salary was not necessary for his subsistence. He was fond of the old stand, and the old firm, and his seat at the desk. His routine was so familiar, and all the details of his department so clear to his mind, that his books went on, year by year, balancing to a cent, so easily, that the labor of keeping them was no drudgery, rather a recreation. But he thought not of himself alone; he would, to be sure, if the concern was to be closed, leave the desk forever; he could not bring himself to feel willing to labor for any new firm; he must go out with his old friend, and if he persisted in removing to the country, he would go there, too, and locate near him, so that they might read the papers together, and talk over, daily, the chances and changes of trade. But what would Mr. Granite do in the country?—no wife to fill up the void in his heart, which had been filled with business, and no likelihood of his getting one; and would not his time hang heavily on his hands? He might, indeed, be diverted while fixing his place of residence, but a year or two would suffice for that; and then?—alas! how much was comprehended in the answer to that query!—what then? Man, to be happy, must have an object—an object that will fill his mind; cessation from labor is not always rest, and retirement from business, for the sake of enjoyment and quiet, had often proved, as Mr. Blagg well knew, a fatal mistake. But he had again and again brought up these arguments, and they were answered—

"Why should I, from day to day, pursue a round that now has no interest for me? For whom am I laboring?"

"Your other children."

"My daughters will have enough already to tempt the money-seekers, and my little Charlie must not be brought up amid the dangers of a city."

"But there is good society in the city—yea, better than you will find in the country—sterling minds, that are full of the noblest yearnings, trained to walk amid vice, and not mingle with it. The city, too, depend upon it, Mr. Granite, is the true place to drill a child, or a man, into the best shape, and fit him to play an active, useful part. We have one example—look at Herbert Jones!"

"Look at Henry Jones!"

"And what has made the difference?"

Mr. Granite felt the rebuke, and was almost tempted to give a severe reply; but he forbore, and only said:

"I cannot change my habits if I remain here. If I have lost one son through my want of care, it is no reason why my other little one should be endangered too. I shall go to the country, Mr. Blagg. I don't fancy it, to be sure, but I can there watch my boy, and keep off bad associates, and be more with him. He shall have teachers in the house, and never go into a public school, and as to college, I would sooner send him to sea."

"And when he grows up, or you should be taken from him, what then?"

Mr. Granite could not say.

"Would it not be better, sir, to fill his mind with good instructions, now in his youth—give him a disgust for that which is evil—let him mingle in common with boys, as he must by and by mingle with men; when any bad influence at any time seems to be acting upon him, counteract it by showing him the terrible consequences to which it may lead? Your word is gospel to him now—he thinks what you say and do is and must be right; deal softly with him—win his confidence, so that he will not be afraid to tell you where he goes and what he does—pray with him—that will do more to bend his little heart to you, and to make him shun evil, than all the talking you can do. He has no mother—you must supply her place."

Poor Mr. Granite was deeply agitated—he had to wipe away the big drops that started from his forehead. He knew his old friend was right; but, alas! how could he begin now to do what he had never yet done? Al-

though he was a kind father, and a professor of religion, and his children had been baptized, and he had taken solemn vows to do all these things, he had served the world faithfully; but what other great object had engrossed his mind?

It was under such circumstances that Mr. Blagg made his visit to Herbert Jones.

Mr. Blagg had been introduced to Herbert's mother, and had spent an evening in their family; he had, therefore, no reluctance when Herbert told him that his mother wished especially to see him—to go into the room where she was in waiting for him, that they might have a private interview.

It was not a long one; and when Mr. Blagg returned into the store, he walked up to Herbert and grasped his hand in both of his, and shook it rapidly for some time without speaking. At last he made out to say:

"Bless you—bless you! Now come, go with me."

Herbert asked no questions; he seemed to know what was wanted. They went out, and walked through one or two streets, and went in at the door of a plain house, and up-stairs. And there they did not remain long either—their business was soon accomplished; but when they reached the street again, Mr. Blagg took Herbert's hand and gave it another shaking.

"You have saved him! May God bless you!" The old man could say no more, and Herbert could not have replied; the scene which he had witnessed in the room up-stairs had stirred up the warm feelings of his young heart. He was weeping—he was yet a boy. How could he help it?

"I must leave you now," said Mr. Blagg; "his father must have his heart set at rest this very night. Tell Willie, when he comes in, I could not wait for him—pressing business—you need not say what—good night. God bless you!—I know he will—wish I was in your skin!" and the old man hobbled off to get a carriage.

"I will arise and go to my father." Blessed resolve!—the turning-point in the poor wanderer's wretched course. Away from his heavenly father's love and care, darkness and despair forever brood. In that land are

polluted pleasures, want, famine, and death! He has come to his mind—he is on his way to the old homestead and his father's sheltering love. The path grows pleasanter, and the skies are clearing, and he finds repose, and a father's welcome are in waiting for him. Could every poor wanderer in the ways of error but come to his mind and try the prodigal's returning path, oh, how quickly would they experience the blessed welcome that awaits them! Alas, that they will not come!

"He was dead and is alive again—he was lost and is found!" This was Mr. Blagg's salutation as he entered Mr. Granite's parlor.

"What do you say?" Mr. Granite had sprung from his chair, where he was sitting alone, and pondering over the past and present.

"I say 'he was dead and is alive again—he was lost and is found!'"

"Who do you mean?"

"Our Herman. I have found him, clothed and in his right mind—and a better mind than he has ever had before. He would have been here days ago to ask your forgiveness, but he thought you might not believe he was in earnest. But he is—never saw such a turn round in all my days!—seen a good many strange things, too."

"Where is he?"

"In good hands, I assure you. You remember, when you helped that boy, Herbert Jones, I begged to have a share in that investment—it's the greatest spec you ever made yet. That boy and his good angel of a mother have saved Herman!"

"Come, sit down, Mr. Blagg, and tell me all about it. How did they come across him—did he know them?"

"He knows them now, and he says that but for them he would have been lost forever—that's as *he* thinks! It's a strange story, and a long one, but I will try to tell it just as that dear lady told it to me; but you must have patience."

Mrs. Jones had omitted no part of the scene attending their first interview with Herman, nor what Herbert told her of the condition in which he found him, nor what Herman had told her of the steps which led to it; and

Herman had told him of the manner in which he had been dealt with by those friends into whose hands he had fallen, and of the change in his views and feelings in consequence of it. And Mr. Blagg, being a particular man, was careful to omit nothing in his recital.

"Now, sir, don't you think that is getting double compound interest for an outlay? But where are you going, Mr. Granite?"

"Going! I am going right up there."

"Softly, sir, softly—not to-night. Bless your soul, they're all abed, no doubt, by this time. No, no; let matters rest quietly to-night—all is settled. Herman knows that I can answer for your feelings pretty straight. Poor fellow, how he wept when I told him that your arms were ready, and your heart was ready, to receive him, and that I knew the past was forgiven. Depend upon it, Mr. Granite, *love is the jewel*, sir. It begets love—it will break more stubborn wills, and reform more rampant sinners, than all the hammers and tongs you can scrape up. But, sir, give me a woman for reaching the very marrow-bones. Her soft words and her kind looks, and the tears that come so quickly and naturally, too—they are worse than the fire and the hammer—man melts all down to nothing under them. You will excuse me, sir, for being so plain, but between you and me, when that widow has worn her mourning long enough to take it off with decency, I should—I should"—

But Mr. Blagg did not give any further intimation of what he should do with the widow, than by a significant dodge of his head. Whether Mr. Granite understood him, or was so intent upon the pleasant news which had been brought, we cannot say—he made no sign whatever.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

THAT there had been some out of the way doings at Kirkland Place, at the death of its late owner, was more or less rumored in the vicinity; but nothing definite was known, only that the ladies were so deeply affected as to be confined to their beds, and unable to attend the funeral. Randolph Hudson, too, it was said, was preparing to leave the situation he had so long held, and take possession of his own property. There was also a rumor that on the day previous to the death of her father, Miss Gerty Kirkland had been privately married to Doctor Weatherbee, and that this had taken place for reasons of policy, rather than for any wish on the part of Miss Gerty to hasten the nuptials. Mr. Kirkland, her father, could not live long, and it would be much better for the ladies to have a gentleman on hand who would be entitled to act as an heir with them and for them, than to be at the mercy of strangers. Whether any of these rumors were true, especially the last, could not be positively known for some time. The doctor was indeed much of his time at the place in attendance on the ladies, both being confined to their beds, under the influence of a nervous fever—not really threatening their lives, but offering a good chance for the doctor to run up a long bill, if, as some affirmed, the story of a marriage was all moonshine. That Randolph Hudson had left, did indeed turn out to be a fact—not, however, to take possession of his own house. He was a bachelor, and very nice in all his ideas of housekeeping, and his place had been leased to a family not very particular about such matters, and of course he did not feel like proposing himself as a boarder; he therefore, a few days after the funeral of his old master, quietly removed himself and his effects to the house of a neighbor, plain people like himself, and about his own age, and with no family but the man and his wife. It was a small, snug residence, with every convenience,

but in plain, country style, and as orderly in its house-keeping arrangement as Randi could desire.

Sam Rutgers and his wife had been old cronies of his, and it was with a lighter heart than he had enjoyed for many years, that he found himself seated on the broad, low stoop the evening of the day he moved in, with Mr. and Mrs. Rutgers, talking of various matters, principally of local interest; and as the subject of their conversation is one in which the reader will be somewhat interested, we may as well take a seat beside them and listen to it.

"They say, Uncle Randi"—Mr. and Mrs. Rutgers always gave him that title, and to return the compliment, Randi, in speaking to or of the gentleman, invariably said Uncle Sam—Mrs. Rutgers, being much the junior of her husband, was addressed simply as "Polly"—"that the daughter of Gerald Kirkland has been found, and that she will come in as an heir, for Robert Kirkland, after all, hasn't left a will."

"That's true, Polly—at least part of it. Mrs. Manners, though the daughter of Gerald, has followed her old grandfather to the grave—or he has followed her, I don't know which; but they died pretty near about the same time."

"You don't say—and left no children?"

"One daughter—even handsomer, they say, than her mother was, and she was pretty enough, and kind enough. Ah! that was a cruel blow to the old grandfather—he doted on her; but temper, you know, Polly, when it gets the upper hand, makes us do what we are sorry for all our lives."

"You may well say that, Uncle Randi; I often tell Mr. Rutgers that temper and pride in the bargain has been the destroying of that family—I mean not destroying of it altogether, but they haven't, it seems to me, ever enjoyed anything like common folks; they never seemed to me to be happy; they looked as things warn't to their mind—as though the world warn't just as they would have it—when they had means to get all that mortal could desire. I always told Mr. Rutgers, when I had been down to the manor-house—you know I often



had to go there to help with their dresses, when I was young, and we were first married—I always said I was glad to get home; things looked happier, and even the birds seemed to sing sweeter here than they did in those old trees. It isn't the grandest place, nor the most money, that can give the most happiness; it's more in ourselves than anything else—I'm sure of that. But do you think it's true what they say about the marriage, that the doctor and Miss Gerty are married—do you think she will ever stoop so low? Why, the day was when she might have had some of the first. The doctor ain't much, depend on it, Uncle Randi."

"He's got bushy hair, and large whiskers, and white hands, and little feet, and he shows good teeth, and the women folks say he's handsome—perhaps he is, to them."

"But do you think she will have him?"

"Can't say."

"May be they are married?"

"Like as not."

"Then you believe it, Uncle Randi?"

"Don't believe one way nor the other—don't say one way nor the other—time will show."

"She will repent it all the rest of her days."

"Like as not—may be he will, too—can't help it."

"Well it seems a great pity things should be just so. Now only to think what a large property there has been, and everything so grand and orderly about the house, and means to get whatever their heart could wish, and yet it seems all to no purpose. Do you think there will be trouble about that other heir? Why, if there's no will, you know, it will all have to be shared alike; then who will be the guardian of that young one—she must have a guardian."

"There's the rub, Polly. You have asked a question now, that is worth answering, if one can only get at the bottom of it. There will be management about that; there will be deep play—see if there ain't. She won't be let loose, take my word for it. You see if she is not brought up here pretty soon, and made much of, and have all kinds of favors, and when once under their

thumb, if she ain't kept closer than any prisoner, and may be wheedled to marry some of their kin, so as to keep all in the family, then I miss my guess. When once she gets fairly under them, she won't no more have a will of her own, unless she is different stuff from what most young folks is made of, or I don't know them—that's all."

"You don't say!"

"Some folks think they will keep up the grudge against the mother, and because she married, as they said, beneath the family, they will never own the child, and have nothing to do with her. I know folks thinks so; but I tell them, not so. It would be better for the child, from what I hear, to hide where she now is—the lady who has taken her, Mr. McBride says, why there isn't such another to be found nowhere—a true lady, kind hearted, a good Christian woman, and able to bring her up as a lady ought to be. And the child, he says, is as happy as a lark, and he thinks they will let her be there until she is of age; but you will see, what I say is true, before two months she will be riding in their coach with them, and she'll be watched closer than ever a cat watched a mouse. There's more trouble, according to my mind, before that poor young thing, than if she had nothing but her own hands to depend on for a living—and I pity her."

The conversation was here interrupted by the appearance of one of the servants from Kirkland Place. Randi looked rather surprised at the messenger, and fears of something wrong at once possessed him, but he said not a word. The rider—for the boy was on horseback—dismounted, and holding the bridle in his hand, walked up to the stoop.

"Uncle Randi, Mistress Lizzie requested me to come and ask you if you will come down in the morning. She says you will oblige her very much; she wants to see you about something of consequence."

Mr. and Mrs. Rutgers looked at Randi, and Randi looked at the boy, but for some reason he made no reply. He was trying to think what possible business she could have with him. He had no accounts to settle—in fact with

either of the ladies he never had any; and his old master's affairs, so far as he had any concern with them, were all squared before his death.

"Shall I say you will come?"

"She did not say what she wanted?"

"Don't know nothing about it."

"Well, tell your mistress I will come as she requests."

And the rider mounted his horse, and was off, without further questions on either side. Randi did not feel much like continuing the conversation, and almost immediately retired for the night.

The next morning he arrayed himself in his best suit of black, and soon after their breakfast hour his arrival was made known to the ladies, and almost immediately he was summoned to the room occupied by the elder of the two.

The lady was seated in an easy-chair, and as he entered the room, accosted him quite pleasantly, and bade him draw a seat near to her, at the same time telling her maid to retire.

"I have sent for you to have a little conversation privately, and I thank you for so readily complying with my request. You have been a long time in our family, and have been a very faithful servant—no, I will hardly say that—rather you have been a faithful friend."

Randi gave his ear a slight rub; he was a little deaf, and feared that he did not quite get the real words which had been spoken.

"I know there have been some hard feelings on our part; we no doubt judged you wrongfully, and perhaps our treatment was harsh at the time; but death has intervened since, and made a great change in many things, and we hope you have not laid up what was said and done when our feelings were under excitement."

"I have no hard feelings, Miss Lizzie."

"We thought you could not have. We know you are comfortably off, and have no need to labor more, and *that* we do not want from you; but it is our wish that you return and take your old place in the family. We want you here, that we may consult about matters that you know more of than any one else; and we have

confidence in your judgment and honesty that we can have in no one else. It will be a great favor to both my sister and myself if you will comply."

Randi was taken by surprise. It was such a strange thing to be thus addressed by one of those who had for a long time treated him, to say the least, with coldness, that he was at once disarmed of all resentment, if any lingered in his mind. The past was all washed away in a moment. It was asked, too, as a favor of him, who had been so long accustomed to obey their mandates without a question, although seldom indeed that his services for them had been demanded. Moreover, Randi found, even from one day's experience, that it was much easier talking about leaving a home, to which he had been so long accustomed, than it was to satisfy his mind with new scenes. Altogether a wonderful change came over him in a short time; he was more ready to return than he thought it possible he could ever have been, when on his way to take up his new quarters. Still he wished to know a little more about the position he should take.

"But, you know, Miss Lizzie, it is said there is to be a new master here; and some say there is one now. He may not feel well disposed toward me, and not willing to see me doing as I did when the old master was living. You know yourself, Miss Lizzie, that, of late years, things have been left pretty much to my directing."

"And that is what we want; we do not wish any changes; it is true, you may as well know it, for you must, whether you stay or not—Miss Gerty is married; and I say it to you, I regret now exceedingly that such an event has occurred. It was done hastily, and when our feelings were not in a proper state for examining things judiciously. I can see already, however, that instead of being a help, this arrangement is going to make, I fear, much confusion. This I tell you in confidence; I shall be put one side, unless some one like yourself is here to manage for me, who knows what has been our way. In fact, Randolph, I must look to you now to do what you know my father would have done, and, so far as you can, be to me what you were to him."

There was a tremor in her voice that told the old man she was earnest, and Randi was not made of such stuff that he could resist any such appeal.

"Miss Lizzie, I have spent my days pretty much here; your father took me when I was but twelve years of age, and this shall still be my home, that is, if I am wanted. But does Miss Gerty know about it, and is it agreeable to her?"

"It is agreeable to her *now*; there are many reasons why she should prefer that you should come back. But you cannot expect, nor do I, that she and I will be of the same mind about many things. We shall now have separate interests, she may very likely feel disposed to make a change, and remove to the city. But this must be my home to the end of my days, if I can so manage it. All I want, is, that you take the oversight of affairs, and not let them get out of your hands—that is, so far as *my* interests are concerned—and always to tell me freely what you think, just as you did my father."

"I will do it, Miss Lizzie; but you must uphold me in what I do, for it is in my mind there will be different ways and doings here from what there has been."

The reader must not suppose, because the language and bearing of the lady toward Randolph Hudson were so changed, that it was in consequence of any change in her general views and feelings in reference to the affairs of life. She was the same in that respect as ever, the same proud spirit; had the same love of money, and the same regard for her family honor, and station. She had reasoned this matter with herself, and had come to the conclusion that under the circumstances it was necessary, or it might be necessary, for her to have such a counsellor as Randolph Hudson, and such a delegate to manage for her in many things, which she could not so well attend to. Her own instinct alone impelled her to do this. Randolph complied with her wish, from a desire to befriend a member of a family where his heart lingered; to which, after all, he was much attached. Both she and her sister were remarkably sensitive as to the opinion of the world around them, and even of the world at a distance too. Randolph knew some things which others did not:

it would be their best policy so to treat him that he might have no inducement to circulate abroad some of the family secrets, and for this reason more particularly had Miss Gerty united with her sister in the effort to retain him.

The division of an estate by a court of chancery is rather a tedious affair, and not very interesting in its details; we shall therefore be pardoned for allowing the reader to use his own imagination in reference thereto. It was highly necessary, however, that each of the parties concerned should have some one to represent their peculiar interest; and as Miss Gerty had, by her marriage, provided such a one for herself, it was necessary for her sister to decide whether she would make a common concern of it, and allow the doctor to act for her, which would indeed have been very natural, or to select some other individual for that purpose. For reasons which she thought all-sufficient, she decided upon the latter course; and at the suggestion of Randolph, Mr. McBride was selected, who, being a gentleman of leisure, and being strongly solicited by Randolph, decided to accept the nomination.

We need not be particular about dates, but it was some weeks after the death of their father, the sisters had almost quite recovered from the shock which the scenes at that death-bed had occasioned, they were seated together in their common parlor, conversing about matters which now absorbed most of their thoughts.

"I have been thinking, Gerty, about the child, who now, whether we will or no, has to be a sharer with us—is it wise that she should be left so long under the influence of strangers?"

"I have been thinking of that, too. The brat must now, as things are, take her slice of our rights—no help for it, that I see."

"And, perhaps, have a share of this very house allotted to her."

"That will trouble you more than it will me. At any rate, I shan't share it with any one. If it cannot be set off to one of us, and the estate belonging to it, then it may go to those who choose to live in partnership. I

shall never live so—and moreover, the doctor says it is too lonesome here; he prefers living in the city.”

“Why, surely he cannot complain as to that matter; he cannot have been very lonely as yet—scarcely a day but some of his friends are here; and I have thought, at times, he might have had a little more regard for our feelings, than to have such a run of company so soon. It is not in accordance with propriety; and especially, while we were confined to our rooms.”

“Oh, well, you must remember that the doctor is a young man”—Gerty always laid stress upon that fact; it seemed to be a matter of congratulation with her—“and besides, how can he help it? Gentlemen will call on him, and he must be hospitable. They all know he has married rich”—that was another subject that Gerty rather frequently boasted of—“and I wish him to feel that he has a position, now, that places him above the common herd—I wish him to live as a gentleman.”

“That is all very well; but I cannot see what reason he has to complain of the want of society.”

“Oh, well, you know he has been accustomed to mingle much in the world”—the doctor often boasted of that; and as no one of them could contradict him, not knowing exactly with whom he had mingled, nor what opportunities he had formerly enjoyed, it was taken, at least by Miss Gerty, as a mark of position—“a man of education, and with a high degree of refinement, must have opportunity for mingling with kindred spirits—and I wish him to do so—and I think, after all, the city will be the place for him. I don’t wish him to be where he is liable to be called out to visit the clowns in this vicinity, nor their low-bred wives, either. But what were you intending to say about that brat?”

“Why, it is this; the child now is to share the property with us; and they say she is a very likely child, remarkably handsome, and with good manners.”

“Where should she have learned them? Living among paupers?”

“I only tell you what those say who have seen her—Mr. McBride is a gentleman who knows”——

“How to sell groceries and make money. Do not, I

beg of you, Lizzie, confound things in this way. He is well enough in his way; but we have never been taught that gentlemen are made by such means.”

“Well, perhaps he may not be the best judge of such matters; but still, his opinion is worth something, and he describes her as very lady-like in her bearing, as well as of a beautiful form and features; and she is, after all, a branch from our own stock, that we must allow; and now it seems to me the better way for us is to hush up matters, and not let the world know but we coincide in the present state of things. Let us get her here as soon as possible, and then we can train her as we think best—train her as *we* have been—do you not think so too?”

The heart of the younger sister had been so bitter against this interloper, as she was pleased often to call the poor orphan, that although her judgment coincided with the suggestion, she could not bring herself to confess on the instant. She made no reply.

“It will be much more trying to our feelings to see our property partitioned off to one who, if kept away and made a stranger by us, will be of course under different influences. It seems to me much the wiser plan to assume at once our right as relatives; and take her under our own supervision. The world must not know but it has been our choice thus to have it. We have certainly a claim to her, prior to all others, and no doubt the chancellor will so decide.”

This new view of the case made the whole affair seem different to the younger sister, and she was quite ready to fall in.

“Let us then, sister Lizzie, do that immediately; let us assert our rights. Let the doctor be appointed her guardian, and have her at once brought home. Mr. Rhind, I know, can state the case in such a way as to have it done without delay. She is living, I understand, in a common corner grocery stand; they must be very low people!”

“Well, Mr. McBride speaks favorably of the lady. Why, she is a Lansing, of ———. They have been reduced, to be sure.”

"There are a great many Lansings in the country as well as Kirklands. When people get reduced as low as that, there must be something out of the way. But we had better get her from them as soon as possible, and try to make the best of it. But it will be hard work. I shall dislike her, I know I shall, and to think that they should have called her Gertrude! I hope one thing, Lizzie, you will never call her Gerty while I am round—call her Gertrude. Oh, dear, how shall I ever bear to hear the brat call me aunt!"

The conversation was here interrupted by the entrance of their maid.

"Randolph Hudson wishes me to say that he would be glad to see Miss Lizzie on some business; and ask when and where he could see her?"

"He can go into the library. I will be there shortly."

"And this other matter, you think, Gerty, had better when be arranged at once?"

"As speedily as possible—the sooner the better."

As Miss Lizzie entered the library, Randi was standing respectfully waiting her presence. She took her seat, and then turning toward him:

"What is your will, Randolph?"

"I have come to ask you, Miss Lizzie, what commands you may have about the horses. When Mr. Kirkland was alive, it was never allowable to use our coach horses for any other purpose whatever; and to put them under the saddle or to drive them in the gig does not seem to be proper—they are too heavy to be trotted or galloped fast; I should fear it might do them serious injury, never having been used to it. Yesterday they were under the saddle all the afternoon, and when they returned were in a condition that no horse ought to be in, especially such horses; they were white with foam."

"Who used them?"

"Two of the young gentlemen that dined here. And besides, Tamerlane was put into the sulky and drove by another of the gentlemen, and I notice he is lame in his forefoot this morning. Mr. Kirkland always called him your horse, Miss Lizzie. He is fine under the saddle, but not used to the shafts, and I suppose he has fretted

and worried himself too much. Will has just now told me that he has orders to put the saddle on one of the coach horses, and to put the other into the sulky, and I told him not to do it until I saw his mistress."

"Who ordered him to do so?"

"The doctor, Miss Lizzie; so he says."

"Where is the doctor's horse?"

"He rides him himself—the coach horses are wanted for his friends."

"Randolph, you know all about such matters, you know how it always has been. Let there be no changes made; and as to Tamerlane, he is especially mine; and I wish to have him used under the saddle, but in no other way; and only to be used by those to whom I give special liberty so to do. Miss McBride has rode him occasionally; and when he is well and she wishes him, let her have him, but no one else without my special leave. Where is Flora—Miss Gerty's horse?"

"Oh, she is out almost every day for the ladies, a sister of one of the young gentlemen has had her these two days, and she is going again this afternoon."

"Well I have nothing to say about that, but the carriage horses must be used only as they have ever been, and Tamerlane as I have directed."

"I understand perfectly now, Miss Lizzie; that is all I want."

The horses were not used that afternoon. The doctor left the stables highly excited, and went at once to his wife's room. What passed there, no one but themselves knew. But when she came where her sister was sitting, late in the day, the latter could not but notice the change that had taken place in her looks and her whole demeanor.

"You have been weeping, Gerty."

"Yes, I have."

"What is the trouble now?"

"That which I shall probably carry with me to my grave! I thought I had married a husband, Lizzie; but I find I merely placed a master over me, and you and I must both submit to be ruled in all things, or every secret which we would wish hidden from the world will

be exposed. I shall never try to resist his will again—my life would not be safe if I did!”

“As I feared—as I feared!”

“He has been married before, and does not hesitate to say that he worried his first wife to the grave, and that I shall lead a life which will make me wish for the grave too, if I ever dare to resist his will. And I shall submit, Lizzie; my spirit is broken—it may be for my good. Depend upon it, our only way is to submit, and bear it as we may. Alas! the property we have thought so much about, and for which we planned and contrived that deed—that *terrible deed*—and thereby hurried our father out of the world—what good will it do us? I had rather this moment be one of my servants than what I am!”

“He is high-tempered, Gerty—I have always thought so, but such people soon get over their freaks. Say nothing to living soul about this; it will pass off, and when he sees you disposed to meet his views, no doubt you will get along comfortably.”

“I mean to get along—I mean to bear it. The world shall not have reason to pity me, or to say that they do. They shall not know but I am as happy as I wish to be. But oh! this chain—this cursed chain which binds me! I feel, at times, that, if I could only break it, and breathe freely once more, life would have some enjoyment.”

“You love him, though—you have said you did, and insisted on it.”

“Well, I know I have said so, and thought so, and I suppose I do now. If he was at my feet, in my power, humbled or dying, I have no doubt I should pity him—feel distressed for his distress. But to feel that he has his hand upon my neck—that I must crouch before him—that he has every power over me—that I must obey his will—that I must watch his smile or his frown—that I must first consult his caprice, and take my portion of happiness as he shall please to dole it out—oh, this is bitterness!—gall!—wormwood! It is perdition!—the torment of the lost!”

The sister listened with deep interest. She could enter into the feelings which had been just expressed,

for they were enough alike to sympathize in such feelings; and yet, as we can see faults in others which, although common to ourselves, we are either not conscious of, or too lenient to chide, so Miss Lizzie found no difficulty in beholding the glaring inconsistencies of her sister.

“But you promised to *honor and obey*. Why should it be so irksome? There is no disgrace in obeying a husband.”

“No disgrace!” and the scorn which blazed from the countenance of the speaker was in strange contrast with her humble mien as she entered the room. “No disgrace! Perhaps not, to those whose cringing spirits can bow obsequiously to the dictates of another—who can, with piling words upon their lips, fawn upon the tyrant beneath whose power they are fixed—who seem even to glory in being down-trodden and crushed, and made a toy and plaything of—caressed and spurned, coaxed and cursed, fondled and flung away with contempt—*such* may not feel disgraced. But could I break this cursed chain—could I stand up once again an unfettered, free woman, I would spurn from my presence the man or woman that should dare speak to me of marriage!”

“Oh, Gerty, Gerty, I pity you! Pray try not to feel so.”

“Sister Lizzie, *I do not want any pity*. I can bear my yoke—and I shall bear it—without wincing, because I must. I shall bow meekly under its pressure, and, like the mute ox, bear the lash in silence, even if its sting goes into my heart; and when I am dead, they may write on my grave-stone an *obedient, loving wife*—it will only be a fitting climax to the lie of my life!”

“But he is young, as you often say, and no doubt hasty. As he grows older, reason will govern him more, and as you and he mingle in society, respect for the opinion of the world will have an influence. I should not be surprised if, as you say, your spirit is broken, and you intend to make no resistance to his will, and he finds it so, his better feelings will be aroused; he will think of his hard dealings and imperious ways, and perhaps yet he may be as mild and yielding as he sees you to be.”



"What if he does! Will it ever take the secret sting from my heart? will I ever forget that he has used his power to put me down—that he has humbled me—that he has dared to tell me that his *will shall be my law*, or he will crush me by cruelty to the grave? No, never! The hatred which has sprung up within my heart is strong, deep, bitter!—never to be eradicated—no, not when my own breath is going, or I see him a stiffened corpse before me! But no one besides yourself shall ever know it."

If Miss Gerty's spirit had been broken, as she affirmed, a more humble state of mind would doubtless have been manifested. That she has been alarmed, there can be no doubt, and that she feels constrained to bear submissively to her fate, is probably her resolve, and certainly the wisest course she can pursue. But, alas! what an illustration does her situation afford of the truth, that what is designed for our highest happiness may, by our own perverseness, be turned into the most intense misery. She had made the sacred bond of marriage a convenience—a mere stepping-stone to other objects. All its solemn covenants, and promises, were entered into as mere things of course—forms without meaning, in a ceremony merely sacred because binding by law—and now, sooner than it often comes, the curse has followed. *Love*, that holy principle, implanted by a merciful God to make life here, even with its trials, a terrestrial heaven, whose gentle breathings were designed to soften the asperities, and nullify the disappointments, and cares, and toils of the journey—that which enables us to throw our burning hearts into the warm bosom of another, and feel the kindred heart, and intertwine the tender fibres, and enjoy the hope and fear which palpitate in each as common to us both—to be two in one—such love she had never known. Its promptings she had trifled with; its deep yearnings she had mocked as the idle fancies of childhood; and yet she had, in its name, bound herself for life! The curse came not uncalled for, nor undeserved. Alas! its penalty can only be cancelled now by the hand of death. Time cannot do it—changes of condition cannot do it—the utmost care cannot now

avail. The blasted bud can never bloom—Love's holy sympathies, once trifled with, they depart forever.

But what must we think of him who, with a husband's rights and a man's strength, should use them to bring the woman he has promised to love and cherish, a humble dependent upon his will? Shame on his manhood! She may have been in error—she may have forgotten that she had yielded herself to him, and promised obedience—that she was not free as she was once, and that even the wealth she owned was not now at her control, and may have manifested a spirit unbecoming a wife. Could he not have borne in mind the fact, that it was but a few short weeks since the yoke had been upon him, and that she had been unused to restraint or the guidance of any will but her own? A sad recreant to honor has he proved himself, and gladly would we blot his name from our pages and our thoughts. He is, and will be, a reptile in the path of our story.

## CHAPTER XIX.

ON the evening which has been already alluded to when Gertrude and Herbert were on their way from a call at Mrs. Kelly's, it will be remembered that they both talked very seriously, and that Gertrude appeared to have been weeping, and that she hastily passed through the store into their back room. Mrs. Jones noticed that she seemed to be in trouble, and was about to follow her to her room to inquire the cause, when Mr. Blagg was announced by Herbert, and she was compelled to leave the matter for another day. When Gertrude came down the next morning, a great change was visible in her behavior. Not that she was less affectionate or respectful; but there was a marked stiffness, or rather an embarrassment about her, especially in the presence of Herbert, altogether unlike any manifestation she had hitherto exhibited.

And Mrs. Jones was not one that could be well deceived about such a matter, nor could she be easy without an explanation.

So, watching an opportunity when alone with her, she resolved to ascertain the cause for such an evident change in manner.

"Are you not well this morning, Gertrude?"

"Oh, yes, aunt, quite well."

"You are not happy then, I fear?"

There was no answer, and she continued:

"I noticed, last evening, when you came in from your walk, that you were in tears, and should have gone to you and inquired the cause, but was prevented by company. You have no objection to let me know what has troubled you?"

Still no answer but a flushing of her cheeks, and, in fact, of her whole face; her eyes, too, were growing moist.

"I do not wish, my dear, to intrude any impertinent inquiries; but you know I love you, Gertrude, and I feel somewhat entitled to your confidence."

The storm burst. Gertrude threw her arms about the neck of Mrs. Jones and sobbed bitterly. "I will tell you, although I fear I have done wrong; and done what you requested me not to do—I will tell you."

Mrs. Jones used all the soothing words she could command; but it took some time before Gertrude was sufficiently calm to unburden her mind.

"I know I ought to tell you; and Herbert ought to tell you; and no doubt we both meant to tell you; but I fear I have made him unhappy—and oh, I am sure his happiness is dearer to me than my own."

Mrs. Jones was somewhat alarmed, but she endeavored not to show it.

"Young people are very apt, for trifling causes, at times to give each other trouble; but it soon passes off."

"I did wrong, aunt, to let him know that I was going away so soon, because you wished to tell him yourself."

"How came you to mention it, Gertrude?"

"I will tell you just how it was. I suppose I showed by my manner that I was not happy. For I have not been so since the conversation we had yesterday. I did not intend, however, to let him see it. But on our way to Mrs. Kelly's he asked me why it was that I had nothing to say, and appeared so different from what I had ever been before; and had he done anything to trouble me. I told him he had not—I could not say that nothing had happened—but I told him he would probably know the cause soon. That did not satisfy him, and then—and then he said he could hardly conceive that I would be willing to keep from him anything that troubled me; but if I did not feel ready to continue the confidence I had hitherto reposed in him, he would submit to it. What could I do, aunt? How could I, after all he has been to me, and done for me; how could I suffer him to feel so?"

"And you told him?"

"I did tell him—he said nothing—not a word did he speak to me until we reached Mrs. Kelly's."

"But that would not have caused the tears which were still flowing when you came home."

"I told you that I intended to let you know *all* that passed—I wish to do so, for there is nothing in my heart I will hide from you. When we left Mrs. Kelly's, Herbert began at once to speak with me. He told me all how he had felt from the first time he saw me. I tried to persuade him not to do so, but he said he could not help it; he must let me know his true feelings. I told him that we were very young; that I thought you would not approve of our talking together of such matters. I wanted to tell him; oh, how I wanted to! that my heart was much more sad than his could possibly be, at the thought of a separation, but I did not: I thought you might not approve of my doing so."

Mrs. Jones drew the dear girl to her breast, and kissed her, fondly.

"You are a dear, good girl, Gertrude; you have acted wisely."

"But it has made me very unhappy. Oh, I cannot bear to have him think that I am indifferent to such a noble heart as he has."

"And you said nothing further?"

"What could I say? my heart was ready to break. I could only say to him that his kindness to me should never be forgotten, and then he answered"—

But Gertrude had to give vent to another burst of tears.

"Oh, I don't see how he could say so! but he answered: 'Oh, that is all paid for, you know.' And then my tears would not allow me to reply. But *you* will tell him when I am gone that my heart is his, and ever will be, and you will tell him all the reason why I could not explain to him. Oh, you will not let him feel unhappy on my account!"

"I will do my best, dear Gertrude, to quiet his mind. You have done well! Young people are very apt to feel as you and Herbert do; but you will both be in very different situations, and while you will, I hope, always feel kindly to each other, yet the scenes in which *you* will soon be thrown, will tend to divert your attention

from one with whom you have, for a little season, been cast; and Herbert will have business and other matters to divert *him*, and a few years will change the tastes and feelings, and views of you both. It is all well as it now is. Your discretion has saved him, no doubt, from being permanently unhappy. Your friends will have their own plans for you, and Herbert, you know, has a proud spirit; he would never stoop to court the friendship of any one; and your relatives would be highly displeased to know that you had, while yet so young, allowed your affections to be placed on any one in particular. Now, I wish you, my dear, to understand this matter thoroughly. Herbert is too good, and his heart too noble, as you say it is, to be spurned by any, be they the most wealthy in the land. And those who will have control of you, depend upon it, would not hesitate to insult him, and try you bitterly, should they learn that there was any intimacy between you, or like to be, at any future time."

Gertrude wished to say more, but Mrs. Jones had wisely precluded any chance for the further exposure of her feelings. She had allowed Gertrude to understand plainly, that so far as her wishes were concerned, the matter must be dropped. Gertrude almost regretted that she had said so much. She, too, had been dreaming as well as Herbert, and now she has been awakened, and all the past must go, as the visions of the night depart when the morning breaketh. And well it was for them both that their delusion was dissipated so kindly, and in such seasonable time.

It was but a short time after the scene above described, when a coach with a liveried driver and postman, stopped before the door which led into the dwelling of Mrs. Jones. The footman opened the door of the carriage, and a gentleman alighted. It was Mr. McBride. Two ladies remained in; nor did they manifest any signs of preparing to leave their seats.

"You will alight, ladies, and go in?"

"Indeed, Mr. McBride, there cannot be occasion for our going in." And they looked contemptuously on the unpretending mansion, and one of them, looking at the

other, said, in a low voice, but loud enough for the gentleman to hear:

"A wretched place! I shall not put a foot in it, Lizzie."

Miss Lizzie Kirkland—for it was she—endeavored, by a motion of her lips, to arrest her sister's harsh language, but not succeeding, she leaned forward and said:

"Mr. McBride, it might put them to some inconvenience should we go in. And as you have written, to give notice that we should be here, the child is doubtless in readiness. If you will do the errand for us, we will be much obliged, and I am really too fatigued to get out unless absolutely necessary."

Mr. McBride bowed his acquiescence, and at once left them and entered the store.

"A perfect disgrace that we should even be obliged to open our coach door at such a place!"

"It is what we had reason to expect, Gerty!—a miserable concern all round. But we must make the best of it."

"When we once get the little brat, we will keep her far enough away from such company—I will warrant that. I expect she is some poor, vulgar creature, and we shall be mortified to death with her low manners and habits."

"Perhaps so. But we must make the best of it now. Mr. McBride says, you know, that she is quite lady-like."

"Ah, Lizzie, what does he know? Lady-like! he knows much about what is lady-like! Where did he ever see ladies, do you suppose?"

"Ah, well, I know he has not been accustomed to refined society, but we must get along now the best way we can."

Although Mrs. Jones had made up her mind, that for both Gertrude and Herbert it would be better they should be separated, and had endeavored to prepare them for the event, yet, when she saw Mr. McBride, and knew for what purpose he had come, a severe struggle at once took place in her own breast. She had become sincerely attached to the lovely girl. The gratitude which

Gertrude so steadily manifested toward her, the confidence which she seemed to repose in her, her pleasant and winning manners, and the constant exhibition of a pure and loving heart, could not fail to affect one capable as Mrs. Jones was, of appreciating excellence, and reciprocating the confidence and love of a child. And she had feelings on the subject of a separation that had no reference to herself in particular. She knew, from report, something of the character of those with whom the young girl would be placed; and how could she help feeling that severe trials awaited her? and perhaps a heart susceptible of the most tender emotions, and if properly cultivated, capable of imparting and enjoying in the highest degree those heavenly sympathies which give to earth its purest bliss, might be sorely smitten by the frigid apathy and formal conventionalities which would meet its warm and generous impulses, or be enticed to submit forever to one who could not appreciate worth. But the moment had arrived, and, however painful, its duties must be performed. The excuses which Mr. McBride offered for the ladies was received by Mrs. Jones without notice or remark. Indeed it was rather agreeable than otherwise to her, that she might, without fault on her part, be excused from an interview; for, as they declined entering her dwelling, her self-respect demanded that she should not go out to them.

Everything was in readiness, for she had taken the precaution to have Gertrude prepared for a sudden departure.

Gertrude was somewhat shocked, when she found that her first introduction to her relatives was to be under circumstances so humiliating; and it required all the art which Mrs. Jones and Mr. McBride could use, to pacify her roused spirit. Never before had she manifested such feelings, and it was as unexpected to Mrs. Jones as it was gratifying, too: for she now realized that there was a spirit within and beneath all those lovely manifestations that could be roused when the occasion might call for it, and would not be easily subdued. Love and confidence alone could do it. It was a sad beginning for

the child, but perhaps on the whole it may be better for her to be thus put on her guard at the outset.

Herbert saw the carriage, and had spoken with Mr McBride when he entered. His heart was very sore, for he had not passed a word with Gertrude since the last evening; no further explanation had been made, and he was left with the impression that what he had said did not meet with a response in her heart. And perhaps it would have been better for him that they should have separated, feeling as he then did. His pride had been hurt, and was doing much to sustain him under the trial, and it was his determination not to see her again. He knew that everything was in readiness. He had brought her little trunk and placed it in the entry, and he heard the children and his mother taking their last leave. He left the store, and was on the stairs, going, for some excuse, to his own room. He heard his name called; scarcely was the voice audible, but those tones were too dear to him—he could not say nay to their slightest whisper. Gertrude was near him, and alone. He at once descended; she gave her hand; he grasped it, and they stood a moment silently looking at each other, and then—she could not help it—the past rushed upon her in all its power: his generosity, his unvaried kindness, *his love*, and that poured out so feelingly from his honest heart. She covered her face, and leaned her head upon his breast; his arm encircled her; he kissed her tearful cheeks, again and again; he pressed her to him, and then, in a flood of tears, she broke away, and he proceeded to his room to give vent to the terrible struggle that tortured his bursting heart.

Dear reader, mock not the heart-suffering which youthful love inflicts; because so often it resembles the spring-shower, that dashes its pearly drops in haste and fullness, and then melts suddenly into brighter sunshine. It is real suffering while it lasts, more real than when added years have given consequence to the trial. These youth may shed more bitter tears in years to come; heavier trials may come upon them, that will make this parting hour fade into forgetfulness, and even appear a bright scene in contrast. But never will their tears flow from

a cause so free from earthly tarnish—from any shadow of this world's selfish interests—from every taint of unhalloved passion, or base motive, or impure desire. Never will the love that pains them now be so unmingled with life's baser dross. But while we ask your sympathy, we feel that it is better, as this world is constituted, that they suffer thus, than be permitted, with their hearts all untrained to the experience of life, to flow together without let or hindrance. Their being is yet unfinished; their true natures undeveloped; their real feelings are not matured; they must be tested in the rough crucible by the furnace fire—they must be molded by the circumstances of their future course, and pass through the stern ordeal that alone can give the stamp of real worth, and then it may be seen how different and how far apart they really are, from what they now imagine. Time will unfold its own mysteries.

The door is closed, and Gertrude's tears have strangely and suddenly been dried away. As she felt toward those who now claimed her obedience, tears were out of place. The traces of them she did not care to hide—she was not ashamed to let her relatives perceive, that parting with the friends she was then leaving, was not an occasion for joy.

As Mr. McBride led her by the arm and produced her to her aunts, he watched the expression of their stern countenances, for they could be stern enough when they felt like it; they were not, he knew, in an agreeable frame of mind when he left them.

The elder aunt at once put out her hand and seemed almost ready to give the orphan a kiss—there was first a look of surprise, then a flash of light across her features, and then a shade of sadness.

"How much like her mother!" This she said as though speaking to herself. Aunt Gertrude also extended her hand, and as though wishing to hide some confusion which she felt, or to divert the attention of all present from herself, or to serve as an apology for saying nothing very particularly to her niece, she spoke to the footman, who was putting up the steps and closing the door.

"Tell James to drive as fast as will answer—we shall not otherwise reach home until dark."

Some common-place questions were asked by the aunts of their niece, and the tone of their voice became evidently softer as she answered all their questions, not only in a pleasant manner, but with much propriety. Mr. McBride did not accompany them home—he had business in the city and would remain some days. It would have been a relief to Gertrude to have had his presence; for she had become somewhat acquainted with him, and, being of a social turn, he no doubt would have diverted her from her own troubled thoughts, and modified the stiff and formal dignity and reserve of her aunts.

Gertrude had heard often, from her mother, descriptions of Kirkland Place, of the scenery around it, and of localities in its vicinity. So that for some miles before reaching the homestead she was diverted by looking at the distant mountains, and the brooks, and the forests, and the store-houses, and connecting them with her who so delighted in them, and on whose memory they ever remained as a beautiful vision that had once blessed her.

"Are you fond of the country?" said her Aunt Gerty, noticing how eagerly she watched the passing objects.

"I think I shall be—I never saw it before."

"Have you always been in the city?"

"So far as I remember."

"Perhaps you regret leaving it?"

"I feel sad at parting with those who have been so kind to me."

"They could afford to be kind! your board must have been quite an object. We almost wonder that Mr. McBride should have allowed you to remain in such a wretched place! We had no idea how mean it was; but now you must forget all about the past; you are to be introduced to very different scenes; and we trust you will put away everything connected with your boarding-place or its inmates. Circumstances have made it necessary that you should not be brought to Kirkland Place before. These people, no doubt, would have been very glad to retain you."

Gertrude did not reply to what she perceived was her aunt's drift. She did not intend to trouble them with reminiscences of her own, which could have no interest for them.

It was near sunset as the carriage entered a handsome avenue, wide and lined on either side with the oak, the ash, the maple, and the fir. They were changing their bright green for the varied tints of autumn; the air was still, long shadows were stretching across the fields, and the slanting rays of the declining sun gleamed through the heavy foliage, and dazzled each in turn as the vehicle traversed the circling road.

Gertrude had never seen anything so beautiful before, and more than once, an exclamation of rapture broke from her lips. And now a large mansion is seen through the openings; heavy shadows cluster around it, its chimneys peer above the lofty trees, its deep red looked cheerily in contrast with the green drapery of the weeping willows, and the brilliant oak; and now they are before its noble portico, and Gertrude thinks that she has never before seen, even in the city, anything so stately, that bore on its outer aspect, so truly the idea of wealth, and dignity, and comfort. She is ushered into the spacious hall and the richly furnished rooms, and finds it hard to believe that she is at home, and has as truly a right to be there as any one under that roof.

Some changes of consequence had taken place since we last were there. Randolph Hudson still held his position, and some of the older servants of the house. But the places of some who had been dismissed were filled by new ones from the city; the old coachman was retained, but the footman was a new hand, procured by the doctor himself, from the city, and at his special call. He was a handsome mulatto about twenty-five years of age, peculiarly active, of pleasant manner, of a shrewd mind, and, as Randi had whispered to his mistress, "not very particular about the truth, and he guessed had been through some training before to-day."

The doctor treated him more as an equal than a servant; was lavish of his gifts, and from Peter's prompt answers and apparent readiness to do his bidding, the



latter no doubt showed that he was not unmindful of the favors, or as Randi said: "knew on which side his bread was buttered."

An addition, too, had been made to the upper part of the establishment in the person of a young lady of about eighteen years of age, a niece of the doctor's, whom he had brought from a distant part of the country, not only as a benefit to the young lady, who wanted a home, but as an addition to their circle, and in order to make the "old house," as he called it, a little less gloomy and lonesome through the winter months. This young lady had either received judicious instructions as to how she should regulate her conduct, or she was astute in judging characters and learning the weak points through which access was to be had to the hearts of those she lived with. Not that the reader must suppose she had accomplished any such feat as gaining an interest in the heart of either her Aunt Gerty, as she was allowed to call Mrs. Weatherbee, or that of Miss Lizzie Kirkland. She had not done that; it had never been accomplished by any one yet. But they were pleased with her, and Mrs. Weatherbee even felt that she had been of essential service in managing the doctor. The doctor had to be managed. He was not to be driven, nor coaxed. He had taken things with a strong hand from the very outset, and although he was careful not to meddle with anything that belonged immediately to "the other part of the house," as he styled the elder Miss Kirkland; and consequently avoided with marked care whatever Mr. Randolph Hudson had under his charge, yet with all the rest he asked no questions, and gave full swing to his own will. It was therefore necessary to manage him, in order that Mrs. Weatherbee might be able at any time to accomplish some little plan of her own.

The reception of Gertrude at Kirkland Place was altogether different from what her friends in the city supposed it would be; and we have reason to think it was very different from what her aunts themselves had designed. They had, without any proper warrant for so doing, pictured to themselves a young girl of somewhat coarse manners, pretty, perhaps, but with a mind wholly unculti-

vated; one that would be dazzled by the stateliness of their mode, and the contrasted elegance of her new home; who would be readily cowed into obedience, and made subservient to their views and whims; whom they could mold into any form, and direct as to all her future life. It was a disappointment to them, as well as a surprise, to find their imaginings altogether at fault. She was older than they had supposed, and even old for her years; instead of sixteen, she appeared to have all the discretion and ripeness of intellect which girls of eighteen usually exhibit. She was more than pretty—they could not but acknowledge that—she was really handsome, and her form beautifully molded; and the grace with which she walked, or sat, or conversed, more like what might be expected from one trained in the most finished schools. It all seemed perfectly natural, too—seemed to have been born with her. It certainly had not been attained by culture, further than by the lovely pattern she had always had before her in her mother.

Her aunts became very soon conscious, too, that she had opinions of her own, which were not to be changed by mere dictation, although she never argued with them when they brought up opinions which she hesitated to receive, but her silence was ominous—she could think for herself. They found likewise that she seemed in no way amazed or abashed by the grandeur of things about her, or the formality of their household arrangements, and was as much at ease as if she had been born and brought up with them; and, in this respect, they could not but contrast her behavior to that of Miss Weatherbee, the doctor's niece, who seemed oppressed by their condescension, and awed by their stateliness, and so obsequious to their wishes, that apparently her own views or her own conscience would be matters of no moment in opposition to their will.

What was also very strange to her aunts, was the ready obeisance of all the servants to this "interloper," as they had been in the habit of styling her. Without any hauteur of manner toward them, or any undue intimacy with them, each one paid Gertrude the utmost respect, and seemed to vie with one another in attend-

ing upon her wants. But servants have minds as well as their employers, and the secrets of the household are not easily kept from them. They already knew before she came that she was no dependent upon charity. They knew she had as legal a right there as those who managed its concerns; and while Miss Annie, as they called the doctor's niece, was often served with a slow step and a demure countenance, a smile was always ready to meet the request of Gertrude. Upon the whole, her aunts soon perceived—it did not take many days to open their eyes—that they had brought among them not an ignorant child, to be managed with ease and trained at will, but one who was likely to prove an equal in all respects.

Their greatest surprise, however, and that which gave the most concern, at least to one of them, was the reception which Gertrude met from her aunt's husband, the gallant doctor. He had been appointed her guardian, after a long consultation between them. Miss Lizzie, on some accounts, would have preferred Mr. McBride for that office—he was one of the trustees to settle the estate, and had become quite a favorite with both ladies—but Mrs. Weatherbee was now very anxious to conciliate the good will of her husband. She found there was no other way to manage him; and she saw he would be flattered by the compliment, and would, as she naturally supposed, be ready to leave the control of her niece to the care of his wife, especially as he had told her he did not want to be troubled with the "young brat," and if they selected him as a guardian, it must be with that understanding.

But the doctor had no doubt formed as low an opinion of his ward as his wife and her sister had, and as far from the truth; in fact it was partly for this reason that Mr. McBride had waited upon the ladies to the city—the doctor excusing himself upon very trifling grounds—he wished to let them see that the honor of the thing was all he cared for, and perhaps some chance to handle her property—the doctor felt competent for that.

Great was his astonishment, when, the morning after her arrival, he and his ward were mutually introduced. He put on his most fascinating smile, bowed most re-

spectfully to her, and even condescended to seal his acknowledgment of relationship by a warm salutation, which Miss Gertrude by no means resented. He was loud in her praise, wondered where she had gotten her beauty from, even hinting the idea that it was not a family trait. He admired her bearing, and with a taste of a connoisseur, expatiated largely on the fineness of her form, even to the shape of her fingers, and the smallness and plumpness of her feet—all this was said, however, after Miss Gertrude had retired. The doctor by no means looked upon her as a child, before whom he could say what he pleased, without fear of giving offence; nor did his admiration end with mere praise. He at once took a deep interest in her pleasures; he conversed with her about the city and the country, about books which she had read, and offered to direct her studies and assist her therein; walked with her about their grounds, pointing out the finest views, and marking the most distinguished trees, as she manifested peculiar interest in those noble efforts of nature.

"Are you fond of horseback riding?" he asked her, the second morning after her arrival.

"I have never been upon a saddle."

"Ah, then, my dear—he soon adopted that title—you must learn. We must ask Miss Lizzie for the loan of Tamerlane, he is the finest horse in the country."

Aunt Lizzie could not say nay. She seldom rode now. Indeed she was so glad to have the doctor interested in a common concern, that it afforded her pleasure to see him placing her niece upon her old favorite, and walking his own horse gently by her side. The doctor was a good rider, and knew how a lady ought to sit and to hold her reins, and he pronounced Gertrude an apt scholar.

"She will soon be able to take old Tam over the bars, she sits the saddle as gracefully as she walks the room."

We cannot suppose that Gertrude was invincible to all this attention. It was new to her, and when she was able to gallop her fine horse along the beautiful avenue, and through the picturesque roads, or the old forests, her young heart seemed to be filled with new life; and often her musical laughter, ringing through the woods,

as her companion would be telling some humorous tale, fully rewarded him for all his attention.

She knew nothing of the doctor's precedents; she knew he was her guardian, the husband of her aunt, apparently the master of the mansion. She also knew nothing of her aunt's feelings toward him, nor how it was that one who from appearances had such haughty feelings as her Aunt Gerty, should be so mild and accommodating to one evidently much younger than herself. She did indeed at times wonder how two so unlike and unsuited as to age and manners should have united; but it was none of her business; they were happy, for all that she knew to the contrary.

One thing, however, pleased not only Mrs. Weatherbee, but all the members of the family—the doctor seemed to be getting tired of so much company. He quite suddenly dropped many of his acquaintances, especially those of a younger class; young gentlemen were seldom invited—only a few middle aged men occasionally were at his table; very seldom now were parties of pleasure got up. The doctor appeared more contented with home; domestic affairs occupied much more of his time. Verily, Miss Gertrude's arrival could not but be hailed as the commencement of a new state of things—the turning over of a new leaf. Her aunts were puzzled—surprised—balked in all their calculations, and instead of taking their niece in hand to mold her to their ways and maxims, they found her a person of so much consideration, that even they were fain to fall into the ranks, and let things glide along in the smooth path into which they had unexpectedly fallen.

Randolph Hudson, however, was not heard to utter any complacent sentiment in regard to matters and things, and the change which had taken place. He and the doctor got along pleasantly together, for the reason that they had little to do with each other. The doctor had indeed of late tried kind and even flattering words with Randi, but to no special purpose. Randi had his own opinion on all subjects that immediately concerned himself, and he had opinions about persons and things around him; he did not fear to express them when the

occasion required, but it was no trial to him to keep his opinions to himself. Randi treated the doctor with all respect, but he had taken a dislike to him from the first; his prejudices were strong and not easily overcome. He thought no differently of the doctor than he had ever done; and when one of the old servants intimated to him that a great change had taken place, and that Doctor Weatherbee was likely to make a clever master he very significantly replied:

"Bill, did you ever see an old snake-skin?"

"Yes, many a time."

"When the snake threw it off, and seemed all fresh and new, and lay still and quiet in the grass for a little while—was he not a snake still?"

"Certain; and when he gets his strength, crosser than ever."

"Just so; that is all I have to say—changing the skin don't change the nature of the reptile."

The winter came and passed off without any change of consequence. The doctor and his wife did not spend it in the city, as he had talked of doing; he went there occasionally, and staid a few days at a time. Business was his ostensible reason, but it could not have been business of the estate, for that was almost entirely managed by Mr. McBride and his assistant trustee; the doctor being satisfied with the guardianship of Miss Gertrude. Whatever business it was, however, it must have been of a trying nature, for he always looked the worse for wear on his return; and if he had not been a married man, and connected with such a "distinguished family," and the guardian of a beautiful and wealthy heiress, one might have supposed he had "been upon a spree." Randi even hinted as much one day, which had like to have gotten the old man into trouble; it came to Miss Lizzie's ears, but she ordered the matter to be hushed up at once, and never to let her hear such an idea mentioned in her presence again.

The subject of Gertrude's education had been talked about, and she was herself quite anxious for such advantages as could only be procured with competent teachers; but the doctor had strenuously opposed the plan of her

going abroad, especially to a boarding-school. "He felt," he said, "quite competent to teach her the common branches, and even philosophy, both natural and moral, including chemistry;" and in order to unsettle the minds of her aunts as to the propriety of sending her abroad, would thus reason with them:

"It is the height of folly to think of sending a young lady like Gertrude away from our watch. She will be known to be wealthy; she is very handsome; these boarding-schools are mere traps for young girls to catch husbands; she is unsophisticated; knows nothing about the world; will be fascinated by attentions from young men, and like as not run off, as her mother did before her—and then where are you?"

All this was plausible, and would probably have availed to keep Miss Gertrude under the tutorship of her guardian, but for an occurrence of rather a singular nature, which all at once changed the mind of her guardian, and caused him to fall in very decidedly with their views.

The family at Kirkland Place, as has been said, was very select in its social circle. Before the introduction of Doctor Weatherbee, but one or two families in the place were in the habit of calling there, or being called upon by the Misses Kirkland. The doctor, indeed, had since kept quite an open house, but that was principally for gentlemen; and since his niece had been with them, a few of the younger ladies had been introduced. But Mrs. Weatherbee and Miss Kirkland paid them merely such civilities as they could not well avoid, never pretending to return their visits, leaving that entirely to Miss Annie. But among those whom they had always acknowledged as their equals, was the minister whose church they attended, a man of more than ordinary abilities, and a devoted Christian. He had always been a welcome guest, and although his ministrations had not, apparently, taken a deep hold of either the consciences or the hearts of the ladies, yet there was a cordial feeling toward him and his family. The Rev. Mr. Marshall and his wife were, as far as known, held in the highest repute; the rich and poor alike respected them; they never courted or shunned the former, and the latter class

knew well that they had in their pastor and his wife friends who could sympathize heartily with them.

Olivia Marshall, the younger daughter, had, in company with her parents, called at Kirkland Place soon after Gertrude's arrival, and the two girls had become acquainted and mutually attached. Gertrude had spent many days there in all, and sometimes the night too; and from her abundance, as she became more intimate, had made many substantial presents both to Mrs. Marshall and her daughter.

All this was very well, and rather agreeable than otherwise, to the friends of Gertrude. They knew that Miss Marshall was not allowed to mingle in promiscuous company; Mr. Marshall having come to the wise conclusion that his children, especially as they were daughters, were not to be considered as the common property of the parish. Their time did not belong to it, to be squandered in whatever frivolous societies they might be invited to join, and their habits and manners were of too much consequence to be sacrificed even for his people. They, therefore, visited only where he thought they might be benefited, or where he was quite certain they would receive no damage. Some found fault with him for this, but only those who were anxious to find something to scold about. It, however, had never altered his steady purpose in regard to his children. The Kirklands esteemed him the more for his exclusiveness, and therefore, when they found that Gertrude had made a friend of Olivia Marshall, they were not disposed to cavil at her choice.

It happened, however, that not long after Gertrude had become acquainted there, a young man from the city came under the roof of the parsonage, at first, as was supposed, to make a visit, but seeing him from time to time at the hour of worship, they, from inquiry, ascertained that he was a pupil of Mr. Marshall's, and expected to be for a year or two. It was said he was a fine young man, and that his father was quite an able merchant in New York. All this rather put them on their guard. They did not, indeed, see any reason to think Gertrude was in the least attracted there in consequence, and she

had told them that she seldom saw the young man; when she called, he was always in the library. But they, in some way, ascertained that Gertrude had formerly known him, and thinking it strange that she should not have mentioned the fact, they one day asked her respecting him.

"And where did you form his acquaintance?"

"I saw him at the house where I boarded."

"Indeed! A visitor there?"

"Yes, Aunt Gerty; he often was there for a time, almost every evening."

"Indeed! That is somewhat strange. I have heard that he belonged to a respectable family. Were the families in the habit of interchanging visits?"

"I think not—not to my knowledge."

"Indeed! Somewhat singular that he alone should have been attracted there!"

Gertrude could not say anything further without entering into particulars which concerned the family with which she had boarded, and which she did not feel called upon to do. And no doubt her aunt noticed that there was a little more color in her cheek than formerly, an ominous sign—there was a crook about this matter somewhere. Gertrude's silence added to the mystery.

That very afternoon a visit, by appointment, was expected from Mrs. Marshall and family. Thinking their boarder now to be fairly a member thereof, and knowing that he was acquainted with Miss Gertrude, the minister and his wife thought it would be but polite in them, and gratifying to the young gentleman, if they should ask him to accompany them. Old folks are sometimes rather obtuse. He did accompany them, and was received quite courteously; indeed the aunts were a little curious to know more about him.

His manners they certainly could not find fault with; nor was there any occurrence during the visit, they took cognizance of, that was calculated to arouse their suspicions, either that the young man had any designs upon their niece, or that she had any feelings toward him. But when the party had returned home, the doctor, with

quite an earnest manner, startled them by a revelation of his own:

"There is going to be trouble, I see. That young scamp has got round Gertrude already!"

"How so? What makes you think so?"

"It is as plain as the nose in your face, Mrs. Weatherbee; and you must both be blind, if you haven't seen it."

Mrs. Weatherbee's nose was somewhat prominent, and taking the figure and the expression to herself, was not altogether flattered by it, and perhaps a little mortified, that a professional gentleman, and her husband, too, should have used such a vulgarism. She wisely, however, restrained her displeasure, but did not think it worth while to make any reply. So the doctor, after looking very significantly at each lady in turn for a moment, continued his remarks:

"I have seen enough—that young scamp must be warned off, at least from these premises. I shall give him a piece of my mind if he comes here again; he shall know who he has got to deal with. I am not to be trifled with."

The ladies knew that, but they would sadly regret should any difficulty result between their family and that of their minister. Proud as they were, Mr. Marshall and his lady were too respectable for even them to look down upon and treat with indignity. They must say something, and as Mrs. Weatherbee was just then very intent upon her needlework, Miss Lizzie ventured to reply:

"I must say that I noticed nothing amiss in the conduct of the young gentleman. He seemed to me not to pay any particular attention to either of the young ladies; and indeed, while in the parlor, confined his conversation more immediately to myself. He appeared to be well informed, and I should judge had been well brought up."

"That is all in my eye"—Mrs. Weatherbee moved in her chair and was evidently agitated—"he was cunning enough no doubt to 'keep dark' before folks, but I saw them when they supposed no one was near. They all walked off into the grove. I thought I would keep



an eye on them. Annie and Miss What-you-call-her, the parson's daughter, walked together, and the young scamp got alongside of Gertrude, and they two wandered off and had a long private confab, and their heads were too close together to bode any good. Take my word for it there is trouble brewing; it must be nipped in the bud. If that young fellow is to be round here, I shall ship Gertrude—send her off to school or somewhere."

"As to the young man, I suppose we cannot hinder his staying in the place," Miss Lizzie answered, "and if you really think, Doctor Weatherbee, that there is any danger, perhaps the very best thing you can do is to send her, as you say, to school—but where shall we send her? you have objected to boarding-schools, you know."

"So I do, in general, but I know a place where she can be sent—a safe place—safe as a nunnery—in New York, too. The Misses Highflyer—they are both old maids, as afraid of men as mice are of a cat—just the place—we will have her there right off."

It must not be supposed that the doctor made known to his ward the very honorable and generous motives which prompted him, when with honeyed words he proposed to her what he knew would meet with her approbation, that she should spend a year or two at a celebrated boarding-school, in order that she might be under superior advantages, and be prepared to take that place in society which her circumstances allowed her. Gertrude received his communication as a new testimony of his disinterested regard for her welfare, and was ready, as soon as preparations could be made, to comply with his suggestions.

That the doctor had told the truth in reference to the private conference between the young folks, there is no doubt. He had seen what he related; and that he was alarmed is also true. But the reader will be able to surmise what was the topic of conversation which so impressed him, when we give the information that this young gentleman was Herman Granite. He had, at his father's suggestion, with perfect readiness concluded to relinquish his place in college and pursue his studies for

a year with some gentleman of education in the country. He was ready and anxious to break off all connection with some of his acquaintance in the city, and thought it could not so effectually be done as by removal into the country; and at the suggestion of Mr. McBride, a residence with the Reverend Mr. Marshall was procured, and here Herman had been for the winter. That he and Gertrude should have some things to converse about which would not be interesting to those immediately about them, may well be conceived. She indeed knew not some items in his history leading to his intimacy with the family she loved so well, nor did he know anything of her history previous to her abode with Mrs. Jones; but they both had frequently met on his visits there, and she knew that Herbert esteemed him and that he and Herbert were very intimate. And although he had never received any intimation that Herbert cared for Gertrude more than for any one who might have been a boarder there, or that Gertrude had even felt partiality for him, yet he liked to talk about Herbert and she liked to talk of Mrs. Jones, and probably had no little satisfaction in hearing one who was linked with some of the most pleasing scenes of her past life extolled so highly. Their intercourse had been harmless enough, and very far from any such tendency as the doctor feared; but its effect was to make quite a change in the circumstances of Gertrude, and in its result led to some of the severer trials of her future life.



## CHAPTER XX.

THE parting scene between Herbert and Gertrude had been very different from his anticipations. For some reasons it would have been better that she had left him under the same impression which he had received from her conduct on the evening before. His pride had been wounded; he imagined she was ready to yield to the force of circumstances with a more willing mind than her previous conduct had manifested, and her reluctance to give him any encouragement arose rather from the thought that his position was inferior to hers, and that her only interest for him was only that of a grateful return for his former favors. And could he but have been assured of this, he might have banished her image from his mind as that of one who had proved, as most do, the mere creatures of the circumstances in which they are for the time placed.

But he could not mistake now. She had wept upon his bosom, she had suffered him to clasp her in his warm embrace, and allowed him, by every sign she could give, to feel that her heart was truly his. This, for a season, was indeed a solace for which he would have bartered all he had to give. For many days and weeks he went in the strength of it; he could bear the separation, now that he felt assured it was equally painful to her. She *did* love him—he knew she did—and was not that enough?

But time rolled on, and no tidings came from Gertrude—not even a letter for his mother. Occasionally, through Mr. McBride and Herman Granite, he would hear that Miss Manners was well, and apparently quite happy, and that she appeared to be a great favorite at her home, and had every attention paid to her that she could ask. Mrs. Jones had confidence in Gertrude—much more than she would have reposed in many of Gertrude's age; but even that was beginning to be in-

jured. She thought possibly her friends might object to a frequent correspondence, but she could hardly imagine they would forbid the child to communicate at all. However, she had done her duty; she had done it without any hope of reward, and her mind, under such circumstances, was not easily disturbed. But on Herbert a different effect was produced. He said nothing to his mother on the subject of his feelings toward Gertrude, and as she purposely avoided saying anything to him, she hoped that whatever feeling he had cherished would soon be dissipated, and on that account was almost satisfied that the lovely girl she had taken such an interest in, should prove, as many do, unmindful of the favors bestowed upon them, when those favors might recall scenes of humiliation in their history. Herbert, however, could not forget; the impression made upon him had not been aided by any external or foreign assistance; he loved her for herself, when he thought her but an object of charity; her strange and sudden elevation had not enhanced her value in his estimation—it had only proved a thorn in his path. He had tried to reason against his passion, but without avail. Coldness, or indifference, or haughtiness, on her part, or the manifestation of any feeling of superiority, because of her circumstances, might have broken the charm; but he could really perceive nothing of all this when he calmly reviewed the past, and thought of the scenes which had transpired between them. She was true—he would believe she was true, and would be to the last.

That she had not written, was strange; not that he expected a communication, only through his mother. But his heart still apologized for her; their last interview would always recur, when he was troubled with doubt, and set his mind at rest. This might have been well; it is a lovely trait for any heart to possess, that of being able to rest with unshaken confidence on the truth of one in whom we have placed our hopes, under circumstances of severe trial; the love that is heightened or depressed by trifles, or destroyed by anything less than absolute certainty, is only a torment to its possessor.

Herbert had done much, too, since their separation, to

rivet the bond which connected him with Gertrude. He kept her image constantly in mind. His imagination wrought beautiful pictures in social life, where she was the prominent object, and all the surroundings, himself among them, were made subservient, mere additions to her lovely self. In all places, and under all circumstances, she did that which was right; the embodiment of every natural grace, and every lovely attribute, nothing impure or unworthy was allowed to darken, even by the slightest shadow, the fair picture. Her bright, soft eye was ever beaming upon him with that parting look, her musical voice sounding in his ears, her graceful form flitting before him; and thus he kept alive the steady flame—yea, it burned brighter and brighter as weeks and months passed by.

But I hear some kind reader exclaim, and with all honesty, too, what an unwise young man, and how wrong for him who writes his story to encourage such fallacious day-dreaming, and hold up to admiration the weak fancies of one who had much better be counting his cop-pers and balancing his cash, and making the most of his abilities in getting along in the world.

But, gentle reader, our apology is ready. We are telling you what happened—we are exposing to you the conduct and feelings of one of like passions with ourselves. What was wrong you are at liberty to condemn, and we anticipate that you will do so; and yet we may differ in our judgment as to the wrong. We approve of a steady and untiring attention to the minutest detail in the business of life, whatever it may be. No other plan deserves success, nor will ever eventually attain it. The speculator we abhor; the man who pants for gain, and seeks short cuts to attain it, is one we pity. We believe in planting the foot, step by step, in the path of duty, be it ever so rugged, and our progress ever so slow, for we are sure that it will finally lead to independence and peace. But there are, and must be, some things besides the toil of life, and even besides the hope of heaven, upon which the mind, at times, must dwell. We are creatures of earth, and have social feelings designed to be cultivated here, and to have their fruition or their sorrow in

this world. They may not be disconnected with the great eternity before us; but of that we cannot be sure. All we know is, they are implanted by a wise and beneficent Being, and they have no tendency, in their purest form, to draw our hearts from him. That love which, although earthly, has been symbolized by Christ himself as a type of his own union with the redeemed ones, must surely be something beyond a mere vagary of the mind, or a passion too childish to have its place amid the interests of time.

And what, except the image of the spotless one herself, so well calculated to fill the mind with purity, to refine it from all grossness, to give it a loathing for that which is debasing and unseemly, as the image of a pure and lovely female? That love should, at times, degenerate into morbid sentimentality, is not strange—not more strange than that religion should expand into wild enthusiasm; but we believe in its power and purity for all that. Let us rather bless God, that amid the ruin we have brought upon ourselves, he has saved for us, deep in our heart of hearts, this pure flame, an emanation from his own being, a talisman whose charm mitigates ten thousand worldly ills, and bears us on, through days and years of toil and disappointment, shedding its light about us from early youth to advanced age, and even around our dying bed.

But the reader asks again, is not your hero cherishing a fire that may only consume him at the last, and make a wreck of all his manliness? a hapless passion that, with all its present good, if good it be, can only, in all human probability, end in disappointment and despair?

We cannot be responsible for the result. Each heart must bear its own trials, and receive its own reward. We can only hope that he may have the fortitude necessary to sustain him when the day of suffering shall come, and the consciousness that, at least, he had not doubted until his fate was sealed.

Herbert, however, did not allow his fancies to interfere with his daily work; they never stayed his quick step nor his ready hand; and as we now follow him awhile amid the busy scenes in which he is engaged, we

shall find that he bears himself with manly dignity amid the varied scenes which open to him, as he labors faithfully along the humble path he has hitherto been treading.

"Mr. Blagg," said his employer, one day, soon after the scenes recorded in a previous chapter, "I am not satisfied with what I have done for that fine young fellow, who has been the means of saving Herman—thanks, after all, are poor pay."

"Not always, sir, not always, Mr. Granite, depend upon it. When you took the hand of Herbert Jones, and tried to tell him how you felt, and could not do it, and when he felt your warm grasp, and knew that your father's heart was too full to allow you to say what you wished; and when Herman stood beside you shedding the tears you could not shed, and both of you thus assuring him that his efforts had saved one of you from ruin, and the other from a broken heart, he felt richly rewarded—I know he did. He has told me so; it was the happiest moment of his life. He wants no other reward, depend upon it, sir. You wouldn't think of offering him money?"

"No, sir, not exactly—no, certainly—it might wound his feelings; he is very sensitive, Mr. Blagg—just like a delicate girl, sir. I wouldn't hurt his feelings, sir, for any consideration; he is proud, too—at least, I think he has it in him; he cannot bear to be under obligations, if he can help it—that is good, too; he won't cringe to any one, for anything—I like him for that, too."

"So do I, sir; and that's the reason, when he paid back that money you loaned him, at his first start in business, I took it and gave him a receipt for it. I didn't want to do so; and I know, at the time, you meant it as a gift, but he considered it a loan, and as such he paid it, and thanked me for it, with tears in his eyes. But I knew he would feel more like a man to have that scored off, and so I let him pay it. No, sir, there is no cringe about him, nor wish to lean upon his friends. Why, only think—I'll tell you all about it; it's a secret, though." And Mr. Blagg left his desk, and placed a chair near his employer.

"I'll tell you a secret, about that youth, worth knowing. My Willie and he, you know, sir, have become quite intimate; I believe they have fallen in love—at least Willie has with him, though Herbert is somewhat younger. They have their heads together about a good many things—can't speak of them now in particular; but Willie has projects, and Herbert has projects—the one has plenty of money, and the other has plenty of kindheartedness. Willie has that, too, but he hasn't had the chance to see poverty in its worst shape—in fact, don't know much about it; but, between them, there are some things going on—secrets, just now; but they will come out one of these days. Well, I am only saying this, by way of introduction, to let you know that they are pretty closely in for it, one with another."

"Well, my Willie has a large heart. I have to hold the strap on him sometimes; he is too fast, too fast entirely. Bless your soul, he would be helping every one—good, bad, or indifferent; he thinks all men are what they seem to be. Well, as I was saying, Willie couldn't bear to see one that he thought so much of, plodding along in that little corner store, selling half pounds of sugar, and a quarter of tea, or a pound of cheese—making but little, working hard, and no great prospect of getting very high in the world. So, one day, he made bold to come out and tell Herbert what he thought, and how he felt; and, do you believe me, he made him the offer to let him have just what capital he wanted, and to go, right off, and set up in the wholesale business, or go into a handsome store down in Broadway, in the retail family business; and, for the first two years, he would not charge him one cent interest."

"Didn't he accept of it?"

"Not he, sir."

"Why not, Mr. Blagg? he is a capital fellow; he will succeed anywhere."

"I believe that, too, sir; but he's deeper than you or I have thought for. No, sir, he thanked Willie with all his heart, but declined accepting his offer. He was too young, he said, to launch out. He was getting along, slowly, to be sure, but he was satisfied to remain as he

was. Willie told me of it, and I feeling as you do, sir, and knowing that the fellow was capable of taking a much higher stand in business, and believing that Willie couldn't do a better thing than to help him to a start, I at Herbert, one day, myself, and told him, plain and plump, that I thought he had refused a good offer.

"'Mr. Blagg,' said he, 'I know it was a kind and generous offer, and just like William Ashton, to make it. He has a noble heart; but he and I are friends—we have become warm friends; we are engaged together in meetings; we open our hearts to each other, and tell all our feelings; we are engaged together in distributing tracts and visiting the poor, and when I want money to help a poor person, his purse is ready, and I ask him freely, because it is not for myself, and he knows it. I have never asked a pecuniary favor from him, and I hope never to be obliged to; we are friends now on an equality. I court his friendship because I love and esteem him—should I place myself under such obligations as he proposed, there would be an end to all my pleasant feelings in our intercourse. No, sir, he is too rich and I am too poor, to allow of true independence in our intercourse, should I become under such obligations. I want always to feel that he can be assured I love him for himself, and not for his wealth.' Noble! wasn't it Mr. Granite?"

"A strange fellow, anyhow. But, for all that, Mr. Blagg, I am sorry to have him persist in staying where he is—he ought to take a higher stand than he can ever do in that place, and you know that, as well as I do."

"I know it, and sometimes I wished we could have offered him a good berth here, and given him salary enough to have supported his family. But you know we could not have done that without displacing others, and that would not have been just. He can never, where he is, do much more than he is doing now, without he should go to dram-selling, and that he will do on no account."

"I have been thinking of making a proposition, and that is what I wanted to say to you now. He is not of age—not quite, I believe. Too young to take in as a partner—but I can do this—I can hire a store in Maiden

Lane or Broadway, stock it with an assortment of first-rate articles, and make a complete family store. Let it go in my name, but let him have the sole charge, with a good smart boy under him. Let him have half the profits, and when he gets able, let the business gradually slide into his hands. He can make such a stand as respectable as any in the city. His manners and attention to business will insure him a large custom in time, provided we are careful to supply him with articles of the choicest kinds—and we can do that, I think, if any house can."

"That we can, sir, especially teas; and they are a leading article. Good tea takes with the ladies, and when they are pleased, a man is made; that is in such a business."

"What do you think of it, Mr. Blagg?"

"It is just the thing, sir. And I think you have placed it in such shape that he will jump at it—can't help it. He will have nothing to do but act under your direction, and his ambition will be excited to do his best. We need not let him know, either, that you do the thing solely for his sake; only, that your confidence in his integrity, and his industry and ability, led you to make him the first offer."

"Just so. Now you have got it, Mr. Blagg; we need say nothing about my obligations to him, and all that—let that go. If it turns out well for him, I shall feel satisfied, whether he knows I did it for his sake or not. And now I am going to let you break the matter to him, and you can do it as soon as you please."

"I will do it before I sleep to-night. I have an appointment to meet him and Willie this evening, and when he and I are alone, after our other business is done, I will bring your proposition up—he can't object—I know he can't."

Some of those who may read this story, will no doubt remember the Old Wall street Church. It was distinguished once as the stronghold of Presbyterianism in the city of New York; and from it have emanated some of the most efficient churches in the great city. Ministers venerated for their dignity, piety, and varied talent, once officiated there. They have all now gone to

their rest—all of them whose names and worth are associated with the popularity and usefulness of that house of God. The building itself has been taken down; its materials removed to a neighboring city, where it may yet be seen, as it appeared in the days we are now considering. The dead, too, that had been laid to rest around its sacred walls, have been disturbed in their quiet beds, their graves opened before the time, and their ashes scattered we know not where. Mammon had occasion for this holy ground, and at his call, the mighty city can have no nook that must not be yielded to his grasp. Alas, that it should be so! But our sighs cannot replace that venerated edifice on its old site, nor tear away the unseemly structures which the god of this world has now planted there.

Connected with this church was a small brick building running at right angles from its rear, and opening on an adjoining street. It was the session-room—the place where the grey-haired elders from week to week met to pray with the few whose hearts loved that service. They too have all gone to their rest, and that unpretending little edifice has long given place to the demand of those who are busy with the absorbing interests of this world.

This building was but one story in height, containing a small entry, and two rooms thrown into one by means of folding doors. When these doors were closed, one of these rooms formed a small apartment with a stove in its centre, and benches on each side of it. Here the session of the church, often in cold weather, held their meetings, and here, also, a little band of youth on Sabbath evenings used to congregate. It was at first a small company of only two or three; but from time to time an addition would be made, until perhaps the number counted ten. They were from all classes—there was the poor journeyman tailor, and the young clerk, and a charity student, and the youth of wealthy parents—all had one object: they met to pray together, and to talk freely on such subjects as concerned their duty to God and man. They enlightened each other by unfolding their individual experience. They stimulated each other

to active duty in the vineyard of Christ. And from that little company have gone forth those who have caused their influence to be felt in different and distant portions of our country. Each has proved a working man wherever his lot has been cast; and some are now living, and as diligent as ever in their master's service.

To this little company Herbert Jones and William Ashton belonged. Whether they were members of that church is not now of any consequence. The individuals which composed the circle, had been drawn in by accident. A congenial spirit, without reference to the denomination to which they might be attached, being the sole requisite for admission.

One fruit of their connection was the establishment of a little mission among the outcasts of the city. The worst and most abandoned locations were selected and apportioned off, through which they were to go two by two, distributing tracts, holding meetings, conversing with individuals, and doing what they could to carry the Gospel to those in the great city who had no other way of hearing it. How much good was done can only be known when the great account shall be made up. That some were benefited, every evidence was given.

Herbert and young Ashton were associated from choice, and had selected a portion of the city near to the residence of the former, which sadly needed some such care.

At first they went from room to room, saying what they thought best, and leaving a little messenger behind them, and if circumstances forbade their talking, they would in silence leave their tract and go on their way. But it became very evident to them both, that something else was needed besides moral or religious instruction; they needed, many of them, food and clothing; many were on beds of sickness in rooms crowded with inmates; some were housed in wretched sheds within the yards, and lying upon straw or sitting on the ground; blacks and whites stowed together; filth was around them, disease preying upon them; hunger pinching them, and not one ray of comfort that the senses of another could



take cognizance of, to cheer the miserable dens in which they crouched.

It required but a little experience in visiting these haunts of woe, to let one see what was needed. The difficulty was, how to supply this need. Present necessities might be supplied, but that would only be temporary relief. Could they not be lifted out of this slough of wretchedness? Could not hope be made to dawn upon them, and their sunken energies be aroused by its quickening influence? Herbert believed it might be done, and William Ashton was ready, with his large heart and abundant means, to afford the material aid. And at it they went. One whole family, natives of the Emerald Isle, had particularly pity the attention of the young men, and the plausible story they told, and their honest faces, especially those of the wife and children, together with their earnest supplication for all the blessings to come down upon the dear young darlints that seemed to be so compassionate to the poor, took fast hold of the hearts of the young men. Ashton had a house, an old one, to be sure; but it was located in a decent neighborhood. He helped them to remove there, laid in a store of necessities for them, said nothing particularly about the rent, only encouraged Mr. Murphy to go to work and save his earnings, promising to help him if he did so. The poor man was apparently out of his head for joy, and declared—

"That his fingers should be wrought to the bone, but he would keep things dacent and forehand now. And may your honor prosper all the days of your life, for there isn't another the like of you in the big city."

But Patrick Murphy's case was only one among a great many, and some of them too complicated for such young heads to manage, so they were glad to call in the counsel of Mr. Blagg. It was just such kind of business Mr. Blagg fancied; and therefore, with a good will, he promised to meet them at the little store—and it was for this purpose he had an appointment, as he told Mr. Granite—and we will attend the meeting with them.

"Now, boys, I am ready to hear your story." Mr. Blagg had taken his seat in an arm-chair—one that Her-

bert always handed out for his special use when that gentleman visited his store—one leg, the lame one, was stretched out, and resting on his cane. How it could be more at ease on such a prop, was not easily understood, but it must have been so, for it was invariably his position when about to sit any length of time. His elbows reclined one on each arm of the chair, and his faulty eye was tightly closed—another habit when about serious business—and his head made a significant twist to one side as he made the remark above quoted. The young men were seated in front of him; one on a box, the other on a stool.

"Well, Herbert must tell you, uncle—he knows more about the folks than I do—all I know is, they are in a miserable state, living like hogs; worse than Indians in a wigwam."

"Did you ever see Indians in a wigwam?"

"No, uncle, but I have read about them."

"Reading about them won't give you any idea of the truth. I've seen them! Pooh! don't want to think about it! But come tell us your story, Master Herbert."

"I hardly know where to begin, Mr. Blagg, but you remember we told you that we had been trying to help the folks up in Hunker's Alley."

"I don't know anything about Hunker's Alley."

"It is the name the place goes by; it is only two blocks from the corner here. There are about a dozen houses or shanties, clustered together; an alley runs up through the centre, and leads into a yard where some sheds are put up—just like cattle sheds or pig pens—one of them was a pig pen last year. In every room in each building, from the garret to the cellar, is a separate family; and in some of them two families; and perhaps more. In two of them, blacks and whites are herding together—I say herding, for they have nothing but straw and old rags to sleep on, and they have hardly clothing enough to be decent. Some of them appear to be crippled with rheumatism; some are covered with sores, and very offensive when you go near them; and some of them seem to be stupefied with liquor, or something else.



A few are apparently dying with consumption; poor, emaciated creatures, it makes one's heart ache to see them! Their cheek bones sticking out, their eyes staring, and their hands and arms reduced to mere bones. They groaned sadly, for they said that their whole frames ached, they were so wearied with lying. And no wonder! they lay most of them on bare boards, or may be some old clothes spread under them. One died yesterday, and really I could not feel sorry to know that he couldn't feel his hard bed any longer."

Mr. Blagg winked his best eye rather fast, and gave a slight cough.

"Better for him; better to be dead, as you say. Go on."

"In three rooms we found persons, who in comparison with the rest, seemed quite respectable—one was a woman of about forty years of age, of very decent appearance; she was sewing some coarse kind of cloth, I believe it was duck, making sailors' trousers; but she had to labor very hard to get her needle through. She said it would take her two days to make one pair, and she only received twenty-five cents for making them—part of her time had to be taken up with tending her husband, who had been taken with the fever. A little child of four years old was standing beside her—the child looked thin and sickly, and hungry too, and so did the woman; but her own clothes were clean, as well as those of her child. Her husband formerly worked along the docks, but he had been sick for a month, and they had to live on what she could earn. In that same room were two young women; they had a corner of the room, and a cloth of some kind was stretched across, so that they could be screened a little when they lay down at night. They appeared quite decent, and were pretty. One of them was lying down; she had sprained her back by falling down the broken stairway in the dark. They were sewing, too, the same kind of articles; even the one that was lying down was trying to sew, but it seemed to give her pain every time she drew her needle through the cloth. A table was by them, and I saw some dried beef and a piece of bread, and a small tea-pot, and cups

and saucers; they had just been eating. I noticed them, but did not ask any questions, they seemed so respectable, and appeared not to wish to attract attention. In one room, where two drunken men were lying on a bed, lay on another bed a decent-looking man, who was evidently far gone with consumption. He was quite intelligent, a foreigner, and had been, he said, 'brought up to religion' in his own country. He was an Englishman, conversed very sensibly, said he did not expect to get well, but hoped he had found peace, and he was willing to wait his appointed time. He had a little money left, which he kept under his pillow; a woman, he said, in the next room, laid it out for him in such necessities as he needed. I found she was the same woman who had a sick husband. She was very good, he said, very kind to a stranger like him. I talked with him, and left him some tracts, for which he seemed thankful. But the whole concern is in a miserable condition; and miserable as the place is, it takes almost all they can earn to pay their rents."

"And now, Uncle Blagg," William Ashton spoke the moment Herbert had ceased, "don't you think such wretched places ought not to exist in such a city, where there is so much wealth? It is a crying sin against us all! What do rich professors of religion mean by living in luxury and so much suffering unalleviated within a few rods of their own fine houses? Even this wretched place is owned, I am told, by a man who gives money largely for benevolent purposes! What does it mean?"

"It means that the world is crooked! But softly, softly, my Willie. Why don't you help them yourself?—got money enough."

"I intend to, uncle, right off; but first I want to know how to do it."

"There is the rub—there is the crook, you see—how to do it? Great question, Willie—wants considering."

"Then some of them drink so! What can you do with them? They ought to be taken right off and put into a work-house, or somewhere else."

"Softly, softly, Willie. You would have your hands full then—want a big work-house; and if a man pays his

rent, and chooses to get drunk, he must sleep it out; can't touch him—free country, you know."

"But some of the women have drunken husbands, and if it were not for them they could get along well enough. And you cannot help them, because their husbands would spend the money for liquor, and there is no use in trying to get them into better houses—they would keep on drinking, be where they might."

"It is crooked, Willie—I tell you the world is crooked! You and I can't straighten it; all we can do is to ease it up a little—do it softly, too."

The conversation was here interrupted by a person entering the store in much haste. He was a large man, a tough-jointed looking fellow, with a rough but honest-looking countenance.

"Is Mr. Jones, in?" The inflected accent, together with the peculiar cast of features, told that the stranger was from good old Ireland. Herbert immediately arose and presented himself.

"My name is Jones."

"And are you the gentleman as has put Pat Murphy in the house behind me?"

Herbert looked at William Ashton, who immediately answered:

"The house back from the street, No. 49?"

"The very same, your honor, and the devil of a muss you've made of it, asking your pardon for plain speaking; but you've clean spiled a dacent neighborhood, and, be dad, I must complain to the mayor, or council, or somebody. It is no gintlemanly, ony way, to be putting sich a rapsallion among dacent folks!"

Mr. Blagg cocked his eye at Willie, and moved his chair, cane, leg and all. Poor William turned red in the face and for a moment seemed utterly confounded.

"I put Mr. Murphy in that house, sir. He appears to be a very civil, honest kind of a man."

"The devil take his honesty! Pat Murphy a civil man! Ahem!—then the ould one is a civil fellow as needs be!—he's a king to Pat, any how! Aint he been drunk this three days, and he's got Bill Mulherrin, and Tam Rafferty, and bloody-nose Brooks, and the devil

knows who all, and sich a row as he's kept there these two days! Civil, my faith! he's the dirtiest blackguard that ye'll find in the whole scrape of drunken whelps! And, moreover, he's boastin' that he's got a lease for a year, and rint free, the lamproon! But I'll take the law on ye, the whole kit, afore a dacent neighborhood shall be spiled with the brute!"

"Softly, softly, friend—softly, softly! Let us hear the story. This young gentleman has done it in kindness, no doubt. Softly, softly!"

"I'll be as aisy as I can, sir—and it may be as you say, done in kindness; but the divil a kindness it is to us dacent folks, that work hard all day and want to rest the night, to have a drunken set of spalpeens a howlin', and fightin', and swearin', and what not, frightening the childer and the woman. But I've just tould him that I shall roust him. I've blessed him, your honor, high and dry; it's no aisy Pat Murphy got it, I warrant you that!"

Another intrusion, and two gentlemen make their way in. The first stranger stops speaking, and fixes his glaring eyes full on one of them. This was a short Irishman, with a face rather red and bloated, without a hat, his sandy hair hanging dishevelled about his forehead, and a few bruises around the eyes showed that he had, somehow or other, been in "a muss." The other gentleman who accompanied him was in rather a more decent shape. He held his friend by the arm, and seemed to be actively engaged in trying to keep him quiet. The first of these was Pat himself, but so altered that neither Herbert nor Ashton for the moment recognized him. He looked not at them, but turned toward the first intruder, and grinned at him horribly, showing a double row of fine teeth, to be sure, but displaying the most violent rage.

Mr. Blagg moved his chair back, saying:

"Softly, softly, my friends—softly, softly! Keep cool—it will all be righted."

"I'll right him, the ould drunken!"—And the stranger who first came in, thus saying, clinched Mr. Murphy by both arms, without taking the least heed of Pat's companion, bore him away from the store, shaking him as he went, until poor Pat's teeth chattered like nut-

crackers. What was done outside, no one went to see, but they could be heard "blessing" each other at a round rate.

There was silence for a few minutes, Herbert looking at Ashton, and Ashton at him, and Mr. Blagg looking at them both in turn, and, patiently waiting for some explanation. At length Ashton quietly said:

"Who would have thought it?"

And Herbert replied:

"Sure enough."

"It is sure enough, that little man was drunk, and, from his appearance, has been keeping it up for some time. One of your tenants, Willie?"

"Why, uncle, who would have believed it—so civil and fair spoken as he was! Who would have thought he could have turned out so? I must turn him out."

"Softly, softly, Willie. Let us hear the story first."

"There is not much story to it, uncle. We found the family living in Hunker's Alley; they had got down from sickness, and were a little in debt, and unable to get any better place—so they told us. His wife certainly seems a nice woman, and he appeared well; he went off to work every day, and, when we saw him, was sober certainly, and his children were so well behaved, and he seemed so fond of them, and I pitied them very much; they appeared such likely folks to help, that I concluded to put them in a house I owned, that was empty, and have purchased some things for them, and hoped they would do nicely now, nor did I intend to charge them any rent until they got a little aboveboard. But I must turn them off."

"Softly, Willie, softly. It looks scarey, I know—rather scarey. But wait and see. It may be, after all, only a little overturn he has got on account of his good luck. These Irish, you know, are a little peculiar—very warm-hearted, and clownish withal. Pat, no doubt, thought he must get a few friends together, and have a little jollification over his good luck. When once a going, there's no stopping an Irishman until the liquor or the money is out. You did not give him money, I hope?"

"Just a little, uncle—only ten dollars!"

Mr. Blagg gave a whistle.

"Pooh! pooh! Willie, you are too fast! Softly, softly, my boy. Ten dollars! No wonder poor Pat's head was turned. A house rent free! plenty of stores in the pantry! and ten dollars in money! Why, Willie, if you should just take your whole fortune and hand it over to Master Herbert here, and say here it is, take it, and be a rich man, it wouldn't make half the stir in his blood as what you have done has made in Pat's."

"I know that, uncle; he wouldn't take it; he doesn't care to be rich."

"Did he ever tell you so?"

"No, but I have reason to know he does not."

"Don't you believe a word of it—he does want to be rich, and so does every one. I suppose, though, he would rather get rich by laboring for it, and it is better for all of us to get rich in that way; we get a deal of experience, that is all the better for us and for others too. Poor Pat was made rich too fast; you will learn, by and by, that such men as he must be helped softly—just enough to keep their heads out of water. They must not be made to feel that you are going to do the swimming for them, or to keep holding them up, so long as they have hands and feet to scratch for themselves."

"And now you see, as I have told you, the world is crooked and can't be straightened too fast—you'll break things if you try to do it. But you mustn't stop trying for all that, only do it softly—just ease up a little, and give a little help, and very little at a time."

"But what shall I do, uncle, with Murphy, now? I am afraid there will be trouble."

"Not a bit of it. They will have a fight may be, and perhaps Pat may find himself and his friends to-morrow morning in the watchhouse; but that will sober him, and the ten dollars are most likely all spent now. He will be all right, no doubt, in a day or two. But watch him; keep an eye on things; call there once in a while, and don't let them feel that you are going to do any more for them in the way of help. But now about the others—what do you want to do?"

"I could tell you what I want to do, Uncle Blagg, but I fear it cannot be done. I want to have all those poor creatures, who are living so miserably in Hunker's Alley, taken out and placed in some situation where they can be made comfortable, where they can have some motive to exertion, and some motive to reformation, which they cannot possibly have there. It troubles me to think of them when I lie down at night, surrounded by every comfort, with no fear of want for the morrow, with every means to gratify my largest wishes, and all provided for me without my ever having done anything to earn these means, while some of them, no doubt just as deserving as I am, and perhaps more so, are toiling, toiling on, in a ceaseless round of drudgery, without the necessities of life; without, as I can see, one ray of comfort, without one stimulus to exertion, but absolute hunger and the fear of nakedness and being turned out, with no shelter to cover them. I have no heart to talk with them about a better world—about reforming their lives or attending to the means of grace. How can they attend upon them? how can they reform? how can they think of anything besides their present misery. It is a burden on my mind—it spoils my own comfort. How can I help it, uncle?"

The old man looked earnestly at the noble youth. He felt proud of him; his heart almost ached to catch hold of him and squeeze him in his arms, for he saw the excitement of his warm heart mantling his fair cheek, and the moisture dimming his eye. Oh, how proud he was of his Willie, then!—his own sister's child!

"I wouldn't have you help it, Willie. May God ever keep in you the same warm heart—the same just views of duty. Those poor, helpless objects are bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh; many of them, no doubt, have as warm hearts, as strong sympathies, love their children as tenderly, and their wives and husbands as truly, as the best of us. They are children of misfortune, in some way; have been unwise, it may be, perhaps have fallen into bad ways; perhaps their present circumstances are their own fault. But there they are, sick in body, sick at heart, helpless, hopeless! I say,

Willie, you feel right; and I am glad you cannot enjoy your own, while before your eyes, and within a short walk of your comfortable home, are some of God's creatures, destitute, afflicted, tormented! Angels may hover about them, and, for aught I know, may weep over them, and may be ready to bear their spirits off with gladness when they leave their poor despised bodies. But angels can't help them while they live and suffer. Man must do it—we must do it—they are thrown among us for this very purpose; and woe, woe, woe be to those who have plenty of this world's goods, and wrap themselves up in their own comforts, and turn by on the other side. I wouldn't be in their skin. But, after all, Willie, we must go softly; and now let us see what is to be done in the case before us. Hunker's Alley is your ground at present."

"That is what I have thought, uncle. Providentially I have been called there. Herbert must have the credit of that."

"No credit to me. I was called there providentially, too." Oh, how providential he thought it was! And then, like a flash, Gertrude was before him, from his first look at her unto the last parting scene. Ah, how providential it all had been!

"Well, no matter for that; you have never told me how you first came to go there; but you first took me there, and it has told its own story. I am ready to spend money, uncle; only I want to do it the right way, in the way that will help them most effectually."

"Pat Murphy will be a good lesson for you. Poor Pat hasn't got drunk for nothing, you see. We must learn from both sides of human nature—the good and the bad. But now to the point. Are the houses in this Hunker's Alley good for anything?"

"They ought all to be burned down. I wish they might."

"Hoot, toot! Softly, my boy, softly! Some of the folks would, no doubt, be burned up with the houses; and what would they do, at any rate, with their houses burned over their heads? Hire some of the fine ones you are building? Hoot, toot! man alive, the poor must

have shelter; and while they are so poor, any kind of a house is better than none. Can't the property be purchased?"

"I don't know as to that; it belongs to Colonel —; possibly he might sell it."

"Try him; see what he will take for it. In time all the rookeries around must be torn down, as property rises. Lots here are cheap now. It might be a good investment; see what he will take for it; get it into your own hands, then you can do something. Once you are the landlord, you can patch, and mend, and clean, and whitewash, and make things snug, and may be quite comfortable. You can, perhaps, extend the buildings, or you can clear out all those that are hopelessly bad, and are a trouble to the rest. You can place the more hopeful tenants in the best rooms, or houses; you can fix things around the premises, so that they will have altogether a different aspect; and then, as you will be among them so much, you will, by degrees, find out their characters, and what they need. Some will want to be cared for in one way, some in another; some may need money, a very little, just to lift them aboveboard—not more than that. Go right into the thing; make a business of it; but don't let them know what you are about. Only help them that can in no way help themselves. Make the place decent first, and then work carefully—softly—by degrees. There, haven't I given you advice?"

"I will try it, uncle. It is what I never thought of, but it seems to me just the thing. What do you say, Herbert?"

"I think so, too, and wish I was rich. I should take hold of another place I know of, and try the experiment there, too."

"There, do you hear that? He says he wishes he was rich—do you hear him?"

Herbert blushed as William looked at him and smiled.

"I wish he was, uncle."

"Well, there is no telling what he may be, yet."

"Not by selling a quarter of tea, and sixpence worth of sugar, and a penny's worth of snuff."

"Hold your tongue, Mr. Croesus; you know nothing about making money. It has all been made for you; only look out how you spend it, and don't be spoiling any fellows, as you have poor Pat. Keep a close fist; you will want all you have got; you have a queer heart; you must look out for it, or it will pick your pocket, and get folks into trouble. Poor Pat is, very likely, by this time, snoring in the watchhouse. But I must stop this chat; you have got enough to chew upon for to-night. Now go home, for I want to have a little talk with this young gentleman, and I don't want you to hear what it is about, so good night to you."

"Oh, Mr. Blagg, do not send him away; there is nothing that concerns me that I should not wish him to hear."

"Perhaps not; young folks must have some one they can tell all their secrets to—if it is not a girl, it's a boy. I don't know whether he knows all your secrets or not, but he don't get any of them from me. You may tell him what you please when I have done with you, but he shan't have a word of it from me—so good night, young man."

With a hearty shake of the hand all round, William Ashton went on his way; he had enough indeed to think of, for his heart was taken with the project of his uncle, and he will scarcely sleep to-night, his fancy will be so busy. Such is youth—how can he help it?

"I expect, Master Herbert, you will begin to think of me as Willie used to—that I am a meddlesome old fellow, ready to be dipping my fingers into any one's pie."

"Never, Mr. Blagg, never; you have been too kind to me, and have been of too great service to me, that I should ever feel so. I think I shall ever be willing to take your advice."

"Don't take anybody's advice without your own judgment is convinced. We cannot get into each other's skins, and tell exactly what we would do, and how we should feel, were we in another's place. I am not going to advise you particularly now, without you ask me to do so; but I have a proposition to make to



you, and of course you must know I would not make it or have a hand in the thing, without I thought favorably of it—favorably for you, and for the other party, too. So far, therefore, you may know how I feel. But to come to the matter in hand. You know what my opinion is about your present business, its prospects, and the character of it, and all that. You know, also, that I have esteemed you for being willing to work along in this small way, and take care of those dependent on you. It never can be a great business—perhaps not large enough to satisfy your ambition, when you get a few years older. In the eyes of the world it don't rank with some others, but you have as yet found that friends worthy of your esteem, can be made and kept, let the world say what it will; and if you remain in it, you will no doubt be thought just as much of by your true friends as they think of you now. But you believe, no doubt, that there are different spheres in life, some larger than others, and that a young man at any rate ought not to be blamed for trying to creep up as high in the world as he can, honestly and honorably. And you, in an especial manner, have a stimulus to do so, from the fact that you originally belong pretty high up, and have a mother and sister who must, from the state of things, keep along just about where you are. Your mother has acted nobly, and accommodated herself most wonderfully to her circumstances. She has never laid aside the lady, and never will, let her be where she may. But both she and your little sister, as I have said, must no doubt remain just in such circumstances as you may be able to sustain them in—you understand me?"

"Oh, yes, sir, and I would gladly, could I do so, have them very differently situated from what they now are; and it is the only thing that has ever troubled me about my business. As for myself, my idea is that a man must make his standing in society by his own abilities, and his own behavior, and not trust to his business for that."

"Right there—quite right. But even on that ground, you would no doubt feel that there were positions which a young man might embrace, much more advantageous than others, and provided he ran no dangerous risks,

there could be no impropriety in his bettering his condition in that way."

"By no means, sir."

"Then we understand one another. Now, then for my proposition. A friend of mine, a man of business, a safe man, and of abundant means to carry out his plan, is about to start a retail family store, either in some location in Broadway or Maiden Lane—they are the two streets most favorable for such business, and which is the best I can hardly say; my own mind inclines to the latter, but that can be determined as he thinks best. He does not wish to have anything to do with the management of it, any further than to supply a first rate stock of goods. His design is to have the character of the store such that it will command the attention of the first families in the city. It will be established in his name, but he wishes to get a young man who will be capable of doing the business, with a clerk under him; the young man to have the sole care of things, and to be the only one known in the establishment as its head. Of course he wants a man of probity and untiring industry, whose whole heart will be in it, and whose manners and prompt attention will be likely to make the store popular. All the means for carrying it on will be furnished; and he is willing to give such a one one-half the profits, and perhaps in a few years he may wish to retire altogether. That, however, is an afterthought; time will arrange that; and he has asked me whether I thought you would not be the right person, and I told him promptly that I thought you would, only you were not yet quite of age."

"That would be a serious objection."

"He said not—that you would not be considered as a partner until that time arrived. Everything could go on in his name, you managing to your best ability, and to be allowed one-half the net gains. Now what do you say?"

Herbert for some time was silent, at length he said:

"Mr. Blagg, it is a great offer, and I am sure I must be greatly indebted to you. It must in some way have been brought about by your kindness."



"Not a bit of it, all comes from yourself. The man has watched you, he thinks he knows you, has a great idea of your abilities, and is much taken with you; it is his own doing entirely, and you are wholly indebted to your own conduct in different ways for his good opinion. A young man in such a business place as this is pretty well marked. Men of the right sort have their eye on him. If he does the right thing, they know it; and if he spends his time in riding out, and running here and there, when he ought to be at his post, they see it, and put a mark against him. The city, after all, sir, is the place, the very best place in the world, for one that keeps right on his way, and is willing to expend his energies in getting ahead—the very place, sir, to make a man of any one."

"Mr. Blagg, do you think I am qualified for such a situation?"

"Master Herbert, do you think yourself qualified?—that is the question."

Herbert thought a moment.

"I should not fear, if I had means of my own, to undertake such a business—I mean if I had money that belonged to me, not loaned. But"—

"Well, settle your but—I shan't settle it for you—then give me your answer."

"It is a great offer!"

"No doubt of that."

"You think I had better accept?"

"Not if you fear your own ability."

"I do not fear, Mr. Blagg, that I shall fail in the utmost stretch of my power to do my duty. I do not fear that any labor will tire me, or that I should take undue advantage of any trust committed to me, or that my knowledge of most articles which may be wanted is deficient; or that I cannot enter with all my heart into the business. I know that my ambition, too, to please my employer, and to satisfy and please customers, will be very great. I have no fear on these accounts."

"What do you fear, then?"

"I can hardly tell, sir—nothing."

And Herbert hung down his head, and covered his face.

"That is right, my boy, you have nothing to fear, and I knew it. I know how you feel—don't wonder at it—prosperity will bring the tears as well as trouble. You have had your dark days; and, thank God, you behaved like a man under them. Many a time, when you have left our store, my heart has ached for you, and not so much for you as for those you loved, and were working for; but I knew it would not always be so. The prospect is bright now, so thank God, and take courage. And now I suppose I may tell you who is to be your principal."

"I should like to hear, sir."

"He is a fast friend, I can assure you, and one who has the most unbounded confidence in in you. It is our Mr. Granite, your Herman's father."

"Oh, Mr. Blagg, is it so!"

"Just as I tell you. So you can rest easy as to the ability of your principal, and the likelihood that he will do as he says."

"May I tell my mother?"

"By all means; only wait until I am gone. Tell her—yes—and let her know that her boy, of whom she is so proud and loves so dearly, is loved and respected by those who have power and influence. And tell her that now the little old store, and the little back room, are to be exchanged for places more suitable to the wife of Jasper Jones. Yes, tell her that her own good mother's teachings have made you what you are, and what you are likely to be—her stay, her comfort, and her pride. Yes, her pride; for you will now take a stand among the best. Now, good-night to you—go tell her as quick as you please."

Herbert could not answer. He followed the kind-hearted man to the door, holding his hand by the way; and then a warm grasp, and he hobbled off, and Herbert hastened to the back room.

## CHAPTER XXI.

WILLIAM ASHTON had never forgotten the beautiful vision which had for a moment attracted his attention so powerfully at the residence of Vanblarcom. He had become intimate with that gentleman, for he found him to be not only a very active and efficient man of business, but also possessed of a warm heart, and one who could enter into all the benevolent plans of his benefactor with a right good will. But in all his interviews, either at the house of Vanblarcom or his own office, no mention had ever been made, beside what has been already related, of the individual who had taken such a strong hold of his fancy. There were good reasons why it should thus have been. The immediate withdrawal of the young lady, after the entrance of Mr. Ashton, led Mrs. Vanblarcom to suppose, of course, that he had not noticed her sister; and the careless manner in which the former had spoken of her, and that merely as a matter of apology on his part, together with the absorbing interest of the *husband* in his own personal affairs, just at that time, caused *him* to forget such a trivial circumstance.

William, too, had his own reasons for silence. He saw the lady but for a moment, by candle-light, in the confusion of a first introduction to a strange family. He might be deceived as to her appearance; she might look very different in the light of day and under a full view. He dared not so far trust to the impression made upon him as to venture upon any questions concerning her, that might lead her friends to draw serious conclusions; but he wished most ardently for another interview. His further acquaintance with her sister, also increased this desire. He found *her* to be far superior to most ladies he had been in the habit of visiting. Her mind was well cultivated; her manners were refined; her taste, so far as she could manifest it under reduced circumstances, was of the true kind; and her conversa-

tional powers just such as made one always contented, and even charmed in her company. All these qualities he had in fancy transferred to the sister, and his heart had begun to dwell upon her with a strange satisfaction. Yet, when inclined to say anything to those who might throw light upon the matter, and lead him to a further acquaintance with this object of desire, fears would come over him and shut his lips. She might already have given her heart away, and he did not care to have his beautiful imaginings thus destroyed.

Time rolls on, when we are immersed in active duties, with unnoticed speed. Eighteen months had slipped by since his first interview with the Vanblarcoms. His plans in the great work of benevolence were, as he believed, successfully going on. A little band of warm and faithful friends had been gathered around him, among those who, like Vanblarcom, had received aid from his devoted purse, and among them he found rich enjoyment. They were not mere hirelings, willing to receive his benefactions, and give him in return their external homage. Through the wise counsel of his uncle, such only had been aided who were truly worthy and efficient. They could comprehend his motives; they could enter into the feelings of his pure and noble heart; they realized, in their rescue from the torture of dependence, and the pinching of poverty, the comforts of their new position; and when among them, he was received with a cordiality that satisfied his own warm impulses. From those in more degraded circumstances, he learned by experience not to expect so much. His efforts in Hunker's Alley had, indeed, been crowned with some success. He had purchased the property at a low price; he had repaired the buildings; he had cleaned all the premises; he had disposed of his tenants according to his best judgment, and endeavored to establish regulations for cleanliness and order; but with all his efforts, he found difficulties continually coming in his way. Some were exacting. One deed of kindness caused them to murmur if everything they asked for was not granted. Some took exceptions to his rules in reference to their conduct on his premises; and some taxed him with being a hard landlord, because

he exacted the rent, small as it was, at the very time it was due; while others, whom he had displaced entirely, were so enraged that not only were attempts made to fire the place, but he was obliged to have two of them arrested for an attack upon him personally, with a design, no doubt, to take his life. All this was discouraging, and led him to see that much of the evil which had so troubled his heart was not to be eradicated by human aid. He found truly, as his uncle so often told him—"that the world was crooked, and could not be straightened by main force"—and he learned to feel more charitably toward those who, having toiled and earned their wealth, seemed to be regardless of their suffering fellows. But still, all were not ungrateful. The woman, with her sick husband and half famished child, was now doing well; the husband had recovered and was again at work, and smiles were always ready to greet their benefactor when he came into their comfortable apartments. The young women, too, were cheerful and happy, laying by their earnings, and garnishing their snug room with such things as were calculated to give it a cheerful aspect. Flower-pots stood in the window, small neat pictures hung upon the walls, and a plain carpet covered the floor. One of them was engaged to be married to a worthy young tradesman in his own employ, who had become acquainted with them while repairing the buildings, and William had promised them a fitting out. So they looked upon him, as he called in there and took a seat beside them, as a friend sent of God, to lift them out of degradation and shed sunshine about their path. They had told him their story. That they had lost their parents suddenly, and not being strong enough to endure the hard service of domestic drudgery, tried to keep together and earn a living by their needle. Hard times came on, and for a while no work could be obtained but at the very lowest rate. One of them had been injured, and for a long period could do nothing to aid, and the other was unable to spend much time with her needle, from the necessity of waiting upon the other, racked as she was with pain, and at times gasping for breath. Their few articles of furniture had to go, piece by piece, for

rent and food, until they became reduced to the condition in which he had first found them. And William saw their tears of gratitude, as they looked round upon their comparatively pleasant abode, and in silence at him who had done so much for them; and this richly repaid him for the whole. He felt that his labor had not all been in vain, if only these two orphans had been lifted up to a position from which they had a fair prospect of rising to respectability and independence. He took courage whenever he saw their pleasant faces and met their warm welcome.

William Ashton had business which called him to the western portion of the State of New York. Large tracts of land were owned by him there, and he wished to dispose of them, in order to have their avails more profitable for others, and himself, too, than they could be, lying a dead capital, with merely a future, far-off prospect of advance in price.

Leaving, therefore, the oversight of his affairs to Herbert and his Uncle Blagg, he started off for an absence of some weeks. It was the latter part of October, before he had accomplished what he designed by his journey, and was able to return. After spending two days in Rochester, he engaged passage in the stage for Albany. It was a night stage, and when he entered he perceived that it was full, with the exception of one seat, and that was the middle one—on which he had placed himself—on that there was room for one more, when two other passengers were about to enter, a young lady and a man—we will not call him gentleman. The lady was stepping into the stage, when the man called out:

"Driver, how is this? My name was booked when you had but eight passengers down. How many does your stage hold?"

"It holds nine; can't you ride up here with me?"

"No, I can't; I engaged an inside seat, and have no notion of riding all night on the outside. Is your name down, miss?" turning to the young lady.

"I do not know, sir; but I presume not. I did not suppose that was necessary."

William Ashton felt the blood tingling his cheeks. A

lady, and her seat contested! and a stage full of men ready to let her suffer a disappointment. He immediately called out:

"My seat is at your service, miss," and at once he sprang from the stage.

"Oh, thank you, sir. I cannot think of depriving you of your place."

"I resign it with pleasure, I assure you, and will sit with the driver."

The light of the lamp fell full upon her face as she looked at him, and he almost lost the power of saying anything further. That countenance, which had been almost a presence with him for so many months, was before him, somewhat pale from the agitation of the moment, but more engaging than the picture his imagination had retained. He was about to make himself known, but he saw that she did not recognize him, and he forbore.

The man who had contested the place with her, in the meantime, without hesitation had entered the stage.

"I suppose," said William, "the gentleman on the back seat will allow this lady to take his place?"

"Why, yes—I suppose that's rutable," and he arose and prepared to remove.

"Indeed, sir, you are very kind," again said the lady; "it will be such a cold night, it will be very painful for me to think that your politeness should put you to such an inconvenience."

"It would be much more painful to me to know that you should be disappointed in proceeding on your journey."

"If the young woman is going to get in, I wish she would be about it—we are tired of waiting." This was said in rather a gruff voice by one of the passengers.

"Your trunk is lashed on—allow me to assist you." The lady yielded to his request; room was made for her on the back seat, and William was preparing to mount by the driver, when his arm was seized, and a well known voice broke upon his ear.

"My dear young friend, is it possible this is you?"

"Dr. C——! How glad I am to see you!"

The reverend gentleman—for it was a well-known and highly distinguished clergyman from the city of New York, and his own pastor—took his hand with both of his, and shook it cordially.

"On your way home?"

"I am, sir."

"I am glad of it; we have missed you sadly. I have come on to visit my parents, and shall return in a day or two. Call and tell my family that you have seen me, and that we are all well."

"I will, sir, certainly."

And then shaking his hand as cordially as before, the gentleman stepped aside, and William Ashton ascended to his seat. The whip snapped loudly over the leaders' heads, and the prancing horses started off on a full gallop.

The young lady had not been an uninterested witness of this last scene. She knew the clergyman well; she had often heard him preach. She saw how earnest had been his salutation of the young gentleman, and it almost seemed like a personal introduction of him to herself. He had proved himself to have a true gentleman's spirit, and she could confide in him as one whose character had received a high testimonial. She felt that she was now not quite alone, for one was on that vehicle to whom, upon an emergency, she might apply for such service as a gentleman could render. She had never seen him before that she remembered—in fact she had never before seen one who, in all respects, was so pleasing to her; one that she felt might, if he were seated within, make the night ride very agreeable. He was going, too, nearly the whole route that she would take—at least to Albany.

At length, after riding some miles, the air, even within the stage, began to feel somewhat cool, and she was about to put on an extra shawl—it was of plain cloth, but calculated to do good service on a cold night. The thought came into her mind, that it might be more needed by one who had exposed himself to accommodate her—it would be but a civil return to send it to him—and addressing one of the passengers:



"Will you be so kind, sir, as to hand this shawl to the young gentleman beside the driver?"

No reply was made, but the gentleman took it, and forcing it through a small opening in front, said:

"Here is a shawl the lady wishes you to take."

"For me! Oh no, she may be robbing herself—by no means."

"Please say to him that I am provided; this is an extra garment I can dispense with."

William heard the voice, and its tones thrilled him as no human voice had ever done before.

"My warmest thanks to the lady; it will be very acceptable, if not necessary for her comfort."

The night had passed, and it was about the breaking of the day, and William was beginning to anticipate, with no little satisfaction, the beams of the sun and a warm breakfast, when suddenly the carriage gave a lurch to one side, rested an instant, and then, with a crash, came to the ground! The horses sprang, but the driver had regained his feet, and was enabled to stop them. William was thrown some distance, and for a moment stunned, but was soon able to rise, and feeling no personal injury, immediately hastened to the relief of those within the stage. They were already emerging from the uppermost door, and some of them tearing wildly at the curtains. His great anxiety was for her to whom he had resigned his place within. He knew she was on the side which was uppermost, or had been seated there. On loosening the curtain, he found that her hand had grasped the side of the stage, and, with the assistance of others, she was soon extricated, but not until an exclamation of pain had escaped.

"Are *you* not injured?" she asked in a tone of earnest inquiry.

"Not in the least; but I fear you are;" and then he caught her in his arms, for she was about to fall. "You are hurt badly."

"Oh, no; but I cannot stand, I fear," and as she tried to place her foot to the ground, another exclamation broke from her.

William perceived that the accident had occurred

nearly opposite a plain farm-house, and that some of its inmates had come to their aid. A young woman immediately asked the lady whom he was holding:

"Are you badly hurt, miss?"

"I hope not seriously; but my ankle pains me, and I cannot place my foot to the ground."

"Had we not better get her into the house?"

"I think so," the young woman replied, and taking hold of the injured lady, with the assistance of her companion, she was soon within the dwelling, where William left her to the care of the females, and went to the assistance of others whom he feared must, some of them, be either killed or seriously injured. They had all by that time, however, been released, and without any material damage. Some of them were laughing; some who had got bruised were swearing roundly at the driver, who paid them back liberally in their own coin.

The accident had occurred by the loss of a linch-pin from the forward axle-tree; the wheel had come off, and the track, just there, being somewhat sideling, together with the impetus the stage was under, had thrown the vehicle off its balance. Nothing material had been broken, and, although the pin could not be found, one that answered the purpose was procured from the farming establishment at hand, and in a short time the stage was in readiness to pursue its journey.

On returning to the house, William learned that the young lady had been placed in bed, and that the pain was not only severe, but was becoming more and more so. At his request the physician was sent for; he lived at no great distance, and was soon on the spot. His examination enabled him to decide positively that no bone was broken, but that the parts had been badly sprained.

"It will not do for her, then, to go on." This was said by young Ashton to the physician, whom he had taken one side to ask his opinion of her injury.

"I should think not; indeed it will be impossible without great agony on her part."

"Would the family here be willing to have her remain, if they were handsomely remunerated for their trouble?"

"No doubt of that; they are very clever people—very respectable, too; she could not be in better quarters. I will guarantee every care will be taken of her."

"Then, doctor, you manage it, if you will; tell her of the necessity of remaining, and of the character of those with whom she is. Is there a tavern near at hand, where I could lodge?"

"There is not. Are you her brother?"

"No, sir; I am comparatively a stranger, but I know her friends in New York. She is travelling alone, on her way home. I cannot leave the place while she is too unwell to go on."

"I will tell you, then, what to do. The family here will probably not have much spare room. My house is but a moderate walk from here, and it will give me the greatest pleasure to afford you all the accommodation you may require, and you can stay as long as you like."

"You are very kind, sir; if it would not be intruding on your family, it will be a great favor to me."

"Not in the least, sir."

"I wish, then, doctor, that every attention should be paid to this young lady; everything procured for her comfort that money can pay for. You need not let her know that I remain behind, it may trouble her; she may think I am putting myself to inconvenience on her account—at least, do not let her know it until the stage is off."

"All shall be done as you request, sir;" and the doctor went again to see his patient, and William Ashton to see that the baggage was removed from the stage.

In a few moments after the doctor entered the room, the sound of a snapping whip and the rattling of wheels was heard. The young lady looked at him with deep anxiety on her pale countenance:

"That is not the stage?"

"Yes; it was just ready to start when I came in."

"And left me! What shall I do?"

"Just lie still, my dear, and keep as comfortable as you can. I will warrant that the good folks here will not feel it a burden to have the care of you."

"Indeed not," replied a pleasant-looking lady of about

forty, the mistress of the house; "no trouble at all; you are in no fit condition, my dear, to ride; especially in a stage filled with passengers. Rest easy on our account; anything we can do, will be done with pleasure."

The doctor smiled—all doctors should have just such a pleasant, cheerful countenance when they feel their patients' pulse, or stand or sit by their bedside—no doubt that look went to the heart, and made the poor girl almost forget her pain.

"You are all very kind; everybody is kind to me. Last evening, a young gentleman, rather than suffer me to lose my opportunity to come on, would insist upon giving up his own inside seat and riding with the driver; such a cold night, too."

"I presume he did not suffer; I do not think I should, wrapped up as he was, and under the same circumstances. He did not forget, however, to leave your shawl, nor his most earnest wishes that you may soon recover. I believe if he had not received assurances from me that you would have the tenderest care, he would not have stirred a step."

"And in the midst of the confusion, I have neglected to thank him for his attention. What will he think of me? I am very sorry. If I knew his name and address, I would get my father to write to him when I reach home. He is truly a gentleman, and I only regret my own thoughtlessness. What will he think?"

"You would not be very unhappy, then, to learn that you will have such an opportunity in a day or two?"

"I don't understand you, doctor; please excuse me."

"I mean that it would not disturb you much to know that he has not gone, and will not leave the place until you are able to travel. He is going to my house, where we shall try to treat so true a gentleman as he deserves; and when you are able to sit up, perhaps you will allow him to pay his respects to you, and then you can thank him personally. It will be much more acceptable to him, I have no doubt, than a letter from your father."

The young lady covered her face, for she was deeply affected. The doctor could enter into her feelings; he



said, in pleasant tone, "Good bye, for the present; I will see you again after breakfast," and left the room.

Doctor Benson, for that was the name of the gentleman, was just the man to enter heartily into such a scene. It seemed to him a little specimen of the romantic. Two young folks, strangers to each other, and thrown together under circumstances that were likely to kindle quite a flame in their hearts, unless they were otherwise appropriated. He imagined that he could see, in the expressed feelings of the young man, something more than the politeness of a gentleman; and the impression made upon the young lady, when he revealed the fact that the stranger would not leave until she was able to travel, was something more than the expression of gratitude.

The place where the accident occurred was about six miles from Auburn, where might be procured many of the luxuries which a city affords; and in the course of the day, there were sent to the sick-room some of the very choicest articles which a good confectionery could produce—jellies, oranges, lemons, dried fruits and candies. Books, too, of the latest publications, and one of choice poetry by an old master. The doctor brought them, and received thanks from the lady as personally due to himself, although it was hard work for him to repress a smile as she was doing so. Whether the lady had doubts that all her thanks were not due to the doctor alone, we will not say. He gave her no opportunity for expressing them; all he said, was:

"I hope you will derive as much pleasure in the use of them, as it gives me in bringing them to you."

On the third day, the young lady was assisted to a large rocking-chair and drawn into the adjoining room, which was their best parlor; plainly furnished, to be sure, but quite in contrast with the rest of the house. It had a carpet on the floor, and green paper curtains at the windows, and a figured white cloth upon the stained table, and a pot of fall flowers in the painted fire-place. A large Bible lay on a stand in one corner of the room, and some Bible pictures were hung upon the walls. The curtains were drawn up, and the sun shone pleasantly in.

It had a cheery look; much more so than many an elegant saloon, with its Wilton carpet and rich furniture.

Fanny Marshall—for the reader, no doubt, knows by this time the name of the young lady—was arrayed in her most tasteful manner. She had eschewed her travelling dress, and selected from her trunk one she thought more appropriate for a special occasion—an interview with one who had been almost constantly in her mind for some days past. And how could she help feeling a little solicitous about her appearance? She had formed a very high opinion of the stranger, and had even wrought up her imagination in respect to his personal appearance. Altogether, Miss Fanny had been strangely affected. She even had to censure her foolish fancy more than once; and yet, when expecting an interview with one so entitled to her consideration, how could she do less than be, as she thought, suitably prepared for it?

We have called her lovely, and we have seen what effect her first appearance had upon the mind of young Ashton; yet she would not have been singled out amid a crowd of ladies as remarkable for beauty. Her appearance was by no means showy. She would not at once, in most cases, attract attention, as would Gertrude Manners. There was nothing brilliant or dazzling as in Gertrude, for on *her*, the eye almost feared to rest long—unless it were the eye of one confident of her love—it was too fascinating to be trifled with; the heart might be painfully entrapped. Fanny Marshall was not thus beautiful; and yet, with certain minds, her appearance in form and face might have equal power—but only to a very few. Hers was a soft, quiet beauty—that of the lovely landscape, whose placid panorama tells of rural rest and plenty; of snug homes and pretty meadows, and meandering rivulets, all bathed in the mellow light of an autumnal setting sun—it satisfied the heart.

Her hair was a light auburn, its curls, at times, just showing a tinge of gold; her eye dark, but not black—perhaps a deep grey, and only seeming dark by contrast with her hair. It may have been its long lashes that caused the charm, or the peculiar color of the eye itself; but when fixed upon you under the least excite-

ment, even that of common conversation, its beams seemed to penetrate your heart—you wanted to look at them, and at nothing else—you could not help believing they were windows to a soul full of deep feeling, where the warmest, purest, holiest passions dwelt, and amid which your own best feelings could meet with sympathy.

And we may as well say here, as at any other place, that she was in reality just such a one as her look betokened.

We might dwell upon the other features of her countenance, but our description would not, after all, tell you half so much as one true, earnest gaze from her eye. No fault could be found with any of them; yet we have often thought the charm, for she had the power to charm when once fairly in communion with her, and a mighty power it was, too, but it lay, we feel convinced, in her soft, bright, lustrous eye.

That she looked perfectly natural on this morning, as she sat in that little parlor, leaning back in the rocking-chair and a light shawl resting on her lap, and spreading over her foot, no doubt to hide its unsightly bandages, we cannot aver. How could she? was she not expecting company? and who is there that feels just like one's self, or looks like one's self under such circumstances?

Perhaps it was well for Miss Fanny, that when the stranger did arrive, it was in company with one who had been with her occasionally these four days past, and with whom she had become quite familiar—the eldest daughter of Doctor Benson, a sprightly, pleasant young lady, the belle of that region. She had called there with her father, had become much interested in the young sufferer, they being nearly of the same age, and had since then called several times, and staid some hours at each call. We have said it was probably well for Miss Fanny that William Ashton had a companion with him, in order to afford her that relief which a third party is apt to bring at the meeting of two individuals placed under peculiar circumstances in reference to each other; and yet when, from her position in the room, she saw him alight and hand Miss Benson from the gig, something like a flash of disappointment passed through her mind;

there was not a little sinking of spirit, too, so strong a thing is the human heart!

"Good morning, Miss Fanny," said the lively girl, as she entered the room leaning on the arm of Mr. Ashton. "You see I have brought your hero of the stage-coach. I am so glad you are able to be up; for I know it would have been a terrible disappointment to him not to see you; he has been almost dead with impatience."

Now Miss Benson may have had the truth on her side, but she could only have guessed at it; for William had been especially guarded, or at least meant to be so, in all that he said or did in reference to her, whom, in this strange way, he had taken upon himself to befriend. No doubt the sprightly lady wished to sound how matters stood between them. Miss Fanny promptly replied—her woman's heart was on the watch:

"I am indeed happy to see one who has acted so kindly toward a stranger, in order that I may personally express my gratitude. It is but a poor return, however, for all the inconvenience I have put him to."

Young Ashton had taken her hand, and was holding it while she said this. He ought, probably, not to have done so; but he did not, just then, think of the proprieties; he was only thinking of the lovely look that was fixed upon him, and of the rich tones of that voice, trembling with emotion; he answered with all the earnestness he could command:

"I beg of you to say nothing of my inconvenience, or of your gratitude. I am so happy to know that you have not been seriously injured, and are so far on the way of recovery!"

That pressure of the dear little plump thing you were holding, William, was a little too warm, for the color has mantled to Miss Fanny's cheek and she has to move a little in her chair, and is using the hand you have relinquished in fanning herself with her handkerchief; if you knew how sensitive she is, how very nice her sense of delicacy, you would not have done it. We excuse you only on the ground of ignorance; you have never been intimate with young ladies, especially such a one.

Miss Benson had watched, with an eagle eye, the

motions on each side. She felt satisfied how matters stood; she had not quite concluded to make a conquest herself, she had only thought of it. There would be no use now; it was a hopeless case! So she thought. A slight motion to be quizzical came over her, but it passed quickly away, and a generous feeling gained the ascendancy. They might wish to be alone.

"Will you excuse me a moment, dear? I wish to speak with Mrs. Rush,"—the lady's name in whose house they were.

"By all means." And, with a pleasant smile and and lively air, she left the room. William almost immediately said:

"You have suffered a great deal?"

"The pain has been severe at times; but there have been so many alleviating circumstances, that I am ashamed if I have given way to it in the least, so very kind have all been! Were *you* not hurt?"

"Merely some slight bruises; for a moment I was stunned by my fall. My seat being elevated, the impetus was greater than I could have imagined. But it soon passed off."

"I feared you had been seriously injured; and until you came to the carriage, I could only think how unfortunate for me, that I was the cause of suffering to one who had acted so generously."

"You would not have wished me to act differently?"

"No—thank you for your good opinion. I will not deny that. It is pleasant for us to realize, in those we think well of, all those characteristics we imagine them to possess."

Miss Fanny could not get nearer than this to her true meaning. She blundered, and blushed, too, a little more than she could have wished. William Ashton did not at once reply, he was trying to construe her expression, if possible, in his own favor. She again spoke:

"Dr. Benson tells me that you are acquainted with my friends in New York?"

"I believe I am—I think—I know I cannot be mistaken. You are a sister of Mrs. Vanblarecom—Mrs. James Vanblarecom?"

"I am; but surely you do not recognize a likeness!"

"I might not, had I never seen you there, and been told that you were her sister."

"Seen me there!" And Miss Fanny could not keep back the rich blood that found its way all over her fair face.

"Only once, and then but for an instant. You will remember, perhaps, a gentleman calling there the evening previous to your leaving the city; and by the same token, too, I can vouch for it that you can sing, when the occasion demands."

"You must pardon me; I remember the circumstance you have alluded to—that a gentleman came in very unexpectedly, and I immediately withdrew. I had preparations to make for my departure. I thought, at the time, it was rude for me to do so. I had no idea we should ever meet again. I expected then to remain a long time at the West, in teaching, but have, for certain reasons, relinquished my school, and am now on my way home."

"I knew you had been teaching."

"Then you knew it was only a school-teacher for whom you were willing to risk almost your life in riding in the open air all night?"

"And with the opinion you have formed of me, would that appear strange to you?"

A moment she looked at him, and her countenance assumed its most serious aspect. She saw that he looked almost hurt.

"I did wrong even to insinuate such an idea. No, I do not believe you put on the gentleman only on special occasions, or among distinguished circles. Pardon me again."

"We shall understand one another, I hope, by and by; do you remember hearing that name mentioned?" handing her, at the same time, a card.

"Ashton, Mr. Ashton! The name sounds familiar to me. I think I remember hearing James say to sister Etta that Mr. Ashton had promised to call and see her, but have no recollection further than that; in fact, my mind was so occupied just then with other matters, you

must not think strange if I am not able to recall either your name or person. I shall not be likely to forget either, now."

"I have but one favor to ask now; you say you are on your return home; do you call New York your home?"

"I am going home to my parents. My father is settled at ———; he is the clergyman there. Our house is near Kirkland Place, as some call it; perhaps you know where that is."

"I have heard of it—in fact I have been there; I have a friend who resides near Kirkland Place—Mr. McBride."

"Indeed!—oh, we know him well."

"May I then be permitted to consider that I am sufficiently known to you, under all these circumstances, to make the offer of my services until you reach your home, and that you will allow me to take the responsibility of your journey, until I can place you among your friends?"

"You have done so much already, it would be almost uncivil in me to refuse such an offer; and yet it may, I fear, put you to much trouble."

"Please stop there, and merely tell me honestly, will any attention I can pay to you as a friend, on your journey home, be acceptable?"

"If you will not let me speak of the trouble it may give yourself, I must say I shall feel most grateful to you."

"That is settled, then. I am no longer a stranger, and may act with the assurance that I have your confidence."

"You may, most certainly."

He saw that she was deeply excited. The tears had started, and she could not restrain them. In order to divert her mind, he took, from the stand near by, the volume of poetry which had been sent to her.

"Are you an admirer of Cowper?"

"I am more than an admirer—I love him. You have seen that book before?" She smiled as she said this, although her beautiful lashes were still heavy, and

her eyes glistening. "I am sure, now, to whom I am indebted for the good things which have been pressed upon me. You like to make people happy."

"We all do—is it not so?"

"I believe it is more commonly a trait of human nature than we sometimes allow."

"I believe so, most truly. Some, however, will not be made happy, do what you may."

Miss Benson now came in, with a smile on her countenance, and apparently with a jest ready to slip from her ruby lips, but seeing such a demure atmosphere pervading the room, she merely said:

"I have staid longer than I intended. Do you still design riding to town?" addressing the gentleman.

"That is as you shall direct; I am at your command."

"My pleasure then is, sir, that you proceed at once to the town of Auburn, and there look round and search out all the little delicacies which your nice taste may select, such as you think two young ladies—invalids—may like to feast their eyes upon, and perhaps deign to partake of; and on your return you will find me here, perhaps reading Cowper to Miss Fanny, or perhaps talking about persons and things, only in the general way, you understand."

"I will obey your orders with pleasure, only let me have a few hints from you both as to the kind of delicacies most acceptable."

"Oh, we can trust to your judgment. You seem to know already what ladies like, especially those not yet out of their teens; only be sure to have a paper of candies in the lot, just such as you got the other day."

"I got!"

"Oh, I forgot. No matter—murder will out, you know; and, moreover, I tell you, once for all, I am too young to keep secrets."

Miss Fanny was sadly confused. She blushed, and wanted to put in a word, but feared she might only make matters worse. For her own part, she was already quite troubled when she thought of the expense the young gentleman had put himself to by remaining. She did not know his circumstances—he might not be able

to afford it; there was nothing in his dress or appearance that indicated wealth, and she knew nothing of the directions which had been given to the doctor, "That every attention should be paid, and every comfort procured that money could command." Her own expenses she of course expected to pay; what amount they might consume she could not tell. She had enough, doubtless, to bear her through; but every dollar she could save would be so much for those whose interests were dearer to her than her own. For them she had been an exile from home, working among strangers. She had heard they were in trouble, that some dissatisfaction had been, of late, manifested among the people under her father's charge, that he expected to be obliged to resign his situation, and that his health was not good enough to allow him to look out for another. He had, indeed, a home; his people could not drive him from that. He owned his dwelling and a few acres of land, but would, no doubt, need all the help his children could give. Her earnings, therefore, she had, with her whole heart, consecrated to that end, and was now on her way home to put the little treasure in his hands, and ascertain just how they were situated. She feared they might not, in their care for her happiness, inform her of the extent of their trials, and had lived with the utmost economy for that reason. Her apparel was decent, but nothing more; that, too, was, for the most part, the gift of friends before her departure from home.

Under these circumstances, it was rather painful, than otherwise, to hear her companion making such exactions upon the purse of a stranger. Frugal of what she possessed in her own right, she felt equally sparing of the purse of others.

She tried to put in a word, but found that between the politeness of the young man, and the volubility of Miss Benson, there was no chance for remonstrance or apology then. She would, however, attend to that matter at the first opportunity. After Mr. Ashton had gone on his way, however, she could not help saying:

"Oh, how could you make such demands of him? Perhaps"—

"Oh, never mind the perhapses, dear. What are men good for, if they can't buy us cakes and candies, and all the goodies? And, besides, it gives them so much pleasure! Did you not see how pleased he looked?"

"Yes; but these things cost a good deal—he may not be able to afford the expense."

"Oh, no doubt he has brought plenty of money with him to spend on his journey; these young clerks always calculate upon having a good time."

"He is a clerk, then, and only living on a salary?"

"Like as not. He has said nothing about his business; if he was in business for himself, he no doubt would have been talking about his store, or his partner, and his clerks, and all that—you know these young partners always do. So I have set him down as a clerk; but he is a right clever fellow—rather solemn, on the whole, and has a very open heart. He is handsome, too—don't you think so?"

Fanny blushed much more than the question seemed to require.

"He has, certainly, a pleasant countenance, especially when he is speaking to you; he seems so earnest, so sincere!"

"He is full of romance, too, I am thinking. If the truth was known, he feels that this turn-over has been quite an adventure, that you are a distressed damsel, and he your devoted knight, bound to stay by you and gallant you home. What if he or you should fall in love? It would be just like *him*, I know it would. I can see through men, young ones especially, if I am in my teens. But we shall not get along with Cowper if I keep rattling on in this way; father calls me a rattle-box—I guess he is right."

"You have proved yourself something better than that to me; I shall not allow you to call yourself by any such name." And putting her arm around the neck of the kind-hearted, pretty girl, Fanny kissed her, then laid her face upon her fair neck.

"Now, then, I shall not allow this," holding up Fanny's face, and wiping away some tears that were stealing silently down from their hiding-place.



"These tears are naughty. Forgive me, dear, if I have said anything to trouble you—there now. Come, let us read Cowper; here is John Gilpin—that will make us laugh, and drive away all naughty tears and sober feelings."

William Ashton was not quite happy when he drove away on his errand—not so happy as he had been before his interview. He had seen the object upon which for so many months his mind had been dwelling, and with which he had indulged his imagination. The reality had exceeded all his fancy had pictured. There was not only just such beauty as satisfied his taste—yea more, that captivated his heart, but there was all that her peculiar beauty indicated, a homebred honesty, a delicate sensibility, a sobriety, a calmness of demeanor—just what he had been always craving, but which he thought he had not met with before. A clergyman's daughter, too! no doubt poor, or in straitened circumstances—clergymen generally were. How delightful it would be to make her an independent lady, to surprise her with wealth, to place her father beyond that care which no doubt he often endured! How pleasant, too, it would be to surprise his good friends, the Vanblarcoms! and then the thought came suddenly upon him—How strange that I should have met her thus! I was on an errand of mercy; I was trying to aid one who was deserving. I being in the way, the Lord helped me. Was it not a providential act; was not the whole a providential arrangement? In what other light could he view it?

Thus on one side the question was answered very much to his satisfaction. But as the mind always seems prone to torment itself when any room for doubt is left as to the possibility of acquiring some very desirable object, the possession of which depends upon contingencies beyond our present reach, so was this case not an exception. He could not be sure that her heart was not already engaged; indeed, the remark she made as to the necessity for her return home, in consequence of some new arrangements about to be made in her family he had construed very decidedly in favor of her being affianced to another. And would it not be strange, indeed,

if one so captivating as he thought her to be, should be really free in heart and hand? But how could he ascertain the truth in this matter? To make the inquiry of herself would be equivalent to a proposal of his own hand; and to do that, under present circumstances, might make the rest of their journey embarrassing to them both. Honor and delicacy dictated that he should postpone all such proceedings until she was under her father's roof, where she could accept or decline his offer, with the approval of her parents; and yet, to be in doubt, for even a day, as to the fact whether her heart was engaged to another, was not to be endured. Many and various were the plans which suggested themselves, and for a while he would resolve to put them in execution, when objections would interpose, and they were laid aside; until, without coming to any decision, he concluded to leave matters to their own course—the only proper conclusion in all affairs pertaining unto true love. It will not be controlled by devices of policy, be they ever so astute.

Miss Benson was very lavish of her praises, when, on his return, the "goodies" were placed at her disposal, and Miss Fanny assented to all that her sprightly companion said, so far as she could, by saying nothing to the contrary and looking very serious, and apparently on the very border of that state of feeling when, should a tear drop, it would not surprise us. William Ashton noticed it—for what change in her feelings did he not notice?—and so soon as he could, resolved to say something—that is, to her own ear.

"And I am going, with your leave, to take some of these figs and raisins to the good folks in the house, may I not?" said Miss Benson, looking at the gentleman.

"With all my heart; you know, they belong to you ladies, to dispose of as you will."

"Much obliged!" and making a low courtesy, at the same time holding out the bundles which she had caught up, she hastened from the room, and William took a seat by Miss Fanny.

"I fear you do not relish these dainties; or, perhaps, you are in pain—you appear sad."

There was something in the tone of his voice, or perhaps in the look together with the words themselves, which, uniting with her feelings, at that moment created a commotion in her heart beyond control. She covered her face, and gave way to what she could not resist.

"My dear Miss Marshall, what has happened—have I done aught to give you trouble?"

"Oh, no, no!" She shook her head.

"Perhaps you wish I should leave you, for the present?"

As she made no reply, William immediately stepped from the room, to search for Miss Benson; he found her in great glee, busily distributing her treasures among the members of the household. He asked her to step one side with him.

"I will return to your home now; at what time shall I come for you?"

"But why should you go?"

"I think my presence is not agreeable to Miss Marshall, for what reason I cannot say."

"You are under some great mistake. Let me see her."

Miss Benson found things in a condition so different from what she had reason to expect, that her wits were perfectly at fault in trying to comprehend the cause. Miss Fanny seemed to be almost heartbroken, and it was impossible, for some time, to ascertain what she did try to say, so broken were the sentences.

"You alarm me, dear Fanny! What can have happened? In what way has Mr. Ashton offended you, or tried your feelings? Surely, he has not designed to do so. There must be some great mistake. Do not let him go away under such an apprehension."

"By no means. Do not let him go away; it is no fault of his that I feel so; please do tell him—ask him to have patience."

In one sense, William Ashton had not been the cause of this outburst of feeling; it was, indeed, no fault of his, and yet he had more to do with it than Miss Fanny would willingly have acknowledged, if even she herself was aware of it. Her heart was as yet in all the

purity of childhood; no earthly object had ever touched its strong, sweet sympathies; no love had moved her but that which she enjoyed with her parents and sisters. She had led hitherto rather a secluded life; in study, or in teaching, her mind had been absorbed, and she had rather shunned the society of those of her own age. She was not given to fancies—not quite enough to form a counteracting influence against the stern realities of life; and yet she had warm affections, and was possessed of exquisite sensibility. There was a whole sea of passion within, ready to be stirred up into an overwhelming deluge; but she knew it not.

Ever since her first interview with William Ashton, there had been a commotion within; every act of kindness on his part had been exerting its influence; and thus, from day to day, had been accumulating a feeling of obligation, a sense of gratitude, an admiration of such disinterested benevolence, combined with a feeling sense of the great kindness of God, in thus surrounding her in a strange place, and amid unknown faces, with every luxury and attention that the most favored could ask. It was all too much for her heart to hold, and the tone of his voice, his kindly look, the words, so full of meaning, coming from his lips, like the bolt of lightning piercing the earth, rending it asunder, and making a way for the hidden living waters to break forth—so did these tokens of his regard open the pent up forces in her breast, and she must give them vent.

To explain, even to the lovely girl who was trying to comfort her, what was the cause of the outbreak, was not such an easy matter; all she could say was—

"My feelings seem to have gained the mastery over me. Perhaps my injury has affected my nervous system; but there was something in the look and the tone of voice, when Mr. Ashton asked me 'why I looked so sad?' that went to my heart, and made me lose all power over myself."

"Dear Fanny, you are in love!"

"Please do not say so, dear! you would not trifle with that word, if you knew how I regard it."

"I assure you, dear, nothing is further from my mind;

I never trifle with it—I have never yet felt its power. I have had what they call lovers flirting around me; I have never given them any encouragement that men of any understanding would take as such; but I have not been able to prevent their untimely propositions. I have, of course, rejected them, and some call me a flirt; I am sure I do not deserve the title, for I never have beckoned any man to pay the least attention to me. I must feel very different from what I have ever done yet, before I can give a shadow of encouragement. I think of love as something holy, so nearly allied to that influence which draws the heart to God, that I can never trifle even with the word. I believe in it as a gift of God, as the sure guide, when restrained by correct judgment, as to whom my heart and my hand shall be given, and my life's destiny disposed of. So, dear Fanny, believe me, I am not trifling with you."

"I believe you, dear," and Fanny kissed the sweet girl; "I believe you. But you are mistaken in regard to my feelings. I am very *very grateful*; his kindness has been so marked; he seems to be so generous, so good; and I have reason to think, too, that he is of much higher standing in life than you have imagined, since I recall some things which he has mentioned in reference to his having seen me in New York. *I*, you know, am the daughter of a poor clergyman—a school teacher. Such are not, in general, much thought of in the city, and when I think of all these things, and witness his kind attention, it affects me deeply; but it is *only gratitude*. Believe me, it is."

"Fanny, tell me truly, is your heart free from all previous attachment?"

"Most truly so."

"I am so glad! Now listen to me. I speak to you in all confidence, and in all sincerity. I have told you that I never loved, but I have come very near the feeling in reference to Mr. Ashton. Nothing, perhaps, has saved me from such a trial—for in this case it would have been only a trial—nothing has saved me, but the fact that, from the first, I conjectured he was deeply interested in you. I thought so from the time he first

spoke of you at our house, and before I saw you; but since then, I am perfectly convinced of the fact. You are made for each other. He is very sensitive, his feelings are very strong, depend upon it. I know you will not trifle with them. He is all honor—all sincerity—and you *love* him, Fanny."

Fanny gently laid her hand upon the lips of her fair friend—

"Please do not say that again. I know, now, that you are not trifling, and that causes me to wish not to hear your lips repeat what you have now said."

"I will not, dear, until the time shall come when, with your own lips, you shall tell me so, and I shall see your full, warm heart beaming from those pretty eyes, and tears of joy streaming from them."

Fanny thought she saw a more serious cast upon the countenance of her friend than she had before witnessed, and a slight moistening of the eye, and strange feelings were aroused within. She repressed every expression of them, however; they did not affect her unpleasantly, nor cause one thought of ill. She *did* love that unselfish one who, with all her vivacity, she now knew to have a most true and loving heart; and putting her arms around her, she said:

"May I not feel that I have *your* love? Oh, that will make me happy, indeed. May I feel that we are friends?"

"Friends for life—of one mind—faithful, true, and fond."

"So be it. Oh, yes—faithful, true, and fond."

"And now I must tell you what my commission to you was when I came here this morning. I was only to communicate it on this condition: that you should be so much better that no fears need be entertained you might, in wishing to comply with the proposition, be induced to suppress your real feelings, and undertake what would cause you suffering. But you have been up now for some hours, and have not experienced much inconvenience—have you, dear?"

"I have almost forgotten my injury; I feel much better than when I first came out."

"So I have thought; I will therefore tell you our plan—or rather, his plan."

Fanny covered her face.

"It is proposed, that next Monday morning a carriage be provided, with a driver and span of horses; that you and I, and my father and—and Mr. Ashton, should there-in proceed on our way to Albany; and from thence in a steamboat to —, and from thence again in a carriage to —, and stop at least for the night at that village, after leaving one of our number at the house of her father, the Rev. Mr. Marshall. Now, what say you, my dear, good Fanny, does it meet your views?"

"All this trouble for *me*?"

"All this pleasure for *us*—will it not be a charming journey—and will not you and I have a dear good time together, and such agreeable company, and leisure to see all that is to be seen on the way—time to talk about everything comes into our mind; and the doctor along, too, should you need his assistance, which I am sure you will not; and myself to wait upon you, and be your maid and your crutch?"

How could Fanny help it? Her heart was overburdened with the mention of all these tokens of care and love for her, a *poor stranger*. She again put her arms around the neck of her friend—

"It is too much—too much!"

"I do not believe *he* thinks so. How much of it is done for your sake, you are at liberty to guess; but he proposes it as a journey of pleasure for my father and me, as a small return for our attentions to him; and not one cent is it to cost any of us. He has asked it as a great favor of my father, and wishes him to go in the capacity not only of a friend, but physician."

"It will cost so much!"

"He will not allow that matter to be mentioned; and I rather think he has satisfied my father that the expense will be a matter of no moment to him. I told you that, probably, he was a clerk; that was only in jest. He is no *clerk*, depend on that, and no spendthrift, either. Now, what say you?"

"What can I say?"

"Yes—say yes, Fanny—just what you must say when he tells you of his love, and asks you for your heart."

"Stop, stop—please stop!" and the little hand is again upon the lips; "you are mistaken—you are greatly mistaken—it is only his kindness of heart, or"—

"Or what, Fanny?"

"Or for your sake—you certainly deserve it most."

"No, dear, believe me, there is nothing in *that*. I have told you what feeling I might have had has been nipped in the bud. He is honorable and true. I can, perhaps, one day love him as a sister may. His heart is fixed, depend upon that. I will, therefore, say that you consent?"

"How can I help it?"

"Certainly, you cannot—I hope you will not try to. Oh, it will be such a charming time! But I must go and see our young gentleman; he will not know what to think of me."

## CHAPTER XXII.

WHEN William Ashton found that he might be detained at — for some days, if not weeks, he immediately wrote to his Uncle Blagg, to let him know where to direct to him, in case any special business might demand his presence in New York; at least, that he might know how matters were going on there. On the evening before his anticipated departure, the following letter was received:

"MY DEAR WILLIE:—

"Yours of 19th instant was duly received, and contents carefully noted. Stocks are falling. Have sold your Fireman, and the balance of shares in New York Insurance companies, and deposited to your credit in bank. Shall sell, to-day, \$50,000 State sixes; they will net you a handsome profit, and the funds had better be on hand in a shape that you can use them on call. There are pinching times on hand—better be prepared for the worst. I have also conversed with all those who lean upon you in an extremity; warned them to keep a sharp lookout ahead. They all give me a good account of matters; showed me their bill-books and bank accounts. All snug, I think, ready for a blow—all but Sandford. He has done a large business, and has a vast amount of paper—good, he says—and some of it I know to be good—but too much, too much. He will be squeezed when the pinch comes. Must keep a little tighter rein on Sandford; he is in too great a hurry. I tell him, softly, softly, is the better way. But we mustn't let him go down, he is too good a fellow. If he will only give more heed for the future, let him get well frightened, it will do him good. Stores in Front street finished—tenants in occupancy—rent low, but sure. Brownstone houses completed—tenants moving in. Van is as happy as a king—he goes fast and sure, too—works like a beaver,

goes regularly to church, sober as a deacon, never says even 'devil' any more—a new man from top to toe—wife looks like a young bride. That was a lucky chance, indeed—money well invested. I wish I could say as much about some others. The Hunker Alley concern, bating a few fair cases, looks dubious; dirty again, very. Great fight there the other night; went up and scolded; got terribly swore at, and a kettle of greasy water thrown at me. The fact is, the devil must have his dues—there is no help for it. World crooked—can't be straightened—not in our day—pigs will get into the mire, wash them as clean as you may. Pat has had another spree, got his head broke, and is spending a month in limbo. He is a hard case—woman not much better—sorry to say it, but they have taken you in; they are full of blarney; what you will do with them, can't say. The fact is, Willie, you will find out, one of these days, as I have told you, 'the devil ain't to be whipped on his own ground'—money can't do it—whitewash and paint, and nice comfortable houses, won't do it. The only thing to be done, is to pick out a few here and there, who have drifted into these miserable places by no special fault of their own, and help *them*. There are such, and they ought to be searched out and cared for. In all Hunker's Alley—I shall never go there again, if they mire in the filth they love—there are but two of the concern that are any better than brutes—(liked to have spoiled my best brown suit)—the two girls, and the family where the husband was sick, are the only deserving ones there, and they ought to be got away. No, no—you have been wrong in thinking all the blame should be laid on the rich. In our country, all decent people have a fair chance; some exceptions, I know, but in the main, when people get into such dens as Hunker's Alley, it is because the place suits them. You might scrape all such places clean as a whistle, and build bran new houses and lay tracts as thick as huckleberries among them, and they would be none the better; in one year they would be as dirty and as degraded as their pigs. The world is crooked, and angels and men united won't straighten it—not much. We must go softly, softly, after all. The



real suffering is among the better class, those who are trying to keep their heads above water, whose feelings won't let them ask for help, who must sink if a hand is not held out to them. Don't be discouraged because Hunker's Alley is a failure. Keep your heart open yet, and your hand ready to do the right thing at the right time. No more to-night—must hobble home.

"YOUR LOVING UNCLE.

"P. S.—As soon as you can leave your sick friend (you don't say whether it is a man or a woman), I wish you would come home, for our Herbert is in some trouble—but it is too long a story to tell on paper—come and see."

Miss Marshall had been removed to the house of Doctor Benson; every preparation had been completed for the journey, and she was seated in their parlor alone. Miss Benson had gone to make some parting calls with her father, and the other members of the family were busily engaged in completing arrangements for the departure of the father and daughter, when William entered where she was sitting. He had not seen her since her removal:

"Indeed! It is pleasant to find you apparently so comfortable; did you bear the ride without much inconvenience?"

"Quite so; my kind friends here fairly bore me in their arms to the carriage. I should be ashamed to think of pain or any other trouble, when every one about me manifests such strange interest. I cannot see how it is?"

"Would you not do the same thing, should any of us under like circumstances be thrown upon your care?"

"I suppose I might have a will to do it; but there has been not only *good will* manifested for me, but even my charges have been anticipated. I could not force any pay upon that kind family where I have staid. But I have no doubt to whom I am indebted for that, as well as for many other benefits; and you have forbidden me even to thank you."

"And for a very good reason. I feel that I can never be sufficiently thankful for the opportunity afforded me to do what lay in my power for your comfort." His voice trembled, for he was deeply agitated, and Fanny could not have replied had he paused for any length of time; he *did* pause a moment; he had much to say, and he wished to do it in the most delicate manner. "I wish to say a few words to you, and as I may not have an opportunity so favorable as the present, I must ask you to hear me patiently. It was not my design to have touched upon such a topic until you were under your father's roof, but I have just received a letter from New York, which informs me that a dear friend is in trouble. I am impatient to see him and know the difficulty, that I may afford what aid I can. I shall therefore leave you to-morrow morning to go on your journey with our friends here, and shall take a more speedy conveyance in the mail stage."

Fanny would have spoken, but the first part of his address closed her lips. Her maiden heart was too full to allow of words just then. He continued: "I must part from you, then, and may not see you for a week; but I cannot separate from you in my present state of feeling. I cannot bear the idea of so long an absence, with an uncertainty that is so painful, even when in your company. I am comparatively, I know, a stranger, and therefore feel great delicacy in addressing you. But may I hope—may I have some encouragement—that when your father shall be satisfied that my relations in life and my standing in society are such that neither he nor yourself need be ashamed of them, may I hope, then, that my addresses as a suitor for your heart will not be disagreeable to you? Do answer me promptly, can I have such a hope?"

He took her hand as he said this, and she made no resistance. But never before had such language been addressed to her. A new feeling, like the first spring of life, that bursts upon the mind of the new heaven-born soul, rushed upon her. Her whole frame was racked under the deep excitement, under the new heart-thrill. She loved him—*now* she knew it. She wanted no cer-

tificate of character; she could have taken him as he was, without one doubt, one fear.

"I am no adventurer, dear Miss Marshall, I am able to take care of you."

"Oh, do not speak of *that*."

"I wish to say nothing that will frustrate my present purpose. My heart is all yours—at your disposal—can I hope in time to gain yours? I want your love, dear Fanny, and that is all I want in this world. I have loved you, I may almost say, from the first moment I saw you."

"If it will be any comfort for you to know"—

She could not go on.

"You *do* love me—I *may* believe so?"

"Yes, I believe you may."

Too sacred for pen or tongue to reveal, was that moment when these pure and lovely beings enjoyed, without alloy, those tokens that henceforth they were one in heart, one in interest, one in such bonds as love in its holiest type alone can rivet.

"But *must* you leave us?"

"Only for a time. I shall hope to join you at Albany. By all means I wish to enter with you your own house, and hear from the lips of your parents their approval of our union. Oh, what happiness that will be! Until then I shall consider myself a *hopeful* suitor."

He smiled as he said this, and Fanny's countenance, too, was lighted with a smile as she replied:

"And do you fear that when I have told my parents of all your care and attention to their Fanny—a stranger—one whom you knew was working for her own living—hardly respectable in the eyes of many"—

"Hush—not a word of that—you are now affianced to *one who has abundance*. I have not told you before, nor do I wish your parents to know, that I am wealthy, until they yield me their consent. But, Fanny, I can now tell *you*, since I have won your heart, my property is large—larger than we shall need to gratify any worldly wish. This very night I shall send an order to my agent, to make over to your name enough to place you and yours beyond the reach of want, should anything

occur by my death or otherwise to prevent our union; so you can feel that your position is now changed, you are independent of the world. And now, dear, receive this as but a token of what is to come."

Fanny was holding his hand and pressing it to her lips. He threw a golden chain around her neck, and placed in her hand an elegant watch.

"This I have worn; it is not properly a gentleman's watch; it was once my mother's, and I have always designed to wear it only until I found one worthy to bear that mother's name. It is yours, dear Fanny."

What could she say? Her lovely eye, bathed in tears, gazed on him, as though her heart was pouring all its fullness out. Words were not needed. He felt that they could not have told him half what that look expressed.

"And let me place this jewel on your breast; its value in money is great, but its value to me is not to be computed by dollars and cents. This, too, was hers, to whom, under God, I feel that I owe this happy hour. She trained my young mind to love that which was good. She taught me to pray—her lovely image and her pure precepts have kept my heart free from contaminating influences—and enabled me to cherish virtue and truth. Wear it, my dear Fanny, as a token from one as pure and lovely as yourself. I know her spirit, if it takes interest in me now, will rejoice that her son has found one so like herself, so dear to his heart."

And he clasped the beautiful brooch upon her snow-white ruff. And then—and then—dear reader, you must guess the rest; but you will guess wide of the fullness of their joy, unless your own heart and life be as pure as theirs. The hour of true bliss here on earth is reserved for those alone, who, having been nurtured in the ways of true piety, have all their days walked therein, far removed from whatever is mean, impure or degrading.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

"WHY, Willie!" And Mr. Blagg sprang from his chair, and hastened to take the hand of his nephew. He was in his own room, and a pleasant place was that room. The neatest pattern of a carpet covered the floor; an escritoir of polished maple stood on one side of the fireplace, and a bookcase, of the same material, on the other; old-fashioned, high-back chairs—only a few of them—with cushioned bottoms of fine drab cloth; a table with a marble top, and a well-matted settee, all of apparently the same species of wood, formed the furniture. A profusion of pictures—lively scenes, generally descriptive of rural sports and labors—hung upon the walls. A fire was blazing on the hearth, and the old gentleman was seated before the fire in a rocking-chair, enjoying a long Turkish pipe.

"Uncle, I am glad to see you. It is late, I know, but I could not rest until I had a few words with you."

"When did you arrive? Come, sit down; you know I keep late hours, or just such hours as I please—my own master, as to that; sha'n't go to bed these two hours yet; and then, you know, I have only to step into the next room—all snug around *me*—disturb nobody, that's my way—always been so. But how have you been—got my letter?"

"Yes, uncle, and started immediately, but have been longer on the way than I anticipated. What is the matter with Herbert?"

Mr. Blagg had taken his seat, and William, having drawn his into the corner, was looking at his uncle, with deep concern. The old gentleman, for a moment, puffed away, fixing his eye steadily at the fire; then he stopped, and laid his pipe on his knee, and looked keenly at his nephew.

"He has been took in by a woman!"

"How, uncle?"

"For breach of promise!"

"Promise of what—not of marriage?"

"So they say."

"But, uncle, it can't be!"

"So I say, and so he says; but they say yes!"

"I don't believe a word of it, uncle. Who is it?"

"I have found out who it is, this very day—a low concern."

"Any one that he has been intimate with?"

"I suppose so, in a certain way. You see, Willie, I often tell you the world is crooked, and when we try to straighten things in any way, we must go softly—go softly, prudently. The devil ain't asleep, Willie, mind you that; he's wide awake, hooking here and pushing there, and smashing things to shivers, and spoiling the best purposes, and making mischief out of the best intentions. We must look out for him all round. You know that Herbert has been holding meetings round among the poor folks in his neighborhood?"

"Yes, I know that, I have attended them with him."

"You have, hey! well, look out for breakers! A body ain't safe, even in a prayer-meeting! the Old One goes there, too, it seems."

Willie did not reply, he merely looked with a more surprised air at his uncle.

"A good many women attended the meetings, did they not?"

"Mostly women."

"Young ones?"

"I should think they were; young men, sometimes, but only a few."

"Very kind and affectionate were the women?"

"They seemed grateful; treated us always very kindly—were very civil, nothing more; seemed always glad to see us, especially Herbert, as he was the principal leader."

"Women are *dangerous tools*, Willie! very dangerous tools to meddle with! they have never troubled *me*, nor I *them*, nor sha'n't. They are well enough in their place—can't well do without them, to make beds, and sweep,

and keep things snug—but hands off! keep them at arm's length; there's mischief in them!"

William knew well his uncle's peculiarity in that respect—his failing, he thought it. William had a great idea of women. Angels, *he* knew them to be—some of them; but he did not think best, just then, to endeavor to refute what was said to their discredit; it might only lead to an argument; so he let his uncle pause, and regale himself with his pipe, until ready to resume the subject, which he did in a kind of soliloquy, looking steadily at the fire, as he went on:

"Don't wonder the poor young fellow has been taken in; warm-hearted, unsuspecting! I see how it is; he has been off his guard, thinking no evil—common folks, too, not used to attention—all in love with him, for his zeal and his good looks; so young, so good, so polite! I see how it is. They must see him in private, too—concerned about their spiritual state! must tell all their feelings—cry, may be; touch his sympathies. He comforts them—deeply interested for them; tries to direct and counsel them, and all that. A pretty kettle of fish a man may get into, before he knows it! a young man, too—no experience with women."

A pause, and a few more puffs; and then turning to his nephew—

"I'll tell you the story, Willie, just as I suppose it is. You see, there was a young girl—not very young, either, I guess she is as old as Herbert—she was in the habit of attending his meetings, lived not a great ways from where he formerly lived—you know Herbert has moved?"

"I know he was expecting to move."

"He has moved—the old corner all closed—down in the new store—going on swimmingly—doing a fine business—lives over the store, in Maiden Lane—comfortable house—all nice as a pin—genteel. What a mother he has got! and then, too, only to think how nicely things are all fixed! Haven't you heard?"

"I have heard nothing."

"She is going to be married!"

"To whom?"

"As nice a man as walks the street, I care not who the other is—our Mr. Granite."

"Mr. Granite!"

"Our Mr. Granite. You see, he never got over that affair about Herman. Herman looked upon her as a mother; she had been a mother, indeed, to him. I gave him a wink, and he took it readily. He is dead in love. Old aunt going to clear out—been there too long already. His children will have a mother, now, and a home. Oh, what a home it will be! what a snug nest for all the young ones—his and hers, too. And just as all this happiness is being hatched, up comes this trouble; and it has set Herbert about crazy; but I must go on with my story. That girl I was telling you of, or rather young woman, became mighty distressed, on account of her sins; like as not she was sincere—don't mean to doubt that; there is room, in my opinion, for some distress yet; she ain't rid of them, not all of them, by a jugful. Well, she wanted to talk with Herbert; he recommended her to the minister; but no, she felt more free to talk with *him*. I believe she is a serpent—she had a design—a cunning serpent; but softly, softly, I may be wrong! the end will show. Herbert talked with her—talked with her often; sometimes at her own house, alone with her in the room; sometimes along the street, as she walked by his side, and so on. She took all he said for Gospel, or pretended to; got quite happy; stuck to him whenever she could get a chance; talked about him to everybody; called him Samuel, Timothy, David, Peter, Paul, and all the good names she could think of, and, if the truth was known, was dead in love with him.

"Like as not, too, he was imprudent; no doubt treated her with marked attention—looked upon her as one that he had been able to comfort—was off his guard, not thinking, all the time, that the 'Old One' was sneaking round the corner, and working his cards for mischief. I suppose, when Herbert walked with her to her home from an evening meeting, and parted from her, he shook hands, and squeezed her hand as he does yours and mine—it is his way, you know; he says he did. I asked him if he ever did anything more. 'Nothing,' he said. 'Did

you ever kiss her?' He fairly jumped when I asked the question. 'Never,' said he, 'never. I never thought of such a thing; should have felt that I was stooping beneath the character of a gentleman to have done so under those circumstances. Never regarded her in any other light than a young convert whom I was happy to aid, and not ashamed, on that account, to be seen visiting or walking with her.' And I believe him."

"And does she really charge him with having courted her?"

"She does so. You see the thing is this: when he left the old concern and set up the new establishment, you know, of course, he was looked upon as having taken a step higher in the world, and so he had—and no doubt she, being a poor girl, and working with her needle for a living, thought it would be a mighty nice thing to have one who could lift her out of her sphere, and make a lady of her; and, I guess, she was mightily smitten with him, and, it may be—I won't charge too much upon her—it may be, she took all his attention as meant for her person instead of her soul. She is good looking, they say. But be that as it is, when he got into his new establishment, there was too much business on his hands to attend meetings so far off, or to make Christian visits, or any other kind of visits, so he quits the concern, leaves others to manage matters at the meetings, and do the visiting, and the talking, while he buckled to, night and day, selling family stores.

"Well, this, it seems, didn't suit somebody; so one day, in the midst of his business, who should give him a call, but the lady. Herbert was buzzing away, like a bee round a sugar barrel; he bowed to her, and that was pretty much all he could do. She hung around, so our Mr. Granite being there just then, and thinking she was in want of some article, asked her, 'Madam, shall I wait upon you—anything in our line?' 'Oh la, no! I only called to see Mr. Jones.' So thinking again that, perhaps, he owed her a bill for sewing, or something, he calls Herbert, 'This young woman wants to see you.' Herbert steps up like a man, bows to her again, with quite a sober face, for he felt a little put out that she

should have called; but she, the moment he came up, was all smiles and courtesies, and asks, right before our Mr. Granite, 'You haven't been to the meeting lately?' 'Oh, no,' he replied, 'I shall not be able to attend any longer—am too busy.' 'Then you ain't coming any more?' 'No, it is out of my power.' 'Nor you haven't called on me, nuther—you ain't a going to give me up, too, are you?' laughing and giggling as she said it. It struck him as rather bold and forward, so he up and says, 'I shall not, probably, be able to make calls in that part of the city any longer, my time is so occupied.' 'Well, I should like to talk with you a spell, if you ain't busy now?' 'I am, indeed, very busy, and must beg you to excuse me—I have not a moment to spare.' 'Well,' she answered, giving her head a toss, 'I guess if you don't do the thing that is right, and are going to act so, you'll smart for it.' Herbert turned away in disgust, mad as a hornet, and sore all over, and went to his work. 'You will smart for it, see if you don't,' and off she walked. Mr. Granite heard the whole talk, and was stumped for a moment, but thought likely Herbert knew his own business, and could settle it to his own satisfaction, and so said nothing to Herbert, nor Herbert to him. But that evening he came to see me, and told me the story, and then says he, 'Mr. Blagg, what does it mean?'

"'It means women,' said I, 'and women, nine times out of ten, means mischief. You ain't implicated no way?' says I.

"'Not in the least, Mr. Blagg—in no possible way.'

"'Glad of that—hope you are sure?'

"'I am very sure,' said he, 'that I am under no earthly obligation to her, or any other female, but my mother, and one who is now far away.' Who he meant by one that is far away, between you and me, is a marvel; perhaps some old baby sweetheart. 'Well,' said I, 'glad to hear that. Keep short accounts, and fair and square accounts, with the women; if you don't, things will get into a snarl pretty quick. They are, many of them, no better than grab nets; when a young man is round, they're after him tooth and nail—clinch him if



they can.' He then up and told me the whole story, as I have told you. I saw how there might, possibly, be some trouble, but I eased it off, saying I guessed he would hear no more from her, and he seemed to be more quiet."

"Did she pursue it any further?"

"That she has; the case is in the hands of a lawyer, and he has been cited to appear at the sessions, and there will be the old boy to pay."

"Perhaps they think—that is, she and her friends, for it is very likely some of her friends are setting her on—that Herbert may be willing to pay a good round sum."

"There is no perhaps about it; that is all they want."

"But, uncle, Herbert is not quite of age."

"True; but they may say he is old enough to break a young woman's heart—just as if the most of them had any hearts to break; you might as well talk of breaking India rubber; they are all supple jacks, or, rather, supple jennies, I tell you, Willie. Women are—*women*! that's the worst I have to say of them."

"You have said, uncle, that you knew the name of the lady."

"I know the name of the young woman—there is no lady in question. Her name is Martin—Betsey Martin—and a 'heigh, Betty Martin,' she is, I guess."

"Do they live in Broome street?"

"Yes, away at the west end of it. Her brother is a cartman; she lives with him, and takes in sewing. Herbert Jones a mate for her!"

"I know the family, uncle, and depend upon it, they have little idea—or the man has—that Herbert is a friend of mine; he would have nothing to do with it if he did."

"What do you know of him?"

"Oh, I have certain documents of his in my hands that might give him trouble. By the way, uncle, could they not be indicted for conspiracy?"

"To do what?"

"Why, to get money out of Herbert upon false pretences."

"The suit is brought in the sister's name; the man pretends merely to be acting for her."

"I believe I can quash it."

"How?—by paying a good round sum?"

"I had rather do that than have him troubled."

"And coax, thereby, some other 'she Biddy' that he happens to speak to, or shake hands with, to begin a suit. No, no; so long as men have to do with women, they must have trouble—it can't be helped; there is no way but to fight it out, now—'tell the truth and shame the devil'—let the truth all come out."

"But will they not swear falsely?"

"The jury need not believe them. No, no, let it go on; it cannot hurt Herbert, if we could only make him think so. But you know how he is—so sensitive; can't bear the idea of a public suit, having his name in the papers, and all that—lawyers questioning, and teasing, and doing everything but finding out the truth. Altogether it makes him sick, hurts his spirits, spoils all his peace, and is a worry to him night and day. It has all come, too, of trying to do a little good in the world, just as you liked to have got your brains knocked out trying to make a decent place out of Hunker's Alley, and I had liked to have been scalded to death, besides having my best suit spoiled with greasy dish-water."

"How was that, uncle? You wrote something about it in your letter."

"It ain't worth repeating, but I will tell you how it was. You see the place is getting back to its old condition. There had been a great fight there—I heard of it first through the papers—so up I goes to see about matters, full cross I suppose; it was enough to make one cross, to see what a state of things there was, after all the pains and expense you had been at to have things put into decent shape—the alley and the yard ankle-deep with mud, and all kinds of filth—children, and hogs, and dogs, and cats, and even monkeys, all looking alike; windows broken, doors off the hinges, steps shivered, and the folks, some whole, some half drunk. It was enough to stir up the blood, and make a saint mad. So I let them have it with a right good will, and threatened to have

the whole concern turned out before night. It did no good, though—only set them to jabbering, and swearing, and shaking their fists, and all that, till an Irish beldame caught off a kettle of greasy water from the fire, swearing ‘she would give me a dose that would take the fine feathers off!’ She being a woman, and knowing how rash they are when their blood is up, I thought best to get out of the way as soon as might be; so pulling the door after me with a slam, and springing, as fast as I could hobble, from the stoop, it did not take me long to get into the street, I can tell you. I have done with Hunker’s Alley, once for all.”

“I am very sorry, uncle, that things have turned out so there. You know we thought, if the place could be thoroughly cleaned, the houses made decent and comfortable, and the very worst of the tenants removed, the whole character of the place might be changed; that if the rent was very low, and their ambition could be excited, by a little aid afforded them occasionally, they would rise out of their degradation, and be altogether different. Otherwise, their poverty and wretchedness seemed to forbid all hope of doing them any good.”

“I had my doubts, Willie, although I recommended the course you have adopted. You see, the poverty and wretchedness which made your heart so sad to witness, is, in nine cases out of ten, the result of their depraved habits and depraved tastes. It seems to me, Willie, almost a necessity that there should be these leprous spots about, where human nature, in its fallen state, may show out the terrible defilement there is in the heart of man—show out what man would be if all those restraints which Providence and Grace have thrown about us were taken off. These wretches, like natural brutes, act out their hearts’ desires without shame. They shun the brighter, purer haunts of social life, because their low desires would be rebuked. Here they have none to shame them by a better life, and all the evil that is within comes out, runs riot, and sends odious incense up to heaven! Oh, Willie, I tell you it would be good for many a self-complacent man, who prides himself on his morality, and feels secure that no human eye can bear

testimony against him for the breach of any of God’s holy precepts, just to visit such places, to look at the full development of our unholy passions. There he can see carried out, in bold, open action, all those desires, and passions, and propensities, which he knows, if he knows anything, do at times pass through his mind. There *he can see himself*, with the covering taken from his heart, in some measure as God sees him. These places are *earthly* hells. They have their use; well for us all if we profit by them.”

“But is there no hope, by the aid of means, to relieve their temporal necessities, and by kind sympathizing attention, and religious instruction, can they not be reformed, raised up, purified?”

“Some may, no doubt. Some few in Hunker’s Alley may have been benefited; but *they* ought to be got out of the place, taken from that slough; and helped to live where the decencies of life are enjoyed.”

“You then give up the idea of reforming such places?”

“You can make a reformation if you see fit in that particular spot. You can—for you are able to do it—tear down the whole concern, erect new and handsome dwellings, and let them to the decent and refined—but what then? Are the pollution, and crimes, and vicious tastes of the herd, who congregate there now, eradicated? You will have improved your property, but the evil that makes it what it now is, what will become of that? Answer me.”

“I suppose it would seek its own place somewhere else.”

“That is it, Willie. But I want you to understand me. There is much misery in the world that *can* be relieved—that ought to be relieved; and so far as you have the means to accomplish that end, you should be diligent about it; you should take delight in it, visiting among the outcasts, searching out those who may by untoward misfortune have drifted into these dens of iniquity and woe, trying to reclaim the vicious, and be ready to lend a helping hand to every wretched struggler amid the quicksands of life, that is endeavoring to escape and tread on solid ground. But if you have an idea that

by polishing up things, and rooting out all the old rookeries and filthy dens in the city, and you and all the rich men here with you, should stand with your purses in one hand, and the Bible and tracts in the other, and all the ministers of the Gospel both sides of you, splitting their throats in warning of the wrath to come, and even with crosses over their heads, telling of mercy to the penitent, is going to make a heaven on earth here, you and they will be sadly mistaken. You may better things a little, but you can't cure the malady. But what makes you look so sad?"

"Oh, well, uncle, it is but a gloomy picture you have drawn."

"Willie, sin is a gloomy thing, a very gloomy thing—it is *no trifle*. We see something of it in its terrible outbreaks, in places where decency and shame have departed from every portion of the community. The heart is sickened with the loathful exhibition—we turn away in horror and disgust. We see something of it when the passions are unloosed, and the murderous knife is unsheathed, and blood is spouting from the mangled carcass! We see it when the dearest bonds of social life are rent asunder, and husbands and wives, parents and children, are cursing each other in their wrought up fury. We see it in the wretched beings that throw up all hope for earth or heaven, and madly rush on death—some in the deep, dark water, some from the giddy height, some with the deadly vial, and some even hacking at their own bodies, and tearing their bowels out, so as to get rid of life! And it is *meant* that we should see it, and we shall always see it. It will hang about us, like a dead carcass, to the very end. Clean the world of sin and misery! It can't be done. White-wash it, and adorn it, and make a paradise of it—as some think can be done, and will be done—but I tell you, Willie, nothing but the fires of the great day will purify this polluted world—and the sooner they come the better."

"Oh, uncle!"

And William fairly started from his seat, for the old man had worked himself up with his subject, so that his

voice had attained a high key. His hand was raised, his eye flashed, and even his pipe went rolling on the rug. It was well perhaps that the pipe had dropped, for our old friend was being carried away with his subject, as many of our preachers are, and beginning, like them, to say rash things. Mr. Blagg was in general a man that loved his own present condition quite well enough. It was a very comfortable one—one that he had grown into, and become accustomed to. The end of this dispensation, bad as he made it out, would not, upon a soberer view of things, have been earnestly courted by him. The reader must, therefore, charge his concluding sentence to the heat of the moment. So thought William; for he at once replied—that is, as soon as he had picked up the stray pipe—

"Softly, softly, uncle; you would not bring things to an end right off?"

Mr. Blagg took his pipe, and resuming his seat, sat a few moments looking into the fire, while his features began to resume their usual calm expression—a smile even could be plainly seen gathering about his lips.

"I know, Willie, that's the best way—softly, softly—we can't right things by scolding, or fretting, and uttering hard wishes. The only thing we *can* do under the circumstances, is to do the best we know—*under the circumstances*. But, to change the subject—you have been selling stock on your journey?"

"Selling stock!" and William looked with some surprise, not quite comprehending the question.

"Yes, selling stock; you ordered me, you know, to transfer \$20,000 U. S. Sixes to a Miss Somebody or other. I have done so, and this very day have sent the certificate to Benton & Brothers, Albany, under cover."

"Oh, yes, that was all right."

There was a slight pause, but as his uncle still looked at him, he felt some further explanation was needed.

"Uncle, I have found the right one, at last."

"Right what, Willie?"

"*Right one*—one that I love, and who is worthy of all love and respect—and one that you will love, too, when you see her."

"Willie! Willie!—softly, softly—you don't mean"—

"I am engaged, uncle. She is one of the most lovely creatures you ever saw—an angel!"

"Then you and she can't live together a week. Angels and men are not meant to be very intimate—not just yet."

"Oh, but she has all the virtues of an angel, and all the human sympathies which a man longs for."

"You can't be sure of that, Willie. Women have so many different sides, change suddenly—clouds, storm, sunshine, calms, and breezes—all in a few minutes."

"But there are some, uncle, who never change, who are beautiful and good all their lives, who throw sunshine about them wherever they are, and leave a memory that never dies."

"Your mother was such a one."

"Is not Herbert's mother such a one?"

"She is another."

"What do you think of Vanblarcom's wife?"

"Pretty as a picture; and more like an angel than anything I can think of."

"My Fanny is her sister, only prettier, so I think, and full as good, if not better; no, I will not say that, but they are both the daughters of a clergyman, and have been trained in the right common-sense way."

"Poor, too?"

"All the better for that, uncle."

"That is she *was* poor; but I guess she is pretty well aboveboard now—a good round sum, Willie, to start with. It will turn her head, my boy."

"No fear of that, uncle. A young lady that is not ashamed to let it be known that she teaches for the sake of supporting herself, and aiding her parents, is not likely to make a bad use of money. Besides, uncle, I could not bear the thought that one whom I love as I do her, should, in case of my death before our marriage, be thrown dependent upon the world, or her parents either. I can now enjoy the feeling, that they are raised above want; that her father will not be dependent in his advanced life upon the caprices of his people. You know many congregations are apt to get tired of their old

ministers, and do all they can to get rid of them, and keep them even at the best, when they get old, in a state of abject dependence. How could I be happy, knowing that those so dear to me were living thus?"

"How could you, sure enough? No, no; if you have found one worthy of you, the money is well laid out, Willie. Mrs. Vanblarcom's sister!"

"But you will say nothing to Vanblarcom or his wife. I want to surprise them."

"Not I; secrets never burn in my stomach, Willie."

"And I intend, uncle, to prepare the house I am building in Broadway for my own especial use; and as I know you will love Fanny, and she will love you, I intend to have two rooms fitted up expressly for your use; that shall be your home, uncle."

"Willie, Willie!—softly, softly."

The old man was intending to say more, but just then he could not go on, so William continued:

"And then, uncle, you can be on hand, you know, to give me advice, and see that I go *softly*, and do not run against stumps, or make foolish bargains."

"Stop, Willie, stop, enough of that—things are smooth and snug now—no use looking too far ahead; when we plan for happiness that is to come, especially for *this* world, it's just like catching eels by the tail—ten chances to one, they are off and down in the mud when you think you've got 'em fast."

## CHAPTER XXIV.

THE Rev. Charles Marshall was one of those old-fashioned ministers who learned most of their theology, and religion, too, from the Bible. He had, indeed, read many books, and his mind was well stored with general knowledge, and was not afraid of any of his parishioners, because he thought they knew more of history, or philosophy, or the principles of science in general, than he did. He did not make any show of what knowledge he had, nor deal with them, although a plain people, the most of them, as if he felt himself to be their superior. He wished, indeed, to keep up with the most enlightened among them, and, if possible, a little ahead, so that he might maintain their respect, for the main reason of doing them good. He belonged to the Congregational church, and loved its doctrines, but was not so prejudiced in their favor, that he felt it right for him, or any of his parishioners, to arrogate to themselves the pretension that he and they alone were right. Over all peculiar doctrines and forms of worship and government, he held that there were certain distinctive requisites—some few fundamental principles, which constituted any man, or any set of men, members of the true church. And without these, all other things were, to his mind, comparatively non-essentials. He did not say much abroad, about his peculiar views in this respect, and went on his quiet way, performing his duties to the best of his ability, and enjoying within his own heart that charity which "hopeth all things, believeth all things, endureth all things." He was a gentleman in his feelings and conduct; attended to many little matters in reference to externals, almost as scrupulously as he avoided evil speaking or evil thinking. Both in his person and his dwelling, he endeavored, to the extent of his means, to maintain a ministerial aspect. Everything was in order, cleanly, and respect-

able. His address was formal, without stiffness, and polite, without affectation.

The consequence was, that all classes paid him a deference something beyond what might have been expected from some; for there were among his parishioners, those who were exceedingly exclusive, and took strong ground in favor of their own claims to superiority in the social scale. Even the Kirklands, as we have seen, regarded his opinion and good will as worth their care. As we have seen, too, he regarded his family as belonging to himself, not to the parish. He trained them as he thought best, and would by no means allow them to form indiscriminate friendships, or mingle with those who disregarded what he thought the proprieties of polite life; it being his firm belief, that a neglect of those refinements which belong to true politeness was a real injury to a pure heart. He may have thought it his duty more particularly to attend to this matter, as all his five children were daughters; for he was often heard to say, "a woman without proper refinement, would be very likely to entail her vulgarities upon many generations; and that a true lady was a valuable gift to posterity."

For more than thirty years he had maintained his position over his present charge. He had married late in life, and was now bordering upon three score and ten. His eldest daughter, Mrs. Vanblarcom, was twenty-three, and his youngest but ten years of age. Fanny, the next oldest, as we have seen, had left her home, to do what she could to sustain herself, and add to their small income for the assistance of the rest. The house in which he lived, with a few acres of land, he owned, having, previous to his marriage, managed, by strict economy, to save enough to provide, as he thought, a permanent home. The dwelling was small, but replete with conveniences; and his taste had adorned the grounds immediately about it with trees and shrubs. The former were now of large growth, affording objects on which a person of true culture delights to look, as well for the beauty of their form as for the variety they give to the still life of the country. It was a plain domestic establishment, a snug ministerial abode, and to its inmates a lovely home, associ-



ated with parental and filial love, and dearer to them than all other spots on earth. The view from it was more than picturesque, it was beautiful—as are almost all those views from the banks of the noble Hudson, where mountains and rich fields, and the blue water, are so grandly combined.

Of late, there had been some disturbing elements within the parish. A few families from the city of New York had taken up their residence in the vicinity, and having plenty of money, were looked upon by the farmers in general as great acquisitions. But they were persons from originally a low class. They had made money, yet retained their vulgarity. Their taste led them to make a fine display in equipage, dress, buildings and furniture. They dazzled the poorer husbandmen, but received no special homage from Mr. Marshall. He maintained his even tenor; kept up his old family regulations; treated them with all necessary attention, but no more than he paid to the poorest of his flock. This was probably the real cause of the difficulty, although the ostensible one was, that his sermons were too dull, too old-fashioned; that his prayers were too long; in fact, he was himself too old, and was getting into his dotage. He had, indeed, been too long at the head of his people, to be able now to bend to any new requirements, or even to heed the remarks which were designed to reach his ear. He had been able barely to live in the most frugal manner, and he rightly thought, that a people who were unwilling to afford one who had spent his best days in their service more than that, had no great claim to dictate as to the nature of his services, so long as they were within the bounds of true doctrine and of average merit. At any rate, he was too old now to make any material changes in his views and conduct.

It requires but a small amount of talent or influence to make disturbance in a parish. One determined enemy, with a little aid from gossips, can, in general, unsettle almost any minister in our country, unless he is made of sterner stuff than was the Rev. Charles Marshall, or a man of rare ability. Mr. Marshall saw that clouds were rising, and he could hear the mutterings of the distant

thunder, and in calm dignity awaited the approach of the tempest. He had no concessions to make, nor any promises that his future course would be at variance with his past life. And yet the trial was no less severe, in the prospect of being removed from his post. His little dependent family he feared must suffer. For him to seek a new settlement, at his time of life, would be almost a hopeless effort. What the end might be, he could not foresee; perhaps his home must be broken up, sold to strangers, and its proceeds taken to sustain them while they should last.

The time of trial at length was at hand, and the morrow was finally to determine the matter. A meeting was to be held, and he well knew its design, for certain ones had been seen all the day riding from house to house, and their averted eye, when their pastor casually met, and kindly saluted them, told him plainly what feelings were in their hearts, and upon what purpose they were bent. Alas, for our selfish natures! How little did they care what pangs rent the good man's breast, or how sad would be the old pastor's fire-side, where his wife and dependent children clustered, when the tidings should reach him, that *his services were no longer desired!* His hands were unused to labor—his children helpless females—his hair had whitened in their service—the vigor of his manhood had departed. His root had taken a firm hold on that spot, where he had lived so long; it would be apt to break the heart-strings now to be torn from his long resting-place. But this cruel act would be done in the name of a majority—no one in particular could be to blame. "The majority must rule; a whole parish must not suffer for one man. If he did so well, and was so good a pastor, as many said, he could easily procure another settlement; he could not expect always to remain there. It was their duty, they must do that, without respect of feelings or persons." Thus, no doubt, they would reason, and stifle the twinges of conscience, if any they felt.

It was drawing toward the close of the day; Mrs. Marshall and two of her daughters were sitting in their best room, while the father and husband could be heard walking the floor of his study. They knew that his mind

was disturbed, and the continued sound of his footsteps very naturally led their thoughts to the cause of his restlessness.

"Your father feels bad; I know he does, although he has endeavored to appear calm before us. It is a cruel thing in these men who are working up all this mischief. They think, perhaps, it is a light matter for us to be broken up; to lose our home, and be compelled to seek a new abode. But we and they are in the Lord's hands. "Let him do what seemeth good unto him."

"It will be hard, indeed, mother," said the elder of the two sisters; "but I care more about it for father's sake than for our own. He has been here so long—he loves this spot so much; every tree and shrub has been planted by his hand, they have grown up under his eye, and he so enjoys the sight of them! But perhaps, mother, if Fanny and I both engage in teaching, we can earn enough to support the family, for father, depend upon it, will never thrive if he leaves this place; he is too old to form new ties to either a place or a people. I do so want to see Fanny."

"I think she must be here in a day or two; her last letter, you know, informed us of her having injured her ankle, and of all the attention she had received from that doctor's family, also mention that she expected to start for home in a day or two."

"May be, sister Jennie," said the younger one, a bright lass of twelve, "it has cost her so much, for you know, sometimes, when one is among strangers, you have to pay pretty dearly for attentions; may be her money is all spent; and how disappointed, too, she will be, for she was thinking how much she would be able to do for us. Oh, I do wish I was a boy, or old enough to go off and teach too; I guess we three girls could earn enough, and then the old parish might go to Guinea!"

"Lizzie, Lizzie!—hush dear; not a very lady-like expression."

"I suppose not, dear mother; but it is such a terrible thing to be dependent upon the whims of so many people and to think how exacting they are, and how they

seem to feel that *we* must be regulated by them in all things."

"Your father has never allowed you to be regulated by any of their whims, as you call them."

"I know that, mother; but they feel, because they pay him a salary, that they have a right to *talk* about us as much as they please, to criticise our dress, and our manners, and our habits of living, and even about where we ought to visit. Why, mother, I had rather marry a blacksmith than a minister—would not you, Jennie?"

"If there were no objections but his trade, I certainly should. His strong arm could hammer out his own living, and he need not feel that he was dependent on the bounty of others."

"But, dear children, do you not think your father has righteously and faithfully earned the living we have had? His labor, indeed, has not been manual, but it has been as constant, and at times more wearying."

"Oh, yes, mother; he has, indeed, earned his pittance of a salary. But *they* do not think so; else why is it, when they have known that what he received was not sufficient for his support, that they come, at times, with a donation?—giving it in such a way, too, as to make us feel that we are mere objects of charity. Why not, if their minister deserves a support, let it come as *pay*—*pay* for what he has rightly earned—and not expect him, and all of us, to bow, and cringe, and courtesy to *them*, for a little flour, and a little butter, and a few pounds of cheese, and a paper of tea or sugar, and a few dollars and cents, which they collect by *handing round a hat in our presence*! Mother, I felt the blood burning my cheek for *shame*—shame for *them*—that they had no more sensibility and feeling for us, that they should treat us as though we were beggars!"

"My dear Jennie, you speak my own feelings. It is, indeed, a degradation. Your father has felt it too—bitterly felt it. He would, if he was able, perform all his services for nothing; he loves his work; but having thrown himself upon the ministry for a support, and so long depended upon it, of course he must rely upon the care of those who, when they called him, were loud in

their protestations of friendship, and told him he should be maintained like a gentleman; and while old Mr. Kirkland lived, things were done in the right way. He was a queer man about some things—a very proud and worldly man the most of his life; but he always treated your father with profound respect, and so has his family. The doctor, however, is now working to displace him; what his reasons are, he probably best knows. I have no doubt, however, that the interest your father has taken in Gertrude Manners has been the cause. The doctor seems jealous of every one that pays any attention to her. There will be great trouble in that family, I foresee—great trouble, or I am mistaken.”

“And, mother, is it not strange that Gertrude seems to be so entirely under the doctor’s influence? His word seems to be the end of the law with her.”

“Not at all strange, my dear. He is devoted to her, gratifies every wish, waits upon her wherever she wishes to go, supplies her with any amount of money, and what gives him the greater influence over her is his education. She has a very inquiring mind, as well as a perfectly guileless heart. Poor thing, I am glad she is going to school. I have no good opinion of that man.”

“Is it not strange, too, mother, that Gertrude never says a word now about the friends she used to have in New York? When we first knew her, she constantly talked about Mrs. Jones—she said she loved her like a mother; but she has not mentioned her name for months. I think, probably, she has been forbidden because they are poor, or perhaps her mind has been prejudiced.”

“No doubt of that. I know some things which it will do no good to repeat; but most probably she has been made to feel that the kindness shown her was from interested motives—that they hoped to be benefited by her money; but the character I have heard of that lady will not allow me to believe it. Herman says she is above all meanness—a perfect lady—one that, he says, is too good to be named by Dr. Wetherbee. It is a strange world, dear children, but the Lord reigns.”

“Well, mother, I will tell you what we ought to do. Let us put on a cheerful face, and not allow father to see

us cast down; we can all do something, I know we can. At any rate, I had rather live on bread and water than have him suffer what he has, for some time past, with the fear of being turned off. Let them do their worst; they cannot turn us out of our home until we are ready to go; and, you know, James wrote such an encouraging letter, the other day, about his prospects, and he says we shall share whatever he has.”

“James is a noble fellow. Rough as he has been, he has a warm heart, and he loves Etta as his own soul; but he has had to struggle hard. Oh, it would be a sad thing to tax his kindness. The Lord will provide, then let us trust!”

Blessed refuge for life’s weary wanderers! Jehovah Jireh, let that precious name be engraved over every household hearth! On its rich promise let every heart repose; let every occasion when that mighty hand has been stretched forth for deliverance, be garnered up in the heart, a defence against corroding care and desponding hope. “They that trust in the Lord shall never be confounded!”

A steamer has stopped at the landing, and a carriage is already on its way to the minister’s house. Two ladies and a gentleman are within it, bundles of good things are stowed away in every vacancy within, and well-filled trunks are lashed behind.

“How many miles, dear Fanny now?”

“Only two.”

“And then”—

“Oh, yes—and then I shall be at home, and the arms that encircle me will be ready to embrace you—mother, and father, and sisters; dear Willie, how they will love you!” Willie’s arm could no longer restrain from the fond embrace, and their tears of joy fell together.

“Now, I say, do you two stop; you only make a baby of me. Crying does not agree with me, without I am angry.”

“And you, too, dear Carrie—there are kisses and fond embraces waiting for you, too! Oh, how you will love them, when you once know them!”

“I know them already, Fan. I expect I shall do some

strange things—like as not hug your dear old father, and frighten him.”

“Take care you do not make a mistake, and throw your arms around my friend Herman. You will frighten him—he is dreadfully shy of ladies.”

“Now, Mr. William Ashton, one thing I ask of you, that you say nothing to this Mr. Herman, as you call him, for like as not, if you talk to him of me, as you have talked to me about him, he may, being a susceptible young man, as you say he is, be making some foolish speeches, or doing some foolish thing or other, and my heart is engaged, you know it is.”

“To whom, Carrie?”

“To whom? Why, to you and Fanny, you know it is; you have made me love you, and I cannot help it; and I am going to love your old father, and your mother, and those dear sisters, and my heart will be full—no room for any one else, so they must keep off.”

“Oh, there, there!—do you see those trees?”

“And that cottage just visible amid them? Is that your home, dear Fanny?”

But Fanny could only nod her head, as with covered face she gave secret vent to the fullness of her feelings, while the noble youth by her side pressed the dear hand he held, and thanked the Lord for this bright spot in his young life; and he thanked him for the means his Providence had afforded him, whereby he could impart such joy and gladness to the loving one beside him, and those among whom he was about to be introduced.

The majestic trees which embowered the home of Fanny are now above them, and the neat but unpretending dwelling is by their side; the vehicle has stopped, and William is helping his Fanny to alight, but ere her feet touch the ground her mother's arms are around her, and other arms are stretched out, too.

“Dear father, where is he?”

“He is coming;” and his venerable form is seen hastening from the door.

“My father, my mother, William; this is Mr. Ashton. Miss Carrie Benson.”

“Mrs. Marshall, I claim a mother's kiss, too. Am I not entitled to it?” and William looked at Fanny.

“Oh, yes, dear mother, your warmest kiss.”

But Mrs. Marshall had not waited for Fanny's answer.

The carriage had to be unladen, for William had thought what might be needed at a country house, when unexpected guests should arrive, and he had laid in a store of choicest necessities, and he and Fanny's father are busy carrying them into the house.

“Come, pa—come, pa—I want you,” and Mr. Marshall, at the call of his wife, hastened to his study, where Fanny, alone with her parents, told her strange story; and then she comes down in haste—she has forgotten all about her sprain—and takes William from the cheerful group with which he is mingling in the lower room, and then he takes a hand of each, father and mother, and he asks them that they will receive him as their son; for without their free consent he cannot look upon their Fanny as his own, although he loves her, and will ever love her to his dying day. And Fanny's father lays his hand upon his head, and says:

“We have heard from our daughter's lips, that she believes you worthy of her heart, and we have confidence that she would never yield her love where her judgment had any doubt. May the blessing of Abraham's God forever rest upon you twain.” And then, before them both, William seals the gift he has received with a warm kiss, and tells her now, “that he is happy—too happy for words to reveal.”

“And now, dear Fanny, may I ask that your father and I be left alone for a short space.”

And soon there were tears upon that old man's face; for a burden had been rolled away—a life's burden. Strange, strange allotment! The light had broken suddenly upon the dark, dark night. Jehovah Jireh! Jehovah Jireh! Praised be his name.

“And now, dear sir,” said William, “from this time forth, I wish to have you look upon me as a child gained to your circle. If what I have so freely given, and which to me is but a trifling sum, shall not accomplish my design, which is to free your mind from care, and lift you

above dependence upon man, more shall be at your service."

"More than enough—more than enough. It only troubles me lest, in the warmth of your generous feelings, you are doing injustice to yourself."

"Fear not that, dear sir; freely take what I bestow—not as from me, I am only the dispenser of God's abundant mercies to me—to him let all the thanks be given, from you and me, from yours and mine."

"Amen! amen! Then let us go, and with our dear ones bow before his presence, and render, while our hearts are warm, the praises that are due."

A few explanatory words may be necessary at the close of this chapter. William Ashton was detained longer in New York than he at first anticipated. He found the case of his friend Herbert not so easily arranged. He did what he could, however, and then returned to Albany, where he met the little company with which he was to proceed to the house of his Fanny. They had waited for him several days, as he left strict injunctions that for no reason must they proceed from there without him. In consequence of the delay, Doctor Benson was obliged to relinquish the intention of going any further, as he feared to prolong his stay from home. He therefore left his daughter to the care of her new friends, William having engaged himself to wait upon her when she should determine that her visit must close, and she return home. That visit, however, had its own results in store for Miss Carrie Benson.

## CHAPTER XXV

It had been decided that Gertrude should at once be placed in a boarding-school, where she would be kept under strict surveillance, lest by any possibility she should come in contact with some young "scape grace"—a term which the doctor applied more particularly to any who paid attentions to his charge—and be withdrawn from his wholesome influence. And Gertrude had been placed there, and although, on some accounts, the discipline of the establishment was not quite agreeable, nor, according to her ideas, consistent with fair personal freedom, yet she made no complaint. Her great anxiety to improve the advantages afforded, enabled her to pass over even some *impositions*, in silence. She had, of course, become acquainted with some of the day scholars, and would gladly, at times, have accepted their urgent invitations to visit at their homes; but so many objections were always ready against her request, she finally forbore to ask leave. Occasionally, in fine weather, she, with the other boarders, was allowed to walk abroad, but one or both of the lady principals invariably attended them. It was a stiff, formal march, through a few streets. They walked two and two, somewhat rapidly, and were forbidden to do more than make a slight recognition, should they be saluted on their way by any who knew them. This, to most of them, was a matter of no consequence; to Gertrude, as we shall have occasion to see, it resulted in a trial of no small magnitude.

Gertrude had not forgotten the friends of her evil day. She had, indeed, never heard from them since the hour when she bade them adieu, and although she had written several letters to Mrs. Jones, no answer had been received. She knew not how to account for it. She had given her letters to the smart, and very complaisant servant of the doctor, who always promised "to see that the document should be placed in the office by his own



hands"—and who, as he said, "was very particular in his inquiries for letters to her direction." What should be the cause, she could not comprehend. Her heart did not accuse her; she loved them still. Could it be that they had taken offence at the slight put upon them by her aunts in refusing to enter their dwelling? She could hardly believe they would thus resent against her, a rude act on the part of those who had the control of her movements. One thing she had resolved before she reached the city: that she would, when there, at once ascertain the truth. This, however, she found no easy matter. She was by no means at liberty to go out alone, and to ask one of the lady principals to wait upon her there, might, she feared, not be agreeable to them, and perhaps equally unpleasant to the friends she wished to visit.

The mind of Gertrude had undergone a mighty change within the last two years. It had, doubtless, been a gradual process, but only within a short period had she herself been conscious of it. As she looked back for a few months, she remembered certain states of feeling which to her now seemed like the dreams of childhood, and could hardly believe they were realities; her views now, were so much more enlarged, and, in regard to some things, so different! She had allowed herself to be led, as a child might, without questioning the wisdom of her guide, or the right to direct her steps. Some things which had occurred, appeared to her now as being very strange, and the motives of some of the actors quite unaccountable. Prominent among these, was the conduct of her guardian. She did not call him Uncle—he seemed to prefer that she should not; and as no one encouraged her so to do, she had always addressed him as Doctor Weatherbee, or Guardy—seldom the latter, she did not fancy it; there was a familiarity in its sound which did not please her, and it was only on rare occasions that she had given him the title. She almost wondered that she had not, at the time, exercised more discernment, and seen more clearly through his teachings. Now they gave her a different impression, in fact an unfavorable one; so much so, that he had become personally disagreeable to

her. She could not, indeed, specify any one thing that ought, of itself, to have led to such a result; but the impression could not be reasoned away—a shadow always came over her mind, when his image was in any way brought before her.

She began, also, to have, more definite and correct views of her position. The scenes of degradation through which she had passed, for a long time after her rescue from poverty, still weighed upon her; she felt as one dependent upon the charity of others; every act of kindness was, to her, a gratuity—something she was not entitled to—had no reason to expect. She felt like one who had no claim upon the world; as if she had nothing to give it in return, and was therefore under obligations even for a kind word or a smile. Such a feeling, if carried with her through life, might have led to unhappy results. A better state of mind she now possessed. She was independent by no favor of any living person; had as good a right to what was legally hers, as any of those who were just inheritors with her. She was able fully to compensate for the trouble friends or strangers might be put to for her sake; and, beyond all this, a power was in her hand—not, indeed, entirely at her control, at present, but the right to it was hers, and in due time she could wield it. She would be responsible for it; it could do much good or evil, as her choice might dictate. Such thoughts did not make her vain or imperious. Her own kind, loving, trusting heart beat true to nature, pure and true, as it had ever done. They tended only to add a dignity to her bearing, to lead her to weigh well her actions, and do that which was proper, because it was so; not for the reason that others, under whose control she might be for the present, thought it so.

In looking back, too, she could not but recall some scenes, in which the impulses of a child were allowed to have free play; and all she thought and felt, in simple honesty, let out. And as these scenes recurred to her mind, the rich blood would spread over her cheek; she could feel its warm flush. She wondered how it could have happened—how she could have been so off her guard; and yet she could not blame the child. Nor was

it shame that made her blush. He was a noble youth; his image still was graven on her heart; she did not blush that one so true and pure had won from her a token that she loved. No, it was not for that; most nobly had he acted toward her; his whole heart had he opened to her view; and if, when their parting hour came, and she saw how sad he was, she had let him know that she shared his grief, why should she blush for that? But months have passed, years even, and not a line has come to her from him or his. She has heard of him, indeed—has heard that he is rising in the world, that he has able friends, that he resides no longer at the humble dwelling, nor tends that small shop. He is, no doubt, absorbed in his larger business, and she hopes he is no longer sad. No, she cannot honestly say that! She cannot truly say, that she hopes he has forgotten her, or that dream of their youth. Yet, if he had, there was no vow broken; no pledge had been given, no promise made on either side; they merely understood each other's heart.

For a long time, she could not understand the feelings of her friends, in reference to those who had been witnesses of her degradation in the city. She thought them unreasonable, unkind. But now a feeling of sadness comes over her, when her mind reverts to that period of humiliation. She could wish that *Herbert*, at least, had never been a witness to it. He had not, indeed, seemed to be affected by it; but may not his views and feelings have changed as well as hers? may not the higher position he has attained have caused him to look with other feelings at the past? May he not now consider the low estate in which she was, when their acquaintance first began, if not a dark spot upon her character, at least an unpleasant recollection, and something which he would be unwilling to recall, or have generally known? In fact, may it not be the reason why such silence has been observed on his part and that of his mother? Could she but be assured of it, no pain that her heart could suffer would be too much to endure, rather than force herself upon their notice.

It was on a Saturday afternoon, in the month of Octo-

ber, while walking in Broadway in company with a schoolmate, on a special mission to a drygoods store, when, near the corner of Park Place, she saw a young man approaching, whose gait and form reminded her of him who had, in various ways, so long occupied her thoughts. At first, the height of his stature, and the fully developed form of manhood, forbade the idea; but as they approached each other, that serious, thoughtful countenance, that clear soft eye, that fair pale face betokened Herbert Jones! She could not be mistaken. He was walking quite leisurely, and when near to them, he turned and looked back, as though in waiting for some one to overtake him. As they were about to pass each other, their eyes met, and she noticed that he seemed to start, and that a deep flush at once suffused his countenance. She was almost ready to stop and put out her hand in recognition, but the serious look he fixed upon her, forbade. Immediately, her companion asked—

"Who is that?"

And they passed by him. Impelled by an irresistible curiosity, Gertrude turned her head; he was looking toward her. Immediately, his hat was raised, and his dark hair fell off from his fair forehead. Ah! there could be no mistake now! He extended his hand; but only as he saw she was doing the same. The grasp, on his part, was not that of an old friend; not so warm as hers, for which afterward she chided herself severely

"Miss Manners?—I believe I am not mistaken.

"Mr. Jones—my friend, Miss Maxwell."

Gertrude was confused, and glad to say anything to hide her feelings, or to break the cold, stiff attitude in which she found herself, with one who once had been familiar as a brother. His obeisance to the lady, whose name Gertrude had mentioned, at once enabled each to withdraw a hand which had done such unsatisfactory work, and no doubt they felt relieved.

"A long time since we have met, Miss Manners."

"A long time! How is your mother?"

"Quite well, I thank you. Have you been long in the city?"

"About two months."

"Indeed!" And suddenly, the flush, which had lingered on the face of Herbert, fled away; that reply had troubled him.

Gertrude noticed it. She knew too well the phases of that countenance; oft had she, in former days, watched its changing aspect. Oh, how she wished they were alone!—that if this were to be their last meeting, it might afford some opportunity, at least, for an explanation on her part.

There seemed to be nothing further which either of them had to say; and they were about to separate, when a young gentleman came up, doubtless the one whom Herbert appeared to have been waiting for. He came immediately to the group, and addressed both ladies with the familiarity of an old acquaintance. It was Herman Granite.

"Ladies, your most obedient. Out of school, hey! and all alone! Are not the Misses H—— afraid to trust two of their most—most dangerous misses without a guardian?—in Broadway, too!"

"You are grandly mistaken, my good sir," replied Miss Maxwell. "You see the only dangerous or fascinating character here is Miss Manners, and I am sent, you know, to watch her; but she pays no regard to the rules, for she stopped this young gentleman—or pardon me, dear—allowed herself to be stopped, and addressed, and all that; and now you are adding to our dilemma."

"Well, really, I hope you will keep mum; but I think there is no fear of that, since you are both implicated. Miss Manners, have you any messages for Kirkland Place? Perhaps my friend Herbert has told you, we are on our way up this afternoon, going to spend a few days at Mr. Marshall's."

"Will you call at my aunt's?"

"If I can thereby do you a favor, most certainly." The young gentleman colored somewhat as he said this; no doubt there were some reminiscences on his part not so agreeable—if he had not been insulted by its master, he had been able to understand some broad hints. "I am going up especially for the benefit of my friend here to recruit his health."

"Oh, thank you. If you should go there, you can say that I am well."

Gertrude looked at Herbert. She saw indeed that he was pale and thin, but she did not speak. Herman addressed the remark to her:

"And I shall say you are very happy?"

"No, Mr. Herman Granite," replied Miss Maxwell, "you need tell no such story as that. Happy! What happiness do you suppose such girls as we can enjoy, mewed up in a prison, and watched like mice, when we want to be gadding about, calling on friends, walking with our beaux, and doing just what we like—no, tell her aunts she is very miserable, cries every night."

"Oh, Maggie!"

"It is truth—are you happy? Now say it."

Herman saw, whether Herbert did or not, those beautiful eyes of Gertrude's were gathering moisture. She was deeply excited, and there was an evident tremor to the tones of her voice as she replied:

"If you please, you may say I am as happy as I ever expect to be—that is, should they ask you."

"Now, Gertrude Manners, you know it is no such thing. As happy as you expect to be!—you know well enough you have a most beautiful fairy world before you—a rich heiress, plenty of beaux at your command, a manor to bestow upon your husband, and all the nice things in the world ready at your bidding. You will be too happy, you know you will."

"Well, Herbert," said young Granite, "you and I shall be too late for the boat."

"May I ask you, Mr. Jones," said Gertrude, her voice very low and broken, "where does your mother reside now—I believe she has changed her residence?"

Herbert immediately drew from his pocket-book a card, and presenting it:

"My mother, and Ellen also, will be happy to see you."

He did not say *we*. Gertrude noticed it; how her heart swelled; she could not have spoken, had she ever so much need for words. The gentlemen bowed, and the little party separated.

"What a handsome fellow that Mr. Jones is! Who

is he, Gertrude? I noticed him the other evening at Lib Granite's party, but he was so taken up with Sue Stansbury, I could not get a chance to be introduced; she hung around him all the evening. Now I know all about him. He is the very young man Mr. Granite has set up in that fine store in Maiden Lane. He is very smart, they say. What a fine eye he has!—but how dreadfully sober he looked to-day; and you, too, Gerty, you seemed all the time ready for a cry. Is he some old lover, and you moaning over departed pleasures? Oh, dear me! if I had your money—but here's the store."

"Maggie, now I want you to do me a favor. I will not be gone over half an hour. I may not have such another opportunity, you know. I wish to call on an old friend, a lady."

"Mrs. Jones?"

"We are near to the house; you can do the shopping as well without me."

"I will, dear; but make all the haste you can."

"In half an hour I will be here."

It was indeed a change, a great change, Gertrude saw at once, as she entered the new residence of Mrs. Jones. The house was of three stories, the lower part indeed occupied by the store, but there were a good sized entry, neatly carpeted, a wide staircase, and spacious rooms above, furnished well, but not gaudily, all in the most perfect order—a great contrast to her former abode.

A servant introduced her to the parlor, and for a few moments she was left alone. Thoughts of the past rushed to her mind, her heart was full, and it required all her energy to keep back the tokens of excitement. As Mrs. Jones entered, well dressed, and with a freshness of countenance Gertrude had never witnessed before in her friend, she arose to meet her, and the lady exclaimed:

"Why, my dear girl, can it be you!"

Gertrude could not speak. Her arms were around the neck of her old friend, and her tears flowed freely. Pressing the dear girl to her bosom, for she truly loved

her, strange as had been her silence toward them, Mrs. Jones led her to the sofa and sat beside her.

"You love us still, dear Gertrude?"

"I have no friend on earth but you."

And again she pressed her arms more closely, and leaned upon the bosom of the kind lady, who had been her friend when darkness and sorrow threw their gloom about her. For some moments thus they sat in silence, when Mrs. Jones resumed.

"I had almost feared you had forgotten us?"

"Never, never for one moment!"

And then the strange revelation came out—that Mrs. Jones had written, and that Gertrude had written, again and again, but neither had received a letter.

"I suppose, I believe, dear Gertrude, that this has not been by accident. No doubt, for some reason, your relations fear that an intimacy might be a disadvantage to you; they wish the past obliterated, at least from your mind."

"It never can be!—I do not wish it to be—no, it will ever remain, dear Mrs.—dear mother!"

Speaking that word, brought back feelings too powerful for even the lady herself, and she, too, had to let nature have its way.

Gertrude was the first to speak.

"No earthly power can ever turn from my remembrance what you have been to me. I see now that I have been deceived; but why, I cannot understand. May I still look to you as I once did? Will you believe that my heart is true to you?"

"I do not doubt it, dear Gertrude; that is, I have not been willing to believe, although others have tried to persuade me, that you had changed."

That was an unfortunate, an unguarded expression. Alas! had she known how the thought, thus thrown out, like a cruel dart, had pierced the true, warm feelings of that sensitive girl, she would surely never have allowed it to come from her lips. But it is spoken, and it has changed, with electric speed, not the feelings of Gertrude's heart, but the determination of her will. It has unfolded to her most clearly the cause for the cold re-

serve of Herbert. She has lost his confidence, and—and no consideration can tempt her to endeavor to regain it. Dear as he had been to her, the tie is broken—she is resolved it *shall* be broken! It will not be easily done, although in this moment of excited feeling, she thinks the pang is past. It will hold its own awhile; it will be only by time, and the intervention of some more fascinating, absorbing object, that she will succeed. Alas for her peace! It had been upon her mind to speak of Herbert, to ask about his circumstances, and his prospects—above all, about his health. Now her lips were sealed. She merely said—for she could not avoid doing so—that she had met him, and received his card, and thus was enabled to find where they lived.

"I am so sorry, too," said Mrs. Jones, "that Ellen is not in. She would be so glad to see you, and little Charlie! Charlie is off with the boys this afternoon. He and Ellen often speak about you, and of the nice times we used to have. Herbert has not been well; when you met him he must have been on his way to the boat. He and his old friend Herman are going to the country to spend some days. Herbert is quite out of health. He has had a very troublesome affair, that has worried him exceedingly—perhaps you have heard of it?"

"I have heard nothing."

"Well, it has been somewhat public. A foolish business it was, altogether. A young girl—not very young either—with whom he became intimate, when he attended a meeting he established up town, took it into her head to fall in love with him, and possibly she thought he had with her. He merely paid that attention to her, a young man might to one who came to him for spiritual advice, and I suppose he was off his guard, but she tried to make out that they were engaged. The foolish thing!—there was nothing further from his thoughts. He has too much on his mind to be thinking of any such matter. I hope he will put all love-scrapes off until he gets a few years older. That business, however, is all settled now. She found she could not do any-

thing, and dropped it; at least her friends dropped it for her. They found they would be only injuring themselves by troubling him. Herbert has very warm and powerful friends now. It has vexed him, however, and made him almost-ready to leave the city entirely."

Gertrude listened to the story in silence—her mind, in fact, was in a trance—she had no reply to make, and, as the half hour had expired, she arose to depart

"Must you leave so soon?"

"A friend is waiting for me in Broadway;" and then she told about her being at school, and how difficult it was for her to leave.

"But when you can, dear Gertrude, come and see me; you will be ever welcome."

Gertrude did not reply—her feelings were highly wrought up—tears stood in her eyes as she took a parting kiss, and then, with love to Ellen and Charlie, she went on her way, almost regretting that she had called. Yet it was something to know that she had still a place in the heart of her old friend, and that there had been an opportunity for explanation on both sides, in regard to their long silence.

"Miss Manners, your obedience is quite commendable!" This was the salutation Gertrude received as she was about to enter the dry-goods shop where she had left her companion. It was the younger Miss H—— who addressed her. This lady, it seems, had not quite the confidence in her pupils which they supposed, and had followed at some distance behind them. Her excuse to Miss Maxwell was, that she had forgotten some things which she wished to procure, and concluded to take a walk to the store herself. Whatever the motive, it was unfortunate for them that she had come along in time to notice the departure of the young gentlemen with whom they had been conversing, and reached the store only to find Miss Maxwell alone. That young lady was standing by her side as she thus addressed Gertrude, and, without saying a word, looked a thousand thoughts at her companion, none of them very agreeable.

"If you are through with your visits, Miss Manners, we will return home."



Without any reply, the two culprits—for such they were looked upon by the lady—followed her as well as they could through the crowd, for Miss H—— was a brisk walker, and no doubt the excitement under which she labored added to her usual speed.

As they entered their dwelling, the lady told them they might retire to their own room until summoned to leave it. This they were glad to do, as it would relieve them from the embarrassment of her presence.

"A pretty kettle of fish we have cooked!" said Miss Maxwell, as they closed the door; "what shall we do?"

"You have done nothing to merit displeasure; I am alone the guilty one, and I shall be prepared to take my own part."

"Good gracious me, Gerty! don't talk of taking your own part! Do, for goodness sake, think of something by way of excuse—'your aunts ordered you to call somewhere,' or 'do something,' or 'you heard a friend was dying'—that would be better, may be; but whatever you do, don't talk of taking your own part! it will make bedlam—turn the house inside out."

"I shall tell the simple truth, come of it what may. We have done nothing in itself wrong."

"Right and wrong depends, you know, upon circumstances. Orders here, you must understand, are always right—to break them, wrong—yes, something worse than wrong, it is larceny, felony, all but murder! But do, for goodness sake, Gertrude, think of something to say!"

"I *have* thought—I *am* thinking. Our speaking to the gentlemen was entirely my fault, you are clear in every way."

"I shall deny that, Gerty; you shall not bear the blame all alone. If they come too hard upon me, I shall talk about leaving. I *can* leave, if so it please me, but *you*, you know, are put so especially under their watch and care, they have got so on the right side of your guardian, they feel that they can do as they please with you."

"They might, perhaps, some time since; but I do not feel as I once did. I came here to learn, not to be watched, and treated as one who had no principles—that is, no good ones."

"Yes; but you know young girls are not supposed to have any. So think these ladies; and they stand so high, and have such a reputation, and all that, and have such a way of gulling the public, and parents, and guardians in particular, that they keep a high head and a strong hand. Oh, dear! what a dreadful thing it is to be a girl! or at least, to be under the surveillance of old maids. I wish the old plagues knew what it was to have a beau, or a sweetheart, or something or other to melt the stiffness out of their hearts. Gerty, I am in mortal fear of them—are not you?"

"I do not wish any difficulty with them, and do not intend to have any."

"How will you help it? Like as not they will have the whole conclave called together—Mons. Bajaud, the dancing-master, and Bucheaud, the music-master, and Heriot, the drawing-master, and very likely Parson K——, the major-general of the whole establishment. If he is here, I shall give clear up. The sound of his voice will be enough for me. Oh, dear! how my heart beats, Gerty! I have a good mind to run away—if I only knew where to run to! But I suppose they would have old Hayes, and all his posse, hunting me up, and frighten our folks to death with an advertisement in the paper. But do tell me, Gertrude Manners, what you are going to do? and don't sit there looking as unconcerned as if nothing had happened."

"Nothing has happened, as yet."

"Nothing happened! You will see. I don't believe you know what strict orders have been given concerning you."

"Orders! Of what nature?"

"Why, about your visiting or being visited. I have heard all about it through one of the assistant teachers; but I have never said anything to you, because I thought it might try your feelings. But now, it seems to me, you ought to know the truth, for you may, if you are at all obstinate or 'obstropulous,' get into a muss, not only with the folks here, but with your own friends. They are peculiar, are they not?"

"My friends?"

'Yes, your uncle and aunts. I guess *he* is a *little gay*. I don't know much about your aunts, only I have heard that they are very proud and overbearing, and very rich. But your uncle, or guardian, or whatever he is—I should call him your lover, if it wasn't that he had married your aunt."

"Dear Maggie Maxwell, do not talk so; it is hardly kind in you to suggest such an idea—to me, at least."

"Gerty, you know I love you, as all the rest of the girls do; but *I* love you *dearly*, I would say nothing to hurt your feelings; yet you ought to know the whole truth. Your guardian is looked upon by many in the city as a man of *very loose principles*. I could tell you some things which I have heard that would make your hair stand on end, but I shall not name them to you, only this, I tell you: do not trust too implicitly to his honesty. His peculiar conduct, since you have been here, has been noticed by all the girls. But let that go. You know when you came, that your aunt accompanied you, and she had a long confab with the principals, and, it seems, told them, 'that you were an unsophisticated young creature, who knew nothing about the world; that, unfortunately, you were heiress to a very large property, and that there were persons trying to get round you, and exert an influence over you; that there was one young man, in particular, with whom you had been accidentally thrown, who was trying hard to win your affections, no doubt with a view to your property.' Now, do not be angry with me, Gerty."

"I am not angry with you; but it is a shameful story, utterly untrue."

"That is very likely. You know it is not any matter to some people whether a story is true or not, so long as their ends are accomplished. The object, no doubt, was to impress upon the minds of the principals the necessity of watching you closely; and I have no doubt our being sent off alone, and Miss H—— coming over as she did, was all done for the purpose of finding out something. Are you going to tell them where you have been?"

"I did design to, but since you have told me all this,

I think I shall not say where I went. *You* do not know?"

"I do not know anything—I have my own particular head to take care of—I am dreadfully oblivious about other matters, when I have a mind to be—and if young Jones is your favorite, they will never get his name out of me."

"Maggie Maxwell! I hope you will never mention that name to me in any such connection. His mother is a dear friend, a good, faithful friend, to me; but I ask you never to speak of Herbert Jones as anything to me."

"Oh, well, Gerty, I must believe what you say; but I thought you acted strangely when you met him, and he did, too; but that is your own business—no one will be the wiser for what I saw or thought. He is handsome enough, Gerty, for any girl to be willing to have a little fuss about; if those eyes of his had looked at me as I saw them glance at you, once or twice, I would be willing to bear all the frowns the old maids could put on, and all their reproof and punishment into the bargain."

"You will find yourself utterly mistaken, Maggie. Herbert Jones is as far from thinking of me as he is of the most perfect stranger, and I have reason to believe that his opinion of me is unfavorable."

"Then, I shall put him out of my books, at once, Gerty; any one that does not think well of you I don't want to have anything to do with. Sue Stansbury may have him, and welcome; she is a real beau-catcher; like as not she has got him already. But all this is nothing to the point I was driving at, and that was, to let you know how you are regarded by the lady principals, and what has been said to them about you; they think, in fact, Gerty, that you are a soft, weak-minded girl, and that they can frighten you into anything, and do with you just what they please."

"And do you think so, too?"

"Dear Gerty, you know better than that!" and Maggie threw her arms about the neck of her friend; for she saw, by the deep flush upon Gertrude's face, and the tear that started to her eye, that her feelings were sensibly

touched. "I know you, darling, as the Misses H—— do not; no one knows you as I do, Gerty, nor loves you half so much. Do you not believe it?"

"I do, dear Maggie."

The young ladies had abundant time for all they had to say, for no summons came to them; and the shades of evening were already falling over the great city. They were in their own bedroom—a small apartment in the third story. At length they heard the supper bell ring.

"Shall we consider that a summons?" said Maggie. "I am dreadful hungry. Do you think they mean to starve us, so as to make our delinquencies very sensibly experienced? What do you think, Miss Gerty? or are you not thinking, at all, about such a very sordid matter? Up in the clouds—are you not, my dear?"

"Not so far as that, Maggie; I am not very hungry, though."

"You never are, I believe, Gerty. I do not know what makes you look so beautiful; it is not eating, at any rate. But there comes some one; now for the summons!"

A step was heard approaching; it stopped at their door—there was a gentle tap. Gertrude rose quickly, and opened it; a courtesy was dropped by a pleasant-looking young Irish woman, as she entered and placed on their table a small tea-tray, containing a few slices of dry bread and two tumblers of cold water. The young woman wiped her eyes with her apron, and for a moment seemed too much overcome to say aught to the prisoners—for such it seemed they were. At length she made out, though in broken accents, to unburden her mind:

"The mistress—bid me—say—here was your supper, young ladies; but it is not Betsey Kelly that can see your dear young selves so treated, and ye will no take it amiss"—What they were in danger of taking amiss from Betsey, the girls could not comprehend, until, diving into her long pockets, she took out two large pieces of queen's cake, and put into each of their hands. Gertrude, to whom she first presented a piece, shook her head:

"No, no, Betsey."

"It is no property of the mistress, my darling; it's

bought with my own money, and sweet it is to do anything for one that has been helpful to my own blood."

"What mean you, Betsey?"

"And is it not yourself that put Pat Kelly's wife and childer into a decent house, and helped them when they were down in the mire and no able to help themselves? I knew ye did not remember me when I came to this place, a week that's gone, but I knew you for the same dear young lady, and if it's no offence, you'll oblige me much by receiving this same."

"Oh, thank you, Betsey, you are very kind; I will take it, then."

"And you, too, my young leddy," handing a piece to Miss Maxwell.

"Thank you, Betsey; we will remember you for this, but say nothing about it to any one in the house; you may lose your place if you do."

"Never fear the like of me; and it's not loss of the place that would hinder me, but it might bring more trouble on your dear young heads. The Lord bless you both, and you, miss, in particular," looking at Gertrude, "for ye are kind to the poor."

And Betsey stepped out, walking briskly down the stairs.

"What a good soul she is! But let us eat our prison fare first, and keep this for dessert. What was it she said about your helping Pat somebody or other, Gerty? You haven't begun already to disburse your charities?"

"Oh, it was only a little assistance I rendered to a poor and worthy woman who had lost her husband. It seems Betsey is the husband's sister. She must have a kind heart, indeed, to feel so much for a favor done to a sister-in-law and her children. The Irish have warm hearts, if they are so reckless at times."

"Commend me to Betsey! this cake is delicious. You are a real trump, Gerty! Who would have thought that you had such a fairy friend in this old Bluebeard castle? Well, I shan't starve to-night, at any rate. I wonder if we are to be kept here over Sunday. We shall have a still time of it. What a pity we did not give Betsey some money to lay in a store for us!"

"She might be found out, and would be brought into trouble for our sakes."

The event which had taken place at this celebrated school, was one that could not be passed over in silence. The main feature in the establishment, and one which its principals prided themselves most on, was the strict discipline enforced by them in reference to any mingling of the young girls, intrusted to their care, with the world in general, and young men in particular. The latter were regarded by these ladies as reprobates, all of them, against whose contaminating influence the closest watch must be maintained. No matter what other things were not learned at this famous school, one thing, at least, was taught them—"that they themselves had no principles which could be trusted beyond the eye of their teachers or guardians; and that there was no virtue in any man who had not arrived at the mature age when spectacles were needed, and grey hairs were very visible." And there were some parents, although we rejoice that the number was very small, and some guardians, both of the male and female sex—maiden aunts, or widows, who had been deceived in early life—enough, we say, of such, to patronize the establishment, and for this special feature in it, to give it a good support. The principals, without doubt, felt strong in their position, and, as Maggie said, "held a high head and managed matters with a strong hand." It had even been whispered abroad, that more than one young girl of weak nerves, had been released from their care to be placed under the watch of a lunatic asylum.

They were "strong-minded women"—too much so for any hope that their *hand* would ever be sought for by the other sex—*hearts*, they had none of any consequence to bestow. That such characters should have been intrusted with those of their own sex in the spring-time of being, when their delicate natures were in all the sensitiveness of youth, and ready to be molded into the most lovely forms of humanity, is, indeed, a strange as well as a sad fact. Some, indeed, may not have been materially injured who passed through its tedious course, but we doubt much if all who sojourned there, do not now look

back upon that period of their life as a very dark spot, and more than that, if some do not, in the bitterness of their heart, charge the sad mistake they have made in their life-career, to the hateful influence of "Bluebeard castle," the common title which they gave it.

The Rev. Mr. K—— had been a rake in his youth. He reformed in time to pursue an education and get into the ministry. He was, no doubt, thoroughly reformed, and, as is often the case, from being a libertine had become an anchorite. To what denomination he belonged, we do not choose to say. We believe he was a good man, after a sort, but we believe he had hard work to be so. He certainly had but little of that external suavity which commends the preacher of the Gospel to the hearts of men. He had some interest in this school, but how much, none but himself and its principals ever knew. He exerted his influence for it; visited it regularly every week; occasionally, on rainy Sabbaths, read one of his dry sermons to the poor young prisoners. He had no regular charge of his own, having received, by a lucky marriage, money enough to enable him to live without a parish. He lectured to them on ethics and rhetoric, and dry and wearisome enough these talks were; they cannot, properly, be dignified with the title of lectures. In other ways, too, he made his presence as unpleasant to the young creatures who had to undergo his inflictions, as the exercises themselves were unprofitable.

He had moreover been called in on some occasions—in obstinate cases—to assist the principals in carrying out their system of discipline. Strong-minded as they were, being, after all, only women, the presence of a man—a stern man, a reverend, with a brown wig, large eyes, and of course large spectacles, black mounted, coarse complexion, a broad nose, and a ferocious mouth, with a very gruff voice—the presence of such a man was quite a help.

The night passed, and the Sabbath morning broke clear and still. The bells rang, and the multitudes walked the streets to their places of worship. Each lady principal took her turn to attend service, one in the morning, and the other in the afternoon. The bread and water was sent up

regularly, as each bell rung, for a meal, and the two delinquents received no summons to leave their room. What extras were smuggled under Betty's apron, or in her pockets, is of no consequence now, nor where they came from. Betty proved herself a grand purveyor on a small scale.

Another night came and went, and Monday morning ushered in a cold, wet, uncomfortable day.

About nine o'clock, or perhaps a quarter of an hour before nine, Betty entered the room, with rather a pale face.

"The mistress would be glad to see the young ladies in the school-room."

And without a word further, Betty closed the door, and retreated down-stairs.

"Now for it, Gerty! The hour of trial has come—how do you feel?"

"I feel just the same, Maggie, as I have, only more determined to submit to their caprice no longer. I shall throw myself beyond their control, by leaving the school."

"I fear you will find, Gerty, you cannot do that, until this stain is washed out. Do you not realize that the honor and integrity of the institution has been invaded? After you have been made an example of, then, perhaps, they may send you off, with some disgraceful story attached to you. They shall not do *that*, though, while I have a tongue in my head to contradict their falsehoods. But come, dear, let us go, or the old maids will be poking after us themselves."

As the girls entered the school-room, they perceived at once there was some peculiar ceremony on hand, for the pupils were all seated on their stools, with their backs to the desks, which were ranged round the walls of the room, and the Misses H——, with their two assistants, were seated at one end of the apartment. At the head of the band was the Rev. Mr. K——, with spectacles on, looking peculiarly savage. He stood with one hand resting on a high desk, and a small pamphlet in the other. The two young ladies made their obeisance, and were proceeding to that part of the room

where their desks stood, when the voice of the elder Miss H—— arrested them.

"This way, if you please; your presence is required this way. Miss Manners, do you hear?"

Gertrude was thus addressed by name, because when her companion stopped, she either did not hear, or did not intend to obey, but continued on. The tones of the lady's voice, however, were so decided, that she halted and looked for further orders.

"This way, miss, this way; your hearing methinks is not good this morning."

Maggie had taken a stand at the spot designated by the finger of the lady, not far from the centre of the room, a large apartment running the whole width of the house. She had been a long time at the school, and had become more accustomed to its discipline, and more thoroughly broken into obedience. Gertrude walked up beside her companion, although with evident reluctance. Her spirit was roused. She felt that the whole concern was a mighty imposition, and her arraignment an insult to her age and her sex. She did not wish to make a scene, or she would have walked from the room—that, however, she would not have been permitted to do.

It was a beautiful sight just then, could her form, so finished in its grace, and her countenance, so bright and finished in expression, have been daguerreotyped; never before probably had her claims to the highest beauty been so clear and undisputed. The girls looked at her with admiration. They would have pitied her but for the calm, scornful dignity of her bearing. Some of them almost envied her position, for they could perceive she felt herself above the petty tyrants who were using the little power which peculiar circumstances gave them, to insult and degrade her. The latter they could not do; the former she was already enduring.

With a wave of her hand, the elder Miss H—— signified to the reverend gentleman "that the performance might commence." Whether Mr. K—— had been summoned for the special occasion, or was there of his own accord, is not material. He often came on Monday morning, and opened the school with prayer—probably



to sanctify it for the week; it needed some such exercise of the right kind every day. Whether his was of that sort we will not pretend to determine.

The voice of the reverend gentleman was in keeping with his appearance, for when he said, "Let us pray," it seemed as if the sound came from the full blast of a trombone. And a brass prayer it was; the ring of the metal was more evident than anything else about it. In mercy, however, to the young folks present, who had to be thus tortured, it was reasonably short.

Another wave of the hand, and another blast from the instrument, answered, "that the rules and regulations of the school were to be read." There was the most profound silence during the performance of this ceremony—for it was nothing more—these being already deeply engraved upon the memories of all present. This farce ended, the elder Miss H—— proclaimed from her seat, in quite a gracious manner for her, "That as Miss Maxwell had not been guilty to the extent of her companion, and had suffered a penalty commensurate with her delinquency (she might have done so but for Betty's providence), she could take her usual seat."

Maggie was not prepared for this. Her spirit was on the point of rebellion. She wished to be a joint partner with her fellow culprit to the end. For a moment she hesitated, when the stern brass instrument belched forth in ringing notes:

"Miss Maxwell, you hear the sentence—you are pardoned—take your seat."

Terrified by a voice she had associated with all that was severe and hateful, her resolution failed, and thinking that perhaps her obstinacy might only make matters worse with Gertrude, she turned and walked with a modest step toward her usual seat; but the girls could see that there were tears in Maggie's eyes, and that it was no choice of hers to be thus severed from her friend.

Again the voice of the elder lady is raised:

"Miss Manners, you have heard the rules of this institution, and you must be conscious of having in a flagrant manner violated them. But as you have already suffered

something by way of penalty, you shall be pardoned, and again permitted to resume your station in the school, on condition that you acknowledge you have done wrong, ask our pardon for the offence, and give me in private the name and residence of the person or persons you had the rashness to visit without leave."

The color crimsoned the cheeks of the beautiful girl, but for some reason she made no reply.

"You hear the terms which Miss H—— has given for your restoration—and very just, and very reasonable—what say you to them, miss?"

The latter sentence came out with a stern ring.

"I cannot comply with them, sir; and do not wish to be considered any longer a member of this school."

"Ah ha! ah ha! you do not, hey! But suppose you cannot help yourself? You, very unfortunately for this respectable establishment, have been received here, and placed under the special care of these young ladies, and under their care you shall remain. Their discipline you must submit to until this breach of decorum has been atoned for. Your presence here is of no consequence—no consequence, I can assure you; but the rules and regulations of this establishment are of consequence, and cannot be violated with impunity—that you will find, to your sorrow, if you do not yield at once."

The stern delivery of this harangue went to the very heart of the poor girl, and the stand which she perceived they were determined to take, alarmed her. Her friends—even if she had any—were far away; and if they knew of her situation, she had no reason to believe would do anything for her deliverance; her spirits sank, but she could not yield.

"I am willing to acknowledge, sir, that I regret having broken any of the rules, although confident I am that it was done with no bad intent; but so unwilling am I to be bound in future by such restrictions, that I prefer not to stay."

The elder Miss H—— now arose from her seat, and opening a door which led to an adjoining apartment—

"Miss Manners, will you walk in here? such conduct

is enough to demoralize a whole school. Walk in, will you, miss?"

Not disposed to make a scene, or create unnecessary confusion, by resistance, Gertrude obeyed the mandate. As soon as she did so, the lady spoke.

"The school will go on with its exercises. Mr. K——, will you favor me with your presence?"

The gentleman, clearing his throat with a loud, brass hem, walked in with the lady, and the door was closed.

"Now, Miss Manners, I wish you to understand that I am not to be trifled with. It would be an easy matter for me to dismiss you, and deprive you at once of the benefits of our institution. I have done so, in some cases, but you have put it out of my power; or rather, I do not see fit to do so under present circumstances. The impression would at once be made upon those under my care, that you had succeeded in setting at naught my authority."

"I have acknowledged Miss H——, that I regretted having broken any of your rules."

"I know you did so, but with a reservation; besides, you are not your own mistress; your legal guardians have intrusted you to me, with strict injunctions—very strict injunctions concerning you. To them I am amenable, and to no one else. I insist, therefore, upon hearing from you own lips the name of the family, or the person, you called upon at the time you took advantage of the liberty accorded you!"

"They are friends of mine, of respectability. I do not wish them to be troubled on my account."

"Their names, I ask you, and place of residence?"

Gertrude was silent.

"This is strange conduct for a young lady—very strange, allow me to say!" The large spectacles were glaring at her, as the brass voice thus uttered its surprise.

Gertrude was still silent.

"Am I to understand, Miss Manners, that you defy my authority?"

"I have no wish, Miss H——, to offend you further; my wish and intention is, to withdraw entirely from your care and not trouble you with my presence."

"That has nothing to do with the question. Do you intend to defy my authority?"

"I consider, after what I have told you, that you have no authority over me."

"You are mistaken—you are mistaken—you are greatly mistaken, miss! This lady has been intrusted, by those who have power to say what you shall or shall not do, with the charge of you; they, and they only, can dictate as to your removal. You are greatly mistaken!"

"It may be, sir, as you say; but I should think Miss H—— would not wish to detain a pupil who is so unwilling as I am to be under her control."

"I shall detain you until you have made full amends for your misconduct; and I ask you, once again, to reveal the name and the place of residence of those persons whom you visited contrary to my orders?"

"I have nothing further to say, madam."

The reverend gentleman took off his spectacles, and wiped them, fixing his hard, cold eye intently upon her.

"A stubborn piece, I see, Miss H——; a stubborn piece!"

"I know how to subdue that: a few days' solitary confinement will take the stubbornness out, or I am much mistaken."

"Miss H——, I am no child to be frightened or punished into submission. I am of sufficient age to judge and act for myself; and it does not well accord with the character of a lady, to attempt to control one who has said so plainly that she does not wish to be under your guidance or instruction. You surely do not intend to use force to that end. I came here to learn, not to be made a prisoner, or watched as a criminal."

The lady did not blush—her blushing days were over; but her features swelled, and her eye glared with anger.

"Forced! yes, forced, if necessary! My behests *shall* be obeyed! you *shall* obey them. There are those under my roof who will bind you, hand and foot, if I say the word. Force! you will find that ready at the instant, when I summon it. Force, indeed! try your hand at resisting my will! You will soon see!—follow me,

miss!" And the lady, manifesting intense excitement, rushed to the door, and, opening it, repeated her order—"Follow me, I say, Miss Manners."

Gertrude had never before seen such a state of feeling exhibited by a female, except among the wretched inhabitants of Hunker's Alley. She knew not to what extremities Miss H—— might proceed, nor what insult might be offered to herself, in carrying out the threat which had been made. She, therefore, did as requested, and followed her.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

HERBERT JONES had returned from his visit to the country. His stay there had been shorter than anticipated—shorter than his health required; but there were reasons for it, which we must inquire into. He had never for one moment lost his interest in Gertrude, although, at times, he endeavored to make himself thus believe. The strange silence which she maintained in not writing, at least to his mother, he could not account for; he could invent no excuse that satisfied his mind. That she should write often, he had never hoped; but that all communion between her and those who had so befriended her should be utterly broken, and by her fault, was an enigma which every day grew more and more difficult to solve. And yet, when the scenes through which he had passed with her, were recalled, and he remembered how truly she had allowed him to feel that her heart sympathized with his, although the words of love were not spoken—especially that last parting embrace—he could not make himself believe she would prove false. On these scenes, therefore, as on a beautiful reality in his past experience, he delighted to dwell. *He had been loved!* They might never meet again. Their course in life, as his mother had said, might be vastly different, yet the past would ever remain a solace to his heart; and he almost thought he could live the rest of his days upon it. It might be only a dream; but what would all life's happiest realities be, when past, but as a vision of the night, when one awaketh? And not in vain was all this; it did not hinder the faithful discharge of any duty; he had enough to stimulate him to the great work of life, and he did that work with a strong will and a steady arm. Its tendency was to elevate and purify his mind. The object was a being of purity and beauty—one whose life, so far as he could know, was spotless; whose bearing, that of the most delicate vir-

tue; in whom no low or debasing thoughts could dwell; whose mind was grasping and intelligent, sound in judgment, and correct in its decisions; whose heart glowed with kindness, and was possessed of intense emotion. He saw no equal to her, in any that he knew, and was satisfied to let his heart repose on the picture it had painted for itself. With all this, however, he was not always content; unpleasant thoughts would at times intrude, and shake his faith, and, for a while, almost make him resolve to dash forever from his remembrance a being who, if circumstances were correct in their interpretation, was, after all, not what his imagination portrayed. And these very thoughts were at work, with their disturbing power, when, on his way to the country, he so unexpectedly met her. That interview passed, his memory was continually employed in recalling every incident and every word, again and again, through the journey, and in all his rambles around the beautiful country. How should he construe her behavior on that occasion? Her words were kind, but appeared to be studied; her manner restrained, and yet there was a seriousness in it that seemed to say: "The past has not been forgotten." But was the remembrance not painful to her? Did it not thus speak: "Yes, I remember; we once were friends, warm friends; my heart was deeply interested, and my conduct, no doubt, gave him reason to know it. Pity that I was not more on my guard?" "And yet her eye for once, at least, met mine, with a look that thrilled my soul. It was the look of former days, when her heart spoke to me its true feelings. What could it mean? Did she yet love? and were the circumstances in which she was placed the only obstacle? It might be so!" He walked over the beautiful grounds which now, he understood, were apportioned to her; he looked at the noble mansion, environed by majestic trees—a princely residence! And all this added poignancy to the fears which his heart suffered. Such external attachments to one so lovely in her own person, would be sure to attract suitors who would have claims far beyond his pretensions. And the influence of her proud and haughty friends would, no doubt, be exerted to the

utmost, to form for her a connection with an equal in the scale of life. And was not Gertrude herself affected by the station in which she now found herself? Very natural, indeed, would it be, that she should, under all these circumstances, feel that a necessity was laid upon her, and her highest happiness alone to be secured, by yielding to the stream that would bear her far, far off from him.

The longer he remained amid the scenes which continually brought to mind her loved image, the more determined he became to have the matter settled by a personal interview. In no other way could he ascertain his fate for life, and the sooner the great question could be settled, the better. He wished to hear the worst—he must know it, and hear his verdict from her own lips. But first he must see his mother—to her he must unfold the great secret. Hitherto he had abstained from making a confidant of her on this point, for the reason that she appeared always ready to turn off the subject when he approached it. She knew more of the world than he did—at least, of that world in which Gertrude was placed. She knew how strong were the prejudices of a certain class against all those who moved in a circle below them, or which they imagined to be below them; and therefore, whatever may have been her wishes, she had, wisely for his peace, carefully avoided all allusion to any such relationship between her son and her who, no doubt, she hoped was worthy of him.

Herbert's arrival, although quite unexpected to his mother, was hailed with joy; nor was he less kindly welcomed at his store.

It was quite late in the evening before he could be released from his business, and have the private interview he so much desired.

"I fear, my dear Herbert, that you have come home sooner than you ought, for your own good. Your business, I fear, will be too much for your strength. Working all day, and writing so late at night, will undermine your health."

"No fear of that, mother; I am never tired; my business is my pleasure. I enjoy myself more in it than I can

possibly do, away. I am happy, mother, with one exception, and on that subject I must have a talk with you to-night. I wish you to tell me—for you have not mentioned her name to me—did Gertrude call upon you the day I left?"

"She did, my dear."

For a moment there was silence.

"Did she speak of me, mother?"

"She said she had met you."

Again quite a long pause. It was very evident to Herbert that his mother did not design to be communicative.

"Did she appear as she formerly did?"

"How so, Herbert? Do you mean as to her looks? She has grown, of course."

"No, mother; I mean, did she appear open, frank, warm-hearted, lovely, as she used to be?"

"Well, I cannot say but she did. She seemed to be very glad to see me, and spoke of Ellen and Charlie. How sorry she was that you were not at home!"

"Did she give any reason for not writing to us?"

"Oh, yes; she says that she has written several letters, and was greatly surprised when I told her we had never received a line from her."

"There, mother! that is just what I have all along supposed."

"What, Herbert?"

"Why, that in some way, it was not her fault."

"You forget, my son, you forget—do you not call to mind how you have, at times, charged her with forgetting, in her prosperity, those who had befriended her when she was poor and in trouble?"

"Yes, mother, I do remember what I have said, but my heart reproved me for saying so, at the very time. Mother, I have faith, strong faith in Gertrude, yet."

"So have I, my son. I believe her to be a good girl; her heart is very tender, and I believe there is a great deal of honesty in the character of Gertrude. She has no affectation, nor do I believe she prides herself upon her family connections or her wealth."

"Mother—I love Gertrude—I love her as I shall never love another."

"I am sorry, my dear son, to hear you say so."

"Why so, mother?"

"Oh, because I believe your love will never be returned. It is hopeless—utterly hopeless! Believe what I say, Herbert."

"Oh, but mother, you do not know. She has felt an interest, a deep interest in me—I feel sure of that, mother."

"Two years, my son, makes a great difference in the feelings of a person, especially a young girl at the age of Gertrude. I warn you, as you value your peace of mind, your health, your usefulness, trust not to any manifestations you may have taken encouragement from when she lived with us—consider all the circumstances—she was then under great obligations, to you especially; she was unavoidably much with you; she saw no others. Since then, a new world has opened to her; many, no doubt, pay court to her; she is subject to much attention and flattery—and females are sadly susceptible to the latter. And more than all this, what I think will be an insurmountable obstacle to you, is the fact that you saw her and knew her in a state of great degradation."

"I cannot understand, mother, how the last reason you mention can operate against me."

"I will tell you, Herbert: for the same reason that a man who has risen to a high station in life, would wish to avoid the companionship of one who had known him when very poor, or engaged in some menial service."

"Oh, mother! I cannot thus judge of Gertrude."

"You cannot tell, my dear son, all the workings of the female heart. A woman wishes not only the love of her husband, she desires his respect. Suppose you had first known Gertrude as a servant—it might have been so; but for a timely providence she might have been compelled to resort to that as a living—would she not, think you, when elevated as she now is, shrunk from connecting herself with one who had known her under such circumstances, from the fear that it would be something concerning her which he would feel ashamed to have known? And, if I am not much mistaken, could the truth be ascertained, this feeling already operates in the mind of



Gertrude, and I think will prove, if there be no other hindrance, an effectual bar to your hopes. She will fear, and no power can dispossess her of it, if she feels her past condition to have been a low and degraded one, that he who saw her in that state, and rescued her from it, might, if nearly connected with her, wish that blot erased—washed out of existence.”

“But, mother dear, there was no blot upon her character; it was merely a condition to which she was reduced by no fault of her own.”

“Granted, my son; granted, also, that it might never affect you, she will not be able to forget the past. No, no, Herbert, I think the obstacles before you too insurmountable. I see so many things in the way, that my advice to you is, drive the feeling from your heart; dwell no more upon her; meet her as a friend, when you do meet her, but nothing more.”

“Oh, mother!”

“What, my son?”

“I cannot promise to do all this—she has too long lived in my heart; and when I met her the other day, I felt that without her the world must be a blank to me. But hark! fire!”

And Herbert sprang from his mother’s side, and in a few moments was arrayed in his fireman’s rig, and running with the hook and ladder company to which he belonged, toward the upper part of the city. And the cry of “fire! fire!” resounded through the streets, and the bells rang “fire! fire!” and the hurrying footsteps of the passers-by, and the rolling engines, and the shouts of the men as they urged each other on to greater speed, proclaimed the news that the devouring element was at work, and the fortunes and the lives of men in danger. Mrs. Jones looked from her window, and saw the crowd rolling up Broadway, and involuntarily addressed a prayer to Heaven that her dear son might be guarded from harm amid the dangerous warfare.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

IN all charity to the Misses H——, we cannot but think they regretted the severe stand which they had taken in the case of Gertrude Manners, when they found that for two days and nights she remained as unmoved by their discipline as ever. On the evening of the third day, the elder lady herself called at the door of the room in which she was confined, and asked, not in a stern voice—“Whether she was not yet willing to acknowledge her error?”

The answer was—“Miss H——, I have already acknowledged that I regret having violated your rules; but feel that I am unjustly detained under your roof. I am not willingly under your control, and never shall be again.”

No reply was made, and the poor girl was left to pass another night by herself; and yet, not entirely by herself, for after the house was still, and all had retired, with noiseless step, a female, wrapped in a blanket and only a pillow to support her head, laid herself down by the door, and through the crack at its sill, whispered words of cheer to the lone girl. It was the faithful Betsey.

Gertrude had not suffered, either, for want of good things, which Betsey’s pockets always held, she being still allowed to carry her bread and water to the prisoner. The key was kept by Miss H—— herself. That the latter was much troubled by the obstinate resistance of the young lady, there could be no doubt; for when Betsey brought back the key, after the evening meal of the third day, the lady, noticing that the kind-hearted girl had been weeping, asked her, rather roughly—

“What is the matter, Betsey?”

“There is nothing, madam.”

“You have been weeping; does Miss Manners feel bad?”

“I cannot say, my leddy; but she looks sad, and is no given to say a word. You will not fault me, my leddy,

that my heart breaks for her. She has no parents, and her kin, I hear, are no the kindest."

"Why does she not submit, then, to our just rules? She is obstinate—headstrong—perverse! She troubles me much, Betsey. I wish her no harm, but my rules must be obeyed."

"No doubt, my leddy, no doubt—sure am I you would not willingly harm a hair of her head."

Gertrude was not idle during her seclusion. Her thoughts were busy, very busy. Her past life, so far as she could remember it, was reviewed, step by step, down to the present moment. The character and doings of those among whom she had been cast, were closely scrutinized; and more especially did she dwell upon the strange conduct of him who had been appointed her guardian. Of late, as we have already seen, her eyes had been opened in reference to his treatment of her. Some things which he had said, and some part of his actions had, indeed, affected her at the time, but, although their impression was unfavorable, she had allowed them to pass unnoticed; nor was she conscious of having given him any reason to think that she understood their import, or resented their insinuations. But he had attempted to undermine her faith in God, and to confound, in her young mind, the principles of right and wrong. He had endeavored to make her believe that virtue and vice were but mere terms, used without much meaning by most people; and that pleasure here was, after all, the highest good. All this, she now clearly saw. She had not been so conscious, at the time, to what ends his speeches and his reasonings tended. A shudder thrilled her whole frame as these things, in their freshness, came back to mind. "And must she again be subject to such an influence? Not for worlds! No power on earth should force her to it. There must be some way by which, in our free land, a lone female can be shielded from the fangs of a bad man; and if this trial to which, by his means, she had been subjected, was to be the test of her resistance, she would hold out to the bitter end." How she should break the fetters, she knew not, nor to whom she should apply for aid; but

time would reveal a refuge for her. She thought, likewise, of Herbert. She had loved him—that, she was not ashamed to acknowledge to herself. He was virtuous and noble-minded. He had once loved her—that she knew, for he had told her so. That, for some reason, his feelings had changed, his conduct at their last interview clearly revealed. She would not try to win him back. He, no doubt, wished her to understand that the past was but a dream of childhood. He was now in a higher position—the world was opening before him in its brightness. Others more fascinating had, no doubt, taken her place in his heart. Perhaps he connected her, in his mind, with the poor child who once almost looked up to him for charity, whom he had relieved and comforted, and who would ever, in his memory, be associated with squalid poverty and degradation! No, no! nothing could tempt her to run the risk—to venture on such a danger as that remembrance might entail. If he should ever need her aid, the last fraction of her property should be at his disposal—herself, never!

Such thoughts rioted within her young heart, and Gertrude during the last three days had gained the experience of years. Her resolution was now that of womanhood. Whenever the climax should be reached and this petty tyranny under which she was suffering brought to an end, she would go forth into a new world to seek new friends, and place herself beyond the power of all who either despised, neglected or oppressed her.

The hour of eleven had been struck by the clocks—she heard the faithful friend who had clung to her, softly recline herself at her door—a few whispered words passed between them, and then all was still. She retired to her cot, but sleep was not easily obtained. Not long after reclining, she became sensible of the smell of fire; but as an open fireplace was in her room, she attributed it to the smoke which the dampness of the night air forced down the chimney. It increased—she had no light nor the means of obtaining one, and as the difficulty grew more palpable she arose and looked from the window. The sky was overcast, but nothing met her view to create alarm. She whispered to Betsey, but the good

hearted girl was sleeping soundly, at rest from her cares and labors of the day. As she placed her face near to the joints of the door, she distinguished more clearly the smell of smoke; again she endeavored to wake the sleeping girl, but in vain; she dared not speak above a whisper, for fear, should there be no occasion for alarm, lest Betsey might be discovered and put to trouble for her sake. Perhaps she had become somewhat accustomed to the atmosphere of the room, but Gertrude fancied the smoke was not so perceptible as it had been, and wearied by her own past thoughts, she threw herself again upon her bed in the garments she had put on in rising, and, strange as it may appear, fell into a sound sleep. How long she remained so cannot now be known, but when she awoke it was by hearing a loud noise, and with the consciousness of being almost suffocated. She had the presence of mind to wrap something about her face, and springing up, beheld flames of fire streaking past the window. She seized the door knob and endeavored to force it open—she called loudly for help, but her voice was drowned by the noises below and around the house—weak, and trembling with affright, she sank upon her knees and cried to that God in whom her young heart trusted, and then became unconscious.

Herbert and his company were the first at the scene of conflagration, although every instant other companies were rushing up. All was confusion—young girls in their night dresses were running from the house, while others were, in the arms of strong men, borne off to places of safety. A young woman seized the arm of Herbert.

"Oh, Mr. Jones! for the love of your soul, save her—save the darling!"

"Who? what? where is she?"

"It is her own blessed self, Miss Gertrude, in the garret! Oh, save her! save her! the door is locked and the mistress is fainted and carried away, and the whole place is in a live blaze—for the love of mercy, up with your ladders."

Herbert did not wait to hear more, he sprang into the house, leaving his companions to adjust the ladders. Betsey, for it was she who had taken hold of him, ran

after him through the crowded entry and up the stairs, calling out that "there was no way to get up but by a ladder, for the stairs was in a living blaze!" He heeded not her warning—in a moment he was in the middle of fire and smoke. He saw the flames wrapping the stairs which led into the attic—they were yet, he thought, secure—he dashed through the burning element, and reached the landing, just before they fell with a crash far down upon the flight beneath.

A loud cry was now made below—the fallen stairs, with the rapid increase of the flames, compelling those who were attempting to follow Herbert, to a swift retreat. Two ladders had been raised to the only window in the attic—it was a large double dormer—and the noble firemen were speeding their way toward it—some with the hose, and others without anything to impede their progress up—being in haste to deliver their companion from his perilous situation. As the window was dashed in, a volume of dense smoke issued from the aperture. Through the suffocating vapor rushed the fearless men, and for a moment the noise in the street was hushed; but the breathless excitement was soon over, and a loud shout succeeded as a man was seen bearing in his arms a female. At once she was seized by those without, and several hands supported, as with slow but sure steps they descended from the giddy height.

Again a buzz of voices arose:

"There he is! there he is! but he is faint! he is helpless!"

It was Herbert—he had succeeded in finding the room, and snatching the precious burden in his arms, bore her to the window, and then sank exhausted—his companions were at hand, and, committing the lady to others, raised him from the floor and brought him to the outer air; a few inspirations revived him; he asked in a feeble tone:

"Does she live?"

Those who were aiding him knew not her condition, but they knew that a word of encouragement could do no harm.

"Oh, yes!" was the reply, "you have saved her life!"

"Thank God for that!"

In a moment more he was on the ladder, but strong arms were about him steadying his descent. As he reached the ground, the arms of Betsey clasped him.

"She is saved—she is living—the Lord be praised!"

Herbert, however, was unable to reply—his strength had been overtasked—he would have fallen, even with the arms of the kind girl about him, if he had not been seized by a stronger hand. He was pale as though life had departed, and as his friend, James Vanblarcom, supported him, he saw the blood trickling from his mouth. He was assisted into a carriage and immediately taken to his home.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

As an author must bear the responsibility of the story he commits to the public, both as to the influence of its principles and the manner in which it is told, it seems but resonable that he should be allowed the privilege of telling it in his own way; and if his judgment assures him that some particular scenes in the lives of those whose characters he is endeavoring to elucidate are such as can neither profit nor please the reader, he may certainly be allowed to pass them over. Taking this liberty with the work now before us, we ask the reader to walk with us on this very pleasant afternoon in May, 18—, upon the old Battery in New York. We do not mean the Battery of the present day. That beautiful promenade has changed—materially changed—since the date of our story. It was, at the time to which we refer, the resort of the elite of the great city. Ladies and children could then enjoy the beautiful panorama of water and land that spreads out from every point of view, and the fresh sea breeze, and the singing birds, and the cool shades which its trees afforded; and on summer afternoons, and mornings too, and when the moon was abroad, and her sweet light threw a tenfold charm on earth and water, did the gay and happy—and sometimes the stricken-hearted too—resort thither to enjoy the luxury of cool air and refreshing scenery.

Mr. Blagg did not often visit the Battery in the daytime—he was too much a man of business for that; but this afternoon he is there, and our friend William Ashton—his Willie—is by his side, and the old man is leaning on his arm. They are looking down the bay, at a fleet of vessels coming up from the Narrows, toward the harbor; some just from the ocean, and some from the little inland ports of Long Island and New Jersey.

The two gentlemen have taken seats upon one of the benches, and the younger one has opened a spy-glass

which he has in hand, and is intently looking in the direction of the vessels. We will take our seat beside them, and listen to their talk. They are saying nothing that the reader has not a good right to hear.

"What do you think, Willie? Is it the Maria?"

"I cannot decide yet, uncle. The ship appears about the size of the Maria, but she has not hoisted her private signal, or the wind there is so light that it cannot float."

"It will be some time before she gets in, if it is the ship, unless the breeze should freshen; but we must have patience. If he has only recovered his health, it will not matter much whether we see him an hour or two sooner or later. His last letter, you say, was very favorable."

"Yes, uncle, it was favorable on some accounts. His health, he said, was certainly good; he felt no weakness at his chest; his appetite was fair; and he thought when he once got to work again he should be as strong as ever. But, uncle, I have never doubted but he would recover his health. I believed he would had he remained here, although the voyage, and the climate of Madeira"—

"And their good wines!"

"Yes, the wines too, would expedite his recovery, certainly; but I never feared so much that he would not get his health here, as some of his friends did. But there were other reasons why I urged his going away."

"You have never hinted them to me before, Willie. What reasons had you? Private? Secrets? If so, don't tell them without you choose."

"They are secrets, no doubt, uncle, but you now ought to know them. You are certainly one of his very best friends. You and I, with all who loved him, and were so anxious about his health, supposed that the injuries he received at that fire, and the exertions he made to save the life of Miss Manners, were the sole cause of his loss of health; but there were other causes, or, at least, one other cause."

"What was it, Willie?"

"Herbert has very strong feelings."

"I know all that."

"He is very sensitive too, feels quickly."

"You need not tell me that, either—know all about it."

"That young lady whom he rescued at the imminent risk of his own life, was one to whom he had been for years greatly attached."

"Hoot, toot, Willie! Nonsense! Several years greatly attached! Why, Willie, he is but twenty-two now! Several years! Baby love never kills folks."

"Well, uncle, it is so. It is a very peculiar case."

"I suppose so—just like yours—very peculiar. Oh, dear me! But go on, tell your story."

"It seems—I know it now, but Herbert did not know it, nor does he yet—that Miss Manners had not the least idea who her deliverer was. She knew he was one of the firemen, and feeling grateful for the efforts he had made, as soon as she recovered, requested her guardian to present him with quite a large sum of money. Miss Manners having in some way got the idea that the firemen all belonged to the poorer classes, she had not the most distant thought that Herbert was one of them. Doctor Weatherbee sent the money, inclosed to the chief engineer, as the most likely person to know who the individual was that saved her, and he handed it to Herbert. Under the circumstances, it was unfortunate Herbert took the money, and immediately sat down and wrote a receipt in full for all demands upon her, of what nature soever, at the same time saying that the money should be at once distributed among the needy; that he was so situated at present as to be able to do a kindness to any of his fellow creatures without being paid for it, and he hoped Miss Manners would feel perfectly relieved from all obligation she might have felt herself under, of that nature, to him. He considered the debt cancelled."

"Full of spunk! He's got enough of it. Willie, put up your glass again; try if you can see anything."

The glass was again presented, but without success.

"She comes along slowly, uncle—we shall know before a great while."

"There, go on with your story. It's a queer story at any rate, and I don't see clearly, yet, what it has to do with



Herbert's sickness. He was not fool enough to let that worry him!"

"I don't know about that, uncle. You see, Herbert was very fond of her, he had loved her so long!"

"Hoot, toot! He is more of a man than to let such a trifle as a young girl's like or dislike worry him."

"But he loved her so, uncle! His whole heart was wrapt up in her."

"Fiddle-sticks!"

William felt the case to be rather hopeless. He knew his uncle had never been in love, and therefore was unable to enter into the feelings of one who had suffered from that cause. He concluded, therefore, to turn the subject, and was on the point of asking some question about stocks, when Mr. Blagg interrupted him by asking

"Why under the moon did not the foolish girl, if she cared anything for him, just sit down, and in a plain, off-hand, business way, write him a note, saying that there was an error in account between them, and show were it was, and set it all straight?"

"I have found out lately, uncle, why that was not done. In the first place, she was very weak and nervous; she had not fully recovered from the shock her system received from the terrible scene of the fire; and his letter had such an effect upon her as almost to destroy her reason. But that was not all. It was just then that terrible affair took place with her guardian. Vanblarcom has told you about that. How that villain entrapped her, and through pretence of taking her to her home at Kirkland Place, attempted to carry her to a vile residence of his own, in the outskirts of New York. He was balked, however, in his infamous purpose by the very servant whom he had trained to wickedness, and upon whom he thought he could rely. The fellow gave notice to an Irish girl who was much attached to Miss Manners, and she went to Vanblarcom, and he and old Hayes surprised him before he reached his vile den—rescued her, took her to her friends, and carried him to the police. Nothing, however, could be proved against him, so he got clear; but the effect upon her was most disastrous. She did not realize her danger until the carriage was stopped

and the gentleman arrested; but when the truth broke upon her, she fainted away, and for some months her life was almost despaired of."

Mr. Blagg's cane was raised, as if in the act of giving a terrible blow to somebody.

"I've heard of it—the villain! They should have beaten him on the spot—beaten him to a jelly. I told Van so when I first heard the story. The infamous wretch!"

"He has received his deserts since, uncle. You know his wife died very suddenly—very strangely! People began to suspect foul play, and were about to arrest him, when all at once, he was missing. His body was finally found in the woods with a pistol lying beside it. He had destroyed himself. Poor, miserable man! In four years he had squandered by gambling and other vicious habits his wife's fortune, and when he died he had not a dollar he could call his own. 'The way of transgressors is hard.' Uncle, how true that is!"

"True enough—true enough."

"It has been much better, though, for the rest of the family, that he is out of the way. Miss Manners now lives with her elder aunt at the old place, and a new face seems to have been given to everything around there. Oh, if things could only be arranged between Herbert and her, how happy it would be!"

"Willie, Willie, you know nothing about it. Keep your fingers out of that pie; don't meddle with it."

"Oh but uncle, I am very sure they love one another; the only thing I fear is, that the young man who now lives with them at Kirkland Place, is also fond of Miss Manners. He is a fine fellow, a noble-hearted fellow. He is rich too, or will be, for Miss Kirkland is to make him her heir; he is a distant relative, and bears their name. Poor Herbert! I fear, if such a thing should take place, and Miss Manners should marry that young man, as some say she has consented to, it will kill Herbert—I know it will."

"Hoot-toot, Willie! love don't kill folks; suppose now that your Fanny, whom you expect soon to marry, should just turn and give you the cold-shoulder; just suppose

it should be so; is it going to make your heart stop beating—or"—

"Oh uncle, uncle, such a thing could never be. I would sooner believe the sun will never rise again; much sooner. Oh uncle, don't talk about such a thing."

"Oh, you poor foolish boy! Just put up that glass again; I am sure you can see something now."

"True, true, uncle; red, black, and white. I can see clearly; the breeze is increasing too; she will be up before long now."

"Where will she come in—at Murray's wharf?"

"Yes, at Murray's wharf."

"Then let us be walking slowly along; I feel a little fidgety; I want once more to get a sight of that boy."

"Does Herbert know of his mother's marriage yet, do you suppose, uncle?"

"He knew she was to be married, and no doubt they have written to him; but whether *he* knows or not, *they* know it, and a happier couple ain't to be found in the country, nor a happier family. Bless your soul, Willie, the children all nestle together as easily as though they all belonged to the same brood. Our Mr. Granite's house is a *home* now—a true home. No stiffness, no scolding, no cross looks. All peace and harmony and love. And a welcome is waiting for Herbert there, such as he never had before. They all seem to feel that he has been the main cause of their happiness."

"I suppose he has, in one way or another."

"Yes, yes, so it is, Willie. Things are strung on to one another—we don't always see how at first; but when we come to unravel the whole concern, we find one thing tied to another all the way to the end. And that is what I want you to remember, Willie: that the first step you take in any transaction should be carefully considered. A great many things you don't think of at the time, may grow out of it. Come, let us walk a little faster; I want to be there when she gets in."

They reached the wharf, however, some time before the good ship *Maria* hauled in, and Mr. Blagg had an opportunity for quite a rest, which he enjoyed by plant-

ing himself at his ease on one of the bales of cotton lying there. He had not been seated long before he called out to Willie—

"Our Mr. Granite—sure as fate."

"Where, uncle?"

"Away down there on the end of the pier. He means to give Herbert the first salute. Well, let him; he deserves to have that privilege. He is his father now, and never father loved a son better than he loves that boy. I shan't hobble down among the carts. You go along, Willie, I will wait here."

Mr. Blagg had to wait much longer than he anticipated, and began to feel very uneasy. He arose from his resting-place, and amused himself by walking up and down a small clearing on one side of the dock, out of the way of the carts. At length, he perceives a company descending from the ship and threading their way amidst the confusion on the dock. But what does it mean? Our Mr. Granite is walking with a lady leaning on his arm. Another lady is leaning on the arm of a gentleman, by whose side his Willie is walking, and talking and smiling, and apparently very happy; and Mr. Blagg exclaims to himself: "Women! more women! Mischief again of some kind, I'll warrant."

"My good old friend, how glad I am to see you!"

Mr. Blagg did not speak; but his hands were very busy, shaking with all their might. It was Herbert, and he was looking better, much better—as well as could be expected after a rough voyage. The ladies were introduced, first, Madam Spinola, who was escorted by Mr. Granite; then Miss Spinola, who was hanging on the arm of Herbert, apparently very happy, and turning her dark brilliant eyes up to him with an expression which Mr. Blagg did not exactly know how to construe. She was, as Mr. Blagg afterward said, "terribly handsome." A very singular description of beauty, certainly; but it embodied Mr. Blagg's ideas of her. Perhaps he meant that she was a beauty; but such a one as a man might have trouble with if he were not very careful.

"Mr. Blagg," said Mr. Granite, "you will go home with us, and help give this boy a welcome?"

"Not now, sir—not now; some business at the store, yet."

"Come this evening, then."

"Will, if I can; thank you, sir."

William Ashton was now on hand with a carriage, and Madam Spinola and Miss Spinola, and Mr. Granite and Herbert—with a genteel-looking mulatto-girl mounted beside the driver—were soon on their way, while Mr. Blagg and Willie proceeded on foot, one toward his home, and the other bound for the store. As they were about to separate, Mr. Blagg takes William by his coat-button, and looks him steadily in the eye.

"What does it all mean, Willie?"

"What, uncle? What do you refer to?"

"I mean—I mean—the women. Who are they? And what are they here for?"

"I cannot say, uncle. They seem to be friends of Herbert; under his care, at any rate. The young lady is very handsome, very; do you not think so?"

"He hasn't married her, I hope?"

"Oh, certainly not; he introduced her, you know, as Miss Spinola. So far as I can understand, they have been very kind to him, and"—

"Of course, he must be very kind to them—tit for tat—what do they want here?"

"I cannot say, uncle."

"The young one, I think, wants a husband. Did you see what a look she gave our Herbert?"

"I did not notice anything peculiar."

"Perhaps not; you young men that are handsome or rich, are so accustomed to have the girls winking and smiling and cooing at you, that you don't think it peculiar. Oh no; not at all. But you will see—you will see. Well, good bye; be at our Mr. Granite's this evening?"

"Oh, yes; I must go there to wait upon Miss Manners."

"You don't say! She ain't though—she ain't there?"

"I will tell you how that has happened. You know Fanny and she have become quite intimate, and they have come to the city together to purchase some articles in the dry goods line. What makes you smile, uncle?"

"Oh, nothing—nothing peculiar; I was only thinking—go on."

"Fanny, you know, thinks Gertrude can select some articles better than she can, so they have come down together, and are staying at Vanblarcom's, and I promised to go with them to Mr. Granite's this evening for a call. I do not intend to say a word about Herbert's having arrived."

"A pretty kettle of fish there will be, Willie! But you young ones love mischief. Remember, as you mix your sauce, so you must eat it, whether it is *peculiar* or not. I can't stop any longer, good bye to you."

## CHAPTER XXIX.

It was a very pleasant room, that front parlor in the house of James Vanblarcom, No. — Broome street. It had a neat home air about it. There was neither in the furnishing of the room, nor the articles that furnished it, anything to attract particular notice—nothing fine or showy, or costly. The carpet was plain; the chairs were plain, but easy to sit on; the table between the windows was of mahogany, without any carving, and the pier glass over it of moderate size, with a narrow, smooth frame. The sofa had a neat chintz cover, and looked like repose itself; and seated on that sofa were two of nature's most lovely specimens—two young ladies nearly of an age, or near enough to be able to sympathize in all the feelings which agitate lovely women of twenty or thereabout. We have styled them "most lovely specimens," and truly they were so; although the beauty of each was of a different cast. One might very properly have been called queenly in appearance, not only for the graceful ease with which her fine form reposed upon the couch, but for a certain dignified expression which her countenance displayed, whether a smile played around her finely arched lips, or an air of serious thought spread over it; there was no hauteur about it; its most settled aspect was that of sadness. It was not a countenance that one could fear, and yet there was an earnestness in the expression of those hazel eyes, softened by their heavy lashes, that would be likely to keep the trifler at a distance. The other not quite so tall—that could easily be noticed even as they sat—her features not so faultless—her air less penetrating—her form as graceful—the expression of her countenance more placid—the smile came more readily—the eye had a softer cast—its beams tell more plainly than those of the other, what is working at the heart; no anger could ever be displayed by those features; that eye must weep when the heart is moved;

it can never be stern; it must rest on some object in which every feeling of the heart trusts, and where it knows those feelings are most faithfully and tenderly cherished.

They are the only persons in the room, and are, to all appearances, arrayed for company; they are, no doubt, expecting to go out for the evening, as shawls and bonnets are lying on one end of the sofa.

The room is well lighted, and a very pretty picture the two would make could they be daguerreotyped as they sit there, each with a hand clasped in one of the other, their countenances in perfect repose, or more properly, perfectly free from restraint.

The latter, and perhaps we may say the most beautiful of the two, has fixed her eyes a moment on the calm, sweet face of her companion, and she speaks:

"Dear Fanny, you are very happy—are you not?"

"Happy! Oh yes, I am! Ought I not to be, dear Gertrude?"

"Surely you ought! You have every reason to be so."

"Not more—not much more than you have; only perhaps for one thing."

"Your Willie!" and as Gertrude Manners said this—for it was Gertrude and our Fanny Marshall who were thus enjoying a *tête à tête*—a smile passed over her features; but only passed—it went on the instant.

"Yes, you are right, Gertrude. I cannot but feel that in the gift of him to me, God has blessed me beyond many—very many. What could I ask for, besides? But why do you sigh, dear Gertrude? You have the love of a noble heart, too. Surely Robert Kirkland is no common man. He is handsome—that to be sure is not of so much consequence, and yet no one can look at his features without thinking of a noble, generous, honest heart, and I believe he has all that."

"Cousin Robert has, I believe; yes, I know he has most excellent qualities; he is all you have imagined. But what if?"

"You do not love him!"

"I have not said that! I am not indifferent to his

noble character, and his treatment of me commands my sincere respect. But, dear Fanny, the heart not only 'knoweth its own bitterness,' it has its own tastes and fancies; it cannot always yield even to that which is in itself most estimable and most attractive."

"Gertrude, I think I know your difficulty; you cannot love easily; your heart can only be touched by one peculiar set of influences; they must be in combination too; but when touched, oh, how ardently you will love!"

Gertrude did not reply at the moment; she put her arm around the neck of her lovely companion, leaned her head upon her shoulder, and then kissing her, said:

"Oh, Fanny, how is it that you have thus divined my nature? You are right; my heart once truly touched—once kindled into love, cannot—no it never, never can be warmed into life by aught beside that which first struck the spark."

"Has your heart ever been thus touched, dear Gertrude? And—— But pardon me, I should not have asked that question. I do not wish to intrude upon your confidence; I did not think when I asked it."

"You need not apologize, dear Fanny; I have the most perfect confidence in your love and truthfulness, and may, perhaps, one day let you into some secret which I have not yet revealed to any; but it is a long story, and now, at least, we shall not have time."

"Whenever you please, and whatever you please; my only desire for knowing your past experience, or your present feelings, is, I truly think, only that I may know better how to sympathize with you, and how to comfort you."

"And you shall know all at some future time—all my heart. I have such perfect confidence in you that it will be, at least I think it will, a relief to unburden my feelings to you; I have never yet done so to any human being."

A ringing of the street door bell at once put a stop to the conversation, and the young ladies arose and began making preparations for departure. As the door of their room was opened by the servant, the countenances of

both ladies assumed an air of surprise, and that of Gertrude's was highly flushed. A tall, handsome young man approached, bowed, and offered his hand, which she readily took, saying as she did so:

"Why, cousin! You in town? This is quite unexpected!"

"You must charge the fact to Aunt Lizzie; she seemed to be strongly impressed with the idea that I ought to be here, that you might have a humble servant at your command; and, to be honest, I felt but too ready to fall in with her suggestion; part of the blame, therefore, if any is deserved, you must lay upon me."

"No blame is incurred, I assure you; but, truly, has no other cause brought you?"

"None whatever."

"And you must give me credit, Miss Manners," said William Ashton, "for bringing Mr. Kirkland here this evening. I wish to introduce him to the family we are about to visit, and have almost by main force brought him along. I find he is a very bashful man for one of his size—afraid of strangers, or pretends to be!"

"I can assure you, kind sir," said Gertrude, "that my cousin never pretends. Am I not correct?" appealing to young Kirkland.

"Thank you, cousin; I believe it is my endeavor to copy you as far as I can, and never say what I do not think or feel."

"I suppose it is my turn now to give thanks!"

"And when you have finished complimenting each other," said Mr. Ashton, "I would suggest that we be on our way; it is later than I designed it should be."

"I presume that has been my fault, Mr. Ashton; the ladies must not be permitted to suppose you would, without some good reason, fail in being punctual in an appointment with them; but, honestly, Cousin Gertrude, do you think I had better be one of your company this evening?"

"I do think so, and should be very happy to assist in your introduction to an old friend of mine, Mrs. Granite, and also to her family. I think you will be gratified."

"I am at your service, then."

Miss Fanny had not entered into the conversation per-



sonally; she was absorbed in looking at the gentleman who had accompanied her Willie, and also in watching the countenance of Gertrude. She had never been more struck with the fine appearance of young Kirkland, nor with his easy, modest demeanor. He was certainly, as to externals, all that a lady even of a critical taste could ask. To the good qualities of his heart Gertrude had assented, and she surely must have had a fair opportunity to prove them. Why could she not love him? But the thought occurred to her, that love is not bound, or more properly, induced, by any external advantages, or internal good qualities, of themselves alone. Her Willie might not, in the judgment of many, stand comparison with Mr. Kirkland as to appearance; but he was her Willie, and there was no other in the world like *him*—not for her. And so she let the subject drop from her mind. Gertrude knew her own heart. She may, perhaps, love him yet, or yield her hand to him; she loves him now—so Fanny judges from little things which others have not noticed.

Introductions are not easily accomplished on paper, and the reader must endeavor by his or her own imagination, to walk round the family circle collected in the spacious rooms of Mr. and Mrs. Granite, with the little company we have just seen depart from the house of James Vanblarcom. We must not suppose, however, that when Gertrude Manners was announced, that all the members of the circle above spoken of retained their seats, and gave a mere formal inclination of their head or person, as she passed around; indeed, she performed no such circuit whatever, for Mr. Granite and Ellen were immediately embracing her, and Mr. Granite, with both hands, giving her a hearty welcome, and Ellen was trying to lead her off from her parents, for some special purpose, into the other room, through the open folding-doors, for quite a company was there, too. But before she could accomplish it, a young gentleman was seen coming from that room, and Mrs. Granite just then whispered to Gertrude—

“Did you know Herbert had arrived?”

Ere the young lady could reply, Herbert was before

her; a smile on his well-known features—a very slight smile—and his hand presented. She did not, of course, refuse it. Neither spoke; their tongues seemed to be paralyzed. Gertrude was deadly pale, and it required all the exertion she could possibly make to retain her position. It was well for her that Ellen still held her arm; and it was well for both of them that the lively, happy young lady—for Ellen was a young lady now—kept on talking to one and the other of them.

“Don’t you think he looks well? does he not look as he used to—only handsomer?” in a whisper to Gertrude. “Herbert, what ails you? you seem to have lost your tongue!”

“Oh no, my dear; only you keep yours going so constantly, one has no chance. Miss Manners, had you not better take a seat? You are not well!”

As Herbert said this, his old earnest look came back; that look which always carried his heart with it. Gertrude saw it; her feelings were touched as by an electric shock. Had she been alone, she must have wept aloud; she was intensely excited. But it would not do to manifest it then. So she replied to his expression of anxiety with as firm a voice as she could:

“Thank you, I am quite well, and am very happy to see that you have regained your health.”

“Will you allow me, then, to introduce you to a friend of mine.” And offering his arm, he led her up to a little group in the back room. Ellen, still walking beside her, whispered again:

“Now for a Spanish beauty. She is going to be my sister.”

Miss Spinola and Mr. Blagg were busily engaged in conversation, as they came up—the latter asking all the questions he could think of respecting the vineyards of Madeira, and the process of making wine and of carrying it to market; and the young lady conversed pleasantly, and seemed gratified at being able to impart information which the gentleman had not been able to gather before; and especially was she pleased in doing so, because he had been introduced to her by Mr. Jones, as an old and very particular friend. This being the case, it

would not be surprising if neither she nor Mr. Blagg had noticed the interview between Herbert and the young lady he was now leading up to them; not, indeed, until she heard his voice saying—

“Adelle, allow me to introduce a friend of mine—Miss Manners: Miss Spinola, Miss Manners.”

Gertrude had almost lost her self-possession. She accosted the young lady as well as she could, but it was utterly out of her power to assume her usual self-command. She could not smile while her heart was sick. Miss Spinola, on the contrary, was all affability—“was so happy to be introduced to a friend of Mr. Jones!” looking at him, as she spoke, with a peculiar arch manner, her bright black eyes sparkling with animation, and her very pretty face all aglow with smiles; her voice was very musical, and the foreign accent scarcely perceptible. She was small of stature, finely and delicately formed; her complexion somewhat darker than that of the ladies around her, but not more so than that of a brunette of our own country. As soon as might be, Gertrude, after saluting Mr. Blagg, retired with Ellen to a seat, and Miss Spinola resumed her conversation with that gentleman.

No sooner had Gertrude relinquished the arm of Herbert, than the latter was touched on his shoulder by his friend, William Ashton.

“Come with me. I wish to make you acquainted with young Kirkland, with whom your father is talking in the other room.”

“Kirkland! who is he?”

“A truly fine fellow—one who, I think, you will like—a distant relative of Miss Manners, and an heir to the old lady’s estate. He lives at Kirkland Place now, since the death of the doctor.”

“Is Doctor Weatherbee dead?”

“Oh, yes, and his wife, too; great changes up there—not like the same place. I will tell you all about things, when I have time. Come, you will like him, I know you will, and he is very anxious to see you, I have told him so much about you.”

Herbert did not seem peculiarly solicitous for an inter-

view; he had already been slightly introduced; he did not then, however, hear the name of the gentleman, being, at the time, on the way to speak with Miss Manners. He remembered now that the gentleman had colored slightly when his (Herbert’s) name was mentioned, and seemed disposed to stop and enter into conversation; but Herbert had passed on, to greet his old friend. At the solicitation of Ashton, however, he allowed himself now to be led up for a more special introduction.

The greeting, by young Kirkland, was quite hearty, and Herbert could not help acknowledging to himself that he was a person of very pleasant address, and of a remarkably agreeable countenance—an open countenance that was highly calculated to win one’s confidence.

The young men were of a height, and in form very similar. They both stood very erect, and their step alike firm and manly. Both were, no doubt, handsome; although, perhaps, by most persons, a distinction would be made, at the first glance, in favor of Kirkland.

They were a well-matched pair, however; and while thus standing, as they did for some time, engaged in conversation, many eyes in the room were turned that way, some whispering, “What fine looking fellows!” and others, “How much alike in form and stature!”

“And now, Kirkland,” said Ashton, coming up and taking his arm, “I must ask you to go with me across the room; I want to make another acquaintance for you—a lady, though, this time.”

“Please, my good fellow—please, do excuse me; you know I am no ladies’ man; I am very happy here with Mr. Jones.”

“I am glad of that; I think you will yet be fast friends; but you will have opportunities to see one another as much as you like in a few days; Mr. Jones is going with me soon up to ———.”

“Are you, indeed. I shall return home in a day or so, just as soon as Miss Manners will be ready. I came down to wait upon her, in attending to some little private business in which this young gentleman has a peculiar interest, although, I believe, he is not permitted to be an

attendant, and most happy shall I be to welcome you to Kirkland Place," taking the hand of young Jones as he said this. "We shall have fine times together, I hope. Come, Ashton; now I am at your service, if you insist upon it."

Herbert watched them a moment, and perceived that his sister Ellen was the lady in question, and that she was yet seated beside Gertrude. He then placed himself near Miss Marshall; he had never seen her before that evening; but they felt mutually acquainted through the introduction of *his* dear friend and *her* dear Willie; and there he sat, apparently without any wish to remove from his situation. He noticed that Mr. Kirkland and Ellen seemed well satisfied with each other; but no doubt the attraction, which detained the gentleman so long there, was its vicinity to one "upon whom he was in special attendance, and for which purpose he was then in the city."

There was, as usual on such occasions, quite a buzz of conversation, and a good share of apparent joyousness—for although it was by no means a party, or designed as such, yet there being many friends together, and the fact of Herbert's arrival that day added thereto, seemed to call for an extra entertainment; and before the evening had been spent, so many nice things were handed round, so various and of such excellent quality, that except for the want of tickets of invitation, and consequently appropriate dresses, it might have passed off for a party, and a very agreeable one, too.

All present, however—whatever appearance may have been put on—were not happy; not so happy as if they had not been among the number.

Mr. Blagg was not in good spirits; he had spent much of the evening in company with Miss Spinola and Herbert; he admired her conversational powers; he loved to hear the pretty tones of her voice; the old man was even more than usually captivated by her winning smile—it was so very pretty, and she appeared so girl-like, without affectation and without any airs! But—but, he did not fancy those very, very black eyes. They flashed so, at times! There must be fire back of them somewhere.

So he believed. Yet, all that would have been nothing to him, if she had not turned those eyes so often toward Herbert, and looked, as he said, "so peculiar that way," and even, once or twice, took hold of his arm, and whispered in his ear something which she did not wish others to hear. Verily, Mr. Blagg was sore at his heart—for he loved Herbert, and to tell the truth, he did not fancy her. "He was afraid," he said, "of her eyes;" and more than that, she had too much, altogether too much "trinkery" about her—in her ears and round her neck and on her arms and fingers and breast; and wherever anything could be hung or pinned, there was "trinkery" of some kind; if it was real, it must have cost a world of money; and if it was sham, she must be a fool, indeed!"

Thus Mr. Blagg felt, and thus he expressed himself to Willie the first chance he got.

Gertrude was not happy. She regretted most sincerely that she had not known of Herbert's arrival. She wished to see him—she designed to see him—her mind could not rest until she had an interview; but it must be in private, and this evening she resolved it should not be delayed; so watching her opportunity, as he was taking leave for the night, she said:

"I am staying at — Broome street, and shall be there for two days longer—could you conveniently call upon me at twelve, to-morrow?"

"Certainly, with great pleasure. I had designed to do so when I heard you were in town. Our meeting this evening has been unexpected, and very"—

He might have been going to add unsatisfactory; but he was interrupted just then, and Gertrude had to supply in her own mind the word which she thought he designed to use.

The anticipated interview between Gertrude and Herbert was one of deep interest to the former. Nothing but a sense of obligation to him, a sincere desire to do him justice, and to requite, so far as she could, the favors he had done to her, could have induced the step she had taken. Her womanly feelings protested against the act;

but Gertrude had become very resolute in what she thought was the path of duty. Her past experience had led her to judge and determine for herself; and in the present case, more especially, did she feel that no one could suitably advise or decide for her. She intended that the relation which they should hereafter sustain to each other should be clearly comprehended.

Four years had now elapsed since they first met; and four years at her period of life makes vast changes in the feelings and judgment of a female. She was now in the full strength of womanhood, and as she looked back upon these few years past, some of its scenes filled her with amazement, and sometimes with deep regret. She remembered how she had felt, and how she had acted. She could not accuse herself of wrong-doing, and at times she could not well see how, under the circumstances, she could have acted differently; and yet, as things had now resulted, she most heartily wished that her own feelings had been kept more entirely under subjection.

Another element had also been added to the causes already operating to disturb and distract her heart. Within the last year, and after she had returned to Kirkland Place as a permanent residence, a member had been added to the household, with whom, as of necessity, she was brought into close intimacy. A young man from a distant branch of the Kirkland family had accidentally stopped at their house on his way to the city. He knew that a connection existed between himself and them, and while passing through that vicinity, as a mere act of politeness, called to pay his respects. Doctor Weatherbee and his wife had but lately deceased, and Miss Lizzie Kirkland he found in an enfeebled state; the trials of life which had for some time been thickening around her had taken a strong hold of her physical frame; and for the greater part of the time she was confined to her room by indisposition. Robert Kirkland—for that was the name of the young man—at his call made a very favorable impression upon her, and at her earnest solicitation, on his return home, he made a longer visit. His personal appearance, as we have said, was commanding, his manners most courteous and agreeable; his disposition seemed

very amiable, and a cheerfulness that was perfectly natural, together with good conversational powers, caused his presence, while there, to give a life to the dull old mansion that seemed never to have been enjoyed there before. He was not absolutely poor, but his parents were in plain circumstances; he had not yet entered upon a business for life, and was on the point of going to the far West to locate upon a large tract of land belonging to his father. Miss Lizzie had wealth; it could do her but little good now; and her life, in all human probability, would not be extended beyond a few years. He was of her own kindred, bore the name of her father, and she resolved not only to make him her heir, but, on condition of his remaining by her and taking the management of her property, to settle at once upon him a handsome independence. He could offer no argument against such a proposition, and the affair was soon arranged. It had proved so far a most fortuitous event. His character, as it became more fully developed amid the home scenes of life, was all that could be wished for. He was not elated by prosperities so unexpectedly showered upon him, deported himself with dignity, gained the good will of all the household and neighborhood, managed business matters with judgment, and demonstrated to the satisfaction of all concerned, that he was worthy of the trust which had been reposed in him.

Gertrude had, as we have said, taken up her residence with her aunt permanently. The estate had fallen to Gertrude as part of her inheritance; but she had assured her aunt that no change should ever be made in the domestic arrangements. It was her wish to be under her aunt's control in that respect; and while the latter lived, Kirkland Place must be considered by her as her own property and under her own management. With this the old lady was content; and when Robert Kirkland was installed at the head of the family, it was with Gertrude's consent and approbation.

It could scarcely be supposed, however, that a young man, situated as he then was, his heart free from engagement to any other, should be constantly in such intimate relationship to one possessed of so many attractions, as

clustered about Miss Gertrude, and not be captivated. He soon felt the power of her charms, and but for the peculiarity of their situation, would early have made a confession of his love and sought her consent. His mind, however, was too refined and delicate not to be sensible that such a step, unless most sure to be crowned with success, would make the situation of them both, if not absolutely unpleasant, very embarrassing. He, therefore, had hitherto forbore to make any such declaration. He was attentive to any wish she expressed; ready to fall in with any plan she proposed for recreation or improvement; consulted her taste in the arrangement of anything within or without the premises that came properly under her jurisdiction; was untiring in every effort to make her life agreeable; and in every way that he could possibly do it without openly professing his love, manifested to her what were his feelings. Such, however, had been the peculiar manner of Gertrude toward him, and so guarded her words and conduct, that his sensitive heart was able to detect no true sign that her affection had been won. He believed she respected him—he had every token from her, of that nature, he could ask—and that she had a sincere regard for him. She never shunned his presence, nor made light of his attentions, nor did she fear to ask favors from him, nor manifest any embarrassment, when for hours or days they would be thrown entirely alone together. She called him Cousin Robert, and he called her Cousin Gertrude, and they were almost as intimate as brother and sister.

How much the heart of Gertrude was touched, was unknown to any but herself. The past of her life had given her some lessons she intended to profit by, and perhaps she was more on her guard in hiding her emotions, from the fact that she had, since arriving at mature age, suffered so much in reviewing the scenes which had passed between herself and Herbert. Whether, had Robert Kirkland exposed his true feelings and whispered to her ear the tale of his love, and offered his devoted heart, she might not have yielded, perhaps she herself could not have told—for the burning words from the heart of a lover, a true lover, have a melting, entrancing power, and she would

have known, she would have believed that the words he spoke were words of truth. She has hitherto been spared this test.

Thus was she situated when again she is thrown, most unexpectedly to herself, into the company of Herbert Jones. A link yet binds her to him; she has felt its hold upon her, even unto the scene of the last evening; for although the letter which he wrote might have justified her in considering whatever tie there had been between them broken, still there were allowances to be made; she knew, or she thought she did, how sensitive was his heart; how alive to the fact of the disparity in their circumstances. It had been unfortunate that the mistake should have occurred; and it would have been rectified but for hindrances she could not prevent. "It is too late, now! He has forgotten the past; a new tie has been entwined about his heart!" Those few fatal words his sister had whispered in her ear have dissolved the charm. But a duty remained to be performed; justice must be done to herself and to him, and then that page in her life obliterated—cast forever away!

Gertrude had arrayed herself as she might have done for any common visitor. She had no desire to captivate. It was a matter of business merely upon which she was to meet an old friend. As such she tried to make herself believe it was; and when the ring at the door announced his arrival, she was much more calm and self-possessed than she herself could have imagined, had the event transpired a day sooner.

Herbert had altered much in appearance. He had been abroad for the last eighteen months; had been engaged in business of much responsibility; for although his chief design in spending some months in Madeira was the acquisition of health, yet extensive orders had been sent to him and consignments of goods for that market; so that his stay there was not only a benefit to his health, but he had realized some very handsome commissions. The peculiar cares attendant upon business in a foreign land, and where all responsibility devolved upon himself alone, had given a more manly cast to his countenance. He was no longer the fair complexioned, mild-faced



youth. A more sober, and perhaps a sadder look was manifest. But, without doubt, he was now a handsome man.

With Gertrude it made little difference now. Perhaps she did not notice much change. Her thoughts were more generally taken up with the boy of eighteen—with his feeling heart, his mild eye, his pleasant voice, and his very kind manner. It was well for her, no doubt, that there had been a change in externals, since so great a change had taken place in the emotions of the heart.

As he had come at Gertrude's request, the duty, of course, devolved upon her to state the object for which she desired the interview; and fearing the strength of her own resolution, she lost no time, after a few usual questions and answers had passed, in making the revelation.

"My apology, Mr. Jones,"—oh, how the sound of his own name, thus for the first time pronounced by her in his hearing, grated upon his ear, and at once waked up past thoughts and visions—"for making the request I did last evening, is, that injustice having been done both to you and to myself, I might have an opportunity, by a personal private interview, to correct the error which has been committed, and place myself on that true ground, where I shall ever wish to be in your estimation."

"My dear Miss Manners,"—Herbert's interruption was quite unexpected, and the manner of his address thrilled Gertrude, and yet she almost felt disposed to resent his familiarity; her countenance certainly assumed, for the instant, a more serious aspect—"I know to what you refer. I have been made acquainted, through my mother, with all the facts in reference to it. You need give yourself no concern whatever. The apology is due from me. I, after all, I find, was the wrong-doer, and had you not invited me here, I should have taken the liberty of calling upon you, that I might tell you how grieved and mortified I am that I ever wrote as I did; and I now most earnestly ask you to pardon that, as you have, in days past, so kindly forgiven former obliquities. May I hope you will do so?"

This was an unthought of change to the whole affair; and for a moment Gertrude was at fault for a reply.

"I hope you do not think that I could have anticipated any such result, or that I had any wish besides that of throwing off from myself a charge of which I know myself to be innocent."

"I do not. You are blameless in every particular; and all I wish to know and to feel in reference to the matter is, that you are able to overlook, to pardon, to put away from your mind the remembrance of that letter. You have known, surely, something of my weakness on certain points? Can you not think of it as a weakness—the weakness of a friend—and pardon it as such?"

"That is settled, then. It shall never more come up as a subject of memory. It shall be as an event that never occurred; there let it rest. And now to the other great matter that bears upon my mind. To you I have been, at last, besides all my other obligations, indebted for my life!"

Gertrude dared not speak further. She felt her heart filling. Her emotions might overpower her; and not for any earthly consideration would she manifest her feelings now. Herbert replied:

"And would you, in any way, take from me that one passing thought—the one thing which, if for nothing else, I can thank God that I have lived? Oh, will you not let me enjoy that one consolation, and be willing that I, even I, should have been the one to rescue you from danger, when, had my life been the sacrifice, it would most cheerfully have been given?"

Gertrude was but a woman, after all. Her heart could not stand this. She felt that she must retire, or expose the very feelings she was solicitous to conceal. She was anxious, most intensely anxious, to close the interview. Herbert seemed to anticipate her feelings; he arose and offered his hand.

"I may, then, in parting from you—and, I suppose, forever—I may hope you will never regret that Providence has permitted me to be an instrument, in any way, for your rescue from danger. Do let me have that assurance?"

"I cannot withhold the assurance of what you have done—of *all that you have done*—if I would."

"You would not if you could? Do say that!"

"No, no, no! I would not!"

Herbert hastened from the room, and from the house. He was in a state of feeling such as he had not experienced for many months. Gertrude had not been displaced from his heart, as he supposed. Alas! that he had ever seen her again; that he had heard her voice; that he had been witness to her emotions! She could not hide her heart from him. Herbert, amid all the pleasant things which surround him, is most wretched.

Gertrude went to her room and wept, in the bitterness of her spirit.

## CHAPTER XXX.

THERE was quite a stir among all the friends of William Ashton, for the time had arrived when he was to take unto himself his dear Fanny, and remove into the large and commodious establishment which had had been in a course of preparation for many months past.

It was in anticipation of this event that Fanny and Miss Gertrude Manners had made a visit to the city. Their errand having been accomplished, they were escorted home by young Ashton, as Mr. Kirkland found, after his arrival in New York, business of consequence, which would necessarily detain him some days longer. What his business was, he did not say, but he found time to spend many hours with Herbert Jones, to whom he seemed to have become quite attached. They were indeed of similar tastes, and on comparing views and feelings, as persons of their age are apt to do, they found so much in common, as subjects upon which they judged alike, that their intercourse became every day more and more agreeable. Confidence is natural to us in the earlier portions of life, and friendships formed then are almost necessarily connected with, if not strengthened by, a mutual revelation of past experience and present circumstances. The heart, then, pants for sympathy, whether in its joys or sorrows. It has not yet learned, through the defection of false friends, to cloister its own secrets, and bear the bitter burden alone. How far this newly formed friendship brought out the peculiar experience of each to the knowledge of the other, it were useless to inquire now; its results will have a serious influence on the development of our narrative. Kirkland, too, had become intimate with the family of Mr. Granite, and was a constant visitor there during his stay.

Herbert had been anticipating a short visit, with William Ashton, to the family of the Marshalls; but when William left the city, he, for reasons which he could not,

or did not think proper to explain, declined going. Doubtless, it would have been very embarrassing for Gertrude and himself, after their recent interview, to be thrown together on a journey in the same conveyance. Herbert had no wish to recall the past. The sooner he could banish from his mind every place and circumstance connected with her who had once, and for so long a period, dwelt in his heart, the better for his peace. That she had still too strong a hold there, he had, to his surprise and sorrow, been made aware. He would not again venture upon such an experiment. To William, Herbert had never committed the secret of his attachment to Gertrude; and for reasons which can be readily appreciated. Whatever the former had learned, had been through confidential communications from Herbert's mother, besides whom no one had ever a suspicion in what relation Herbert and Gertrude once stood to each other.

The circumstances which had transpired within a few days, had convinced William that the views and feelings of his friend had undergone a revolution, and in addition to that, was the fact, as it appeared to him now established beyond a doubt, that Gertrude was affianced to young Kirkland. He forbore, therefore, to press Herbert, when he found that the latter had decided not to accompany him. The only request he did urge, was that Herbert should be present at his wedding, to which he consented. This event would not transpire for some weeks yet, for Miss Benson was to be a guest, and Mr. Herman Granite had just gone to wait upon that lady to the home of Fanny; and if current reports could be relied upon, that lovely girl had consented to place herself, for life, under the control of our good friend Herman. His attention to Fanny had resulted, as she herself thought, and all who were concerned in the matter most truly believed, in a fair prospect of a happy life. Herman had become a partner in his father's establishment, and bid fair, under the tutorship of Mr. Blagg, to make an efficient man of business.

It was about ten days after the return of Gertrude to her home, near the close of a beautiful afternoon in the early

part of June, she walked toward the bank of the river, for the purpose of enjoying a clearer view of the noble sheet of water, and of the setting sun. An arbor had been constructed there by her cousin, for her especial benefit, and a walk tastefully arranged so as to wind beneath some of the more majestic trees, and about spots from whence far distant views might be obtained of the mountains and the river. Seats were planted, too, along the path, where, even at noonday, a perfect shelter might be enjoyed from the scorching sunbeams. It was a pleasant token of his care for her, as well as a beautiful promenade. It became her favorite resort; and more especially since her return from the city, had she been disposed to ramble through it, and to sit in the beautiful arbor, watching the white sails as they glided by, and the clouds flitting round the mountain tops, and comparing her own varied, changeful life, with their protean forms.

As she was walking along the winding path toward the arbor, and about to enter a thickly shaded spot, she very unexpectedly encountered a stranger seated on one of the rural benches. He did not appear to notice her approach, for his back was toward her, and his eye intently fixed upon the charming prospect that opened to the view from that point. She halted; and was about to retrace her steps, when her favorite dog, a large mastiff, came running in pursuit, and, having found his mistress, began playing around her, and, to manifest his joy, gave a slight bark.

The gentleman—for he had all the appearance of one—immediately turned, and beholding a lady so near to him, arose and advanced to meet her. He was a middle-aged man, of good size, and had apparently a robust frame, but his countenance indicated the loss of health—it was pale and somewhat emaciated; it had, however, a pleasant aspect, and as he removed his hat in saluting her, Gertrude was struck by the whiteness of his hair—his motions, and general appearance being so much like one in the prime of life. He at once addressed her:

"I fear, madam, you will think me an intruder; but I have been so charmed with the view from this spot, that I ventured to rest myself awhile and enjoy the scenery.

a luxury it has never been my privilege to experience in my life before."

"By no means an intruder, sir. There is seldom any one besides myself who cares to enjoy the solitude of this retreat. I am only glad if it affords you any pleasure. Resume your seat, sir, and feel quite at liberty to occupy it as long and as often as you wish."

"It is a great rarity—such seclusion as this, and such lovely views as are presented from every point of vision—to one who has spent a life amid the turmoil and bustle of a great city."

"You reside in the city, I conclude then, sir? Please resume your seat, sir."

"Since I have your leave, I will take that liberty. I am a little fatigued with my walk. I have resided in the city—New York has been my home from childhood; but the Lord has graciously, as I think, taken me up from the midst of its tumult, and placed me where there is peace and rest; and, what is peculiarly grateful to my feelings, where I can witness, at all hours of the day, and the night, too, some tokens of his wonder-working hand—of his great goodness—so it seems to me."

Gertrude, affected by his words, and willing to show her confidence in a stranger of his address and appearance, and also perhaps desirous of knowing more about him, seated herself at the further end of the bench. She would have had no fears were the stranger one about whom her suspicions could have taken any alarm, for Jup, her faithful protector, was lying near, but she did not feel that even his presence was necessary.

As she was taking her seat, she remarked:

"I frequently walk to the arbor which you see on that point of rock, to witness the scenery of sunset—often it is very beautiful, especially if a few clouds are in the west, hovering about the sun—receiving and reflecting his brightness from their broken masses."

"Very beautiful—very beautiful indeed are they at times, but to me they teach a different lesson from what many seem to learn when they look at or speak of them."

"May I hear what that lesson is?"

This was said in that peculiarly artless manner which

was so natural to Gertrude, and with her eye earnestly fixed upon him whom she addressed.

"Those clouds which are so resplendent when the beams of the sun play upon them, and so dark and forbidding when his beams are hidden by them, are but vapor after all—they can hardly be called substances. To me they seem like the absorbing interests of this world—its cares, its troubles, its business, and its pleasures—a vain show, all of them, except as the Saviour's love dwells in our heart, that will change their whole aspect, and shed beauty around, and upon what would otherwise be forbidding and gloomy."

"But is not life, after all, a great reality? Its trials are many of them terrible to endure; they are real, they fasten on the heart, and leave marks which time cannot efface. I believe with you, sir, that its pleasures are transitory, very much like the glories of a brilliant sunset."

"Its pleasures, I think, are as much realities as its trials. But perhaps I do not make myself understood. I acknowledge to you, that to the worldling, sorrow is a reality, and pleasure a phantom. The Christian, however, lives in a different atmosphere: he views things through a different medium; the love of Christ shed abroad in his heart is like the sunbeams gilding the cloud; it is a well-spring of joy, forever bubbling up hope and peace, else why should we be exhorted 'to rejoice always,' 'to be always singing 'of the Rock of our Salvation,' 'to be of good cheer,' if sorrowful, 'yet always rejoicing?' Depend upon it, my young friend, there is no scar trouble or sorrow makes upon the heart, that cannot be erased, smoothed all away by the love of Christ."

Gertrude's eye drooped, and she seemed to be deeply meditating; and as she did not reply, the gentleman ventured to ask:

"Will you deem it rudeness, in a stranger, if I ask you, is Christ precious unto you?"

"I receive your question with all the kindness of feeling with which I believe it has been put to me, but I cannot comprehend your meaning—that is, I think I do not."

"In other words, *do you love him?*"

"I have been taught to believe in him as having died for us. He is the only Saviour of mankind."

"That is true—yes, that is a glorious truth; and in making the acknowledgment, of course you place yourself among those who must in some sense be called Christians. But what I wished to know is—and I hope you will not think I am indulging a vain curiosity—whether thus believing in Jesus as the Saviour of mankind, you have been enabled so to appreciate the law he has manifested, that you have entered into a covenant with him, committed the keeping of your soul and body to him, and are resting upon him daily and hourly as the friend of your heart, on whom you can cast all your sorrows, to whom you can commit all your interests, whose friendship is like a presence with you. Is he to you the chief among ten thousand, altogether lovely?"

Gertrude covered her face, but made no reply.

"Perhaps I may be better understood by unfolding what I believe, and know to be the condition of one who has *not* thus received Christ. I do not mean, by such, merely the openly wicked and abandoned. I have seen many of that class, for it has been my lot to be much with them. As a police officer for a number of years in the city, I have of necessity beheld wickedness unveiled—sin in its most horrible forms. Of such I am speaking now. I take one who appears before the world without spot—pure, virtuous, perhaps most lovely in person and character. All that is seen commands the admiration of others, and the heart itself is not conscious of evil, does not upbraid itself for the indulgence of bad passions of any kind. The only test which can distinguish such a one from the loving Christian is this: *the world in some form absorbs the heart*. Its trials seem of more consequence than that Christ should be honored. Such a one may be saddened by some great sorrow, and continually dwells upon it, perhaps magnifies it. Great riches or intense pleasures may not be prominent objects of desire, yet in some form or other, worldly interests elevate or depress the mind. Afflictions do not come as the chastening of a father; and pleasant things

are not enjoyed as a father's gifts. Nature may have charms, but they are merely natural. Its beauties and its grandeur does not affect, because they exhibit the love and power of him who 'makes the evening and the morning rejoice, and spreadeth forth the earth like a curtain.' There is no special delight in communion with God. Friends can give consolation or they can send anguish to the heart; their smile can wake up the most intense emotion, or their coldness sink the spirit as with the death chill. But the friendship, the love of Jesus, kindles no fire, awakes no joyful pean. Pardon me, miss, for my rambling and prolonged remarks. Can you now comprehend what I meant?"

Gertrude looked at him a moment, her beautiful eyes still glistening with tears.

"I think I do. Yes, I comprehend you now. I see some things as I never have before. But is it so? Are there many who have such views and feelings—such a sense of union and friendship with the Saviour?"

"I cannot tell you, my dear miss. I know not the hearts of others. All I can say is, such a union is possible—is the privilege of all his people. It has been my light and consolation in many a dark day, and is now a richer treasure to me than my tongue can describe."

"Oh, can you tell how to obtain such happiness; I am ready to barter all I have for it."

"*He* can give it, and he alone; go to him. His arms are already open to receive you. Give yourself into his care. Ask most earnestly for his Spirit. Make a covenant with him. 'Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.' 'Keep my commandments, and ye shall abide in my love, as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.'"

The gentleman now arose to depart.

"I hope, sir," said Gertrude, "so long as you remain in this vicinity, that you will consider yourself at home on any of these grounds. I shall feel happier to know that you have walked over them, and perhaps—have prayed for their owner."

Her voice trembled greatly—he could not but perceive her deep emotion.



"You are, then, their owner?"

"I suppose I am, sir; but hitherto they have afforded me but little joy."

"You are Miss Manners, then, the grandchild of Robert Kirkland?"

"I am, sir. Did you know my grandfather?"

"Only by report. I am a stranger here, although I anticipate, now, spending my days in this place. By the wonderful goodness of God, I have been enabled to leave the city at a time when I had become disabled from continuing my business there. And to live in the city without quite an income, is impossible. But just as the cloud began to grow dark around me, the sunbeams gilded it. A friend of mine, Mr. Jones, has just returned from Madeira"—

"Mr. Herbert Jones?" Gertrude asked, in great surprise.

"Do you know him?"

"Mr. Herbert Jones, son of the present Mrs. Granite, I know."

"Then you know one of the excellent of the earth—few like him—few young men like him. He arrived a few days since from Madeira, bringing tidings of his brother"—

"Henry Jones?"

"Did you know him?"

"I never saw him, sir, but have heard him spoken of in the family."

"Oh, well—you may or may not have heard some circumstances in his early history?" The gentleman looked at her inquiringly.

"I only heard mention made of him as away—far from home."

"It is not likely that anything would have been said, unless you had been a member of the family. But I was instrumental in doing him a great benefit on a particular occasion, and was enabled, through a friend of mine, to advance him a sum of money, not large, but of great consequence just then. He left home for the north-west coast, and from there he went to China, and finally reached the island of Madeira, where he obtained a situ-

ation with a very large wine dealer, and became such a favorite with the gentleman, that he took him in as a partner, and he has prospered greatly. Herbert found him there—in fact, he knew of his being there before he went. Well, Henry has not only returned the money advanced to him, with interest, but he has sent on, by his brother, a sum sufficient to enable me to purchase a home for myself, and I have just purchased the small farm and dwelling, I believe the very next adjoining your southern boundary."

"Oh, sir, that is indeed a pleasant fact to hear. I rejoice greatly for your sake, and also that the gentleman himself should have manifested such a just and noble spirit."

"They are a noble family—a blessing to all who have any connection with them. Herbert, however, has been their stay. Oh, that young man has already received the fruit of the promise! He has honored his father and his mother, and God has honored him, and will honor him. I am expecting him in this region in a few days."

Poor Gertrude would gladly have parted from the gentleman and gone on her way home. The name he was praising, and of whose movements he was telling, had naught in its sound, now, that could give comfort to her heart. The gentleman, however, seemed to have more to say. In compliment to him, she maintained her position.

"He is designing to accompany some ladies, who are under his especial charge, and he wishes to obtain, if possible, board for them in this place, because he has friends here who will be glad to show them attention, for his sake. Who his friends are, I do not know, although I believe he is acquainted with Mr. McBride—a gentleman whose name I have often heard mentioned, but whom I do not know—but, as you tell me you are acquainted with Herbert, no doubt you are one of those to whom he alludes."

Poor Gertrude! how can she pay attention?

"The elder lady, who is the mother, is in feeble health. She is the wife of the gentleman with whom Henry Jones is in business, and the daughter, I am told, is engaged to

be married to Henry. But I fear, miss, the evening air is not doing you any service. Pardon me, if I have detained you to your injury. You are not well, I fear?"

Gertrude was, doubtless, very pale; her mind had been exercised in various ways during this interview, and the revelation which had just been so incidentally made, was too much for her strength. The gentleman immediately bade her good evening, and turning a bend in the path and descending the bank, was lost to view. Gertrude, overcome by the tumult within, sat down, that she might recover strength for her walk home. She had received new light—not only as to her own true character, but also upon other points, which had caused some heart-sorrow. She had much to think of.

The stranger, whose words had made such an impression on the mind of Gertrude, did not give his name, and she was too deeply absorbed in what had fallen from his lips, to think, at the proper time, of making the inquiry. This she regretted after he had left, and also that she had not invited him to visit at her home, as she had to promenade her grounds. His face seemed, for some reason, to be familiar, and she thought of all the circumstances and places where she might, in days past, have met him, but was unable to satisfy herself of the fact. Our readers, however, will not be at any loss in recognizing him who gave such timely aid to Henry Jones—the kind-hearted Mr. Peckham.

We know not but many of his calling were then, and are now, as decided for the truth as he; but the calling itself does not appear to be one calculated to cherish warm Christian feelings. There are instances, however, where, amid most unfavorable influences, the holy flame burns bright and pure. In the camp, and on the war ship, are found, not unfrequently, those who live the higher life, and shed, amid scoffing and profanity, the mild, beautiful light of Christian love on the dark spots where they are stationed. And thus—surrounded as he often was by those who had debased their humanity and were an offence to God and man—did Peckham maintain integrity, and exert his influence for the rescue of the fallen and wretched. The flame of divine love

burned the brighter, from the many efforts which he made to tread in the steps of his divine master—in healing the broken-hearted, winning back the wanderer, and encouraging the feeble-minded. His health, at last, had failed, and his situation was lost. But, as we have seen, the good soldier was taken up out of the turbid elements in which he had mingled so long, and stationed amid the quiet and beauty of the country; and even here, when but a few days have passed, we find he has work to do; and he has the skill to do it wisely. His gentle teachings have taken hold of one who was elevated far above him in wealth and station; and he has seen the tear start from her lovely eye, and heard her sweet voice earnestly asking of him directions how to find that joy and peace of which he spoke as an abiding pleasure—a rich possession ever present with him. Dear reader, let us go and do likewise.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

GERTRUDE returned home, after her interview with Mr. Peckham, and retired to her room, there to enter into the secrets of her own heart as she had never done before. A test had been given her, and she was resolved to apply it with the strictest care—even should her own dear self be humbled and abased by it.

And it did not take her long to find out that with all the purity of her life, and its freedom from what the world could call evil, she fell far short of true excellence. *The world had been, after all, her God.* She had not courted its wealth or its applause—she had not been elated by prosperity, nor did she care to attract attention by adornments which were in her power to throw around her person or her station—she did not pride herself for personal charms, nor for any of those kindly feelings which she was conscious of possessing. And yet, she found that her heart had been more deeply affected by the things of this world—its troubles, its joys, its friendships, and its past and its future for her—than it had by that love which had borne the cross and the thorny crown. She did not care to search further—that she could do with more effect when light from above should be present to guide her amid the labyrinth. She had not loved her Saviour; she had not lived for him, nor with him; he had not been in all her thoughts. This was enough for her to know—enough to fill her with dismay, had it not been for those precious words which had fallen upon her ear—“Go to him; his arms are open to receive you.” “Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.”

Gertrude was in earnest; her prayer for help was an honest prayer; it was the outpouring of filial love for a Father's forgiveness, for a Father's help, for the tokens of a Father's sheltering care. Such prayer is never made in vain, and Gertrude soon found—not just then, nor at

any one subsequent hour or moment that she could designate, but, like the gradual breaking of the day, it came—that there was light about her path, and peace in her heart, and a new world all around her.

Nor did this change affect her merely as regarded her relation to God; it modified her feelings in reference to other objects and interests. She could now understand that her happiness for this world did not depend upon certain contingencies, either at her own disposal, or that of others, and the only safe course was, to be under the guidance of her Father's hand, with meek submission to bow before his sovereign will, and take, with humble gratitude, whatever his hand apportioned to her. Her real business, and that which should give her most anxiety, was faithfully to do the work assigned her, and in whatever station she might be placed, there to shed that light which would glorify her God and Saviour.

She could now also look back upon the past trials of her life through a different medium, and could plainly perceive how it might have been necessary for her best good, that she should have been thus dealt with. Those dark spots which had so marred her vision when she recurred to the past, and caused her spirits to droop, and almost at times made her wish to retire from the world, and hide herself within the walls of a cloister, were now revealed as tokens of a Father's care. She would thank him for them. Her feelings, too, in reference to those who had been made instruments for her comfort and deliverance, were now vastly changed; they were dearer to her than ever; her heart embraced them in a firmer love—a love in which all selfish considerations were absorbed; which led her “not to look at her own things, but also on the things of others.”

Gertrude's treatment of her aunt, now in the wane of life, and deeply depressed in body and mind by the trying scenes of the few past years, had been upon the whole kind and generous, and its effect had told upon the selfish, disappointed heart of the former. Somewhat of a pleasant intercourse was enjoyed, and in general a courteous manner was observed; still there seemed to be no heartfelt interest on either side. Aunt

Lizzie remained for most of her time within her own apartments, waited upon by her old domestics, maintaining her old stiff attitude, and apparently shut up in selfish thoughts—in reality surrounding herself with a wall of cold indifference to all the world beside. Seldom did Gertrude obtrude upon her solitude, for the reason she had no evidence that her presence was peculiarly grateful. But the new views which the former had now obtained, had also an effect upon her feelings in reference to this lone relation. She thought of her isolated condition—the effect of her own conduct, and apparently her choice—and yet so cold seemed the atmosphere about her, and so cheerless the prospect, whether to the past or the future the eye was turned, that Gertrude yearned to get closer to her aunt's heart, and to share with her some of that genial warmth with which her own was glowing, and do what she could to make more cheerful the days still remaining, even if the past could not be cleared of its dark shadows.

And her earnest desire was attended by corresponding efforts; the wall she thought could not be entered at once, nor its strong barrier removed, but by a careful and slow process. Love, however, seldom fails to win its way, and hard indeed must be the adamant which does not melt before its powerful though mild rays; and much sooner than Gertrude hoped—even sooner than could reasonably have been expected—was the wished for end accomplished. The way had been preparing. Disappointed expectations, baffled plans, dissatisfied cravings, ill health, and death itself—all had in turn, and by their united forces, been battering her heart; it wanted but the genial fire of love to complete the conquest.

When the heart is set upon the accomplishment of any plan, whether for good or evil, opportunities are seldom wanting. A trifling circumstance afforded Gertrude the desired chance, and at once she resolved to begin her work. Entering her aunt's room, and approaching her with all due formality, although with her heart full of tenderness, she addressed her:

"Aunt Lizzie, Mr. Hudson"—Gertrude had always

given him that title—"has just spoken to me about your carriage horses, and thinks they need exercise, and wished to know if I would not allow him to order them harnessed, that I might take a ride. I told him I would speak to you, and ask your leave."

"Why need you have taken that trouble? You know I do not consider them as mine; they are not really mine, nor is anything around me—not mine as formerly."

"And why not, aunt? Have I ever by act or word caused you to feel that any change has been made in your right to command or control every arrangement within or around the house?"

"I am not bringing any charge; I merely speak of things as they are."

"But if it gives me pleasure to feel that you and you alone are still the rightful mistress, and if in all that I have done, my actions prove that thus I feel, why may I not have the joy of knowing that you pass over the mere fact of abstract right, and freely take what is so freely accorded?"

"I am not charging you with aught—you cannot alter circumstances."

"It does not satisfy me, Aunt Lizzie, to hear you say 'that you bring no charge against me;' I want to feel that I have your love—my nearest and only living relative—at least the only one to whom I feel bound by filial ties!"

The lady looked at her niece, as if she wished to ascertain from her countenance whether the words she uttered were merely those of compliment. She had no experience in her own past feelings to teach her; she was not well able to distinguish by mere words when the heart spoke; she saw that lovely face of her niece highly flushed—strong feeling was manifest; and her eye rested in silence a moment; then she said:

"My love! what can you want of that? what can it be worth to you?"

Gertrude dropped upon her knee, and took the hand of her aunt in hers.

"Dear aunt, I want your love for my sake, and for

your own; I want to feel that you regard me as a child of your own blood; I want your confidence, to know that I have one like you to whom I can unbosom what I think and feel; and I believe you will be happier, aunt, even although my years are few as yet, and I have no experience to impart that can meet your sympathies; yet I think you will be happier if you could let your affections rest upon one, your own nearest kin, who will ever be ready to do all that in her lies to make you happy.

Miss Lizzie Kirkland had never before been thus addressed by man or woman, and as that beautiful face, beaming with excitement, which the earnestness of feeling had wrought up, was raised toward her, and she saw the eye that was fixed upon her, bathed in its own holy tears, it was not in the nature of woman to resist such an appeal. She covered her face and pressed the hand which was grasped in hers; thus encouraged, Gertrude threw her arm around the neck of her aunt, and leaned her head upon her breast.

"My own dear aunt!"

"Child! child! Oh, can it be, that there is a heart that truly loves me! Is life yet to have some brightness before its close!"

"Oh yes, dear aunt! If my love, my care, my tender regard to your feelings and wishes, can make it so, many, many years may you be spared to counsel, to watch, to love your Gerty!"

The sound of that name had not been heard of late; not since the death of her sister had Miss Lizzie used it; now it awakened past recollections, not all of them pleasant, and yet so connected with days of childhood and youth that its tendency was to arouse the better feelings—at least to encourage and strengthen those which had already gained ascendancy. For some moments no reply was made; at length, uncovering her face, she pressed her lips to the cheek of the lovely girl.

"Would you like to have me call you by that name?"

"Dearly would I, Aunt Lizzie."

"I shall do so, then."

"And now, aunt, I want you to yield to the request

which I designed to make when I came in. It is a lovely day, and all abroad is so full of life and cheerfulness, that I am sure it will refresh and strengthen you to go out with me and enjoy the ride. Oh, do consent! it will give me so much pleasure!"

"Then let the coach be ordered; but after this, dear child, you must not feel constrained to regulate your wishes by my will. I mean, from this time forth, to let you be the guide—the mistress; I know you now as I have not done before."

It was one of summer's most joyous days; the air warm and balmy, the trees in their heavy foliage of deep green, and the earth covered with the same rich dress; the sun bringing out their brightest hues—not to pain or blind the eye, but to impart life and freshness; the birds filling the air with sweet sounds, and the gentle breeze just moving the long tendrils of the weeping willow, and the leaves of the aspen, made it a morning in which not only the invalid could with safety venture abroad, and hope for renovated strength, but in which youth, in the fullness of health and vigor, could drink in nature's most inspiring influence.

Slowly the old coach moved through the long, winding avenue; the well-conditioned steeds, prancing with delight, and yet obedient to the slightest word, or motion of the rein, bore after them their stately burden with steady onward pace, just fast enough to allow each passing beauty to be noticed, and yet with sufficient speed to give delight to one whom sickness or other causes have for months confined to the chair or the bed.

Never had Gertrude witnessed such a pleasant aspect on the countenance of her aunt, nor had she heard the tones of her voice so unbent and in sympathy with her own; and her young heart was full of gladness. Surely a new life was opening to her. It had, indeed, already begun; and this feeble, aged relative, now apparently so happy, and whom her loving words and manner had enticed from seclusion and unsocial thoughts into the atmosphere of confidence and affection, was a token full of promise—a first fruit most pleasant in its fragrance and its flavor.



Very soon after the carriage had entered the highway, a vehicle was seen advancing toward them; and as it was about to pass, the carriage stopped, and Gertrude at once exclaimed:

"There is Cousin Robert!"

The young gentleman immediately alighted, and came up to the carriage door. His salutation was very cordial; and especially did he manifest pleasure at seeing his aunt able to be out, and looking so well.

"You have staid much longer, Robert, than you anticipated."

"I have, aunt; but I hope to be able to give a good account of myself to you and Cousin Gertrude."

"I hope you will not feel bound to include me in the number of those to whom you are responsible for good behavior. I am glad, however, to see you back again."

"Thank you, cousin—I am happy to be so near home again; but I must excuse myself for an hour or two yet. I am on my way to the Rev. Mr. Marshall's, to leave a friend of mine—and an acquaintance of yours, Cousin Gertrude—Mr. Jones."

The gig in which the gentlemen were riding had passed the window of the carriage so quickly, before it stopped, that although Gertrude recognized her cousin, and could perceive another gentleman was with him, she did not notice Herbert. Her reply was quite short, and without manifesting any interest:

"Indeed!"

"And I must hasten on my way, for the reason that a carriage load of friends are behind us a few miles, and I wish to apprise the family of the fact. So many coming suddenly upon a minister's family in the country, you know, might put them to inconvenience."

"Why not, then, Robert," said Miss Lizzie, "since they are friends of yours, invite them to stop with us. In former times we have been accustomed to entertain large companies; and if you and Gertrude feel so disposed, it will, I assure you, be quite agreeable to me."

What had transpired to make such a change in the feelings of his aunt and benefactress, he knew not; but so certain had he been that company was not agreeable

to her, he had hitherto abstained from inviting any to the house, unless when so situated as not to be well able to avoid it, and then, invariably, he felt bound to apologize for the liberty. Now he looked to Gertrude, as if he wished her confirmation that he had understood aright.

"I think, Cousin Robert, aunt will by no means be disturbed. It will be a gratification, rather. She wishes Kirkland Place to assume its old character, and its doors to be more open than they have been for some years."

"Methinks, too, Mr. Robert Kirkland, you are not doing the polite thing, to allow the gentleman who accompanies you to sit so long without an introduction."

Young Kirkland was more confounded than ever. Something had turned up—what, he could not imagine, but a resurrection from the dead would not have surprised him more. Without asking any further questions, he immediately left the carriage, and in a very short time indeed, was introducing our friend Herbert to Miss Lizzie Kirkland, of Kirkland Place. The young gentleman was pleasantly received by her; but whether she fully understood that he belonged to the family once so obnoxious to her, we cannot say; the probability is, she did not. The fact of his being mentioned as the friend of her nephew, and the very gentlemanly bearing of the young man, no doubt at once led her to suppose that he belonged to a very different class of society. Gertrude's salutation was pleasant, without being cordial; she, however, was relieved from the necessity of exposing her feelings by conversation, as Miss Lizzie, after passing a few words of compliment, addressed herself to young Kirkland.

"I think, Robert, you had better allow your friend here to take a seat with us, as we will now return home; and you go on the way to meet the rest of the party, and say to them how much pleasure it will give us all if they will favor us with their company."

The door of the carriage was immediately opened, and Herbert, not knowing well how to refuse compliance, took his seat with the ladies, and Robert Kirkland drove off, wondering much what strange overturn had taken place; and yet, for certain reasons of his own, quite

overjoyed at what he thought a most fortuitous circumstance.

That either Herbert or Gertrude felt particularly at their ease, cannot be supposed—their relation was now of rather an uncertain character; the peculiar feelings of each were entirely unknown to the other, and their last interview had apparently widened the distance between them; and yet it was impossible for either to forget the scenes which had formerly transpired. It was well for them both that Miss Kirkland seemed disposed for conversation; and Herbert, no doubt, found it far less difficult to answer the interrogatories of that lady than to hold converse with one whom he feared might be embarrassed by his remarks, if personally addressed to her, as she was evidently so by his presence. Arrived at the house, however, Gertrude did not forget that upon her devolved the duty of hostess; and as soon as Herbert had waited upon them into the house, she at once gave her hand to him, and in a voice that manifested deep excitement, said:

"This pleasure is most unexpected. I bid you a hearty welcome to my home; not more truly though, I firmly believe, than that *you* once gave to a poor outcast who was thrown upon your bounty."

"Herbert was so taken by surprise that it was utterly out of his power to reply; but, to his further astonishment, still holding his hand, Gertrude turned to her aunt.

"My dear aunt, I have told you about the young gentleman who once acted such a kind part toward me, and who, although then struggling to maintain himself and his family, offered me a home without hope of reward. I now have the pleasure of presenting him to you."

Miss Kirkland seemed for a moment utterly confounded; but soon rallying, she put forth her hand to him.

"I bid you welcome. Yea, more—I owe you a debt which I feel no attention which can be meted to you under this roof can liquidate. I am happy, not only in bidding you welcome, as a gentleman, to the hospitalities of our house, but also in the opportunity of manifesting, as far as I can, that your generous conduct to my dear niece is appreciated."

"My dear madam,"—Herbert had recovered somewhat from his confusion—"I beg of you to make no further mention of anything I have ever done, by which Miss Manners has been led to feel under obligations to me. I assure you, no sense of any such favor is felt by me, as resting upon her or her friends. I am deeply impressed by the kind manner of your reception."

Miss Kirkland now retired to her own room, and Gertrude was left for a short period to do the honors of the mansion to her guest. All restraint seemed to have vanished; she was herself again—her former self—in all things except the manifestation of any interest beyond that of a polite hostess. Herbert, however, was by no means the Herbert of former days; his behavior was dignified and courteous, but with great reserve. He avoided, in a marked manner, all allusion to the past, even turning the conversation, as soon as possible, when mention was made of persons or circumstances in which they once had a common interest. He seemed to prefer talking about the beautiful scenery around them, and the beauties of nature in general, and the privilege which those enjoyed whose lot was cast where the works of God were displayed, and his hand could be traced through the changes not only of every season, but at all hours of each day and night; and on such topics, he found Gertrude quite free, also, in letting out her views and feelings. A new world had of late opened to her heart, and her tongue was loosed upon subjects now dear to her. This, to Herbert, might have been supposed a pleasing revelation; perhaps it was, but no manifestation of delight escaped him. He was evidently holding a tight rein over himself, in strong contrast with the free and unreserved manner of his companion.

Nearly two hours had been thus passed, when Robert Kirkland drove up, with Miss Ellen Jones by his side. The rest of the party, consisting of Herman Granite and Miss Benson, were preparing to pursue their way to the parsonage. Miss Ellen, delighted with the thought of seeing Gertrude, was persuaded, without much difficulty, to accept the invitation so cordially sent, with the pro-

viso, however, that she should be permitted to join her friends at the Marshalls', in the evening.

The occasion of their present visit was the nuptial ceremony about to take place when William Ashton and his Fanny were to be united in that holy bond which had been now for nearly two years in anticipation.

Gertrude lost no time in making Ellen acquainted with Aunt Lizzie, and the fact that she had thus so readily complied with that lady's request, was, of itself, a powerful means of winning her good will, and while Gertrude was otherwise busily employed, Miss Ellen passed her time, agreeably to herself and very much to the satisfaction of the invalid, in a pleasant interchange of thought.

Robert Kirkland, of course, relieved Gertrude from the duty of entertaining Herbert, and as the young men had been so much together of late, Herbert seemed to feel much more at home in his company, and was more like himself than he could possibly be now with Gertrude, charming as she was, with all her external grace, and rich, pure thoughts brought forth in such a free and ready manner. Her beauty and her worth seemed now to have no charm for him.

The day passed off pleasantly, and, at the earnest request of Miss Lizzie, Ellen assented to defer her visit to the parsonage. The evening was spent in social converse, Miss Kirkland joining the parlor circle, and enjoying the domestic scene as she had never before been known to do. It was late for her, when she retired to her own apartments; but Robert Kirkland had something to say to Aunt Lizzie, and, as he waited upon her to her parlor, he begged a private interview, and it was granted. Whether he slept more soundly that night, we will not pretend to say; he could not have rested well without it.

A new day dawned on Kirkland Place—a day more momentous in its results than had ever dawned upon it before. Soon after breakfast, young Kirkland was ready, according to promise, to escort Miss Ellen to the home of the Marshalls, where so many of her friends were collected, all busy in preparation for the scenes of the morrow—the wedding-day. Herbert, at Miss Lizzie's request

and the urgent plea of his friend Robert, had consented to remain where he was, to make it his home until after the joyful occasion should be passed.

It was the middle of the forenoon, when Robert Kirkland returned; he immediately sought his cousin, and for some time was most earnestly engaged in private conversation with her. The subject was one of deep interest, not only to himself, but it must also have been so to her. Tears rested on her lovely cheeks, as she, looking earnestly at him, said:

"May God bless you, Robert! you are noble—generous. I thank you for your confidence; and remember, my trust to you is sacred—I think you will find yourself sadly mistaken!"

"But if I am not, dear Gertrude—if what I so firmly believe should prove a reality—I may hope? You will consent?"

As she did not reply, he left the room, while Gertrude arose and walked to and fro, her heart tossed in a tempest of intense emotion. Never had its depths been so disturbed before. Years of feeling seemed to have concentrated their force; years of hope and fear, of ardent love, subdued, kept under, but not destroyed—all had united to agitate her pure spirit—all were now alive in their freshness. Alas! if she has been deceived, death alone can give relief to her bruised heart.

Herbert had taken a walk to the bank of the river, and was reposing within the arbor which had been erected for the special benefit of the fair mistress of the place, when Robert Kirkland came unexpectedly upon him.

"Ah, indeed! You have made quite a stay at the parsonage!"

"I remained there but a very short time—merely to say 'How do you do?' to them all round. They are all busy enough, and happy enough, there; and I should have been happy as any of them, but for one thing, and that could not be settled until I had seen you. Herbert, *I love your sister!* and I have reason to believe my affection is reciprocated by her; but my happiness cannot be assured without your approbation. Ellen feels that your devoted love and care, as a brother, demands

from her this mark of her love and respect for you. She has, therefore, referred me to you."

Herbert arose from his seat; he was deadly pale. He fixed an intense gaze on young Kirkland.

"Are you in earnest?—and yet, I cannot believe I am so mistaken in your character as to suppose you would jest on such a subject."

"You judge rightly; I could not jest on such a theme, especially with one I respect and love, as I do yourself. I am in most sacred earnest. But why should such a thought have a moment's place in your mind?"

"Pardon me; but I have been so firmly of the opinion that you were already affianced to your cousin, Miss Manners, that your most unexpected revelation, I must confess, startled me not a little. I assure you, I know of no one to whom I would so willingly commit my sister, as yourself."

Kirkland seized his hand.

"I thank you—most heartily, I thank you; and now, as a brother I address you. I cannot say I have not loved Gertrude—that I might not have loved her ardently; but I have never had the least token from her that could give me encouragement. I have, therefore, repressed my feelings, and now they are completely at rest."

"But are you not mistaken? Can you be sure that when she hears what you have just told me, that unpleasant feelings may not arise?"

"Very sure am I on that point, for I have already told her that I have been long convinced that Gertrude had no heart to give *me*. She has strong feelings, and they are under great subjection. She can never love but once."

Herbert sat down and covered his face, and for some moments neither spoke. At length, he turned abruptly to his companion—

"Kirkland! my dear brother!—you have placed yourself in that relation to me—as such, then, tell me frankly, can I, dare I, hope that Gertrude Manners has any regard for me? *We once loved*—I am certain of *that*—we loved intensely; and to this hour, no one else has ever

touched my heart. She alone has remained there—she alone can ever dwell there. God is my witness, that, next to my duty to him, would I give up all else in life for her. To be sure of her love now, with her woman's heart, as I was once sure of it, in her girlhood, would be the highest gift my soul craves. Oh, it would be too rich a blessing! I dare not ask for it!"

"I cannot tell you, brother Herbert, for I do not feel competent to decide from what I may have casually noticed; woman has a power of concealment which we do not possess. A great change has taken place, too, in her mind, of late; what effect it may have had I cannot determine. Of one thing I can assure you—the most perfect truthfulness, the most candid treatment—more, a gentleman cannot ask. But I must leave you now to your own reflections; we will meet at dinner."

Herbert's reflections, however, were not of such a nature as to allow him to be at rest. The powerful feelings which had been so long triumphant over him, and which, by a mighty effort, with the aid, too, of many circumstances tending to loosen his interest in Gertrude, he had been able of late to put down, if not to subdue, were now alive again in all their strength. Circumstantial influences, too, had suddenly vanished, and he could almost believe that he was in the same position in reference to her, as when in the fullness of her child's heart she leaned upon his breast and sobbed out her sorrow to him. He was ready to fly to her, openly declare his unchanged love, and cast his life's venture upon her reply, and he doubtless would have done so without hesitation had he known what he now knew some weeks sooner. But her conduct toward him since he had been at her home, from the first moment that he entered it, was peculiar. The welcome she gave him—alluding therein to that scene in her life which he had been led to suppose she would wish obliterated—the introduction of him to her aunt, and the fact, then first brought to his knowledge, that the particulars in her early history in connection with him had been made known, her marked politeness, her freedom in his presence, her readiness to allude to the past, all manifested clearly to him that she re-

garded him as a friend—one to whom she and her family felt under obligations—and that all other feelings had forever fled. Thus drawing conclusions, and imagining difficulties, and revolving hopes and fears, he left the arbor and sauntered toward the house. When about to enter upon the spacious piazza, his notice was attracted to a beautiful rose-bush in full bloom. A moment he stood admiring its rich blossoms and its delightful fragrance, and then selected the most finished flower he could find—one but half blown, rich in perfume, and giving promise of more than usual beauty when its full form should be developed. He plucked it, and walked into the house. Gertrude was seated in the parlor, alone; and as he approached her, he thought her countenance had an air of peculiar earnestness, as though her mind had been intently dwelling on some subject of grave import. He presented the rose, which she readily took, looked at it a moment, inhaled its fragrance, and then raising her eye to him, asked:

"Do you understand the language of flowers?"

"I have never learned it; but I have selected this for its peculiar beauty. No work of art, to my mind, can compare with it; and were its value beyond that of the most costly diamonds, and I had the wealth to purchase and present it to you, it would not more truly manifest my profound respect, my sincere"—

Her eye was fixed upon him while he spoke. His countenance had lost its late tone of indifference—it bore that same peculiar aspect which in days past had at times thrilled her heart. She could not resist its influence now, and, to hide her emotion, covered her face. Herbert had not finished what he was saying. Overpowered by this token of feeling, so unexpected, he ventured further:

"May I unveil my heart, and be permitted to explain what I now believe must have appeared strange, and perhaps unkind, in my conduct?"

"Do not say unkind; I understand all, now."

"And you believe me when I say that the feelings I once exposed to you—in plain, broken language indeed, but with all sincerity of heart—have never changed, but

are more intense at this moment than it was possible for them then to be."

"I believe you."

"And you once allowed me to feel that you were not indifferent to my regard?"

Gertrude for a moment did not reply. She seemed at a loss to utter what was then her wish to say. She felt that the decisive moment in her life had come—not only for herself, but for him who was thus a second time pleading for her love. With a calm manner, she unveiled her beautiful face, and met without shrinking his intense gaze.

"It would be prudery in me to attempt to conceal the fact to which you allude, or to endeavor to nullify the impression you received, by reminding you that I was then without experience, and, at the time, under strong excitement. I acknowledge to you that there have been times when the remembrance of that scene has caused me pain; and, more than that, my heart has often rebelled, and been made unhappy at the idea, that to you, or to any who knows me now, my circumstances of degradation should have been exposed!"

"And can you think—can you for a moment suppose"—

"I know what you would say—it is not necessary now; that matter has been settled—quite settled in my own mind. God has taught me a new lesson. I judge very differently now of myself and others, from what I once did. He has been leading me, and enlightened me by his guidance." And she put forth her hand, which he took, not with the rapture of a hopeful lover—her composed, self-possessed manner, her voice, so soft and firm, manifesting no emotion, told him that whatever her decision should be, there would be no appeal! His fears almost unmanned him; he took her hand, but it was no token to him that she had given him her heart—he knew it was not. "I am glad that you know me, then, and would not alter, if I could, one feature of God's dispensation concerning me. This I say, in justice to you: no other human being has my unbounded confidence, and, if it will make you happy to know it, no other has



ever had my love; and, if my love is of such value to you"—

She could say no more; nor need Herbert have required any stronger assurance. But the result was so unexpected—his fears had been so triumphant—he could scarcely believe he had heard aright.

"Mine! is it so—do you say it, my own Gertrude?"

"But I wish you to feel—if your heart is now at rest, as mine most truly is—that no wisdom or device of our own has brought this about. Much as I have loved you, had not my proud heart been humbled by divine grace, and my views of divine Providence been purified and made clear by the Spirit of God, I never could have yielded to your request. I now see that the way through which I have been led was the right way, and that humiliation was as needful for my ultimate happiness as any other method by which my life has been shaped!"

Herbert's heart was too full for words; but Gertrude had no need to hear from his lips earnest protestations of unchanging love. She knew him well; his life hitherto was a stronger guaranty than the most solemn vows; and as she leaned again upon his breast—not now weeping bitter tears, but with the consciousness of loving and being loved, and that no earthly power could now tear her from him beneath whose circling arm she reclined—she could only breathe out thanksgiving and praise for this special gift of mercy to her.

"And now, dear Gertrude, is it not your will that we at once do what to me seems right and proper—that we go to your aunt, and ask her consent and her blessing?"

"With all my heart."

Miss Kirkland was somewhat startled, as she saw young Jones, with Gertrude leaning on his arm, approaching where she sat. She was just then in busy converse with Robert, who immediately arose, and was about to leave the room.

"Cousin Robert," said Gertrude, "your presence will be no hindrance to what we have to say—please do not go. Aunt Lizzie, I have come to ask your blessing upon me, and upon him, who, I have already told you, was my friend, when forsaken by all the world beside."

"And I assure you, madam,"—Herbert's voice was not so firm as that of the fair one by his side—"if you can consent to yield your niece to me, and will take me to your heart, no son shall be more ready to meet your wishes, and do all that devoted love can do to make you happy."

The old lady put forth her arms in silence, and pressed her lovely niece in a fond embrace, and then she took the hand of Herbert.

"I thank you both, and you too, Robert. Come, give me your hand."

Robert Kirkland stepped up quickly—he was highly excited; the change in his aunt was so marked, his interest for the two young friends was so heartfelt, together with his fresh and full happiness as an accepted lover, that all combined to fill his mind with intense emotion; his fine countenance was all aglow, and as he took the extended hand of his aunt, and felt the arm of Gertrude clasped within his own, as though she wished to be a bond of love and union between him and her chosen one, manly as he was, tears found their way and dropped down upon his well bronzed cheek.

"I thank you children, all of you; I have no blessing to bestow, for my poor petitions for you could have little avail; but I can say, all your present arrangements are very gratifying to me. You, Robert, next to my dear Gerty, have manifested so much filial regard that I know not how I could confide in you more truly, or be made more happy by your care. And you too," turning to Herbert, "I have a strong assurance, will be an additional prop in my declining years. I am not ignorant of the past concerning you; so faithful a son, so kind a brother, so warm a friend, is a strong warrant to this lovely girl that you will not fail in cherishing, with the utmost tenderness, the heart she has given you."

"So help me God!" And Herbert, saying this, pressed Gertrude to his heart, and sealed his solemn vow with a warm kiss.

The sound of a carriage being driven up to the outer door caused the little party to separate; Robert Kirkland hastening to welcome the guests, and Gertrude to

perform her part as mistress of the domain. Herbert accompanied the latter into the parlor, but hearing familiar voices in the hall, immediately advanced to greet them.

Mr. Blagg had alighted from the carriage, and was leaning on the arm of William Ashton, while Fanny Marshall, escorted by Robert Kirkland, preceded them through the hall.

Gertrude was at hand to welcome her friend Fanny, while Herbert hastened to grasp the hand of Mr. Blagg.

"This boy here told me that I should not be likely to see you until some time to-morrow, unless I came here, and he is such a baby, you see, that he cannot bear to get out of sight of a certain person; so the whole troop has had to come with me. Oh dear! oh dear! what children these women make of us!"

"But it is an additional pleasure, Mr. Blagg," said Gertrude, "and I am quite sure the ride has been more agreeable for the presence of our dear Fanny."

"Well, well! I won't dispute the matter; but what makes this young gentleman look so chirp and good natured? He has been as demure for some time past as though the world was wrong end uppermost. Nothing happened?"

They were now in the parlor, and all trying to get Mr. Blagg into a large arm-chair, which he seemed in no haste to occupy.

"I will tell you, Uncle Blagg," said Fanny, whispering a few words in his ear.

"I thought so—wish you a great deal of joy!" taking Herbert's hand; "and you too," as Gertrude held out hers. "If you are not both happy"—

"It will not be my fault, Mr. Blagg!"

"I cannot say as to that; women in general have a deal to do with our happiness and unhappiness; but I can say this to you both: if you are expecting all your happiness from one another, like as not you may be disappointed. For instance, these poor foolish children," looking at Willie and Fanny, who were standing arm in arm, listening to his remarks, "they are looking forward to to-morrow, as if all the happiness in this world was concentrated in it. They don't believe that either of

them can ever do anything to make the other unhappy! They are never to be sulky, nor cross, nor dull, nor low spirited—never to contradict one another. To be all patience, and tenderness, and attention, and love! Only to think of it!"

"Well, Uncle Blagg, don't you, from your heart, believe that Willie is so good, so kind, so loving, and I think so much of him, that it will not be possible for any of those naughty things to happen?"

"I tell you what I think, and what I know; he wants watching; he has got a heart that will any time run away with his head, and will pick his pocket if somebody don't keep hold of the purse strings!"

"And that you are to do, uncle; you know you are to be with us—not only to watch over my purse, but over my conduct in every way. You have been a true father to me hitherto, and I hope to the end of your days I may prove to you an obedient and loving child!"

"And I too," said Fanny.

"And I too," added Herbert.

"And may I not," said Gertrude, taking his hand, "cast in my lot with the rest? I feel that your kindness to this dear friend by my side, when he was alone, and, as he thought, friendless, has been so distinguished, so opportune, so unremitting, and so unselfish, that I know he looks upon you as a father. May I do so too?"

Mr. Blagg had been winking very fast for some time; he tried to reply, but, instead of speaking, he had to wipe away a tear that in spite of him came rolling down.

"You must excuse me—I can't help it!"

Sure enough—*how could he help it?*

THE END.

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