

SIBYL:

OR,

OUT OF THE SHADOW INTO THE SUN.

BY

MARTHA RUSSELL.

"—— God gives patience; Love learns strength,
And Faith remembers promise,
And Hope itself can smile, at length,
On other hopes gone from us!"

E. BARRETT BROWNING.

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STEREOTYPED AT THE
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TO THE MEMORY OF

E. F. B.;

WHOSE BRIEF EXISTENCE HERE MADE ALL HOLY AND
BEAUTIFUL THINGS POSSIBLE TO WOMANHOOD,

THESE PAGES

ARE LOVINGLY DEDICATED.

43-mrs. H. F. Hooper

SIBYL;

OR,

OUT OF THE SHADOW INTO THE SUN.

CHAPTER I.

"MAMMA!"

"Well, darling."

"I want my rocking horse. Won't you make James go to Mr. Healy's for it? I want it this minute, mamma."

"There, do be quiet, Willie."

"But I want it now!" and the determined little fellow climbed upon the sofa where the lady lay, and tumbled himself, *sans ceremonie*, into her lap. Partly rising, she pressed back with kisses the impatient "*mammas*" which the little wilful lips persisted in uttering.

At the risk of being considered trite at the outset, we must say that, to us, there is no more beautiful sight than a young mother and her child. Part of this may be set down to the *woman* within us, but more to the fact that, though old as Time, it ever comes upon us with the freshness of originality—a phase of the Infinite upon which Time has left no trace.

And very beautiful indeed was the young face that bent over that child! Not less round, less smooth, or less delicate, in its soft outlines, than the childish one nestled upon her lap. It was a picture for an artist: the finely-formed head, with its masses of silken, sunny hair, which, escaping from the richly-wrought comb, fell in soft waves over the daintily curved shoulders; the sweet, full mouth, so suggestive of smiles and mischief, and all manner of pretty wilfulness; the round, white arms, stealing from a rich drapery of lace, and folding closer and closer the curly head of the little one, would have filled his soul with delight, and for a moment he might have fancied his life-long dream realized—that one of those shapes of the eternal beauty which haunted his sleeping hours, and glimpsed out upon him from the white clouds, or flitted by him in the dim old woods, was embodied here.

And yet he must not gaze *too* long; for then would arise the query which the thoughtful soul puts to every beautiful face—"What of the soul within?" and there would arise upon him the vision of some woman he had known, plain and homely, but whose features were transfigured by the noble soul within, like "night crowned with stars," and he would feel the truth at once—that Elsie Monroe was but a pet and a plaything;—as much so now as when, six years ago, she had become the wife of Arthur Monroe. Her doting old father lived only to see her a bride, and she had wept passionately upon his coffin, and quite as passionately at the thought of laying aside her

splendid wedding *trousseau* (for which the fond old man had expended the last relics of what had once been a handsome fortune) for crape and bombazine, and the series of gay parties upon which she had counted for the seclusion of her own home.

Perhaps her husband did not so deeply regret this quiet seclusion, for at twenty-five he worshipped his wife with all the passionate fervor of a strong, but half-developed nature, and, like most men of earnest minds, cared more about keeping his treasure to himself, than displaying it to the admiration of the world.

Such men do not crave the aid of strange hands to offer incense to their heart's idols—a truth which many a woman besides his "child wife" has learned all too late.

Yet the first year of their married life, so often said to be that of hardest trial, passed with them like a summer dream—all the more pleasant because they had those joys and hopes to speak of with which "the stranger intermeddeth not;" for, at the end of that year, a little daughter was given to their arms. The young mother was delighted with her new plaything, and it was so pleasant to see her leaning over it so fondly, looking up, now and then, so archly in her husband's face, as she traced out resemblances to him; one moment hoping it would be "just like him," and the next that it would look a little—just a little bit—like herself, and laughing so merrily as she placed it in his arms, and showed him how to hold it, and with such a bewitching assumption of maternal dignity, that Monroe

was certainly excusable for thinking no man ever possessed a wife and child like his.

Six years lie between that period and the opening of our story. Elsie Monroe is twenty-three, and Time, like an enamoured artist, has only touched, here and there, a point in her face and figure, to render more perfect their rare loveliness; but he has dealt far less kindly with the little child.

There she sits, in the deep embrasure of the window, with a doll on one knee, and a pile of picture books by her side, but occupied with neither. Of such things she has enough; but she gazes long and earnestly at her little brother, struggling to avoid his mother's kisses — a wee, elfin-like figure, numbering six years, yet scarcely taller than little Willie at two. What do that earnest, imploring look, and the quivering of that small mouth, imply? This much: that children — ay, little children — have within them a world of thoughts, and dreams, and fancies, of which we, children of older growth, never dream. That little Sibyl Monroe would give all the toys, all the books, even her beautiful picture of the infant Jesus, for just one of those kisses which Willie seeks to avoid — for one such close, loving clasp of those beautiful arms.

A kiss will be hers in a few moments, for their half hour in the parlor is almost spent; not *such* a one — but one coldly, carelessly given; and as the nurse enters, and the child rises and comes forward, the light from the brilliant chandelier, falling upon her tiny figure, and shy, upturned face,

reveals features small and delicate, but sadly disfigured by deep red and blue and purple spots — sad traces of that fearful scourge, the small pox.

But her voice is low and very sweet, as, with a "Good night, dear mamma," she returns her mother's carelessly given caress, and follows the nurse to her room, while the mother sinks down again upon the sofa, and resumes her reading, little dreaming that her indifference is wearing deeper scars in that tender, thoughtful little child heart, than any left on her face by disease.

Will they reach and unseal for her the fountain of the Infinite Love, which to know is life eternal? We shall see.

CHAPTER II.

ARTHUR MONROE, like many an older and wiser man, had yielded up soul and sense to the spell of physical beauty, and had been, for some three years after his marriage, we had almost said, *content*. But if so, how shall we account for the secret, half-acknowledged longing that would sometimes come, that his wife would be a little less childish — that she would take sufficient interest in his pursuits not to yawn or fall asleep when he was reading, or make grimaces at which he himself was forced to laugh? But then she was so young, so gentle — she had always been such a pet; besides, she loved him so dearly! — what man could withstand an argument like the last? And with her fair head resting on his shoulder, or her soft hand smoothing his cheek, he must have been of a sterner nature than Monroe who could long have cherished such thoughts.

When Sibyl was about two years old, it became necessary that one of the members of the mercantile firm, of which he was junior partner, should go to Europe; and the duty fell upon him. He could not well refuse, being wholly dependent upon his business, his marriage with little Elsie Gordon having offended the only relative from whom

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he had ever expected any aid — a maternal uncle, a queer old body, whose professed dislike of “beauties” was equalled only by his horror of early marriages. Though residing in the same city, he had never seen Monroe’s wife, and Arthur was too proud to seek a reconciliation.

Neither could he take his wife and child with him, though Elsie wept, and begged, and entreated. She found, to her surprise and vexation, that her husband could be firm, as well as fond, and made herself ill with weeping over the discovery.

He waited in silence, with a grave brow, until her grief had spent its first violence, then again explained the necessity of their separation, and his plans for her comfort.

“I shall be absent not more than a year, if I can help it, Elsie — an age to us both, I grant, but I cannot help it; and if you and baby Sibyl can content yourselves down at Eltham —”

“At Eltham!” she exclaimed, starting up, and clasping one arm around his neck; “surely, Arthur, you will not send us down there!”

“But I thought —”

“No matter what you thought. I detest Eltham; I should die of ennui there before six months were over, with nobody to talk to but your brother’s wife. Don’t be angry,” she went on, smiling through her tears, as she noted his serious look; she is a very excellent woman, I dare say, but she is so unwell, and I cannot bear to be with sick people! Besides, I can’t abide the country.”

Monroe looked a moment into the fair, pouting face. "A pretty rosebud, set in wilful thorns," uplifted so eagerly to his, and a smile lighted his grave face, as he said, —

"I thought you were delighted with Eltham, Elsie. You could not praise it enough when we were there after our marriage."

"O, yes, then I was, to be sure; and I would be delighted with it now, if you were with me. I will be delighted with all those miserable, disagreeable things which you say would await me in Europe, if you will let me go. Only try me, Arthur."

How that strong, loving heart yearned to grant the request so pleadingly urged by lips and eyes! It was some moments before he replied, with a sigh, as he pressed his lips to her forehead, —

"I would it were in my power to 'try you' as you say, dear Elsie. This separation will be harder for me than for you, for you will, at least, have little Sibyl;" and the father's eyes filled with tears as he glanced at the cradle where the little one slept. "When I spoke of Eltham," he added, "I thought how nice the pure, fresh country air would be for her."

"There! the truth comes out! You thought far more of her than you did of me!" cried the young wife, half jestingly. "I might have known how it would be. It's just the way with all men. Confess the truth — isn't it so, Arthur? No," she went on, poutingly, in reply to the mute answer her husband saw fit to make to this charge;

"no, I am not to be put off with kisses. You know it's the truth."

"Elsie!" he said, in a tone of mingled surprise and pain.

"You need not cry, 'Elsie!'" she went on, her light tone changing to one of petulant complaint. "I have seen it all for some time. You don't care for me, or you would take me with you;" and the spoiled pet burst into hysterical tears.

He was a young husband — still a lover, and the little tricks of girlhood had not yet lost their power. He would have drawn her to him, but she pettishly repulsed him, and, rising, he walked the room in silence. She watched him through her wavy hair; she saw him pause and lean for some time upon the mantel-piece, and when he turned his face towards her again, it wore a new look which some instinct taught her to regret. She sprang to her feet, and stealing softly to his side, said, —

"Are you angry with me, Arthur?"

He looked at her a moment, and the rigid lines about his mouth slowly curved into a smile. "You are such a child, Elsie," he said, as he gathered her little hands in his, — "and who could be angry with a child?"

It was decided that Elsie and her child should remain in their own house, which was in the same block with that of her cousins, Mr. and Mrs. Norland.

"It will be so much better than that tiresome Eltham," said Elsie, "to be able to run into cousin Julia's and hear the news; for I suppose, Arthur," she went on question-

ingly, "I suppose it will not be proper for me to go out much."

"Will you wish to do so, darling?"

Any one accustomed to read character at all could see how much the question involved to him.

"Why, I don't know; it will be rather stupid here, with no one but baby. But, of course, if you do not wish it, I shall stay at home."

"I wish you to do just as you please," he replied. "I suppose I am rather selfish; but if my wife is left to herself, I think I can trust her to do what is proper and right."

"If you cannot, you can send for that old friend of yours, aunt — what's her name? — the woman with the tall cap crown, whom we saw down at Eltham. She will be as good a guard as that ugly dragon, of which you were reading the other night," called out the young wife, merrily, as he turned to leave the room.

"Aunt Lydia Blair," he exclaimed, pausing on the threshold. "That's not a bad suggestion, Elsie. She is sensible and well bred, and would relieve you of a world of care. She will do any thing for me, for my mother's sake; and I don't think she disliked you, when we were down there."

"Disliked me! There's a compliment from one's husband! I should like to know who does dislike me, unless it be that miserable old bachelor uncle of yours. I am not quite a fright, I believe. You can write for her to come. She will serve to amuse me, at least."

CHAPTER III.

ELSIE MONROE was one of those women who have no independent, self-sustained existence. Vine-like, she was always reaching out for support, and in the absence of her husband, her cousins, Mr. and Mrs. Norland, became her chief dependence.

They were well-meaning, agreeable, fashionable people, who did their best to amuse her, — in the only way they could, — by introducing her to all the gayeties of their set, and considered themselves well repaid by the admiration her grace and beauty excited. To the young wife herself it was a welcome return to the enchanting region she had just entered when the love of young Monroe magnetized her volatile nature and opened to her glimpses of a higher, holier world.

But, alas! few "walk by faith and not by sight" in this world; and when his arm ceased to enfold her, and his voice to linger in her ear, the spell slept. The strong, holy, unswerving love, that regards neither time, nor space, nor absence, nor death itself, (why should it, being immortal?) springing from an ever-living fountain as freely as God gives light, and, like that, blessing its object without a con-

scious thought of requital or reward, was not hers. Though she spoke of her husband often and tenderly, and talked to her baby in terms almost as childish as her own, of her "dear papa," yet, after a few weeks, she was surprised to find how well she could enjoy herself without him, and took with eager pleasure the cup which the world offered to her lips.

She was not indifferent to her child, or unmindful of her. She always saw that she was dressed with most exquisite taste. Half a dozen times a day she would catch her up and half smother her with caresses, while she lavished upon her all manner of pet names; and there her sense of maternal duty ended.

But, fortunately for the child, there was one person in the house whose sense of the responsibilities of life had been deepened by years of thought and experience — old Lydia Blair. She was both able and willing to take the matter up; and it may be that it was not less fortunate for her, for, though the memories which the little hands, clinging about her, and pressing against her withered bosom, recalled, were full of pain, they were, nevertheless, softening and healing; and had little Sibyl been of her own blood, she could not have guarded her with a tenderer care.

Elsie had counted upon her presence and old-fashioned ways as an amusement; but she soon felt the influence of her strong, determined character.

In personal appearance she was indeed a contrast to Mrs. Monroe — tall, angular, and bony; but her plain

and rather old-fashioned dress was always neat and of good material; and, in compensation for lack of all that attracts the eye, God had given her strong good sense, unswerving integrity, a will firm, patient, and enduring, and a heart stern as one of her native rocks towards all wilful sin, but opening a fountain of tenderness towards the helpless, the wronged, the suffering, and down-trodden; though this tenderness came perhaps more through grace than nature.

She had had, like almost every woman, her full share of the experience of life, and she had had, also, the wisdom to read it aright. The great moral law that underlies all the theology of her native New England, and forms the substratum of so much that is noble and peculiar in the people there, — the idea of *duty*, — was the main spring of all her thoughts and actions. Of course, her views often clashed with those of Mrs. Monroe; but somehow the winning ways of the latter, her youth, her very ignorance, pleaded for her with the rigid old lady, and made a sort of "half-way covenant" between her sense of duty and her woman's heart.

Besides, Arthur Monroe's mother had stood her firm friend in an hour when there was little light for her on earth. He had placed her there, and for his sake she would be true to her trust.

So the year passed by, and Monroe was still detained abroad. His letters clearly indicated how sore the trial was to him; but Elsie was sincerely vexed. She charged him with indifference and neglect, and half angrily, half playfully, placed her tiny hands upon her ears when old

Lydia sat herself down, as she sometimes did, to "make her hear to reason;" pitying herself and baby Sibyl as the worst used people upon the earth, until some new show of admiration came to attract her attention and put her in good humor.

One evening, towards the last of July, as old Lydia Blair sat in her room, with Sibyl on her knee, telling her, as was her custom, some Bible story, before putting her to rest, a servant entered with a letter. Though the old lady had few friends living who would be likely to remember her in this way, she would not be disturbed in her relation, and motioned the girl to lay it upon the table. When she had listened to the childish prayer, and seen the little head upon the pillow, she drew from her deep pocket her glasses, and adjusted them to read the missive. Being a person of method, she examined minutely the address and post mark before breaking the seal, but with little satisfaction; for both were nearly illegible.

"It must be from that worthless fellow, Jim Needham, begging for money again, I guess. I was a fool to ever think of making any thing of him. He might have written plainer, I should think, after all the schoolin' cousin Sally gave him. But she sp'ilt him waitin' on him," she muttered, as she broke the seal.

She read slowly a few lines, looked at the signature, then suddenly dropping the paper, and clasping her hands, exclaimed,—

"O God! how wonderful are thy ways, and thy judgments past finding out!"

For some moments she sat with a bent head, while only her lips moved, as if wrestling with God for some gift of wisdom or of strength; and when she again looked up, her face was very pale, and the great tears rolled silently down her cheeks and lost themselves in the wrinkles there.

Half an hour later, she entered Mrs. Monroe's dressing room. The latter was arraying herself for a musical *soirée*, which she was to attend with the Norlands, and when the old lady entered, was wreathing a string of pearls amid her hair. As she caught a glimpse of her tall form in the mirror, she turned towards her, and exclaimed,—

"There, aunt Lydia, is not this dress exquisite? So light and cloud-like, and the blonde harmonizes so admirably with these pearls! Arthur always likes to see me wear pearls. He says they are like me, so fair and pure. Dear Arthur! I wish he could see me to-night!" And she sighed sadly; but the moment after added, with the volatile gayety which marked her character, "Confess, now, aunt Lydia, that I am worthy to be his wife. It will be such a rarity to get a compliment from you."

The old woman looked at her a moment, and there was a slight tremor in her voice as she replied,—

"Favor is deceitful and beauty vain. The fear of the Lord alone giveth wisdom. Would that you could see it now as you will in the years to come, child. But each one must drain his cup for himself, even as He did before us."

Even Elsie was touched by the earnestness of her tones,

and noticing for the first time her unusual paleness, — the only evidence of emotion that her strong will could not suppress, — she dropped the scarf she was about to fling over her shoulders, and exclaimed, —

“What is the matter, aunt Lydia? Something has happened! Arthur — my husband!”

“Your husband is well, for aught I know. I only came to tell you I must start for Boston to-night.”

“Start for Boston — you! Are you crazy, aunt Lydia? You must be joking,” cried Elsie, opening her eyes in astonishment; for she was well aware of the old dame’s dislike of change.

“I am in earnest, Mrs. Monroe. I shall take the boat at nine o’clock.”

“But what for? What possible reason have you for going to Boston, aunt Lydia?”

“Because the hand of the Lord leadeth me. Yes, it is surely his hand, and none other,” she added, more to herself than to her listener.

“Pshaw! aunt Lydia! I do wish you would talk like other people,” cried Elsie, impatiently. “You know I cannot stay in this great house with only Bridget and baby. I shall die of fright. It is not right for you to go; for you promised Arthur to stay here until he came back.”

“I know I did, child,” replied the old woman, sorrowfully. “But I *must* go now, for a few days. Justice and mercy both require it. There is a person there lying at the point of death, whom I *must* see once more in the flesh.”

“Some person dying! One of your friends, aunt Lydia?”

“No; it is mine enemy.”

Elsie did not notice the painful working of the stern old face; but her own cleared up at once, and she said, carelessly, —

“O, if that is all, I am sure there is no need of going. You can’t certainly want to see a person you dislike. I never do,” she went on, shrugging her fair shoulders, “it gives me such disagreeable feelings. Just write a line. Or, stay,” she added, looking at her watch; “I have time, I will write for you. You are much too old to think of going such a journey alone.”

Old Lydia laid the keys — for, as Arthur had said, she did indeed relieve Elsie of all household cares — on the dressing table, and merely said, as she turned away, —

“I must go myself. I have sent Bridget for the carriage, ma’am; and it will be well for you to look into the kitchen once in a while yourself, for these Irish need a deal of telling. And you will need to send for some sugar to-morrow, and the milk bill will become due on Friday.”

Elsie looked at her in consternation.

“Do you really intend to go and leave me with all these disagreeable things to look after?” And flinging herself down upon the sofa, she began to weep and complain.

“It was too bad: Arthur was gone, and now Lydia must go too; and what was she to do? It was very provoking, just as she had made such a nice arrangement to accompany

cousin Julia to Saratoga. She believed every body tried to thwart her."

Aunt Lydia had already reached the threshold; but at the word "Saratoga" she suddenly turned back, and there were surprise, anger, and pity struggling in her voice as she said, solemnly, —

"Elsie Monroe, if you would be indeed worthy of the name you bear, stay at home with your child. What should you, a wife and mother, be doing at a place like that? Dawdlin' away your time, if nothin' worse, while your husband is in furrin parts slavin' his life out for your comfort. Have a little thought for him, if none for yourself."

Mrs. Monroe raised her face glowing with indignation. "You forget yourself, Lydia," she said. "I trust I know what is proper for the wife of Arthur Monroe. You can go if you choose."

But the old dame did not go; she even advanced a step towards her as she said, with a show of tender earnestness that in her was very rare, —

"I wouldn't say that you don't, ma'am, but woman sins not so much from want of knowledge as want of thought. Neither do I say that you have sinned," she went on, seeing the rising color in Elsie's cheek; "and I know that I am old and you are young — that my ways are not as your ways; but human love, be it husband's or friend's, is the same in one age as another — harder to keep than to win; and take the advice of one who has no motive but

your well being, — if you would meet your husband with an open heart and clear conscience, stay at home. One's own roof is a safeguard against many evils."

She held out her hand, but the indignant beauty would not see it, and the old dame turned away in silence.

Two weeks later, when she returned, she found Mrs. Monroe absent at Saratoga, and little Sibyl an inmate of cousin Julia's nursery, moaning in the arms of an Irish nurse. With a faint cry of joy the child recognized her old friend, and the latter gathered her in her arms, while she sternly questioned the housekeeper and the servants as to the cause of the child's illness. The moral atmosphere of Mrs. Norland's house was not particularly calculated to foster habits of strict veracity; but old Lydia was not to be deceived, and she at last obliged the nursery maid to confess that she had taken the child out with her when she went to see some of her relatives who had just come over from Ireland.

"And she has caught some of their dreadful outlandish diseases," muttered old Lydia; "but if the mother forsakes her young, what can be expected of the hireling!"

She took the child home, and sent for a physician, who confirmed her worst fears; it was an undoubted case of small pox.

Lydia Blair did not fear death. She trusted she was ready when it should please her Maker to call her; so she shut herself up in her own room, and devoted every thought to the care of the child, scarcely leaving her to go to the

door for the food which the terrified servant left outside. On the sixth night, as she stood over her charge, bathing the swollen head and putting up unceasing prayers for her recovery, not unmingled with hard thoughts towards the absent mother, a footstep in the hall aroused her, and, almost before she was aware of it, Arthur Monroe entered the room. She stood speechless for one second in surprise, then, springing forward, essayed to thrust him back, saying, in a low but startling whisper, —

“Not here! You must not come here, Arthur, as you value your life!”

He put her from him — the great, bony woman — as if she had been a weed, and strode up to the bed; but starting back horror-stricken at the sight of the little purple face upon the white pillow, he seized her arm with a force that made her writhe with pain.

“Lydia — woman — where is my wife?”

“Gone off with ——”

He did not let her finish her sentence, but flung her from him; and the stout woman, accustomed all her life to scenes of bodily and mental agony, trembled as she saw how his strong frame shook, and his swarthy cheek blanched as he grasped the bed post for support. Instantly she divined the terrible thought which unnerved him.

“Be calm, Arthur,” she said. “It is not that — not what you are thinkin’. Your wife is careless, thoughtless, and, to my thinkin’, sometimes unfeelin’, — God forgive me if I wrong her, — but that is all. She is with the Norlands

at Saratoga.” She was about to add something more, but he motioned her to stop, and sinking on his knees by the bedside, something like a sob welled up from his heart. At length he arose, and bending over the child, gazed long and earnestly at the distorted, disfigured face; then turned his bewildered, inquiring eyes upon old Lydia.

“It is her, indeed — your little Sibyl,” returned she, mournfully.

He again bent over her, drew the little head towards him as if he would have kissed her; but suddenly drawing back, he asked, —

“How came the child in this state? and why is my wife not here?”

Not for worlds would old Lydia Blair have said aught of his young wife that was false; but there was no softening of the facts, nor of her tones, as she related, in her straightforward manner, the events of the past weeks. Perhaps there would have been, could she have known how each of her words was like a sharp sickle in his heart, reaping the rich harvest of hopes, and dreams, and anticipated joys, with which he had beguiled the years of absence, or, even, could she have seen the expression of his face; but the room was carefully guarded from the light, and she kept on until he interrupted her fiercely, —

“How dare you go and leave her thus — alone — *you*, to whom I intrusted her — my poor childish Elsie? The curse of a ——”

The old dame suddenly interrupted him; and there

was an awful sternness in her voice and manner as she said, —

“Hush, Arthur Monroe! Beware how you charge upon another the sin and folly which lies at your own door. If you would take to your arms a mere child, a *baby*, to bear the cares and duties of a strong-hearted woman, you should have staid with her yourself. No wise man leaves a lamb among wolves, or a dove among the hawks.”

He was moved by her manner, and said, earnestly, —

“Forgive me, Lydia; it may be you are right; but if you could only have staid!”

Touched by his distress, she said, less sternly, —

“I will tell you why I went, Arthur, though I little thought to speak of this subject again. Once I was young like you; and like you I made to myself an idol, bowed down to it, gave it all that woman could give, and was trampled in the dust beneath its feet; my name — my father’s honest name, all the heritage I had — made a by-word for shame and sin. *You* tremble at even the shadow of disgrace — for almost forty years it has rested on me, and —” her voice grew low and tremulous, — “it was the only earthly portion of my child!”

“Your child, Lydia?”

“Yes, my child; dear to me as that little one to you. And yet I shed no tears when it died; not because I was resigned to God’s will, — for even then I was ready to question both his wisdom and goodness, — but because it was beyond the finger and taunt of scorn. The grave takes out

all moral as well as physical taint. At that time your mother stood my friend. She put life and hope into me, for she *believed* me; she gave me shelter and countenance, and it was no slight thing that would have led me to desert, even in appearance, the trust confided to me by her child. But three weeks ago there came to me a letter saying that my — that the man who gave me the name of wife when he was already married to another, and whom I long supposed dead, was dying in the hospital in Boston; and ‘He who executeth judgment’ put it into his heart for once to speak the truth. He sent for me, and in the presence of witnesses proved to me that of all his many deluded victims, I alone had the miserable right to bear his name.”

Monroe grasped her hand in silence, while she added, —

“Human love is a broken reed at best, my boy, and this is a sore welcome for you; but remember, there is One who can turn all our sorrow into joy.”

Alas! Monroe had none of her strong faith in an overruling Providence, which blossomed up from the stern tenets of old Calvinism; so he turned away in silence, and through the long hours of the night old Lydia heard him pacing the floor of his room with heavy steps. Of what was he thinking? ay, of what did he think?

CHAPTER IV.

THE next morning, while Monroe stood in his solitary parlor, gazing at the portrait of his wife, a carriage drove to the door. He hardly heeded it until his wife's voice fell upon his ear. She rushed past the servant who answered the bell, paused a moment on the threshold of the parlor, and then, with a cry of joyful surprise, threw herself into his arms.

"O Arthur, dear Arthur, how glad I am to welcome you home!"

Her arms were clinging about his neck, her head nestling upon his breast, and for a few moments he forgot every thing in the delicious joy of reünion; then he gently put aside her arms, and said, in a voice that was very sad, almost stern, —

"Pardon me, Mrs. Monroe, as you are the latest comer, it is I that should welcome you."

That tone, without the title, was sufficient to teach even Elsie something of the change that had been wrought in her husband by his night's vigil; and hiding her face on his shoulder, she cried, —

"Don't speak to me in that way again, Arthur; in pity

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don't! I was so lonely! Cousin Julia wanted me to go so much! Indeed, I would not have gone for worlds had I known of your coming. Say you will pardon me, Arthur."

He felt her tears upon his cheek, and, raising her head, he returned her caresses, as he sadly recalled old Lydia's words.

"It was indeed wrong for me to leave you so long alone, poor child."

"I knew you would think so, Arthur," she returned, her face brightening into smiles, as she drew him to a seat on the sofa. "But you are here now, and we will forget all those tiresome, disagreeable months. We will have such nice times,—you and I,—and be so happy! I have a delightful plan. But how solemn you look!—just as if you were not really glad to see me, after all."

"Have you forgotten our child, Elsie?"

"Forgotten her, the darling! No; how odd for you to think so! She is such a little beauty, Arthur! I am so proud of her! I believe Julia really envies me. Her children are so ordinary looking! How the doctor's note frightened me, though he said she was better! I could neither eat nor sleep, and started right off in spite of cousin Julia, with a gentleman who was almost a total stranger to me. Was not I brave, Arthur? It is so dreadful to think that wicked girl should take her to such a miserable place, and expose her to scarlet fever."

"Scarlet fever! O Elsie!" And remembering the little, swollen, disfigured face upon the pillow, up stairs, Monroe covered his face, and groaned aloud.

"Arthur," she cried, springing to her feet, "what is it? Tell me, — my Sibyl, my darling, — is she dead?"

His first impulse was to lead her to the child's bedside; but one glance at her pale, frightened face wrought a softened change in his mood, and, again seating her by his side, he told her the fearful truth.

"Will you see her now, Elsie?" he asked, mournfully. "There is no danger, I assure you."

She looked at him anxiously, as if, in spite of his assurance, there was certain death in acceding to his proposal; and yet she had a sort of dim perception that it was not wise to refuse; so, taking his arm, she ascended to the chamber. The child was sleeping, and old Lydia silently stepped aside from her post at the pillow, to allow the parents to approach; but at the first sight of that spotted, swollen face, the poor weak-nerved mother fainted. Her husband bore her from the chamber in his arms, and the hysterical paroxysms that followed were so violent that even he forbore to ask her to repeat the visit.

"The doctor says I may take Sibyl down to-morrow, if it is pleasant, Mr. Monroe," said old Lydia Blair, as she met him in the hall, one day, when he came to dinner.

"Bring her to the parlor after dinner, then, if you please, Lydia," was the reply.

Elsie sat by her husband's side, winding his hair about her slender fingers, and laughing at him for growing old and gray before his time, when Lydia entered, leading the child by the hand.

"Mamma, dear mamma!" lisped the child, letting go of her old friend's hand, and tottering with feeble, uncertain steps towards her mother.

Monroe had forgotten to tell his wife of his order, who caught one glance of the disfigured face, and, with a quick, sharp cry, and a gesture of surprise, covered her face with her hands, and sank upon the sofa.

He did not stoop over her and soothe her with caresses this time; but he caught the little girl in his arms, and, with a hasty kiss upon the little face turned with such a bewildering look from the mother to him, he gave her back to Lydia, and motioned to have her taken away.

"And so you treat the treasure, snatched, by the mercy of God, from the brink of the grave, you selfish woman! The wild beasts that perish show more feeling," muttered the angry old woman, as she turned her back upon the room. "The day may come when you may stretch out your arms for help, and find none ready to support you but this little one you now scorn. God be with you then."

The mother sobbed convulsively, but her husband did not heed her. He turned to the window, and looked moodily out a while. A fountain of bitterness had been opened in his heart, and he dared not trust himself to speak lest it should overflow. Was that his wife, — his angel wife, — the mother of his child, the constant thought of whom had been a law to his passionate, impetuous nature amid all the temptations of Paris, whose image, with her baby in her arms, had always been with him in the far-famed galleries

of the old world, dimming, with its living warmth and fresh beauty, the finest conceptions of the Virgin Mother and her Child?

"Arthur."

He turned, and Elsie started at the dark, moody face that met hers.

"I could not help it; indeed I could not, Arthur. The change is so sudden, so dreadful!"

His face softened. "Shall I send for her again, Elsie?"

"O, no! Not now. I cannot bear it. I am still so weak," she cried, with a shudder. "It will kill me! How can you bear to look upon it, Arthur?"

"*Bear* to do it, Elsie!" And again the cold, dark look shadowed his face, and made itself felt in his voice. "*Bear* to do it! We men, I believe, have little credit for parental devotion, compared to that of women; but if my wife could bear to make my child what she is, I can surely bear to look upon her."

"I, Arthur Monroe! I make her what she is! How unjust, how cruel, when you know it was all the doing of that wicked, miserable girl! I charged her expressly to take the child into no house during my absence."

"I have no doubt of that, Elsie; but you cannot blame the girl for following the example of her mistress. She doubtless found it dull and lonesome. O my wife, how could you be so careless of our child?"

Elsie made no reply, and kept on weeping, but finally mingled with her tears half-muttered reproaches of his wish

to shut her up alone with a child, while he was enjoying himself amid all the gayeties of Parisian life.

He turned towards her, and in a voice so deep and intense as to make her start, said, suddenly, —

"Enjoying myself! Yes, I did enjoy myself, amid temptations and allurements, the power of which, thank Heaven, you can never conceive! Would you know how? With a dream — a dream of a wife pure as Cæsar's, of a mother true as — as the one whose memory I reverence; of a child, — a little, tender, beautiful, helpless bud, rooted fast in the heart of each. I kept the thought of these ever before me, and conquered more in their strength than my own. I toiled for them early and late. I fed my hungry, homesick heart upon the thought of meeting them, blessed each day that made that end more sure and certain, and then, when the time came — O Elsie! Elsie!"

She felt the sorrow, the disappointment, the anguish, the shattered, broken hopes that shook him, and made his voice tremulous as a woman's. She could not help feeling them; and O that she had yielded! that she had hidden her face in her husband's bosom, and showed him her whole heart — its folly, its wilfulness, its weakness, and ignorance! O that she had remembered old Lydia Blair's words — "Human love is harder to keep than to win," — and, as the weakest, — the one to whom that love was most a necessity, — had earnestly whispered, "Forgive!" Then might she have been taken again to his heart, not to rule

and reign there,—an idol,—but as an erring, suffering companion, to walk the paths of life, relying on his firmness and wisdom to guide her weary steps, until, through patience and self-denial, she had indeed become worthy of the shrine where his boyish love had so blindly placed her.

Would that she had been wise enough to know that such men as Monroe seldom plead for love or confidence twice—that tears, unless springing from the bitter fountain of repentance, as often help to cement the hard walls of division as to soften them; that, in some moods, they are the idlest of all pleas. But she remembered only their power over him in their early love dream; and so she hardened herself against his anguished tones, and, with averted face, still wept on.

But she had mistaken her power; no arm now stole around her; no hand gently unclasped hers, and kissed away her tears. Arthur Monroe had faced the world since those days, and he was in no mood for such things. He bade her a simple “good night,” and left the room. She lifted her head to listen: there was no pausing on the threshold—no irresolution in the steps that crossed the hall, and passed slowly up the stairs.

Ay, well might she weep, then, tears as bitter as if that familiar door had been a grave, to thus shut out her husband's form; for the graves of the heart are far deeper and colder than those of mother earth. Our dead we bury in hope, but for love scorned, grieved, and misinterpreted—for that there is no resurrection.

CHAPTER V.

So died out “love's young dream” in the home of the Monroes, and life's stern realities commenced, all the colder and harder for the past brightness.

It might have been otherwise with a man of different mould; but Monroe steeled himself against further disappointment by shutting himself up in an armor of polite reserve. It was difficult for Elsie to understand this change. It would be too much to say that she ever did; but she felt it, and when she found that neither tears nor caresses could avail, it was natural, perhaps, that she should unconsciously connect it with her unfortunate child.

She had learned to fear her husband, as well as love him, and no longer ventured to object, when he requested that the child should be brought in to dinner every day, when they were alone; for even he shrank from hearing his own child pitied before his face. His sense of justice exacted for her every attention, but he could not forget the past, and her face only too sadly reminded him of what now seemed to him boyish folly. With him, therefore, she was pitied, rather than beloved.

So that little pale, silent figure sat between them at the

dessert, day after day, lifting its great pleading blue eyes to theirs, in which they read, not the yearnings of an earnest but defrauded nature, but only silent reproach.

Then, to fill up the dreary void in their home, they let in the gay world, which in return pronounced them a "charming couple," sometimes querying, with a yawn, whether the fascinating Mrs. Monroe was quite at her ease with that quiet, dignified husband of hers.

None so well knew the true state of affairs as old Lydia Blair. The life they were leading seemed to her little better than downright sin, and half in anger and half in pity, she mourned over them, and prayed for them, while she confined herself more and more exclusively to her room, and guarded her little charge with still more jealous care. It was very natural that she should feel keenly all that touched the interest or well being of the child whose very helplessness took so strong a hold upon her heart, and she regarded the prospect of the birth of another child with mingled hope and fear — hope that the fountain of parental love, thus reopened, might overflow, to brighten and bless the future of little Sibyl, and a fear that the heart of the child, thus diverted, might leave her own life again desolate. She knew this last feeling was selfish, and by a strong effort of her will, she rooted it out, and was enabled to overcome pain in thanksgiving, when she saw Arthur Monroe lift his little girl in his arms, and bear her down stairs to see her baby brother.

"The Lord be thanked it's a boy, and not another girl,

to put her to shame for other folks' sin. He may right her in the days to come!" she muttered.

To Sibyl the advent of this baby was a never-to-be-forgotten event. She would sit hours by the cradle, gazing, in her quiet, thoughtful way, upon its tiny features, sometimes venturing to just touch its soft cheek with her little hand, as if to satisfy herself that it really was a thing of flesh and blood.

"Look, Arthur, is she not a born nurse?" cried the mother, one day, as she pointed to the little silent figure bending over the cradle. "She only needs a cap and a tea cup to make the picture complete. Who ever saw such a wise look on such a child's face before?"

"Perhaps she remembers the carelessness of her own nurse," was the reply — the thought of the moment unconsciously finding vent at the lips; for he, too, had been gazing at her, and painfully contrasting the little pale face with the rosy, beautiful one of the babe. "But I did not mean to recur to this topic," he added, seeing his wife's reproachful look; "it is as unwise as useless."

It was not so much his words as the cold, reserved air that invariably came over him whenever any allusion was made to this topic, that touched the thoughtless Elsie. In her joy at the birth of her boy, she had almost forgotten the unhappy circumstances connected with her other child; she had hoped that Arthur would do the same; but his words and manner now came like a frost, blighting all her gay hopes, and as he left the room, unmindful of the children, she burst into tears.

She did not see the little figure drawing slowly near the sofa where she lay, but presently a little soft cheek was laid against the hand that covered her face, and a pleading, childish voice said, —

“Please don’t cry, mamma; Sibyl hasn’t been naughty; she hasn’t hurt Willie;” — the last being in her childish ethics, the very height of wrong doing.

The mother started at her touch, and pushing her nervously back, said, —

“There, there; I am not angry. Do go away, child.” Thus repulsed, the child turned sadly away, and with one glance at the cradle, with slow steps left the room. She paused in the doorway, and looked timidly back to her mother.

What was there in that little shrinking figure, and pale, patient face, that for one moment roused all the mother in that spoiled woman’s heart? Was it that the pleading expression in the soft eyes were so like to her husband’s in the early days of their love dream? Indeed, they were wonderfully like his at times. Something there was, for she sprang up, and was about to call her back, when Willie moved uneasily in his cradle; and flying to his side, she forgot, in soothing and caressing him, the troubled thought that childish glance had stirred.

“The feet of the avenging deities are shod with wool,” says an old Greek proverb; but for all that their footsteps are not less sure, nor their arrows less keen. Years afterwards, when she reaped in tears the harvest of

sorrow and neglect which she had so carelessly sown, and began to know the worth of that love which she had so lightly cast aside, the image of that little pale child would come before her in her dreams, and the silent reproach in those great dewy eyes was far harder to bear than the bitterest of words.

CHAPTER VI.

"SIBYL, child, come here! — not so close; I can't see you. Stand out in the light — yonder — it gets so dark — so dark."

The words were low, spoken at intervals with great difficulty, so different from the quick, sharp, clear tones of old Lydia Blair, as we knew her at first; neither was the face the same, for as she lifted herself on her elbow, and gazed wistfully at her darling, who stood where the golden summer sunlight streamed through the western window, one could see that the shadow of death was there.

"Yes, you are like her — my old friend, Sibyl Umberfield — your father's mother. She was a crown of glory to her husband," muttered the old lady. "Like *her*, and for her sake *He* whom she served will keep you, child."

Presently she beckoned Sibyl nearer, and peering with sunken, filmy eyes in her face, she said, with something of her old sharp tone, —

"You have been crying, Sibyl! — what for?"

Sibyl blushed and averted her face, as she pressed the cold, shrivelled hand tenderly in hers.

"It's nothing, aunt Lydia, only I am foolish, as you

sometimes say." Then, as if fearful her explanation might not prove satisfactory, she went on hastily: —

"I promised you I would take a walk to-day, aunt Lydia. If you would like Mrs. Bryce or Jeanette to sit by you, I will run down to the moss terrace, and see the sun set."

"Sun set! — it's dark now, child. I can scarcely see you."

"Not quite; it must be the heavy curtains that cast their shadow there," the girl replied anxiously, as she put back the drapery.

Sending the nurse, whose office she made a mere sinecure during the day, to her old friend, Sibyl took her way through the beautiful grounds that surrounded her father's stately summer home on the bank of the noble Hudson; for Monroe has now been for some years ranked as one of New York's most successful merchants.

Ay, walk slow — slower still, little Sibyl; few hearts at ten years old bear a heavier burden of sorrow than yours; — so heavy as almost to still its rapid throbbing. What was it the housekeeper said to the nurse, as you left the room, that so suddenly blanched your cheek and gave shape and density to the fearful thought which has sometimes come to you during the past week, and from which you have shrunk back with such trembling and horror? Ay, the day will come when you will look upon it with joy — welcome it as the angel who is to lead you to the "boundless regions of all perfection;" but now — you are

but a child, and how can childhood comprehend the mystery of death?

That was the word. They said, "Lydia Blair was on her death bed—she could hardly live a week." They have no need to tell her—the old dame knows it; and all through the watches of the night, she strives to make grace overcome nature, and prays earnestly to be forgiven if the strong yearning to be with you and guide you yet a little longer be a weakness of the flesh, even for His Son's sake. Her kind old heart would keep it from you; but others are less careful. So hasten on, Sibyl—never mind the crushed flowers or the merry birds; music and fragrance are for the happy. Hasten on, and fling yourself upon that mossy, flower-starred terrace, your mother's favorite seat, and weep as only lone, neglected little children can weep.

Yet tears are idle here, or only serve to swell the waters of the stream of death; they cannot take one grain from the heavy burden of your grief, or add one moment to the life flickering and waning in yonder chamber—nothing can. Ah, yes, you are right, little one; wiser, far, in your childish faith and trust than we in our worldly wisdom; so kneel down there, and with your little hands uplifted pour into His ear the sorrows which you dare not whisper to an earthly friend. He will hear; for hath he not said, (many and many a time has old Lydia quoted it,) "When thy father and mother forsake thee, lo, I will take thee up"?

Thou hast found comfort, little one; and now turn your eyes to the magnificent landscape before you, and let that preach also of hope and peace.

How soft, white, and peaceful are the drifting clouds that mottle the sky above! how exquisite the arrangement of hill and dale, with its music and fragrance! the mighty river sweeping in long, majestic reaches to the ocean, white with the sails of numberless water craft—an ever-shifting panorama set in a framework of lofty hills; the ceaseless play of clouds and shadows; the softened sounds of busy life floating up from the landing below; and best of all, there, in the distance, the grand old Catskills, overtowering all their brotherhood, and leaning back so lovingly against the blue sky, with the sunset resting on their heads like a fire baptism.

O, God be praised for the hills!—the mighty hills, that fold us about like his encircling arm! Silent, immovable teachers! how, in their presence, the weak heart grows strong, the doubting firm, the sick and sorrowing comforted! the friendless and the solitary, the wanderer and the exile, gather beneath their friendly shelter, and are no longer alone. They are God's strongholds of truth and freedom; the scene of the transfiguration and the crucifixion; and remembering this, the martyr turns to them his dying gaze, and sees no more the faces of his persecutors—sees "no man save Jesus only." O, give thanks for the hills.

Sibyl has long loved them; and as she sits there watching their golden summits, a sense of support and protection

steals into her heart; their strength, which we know is His strength, becomes hers, and she is comforted. Sometimes she glances at the steamer coming up the river, and hopes that her papa and mamma and brother Willie may be on board. They are away at Rockaway, and she fears so much that they will not come before *that time*—and she glances back at the window of old Lydia's room and shudders.

But the steamer passes on, and the last sunbeams strike a deep gorge in the mountains, down which rushes a furious mountain torrent. It reminds you of the legend you read the other day in your father's library, Sibyl; so linger a little longer and dream it over, child; that dark cloud hiding behind the old "Cro' Nest" will not reach you yet. It is a monkish tale—"an invention of poor, ignorant, deluded, Popish folks," old Lydia says, but nevertheless full of significance and beauty, and runs thus:—

Close by a gorge like that (you felt that you knew the spot when you read it) once lived a mountaineer, poor and miserable, and wretched in all outward wealth, but richer than his lord in all kind deeds and gentle humanities. He had built his hut on the very brink of the torrent, and sometimes eked out his scanty means of subsistence by assisting some adventurous hunter or wandering traveller across the stream.

One night, when a week of rain had swollen the torrent to an unusual height, while the storm still raged fearfully without, and the forest groaned and wailed as if in anguish

over the broken and uprooted trees, and the darkness was so thick that no human being, nor even animal, it seemed, that had shelter above its head, would venture forth, the poor man was roused by a traveller, who begged him to assist him in fording the torrent, saying, at the same time, that he had neither silver nor gold wherewith to reward him.

The mountaineer pointed to where, through the murky darkness, the white foam of the waters was dimly visible as it leaped up to fight the storm, and tried to dissuade the person from so dangerous an undertaking, offering him such food and shelter as his cabin afforded; but the traveller only entreated him the more earnestly, begging him for Christ's sake to grant his request. The poor man could not withstand the plea made in that holy name; so he led him some rods above to the safest ford, and taking him upon his shoulders, boldly plunged into the stream. Amid the darkness, stumbling against rocks, many times losing his foothold amid the furious waters, he struggled on until at last he gained the opposite bank in safety. Then, for one moment, a crown of dazzling light encircled the head of the traveller, making the wild scene distinctly visible; and as the darkness again closed round him, he heard a voice, coming as it were from the clouds above him, of most heavenly sweetness, saying,—

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these little ones, ye have done it unto me."

And the poor man fell on his face in deep awe and

gratitude, for he knew then it was the blessed Lord himself who had thus condescended to test his faith and obedience.

This story made a deep impression upon Sibyl, and she sits often as now, thinking how blessed must have been the lot of that poor man, thus to have borne the burden of the Lord.

She is but a child, and feels the great truth that underlies the legend but in part; she has yet to learn that, sooner or later, the same opportunity comes to all who live — that before many months it will come to her; and though she may not see the “glory,” its light will be in her heart and upon her path forevermore.

“Sibyl,” murmured old Lydia, an hour or two later, “where are you, child? I do not see you.”

Sibyl crept still closer to the pillow, and folded still closer the stiffening hand, as she said, —

“You are getting so cold, aunt Lydia; let me call Mrs. Bryce, and order something warm for you.”

“No; don’t fetch that woman here. I shall be better soon — better.”

Sibyl believed her, and sat quietly by her side, while her old friend looked so wistfully — O, so wistfully in her face, and her lips murmured inaudibly.

At last the listening child caught the burden of the petition so often offered for her, —

“Not that thou shouldst take her out of the world, O Father, but that thou shouldst keep her from the evil.”

Then followed wandering words, names of places and

persons which were quite strange to the child, until suddenly the old dame roused herself, and bade her draw the curtain and let in the sunlight.

“There is no sunlight, dear aunt Lydia,” said the half-frightened child. “It is night, and even the moon is covered by a thick black cloud, and — hark! — hear the thunder.”

“Sibyl, how dare you say there is no sunlight when it shines on the bank yonder just as it used to down at Eltham — on the bank under my mother’s bedroom window. The grass isn’t so green as it used to be, and the sea pinks and roses — I wonder if they will be blown out when we get there?”

“Get where, aunt Lydia?”

She did not reply, and the instant after there came a loud clap of thunder, which caused the girl to bury her face in the bed clothes in fear. But it roused the dying woman; she started half way up, and supporting herself on her elbow, said, with much of her old, distinct enunciation, —

“Hark! the voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory thundereth; the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon; the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh.”

“Sing, child,” she murmured, as she sank back upon her pillows, “the song of the Psalmist when nigh unto death. Not those words,” she added, as the terrified child commenced the modern version of the twenty-third psalm, “the old words — my mother’s words.”

Thus reminded, Sibyl began the old Scottish version which Lydia always sung, —

“The Lord’s my Shepherd; I’ll not want;
He makes me down to lie
In pastures green; he leadeth me
The quiet waters by.
Yea, though I walk in Death’s dark vale,
Yet will I fear no ill;
For thou art with me; and thy rod
And staff me comfort still!
Goodness and mercy all my life
Shall surely follow me;
And in God’s house forevermore
My dwelling place shall be.”

Faintly, slowly, tremulously, as if breaking through tears, the strain rose at first; but the words brought comfort to the childish heart, strength to her voice. The old dame lay with hands folded across her breast, listening and gazing until her lids slowly closed over the dim eyes to be raised again no more on earth.

She had crossed the torrent; but the child did not know it, for she still sang on, while the thunder muttered and the faint twilight faded stealthily away, as, more conscious than the singer, it felt the presence of the shadowy conqueror there.

An hour later, the terrified nurse roused the whole household by her shrieks; and upon entering the chamber they found the dead body of old Lydia and the child lying in a swoon upon the floor.

CHAPTER VII.

IN this shifting drama of life, there is no prompter to forgotten or neglected duty like death. Few have the hardihood to slight his teachings, and Arthur Monroe turned from the grave of the faithful friend of his house for three generations, to the bedside of his sick and suffering little daughter, with a sad and sorrowful heart.

At thirty-five, the world quotes him as a very successful man; and according to its factitious standard, the judgment is correct. Few men of his native energy of mind wholly fail when they devote themselves to a given end, and in the exciting game of speculation into which he threw himself, when his early dream of a domestic paradise vanished, he has won that most worthless of all the husks with which man has attempted to satisfy the cravings of his soul — a reputation for great wealth. But the hard wall of cold reserve between him and his wife — *that* had only become the harder for the glitter which fell upon it from without.

O, these cold, hard, impalpable, but impregnable barriers which pride, and will, and wrong unacknowledged and unforgiven, build up between hearts that should be one! How they darken the light on our hearth stones, and shelter

the demon of unrest! From divisions like these, let our litany be, "Good Lord, deliver us!"

We are accustomed to look forward to the fulfilment of the prophecy of the most sublime of the prophet-priests — "The lion shall lie down with the lamb, and a little child shall lead them," as a miracle. But to the thoughtful soul this miracle is old as time, for there are many lion-like natures, strong in pride, and passion, and self-will, which none but a little child can lead; and when we see such yielding to their gentle touch, we cannot fail to recognize the guiding hand of God.

It was thus, to some extent, with Monroe. The sweet, guileless nature of his child permeated his cold armor of reserve, and he had not passed many hours by her side, before something of his old genial humor awoke within him, and made itself felt by those around him.

"What have you here, Sibyl?" he asked, one day, taking a richly-bound volume from the lounge, where she lay looking dreamily out towards the friendly mountains — "a new book?"

"Yes, and a pretty one, too; mamma bought it for me yesterday, in the city. It was very kind in her to think of me, wasn't it, papa?"

"Why so, Sibyl?" he asked, as he stood for a second, gazing with a mingled feeling of curiosity and interest in the small animated face.

"O, because mamma has so much to do, and so many things to think of, when she goes to town. Madame La-

frage disappointed her sadly about her dress yesterday; and besides, she was forced to go all over town before Willie could find such fishing tackle as suited him. She was so weary when she reached home — poor mamma!"

Had it been Elsie herself speaking, he would probably have turned indifferently away, or expressed his sense of the importance of her business by a polite but pointed sarcasm. But now he was silent a moment; then seating himself by her side, asked which of the stories in her new book he should read to her.

"Read, papa! *you* read to me!"

"Yes," he said, smiling at her eager surprise. "One would suppose, by your manner, that you doubt my ability to read."

"O, no, not that; I know better, for aunt Lydia told me what an excellent reader you were when a little boy; but I thought — you are always too busy, papa, to —"

"To enjoy myself," he added, seeing her hesitate; "but I am at leisure for a half hour, now; so which shall it be?"

The volume was a collection of fairy tales, and Sibyl selected the old one of "Beauty and the Beast."

Monroe had not seen it for many, many years, and, as he read on, there came with every page, almost with every paragraph, some memory of his boyhood, and he would pause to tell the eager listener stories and anecdotes of those days, or give sketches of his brother George, his schoolmates, the old teacher, and the school house, and the mill pond; and, thus illustrated, the tale was ever afterwards, to Sibyl, one of

the most wonderful and beautiful in the world. When it was finished, the child said, thoughtfully, —

"Beauty must have been very happy. It is a great blessing to be beautiful, isn't it, papa? — beautiful, like mamma?"

It was some seconds before Monroe answered, and the change which came over his face, accustomed as he was to control his emotions, half frightened the child.

Of what was he thinking? Of the free criticisms upon the beauty of his wife's face and figure, which fell from the lips of two young naval officers, as he entered the brilliant ball room of Mrs. Van Lenness, a few nights since, to escort her home — a duty which, as yet, his own self-respect allowed him neither to omit nor delegate to any one else? Or did there rise before him a vision of the splendid *salon* at A.'s, with its Oriental luxuriance of fixtures, and its crowd of wealthy, out-of-door respectabilities, among whom he so frequently forgot family and fortune in the excitement of the gaming table?

It is hard to say; but he started, as the small, outstretched hands touched his.

"Don't be angry, papa; I did not mean any wrong. I forgot. Aunt Lydia always told me it was wrong."

"What was wrong, child?" he asked, abruptly.

"To wish to be beautiful," she replied, timidly.

He looked a moment at the anxious face, and the blue eyes in which the great tears gathered, but did not fall, — for Sibyl seldom wept passionately, like Willie, but silently, inwardly, one might say, — and then said, fervently, —

"It is much better to be *good*, Sibyl."

Her face lighted in an instant. "That is what aunt Lydia always said. I wonder I came to forget it."

"You miss our kind old friend very much?"

"Yes, papa; at first it was so lonesome without her; but now she comes so often that it is quite different."

"Comes so often!" He looked at her anxiously.

"Yes — in my dreams, I mean; and she looks so natural; it seems as if she had never died, and been buried."

"Does she ever speak to you?" he asked, curiously.

"Yes."

"And what does she say?"

"O, sometimes one thing, and sometimes another. Last night —"

"Well, what last night?"

"Only a text from the Bible, which she used to repeat."

He saw she hesitated, and, half curious and half amused, he pursued the topic.

"What was it? Can you remember?"

"O, yes; she taught it to me when I was a very little girl, not higher than your knee, papa — 'When my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will take me up.'"

Monroe started; but the child, unobservant of his movement, added, —

"I shall never forget it, papa."

And the father bowed his face, as he answered, —

"I trust you never will, Sibyl. How like you are to my mother!" he added, a moment after, as he lifted her to his knee.

"Am I?" she asked, her face radiant with happiness.

"Yes; the resemblance deepens every day."

"You loved your mother very much indeed, papa?" she asked, thoughtfully.

"Yes."

"Then I am so glad to be like her!" she cried, folding her small hands over each other—a way she had when very happy.

"You are! Why so?"

"Because ——" She faltered, and looked anxiously in his face.

"Because what?"

"Because, if I am like her, you may love me very much, some time—when I learn to be better."

She did not see his face, but she felt his kiss upon her forehead,—almost the first which she remembered,—and she heard his low—

"I will—I do love you now, my child."

She was ten years old; and in all the sorrowful changes that filled up the coming years, she never forgot that hour.

It was not often that Monroe showed his heart to her thus; but sometimes he questioned her of her reading, and one midsummer evening, when the pale sheet lightning lit up the landscape without, and gave them spectral glimpses of the hills, she told him "the legend of the torrent."

"I think he must have been a very happy man—that poor mountaineer, papa," she said, seeing that he remained silent.

Did he fancy the pale light that gleamed into the room,

and lit up her pale face as she spoke, akin to that which had glanced around the brow of the traveller in the legend? Perhaps so; perhaps he would have spoken his thought in words that would have remained with her as blessings; but at that moment Mrs. Monroe put her head in at the door, saying,—

"Sibyl, Jane says the Bacons are below. They want to hear that new music I brought from town; you must come down and play it; Eckert says you have it perfect, while I have not practised a note."

Then, suddenly becoming aware of the presence of her husband, she added, "Why, Mr. Monroe, (she seldom called him Arthur now,) I believe you have really turned nurse in good earnest, though I never gave you credit for much taste that way."

"People's tastes change, as perhaps you may have observed, Mrs. Monroe," was the quiet reply, as he left the room by another door.

Sibyl looked after him with a troubled expression a moment,—then said,—

"Please don't speak so any more, mamma. Papa does not like to be teased, and I enjoy seeing him so much. He knows so many beautiful stories!"

"Does he?" and for a moment Elsie's thoughts went back to the time when his words could magnetize even her careless nature; and she added,—

"Well, I will not, then; but you need not look so solemn, child. I do wish you would be a little gayer—more like other folks."

"More like other folks!" That was what Willie always said; what the servants said; and what she overheard her friend, Julia Simmons, say to her brother Charles. There must be something which she lacked. What could it be? Musing over this query, the child grew daily more quiet and thoughtful.

CHAPTER VIII.

"WHAT is all this, Sibyl? How can you be so passionate? Give him the paper at once. You are so selfish that I am ashamed of you."

Sibyl stood on a chair, with her cheeks flushed with excitement, while she strove to keep beyond Willie's reach a drawing, which he was struggling to obtain, while her pencils and crayons were trampled beneath his feet, when Mrs. Monroe entered the room.

"There, miss, I told you mamma would *make* you give it to me," he cried, exultingly. "Let me have it, you selfish thing!"

"Hush, my son; you must not be so rude. Give him the picture, Sibyl. How can you bear to tease him so about such a trifle?"

"I drew it for papa," she said, as she slowly approached, and laid the contested sketch in her mother's hand.

"Pshaw! what does he care about such things! You can make a dozen more. Why, it is the view from the window of your room," continued the mother, examining the drawing. "The mountains and that deep ravine are well done. Legendre says you have a good deal of talent

for drawing. Now, Master Willie, why do you want it?"

"Because I choose to have it, and she said I should not. And I promised to give a picture to Bill Jones, to pay for one of his that I spoiled."

"Spoiled! How?"

"Threw water upon it with my syringe. His aunt gave it to him, and he was carrying it home."

"O Willie! But you are generous, you little mischief—ready to atone for your misdeeds. Sibyl will give you the picture; but you must not play so much with that Jones boy. They are low-bred, vulgar people."

"I don't care for that. We have capital fun down there. Tell John to saddle Helpie, and bring him round to Charley Simmons's in an hour. We are going to ride," he cried, as, seizing the picture, he bounded away.

"He is so spirited!" said the mother, gazing after him proudly.

Thus, through the neglect of the father and the weak partiality of the mother, the elder of these children was made to serve the younger. If they were going to ride, it was often, —

"Sibyl, Willie wishes to take up Charley Simmons and his sister Julia, or Henry Drake: you won't mind staying at home just this once, to oblige him? You don't care to go, do you?"

"Not much; or, not *very* much," was the usual reply. But had her mother been less absorbed in Willie, she would

not have failed to understand something of the feeling which prompted it. Indeed, these answers were a troublesome point of ethics with Sibyl. She *did* care; for out-of-door life was her delight; and her reverence for the truth, developed and strengthened by old Lydia's teachings, made her feel that she was guilty of falsehood in speaking thus. But her mother never waited for explanations, even had she dared to make them. It was taken for granted that no one would hesitate to oblige Willie, and so the child struggled alone with her feelings, thinking that she must, indeed, be very selfish, as her mother often said, to entertain them at all, and that this was the reason why she was not "like other people."

When Sibyl was thirteen, there came in the business world one of those disastrous changes to which the system of reckless speculation and extravagance inevitably leads. Arthur Monroe was one of the first to feel its effect. A great proportion of his wealth had been merely nominal; but few suspected the truth. His calm, dignified bearing had helped to deceive the crowd, and even some of his oldest friends; and none knew the dark temptations which beset him when alone in his counting room—temptations against which he struggled less and less, as his embarrassments thickened, until the evil triumphed. He forged the name of one who had trusted him; but this only involved him also in his ruin, and he was obliged to hide not only from his creditors, but from a prison.

The family were at Underwood, their summer house,

upon the Hudson, and the first intimation his wife had of his failure was the seizure of her horses and carriage for debt, on her return one day from making some calls in Newburg. Indignant at what she deemed an insulting mistake, without waiting to hear the explanation of the officers of the law, she entered the house, where the sight of strange faces, and the words of the garrulous servants, taught her that, at least, there was no mistake. She had but one thought: it was Willie; and, flinging herself upon a couch in her own room, she bemoaned his fate with hysterical violence.

"Mamma, dear mamma, God will take care of him and of us," said a soft, sweet voice, and Sibyl's hand was laid lightly on her shoulder.

She did not uncover her face; but she allowed the small arm to steal around her neck unhindered, and wept herself quiet upon that childish support.

"Do you understand what all this means, child?" she said.

"Not very clearly, mamma; only that papa has some trouble about his business. I have known that for some time."

"You have!" There was both pique and surprise in her tone, and she half raised herself up as she added, "Has your father made a confidant of you?"

"No, mamma; but you see I am a quiet body. You said one day I was just like a mouse," she replied, with an attempt at cheerfulness, "and I mind many things that

escape you, who are always so much occupied. Papa has looked to me of late as if something troubled him; and some nights, when he has been at home with us, I do not think he has slept at all. His room is next to mine, you know, and I could hear him pacing back and forth all night long."

She did not say that she had crept stealthily to his door more than once, when he had come home with flushed cheeks and unsteady steps, and how her heart had ached as she saw him pour from the decanter, on the table, large glasses of brandy, and swallow it. She did not tell how, fearing that he was ill, she had once ventured to enter his room, and her gentle query had been met with an oath and a harsh command to "begone, and mind her own business." She, better than any one else, knew the habit that was ruining him; but she looked resolutely away from these bitter memories to the few pleasant hours that stood out so brightly in her life.

"It may be, but I had not noted it," said the mother. "But *what* shall we do, Sibyl? What do these horrid people say? Is there no getting rid of them?" she added, with a look of helpless anxiety.

"I fear not, mamma. I do not know much about such things; but they say the house is ours no longer. I think we had best send for Judge Simmons; he can tell us what to do."

At that moment the housekeeper entered, bringing some articles of dress, and, with a significant look, placed a note

in Mrs. Monroe's hand, saying, in a whisper, "John brought it up this noon, but I could get no chance to give it to you, ma'am."

It was from her husband. The words were few and almost illegible; but he begged her to secure certain papers which were in a drawer of the bookcase, in that room, and bring them herself, or send Sibyl with them to New York as soon as possible.

"You know all by this time, Elsie," it ran; "so I need not multiply words. Take the six o'clock boat down. A carriage will be in waiting for you, driven by our old coachman George. He will bring you to my present place of shelter. You had best come yourself, if you can, for there is much to be said between us. Confide in Sibyl; I think she can help you much. Heaven bless her!"

There was no name; and Elsie read and re-read the note, and finally placed it in Sibyl's hand, with a hopeless sigh. She comprehended it at once, and the words of blessing gave her strength and hope. She glanced at the clock.

"It is a quarter past five now. The 'Knickerbocker' will be at the landing by six. You can be quite ready by that time. Can you walk down, mamma?"

Elsie stared at her in blank astonishment.

"Are you mad, child? You talk as if I had the strength of a giant, when I can scarcely stand. I shall never reach the landing. What if some of these dreadful people should follow me, or I should meet any of our friends! I should die of shame. If it were not for poor Willie, I would not

care how soon. Poor boy! How glad I am he is away at school! It would kill him to be here." And she again sank down and began to sob.

"Sibyl's lip trembled slightly, as she said, after a pause, —

"I, too, am glad Willie is away. But you will try to go, for his sake, mamma. Perhaps it is about him that papa wishes to see you. These people will not follow, or even see you, unless we choose to have them. You can step from these windows upon the lawn, and the althea walk will conceal you until you reach the high road; or, would you prefer to have me go?"

"No; I will try, though I haven't the strength of a fly. You are just like your father, Sibyl: nothing moves you," she added, as, without making the slightest effort to further the arrangements for her journey, she watched the movements of her daughter, as she glided ~~here~~ and there for the various articles of dress.

"Do you think so, mamma?" she replied, with a smile, as she assisted her to dress. "There, now, you will do; but let me send Janet to see what these people are about, before you go. It is really quite like an elopement, mamma. See, your boot needs fastening. Let me tie it."

The words were full of cheer; but as she rose from her kneeling position, the mother saw that her eyes were full of tears.

For the first time the thought of the lonely, unprotected position in which the child would be left occurred to her.

and, with an involuntary impulse of tenderness, she cried, —

“Sibyl, I must not leave you here. What will you do? What will become of you if — if any thing should happen to us?”

“Janet and the other servants will be here, mamma; besides, you will be back in the morning, or some time to-morrow.”

“Certainly, child, in the first boat.”

“Now, Mrs. Monroe, they are all disputin’ about some-thing or other in the hall, and the boat is off the Grape Vine Point, ma’am.”

Janet’s warning was heeded. Once behind the friendly altheas, Elsie Monroe walked as she had not for many a long year. Sibyl, leaning against the lattice of the veranda, kept her eyes fixed on a spot of dusty road, about a quarter of a mile distant, scarcely drawing a long breath, until she saw her mother emerge from the shrubbery at that point. The winding, descending road soon hid her again; but she did not leave her post until she saw the steamer stop and again put out into the current.

Then she came in, and, sitting down, wept silently, but not altogether sorrowfully; for her mother had been sorry to leave her, and her father’s blessing still warmed her heart.

She was aroused by the entrance of a man servant, who had been long in the family, and who said, with his most respectful bow, —

“Perhaps you had best go to your own room, Miss Sibyl. They are coming this way inventorying, as they call it.”

“Thank you, James. I will. But stay. There is mamma’s writing desk; they cannot claim that. Bring it to my room, if you please.”

“Now, there’s a real lady for you,” muttered the man, as her slight figure disappeared through the doorway. “An’, what’s more, she’s the true grit. Who’d a thought of her stayin’ here, as grave as a judge, and as brave as General Jackson! Tain’t much like women folks in the general, as far as my observation goes. There’s Bridget, and Kate, and Mary, and even Miss Janet, scared out on their seven senses, — huddlin’ up in corners, and expectin’ to be robbed and murdered, one would think, every minute. Her bein’ here is jest what grannie would call ‘castin’ pearls afore swine;’ that’s a fact.”

CHAPTER IX.

THE hours of that night passed very slowly and wearily to Sibyl. She could not sleep, but lay tossing and tumbling among her pillows, trying to shut out the loud ticking of the hall clock, which, like some garrulous old night watcher, seemed in the deep silence to be recounting the history of the past.

Once she rose to waken Janet, who had made up a bed in her room; but the good woman slept so soundly in spite of her fears, that the girl's own nerves grew quiet at the sight, and she crept back to fall into an uneasy, troubled slumber.

She was up with the sun, and as the servant threw back the blinds, and let the warm sunlight into the room, her heart grew lighter, and she said, —

"Mamma will hardly come in the first boat, Janet; it will be too early for her; but I will go down to the moss terrace and watch."

"Not till you have had some breakfast, miss. The morning mists are not good for an empty stomach."

But she was already down stairs before the woman had ceased to speak. The terrace was fresh as Eden, and the

long line of the Shawangunk Mountains on the west, and the Catskills to the north, were rolling up their heavy veils of mist to greet the sun; but this time the child had neither eye nor ear for any thing save that point in the river where the Boderburgh on the west, and a giant brother on the east, keep sentinel at the rocky jaws of the Highlands; for from amid the thick, black shadows by Polopell's Island ascended a column of smoke, and she knew that the morning boat was on its way. Seated upon the rustic lounge, she watched until the steamer hove in sight and came proudly up the stream.

"If she is on board, she will take a carriage from the landing." And with this thought she hurried home. The breakfast was arranged, but the moments and hours went by, and its delicacies were left untasted by the child. "I suppose I was foolish to look for her by the first boat, Janet," she said, catching at every cause for delay. "I might have known she could not rise so early."

She had hardly ceased speaking when a carriage drove up the avenue. She was about to run down, when the faithful servant who stood near the window recalled her.

"It is Judge Simmons and two other gentlemen, Miss Sibyl."

She was glad the judge had come; he was a good neighbor and friend; he might bring her some message; her mother might have come, and have driven to his house to avoid those disagreeable people, and she waited impatiently for some message from him.

It came at last, and she hurried down. She found the hall full of people; some were gathered together in groups, talking over her father's affairs; others examining the pictures which the fine taste of Monroe had placed upon the walls. One or two of these gentlemen she recognized; but she stole along unheeded, until, near the parlor door, she was arrested by the sight of a picture which had ever been considered her exclusive property. It was a "*Mater Dolorosa*," which her father had given her on her tenth birthday. It was now in the hands of a person who was holding it in a favorable light, while two gentlemen discussed its merits.

Perhaps she would have sprung forward and claimed it, but at that moment some one behind her uttered a loud cry; there was a crash immediately above her, and when she next opened her eyes, she lay on the sofa in her mother's parlor, supported in the arms of a stranger, drenched with the cologne water which Judge Simmons and another old gentleman plentifully bestowed upon her.

"Are you much hurt, miss?" asked her supporter.

"Not at all, sir. Why, what has happened?" she asked, trying to rise, and sinking back, and almost fainting again from pain.

"You are hurt, badly hurt, I fear, my dear child," said Judge Simmons, kindly. "That awkward lout, in taking down the great hunting piece, let it fall; and had Mr. Wentworth, here, been a moment later in his notice of your danger, you might have been crushed. It was quite a Providence. Mr. Hungerford," he added, addressing the old

gentleman, "I saw Dr. Atwater's carriage at the house below as we came up. Will you despatch a messenger for him?" He sat down, and relieved Mr. Wentworth of his light burden.

He arose and stood before her, and she would have thanked him; but he said gently, with a slight tinge of irony in his low, musical tones, —

"Judge Simmons overrates my slight service. Like most remarkable deeds of heroism, it may be traced to self-love. I was standing beneath the picture, and in noting my own danger could not be blind to yours. I would that I could have spared you a lame arm and shoulder."

Attracted by the music of his voice, she looked up to his face. It was a very noble head, and the dark, clearly defined features were full of grave command, even in repose. He might have been twenty-five, perhaps; he looked older to the young girl, who, as he turned away and stood examining some marble vases which ornamented the room, continued to gaze at him, almost forgetting her pain in striving to recall where she had seen him before: at last she thought. At the house of a gentleman in New York, where she had sometimes been with her brother, was a portrait of Arnold of Brescia, the priest-patriot of Rome. It was probably a fancy piece, a mere creation of the artist's brain; but it had made a powerful impression on her mind, and in this stranger's face she traced the same lofty purpose, the same firmness, endurance, and strong resolve, the same energy of will, that for a noble end would brave all things, which

the artist had given to his hero. Happily she was too pure and childlike to see the pride, ambition, and egotism that marred those noble features. Like the best and worst of us, she could "see only what she had learned to see."

As he became aware of her scrutiny, he turned, and with a smile of almost feminine sweetness, said a few words of condolence, and was leaving the room. In the doorway he met the gentleman denominated Hungerford, and Dr. Atwater. This reminded her of her picture, and she begged the doctor and Judge Simmons not to let them take it away.

"Is that picture yours?" said Mr. Wentworth, suddenly turning back.

"It is; papa gave it me!" she replied eagerly.

"Then I relinquish all claims to it. I did not know it was yours." And he left the room, accompanied by his old friend.

"Now please send Janet here, Judge Simmons," she said, as the doctor proceeded to examine her arm. "It is not broken, I think."

"No, only badly bruised. We shall be all right again in a few days," was the characteristic reply, as with Janet's help he bound it up; and ordering a few quieting powders to guard against any tendency to fever, with a general order to keep very quiet, he left the room.

"Now, my dear brave little girl," said Judge Simmons, when they were again alone, "I have something for you better than a powder—a letter from your father. You must promise me not to cry over it. It came in one containing a few lines to me, and will tell you all about his

plans much better than I can. Perhaps you would rather be alone to read it. I will come back in a short time."

He rose as if to go. Then looking at her with a tender, pitying expression on his bluff face, he said, "I trust, Sibyl, that all this unfortunate business will be settled soon, and that you will have your friends again; but remember, you are welcome to a home in my house as long as you choose. You must go home with me to-night; this is no place for you, and Charley and Julia will be delighted to see you. I will return soon." And with a strange feeling of tightness in the region of his unruffled neckcloth, the stately judge left the room.

The letter ran thus:—

"My little Sibyl—my dear daughter. As I write these words, I think of the hours we spent together after old Lydia's death. Would that she were living to guard you now! I know you have not forgotten them, and that you will always remember them; and this will help you to bear the evils which your father's misfortunes—rather his madness—have brought upon you.

"It is a bitter thing for a father to stand before the face of his child and confess his sin; an added bitterness, which God grant you may never know, my child, to feel that the innocent must suffer for his guilt; but if I had the audacity to do this wrong in the face of my own sense of right, I will not have the cowardice to deny it to my child. I have sinned, Sibyl; I have wronged and defrauded the man who

trusted me. I hope to be able in some measure to repair this wrong; and in this hope, and to escape a prison, I have taken passage to France, where I hope to find friends and employment. When you read this we shall be already on our way — your mother and I.

"I thought to leave her with you; but she cannot bear the change that would await her, and — poor Elsie! I cannot refuse her this. Willie will remain at Mr. P.'s school for the present; you, my little Sibyl, will go down to Eltham, and find a home with my brother in the old farm house until I can make some arrangements to bring you to us. I am sorry now that I have not seen him oftener; but he will receive you, and be kind to you for my sake. I have written to him, and Judge Simmons will make all the necessary arrangements for your journey.

"You are more thoughtful than most girls at your age, Sibyl; you will understand how imperative it is that I should leave you thus; you will think of all I have said, and believe ever that your father loves you. Your mother is too busy to write, but sends much love.

"God bless you, my child.

"ARTHUR MONROE.

"P. S. As to your expenses, the quarterly allowance which I gave you a week or so since will more than cover them all. When I reach Paris, I will send you more. Write often, and always remember that you are very dear to your father."

We have said that Sibyl seldom wept passionately; but now, as the whole sense of her forlorn condition came over her, she cried as if her heart were breaking. She did not hear any one enter the room; but when her grief had spent itself in low, spasmodic sobs, she looked up, and started in surprise and anger as she saw the gray-headed old man, whom they had called Mr. Hungerford, perusing, with all the calmness in the world, her father's letter, which had fallen to the floor. She sprang to her feet; but before she could speak he had pushed up his glasses, and deliberately handing her the letter, said, —

"So you are Arthur Monroe's daughter; and you think me a very rude, impolite old man."

"I do, sir."

"Well, that sounds honest. I like it. But you must remember, little one, that it matters not so much what people think as what we are. Perhaps I was guilty of a breach of good manners; but the sight of that handwriting brought back old memories. Besides, I caught the name 'Sibyl' on the letter, your grandmother's name, and I knew that noble, God-fearing woman well, child; and I knew your father, too, when no older than you," — he went on, rising and walking the room with quick, rapid steps, — "knew him before he had bowed the knee to the poorest, emptiest, most unsatisfying of all earthly idols — mere physical beauty, that apple of Sodom, from whose ashes spring disappointment, sorrow, and ruin — atheism towards God and man."

The girl watched the face as if it had for her a species

of fascination — so wrinkled, so hard, so obstinate, with its straight mouth, and shaggy eyebrows drawn to a point, and almost meeting, and yet so alive, and quivering with deep emotion.

At length he paused, and standing before her, said, —

“So you are to go down to Eltham; that, at least, shows sense — better than a miserable boarding school; for you will have fresh air, at least, and healthy food, though Polly Mason does rule in Sibyl Umberfield’s seat.”

“I am to live with my uncle George!” she said, not quite comprehending him.

“And your uncle *stays* with Polly Mason; that is, she contrived to marry him some years ago. She bears his name, but she is Mason still — mean and grasping. But is there any thing you want, child? I am your father’s friend, you know.”

“No, sir, I thank you.” Then suddenly remembering that only a day or two before her mother had borrowed more than half her allowance of pocket money to send to Willie, because he had spent his, she added, —

“Can you tell me what it costs to go to Eltham?”

“About eight dollars, I should think, for you. I could go for half that; but you are a woman, and costs double to get a woman any where. I have been the distance many a time with no cost save a pair of weary legs, and the matter of a few shillings for food and lodging. But do you need nothing in the way of clothes? Think.”

“No, sir.” And as he left the room, she again laid her

weary head on the sofa, thinking how much she did need some loving human heart.

Perhaps that queer old man thought the same, for he looked back from the door, and then went down and had a brief but earnest conversation with Judge Simmons; and when that gentleman came to her soon after, he seemed quite elated, and told her he found that Mr. Hungerford was an old friend of her father’s — a distant relative of the family, he believed; that he had purchased of one of the creditors, who refused to give it up, her picture, and desired him to take charge of it for her; and moreover, that he offered her, if she chose, a home with himself. “He keeps house, though a bachelor, it seems,” he added, “and is a person of unquestionable character, and quite wealthy. I do not like to take the responsibility of advising, my child, but it is a kind offer, and may lead to important results.”

“It is very kind; please tell him so,” said the child, too unworldly to realize the drift of the judge’s remarks; “but I will go down to Eltham, as papa wishes.”

CHAPTER X.

"GOOD by, Sibyl; you must write to us when you get to your uncle's. I would go all the way with you if it were not that I must not neglect the interests of my clients. It is but thirty miles farther, and your uncle's people will meet you at the 'Corners.' I have written again to make sure;" and the kind-hearted Judge Simmons, who had escorted her as far as New Haven, looked again into the stage coach, where he had placed her, to press warmly her hand.

She tried to keep up bravely as she bade him "good by;" but when, with a reiterated command to the driver to be careful of the young lady and her baggage, and be sure and leave her at "Hitchcock's Corners," he turned away and disappeared among the crowd in Chapel Street, she drew back in her corner of the vehicle, and no longer tried to restrain her tears.

It was a nondescript sort of a vehicle, — that long, covered wagon, by courtesy denominated a stage, — and its contents still more so; for packed in among the three or four passengers, without much reference to their comfort or convenience, were a keg of nails, one or two cans of turpentine

and oil, bundles and bandboxes, wooden butter tubs of various dimensions, and a small keg, which one of the passengers, a young countrified-looking fellow in a linen coat, said smelt "mighty strong" of New England rum.

Sibyl sat upon the back seat; a woman in a deep black bonnet and faded mourning, with a sickly-looking rose bush in a pot upon her knee, occupied the seat beside her. The middle seat was almost wholly monopolized by a large, fleshy man, who shook with the motion of the vehicle like a pyramid of jelly, which he greatly resembled; and upon the front seat, *vis-à-vis* with Sibyl, was the youth aforesaid. He was the only one who seemed inclined to talk; but he had generally that kind of *unwashed* look which seems inseparable to some persons, and Sibyl instinctively recoiled from him. Yet he seemed kind hearted, for, when repulsed by her silence, he addressed himself to cheering up the sad woman in black, and succeeded. He soon drew from her the story of her rose bush; it had belonged to a young daughter who went to the city to learn a trade. The daughter had died of dysentery the past week, and the poor mother was bearing home this last relic of her child. She told this story with many repetitions and tears; but Sibyl was touched by it and the evident sympathy of the young man.

Their driver, a small, cheerful, dust-colored man, with an eye and a voice like a cricket, seemed to be on capital terms with himself, his horses, and every one else; especially with the housewives on the road, for whom he acted

as a sort of commission merchant. He reined up at almost every old farm house gate, to hold a chat with the mother or some sunny-faced girl, sometimes handing out a parcel, but oftener a butter tub with the weight marked in red chalk upon the cover, and talked over quarters and ounces, or reviewed the state of the market generally. Sibyl was somewhat amused by some of these interviews, and looked longingly at the little fair-haired children that came running out after their mothers, sometimes climbing the fence, but oftener hiding timidly behind the folds of their mother's gown, and peering out at the travellers.

It was the season of the hay harvest, and her quick eye took in all the beauty of that most beautiful season. The measured step and graceful sweep of the mowers; the unconscious grace of their attitudes, as they paused to whet their scythes; the cheerful laugh of the rakers, as they gathered the fragrant masses into long winrows and rolled them into heaps; the patient look of the oxen, the deep-red cattle so long the pride of Connecticut farmers, as they stood in the shade waiting to be hitched to the wagon, or obeyed the quick motions of the teamster as they wound in and out among the thick heaps; the deep green of the barley, that most graceful of all grains; the rustling murmur of the magnificent corn leaves, sounding like a distant sea; the "silver flowing of the rye," along the edges of which might occasionally be seen young girls cutting the straw for braiding, — all formed to her a picture as new as beautiful, and helped her for a time to forget her loneliness.

But as the hours went on, and the heat grew more intense, her head began to ache terribly; the dust filled her weary eyes and lay thick upon her dress, and she was glad to draw as far back as possible in her corner, where, from sheer exhaustion, she fell asleep. But her sleep could scarcely be called rest, so filled it was with visions of all she had seen that day — haunted by strange noises, among which sounded at intervals a horn, which sometimes seemed the bugle of some fairy king, and sometimes the horns of the host of Israel before Jericho, which aunt Lydia used to describe so vividly. It was the tin horn upon which the driver announced his approach to any village; and its shrill peal awoke her just as they were entering a small hamlet. She was surprised to find the fleshy old gentleman gone, and that her neighbor in black had vacated her seat to make more room for her; for she had been stretched upon the seat, her head resting on a temporary pillow formed by the spare cushions, over which was spread the linen coat of her fellow-traveller.

The latter smiled as he noticed her bewildered look.

"You seemed so fagged out and sleepy, and your head kinder tottled about so, that we thought we'd see if we couldn't fix you up in a leetle better shape."

Sibyl thanked him.

"O, not at all. I'm glad if any body can sleep in this confounded old ark. Driver, you haven't got the sea serpent among this loadin', have you?"

The driver laughed, and drove up to one of a cluster of

houses in front of which hung a sign with "*Entertainment for Travellers*" painted upon it. It seemed that the occupant united the functions of landlord and storekeeper; for in the windows of one of the front rooms were displayed glasses filled with sticks of colored candy, lemons, oranges, pipes, &c., interspersed with advertisements of patent medicines; and on the same side of the door was a column of black letters telling of "Ginger," "Allspice," "Cinnamon," "Rhubarb," &c., to be bought there. This was "Hitchcock's," the driver said, as he opened the door to hand Sibyl out. He told her to "run in" while he would see to her trunk. She said "good by" to her fellow-travellers, and obeyed. There was no one behind the counter but a young boy, and before she had gathered courage to speak with him the driver entered, and setting down her trunk with a thump, asked the question for her:—

"Seen any thing of Cappen Monroe or any of his folks about here, Smith?"

"No; the captain's gone west with a drove, I believe."

"Well, here's his niece come up to make 'em a visit, I reckon. Some of 'em 'ill be down afore night, I expect. They are to meet her here."

"Exactly so," said the youth pertly, as he turned and gave a long stare at Sibyl.

She gave one glance at him, and around the dark, dirty store, and half drawing her purse from her pocket, turned to the driver.

"Can't you take me to my uncle's, sir? I will pay you if you will."

"Can't possibly, miss. 'Twould take a month o' Sundays to get round that way, unless the 'Old Man of the Mountain' has been at work at highways lately, which ain't no ways likely. But don't fret; they'll be down for you before long." With this piece of consolation, he took his mail bag, and mounting his vehicle, again drove off.

Amid a cloud of yellow dust, Sibyl lost sight of her white-haired friend of the linen jacket, and the sad mother with "poor Mary's rose bush;" and as the top of the wagon disappeared in a deep hollow, her heart sank, and her eyes filled with blinding tears; for, child or man, the heart shrinks from the unknown, and clings to the familiar. She had met her fellow-passengers before her old friend, Judge Simmons, left her; they had been kind to her, and too troubled to remember that even this should teach her to hope, she sat down on a box, and hid her face in her hands.

"Perhaps, miss, you had better walk into the sitting room."

She looked up, and met the curious glance of the clerk. "A little homesick, I guess," he added; "but that never killed any body yet."

He threw open a door; and thankful for this piece of attention, she walked into a long, rather narrow room, scantily furnished with a rag carpet, a few chairs, and a table. There was no one there; and after a while, she began to look over the few books that lay upon the table. There

were the Village Hymn Book, Complete Letter Writer, a copy of Judah's Lion, with "S. S. Library" upon the fly leaf; the Boston Academy's Collection of Music, with a leaf turned down at "Siberia;" the Adventures of Israel Potter, with a coarse wood cut of himself and boy; and a Song Book, with several "Farewells" and entreaties to "Forget me not" scrawled in pencil on its pages. Tired of these, she turned to the walls, which were graced with one or two high-colored prints of females with wondrously sloping shoulders, and miraculously small waists. Over the fireplace hung a smoke-colored menagerie of American Presidents, and on the side of the room opposite, one of those coarse lithographs, so common in some of our country houses, representing a large white funeral monument, with a female in mourning, with a wonderfully lachrymose expression, and a monstrous, large white pocket handkerchief, leaning over it. Sibyl was turning away from this caricature of grief with indifference, when her eye caught the inscription written upon the white tablet, —

DAVID HITCHCOCK, AGED THREE YEARS.

Her heart at once recognized the feeling that placed it there, and did reverence before it. She was still standing beneath it, when a tall, thin, worn-looking woman, with a nondescript cap of black cotton lace hung upon the back portion of her head, entered the room, and said, —

"How do you do, miss? I hope you are comfortable.

You are looking at that picture. I never thought much of such things, but a little while ago, a man came along with a whole lot of 'em, and the girls were possessed about 'em. They would have the others," she went on, with a glance at the "Julias" and "Isabellas" opposite; "he wanted them Presidents, and I chose this. Isn't it beautiful?"

Sibyl parried the question by asking, with a glance at the inscription, —

"Was it your little boy, ma'am?"

"Yes, our little Dave. He died almost a year ago, and it seemed, when he was took, that the whole house was gone."

Sibyl's eyes were as full of tears as the hard-working, bereaved mother's, and the woman's heart of the latter was drawn towards her at once.

"Bless me, I forgot! talking about little Dave, I oillers do," she exclaimed; "but Ambrose says you are Arthur Monroe's girl. You must be tired and hungry. Take off your bonnet, child; they may not come for you till clean sundown; and have a cup of tea — the kettle is on the fire, and I'll have it ready in a jiffy. You expect to stay some time at the capting's, I reckon," she added, as she suddenly paused in her progress towards the kitchen.

Sibyl said, "Yes," and added, that she would be much obliged to her if she would show her some place where she could wash her face and hands.

"La, yes! why didn't I think of it before? It's terrible dusty," she replied, starting for a door opposite from the one

by which she had entered; but suddenly halting, and whirling about, she said, —

“There ain’t no water in the spare bedroom, and you may as well come right out to the kitchen. It won’t be so lonesome like.”

Sibyl was glad to get water at any rate, or in any place, and she thankfully followed the woman into her kitchen, where a plentiful supply of pure water, albeit it was in a somewhat battered tin basin, and a clean crash towel, made her feel very much refreshed. She smoothed her brown hair by the little bit of a mirror fixed to the wall above the sink, while the good woman—let us hope, with the kind intention of keeping her from feeling lonesome—plied her with questions about her family and journey, rattling her dishes, in the mean time, so loudly as to prevent herself from hearing one half of the child’s low, brief replies.

When the table was ready, Mrs. Hitchcock said they would sit down, as the boy was busy, and *he* might not be home until sundown, as he had gone to carry her girls down to “sister Brown’s;” and from this Sibyl inferred that the “*he*” so often spoken of was her husband. The landlady evidently held to the opinion of a great many housewives—that a cup of strong green tea is a cure for all troubles; for she poured out one for the child which looked like ley, and very reluctantly consented to permit her to reduce it with milk and water.

After the meal was over, Sibyl watched the long shadows creeping across the back yard, while the good woman went

on to give her a long account of “sister Brown’s” sprained ankle, and before she finished, “*he*” drove into the yard.

“Well, there’s Dave, come at last. I guess he’ll know if any of the captin’s folks are on the road.” And she thrust her head out of the window, and called, —

“Dave! Dave Hitchcock!”

The man tied his horse, and moved very deliberately towards the door, with a —

“Well, July, what’s wantin’?”

“Here’s Arthur Monroe’s girl—you remember Arthur—come all the way from York, to see her relations. She’s expectin’ some of the captin’s folks down. Have you seen any thing of ’em on the road?”

“Arthur Monroe! I guess I do remember him. We used to go to school together, when I lived with old Tim Dean. And this is his gal. Your father ain’t down in these parts, is he?”

“No, sir.”

“You didn’t come clean from York alone, did you?” he said, glancing at her curiously.

Again Sibyl replied in the negative, and ventured to repeat his wife’s question with regard to her uncle’s people.

“No, no, the cappen ain’t to home, and Polly wouldn’t be likely to let any on ’em quit until sundown, especially in hayin’ time. Fred don’t often get the reins between his fingers, I fancy.”

Then she was subjected to another querying about her father, his business, and so forth; and, wondering when it would end, she answered as briefly as possible.

The man seemed satisfied, and, probably pitying her evident uneasiness, he remarked to his wife, as he sat down to the table, —

"I've got to go to mill after my grist to-morrow. Perhaps I may as well go to-night, and the little girl can ride down with me. Tim," he cried, going to the door, and calling to an Irish boy, who was busy in the wood pile, "take out Prince, and harness him into the big wagon. It'll be rather hard riding on the board seat, but you won't mind it much, I guess," he added to Sibyl.

She thanked him warmly, and returned to the sitting room, where she could not well avoid hearing her arrival talked over between the man and his wife; and there was something in the way they spoke of her uncle's wife that made her feel still more troubled and sad.

When the man was ready, she took out her purse to pay them for her supper; but the woman, with a laugh, bade her put it back, saying she was not accustomed "to ask folks to eat, and then take pay. She was sure she was as welcome as could be. She hadn't eat enough to keep alive a fly;" and asked her to come down and see them sometimes, for she "guessed she would have a kinder lonesome time of it up there, for 'twan't much as it used to be when her grandmother was alive, or even the first woman."

Before she had time to think, Mr. Hitchcock had lifted her bodily into the wagon, and taken his place by her side on the board, which served for a seat. Her trunk was already in, and, nodding to his wife, they drove off.

Her driver was very sociable, and fortunately did not require her to take part in the conversation. He gave her the history of each house they passed, the families that dwelt in them, just how much they owed, and how much they might be worth were they to die *that minute* — a point on which he seemed to lay great stress, occasionally diverging to the merits of his horse, until Sibyl thought both master and beast very remarkable specimens.

At length he paused, and she ventured to ask about her cousin Fred.

"Well, he's a bright boy, — uncommon, as one may say, — a mighty genus for workin' in wood, and makin' all sorts of things. It's my honest opinion he ought to be sent to a trade; but Polly can't spare him, or won't, I s'pose."

"Is Polly my aunt?"

"Yes, she's the man of the house; the cappen's gone a good deal, and she holds a pootty tight rein, I guess. I hear Jim Culver tell about her management now and then. Jim's ollers worked there, more or less, sin' he was a boy. He says Fred has a hard 'un, though he's weakly and consumptive, like his mother. The Wilsons were all consumptive. What's got ye now?"

The last query was addressed to his horse, which shied at a large log, which lay by the road side, when, turning the shoulder of a hill, they began to descend into a broad, beautiful valley.

It was sunset; but Sibyl could still mark the graceful undulations of the hills on the west; the silver stream,

fringed with willows and alders, and crossed by more than one rustic bridge, which gleamed through the smooth meadows; the quiet old farm houses, indicated, rather than seen, by the tall well sweeps and red chimneys, peering above the nooks of greenery in which they were shrouded, and away at the south, the spire of a church just visible above the hills.

"That is Eltham church," said her driver, "two miles or so here; and look yonder."

She turned, and uttered an exclamation of delight; for on the east, looking very near in the early twilight, were three grand old bluffs, their perpendicular, seamed faces still glowing with the last rays of sunlight.

"There's the jumping off place of the great hills that run all the way from here up to Canada, they say; and a pesky job it is to get wood off from there in the winter, I can tell you," was his reply. "Between the two on this side is the 'Cat Hole Pass,' where it's as dark as Dinmie, even at noon, and on the other side, clear up to the peak, is the 'Old Man of the Mountain.'"

"Does he live up there?" she asked, timidly.

The man's loud laugh brought the quick blood to her cheek, as he replied, "I guess he'd have a rather cool time of it if he did. Didn't your father never tell you about the Old Man? He used to be pooty well acquainted with him when he was a shaver. I don't know who gin it the name, but jest on the other side — you can see it from your uncle's — is the image of a man's face in the rocks. It

looks, for all the world, like General Washington. You must get Fred to take you up there some day."

Sibyl ventured no more questions, and, notwithstanding the rude jolting of the wagon, was half asleep, when it suddenly stood still, and she was aroused by Mr. Hitchcock's exclamation of "Here we are, girl!"

She would, as she thought, have recognized the place any where. There was the giant oak on the green, in front of the gate, of which old Lydia had so often told her; its great gnarled branches were shorn of much of their beauty and strength, — a meet emblem of the fortunes of the family, — and behind it, in the midst of a large yard, stretched the old farm house, a long building, with a peaked roof and massive stone chimneys.

This was her father's home; and though no kind faces appeared to welcome her, and the front door looked as if it were never opened, her heart warmed towards the spot, and with a light step she followed her conductor around to the back door. It stood wide open, revealing a long, low kitchen, in which the darkness was made visible by the light of a candle on a table, at which sat a slightly bald-headed, square-shouldered man, with his shirt sleeves, of striped cotton, still rolled up to his elbows, displaying his brown brawny arms, eating his supper, while at another table, at the farther end of the room, stood a woman straining milk.

"Hallo, Culver! Busy, as usual!" exclaimed Mr. Hitchcock, as he entered without further ceremony. "Miss

Monroe, I hain't brought your butter tub. We hain't quite emptied it yet; but I've brought somethin' better, — a little gal, the cappen's niece, to kinder liven you up."

"It's no matter about the tub," she said, answering what was to her the most interesting part of his address first; then, coming forward a few steps, and taking a survey of Sibyl, she added, —

"So you have reached here finally, child. Why don't you sit down, and take off your things? Pray have a chair, Mr. Hitchcock; that is, if you can find a place to sit down. It's all dirt here."

There was not so much as a speck of litter to be seen any where, and Sibyl wondered what her aunt meant; but Mr. Hitchcock knew the woman, and answered, with a laugh, —

"Ah, we all know how much dirt there is in your house. I guess a tea spoon would hold it all. My wife says the flies don't dare to come where you are."

"I wish they didn't, for my part; for it's more than I *can* do to keep decent. I hope you hain't come all the way on purpose to fetch that girl?"

"Not exactly. I had got to go to mill, and, as she seemed to be kinder down-hearted, I thought I'd come round this way, as none of you happened to be down."

"I couldn't spare man nor horse. How folks can find time to go riding about in hayin' time is more than I know! I thought she'd get here somehow. Did you say you were going to mill?"

"Yes."

"Well, if you'll just let me fling in a bag of corn, you'll oblige me very much. My chicken meal is most gone, and it will save harnessing up and going on purpose. Culver, you won't mind staying to put up a bushel of corn. You'll find a bag in the bin. It ain't my way to trouble folks," she went on, again addressing Mr. Hitchcock; "but Mr. Monroe's ollers gone, and I'm obliged to see after every thing. If I don't reward you, the Lord will."

"And a long score he'll have if he pays for all you get out of other folks," muttered Culver, as he rose from the table and went out to put up the corn.

Mrs. Monroe was already at the well near the door, where she stood rinsing her pails, and talking over the prices of produce and the neighborhood gossip with Mr. Hitchcock, apparently wholly forgetful of the presence of the girl; but then it was still light enough for Sibyl to see her features distinctly. She was a small, spare woman of forty-five: she might, however, have been younger, for Sibyl could not help feeling that she must always have been old, even as a baby; with a small, narrow head, very high in the region of firmness and self-esteem, and features that were small and rather pleasing in themselves, had it not been for an exceedingly dry, hard look, as if she had been baked in a kiln, which was heightened by the apparent tightness of the skin over her cheek bones and temples. Culver would have called it a "hide bound" look; and perhaps that term is as expressive of the truth as any other.

Sibyl was peculiarly susceptible to personal impressions, and as she sat gazing at her aunt, her heart grew gloomier and sadder than before; the love with which she had been yearning to meet her relatives seemed to turn into ice; there was no beauty in the landscape, nor any thing else; and the tears were just ready to fall, when a hand was laid lightly on her shoulder, and a pleasant voice said, —

"Is it you, cousin Sibyl? You can't think how I've longed to have you come."

She looked up into the face of a boy, who stood panting painfully from some over-exertion by her side. He was a year or more older than herself, tall and gaunt, with great dark eyes, that seemed set in a hollow, and a mass of black hair, which, wet with perspiration, clung close to his temples.

Sibyl laid her hand in his and attempted to reply; but her tears were far more intelligible than her words. The lad understood them, and said, kindly, —

"You are so tired, cousin — let me take your things. One feels so queer among strange folks," he added, as with the handiness of a girl he helped her off with her cape and hat, "at least, I should. But you'll be better by and by." A fit of coughing interrupted him, and when able again to speak, he added, "She said you were coming some time, but I did not know when."

Before Sibyl could reply, Mrs. Monroe called him to assist Culver in bringing her trunk. He sprang to the door, and Mr. Hitchcock, nodding good by to her, followed him out to the street.

"Goin' ter stay a spell, I guess," said the man Culver, as he and Fred brought in her large handsome trunk and set it down. "That's a nice affair. I wonder where Miss Monroe is goin' to have it put."

"Up stairs in the east chamber, of course," Fred replied. "The front way, Culver; wait until I have opened the doors."

"Now just please to put that trunk down," said the voice of the mistress of the house, as they were lifting it with the intention of carrying out Fred's suggestion. "I can tell where the trunk is to go. I don't need any of your ordering, Mr. Fred, nor of other folks's in this house. I guess I shall have you traipsing through my rooms and up my stairs with them feet — streamin' taller all the way for me to scrub up. I'm slave enough now, and like to have more on't;" and she turned a sharp glance at Sibyl. "If you want any thing to do, Fred, you can go out and bring in some wood and kindlin's for mornin'. You'd never know as there was such a thing wantin' if I didn't tell you;" and she went into the pantry, to use an expression of Fred's, "as if she was shot."

"Fire!" muttered Culver, as he gazed after her with a comical look. "What's ter pay now? Well, boy, I guess I'll go home now. In the morning we'll strike the grass in the 'Abel Meadow' bright and early. It's getting a little burnt."

Fred nodded a reply, and looking half ashamed and a good deal vexed, sat down to his supper. He had scarcely

commenced eating when Mrs. Monroe came out of the pantry, and began clearing off the dishes; and by the time the boy was ready for his pie, she had swept the table of every dish save the one which contained it. Sibyl, wholly unaccustomed to such proceedings, watched them with astonishment, which was deepened when Fred took his pie in his hand, and came and seated himself in the doorway, very near to her side.

He probably read her thoughts, for he laughed as he said, "You don't eat in this fashion down in York, cousin. What do you suppose your brother would say to this?"

"I don't know; I don't think I should like it at all, but may be Willie would. He likes to do all manner of strange things."

"Does he? I wish he had come too. Does he like to ride and drive? And can he make mills and water wheels, and catch fish, and do such things?"

"He likes to ride, and has the prettiest pony in the world; but he never drives, unless when James lets him take the reins a little while; and he is very fond of fishing. But about the mills and wheels — I don't know — I think not."

"Does he go to school all the time?"

"Yes; and the last term he took Kelpie with him. He is very clever."

"I should think he ought to be, to go to school all the time."

"Don't you go?"

"Not much; only a few weeks in the winter, when there

is nothing to do. I wish I could." And the lad's pale face grew very sad. But he said no more, and before Sibyl could ask why he did not go to school, Mrs. Monroe came in, and seeing that the wood and "kindlings" were not brought in, pointed to the empty basket, and said, dryly, —

"If some people were as smart to work as they were to eat, there would be more done than there generally was."

The boy's pale cheeks flushed crimson, and Sibyl, though she had once or twice glanced at his soiled clothes and bare feet with a feeling of dislike, felt her heart drawn to him, and said earnestly, —

"Can't I go with you, cousin Fred?"

"Not to-night; you are too tired;" and the face he turned towards her, radiant with pleasure, completely transfigured his trousers, bare feet and all.

As he took the basket and went out, Mrs. Monroe set up her broom, saying, —

"I suppose you would like to go to bed."

"As you please, aunt."

She lighted a candle and stood waiting. Sibyl hesitated.

"I should like to have my trunk taken up, if you please, aunt."

"The trunk will stay where it is to-night. You can take out what you want."

Sibyl drew from her pocket the key, and kneeling down, selected such clothes as she needed, together with her little pocket Bible, old Lydia's gift, and locking it again, with a

wistful glance at the door, in hope of seeing Fred, to bid him "good night," followed her aunt up the back stairs, through the long, narrow *lean-to* where the rafters almost hit her head, into a large front chamber, where the air was very close and stifling, and strongly impregnated with the odor of stale feathers and wool.

Mrs. Monroe said herself that it was "hotter than an oven there," and proceeded to raise a window, for which the child was truly thankful; then, bidding her make haste and undress herself, she emptied one of the few chairs in the room of its pile of woollen blankets, and seating herself, watched her movements with a cold, curious stare.

Conscious of this, Sibyl's fingers grew tremulous and unsteady; she caught the hooks of her dress in the dress itself, and was, at last, obliged to apply to her for assistance.

"There! next time don't quiver and shake as if you had got the palsy, child! Now, into bed with you! What are you waiting for?" she added, as she rose and took the candle.

"Please, aunt, would you leave me the light a little while?"

"And who is to come after it, I'd like to know?"

"I don't know. I thought they might take it when they came to bring up the water," said Sibyl, glancing around the room for those indispensable articles—a wash stand and ewer.

"They! Who?"

The words were short, and crisp as hailstones.

"The servants, aunt."

She put down the candle, and said, with an expression which by no means quieted the girl's nerves,—

"You had this done for you at home, miss?"

"Yes; Mary always saw to my room, besides arranging the bath when mamma desired it."

Again there came that curious expression, and, as if half comprehending it now, the child added,—

"I dare say, aunt, I can bring up water for myself, if your people are too busy."

"I rather guess you'll have ter." Then, with a singular elongation of her neck and chin, and a contraction of her thin lips,—a movement which Sibyl learned to dread far more than the biting words that always followed,—she added, in that cold, cutting tone,—

"I rather guess they'll always be too busy; so I'll just tell you that, in the morning, you'll find a whole well full of water out the kitchen door, and, if that ain't enough, a whole mill pond full over the hill; and as to lights, you will have one until you have learned the way to bed, and no longer. I'm not going to be burnt up for any young one's whim!" and with the light in her hand she left the room.

Poor Sibyl! This was her welcome to Eltham—to her father's and dear Lydia's old home! She had not hoped much. The last few weeks had been too crowded; but back of these lay many a happy dream of this old place,

and now no kiss of welcome, no kind good night, no gentle, loving glance, — and, sitting upon the foot of the bed, where her aunt had left her, she gave vent to her long-suppressed tears.

At length there came the sound of bare feet upon the stairs. Stealthily they crept along through the dark back chamber, until they paused at her door, and a "Good night, cousin," in a tone scarce above a whisper, reached her ears.

It is strange on what slight things our moods depend. We are all children in this respect. Through the loneliness and darkness that a moment before had seemed to shut her in, these little words came, full of comfort and light. She remembered Fred's kind welcome, the thoughtful care of her fellow-travellers, and the Hitchcocks' kindness, and, whispering back the words, she sank on her pillow, and soon fell asleep.

CHAPTER XI.

SHE awoke in the morning long before her usual hour, to find herself half smothered in one of those masses of feathers, which it is the pride of country matrons to possess, under the name of beds. It rose on each side of her like a wall, and hot, faint, exhausted, she raised herself up, and gazed round the room, scarcely realizing where she was.

In truth, there was little home-like or attractive to her in that room, with its bare floor, few chairs piled full of woollen blankets of all imaginable patterns, red chest with drawers, and another of unpainted wood without drawers; and its homeless aspect, together with the memory of her aunt's manner the night before, was too much for her, and she buried her face in her pillow, murmuring, "O, papa! papa!"

Presently she heard voices below her window, in the yard, which she recognized as her cousin's and that of the man she had seen the night before; and fearful of displeasing her aunt by tardiness, she contrived to reach the floor from her mound of feathers and straw, and began to dress. She looked in vain for a mirror, in which to arrange her

hair, but finding none, was obliged to trust to the nicety of her touch, in smoothing the soft locks. Of course she did not expect any water; but unwilling to go down and expose her swollen eyes to her aunt, she went to the window, and threw up the sash. She started, and her heart leaped with joy, for there, at the distance of scarcely a mile and a half, rose the grand bluffs she had seen the night before; and with the morning mist hovering above it like a crown, clear and distinct in the pure morning light, stood out the great rock profile, of which Mr. Hitchcock had spoken, calm, grand, and severe. There was something about it that reminded the child of her old nurse. Perhaps old Lydia had lived beneath its shadow until she had caught something of its expression of high endurance; and with a heart full of pleasant memories, she turned away, and descended to the kitchen.

There was a bright fire burning on the wide hearth, and between the andirons, flanked on one side by the tea kettle and the other by a large brass kettle filled with milk, sat Mrs. Monroe upon her feet, vigorously stirring some hash, which was warming upon the coals.

She did not speak, and Sibyl, after waiting a few moments, was about to wish her "good morning," when she suddenly arose, and turning upon her flushed face, said, —

"So you can get up without help, it seems."

"O, yes, aunt," she replied, pleasantly. "I have been accustomed to dress myself this long time."

"Well, that is wonderful!" There was something in the tone that jarred unpleasantly upon the child's feelings, and remembering what she had been told the night before about the well, she stepped out of the door.

The morning was glorious, and the sweet fresh air, laden with the fragrance of the new-mown hay, after that of her close chamber, seemed to give her new life. The yard, which led back to the barns, and sloped gradually down to a little lively brook, which gave drink to the cattle in summer and winter, was alive with all sorts of poultry — full of sights and sounds wholly new to her.

She easily found the well, a few paces from the back door; but there was no water in the bucket, and the process of raising it, by means of that long pole and sweep, was to her a mystery. She stood looking down into the water dimly visible at the bottom of the deep old well, and admiring the fresh, crispy look of the mosses that tapestried the rough stones, when she heard her aunt's voice, calling, —

"Do you intend to fall down the well the first thing, child? Why don't you wash yourself, if you are a gwiner?"

"There is no water here, aunt."

"There's a plenty in the well, and I guess you'll have ter draw down the bucket. Folks wait on themselves here."

It was the same thin, cold, ironical tone which she had used the night before, and frightened at that more than the words, Sibyl seized the pole, and began to draw it down; but it was new work, and when it was about half way down

to the water, she missed her grasp, and, slipping through her hands, it went up with a jingling of chains that greatly increased her fright. Fortunately, Mrs. Monroe was within doors; and grasping it again, as it swung past her, she made another effort. This time she contrived to reach the water, and dip the bucket, but was vainly endeavoring to raise it, when some one called to her with a cheerful laugh, —

“I rather guess you hain’t got the hang of that contrivance yet. Wait a bit;” and Mr. Culver, his round face shining with good humor, hung his scythe across a limb of an old gnarled apple tree which grew near the well, and seizing the pole with one hand, drew it up as if it had been a feather.

“There,” he added, as he balanced the bucket on the edge of the curb, and the clear drops trickled back with a pleasant murmur; “guess you would not water the flocks quite as quick as Rachel did Laban’s. Where’ll you have it?”

Fred came up as Sibyl looked around for something in the shape of bowl or basin to hold the water, and catching the bucket, dashed a full stream again and again into a small wooden trough, which, supported on two light posts, stood behind the well.

“There, that is as clean as silver,” he said, as he filled it up once more. “You don’t have such basins as that in New York, cousin.”

Sibyl laughed, and dashed the cold water over her face with delight; and then Fred showed her how to turn her primitive bowl, so as to empty it when she chose.

“I made it myself,” he said. “Isn’t it nice, Sibyl?”

Sibyl thought it very good, but preferred a bowl. “How came you to make such a thing?” she asked.

“O, I was giving old Charley a bucket of water one day, and when I wasn’t minding, he stepped into the hand basin, and smashed it so that it leaked like a riddle; and then *she* said” — and he nodded towards the kitchen — “she said I should not touch the new one; and rather than take the big iron kettle there, I made this. ‘Necessity is the mother of invention,’ Master Richard says.”

“Breakfast!” cried the shrill voice of Mrs. Monroe from the doorway; and at the word, Fred let go of the bucket, which shot off in a tangent, Culver arose from the broad door step, where he was pounding sand for his rifle, and both entered the house. Sibyl followed, with dripping face and hands. Fred showed her where the crash towel hung behind the door, and stood waiting for her to dry her face and hands, when Mrs. Monroe, who, with Culver, was already seated at the table, said, —

“I s’pose your cousin can wipe her face without your help, Fred. If you are gwine ter fool round in this way every mornin’, we shall have about work enough done. There’s that kettle of milk been ready to go over the fire this half hour.”

The hired man sprang up, and laid hold of the bail, when the good woman interrupted him, —

“Don’t lift it alone, Culver.”

“Lord bless you, I can lift a dozen,” he cried. “You just swing out the crane a leetle.”

"I tell you I won't have you lift it alone; you *jiggle* all the soot down into the milk. Fred, if you intend to move to-day, take hold of the other side; you may as well do it as for me to kill myself liftin'."

The boy lifted his side of the heavy kettle in silence, and took his seat at the table. Mrs. Monroe, by signs rather than words, indicated the place where Sibyl was to sit, and the meal was eaten with a rapacity which quite astonished the child. She had scarcely commenced her breakfast, when the others arose from the table, and Mrs. Monroe, as on the evening previous, commenced removing the dishes.

"Better pocket a piece of somethin' or other, little one," said Culver, as Mrs. Monroe shut the pantry door behind her. "She's worse than the tide; she waits for no man, nor woman either, for that matter, and you'll feel kinder holler afore noon, I guess."

"Sibyl," said Fred, as he came from the cellar with a bottle made of wooden staves, like a barrel, "we shall not be home again until noon; but you mustn't get homesick. If you get lonesome, you must run down in the meadow, — there are raspberries there, — look, down the fence from that big ash tree," he added, pointing across the field west of the house. "I picked a lot there yesterday."

Mrs. Monroe came in with a basket filled with their lunch, and Fred hurried out to the well to fill his bottle with water; but when he came in for the basket, he contrived to give her another whispered charge not to "be homesick" before he bounded off after Culver.

Sibyl watched them as they crossed the fields, wishing very much that she could go with them; but not daring to express her wish, she turned and watched her aunt, as she moved quickly around the kitchen, busy with her household operations. As the latter did not speak to her, or seem to be conscious of her presence, she watched her in silence while she brought out a great bowl of curds, and began to cut them in slices; then her curiosity got the better of her timidity, and she ventured to ask what it was.

"Cheese curd!" was the curt reply.

"Do you always cut it in this way, aunt?"

"Yes."

"Are you going to make a cheese to-day?"

"Yes."

The words could not have been shorter had they been cut off with the chopping knife which she plied so vigorously; and discouraged at her manner, the girl turned to the open window.

"O, what pretty creatures!" she exclaimed; "they are ducks, are they not, aunt?" and she was flying out of the door, when Mrs. Monroe recalled her.

"You let the ducks alone; you'll only scare them to death!" she said. "If you want to do any thing, you had best pick up them clover leaves that you have scattered all over the floor. I thought city folks had some manners."

"I beg pardon, aunt," said the girl, coloring, as she stooped and picked up the few petals of the clover blossom which had fallen from her hand. "I did not think."

"No, I dare say; nobody ever does; it's easy enough to say that. Stand out of the way, child — you are between me and the light."

Somehow Sibyl had a feeling that she was in the way any where in that large kitchen; so she stole out of the door, and reminded by the sight of the great ash tree of Fred's raspberries, she returned and asked permission to go down in the meadow.

"Nobody henders you, as I see," said the aunt, without lifting her head.

Away the girl bounded, across the meadow.

The berries were very delicious; and wandering along by the side of the fence, she suddenly caught a glimpse of a sheet of water through the thick, green trees.

It seemed not far distant; so she climbed the fence, and soon stood by the side of a long but somewhat narrow mill pond. The place was very beautiful, shut in by low, wooded hills, and Sibyl's eye rested on it with delight.

"If I only had my pencils to sketch this for papa! but I will come here again to-morrow," she thought, as she sat down close upon the bank.

Presently the great skeleton-like looking wheel began to turn, and drawing closer to the mill, she watched it with eager delight as it cast off, in its revolutions, whole showers of diamond drops, that glittered a moment in the sunshine, then sank back into the stream.

"So you think it is very pretty here, little one?" said a voice close at her side; and springing to her feet, she confronted the speaker.

He was an old white-haired man, with a face wrinkled and somewhat disfigured by one or two large warts, but bright with that ruddy glow peculiar to a healthy old age when life has been spent much in the open air, and lit up by deep-set, clear, blue eyes, which from underneath their shaggy brows, shone calm and clear as the lake at their feet.

"So you like it!" he added, with a smile.

"O, it is so lovely here!"

Some one has said that the number of words a speaker uses to explain his meaning is the gauge of the distance between his mind and those of his audience. It was so here. The child had at once replied to the old man's thought, and pushing the white felt hat which he wore from his wrinkled forehead, he slowly glanced over the scene, then said, in the tone of one addressing an old friend,—

"Yes, it is lovely. I thought so when a boy I fished from that rock yonder, fifty years ago, and I think so now; so every thing don't change and grow dreary as we grow old; does it, child?"

"I should think scenes like this would grow more beautiful, sir."

"Why so? why so, little one?" and for a moment he turned his glance from the landscape to her face with an expression of curious interest.

"Because one would be so much nearer heaven, then," was the half-timid reply.

"Ay, so it should be — so it should be," he said thought-

fully. "But we wander—wander, like men in the days of Shamgar of Israel, in by-ways. We look back, and not forward, and so get our own shadows between us and the eternal brightness with which He is ready to lighten our downward path—cowards that we are."

He seemed addressing himself rather than Sibyl, who was gazing quietly up in his healthful old face, seeking in vain for shadows there, when he turned to her abruptly,—

"So you expect life to grow brighter as you grow old?"

"Yes."

"Why so?" he asked, curiously.

"I don't know; I never thought much about it, sir; but there will be a great many more things to love, and"—

"A great many more friends to love you; is that it?" he asked, pleasantly, seeing her hesitate.

"O, no; not that," she said quickly.

The old man scanned her face closely; then, placing his hand on her head, he asked,—

"What is your name, my child?"

"Sibyl Monroe."

"Arthur Munroe's daughter. I thought I knew the look;" and again he scanned her with a fond interest.

"Yes, you are like your father. I shall be glad to see him once more."

"He is not with me, sir. He has gone to Europe."

"Indeed!" but repressing the questions that rose to his lips, he added, "We must be friends, little Sibyl. Your father and I were good friends when he was a boy, though

my head was almost as white then as now. I wonder Fred never spoke of your coming. Ah! I had well nigh forgotten his new wheel. It is down below the dam, and I must see how it works. Will you go with me, Sibyl?"

She placed her hand in his, and for the first time observed that her old companion was lame; that it was only the aid afforded by a thick cork sole that enabled him to dispense with a crutch. Hand in hand they went on, he pointing out now a glint of sunbeam striking athwart the black shadows at the head of the pond, now a fleecy cloud mirrored in the clear water, or a lily riding like a fairy boat at anchor, a bird, or a shy squirrel—speaking all the while in such a quiet, friendly tone, that it seemed to the child as if she must have known him always.

"There, little one; now step from that rock to this—that's well done; your father couldn't have done better. Give me your hand, and we will take a look at the boy's invention."

Sibyl could see nothing at first but the water that came rushing over the dam, and swept fuming and fretting around the scattered rocks in the stream; but dashing the spray from her eyes, she finally discerned at her feet what seemed to her a complicated piece of mechanism, which whirled in the rushing water like a thing of life.

Stooping down, the old man noted the movement of every part with the utmost interest; then, stepping past the child, he shut down the mimic gate which barred the water

from the narrow channel which the boy had constructed for his experiment, and took a closer survey of the wheel, whistling all the while to himself.

"That'll do. If the boy can carry out his idea and make it work, he's a made man," he said, rising from his knee. "Boy or man, he may be proud of it." And then he began to point out to Sibyl wherein the superiority of Fred's crude idea lay, talking of segments, and circles, and hydraulic pressures, wheels horizontal and perpendicular, with an enthusiasm that made her eye and cheek grow bright by mere force of sympathy, for not one word out of twenty did she understand.

"Did my cousin Fred make this?" she asked.

"Yes, with his jackknife, and at odd moments; for he gets little time for such things, I fear."

"I wish you would make it whirl again, sir, it is such a pretty plaything."

"Plaything!" The old man laughed quietly. "But you may not be so far out of the way, after all, little Sibyl. For it is only when the soul is cramped, confined, fettered like the water in the pond yonder, compelled to a life for which it has no affinity, that labor becomes a task. All creation should be play; and Fred, poor boy, would no doubt think life a holiday could he go on whittling out his fancies thus."

They turned away, and like two children went loitering along the high road past the door of the old mill, into the misty recesses of which Sibyl glanced with a timid wonder,

while her old friend paused to speak to the powdered miller, up the slope beyond the mill, where the road, passing along several rods on the edge of a beautiful bit of woodland, made a sudden bend, and ran down the hill towards her uncle's house. Leading into the woods, through which ran a well-trodden cart path, was a pair of bars, flanked by large rocks, which formed convenient seats, very happily; for few could pass that point without wishing to pause and take at least one look at the beautiful landscape before them.

Here they parted, for the old man's home, as he told her, lay on the other side of the wood.

"You must come and see us," he added. "Mother and Silence will be glad to have you. We are all old, but we like young faces. Fred will show you the way."

Sibyl looked after him until he was lost behind the thick trees; then, fearing she might have displeased or alarmed her aunt by her long absence, she hastily descended the hill. Her hands were full of magnificent water lilies, which her old friend had gathered for her, and which she had brought with great care, unmindful of the fact that they were dripping with water; but her aunt, who stood on the door step churning, was not so oblivious. As the child drew near, holding up her prize, she dropped the dasher of her churn, and stood looking at her a moment, with a curious mixture of anger, disgust, and contempt upon her face. Instinctively Sibyl's glance followed hers, and she at once

discovered the cause in her soiled, bedraggled muslin dress, and begrimed shoes and stockings.

"My stars! my stars alive, child! Where have you been, to make such a muck of yourself?"

"Only to the pond, aunt. I did not think I had wet my dress so much. It's the flowers, I suppose. But don't worry, aunt; I shan't take cold, and I've plenty of other dresses."

"Yes, I dare say. But I should like to know who you think is going to wash 'em. Do you expect to wear such light-colored things while you stay here?"

"I don't know. I have a number of worsted and silk dresses, besides some fall gingham, I believe."

"Silks and worsteds! No wonder your father failed!" Sibyl colored. "Silks for such a young one! I don't suppose you ever airned a cent in your life!" and turning to the child, she again repeated the question, "Do you expect to wear them here?"

Sibyl said she did not know. She would wear what her aunt thought best.

The woman seemed a little mollified by this answer; but at that moment her eye fell upon the unfortunate lilies, and she said, snappishly, —

"What are you gwine to do with them things?"

"I was going to ask you for a vase, or something, to put them in, aunt — by and by, when you are not so busy," she added, seeing a peculiar look come over the woman's face.

"Yes, I'll give you a vase," she replied. "I can find one with very little trouble. Give 'em here."

Sibyl obeyed, and with one energetic movement of her arm, Mrs. Monroe sent them into the midst of the wood pile. Sibyl sprang forward, as if about to go after them; but the woman motioned her back, and said, sternly, —

"Let 'em alone!"

There was that in the action and the words that woke in the child's heart a spirit that heretofore, even under Willie's exactions, had slumbered, and she said, with flushing cheeks, —

"The flowers were mine, aunt. I do not think you have any right to fling them away."

"No right! Well, I s'pose not. No right to the house here, or any thing in it! But you'll find, miss," she went on, suddenly changing her ironical tone to one of iron hardness, "that, if I am as easy as an old shoe, you won't litter up my house with such trash as that. Fred would have covered the house with briars, and rotted it down over his head afore this time, if he'd had his way. Folks that wear silk dresses and live on other folks' money, can afford to do such things, I s'pose. I can't."

Sibyl turned slowly into the house. Ah, little one! where are all the gentle, loving thoughts that nestled in your heart like home birds, half an hour ago? Your cheek is hot now, and there is a new light in your eye, a new feeling stirring in your heart — anger and bitterness.

This is part of the burden, Sibyl! Take heed, therefore, how you bear it. Other eyes besides ours are watching you; other lips murmur their oft-repeated prayer, —

“Not that thou shouldst take her from the world, O Father, but that thou shouldst keep her from the evil!”

CHAPTER XII.

“Not a thing — not a single, individual thing — fit to wear! How any body could think of sendin’ a child here with such a lot of cobwebs is more’n I can conceive!” and Mrs. Monroe’s nostrils were expanded, and her thin lips drawn in until only a narrow line was visible, as, with a quick, nervous hand, she removed the articles from Sibyl’s trunk. “Cloth boots! Not a colored skirt or stocking in the whole kit! We’ve not only got her to keep, but clothe, it seems!”

Sibyl had been watching this process in silence. Her aunt would’nt allow her to unpack her trunk herself; for Mrs. Monroe, among her other qualities, was blessed with a due share of curiosity; and she had stood there, her heart growing heavier and heavier as the trunk grew lighter, until this coarse fling at her dependence roused her, and she said, quickly, —

“Indeed, papa never intended I should be a burden to you, aunt. These dresses are such as he thought proper for me to wear, and I shall wear them, of course.”

“You will! Well, mebbly so. But what’s this?”

And she flung a large portfolio upon the floor; some

half dozen books followed, with as little ceremony; for Sibyl made no reply, but busied herself with picking up the sketches and drawing materials scattered by the fall. Catching a glimpse of one of them, the woman asked, —

“Who made them picturs?”

“I made them.”

“You! Who teached you?” she added, with a look of curiosity on her face.

“I had various masters. See,” Sibyl added, childishly catching at the gleam of interest manifested in her favorite pursuit, “here is one I think you will like.”

It was an old farm house, with its accessories, and the woman looked a moment with evident interest.

“Them cows are well enough,” she said, at length, “though no great things for milk. But what are such things good for?”

“Good for!”

“Yes; what will they get? Victuals, or clothes, or money?”

“I don’t know. I never thought,” said the girl, slowly, as this new view of art dawned upon her. “I don’t think artists think much about such things, though I know papa paid large sums for some of our pictures.”

“Paid money for things like that!”

Sibyl laughed outright. “No, ma’am, not much like that, or any of mine. But they were very beautiful — so beautiful!” she added, with a sigh for her old home.

“Well, no wonder your father didn’t prosper, squan-

derin’ his money upon such things, when he could look out doors and see brooks and trees, and men and women, enough any day. You needn’t put ’em back here,” she went on, seeing Sibyl about to replace them in her trunk; “them books and the black leather thing will go on the front room shelf.”

“But I should prefer to have them in my own room, aunt. I shall want my text books, and ——”

“Text books!” she interrupted, taking up a French copy of Telemachus. “What sort of texts?”

“That is French, aunt, and ——”

“French!” She held the book from her as if it were some infected thing, and crossing the room deliberately laid it on the fire.

For a second Sibyl was motionless from surprise; then, she sprang forward to the rescue. But a strong hand held her back, and a hard voice said, harshly, —

“Let that thing alone! I’m no professor, but I hope I know my duty, and I’ll have no French atheists here!”

Sibyl flashed up. “It was my reading book, and ——” but the woman cut her short, saying, with that indescribable motion of the head and neck of which I have spoken, “You needn’t waste words; as to your wanting books, there is one text which I rather guess you’ll have to study on a while, if you stay here, before you’ll need any more! — ‘Six days shalt thou labor.’”

Sibyl said no more, but mechanically obeyed when her aunt bade her help carry the trunk to her room; and

long after the old woman's quick, decided step had left the stairs, she sat on the side of her bed with a cold, frozen feeling at her heart.

"Sibyl, cousin, would you like to go with me after the cows?"

The voice came from beneath the window, and looking down, she saw Fred standing outside on the sloping cellar door, looking up to her. He looked pale and weary, and Sibyl could not help thinking that the dark shadows around his eyes gave to the face something of the look which had marked old Lydia Blair's on the day of her death; and she asked —

"Are you ill, cousin Fred?"

"No, only tired to death. But come, will you go?"

She quickly joined him, and they went down the lane back of the barn, and along the cart path, mottled with black shadows and patches of mellow sunlight, every step of which was marked with some new discovery by Sibyl. Now it was a flower, a stone, a spire of grass, a bit of moss, a bird, or a tree; and so learned, so wise did Fred seem in their names, uses, or habits, — so easy it was for him to tell a robin's nest from a kingbird's, a hawk from a crow, a piece of barley stubble from one of wheat, that Sibyl forgot his bare feet and rude dress, and looked upon him with genuine reverence.

A few nights after he took a different path, which led them at last up a very steep ascent. This they climbed with some difficulty, for Sibyl was unaccustomed to such

work, and Fred's breath came quick and short; but Sibyl forgot all her trouble in the beautiful view which awaited them from the summit. Seemingly at no great distance lay Eltham village, and the tall spire rising from amid the thickest cluster of houses must be Eltham church.

"Yes," Fred said; "and just beyond is the graveyard where my mother lies. I can almost see her grave from here."

"You remember her, Fred?"

"Remember her! I guess I do! She wasn't like *her*, Sibyl, not one bit; no more like her than — than I am like what I used to be; but sometimes it seems as if I had only dreamed about them old times."

The lad's eyes were misty with tears, and Sibyl pressed closer to his side, and wound closer still her slender fingers around his brown hand.

"Fred," she said, at length, "I don't think aunt" (she knew well enough who the *her* referred to) cares much for children. She has none of her own, and, I suppose, we fret her. Then she's worried about your father! How glad you must be to have him come home!"

Fred did not speak at first; but he finally said, "Yes;" then, as if anxious that his cousin should not be deceived and consequently disappointed, he added, "Yes, if things could be as they used to be; but he leaves them pretty much to her when he is here. See, Sibyl, yonder are our cows."

"Are all these fields yours, Fred?"

"No; they were once, but they have gone bit by bit, somehow. Father says land is more plague than profit. He sold the river meadows because the freshets carried away the fence, and he can't bear to be bothered. She manages now, and though there's hard work enough in all conscience, we don't seem to get along a bit. Sometimes I think, if I've got to stay here much longer, I'd as lief die at once; but Master Richard says that's wicked, and I s'pose 'tis."

The listless, hopeless, discouraged attitude and look of the boy, as he sat there on the shelving rock, was far more expressive than his words; and as Sibyl looked at him, she felt for the first time glad that she was there. She might help him, and she spoke of this eagerly.

"Yes, you can. You are good, I know. I knew it the moment I saw you. You speak softly, just as my mother used to, and it does me good. Now, to-day," he went on, throwing back his long, dark hair, and fanning himself with his straw hat, "the work would have dragged a great deal harder if I had not thought all the while of bringing you up here. I like to come here when I feel plagued and cross; for somehow, up here, I forget all about it in a little while. Can you tell me why, Sibyl?"

She said "no, unless because it was so high up."

He laughed. "Yes, that must be it; but come round on this side; I want to show you something." He led her round a projecting corner of the ledge, and right before her, at scarce the distance of a few rods, was the grand rock

profile that she saw each day from her window. The features stood boldly out in the departing sunlight, but the cliff below was one mass of deep-black shadows,

"Old Master Richard calls him 'The Preacher,'" said Fred at last, breaking the silence. "Sometimes I start after the cows early Sunday nights, and find him up here, and he tells me what the Preacher says — how it teaches hope and patience; and I like his sermons a great deal better than I do Parson Melvin's, and remember them better too."

"Is Master Richard a lame man?" asked Sibyl, recalling her old friend at the mill pond.

"Yes. I am going to take you over there; he's the best old man that ever breathed; and I don't believe there is any thing — at any rate not much," the boy added, correcting himself — "that he don't know. He's got an organ, Sibyl; I wish you could hear it; it is like the wind in the pines yonder, only a great deal grander. Then there's grandmother Mabel and Miss Silence — O you'll like them, Sibyl, first rate! Did you ever hear an organ, cousin?"

Sibyl smiled. "Yes, I took a few lessons on one once; and besides, I believe I have seen Master Fenn."

And as they made their way to the plain in search of the "milky mothers of the herd," she told him of her interview with the old gentleman at the pond.

"That's him! that's him! But the wheel, Sibyl; what did he say of that?"

She could not tell him all the old man's words, but he inferred from her report that he thought it a success; and he flung up his ragged straw hat in delight.

"Because you know, Sibyl, if he says it will *do*, it will," he said, more gravely. "I must go to see him this week. What if I should succeed, after all, Sibyl!"

He had stopped, and with his large, dark eyes gleaming with enthusiasm, which transfigured his whole face and figure, he stood looking intently, not at the earth or the sky, but away towards the distant horizon, as if he saw there the realization of some mighty dream.

Ah, boy, many and many bright, hopeful eyes have looked through the same glowing vista; but there came clouds and shadows, mistrust and doubt, obstacles and hindrances placed before the stumbling feet, by the very hands, perchance, which should have aided them, until, faint, hopeless, and chilled, they have seen the prospect close as the ice encloses the mariners in the far northern seas, and they have been willing to lie down in the arms of death, and wait the accomplishment of their aims in that land where shadows never come.

CHAPTER XIII.

BEFORE the grain harvest was over Sibyl's uncle came home; but his presence did not brighten the old farm house as she had hoped. Indolent and easy-tempered to a certain point, he still let his wife order and plan, while he talked largely of the great amount of work he had got to do; but somehow he never seemed to get about it, and to make up for his deficiencies Mrs. Monroe drove Fred still harder than before. She seemed bent upon having the labor of three men done, whether the third man was there half the time or not. And truly, the captain seemed to have a great deal of business to attend to besides his farming. Scarcely a day passed in which he did not feel obliged to go down to H., or drive over to P., or at least down to the village, for something; and however great the hurry at home, he seldom returned before night, sometimes not until late in the evening; and on such occasions Mrs. Monroe always seemed sterner and gloomier than ever, and Fred always contrived to slip away to the little room in the corn house where he kept his tools, or to bed.

Mr. Monroe made a pet of Sibyl, and the look about his mouth, so like her father, would have been quite enough to

win her heart; but upon some occasions his fondness became maudlin, and the child thought, for such a sensible-looking man, he said a great many very foolish things. Though he insisted on holding her upon his knee, and calling her his "poor little niece," she did not like him half so well as in the morning, when he met her with a cheerful smile and a —

"Come, little girl; get your bonnet and go with me to salt the sheep!" or said to his wife, "Polly, I'm going after the oxen; can't Sibyl go with me? I want her to stand at the end of the lane, and she looks as if a run wouldn't hurt her."

But to do the captain justice, he made great preparations towards getting ready to work, in the way of grinding scythes, and hanging and unhangng them in cradles; in the mean time, the broad field of oats, that had been such a thing of beauty to the child since her arrival, stood waiting for the laborers.

"Come, hurry, captain," said Culver, one morning, as he left the grindstone where Fred and he had been busy while the captain looked over his paper; "that cradle is all right; and if we cut the oats and get in that rye to-day, we've got to move quickish."

The captain took a survey of the sky. "It isn't going to rain to-day, man, and the rye will take no hurt. I guess we'll risk it, at any rate; for I must go down to John Newton's to look at a pair of steers, and Fred and you can strike the oats. I'll be back in a couple of hours."

"That's the last we shall see of him to-day," muttered Culver to Fred, as he shouldered his cradle. "He's made me tinker over that confounded old cradle all the morning, and here's an end on't."

Fred did not reply; but the sad, desponding look with which he followed Culver to the field, fell like a cloud over Sibyl. She entered the house in time to hear her uncle say, in a testy, irritable tone, —

"Well, well, I didn't say that it wouldn't be got in to-day. I hope I know when rye is fit to be got in, and when it ain't, without going to you. But if I had, all the women betwixt here and Paradise wouldn't make me change my mind. I won't be drove, any how."

People who are always boasting of possessing a quality are very apt to lack it in reality; and though Captain George Monroe was daily quite as emphatic in his declarations of marital independence as his wife was in asserting her docility and the long-suffering meekness which made her little less than a martyr, yet, like many others in political and domestic life, he no more thought of actually and successfully opposing her than he would of coming in collision with an iceberg.

Indeed, an iceberg is no bad illustration of poor Mrs. Monroe's cold, hard disposition. Yet let us speak in charity, for as the iceberg was once fluid, — bright, glad, dancing water beneath the warm sunbeams, — so there may have been a time in her life when her nature might have been developed into brightness and beauty; but

poverty, injustice, and selfishness brought the "ice period" early, and congealed all that was sweet and genial in her heart. Yet as away down beneath the rushing waters the iceberg still feels the influence of the warmth and melts — melts — melts — slowly but surely, so it may be that, beneath the great ocean of life, God is fostering some influence which shall touch even her hard heart, and make it warm and bright with love, here or hereafter.

Culver was right; noon came, but still Mr. Monroe did not return. White, silver-edged "thunder heads," as the country people call them, were rising in the west, and crowning, as it seemed, the long sweep of hills in the distant horizon with fantastic towers and battlements. Anxious to secure the grain, Fred and Culver exerted themselves to the utmost; and after dinner, Mrs. Monroe and Sibyl followed them to the field to assist in carrying together the bundles into heaps. It was light work; but Sibyl did not succeed very well, for the bearded grain pricked her hands, and the light, loose soil got into her shoes and hurt her feet; and to crown all, she caught her dress upon a bush which she did not observe, and tore in it a great rent. But she soon forgot this misfortune in her admiration of the rising storm, which had already sent down, as *avant-couriers*, a few large drops of rain, when she heard behind her a loud, clear laugh. She turned, and saw a girl of about her own age, with a face brown as a berry, and great, bold, black eyes, surveying her with a look of mingled mirth and contempt.

"What in the world made you put on your meetin' clothes to come out here?" she said. "Gracious!" if that wasn't about cunnin' enough!" and she laughed again, showing a row of large, even teeth, as she noted Sibyl's distressed glance at her rent dress and dirty stockings.

Sibyl's face flushed, making the scars there plainly visible. The girl observed them, as she said, coolly, —

"You needn't get in a huff. I didn't mean any thing; I suppose it's York fashion to wear your best frocks every day. I wish 'twas here. But what made them spots on your face? It's speckled as a turtle."

"Mandy! Mandy!" called Culver, from another part of the field; "what are you l'iterin' there for? Come here, and go to work."

"There! I might have known father would have set me to work! He's about as bad as Miss Monroe, and she's worse than a harrow. I was a fool to come up here!"

Sibyl followed the girl at a distance, and was surprised at the dexterity with which she handled the bundles of grain, while her tongue was not less busy than her hands. Part of the grain was already on the cart, when the rain began to come in earnest, and Culver turned the team towards home, anxious to save that from the storm.

With a glance at the scattered bundles left behind, and muttering the word "slack!" Mrs. Monroe went towards the house with long strides. Sibyl was about to follow, when Mr. Culver called her to ride on the load. She shook her head in dismay at the thought of climbing up there, but

Mandy said, "O, she's afraid; but here's somebody that ain't;" and climbing up like a cat, she seated herself in the middle of the load, looking back to Sibyl with a grimace.

By the time the latter reached the house, Mandy came flying after her, with her sun bonnet in her hand, and her mass of coarse but glittering black hair tumbling down her back.

"Miss Monroe!" she cried, flinging herself down in a chair, "mother wants you to lend her a yeast cake. She's goin' to knead up to-night, and hern are all gone."

Mrs. Monroe answered from the cellar way, where she was in some domestic operation. The girl came up to Sibyl, and taking hold of her dress, without noticing her attempt to withdraw it, went on, —

"That's an awful tear, ain't it? But it's pretty stuff. I wonder what you give for it."

Sibyl said she did not know what it cost.

"Don't! Have you got any more sech?"

"Not exactly; some of the same material, but not the same pattern."

"Well, I'll come up to-morrow or next day, and you shall show 'em to me. I'd have come afore, only I haven't been at home. I've got a new pink muslin; but mother won't let me wear it, only to meetin', and Sunday don't come but once a week. Kate White wears hers to night meetin's and apple bees, though 'tain't half so pretty as mine. Don't you think mother's too bad?"

Sibyl assented, and the girl, evidently pleased, added, —

"I don't believe you're so stuck up as they say, after all."

"Stuck up?"

"Yes; they said you wouldn't have nothin' to do with us; that you had never done nothin' but go to school, and talked jest as folks do in books; and I can't bear books."

Sibyl laughed, and told her that she had never attended school at all.

"Never been to school! my stars! You don't pretend to say you can't read! Why, father said you knew as much as Master Fenn himself, and he made an almanac once."

Sibyl explained.

"O, that's it! studied at home — how stupid! No fun at all; no snowballing, sliding down hill, or playing tag." The girl's glittering eyes really softened with commiseration.

"Well, I'm glad you ain't proud; half so proud as that Fred. He's ten times worse than ever since you have come. He was mad as he could be because I laughed at you for being afraid to ride on the load, and said he was glad you wasn't like a boy. He used to like to have me help him, but he's gettin' grand lately. Lorinda Mason says that the folks at Rockville are all talking about some whirlgig or other that he's made, and that Mr. Wentworth says he is a genius. I wonder if Miss Monroe is makin' emptin's."

Mr. Monroe did not return until dark that night. He had swapped horses during the day, and the advantages of

his bargain seemed to outweigh, in his mind, any damage that the rain might do to his grain, even though there came a flood. He was in high spirits, but they seemed to infect no one but the hired man, who laughed loudly at some of his jokes.

Mrs. Monroe seemed to gather the whole gloom of the night into her face; she did not sit at the supper table, but poured the tea standing, with compressed lips and elongated neck, putting down the teapot and setting back the chairs with a force that seemed to do her good.

Fred had scarcely tasted his supper, and as soon as possible Sibyl stole out to the small work room, where she expected to find him. He was not there, and she was returning to the house, when she saw him sitting upon the shaving horse, under the great apple tree in the yard.

He did not see her, and she went up to him, and put her hand upon his head.

"Fred, dear, you have no hat nor jacket; you will catch cold. See how the wind shakes down the rain drops from the leaves. You must come in. I thought you were in the shop."

"I couldn't breathe there, nor in the house. Go away. Go in, Sibyl, and let me be."

He spoke impatiently, almost harshly.

"Fred!"

"I'm sorry, Sibyl; I'm cross, to-night, and discouraged. I wish I was dead."

"O, no, no, Fred."

"I do," he went on vehemently. "What's the use in trying to live? It grows on him all the while, Sibyl."

"It! What, Fred?"

"What! But how should you know?" he says, sadly; and drawing her face close down to his, he whispers one word.

Ah, there is no need for you to whisper so low, boy, as if you feared to betray your secret to the ears of night. It is no secret to others. You have dwelt upon the terrible word until its dreadful significance haunts even your dreams, and takes the light out of your boyish heart, and yet have never before dared to speak it to another; but go down to Cheeny's, at the village, or over to Hitchcock's, or across to Rockville—stop at any country tavern on the drovers' route between here and New York, and you will hear the word blabbed out by a dozen lips, should you chance to speak of George Monroe; nay, Sibyl understands it—the effects of champagne taken at the magnificent club rooms in Broadway, and the villanous compounds sold for spirituous liquors in New England dram shops, do not differ much, and there is another bond of sympathy between you, brothers' children as ye are.

CHAPTER XIV.

STEP along, Sibyl; don't look so ruefully at your wet, muddy boots and that snowy floor. That tall, thin woman at the table yonder, rolling out piecrust, is not Mrs. Polly Monroe. She won't scold if you do chance to leave the print of your little boot upon the boards.

To be sure she has no children. Her eye never lightens to the holiest of all names — *mother*; but, withered, wrinkled as she is now, she was once young, and, away back in her sunny youth, who knows how many dream children nestled in her heart? Some, we fancy, — for she is woman, — and for their sakes she will be kind and gentle with you.

No, there are no children here. Dear Master Fenn and his sister Silence are "old bachelor" and "old maid;" but long ago they learned the meaning of our Saviour's words, "Unless ye become as little children, ye cannot become my disciples," and the lesson has brought its reward. Child-like and child-loving themselves, they have a share in the hearts of all the children in the town.

But, at first glance, no one would suspect their riches — that they share so largely in the divine Master's legacy;

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for Miss Silence's face is thin and something wrinkled; her hair is streaked with gray, and put up most ungracefully, in little round rings upon each temple, fastened with a piece of broom splinter; her form angular, and her dress scant, somewhat *passé*; and most of us worldly-wise people would set her down as a poor, meagre, unattractive soul. But the instincts of children are more correct. They have wandered but a little way from the true heaven, and they see in her a kind, genial soul, scarcely less true and loving than the angels they had left behind.

It may be a shade better with Master Richard, or "brother Dick," as she usually calls him. His face has more sunshine in it, — probably because he is more out in the open air, — his manners an easier grace; but he is far from handsome, and his coat is an old-fashioned, long-waisted, square-skirted affair, with great brass buttons; his pantaloons in the old gaiter style, that makes his small ankles look still smaller, and his long foot still longer; and his cork sole makes a heavy clumping on the uncarpeted floor, to say nothing of that ungraceful limp; but we have seen how little timid Sibyl was ready to put her hand in his, down by the mill pond, and we know that the many years he has spent as the village schoolmaster have only deepened his love and reverence for little children, and brought his nature into harmony with theirs.

And we must not forget that small, delicate-featured, neat-looking old lady, in her deep arm chair, by the fire. We were wrong in saying there were no children here. Grand-

mother Mabel is one in helplessness as well as in simple, loving faith. She is almost ninety, and for several years has looked upon life only through the eyes of her children; for she is blind.

Poor old Mabel Fenn! No, not even the Eltham people say that; for they all know that Richard and Silence are as eyes to her, and that they still listen to her with respect and obedience; for the old lady clings to old habits. She likes to say that by such a day "the walnut buds will begin to open, and asks Richard if Tom Briggs will be ready to plant the corn," and "fixes" with her own hands the planting bag, because he is "such a shiftless body, he never has one of his own;" or to say to Silence, "You had best look after the yeast, child, for to-morrow *we* must bake." And they — God bless them! — lead her along so gently, indulging all her little peculiarities, that she hardly realizes that she is old and blind, much less that they, on whom she so fondly leans, and of whom she speaks as "that boy," or "that girl," are themselves gray-haired, middle-aged people.

The house, like its tenants, is old and quaint, irregular and ill constructed, even older and less outwardly respectable than the old Monroe house; but, within, it is warm, and bright, and cheerful, and the figures of Fred and Sibyl, whom we left standing in the doorway, saturated with the thick November mist, are transfigured by its light.

Here Fred was always sure of a welcome. He and Sibyl had been abroad in the woods some hours in search

of a missing ewe; and the mist, so light when they started, had grown more dense and as penetrating as a settled rain. She was shivering with cold, and old grandmother Fenn warmed her checked apron by the fire, and folded her little chilly hands in it again and again, while she talked to her of her father, and the days when he was a boy; while Miss Silence hastily wiped the flour from her hands, and insisted upon removing the child's wet gaiters.

"Miserable things in weather like this!" she said, as she pulled and straightened them, and set them by the fire to dry. "Fred Monroe, you ought to have known better than to take her with you in such a mist."

Fred had not thought of its being so wet; but the good woman caught up her rolling pin, with a threatening gesture, as she said, —

"Then you deserve a ducking! You, that have been brought up under the nose of the Old Man of the Mountain, not to know when it's going to rain. The wind was due east in the morning, and the chickweed has not opened an eye to-day. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, sir. Ay, here comes brother Dick! I'll leave it to him."

Brother Dick did not look very ferocious; but Sibyl, scarcely understanding the good woman's banter, turned to her old friend very earnestly, —

"O sir, he is not in the least to blame! I wanted to go with him so much! I was so tired of staying in the house!"

"Well, well, the best thing is for you to get dry now, children. Did you find your lost sheep, Fred?"

"No, sir."

"And he would have taken me home when it first began to be so wet, sir; but I would not let him, for aunt said we must look until we found it, and I was afraid she would not like it," said Sibyl.

"Look till you found it, in such weather as this!" exclaimed Miss Silence, indignantly. "She thinks more of losing a sheep any time than of ——"

"There, there, Silence, that will do," interposed Master Richard, with a significant glance; "we shan't make her any wise different by talking about her. She has doubtless some good in her, though we may fail to see it, Silence. May be this little one will draw it out, and make it visible."

"Silence, child, the boy is right. The tongue is an unruly member. We must not speak ill of our neighbors," said old Mother Fenn, turning her sightless eyes towards her daughter.

"I did not mean to, mother, and I know Dick is right — he always is," said Silence; "but I must say, it's little better than murder to send a child out in such weather, in such clothes. Feel, mother," she added, placing in her mother's hand a fold of Sibyl's thin summer dress; "and then those boots — the soles are just like brown paper. My little girl," she continued, turning to Sibyl, "you are old enough to use more judgment about your dress."

Sibyl did know better. She had not been there long before she felt that the wardrobe suitable to her former life was no way adapted to this; and her torn, soiled, half

washed garments brought more tears to her eyes than the blisters on her hands, raised in the process of washing, or even Mrs. Monroe's caustic criticisms.

More than once, she had been on the point of placing the small sum of money which she had in her purse in her aunt's hands, and asking her to purchase for her some suitable frocks and shoes; but she was by no means perfect, and some ill-timed sneer at the connection between her dress and her father's failure, or fling at pride and poverty, would rouse in her a sort of a stubborn anger, which made it seem a duty to her father to wear the things he had provided.

But her anger did not trouble Mrs. Monroe; she knew the value of steady perseverance, and for some weeks, although constantly complaining in a way to make the child feel that she was a burden, she as constantly refused her offers to aid her. Deprived of her books, and kept for most of the time in the house, Sibyl would gladly have helped her in whatever she was able; but whenever she spoke of it, Mrs. Monroe extended her giraffe-like neck, and pointing to her dress, said, —

"People who wear such fine clothes are not expected to work — they only make slaves of other people."

Now, beneath Miss Silence's gentle glance, the girl burst into tears, saying, —

"I did not know better at first, ma'am, but I do now — only I am very, very wicked."

"Wicked!"

"She isn't. It's no such thing. Sibyl, how can you say so?" cried Fred, impetuously. "Don't you believe her, Miss Silence."

"Fred," said old Master Richard, "you come to my den with me; I want to talk with you."

"Now, will you tell me what makes you bad, Sibyl?" said Miss Silence, taking a bowl of apples from the table to slice, and sitting down close by Sibyl.

"I don't know. Mamma used to say I was selfish;" and with a sort of deprecating gesture, she turned her face, upon which her agitation and the cold had brought out the scars, and added, "You see people don't love me at first — especially strangers. Aunt does not love me at all. I feel in the way all the while, and —"

"O child, that's a mistake," interrupted old grandmother Mabel. "I know all about that. See here; when the illness which came on to me after that girl's father died, fell into my eyes, and the blue film shut out day by day more and more of the light, until I could not see at all, — not even my own hand before my face, — I felt just so. I said, I'm right in the way now; nobody'll care for the old blind body; I shall be only a plague and a trouble. And I wished I had died instead of father; but God let me see how much I wronged him and my children; for they do love me, child, though it's all of his mercy, of course; they are better to me than twenty eyes; and even the neighbors, and the little children, don't forget me. I tell 'em I'm a poor, blind old woman; but they ask me about this and that,

just as if I was as wise as Solomon. Never feel in that way, child. Silence, I guess by this time you'll want two more sticks in the oven."

Silence said, "Yes, mother;" and getting up, stirred the red hot coals in the oven with her long-handled fire shovel, put in the two sticks; and with her face all a-glow with heat, took her seat again, saying, —

"You did not finish what you were saying, child; what was it?"

"I don't love aunt, and I don't want to."

Something like "I don't wonder" rose to Miss Silence's lips, but she was too wise to utter it; she only said, "So you could love her if you chose."

"I don't know — it would be very hard; besides, she don't care to have me."

"Yes, yes," said Miss Silence, musingly, "it is hard, sometimes, to do right — hard for the old, as well as the young; but if we love only those who love us, what thank have we? That sometimes seems a hard saying to me, especially when I think of such folks as Polly; but there may be, as brother Dick says, more good in her than I see. I have e'en-a-most given her up myself; but Dick says love and patience can work miracles sometimes. But hark! there's Dick's organ! you like that!" she added, as the child sprang to her feet, and stood listening, her little pale, sad face bright with delight.

Sibyl did not speak, and grandmother Mabel, laying down her knitting, said, with a gratified smile, —

"Ah, that's 'Old Hundred.' It sounds almost as well as when father and I used to sing it in the choir. Dick knows what I like, though I'd rather hear him sing than play. I never used to think much of instruments."

"Sibyl! Sibyl!"

The face Fred showed in the doorway was bright and hopeful, unlike the worn, weary, despondent one which he had carried into that room; it was as if he had looked upon the face of an angel.

He had done better. We say it with all reverence, and all gratitude for the "cloud of witnesses" with which we are surrounded; but there are seasons, when all souls, but more especially the young, need human sympathy; human voices, to whisper courage to their hearts; human hands, to strengthen, by the magnetism of their touch; human eyes, — kind, loving, friendly eyes, — in which they may find again the faith so easily troubled.

Fred Monroe had looked into the face of a "good man," and his boyish heart was lightened of half its troubles. O, those quiet, unpretending, humble souls, whose biographies remain unwritten, — whose names even are unknown, — those Samaritans of the heart, whose unguents are the "charity which hopeth all things, and endureth all things," — how much we owe them!

It may seem a little thing to lighten the sorrows of a child; but Master Richard Fenn thought otherwise. None knew better than he the trials that beset poor Fred; none better knew his faults, and none more keenly appreciated

the really remarkable mechanical genius of the boy. He had supplied him with books, purchased him tools, and even succeeded in interesting the proprietor of the neighboring factory village in his future.

Fred would be sixteen in the spring; he had an earnest wish to enter the shop of Mr. Leffingwell, the best machinist in the state, in order to obtain that thorough knowledge of practical mechanics so necessary to the successful inventor. Master Richard had been telling him that through Mr. Wentworth's interest, his application had been successful; and then, to calm the boy's excited feelings, he had opened his beloved instrument, and begun to play.

The organ was chiefly the old man's handiwork, clumsy and rough in its appearance, but fine toned and sacred as the blossoming of his deep and true love of music. The room in which it stood was long and narrow, seemingly an addition to the main building; for you stepped down upon entering, and the walls were cracked, the wood work guiltless of paint, and brown with age; the windows narrow and uncurtained, save by the clumps of lilacs, and Guelder roses beneath them, for Master Richard loved the light. A chintz-covered arm chair or two stood by the western window, and on one side of the room was a light bench, with some mechanical tools upon it, and a few white shavings scattered beneath. It was, as the old man aptly termed it, "his den."

Fred had already told him what Sibyl had said about her lessons upon the organ, and as she entered he resigned the stool to her. A few bars convinced him that in execu-

tion, at least, she was his master; and he listened with delight, and a kind of loving reverence, as she gave piece after piece from his favorite Handel.

Soon came the old blind mother Mabel, and Miss Silence; and their faces reflected the wonder and surprise that looked out from Fred's eyes.

"It minds me of the angels," whispered old grandmother; "play on, little one;" and forgetful of the cold and wet, the sorrow and loneliness, the child did play on, while the humble listeners stood around, and the whole atmosphere of the narrow room seemed full of peace and love.

CHAPTER XV.

WEEKS and months fled. Long since, the deep bays and high scaffolds in the barn had been filled with hay and golden grain; the corn house held its yellow harvest; the brown-coated potatoes were heaped high in their allotted bins in the dark old cellar, flanked by families of apples — greenings, seek-no-farthens, baldwins, and the somewhat common and plebeian race of pippins, all showing their tempting cheeks in the mottled light streaming in faintly through the narrow cellar windows, and sending up a flavor as appetizing as those which grew in the gardens of Solomon; the winter grains were sown, and the tender, green spires showed like a young spring; the young cattle and sheep were brought home from the distant hill-side pastures; the woods grew bare and barren, and the wild geese, with their hoarse, clanging cry, began to pass southward; and still there came no word to Sibyl from her parents.

But she has not ceased to hope, and every time Fred goes to the village, she watches for his return with eager, restless hope.

She is stringing the quarters of apples now, beneath the old kitchen window. Mrs. Monroe has found some "specked

ones" in the cellar, and as she permits nothing to be lost, she keeps Sibyl at work preparing them for drying; and day after day finds her seated there, with her knife and bowl.

"She is broken in now, as far as such a good-for-nothing idle thing can be," her aunt says; and surely she looks spiritless and quiet enough.

"She always seemed quiet enough — more like a little frightened mouse," said kind-hearted Mrs. Culver, one day, in reply to a remark like the above. "I wish Mandy was like her."

"She's got grit enough for a dozen, I can tell you," was the reply; "but it takes me to quiet it. I'll have no idle, shiftless bodies about me."

Ah, Mrs. Monroe! She wears a shilling calico dress now, a checked apron, thick leather boots, pares apples, washes dishes, sews, sweeps, dusts, irons, &c., with tolerable skill, and without a word of complaint; but if you think you have killed the world of thought within her, the yearnings and aspirations for some higher life than this mere drudgery, that fill her heart — if you fancy your harsh tones have completely exorcised her dreams of beauty and delicate appreciation of all that lies beyond your mere money-getting sphere, you are mistaken. These are plants of immortal growth — you can stunt, but, God be praised, not kill them.

It is little she thinks of the apples as she sits there, except it be when the long darning needle, used so mechani-

cally, pricks her fingers. She is looking for Fred, and, as he comes up the road on a full canter, and catching sight of her, holds up a letter, she springs to her feet, and the apples are scattered upon the floor.

Never mind, child; there will be apples another year; they will set, and ripen, and fall, for years, upon the same trees, long after the hands which traced that letter are still in the grave; run out and catch the precious missive before Fred's foot touches the ground, or he can get breath to utter his glad —

"Hurrah! I'm so glad, Sibyl!"

She held the letter in her hand; — the letter with its foreign postmark, for which she had so long hoped and waited; and yet, for her life, she could not open it — not just then; there was such a fluttering about her heart, such a trembling of her limbs, that she could hardly reach the house.

Fred followed with his bundle of "notions," for he had had other errands to the village besides looking for a letter, his joy half dampened by the fact that she did not open it at once, half doubting if she was so "very glad" after all, and still further puzzled by the burst of tears with which she replied to some words of his.

"I thought you would be so glad!" he said, as he stooped to pick up the scattered apples before Mrs. Monroe, who was bending over the hearth engaged in some culinary operation, should observe them.

"I am too glad, Fred!"

"O, if that's it, cry away!" and his face brightening at

this explanation, he sprang out the door to attend to his horse.

She obeyed; but Mrs. Monroe, looking up, seemed to take a different view of her tears.

"What upon airth are you crying for now?" she exclaimed. "Now you've got your letter, why don't you read it? There'll be time enough to cry afterwards."

Sibyl rose to go to her room, but Mrs. Monroe checked her.

"You can read it here, I s'pose. I'll have no secrets in my house. I don't believe any body ever see such an unreasonable girl,—crying 'cause you hadn't got a letter, and now crying 'cause you have. Why don't you read, and see what they say?"

She opened the letter, and as she did so a ten dollar bank note fell to the floor. Mrs. Monroe seized it with avidity.

"Only ten dollars!" she said, a shade of disappointment darkening her face, "and that counterfeit, I'll warrant. But it's quite as much as I expected."

Sibyl did not heed her. She was greedily devouring her father's words. He spoke of their voyage, of their arrival in good health, and the hope he had of some time sending for her and Willie. But he told nothing of his business, and the letter seemed filled more with reminiscences of Eltham than any thing else, and in connection with these he spoke of her studies.

"You will find a plenty of occupation there for your pencil, Sibyl," he wrote, "for I know no place richer in

picturesque scenery; but I doubt whether you will find any one there competent to teach you much. You will have to rely upon yourself; but remember, practice makes perfect. French and music you will continue to pursue, and if your uncle will hire you a piano, I shall be very glad, for you ought to practise at least two hours every day. I will see that he is repaid for his trouble.

"I send you a trifle, which is for your own exclusive use. It is much less than you have been accustomed to receive, but the times are changed with us all."

Her father's letter enclosed one from her mother, and this she eagerly opened. It was short, written in "*great haste*," Elsie said, and the daughter sighed, for she had hoped her mother would be able to command more time abroad; but it began with, "My dear child," and in the love light of those words she read what followed, and saw nothing partial in the fact that her mother had taken half of the money her father designed for her, to add to Willie's allowance.

"Your father is so unreasonable, Sibyl! It is useless for me to attempt to convince him that Willie needs a much larger allowance than you. In that out-of-the-way place, with your kind uncle and aunt, who doubtless make a pet of you, you can want but very little.

"At a public school he is bound to keep up a certain appearance. He must keep up with the others, for he would die to be thought mean; and the boys there, his associates, are among the wealthiest in the city, and their

friendship may be worth a great deal to him in the days to come.

"Your father 'pshaws' at this; but you will agree with me, Sibyl, and see that I have only done what is right in taking some of your allowance for that darling boy.

"P. S. I intend to persuade your father to let Willie come out to us when his term expires; then we will, some day, if we continue to stay here, send for you. So don't run quite wild down there.

"I saw Maggie Ellerton the other day. She has grown into a most beautiful girl, and dresses with exquisite taste. I think a Parisian *artiste* would do much for you."

Sibyl was not permitted to dream long over her letters. Mrs. Monroe insisted upon being made acquainted with their contents; but when she reached the suggestion in regard to a piano, her indignation burst forth.

"Piano! Sibyl Monroe, is your father a fool, or does he s'pose that I am? Piano!—in this house! Is that all, child?"

"All of any consequence, save his wish to be remembered to uncle and you."

"There is no need of that. There's little danger of our forgetting him;" and the neck was darted out with a motion which plainly said the rest,—"as long as we have his child to support." But for once Sibyl paid little heed to it.

Fred had not seen her look so happy since she came to them, as she did that night as they sat upon the bench beneath the old apple tree, and talked of France.

"Your father is right, Sibyl; you ought to go to school. If we are heathen here, it is no reason why we should make one of you. You must go this winter; I will talk to father about it," said Fred, gravely.

"I am afraid aunt will never consent, Fred. She said the other day, that I must learn to earn something this winter, and that she should take some sewing from the shops in Rockville, as soon as the fall work was done."

"Hang the work! But she must consent, Sibyl. And I think she will, now you have money enough to pay your own bills. What have you done with it?"

"She took it."

The boy's face fell. "That's too bad. You should have kept it yourself."

"Of course she will give it to me when I ask her?"

"May be so. But I have five dollars of my own, and there are lots of walnuts this year, which are always considered my property. Father said, before he went off this last time, I might have ten bushels of corn if I would get the crop in alone; and as I have decided not to go to school this winter, you shall have all mine."

Sibyl looked at him in astonishment. She knew that the one wish of his heart had been to attend the Eltham Academy the coming winter, that he might not, as he termed it, "seem quite a heathen" when he went to Springfield to learn his trade. They had often talked the matter over together, and she knew not what to make of this sudden change.

"Not go to school, Fred!" she exclaimed.

"You can teach me, Sibyl. We shall have the long evenings, and I shall learn faster of you than of any one else. I believe in laying out my money to the most profit," he said, with a smile.

"Listen, Fred, I will not go without you. Fred, if we can both go, so much the better; that would be delightful. But if but one, that one must be you."

"Fred! Fred Monroe!" cried the voice of Mrs. Monroe, "there's all them dry beans in the house to be shelled. Sibyl, if you calculate to go barberrying with Mandy Culver to-morrow, you may as well finish making that sheet. You won't go unless it's done, I can tell you."

Mrs. Monroe was a sort of modern Sisypheus. She always had some stone for Sibyl and Fred to roll. But the beans were shelled, the sheet finished, and Sibyl spent a right pleasant afternoon on the hills and in the woods with Amanda Culver, and came home laden with the beautiful scarlet racemes of that most graceful of our common shrubs.

The wild, reckless Amanda had conceived a warm friendship for the "city girl," as her companions called her, defending her upon all occasions with more zeal than prudence; and Sibyl's influence over her was soon visible in her attempts to arrange her hair and dress with some degree of neatness and taste, and in lending a helpful hand towards taking care of her little brothers and sisters, who certainly were much benefited externally by her care. Hitherto she had been lawless; sometimes working in the

field with her father, and completely setting at nought the control of her indolent, weak-minded mother, not from any lack of affection, — for she was warm hearted, — but because the untidy, ill-arranged, slack habits of the household made the within-door life unpleasant to her, and she did not care nor think it was any way dependent on her until she became acquainted with Sibyl.

Her father saw the change in her with great pleasure, and even her mother began to brighten up, and to think that her children might become something more to her yet than a "pack of plagues."

The old Monroe farm was famous through all the county for its walnuts and chestnuts; and Fred and Sibyl spent often whole days in the fields, walking through the woods beneath a gorgeous canopy of leaves, gathering up baskets full of their treasures, or seating themselves at the foot of some decaying old tree, whose protuberant roots formed grotesque seats, removed from the nuts the outer husks, talking of all the strange thoughts and fancies which haunt the heart of childhood and dreaming youth.

O, those autumn days amid the woods and by the streams! How beautiful is their memory! How quiet they are! How unlike this turbulent life, that presses upon us now, with its unrest and incompleteness! O, to lie once more on the thick mosses, and looking up through the gorgeous canopy of leaves to the deep-blue heavens, with the old childish faith, see again the angels of heaven ascending and descending on the white-cloud ladder of love!

But all days were not thus bright. There were many mornings, especially after the autumn storms set in, that were wet and cold. Then they must walk fast to keep warm; and there were frosty mornings, when the crisp grass crumped like snow beneath their feet, and high windy days, when the nuts rattled down upon their heads, and the leaves whirled in their faces, until they were glad to get in the lee of some friendly tree or stone wall, and take breath. But they did not mind it. The pile of walnuts in the old garret widened and deepened, and before them rose a vision of Eltham Academy, and its pleasant atmosphere seemed to warm them, even at that distance.

CHAPTER XVI.

FRED's going to school that winter had been a kind of understood thing between him and his father during the past summer; but now the boy set all his ingenuity to work to obtain Mrs. Monroe's consent that Sibyl should accompany him. Many and many a plan they canvassed, and more than once Fred started up, with the avowed intention of asking her at once, and if she refused, "giving her a piece of his mind," as he said; but Sibyl's gentler counsels prevailed.

Above all things, she dreaded such jars and contentions as she had sometimes witnessed since she came there; and she put Fred off, saying she would watch her opportunity, and make the request herself.

But day after day slipped by, and the request still remained unspoken, until finally a development was made by the captain, that so irritated her aunt, and soured the atmosphere of the whole house, that Sibyl about gave up her scheme.

It came by way of a letter from her uncle, whom they had been expecting home for some days, and informed them that he had been ill, — "laid up with the inflammatory

rheumatism for nearly two weeks," and that he should not come home at all, but drive his cattle directly through from Vermont to New York.

"Umph! I wonder if he thought it worth while to pay postage for such news as that. I guess we shall live somehow if he don't come!" was the wife's comment as she flung aside the letter. "The rheumatism never killed any body yet, as I know on!"

Fred took up the letter, and ran it over.

"What's this?" he said, turning the sheet; "here's something about Miner Bronson."

"Miner Bronson! What is it? Read on."

Fred obeyed.

"I hear, by the way of Jim Nichols, who is up here, that Miner Bronson has put that note of mine into a lawyer's hands. I suppose he's mad because I didn't pay the interest when he spoke about it. Just as if I couldn't pay a dozen like it if I chose! But it's just one of his mean tricks. If I had him here — but never mind; I guess, as the case is, you'll have to look about and raise a hundred dollars for him. Let Hitchcock have the corn, if Fred has got it shelled out, and sell some of the oats — they are as high now as they will be. That ought to satisfy him for the present. When I get home, I'll see to the rest."

From the torrent of indignant words which Mrs. Monroe poured out, it was very evident that this portion of the letter touched her far more deeply than that which related to her husband's illness. A history of all the misdeeds and short comings of the Monroe family was given in a breath.

"I should like to know when he had it, and what he did with it! Borrow money unbeknown to me! Paid tavern bills with it, I s'pose. Sell the corn! The whole concern wouldn't pay his debts. And here I am slaving myself to death to die on the town at last. It'll be the last he'll borrow or I'll pay, I can tell him that."

There was little danger of Mrs. Polly's dying on the town, if report spoke the truth. She had not been quite so confiding as to leave her future provision to her husband's affection. He was absent a great deal, extremely careless of money matters — "shiftless," she said — certainly indolent, and it had been no difficult matter for her to usurp the whole management of the farm. The receipts of course passed through her hands, and while the captain cursed farming as the least remunerative of all employments, and Fred worked beyond his strength, wondering, all the while, why they could not get along like other people, her brother was constantly making deposits in the Hartford Savings Bank, in the name of his sister.

But she had never dreamed that her husband would *dare* to borrow money without her knowledge. This was a new revelation, which, added to the necessity of raising the sum of money which Monroe had specified at once, to prevent a lawsuit, made her temper almost unendurable.

The corn was sold — sent away when Fred was absent, and the walnuts went with it; but there was nothing said about the product being given to him; and when he mentioned it, and his father's promise about the corn, he was

met with sneers at his father's improvidence, which goaded him almost to madness, while the prospect of going to school lessened daily.

He would have consulted Master Fenn, but, for the first time for many years, the old man was absent from home — gone to New York, it was said; and had the great rock face descended from the cliff, and suddenly walked off, it could hardly have excited more surprise and conjecture among the neighbors than this step of Master Fenn.

"Gone on business," Miss Silence replied to the curious querists. "Gone on an old friend's business," she added, to Parson Melvin, when he drew up at the gate; "gone to see Jim Hungerford," she had told Fred. "You don't remember any thing about Jim," she continued, "for he hasn't been here these twenty years; but he was born a short distance from here, and brother Dick and he were always together as boys. Jim went to York, and they say he got to be very rich; but he never seemed to be when he came down here, which he used to do once a year or so, as long as your grandmother lived. She was a kind of half niece of his by marriage, though some years the eldest, and he thought every thing of her. He was always an odd body, and since she died he has not been down here, though Dick and he have written back and forth occasionally. He wrote the other day that he was poorly, and wanted Dick to come to York, and he started right off, without even waiting for Mary Wilson to finish his new coat."

But their point was gained quite unexpectedly, through

the influence of a no more important personage than Amanda Culver. This girl had lived with Mrs. Monroe at different times, when some unusual press of work had made her assistance necessary; and being in possession of all her weak points, she knew how to manage her much better than Master Fenn.

It so happened that the week before the school was to commence its winter term, the Hunters, who lived about a mile beyond the pond, came over to spend the evening at Mrs. Monroe's. Mr. Hunter had some business about fences to talk over, — for their farms joined, — and he had brought his wife and daughters with him. Amanda Culver was with them, in high spirits, as usual.

Mrs. Monroe belonged to that class of people who, spite of their penuriousness, are ambitious of having it said that they "know how to treat company."

She seldom invited people there; but when she did, Sibyl had been surprised at the amount of preparation in the way of cooking, and the profusion of the table.

The Hunters happened to stand high in her aunt's estimation; and this evening her best cake was brought forth, and Sibyl ordered to the cellar for a very rare kind of apples. Amanda offered to go with her, and while Sibyl filled her basket, rattled away about Cynthia Jones's Thanksgiving party, which she had attended, and various other things, until she suddenly stopped, and, looking at her companion a moment, said, —

"What's the matter, Sibyl? I don't believe you've heard a single word I've said."

"Yes, I have."

"Well, you don't look as if you cared a cent whether I had a good time or not. What makes you look so solemn?"

"I was thinking about Fred's going to school, and——"

"Going, is he! Good!" interrupted the girl, tossing the apple she held in her hand up to the flooring above. "I kinder like Fred, for all we are always in a jaw about something, and feel mad every time I think of his staying here and slaving himself to death for nothing. He wouldn't, if he had a bit of spunk. I'd have run away before this time, and I guess he'd have gone before now if you hadn't been here."

"He will go in the spring to Springfield, and he was to have gone to school this winter; but if aunt won't consent to give up his money or mine, he can't go."

"Consent! What a humble, chicken-hearted thing you are! Why, walk right up to her, and tell her you'll have what's your own. Or, leave it to me; I'll manage her. I'll put a spoke in your wheel, that will turn it clear round this very night. See if I don't!"

She did. Even as they entered the room, Mr. Hunter was saying to Fred, —

"So you are going away in the spring, Fred?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, that's the way with all the boys nowadays. They are all getting above farming. I was in hopes you would be wiser."

"Young folks are apt to think any place better than home, until they have tried it," was the trite remark of the meek Mrs. Hunter. "You will miss him very much, Mrs. Monroe. I did my William."

"I should think you would be glad to have him go, Miss Monroe," said Mandy, who had edged round from the corner of the hearth, where Fred and the Hunter girls were cracking nuts, to where the elder dames sat with their work; "for then people will stop talking about it. There's Polly Butler — what a creature she is to talk! I shouldn't think you would bear it of her, Miss Monroe."

"Poll Butler! Her words won't make nor break nothin', I guess. But what's the creature been sayin' now?"

"O, the old story: how you make a slave of Fred; that you wouldn't hear of his goin' to a trade, only you've broke him down on the farm, and you think he'll have consumption, as his mother did before him. She says, too, that he hasn't been to school so much as two months out of the year, on an average, since his mother died; and when I told her," pursued the girl, with an expression of the utmost gravity upon her rosy face, "that it couldn't be your fault, — for you always say that Fred does just exactly as he chooses, — that you never interfere with nobody, she laughed heartily, and said, every body knew how much that amounted to. She s'posed negro drivers let the slaves do the same, and Mrs. Pike, and Fanny Green, and all the rest of the folks — for we were down at Fanny Green's quiltin' — laughed too."

"Let 'em laugh. Every body knows what a mischief-maker Poll Butler is. She don't like it, I s'pose, because I didn't hire her to sew here this fall."

Amanda knew, by the sweep of the neck and the contraction of the lips, that her shaft had not missed its aim; and, delighted at her success, she kept on.

"I guess she is; for I couldn't think what made her say so much about your making Sibyl sew so steady. She told 'em that you had made her work on that awful coarse dress cloth until her fingers were blistered, and the joints swollen until they were as large as two joints; but I knew it wasn't quite so bad as that, for I saw Sibyl's hands myself, you know; and so I told 'em. They were bad enough, though."

Mandy staid to catch but one gleam from those fiery eyes. Not that she feared them; but she knew she had said enough, and Mary Hunter called her to take part in naming apples. So she turned away, leaving Mrs. Monroe choking with rage, while Mrs. Hunter went through with a prolix receipt for making doughnuts.

"Sibyl," said Mrs. Monroe, as soon as the company left, "the less you have to do with Mandy Culver the better. I should like to know what you and she were sayin' in the corner yonder about me. I know it was about me," she went on. "So you needn't deny it, nor make strange of it. What was it?"

"We were talking about going to school."

"What else? There was something said about money."

"I was saying that if you would give me what papa sent me, I would let Fred have it, as he ought to go this winter; and I suppose our walnuts and his corn went to make up the sum for that man."

"Walnuts and corn! Who told you to count up the produce of my farm? You are good in figures, it seems. As to your money, I should like to know what you mean."

"The ten dollars papa sent me; you took it, aunt."

"Certainly I did; and what's more, I mean to keep it. What more have you got to offer?"

"Nothing," said Sibyl, choking back the indignant answer that rose to her lips, "but this—if you will use it for Fred, you are very welcome to keep it."

"And like the rest of the Monroes, he's ready to take it—ready to beg or borrow; any thing but work."

Fred had hitherto sat in silence, carving a walnut into a grotesque semblance of the human face. At this taunt he rose, and Sibyl could see his face flush to a deeper hue than the bright fire glowing upon the hearth; but when he had crossed the room, and stood before her who bore the name of mother, it was white as the snow which glittered without.

"Mother!" he said firmly, and the title as well as the tone startled her; "mother, that isn't true. I am neither a borrower nor a beggar; neither was my father until——"

"Until when, sir? Pray go on; I like preachin'!"

"Until he learned to think Tim Rainsforth's store, or Hitchcock's, or even any place, pleasanter than home; until he became what he is now," he added with a quivering lip.

"Umph! and it's all laid to me, I s'pose. But I'm used to it. Go on."

"I have done all that I can here. I have worked with all my strength, and beyond my strength, because I hated to see every thing going to ruin, and because I sometimes hoped for better times; but I have done. I am sick, and tired, and discouraged! Hear me out!" he added, seeing her about to speak. "I mean to go to school this winter. I do not ask you to *give* me money for my expenses, for I think I have a *right* to it. I have earned it; but if you refuse, I must avail myself of Sibyl's offer, and *borrow*. You will not be so mean as to keep her money."

She stood for a few seconds before him in silence, as much from astonishment as rage; and the former feeling was fully shared by Sibyl; for Fred's face, even the very tone of his voice, seemed suddenly changed; it was as if he had at once become a man.

It had its effect, too; for though the woman bit her thin lips until they were white, while her hands, as she strove to pull down the sleeves of her dress, shook tremulously, she was, somehow, impelled to repress her rage.

"What in the name of common sense has got into the boy? It's gettin' to be high times with your '*musts*,' and '*shan'ts*,' and '*shalls*.' Who said you wasn't goin' to school, I'd like to know? I've made up my mind to have you go! Not that I care a snap for that Poll Butler, or the Greens, or old Dick Fenn, either. He's ollers been tryin' to set you agin me, and ——"

"It is not so; he never says a word ——" Fred began earnestly; but she interrupted him, her eyes flashing fire.

"Don't tell me! I know him, and Silence too! They are a mean, mischief-makin' set. I'll not be contradicted in my own house, I can tell you."

CHAPTER XVII.

WE must pass over four years, during which the shadows gathering over the old Monroe farm house deepened day by day. The whole aspect of the premises without bears witness to the absence of Fred; and the prospect within doors is yet more gloomy; for, in that time, George Monroe has made rapid progress in the downward path towards a drunkard's grave. He has grown moody and irritable; and as his habits unfit him for business, he is more and more tenacious of having his own way, and his "queer bargains" are the town talk.

Outwardly, Mrs. Monroe is the same; the knowledge that the property for which she has plotted and managed so long is daily slipping through her hands, does not tend to soften the hard-set lines about her face, nor sweeten the acidity of her temper; it only renders her still more greedy of gain, still harder upon herself and all around her. Poor blinded soul!

Sibyl is her chief dependence now; it is easy to see that, though she never acknowledges it in words; she never hires now, not even on those days of extra work, house cleaning, butchering, and the like; for Sibyl is much quicker, neater, and more skilful, than any one she could obtain.

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And what of Sibyl? Does she shrink from the burden which she once thought it such a privilege to bear? Does she fail to see the glory or hear the voice which blessed the heart of the poor mountaineer?

Sometimes she does; often, since she knows that her brother has long since joined her parents, because, as her mother said, she "could not exist longer without him;" and they say not a word of her coming. Indeed, they do not often write to her at all; and it is so hard to feel that one is forgotten — unnecessary to any one that we have ever loved!

Remittances have long since ceased, having been changed into liberal promises to pay her uncle any expenses she may incur; and in the present state of affairs there, she feels her dependence even more keenly than at first. Fred seldom comes home, but his letters are frequent, and never fail to brighten up the solitary old house.

He has suffered much from illness since he left home, but is always "better" when he writes; indeed, would be quite well were it not for some "slight cold;" and Sibyl almost forgets his hollow cough in the enthusiasm with which he speaks of the future. He has perfected his invention until it meets the approbation of the best judges, and his friends only await his majority to obtain a patent.

"Then hurrah for France, Sibyl! You and I will go over there together, yet, and look up uncle, and aunt, and Willie. You musn't forget your French, for you'll have to be spokesman. I am confident I never could *parlez-vous* in the world.

"Stranger things than this happen every day. Indeed, it seems much stranger to me when I think how Mr. Lef-fingwell, and Mr. Colton, and Mr. Wentworth, whom I always thought so proud and haughty, talk to me just as if I knew as much as they, and ask my opinion upon this thing or that. I guess they wouldn't if they knew me as well as you do, Sibyl. I want to laugh sometimes, but somehow the laugh oftener turns into tears when I think what a hopeless, ignorant boy I was when you came to us, and how you put the life into me. Ah, Sibyl, what should I have been without you!"

With all her avarice, Mrs. Monroe had a great desire to be "respectable," as she called it, and Amanda Culver perfectly understood this when she related "they says" of the village. Angry as they made her, she had not the courage to despise them, while she was determined not to allow both the children to attend the academy. So she made a compromise, and permitted Sibyl to spend certain days of the week under the tuition of old Master Fenn. The old man had readily consented to receive her as a pupil. He even rubbed up his French and Latin for her sake; and the hours they spent together were full of quiet happiness.

Old Master Richard was a thorough teacher; but he was wise enough to know that the training which we call education should be a means to that self-development which each soul must live out for itself. Therefore the mere technical lessons which he gave her were the least valuable part of what she learned from him.

Indeed, they were all teachers to her there — Miss Silence, with her strong, practical good sense, and mother Mabel, with her childlike faith and clear insight, which seemed to have been quickened by the physical blindness which darkened her eyes.

Only one thing seemed to trouble these good women — the nature of brother Dick's business with Mr. Hungerford. He avoided all discussion, or even allusion to it, and this was "so unlike him," Miss Silence said. She really hoped Jim Hungerford "hadn't been cuttin' up any caper that Dick would have to settle."

Even that gentleman's death, which occurred early in the spring, did not seem to put an end to their anxiety; for Master Richard had, after that, an increased amount of correspondence, and once or twice he went quite suddenly to New York, and was absent some days.

As on one of these occasions he went in company with his friend Mr. Wentworth, of Rockville; they began to think they had found a solution to the mystery. Jim Hungerford had, as a boy, been a clerk for Ernest Wentworth's father. Perhaps he had made Mr. Wentworth his heir. They hoped so, at least; for then the Wentworths would be able to pay off his father's debts, and be level with the world again.

Sibyl had heard a great deal about this Mr. Wentworth. He had been at one time a pupil of old Master Fenn, and though even now not an unfrequent caller at the little brown house, she had never happened to see him.

The Wentworths had been for generations a leading family in the country — very proud and wealthy. Various circumstances had combined to lessen the family wealth, but nothing could diminish their pride. The father of the present gentleman had been one of the first to engage in manufactures, and, after sinking half he was worth in various unsuccessful experiments, at length succeeded in placing his business on a permanent and profitable footing.

But with the intense conservatism which had ever marked his family, he half scorned the means by which he repaired his fortunes, and had no desire to see his son take his place. The boy was, therefore, early sent away to school, preparatory to his entering college. It was a wise step; for in the rough and tumble of school life he soon learned to find his own level, accept it, and to correct many of the false estimates peculiar to the narrow atmosphere of his father's house, particularly that which led him to scorn the labor whereby he gained his daily bread.

But as all his tastes led in the path his father's ambition pointed out, he pursued it with great honor; until, just as he had graduated and entered the law school, he met and yielded to an influence which colored his whole after life. Scarcely out of his boyhood, he became fascinated by a very beautiful and somewhat celebrated woman, some ten years his senior in years, and twice that in actual knowledge of life, and married her in spite of all remonstrances.

The disappointment of his parents — their anger — could only be measured by their ambition and pride.

They "were reconciled" at last, as the world phrases it; but such natures as old Mr. Wentworth's seldom *forget*, if they forgive; and when the woman whom Ernest, in the first flush of the eager, vehement passions of youth, had worshipped as the realization of all perfection, proved false in heart, if not in deed, the old man, forgetting his son's anguish, could not help assuming, in all his intercourse with him, that triumphant "I told you so" air, which is so much worse than words.

But the mother's heart was truer. Indeed, hers was naturally a much stronger, nobler character than the father's, though few people knew her — none, perhaps, save her son; for in all her long life, no experience, save maternity, had come with sufficient power to break through the wall of deep reserve which marked her nature.

She had married Mr. Wentworth because her friends thought it a desirable match, and she "must marry" somebody; but she had never pretended to give him more than the respect which she felt due to the head of the family. It was all he asked, or was capable of appreciating.

To one of her self-possessed, self-reliant character, her son's passionate idolatry of beauty was a madness, a disease. She had sense enough to see that all remonstrances were worse than nothing; that it must work its own cure, at whatever expense; and she watched it in silence. But if there was no reproach, no hint of the wife's follies, or the son's disappointment, there was also no sympathy.

People said the Wentworths were "odd." Even mother Mabel and Miss Silence said they were odd. They told how the beautiful but misguided Mrs. Wentworth had died suddenly, and how on the night after her death, when the young husband stood with no one but his little child by her coffin, his mother, whose foot had very seldom crossed his threshold, suddenly entered the room, and, before he was aware of her presence, stood by his side. There were no tears in her eyes as she gazed on the face of the dead, none when she lifted the little motherless girl to her arms, and slightly touched her cheek with her firm lips; only when she looked in her son's eyes, and read there something of all he had suffered, the great tears came silently, and placing her hand on his, she said, —

"Come back to me, Ernest; you and this little one."

He went; and apparently, as old Mr. Wentworth often observed, there was nothing but the presence of little Winnie to remind them that he had ever been away. But the mother knew better. She was the first to urge her son to take up again the broken threads of life, and her own eye grew brighter and her step firmer when she saw him reaching high up in his profession. Alas! she did not know of the dreary distrust and unbelief that were eating away his heart. He did not show her *that*; for he knew she would never be able to comprehend how the failure of any thing earthly could effect a change — such a change.

It was at about this time that old Mr. Wentworth, easily persuaded by the success of a person with whom his

business frequently brought him in contact, and of whose honesty, sagacity, and prudence he had the highest opinion, entered largely into the speculations of the day.

This person was Arthur Monroe. His failure involved that of Mr. Wentworth. This was bad enough; but it was soon found that Monroe, trusting to the old man's confidence, had made a fraudulent use of his name to a large amount, and it was this crime to which the miserable man alluded in his letter to Sibyl.

The disappointment — the indignation — of the old man was such as to render him for a time incapable of any thing save hating Arthur Monroe with the insanity of hatred; and Ernest, leaving his profession, came home to examine into affairs. The bankruptcy was undeniable; they would not be able to meet one half of their obligations; and the mother and son felt this far more keenly than the loss of their wealth. Ernest Wentworth thought that he could not pursue his own life aright until these debts were cancelled; it became the one leading thought of his mind; the more he examined, the more clearly he saw that by patience and perseverance it might be done; therefore he suddenly announced his determination to give up his profession, and take the business into his own hands.

It was very difficult for him to come to the truth of their affairs, for his father shrank from speaking of his speculations, and either became irritable and moody, or else met all such inquiries by a volley of curses against Monroe. Though Ernest could not help feeling an inexpressible con-

tempt for Monroe, he was not blind to his father's character; and that examination gave him a light by which to judge him. He could see how a nature not naturally bad, if limited, had been narrowed by the cold, selfish spirit which has gradually come to govern the laws of trade, until our merchants, instead of vindicating their birthright as the representatives of the chivalry of the middle ages, have become hucksters, hagglers, and repudiators. He saw how gain, pursued as the chief object, eats the life and soul out of men, and leaves them little else but empty gilded shells, echoing with low, grumbling complaints about the vice, and wickedness, and dishonesty of the "lower classes;" giving largely, perhaps, to charities, and then, in the expressive language of Dr. Chalmers, wondering why "universal selfishness does not do the work of universal love."

He might, in all probability would, founder on the same rock; but whatever else his early experience had taken from him, he still had faith in the power of an earnest will, and he would try.

The old gentleman did not live long enough to witness even the beginning of his son's success; but the people in his employ, from the head clerk in the counting room to the most ignorant foreigner on the premises, felt at once that there was a new hand at the helm. He was a man of few words, but each one felt *compelled* to do his work thoroughly; that the keen eye of a master was upon them; and even the delinquents were obliged to confess, that if he was stern and relentless, he was also just.

One of his first measures, after the death of his father, had been to rent the large family mansion to a gentleman from New York, and remove, with his mother, to a small cottage, more suitable to their fortunes. The house was her own, and she might have retained it, and many people thought her "mean and stingy" for removing from it, for the sake of a few hundreds of rent; but they did not know her. The debt weighed even more heavily upon her than upon her son, and she scorned empty pretence.

The cottage was comfortable and convenient; Ernest saw that his mother, little Winnie, and their attendants had ample room, and contented himself with two small upper chambers, which served for bedroom and library. These looked down upon a large garden, which served Winnie for a play ground.

Here the child walked very demurely while within sight of her grandmother's window, where that lady usually sat, her handsome but stern face looking out from the white borders of her widow's cap like some face in an old picture. But once out of sight, she ran about and rolled upon the grass, like any other child. Mrs. Wentworth did not love children; she made no pretence of so doing; but upon this account she was, perhaps, more rigid in performing what she deemed her duty, wherever they were concerned; and woe to the servant who ventured to neglect her orders with regard to Miss Winnie.

There was often another pair of eyes watching the child from the window above, of which she was wholly uncon-

scious — a face full of anxious thought, quite at variance with the usual self-possessed look with which it met the world; for Mr. Wentworth's own experience taught him to tremble for his child, and there were times when he wished she had never been born.

No one understood so well the character of Mr. Wentworth as his old teacher, Richard Fenn.

His father had mourned over the circumstances that compelled him to trust, even for a few months, the education of his boy to a country schoolmaster, when he should have rather thanked God for bringing him, at that impressive age, in contact with a noble, honest man.

The calm gentleness of Master Richard acted like a charm upon the wilful, passionate boy; and in all the dark years that beset his manhood, when he hid himself from himself and others in that mantle of cold reserve, he had ever a kind word for his old friend, and he was even grateful for the quiet sympathy which he read in his face. For his sake, he had overlooked the fact that Fred was Arthur Monroe's nephew, and warmly interested himself in his fortunes.

All this Sibyl learned from the Fenns — all save the name of the person whose failure and dishonesty had caused theirs; that they withheld: and she little thought the Mr. Wentworth, whose kindness to Fred had so won her interest and gratitude, was the person whom her father acknowledged he had wronged.

Therefore, though Miss Silence proved over and over to

her that she and Fred were the "next of kin" living to old Jim Hungerford, she felt rather glad than otherwise at the thought that the property, as they suggested, had gone to Ernest Wentworth, especially after she learned incidentally from old Master Fenn that certain changes in the tariff were likely to bear heavily upon the branch of manufactures in which he was engaged.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AND it did press heavily — the new tariff arrangement, which the assembled wisdom in Congress saw fit to impose on the country. With all his energy, forethought, and perseverance, Mr. Wentworth saw himself upon the eve of a second bankruptcy, even before he had half cancelled the liabilities of the first; and it was this state of affairs that led him so often to seek counsel of old Master Fenn.

If the latter could not give him "material aid," he could cool the irritability of his overtasked nerves, and help him to catch again glimpses of the true ends of business, which, in the keen contest of competition, he was so much in danger of forgetting.

"O, if the blockheads had but waited one year before they passed this law!" he exclaimed, as he walked back and forth in the evening twilight with Master Richard, beneath the great buttonwoods that shaded the old house — "one year, until I had cleared myself of this miserable load of debt, and I would not have cared! But to fail now, with the end in full view! — to see all my care, and labor, and forethought come to nought, that a few selfish dema-

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gogues may ride into notoriety! But it's of a piece with all the rest of my life!" he added, bitterly.

The old man looked thoughtfully in his dark, scornful face, as he said, —

"I wish it might have been otherwise, Ernest; and yet I doubt whether the wish may be either the wisest or the most friendly one for you; for all human experience teaches that the ends which seem to us of such vital importance are of far less value than the training we win in the race. Few men live to my age, — scarcely one who exercises thought enough to deserve the name, — without seeing how the very ends they pursued with such zeal, would, if attained, have proved to them curses instead of blessings, and devoutly thanking God for the failure that had seemed to them such a sore calamity. Ernest, your own observation must have taught you how any end, however unobjectionable in itself, if pursued to the exclusion and neglect of every thing else, is liable to narrow and belittle the mind and heart, until it becomes a sort of tyranny from which it is almost impossible to escape."

Mr. Wentworth colored slightly, as he said, "You think I am in danger, so read me this lesson, I suppose. It may be you are right. All life, at best, seems to me but a bundle of contradictions. It is of this very ignorance of what is best for us that I complain. We strive, dream, hope, pray, for some good which we honestly deem nobler and better, — more desirable than aught else the world can offer, — and attain it only to find it dust and ashes, for-

fortunate if it prove not a sword to thrust us through and through. These lofty aspirations, these beautiful ideals, which we find in the mind," he went on, his lip contracting as if from pain, "what are they but illusions, like those clouds yonder, more changeful and quite as evanescent! All men are slaves to something. It is idle to rebel; but I would fain work out this portion of my task, and see it ended."

Master Richard did not reply. He knew how idle mere words were to such a character as Wentworth's; but in the deep faith that trusteth all things, he uttered in his heart the prayer of Philip, —

"Lord, show him the Father."

Mr. Wentworth noticed the sadness of the old man's face; he paused in his walk, and said, with an air and tone of affectionate reverence, —

"Be patient with me if you can, my dear Master Fenn. I may be wrong; I may have failed to read my lesson aright. I know you think so; but I have read it at least with an honest intention, and if I err time may work a cure. If any thing on earth is real, it is your patient friendship. In that I will trust still."

"In nothing else, Ernest?" asked the old man, seriously.

"No; unless it be in this," and he touched the earth lightly with his riding whip; "for no stroke of honest labor on this surface is without some reward. This is something tangible — real; and he who sows here reaps not thorns nor thistles. But hark!" and with his arm still extended, as if to hush even the rustling leaves above him, he stood

listening to the soft, entreating strains of Handel's "Comfort ye my people," as, accompanied by the soft, full voice of Sibyl, they swelled forth from the organ in Master Richard's den; while slowly the dark look passed away from his face, and left it glowing with unexpected pleasure. Ah, he believed in something besides himself yet. We are none of us such atheists as we pretend to be.

Perhaps Master Fenn thought thus; for he stood beside him silently until aroused by his abrupt query, —

"Whom have you here that can play and sing like that?"

"A young friend — Miss Monroe."

"Ah! a sister of that boy, your *protégé*. Her voice is uncommonly sweet, and her execution good. Is she your pupil?"

"Not in music; of that she knows much more than I — but —"

Master Richard paused; for as they turned to retrace their steps, Sibyl unlatched the gate and approached them on her way home. With a bow and a smile she returned his greeting, and passed on. There was nothing in the somewhat undersized figure nor in the pure, pale face, that for one second had been turned towards him, to excite Mr. Wentworth's attention, and he sauntered on. But his old friend paused and looked thoughtfully after her a second; then, as if some thought suddenly occurred to him, his face brightened, and walking forward as rapidly as his lameness would permit, he laid his hand on Mr. Wentworth's arm.

"Ernest," he said, "make no hasty movement in your

affairs. I think — I believe I know a way in which I can assist you. Promise to make no change until you hear from me."

The eagerness of the old man's manner, the contrast that involuntarily rose in Wentworth's mind between the means at his old friend's command and the large sum immediately required to relieve him from his dilemma, raised a smile upon his lip. But he readily assented to the request, only warning him that the delay must not be long, and asking if he expected to find Aladdin's lamp.

"No," returned the old man, smiling. "I see you are not only curious, but incredulous; but the mouse saved the lion, you know."

"Well, I must trust to you; I have no other resource. If I only had what that rascal Monroe honestly owes, — but he has doubtless long since ignored the meaning of the word *honest*, if indeed he ever knew it."

"He did know it. His boyhood's promise was as bright as your own, Ernest. He must have been sorely tempted before he put his hand to such deeds," said the old man, sadly. "I pity him."

"And I scorn him; a weak, cowardly nature, at best," was the haughty reply.

For two or three days succeeding this interview between himself and Mr. Wentworth, brother Dick seemed, as Miss Silence chose to express it, in a "quandary." He went about the house doing things strangely at variance with his usual methodical correctness; occasionally sitting down at

the organ and mixing up strains of "Rothermel" or "Dundee" with snatches from old "Rosin the Bow," in a way that seemed to her quite profane. Mother Fenn, with her quickened senses, noted a change, and began to fear that "that boy Dick had been led astray in his recent visits to the city — a place as full of temptations to young people as Vanity Fair to Christian and Hopeful;" but at this Miss Silence shook her head. She "couldn't believe that of Dick;" her fears took a different direction, especially when she noted the unusual fervency of his petitions morning and evening, that he "might not be led to do evil that good might come." It suddenly occurred to her that the danger lay nearer home. Brother Dick had said to her more than once within the last year, particularly when he was down with the rheumatism in his lame limb, that she "had too much to do." Possibly he contemplated bringing home a wife to share her labor. Once or twice in the years gone by, she had been seriously disturbed by such thoughts, and now she could hardly realize how such a step could be productive of any good. But "brother Dick knew best," and with this conviction she tried to silence her disturbed thoughts.

She might have dispersed them much more effectually, though not without a doubt of her brother's sanity, could she have listened to a conversation between him and Mr. Wentworth, in that gentleman's office, a few days later.

Indeed, for a few moments, Mr. Wentworth's face expressed a doubt of his old friend's mental condition, when,

after talking over his affairs, and gaining a thorough understanding of the complicated embarrassments that were closing round him like a net, he drew forth his pocket book, and laid before him notes and bonds to the amount of thirty thousand dollars.

"Take it, but don't ask any questions, Ernest," he said, indulging in a quiet smile at the gentleman's stare of unfeigned astonishment. "I have not robbed the bank, nor found Aladdin's lamp. A few words will explain all I can tell you with honor. I hold this property in trust for another. By the express terms of the will of the donor, the heir cannot come into possession of even the interest under the age of twenty-five. For the eight years to come, I alone am responsible for it; and all I ask of you in the mean time is security against loss."

Mr. Wentworth glanced at the bonds, and then at the old man, as if still in some doubt of his sanity, before he replied, sadly, —

"I cannot give it, my old friend. It is a sore temptation, for with such a sum I could soon make my way clear. But I have no security, such as I could offer you, and I would ask no man to indorse me for that amount, even if I knew one who would be willing."

"You have your buildings and stock, Ernest."

"Yes; but the buildings are still holden for my father's debts, though in fact worth twice as much as the mortgages still remaining upon them."

"Have you the copies of the papers? Let me see them."

Mr. Wentworth took from the safe a bundle of papers. The old man glanced them over.

"Why, Ernest, these are not the papers; these are notes — Arthur Monroe's notes."

"I thought that trash destroyed," he said, as he handed him the right package. "Perhaps you will accept them; they are nearly the amount, you see — twenty thousand."

He spoke jestingly. Master Fenn made no immediate reply, but sat examining the papers for some moments, then took up Monroe's notes and looked them over, before he said, gravely, "I will accept a mortgage on the buildings, Ernest, and besides, I will take these notes."

"But they are wholly worthless — worse than blank paper, Master Fenn."

"To you they may be; not to me. Let us finish this business."

Master Richard had ridden over to Rockville that day with his neighbor the miller. It was still early when he came up from the mill to the Hill pasture bars. He paused there, and stood for some moments as if revolving some topic in his mind, then turned and walked down towards Captain Monroe's. Out in the meadow, west of the house, through which ran the clear brook of which we have spoken, he found Sibyl, engaged in showering with a large water pot the long pieces of homespun linen stretched upon the grass in the process of bleaching.

"A primitive employment, little Sibyl," said the old man, as he returned her glad greeting, and seated himself in the

shade. "Many's the time I have seen your grandmother and Lydia Blair out here amid their linen. But those women — Lydia, and Hannah Holbrook, and black Dinah — had rather more strength to lift that heavy watering pot than you, child. You look tired."

"I am," was the reply, as she took off her sun bonnet and seated herself by his side. "I remember," she continued, laughing, "of once riding with mamma and some other ladies past just such an old farm house, where were several young girls bleaching cloth. We thought it very picturesque, and mamma made John stop the horses while Miss Addie Grey and I made sketches of them."

"You think now it was more picturesque than pleasant?" he said.

"Yes, the heat of the sun gives me such a headache. I often wonder what mamma would say if she was to see me now. Poor mamma!"

"You regret your beautiful home, your carriage and horses, very much, Sibyl?"

"Yes; though I sometimes think," she added, with a glance round the beautiful landscape until they rested upon the great rock profile, "that I would quite as soon live here. It is so very beautiful here; and if I were rich, I would buy the old farm, if uncle would sell it, and build a new house here. Fred and I have built a great many," she went on with a smile. "Then I would bring home papa, and mamma, and Willie. I would have a library for papa, and pictures and an organ for you, dear Master Fenn;

and you should come over every day and play. I would bring grandmother Fenn and Miss Silence over sometimes, and Fred should have his workshop, and all the tools he needed. Wouldn't that be nice, Master Fenn?"

The old man sat a moment regarding her thoughtfully, before he replied, —

"Yes; thank you for my share, dear. But, Sibyl, suppose that you were rich, as you say, my child; if you knew that by sacrificing fortune, and living a life of self-dependent labor, you could redeem the memory of one you dearly love from dishonor, would you do it? Remember, you would be under no obligation to do so. I am only supposing the money all yours. It would be a mere matter of choice."

"Indeed, I would, sir!" she exclaimed, scarcely waiting for his explanation, "even if I had to live with aunt Monroe always." She hesitated a moment, and then hushing her tones as if she feared the nodding clover blossoms would hear her, she added, —

"Dear Master Richard, there is something I want to say to you. I am afraid, indeed, I know, that my father did some one a great wrong before he went away. He told me he did, and asked me to forgive him in the letter he wrote just before he sailed. He did not tell what the wrong was, or who was the person; but it troubles me to think of it. I wish I did know — I would work like a slave to cancel it."

"I know you would — I know you would, my child. I wonder I could doubt it!" exclaimed the old man.

"Doubt it! Do you know any thing about this, Master Fenn? any thing about papa's affairs? O, if you do, tell me!" she cried eagerly, scanning with her clear eyes the old man's face. "What can I do?"

"You can hope and trust, little one," he replied, after a moment's silence, laying his hand on her head as he arose to go. "Do this, and God will teach you what to do when the time comes — in this as well as every thing else."

CHAPTER XIX.

"YOU'LL have been expectin' the captin' about these days, and mebbey here's somethin' that'll tell about him," said Mr. Culver, as he stopped one day on his way home from the village, and handed Mrs. Monroe a letter. "I reckon he's made a pretty good trip on't this time. Cattle's risin'."

"He ought ter, to make up for what he's lost before," replied the wife, as she adjusted her glasses to read the letter, while Culver lounged into a chair, being determined to hear the news.

"It isn't his hand; but the postage is paid," she said, with a glance at the address.

She was not a ready reader, and the hand was one of those business scrawls so illegible to any but a practised eye.

"I can't make head nor tail on't," she said, pettishly. "It isn't Mr. Monroe's handwriting, that's sartin. I should think the name was James Morton; he's the man he ollers sells to down there. Here, Sibyl, see if you can make it out."

Sibyl laid down her work and took the letter. The first

sentence, though somewhat awkwardly worded, was an earnest expression of sympathy, and intuitively divining what followed, she turned pale as the paper in her hand.

"Why don't you read on? There's no privacy, I s'pose. Another dunnin' letter, I guess. No mortal knows how much trouble his shiftless habits make me!"

"They will never trouble you more, aunt; uncle Monroe is dead!"

"Dead! you don't say so! I don't believe it. Give me the letter."

Culver had started to his feet, echoing her ejaculations, and forgetful of all save his interest in the fate of the man for whom he had so long labored, stood looking over her shoulder, as she tried to decipher the words.

She saw that it was true, and handing the letter back to Sibyl, bade her read the whole. She threw herself into a chair, and gave way to hysterical sobs, and the man Culver wiped the great tears from his eyes with the back of his brown, hard hand, as Sibyl obeyed.

Mr. Monroe had been killed almost instantly by a fall from his horse, and the kind-hearted man who wrote the letter had already taken measures to forward the body to Eltham. As she ceased reading, Culver crossed the room, and placing his huge finger on the date of the letter, said, thoughtfully, —

"That was writ Tuesday; to-day is Thursday: they will be here to-night with the body. Somebody must see to — to — all these things. Shan't I do it?"

The man hesitated to say funeral; but the newly-made widow understood him, and with her usual promptness said, —

"You are right; we have no time to lose;" and wiping her eyes, she proceeded to give her orders with a composure which quite surprised the man; then, turning to Sibyl, she added, —

"The house will be overrun with people, your uncle was so well known. We must go to puttin' things to rights at once. The front rooms and the kitchen must be cleaned, and the chambers thoroughly swept."

Sibyl did not stir, but sat with her head bowed upon her hands, thinking of her uncle's death; of the last time she had seen him; of Fred, and the impossibility of getting a letter to him in time for him to attend the funeral; and Mrs. Monroe had to repeat her words, saying in a kind of explanatory tone to Culver, —

"Poor folks have no time to sit down and cry, even if it was right for 'em to do so. Folks expect to see things decent at such times; if we could hire, 'twould be different."

"But I must first of all write to Fred, aunt."

"I don't see why; he can't possibly get here in time for the funeral."

"Mebby he will," said the good-natured Culver, with a glance of commiseration at Sibyl; "I guess I'd do it; and I'll send Mandy up here to help. She'd do any thing for — Sibyl," he was about to add, but with a forethought quite unusual, he changed it to "any of you."

Mrs. Monroe declined his proffered aid. She had a great horror of having strange people "peekin' round her house;" so the chief labor fell upon Sibyl. She had spoken the truth — there was no time for sorrow in that house. Not even after the body arrived, and was laid in the scrupulously arranged parlor, could the niece spare time for her tears, for then her aunt's mourning was to be arranged, and Mrs. Monroe had long since learned that no one could suit her in the matter of dress but Sibyl.

When they came home from the grave, the sight of the open doors and windows, the strange faces and strange voices of her aunt's relations, made it all seem like some fearful dream. It was only when Fred arrived that night, weary and haggard, and she felt his arm around her waist, and his head bowed upon her shoulder, as he murmured, "O my father! my father!" that she fully realized the sorrowful change.

Mrs. Monroe expressed neither surprise nor pleasure at his arrival; she answered his greeting by raising her handkerchief to her eyes, and hastily joining her brother in another room. No one heeded them as they sat there in the gathering darkness, as aliens in the house where their fathers had lived for generations.

"Sibyl, dear Sibyl, can you tell me — do you know how he died?"

It was the one question which had been haunting her, which she had feared to put into words.

"No, Fred; let us hope the best."

As he turned his anxious face towards her, she noticed, for the first time, its hollow, haggard look. He saw her glance, and said, with an effort to smile, —

"Don't be frightened, Sibyl; I have neither slept nor eaten since I received your note. I shall be better to-morrow."

At the breakfast table, the next morning, they met Mr. Mason, Mrs. Monroe's brother, who was to remain with her a few days. No one seemed disposed to talk, and the meal passed in silence, until they arose from the table. Then Fred stated that he should be obliged to return the next morning, and would like to speak with his mother about the future arrangements of the family.

Sibyl had never before so fully realized the change which the past two or three years had wrought in the boy; for boy he still was, as one could see by the quivering of his lip; but this passed, and his calm manner impressed even the money-worshipping Mr. Mason, and kept back the rude rejoinder that rose to his lips.

"I have nothin' to arrange," said the widow; "I shall stay here until next spring. The law allows the widow her support for six months."

"The widow, and the children who are minors. It says nothing about hangers-on and the like!" added Mr. Mason, with a glance at Sibyl from his weasel-like eyes.

Fred stood with his hand upon Sibyl's shoulder, and he involuntarily drew her closer to him, as, darting a look of indignation at the man, he said, —

"I spoke to Mrs. Monroe, sir. I don't know as our family affairs are any thing to you!"

"I rather guess you'll find they be afore you get through, young man. I'm to be administrator."

At any other time, Fred would have been unable to suppress a hearty laugh at the pompous air with which the insignificant man made this announcement; as it was, he turned to the widow, without deigning him any further notice, and asked, —

"Did my father leave a will?"

In default of a handkerchief, Mrs. Monroe raised her apron to her eyes, as she said, —

"Thinkin' of property, and your poor father not cold in his grave, Fred Monroe! But it's nothin' more than I expected."

Fred colored deeply; nothing, probably, but the contempt for the people before him, kept back the tears. With a glance about the old familiar room, he said, —

"I tell you I must leave this place early to-morrow morning, and I want to know, before I go, what right I have to ever come back. I am neither mean nor selfish, but what is justly mine I intend to have; and what is more, I wholly object to this man as administrator. It is as well that we understand one another at the outset."

"You can object, and keep on objectin', if 'twill do you any good; but in the eye of the law you are a minor, and hain't got nothin' to say about it," said Mr. Mason. "My sister has chose me to help her settle the estate, and I

shan't see her wronged by nobody. If you say much, I'll get a guardian appointed over you, youngster, though you'll have precious little to guard, I'm thinkin'."

"Thank you. The law, I believe, allows a person of my age the privilege of choosing a guardian. I shall select Master Richard Fenn," said Fred, coolly. Then turning to his mother, he repeated, —

"Is there a will?"

"No. What should he make a will for when he owed more than he was worth?"

Fred looked incredulous, and Mr. Mason went on in his pompous way, —

"True enough; ef he'd lived a little longer he wouldn't a left his widow a cent. Come to take out her thirds, and a note for fifteen hundred dollars, which she holds agin him, there won't be enough left to pay the debts."

"Can I see that note?" said Fred, after a second's silence.

"Yes; I hain't any secrets. Your poor father wanted to do something for me; for he knew what a slave I'd ollers been. Show it to him, Bill."

It was a fair note of hand, dated a few months back, and there was no disputing its genuineness, and Fred gave it back without a comment.

"You see it's all straight. That are George is a leetle shaky, perhaps, but the captin's hand hain't been none of the stiddiest for some time, you know. He bore on pretty heavy latterly."

The hot blood crimsoned the son's cheek, and his eye flashed keenly, as he said, in a tone of suppressed rage, —

"Remember, you are speaking of my father, man — in the house that was his; ay, is his now."

"Well, you needn't flare up like such a tiger," replied the man, drawing off a step or two. "I don't want to hurt you, I'm sure. Ef you are a mind to stay here for the next six months, you can have your board, 'cause you're a minor. But the law knows nothin' about nieces. Ef the gal would like a place in the factory, I'll try and get her one. They say they want hands over to Rockville."

Sibyl would have spoken, but Fred was too quick.

"My cousin will not trouble you," he said, haughtily. "I can take care of her. Get your bonnet and shawl, Sibyl."

She obeyed, and with her hand in his, he led her over the old threshold. They walked rapidly, neither speaking nor looking back, until they reached the Hill pasture bars. Here Fred paused, and leaning his head on Sibyl's shoulder, wept like a child.

"I can't help it, Sibyl. Indeed I can't. I managed to keep it in down there, — I was so angry. But it's my old home, — my father's old home, — and it's all gone, — gone forever."

She did not bid him help it. She only folded closer the hand which she held, and struggled to keep back her own sobs, lest they should add to his grief.

It has been a windy October day. Masses of dark

bluish-black clouds drove athwart the sky, and cast long black shadows over the valley, and the yellow leaves that fluttered to their feet, or clung to her dress, sent a cold chill to Sibyl's heart. It seemed a gloomy close to a gloomy day; but suddenly the dark clouds parted, and the sun looked out clear and bright, lighting up the whole valley, as if by magic. Even the great cloud racks, sailing away to the east, were edged with gold, and against a background of pale apple green — a hue as delicate as it is evanescent in our autumn skies — stood out the grand old granite face. They both started to their feet, and looked at it in silence; and when they again turned to each other, there was a new light in their eyes — hope and trust shining through tears.

That night there was high council held in the family of old Master Fenn. Sibyl's head ran over schools, music, millinery; but old mother Mabel's voice finally silenced them all.

"Take time, children," she said, "take time. A night's rest will do none of us no harm, nor a month's either, to this poor child."

But there was no rest for one beneath that roof that night. Long after the others were asleep, and the old house quiet, Fred Monroe sat by his window, looking out into the night. The flitting clouds left scarcely a star visible; but he did not think of that. Amid the darkness and sorrow of that day, a new light had dawned upon his heart, a new hope gave value and dignity to life, and completed the change from boyhood to manhood. The dreary

shadows, the hopeless despondency, the listlessness and weariness that had sometimes clogged his footsteps, fled before it. How strange that he should never have been conscious of it before! How natural for him, in the first glad tumult of the discovery, to feel glad that she had no one to protect her, no one to lean upon but him! It was not selfishness, but simply the exclusive demand of his manhood that craved to be all and every thing to her. He would fold the secret in his heart until the hour came, and then —

The room grew too close for him — too narrow. He threw up the sash, and, leaning out, let the cool winds fan his cheek.

There was one other there who did not sleep. Not from any such hopes as filled the heart of Fred Monroe, but from sheer indignation at the conduct of Mrs. Monroe. This was Miss Silence; and presently her stealthy step was heard upon the stairs, and her whisper came clear and sharp through the key hole, —

“Shut down that window, and go to bed this minute, Fred Monroe! The night air will be the death of you! I believe the boy’s crazy.”

Fred closed the window and sought his bed; but the excitement of the day and the exposure to the night air were not without effect upon a constitution like his, and it was with a new feeling of anxiety that he marked the fresh blood stains upon his handkerchief, after a severe fit of coughing, next morning; but he carefully concealed them from all eyes.

His friends only noticed his haggard paleness, the hollow cheeks and sunken eyes; but the events of the previous day were deemed a sufficient excuse to satisfy even Miss Silence, and he bade them “good by” with words of cheer. It takes much to make a young heart despair in the light of a hope like his.

CHAPTER XX.

THERE is a great deal of genuine kindness in the world. Love and pity still keep their dwellings here, only we are so intent on seeing nothing but ourselves, that we fail to recognize them beneath the rough disguises they sometimes wear. To have looked upon the patched clothes and unshaven face of the man Culver, no one would have suspected they would have chosen such a tabernacle; but there were tears in his eyes when he came up to Master Richard's to offer Sibyl a home among his own children as long as she should choose to stay, striving to fashion his blunt tongue to such expressions as should make it seem that the obligation would be on their part; and even mother Mabel forgot to rebuke the oath which inadvertently slipped out when he spoke of Mrs. Monroe's treatment of the children.

"They're willing Fred shall have all the law'll allow him. They don't want to wrong him out of a cent. That's what she told me herself; for when I heard the children had quit, I went right up there, and let in to her. Jest as ef she hadn't been a plannin' for years to get the whole! Ef the law can't touch her, the tongue can, and I'll not spare her a bit. I know her."

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"It's little Polly Monroe'll care for the tongue as long as she has the money," remarked Miss Silence.

"I do'no that. She's human, and, I guess, a woman. She's ollers had a great notion of bein' respectable and pious in her way. Only last week she had the minister's folks invited up there, and this mornin' she told me 'twould learn Fred to put his trust in the Lord. Trust in the Lord! I guess ef she'd held on trustin' a little longer, she wouldn't have got that note for fifteen hundred. Every body knows the capp'n couldn't a been himself when he signed it."

The week brought other neighbors; among them Mrs. Hitchcock from the Corners, with her memories of little Dave, and her endless chat about the girls, and how glad they would be, as well as herself and *he*, to have Sibyl come and "stay a spell with them." Curiosity, no doubt, had its share in many of these visits; still Sibyl could not help feeling touched by the homely expressions of sympathy, especially when she thought of the neglect of her own friends.

Immediately after the death of her uncle, she wrote to her parents, and pleaded for permission to join them; and old Master Richard, in a few earnest words to his old pupil, seconded her request.

"She was even as a child to them," he said; "but he could not be so selfish as to insist upon retaining her. He knew how they must long to see her; and besides, he was getting old, — Arthur must know that, — life was precarious,

and he could not bear the thought of her being left alone. She is a quiet bird, and needs the shelter of your arms, Arthur."

Had either he or Sibyl been capable of looking into Arthur Monroe's heart when he opened those letters, and seeing how their words pierced through the crust under which loss of self-respect and its consequent vices had buried it, stirring the stagnant fountains of memory and tenderness for his child and brother, until he bowed his head upon his hands and wept bitter, self-accusing tears, they would have wept in sympathy; but far more sorrowfully, when, unable longer to bear these self-reproaches, he, coward-like, shrunk from himself, and sought forgetfulness in what had now become to him a common resort — the gaming table; far more hopelessly, had they seen the moody air with which he answered Elsie's question some hours later, when, looking up from the letters he had thrown into her lap, she asked what he purposed to do.

"Nothing. What sort of a shelter would this place be?" and he glanced with a look of disgust around the slovenly, ill-arranged apartment. "What could we do for her? What *have* we done for Willie?"

"I'm sure I have done all for him that I possibly could. I have deprived myself willingly of every thing to give him pleasure, poor boy. Last night he took all the money I had remaining after paying Pauline. I am worried to death about him, Arthur," said the mother, burying her worn, anxious face in a richly embroidered handkerchief,

to conceal the tears which she had long since learned were powerless with her husband.

Monroe seemed moved.

"Has he not been in since last night, Elsie?"

"No."

The father paced the narrow room in silence. He had no face to reproach the mother with her ruinous indulgence towards the boy; he felt too keenly still his own error in giving him up thus wholly to her influence, and his heart smote him as he looked at the bowed and trembling figure of his wife.

"I will look for him, Elsie," he said, kindly. "I presume I can find him without much trouble. Is he often out thus?"

It was a sad question, revealing as it did the utter estrangement between the husband and wife, and the latter felt it. Lifting her face, she answered, —

"Not until of late. If you find him, don't speak harshly to him, Arthur. He is so young, and youth must have its follies, you know. I have sometimes thought of late," she went on, encouraged by his evident interest and kindly expression, "that if we could only go to some quiet place where there would be fewer temptations for him, where you could be more with us, it would be better for us all."

"Would you be willing to live at Eltham, Elsie?"

"Yes, any where, if I could but keep Willie; but I am afraid he would never be contented to stay there."

"You are right; he would be no more contented than you or I. It is idle deceiving ourselves, Elsie. We cannot recall the past, nor re-create ourselves, if we would," he said, sadly. "But Sibyl — have you any wish to introduce her to our *menage*?"

"I don't know. Pauline is so heedless; and Sibyl, as a child, was very helpful. She always seemed to know just what one wanted. I thought she might help; but I don't see where we could put her, we are so crowded now; and I suppose we can't take more rooms until your business is better," said the mother, with a sigh.

Monroe sighed too. Perhaps he was thinking of the room in his father's house; for he said, as he took his hat and gloves, —

"No; and for my part, I would much rather that my daughter should be a servant in the house of Richard Fenn all her days, than to be for one week exposed to what she would necessarily meet here."

And thus they decided to leave Sibyl to herself, ignoring all the yearning tenderness of her nature which impelled her to reach out her hands towards them, forgetful that, as week after week and month after month passed by, she was waiting, watching, praying for some word of affection, or even recognition, wearying herself with conjectures about missing letters, anxious forebodings of illness or death, until her heart grew faint and her brain weary.

She knew that her old friends were sincere when they said that she "was as welcome as the day" to share their

home, but the experience of the past years had taught her the value of self-dependence, and she determined, if she did not join her parents, to become a teacher.

So there were lessons that winter — old studies reviewed under the eye of Master Richard; and music lessons twice a week, under the instructions of the minister's niece, Miss Flora Hale; and diligent practice in drawing.

Every beautiful location about the straggling old town found a place in her portfolio, or upon the walls of the old house; for Master Fenn was skilled in the manufacture of all sorts of quaint frames, and these scenes of his boyish feats looked out from settings of mosses and acorns, oak leaves and feathery grass.

Indeed, as Miss Silence observed, "between the music and the pictures, they had summer there all the while."

Then there were Fred's letters, looking forward to the future, so rich in promise, hopeful, cheerful, wanting in nothing but assurances of his own health — a subject upon which he seldom touched.

Sibyl had often spoken to her old friend of her picture, which had been left in Judge Simmons's care; and one afternoon, on returning from a long walk to her music teacher's, she was delighted to find it hanging upon the wall in Master Richard's den.

Some weeks later, when the warm breath of spring flushed the hills and made the fresh air like balm, she sat gazing at this picture, and trying to trace the resemblance between the serene, patient, womanly face of Mary's

mother, and that of old mother Mabel, who was seated by the window where the sinking sun poured a flood of golden light upon her silver hair and unwinking eyes. Taking up her pencils, she began to sketch the old lady as she sat there; and so entirely did she become absorbed in her work, that she did not notice the footsteps approaching the threshold, until a sudden movement of the sitter, and her "Hark! there comes Dick, and somebody with him!" aroused her.

Before she could gather up her scattered papers and lay them aside, the old man had entered, followed by a gentleman whom he introduced as Mr. Ernest Wentworth.

Slightly bowing, the gentleman passed on to the farther end of the room to speak to mother Mabel, while Master Fenn looked at the sketch.

She had not gone beyond a mere outline; but Master Richard was delighted with its truthfulness, and he called to his friend, saying,—

"I promised you some music, Ernest; but first come and look at this sketch. Isn't it admirable?" he added, as the gentleman came to his side. "Sit still a moment, mother—just as you are."

"It is certainly a very striking outline," said Mr. Wentworth, glancing from the sketch to the original. "If it is as carefully finished as— But what is this?"

He had changed his position to get a better light, and the movement had brought him face to face with the Mater Dolorosa.

"Something new—and—yet I have surely seen this picture before. I remember that atmosphere, so much better than is usually found in the old copies. May I ask where you obtained it?"

"It belongs to my young friend here," said the old man, with a curious smile.

"Indeed!"

He turned the picture, so that the full light which now rested upon it brought out his own features more distinctly; and Sibyl's recollection, quicker than his, recognized him at once. The face was changed—it was older—more thoughtful—a trifle sterner, but the same into which she had looked up on that sorrowful morning which had left her homeless. She was about to speak, but he forestalled her.

"I remember now," he said. "It was at the house of that——"

Old Richard Fenn's grasp upon Sibyl's arm was like a vice, as he suddenly drew her forward, and said hastily,—

"Excuse me, Mr. Wentworth, but I forgot to say that my young friend here, the owner of the picture, is Arthur Monroe's daughter."

The gentleman bowed haughtily, and after a few moments of embarrassment, at least on the part of Sibyl and her old friend, he took his hat to go.

"Stay, Ernest—you have forgotten the music!" said Master Fenn. "Sibyl, child, will you play?"

She sat down to the organ, and took the first piece of

music that lay before her, which happened to be Schubert's "Thou art the Rest."

The inspiration of the moment was more to the young singer than art or culture, for she was moved almost to tears by the recollections which Mr. Wentworth's presence recalled; all the sorrow and loneliness of that time were present with her, and she sang as if there were, indeed, no rest for her save with the all-perfect Father.

The gentlemen listened intently, and in the midst of the deep, appreciative silence that followed the performance, so much more grateful to the true artist than loud-voiced praise, she glided from the room.

"How came she here?" suddenly asked Mr. Wentworth, rousing himself. "I thought the family went abroad."

"They did — all but this one. She remained here with her uncle until his death."

"And since with you?"

The old man bowed.

"I understand now — she is the same girl, and that is the same picture;" and sitting down, he related the accident which had occurred on the day of Elsie's flight.

"I have heard something of this before," said Master Richard. "Other creditors were less honorable, however; they would not admit the child's claim to the picture, and Jim Hungerford, having become interested in Sibyl, paid for it a large price. He said he had a contempt for such trash, but he wouldn't have the girl wronged."

"Hungerford died some time ago, I think."

"Yes."

"He had the reputation of being rich. I wonder how he disposed of his property."

"There are various rumors about," returned the old man, smiling. "Some say that he gave it all to me; but Jim was far too wise a man to do that."

Mr. Wentworth started to his feet, and grasped Master Richard's hand, saying, —

"Ay, I see it all now. He did do it, and it was his property that you transferred to me. You gave it all up. Forgive me, Master Richard — that I have been too blind, too selfish, too much occupied to see all this before. It is so, and that clause about the heir's majority was a simple *ruse* — was it not?" he added, seeing the old man's embarrassed look.

"I told you to ask no questions, Ernest."

An hour after the departure of Mr. Wentworth, while the old man still sat alone in his room, busy at work on some pet job, Sibyl again stood at his side. He began to explain to her something about the lens for a telescope which he was preparing; but she put it aside, and said, gravely, —

"Dear Master Richard, will you tell me what connection there was between papa and this Mr. Wentworth?"

"Some business relations, I believe. Why?"

"Because I must know all about it. You will tell me, Master Fenn? Is not he the person whom papa meant

when he said he had wronged some one? You know—I told you about the letter.”

“He is—or rather his father was. But you cannot change this, my child—it will not add to your happiness to talk about it;” and he would have returned to his hobby, but she was not to be put off.

“Perhaps not,” she said, sadly, seating herself by his side; “but I must know all.”

Thinking it might, indeed, be best to gratify her, the old man told as briefly as he could, and as kindly as his strong sense of right would permit, the story of her father’s crime.

She sat with drooped eyelids and folded hands for some moments after he ceased to speak. At length she said,—

“Thank you, Master Fenn. It is as I thought—and this gentleman—he dislikes me for my father’s sake?”

“What makes you think so, child? He said nothing of the kind.”

“No; but I felt it even when I was singing,” she returned, with a slight shiver.

“O, that is nonsense, child. You wrong him,” said Master Fenn, earnestly. “Of what are you thinking?” he asked, a few moments after, as he turned and saw her still in the same attitude.

“Of some means to pay this money back. I would almost be willing to become a slave to do it.”

CHAPTER XXI.

Two weeks or so after Mr. Wentworth’s call, a carriage drove up to Master Fenn’s door, and a tall woman, dressed in deep mourning, alighted.

“Gracious goodness! if there isn’t old Mrs. Wentworth comin’ here!” exclaimed Miss Silence. “What’s going to happen now? Brother Dick, put up those books there; Sibyl, there are some threads on the carpet by your feet;” and the good woman bustled about, settling the borders to mother Mabel’s cap, and sweeping her apron across the dustless tables.

Brother Dick met the lady at the door, and ushered her into the room. Sibyl was introduced to her; but she only bestowed upon her a slight bow, and entered into conversation with Miss Silence and mother Mabel, whom she greeted with a great deal of stately, if not kindly courtesy.

The resemblance between the mother and son was very striking. It was a grand face—the features large and well defined, but dark and severe, as if the fire of life had burned out, and left there nought but shadows.

Even her deep mourning garments seemed to Sibyl to have caught their gloom from her; and so intent was she

upon the face and figure, that she started and trembled, as if caught in the commission of some crime, when, turning the great dark eyes upon her, and deliberately scanning her from head to foot, the lady turned to Master Fenn, and said, —

"My son Ernest informed me that there was a young person staying with you whom I might possibly secure as governess to my grand-daughter. Is this the person?" with another glance at Sibyl.

"I presume it is," replied the old man, with a rather puzzled look. "This is Arthur Monroe's daughter Sibyl."

"I am aware of her parentage," said the lady, in that same cold, measured tone; we set aside that. Can you recommend her as a suitable person?"

"None more so, Mrs. Wentworth, both as to character and acquirements. She is a very dear child to us;" and the old man's eye rested fondly upon the embarrassed face of Sibyl.

"Then I am satisfied. Neither my son nor myself need any recommendation save the word of Master Richard Fenn. We will, if you please, arrange the terms."

"But the child must decide for herself. What do you say, Sibyl? Would you prefer this situation to a district school?" asked Master Fenn, anxiously.

"May I know just what will be required of me?" said Sibyl, for the first time confronting the lady.

"You will be expected to teach English and music thoroughly, and take care of your own room and Miss Winnie's.

Besides, it may be as well to add, that I like quiet, and do not approve of much company."

"I have no friends save these and one other," said Sibyl, sadly. "May I know the terms?"

"Two hundred per year, and board."

"I accept them, ma'am. When shall my labors commence?"

The lady seemed pleased. "Next Monday," she said; "you are prompt, Miss Monroe; I like that. Let me find that you are also punctual."

"My patience!" exclaimed Miss Silence, watching the lady down the walk, escorted by Master Richard. "I wouldn't be Madam Wentworth, with all her grandeur, for considerable. She's jest like a great black cloud. I wonder if the wind never blows up a light streak in her any where. No wonder Ernest looks so proud sometimes. Sibyl, they'll freeze you to death between them. You'll have to run home pretty often to warm your hands in mother's apron."

"That's the worst of it, being four miles off. But I am used to walking, you know. I wish I had asked her how often I may come home."

"Don't you think you were a little hasty in your decision, child?" said Master Richard, looking up from his book an hour or so later. "I had hardly thought the matter over when you decided."

Sibyl held out to him a drawing over which she had been poring for some time. It was her childish conception of the mountaineer of the torrent; and pointing to it, she said, —

"I used to think the mountaineer a happy man because he was permitted to bear that burden. Shall I shrink from mine now? If I do my duty by this child, may they not in time come to think less hardly of me and mine?"

"Yes, indeed they must!" said the old man. "They cannot help loving you, and you will be a blessing to them."

Sibyl shook her head. "I think they can be just, and that is all I have a right to expect."

She did not disappoint her patroness. The sun was scarcely up on Monday morning, when, with the blessing of mother Mabel and Miss Silence warming her heart, she started with Master Richard for her new home. Her old friend seemed in no mood to talk, and they drove along in silence, until leaving the Hartford turnpike, they rounded a spur of the hills which stretched out on their left, and entered a long, winding valley, traversed by a rapid stream. The road still kept the level, close at the foot of the hills, sometimes elbowed quite beneath the rocks by the capricious stream, which was hedged from sight by a thick growth of hemlocks, birches, and sycamores; but its babble still proclaimed its whereabouts, and now and then Sibyl caught a glimpse of the sparkling waters, as they flashed along over their rocky bed. It was a perfect Undine in its movements, now babbling saucily close beneath their carriage wheels, then suddenly running off in a huff, and hiding behind clumps of willows and witch-hazels; and Sibyl could scarcely believe it to be the same stream that swept with such a quiet flow through her uncle's meadows a few miles below.

After crossing a rustic bridge, and rounding another elbow of the hills, Master Fenn drew in his reins, and pointed out the village, stretching along both banks of the river, — whose waters lay quiet enough there, shut in by the massive dams, — or nestled upon the declivities of the hills, which, in some places, swept so close to the stream as to be scarce the space of an arrow's flight apart. A great portion of the houses still lay beneath the shadows; but the wooded hill tops, the factories, with their gilded domes, and the slender church spire, glittered and gleamed in the morning light like burnished gold.

Sibyl felt herself grown strong. There was something within her in unison with that clear, invigorating atmosphere, and her soul went out in silent thanksgiving to God that he had cast her lot amid so much beauty, and earnest aspirations that she might become an instrument of blessing to the inmates of her new home.

Therefore, when Master Richard pointed out Mr. Wentworth's cottage, near the centre of the place, and looked in her face, half expecting to see there anxiety and regret, he met only quiet resolution, and her look, quite as much as the words with which she answered his mute inquiry, reassured him.

"Not so," she said, with a smile. "I am grateful for a situation so much to my taste, and I feel that I shall succeed."

"Then you cannot fail of being happy," returned the old man. "There is much that is noble — even good — in the

characters of your employers, Sibyl," he added, after a pause; "but there is a blight over it all — the mildew of egotism and the pride of human wisdom which insists upon controlling its way, ignoring the fact that God and man must ever be co-workers. You must try to overcome this, child."

"I! You forget who I am, Master Fenn, and what relation I bear to these people."

"No, indeed; and this may be a part of your mission here, child. Your old friend, the mountaineer, was not allowed to pick and choose, I think."

Sibyl felt rather nervous when she entered the parlor and stood before her employers for the first time.

Mrs. Wentworth's greeting was courteous, though cold; the son's respectfully polite, as was due the governess of his daughter; while both treated her old friend with affectionate cordiality.

"You are early, Miss Monroe," remarked Mr. Wentworth, turning from an animated conversation with Master Richard, to where Sibyl sat demurely, shadowed by the black garments of his mother. "Your little pupil has not breakfasted yet, I think. Mother, shall I not tell Janet to bring in the child?"

"Winnie is not accustomed to come into the parlor until after she has breakfasted, and there is no reason why we should infringe the rule. Miss Monroe will soon see her in the room appropriated to their use; in the mean time she may like to see her own room."

The governess bowed, and the lady rang the bell and

ordered the servant to show "Miss Sibyl Monroe the east chamber."

Sibyl followed the servant. Her trunk and boxes, she found, had already preceded her; and sitting down as the door closed behind the servant, she looked around the room with a strange feeling. The whole change had been so sudden, it was as if some resistless but unseen will, over which she had no control, had placed her there.

She wondered if she was expected to return to the parlor — if she was not to say "good by" to Master Richard; and even while she wondered, she caught a glimpse of her old friend passing up the gravel walk, accompanied by Mr. Wentworth, and presently after she saw them draw off in the direction of the factory.

For a moment she felt hardly towards him. She had not thought he could leave her thus, without a single word; and she yielded to the feeling of desertion that overcame her. Once more she was a stranger in a strange place, and she was struggling against the weakness that came with this thought, when she heard the tread of little feet on the matting in the hall, and a moment after, the door, which had been left ajar by Janet, was slowly pushed back, and a child's face showed itself in the opening.

She did not speak or offer to come in, and Sibyl, after waiting a second for some demonstration on her part, held out her arms.

The little girl looked timidly back into the hall, made a step or two inside of the door, then took another long look

at Sibyl, and sprang into the outstretched arms. She flung one little arm about her neck, whispering as she did so, —

"I could not wait any longer. I wanted to see you so much! Please don't tell grandmamma."

"Why not, my dear?" asked Sibyl, as she settled the child on her knee.

"Because she would say it was not proper," was the reply.

She was wholly unlike her father or grandmother; a fair-faced, blue-eyed child, with flossy, flaxen hair, and an air of timidity quite different from the usual self-willed manner of a petted, only child.

But her reply, coupled to Sibyl's knowledge of her grandmother's character, explained this, while it made her somewhat uncertain as to the best course to pursue, in order not to offend the old lady, and yet mark to the child her sense of the wrong of deception.

She spoke a few gentle, welcoming words to her, then said, —

"Did your grandmother forbid your coming to see me, Winnie?"

"No; I came without asking. She would, if I had asked; for every day, after I have bidden her good morning, I have to walk or play in the garden until I have my breakfast. Grandmother says I must go nowhere else."

"I think she will excuse you this time. I shall ask her to. Let us go down and see."

The child hung back. At last she put her hand in

Sibyl's; but it was evident, from her slow, lingering step, that the move was a distasteful one, and that her confidence in her new friend was somewhat shaken.

Sibyl entered the parlor, and, leading her up to Mrs. Wentworth, said, —

"Your little granddaughter fears she has done wrong in coming to speak to me without your consent, and I have promised her to beg you to pardon her this time."

"An unwise beginning, Miss Monroe; but as you are a stranger, ignorant of our rules, it may be best to overlook it for this once." Then turning her strong eye on Winnie, she added, pointing to a small manuscript book which lay on the table beside her, —

"If I do not put down a mark against you this time it is not because you do not deserve it; only because Miss Monroe has asked it. Do you understand, child?"

"Yes, ma'am."

The grandmother's tone, though quick and emphatic, was not unkind; at least, it did not seem to Sibyl that she meant it to be unkind; but there was such a rigid inflexibility about it, that her heart ached at the thought of the cold, barren life the child must have hitherto lived.

They did not understand children — neither the father nor the grandmother. They supplied little Winnie with every thing necessary to health and physical well being, but withheld that without which childish life is so sad — warm, loving sympathy. Not because they did not hold her very precious, but the grandmother's heart could admit of no

plurality of idols — her son was all in all to her; and, as we have already hinted, the son had not yet been able to put the bitter memories connected with her mother far enough away, to make her to him all she should be; he was, as yet, too intent upon his own wounds to heed those he was inflicting upon his child.

Sibyl's own experience helped her to an understanding of all this. In her the child found a loving, appreciating response to every childish thought and feeling. A word or a look from her soon came to have more influence in controlling her somewhat peculiar temper, than all her grandmother's marks of discredit, even if at the end of the week there rose before her the prospect of imprisonment in the garret, and a diet of bread and water.

Their daily walks sometimes led them among the factories; and as Sibyl watched the working of the mighty mechanical power there, — so prompt, unerring, unwearied, and resistless, — she was led to query whether the same power did not extend to the lives of her employers, and regulate all their domestic life. There was the same silent, unyielding promptitude, which conceived of no delay; the same exacting regularity, which admitted of no change; the same iron force, which recognized neither weakness nor imperfection, nor even the shortcomings of childhood.

The whole atmosphere of the house was silent, cold, and pale. One would have supposed that the quiet, thoughtful-eyed little governess, whose light step was scarcely heard in those dim parlors, would have grown colder and paler

still in such a chilly place, like some miserable plant, that, defrauded of air and light, merely lives on, putting forth neither flowers nor fruit.

Had the warmth within her heart been merely a reflected, uncertain light, it might have been so; but *that* had been kindled at the great centre of light, and the changing winds which had driven her into this haven only fanned it to a brighter flame.

We forget that it is not amid the calm, still, peaceful waters that the little coral insect — that busy artificer — rears its gardens and cities of weird loveliness, but amid the terrible breakers. Silently, quietly, patiently it struggles against the mighty element, and the apparently insignificant polypus, so minute that a child's foot might crush a million, conquers at last, by the force of its living energy, the terrible might of the sea, sustaining, —

“Year upon year, the shock
Of cataract seas that snap
The three-deckers' oaken spine
Athwart the ledges of rock!”

Slowly her patient cheerfulness interfused a warmth into the atmosphere around her. Mrs. Wentworth had days, sometimes weeks, of feeble health; and although she never complained, and never asked a favor, Sibyl soon found out many little ways of serving her without coming in contact with her prejudices, until, finally, her presence in the parlor, especially evenings, became almost indispensable.

The lady did not care much for books, but she liked the

music of Sibyl's voice; the house was well supplied with the periodical literature of the day, and it soon became quite a matter of indifference to Sibyl, when engaged in an article of Wilson, or Sydney Smith, whether her auditor was awake or asleep. But she sometimes had another listener; as the evenings grew long and cool, Mr. Wentworth fell into the habit of lingering over the parlor fire long after the hour usually devoted to his mother; and upon such occasions Sibyl would have suspended her reading, but Mrs. Wentworth's imperative "Go on; my son Ernest will not mind you, Miss Monroe," and his quiet "Don't let me disturb you," left her no choice.

But he did "mind" her; or, at least, what she read; for not unfrequently the book or newspaper which he held was suddenly laid aside, and he would startle her by some keen criticism, or suggestive remark, that showed he had been a close and earnest listener.

Sometimes these remarks took the form of a query; and even before she was aware of it, Sibyl would find herself drawn into an argument, if their conversations could be called such, where on one side there was the learning and logic, the practised skill of the ready debater, and on the other nothing but woman's intuitive perception of the right, and an earnest love of the truth. He seemed to take a kind of pleasure in drawing out her opinions upon all sorts of subjects, though they seldom thought alike; and he, in the pride of his intellect, smiled inwardly, not unfrequently openly, at the logic which ended, when pushed to the utter-

most, in the simple but firm "I know," of what was to him a mere blind mysticism. Yet this asseveration often recurred to him, and sometimes he could not help asking himself whether the mysticism which trusted all to faith, was not better than the atheism that doubted all things. Perhaps it was better that she could not argue, for men like him are seldom converted by mere logic.

But if he could not shake her faith, he sometimes succeeded in making her dissatisfied with herself; sad because she could not give a better reason for her belief; but when she spoke of this to old Master Fenn, he only smiled quietly, as he said, —

"Don't trouble yourself about words, Sibyl. It may be, as Ernest says, that all religious experience either ends in mysticism or atheism; but it does not follow we are to give up in despair. An earnest Christian life is of far more value than all the systems of philosophy and theology that ever puzzled the brains of men — poor, dry husks, at best. Ernest has had enough of such fodder; what he needs is life — a life informed with the spirit of Him who said, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven, and all the rest shall be added unto you.'"

"But is it right for me to teach his child things which he professes to disbelieve?"

"Ask him," was the old man's reply.

She did ask him; and he, after hesitating a moment, with a kind of puzzled air, — for the question was wholly unexpected, — pointed to a volume of *Madame Guyon's Life*,

which he had just laid down with an acute but somewhat sarcastic criticism, and said, —

"I would rather my daughter should be a Guyon than a De Stael. Women must have something to occupy them, and to me psalm-singing is preferable to politics."

"Unfortunately, sir, there are some who have no gifts for either. Is there no alternative, no other sphere in which they may be useful and honorable?"

Sibyl spoke with warmth, and he noticed her flushed cheek as he replied, —

"Pardon me, Miss Monroe. I have spoken hastily, unjustly. I know that there are such — women who neither wear their womanhood as a weakness of which they are ashamed, nor a penance from which they would gladly be absolved; who are neither anxious to be men nor angels, but simply women; and I am grateful for the knowledge. Teach my daughter what you will; I can trust you, fully."

CHAPTER XXII.

FRED MONROE had reached his majority; he was twenty-one; and the Saturday which followed this important event, when he, and Sibyl, and little Winnie, all met at Master Fenn's, was one of those days never to be forgotten. Very rich they were with their plans and projects, their laughter and merry jokes; and their merriment only gathered force when grandmother Mabel occasionally reproved them all, but especially Silence and Dick, for being "such children."

Fred was to be Mr. Wentworth's foreman. Did not Sibyl know it — and she living in the same house?

She did not know it, but the prospect was not less pleasant; they should often see each other, and they should enjoy *that* so much. Sibyl quite forgot Mrs. Wentworth's stipulation of "no company;" indeed, she had almost forgotten that she was to return to Rockville that night, when she was reminded of it by the appearance of Mr. Wentworth himself at the door. He wanted "to see Monroe," he said, "and had therefore driven down for them himself."

She was surprised to see how easily he took the tone of the company; it seemed so odd to see him sitting there, talking so familiarly with mother Mabel and Miss Silence

about neighborhood affairs — deaths, funerals, marriages, and the like. It was a new phase of his character to her, and even little Winnie felt it; for when, in reply to some remark of grandmother Fenn about her, he drew her to him, and lifted her to his knee, — a thing which Sibyl never saw him do before, — she did not slide away, but sat there eating a piece of cake, as if it were the most natural place in the world.

Ay, there is no spell like simple love — kind words and glances — to exorcise the demon of unrest. It was this element — the weakness of love and tears, which Ernest Wentworth so much despised — that he needed most.

Once he had said to Winnie, when moved by some childish grief, —

“You must learn self-control, of all things, child. We must have none of this; it is weakness. Miss Monroe must teach you to overcome it. She has doubtless found, by this time, that there is nothing on earth worth a tear.”

“You mistake,” Sibyl had said; “I should be very sorry indeed to have learned such a lesson.”

“Indeed!” said Ernest, looking up, in some surprise; “why so?”

“Because the experience which could lead to such a result must be a very sad one, or sadly misapprehended.”

He looked at her a moment, thoughtfully, as she sat bending over his child, whom she had taken upon her knee, and was trying to soothe.

“It may be you are right,” he said, at length; “but I

think I have the verdict of experience — certainly of philosophy — on my side.”

“And I have that of humanity — ay, of Christianity — on mine; the example of one before the light of whose life and teachings all philosophers grow dim!” and opening a Bible that lay upon the table, she pointed to that brief record by which, for so many, many centuries, suffering, sorrowing humanity has claimed fellowship with God — “Jesus wept.”

Perhaps he had taken the lesson home.

Fred’s presence in Rockville was indeed a great happiness to Sibyl. Not that they spent much time together, for his duties occupied most of his time, and the pleasure of seeing her at the house was dampened by the presence of Mrs. Wentworth, whose *hauteur* and coldness always seemed to freeze him.

But it was pleasant for her to look over to the factories, and know he was there; pleasant to look up, as Winnie and she passed the windows, and catch his ready bow and happy smile; to have him join them sometimes upon Saturday afternoons; to walk back and forth to church with him; but pleasantest of all, the Sundays they sometimes spent together at Master Fenn’s, walking to church with the old man, and making long *détours* on their way home, to visit the resorts of their childhood.

The old Monroe farm had been sold — sold to pay the debts, Mrs. Polly had said, and she had removed to her brother’s. They did not care to enter there, to meet strange faces,

but they seldom returned to their weekly duties without a glimpse of the great granite face; and sometimes they looked in at Culver's, where, since Amanda had learned a trade, and spent most of her time from home, the old chaos reigned triumphant.

On one of these occasions, they found Amanda at home. She was delighted to see them, and yet evidently ashamed that there was scarcely a chair empty, that she could offer them a seat.

Sibyl soon drew her without the doors, and while Fred and Mr. Culver loitered behind, talking over the changes at the old place, she drew from her an avowal of the truth of a rumor which had recently reached her — that Amanda was about to marry a wealthy, but peevish, ill-tempered old man, much older than her own father.

At first, the girl, while she acknowledged the truth, seemed inclined to make fun of the whole affair; for when Sibyl urged that she could not love this person, she laughed heartily at the idea of any one's loving old John Stephens, but said that he was rich; had a nice, new house; had bought a horse and carriage recently, on purpose to please her; and went on with a ludicrous description of how she should manage the house, and the horse, and the man, of whom she evidently thought least.

But her gayety seemed rather forced, and when Sibyl persisted in showing her the wrong of such a proceeding, she said, impatiently, —

“Pshaw, Sibyl! that's all nonsense. Aunt Sarah says

after a little while it makes no difference who a woman marries, so long as it is somebody who can support her handsomely; and as to its being wrong, every body does it. Why, there's Maria Hollis — you know Deacon Hollis's Maria — only last week she married Mr. Haverstraw. He's thirty years older than she, and a Universalist at that — and she a church member! But he's rich, and every body says that it's doing well for Maria.”

“Not every body, for I don't, Amanda. I can't believe that it does not make a difference to a woman whom she marries, and I think you and Maria will both find out your mistake, in time. Then you are so lively, so fond of society, of dancing, and all sorts of amusements! What will you do with that old man? He cannot go out with you, and you will find that you cannot manage him as easily as you think. There can be nothing but discord in such a home, Amanda.”

Amanda did not reply at once. She broke a spray of goldenrod from a feathery stalk of that plant near by, for they had paused by a gateway, and busied herself in picking it to pieces; and when she looked up, her round, black eyes, usually so sharp and bold, were full of tears.

“I don't know what to do, Sibyl,” she said, slowly. “If I really thought it would be as you say — But then it can't be worse than it is at home. You know how that is — noise, and confusion, and dirt; it ain't of no use to try to help it; I'm tired of that. Sometimes I stay at home a whole week, and get the house decent; but when I come

home the next Saturday night, tired to death with dragging round from house to house, and sewing all the week, it's just as bad as ever. Then there are so many of us—so many to want, and so little to get with—that it sometimes seems as if I might help the others by going. At least, they would have more room, and one's room is sometimes better than one's company."

Sibyl sighed, for she knew that there was much truth in what the girl said; yet she felt convinced that the contemplated change could only end in worse misery, and she was about to urge this point again, when the girl started, and dashing the drops from her eyes, said, —

"See! here come father and Fred; don't say any thing about it before them."

When Sibyl next met her, she was the wife of John Stephens — had escaped from one discordant, over-crowded home, to entail the same or a worse misery upon herself and others.

"Why did they marry thus?" was the query put to a lady who was bewailing the unhappy domestic relations of some friends of hers.

"Because they were the eldest of a large family, where the means were small, and the wants many, and those behind them crowded," was the reply.

And thus we have wives who disgrace their womanhood by the assertion that it makes no difference to whom they give themselves, so long as they get a good bargain; others, who, in the bloom of youth, fall a prey to the demon *hys-*

teria, or grow morbid over some gloomy religious creed, making of life one long, dreary penance, rather than a glorious march, whose battles are best fought to the music of sweet household songs, whose wayside God himself has edged with the flames of love and joy.

But Sibyl had little time to sorrow over Amanda. Mrs. Wentworth's brother's widow, with her daughter, Miss Agnes Drummond, arrived there on a visit, with the intention of taking a house in the village, should the air not prove too bracing for the elder lady's health. Miss Agnes was a beauty and a wit, and Sibyl was surprised at the cool *nonchalance* with which she set aside such of Mrs. Wentworth's regulations as did not suit her convenience, particularly at the easy, assured manner with which she commanded Mr. Wentworth's attentions, as well as the readiness with which he replied to her gay sallies and repartees; and yet she was rather glad than otherwise that he never took that tone towards her.

She thought to confine herself to her own rooms more; as, at the mother's suggestion, Miss Agnes relieved her of the task of reading to Mrs. Wentworth; but she soon found this was not to be. Miss Agnes might get weary; or, as she was fond of singing, and quite a brilliant pianist, as far as mere execution went, she might require Sibyl's *alto* to relieve her powerful and richly cultured *soprano*, and it may have been possible that the young lady was not unmindful of the fine foil which Sibyl's slender figure and pale face made for her rich and glowing style of beauty.

It might be that she fancied her cousin. Ernest thought so too, when she caught, as she sometimes did, his eye fixed earnestly upon them. She was not unkind to Sibyl — on the contrary, she always praised her — praised her drawing, her singing, her playing, but always in that tone of pitying condescension which in some moods is so much harder to bear than the severest censure.

And Sibyl's mood was none of the happiest just then. She seldom saw Fred since the Drummonds came. Not that he failed to call as usual, but she was almost always occupied; and this unusual tax upon her time, which their presence imposed, together with the wet autumn weather, prevented her extending her walks with Winnie beyond the garden. Every thing tended to make her feel restless and dissatisfied with herself; and loss of self-confidence is always such a miserable feeling.

"Our little friend looks more than usually pale and dispirited to-night, cousin," said Miss Drummond, one evening. "If it were not for that knot of rose-colored ribbon which she wears, she would be as neutral in tint as her gray merino dress. I do wish she would be a little more animated; melancholy people distress me."

"Miss Monroe is usually quite the reverse of that," returned the gentleman, looking up from his book with a glance at Sibyl. "I have often had occasion to admire her unvarying cheerfulness. I think she cannot be well to-night."

"Perhaps she is suffering from some hidden grief,"

said the lady, lightly running her fingers over the keys of the piano, at which she was sitting — "some quarrel with her lover — that interesting looking *employe* of yours who calls here occasionally."

"O, Monroe — he is her cousin!" and the gentleman again took up his book.

The lady laughed.

"Not within the forbidden degree, I sincerely trust, for her sake, poor thing!"

He did not reply, and Miss Agnes turned again to the instrument, and struck into one of Strauss's brilliant waltzes. The movement had the anticipated effect — the book was laid aside, and her cousin remained near her a pleased listener, while she gave him piece after piece of fashionable music with a brilliancy of execution that seemed to Sibyl like magic. As she turned from the instrument with a yawn, Mr. Wentworth crossed the room to the table where the governess usually chose her seat, a little aside from the rest, and asked, —

"Are you ill, Sibyl?"

It was the first time that any one in the house had ever addressed her by that name, and the tears that had been stirred by the music sprang to her eyes.

He assumed not to see them, but went on in the same low tone.

"I was about to ask a favor. It is, if you feel able, that you should play for me, once more, 'Thou art the Rest.' It will be particularly grateful after the brilliant

compositions with which Miss Drummond has treated us."

Seating herself at the piano, Sibyl sang her old favorite, and, as usual, found comfort in the act. Mrs. and Miss Drummond were loud in their praise, but Mr. Wentworth's simple "I thank you" overtopped them all, and lingered longest in her heart.

Perhaps that gentleman really felt then the need of some rest beside that which the world gives; for, long after the family had separated for the night, he continued to walk his room in deep thought. At length he seated himself at the table, and with a half smile on his lip, as if in scorn of himself, he drew a sheet of paper to him, and seizing a pen, wrote rapidly.

"It must be so," he muttered, as he folded the letter. "It's well to know it now! What fools men are!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

"SIBYL, my child."

She was crossing the hall when she caught the words, and sprang forward to meet Master Richard Fenn, who had just entered, and stood there, shaking the snow from the capes of his old-fashioned great coat. She was about to lead him to the parlor, where the family were gathered; but he checked her, saying, —

"Take me to your school room, Sibyl. I do not care to see Mrs. Wentworth just now."

She gave one glance at his face; there was a something there that chilled her gladness, and leading him to the room, she sat down beside him, saying, —

"You have something sad to tell me, Master Fenn. What is it?"

"I have, dear. Your father is dead."

She did not speak but looked a moment in his face, and then, laying her head on his knee, as she had when a child, wept silently.

"Tell me all — how was it?" she said, at length.

He placed a letter in her hand.

"It is from your brother, Sibyl, and addressed to me."
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You will see he writes hurriedly—like one who hardly realizes that of which he speaks.”

She read the letter through her falling tears. It contained little beside the announcement of her father's death, which had occurred suddenly, a short time before, and a request that Master Richard would break the news to Sibyl, and say to her that his mother and himself would be with her in the spring; that as soon as his mother felt able, she would write her more fully; with usual expressions of attachment, &c.

It was well worded, and the chirography beautiful; but there was such a cool, matter-of-fact, business-like tone about it, that Sibyl felt doubly orphaned; and she laid it down with almost a groan.

The old man understood the feeling, and tried to excuse the cause.

“Poor boy!” he said, “he finds it hard to realize the truth. It is hard for the wisest of us; much more so for a boy like him!”

But Sibyl was soon called upon to act. A letter from her mother was not long in following this, full of weak, sorrowful repinings, and throwing the burden of all their future arrangements upon her.

“Willie will never be contented in the country; that is certain, Sibyl; and I trust you will exert yourself to get him some nice situation in the city. He would prefer New York. Perhaps this Mr. Wentworth of whom you speak may be able to assist him. As for you and me, if we

cannot be with him,—which he seems to think impossible,—it is little matter where we are. Rockville will do as well as any place, for I have no ambition left.”

But to get that place. Sibyl opened her desk, and looked long at the figures in her bank book that indicated the sum, which, by rigid self-denial, she had been able to lay aside during the past year. It was a small pittance at best, to provide house and furniture and the various *et ceteras* of housekeeping; and then, what should she do? For of course, her situation as governess must be given up.

As usual, in all her troubles, she went to the Fenns, and laid her perplexities before them.

Master Richard waited until Miss Silence and mother Mabel had had their say. It was a habit he had; and in this case it did not take them long, for they were completely *nonplussed* by Sibyl's constant assertion that her mother's assistance was not to be counted upon at all. They did not know what to do with a woman who was “wholly helpless,” and gave the matter up.

Master Fenn suggested that Sibyl should take a small house in Rockville, and open a school for young girls. There were always enough ready to patronize a good school in a manufacturing village, and the fact that she had given satisfaction as governess at Mr. Wentworth's would be a sufficient recommendation.

“But how am I to meet all the first expenses—the furnishing and fitting up? I have but——”

“There, there's what will do it, Sibyl!” and Fred Mon-

roe sprang into the room, and flung an official-looking document into Sibyl's lap.

"You didn't know that I was listening in the old kitchen all this time, just to pay you off for running down here without saying a word to me? I haven't been to see you for some days, because I was waiting for that," — he pointed to the paper, — "and I wanted to surprise you. To-day, when Mr. Wentworth gave it me, I ran right down to the house as soon as I could get away, and you were gone; so I asked leave of absence this afternoon, and Mr. Wentworth gave it. It's all his doings, Sibyl. I never should have got the patent if he had not taken the matter in hand. There was a Vermont man who disputed my claim, and I had about given up; but he took the matter up, wrote lots of letters, and there is the result. God bless him!"

There was a hearty response to Fred's words, and then they examined the magic paper that was to bring wealth and fame to Fred, while he stood a little apart, striving to take the whole thing as a matter of course. But it would not do; for he tossed on his cap, and burst into a merry laugh, saying to Sibyl, as he flung a shawl over her shoulders, —

"I can't stand it, Sibyl. It seems so odd to hear you talking about my being rich. It would seem a great deal more natural for us to go down to the old corner walnut tree, and sit down there to count up our shillings, as we used to. I dare say the sun has melted the snow from the south side of the tree now. Get your bonnet, and let's go down there once more."

It was a cold, bright day in February, but the noonday sun had tempered the keen air of the morning, until it seemed to have in it a touch of spring. The snow lay deep and white, almost to the hill tops; but Fred and Sibyl cared little for the cold and snow. They had warmth enough in their hearts to thaw old Winter himself, and they wandered over the scenes of their early days with many a laugh, until they stood before the white, snow-crowned head of their old granite friend. Then they were silent; and when Fred turned his face towards his companion, it had something of the old sorrowful look it wore the first time they stood there together.

Did a shadow from the unseen future fall across his heart?

Mrs. Wentworth did not like changes. Sibyl had become, in a measure, necessary to her; and it is so difficult for some natures to forget that they do not *own* people! Therefore, when Sibyl notified her that she should leave at the end of the present term, she was both surprised and offended. But she was too proud to expostulate, or refer to the matter at all, beyond the remark that she thought it a much wiser plan for her mother to board; but she made Sibyl feel her mood by refusing all the little attentions she had been accustomed to receive from her, with a cool —

"Don't trouble yourself, Miss Monroe. People must learn to depend on themselves, I find."

The girl felt this all the more keenly, because she often

accepted those very attentions from Miss Drummond. Sibyl was very human, and it must be confessed that she would much rather any one else had superseded her than Miss Agnes. She did not ask herself why; she might not have been able to tell, had she done so; for the secrets of the heart want some sudden shock to bring them to the light, just as the precious stones of earth are thrown out by the convulsions of nature.

The last weeks of her stay there passed heavily and slowly. She felt vexed and dissatisfied with herself that the anticipated arrival of her mother and brother did not fill her with more joy. Most of her time was spent with Winnie, in trying to reconcile her to the proposed change — no easy task; for under that timid air the child concealed much of the strong feeling of her family, and her attachment to Sibyl was very warm. Sometimes she walked out, but only to come back more depressed; for there was nothing in the weary, wet, unstable March weather to cheer or enliven her; no keen, bright frosts to freshen the air and give new life to the overtasked nerves; no fresh, crispy snow to suggest strong and cheerful thoughts; only dirty, ragged strips lying here and there, in the corners of the fences, making the wet earth look more forlorn, and the gray sky still more cheerless.

It was quite time for Sibyl to go. Master Richard felt this when he came for her one morning; and he seriously questioned himself as to whether there had not been something of selfishness in the feelings with which he had

marked her influence over the proud Wentworths; whether, in his interest in them, he had not forgotten that she might starve there for lack of human sympathy.

It was well for her that there was so much to be done — so much planning in the way of furnishing and providing; well for her that in these matters she had the long experience and good sense of mother Mabel and Miss Silence to rely upon; for Master Richard's wisdom in such affairs did not much exceed that of herself and Fred, and the list of necessities which they made out was much better proportioned to their wants than their means.

Miss Silence's keen eye soon riddled this list; and it was doubly well for them that they could laugh so heartily as she drew her pen across each superfluous article, with the remark, —

“Look to the end, children. ‘What man, intending to build a house, sitteth not down first and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it or not?’ You'll be on the town at this rate.”

More than once her plaid flannel dress was exchanged for a black merino, her sun bonnet for a straw of the finest, whitest braid, the product of her own bony fingers, to accompany Sibyl on shopping expeditions to Eltham or Rockville; and more than once the latter had occasion to admire her judgment and forethought.

Sometimes Fred slipped away, and joined them for a few moments, ostensibly to give his opinion of the colors of a carpet or the position of a table, but really to slip into

Miss Silence's hand his mite towards the plenishing; and sometimes they met Mrs. and Miss Drummond, who were engaged in the like occupation, having taken a house there; and the elder lady, forgetful of Sibyl's "ungrateful conduct," as she termed it, in leaving her sister, "especially when the latter had condescended to tolerate her — the daughter of the man who had ruined them," condescended herself to make inquiries into her affairs which were at times almost too much for Miss Silence's patience, and to offer her advice as to what was "proper for people in Sibyl's position," while the daughter chatted in a friendly way with Sibyl, never failing to allude to the new governess she had procured for Winnie; feeling assured, she said, that "Miss Monroe would be delighted to know that she gave such satisfaction — was such a favorite with her aunt and cousin Ernest."

"And Winnie — is she pleased with her?" asked Sibyl.

"O, Winnie is but a child, you know; besides, she is capricious in her likes and dislikes — somewhat like her father, I think. Do you know, when you were there I used sometimes to think you quite a favorite with cousin Ernest, if one may use that word in speaking of him; then again he did not seem conscious that there was such a person in the house. It must have been very annoying. I wonder how you bore it. I am sure I used to pity you sometimes."

"I was there as Miss Winnie's governess. In that

capacity I had nothing of which to complain," was the quiet reply.

There was only one point in the matter of furnishing upon which Sibyl and Miss Silence differed. Sibyl remembered her mother's love of the luxurious, and insisted on furnishing the bedroom designed for her, and the parlor adjoining, in a style quite different from the rest of the house.

"But what will you put in your own room?" asked the good woman somewhat impatiently, one day, after listening to Sibyl's reasons why a carpet of superior texture and beauty must be purchased for these rooms. "If you buy this, you will have to go without yourself."

"O, no matter about my room. I can get along any way for the present. A bit of striped cotton — any thing will do; but mamma is so different from me!"

Miss Silence said nothing further; but that night, as she sat alone with mother Mabel, giving her an account of the proceedings of the day, she shook her head very gravely as she said, —

"I don't know, mother — but there are some folks in this world so entirely useless that I don't know what to do with them — what they are permitted to live for; and Sibyl's mother must be one of them."

"But the Lord may, Silence," said the sightless mother, reprovingly.

"I hope he does — I really hope he does, mother; but I am sometimes wicked enough to doubt it."

The house was at last in readiness, and Sibyl felt both

proud and gratified as she walked through the rooms with Miss Silence and Fred; for it was the home that her own hands had provided for her mother. But her enthusiasm did not equal that of her companions. She felt the contrast between this humble home and the one in which she had last seen her mother too vividly to anticipate much of a surprise.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"So you knew me, mamma?"

"Yes; you are like your father, Sibyl. You have his mouth and eyes. I never used to think you like him at all; but you are. I see the resemblance more and more every time I look at you."

"I must have changed a great deal since you last saw me, mamma; but I should have known you any where, even if I had only had a glimpse of this hand, I think;" and Sibyl raised the delicate fingers to her lips.

They were sitting in Mrs. Monroe's room, at the Carlton House, New York, and there were tears on the cheeks of both; for they had been speaking of the dead husband and father; but there was a faint smile on the mother's face, as she said, in reply to her daughter's remark, —

"Am I indeed so little changed, Sibyl? It seems scarcely possible, for I have suffered so much! I did not think any one could suffer what I have and live. To be left alone in a city like Paris, as I was!"

"But you had Willie, mamma."

"Yes — the dear boy. I should have died if it had not been for him. Indeed, I did have serious thoughts of en-

tering a convent at one time. I was so tired of every thing."

"It was much better to come home, and try to do your duty, mamma."

"That is so like your father, Sibyl; as he used to talk when I first knew him. It has been a comfort to me to know that you possessed his strong, self-reliant spirit, which is so independent of love or sympathy."

"Then you did think of me sometimes, mamma?"

The flash of interest that lighted up the daughter's face might have taught the widowed mother that if she did command this mood of mind, it was the guerdon of patience and suffering, rather than the gift of nature.

She did not see this, however; yet her next words brought a thrill of sorrowful kind of pleasure to her child's heart, for it was this:—

"Yes, Sibyl; I could not help it, for your father fretted about you constantly in his last illness, because we had not written to you oftener. He knew there was little to write about; that you were happy with your friends — better off than you could be with us; but it was no use telling him this. He was a little deranged, I think. It was very trying, indeed. I don't know, as I say, how I ever bore it. Your friends were very kind to you down there, of course, child?"

"Many people have been kind to me, mamma. I have some excellent friends down there; not very fashionable or elegant, but clear headed and warm hearted. One of them,

as I told you before, is waiting below to see you — papa's old friend, Master Richard Fenn. He remembers you as a bride, mamma, though I suppose you have forgotten him. Will you go down now?"

Elsie looked at her watch. "I wish Willie would come in," she observed, anxiously. "He has been out since breakfast; I want you to see him so much; but some of his old friends keep him, I suppose. They kept him last night until quite late; but then he is always such a favorite. You will be proud of him, Sibyl."

"I am very anxious to see him — so is Master Fenn. He has a situation, or the promise of one, for him, I believe."

"I am glad of that; but I hope it will be easy and pleasant, he is so particular. I can't bear to think of parting with him."

Her distress touched Sibyl, and she began to speak of a situation for him in Rockville; but her mother interrupted her.

"Don't speak of it, Sibyl; at least, not to him. He hates the country; we must make some allowances for him, after Paris. Besides, he has been quite low-spirited of late, and would die of *ennui* down there. We must not think of it. I only wish we could live here; but I suppose that cannot be."

"Not at present, mamma."

They went down and met Master Fenn. Sibyl was pleased to see that the old man's kind greeting and affec-

tionate allusions to her father were not lost upon her mother. He spoke of Willie, and, while he did not hesitate to say that he considered a situation near them in the country much the best for a youth like him, he added, that in accordance with her wish, he had spoken to an acquaintance of his, a former partner in business of James Hungerford, her husband's relative, and he had promised him a clerkship in his store. While they were yet speaking, Willie entered. He was, indeed, very handsome, but so much older in look and manner than Sibyl anticipated, that the discrepancy troubled her. He greeted her with the ease and self-possession of the man of the world; there was nothing to complain of in his words or manner; and yet, when she contrasted him with Fred, and thought of Fred's guileless, open, intelligent face, and warm, impulsive manner, she felt troubled.

She forgot that in large cities, like Paris, there is no such thing as youth, in our acceptance of the word, especially in the society in which her brother had mingled.

Master Richard soon recurred to the topic upon which they had been speaking, and Willie, thanking him for his efforts, professed himself anxious to see the gentleman to whom he had so kindly recommended him.

"Not recommended; that is just what I could not do," said the old man pleasantly. "But my friend has promised the situation on your good behavior."

The youth laughed.

"I forgot; pardon me. But if recommendations are

wanted, I have one from the firm of Le Clere & Dupont, with whom I was in Paris."

"Did *they* give you a recommendation, Willie?" said the mother. "You never spoke of it to me."

"I never thought it necessary, madam," was his reply. Then turning to Master Fenn, he added, "I suppose the sooner this business is arranged the better."

The old gentleman liked promptitude, and they set off.

Elsie watched him from the window as they passed up the street; the tall, graceful youth accommodating his springing step to the slow pace of his lame companion, and a flush of pride lighted her cheek as she said, —

"Isn't he a noble fellow, Sibyl?"

"He is very handsome, mamma; but," she added, almost unconsciously, "he seems so much older than he is!"

"O, that is the result of living in a large city. Willie is, indeed, quite a man in thought and feeling. Most boys at eighteen need some one, at least, to advise them; but instead of advising or guiding him, I have of late been accustomed to depend upon him."

Poor Elsie! When did you ever possess sufficient energy to guide yourself — much less a headstrong, spoiled boy?

"I am glad he had the forethought to ask for that certificate from his employers. He was there but a few weeks; though of course they would give him one."

Sibyl had little opportunity to become acquainted with her brother. The business with regard to his situation in Mr. Wallace's store was successfully arranged; they could

not afford to linger in the city, and the next day saw them on the way to Rockville.

Elsie refused to be comforted after parting with Willie; and, after various efforts, Master Richard and Sibyl gave up the attempt. The old man, though never forgetful of the comfort of his companions, seemed unusually silent; and Sibyl, as the locomotive bore them swiftly along, had ample time to recall her first sad journey to Eltham, and all that had occurred since. If the way had seemed dark and hidden sometimes, it was light now. As she looked in her mother's pale, sad face, and thought how much more than ever she would need some firm arm on which to lean, and how, amid the luxury of her childhood, she herself might have grown up weak, helpless, and selfish, she had a deep consoling sense of the loving kindness of the overruling hand that had ordered her steps; and she thanked God for the evil and the good—for the strength which is born of weakness.

It was one of those hours in which, by the grace of God, the cross, so long and patiently borne, slips from the weary shoulders, and becomes a support; while the soul takes in the past and the future, and girds itself for the struggle of life.

There had been almost marvellous changes since her first journey down there, and none greater than at the Corners. Hitchcock's of old was missing. The railway track passed directly over the place where the store had stood; but a large, white store, which bore that gentleman's name in gild-

ed letters, on the street opposite, and a new cottage a few rods distant, somewhat profusely overlaid with ornament, indicated that the change had been to him one of profit.

They left the cars here, and took a carriage; and as the road led deeper among the hills, Sibyl strove to draw her mother's attention to the beauty of the scenery. It was too early in the season for the lavish beauty that marked it in spring and summer; but even in that gusty March weather, a loving eye could detect many a delicate trace of the footsteps and fingers of a shy spring, in the tender green grass bordering the edges of the little brooks and springs, the freshened look of the mosses and feathery brakes clinging to the rocks—in the cheerful call of the robin, the heartsome song of the bluebird. Overhead, the clouds, as ever, were a spectacle of endless and ever-changing beauty—now gathered in white flocks, and driven slowly across the sky by the laggard winds, or, scattered by some fitful, boisterous gust, they fled as if for life, casting rapidly changing shadows over the sunny landscape below.

Mrs. Monroe's love of beauty came to Sibyl's aid; old Master Richard had many a tale to tell of storms and freshets, or humble deeds of Christian charity, or Christian heroism, on the part of the early settlers; and when they entered the Mill Brook valley, and drew near their own home, Elsie was in quite a cheerful mood.

"There, mamma, the cottage behind the locusts, the one on which the shadow of the church spire still rests, is ours!" cried Sibyl, half rising in her eagerness to point out her home, as they entered the village.

"It is quite pretty, or will be when the locusts are in blossom. But is it not small?"

"Yes; but we are small people, mamma. There is plenty of room for us two, as Master Richard can tell you."

"But who are those people — see, in the doorway, child? I can see no strangers," exclaimed the mother, hastily.

Sibyl's face was radiant with joy. "It's Miss Silence and Fred," she said, turning to Master Fenn. How kind of them to come to meet us. And see! there is grandmother Fenn, behind Miss Silence — out of the draught of the door. I see her white cap now. O mamma, they are just the best friends in the world! You cannot help loving them — every one."

It was true; they were friends: and if such hearts can consecrate a welcome, then Elsie Monroe might consider her entrance over that threshold as thrice blessed.

"Old folks have their whims sometimes, as well as young ones," said old mother Mabel, as she laid her hand on Sibyl's head; "and I had heard so much said about your house, and your mother, that I thought I would take one more journey before I go on the long one, and see it." (Mother Fenn always spoke of seeing just as if she had not lost her sight.) "Silence thought Richard might not think it worth while, but I knew Dick would have nothing to say, if mother really thought best."

"You are right, mother; indeed, I think it will do you good — at least, it will do us good to see you here;" and tenderly, as if she had been a little child, he led her into

the parlor. Fred followed, with his aunt, while Sibyl gave a glance into the dining room, whither Miss Silence had disappeared, after her first hearty greeting.

The good woman stood near the table, cutting slice after slice of snowy bread from a fresh-baked loaf, which she placed upon a table well supplied with eatables.

"There, go along with you, and take off your things," she said, in reply to Sibyl's exclamation of surprise. "Mother and I thought, as likely as not, you would not have much to begin on; so we just tucked a few things into the wagon."

In the doorway of the parlor Sibyl paused, in mute surprise. She had left a blank space on one side of the room, in arranging the furniture, for the piano, which she had hired, but which had not arrived when she left. Now, the space was occupied by a new and richly-cased instrument, and a glance into Fred's excited face led her to think that she had discovered the source from whence it came; but before she could express her thought, he caught her hand, and leading her to the instrument, pointed to a card that lay upon it. She took it up, and read, in a child's irregular, scrawling chirography, —

"A present to dear Miss Monroe, from Winnifred Wentworth, with the consent of papa and grandmamma."

A vivid flush of pleasure and surprise glowed upon Sibyl's face, as she laid the card in Master Richard's hand.

"Ay, it is like him," said the old man, with a quiet smile.

Sibyl's blush deepened, but Fred said, hastily, almost impatiently, —

"Him! the present is from Winnie, Master Fenn."

But they had no time to pursue the matter. Miss Silence's voice summoned them to the table; and as Elsie Monroe listened to their pleasant, friendly thoughts, their direct, practical good sense, their genial humor, and kind forbearance towards others, she began to have a dim insight into the characters that had so won her daughter's love, and to feel, in spite of herself, somewhat humiliated in their presence.

Thank Heaven that we have such lives! Better than sermons or words to illustrate to the weak or doubting heart the beauty of that way which is peace!

CHAPTER XXV.

THE next few days, Sibyl was full of business; and as her mother seemed to be quite worn out, and to need rest, she was very willing she should keep her room.

Fred looked in occasionally to bring a pail of water from the pump, or perform some little service for her, and have a hearty laugh over some reminiscence of their childish days, called up by the wide gingham apron which she had donned, and then went on his way.

She had just got through with her dinner dishes one day, when little Winnie Wentworth came running in, full of delight and importance at being permitted to call—and to call alone.

"I wanted to come so much, Miss Sibyl! Grandma thought it would be proper, and Miss Greyling, my governess, was coming this way on some business, and I came with her. I'm to stay half an hour—then Miss Greyling is coming back for me."

Sibyl let her run on until out of breath; then raising her to her knee, she pointed to the piano, saying,—

"See, this is your beautiful gift, Winnie."

"Yes, papa said it was mine, though I did not pay my

own money for it. I hadn't enough, and he had to take his," was the straightforward answer.

"How came you to think of such an expensive gift, Winnie?"

"Because I thought you would like a piano better than any thing else, you used to be so fond of playing; and cousin Agnes said you couldn't have one."

"Miss Agnes Drummond?"

"Yes." The child colored deeply, as she replied. "She said, one day, when she came in to see us, that she had met you buying furniture, and I asked her if you had bought a piano. She laughed, and said no, she guessed you were too poor to do that, though you might possibly hire one; and I thought then how much I wished I could buy one for you, and I thought of it a great deal after that. One day, when I was practising, papa asked me if I could sing *"Co' the yowes to the knowes,"* and play the accompaniment. I said yes, and played and sang it just as you taught me to; and when I had done, he asked if I would like to make you a present. I said yes, a piano. He wanted to know what made me think of that, and I told him what cousin Agnes said.

"I thought he was displeased, for he did not say any thing, but went away to his books. The next day, he said to grandmother that he understood you were going to house-keeping, and that I would like to make you some present, if she thought proper.

"She said, certainly; you had been a good teacher to

me; though he must select it, as she could not go out; and papa got the piano. I wanted him to write my name on the card; but he said the gift was mine, and I must do it myself; only he told me what to say. Was it right, Miss Sibyl?"

"Certainly, dear; but was your grandmother pleased with your choice?"

"I don't know. She never asked me any thing about it. Perhaps papa told her."

If papa has not, some one else has, Winnie. Few things that concern Mr. Ernest Wentworth escape the observation of Mrs. Drummond; and the gift of so valuable an article as a piano, to a poor governess, disturbs her sense of propriety.

A book, a pair of vases, or a silver card case, would have been much more suitable, she thinks. She has none of that lofty scorn of littleness or meanness which characterizes her sister-in-law, but she is equally intent upon carrying out her plans. Some people think she had Miss Agnes' future establishment in view when she came to reside so near her friends; and perhaps she did admit of such a possibility; but it was very faint, for she had almost come to believe the assertion reiterated with such perfect confidence by her lofty sister-in-law whenever the possibility of a change in Ernest's condition was suggested — "My son Ernest will never marry again." But she has two sons younger than Agnes, whose expenses she even now finds it difficult to meet. She believes Ernest Wentworth will be a rich man,

if he is not so now; there is but one life — yours, little Winnie — between them and the property; that may go out in a natural way, or become absorbed into her own family. Besides, Mrs. Drummond has a natural propensity to manage; and while you, little Winnie, were so deeply absorbed in trying to comprehend Miss Greyling's explanation of long division, the other day, aunty Drummond was hinting, as plainly as she dared, the impropriety of making such valuable presents to a governess.

"It was Winnie's gift, sister Drummond," said Mrs. Wentworth, briefly.

"Yes; so I understood — but the world, dear sister, will, as you know, think what it pleases."

"Let it! and my granddaughter will continue to make such presents as she pleases," was the haughty reply.

Mrs. Drummond was silent a second, as if very seriously reflecting upon the wisdom of such a course; at length she observed, —

"True; it is very proper that both she and your son should do so. However, I think people in our position sometimes err in not taking into sufficient consideration the condition of those whom they wish to benefit. Favors of this kind, coming ostensibly from a gentleman, may be construed to the poor girl's disadvantage."

The red blood showed clear through the dark cheek of Mrs. Wentworth, as she said, sternly, —

"You are speaking of my son, sister Drummond, and of a young person whom I selected as the preceptress of my

granddaughter, an inmate of my family, whose conduct, while here, permit me to add, was such as met my unqualified approbation."

The tone, to say nothing of the words, would have been enough to discourage almost any one but Mrs. Drummond. She was not easily daunted. She had one arrow more, which, under the guise of indignant sympathy, she meant should hit home; and she said, pleasantly, —

"I beg pardon. I have lived so long in the busy, wicked world, that I have grown over-watchful and suspicious, I suppose. I forget that it is so wholly different with you in this country village, where half the people are in some way dependent upon you for their daily bread. You must lay the blame where it belongs — to the deep interest I take in all that concerns you. I confess I can never quite forgive this girl for leaving you as she did. If she had felt as she should, she would have thought the service of a lifetime too little to repay all the evil you have suffered from her father's dishonesty. To me there is something insulting in her setting herself down here right in your face, with her mother, and expecting to still get a living, as one may say, out of you. I really thought she had more delicacy."

"Annie!" said Mrs. Wentworth, — and the high, proud face flushed with scornful indignation, — "Annie, I seldom speak of the past — never to you, because it is useless. But when my son Ernest spoke to me of this girl, Arthur Monroe's daughter, as a person suitable to take charge of his child, I was astonished at him — indignant; and I spoke

what I felt. He uttered but one word, — 'Mother;' but the tone and the look were enough. It gave me such a view of myself as I had never taken before. I saw how the anger, the almost vindictive hate, which I had nourished towards that man — the author of our ruin, as I viewed him — had dragged me down to a level with himself — even lower, if possible. Then I brought home his child, ostensibly to be the governess of my granddaughter, but in reality that I might have before me, day after day, a memorial of my sin.

"She knew nothing of this; she performed her duty well; if, when she chose to go, the old self-love and arbitrary will stirred in my heart, she was not to blame. She had fulfilled her mission with me, and God forbid that I should put an obstacle in her way."

Mrs. Drummond felt that the discussion was closed for the present.

Sibyl had taken an early opportunity to explain to her mother her plans and the necessity which would compel her to devote most of her time to the duties of teaching. The mother seemed to take little interest in them, further than to bewail the change that made such labor necessary.

She knew "nothing about business herself — Arthur always said she didn't — but she didn't see why they should be compelled to turn their house, which was really a very decent one in its way, into a noisy school house. There were but two of them, and they could want but very little."

The Bourbon princess who asked, when the French people were dying of famine, why, if they could not get

bread, they did not eat cake, knew about as much of the actual needs and responsibilities of life as Elsie Monroe.

"But that little must be had, mamma," Sibyl was wont to respond gayly; "and as neither of us happen to have a fairy godmother, I see no way better to effect that end than the one purposed. A dozen or so little girls will keep us from growing stupid. I think you will like it."

She did not misjudge; though for the first few weeks she was very careful to keep her scholars from intruding into her mother's presence, or in any way disturbing her. But childish sympathy and admiration are easily excited; and it was very natural for the little girls to look with interest upon the pale but still lovely face of their teacher's mother, as she sat by the open window beneath which they daily passed, and to sometimes offer her the bunch of fragrant flowers designed for the daughter.

She was not proof against these attentions, and after a time she began to make her appearance in the school room with her work, — a bit of some elegant embroidery, — in her hand, which gradually was laid aside, while she took her place at the piano, and relieved Sibyl of the task of overlooking the exercises in music — a part for which she was admirably fitted; besides, she was an excellent French scholar, and Sibyl spared no pains to catch the pronunciation from her lips.

Grandmother Mabel was right. Our Lord did know what she was here for; and we, if we were not so blind, should be able to see that no spark of life, however feeble

and dim, is permitted to go out upon this earth without illustrating some truth, teaching some lesson, which it is God's will we shall learn. O, if we could but more plainly discern the end!

Still, as yet, Miss Silence could not see this. There was a twist, if not in her eyes, in those clear, silver-bowed glasses of hers, that made her look obliquely at mere accomplishments; and it was not until she saw Mrs. Monroe, sitting by her side, copying recipe after recipe from the manuscript book that contained the accumulated experience of her mother and herself in the art of cooking, and writing down her explanations so minutely in that delicate hand, that she began to have hope of her; not until she had tasted of a mince pie concocted by that lady's own hands, that she uttered her emphatic —

“Mother, that woman will be worth something yet.”

The time had come to Elsie Monroe, which comes, sooner or later, to all that live, when God so arranges and overrules the circumstances of our lives, as to compel us to look inward and take some account of our betrayed trusts and neglected duties.

She could not see the unwearied industry, the faithfulness, the patience, with which Sibyl went through her round of daily duties, without a query as to her own life.

It was a new thing, a hard thing, for her to think at all; but it is always easier to raise questions than to silence them; and in the stillness of those long summer days, slowly the dim thought dawned upon her, that she had something here to do.

Sibyl kept no servant; much of her furniture was still unpaid for, and she could permit herself no such luxuries, as long as this debt remained. She had pleased herself with the thought that her house work would be a pleasant and beneficial relaxation from the duties of the school room; but like most young housekeepers, she soon found that she had overrated her powers; and moreover, however excellent and pleasant the combination of intellectual labor and physical exercise, that mere household drudgery, of which there must be some in the smallest family, is quite another thing. She was obliged, therefore, to call quite often on her washerwoman, who had promised to come in and help her at odd times.

Her mother gradually got an understanding of this. It was still hard, as of old, for her to rise in the morning; and Sibyl was therefore very much surprised to see her make her appearance in the small kitchen one morning a full hour earlier than usual, and after watching her a few moments, as she deftly moulded some biscuit for breakfast, ask if there was any thing she could do to assist her.

“You, mamma?”

“Yes; I think I might do something to help you. Will you let me try?”

“Certainly,” was the laughing reply; “but as I am chief cook, I shall not let you touch my biscuit. You may lay the table, if you please, and as soon as I put these in the oven, I will boil the eggs.”

She wiped the flour from her hands, to show her mother

where were the necessary articles for the table; and when the latter had arranged this to her taste, placing upon it, after the French custom, a beautiful bouquet, gathered from Sibyl's little bed of flowers beneath the windows, she insisted upon boiling the eggs.

Sibyl was too wise to refuse; and with her watch in her hand, — Arthur's gift before their marriage, — she watched while the requisite number of seconds slipped away, with an interest quite new to her; and when she seated herself at the table, she was a prouder and a happier woman than she had been for many a day.

Habits the growth of years are hard to overcome; and not unfrequently after that, she had to chide Sibyl for permitting her to oversleep; and sometimes, when she had taken upon herself the responsibility of preparing dinner, she would forget all about it, until the pattering of the children's feet upon the stairs warned her that it was already noon. But she really tried to do her best, and, as we have hinted, developed quite a genius for the niceties of house-keeping; her cream cakes were delightful, and even Miss Silence pronounced her biscuit perfect.

Many things tended to foster this change. Their social position brought them acquainted with several very pleasant families, and Master Fenn's had become almost as dear to the widow as to her daughter. The gentleness, the patience, and simple faith of old blind Mother Mabel possessed for her world-wearied mind a singular charm.

Sibyl seldom spoke to her mother of herself; but Miss

Silence's lips were not so close, and Elsie, in her awakening to a healthier tone of life, could not help thinking often, with a feeling of self-reproach, on the long years of loneliness and neglect to which her thoughtlessness — to use no harder term — had consigned her child.

But she did not say this. If it is hard for a strong, proud nature to acknowledge error, and utter the word "forgive," it is harder still for the weak and vain; and she only manifested her feeling by increased respect and deference towards Sibyl. It was the dependent, reverent, unquestioning affection of a child towards a parent, rather than the strong, thoughtful, far-reaching, unwearied love of a mother. They seemed to have exchanged posts; and it was never more observable than when she spoke of Willie.

Sibyl felt this deeply. Must she always be alone? The burden of labor and care she could bear; she asked no one to share it with her. But the feeling of womanly helplessness that overcame her at times; the reaching forth for support; the strong yearning for perfect trust; unquestioning reliance on a stronger, wiser nature — would that never be realized?

It is hard, even for a woman, to always feel that "it is more blessed to give than receive."

Willie was ever her mother's first thought, and she was surprised to see her natural extravagance give way to the most rigid economy — not to say parsimony — that she might be able to indulge him. Scarcely a letter went to him which did not enclose some little remittance, to add to his comfort, — or his ruin, as Sibyl sometimes queried.

The autumn brought him down on a visit, and Sibyl's first impression of his character was only deepened by a closer acquaintance. He was thoroughly selfish. The Parisian polish of his manner could not conceal that from her anxious eyes, even if he had always retained it; but like that of many other people, it was almost wholly laid aside with his mother, and Sibyl was often pained at the indifference and rudeness of his manner towards her.

He had come down "to amuse himself," he said, "with fishing and hunting; not to be tied to her apron string." He soon made the acquaintance of the half dozen young men usually lounging about the hotel of a manufacturing village, and almost every day and night found him abroad in their company, while his consequent late hours in the morning did not tend to improve his temper at all.

One morning, he seemed unusually moody and irritable, and Sibyl soon learned from her mother the cause. He had looked in upon a ball given at the Hollister House—the chief hotel of the village—the evening before, and some one had relieved him of his pocket book, and all his funds.

"He dislikes to apply to you so much, Sibyl; but he knows no one else, and he has not money enough left to take him back to New York."

"He need not, mamma. How much will be necessary?" and she turned with a bright smile to the desk which held her small hoard.

"Some twenty or twenty-five dollars he says will do.

To be sure,"—she went on, reading Sibyl's look of surprise,— "he will not need it all to pay his fare, but he may want a trifle for something else, and it is always so disagreeable to him to be without money."

Sibyl looked thoughtful. She had so many times counted up just how much she could spare from the amount recently received for this first quarter towards liquidating the debt at the cabinet maker's, and the sum mentioned by her mother covered nearly the whole amount. To be sure, the man would wait. He had told her so the last time she had spoken to him about it; but this did not lessen the annoying sense of obligation she felt every time she saw him.

Her mother saw her hesitation, and said, in the tone of a person much aggrieved,—

"You surely won't refuse him, Sibyl. Willie can't bear niggardly people."

There was something in the tone and words that brought to the daughter's mind the old charge of selfishness, so often made against her in her younger days, and, listening to her feelings rather than her reason, she placed the money in her mother's hand, saying,—

"I was thinking of the debt we owe Mr. Smith. It ought to be paid."

"O, never mind him. He can wait. Such people expect to wait."

"I know he will wait; but, mamma, had not Willie better make some further inquiries? I can hardly think

any of the young people at the Hollister House would be likely to take his money. He might have laid down his pocket book some where accidentally."

"I suggested the same thing to him; but he is positive that he did not. Besides, he can't bear to make a fuss. He is so independent!"

The subject troubled Sibyl. She could not doubt that her brother had spoken the truth; yet it seemed so strange that he should refuse to make any inquiries after his property. She scarcely knew whether she had done right in yielding to her mother's request, and, contrary to her usual habit, she did not tell her old friend, Master Fenn, of this when he called next day, from a sort of misgiving, that it would expose not only herself, but her mother and brother, to censure.

The winter passed very quietly. Fred Monroe was absent, by the advice of Mr. Wentworth, looking after the sale of his patent himself; but his letters were full and frequent. As they came to Mr. Wentworth's box, that gentleman usually came round that way, and delivered them himself. At first he only paused long enough to pass the compliments of the day; but it sometimes happened that Sibyl was playing when he came, and on such occasions he always remained a pleased listener, or she had something to tell him of Fred's success, and it was strange how closely, upon these occasions, the stern, reserved man studied her—strange that a blush or the emotion which

she often showed when speaking of her cousin, should sometimes raise in him a miserable feeling of self-contempt.

He had limited the possibilities of life; perchance he began to suspect his error.

CHAPTER XXVI.

It was Thanksgiving — that dear old New England festival, which gathers together the scattered families to keep the feast of the tabernacles beneath the old household roof, to thank God for the plenteous harvests, and call upon the "man servant and maid servant, the stranger and the fatherless," to rejoice with them, and partake freely of the gifts of his hand.

Thanksgiving! Who, when he thinks of the origin of this festival, its true meaning and purpose, will deny that our old fathers, stern and exacting as they were, had that deep sense of the *fitness* of things which translates itself into beauty?

These festivals, always significantly kept at Master Fenn's, had received a new interest since Fred and Sibyl had become, as it were, the children of the household.

Neither did the stranger or the fatherless suffer from this addition to the old man's family. He had a curious way of looking at things, and counted himself all the richer for the gift of these two young hearts.

Fred was still absent at this season; but Sibyl and her

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mother were to be the guests, and all the old-time preparations were made with scrupulous exactness.

And they kept thanksgiving there too, but not with feasting and mirth; for another guest was added to their number. Silently, amid the deep watches of the night, a presence crossed the threshold, and, in the ears of blind old mother Mabel, —

"Whispered a word that had a sound like death."

So gently, so quietly did he lead her through the dark valley, that they might have thought her still sleeping, had it not been for that deathly pallor upon the face, and the rigid look of muscle and limb.

Still there were thankful hearts there — hearts that could discern the loving kindness of the hand that had thus lifted the burden of years and blindness, and opened for her the freshness and beauty of the eternal life. O, amid all our thanksgivings, let us not fail to be grateful for death, as well as life.

There were tears there too. There could not fail to be; for we are so slow to see that it is evil, imperfection, alone, that perishes; that good is eternal; that the blessing of a life like hers cannot be buried up in the grave!

"She sees now," Master Richard said to his weeping sister, as they turned away from her grave in Eltham churchyard; and, though they missed her wise counsels, and even that very helplessness, which had mingled with their reverent love something of the protecting tenderness

one feels for a little child, they comforted themselves with this thought.

It was during this visit that Sibyl met again her old acquaintance, Amanda Culver; and as she looked in her face, and read there the fulfilment of all she had feared, she felt how much more sorrowful life may be than death.

The girl evidently avoided her; but the reckless, unhappy, half-defiant look, that had settled upon her face, was enough. Sibyl did not need her own words, or the gossip of the neighborhood, to tell her of the discord in that miserable home.

Neither was she at all surprised, when, some months later, driven to desperation by the interference of relations, and the exercise of an authority which she scorned, the young, high-spirited, unloving wife quit her husband's house, and finding all other doors closed against her, stood before her a fugitive.

"They say I have done wrong; that I am wicked and bad tempered; that I must go back and submit; but I'll die first!" she said, vehemently. "I know that I am quick-tempered — passionate, and often wrong; but living there only makes me worse. I'm afraid of myself, sometimes, and the wicked thoughts that come into my head. I'll do any thing for you, Sibyl, only don't tell me to go back to John Stephens!"

Sibyl had no wish to send her back. She willingly gave her a home, and the grateful girl soon relieved her from much of her domestic responsibility. The arrangement

was a timely one for both, and Sibyl again resumed her walks, now confined by the deep snow to the well-trodden streets of the village.

Some casual circumstance had brought her in contact with some families of the poorer portion of the population, and excited in her a desire to know more of that phase of life.

This winter brought ample opportunity; for the past year had been unfavorable, not only for manufactures, but for agriculture. A cold, wet spring, followed by a severe drought, had produced but a scanty harvest; provisions were both scarce and high, and the severity with which the winter set in made the prospects of the poorer families in the village any thing but favorable.

The misery of destitution was most apparent, if not most severe, among the class of reckless, improvident foreigners, who usually crowd such a place; and as Sibyl extended her acquaintance with them, she was surprised, not alone at the suffering, but at the ignorance, vice, and crime, and, above all, at the deep hate which they seemed to nourish toward the mill owners, who could not or would not find them employment.

The feeling was not wholly confined to the foreigners. Many of the native operatives were uneasy — discussing, newspaper in hand, the relation of capital to labor, and raising problems which neither the wisdom nor experience of ages has yet been able to solve, and warmly advocating a strike for higher wages.

The wiser, more thoughtful, looked upon the faces of their wives and little ones, and still held back; but wisdom and thought are ever in the minority, and the turbulent, undisciplined mass, whose chief notion of liberty is unbounded license, pressed them forward in spite of themselves; and so the crisis slowly ripened.

Sibyl could not understand how a few pennies per day above their usual wages was going to remedy this widespread want. Indeed, in the case of many, it seemed that any amount of money would be in vain; but when she ventured to speak of patience, she was met by the old, eternal query —

“Why must we starve, while our employers hoard wealth?”

“Look!” cried an Irish mother one day, to whom she had been speaking of some sanatory measures in favor of her sick child, as with one hand she drew up the miserable little thing from its pile of rags — “why should the master’s child go dressed in silks, and mine be kilt wid the hunger and cauld?”

She could not answer; and she would gladly have spoken to Mr. Wentworth of these things, but a change had come over him. It was long since he had called there, and whenever she met him in the street, his manner was reserved, and his words brief; very different from the cordiality which had marked their intercourse for many months past; and Sibyl was unwilling to own to herself how much this change darkened and deepened the gloom of the atmosphere around her.

“He is troubled about his business,” she said to herself again and again; “he will come to-morrow;” and the music which he liked best was played over, and the books he liked best placed close at hand.

“I can’t think what has become of Mr. Wentworth,” said her mother one evening. “Sibyl, have you done any thing to offend him? I thought he seemed somewhat absent and *distract* the last time he was here — the day you were speaking of Fred’s return. I hope not, for I miss him so much.”

It was the feeling that had been stirring in her heart for so many weeks — “I miss him so much!”

And why? She flung aside the music of Beethoven’s *Adelaide*, which she had been looking over, and hastily retreated to her chamber. For what? To meet that question; to bow down beneath the shame, and sorrow, and self-scorn that ever come to woman when she first discovers that, unsought, unasked, her whole life has flowed out towards another.

Well might she weep sorrowful tears — well might she watch and pray through the livelong hours of that night; for it is a fearfully solemn thing to know that one’s future is no longer in one’s own power; that all its joys and sorrows must take their coloring from another — a separate life.

Yet, when the first sharp pain was over, she met this subject bravely, solemnly, as one faces death. The morning light was breaking, when she raised her head from the

table, where it had rested so many hours, and putting back the soft, brown hair, looked for some seconds steadily at the face reflected back from the mirror which hung above.

The beauty which those who loved her saw there — the gentle serenity, the purity, the calm thoughtfulness — were invisible to her. Agitation had brought out the dim scars of disease, and, turning away, she set down her lamp, murmuring the old time reproach — “Not like other people! How could I dream such a dream!”

Patiently, earnestly, she set herself to the old round of duties; but she could not bring back the old, elastic spirit. Those who have few hopes and pleasures cling to them closest; and it was so hard for her to put aside the books and music they had read or practised together, and make as though the past had never been.

She knew that from the troubled waters of life come healing and strength; she knew that the way before her had been trodden by many who had exchanged their weakness for the victor's crown; but the thought of them as often brought discouragement as hope; for she looked only to the result, and forgot how frequently they, too, might have stumbled, fainted, and grown weary in the strife.

This change in her finally awakened her mother's attention and anxiety. She insisted upon her closing her school at once. Sibyl had arranged the term so that her vacation would happen about the time that Fred was expected home, and she could not be induced to make any change.

“Well, there is one thing you must do, child; I insist

upon it,” said the mother, anxiously. “You must give up going so much among these poor, miserable people of whom you say so much. It's enough to make any one look wretched; I'm sure it would kill me. If any one must needs go, you can send Amanda.”

“I think you are mistaken, mamma. Besides, Amanda always does go with me.”

Mrs. Monroe looked at her anxiously for some moments; then, crossing the room to where she sat upon the lounge, she seated herself by her side, and drew her head to her shoulder.

The movement was so new — so unexpected, that Sibyl met it with one quite as new on her part — a burst of tears.

“Sibyl,” said the mother, after a pause, “forgive me that I have not before noticed that you were ill; I have been too thoughtless — always too thoughtless about you, I am afraid, my child, not only now, but in the years gone by.”

The guerdon was won; the mournful self-reproach of her mother's tone taught her that the tenderness for which she had so much yearned as a child was new born for her now, in this hour of her womanly weakness and distrust.

The thought was infinitely comforting; and raising her head, and choking back the tears, she said, —

“Do not think about it any more, mamma, and I will try to be stronger.”

It was not a difficult thing to quiet Elsie; but Fred, upon his arrival, was not so easily deceived. Her look of

patient, subdued suffering struck a chill to his heart, as, still holding her hand in his, he put her from him to gaze at her again and again. It kept back the loving words that leaped to his lips, and he waited patiently while she should speak to him of her trouble; but when he found that she studiously avoided any allusion to herself, the shadow deepened upon his heart.

In all things else, her manner was marked by the same open, sisterly kindness and affection as ever — more thoughtful even than ever, for it seemed to her as if she wronged him by having a feeling that he must not share.

In the old days at the farm house, he would not have hesitated to question her — to urge her to tell him all her thoughts; indeed, he would most likely have insisted upon it; but with his manhood, especially since their expulsion from the old home had constituted him her protector, a new feeling had come to temper all his relations with her — a feeling of delicate respect, which could accept only what she chose to give; fearing even to *seem* to presume upon the sweet barrier of dignity and reserve with which womanhood had come to surround her as with a sacred veil.

Therefore he waited and watched, while they passed the days together down at Eltham, or, regardless of the keen frosts of February, explored together the environs of Rockville and the adjacent villages, or turned their steps towards the crowded dwellings of the poor, and forgot for the time their own troubles in studying the sorrowful phenomena of men upon whom, from their very infancy, the necessity of

mere bodily want had pressed like an iron wheel, leaving no time nor thought for any thing else.

It is a very beautiful and hopeful creed — that which we hear so often from the press and pulpit in these days — that from the hard, rugged soil of poverty spring the noblest natures; that beneath its stern discipline are developed the highest types of men: we thank God that it is so. But there is a poverty which is death; no man can have studied life without seeing it — the inheritance of wretchedness, and guilt, and crime; the dreadful growth of man's selfishness and indifference; a race of children abandoned from their birth to a condition worse than that of the animals; human beings gifted with intelligence, yet into whose dark minds no hope or wish beyond the satisfaction of mere animal wants ever finds its way; who lack even the softening, humanizing touch of sorrow and memory!

How shall these "conquer circumstance"? — these, who know not the meaning of the word! How develop a noble character from a state like this? It cannot be; neither God nor man expects it. But not upon the all-wise Father must rest the blame, but upon the human selfishness that permits such a state of things.

Fred was finally persuaded that his aunt Monroe was right; it must be the harassing care of the school that was wearing upon his cousin, and he quietly laid his plans for the future.

Just at this time, they were surprised by a visit from Willie. He had left Mr. Wallace's employ, he said, some

weeks since, for a place much more to his mind ; but "business was slow," and he thought he would run down and make the acquaintance of his cousin.

Fred was much pleased to meet him. He had called at Mr. Wallace's store once or twice, when passing through the city, during the past year ; but it so happened that his cousin had always been out, and therefore they had never met until now.

Willie had always figured largely in Fred's castle building, but like Sibyl, he was disappointed in him. He was very different from the Willie of his dreams ; and though at times half envying the graceful ease of his manner, he could not be blind to the selfishness and low sentiments it covered, and he began to question whether Sibyl's present mood was not in some way connected with her brother. A circumstance soon occurred to deepen this impression.

It was the morning after Willie left for New York. Fred and Sibyl were going out for a walk, when Amanda called Sibyl back, saying the butcher was in the kitchen, and desired to speak with her. With a pleasant jest about the cares of housekeepers, Fred turned into the breakfast room, and renewed his chat with his aunt, while Sibyl proceeded to the kitchen.

Presently she returned, saying, as she passed into the parlor, that "Mr. Wait, poor man, had become entangled in some unfortunate lawsuit, and needed all the money he could raise."

A few moments later, she called them to her. "See,"

she said, pointing to an open drawer in her writing desk, "some one has broken in here, and taken my money. I have only some change left."

"Broken in here! Stolen!" cried the mother, looking round in affright, as if she expected to see the thief lurking in some dim corner of the room, for the blinds were still closed ; "I can't believe it. Are you sure you put your money there, child?"

"Certainly. I always keep it here, as you know ; though when I opened the drawer for some to pay Mrs. Hall, the other day, Willie warned me that it was not a safe place."

"Ah, that was like him ; he has always so much forethought."

"It was here last night," began Sibyl, again examining the few papers which the drawer contained. "I saw it when I came here for that sample of silk for Mrs. Ashmon. The silk was in my *port-monnaie*. You remember ; I spoke of it, mamma."

"Yes, it was just after Willie left ; but surely no one could have come in here after that. I sat in the dining-room with Amanda while you were gone to Mrs. Ashmon's, to be sure ; but we should have heard the noise if any one had come in — it was so still here. I'm sure I shall never dare stay alone a moment again!" and Mrs. Monroe grew pale with fear.

Fred had not spoken hitherto, having been busily engaged in examining the lock of the drawer, and the appearance of the room ; but he now called to his cousin.

"See here, Sibyl! This lock was forced, and the person who took your money probably entered here;" and he pointed to the window nearest the book case. It was open the width of two or three inches — a circumstance that she had overlooked on her first entrance into the room, the blinds, as we have said, being shut.

Fred raised it still farther, and swung back the blind. As he did so, a white object gleamed upon the carpet at his feet. He recognized it at once. It was the beautiful ivory-handled knife over which Willie had bragged so much during his visit, and which he was certain he had seen in his hand when he accompanied him down to the hotel the previous evening, from whence he was going to drive over with an acquaintance to Hitchcock's, in order to take passage in the night train of cars.

He had insisted upon going early. Elsie had remonstrated, and now, like lightning, a startling suspicion flashed upon Fred's thought. Still he had sufficient presence of mind to attempt to conceal it, and the object that occasioned it; but he was too late, for, at his first movement, the mother saw it, and cried out, —

"Take care, take care, Fred! There is Willie's knife on the carpet at your feet. You came near stepping upon it. He must have forgotten it. I'm so sorry!"

She picked it up, while Fred and Sibyl stood gazing into each other's face without a word. They did not need words; the look was enough.

"Why, what ails you, children?" exclaimed the mother,

suddenly looking up from what was to her but a pleasant memento of her absent child. "Sibyl, are you going to faint? You are pale as a sheet. Fred, bring the cologne from the table in my room — my bedroom, I say! What ails the boy? You look as frightened as Sibyl. One would think we had lost a million of dollars instead of a paltry twenty. I thought you had more firmness, children. I wouldn't fret about such a sum."

"You are right, mamma," said Sibyl, striving to command her voice. "We will say no more about it. Fred, I shall be obliged to look to you to pay Mr. Wait's bill."

He placed his purse in her hands, while her mother added, cheerfully, —

"And I shall look to you to hunt out the truth of this matter, nephew. It is well you are here. I don't care so much for the money; but to have any one entering your house in this way! Ugh! I shall never sleep another wink until the wretch is brought to justice!"

"I think — will it not be best to say nothing about it ma'ma? It is, as you say, but a trifle. I trust it may save whoever took it from a greater crime." Sibyl spoke hastily and sadly.

"Why, Sibyl Monroe, how foolishly you talk! If unpunished, it is much more likely to lead to greater crimes! I am surprised at you!"

Sibyl felt keenly the truth of her mother's words. It was very hard for her to speak with a steady voice, or even without tears, as she said, —

"It may be; but on one other occasion you thought differently — when Willie was here before, mamma."

"O, yes; I remember — when he was so unfortunate as to have his money stolen. But that is a different affair."

They did not go out that day. They did not speak their thoughts, but rather avoided it, like people who, by the bedside of a beloved friend, sit watching for some terrible crisis, talking in the low, hushed tones which one unconsciously assumes at such a time.

But at night, when they sat together alone, with the old childish freedom Sibyl laid her face on Fred's shoulder and wept bitterly. She remembered the time when her father had acknowledged his guilt, but then she was a mere child; her tears had been for herself rather than him; now she felt in full all the sin and the ruin it included.

"Sibyl, don't cry so. It may be that we are wrong, after all. He could not have needed the money, for it is only two days since, that I lent him fifteen dollars," said Fred, embodying in words, for the first time, the thought which haunted them. "I may be mistaken about the knife. He might have dropped it. There are so many others more likely to have done this;" and thus he went on multiplying suggestions, until Sibyl felt grateful, if not calm.

But the dreadful thought was still there. She knew by the sharp pain that shot through her at the sight of the elegant knife which lay on a stand close by her mother's

pillow, when she went in as usual to see that all was right in her room, before retiring to rest.

So differently may a trifling object affect two hearts beneath the same roof.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE dissatisfaction that had been so long fermenting in the hearts of Mr. Wentworth's operatives at length reached its height. At the close of the month of February, a deputation waited upon him with a memorial, stating their grievances, and their determination to work no longer at the old prices.

He listened quietly and attentively to the close, — so quietly that one or two of the committee, who had recently entered his establishment, fancied their point won; but others, who knew him better, were not at all surprised when he asked, at the close, —

"Is this all, gentlemen?" and, on being answered in the affirmative, said in that quick, brief, determined tone, that admits of no change, —

"Then our business is at an end. You have well and truly said that you have the right to regulate the price of your own labor. I trust you will not dispute my right to say whether I will give it or no. I shall not. So the relation between us is at an end. Good morning, gentlemen."

They had thought to move him. They might just as

well have thought to move a rock; and the result of their interview was received by the outsiders with groans and execrations, all the more deep, because the operatives in the mills up the stream had followed their example, and they knew that Mr. Wentworth's decision would largely influence the other mill owners.

"If they are so learned in all that relates to our business," said Mr. Wentworth to Fred Monroe, when discussing this affair, "they should know that the employer has rights as well as the employees; that if the times are hard for them, they are not less hard for us."

"Yes; but have you been among them of late? There is much suffering, and I fear these reckless foreigners. They think you influence the other capitalists, and they will spare no pains to excite their whole class against you."

"Let them. I have no fear. If they had asked this change as a favor, though I might not, in the present state of the market, have been able to grant it, I might have entertained it in a different spirit. But I will never be dictated to by any one."

"If you would but tell them this," began Fred; but the gentleman interrupted him.

"No, no, my boy. I should only be the greedy capitalist who wishes to grind them, soul and body, into profit. Words are idle; but if they need aid——"

He turned to his desk, — for it was in the counting room that this conversation took place, — and handed over to Fred several bank notes, saying, —

"Take them to your cousin. She is much among these people, and will know how to apply it."

"They do not know him, Sibyl," said Fred, as he related this conversation and gave her the money; "and he takes no pains to make them know him; if he did, it would all be right. He has such a kind heart at bottom. Only to-day I heard him tell Dr. Strong to look to him for his pay for attending John Morrissey's child; and John is one of those who are loudest in denouncing him."

But eleemosynary aid, even if Mr. Wentworth had given his fortune, could not remedy this evil; after a few weeks of idleness, many of those who had been the loudest and most active in forcing this point, were the first to give in and apply for work at the old terms; and the burden fell upon those who had deprecated and delayed the movement as long as possible.

Seemingly, things went on as usual; but the anger, passion, and ill will, that had sprung up beneath this state of things, no one could rightly estimate.

The month of March closed in with violent, driving storms of rain, until the earth seemed like a great sponge; and every little mountain brook, swollen to a torrent, came pouring into the narrow valley to add its mite to the mill stream, which already, by the increase of its own waters, pressed hard upon the dams which hemmed it in.

These rains were followed by a week of dim, dirty, misty weather, and a warm, lazy, south-west wind, that rotted the ice above, and sent it down in great, muddy, jagged-edged,

porous-looking cakes, wedged and piled together, and driving before them fragments of bridges and dams, and crossing poles, until the river seemed in some places to be covered with a great raft.

No such freshet had been known for years; the yards and cellars, even the lower floors of the houses near the river, were invaded by the water, and the families fled to their neighbors, or to the upper stories, to await the result.

The dams above Mr. Wentworth's were gone or much injured, and great fears were felt for the safety of his.

All the afternoon a crowd was collected upon the bank, watching the rising flood, and speculating upon the chances of its safety. It was a splendid sight, that great expanse of water that came sweeping on over the dam, carrying with it great ice cakes, that splintered and split into a thousand parts as they fell into the frothy whirlpool below. But the dam stood the test, and the people who lived down the stream, between whose houses and the hungry flood that was the only barrier, returned to their rest with the pleasing hope that the worst of the pressure was over.

But they were mistaken; they were soon roused by the ringing of the factory bells, and the cry that the dam was going. People hurried through the streets, some half dressed, some with lanterns, which only made the dim light of the March moonbeams still more dim, and gave a sort of unearthly, ghastly look to the faces of the women and children that showed themselves at the windows, or gathered in groups about the doorways. All Rockville seemed

to be on foot, and Fred had early proceeded to the spot, leaving Sibyl and her mother anxiously waiting his return.

At length he came. The jam of ice in the narrows above the bridge had suddenly given way, and taken the bridge with it; but the dam still held firm, and there was every reason to suppose it would continue to do so.

"It's a grand sight, Sibyl," he went on. "Get your shawl and bonnet, and come out with me. Will you not come, aunt? Miss Drummond, Mrs. Sterling, and her girls, and Miss Greyling, were there when I left. There is a fine view from the counting room windows."

Mrs. Monroe declined going out, but Sibyl gladly accepted the invitation, and soon joined the group of ladies who were watching the mad waters as they dashed over the dam.

Occasionally, as the bearers of the lanterns shifted them about, Sibyl could distinguish the figure of Mr. Wentworth among the crowd, and sometimes catch his quick, brief tones, as he gave his men some order or precaution connected with the safety of the dam; and always by his side was Fred, like an attendant spirit.

Presently, the latter made his appearance in the counting room, saying, —

"There is another large lot of ice coming down, ladies. If you will just step out upon the bank below the dam, you will see it come over to the best advantage. Mr. Wentworth thinks it perfectly safe," he added, seeing them hesitate.

He led the way to the opposite end of the building, down

a flight of stairs, to a spot on the edge of the water that commanded a fine view of the fall.

The whole space between them and the bed of the stream, some two rods wide, was now covered with water, and for a time Sibyl could not keep her eyes from the writhing, boiling caldron just below the dam, where the water whirled up in great silvery plumes, or, like restless serpents, wreathed around the sharp, black rocks, hissing in anger, or crept slyly away under long, undulating threads of white foam, to undermine posts in fences, houses, and sheds, and eat beneath the sandy banks, making new channels, until, wearied out, it spread itself forth in a great silvery sea, and went on its way at a more tranquil pace.

Mr. Wentworth himself had joined them, when Sibyl looked up, and at a given signal from above, Fred exclaimed, —

"Now, ladies, they are coming!"

Mr. Wentworth stood some few paces in advance of the others, on the very verge of the stream; and, as Sibyl looked up, a stone, or piece of iron, sent by some hand above the dam, and aimed directly at his head, came hurtling through the air. Instinctively springing forward, she raised her arm to ward it off. It struck her near the shoulder, and sent her backward into the water.

A cry of terror and agony broke from Fred, and the next instant, both he and Mr. Wentworth had plunged into the stream. The waters there, though quiet compared to the whirling current in mid-channel, were still swift enough

to take her downward; and it was with a mingled feeling of envy and joy that Fred saw his strong-armed competitor strike past him, and, seizing her by the dress, swim downward to where a comparative shallow gave him easy access to the shore.

In a few minutes more, he might have needed the aid of that strong arm himself; for the current was fast drawing him downward, when he caught at a piece of timber lodged in the tangled roots of a group of alders, and saved himself. When he reached the bank, the ladies were gazing, with wide, awe-struck eyes, upon the white face of the apparently dead girl; while Mr. Wentworth, silently but hastily, wrapped her in the cloak which Fred had dropped from his shoulders when he plunged into the stream.

"Home! Monroe! Run for life!" he said. "To my mother's—it is nearer! Tell her to have warm water—flannels—every thing ready!"

Fred started like an arrow; and lifting Sibyl in his arms as if she had been a feather, Mr. Wentworth strode up the stairs, followed by the frightened women.

His house was not far distant—there was no time for ceremony, and without heeding the words of Mrs. Sterling, who was the first to find her tongue, he went straight on, pressing his light burden closely to his heart, as if its rapid beating might awake the still pulses of her own.

His mother met him at the door, and without a word led him to the room already prepared, where Miss Greyling and the servants were busy with such restoratives as

Fred's hasty warning had enabled them to prepare. It was easy to see by the tremulous working of the lines about the old lady's mouth that she was unusually moved; but nothing else betrayed it, and her voice was calm and measured as usual, when she said, as her son laid down his burden on the sofa,—

"Leave us now, Ernest. This wet clothing must be removed."

He looked up from the pale face over which he still hung, and said almost reproachfully, "Mother, mother, do you know it was to save me?"

"I know all, Ernest. Young Monroe told us before he ran for Dr. Strong. You must look to yourself now, and change those wet clothes."

He left the room, hurriedly changed his wet clothes, and returned to the hall; the door was still closed, and he turned into the adjoining room.

Five minutes—ten—fifteen—what an age they seemed! Where could Fred and the doctor be? They listened—he would go himself.

"Ernest, my son!"

"Mother!"

She read his glance, and for one second the proud woman bowed her head upon his shoulder, and there were great tears in her eyes when she looked up.

"It was to save you, my son! And she so young!"

"Mother," he said, huskily, "she must not die—let me see her."

She no longer opposed him, and bending over her pillow, he rubbed her cold hands, and gave his brief orders to the frightened, discouraged attendants.

She breathes — no — ah yes — she moves — the white eyelids tremble — the lips move — and bending lower and lower, he listens breathlessly; there is a low murmur — a word — and, O, how the quick, truth-telling blood rushes to his cheek and brow, and his whole frame thrills with a keen sense of joy! It is *his* name, and with the crimson flush still on his cheek, he looks up to meet the eyes of Fred Monroe, who has silently entered with the physician, to read there — wonder, surprise, and disappointment.

He relinquished his place to the doctor, and, coming round to where Fred stood, held out his hand. The boy grasped it, and turning his head away as if he would hide the struggle going on within him, said, —

“God bless you, sir! You saved her!”

“And you would have done the same in a moment more — but —”

Fred did not wait for him to finish his sentence, for, at that instant, Sibyl slowly opened her eyes and gazed round the room.

He sprang forward.

“Sibyl — dear Sibyl!”

She smiled faintly, and held out her hand. He took it, but he had no power to fix her glance, and it wandered on uneasily, until it rested upon Ernest Wentworth; and he

could not repress a spasm of pain, as he saw the flush of delight which suffused her pale face when she saw that he was safe.

Did Mr. Wentworth note it too? He came slowly forward, and would have spoken, but Dr. Strong interfered.

“Gentlemen,” he said, “we must have perfect quiet. As I came in, I saw half a dozen ladies coming towards the house. You will best serve us by going out and preventing their coming in here, even by barricades if need be. But — good Heavens!” — he had laid his hand on Fred’s shoulder as he spoke, — “this fellow is yet in his wet clothes. Are you mad, boy? Or do you fancy you have as many lives as a cat? Change them at once, under penalty of seeing me at your bedside for the next month! See to it, Mr. Wentworth!”

“Will she live? Is she out of danger, doctor?” whispered Fred, scarcely heeding the good man’s words.

“Live, yes. Much likelier to than you are, if you are going on this fashion. Away with you at once!”

“Then I may tell her mother!”

He left the room; but, almost before he had closed the door, Mr. Wentworth’s hand was upon his shoulder.

“Monroe,” he said earnestly, “you must not go as you are! Forgive me, that I have not thought of you before. I will send some one to Mrs. Monroe. See, you are trembling from the chill now. Come to my room! I changed my own clothes half an hour since, and yet it would not have hurt me.”

"It would not have hurt *me!*" The words were uttered in a tone of the most sincere interest, but they jarred so discordantly, so painfully, upon the sensitive heart of the youth, that they seemed in that mood like a pæan of triumph, and he turned abruptly away, and hurried down stairs, out into the street.

Even here he heard them — holding up the contrast between him and that iron-nerved, athletic man; and how poor, and weak, and contemptible seemed the life which, like his, was held at the mercy of every change of weather!

O, there are moments when the physical seems all in all, and we forget that it is the spirit alone which giveth life.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A VIOLENT hemorrhage succeeded that night's exposure, and for many days Fred Monroe's life hung upon a hair.

"Not one word of his danger to Miss Sibyl," had been Dr. Strong's orders; and even the garrulous Elsie was frightened into obedience. Indeed, she was almost paralyzed with fear. But she strove to do her best, and she was in all things energetically supported by Amanda Stephens. Fred, notwithstanding their frequent war of words, had been Amanda's childish ideal, and she now watched over him with unwearied care. Mrs. Monroe could scarcely believe that the thoughtful, efficient nurse, who moved around the room so quietly, and comprehended with such ready tact the physician's wishes, could be the woman whose heavy steps, abrupt manners, and blunt speech so often jarred upon her sensitive nerves.

Mr. Wentworth called daily, and daily the sufferer roused himself to send back some cheering message to Sibyl.

"What do you think of him, doctor?" said Mr. Wentworth, one morning, as they left the room together; "it seems to me that he deceives himself."

"He has not many years before him — possibly not many months," was the reply.

Ernest Wentworth looked into the grave, sad face of the doctor a moment, then turned away, and sent for Master Fenn.

The old man came, and it was from him that Sibyl first learned her cousin's danger. She had been tended with the most watchful care by old Mrs. Wentworth, not so much for herself, as because she had saved the life of *her* son.

She was too feeble to analyze her own feelings or those of her friends. She did not even ask the motives of this jealous care on the old lady's part, which permitted no one to wait on her but herself and Winnie. It was enough to know that it was so; that for once, she had some one ready to relieve her of every care, and she yielded to the pleasant dream.

Of Mr. Wentworth she saw little; after that eventful night, he had seemed content to leave her in his mother's hands, and though his manner, when he did come in to ask after her health, was marked by that delicacy and consideration so winning when combined with the conscious strength of manhood, it was at the same time more than usually reserved.

"It would have been all the same to him had I been drowned," thought Sibyl; and the thought was confirmed when she insisted upon returning home with Master Richard, in spite of Mrs. Wentworth's commands to the contrary, and he turned from the window, where he had been standing, and said, in that cold, indifferent tone, —

"Do not urge Miss Monroe, mother; we have no right to keep her from her friends."

It was well that it was so. It helped her to take up again her old duties, and even to cross hands with him over the couch of her suffering cousin, and feel grateful for his firm, unwearied friendship.

Orphan as he was, there was no lack of loving friends about Fred Monroe's bed; and when he was able to leave it, Master Richard's house was open to him; and here, within sight of his birthplace, while the midsummer sun ripened the fruits of the earth for the harvest, he waited for the slow coming of the reaper, Death, while his face caught more and more of that clear, transparent, moonlight look, which seems a reflection from the brightness of the world towards which he was going.

Mrs. Monroe, Amanda, Mrs. Wentworth, and little Winnie were frequent visitors; for there was nothing painful or disagreeable in his condition; but Sibyl never left him. There were no words about this; no one — not even Elsie — remonstrated with her; they felt it must be so, though no one knew his heart but Master Fenn.

The stormy autumnal equinox had confined him many days to the house; but October came, and in its mellow sunshine and genial atmosphere he seemed to gather strength.

"I must go through the woods, and down to the mill pond, once more," he said, one sunny day, turning his eyes from the landscape without, which he had been watching silently, to Miss Silence's face. "You will not refuse me!"

She could not, even though she shook her head sadly, and the tears came in her eyes as she watched him pass along the woodland path, supported by Master Richard and Sibyl. By the time they reached the hill side bars, he was glad to stop; and sitting down upon the rock, which Sibyl cushioned with a spare shawl, he said, sadly,—

"I shall not see the pond to-day, but I can hear the sound of the wheel, and the dash of the water; and yonder was our foot path, Sibyl—it is almost grown over with grass now. How the old days come back!"

It was, indeed, a day for silent memories. The dear old woods, which had shadowed their childish wanderings, each tree familiar as a friend, stood up amid the silent, solemn sunshine, in the gorgeous robes of early autumn; across the fields, gay with the delicate blossoms of the starwort, goldenrod, yarrow, and fragrant everlasting, the sunshine slept in long golden bars, crossed, here and there, with the deep, black shadows of the hemlocks and cedars, around whose trunks, even to the very topmost bough, crept the five-leaved ivy, like a flame of fire; below, the bowl-shaped valley was filled with golden haze, and in the distance, with the stern outline softened to a most blessed benignity, the great granite face looked down upon them; while far in the distance, the mist-enveloped horizon melted into the blue sky above.

A day for solemn memories! So calm and still; each sound so remote—so dream-like; the stray leaves floating so slowly to the ground; the whirr of the partridge; the solemn pace of the robin, pecking at the red capsules of the

wild roses; the whistle of the quail, mocking the plough-boy on the opposite hill; the monotonous, measured beat of the flail in Culver's barn; even the shrill cry of the barn-yard fowls, seemed in that atmosphere unreal, phantom-like, a part of the great world of dreams, through which memory wanders like the gentle Moabiteess gathering up the sheaves of the past; joy and sorrow, trouble and wrong, many hued and many formed, like the leaves of the forest trees.

There was one hope which had been softening to a memory all through the summer months. Should he not speak to her of it now? now that he had learned, by God's mercy, how—

"—— Hope can smile at length
On other hopes gone from us"?

Master Richard had stolen silently away. Sibyl sat gazing down at the old Monroe farm house, thinking of all the air castles they had built about it. Fred did not need the tears that dimmed her eyes to tell him her thought, as she looked up; and he answered it with a faint smile,—

"It will never be, Sibyl. I shall never realize my boyish dream. My home must soon be elsewhere. 'In my Father's house are many mansions;' it is pleasant to know that, Sibyl."

She could not feel it then, not with all those sorrowful thoughts crowding upon her; but to him it seemed a reality, and while she bowed her head upon her hands and wept sorrowfully, he spoke to her of the past—of the hope that had arisen in his heart on that very spot, on the night of

their expulsion from their home, of all that it had been to him, and, without mentioning Mr. Wentworth, very delicately let her see how truly he had read her heart.

"Do not feel so sad, Sibyl—do not weep so; it is past now. That which was such a terrible pain to me six months ago has become a softened memory. Had it been otherwise, as I hoped, life would have been too dear—death so much harder to bear. You will not cease to love me; you will not forget me. You will come sometimes, in your happiness, and stand with those you love around my grave."

"Happiness! O Fred, can I ever be happy again?" He felt her shiver and tremble with the sudden consciousness of all the pain and sorrow she must have cost him; and drawing her hand in his, he said,—

"Don't make me regret that I have told you this, Sibyl. At one time I thought not to do it; but it seemed as if I could not die without speaking."

Not many days later, even before the trees had half cast their leaves, they knelt around his death bed. Ernest Wentworth was there, and supported in his arms the dying youth; while old Master Fenn prayed that "His loving kindness, which is better than life," might infold them all in that sorrowful hour.

"Better than life," was the low murmur the gentleman caught from those stiffening lips; and he turned away his head to conceal his tears.

Ay, then he had found that there was something in life worthy of tears.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE mental struggle of the last months, the silent, sorrowful self-reproach, that, in spite of her better reason, would come when she thought of Fred's confession, the anguish of his loss, left Sibyl very miserable, both in body and mind.

She was "not ill," she said; and she continued to go about her duties, but in a kind of dull, stupefied misery, difficult to describe, because it is hueless, like a drear November day, having neither light nor shadow.

She had no interest in the world for good or ill; she stood apart, while it whirled on and on, in a kind of confused storm waltz, offering no resting place, no foothold to her. Why should she attempt to take her place there again?

She had lost hope and trust. Who has not, at some time in his life, done the same?

The knowledge that Fred had left her the few thousands he had already realized from his invention, and the exclusive right to all that might accrue from it, roused her for a moment.

"I should advise you to sell out your right, Sibyl," said old Master Richard, who made this communication. "It is awkward property for a woman, and Mr. Leffingwell is anxious to buy it. What do you say?"

"Sell it at once, and pay over the proceeds to Mr. Wentworth," she said.

"He will never accept the money, Sibyl."

"He *must*! What right has he to refuse? Is not my father's memory as dear to me as his to him? and has he not devoted his life to clearing his father's name from the dishonor of bankruptcy?" she replied, impatiently.

It is well said that the providences that create us, that wait and watch to mould us into the image of the Highest, do not always wear angel faces. They are often rough and stern; too painful, even after years have unfolded to us their true traits, to be dwelt upon with pleasure. Some such still awaited Sibyl.

One stormy, winter evening, as she sat alone in the parlor, long after her mother and Amanda had retired, she was startled by a noise without, as if some one rapidly turned the blinds. She lifted her head and listened; presently the movement was repeated, and she fancied she heard some one speak her name. To satisfy herself, she arose, crossed the room, just raised the sash, and asked, —

"Who is there?"

"It is I; for Heaven's sake let me in! and be quick about it, if you can."

She recognized the voice at once. It was Willie; and hastening to the door, she gave him admittance.

He darted past, and when she joined him by the parlor stove, she was shocked at his wild, haggard look. Some exclamation rose to her lips, but he interrupted her in a tone scarce above a whisper.

"Don't shriek out or multiply words, Sibyl! I can explain my wants briefly. In the first place, I am tired, and wet, and cold, and hungry. You must get me some food as quickly and as quietly as possible. In the second place, you must let no one know of my arrival—above all, mamma. If any one asks for me, which is not likely, you must swear that I am not here. Do you understand?"

He might well ask. His whole look and manner were coarse and vehement as his words, and she stared at him in astonishment.

"Why must I do this?" she said, at length.

"Because I choose it—because I am in trouble," he said, with a muttered oath.

Quick as lightning a terrible suspicion flashed upon her mind, and she clasped her hands, crying, —

"O Willie! Willie!"

He seized her by the arm, almost fiercely — "Don't be a fool, Sibyl! You will wake the whole house!" Then catching a glimpse of her face, he seemed moved by its expression, and said, more gently, —

"Sister, if you are, I need shelter—rest. I have not slept in two nights. If you can conceal me for this one night, you may save us both much trouble. If mother knows I am here, her folly will surely betray me. You have only to deny me to every one that inquires. It's all I ask."

"But that would be false, brother."

"False!" The oath that burst from his lips would have

startled a less sound sleeper than Elsie Monroe, and even he glanced hastily at the door of her bedroom, as he went on.

"Would you give me up to shame? Would you kill her"—and he pointed towards her door—"for a scruple about a few words? You were always selfish, Sibyl; but I did not expect this."

She lifted her head, and, though her heart felt keenly this unwarranted taunt, she concealed it, and said, firmly,—

"I will do any thing but lie for you, Willie. I do not believe that is necessary. Will you trust me?"

"I must," he muttered; "besides, you forget I am starving."

She placed before him food, which he devoured eagerly; and when his hunger was appeased, she led him to her own room, as one least likely to be invaded by the officers of the law, who she suspected would be on his track. Besides, it communicated with Amanda's room, from whence it was not difficult to escape by means of the shed roof which adjoined.

She explained this to him, and for a moment he seemed grateful for her forethought; but as she was turning away, he said,—

"I must have money, Sibyl. I can do nothing without it. Give me what you have in the house. It is the last probably for which I shall ever ask."

She went below for her purse. As she unlocked the drawer, her mother called out in that drawling tone peculiar to the but half wakened sleeper,—

"Sibyl, who is there?"

"No one but myself, mamma."

"I was dreaming, then. I thought I heard Willie's voice. Go to bed, child. The storm is terrible."

Sibyl waited until her regular breathing assured her that she again slept, before she ascended to her brother.

He was leaning over the banisters in an attitude of listening, and as she met him, he whispered, angrily,—

"So you have waked her, you dolt! I thought you had more sense."

It was not to spare their mother pain, but to secure his own safety, that he insisted upon keeping her in ignorance; and this thought brought the hot blood to Sibyl's cheek, who replied,—

"Our mother had been dreaming—dreaming of you, Willie. If I did not tell her, it was only to save her a few hours of pain. She has a right to know all, especially when you are concerned."

The wretched youth quailed beneath her glance; but the next instant his eye flashed with a kind of greedy delight, for she placed her purse in his hands.

Sibyl went down and threw herself upon the sofa,—not to sleep; that was not possible,—but to wait and watch for the morning. Yet what could that bring but sorrow? There was a hardness and indifference about her brother that terrified and shocked her.

She thought not so much of his danger as of the crime which had brought the danger; for crime she knew it must

be, though he had refused to tell her that. Her thoughts went back to their early days, even to the time when he came to gladden her young life—the baby brother whom she had worshipped. Could this indeed be he? She started up, and stole stealthily up stairs, as if to convince herself; but the half-uttered oath with which he started at the sound of her light footsteps, frightened her, and sent her back to her uneasy couch.

“What, you up so early, Miss Sibyl?” said Amanda, when she made her appearance below at an early hour the next morning. “What’s the matter? You look as if you hadn’t shut your eyes in all night.”

Sibyl said something about the storm; but the faithful girl, whose watchful love amounted to a kind of reverence, was not to be deceived. She said nothing further just then, but went on with her preparations for breakfast, glancing occasionally at the pale, hollow face of her young mistress.

At last, putting down her knife, and, coming up to Sibyl, she said, —

“There are no two ways about it, Miss Sibyl; you are in trouble, and it ain’t about the storm neither. I don’t want to push myself into your affairs, as I used to when we were children, down at Eltham. I hope I have learned better manners since. Besides, your treatment of me only makes me feel more and more every day the difference between us. All I want to say is, if it is any thing in which I can help you, you have only to speak the word.”

The flashing eyes were full of tears, and Sibyl said, gratefully, —

“I know it, Amanda; and there is no one I would trust sooner. But—now I can tell you only this: I am in trouble, and I wish to keep it from mamma. You must help me; and be sure and keep the back and front doors locked, and open them to no one until you have asked me. Do you understand?”

The girl stood a moment in blank astonishment, at orders so different from any thing she expected; but slowly a light began to break over her confused face, and she said, with a decided nod, —

“Trust me, Sibyl; no one will get in unless I choose. I thought,” she muttered to herself, as her mistress turned away, “that it might be something them Drummonds had been sayin’. They are always afraid somebody will like her better than them. I heard ’em the other day, when I was in Mrs. Monroe’s kitchen — ‘A proper young person enough for her station.’ I hope she’ll live to wipe her shoes on ’em yet; and they are just the folks to let her, if she was only rich enough. I want to snap off their heads, just as I used to the poppies down in our old garden, every time I hear ’em talk in that way.”

Whatever feelings of forgiveness Amanda might cherish towards her own enemies, it was very evident that she had little for those whom she suspected of underrating Sibyl.

Fortunately Mrs. Monroe did not feel well that morning. The storm had disturbed her rest, and Sibyl easily persuaded her to take her breakfast in bed. Amanda’s suspicions were confirmed when she saw her young mistress take

a tray of provisions up stairs; but she asked no questions. Sibyl's foot had scarcely reached the landing, when there came a loud knock at the front door. Notwithstanding she had been expecting it all the morning, she came near dropping the tray in her fright, which was heightened by the appearance of her brother's face at the door of his room, and his eager whisper, —

"Keep them out, Sibyl! Keep them out for a few minutes, and go down and see if the back yard is clear."

She hastened down in time to hear Amanda say, in the irritable tone which so often characterizes the voice of one suddenly roused from sleep, —

"Don't bang the door down! The milk won't sour, I guess, until I can get my clothes on."

She passed through to the kitchen. The back yard was clear; for the person stationed there had drawn close in under the porch that sheltered the kitchen door, to escape the fierceness of the storm.

She flew back, while Amanda still carried on a fretful colloquy with the person whom it pleased her to take for the milkman, and informed her brother of this.

"But had you not better stay, Willie?" she said, anxiously. "There are closets up garret; had you not better trust to us?"

"And be caught! No."

They were already in Amanda's room. He cautiously raised the window, and creeping slowly along the wet, sleety roof, dropped to the ground.

Forgetful of the loud altercation going on below, Sibyl watched him breathlessly, as he crawled rather than walked across the plat of ground belonging to her house, and scaling the fence, ran like a deer across the open field that lay between them and the street. She did not know, that, sheltered beneath the high board fence that divided this lot from the street, there were two men watching, who seized him even before his feet touched the ground. Even had she known it, her heart could scarcely have been heavier than it was when she descended and bade Amanda open the door.

The burst of indignation about to be discharged upon the head of Amanda, by the person upon the steps, was changed into quite a gentlemanlike greeting at the sight of Sibyl.

"I beg pardon, ma'am, for disturbing you so early," said the man, "but I was told that this is the house of Mrs. Elsie Monroe. I have pressing business with her son William. Can I see him?"

"He is not here, sir. Will you walk in?"

The man looked suspiciously, with his keen, penetrating eyes, in Sibyl's face, and seemed for a second at fault. But he accepted her invitation, saying, as he closed the door, and shut out the wintry sleet, —

"I believe my duty will oblige me to, ma'am." Then, with another glance at her face, he added, with visible concern, —

"You are the young man's sister, I suppose."

She bowed.

"I'm sorry to disturb you, but I shall be under the necessity of searching the house. Here is my warrant." He drew from his pocket a paper, as he added, "The young man has been guilty of crime. His employer has, for some time, missed articles of value from his store, and the theft has at last been traced home to William Monroe."

"It's false! false as your own heart, man! Out of my house with your lies! Sibyl, how can you stand there and permit him to say such things! Drive him out!"

Sibyl had turned with the rest, and stood gazing at her mother who appeared in the parlor doorway, a Cashmere dressing gown hastily wrapped around her, while her whole face and figure were glowing with scorn, indignation, and unutterable contempt.

"What ails the man, that he does not move! Turn him out, I say!" she added.

"I fear we have no power, mamma. He has the law on his side, and we must submit. His search cannot harm us."

"Assuredly not, if he is mean enough to make it; and doubtless he is, if he is mean enough to prefer such charges against an innocent boy," said the mother, haughtily. "Here, man," she continued, as, with an air of ineffable disdain, she swept across the parlor and swung back her bedroom door, "this is my room. Search it carefully; perhaps he is in that wardrobe, or under the bed. My daughter and that girl yonder will show you theirs. Be sure you leave no corner unsearched. We are only three

women, with no one to protect us. You may as well have all the aid this fact can give you."

The man turned to Sibyl in evident trouble.

"It's a hard duty, and an unpleasant one. I have no desire to make it worse than it is," he began; but he was interrupted by the opening of the door, and a person calling out, —

"It's all up with him! Tison and Jones caught him as he attempted to escape the back way. They are coming this way now."

The sudden opening of the door had attracted all eyes in that direction; even as the man spoke, Willie was passing, closely guarded by his captors. The mother recognized him at once, and, stretching forth her arms with a cry of agony, she sank fainting to the floor.

Those were very miserable days that followed — days which tried the friendship of the many; and, alas! the many were found wanting. But they proved the friendship of the few who remained faithful, and added to that list one whose countenance was as a tower of strength to them in that hour. For the first time old Mrs. Wentworth came to their house, not from curiosity, nor a vain desire to show patronage, but as a friend; and her strong will did much to rouse the miserable mother. Ernest was absent on business; but Master Fenn and Miss Silence were there, and the poor, too, whom Sibyl had aided in their troubles — they did not forget her.

CHAPTER XXX.

ALONG Centre Street, among wretched, forlorn-looking women, bloated, blear-eyed men, half-naked, swollen-limbed, scrofulous children, who bore the sins of their parents written legibly upon their foreheads — past dirty alleys and dark, filthy cellars, from whence issued a conglomeration of odors that might poison the lungs of a whole city — went two delicate-looking women, escorted by a policeman.

Neither mother nor daughter was conscious of these things. All their thoughts were concentrated upon that spot, where dark, and stern, and terrible rise the walls of the city prison, — the Tombs, — the fearful but necessary growth of that most God-forsaken region.

Our readers have recognized them, of course. Nothing could keep Elsie Monroe away from her son. As soon as she was able to arise from the bed where the first terrible shock had laid her, she insisted upon going to New York; and, finding all remonstrances vain, Sibyl had consented.

Indeed, when the first shock had gone by, Elsie manifested more courage and hope than any of them. Her unshaken faith in Willie's innocence, and the indignation which she felt towards his accusers, gave her strength. He was, in

her view, the victim of some villanous plot, from which he would come out triumphant. Sibyl longed to undeceive her — to prepare her for what she felt must come; but the first attempt was met with such a shower of grief and reproach, not unmingled with anger, that she did not venture to try it again.

Then, sometimes, she doubted her own judgment. He might be innocent after all. Those suspicious circumstances which had brought such terror to her and poor Fred might be easily explained, perhaps. Of course she could never speak of them to another; still she prepared for their journey with a heavy heart.

"If my son Ernest were here, he would know just what course to pursue," old Mrs. Wentworth had said to Sibyl, the day before their departure. But Sibyl knew just how his keen sense of rectitude would lead him to look at the affair. She remembered her father's crime, and felt the absence of Ernest Wentworth an infinite relief. Henceforth their paths lay far apart.

All the arrangements for their journey fell upon her. She must purchase tickets, look after hackmen, baggage, and lodgings; but the excitement left her when she stood within the shadow of those dreary walls, and she followed their conductor through the dismal corridors with slow and heavy feet.

As usual, there was a party of curious visitors there — young ladies, to whom a prison was a novelty, accompanied by an elderly gentleman, upon whom they drew largely for information.

He seemed to be quite posted up in the prison life, for he pointed out each cell, and the crime of the inmate, — here a murderer and there a pirate, or burglar, — amid exclamations of horror from his party.

They barred the way along the narrow corridor, and Sibyl and her mother were obliged to wait until they could pass, consequently could not avoid overhearing a portion of their conversation.

"74 — let me see — whom have we here?" said the gentleman. "I forget. Who is it, sir?" and he turned to an official.

"74 — ah, only a young fellow for theft."

"O, my!" But the young lady's ejaculation was cut short by a request from the conductor of Sibyl and her mother for her party to make way for them to pass; and her look suddenly changed to genuine pity and commiseration, as she saw them enter that cell.

He must have been less than human who had not been touched by the frantic joy of the mother when she again clasped her son in her arms, and Willie could not but feel and respond to it. But when she overcame her emotion, and went on to speak of his innocence, he maintained a moody silence, and, when forced to speak, said, abruptly, —

"Don't make a fool of yourself, mother. I am here, and here I have got to stay until after the trial. Money might possibly buy me off — such things are done every day; but you haven't got it, and there's no use in talking."

"Buy you off!" cried the mother, her face aglow with

indignation; "give money to the villain who has brought all this disgrace and trouble upon us! I have no doubt he hoped we would do so; but he shall take your place if there is any such thing as justice left. I'm astonished that you should make such a proposition, my son."

She happened to catch his eye fairly as she turned towards him, and something there — some expression which her words had called forth, and which he had not the art to conceal — staggered her. She gazed again; he sullenly turned his face away. Clutching his arm, she cried, —

"It cannot be. O Willie, Willie! Speak, and tell me it is not true!"

He remained silent. He dared not deny his guilt, with that cry in his ears; and the miserable mother stood as if transfixed, gazing at him; while it seemed to Sibyl as if the shades of death were gathering over her, so fixed, so pale, so rigid, was she: then, slowly unlocking her hand from his arm, she clasped both hands above her head, with a motion as if she would ward off some heavy blow, and sank senseless to the floor.

The brother and sister silently raised her, and laid her on the pallet bed. The room contained nothing in the way of restoratives save a cup of water; and while Sibyl bathed her temples and chafed her hands, she could not help feeling that it might be well if she should never awake to a sense of her misery again.

But she had not yet gathered the full harvest which her foolish indulgence had sown years before; and she opened

her eyes, glanced at the bare walls, the face of her idol boy, and closed them again with a low groan.

"Mother," said Willie, lifting his face from his hands, where he had bowed it as if to shut out that sight, "this is no place for you. You cannot help me, and you had best not come here again. Sibyl can come, if necessary; and, if you choose, you can get counsel, and see what can be done."

"Willie, you spoke of money; is there any hope? Will money buy you off?" cried the mother, eagerly.

"It might, for this man is mean and miserly, and ——"

"Then you shall be free, my child! Sibyl, you have Fred's legacy. You will not spare it to keep him from a prison; think of it—among murderers and felons!" and the thin, white hands were clasped tightly over her eyes, as if to keep out the horrible vision. "Why don't you speak, child?"

"It is no longer mine, mamma;" and in a few words she told them of her disposal of the property. Elsie scarcely heard her out.

"Given it to Mr. Wentworth! Left yourself and us beggars! Sibyl, were you mad?"

Mrs. Monroe sat upright now, staring Sibyl in the face.

"Not *given*, mamma. It is gone where it was justly due—to pay papa's debt. Remember that he ruined them."

"You are a fool, and always will be, Sibyl!" said Willie, angrily, disappointed in this sudden hope of escape. "To give up your money for a whim like that! But perhaps

you had other hopes, miss. I am not so blind as you think."

"Willie, Willie!" cried the mother, in a tone of reproach.

The quick blood which her brother's taunt brought to the neck and cheek of Sibyl retreated and left her pale as death. "Mother," she said, firmly, "to you and Willie that deed of my father may seem a whim, a trifle; but to me it is otherwise. It has darkened my life. The money was my own, and I did with it as I thought best. I did not anticipate such a case as this; but even if I had, I should scarcely have done otherwise. I can still work for you, mother, and as long as I have health and strength, I have no fears."

"Of course; I have no doubt you did what you thought right, Sibyl," said the mother, soothingly, touched by her daughter's tears; "but it's what one in a hundred would not have thought of doing. I wish you had consulted me. Of course, no one could foresee this," she added, sorrowfully.

"You might have foreseen it years ago, mother," said Willie, turning upon her his handsome face, with that cold, wicked, hardened look, which Sibyl had felt, rather than seen, at their first meeting. "You might have known it if you had ever considered the training you gave me—the difference between my habits and my means."

She shrunk from his words as if they had been daggers.

When Sibyl returned to their lodgings, she found a note from old Master Fenn. A severe attack of rheumatism had prevented him from accompanying them to New York, and he now wrote to recommend them to employ as coun-

sel a Mr. Longley, a lawyer of some note in the city. "He is Mr. Wentworth's friend and counsellor in legal matters, and will be able to settle your business if any one can," added the old man.

Sibyl sought him out; but one or two interviews with the prisoner convinced him of the hopelessness of the case, and he kindly but explicitly prepared them for the result.

"The missing articles found in his possession do not amount in value to the sum of twenty-five dollars; therefore they cannot make grand larceny of the offence; and he will not be sent to Sing Sing, but to Blackwell's Island, for a term of time, at the option of the judge," said the gentleman. "The only hope is in a petition for pardon to the governor; and if you had any testimonials as to his previous good character, it might possibly be successful, as this is his first offence."

"Why have we not thought of this before?" cried the mother, starting up from her stupor of despair. "There is Mr. Wallace, and Messrs. Le Clerc & Co., of Paris. He brought testimonials from them. You remember, Sibyl, he showed them to Mr. Wallace and Master Fenn."

They did apply to Mr. Wallace, only to find that the French testimonials had been of questionable authority, and that Mr. Wallace's opinion was any thing but in his favor.

"Only surprised that the lad has not brought up where he is before," that gentleman said to Mr. Longley. "I bore with him for my old friend Richard Fenn's sake; he had

some interest in the boy; but it was of no use. He was a sharp lad enough at business — a little *too* sharp for one so young; but bad hours, bad company, bad habits, have been his ruin. They cost not only money, but life, sir."

Of course there was no hope of getting the wretched, misguided boy clear, and he was sentenced to Blackwell's Island for a three months' term.

Then he seemed to realize, for the first time, that he was a convicted felon; but even then it was his pride that was touched rather than his conscience. He could not bear the thought of eating, laboring, mingling with felons. His fastidious physical sense shrank from the contamination, — would that his moral sense had been as keen, — and in his last sorrowful interview between himself and his mother and sister, he threw aside his air of bravado, and begged pitiously that they would find some means to get him free.

Before Sibyl left the city she received a letter from Mr. Wentworth. She had never received a line from him before, but she knew the handwriting of the address at once. She would have known it among a thousand, so regular, clear, firm, and decided; no tremulous, uncertain strokes, no running of one letter into the other to provoke uncertainty or irritability. It made her strong to look at it. The days of miracles are not past; there are those even now on earth, in the touch of whose garments there are healing and strength; who has not met them and thanked God for the same?

The note was dated Rockville, and contained a decided

and indignant refusal of her offer to transfer to him Fred's bequest.

"Master Richard tells me," he wrote, "that to cancel this obligation of your father has been the aim of your life. I am very sorry, I confess, — disappointed, — to learn that this aim should be one which must necessarily include such a low, sordid estimate of me; the more so when I reflect that many months' residence under the same roof, and years of acquaintance, seem only to have confirmed it. I cannot submit to this estimate even to gratify you. I beg leave to refuse your offer. Master Fenn will tell you that the papers relating to this business are destroyed. I trust you will forget that they ever existed, and that your aim henceforth may be such as will include justice to others."

Mr. Wentworth was vexed — that was evident; yet why should the estimate of his daughter's teacher disturb the haughty man? He did not ask himself that question. Like the proud, self-willed being as he was, he expected his laws to fulfil themselves. Moreover, Sibyl had become necessary to him. She possessed just that combination of strength and feminine grace that he admired. She knew how to hold her tongue — she did not fret him with an exacting manner, like Miss Drummond; he liked to have her near him; her quiet ways soothed him; he liked to know, even if he seldom called, that she was there in her quiet home; that he could see her any time he chose to make the effort — the autocrat! that he could listen to her voice and study her thoughtful face. All these things were pleasant

breaks in his harassed business life. He never thought of danger to her; he was not vain; or, if he had been so, he had left that period far behind. She was too wise to misunderstand him; he felt that. He was a wise man in most things, — this Ernest Wentworth, — but he did not know with what a wonderful, mysterious power the soft, yielding moss impresses its image upon the clear, hard agate. That he had yet to learn.

CHAPTER XXXI.

SIBYL had not the trouble she anticipated in persuading her mother to return to Rockville. When the excitement of the trial and sentence was over, the poor woman sank into a state of helpless despondency — an apathy, accompanied by almost childish helplessness.

She would sit for hours looking at a miniature of Willie, taken when he was at school among the Highlands, without speaking or altering a muscle of her countenance; or lie whole days on the sofa, making a low, whimpering moan, which was far more terrible to hear than her old-time bursts of passionate tears.

Dr. Strong said it was "a nervous weakness," and recommended "cheerful society, change of air," &c., &c.; but she wholly refused to listen to either of these propositions. Then the doctor said they must "trust to time;" and only those who have watched over a friend in like condition can understand how long that time seemed to Sibyl, or appreciate the influence of such a trial on a person of her sensitive temperament. It is the slow torture; and it seemed to Sibyl sometimes as if a paroxysm of raving insanity would be a relief. Of course her school was scattered;

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possibly she would have found it difficult to gather it again, even if she had felt disposed to make the attempt. Amanda took from her, with the manner of a despot, all domestic care, and thought it kindness; yet she never more needed the influence of active employment.

Sitting there, day after day, in that quiet room whose shaded light added to its still lifelessness, hope seemed to fade to a dream, a mocking vision; the future opened no promise, and she felt a kind of dreary indifference to life, a longing to reach forward to the close — to have done with at least its earthly toils.

Nervous debility had much to do with this state, no doubt; but — do not sneer, reader — nerves are, unfortunately, as liable to disarrangement as any other part of this human mechanism; and moreover, every one is not so fortunate as to leave the Slough of Despond behind him at the outset as Christian did. Sloughs of Despond are frequently encountered on the path of life.

Sometimes the resolute Amanda drove her forth for fresh air, bluntly affirming as an excuse that she would be "worse than her mother if she cooped herself up thus."

And these walks did her good. It was not alone the fresh air; the faces that met her with a smile and kind greeting, had a cheerier look than when they showed themselves with their court dress of sympathy in the wan light of her mother's room — the voices a heartier tone. She could even endure Mrs. Drummond's shrill-voiced condolences about that "dreadful affair," and her "poor mamma," even if half the town heard them, with some grace.

On one of these occasions she met Mr. Wentworth. As she turned the corner of a street, she saw him several rods distant, talking to his cousin, Miss Agnes; but as she advanced, the lady walked gayly up the street, and the gentleman, observing her, as he turned, slightly bowed, and entered the half confectionery and half florist's shop in front of which he and Miss Drummond had been standing. It was the first time Sibyl had seen him since her return from New York. Mrs. Wentworth and Winnie were at the sea side; and after that note she had hardly expected him to call. She felt convinced now; but there was a sharpness about the truth that made her shrink a little beneath her shawl, and walk a little faster in order to avoid the possibility of a meeting.

Just as she reached the door, he came out; had he been waiting he could not have been more exact. As she was about to pass him with a bow, he spoke, uttered some casual remark about the weather, just as if they had been accustomed to meet daily, and placing in her hand a small bouquet of white violets, passed on.

Was it a peace offering? Sibyl took it as such. It was no unusual thing for him to bring home flowers when she was at his house; his stern mother was fond of them; but she was glad to see that he remembered her tastes; glad that he was not angry; and the white, creamy petals of the flowers lightened the darkness of her mother's room for many days, while the air was filled with their perfume.

Sweet as it was, it led to no intoxicating dreams — it did not smother truth. She was too wise now to attempt to

cheat or compromise with this sternest, most exacting of all God's angels; she knew how idle and futile the attempt — but it helped her to face it; it gave her strength to hold it fast, and scan it in its nakedness — to hear it said that the hand that gave the fragrant gift was promised to Miss Drummond, and even to see him, many times, pass her in the street with scarce a look of recognition; for she felt that there was friendliness at his heart.

As the term of Willie's sentence drew towards a close, Mrs. Monroe began gradually to rouse herself, and take some thought for the future; and she could tolerate no future that did not lie far away from Rockville. Like all weak-minded people, to do right seemed a thing more dependent on circumstances than the heart, and she could not bear the idea of Willie's returning there, to face all their former acquaintance. She never seemed to doubt his repentance; but it would be so much easier for him to do right where he was unknown.

It was in vain that Sibyl and Master Richard urged that temptation and evil are every where, and maintained the wisdom of meeting them among kind, thoughtful friends; she was deaf to their reasoning, and Sibyl, at last, gave a reluctant consent.

Indeed, it seemed as if Mrs. Monroe had come to hold her in some way responsible for Willie's future conduct; as if there were some talismanic power in her presence to keep him from evil.

"There is room enough at the west for us, and we may be proud of Willie yet, Sibyl," the mother would plead;

"besides, you have no ties here; it is so fortunate that you never cared for friends, like other girls; it will be so easy for you to leave, child."

No ties! How strangely we misjudge those with whom we clasp hands daily! How sorely they feel it sometimes, too! And yet it is well. The nearest, most passionately beloved heart is but human, judging through the film of earth, laying itself bare in its strength and weakness only to the clear eye of the Omniscient Goodness. No ties! Who could measure the clinging, reverent affection that bound her to Master Richard and Miss Silence, or the tenderness with which she clung to each spot consecrated by memories of Fred and mother Mabel—the wood, the hills, rocks, and waters, which had become a part of her being?

The affairs of the Monroes were duly discussed by the people of Rockville, especially this project of going west. Most thought it the best thing they could do.

"Of course, they would not want to stay here where every body knew them. If it was our case, we should never be able to hold up our heads again, that is certain," &c.

None more loudly expressed approbation of this plan than Mrs. Drummond. She always thought "that Miss Monroe a sensible girl, and she was glad to find that she was not mistaken. She did not doubt but they would do well out there. Sibyl's education, which was just that of any ordinary girl here, would give her a position out there; she might marry well—who knew? Certainly, it was the wisest thing they could do. Did not Ernest think so?"

And Ernest, whose face was always on such occasions as

unreadable as the Sphinx, at least to Mrs. Drummond, turned away without reply, reserving his opinion for those most interested.

Indeed, the plan was little likely to meet either the approval of his head or heart. It was "absurd, ridiculous, a piece of mere folly; none but a woman would ever have entertained it for a moment." Yet, in spite of these not very complimentary opinions which his mother's reference to the subject at the breakfast table had called forth, he did not hesitate to call at the cottage, and earnestly expostulate with Mrs. Monroe; with little success, however; for opposition only made her cling more tenaciously to her plan; and hopeless of influencing her, he turned to Sibyl.

She acknowledged the force of his arguments. She was touched by the earnest friendliness, the almost tenderness, of his manner; but she felt that her mother's happiness, perhaps her reason, depended on this plan—that it was her duty to go.

"Duty! have you no duties save to your mother and brother, Miss Monroe? None to yourself, or your other friends?" he said rather impatiently one day, when she had replied to him by uttering that one word.

"Yes, many," she replied, looking up pleasantly from her work; "but I have always found that by doing duties which seemed to me the plainest and nearest, I best fulfilled the others. To me," she added, thoughtfully, "the path seems plain; and knowing this to be so, I can hardly think you wish to shake my resolve."

"Not merely to shake it, but to change it," he said, de-

cidedly. "I think your notions of duty morbid; I have some reason for the statement, I think," he added with a smile, as he saw her start and look up as she recalled his note. "Any view of duty that leads one to assume to himself the obligations which are plainly binding upon other people, however beautiful it may seem, is a positive wrong to himself and the others. There are, doubtless, exceptions; but, generally, it is merely giving 'aid and comfort' to selfishness — making bad worse. Pardon me, Sibyl," (he had sometimes called her thus in the long watchings by the bedside of Fred Monroe,) "pardon me for speaking a thought which has been often forced upon me during your residence here. I do not think that either your mother or brother has any right to ask, much less expect, this sacrifice of you. You know little about the trials of life in the far west; the discomforts of a half civilized home; the changes, the sharp disappointments, that will await you there."

"You doubt my brother's amendment," she said, quickly, reading the thought in his face rather than his words. "You do not trust him. Speak freely. You have seen him, and I am anxious to know your thought."

"It would not be true to say that I distrust him entirely," he said, slowly. "I have seen him more than once, and, I confess, my impression of his sincerity is not the most favorable. But I may be mistaken. You, who know him best, ought to be the best judge."

"Then there is the more reason why mamma and I should keep him with us," she said, scarcely heeding the last clause of his remark; "and we must indeed go."

Mr. Wentworth paced the room, silently, a few moments, then pausing before her, said, impatiently, —

"There is no *must* about it, save in your own mind. If you would but look upon it like a sensible woman, and not like a romantic school girl, — if you would but firmly refuse to go, — they would be obliged to give it up."

"Mr. Wentworth, I have said that my mother's heart is in the plan. You are too devoted a son not to comprehend my feelings." She spoke hastily, for it seemed to her that he was hard to press her thus; and the tears sprang to her eyes, as she added, —

"They are all that I have. Why should I not make their lot mine? Why should I stay here?"

He thrust back the words that sprang to his lips; he shut them back, and manacled them by the strong effort of his will. He would have no such follies as these, no such weakness, which must end only in disappointment and repentance. Had he not learned the lesson once? So he said, calmly, —

"There are many here who will miss you. Master Richard and Miss Silence, Winnie and my mother. Kinship is not always the best assurance of appreciation. You will not go, Sibyl!"

For a moment she yielded to the spell of that clear, decided tone. It seemed as if there was destiny in its quiet determination; but she roused herself, and answered, —

"These have enough to love them, the others none but me. I shall go."

CHAPTER XXXII.

MR. WENTWORTH'S words were, indeed, prophetic. They did not go. It had never occurred to the poor fond mother that her cherished scheme could fail through the conduct of the very person for whose benefit it was planned. But Willie took his destiny into his own hands. His experience of prison life, and the influences he came under there, had any thing but a salutary effect upon him; and, however he might view the matter while within the walls, he felt no disposition to be "tied to her apron string" when he got free again.

Instead of the repentant boy, which the mother's arms were reaching out to clasp, there came only a letter, — a short, hurried letter, — to say that he had joined a company that were going to the newly-discovered gold regions in California, and they need trouble themselves no further about him.

It must have been that the boy had no conception of the love his mother bore him, of the life of unwearied sacrifice she was now willing to live for him, or he would not have written just in that way. It was a cruel letter, and pierced her heart even more keenly than had the knowledge of his

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guilt. That was terrible; but all through it there had run one light streak — his love for her. This now went out in a darkness that made her very heartstrings shiver, and she gave way entirely.

Ah, could old Lydia Blair have looked upon her then! Even her stern justice would have been tempered with mercy.

There were no weak, querulous complaints now, no false pride seeking to hide the truth; the anguish was too real for subterfuge or triviality, and it imparted to her manner a dignity which commanded respect as well as pity.

Do we speak too often of clouds and shadows, reader? — not of the quick, black thundercloud that flashes out its anger in fiery darts and is gone, but of long, dreary, tintless, gloomy days, when all light is mixed with a sodden gray, a lifeless atmosphere, which seems to settle lower and lower, crushing out faith and hope?

It is because we have found that, both in the physical and moral world, these are the most frequent, and far the hardest to bear. Yet we know that now, as of old, the fire and the cloud still lead to the promised land; that behind the thick darkness the stars sit calm and serene, unchangeable as God's truth.

It was very hard, and sometimes Sibyl feared the clouds would never lift; but light came at last, and from a quarter wholly unexpected.

"Mamma," she said, looking up from the letter which a kind neighbor had brought from the office, over which she

had been looking, for the last ten minutes, with a puzzled expression, "have you any relatives of the name of Cook — Abigail Cook?"

Once, Mrs. Monroe would have been curious; now, she merely shook her head, without looking up.

"Well, here is a letter from a person of that name, who says she is your aunt, and that she is coming here to make us a visit. Think, mamma; who can she be? Abigail Cook."

"Abigail Cook," repeated Elsie, rousing herself, as if she had but then comprehended her daughter's words; "my mother had a half sister, who married a Cook. I think her name was Abigail; I am not sure, for we always spoke of her as aunt Cook, though I never saw her. I think she must be dead long ago — she was older than mother."

"No, she is not dead; see! this is her writing — old fashioned, round, and firm; if she is like that, she is a hale old lady yet; and she is coming here. Mr. Longley, whom we knew in New York, — our lawyer, you remember, mamma," — she hesitated to name Willie, — "is coming with her. He married her granddaughter, it seems."

Mrs. Monroe was partially roused; by means of that simple, but kindly-expressed letter, Sibyl led her back to the days of her early childhood, and the effort brought its reward. It took her out of the weary, black present; and partly by caressing entreaties, and partly by adroitly-put queries, the daughter learned, in a short half hour, more of her mother's own family than she had before in her whole

life. But of the expected guest, whose coming had thus already stirred with life the still atmosphere of that room, she could learn but little, beyond the fact that her grandmother had been much attached to her, — as much as if she had been her own sister, — and that she had married, and gone to Ohio, when that state was the frontier of civilization.

There was a bustle in the house — not a necessary bustle, but a sort of understood thing between Sibyl and Amanda — an affectionate *ruse*, to keep alive this newly-excited interest in the mother, and their ignorance succeeded in drawing her to the kitchen, to superintend the cream cakes and other delicacies; and fortunately, these were scarcely cold before the guest arrived; Mr. Longley only pausing on his way to Boston long enough to introduce her, and exchange with his former clients a friendly greeting.

There are some persons who have a peculiar power of communicating happiness; it seems to be neither dependent on their will nor their wisdom; they do it involuntarily, as the flower gives out fragrance; they bear an atmosphere about them at once genial and bracing — June natures, that carry warmth and vitality to the exhausted, despairing spirit, just as June days quicken with life the vegetable world.

Such a one was aunt Cook. Though nearly seventy, she was still hale and hearty; her deep-blue eyes retained much of the vivacity of youth, and her complexion something of its freshness, like a fine apple, long kept, a little withered without, perhaps, but sound and fresh flavored at

the core. You felt that she had garnered the sunshine of those seventy summers in her heart. It was good to be near her; and Elsie felt her presence like a balm.

Though very decided and energetic, even peremptory in matters of importance, she did not trouble herself to sermonize on every little fault or mood elicited by the friction of daily life. She knew when and how to leave people alone, though few things escaped her clear eye. Therefore, when Elsie chose to confine herself to the sofa, with her head buried among the pillows for hours, she did not expostulate — she merely sent Amanda to the hotel, to order a horse and carriage, and when it came, reminded her that Sibyl and she were waiting for her to accompany them down to Master Richard's, or to some other place of interest.

The intimation might be, as it usually was, met with refusals, entreaties to be left alone, hysterical assertions that she should die before they had gone a mile. The old lady did not contradict her; she only talked of the sunshine and pleasant weather, and under the pressure of her resistless will, the invalid found herself bonneted and shawled, and in the carriage, almost before she knew it; and by the time she again reached her own door, had usually put off all thought of dying, at least for the time being. She was learning what a great many had learned before her — that it is not so easy to die as we think.

To Sibyl the old lady's presence was a cordial, and very cordially they plotted and planned together. She did not often speak of their past history, though from some words of hers, Sibyl inferred that she was familiar with all that

portion which related to Willie. This she could easily learn through Mr. Longley, whose interest in them had excited hers, and led her to trace them out.

"Sibyl," she said, one day, "you and your mother must go home with me. I have decided that point. She needs change; there is no fear of her actually dying, as she says, here, but she may become confirmed in this state of nervous depression, which is a sort of living death. And the change won't hurt you. You want stirring up, and our buckeye life will do that. You have a dragged-out look, child, that I don't like. You must go. Don't go to hunting up objections; the thing is settled; your friends the Fenns and I settled it the other day, when you were thrumming away on that organ, and Amanda is to stay with them while you are gone. Don't talk; we shall have enough of that to do to persuade your mother. We must take her by storm."

They did: spite of Elsie's protestations, the preparations went on — hastily, at times almost merrily; and by the time they had reached New York, she began to manifest an almost childish pleasure in the plan. They stopped at Mr. Longley's for a day or two, and she was quite charmed with the attentions paid her by that gentleman and his wife.

The day after their arrival, Mr. Longley brought a gentleman home with him to dinner, whom Sibyl instantly recognized as her old friend Judge Simmons.

"Monroe, Monroe," he repeated, as Mr. Longley introduced her, looking her full in the face. "Can it be? Are you indeed little Sibyl?"

The good old gentleman, grown a trifle stouter since we last met him, was really delighted to meet her again, and highly elated with this evidence of the acuteness of his perceptive powers in detecting faces. On learning that her mother was with her, but had kept her room on account of a bad headache, he would not have her disturbed, but promised to call next morning with Julia — Julia was in town with him, and would be so pleased to see Sibyl again.

She was pleased. The proud, brilliantly-beautiful girl came with her father, and spent a happy hour in recalling her childish days. At first, the old leaven of false pride stirred in Elsie's heart, and she declared she could never endure to see them in such "changed circumstances."

"Changed fiddlesticks!" said aunt Cook, as she resolutely tucked Elsie's arm under her own, and led the way down stairs; "what have the ups and downs of life to do with the estimates of sensible people? Don't attribute to other people your own foolish pride."

And the foolish pride vanished like frostwork before the sun, in the kind, friendly presence of her old friends. Indeed, the sad changes she had suffered won for her, from both father and daughter, a deeper, truer respect than she had ever called forth in the days of her prosperity and beauty; and when they both insisted upon Sibyl's remaining behind, and spending a few weeks with them at their old home near Undercliff, she was the first to urge her to accept it.

"It may be the means of placing you in the society and position to which you belong, Sibyl," suggested the old leaven again.

"Nonsense! your position is just that place in which your own worth and the will of God place you, child!" said aunt Cook, who had overheard the mother's remark. "No bolstering will ever keep you in any other place. But you had best go with these people. It will be pleasant for you. You can join us with those friends of theirs, who they say are coming to Cleveland; besides, it suits my plans. It is time your mother was taught to go alone; and she never will as long as you are with her — that's certain. If she is willing to make the effort, don't you put a stumbling block in her way."

"But you forget how much she has suffered."

"No; I only wish that she shall profit by it. Will you get out of the way and leave me a clear field?"

Sibyl promised, and the next week she was amidst the scenes of her childhood.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

WERE they the same — those hills and waters? Were they true to the picture she had so long worn in her heart? Was it home? She tried to think so; but those who have returned to the old place after many years' absence, or those who have gazed upon one of Doughty's still autumn landscapes until the very absence of life, the sense of loneliness, touches the fountain of tears, will understand her failure. The presence of the eternal beauty still infolded the whole scene, but the living interest, the hearts that she had loved were gone. Still it was pleasant to be there. The courtesy of the owners opened to her the grounds of Undercliff, and it was pleasant to sit on the moss terrace and recall memories of her father and old Lydia — to gaze on the old hills and the deep, black mountain gorge. She has never forgotten them; but she has faced life and death since she saw them last, and, in the light of this experience, the old monkish legend has become clear to her. She recognizes the burden, and thanks God for the strength which has enabled her to bear it thus far.

She was grateful to Julia and her father for their considerate kindness in postponing the visits of several fashion-

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able guests, and inviting only such of her old girlish acquaintances as they thought she would like to see. But she felt that her mother was mistaken — that was not her position; and when the four weeks — the term of her visit — had elapsed, no entreaties could induce her to stay longer, though George, the well-remembered brother, was expected home from college, and Julia averred that he would never forgive her if she permitted her to go without giving him an opportunity to renew his acquaintance with her.

Seeing her decided, the judge proposed that Julia and himself should accompany her as far as Buffalo. The kind old man pretended to have business there, and the daughter helped on the *ruse*. The journey was pleasant, and Sibyl often recalled the one which she had taken under his protection many years before, especially when she witnessed the warmth with which he recommended her to the care of some acquaintances of his, a gentleman with his wife and children, whom they met at the hotel waiting to take the boat to Cleveland.

The "Erie" was to leave that night, and her friends accompanied her on board. Julia, whose position as house-keeper at home, had given her a sort of motherly forethought, must see herself that Sibyl's state-room and accommodations were comfortable, and her more "last words" were still unfinished when the bell rang.

As they turned to leave, Julia suddenly grasped her father's arm, and pointed to a gentleman, who, with a lady on his arm, had just come on board, and was forcing a passage through the crowd, saying, —

"See, is not that the Mr. Wentworth whom we met at Mr. Longley's? It is — and the lady is Miss Drummond, whom he is going to marry. The Hardenbergs were talking about it when I was there, and they pointed her out to me at the opera. Perhaps they are married."

"By Jove, I believe you are right, Julia!" exclaimed the old judge, as he caught a glimpse of Mr. Wentworth's face. "A fortunate meeting for you, little Sibyl," he went on; "for he is just the man to take care of you in case of accident. Sandys is well enough, but he has his hands full with his wife and children. Let me introduce you."

Sibyl had no need to be told who it was thus making his way through the crowd in that decided manner, though she did not see his face; and resisting Judge Simmons's motion to return, she begged to be excused, professing herself satisfied with the escort of the Sandys.

"Well, you must have your way, I suppose; but you'll be sorry. He's a fine fellow; somewhere from your region, too, and would be a pleasant acquaintance."

"Let Sibyl be, papa," said Julia, who had been somewhat puzzled at her companion's anxious face, and suddenly divining, as she supposed, the cause. "Don't you see that if the gentleman is, as I surmise, on a wedding tour, she would feel herself *de trop*?"

"Don't I see! No, Madam Surmise, I see nothing but two wilful girls, whose heads run on marriages," said the judge, good humoredly. "But come, daughter, we must make haste, else we shall be forced to escort her ourselves."

So it is true, thought Sibyl, as she sat in her state room after parting with her friends. She felt no surprise, but rather relief. Months before, in the silence of her own room, she had held reckoning with her heart; the bare nerves had trembled and shrunk with an agony like death, beneath the touch of truth; but she did not turn away, or palter with the cunning voices of falsehood or self-deceit; and now she reaped the blessing.

It was this consciousness that gave to her voice its steadiness, and her manner the calm self-possession, when she found herself, with the Sandys party, occupying seats directly opposite Mr. Wentworth and his cousin, at the supper table, and met his surprised, but apparently pleased recognition, and replied to the lady's somewhat patronizing queries. "So Judge Simmons and his daughter are old friends of yours, Miss Monroe. Why, you never even mentioned their names all the while you were with us at aunt Wentworth's, and they such distinguished people; the Hardenbergs are always talking about them," exclaimed Miss Drummond, as they rose from the table.

"I had no occasion to mention them, as I remember," replied Sibyl, quietly.

Mr. Wentworth smiled, and Sibyl could hardly repress an inclination to do the same when she caught the quiet sarcasm of his tones, as he said, —

"We must not be too hard on Miss Monroe. She is country bred, and has not yet learned to wear her friends as an advertisement, Agnes."

That was no bridegroom's tone; and half puzzled, half doubting, Sibyl turned to follow Mr. and Mrs. Sandys, when Miss Agnes seized her by the arm, and insisted upon her accompanying her on deck. "It is so stupid to be all alone with no one to talk to in such a crowd."

"All alone," thought Sibyl, with a glance at Mr. Wentworth, as he lingered behind to speak with some acquaintance.

Miss Drummond observed the movement, and reading her thought, said, "Of course, cousin Ernest is good company; no one better, when he chooses to be; but then, one can't talk to him as one can to most folks; besides, he has been in a brown study ever since we left home. He is very anxious about some business affairs in New Orleans, I know, or he would never have taken this sudden journey; indeed, he told mamma so, when she begged him to wait a week or two, that I might visit our friends in St. Louis under his escort; but that does not make it less tiresome for me. It's too bad, after all mamma's hurry to get me ready."

At home, Miss Agnes Drummond would hardly have taken the trouble to have gone through with this frank explanation to Sibyl; indeed, had she been conscious of the sudden revulsion of feeling her words caused in Sibyl's heart, she might have withheld them; but she did not notice even the nervous gathering of the shawl over her bosom, as if that could help hide her emotion. She was really anxious for the company of some one into whose ears she could

pour that volley of small talk — the story of her sufferings and annoyances, which instinct taught her would meet with little sympathy from her cousin; besides, Sibyl's acquaintance with the Simmonses had given her quite a new interest in her eyes.

Mr. Wentworth soon joined them on the deck, but seemed, as his cousin had said, in no mood for conversation; for after answering one or two questions about Rockville affairs, he took a seat behind them, and relapsed into silence. Once or twice, as the boat veered, and a fresh wind struck them, a hand thoughtfully lifted her heavy shawl to her shoulders, and Sibyl received the attention, as silently as it was given.

Suddenly Miss Drummond interrupted herself in the midst of some remark with, —

"Certainly there is Albert Hurst, the Hardenbergs' cousin; look, Ernest! there, at the opposite end of the saloon, talking with that brilliant-looking woman. I hope he will come this way. He is such agreeable company."

He did come that way; Miss Drummond was altogether too conspicuous for both beauty and dress, to be overlooked by a fashionable young gentleman; others were not so blind as Ernest Wentworth; and with a glance that said something like this, she accepted the young man's arm, and was soon promenading the long saloon, the "observed of all observers."

Sibyl does not look round; she knows the chair which Agnes had vacated is already occupied; but there seems

a sort of spell upon her, and half vexed at herself for even recognizing such a weakness, she attempts to break it; and catching at Miss Agnes and her partner, who are slowly pacing that way, she says something about their being a fine-looking couple.

"Who, Agnes and Hurst? Yes; I fancy he is quite a favorite with Agnes, from what I have seen of them at the Hardenbergs; or would be, if my excellent aunt admitted the possibility of a young lady's having an independent movement of her own mind."

How coolly and quietly he speaks! how ridiculous in you, Sibyl, to feel so disturbed! Shake off this spell; it is weak, disgraceful. Remember it is Ernest Wentworth who sits by your side — the stern foe of weakness and tears.

She can, at least, hold her tongue, seeing that is a virtue she can practise on occasion; but it is strange what a passion for speech has come over our usually quiet Sibyl.

The silence which follows his words seems to choke her — it is unendurable, suffocating, like the hot silence of the desert that precedes the sirocco; she must break it in self-preservation, and she blunders (it seemed to her a blunder) upon her mother's former project of going west, and his efforts to dissuade her. The ice once broken, she finds her voice, and goes on with an attempt at gayety.

"For once you were a false prophet, Mr. Wentworth. You said I would not go; but here I am on the way, and, stranger still, you are with me."

"It is not the first time I have been mistaken. Master

Richard would say that man proposes but God disposes, and I never was more inclined to accept the doctrine. Sibyl," he goes on speaking rapidly, "do you remember a discussion we once had about the religious devotees of the hair shirt and scourge, — the Stylites of the world, who mistake self for God, for whom I had nothing but scorn, where you saw tokens of a noble but misdirected will? Are you as lenient now? With a wilfulness equal to theirs, a blindness more culpable, because voluntary, I have misinterpreted my heart. I have called pride strength, weakness wisdom. I have been a coward, for I would not see the truth, and — I have suffered. To this let me add, that I am so selfish as to hope that I have made another suffer also; at least enough to make her forgiveness worth the having. Is there any hope, Sibyl?"

If he won an answer, he must have read it in the happy eyes that were for one moment lifted to his face; for at that moment, Miss Drummond touched his shoulder with the point of her parasol, saying, —

"It must be that you are exceedingly interested, cousin Ernest, for I have been striving to catch your eye for some moments, to conjure you not to quite ruin my fan. I shall hardly be able to procure another this side of Cleveland. There it is, beneath your foot."

"You are right, Agnes," he replied, as he handed her the article in question, and rose to return Mr. Hurst's greeting, who, drawing up a chair for Miss Drummond, begged permission to join their group.

Sibyl would gladly have escaped, and Mr. Wentworth, comprehending her feeling, said, —

“Sibyl, is not that bald-headed gentleman, in the crowd yonder, your friend, Mr. Sandys? He is evidently looking for some one; possibly yourself. Let me take you to him; for I think Agnes and I owe him an apology for taking you away.”

“You tremble, Miss Monroe, and your face looks flushed and feverish,” said the benevolent, care-taking Mr. Sandys, as he drew her arm within his to lead her below. “Are you sure that you have not taken cold?”

Ah, Mr. Sandys, since she sat at your side at the supper table, she has passed from the stern, barren, isolated ice region into the warmth and light of the beautiful tropics of Life and Hope, and you see only the febrile symptoms of cold! So little do we know of the miracles of life!

CHAPTER XXXIV.

DID she sleep? No; the atmosphere of that region was too full of strange and holy happiness for the presence of even this gentlest of all earth's angels. She who had passed so many lonely, anxious nights, shall she not keep one watch with Happiness? How those nights come back now, as she sits by the open window of her state room — the nights and the days that lie away back in her childhood, her father, old Lydia Blair, and her oft-repeated prayer: “Not that thou shouldst take her from the world, but that thou shouldst keep her from the evil!” and her eyes fill with happy, grateful tears, as she thinks how that prayer has been fulfilled. The veil of Circumstance is drawn aside, and she sees the

“—— helpers God has sent,
And how life's rugged mountain side
Is white with many an angel tent.”

But, hark! there is a sudden rush on deck, a brief pause, a confused running to and fro, and then that cry, — a loud, terrible cry, piercing to the lowest depths of the boat, and cleaving the hollow night air, — “Fire! fire! fire!”

O God, the boat is on fire!

Instantly the cabin is a scene of terror and confusion. The boat is crowded with passengers, and mothers spring from their sleep to clasp their children to the breast in wild, speechless agony, or wring their hands at the thought of the loving faces they should never see again. Young bridegrooms and brides wake from their dreams of a happy Eldorado in the far west, to face Death in his most horrible form, and stand clinging to each other in terror and dismay, while little children, scarcely conscious of their danger, weep loudly at the sight of their mothers' tears. Here and there a solitary woman, — just what Sibyl had been a few hours before, — with none of the strong ties of life upon her, yet still holding it dear for the sake of its sad and happy memories and its still lingering hopes, stands pale, silent, and quiet, watching each face, in order to learn the chances of her fate.

Sibyl is giving all her attention to Mrs. Sandys and her children, conscious that there is one on board who will care for her safety, if safety is possible, when, as if simultaneously recovering from the stupor of the first fearful shock, there is a rush for the deck. It is in vain to resist the pressure, and she is borne along with the crowd, lifting high the little Bell Sandys in her arms, to save her from being crushed.

As she reaches the deck, there is a grasp on her arm. The thick smoke makes all things indistinguishable; but she knows the touch — firm, resolute, and unyielding, checking the impetus of those behind by its unexpected force.

"This way, Sibyl. One brave effort; there, you are clear for a moment. Be quiet, and let me help Mr. Sandys:" for the worthy parents were instinctively striving to follow the child which she still held in her arms.

"I should have come for you before," he says, "but Agnes, whose state room adjoined mine, on the upper deck, is well nigh frantic. I left her yonder," he adds, as, with one arm round her waist, he forces a way towards the spot indicated.

"O Ernest, Ernest, save me! for the love of Heaven, save me!" screamed the terrified girl at their approach, springing from the pile of boxes upon which she had sunk, half fainting, when he left her. See, they are lowering a boat! Put me into it, Ernest. I shall die here! Make them let me pass! See!" and her whole frame shrank and quivered with death-like agony, as a long tongue of flame burst through the stout plank not many feet behind them.

They were indeed making all haste with the boats; and it was needed, for the fire was spreading rapidly. The dense smoke was already parted by the fierce, leaping flames, that sent their lurid, angry glow far over the still, black waters, while the cries and groans, the loud shrieks of the poor emigrants on the forward deck, who already felt the scorching heat, added tenfold terror to the scene.

"Not there — not in that boat," cried Mr. Wentworth, holding his cousin by main strength. "See, it is already overloaded. It can never reach the shore;" and even as

he spoke, almost before it had left the ship side, the crowded boat, into which so many had thrown themselves in frenzy, went down with her living freight, leaving scarcely a ripple upon the glowing water.

Agnes covered her eyes, with a shriek, and sank fainting upon Sibyl's shoulder. Her cousin seized her arm — not lightly, for the grasp drew from her a scream of pain.

"Rouse yourself, Agnes, if you really wish to escape!" he said. "See, they have already lowered another boat; this time they will be wiser. Now you shall go."

He pressed forward with the strength of a giant, and his cousin was swinging over the side, and caught in the arms of a stout sailor, almost before she knew it. Then she had time to think of him — of Sibyl; and she reached out her arms, imploring them to join her.

His hand was already on Sibyl's shoulder, when she suddenly drew back, and pointed to Mrs. Sandys and the children.

"Take them first; I can wait. See! Mr. Sandys is stupefied."

He hesitated a moment; then flashing a proud, bright smile upon her, obeyed, while Mr. Sandys, roused by the movement, attempted to assist with his trembling hands.

But there is a movement among the crowd; it sways a moment, and then, with a force which it would be madness to attempt to resist, Sibyl is borne to the extreme after portion of the boat; and turning her eyes back, she covers them, with a quick, sharp cry of agony, for the whole mid-

dle portion of the vessel — even the spot where she had lately stood — was a sheet of flame.

"O, this fearful death! To watch the forked tongues leaping nearer and nearer; to feel the hot, suffocating breath scorching lip, and tongue, and throat; to gasp for a breath of heaven's fresh air, and draw in only the thick, hot smoke; to stand chained between the hungry, devouring flames, and the black, pitiless sea, and know that either is certain death!

God help such as these! Closer and closer strides the angry element; many are already flinging themselves into the lake to escape the crisping heat. Sibyl knows this fate must soon be hers; when a scorched and blackened figure stood by her side, saying —

"Thank God, I am not too late! You will trust me, Sibyl!"

She placed both hands in his, as she answered, "In life and in death."

"Then, please God, it shall be life."

He hastily took the long merino scarf she had thrown over her shoulders, and knotted it around his waist, as he said, —

"We are not far from shore, Sibyl. The boat was headed that way as soon as the fire broke out, and even since the engine stopped, the wind has continued to drift us forward. Yonder are lights, — Erie lights, I think, — and boats will surely put off to our rescue. I shall attempt to swim, and you must hold to this scarf — thus — do you understand?"

"Leave me! Burdened with me, it will be certain death! I will not go. O, leave me, but remember my mother, Ernest."

He folded his arms determinedly. "You said in life and in death, Sibyl. If you choose death, be it so. See!" he added; "there are boats — lights yonder. You must obey me!" and lifting her in his arms, he sprang over the side.

When Sibyl next awoke to consciousness, she was lying in a low, pleasant chamber, the windows of which overlooked a broad sweep of country, rich with the shows of autumn. She could see no water; but the low, hushed sound of waves, breaking on the beach, helped to recall her wandering memory, and explain the scene. There was a sound of female voices, talking in a low tone, near by; one sounded familiar, and very soon a high, light screen was set aside, and Agnes Drummond came forward to her bedside.

The better elements in Agnes' character had been thoroughly roused by that night of trial, and there was no mistaking her joy when she found Sibyl awake, in full possession of her senses.

Sibyl's first inquiry was for Mr. Wentworth.

"He is below, confined to his room by burns and bruises, and has been almost as wild as you; one arm is badly injured, and he can scarcely stir now. O, dear! between you both I've been frightened to death. When I saw how bad Ernest was, I telegraphed to aunt Wentworth at once, and

she will be here to-morrow. Dear, here I am talking, and Mrs. Brown said I mustn't speak a word!"

She was turning resolutely away, when Sibyl feebly caught her gown.

"Stay, Miss Agnes; you must speak; it will do me good. Tell me about yourself, and the Sandys, and Mr. Hurst, too. Are they all saved? And who is Mrs. Brown?"

"All saved. Mr. Hurst was in the boat with us. I think I should have died if it had not been for him. And those people whom you made Ernest put into the boat — they think you are an angel, Sibyl; and I think you must be something more than human, to have staid behind. How could you do it?" she added, shuddering, as she placed her hands before her eyes. "I can see those flames now! It seemed like certain death."

"But you see it was not certain death, Agnes. Now, tell me who Mrs. Brown is, and where we are."

"Mrs. Brown is the mistress of this house — the wife of a kind-hearted farmer. You are near Erie, where most of the survivors are, or such as have not already left; for it is three days since the wreck. I have acquaintances there, with whom I am staying. You and cousin Ernest could not be moved; so I come out here every day to see you. But I must not talk — at least no more to-day; I shall come with aunt Wentworth to-morrow."

"Stay; you did not telegraph to my mother?"

"No, but Mr. Sandys did; he knew the address, and told her you were safe. And now not another word." So

kissing Sibyl's pale forehead, the beautiful Agnes Drummond ran away.

A few moments after her exit, a young, rosy-cheeked girl entered with a bowl of savory broth.

"Mother says you must eat this, miss, and you will soon be well," she said, as she arranged the pillows, and spread a snowy napkin before her, with the ready tact of a practised nurse.

Sibyl took the sustenance, to the delight of her young attendant, who stood by, watching her slightest motion; but this done, she could not induce her to assist her to dress.

"You must not think of such a thing, miss. The doctor said you must be kept quiet, only last night, and I don't know what he'll do if I let you get up. He's terrible cross when people don't mind him. At least, wait until I call mother," she added, seeing Sibyl only smile at her dread of the doctor.

She disappeared, and a motherly-looking woman soon entered. Sibyl thanked her earnestly for all her kindness, and learned from her that Mr. Wentworth and she had been picked up by a boat, manned by her husband and two sons.

"He was almost exhausted, and you were quite senseless, miss; but we soon brought you to, though you have been a little wandering since, from the fright. No wonder. He, poor man, can hardly move yet."

"He saved my life, and I must go down and see him. I can lie here no longer," said Sibyl, hastily rising.

"And so carelessly risk it again. The gentleman would

hardly approve of that," said the woman. Then, pitying Sibyl's disappointed look, and deeply sympathizing with the feeling she was forced to oppose, she added, "Wait until afternoon, miss, and then, if you feel right smart, we'll see about it."

She was "right smart," for she felt she must see him now. She shrank from the thought of waiting to meet him in the presence of his mother; besides, Hope and Resolve are better tonics than any in the old doctor's possession. Her own brown travelling dress was ruined, but pretty Ellen Brown had a neat wardrobe at her service, and in one of her printed wrappers, with Mrs. Brown's great blanket shawl folded around her by the good woman's motherly hands, she descended the stairs, leaning on her arm.

They landed in a small entry, and when Mrs. Brown flung open one of the doors which led from it, and suddenly withdrew her arm, all Sibyl's strength seemed to go with it, and she stood clinging to the door for support, dimly conscious of the figure that lay stretched on a rustic lounge at the farther side of the room.

"Sibyl! My Sibyl!"

The words had in them a talismanic power. She sprang across the room, and knelt at his side, while his uninjured arm was folded around her, and drew her closer and closer to his breast, as he whispered, —

"Mine, mine! and thank God it is in life! Is it not so, Sibyl?"

This time he had his answer; but that was not enough.

When was Ernest Wentworth otherwise than impetuous and exacting?

There is a bustle without. A carriage drives up to the door, but they do not heed — scarcely hear it; a quick, firm step comes along the gravel walk, and enters the little entry — a hand is on the door latch, and a well-known voice says, somewhat imperiously, —

“No, no; my son is expecting me, of course.”

Sibyl starts and would escape; but he holds her fast, as the door is thrown open, and his mother appears on the threshold.

She does not advance, but stands a moment gazing at them; while surprise, disappointment, wounded feeling, not unmingled with anger and jealousy, cloud and darken her proud face.

“I beg pardon; I see I should have caused my arrival to be announced,” she says, as she turns away.

“Mother, mother!” cries the son, attempting to rise, and sinking back upon Sibyl’s shoulder, pale with the keen pain the sudden effort caused him — “mother, have you no words for me but these? no room in your heart for any save me? I will not believe it. You have often mourned over my hopeless, restless life; you have not said it, but I know it is true. See, mother,” — and again he draws Sibyl to him, — “here are my rest and my hope!”

She cannot resist that plea; her wounded pride shrinks away before her deep, motherly love, and crossing the

room, she lays her hand on his head, standing a second in silence, while the great tears gather in her eyes.

“God bless you, Ernest, my son! God bless you, and Sibyl Monroe too, and forgive me my selfishness,” she says, at length. Then turning to Sibyl, she stoops and kisses her forehead, as she adds, —

“It is hard for a mother to find another before her in her son’s heart — and it came so sudden; but I shall learn in time.”

Four months later, Sibyl Monroe sat in her quiet bedroom in the pleasantest house of all the pleasant houses in Atwater, Ohio, with two letters open before her. In the next room she heard the strong, cheerful voice of aunt Cook chatting with her mother, not unfrequently interrupted by the imperious tones of “the Little Corporal,” as the old lady designates her youngest grandson, a boy of four years old, and the special pet of her mother.

“Come, Sibyl!” cried the cheery voice, presently; “I think we have been reasonably patient. Have you no crumbs of news to bestow upon your mother and me? What says Richard Fenn? I suppose I may ask that without breach of propriety.”

“He says that we must positively be in Eltham on the eighth of May — my twenty-fifth birthday — for he has business of importance to transact with me at that time.”

“Business of importance! What can it be, child?” exclaimed Elsie.

"I don't know. I have not the slightest idea, I am sure, mamma. There is his letter."

"Well, well, sure enough!" said aunt Cook, glancing at the round, clerkly hand, to satisfy herself. "I am not sure that the old gentleman is not in his dotage; but what says the other one? He seconds the order, I suppose, for he too has important business to transact. Is it not so, child?"

"He wishes us to start as early as possible, and will meet us on the way; but ——"

"But what? He has not gone in for the unintelligible too, has he?"

"No; it's all plain enough; but he says that the failure of the house of Bacon & Co., of New Orleans, will compel him to fail also—that he is a poor man."

"Well, what of that? The man is left, I s'pose. He has his health and his hands. You are surely not so foolish as to let this influence you, Sibyl."

"No; on the contrary, I am glad that I am poor too; for, see, he says if I were rich and accustomed to luxury, he should hesitate to ask me to share his lot; but knowing my habits, he will not insult me by suggesting even the slightest change in our plans."

"Good! I like that! He is sensible, and you shall go. I won't lay a straw in the way. But O, little Corporal, what shall we do when aunty and Sibyl are gone?"

"Go to see 'em, grannie. Ride on old Whity."

"That's it, Corporal!" cried Sibyl, catching him up and kissing his chubby cheek. "Grandmother shall have a nice time with mamma and Mrs. Wentworth."

"You mean that aunt Cook and I shall come to see *you* and Mrs. Wentworth, Sibyl," said Elsie Monroe, turning from the window where she had been standing; "for I am to make my home with Master Richard and Miss Silence."

"Mamma!"

"Don't feel surprised or hurt, my child," she went on, in a gentle but firm tone; "I am convinced that it is best. They want me. There is Miss Silence's letter; she says we can help one another; and somehow we suit each other, and I am not quite sure that it would be the same with me and Mrs. Wentworth; though doubtless I shall spend much time with you. It must be best, for aunt Cook thinks so too."

"Yes," replied the old lady, answering Sibyl's inquiring look; "you know my creed—that one mother-in-law is too much for a house, else I should not live alone, or bestow so much of my time upon my more distant relations. She is right, Sibyl; and I intend to enter the lists with Miss Silence, and claim a visit from her every other summer. Where was the good of looking her up, and driving the life into her by my scoldings, if I am to lose her now, I'd like to know?"

CHAPTER XXXV.

WE must return once more to Master Richard Fenn's. It is towards the close of a balmy May day, and, with Sibyl by his side, the old man sits in his den, by a small table, which he has drawn beneath the window. It is her twenty-fifth birthday, and also her wedding day; for they had been married that morning, and had immediately driven down there, leaving the two mothers, assisted by the proud and happy Amanda, to do the honors of the house to the half dozen friends invited to witness the ceremony, including Mrs. Drummond, who, owing to some recent news from St. Louis, to the effect that Miss Agnes would soon be the wife of a millionaire, was disposed to be very gracious and complimentary towards the bride and her mother, and *par consequence*, so far mollified Amanda's disposition, "to snap off her head like a poppy," that she might be said to entertain towards her quite a commendable and Christian mood.

This short drive was to be their bridal tour; for Ernest Wentworth, on the eve of, as he supposed, inevitable bankruptcy, was too honest to squander his creditors' money on a trip to Washington or Niagara. He can meet his

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obligations, and he does not look either "crushed" or "cast down" by the impending change, as he sits there in Miss Silence's front room, listening to her chat, and inwardly wondering what secret business the old man can have with his bride.

And Sibyl wonders, too, as Master Richard draws a packet of papers from a large old pocket book, which she has seen many times, in the years gone by, lying in the old desk. It had been his father's, and held all the family papers. Selecting one of them, he begins to read.

There is a puzzled look on her face at first; but gradually there comes a flash of light, and, laying her finger on his arm, she says, —

"James Hungerford — the same old gentleman whom I saw at Undercliff, when I first met Ernest?"

"The same, Sibyl;" and he goes on reading, until, springing to her feet, she cries, —

"Mine! mine, did you say, Master Richard? All mine!"

"All, Sibyl. You are the heiress. To-day the terms of the will are fulfilled, and you come in possession. But what is the matter, child?"

She had flung herself down by his side, and, with her head upon his knee, was weeping like a child.

"Nothing; only I am so happy, and God is so good, Master Fenn. But this trouble of Ernest's — I see it all now. I am the creditor to whom all this money is due?"

"Yes; it falls due to-day, and it was with difficulty I

persuaded him to forego the assignment which he intends to make, until after to-day. I might have told you, dear, I suppose, seeing the day was so near; but I thought you would prefer to speak to him about it as his wife."

"You were right, as you always are, dear Master Richard; but call him in—tell him about it yourself," she cries, with tremulous eagerness. "I never can make it plain. It is so strange!"

He did call him in, and contrived to make it plain to him in a few words.

"I always supposed the money to have been James Hungerford's, but I did not once suspect the true heir," he said. "But you, Sibyl," he went on, half reproachfully, "you preferred to struggle on in poverty, while I enjoyed the benefit of this bequest. You did indeed think meanly of me, after all!"

"You forget that until within the last half hour I was as ignorant of my fortune as yourself. Besides, if I had been, I doubt if I should have told you; for you might have cast me off, you know. You cannot refuse it now."

As they were preparing to return home in the early twilight, Miss Silence brought forward a good-sized bundle, and laid it by Sibyl's shawl.

"What is it, Miss Silence?" inquired Mr. Wentworth, smiling. "I shall carry no contraband goods."

"I won't say but what the contents of that bundle might have been once in the world smuggled off unlawfully," returned the old lady, with a kind of dry smile; "but they

came into my hands honestly, as a wedding gift to your wife. *Wife!* It sounds odd enough, don't it? There, Sibyl," she went on, opening the bundle, and displaying several folds of very fine, but very yellow linen, "every thread of that was spun by your own grandmother, Sibyl Umberfield. See, here is her name, marked by her own fingers, too, if it hain't been picked out. There 'tis—'S. U.' How did I come by it? Why, I was over in Plainville the other day, and I thought I'd just call and see Polly Mason, your uncle's widow. I may as well say I meant to tell her of your coming marriage, and kinder cut her up; but she's a poor creatur', Sibyl, confined to her chair by rheumatiz, brought on by overworkin' herself, the doctors say; and when I come to see her, my heart was soft as pap. But she asked about you, and I told her, makin' as if she knew all about it, of course, and, as true as I live, she seemed pleased. She said she was glad you had turned out so well; that she sometimes thought that she didn't have patience enough with you, seein' how ignorant you was when you came down here; that 'twas a dreadful thing to sit there, day after day, with nothin' to think about but things done long ago; and then she asked me to draw her up to a chest, which stood in the room. I moved her up, and she unlocked a drawer and took out these,—a pair of sheets and pillow cases,—and said may be you would like to have 'em, 'cause they were your grandmother's. I guess you'll have to go and see her some time, Sibyl."

Let us say here that she did go to see her. Both she

and her mother did what they could to lighten the old woman's painful existence; but we are not sure that these visits, welcome as they seemed to be, tended to make Mrs. Monroe's review of the past at all more pleasant.

"Sibyl," said Mrs. Wentworth, with something of her old sternness, that night, when her son concluded his explanation of James Hungerford's will, and the relation of his own affairs towards it, "when you entered my family as governess, did you know that my son owed his solvency to you?"

"No, ma'am!"

"It is well; for had it been otherwise, I could hardly have forgiven you."

It is a rich midsummer afternoon. Above arches the deep-blue sky, so clear, so pure, that one almost fancies that he can catch there glimpses of angel faces; while below, the broad, green earth, with her rich burden of harvests, lies steeped in the golden sunlight, and God's peace seems to brood over all.

Softly, solemnly, the sunlight falls on every haunt by forest and brook side, where we, in the old days, have wandered with Fred and Sibyl; but on no spot does it rest more lovingly than upon the old churchyard of Eltham. Art has done little towards improving the natural advantages of the place; but Nature, with a grace all her own, has wreathed the low stone walls with bittersweet and ivy, and on the south side, which is divided from the river by a fringe of alders, the wall is festooned with clematis, whose rich, creamy blossoms fill the air with their fragrance.

Near the centre of the yard, where a plain, but very beautiful slab of Italian marble marks the last resting place of Fred Monroe, Sibyl stands with her husband. Many changes have come since they laid that young head down there, but none that can dim his memory, or make them oblivious of his gentle goodness and loving heart.

"You will come, in your happiness, and stand with those you love about my grave, Sibyl."

She recalls these words now, even the very tone in which he spoke them, and the gentle, sympathizing pressure of her husband's hand cannot check her tears.

But hark! from the old church, whose doors stand open, come the rich strains of an organ, — Sibyl's gift to the society, — mellow as the sunlight about them, pure and deep as the sky above, but sometimes a little tremulous and uncertain, as if called forth by the hand of childhood or old age.

Sibyl hushes her tears, while the grand "Hallelujah Chorus" fills the whole air with harmony.

She, too, notes the tremulous touch, and says, while an expression of anxious sadness gathers upon her face, —

"He fails, Ernest; I can see it every day. Dear Master Fenn! what should we do without you?"

Her husband makes no reply in words, but drawing her closer to him, points to the inscription on the marble at her side, —

"HIS LOVING KINDNESS IS BETTER THAN LIFE."

"You are right, Ernest!" and with a glance of loving reverence, she looks into his face.

"Mamma! papa! O, see! here they are!" and out from the dim shadows of the old porch comes a little girl of some four summers, leading old Master Fenn by the hand.

He needs guidance now, for his mother's infirmity is fast gathering over those mild blue eyes; he sees but little, but he does not repine. God has sent the little Mabel — for the name of the dear old mother graces Sibyl's eldest born — to be hands and feet to him, he says. "Why should he complain?"

He stands for a time looking silently down upon that green grave, while the little girl traces with her tiny fingers the deep-cut letters, and spells out, in a low tone, the words she fancies are cut there —

"DEAR UNCLE FRED."

"See, the shadows are falling here, Sibyl. Master Richard, we must think of home."

With his little girl by his side, Ernest Wentworth turns towards the gate, followed by Sibyl and their white-haired old friend, who, taking Ernest's casual remark for a text, goes on to speak of the past; of all they have loved and lost, and points out how each noble deed, each earnest effort, ay, each black cloud of doubt, and each sharp struggle with temptation, may become angel helpers, to lift us

"OUT OF THE SHADOW INTO THE SUN."