

WALTER THORNLEY;

OR,

A PEEP AT THE PAST.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"ALLEN PRESCOTT" AND "ALIDA."

"Our fathers find their graves in our short memories, and sadly tell us how we may be buried in our survivors. Generations pass while some trees stand, and old families last not three oaks."—URN BURIAL, SIR THOS. BROWNE.

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Plain

The light of early days and better years is reflected
in the young faces around me; and recollections of the
PAST are united with gratitude for the blessings of the
PRESENT, when I inscribe these pages

TO

MY GRANDCHILDREN.

WALTER THORNLEY.

CHAPTER I.

IN the village of Ashton, which, in order to avoid curious surmises as to personalities, as well as critical investigations as to accurate topography, it need only be said, was within the bounds of Massachusetts, there lived at the period to which the commencement of the following tale refers—1780—a person of the name of Grafton. He had but recently become a resident of the place—a fact in itself of not much importance, but which had excited no small speculation among his neighbors.

The residence Mr. Grafton had chosen was, indeed, little suited to his previous habits and associations. A traveled man, a scholar, and a gentleman without a family, it might well be supposed, could find few inducements to adventure into a rude settlement, in the vicinity of which the savage yet lingered. Still there was no mystery in the case. It was simply an instance of idiosyncrasy. He had, though yet in the prime of life, seen the world, had participated in its pleasures, had not escaped its trials, and had not withheld himself from its duties. But a nervous dislike of the restraints and demands of society, co-operating with a reserved temper and health not robust, had led him to seek in retirement the enjoyment of his favorite pursuits, which he could not disguise to himself was as selfish as impracticable in the busier haunts of men. Accident had led him to this particular spot, where his townsmen, leaving him the

enjoyment of his books and his time, were quite willing to commute his personal services for the pecuniary aid he was at all times ready to contribute. Although not more than thirty, he appeared older; for a countenance marked by reflection, and an air of languor, gave the effect of more years than he had seen. His manner betrayed no consciousness of superiority, and his dress, though scrupulously neat, was equally unostentatious, yet both sufficiently indicated that he belonged to a more cultivated order than the persons among whom he had taken up his abode. His house, to which a small garden was attached, in size and style befitted the small establishment within, consisting of himself, a lad for out-of-door services, and one female domestic, who united in herself the offices of chamber-maid, cook, and house-keeper. But, far from conceiving this to be derogatory, not the *Diva triformis* could have entertained more complacent notions of her importance in her three-fold capacity than did Damie Turner of hers, as she passed through her several transformations, and finally attained, at about five o'clock in the afternoon, her most distinguished position. Then, with clean gown, cap, and apron, she was prepared to attend on Mr. Grafton's tea-table, to "turn out," in country phrase, the refreshing beverage, and to see that things were as they should be.

Damie, who rejoiced in the baptismal name of Deidamia, was a woman of a "certain age," whose single blessedness it might have been unjustly suspected no man had wished to disturb. Beauty had never been among her gifts, which was perhaps the reason of her very just estimate of it—she often averring that "to be pretty behaved was much better than to be pretty looking." She had many good qualities, was kind-hearted and upright, and, though self-sufficient, was not insufficient. Mr. Grafton, on his part, was easily satisfied, and,

so long as his books and papers were untouched, was not unreasonably curious about her housekeeping. From this indulgence, Damie's power grew in time to overshadow the little household, Mr. Grafton submitting to an evil of his own creating, by good-naturedly applying the Shandy maxim, "We lose the right of complaining by forbearing to use it."

A fine day in May had closed, and, seated in his study chair by the side of a fire, even at that season not unwelcome, Mr. Grafton was poring over a favorite author, with no sound to break the silence but the purring of a privileged cat. The evening wore away to a late hour. The lights in the adjacent dwellings, one after another, had been extinguished. He shut his book, and, with his eyes turned to the window, and arrested by a candle that still burned in a distant part of the village, he applied the line, which has so often occurred to others,

"So shines a good deed in a naughty world,"

when he was roused by the sound of horses' feet. They approached, and appeared to stop at his gate. It opened, and in a moment a knock announced a visitor—at such an hour an unusual occurrence. As Damie opened the door, a person entered so hastily as to brush out the light in her hand—she always insisted designedly—and she could only discern a tall figure much muffled, who, without heeding her, proceeded quickly toward the room in which Mr. Grafton was seated, and presented himself with the air of a gentleman, but with a countenance expressive of anxiety and urgency.

With a courteous request to be seated he complied, but without laying aside his cloak, though apparently encumbered by it, and though the fire seemed to invite him so to do. His body, strangely disproportioned to his face, which was thin and rather pale, arrested the

usually incurious gaze of Mr. Grafton, and an awkward silence ensued, while Damie purposely loitered in the room, and the stranger directed his piercing eyes by turns on both. At length, as if he had no time for ceremony, he abruptly requested a private interview with the former.

As soon as they were alone, throwing aside his cloak, he revealed to the astonished Mr. Grafton a child of about three years of age asleep on his breast, an attempt to conceal whom had so much added to his apparent bulk.

"The little fellow is so wearied with his drive," said he, gently disengaging him, "that I doubt if he wake to-night; but I must liberate myself, at all events, for I have brief time for even a few words," saying which, and forming a pallet of his cloak on the floor by his side, he laid the child on it without disturbing his slumber; then, addressing Mr. Grafton in a tone of confidence and respect, he continued:

"Your name and character, sir, are known to me, and I can give no better proof of the high estimation with which you have inspired me than by the trust I am about to repose in you. Without circumlocution—for, with you, truth the most direct must be the most acceptable—the object for which I have ventured to obtrude myself upon you is to request that you will become the protector of this child, without question of his birth or destiny; that from this moment you will receive him under your roof, there to remain till claimed by his natural guardians."

Occupied in a survey of the person who proffered so unexpected and so unwished-for an expression of his respect, Mr. Grafton did not immediately reply, nor was the result of the survey favorable to the request.

There was in the stranger, with the carriage of a gentleman, an easy assurance that by no means inspired

the confidence it expressed, while his eye, quick, intelligent, and penetrating, sought rather to observe than to be observed. He might be rather younger than Mr. Grafton, and was decidedly handsome; yet there were hard lines, traced either by bad passions or an irregular life, that gave a sinister expression to his face.

"I wait your assent, sir," he continued, with a slight frown of impatience, but in the blandest tone.

"You can hardly be serious," replied Mr. Grafton, "in expecting an assent to a proposition so unqualified, and unattended by a single circumstance that can even justify my assuming such a responsibility."

"The more unqualified the trust, the greater the confidence reposed."

Before the shuffle could be detected or replied to, he continued: "And allow me to add that Mr. Grafton is the last man living who would require to be *justified* in the performance of a benevolent action."

"Excuse me, sir; but we will, if you please, dispense with compliments. This is at least as much a matter of business as of sentiment; and, to be very plain with you, there must be strong claims to induce me to take it into consideration even for an instant. If there are such, which is in the highest degree improbable, I am willing to hear them."

The stranger, it would seem, had trusted to the effect of his full and broad demand on what he had been led to consider the easy temper of Mr. Grafton to produce a sort of amazed compliance; but, unabashed by its failure, with persuasive accents he proceeded:

"I can plead no claim but that of the friendless. This poor child is cast upon you by the same Providence that has more than supplied your own wants, and now calls on you for that portion of your care for which there is no natural claimant."

Though uttered in the most respectful manner, this laying down the law of moral obligation by a stranger, requiring as a duty a favor of such magnitude, was so offensive that Mr. Grafton was on the point of expressing a decided refusal, when the child—who till now had lain quietly—gave signs of awaking, turned over, stretched his limbs, and opened his eyes, which happening to rest on his near neighbor, the fat, beautiful tortoise-shell colored cat, he started up, and, uttering a cry of surprise and pleasure, exclaimed, "Oh pretty! pretty!"

What eloquence so persuasive as the sweet voice of infancy! The repellent emotions which were kindling in the breast of Mr. Grafton were stilled. Repressing the reply he was about to make, his eye rested on the little being before him, as, refreshed and animated, he scrambled up from the pallet that had been spread for him, and sought to win the sleek and beautiful animal by his caresses.

The appearance of the child was well fitted to fix the attention of a person even less kindly disposed than Mr. Grafton toward such sometimes wayward sprites. His sturdy little figure, his finely-formed and well-set head, covered with luxuriant curls, which yet permitted the exposure of his fair forehead; his bright eye, his ruby lip, scarce passed from the rose-bud of infancy to the better-defined lines which develop it a little later; the dimpled cheek, the joyous laugh, the graceful attitudes into which he unconsciously threw himself in his gambols with puss, the warm light shed by the fire, presented a study for a painter as well as an appeal to a philanthropist, and Mr. Grafton felt his refusal melt away in a gush of kindness and pity. He began to take a new view of the matter, to seek in his heart excuses for what appeared to his judgment a piece of Quixotism. "Suppose I am a bachelor, unskilled in the care and training

of a child, I am the more unembarrassed by any conflicting duties; and my beloved quiet—I shall but enjoy it the more if it be sometimes interrupted."

The distrust, too, which he felt for the stranger increased his compassion for the child. "Shall I leave him," he thought, "perhaps to an evil destiny, when it is asked of me to rescue him?" But Damie—there was the rub; "she would probably object to her share of the additional burden, and he should deprive himself of her services, or be involved in domestic jars. What then? Should he for such a consideration reject the little creature thus cast on his mercy? No; Damie, important as she was, might go, the child should stay."

The stranger eyed him attentively, and read in the softened expression of his face the operation of new feelings.

"You consent, then, I perceive, sir," said he. "You justify my hopes, and secure to yourself the reward of the beneficent. That," rising, and presenting a letter, "contains all that it is necessary to communicate. Farewell. I must be many miles from here before the dawn," and hastily wrapping himself in his cloak, as if about to leave the room, he paused a moment, and fixed a parting glance on the child.

"I must leave him without his knowledge," continued he in an under tone, rather as if addressing himself; "he would resist my doing so were he aware of it, though, when I am gone, he will be easily pacified." Then, with an inclination of the head, a finger on his lip to request silence, and a quick inaudible step, he vanished as if incorporeal, leaving Mr. Grafton time neither for farther question nor reflection. He held for some moments mechanically the letter committed to him, scarcely sure if he were not in a dream, so strange and sudden had been the revolution wrought in his quiet abode. Curiosity,

however, soon prompted to a perusal of it. It contained a small sum of money and the following lines:

"His name is Walter Thornley; his age three years. A valise, containing such clothing as is at present necessary for him, will be found at your door. Funds shall from time to time be remitted for his support. He is not to be sent to a public school; but his education must nevertheless be that which befits a gentleman. You will not communicate the circumstances under which he has been confided to you, yet an appearance of mystery is to be avoided. Curiosity is not to be excited."

The easy impudence of these requirements by the obliged party provoked a smile.

"A pretty fellow, truly!" exclaimed Mr. Grafton; "imposes on me the trouble of rearing and instructing his child, and dictates the manner with the air of a sovereign prescribing the education of his heir apparent!"

In the mean time Damie, who had heard the stranger withdraw, and who was by no means superior to the infirmity common to all persons excluded from conferences, entered, with some ready excuse for her reappearance, when the sight of the child struck her dumb. Looking from him to Mr. Grafton, from Mr. Grafton to the child, she stood silent and motionless. At length, recovering her speech, she exclaimed, as she seated herself in the nearest chair, "Well, if I ain't beat!"

Mr. Grafton was sufficiently disposed to obey the last injunction of the letter. He had no mind to be a village wonder, to prevent which, he quietly remarked that "the child had been placed under his guardianship, and that he and she must make the best of it."

This did not satisfy Damie, who, bursting with questions as to "who?" "what?" and "where?" condensed

all into one, which she trusted would lead to a solution of every other.

"What is his name?" she inquired.

Mr. Grafton informed her, adding, with affected indifference, uncertain as yet how this addition to her cares would be regarded, "You see, Damie, that you and I can not shut ourselves out from the troubles of the world any more than others. If we do not seek them, they come to us."

The child, meanwhile, all unconscious that his destiny had passed into other hands, was pursuing puss from one covert to another, till she had ensconced herself under the chair occupied by Damie, who, not yet decided in what light to regard the little intruder, was following him about with her eyes in mute perplexity.

At this juncture the cat, who, among her immunities, chiefly valued her quiet nap before the study fire, who had not been so hunted about since she was a kitten, and, though she "wore motley," had no fancy to play the fool, grew tired of having her well-dressed whiskers twitched, her tail pulled, and her smooth coat of many colors brushed the wrong way. When, therefore, she had gained her last retreat, and her indefatigable pursuer, with a cry of exultation, seized her, she turned on the defensive, and inflicted such vengeance with her talons, that he was obliged, though not without a brave struggle for victory, to release her, uttering at the same time a scream of pain, and holding up his bleeding chubby hand with an imploring look to Damie.

Mr. Grafton was at rest; the crisis was favorable; Damie caught him in her arms, beat puss, and kissed his hand; and the little fellow, moaning with pain, reclined on her bosom till he completely subdued her.

"He has cried himself to sleep," said Mr. Grafton; "where will you lay him for the night, Damie?"

"Where?" repeated she; "why in my own bed, be sure. The poor little cre'ter sha'n't never sleep nowhere else." And there, accordingly, he was safely bestowed with no sense of suffering or desertion.

In the morning, however, strange voices and objects disturbed him. The images which frolic and pain had chased away returned. He looked in vain for some familiar face, till, disappointed and confounded, he threw himself back on his pillow, covered his eyes, and cried aloud for some one, but with such imperfect articulation that the united efforts of Mr. Grafton and Damie could make nothing intelligible of the sounds.

"Poor boy!" said Mr. Grafton, sadly, "he calls for those who can not hear, and who would not if they could. Fortunately, his tender mind will soon yield to other impressions."

In effecting this change, the fearless temper of the child much aided. He was soon won by kindness, and reposed himself without distrust on his new friends, though his heaving bosom and occasional sobs indicated that his little heart was troubled. For days his anxious glance was directed to every opening door, and an approaching footstep would arrest his attention in the midst of his play. In her endeavors to soothe him, Damie found his first acquaintance, puss, an able coadjutor. Having instructed him so to caress as not to irritate her, she skillfully combined something of responsibility and occupation with amusement by making it his business to feed her, an office that so delighted him that his own meal was often left untasted till he should place her saucer of milk and her morsel of meat. Amid her kind attentions to the little stranger, Damie's curiosity remained as unsatisfied and as eager as ever; and, finding Mr. Grafton insensible to all her hints, her woman's ingenuity was set to work to extract information from the

child himself. Here she was alike unsuccessful. In vain she tried and pumped; asked about father, mother, brothers, sisters, home; and she at length relinquished the attempt to interpret words which, as the past was in part effaced by new impressions, seemed fewer and more unintelligible at every trial. The valise, which had been the first object of her investigation, was found to contain a supply of clothing, but no marks. It was evident that pains had been taken to efface them from a few articles more worn, and of finer materials, and which were ornamented as mothers love to deck their darlings. But the greater number were plain, and appeared not to have had any. The former Damie abstracted for reasons of her own.

"They ain't no use now; he's most grown out of 'em; and who knows but they may be wanted some day to sartify to the child?"

The benevolence of Mr. Grafton soon gathered its reward. The little being thus strangely imposed on him, as if conscious of peculiar obligations, seemed to strive to make the only return in his power—his caresses and obedience.

Without disturbing the quiet, he infused cheerfulness into the hitherto joyless dwelling. By a sort of instinct he seemed to know when he must suppress and when he might indulge his merriment, and

"Provoke
A partnership in play."

If Mr. Grafton were reading, Walter remained immovable on his little cricket, and addressed his inseparable companion, puss, in whispers. But when the book was laid aside, and his "uncle," as he was instructed to call his guardian, at leisure, he knew he was permitted to approach, to mount his knee unchidden, and to ask for the oft-repeated, never-wearying story which Mr. Graf-

ton—himself a child in simplicity and tenderness—soon learned to adapt to his auditor. Day after day was told the tale

“Of orphan babes,

With berries smear'd, with brambles torn,”

of dutiful but unfortunate Red Riding-hood; of the marvelous bean-pole, the top of which, like the fabled summit of Demavend, was nearer heaven than earth; of the magic slipper, and the beneficent fairy, and all the fantastic tales of the olden time, which, after amusing the nurseries of our granddames, furnish the drama of their adult descendants. But, above all, Walter delighted in the wonderful achievements of “Puss in Boots,” and nearly renewed the ancient battle between himself and his four-footed friend by an attempt to force her into the same unseemly guise. Then, changing his theme, Mr. Grafton would descend from these legends to the experience of common mortals, and inculcate a moral from the fate of those who had neither fairies to befriend nor ogres to distress them; of good boys, like himself, and of bad ones whom “nobody loved”—a predicament, of all others, terrible to Walter. At other times, in the scene of Damie's labors, with the irrepressible activity of children, he proffered his “hindering help,” by which, if her work was not advanced, he was amused, and she was not displeased. Sometimes, his powers and faculties suspended on the revolutions of her wheel, he would sit silent and motionless, his eye following, as with slow, retreating step she mysteriously extended the roll into the long and slender thread; then would come the rousing turn which was to render it fine, and smooth, and strong; and then, after a momentary inverted motion of her wheel, it was carried to the point of the spindle, which seemed to Walter to swallow up the yarn as fast as Damie could spin it. To the hum of her wheel she

added a song as monotonous; yet, as if his ear were attuned to sound, and could catch its slightest variations, he listened with satisfaction, and was impatient of interruption.

To his amusement succeeded his instruction, and Damie was advanced from his nurse to his dame. The labors of the day over, she assumed, with her afternoon's better apparel, the office of schoolmistress, taught him to repeat the strange characters of his horn-book, and to utter those first simple combinations that were to be to him in after years the key to knowledge. His aptitude and docility rendered commands and punishments unnecessary. His attention seldom wandered but when puss coaxingly rubbed alongside, inviting a brush from his familiar hand; and then a tap from Damie's knitting-needle, the extent of her penal administration, soon recalled it.

CHAPTER II.

YEARS passed, and Walter, having acquired all that Damie could teach, was not slow to apply the key with which she had furnished him. The Bible, almost the only book she was acquainted with, notwithstanding that she had used it as one of primary instruction, he continued to peruse with interest, if not with "spiritual discernment." The wonders it unfolded, the heroism, suffering, and fidelity it recorded, expanded his young mind, while Mr. Grafton was careful to impress the lesson which might else have escaped his perception, and to direct his excited sensibilities to the Being whose character it revealed. There were not then, as now, books for all ages; and, when Walter humbly requested "something to read," Mr. Grafton despairingly raised his eyes to his well-filled shelves, where ancient and modern tongues poured forth their treasures, but only for those who had earned them by hard and patient study.

The eager desire of Walter for knowledge was not, however, to remain unsatisfied. It became an additional tie between him and his guardian, who, thus won from his more dignified pursuits to the personal instruction of a child, supplied by oral teaching the deficiencies of the period. This was fortunate for both. It withdrew Mr. Grafton from occupations which, if they could not extinguish his sympathies, prevented their full exercise; and it brought Walter's mind into more frequent communion with one not less pure and good than it was rich and beautiful; and while Mr. Grafton created or found—we leave to others to choose between the exist-

ence or not of original propensities—a correspondence in his pupil with his own poetic temperament, which opened a new source of sympathy, he thought he could already discern, too, the germ of a character sufficiently strong to resist the illusions it loves.

As Walter's mind advanced, Mr. Grafton fed it "with food convenient;" and study, hard, pains-taking study, succeeded to the hitherto less arduous method. Difficulties only increased his zeal. They were surmounted with an ease that at once surprised and gratified his instructor; but, nevertheless, Mr. Grafton was sometimes doubtful if an education so entirely secluded did not exceed the injunctions imposed on him. He feared, too, its effect on the temper of the boy, who, though both fearless and kind, was exclusive and self-dependent to a degree not consistent with the ordinary condition of man, which makes it at once a necessity and a virtue to confide in his fellows.

Though a small settlement in a rude country, there was of course—being in New England—a school. To this Walter was now sent, not so much for its ostensible advantages as to bring him into union, and peradventure into collision, with those of his own age. Here he was soon distinguished by his industry, quickness, and obedience. His truth, courage, and generosity had their natural effect on his companions. He was on good terms with all, but a certain sense of uncongeniality on both sides prevented intimacy. Yet he mingled in the usual sports of his age, for which his fine *physique* well fitted him; and such were his fairness and good-nature that, though generally excelling, he excited no envy. All yielded to Walter Thornley, whether at book or ball, as if the attempt were vain to outstrip one whom Nature had marked as her favorite.

His fourteenth year was now completed, and it may

be asked, had no clue offered to the mystery that involved him? and was he himself aware of it? So far from a solution, the enigma was the more complete, inasmuch as the remittances, gradually diminishing, had soon ceased altogether. Though pained, as it regarded Walter, by this apparent desertion on the part of his natural friends, Mr. Grafton rejoiced for himself. Pecuniary considerations were of little importance to him. Not rich, he had yet enough for the moderate wants of himself and his ward, and could not deeply regret what seemed to secure an undivided right in one whom he felt daily more necessary to his happiness. In reply to the inquiries of Walter he had carefully avoided whatever would excite a curiosity he could not gratify. He had represented him as an orphan, because such he believed him virtually to be; and, evading farther particulars, he hoped to preserve his mind, at least during its tender state, from a knowledge, the effect of which he dreaded on one of his temperament.

But, though Walter acquiesced in the silence of his guardian, there were yet certain vague reminiscences lingering in his mind, like visions of a pre-existence, which strangely perplexed him, and which he cherished as persons of a poetic imagination dwell upon their dreams, as something that carries them beyond the common and the limited into the unrestricted regions of the ideal and the extraordinary, where they may indulge in thought and emotion forbidden within the sober confines of reality. Like dreams, he feared that they, too, would vanish into insignificance if reduced to language, which seemed incapable of "bodying" the faint traces, the scarce perceptible connections, the momentary associations, which came and went like shadows over the surface of memory. There were visions of a lady who smiled and wept, who caressed and soothed; of spacious

rooms, and beautiful wanderings among flowers; of lying on the soft grass that seemed to spread immeasurably around him; then of restraint and authority, and a tall, dark man; then of noise and fright, the dashing of waters, and the roar of winds. Then all was a blank till Mr. Grafton, Damie, and puss filled up the vacancy. How much of this could be traced to original first impressions; how much had been afterward supplied by ideas which, as the mind received them, fitted into and perfected its half-formed imagery, he could not ascertain, nor did he desire to do so. It was a part of himself, and as such he clung to it.

Many circumstances of Walter's condition co-operated with these impressions, in giving that turn to his mind which, invidiously termed "romantic," is but another name for quick sensibilities and generous impulses, craving objects and opportunities above the comprehension or desire of ordinary men. His secluded and simple habits left imagination to its own creations, unshackled by the forms of artificial life—the most effectual of sedatives; at the same time that its freedom, invigorating to mind and body, preserved him from the sickly sentimentality of a dreaming boy. Without apprehensions of their Indian neighbors, many of whom were the subjects of religious instruction, and perfect in the woodcraft of the place, Walter, with his gun and dog, fearlessly roamed the forest which still closely skirted the village. There, threading its mazes, penetrating its deep recesses, looking up to catch the sunbeam that could scarce find its way to his path, or provoking its echoes with his rich musical voice, he was unconscious of a want.

To this temper, allied to whatever was beautiful, Walter's reading had also contributed; some of which, if it answered no other end, at least preserved him from low associations and vulgar pleasures. Among graver

matter in Mr. Grafton's library, he had found records of that picturesque age which, as M. de Sismondi skeptically asserts, always eluding our investigation, is ever a little farther than we can penetrate. "Plus on étudie l'histoire, et plus on voit que la chevalerie est une invention presque absolument poétique; on n'arrive jamais à trouver par des documens authentiques la pays ou elle regnait: toujours elle est représenté à distance et pour les lieux et pour le tems." But to Walter, his imagination fired by the idea of devoted pages, trained in every gentle and manly service, and destined to a career of faith, humanity, and courtesy, it seemed as real as the skies above him.

A favorite ramble of his was along the river, which, after passing near the village, proceeded for more than a mile beyond it in a tolerably direct course. It then took a sharper turn, and dashed over a rocky ledge, falling from a height of fifty or sixty feet into a ravine, over the stony bottom of which it found its way into another part of the town, where a few houses were known as the "South End." Then, escaping from every obstruction, it resumed its full and placid course till it passed far beyond the bounds of Ashton. The richly-wooded sides of the ravine that shut in the river permitted a walk along its margin, by which a fearless foot might gain the summit. There, on one side, a small grassy plat closed in with trees afforded an inviting resting-place to the adventurer, whence he might gaze into the chasm, or be lulled to sleep by the

"Water's fall with difference discreet,
Now soft, now loud."

On both sides of the ledge over which the waters fell projecting masses of rock had suggested the idea of a bridge, these furnishing secure abutments. But the arts were still young in Ashton. The trunk of a large

tree which had accidentally fallen just beyond the cataract, and to which others had been added, served in place of a more artificial structure to those persons with steady nerves, who, to save time, went by this shorter cut from Ashton to "South End."

The place had, too, its legend to add to its attractions. In a conflict near it of two hostile native tribes, the daughter of the vanquished chief, hotly pursued by the victors, to escape captivity was said to have thrown herself from the rocks that overhung the ravine. A sycamore, not far from where she took the fatal leap, marked the spot. It was old, and the winds had played roughly with it; but as it reared its broken trunk and white branches above the underwood that partially concealed it, it justified, in the delusive lights and shadows of the night, the fancies of the country-folk; who, as the story ran, had often seen a gigantic phantom raising its arms, and in the act of precipitating itself into the abyss. Be this as it may, pity and superstition had consecrated it.

It was Walter's delight to pick his way along the stone-strewed margin, till, having reached nearly the base of the fall, he contrived, by the aid of fissures, projections, and saplings—the tough nurslings of the rocks—to gain by zig-zag approaches the summit. There, throwing himself on the soft grass that seemed spread for his reception, a vague foreshadowing might sometimes suggest to him that such was life—its high places only to be attained by hard and adventurous toil. Nor would his ardent young spirit have been discouraged by the admonition that, even when thus gained, they are often, alas! like a scant and dizzy height, "too narrow for friendship, and too slippery for repose."

But an exclusive companionship with nature, Mr. Grafton would not permit; and more for his pupil's ad-

vantage than his own gratification, he sought, as Walter grew older, what society the place afforded. The professions were represented by the village pastor, lawyer, and physician. These, with their families, and a few others, served to cultivate those feelings without which our nature is stunted and but half-grown. They were all respectable men in their way. Dr. Mills, undisturbed by old or new schools of medicine, by allopathy, homœopathy, or hydropathy, killed and cured to the general satisfaction. Squire Whiting, when he could not settle a difference amicably as a referee, fought the battle stoutly as an advocate. But first, in all respects, was good Dr. Jarvis. Those were the days of reverence, when the clergyman's well-worn black suit—coat, breeches, and worsted stockings; his steel shoe-buckles, cane, and pocket-comb; his rusty cocked hat, even from its peg behind him in his pulpit on the Sabbath, inspired more respect than the young of the present time are capable of feeling for any thing. It is fair to say, however, that Dr. Jarvis had stronger claims than even these. To much of the learning of his period and profession, he added a kindly nature and the manners of a gentleman. Though none could more pertinaciously defend their tenets, nor maintain a more uncompromising warfare with gainsayers, yet, when these had passed the confines of this world, there was none whose charity was so earnest in devising an escape for them from the very fate he had denounced against them. His feelings, indeed, whatever he might say—and he did say many things as hard to bear as to understand—were in charity with all men, and it was sometimes surmised that to indemnify himself for what he deemed necessary severity to the living he dealt thus mercifully with the dead.

It was not a small benefit that Mr. Grafton derived from his guardianship that he was thus drawn from a

morbid love of solitude; and that by his good-natured polemics with Dr. Jarvis, his disputed points of law with Squire Whiting, his incredulous but patient acceptance of Dr. Mills's remedies, and his hospitalities to all, the little courtesies of life were kept alive.

Among other apparently insignificant circumstances that went to make up the experience and character of Walter, was his intercourse with one who, though among the humblest in Ashton, filled a place that no one else could fill. This was Jedediah Cooley, otherwise "Jed," by which abbreviation he was universally known, to the practical oblivion of his patronymic. He had been a Revolutionary soldier, and was at this time a pensioner, and, moreover, peddler, fiddler, fisherman, sportsman, and songster. His fund of military anecdotes, of songs, and personal adventure, recommended him to the young, and, in addition to this, between himself and Walter had been early established certain sporting sympathies. He had been his instructor in all sylvan arts; services that had been well repaid, for, besides minor good offices, when a "season of sickness" had occurred—a period to which Jed was fond of alluding—Walter had proved himself both efficient and grateful.

CHAPTER III.

THE winter had been long and severe; and as the punishment of many acts of "downright presumption," as Damie did not scruple to say, with the opening spring Mr. Grafton was attacked by rheumatism so severely as to call for more attention than he was disposed to pay to himself. Having resisted all domestic nostrums, Damie, with equal confidence, asserted that it could only be cured by "the Pool"—the popular name then given to the Sulphur Spring at Lebanon. "Doctors' stuff," which, with a common inconsistency, she believed in only when administered by herself, and of which she would have said, in the words of the quaint old drama,

"It doth *them* more good, when they *sell* it,
Than all the buyers who take or smell it,"

"wouldn't be of no use."

Lebanon was at the distance of nearly two days' journey—something of an undertaking to stay-at-home persons. It had, too, or was supposed to have, its perils. The road, through a hilly and rough country, was much neglected, and, as some reported, absolutely dangerous. This, however, was not one of the things of which Mr. Grafton made much account, though their good pastor, on the Sabbath preceding his departure, did think it expedient to "put up," as the phrase went, prayers for his safe-conduct—a devout practice in keeping with the times, and one which the present generation, who trust themselves so recklessly to a blind and irresistible force, might do well to imitate.

Storing the wagon, at the suggestion of Damie, with

such comforts as in the then accommodations of the place might not be found, and with Walter as companion, attendant, and driver, one fine day in the middle of June Mr. Grafton bade Damie farewell, who, shading her eyes with her hand, looked after them as long as they could be seen, with more anxiety than is now manifested when a steamer parts its moorings for an Atlantic voyage.

"Well," said she, as she re-entered the house, and busied herself with its adjustment, "they are off—the Lord have mercy on 'em! Walter is a helpful lad, and will see that the cre'ters are well looked a'ter; but he can't do nothin' for the rheumatiz'; and Mr. Grafton, take him out of his books, though he is the best man ever I see, isn't much."

Ponder this, you who insist that knowledge, *per se*, is power.

Toward the close of the second day they reached the little village of Lebanon, without any of the accidents that had been predicted.

On the side of the high hill which rose above it two houses offered themselves for their accommodation, both sufficiently unpretending, but the lower one more inviting, because more accessible, the hill being very precipitous. To this they directed their course as a first application, and, finding such a promise of comfort as satisfied them, were content to remain. Wearied with his journey, Mr. Grafton soon retired, postponing till the next day an investigation of the place and the persons he might find there.

A beautiful morning called our travelers to a view of the valley beneath them, not, indeed, varied to the degree it now is with well-cultivated farms, clusters of substantial houses, a boldly undulating country comprehending many miles, and a distance that stretched with-

out intervening veil to the far mountain outline. The primeval forest still held partial possession, and excluded much that has since been laid open to admiring eyes; but enough was even then to be seen to give an idea of the whole.

A visit to "the Pool" was the first business of the day. There was found a little open reservoir, overshadowed by trees, into which the spring poured itself, and around it on benches were seated the patients, as if waiting for the angel who should "trouble the waters." In a few moments he appeared in the form of a fine, healthy, bare-footed boy, who, filling tumblers, presented them to such as desired it.

At present, the chief recommendation of this water is its purity and softness; but at that period the belief in its efficacy for many complaints was strong, and, moreover, confirmed by deposits of sulphur on the sides of the Pool in such quantities that people often gathered it to take with them on their return to their homes.

Mr. Grafton and Walter, both quick observers, were speculating on the persons near them, chiefly plain country-folk, who compared their cases and experience, the various doctors and remedies to which they had resorted, etc., etc., and were unanimous in the opinion that "the Pool" was better than all. While this was passing, Walter's attention was attracted by the approach of a wagon, small and light enough to be drawn by hand, descending from the upper house. It was brought quite close to the Pool, and its occupant, a boy apparently eleven or twelve years old, was served with water.

Walter observed that the servant who attended him supported him while he raised himself to drink. This, together with the extreme delicacy of his appearance, awakened his sympathy, and, approaching, contrary to

his usual shyness toward strangers, he tried to find some occasion to speak to him. It soon offered. The little invalid dropped his handkerchief, the servant did not observe it, and Walter hastened to pick it up and hand it to him. He received it with a smile, and by the mesmerism of youth a communication was established. The servant now drew near, took up the pole of the wagon, and they turned from the spring. It dragged heavily up the steep ascent, and Walter, who had followed a few paces, extended a helping hand without speaking. It was not rejected, and they were soon at the door of the upper house. Here Walter was about to turn away, but the little fellow said, with a wistful look and friendly tone, "Don't go!" and Walter lingered.

Presently a lady appeared on the piazza and descended the steps. Bending over the wagon, she kissed the child tenderly, saying in a sweet German voice, "Guten morgen, mein liebes kind; how came you to desert me thus?"

"Master Oscar wished, ma'am," said the servant, respectfully removing his hat, "to surprise you by showing how early he could be dressed, and how strong he is growing."

"Yes, mamma," said the boy, eagerly, "I am so strong I almost raised myself without Wilson's help."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the lady. "Thank Heaven!" and again, with eyes full of love, she bent over him, and again she kissed him.

Walter turned away, and hastily retraced his steps down the hill. He could not have very clearly defined his feelings, and he would have stoutly repelled any inquiry into them. He only knew that never before had he so keenly felt that *he* had no mother's love.

"Who is that fine-looking youth, Wilson?" asked the lady.

The man professed his ignorance.

"But, mamma," said Oscar, "we must find out. He is so very good-natured. Do you know that he helped Wilson draw me up the hill? It was his own offer, too; no one asked him."

"That was indeed very kind and thoughtful," she replied. "We will ascertain who he is when we next go to the spring."

Meanwhile, Mr. Grafton, who had observed Walter's attention to the sick boy, turned to a gentleman at his side, and inquired who the child was. The question was addressed to the village doctor, in frequent attendance at the Pool, and, having been called professionally to the child on his arrival, was better able than any one else to answer it.

"He is the son of a Mr. Middleton. The father is an Englishman; but, though his wife speaks English perfectly, it is with a foreign accent, which I take to be German. Carriages, horses, and servants show them to be people of fortune, but they are quite unassuming in their manners. *She* especially; *he* is one of your '*noli me tangere*' people; but the son is a fine fellow."

"Have they been long here?"

"About three weeks. They came for the health of their child, who, I understand, is the only survivor of four."

"And is he likely to be benefited by the experiment? he is an interesting-looking boy."

"Oh, too handsome! too handsome!" said the doctor, shaking his head. "I never like that complexion; but he is mending, and, with good care, I think they may save him."

"Where do they reside?"

"I believe near New York. They have been in this country some ten or twelve years, but he retains all his

John Bull stiffness, and will, I dare swear, as long as he lives."

In the course of the day there was the same gathering at the Pool, and soon the wagon and the little boy appeared, accompanied by a lady leaning on the arm of a gentleman, whom Mr. Grafton rightly inferred to be Mr. and Mrs. Middleton. The relationship between her and Oscar would have been suggested by their strong mutual resemblance, except that, with the same clear blue eye, delicately-cut features, and profusion of silky light-brown hair, her complexion, though fair, had not the fatal transparency through which that fate is seen, which so often attends those who seem like victims decked for sacrifice. Her sweet face and courteous manner were a passport to all hearts. Mr. Middleton, on the contrary, invited no approach. A fine person and gentlemanly deportment made an immediate impression, but, beyond what politeness required, he encouraged no intercourse.

Oscar's eye eagerly sought Walter, whom having found, he pointed out to Mrs. Middleton, saying, earnestly, "*Do, mamma, speak to him.*"

She was on the point of advancing toward him, when her husband, perceiving her intention, restrained her, though very gently, and said, "Wilson, go to the young man, and request him to do Master Oscar the favor to come here."

The message was delivered and obeyed. Oscar greeted Walter with a smile, and Mrs. Middleton, kindly extending her hand, said, "I am happy that my son has formed such an acquaintance, but, that I also may share his pleasure, will you have the goodness to give me your name?"

Walter felt as if he could give her his heart.

"Walter Thornley, ma'am."

"What a nice name!" exclaimed Oscar, ready to admire whatever belonged to his new friend.

"Papa, this is Walter Thornley."

Mr. Middleton, whose attention had been otherwise directed, turned rather suddenly at hearing himself thus addressed, looked inquiringly at the youth, then politely but coldly offered his hand, but said nothing.

"And I," said Oscar, "am Oscar Middleton; now we know each other, don't we?" And so it seemed, notwithstanding that a few hours previously they had been ignorant of each other's existence. Precious immunity of young hearts!

Henceforth Walter's time was divided between attendance on Mr. Grafton and Oscar; and as the improvement in the former soon began to justify Damie's recommendation of the Pool, Walter was more at leisure to devote himself to the latter. His gentle ways; his hand always in the right place in moving, lifting, and adjusting Oscar; that instinct by which even children often know how to adapt themselves to the suffering, rendered his services more acceptable than Wilson's; and Walter, in no long time, became his most reliable attendant. Then his companionship was so amusing! He had so many things to tell of his wild wood-life, of his forest sports, and Indian traditions, that, in listening, Oscar's body grew stronger as his spirit became lighter.

Though difference in years under other circumstances would have kept them asunder, it now served only to unite them by a sense of usefulness on one side, of reliance on the other. In addition to this, Oscar's delicate health had confined him so much to the society of those older than himself, that he was sufficiently matured to value the superior attainments of Walter.

A fortnight had thus passed, during which the intimacy of the boys had drawn Mr. Grafton and the Mid-

dletons together. Between himself and the lady a friendly, almost familiar intercourse was established. He, as an invalid, excited her interest, and by attentions to him as such, she endeavored to repay the really important services that Walter was rendering to her son. Then he had seen her country in his younger days; he understood its language and admired its literature. He loved its music and its poetry; could sympathize with Klopstock's love for his "Meta," and comprehend and pity, if he could not justify, the "Sorrows of Werter." Walter, who had never seen his guardian in society so stimulating, listened, and wondered at the new phase under which he appeared.

In Mr. Middleton Mr. Grafton had scarcely less interest than in his wife, but it was of a very different character. He was to him a study, and a painful one.

"His is not a handsome face," thought he one day when he had been long speculating on it; "no, not what is commonly so called, and yet, from its variety and power, it rivets my attention beyond any I ever saw. Sometimes harsh almost to severity, then tender almost to sadness; never cheerful, yet occasionally bright with a gayety that seems to play but on the surface, and reminds one of sunshine upon ice—light without warmth. A man, I should say, of quick sensibilities—of strong impulses rather than stern resolve—and yet sometimes he looks as if he could dare death in the pursuit of a purpose; yes, *dare*, perhaps, but not *endure*. His manner is as uncertain as is his face—always polite, though often cold to repulsiveness, he will yet suddenly surprise with a cordiality that embarrasses by its strangeness."

That Mr. Grafton, on his part, should impress his new acquaintances favorably was to be expected. *Gentleman* was so indelibly stamped upon him that the most suspicious and exacting could not distrust his claim to be

thus considered, while the intellectual and spiritual character of his face spoke to whatever was high and holy in those with whom he held communication. Simple as a child in his manners—reserved from modesty, not pride—there was no artificial barrier to the fountain within. He was no egotist; he could not speak of himself or his interests; but though he did not offer his own heart to the inspection of others, he never withheld from them his sympathy.

While Mr. Grafton found matter for reflection in his new acquaintances, Walter was not less observant. Alternately attracted and repelled by Mr. Middleton—hardly knowing whether or not he liked him—he was yet conscious of an uneasy interest attaching to whatever he said or did. On the other hand, Mrs. Middleton inspired him with emotions as delightful as new. Her beauty, her manner, invested even ordinary actions with a charm. But when she caressingly leaned over her son, when she laid her soft fair hand on his head, or turned his light curls over her fingers, a strange undefined feeling of desolateness would come over him, while he gazed with such sad admiring eyes as on one occasion caught the attention of Mr. Middleton, and Walter felt a rough rap on his shoulder. Looking up, he saw that gentleman regarding him with a smile unusually mirthful.

"Take care, young sir," exclaimed he, "you must not fall in love with my wife."

"I don't know what you mean, sir," replied Walter, in all simplicity.

Again Mr. Middleton smiled. "Oh I am not at all jealous, I assure you—rather pleased with your involuntary homage; but"—shaking his head—"I see there is a very soft place in your heart, my boy. I hope you may not some day find it out to your cost."

CHAPTER IV.

THE health of Oscar rapidly improved; the pure, bracing mountain air probably the chief agent in his recovery. The symptoms that had filled his parents with apprehensions of spinal disease had nearly disappeared, and the doctor could honestly assure them that he was thus far safe. He now sat up without support, and moved about with only the assistance of an arm, or a cane; but Walter, even more necessary to him as a companion, still passed part of every day at the upper house.

One morning when he and Mr. Grafton had, as usual, joined their friends on the piazza, where Mrs. Middleton was seated at her tambour-frame, and her husband, after a short conversation, turned again to his newspaper, Walter found a place at a table, where, among other things scattered on it, lay a large open book richly illustrated, over which Oscar was poring.

"Oh!" said he, "I'm so glad you've come. Here is something that mamma packed up for my entertainment, that I have been so wishing to show you, but it has not been taken out till to-day. It is full of the queerest things; just look!"

It was a work on Heraldry, and Walter was as eager to see as Oscar to exhibit.

"This is the very thing!" said he. "It will explain what I have read of; but you must help me to understand it."

Delighted to be able to teach Walter any thing, Oscar poured forth his little store, accompanied with a modest disclaimer.

"Indeed I don't know much about it myself, as I have

only looked it over once with mamma; but we will help each other."

They were soon deep in the book with its quaint and antiquated Norman terms, which Oscar, with an amusing complacency, repeated for the instruction of Walter. "*Field, ordinaries and charges, chef, fess, and base; bends and cheveron. Party my coupé, and coupé my party. Parti per chef, per fess, and per bend; or, argent, gules, vert, pellets, bezants, torteaux, ermine, and vair.*" Lions in every fantastic attitude; stags' and bulls' heads cabossed; leopards, eagles, and dolphins; battle-axes, spears, and daggers; helmets, crests, devices, and lambrequins; gauntlets and greaves; crosses in every conceivable variety; roses and fleurs-de-lis; cups, baldricks, and horns, etc., etc.

"And are all these strange things significant?" asked Walter.

"To be sure," answered Oscar, with the confidence of an amateur; "at least they were so once. Perhaps they make coats of arms now to suit people's fancy, and crowd every sort of thing into them, for the book says the most simple are the most ancient. Here now is one, '*parti per pale, argent and gules*'—nothing more—that means divided perpendicularly, one half white, the other red, and it belongs to one of the oldest families. Mamma says this is as it should be; for the best-born persons are the least ostentatious."

They continued to turn over the leaves quietly, till Oscar exclaimed, "Ah! here is something would suit me nicely. See! '*Falcon close*,' confined to its perch, and '*Falcon rising*,' with wings just beginning to spread themselves—not yet fairly off—I'd take that if I had to choose. I am leaving my perch; by-and-by I'll fly!"

"And what does this queer little dumpy bird mean?"

"'Dumpy bird!'" repeated Oscar; "why, that's a martlet, and never has any feet, because it was given to younger sons, who had no land to stand on."

"Oh, then, that would do for me," said Walter.

"And why for you? You have no older brothers, have you?"

"No, nor no land neither; I am 'Walter the penniless.'"

"Well, they say I am to have plenty of land, but I would give it all for a brother. Ah! here is one would suit mamma, 'a pelican wounding herself to feed her young;' that is just what she would do."

Mr. Grafton, seated by Mrs. Middleton, had engaged her in conversation, but it flagged as her ear caught the sounds from Oscar's table; and, as he uttered the last words, he observed a sigh to escape her, and her moistened eye turned to her son.

"Ah ha!" continued Oscar, with emphasis, and in a higher key, "here is something we haven't got, and we don't want—do we?" Then, lowering his voice, he whispered to Walter an explanation, who replied by a nod of intelligence.

Oscar's louder tone had roused his father, who, catching his last words, laid down his paper, and said, "Pray what is that, my boy, which you neither have nor want? I am glad you are so reasonable. We generally desire most what we have not; what is it?"

Oscar looked a little foolish; his father repeated the question, and he replied, "A '*bâton sinistre*,' papa."

A cloud came over Mr. Middleton's face, and in a manner almost fierce, he said, "Who has dared to put such ideas into your head? Has Wilson presumed to instruct you? or—"

"Dear papa," said Oscar, "Wilson does not understand heraldry, you know."

"Who, then," repeated his father in the same tone, "has given you this superfluous information, filling your mind with—"

Mrs. Middleton had risen from her frame and approached her husband, and now, putting her hand gently on his shoulder, said, "If there can be a fault in a matter so trifling, it is mine. Oscar asked me for an explanation, which I gave. I always tell him the truth."

Her voice, her touch, were enough. Subdued at once, he took her hand, raised it to his lips, and said, "You are always right; I am always wrong."

"Not so, dear Godfrey. But if sometimes wrong, as we all are—always generous and ready to atone, which all are not."

He replied only by repeating the word "atone" in a low voice, and then resumed his paper.

Mrs. Middleton, without apology or explanation, or apparent consciousness that such might be required, returned quietly to her work, and the boys tried to busy themselves in their book.

But the harmony of the morning was not to be restored, and, as soon as could be done without betraying the reason, Mr. Grafton reminded Walter of the hour, and they withdrew.

As they descended the hill Walter said, "Mr. Middleton is a strange person. Do you not think, sir, that he is a little insane? His coachman, I understand, says (for Wilson is more guarded) that he sometimes keeps his room, where no one, not even his wife, goes near him. And then he is so uncertain! At times he makes me feel as if I could do any thing for him, and then again he is so strange that it seems as if his mind could not be sound."

"No, I do not think so. He is rather the spoiled child of fortune, and having been disappointed, or per-

haps ill-treated, his nerves are out of tune. I am glad to be assured by his devotion to his wife and child that there is no domestic unhappiness. If we referred all human inconsistencies, Walter, to insanity, we should make the world a '*maison des fous*.'"

Yet, notwithstanding this interpretation, Mr. Grafton did not wholly reject Walter's suggestion, which tended to increase his interest in the family, and his regret for his departure, which, as he was now quite restored, was to take place in a few days.

The next morning, as Oscar was sitting by his mother, he said, "I want you to ask papa to do me a great favor."

"Why not ask him yourself, my son?"

"Because he never refuses *you* any thing."

"Nor you, Oscar, if it be proper."

"Well, this is proper; and yet I am afraid. I know papa loves me—but—sometimes—he speaks so—"

"Your father has much to trouble him, and we all have our faults, Oscar. We must love our friends with them, since we can not have them without."

"You have none, mamma—"

Mrs. Middleton would have checked him, but he proceeded, "No, no, you have no faults! You are kind to every body, and Wilson says all the poor people say you are an angel."

"Oh, my child, it is easy to earn such commendations from those who are starving. A full meal, fuel, and a little money will lend wings to any common mortal."

"Perhaps so; but *their* wings drop off when they come to the light, like the man's who went too near the sun; but yours only look brighter."

"Stop, stop, little flatterer! and tell me what is the great favor you are wanting."

"It is that papa would invite Walter to go home with us—only for a visit, I mean."

Mrs. Middleton hesitated, and looked rather doubtful; then said, "Your father is not fond of having strangers—"

"But Walter is not now a stranger."

"No—well, I will do what I can for you, unless you will ask yourself—that is best, believe me. Your father never refused you a reasonable gratification."

A few days after, Mr. Grafton and Walter called to take leave, and the visit, which all seemed equally unwilling to terminate, being ended with an exchange of regrets and good wishes, Mr. Middleton said, as they rose to go, "We will, if you please, leave the boys here a few moments, while you indulge me with a walk on the piazza."

"I have," he continued, when they were alone, "a request to prefer in behalf of Oscar, but one in which Mrs. Middleton and myself take part. We wish you to allow Walter to remain here, and to return with us to our home. We shall be grateful for as long a visit from him as you can consent to."

"You are all very good," replied Mr. Grafton, somewhat embarrassed by the unexpected proposal, "so good that I grieve to say no. But I can not at present part with him. The conditions of my guardianship are rigid, and I must conform to them."

Mr. Middleton looked disappointed.

"Were you like some men I might urge you," he said; "but I am so well assured of your desire to give happiness that I am satisfied you decline to do so only for sufficient reasons. But if not now, some other time; and one word more; your nephew has interested us not only by his kind attentions to our son, but by his uncommon gifts. Have you decided on his future? Can he obtain in your retired situation the advantages to which he is entitled?"

"Not all I could wish, of course, but more, perhaps, than you suppose. He is now advanced in some studies as far as youths of his age in a country where a classical education is much behind that to be obtained, and therefore required, in yours; and in his reflective powers he is far beyond them. His mind is more than usually impressible, and gathers from books and from every external object with no other stimulant than its own energy. As to his future, that does not depend on me; I have little fear, however, but that he will make a way to usefulness, and that is the best distinction."

Mr. Middleton looked as if he wished, yet did not know how, to proceed. At length he said,

"I will not farther press this matter at present, but if at any time money should be necessary—I have no influence in this country, you know—call on me. Here is my address. Pardon me if I am impertinent."

"My dear sir, you are only generous beyond all claim, and I ought therefore to be frank with you, though little disposed to speak of my own affairs. Should his resources be inadequate, I have enough for him and myself. I will only beg you to preserve for us your good-will and remembrance."

At an early hour the next day, after another farewell to Oscar, who had insisted on being at their lodgings for the purpose, Mr. Grafton and Walter were on their way homeward.

The morning was exquisite; and Mr. Grafton, renovated in health, gratified with the acquaintance they had made, from which he hoped some future good to his ward, and well pleased to return to his quiet home, cast a cheerful glance around him, and Walter endeavored to shake off regretful feelings.

Considering it due to Mr. Middleton, Mr. Grafton communicated his kind invitation.

"May I ask what you said, sir?"

"I had only to tell the truth, and confess myself not at liberty to consent. Would you like to go?"

"Yes, sir; but you know best, I dare say."

Still Walter did not look satisfied. After a silence of some time, and divers unconscious applications of his whip, which, considering his horses were doing their best up a long hill, probably seemed to them quite unnecessary, he said,

"I should like to ask you a question, sir."

"As many as you please, Walter."

"Then why did you say you were 'not at liberty to consent?' You, only, have the control of my actions."

"Oh! well, perhaps I did not use to Mr. Middleton just that form of expression."

"But you do to me, sir; and it is why you use it at all that I wish to know."

"You are critical, Walter," said Mr. Grafton, with a smile. "Do we not often so express inability? We regret that we have not the power to do a thing, which is just the same."

"Perhaps so, sir; but when you have sometimes refused a request of mine, you may have said you could not comply, but it was never in a way to imply that you could not if you chose to do so."

"Guardians are often restricted in certain particulars. Be assured that I shall never interpret my limits too rigidly. For the present we will say no more about it."

But it was not so easy to repress in Walter's mind the train of thought that had been suggested.

Near the decline of the next day, Damie, having been forewarned of their approach, received them at the doorstep. The evening being rather chilly, though it was July—a freak our capricious climate often indulges in—she had a cheerful little blaze on the parlor hearth;

Mr. Grafton's chair was in its usual place, his stand and candles placed by it, and every piece of furniture had an expectant look. As she observed Mr. Grafton's improved condition, Damie was, as an Italian would say, "*gloriosa*." She had advised the journey! she had predicted the cure!

"Well," exclaimed she, "if the Pool isn't wonderful! Why, you are as spry, sir, as Walter; and he, too, though he *was* perfectly well when he went, he, too, is better now."

This declaration provoked a laugh at her expense, which she was too proud, too happy, and too busy to resent.

CHAPTER V.

THE summer passed; but, though Walter attended to the cares that, as he grew into greater trust, devolved upon him, and failed in no respect in his accustomed application to study, Mr. Grafton saw with regret that his boyish happiness seemed yielding to a thoughtfulness which, always in some degree natural to him, had of late become so prevailing as to suggest some special cause. Still, as he made neither communication nor inquiry, Mr. Grafton, whatever he might conjecture, thought it best to defer the revelation which he was aware must soon be given. This was unexpectedly hastened. One evening, as he was reading, and Walter was, or affected to be, occupied in like manner, he suddenly turned to his guardian, and said, "Are you my uncle, sir?"

Off his guard at this unlooked-for inquiry, Mr. Grafton instinctively answered, "No, Walter."

"What relationship, then, is there between us?"

"None whatever."

With a strong effort to suppress his emotion, Walter said, in a proud and injured tone, "Then I have been deceived for twelve years. 'Tis time, sir, to deal differently with me."

"My dear boy, the deceit of which you complain, if it indeed deserves so harsh a name, has been most reluctant on my part. I have only sought to defer what would give pain. But you are right. The time for concealment is past. Take this seat by me, and I will give you such facts as are in my possession."

Walter did so; the story was told in few words, but many would fail to express its effect on the hearer. His intense gaze, his changing color, his quivering lip and heaving chest, better told the conflict of emotions that shook him. For some time he could not speak. His first words were those of gratitude. Convulsively pressing Mr. Grafton's hand, he could only say, "My father!" and the effort brought tears to his relief.

Mr. Grafton, unwilling to infuse his own distrust into Walter's mind, had been careful to express no opinion of the person by whom he had been committed to his care, while ignorant of the relationship subsisting between them.

"Has he never written?" asked Walter, at length.

"Never."

"But the promised remittances—he surely sent them?"

"For a short time."

Walter's countenance fell.

"How do you explain their failure, sir?"

"I can not, otherwise than by supposing that he may be no longer living."

Walter shuddered.

"Dead!" he exclaimed, "and all knowledge dying with him! Oh, it can not be! do not, do not say so!"

"I only suggest a possibility; there may be other and excellent reasons. We must hope the best."

But distress, doubt, fear, spoke in Walter's face. He longed to ask if Mr. Grafton believed this person to be his father, but he could not; he dreaded, he knew not why, to have the idea confirmed. He only asked that he would more minutely describe his appearance.

Mr. Grafton did so.

"The same! the same!" exclaimed Walter, as if from some secret recess of memory an image came forth, bringing with it, too, dim recollections of endearments

that had won his infant confidence; and he softened toward one who, a moment before, had repelled him. But with these came also a fear, and his heart fainted within him.

"Perhaps it is better I should never know," thought he. "I may only hear my birth to blush for it."

Mr. Grafton, tenderly regarding him, easily divined the doubts, the conjectures, the apprehensions that passed like shadows over his expressive face, but he forbore to avow his participation in them.

"My dear boy," said he, affectionately laying his hand on his head, and stroking the rich hair from his brow, "let us talk no more at present, it is late; but henceforth we shall have no secrets from each other."

A beautiful autumn came, glorious with its yellow lights and gorgeous foliage; and, animated by its bracing influences, Walter seemed more like himself than he had of late done. With his gun on his shoulder, his lunch in his pocket, and followed by Peto, a mongrel, with a strong infusion of bull, unfit for sport, but great as a guard or companion, and one who would not be repulsed, he set off for a day in the woods.

On his return home, finding himself near the lower termination of the ravine, the fancy took him to climb its precipitous side as he had often done; but what should he do with Peto, who had been more a plague than pleasure during the day, and would here be a serious encumbrance? A neighbor lad who was passing by the usual route to the village offered to relieve him both of dog and gun, and Walter, sharing with him his game, consented, Peto going off with the air of a dismissed official, conscious of incompetency. Then, winding his way up the ravine, he put forth his strength and agility to the task of reaching the summit. Having gained it, he threw himself panting and excited on a bed of leaves

with which a slight frost had strewn the ground, and surrendered himself to the tranquilizing influences around him.

A soft vapory haze was spread over the declining day, rendering nature—like a lovely woman seen through a transparent veil—even more lovely. The woods had put their glory on—

"Oh, Autumn! why so soon
Depart the hues that make the forest glad?"

There were no discordant sounds, but through the still air was heard the murmur from the ravine, and the distinct but gentle dropping of the golden leaves that the frost had disengaged. Walter watched them as they fell till a dreamy thoughtfulness came over him. To this succeeded a sense of loneliness, suggested by the companionship that seemed to pervade all nature. The hum of insects told of numbers; the birds that twittered among the trees that shaded him were arranging a social southern trip when the shorter days should come; a cow that had broken bounds, and had found some green spots near him, from time to time gave a motherly call to her silly calf who had strayed too far from her; even the senseless river at his feet seemed hasting to some "meeting of the waters," as if willing to lose itself so that it might mingle with others.

"Nothing is alone but myself," sighed Walter.

Wearied with his day's ramble, reverie soon disposed to sleep, and he was transported to the "land of dreams." He there appeared still to lie on his cliff-top bed, while groups of happy children and caressing mothers were near him. Lambs gamboled about their dams, and parent-birds were feeding their nestlings in the trees; but none cared for him, or even seemed conscious of his presence. He was *alone*, in the midst of life and love. By-and-by a cloud intervened, and all were gone. While

he lamented, it parted, and disclosed the image that had haunted his childhood—a tall, dark man, with eyes bent on him that penetrated to his heart, and weighed on him like a nightmare. He tried to move—he was transfixed by their gaze.

The low growl of a dog broke the spell, and he awoke to behold that very face leaning over him; and Peto, who had eluded the custody to which he had been committed, guarding him with an air of defiance.

Walter raised himself on his elbow, laid a restraining hand on Peto, and turned a full, undaunted look on the stranger.

"Walter Thornley?" he asked.

"Yes," said Walter.

"I thought so. But you do not and can not know *me*."

Years had left their mark on that face, but there were still the same strong features, the same singular expression that had, as it were, burned itself into his infant mind. Naturally tenacious of all impressions, and rendered still more so by a life so quiet and unvarying as to produce but few, Walter gazed on him with a clear conviction of his identity. He had risen, and, standing erect with arms crossed upon his breast, as if to control the beating of his heart, and endeavoring to speak with composure, he said deliberately,

"Yes—I—do."

It was evident that the stranger was unprepared for this reply, and he returned a look of rather displeased surprise.

"Know me! and as *what?* or *whom?*"

"As one with whom I have some mysterious connection. Oh, give me a name by which to call you!"

Surveying Walter from head to foot in silence, and with an expression difficult to define, though certainly inquisitorial and severe, his face at length melted into a

smile meant to inspire confidence, and he replied, "You *shall* know me, and for your best friend. There, give me your hand. Now let us be seated. Here is a rock that will serve for our purpose. I have something to say, and not much time. First, let me express my satisfaction with yourself—nay, hear me," continued he, in a less gentle tone; "I have the right, young man, to commend or to blame—reward or punish—therefore listen without interruption. Your appearance, your air, your language, all indicate that my choice of a guardian was well made. Go on as you have begun, and success will be yours."

"Success!" repeated Walter; "I want affection, confidence, and that which is not refused to the poorest—the knowledge of who and what I am."

"And can any one," replied the stranger, with a sarcastic smile, "can any one better instruct you than yourself? What makes your identity but your own mind; your own consciousness? What can I tell you of Walter Thornley that you do not know better than I do?"

"Oh, do not trifle with me!" exclaimed Walter, no longer able to restrain his emotion. "I entreat you, I conjure you by every thing sacred to tell me what my heart is bursting to know—tell me what gives you a right over me? by what name I should call you? by what name should I know myself? Oh, tell me!" said he, with a gush of feeling that had little effect on his hearer.

"Be calm, Walter. This will not advance your object. I am not to be moved from a purpose by the tears of a boy. You must remain for such time as I alone shall decide in your present ignorance. I will only say that, if you do not thwart me, you shall eventually know all. If you do," he added, with a threatening aspect, "you will never know. Be obedient, be satisfied to re-

main as I have placed you, and it will make the happiness of both; for let me tell you that we are each to the other a *destiny*—for good or for evil, as you shall act."

These words, uttered with a look and tone that sent a chill to Walter's heart, silenced him; but his spirit was working strongly within him. The authoritative and menacing voice, the cold—almost contemptuous—answers to his natural yearnings, the smile of irony at such a time, all repelled his confidence and roused his resentment. Starting to his feet, he exclaimed, in the impotent violence of a boy, "I *will* know; you shall no longer trifle with me!"

Peto, a close observer, instinctively felt that all was not right. From the first he had cast a doubtful eye on this unknown visitor; but now, when he saw him rise, and lay an arm on Walter with a view to check his impetuosity, a hostile growl, and a slight movement of his upper lip, indicated that he required but small encouragement to make an inconvenient member of the conference.

"I advise you," said the stranger, with an angry glance of distrust at Peto, "to keep both yourself and your dog under better control; unless, indeed, you intend to use his fangs to effect the determination you have just expressed."

"Oh, sir!" said Walter, cruelly wounded, "how can you speak to me in this manner? If you could only see my heart! You once treated me kindly. I have not forgotten it. I once looked on you as my only friend. Oh!" exclaimed he, trying to take his hand, and resentment subdued by those recollections, "oh, look at me, and speak to me differently!"

The stranger was moved. He did not reject Walter's hand; he was silent for a moment; then, in a voice rough with the emotion he endeavored to suppress, he said,

"Pshaw! folly! enough of this. You have heard my conditions—'tis needless to repeat them. I have but one other thing to say. Your remittances have been irregular; they may be so again, but you are never to make that a pretext for disobedience, or worse may follow. Here is something for the present—more will come." Then presenting a purse, which Walter unheeding let fall to the ground, and shaking himself loose from the grasp which would still have detained him, he plunged into a thicket near them, and was soon seen crossing the rude bridge that spanned the ravine. Peto sprang after him, but, recalled by his master, he only tossed up his head, and, giving the short, angry bark by which dogs express their contempt at an unsatisfactory encounter, looked up in Walter's face to congratulate him.

But he was in no mood to return it. The twilight had faded away, and the night that was settling on him seemed an emblem of the greater darkness that now fell on his future. Throwing himself on the ground, burying his face in his hands, he gave vent to the conflicting feelings with which he had thus far struggled. Again and again he reviewed the scene just passed; again he repeated every word and studied every look. He could extract no comfort, no assurance—nothing but that he was a helpless boy in the power of a hard man.

Long he lay and bitterly he ruminated, till a lovely young moon peeping through the trees offered to light him home. He rose, and Peto, who had not left his side, gave a jump and a joyous bark; but, as if suddenly recollecting himself, made a pounce upon the rustling leaves, and, extracting something, brought it with a wag of his tail to his master. It was the purse, of which Walter had not thought since it dropped, and which he now took almost mechanically. It was heavy with gold, but he did not examine it.

"I'll never use a dollar of it," said he, proudly, "till I know by what right he dares to give it to me. Come, Peto, home!"

On reaching the house he found Damie just setting forth in search of him. Her troubled brow changed to a frown of displeasure as soon as she saw him safe.

"What on airth, Walter, made you stay so? I expected nothin' but that you'd broke your neck climbin' them there rocks. It is ridic'lous to frighten us so! stayin' out all day, too, without half victuals enough—no wonder you look so dragged! Your uncle has been walkin' up and down, worried most to pieces, I can tell you."

He passed her with but few words, and, going to Mr. Grafton's room, found him anxiously looking from a window.

At the sound of Walter's step he turned to express his relief, but, struck by his countenance, exclaimed, "What is the matter? What has happened?"

Walter could answer only by throwing himself into a chair, and saying, "I have seen him! I have seen him!"

"Whom, Walter? What can you mean?"

"That man!"

Mr. Grafton seated himself by him, took his hand, and forbore farther questioning till he had soothed him sufficiently to give voluntarily the particulars of the interview. He heard them indignantly; but chiefly intent on quieting Walter's fearful agitation, he said, gently, "Be comforted, my dear boy! We have still one thing to be thankful to him for: he has not separated us, as he might have done had it suited his purpose, and as remorselessly as he has now wounded you."

"Separate me from you! He should have killed me first!"

The next morning Mr. Grafton, not farther to excite Walter, went alone to South End to make inquiries. A gentleman had arrived there on horseback late in the preceding afternoon; had asked some questions as to roads, and the shortest walk to the upper village; had then set out on foot "to see the falls," as he said. He returned after sunset, immediately called for his horse, and went away. Nothing farther was known or could be heard of him.

This occurrence proved an occasion of increased solicitude to Mr. Grafton. Walter, though always more thoughtful than boys of his age, had never been other than cheerful and happy. His temper, sweet and affectionate, was never ruffled by unreasonable or capricious moods; always kind and obliging to others; unexact and grateful for himself. But now Mr. Grafton remarked with pain that he was listless, gloomy, irritable, though never so to him; excited to sudden causeless anger, then even unreasonably self-accusing—all indicating the rude shock his nature had received. Of the stranger he rarely spoke: when he did so, it was with a proud, defiant air.

CHAPTER VI.

ANOTHER interval, and Walter, who was left a fitful boy of fifteen—that sensitive age when, to the inexperienced observer, a sudden, strange perversity often seems to blight the sweet promise of earlier years, now reappears, when nearly twenty-one. The interval, unmarked by any change in his external condition, by notice from the stranger, or even by the remittances that might have been expected, had left a strong impression on himself. The irritation induced by his peculiar condition, acting on the susceptibility of youth, had subsided. The feverish impatience of concealment, the fretful resistance of a power he could neither comprehend nor love, the galling sense of dependence, had all gradually fallen under the control of reason. He had learned to look his situation in the face, and had even dared to form his own plans.

"I belong to God and myself," he had reflected. "There only I am accountable for whatever powers have been intrusted to me, and I will not waste them in a cowardly subserviency to any human being. Nor will I permit my inner self to be the victim of cruelty and caprice. 'My mind to me a kingdom is.' *There* I will reign supreme."

These were no vain resolves, as was manifested by the fast maturing character of Walter. It might, in a different state of things, have been almost to be regretted that one so young should be so wise; his natural impulsiveness so repressed; the frank, confiding temper—the beauty of youth—so checked. But he be-

lieved that it depended on himself alone to be saved from the palsy effect of his condition.

"I have," he thought, "a solitary and hard path before me; but, like the princess in the fairy tale, I must not falter, whatever threats assail me. I may have much to bear; I must, then, learn to be strong. I must be my own counselor; I must, therefore, keep my feelings in subjection, and to do so I must keep them to myself."

"My dear sir," said he one morning to Mr. Grafton, "I have completed my majority, and though I can never sufficiently bless your kind guardianship, 'tis time to relieve you of it."

Mr. Grafton looked at him in silent surprise.

"Yes, sir; this Walter Thornley, who, as child, boy, and man, has given you so much trouble, must henceforth take care of himself."

"But, Walter—if I understand you—hear me a moment. My guardianship was restricted by no legal forms; it was to continue till those having a natural right should claim you."

"And how long, sir," replied Walter, with a cold smile, "do you suppose that would be? No; my resolution is taken. Forgive me if this has been done without consulting you; but I felt I must act, or die. I am not, however, so presumptuous, so self-confident as not to beg your continued guidance so far as to put me, if you can, in the right way, but *go* I must."

"Go! where, Walter?"

"Any where! any where from Ashton, that, left wholly to myself, I may ascertain what I *can* do."

Mr. Grafton, grieved as he was at this unexpected determination, saw, nevertheless, a purpose so fixed, that to resist might result in mutual unhappiness. The only thing to do was to try to guide it; and, revolving it in his mind, as Walter continued to urge its necessity, he

became in part a convert, in so far as to acquiesce in an attempt to carry out his wishes. Nothing short of that, he saw, would satisfy him; should it fail, he might be content to remain as he was.

The first thing that occurred to Mr. Grafton was to enter him as a clerk in a lawyer's office in New York; in proposing which, he added, "The fee paid on such occasions is not large. I have at my command enough for that, and for your other expenses during your apprenticeship."

"No, sir," said Walter. "To this moment I have been your pensioner. I can not be so hereafter. I will leave the law for a time, till I have by some means earned enough to pay my own way."

"Walter!" said Mr. Grafton, with much feeling, "you are wrong. You are trying to create new relations between us. No longer father and child, we are to be debtor and creditor. The little I have is, and will be yours. Why treat me thus?"

Walter took his hand; he pressed it; he bent his head over it; choked down the tears that were rising to his eyes, and, when he could speak, said every thing that gratitude and affection dictated, but remained unmoved in his decision.

"It must be so. If you would see me a man, let me go, sir, and in my own way."

The next thing thought of was to write to Mr. Middleton. He had once proffered his assistance. There was, therefore, no impropriety in asking merely if he knew of any employment adapted to Walter, stating his eager desire, by his own efforts, to secure his support.

The letter sent, Walter was more at ease. The first and most painful step had been taken—the communication to Mr. Grafton. In about a week letters were received, and among others the desired answer from Mr. Middleton.

Walter watched his guardian's countenance while he read. At first it expressed blank disappointment, then with a sudden burst of indignation he threw it toward Walter, exclaiming, "O World! World! did I not do well to quit you!"

The letter, polite and cold, in substance was as follows: Mr. Middleton was surprised at the application, which if he had ever authorized, it must have been under an impulse that reflection would have checked; for how could he, a retired stranger in a foreign country, be supposed to have any practical knowledge available to Walter? He wished the lad success; but, so far as he might venture to suggest, for one so young, without patronage or fortune, his present obscurity was his safest condition. With good wishes for himself, etc., etc., it concluded.

"Well," said Walter, calmly, "it is just as I once thought. Mr. Middleton is insane, and if not, then worse—much obliged by his advice, which we can do without. What next shall we turn to, sir?"

But Mr. Grafton's attention was riveted on a letter he had just opened, and which, though he looked at it, he did not appear to read. Presently he ran it hastily over, and, as if relieved, said, "I beg your pardon, Walter. The sight of a handwriting I had not seen for many years startled me; I feared I could not say what; but, like many terrors with which we torment ourselves, mine was unfounded. Among other matter, the letter contains somewhat that has a bearing on our present perplexities. The gentleman's name is Meredith; his residence is in New York, where you prefer to go: hear what he says."

After a reference to early friendship and long separation, the letter proceeded as follows:

"I almost question my right to give you any trouble, and yet, if you are what you once were, you will not refuse to oblige a friend. I have an only child, a daughter. She has had, thus far, what is called the best instruction, but it is superficial and of little value; something more is necessary to satisfy me. But young people now-a-days think that they, too, constitute a republic, and are quite capable of self-government; and for this reason I will not send my daughter to a boarding-school, where she will learn little but insubordination. The only alternative is a 'select' one, as they are called, or private lessons. I have tried both, and like neither. But if I could find a competent tutor, who should reside in my family, I believe that, with his instruction and my supervision, my object can be secured. I wish her to have a *solid* education—Latin and mathematics as the foundation, and on this a superstructure of history, philosophy, and whatever else we may agree upon. If you happen to know of a person qualified for this charge, and at the same time unexceptionable, please inform me: his salary shall be so liberal as to satisfy him."

"I will take the place, sir," said Walter; "that is, if you can recommend me."

"Consider, Walter. It may be very irksome; it may even be offensive; it often is so; for parents, with an absurd inconsistency, will trust the minds and hearts of children to persons whom they will, nevertheless, treat as inferiors. In this case, however, such injustice may be prevented. You should go as my ward; you will then be put on the footing to which you are entitled."

"Pardon me, sir—in that way I decline to go. It would be improper as it regards the parents, and fatal to my duty as a teacher. As your friend and ward, Mr.

and Mrs. Meredith would not feel at liberty to make demands or to find deficiencies; and, on my part, courtesy to your friends would restrict the uncompromising fidelity due to my pupil. Forgive me if I presume to differ from you; but I fear lest your tenderness for me should mislead you. Send me with such credentials as to character and competency as you think I deserve, but nothing more. For the rest, I prefer to depend on myself. If they fail in common delicacy or humanity, I leave them, but I will claim nothing as your protégé."

Mr. Grafton reflected. He did not partake of Walter's proud indifference in regard to the mysterious person who had, or assumed to have, a supreme right over him. He did not, indeed, expect good from him, but he was not equally sure that he had not the power to injure. Walter's plan had one recommendation—it would prevent embarrassing questions, and tend to the incognito he wished him to preserve. He therefore acceded to it.

"But how, my dear boy, am I to live without you?" sadly exclaimed Mr. Grafton when other considerations had been weighed.

"Say, rather, how am I to live without *you*, sir? But no, I shall *not* be without you. Your affection, your advice, and your wishes will be ever with me to comfort and guide me."

An answer was immediately returned to Mr. Meredith, and after a short time came an acceptance of the tutor, but so qualified as a good deal to nettle Mr. Grafton. "If he did not prove, on trial, to be satisfactory, he would be returned, all expenses paid."

"I will not send you like a bale of merchandise," said Mr. Grafton.

Walter laughed. "Do not take it so, my dear sir; this is just what I should have wished. It is exactly fitted to my humor."

Walter's preparations were now to be made, and in a state of astonishment and alarm Damie appeared. Years had increased her attachment to Mr. Grafton and his ward, but they had also invested her with privileges sometimes inconvenient. Like Corporal Trim, she "loved to advise," and an occasion now offered itself.

"Is Walter going away?"

"Yes, Damie."

"But where under the canopy can he be so well off as here, sir?"

"Young birds must leave the nest, Damie."

"Yes, and hawks must catch 'em, too: what is he goin' for, sir?"

"To seek his fortune," said Mr. Grafton, with a shrug intended to check farther inquiry. "He naturally desires to earn his own support."

"'Arn his own support!'" repeated Damie, her reluctance to part with Walter inducing her to disparage his ability—"arn his support! why, what in all natur' can he do? He's never done nothin' but jest study and larn. He might be a minister, be sure—he knows enough; but he hasn't no call for *that*. *What, then, can he do?*"

"The next thing to preaching, Damie: he is going to teach."

"To teach? and where, sir? and who?"

"A gentleman's daughter in New York."

"Goin' to teach one gal!" replied she, contemptuously. "Well, if that isn't a poor business! Teaching thirty or forty might be worth a man's while. Why not take the district-school here?"

"But suppose, Damie, that he should receive more for one scholar there than he would for the whole school here—"

"More! why, is she so hard to larn? She isn't un-

der-witted, sir, is she?" continued Damie, with a jeering smile; "if she be, 'tis, be sure, a pretty hard place."

"No; bright and quick enough, I'll engage."

"And what will he get, sir?"

"They will settle that when they meet."

"If I was you, sir, I wouldn't let him stir a step till I knew. 'Tis no way to send the poor lad off 'mong strangers, and let them impose on him."

"Never fear, Damie. Walter is not a person to be imposed on. You and I shall miss him greatly, but if for his advantage, we must bear it, you know."

But not heeding this reflection, she proceeded:

"Ever since, in this very room, he showed me his poor scratched little hand, I've set by him. Boys, I know, are hateful, always turnin' up Jack. I never could bear any on 'em but Walter."

"But Walter has not been perfect, Damie."

"Parfect! no, be sure; who is? But when once in a while he was unruly he would be so sorry a'terward, and wanted so to make it up; I only loved him better for't. Besides, it was jest because he was growin' so fast."

"Well, well, don't grieve, my good Damie; he will return to us all the happier and wiser for experience."

"But *when*, sir? People go, but they don't always come back!" and her voice grew thick. "I've heard that afore; we may be all dead and buried when he comes—"

"No, no, not so bad; a few months and we shall see him again."

Silenced, if not resigned, Damie retired; but it was to pour out to Walter what she might not say to Mr. Grafton. His wardrobe before her to examine, mend, make, and in all respects arrange, while he occasionally offered a suggestion, she resumed her theme; lamented and advised, concluding with, "And what in all natur'

is your uncle to do without you? You have been the savin' on him!"

"*I save him!*" exclaimed Walter, who would have reversed the proposition.

"Yes, yes. Savin' on 'him! be sure you have. I mind what he was afore you come; nothin' but teachin' you and playin' with you put any life in him; and now, when he hasn't got no special trouble, he looks younger than when you come. He looked so poor then, you hav'n't no notion, Walter. Folks said he was only sickly; 'twasn't no such thing, except it was heart-sickness. I've watched him many a time set and look in the fire as if he was clean out of the body, and then start up, take his hat, and walk out. By-and-by he'd come in, lookin' maybe a little better, but so sorrowful and down like. But no matter what the trouble was, he never wasn't cross nor fretty. He seemed to want to make others happy, even if he couldn't be so. Well, I guess I know. I larnt the signs," said she, shaking her head; "'twas a hard lesson, but I hav'n't never forgot it."

"What do you mean, Damie? This is all new to me."

"Yes, I suppose so; for now when he has any such turn come over him, and once in a while it will come, we call it *nervous*, you know. That's as good a name as any; but, Lord! what different things it means! Now the plain truth, Walter, is that, sure as I stand here, your uncle was disappointed, crossed in love as folks say. I can tell; I hav'n't had experience for nothin'."

"Experience, Damie!"

"Yes, Walter; for all what I seem to you now, I wasn't so always. I had—I had—a friend—"

Damie stopped, and Walter, touched by the workings of her strong expressive face, looked at her in silence.

Then, as if ashamed of a weakness, she proceeded, with an effort: "Lost at sea; news came the very day we'd fix'd for our publishment." After another pause, "Never love to speak on't. A dreadful storm! that's why I fly round so when the wind blows. I can do three days' work in one when it storms. They brought me home his watch; 'twas hangin' in his berth when he was knocked overboard, and there 'tis now at the head of my bed, keepin' time for me till he and I meet in eternity."

Walter, in happy ignorance of similar emotions, knew not how to address her. He only took her hand and pressed it kindly; and, after a moment's hesitation, said, "Yes, Damie, though parted here, we shall find those we love in Heaven. Perhaps you are right about my uncle. I can not tell; but whatever trouble he may have had, it has only made him a better man. Some persons it makes worse, you know."

"So it does, Walter. It makes their hearts harder than Pharaoh's. But don't let's say no more about it. These here shirts, Walter, ar'n't no dependence. You had ought to have told me in time, and I would have made you a new set; but never mind, I'll go right at 'em as soon as you are gone, and send 'em to you. Let me see; this is your best coat, not much the worse for wear. I'll put new cuffs, and then it'll do."

Walter smiled. "City folks, I hear, are critical, Damie. I shall want a new coat."

"Well, you wouldn't, if you staid here, in six months. So it goes. What's the use arnin' money if you must spend it all? jest as good stay here and not want it. Now let me see—stockin's? Yes, all right; but nobody'll darn 'em for you now. Be sure you keep count of all your things, for they say that down in York they'll steal the eyes out of your head. Now one thing

more I want to say to you, Walter. It has been on my mind for many a day, but while you was here there wasn't no use speakin' of it. You know I am not expensive; and, as I hav'n't any near relation, I've saved up mostly all my wages, and Mr. Grafton has put 'em out for me. Now this I mean for you—don't go for to interrupt me. Yes, for you. I hav'n't nobody else to give it to. But, mind, Walter, it is only in case you behave. My honest arnin's sha'n't never go to be spent in any wickedness or folly. I meant to keep it all a gatherin' till I died, and so leave you a good lump at once; but what's the use? So, if you want some on't *now*, here's twenty silver dollars in my chest for you to take with you; and if any misfortin befalls you, let me know, and I will send you what you want."

No kindness had ever touched Walter more; but, with the heartiest expression of his feeling, he nevertheless resolutely declined the good creature's offer, who could only be reconciled to his refusal by a promise that if the money were required he would certainly send for it.

CHAPTER VII.

THE day for Walter's departure came, and with a manly front, but a throbbing heart, he bade farewell to his friends. As he turned for a last look at the dear old weather-beaten house, with its Puritan roof descending to the very tops of the windows, that seemed to look out from the projecting eaves like eyes from under overhanging brows, he cast many tender thoughts to this shelter of his helpless years, and devoutly asked that peace might rest upon it till he should see it again.

According to her custom, Damie sought her consolation in work; and after adjusting Walter's deserted room, religiously preserving every article he had left, and locking the door, she was "flying round," as she termed it, in search of other safety-valves for her excited sensibility, when a well-known voice met her ear, and a man entered the kitchen, singing,

"A white cockade and a peacock's feather,
American boys will fight forever!"

"Why, Jed," she exclaimed, "is that you? Where *have* you been? I began to mistrust you'd gone to the 'Hios,' a name by which she and others not better informed designated Ohio, and inclusively the great north-western Ultima Thule; "and that I'd never set eyes on you again. When *did* you come back?"

Before he answers he must be more particularly introduced than he has yet been. He now reappeared after a tramp in his commercial capacity, with his pack on his back, instead of a gun, or a pole suspending a string of fish. Having been "on the circuit," as he dignified his calling, he wore the remains of a cocked hat,

part of his array when serving among "the old Continentals." The "regimentals" themselves, still in existence, were reserved for the 4th of July and other extra occasions, among which was included "goin' to meetin'," which he did when birds were not in season and when fish wouldn't bite. In person, short and thick, with a slight limp in his gait, a full ruddy face, a pleasant smile, quick gray eyes—in one a cast, which gave to his countenance a comical and roguish expression; hair slightly turned and thinned, more by hardship than years: such was Jed's outward man.

"Not see me again! Why, Damie, my dear, I'm the sort that always comes back. Them that's no use to nobody"—with a self-satisfied air—"is always sartin to come back."

"Now, Jed, don't go for to be modest, or I shall be rally uneasy about you."

"Well, then, Damie, you sha'n't have no consarn about me on that account. When did I come? Why this very minute, and of course I couldn't pass your door."

"And you haven't had no breakfast, I know; so sit down and you shall have a hot rasher."

While she prepared it and bustled "round," he disencumbered himself of his pack, and stretched his legs on the settle, giving forth, according to his custom, scraps of old songs. At length, seating him at the table, Damie rested for a few moments from her labors; but such a gloom gathered over her face, that Jed remarked it, and, resting his knife and fork, exclaimed, "What ails you, Damie? Any thing happened?"

"No, I'm well enough, only tired some, getting up so early to help Walter off."

"Walter off!" repeated Jed, with a look of consternation. "Where? What for?"

Damie gave the required information.

"Well, if I a'n't sorry! Gone to York! What shall I do without him?"

"You!" said Damie, her feeling of personal loss aggravated by any one presuming to share it. "What shall I do?"

"Why, Damie, I've known him off and on 'most as long as you have, and a pleasanter lad, boy, and man, I never see. And didn't I teach him to use a gun, when you went into fits about the powder? No more danger in't than in so much black pepper, if folks is only careful; and didn't I teach him to bait his hook, and show him the best places? And didn't he come every day to see me when I got the fever? And when people told him 'twas catchin', in partic'lar for young folks, didn't he say, like a brave boy, he couldn't die but once, and he better do so then, than to desart a friend in distress? And didn't he bring me nice things that you made for me, and read the papers for me? No, don't tell me! I *shall* miss him, and I *will* miss him!"

This eulogy of her favorite, with the allusion to her own kindness, silenced and softened Damie.

"Why didn't he go into the army," continued Jed, "if he must go away? That's the place for him. They say we're agoin' to have a brush with the French, and he'd be a major gin'ral in no time."

"Army! Don't speak of it. Killin' and slaughterin' folks! He's fit for somethin' better, I guess."

"Come, come, Damie! no more of that. Don't go for to abuse the army. I wonder where you'd all be now if 'twa'n't for the 'old Continentals' and the rest. And who keeps the country quiet now but the soldiers? Who puts down whisky boys, and Shaysites, and mobs, and riots, but the soldiers? Killin' and slaughterin', indeed! I don't like that better than you; but if my country and glory says so, you know—" Then putting

on a tender comical air, and with appropriate gestures, he burst out with

"Adieu! adieu! my only life,
I go where honor calls me;
Remember thou'rt a soldier's wife,
Those tears but ill become thee."

"Don't be a fool, Jed. Be quiet, and eat your breakfast. I ha'n't no spirits for such trash."

"Damie, my dear, you must do as we soldiers do. We bury a comrade to the tune of the Dead March; but, that done, we come back in double quick time. You've done all you could for the lad, and now he's gone; but, instead of takin' on, you must cheer up for what remains."

"That's true, Jed. Shall I cook you another rash-er?"

"No, thank ye, Damie; I've had a royal breakfast—'a dainty dish to set before the king!' Now to business. You don't ask me nothin' about my luck."

"No more I haven't! well, how was it?"

"Why, the circuit was better than common. I've sold pretty nigh every thing, all but one shawl, and that I had a notion you'd like. See, here it is."

"That is nice; but no, I don't want it."

"Oh, you couldn't have this partic'lar one if you did. This is promised; but if so be you liked it, I know where I could find its fellow for you."

"Promised!" said Damie, with another glance at what now seemed to have acquired a new value in her eyes. "Who to?"

"A very pretty young woman at one of the quality houses on the river. She wouldn't take it now because she hadn't the money; and, though I offered to trust her, she said, like a sensible gal, she'd wait till I come again, and so here it goes into my pack for her."

"That's a rale nice shawl," said Damie, "and if 'twasn't promised, I don't know but—"

"Let me throw it over your shoulders just to see if it looks as well on you as it did on her; for, though you can not have this one, I dare say—I'm 'most sartin'—that I can get one like it."

Damie submitted to have the shawl put on, and looked in the glass approvingly.

"No; if I can't have this I won't have any. I have heard that story often enough. There an't never two things jest alike."

"Well, Damie, I like to be accommodatin', you know. It may be six months afore I go to the river again, and she may change her mind by then—women's apt to—and I didn't promise *posi-tive-ly*. So, as you like it, Damie, it is yours;" and, leaving the tempting "article" floating about her, he proceeded, with all dispatch, to close his pack, while she, with her usual promptness, produced the money. As she handed it to him, she said, "I raly forgot, Jed, with all our talk, to ask about your leg. How can it stand such long tramps all over creation? It can't trouble you any more, I should think."

"Oh," replied he, limping badly at the suggestion, "don't speak of it. I try to forget it; for you know I must keep movin'; besides, a fellow that has stepped to such music as I have, hates to go halting about like a beggar. No, no, Damie; my poor leg will never be better in this world, and my pension wouldn't pay, if 'twasn't for the thought of how I arn'd it. And now, good-mornin', Damie," and he was off, to the tune and words of

"I left the lines and tented field,
Where long I'd been a lodger;
My humble knapsack all my wealth,
A poor but honest soldier."

"Poor!" said Damie, as she looked after him. "Yes,

that he is, and *honest*, too, accordin' to his notion; but that is like his eye, 'rayther squinty.' There he goes, sp'ry as a cricket! That leg of his has 'arnt him more than his whole body ever did, I guess. 'Tis a queer leg! Sure to be worse if any body thinks it's better; and always dreadful bad about the time pensions is paid. Well, 'tis sartin he was wounded, and he doesn't a'ter all get more than he deserv's. I never could see into it, why the poor fellows that gets the hardest knocks should have the smallest share of the profits. Then that shawl! how he talked me into it! Goodness me! I don't want it. I have so many now, I shall have to sit up nights to wear 'em out. But that's Jed all over; he can twirl any body round his thumb; he hasn't got that twist in his eye for nothin'. I never see one of them sort that wasn't downright rogues, or else as 'cute as Old Nick! howsoever, Jed's a good-natur'd fellow, and loves to do every body a neighborly turn, and he does set by Walter, I know."

"Damie," said Mr. Grafton, as she entered to arrange the parlor, "did I not hear a man's voice in the kitchen?"

"Yes, sir; Jed has come back."

"Why did you not bring him in to see me?"

"I didn't think you'd care to see him to-day, sir."

"Why not? We must not shut out our neighbors because we are less happy than usual. And a woman, too, passed the window with a basket, who was she?"

"Oh, that was that shiftless cre'ter, Miss Jenks."

"But she has no vice, and her shiftlessness, as you call it, only makes her more pitiable. You gave her something?"

"Be sure, sir. You will always have me give, so I filled her basket with one thing an' other. I shouldn't mind doin' so, but she's so proud, and always wanting to pay."

"Perhaps that is only her mode of expressing her regret at being burdensome."

There was one way by which Mr. Grafton aggravated Damie: seeking to excuse those she considered unworthy. She was not censorious nor harsh; but she did not comprehend

"That where ye doubt, the truth not knowing,
Believing the best, good may be growing.
In judg'ing the best, no harm at the least,
In judg'ing the worst, no good at the best."

"No, sir; 'tis nothin' but downright pride. She is willing enough to beg, not a bit afraid of being burdensome. She pretends to buy just to save her pride. She has always some way of fixin' it; sometimes she's goin' to bring mops, but they never come; or, if they do, I have to give two prices for 'em. To-day, 'twas, 'If the Lord is willin', I'll bring you some berries;' but they'll be like the mops, I guess. I fixed her well enough t'other day. She 'wonder'd if the squire hadn't a bedstead he'd sell her.' 'Yes, sartin,' says I. 'How much would he ask?' So, says I, 'six dollars'—full price, you know, sir. 'Oh dear,' says she, 'I can get one for that at the shop.' 'I dare say,' says I; 'but I don't see why we should sell under price, if ours is full as good.'"

"Damie! Damie!" said Mr. Grafton, laughing. "You'll ruin my reputation. Now I shall be obliged to give Mrs. Jenks a bedstead to retrieve my character."

"No, you sha'n't do no such thing, sir. Give her a bedstead, indeed! There's better people than she to be helped. You know Sally Crandell, sir?"

"The nice young woman who sews here occasionally? Yes; what of her?"

"She is, you know, sir, an orphan; has nothin', and lives with her aunt, a queer-tempered cre'ter. Well, she has a son, and Sally and he kept company, and were to

be married next Thanksgivin'. But he has turned out so unsteady, that Sally, though she feels dreadful about it, has changed her mind, and won't marry him. And her aunt throws all the blame on her; says that her flirty ways has made him so, and threatens to turn her out of doors."

"I'll go and speak to her, and perhaps I can bring her to reason."

"Pray do, sir; she thinks every thing of you, sir."

"And if I fail, Sally can come here; we can give her a room, can't we, Damie?"

"Lord bless you, sir, yes. There's another thing I was goin' to tell you: Ryders, the shoemaker, is carryin' on as bad as ever. He's drunk pretty much all the time, and his wife is in fear of her life. They've just put him in jail, and his tools, and his stock, and every thing needful for his trade are seized for debt. His wife wants to redeem 'em, for she says, when he comes out of jail, and finds nothin' to work with, he will give right up, and drink himself crazy, and perhaps murder 'em all! It's a dreadful pity! He is a kind man when he is himself, and a good workman, and his wife's a rare good woman. She is tryin' to get up a subscription to save his things. It will take thirty dollars or more. I was a thinkin', sir, that perhaps you would give somethin' toward it, and so I made bold to speak."

"Quite right, Damie; I'll see about it," and he took his hat and walked out.

"Now," said Damie, "that means he'll go and do the whole on't. 'See about it,' with some folks, is as much as to say 'do nothin';' but with him 'tis always tantamount to doin' every thing! The less he says, the more he does. Well, the best way to lighten our own hearts is to lift the load off other people's. That's the way he's always done. And so now I'll go and do what I can for Mrs. Ryders."

CHAPTER VIII.

At the period referred to, traveling was attended by difficulties little understood by the present generation, for whom time and space are nearly annihilated. Postal communications were pretty generally established, but few stage-coach routes existed, and mails were transported in such modes as were convenient. As his readiest way, Walter, after a drive of some five-and-twenty miles of bad road, consuming the greater part of the day, took the coach from Albany to New York, well pleased to be *en route* for the Great Metropolis—even then in the ascendant she has ever since maintained. At the conclusion of the fourth day he was dropped, with his baggage, on the stone steps of a handsome house at the lower part of Broadway, near the Bowling Green.

In the interval since the city had been relieved from British occupation—some fifteen years—it had risen literally like a phoenix. The great fire which, while they held possession, had consumed nearly a fourth part of it, had made room for better buildings than those it had displaced. "Canvas Town," on the present Whitehall Street, so called from the tents which for a time supplied the place of the habitations destroyed by the fire—the wretched shelter of a more wretched population—had, in its turn, disappeared, and was succeeded by good and handsome houses. The lower part of Broadway was now the especial sphere of fashion. Sidewalks and lamps had been given to it, and the unsightly gutter in its centre no longer existed. The gardens, too, of the patrician families, many of whom had formerly a "plaisance" on the Broadway, though their residences were at

the western end of Stone Street, then an aristocratic quarter, were now covered by fine houses. The fort and its sentinels, once the representatives of royalty, and holding in awe the subject city, had surrendered to a republican government-house without guards; and the Bowling Green in front of it was relieved of the king's statue. On the site of old Trinity Church, destroyed by the fire, a second had been erected, to yield in time to the present one, far exceeding its predecessors in size and beauty.

Broadway, thus renovated, reposed in elegant exemption from all vulgar occupation. Private equipages moved along its clean and airy length unjostled by omnibuses. Shops had not yet invaded it, except at what was then its upper end; and the few carts that appeared seemed rather permitted than, as now, the rightful possessors. The side-walks, clean and unobstructed, were the favorite promenade of well-dressed ladies, who now adventure there at the peril not only of silks and velvets, but of life and limb.

Not alone in Broadway, but throughout the city, the change was apparent: in the new nomenclature of the streets, the absence of sentries at great men's doors, the increased activity, the evidences of wealth, and a growing commerce. Manners, too, were in a transition state. Coffee-house Bridge, at the foot of Wall Street, where, before the war, gentlemen "used most to congregate," was no more. The Saturday-night club at Brock's Tavern, with tea, politics, and oysters, had given place to other, and perhaps less justifiable relaxations; and water-sockies—a small black-fish—were no longer sought by lawyers, who used to meet in summer, a little out of town, for the purpose of thus regaling themselves.

The evening had closed on the city, and Walter could only form an imperfect idea of the objects immediately

surrounding him, and of that which naturally chiefly struck him—its vastness.

His ring at the door was answered by a grave-looking colored serving-man, who, on being told his name, asked him to walk in.

"I am expected, then," thought he: "so much the better; I am not come too soon."

He was ushered into a room—which he soon comprehended to be the library—furnished with heavy mahogany chairs, high, straight-backed, and black with age; seats covered with crimson moreen, and window-curtains of the same material, raised by cords and pulleys instead of being drawn aside. Bookcases of the same dark wood, with glass doors, filled the recesses of the room, and a Turkey carpet covered the floor. On the centre of the mantle-piece was a richly-cased clock, of old-fashioned form, bearing on its silvered dial the name of "Peacock, Royal Exchange, London," and no glass or china was allowed to glitter near it. Good maps were hung wherever space admitted of them, but no "*objet d'art*" relieved the grave aspect of the room, evidently furnished according to the taste of one opposed to innovation. By a round table, very dark, and whose polished surface reflected the lights from two candles in tall, massive silver candlesticks, in a library-chair—the only thing in the room in which ease appeared to have been consulted—was seated a middle-aged gentleman. He was reading, but he laid down his book and turned his eyes to the door as Walter entered, who, to cut short all uncertainty, advanced, and presented Mr. Grafton's letter, the superscription of which announced the bearer.

"Ah!" said Mr. Meredith, now first partly rising from his chair, and coldly motioning to another, "Mr. Thornley—be seated, sir."

Walter obeyed, and Mr. Meredith, having read his letter, folded and laid it down.

"You left Mr. Grafton well, I hope."

"Yes, sir."

"Your journey has not been very fatiguing, I suppose. Hardy habits make one indifferent to such things."

Walter bowed. Three days and two nights in the mail-coach, over very bad roads, was not pleasant, but not to be spoken of.

A silence ensued, which neither seemed to care to break. Presently the clock struck the hour of tea, and Mr. Meredith rang the bell.

A tea-tray was brought in, rich with highly-wrought silver; another, on which were the only edibles—bread and butter, in slices incredibly thin, on a china plate, and, on another, hard waffles—well termed wafers. These constituted the substantials of the meal, which, to our hungry young traveler, promised rather to provoke than to satisfy his appetite. Then came

"The bubbling and loud-hissing urn,
Throwing up a steamy column;"

and Mrs. Meredith entered—a lady somewhat past her prime, but still comely, with "gracious womanhood and gravitie," well harmonizing with her puce-colored silk dress. Her handkerchief, of the finest India muslin, was disposed over her bosom in what was called "a craw"—a style that obtained for the wearers the sobriquet of the "Brest (*c'est à dire* breast) Squadron"—from the voluminous expanse of which peeped a "modesty-piece." She wore a cap, in the fashion called "French night-cap," with a high crown, full lace border descending low at the ears, and a large white satin bow in front; a thin muslin apron, ornamented with tambour-work, and black lace mitts nearly meeting the sleeve, which terminated at the elbow.

"Mrs. Meredith," said her husband, "here is Mr. Thornley, whom Mr. Grafton has sent to us."

Walter bowed, in deference to the lady, not to the manner of his introduction. She courtesied slightly, said in a gentle tone she was happy to see Mr. Thornley, and passed to the ministration of the tea-table.

Just in the shadow of Mrs. Meredith, like a little satellite in attendance on its primary, was a young girl,

"As faire as faire mote ever bee,"

"And in the flower now of her freshest age,"

for this was her fifteenth spring. Had a passport been made out for her, it might have run somewhat in this wise: Face oval; complexion fair, and so clear that, with every emotion that stirred the young blood, it mantled in her cheek to the richest bloom. Eyes full, and finely set—hue indescribable; some would say gray, some hazel, and others blue. "Eyebrows of the Graces." Eyelids well fringed. Nose not classical, but, nevertheless, a very proper nose. Mouth perfect, revealing teeth far superior to pearls—whatever poets may say—and little dimples in which Love and Frolic played.

Her soft, wavy brown hair was turned back from the fair ingenuous forehead by a long tortoise-shell comb, and fell behind nearly to the waist. Her dress, more simple and appropriate than that of an infant in these days, was a fine Holland (linen) frock, with a tight and rather a long waist, buttoned up at the back. The skirt, full and plaited, was open behind. The sleeves, short and looped up, showed an under one of linen cambric, turned up with a lace-edged cuff; the same trimming at the neck, which was uncovered. A moderately stiff stays confined the waist; for, though the steel busk and stiff circular front were now generally discarded, Mrs. Meredith, attached to old customs, and accepting her husband's opinion that relaxation in dress tended to the

increasing and alarming relaxation in manners, still adhered to the stays with certain mitigations; and the finely developed bust and erect person of her daughter showed that she had received no injury from it. A broad sash, with long streamers behind, differing little but in name from the rejected "leading-strings;" green morocco shoes, covering little feet, in nice proportion with a very pretty pair of hands, completed the young lady's attire.

"This, Mr. Thornley," said Mr. Meredith, "is my daughter, Miss Eleanor Meredith."

The young lady courtesied; Walter returned a bow as cold and distant as if prescribed by her father. Had they met in Ashton under the same circumstances, he would have involuntarily extended his hand in token of the friendly relations he hoped to establish between himself and his pupil; but he readily understood that here it would be regarded as a liberty, and he was perfectly satisfied to omit it.

"If the face," thought he, "be an index to the brain, I shall not have much difficulty as a teacher."

The tea was not enlivened by many words. When the tray was removed, Mrs. Meredith took up her shuttle and busied herself with knotting, and Eleanor seated herself by her with her filigree-work. "What on earth those taper fingers were about! why those narrow gold-edged strips of paper of all colors were thus rolled up, and then carefully disposed of," Walter could not divine, and the knotting too was equally a mystery, unaccustomed as he was to the elegant trifles with which city ladies occupied themselves.

Mrs. Meredith, with the "pleasant ways of woman-kind," made some attempts at conversation, to relieve what she thought must be the awkward situation of Walter; but, though kind, she was mistaken: he was

simply tired, and soon requested permission to retire. He was accordingly lighted to the attic by the servant who had admitted him; and, having placed his candle on a table, he surveyed the room; then, looking from the window to the street, which seemed immeasurably beneath him, he thought, "Well, I am nearer the sky than I have ever been before, I believe, so I may be said to be rising in the world; but I am mortally hungry. Oh! for a cold cut from Damie's buttery. I have not gone so supperless to bed since I was a 'hop-o'-my-thumb' under her discipline. But sleep will cure all. Oh, well saith Spenser:

"Food and sleep, which two upheare,
Like mightie pillars, this frayle life of man,
That none without the same endure can."

If I have not the first, I am sure of the second."

CHAPTER IX.

IN the morning Walter was shown into the dining-room, where he perceived more decoration. With the same generally substantial character was intermingled modern taste, showing that innovation had been less sternly resisted in the female department. The mahogany furniture was carved instead of plain. Chintz curtains of a graceful form had replaced worsted ones. The walls were hung with a handsome French paper, and a large commodious sofa and stuffed arm-chairs gave an air of luxury to the room. On the mantle-piece was a French clock, where the flight of time was enlivened by cupids. But this concession to the present generation was indemnified by the china shepherds and shepherdesses, the admiration of the preceding, that supported it on either side; and these, again, were flanked by lustres of recent date. A large mirror, so placed as to reflect these adornments, was richly set in the fantastic taste of the Louis Quatorze period; but the thousand fanciful trifles that fill every inch of space in the present parlors and drawing-rooms then were not.

Walter found the family assembled. A few moments intervened before breakfast, during which Eleanor read, or appeared to read, and, having nothing else to do, Walter occupied himself in looking at her. She seemed to him even prettier than on the previous evening, in her chintz frock of many colors, her vandyke of fine cambric, and apron of the same; or it might be that, having volunteered a "good-morning, Mr. Thornley," as he entered, he was disposed to regard her more favorably.

The breakfast over, and Mr. Meredith having read his

papers, he said, "I am going to my office now, Mr. Thornley, and, as you may like to look a little about you before commencing your regular occupation, we will say nothing of it at present. If I am not otherwise engaged this afternoon, I purpose to have some preparatory talk with you in the library."

Walter had only to assent, and deferring his exploration of the city, he retired to his room to write to Mr. Grafton.

Two o'clock was the dinner-hour. When he entered the room he found the family already seated at table, and, in addition, two guests. Mr. Meredith motioned to Walter to take a chair at his left hand, and said, "This is Mr. Thornley, gentlemen, of whom I spoke to you."

Of the persons so addressed, one raised his eyes with a slight inclination of the head; the other, turning toward him a face from which a laugh had not quite passed, gave him a careless, good-natured nod, and proceeded with his conversation. But, however little the notice bestowed on Walter, his own attention was at once engaged by the gentleman last mentioned. In age he seemed about thirty-five; in stature, short and thick-set. The lower part of his face was mirthful, but there was power in his well-developed forehead, and quickness in his deep-set, vivacious gray eyes. An observer might have safely pronounced him as acute in argument as in jest irresistible, while the negligent *enjouement* of his air showed that business and care sat lightly on him.

They were both lawyers, and the conversation, though chiefly professional, was animated and agreeable. Dull points of law were enforced by a joke, and humorous anecdotes confirmed "grave precedents," in all of which the gentleman referred to excelled.

The dinner was so bountiful that Walter comprehended the scanty city tea. At the proper time, one gentle-

man begged to take wine with Mr. Meredith, and the one who had so much attracted Walter asked the same favor of Miss Eleanor, seated next to him. Mr. Meredith without speaking filled Walter's glass, as he would have done that of a child or an inferior; but having done so turned away and continued to converse with his guests. Walter left his wine untouched.

The gentleman, after talking with Eleanor, seemed disposed to some farther acquaintance with her.

"And so, young lady, you are learning Latin, mathematics, and of course the whole circle of sciences, eh?"

Eleanor blushing replied, "Only a little, sir."

"Very well; the less the better. Let me give you a word of advice. I can spare it, for I get plenty of it."

A laugh from the others seemed confirmatory.

"Don't mind them; they are laughing, not at you, but at me. Now for my advice. Don't spoil those pretty eyes by hard study, for one of these days some very clever fellow will rather have you conjugate for him in plain English the verb 'to love,' indicative mode, present tense, first person singular, than that you should speak all the dead languages. Besides—another thing—you like to dance?"

"Yes, sir," said Eleanor, with a smile.

"Ah! I thought so; but you can never dance well in 'blue stockings'—no lady ever did! Take care of the heels. The head—*your* head, certainly—will take care of itself."

"Bad advice!" exclaimed Mrs. Meredith; "very bad advice, sir! You'll spoil my daughter."

"My dear madam, don't you perceive that I am acting on the defensive? Young ladies will be treading on *our* heels if they neglect their own. In fifty years they'll be contending for the right to vote, for seats on the bench, and professors' chairs, if they are allowed to

go on. We must check them, or we *men* shall be extinct—among the lost races! Latin and mathematics! Why, my dear madam, 'tis a repetition of the 'original sin!' Knowledge to women! 'tis the forbidden fruit. No, no; samples and receipt-books forever!"

Mrs. Meredith shook her head, but did not refuse a smile.

"I am sorry to say," continued the gentleman, "what must needs shock your conjugal reverence; but your husband is the most inconsistent man I know."

"Inconsistent! I can not think it."

"No, I dare say not; but I can prove it. No man more alarmed than he at the progress of democracy, and yet he puts the greatest leveler into the hands least able to use it discreetly—knowledge to women. Why, we shall beat the French. Instead of *one* goddess of reason, every town and village will be overrun with them."

Eleanor listened, but not with an undivided attention. She was puzzling herself to discover what the gentleman could mean by dancing in "blue stockings!" and she cast a furtive glance at Walter as she "wondered if Mr. Thornley knew." But she had no time to speculate on his countenance, for he rose at the moment to leave the room, saying to Mr. Meredith, "I will attend you in the library, sir, when you please to send for me."

"Very well," replied Mr. Meredith, but without suggesting that he should stay longer.

Expecting a summons, Walter remained within, instead of taking the walk he had promised himself; but he received no call till the hour of tea, and then no apology for the omission.

The same formal meal succeeded, after which Mr. Meredith had an engagement, and Walter was left with Mrs. Meredith and her daughter.

In a voice and manner rendering commonplaces agreeable, the former asked him what he had seen of the city.

"Nothing, madam; I have not been out."

"Indeed! Why not?"

"In the morning I was occupied, and in the afternoon Mr. Meredith had said he should wish to speak to me."

"Ah! I am sorry. You have, then, had a dull day."

Walter could not deny it.

"But you have at least seen two of our principal lawyers, and I thought Mr. Hoffman impressed you agreeably."

"I was not aware that I had seen him."

"Seen him! You dined with him."

"I did not know it, madam."

"Why, you were introduced."

Walter smiled.

"My name was mentioned, I believe; but I thought that an introduction, to be such, must be mutual."

Mrs. Meredith, not knowing what to reply, turned the conversation; and, willing to be complimentary, said, "A country life, with its simple habits, has its advantages. I observed you drank no wine."

Again Walter smiled.

"I am not, for that reason, entitled to be commended for simplicity. I like a glass of wine occasionally, but I never took a solitary one in my life; its chief pleasure to me is the companionship it expresses."

A woman's tact seldom fails her. Mrs. Meredith's did not, and she resolved on a secret representation to her husband.

Eleanor meanwhile was silent, but her eyes often turned to Walter, and as often as he smiled she smiled too; but why? Perhaps she could not have told.

It must not be inferred that Walter's notice of these omissions was in an exacting spirit. Mr. Grafton, both

from temper and education an observer of the small charities that soften life, had carefully retained them in his little household, where Walter was accustomed to see their visitors, however humble, treated with attention, and had thus been early instructed in all the courtesies practicable in their situation. But he did not overrate them. Not so Mr. Meredith; and Walter already comprehended that when omitted by *him* it was with a meaning, and that meaning he meant to resist.

The next morning, after breakfast, Mr. Meredith requested to see him in the library, and thither they went.

The course of study for Eleanor having been marked out by her father, Walter, in the main, assented, only begging leave to differ in some small details. Mr. Meredith was a strenuous advocate for the technical mode of instruction; Walter, though he would not object to a severe drilling for a youth destined to a profession, ventured to say that for a young lady he should prefer a somewhat different method. Taught by his own experience under the instruction of Mr. Grafton, he dwelt much on the power of the teacher, not merely to instruct, but to enlarge the mind; not alone to excite the taste, but to refine it. That, omitting sometimes dry technicalities, lest he should disgust his pupil, he should endeavor to leave no beauty in sentiment or morals unperceived, thus leading her through her lessons as a means to that which was higher.

Mr. Meredith listened with attention. He was not deficient in good feeling, but the changes of the time impended over him like a nightmare. He conceived it the duty of every citizen to maintain the proper subjection of the young to the old, and the due subordination that keeps each class in its own place. Yet he was not unwilling to acknowledge merit, and to admit that an individual might lawfully emancipate himself from restric-

tions, nevertheless wholesome in themselves. He began to regard Walter from a new point of view. Deceived by his youthful appearance, he had set him down as a half-taught country lad, who might possibly be made of some use under his directions. He found him instructed and mature beyond his years, with unembarrassed manner, modest and unpresuming in the expression of his views, yet maintaining them with dignity. He was so well pleased he became communicative. "He had been solicited," he said, "by some of his friends to admit their daughters to share with Eleanor in his instruction. But," continued he, "it would never do. I once did try the experiment, but such an ungovernable set you never saw! They nearly drove the poor man distracted, although he was almost twice your age. You could never endure it."

"Just as you please, sir. I should not fear to undertake it on my own account."

"Why, what could you do with a dozen girls, who could not be flogged like so many boys? Whose parents would expect them to be treated like young ladies, but who were, in fact, ill-bred romps."

"If inaccessible to remonstrance and reproof, I would simply dismiss them *sine die*," said Walter, laughing.

"No, no, 'tis better as it is; and as I approve of your ideas as far as you have explained them, you will proceed to carry them out as soon as you please. One thing only has first to be settled—I wish you to be satisfied in all respects—the terms—"

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Walter; "I understood there was to be a period of trial. I prefer to wait till the expiration of that before my remuneration is fixed."

"Trial! Oh ay, yes; but I am quite satisfied now."

"I regarded the provision as applicable to both parties, sir."

"How? I don't understand you."

"You are so good as to say that *you* are satisfied. Perhaps you are precipitate; but allow me to say, sir, that, if your mind is made up, it is possible that mine is not."

Mr. Meredith looked disappointed and perplexed.

"Permit me, sir," said Walter, "to be frank with you. The position is a new one to me. I can not exact treatment from you differing from that which you may deem proper. But, if our views in this respect do not agree, I must do as I have said that I should request the young ladies to do—take my dismissal. A month will probably settle our respective relations. Until that shall have passed we will, if you please, sir, say nothing of terms."

Mr. Meredith was beginning to understand him.

"Your hand, Mr. Thornley!" said he, with a heartiness Walter did not think in his nature. "I respect your frankness and manliness as much as I do your attainments. It shall not be my fault if we disagree."

The two previous evenings Walter had been allowed to retire at an early hour, with no suggestion to the contrary. This evening, however, when about doing so, Mr. Meredith said, "Stay and take a little supper with us, Mr. Thornley. It is a very light one, and usually restricted to my family; but if you will partake of it, it will give me pleasure."

Thus invited, Walter did not refuse. The time passed cheerfully. Mr. Meredith unbent; and, condescending to talk to Walter on general topics, he was surprised into an interest so unusual with him, that when separating for the night he requested that "whenever agreeable to himself he would favor them in the same way."

The next morning Walter was shown into the library, where, in a few moments, Miss Eleanor entered to receive her first lesson, or, rather, to undergo a prelim-

inary examination, in order to decide the course to be pursued. He found, as he had been given to expect, that her instruction had been but superficial, as was, indeed, at the time, the fact with regard to female education generally. Geography and history without maps or chronology; grammar by rote; arithmetic to the "rule of three"—examples set down in the books, and the answers obtained from the same—as Mrs. Malaprop would say, "a supercilious knowledge of accounts;" reading conducted in a similar manner, each girl in the class taking the page or paragraph which fell to her share, without heeding that which preceded or followed. Any thing like hard study, with few exceptions, was unthought of. Girls were not allowed, to use the language of the above quoted lady, to "meddle with Greek, or Hebrew, or Algebra, or Simony, or Fluxions, or Paradoxes, or such inflammatory branches of learning."

The case with Eleanor was rather better, inasmuch as her father had insisted on Latin; but her most thorough attainment was in French. Among the unfortunate emigrés, excellent teachers were found; and, with her nice ear and natural facility, she had made quite a respectable progress in it. To this might be added music, not, indeed,

"The fine sleights of hand
And unimagined fingerings, shuffling off
The hearer's soul thro' hurricanes of notes."

As a science she had no claim to it. Of "harmony" she knew little; but in "melody," well called "the Poetry of Music," her sweet rich voice, her musical instinct, her delicate touch, all natural adaptations, did more for her than her teacher. Drawing, including coloring, she had learned like others. This chiefly consisted of mechanical rules by which ever-varying nature was presumed to be expressed. The same forms for the clouds,

the same straight lines to indicate water, the same unchanging tints for the sky, the same touch to express every variety of tree. Flowers as unlike nature as if some Egyptian hierophant had prescribed a sacred and inviolable form; while perspective was still nearly an occult science.

Almost the only thing really well taught was dancing, and here the teacher, generally French, could hardly fail. Heads unencumbered with learning, spirits unchecked by study, health unimpaired by late hours, hot rooms, and stimulants, were admirable assistants. And it must be conceded by the present generation that their grandmothers, without any of the 'ologies,' excelled them in the adaptation of motion to music, in the true expression of youthful enjoyment. As they moved through the sprightly "contra-danse" and changeful cotillon, groups would gather round them to admire their flying feet, their graceful evolutions, their steps conformed to every varying note, their kindling cheeks, their sparkling eyes. There was no voluptuous waltz, no romping polka, no stamping mazurka, no "walking through the figure." Dancing was neither a rage nor a pretense; it was an earnest and natural pleasure, in which also young men, now too busy or too indolent to enter into it heartily, then partook without the fear of being regarded as idlers, or as dancing-masters, if they executed an "entrechat" or "cut a pigeon-wing." But to return to Walter and Eleanor.

Having prepared the way, and prescribed the first lesson, he released her, he with an impression in favor of her natural capacity and good temper, she with a sentiment half fear, half liking—something she could not well define, but entirely different from what Mr. A. or Mr. B. had inspired.

And now, having inducted Walter into his new posi-

tion, and seen him through the small obstructions which threatened to render it irksome, he may be left to maintain it as he can. And, as it is not intended to give a treatise on education, nor to enter into the details of his teaching farther than the story requires, he and his pupil shall be left to their "kies," their "kaes," and their "cods," without much present observation.

The first of July came; and, though Mr. Meredith brought inviting accounts of the beauty of their country residence, the family were content to remain in the city till after the national festival of the "Fourth." That anniversary was then celebrated not only with noisy demonstrations, but with a pleasure that pervaded every class. The rich, the refined, the fashionable, and the self-indulgent did not then turn their backs upon it, seeking a retreat where their trembling nerves might be safe from its patriotic explosions, leaving the honors of the day to be paid by vulgar, and often by ruffianly excess.

On the occasion referred to the day was hailed with even more than ordinary interest. The general indignation at foreign aggression held in check the angry feelings of opposing parties. A more hearty nationality prevailed, and religious services and an appropriate oration enforced its proper observance. As the accustomed procession passed through Broadway, from every door and window it was greeted. Gentle and simple, young and old, followed with eager gaze and thrilling hearts the long lines that, with various insignia, civil, military, and municipal, proceeded through the street to martial and patriotic airs. Demonstrations of respect were made before the residences of official persons; in answer to which gray heads bowed, and fair young faces smiled—hands were kissed, and handkerchiefs waved. Pulses beat quick at the sight of the old Continental uniform!

which, not then a mere pageant, expressed a *reality* felt and understood; and the New York Rangers, with others of the new levies—among them sons of the best families—showed that the spirit of their sires was not extinct.

The rejoicings were prolonged into the decline of the day by a gay and very general assemblage on the Battery, then the favorite promenade. There Mr. Meredith, accompanied by Walter, conducted Mrs. Meredith and Eleanor. The latter, attired for the occasion in a new chip gipsy, tied with blue ribbons, and a white dimity cardinal trimmed with fringe, tripped along so gayly as to receive a rebuke from her father. But her spirits were up. The crowd, the music, the general exhilaration were intoxicating; besides, she had recited a good lesson, and Mr. Thornley had commended her: a rare occurrence.

Nature, amid all changes, ever the same, unaffected by the mutations of men, was just as beautiful, and not more so, than now. A gorgeous sunset was shedding its light over the city and bay, tinting every jutting headland and island, and casting across the waters a broad gleam like molten gold. As the greater glory departed, the lesser replaced it,

"The heavens unfolding all their gates
To let the stars out slowly."

But among all this natural beauty human interests prevailed. Fireworks presumed to scale the empyrean; and illuminations, in characters of flame, repeated the sentiment, originating in the exigencies of the time, "Millions for defense! not a cent for tribute!"

They met troops of well-dressed people and happy children; and many salutations were exchanged. Among others, a gentleman accosted them, who, giving his hand to Mr. Meredith, raised his hat and remained uncovered while he courteously conversed with his wife. The op-

portunity thus afforded was not lost. His finely-formed head, his massy brow, his eyes, not effective in color or size, but brilliant in expression, his well-cut profile, the genial smile that graced a mouth the fit instrument of truth—strong and beautiful!—the whole countenance informed by thought, so impressed Walter that he failed to observe that “his bodily presence” was unimposing, small even to diminutiveness. He felt only his superiority.

The gentleman bowed and passed, and Mr. Meredith said, with a proud, complacent smile, “*That is General Hamilton; at this juncture no man more important to the Republic—his sword as convincing as his pen!*”

Alas! little did the speaker foresee the near extinction of the life he so estimated! a sacrifice to malignant rivalry, and a mistaken sense of duty.

In their progress, approaching one of the gates, Walter observed a phaeton and pair drawn up in the street without, in attendance on a gentleman, who delayed to enter that he might address some parting words to persons near him. He was one to fix attention. He held his hat under his arm, as if such were his custom in walking. His head and face, thus seen to greater advantage, were striking and handsome. An air of command increased the effect of his tall stature, and his whole appearance indicated a consciousness of power, which, nevertheless, did not offend, because it was felt to be based on rare endowments both of mind and body.

Walter was about to ask his name, when he perceived, as the gentleman ascended his carriage, that he had lost a leg.

“Ah!” said he, “Mr. Morris? Is it not?”

“Yes; our minister to France. But,” in a tone of surprise, “how should *you* know him?”

“Great names,” replied Walter, “penetrate the dark-

est places. The stars, you know, sir, may be seen from the bottom of a well.”

Again and again they went the usual round till Mr. Meredith suggested that they should conclude the evening at Contoit's. Directing their steps, therefore, to that part of State Street parallel with one side of the Battery, they entered beneath an archway, on which was inscribed “Columbia Gardens,” where a parterre of grass and flowers, surrounded by small alcoves, presented itself. It was lighted, and on a stage elevated above the general level was an orchestra, and musicians were prelude the evening performance.

Mr. Meredith having selected an alcove, an attendant appeared with ices, and a programme of the music for the occasion. After a short interval of expectation, the entertainment commenced by “Hail Columbia!” then in the zenith of its favor. To this succeeded an “overture,” followed by singers, male and female; and, among other patriotic songs, “America, Commerce, and Freedom” was received with a burst of applause. At length, the chief attraction, the prima donna of the evening, the celebrated Mrs. Oldmixon, made her appearance. The power of her voice there was no denying, nor the skill with which it was managed; but such were the contortions of a face to which Nature had been singularly unkind, that Walter turned away in a sort of horror, for which her songs, though the most admired of the day, including the favorite “Gipsy's song,” were no compensation. *He* had not learned that “the nearer the singer can arrive at a *gasp*, a *sob*, or a *scream*, the more successfully the voice is treated.”

When Mrs. Oldmixon had been encored and applauded till Walter was wearied, Eleanor asked him how he was pleased.

“I must not tell untruths to you of all persons,” said

he. "Well, then, I do not like such music at all. I dare say because I am too ignorant to enjoy it. I had infinitely rather hear *you* sing."

"Oh, Mr. Thornley!" exclaimed she, much pleased. But Walter, unconscious of having excited emotion by the expression of a simple fact, understood the exclamation as a remonstrance against his bad taste, and reflected, "How strange, that a creature so inartificial herself could enjoy any thing so perverted!"

"I see you think me a barbarian," said he; "but I must, nevertheless, say, that a fine, full voice exaggerated to a shriek, all sweetness and expression tortured out of it, gives me only pain."

Eleanor said nothing, but she did not think him "a barbarian" by any means.

The next day Walter was introduced to a home more congenial to his habits than his city residence had been.

The "Oaks," the country house of Mr. Meredith, was well adapted to comfort; plain and substantial, simply furnished, pleasantly situated in that part of Bloemendal nearest the North River, and surrounded by grounds under good cultivation. Walter fancied that there was, too, an air of greater freedom, something like what he had been accustomed to breathe. People did not walk with steps as noiseless, and doors were not always closed without a jar. Instead of the heavy carved mahogany chairs, imposing such responsibilities on the occupant, were "cottage" chairs—as those of the late fashion were called—the feet of which, if they did not always stand on the same plane, it did not appear so great a breach of propriety. A large hall occupied the centre of the house, into which opened dining-room, drawing-room, library, and a room denominated "the study," because there Eleanor had received the masters who had given her private lessons. This communicated by a glass door

at the south with a piazza running round three sides of the house, to which a long window on the western side also furnished access. From the piazza a descent of a few steps led into a garden, the especial delight of Mr. Meredith; who, far in advance of his neighbors in horticulture, imported many of his plants from England and Holland. Shrubberies, ornamental trees, and shaded walks well disposed, increased its apparent size; and a fine wood, chiefly of oak, gave it, though so near the city, an air of privacy and repose.

The study, thus agreeably situated, was furnished with books, maps, globes, and whatever could justify its appellation; and here Eleanor had collected what she regarded as her peculiar property. Albeit no student, it was her favorite room; for here were her canary birds, and her gold and silver fish; a little cabinet covered with tortoise-shell, a writing-desk of Japan workmanship, and a Chinese pagoda made of rice, but looking like exquisitely-carved ivory. Here, also, was a wonderful nest of balls of the same material, the admiration of eyes not then accustomed to the innumerable bijoux since introduced. Here were, in short, all those articles of taste that then constituted the staple of Christmas and New Year gifts.

Into this room, destined to be henceforth what its name imported, Walter was introduced; Eleanor graciously inviting him to use it whenever he pleased, a permission which its aspect inclined him to profit by. The next day lessons were resumed; the door communicating with the hall always open, and Mrs. Meredith and her work-basket always near it. Having a conjugal respect for her husband's opinions, she was ready to enforce them, particularly when, as in the present instance, her own experience tended to confirm them. The recollection of "manners taught by Mrs. Stakes,"

"wax-work and shell-work by Madam Roger," and a smattering of bad French by M^{de}mslle. Blanch Beault—the lights of *her* time—enabled her rightly to estimate the better instruction now offered to her daughter. Yet she had a grateful remembrance of Mr. Leslie, one of the few good teachers of her time—so honest as to send home a pupil, because, as he said, "she had learned all he could teach;" and so charitable that out of his small earnings he paid a master to instruct the children of the poor.

CHAPTER X.

THE month of probation had passed; all parties were satisfied; Walter's remuneration was settled in the most liberal manner, and things remained as they were. But he was still learning to fit himself to his position. It was plain that his standing in the family was quite different from what it had been. Instead of a *tolerated* member, he was now regarded with a certain degree of complacency; and since their removal to the country his companionship had seemed even desirable. But still he felt that his place was "below the salt"—a situation in which some persons would have secured the advantages by quietly submitting to its exactions. This did not suit his humor. With one of the best of tempers, and having a real happiness in obliging, he resolved not to be the easy, good-natured young man, always ready for a vacant place, to entertain a bore, to walk or drive, as a whim might dictate; or to execute commissions properly belonging to one just hovering between a dependent and a domestic. Perhaps he was proud; but pride, which in excess is a vice, may sometimes be a safeguard. At any rate, he was consistent, and that, for its rarity, is commendable. If invited to remain after dinner or tea, exercise, books, or writing was an excuse; if a drive was suggested, he quietly preferred a walk; if a visit were proposed, he was always happy at home; by his self-dependence thus securing his independence. In a little time it became a circumstance to secure Mr. Thornley's society; and, somehow, neither Mr. nor Mrs. Meredith would any more have thought of making demands on his time for their own convenience than on that of any

other young *gentleman* with whom they were on terms of equal familiarity. Thus much obtained, Walter gladly relaxed his self-imposed restrictions.

Meanwhile he had not been unmindful of the small things which go toward making the whole man. Trained by Mr. Grafton in an observance of proprieties which he had never laid aside himself, Walter, as soon as assured of his ability to attain his own support, had submitted himself to the hands of those persons who undertake to improve God's workmanship by the cut of their clothes and the trim of their hair.

The fashions for gentlemen, like other things, were revolutionized. Fine cloths had nearly banished velvets, cut and uncut. Waistcoats of silk shot with gold or heavy with embroidery, scarlet stockings worked with gold, point-lace ruffles and creepers, diamond stock-buckles, solitaires, bags, and gold snuff-boxes, and all the elaborate toilet of the preceding generation had disappeared. Wigs were on the decline, and powder was discarded except by elderly persons, who disdained to submit their heads to the *sansculotteism* of a crop, and who retained it, together with their cambric chitterlings and ruffles, to testify that *gentlemen* were still extant.

A subject of much more anxiety to Walter than his own standing was his pupil. If dissatisfied, he could go; that was a matter soon settled. But he could not so easily dispose of the question, "Was he of any use to her, or was he likely to be so?"

With good natural powers, a sweet, ingenuous, playful temper, quick sensibility, and a confiding heart, she had no taste for study, no value for knowledge. This, he was aware, was greatly the fault of the parrotry in which she had been allowed to proceed; but might he hope to effect the change that was necessary? Thus far he could not flatter himself that he had secured any

thing but obedience and personal good-will. He would, indeed, most unwillingly have left a creature of such fine impulses to instruction which, however imperfect his own attempts, was very unlikely to succeed better. She could not but inspire a strong interest where known familiarly. A system of parental restraint, to which her young companions were not generally subjected, would have engendered in some minds rebellion or deceit. She was too affectionate for the former, too fearless for the latter—submissive to authority, yet enjoying with an excess of glee her occasional liberty; and, like a bird who, released for a while from its cage, returns without resistance, she resumed her chain with as pleasant a face as she laid it down. A child in ignorance, she was equally so in innocence and unconsciousness.

One morning soon after their removal to the country, as she seated herself at her desk in preparation for the recitation, she exclaimed, "Oh, how delighted I am to get back to my study!"

"Which of them? Latin, Philosophy, History, or—"

"Oh, Mr. Thornley!" replied she, with a significant smile, and well understanding his look, "You know what I mean—my dear old room, with all my pet things about me!"

"Including your books, of course."

"Books! Yes, some books. Arabian Nights, for instance; some poetry, and a few novels—not musty old dictionaries and grammars."

"Your catalogue is rather small, Miss Eleanor; it would but scantily furnish a young lady's head."

"Oh, I know that you, Mr. Thornley, would add folios of history, and Heaven knows what! more than my poor little head could contain."

"You have never tested its capacity," said Walter, willing to indulge her desire to defer the more serious

business of the lessons, in hopes of insinuating one in a less repulsive form.

"Why, do you really believe I can ever learn all the things that you and papa say I must? and if I could, what is the use? There's history now—what am I the better for knowing that Semiramis lived 1965 years before the Christian era? a good-for-nothing, wicked woman, I don't care when she lived! or that Babylon had a hundred gates? It would be more to me if papa would get one new one at our front entrance. Or that the ancient Egyptian language was the same in its roots with the modern Coptic? I care a vast deal more about the roots of my roses! Or that Cheops succeeded Rhampsinitus? Horrid unpronounceable names! That Sesostri was a mighty conqueror? and so on."

"I must confess," said Walter, involuntarily catching the spirit of frolic that sparkled in her eye, "you have contrived to select facts not very important to you personally; but you should remember, Miss Eleanor, that history, like every department of knowledge, comprehends many details, not perhaps interesting in themselves, but preparing the way for what is to follow: thus we float down the stream of time to—"

"No, no; I don't float, I sink! and pray don't speak about the stream of time, Mr. Thornley, I beg of you; it only reminds me of that great chart in papa's library, and it makes you seem just like a schoolmaster."

"But I *am* nothing else," Miss Eleanor.

"Oh, yes; you are, sometimes. I don't ever want to think of you as a schoolmaster, they are always so disagreeable! When you talk to papa and mamma you don't talk so. You think, perhaps, that I don't listen, but I do. I hear every word you say to them."

"Eleanor!" said Mrs. Meredith, from the hall, "are you talking or reciting?"

"Talking, mamma."

"About your lessons?"

"No, mamma."

"Then please attend to them, and do not waste Mr. Thornley's time."

Recalled by this reminder, Eleanor, without a cloud on her brow, opened her book, and, presenting it to Mr. Thornley, the business of the morning began.

After a long sitting, and tolerable recitations, she rose, put on her bonnet, her vandyke, and nankeen mitts, in preparation for a walk.

"Do, Mr. Thornley, go with me. I am sure you are as tired as I am; and it is so solitary, with only Bruno"—a liver-colored spaniel, her constant attendant. "I did not use to mind it, when I could not have any thing else; but now it is different, and I am sure it would do you good."

"No, thank you, Miss Eleanor. I should probably be a dull companion, for walking disposes me to silence."

"A silent companion! that is no better than Bruno!"

"No; and therefore I will not impose myself on you."

"Well, I'm sorry! but come, Bruno! my only friend! Mr. Thornley don't care for us, so we'll amuse each other," and off they went.

The summer months glided away with occasional disappointment, but, on the whole, with increasing satisfaction to Walter, who saw that, with now and then a relapse, Eleanor was really gaining in application and interest in her studies; he, meantime, careful not to increase her distaste by undue rigor, secured his influence by his forbearance.

One sultry morning, having been detained by attention to her mother, who was slightly indisposed, Eleanor entered the study, and, seating herself languidly, exclaimed, "Oh dear! Mr. Thornley, it is so warm

and so late, would it not be better to omit lessons to-day?"

Walter looked at his watch.

"It is only twenty minutes past the hour. I see no reason why, having lost that much, we need lose more; and as to the heat, the most effectual way to forget it is to be occupied."

"Oh, you are always so sensible! I wish I were so. Shall I ever be so?"

"I do not know."

"Why can't you say you hope so, Mr. Thornley?"

"I will, if you give me cause to say so."

"Have I not done so at all?" said she, with a reproachful look. "I'm sure I have tried."

"Yes, Miss Eleanor; you have done so. I am most happy to admit it; but, you know, to reach the goal, we must not flag by the way."

"Well; where are the books? I'll begin."

They were produced. The first lesson was a weary one in mathematics, indifferently got through with; then a Latin translation to be corrected; English poetry to be recited; and then the usual historical reading, with a review of that of the previous day, presumed, but not proved to have been studied over in the interval. This last, when she was in the mood, had, in spite of her original disgust, been rendered, by Walter's commentaries, a favorite exercise. But now she was not in the mood.

"Oh, what a tiresome world this has been!" exclaimed she, as she closed the book. "Nothing but fighting, politics, and wickedness!"

"But still, at times, virtue and true greatness. Don't you think so?"

"Yes; if they would only leave out all the rest."

"That would be a singular compendium," said Walter, laughing. "Shall I prepare a 'digest' for you, consist-

ing of anecdotes of men and women, omitting time, place, and people, and entitle it the 'Philosophy of History, for the use of Miss Eleanor Meredith?'"

Eleanor returned his laugh, saying, "Yes, yes, that much I might digest; at present I am surfeited."

Walter looked grave.

"May I ask, Miss Eleanor, which of your *studies*, so called, do you prefer?"

"Let me see. History, with notes by Mr. Thornley, sometimes quite agreeable; mathematics, so, so; rhetoric, dreadful!—to speak by rule I can't endure; natural history, pretty well—there's *life* in that at least; mythology, a dull story-book about impossible gods and goddesses; natural philosophy, except the laws—laws are always tiresome, you know—quite entertaining; French I like very much; drawing, very little; dancing"—stopping and looking demurely in his face—"is dancing a study, Mr. Thornley?"

"Yes, with opera and rope dancers; the last especially, who understand some of the laws Miss Meredith despises."

"Well, as long as *I* can move, and see every thing moving about me, I can not much care about the laws of motion. If I, and every thing else stood still, I should want to know the reason why."

Mrs. Meredith's admonitory voice not raised, and the lessons completed, Eleanor was disposed for farther chat.

"I'll tell you, Mr. Thornley, what, of all things, I should like to do; to read French with you."

"With me! Miss Eleanor. My pronunciation is not good. I can not undertake to teach it."

"Then, let me teach you; my accent is very good—'*parfait*,' my teacher used to say, though I do not believe him. Perhaps, however, it is better than yours. Do, Mr. Thornley, let me teach you. Why am I to

learn every thing of you, and you nothing of me? Don't you think I know any thing? Oh, I will show you what a schoolmistress I can be! I shall give you a full return of the 'stream of time,' 'departments of knowledge,' 'digest of history,' 'reaching the goal,' and so on; and make you so ashamed of your 'indolence,' and your 'no taste for study!' Now won't you, Mr. Thornley?"

Walter found it impossible to resist her coaxing smile. Besides, it was an exercise of her faculties, and he consented.

To this duty she always came with alacrity, and, although she at first found infinite amusement in correcting him, and even he was diverted out of his propriety, it became more and more a serious occupation, he deriving a real benefit from it, and she awakened to an entirely new pleasure in this sense of power.

Thus, by degrees, Walter led her on, sometimes by exhortation, sometimes by turning to good account her childlike flashes of fun or her merry caprices, but always preserving his own ascendancy. From a progress at first scarcely perceptible her advance was accelerated, till her young mind, effectually stirred by new ideas, became eager for more and higher.

She would sit listening in rapt attention as Walter, with gentle earnestness, pointed out to her how, through the "beggary elements" of teaching, she might ascend to an enlarged application of these first principles—to an understanding of how the facts of other times became the instructors of her own, and how even Error prepared a highway for Truth. How Nature, grand and beautiful as she is, often taught us by the meanest agencies; how "silk-worms turned the philosophy of Sir Thomas Browne into divinity," and "that Reason may go to school to bees, and ants, and spiders;" that

"Nothing's mean,
But every common bush afire with God."

How, through dry and abstract mathematics, which had so often wearied her, the heavens which she loved to contemplate would be comprehended, and she would thus ascend to *Him* "who sitteth above the heavens."

It was a subject for a painter—that young, childlike girl—that youthful teacher, wise beyond his years.

On one occasion, when seated in the western piazza, at sunset, her eye intent on the lovely planet, "companion of retiring day," she looked as if, with the poet, she would have asked,

"Why, at the closing gates of heaven,
Beloved star, dost thou delay?"

Walter, interpreting her curious gaze, said, "Shall I tell you?" and proceeded to explain the phenomenon. As he concluded, she impulsively put her hand on his arm, and exclaimed with animation, "How beautiful it is to know all these things!"

Walter was touched; the young spirit had come at his call; but he replied, calmly,

"Yes; and do you not feel that it makes you happier, too, Eleanor?"

"Oh yes, indeed; I never was half so happy in my life."

"He called me 'Eleanor,'" thought she; "I wish he would never again say '*Miss Eleanor*.'"

At another time, when an aurora was sending up

"Its waving brightness, she,
Curious, surveyed, inquisitive to know
The causes and materials, yet unfix'd,
Of this appearance, beautiful and new,"

and bent her inquiring eyes on Walter.

He shook his head. "I can give you only conject-

ures; but," added he, with a smile, "as you profess to like *fancy* better than *law*, perhaps you will be satisfied with them."

"Oh no," said she, hastily, with a conscious look at the remembrance of her former complacent ignorance, "Oh no, not now; now I like to understand every thing—every thing that you teach me."

He answered by remarks on equatorial regions, phosphorescent lights, earth's motion, and so on—very grave, and, as Eleanor thought, very wise; but which, being, perhaps, behind this more scientific age, it may be best not to expose.

But sometimes a small cloud would come across their fair heaven. Mr. Meredith, not a passionate or harsh-tempered man, could, nevertheless, occasionally be stern, and, unfortunately, did not always discriminate between greater and lesser faults.

One morning Eleanor was a laggard at the breakfast-table, and her father's reproving eye gave effect to his inquiry:

"Pray what has made you so late, Miss Eleanor?"

Rather fluttered by her delinquency, she replied, "I was up late, papa, reading."

"Reading! and what?"

"A novel, papa, that Emily Morton lent me last evening when I went to see her; a very—"

"A novel!" interrupted her father, in a tone of surprise and displeasure; "a novel! borrowed and read without my knowledge!"

"Indeed, papa, I was—going—"

But her embarrassment only confirmed her father in the suspicion of a deliberate disregard of an injunction to which perhaps he attached undue importance, "to read only such novels as he should suggest or approve," and, with increased displeasure, he added, "You may re-

tire to your room"—a permission which, however ungraciously given, was readily obeyed to hide the tears that were starting to her eyes.

Mrs. Meredith looked disturbed, but, as she generally inclined to believe her husband right, she did not interfere. But Walter was not so passive; and when Mr. Meredith, in expectation of his sympathy, expressed in strong terms his determination to "exclude from his house the pernicious trash circulated in the shape of novels, and to enforce obedience the more rigidly as he saw the prevailing tendency to the contrary," Walter ventured, as to the last, to demur.

"I think, sir," he said, "if I may be permitted so to say, that you were rather precipitate with Miss Eleanor."

"Precipitate! How so?"

"You did not allow her time for explanation, sir. I have no doubt that, if not an entire justification, she has a sufficient apology."

Mr. Meredith for some moments maintained his own side, but Walter did not yield, and it ended in his being allowed to mediate, that the present unpleasant feeling on both sides might cease as soon as possible.

He found Eleanor in the study, her eyes red with weeping, and her voice still tremulous, but with no sign of ill-humor. Encouraged by him, she was soon calm, and gave the required explanation. The book had been recommended by Mr. Morton to his daughter, and Eleanor had brought it home with the intention of asking her father's permission to read it, but he was in town, and would not return till morning. "And then," continued she, "I only opened it to see what sort of a book it was; and it was so interesting that I forgot myself, and read till quite late. But, Mr. Thornley, it can not do me any harm, for there is no *love* in it. They told me

so, or I should not have looked into it without papa's leave. *Can* it do me any harm if there is no love in it, Mr. Thornley?"

Walter answered, with due gravity and caution, that he should hope not.

"And I'm sure," continued she, "I am safe enough, for I don't care so much for any gentleman I know as to fall in love with him." Then, with a sudden reflection on what struck her as ill-manners, she added the common qualification, saying, with an innocent smile, "except *you*, Mr. Thornley; I beg your pardon, I did not mean to say that I did not care for *you*; that would be very rude and ungrateful, I am sure."

Walter, quietly assuring her that he should never impute rudeness to her, returned to the subject in hand, and, furnished with her explanation, apology, and the offending volume, which proved to be "Caleb Williams," peace was restored.

CHAPTER XI.

THE quiet of the Oaks was not, however, to be undisturbed. His garden, to which Mr. Meredith had retired on his return from a hot day in town—the flowers, whose bloom and fragrance seemed emulously to offer an acknowledgment of his care—the music of the birds, whom his shrubberies invited and his mercy protected, could not dispel the cloud from his brow. Pestilence had breathed on the city! and the coming woe was already to be seen.

"Amid those scenes of late so fair
The Demon of the Plague had cast
From his hot wing a deadly blast!"

Scarcely a month had gone since sounds of joy and exultation from all ages and every class had filled the air, where now was only silent dread or loud foreboding; where hands had been clasped in friendly greetings, and congratulations exchanged, neighbors avoided each other, or met but to confirm their mutual fears. Bonfires and illuminations, that, in accordance with the sentiment of the elder Adams, had expressed a nation's joy, were replaced by lurid flames and heavy smoke—supposed preventives of contagion—more truly the portents of death. Peace and war, so lately occupying all minds, were forgotten in smaller considerations of personal safety.

The consternation soon became general. All fled but those whom imperious duty, humanity, or poverty detained. More than half the population abandoned the city, finding refuge in the neighboring towns and villages, in country residences, or in slight dwellings hastily

erected in great number over the island. Business was suspended; but persons from out of town ventured to the post-office—removed to the corner of Wall Street and Broadway—at certain hours, it having been pronounced by medical men safe to do so; and clergymen, who had sought safety in Greenwich and Bloemendal, came at stated times for the performance of religious service.

But why sadden a simple story with farther details? Plague and Pestilence have had their chroniclers, from Thucydides to Grant Thorburn; Boccaccio, De Foe, Manzoni, and others. All tell of human nature the same tale. Its cowardice and courage, its selfishness and generosity, its desperate mockery, its palsied stupefaction, its blind fatalism, and its Christian submission.

But Time, whether he “shed odors” or tears “from his wings,” must pass. The summer, with its weight of woe and anxiety went “to the years beyond the flood,” and autumn, never more welcome, came. Frost, often the extinguisher of life, was now hailed as its only hope, and with the advancing season the fugitives began to return.

In November the Merediths were re-established in Broadway. At first the change was oppressive. The mourning garments, the sad faces, the sorrowful details that daily met them, seemed scarcely endurable. But with the returning current of life the ravages of death were gradually obliterated. If people met to lament for the lost, they lingered to rejoice for the living; the very extent of the calamity magnifying the deliverance, and sorrow for the inevitable past yielding to wonder at the scarce credible present.

Eleanor in the grave town library regretted the airy, cheerful country study, endeared to her by pleasant and profitable occupation; but her tutor and her lessons re-

mained, and these sufficed for her. Walter encouraged in proportion as she was interested, instruction was no longer a task to either; and, but that her young companions gathered round her and would not be denied, her thoughts would have seldom wandered from it.

“Holidays” next brought an interruption, though Eleanor declared her indifference to the amusements proposed. But, in conformity to custom almost religiously observed, festivity ruled the hour, and the young came in for their share. Sleighing parties to “Love Lane,” Haerlem, and Kingsbridge; oyster suppers and dancing; the streets musical with sleigh-bells; the side-walks, though icy and dangerous, filled with well-dressed people, gave token of the respect paid to ancestral usages. Among the pleasures of the time were its duties, and respectful calls on gray-headed friends were not omitted by the young. Eleanor, appropriately attired in a dark-green silk cardinal, lined and trimmed with fur, a hat to correspond, muffed and tippeted, and her feet protected by galoches, had been thus occupying the morning; and after presenting the “compliments of the season” to certain ancient ladies, the friends of her family, was on her return.

In crossing Broadway, the near approach of a sleigh with mettlesome horses startled her, to escape which she quickened her pace, slipped on the glazed and treacherous flagging, and fell just as she reached the curb-stone.

The driver instantly checked his speed, and a young man sprang from the sleigh and hastened to her assistance. With expressions of the greatest regret he attempted to raise her; but, though she tried to aid him by her own exertions, she found it impossible to do so. Perceiving her changing color, and the necessity of immediate relief, he lifted her in his arms, bore her to the sleigh, and placed her in it, where, nearly fainting with

pain, she sank back powerless on the cushions, just able, in reply to the gentleman's eager inquiry for her residence, to give the number of her father's house.

In a few moments they were at the door. To lift her from the sleigh and ascend the steps was the work of an instant, though the young man seemed too slight for the burden. The bell was answered as soon as most bells are, but there was time for the distressed Eleanor to stammer forth her thanks before James appeared, his usual dull face excited to consternation at the sight of "young missus in the arms of a strange gen'leman." This last, however, offered no apology for the liberty, but, hurrying to the first open door, deposited his charge on a sofa, to the yet greater terror of Mrs. Meredith, and, having explained the accident, begged to be directed to a physician. In the uncertainty of the amount of injury, the offer was not to be declined; and the gentleman, giving his card, with a request to be permitted to make inquiries the next day, disappeared.

The physician soon came. On examination it proved that no bone was fractured; but a severely sprained ankle and a bad bruise were sufficient to produce the suffering. Rest was imperatively enjoined, and this, with proper external applications, would, he hoped, soon restore her.

As this conclusion was arrived at, Mr. Meredith and Walter entered. They had been met at the door by the usual exaggerations, "Miss Eleanor had been run over, her leg broken, and she was very bad!" but Eleanor's voice assured them.

"Don't be frightened, papa. Oh, Mr. Thornley, don't look so! 'tis only a sprain, and I shall be well directly."

Mrs. Meredith, having given the particulars, with many comments on the young gentleman's "sensible behavior," produced his card.

"I have heard the name," said Mr. Meredith, "but I don't know the family," and he handed it to Walter.

"Oscar Middleton!" he exclaimed, with surprise.

"Do you know him?" asked Mr. Meredith.

"I once met him; 'tis long ago, when we were boys;" and but for "the letter," which flashed across him, he would have said more; as it was, he remained silent.

The violence of the pain yielded to good care, but Eleanor continued lame, and a prisoner. Mr. Middleton called the next day, but saw only Mrs. Meredith, upon whom his kind inquiries, his regrets, his good looks and good manners made an agreeable impression. Almost daily calls ensued; yet he and Walter did not meet until one morning, just as Oscar rang for admission, Walter opened the hall-door in order to go out.

Oscar did not appear to observe him, but stood awaiting the servant. For a moment Walter suspected his inattention to be design, and was about to pass him with equal indifference. Better thoughts prevailed. "He may not," he reflected, "recollect me; I should not, perhaps, have recognized him under other circumstances." The "letter" was no longer remembered as he looked in that kind young face; he stopped, extended his hand, and said, "Oscar Middleton, have you forgotten Walter Thornley?"

Oscar started, the color rushed to his cheek, his eye sparkled, and, grasping the hand that was offered, he exclaimed, "Forgotten him! never!"

The appearance of James interrupted farther communication. Foregoing a visit, leaving compliments and a card, he turned to his friend, saying,

"Come, let me go with you; and you shall tell me all I want so much to know—where you have been, and why you are here;" and, taking his arm, they descended the steps.

In few words Oscar was in possession of all that there was to tell.

"And so you are the tutor of the little girl I came near killing. Upon my soul, I envy you! Why, she is one of the loveliest creatures I ever saw. Don't you think so?"

"That would be a very safe assertion for me," replied Walter, laughing, "as my observation has not been large, and, for the same reason, not very complimentary; but, coming from you, it is worth something; however, I shall not deny that she is a pretty child, and, what is better, quite studious."

"Pshaw! that sounds so pedagogic; and 'child,' too! why, Walter, I shall renounce you if you've grown priggish."

"Oh, I only spoke professionally. If I call her child, it is from the relation in which I stand to her, and because she is such in naturalness and docility, so much so that I really forget her age. But tell me of yourself. You are tall, and strong, I hope, in proportion."

"Oh, yes; those springs cured me. I repeated the dose the next year, and since that I am well, as I say, though my careful mother will not hear of a profession, and keeps me forever in the open air. She has a theory about constitutions much the same as about trees: that the fibre of the young wood must have time to become tough and hardy before exposure. She gives me, I believe, till five-and-twenty to acquire a close grain and a rough bark, and after that I may be trusted to do something. In the mean time, if I happen to cough, she sighs; but you see how fresh and strong I look."

Walter saw indeed that his color was bright, but he feared he overrated his strength. He changed the subject.

"And how is your mother? I can never forget her,

though I can hardly hope that she has any remembrance of me."

"Indeed, you are greatly mistaken. She often talks of you, and always in the kindest terms. In truth, you must have taken a pretty strong possession of all our hearts; for whenever my father, in reproof of my shortcomings, proposes a model for my imitation, he chooses *you*, and I listen without jealousy. They will both be delighted to see you. We live about six miles from town. My father hates a city, and therefore we remain at the 'Lodge' summer and winter. Tell me when you will go, and I will drive you out."

This was embarrassing. It was plain that Oscar was unconscious of the "letter," and Walter was willing to believe that his mother was equally so; but there was the fact, only aggravated by the insincere commendations that Mr. Middleton had bestowed on him. His mind was entirely settled; go to the house he would not. He must excuse himself to Oscar as he best could. Meanwhile, he had the comfort of finding him unchanged; and as, in consequence of his almost familiar admission to Mr. Meredith's, he should often see him, he was satisfied, and hoped that his friend would be so likewise.

The good impression made by Oscar prompted to some attention to his parents. Accordingly Mr. and Mrs. Meredith called on them, were charmed with the lady, not much pleased with the gentleman. The visit was returned by Mrs. Middleton alone, with an apology on the part of her husband, and the intercourse went no farther, Mr. Meredith setting *him* down as a churl not worth the trouble of seeking, and Walter regretting that, being from home, he had lost the only chance of seeing Mrs. Middleton.

Eleanor, released quite as soon as had been predicted

from the confinement of her room, was now permitted to recline on a sofa in the parlor. As soon as he might be admitted, Oscar was allowed to see and congratulate her; and he did so with so many protestations of sorrow and shame for the suffering he had caused that Eleanor could not help feeling a little important. Flattery had seldom fallen on her inexperienced ear. Her young companions were more likely to tell disagreeable truths; her father's cautious commendations were always accompanied by deductions; her mother, though affectionate, was not demonstrative; and "Mr. Thornley! he never paid her a compliment in his life!"

As a part of their rather rigid system, Mr. and Mrs. Meredith resisted an early introduction into general society, but they looked approvingly on Eleanor's intercourse with a small circle of young friends, consisting of girls of her own age, with their brothers and intimates, who met at their respective houses in turn, often presided over by a mamma or elder sister. Dancing was varied by the innocent, if not very intellectual games of Pope Joan, Cassino, and the like. Charades, crambo, and conundrums had their turn; early hours prevented all waste of their fine spirits, and a simple refreshment was entirely satisfactory to youths as yet not vitiated by "Broadway saloons."

"Mr. Thornley," said Eleanor, one day, "I do wish you would join our cotillon parties."

"I have no invitation, Miss Eleanor."

"Oh, that is only because the girls think you too grave, and too—too—old, perhaps," she added, with a smile.

"And as I never dance, you know, they would only be confirmed in their unfavorable opinion if I were to go."

"Well, I will sit and talk with you all the evening if you'll go, and try to be as old as you are, and we sha'n't care what they say."

"I would not so much abridge your enjoyment, Miss Eleanor."

"But it would be better for me; for mamma is rather afraid of my dancing much, since the sprain I got."

"Ah! but I should disappoint others—Mr. Middleton, for instance."

"Oh, I only danced with him so often because he was a stranger, but now he is quite acquainted with them all, and can do very well without me; so do go, please, Mr. Thornley, I can arrange it easily."

"Excuse me, Miss Eleanor. I will compromise the matter; when your friends meet here I will not absent myself."

Accordingly, on the next occasion, Walter remained with the young people. At first some of the more thoughtless exclaimed, "Eleanor's tutor! dear me, we shall not dare to speak!"

But they soon found the "tutor" a valuable addition, not only taking part in every game, but making acceptable suggestions. Among others he proposed "characters," which, furnishing a little mental stimulus, added to the excitement. Kings, queens, and nobles, as their memory served them, were enacted by the young republicans—exultant in their short-lived honors. On his own part, Walter, adapting himself to the topics of the day, and furnished by the ingenuity of Eleanor with the symbolical red cap, appeared as a furious Jacobin. So successfully did he travestie the extravagance and the assumption recently exhibited by the French agents in this country—so well did he propitiate the admiring "citoyens" and "citoyennes" around him with greetings of "Health and Fraternity!"—so happily interlard his speech with Gallicisms, the "Rights of Man," and the prevailing political slang, that at its conclusion, "Ça ira! ça ira!" in its popular air, was shouted by the young men

in so loud a key, that Mr. Meredith, roused from his labors in the library, entered the room to check their merit, but remained to share it.

Mrs. Meredith, who, seated at her work, had been an amused spectator, now proposed, as something more quiet, "Mottoes," an entertainment that has descended to our day. These consisted of lines addressed to each person, complimentary or otherwise. The idea was accepted, and immediately, pens, ink, and paper being produced, all heads and hands were at work. But the aspirants met the usual difficulty that obstructs such first efforts. Pens were mended; dipped and redipped; ink flowed, but not ideas; brows were knit, foreheads rubbed, and lips, perhaps nails, bitten; but little was effected. During this perturbation, Walter had, unobserved, slipped his contribution into the vase placed to receive it, and then occupied himself with a book while waiting for the distracted ebullitions of the rest.

Eleanor, nibbling the end of her pen, bending over three or four lines complete, except the *rhymes*, and trying in vain to find harmonies for "sage and grace," looked up, exclaiming, "Why, Mr. Thornley, *you* not writing! then pray help me."

Walter suggested "rage and lace," "cage and brace," "wage and chase."

"No, no, won't do," said Eleanor, shaking her head.

"Let me see the subject, and perhaps I may suggest something that will suit you."

"Oh no, no, not for the world!"

"Well, then, I'll try again: 'page and trace,' 'gauge and base,' 'stage and pace.'"

Again she shook her head; but, presently, having found what she sought, she, with a merry look at Walter, tossed a slip of paper into the vase.

At length the work was achieved, and the results

drawn forth with as much interest as if votes from an electoral urn—if not as important, quite as inflammatory. For such was the accumulation on the part of the gentlemen, in the taste of the time, of darts hearts, fire expire, love dove, glow woe, blaze craze, that, like a bundle of locofocos, they should have been kept in a *match-safe*, at least till the young ladies were marriageable. A few of the least dangerous may be offered to the reader. One, a cut at Oscar for his gallantry, another at Walter for his gravity, and two of a more sentimental description.

A slip inscribed "To Mr. Middleton" ran thus:

"Sir Calydore you sure should be
Knight of gentle courtesy!
With smiles receive him, ladies all,
He only lives to be your thrall!"

Another to "Mr. Thornley," thus:

"How wondrous to see Mr. Thornley, the sage,
Our juvenile sports here to grace—
Believe me, that smiles will enliven your *age*,
And smooth out the lines from your *face*!"

While this was reading, Eleanor, reminded of having betrayed her authorship, listened rather uneasily. Though it cost her some trouble, it sounded, when read, flat, and not over civil; and its good-humored acceptance hardly relieved her.

To this succeeded one addressed "To Mrs. Meredith:"

"What meets us at the hour of birth,
Nor leaves us till we pass from earth
To spheres above?
Exhaustless gives, and, suffering long,
Forgives unask'd, through sin and wrong;
Speaks in the last, the parting breath,
And still undying conquers Death?
A mother's love!"

Mrs. Meredith accepted it with a look that sufficiently

repaid the tribute, and Eleanor thought she knew who had offered it.

The next was addressed to herself:

"Maiden! with those truthful eyes,
Within whose heart a fountain lies
Of feeling fresh and rare!
Oh, waste not life's sweet dewy prime,
Though joy may prune the wings of Time,
Be wise as you are fair!"

She held out her hand to receive it; then, without speaking, turned away, in order to secure it. Walter continued to read, apparently unobservant of what was passing. Presently, one of the young ladies said,

"What have you done with your motto, Eleanor? I did not half hear it; let me see it."

"Not now," she replied; and then, in a low voice, added, with a significant gesture, "It was good advice, and I have 'laid it to heart.'"

Thus occupied, dancing was forgotten. The hour of separation came; and, as soon as her friends had gone, Eleanor, turning to Walter, exclaimed, "How agreeable you have been, Mr. Thornley! The girls were all delighted, and say you *must* always meet with us."

"They are very good; but that would be hardly safe, I fear."

"Not safe! Why?"

"Every one can not endure pleasure as well as you do, Miss Eleanor. It would quite turn *my* head, though yours is so little affected by it."

"Oh!" said she, half ashamed, yet rather reproachfully, "I know what you mean; but it is not so. Only I have so many things to do!"

He said no more; but his resolution was taken, and an opportunity soon offered for making it known.

"I think, Mr. Thornley," said Mr. Meredith, "that the large indulgence permitted to Eleanor—in good part

owing to her accident—should now be restricted. We have had party-going enough. I shall speak to her mother about it."

"If you will allow me, sir, I was about to say what will, perhaps, induce you to continue your indulgence. I wish to visit my friends at Ashton, and, if agreeable to you, would take this time for the purpose. By-and-by Miss Eleanor will return to study with a greater zest. We must not expect too much, nor require every young lady to be a 'Jane Grey'—to prefer," he added, with a smile, "the 'divine Grecian' to an Oscar Middleton."

"No; children will be fools—and you really wish this?"

"I do, sir."

"Then I have no more to say, though I can not but regret it. When would you go?"

"In two days, sir."

"And when return?"

Walter hesitated, looked perplexed, even troubled.

"Will you certainly require my services, sir? Our year, though not completed, shall be so considered if you desire it. I do not hold you to any engagement."

"I do *not* desire it," replied Mr. Meredith, with emphasis. "You have satisfied me in all respects, and I prefer you should return."

Still Walter hesitated, but at length bowed, and gave what he could hardly conceal was a reluctant assent.

"You will have the goodness, then, sir, to mention the matter to Mrs. Meredith and to Miss Eleanor, and I will make the few preparations that I require."

On farther reflection, it was decided that, as in consequence of domestic arrangements they would remove to the country earlier the ensuing spring, Walter's furlough should extend till they were settled at the "Oaks."

This appeared to relieve him, and he replied more readily,

"I shall come, sir, at the time appointed, unless you forbid it."

"There's little fear of that."

The young circle met again at Mrs. Meredith's, and Walter was escaping from the drawing-room, when a glance from Eleanor, who, by the side of Oscar, was prepared for a cotillon, seemed to reproach his desertion.

"Tis the last evening," thought he, and he remained; and, leaning against a window near her, followed the dancers with an abstracted look. Presently a change in the air recalled him, and, drawing nearer, he found Eleanor dancing the "coquette." She was, in her merriest mood, just making the accustomed feint of presenting her hand to her partner, when she suddenly turned to Walter, who, before he could comprehend her purpose, found himself whirled round, an involuntary partaker of the dance, much to the amusement of all. The next change was the "prisoner;" and Oscar, catching Eleanor's frolic spirit, instead of allowing himself to be encircled, made one of the ring, and so extended it as to entrap Walter, who, thus caught, folded his arms with a submissive air, while his captors tripped gayly round him; but, as soon as released, made good his retreat to his own room.

"There he goes!" said Oscar to Eleanor; "what can he have so important to do?"

"Oh, he is never idle a moment!" she replied, sending a regretful look after him. "When he is not teaching me, unworthy that I am, he is reading law."

"Law! as a profession?"

"Yes; and papa has advised him what to read."

Oscar became thoughtful, and received a rebuke for his inattention.

Walter, meanwhile, took the measure of his room more than once, turned over his books, did not feel like reading, leaned on the mantle-piece, ruminated as he looked into the fire, resumed his walk "*autour de sa chambre*," and wasted the evening in unprofitable thought, till roused by a tap at the door, and the entrance of Oscar.

"Ah! you shabby fellow, to desert us!" he exclaimed; "but I can not abuse you as you deserve; I am too sorry! Mr. Meredith tells me you are going away, Walter; can this be?"

"Yes; but only for a short time; at most not more than three or four months."

"But you and I may not meet so soon."

"You! you are not going too?"

"Yes; in a little time I shall be off, seeking what I may never find, at least to the degree that is necessary to keep my parents quiet. I have been more plague than pleasure to them thus far. If they would only not insist on my being perfectly well, they and I could enjoy life without this perpetual struggle after health. As it is, I must meet the embraces of the spring in the sunny south, instead of awaiting her caprices here, merely because they hear me cough once in four-and-twenty hours."

"But you will return as soon as they think it safe for you here?"

"No; they have some half-formed plans that may keep us all away, no one can say how long. But we won't talk of this just now. My dear Walter, I fear you think me but a thoughtless boy; yet I am not quite so much so as I seem. But I did not come here to speak of myself. 'Tis you of whom I am thinking. For some reason, I have found it impossible to get you to my father's. I know he is in manner cold, and often repulsive; but his nature is generous and true, and he might

have been a useful friend, had you allowed him so to be. Nay, don't interrupt me with disclaimers and explanations; let that pass. You had your reasons, I dare say; perhaps good ones. But, now, hear me patiently. My father has, for some time, made me a liberal allowance—much more than I required; for, fearing the effect of the incessant guardianship, which he thinks my very life requires, he enlarges my liberty in every way that can conduce to self-dependence. I pretend not to be better than other youths, but, as a matter of taste, I hate vice; and, if I have not abused his indulgence, I have to thank the pure influence of my mother, who has formed that taste. But this, though introductory, is yet aside from my object, which, in plain truth, is to say that I have husbanded some three hundred pounds, and that you must take them. They are my own, as you perceive, but, remaining in my hands, are useless. I therefore transfer them to yours, as I have the right to do. You propose to yourself an honorable career. You will succeed; you can not fail; but something must be wanted at the outset.

Walter took the hand that had rested beseechingly on his, but he did not speak—he could but press it—while he endeavored to suppress his emotions.

Oscar, receiving this as assent, returned the pressure, and said eagerly, "Now that's a good fellow! that's like yourself. I am the person obliged, and a frank acceptance doubles the favor. You shall have it in the morning. Good-night; and God bless you."

"Stop! stop!" said Walter. "Not so; I have heard you, now hear me. That I understand—that I honor your generosity, your delicacy, you must see, you must feel; and, were it necessary, I declare on the faith of a true man, I would not refuse you—would not wound you by paltry objections to a pecuniary obligation which,

between friends, so far from humbling, elevates, as the expression of that which is far better than money. But the assistance you offer is not required. I have already refused it from my best friend. I can not tell you my reasons. Perhaps pride may have part in them. Not the pride that shuns an obligation, but the determination to prove that I have in myself the power to conquer my fate, and make my destiny. For this I *must* act *alone*. If I felt myself propped, even by the kindest arms, I should be shorn of my strength; I should cease to trust myself, and I should be lost! This sounds to you as presumption—perhaps mere fustian. I can not help it, for I can not be more explicit. Accuse my folly and my vain self-reliance—I submit; but do not doubt my affection nor my gratitude. Take my hand and my heart—give me yours. They are more to me than untold gold. Oh, Oscar! *you* can never know how priceless is love to *me*!"

Oscar took the hand extended to him, pressed it between his own, and said in a broken voice, "Dear Walter, you distress me. I can not comprehend—I do not judge—I ought not; but one thing I do know: I love and honor you more than ever, though I seem to understand you less. I can not press what you in such terms reject. I can but bitterly feel that I can do nothing in myself, nor for others."

Walter cast his arms around him, pressed him earnestly, and said in a tender voice; "Yes, yes, Oscar; *you* will bless, and be blessed; all I ask is strength to endure."

"Good-night!" "Good-night!" and they parted—Oscar with a promise to see him again before he went. But, instead of his so doing, Walter, on leaving his room in the morning, found a note from him, saying that, being unexpectedly obliged to leave home on business for his father, he could not keep his engagement.

CHAPTER XII.

At the usual hour Walter was at his post in the library, where, though with frequent interruptions and less zeal than he could wish, the prescribed routine had been observed. Uncertain if Mr. Meredith had communicated his intention, and of its reception, he waited in some anxiety. He was not long in doubt. Eleanor entered with a troubled face—the flush of fun and frolic all gone.

With half-averted eyes, and in a voice low and tremulous, she said, "Papa has told me you are going away, Mr. Thornley."

"Yes, Miss Eleanor."

"And he says you wish to go; is that so?"

"Yes; it is some time, you know, since I left my friends."

"Is that your only reason?" she asked, looking up timidly into his face.

Her embarrassment seemed contagious, for Walter colored and hesitated.

"Oh! I see it is as I feared; you are going because you are tired of such a careless, idle girl—a pupil who so ill repays your trouble. It is no wonder you don't wish to teach me; no wonder you are displeased; I deserve nothing better."

Hastily interrupting her, Walter exclaimed, "Displeased! never! impossible! do not apply such a word to me. Not wish to teach you! it has been the greatest pleasure of my life."

His unusual warmth reassured her, and she spoke with more confidence.

"I could not blame you, Mr. Thornley, if it were so. I know I have been negligent of late—why, I can not tell, for I am sure I have never lost the taste you have been at such pains to excite in me. But I have been easily persuaded; the girls were so teasing! And then Mr. Middleton was so kind—so—so—attentive—that—" She looked down, colored, and seemed not to know how to proceed.

Was it that she felt the poverty of the excuse? or was it a girlish consciousness of a welcome conquest? Walter thought it the last, and, to relieve her embarrassment, replied in a calm and encouraging tone:

"We will not seek for the cause of what you accuse yourself: a fault felt and acknowledged is in a fair way to be corrected. Let us say no more about it."

"Then I feared you would never come back; but you *will*? You are not cheating us, Mr. Thornley?"

"Cheating you! how can you imagine it? I would not deceive you for the world."

The accustomed smile returned, and she replied, playfully, "Then I will let you go. It would be selfish to try to keep you longer from your family, when they will be so happy to see you. But you won't forget us, will you?"

"Family!" thought Walter, while a shade fell on his face; "where am I to seek for mine?"

"Oh, Mr. Thornley, don't look so! I would not have you too glad to go, but I can not bear to see you sorry. Come! I have something that will please you—a good, really good exercise. I know it must be so, because I have worked with all my heart. I don't mind work now as I used to do. I have not forgotten the answer of Euclid to the Egyptian king, of which you told me—'There is no royal road to learning'—and I have been up this morning studying two hours before breakfast."

Walter looked pleased and grateful, and rewarded her efforts with the kindest approval.

The lessons over, Eleanor rose to retire, saying, "But you will write, Mr. Thornley—to papa—or—to mamma?"

"Yes, if they wish it."

"And you will send me messages about my studies? I shall not be idle because you are away. And perhaps mamma will write you what I am doing."

"I shall be very happy to hear, Miss Eleanor."

"And you will tell me before you go what I should read?"

"Certainly, if you desire it."

Having to make some purchases before leaving the city, Walter in the course of the morning entered a shop in Broadway. While waiting the leisure of the shopman, his attention was attracted to the gentleman he was serving. His air and dress were striking; and, though he spoke English, he was evidently a foreigner. Just as he had completed his purchase, a carriage stopped at the door. The shopman, casting a glance toward it, said to a clerk, "There is Mrs. Middleton. She has called for the article she ordered yesterday; hand out the parcel."

But the parcel was not made up, and, while the clerk prepared it, Walter, strongly impelled to see her again, went to the door. The glass was down, and she was giving directions to the footman. He could not resist the opportunity, and approached, saying, as he presented himself, in rather a doubtful tone, "Walter Thornley, madam."

Her smile and hand immediately assured him. If his person was not recognized, his name was not forgotten. She was but little changed herself, and compared well with the image in his mind.

To her inquiries for Mr. Grafton succeeded the kind-

est expressions of interest in himself, and pleasure at the renewal of his intercourse with her son; but, though regretting not seeing him at "the Lodge," Walter remarked that the invitation was not repeated.

To his inquiry for the health of Mr. Middleton she replied with emphasis, "No, he is *not* well. Our mode of life does not suit him. He hates cities and civilization. I hope to induce him the ensuing summer to explore some of the wild parts of the country. These will at least have the charm of novelty."

As she spoke, her eye, which had wandered from Walter, seemed to encounter something displeasing. He turned to follow its direction, and perceived the gentleman he had met in the shop at a little distance, with folded arms, and gaze so intently fixed upon her as would easily explain the offended expression of her face. At the same moment, with a wave of her hand to Walter, and drawing up the glass, she reclined on the seat, and the carriage drove off.

As he re-entered the shop, he perceived the gentleman standing as if immovable, and when he again came out he was on the same spot, his eyes still following the carriage, which, having passed round a corner, disappeared. Then, as if mechanically, he joined Walter and walked in silence by his side.

For some time neither spoke. At length the gentleman said, "You know that lady, then?"

"I can claim but a very slight personal acquaintance. She is better known to me through my intimacy with her son."

"Ah! her son! You know him, too! Is he a youth of any promise?"

The manner of these inquiries betrayed no idle curiosity. It was plain that the speaker had an interest, and a painful one, in the subject, and Walter's sympathy

was excited. He replied, therefore, earnestly, "Not only 'promise,' but performance. He is manly, generous, intelligent, truthful. One of the finest fellows Heaven ever made! I am proud to call him my friend."

As he spoke he was struck by the effect his words seemed to produce. The gentleman was unable to reply. At length he said, in a voice that betrayed the effort it cost him, "Ah! indeed! He is not then like—his father?"

Whatever might be Walter's distrust of Mr. Middleton, he could not avow it to a stranger; and he merely replied, "I have not seen him since I was a boy, consequently have no right to an opinion about him."

"But *I* have!" exclaimed the gentleman with a burst of passion. "*I* have a right both to speak and to do, that but for *her* should be sealed in the blood of his black and treacherous heart!"

Inexpressibly shocked, Walter turned on him a look that recalled him from what was evidently an involuntary betrayal of his feelings; for, suddenly restraining himself, he said, "Pardon me, sir. The only atonement I can offer for thus intruding myself upon you is to say that your honorable testimony to your friend may do him better service than you can possibly comprehend. Let me add an earnest request that this accidental interview may not be disclosed. Good-morning," and he hastily retreated, leaving Walter in a state of painful astonishment.

He could not hear unmoved such language applied to Mr. Middleton, of whom he never thought without the same inexplicable interest that he had formerly excited in him—so great that, at times, he could scarce restrain his desire to ask him face to face, "Why he had written that cruel letter?" And then this stranger, who could he be? The deadly foe of the husband, yet the friend

of his wife and son. There was no clue. He might not even seek information from Oscar, lest he should violate the injunction imposed on him.

A hasty step approached, and the gentleman was again at his side.

"Could you," said he, in an eager, hurried manner, "could you so far oblige me as to obtain for me a sight of your friend without being myself observed?"

While Walter was revolving in his mind how this might be, Oscar being absent, he knew not where nor for how long, the gentleman seemed to recollect himself, and added, "But no, no, 'tis best as it is. Excuse me;" and, with a quick step, he was soon out of sight.

In the evening, having still some last matters to attend to, Walter went out. His own business done, he was on his way to the upper part of the city to deliver a parcel intrusted to him by Mr. Meredith, when the theatre, brilliantly lighted, attracted his attention. It was a benefit night, and many were thronging the doors.

Like all young persons, Walter was fond of dramatic representations, yet he had been to the theatre but once, resisting both invitations and tickets from Mr. Meredith. On this occasion he relented.

"If ever so much enchanted to-night," thought he, "I can not be tempted again very soon. I will treat my resolution. It is well, too, just now, to have some merrier company than my own thoughts."

The rage for the German drama, so great at that time in England, had extended to this country. The New York Theatre was struggling into existence, Cooper then in the ascendant, for whom the managers of New York and Philadelphia were contending, and the popular play of "The Stranger" had saved it; and for this evening another favorite drama of Kotzebue was announced.

Walter, having found a seat in the pit, looked over the bill that was handed to him.

"'Lovers' Vows,'" he repeated. "Not for *me*; but if I may not have the reality, perhaps I shall enjoy the semblance."

The cast of the characters was favorable. Mr. Tyler well supported the Baron, and Cooper was admirable in Frederick. The lovely Miss E. Westray, about whom half the young men in the city were mad, crowding the lobbies whenever she performed for a passing glance, yet preserving a reputation as fair as her face, appeared as Amelia. Her good taste and dignity gave truth and purity to a part which, if allotted to another, might have been pert and indelicate; while her grace and naïveté imparted to it a charm all her own.

Walter was soon absorbed in the play. At one moment displeased with Amelia, the next fearing for the virtue of Anhalt; then a momentary pity for the Baron lost in indignant compassion for Agatha; and then forgetting all others in his sympathy with Frederick. All he had ever suspected and feared for himself came rushing over him. He listened with the breathless attention that only a personal interest could inspire, till at the words, "I belong to no one! All the world disclaim me!" no longer master of himself, he half rose from his seat, struck his hand to his forehead, and an indistinct exclamation escaped him. The action drew the attention of the person next him, who inquired if he were ill. Recalled by this, he endeavored to listen calmly; but when Frederick declares his determination to share the fate of his mother, to know only the name that she shall bear, to be only Friburg or Wildenheim, as she may be—an avowal that called forth a burst of applause—Walter's was the loudest and longest.

Thus moved he was unconscious that he was himself

an object of attention. A gentleman, apparently attached to a party in a box on that side of the house, near which Walter was seated, with a glass directed toward him, kept him constantly in sight. When the curtain fell at the conclusion of the play, he rose, and, after another scrutinizing survey of Walter, left the box. Others also went out, as usual, while some rose and looked about them; but Walter sat still, his mind divided between the interests of the play and his own.

The signal of recall was given. People resumed their seats, and among them the gentleman before mentioned. If Walter had been at the moment observant of any thing external, he might have seen him speaking to a man in the shadow of the box near the door, to whom, at the same time, with a slight movement of his hand, he indicated Walter. The man retreated, and the gentleman seated himself, but it was plain that the stage interested him less than the young man in the pit.

The "entertainment" was the favorite after-piece of the "Spoiled Child." The tricks and songs of little Pickle received their accustomed applause, but more than usual effect and importance were given to the part of Tag by the performance of Jefferson. Ah! who can ever forget him, who was fortunate enough to see him in those more worthy of his powers? in Goldfinch, the incomparable Scaramouch, or the

"Father-in-law

To a very magnificent three-tailed bashaw?"

The curtain finally fallen, and the people pouring out, Walter found himself in a crowded passage, where a person wrapped in a large cloak, and guarding himself from the rush of night air by drawing it over his face so as nearly to cover it, jostled him in the attempt to pass. As Walter turned to resist the rudeness, he saw him already some steps ahead, but looking at him over

his shoulders in a manner rather inconsistent with his apparent haste.

Once clear of the house, he thought no more of it. Oppressed with the close atmosphere of the theatre, he prolonged his walk beyond it, and soon outstripped the few who were proceeding in that direction. After a while there was only the echo of his own feet, when at length hearing a solitary step behind, he turned, and saw a person following at a short distance. At first he regarded it as accidental; but finding that when he had occasion to cross the street the man did so too, and that when he recrossed it by way of trial the man did the same, he stopped.

Being naturally impatient of impertinence, and, moreover, stout-hearted, he turned upon the man, now just behind him, and said, in a tone of authority, "Proceed, sir! I do not choose to be dogged."

The man passed without speaking, and, quickening his pace, was soon out of sight. Walter observed that he was shorter than the person who had passed him in the lobby, whose manner had somewhat struck him, and that he wore no cloak. He looked at his watch; it was later than he had supposed, and he retraced his steps toward home.

The moon was up and bright, but soon a rack of dark clouds drifted across and completely obscured her. Every object had thus been cast in deep shadow for a time, when, suddenly emerging, she revealed the same man on a line with Walter, and but a few paces from him.

Raising a pretty formidable cane, which he was in the habit of using at night, Walter advanced a step toward the man, and said, "Begone this instant, or I level you to the ground!"

It was plainly no idle threat; and he retreated hastily down a street, the corner of which they were just passing.

A short walk brought Walter to the house at which he was to leave Mr. Meredith's papers. After ascending a flight of steps, ringing the bell, and delivering the parcel, he was about to descend when near the foot he again saw the same person. At the moment a watchman approached from the other side of the street.

Walter raised his voice. "Arrest that man," said he; "he is about no good." But, taking to his heels, the intruder was gone, and Walter reached Mr. Meredith's door without farther molestation.

Conceiving it a plan to rob him, which, being frustrated, was of no consequence, he did not mention the circumstance to his friends, but gave the little time that now remained to what interested him more.

At length, with an effort delayed to the last moment, he bade them farewell in anticipation of his early morning departure.

Walter's return brought sunshine to Ashton. But while Mr. Grafton found much to repay the pain of separation in the development the natural result of more varied observation, Damie's scrutiny and approval were directed to somewhat different things.

"Well, I declare!" said she, smoothing down his sleeve, "if you haven't worn this 'ere coat car'fully; why, it's pretty nigh as new as when you went away."

"I have not had much occasion for it," said Walter.

"Why, it was your best; you couldn't help wearin' it."

"Yes, Damie, till I got a better, of which, I dare say, you will approve," he added, with a smile.

It was a presumptuous conclusion. She only opened wide her eyes at what she deemed the superfluities of his wardrobe; for Damie, like other womankind overawed by boys just fledged, knew how to wonder in silence, inly resolving, however, that "every individual

stitch of York clothin' should be packed away till he went back; so he needn't have no excuse to buy more."

Among others, his old friend Jed lost no time in coming to congratulate him on his return.

"I'm as glad to see you, Walter, as ever I was to see pay-day! What a stout lad you're grown! And you'll not be too proud to fish and shoot with old Jed, because you've been among the quality, will you?"

Walter gave the desired assurance, amused at his exaggerated idea of the honor that had been "thrust upon" him by the "quality."

Happy to be again among his early friends, he betook himself to all his old ways, much to the satisfaction of Damie.

"He's not a speck spiled," thought she; "just as natural and kind as ever. Only sometimes I kind o' consate a shade like comes over him; but that's only 'cause he's older, I expect; and as to gettin' new cloaths, why boys will be boys all the world over!"

Walter had been at home nearly a month when a letter was sent him from the inn at the next town. It had been left there by a person who passed directly on, and was inscribed "with care and speed"—a request enforced in this instance, probably, by a "consideration," as it had only been left the preceding day. Walter opened it, and read as follows:

"You have disregarded my commands. Be thankful that you have escaped the penalty you deserve and might have incurred.

"Remain where alone you are safe, and do not farther tempt the consequences of my just displeasure by your disobedience."

Without date, place, or signature, there was still no difficulty in ascertaining the writer.

"Why should he not have sent it by mail?" said Walter; "it might have never reached me."

"Probably because he could not evade a post-mark. He has evidently strong reasons for what he does, since he avoids the most obvious course."

Walter reflected, and recalling his being dogged the evening before leaving the city, he mentioned it. "It might have been some creature of his, instructed to ascertain my place of abode, in which, however, he failed. Himself it was not. Height and person were altogether different. But, having discovered my 'disobedience,' as he presumes to call it, why wait a month before writing?"

"In the dark as we are, an attempt to account for his actions is vain. Besides, you can neither tell when the letter was written, nor at what distance."

"That is true. However, it matters little to me; I shall proceed as I have begun."

"Walter," said Mr. Grafton, "you are young and fearless—perhaps because older, I am more timid. Do not too far oppose this man. This late attempt at New York, I confess, increases my anxiety—abortive though it proved. It indicates a pertinacity of purpose that is not to be foiled; perhaps a power to injure if not to benefit. Do not be rash."

"My dear sir, I am not rash. Believe me, my resolution has been formed deliberately, I may almost say religiously. If any thing in him inspired confidence I could submit. It would surely be no hard matter to remain with *you*. But, with the feeling he has excited in me, to leave myself a mere puppet in his hands would have the worst possible effect on me. I should become useless, irritable, morbid. I dare not expose myself to such a trial. No. There may, indeed, be consequences I can not foresee from opposing him, but there are others

not less terrible to me, which I can clearly discern in the strange, the aimless existence to which he would condemn me. Look at his letters; see the style in which he addresses me—at two-and-twenty the same as at fifteen!—a mere string of threats and mysterious warnings. His object, to frighten me to his purpose. That of itself, aside from his violated engagements, is enough to justify distrust.”

“But you know, Walter,” said Mr. Grafton, hesitatingly, “you know—you can not—can not understand the extent of the claim he may have upon you.”

“Oh, do not, my dear sir,” exclaimed Walter, starting up, and pacing the floor, “do not speak thus! Any thing else! It is the only thing I can not bear. I *must* forget it—it drives me nearly mad to think of it.” Then, recovering himself, and taking affectionately Mr. Grafton’s hand, he added, “Forgive me. I ought never to disturb you by such violence. Forgive me, and I will not again offend you by it.”

A letter from Oscar gave another direction to his thoughts. It was, as usual, kind and cheerful, but, to Walter’s surprise, dated from Charleston, to which place it was evident that he had been hurried, without returning to New York. There, he said, his parents had now joined him. Their future was uncertain; but his father talked of wild explorations, that might keep them even the next winter at the South.

These rather obscure intimations furnished matter of reflection. Walter remembered the stranger he had met in New York, and his hostility to Mr. Middleton. “Could this abrupt desertion of their home be connected with that person?”

CHAPTER XIII.

THERE was little occasion to impose on Eleanor a more moderate participation of pleasure. Indifferent now to other things, her chief enjoyment was in pursuing the course of reading that Walter had recommended at parting. But the life-giving spirit was gone; though she persevered, it was not with her usual animation, and, to add to the shade that was falling on her, her agreeable young admirer, Oscar, was gone too—even sooner than had been expected. She and her mother were passing a quiet evening at home, the latter weaving fringe, the former weaving fancies, when Mr. Meredith entered with a look of having something pleasant to say.

“I have made a new acquaintance, my dear,” said he, addressing his wife; “one whom I think you would like as much as I do.”

“That is very probable,” she replied, with her usual gentle conformity. “You know that, like Mrs. Smith, who does not venture to commend the weather without adding, ‘Mr. Smith thinks so too,’ I always agree with you.”

“No, not always; I should not love you so well if you did. I like, sometimes, a little of the ‘Lawrence spirit,’ it keeps domestic life from stagnation.”

“Well, well, but the gentleman, who is he?”

“Captain Talbot. He dined with me to-day at Mr. Ogden’s. He was the life of the company, intelligent, full of anecdote, and fine manners. A really well-bred man; for an accomplished, traveled Englishman is the best sample of gentleman to be found, the world over.”

“A military man, of course?”

"He has been: but I understand he sold his commission some years since. He has seen service, however; has a fine military air, and is about six or eight-and-thirty, though he looks older—the effect of his profession, I suppose. Ogden says he is not rich, he thinks, but very well connected. He is acquainted with the Middletons, and has been in this country more than once before."

"Shall you see him again?"

"Oh yes; I shall call on him to-morrow, and ask him to dinner, at your earliest convenience."

So said, so done; and at the day appointed Captain Talbot appeared.

Mr. Meredith had not exaggerated; he was indeed little prone to do so. The guests were well selected, and the captain recommended himself to all. His appearance, on which Mr. Meredith had not enlarged, assisted to this effect. He certainly looked old for his years, but his brilliant eyes—the keenness of which was tempered by a most effective smile, his fine teeth, dark hair—thin, but only slightly changed, his figure and air, presented a whole that most persons would have pronounced still handsome.

Eleanor, sufficiently grown to be regarded as a young lady, retained her girlish simplicity of dress and manner. Her open frock was exchanged for a gown of fine cambric; its surplice folds, so disposed as to show to advantage her form, were confined at the waist by a girdle, and its tight long sleeves fitted perfectly her well-rounded arm. Her hair, still allowed to be uncontrolled, fell behind, in its natural wavy lines, to her waist, and on her forehead and cheek lay in small loose ringlets. Earrings, simple gold hoops of moderate size, and a brooch were her only ornaments.

Captain Talbot was seated at Mrs. Meredith's right

hand, and Eleanor next him. They had thus the benefit of all his pleasantries, whether addressed to themselves or to others; while his deferential manner toward the mother was nicely graduated into a shade of kindness toward the daughter, well understanding from her youth and shyness that she was as yet unaccustomed to take a part on such occasions. "Youth and shyness," at that day, were considered properly inseparable; for there were *then* American girls who did not talk loud, speak fast, laugh immoderately, nor pronounce confidently—who did not distort their fine native language by "slang," nor by misapplication. Of many things now known it must be admitted they were ignorant; but they did know that a volcano was not "nice," a murder not "funny;" that commonplace sensations were not "intense;" that mice and kittens were not "awful;" that caps and ribbons were not "loves;" and that "glorious," "splendid," and "jolly," were not convertible terms.

"But surely there are just such girls now," objects some young lady reader. "I know many such; there is Miss So—, and So—, and So—."

Granted, fair critic! There *are* charming exceptions, and *you*, undoubtedly, among the number. But they only serve to illustrate the too common rule.

On this subject, however, you will not be easily convinced, so we will return to the dinner-table, where the captain confirmed the agreeable impression he had already made.

The liking expressed by Mr. Meredith appeared to be mutual, as was proved by an early call from Captain Talbot, longer than ceremony required. From this auspicious commencement, the intercourse ripened so fast that he was soon an *habitué* of the house.

Mr. Meredith, descended from, and by marriage con-

nected with the best colonial aristocracy, had imbibed with prejudices of birth strong English partialities. Though early involved in measures tending to revolution, and a consistent adherent to the interests of the Colonies, he had been slow to believe in the possibility or expediency of their independence. But, yielding at length to the pressure of the time, he had sincerely co-operated toward such a result. Once obtained, however, he ardently desired to maintain friendly relations with the parent country. At the origin of the parties which, soon after the peace, had divided the public mind, he had naturally adhered to the most conservative, and fell, like others, under the imputation of British influence. The excesses of the French Revolution, excused by those who remembered only their ancient ally, confirmed him in these opinions. France and England became the watch-words of party, and a rancorous feeling was exhibited that threatened serious evils. Under "Federal" and "Anti-Federal" were ranged good and wise men on either side; and, as must always be the case, the selfish and unprincipled were also found in both ranks. The press fomented the passions thus engendered, and personal abuse knew no restraint; so that even the founder of the Republic was moved to say, that "every act of his administration had been tortured; and that, too, in such exaggerated and indecent terms as could scarcely be applied to a Nero; to a notorious defaulter, or even to a common pickpocket." At this moment, however, when accumulated injuries seemed to have reached their height, when the arrogance and lawless attempts of Genet, the pretensions of Fauchet and Adet, the insulting tone assumed by the French Directory, the insolent dismissal of our minister and commissioners, threatened to involve us in a war with France, a better and more national spirit appeared. A common feeling of injury awaken-

ed a conviction of common interest and mutual dependence.

But Mr. Meredith was little encouraged by the lull of party storm. He saw in these fearful outbreaks indications of disunion and anarchy; and, invited by the sympathizing tone of his new friend, perhaps, alas! who has not a weak side?—perhaps not insensible to the well-timed regrets of Captain Talbot that such men as he should not be placed where patriotism and talent could have their effect, gave vent to his occasional despondency.

The captain was remarkably free from the assumption ascribed to his countrymen, nor had he any of the sore feeling which so recent a conflict might well excite. On the contrary, he contemplated the matter from an impartial position. "He rejoiced in the independence of America. It was best for both countries. He congratulated himself that he had not been compelled to draw his sword in a cause of which he could not approve."

"But, my dear sir," continued he, "why thus disturb yourself? No man more rejoices in the prospects of your country than myself; but look at the history of republics; where have they endured? And where is the charter which insures to America a longer duration? Be satisfied, then; she will ascend like Athens—like her will fall. Faction will eat into her institutions. Her great men will be overstepped by Eucrates the rope-seller, Cleon the leather-seller, Lysicles the sheep-seller, Hyperbolus the lamp-maker, and so on; till misrule shall subside under the strong arm of some vulgar demagogue or military chief."

"And you counsel me to be satisfied with *this*?" exclaimed Mr. Meredith.

"Yes; because you can have nothing better. But it

may be long before such a termination. Long before your young 'Demos' comes to his full maturity, and longer still before he becomes the 'Old Demos' of the Athenian stage—flattered, cajoled, and impoverished by some artful idol of the day. In the mean time generations will have passed; America will have taken her place among the nations and on the page of history, which will record her rise and her fall. No, no, my dear sir, you and your political friends are more rational and practical than your opponents, but even you can not work impossibilities. You can not save mankind against their will. Be wise, then; enjoy the present. Indifference is the only philosophy for the future."

"No," said Mr. Meredith, warmly; "despondent I may sometimes be—indifferent I can never be. My prevailing trust is in the good sense of which I believe the people to be capable, that they will finally work themselves clear of the mists which now obscure them. All I contend for is that, while being educated for liberty, they should be under competent guardians. If I thought as badly of the race as you do, Captain Talbot, I should not much care to remain in a world subject to it."

Mrs. Meredith and Eleanor, often present at these discussions, were not uninterested hearers; the former indicating by a word or a look her accordance with her husband's views, and Eleanor silent, but wondering that "so amiable a person as Captain Talbot should think other people so bad." At another time, when the subject of imported luxuries, fashions, and vices was under consideration, after rallying what he called the causeless alarm of Mr. Meredith, the captain, with a careless laugh, concluded; "Well, then, the only consolation that remains for you, sir, is the 'Fable of the Bees.' You know the moral—'Private vices, public benefits.' For my part, pretending to no political science, I leave the problem

of civilization to longer heads. I can no more calculate the agencies that act on this world of ours, than I can apply Kepler's law to planetary motions. I am but a passenger; if the earth is wrecked I can't help it. Like a soldier, I do as I am ordered, and leave consequences to others. It is with you, sir, and such as you—men of wisdom, talents, and influence—that responsibility rests."

Thus, often agreeing with Mr. Meredith, or differing but to give spirit to the conversation, with just such a dash of compliment as served to combine and harmonize the whole, it was not surprising that Captain Talbot should be an acceptable visitor, and that certain gleams of a cold and selfish philosophy should be unobserved; or excused, as the effect of a profession which led him to regard men as machines or slaves—alike drilled, whether for a battle or an election—and equally led blindly, whether it were by a superior, or by their passions.

This familiar intercourse soon became intimacy. Captain Talbot seemed by an instinct to adapt himself to all—to Mrs. Meredith by donations to her favorite charities, and to Eleanor by a happy mixture of encouragement and respect, inspiring her with an ease and freedom she had never felt toward any other visitor.

A money transaction of small amount, but serving to exhibit the captain under another phase, confirmed his good standing. Certain English remittances expected by him not arriving, he requested of Mr. Meredith a loan of a few hundred pounds. It was readily advanced, and a promise given of early repayment. Before the time, the money was returned in a draft on one of the best New York houses. Mr. Meredith presented it himself, not sorry to have an opportunity of thus obtaining farther indirect testimony to his new friend. He was not disappointed. The draft was accepted without hes-

itation, and the merchant proceeded to say, "he knew nothing of Captain Talbot except in the way of business, but he had had frequent exchanges to negotiate for him and his friends, and that every thing had been perfectly satisfactory."

The time for retiring to the country arrived. This, instead of interposing an obstacle to the intercourse, only gave it a more familiar character, the captain often passing an unceremonious day at "The Oaks," and not unfrequently remaining the night—becoming, in short, "*l'ami de la maison*."

One evening Mr. Meredith, on returning from the city, had that air which experienced wives know to indicate something on the minds of their lords paramount, and, with the tact of the sex, without any direct inquiry, prepared the way for its disclosure, were he so disposed, by an early removal of the tea obstructions, and then by suggesting some employment that should take Eleanor from the parlor. Then, seating herself at her work, she waited till Mr. Meredith should open his budget for their mutual relief. She had not long to wait.

"My dear," said he, "I have a matter to submit to you. Captain Talbot has proposed for Eleanor."

With unaffected astonishment Mrs. Meredith dropped her sewing and looked at her husband. "For Eleanor! Eleanor! Well, that can not require long deliberation."

"Do you mean by that, approval or the contrary?"

"The contrary, of course. Why, Mr. Meredith, Eleanor is a child! and he is more than double her age."

"Very true; that is precisely the difficulty. Aside from that, I could see advantages in the connection not to be disregarded."

"Advantages!"

"Yes. To be sure he is not rich. He has dealt very frankly with me. He is within one life of a large estate;

but that life, as he says, is as good, or better, than his own. This, however, matters little. Eleanor's large legacy from your aunt, to be hers at eighteen, or earlier, if she marry before, would be a reasonable independence. He is well born—a great consideration—and well educated; can furnish the best credentials as to character and position; is a man of sense and honor—a better guarantee for her happiness, and for her character yet unformed, than if he were a young man as immature as herself."

Mrs. Meredith listened, but, unconvinced, returned to her first objection.

"But, my dear, she is a child! a perfect child! her education not yet completed."

"True again; but he could therefore better train her to conformity, and, of course, to sympathy."

"That means that his powerful will and stronger qualities would crush every thing individual out of her. I do not call that 'sympathy,' and the process is any thing but 'happiness.'"

"Well, well, do not be disturbed. I have given him to understand the case just as it stands; that if he were ten years younger, or she as much older, I should not object; but that, as it is, I can not approve."

"Then it is settled, is it not?"

"Not quite. He still asks to be allowed to refer the matter to herself; this is the point for us to decide. For myself, I do not see that we can deny him so small a favor as a refusal from her own lips."

Mrs. Meredith, with her direct common sense, had, woman-like, jumped to a conclusion, and not far from right. She saw that the captain's conversation, his manners, his flattering estimation of Mr. Meredith—obvious, however delicately insinuated—did not permit to that gentleman the free use of his usually sound judgment.

She saw, too, that the captain, relying on the friendly feeling he had inspired in the young lady, was confident of his own powers of persuasion; nor could she tell how far the silly fancy of "being her own mistress" might aid him. She had not forgotten that the pretty daughter of a friend of hers had married at sixteen a baronet of sixty, for the bribe of going to England, and being called "my lady." For her own part, "she liked the captain very well—liked to hear him talk to Mr. Meredith—but didn't care for a nearer connection." So she sat silent and perplexed.

"Well, my dear," said her husband, "shall he be permitted to make his application?"

"And *you*—you will not suggest any thing in his favor?"

"No, certainly not; nor you any thing to his prejudice, I hope; for I conceive it a point of honor to let the captain have a fair field."

With this non-interference Mrs. Meredith felt it necessary to acquiesce, and she tried to wait patiently the result.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE next morning the all-unconscious Eleanor, putting on her straw "scoop"—a name given to a bonnet more useful than comely—and with basket and scissors, prepared for her accustomed business of gathering flowers for the parlor decoration, descended into the garden, followed by her inseparable attendant, Bruno. Her basket was soon filled, but the morning was so beautiful she could not think of returning to the house; so she placed it, as she supposed, in security under a rose-bush, and wandered off to the trees that skirted the garden.

Bruno, with the propensity of some bipeds to find what is not lost, took it into his head to carry the basket after her, as he had sometimes been directed to do. Her first intimation of this officiousness was the flowers scattered to right and left, and the empty basket in his mouth. Catching up a twig she was about to chastise him, but this only provoked him to retain his prize, and a contest ensued, in which, getting the better, he made off with his booty. Then, after many feints and circuits, he brought it back, and laid it and himself at her feet.

At this moment the captain, having called, and being told where to seek her, appeared. Exercise and frolic had heightened her color and excited her spirits. She was in the gayest humor: ripe for fun and sport.

"See!" she cried, "how reverently he has prostrated himself before me! The cunning fellow!"

"And who would not do so!" returned the captain, warmed into an excess of admiration as he gazed at her. Otherwise occupied, Eleanor did not observe the com-

pliment conveyed; and the dog, as merry as herself, keeping his paw on the basket, the instant she extended her hand to recover it, caught it up, ready for another chase, while she, stamping her foot, exclaimed, authoritatively, "Let go, sir! Have done, sir! this moment!"

But in vain; he was off, and she on the point of following him, when the captain, seizing her hand, detained her while he poured forth a passionate declaration of love.

Eleanor stood in mute amazement. She comprehended that an answer was expected, but what must it be? She understood that something was to be said to save the captain from "dying in despair!" something "to breathe into him a hope that would render life endurable;" that would hold out a prospect of "ineffable felicity;" but she could not say it. On the other hand, how could she be "cruel, inexorable, inflexible," as he said, to so kind a person?

Encouraged by her silence, more and warmer protestations assailed her.

Could he have looked within the deep recess of the protecting "scoop," so inclined that his eager glance could not penetrate it, he might have augured differently. Surprise, perplexity, alarm, were passing over her face, but no gentle yielding. Rather through all was to be discovered a sense of the ridiculous, equally unfriendly to his suit. At length, finding words, she exclaimed, "Oh, don't say so! pray don't!" words met by reiterated vows of devotion and deprecations of her cruelty.

Overpowered by his ardent volubility, and anxious to put the readiest termination to what, distressed as she was, struck her as excessively absurd, she could think only of the stratagem by which young ladies hold themselves at liberty to evade a partner in a less momentous enterprise, and she impulsively exclaimed, "Oh, Cap-

tain Talbot, you must not talk so! Indeed I am not cruel! But I can not—I really can not—I am engaged!"

The captain dropped her hand as if he had been shot, and she, delighted to be saved any farther parley, fled.

"Engaged! engaged!" repeated the discomfited lover. "How can it be! Who can have rifled this lovely young creature from me!"

Then, revolving every one he had met at the house, and finding none on whom his suspicion could fasten, he again exclaimed, "It can not be—it is impossible! But she might have met the favored individual elsewhere; must have done so, since it was plain her family was ignorant of the matter."

Pacing to and fro till conjecture was exhausted, he at length turned his steps to the house to seek her parents, to communicate his failure and the cause, to deplore his fate, and to withdraw. Their consternation far exceeded his own. The feelings that had so lately disturbed them—Mr. Meredith's sympathy for his friend, Mrs. Meredith's fears for her daughter—were forgotten in other and stronger emotions. The father was indignant at her duplicity; the mother grieved at the want of confidence in her child; and both were terrified by the fearful question of "to whom had she pledged herself?" The only plausible idea was young Middleton. This was far from satisfactory; he was as much too young as the captain was too old. A mere boy, and, as Mr. Meredith considered, characterless and unreliable. But it might be much worse; after such deception what might they not fear?

The first thing to be done was to obtain a full confession from Eleanor herself. Here a difficulty arose as to which should require it of her. Mrs. Meredith, knowing the awe in which she stood of her father, feared his severity would overwhelm her; while he, on his part, saw that her mother's gentleness would be farther im-

posed on by Eleanor. It was at length decided that Mrs. Meredith was the more proper of the two, and she was about to leave the room for the purpose, with a dread of what might ensue, when the door opened and Walter Thornley entered. It was the time that had been appointed for his return, but, having written to obtain a longer leave of absence, he was not expected.

Sensible people sometimes do foolish things. So Mr. and Mrs. Meredith, mutually distrustful, gladly caught, in their perplexity, at a third person to act for them, whose position and discretion seemed at the moment to settle the question of his fitness.

"Oh, Mr. Thornley," they both exclaimed, "how glad we are to see you! You are the very person we want."

Walter, his face flushed with pleasure at the sight of his friends, his eager eye seeking his absent pupil, responded gratefully to a reception warmer than he expected.

"The illness of a friend I feared would detain me," said Walter; "but, happily, I could leave him, and be here as I had promised. I hope Miss Eleanor is well?"

After what seemed rather a cold reply on their part, he inquired in what way his services were required. This necessarily introduced the subject in hand, and, requesting him to be seated, Mr. Meredith, with professional accuracy, stated the case, beginning at the beginning, and carefully detailing the approaches of the captain, the *pros* and *cons* of himself and Mrs. Meredith, till, unable to imagine what might be coming, Walter, in painful suspense, awaited the conclusion. At length Mr. Meredith arrived at the final dismissal of the captain, and the avowal of Eleanor, which, as might have been expected, shocked her conscientious young tutor as much as her parents. He said nothing, however, but his sudden paleness evinced his sympathy with them, and, at-

tracting the notice of Mrs. Meredith, she reproached herself for her inattention, and begged him "to take some refreshment, for he looked dreadfully fatigued." But he declined; and, after a few moments, said, "You spoke as if I could serve you, sir; in what way can I do so? You can not mean in relation to Miss Eleanor."

"Yes, I do. Let me explain, however," continued Mr. Meredith, his habitual formality yielding, in spite of his endeavors to the contrary, to emotions of pain and displeasure. "Let me explain. She is more confidential with you than with us. The necessary restraint between parents and children has sometimes a bad effect. We should alarm and repress; you will calm and encourage her. And let me take this opportunity, Mr. Thornley, to say, that, in giving you this proof of our confidence, we only properly reward your remarkable discretion in a situation calling for more than is usually found. I have observed you closely, as I was bound to do, where the interest of an only child was at stake; and I must say, that while you have exacted your due respect as her teacher, you have never forgotten your relative positions."

A cold bow on the part of Walter acknowledged this not ambiguous compliment. He was not insensible to the confidence expressed, nor to the inferiority implied.

"We are, therefore," proceeded Mr. Meredith, "glad to depute you to a delicate office, for which you are, perhaps, better fitted than ourselves."

"But what, sir," inquired Walter, anxious to terminate in any way this oppressive interview, "what can I possibly do?"

"You must see her before we do; must obtain from her a full disclosure of every thing—of her real feelings—for we are not without suspicion that she may be entangled through mere thoughtlessness. She may even be glad to be assisted in escaping from some fool-

ish involvement, which she would sooner expose to you than to us. You can sift this more calmly than we can. If, on the contrary, her affections are really interested, you are at liberty to assure her that we disregard riches; that, if the connection be not disgraceful, in other words, if the person is her equal in birth and position, she shall not be opposed, provided, at the same time, that his character secures her happiness, for this is all that we desire. It is best not to delay," added he, as Walter sat silent, troubled and irresolute; "you will find her in the study."

With an effort Walter rose to obey; a beseeching look from Mrs. Meredith expressed her dependence on him, and he left the room without speaking.

In the mean time, Eleanor, having escaped from her lover, had taken refuge in her favorite retreat. There, throwing herself on a sofa, she saw only the good joke she had practiced, laughed merrily, and then burst forth in a pleasant old Scotch song, which struck her as particularly applicable to her case:

"The blude-red rose at Yule may blaw,
The simmer lilies bloom in snaw;
The frost may freeze the deepest sea,
But an old man shall never daunt me."

As the song passed away into a mere murmur of the melody, she ceased to think of the captain at all, and turned her thoughts to a more agreeable subject.

"What a pity," thought she, "that Mr. Thornley does not come! I wonder who that sick friend is that he stays to take care of. Well, it is very good of him, and all right too; but that is nothing new—he always does what is right. But when he *does* come! he will see I have not been idle. I have read all the history he directed, and made all the abstracts he advised; and as to chronology! why, like an Arab, I have absolutely lived

on *dates*! and I have really attended to all my studies as well as I could in his absence; and when he finds this he will be so pleased! and I shall be so happy!" In proof of which she clapped her hands, the sound of which still rung in her ears as the door opened and Mr. Thornley entered.

With a look of joyous surprise she hastened to meet him, exclaiming, "Mr. Thornley! when *did* you come? You are welcome back again!"

"You are very kind—very good, Miss Eleanor," he replied, and, unconsciously retaining the hand she had extended, he led her again to the sofa, and seated himself by her side.

Pouring forth question on question as to "what he had been doing all this long time? if he had been always reading and studying, as usual? or if he had been fishing, shooting, and rambling in the beautiful forests he was so fond of?"—to all which he answering only in grave monosyllables, she suddenly stopped, and, looking earnestly and inquiringly in his face, said, "What is the matter, Mr. Thornley?"

To this he could but reply in that unmeaning "Nothing," which so often belies a full heart.

"Oh yes there is," she repeated; "something has happened, I am sure of—your friend—"

"He is well."

"Yet you don't look happy. You are disturbed, perhaps displeased—but not displeased with me, *are* you, Mr. Thornley? Tell me if you are. If I have done any thing wrong I will acknowledge it. You know I always confess to you," added she, half playfully; "but do, do speak, and don't look at me so!"

She might well indeed deprecate the fixed and searching gaze with which, while still holding her hand, he regarded her.

"Confess!" he at length said; "yes, Miss Eleanor, that is what I have come for, but not, as I believe, to hear any thing 'wrong;' nor am I so presumptuous as to call you to confession without authority. I come," said he, desperately plunging into the troubled waters he had been directed to sound, "by the request of your parents. They speak by me."

Eleanor, regarding him in surprise, agitation, and alarm, could say nothing, and he proceeded, in a tender and encouraging tone:

"Your parents authorize me to say that they have no wish but for your happiness. All they ask is that your affections should be really interested—that no transient fancy should mislead you—" Walter paused.

"What *do* you mean, Mr. Thornley?" said Eleanor, with a happier, but still a bewildered look.

"They care not," he continued, "that he whom you choose should be rich, provided he be your equal and worthy of your affection."

"Worthy!" repeated Eleanor, heeding only that condition, and clasping her hands with a look more expressive than words, from which Walter easily inferred a fond confidence in some one. But who was that person?

With a less-assured voice he proceeded:

"You admit, then, Eleanor, that you are not indifferent—that an impression has been made—that a sentiment—that your heart is not insensible. Have, then, no farther reserves," continued he, in the gentle tones of persuasion; "I ask it for your parents—for yourself. I even presume so far as to ask it for myself. Do not withhold from me this assurance of your—"

"*Friendship*," he would have said, but her embarrassment and agitation appeared contagious, and he hesitated. If her imagination supplied a more tender word,

it was not strange; nor, unconscious as she had thus far been of the sentiment so innocently entertained, was it to be wondered at if it were suddenly revealed to her by the touchstone now applied.

"Oh, Walter!" exclaimed the blushing girl, misled by language that she supposed could have but one meaning, "for yourself! How can I withhold any thing from *you*! You, whom, next to my parents, I love better than any one in the whole world! Oh," continued she, covering her face with her hands, "you *must* know what I would say!"

It was, indeed, but too plain. Astonished and confounded, yet, with one exquisite thrill of joy, he darted from her side, approached the window, and, resting his head on his hands, leaned against the casing without having uttered a word; while Eleanor, starting as if from a dream, and terrified at this strange reception of what deserved a very different one, repeated, in broken sentences and trembling voice, "What have I said? What have I said? Walter—Mr. Thornley, I mean—tell me; what *have* I said?"

"Dear, innocent, unconscious Eleanor," exclaimed he, in great emotion, returning to his seat, and taking both her hands in his, "nothing! You have said nothing into which you have not been involuntarily led by the misconceptions of others, and by your own guileless, affectionate heart! Nothing, Eleanor, that does not make you dearer to me than ever! Thus much I owe you; more I dare not, must not say. Honor, gratitude, unlimited confidence reposed in me, forbid it. There has been some strange mistake. You alone can explain it."

It was done in few words, but often interrupted by the confusion and distress of Eleanor, by her self-accusation of folly and stupidity. The explanation given, a few moments of "thoughts unutterable" succeeded,

Walter's eyes riveted on her face with a fondness he dared not express, she almost convulsed with contending emotions.

At length, rising with a dignity inspired in moments of emergency, and often where it seems least to be expected, Eleanor said, though with an uncertain and quivering voice, "Mr. Thornley, I have but one request to make, forget every thing I have been so foolish as to say; remember only that I am, and shall always be, your grateful pupil." Then, turning to the door, she would have instantly passed it, but, detaining her with an impulse he could not resist, and with feelings nearly overpowering him, he ventured only to say, "I forget every thing, Eleanor, but *yourself*."

The next moment she was gone; but, having reached her own room, tears, long suppressed, burst forth. Pride and mortification, however mingling at first in this passionate outpouring, were not the predominant emotions. Generous herself, she confided in the generosity of others. She believed Walter superior to the little vanity of a triumph over her weakness. Moreover, much as he had struggled to conceal it, she saw the reciprocal sentiment that agitated him, and she loved and trusted him the more for his forbearance. The violence of her feelings abated only to subside into grief at the reflection that of one so noble she must never think. For when no longer deluded by ambiguous expressions, to which excitement and affection had affixed her own meaning, she saw but too plainly that her parents, whatever might be their opinion of Walter, would never favor such a union. Nor was it less certain that he himself so considered his position that he would never seek it. She could now understand and honor his hitherto reserved deportment, often, as she had thought, unnecessarily cold and formal; intermingled with rare but delightful flashes

of interest in her, which, though they never found words, had darted from his eyes, had beamed in his smile, or had touched her heart in some unexpected tender tone; manifestations which, however guarded, had involuntarily nourished a sentiment the innocent girl little comprehended, and of the tendency of which she had never thought.

Nothing now remained for Eleanor but the resolution to render herself more deserving of the esteem of one whom "she felt quite sure *she* must always love." This, though a very natural conclusion for a girl of sixteen, is not always in conformity with experience in such cases. *Nous verrons.*

CHAPTER XV.

WALTER, left alone in the study—that place to him so consecrated, where he had first known his own power in the training of an ingenuous young mind, and in the harder task of governing his own under influences there first felt, the scene of many happy hours never again to return—yielded without restraint to his emotion. He perfectly well understood that the confidence reposed in him by Mr. and Mrs. Meredith, whatever might be his personal claims, was greatly assisted by what they considered the insuperable barriers between him and their daughter, a confidence confirmed by the manner he had carefully and honestly maintained toward her. He could not, therefore, for an instant be deluded into an idea that they would relax a single prejudice in favor of what they would condemn as a *mesalliance*. “Besides,” he reflected, “even if they would overlook a humble origin, how would they, how must they repel a nameless, unacknowledged—most probably base-born—son of a father disgraced perhaps himself, and disgracing others! No; it was impossible! He would stifle the fondest feeling of his heart rather than subject himself to the indignity such an aspiration would be sure to call down on him!”

But this resolution cost him pangs never before known. The conflict was not, indeed, new to him. From the moment he had felt his growing interest he had striven to repress it. He had avoided every thing that might betray it. He had even congratulated himself in the belief that Eleanor's open, child-like expression of regard for him was proof that she had no stronger interest in

him—a belief confirmed by her apparent liking for young Middleton. He had even voluntarily torn himself away, and had reluctantly promised to return, only in the hope that absence might increase his self-control, considering it permitted to do so if he endangered no one but himself. But now even a harder battle was to be fought. He had not to conquer vain desires for an unattainable good, but to reject it when perhaps a bold hand might secure it. He who had never known love from woman's lips, must he now refuse it from those dearest to him? He who had never been soothed by the sympathy of mother or sister, must he now reject it from one who could give more even than these? Must he turn from her who had been the fresh, young, innocent Eve of his imagination,

“Infusing
Sweetness into his heart unfelt before?”

The confession, so unlooked for, which had at once agonized and delighted him, must it be repulsed and cast away?

For the first time utterly unmanned, he buried his face in the cushion of the sofa, unconscious that he wept, till an approaching footstep recalled him to himself. Starting up, he recollected that Mr. Meredith was still awaiting the explanation of what now seemed so trivial that it was nearly forgotten, and he hastened to communicate it.

In the relief thus afforded, Mr. and Mrs. Meredith soon forgave the pain so childishly inflicted. While they were congratulating themselves, Walter was left to reflect on his present position, and, with his usual promptitude, to decide what was best—best for himself, best for Eleanor. He must go, and go immediately. His first thought was to take no leave, to depart in the evening without explanation. This, as his luggage was still at the stage-

house, would be easy. But this might subject him to unjust inferences. It might, too, in some way compromise Eleanor. He determined, therefore, on a course which, without the utterance of an untruth, would render his departure, if unexpected, not mysterious. His cogitations were interrupted by an exclamation from Mr. Meredith.

"Bless me! we are entirely forgetting every thing else in our own affairs. I have never asked after my old friend Mr. Grafton; tell me, is he well? does time make much impression on him?"

"So little," replied Walter, "that really I never think of it. His early hours, regular habits, and quiet pursuits prevent wear and tear."

"I suppose so. Yet he is nearly my age—not far from fifty. Poor Grafton! he was a handsome man once."

Walter thought the sigh with which this was uttered uncalled for, and replied, "He is so still, sir; and no one would imagine from his manners or appearance that he had been so long out of the world."

"Ah! indeed! But the inborn, inbred gentleman is a strong plant, not to be choked by the vulgar weeds that may start up around it. Well, now, to matters nearer home. When shall lessons begin? Eleanor has had a long holiday, and will, I dare say, be glad to resume them."

This was the moment Walter had been nerving himself to meet.

"I am grieved to say," replied he, "that I can remain only long enough to say farewell."

"Farewell!" echoed both Mr. and Mrs. Meredith in the same breath; "farewell! what! really leave us? and why?"

In a few words Walter informed them that he was

compelled to do so, adding, with a poor attempt at a smile, "You know, sir, if we can not control circumstances, they must control us."

His manner was so decided, and being, at the same time, as calm as they could expect under what he did not hesitate to confess was a very painful separation, that happily the idea of a sudden determination did not occur to them, and their good-breeding spared all interrogations as to reasons which he did not voluntarily offer. Mr. Meredith only said, with much earnestness, that, if pecuniary considerations influenced him, he would make any additional compensation he would name. He graciously added that "Eleanor owed more to his instruction than to all she had ever previously received."

This generosity, at this moment, was too much for Walter, and he did not immediately reply.

"You are too kind, sir, too kind, to attach so much value to my small services. Believe me, money should not part us. I have always been, and am still, perfectly satisfied with what I have received."

Mrs. Meredith, too, with much cordiality, expressed her regret, her sense of the benefit conferred on Eleanor, and the difficulty of replacing his ability and care.

"Well, if you must leave us, Mr. Thornley," said Mr. Meredith, "we will not consider it a final separation; something may bring us together again. I shall always be happy to serve you in any way that I can, and to testify to your faithfulness, and to your correct and becoming behavior in my family during nearly an entire year that you have lived with us."

At this certificate of character, much the same as would have been accorded to any approved domestic, it must be confessed Walter's pride rebelled. The color returned to his cheek from which emotion had driven it; but he forgave the unintentional insult. At that

moment he could not do otherwise; yet it fixed, as with an iron grasp, into his soul the conviction of the scorn with which his love would be repulsed; and he blessed Heaven that he had not been so weak as to expose himself to it. He only by a bow returned his acknowledgments.

"But you will not leave us immediately?"

"To-night, sir," said Walter, with a resolution for which he was probably indebted to Mr. Meredith's proposed "recommendation." "I shall walk into town in the evening, for, having no luggage to transport, I shall not need to put your horses into requisition."

This met with much opposition, and it was not without reiterated assurances that he really preferred it that it was assented to.

"I don't know what Eleanor will say to all this," said Mrs. Meredith, kindly. "She will be much disappointed."

Walter allowed himself no reply, except that, "with the progress Miss Eleanor had made, she would require little direction in future."

But, under this quiet exterior, how did his heart beat at thought of the parting now so near! The striking of the clock announced the approach of dinner, and he listened with a sickened feeling for her footstep on the stairs. But, when assembled at table, instead of herself came a whispered message to Mrs. Meredith.

"Eleanor has a bad headache, my dear, and begs to be excused."

"A headache!" replied her husband, "I never knew her to have one in her life. What has she been doing?"

"Oh," said Mrs. Meredith, innocently, "you know she must have had rather an exciting scene with Captain Talbot this morning."

"True, true," replied he, laughing, "and 'tis but a

fair punishment for the heartache she gave him. Besides, I dare say she is rather ashamed to appear after such a silly business; and well she may be.

"But," added he, gravely, "it is just as I have said; no care, no restraint keeps young people in order in these days. Now her mother, Mr. Thornley, would no more have dared so to trifle with a gentleman than she would have presumed to laugh in the king's face. I don't know what we *are* coming to! No respect to age, dignity, nor condition! Young people think they may say, think, do any thing they please!"

Mrs. Meredith took advantage of the first pause in her husband's outpouring on a subject that always excited him, to say, "I think, Mr. Thornley, I will not tell Eleanor just now that you are going. She will sleep off her headache, I dare say, and be able to bid you good-by."

Walter blessed the headache and the delay, devoutly hoping to escape without putting her to the test of a farewell.

In the afternoon, to conceal, if he could not check, the feeling that increased as the final hour approached, he strolled off into the woods that at a short distance screened the house, and yielded, when thus in security, to the thoughts that oppressed him.

The past, checkered as it was by conflicts, fears, and doubts peculiar to his strange position, had yet had one bright light thrown athwart it. One exquisite delight had been granted him. He had known what it was to love and to be loved; and, short as had been the joy, and compassed with obstructions, it had repaid him for many sorrows. He would not part with it to secure immunity from all earthly ill. But the *future*, what did that offer? A hopeless remembrance of one by whom, if true to his sense of right, he must pray to be forgotten.

Forgotten! oh, the dreadful import of that word! Even in the grave—cold, insensible, dissolving—we can not bear it; it adds the keenest pang to death. Even in heaven, we crave to be remembered on earth! What, then, was it to a young heart throbbing with passions newly awakened, with wants that would not be denied, conscious of its power to enjoy and to create happiness, of its own inherent right to it—what was it to such a one to set a seal on the fountain of bliss, to turn away from hope, to reject love, to pray to be forgotten? Yet this Walter felt to be his future.

Long, long he wandered; revolving every circumstance since first he had known Eleanor. At one moment rebuking his own coldness as cruel, the next rejoicing in it as their only safety. Now dwelling on her sweet unconsciousness, her ingenuous confession, her maidenly dignity when aware that it was unsought; and then turning to the present, the parting moment.

The slanting lights that streamed beneath the branches, and the long shadows warned him to return, and, with indescribable dread, he bent his steps toward the house. With a sad longing for one more look he entered the study by the garden-door, and cast a glance at every familiar object, as if taking the superfluous trouble of fixing them indelibly in his memory. At length his eye fell on the study-table, where, among scattered books, lay an unopened letter. He took it hastily up, the first thought being that it was a farewell from Eleanor. He turned to the superscription. It was directed to himself, but not in her hand. He opened it, and the change in his countenance sufficiently indicated the revulsion in his feelings. It was as follows:

“Rash, obstinate young man! Again you have perilled yourself and those who ought to be even dearer to

you. Return without delay to the security provided for you, or involve yourself in consequences you will forever repent. *Obey!*”

The feelings with which Walter had been struggling for hours, now taking another direction, burst forth like a tempest. He threw the letter on the floor. He stamped on it. He caught it up, and was about to tear it in pieces, when a thought seemed to check him.

“No!” exclaimed he, “it shall remain till the day of reckoning comes. ‘Security provided for me!’ and by whom? Not by him who cast me a beggar on the charity of strangers. ‘Obey!’ and whom? Not him whose forfeited word has no claim on me. Oh, that I could stay here and brave him! that honor did not demand my departure! I would fearlessly encounter his threats. Intolerable! that by going I shall seem to act in obedience to commands that I scorn and reject. Oh, that I could tell him to his teeth that I am not his slave and puppet, to be controlled and played as he may please! I, a man, competent to be treated like a reasonable being, to be thus addressed like a boy or a fool!”

Ring the bell, he inquired of the servant who answered it who had left a letter for him? Nobody. Could no one have entered without his knowledge? No, he had been occupied in or near the hall. But the study? Ah! yes, there a person might have entered through the garden.

The servant was too trusty to be suspected of collusion, and on farther inquiry the other domestics were equally ignorant.

The tea-bell at this moment summoned him, and, compelled to leave the mystery unexplained, he obeyed it.

Mrs. Meredith, with considerate kindness, had ordered an earlier tea than usual, and more abundant, in prepa-

ration for his long walk; and with trembling steps he entered the room where she sat ready to receive him, "for now surely he *must* meet Eleanor!" Seating himself, as requested by Mrs. Meredith, he reflected that some little show of natural feeling would be allowed on such an occasion, and thus both he and Eleanor might escape a strict construction. Mrs. Meredith proceeded to dispense the good things she had ordered, though to little purpose; and, after lamenting that he ate nothing, said, in her kindest tone, desirous of softening the disappointment to him, "I am so sorry, Mr. Thornley, that you can not see Eleanor; she is really quite indisposed with this very inopportune headache, and begs me to bid you good-by for her."

No relief could have been greater.

"She understands me," thought Walter; "she forbears to add to my distress by either seeing me or questioning my motives. God forever bless her."

With this prayer in his heart, and a kind farewell to her on his lips, he rose to take leave, and was soon on his way to the city. After a few hours of troubled sleep, at three o'clock he was roused by the driver's thundering rap at his door, and a lighted candle thrust into his room to assist him to make his hasty toilet.

CHAPTER XVI.

WALTER'S unexpected reappearance at Ashton excited no small sensation. Mr. Grafton met him at the door with a look of alarm, exclaiming, "Walter! Has any thing happened? Our friends! are they well?"

"Quite so," replied Walter, assuming a cheerfulness he could not feel, in order to dissipate the uneasiness he had caused. "Quite so, and myself too, or I shall be as soon as Damie gives me one of her good country teas."

While Damie's efforts were thus directed, Walter endeavored still more to assure Mr. Grafton by talking with unconcern of his journey, the weather, and other ordinary topics, deferring till left to finish the evening without interruption such explanation as he felt at liberty to give.

As soon as the fitting time occurred, "I think," said he, affectionately taking his guardian's hand, "I think, my dear sir, that I have never had a secret from you, and, moreover, I believe you have never distrusted my word?"

"Never," replied Mr. Grafton, earnestly, "never."

"Then I think you will pardon me if I have one now, and that you will also continue to trust me."

"Yes, without the least question; yes."

"I thank you, sir. So far I can satisfy you, that, though I have left Mr. Meredith's family with no intention of returning, my so doing involves no one in the least blame. On the contrary, could I think it right to be more explicit, I know you would approve of what I have done, and be satisfied with all concerned."

"This shall suffice, Walter; I ask no more."

Walter pressed his hand, and they were both silent. At length, opening his pocket-book, Walter drew forth a letter, which he handed to Mr. Grafton.

"That," said he, "may reconcile you to the step I have taken. I know you have some apprehensions from that quarter, and will be glad that, by apparent submission, I have avoided threatened danger. I say apparent, because I must in truth tell you that the letter had nothing to do with my decision. That was formed before I received it."

"It is extraordinary!" said Mr. Grafton, after reading and returning the letter, "most extraordinary! How did this letter reach you?"

"Like every thing from the same source. I found it where it had been placed for me in my absence. How or by whom I could not discover."

After some reflection Mr. Grafton continued, "I do not require to be 'reconciled,' as you say, to your return; but this does diminish any regret I might feel as to the manner of it, for I do not deny that I am often troubled by the threats that you are so willing to brave. You then, for the present, will, I trust, be content to remain here. Thank Heaven, we can be happy in spite of the persecutions by which you are followed."

But Mr. Grafton was not long in discovering that Walter was *not* happy. The manly cheerfulness worn at first to relieve his friend soon disappeared, and, if occasionally roused to something like his natural animation, it was plainly an effort. To such alternations he had been subject, but there was now an air of dejection, very different from the fitful moods of previous years, easily explained by the irritation of his peculiar condition. There was nothing to be gained by questioning him. The matter, whatever it was, was decided.

There was no perturbation, no apparent conflict. He occupied himself much as usual; was kind to old friends, and more than ever affectionate to Mr. Grafton; but a change had come over him, the light of hope and youth seemed extinguished.

Mr. Grafton observed him with the tenderest solicitude; and one evening when they were alone, Walter dreamingly gazing at a beautiful moon that sent a beam into their room as if "to pleasure them," he approached, and, laying his hand on his shoulder, said, in a gentle, half-playful tone, "It is asserted that no man is the better for the experience of another; that each must find out the secret of life for himself. Perhaps this is so; but the heart, nevertheless, often longs to impart what it has learned, and I—I would—"

His voice failed, and, turning away, he left the room. The next night Walter found, on retiring to his room, a packet containing the following from his guardian:

"MY DEAR WALTER,—I would much prefer speech to this more formal mode of communication, but I am not equal to it. It is not easy, indeed, for me in any way to enter into the details of my life; to dwell on scenes that years have not obliterated. I shall therefore be as brief as is consistent with the purpose for which I write. The afflictions and disappointments that meet us in early life, from their very strangeness, are apt to appear to us greater in our individual experience than any one else has ever known. We yield ourselves to them as if spell-bound, we exaggerate them until from ministers of wholesome discipline they become our tyrants, and our whole lives not unfrequently are discolored by them. But I will leave you to make your own reflections on what I have to communicate.

"You know me only as I have been associated with yourself. I must, therefore, begin at the beginning.

"I am, by my mother, of English descent; but, as her family came to this country soon after her birth, she was regarded as American by all but herself. She, on the contrary, cherished an attachment to her native country, and never lost it, not even when she married into a colonial family of considerable importance. For my misfortune, both my parents died young, leaving me, their only child, with a sufficient but not large patrimony. In conformity with the wish of my mother, I visited England after completing my education; and, while there, my home was with my only near maternal relative, my mother's sister, who had married an Englishman, and had thus been replanted into the native soil. My life there was so happy that I can not recollect a shadow, except a regret for one sweet young face, which again to see was the prevailing wish of my heart. I returned, and found it even more lovely than my fancy had painted it. We met as friends, for I had from a youth been domesticated in her father's house. From friends we became lovers, with the approval of her parents, and with every circumstance propitious to our union, which was not long to be delayed.

"But a dark cloud was to intervene. The discontents between the mother country and her colonies gathered to a head. To angry passions succeeded conflict. Blood was shed, the sword drawn, and, at length, civil war burst forth.

"My position was one of intense anxiety. With my English ties and my mother's blood, it seemed nothing short of parricidal to take up arms with the colonists; in addition to which, I had been trained in so loyal a spirit, confirmed by my happy days in England, that my

prejudices were on that side. Still I could not shut my eyes to the wrongs of my countrymen, and their right of redress; and, as long as their efforts were confined to remonstrance and attempts at conciliation, my sympathies were American. But independence seemed a delusion, and rebellion was abhorrent to me.

"In this conflict of affections, I saw nothing but to leave myself, for a time, to the current of events, continually hoping that our difficulties might be adjusted; and that, if not, I might be permitted to continue neutral, as I had thus far been. But alas! the storm burst on me from a quarter where I least looked for it.

"The father of Mary, the possessor of a large landed property conferred on his ancestors by the crown, renounced his allegiance, at the peril of his life and estate. Having taken this step he could not brook my passive position. Accustomed to be obeyed, he required me, young, unimportant, and divided as I was, to follow his example or to relinquish his daughter. Mutual friends endeavored to reduce him to a more reasonable temper, but opposition only inflamed him. From condemning my conduct he passed to suspecting my motives, and, finally, insulted me by a charge of cowardice. My love to Mary had but one measure. She was dearer to me than life, but not than honor. To have yielded to his requisitions even to obtain her, as at first demanded, I should have felt to be a disgrace; but when to this was added insult, to comply was a degree of baseness for which I had no language. Cowardice! God knows how much more courage was required to renounce my allegiance to Mary than to my king!

"Such treatment on his part provoked retort on mine. His accusation was resented in terms that rendered all farther application or remonstrance impossible. One alternative alone occurred to me. At this juncture I re-

ceived an urgent entreaty from my aunt in England to come to her. She was left a widow, with an embarrassed property, and she had no friend but myself who could, or who would assist her to save something from the wreck for herself and daughter. I could not refuse. I determined at once to go, but my heart suggested, 'why not take Mary too?' if I could overcome her repugnance to a clandestine union. This was a fearful uncertainty, but I caught at the desperate idea as all that remained to me.

"Circumstances favored me. Her parents were at their residence in the country; but she was at a small town at the distance of a day's journey from them, with some friends. I hastened to her; I urged my plan, and, to my delighted surprise, she yielded at once. By nature the gentlest of human beings, she was not less just. She had never opposed her father in her life; but a sense of my wrongs inspired her with a courage nothing else could have done. Every thing was arranged. The place and the hour for the ceremony were appointed; the carriage, a few paces off, awaited her, to which I was secretly to conduct her; and my feet almost at the threshold, when intelligence arrived of the alarming illness of her mother, and directions for her immediate return home. I entered the house just in time to support her, as she fell nearly fainting in my arms.

"As soon as she could speak she renounced our purpose. This was to be expected; but to my entreaty that, though I could not now ask her to accompany me, she would consent to a secret marriage, she was equally inflexible. She was to go at an early hour the next morning, and all I could obtain was permission to see her once again before she went. Late in the same evening we met. What a meeting! what a parting! Again and again we renewed our protestations of love, our vows of fidelity,

our determination to abide resolutely and hopefully the chances that might yet favor our union. With clasped hands we called on heaven to ratify these vows; and, placing on her finger the marriage-ring with which I had prepared myself, in expectation of the ceremony so cruelly interrupted, I called her by the sacred name of *wife*! There was nothing wanting to the solemnity of our compact but the few prescribed forms and the presence of witnesses. In place of these were the sanctions of our prayers, and, as we doubted not, the approval of God. We parted—she to the death-bed of her mother, I to the ship which soon bore me over waters far less troubled than those that passed over my soul.

"But I must not dwell on this. I had many difficulties to encounter in the settlement of my aunt's affairs, but, finally, the comfort of greatly aiding her. In the mean time no tidings reached me from America. At length they came, and hope departed. Mary arrived in time to receive her mother's blessing, but so accompanied as to render it a curse to me. She had been a devoted wife and an affectionate mother, with one fatal mistake. Married to a man of strong will and vehement passions, she conceived that the only way to secure domestic happiness was in an unreserved submission to him. This she had perfectly practiced, and his idolizing affection had rewarded the sacrifice she made. Notwithstanding, therefore, her sympathy with us, she had ventured no opposition to him, believing such to be the best way of finally obtaining his consent; and now, as a last injunction, to secure her daughter's happiness, as well as the tranquillity of her husband, she required of her a solemn promise never to marry me but with his approbation. How could she refuse? Her mother's life seemed suspended on a breath, that at the least agitation might cease forever. She promised, though with a

dreadful foreboding of the consequences. This was the purport of the first letter I received.

"I instantly wrote to a mutual friend, inclosing letters to Mary and her father. To herself I asserted my claim, registered in heaven; to her father I said every thing I could, consistent with honor. My letter to Mary was never answered—perhaps never received. That to her father was returned unopened.

"In the state of mind thus induced, my health suffered to such a degree that a milder climate was imperatively prescribed. I obeyed, rather from utter indifference to place than a wish for life. Though writing continually to America, I received no letters. At length one reached me at Nice, advising me to return, in order to prevent the confiscation of my property, which might be averted if I were actually on the spot; but if not, I should be classed among the refugee Tories. As I was not such, in fact, and as my property might be of use to others, if little valued by myself, I obeyed the suggestion of my friend. On my arrival I made one more effort to communicate with Mary. Her answer, the last letter I ever received from her, was to entreat me to forget her, to consider every promise that bound me to her as void, and to seek in another union a compensation for the suffering she had caused me.

"My property was saved to me, much more through the efforts of my friends than my own. But I felt myself a stranger and alone. Those I had left had formed other interests, based on mutual dangers and political sympathies, in which I had little part. With nothing to hope or to enjoy, I fell into a morbid condition. Yet, I thank God, though my social nature was disturbed, it was not embittered. I still loved my kind, and entertained vague purposes of doing them good. But, excluded by the state of things from the practice of my

profession—the law, to which I had been bred—disgusted with the rivalry, political animosities, and jarring elements that war excited, I fled to the country; the wilder and more remote, the more quiet I promised myself. Accident determined me to Ashton. I had been passing a few weeks in this house, when I found that its owner, much embarrassed by the times, wished to dispose of it as the only means of extrication. But purchasers were rare. Every one was poor or in debt. He offered it to me, and I took it at his own price, mainly to relieve him. When my own, however, it began to have attractions. I put it in such order as was necessary for comfort, ordered my books—my only friends—to meet me, and established them in the accommodations I had prepared for them. Surrounded by these, undisturbed by the outer world, at peace with my neighbors, a sort of dull content crept over me, under which I should have stagnated but for you, or rushed in search of some more potent Lethe. But you came unsought, at first unwelcome, and, with you, an object and an occupation were provided for me by Him who was better to me than I deserved.

"And now, my dear Walter, will you extract the moral, or must I point it? 'Tis best that I should do so, lest your partiality obscure your perception. I have, I trust, led a harmless life; perhaps, in some instances, as in your own, have done good when it was thrust upon me. But I look back with contrition to my wasted prime, my objectless life, my idolatrous worship of an idea. I do not mean that I rebuke myself for the fidelity, the pertinacity of my affection. I was made so. I could love but once and forever. And I declare to you, though you will perhaps deem it the fond confession of an old man, that I am unconscious at this moment of any diminution of my early love. I could no more sep-

arate Mary from my heart than my heart from my body. Though I shall no more see her face on earth, the hope of meeting her in the heaven to which she belongs is the animating thought of my life. But this hope ought sooner to have taught me submission.

"Learn thus much from my experience—to allow no passion, however right in itself, to become inordinate. Be resolute for yourself; be mindful of others. We may suffer much with little benefit; but 'what we *do* is ours.' I would not, my dear Walter, impertinently pry into your feelings; but I require not to be told that you are unhappy, and I, in some sort, divine the cause. Be true to your convictions of duty, and you will regain your tranquillity.
E. G."

Walter dropped his head on his hands as he concluded, and was some moments absorbed in the feelings the narrative had excited.

"Dear, excellent Mr. Grafton!" he at length exclaimed; "how strict to himself, how forbearing to others! Damie, then, was right. She, with her simple experience, had discovered what I, in my happy ignorance, could not believe. And Mary, that star of his life, has set to *him*, to rise in heaven. Dead! dead! oh, what a word to connect with one so lovely and beloved! Yes, I will be strong, if only to reward the effort he has made to make me so. If I have been weak, I will not be worse." And he tried to believe he was not selfish; that, putting aside his personal interests, he desired only the progress and happiness of her he loved; that he could submit to the impassable barrier that separated them, if assured that one so gifted might not fail of the fair ideal he had formed for her—if certain that she would not, as a young poet of our own time has said, be

"Swept
Along the shallow whirl that Folly leads,"

and "harden down to coarse realities."

Walter's first impulse was to open his heart to his guardian, but delicacy to Eleanor forbade. His manner, however, when next they met, sufficiently expressed his gratitude, and the consolation of increased sympathy was felt by both.

His next care was to satisfy Mr. Grafton that he was not so purposeless as he had appeared. He could, though not with all the advantage desired, pursue at Ashton the course of legal study he had already commenced, during his leisure hours, while in Mr. Meredith's family. It was something, if not all he could wish, toward the end he had long proposed to himself.

Mr. Grafton received the suggestion with much satisfaction; and in a few days Walter was regularly entered as a clerk in the office of Mr. Barton, a lawyer recently established in Ashton, and occupying the place of his old friend, Squire Whiting, but with a larger practice.

CHAPTER XVII.

ELEANOR's indisposition had been no pretense. Even in such a strait she could not have resorted to an untruth. The shock, when told by her mother of Walter's immediate departure, was softened to her by the conviction of his honorable motives for thus withdrawing himself, and by the delicacy that spared suffering and embarrassment to herself. But though she considered all right that he should do, nature could not be so passive. Agitation and distress were followed by a sleepless night; and the next day fever appeared sufficient to excite the anxiety of her parents, though pronounced slight by her physician. For eight or ten days it hung about her, reducing her color and flesh, and then gradually passed away; having brought with it, however, a compensation—it had saved her from observation when she could least have endured it. The cause remained unsuspected. Her intercourse with her mother, though affectionate, was not familiar. She shrank, therefore, from the confidence which she at the same time desired, and was reconciled to the omission only by the reflection that she could not make disclosures without involving Walter in unjust suspicions. Fortunately, while thus denying herself the advice of her best friend, she had no dangerous intimacy with any girl of her own age, into whose sympathetic ear she could pour her young grief, and thereby strengthen an impression she felt she must resist. She was left, if unaided, at least not ill-advised.

Captain Talbot was not slow in renewing his visits. She would gladly have avoided him. He recalled all that was most painful to her, but his tact soon relieved

her. Playfully alluding to the stratagem by which, as he said, she had generously softened her rejection, he next contrived so to treat the matter as to leave her quite in doubt whether he, too, had not been practicing on her credulity; thus giving to the whole affair so much the air of a jest, that she involuntarily fell back into her former natural and unsuspecting feeling toward him; and he, resuming his unrestrained intercourse with the family, was able to avail himself, without alarming her, of every opportunity of rendering himself acceptable, hoping in time to become necessary.

Perhaps a change in herself contributed to encourage him. From a thoughtless, laughing girl, little more than a child, every way unsuited to him, she seemed to have started into reflecting womanhood, capable, as he hoped, of better understanding, perhaps of sympathizing with his maturer years.

Eleanor had, indeed, grown much older in a few weeks.

"Even in a single day

Grief hath been known to turn the young head gray."

And, in like manner, the youthful mind is sometimes suddenly matured by that which stirs it deeply. Eleanor had now a study that reacted immediately on herself. The contemplation of Walter's character ripened and confirmed her own. Instead of a girlish passion, the sentiment she had conceived for him became a serious, earnest motive—his self-control, his honorable adherence to duty, rousing her latent energies and correcting the heedless impulses by which she had heretofore been influenced.

A fortunate change was at this time provided for her, and renders some family details necessary.

The father of Mrs. Meredith, Mr. Lawrence, a man of large fortune, with many good qualities somewhat mar-

red by strong peculiarities, had been of late years estranged from her husband, and, as a consequence, there had been a suspension of intercourse between their families. The two gentlemen, very unlike, had unhappily embraced different sides in the political questions that agitated the country; and this, together with some domestic matters, had engendered a coolness, amounting at length to an entire rupture. Most unexpectedly, therefore, a letter arrived from Mr. Lawrence, addressed to his daughter, inviting a visit from Eleanor, whom he had not seen for several years. As a reason for her coming was urged the desire of her aunt Gertrude, a younger and unmarried sister of Mrs. Meredith, who lived with her father at his patrimonial residence on the North River, at what was then considered no small distance from the city.

Such an invitation from Mr. Lawrence was not to be slighted, even though pressed rather stiffly, more for Miss Gertrude's pleasure than his own. To Mr. and Mrs. Meredith it indicated a return of kindly feelings, and to Eleanor it offered just what they thought most likely to restore her health and cheerfulness. For the present, then, all plans for tutors and teaching were laid aside, and nothing thought of but the best way to effect the proposed visit. As the invitation was limited to Eleanor, Mr. and Mrs. Meredith were too wise to accompany her; and it was decided to consign her to the care of Mammy Jenny, a negro woman who had lived with Mrs. Lawrence ever since her marriage, had been the guardian of her nursery, and was now a *factotum* resorted to on every emergency. The next thing was to ascertain when Captain Van Allers, commanding one of the three sloops that belonged to a small town near Mr. Lawrence, would be returning. Much to the satisfaction of all parties, he was found to be actually at Coen-

ties Slip, and might, extraordinaries excepted, be expected to sail in three or four days. Such unlooked-for facilities augured well for the expedition; and, the "after cabin" being engaged, a huge basket of provisions was made ready. Cold roast chickens, ham, pastry, eggs, tea, coffee, cakes, bread, butter, etc., it being understood that the captain's table in the "forward cabin" would not be the thing for a young lady; and the length of the voyage was uncertain—it might be a week, or even more; people had been known to be ten, even twelve days between New York and Albany.

At length the sailing day came, and, intrusted to the faithful Mammy Jenny, and with every assurance from the long-known and reliable Captain Van Allers, she was left on board the "Fair Polly" in the evening of a fine day, and with every prospect of a pleasant trip. But the light wind in their favor "went down with the sun," and was succeeded by one so decidedly adverse that they were soon compelled to "drop anchor." To sailors so inexperienced as Eleanor and her attendant, their situation soon became fearful, aggravated as it was by the intense darkness and the increasing gale. To the uproar of the wind succeeded new and strange sounds. The vessel appeared in commotion. There were feet hurrying to and fro, confused voices, rattling of ropes, lowering of the boat, and haste, if not alarm. No one entered, and at length Mammy Jenny ventured forth to inquire.

She soon returned, accompanied by the captain. "No accident to themselves, but a sloop was capsized near them," as he said, "owing to the folly of a raw captain and an obstinate helmsman. They had been such dunderheads as to tack with a wind 'dead ahead,' and 'no ballast;' and they were now where they ought to be, 'on their beam-ends.'" The few passengers had gone

ashore, except a "lady," who had come on board the "Fair Polly," and for whom the captain requested accommodation in the after cabin.

This, under the circumstances, could not be refused; and, just as Eleanor had compassionately assented, she was startled by the entrance of a singularly-attired and vulgar-looking woman, with her arms full of boxes and parcels. Mammy Jenny cast a dubious eye on the intruder, but Eleanor kindly helped to accommodate her numerous packages.

She soon made herself known—a New England woman, who, with the enterprise of her people, had established herself as a milliner at one of the "landings," and who was now returning from New York with an assortment of articles in her line.

At this time the great Yankee nation was slowly insinuating itself within the boundaries of their Dutch neighbors, who, with much the same enlarged policy as induced their countrymen to burn their spice-groves in India, regarded the interlopers with distrust and jealousy. Even among those who ought to have known better, the prejudice often had its weight, and "Yankee," with many, was but another name for roguery, vulgarity, and conceit.

But, in spite of ill-will and misconstruction, they came and conquered. Not, indeed, in the manner of their progenitors, the sea-kings of old, in their descents on the too-confiding Britons, but with arms quite as effective—their heads and hands. There was "no device nor knowledge" in which they did not excel, no invention nor handicraft which they did not originate or successfully apply, until they "entered into the land to possess it."

The young woman now introduced into Eleanor's exclusive cabin was no bad specimen of the driving and

thriving ingenuity by which her people, however disliked, were making themselves known and necessary. She had, like the rest, evidently inserted an "entering wedge," and felt all the importance which belongs to persons of her occupation in a village where, as usual, women were the majority. The accident furnished a theme for her accustomed loquacity, and she did not long restrain the wrath and disgust it excited.

"A pretty mess they'd make on't. Never heard of such doings in Nantucket. Tried, be sure, to excuse it—putten' it on the new sloop, and the stiff, onhandy riggin'! Guess they had as many new sloops at Nantucket as at Red Hook. Never heard afore that any craft was better for bein' *old*! Spilin' people's goods and disapp'intin' customers! Dare say this 'ere hat," taking off, as she spoke, a remarkably inappropriate one of white satin trimmed with a profusion of ribbon, flowers, and feathers, "dare say it's all beat in with that knock I got on my head. Yes, jest so, all poked in; but I guess I can fix it somehow. Well! how they *did* pull me out of them cabin windows into the boat—me and my things; for I wouldn't stir without *them*, I tell you."

Eleanor listened in mute astonishment to this entirely new sample of womankind; and Mammy Jenny, who had risen respectfully on her entrance, reseated herself, with an instinctive conviction that she was not entitled to any such demonstration. But the new-comer proceeded to adjust herself in her quarters as if they were entirely her own; and, after giving sundry twists and turns to the misused hat, pronounced it "none the worse." Then, pinning it up to a nail in the cabin, she covered it with a handkerchief, and said, complacently, "There! if that isn't a first-rate bride's hat, I should like to know where you'd find one. I guess Catliny Van

Zandt will be pleased enough to eat it. Sweetheart, bride, minister, company, weddin'-cake, and dress, all ready, only waitin' for *me* and this 'ere hat. I wore it, you see, jest to keep it in shape—rather unlucky, considerin'," with a smile; "but who'd ever have thought of bein' upset? 'Tis a nice pattern, too, and I sha'n't turn my back on any one for copyin' after it."

Eleanor thought she should little relish such a hantelling of *her* wedding-hat.

About midnight a bustling movement announced a change. The wind had veered so many points that preparations were making for tacking, and then began the horrors of the voyage. The misery of sea-sickness has been too often felt to need any special notice here, but if it be doubted that it could be experienced in any great degree under such circumstances, let those who have known our sloop navigation answer.

Eleanor could not raise her head; Mammy Jenny turned despairing and helpless looks toward her "young missis;" the milliner's powers of speech were limited to scarce articulate lamentations, and the wedding-hat, tossed from its moorings on the wall, fell to the floor without a hand raised to its rescue.

"If it goes to Jericho," exclaimed its disconsolate owner, "*I can't stop it.*"

Toward midday the wind lulled into nearly a calm, and, with relief, came thoughts of food. Mammy Jenny bestirred herself to prepare it, and, companionship in misery removing barriers, she suggested to Eleanor to offer some to "the milliner woman," who did not appear provided with any private comforts of that sort. It was gladly accepted, and, as excitement naturally follows relief, she repaid their kindness in volubility.

"Hadh't she heard of Mr. Lawrence! Yes, indeed. The richest man in the country round, and, by all ac-

counts, the proudest. Proud as Nebuchadnezzar, and a perfect tyrant! But then his daughter was a saint, and 'Master Phil,' as they called him, the greatest shot in all these parts. A likely young man, too, they said—not near so overbearin' as his grandfather." And so on, to the great indignation of Mammy Jenny, who wondered at her "imperrence!" and not a little to the alarm of Eleanor, who, accustomed to hear her grandfather spoken of only with respect, was quite unprepared for this view of his character.

What wind there was now favored them, but their progress was slow, with the prospect of anchoring again at ebb tide. Novelty, however, had its charm, and Eleanor rejoiced in the opportunity thus afforded of better seeing the objects presented to her. Seated on deck, or walking, her faithful attendant always at hand to warn her of the shifting boom or a rope that might entrap her, she surrendered herself to this new experience, now directing her gaze to the varying shore, now watching the working of the sloop; then leaning over the stern to amuse herself with the apparent efforts of the little boat behind to keep up with them, and then measuring with her eye the wake of its keel. The river, clear, unruffled, majestic in its serenity as in size, widening into inland seas, and then insinuating itself between the approaching and apparently interlocking shores, mocking the eye with the semblance of a lake, its bold headlands, its far-stretching points, its margin now rising into mountains, now descending in grassy slopes, furnished her incessant variety and delight.

The captain, pleased with her inquiries, readily answered them. Dunderberg, at the entrance of Highland Pass, where geologists tell us the labor of Hercules was repeated, and a channel, through sixteen miles of solid rock, furnished to the imprisoned waters above;

West Point, saddened even to his enemies by the memory of the unfortunate Andre; Anthony's Nose, then perfect, but since snubbed by modern improvement; Sugar Loaf and Turk's Face, were pointed out to her by the captain with the pride of a river skipper. So on they rather floated than sailed, the day genial, the skies beautiful, till they emerged from the strait at Newburgh. Here, as the wind had failed altogether, and the tide was against them, they cast anchor in face of the Grand Sachem, the river again expanding before them, and its course traceable for many miles, studded with sloops and schooners, which, like themselves, had left the wind caged in the Highland recesses in their rear.

Over all were beauty and tranquillity. Then were no steam-boats, terrifying the ignorant Dutch negroes with the belief of the coming of the Evil One in a car driven on the water by a dragon vomiting smoke and flame. Nor was unhappy Echo then compelled to repeat the shriek of a locomotive as it rushed through rocks, leaped over creeks, dived into mountain depths, dashed through the humble garden of the cottager, or rudely invaded aristocratic parks. The march of improvement had not begun.

Another night succeeded, with little progress; but toward morning a favorable breeze sprung up, and every one was astir. Eleanor, having breakfasted, resumed her station on deck. All sails were set, the waves raced after them, and the little boat in the rear bounded, as if endowed with life, over the foam that crested its tiny prow. Eleanor caught the spirit of the change, and laughed aloud from the excitement.

The Catskills, which the day before had but dimly blended with the far horizon, now came forth blue and distinct, but with ever-varying tints as their fleecy draperies waved about them. If they were, as has been

fabled, a treasure-house of storms and sunshine, they now only let out the last, and appeared to Eleanor a lovely cloud-land, where only good and beneficent spirits dwelt. And, if legends may be believed, they had vindicated their claim to be thus considered by defeating all attempts to extract from the mountains committed to their guardianship the root of all evil—gold and silver.

Borne along, like Psyche, by the zephyrs, Eleanor, late in the afternoon of the third day—a remarkably short passage—was requested to look at a certain “landing,” near which, on a bank that overhung it, was the residence of her grandfather, but so embowered in trees that it was not discernible at her then distance. They approached the dock, and, as Eleanor and the old nurse disembarked, a troop of little colored children, evidently on the look-out for them, collected, with a courtesy to “young missis,” and a hearty welcome to Mammy Jenny. Others, as soon as the sloop gave signs of nearing the dock, had started off on a brisk trot up a precipitous ascent, tumbling each other over in their haste to be the first to announce the arrival.

By the time that every thing was landed, was seen descending by a winding road, through a fine wood, a carriage, into which, with many bows from the gray-headed colored coachman, Eleanor, her attendant, and her luggage were bestowed; and, while it is pursuing the long and circuitous ascent of the carriage-drive, it may be well to introduce both master and mansion more particularly to the reader.

The house had been built by Mr. Lawrence's father for the reception of his bride. With the uxoriousness that marked a family of whom a witty friend had said that “if a Lawrence married a broomstick he would love it,” every thing had been done to honor his young

wife. Her family having originally come from Guelderland, he fondly called her his "Guelder Rose;" and, with the same feeling, he gave to their new residence the name of "Rosenberg"—*Anglice*, "Rose-hill;" to render which the more appropriate, the grounds were ornamented by roses of every hue and name then known. The memory of these was still preserved in their vigorous offshoots.

The house was constructed of brick brought from Holland. The year of its erection, inserted in the façade in large iron characters, announced a respectable antiquity for a colonial residence. Two crow-stepped gables, one with a finial and weather-cock, presented themselves as the front entrance, while every imaginable variety of outline prepared the observer for its interior irregularities. Windows of every size, without symmetry in form or relation to each other, were thrust through its walls, with here and there little projections, neither dormer nor oriel, adding to its grotesque yet not unpicturesque architecture. On entering, a hall of moderate dimensions received the visitor, which, at its termination, expanded into what was called in Dutch domestic parlance a *portaal*, a word susceptible of various applications as portal, entry, or lobby. This last was its signification in the present instance. It had a window, and an outside door divided in the centre horizontally. By this was entered an *af-dak*, literally a "projecting roof," but freely applied, as in this instance, to the place so sheltered, and well rendered by the English term "lean-to." Here were to be seen guns, powder-horns, fishing-tackle, fishing-boots, and weather-defying coats, the Mackintoshes of the day. A short flight of steps descended from this to the ground.

In the *portaal* terminated a large heavy staircase, beneath which a narrow one, dark as Avernus, gave an en-

trance to the regions below. Into this part of the hall opened doors from two of the principal rooms on the first floor, in passing through which it was especially well to be heedful, for there were almost as many levels as rooms. These were small, badly lighted, with deep window recesses, cushioned, and serving as seats; ceilings wooden, painted, and so low that a tall man would instinctively stoop on entering; with heavy beams, in some of the rooms carved; large, deep fireplaces, the jambs and fronts ornamented with tiles of coarse blue and white pottery, illustrating Scripture incidents—the history of Moses, of Joseph, the Prodigal Son, etc.—thus, with pious intent, associating with the sacred fire of the domestic hearth the teachings of Holy Writ.

The furniture was of black walnut: straight, high-backed, heavy chairs, their seats covered with worsted of divers colors, wrought in tent-stitch. In the dining-room a slab of the same wood served as the sideboard, and was laden with silver, massy, and richly-wrought. The carpets were what was called "ingrain," woven in one piece, with small figures on a dark ground, and surrounded by a border. These were never allowed to extend beneath the chairs or other furniture ranged against the walls, but were, in accordance with Dutch notions of neatness, taken up every week, and the floor kept so white and clean, that the portion of it seen was at once the pride and the test of the housekeeping.

Dutch habits, indeed, pervaded the household. Like many other colonists, Mr. Lawrence was of English extraction, but his ancestors, by intermarriage with Dutch families, had ingrafted their tastes and customs on the original stock. These he adhered to with much pertinacity.

Mr. Lawrence, even still handsome, and remarkably well preserved, permitted himself to be called about

seventy-three years of age. A close examination of the family Bible might have added three or four years. But, although not generally slow to enforce his rights, he magnanimously overlooked them in this instance; and if people, misled by his vigor and good looks, gave him less than his due, he submitted. Yet, somewhat inconsistently—but who is consistent?—he persisted in a style of dress at least ten or twelve years anterior to the then period. Here, however, an antagonistic principle was in force. “He would not be dictated to by man-milliners and upholsterers. His person and his house should be clothed as *he*, not as *they* chose.” Accordingly, in this, as in all things, a practical exponent of the “Declaration of Independence,” his furniture remained unchanged, and he continued to wear coats whose deficiency of collars was compensated by immense cuffs, waistcoats with deep pockets, a stock, the diamond buckle of which was displayed above his coat, costly knee and shoe buckles, powder, and a cue.

It must be allowed that in this his good taste was as conspicuous as his obstinacy. No style would have sat so well upon him. He had, indeed, an eye for beauty seldom at fault, often attaching to it a false value; for though, as he thought, an aristocratic distinction of *right*, the possession gave importance in his eyes to the most humble. Nature had favored the weakness. Handsome himself, he had married a handsome wife, and had been blessed with handsome children. Heaven knows what he would have done to them had they been ugly!

Yet he was not a vain man. Well convinced of his advantages of whatever kind, and proud as “the son of the morning,” he wanted no assurance from others. He was as little to be flattered as an English mastiff, and would have received any such attempt with a growl quite as distrustful. To a strong will, never disciplined,

at times implacable, a stern adherent to his conception of honor and right, he added endearing qualities, more apparent to his dependents than to his equals. He was a considerate landlord, to his servants a kind master; indulgent to their small pleasures, and, if sometimes imperiously exacting, and disproportionately punishing petty offenses, often overlooking greater ones; in sickness merciful to them, in old age caring for them. Yet the wife of his bosom, the dearest object of his affection, and his children, were not unfrequently sufferers from his peculiarities.

An aristocrat in taste, he was nevertheless a democrat by profession. Nor was this as unaccountable as it might appear. His nature was essentially humane, his temper imperious. Hence, reversing the laws of optics, objects seen at a distance preserved to him their true size and proportions. It was only when they approached so near as to affect him personally that they were exaggerated and distorted. He could admit the claims of the whole human family, but not the rights of his own.

The carriage, having ascended the hill, turned, and, proceeding through a long avenue of trees, approached the entrance. Here appeared negroes of every age, from “wee toddlin’ things” of two or three years to an old Guinea negress. The younger ones slyly peeped from behind the projections of the house and kitchen—an adjacent building—or from the cellar rooms. The elder ones approached with courtesies, and demonstrations of welcome. One young fellow, evidently an aspirant to gentility, elbowed the rest aside, let down the steps, and with a scrape that brought his head nearly to the ground, expressed his high satisfaction.

Mr. Lawrence, having been slightly indisposed, had not left his room that day—an unusual occurrence; thither, accordingly, Pomp, the servant just mentioned,

conducted Eleanor by his master's orders; and having, with a flourish suitable to the occasion, opened the door and seen her in, closed it and retired. The first person she saw on entering was one whose image, left on her childhood, had never been forgotten, and which, though altered by intervening years, still corresponded to the original impression. Eleanor rushed into the arms that opened to receive her, exclaiming, "Dear Aunt Gertrude!" Her aunt's eyes were more eloquent than speech. Pressing her tenderly to her heart, she whispered, "Your grandfather!" and Eleanor comprehended the omission. Advancing a few steps, she saw a very fine-looking old gentleman in an arm-chair, habited in a light gray camlet dressing-gown, lined with silk of the same color, and wearing a white cotton cap, not very long since occasionally worn by elderly gentlemen before making their dinner toilets. The inadvertence that disturbed Eleanor he was too happy to notice. Taking both her hands as she approached him, he kissed her on her lips and forehead, and said, in a softened voice, "God bless you, my child!" Then, with a polite formality, he inquired for "Mr. and Mrs. Meredith," and then for particulars of her voyage.

These inquiries answered, he desired her to place her chair by his side, and gazed at her with much satisfaction; looking into her eyes as if he would read them; surveying her minutely as she sat; then, taking her hand, he directed her to rise, measured her height attentively, told her to show him her feet, and, in a sort of soliloquy, broke forth:

"Just such eyes as *mammatje's*!"—a Dutch diminutive for *mamma*, often fondly applied by him to his wife—"just such eyes! No one could ever tell their color, but no one ever forgot them. Her height too! just such falling shoulders! her round waist too! Ah! yes; and

her hands too!"—turning and examining them as he spoke—"and her feet, which one can tell by a glance are prettier without shoe and stocking! Yes, *mammatje* brought all these into the family. Do you love to dance, child?"

"Yes, sir."

"To be sure you do; your feet were made to dance, as much as birds' wings to fly. So did she; and danced away my heart the first time I saw her." Then, looking at her fingers one by one, he continued, "Do you play on the spinet? I have just had a man from New York to put your aunt's in order for you."

Eleanor replied in the affirmative.

"And sing?"

"Yes, sir."

"Ah! yes, yes, I see you are *mammatje's* child"—in a tender voice—"more like her, even, than Gitty, who was always called her image."

Then, with a deep sigh, he bade her resume her seat. "I hope you will be happy here, my child; Aunt Gitty isn't very lively, but she is very good; and I—I am neither lively nor good, but I feel that I shall love you very much; and Cousin Phil, he will make up whatever we lack. By the way, Gitty, where is Philip? He ought to be here."

Miss Lawrence, who had not withdrawn her admiring and loving gaze from her niece since she had entered, but had been silent from respect to her father, replied, "You know, sir, he could not be sure that his cousin would come to-day, and he is off sporting, I believe, for I heard him call the dogs."

Mr. Lawrence frowned.

"He should have remained here, like a gentleman on duty, to receive her whenever she might come. But he is a good fellow, Eleanor, and will be a merry companion for you. Do you remember him at all?"

"Very little, sir. I can only just recollect him as a boy, terrifying me by pointing a gun at me."

"The rascal! the young rascal!" exclaimed Mr. Lawrence. "But now, in vengeance, my pretty Nelly, you shall point your eyes at him—much better ordnance, I can tell you, than his gun."

The tea-hour, an early one, had passed, and Eleanor, having declined all refreshment, withdrew with her aunt to the apartment assigned her. This consisted of two rooms; one, her bedroom, commanding a view of the river; the other, in its rear, and communicating with it, combined the conveniences of dressing-room and library. Here a large *kass* (*Anglice*, wardrobe) of black walnut, supported by immense balls, with its heavy cornice, extended to the low ceiling. Its two folding doors, richly carved, when opened, disclosed deep recesses, affording space for skirts that

"Made a brave expansion."

Next in importance was a walnut bookcase, the lower part an *escritoire*, on the top of which was a small plaster bust of Calvin, painted black, probably in honor of his cloth. Here, among many of graver character, were a few books placed apparently for her especial benefit: "Bennett's Letters to young Ladies," "Fordyce's Sermons for young Women," "Gregory's Advice to his Daughters," "Mrs. Chapone's Letters;" and, for lighter reading, "The religious Courtship," and "Sir Charles Grandison," in eight volumes.

Then came a commode-table of ancient fashion, enriched with marble and brass, and adapted to the intricate toilet of her grandmother's time. On this was placed a little cabinet, covered with ivory, and adorned with horses, trees, pagodas, men, women, and beasts, that certainly did not violate the commandment.

The cavernous chimneys of both rooms were orna-

mented with tiles. One of them, open to the ceiling, instead of a mantle-piece, had a chintz valance. How fire could be safely made in such a place Eleanor might well wonder. The other, placed in the angle of the room, was curtailed in breadth, but, as a compensation, was furnished with a breastwork that ascended pyramidally to the ceiling, divided into panels and other devices designed for ornament. The tiles set forth the histories of Esther and Judith; and, though the Jewish heroines were neither as touching or magnificent as when portrayed by Guercino and Allori, they had, nevertheless, met with admiration.

The heavy carved four-post bedstead, blackened by time, was surrounded by curtains on which blue and white shepherds and shepherdesses tended blue and white sheep, wove garlands of blue and white roses, and reposed under blue and white trees but little higher than themselves.

But, if Art was rude, Nature, ever true to herself, was beautiful! The river, though seen through small and inconveniently-constructed windows, was to be traced far-stretching north and south; and the mountains, irradiated by the declining sun, burnishing, as he receded, their empurpled summits, amply made up for all interior deficiencies.

Having changed her dress, Eleanor proceeded to adjust herself in her new quarters, and, this done, a summons to supper recalled her to her friends. At the dining-room door she was met by her grandfather. He had insisted on leaving his room on her account; and, taking her hand, with apologies for his dishabille, he introduced to her a handsome young man as "Mr. Philip Lawrence, her cousin," who advanced to greet her with much cordiality.

A pleasant recognition of each other by the young

people, with a reference to the circumstance already referred to, drew forth the old gentleman; who, shaking his cane at his grandson, and then winking at Eleanor, exclaimed, with a laugh, "But she is able to avenge herself now, sir, I can tell you; and you'll do well if you escape without being mortally wounded!"

Eleanor laughed carelessly, but her cousin looked a little conscious and uneasy.

Placing Eleanor on his right, and his grandson on his left, Mr. Lawrence was radiant with good-humor; while Miss Lawrence, occupying the head of the table, dispensed with grace and kindness the good things that covered it; among which was to be seen the simple and never-failing "*suppaan*"—boiled Indian meal—which, in spite of modern refinements, Mr. Lawrence insisted on retaining.

At nine o'clock, as told by a large clock in a light blue and gilt japanned case, standing in a corner of the room, the servants—a goodly number—entered to family prayers; and at ten, the usual hour for retiring, Eleanor was reconducted to her room by her aunt, who, kissing her, said, with a smile, "It is so long since you slept in this house, my love, that your dreams may be as prophetic as if it were the first time. I hope they will be pleasant, at all events. I am too happy to sleep at all, I fear."

"Dear aunt," thought Eleanor, as she left her, "there is something in her face that says she has not often been sleepless from excess of happiness! How sweet she looks! yet she must be forty, I suppose. I wonder if people are not always young who are as good as Aunt Gertrude."

CHAPTER XVIII.

ELEANOR'S rest was so profound that, much to her confusion, she found, on entering the parlor in the morning, the family prayers over, and her grandfather ceremoniously waiting for her. Her humble apology was graciously received, and Miss Lawrence, to relieve her embarrassment, playfully called for her dream.

"Oh, I slept too soundly for that; but stay! I did dream something, too. Ah! now I recollect; and it was about Cousin Philip," said Eleanor, looking archly at him, "and his gun, which he again pointed at me, when suddenly it changed into a wreath—like those on the curtains, you know; I had been examining them just before I fell asleep—and, as he wound it round me, in the effort to escape I awoke; but I was soon fast again, and had forgotten it entirely."

Her grandfather chuckled her under the chin, exclaiming, "Forgot it! No, no, I don't believe that. But there's no harm in a little coquetry. 'Tis only an agreeable spice, which, I dare say, you know how to use."

Cousin Philip colored; but Eleanor attached no significance to that, nor to the raillery that excited it. She was no coquette. Indeed, so little was her nature adapted to affect or to conceal, that she hardly comprehended the word in its full extent, and replied to the charge only by a smile.

Master Philip, thus far rather unceremoniously introduced, has claims to a more particular notice. He was the orphan and only grandson of Mr. Lawrence. Deprived of his parents from infancy, he had passed his life under his grandfather's roof; and, though the right of

primogeniture had ceased to exist by law, it was generally supposed that Mr. Lawrence, in accordance with what, to him, would be a "higher law"—his own choice—intended to leave nearly all his large estate to him.

Good looks were his by inheritance. To these he added good temper, unspoiled by his position; amiable manners, kindly feelings, and good natural abilities. These last, however, had received little cultivation. He had, indeed, been sent to college, for which he was indifferently prepared; but, with no habits or tastes fitting him to derive advantage from it, his grandfather wisely deemed that the exposure to his morals was greater than the benefit to his mind, and recalled him before the academic course was completed. Hardy and fearless, his passion was country sports; and with such perseverance and success did he pursue them, that they procured for him a reputation far more to his fancy than any honors a college could confer. His grandfather saw his deficiencies with a lenient eye; not so much from an overweening indulgence, as from a pride that refused to admit them as such.

"Phil was a gentleman, every inch of him. Brave and generous; he couldn't be otherwise; 'twas in his blood; he would be a good master and landlord; had no vices; what great matter if he didn't like books? like a young Persian, he could ride, shoot, and tell the truth; and that was more than some chaps could do, who were men before they were boys, and grew up without either childhood or manhood. Book-worms were not the most useful people in the world. No; he had found *that* out, to his sorrow!"

These and similar reflections served to reconcile the old gentleman to the inevitable.

The breakfast over, Mr. Lawrence remained in the parlor till Pomp, punctual to the stroke of ten, appeared at

the door with a silver salver, on which was a silver mug with warm water for shaving, and stood till his master proceeded to his room, whither he followed. There the business of the toilet began. The wrapper was exchanged for the "powdering gown." The shaving finished, the hair "*en papillotes*" was released, pomatumed, frizzed, curled, and powdered, and the cue carefully entwined with its black ribbon. If Mr. Lawrence intended to ride, he dressed accordingly; but if, as on the present occasion, he meant to remain within, he arranged himself as if for company; and reappeared in the dining-room just before one o'clock, which, as the dining hour, no conformity to later fashions could induce him to change.

Eleanor had come like the olive-bearing dove, and, as such, found access to all hearts, especially her aunt's. She had suffered much from the family breach, and received her niece with nearly a mother's love. There was a striking resemblance between them, from the likeness they both bore to the same person—Mrs. Lawrence. They had also much of her character, but different phases of it. Eleanor reproduced her, frank, joyous, spirited, as when, in the words of her husband, she had "danced away his heart;" her daughter recalled her, when, after subduing his heart, her own had passed under the yoke. Time had dealt kindly with Miss Lawrence. In withdrawing some beauties, he had added others. He had stolen the rose, but he had replaced it with a lily so perfect as seemed a fitter expression of her pure spirit; and if, on her fair brow, there might be detected some slight

"Lines of his antique pen,"

they were scarcely noticed in the sweet serenity that ever dwelt there. Her smiles, if less gay and frequent, were more tender; and

"Still her eyes smiled too,
But 'twas as if remembering they had wept."

Ah! how truly has it been said, "Within the most beautiful eyes are yet fountains of tears!"

Notwithstanding difference of years and temperament, there soon appeared a happy adaptation between the aunt and niece. The inward peace which spoke in Miss Lawrence's face, her gentleness, her self-forgetfulness manifested in constant thought for others, her patience, her chastened cheerfulness, shed a tranquilizing influence on the yet excited and sore spirit of Eleanor, who, in turn, as her feelings gradually recovered, in good degree, their natural tone, gave animation and movement to the still waters of Miss Lawrence's life.

While her aunt attended to some domestic matters, Eleanor sought her own amusement; and, wandering into the drawing-room, spied the spinet that her grandfather had mentioned. It was an antiquated instrument, but had been costly and handsome in its time; and, when she touched it, she was surprised to find its tone so good. Turning over leaves and books of music, she found some which, though a little old-fashioned, bore testimony to her aunt's nice taste: Handel's "Water music," his much-admired "minuet in Ariadne," portions from other operas; and, among the songs, some in sentiment far excelling those that had superseded them: Waller's beautiful lines, "Go, lovely Rose;" Ben Jonson's "Drink to me only with thine eyes," which has since been murdered by being made "a lesson for beginners;" "The rose had been wash'd, lately wash'd in a shower," and others of the same character. From one of the books a loose leaf fell out, on which were the notes and words of a song in manuscript. Her attention was attracted to it by an attempt to obliterate some writing on the margin, of which only a date, and "sent by," were visible. The song, beginning

"Whither, my love—ah! whither art thou flown?
Let not thine absence cloud this happy morn.
Say, by *thy* heart, can falsehood e'er be known?
Ah no! ah no! love, I judge it by my own,"

touched a chord that vibrated in Eleanor's, then particularly sympathetic on the subject of the tender passion; and, her imagination excited by the idea of mystery, she tried, girl-like, to solve it. The paper was yellow with age, the ink pale, therefore both belonged to "long ago." It must have been sent to Aunt Gertrude in days of "Auld lang syne." "Yes; but had it any personal reference to herself, or to the giver? If not, why erase so carefully the name? Did that express displeasure, or desire of concealment?" Eleanor could not satisfy herself; but she felt more than ever drawn to Aunt Gertrude by the fantastic idea thus conjured up. She tried the air; it was very tender, and she readily caught it.

When she returned to the parlor, where Miss Lawrence had remained, her aunt said, "You have been trying my long-forsaken spinet, my dear, and have chanced on one of my old songs, I perceive."

Miss Lawrence's manner was so calm and unconscious that Eleanor's little castle tumbled down.

"Dear me!" thought she, much disappointed; "then it was not a lover, after all!"

No sketch of the domestic life of the period could well omit the humbler characters in the family drama. Negroes made then, in the State of New York, a necessary part of every establishment, great or small.

The gentle race is now fast disappearing from the household. It is only occasionally that a courtesy or a boy from a gray head recalls those who nursed our infancy and guarded our childhood; who prepared, with an instinct all their own, the food for the family or hospitable board, and served it with an assiduity peculiar to

themselves; who sat unwearied, during the night-watches, by sick-beds; ministered, fearless even of contagion, to the dying, and followed the dead to their last homes, with a fidelity not measured by their merits—our attendants from the cradle to the grave. Surely, as such, none will reject a passing tribute to them.

The "vexed question" of slavery, which even then began to be discussed, did not yet agitate the public mind as it has since done. Philanthropists and patriots revolved schemes for solving the threatening problem, but most persons satisfied their convictions of duty toward their slaves by humane treatment, to which some added a care for their morals. Of these were Mr. Lawrence. They were a part of his inheritance, and he would have felt himself disgraced as a gentleman had he been a cruel or neglectful master. He enforced the marriage tie, punished vice, exacted no severe labor, and was considerate to sickness and infirmity. His daughter's compassion was more enlarged. Lamenting their ignorance, she tried to instruct them in reading and writing; and, when baffled by their inaptitude, gave time and patience to their oral teaching. Here, too, she had difficulties. With no bad passions, affectionate, gentle, and, according to their light, faithful, their moral perceptions were nevertheless not very clear. The abstract beauty of truth they could neither feel nor see; and, though money might be as safely exposed to them, as were the bracelets hung on forest-trees in the days of righteous King Alfred, edibles were less respected. Even Momma Zip, with her stern fidelity, scrupled not to expound the law of *meum* and *tuum* with considerable latitude, pronouncing, "What put in de pocket, dat teefy; what put in de tummack, dat no teefy."

They had much increased in numbers, having been more careful to "replenish the earth" than their master

thought necessary; for, as he never would sell them, they were not welcome additions to his family. Miss Lawrence, on the contrary, sat like Charity with open arms, ready to receive all who came, notwithstanding that they added much to her cares. These began even in anticipation of their approach, as various small garments, issuing from her work-basket, would testify. On such occasions, every indulgence that nature required was granted: a comfortable room, a competent nurse, quiet, and the usual time allotted for restoration. To this succeeded thoughts for the little ones themselves, who were allowed to be brought to her room, and to lie on a pallet spread on her carpet, that they might enjoy an hour of purer air and brighter sun than could be had in their own proper quarters; and that their mothers, by this notice and inspection of them, might be incited to greater care. When ill, with her own fair hands she ministered to the little sufferers; and when, as sometimes happened, the *freedom* of the *Celestial City* was conferred on them, she sympathized with their mothers, but rejoiced for them.

The saying, "Many hands make light work," was verified in Mr. Lawrence's establishment, where, as he was used to say, "the negroes raised the corn, the corn fed the hogs, the hogs fed the negroes, and the farm-circle was completed without loss or gain." Horses, carriages, and stables were the charge of Uncle Mink and his assistants. His wife, Aunt Flore, ranked first among the house-servants, more from her individual superiority than from her department. She was a tall, well-formed, bright-looking mulatto, the diplomat of the kitchen, whose ability was best expressed by her master's saying that "Flore could cheat the devil." Though generally preferring to carry her point by a manoeuvre, she could, when she pleased, use a freedom of speech

that even her master did not care to encounter. In the kitchen she was supreme. She had been dressing-maid to the young ladies, and afterward attendant on Master Phil's infancy, who had been so much her pride as to encroach on the rights of her ebony offspring. When no longer necessary to him, she had been promoted to the ministry of the interior as assistant to Mrs. Dorothy, a spinster who had known better days, and who presided in the housekeeper's room. Here were prepared all the "subtleties" of pastry, cake, and preserves in a Dutch ménage. Then, too, Flore was an experienced nurse, and nice things for those who were well alternated with possets, gruels, wheys, and soups for the sick. There was, indeed, nothing she could not do.

Aunt Minty, the cook, a fat, simple, good-natured creature, was admirable in the substantials. But she would sometimes forget the time, or the fire that had been unadvisedly spared to one dish had been unduly bestowed on another, or a sauce or appropriate vegetable had been omitted; and as often her master would send her peremptory orders to "quit the premises! never again to appear in his presence!" But Aunty Minty budged not, and noticed the mandate only by saying, as she quietly lighted her pipe, and took immovable possession of her usual seat, with a chuckle, "Dat on'y massa's way." Her son, "little Pomp," a well-grown lad of eighteen, was a compound of her simplicity with a dash of Aunt Flore. He had appeared to profit rather more than the rest from Miss Lawrence's instructions, but it proved only "the knowledge that puffeth up;" for of his reading he selected, with true negro love of ornament, the longest words in order to garnish his discourse, but retained little of the subject matter. Next to Aunt Flore, he was the kitchen oracle.

Besides these were "little Minty" and "little Flore"—

who, in their clean white linen "bed-aprons," moved about in smiling and leisurely companionship through the labors of the morning—and others, like the "supernumeraries" of the theatre, of no individual importance, yet occasionally finding a part they could fill.

But unlike all was Momma Zip, an abbreviation of Zilpah, by which name her first master had replaced her native one. She was a Guinea woman of the blackest dye, and of an age which, though only guessed to be eighty, was probably not much overrated. Yet she was still useful, and retained a good degree of activity. Long as she had been in the country, she had but imperfectly acquired the language, partly from inaptitude, but more from an indisposition to talk. Unlike her race, she was silent, except that she muttered much to herself, and would stroll off into the wood adjoining—"the bush," as it was called—or into "the hollow," in preference to the chimney corner. The deep seams in her cheeks, which Eleanor supposed to be wrinkles, were the marks of her tribe, and, with an occasional fierceness of look and gesture, indicated that she had belonged to one of the more warlike ones; yet she was a kind and patient nurse to the negro children, who, with the care and picking of the poultry, and the feeding of the dogs—not few in number—were her charge. She was much bent, more from sitting than infirmity, and walked with a stick, not because she required it, but that it added to her dignity, as it certainly did to her power, among the subjects committed to her rule.

With different degrees of moral and mental capacity, they could all love Miss Gertrude. She was to them the personification of goodness; and, though they had but a dim appreciation of her whole character, the very vagueness of their perceptions seemed to add to their veneration. She was *something* which they felt they did

not quite understand, but wiser and better than any one else.

The following day, Sunday, the large family carriage, with Mr. and Miss Lawrence, Eleanor, Mr. Philip, and Mrs. Dorothy—always treated with this consideration—and attended by a wagon with all the domestics that could be spared, proceeded to a church of the Dutch reformed communion, where most of the neighboring gentry also assembled. There Domine Van Kleeck, a portly, comfortable-looking person, officiated. The services, including the sermon, were in Dutch, which Mr. Lawrence, understanding, attended to with much reverence, but which Miss Lawrence followed with more difficulty; while Mr. Philip understood here and there a sentence, and Eleanor not a word. Much, therefore, as the domine might have “edified himself” and the older members of the congregation, to her and to the other juniors, his unknown tongue, “giving forth an uncertain sound,” profited little, except that

“They got patience and the blessing.”

But, though the public worship, continued through the day, with the attendance of all rigorously exacted, was not at all to her edification, Eleanor found an hour in Aunt Gertrude’s room, under her gentle ministry, fruitful of much instruction. Among her devotional books were many then in favor, as Flavel, Doddridge, Watts, and Hervey; the poems of the “divine Herbert” also, from which last Miss Lawrence selected the “Church Porch”—a mine of wisdom, sacred and secular, and his hymn to Providence:

“In small things great, not small in any;
In all things one, in each thing many;
Infinite in one and all!”

Listening to her aunt’s sweet voice, and moved by her tender devotion, Eleanor was taught that

“A verse may finde him who a sermon flies,
And turn delight into a sacrifice.”

At night, when going to her room, her aunt accompanied her, kissed her fondly, and said, “I am glad, my love, that you like some of my good old-fashioned friends; you will, I hope, like them better and better.” Then patting her blooming cheek, she added, with a smile and a sigh,

“‘Time did beckon to the flowers,
And they by noon did steal away.’

But grieve not, dear child; there *are* flowers that fade not, and you, I trust, will gather them.”

CHAPTER XIX.

ELEANOR loved to wander about the old house and explore its intricacies. There was a large hall in the second story, but, as her room did not communicate with it, she had been some days at her grandfather's before she discovered that it contained several portraits. Having found her way there, she was one morning endeavoring to spell out the originals through the lapse of time and changes of dress, when Flore crossed the hall, and, as she courtesied, Eleanor detained her.

"Stay, Aunt Flore, and tell me about these pictures; and, first, who is this old lady in a black hood that covers all but her face, and with her hands crossed on her breast?"

"Oh, dat ar massa's gran'moder; dat ar cum eber so far 'cross de water."

"Indeed! but why is this hole in one of the fingers?"

"Dat," said Flore, smiling, "is Massa Phil's doin's. When he fuss larnt to shoot wid a bow an' arrer, what muss he do but take aim at de ole lady's ring, and shoot in troo. Massa was drefful mad; but, Lorry me, missis! none body could eber be mad wid Massa Phil, you know; and so, when he cried, massa guv him a crown to make up."

"And then," said Eleanor, laughing, "he shot again, I suppose?"

"No, no; no such a ting, missis; Massa Phil neber wuss for kindness—always 'member dat, missis," continued Flore, with more emphasis, Eleanor thought, than the matter demanded; "wheneber you want a ting ob Massa Phil, coaxin' is de way."

"And who is this handsome lady, with a rich stomacher, and jewels in her hair?"

"Lorry me, missis! don't you know? dat ar your own gran'ma."

"Is it, indeed? Well, I don't wonder grandpapa loved her so much;" and Eleanor looked tenderly and reverently on the sweet face that seemed to respond benignantly. "And this, though it looks so young, must be his likeness, is it not?"

"Yes, missis, sure 'nuff; just so, I 'member my moder say, he looked when he was marr'ed; wid a brack silk bag to his hair, and a brack ribbon crossed ober his bosom, and his waistcoat all kivered with flowers. And dis yer one, missis—I's sartin you must know dis," pointing to a very handsome boy, dressed in scarlet, holding a hound in a leash.

"No, no; I can only guess: perhaps 'tis Mr. Philip."

"Ah! yes, I was tinkin' you'd find *him* out," replied Aunt Flore, with a significant smile.

"And this beautiful girl?" asked Eleanor, unmindful of the insinuation; "she seems not over fifteen; a bird is resting on her wrist, and she looks at it with almost a smile: what a lovely face!"

"Dar! you juss hit it, missis," exclaimed Aunt Flore, triumphantly; "she was de lubliest young lady in de whole county—dat ar Miss Gertrude."

"I thought as much; and this, I suspect, must be my dear mother; for, though younger and prettier than I can remember her, there is still the same look that I so much love—better to me than all the beauty in the world."

"Yes, missis, dat ar de trute; dat are Miss Janet 'fore she was marr'd."

"And this pretty lady, who is she? in what, I suppose, mamma means by a sack of pink silk with white rob-

ings, which I have heard her describe. She must be of another family; her eyes and hair are very dark, and, though she has a fine color, she is a brunette."

"A what, missis? I dunno know dat; but I know she was Massa Phil's moder."

"Poor woman!" sighed Eleanor; "she died very young, did she not, Aunt Flore?"

"O Lor! yes, missis; dat ar was horribble time," replied Flore, looking darker than usual, and turning away as if going.

"Stay! don't go yet: here is another; but why does this green curtain hang over it? No, I can't reach it. You are so tall, Aunt Flore, do you draw it for me."

"Bress me, missis, I dars'n't; massa won't hab it drawed never. He'd kill me if I did sich a ting."

"But why, then, let it hang here?"

At this moment Mrs. Dorothy entered, and Flore moved off, saying to herself, "If *she* mind to brun *her* fingers, dat none of my bizzens."

Left by Flore, Eleanor applied to Mrs. Dorothy; but, not willing to infringe on the injunction in regard to the curtain, she merely asked, pointing to the picture, who the person was.

Mrs. Dorothy looked all round, as if unwilling to be overheard, and then said, "I do not know certainly, miss, but I believe 'tis Master Philip's father."

"But why, then, covered?" persisted Eleanor.

"Why, you must know, miss, some things happened before I came to live here. Master Philip was then a little child, and his parents were both dead. It is such a sorrowful story that no one cares to talk about it, and so, I suppose, they cover the picture."

"What story?" asked Eleanor, much interested; "there is no objection to its being told, is there?"

"Oh no, miss! there is no secret. I wonder you

shouldn't know all about it, being in the family; but, I suppose, being disagreeable, there was no use talking of it. Master Philip—for his name was Philip too—the father of this one, and his wife, lived here with the old gentleman, and he was much thought of, and his wife too. He was a great sportsman, like his son, but not so good-natured. He was, by all accounts, more passionate than the old gentleman!" added Mrs. Dorothy, with a look like a note of admiration. "Well, there lived in the neighborhood a young farmer by the name of Kline. Now this man and Mr. Philip were quite friends, because Kline's mother had wet-nursed Mr. Philip; so they were foster-brothers, you know.

"But Mr. Philip had a proud, overbearing way, and Kline, too, was high-tempered; and it happened, unfortunately, that Mr. Philip's dogs got into Kline's corn and wheat fields. Kline complained, but Mr. Philip made very light of it. They did it again, and with a good deal of damage; and then Kline, instead of coming and stating his loss—for which he would have got compensation, of course—sent a threatening message that he would take the law of him, and kill his dogs if he ever caught them on his land again. Mr. Philip, at this, flew into a passion and sent back a fiery answer; and the next day went in that direction, just as if on purpose to dare the man. The dogs got in again, and this time attacked Kline's hogs, upon which he rushed out with his gun to defend his property. He then, being terribly angry, met Mr. Philip coming, as was afterward supposed, to call off his dogs; but this Kline did not understand, so he made straight at them and leveled his gun, when Mr. Philip caught his arm, and a scuffle ensued. At this moment a couple of men came up, but too late to prevent trouble, for the gun was discharged, and Mr. Philip fell. Kline ran off and hid himself, and Mr. Philip was

placed on a litter and brought home. The first the family knew of it was seeing him borne into the house, bleeding and dying, and the first person to meet him was his poor young wife, then very near her time. She fainted, was seized with convulsions, and, after giving birth to her son, died within a few hours of her husband."

"Dreadful!" exclaimed Eleanor; "and what became of Kline?"

"Oh, the country was all alive about it! The quality took it up because Mr. Philip was one of them, and the rest because, for all he was proud, yet he was so free-hearted and manly that every body liked him. But, while they were searching for Kline, he came and surrendered himself. He said he might as well die as live, for he should never have another happy day again; but he persisted in his innocence, and that the gun had gone off by accident. But it was said that he had used threats against Mr. Philip as well as the dogs; and the men who happened to be on the spot, when he was put on his trial, appeared against him; so he was convicted of murder."

"Oh, horrible!" exclaimed Eleanor; "and executed?"

"No, miss; but it was all owing to your grandfather that he was not."

"My grandfather! the person most injured!"

"Yes, miss; for though, as they say, when Mr. Lawrence's pride is up he never yields, this was a different case. Here the foundation of his pride was taken from under him—his heart was broken; and perhaps, too, he thought that God had a controversy with him. At any rate, he was not satisfied with the testimony; said his poor son had brought his death on himself; and when the mother of Kline fell on her knees and begged him to save one who had lain on the same bosom, had drawn

from the same breast, and slept in the same cradle with Mr. Philip, the old gentleman could not stand it, but got up a petition to the governor, and signed it himself, and Kline was pardoned."

"And what became of him?"

"Your grandfather, though he had saved his life, could not hear his name without a shudder, nor bear the thought of ever seeing him; so he got a friend of his to advise with Kline for the best arrangement of his property, and he sold out and moved off where nothing more is heard of him here."

"Dear grandpapa!" said Eleanor; "I am so glad that he was merciful."

"Oh, miss, he does many a good thing. I wish every one that had his means had his will. There was Mrs. Dale, the little English Quaker woman at the mill—that was after I came, and I know all about it. She was very poorly, in a sort of decline, and he had her brought here, and Miss Gertrude nursed her as if she had been a sister. She was confined here, and finally, after being here a whole year, died. Many a time I've seen Mr. Lawrence sit by her bed, as she grew worse, and hold her hand, try to comfort her, and talk to her like a domine. They kept the little girl she left till she was three years old, and after that she used to come to Miss Gertrude to be taught."

"Where is she now?"

"At home with her father. She has not been here lately, or I should have showed her to you, for she is a nice young woman; but she does not have much time, I suppose, to go out."

"Poor Aunt Gertrude!" sighed Eleanor, as she reflected on what she had heard. "Poor Aunt Gertrude! No wonder she looks sad sometimes."

"Yes, indeed, miss; it was a sad business—to think

of Mr. Philip, and his pretty young wife, lying both together in the *dood-kamer*."

"*Dood-kamer!*" repeated Eleanor.

"Yes, miss; that is the death-chamber. You know about that, I suppose?"

"I have heard of such a thing, but I thought it done away with long ago."

"Oh no; it may be down in York, but it isn't here."

"Here! Do you mean to say there is still such a chamber here?"

"Certainly, miss; and the best room in the whole house. Haven't you seen a door on the left hand side of the portaal? 'Tis always shut, but you may have observed it. Well, that opens into an entry that leads to the *dood-kamer*. At the end of the entry is another door, through which the dead are carried to their burial. They say that, in old times, in Holland, the young married couple used to enter their new house by such a door, which they never passed again till they were taken out feet foremost. My mother was Dutch, and so I have heard all about their strange ways: their '*dood-koeks*,' and spiced wines sent round at their funerals, and to friends who could not attend; and the shrouds among the bridal clothes."

"Oh!" exclaimed Eleanor, with almost a shriek; "what do you mean, Mrs. Dorothy?"

"Just what I say, miss. Your grandmamma, pretty as she looks there, in her wedding-dress, I have heard say her shroud was waiting for her at that very time, and she was buried in it. And your grandfather, to this day, every year orders his given to him at the same time, to be washed and bleached, that it may be in readiness when wanted."

"Well, I never would be married if there were such awful customs now."

Mrs. Dorothy "smiled superior."

"You think so, miss, I dare say; but young ladies do get over almost every thing rather than not be married."

Eleanor's thoughts again turned to the picture.

"And so they covered it, you think, to shut out painful ideas."

"Yes, miss, I suppose so; because I never heard any reason given for it."

"But I should not think it would have that effect. I am sure, with me, it would only serve to keep them forever in my mind."

"Perhaps so, miss. But people are different. Some expect to shut out trouble by closing their lips and eyes, while others empty their hearts of it by speaking."

"But you know," said Eleanor, involuntarily making a personal application of this last remark, "there may be trouble of which one can not speak;" to which Mrs. Dorothy replied by an unsuspecting assent, and Eleanor left the hall.

CHAPTER XX.

THE finest days of autumn came, and Master Philip, who was companionable as well as polite, was always contriving new pleasures for Eleanor. A year before, and he would have probably made rapid progress in her favor; but she had now a higher standard. Still, the freemasonry of youth, which readily discovers points of sympathy, and the absence of other society near her own age, rendered him quite acceptable.

She loved music, so did he; and with his flute, or as a good second, was always ready to accompany her. She loved the country too, as he did; and, in a little while, learned to take an interest in his sports, to caress his dogs, and to rejoice over his full bag of game, as a testimony to his skill. She even condescended to take a few lessons. She could not, indeed, be induced to take the life of a bird, but she consented to be instructed in target-shooting; and, with female inconsistency, though so tender toward the feathered creation, had no distresses about fish; for, while she would on no account bait the line, yet, if cousin Phil prepared and put the rod into her hand, she had sufficient nerve to hold it, and in time became as ambitious of a nibble as the most hard-hearted angler. Then Master Philip was an accomplished horseman; for

"Skill to ride, a science seems
Proper to gentle blood;"

and, although inexperienced herself, yet, under his tuition, when mounted on Fairy—a spirited little pony her grandfather had given her—she soon learned to keep her seat with a courage and grace that delighted the

old gentleman; who then, as at whatever else she did that was commendable, never failed to exclaim, sometimes with a sigh, sometimes with a smile, "Just like *mammajie!* just like *mammajie!*"

The nutting season came; and the brightly-tinted woods, the clear skies, and exhilarating air invited every one to the gathering of the autumn's fruitage, "ripe down-pattering." Even Miss Lawrence could not resist it; and with Eleanor, Philip, and a troop of darkies, down to Mink junior, three years old, who occasionally required a lift, set forth to a beautiful grove, within walking distance, of walnuts—called there *kriskotomas* nuts—and chestnuts.

The trees were loaded; and the opening shells and burrs that Jack Frost had cracked for them wanted but a touch to send a rattling shower to the ground. Pomp was ordered up to shake the upper boughs; the children clutched at the lower ones; and Master Philip himself, always ready for any physical exertion, sprang into a fine large tree, near which the ladies were standing, and shook it with such effect that they were compelled to retreat. Soon all hands were busy, and the fruit was worth the labor; not such as people are often content with nowadays, but walnuts worthy of primeval trees, and chestnuts so large and plump as to give significance to the saying of the little negroes, "*De middle one de ox, and de oders de cows*"—information given to "young missis," but, of course, utterly unintelligible. It was, indeed, a simple pleasure, but Eleanor did not, therefore, like it the less. The merry, musical negro voices alternating scraps of song with shouts of rejoicing, as from time to time they found more than they expected; their mutual good offices—the older helping the younger, especially little Mink, who, with an uncommon pair of bandy legs, describing, in his advance, rather circles than

straight lines, could not well compete with the rest—together with their frequent cautions to “young missis” not to “cratch her fing-ers wid de buz,” furnished her much amusement.

It was an established privilege that, after the family was furnished with nuts for the winter, the negroes were to take the rest, for which they found a ready market, their master's summer visitors often engaging a supply of them. On this occasion Miss Lawrence directed the young ones to anticipate the gleaning, and fill their aprons and baskets for themselves, kindly contributing all that she had gathered to their store, adding, “’Tis a holiday for Miss Eleanor, you know, and must be all play and no work,” at which there was a general caroling, heels higher than heads, and a unanimous “Hi! for young missis!”

Miss Lawrence soon wearied; but, unwilling to curtail the pleasure of the rest, seated herself a little apart, and was occupied in forming a wreath of the bright autumn leaves strewn around her, which, when Eleanor came in triumph to exhibit her full basket, she placed on her head.

“A Roman, you know, my dear,” said she, playfully, “was crowned if he saved the life of a fellow-citizen. Let me then crown you for infusing a new life into me.”

Eleanor kissed her aunt affectionately, but she perceived that, though she smiled, it was sadly, and that she averted her eyes, as if they might betray her.

Eleanor looked inquiringly, and Miss Lawrence at length said, “’Tis nothing dear—only thoughts of other days. ’Tis long since I went a nutting—I—I was only thinking of those who gathered with me—and who, like myself, have gathered many a sorrow too. But come,” added she, rising, and speaking more cheerfully, “let us return to papa; he will want to hear of our success; and

wear your wreath, too, dear, for he loves to see you look pretty.”

“And how could she ever look otherwise?” said Master Philip, gazing at her admiringly. “But stay, Eleanor, let me have the honor of adding one leaf to your wreath—this bright sumach.”

“Oh no!” said Eleanor, shrinking. “They tell me ’tis poison.”

“No, no, not this kind,” and Philip proceeded to entwine it with the others.

“No, indeed, Phil, that would never do,” said Miss Lawrence, tapping him on the shoulder. “Heaven forbid that you should bestow a *fatal* crown on her!”

Master Philip became embarrassed, colored; his fingers seemed to fail of their accustomed adroitness; the leaves would not lie as he wished, and his aunt, to relieve him, adjusted them.

The next morning, at breakfast, Mr. Lawrence was in high good-humor. Miss Lawrence not having yet appeared, he called on Eleanor for his coffee, and cracked jokes with her and Master Philip till the entrance of Aunt Flore, with a tray, and a request for a cup of tea for Miss Gertrude, “and,” as she rather pointedly added, “nuffin else.”

The old gentleman's countenance changed, and he exclaimed, “What's the matter now?”

“Nuffin, massa, only missis got drefful headache, and can't come to breffass.”

“What's brought that on?” he demanded, rather than asked.

“Dunno know, massa; spose de same ting.”

“What ‘thing!’” exclaimed Mr. Lawrence, with rising anger.

“’Spects massa knows,” answered the imperturbable Aunt Flore.

"No, massa does *not* know. Speak! what do you mean?"

"Massa knows dose narvous turns dese years. Eber since massa—"

"Oh, yes, I dare say," hastily interrupting her; "nervous turns, and massa of course to blame. Take your tray, and go! But hark ye, Flore, tell your mistress that, if she does not come down to dinner, I'll quit the house for six months—for a year—forever!" continued he, with voice "*crescendo*."

"Yes, massa," and Flore slowly retreated.

Mr. Lawrence rose, his coffee and muffin untasted, and, crossing his hands behind him, walked up and down the room, with a pace and countenance showing great and angry disturbance.

Eleanor was mute with surprise. Thus far he had been so kind, caressing, cheerful, even gay, and good-humored to all, that she had begun to think the accounts of his temper greatly exaggerated; but this strange and unreasonable resentment toward dear Aunt Gertrude, merely for having a headache, justified all she had heard. She looked at Master Philip, but he very composedly continued to eat his breakfast, not at all moved or surprised at what, to her, seemed so unaccountable. At length, mustering courage, she said, in order to break the distressing silence, "Grandpapa, your coffee is cold; let me give you another cup. Aunt Gertrude will soon be better, I dare say; only a little fatigued with—"

But he turned on her, and interrupted her almost fiercely, saying, "You dare say a great deal, then. Don't talk to me child! You know nothing about it. I have been the victim of these cursed nerves! Never was a family so full of them! As sure as I feel a little happy, and enjoy myself, they must needs break out!"

Eleanor could not but think his message to her aunt not calculated to quiet them.

"Fatigued yesterday! What was there to fatigue her? She had been remarkably well of late. No, it was always so; would always be so. His life had been sacrificed to an eternal spirit of contradiction."

"Alas!" thought Eleanor, "perhaps too true, poor grandpapa, but whose fault?"

Leaving his breakfast untouched, Mr. Lawrence retired to his room.

"Never mind, cousin," said Master Philip. "These little flurries soon pass. Our sky has been remarkably clear and quiet since you came, and will be so again. The best way is never to speak to grandpapa at such times; nor even to notice them. Come, shall I give you a lesson in target-shooting? or will you exercise Fairy in a ride?"

But Eleanor, hoping to be admitted to her aunt's room, declined both. Her gentle tap at the door was, however, answered by Flore saying that Miss Gertrude would see her by-and-by; and so, putting on her bonnet, she resolved to forget the clouds that had gathered within, by the contemplation of the serene beauty without. Strolling along the garden wall she found Momma Zip seated on a stone, with her family of dogs about her, giving them their morning meal, and Eleanor, for want of better amusement, stopped to observe her. With her uplifted cane she enforced obedience and good manners, not allowing one to encroach on the rest. In the main she succeeded very well; but Ponto, a pointer of irregular behavior, the particular aversion of the house-maids, because he always contrived to insinuate himself into the nicely-arranged spare beds, to their infinite trouble and vexation, was, on this occasion, unruly, and, in order to secure the morsel offered to another, gave him a very unfriendly grip.

Down came Momma's baton of office, with an angry

expostulation, "Fie! shame! hide ye face! What, lick ye feller-sar bent!"

But the "fellow-servant" retorted the grip, and, a regular onset ensuing, Zip was compelled to rise, and, making good use of her cane, restored order. She then first perceived "young missis," and, courtesying, was going away as usual, when Eleanor addressed her.

"Good-morning, Momma; your children have been naughty, I see. Are you often obliged to punish them?"

But with a displeased look, and a shake of her head, she replied, "No pickaninnies—sarbents, like Zip. Pickaninnies"—with an appropriate gesture—"far off! gone! gone!"

Then, turning away, she sung, to a native air, words she had caught, probably because applying to herself:

"Oh! red was de sun on dat dark, drefful day,
When de Buckras dey stole poor Ora away!
De pickaninnies cry, and de blud it did run:
Oh! dark was dat day, and red was dat sun!"

and, still retreating toward the house, she continued to sing, and Eleanor to listen, till the air died away.

"Poor Momma!" she said, kindly. "She will not call the dogs her children; that name belongs to those far away. These are but fellow-servants, like herself. Poor old soul! Now there is a heart that has a history! who can tell it? not even herself. But God has written it in his Book."

The morning passed rather heavily without Aunt Gertrude, and no summons came from her till near the dinner-hour, when, to Eleanor's surprise, she found her up and dressed. To her exclamation Miss Lawrence quietly answered, "Poor papa would be so harassed by my absence that I ought to go down. Don't say any thing about it, dear, nor allude to my headache; it is

nearly gone. I shall soon be released and return to my room."

The family met as usual—no questions and no explanations. Aunt Gertrude, as always, was gentle and kind, though an occasional contraction of her brow showed her head not yet at ease, and Eleanor saw that the meal was, with her, a mere form; but grandpapa was restored to good-humor, and the little disturbance of the morning forgotten.

"How strange!" thought Eleanor. "I do really believe grandpapa loves Aunt Gertrude better than all the world, and yet he is more unreasonable to her than to any one else. If she does but look grave, or is not quite well, he is worried to death, though it seems to make him more angry than sorry. Any one would suppose that, if she did not always smile, he thought it a reproach to himself, he makes it such a personal matter."

Few as were the words which Eleanor had occasionally exchanged with Zip, they had made an impression on her. The dullest can interpret a smile or a kind look. Her youth was, too, an attraction which all felt, and seemed to melt even the stern nature of the old woman, who, the next day, to Eleanor's surprise, appeared in her room. She had in her hand a roll of "hum-hum," a cotton cloth then in common use.

This she unfolded with much formality, and Eleanor wondered what was coming. When spread, it appeared to be a sheet; and, taking up a corner of it, she made signs—which she generally preferred to speech; but Eleanor, unable to comprehend, could only say, "Well, Momma, what do you wish?"

She repeated the signs, and then added, "Missis, you mark dis?"

"Mark it? Yes; for whom? and why?"

"For Zip, missis."

Eleanor still looking puzzled, she had again recourse to signs. Measuring a space of five or six feet in length on the floor, by two or three in width, she took the cloth, and, wrapping it round her, lay down on the spot she had defined, and closed her eyes.

Eleanor caught a glimpse of her meaning. "A grave and a winding-sheet!" exclaimed she; "can she mean that?"

"Yes, yes, missis," said Momma, quickly, and rising; "for Zip—for me."

"And I am to put your name in the corner?"

"Yes, missis."

"Zilpah?"

"No, no, missis," she interrupted hastily and imperatively—"no Zip." Pointing upward with an earnest look, "Pickaninnies up dere not know Zilpah—ole ooman now. No, no—Ora! Ora!" Then, falling into the burden of her favorite song, she proceeded in a melancholy strain,

"Oh! red was de sun, and dark was de day,
When de Buckras dey stole poor Ora away!

No, no Zip: Ora, missis."

"Ah! yes," said Eleanor, "I understand. Yes, I will do it;" and, with repeated courtesies, the old woman left her.

"Poor Momma!" thought Eleanor, "*she* has never puzzled herself with the questions, 'How are the dead raised? and with what body do they come?' Her mind goes no farther than the restoration of her present one, poor and decrepit as it is. Her only trouble is that, old and altered, her children will not know her except by the name she bore to them. Well, she has an idea that fills her present capacities, and is satisfied—more than many wiser ones can say."

CHAPTER XXI.

A NEW circumstance added to Mr. Lawrence's satisfaction in his granddaughter. For some time a weakness in one of his eyes had nearly deprived him of the use of both. He had struggled against the infirmity with his usual persistence; but he was at length obliged to yield, and have a reader. Master Philip did not quite please him. "He rattled on so fast that it took away his breath to follow him." He would not tax his daughter's strength, and Eleanor, therefore, was appointed to the office, which she discharged so as entirely to satisfy him. Being thus brought into a closer intercourse, she became so endeared and important to her grandfather, that, when a letter from her mother hinted at her return, he sent an absolute refusal; and, moreover, a demand for their surrender of her for the rest of the year, "indeed, he did not know that he would ever give her up."

Unwilling to revive a resentment so lately appeased, Mr. and Mrs. Meredith consented for the present, and Eleanor, conscious of the happiness she bestowed, acquiesced cheerfully in their decision. Perhaps she thought of her pleasant cotillon parties, but it was a momentary regret; the past had deeper interests, and she almost dreaded to return to scenes that would so forcibly renew them. Checking feelings she must not indulge, she turned again to the details of her mother's letter. "And so," she reflected, "the Middletons are to pass the winter at the south, and Captain Talbot has just sailed for England, to return next spring. How he does fly about! Well, he is a pleasant person, and when I am with him I think I like him; but, somehow, I am

never the wiser or better for any thing he says. What is the reason? Heigh-ho! Walter would say that it is because he has no faith in goodness. If he praises, 'tis ironically. More frequently he finds it only selfishness well disguised."

And now came the dark November days, and out-of-door pleasures yielded to the bustle which at that season reigned in every Dutch establishment. All hands, young and old, found employment; and a suite of cellar rooms were devoted to the various cares of cutting up and packing beef and pork, and making an incredible amount of sausages, rolletjes, headcheese, souse, etc., etc. Abundance reigned throughout; the full and generous house-keeping recalling the times of the old Saxons; and large baskets of provisions were distributed among less prosperous neighbors.

Had it not been for certain sounds of woe that found their way to Eleanor, she would have better enjoyed the prevailing activity and excitement. Alas! that we can not import humanities as readily as fashions. Even at this day, when animals, reposing under the shade of lilacs and laburnums, within the *abattoirs* of Paris, are gently led off to their doom, neither terrified, beaten, nor conscious of their impending fate, which an instant seals, we continue the barbarous customs of our ancestors; and the blood of helpless animals cries from the ground against us, not because we take life necessarily, but destroy it mercilessly.

This busy season over, one morning, as Eleanor sat reading to her grandfather, a man drove up to the door, having a young negro girl with him. They alighted; and, while the girl was taken into the housekeeper's room to warm herself, the man was ushered into the presence of Mr. Lawrence.

His appearance was not prepossessing; his business

less so. This was to inquire if Mr. Lawrence would purchase the girl whom he had brought with him.

Mr. Lawrence peremptorily refused. "He never meant, with his own consent, to own another black." He was told that she was to be sold only for seven years; but he was equally immovable. Whereupon the man proceeded to say that "*he* did not care to part with her, but that she was an obstinate wench, would be sold, and would be sold to Mr. Lawrence."

Eleanor's attention, arrested at first, was now still more so; and, leaving the parlor, she went to Mrs. Dorothy's room to ascertain why the girl should thus persist in the desire to leave her present home and become the property of a stranger. She found a gentle, pretty mulatto girl, apparently fifteen years old, trembling more from fear than cold. She rose as Eleanor entered, but did not speak, though she cast a piteous glance into her face. In reply to the often-urged inquiry, "*Why* she wished to be sold?" she, after looking timidly and cautiously round, at length replied, "'Case, missis, he hard massa. My moder is dead, and my fader is dead, and Aunt Jenny is dead. I got no broders nor no sisters, and massa beats me."

"Beats you!" repeated Eleanor, looking compassionately on the little, delicately-made creature, "for what?"

"'Case I cry, I 'spects, missis; but I can't help it; I got no comfort. Oh, do buy me, missis!" continued the girl, with growing hope and earnestness, as her heart warmed in the glow of Eleanor's expressive countenance. "Do, *do* buy me; I'll be your faithful slave, you look so good! and ebbery one say all Massa Lawrence sarvents so happy!"

At this moment the parlor door opened, and Eleanor turned away, in order to ascertain the final result of the application; but the frightened girl clutched her dress,

and, with a look of agony, again exclaimed, "Oh, do buy me, missis; do buy me! I neber ask to be free; I sarve you till my det; don't gib me back to dat dreadful massa!"

Eleanor endeavored to quiet her; and, having in some measure succeeded, she went into the hall, where she heard her grandfather absolutely declining the purchase, and the man gruffly calling for his property.

Perceiving that no time was to be lost, she hurried into the parlor, and, throwing her arms round Mr. Lawrence, exclaimed, in a tone of entreaty, "Do, dear grandpapa, buy this poor thing!"

"Why, you foolish child, what can I do with her? We have so many now, they are only in each other's way. No, no, I can't think of it. It is absurd!"

"But she is unhappy; she has no natural friends, and her master is cruel to her."

"How do you know that?"

"She says so."

"It is not likely. A High Dutcher would sooner risk the life of his son than his negro; because the one might sell for three hundred dollars, and the other wouldn't sell at all. No, no; it's nonsense; I won't do it. And, as to what *she* says, why, they'll all say that. Flore, and Minty, and Mink, and Tobe, and Jenny, and Pomp, and the devil knows how many more, would say the same of *me*, if they wanted to be sold."

"No, grandpapa, you don't believe that; besides, they don't wish to be sold; they are all contented. This poor thing wants to come here only because she hears all your people are so happy."

This last appeal had some effect; but still, the utter uselessness of the girl seemed an insuperable obstacle.

"Is there any thing on earth for her to do, Gitty?" asked Mr. Lawrence, in a despairing tone, of his daughter.

Miss Lawrence—an attentive, but silent observer, lest her interference might rouse the imp of contradiction, which she hoped Eleanor would exorcise—replied, quietly, "She feared not, but she would consult Mrs. Dorothy."

"Consult Mrs. Dorothy, indeed!" interrupted her father. "I'd be glad to know if I can't buy a servant without *her* permission!"

"You do not understand me, papa. I meant—"

Here Eleanor exclaimed, as she looked from the window, "Oh, quick, dear grandpapa—speak. The man is bringing up his sleigh. Dear grandpapa, have pity on her. There! there he is! coming into the house; he will carry her off directly! Oh! I hear her sobbing now. Oh, dear, good grandpapa! for my sake!"

Mr. Lawrence, yielding before, at this gave way entirely.

"For your sake, then, Eleanor; but remember I buy her for you; she is none of mine. You must take all the responsibility; I'll have none of it. There—it is said. Call in the man. The girl may be right. He has the name of a hard-tempered man," continued Mr. Lawrence, seeking an excuse for what he considered his folly.

The business was soon settled, the man off, and Eleanor formally invested with the ownership of the girl for the seven years next ensuing.

The joy of the poor creature can not be told. Falling on her knees to Eleanor, she thanked her, blessed her, promised everlasting fidelity, wept and laughed by turns, and was at length led off to the kitchen by the sympathizing negroes who had gathered round her, and who all, with a fellow-feeling, rejoiced in her deliverance. "Little Pomp" giving it as his "'pinion, dat young missis from York was a lady to de backbone, and know'd how to 'spect niggers."

Eleanor's new responsibilities were not small, but they were cheerfully undertaken. Advised by her aunt—who feared that jealousy might be awakened, to the injury of the new-comer, if made a pet—she avoided that mistake. After clothing her properly—to which Eleanor applied herself with a feeling of importance quite new to her—she was anxious to prove to her grandfather that the girl might be turned to some use. But Phyllis had only lived in the family of a small farmer, where all things were done coarsely, and many not at all. She had, therefore, every thing to learn, and Eleanor, with the good-natured housemaid, had trouble enough in her training. The chief difficulty was the girl's eager desire to obey; for, under the rough teachings of Heiser's whip, she had acquired such habits of running, jumping, slamming, and executing imperfectly labors beyond her strength, that the nerves and temper of Mr. Lawrence were tried beyond his power of endurance, and, unwilling to consign her to a worse place, he wished her in "the Red Sea" every day of his life.

Poor Eleanor saw it all, and continually feared an outbreak; yet such was the girl's idolatrous gratitude to herself that she could not regret what she had done. Phyllis followed her like her shadow, stood behind her chair at meals, watched like a dog every movement of her eye in anticipation of her slightest wish, and asked no other pleasure than to wait upon her.

If Eleanor missed her thimble or scissors from its accustomed place, or if book, basket, or handkerchief were forgotten, Phyllis seemed to divine the want; and, flying up stairs, tearing through entries and rooms, would come with the quickness of thought—not seldom head before heels—into the parlor with the required article. She could always *find*. That was her "specialty;" but to *bring* without slip or breakage was another matter.

Her unfortunate tendencies in this way brought about the crisis Eleanor had so much dreaded.

Pomp meeting Phyllis, his hands full, preparing for the tea-table, to relieve himself, in an evil hour intrusted her with the basket of china. Always pleased to be busy, she started as usual, and, gaining impetus as she went, reached the parlor just in time to precipitate herself, basket, and contents at Mr. Lawrence's feet; who, rudely roused from a comfortable nap in his arm-chair by the crash, opened his eyes, with every nerve ajar, to see the carpet strewn with fragments.

"Not master of himself when china fell," he started up, and, seizing a riding-whip unhappily left out of place on a table near him, he darted toward the terrified girl, bent on punishment. Just at that moment Eleanor, alarmed by the noise, and fearing the truth, entered the room.

Rushing behind her young mistress, who, spreading her arms and skirts, presented a protecting front, Phyllis avoided the first onset. But, irritated by opposition, his anger beyond control, her master continued the pursuit, striking at random, with violent threats and denunciations more injurious than his ill-directed whip.

Eleanor, shocked and alarmed, besought for mercy and forgiveness; but, finding herself unheeded, she suddenly exclaimed, with an energy and resolution inspired by compassion, "I will *not* have her whipped! She is *mine*! she is *mine*, I say! She *shall not* be touched!"

Her manner arrested Mr. Lawrence instantly; and, with one of those alternations to which his impulsive nature was subject, he threw away the whip, burst into a laugh, and, throwing himself into his chair, cried out, "Why, you little jade! do you dare to brave your grandfather?"

Making a signal of flight to Phyllis, who vanished,

Eleanor ran to Mr. Lawrence, and, falling on her knees, exclaimed, "Dear grandpapa, forgive me. I fear I have said something very wrong; but I could not, indeed I could not see Phyllis whipped; and I could not bear that *you* should do such a thing."

Stooping down, he kissed her forehead, and then, raising her, said, "You were right, you were right, child. I forgot myself; but do, *do*, Nelly, make that huzzy more quiet and careful, or she will drive me mad."

Pomp, present at the scene, forthwith reported it in the kitchen, where it lost nothing at his hands, and gained great applause from the rest.

"I tell you," said he, "yelly neber seed nuffin like it! dat ar young missis is grandashious. I neber tink she'd be so pr'umshius to speak in dat ar way to ole massa."

"Why, dat ar jess de right way, wid massa," said Aunt Flore. "I know'd it alloways. Speak up to massa, and he comes right to he-self. But 'twon't do try dat trick berry often, case he get used to it. Oh dear me! if Miss Gertrude done so long ago, she'd be better now."

"Don't yelly talk about Miss Gertrude," said Aunt Minty, taking her pipe from her mouth; "she neber can't be no better dan she is; for she is an angel of de Lord now."

The "sense of the kitchen" being clearly with Phyllis, she was consoled under her mishap. Another link was added to the chain which bound her to her young mistress, who availed herself of her influence to make the desired impression, and, by warnings, gentle reproofs, and exhortations, poor Phyllis obtained some mastery over her ill-trained feet and hands.

Eleanor's efforts did not cease here. With much patience she attempted the harder work of teaching Phyl-

lis to read. Her progress was slow, but her earnest desire to please her mistress seemed to quicken her dormant faculties, and she at least gained new ideas from the greater degree of intercourse with her young lady to which she was thus admitted. Encouraged by her kindness, she would sometimes venture to speak of her former condition, and, in particular, would dwell on "Aunt Jenny," her only friend when her parents died.

"Berry good woman, missis, as eber was! teached me to say my prars, and neber tell no lies. But she know'd notting, no more dan me, out de book, missis—on'y in de heart. She say nobody eber teached her, on'y de Lord. But, for all she so good, what you tink, missis? de domine wouldn't let her jine de Church!"

"Not join the Church! and why, Phyllis?"

"Case she didn't know 'nuff, missis, de domine say. She went one, two, tree times to him, and ebery time he turned her back wid de same story, 'No, Jenny; I bery sorry, but I dars'n't let you come to de table till you answer dem questions I put to you.'"

"Poor Jenny!" said Eleanor.

"Yes, missis; but she got help at de last, for when she went de next time, and he put her off jes de same, she say, says she, 'Well, massa, 'taint no use for me try-in' any more; I shall die 'fore long, for I am ole woman; and when de Lord say to me, 'Jenny, why you no go to my table dat I spread for you?' I have notting to say but, 'Dear Lord, de domine wouldn't let me.'"

Now when she said dis, it struck like to his heart, and he said right off, 'No, Jenny, you sha'n't neber gib in dat 'port agin me; come to de table, and de Lord bress it to your good!'"

"And she did so?"

"Yes, missis; and after dat, nuffin eber trouble her any more. Poor Aunt Jenny! she used to say she

couldn't neber larn, but she could love: *love* is easier than *larn*, missis, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Eleanor, "far easier to such good, simple souls as Aunt Jenny—much harder for her superiors: better, far better, for all."

CHAPTER XXII.

AND now approached the great festival of the year—the holidays, extending from Christmas eve to New-year's day inclusive—which, in accordance with immemorial custom, were celebrated with a fullness of all good cheer and merry-making. To this the accumulated stores of the preceding month were designed to minister, with the addition of those particularly consecrated to the time, consisting of every variety of flesh and fish in season, together with every dainty device of tart, cake, jellies, and confitures, headed by the orthodox mince-pie, and the rear brought up by plum-pudding. Those were the days of soft waffles—a myth since Dutch housewives are extinct—oliekocks, krullers, and the true New-year cake—indeed, every thing "good for food." For then, without dread of dyspepsia or neuralgia, in their many horrid forms, or any of the diseases which brood like spectres over our modern tables, people ate, rejoiced, and digested, and invited their friends to do the same, instead of mixing cautions, like poisons, in their food. Then, too, with a liberality not limited to home, chests of cakes, rusks, and pastry were sent to kindred in town, and "portions to those for whom nothing was provided."

Then, too, was the season of visits and wishes, not of ceremony, but as a part of the gentle charities of life. Present ties were strengthened, the embers of former friendships stirred, and many a spark of kindness given out by the apparently cold and unpromising mass. Then the first day of the year was not so much glorified by a crowd of "callers," known only since the last *roué*, as

consecrated by the sight of dear familiar faces, and by the cordial greetings of others, who, jostled aside by the cares of the year, would not let another begin without an assurance that friends were not forgotten. Affections were kept bright, the rust of carelessness, neglect, or distrust rubbed off, and even enmities extinguished.

In no house were all the observances of the season more scrupulously regarded than in Mr. Lawrence's. The entire week was given up to its appropriate duties and pleasures. Mr. Lawrence, more than usually animated and interested for the sake of his granddaughter, would have every day, either at home or abroad, marked by festivity. Dinners of much state and formality, but with a good degree of license in some particulars, were prominent among the entertainments. At these the beauty of Eleanor and the attentions of Mr. Philip provided matter of prophetic gossip to the neighboring gentry, while Mr. Lawrence, *en grande tenue*, revived the glories of the olden time, and Miss Lawrence, still lovely, recalled—as a gentleman protested, who had long and unsuccessfully worshiped at her shrine—the “days of her bloom,” when she “was fairest of the fair.” The ladies retired from the table early, but the gentlemen “sat long at the wine.” And it must be confessed that toasts, songs, and stories sometimes verified the proverb which saith, “When wine is in, wit is out.”

On one such occasion, the gentlemen being left to themselves, and politics being exhausted, Mr. Philip was exposed to a battery of raillery on the subject of his fair cousin, much to the delight of his grandfather, but to his own manifest annoyance. To put a stop to it, he readily complied with a call on him for “The Twins of Latona;” and his fine manly voice was heard in the near drawing-room, where, through the frequently-opening doors, the ladies were made participants of the pleasure. To this

succeeded others by different gentlemen, and, at length, “Tom Bowling,” sung with much taste and feeling. Eleanor caught what she could; but, as the song ceased, her sense of sweet sounds was wounded by the less musical tones, in which a point was contested by her grandfather and one of the company.

“I would like to know, sir,” said Mr. Lawrence, “by what arithmetical process you make ninety-nine to be a hundred. It would be a profitable mode of notation applied to some things, but one that I confess I can not understand.”

The gentleman resisted Mr. Lawrence's interpretation, and they were both at once involved in the quiddities of the “century” question, which had just begun to whet the ingenuity, and sometimes to ruffle the temper of the disputants, even when “grave and reverend seigniors.” But the argument was suddenly, and, perhaps, fortunately interrupted by an uproarious burst of

“Here's to the maiden of bashful fifteen,
Here's to the widow of fifty;”

when the singer was checked by a loud call for “Black-eyed Susan.” But, unaffected by it, he persisted in his first choice, and proceeded—

“Here's to the charmer, whose dimples we prize,
And now to her that has none, sir;
Here's to the girl with a pair of blue eyes,
And here's to the nymph with but one, sir.

Let the toast pass,

Drink to your lass,

I'll warrant she'll prove an excuse for the glass.”

Spirits rose with voices, as the song went on with its oft-repeated burden, in which all joined, till, some one wisely moving an adjournment to the ladies, the gentlemen left the “wine-cup” and entered the drawing-room. Here Mr. Lawrence—cut short in his argument, but not silenced—resumed it, by saying to his antagonist,

"If I owed you £1800, sir, would you hold me acquitted if I paid you £1799?"

This, as the gentleman addressed was noted for a careful attention to small sums, was regarded as "a hit!" A laugh ensued. Mr. Lawrence, thereupon, conceiving himself the acknowledged victor, magnanimously permitted the subject to drop; a conclusion willingly acquiesced in by the rest, who found better entertainment in the smiles that greeted their entrance. But, in some instances, an undue exhilaration converted these into frowns, which even muddled heads could understand; or a gentle look would convey a regret quite as effective.

One gentleman, approaching Eleanor, by whom Mr. Philip was seated, after looking into her face with a scrutiny she neither comprehended nor liked, exclaimed, "Why, Lawrence! what right have *you* to sing about maidens with blue eyes? Miss Meredith's are not blue; though hang me if I can tell what *is* their color."

"Pardon me, Mr. Johnson," replied Philip, rather gravely, "the song, if I am not mistaken, was your own."

Without noticing the correction, the gentleman continued,

"They may be blue to *you*, however, for," in an audible whisper, "such is the color of Love, you know."

The angry glance of Eleanor seemed to recall him to propriety, and he added, "But I see that frowns have come over them, like clouds over the blue heaven, and I must retreat."

"Silly man!" thought she, as he turned away, "to be putting such ideas into cousin Phil's head!" But her wrath was changed into a laugh by a euphuistic address to her aunt from a gentleman who did not appear to know he was talking nonsense, and who, after a string of compliments, finished by comparing her

and her niece to the goddess Diana and an attendant nymph.

"Oh no, my good sir," replied Miss Lawrence, preferring to laugh at rather than to rebuke him seriously; "pray adapt your hyperbole to the taste of country ladies, and let us be only 'the young moon with the old one in her arms.'"

Coffee and whist brought the gentlemen to order, after which a handsome supper completed the plentiful hospitality of the day.

The eve of the new year, by universal consent, was a sort of domestic saturnalia, admitting among masters and servants of a general game of "Catch who can." This "catching," in which license and stratagem were permitted, the unlearned may require to be informed, consisted in being the first to express the good wishes of the season, subjecting the person caught, of course, to a forfeit. But the gain was but a secondary consideration. It was the triumph of cunning and quickness that chiefly excited.

At Mr. Lawrence's, each one, in no wise wearied with pleasure or service, had a scheme, independent of the others, for the great object of the night. Aunt Flore had appropriated to her use a little dark closet under the hall stairs, whence, like a spider darting from its central point of observation, she could rush out on all unwary comers. She felt quite sure of Master Phil and Miss Eleanor, "'case dey would sartin be coming down de great stars to cotch ole massa." Fat Aunt Minty "t'ought she would smudder in dat ar little hole," so she decided to take up a position in a larger closet, designed for hats, coats, etc., opening by a door into the hall. Pomp had given much consideration to the perfecting of his device. Watching his opportunity, when the coast was clear in the evening, he took down the

key, which hung high up by the side of the door leading into the small private entry, through which access was obtained to the "*dood-kamer*," and, putting it into the lock, turned it.

"Now," thought Pomp, "all's ready; only jess got to turn de handle, and I inside. No racket gettin' down de key; no time lost fumblin' 'bout de lock. Nobody neber 'spect any body in dere! Now, Massa Phil, see if I don't cotch you!"

Contrivances equally astute occupied all; and then, very innocently bidding "good-night," every one retired, apparently to rest.

A little before midnight, one by one, all stole to their coverts. Pomp greatly congratulated himself on his till he got fairly into it, when he began to feel rather shaky. Nothing short of the excitement of catching Massa Phil would ever have tempted him to put his carcass into that fearful place; and even this nearly failed him when he heard a small noise in his rear. He did not dare to look behind him, excusing himself by the reflection, "Can't see nuffin—dark as a pocket." The noise was repeated, and Pomp felt much inclined to abandon his project, and cut and run. But "No," thought he, bracing himself up, "'t isn't nuffin; rats and mice, I s'pose, dey neber still, always racketin' 'roun. One in Aunt Flore's closet saw away all de worl' like a carpenter! I tell Aunt Flore," continued he, trying to encourage himself by a joke, "I tell her dat ar fellow get gran' good livin' sawin' wood; he! he!—hark! hark! O Lor'! dat ar berry queer noise! dat ar no rats!"

A low, cautious step behind him confirmed this opinion. He dared not look, his knees knocked against each other, and with a desperate effort he reached out his hand for the door, but, bewildered by fear and darkness, could not find it. He opened his lips to cry "Lor', hab

marcy!" but his mouth was stopped by a hand laid upon it, another clutched him by the collar, and Master Phil, half choked with suppressed laughter, found breath enough to say in an under tone, "Happy New Year, Pomp! now keep quiet, make no noise, or I'll do worse to you."

"Lor' bless us! Massa Phil, who could tink dat jelly'd be in sich a place as dis?"

"And perhaps I shouldn't be here if I had not seen you working away at the key. 'Twas a good trick, eh, Pomp, to counter-work you. You are a cunning fellow, but you hav'n't eyes behind."

"No, 'deed, Massa Phil; body muss be eyes all ober to cotch you."

"Now do you stick by me, Pomp, and you shall catch all the rest."

Aunt Flore, meanwhile, in her lair, heard a light step on the great stairs, and, keeping the door on a crack, thought, "Dat ar Massa Phil, for sure." The sound approached, and, darting out, she exclaimed, "Happy New Year!"

No voice responded; and presently, in a tone of great vexation, she was heard to say, "Only dat ar cussed dog, Ponto!" and was returning to her hiding-place when Master Philip and Pomp burst upon her with the triumphant salutation.

Aunt Minty, thinking it time for her to appear, was about to do so, when she found herself entrapped; the door of the closet in which she had unwarily secreted herself fastened by a spring bolt on the outside, and was, of course, immovable from within. Her situation being discovered, she became a mark for the gibes and jests of all the rest, till at length Pomp, yielding to her entreaties to be "let out," opened the door with one of his profoundest scrapes, and, with an introductory flourish of

his hand, said, "Ladies and gemplen, my moder! De com'plents of de season to you, marm!" Poor Aunt Minty, hiding her face with her apron, panting, perspiring, and ashamed, waddled off to conceal her discomfiture in the kitchen. In her confusion and haste she nearly overthrew Momma Zip, who, unusually excited, was coming, with Guinea song and dance, to wish happy years to all. Poor soul! how few in her long life had been *hers*! and the future had none for her.

The next and greatest achievement of the night was to "cotch ole massa;" and Flore, fearlessly leading the way, softly entered his room. The curtains were drawn as usual, but the light was burning. There was no fear of waking him. No one ever slept on that night till they had seen "the old year out and the new year in." Flore, therefore, in full confidence, stepped along as stealthily as a cat, and, unwilling to startle him, said, in a gentle voice, "Happy New Year to massa!"

But no answer was returned; and, peeping within the curtains, to her dismay she saw no one there. Turning to the group behind, which now included nearly the whole establishment, she was about to express her surprise and disappointment, when a screen at one corner of the fire-place was thrown down, and Mr. Lawrence, seated in his arm-chair, brandishing his cane, and laughing, exclaimed, in a merry voice, "Happy New Year to all! great and small! old and young! white, black, and yellow! Now to bed, every one of you, and let the old house be quiet."

"Happy New Year!" cried yet another voice, and Eleanor, coming from behind a large cloak that hung in the room, saluted her grandfather and aunt, and then ran to shake hands merrily with all.

Aunt Flore, having the first and last word on all occasions, dropped a courtesy to Mr. Lawrence. "Massa

beat us all," said she; "so smart as de first New Year time I'member him. Many 'turns of de same to massa. He'll always be de smartest of us all." And thus ended the "Mistakes of the Night." But a generous distribution of cakes and money the next day among the servants, proved that massa had not desired to escape the forfeits.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE holidays had passed, but not all the pleasures of the winter. Master Philip was anxious to prove to Eleanor that she had never known the true delight of sleighing. Rejecting the accustomed roads, where the snow was worn, he resorted to the highway provided by the river, which was just in the finest condition for the purpose. Here, in a commodious sleigh, with plenty of furs, and and a pair of fleet horses, he was always ready to attend her. Some of their neighbors lived, like Mr. Lawrence, near the river; and, either to visit these, or for more extended drives, sometimes with Miss Lawrence and her father, Eleanor profited by his courtesy.

Following the course of the noble stream, beautiful even when ice-bound, with its mountain line on one side and the dwellings of the gentry, the river gods, on the other; its shores dotted by "landings;" dismantled masts peeping out of its sheltering inlets and creeks—suggestive of the activity that was to succeed the present repose; now doubling a headland, now keeping clear of a cove; sometimes under a flood of sunshine, then in the soft moonlight, mirrored in portions of ice not covered by snow, Eleanor was borne along, as if by winged horses, to the

"Tintabulation of the bells, bells, bells."

What was a drive through the streets of a crowded city to this broad, unbroken highway—jostled by some, running down others, fearing to be impaled by those behind, or to commit an equal violence on those in front, snow half mud, and every jarring sound disturbing the sense?

Then, too, Cousin Philip instructed her in sliding. He would have put her on skates, after the fashion of the fair Hollanders of whom he had heard, but she was timid, and only ventured, clinging to his hand, to slide while he skated.

And then, in her pleasant walks and sweet companionship with Aunt Gertrude, she learned to love Nature under its winter aspects. The clear skies of the day, the gorgeous sunsets, the deep blue of the star-lit firmament, the evergreens bending under the new-fallen snow, the symmetrical ramifications of the disrobed trees, now cased in prismatic crystal, then in feathery frost-work, shedding an indescribable softness over the landscape, filled her with a delight which she could not always express. But her heart responded as Aunt Gertrude softly repeated from the old canticle,

"Oh, ye ice and snow;
Oh, ye frost and cold, bless ye the Lord;
Praise him, and magnify him forever!"

Then there were fireside pleasures for the long evenings, among which Mr. Lawrence especially esteemed a game of whist. In this he and Master Philip excelled; and Miss Lawrence had made herself, to please her father, a remarkably good lady-player. Her grandfather undertook the instruction of Eleanor; and though, with all others, he insisted, like Mrs. Battle, on "the rigor of the game," to her mistakes he was always indulgent. She might omit to return his lead; she might uselessly sacrifice a trump on the thirteenth card, or compel him to cast a king into the jaws of an ace, which she ought to have remembered was lying in wait for him; she might, in short, do any thing but revoke. *That* he considered an "irredeemable stupidity." Once she was guilty of it, and received only a gentle exhortation. The second and last time she thus transgressed he threw

up his cards, did not speak—a marvelous self-control—but whistled emphatically, and played the “Cooper’s March” with his knuckles on the little stand, always by his side, as if on purpose to afford him this relief. Master Philip saw the tears start into Eleanor’s eyes, and adroitly proposed to teach her piquet, saying, “You’ll soon know enough to beat me, for I am but an indifferent player.”

Mr. Lawrence smiled. The cloud passed away, and Eleanor, with a grateful look at Cousin Phil, accepted his offer.

From that time, for some reason—Eleanor feared, her own dullness—her grandfather promoted piquet in preference to whist. Seated by the table at which she and Master Philip played, he seemed to find as much pleasure in the game as they did, suggesting from time to time to his grandson—Eleanor could not tell why, when he certainly knew more than she did—to ‘strengthen his point,’ not to reject ‘good cards’ in a presumptuous hope of better, and to remember that ‘first in hand’ was a great advantage—admonitions that seemed to embarrass Master Philip rather than to help him.

A fine fall of snow had repaired the sleighing, when, one morning, Uncle Mink appeared at the parlor door, and wanted “to speak to massa.”

“Well, what is it, Mink?”

After shifting from leg to leg, and twirling his hat round on his hand, he answered, “A drefful bad rheumatiz” in both his arms and in his right shoulder.

“Ah! that’s bad; but Miss Gitty can cure it.”

Mink looked doubtful; said he’d “tried missus’s stuff, and it didn’t do no good.”

“Well, we’ll have Dr. Nelson then.”

Again Mink hesitated. At length he continued, “Please, massa, dere’s a doctor at de Hook cures brack

folks all roun’ here—Mr. Johnson’s Jake, and Mr. Du-bois’s Tom, and all—I’d like try him.”

“Some cursed quack!” said Mr. Lawrence, with rising anger.

“Yes, massa, dat’s de name—Doctor Quaco—colored man, massa.”

“Yes, so I supposed. But how can you go? Not on horseback with lame arms; at least, you couldn’t if it were *my* business, I’ll engage; and it won’t help your rheumatism to walk there.”

“No, massa; but if massa let us take de farm horses—dey rader gay for want of work juss now—and massa knows dem High Dutch horses—muss keep ’em down, or, dam ’em, dey *will* hull.”

Mr. Lawrence’s cane descended with an emphasis that made Mink start.

“No swearing, Mink! Nobody swears here but *me*!”

A low bow, and “Beg pardon, massa—didn’t tink,” acknowledged Mr. Lawrence’s superior claim.

“Well, and who to drive? *You* can not, of course, drive wild horses.”

“Pomp, massa, can drive me and Flore.”

“Flore, too, what’s the matter with her?”

“Nottin’, massa, only she tink de doctor help little Mink’s legs: de doctor drefful smart on de rickets, massa.”

“So little Mink must be poisoned too! and why not try Dr. Nelson for him, if not for yourself?”

Mink scratched his poll; but, more afraid of his wife than of his master, he proceeded:

“Flore tink dat he don’t care for de colored folks—on’y for de quality, massa.”

“Oh, the devil fly away with Flore! She’s always thinking; and why can’t you think yourself, man?”

To this Mink had nothing to reply, never having con-

sidered *thought* as among his inalienable rights, and, especially, never to be exercised in opposition to his wife.

"Well, well, go your way, but take care the horses don't break all your necks—Doctor Quaco can't mend *them*."

"No, massa, I 'spects not;" and Mink vanished.

Flore's diplomacy prospered. It was true, Uncle Mink had the rheumatism, and perhaps little Mink the rickets; but *she* had a small fund, a good deal increased by her New-yearings; and this was to be invested at a shop in the neighboring village, and Doctor Quaco was to be taken on the way. Having had many indulgences of late, she thought it advisable to put this expedition on the footing of necessity, thus leaving the field open for farther favors, if desired.

Pomp's appearance at the tea-hour announced their return.

"Well, Pomp," inquired Mr. Lawrence, "what did Quaco say?"

"He say, massa," replied Pomp in an oracular manner, "dat Uncle Mink hab de rheumatiz, and little Mink de rickets."

"Yes, that we knew before; but what's to be done?"

"He gib some stuff in a bottle for bote, massa; and he say Uncle Mink muss hab some sperits too," added Pomp, anxious to account for a suspicious-looking jug that had appeared.

"Spirits! what, inside or out?"

"Bote, massa; to froment outside, and take inside for etarnal complaints."

"I dare say! The scoundrel! Gertrude, you must look into this. Mink has been a sober fellow all his life. I won't have this quack make a drunkard of him."

But a glimpse into the kitchen at eleven o'clock that

night would have relieved Mr. Lawrence's alarm on the subject of Mink's temperance.

By the light of a roaring fire was to be seen a table of large dimensions, covered with the good things hoarded from their holiday luxuries, and smoking with additions of their own procuring. Of these, most conspicuous was an immense turkey, in regard to which Flore had mystified Momma Zip, the guardian of the poultry-yard; averring that Miss Hyslip at the ferry had given her a turkey's egg, and that she had put it in a certain nest where the process of incubation had just begun. Consequently, this individual turkey was the product, and the property *hers*, the intermediate feeding and care to the contrary notwithstanding. Momma, who, however lax her notions on the subject of food, as has been said, was incorruptible in regard to any thing committed to her in trust, demurred, but in vain. She could never talk fast enough for Aunt Flore.

At each end of the table was a bottle of the spirits prescribed for Uncle Mink, and among the guests Doctor Quaco himself and his wife, both of whom recommended his medicine by their fearless use of it.

Here they were, in a state of high enjoyment! This upper kitchen being detached from the house, and with but one window, which looked in another direction, they had no fear of being seen or overheard, when a rap at this only window produced a general start. Knives and forks dropped, the glass on its way to the lips was arrested, the joke was cracked the wrong way, and laughter died in the birth!

Aunt Flore was the first to recover. Going to the window, a face she never found unfriendly, appeared, and, shoving it softly up, she said in a low voice, "Massa Phil! dat ar yelly?"

"Yes, Flore—me myself; let me in. I am very cold,

ay, and hungry too;" and, raising his finger in a way at once confidential and admonitory, said, "*Mum*, Aunt Flore! no tale-telling, you know."

"No, Massa Phil; dat's de word: mum for you, mum for me."

Upon this the door was unbolted, and Philip, shivering with cold, yet casting a merry glance at the table and those around it, drew up to the fire. Insisting that no one should be disturbed, he was formally introduced by Pomp to "de doctor and he lady;" after which, being well warmed, and taking, by Flore's advice, a taste of the doctor's medicine, he gladly took the supper that she spread for him on a table in the wide chimney-corner, saying, with her usual tact, "Massa Phil too cold to come to de table—muss keep close to de fire."

"This is a capital turkey, Aunt Flore; where did it come from?" asked he, significantly.

"Not bery far off," she replied slyly; then added, "From Miss Hyslip's, at de ferry, Massa Phil."

"And there's more where this came from, I suppose?"

"Oh yes, whenever Massa Phil wants a supper," said she, with a smile which he well understood.

He did not long interfere with their pleasures; but, cautioning them to be quiet, and with an "aside" to Aunt Flore to get her visitors away without rousing the dogs, he retired, having the satisfaction of hearing himself, through the closing doors, applauded as "dat ar's de truest gem'len as walks de ground."

That evening, to Mr. Lawrence's surprise and annoyance, Philip had not been at home. Miss Lawrence endeavored to soften it to him by saying he had been unusually domestic of late, and that whenever he was absent it was always easily explained.

"Yes, oh yes," replied the old gentleman, trying, but

not very successfully, to treat it as a light matter. "Come, Eleanor, let *me* give you a lesson in piquet; or shall we try three-handed whist, since that runaway has reduced us to it?"

This was preferred as including all, and grandpapa played "dummy" to the ladies.

The next morning Philip appeared at breakfast at the usual hour, but Eleanor thought he had not his accustomed cheerful face.

"Good-morning, Phil," said Mr. Lawrence; "you deserted us last evening; where were you?"

"I was out, sir."

The gravity and decided tone of this reply, so rare with him, seemed to disconcert his grandfather.

"Out! why—why yes, I know *that*. I said so. Out! to be sure you were."

But he did not repeat the inquiry, and Philip proffered no explanation; turning the conversation by some rather forced small-talk with Eleanor and his aunt, he left the room as soon as the meal was over.

Mr. Lawrence sat silent, evidently brooding over something that much displeased him; and, not inclined, as usual, for society or reading, summoned Pomp, and withdrew to his room. On entering he found Aunt Flore there. He had never condescended to any espionage with servants or children; but, thinking Flore very likely to know more in the present instance than himself, and choosing the most direct mode, he dismissed Pomp, and said,

"Where was Master Phil last night, Flore?"

Now Flore knew nothing; for her young master, with all his reliance on her good-will, had never admitted her to his confidence. Nevertheless, she always instinctively spoke as if retained by him.

"Massa Phil! why, in his bed, massa; so fass asleep dis mornin' I couldn't hardly wake him."

"Very well, that may be; but where was he in the evening, I say?"

"I dunno know, massa. Sarvents ough'n't neber be spyin' where dere massas goes. If ole massa out ebery night in de week, I tink he on'y at de dominie's or de 'sist'ry—"

"You know very well, Flore, that Master Phil was not at the dominie's nor the consistory last evening."

"No, massa, s'pose not; he too young for dat ting now; one of dose days, p'raps. But massa knows young gen'elmen don't like be ax'd whar dey's agoin', here nor dere, dey feel so gran' to be dere own massas. P'raps Massa Phil only down by Mr. Johnson's, or ober de riber to wait on de young ladies at ole Madam Van de Bergh's."

"That is just where I supposed he was, and where he shall not go," said Mr. Lawrence, angrily. "They have been trying to catch him these two years."

"Laws, massa! dey can't hole a candle to our young missis for beauty. Massa Phil neber tink of dem, I sure; den Miss Eleanor so sweet on Massa Phil, too."

"Do you think so, Flore?" replied Mr. Lawrence, much mollified. "Well, you may go now, and send Pomp to me."

Pomp reappeared; and, while assisting his master to put on his dressing-gown, said, "Massa loss any ting?"

"No, Pomp, nothing but my temper, which I shall find by-and-by."

Pomp, something of an "expert" in the interpretation of looks, perceiving that his master was in a more complacent mood than when he left the breakfast-room, ventured, as he had sometimes done with impunity, a little pleasantry.

"Massa better don't lose dat so berry often, fear one of dose days massa neber find it."

"That's true, Pomp, spoke like a dominie. A bad habit is master at last—but come—the water. Did you brush my coat?"

"Yes, massa," replied Pomp, handing at the same time a crown piece that had slipped within the lining of the pocket; "massa neber know he loss it."

Mr. Lawrence took it and put it in his purse, giving Pomp, at the same time, a half-dollar for his honesty. He received it with a grin, displaying an enviable set of ivory, and a low bow, saying, "Wish massa loss his money ebery day."

"I am much obliged to you; and that's your gratitude, is it? Well, I suppose you are as good as you know how to be, and that's more than *I* am, I fear."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE least agreeable season had come. The snow was gone, and the removal of its white drapery disclosed the ragged garments of winter. The roads were nearly impassable, and the ice, cracked, unsound, and in many places covered with water, was no longer to be trusted. Moving was out of the question, and the young people were reduced to in-door occupations. In books they had little companionship; but Philip, an observer of nature and a lover of animals, had pets of all kinds, understood their habits, and could give Eleanor practical hints in natural history, as well worth having as if found between the boards of a book. Birds, including choice species of poultry, rabbits, cats, and dogs, abounded about the house and premises, and were taught to dwell in most instructive harmony. In proof of which, Phil delighted to point out to Eleanor a spaniel on the hearth-rug, with his fore-paws lovingly folded round an unre-sisting cat. At another time he directed her attention to this same dog performing the part of dry-nurse to a family of kittens, whom the mother, dissatisfied with her quarters, was removing. Following her lead, he took up one in his mouth and gently placed it in the new bed the mother had found, to which he was seen returning at night, as if to inquire into the safety of the family. Having ascertained it, he licked them and retired. On another occasion Eleanor was called on to assist in the care of a pet bantam hen, whose feet were nipped by the frost. Too tender to be at once exposed, Philip inter-ceded with Mrs. Dorothy—no one in the house could refuse him—to admit her and her basket, for a few days,

into the housekeeper's room. The species were then rare, very small, strongly marked, and cared for as a sort of curiosity. The basket was capacious. Philip, having furnished it with a perch, brought in her mate to console her, and Eleanor was requested to admire the conjugal devotion of the little cock, as he spread a sheltering wing over his disabled spouse.

Then Cousin Phil asked assistance in preparing his fishing-tackle, and she soon learned to manage the quills and corks, to twist the horse-hair lines, and to attach the hooks.

"What are you so busy about, Eleanor?" inquired her aunt.

"Making 'snares' for Cousin Phil," she replied, very innocently.

Miss Gertrude looked at her father, and smiled. He put his finger on his lip to check farther comment, but he rapped on the table a merry accompaniment, as he hummed the air of "Come, haste to the wedding!" Eleanor, intent on her work, neither saw nor heard.

Philip, meanwhile, in anticipation of the ducking season, was getting things in readiness. His canoe required repairing and a fresh coat of white paint; and a suit of white linen was to be put in order, that, thus disguised, he might, unsuspected, invade the haunts of the water-fowl in the coves and creeks as soon as the ice should move. This, of itself, was an event. For some time in a state when crossing was perilous—only attempted by the daring or fool-hardy—while daily false announcements of its "moving" kept expectation wide awake, at length the fetters were burst, and, in grand accumulating masses, the ice floated down. All seemed to have a sense of liberation—of restoration to the world without—as the noble river, shaking off its chains, flowed rejoicingly by, inviting them again to its broad and beau-

tiful bosom! And now was to be put in practice the stratagems devised against the "poor ducks," as Eleanor said; but, in spite of her compassion, she laughed heartily at Philip in his death-dealing dress, which wanted, as she told him, "only the 'mist-cap' of the dwarfs to be complete!"

Thrown thus continually and naturally together, it would have been strange if a more than common mutual interest had not been excited. In Eleanor this was undisturbed by any question of its nature. Preoccupied as she was, Philip but supplied to her, as nearly as possible, a want she often lamented. He was a brother, with just that touch of gallantry and devotion, in which, however true in more important respects, brothers are sometimes deficient. The only deduction from her contentment was, that he himself was less cheerful than formerly—often abstracted, and evidently perplexed, restless, and, she feared, even at times unhappy.

One evening it so happened that they were left alone in the parlor, Mr. Lawrence having retired earlier than usual; and Miss Gertrude, leaving them to finish a game of piquet, soon followed him.

They continued to play for some time, only speaking as the game required. At length it approached its termination, and, having compared "points," etc., Eleanor, first in hand, proceeded to play, counting, as she went, till, reaching "one hundred," she exclaimed, "There! I have beaten you again! Why, Cousin Phil, you are a better player than I am, yet, lately, I always win! What are you thinking of?"

"Shall I tell you, Eleanor?" said he, with an expression so strange, hurried, excited, and yet hesitating, that she could only gather from it some trouble, of which, indeed, since the evening when his absence had incurred his grandfather's displeasure, she had been apprehensive. "Shall I tell you?" he repeated.

"Do, cousin," she answered, looking compassionately; "do, I beg of you. If I can only give you comfort or counsel, I shall be so happy!"

"Hear me, then, while I have courage to speak," and with a sort of desperation he proceeded:

"Can you, *will* you, dear Eleanor! unworthy as I am; little as I can offer in return for all your beauty, accomplishments, and goodness; little as I have done to obtain such a possession! *will* you, dear Eleanor—*will* you be my *wife*?"

If lightning had fallen at her feet, Eleanor could hardly have been more stunned. Although, on rare occasions, some expression of her grandfather's had for a moment suggested to her an uneasy thought of this kind, still he had so rigidly forbidden, and, in the main, had so carefully avoided all allusions or raillery in the presence of Eleanor, and Philip himself had been so much more like a friend than a lover, that she had entirely dismissed the idea from her mind. And now to this good, kind, pleasant cousin she was to give pain, which, however short-lived she might hope it would prove, must at present be the keenest she could inflict—on one, too, on whom she would only confer happiness! Her heart and eyes were full; she could scarcely command words to convey the sentence for which he waited in silence as profound as her own. At length she spoke.

"Dear cousin, I am sure you will believe me when I say that this declaration overwhelms me with surprise and—and—grief! Forget it, I entreat you, as I shall do. Let me not lose my cousin and my friend because I can—never be any thing else to him!"

Not daring to raise her eyes to Philip, who sat voiceless by her side, they remained immovable, till, unable longer to endure the constraint, she ventured a look toward him, and still another, for astonishment now got

the better of every other emotion as she met his gaze, expressive only of relief, of happiness!"

"Cousin Phil," exclaimed she, with animation, "what does this mean?" Then, catching the contagion of his smile, "This is not the first of April, surely! What game are you at?"

"A desperate one, dear Eleanor, if you were not the best cousin in the world!"

She still stared in mute amazement.

"Yes, the dearest, kindest cousin that ever man had! and simply for not falling in love with me!"

"In love with you! I never dreamed of such a thing! How had you the presumption to suppose it?"

"I did not; I only feared it."

"Feared it! Worse and worse! But you may be perfectly easy now, you see. Pray, however, how happens it that, being in love with *me*, you *feared* a return?"

"Dear Eleanor, how shall I confess it? I was *not* in love!"

"Not in love yourself! Oh, delightful! Now we are on equal terms. You do not want to marry me, and, if you were the last man, I wouldn't marry you!"

"Don't be severe, dear Nelly! Let me call you so now; it is more familiar, but it is, too, more affectionate; and now there is no danger, you know."

"None in the world to me! but who shall guarantee your safety, my hitherto invulnerable cousin? Take care! Perhaps I may be piqued into making myself irresistible yet."

"No, no," said Philip, shaking his head; "I have a stronger guarantee than you imagine. You shall hear—"

"Nay, if you please, pray answer me one question first. Pray, sir, supposing you had 'made an indelible

impression on my too susceptible heart,' as the novels say, what would you have done then?"

"Married you, of course, even at the sacrifice of myself."

"Sacrifice!" exclaimed Eleanor, laughing heartily. "Well, there have been love-scenes, sentimental, tragical, passionate, heroic, sublime; but so ridiculous as this, never!"

"Ah! Eleanor, to you it is all sport, but to me confusion and fear still."

"What, though I have refused you! What else can I do to make you happy? I thought but now that you were on the pinnacle of felicity, having escaped from me."

"Yes, for a moment; but have patience with me, Eleanor; I can not rest without explaining my strange conduct. I do not ask your love, but I can not be denied your friendship—I dare not say your respect. It is not very late—" and, throwing more wood on the fire, placing a chair near it for her, and drawing another toward it, he seated himself by her side. "Now for my confession:

"You have not known, Eleanor, nor I, much longer than since you came here, that a darling object of our grandfather was to unite us. It was natural enough that he should desire it. It would draw closer the few family links left, would keep his fine fortune unbroken, and secure to himself in his old age the society and care of those dearest to him. This desire was strengthened, of course, by your presence. Oh, you have no idea of the fondness and pride with which he regards you, and the efforts he has made to inspire me with his own admiration!"

"Nor of your indifference!" interrupted Eleanor, archly.

"Oh no, not indifference, dear cousin; I had no heart to give."

Eleanor uttered an exclamation, and could not suppress a sigh.

"Ah!" thought she, "poor Phil; now I do, indeed, feel for you."

"Nothing," he continued, "could have preserved me from an attachment which I now see would have been hopeless but a pre-engagement of my honor and affection. And now, how shall I venture to say to whom? how ask your sympathy for one so far below you?"

Eleanor started. She began to fear the confidence to which she had so readily assented.

"Neither fortune nor family—"

"Oh," said Eleanor, much relieved, "if that be all! But tell me, tell me who she is."

"Let me go back to the beginning. She is the child of humble parents, was born in my grandfather's house, and remained there the first three years of her life."

"What! Priscilla Dale?"

"The same. Are you mortified for me, Eleanor?"

"Not mortified, but—but surprised," said she, too honest to conceal her feelings, and Philip proceeded:

"Both motherless children, we seemed instinctively drawn toward each other—just difference enough in our ages to make her my plaything, and me her protector. A sister of her father came from England to live with him, and the child left us. But my aunt's interest in her continued; and, from time to time, she came to her for better instruction than she could get elsewhere. If she was industrious, her reward was to remain for an hour's play with me; and when I was in especial favor, my reward was to pass a day at the Mill Farm. So the time passed till I was sent to school, and then to college

—my holidays always the more welcome, because I should again see Priscilla."

"And my grandfather and aunt—had they no fears, no suspicions?"

"My grandfather, at that time an active man of business and a warm politician, was too much occupied to observe attentively what a mere boy was doing. Besides which, as I grew older, I became more cautious, and confined my intercourse with her to such times and places as would excite no remark. As to my aunt, she was an invalid, and had few opportunities of observation. Thus it went on till my final return home; and then, though with continually-increasing affection, I formed no purpose, had no plan for the future. I thought only of seeing her; of the pleasure of being with her. I had never even mentioned love to her, though I could not but feel that there was but one heart between us. At length I was roused from this dreamy happiness by the rumor of a lover urged on her by her father, and I resolved to secure her. My grandfather's consent to our marriage was impossible. The very suggestion would be an offense scarcely pardonable. A clandestine one, sure to be discovered, would be only an aggravated crime. In this situation—a madman and a fool!" continued he, with startling violence—"bent to make her my own on any terms, I tried—I proposed, in a moment when her yielding tenderness gave me courage, a solemn written contract, to be fulfilled when I should be my own master. But," added he, hesitating, and covering his face with his hands, "but, though my—wife in fact, for the present no—no marriage."

Eleanor turned faint; she had heard enough and too much. The guilty embarrassment of Philip left no doubt of his meaning. He was in her presence a self-convicted betrayer of an innocent, confiding girl. Without at-

tempting to speak she endeavored to rise and leave the room, but he caught her hand and almost forced her to be seated.

"Stay, Eleanor! you have not heard all. Heaven and Priscilla saved me from the wicked folly I was ready to commit."

Eleanor breathed more freely; raised her eyes with a look expressive of thankfulness, but could not speak.

"Yes; she, hitherto the gentlest and most loving creature, spurned not only my proposal, but myself! Yes, spurned me! Oh, you can not know, even if you had seen her, the spirit that kindles those dark eyes when roused! I was banished. No entreaties, no prayers could obtain my pardon, nor even a glimpse of her. At length, after repeated attempts to see her, I was informed that she had gone with her aunt to Pennsylvania, where a brother of her father resided. Gone ostensibly to attend a yearly meeting of their sect, but, as I well knew, to avoid me. Her aunt returned without her. Their friends had pressed Priscilla to remain, and she did so, till not long since."

"And then? were you allowed to see her?"

"To see her! yes, but to no purpose. You recollect, perhaps, the evening when my absence from home caused some uneasiness?"

"Yes, perfectly; what then?"

"That evening she consented to see me. Up to that time, notwithstanding my grandfather's desires—almost his commands—and my own growing affection for you, my dear cousin, I never wavered in my fidelity to Priscilla. The object of this interview was to implore her to consent to an immediate private union, trusting, by thus hazarding every thing, to atone for my offense, and to secure her."

"And her answer?"

"Decided and inexorable; and we parted. Despair, together with resentment, now stimulated me, and I resolved to conform to my grandfather's wishes. You know what a wretched business I made of it, and will now understand why I could not even desire success. I gain, indeed, nothing by my failure but time—time, yet to make peace with Priscilla; perhaps to obtain her consent; and, on the part of my grandfather, his relinquishment of a purpose he will now see to be impracticable."

Eleanor had listened with the deepest interest. Extending her hand to Philip, restored to her confidence by the sacrifice at which he was willing to atone for his fault, she said, "I am so glad, my cousin, that I can love you still. Yet I have a thought that will burn out my heart if I do not speak it. It is not for me to decide between your duty to grandpapa and what is due to Priscilla. I can but admire your courage and generosity. But I have somewhat against you, for all that. What right had you to consider that my whole heart, without which I would marry no man, was fairly obtained by the mere offer of an unwilling hand? Had you gained my affections, what had you to give me in exchange? Nothing! which I was, of course, to find out to my sorrow. No, no, Cousin Phil, it is bad, it is wicked, thus to trifle with love. Burn no false fire on that altar."

He felt the rebuke. "Dear Eleanor, it was base, it was unmanly; I see it now as never before; but be merciful, and forgive me."

"I have already done so. There is nothing so enervating, so treacherous, so cruel, as fear. Alas! that grandpapa, with all his affection for you, should have held you in subjection to this bondage. But let the past be past. My sympathy is yours, and my respect for Priscilla you can not doubt. How far she is fitted for the position you would give her, of course, I can not judge."

"Ah!" said Philip, with a smile, "you can not, my sweet cousin, from your height, see far enough into my lowly little Quaker girl to do her justice. But you will, by-and-by, I am sure, or you are not so good as I believe you to be. It is unreasonable, though, to detain you longer. It is time you should retire. Oh, you can not know how much good you have done me! No, no," added he, interpreting rightly her arch smile, "not by your rejection, but by your sympathy. Good-night, dear Eleanor."

They parted—Philip to ponder on his grandfather's reception of his failure, Eleanor to "moralize the spectacle" in her own way.

With her associations and education she could not but be somewhat shocked by so incongruous a union. But, though trained in habits of filial respect and obedience, hers had been "a reasonable service"—not under the iron rule of the preceding generation, nor yet lowered to the modern familiarity, by which a perfect equality is established between parent and child. She could, therefore, see the conflict of duties in the present case, and the enfeebling effect on a naturally generous and manly temper of a system that inspired no confidence.

"Ah!" thought she, "how differently would one that I know have acted under such circumstances. If opposed in a virtuous attachment, how bravely would he have avowed his love! how would gold have melted away before it! how would rank have burst like a bubble! No crooked path would he have trod—no timid course pursued! But, after all, Cousin Phil is to be pitied, perhaps, more than blamed; and if this little maid of the mill is really what he fancies, I do hope he will have the courage to marry her like a man."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE next morning the breakfast passed cheerfully. No cloud rose even "as big as a man's hand." Mr. Lawrence, understanding that the young people had had a long *tête-à-tête* evening, concluded that, if Phil were not a booby, he had opened the business; and, if so, their present amicable relations justified a hope of the happiest result. In this belief, he directed his grandson to attend his toilet.

A few words served to demolish the castle that years had built. At first it was difficult to say where the bolt of his anger would fall—on Eleanor for refusing, or on Philip for being refused. When, however, the family met at dinner, a more discriminating justice than was to be expected directed it entirely against Eleanor, who, though aware that her decision would pain her grandfather, had no apprehension of the manner in which it would be evinced. This was not long doubtful. Mr. Lawrence, having had a slight touch of Eleanor's spirit in her defense of Phyllis, rather shrunk from a fair fight with her; but this he made up for by a series of small attacks, the more vexatious as they could be neither repelled nor noticed. Instead of the greeting, at once kind and playful, with which he usually seated her at table, she took a place unheeded. No nice morsel solicitously selected, and sent to her unasked, she remained unattended to, till Phyllis, having stood some time, plate in hand, purposely unseen, at length was carelessly asked, "For whom?" as if he were unconscious whose little serving-maid she was. Instead of the accustomed glass

of wine with her grandfather, not a word was addressed to her. She was, in short, made to feel as much as possible, by negations of every kind, how entirely the sun of her favor was set. Not that this was really so. Mr. Lawrence could not so easily abandon a cherished project. He flattered himself Eleanor's refusal was a mere girlish freak to prove her power; or that Philip had been precipitate, and that a little more time and intercourse would excite the corresponding feeling on her part. Of Phil's indifference he had not the least suspicion. He thought him, indeed, not so passionate a wooer as he himself would be in the like case; but this he imputed to the change of manners—the execrable decay of all true gallantry and devotion; all owing to the French Revolution, with which, Democrat as he was, he had become thoroughly disgusted. Oh! had he known the fact! Still hoping for success, he thought that, in the mean time, it would not be amiss to show Eleanor, by the temporary withdrawal of his favor, how much it was really worth.

It would be difficult to say who suffered most by the experiment, Eleanor or his grandson. She, grieved and oppressed, the tears ready to fall from eyes that she did not dare to turn toward Mr. Lawrence, her dinner nearly untouched, yet not presuming to leave the table, sat like a culprit; while Philip, unprepared for this displeasure, felt self-condemned that he did not share it with her.

The cloth was removed, but no cordiality nor pleasantries succeeded. No remembrance of "absent friends" to draw the nearer those who were present. No repetition of his jocose and favorite toast,

"Here's to our friends! but as to our foes,
Short shoes, and corns on their toes!"

Only a joyless formality, unbroken except by an occa-

sional remark addressed to his daughter or to Philip—never to Eleanor.

Unable longer to endure this, she left the table as soon as was admissible, taking refuge in the drawing-room, whence a view of the river suggested to her an escape, on which she was reflecting, when Philip, with a distressed countenance, entered.

"Eleanor," said he, "I can not bear this. I will confess every thing. It is base to let you suffer when I am the only one in fault. I will at least share your disgrace."

"No, no, on no account. To involve you would not help me. I suffer, 'tis true, unjustly, but still for my own act, which nothing that you could have done would have prevented. Be easy; you are guiltless in regard to me. Nay, I insist on your silence. In a few days I shall be at home, and shall forget these troubles. By-and-by, when the storm has passed, I'll come again, if grand-papa will let me. In the mean time, you must come to us, and I will introduce you to some right pleasant young persons, and we will have merry times again."

But her amiable efforts to console him only increased his concern. The idea of her leaving them was intolerable. She had "made it sunshine in a shady place." He had known a pleasure in her companionship he could not now do without, especially in the involvement of his present anxiety; but, declaring her departure imperative, Eleanor retired to her room to write to her mother. Here she had hardly seated herself before a gentle tap announced her aunt.

"My dear child," said she, "I am so grieved! Papa has told me all. Poor Phil! I know not which is most to be pitied, he or myself."

Eleanor could not suppress a smile. "Dear aunt, trust me that Cousin Philip will not die of a broken

heart on my account; and you, I hope, will find consolation in some one much better than your insensible niece."

"Oh no, Eleanor, never. You can not comprehend the happiness you have shed on my solitary life. The hope of keeping you here has been to me like the fabulous elixir. But you were about to write—not to your mother?"

"Yes; to inform her of my return."

"That is just what I am sent to prevent. Papa desires she may not know what has passed, and that you will not think of leaving Rosenberg at present."

"Oh, I *must* go!"

"But, my dear! The wishes of papa are commands, you know."

"Commands!" repeated Eleanor; "commands that I shall not go, nor write to my own mother!"

"Yes, even so; here his word is law."

"Oh, dear aunt! perhaps 'tis disrespectful to say so, but I can not help it. You've all made grandpapa a tyrant by your slavish fears. He would be just and reasonable, I am sure, had he not been spoiled by this irrational submission. Do, dearest aunt, be a little more resolute for his sake."

Miss Lawrence did not answer, and Eleanor saw, by her closed eyes and contracted brow, that some painful thought occupied her.

"'Tis too late! too late!" said she, at length, rather reflecting than speaking to another; "Life has passed me by; I can not now arrest the stream. If I have made a mistake, it has not been wholly from the weakness you ascribe it to. But let us speak of yourself, Eleanor. By complying with papa's request you will soothe his present irritation; by refusing, you will reopen the breach with your parents so lately closed.

This, I think, will reconcile you to the surrender of your own wishes. As to Philip, he will not be deceived into a vain hope by your remaining; he will understand that it is compulsory."

"Oh," said Eleanor, with an irrepressible laugh, "I am not deterred by fear of any such consequence. Phil and I perfectly comprehend each other."

Miss Lawrence cast a glance on her, half-reproachful, and, rising, said, "Well, my dear, you will, at least, allow me to tell papa that you consent."

"Yes; with one reserve. I will not write. I will remain, but not to be treated as I was to-day. I wish never to fail in respect and obedience to grandpapa; and, therefore, I dare not subject myself to what I know I could not patiently bear."

To complicate matters, the gout appeared—the result of nervous agitation—and Mr. Lawrence was confined to his chamber.

Eleanor sent to beg she might be admitted to read, as usual, but the offer was declined, and in such a manner that it was plain she would not soon be permitted to have the privilege.

Several days passed, during which it was by no means easy to preserve the peace in Mr. Lawrence's sick-room. The attack was not violent, and at intervals he might, if he would, have found a solace in an agreeable book; but neither the offers of his daughter nor of Philip were accepted. Mrs. Dorothy very humbly proffered her services, but only to be rejected. At length, after pondering and hesitating, she ventured to say,

"I do believe I have thought of what may suit you, sir. Suppose you try Priscilla Dale, sir."

"Priscilla Dale! Pshaw! nonsense! She'd drive me mad!"

"Why, sir, she's an excellent reader! Miss Lawrence

took ever so much pains with her, and she came every day to read to her when she used to be so poorly. Dear me! I'm sure nobody'd 'a thought then that she'd live to see this day! You haven't forgot that time, sir, I'm sure."

"No, woman!" exclaimed Mr. Lawrence, violently; "and, if I had, you would never cease to remind me. No; I won't have Priscilla Dale!"

Her habitual fear overcome by her real desire to relieve him, Mrs. Dorothy ventured a little farther, and suggested that Mr. Philip might ask her to come "just on trial."

But Phil, alarmed at the idea of such an embassy, certain, too, to fail in his hands, answered, hastily,

"No, no, Mrs. Dorothy, that will never do; she won't come!"

These few words settled the matter.

"Won't come! won't come!" repeated Mr. Lawrence, "when I send! a girl who owes every thing to us! I'd like to see her refuse! Go to her this instant, Phil, and tell her to come to me. I'll try her, if only to punish her pride."

There was nothing to be done but to appear to obey; when, to his great relief, Miss Lawrence undertook to dispatch a note, which, she doubted not, would bring her; and, while this is on its way, it may not be amiss to peep into the neat little domicile whither it is traveling.

About two miles from Rosenberg was the "Mill Farm." The mill, whence it derived its name, turned by a never-failing stream, together with the good character of the miller and his meal, had secured the custom of the country round for many miles.

Joseph Dale, the occupant, a Quaker, who had many years before left England a poor man, had, by industry and thrift, arrived at what to him was competence—a

respectable living, with something "laid by for a rainy day." He had at first a hard struggle; but Mr. Lawrence, of whom he had taken a long lease on easy terms, had been not only an indulgent landlord, but a good friend. With improving circumstances Mr. Dale had carried out his English and Quaker tastes. The rude, ill-constructed, weather-beaten house had been repaired, painted, and bettered in many ways. The little walk which conducted from it to the mill had been shaded by a row of trees; and a garden, at the foot of which his Pactolus—the mill-stream—glided along, was always the best and the earliest in the neighborhood. Fences, out-houses, and land, all showed his intelligent care; and, when driving his sister and daughter in his capacious chaise, drawn by a sleek, well-fed horse, in a suit of gray not unlike their own, they presented altogether an image of comfort and respectability that some of their richer neighbors might have envied.

Within, the dwelling was the very temple of neatness, of which Esther Dale and Priscilla were the priestesses; and Martha, an orphan girl, at first taken for charity, now their only help, was a faithful ministrant.

Esther Dale, a woman of sense and feeling, with a good plain education, had been, though not a preacher, an occasional exhorter, when so "moved." This gave to her manner and language an increased precision, to which was added an attachment to her sect that narrowed her views of the "world's people." By this last her niece was unaffected, though she had naturally caught something of the former. Her brother, not less honest, was more liberal. He had seen sufficient cause to believe that goodness was not found only under a broad brim and a drab coat; and, while an attentive observer of the forms of a people who profess to discard form, he did not believe in their essential importance.

On the afternoon alluded to, Priscilla and her aunt—the day's work over—were in their quiet little "sitting-room," the windows of which, opening to the poet's corner, the sweet southwest, disclosed a small flower-garden spread beneath them. Here, as if that instinct of beauty implanted in the human breast would vindicate itself, were to be seen the gayest combinations of colors; and sober eyes, that turned from all the glories of earth, could not shut out the gorgeous hues and the brilliant lights of the evening sky.

On the hearth

"The kettle whisp'ring its faint under-song"

gave note of preparation for their early tea. The floor, white and scantily carpeted, and the polished pine tables, attested the patient labors of Martha. At every door little mats of list—home manufactory—mounted guard to defend the sacred precincts from gravel and soil. Chairs of the prevailing straight, high-backed form, but of inexpensive bilsted wood, well oiled, were a good substitute for mahogany. There was literally no article of ornament in the room. On one side hung a map of Great Britain—left, but not forgotten! on the other was a small bilsted press, the upper part a book-case, containing their literary staple, with drawers below, whose brass handles shone resplendent.

Among the books were "A History of the People called 'Quakers,' by William Sewall;" "Journal of the Life and Travels of George Fox;" "The History of the Life of Thomas Ellwood;" Barclay's "Apology for the true Christian Divinity, as the same is held forth and preached by the people called in scorn 'Quakers;'" "Life of William Penn;" "No Cross, no Crown;" William Penn's "Rules for the Regulation of his Family, or Christian Discipline; or, Good and Wholesome Orders for the well-governing of the same;" Biographies and

Experiences of several eminent Quakers; "Guthrie's Gazetteer," and "Entick's Dictionary."

From a volume in Esther's hand, she was reading aloud to Priscilla, seated by her side, sewing "fine linen" for her father, who, despising "embroidery and vain apparel," moderately indulged in this luxury. The passage selected was a portion of the beautiful letter addressed by Penn to his wife and children previous to his first embarkation for this country.

"Hearken, Priscilla," said her aunt, "to this godly and wise man. 'Agriculture I especially commend. Let my children be husbandmen and housewives; it is industrious, healthy, honest, and of good example. Like Abraham and the holy ancients, who pleased God and obtained a good report.'"

"Yes," said Priscilla; "he was, I doubt not, a wise man, and as full of love as of wisdom; for in the conclusion of this same letter those tender words meet us, that have always dwelt in my memory. 'Yours,' he saith to his wife, 'yours in that which no waters can quench, no time forget, nor distance wear away, but remaineth forever!'"

"But thou must remember, Priscilla," said Esther, with a scrutinizing look, "that the love of which he thus speaketh was bred of a godly mind; and observe, farther, how he enforceth this. For, advising of his children, he saith, 'When marriageable, see that they have *worthy* persons in their eye; of good life, and good fame for piety and understanding.' Now, by 'understanding,' it is manifest that he meant not carnal gifts; for what doth Scripture say?—'A good understanding have all they that love thy law.'"

Priscilla, not inclined to a conversation the tendency whereof she was well aware, was glad to be relieved by the entrance of Pomp, with a note from Miss Lawrence.

Esther observed her closely. She marked her varying color and startled look. But Priscilla, taught to control her emotions, soon recovered her usual calm exterior, and, having dismissed Pomp to await her answer, she handed the note to her aunt. She read it, and returned it without comment, saying, "Is the young man Philip at home?"

"Not often, I think. He spendeth much time in the woods, and on the river."

"Verily, a gainful occupation!" replied Esther, coldly. "Slaughtering God's harmless creatures for his amusement."

Now it is not to be inferred that she disliked Philip. On the contrary, she was no exception to the general favor he found:

"With eye so merry, and a foot so light,
That none could chide his gamesomeness."

She had, indeed, often rebuked his taste for what she considered murderous sports, held in abhorrence by her sect; yet once, when her brother had been left by a wasting fever with a sickly appetite, she gladly received the frequent bag of game, nor scrupulously counted the little lives that went to fill it. Nor would any one so surely raise a smile on her habitually grave face as "the young man Philip."

But those days were past. A woman's instinct, surer than "Suspicion's hundred eyes," had alarmed her for her niece; and, together with her desire to promote her marriage with a thriving young Quaker suitor, led her to discourage an intimacy which she feared could only produce unhappiness. For this reason she had favored the long sojourn among their distant friends; and, perceiving that Philip's visits were not renewed, she hoped the danger was passed. The request of Miss Lawrence was therefore as unpleasant as unexpected.

Priscilla did not reply to her aunt's unfavorable observation, but looked perplexed and uneasy.

"I see," said Esther, "that thy spirit is troubled within thee. Thou hast a divided mind between duty to thy friend Gertrude and to thyself."

Priscilla did not confirm, though she could not deny, her aunt's assertion.

"My child," continued Esther, earnestly, "spread her letter, like Rabshakeh's, 'before the Lord,' and verily thou shalt be heard. Be not disheartened; thou knowest, 'No cross, no crown.'"

"I will do as my father shall advise," replied Priscilla, hearing his approaching footstep; and, as he entered, she put the note into his hand, saying, "I wish to do in this matter, father, as seemeth best unto thee."

Now Joseph Dale was too busy with mill and farm, and the cares, large and small, of his industrious life, to have time for close in-door observation. It had probably never crossed his mind to question what the visits of Philip might tend to, continued, as they had been, from his childhood. "He was," he thought, "a sensible lad, and a good one; and, moreover, his laughter was pleasant to the hearer;" for, from under the restraint of Quaker manners, there often wells forth a spring of mirth that mingles readily with its like. Nor was his scrutiny quickened by the religious zeal of his sister. He was well aware that as yet Priscilla's conformity consisted only in "dress and address." He could wish it otherwise, but this "was not for him to bring to pass." Had he feared that she was in danger of violating her own convictions, he would have been much disturbed. But habits, the result of education merely, must, he knew, be liable to change; and he held that she could yet be a Christian woman, even though her speech and apparel were altered.

Having read the note, he replied, "I marvel what thee means? Friend Lawrence and his daughter have never failed to us; and, if they desire this small favor at thy hands, I should be loth to deny them. Go, therefore, of a certainty."

Esther, by look rather than word, expressed a demurrer, which Joseph perceiving said, "That is, if thy aunt can spare thee. I would not have her cumbered by too much serving, yet, rather than thee should say nay in this matter, I advise thee to seek some one to assist her in thy stead."

Esther knew her brother well enough to understand that, once having decided, he was little likely to change his opinion; and, as in such a case words would be useless, she, with her usual dislike to superfluous expenditure, spared them, and Priscilla dismissed Pomp with the desired answer.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE next day, as Eleanor was alone in the parlor, absorbed in a book, the door opened, but so noiselessly that she was not aware of the entrance of any one till a near step drew her attention; and, turning, she found herself confronted by a young girl whom she had never before seen. She was apparently not much older than herself, lower in stature, but of such fair proportions, and so erect a carriage, that height was not necessary to confer dignity. Nor had her natural flexibility of limb and movement been repressed by the primness of her dress. This was a gown of gray chambray—a silk and cotton material, then much used—with the long, tight Quaker waist, unrelieved by any garniture; a muslin handkerchief crossed over her breast, sleeves tight to below the elbow, and there met by long gray kid mitts. Her gown was just short enough to show that she wore the low "spring-heels," not in order to affect height, but for greater neatness. She had a shawl of the same color, and a bonnet of the Quaker fashion; but from under it looked out a pair of eyes in strange contrast with this sad-colored attire. They were of that form and color described as "Italian," soft as the dove's, but in their rich depths a fire burned. Her brow was strongly marked, and, in keeping with her mouth, gave more of character and firmness to her face than beauty. But a clear and smooth complexion—the usual accompaniment of her dark auburn hair—atoned for any irregularities; rendering the whole, though not faultless, at once striking and pleasing—a face which, if it could not defy criticism, was sure of admiration.

Eleanor was not long in doubt as to who she was.

"Well," thought she, "if Cousin Philip could afford to be silent about her external charms, she must have a great deal besides."

"Miss Dale, is it not?" said she, offering her hand.

"Not so," replied the young girl; "Priscilla Dale better pleaseth me. And thou art—"

"Eleanor Meredith."

"So I did suppose."

Having placed a chair for her, Eleanor assisted in removing her hat, and saw, admiringly, the little white cypress gauze cap that shaded, but could not conceal her rich hair.

The few commonplaces exchanged about weather, walking, etc., both were silent. Eleanor thought she perceived the impress of Miss Lawrence in the refinement of her voice and manner, and in the accuracy of her speech—free from the usual Quaker offenses against grammar; but, fearing to embarrass, restrained her desire to look at her; while Priscilla fixed her eyes on Eleanor, not with the gaze of ill-bred curiosity, but a sad intentness that betrayed a more than common interest.

To a person curious in the effect of modes of thought on manners, they might have been a profitable study. The one, unspoiled by the world, but not ignorant of its prescriptions—neither selfish nor arrogant, yet not indifferent to her advantages of wealth and position—was constrained, from the fear of doing either too little or too much. The other, undisturbed by a question for her already settled, not by propriety or expediency, but on grounds far higher, was calm and self-possessed. Taught to honor no man for external distinctions, she was unmoved in their presence, and was absorbed in far different reflections as she continued her observations of Eleanor.

"She is surely comely to behold," she thought. "It is no marvel that she should find favor in *his* eyes; but, unless her face belie her, she has that also which is better."

The entrance of Miss Lawrence gave a new direction to their thoughts. Priscilla warmed into animation, and approaching her, took her extended hand between hers, and, in reply to her friend's kind greeting, replied, "It rejoiceth me to see thee." Then, gazing on her lovingly, she added, "and thou art well too, and strong, and young—almost as young and fair as this thy niece."

"Ah! Priscilla," said Miss Lawrence, tapping her cheek, "how have you, under the safeguard of a Quaker cap, learned to flatter?"

"Flatter!" repeated Priscilla, with a smile; "nay, not so. I have heard a man, learned in the law, tell my father that evil words, if not false, were no libel. Then fair words, if true, are no flattery. Are we allowed to utter truth only when it giveth pain?"

"The truth—that is just the question. I own, however, I am, in health at least, much improved. My niece has been my best physician. But," added Miss Lawrence, with a look of kind scrutiny, "*you* are a little thinner, and rather paler. What have those strict Pennsylvania friends been doing with you? I am glad to see, however, that my favorite hair has not turned Quaker yet."

"No," said Priscilla, with a smile, smoothing away some refractory curls that had escaped from her cap, "no, though I do try to make it better conform."

"And how happens it that you have been so long returned without coming to see me till I sent for you? That is not like you, Priscilla."

Priscilla, dropping her eyelids and folding her hands,

for an instant offered no excuse, while Eleanor, moved by pity and curiosity, listened for her answer.

"It hath not been my fault, but it hath been a sore grief to me. I know thou wilt pardon me if I can not farther satisfy thee."

Miss Lawrence, supposing it to be some restrictions on the part of her aunt, who feared any influence at variance with Quakerism, set the matter at rest by saying, "You deserve my confidence, Priscilla, because you never doubt it. And now let us go to papa, who expects you in his room, because not well enough to leave it."

She led the way, and Priscilla prepared to follow her, but Eleanor could not part with her thus.

"Let us," said she, "be better acquainted. When you have the time, will you come to see me too, and allow me to visit you?"

"It is kindly spoken of thee, Eleanor, but it is, nevertheless, not best for thee, nor for me, thus to do. Do not think me unthankful; I feel that I should love thee well, were it permitted. Farewell!" and she was gone.

"So," thought Eleanor, "my overtures rejected by the little maid of the mill! but what a majesty there is in truth and simplicity! Now I, in the same circumstances, would have gone beating about for excuses, in order not to compromise myself by an allusion to the real fact. She comes directly to the point. 'It is not best for thee nor for me,' in which, too, she would be perfectly right were matters as she probably believes; that is, if I were indeed her rival. I shall make another attempt, however."

For this there was no opportunity. Priscilla came daily at the appointed hour, but was immediately conducted to Mr. Lawrence's room, whence, when dismissed, she left the house as noiselessly as she came. And when, in the course of a week, he was so far better that

he received her in the parlor, it was evidently expected that Eleanor should withdraw; for, though his displeasure was now only manifested by a punctilious politeness, it was not abated.

Pained by this seclusion, and the strange position assigned her, still Eleanor could not but admit the happy effect of the present arrangement on her grandfather. Whether that he had a secret satisfaction in the infliction of condign punishment on *her*, or the tranquilizing ways of the little Quaker—her gentle tones, the sedative effect of her phraseology, her good reading, her immovable placidity, which seemed to act like oil on ruffled waters—or her beauty, which, he having seen little of her of late, appeared to take him by surprise—or all together, could not be said. Certain it was, however, that, like "the little maid carried away captive out of the land of Israel," she had brought healing to the house. The gout disappeared, and an unusual calm succeeded.

One day, as Eleanor had just made her compulsory exit from the parlor, she was met by Philip in the hall, who stealthily giving her a signal, she followed him into the drawing-room.

"Eleanor," said he, "*I must* speak to you! Do you know that Mrs. Dorothy says that grandpapa is quite taken with Priscilla, who, as she tells me, 'has bewitched the old gentleman.' This has put new hope into me: what if she should so gain his favor as to overcome his objections?"

"Well, but, my good cousin," replied Eleanor, mischievously, "how could that help you? You say that Priscilla is herself inexorable."

"Oh, she would not be so—you know she could not—if every obstacle were removed."

"But—another thing, Philip—how can you be sure that Priscilla may not play 'The Irish Widow' in earn-

est, and, finding she has captivated the grandfather, sacrifice the grandson?"

"Why—why—you don't—what do you mean, Eleanor?" exclaimed he, gasping with alarm and astonishment; "what can you mean?"

"Only just what I say: I, of course, am ignorant of all such things; but mamma, who knows the world, often declares that no marriage would ever surprise her—that the wisest and the silliest, the oldest and the youngest, are equally unreliable in this matter."

"Well, but, Eleanor, you distress me; don't talk so; 'tis absurd: do be serious."

"I *am* serious, and, moreover, quite reasonable. Priscilla has rejected you. She is, therefore, as you must admit, perfectly at liberty. Grandpapa is a handsome, hale old gentleman, and, when, he chooses, can be captivating. More than this, she considers you engaged to me, which, of course, you ought to be, if people ever did in matrimony what they ought to do. It is not *my* place to undeceive her, and you can not, because she has sent you to Coventry. Now, before we can all stand in our proper places, grandpapa, who thinks that every thing, like murder, 'if it were done, it is well it were done quickly,' will have the banns published, and you and I will be invited to walk as 'chief mourners.'"

"If I thought such a thing possible," exclaimed Philip, "I would—"

"Fall down and worship me! I suppose," interrupted Eleanor, with mock gravity; "but I warn you, my goddessship would be immovable."

"No, no!" replied he, passionately; "I would tear her from my heart, and never more have faith in woman! But I won't think of it. 'Tis an absurdity! You don't believe it; you can not."

"I believe nothing, because I have nothing on which

to found belief. You ought to know how far you can trust her. But no, dear Philip, do not look so distressed; I am only taking my revenge on you and grandpapa. Priscilla's face can not deceive. She may be firm even to obstinacy, but never mercenary or heartless."

Philip, though rejecting what his better sense assured him did not deserve a thought, could not be quite easy under these suggestions, even when retracted. He reflected on all the extraordinary marriages of which he had ever heard, till he almost persuaded himself that this one was possible. His situation, tantalizing before—daily under the same roof with Priscilla, yet not daring to speak to her—became now intolerable, and he resolved, at all hazards, to see her.

Accordingly, the next morning, when, having performed her usual duty, she was on her return, and proceeding through the wood which separated her from her home, she heard steps behind, and feared that she was followed. She would not betray it, however, even by a look, but pursued her way, as if unconscious. They gained on her—they were at her side—still, she neither turned her head nor raised her eyes.

In the days of their childhood, Philip had playfully imitated her mode of speech. Affection had adopted what sport began.

"Priscilla!" at length, he said, in a hesitating voice; "Priscilla! may I not speak to thee!"

She was silent, and again he entreated.

Without slackening her pace or raising her eyes, she at length replied, "I have neither might nor right to prevent thy speaking; but let it be what befits thee to say, and me to hear."

"Oh, Priscilla! thou knowest that there is but one thing I *can* say—forgive me! Be again to me what

thou hast so long been! Thou, whom only I have loved, or can ever love!"

She stopped suddenly, and, turning toward him a face pale but unmoved, said deliberately and coldly, "Thy grandfather is pleased to require at my hand certain small services, the which I gladly render; but I will not again cross his threshold unless thou leave me."

"Say, then, only that thou dost not hate me; nay, hate me, if thou wilt: any thing but this deadly coldness."

"I may not vex myself at thy bidding," she replied.

"Priscilla, I can not bear this. Accuse me! scorn me! any thing that shows human feeling!"

But no word was returned; she only walked faster, as if anxious to escape him.

Stung by her manner past endurance, and, for the moment, yielding to the suspicions that had been infused into him, he placed himself in her path, and exclaimed, with violence, "It is so! I understand you at last; do not think to blind me; I am sacrificed, not to a just resentment, but to your ambition! Poor and dependent as I am, you do well to cast me off for one who, if more than three times your age, can make you mistress of Rosenberg!"

The words were hardly uttered before they were repented. The lightning that shot from those dark eyes brought quick conviction of her indignant innocence, and of his own folly.

"I thank thee, Philip Lawrence," she said; "thou hast done me thy last and best favor; thou hast extinguished the small spark of kindness that yet warmed my heart toward thee."

Humbled and alarmed, he implored her pardon, and attempted to take her hand; but, disengaging it, she exclaimed, "Let me pass! thy path and mine here part forever! Let me pass."

"Oh, Priscilla! canst thou leave me thus, without a word, or hope of forgiveness? I am wretched! Pity, if thou wilt not love me. Tell me what I can do to show thee my repentance."

A slight tremor of her voice betrayed the effect of this appeal, but her manner was unchanged.

"All that I ask at thy hands is that thou hinder me not in my duty to thy grandfather."

Philip no longer ventured to oppose her. Retreating from before her, he permitted her to proceed, while he turned homeward with a heavy heart.

Meanwhile, Priscilla, having got beyond sight and sound, seated herself under a tree, not to rest, but to weep unseen. Here she gave way to a gush of feeling, the more violent because long suppressed. Tears, and even groans, attested her sorrow. Suddenly she checked herself.

"Foolish and wicked that I am," thought she; "why am I thus disquieted? Surely no new trial has come upon me. What if he, indeed, love me still; what though report of him and his cousin be untrue; what if I forgive all that is past? it mattereth not—my duty remaineth. It can not be shunned but by returning evil for good. 'Thy friend and thy father's friend forget not.' Then how may I, in return for all the kindness rendered to me and mine, steal away the hope of their house? No, I will not do it, even though my heart should burst. 'Tis well that I turn on him a cold countenance, even that he thinketh me unfeeling and cruel. Be it so."

Then, adjusting her cap and hat—in her agitation, nearly fallen off—smoothing her hair, and wiping away the traces of her tears, she rose, and, slowly proceeding, was so far tranquilized, on reaching home, as to escape question or observation.

CHAPTER XXVII.

ELEANOR's sympathy for Philip had reconciled her to what she believed could only be a temporary loss of favor; but, when she found she was thereby restricted in her kindly efforts for others, it was harder to bear. Of this she soon had an instance.

Pomp had been sent to the village on the opposite side of the river, charged with various household errands, but, above all, to call for a pair of knee-buckles which Mr. Lawrence had sent to be repaired. He returned just at nightfall, but his memory had proved treacherous, and his master's errand had been forgotten.

Finding Eleanor alone in the parlor, he confided to her his trouble, and begged her to "speak a good word for him to massa." She had just given the promise of her best services when her grandfather entered, and the luckless omission had to be confessed.

Pomp's fears had not exaggerated the probable consequences. Not that Mr. Lawrence cared more for his knee-buckles than an old gentleman should be allowed to do; but, various similar offenses on the part of Pomp having of late occurred, and punishment having been threatened, it was hardly to be expected that he should now escape.

"Go instantly back and get them!" was the penalty denounced.

At this moment it was no small one. The wind had risen, as the night came on, and the darkness, deepening at every moment, was becoming fearful. Courage was no virtue of Pomp's; add to which, his mother's frequent injunctions to avoid the fate of his father, who had been

drowned, had impressed on him a superstitious dread of the water.

"Massa," said he, with a quaver in his voice, "de white caps is risin' drefful fast. Won't massa please let me go ober in de mornin'?"

Mr. Lawrence had no sympathy with cowardice in any form, and a peremptory negative cut short the entreaty. Pomp ventured only an imploring glance at Eleanor, which, being observed by his master, she saw only aggravated the matter. Still her promise was not to be broken; and, though hoping little from her interference, she commenced with "Dear grandpapa, do—" when another command, issued with even more violence, like an explosion, blew poor Pomp out of the room.

A lull in the wind for a short time furnished an excuse for the harsh mandate; but, as the night advanced, it again rose, justifying all Pomp's fears and the prognostics of the kitchen. To the gale was added Egyptian darkness. Eleanor, too anxious to sleep, remained up, looking from every window in hope of some abatement of the storm. At length, recollecting the probable terrors of Pomp's mother, she went to the kitchen, in the wish to afford her such comfort as could be suggested. She found that her aunt had anticipated her. The other servants had gone to bed, but poor Minty, in her desperate grief, had thrown herself before the hearth, and was venting her feelings in tears and moans. Miss Lawrence bent over her, trying to dispel the fears to which, like a child, she gave way.

"Yelly's bery good, missis," at length she sobbed forth, "but jess so Tom went, missis; jess so! and I neber seed his face agin! I allus t'ought Pomp would be drowned, 'case he jess like his fader! Oh, missis! missis! and only jess for dose drefful knee-buckles! Oh, massa! massa! I wouldn't sarve you so!" and a sad

wail accompanied these few reproachful words, which her mother's heart could not repress.

Miss Lawrence would not reprove what she could not, in truth, condemn. At length, with some difficulty, inducing her to take a composing draught into which she had insinuated an opiate, she and Eleanor got her to bed, and remained with her till it had soothed her to silence and sleep.

In returning to her own room Eleanor perceived the drawing-room door ajar, and a light within. This being unusual at so late an hour, she gently pressed it open, and saw her grandfather standing by the front window, evidently endeavoring to peer into the darkness of the wild night, which was now terrific. Going from window to window, apparently in a vain hope to see what was not to be seen, he then turned round and walked, in an anxious, troubled manner, about the room, looked at his watch, and said to himself, "One o'clock! where *can* the boy be!"—then again went to the window.

Unwilling to leave him alone in this uneasy mood, Eleanor entered, and, without an offer to bear him company, which would of course be rejected, seated herself by a table and took up a book that lay on it. But Mr. Lawrence did not choose to be observed, and, turning on her abruptly, he said, sharply, "What are *you* up for? The wind disturbed me; but young folks should not mind such trifles. Go to bed, child; go to bed."

"I can not sleep," said Eleanor; "and if you will let me stay with you, sir, I shall not care for the storm."

"No, no; nonsense! it is no storm. You city people call every whistle of the wind a storm. Always frightened to death about your chimneys and your roofs. My old gables have stood many a worse blast than this. If you will build high, your pride may have a fall. We are safe enough here. Go to bed, go to bed."

His manner admitted of no appeal or hesitation, and she unwillingly obeyed.

"Poor grandpapa!" she thought, "he is paying the price of his proud will!"

In the mean time Pomp, having executed his master's command, returned to the ferry, near which a rough shanty afforded a shelter to the ferryman, whose lantern was the only light visible.

Pomp entered with fear and trembling.

"So, you've come at last," said the gruff voice of Hans Van Slyke, stretching and yawning, and well disposed to sport with the terrors of his companion. "We may as well be off at once, for we have but narrow quarters here. Davy's locker, if ever so wet and cold, will be wider, at any rate; and the white caps will be soft pillows, eh, Pomp!"

"Lors a marcy, Massa Hans, don't talk dat ar way! Yelly's not afeard?"

"Afeard! who dares say that? But I never crossed in such weather afore, I can tell you. I say, Pomp, you didn't think, did you, when you was a catching fish yesterday, that they'd grab you to-night, eh?"

"Oh, don't! don't! Massa Hans!"

"Why, Pomp," continued the immovable Hans, holding his lantern to his face, "you're as white as I am. When they hook you up to-morrow they'll think they've fished a gentleman, and they'll give you a grand funeral. But come, let's be off," and, gathering himself up, he prepared to face the night, Pomp following with faltering steps. Opening the door, he looked and listened; shook his head, and enlarged on the darkness and danger, but manfully issued forth; when, having played out his game, he turned suddenly round, saying, "Pomp, if you're such a cursed fool as to go, I am not; I shall not budge to-night."

This was music to the ears to which it was addressed, but Pomp had now his own game to play.

"Not go, Massa Van Slyke! not go! Is dis de way you sarve de public? I'se agwine on bizens. I don't 'quire wedder danger here, or danger dere; I make no comparishments, but go whar I sent."

"You *do*, do you? But I ain't a nigger. I'm not going to risk my life for no man. Here I stay," putting down his lantern, closing the door, and shaking up a straw pallet for himself.

Pomp's courage growing as the call for it became less, he straightened himself with a characteristic pomposity.

"Massa Van Slyke," said he, "I 'spec you know de law. If a man's 'structed in his lawful bizens, ob course dere's damage to pay. Now who's 'structed here? Not you, but me. Who's to pay den? Ob course not me, but you."

"Your lawful business," said Hans, scornfully; "I'd like to know what great matter you are trusted with?"

"And I'd hab you know, Massa Hans, dat I'se not gwine to blab. I knows when to speak and when to hold my tongue. And dis yer's a ting berry near to massa," with a chuckle at his own wit, "berry near; moss a part of hisself. I'se not gwine to 'quire wedder you tink it of 'portance or not—I know—and I tell you once for all dat you take de whole 'sponsability ob my stayin' here."

"Shut up, you black rascal!" exclaimed the regardless Hans, "and let me go to sleep, will you!"

"And whar am I to sleep?" asked Pomp, with the feeling of a misused official. "Is dis de only place you perwide for a gen'elman stopped on his lawful bizens?"

"If it's good enough for me, it's good enough for you; so hold your gab, I say."

This curt reply appeared final. Pomp nestled into

the straw with entire satisfaction; slept profoundly in spite of roaring winds and dashing waters, and, with the early dawn, his cheery whistle was heard at Rosenberg, as he wound round the house, to the comfort of those who were fearing never to hear it again.

At breakfast, standing behind his master's chair, he was permitted to relate his experience. The horrors and dangers of the night, of course, were not slighted, nor his own courage in being ready to brave them. Mr. Lawrence, as might be expected, ridiculed all; but, when Pomp gave his statement of the case as put to Hans, he said, putting some money in his hand, "Spoken like a lawyer, Pomp, and there's your fee," better pleased, perhaps, than any one, that no calamity had happened.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A REALLY poetic May had come and nearly gone. The fresh grass, the trees in their young, feathery foliage, the flowers—the first-born of the year—the “charm of earliest birds,” the soft and fragrant air, the mountains in their cerulean blue, and their white, fleecy draperies, the warm sky, flecked with the light clouds which the yet moist earth sent up as incense, “nature all blooming and beneficent,” combined to cheer Eleanor, and to charm away the little vexations that of late had crossed her. She was, indeed, made to

“Count her hours
By the opening buds and closing flowers.”

But there was one thought she could not always exclude, to which the season and its associations gave renewed strength and freshness, proving that her earnest efforts to conquer it had not been effectual. Eleanor,

“A child,
Smitten amid its playthings;”

one who

“Knew not life,
Save as the sportive breath of happiness,
Now felt her minutes teeming as they rose
With grave experiences.”

She had, with a wisdom suddenly and painfully acquired, or, rather, a natural good sense and courage unexpectedly called forth, seen and determined, however hard, to do her duty. In this she had been aided by a removal to new scenes and new interests, where the gentle influence of her aunt had enforced her purpose, and the happiness she conferred had been reflected on her-

self. Without any nice mental analysis, she had found that “the best and only way of abstracting the mind from one object was to fix it on another;” and, in yielding herself amiably to those around her, had discovered the best restorative. The first disturbing force had been the unjust displeasure of her grandfather. It had turned the current of her thoughts, which she had sedulously directed to others, back upon herself, not only by rendering her less happy, but by suggesting comparisons with the standard which she had adopted. Severity, injustice, weakness, only rendered more conspicuous mildness, truth, and strength, embodied in one she could not forget, yet might not love.

The day had been unusually warm for the season—even sultry; and, after the early tea, to drive away thought, she snatched up her hat and shawl, and strolled off to her favorite retreat. This was at some distance from the house, and was gained by a path through a wood so thick that a stranger, in following it, unexpectedly would find himself standing on a little rocky promontory, so shaded and secluded that no habitation was visible, and no sound heard but the rush of the mill-stream that on one side hurried to the river, and the alternating tides that murmured at his feet. A fantastic tree afforded seat and shade; and here, with an agreeable book, a pleasanter nook could scarcely have been found.

But now, instead of sitting or reading, Eleanor leaned on a projection of the rock that rose like a battlement before her, and, bending over it, thought of home, father, mother, and—Walter; of her dear study; of the lessons first disliked and then loved; of absence—return—avowal—separation. All, all came back with the greater power because so long repressed, and tears, unbidden and unthought of, fell on the hand which sup-

ported her cheek. She saw nothing—not river, nor mountain, nor setting sun; nor a sloop, whose idle sails were flapping in the lazy air; nor yet another, which, at low tide, was stranded on a bar near the opposite shore. No, nor a little boat, which, having put off from its side, had, after a few moments, changed its oblique course, and was steering toward the spot she occupied. Neither did she see that a spy-glass, handed from one to another, was directed to herself; nor, until the boat's prow disturbed the monotonous murmur on the beach, was she roused to see that a young man, returning the glass to some one near him, had leaped ashore, at the same moment answering the question, "At what hour, sir?" by another—

"When does the tide serve?"

"At nine o'clock."

"Very well; you'll find me here."

That voice awoke an echo in her heart. Starting from her reverie, she saw, struggling up the rock, and in a few seconds by her side, with glowing, animated face and extended hand, the very spirit of her waking dream.

"Mr. Thornley!" she exclaimed.

"Eleanor!" he replied, excited out of his habitual cautious address. Their hands met; their "mutual eyes" were eloquent, but their words were few. Their last sad parting was present to them.

"Do not stand," said Walter, first recovering himself. "Rest here, where the Dryads seem to have prepared a seat for you"—leading her to the old tree, whose distorted trunk afforded a resting-place—"and I will find a fitting one here," throwing himself on the grass at her feet.

Eleanor, in a bewilderment of joy and surprise, could say nothing. She passively complied with his sugges-

tion, while he sat gazing into her face, to which the year since they had parted had added both strength and beauty. The freedom, the pure air, the healthful exercise, the early hours of her quiet, inartificial country life, had increased her bloom, and matured her figure to its full and perfect proportions. She had ceased to be a child without losing a single grace of childhood. She had grown into the dignity of a woman without any consciousness of greater importance.

"Now, tell me," said she, at length, "where have you come from? the earth beneath, or the sky above? for I have not the faintest idea."

"My progress has been neither subterranean nor ethereal—entirely prosaic, and like that of other mortals. But, in order to be understood, I must enter into particulars. You, perhaps, remember my legal aspirations, and the facilities afforded by your father. Well, I have obeyed the impulse thus encouraged, and am in the outer court of the temple I so much desire to enter—a lawyer's clerk; with so much of his confidence that I am now absent on his business. Is not that well?"

"That sounds well, at least," said Eleanor, returning his smile, "but do you like it? Now, for once, descend to my level, and admit that a thing may be very wise, and yet very disagreeable. Those dry books, those interminable papers, are they not horribly tiresome?"

"Tiresome! have a care lest I send you back to the study, and, putting on my schoolmaster's frown, tell you, in the words of your old friend Plutarch, that 'Law is the king of mortals and immortals—of nature, man, angels, and even the highest intelligences!' that 'law is—'"

"Oh, no more! I'll believe all, any thing; only speak yourself, and let Plutarch be silent."

"Well, then, having awed you into a proper state of

mind, I will admit that, as yet, I do not find it very exciting; nevertheless, it is occupation for the present, hope for the future. Hope! hope!" added he, with animation, "that mysterious essence of life! about which physiologists dispute. But to explain why I am here. My business took me to Albany; where, having failed to obtain the desired information, I am now seeking it in New York. We grounded on the Overslaugh, and again here on the opposite bar. A boat was to be sent ashore for a fresh supply of milk and bread; and, to beguile the time, I jumped in. Your little promontory caught my eye, with a figure like Hope resting on her anchor, and, with eyes directed to the distant main, inviting the wandering sailor home. An instinct that could not fail told me it was you. I seized a glass to assure myself, and found I was not deceived. Now tell me, in return, of yourself. Where are you? and why? and how does that busy young mind occupy itself?"

Eleanor gave a brief sketch of her visit. She longed to tell every thing, but she reflected that Philip's interests, and her grandfather's infirmities might not be revealed to a stranger. On her aunt she could fearlessly dilate; and the more earnestly from the pleasure with which Walter listened, as he perceived how much so lovely a character had touched her.

"And society?" he asked; "are there no Oscars to bewitch? no hearts to bless or—to break?"

"Oh dear, no! The only one I might have been tempted to experiment upon is pre-engaged, so I have had no opportunity of losing my own, nor of winning another's."

To this succeeded inquiries as to reading, study, and so on—all put very properly, and answered categorically, but with that "double consciousness"—when the lips speak of what the heart is not thinking—which those will readily understand who have been similarly affected.

And now, as Walter reclines at her feet, with eyes upraised, that seem to say

"How like a winter hath my absence been
From thee!"

it is well if every resolution be not forgotten. It is well if she do not

"Read what silent love hath writ."

Beware, Walter! You have been wise, you have been strong. But you have now, in a fond self-reliance, ventured into temptation. Ah! you are beginning to know it yourself. Your heart nearly bursts the restraints you have imposed on it, as you read in those sweet eyes innocently bent down on you, in those kind smiles, whose light shines into your very soul, the answer you *might* find! But no, you are still master of yourself.

How long he would have remained so is not to be told. Ah! how often is human wisdom the result of some beneficent arrangement for us; or some lucky accident, as we falsely and unbelievably term it!

At this moment a rumble of distant thunder recalled them from the inner to the outer world; and they perceived, for the first time, that, while they had been sporting in rainbows, the night had gathered blackness. Heavy clouds were rolling toward them; the sultry air was stirred by a wind, the forerunner of a gust; lightnings flashed along the horizon, attended at shorter intervals by thunder nearer and louder, and every thing indicated an approaching storm.

Eleanor started from her seat, wrapping her shawl around her, and Walter, alarmed at so slight a protection, entreated her to lose no time in returning.

"And you?" said she; "what is to shelter you?"

"Oh, this thick wood would be sufficient, so well used as I am to such exposures; but I shall go with you,

and shall still be in time to keep my appointment with the boat."

There was no time for farther parley, and they turned homeward.

Luckily, though threatening every instant, the rain did not actually fall; but the darkness increased fearfully, and the lightning, more and more vivid and frequent, was their only guide. The long, deep wood, through which they must pass by merely a narrow foot-path, often obstructed by fallen brushwood, and which, in the cheerful day, was only wild and romantic, now became intense in gloom, and almost a place of danger. At every moment Eleanor feared to strike her head against a tree, or to be prostrated by some unseen obstacle. Walter's anxiety for her gave importance to what, if alone, he would have disregarded. In momentary expectation of a pelting rain, he would, had the path permitted, with merely an arm around her, have borne her along scarce aided by herself; but this was here impossible.

While thus groping their way, Walter preceding and leading her by the hand, they both, at the same time, exclaimed, "What is that? Hark! Who is there?"

They stopped and listened.

"'Tis nothing," said Walter; "nothing but the rustle of the leaves under our feet."

"Do you think so? It sounded exactly like a footstep. There! There it is again!"

"'Tis only the echo of our own. Do not be alarmed; there can be no cause; for, even if it be a footstep, 'tis only some unlucky wanderer like ourselves. Do not think of it. Haste, haste, Eleanor! I feel the rain this moment."

But, though Walter endeavored to divert her apprehensions, he often looked round into the darkness, which

his eye could not penetrate, and only spoke to urge her onward.

At length they emerged from the wood, and crossed an open space, under a dim light, by which an object might have been discerned. It was, however, only to enter another scarce less impervious, through which an avenue led to the house. Here, proceeding with less difficulty, and with a feeling of security, Eleanor reverted to the sounds that had disturbed her.

"Why," she asked, "should no answer be returned? One would think that, at such a time, mere companionship would be a motive to speak."

"Recollect, Eleanor, it is only your assumption that there was a person. In such a confusion of sounds, one is easily mistaken. But think no more of it. Have we yet far to go?"

"No, not far; that is, measuring distance by my steps, for I see nothing. Ah! there's a light! Yes, we are approaching the house at the front. The parlor windows are behind; we can not see them here. Now you must leave me."

"Leave you! here, unsheltered, alone! Never."

"Nay, I know best," said Eleanor, fearful of the effect of his entrance on her grandfather. "I am within a few paces of the house; there is nothing to fear for me."

"But let me see you within the door at least."

"I can not, I must not: let me judge."

Constrained by her earnestness—as no real danger could be apprehended—he yielded; but said, with an emotion that, fortunately for both, could not be perceived, "You drive me from you, Eleanor, and I go. What else, indeed, *can* I do?" Then, with an attempt at cheerfulness, he added, "But, in like manner as we have now met, we may meet again. To insure this, were

I a heathen, I would erect an altar to the goddess of the 'Unforeseen!' " and raising to his lips the hand he still held, "Farewell, Eleanor!" he said, and was gone, while her half-uttered parting words were unheard.

Approaching, as she supposed, the front door, which, however, she did not wish to enter, she passed farther on; but the rain, so long threatened, now came with a violence that, added to the darkness, perplexed her. She turned a corner, where a gust met and nearly prostrated her; and, struggling with it, she became bewildered as to the direction she was taking. Dimly discerning the mass of building, and seeking a private entrance somewhere, in order to avoid embarrassing questions, she was pressing on, uncertain if right or wrong, when the sounds that had lately disturbed her fell on her ear again, and so close as to startle her. At the same instant a flash of lightning, broad and vivid, revealed a dark figure within a few feet of her. It was tall, but so wrapped that only a general outline was seen, relieved against a glass window, from which was reflected a strong light. The next moment all was total darkness.

"The *dood-kamer*!" she exclaimed, "what fate has brought me here?" and, her imagination excited by the vague terrors she associated with that part of the house, and, in an agony of fear, attempting to escape the phantom at her side, she darted forward, her foot slipped, she fell, and her senses fled.

She was roused, by a wailing voice and a lantern flashing in her face, to find her faithful Phyllis, who had been in quest of her, bending over her. The violence of the rain had ceased; but, thoroughly wetted and chilled, she readily comprehended the necessity urged by Phyllis, of getting into the house as soon as possible. Covering her mistress with the cloak she

had provided, and supporting her trembling limbs with an arm strongly clasped around her, she guided her, as Eleanor requested, to the steps leading to the *af-dak*, by which, through the *portaal*, she might gain her own room unobserved. Having reached it, and guarding against any alarm, by directing that her aunt should be merely told that she had come home tired, and requested not to be disturbed, she resigned herself to the care of Phyllis, who laid her, like an unresisting child, on her bed. The energies and affections of the little maid were all alive. She flew out of the room, was back again like a flash; held a glass of wine to her lips, which Eleanor could not refuse; felt her feet—found them cold; rushed out, and in again with a bottle of hot water for them; tucked every thing about her, and then seated herself in a corner to be ready if any thing more were wanted.

The next morning, however, the fact could not be concealed. A restless night, during which Phyllis had never left her, was succeeded by all the indications of a violent cold, confining her not only to her room but to the bed. Her aunt attended her with anxious affection. But Mr. Lawrence, though putting aside his air of offended majesty, and unable to disguise his interest, would not admit that she was ill. "It was a bad cold—nothing more; she would be well directly." At the request of Miss Lawrence the doctor came: "Saw no danger at present; but, if fever and delirium should supervene, couldn't say," only shook his head ominously. These suggestions enraged Mr. Lawrence, who, resolved she should *not* be ill, was only more persistent in his first opinion; would not allow her parents to be sent for; would not permit her aunt to remain with her at night, but commanded Flore to do so.

Thus passed two days and nights. As was feared, de-

lirium and fever did appear, but Mr. Lawence changed not. The third morning a bulletin announced to him a better night, no fever, soft skin, cough abated, head clear. "I told you so!" said he, triumphantly, and his imperious will found still another confirmation.

As her indisposition yielded, Eleanor's mind recurred to the circumstances immediately preceding. "That silent figure! seen so distinctly, though but for a moment. That strange light on the window of that fearful chamber! Was it indeed a reflection from without? Did it not come from *within*? And, if so, what might it not portend? Why had she been led to that place she so sedulously shunned? Why had she fallen near its fatal door, to which that dark phantom appeared to conduct her? Might not some fatality impending over her involve Walter also?"

Again and again she asked these questions, and as often her reason suggested plausible, but not satisfactory explanations. "A man-servant might have been returning home—he would be silent, of course; why not? A reflection of the lightning from the glass was an easy solution of the strange light! Why, in the dark, might she not miss her way? and, being terrified and faint, why should she not fall?"

Let not poor Eleanor be condemned for superstitious terrors in her time not uncommon; especially not by those of the nineteenth century, of whom some believe—nothing, and others—every thing.

Eleanor was passing the twilight-hour alone with these reflections, to which was now added the question of "How would grandpapa receive her when she should rejoin the family?" when Aunt Flore asked permission to enter.

"All alone, missis?" said she; "in de dark too! Well, I drefful grad yelly's gwine down sta'rs to-morrow. I

neber 'pruve sick folks stay by deresels. And now, missis, may I speak jess one word?"

Flore had been so devoted to her, that Eleanor was pleased to have a favor to grant her.

"Well den, missis, sarbents hab'n't no bizens to 'quire 'bout dere massas and misseses; but den brack folks has eyes, and so dey muss see. Now I see, misses, dat dere is somet'ing wrong 'twixt yelly and ole massa, and I jess want to say, dat yelly neber mind dat. Don't missis be frettin' 'case of dat ar'; its only jess outside. *I know*," she said, with a look of intelligence which engaged the earnest attention of Eleanor, "*I know*," she repeated; "dem ar nights when massa wouldn't let Miss Gitty stay here he neber went to bed hisself, but was up and down here all de night long, feelin' yelly's hands and head, and walkin' 'bout de house sighin' and groanin' like as he was out of hisself."

"Dear grandpapa!" softly said Eleanor, "then he does love me, after all."

"And den, ebery little while he would say—but he would moss a-killed anybody else for sayin' it—'Flore, bery sick chile! eh, Flore, don't you t'ink so? Flore, you've seed a great deal of sickness, what do you t'ink now?' 'Love' yelly! dat he do, missis; but massa very queer massa—dat ar de trute—always de wuss to dem he loves best. Jess so in my ole missis' time—ready to die for her, but neber gib up his own way for her; and Miss Gitty, too; oh, de trouble in this yere drefful ole house in dose days! Now you mussn't be mad 'case what I says," added Flore, in a deprecating tone.

"Oh no, indeed, Flore; I know you mean it all well."

"So I does, missis. I seed dere was trouble on yer mind when I was watchin' dose nights, 'case you talked 'bout ebery t'ing."

"Every thing!" repeated Eleanor, alarmed; "what did I say, Aunt Flore?"

"Oh, notting partic'lar, 'cept ole massa, and de *dood-kamer*, and 'nudder name I couldn't make out; so I 'tar-mined to speak. And now, missis, when you go down sta'rs, neber mind if massa look big an gran'; dat ar his way wheneber he mad; but jess you smile, like ole missis. Oh, yelly is de pictur ob her! So massa said toder night. 'Flore,' says he, 'ezacly like her grand-moder!' and den up and down t'rou de room agin. Oh, Lorry, what a night it was! Den massa come stan' by me when I counted de drops for yelly. 'Are you sartin, Flore?' he say. 'Take care, my chile!' Yes, missis, he loves you better dan any t'ing 'cept Miss Gitty. Massa treat her ezacly so, only wuss."

In Eleanor's present nervous condition these assurances were neither unwelcome nor useless.

CHAPTER XXIX.

MISS LAWRENCE had perceived in Eleanor a flutter of spirits, an unequal manner, an occasional anxiety and abstraction, so unlike herself as to excite, not only observation, but solicitude. It was, therefore, with as much pleasure as surprise that, as they sat together in the parlor the day after Eleanor's return to it, she saw her, on Pomp's ushering in a gentleman, dart forward to meet him, exclaiming, with much animation, "Captain Talbot! how glad I am to see you."

The sentiment was more than responded to; so much so that Eleanor was not sorry to check his almost rapturous delight by an introduction to her aunt, of whose presence he had seemed unconscious.

The captain was not a man to let his feelings run away with him; but Eleanor's excitement at seeing him, her improved beauty, and her more-confirmed manner, bringing with it the hope of a better capacity to estimate himself, threw him off his guard. Soon recovering, however, with his usual presence of mind, he addressed himself to Miss Lawrence. Of course, there were many inquiries on the part of Eleanor to answer. Having satisfied these, he next ventured to hope that she might care to hear something of himself; and proceeded to say that "he had only lately arrived from England; that he was now on a visit to their neighbor, Mr. Johnson; and, finding that he was near Rosenberg, he had taken the liberty to call on his young friend, Miss Eleanor, and also to inquire after the health of Mr. Lawrence, of whom he had heard so much as to inspire him with a profound respect."

Mr. Lawrence, being informed of the attention designed for him, made his appearance. The captain was graciously received; and, having produced an agreeable impression, took his leave, with an invitation to dinner the following day.

Even before the appointed hour, though an early one, Captain Talbot rode up the avenue. Philip had just returned from a morning in the woods, and, having sent Pomp in with his sporting equipments, and his game-bag to Aunt Minty, he loitered near the entrance to see who this stranger might be. The captain alighted from his horse; and, deceived by the "questionable shape" in which Master Philip appeared, disguised in his careless sportsman's dress, threw the bridle toward him, saying, "He is warm—see him well cared for," walked, with a superior air, into the house. Though willing to believe it a mistake, Phil was piqued; and, after making his toilet with more than usual attention, descended to the drawing-room, fully intending to overwhelm their indiscriminating guest with deserved confusion.

Meanwhile the captain was invited to the guest-chamber to relieve himself of the effects of a dusty ride. Eleanor, not aware of his arrival, left her room in order to be ready to receive him when he should come; but, in passing through the upper entry, she caught a glimpse of a gentleman in the "picture hall," as it was called—into which the room allotted to visitors opened. This hall was cut off from the entry by a glass door, now ajar, through which she could see and hear, herself being screened by a projection of the wall.

"Captain Talbot!" thought she "here so soon! and, as I live, standing before the forbidden picture, unveiled! He alone has dared to expose it!"

She drew a little nearer—the desire to see the face so long denied was irresistible—nearer still. "Yes; now

I see it! It is not at all like Cousin Phil, though," continued she, disappointed. "Can it indeed be his father? What an intellectual forehead! Eyes full of thought and feeling! What sweetness in the mouth! 'Tis a shame to hide such a face!—hist, the captain is speaking!"

"'Tis very strange," said he, unaware of any one near him, "very strange!" as, varying his position, looking now in front, now obliquely, now closer, then farther off, he tried to catch the face under different aspects. "If not the man, certainly a marvelous resemblance! but, if he in fact, how should it be here? Stranger still this fantastic device to conceal it. And why?"

At this moment a door opened, and Momma Zip crossed the hall. He beckoned to her and addressed a few words to her, which not understanding, she remained silent. Inferring from this that if there were a secret it was to be obtained only in one way, he put a piece of money into her hand. Dropping a courtesy, she received it apparently with proper gratitude, but was still silent; upon which, concluding her to be dull of apprehension, he enforced his inquiry by signs, and, pointing to the picture, said, with emphasis, "Who is *that—that*, I say? Speak!"

Zip shook her head, but not to express ignorance. On the contrary, taking the money from her pocket, she placed it on a table near which they were standing with a force that gave the effect of rejection; and walked off with an air that said, "I know, but I am not to be bribed."

The captain, for a moment, was confounded. The key which he had found a *passe-partout* had failed. There were in the heart of a poor old negress wards that it would not fit.

"Why! what an African Princess!" he exclaimed.

But this only increased the wonder. "It *must* be explained."

Eleanor, having the clue, was amused, and still more charmed, with Momma's fidelity. Hurrying away, lest she might encounter him, she entered the drawing-room, where Master Philip, in full-blown dress and offended dignity, awaited the moment when he should enjoy the captain's embarrassment. This, however, was not to be. The captain did not perceive his mistake; or, rather, was too much a man of the world to give it importance by referring to it.

The dinner passed off well. Though not loving the English any too much, Mr. Lawrence understood the duties of a host; besides which the captain was full of information on all subjects, and it was a rare chance to catch such a visitor in the country.

Recommending himself by social anecdote and amusing details of city life, he contrived, notwithstanding that the gentle gravity of Miss Lawrence occasionally rebuked a caustic sally, the wit of which did not to her atone for the insinuation it conveyed, to make himself acceptable to the ladies. Master Philip, though rather in a bad humor, was considerably mollified. As to Eleanor, she was actually gay; and the captain, who could not understand that it was a nervous reaction—the natural consequence of the depressing influences under which she had recently suffered—saw it only as the effect of his presence, and a daring hope again possessed him.

In the evening other visitors joined them. Whist was introduced; and here the captain, as in every thing, was *au fait*; and Mr. Lawrence, animated by finding a competitor worthy of his "best play," acquiesced reluctantly, when he politely resigned his seat to another. Having done so, he joined Philip in a corner, at

a distance from others; and Eleanor heard him, in a gentle under-voice, refer to the mystery of the picture, and inquire the name of the original; to which Phil replied, coldly,

"'Tis a family matter, sir, of which we do not speak."

"I beg pardon," said the unabashed captain; "I ought to have understood as much, from the very circumstance that provoked my inquiry. Excuse me." And he took a seat by the side of Eleanor. In a little time, letting fall, rather abruptly, the thread of conversation he had been pursuing, he said, in a low, confidential tone, "Have you a haunted chamber in this house?"

Eleanor turned pale. All her terrors of a certain room, all her late strange sick fancies returned, and she faltered out, "No! no! What—how came you to think of such a thing?"

His penetrating eye rested on her face an instant. He then carelessly added, "Because one mystery is apt to suggest others. Who is the original of that veiled picture? Was he not a hero of some romance of real life, in true novel style treacherously murdered? and does not his spirit walk this labyrinthine dwelling?"

"Oh, horrible!" exclaimed Eleanor, with a shudder, as she thought of the tragical fate of her uncle.

"But tell me, who was he?"

Surprised, and rather amused at his persistency, she replied, "I thought that ladies only were accused of curiosity."

"Oh no! I confess I am as curious as a woman; besides, 'tis a traveler's privilege to ask questions. Why else should he travel at all? Well; and his name was—"

Eleanor put her finger to her lip.

"Do you know?"

The same sign repeated.

"Will you answer, if I guess?"

She shook her head.

"One of the family?"

The finger to the lip again.

"What a nice little Trappiste you would make!"

"And what a poor inquisitor would you be!" said she, laughing.

"I am merciful; I have not yet applied the torture."

"The torture!"

"Ay; I could do so," said he, with a look quite incomprehensible. Then, as if to remove the impression he had made, "Don't you deserve to be tortured; you, who inflict torture on others?"

"What a strange man!" she thought. "He absolutely frightens me sometimes."

The whist-players having finished their rubber, music was called for. Eleanor, glad to escape, rose to obey; and, seating herself at the spinet, summoned Cousin Phil to her assistance. They sang together with much approval—the captain's eye more intent than his ear—and were leaving the instrument, when Eleanor stopped, resumed the seat, and, looking up into Philip's face with a mischievous expression, sang, from the "Gentle Shepherd,"

"The lass of Patie's Mill,
So bonny, blithe, and gay,
Hath won my right good will,
Hath stawn my heart away!"

The looks of intelligence exchanged by herself and Philip, and the consciousness of the latter, showed an understanding not agreeable to the captain. But supper was announced, and song and sentiment ceased.

The next day brought the captain again, who, assiduous to please Mr. Lawrence, by a ready instinct adapted himself to his tastes—admired the country, Rosenberg

especially—even the quaint architecture of the old Dutch house, rural life, and manners; wondered not that he had abjured the city, etc.

Presently, Pomp entered, to say that "Hans Van Slyke come to speak to massa."

Hans was admitted. The amount of his communication was that "He had seen two men slyly ascending the hill, in the direction of the garden; that, on his hallooing to them, they had fled, and he had lost sight of them; but that, soon after, a boat had pushed off, and that they must have returned in it to a sloop lying just off 'the point;' that, as she might be there some hours, he thought Mr. Lawrence ought to know."

Now Mr. Lawrence's fruit was almost as dear to him as his honor. Indeed, it might be said to make part of it, inasmuch as it was his pride to produce the finest in the county. In consequence of its exposed situation, and within only a low stone fence that a boy could leap, he had often suffered from such river marauders. He had set on his dogs, and had talked loudly of doing worse; but, as no one believed he would ever enforce his threats, they became a dead letter, much to the comfort of Miss Lawrence, on whose disinclination to strong measures—though not, in fact, greater than his own—he always threw the blame. "A little gunpowder," he said, "would soon settle it;" but Gitty wouldn't hear of it, and so he must submit, as he always did.

"The rascals!" he exclaimed, as Hans concluded; "they were after my 'early Annes.' Here, Pomp, do you be on the watch, and if you see any thing more of them call out the dogs."

And here the matter would probably have rested but for an observation of the captain.

"Ah! my dear sir," said he, "we manage this business better. Brick walls, spring guns, and man-traps are the

only protection. But," with a shrug, "free people, free game, and free fruit, of course."

Rather nettled by the superior air with which this was said, Mr. Lawrence was about to reply, when Hans, enraged against the supposed thieves, whom, like a true Dutchman, he pronounced to be "Yankees," and encouraged by the remark of the captain, went on to say that "They got worse and worsen. That it was not much over a week since a boat set a man ashore, just under the hill, and left him to get the fruit against they came back—that they did so, late in the evening—that he heard their voices and their oars."

"My May Dukes!" exclaimed Mr. Lawrence, "the scoundrels were after them, too, and have broken my trees besides." Thoroughly roused, first by the implied want of law and order in the new republic—*O tempora, O mores*, what might be said now!—and then by visions of mangled cherry-trees, he called on his henchman, Pomp.

"Has any mischief been done to the trees?"

"No, massa, b'liebe not. Dere was a boat com'd here t'oder night from a skipper out in the riber, jess as Hans say. It com'd afore dark, and den agin when de tide was up. But lors, massa! dat ar was de night storm'd so; so dark neber couldn't pick nottin'. Same night young missis was cotch'd out. Young missis"—turning to Eleanor—"members dat ar, and p'r'aps she seed de boat too."

This personal application did not diminish the uncomfortable consciousness under which Eleanor had been growing hot and cold ever since the discussion began. She did not accuse herself for an accidental meeting with Walter, but the circumstances, she was aware, might excite suspicions undeserved both by him and herself. In extremity one thinks rapidly. This was no time to de-

cide if she had acted wisely or not. She was, at least, confident of her right intention, and she must abide by what she had done. If concealment at first were proper, it was certainly still more so in the presence of Captain Talbot. With her usual directness, therefore, she stated the simple fact for which she was referred to—the coming of a boat; and, amused in spite of her secret disquietude at the design imputed to Walter, she added, with a smile, "I rather think, however, grandpapa, that your May Dukes are safe." But he was not now in a mood to be easily satisfied.

"Safe!" he exclaimed, angrily. "Yes, till the next sloop stops within reach of them. There is but one way," continued he, with a look at poor Miss Gertrude as reproachful as if she were an accomplice; "but one way;" and down came the cane in confirmation. "Pomp, tell master Philip to leave a loaded gun—a loaded gun, you understand—in the af-dak. I'll see if I can't, for once in my life, do as I please:" another look at Miss Lawrence. "But, Pomp, do you hear? don't you dare, you puppy, to meddle with it. If you must be shot, I'll do it myself properly. I'll have none of your blundering work."

"Yes, massa," replied Pomp, with a grin; and vanished, greatly magnified in his own eyes by a commission of such importance.

"Massa gib it to 'em!" exclaimed he, as he started off on a skip and a jump. "Neber nobody like ole massa yet. Hip! ho! hi! fire away! bang! and down dey comes. Hey, massa, gi' me you yet!"

O

CHAPTER XXX.

CAPTAIN TALBOT, availing himself of a general invitation, was now a daily visitor. Mr. Johnson lived within walking distance; and, either on foot or on horseback, morning or evening, he was sure to make his appearance. For a time this passed smoothly. Miss Lawrence was amused, her father entertained, and Eleanor more excited and interested than by any thing else—a fact which her aunt innocently revealed by greeting him on one occasion with the welcome words, "I am glad you've come, Captain Talbot. You will put Eleanor in spirits, I hope. She has been so dull to-day! No one but you can animate her."

Eyen Philip had given in his adhesion: but the liking, somehow, did not ripen into cordiality; so far from it that Miss Lawrence, though polite as ever, grew tired of being always amused; Mr. Lawrence became suspicious of the captain's views; and Master Philip resented the eagle glance that seemed to watch every whisper or look that might chance between him and his cousin. She alone remained as usual, and this was enough for the captain. His manner to her—always that of a kind friend, interested in her health, her pursuits, her improvement—with whom she had a larger range of subjects than with Cousin Phil, and who, consequently, could better withdraw her from unpleasant thoughts when such would intrude—rendered him always acceptable. This he saw, and, knowing well how to turn such an intercourse to his advantage, was not to be deterred by any obstacle.

Mr. Lawrence, whatever might be his personal or national aversions, was as yet sufficiently self-controlled not

to betray them in his own house; and he continued to receive Captain Talbot, if not with the same pleasure, yet with a ceremonious politeness that left him nothing to complain of. There was no interruption, therefore, of his daily calls, often, by design or accident, protracted into the evening.

"Bless me!" he exclaimed one day, looking at his watch, after a long morning visit, "I have, I fear, Miss Lawrence, exceeded even your kindness. It is actually the dinner-hour! Pardon me; it is surely as little my fault as my misfortune that you are all so charming as to render me oblivious of time and propriety;" and he rose to depart; but a gently-uttered suggestion that he would remain was readily acceded to.

The addition was not agreeable to Mr. Lawrence; but the guest had eminently the power of overcoming all barriers that coldness or dislike might interpose. The dinner over, while the ladies indulged with Cousin Phil in a by-talk of their own, the captain, in his most conciliating tone, addressed Mr. Lawrence.

"I do not think, sir, that I have seen an individual in America that, were I so disposed, I should be so tempted to envy as yourself."

Mr. Lawrence turned on him a look of inquiry.

"After having so nobly periled life and fortune, to live to see your reward in the present success of the cause on which you staked them, and to foresee the glorious destiny you have contributed to secure! How many unhappy patriots have failed in similar attempts!"

"I have done no more than my duty," said Mr. Lawrence, coolly, "and no more than many others of my countrymen. As to the future, if the English and French will give us fair play, we shall do very well."

"I am not surprised that you should entertain some doubts of *us*," replied the captain; "but of your tried

friends, the French, you can, I should say, have no fear."

"Fear!" repeated the old gentleman, emphatically, "I have not of either country. It is of their governments I speak. Yours chiefly, because its conduct is cold-blooded and systematic. As to the mushroom Revolutionary Directory of France, they have insulted, irritated, and inflamed us; but their day is nearly over. The French people I feel toward as every American should; but I do not desire to hear again '*Ça ira*' and '*La Carmagnole*' sung in our streets, nor any other glorification of their infernal Jacobinism, drunk with blood! It deceived us once, but never again. As to our fitness for liberty, 'glorious destiny,' and all that, it remains to be proved. I and my political friends are willing to trust the people as the only way of arriving at the fact. Our opponents are too fearful—that is their mistake."

"I have no doubt you are right, sir. 'Tis Montesquieu," continued the captain, in a deferential tone, "is it not, sir? who says that 'when the common people adopt good maxims, they adhere to them with more steadiness than those we call gentlemen.'"

Mr. Lawrence, who had a great contempt for what he called "borrowing other people's thoughts for want of your own"—"standing on other men's legs" etc.—answered impatiently, "I don't know nor don't care what he says, but I do know that, gentle or simple, though we may wrangle over our favorite systems, yet we are true to our country; and that the charge of 'French influence,' and 'British gold,' and such stuff, is all d——d nonsense! No, sir! there is not a man in either party, who dare call his soul his own, that the Directory or King George could buy."

"Damns had *not* then had their day;" and, though the gentle admonitions of his daughter and Mr. Lawrence's

own convictions somewhat restrained his anathemas, there were occasions—like the present—when he could in no other way find relief, albeit the same may not herein be reported.

"I believe you, sir, I believe you," replied the captain, with an acquiescent inclination of the head. "Those must take a narrow view of the capacities of men, who can not see that they require only a favorable position to realize all that philosophers have dreamed of human perfectibility."

"No, not 'perfectibility'—I hate that slang! Our people are no fools. They know their own interests. Give them a chance, and they'll work them out. There's no necessity to turn their heads with blarney about their 'perfectibility.'"

"I beg your pardon, sir, if the phrase offend you. I meant only to express my confidence, as felt by yourself, in human progress, when the obstacles that now obstruct it shall be removed."

These last words caught Eleanor's attention, who involuntarily exclaimed, "Captain Talbot! why, that is entirely different from what you used to say to papa—that 'people were so bad! so very bad! They could never govern themselves!'"

Mr. Lawrence turned a hasty and inquisitorial glance at the captain, who, not at all disconcerted by this charge of inconsistency, replied with a smile, "My dear Miss Eleanor, we are always learning, you know; and, much as I have been in your country, I am but just beginning to understand it."

"If your opinions are so liable to change," said Mr. Lawrence, dryly, "you will probably see occasion to reverse them again;" and, with the air of one who thought them of very little consequence, be they what they might, he rose and retreated to his arm-chair, indisposed

for farther conversation. It was the signal for leaving the table. Eleanor, at the same moment, withdrew to her room, Master Philip had an engagement, and the captain, declaring the day too fine to stay in the house, took his hat and sauntered off to the neighboring wood.

"Gitty," said the old gentleman, after some preparatory impatient movements—"Gitty, does the captain come to see *you*?"

"Me! Bless me, papa!" replied she, coloring, and always startled at such a suggestion, "what put such an idea into your head? No gentleman comes to see me, papa, you know."

"I know you won't let them do so; 'tis your own fault if they don't; you are young enough and handsome enough yet, if you'd believe it; but never mind that. The captain does not come to see you, you say. He does not come to see *me*, *that's* certain. He is not in love with *me*, for all his fine speeches; no, nor with Phil. Then who the devil does he come to see?"

"Why, really, papa, no one, in the way you appear to think. He is an idle man in the country, finds your house agreeable, and therefore comes."

"He won't find it so much longer, I can tell him."

"But, papa, you know you gave him a general invitation to come, without ceremony, whenever he pleased."

"Yes, but I did not tell him to come morning, noon, and night. He might as well come and sleep with me. Neither did I tell him to fix those infernal eyes of his on Eleanor all the time."

"Eleanor, papa!"

"Yes, Eleanor, papa! Do you think, because I am old, I am a fool? I can see more with my one eye than you with both of yours, handsome as they are."

"Well, but even if he has so absurd a purpose, as

you seem to think, you know, papa, he never could effect it."

"I don't know any such thing. You women are such cursed fools, if only a man pretend to be dying in love with you! Besides, don't you see how he has bejuggled her already? She is not, as she used to be, like a bird in the house; no—dull and moping, except when *he* is here, confound him! I tell you I won't have it. I'll break it up—I *will*," and a tremendous stamp of the cane enforced the declaration.

After a few moments, during which Miss Lawrence revolved how to divert his violence, he returned to the charge.

"Gitty," exclaimed he, "I don't believe in that man! Who the devil is he? Nobody knows. He has been here, off and on, for years, yet he has no visible business. I tell you, he is a sharper, a swindler, an escaped convict, or some blasted thing or another—you'll see!"

Miss Lawrence interposed by the mention of his good standing with several persons whom they knew, and especially Mr. and Mrs. Meredith.

"Oh, that's nothing! Meredith swallows any hook baited with an Englishman; and Janet is, by this time, I'll engage, only a reflection of him, though she was a sensible young woman when she lived at home, and was allowed to have an opinion of her own, poor thing! As to the other persons you speak of, there's nothing easier than to impose on people who are always running after foreigners. Have you forgotten that marriage, prevented almost at the last moment?"

"Marriage prevented!" repeated Miss Lawrence, with a strange, bewildered look.

"Why, yes, child; what are you thinking about? I did it myself. The girl, very rich, very handsome, was crazy to marry a German *soi-disant* count or baron.

Some cautious friend suggested better security than his word. After time allowed to obtain credentials from home, they were produced, pronounced satisfactory, and the wedding was to take place immediately, when I traced the precious document to the very scrivener's in New York where the parchment was obtained. Yes, actually fitted into the sheet from which it was cut—every identical notch and scallop! The marriage was broken off, but the girl never forgave me for saving her. Now haven't I a right to call you women fools?"

Miss Lawrence answered only by a faint smile, and, glad to perceive that the recollections of the past had diverted his anger, was careful not to revive it by an expostulation, but, having adjusted his chair, left him to his afternoon's nap. This so far refreshed and composed him that, when the captain reappeared at tea, he was able to behave decently.

A beautiful full moon withdrew Eleanor from the parlor, and then into a little path that wound its way through the shrubbery. It was not long before the captain was by her side, rather to her regret, for she would have preferred to be alone. He saw it—for what did he not see? and he addressed her thought, though not expressed.

"My dear young lady, you seek solitude; and why? because you are out of place here. Wherefore then remain?"

"No, indeed, not out of place, I hope, with some of my best friends; yet, to tell the truth, I should like now to return home."

"And why not? Will you not trust me to take you there?"

"No, no," said she, shrinking from such a proposal; "I can not go now; I am not permitted to do so."

"Not permitted! and why, in Heaven's name?"

"Reasons—family reasons. I must stay as long as grandpapa wishes it."

"Family reasons!" reflected the captain, doubting not that he divined them.

"But," continued Eleanor, laughing, "if some good fairy would fly away with me, and I could wake to-morrow in mamma's arms, I should be delighted!"

"Well, although I can not transport you through the air in a car drawn by dragons, nor yet borrow, as more appropriate, the doves of Venus, I *could* find ways and means quite as effectual."

"No, no; I must stay—for a short time, at least; so don't talk of it."

"I won't *talk* of it," said the captain, emphatically; "*you* are not to be compromised; I understand that; but—but—we shall see."

Eleanor returned, carelessly, the smile with which this was said; then, after a few moments, added, "We make very free with spirits, 'black, white, and gray,' and yet I doubt if even you would not rather face any thing of 'mortal mould' than little Queen Mab, or a—"

"Haunted chamber," interrupted the captain.

Her countenance changed, and, perceiving it, he fell into her mood.

"To be serious," said he, "I do not know but that a Highland nurse may have disposed me to treat such things reverently."

"What! really to believe in them?" asked she, anxiously; "in warnings and forebodings?"

The captain turned on her an inquiring look. After a pause that gave effect to his words, he said, "It is not for us to say how far a weak or sinful purpose may be defeated, or a good one confirmed, by what you call 'warnings.' As to their reality in any given case, the individual conscience might furnish the test. For in-

stance, if pursuing a course of passion or disobedience, an admonition of danger might be given—"

"You think so?" said she, more struck by his manner than by the personal application that was perhaps intended, and which her innocence rejected.

"But, in saying this," continued he, "I do but repeat what has been better said by a quaint old English writer—that 'the highest spirits *may* be constantly attendant on the service of man, not on account of his great importance, but because he is the only poor creature that wants their assistance.' But surely, my dear Miss Eleanor, these inquiries have no foundation in your own experience?"

If this were said to draw from her any admissions, it failed of its object. There was something in his tone and look that did not invite confidence; and she felt relieved when Pomp appeared in search of her, with a message from massa for "young missis to come in de house right away, or she cotch cold."

She obeyed, though a little wondering at this unusual timidity on her account, but found the temperature within much lower than without. Her grandfather was at zero, Phil at the freezing-point, and her aunt shivering but little above, only prevented the same rapid descent by her habitual politeness. The captain, entirely unchilled, appeared not to perceive the change. Thus passed a weary half-hour, during which neither conversation, cards, music, nor kind looks relieved the dead weight which had fallen on all but the one for whom it was intended.

Unabashed by what he, nevertheless, perfectly understood, Captain Talbot took his own way to meet it.

Rising to depart, and approaching Mr. Lawrence with great respect, he expressed his sense of his generous hospitality, his *unvarying* kindness—strongly empha-

sized—the pleasure he had enjoyed under his roof, and his concern at being compelled to leave them. Turning to Miss Lawrence, he proffered much the same in less formal terms; then thanked Master Philip for his very agreeable companionship and many polite attentions; assuring them all that nothing had been omitted on their part that could conduce to his high gratification; and, addressing Eleanor particularly, he begged for her commands to her parents, as he should return to the city the following day. She, as much surprised, but less disturbed than the rest—who, in their honesty, felt as if the captain had read their thoughts, and had convicted them of the meanest behavior—gave him her hand frankly, accompanied by regret for his sudden departure. Then, with a parting glance to all, in which might have been detected his satisfaction at the recoil of the enemy's projectile, he bowed himself out.

Mr. Lawrence was the first to break the silence that ensued.

With a long expiration, to allow his suppressed breath to escape, he exclaimed, "Now, I should be glad to know what the devil that means? Haven't I been civil? Haven't I been polite? Haven't I been hospitable?" in the way in which persons conscious of a failure seek to be justified.

"Haven't I too?" gently inquired Miss Gertrude.

"And haven't I?" asked Philip, uneasily.

"And haven't I?" exclaimed Eleanor, with a mischievous smile at the absurdity of the scene.

"Oh, *you*, indeed!" said Phil, reproachfully. "That's well for *you* to ask—the cause of all the trouble!"

"Me, Phil? why I am the only innocent one."

Mr. Lawrence, recovering from his first feeling of annoyance, took another view of the matter, that turned the scale in his own favor. "A stranger had presumed

to teach him manners! and in his own house! Intolerable!"

"I have never been so insulted in my life. An insolent, ungrateful puppy! Comes here with no other introduction than his own impudence; presumes on my hospitality to billet himself upon me day after day; nauseates me with his fulsome compliments; makes love to my granddaughter before my face; and then takes himself off with the air of a great man, whom he dares to insinuate we had treated like ignorant boors! Never let me hear his name again!" A prohibition no one was likely to disregard.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A few days after, the quiet morning of Miss Lawrence and Eleanor was broken in upon by Phyllis, who rushed up-stairs to inform them that a peddler was below.

At that time, when the country shops were few and very indifferent, these itinerant traders were generally acceptable, especially in the female world. Miss Gertrude, therefore, having recollected various small wants, prepared to go down, followed by Eleanor chiefly for the novelty.

The man had been directed to come into the *portaal*, and there, surrounded by the servants, old and young, big and little, he opened his pack and displayed his wares. He was a sturdy, hale-looking man, not young, but with such a merry eye and mirthful face no one could be old. These, a slight limp, and certain Yankee peculiarities proclaimed our friend Jed, whose professional wanderings had led him hither.

He cast a look of more than usual inquiry at the ladies as they approached, in answer to which Aunt Flore said, "Dese yere is my young misseses"—Flore always persisting in thus styling Miss Gertrude, distinguishing Eleanor, when necessary, as "t'oder young missis," or "de young missis from York."

Jed kept his eye on them.

"One looks older than t'other," thought he, "she's pretty-lookin', though; but *she* can't be the one, though she's more suitable."

Having thus communed with himself, he said, "Well, ladies, here's my shop—I call it my 'univarsal!'—Muslins, silks, shawls, stockin's, gloves, pins, needles, scis-

sors, knives, tapes, ribbons; every thing that women folks can want—except sweethearts, and these 'ere will bring *them* too. No offense, I hope?"

The servants giggled.

"If ole massa was here," said Pomp aside to Phyllis, "guess he'd send him to a wuss place, if he talk dat ar way to young missis. Jess right for you, Phyllis."

"Yelly be still!" replied she, with a reproving nudge.

Jed's quick eye detected a joke, and he turned it to his own account. Holding up a bright plaid cotton handkerchief—an imitation of those called Madras—"Here," said he to Phyllis, "is the very article for your head! and only four shillin's, lawful."

She looked admiringly, but hesitated.

"If you can't make it out, that 'ere young fellow will give it to you; I see it in his eye."

"Cock's pottie up for *her* den!" retorted Pomp. "She better get it, put roun' my t'roat 'stead ob her calabash!"

Phyllis pouted; but good-natured, fat Aunt Minty brought back the smile, saying, "Neber you mine him, Phylly—impurent nigger!"

While she folded and refolded the tempting handkerchief, Jed assailed Aunt Flore with a cotton shawl overspread with flowers of the largest size and brightest colors, but of no particular genera or order.

"There!" said he, throwing it over her shoulders adroitly as a Broadway shopman of the present day, and with much the same recommendation, "there's a *splendid* article! If *that* don't suit you, why, you can't be suited—that's all."

"Oh, Hughey! carry me out, and berry me decent!" exclaimed Pomp; "why, Aunt Flore, Uncle Mink neber know he own wife."

"Get 'long, you eberlastin' nigger, you!" replied she, enforcing her words with a push that sent him against

the wall; "you always t'ink de boat neber can't cross widout your oar!"

The rebuke would probably have failed to check the flow of Pomp's wit, had not the attention of Miss Lawrence, hitherto occupied in her own selection from among the divers small packages spread before her, been now attracted to what was going on; and, desirous to prevent imposition on the servants, she approached. While she watched over and advised their purchases, Momma Zip entered, and, making her courtesy to Jed, endeavored to explain her wants.

"Poor old cre'ter!" said he, "I can't make nothin' out of her."

Diving into her pocket, she produced a tobacco-box, and this symbol was intelligible.

Jed shook his head.

"No, no; I only trade in ladies' notions. They never want *that*, unless," with a wink, "a little 'ladies' twist,' you know. But stop; let me see," and he drew from his pocket a paper of the kind desired; "there; I always keep that 'ere sort for my own use," at the same time putting a pinch in his mouth; "this will support natur till I can get more; and now, old woman, you shall have the rest; and stay! here's a nice new pipe for you. I keep pipes 'cause sometimes mothers want 'em for their children to blow bubbles." Then, turning to Eleanor, who stood near him: "For that matter, we all blow bubbles, miss, don't we, all our days? I hope your'n won't burst too soon. Now, Goody, you're fixed, I guess. No, no; I don't want any of your pennies. I mistrust you never got your own yet in this world. I won't take nothin' from you—no rate."

Momma's gratitude found expression in repeated courtesies, and she drew on one side, thus giving Jed an opportunity of addressing Eleanor.

"And what shall I sell you, my pretty lady?" said he. Pleased with his kindness to Momma, Eleanor endeavored to think of something.

"Have you pocket-handkerchiefs?" she asked.

"Sartin—plenty on 'em; just made for your little lily hand too;" bringing forth some, to which, without vanity, Eleanor might have assigned a less distinguished destination. She looked rather dubious, but bought some.

"Perhaps you'd like picter ones too?"

"Picture ones?"

"Yes, miss, very musical and instructive too. Here's one;" and he displayed one on which was stamped a chronological arrangement of the kings and queens of England. The names, surmounted with a crown, were placed within circles, sometimes attended also by emblematical allusions to circumstances or events connected with them; as, for instance, seven smaller crowns encircling the name of Egbert; William Rufus accompanied by an arrow; a lamprey coiled around the name of Henry I.; the garter twined round Edward III.; and two circles, one inscribed Henry VII., the other Elizabeth, were connected by a knot of ribbons, the ends of which formed a scroll, on which was written a couplet more convenient as stating a fact than admirable as poetry:

"York and Lancaster united were
By Henry's marriage with Eliza fair."

This was, in Jed's estimation, a production of high art.

"There!" said he, triumphantly, "buy that, and you'll have it all at your fingers' ends, as a body may say. If that isn't bein' larned at small expense, I should like to know! Or, if you like picters, you can frame it, and hang it up in your keepin'-room, always handy."

Perceiving that it did not take, much to his surprise, he proceeded to another.

"Well, then, here's one;" exhibiting Tippto Saib surrendering his two sons as hostages to Lord Cornwallis. "Now did you ever see any thing more affectin'? I'm sure such a tender-hearted young lady must have feelin's at such a sight! And then to think that jest so *we* should have had to take it, if it hadn't been for the old Continentals, and the rest. Every thing gin up—our fortins to the crown and our necks to the halter! Awful! miss, eh—and only jest two shillin's, 'lawful—"

But Eleanor's "feelin's" were only excited to laughter.

"Ah! I see you don't understand these things like those that has sarved. Well, I can't blame you; that's nat'ral. But here is somethin' that'll come nearer home." And he spread out one on which was printed the old Scotch song "Whistle and I'll come to you, my lad;" and, in illustration, a young girl was represented at a cottage door, with eyes directed to a distant stile, on which leaned a youth, who, with lover-like expression, seemed watching her approach.

"Now that," said Jed, closely observing Eleanor, "that I call a speakin' thing. Don't you see her eyes meltin' like, and her lips movin'? Don't you seem to hear his whistle, clear as a sky-lark? Lord bless my old body! it makes me young agin jest to look at it. I feel e'en a'most as if it was I myself."

Eleanor's laugh encouraged him. "And so do you too; I see you do; jest as if you was a settin' by your chamber window, a knowin' that somebody was a waitin' for you down yonder at the eend of the road, or the 'awenoo' as the quality calls it."

To check applications so familiar and personal, she replied coldly, "No, I don't fancy any of these. Have you any lead-pencils?"

"Sartinly, Jed Cooley never fails;" and he handed them. They were poor enough, but she took them.

"And here's somethin' that goes with them," said he, handing a small tablet for memoranda. "Here's days, weeks, months, the whole year; and see, here's the place for the pencil too, all quite nat'ral and convenient. Now jest look; this'll sarve to make you remember all you've done, and all you've got to do. As to *all* that folks *has* done, that isn't jest always what they like to remember, I know. Not meanin' you, miss, by no means; but me. For when a man has been a soldierin' seven long years, tearin' round like mad, in heat and cold, wet and dry, sometimes full and sometimes empty; fightin', swearin', settin' fire to houses, makin' widders and orphans, it don't make a feller speret'al, I can tell you; and such memorandums isn't very pleasant readin', 'specially when he thinks of that big memorandum book up there!" casting a grave look upward; "but as to what one has got to do in the way of business, you know, and the like, no one can't object."

Eleanor examined the tablet, admitted its usefulness, and kept it.

"Perhaps you don't quite see into it yet; let me show you, miss. Jest, for instance, to-day's Tuesday, to-morrow Wednesday. Now, let's suppose"—lowering his voice, speaking deliberately and emphatically, and affecting to write in the tablet as he spoke—"that you'd got to meet *him* at nine o'clock to-morrow evening, at the eend of the road, a little beyond the gate. Bein' put down here you can't forget, you know; and so"—taking a slip of paper from his pocket—"I'll jest put that in to mark the place, and to show you that I am under orders from the right one." Then, in a still lower tone, he added, "If you won't come, miss, you have nothin' to do but to shake your head."

Putting the pencil in its place, and folding the tablet up quickly, he looked sharply and inquiringly at her as

he put it into her hand; while she, amazed, bewildered, and not as yet clearly comprehending, received it passively, and made no sign.

Satisfied with this, he proceeded to bundle up his wares with all dispatch, and Eleanor, trying to collect her thoughts, was devising how best to reprove his impertinence, when Mr. Lawrence entered, and she saw that she must remain quiet if she would avoid a violent scene.

With a frown directed against the unwelcome peddler, he exclaimed, in an angry tone, "Another of these vermin! I wonder, Gertrude, you will encourage them. They bring nothing but trash, and cheat the poor devils out of the little money they have."

His daughter assured him that this man was an exception—that he brought good and reasonable things, such as the neighborhood did not furnish.

Encouraged by this, Jed reopened his pack, and offered to Mr. Lawrence's inspection a snuff-box of glittering material, gaudily ornamented, with a smile of the most imperturbable good-humor.

"There, sir, is not that *the* thing? Look at it and examine it car'fully as you please, sir; inside and out. Why, 'twould pass for gold, sir!"

To ask Mr. Lawrence's approval of a *sham* of any kind was to insult him past bearing, and the manner rendered it even more offensive.

"You infernal Yankee knave!" he exclaimed, "do you offer *me* a pinchbeck snuff-box? Pass for gold! yes, as you pass for an honest man! with a fair outside. March! begone with your Yankee shams! If ever you darken my doors again I'll have you tossed in a blanket. I'll set the dogs on you!"

Jed was not a man to be frightened by a few hard words. With no haste, and perfect composure, he re-

placed the box, strapped his pack, threw it over his shoulder, then, standing erect, and planting his staff firmly on the floor, he said, "Good-day to you, sir! May the doors of your house never be darkened by nothin' worse than an 'old Continental,' who has shed his blood to prop its foundation, and to keep your head in its own place. As to the blanket, if you'd a been so gin'rous as to send it to Valley Forge, when I lay there a freezin' for you, 'twou'd been about right; at present I have no occasion." Then, making a military salute to the ladies, and nodding pleasantly to the servants, he marched off, in his own view, "with colors flying," leaving Mr. Lawrence in that agreeable perplexity when a person knows not if he has had the best or the worst in a contest he has himself needlessly provoked.

Jed's clear whistle, succeeded by

"Old King Cole was a jolly old soul,
And a jolly old soul was he!"

was heard as he struck into the avenue, along which he presently perceived himself to be followed by the house-dog, Brag, whose suspicions were awakened by the loud tones attending his exit from the house, but who satisfied himself with the intention of seeing him off the premises. This was, however, delayed by Jed's choosing a shady spot near the gate, and seating himself, at the same time opening a wallet suspended at his side. From this he drew forth the remains of his dinner; and, having purposely put the wind "between his nobility" and Brag's nose, the latter soon caught the perfume of a mutton-bone, which certified so satisfactorily to the character of the stranger that he drew nearer to cultivate his acquaintance.

"Ay, I thought so," soliloquized Jed; "I thought so. But it isn't nothin' agin him; he's no worse, nor half so bad, as human cre'ters who are bribed every day. Some

for honor, some for profit, some for pleasure; for hunger, rale hunger, like him, least of all. There, sir," said he, throwing a bone to Brag, whose teeth snapped it in a second, "I may have a call to these 'ere parts agin, spite of that fractious old gentleman. It's always well to have a friend at court they say, and so I gin'rally make a p'int of standin' well with the dogs. I don't care for his blanket; 'twou'd take more than all his niggers to get Jed Cooley into that consarn. But dog's teeth a'n't favorable. So—here—you, what's your name? there's another bone; remember me if ever you see me agin;" and, patting him on the head, a familiarity Brag authorized by a condescending wag of his tail, "now we're friends," a conclusion that the dog seemed to admit by stretching himself on the grass at his side.

"Now," said Jed, reposing in like manner, "let me consider. It's always well to look all round when one's standin' on 'slippery ground,' as the psalm-book says, and I feel kind o' skittish about this business. Let me go it over to myself. Well, as I come along this mornin', a skirtin' that 'ere wood yonder, a man—that is, a gentleman—meets me. At first, he was shy, all kiver'd up in his cloak, for all 'twas hot enough to melt a body, and his hat draw'd over his eyes. Presently he seemed to bethink himself, and turned toward me. So, as I always like to be friendly and to give the time o' day, if nothin' else, I tips him a salute. With that, says he, 'Where be you a goin'?' 'Sir,' says I, 'I am a goin' to sell you so'thin' out of my pack, if so be I can suit you—knives, pipes, neckerchief, stockin's and so forth,' unstrappin' at the same time. But he looked kind o' sharp and uneasy, and would not hear me. 'I mean,' says he, 'what place are you goin' to?' 'Oh,' says I, 'to that 'ere big house 'mong the trees.' 'Ay,' says he, 'all right. What's your name?' says he, next.

"'Jedediah—Jed, for shortness—Cooley, sir,' says I, taking off my hat, 'cause I always lay out to be civil. I larn'd that at school. Well, then he stopped to consider, looking at me as if he expected to see clean to my backbone, but I never dodged a bit. Then says he, 'Can you be trusted?' flinging me a piece of money at the same time, jest as I threw a mutton-bone to this 'ere dog. 'Hope I can, sir,' says I. 'Well, then,' says he, 'you'll see a pretty young lady at that big house—just ask her to meet a friend here to-morrow evening at nine o'clock—you understand,' says he, puttin' his finger to his nose, so. 'I expect I do, sir,' says I, but I s'pose I laughed, for he looked desp'rate angry, and said, 'What do you mean, sir?' 'Oh, nothin',' says I, 'but you said "*young*" lady, didn't you?' 'Be sure,' says he, 'what if I did?' 'Oh, nothin', sir, only there's no disputin' tastes, sir, that's all. And what name shall I tell her?' 'No matter for that,' says he, 'only do as I bid you.'

"Now, thinks I, when a feller is shy of tellin' his name he's ugly—specially when I'd gin him mine so freely. However, I'll fix him for that yet. Then says I, 'I'm an old soldier. I'm used, on secret sarvice, to give a watch-word.' 'No matter for that,' says he, very sharp. But presently, considering, he says, 'Stay, you're right;' and, taking out a slip of paper, he writes somethin' on't with a pencil. 'There,' says he, 'give her that; then meet me here with her answer, and, if favorable, you shall have as much more as I gave you just now.'

"Well, such was my arrant, and I think I've done it pretty 'cute; but, somehow, I don't feel comfortable. She is pretty as a picter, and looks as good as she is pretty. I can't bear to think of her havin' any consarn with that fellar. I'll keep a look out for her yet. But he's a prowlin' about in that 'ere wood, a waitin' for

me, I s'pose, so I must march agin"—resuming his pack and staff, and giving Brag a farewell pat, he issued from the gate, and, after proceeding a short distance in the neighboring wood, encountered a gentleman evidently on the watch for him. His slouched hat and large cloak concealed much of his face and person, and in a voice subdued to harshness, he said, "What success?"

"Your arrant's did, sir," said Jed, "straight as an arrow."

"And she will come?"

"Sartin, sir; she understood the signals; all correct."

Putting a piece of money into Jed's hand, according to contract, he was silent for some minutes, during which Jed tossed up the crown with a careless, satisfied air, and the stranger surveyed him with a scrutinizing gaze.

"An intelligent fellow," said he, thinking aloud.

"Yes, sir," said Jed, "just so," still playing with the money.

"Pray what has been your business heretofore? You called yourself a soldier, though your drilling seems rather rusty at present."

"I started, sir, at the plow-tail; did all kind of farm-work. Then the war broke out, and I was drafted into the militia. Then I sarved in the reg'lars—right old Continental, I tell you. There I got this 'ere," rapping his leg with his stick. "When the war was over I drove a stage near on to a year; but goin' all weathers, night and day, didn't suit this 'ere pesky leg, so I gave in, and took to peddlin'—at your sarvice, sir," with a touch of his hat.

"Ah! you have driven four-in-hand for a year," said the gentleman, approvingly; "and you call yourself a good and safe driver?"

Jed, with a look of rather indignant surprise, answered, "I—guess—I—do!"

Again the gentleman paused, and again communed with himself. "I *must* trust some one;" then said aloud, "Is your business finished here?"

"Yes, sir, for the present, about done."

"Have you any acquaintances in these parts?"

"No, sir; Dutch people and Yankees don't step well together: one's too slow, t'other too quick."

"Then you will proceed from here to your home?"

"Sartin; only stoppin' to accommodate folks on the way."

Again the gentleman looked and hesitated; then, as if suddenly deciding, said, "Be here at nine to-morrow evening—no, a quarter before. A carriage and pair of horses will be secured at the edge of the wood, on that farther side. Having reported yourself to me here, I will give you farther orders. When the lady comes, you must be ready to assist her. She may be a little overcome by fear—of pursuit, I mean—and unable to walk to the carriage. You understand? Ladies have not always the courage to do the very thing they most desire, and are grateful for a little gentle force. You understand?"

Jed's face wore an expression of entire and approving comprehension.

"Just so, sir. Land! I haven't seen the world for nothin'. I'm up to a thing! women folks 'mongst the rest. They are the charmin'est cre'ters in the world, sir; but they don't never know their own minds. Well, sir, and how long will you want me?"

Without replying directly, the gentleman said, "'Tis thirteen miles to the lower landing; do you know the road?"

"Yes, sir, perfectly; have tramped it more than once."

"It is in good order; I came over it to-day. Two hours and a half will take us there."

"Less time too, sir."

"It will be night, you recollect?"

"Yes, but the moon will be up."

"When there, you will be dismissed. The carriage belongs there. You can then take your quickest route home."

"And the driver who brings it here?" asked Jed, "what comes of him?"

"That driver will be myself. I shall have something else to do when I go back. You understand?"

"Oh, sartin, sartin! all right! I guess I'm up to trap—never trust two when one will do."

"Yes, I see you take me. Obey orders, and your pay shall be such as shall satisfy you, of which I give you this as earnest-money."

"Thank you, sir," said Jed, rejecting it; "I'll be paid when the job's done, if you please."

"Well, that's honest. I feel sure of you. A quarter before nine to-morrow evening;" and he disappeared into the wood, leaving Jed in a musing posture, nibbling the head of his staff. After some moments he struck it to the ground, and exclaimed, "Well, it's a risky business, but I'll do it!"

P

CHAPTER XXXII.

As Jed departed, his customers, gathering their purchases, scattered, congratulating themselves that their traffic had not been sooner interrupted.

Eleanor had a subject of more serious thought. Defeated in her purpose of returning the tablet to the peddler, with a proper rebuke for his conduct, she sought a retired seat in the garden, to review the matter calmly. In doing so, she recollected his having written in the tablet, and she referred to it in the expectation of farther light. She found nothing intelligible; but on the slip of paper he had inserted as a mark was the following:

"The keel to the wave, the hand to the oar,
And the boat to the maiden that sits on the shore."

The dim, vague hope suggested by the first address of the peddler, but rejected by her better sense, and then frowned down by her displeasure, at these words revived irrepressibly. Read and re-read, at every instant it gained confirmation. "What could they be but a token, an assurance, from the only person who knew of their interview, and the real significance of this allusion to the boat? And who could that person be but Walter? Who but he could furnish such a credential?" But again: "Could he, would he, ask her thus, to meet him?" Her heart beat the response. "Her earnest prohibition against entering the house would naturally prevent his now attempting it. If he asked a meeting under such circumstances, it must be for reasons that would justify it. It was the last thing he would do, unless compelled."

Her own dislike to a violation of decorum rose in op-

position. "How could she, alone, in the shade of evening, unauthorized by the permission or even knowledge of the friends who had the right to direct her, go at the call of one who—she could not deny it—might prove a person unworthy of the confidence? What would her father, the stern advocate of female propriety; what would her mother, whose gentle dignity repressed all thoughtless compromise of delicacy, say to such a proceeding?" She became faint and cold. "But then, if it should be Walter. *He* could only come on angels' errands! Ought I not to trust *him*? Can I bear to disappoint *him*? to make it apparent that I have not faith in him? What shall I do? what shall I do?"

A summons to tea found the question unanswered. As she entered the house she met Philip, attended by his dogs, jumping and barking around him with noisy delight at his sporting preparations, in which they understood their co-partnership.

"Ah! Eleanor, well met. I have been looking the house over for you, to say good-by. Not, however," in answer to her look of inquiry, "not for very long. I am going down to young Morton's to-night. We start early in the morning for a shooting ramble of a day or two. I take my dogs, for I can not trust his."

"You don't take Brag, I hope."

"No, of course not," said he, laughing; "he would be rather more plague than profit. But why do you ask? Not from fear?"

"Oh no, there's nothing to be afraid of. But of late I'm not so profound a sleeper as usual; and I like to hear the old fellow going his rounds at night, talking to the moon, or challenging the neighbor dogs. It is companionship, and, when wakeful, 'tis quite agreeable."

"Pshaw!" said Phil, with an impatient gesture, "here's that confounded pistol. I have been showing it to Mor-

ton and forgot to put it away. I must run up stairs with it at once. Excuse me; I have not a minute to spare. I dare not leave it here; that fellow, Pomp, will be trying experiments with it."

"Give it to me; I'll take care of it for you."

"Will you? that's very kind. I would not trouble you, but Morton's waiting for me. But take care; the charge is not drawn. You're not afraid?"

"No, indeed! thanks to your instruction."

"Well, good-night." But, holding her hand, he lingered a moment.

"Give me credit, Eleanor. Only once have I spoken to her! and that once," with a sort of shudder, "what was it?"

"I don't know about the pleasure of speaking," said Eleanor laughing, "if that is its effect."

"Ah! you do not know how much harder silence is than all things else—how should you? But one of these days, my fair insensible cousin! Good-night!"

"One of these days!" thought Eleanor, and she went to her room, where relieving herself of hat, shawl, and pistol, she descended to the parlor.

Much to her satisfaction, her grandfather showed no trace of the irritation the peddler had excited. On the contrary, he was kinder than usual of late.

"Come, Leentje"—a Dutch diminutive for Eleanor he sometimes used when in a petting mood—"come, Leentje," said he, "this evening we'll have cards, and you shall choose. Dummy, or piquet, or cribbage;" and the evening passed off pleasantly.

There are all kinds of ill-temper in the world—capricious, irritable, passionate, sulky, malignant. No one of these would express that which nature or circumstance had conferred on Mr. Lawrence. He was not capricious, because he always believed himself acting from sufficient

cause—if irritable and passionate, yet, when least looked for, gentle and forbearing—roused to fury by the smallest opposition, yet capable of the most generous voluntary surrender—sympathizing with truth, courage, and liberty, yet habitually a despot; and, if not thus making hypocrites of others, it was either that their fine natures were impassible to evil, or that his own better impulses operated as a corrective. Sulky or malignant he could never be. Of all epithets, one of uncertain etymology, and, like himself, difficult to define, was most applicable—he was a *queer* man.

Eleanor retired, but not to sleep. Leaving her candle in the little back room she sometimes dignified as her "study," she passed into the other, in the front of the house, and, seating herself by the window, she looked out into the quiet night,

"So quiet, that even the motion of an angel's wing
Would interrupt the intense tranquillity
Of silent hills, and more than silent sky."

The moon, high in the clear blue heaven, offered to the upcast eye an image of unruffled majesty, while, reflected from the ever-moving waters below, though still beautiful, she trembled.

"So it is!" thought Eleanor. "Even the loveliest things are often dimmed and distorted here. 'Tis only in heaven that they are perfect. So even with our affections." And again her troubled mind debated with itself, "What should she do?"

She regretted now that she had not consulted with Philip. She knew she could trust him, that he would have remained at home if she desired it, would have watched over her safety if necessary. "But, then, how make partial disclosures to him? and, still more difficult, how tell all? No, it could not be."

"Then," naturally courageous except when assailed

by fears of things unreal, she thought, "what could harm me here, within our own bounds?"

In this conflict with herself, at one moment renouncing the idea, at another incapable of so doing, she suddenly reflected, "He has just returned from the city; he has seen mamma; he said he should. He brings me a message from her! Oh yes, it must be so! and then I must, I ought to see him!"

Truth to tell, she was but too ready to say, with St. Francis, "I do not know how that poor virtue *prudence* hath offended me, but I can not cordially like it." So lately regretting even what seemed a necessary concealment, she was now about to commit deliberately that of which she had feared merely the appearance. Doubt yielded to conviction, enforced by inclination—"Yes, she would go."

Poor Eleanor was not, indeed, infallible! But she was little more than "sweet seventeen," and she was in love—when imagination silences reason, and ingenuity puzzles prudence. Ye pretty ones! pity, but do not imitate her.

Having decided, she nerved herself against farther scruples. The clock struck eleven, and, rising, she went for the light left in the adjoining room. As she approached the table a strange creaking noise arrested her attention. Surprised, but not frightened, she listened with a quickened sense. It was repeated; it was near; it was in the room in which she stood. The window-sashes were closed. One opened on the *af-dak*, and she directed her eye to it with a startling suspicion of an attempt to raise it; but it did not move. Again a sound as of a heavy door cautiously turned on its hinges! She looked at the door of the room, but it remained shut. Again the same mysterious sound! Her fear now awakened, she looked anxiously around, not knowing from

what quarter to expect its confirmation, when, her eye resting on the large dark *kass*, she perceived, with increasing alarm, one of its ponderous doors ajar. Not daring to approach, she bent on it a look of suspicion. It moved, attended by the same sound, now fearfully explained. For, as it continued slowly opening, inch by inch, while she stirred not, and scarcely breathed, a man's head and body were protruded. She did not shriek. The instinct of self-preservation was stronger than fear; but, putting her hand on the pistol which lay on the table by her side, she raised it and directed it against the intruder.

"For the Lord's sake, miss!" exclaimed the voice of the peddler, "don't fire! I won't hurt a hair of your head. It's only me—only Jed Cooley!"

This information did not convey the same assurance to Eleanor that it might to others. His strange reappearance oversetting all the conclusions she had just arrived at, while he might be supposed the accredited agent of Walter, the thought instantly occurred to her that his visit by day had only been a stratagem to ascertain how best to make a felonious attempt at night.

She lowered her weapon, however, but looked at him with all the sternness of which her face was capable, saying, resolutely, "How dare you to conceal yourself here? Begone instantly, or I shall alarm the family."

"Why, what a *heroïne* you be!" said he; "but it's not quite rulable though, to shoot a man before you challenge him. Not so much as 'Who goes there?' and pop! I'd like to have been a dead man in no time."

"Silence!" said Eleanor, imperatively, "and begone!"

"I can't go yet," said Jed, shaking himself very composedly, and speaking rather low; "that consarned place has made me so stiff, all crumpled up for two hours, that I can't move jest at present. But don't be afeard. I

see you are, though you do behave like Judith and Holofernes. I want you to know that I come only as a friend; do jest believe this, and be easy, and let me tell you so'thin' for your own good. So, no offense, I'll set down, but jest as far off as you please; my lame leg is so cramped, bein' crammed like a bundle of rags in that 'ere what y' call it, that I can't stand."

Without permission granted, he seated himself at a respectful distance. Eleanor, upon this, retreating still farther, he ventured a nearer move; when, mistaking his meaning, she again raised the pistol.

"Hold, miss! not so fast! Unless you put down that 'ere popgun of your'n, I sha'n't speak at all, and that would be your loss, not mine. I only want to come near enough to speak without raisin' the ruff. Now, I tell you, on the honor of an old Continental, and, if that don't suit you, on the faith of a Christian, that I come for your good, and you'll rue the day if you don't hear me. I'll swear it, if you choose, on that 'ere Bible. It consarns that message I brought you this very mornin'."

The unmistakable earnestness and frankness of the man, together with this last intimation, inspired her with confidence.

"I will hear you," said she; "be quick; but remain where you are."

Then, taking a chair herself, at what she deemed a safe distance, but still retaining the weapon, she waited for his communication.

Jed cast a comical glance from his oblique eye at the pistol.

"I guess, miss, you better not play much with that 'ere artillery of your'n. It's loaded, you know; and, bein' panted this way, it rayther chokes me. It's like speakin' with a knife at one's throat."

Eleanor did not condescend to reply, but, looking grand, waved her hand for him to proceed.

"Well, you see, miss, I'm a little giv'n to do what the sailors call 'spinnin' a long yarn.' Can't, therefor', be so very quick, as you say, but'll try to accommodate. Now, it a'n't that I would stand about helpin' a young lady out of a window, or into a coach, if so be that her sperrit was up t'tit, and if 'twas the right man. But this 'ere, maybe puttin' the saddle on the wrong horse, I can't no way agree to."

Eleanor looked in wonder and indignation.

"What do you mean?" said she, angrily. "What has this impertinence to do with your message to me?"

"Considerable," replied he, with a significant nod; "con-sid-er-able, I tell you!" Then, speaking earnestly, "Now, *do*, do, my pretty young miss, let me go on in my own way. If I'm mindin' my manners all the time, you'll never get to the eend. And, to begin, I must make bold to ax you one question. What kind of a person might you be expectin' to meet at that 'ere place to-morrow night? Any partic'lar one?" he added, with a smile.

The delicacy of Eleanor shrunk from confidence on such a subject with such a person; yet, conscience convicting her of the very purpose hinted at, however offensive it sounded when thus stated, she could not speak, but sat troubled and confused.

"Well, if so be you're backward to tell, I'll describe my gentleman, and you'll see if he's your'n or not."

Eleanor still remaining silent, he proceeded.

"He's tall; a fine figure of a man; some folks might call him handsome, but I don't; he's hard-favored."

"Oh no!" exclaimed Eleanor, off her guard. "He is, very handsome!"

Jed smiled; and, as ruthlessly as he would have described a deserter, proceeded:

"Has a mop of darkish hair."

"Full, curling, brown hair," said Eleanor, correcting him.

"Teeth, white as a dog's."

"As ivory," interposed Eleanor.

"Dark eyes, sharp as a razor."

"Yes, when necessary; at other times soft and kind as those of a child."

"Didn't look partic'lar soft or kind on *me*," said Jed, turning his quid. "Voice strong and harsh; and then, ag'in, a kind of a low growl."

"Oh no, no; his voice is music itself! You've no ear!"

"No ear!" This was touching Jed on a tender point.

"No ear! that's good! Why, there a'n't no tune I can't whistle and sing a'ter once hearin' on't. No ear! I guess! Well, no matter for that; does this pieter' suit you, miss? Is this the right one?"

Jed's *renseignemens* had been so general, and so qualified by Eleanor's involuntary amendments and constructions, that they could not be said directly to oppose the image in her mind, if they did not perfectly conform to it. But she hesitated; she could not yet bring herself to an open admission of the expectation insinuated by Jed.

"One thing I forgot," continued Jed—"his age. When he makes himself up to please a young lady, I won't undertake to say what he may pass for. But, havin' no partic'lar reason to tickle my eye, he jest looked his rale man; and if he's a day, he is fifty."

"Fifty! Oh, dreadful!" exclaimed Eleanor. "Never, never; you're dreaming."

"No, *I'm* not a dreamin'; I won't say but other folks may be. Pray, then, miss, how old do you ralely expect your gentleman to be?"

"The person," said Eleanor, hesitating—"the person I thought—I supposed—you might mean, is not more than three or four and twenty."

Jed opened his eyes and gave a long, low whistle.

"Con-star-na-tion!" he exclaimed; "well, we've missed a figure, but there's time to set it right yet. Now, another thing: you didn't hear nothin' about a carriage at a sartin place, did you? and, to speak right out, you didn't agree to be run away with, did you?"

"Good Heaven!" cried Eleanor, scarcely repressing a scream. "What do you mean? What is all this? Who are you? and what horrible man are you speaking of?"

"Then you hadn't no notion of this?" asked Jed.

"No, no, no! how dare you think it? I would rather die. Leave me this moment! You are a bad man, leagued with some one still worse to entrap me. Go, go, I command you!"

"Don't be so hasty, my dear young lady; though I can't blame you, for all. Jest hear me. I see into it. Jest as I partly expected afore. 'Tis all a plot of that villain. I mistrusted him soon as I see him the second time. Now jest be quiet and hear me, and I'll make it clear as print to you."

Yielding to his hearty manner, and her own earnest desire to fathom the matter, if possible, Eleanor consented. His account satisfied her of his honesty, and that, but for him, her imprudent confidence would have betrayed her into a very unpleasant, if not dangerous adventure. But the question still returned, who was this daring and impertinent man? Captain Talbot occurred to her, but only because, at the moment, she could think of no one else. The idea was rejected almost as soon as conceived; for, besides that he was gone, and that he was in manners and conduct above suspicion, he was far

too worldly-wise thus to commit himself. After revolving in her mind every other acquaintance, a certain eccentric, rich old bachelor—Baltus Quitman by name—a visitor at Rosenberg, who had furnished merriment to herself and the family by his violent admiration of her, appeared the least improbable. Jed's description was not inapplicable, except that he had exaggerated his age. She recollected, too, her grandfather's saying, "Take care, Nelly! Baltus has been a wild dog in his day. He'll run off with you, if he can get you in no other way; for our Dutch blood, when it *does* stir, stops for nothing. It makes pirates, buccaneers, patriots, or lovers, as the case may be." The suspicion gained confirmation as she dwelt on it. "Yes, it *must* be so! that wild, half-crazy Quitman must be the man. He must have seen the boat land, remained on the watch, and followed in the obscurity of the night and the storm. Those mysterious footsteps! that spectral figure! were all traceable to the same person;" and she almost forgave his nefarious purpose when thus relieved of her superstitious fears.

"Well, miss," said Jed, watching her anxious face, "have you thought it out?"

Unwilling to compromise any one without absolute certainty, she replied, "I only know that a base design has been formed against me, and that you have prevented it."

She drew her purse from her pocket as she spoke, and, extending it to him, added, "This is a small requital, but I shall find a way to increase it if you will give me your address."

But Jed, putting it aside with a proud, but good-natured smile, said, "Why, now, you don't suppose I'm a goin' to be paid for not bein' a rascal—you don't! When I was a youngster, my granny used to say, 'Jed,

your money always burns in your pocket;' but, land! I guess if I took your'n, 'twould burn blue as brimstone. No, miss; if I've done you a sarvice, I hope it may wipe out some of my shortcomin's to other folks. And now I must be a goin'."

Eleanor would not mortify him by farther pressing her bounty, but, with a smile that Jed thought brighter than gold, she said, "You are a good, generous fellow! You must come and see my parents that they may thank you too. But how can you get down? and you lame too! and the dog?"

"Oh! that ain't nothin'. I've scaled worse things than that 'ere outwork under your window; and if I got up, why, I can get down, you know. As to the dog, he and I's friends, and, if he don't remember it, I've a bone here to put him in mind. But, dogs or no dogs, you see I set myself to do the job the minute he spoke of that 'ere carriage; I smelt a rat then, I tell you."

Turning the same comical squint at the pistol, as he saw her putting it cautiously on the table, he said, "You needn't be so dreadful car'ful about that 'ere. It can't do nothin'."

"Nothing! when it is loaded! What do you mean? You were—"

"Yes, yes," said he, interrupting her quickly, "I know what you're goin' to say. I did seem afeard on't myself; but that was only jest to keep up your sperrits. You see, when I got in here, and found all dark, I did what I always do, struck a light—I always keep a box by me. Whenever I pass the enemies' lines I look out, I tell you! So the first thing I see here was this 'ere pistol, ready for action. I hadn't forgot the angry old gentleman I see in the a'ternoon, nor how he warned me off the place. And, thinks I, better keep fire-arms out of the way of a wrathy man. So I drewed its teeth.

But seein' what a comfort 'twas to *you*, and how beautiful you looked a p'intin' it at me, thinkin' to shoot me any minute you'd a mind to, I hadn't the heart to disapp'int you."

Approaching the window, he again stopped.

"I must make bold, miss, to give you a bit of advice. Don't you be goin' outside your bounds here, at no time, day nor night; that is, not alone. I wouldn't trust that 'ere man more than the Evil One; jest you keep close, I say. Well, I believe all's settled now, so good-by, my pretty miss. If ever you'll think of Jed Cooley, the old Continental, that's the best reward he'll ax; and one thing more—no offense, by no means—but I should like to know how to call you."

Eleanor smiled and gave him her name.

"It's a kind of a new one to me, would you be so good as to write it in this here pocket-book for me?"

She did so, with the address of her parents, saying, as she returned it, "You are a great traveler, and your next expedition must be to that place. I am sure," continued she with warmth, "that you are an honest man; I shall never forget you; and in some better way I hope to show my gratitude."

With a profound bow, and "I thank you heartily, miss," Jed made his exit, and, slipping down from the corner of the *af-dak*, his stealthy tread was heard by Eleanor as he wound round the house. Brag approached to challenge, but a hand and a mutton-bone met him. He inquired no farther, and Jed pursued his way unmolested.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE next evening, at the appointed time, Jed took up his line of march to the place of rendezvous with his unknown employer. It may be questioned why, having broken his engagement in the spirit, he should keep it to the letter, exposing himself to a collision with an angry man. But *fear* was not in Jed's vocabulary, and he had two motives for keeping his appointment. First, to ascertain if, perchance, he might discover the farther plans of the gentleman, ~~and~~, next, to enjoy his present discomfort.

Striking along the fence which inclosed the grounds of Rosenberg, he crossed a road, and struck into a dense wood, where he soon encountered the person he expected to find, wrapped, as usual, and his face sheltered under a deeply-impending hat.

"You are just in time," said he, approvingly.

"Yes; I always calculate to be about right."

"Have you seen any one?" he asked.

"Not a livin' cre'ter; and it's so light outside of this 'ere wood, that you might pick up pins, so I couldn't miss seein' on 'em. Pleasant night, isn't it?"

The gentleman did not respond. It seemed that his own thoughts were sufficient for him, and he walked to and fro, without encouraging conversation. But this did not suit Jed's taste, and he was resolved, if he could not draw him out, he would talk at him.

"A rare pretty night it is! I do believe I could read printin' as well as by daylight; but that's not sayin' much, for I've rayther neglected my edication. Some-

how, though, such nights make me feel queer—superstitious-like; don't you feel shaky?"

"No."

"Well, folks is different. Now, it seems to me, when all creation is so still and clear, as if nothin' couldn't be hid. As if every wicked thing men was a doin' must sartin be seen. So, if I was a goin' to rob, or murder, or do any thing unlawful, I couldn't never do it such a night as this. I should want a thund'rin' noise about me, winds blowin' like mad, trees a crackin', and clouds a driftin', as if witches was ridin' on 'em. No beautiful shinin' moonlight like this 'ere!"

"I thought you had been a soldier," said the gentleman, coolly.

"Guess I have! Seen hot sarvice too; but there's harder things than cannon balls, I tell you! A man can face them, when a little trip-hammer inside of him will knock him flat."

"My friend," said the gentleman, with a dash of sarcasm in his manner, "you have been a Methodist preacher, I perceive, and probably much greater at a field-preaching than in any other field; but I'll dispense with your exhortations at present. By the way, you told me your name, but not your residence. Where do you live?"

Jed, nettled at the insinuation of Methodism, and not forgetting how close the gentleman had been of his own name, answered, dryly, "Why, all about. At this present time I live *here*."

"Yes; but when you are at home, where do you live?"

"Oh, then I live *there*."

The stranger hesitated a moment, as if uncertain whether it were best to resent or to be amused at the evasion; he chose the latter.

"You are a queer fellow," said he, and resumed his walk of observation, while Jed seated himself on the trunk of a large tree that had been felled hard by. A flood of moonlight poured in through the opening, thus throwing the wood and the stranger into a deeper gloom.

"Ay," thought Jed, "there he tramps back and forth, for all the world like a wicked sperrit. Darkness suits him better than light. The villainous old wolf! to think of his devourin' that pretty lamb! There he goes, a prowlin' round, like Satan tryin' to coax Eve out of the garding."

While Jed thus communed with himself, his companion kept up his walk. At length he stopped, and, in a voice indicative of growing impatience, said, "'Tis long past the time; what can detain her?"

"Perhaps she's forgot," suggested Jed, with provoking indifference, and rapping a careless tattoo with his staff on the log on which he sat.

The gentleman, either disdaining, or unable to reply, suffered the offensive suggestion to pass.

At this moment approaching steps were heard.

"She comes!" said he, in a whisper; Jed only whistled.

The sounds passed away.

"Might a know'd," said Jed, "that wa'n't her; only folks on the road goin' to the ferry. When she *does* come! I guess we sha'n't hear nothin'."

"Not hear! Why not?"

"Oh, I'd'n'know," replied Jed, again rapping on the log; "only her steps fall like a feather."

"Don't keep up that infernal rapping; of course we can't hear while you do."

Jed ceased.

"Always willin' to accommodate," then, appearing to listen, added, "If she does not come—"

"Not come!" interrupted the gentleman, angrily; "why should she *not* come?"

"How can I tell? Maybe she will, maybe she won't: women ain't never to be depended on—that's my experience. But I was goin' to say, if she does not come, why then what next?"

But Jed was disappointed; the gentleman was in no mood to form or to disclose farther plans. On the contrary, he said, impatient of Jed's nonchalance, "You are much at your ease, I think."

"Sartin—why not? I'm not doin' nothin' I'm ashamed of; be you?"

The gentleman was perplexed; he did not quite comprehend his coadjutor; but he had trusted too far to recede, and he suppressed an angry reply. Taking out his watch, and coming still more into the light, his face was clearly discernible with its dark and stormy expression.

"'Tis nearly ten," he said, fixing his eyes on Jed, who returned the glance without flinching, but, at the same time, rose and faced him with rather an air of defiance.

"'Tis nearly ten," he again said, after some deliberation, "and yet she does not come."

"No, that's pretty sartin; and I've an idee that she won't."

The manner, more than the words, brought things to an issue. In a voice that trembled with passion, the stranger burst forth:

"I trusted to your word, but more to my money. I suspect you have broken the one, though you pocketed the other."

"*You do!*" said Jed, with a mocking, leisurely emphasis that, while it confirmed his suspicions, roused the gentleman to fury.

Regardless of consequences, he elevated his cane and aimed a blow which, had it fallen as intended, would have told on Jed's pate; but he, perfectly cool, with a twirl of his stout bludgeon twisted the cane out of the hand of his antagonist, and, catching it in its descent a few paces from him, stood master of both weapons, while the stranger, in impotent rage, shook his fist, and vented in imprecations what he had no means to enforce more effectually. When he paused, as if for breath, Jed spoke:

"Now, I guess, you've done, and I'll have a word. First, you'll please to larn that no man lays a cane on Jed Cooley; and, next, I have to tell you that, if I sarved you right, I'd fling your money in your face. But I won't, though. I 'arned it honestly, doin' your arr'nd: I can't afford to work for nothin' and find myself. But you'll please to remember that, as soon as I see your cloven foot, I didn't touch no more of your silver. So much for myself; and—"

The gentleman was about to speak, but Jed cut in imperiously:

"Stop! I a'n't done yet. And now, sir, you'll take notice, *she—is—not—a comin'*; not to-night nor never! She's found you out, and so you'd best strike your tents and march away, and I'll furnish the music." So saying, he broke, with a clear whistle, into the "Rogue's March."

The rage of the disappointed and insulted man may be imagined. In sentences incoherent from passion, he applied to Jed epithets which, perhaps, relieved himself, but no way ruffled his imperturbable foe, who, well satisfied to have a clear understanding with him, felt, as he would have said, "very fine."

Raising the cane he had secured, and giving it an impulse that carried it into the depths of the wood, he said,

"There! I don't want it, and, jest at this partic'lar time, *you* can do without it. You won't have nothin' to do to-morrow; no young ladies to smuggle into carriages and carry off agin their will; and then you can look for't. So good-night to you, sir;" and with a snatch of Revolutionary doggerel—

"Says General Lee to General Howe,
What do you think of the Yankees now?"

he passed into the road, and was soon out of sight.

Meanwhile, Eleanor, at this juncture, in which her own fate might have been involved, reflected, in the security of her room, on her escape.

Of the actual world she knew little. She had seen it chiefly as reflected in the mirror of fiction, and naturally reasoned from this to her own case. While she had no alarm for the future, believing herself safe in observing the caution given her, she dwelt upon the danger to which she had been exposed.

"Yes," thought she, "who can tell what might have befallen me? In the power of a wicked man, who, by working on my fears or my compassion, or by alarms for my reputation, might have frightened or forced me into a marriage! Just so did that insinuating Sir Clement attempt to carry off Evelina; and just so, and worse, did that hateful Bellamy compel poor Eugenia to marry him." But in proportion as imagination pictured her danger, her better sense and her conscience represented her own folly, the sole cause of it. This once admitted, she was too honest to deceive herself. Reverting to the meeting with Walter, she recalled, with confusion, her undisguised pleasure—an excitement that inevitably had betrayed a sentiment she was bound to repress, and her consequent failure of filial duty. She reflected that Walter must himself have condemned the weakness, pardonable in a child, but reprehensible at her present

age. Then how had she yielded to, how had she encouraged, feelings thus strongly revived! Alas! alas! how nearly had she been the dupe of her own foolish presumption! "Oh!" thought she, "if we ever meet again, he shall respect me, though he must not love me!"

Going to her open window, where the ripple of the rising tide sent up through the still air a faint murmur, as it coquetted with the shore, advancing, receding, yet always gaining, she impatiently wished that affections could be governed by laws as irresistible. But wiser thoughts prevailed, and her mind turned to that "higher law," that beautiful chain of dependences by which God unites his rational creatures, making the least often the benefactors of the greatest. "Ah!" thought she, "but for that poor lame peddler, where might I have been at this moment?"

She closed the window, then fell on her knees contrite, grateful, and submissive, and rose with new purposes of duty. Thus tranquilized, she sought her pillow, and a night succeeded not like those of late,

"From which the silken sleep was fretted out;"

but as if

"Angels made
A place beside her."

From such sweet rest she was roused in the morning by the gentle voice of her aunt, who entered with letters—one to Eleanor from her mother, authorizing and urging her return home. The year exacted by her grandfather had expired, and her parents could no longer live without her. This was just what she would have asked, and the delicacy which feared to wound her aunt by a pleasure too manifest, was relieved by Miss Lawrence saying, as she held up an open letter she had just read, "Now, Eleanor, hear mine."

It was also from Mrs. Meredith—an earnest request

that her father and sister would accompany Eleanor, and without delay. The reason for this dispatch was, that Mr. Lawrence should consult an eminent English oculist, lately arrived, and soon to leave the city. There was, therefore, no time to lose. The case of her father had been mentioned to him, and, considering his vigor and constitution, he had little doubt of a cure.

Eleanor clapped her hands, and Miss Gertrude evidently favored the proposition; but the decision, of course, rested with her father. For this the ladies must wait till after breakfast, no one ever venturing to bring any matter before him till that meal had prepared the way.

The morning was beautiful, the breakfast excellent. He heard, he smiled, he assented, and straightway the house was astir. First Pomp was sent in hot haste to ascertain when Captain Ostrander would sail; Mr. Lawrence would go with no other; then with orders to secure the entire after-cabin. Then a council was called with Mrs. Dorothy and Aunt Flore as to certain household arrangements. Then Pomp's wardrobe was to be put in proper order to attend his master, to his unspeakable pride and delight. As to Mr. Lawrence himself, when asked for his commands, he only answered, "A gentleman is always ready. If my clothes are good enough for myself, they are good enough for my company."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

PRISCILLA'S attendance on Mr. Lawrence had continued with few intermissions since it was first required; for, though his displeasure against Eleanor had nearly worn itself out, and was no longer manifested, he evidently found a satisfaction in the quiet little Quaker, and a pleasure in the free appropriation of her time, which he did not choose to relinquish. She came, therefore, as usual, and with the same persistency saw only Mr. Lawrence. Eleanor, at first really wishing to establish a friendly relation with her, had made frequent attempts to meet and to detain her, but in vain. A quiet "farewell" was all she could obtain; till, half vexed at what she considered an ungracious return to her advances, she gave the matter up.

The morning after the decision in favor of the New York visit, Mr. Lawrence returned from a ride to inspect some work he had in hand with a ruffled look, that indicated either that it had not prospered, or that something else was wrong. Going to his own room, he gave orders that when Priscilla came no one should disturb him.

On entering, he found Philip awaiting his return for directions in regard to improvements to be made in his grandfather's absence. The business settled, he stood looking from a window commanding the walk by which Priscilla would approach. It was not long before she appeared.

"Your reader is coming, sir," said he.

"Very well; then *you* may go."

There was nothing in the words, but they were accom-

panied by a look and emphasis that gave them significance, and Philip was seized with a temptation that had more than once beset him—a desire to hear what passed on these occasions.

At this moment it was stronger than ever, and the facility with which it might be accomplished rendered it unconquerable. The head of the high, old-fashioned bedstead, surrounded by full heavy curtains, was near the door by which the room was entered, and, to guard against a draught, there was a large folding screen reaching nearly to the ceiling. This was so placed between the bed and the door as to admit of a person being concealed by it from any one entering the room, while the curtains furnished an equal protection from those within it.

Apparently obeying his grandfather, Philip passed round the screen, opened the door, and, closing it again, slipped noiselessly between the screen and the bed—awaiting, with breathless interest, the interview. The approaching footsteps of Priscilla in the hall would have prevented Mr. Lawrence detecting that none had passed from his door, had a suspicion been awakened. But it was not, and the entrance of Priscilla led to their usual occupation.

Motioning to a chair near him, "Here is the paper, child," said he; "we will take that first."

This being "read and marked," though perhaps not as "inwardly digested" as usual, Priscilla was laying it aside, when a paragraph unnoticed before caught her eye, and she read aloud the heading—"A Domestic Tragedy." "Shall I read it?" she asked.

"Certainly. Go on."

It recorded the death of a young girl in New York, under circumstances of peculiar interest. She had been addressed by a youth of superior fortune and condition,

who had secured her affection; but his father had forbidden the marriage in terms so offensive and injurious to her, that self-respect had silenced love, and she had broken off all intercourse with his son. He, in despair, had fallen into intemperate habits, and had met a violent death in a street brawl; at which she, struck to the heart, and reproaching herself as the cause, lost her senses and died miserably.

Priscilla's voice faltered as she read, and Mr. Lawrence, as she concluded, said, "Poor girl! I think I know that man; not personally, but by name and character. He was a hard man. 'Tis all true, I am afraid."

Priscilla, having often been encouraged by Mr. Lawrence to express her opinion of what was read, ventured to say, "It seemeth to me that of the three she hath the least need of pity; the father the most, for he was the oppressor. She, and he whom she loved, have gone to a more merciful parent. He remaineth alone with his remorse."

The solemnity of her voice and words, instead of rousing a spirit of contradiction, affected him.

"Very true, child; very true. But don't you think *she*, too, had some cause for remorse?"

"Nay, not remorse; perhaps for regret, on account of human weakness, inasmuch as it may be that she had spoken unadvisedly with her lips, and had given place to wrath. If so, it was the word, not the deed, of which she had need to repent, for is it not manifest there remained nothing else for her to do?"

Mr. Lawrence was silent, but after a long look into her face, which was calmly and fearlessly turned toward him, he replied, by asking, emphatically, "What would *you* have done? You do not speak. I will tell you. You, a cool, discreet, wise little Quaker as you are, would have taken the bit between your teeth if you had been

thus used, and would have married the son in spite of his father; and, as it turned out, I must say, have done rightly."

Priscilla's color rose, her lips moved, as if to speak, but she was silent. After a moment's pause, she shook her head, and repeated, "Rightly! Men often judge righteous judgment in the case of others. But right or not, so I would not have done."

Then proceeding, with a kindling eye but a firm tone, she said, "I am one in humble condition, without any of this world's riches. I could bring no dowry but an honest name. But, though I render not worship to titles, nor to rank, nor to great estate, I would enter no man's family unbidden and unwelcome. I ought not to esteem him higher for the things that perish; neither may I, by a mean action, sink lower than heaven hath placed me. I have not been taught to take the height of others as the rule by which to measure myself or my duty."

Her manner seemed to have a magnetic influence on Mr. Lawrence. Accustomed, as he had been, to implicit obedience—unfortunate for himself as for others—impatient of the least contrariety, even in opinion, yet when she presumed to utter a displeasing truth, she acted on him as a sedative. He could as soon have directed a burst of anger against a statue, as against her impassive calmness.

He looked at her fixedly, as if endeavoring to read her thoughts.

"Priscilla," said he, at length, "you know a person by the name of Joel Parkinson."

"I do."

"He has been a lover of yours."

"He has sought me in marriage."

"And you have refused him, though he appears an eligible connection."

"My heart did not incline to him."

"He is an industrious, respectable young man; well-looking, and well-behaved."

"I do not deny it."

"He will, to be sure, have to work pretty hard a few years, and you would be obliged to make exertions greater than in your father's house; but, he will be a prosperous man; he has all the necessary qualifications."

"I doubt it not."

"Priscilla, you have been much in my family; were born under my roof; your mother was an excellent woman; you have conducted yourself well, and have rendered me kind and willing service, so that I feel interested in your welfare. If you will consent to marry this young man, who seems truly attached to you, I will befriend him in the way of business, and your marriage portion shall be five hundred dollars."

Priscilla's face betrayed that she was moved. She did not attempt to speak for a moment, then, in a clear voice, but not without effort, she said, "Thou art too generous! I thank thee. May God be good unto thee, as thou hast been to me and mine! But I may not profit by thine offer. I do not love the man."

"Love begets love," persisted Mr. Lawrence. "Besides, prudence as well as affection is to be considered in these things. It is *safer* for you, Priscilla," continued he, with an earnest look, "far safer to have the protection of a husband. You are young and handsome. Some one may regard you with a love not as honest as poor Joel's. Be wise in time."

Her blushing cheek showed that she felt, as well as understood the insinuation; but she

"Answer'd nothing, save with her brown eyes."

Her evident distress affected Mr. Lawrence, and, in a tone grave, but not stern, he proceeded:

"Priscilla! Joel tells me that he fears you love another—that you are ambitious. If this be so, hear me. He to whom you have raised your hopes can not *marry* you. He may love you—our affections are often not in our own keeping; but sorrow, if nothing worse, can only attend such an attachment. I wish to shield you from all harm, and see you the happy and respectable wife of an honest man."

Like all strong natures, which, when they do yield, pour themselves forth without reserve, Priscilla's burst through its accustomed restraint. She sat, for a moment, with hands clasped, with an upcast look, as if asking direction, and then, suddenly turning to Mr. Lawrence, she exclaimed, "Thou shalt know all! Thou art merciful and just. I *have* loved thy grandson! but, were he now to offer me marriage, I should reject it. I do not ask thy forgiveness. I have never, even in thought, sinned against thee; but I do entreat that thou wilt *trust* me, for thine own peace, as well as for my honor."

Her face beaming with expression, her hands pressed convulsively to her breast, her voice full of power, her earnest words, altogether so touched Mr. Lawrence, that he could only gaze on her with pity and admiration! When, as if dropped from the clouds or sprung from the earth—so noiseless and sudden his appearance—Philip was kneeling before him!

"Hear *me*, sir!" he exclaimed. "She has *not* told you all. Oh, let me do her the justice she has not rendered to herself!"

But the anger that Priscilla had disarmed now found an object. The fluid, innoxious to her, burst upon Philip's devoted head.

"Rise, sir," said Mr. Lawrence. "Do not farther disgrace yourself by adding to the deceptions already prac-

ticed upon me. I am not the blind, easy man, under whose very roof you have hoped to carry out your designs. I do not blame this unfortunate girl; her affection has made her a mere instrument in your hands."

Rising from his suppliant attitude, his face flushed, and trembling with emotion, Philip exclaimed, "I should be unworthy of your blood if I could hear such language unmoved. Listen to me, sir; I do not now ask it as a favor; I claim it as a right. I do not deserve the imputation you cast on me. I did not practice on you, as you suppose, by the introduction of Priscilla into your house. It was your own act. So far from being done to further our intercourse, we have never met till this moment under this roof since the day she came at your own request."

Mr. Lawrence looked at Priscilla, who, at Philip's appearance, had retreated, and now sat, pale as marble, like one stunned, in the first chair into which she could drop.

"Is this true?" asked Mr. Lawrence.

She bowed her head, and scarcely articulated, "It is."

"I must and will speak farther," continued Philip, with passionate earnestness. "We were allowed to grow up together from children without counsel or check—with no guard but the angel who has watched over her innocence. Look at her, sir! Is it strange that I should love her? I solemnly declare that, if I have been preserved from the vices and follies of other young men, you owe it to that girl—to her image in my heart, and her influence on my mind. Yet was I coward and base enough to dread your displeasure more than her injury—to seek to obtain unworthily what I dared not ask honorably. But she cast me from her, as I deserved; and, when I offered reparation for the insult, she would not hear me; she would condescend to no clandestine

proceeding. I was denied even the privilege of seeing or speaking to her. Then it was that, in a moment of desperation, I tried to carry out your wishes in regard to my cousin. You know the result. This moment decides my future. I conceal nothing. I regret to disappoint and displease you, sir: you have a right to every thing but my honor. By that, as strongly as by my love, I am bound to Priscilla. I shall seek to be restored to her affection. If I succeed, disinherited and beggar-ed, I shall marry her."

Mr. Lawrence listened without an attempt to interrupt him, his strong, expressive face betraying the various emotions by which he was agitated; but, as Philip ceased, he broke forth,

"By Heaven, you shall do no such thing! No! As the heir of my name and fortune, you shall bestow both on a girl who has earned them so nobly. Come hither, Priscilla!"

Philip, animated with newly-awakened hopes, darted forward and led her to his grandfather, who, seating her by his side, and laying his hand gently on her head, said, "I see it all, my child—your temptations and your resistance, your trials and your strength. If there is blame, it attaches to those older than yourself, who should have foreseen consequences. You have suffered enough for their folly. You will forgive Phil? Yes, yes; you know," continued he, with a smile, to encourage her—"you know you are a Christian maiden, and must act consistently, when I, not half so good as you are, set you the example. There!" said he, joining their hands, while his voice changed. "Now go; you can not speak freely here, and I am better alone at present."

Philip grasped his grandfather's hand, and could just say, "God forever bless you, sir!" and, as Mr. Lawrence

extended it to Priscilla, she pressed it to her lips and heart, but utterance she had none; then, yielding to Philip, who tenderly drew her arm within his own, they left the room.

Mr. Lawrence sat a few moments, his head resting on his hand; then, rising and walking to the window, he said, "Yes! there they go; thank Heaven, I have at least made *them* happy! My pride and passion have for once yielded. Would that they had oftener done so!" Then, pacing his room for some time, he said, "Well, we are strange creatures! My fondest and, apparently, wisest plans for that boy have been thwarted; my pride, in the tenderest point, wounded; my hopes of a posterity, of blood as good and honorable as my own, disappointed. Instead of a race as gentle as that from which I descend, there will be an infusion of little 'broad-brims,' and 'the Lawrence' will 'quarter' with 'the Dale.' And yet I am happier than I have been these twenty years!"

As may be inferred, Priscilla was not inexorable; and Philip returned to dinner so radiant, that Eleanor, who met him at the hall-door, looked at him suspiciously; and, shading her eyes with her hand, said, "The light of your face blinds me; I might as well gaze at the sun! What has happened, Cousin Phil?"

Without answering, except by a smile, he drew her aside, and, leading her into the garden, unfolded his felicity. He could not have found a more sympathizing auditor. So pleased and excited was she, that, when Mr. Lawrence entered the dining-room, his face grave, but kind, recovering all her former familiarity with him, she rushed up to him, and, putting her arms round his neck, exclaimed, "Dear grandpapa, I must kiss you, for you are the very best grandfather in the world!"

He was evidently pleased with this spontaneous testi-

mony of approval, and said, affectionately, "Now I have only you to care for."

"Oh, never mind me! I'll—"

"Take care of yourself, I dare say, as Phil has done. Well, it must be confessed that the present generation spare their friends a deal of trouble, by so readily undertaking the charge of themselves. But here's the dinner. We'll talk farther by-and-by."

Mr. Lawrence having desired that no one but those immediately interested should be informed of the occurrence of the morning till his return, it was understood that he reserved to himself the making it public in his own way.

The next morning, at the usual hour, Priscilla appeared; but, instead of being conducted to Mr. Lawrence, was taken to Miss Gertrude's room, where an affectionate greeting awaited her.

Eleanor gazed on her with surprise and admiration. "What a resurrection!" she thought. "That face is now really alive, which, if I had not heard of Pygmalion and his statue, I should have doubted that it could inspire love. A real, live tear trembles in those beautiful eyes, and that mantling color betrays that she is actually flesh and blood! She speaks! she smiles! And Aunt Gertrude too! I have never seen her so moved. Can it be only sympathy? while she kisses her, she turns away and weeps! Dear me! I am sure I could do so too!"

"My dear child!" said Miss Lawrence, "how happy I am to secure you! I now understand what has appeared estrangement, and I admire you all the more for it. I shall never again distrust your love."

"Distrust!" replied Priscilla; "why, I love the very ground thou walkest on!"

"And me," said Eleanor; "have you no love for me, too, Priscilla?"

"Thee! oh, doubt it not. Yesterday I felt as if my heart were dead; to-day I love every body!"

"And you will never be jealous of me again?"

"Nay, Eleanor, not so. I was not jealous of thee; I did not sin against thee by an evil thought; I was only jealous of myself. There was a narrow path before me, and I was inwardly admonished to walk therein. I did not dare to see any one who would call up thoughts forbidden."

"Well, a wider and a pleasanter path is opening to you now, dear Priscilla."

"Yes, truly, my borders are enlarged," she replied, but in a manner which, though grave, was so simple and childlike, that Eleanor could not suppress a smile; and Priscilla, now in a mood to respond to every pleasurable emotion, involuntarily returned it; at the same time saying, "Thou laughest, Eleanor, and, perhaps, at me, for I know that my 'dress and address' are often strange unto thee. But, now that I am happy, I will prove to thee that there is a real girl's heart under these; and that, if I can not be acceptable to thee by what godly William Penn calleth the 'trims and *à la modeness* of dress,' I will try to be so by a cheerful spirit."

"I believe you," said Eleanor; "henceforth we are friends."

The time of the New York visit was now close at hand, the sailing-day appointed, and every thing in readiness except the vessel, which was detained two days longer, her cargo being not all in.

This term expired; then at eight o'clock on the following morning she would certainly be under way, and a troop of little darkies were on the look-out to see her emerge from the cove which formed her harbor. The horses were harnessed, ready to be attached to the carriage; the baskets with provisions for the voyage, the

presents of various nice articles of domestic manufacture—hams, tongues, sweetmeats, cakes, etc., designed for Mrs. Meredith—and the luggage, were all collected in front of the house, to be transported, at a moment's notice, to the dock at the bottom of the hill; but still no sloop appeared. After two hours of tedious expectation, they ascertained that the vessel could not get over the bar before the tide rose, at the close of the day. There was nothing but resignation to discomforts, which then were the common accompaniments of traveling; and people who had never known the advantage of starting at a prescribed time, and of being able to say, to a minute, when they should or ought to arrive at a given place, submitted with a grace that now can hardly be conceived of. Even Mr. Lawrence, who certainly had not the virtue of patience, never imagined he had the right to complain because Captain Ostrander did not better calculate the time necessary to take in his lading, the water his vessel would draw, or the time the tide would serve. On the contrary, when the sloop actually appeared, bending toward the shore, and they were really in the carriage, followed by a baggage-wagon, and every living creature on the premises, black and white, he even congratulated himself on his good fortune in getting off, after three appointments made and broken!

Yet there were in those days enjoyments such as no steam-boats nor railroads can supply. Traveling was then something more than the "transmutation of a man into a living parcel"—one "who, for the time, has parted with the nobler characteristics of his humanity for the sake of a planetary power of locomotion." He "sees nothing—he admires nothing." He would not were he passing "by rail" through the Vale of Cashmere! "All he asks is, 'carry him safely, dismiss him soon.'" He can not be deceived by a promise of *pleas-*

ure." No, that is past, together with much that we can not regret.

But still, does not a cherished recollection cling to the old time, when forty miles in a private carriage, with sleek, well-fed horses, was a full day's journey; varied and beautified by hill and dale, the road winding by pleasant streams, through long-drawn vistas of shady trees, through cooling brooks, refreshing the warm and thirsty animals, regarded much as fellow-travelers? Its termination, too, had a pleasure of its own; the expectant inn, and at the door the well-known landlord, who had grown old beneath the shadow of his sign. Perhaps he was a justice of the peace, or a militia colonel, or a substantial Dutch burgher; for in those days, in New England at least, such was the responsibility of an "innholder," that a man was seldom licensed whose character was not a guarantee to the public. And then, too, "didn't he know the carriage as far as he could see it?" and didn't he, with alacrity, hasten to open the door, and to let down the steps for Mr. A., or Mr. B., or Mrs. C., ushering them, not into rooms glittering with mirrors, and filled with dirty damask—no one knowing and no one caring who they might be—but into a cozy little room, plain but comfortable, where a quiet meal, not eaten against time, was served to them, instead of a seat at a long, desolate table, permanently arranged for the throng who at certain hours assemble at it. Then at night, not a canopy bedstead, resplendent with gilding and mirrors, and curtained with silk, suggestive of the pleasant reflection that, though numbers have reposed beneath it, soap and water come not near it—but a bed which, if inelegant, was, at least, not too fine to be clean. No; this is past. Now roads are rails, horses are iron dragons—"mad elephants," as the Hindoos call them; carriages are mere containers, and men, women, and chil-

dren, deprived of individuality, only portions of matter, to be left, like merchandise, at certain stations; while snake-heads, broken axles, collisions, and fractured limbs, are too often the wayside diversities of the route.

But what is to be done? The march of civilization hurries us on with railroad speed. As we are borne swiftly past we detect imperfections, but we can not stop to rectify them. We submit. But let not those be blamed who, in the distance that stretches far behind, recall images of an earlier, poorer, and simpler age, still dear to them.

CHAPTER XXXV.

LEAVING Eleanor at home, it is time to follow Walter to Ashton, where, having accomplished the business intrusted to him, he sought again to lose himself in the intricacies of the law, but not with the same success. The sentiment which he had flattered himself the convictions of his reason had controlled, if not subdued, asserted itself with even greater power. The lovely confiding girl, little more than a child, who had supplied the strongest craving of his nature, had grown into the grace and dignity of womanhood, inspiring not alone a tenderness that melted his heart, but claiming a homage he could not withhold. He felt himself powerless. He might be silent—he might conceal, but he could not forget. What remained for him but to repeat in substance what the poet has sung:

“Why should I indiscreetly tell
The name my heart has kept so well?
No; let it, shrined within my breast,
A little saint forever rest;
Forever loved and worship’d there,
But never mention’d save in prayer!”

It has been said that “every one *can* do what he *should* do.” While Walter struggled to prove the truth of this, his mind was averted in some degree from personal interests by a long and pleasant letter from Oscar. His previous ones had mentioned his improving health and southern winter. All breathed the same genial spirit, the same generous admiration of his friend. In this he spoke of their homeward course. They had arrived at Pittsburg, and should soon be at the Lodge.

Much of it was occupied with his mother. He dwelt on her delight in untamed nature. The deep solitudes of the primeval forests through which their "keel-bottomed boat," impelled only by the poles of the boatmen, had breasted the strong currents of the Ohio; the picturesque lights and shadows; their nightly encampments in woods strewn with a paradisiacal profusion of flowers, had enchanted her! The simple preparations for their evening meal, their beds of skins spread on the grass, the watch-fires during the night—all was in keeping. "It was," she said, "the very poetry of life!" "Even my father," continued Oscar, "caught the infection of her German enthusiasm. I never saw him so happy as when, with her arm in his, her hand in his grasp, they wandered into the forest while the men were pitching our tents. 'This,' he exclaimed, 'is indeed to be free! Here only one may escape from those who presume to legislate for the heart. Here I could be happy, no one to question my motives or to control my actions. But *you*, Theresa?" "Any where with you," was her reply. For myself, I must confess I am not so romantic. No, that is not the word; it is that I have not yet quarreled with the world; that I believe it might bestow a felicity which the whole Northwest could not furnish."

This letter was followed by one of a very different description. Their journey had terminated most sadly! At Shippensburg, in Pennsylvania, one of the last towns on this side of the Tuscarora Mountains, Mrs. Middleton had been seized with an inflammatory disease, which had terminated her life in a week. Walter was deeply touched. He had seen her at the most impressible age. A lovely and gentle woman, she had first made him sensible of that sweet influence of sex which animates the pure sentiment of the son to his mother, of the brother to his sister, long before the heart believes in a

stronger passion. His subsequent intercourse with Oscar had deepened this first impression, for he was the reflection of herself. To him his ready sympathy was offered. "But who," thought he, "can speak comfort to Mr. Middleton? alike unapproachable as inconsolable."

Some days afterward, having returned rather early from the office, he followed the hum of Damie's little wheel to the outside of the door, where, for greater coolness, she had placed it on the clean-swept gravel-path, and, having found a seat on the step, he fell into a kindly chat with her. This gradually ceasing, he mechanically followed her movements with his eye, as in the days of his childhood, while his thoughts, perhaps, were far away.

At length he said, "Damie, you look like one of the Fates."

"Who be they, Walter?"

"Three old ladies, who watch when we are born, spin the thread of our lives, and then cut them short."

"Marcy on me! Why, now, you don't mean for to say, Walter, that I would be so wicked as to kill any body, do you?"

"No, no," replied he, laughing, and endeavoring to adapt the fable, but not very successfully, to her prosaic mind.

"Well," said she, "I don't call that very profitable spinnin', any how—always a cuttin' off the thread into all sorts of lengths. Just a waste! couldn't make warp nor fillin' on't."

Walter smiled, and she went on. "I 'spose I don't quite see into it. Never mind, I'll turn my labor to better account. But hark!"

Here a military air, in a clear whistle, attracted their attention.

"'Tis Jed come home ag'in. The cre'ter has been gone on one of his long tramps. Yes, there he is jest turnin' the corner."

In a few minutes Jed was with them, and, having received a hearty shake of the hand from each, and taken the chair that Walter brought for him, he began, as usual, with his experiences.

"Well, if I'm not tired to-day, nobody never was, that's sartin."

"When did you get home?" asked Damie.

"About noon, I guess; and, you see, Damie, I can't no how live without you."

A laugh, the only return that Jed's gallantry ever asked or received, was accorded.

"Well, now, I know you're burnin' for news, and I'll not disapp'int you this time. I guess I've larn'd so'thin' now, if I never did afore."

Jed's air of self-importance was no small provocative of Damie's curiosity, and, while Walter, in complaisance, seemed to listen, she suspended the motion of her wheel, and gave him her undivided attention.

"Well, to begin, for you know I love to do things reg'lar—I larnt that in the army—I thought I'd strike across the country, and go clear to the river, this time. I hadn't been there lately, and I was a thinkin' that the quality out there must want fixin' up. Well, I did so, and, after tradin' pretty successful, I come to a great old place I'd often heard tell of, but somehow I hadn't never been to, and, thinkin' it wasn't obleegin' not to accommodate them too, I thought I'd stop now. But, Damie," continued he, with a look meant to concentrate all her capacity for wonder and curiosity, "you hav'n't no idee of what all come out of this! You're as far from it as one of them 'ere chickens, peckin' round there. Oh, the queer things in this world! Rascals lyin' in wait, old

gentlemen a stormin', niggers a yellin', dogs a barkin', blankets a shakin', young ladies a faintin', pistols a p'intin', and Old Jed to bear all!" he concluded, with much the same self-glorification as that with which "Old Jack" lamented the oblivion of "Manhood, good manhood!"

"But, Damie," he resumed, "to see her pretty face! to hear her say she wouldn't never forget me! why, I tell you, I'd a faced a battery; I'd a stormed a redoubt, if I kno'd there was a mine under it; I'd a blowed myself to atoms afore I'd a deserted her; I'd—"

"What under the canopy are you runnin' on so about, Jed?" exclaimed the astonished Damie; "who are you talkin' about?"

"Why, who should it be but that pretty cre'ter, Miss Ellenny—Ellenny; I can't jest hit the name, but she writ it here in my pocket-book," producing it as he spoke.

Walter, who had but imperfectly attended to Jed's narration, suspecting that he would sometimes, perhaps unconsciously, "embroider" a little, caught that name, which, however marred, his heart could not but translate; and, seizing the extended pocket-book, read on the coarse and soiled leaf what he considered should only be inscribed on an imperishable tablet.

An involuntary exclamation escaped him, to which Jed responded by a look of acute and eager inquiry, saying, "Why, sartin, *you* can't know nothin' about her?"

Walter attempted an explanation that should avert the curiosity excited; but he could better have parried eyes and ears polite than Jed's or Damie's, who both, full of real interest, and unrestrained by forms and proprieties, pressed the when, and where, and how, till they had extracted the fact that she was the individual young

lady, the "one scholar that Walter had been sent for to teach." What inference they farther drew they prudently withheld from Walter, who now, in his turn, demanded an account of the circumstances to which Jed had alluded.

In silence he listened, but the strong emotions which the detail excited—surprise, alarm, indignation—were sufficiently intelligible. At length, starting up with uncontrollable agitation, he gave vent to his feelings in such vehement language that Damie laid her hand imploringly on his shoulder. It recalled him sufficiently for a rigid cross-examination of Jed.

"And what security is there for the future?" he continued; "why may he not renew the attempt?"

"Didn't I see to that?" replied Jed, with a knowing wink. "Didn't I stay hangin' about for days? Nobody mistrusted me; peddlers' work's like women's—never done; and then, you know, my leg got desper't bad"—another wink—"and I couldn't travel no how. And the women, they'd give me a meal or a night's lodging for some little notion out of my pack. All this time, you know, I was spyin' round a'ter that 'ere sar-pent, but couldn't see hide nor hoof of him. Well, a'ter I had pretty much gi'n him up, I goes, one day, by the old place—rayther shy, though, 'cause I didn't care to have another time on't with the old gentleman; and what should I see but the grand family-coach, tip-top, I can tell you, going down the road! I followed on to the dock, and there I see that same young lady go aboard of a sloop jest setting sail for New York; so all's safe now."

This was a relief—Eleanor was with her parents. Assured on this point, he expressed his earnest gratitude to Jed, and left him and Damie to compare their own views of the matter.

As he retreated Jed turned his quid and said, "Damie!"

"Jed!" replied she in the same tone.

"I say, Damie, can't you see as far into a mill-stone as I can?"

"I guess I can, Jed."

"Didn't you mark how he acted when I repeated them 'ere varses?"

"Be sure!"

"And when she was a describin' the man she was expectin'?"

"Sartin."

"And didn't you notice what a flustration he was in? Now you know that, nat'rally, he's rayther still."

"Oh yes! I see."

"And then how he thanked me, as if I had done *him* the greatest sarvice of the two."

"Be sure!"

Here Jed gave his long, low whistle, which always, with him, signified unspeakable things. Then, with a comprehensive "*Well!*" he rose, adding, "I must go now, Damie; but if Walter wants any message carried, or any sarvice done—you understand? I'm ready, if it's a hundred miles off; jest tell him so, will you?"

Walter had strayed off to recover himself unobserved. He was vexed to have betrayed so much feeling. It was exposing Eleanor to vulgar gossip; it was laying open a corner of his heart never yet disclosed but to Heaven. This feeling yielded to the still stronger one excited by the danger of Eleanor; to the desire to discover and punish the contriver. But he was here more at fault than she had been; for, though he had no difficulty in believing that an artful and desperate man might have been tempted to the outrage by such a prize, and that it was obvious that the villain, having seen

him set on shore, had used the circumstance as a decoy, yet he knew no one to whom her residence at Rosenberg had introduced her. Conjecture, therefore, was vain; and he turned from the irritating thought to the consolatory conviction of her safety.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

IN the morning, Walter went to his usual labors: but the pages that he had heretofore patiently explored, because that, however dry or obscure, he believed them, like the books of the magician, to contain the secret of life and fortune, now failed to interest him. The hours wore away wearily, and he was glad that the business of the office permitted him to leave it earlier than usual.

But he could not go home. He longed not for the human voice, but for the murmur of waters, the whispers of the breeze, the hum of insects, and the sweet, tranquilizing sounds of summer.

Taking a course over the hills, after a long walk, he found himself at his favorite spot—the height that overlooked the fall; and, throwing himself on the sward, he reclined on a little grassy mound that had pillowed his head when a boy. There had been a heavy rain for many hours, and, though it had ceased, and

“The great sun
Look'd with an eye of love through the golden
Vapors around him,”

the weather was not settled. It had cleared, but the wind had, in country phrase, “gone round the wrong way.” Still, every object was dipped in beauty. Exhalations,

“Their fleecy skirts painted with gold,”

hung, like a gorgeous drapery, round the setting sun. The passing zephyr shook from the leaves a shower of diamond sparks. The fairy-draught still waited, in the chalice of the wild flowers, which,

"With rich inlay,
'Broider'd the ground;

and the river, with a fuller current, sent forth a deeper tone, as it fell and rushed along.

Walter did not want to think. He had no pleasant subject of reflection. He asked only to repose on "the lap of earth," as unconscious as the weed that sprung from it.

For some time he thus lay, calmed by the quiet influences of the place into an unmindfulness of any distinct thing, and reckless of the damp earth on which he cast himself. A rustling in the branches near him caused him to turn, and he beheld a face, the impression of which time only deepened on his tenacious memory.

Starting up, and rejecting the hand extended to him, he met the eyes of the stranger with a fixed and indignant gaze.

"Do you not know me?" he asked, in a gentle tone.

"Too well," was Walter's quick reply.

"Then why refuse the salutation, which, as your best friend, I have a right to claim?"

Walter smiled contemptuously.

"I know you only as one who insists on rights, but performs no duties; who makes promises only to break them; who, having left me to dependence, would frustrate my honest efforts to support myself; who shrouds himself in mystery to escape me, and, like an assassin, stabs in the dark."

The smile that had dressed the face of the stranger remained unchanged, as if listening to the idle reproaches of a child.

"I have neither time nor disposition to discuss these charges," said he; "we have weightier matters to speak of. Come, Walter," he added, with an insinuating tone, "'tis time that you really know me. I forgive every

harsh word, every injurious suspicion, however much they have wronged me, in the conviction that I have a perfect justification in my power. But let us find a resting-place, for I have much to say, and every mystery of which you complain shall be cleared up."

He had never been so fortunate as to inspire Walter with confidence, nor was he more successful now; but the conviction that at least he could no longer deceive him, induced him to listen. Without replying, he approached a little gravelly knoll, and, having seated themselves, the stranger abruptly asked,

"Would you like to go to England?"

At a proposition of such import, Walter paused, and then said, "It would depend on the motive assigned for my going."

"Suppose it the strongest that could be offered. The restoration to your natural friends; the removal of all concealment in regard to your birth, your past, and your future. Would this induce you?"

"Certainly; but I should require the most unquestionable proof that such would be the result."

"Undoubtedly. This I will furnish; nay, more, I will myself accompany you."

The idea against which Walter had struggled and revolted—that this person had claims he should find it impossible to evade—came over him. Yet he felt that this might be the crisis of his fate, that it must not be trifled with. He hesitated, and then said, "Is that necessary? With the proper testimonials, can I not proceed alone?"

A smile, almost contemptuous, was the immediate reply.

"You little understand in what these credentials consist, nor how important I, personally, am to your success. But you must confide in me; you must be advised, nay, governed by me; you will tread unknown ground, and

may encounter obstacles you little think of. Without me, your attempt would be futile."

Walter shuddered at the close connection that was intimated; and even were it not such as he feared, to be advised, even controlled by this person, his distrust of whom was nearly invincible, was so repugnant to him that he could not bring himself to utter the required assent. At length he said,

"I owe every thing to Mr. Grafton. I will take no step without his concurrence. If I am not at liberty to consult him, I decline your proposition entirely."

"You are right," replied the stranger, with a readiness that looked like truth. "No one can more highly estimate your obligations to Mr. Grafton than I do. You only anticipate what I meant to say. Consult him by all means. I will not ask of you any thing that he shall not approve. I will see him myself; I ought to do so. I have much, very much, for which to thank him."

This answer, prompt and unqualified, and therefore unexpected, had its effect on Walter.

"And when is it proposed that I should go?" he asked.

"By the first vessel that sails. I think I can rely on one within a week. The precise day I can not now name."

"And the testimonials?"

"They shall be yours to-morrow. Communicate with Mr. Grafton this evening. Meet me alone at this place to-morrow morning, say at nine o'clock, and all that is necessary to satisfy you shall be placed in your hands."

Walter looked as if he would speak farther. He did, indeed, long to put one question, "Did his parents live? Had he no cause to blush for his birth?" But, as if divining his thought, or perhaps to test his submission, the stranger said, with significance, "Ask me nothing now."

"Tis best you should not know in part. The whole will bring explanations that will palliate, if not justify, whatever is painful. To-morrow you will know all."

"All!" thought Walter, with a sinking of the heart at these ambiguous words, that made him almost desire to remain in the ignorance which he had hitherto found so hard to bear.

"And now," continued the stranger, "I leave you. Give me your hand at parting. You will never refuse it again," he added, with a cordial pressure, and a smile so persuasive that Walter felt his aversion and doubt melting away.

The stranger's quick eye perceived it.

"Ah!" said he, "you are naturally too generous to question so narrowly and harshly the actions of men. Appearances have misled you. You will learn to be more discriminating and more confiding; to pity, instead of blaming, those who are condemned to a conduct as foreign to their natures as to yours. Do not deny to yourself the happy privilege of youth—the faculty of believing. The world will disabuse you soon enough. Better the fate of him on whose tomb was inscribed '*The Deceived*,' than never to trust."

What was it that so affected Walter—a tone, a look, a will that, by a sort of mesmerism, subdued him? or the bringing back the recollections of a period when this man seemed his only friend?

"Ah! I see," continued he, as if again penetrating the thoughts of Walter; "I see! Think you that I do not remember, too, when you clung to my hand, followed my steps, sunk to sleep on my bosom! Forgive me, Walter, if I have ever appeared to forget it. And now I must leave you."

Walter, with an irrepressible desire to be satisfied, at least on one point, before they parted, said,

"Will you not, as an earnest of farther communications, give me one more assurance—your name? Remember, that for twenty years I have been denied it."

With a smile, much as a mother would repress the importunity of her child, he replied, "To-morrow! to-morrow!" and, retreating into the thicket whence he had emerged, was next seen crossing the bridge; and, having gained the opposite side, with a farewell wave of his hand he disappeared.

"What a puppet," thought Walter, "I am in that man's hands! At one moment wrought to fury, and the next held as if in leading-strings!"

The night was closing darkly around as he reached home, and a rising wind in a threatening quarter portended a storm. Mr. Grafton congratulated him on finding a shelter before the rain should come, and Damie looked inquiringly at his damp clothes and wet feet. "'Tis ridic'lous, Walter," said she, with the privilege of affection, "to be sittin' on the ground a'ter such a rainy spell. Why, the airth is a perfect ma'sh, 'specially in the woods, where you are always a goin'. You want to be looked a'ter just as if you was a boy. You must take some bone-set when you go to bed, or you'll be stiff as a stake in the mornin'."

But Mr. Grafton perceived that Damie's fears and prescriptions were lost on Walter; that something occupied him to the entire oblivion of any consideration of comfort or health; and, getting rid of her as soon as he could, he awaited the communication which he saw was trembling on his lip. He had not long to expect it, but, having heard, he was not so quick to reply.

The idea of parting with Walter for a purpose that might separate them forever, pained him inexpressibly. But this might be borne under different circumstances. Whatever should promote his happiness would bring its

own consolation to himself. But to place him in the power of that hard man; to surrender his nearly parental rights to one who had inspired him only with aversion; to place his pure mind, his unspotted character, under an influence which, if it could not corrupt, would render him miserable; to have him compromised, perhaps, by the companionship of a man whom he had every right to distrust, embarrassed his decision. He could only say, while his countenance expressed much more, "Let us see the promised testimonials, Walter, before we farther discuss this matter. Without them it is impossible to form an opinion. I shall also see the man himself. I choose to read his face as well as his papers."

Walter pressed the subject no farther, but the conflict in his mind was but too visible; and, unable to talk of any thing else, he retired, followed by Damie, with her favorite medicament against the effects of cold, the last thing, in his present state of excitement, to be apprehended. But, though he patiently bore with her reproofs and directions, he retained no distinct impression of either. The door closed after her, leaving him no other consciousness than that of being alone and quiet; and the draught remained untouched.

But to this sleep did not succeed. The wind, which had risen toward night, with loud threatenings of an approaching storm, was now accompanied by a rain that descended in torrents. The trees creaked to the blast that whistled through their branches, and the darkness was intense. The outer world but too well imaged the tumult and obscurity in his own breast. At one moment, with a passionate eagerness, he longed for the morning, and trembled with a strange delight at the disclosure it was to bring. An indescribable feeling possessed him, as of an entrance into a new being—a revelation of himself to himself—a sort of bewildering loss of present identity,

in the expectation of a new personality. Then he asked, in terror, "What unknown ties were to be formed? what old ones to be ruptured?" With this came visions of Mr. Grafton and Eleanor; of the past; of childhood, youth, and love. "Oh, heaven! were all these henceforth to be to him as dreams? and, if so, what was to take their place?" That face, so impenetrable, was the only answer, and a fearful gulf seemed to open before him.

Thus tossed and agitated, the first hours of the night brought him no refreshment. At length he sank into a sleep so heavy as for a time to overpower thought, but from which he started, as people do when under the impression of a strong necessity, at an earlier hour than usual.

The night had brought as little rest to Mr. Grafton as to himself, and the breakfast was a sad one. When finished, Walter rose, stood as if about to speak, looked irresolute, suddenly seized his guardian's hand, pressed it earnestly, and, rushing from the house, hastened to the place of meeting.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE rain was over; but, though the wind had abated, it still returned in fitful and complaining bursts, driving before it dark, broken clouds that saddened the heavens.

As Walter approached the ravine he was struck with the ravages of the night. The old sycamore, long since reduced to a fragment of its original size, had been reft of most of its remaining branches, which, together with young saplings uprooted from their slender hold on the light soil, and portions of rock loosened by the rain, were strewn at the bottom of the fall. The river seemed nearly to have doubled its volume, and, as if with a conscious power, tumbled impetuously over every obstruction, with a deafening noise. A mass of rock, at other times above the surface, was still partially exposed near the base of the fall, though around it innumerable little cascades had been formed by the swelling waters.

"How beautiful!" exclaimed Walter, almost forgetting for a moment his purpose. "If the sun would but shine! I have never seen it so fine."

The next moment his attention was diverted to a person approaching the opposite bank. It was the stranger, who, with long and hasty strides, bent his course to the bridge. Walter's eyes followed his steps, and as they did so he perceived, with a startling shock, that the abutment on the opposite side—consisting of portions of rock imbedded in the bank, and bound together by the roots of a tree that had insinuated themselves—had yielded to the pressure of the stream. The most important fragment had disappeared entirely, the others looked disturbed and loose; and the tree, whose roots had served

as binders, hung down, evidently disengaged from the soil, and only slightly adhering among the stones.

To raise his hat as a signal, to wave his hand as a warning, to elevate his voice in admonition of the threatened danger, was the instinct and work of the moment. But in vain. The noise of winds and waters drowned his voice, and his gestures were not understood. The unconscious man continued to advance, and, as he did so, held something in his hand which he elevated as if in triumph. Walter, terrified, repeated his warning, with every gesture suggested by the necessity; the stranger, blinded by Fate, regarded them only as tokens of recognition. Pressing onward, his feet touched the bridge; in an instant his weight was upon it, and the next, a loud crash confirmed Walter's fears. Then, for the first time, comprehending the danger, he strove to recover the bank. But no—he only made sure his destruction, lost his balance, and was precipitated on the rocks below, even before the entire fall of the bridge; which, wrenching itself by its weight from the opposite abutment, descended with a tremendous force so near its victim as to appear to crush him.

A shriek of horror burst from Walter. Casting a frantic look around, he imploringly called for help, but no voice responded.

The stranger lay motionless. Fearless and agile, Walter prepared to descend the bank; and though he felt the stones and trees of which he had heretofore often made a ladder yield under him, he reached the bottom in safety, and made his way, though with difficulty and danger, to the rocky bed on which the unfortunate man lay. He saw, to his unspeakable distress, that a fragment of the bridge had fallen across his limbs. There could be no doubt of the effect. What other injuries he had received he endeavored to ascertain by such efforts as

he was, unassisted, capable of. He could only discover that, though life was not extinct, consciousness seemed gone; a faint moan was the only sound uttered.

To leave him thus was dreadful! but how otherwise could he obtain the requisite aid? Again he shouted, "Help! help!" and cast a despairing glance down the ravine. A loud "Halloo!" answered him, and in a second he caught a glimpse of a man at the entrance. Repeating his cries, accompanied by wavings of hat and handkerchief, he succeeded in attracting his attention to himself, and soon, to his inexpressible relief, he discerned him to be his friend Jed.

The usual path along the river's margin was covered with water, and one less fearless than Jed might have hesitated to adventure up the ravine; but he was not to be deterred, though it was impossible to advance with the rapidity that was required.

As he slowly picked his way through water and over rocks, sometimes obliged to ascend a considerable distance up the shelving bank, Walter watched his approach with feelings more easy to imagine than describe. At his feet lay a human being, a few instants before full of life, thought, projects, power—one toward whom the returning tide of early affection had brought back kinder feelings than he had supposed he could ever again entertain for him—now a mangled, perhaps a lifeless mass! and on this man depended his dearest interests. He held the key of his destiny. He alone could raise a veil now, perhaps, never to be withdrawn, and the future would settle over him as darkly as the past. Nay, more, with a shudder that chilled his very soul, he exclaimed, "And this man was, perhaps, my father! Oh, heaven! am I never to be relieved from this oppressive mystery?"

With eyes bent on the wretched being before him,

arms crossed on his breast, and emotions that nearly mastered him, he remained, till Jed, with a last leap to the rock, stood beside him.

A glance at the wreck of the bridge, a few words from Walter, and he comprehended the whole. Then, stooping down, he examined the face that was turned from him; but, starting back, with a look of amazement and awe, he exclaimed, "The Lord is just! This is the very individual I told you of! I should know him among a thousand!"

At this assertion, confirmed by still farther examination, the revoltings of Walter returned with increased violence—at the very moment, too, when he desired only to indulge in the new-born confidence inspired by the stranger! The revulsion nearly overcame him. The claims of a common humanity alone enabled him to exert the necessary self-control.

Fortunately, several persons from the lower village—some curious to see the wrecks of the storm, others to ascertain the cause of the loud report on the falling of the bridge—now appeared on the heights above, or wading up the ravine.

As soon as the catastrophe was understood, there was no lack of assistance; and Jed, having ingeniously contrived a hurdle from the branches of trees, suggested the difficult, but only expedient of thus carrying the injured man to the nearest house, or other resting-place, where a physician should be in readiness to attend him.

With all dispatch this idea was put in practice; and, carefully and tenderly, the rough men contrived to remove the timbers, and to raise and place upon this rude litter the poor remains of a body which still gave evidence of life by obstructed breathing and loud moans. To bear this burden, by a path difficult for a single person, was no easy matter; but what will not human sym-

pathy effect? At last it was accomplished. Having reached a dwelling, near the extremity of the ravine, they there deposited their charge in the hands of a physician, for whom a messenger had been sent.

The examination was not long. A short time was sufficient to decide, from the nature of the injuries, that life could not be preserved. The only relief the case admitted of was that there was no consciousness of suffering, and that, even if there were, the conflict must be short. This opinion was soon confirmed. While a few lingered round from compassion, which, however fruitless, was not to be repressed, the physician remained to watch the failing pulse; and Walter, possessed with the feeling that to him belonged the sacred offices due by the kindred of the dead, reverently waited to receive the last breath, and to lay his hand on the closing eyes.

Jed, who, after his fashion, "puttin' things together," as he said, had come to the conclusion that "somehow this person was not unbeknown to Walter," and who perceived, moreover, that this knowledge was attended by a painful interest, was one of the number who remained.

The final moment that comes to all was at hand. The physician removed the finger which pressed, in vain, for the answering pulse; listened for the breath that no longer came; felt, inquiringly, for the heart that no longer throbbed; and, in that low tone which all instinctively use in the presence of Death, said, "It is over!"

Notwithstanding his distrust, his indignant sense of wrong, the last charge just brought against him, and the repugnance with which, until very lately, he had shrunk from this strange man, Walter could not hear these words without a pang.

"Yes," thought he, "it is over! The last, the only

clue to my name and kindred, the only being to whom, for weal or for woe, I seemed to belong, is gone!"

Every angry feeling was still. His eyes filled with tears as he contemplated that pale and ghastly face, and repeated the last words of the stranger, "To-morrow! to-morrow!"—"how unconscious," continued he, "of their prophetic import!"

He was reminded that he was not alone, by Jed's saying, as he approached and stood by his side, "Well, he has done what we must all do; he has gi'n in his account!"

This solemn truth, though announced in homely phrase, struck to the heart of Walter, and turned his thoughts from his personal interests to the dread concerns of the man who lay before him; in comparison with which, all earthly hopes and disappointments faded into insignificance, and he involuntarily uttered a prayer for mercy!

Having given the necessary directions, he hastened home to apprise Mr. Grafton of the events of the morning; but the rumor had reached him, and, hurrying to the place, he met Walter at the door, whose countenance confirmed it.

While occupied by the considerations now naturally presented, they were interrupted by the entrance of Jed. He would, perhaps, have dilated on an occurrence so startling, but he saw that, contrary to his usual practice, the fewest words were best. He, therefore, proceeded promptly to say that, in removing the body, a packet had been found lying under it, from which circumstance it had remained dry and uninjured; that, not knowing what it might contain, or into what hands it might fall, he had put it immediately into his own pocket, whence he now took it.

"I expect," continued he, "that it had ought to be

sent to his kin, but as I don't know nothin' where to find them, it can't do no harm to give it to Walter."

With an eager hand it was grasped, but, unwilling to expose the intense interest it excited, he laid it on the table. He had just done so when the landlord of the inn at the lower village entered, bringing a valise, which he said belonged to the gentleman.

Here was farther matter for investigation—perhaps more evidence. But, though, in addition to the right exercised on such occasions, in order to ascertain the name and friends of the individual, they felt that *they* had peculiar claims to the fullest inquiry, this, for obvious reasons, could only be made without witnesses. Mr. Grafton was therefore compelled to disappoint the evident curiosity by saying that he would make the necessary investigations in proper season; and he then quietly removed the articles to a place of safety. The prevailing idea that the stranger had been in some way connected with himself or Walter, and the character of Mr. Grafton, prevented all complaint.

That Mr. Grafton did make such investigation, and that he did find matter of the deepest interest to Walter, is all that is, at present, needful to communicate to the reader. To the village public it was proper to be explicit on one point—the name and condition of the deceased. Mr. Grafton, therefore, lost no time in making known that the unfortunate person was proved to be Captain Talbot, an Englishman, having friends in New York, to which place, immediately after the funeral, he should himself proceed, in order to convey the articles in his possession, and to communicate the intelligence of his death.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE oculist had not disappointed the expectation of Mr. Lawrence and his family. His fine constitution, little impaired except by occasional attacks of gout, and his hopeful temperament, coming in aid of a really skillful operator, the ultimate restoration of the eye was soon pronounced certain, and a short time put it in a condition to be used under some restrictions. This, together with the assiduities of his children, and the effect of agreeable change, seemed to rejuvenate him. He was pleased with every thing and every body. He forbore to discuss politics with Mr. Meredith, with whom he never agreed; or, if sometimes betrayed into a collision, dropped it voluntarily when it grew too warm; was not vexed when his daughter sympathized more with her husband's views than with his own; did not consider it a personal injury if Miss Lawrence had a headache, and, to Eleanor's especial satisfaction, reinstated her entirely in his favor. He could even see, without offense, that Oscar Middleton excited in her a very different interest from that which Master Philip had done, though, in his private opinion, the ruddy, handsome face, vigorous frame, and manly air of the latter "were worth a hundred such pale-visaged slips; but if girls would be fools he couldn't help it."

Oscar, indeed, did interest Eleanor more than he had done heretofore. His tender sadness came nearer her heart than his thoughtless, happy gayety. Formerly she laughed with him, but could forget him; now, with all the sensibility of her own nature awakened, she was

the more strongly drawn toward him. If he were silent, she became so; if he smiled, she rejoiced; if he were sad, she was only the more thoughtful for him. Her young friends had greeted her return with welcomes and invitations, but she resisted whatever interfered with kind considerations for Oscar. To cheer him when present, to pity him when absent, became a habit, the more confirmed by his reliance on her.

The improvement in Miss Lawrence, if not as great as in her father, was more striking, because that, on her first arrival, a more than usual languor and dejection were visible. Years had elapsed since her last visit to her sister. Many changes had taken place. Past scenes, of which every heart bears indelible impressions, were revived, and she had often cause to reprove herself for not being happier now that the family harmony, the loss of which she had so much deplored, was restored. But the cloud passed, and she, too, was cheerful—grateful for the love bestowed, and especially for the sweet attentions of Eleanor, who, like a ministering spirit, dispensed good to each and to all. Ah! had she found out thus early that the true secret of quieting our own hearts is to cheer others; that secret which some never learn?

A fine afternoon and the solicitations of Eleanor had tempted her aunt beyond the limit of her usual walk, and, on their entering the study by the garden door, she perceived that she looked pale and wearied.

"I have been a foolish girl," said Eleanor, "but, when I get among those trees, they always cheat me into going too far. Dear aunt, let me arrange a couch for you here. You are too tired to take another step. See! there is the settee on the piazza, and here," said she, filling her arms as she spoke, "are these sofa-cushions; they will make a nice resting-place for you. I'll carry them out, and have it ready in a minute."

"No, no, my love; I'll go to my room. Some one may come, and I should not fancy to be thus caught."

"Nobody will come; nobody ever does come here now," replied Eleanor, with a sigh. "There will only be the sun to look at you, and he is about taking his rest too; he is so low he can only peep at you through the branches."

Miss Lawrence was not one of the resisting order; and, telling Eleanor she always made her do as she pleased, she yielded to the arrangement.

The cushions being so placed as to support her, she permitted herself to be disposed of, sitting or reclining, as Eleanor fancied, who, hovering about her, delighted herself by contriving, like a playful child, the most becoming adjustment. The simple white veil, taken from her hat, was so thrown as to shade, and yet add another grace to her face. A shawl of many dyes was cast as a drapery over her; one hand supported her cheek, and the other reposed, as Eleanor said, "beautifully negligent" among the flowers they had gathered in their walk, and which appeared to have fallen from its grasp into her lap.

She contemplated her work admiringly. Her aunt laughed.

"You have placed me like a lay figure. Now what do you propose to do with me? You see I can resist none of your vagaries."

"Oh, if I could sketch you just as you now are! but I can not. Therefore I shall put you to sleep. Now not another word! but shut your eyes like a good child."

As if under the spell of her irresistible attendant, Miss Lawrence obeyed; and Eleanor, in a little while, satisfied that she really slept, stole quietly into the study, and thence into the hall, to prevent any intrusion from that quarter.

The sweet air, the perfect quiet, the soft light,

"Prolonged the balmy rest."

At length a foot crossed the threshold of the garden door, and a gentleman cast an inquiring look within, as if in quest of some one. He entered; but, finding nobody, ventured to approach the glass door communicating with the piazza. His step was light, like that of one who fears to intrude, and yet who is impelled to advance. As he does so, he passes the door and sees a sleeping lady! Instinctively he retreats; another look, and he advances. A thought seems to kindle up his face. He proceeds, regardless of proprieties; his lips move, but no sound escapes. His countenance and manner evince surprise, eager interest, and yet timidity. He moves nearer, and still nearer. He pauses; and then, with a noiseless step, he is by the side of the unconscious sleeper. He gazes; his soul seems looking from his eyes! One instant, and they have detected the fair hand among the flowers; the next he is on his knee, the hand is in his, and his lip is pressed on a simple gold ring! The action has roused the lady; she wakes to hear "Mary!" uttered in a voice which, though silent to her outward ear, has never, through long, long years, ceased to speak to her heart. Speech fails her. Does she still sleep? Does she dream? That face, changed, yet still the same, is it a reality? Those eyes,

"Once so dear,

Long, long ago—long ago!"

are they, indeed, bent on her?

Another pressure of her hand, that name, now disused, perhaps forgotten by all but himself, again uttered, assure her of the living presence of one whom she had never thought to see again this side of Heaven, and she ventures to say, in a low and timid voice, "Graf-ton?"

"Yes, Mary," he exclaimed; "I should doubt my own identity if *you* did not admit it. Could *we* ever fail to recognize each other?"

Still she looked at him, immovable, wondering—tears filling her asking eyes.

"I know what you would say," said he, rising; and, assisting her attempt to do the same, he placed himself by her side. "You would ask why I am here? Here of all places? There is much to tell you, dear Mary, but at another time. Now, I will only say that urgent business brought me to New York. I could not be there, and not see your sister and Mr. Meredith, always my friends. Failing to find him at his office, I came hither; of your being here I had not the remotest thought. In my ignorance of the house I blundered in at the wrong entrance, and was led, not by chance, but by Heaven, to *you*—never, so help me God, to be again parted from you!"

A cloud overspread her fair brow. A deprecating look—a deep sigh, were the only answer.

"I understand you. You would say the same obstacles exist. They may, but they shall no longer prevail. Mary," continued he, with solemnity, "you love me still. If time, as I sometimes feared, had worn me out of your affection, I would be silent. But your look, your manner, this sacred symbol never laid aside, attest your fidelity."

She attempted to speak, but he continued earnestly:

"Oh, hear me farther. The happiness of our lives has been sacrificed by a weak submission to a false principle. It shall be so no longer. I will claim you as my *wife*. I ought to have done so when you were first torn from me."

A loving but weeping face, eyes upturned as if imploring strength from above, betrayed the conflict his words had excited.

"Oh, that is not all!" she at length said. "If no opposition—there are—other considerations. How can I impose a wreck upon you? upon you, still capable of happiness? How can I burden you with the poor remains of what, even in its best estate, was not worth the love you lavished on it? No, no, no; it is wrong, ungenerous; I should be humbled to the dust were I to do so."

"Mary! Mary!" said Mr. Grafton, in a tender but reproachful tone, "is this the language you should hold to me? Were you, indeed, the wreck you fear, should I not love the ruin I perhaps had caused? And has not time done its work on *me* too? But I will not so wrong true love as to rest it on the outward creature. I could, indeed, dear Mary, still address to you the words of mere human affection; could tell you that I love you in that sense that satisfies most women; that I had not outlived my youthful passion; that no conceivable happiness could equal the possession of you; that—"

"Do not—do not speak so! You deceive yourself. I am nothing—nothing."

"No, I will not; but rather of that union of heart, mind, and soul, that time has only strengthened. To this union I claim the right of setting that seal which God has Himself appointed, not alone for present happiness, but as an earnest of that still better union for which it is a preparation. Do not, then, disturb your own mind and distress me by considerations unworthy of us both."

Her tears flowed faster. She could only say, "You are too good—too good; I do not deserve it."

He looked at her in silence; then in a tender and admiring tone, rather as if thinking aloud, said, "Still the same! humble, gentle, self-distrusting; still, as in the language of my youth, 'My lovely Mary!'"

What could woman—true, believing woman—say? Her heart was on her lips, ready to pour forth all he could ask, but a cruel fear restrained her, and a look of agony overspread her face, as she said, “My father! my promise!”

“Bless you, Mary, that you insist on no other obstacle! Your father’s objections shall be met with all respect; but, if still immovable—I say it deliberately—I will disregard them.”

“But my promise,” she repeated.

“I am the last person to make light of it; but we must not let reverence exaggerate itself into superstition. That promise was made under circumstances which deprived you of free agency. Only a tender, conscientious spirit, like your own, would have held it obligatory to the extent that you have done. We have both been sacrificed to it. Your mother, could she have foreseen its consequences, would never have exacted it; and, if now comprehending what passes here, will rejoice in the breach of it.”

His calmness restored her own.

“Hear me,” said she, “for a moment, and then you must leave me. You are not aware that my father is now in this house. I can not permit you to meet him at present. I must have time to reflect. Let me decide as I may, I have need of a strength that now I do not feel. Leave me; you shall hear from me to-morrow.”

“Do with me as you please. I shall go, but in the confident trust, not alone of hearing from you, but of seeing you, to-morrow.”

“Go! go!” said she, earnestly, the dread of her father taking possession of her.

He comprehended her fear, passed from the piazza through the garden, and retreated, unseen, as he had entered.

Left to herself, Miss Lawrence’s first care was to escape to the privacy of her own room, which she reached unperceived, even by Eleanor, who, occupied by visitors during the *tête-à-tête* on the piazza, had relaxed her care of her aunt, and was now otherwise engaged.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Mr. Lawrence, in a happy unconsciousness of what was going on elsewhere, reclined in his chair in the dining-room, and near him, at the tea-table, was Mrs. Meredith.

After an interval of silence, Mr. Lawrence asked the hour—"Tea-time, is it not?"

"Yes, sir. Will you take it now, or shall we wait for Mr. Meredith? He will be here in a few moments."

Now, usually, Mr. Lawrence abhorred waiting for any body, but he was not in a mood to be easily ruffled.

"Oh no; wait by all means."

Another pause.

"Where is Eleanor?" he asked.

"Gone to pass the evening with some of her young friends."

Mr. Lawrence particularly disliked the absence of any of the family at meals, but now he only said he was glad of it.

A servant entered with a note from Mr. Meredith. He was detained in the city; should not be at home till the next day.

Mr. Lawrence could bear this too; for, though he entirely respected Mr. Meredith, they were, as the Italians say, not *sympatici*; and the presence of neither added much to the happiness of the other.

"Well, then, we'll have tea, Janet, if you please," said he, and, Mrs. Meredith ringing the bell, Phyllis was directed to tell Miss Lawrence it was ready.

She returned in a few moments, and, dropping a courtesy to the old gentleman, as if deprecating the effect of the answer she brought, said, "Missis not well, massa, and can't come down, she say."

This was a sound seldom heard patiently by Mr. Lawrence.

"Not well! What's the matter now? She was well enough at dinner."

"Dun know, massa. Missis looks berry sick; neber seed missis look so afore."

"Do, Janet, go up and see what it is. These creatures always make every thing as bad as they can."

Mrs. Meredith did not need the injunction. Hurrying to her sister's room, she found her in a state that, as Phyllis had said, was unusual, and which, knowing no cause for it, she naturally referred to physical indisposition. Miss Lawrence was in bed, with a quickened and irregular pulse, a feverish cheek, and a strange, excited look quite unlike herself. But she spoke calmly, and, not daring then to attempt an explanation, only begged to be alone and quiet, and doubted not that she should be well in the morning.

Mrs. Meredith left her, as she requested, but not much assured by what she had said; and Mr. Lawrence, on hearing it, put down his scarce tasted tea, pushed his chair from the table, and, leaning back in it, sighed heavily.

His daughter, to relieve him, repeated her sister's words, "She will be better in the morning, sir."

"No, she won't," he replied, quickly, "nor the next day, nor the next, nor never; never, I tell you!"

"Dear papa, even if she should be indisposed for a few days, there can be no cause for uneasiness. We will send for Doctor Bayley in the morning."

"Doctor Fiddlestick! Do you suppose I'm an ass,

Janet? All the drugs in the *Materia Medica* can't help her!"

"Why, papa!" expostulated Mrs. Meredith. "There is surely nothing in Gertrude's indisposition to excite alarm."

"Pshaw, child! I don't suppose she's going to die; perhaps it would be better that she should. She would go to heaven, and I might be made more fit for it. But she won't die; she will live, and she will suffer; and so it always is. I never see a little sunshine, I never feel happy and cheery, but some cursed thing turns up to contradict me. I am a miserable man—I am."

"Dear papa, don't say so."

"I will say so. Here she has been so well and cheerful that, old fool as I am, I thought she would continue so; that, at last, she was happy; and my heart was lighter than it has been for years; and now—now it's all over! the same dark cloud again!"

"Oh no, sir; this is some accidental thing—some little nervous derangement."

"Ay, yes; there it is, those infernal nerves! Don't I know what that means?"

"Nothing mysterious, papa; every body knows what nerves mean."

"The devil they do! I wish I did; I only know that they mean misery. Oh Lord! I wish I was dead."

"My dear father," interposed Mrs. Meredith; but, resisting her sympathy, he suddenly exclaimed, "Where is that fellow?"

Mrs. Meredith, perhaps not comprehending, did not speak.

"Is he in this country?"

Still she was silent.

"Is he alive?"

Mrs. Meredith, as if like the jester and the sultan in

the Oriental tale, she were resolved to compel her father first to pronounce the prohibited name, sat speechless.

"Where does he hide himself?" continued Mr. Lawrence.

"Whom do you mean, papa?" at length she asked.

"You know, very well," he replied, impatiently.

"Whom should I mean, but the man who has caused all this trouble—Grafton! I say, *where* is he?"

"He is living, sir, and in this country—in New England."

"Why, then, have I never been able to hear of him? Why have not you, or your husband, by any chance ever spoken of him? Why have I been kept in ignorance?" His rising displeasure forced Mrs. Meredith on her defense.

"You must recollect, papa, that his name has been interdicted for years; that every trace of him has been purposely obliterated; even his portrait saved from destruction only on the condition of being never seen—" she might have added, that the family breach, mainly occasioned by the sympathy of her husband and herself with Mr. Grafton, had prevented all communication; but he checked farther remonstrance by saying, "Well, well, if it was so then, now I want to hear of him—nay, to see him, if it be possible to get any comfort out of him. Can he not be written to?"

"Certainly; but to what purpose, sir?"

"Janet, don't drive me mad! To what purpose? Why to bring him here, and marry him to Gertrude."

Mrs. Meredith was dumb with astonishment.

After some hesitation she replied,

"My sister would not approve of such a step, I am sure, and might not consent if he were to come."

"Oh, I dare say! As soon as I propose any thing, though it has been sighed for through a lifetime, it is

enough to prevent it. Just like my family! Never was a man so contradicted! But I say it *shall* be done. I won't live so any more. And pray why should she object?"

"You must allow, papa, for the feelings of a delicate woman. Even if her own are the same toward him, she may naturally fear a change in his sentiments."

"Sentiments! Oh, he has nerves too, eh! Of course, sentiments and nerves—they always go together."

"Or, perhaps," continued Mrs. Meredith, "she may fear the effect of time on her appearance."

"Appearance!" interrupted he, angrily, "why, there isn't a prettier woman this day in the United States of her age—no, nor even younger. She's only a hundred times too handsome for him! Object to Gertrude, indeed!"

"Oh no, sir, I did not say that! I merely suggested a natural apprehension on her part. You know, sir," added she, with a smile, "we women have our weak points, and that is one of them. But besides, sir, Mr. Grafton has been ill treated—at least, so he thinks—and we can not be surprised if that should render the connection undesirable. In short, sir, I must beg you will not insist on my writing as you propose."

But Mr. Lawrence, having taken the first great step, *le pas qui coûte*—having sacrificed his pride, his will, his personal resentment—was not a man now to stop. Opposition and doubt only stimulated his determination.

"Very well; if you won't write, Meredith will; and if he won't, Eleanor shall. I will have it done, and that before another day passes. I am old—I must soon die—I will not any longer have this man's face forever thrusting itself between me and heaven, nor Gertrude's complaints turning aside my prayers."

"Complaints, sir! Surely, my sister never complains?"

"No, not in words. But do you think that to be obeyed, cherished, honored, as if I had never given her a moment's pain; to be waited on year after year, as if it were not a duty, but a delight; to be borne with, however unreasonable; to be watched when ill, as if her life hung on mine; and to look like an angel with a broken heart! do you think there are, or can be, complaints louder than these?"

Alarmed by her father's vehemence and agitation, she directed all her efforts to calm him, and in some degree succeeded. He consented to talk over the matter coolly with Mr. Meredith, and above all not to touch on it to his daughter at present.

This done, and having induced him to retire at an early hour, with her habitual deference to her husband's opinion, she suspended her final judgment till he should return.

The breakfast was cheered by a favorable report from Miss Lawrence, and, while still seated at the table, another note was brought to Mrs. Meredith from her husband. It was, as may be conjectured, to inform her of his meeting with his old friend, Mr. Grafton. Her exclamation of pleasure and surprise attracted the attention of her father. The explanation was no sooner given than followed by his earnest direction that the gentleman should be invited to the house without delay.

It is enough to say that Mr. Grafton came; that a conference with him and Mr. Lawrence ensued, conciliatory and conclusive; that he was indulged in a long interview with Miss Lawrence, the result of which was eloquently inscribed on their happy and serene faces, when they afterward joined the family circle.

Oh, Love, when art thou worthiest of our homage?

In our morn of youth—like the coming of day, joyous and beautiful, yet often capricious, and failing of thy rich promise? In our noon—fervid, full of mastery, maddening and destroying some, though leading others by flowery paths and beside still waters? Ah! rather when, long tried, thy mellowed lights stream through our lengthening shadows, soft as at the evening hour, when from the blue depths of heaven to the golden horizon no cloud is seen, and no rude sound disturbs the harmonies of nature!

CHAPTER XL.

ELEANOR's sympathy with her aunt was, as might be expected, full and demonstrative. She could speak of nothing but the happiness that was at last to reward her sweet and patient life, and loved to dwell on every thing that could add to it interest or romance.

"Ah! that ring," said she, one day, to her; "how often I have wondered why you preferred it to every other ornament; and another thing, too," turning to Mr. Grafton, "Why is it that you call my aunt 'Mary?' I suppose there is some secret about that also."

"No, Eleanor; none at all. The names of Mary and Gertrude were both given to her—the last more generally used. For this reason I preferred the first. It was, perhaps," added he, with a smile, "a lover's fancy—of which you now, I dare say, wonder that I could ever have been capable—but it seemed to make her more my own to address her as few others did. After her mother's death, I now understand that your grandfather directed that 'Gertrude,' *her* name, should be exclusively used, and 'Mary' lived only in my memory."

Entering thus into her aunt's interests, Eleanor conceived the greatest liking for Mr. Grafton. His goodness, his dignified yet simple manners, his refined yet playful ways, were her constant theme. It is but fair to say that, like every thing in Eleanor, the sentiment was genuine. It had nothing to do with Walter, of whose intimate relations with Mr. Grafton she was still ignorant, that gentleman having reasons to be no farther communicative on that subject than he had formerly

been. On the contrary, his manner, when speaking of him, was the only thing she did not like in Mr. Grafton.

"That was a respectable young man," said Mr. Meredith, one day, "whom you were so good as to send to us—Mr. Thornley, I mean. We were quite sorry to part with him. I hope he is likely to do well."

"Yes, I think so," said Mr. Grafton, coldly.

Eleanor colored and bit her lips.

"He was a well-mannered young man too," continued Mr. Meredith; "rather remarkably so, in his condition. Not at all presuming—appeared to understand his place as well as his business, which is not common in these days. I shall always be happy to see him, and to be of use to him."

"I am glad he gave you satisfaction," was all the reply vouchsafed; and Eleanor, feeling her anger rising against them both, fled out of the room.

Walter's sudden and never-explained removal from Mr. Meredith's family, together with its obvious effect on him, had been a cause of painful conjecture to Mr. Grafton. When he saw Eleanor, he was confirmed in his suspicion that it was connected with her. It was not easy to believe that he could have remained indifferent when placed in such relations to such a girl. He only wondered that her parents had permitted her to be exposed to a similar danger, and if the interest were, indeed, wholly on his side. She became, therefore, a study to him.

In the evening, as he sat by her side, he said, "I have not heard *your* opinion of the teacher I sent you. Did you like him? I mean, of course, only as an instructor."

Vexed to have her estimate so restricted, she replied, coldly, "Oh yes, very well."

"Did you take your lessons quite alone, or was a class formed for him?"

"A class! What an idea! Share those precious lessons! What a suggestion!"

She repeated, with an affronted air, "A class! No, indeed!"

"It is a good plan, however," said Mr. Grafton. "It furnishes a stimulus and an excitement to what might otherwise be dull."

"What a mind it must be," thought she, "that *he* could not stimulate! What a spirit that could be dull in *his* presence! 'Tis plain he knows very little of Walter."

"But, perhaps," resumed Mr. Grafton, "he did not wish it—I mean, did not think it best for you. You might not have required it; his undivided attention would advance you more rapidly."

Still Eleanor did not speak; she dared not. She was irritated. She feared to betray it; and, deceived by her manner, he reflected, "Ah, poor Walter! I see the young lady is not pleased; and why? There is but one solution—she has detected, and resents his presumption."

Her conduct to Oscar Middleton confirmed his suspicion. Yet, if she were, indeed, unfriendly to his favorite, he could not be unjust to her; and, seeing daily more and more of her attractive qualities, he became still more regretful of the hard fate of Walter.

Nearly a fortnight had elapsed since the arrival of Mr. Grafton, when divers family *têtes-à-têtes* might have been observed; Mr. Meredith and Mr. Grafton closeted in the library; Mrs. Meredith with her sister, in her room. Mr. Lawrence and Eleanor—the oldest and the youngest most approximating—whispered, laughed, and took counsel together—he in his arm-chair, she on a low seat at his feet.

"I *will* have it so," said he. It was uttered imperatively, but pleasantly.

"'Tis all nonsense to put it off! What are they waiting for? They are old enough; eh, Eleanor? Come to years of discretion! Don't you think so, little Nelly? Well enough acquainted, eh?"

"Oh yes, dear grandpapa, you are quite right. Why should people ever *wait* to be happy? If mamma can only persuade Aunt Gertrude—"

"We'll do it first, and persuade her afterward," said Mr. Lawrence, with his usual impatience. "I will not hear of any silly delay. Why, I may die in a week—in a day—and I will see it first."

Then followed half-whispered suggestions, smiles of intelligence, and exclamations of "All right! that's a good girl! a very good girl! You shall be married, too, one of these days."

Then, drawing out a well-filled purse, he put it into Eleanor's hand, adding, "Just as you please, Leentje; as much more if you want it." Upon which, kissing him gratefully, she hurried away. Meeting her mother, her eager inquiry was answered by a smile and nod of assent, accompanied by "The very thing! *she* would never have given a thought to it." Upon which, Eleanor rang the bell, ordered the carriage, flew down stairs, and, in a few minutes, was on her way to the city.

A few days' interval, and paper boxes of various sizes were smuggled into the house, and into Eleanor's room, where Mrs. Meredith was called on to admire. Many articles were presented for the approval they without exception received. The most important was reserved for the last—a silk dress, white, and yet not white, for, in certain lights, it gave out a faint shade of exquisite blue, and, over all, was a lustrous silvery hue.

"Now is not that just what it should be?" exclaim-

ed Eleanor, delighted. "The very color of an angel's wing!"

"Ah! my dear child, I fear my acquaintance with angels is not so intimate as yours. But it is certainly the very thing for your aunt."

One day more, and, in the evening, the drawing-room lustres are lighted. Though there is no bustle, there is arrangement and an air of expectation. In one of the arm-chairs Mr. Lawrence reclines; in the other, a venerable-looking person, whose black gown and white bands indicate his office; and, on a table near him, between massive silver candlesticks, lies a richly-clasped book. The two gentlemen converse in a subdued tone, and Mr. Meredith, who walks up and down the room, with his hands, as usual, crossed behind his back, occasionally looks at his watch.

At length the hall clock is heard to strike eight, and, the door opening, Miss Lawrence, led by Mr. Grafton, enters, attended by Mrs. Meredith and Eleanor, and followed, at a respectful distance, by the domestics. The clergyman and Mr. Lawrence rise, and the proper disposition of all parties made, the book is opened, and those portentous words, "We are gathered together here, in the sight of God, and in the face of this company, to join together this man and this woman in holy matrimony"—those words so fraught with happiness or misery—usher in the solemn rite. Circumstances, peculiar to this occasion, give it a more than common interest, yet a sweet composure rests on every face. A slight irregularity at the moment of betrothal threatens to disturb it. Instead of putting on the ring in the usual manner, Mr. Grafton is observed to draw one off, press it to his lips, and then replace it. Some hearts beat quicker, but no agitation interrupts the holy benediction, which now sets its seal to the ceremony.

Miss Lawrence's first impulse is to seek her father—she finds herself already in his arms, his eyes full of love, his lips filled with blessings. Eleanor's heart is so full she can not comprehend how others are so quiet! Her aunt presses her tenderly to her breast, but she smiles. Her father, her mother, Mr. Grafton, all are softened, but all are calm. She turns to her grandfather. He has retreated to his chair; his handkerchief covers his face. This she can understand. She runs to him, throws her arms round his neck, and they weep together.

CHAPTER XLI.

MR. GRAFTON had kept Walter informed of whatever related to the business that had taken him to the city, together with that which most nearly touched himself. A letter now received announced his marriage, intelligence welcome to Walter, but astonishing to Damie, entirely unprepared for it.

"Married!" she exclaimed; "well, of all things! After stayin' here till he fairly grow'd into the airth, to go off and get married! Taken in by some artful slip of a thing, jest fit to be his darter! There's no trustin' a man! They're all alike!"

The letter farther directed Walter to join Mr. Grafton without delay, and this, recalling Damie from her previsions of the domination of a young wife, and the overthrow of her own safer rule, she gave her attention to the necessary preparations. But there was something in Walter's manner that she could not explain, which, together with certain other things she had remarked of late, disturbed her. At an early hour on the following morning he was off, and, while she and Jed watched the receding wagon, she said, "Jed, I feel uneasy."

"I dare say," said he; "women most gin'rally do."

"No, no; but about Walter."

"I don't see no occasion to buy trouble. He looks well enough."

"Oh, 'tisin't that; but he's different. He isn't like other folks."

"No, he never was; that's why I always liked him. He is Walter, and he ain't nothin' else. 'Tisin't every one that understands him."

This was touching a weak point.

"I think I'd ought to understand him by this time, if any one does. He's nat'rally quick, has considerable pride, and strong feelin's; but he's larned to keep 'em under, to 'rule his sperrit,' as the Bible says, and to be always jest about so. But lately he's in a perfect whirl; never remembers nothin', don't answer no more'n a post, don't read his books, don't do nothin'. I tell you, Jed," she added, in a confidential tone, "I am afraid he's shattered! I've observed it ever since that awful consarn at the old bridge."

Jed laughed outright.

"No, no," said he; "that was, be sure, an ugly business, and bein' some kind of acquaintance made it worse. But Walter's all right here," tapping his head as he spoke.

"And then," continued Damie, little affected by Jed's assurance, "to go off and get married! 'tis jest like puttin' a step-mother over the poor lad. That'll jest finish him."

"Damie," said Jed, with one of his comical looks, "I respect you, and that's rayther more than I can say for all women folks; but you're human natur', Damie, a'ter all. Now don't you go for to make out a despe'rt case on't, 'cause a new mistress is a comin'. I tell you Walter ain't a goin' to lose his wits, nor you to lose your home. Mr. Grafton can't live without you no more'n without a head; and, as to his young wife, she don't know nothin', and you'll rule her jest as you do him. So keep quiet, and if you'll get breakfast ready, perhaps I'll take some with you, jest to keep up your sperrits."

Walter, alighting at the stage-house in New York, was met by Mr. Grafton, who immediately transferred him to the carriage of Mr. Middleton, in waiting for him, when they proceeded to the residence of that gentleman, where he was informed he was expected to stay.

It was late in the evening when they arrived. Oscar received him with open arms, and saw, in the unusual emotion with which Walter met him, only the natural expression of his sympathy. His father, he said, was not at home, and might be absent a week longer—a circumstance that Walter heard with a sense of relief.

Mr. Grafton having left the young men to themselves, they had much of mutual interest to occupy them.

A late hour found them still together. Walter took up his candle to retire, but Oscar resisted.

"Why go so soon?" he asked; "let us make a night of it. You once, I know, were a 'slave of the lamp' over your books. Come, be as regardless of sleep for the sake of a friend."

Walter replaced his light, and Oscar said, "I have a great deal yet to say. I have not spoken of Mrs. Grafton. You will like her, I am sure, and not wonder at the constancy of your guardian. We young fellows, Walter, are fond of talking of undying love, and all that, but I never expected to see such a living proof of it. I wonder if you or I could be capable of it."

"It would depend, I imagine, on the object."

"Ah! yes, indeed; and such an object, I can tell you, is not often given, to test a man's fidelity. Why, Walter, she must have been handsomer than even Eleanor Meredith! There is still a strong family likeness, but I doubt if the niece be equal to what the aunt was. Such regular features; and, then, that angelic look! which I never saw on any face but one."

Oscar's changing voice explained the allusion. At another time Walter would have replied to it; but now the words would not come, and both were silent.

At length, with an expression of regret at the absence of his father, Oscar added, "He was called away by the affairs of that wretched man, Talbot, who was a connection of his."

Walter started, but did not speak, and Oscar proceeded:

"The catastrophe happened, I think, in your neighborhood."

"Yes; you knew him personally?"

"Oh yes; I've seen him occasionally from a boy, but I never liked him. Perhaps it was a mere prejudice founded on the fancy of a child. I remember taking it into my head that his visits always made my father ill, and I conceived a dread of the mere sight him. Later," continued Oscar, laughing, "I gave him the sobriquet of 'the Wandering Jew,' because he was forever roaming about, got money nobody knew how, and never seemed to grow older."

This was a subject Walter could not talk of, and both again were silent.

Suddenly Oscar exclaimed, "You have no idea how Eleanor has improved since you saw her, in face, person, manner, mind. Then she was a charming girl—now she is a bewitching woman! With all your philosophy about her, Walter, which even then I wondered at, you must admire her now!"

Walter did not feel called upon to say how recently he had seen her, nor how entirely he agreed with his friend.

"You mistake me," he replied, quietly; "I always did her justice, I think."

"Justice! Pshaw! What a word to apply to Eleanor Meredith! So you really brought her up before the inexorable bench of your discriminating mind, tried and found her worthy of approval! You 'second Daniel come to judgment!' Why, Walter, like the knights of old that you and I used to rant about, I shall be compelled to defy you to mortal combat if you do not acknowledge her peerless charms in warmer terms."

"And by the same right?" inquired Walter, smiling. Oscar's heightened color betrayed more than his words.

"No," he replied; "no, not her avowed champion and adorer."

"Her silent one?" asked Walter, rather uneasily. It was a topic on which he could not well banter.

Oscar hesitated, became embarrassed, and then exclaimed, with vehemence, "Why should I deny it? With *you*, at least, I need have no concealments. Yes, Walter, I do love her—truly, ardently. She charmed me while still a boy; you will, perhaps, say I am little more now. But, Walter, I have grown old fast. My late experience has matured me. I see her now with the eyes of a man—of one who knows his own wants—and find in her gentle sympathy, her ready comprehension of me, her sweet unselfish cares for my happiness, the evidence of a character even more beautiful than the outward form in which it is presented. I love, not like a boy, dazzled and intoxicated, but with an appreciation of her so founded that it will last forever!"

He might have proceeded till wearied of his own voice. Walter was incapable of speech. The utmost he had ever imagined on the part of Oscar was a boyish excitement, perhaps already forgotten in the new scenes and the larger circle to which he had been introduced. It may be comprehended, then, with what feelings he heard this avowal. But the words her "sympathy," her "cares for his happiness," while they struck still deeper, were inexplicable! "What," he asked himself, "what did they mean? Have I been blinded by a miserable self-love? I will know the worst."

"And *she*?" he at length ventured to inquire.

"I see, Walter," replied Oscar, "that, with your cool way of looking at things, you regard me only as an ex-

citable youth whose feelings are unreliable. I do not resent this. Time shall justify me. For the same reason you will distrust my impressions of her. I will only say, therefore, that if Eleanor Meredith is no coquette, which you must know it is not in her nature to be, I have no reason to despair. Not that I am such a puppy as to insinuate a single word or look that could compromise her delicacy. My hope is founded solely on the conviction that, though I have not spoken, she must understand me, and that, so doing, she continues the same."

"And—why—not speak?" faltered out Walter, feeling that any certainty were better than this suspense.

"Ah! Walter, there is my trouble! From my father I apprehend no opposition; but—to you I will admit what I do not allow to others—what I try to conceal from myself."

Oscar paused—was moved—then, recovering himself, he said, "Do you believe in presentiments?"

Walter was not exactly in that frame of mind best fitted to answer such a question.

He only replied, "No one, I believe, is always proof against them."

"I, at least," continued Oscar, "am not. I believe, I should rather say, I fear, I shall die early—perhaps soon. I thought myself well. I have had some intimations of late that suggest the contrary, and confirm an impression I have long had, but which never till now afflicted me. At present, therefore, I deliberately avoid an explanation that might only commit her to greater suffering. Will you not now believe in me, Walter, when you see I am not incapable of self-control?"

"But do you equally avoid," asked Walter, evading the question, "do you equally avoid securing an interest that must lead to the same consequences?"

"I am not sure. It is so difficult when with her to

resist the sweetness that seems to draw the very heart out of me. But if I err, it is at least not designedly. You will, of course, go there to-morrow. We will go together, and you shall see yourself how wise and resolute I can be."

Walter could not trust himself with more than a silent assent, and Oscar paused for some moments; then, with much feeling, but with his usual manly frankness, said, "I am disappointed, Walter. I expected from you a sympathy more demonstrative. For this reason I longed to see you—to speak to you of what I could speak to no one else—my hopes! my fears! But I see how it is. I am in your eyes still a boy; and this my first essay in the tender passion, to which many others will succeed before I am really caught! I thought you would better understand me. Well, well, time will show."

Walter's distress was intolerable. What could he say? How so speak as neither to wound nor deceive Oscar? Neither to compromise Eleanor nor himself? The instinct of truth saved him.

"Oscar," said he, in a tone so earnest and affectionate, that it could not but bring conviction, "never has my interest in you been so strong as at this moment. I believe in your love; I respect your self-control, and I pray Heaven that your impressions of your health may be mistaken. But let us talk no farther at present. It is not best. Good-night. We will do to-morrow whatever you choose."

He retired, but it was only to give vent to feelings he had with such difficulty suppressed. What they were, may be supposed easily divined by one as much in his confidence as the reader presumes himself to be.

But there were complications of which even he is yet ignorant.

Out of a chaos of fear and perplexity there came ques-

tionings which Walter sought to resolve. "Was she, but lately so kind, so confiding, was she capricious and unstable? Could she have so little depth?" To one who, like himself, might say that he "could not forget," this would be less pardonable than much that was positively wrong. "If such were the case, he could bear to lose her. It would be a stern effort, but a short one."

"But let him be just. She was perhaps more consistent than himself. Had he not pronounced his own doom when he first tore himself from her? And, if she still met him kindly, had she not wisely and resolutely forbidden him to cross her threshold? Was not this sufficiently significant? If compassion had subsequently pleaded for Oscar—if the wishes of her friends had recommended, perhaps urged his suit—of what had he to complain? On the other hand, if this impression were so feeble that a previous preference might yet be revived, in that case were not her own feelings entitled to consideration? Ah! let me not," he thought, "be tempted by this insidious suggestion."

No; he dealt boldly and truly with his own soul, and he came resolved to his conclusion. He would see them together. He would observe her calmly, and, if he detected even a leaning in favor of Oscar, he would crush unrelentingly the hope that had recently dawned on himself.

The next day they drove to the Oaks. They were shown into the dining-room, where Walter was presented to Mrs. Grafton and her father, and received very civilly by Mr. and Mrs. Meredith.

A servant was sent to inform Miss Eleanor, but she already knew whom she was to see. Her quick eye had caught a glimpse of Walter as he alighted from the carriage. She was as quickly reminded of the self-condemnation their last interview had caused her, and of

the resolutions she had then formed. To these was added the reflection that she was now to meet him in the presence of others; and she was seized with a nervous tremor lest she might betray what her present nicer sense of propriety taught her should never have escaped her own breast.

Under this apprehension she entered the room. The consciousness of constraint increased it. For relief she addressed Oscar, and the warmth she had not dared to manifest to Walter spent itself on him. Denying a healthful draught to the one, she unwittingly gave poison to the other.

Mr. Grafton observed the difference.

"Poor Walter!" thought he, as he turned an inquiring look at Eleanor.

She perceived it. The fear of being watched took possession of her. She became more conscious, and, of course, more cold.

Walter could not but feel it; but, though perplexed, he was still incredulous as to a real change. He endeavored, by his own behavior, to relieve her. He talked of indifferent things, and she gradually regained more self-possession, but she was not natural. An increasing dread of some mistake on her part—of unkindness, inconsistency—gave to her countenance an uncertain expression. Her manner became ambiguous. "It might indicate an interest in Oscar; it might conceal an enduring but repressed sentiment toward himself." A lover's instinct inclined to the last. He felt as if one word, one look, would be an 'open sesame' to that heart never closed to him before. But there was that, even stronger than love, which forbade that word, that look.

Retreating from Eleanor, he advanced toward Mrs. Grafton; and they were mutually so well pleased, that Eleanor, having no farther opportunity to address him, permitted herself to be engrossed by Oscar.

Endurance, however perfect, has, like all things, its limits; and, on the entrance of other company, Walter succeeded in drawing Oscar, reluctantly, away.

Thus passed a week. Walter, compelled when at home to listen to the raptures, plans, and hopes of Oscar, was glad to escape them even by visits to the Oaks, though the same unpropitious circumstances prevented any clearer comprehension of Eleanor; the same circle always present, the same obstacles to any conversation with her. He was satisfied with no inferences that could be drawn from the small opportunities afforded him. Eleanor, once open as the day, became an enigma to him. A few weeks since, animated, confiding, natural; now, restless, disturbed, and with a mind evidently ill at ease. At one moment he would compassionate what might be painful vacillation on the subject of Oscar, the next reproach her inconsistency to himself. "But why?" he would ask. "Did I not counsel her to forget me? Did I not abjure the language of love to her very face? Was she to be faithful to a phantom? No; I ought to be the sufferer. I would not, if I could, turn the trembling scale that vibrates in favor of Oscar."

One evening, the weather proving unfit for Oscar to go, as he had purposed, to the Oaks, in the hope of at least hearing from there, he persuaded Walter to do so. He found the family, as usual, together, Mrs. Meredith and Eleanor at work. The conversation for a while was general; and, though Eleanor took little part in it, she seemed more at ease than usual. At length Walter approached the table at which she sat.

"As industrious as ever!" said he.

She looked up; the light fell full on her face, but a smile even brighter overspread it.

"Oh no! I accomplish nothing. I am a lazy girl now."

"Can that mean," thought Walter, "that the heart is too busy to let head or hands work?"

"Some people can afford to be idle," said he. "The bee is so in winter, you know."

"Yes; but I have gathered no honey, I fear."

"None, perhaps, that you will exhibit; for, like the bees, you do not fancy a glass hive."

A pleasant reply was on her lip, but her father approached, and it was checked.

"What is this I hear?" asked he. "Is young Middleton going to Bermuda this autumn?"

"He thinks of it, sir," replied Walter.

"But not for his health, surely: he looks better than he did."

"Tis, I hope, rather a measure of precaution than necessity. His father has always had a dread of our winters for him."

"Does his father go with him?"

"No, sir; I shall do so."

"Indeed! That may be for your advantage. I am glad to hear it. When do you go?"

"We shall leave here as soon as Mr. Middleton returns, on a preliminary excursion, which will occupy some weeks; after which we shall proceed to Bermuda."

Eleanor had not spoken, and Walter had avoided to look at her. Now a movement of her chair compelled him to do so. Her smile was gone. A troubled expression replaced it, and, in a flurried manner, she gathered her work as if to change her seat.

"Can I assist you?" he asked.

Without answering, she hastened toward the door, left the room, and did not return.

Mr. Meredith took the seat she had left, and Walter was condemned, while thinking of any thing else, to listen to details and questions as to the climate and condition of Bermuda, the opportunities he might find there of advancing his own interests, how he would like such

a residence, and the offer of letters to two or three acquaintances Mr. Meredith happened to have there; all of which, however well meant, were at this moment as unwelcome as unnecessary; and, as soon as he could escape, he took his leave.

Arrived at home, another trial awaited him. Oscar insisted on knowing how Eleanor looked, how she was dressed, how occupied; if she were in spirits; if she spoke of him?

Walter submitted to "the question" manfully. He even did more. He magnanimously and unflinchingly related the effect produced on her by the announcement of his approaching departure. He did well. It was not more delightful to Oscar than a wholesome, because indurating process to himself.

Faint not, Walter!

"And thou shalt know, 'ere long!
—— know how sublime a thing it is
To suffer, and be strong!"

Eleanor, meanwhile, was little to be envied. She had acted impulsively, and, as was often her experience, now regretted it.

Walter, occupied with studying her, had been unaware of the change in his own manner, scarcely to be avoided under the circumstances. Each had thus unconsciously distressed and repelled the other, and were equally seeking an explanation of what was only in themselves.

"And now he is going!" exclaimed Eleanor, as she sat leaning her throbbing head on her hands; "to be gone for months, and then, of course, not to return here. I may not see him, heaven only knows when! He goes, too, without a single word of interest in me since we met! Not love; *that* I know he would not speak, even if he felt it. But, surely, we may be friends, if no more. No, even this is past. I see it, I can not explain it, but

I feel it. Perhaps I ought to have staid; he might have had something now to say to me. He may have come on purpose! foolish girl! and yet, at this moment, I ran away! I will go down; I will sit by him; will talk to him as I used to do; will even say, 'What is this dreadful blank that has come between us?'" and, starting up, she rushed to the parlor. She was too late. Walter had gone.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE next morning Walter had business in the city, but Oscar declined accompanying him, reserving himself for a drive to the Oaks in the afternoon. Taking a book from the library, he retired to his own room communicating with it, and threw himself on a couch, not so much to read as to muse.

And now his ardent spirit, refined, but not tamed, by its companionship with a delicate frame, indulged in the fond fancies of sanguine, unsuspecting youth. "He must, indeed, absent himself for a short time. He was aware that he was less well than he had been, but it was the natural consequence of sorrow and depressing circumstances. He was not in the best condition, therefore, to encounter a northern winter. But he should return well! He had always improved by a change of climate. And then he should be justified in a full avowal to Eleanor. But could he be sure of the answer he desired? Sure! no! he was not so presumptuous. Yet neither could he despair when he reflected on her almost tender interest in his happiness. The feeling, too, betrayed at the intelligence of his departure! Dear, kind Walter; how true his sympathy! manly and self-restrained as he always was, yet how moved had he been while telling him. And even if she now feels only friendship, might not his faithful love in time secure its reward? Oh yes! he would not doubt it!"

Hope gilded his future in her brightest dyes. His book lay unopened by his side, while his own face presented a page that would have repaid the perusal. His kindling eye, his excited color, alas! too high, and the

smile that played about his mouth betrayed the promise that his heart whispered!

The door into the library was open. A footstep was heard in the hall, and a voice he did not know inquired of the servant in attendance if Mr. Middleton were at home.

"No, sir."

"Is he in the city?"

"No, sir. He has been absent some time."

"When will he return?"

"Perhaps not for several days, sir."

There was a pause, apparently hesitation and disappointment, which the servant perceiving, said,

"His son is at home, sir."

"His son! indeed! I will see him, then."

Oscar rose and went into the room, where he saw a middle-aged gentleman, of a grave, rather cold, business-like appearance, who announced himself as Mr. Bolton.

Oscar bowed, and begged him to be seated. The name was new to him.

"Mr. Middleton's son, I presume."

Oscar returned an affirmative bow.

"His only son?"

Again Oscar bowed.

"There were others, I think."

"Yes."

"But none of them are living?"

"No, sir," said Oscar, rather annoyed by such inquiries from a stranger.

"I am sorry not to see your father at once," continued Mr. Bolton, "as I wished without delay to put into his own hand this packet, containing papers of importance. But the next best thing is to place it in your custody, whose interest in them is not less than his own," and he laid it on the library table, by his side.

"I will see that my father has it as soon as he arrives."

The gentleman then rose to depart. Oscar repeated his invitation to rest himself, but he declined.

"Before I go, however," said he, "I may, I hope, be permitted to express my satisfaction at seeing you here, young gentleman, in your proper place."

"Here!" thought Oscar; "where else could I be?"

"A fact," continued Mr. Bolton, "that I shall have great pleasure in communicating to my respected client, to whom I shall write to-day."

Oscar stared. "The man is under some gross mistake!" thought he.

"You look surprised," said the gentleman, and well may be, that a stranger should be aware of what, I presume, has been but lately made known to yourself. But the confidential relation in which my respected client—your honored mother, sir, as you must understand—has thought proper to place me, has necessarily put me in possession of many private and family matters."

"The man is mad!" thought Oscar, listening in silence, and with a look of extreme perplexity, which induced Mr. Bolton to repeat his inquiries.

"You are Mr. Middleton's *only* son? I think you said so."

"Yes, sir."

"The others are dead? I understood you so to say."

Oscar again assented.

"Not that, if living, it would be material," he continued, with the same cross-examining air, "but it would be disagreeable, of course—"

"Sir!" interrupted Oscar, indignantly.

But, not heeding, the gentleman proceeded.

"Yes; I am right. His only son, heretofore known as Walter Thornley—his only child by his only wedded

wife—residing in England, she being a subject of his British majesty; the rights of which child I am sent over to make known, and, if necessary, to enforce; but which rights, I am happy to observe, have been acknowledged without my interference."

This, like what had preceded, would have been regarded as some unaccountable mistake, or the ravings of a disordered mind; but that, as Oscar had grown older, his father's peculiarities had occasioned him much painful perplexity—his strange paroxysms of unexplained distress, and the mystery that rested on his early life. Habitual respect for him had rejected the idea of crime or disgrace, but a vague fear had haunted him of some youthful wrong-doing, the remembrance of which had, perhaps by a morbid exaggeration, been a spectre in his path through life. These words, therefore, fearful and incomprehensible, were received as a revelation, and struck on a chord the vibrations of which were too much for his sensitive nature.

Turning deadly pale, his hand pressed to his breast as if in acute pain, he staggered, and would have fallen, had not Mr. Bolton, extending his arms, caught him. His cry of alarm brought in a servant from the hall, and together they succeeded in laying him on the couch in his own room.

Supposing him to be faint, the servant hastened for a restorative, and Mr. Bolton looked with consternation on the mischief which, he knew not why, he seemed to have caused. A moment passed, and a glass was offered to Oscar. Without opening his eyes, with a feeble motion of the hand he repulsed it; and they saw with dismay that blood was issuing from his mouth.

"A physician!" exclaimed Mr. Bolton; "lose no time!"

The man, in obeying the injunction, encountered Wal-

ter entering. One glance revealed the condition of his friend. Ordering the servant to remain, he rushed from the house. The chaise of the family physician stood at a door in the neighborhood. He flew rather than ran; entered and found him just departing. Few words were necessary, and they were at Mr. Middleton's with the speed which, unhappily, the case required.

Whatever skill and experience suggested to a judicious man, well understanding the constitution of his patient, was at once resorted to, with an injunction to silence and tranquillity, and no attendance but that strictly necessary. Oscar spoke not. His eyes remained closed, and only by an occasional movement of his hand he indicated a want or rejected an offer.

"He is very right," whispered Doctor Barton. "The less he hears, sees, or speaks, the better. His pulse betrays much disturbance of the system."

Alas! They did not understand that in the miserable conflict within, he instinctively excluded every sight and sound.

Meanwhile, Mr. Bolton, still under his original mistake, with many expressions of regret, the more hearty as he believed that the calamity nearly touched his "honored client," took his leave; and the doctor, having at length succeeded in checking the hemorrhage, left Oscar in the care of Walter and the faithful Wilson.

After dispatching a note to Mr. Grafton, Walter seated himself sufficiently near to watch, without disturbing, Oscar. The day was now declining, and the darkened room, the perfect quiet, and an anodyne, would, he trusted, induce sleep. He was not yet aware that a thought had been rudely thrust into that gentle breast that "mandragora nor all the drowsy sirups of the world" could effectually still!

But at length, for a brief space, the "sweet restorer"

came. The restless muscles were quiet; the nerves ceased their agitation; a more regular pulsation returned; the face was calm. He slept.

The night had fallen, and so profound was the stillness that the faintest sound might have been detected. Walter heard only the ticking of his watch, and the breathing from the sick-bed, at first quick, but by degrees indicating the better rest of the sleeper.

"Thank heaven!" he ejaculated, with a sense of infinite relief.

An hour or more passed, and carriage-wheels were heard. They approached the house. They stopped at the door; it opened. Some one entered, met by others cautiously approaching from within. Then suppressed voices were heard. Then low sounds of distress came from the library.

Walter, afraid to stir, did not attempt to close the door of Oscar's room, till the sounds becoming more audible, he ventured to move toward it. In doing so he was shocked to perceive Mr. Middleton extended on the sofa, his face covered with his hands. Mr. Grafton stood near him. Walter remained immovable. Mr. Grafton turned, saw, and beckoned to him. Walter advanced. "Speak!" said Mr. Grafton, in a low but decided tone. "'Tis the best moment. One strong emotion will control another."

Walter obeyed. Approaching the sofa, he knelt, and in a tender voice uttered one word:

"Father!"

It was enough. Mr. Middleton turned on Walter a startled and agitated look, but unattended by any violent demonstration. On the contrary, putting his arm gently round him, he said, with an emphasis that went to his heart, but in a low and broken voice, "My noble son!"

Walter took his hand, pressed it to his lips, and meeting those eyes that seemed to seek his secret thoughts, answered their scrutiny with an expression of such manly confidence, such compassionate tenderness, that Mr. Middleton could neither distrust nor fear him. He suffered Walter to retain his hand, and gazed on him in silence, till, by a sign, Mr. Grafton called him to his side.

"The worst is over," he whispered. "Return to your charge. Mr. Middleton is mine."

Oscar still slept. The night was far advanced, but Walter was too deeply moved to sleep. While he reflected with thankfulness that the dreaded interview—for which he had in some degree been prepared—was past, he knew there was much yet to suffer. He had, indeed, found that for which he had been so long importunate—for which he had wept and prayed. He had a name, a place among the kindreds of men. He was no longer a waif, a stray on the great common of the world, to be picked up and claimed by he could not tell whom—liable at any moment to be dissevered from all he held dear, and united, perhaps indissolubly, to all most abhorrent.

But there was another side—darker, perhaps, than he feared—full of wrong and wretchedness! There was an innocent sufferer, from whom all was wrenched that he himself had gained! What new duties were involved in these strange developments? Was it for him, who, when cast away, had been gathered in; when deserted, had been sheltered; when unknown, had been cared for, instructed, and protected, and to whom rights despaired of had now been restored—was it for him to ask more? "No," thought he, the same self-denying purpose animating him by which he had already been actuated, "No; *her* love, too pure to be affected by ex-

ternal changes, shall compensate him for all he has lost! If I yet have influence it shall be used for him."

While Walter kept his unbroken vigil, Mr. Grafton devoted himself to Mr. Middleton.

He had hurried to the Lodge on receiving Walter's note. The packet on the table had caught his attention.

"It was left," Wilson said, "by the gentleman whose conversation had brought on all the trouble."

The truth flashed on Mr. Grafton—already prepared for it. The communication, so carefully, for the present, averted, had been made by a stranger; ignorant, too, of the nature with which he was dealing. The result did not surprise him.

Mr. Middleton being induced to withdraw to his own room, a fearful scene ensued. A new terror seized him. "Oscar was not prostrated by an inevitable disease. No; the blow might never have fallen. *He* himself was his murderer! The avenging judgment of God was upon him! The victim demanded was his own child—slain by his own hand! The fruit of his body for the sin of his soul!"

Though no two men could be more different, Mr. Grafton was the person who at this moment could most influence him. His sympathy—ever responding to the cry of the afflicted, from whatever cause—like the oil and wine in the wounds of him who fell among thieves, shed its balm on the sore and remorseful spirit that now poured forth its agony into his heart. His efforts were at length so far successful that he left Mr. Middleton in some degree composed. His next care was to see Mr. Bolton, to inform him of the actual state of things, and to secure his silence, for the reason that publicity at present could only aggravate the feelings of all.

The morning found Oscar more refreshed and calm than they had dared to hope. But a deep seriousness

was on his countenance. He watched every one who approached; he listened to every sound. He did not attempt to speak, or even to move. He seemed reserving his strength for some definite purpose.

The physician came. He pronounced every thing as favorable as he had expected. This was ambiguous, but no one dared to ask any thing more explicit.

Oscar made a sign for a pencil, and, with a slight effort, wrote, "My father is returned; I must see him."

The physician hesitated. Oscar perceived it. An impatient frown obscured for an instant the almost deathly calm of his face. "I *must*," he wrote, "for one word."

It was no longer opposed, and Mr. Grafton went to inform Mr. Middleton. They returned together. Mr. Grafton and the physician withdrew to the library. Walter rose to follow them, but a sign from Oscar detained him.

Mr. Middleton, with feelings that no words could adequately convey, approached and leaned over his son. Oscar's calmness seemed something supernatural. Fixing his eye intently on his father's agitated face, his own colorless and quiet almost to sternness, occupied with one idea, he yet uttered no sound. At length his lips moved, and one word passed them—"My mother?"

"I know what you would ask!" exclaimed his father. "She was as unconscious of wrong to others as to herself. She was pure as the angels to whom she has gone!" A smile, sweet as that of infancy, a glance upcast, expressed the joy and gratitude these words inspired. Looking to Walter, he said, speaking very low, but with much significance, "You hear; I thought so. I shall die happy." Then, closing his eyes, he seemed to decline all farther communication. Mr. Middleton was equally unfit for it, and, on the entrance of the physician, who imposed the most rigorous restrictions, he left the room.

During many succeeding days judicious care and treatment had their proper effect, and the physician's opinion was decidedly favorable. The stony look was gone; his natural sweetness returned. As his father sat by his bed, he would often extend his hand, as with a desire to comfort him; and Walter, his unwearied attendant, his loving eyes were always seeking. Every day now brought some improvement. He was allowed to change his position more freely, to talk, with certain restrictions, and to sit up. All things promised well, and his physician authorized the confident hope thus inspired.

CHAPTER XLIII.

WALTER had not been to the Oaks since the illness of Oscar; but he was now so much better as not to require his presence, even preferring to be alone; he drove over, therefore, to see Mr. Grafton, with whom he had business.

As he approached the house, he hoped that he should not see Eleanor. He asked, accordingly, only for Mr. Grafton, but a light step on the staircase made him aware that his wish was not granted. Looking up, he perceived her descending. She had not yet seen him. As she came nearer her cheek flushed, her eye brightened, and, with a spring, she was by his side.

"Ah! Mr. Thornley," she exclaimed, forgetting the caution which his own reserve and absence rendered unnecessary, "indeed! 'tis long since you were here."

"She has heard," he thought, "that he is doing well. I wish he could see how happy it has made her! it would be his best medicine."

"Yes," he said, "it is, indeed, a long time to be so near, and yet—so—" "far apart," he would have said, but he corrected himself—"and yet unable to see my friends. But we are, as you know, so much relieved about Oscar, that I can not regret any thing."

"Oh yes! I have heard; 'tis delightful! Yes, yes, he will recover; you may be certain of it;" and, in the hopeful temper natural to her, and to encourage Walter, she continued; "the attack, I understand, was quite accidental; one that might happen to any body—not at all likely to return again; and then, you know, Nature is always on the side of youth."

He was a little surprised, almost pained, at her manner. "It was," he thought, "something too easy;" but he repelled the harsh imputation. "Love is stronger than fear," he reflected. "Poor girl! has she never heard that the young die?"

"The doctor, I understand," continued Eleanor, "gives every assurance."

"Oh yes; he justifies all you say. But where is Mr. Grafton? I came to see him."

"Only to see him? Mamma will not let you go before dinner, I am sure."

But, pleading the necessity of his return, he hurried away.

Having seen Mr. Grafton, he drove rapidly home. Oscar was not quite so well as he had left him. A little excited, feverish, and exhausted.

Walter's anxious look called for an explanation, and Oscar, with a smile, pointed to a sheet of paper near him. He had been writing.

"Oh, Oscar! how could you?" said he, reproachfully.

He waved his hand to ward off reproof. "'Tis done," said he, and Walter was silent.

After a few moments, pointing to the paper, it was handed to him. He folded it, put it into Walter's hand, and said, with earnestness, "For *you*; read it alone."

The restlessness gradually subsided, and he fell into a sleep that it was hoped would entirely remove the effects of his ill-timed exertion. But, though he slept, his face was not calm. Slight contractions of the brow and mouth disturbed it. Sad thoughts seemed flitting over it, and, occasionally, a faint sigh struggled forth.

Walter remained motionless near him, and, when he awoke, a kind smile acknowledged his care; but it yielded to the same deep seriousness, so marked in the first days of his illness. His eyes were fixed in thought. He

seemed unconscious of the presence of any one. Medicine was brought him; he took it without a question. Food was offered, garnished with savory remarks from Wilson; he received it mechanically. His father entered, and his mounting color and quivering lip showed him unequal to the visit. He retired, and Oscar became calm.

At night Walter retired to the library, where he had slept since Oscar had been so well as to dispense with a nearer attendance. Waiting till all was quiet, he drew the manuscript from his pocket which Oscar had given him, and read as follows:

"Though my heart and brain are full, I must be brief. "I have at last had a communication with my father. I could weep tears of blood! Oh, how gladly would I die to expiate the wrong he has inflicted, to remove the suffering he endures. Alas! my death can only aggravate his misery. That this can not be long delayed I have the fullest conviction; no hopes nor assurances deceive me. I am dying even now. Receive, then, these, my parting words; I may have strength for no other. Walter! long the brother of my heart, no natural ties can make you dearer; and, thank Heaven, nothing can render you less so! Do not, for an instant, wrong me by such a suspicion. Comfort my father! and one other care I leave with you. See Eleanor. It can not be that I have mistaken the nature of her sympathy! But, if I have done so, offended delicacy will be appeased by the grave. Explain to her my silence, if she does not already understand it. I would not be remembered as trifling and inconsistent. Convey to her the assurance of my undying love. Say to her that at this moment I am conscious of no earthly interest stronger than my desire for her happiness. That I pray she

may find it in a union with one who, though he can not love her more, may better deserve her than myself.

"Oh, how many thoughts struggle for utterance as I think of her! The happy past returns to me, the blessed future that I hoped for beams upon me! But of these I must not speak. Time is closing its gates. The opening portals of another world demand my thoughts.

"Do not grieve for me; I go to my mother! 'Tis well it is so. Earth has no place for her, nor for me. Death has no terror! I deserve nothing, I claim nothing, but throw myself, with the faith of a child, on Him who never rejected any that came to Him. To my kind friends—all—I can not specify—my last love and thanks. And now, my dear and faithful friend and brother, be heaven's choicest blessings yours! My parting soul will rely upon you. Let me feel the pressure of your hand when I can not return it, and whisper peace and love to me, even when you believe "the dull, cold ear of death" is insensible. The spirit may perceive, though the bodily organism is dissolving. Have we not heard of strange suspensions of the physical powers, mistaken for death itself, when yet the mind was conscious? Farewell, my brother!"

"My brother!" echoed the throbbing heart of Walter. "Dear, generous, magnanimous Oscar! Can it be that I must part with you?"

Overcome by emotion, he threw himself back in his chair, and yielded to the recollections that came rushing over him—to the fearful forebodings that cast their shadows before—the loving instinct with which Oscar had clung to him from the first moment they met; his confiding, child-like temper, still the same, however modified by the growth of his character; the brave,

yet humble spirit in which he now prepared for "the supreme hour," that, perhaps, he too surely predicted!

"Ah! my brother!" exclaimed he; "loved but to be lamented! found but to be lost! How in this hard world am I—reserved, perhaps repulsive, distrustful—how am I ever to replace the love you voluntarily gave me?"

Absorbed in these reflections, Walter was unconscious of time, till a moan from Oscar arrested his attention. Starting up, he went noiselessly into his room and approached the bed, where he trusted to find nothing worse than disturbed sleep. He beheld, with horror, the life-stream again issuing from his mouth. His face was deadly pale, but perfectly calm. He exerted himself to extend a hand to Walter, then directed it upward. It fell heavily, and a fresh gush of blood betrayed the effort it had cost him.

His father and the physician were summoned. The face of the latter confirmed the terrors of Mr. Middleton and Walter. Oscar alone was serene. In the words of the Oriental poet,

"He alone could smile
While all around him wept."

The usual remedies had some effect, but the extreme exhaustion was fearful, and the doctor felt himself compelled to admit to Mr. Middleton his alarm, though with some qualifications.

Oscar more accurately interpreted his condition. He looked first at his father, then at Walter, and, with an expression evidently intended to remind him of his request, he motioned for his hand. When given, he feebly clasped it, and Walter, comprehending his wish, seated himself by his side. A gentle inclination of his head signified his satisfaction. His eyes, full of tenderness, were directed alternately to his father and his friend. At length they closed, and he seemed to sleep.

The physician left them for half an hour, at which time he returned. He immediately detected a change. He placed his hand on the pulse; it was weak and fluttering. The eyes were partially open, but there was "no speculation" in them! Their sense, now shut to earth, was turned

"To the luminous side
Of Death—"

and a sweet peace had descended on the countenance, that seemed to say "the welcome was heard in the heavenly world ere the farewell was hushed in this!"

In speechless sorrow they watched the gentle parting, which no suffering aggravated. Mr. Middleton, with eyes fixed, stood motionless, as if stricken by a hand invisible to all but him; while Walter, with head inclined, whispered words of love that could only be answered from the spirit-land! The feeble, intermitting pulse failed, the low, scarce audible breathing, ceased—Oscar was gone!

CHAPTER XLIV.

ON the appointed day, at the soft twilight hour, the last sad offices were performed; and Walter, seeking, when all was done, "a place where to weep, entered into his chamber and wept there." Feelings restrained in consideration of Mr. Middleton were no longer to be controlled. Leaning his head on his arms, crossed on the table before him, sorrow subdued him as nothing had ever done. That chill of loneliness, which death only can bring, came over him. As yet, he knew not what relations might exist between Mr. Middleton and himself. Engrossed by the same object of intense concern, their peculiar interests were so merged in a common sorrow that, except the first few words of recognition, no communication strictly personal had passed between them. He had lost a brother; he knew not yet if he had found a father. That brother, too, the truthful friend on whom he had relied, as an unfailing fountain of affection; and he had so few to love him! That friend, whose unselfish nature a trial most unusual had only more perfectly revealed! "Why were such things?"

The great mystery of death met him with a power such as he had never before felt. The strange, the inconceivable change oppressed him. He, who so lately withheld not a thought from him, had now passed into conditions that permitted no intercommunion! Again and again his heart asked the question, so often, so unavailingly asked, "*How*" and "*where*" does he exist? "Is it under the same lineaments as heretofore? Or, as some believe, has his pure nature formed for itself a

'celestial body,' only recognized by those who, in like manner, are clothed upon by indestructible qualities? Does the emancipated spirit move among those bright orbs above us, listening to melodies

Which,
While this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close us in, we can not hear?"

Is he expanding under the teachings of those higher intelligences whose sphere is Progress? Or, conforming to eternal harmonies, has he found his fittest place among those spirits like himself, whose ministration is love?"

Lost in these shadowy imaginings of a better world, he was recalled to the present by a tap at his door, and a servant handed him a letter. It was from Mr. Middleton, and the contents were as follows:

"I choose this mode of communication because unfit, at present, for any other.

"I am too sensible of the delicate forbearance with which you have refrained from all inquiries, to delay the information to which you are entitled. The confidence with which I shall treat you will be the best assurance of my affection, and my sense of your wrongs. Bear with me, then, while I enter into details of my life, without which my conduct can not be explained.

"I was the only child of parents who, seeing in me the representative of an ancient and opulent family, unfortunately proportioned their indulgence to their estimate of my importance. This might not of itself have been fatal, had I not been exposed to a companionship that poisoned my mind and perverted my affections.

"In the event of my death without issue, the inheritance was to pass to a cousin, about two years my senior. This youth, an orphan, poor and dependent, and, having this reversionary claim, interested my parents. Instead

of looking with a jealous eye on one whose position might be supposed to engender an unfriendly feeling toward me, they generously resolved to educate him in such a manner as should fit him for the condition which Providence might possibly assign to him. Acting on this principle, he was invited to our house, and the same care and expense were bestowed on him as on myself. With a good appearance, a natural facility of manner, and more than ordinary intelligence, Warren Talbot soon made himself so acceptable to my parents, that a limited invitation was extended to a permanent arrangement, and he became a member of our family. By a ready adaptation to my tastes or whims, he soon rendered himself indispensable to me. This was the beginning of an evil which parents more guarded would have seen; but I was happy, and they were satisfied.

"Thus passed our boyhood, Talbot maintaining favor with his patrons by the most entire subserviency and plausibility, and obtaining over me a control of which I was unconscious.

"With years and increasing temptations his influence became greater and more dangerous. Every youthful folly he fostered; not by direct advice; he was much too cunning for so false a step. By feeble opposition he provoked my will and stimulated the desire. The act committed, he reminded me of his better counsel, and, at the same time, contrived to shelter me from the effect of my imprudence.

"My father, in compliance with his own wish, purchased an ensign's commission for him. Not that he had any genuine military taste, but he had still less for the laborious study requisite for a learned profession. Subsequently, by favor and good luck, he rose to the rank of captain, when he sold out, having secured for

himself a convenient traveling title, and a certain social position, which answered his purpose.

"My father's death left me master of a fortune, but, unhappily, not of myself. I was still the slave of Talbot; my time, my occupations, my resources, were under his control. Yet so admirably did his instinct of intense selfishness direct him, that, instead of resisting his power, I was flattered by the idea of my generous protection of an unfortunate relative.

"At length a marriage was negotiated for me. It was merely a union of two fine estates. The lady was handsome, well-educated, and intelligent, and I had no conflicting preference. My mother urged it, because it would "increase my influence;" and, in an evil hour for both, two young persons were led to an altar on which happiness and integrity were sacrificed. My poor mother did not survive to see the ruin she had prepared.

"Still, this marriage, unblest as it proved, might have saved me. My wife was truthful and high-minded, and, brief as had been our acquaintance, was really interested in me. It was not long before she learned to distrust Talbot, and to dread his power over me. She ventured to caution me. My pride took the alarm, and he was too acute, and had too much at stake, not to discover the uneasiness between us, and the cause. But, with his usual adroitness, he turned it to his own account. He affected the most candid construction of her motives, and generously withdrew. He absented himself long enough to make his presence indispensable. He was recalled, and more firmly established than ever; and so magnanimous was his deportment, that, but for that instinct by which the truly good penetrate the glosses of the wicked and designing, my wife would herself have believed in him. As it was, she suppressed all remon-

strance; confidence was apparently restored, but he never forgave her.

"I ought to say that, in my delineation of Talbot, I give him and his motives as I now understand them, from my own experience, assisted by the communications of Mr. Grafton, and by papers that have come into my possession. At the period to which I refer, his spell was still upon me. It is now broken. Would to heaven I had sooner seen him in his true colors! I should then have comprehended and loved your mother; who, too proud to solicit my affection, veiled her own under a coldness that repelled me. Thus we lived till your birth. Disappointed in her husband, she turned to her child, with such absorption as, at Talbot's suggestion, appeared an injury to myself; and an event that ought to have drawn us together, only widened the breach. Availing himself of the alienation, he proposed a Continental tour, which your mother, hopeless of resisting his influence, did not oppose, and I left her in the conviction of her entire indifference.

"Arrived in France, a whim took me to travel under a feigned name. Talbot, as usual, approved, and, enlarging on my original idea, which was merely to escape the responsibilities that might attend on my real one—an annoyance to my constitutional reserve—he represented me as *unmarried*. I, simply amused at his improvement, attached no importance to it, and we proceeded on our proposed route. After some time passed in the south of France, Spain, and Italy, we went to Germany. My letters from home were few and brief—little more than assurances of my child's health, and details of such affairs as had been intrusted to my wife. No laments for my absence! no longings for my return! Why, indeed, should such have been? Even were they felt, as I have now reason to believe, how could a proud and neglected wife utter them?

"At a German watering-place we met a family whose manners and accomplishments attracted my attention, and we soon ascertained that their rank was in keeping with their appearance. I can not dwell on this event—the origin at once of my greatest happiness! my bitterest woe! Let it suffice that, in that family I met with the woman who first and forever fixed my love—my lamented Theresa! Even to *you*, son of a much-injured woman, I can not but hold this language, for you have seen her, and, from what she then was, can well imagine her in the flower of youth! still more beautiful in mind and heart than in person.

"At such places acquaintance soon ripens into intimacy. We met daily, hourly; our intercourse of that unceremonious, cordial character, which German simplicity and kindness on her part, and the secret security of a married man on mine, encouraged. Week after week I prolonged my stay; yet it was not till the day of separation drew nigh that I was aware of the suffering it would cost me. To meet this, however, I called up every thing of manly and upright in my nature. Whatever might be my indifference to my wife, or the fascinations of Theresa, I was resolved not to violate duty to the one, nor attempt to secure, even were it possible, the sympathy of the other.

"It would have been strange if Talbot, to whose analysis I had so long been subjected, had not discovered the cause of my disturbance; and equally so had he not turned it to his own ends. Dreading the influence my wife might yet obtain over me, supported by her child, his part was to make himself essential to me. In no way could this be so effectually done as by the unprincipled course he at once devised. Affecting the deepest sympathy with me, lamenting my unfortunate position, he then, with the utmost adroitness, insinuated

'the coldness of my wife, her ample fortune independent of myself, the honorable position which my name and connections afforded her; that, by what the world called "desertion" I took nothing from her but that which she valued least—my person. The only consideration, therefore, was what I myself would sacrifice or gain by following the dictates of my heart. This was for me to decide.'

"But his sophistry did not blind me. I resisted; I did more, I despised it, and quarreled with him outright. In reply to my reproaches of his perfidious counsels he humbled himself, pleaded his devotion to my happiness, and made his peace.

"We were about to depart. My trunks were packed; every preparation made. I went to take leave, and, while I waited the entrance of Theresa, most unhappily overheard a conversation in an adjoining room, between her mother and sister, which left me no doubt that the sentiment I entertained for her was reciprocated. At this moment, when my brain and heart were on fire with the discovery, she appeared. The effort she made to seem calm only confirmed what I had just heard. Prudence, duty, honor, were forgotten! and, instead of the leave-taking for which I had gone, we parted after a mutual avowal of affection, and a solemn promise to meet again, and forever!

"The die was cast. Intoxicated by my passion, I persuaded myself that nothing now remained but to carry out that which destiny had cast upon me. I no longer resisted Talbot. I invited his false and treacherous advice; and, stifling every emotion but love, triumphant love! I surrendered myself into his hands—and the woman I adored, whose purity and unconscious innocence I worshiped, I basely betrayed by an illegal marriage! Animated by a sentiment as strong, and far

more holy than my own, she hesitated at no sacrifice, but consented to go with me immediately to America, reasons for which were easily manufactured by Talbot—the principal, a family rupture, which accounted not only for present separation, but for the perpetual estrangement to follow.

"We came. It would be a treason to Virtue that I will not perpetrate to say that I was happy. There were, indeed, moments of delirious felicity, when I forgot every thing. But even then I paid her an involuntary homage, by rejoicing in the angelic innocence which continually reproached me.

"My assumed name, and the precautions taken by Talbot, sufficiently concealed the place of my retreat.

"He returned to England, and contrived to elude suspicion of his participation in my guilt. He was probably believed by all but my wife. Her conduct was marked by the same dignified forbearance. She did not attempt to penetrate my disguise, nor to follow me with reproaches. I was as much lost to her as if the grave had closed over me. But her child remained, and filled the heart my baseness would have made a desert.

"The devices of Talbot were not yet exhausted. There was still to be perpetrated another villainy, by which to bind me to him. I am willing to believe that the original impulse to the unprincipled act was to relieve me, though, when committed, he quickly saw how available it might be to himself. He knew that, though I did not regret my wife; that, though I had steeled myself against all considerations of country and the duties of my position, there were yet moments when the loss of my son, of my only legitimate offspring, and the contempt and abhorrence in which he would be trained to regard me, weighed on my spirit—when I felt that the ruin I had wrought was to descend on me in the shape I could least

well bear—when paroxysms of remorse rendered me almost a maniac.

"It was in such a moment that he overwhelmed me by telling me that my child was in this country! Under the same sky with myself!

"The conflict into which I was thrown by this communication is not to be described. The outrage to my wife absorbed every other feeling. Every personal consideration vainly struggled against the irreparable, the aggravated injury inflicted on her. But here again the tempter, in the shape of Talbot, was at hand: 'She believed him dead. A careless nurse had left him at play on the border of a stream that watered the grounds—the opportunity had been seized—the child carried off, and his hat cast in the river to suggest that he had fallen in.' Meanwhile, Talbot, not known by her to have been in England at the time, with that facility which sometimes attends the wicked, as if to damn them by success, was bearing the child across the ocean while his mother bewailed him as drowned.

"'But the injury,' he argued, 'to her was temporary. The death of a young child was an ordinary calamity. "Time, the consoler," was already having its effect. The relief to myself was permanent, and the benefit to the child greater than could be estimated. Instead of unlimited indulgence, the victim of a desolate wife's dotting fondness, and then of his own vices, he might here be trained in a wholesome simplicity, and under proper restraint. When these had done their work, he could, if I so chose, be restored to his mother—grateful to the father who had rescued him from the seductions her love would have spread around him. He, Talbot, had, however, he must own, been moved to do what he had done mainly by regard for my happiness.'

"The considerations affecting my son's character had

their influence. I shuddered at a repetition of the weak indulgence that had wrecked my fame and peace, and I submitted to what seemed inevitable. The best arrangement to be made for him was next to be decided. To introduce him into my family was impossible. I must, then, seek elsewhere for the protection and guidance that could not be extended to him under my own roof; for which, in my perplexity and agitation, I declared that I was ready to make any amount of compensation—of course, as I could not encounter the risk of discovery, to pass through Talbot's hands. Here, undoubtedly, the temptation to his subsequent villainy insinuated itself. This I infer from the fact that measures were taken from the first to prevent all direct communication, however secret, between my child and myself. I was deceived as to the name he bore, that of the person to whom he was intrusted, and even the place where he lived. How Talbot had heard of Mr. Grafton I have no means of knowing amid all this mystification. But I can well believe that, to a man like him, the slightest allusion to a person whose character and seclusion were just what he wanted, would not be lost; and, as he never failed in effrontery, his application does not surprise me.

"Talbot kept up his relations with England; I, of course, had none, but such as were necessary to secure and receive my revenues, for which he was my agent. He wandered about, leading, as he said, a bachelor's life; while I, in retirement, knew only of his movements and pursuits what he chose to reveal. From time to time he gave me satisfactory intelligence of my son, and rendered such accounts as were convenient to himself of the disbursements for his benefit.

"To my lamented Oscar succeeded other children more vigorous; but all were taken. These losses touch-

ed us deeply, though differently. To the mother sorrow brought 'airs from heaven,' that breathed into her soul intimations of a better world, where she should rejoin them. To me it was a 'blast from hell,' burning into my spirit a sentence of condemnation and eternal separation.

"At length occurred our visit to Lebanon, where I was to behold my unknown first-born. I remember well the moment of meeting, because the name of 'Walter' struck me. It was that of my son, and I saw with some interest the boy who bore it. Talbot had probably permitted you to retain it in order to secure your childish confidence. But so effectual had been his precautions that no suspicion crossed my mind. Yet, though not bearing a marked resemblance to any one of my family, you were sufficiently of that type to recall it, and I sometimes wondered 'who it was of whom you reminded me!' Other things, however, inspired me with a regard for you, which I would gladly have proved. An opportunity offered, but, like every good purpose of mine, my evil genius was at hand to prevent it. An application on your behalf came from Mr. Grafton. I was ill in bed, and Talbot by my side. I was unable to use my eyes, and he read the letter for me; and on my regretting my inability to reply immediately, he offered to write at my dictation. He appeared to do so. I requested you to make my house your home, while I should use my best endeavors for you. For this he substituted what he pleased. I am not surprised at the reception you gave his letter.

"In addition to the usual remittances designed for you, but as I now know never received, he contrived to obtain money on your account under various pretexts. On one occasion, 'the excellent man' with whom he stated you to be living, 'a country clergyman with a

small salary, had met with what to him was a heavy pecuniary loss;' and he urged so forcibly the making you the medium of relief to him, that I gave him a draft for the amount required. At another time you 'had unwittingly fallen among sharpers, and had been cheated out of nearly a year's allowance. You were a minor, and might thus evade the payment, but the effect on your own mind would be bad: it was, after all, a youthful indiscretion,' etc. Without waiting farther argument I advanced the money.

"By similar devices, and the representations of your naturally increasing wants, you will perceive how important to the vampire was his hold on me. At the same time, you will wonder at a fatuity so gross as hardly to be believed—at such confidence in a man whose loose morality must have been apparent. But you must recollect that, besides an original fatal facility on my part, which these disclosures sufficiently betray, I could not *afford* to distrust him. He had my dearest secret in his keeping. A word or look that suggested a doubt to Theresa would destroy us both! Never, therefore, did man more earnestly desire to believe in the faith of his wife than did I in that of Talbot. Another consideration held me in his power with a sort of fascination. He was the only being to whom I could be true! To the angel who lay in my bosom I was habitually a hypocrite; to this man, the incarnation of falsehood, I could speak the truth!

"It may naturally be asked, as time passed on, what plans I had formed for you? None. With an imbecile indecision—the result of the labyrinth in which I had involved myself—I made no provision for a future I dared not think of, quieting my perplexities by the reflection that, in the event of my death, you must suc-

ceed to a large entailed estate, your claim to which Talbot would establish.

"From Mr. Grafton I learned his design against Miss Meredith. It was in keeping with his whole life. Though incapable of love, he was not insensible to beauty, and he wanted money. He would not, therefore, hesitate to secure her by fraud, confident of powers that had never yet failed him to make his peace afterward. He had the same reliance on these that some men have on their 'star.' This is observable in his conduct toward you, the particulars of which I have obtained from Mr. Grafton. He never doubted his ability to delude you; to keep you in check, as by an unseen hand; to counteract you in the dark; to mystify and to intimidate; and thus to maintain his strange hold upon you. His apparent success justified his presumption. Your first attempt at emancipation he defeated, as he believed, by the substituted letter. He then left New York for a time; and though, on his return, he found you there, the threat that followed you to Ashton seemed to have its effect, for you did not reappear in the city. When he discovered your relations with Mr. Meredith, and you were met by a still sterner mandate, you instantly departed. Again, as Mr. Grafton believes, he crossed your path in the woods of Rosenberg, and again, to all appearance, you retreated, as if conscious of your inability to struggle against him. Thus confirmed in his self-confidence, and always on his guard, I doubt if, by word or look, he ever permitted it to appear to the Merediths that he was conscious such a person as Walter Thornley existed.

"But, triumphant as had been his artifices, they reached their limit. A transaction, not connected with you, excited my suspicion. I asked for an explanation, which was not satisfactory, and we parted, on bad terms. This

was immediately after the death of Theresa. Had she still lived it would not have happened; for, strange to say, she, his victim not less than mine, was a link between us. I would have submitted to be cheated and trampled on forever, rather than rouse him to disturb her repose. I ought, too, in justice, to say that, such was his reverence for her—the only pure sentiment in his breast—that he would unwillingly have inflicted misery on her.

"This restraint removed, his tactics were now changed; and, perceiving my growing distrust, he resolved to leave me to my fate, and propitiate you and your mother. To this course he was the more impelled by a letter from England, threatening him with disgraceful disclosures, unless a certain sum, long due, were paid by a given time. This letter, found in his port-folio, had no signature except initials, to me unintelligible. I mention this fact, apparently unimportant, from its bearing on what afterward occurred. He resolved on an immediate return to England, there to restore you to your mother, as having been cared for and saved by himself, out of which he was, of course, to make his profit; charging me, no doubt, with your abduction, and the neglect in which you were subsequently left. I, meanwhile, ignorant of these allegations, and, if suspecting his previous frauds, unable to prove them, could neither defend myself nor inculpate him. This move had plainly been his 'strong card,' to be resorted to on any emergency.

"It may, perhaps, be wondered why a man so unscrupulous had not played a deeper game—you only being between him and my estate, and you in his power. To me this is easily explained. His course had been shaped by circumstances, not an originally concerted plan; and, while continually entangling himself more and more in falsehood and depredation, it is evident that he expect-

ed, not only by his never-failing ingenuity to escape detection, but to dupe the son as successfully as he had the father. But, more than this, Talbot was a coward. There is no trickery of which he was not capable. He was a *manceuvrer en amateur*. As in art to an artist, so, to him, in morals, 'the curved line was the line of beauty.' But he had not the courage for great crime. His was the temper of a subtle scoundrel, not the nerve of a relentless villain.

"And now comes the crisis of our fate. The judgment of God overtook him when he felt most confident of success! and Mr. Grafton came to lay before me documents which implicated me, without clearly defining to what extent. Of our interview you have heard what was necessary at the time. I can not go over moments of such humiliation. I admitted, without hesitation, the parentage of a son, of whom any father might be proud, but I entreated to be spared details, and an open acknowledgment, till Oscar was in a condition to bear it. All I asked was time. Meanwhile, I wished you to be with him, to strengthen the attachment he already felt, and thus to reconcile him, in some degree, to the disclosure that must come. I little thought the match was even then applied to a train that must explode to his destruction!

"Among Talbot's papers a sealed letter was found, addressed to a person in England, whose name was unknown to me. Not conceiving myself to have a right to read or withhold what did not appear to have any connection with myself, without suspicion or reflection I sent it to its destination. Thus my own hand discharged the engine leveled at my peace! The letter proved to be to the very person whose threat had precipitated Talbot's decision. He had so often foiled the man by promises, that he saw it necessary, in order to obtain delay,

to give him an assurance that would satisfy him. Not doubting your acquiescence in his plan, and sure that he should follow his letter immediately, he ventured on the bold step of confiding to him your existence, and your supposed name, with his own pretended claims upon you—just what, without committing himself, would secure the forbearance of his creditor. The same ship that carried the letter conveyed the news of Talbot's death, and the man, deprived of farther reliance on him, immediately communicated its contents to your mother.

"The appearance of Mr. Bolton is now explained. I have only to add to these details—all, in some sort, necessary—that your delicacy to myself, and your devotion to your unfortunate brother, have touched me beyond the power of words to express. All that I can do for your happiness shall be done. Personally, I can not add to it. Leave me, therefore, if you would be happy. I am but a weight to drag you down to misery! Even while I write, I am taught that avenging Heaven turns aside every blessing that might fall on me! A letter just put into my hands informs me that, on the intelligence of my poor Theresa's death, her only brother, Baron von Ehrenfelt, has proposed to adopt her son. He has no child, and his name and fortune are offered to Oscar! thus, generously shielding from disgrace, and loss of position, my innocent boy! Nor is this the first strong expression of the love he bore his sister. A mere child at the time she left Germany, he did not forget her. About eighteen months since, being in England, a rumor reached him of her actual position. The villainous fact was made sufficiently clear to his farther investigations, and he instantly took passage for this country, in order to find and rescue her. Here, again, Talbot interposed, but this time to save me. He was a fellow-passenger. He soon discovered Ehrenfelt, and in-

sinuated himself into his confidence, his own share in the transaction, of course, unsuspected. He was only known as my connection, and, from long intimacy with me, well fitted to be an adviser; and such were his representations of his sister's happiness, of our mutual devotion, of her unconsciousness, and consequent innocence, of the wretchedness and wide-spread disgrace that must follow, should he interfere, that Ehrenfelt, overcome by his specious arguments, yielded to expediency; and even forebore an attempt to see her. At the same time, Talbot warned me of my danger. I fled with my treasures to the south, and Ehrenfelt returned to Europe.

"Oscar is beyond the reach of reproach. But can I fail to see in this aggravation of my loss, this unavailing provision to soften the blow I had prepared for him, the sentence that has gone forth against me? I am the accursed thing—touch me not lest you die! I am the deadly tree, under whose shade happiness can not live; whose bitter fruit has been guilt and woe; whose wounds distill poison; and from which even the blessed dews of heaven, descending, are converted into drops that scald as they fall. Be warned, and leave me!

"Do not, Walter, regard this as a burst of passion, wrung from me in the exasperation of the moment. It is the conviction of my reason. My conduct must be so repellent to a nature truthful as yours, as to create a barrier which even duty can not surmount; and I am still too proud to owe to compassion what I can not command from respect. I feel that the conflict of my life has made its impression on my health. What of time remains to me I would make, in some small degree, an atonement for the past. You need not be told that your first duty is to your mother. My wish, so far as I have a right to express one, is that you hasten to her.

She and you must decide your future plans. She will, of course, retain you in England, and form for you such connections as will, I trust, promote your happiness. My resources are at your command in any way that you shall suggest.
GODFREY CECIL."

The humble, broken, yet proud spirit that spoke in this letter, affected Walter with a contrariety of emotions: condemnation that he could not but feel; pity that he did not attempt to repress; indignation and wonder at such a tissue of folly, selfishness, rashness, and crime! Yet he could not be unmindful of the constant, though fruitless efforts of his father for his benefit. One thought, however, absorbed all others. "If sympathy were ever called for, it was," he reflected, "when the soul, conscious of wrong, sought the right—when, sore in the war of passion, remorse, and pride, it required healing—when, in its utter self-abasement, its faith in the reality of virtue needed to be quickened. But he would not, could not write!" Starting from his chair, he hastened from the room, and ventured to appear uncalled in his father's presence.

There it is scarcely well to follow him. A parent humbling himself before his child—entreaties for forgiveness mingling with self-denunciations—his whole heart exposed and prostrate—is too painful and too sacred to be trifled with by inadequate description. It is enough to say that the generous purpose of Walter prevailed; that so tenderly, yet so uprightly, did he deal with his father, and so entirely did he convince him of his filial sentiment, that confidence was established between them.

"It was his own desire," he assured him, "to be guided by him in all things." To this he added a request to defer the recognition of their relationship, till his return from England.

"There has been," he said, "enough of agitation. Let us be spared at present from curious eyes and tongues. It is sufficient that *we* have no reserves—that *we* understand each other. So far as the world has any concern with the matter, let it make itself known with as little circumstance as may be. Six months, or a year hence, when Walter Cecil shall appear, the unknown, obscure Walter Thornley will have been forgotten; or the two will only be identical to those who have an interest in the individual."

A pressure of the hand, and a grateful look from his father, expressed his acquiescence.

CHAPTER XLV.

A FORTNIGHT had elapsed since Walter's last visit to the Oaks. In the mean time, through Mr. Grafton, he had learned of Eleanor's grief and dejection, which that gentleman, imputing entirely to a cause which only in part explained it, and misunderstanding the relations that had subsisted between him and Eleanor, conceived it well to represent in as strong language as truth would permit. "It would," he reflected, "effectually damp any lingering hope, if such still existed, and better nerve him for the new career on which he was to enter; leaving his mind free to gratify the wishes that his mother might form for him, and thus enable him to promote the happiness of a parent to whose wrongs so much was due."

On the occasion of Walter's last hasty call, he had made it so evident to Eleanor that his only wish was to see Mr. Grafton, as to pain and surprise her. Pride, however, came to her relief.

"Well," thought she, "if he prefers, for some unexplained reason, to withdraw even his friendship, so be it. He shall see that I regret it as little as himself."

But the sorrow called forth by the death of Oscar—natural, unconscious, and therefore freely manifested—unnerved her. It was the first breach made in the youthful circle—her first view of the Destroyer! and her susceptible nature fainted and shivered under the revelation. "Ah! who does not remember the time when the stern fact of mortality broke in upon the gay fancies of youth!" It was not strange that emotions so strong should have been misinterpreted, nor that the

sadness that succeeded, however compounded with other feelings, should be referred to the same cause.

Walter, on whose heart lay the trust that Oscar had imposed in regard to Eleanor, had delayed to discharge it in the desire to obtain the calmness and self-possession required. But circumstances pressed upon him. The voyage to England was decided; his preparations were nearly completed; and, having no longer time nor excuse for procrastination, he ordered his horse, and, mounting him with somewhat the feeling of going into mortal conflict, turned his course to the Oaks.

Eleanor had been passing the morning with her aunt, when Mr. Grafton entered with a note from Mr. Middleton. Drawing his wife a little apart, they conversed a few moments in a suppressed tone, Eleanor unheeding till the name of Thornley fell on her ear, followed by the words, "Sails for England in a few days." The matter of the conversation was evidently private; nor could she, if permitted, then have asked a question. Her only resource was to fly; and, shutting herself in her own room, tears that pride could not restrain burst forth.

"Yes," she exclaimed, "he is going, perhaps, forever! and not a line, not a word of regret, nor even of information. How is he estranged! To England! What can take him there? Business of Mr. Middleton's? But no matter. We, his first friends, are now nothing; this strange, disagreeable Mr. Middleton every thing," added she, petulantly. Then, her frank and generous nature more grieved than offended, she continued, "I could not so treat a friend. Where I had once given my confidence I could not withdraw it without cause."

Phyllis tapped at the door, and was reluctantly admitted.

"I see a gen'elman ridin' up trou' de trees, missis. I

t'ink dat ar same gen'elman com'd here while ago—Mr. Torn'y t'ink dey call 'im."

"Oh," cried Eleanor, "I can not—I will not see him now. 'Tis impossible," she continued, catching a view of her face in an opposite mirror—"impossible!"

Never waiting for second thoughts, Phyllis, as usual, rushed down stairs, and met Walter alighting at the door with an inquiry for Miss Meredith.

A country-bred girl, untrained as yet to the polite qualifications by which those better taught know how to soften the refusal of city dames to shine upon their worshipers, Phyllis dropped a courtesy, and answered without circumlocution.

"My missis say, sar, she won't come down."

Walter, with a look of surprise, inquired if she were ill.

"No, sar," replied she, with much composure; "she bery well—on'y she say she don't want to see you, sar."

"Did she say so?"

"Sartin, sar," replied the affronted little *femme de chambre*. "I neber tell no lies."

"Does she see any body?"

"Yes, sar; be sure. All de gen'elmen and ladies what come."

"I only, then, am excluded," thought he, and but for the errand on which he came, he would have immediately departed.

Not choosing to trust the accuracy of Phyllis with a verbal message, he wrote on a card, "My visit is one of necessity; be so good as to see me for a few moments;" and, committing this to her, waited in no very patient mood an answer.

In a moment she returned, and was leading him to the parlor; but, hearing voices, and his interview requiring to be private, he entered the open door of the study, saying he would await her mistress there.

Eleanor, scarce conscious of the words that had escaped her, and little imagining them to be reported to Walter, saw only in the line addressed to her the same pertinacious avoidance of any personal attention. Displeasure at this lack of common courtesy overcame other feelings, and she felt at once quite strong enough to meet him.

She descended, and, at the foot of the stairs, met Phyllis with an apology, "De gen'elman would go in de wrong room," pointing to the study; "no fault of mine, missis."

"Rather any where else," thought Eleanor; "but if he can bear it so will I." And she entered, so calm and cold that, but for the traces of recent tears, she might have seemed incapable of feeling.

Under this exterior, however, Walter, though mistaking the cause, saw and felt the sorrow, and the momentary pique was gone. Approaching her with a softened though still a constrained manner, he extended his hand; hers trembled, but she permitted him to lead her to a chair, and he took one by her side.

"Forgive me," said he, "if I appear importunate. I would not obtrude myself on you, but that a sacred duty requires it."

Eleanor looked in silence and surprise, inwardly repeating, "Importunate! obtrude! What language to me!"

"And, now that I am permitted to see and speak to you, I scarcely know how to introduce a subject so painful to us both. Strange that we should feel such reluctance to name those most dear to us, when death has come between us!"

No word from Eleanor smoothed the way, and he continued, after a pause, in which his troubled look only added to her perplexity.

"Oscar," at length he said, "may I not say *our* Oscar?" and again he paused, with a fixed, inquiring glance, till, feeling herself called on to reply, she said, in a sad but quiet voice, "Certainly; why should you doubt it?"

Her calmness reassured him; and, taking Oscar's letter from his pocket, he read that portion which related to herself.

She listened without a word; but the varying expression of her truthful face, in which astonishment, pain, and wounded delicacy were reflected, was more eloquent than words.

"This can not be new to you," said Walter, in his turn surprised and perplexed. "Your own feelings must have prepared you, in some degree, for a communication so natural under the circumstances. Perhaps there may be somewhat left unsaid at a moment of great bodily weakness—allow me to be more explicit." And he proceeded to explain the silence of Oscar; to enlarge on the love that had rendered it so difficult; the honor that could alone have enabled him to maintain it. He would have said even more, but Eleanor, having recovered from the first effect of a revelation so little expected, interrupted him.

"You have discharged your trust. That is enough, so far as you are concerned. For myself I must be allowed a few words. I can not tell to what extent you may impute inconsistency to me, but my own conscience acquits me. I have never felt, nor intentionally manifested, any thing for your friend that a sister might not feel for a brother, whose peculiarly delicate nature called for more than common sympathy. My first feeling at this communication, I will own, was displeasure at being thus mistaken and addressed—but it is passed. If the delusion were a happy one to him—whose fate I truly lament—I do not complain. To him it matters not now

—and as little to me; for, if the living condemn me, my own heart does not.”

Walter did not attempt a reply. Never had he more deeply felt her truth, dignity, and generosity; but the sentiment could find no expression. No longer restrained by consideration for another—friendship and love no longer in conflict—the charge of fickleness and levity which his heart had secretly brought against her now withdrawn—the hope of earlier days would not be denied. Yet the uninviting manner of Eleanor repressed all utterance. He tried to speak, but his words were indistinct. And she, little propitiated by his earnest representation of the love of another, rose, and said, coldly, “From the short conference you requested, your time must be much occupied; pray, do not let me longer detain you.”

All the pride of Walter would, at any other time, have risen at this speech; but now, gentler feelings were in the ascendant.

With increasing agitation, and in a voice tremulous with emotion, while his eye sought the depths of hers, he exclaimed, “You must not leave me thus—misapprehension shall not part us! Dearest Eleanor, may I, dare I open to you a heart that has never ceased to be yours?”

Pride, wounded affection, displeasure, at these few words, fled as by magic. She started, the blood rushed to her cheek; a doubtful look for a moment seemed to repel him; she half-resisted the movement that sought again to resear her; a word of rebuke was ready to fall from her lips; but they melted into a smile that gave the permission he asked.

As he proceeded, however, it was apparent to her upright mind that he was transgressing the limit they ought to observe, and, rising hastily, she said, “I can

hear no more. I did, indeed, desire to be assured of your friendship. You have satisfied me; I shall never again distrust it. Let us part for the present; it is best.”

Walter, it is hoped, will be forgiven, if he, after the manner of men, seeking to be loved for his own sake, maintained, even at this moment, his incognito.

“Eleanor,” said he, “you once believed in me, when honor compelled me to be silent; believe me now, when I dare to speak. Your parents, as I know from their own declaration, desire chiefly your happiness; and, if assured that I shall bring you neither poverty nor disgrace, they will not reject me. My present condition warrants this assertion. Others might offer you a more distinguished position, and ‘wealth beyond the dream of avarice;’ but, if love is better than riches and honor, where is the treasure larger than that which my heart has ‘garnered up’ for you? Will you cast it from you?”

Her beaming eyes, full of things unutterable, answered for her. Her extended hand grasped in his, pressed to his lips and heart, sealed the compact, while a sweet, low voice was heard to say, “Your love, and the sanction of my parents, is all I ask.”

Ah! Walter, did not your conscience smite you that you had dared to apply a touch-stone to that true young heart? Or, rather, did not a thrill of joy, exquisite, if selfish, acknowledge this frank avowal that *you*, without fortune or distinction, unknown and obscure, that you, simply Walter Thornley, were the “star of her destiny?”

What followed in that *tête-à-tête*, or, to use the more beautiful expression of the Italians, *quattr’occhi*, may be easily divined—the same review of the past, the same tracing to its first spring in their hearts of that stream which “never did run smooth,” the same lingering on moments of bliss, the same explanations of doubts and

fears, of circumstances so incomprehensible at the time, yet so easily understood in the light of out-spoken affection; those little mysteries which serve to draw still closer the meshes of love—all, in short, that so many have felt, and which, therefore, need not be told.

At length they parted, with many delays, and much "sweet sorrow."

Phyllis, ever on the alert when her young mistress was concerned, had taken up her position in the hall, in order to open the door to the "gen'elman," whose visit, judging from his reception, she decided would not be very long. It was so protracted, however, that curiosity, more than propriety, held her to her post; nor did she fail to make her own inferences. "Well," thought she, as she finally closed the door after him, "dey don't look, comin' out dat ar' room, as dey did 'gwine in, dat's for sart'in."

CHAPTER XLVI.

As Eleanor retired to her room at night, Phyllis presented herself, with a large packet, brought, as she said, by Mr. Middleton's "sarvent, and on'y for young missis' own hands."

Her happiness too great for any addition, Eleanor's first sensation was alarm, and she received it with some trepidation. A letter from Walter relieved her. It inclosed one from Mr. Middleton to himself, which ran as follows:

"MY DEAR WALTER,—I thank you for the confidence reposed in me, frank and manly as yourself. Nothing could, at this moment, give me such satisfaction as the information in regard to Miss Meredith.

"You urge, in so far as she and her family are concerned, the necessity of departing from the reserve you had proposed. This is obvious. And I must, in justice to myself, say that I had already determined not to avail myself of your delicate consideration, though, at the moment of its suggestion, I was too much touched to discuss, or to resist it. I prefer that the truth be known at once. When the lives and happiness of those dearest to me were at stake, I was a coward. Alone, I can bear all that I deserve. The contumely of the world, much as at one time it would have stung me, will now fall on a heart so wrung with sorrow, so penetrated by remorse, as to be nearly insensible to what man can say. Make what use you please of my written communication to you.

G. C."

With this preface Eleanor opened the packet—the “communication” alluded to—of which Walter’s letter authorized the perusal.

With what feelings it was read—with what mingled indignation and compassion on the one hand, and rejoicing, free from all selfish considerations, on the other, may be imagined.

An early hour the next morning brought Walter, who, after an interview with Mr. Grafton, was introduced by him to Mr. and Mrs. Meredith as bearing a name, having a position, and, moreover, preferring a suit, which altogether astonished them. The courtesy with which he was heard and accepted can not be doubted. Yet it is but justice to say that the estimate they had formed of him, under circumstances so different, entered largely into the feeling with which their assent was accorded.

Mr. Grafton, of course, was delighted; his wife scarcely less so; it only remained to be assured of the approbation of Mr. Lawrence, and Mrs. Meredith forthwith asked admittance to his room.

She found him in a favorable mood. He listened with complacency to the picture she drew of youthful love, honorable forbearance, constancy, etc.; but when she proceeded to the strange turn of fortune by which they had met their reward, enlarging on the wealth and social position that had so unexpectedly been disclosed, and then to the startling facts connected therewith, accompanied by ill-advised though well-intended expletives, of “poor Mr. Middleton!” his “trials,” “unfortunate temptations,” “peculiar circumstances,” etc., Mr. Lawrence’s countenance darkened.

Striking his cane violently on the ground, he exclaimed, “Janet, I’m ashamed of you! You have a right to marry your daughter as you please, and, should I approve or not, of course you’ll do so. I love the girl,

and shall love her, let her marry whom she may. I’ve had enough of crossing hearts. If you had given her to young Thornley, as you called him, an obscure country lad, however surprised, I should have said nothing; nay, shouldn’t have been as much surprised as you may think. I liked him from the first; he is a manly, handsome fellow; has so much the air of a gentleman that I wondered where the devil he got it from! But don’t come pow-wow-ing over me about his father. He is a rascal—an infernal rascal!”

“Dear, dear papa,” interposed Mrs. Meredith.

“I tell you he is, and you ought to be ashamed to have any mercy on such a fellow! What! desert his wife and child! impose on a very angel, as you call her, by a false marriage! carry her off from her friends! and then you to pity him! to contrive excuses for him! nay, even rejoice in a connection with him! I tell you, Janet, a woman’s feeling ought to teach you better. Let Eleanor marry his son; he has not had the bringing of him up, and therefore he may deserve her; but don’t expect me to be proud of such a marriage if his pedigree counted back to Japhet, and he could cover the State of New York with gold pieces! No, nor to clap palms with him, and to insult truth and honor by a pretended cordiality with such a man! Let him keep out of my way—that’s best for both of us.”

Mrs. Middleton was so taken aback that she could frame no reply; and while she hesitated, her father continued:

“I tell you, Janet, you women have much to answer for. There would be fewer broken hearts if you frowned such villains down. All laws, civil and religious, can not do as much for your sex as you can do for yourselves.”

His daughter, in despair of a more patient hearing, re-

tired to seek Eleanor. "Mr. Middleton was that day to be introduced to his future daughter-in-law, and to such of her family as he had not yet seen. The absence of Mr. Lawrence at such a time could not fail to be remarked. What was to be done?"

"I will speak to him," said Eleanor; and, with a fearless step, she ventured where no one else would have gone just at that moment.

On entering she threw her arm round his neck, and then, sinking on her knee before him, said, in a low, reverential voice, "Your blessing, dear grandpapa!"

Raising her up, and pressing her to him, she caught a few words, partly in his mother tongue, always to him the most tender; and *kindsdogter! het vaderlijk dak!* told how affectionately he commended to Heaven his "granddaughter," the joy of "the paternal roof."

"You will forgive me now, dear grandpapa—won't you—for crossing your wishes? You see I couldn't help it," she added, with a deprecating smile.

"No, no, my *lammetje* (little lamb), you could not, to be sure. I have long forgiven all that, and love you better than ever."

"And won't you love Walter, too, a little, by degrees?"

"To be sure—to be sure; I do already, but don't ask me to like his father, Nelly."

"I shall not, sir. With your character you can take but one view of his conduct. But you know, grandpapa, that from my relation to him it will be my duty to suppress feelings that would be painful to his son; and even to try, by obtaining some hold on his affections, to influence him favorably. You know, dear grandpapa, the mercy we hope for we must practice."

"Yes, yes; I can not deny that; and if any body can make him a better man, 'tis you, Leentje; and Gertrude,

I suppose she, of course, will think, the greater the sinner, the louder the call to give him a lift. But don't, I command you, disgrace yourselves and dishonor virtue by pitying and cosseting such a fellow! Tell him plain, wholesome truths. If he's worth saving, that'll do him most good. Such a patient as that must not be fed upon sugar-plums, nor handled with gloves. He requires thorough treatment. If there's any reaction in the system, it will bear it; and if not, let him die and be—"

Eleanor cut short the forthcoming malediction by saying, "You remember Captain Talbot, sir?"

"To be sure I do—the puppy! But they tell me he's dead, so I shall not waste breath on him."

"He was a great deal more wicked than you supposed, sir. I have a sketch of him here—a curious specimen of human nature! May I read it to you? He and Mr. Middleton were relatives."

"I dare say; a brace of rascals! A pleasant family to marry you into!" growled the old gentleman, in great disgust. "But read on; let's have it."

Eleanor obeyed. A change of feeling was soon apparent in Mr. Lawrence's countenance. Contempt was overpowered by indignation, but mingled, nevertheless, with interest; while his contracting brow, his heightened color, his cane—the unerring exponent of his emotions—expressed the effect of the narrative. Occasionally an interjection or an anathema broke from him. He would rise from his chair and instantly reseal himself, as if bodily motion were necessary to relieve the intense wrath that boiled within. The vices of Talbot were just those most abhorrent to him. The conduct of Mr. Middleton lost its pre-eminence in evil. A new emotion succeeded. He was more weak than wicked—himself a victim as well as a destroyer. Some compassionate throbs were felt. Then, as the tale, darkened by death and sorrow,

drew to a conclusion—when remorse and self-abasement alone were expressed, with no vain attempt at excuse or justification—he could stand it no longer.

Throwing himself back in his chair, he exclaimed, "Oh, good Lord, what poor creatures we are! Lead us not into temptation, for who can stand? There, there, child! go away. I have need to thank Heaven, on my knees, that I have not been left to myself. Lie and cheat, I never could; *they* were not my besetting sins. But my anger has been fierce, and my wrath has been cruel, and injustice and suffering have clung to my skirts. With such passions, what might I not have been left to do? If a saving hand has been held out to me, should I not do the like to another? Show mercy, ye that hope to be forgiven! Go, go, child! leave me a while to myself."

Eleanor kissed his hand and withdrew in silence.

When Mr. Middleton called, Mr. Lawrence, unasked, requested an introduction to him.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE visit to England was imperative—not more urged by Mrs. Cecil than desired by Walter himself. The image of his mother impressed on his infancy had never been effaced; and he earnestly wished to testify his reverence for her, and to make such arrangements for the future as should satisfy the various claims now to be considered. But to tear himself from Eleanor, at the very moment she had given herself to him, was more than he could bear.

An immediate marriage was the only way to reconcile these conflicting interests. Accordingly, on one of the finest of October mornings, at about eleven o'clock, carriages were observed to stop in Broadway, in front of Trinity Church. As all notice had been guarded against, there was little danger of intrusion; and if any curious loungers did follow those who alighted and passed within, their presence was unobserved. If such there were, they would have seen, fronting the officiating clergyman, a youthful pair with tender and reverent mien; a gentleman in mourning garments, not so sad as his pale face; happy parents, though giving away their daughter; friends scarce less loving than parents; and, as the head and crowning honor of the group, an old gentleman in the elaborate costume of a by-gone time, but whose hale, handsome face gave no indication of infirmity; his hands crossed on his gold-headed cane, his figure slightly inclining, his eyes occasionally cast upward, as if in prayer and benediction. The service was soon over; the party left the church and re-entered their car-

riages. Walter and Eleanor Cecil were one and indivisible.

Those were not the days of bridal tours—a fashion originating in a foreign country, in a class by which escape from conventionality was felt as a privilege—glad to find in elegant retirement, or some rustic retreat, freedom to be natural and happy. Such fashion had not then been imported and caricatured here, where it was not wanted. Those who might be as private and undisturbed as they pleased at home, did not then rush to steam-boats, rail-roads, and public places; and delicate young women did not run away from the “sheltering grove of their own kindred,” to make themselves a mark for impertinence and curiosity. The hymeneal torch was not then extinguished as soon as lighted, but people staid at home and kept it burning.

There were, to be sure, customs and ceremonies sometimes rather tiresome, and a routine that wealth and station were expected to observe. In some places, among those of Dutch descent, on the wedding-night, the doors of the house were besieged by a mob of children, who expected that their good wishes for the *vrolijk bruid* (merry bride) should be responded to in a shower of cakes, which she, in a Dutch doggerel, was requested to “throw out.” Reversing the present order, the wedding gifts, few and simple, were conferred by the bride on her special attendants. There was no bridal table spread with costly offerings, requiring the presence of a police-officer to guard it; and, above all, there were no articles, *hired for the occasion*, inscribed as the gifts of “affectionate friends,” but designed only to swell the glittering bubble of the moment, and then to be returned to the shops and show-cases whence they had been taken *pro tem*. For three mornings or more, the happy bridegroom, in exchange for the congratulations of his friends, gave wine and punch;

and, for as many evenings, the bride, supported by her nymphs, received a succession of admiring guests. But in all this there was enough that was hearty and personal to compensate for a little effort.

In the case of our young friends, these usages were, for obvious reasons, dispensed with, much, however, to the regret of the old gentleman.

The counsel, “whenever you have nothing to say, say nothing,” is never more worthy of observance than in the winding up of a story, which, perhaps, to some, may have little worth the telling. The reader, if such there be, shall not much longer be detained.

A week has elapsed since the Church bestowed its sanction. A gallant ship is spreading her sails; the wind is fair, farewells are exchanged, and Mr. and Mrs. Cecil, from the deck of the “Lovely Nan,” are making parting signals to those on shore, who linger to catch the last wave of his hat, and the last flutter of her scarf. And now, if any one would know in what their friends found consolation, it will appear in the following letter from Mrs. Grafton:

“Rosenberg, January 10, 18—.

“DEAREST ELEANOR,—Your letter, just received, announcing your safe arrival, excited feelings you can well understand. We had been cautioned not to expect tidings under three months; you may imagine, therefore, how welcome they were, a week earlier than the time prescribed.

“Your touching account of your reception and of your admirable new mother delights us. But, amid all the love lavished on you and the novelties that meet you, I see that you sigh for accounts of home, which I hasten, therefore, to give. I have written once—a dolorous letter; how could it be otherwise, with our hearts

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thrown into shadow by the withdrawal of our sun? In that I informed you of our return here.

"I do not know what papa would have done after all our recent excitement, had it not been that another wedding was to be cared for. Accordingly, preparations were immediately made, and on the largest scale, for that of dear Phil and Priscilla. 'This time,' he said, 'he was resolved to have it in his own way; he would have no more "hugger-mugger" marriages; nothing done in a corner, as if people were ashamed of it.' Not only all the neighboring gentry were invited, but every one who, as friends of the bride or her family, could expect or desire to be included. Dear papa! he was, as usual, transparent; his humility a pretty sure gauge of his pride, implying, plainer than by words, 'Let no man dare to say I am not satisfied.'

"Of course, you know, the service had to be performed by our dominie, a prelude to Priscilla being 'cut off from her people.' But for this she was prepared; and, having been only 'born in the meeting,' as they say, there was no sacrifice of principle. She begged, however, to retain her dress, and in this Phil concurred. 'He should not,' as he said, 'know her as his own, if she were attired as one of the world's people; besides, it became her better than any other.' How they may settle it hereafter I can not say, but at present she retains 'dress and address;' and, for my own part, I like both. They are so in keeping with her character I should regret to see them renounced. But papa was resolved that she should be as well arrayed as could be made to comport with her style; so your mother was directed by him to send the prettiest Quaker dress that could be devised, and, certainly, Priscilla did look lovely in it!

"I was, however, more concerned for herself than her dress, fearing lest a circle more numerous and distin-

guished than she was ever before in, should overpower her. I might have spared my anxiety. It was curious to see how extremes meet. How the renunciation of 'man-worship,' and all the vanities of life, produced the effect at which artificial training aims—for no high-bred lady could have been more calm. Her pale cheek, and an occasional tremor of her lip, betrayed the emotion natural to the occasion, but there was no disturbing sense of inferiority.

"The prettiest thing, however, I have not told you. The day before the wedding we were sent for into papa's room, where it appeared that Priscilla had been desired to meet us. Addressing himself to her, he said, 'You may remember, my child, I once promised you a marriage portion, provided you conformed to the condition I proposed. Do you recollect it?'

"'I do,' she replied.

"'If I have substituted other conditions,' he continued, with a smile, 'I am virtually bound by the same promise, if you accept them. Here is the fulfillment.'

"It was a deed of the Mill Farm to her and her heirs forever! Now, was not this like papa? It was removing her parents from a condition of more or less dependence on him, and placing their comfort and happiness in her hands. But this was not the end.

"Her heart seemed too full for speech, but, when able to reply, she said, 'This may not be.'

"'Why not, you foolish girl?' said he, impatiently; 'why not?'

"'For the reason that it is taking thy inheritance from thine own blood to give it to strangers. Nay, hear me. I may prove faithless or weak, and bestow it on my kindred, which is not thy intention. Put not temptation in my way. And, furthermore, it hath a show of distrust of thy grandson's good-will to my parents,

which I know of a certainty will never fail. Give it, therefore, to him, as is fitting,' and, with an appealing look, she turned to us.

"I trembled for her, knowing how much it displeases papa to have his generosity thrown back on his hands. But her plain truth always finds an entrance into his heart; and, when Mr. Grafton said, 'I think, sir, Priscilla is right,' he only laid his hand caressingly on her head, and replied, 'Well, well, be it so.' So thus runs the deed.

"Another thing, which, though small, will interest you. I had felt a little apprehensive lest the proper feeling should not be manifested on the part of the servants. But as in the Shandy family 'nothing ever seemed to work in the ordinary way,' so it proves wherever Priscilla is concerned. Instead of betraying any thing of the negro preference for the 'quality,' they were all true to Philip—Aunt Flore, of course, giving the key-note.

"'Massa Phil,' she said, 'a rale gen'elman! Didn't bring no strange lady to be missus ober dem, but one mose like one ob de fam'ly; grow'd up dere; teached by Miss Gitty, wid all her ways.'

How much her tendency to the rising sun had to do with this, I do not care to inquire; but, I doubt not, much more her real affection. To this Pomp replied with a wave of his hand and an air of superior information.

"'Ezactly so, Aunt Flore; an' I would furdur obsarve on dis 'markable 'casion, as de dominie says—fusly, for de sake ob mysef, and, secon'ly, for de sake ob yelly, dat my own 'pinion is, dat Quakers is allers friends to de colored people.'

"Our own affairs are advancing to a satisfactory conclusion. Our nice little cottage will be completed by your return. You remember the pretty shaded walk at the bottom of the garden at Rosenberg: through that

we shall communicate with the old mansion. On the farther side papa has given us ground enough to carry out all our small purposes of arbor and horticulture. The 'little gray hermitage,' as Mr. Grafton calls it, that sheltered him and Walter so many years, and to which both are much attached, is to be loaned rent-free to the joint occupancy of their friends Damie and Jed, who are to set up housekeeping together, but on the platonic platform. At first, I understand that she objected to the copartnership, on the ground that 'folks would talk;' but Mr. Grafton quieted her scruples by reminding her that 'she and he had lived much on the same terms for a long while, and that he had never heard that the reputation of either had suffered.' All that is required of them is to keep the place in decent order, which, as ideas differ on this point, I see will never be done without *douceurs* from the gentlemen, and occasional visits from you and me.

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