

DANGERFIELD'S REST;

OR,

BEFORE THE STORM.

A Novel

OF AMERICAN LIFE AND MANNERS.

The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
Make instruments to scourge us.

SHAKSPEARE.

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DANGERFIELD'S REST.

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CHAPTER I.

WHOEVER had been in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, on Friday the twenty-fourth of August, 185—, or more strictly, had been at a point equidistant from Montauk Point and Cape Clear—might have seen the R. M. Steamship *Assyria* bowling westward as fast as her powerful engines and a free breeze on her quarter would allow. It was drawing toward the close of one of those sultry days which at sea bring universal lassitude, and heighten the reaction of spirits and vivacity when the fresh evening air stirs in pursuit of the falling sun. There had been little sea running, but a long velvety swell, the remote effect of distant gales, which, in the absence of wind, so often usurps the place of a more perfect calm, had swept slowly by, unbroken, save where the sharp black bow of the gallant vessel dashed through its sullen bulk, throwing high in air her tireless precursor of glittering foam. Now, however, as the sun neared the horizon, the rippling catpaws became more and more frequent, the cooling puffs from the south-east became more and more steady, and as his lower limb touched the blue and distant line, the *Assyria* was

rushing through the water at the rate of sixteen knots an hour.

Thirty minutes before, the spacious quarter-deck of the steamship was silent enough, and, indeed, all but deserted; but now it suddenly became the scene of great gaiety and animation. The gentlemen left their wine and the dinner table, the ladies no longer sought shelter from the burning sun. Many were scattered in knots laughing and chatting, some promenading in couples, a few solitary ones reading or gazing wistfully across the traversed waste astern. A motley company indeed! People of all ages, degrees, and nationalities. A listener could catch half a dozen languages in a breath, and in some of the languages as many dialects. Here were cockneys abusing their h's and w's and Yankees ridiculing the vulgarism in fearful nasal drawls; young Englishmen of breeding with baggy clothes and easy manners; youths from Harvard in closer guise, and that peculiar precision of speech and manner which tells unerringly of the Western "modern Athens." Jewish bankers and money changers, with that air, the mixture of obsequiousness and insolence, which suggests the memory of oppression blended with a conviction of the power of money. Hard American faces with vulgar mouths, tufted chins, and cunning expression; fat British faces with greasy mouths, shaven chins, and no expression at all. Here a Southern planter, there a Manchester manufacturer. One or two New York lawyers, a pair of drink-soaked Californians, a "literary man" from Boston, and the Rev. Dr. Somebody going back to his flock rather the better of his bronchitis. There is Slymer, who always gets his passage for nothing by being a "Bearer of Dispatches." Just at present he is on confidential terms with Sprigg, correspondent of the *New York Crier*, touching a laudatory notice of him, Slymer, which is to appear the day after the *Assyria* arrives at New York. That man with the yellow waistcoat, brick-colored face, and moustache dyed jet black, is McSwindle, Common Councilman of the Empire City, returning from a visit to his friends in the green island.

He used to black boots in Sackville street thirty years ago, but has thriven apace in the land of liberty. The stout but gorgeous lady sitting by the long boat with the two handsome girls, is Mrs. General Von Donk, and they are her daughters; this is their fifth passage this year across the ocean. Mrs. General Von Donk made her first appearance in the business world in the capacity of a laundress. She washed shirts for Corporal Von Donk of the Bowery Fencibles and a rising corner grocery. After all it was owing to her tact and management that he got on in life, so it was not such a bad alliance for Von Donk as people at first declared. Few remember those old times now. They are eclipsed by the glories of the house in Fifth Avenue, the beauties of Zerlina and Violetta, the vanities and extravagance of Mr. Gossamer Von Donk, and the honors, political and military, of the stalwart General. All the family needs now is an infusion of good blood, and *materfamilias* knows it as well as we. That indeed is the secret object of all her shuttlecock bounds and rebounds over land and sea. She wants an Englishman with a good name, or a continental with a title. You will find her hunting for him one week at the Hotel Bédford, the next at Morley's. Last week shopping in Regent street, this week on board the *Assyria*, she will pass a month or so in New York, Newport, and Saratoga, and be off for Europe again in October.

Such were some of the many curious personages whose presence lent variety and clatter to the decks of the huge packet. But to find those in whom we have a greater interest, and whose future chiefly concerns us, we must go further off than we have yet ventured and seek them in a group close to the taffrail.

Conspicuous in a knot of persons several of whom were noticeable enough, sat, bareheaded, a noble-looking man of some sixty years of age. His hair and beard worn full and naturally, were snowy white, suggesting greater age than did the healthful ruddy cheek, and almost unwrinkled brow. His figure too, although spare, was erect and mus-

cular, and, when he rose, towered some inches above the middle height. He wore clothes of a dark color which discovered more attention to symmetry in style and cut than is usual at the age of the wearer, and a spotless cambric cravat was loosely, but with gentlemanly neatness, arranged about his throat. His bearing and manners exhibited that mingling of dignity and graciousness which it is common in these brusque times to attribute to "gentlemen of the old school," and there was a sweetness of expression in the benignant countenance which rarely,—very rarely, gave way to a passing trace of anxiety and pain. Such was Oliver Vernon, who, had he remained in his native country, might by this have been one of the foremost of England's legislators and sages, but who after his thirty years in America was content with his books, his artistic tastes, his few friends, and the ample fortune which successful speculation had early enabled him to amass. Why he had left home and society which his education and position unquestionably qualified him to enjoy and to adorn, none knew, even of his own family, and few ventured to inquire; for, gentle and conciliatory when discussing other subjects, he became haughty and reticent on allusion to this; so that whoever through chance or curiosity might question him thereon was pretty certain not to repeat the experiment for the future.

On the right and left of Mr. Vernon were seated two young ladies, respectively his daughter and ward, whose presence supplied his reason for lately taking the step which, in former years, he had resolved always to avoid—he had re-visited Europe. Postponing from time to time the pleasure they were ever soliciting, and which he could scarcely with generosity refuse, he had, some fifteen months before, started from their lovely home on the banks of the Hudson, and, embarking from the great city at its mouth, afforded the happy girls that opportunity for viewing the wonders of the old world to which they had so long looked forward with joyous anticipation. An elderly woman who had nursed his child,—image and sole legacy of the

wife who had died in giving her birth,—a person more companion than servant,—constituted the only attendant of the little party, which, after its bright holiday of travel and sight-seeing, was now flying over the waters toward home once again.

Elinor Grazebrook and Grace Vernon were as unlike as two people who had so much in sympathy and in common could well be. The former, who at this time had seen some two and twenty summers, knew, up to her eighteenth, little but sorrow and mortification. She was the daughter of an extremely clever but delicately organized and sensitive man, who, disappointed in life, had taken incurably to drink before Elinor was born. His wife, a beautiful but wilful woman, whom a stronger head and firmer heart than Grazebrook's could have moulded into everything lovable and noble, exasperated by the excesses and ill treatment of a dozen years, fled in an evil hour with one Kirkwood, her husband's former partner at the bar. Five years after, she was deserted in turn, her paramour making his way to California. The unhappy woman sought her husband to beseech his forgiveness and to beg to be allowed to look once more on her child, but Grazebrook had died in *delirium tremens* some days before. In all his madness, he had saved a few thousands by way of portion for poor Elinor, whom he tenderly loved, but whose life his habits had made wretchedly miserable. Shortly before his death, conscious that it would not be long deferred, he had implored Oliver Vernon as a friend of earlier and happier years, to take charge of the girl, and to keep her as far as possible from contact with or knowledge of her lost mother. Vernon willingly undertook the trust, although naturally anxious as regarded the legal aspect of the latter injunction. Five or six years rolled by, however, and no one could be found who had seen or heard of Mary Grazebrook, since the day she learned of her husband's death. Those interested agreed therefore with Vernon's conviction that she must be dead.

The bitter experience which this brief history so readily

suggests had left its marks on Elinor's character rather than on her person. Singularly sensitive in reality, she was generally considered cold and impassive. Keenly alive to every impression or incident of either exterior or interior life, she appeared indifferent alike to each and all. She had been so shocked and humiliated by the sad occurrences and soul-depressing atmosphere of her childhood, that the poor young spirit sought the refuge which natural pride afforded in a reticence and repose which amounted to hauteur. The peculiar character of her beauty served to heighten the impression which was conveyed by her manner. Tall and slight, she would have appeared too thin, but for the proportions of a full and exquisitely moulded bust. Her features would have been Grecian but for the smallest disposition to the aquiline in the delicate nose. The lips might have been called a thought too full, but the suggestion was banished by that peculiar stamp of self-control which gives the mouth in intellect what it takes from it in sensuality. The skin was singularly fair, yet the eyes, almost black in fact, appeared quite so from the long dark fringes which surrounded them. The hair of a rich changing brown, had the sunny warmth of tone so much admired by painters, and, being lighter beneath, looked absolutely blonde from the front, because dressed in the manner made fashionable by the Empress Eugénie. Elinor's hands, without being diminutive, were of the true patrician mould, and the feet with their slender outline and arching insteps were pretty enough to make one grateful to the friendly breeze which now and again disturbed the young lady's ample draperies.

Grace Vernon had the air and manner common to human beings as well as animals who have never been hurt and have never been frightened. Accustomed from infancy to be loved and cherished by all who surrounded her, she had no thought of harm from any living thing. Not even that sorrow which even the privileged and opulent cannot escape—the death of those dearest to them—had been hers, for her mother's last hour was the daughter's first, and she

had never lost a friend. Her life had passed in sailing over summer seas beneath cloudless skies, and with as little check or obstacle as the noble ship now met which bounded under her feet. Guileless and unsuspecting, often giddy and unthinking, Grace was yet thoroughly unselfish. She had inherited from her father a portion not only of his large humanity, but much of his clear perception of right and justice, which goes so far to ennoble as well as to give symmetry to character. Passionately attached to her father she warmly sympathized in his views and opinions, which, always philanthropic, were sometimes so far in advance of the huckstering utilitarianism of the day as to be called "extreme" and "radical." Deprived of a mother, a share of the love which would have been hers had fallen to the lot of her nurse, Mercy Tredwell, or, more commonly, "Aunt Mercy," a worthy and kind-hearted woman, the widow of a small farmer in Western Massachusetts. Grace had hailed with delight the time which brought Elinor Grazebrook under her father's guardianship, and the time which had elapsed since that memorable epoch had ripened her girlish pleasure into a more than sisterly affection. We have said the two were unlike enough, and indeed the external difference was as marked as that of their characters. Shorter than the stately Elinor, Grace had scarcely a feature which could be called regular, and yet was undeniably pretty. Her figure was charming, her eyes of a lovely blue, and a profusion of nut-brown hair surrounded a face which wreathed into a smile of quite bewitching sweetness. Then she had radiantly white teeth, a beauty the laughing lips did not fail to disclose.

Both ladies wore round hats of the nondescript patterns then coming in vogue, and were dressed in gauzy, summery fabrics of the abundant fulness and matching ribands which the season and the fashion prescribed.

The group formed by the three persons we have described was remarkable enough to justify its apparent attraction, for at the moment a number of gentlemen had gathered around it, partly joining in, and partly listening

to a conversation whose progress was suddenly interrupted by an exclamation which turned all eyes toward the mizen cross-trees, where was perched a young gentleman balancing a spy-glass nearly as long as himself:—

"What d'yemake of her, Mr. Middleton?" cried Captain Stanchion, interrupting his quarter-deck walk.

"Large screw, sir, three points on the weather-bow, and bearing straight down on us," replied the stripling.

"Ay, ay. Get out your bunting, Mr. Edwards, and the private signal. We may as well be reported. Too near Yankee land for a West-India man. News from New York; gentlemen," continued the Captain, as he joined the party of our friends astern.

"How much later, Captain Stanchion," inquired Mr. Vernon, "than what we have?"

"About fifteen days, sir. We sailed on the eighteenth, our friend yonder has had western winds, and left, perhaps, but a day earlier. Our latest dates from America were up to the second."

"Couldn't we stop and get some papers?" asked Sprigg coming up anxiously.

The Captain shook his head. "We carry her Majesty's mails, sir, which stop for no one."

"Never mind, Sprigg," said Slymer, "there's only a week longer, and if the Republic has gone down, I dare say we shall hear of it through the trumpet."

"No fear o' that, sir," remarked McSwindle oracularly; "the Great Republic will outlast your time and mine."

"The Great Republic is a failure," lisped Gossamer Von Donk *sotto voce*: "why, do you know, Mr. Eliot, no gentleman can even vote now in New York? A man of decent family with a whole coat on his back can't get near the polls for the rowdies and Irish."

"Is it true, Mr. Vernon," asked Eliot, a young Englishman of liberal views, and crossing the Atlantic for the first time, "is it true that your universal suffrage works so badly?"

"I fear," said Vernon gravely, "that the system has many

drawbacks. If things could have remained as they were during the first thirty years of the republic it would have answered admirably. The young nation had passed through a fearful ordeal, and emerged purified and elevated. Its founders contemplated that universal education should accompany universal suffrage, and that men should thus be made fit for the privilege before they came to enjoy it. But the vast and unforeseen material prosperity which ensued brought also the seeds of corruption and decay. An immigration on a colossal scale was stimulated, which consisted to a great extent of the most ignorant classes of foreign populations. These classes, however well meaning, could not be expected to learn in a day that democracy does not mean licentiousness and disorder. Often ill treated in their native land, they were unused to liberty, and naturally knew not how to employ it."

"But surely," said Eliot, "the native population must outnumber the foreign and be able always to control it."

"Outnumber, yes; control, no; for in the natural divisions of party, the foreign element would hold the balance of power, and be pretty sure to consult its predilections by going on the wrong side."

"Yet, after all," reasoned Eliot, "why *should* they go on the wrong side? why not in their ignorance stumble on the right one?"

"Ah," replied Vernon, "their ignorance does not go so far as that. The people who emigrate to America,—and especially those from the British Islands,—either have been, or fancy themselves to have been, oppressed by law and society in their own countries. They cherish, therefore, a hatred for all law which seeks to control them, a dislike of all society beyond their own level. They uniformly mistake political for social equality, or at least they insist on putting that construction on the dogma which is only true as expressing the equality of all men in political and judicial rights. Thus they always sympathize with whatever is levelling and whatever is insurrectionary,

quite regardless whether the rights of others are invaded or destroyed by such processes or not."

"Yet the United States would never have reached their present position without the influx of foreign labor."

"Probably not, and foreign labor has been glad of the chance to be very well paid and very well fed. But Europe has also been a gainer—at least in a *material* sense."

"How so?"

"Because the manufacturing interest is a principal source of strength in Western Europe—emphatically so in England. The manufacturing interest depends on the cotton supply, which depends on Slavery. Now the foreign population of America—at least, and beyond dispute, the very large fraction of it from the British Islands—has been and is, the staunch supporter of all measures which aim at the perpetuation and extension of human bondage."

"But is not this very anomalous—the oppressed becoming the advocates of oppression?"

"Anomalous indeed, but so it is. The nature of man, once warped and misdirected, does not recover itself, as a rule, by processes much more rapid than the vitiating ones have been. There are of course noble exceptions, but most Irishmen and most Jews are friendly to the Institution of Slavery. The idea that a race or class may be systematically oppressed does not appear disagreeable to them, provided that class is not their own. Such people have not yet *grown* sufficiently to be fit for liberty in our extended sense:—any more than the negro would be fit for freedom, in a similar sense, were he emancipated to-day. The regeneration should be gradual in both cases."

The conversation was here interrupted by the interest and bustle occasioned by the approaching steamer—a diversion highly satisfactory to the ladies, who noticed with feminine quickness that McSwindle had overheard portions of Mr. Vernon's remarks, and that the growing truculence of his expression boded some unpleasantness; and, indeed, his mental question of "An d'ye mean to compare us to nagurs?" was at the very point of finding

expression when a general movement to the larboard side of the quarterdeck constrained him to change his position and to swallow his indignation.

The stranger, who was now scarcely half a mile distant, was a large screw steamer, heavily sparred, and as neat about her upper works as a man-of-war. She had been coming on under full sail, although necessarily close-hauled. Now, however, she had swung round her maintopsail, which was backed against the mast, and stopped her screw. Each moment lessened the distance between the vessels, as the stranger lay almost directly in the course of the *Assyria*. The noble standard of England was flying from the peak of both, and the deck of each was crowded with people scanning the other with interest and curiosity. It could now be seen that men were at work at the port-quarter-davits of the screw, and that they were in the act of lowering a boat.

Mr. Edwards came up to Captain Stanchion and touched his cap. "They are going to try and board us, sir."

"I know," said the Captain discontentedly, "we can't stop, but you may slow the engines, Mr. Edwards; there's no sea, and they can easily get a line aboard."

"Ay, ay, sir."

And in a few moments the huge mass was moving at a quarter of her previous rate. By this time the stranger's boat was in the water, and four stout fellows were pulling the few strokes needed to place her in the track of the *Assyria*. Meanwhile a process of mutual cross-examination was in progress from the two quarter-decks, and the people of the latter craft were acquainted that the screw was the steamship *Stromboli* from New York on the 17th ultimo and bound for Liverpool. Also that a gentleman who was desirous to retrace his journey was in the approaching boat. A little shouting and clattering of ropes, an exchange of newspapers and messages, and the passengers of the *Assyria* saw the frail craft dancing in their wake. At the same moment a couple of black bags

came up over the side, and immediately afterward leaped lightly over the bulwark—Mr. Stephen Dangerfield.

A young man of thirty, very much sunburnt, with dark flashing eyes and snow-white teeth. A face and figure fit to be the model for an Apollo in every respect of shape and proportion, except perhaps a trifle too much weight about the shoulders. He was dressed in a loose suit of white flannel, and wore a straw hat which he removed as his foot touched the deck. There was in his whole manner that union of careless ease with perfectly good breeding, which is so difficult to simulate, and which springs so frequently from good blood which has become familiarized with danger.

"Good evening, Captain Stanchion," cried the new comer gaily; "I hope you will give me a welcome and a berth, though I do come so unexpectedly."

"As I live, Mr. Dangerfield," exclaimed the sailor, "you are the last man I would have thought to see this day! Welcome? Yes, and a hearty one! though it is a little unusual."

"Oh, I'll make it all right with Mr. C——," laughed the young man. "I fear," he added, turning with graceful courtesy toward the groups of passengers, "I fear I am but a stranger here."

"Not quite so to me, Mr. Stephen Dangerfield," said Oliver Vernon, coming forward with his highly bred air, "at least your father was not, though you were but a curly-headed boy when I saw you last."

The other blushed slightly. "You mean before I ran away and went to sea. I remember you, sir, although, if you are Mr. Vernon, you too are changed in these fifteen years."

"And for the better, I hope," said the old gentleman cheerfully. "But come, I must claim a neighbor's privilege." So saying, he led the young man, nothing loth, to the charmed circle whose central attractions were the two beautiful girls in his charge.

And so meet these people who but for a trivial accident

had never met, and whose influence on each other's future was to be so momentous. The evening's conversation was no doubt pleasant enough to all engaged, and it was remarkably so to Mr. Stephen Dangerfield. But it did not affect him to that degree as to make him forget, on retiring to his state-room for the night, to carefully peruse two papers, one written, one printed,—and which he had only read some fifty times during the past four days. After this final perusal he carefully folded and placed them in a pocket-book, which again he placed under his pillow. The first was a telegraphic dispatch and ran thus:

"PHILADELPHIA, August 17.

"Mr. Stephen Dangerfield, Clarendon Hotel, N. Y. Something wrong. Do not sail.

"HAWK."

The other was a slip from a New York paper containing an advertisement under the head of "Personal," and which was to this effect:

"K. did not sail in the A.—Has gone north to The Rest."

CHAPTER II.

"I HOPE you will like America," said Grace Vernon to Robert Eliot, who was standing by her side and gazing dreamily over the sparkling waters before them. "That is, I don't mean Niagara, the Great Lakes, the beautiful scenery, and all that; of course everybody must like or admire *them*; but I hope you won't find the people so disagreeable as most of your countrymen who write books do. They always appear to me to select the very worst types they may happen to meet, and then serve them up as fair average specimens of their class."

It was just after sunrise on the third morning succeeding the events described in the last chapter. A soft air from the south distended the sails, being just free

enough to allow the steamship to show canvas and hold her course. A balmy moisture pervaded the atmosphere, and the sun was shimmering through fleecy, broken cloud-banks, which it suffused with gorgeous coloring. A cool grey yet lingered on the western horizon, where the twinkle of the last star was expiring for the day. The newly washed decks were redolent of freshness and cleanliness. Every rope was coiled neatly in its place, the running gear all taut and ship-shape as in a man-of-war, and each bit of metal brightly polished. The sea was covered with crisp and lively little waves, which, breaking each other at right angles, betrayed a recent change of wind. The surface was too much ruffled to see the brilliant dolphins which were running their fantastic races alongside; but the porpoises were gambolling about in myriads, and, by their ceaseless leaping and popping their black snouts above the water, lent life and variety to the scene.

The young people had left their berths betimes to enjoy a period of the day especially grateful in warm weather at sea, and when, as they learned by experience, the attractions of the quarter-deck were enhanced by its comparative desertion. There were indeed only three other persons visible on deck at the present time, save one of those rugged quarter-masters who lose all individuality in their perpetual presence. Elinor Grazebrook in her snowy morning dress, was seated in statuesque contemplation of the view; Aunt Mercy was illustrating her New England thrift by knitting vigorously at some unknown utility; and Mr. Stephen Dangerfield was pacing slowly up and down, peeling an orange and debating within himself, whether, on finishing the operation, he should offer the fruit to Grace or Elinor.

"Most travellers who make books find it to their account to be censorious," replied Eliot. "They are beset by the necessity to amuse, and it is more piquant to ridicule than to extol. Scribbling Frenchmen abuse England, scribbling Englishmen abuse France; both have the same temptation and both fall into it; nothing which is really worthy or

excellent, North or South of the Channel, is affected by either."

"Ah," cried the young lady, "because your channel is so narrow. Misrepresentation is sooner corrected when people are near. But it is different across this wide Atlantic!"

"I grant the difference; but is it not balanced by our speaking the same language on either side?"

"That increases the facility for recrimination."

"But also that for explanation, which sooner or later must always be heard."

"Well," reasoned Grace, "the newspapers are, I suppose, the principal vehicles for 'explanation' between England and America; you surely don't think *they* tend to produce good feeling between the two countries, do you?"

"Perhaps not, for the time being," answered Eliot, "and for the same reason that the book-makers do not. They must have 'smart' and 'spicy' articles. The temptation is strong to tickle the worst prejudices of the worst class of their audience, and they do so. But this must come to an end. The animus and the profligacy are alike detected at least, and the influence of the offender must wane in proportion. All the brilliant flummery of the *Saturday Review*, for example, will not save its credit when the knowledge is notorious of its contempt for common honesty, and that it habitually makes the truth subservient to an epigram."

"Nothing can be worse than *our* Press," said Stephen Dangerfield, pausing in his walk and solving his doubts about the orange by dividing it neatly into halves; "yours is for the most part conducted by gentlemen who can, at least when they like, show culture and refinement. With us these are the exceptions, the general rule all the other way. If, as Mr. Vernon says, our foreign population is brutal enough when it comes to us, the *New York Crier* and the *New York Yahoo* do all they can to keep it so."

"I suppose," remarked Eliot, "that the demand, as usual, induces the supply. Your newspapers are cheap and

address themselves to a highly miscellaneous body of readers; and, like the poor players, they 'who live to please must please to live.'"

"Ay, but the whole body of our people are libelled by these prints in so far as European opinion accepts them as exponents of American culture, American temper, and American common-sense. The fact is, no sea-port town filled with mere money-getters and constantly reinforced with unruly foreigners, supplies the best specimens of either. Boston is the best of the bunch, with all its prejudices and provincialisms, and is only so because the deteriorating elements are less potent or better checked there than elsewhere."

"But, granting the truth of your hypothesis, it must be well known to the more intelligent classes of your population, and the presses you name boast large circulations in every rank of the community."

"To be sure it is well known; and in private it is universally admitted and deprecated; yet no one seeks to correct the evil. It is everybody's business and therefore nobody's. People are all too busy or too indifferent. Of course they have large circulations; every one wants to see the news, and the New York Press exhibits more energy and enterprise than any in the world in this respect."

"If they have circulation, they should have influence."

"Just the other way with us,—at least so far as the country at large is concerned. The New York papers which have the largest *city* circulation in proportion to their total issue, carry the least weight with intelligent people."

"A singular state of things truly."

"You will find it to exist. It is one of the indirect consequences of permitting immigrants to linger on the seaboard, instead of taking them West and giving them plenty of land. We keep them and their children in the filthy tenement streets of Eastern cities instead of sending them to the fresh and teeming Western prairies. We keep them where they are morally certain to become the worst possible

citizens, instead of placing them where they would be equally sure to grow into very good ones."

"And this is susceptible of demonstration?"

"Unquestionably. It can be tested by, among other things, the evidence of more than one of the senses. An average comparison of the condition of the people from the two nationalities which have supplied our principal accessions these twenty years past, furnishes a tolerable illustration."

"Don't you think, Mr. Eliot," cried Grace Vernon laughingly, "that if all these guests of ours, to whom we open our doors so hospitably, are given the right to vote,—don't you think that American women—or at all events educated women—ought to have the same privilege?"

"You have me at advantage, Miss Vernon," returned Eliot, with an admiring gaze, which included both the lovely girls before him; "who could see such specimens of your countrywomen as I have, and not reply in the affirmative?"

"No, no," exclaimed Grace, while a bright blush rose to her cheeks, "you mustn't take refuge in compliments; I demand a serious reply."

"The question is a very delicate one, my dear Miss Vernon,—so delicate, that I rejoice my good angels relieve me, and send one so much more competent in the person of your papa to decide it."

Oliver Vernon came on deck and advanced toward the party. His noble face was beaming with a sweet and benignant smile. Those who knew him best prized that smile and loved him better each time they saw it; but they would perchance have prized it more had they known it precisely for what it was—the outward sign and expression of a spiritual growth, which a generous heart and a large comprehensive nature had fostered and nurtured in the teeth of circumstances which would have made most men misanthropes and some men criminals.

Oliver Vernon quitted his native land under the stigma, and to escape the consequences, of a disgraceful crime

committed thirty years before. The younger son of an ancient family, he had early tasted the bitterness and humiliation which is often a consequence of the law of entail. His case was, indeed, one of unusual aggravation, for his mother, a weak and frivolous woman, lavished all her affection on her eldest son William, treating the younger with neglect and almost with contempt. The father, a man in active political life, paid little attention to the family affairs which his powerful intellect should have regulated and controlled. He was, however, anxious to bring forward his son and heir, William, into Parliament, and resented the lavish and indolent habits which, in spite of his brilliant qualities, the latter had from early youth exhibited. William Vernon was known to have gambled heavily upon the turf; yet no one knew but himself and the Jews to what extent he had been "dipped" until many years after the events we are about to relate. Oliver, having found life in his father's house insupportable, had left it, having for his sole resource a slender annuity derived from a grandmother, and after buffeting with fortune for several years in search of a favorable opening in life, had accepted a position as Secretary to a nobleman of high rank, a distant connexion of his family. It was to this association that his subsequent misfortune was due. The elder Vernon relied to a great extent upon the promised interest of Lord C—— to push the political fortunes of William. The latter was assiduous in paying court to his lordship, and was a frequent visitor both at his town and country house. At a time when the nobleman was absent in a distant part of the kingdom, a check purporting to be drawn by him for the sum of five thousand pounds was presented at his London Banker's. The sum was large, but not uncommonly so; and, as it was demanded at the same time with several smaller checks known to have passed through the hands of Oliver Vernon, whose connexion with Lord C—— was known at the Banker's, it was paid unsuspectingly. The signature proved a forgery; and, as a discovery of the fact was coupled with overwhelming

criminatory evidence, and was immediately followed by Oliver Vernon's flight from England, the guilt of the latter was universally accepted and believed.

This conviction grew into certainty in the minds of those interested, when, two years afterward, Lord C—— received a draft from America for the sum of one thousand pounds; a remittance which was repeated yearly until the whole amount of which he had originally been defrauded had been repaid. There had been no prosecution, and publicity was confined to the immediate circle wherein the forger had moved, but the Vernons never held up their heads again. The old man sickened and died the third year after Oliver's flight, and people said it was the shameful disgrace his younger son had brought upon his house which had dealt the death-blow. Then William Vernon became more and more profligate and dissipated, and it was found that, although he could not alienate the family property, he had, so far mortgaged his life interest therein that but a bare pittance remained for his support. His mother had some little means, and it was said that bitter quarrels now occurred between the parent and child. In the fifth year she, too, was on her death-bed, and there were terrible stories creeping about that Mrs. Vernon died cursing William, and calling on Oliver Vernon to forgive her. A year more and the ruined spendthrift left the country, and Vernon Hall was put in charge of trustees for the benefit of his creditors. He found refuge in America and in the house of his brother, who had, by combined industry and good fortune, laid the foundations for a handsome competency. Oliver endeavored to incline his brother to some settled plan for life, offering to assist him to the extent of his ability, but his fatal habits were too deeply seated to admit of steadfast attention to anything. The effects of his early education and surroundings, as shaped by his unfortunate mother, were fatally apparent at last. He went from bad to worse, gambling when he could obtain the means, and rarely going to bed sober. Oliver Vernon purchased, in the tenth year after his leaving Eng-

land, the beautiful property which had since been his home. It was the year of his marriage, and he feared the consequence of having his dissolute brother living under the roof with the delicate and shrinking girl he had made his wife. However, he could not find it in his heart to turn William from his door, for with all the misery he had caused, Oliver still tenderly loved him. Within a year he lost both wife and brother. The former left the world in giving birth to Grace. William Vernon left the house one stormy day in November, and never returned. Some thought he had returned to England; some that he had met his death in a drunken brawl. The skipper of a North River sloop had seen two men in a boat with something which looked like a body, paddle out from the little Stone-Quarry pier which was under the Palisades half way between Mr. Vernon's place and Dangerfield's Rest. But the night was pitchy dark, and no dependence could be placed on this. The detectives whom Oliver Vernon employed telegraphed him from New York, in triumph, that they had discovered the remains of his brother; but the corpse they had found proved to be that of a drunken sailor who had fallen overboard in the night from a ship in the harbor. Time wore on, and no traces could be found of the missing man. Oliver himself rather settled into the belief that, while intoxicated, and in the darkness of the night, William had fallen from some point on the crest of the Palisades, which rose, frowning, to a great height, and extended entirely along the eastern boundary of his estate. Thus precipitated into the rapid river the body might have sunk or have been carried far away to the sea. In either case, it need be looked for no more. Five, ten, fifteen years passed away, and the Insurance Companies had finally consented to pay the policies which secured the creditors of William Vernon in case he died before the revenues of Vernon Hall should liquidate their claims. The property itself thus fell in due course into the possession of Oliver Vernon, who had re-visited it for the first and only time just before the opening of our narrative.

We return from this digression to our friends on the quarter-deck of the *Assyria*.

"I fear Mr. Vernon will criticize the postulate," said Stephen Dangerfield gaily, "because one set of people vote who shouldn't, we are to modify the evil by enfranchising another class of ineligibles!"

"I'll recollect that gallant speech, Mr. Dangerfield—and your evasive one, Mr. Eliot—but papa will see me righted."

"I doubt Mr. Vernon's supporting you this time," said Eliot, "for—and I have been surprised by it—he appears rather to favor the curtailment than the extension of the suffrage."

"Politics and the suffrage again!" exclaimed Oliver Vernon, as he fondly embraced Elinor with an affection undistinguishable from that with which he had greeted his daughter. "Why, Mr. Eliot, you will be perfectly saturated with democracy and heresy before you see the Narrows. You must not let Grace turn you into a Radical; we want your opinions of us from a normal point of view, unprejudiced and unbiassed."

The salutations which preceded and accompanied these remarks appeared, to speak truth, rather more interesting and suggestive to both the young men than the observations themselves. Eliot recovered himself, however, and replied with his accustomed gravity:—

"I was expressing my surprise that you, sir, who are apparently the advocate of what are called progressive opinions, should be, in a measure, opposed to universal suffrage."

"From which assumption," added Grace, "Mr. Stephen Dangerfield deduces that you must surely oppose its extension to women."

"I am the sincere advocate of Universal Suffrage," said Vernon steadily, "but I would adopt it only after the dissemination of that which can alone render it truly useful to mankind—that is to say, of Universal Education. For the interest of true progress *names* are nothing, *things* are

everything. As things are, to say that Universal Suffrage exists in a country is by no means to imply that the greatest possible happiness exists in that country, but the implication would be inevitable if we knew that education was universal there as well. If it could be demonstrated that children of fifteen possessed the judgment and culture requisite to the intelligent appreciation and use of the suffrage, I would extend it to them. Until it can be demonstrated that hundreds of thousands of ignorant peasantry coming from countries where there are no free schools, possess or acquire such judgment and culture, I would defer intrusting them with the privilege. I would have a Qualification, not of Property but of Knowledge. The extension of the franchise, if it means anything, means the extension of happiness; yet in practice, and in the absence of education, it infallibly produces the precise opposite. Take an illustration:—The most ignorant class in our Southern States is that of the poor whites—'trash,' as the negroes call them; the most ignorant class in the North is the incoming foreign population. These two classes have for years voted together and in one direction, namely, the direction which is most diametrically opposed to the happiness and prosperity of both. They have voted in the interest of the perpetuation and extension of Human Slavery, which by making labor disgraceful keeps the poor white at once indigent and ignorant in the South, and closes the richest territory on the continent to the industry and enterprise of the poor white from the North. And yet, mark the sequel, in connexion with the use they have made of their Universal Suffrage—when, in the Providence of God, the inevitable conflict shall arrive between the two principles of Freedom and Slavery, these are the very men who from the necessities of their position must bear the brunt of the Battle;—a Battle which, without their aid, Slavery had never been strong enough to fight at all."

"As to women," continued the speaker after a pause, "there can be no doubt but that there are thousands in America more capable of voting wisely than the mass

of foreign immigrants can be. Admitting this, the question becomes one of policy and expediency. That women may be admitted ultimately to the suffrage is by no means improbable, but at present I question if society is ripe for such an innovation. There are very few women as yet who really *desire* to exercise the privilege, but supposing there were one in ten who did so desire, the remaining nine would be made unhappy and uncomfortable by the aspiration or ambition of the one."

"But why so, papa," said Grace Vernon, "could not the voting be made optional as with the men?"

"I fear not," replied her father, "at least with our existing social organization. Husbands, fathers, and brothers would be apt to think that the votes of wives, daughters, and sisters should be cast as they wished or not cast at all, so that average results might be unchanged."

"Tis certain," said Eliot, "that the participation by females in the details of political action, more especially in that of elections, would modify many objectionable features which exist at present. There would be less asperity, less brutality, and certainly less corruption."

"But," said Dangerfield, "would there not be in the feminine character less delicacy, less modesty, and less refinement?"

"I don't think so," said Grace Vernon gravely. "The Turks and other Oriental nations consider that many privileges accorded by Western nations to their women should produce such effects, and we know how fallacious is their estimate. In France women serve in shops, and have other paths open to their industry, to which in America they are inadmissible, and it cannot be said the sex deteriorates in consequence."

"The question of female employment is in its infancy with us as yet," said Mr. Vernon, "but a truce to such grave subjects; we're setting Nelly here fast asleep. Why!" turning and looking at the young lady, "why, what ails the child?"

Elinor Grazebrook had been seated a few paces from the

others during this discussion, and on the lee side of the deck. She had not spoken, save now and then a kind word in an undertone to Aunt Mercy close by; but at this moment an exclamation burst from her lips, and a look of intense interest sprang to the face before so placid. One arm was stretched toward the West, and a taper finger indicated some object far down the horizon which had caught the girl's piercing eyes.

"As I live," cried Grace Vernon, springing to Elinor's side, and glancing toward the direction in which she pointed, "'tis a boat—a boat with a broken mast, and lying on her side."

"A boat!" laughed Stephen Dangerfield, "'tis a large schooner and water-logged!"

"The look-out must have been asleep," grumbled Mr. Edwards, bustling aft. "Let her go off a point, Markwell!"

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Large schooner—both sticks out of her—on her beam-ends—" continued Mr. Edwards, with his eye to the glass. "Jacobs, call Captain Stanchion!"

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Any signs of poor people aboard, Mr. Edwards?" inquired Vernon anxiously. "No crew, no passengers?"

"None, sir, that I can make out. Abandoned, I fancy. She may have been in this plight for a month."

Captain Stanchion now hurried on deck, white trowser'd, collarless, and catching hastily the buttons of his coat. He glanced at the wreck and at the compass. "Let her fall off, let her fall off, Markwell!"

"Ay, ay, sir."

"A couple of points will do. We must see if there are any poor souls about. Get ready the Quarter-cutter if you please, Mr. Edwards. So, that'll do, Markwell! Steady!"

"Steady, sir."

The steamship was now fast approaching the wreck, which, on its first discovery nearly five points on the lee-bow, was now nearly ahead. She was a vessel of perhaps a hundred and fifty tons, of the long, fast sailing

build, and had evidently been very handsomely fitted up. Her masts were both missing, the main having apparently gone by the board, leaving a stump of perhaps ten feet, the mizen cut away close by the deck. The bulwarks were stove fore and aft, and whatever may have been on deck in the shape of cook's galleys or other houses, had entirely disappeared. The bowsprit remained, and there hung from it fragments of lines, being jib or stay-sail gear, which trailed in the sea. The decks were on a very heavy angle to the surface of the water, seeming to show that the cargo or ballast had shifted when the vessel was knocked on her beam-ends, and that even the lightening caused by the loss of the masts had failed to right her. A lot of seaweed and drift of various sorts surrounded the ill-fated craft, which had the appearance of having been some time in the course of collection.

The experienced eye of Captain Stanchion ranged over all these details, and drew the inferences which they suggested. "Not a living soul nor a sign of one," he exclaimed. "I fear we shall lose our time for our pains. No need to lower the boat, I fancy."

"Not for life's sake, certainly," said Mr. Edwards, "there's not a trace of hide or hair visible, and surely no one would go below in a thing like that without leaving as much as a rag flying."

"No use, no use," said the Captain decidedly, and shutting his glass with a bang after another long scrutiny. "Can't lose time."

"Shall we put the ship on her course again, sir?"

"Ay, ay. But give them a gun. Make ready a gun there forward! We'll give them a last chance if there be any one about." Both orders were executed simultaneously. The bow of the great steamship swung around to the wind, and the flash and heavy boom of the cannon followed in quick succession, just as the movement of the ship had brought the schooner abeam. The smoke drove down to leeward, hiding the wreck for a time from the gaze of the spectators on the quarter-deck. A dead silence followed,

while the two girls looked at each other with a glance of sympathetic disappointment. Another instant and a sharp cry again burst from Elinor:—

"Oh, no, sir! Captain Stanchion! look, sir, look!"

The smoke had risen, curling away in fantastic eddies, and again discovered the wreck scarcely a third of a mile under their lee. From the after hatchway there appeared, thrust upward with a feeble and tremulous motion, a staff with the fragment of a torn and tattered American ensign. A human hand must be below it, for it rose higher and higher until the whole fragment blew out into the breeze. Then as if the strength which upheld it were utterly exhausted, the pole and the flag fell prone to the deck.

Every one on the deck of the *Assyria* saw and understood this mute appeal. Almost without orders the ship's head fell off from the wind, the men sprang to the davits at the starboard quarter, a few revolutions of the paddles and the boat was lowered into the sea. Impulsively the two young men leaped into it, with the crew, and pulling as if indeed for life, six sturdy oarsmen drove it through the water. Those who remained behind gazed with straining eyes watching the result. Nor had they long to wait, although to Elinor Grazebrook the time seemed incalculable.

Presently they see a confusion as the men gain and clamber up the sloping decks of the schooner. A few moments more and they are on their return—have returned. The steamship's deck is now alive with curious and expectant faces, which crowd to the bulwarks as the living freight of the boat ascends the side. There are ten now instead of eight. Three or four men tumble up over the rail, then Eliot and another supporting a middle-aged negress with face haggard and ghastly with its emaciation and pinched blue lips. Then Oliver Vernon presses forward to the gangway, and Stephen Dangerfield comes up quickly and places in the old man's outstretched and protecting arms—a little child.

CHAPTER III.

MR. GOSSAMER Von Donk was a very fair type of the scions of that large and—especially in New York—rapidly increasing class, the *nouveaux riches*. Personally, he was a thin young man with narrow shoulders, bony extremities, and an imbecile expression about the legs. He had rather agreeable features, whose natural disposition would have suggested good-natured vacuity, but which he habitually forced into a look intended to convey a mixture of misanthropy and ferocity. His eyes were of a maroon color bound in pink cord, and his huge moustache (*à la Calmuck Tartar*) was of a rich tan, injudiciously dyed to a sooty black. He wore his hair extremely short for the purpose of producing a half-fledged appearance which he supposed to be becoming to his style of head. He had always a profusion of clothes very extravagantly cut, and a vast supply of studs, chains, rings, and such like trinkets. Of these his favorite selection consisted of a set of huge diamonds, worn on the breast and wrists, and which he generally put on before breakfast. When these gorgeous appendages had been added to black clothes, including what he termed "pants" and "vest," Mr. Von Donk formerly conceived his costume to embody the very acme of taste and elegance as exhibited in a gentleman's morning toilet. Since visiting England, however, his views had undergone some modifications, and he was now provided with vast store of loose "rough" clothes of various carpet-like textures, and worn in suits which he carefully changed some five or six times a day. By this means he produced a pleasing and variegated effect, whilst furnishing himself with an agreeable occupation. Thus he would appear at breakfast in very pronounced checks of opposed and uncompromising colors, which before luncheon would ameliorate and soften into gentle stripes of conciliatory and harmonizing hues. Before dinner, however, these placid lines would fall into violent confusion and merge into thunder and

lightning of the loudest and most appalling character, which again having had full sway for a time, the storm would clear, and give place to warm and rainbow tints quite in keeping with the approaching sunset. As a result of this ingenious procedure the impression was first produced on the stranger that there were several Mr. Gossamer Von Donks, or that, being only one, he had some mysterious power of multiplying himself indefinitely; and it was only on further and closer inspection that the truth became apparent, and that both these distressing hypotheses could be safely dismissed.

Mr. Von Donk was remarkably well known in New York, and had his circle of acquaintance been as choice as it was extensive, there would only have been room for congratulation in such a circumstance. Unhappily this was by no means the fact. Not a tallow-faced blackleg crawled out of his hole of a morning, but gave a leer of approving recognition as Gossamer's fast trotters swung him through Broadway. Not an equivocal bit of brocade or crinoline sailed through the afternoon's crowd but had a simper and a sideling glance of meaning reminiscence as Gossamer took his ante-dining saunter. The greasy Oriental-looking gentry who may be of Wall or of Chatham street, but who haunt alike the lobby of the Opera-house, knew all about our young friend, and some of them had his measure in their breeches' pocket. Most of the small actors who haunt English pot-houses about the back doors of the theatres knew him and admired his critical judgment. Not a few gentlemen with broad shoulders, bird's-eye neckerchiefs, and malign expression, who go on mysterious belligerent excursions into New Jersey and Staten Island, knew him, and said he was a "whole-souled supporter of our noble art, by G—d, sir!" Staunch adherents also had he among the small scribblers and hangers-on of the press—such as had seen the color of his money, at the epochs of his numerous fleeting passions for skinny *comédiennes* or galvanic *danseuses*. Mr. Toadeater Sumph is an immense admirer of his; he calls the young man "his

dearest Gossy," and writes love-songs for him. Toadeater also invites himself to General Von Donk's country house, and subsequently, to the houses, town or country, of everybody he meets there, and ultimately puts all their names down as subscribers to his forthcoming work, "The Adventures of an Idiot." Stickum the Manager, and Libel the Editor of the *Sunday Muckrake*, are also very fond of Gossamer; they also "have had occasion," they aver, "to appreciate his many high-toned and manly qualities."

Yet with all this extensive and elevating circle of acquaintance—which included, indeed, many more we need not designate, and embraced innumerable gentlemanly expressmen, bar-keepers, billiard-markers, and dog-fanciers—with all his multiplication of fine clothes and jewellery, fast horses and expectancies, Mr. Gossamer Von Donk was not happy. At Newport, during the last summer, he had permitted himself to be drawn into a net, which, as he now bitterly declared, bade fair to poison all his future hopes. In a word, he had engaged himself to Miss Joanna Heydensucker. This was a procedure partially attributable to the adroit engineering of Mrs. General Von Donk, and partly to that of the Honorable Job Heydensucker, the father of the lady in question. The Heydensuckers were of an old and distinguished Knickerbocker family, whose ancestor, three generations ago, kept a Dutch beer-shop on the Battery. The Honorable Job's father, who was a man of some culture and prodigious cunning, had managed to achieve a high political position, a circumstance very fortunate for his family, and especially so for the Honorable Job, who had traded upon it ever since. The latter was ostensibly of the legal profession, but being a very bad lawyer as well as a singularly indolent one, he failed in attaining distinction at the bar. He therefore devoted much of his attention to political chicanery, wherein he was more successful, and would have been signally so, but for the peculiarly slippery and unfaithful quality which was his chief characteristic, and

which he imported alike into politics and law. He ratted continually, going always to the side which could recompense him by the most immediate profit. In the meantime he had rather expensive habits, and counting the inroads made by a passion for gambling and a habit of heavy drinking, the Honorable Job was always in need of repairs both in purse and constitution. It was with a view to the former necessity that he had years before contracted his marriage with a lady of a wealthy and respectable family, which had never been known to make a mistake until it committed the glaring one of accepting the political and social *status* of the Honorable Job at his own valuation. The lady became the mother of Miss Joanna aforesaid, whose charms were now superadded to the weight and prestige of the Heydensucker name, in virtue of which the Honorable Job considered her an over match for the Von Donk strong box. Thus it stood then; Mrs. General Von Donk wanted social position for Gossamer, the Honorable Job Heydensucker wanted hard dollars for Joanna. The lady thought to gain her point by the suggested alliance, the gentleman was determined to gain *his* point by it. There remained only one difficulty—the consent of the parties most directly interested, to achieve which it was diplomatically arranged that Mrs. General should fascinate the young lady, and that the Honorable Job should in like manner charm the young gentleman. Mrs. General's process was of the directest order, and included the presentation of rich laces, handsome shawls, and articles of *bijouterie*, with an artistic working in of dashing equipages and opera boxes in perspective. The Honorable Job's tactics were more machiavellian, and included among their material features the singular device of keeping Mr. Gossamer Von Donk in that astute politician's rooms at the — Hotel until daylight on several occasions, when the former gentleman would emerge with a paler face and redder eyes than ever. So it fell out that when a persuasive melange of threats and cajolery had brought the young people, neither of whom fancied the other, to the

engagement point, the Honorable Job clinched the amatory understanding by suggesting privately to the unhappy Gossamer that sundry bits of paper representing an alarming number of thousands and bearing his, Gossamer's, autograph, might serve as a portion for the fascinating Joanna, instead of being submitted to the paternal consideration of the irascible and penurious General Von Donk.

The year which was to elapse before the union thus auspiciously conceived was now nearly at an end. It was arranged in fact to take place during the ensuing September. This was the incubus hanging over the spirits of our young friend Von Donk. There were now two insurmountable objections in his mind to carrying out his engagement. One was his growing aversion to the lady, her father, and all the circumstances connected with his acquaintance and entanglement with them; the other consisted in his having fallen head over ears in love with Miss Grace Vernon.

Such was the piteous narration which he poured into the sympathizing ear of Mr. Elias P. Staggars, on the morning after the rescue from the wreck. Mr. Staggars, or, as he was more familiarly styled among his acquaintance, "Elias P.," was in the Banking and Stock Brokerage business in Wall Street. He was rather stout, very fussy, and, like many of our countrymen who are in trade, very uneasy about his social position. He was rich, or rather his wife was, long experience in his mutable calling having taught him the value of prudence, as exemplified more particularly by keeping the bulk of his property "out of his own hands." Elias P. always wore black clothes made from the most expensive fabrics, dressing, as he repeated with inward complacency, "plain but rich." He had a bald head, no eyebrows, and that indescribably fascinating expression which is obtained by wearing the full beard everywhere else, and shaving to scarification the upper lip.

He affected to be very fond of art and artists, and set up for both critic and patron, more especially of the Italian Opera; but in reality his soul was completely bound up in money-getting, and his æsthetical pretensions were stock

investments worth just what they would bring in in popularity and social consideration. He had transacted business for many years for old General Von Donk, and a degree of intimacy existed between their respective families. Moreover most nights of the present passage of the *Assyria* had been enlivened by what the participants called "poker parties," in Mr. Staggers's Stateroom, which, with the aid of much punch and champagne, had contributed to the establishment of those confidential relations which now led Mr. Gossamer Von Donk to seek the worthy broker's advice and sympathy. Independent of the other embarrassments of his situation, the young man was becoming very jealous of the attentions paid Grace Vernon by Robert Eliot and Stephen Dangerfield, albeit his nicest scrutiny had failed as yet to satisfy him as to which of the two he had most reason to dread.

"I don't like neither of 'em," said Mr. Staggers consolingly. "As for Stephen Dangerfield, he ain't near so well off as he thinks he is, and that *I* know. He's kinder high and mighty because they live on their own land and hain't been in business: but that sort o' thing don't do, and oughtn't to do in a free country."

"No, *sir*," said Mr. Von Donk.

"The other fellow's bad enough," continued Mr. Staggers, "but folks *is* airy where he comes from, and p'raps he don't know no better. I wonder how much he's wuth."

Gossamer was ignorant as to Mr. Eliot's estate, but suggested that he didn't appear to have many clothes.

"Oh! you can't tell nuthin by that," said Staggers authoritatively; "these Englishmen, if they are *real* swells, everybody knows it, and they don't have to keep dressin' and undressin' themselves to show what they are. It's different with our folks. We hain't got no standards, so we have to kinder show off more. Now, nobody would know that *you* was anything, unless you dressed showy and expensive."

Poor Gossamer looked rather blankly at his uncompromising checks, but plucked up courage to question,

"What odds does it make whether Eliot *is* a swell or not?"

"Just this. Old Vernon, for all his liberal ideas, has a good deal of the old country feeling 'bout blood and breeding and such stuff, and he's been too careful to get his money not to value that pooty high too. Now, if Eliot don't come up to the mark on both points, he won't do, certain."

"I don't think the old gentleman cares a bit about tin, and I'm sure Miss Grace doesn't. Then, if it should be Steve Dangerfield —"

"I'll fix that," said the broker, "he'll have no chance at all. There'd be a crash, any how, when the old man goes, and they say he won't last much longer. He's pooty well gone in on the property question, tho' I guess Steve don't know it. I can let Vernon know just enough to answer the purpose. Then we'll get Sprigg to write to their London correspondent, and find out 'bout Eliot. P'raps he's done somethin' or another and had to leave; and p'raps, after all, he mayn't have no idea of the girl."

"But even if all this turns out as I wish, there's Job Heydensucker—"

"Don't you be alarmed 'bout *him*," chuckled Elias P. "I'll attend to him, *I* will. If he's got them notes o' yourn, he's just got to make 'em over to me, or I'll know the reason why. You and I can settle at some future time. I'm willin' to wait."

"I'm sure it's very kind of you—very. Ma'll make a fuss, but I guess I can get over her. I don't mind saying to you, Mr. Staggers, you being such an old friend, that I've been very unhappy about all this business. I never cared a bit about any girl before, and if these obstacles are removed, I have nothing to fear."

"Don't be too sure o' that," replied Staggers, sagely, "a handsome girl with a large fortune is the most uncertain thing in the world. Now, there's Cuthbert Boynton—I should keep an eye on Cuthbert Boynton. See he's leanin' over there now, pattin' the little girl's head!"

Gossamer smiled. He had no fears from that quarter. He had a contempt both for the cut and the trimmings of Cuthbert Boynton's clothes, which he could scarcely express in words. The idea of being supplanted by a man in such peg-tops as those was absurd. Besides, Gossamer fell into an error common to his class. He thought the careless ease which was characteristic of the Southerner's manner was indicative of a want of style. He contrasted this to Boynton's disadvantage with his own stiff and priggish ways. Altogether he felt quite safe as regards Cuthbert Boynton, and he said as much, rather flippantly, as, with his Mentor, he approached the group before them.

"Hush!" breathed the Broker, in a reverential whisper; "hush, he's got more'n three hundred niggers."

Seated on Oliver Vernon's knee, with its little head leaning trustingly against his shoulder, was the child rescued from the wreck of the schooner the day before—a little girl scarcely five years of age, but who, from the steadfast solemnity of her expression, and a certain peculiar intelligence of the eyes, appeared somewhat older. The eyes themselves were exceedingly beautiful, large, dark, and liquid, with sweeping, glossy fringes, and surmounted by brows of exquisitely delicate pencilling. The hair fell in dark-brown waves about a face pale from fatigue and anxiety, but the complexion had the soft olive tint which was in harmony with the coloring of the eyes and hair. The child's dress had been such as showed her to belong to people of refinement, but was sadly frayed and stained with sea-water, so that the resources of Grace and Elinor had been taxed to find substitutes for the ruined articles. She had complained of being chilled, and was wrapped at the moment in a large India shawl, whose bright hues threw out in picturesque relief the beauty of her eyes and complexion. Nothing had been taken from the wreck, as all that was movable had been swept away, and the little after cabin was half filled with water. The table, which had nearly occupied its whole length, had evidently been wrenched from its fastenings when the vessel

went on her beam ends, and was jammed against the doors of the small state-rooms on the lee-side. On the opposite, or weather side, the doors had apparently been torn from their hinges, and the rooms contained nothing but the bed gear in the berths. The child knew nothing of the fate of the crew. There had been a dreadful storm, she said, and Gerty held her in her arms. When the tempest subsided, there was no one on board but Gerty and herself. The negress had contrived to make a flag-pole of a small spar which had been lashed on deck, and she fastened to this a flag found in a locker by the transom. She had found some ship's biscuit, and a little water, but both were exhausted when they were rescued. It was quite evident that the negress had denied herself to prolong the life of the child, for the latter was but little emaciated, while her nurse was in the last stage of exhaustion; indeed, she was now very low, and had been quite delirious ever since she was brought on board. As to their origin and destination the child said but little. It was gathered that they had sailed from a port in Georgia, and were on their way to New York—"to see papa," the child said. She added that her name was "Ally," but seemed embarrassed when questioned as to her surname, and the point was not pressed.

The advent of the little stranger, as might have been expected, had produced no small commotion on board. Sprigg had already prepared a "sensation" article on the subject, to appear immediately in the *New York Crier*. Slymer was deliberating as to the best method of getting his own name published in conspicuous connexion with the romantic incident of the rescue. Mrs. General Von Donk and her daughters were in despair at their own ill luck, or late hours, which had prevented them from establishing a pre-emptive claim on so interesting a *protégée*. McSwindle was chiefly exercised about the "nagur," whom he set down as a runaway, and as being sent by a special and providential grace to afford him the opportunity of making "political capital," by causing her arrest in New

York, and subsequent "rendition" to her Southern master. Elinor and Grace were delighted with the happy accident which had brought them so lovely a plaything, while the deeper feelings of womanly instinct, rich in both their hearts, found ample scope in the care and pity they lavished on it. Stephen Dangerfield with his sturdy manliness was charmed in watching the beautiful girls caressing the poor little unprotected waif he had brought them. Robert Eliot was engrossed in profound consideration over the singular physiognomical resemblance he had discovered to exist between the child and Elinor Grazebrook. To Oliver Vernon alone did the new arrival appear to bring a trace of sadness. Overflowing as he was with humanity—a fact which the little one's quick instinct straightway detected and appreciated—ever happiest in conferring happiness on others, and not least so when the recipients were at once innocent and friendless, it might have been supposed that such an incident as this was well adapted to exhibit in lovable relief the most attractive qualities of his nature. And so indeed it was. But the shadow on his brow sprang from naught which had to do with the present. It was the foreboding of evil, or the recollection of misfortune. From the breast of the colored woman had been taken a letter, which was confided to Oliver Vernon; he had not disturbed the seal, but had merely glanced at the superscription. The young ladies had shared their state-room with the child the night before, when they made two small discoveries insignificant enough in themselves, but which Grace had communicated to her father—on the corner of a pocket-handkerchief a "A," in Old English lettering; and on the child's tiny chemise, in the same characters, worked in crimson silk, the word "Alabama."

CHAPTER IV.

WHEN the *Assyria* was gliding up the Narrows, her passengers were contemplating the end of their voyage with various and opposite emotions. Elinor and Grace anticipated with delight their return to the happy home they last year quitted; but discussed with an interest, not unmixed with anxiety, the chances of being able to retain the beautiful child as a permanent acquisition. To Elinor, the subject assumed an importance which she could not explain even to herself. Nothing was more natural than that an attachment should spring up, even in so short a time, for a charge so lovely and so interesting: but, with this feeling, there mingled in Elinor's breast a certain sense of personal responsibility, coupled with an oppressive conviction of impending danger. Perhaps the latter emotion was strengthened by her careful study of Oliver Vernon's countenance. The girl was so essentially sympathetic—so largely gifted with mysterious feminine perception—that she speedily learned to know almost the thoughts of those who came in contact with her under ordinary circumstances; but in the case of Mr. Vernon, the knowledge was all but literal; and, in matters approaching gravity, could hardly be mistaken. She had read in his mild and dignified face as he gazed on the unconscious child,—tempered with the love which was always there,—pity and apprehension: and her quick spirit hastened to share in both sentiments.

Grace, more volatile, and therefore less penetrating, had other claims on her attention, which, albeit sometimes annoying, supplied her with never failing sources of amusement. Gossamer Von Donk was persistent in his attentions, which were growing too pointed to be misunderstood. His jealousy veered from Eliot to Cuthbert Boynton, and from the Southerner to Stephen Dangerfield; and he strove assiduously to out-dress and out-talk all three. As often happens, he disposed most of his suspicions in the quarter

where they were least justified; and, aided by the machinations of his ally, the artful Staggers, and the experienced tactics of his mother, Gossamer succeeded in fastening on Eliot much of the society of the Misses Zerlina and Violetta; and, in an evil hour, a pledge to pass some time at the Von Donk cottage, at Newport, during the coming September. Stephen Dangerfield watched the little comedy with great interest, but with scarcely a suspicion in his honest heart, that the bewitching Grace had commenced to encroach therein. True, he had taken huge delight in frustrating various small schemes of Gossamer's, having for their aim walking the deck with that lady, getting next her at table, and the like; but this he accounted for on the score of his aversion for the young man, whom, in his double capacity of dandy and *parvenu*, Stephen by no means admired.

Robert Eliot looked forward with zest and curiosity to his coming tour through America. His family came of a long line of Whigs, and his father was now in Parliament. Some of the Eliots had held office, but they were not of the modern stamp of their party, with whom it appears to be accepted that, once they gain place, they are to turn Tories. They were consistent, progressive liberals, who believed in making concessions to the people, just as rapidly as, in a wise discretion, the people were intelligent and educated enough to make good use of them: who hated tyranny of all forms and shapes, and did not believe that any Government could be either good or permanent, which included in its policy the oppression of any race, class, or sect: who had no sympathy with the detestable politicians, who, in their horror of the *example* of successful freedom, are ever anxious to ignore or to crush all the happiness successful freedom surely brings where it exists. Imbued with these and kindred opinions, Robert Eliot was well qualified to survey with no unfriendly prejudice the institutions of a country, nominally, at least, freer than his own. Firmly convinced that her present form of Government was, under existing circumstances, the best possi-

ble for England and Englishmen, he did not assume as a necessary corollary, that a Republican was the worst form possible for America and Americans. He was disposed to accept the establishment of Republican Freedom in the New World as a providential dispensation for the good of the Old; not necessarily for that literal imitation whose expediency there are so many reasons for questioning, but for the promotion of that gradual modification in the privileges, education, and spiritual growth of the peoples which such an example induces; to acquiesce in which is to advance in light and happiness—to repel which is to retrograde to the darkness and misery of feudalism.

With his tastes and education, it seemed somewhat anomalous that Robert Eliot should fancy a Slaveholder—and yet true it was, that, with the exceptions of Vernon and Dangerfield, in each of whom he found much to esteem—the man he liked best of all he saw on board the *Assyria*, was the Southern planter, Cuthbert Boynton. This arose from a social and not from a moral sympathy. Eliot was the son of an English country gentleman. He had been accustomed to live among people whose position was assured, and who were not therefore impelled, as were too many of the Northerners around him, to be continually and in a hundred ludicrous ways, vindicating and asserting themselves. Secretly, he thought Mrs. General Von Donk very like an overdressed cook, and Mr. Gossamer Von Donk uncommonly like a linen-draper's shopman. Most of the professional men and students were terribly priggish, and Mr. McSwindle, who filled such a high civic position, was simply a drunken navvy. Sprigg and Slymer were vulgar enough, and the copies of the *New York Orier* and *New York Yahoo* he had seen would not stand editorial comparison with a third rate country newspaper, except in slang and self-eulogy in which they were unrivalled. Moreover, most of the men were objectionable in a physiognomical point of view. They had hard, cruel mouths, eager, cunning eyes, and cut their beards after methods fearful to behold. They called each

other "Sir" at every third word, and that with a highly objectionable emphasis. They talked over-much through the nose. They called their trousers, "pants," and many of them chewed tobacco.

Such were some of the distasteful attributes which might have shocked a less fastidious observer than Eliot, but of which none happened to be illustrated in Cuthbert Boynton. The latter had most of the attractive, and few of the repulsive qualities which are incident to the social conditions among which he was born. He had been much abroad, having spent some years at German Universities. He had also mixed with polite circles in several European capitals. His father had been a man of letters, and was one of singular gentleness and humanity. Although Cuthbert had passed much of his life where he was born—on a cotton plantation worked by between two and three hundred slaves—it will be readily perceived that circumstances had tended to modify the peculiar moral development which it is usual to suppose is fostered by living among black chattels. He had polish, reading, and unqualified ease and grace of manners. He was gentle as a woman, and brave as a lion. He had withal the air of independence and assured position which men acquire who live—directly or indirectly—from the profits of agriculture, and not from those of trade. Here was the chief point of sympathy for Robert Eliot, and one which led the two young men, differing materially in many respects, to fraternize not a little in this. So it fell out that the Englishman had accepted the other's hearty invitation to visit him at mid-winter on his plantation in Northern Alabama.

Oliver Vernon saw and understood the current of Eliot's reflections, as men do who recal a precisely identical experience.

"Society at the North," he said, "is in an imperfect, transitional, but growing state; that at the South is as complete and perfect, as, with the institution of Slavery, it can ever be. The South has organization, such as it is, the North has none. The highest ideal society must sub-

sist in an agricultural, and not in a trading community. Whether Slavery be right or wrong, the section wherein it exists has had an advantage in this respect."

"This then," mused Eliot, "is at least one argument in favor of the system."

"By no means," replied Vernon, "the system is purely adventitious and irrelevant; high breeding and elaborate culture are no more produced by Slavery than the rich soil of the Mississippi valley is produced by Democracy. Each would still exist in the total absence of the other. The staples of the South are cultivated in large plantations; were they tilled by free laborers their owners would still have the same wealth and the same leisure, which induce mental culture and social amelioration, as they have at present."

"But surely," said Eliot, "the North is also an agricultural country."

"Not in so exclusive a degree," answered Vernon, "and the subdivisions are vastly more numerous. The commercial interest is, relatively, far more potential than in the South. But there are other causes more depressing to our social standards. The most striking is the dogma of universal social equality as received by a huge, ignorant, foreign immigration. Suffrage is generously extended to all these people, and they wield it with remorseless activity. By sheer stress of numbers, they force into places of power and trust those of their own kidney, until office is degraded to a point where education and respectability refuse to descend to it. Look at McSwindle and judge. There are thousands like him, who, notwithstanding the debasing tendency of the policy which elects them, still demand and receive a certain recognition which every year is plunging lower and lower the standards of qualification for office."

"I can understand that," remarked Eliot, "but I cannot understand that, in a country containing so much intelligence as yours, such an evil should not be perceived and remedied."

"It is being perceived more and more every day," said

Vernon, "but there are various reasons which militate against the application of a remedy. For example, so long as the foreign vote is thrown for the most part in the interest of Slavery, any legislative restriction would be difficult, if not impossible. Many, again, who are entirely convinced that universal suffrage is premature, hesitate to say so for popularity's sake. Others, dissatisfied with results, are yet convinced that their favorite theory of 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number' is inseparable from universal suffrage. They see not the other side of the shield, and fail to apprehend the possibility that the greatest misery of the greatest number may ultimately inure from endowing them with privileges they know not how to use."

"And how is the question to be decided; if the disease cannot be restrained, will it not destroy the patient?"

"I fear it must run its length," answered Vernon, "and then it will become a question of kill or cure. There have been for many years the increasing signs of stupendous political convulsion. The unnatural alliance between negro slavery and the mis-called democracy of the North, rotten to the core, will soon fall to pieces from its own corruption. Then will ensue a terrible storm, which will annihilate those who raise it, but what it may leave behind no one can with confidence predict."

"The usual historical legacy, perchance," suggested Eliot—"military despotism."

"God forbid," replied the old man solemnly; "I have great hopes in the intelligence of the Americans themselves. Common schools are stronger than the sword, and they have wrought more in the United States than in any nation whose records have come down to us. Military despotism seeks success in the ignorance, not the education of the masses. Its ingredients may exist among the poor whites of the slave country—scarcely in New England or on the banks of the Ohio."

On the quarter-deck sat Elinor Grazebrook and Cuthbert

Boynton, talking of the beautiful panorama now swiftly passing before them, and thinking of many other things beside. Little Ally stood between them, and the young man's hand was playing with her glossy curls. Grace and Stephen, near by, were chatting unmolested, for Gossamer, with little eye for the picturesque and romantic, was settling accounts with the steward, and arraying himself in an entirely new assortment of gorgeous habiliments, wherein to astonish the officials of the Custom House.

The long spit of Sandy Hook, with its spreading projections of curtain and bastion, soon to grow up into frowning battlements; the lovely blue hills of Navesink, at once the ornament and the guide of the noble bay which reflects them; the brimming Shrewsbury, jutting mysteriously away into the Jersey shore; the labyrinth of islets and inlets clustering so inextricably about Fire Island and Jamaica; nay, even the classic precincts of Coney Island had been scanned and admired, and the spectators were now fixing their eyes upon the charming spot which incoming English folk so generally style "the Isle of Wight of America."

"People who live there," remarked Elinor, "are very proud of Staten Island. The views from it are singularly fine in all directions, and the interior itself is beautiful. There is, too, a refinement and taste in the residences and grounds—an air of solidity and *completion* not common as yet to rural places in America."

"To my mind those houses are too close together," said Cuthbert, pointing to the mansions which crowned the heights opposite, "certainly too near for the advantage of either. A degree of isolation is quite essential to the dignity of a dwelling."

"A dignity not easy to achieve," answered the young lady, "in the environs of a crowded city. But your evil, if it is one, will, I fear, be increased. Every one says New York is growing so fast that every bit of land skirt-ing the waters which surround her must soon be densely populated."

"'Tis a pity," said the Southerner; "nothing spoils the beauty of suburbs so effectually as this rapid growth of population arising from immigration. See! even these pretty villages on the shore have signs of the squalor and dirt which once we thought the peculiar characteristics of the Old-World towns, and not to be thought of in free and happy America."

"Surely *you* should not complain on that score," argued Elinor, "for Uncle Noll says the chief incentive for keeping this class of population in the great cities,—that is, for encouraging it to remain in them,—is that its votes may always be massed in the interest of the South, and overcome the balance against her, which accumulates in our agricultural districts."

The young man smiled.

"We are not," he replied, "to say sooth, over proud of our allies, but they serve as useful a purpose as if they were far more ornamental. We don't need their labor, and we do need their votes. They're good enough to give the North the former, and the South the latter. Each section gets what it stands most in need of, and it seems to me a very fair sort of arrangement."

"But," exclaimed Elinor, "is it either quite just or, in the long run, politic, to avail of suffrages given through ignorance? Can a true Republic long exist based upon such a principle?"

"We think," answered Cuthbert, "that if the votes fall on the right side it makes little difference whether or no they are cast in the dark. The Republic is only possible pending the equipoise created by the South obtaining the foreign vote. When immigration materially slackens, or the abolition faction materially strengthens, so as to overbalance her, she will abandon the Union. Southern men will never consent to be governed by the lawyers and traders of the North."

"Have they then no affection for the Union—no love of country?"

"They regard the Union as having been simply a

bond of mutual interest and convenience, to be dissolved whenever those sentiments have lost their original cementing force. Their patriotism expresses itself for the most part in attachment to their individual *States*, not to any Union of them. The former they regard as concrete and permanent realities—the latter as an abstract and temporary expedient."

"Ah, but we of the North have no such idea. I was taught, even as a schoolgirl, that, from the Lakes to the Gulf, all was equally my country; that the Mississippi was the same to us as the Hudson; that Maine and Alabama were alike the same; that Louisiana, Florida, Texas, California, each and all, whether, the *United States* acquired them by purchase, by warfare, or by cession, became part and parcel of our country just as if they had been among the original thirteen colonies. I was taught that the blood and treasure of the succeeding generations had been added to those of the first, for the purpose of creating one great, whole, and glorious country for the future, and homogeneous like France or England, only far more extensive and powerful. I believed that such a purpose was implied by our Constitution, expounded by our Statesmen, accepted and ratified by our whole people; and that whatever changes or modifications might occur, induced by new exigencies, denser populations, higher progress, we were still to remain, now and for ever, one nation."

"Truly, a grand Ideal," said Cuthbert, rather sadly, "but suppose, my dear Miss Grazebrook, that such a perpetuation is greatly to the interest of one principal section and greatly to the detriment of the other?"

"The discrepancies could be reconciled," said Elinor; "surely, in enlightened days like ours, such differences could be amicably settled. If men in power are really and truly anxious to do *right*, that is; but if some of them are determined to perpetuate and spread a monstrous wrong, and are bent on believing, or assuming to believe, that their moral and intellectual, as well as material prosperity depends on such a policy, why *then*, I suppose that—that—"

She hesitated with a scrupulous delicacy to complete the

sentence, conscious of having become a shade more earnest than was usual with her, and averse, with her high-minded instinct, to inflict even a trace of pain where it was impossible that it should be resented. Cuthbert saw her embarrassment, and instantly sought to relieve it.

"Pray conclude, Miss Grazebrook," said he, with perfect good-nature, "pray conclude. If I can't agree with the Oracle, its Priestess assures it a respectful attention. In the event of an ultimate clashing of interests, you suppose—"

"I suppose and believe," said Elinor steadily, "that, in such a case, the side where Right is, will assuredly triumph."

"I shan't quarrel with that prophecy," cried the young man, laughing; "if our people were confident of its fulfilment, they would be perfectly content."

Elinor saw his meaning, but she did not resume the subject, and Cuthbert Boynton himself lapsed into silence. For, indeed, he had commenced to feel an interest in the pale and thoughtful girl before him, which the indolent beauties of his native South had hitherto failed to excite. In a worldly sense he was well aware that he was an excellent *parti* for greater wealth and more unquestioned social position than Elinor Grazebrook could lay claim to; but he had quite enough penetration to perceive that such considerations would have as little weight with the lady herself as with Oliver Vernon, who stood to her in the relation of a parent. The strength of her convictions on a particular subject had been evident in various conversations like the foregoing, but he did not apprehend therein an obstacle of a formidable character to the hopes he had begun to cherish. A woman who felt and spoke as she did was certainly unfit to become the mistress of a Southern plantation. On the other hand, he knew of many highly cultivated young women of the North, who had quitted atmospheres as full of prejudice and misconception as Elinor's, to see their error, and become warmly attached to the "institution," when surrounded by its genial and enlarging influences. Possibly she might be induced to

add to their number. Altogether, he was in a state of no little doubt and anxiety.

Mrs. Von Donk, in her detective capacity of managing mamma, watched Cuthbert's manner to Miss Grazebrook with disgust and indignation. "It was her unfailing habit and accomplishment instantly to catch the scent whenever there was anything matrimonial in the wind. Men who might otherwise have remained quite unmolested, she straightway pursued and worried if she saw, or fancied she saw, a trace of such a purpose in their bearing towards any of the opposite sex. "A pretty pass indeed," she flustered into the ear of Staggers, "for a minx like Nelly Grazebrook, whose father drank himself to death, and whose mother was—well, no better than she should be—to be setting her cap at young Boynton, whose people had been in Congress, and a family almost as good as the Von Donks themselves. Nelly Grazebrook, indeed!"

"How much d'ye spose she's wuth?" asked Staggers, reflectively.

Mrs. Von Donk didn't know. A paltry ten thousand or so, she had heard. She had warned Gossamer not to be too intimate with her. Grace Vernon, of course, was a different thing. She would have all old Noll's money, and they were very nice people—just the thing for Gossy. Cuthbert Boynton wasn't going south until winter, and Mr. Staggers must manage to bring him to the house in Fifth Avenue, and, if possible, to Newport. Then there was that Steve Dangerfield,—there was something queer about *him*. See how he was playing with Grace Vernon's handkerchief—Grace Vernon, whom she regarded as almost her daughter-in-law already! Mrs. Von Donk was glad for one that the passage was so nearly over.

Stephen Dangerfield was, in truth, as Mr. Staggers conceded, "going it rather strong" with pretty Grace. He had that on his mind which made him nervously solicitous to reach his home; but he had most certainly begun to find consolation, as the passage drew towards its close, in the reflection that she would be very near indeed to that

home; so near, in fact, that his black mare, Vixen, would take him from The Rest to Uplands in thirty minutes. This was a consideration happily unknown to Mrs. Von Donk, but of which Grace herself was very clearly advised. Oliver Vernon yearned to be once more at his quiet mansion. He had numerous poor friends and pensioners in the country round, and, although he had left in his old servant, David Greenwood, a faithful steward, he had a good man's earnest wish to see for himself that the happiness and comfort he was wont to spread about him had met neither check nor hindrance, or, if they had, to set about the remedy. There was, too, another suspense hanging about his heart—a doubt which, even if it brought pain, he sought to have resolved. But we will not anticipate.

In another hour the doubts and fears of the busy little world of the *Assyria* were at an end, so far as their life in her was concerned; for the stately vessel lay safely by her wharf at Jersey City, and her passengers were scattered far and wide in the seething vortex of the great neighboring capital.

CHAPTER V.

IT was a dark afternoon in early September, and the air was dull and heavy, as if waiting in sullen expectation for the rain, which had been threatening for some hours, but had not yet commenced to fall. Masses of lowering cloud obscured the sky, and ever and anon a fitful gleam from the sinking sun straggled through chance rifts in the dusky canopy, and served to increase the gloom it interrupted. Such a transient ray was just gilding the chimneys and roof-points of an irregular and picturesque building which crowned the summit of one of the most romantic portions of those lofty cliffs which the early explorers of the Hudson called The Palisades. The noble

river flowed far below, making a course almost due south, until it mingled in plain view with the waters of that majestic bay which is the glory and the strength of the great city of the West. The mansion was old and weather-worn, part of it having been built not long after the hopes of the Stuarts, elated by the fall of Mons and of Namur, had been so cruelly crushed by the disaster of La Hogue. The Dangerfield family had been among those which adhered to the standard of the exiled house, and had been rewarded for its long-suffering constancy on the restoration of Charles, by a considerable grant of land in the distant colony named after his unfortunate brother. Their subsequent attachment to the cause of the latter exposed them to suspicion and inconvenience, and, although no actual step had been taken to his prejudice, the ancestor of the present family found it prudent to put the ocean between the ministers of William and Mary and himself, soon after the fall of Limerick. After a few years of doubt and wandering, he had settled on the banks of the Hudson, and built a dwelling on the lovely spot which was to prove the future homestead of his race. His life had been one of trouble and excitement, and he soon grew to cling with a warm attachment to the tranquil shades and beautiful scenery which surrounded his new abode. He improved, set out trees, reared cattle, and passed his days in a peaceful calm which strongly contrasted with the struggle and turmoil of his early life. Thus it was that he called his home "The Rest," and instilled into his growing children that affection for it which he had learned to cherish, and which they in turn transmitted to those who came after. In this manner it happened that the estate had remained to the old name for many generations, and had escaped by a rare fortune much of the subdivision and mutilation which are so common in the absence of a law of entail. As time rolled on, people got to think the family tenure as firmly established as the giant cliffs themselves; and that the latter were quite as likely to be overturned as that one not of the name should ever hold or occupy "Dangerfield's Rest."

And, indeed, the family attachment was justified, for there are few situations as lovely even in a region where nature has been so bountiful. The view which stretches on one side to the Atlantic, extends on the other to the stately Catskills. Intermediate, and on either hand, courses the broad stream, the beauty of whose banks has been so greatly extolled, and which can hardly be exaggerated. Villages and spires innumerable impart life and variety to the landscape, and the vast city in the distance, with its suggestion of ceaseless activity, gives zest to the enjoyment of the seclusion from which it is surveyed. Countless vessels glide in every direction, from the tiny sloop with its soaring spread of canvas, to the gigantic steamer which seems yearly to be growing in size. Far away over Manhattan, the winding East River, connecting New York Harbor with the opening Sound, adds to the panorama and enhances its living interest. Looking westward, the spectacle, if less diversified, has its own peculiar attractions. There can be seen pictures of rural beauty in sunny fields and deep-green woods, reaching in placid alternation clear beyond Hackensack until they melt into the hazy horizon.

We have said that the mansion was old and rambling, but it was substantial enough, notwithstanding. The original building had been of rough stone, and was built in the form of a parallelogram, with a low tower at one end. Three generations back, a wing had been added at the end opposite the tower, and which, as the main edifice faced toward the South, ran parallel with the river, and looked out upon it. The father of the present occupant had constructed a similar wing at the tower end, which, for some reason of his own, he had built of brick. There was, however, much shade in that immediate vicinity, caused not only by deciduous trees of artificial growth, but by some noble evergreens which were indigenous: and, thus protected, masses of English ivy had been in course of time induced to spread over a great portion of the exterior façade, and were even commencing to encroach upon the tower. The central part of the pile was two stories in height, but

the stone wing had been built rather higher, and the brick one slightly lower than the original structure. The whole presented an incongruous but picturesque appearance, which was increased by the odd jumble of styles, there being features which might have been claimed by the Elizabethan and Tudor architects respectively. Thus, the old building had deeply embayed windows at either end, and long galleries reaching through its length,—but the walls were surmounted by low battlements, as was also the tower, and the principal entrances were formed by flattened arches. A piazza which ran around the outer sides, thus forming three sides of a quadrangle, heightened the composite character of the mansion, and augmented the anomalous features which shocked the disciples of harmonious and exacting taste.

The house stood in a comparatively open space of, perhaps, four acres, at one extremity of which were the stables. The cliff formed one boundary of this space, its crest being about two hundred yards from, and much lower than, the foundations of the building. A strong fence constituted a protection from the dangers of the precipice, being placed at some distance from the extreme brink, and backed by a dense hedge of buckthorn. The remaining boundaries of the lawn consisted of groves of oak and hickory mingled with many fine specimens of the natural evergreen common to the high land of the region. A carriage road ran in easy curves from the stables to the main entrance, and thence passed through the grove to the southward, striking the highway at a distance of a third of a mile. Around the house were many flower-beds of tasteful form and arrangement, separated by winding paths, and protected by well trimmed box, but most of the space between the building and the cliff consisted of smooth rolled lawn which sloped downwards to the fence.

In the stone wing facing the east was the library, the windows of which opened on the piazza, from which again, at a point close by, a low flight of steps descended to the garden. The library had been a favorite apartment with

the Dangerfields ever since its construction. It was a large and old-fashioned, but handsome apartment, with bay windows, and finished within of sturdy unpolished oak. The book-cases, chairs, and tables were all of this material, and as most of the many volumes on the shelves wore antique and sombre bindings, the room might have looked gloomy but for the relief of the green morocco covering the seats and writing desks. There was a trace of warmth too in the lengthy draperies which fell from the embrasures of the windows and looped up at the sides. The windows were so deeply embayed, that there was ample room at the sides for sofas, without impeding passage to the sashes which opened on the piazza.

In this room, Martin Dangerfield had passed most of his waking hours for the past fifteen years. He had been rather wild in earlier life,—had gambled and drank hard, and his name had been associated with many questionable freaks and adventures,—yet these dissipations had never partaken of a character which the conventional world calls dishonorable. He had always paid his debts, although they had been of the heaviest, and had often subscribed liberally to charities. He had always kept a pew in the village church, and occasionally occupied it. If he was supposed to have lost heavily at the gaming table, he was known to have ample resources, and none could say he was niggardly in drawing on them. He was rigid on the point of honor, and regarded his family name and estate as trusts to be upheld and retained as spotless and unimpaired for his descendants as he had received them from his ancestors. Up to the age of forty-five he had been what is called a free liver in the largest sense of the term; but at that time he had suddenly changed his mode of life, and it was common to say that Mr. Dangerfield had "reformed." Whatever he did in secret, no one of course could tell: but certain it was, there were no more card parties, no more drinking bouts, no more riotous company at The Rest.

It was generally credited that the change was brought about by the conduct of his only son, Stephen. The latter,

a volatile, passionate, and very handsome lad, had certainly been treated capriciously and sometimes unjustly by his father. His mother, unhappily for him, had died when Stephen was not yet ten years of age, and Martin Dangerfield was choleric, domineering, and often very tipsy. Such a father, however well meaning or affectionate, will seldom fail to damp the happiness and warp the character of a sensitive and high-spirited child, and the present case was no exception. Some bitter words and an exhibition of brutality one night, were followed the next morning by the disappearance of young Stephen, when he was just turned of fifteen. In the heat of his resentment, the boy made his way to New York, and being large and strong for his age, he had no difficulty in shipping for a voyage to China. The vessel sailed before the father had succeeded in tracing the runaway, who, however, left a letter explaining what he had done. When Stephen returned, he found his father a changed man. Their meeting was affectionate, and their relations had been no less so ever since. From a roystering, arrogant profligate, Martin Dangerfield had become a quiet, timid recluse. The son never knew him to raise his voice in anger since the night before he absconded from the parental roof. He deferred to the young man in a fashion that was almost womanish, and seemed bent on making him forget former asperities in the excess of his present gentleness.

Martin Dangerfield was now about sixty years of age, but he looked much older. His frame was bowed, his hair was white, and there were deep furrows on his brow. Naturally of a powerful constitution, he had been somewhat shaken by habits which had extended too far on in life for the effect to be altogether eradicated by subsequent abstinence. His face wore an habitual expression which was not really natural to it—for it indicated both deprecation and timidity. It was singular to see almost the self-same features—making allowance for difference of years—expressing frank confidence and unshrinking courage in the countenance of the son.

Stephen had spent much of his time from home, for in sooth there was little of society or amusement there, and he was fond of both. He had read law, but seemed disinclined to settle down to practice. The love of travel and adventure was still strong upon him, and as his father was sufficiently liberal in money matters, and his future was assured, he felt justified in following his inclinations. Yet, although there had never been a difference between the two as to money, and although Martin Dangerfield was not chary of his confidence in other things, the old man had never admitted his son into the secrets of his affairs, or acquainted him with the extent of his resources. Stephen knew of course that there were certain farms and dwellings and stores, which brought in fixed rentals. But he knew nothing definite of the aggregate, or as to whether there existed incumbrances. It was only within a few weeks' time from that of the opening of this history that he verified a suspicion that his father had for years been in the habit of making large disbursements for unknown purposes, but which had no reference to the keeping up of his establishment, and which brought no apparent return.

Martin Dangerfield was sitting in his library, and—an unusual thing for him in these days—he was receiving a visitor. This personage, a tall, dark, handsome man, might have been forty-five years of age. He wore the dress of a gentleman, but there was a certain insolence in his manner, and a restless expression in his sarcastic and striking countenance, that a physiognomist would have regarded with suspicion. He had risen, too, during a conversation which had grown somewhat heated, and was leaning over the back of a chair with extended hand, and one foot planted on the seat itself.

"You must call off your dog, Martin Dangerfield," said the man coarsely. "I'm not so good-natured as I used to be, and I might do him a mischief. He's safe enough now—thanks to his own blundering folly—but he'll soon be back again, and on the scent. It's your business to tie him up—I'm going to stay here now—*here*, do you understand?

and I haven't been through what I have to be badgered and hunted by a whelp like that."

A crimson spot burned in the old man's withered cheek as he retorted:

"What he did, he did of his own accord. In God's name, why should *I* wish him to be mixed up in the business! He found, without my connivance, that some one was injuring me—making my life miserable—impairing the fortune which is his as well as mine. He begged for explanations—I refused them. Then he thought—you can say how justly—that a designing adventurer was practising on the fears or credulity of a weak old man. Son-like he tried to probe the mystery to apply a remedy."

"He'll find it sorry work if he probes any further. I don't want to be annoyed, and I don't mean to be. I came back to be comfortable and easy—in a word, to enjoy myself—and you must see to it that, at all events, none of your breed crosses my path."

"But why come back at all,—surely the world is wide enough for both of us. I did my best to assure your future; you promised to remain."

"Ah!" said the other, with a malignant smile, "that was some years ago. I had very good reasons for not staying here, and very good reasons to go out there. *Now* I have very good reasons to come back here, and very good reasons not to stay out there."

"I thought you had made a great deal of money, and that—that the society there was to your taste."

"Oh! there was gold enough—that is, at first—but it was with me as with most—making isn't keeping. A man who banks a game has to take the chances; and when there is no limit and heavy betting, the bank sometimes breaks."

"They told me you were settled at Sonora; that you had a *ranch* there, and a Spanish wife. I never dreamed of your coming here again," complained Martin Dangerfield.

"You underrated my personal attachment for yourself,

I always meant to come back, and spend the evening of my days with you," returned his guest more cheerfully, as he marked the tone of weary distress with which the old man spoke. "I got sick of San Francisco—too many of the same trade. Sonora was capital for a time. We might have brought away a couple of hundred thousand. But my partner, Grayson, was imprudent—irregular, you know. One night there was a stupid mistake—something heavy on case-cards; he was dealing, and undermarked the people betting; thought they were mere roughs just in from the diggings; so there was a card or two slipped. The heaviest loser saw the little game, and happened to be plucky and resolute. He laid hold of a box full of gold coin and checks, and swore he'd have back his money. There was a scuffle and a rush, and the touters and pickers-up-of-sleepers jumped in, and bang! went half-a-dozen shots. Jack Grayson shot two of the men, and got all his money back, but it cost him dear. People were getting disagreeable about such things. The friends of the chaps who were shot went about the neighborhood, and kicked up a tremendous row. At about three o'clock they went and pulled poor Jack out of bed at the Chrysolite Hotel, and the first thing I saw in the morning, as I rode in from my *ranch*, was him hanging from a flume which crosses the Columbia road. Then I suddenly remembered that I had very important business at Stockton, which had been left over a long time; and I turned my horse's head, and galloped westward."

"But why should they harm you—you were not responsible for the m—misfortune of Grayson."

"Why, you see Judge Lynch isn't always so technical in his expoundings and constructions as Judge Kent or Judge Story. *Here* a man must be proved to be *particeps criminis*—there they occasionally take it for granted—a vast difference, Martin Dangerfield."

"I understand you," said the old man gloomily, "but did this involve the loss of your accumulations?"

"Only in part. There was trouble about dividing and

settling Grayson's estate—two or three wives among other things. I didn't fancy going back to Sonora, so I got a trusty man to go there to attend to my interests in the matter—which he did very effectually by bagging all the money he could find, and taking the Overland Route home. However I had other resources—some land and buildings I contrived to sell and get the money for, and then returned to San Francisco."

"I sent you two drafts for \$5000, each, and promised you others if you remained there."

"I couldn't. Had I wished it ever so much I couldn't. You see I was rather in the dumps about my troubles and losses, and I had no heart to turn to anything except 'fighting the tiger.' Then things grew worse and I was drawn into one or two little scrapes—quiet enough, but some people knew of them. I had a very promising little concern in Sansome street, and seemed to be picking up again, when the scoundrels of city officials opened up all my tracks and cleaned me of every dollar to escape publicity and prosecution."

"But they did not molest you further—and as you received funds from me you were not compelled to leave."

"That's exactly it; *I was* compelled to leave. You see there arose a sort of mutual admiration society there which took a very philanthropic interest in my welfare. They called themselves the 'Vigilance Committee.' Two of them waited on me one day, and, after expressing in a general way their admiration for my character, and their interest in my future prospects, they favored me with a courteous invitation to embark in the Brig *Sarah Jane* which was to sail that evening for Mazatlan."

"And you then made up your mind to return hither—hither where your presence has already produced so much misery."

"I then made up my mind that I had been a great jackass ever to go away at all. Setting inclination aside, it was clearly my duty to stay here and be a comfort to you. But although I could not recall the past, I might,

in a measure, atone it, by devoting to you the remainder of my future. Such is my intention. I made my way in a coasting vessel to Realéjo, crossed to Greytown, steamed to New Orleans, came up the river, and here I am."

"I can do no more for you here, than in either of the places you name."

"No, but you are more certain to do it, and you are also much more prompt. It suits me to have you prompt. In the transaction your son unfortunately got wind of, he would not have done so had you not been so dilatory; if you are dilatory in the future he will be likely to learn more—that would be unpleasant."

The old man made an impatient gesture. "In a word, James Kirkwood," he cried querulously, "in a word, what do you want?"

"In a word," replied the other firmly, "money, and plenty of it. None of your pitiful hundreds, but thousands when I want them. Then I want social consideration, or at least as much of it as your countenance can give me. I think of settling for life, and there are many old and wealthy families in this vicinity with eligible and desirable daughters. I must have a suite of apartments here, in this house, to which I may come when so disposed. This place suits me. I need rest, and I propose to come here to take it."

"As to money," responded Martin Dangerfield, "no fortune would long stand your extortion. Have you the remotest idea of what you have had? Near a hundred thousand. Shall I leave my boy a beggar for your sake? You are determined to drive me to extremities. Do so, and you will have nothing. I cannot supply your extravagance at the rate you demand. I have not the means."

"You can get them. Here is the place——"

"Never!" exclaimed the old man angrily, "I'll not mortgage a rood! You may strip me of every dollar of money, but I will not imperil one inch of my son's inheritance."

"Let me see," said Kirkwood in a reflective tone, and

taking out a set of tablets, "he sailed on the seventeenth. He will return as soon after he arrives as possible. Consequently we may expect him at furthest by the twenty-fifth. Say three weeks hence."

"I know what you mean," cried Dangerfield sharply. "I can put it out of his power to interfere. I can make over the property to trustees, and set you at defiance."

"You have talked in this manner before, but you have never carried out your threats. Your son will wish to marry some day. 'Tis high time to think of it now. Have you considered this side of the question? You are proud of this spot, the home and heritage of your family; who is to inherit it after your son? where is the heir who is to perpetuate this unsullied race?"

The old man shuddered slightly, and there was a tremor in his voice, but his words were resolute:

"Sneer as you will, Kirkwood, and mingle sneers with threats. There are limits to my docility, bounds to my weakness, and this is one of them. Come what may the place shall never be mortgaged or sold."

"That remains to be seen. Possibly I may not require that sacrifice on the altar of friendship. But heed me well, Martin Dangerfield," he continued, abandoning the tone of badinage he had for some time employed, "henceforth there is no need of wrangling words. I come not here to argue and entreat, but to command and to enforce. Remember," and his face assumed a deadly and menacing aspect, "what a word may do, and how long that word has been withheld. Remember that others are involved besides yourself—those who came before, those who are to come after. Remember that so long as you have known me I have shown no want of resolution, and believe what I now tell you, that so long as we have to do with each other I must, and by G—d *will* be obeyed!"

"Bold words!" cried a voice without, and repeated as the speaker appeared at the window. "Bold words to be spoken to a Dangerfield, and that in Dangerfield's Rest!" and Stephen Dangerfield advanced into the room.

CHAPTER VI.

WE need not employ the trite illustration of a bomb-shell to depict the astonishment of both Martin Dangerfield and his strange visitor, on the sudden appearance of Stephen. The latter gentleman, with the *nonchalance* which was so marked a feature of his character, had, after saluting his father, dropped into a chair, from whence he coolly scanned from head to foot the person of Kirkwood. It is as common as it is true to remark that there are moments in which we live hours, perhaps sometimes years, as Kotzebue makes Mrs. Haller say. However that may be, it is certain not more than thirty seconds of silence ensued after Stephen Dangerfield entered the room, and that in so brief a space the latter believed that in the man before him he was destined to deal with an unscrupulous and formidable enemy. It is also true that Kirkwood with equal celerity perceived in the bold-looking young eyes, which were so steadily taking his measure, there shone a spirit and alertness which presaged trouble and impediment to his own plans in the future. The elder gentleman, it would appear, foresaw more danger than the others, for he was shaking with anxiety and apprehension.

"Stephen, Stephen!" he cried in a shrill and tremulous voice, "speak, what did you hear?"

"Nothing, father, nothing," replied the son soothingly. "I knew you were in the library, and came directly across the lawn to find you."

"Not a word?" pursued the old man sharply.

"Have you trained me to play the eaves-dropper? I have only this moment arrived from New York. I heard nothing except the slightly forcible expression this gentleman was employing to you as I came on the piazza."

"An expression," said Kirkwood instantly, "in very bad taste, to say the least, and for which I beg to apologize most heartily. Mr. Stephen Dangerfield, I believe. Permit me to introduce myself; my name is Kirkwood, a

very old friend of your father's; and one, I am sure, he and you will forgive a hasty expression, based on the misunderstanding of a matter long since dead and buried."

The man's bearing was utterly changed—a metamorphosis from a bully to a courtier. There was a half paternal air in his manner toward Stephen, and one of respectful esteem when he turned to his father. The breeding was quite unexceptionable. It had the absolute stamp of even polished society. Stephen's first inclination was to laugh in his face, but Martin hurriedly added his explanations:—"Yes, yes, we are very old friends—very old friends—I—I dare say I was in the wrong—you must know, Stephen, I rather provoked Mr. Kirkwood, so you must forget what you heard—especially as he has made the *amende* so handsomely."

"I remember you as a boy," resumed Kirkwood affectionately, "you had a spirit of your own then, whatever your rubs with the world may have made you since:—so that I trust you'll think no worse of me for a childish outbreak of which I'm so heartily ashamed."

Stephen was in doubt. His first impulse—his first *instinct*—had been to regard the man before him as the incarnation of sinister malevolence. He remembered him in his youth well enough,—and remembered him with a certain aversion, albeit his perceptions were not then sharpened up to their present edge. From various circumstances he had been led to regard Kirkwood as, in a manner, his father's evil genius. Of late years he had been absent from the country, but a short time before had returned. Stephen had been advised of his movements from a source which will hereafter appear. He made no doubt that this visitation was designed to commence afresh the old game of extortion and rascality which he had reason to suspect had been played years before. The young man had for some time past entertained grave apprehensions that his father was sinking into an imbecile condition. Should this be the case, he would be more than ever at the mercy of his persecutor. Stephen had determined to seek out

Kirkwood,—who had cautiously abstained from visiting The Rest during his presence there,—and to bring matters to a crisis which should lead to explanation and ultimate settlement. Having determined on this course, he pursued it with characteristic energy. The conviction of serious danger which was suggested by the manner in which he received his information—the nature of the source alluded to—led him to stop at no obstacles in carrying out his purpose. When he discovered, therefore, that Kirkwood had sailed for England in the A——, he determined to follow instantly by the next steamer, which happened to depart within forty-eight hours after. Stephen had been advised of the trick whereby he had been deceived, but through accident and carelessness the advice did not reach his eye until he was far to the eastward of Sandy Hook. Of his subsequent procedures we have already taken cognizance.

Thus Stephen had, or fancied he had, ample reason to regard James Kirkwood with distrust,—and yet the extreme candor and affability of that gentleman almost made him, for a moment, ashamed of his suspicions. Meantime, his father continued the conversation :

"But by what magical process do you find your way to The Rest, my son? Your letter stated you had taken passage in the *Stromboli*, and your name was certainly in the list of passengers. We thought you were by this time in England."

"I was about to put your question to this gentleman, sir. I had expected that *he* as well as myself would, by this time, have been in England. He took passage in the A——, and his name was, to my knowledge, in the list of passengers!"

"You surprise me," said Kirkwood blandly. "My name is not so very common;—but your mistake obviously arises from there being another who may, or may not, have the right to bear it."

"Do you mean," cried Stephen, "that you did not engage passage by the A——?"

"How could I have done so," answered the other with perfect simplicity, "since you perceive I am here?"

"It is tolerably clear," quoth Stephen, "that you did not sail by that vessel, but the retaining passage, of course, is a different thing."

"My dear young friend, I assure you, I did neither the one nor the other."

"And would you have me believe," pressed Stephen, "that you were ignorant that I was in earnest quest of you?"

"On the contrary," replied Kirkwood frankly, "it was my knowledge of that very fact which brings me here at this moment in order that you might be gratified."

Stephen looked inquiringly at his father.

"Mr. Kirkwood mentioned," said Martin Dangerfield, with some hesitation, "that he had been given to understand you were desirous of meeting him, and expressed surprise and—and regret—that you were not at The Rest on his arrival."

"For myself," said Stephen with a puzzled air, "I owe my return to the fortunate accident of crossing a westward bound ship at sea;—but such a thing isn't likely to be duplicated in the same month."

"Hardly," said his father drily; "but you need seek for no such explanation, since that which you already have is sufficiently explicit."

"I dislike to appear tenacious, sir. But, with my present sources of information, I must admit that, had I remained at The Rest, this gentleman is the last person I should have expected to see here."

"Your 'sources of information' have misled you. Such things occur in the experience of all of us. In any case, since I am here, and since I am both ready and willing cheerfully to give you any more trustworthy information which may lie in my power to impart, there is surely no need for any misunderstanding between us." Kirkwood had risen while speaking, and as he concluded he held out his hand to Stephen with a cordial and winning smile.

The young man took the hand with some reluctance, which he found it impossible altogether to refuse, and said steadily:—

"I trust there may be less misunderstanding on my part, sir, when I have enjoyed the privilege of an hour's conversation with you."

"Not to-night—not to-night, Stephen," said his father nervously, "you must be fatigued with your journey—we dine at six—almost directly—"glancing at a clock on the oaken mantelpiece—"and this evening, Mr. Kirkwood and I had already devoted to the transaction of some important business."

"As you please, sir. Only, the sooner Mr. Kirkwood can vouchsafe me the explanations he tenders, the more gratified I shall be."

"My young friend and I will take a stroll together after breakfast to-morrow," said Kirkwood, "when it will give me great pleasure to satisfy him in every respect."

"Be it so, sir," and Stephen, saying something about changing his dress before dinner, and casting a look of blended doubt and affection upon his father, left the room. As the door closed behind him, the old man gave vent to a long and painful sigh—one of those heavy expirations which tell at once of suffering and relief, and which always come with a temporary respite from some dreaded calamity.

"Decidedly," said Kirkwood, "decidedly your son is a clever young man. I didn't think there was so much in him."

"You have seen too little to judge, I should say," demurred the other, not without a glimmer of fatherly pride.

"Pshaw! I judge, not by what he says, but by what he expresses, and does. Anyhow, he's not a man to be humbugged by cock-and-bull stories. We must tell him the truth, Martin Dangerfield!"

"THE TRUTH?"

"The Truth. What are you startled at? It will be I, not you who will have to do it. I tell you he knows too

much of what has passed between us to be satisfied with prevarication. He must know all."

"You are mad!"

"Always obtuse. Reflect and realize if you can that our interests are identical. Unless his suspicions are laid at rest, once and for all, he will be taking steps which may breed fresh mischief. Leave all to me."

"I must, I suppose. But never will I live to witness the expo—"

"Hush! you may have no great confidence in my generosity; but your ruin would do me no good—would certainly cause me great loss and inconvenience. You can trust me for this, if for no other reason."

That night, from his chamber in the second story of the western wing of the mansion, Stephen Dangerfield saw lights in the library until a very late hour. He tossed to and fro upon his bed in uneasy slumbers, and, starting up for the tenth time to look forth on the cool grey of the coming dawn—he still saw the pale glimmering of candles—still saw the dusky shadows of forms moving up and down between their dim light and the gloomy windows of the library.

CHAPTER VII.

FRESH and radiant was the morning after Stephen's arrival at Dangerfield's Rest. The breakfast hour wore heavily enough, however, each of the three who passed it together showing signs of that restraint which accompanies demanded and yet ungiven explanations. Martin Dangerfield avoided his son's eye, and his face, usually troubled and care-worn, exhibited traces of the vigil of the night before. Stephen himself was thoughtful and expectant. He was determined to watch narrowly the

speech and conduct of their unwelcome guest, anticipating in each, subterfuge and dissimulation. That Kirkwood had taken especial pains to avoid him, there could be no doubt. That his father had been anxious to conceal the nature of his relations with this man was equally certain. Both had been taken by surprise, as they could by no possibility have foreseen a return so sudden, based as it was on an accident so uncommon. They had, however, had time for fresh collusion, if their wishes pointed in that direction. Whatever reasons had existed for the previous mystery, probably existed still. Stephen felt, therefore, that he had a right to expect renewed attempts to mislead him; and, while Kirkwood was the recipient of his father's hospitality, it seemed difficult to approach him with that peremptory tone he had fully resolved upon adopting before their present meeting. He was thus reduced, in a manner, to the weapons of vigilance and observation.

As for Kirkwood himself, he understood precisely what was passing in the young man's mind, and governed himself accordingly. He had led rather a rough life of late, and it put him in high good-humor to be surrounded by the comfort and luxury he was accustomed to consider as his natural and legitimate surroundings. The soft beds, the solid, old-fashioned furniture, the bountiful table, the plate, the wine, the ready attendance, all soothed and gratified him; and, as he had made up his mind to enjoy them for some time, the future appeared altogether *couleur-de-rose*. Then the man's digestion was perfect, and he really took more than usual satisfaction in the mere animal fact of living. He could be thoroughly good-natured when no one thwarted him too much. On such occasions as the latter, the inner nature might exhibit itself unpleasantly. The close observer would then perceive how much early association and training has to do with the development of inner natures of this peculiar character. For Kirkwood was born and bred on a large plantation in Alabama. Up to his twenty-fifth year he had lived in an atmosphere of human slavery, and, to his misfortune, slavery of the most

cruel and repulsive type. He was the natural son of a wealthy and dissolute planter, by a very beautiful quadroon girl. The father, a man of gross tastes and appetites, and barbarously cruel to his negroes, had still enough of human feeling not to enslave his offspring—an abstinence uncommon enough in that section, and which might have attracted more notice but for the fact that there was not the slightest trace in the child of negro blood or coloring. The complexion darkened, to be sure, as he grew to manhood, but even then was fairer than that of many a Castilian; so that, as the mother died early, and there had been, for various reasons, some pains taken to conceal his origin, James Kirkwood passed through life as an unsuspected Caucasian. He received an irregular and smattering education—including the reading of some law at the office of a county judge in a neighboring town—and on the death of his father, who left him a small provision, he came north, and settled at New York. Of his subsequent career we have already had some inklings.

On his appearance at the breakfast table, Kirkwood exhibited no little gaiety and animation; and it was not until his efforts were repeatedly dampened by the silence of his companions that the exuberance of his spirits subsided, and his energies were confined to the edibles before him. He was desirous to establish with Stephen Dangerfield a familiar and off-hand sort of relation, which that gentleman was in no wise disposed to encourage. Each rebuff, however, increased Kirkwood's respect for the other's talent, and confirmed him in his previous conviction, that it would be expedient to be quite unreserved and frank in the communications he had promised to afford him. Stephen might or might not have been conscious of producing this effect, but his behavior was dictated as a matter of fact, by his determination to treat Kirkwood with measured formality until those communications should satisfy his mind that the latter deserved at his hands the treatment of a man of honor—a contingency which at present he was very much disposed to doubt. As for his

father's endorsement, Stephen was persuaded that it was extorted by some sinister process, which it was his duty to detect and to foil.

The meal concluded, Martin Dangerfield betook himself to his library, and Kirkwood at once proposed to fulfil the last night's agreement.

"Now, my dear young friend," he said cheerfully, and lighting a cigar, "now, I am altogether at your service. Where shall it be? Shall we stroll along the edge of the cliff, or shall we avail ourselves of the shady retreat afforded by yonder tasteful summer-house?"

"Suit yourself, sir," quoth Stephen, curtly; "wherever you can make it most convenient to be brief and to the purpose."

Kirkwood looked at him with a compassionate eye.

"'Tis the essence of youth to be hasty," said he, philosophically, "even when the apples we seek turn to ashes in the mouth. When you have lived as long as I—who have seen, I dare say, half as many years again as your own—you may find there is more wisdom than you think for now in the sage old maxim—*festina lente*."

"We can scarcely make too much haste," returned Stephen, "when the fruit we seek is in plain view, and the road is clear to the tree. I haven't often wasted time when such were the conditions."

"One instance at least must be fresh in your memory," answered the other significantly, "as your late journey may suggest."

Stephen flushed.

"Any one may blunder," he retorted quickly, "when people find it to their interest to set up false guide-posts. I shall try to profit even by *that* experience."

The two walked on silently, Kirkwood thinking the young man was piqued by the recollection of his mistake, and that it were better not to pursue an irritating subject,—Stephen almost forgiving his enemy, if indeed he owed to his machinations the late trip over blue-water, for the sake of the sweet face the recollection brought up so vivid-

ly before him. Presently they came to the summer-house, and Kirkwood seated himself, inviting his companion, with a gracious wave of the hand, to do the same.

"You have a lovely place here, Mr. Dangerfield," he remarked, gazing over the beautiful prospect with a not unappreciative eye. "Pity if it were ever to pass out of the family."

Stephen came back to earth with a rough shock. "And do you know of any reason, sir," he demanded, almost angrily, "why it should do so?"

"None whatever," replied Kirkwood, gently emitting a smoky spiral. "That is—with reasonable prudence. I was only thinking," he went on rapidly, and checking an obvious intention to interrupt him, "that you have arrived at a period when most young men of your position have more than thought of marriage."

"You forget the maxim you favored me with just now. This may be one of the instances wherein I am wise enough to apply it. But 'tis hardly a subject which can be of any particular interest to yourself. With your leave we will proceed to the one which brought us here."

"Willingly. Pray believe, however, that anything interests me which concerns the Dangerfield family. My long friendship for your father prevents such an interest from savoring of assumption. At all events you will find it to be genuine enough as we get on."

"I understood you to express a readiness to enlighten me on certain matters which have, to say the least, an equivocal appearance, and into which, I suppose you are willing to concede, I have some right to inquire."

"Quite right—to both propositions. For my part I regret such an explanation has been deferred so long, and I beg you to understand that it has been so deferred, strictly in accordance with the wishes and injunctions of your father. I am prepared to reply fully and freely to any inquiries you may think proper to make, since I have now his permission to do so."

"Granted last night?"

"Granted last night."

"Very good—then I have no difficulty in proceeding. I infer, of course, that my father will verify any statements you are kind enough to make."

"It is in your power, of course, to put them to that test."

"The reply to a single question will involve, I should judge, all the information for which I seek. It has come to my knowledge—it is immaterial how, as the fact is sufficient—that my father has been for many years in the habit of making very heavy disbursements for purposes unconnected with the improvement of his property, having no reference to investment, or in any sense relating to personal expenditures. I have also become cognizant—and again the process is unimportant—that these moneys have invariably found their way into the hands of a single person."

"Go on."

"My father is growing old—old in mind and energy, perhaps, rather than in years. I have preferred not to harass him on a subject obviously distasteful to him. Strictly speaking, I might not, possibly, have the right to interfere. But the disquietude which this business has occasioned him—a disquietude which has deepened into absolute distress—indicates that my duty as a son is, clearly, to relieve him if I can. Such has been my motive in tracing out the person to whom I refer. For many years he has been beyond my reach. Of late he has thought proper to place himself within it. From him I resolved to demand explanations."

"Quite right."

"You agree with me?"

"Perfectly, in all respects."

"That simplifies matters, since, as I need scarcely add, the person in question is—*yourself*."

"Quite right again. What do you wish me to do?"

"What do I wish you to do!" echoed Stephen in some astonishment. "You admit the accuracy of the statement I have made?"

"Entirely, in each and every particular; and, that being the case, I repeat, what do you wish me to do?"

"Do!" reiterated the young man, annoyed by the coolness of his interlocutor. "Do! why to tell me, since you are so obliging, why you have received all this money, and what you have done with it?"

"As to your first question," said Kirkwood, deliberately knocking the ashes off his cigar, "I reply, nothing more easy. The second is more difficult. With every wish to gratify your curiosity, I fear that *that* will involve a great deal of profound investigation."

"Well, then," said Stephen impatiently, "suppose you answer the first to go on with."

"With much pleasure. You will allow me to remark, *en passant*, that I cautioned you in advance as to the apples and the ashes. Properly to answer your question obliges me to go back a few years. It also involves touching upon a subject rather painful for a son to discuss, or a friend to advert to. Yet as the business is opened at all, candor is distinctly the only policy. You are, perhaps, not aware, that in his younger days your father played rather deeply?"

Stephen bowed in acquiescence.

"He was unfortunate enough, as others have been before and since, to carry this weakness rather too far. He became very heavily involved: so much so as almost to compass his ruin. Some of his largest obligations might have been repudiated, and the law would have borne him out in such a course. His pride, and the jealous and scrupulous regard wherein he ever held the old Dangerfield name, would not suffer him to adopt it. I was at that time a practising attorney in New York—a warm friend of your father's, though previously a stranger to his habits and embarrassments. He came to me in his distress, and I undertook to save him and this property from the sheriff's hammer. To do so involved great sacrifices on my part. I disposed of all my own property and strained every nerve to raise the required sum. It amounted to about a

- hundred thousand dollars. The loan was secured by a bond and a mortgage on Dangerfield's Rest,—then, by no means, worth so large an amount, though it may be now. The interest on this debt has been regularly paid, and about a fifth of the principal. I hold the mortgage which secures the ultimate payment of the remainder."

Stephen Dangerfield sat through this momentous recital in a state of perfect stupefaction. He wished to stop his ears, to rush headlong from the spot which had witnessed a disclosure so ruinous to his hopes and prospects in life, but a species of fascination seemed to chain him to his seat, and to compel him to listen to what further Kirkwood might have to say. The latter paused a moment, and expelled a column or two of blue and fragrant smoke as if waiting for any response Stephen might wish to make; and proceeded:

"I would gladly have spared this narration for your sake, and as gladly have avoided the unpleasant office of repeating it for my own. Your father may live many years, and will do all he can, no doubt, to disencumber the estate. The farms are very profitable, and much may be done in a short time. I have given you a general outline of the facts. When you desire it I will furnish particulars. You will bear me witness that I have avoided you, knowing well the explanation you sought,—and that you have in a manner extorted it from me."

The speaker rose as he concluded, and guessing from the young man's abrupt gesture that he wished the interview to end, he lighted another cigar, and strolled along the cliff.

Stephen remained for a space as if paralysed. He tried to believe what he heard was a dream, but he found himself too truly in possession of his senses. He tried to believe that it was a lie,—a base, malicious fabrication, concocted for some as yet inscrutable purpose: but he found his soul pervaded with an awful conviction of its truth. He glanced back through all the incidents of the past fifteen years, and remembered at every turn circumstances

which corroborated the tale and stamped it as genuine. He even thought matters far worse than Kirkwood represented them, for he now recalled many facts and evidences which proved that his father's pecuniary position was becoming yearly more embarrassed.

Determined to be satisfied, he sprang to the piazza where he had entered the night before, to seek endorsement or denial from that father himself. A glance into the open window of the library was sufficient. Martin Dangerfield was sitting, his face buried in his hands, the thin white hairs straggling over his trembling fingers. Stephen turned away sick at heart. Where were now his hopes, his rose-colored dreams of Grace Vernon? The young man was not yet either a hero or a saint, and he spent the rest of the day locked in his room, and having for his sole companions—the gloomy and foreboding reflections of despair.

CHAPTER VIII.

IT was the day after the arrival of the *Assyria*. Eliot and Cuthbert Boynton had gone to the same hotel, promising themselves a day or two of sight-seeing together, before their proposed trip to the sea-shore. Oliver Vernon with his family had gone up the river to their home, after extending a cordial invitation to both the young men to become his guests at Uplands on their return. Stephen Dangerfield, as we have seen, had gone in the same direction; nor did all his intense desire to be with Grace prevent his taking the train at Chambers street, within the hour that he reached the Battery.

The female Von Donks were rummaging and fussing about the house in Fifth Avenue, and awaiting impatiently the arrival of their boxes of latest Parisian finery, that they might select the most appropriate ammunition for their approaching campaign at Newport. Gossamer himself

was in high spirits. The dreaded Heydensucker was rusticated at a distant establishment of a hygienic character, ostensibly under treatment for a febrile disorder, but in reality, as Gossamer was assured at his club, to tide over a composite crisis of pecuniary embarrassment and *delirium tremens*. Thus relieved, even without the aid of Mr. Elias P. Stagg's proposed operations, the young man regarded the future with great complacency. He even prepared an elaborate note of proposal to Miss Vernon, which he only awaited the acquiescence of his ally to despatch.

Mr. Stagg's had hastened on 'Change to receive the welcomes and congratulations of his friends, among whom he was regarded as a sort of financial Crichton, and not a little esteemed, in spite of the rather slippery character of his dealings. McSwindle had thought it wise to abandon his design on the "nagur," for fear of making powerful enemies among her protectors, and because Cuthbert Boynton, on whose aid and countenance he somewhat relied, had treated his advances with a contempt which was perfectly undisguised. The worthy Milesian, therefore, having shown himself in the congenial atmosphere of the City Hall, had repaired to his favorite haunt at "Hook and Cuff's," where he was uproariously received by an anomalous band of his compatriots, most of whom presented that ingenious and striking *ensemble* which is effected when a person with the face of a "cut-wood robber" wears the dress of a mute at a funeral.

Sprigg was the lion of the hour at the *Crier* office, where he was writing and telling incredible stories of his exploits and adventures, and where he had an invitation to dine with the editor-in-chief the next day, Slymer having invited himself, as was his custom, for the same occasion.

Robert Eliot made the usual observations which Englishmen are prone to make on entering New York. Everything was bright and gay in coloring; too much so, in fact, for eyes accustomed to the humid atmosphere of his native island. Broadway was a very fine street—finer probably,

and longer certainly, than Piccadilly or Oxford street—but rather more mixed and promiscuous in shops and associations. Those huge hotels were too square and prosaic; surely if they could devote so much space to them, they might afford a little to embellish with a trace of poetry such vast blocks of use. Very fine shops certainly; but they look as if they had their whole stock in trade thrust in the windows. And such lots of great hulking fellows behind the counters! Why, they ought to be in the army or behind the plough. People look dreadfully anxious and skinny—in a hurry? of course, but then people are always in a hurry in a commercial city. Stand at Temple Bar, or opposite the Bank—precisely the same thing as Broadway or Wall street. Very pretty women, very; but rather too thin for our taste. They say your women fade early. Climate? no; want of exercise, I fancy. The physiognomy does *not* strike me agreeably; the mouths are too hard, and the eyes too eager. These people want a leaven of artistic culture—more leisure—more generous and elevating pursuits and studies. The women dress too much; a morning dress for promenade should not be the dress for a carriage or a ball-room; what do you think I saw at the breakfast table? a woman in a full set of diamonds! In England they would think her mad, and I dare say she is. The men, too, even the gentlemanly ones, don't seem to know the difference between a morning and dinner costume. What *can* you do without cabs? Omnibuses? Yes, but how slow and uncomfortable! and I see you have no conductors; and, setting the rate of speed aside, how much time must be wasted in taking up and setting down each passenger. Why don't you have Hansoms? "Opposition of omnibus and street railway men?" But I thought this was a free country; and you Americans think so much of doing things quickly. Policemen, splendid fellows, certainly. We should make them Life-Guardsmen or Grenadiers. What do you allow vans and baggage-wagons in Broadway for? The road is blocked half the time by vehicles which might as well run in parallel

streets—shocking waste of time and very unsightly—singular evils for Americans to submit to, etc., etc.

Staggers presented himself in the afternoon, and managed to inveigle the young men into a call at the *chateau* Von Donk.

"You ought to know the General," he reasoned to Boynton; "capital representative man of the Empire City. Hates the Abolitionists wuss than a pestilence, and goes in for the true interests of the country. You want to see all sorts of folks," he continued, turning to Eliot. "Von Donk's one of our Merchant Princes. He's one of nature's noblemen, he is."

"I thought he was in the army," remarked Eliot.

"So he is," responded Stiggins; "militia service, the true bulwark of our Republican Institutions. Our reg'lar army aint much, that's a fact—only a nooculus, as we say. We are a practical people, Mr. Eliot, and we don't want a great crowd of chaps lazing about doing nothin' in peace times. If we get into a scrimmage, we just call our bone and muscle into the field, and do things up in good shape, slick and quick; when the war's over they go back to their avocations, addin' to the wealth and strength of the country."

Arrived at their destination, Eliot was rather surprised and amused on finding the door opened by a well trained English servant in livery.

"Rather anti-democratic that, isn't it, Mr. Staggers?" queried he.

"Well, our folks do kinder rile over it," explained the broker, "but it's the fashion now, and you have to do it if you're in our best society. They can't get no free-born American citizen to put on such things, but them from the old country, bein' used to be down-trodden and oppressed, of course it comes easy to 'em. Even they kick over the traces after they've breathed the air of liberty for a year or two, and find out they're as good as anybody, and can git to be President if they're smart."

"But surely some must perform domestic offices," said

Eliot, "if all refuse to act as servants, how can you get on?"

"Oh, there's English, and Scotch, and Irish, and Germans, coming over all the time, and they fill up the vacant places till they get sick of it, and then others come along."

"I should have thought that in a free country, and one in which there are so few idlers, no honest labor would be considered disgraceful."

"Well, you see, it ain't in accordance with the spirit of our institutions to set one man up over another, and folks go agen it. You know they all have votes. That chap with the buttons has just as much power as the General himself. He haint been here long, and he gets good wages, but bime-by he'll see things as they are, and they'll have to get some one else."

"The fact is, Eliot," said Cuthbert Boynton, "people who emigrate to this country are composed, as a mass, of the lowest and least educated classes of European nations, and they either won't or can't see the distinction between a political and legal equality, which is possible, and a social equality, which is impossible."

"Then why bestow upon them every privilege which the State can confer, until they are educated to appreciate it?"

"There ain't no distinctions," said Staggers stoutly; "we hold all men to be born free and equal, exceptin' niggers."

Eliot did not reply to this conclusive declaration, as the party found themselves in a drawing-room, and in momentary expectation of the ladies. The apartment was gorgeously ornamented with pink and gold, and, in expense, if not in taste, might have been the reception room of a duchess. The furniture peeped out here and there from under its coverings of brown holland, in dazzling accord with the ceiling and walls, and a huge chandelier gave promise of overwhelming refulgence when put to its use. Gilding and white marble were in profusion, and the feet of the visitors sank deep in a carpet of sumptuous cost and thickness.

"Mrs. General knows how to do it, she does," said Staggers, admiringly, as he stooped down and commenced a minute inspection of the expensive fabric. "This must be wuth as much's ten dollars a yard."

The eyes of the two young men met, and both turned away to conceal a smile, when the door opened with a bang, and Mrs. General and her daughters made their appearance.

"Dear me, Gentlemen, I'm really very happy. So kind of you, Mr. Staggers. I hope I see you quite well, Mr. Boynton. You were very good to come before leaving town, Mr. Eliot, and town so dull just now."

"Oh, dreadful!" piped Zerlina Von Donk, in a high monotone, without the slightest trace of modulation, "'taint gay a bit now!"

"And all our set out of town," chorused Violetta, in precisely the same voice, and with startling rapidity, "you'll see no life at all, Mr. Eliot, till you get to Newport!"

"I'm sure I find New York very interesting," said Eliot, through the confusion of salutations and finding of seats.

"Pretty pattern, ain't it, Mr. Staggers?" continued Mrs. General, who, to the amusement of Eliot, exhibited no more surprise than that gentleman did embarrassment at being caught in the act of examining and appraising her carpet. "I *do* take great pride in my house," proceeded she, gracefully receiving the broker's enthusiastic acquiescence. "If it wasn't for servants, I should have nothing to ask for. They *are* so troublesome, and do you know they get worse and worse every year."

"Mr. Boynton doesn't know such troubles," cried Zerlina, gazing at the young planter with a mixture of envy and awe, "he has the same servants always, and they have to be respectful and obedient."

"But they need so much care and watching, Miss Von Donk," said Boynton, "I doubt you would save trouble, could you make the exchange."

"But you have foreign servants, I hear," remarked Eliot to the elder lady.

"Oh certainly, some of them. We have a French cook, and the girls have a French maid, and we've a Scotch coachman, and an English footman, but for housemaids (who give the most trouble always), we *must* have these low Irish;—and they're *such* a dreadful nuisance. Such silks and feathers and gold watches as they wear;—and getting more impudent and neglectful and independent every year."

"I'm glad you like New York," squealed Violetta; "of course it aint *anteek* like London, nor *commy-fo* like Paris, but it has beauties of its own. You must see the Fifth Avenue Hotel, and the Academy, and the Central Park, and the High Bridge, and—"

"La, Violetta," interrupted her sister, "Mr. Eliot doesn't want to see such things. He comes to see Niagara, and the Mississippi, and the Natural Bridge, and most of all, our best society."

"And where's General Von Donk, ma'am," inquired Mr. Staggers, with affectionate interest, "haint he come up yet from down town?"

"Oh dear, yes. He'll be here in a minute. He's got somebody in the library. Some political business."

Mr. Staggers looked intensely sly, and proceeded, "Guess he'll run, won't he?"

"Really I don't know," replied Mrs. General. "It cost him twenty thousand, year before last; expenses, you know, for Pythagoras Hall. You know Pythagoras Hall, of course, Mr. Eliot?"

Mr. Eliot hadn't the honor—had never heard of him, in fact.

Mr. Staggers explained that this was the popular but accidental designation of a certain political organization.

"Well," continued Mrs. General, "he don't like to spend money pretty well, but they're trying hard to get him into it again, I reckon. Mr. Kole says he's the man of the people, and made a speech last week in which he referred

to 'a high office in the gift of a grateful people, awaiting the acceptance of that incorruptible patriot and high-toned gentleman, P. Von Donk.' But the General says they are rather heavy on him, whatever that may mean."

"P. Von Donk's the man for my money," cried the Broker, with great enthusiasm. "You know, ma'am," added he in a confidential manner, "that office's wuth more'n two to one what it was year before last, and that makes a heap of difference."

"I presume," ventured Eliot, "that you manage elections very much as we do in England?"

"Pooty much, sir, pooty much—exceptin' always, we don't exclude the hand of honest toil from its share in governin'! All vote alike unless it's niggers, which is different, I take it, from all them ere rotten old aristocracies of Europe—no offence to *you*, Mr. Eliot."

"Oh, none in the least," said Eliot, highly delighted and edified. "I think all such experiments have their value, and if yours is successful after a fair trial, I've no doubt we shall ultimately copy it."

"Dear me, I hope not," ejaculated Zerlina. "Your Queen, and Lords, and Commons, and all are so nice—everything so settled, and orderly, and genteel. Gossamer says our system is fearfully low, and that all political power is falling into the hands of the very dregs of society."

"For shame, Zerlina," interposed Mrs. General. "Your brother knows nothing about it. He only says that because De Talbot Jones says so all the time at the Club, and Gossy thinks it's fine and *distongay*."

"Well, I don't know, ma," persisted Zerlina, "I don't see what great honor there is in being an office-holder, when such people get in as there are now. There's our butcher running for Alderman of this Ward, and there's McSqueeze who cheated his nieces out of their property, and set his shop on fire to get the Insurance, he's in the Common Council, and there's that Mayhem who bit a man's nose off, and only came out of the Penitentiary last year, he's nominated for Supervisor—"

"Spots on the sun, Miss Zerlina," interrupted Staggars, "spots on the sun, which only shows off more bright and refulgent the glory of our democratic institootions."

This novel illustration, delivered with a glibness which suggested frequent use, served as a cue for the entrance of General Von Donk, who now presented himself, and came forward to greet his visitors. The General was a short thick man, with a red face, and an exaggerated cerebellum. He spoke slowly, with no little pomp, and seemed to have some trifle in his mouth which impeded his utterance.

"How are you, Mr. Staggars? How are you, Elias P.? Mr. who? Oh, Mr. Eliot—sir—your most obedient—very glad I'm sure—company of all distinguished foreigners—Mr. who? oh, Mr. Boynton—delighted—sunny South—happy combination, eh? Effete old despotism and land of the Free and the home of the—"

"La, pa," said Mrs. General, coming to the rescue, "what are you talking about?"

The General wasn't quite sure. He was very glad to see all the gentlemen. He fidgeted a little, bit his nails, blew his nose, and finally subsided into a huge arm-chair in a corner. Mrs. General glared at him with a severity elicited by her conviction that, as was sometimes the case, the General had been indulging rather too freely in cocktails.

"We're going to beat 'em hollow, sir," he declared oracularly to Elias P. "We've got all the Irish vote—Lysandy's got that in his pocket; then we've got all the liquor-dealers and policy-shops; all the sporting men we have, of course; then the *Crier* and the *Yahoo* are comin' out heavy on the cussed Abolitionists; you'll like that, won't you, Mr. Boynton? then there's a lot of emigrant ships due before the election—five or six thousand more, sure; altogether things have a very good look."

"That's the talk, General," said Elias P.; "nothin' like making your calculations well in advance." And the two launched into a mysterious labyrinth of political slang and mutual confidences, wherein the names of "Pythago-

ras Hall," and "Lysander Kole," and the feasibility of "crushing the Niggerheads," and "conciliating Hominy," were unintelligibly mingled.

Eliot and Boynton, having exhausted their small talk with the ladies, took their departure, after reiterating their promise to present themselves at Newport during the ensuing season.

"These men are of your political party, are they not?" asked Eliot, as they descended the steps.

"Yes; they are our allies," said the Southerner, with something like a sigh. And the young men walked arm-in-arm down the street.

CHAPTER IX.

IT is a law from whose operation we can no more escape than can the people of less favored nations, that political and social standards rise or fall in a community in direct sympathy with the virtue and culture of its public men. The proposition may of course be stated conversely and be equally true. Measured by this standard, the people of the United States have been steadily deteriorating for the past quarter of a century. This is not a very agreeable statement, but it is a true one, and the conclusion is well found. Educated Americans may plead that the public men of their country do not justly represent its better classes, but in so doing they concede the truth of the argument; for what is it but decline in virtue that can give birth to the criminal supineness which furnishes the reason why those classes are *not* represented, as is alleged? Surely the Fathers never intended the existing order of things. Universal suffrage is philosophically reasonable only when ALL classes of the community actively exercise the right to vote, each class thus exerting a check on the possible excesses or vagaries of the others. But if, when a theore-

tical universal suffrage exists, the great mass of the poor and ignorant exert not their privilege, the putative democracy approaches an oligarchy, as is seen in the Southern States. And if, in such a case, the great mass of the wealthy and educated exert not their privilege, the putative democracy approaches a mobocracy, as is seen in the Northern States. In point of fact, the abstinence in the first hypothesis is compulsory, and therefore innocent; but in the second it is voluntary, and therefore criminal. Results have verified that the tendency in the former case is to thrust into power despots; in the latter, demagogues. They have also shown that such apparently antagonistic elements can assimilate for interested purposes—the demagogues agreeing to perpetuate despotism so long as they can share in its profits; the despots agreeing to perpetuate mobocracy, so long as they can purchase its suffrage. Both have been going further and further away from a true Democracy, but in opposite directions. By and by, with increasing and overwhelming pressure, the venal links which have united them will fly asunder with a mighty crash—and then will come the storm.

Those who have power, however obtained, will use it to put in high places men like themselves. The low and ignorant hate polish and cultivation; the wicked and unscrupulous detest the virtuous and conscientious. Remembering this, how can Americans expect to be well served or honored by their public men, when the power of the low and ignorant, the wicked and unscrupulous, has been yearly on the increase? How can they look to be respected abroad when governed at home by those who have neither the virtue to do right, nor the education to know how, even if so disposed? There are, to be sure, noble exceptions. There have been many men of the South with culture and no virtue; there have been many men of the North of virtue and no culture. Each have sown abundant mischief for their country to reap in the future. There have also been men, both North and South, who have been so unfortunate as to exhibit in an eminent

degree both these great qualities of character and education; and as soon as the exhibition has produced conviction, their grateful countrymen have quickly taken the alarm and swept them into political oblivion.

To such a height has this proscription of merit attained, that clever men, ambitious of office, have been known to go about pretending to be numskulls, that they might establish a fraternal claim on the constituency they sought to propitiate. The mob will only forgive ability on condition that a leaven of unquestionable turpitude be associated with it. They can only excuse probity when the intellectual dulness of its possessor has been satisfactorily established. The fate of the candidate who, not to be paradoxical, is so injudicious as to be both good and wise, can safely be predicted in advance.

The offices in the gift of a great and free people ought surely to be the highest objects of ambition to its most intellectual and upright citizens, but with us what is the fact? Is it not notorious that the standards of qualification for every political position, from President to Excise-man, are becoming constantly lower and more contemptible? Is it not true that ignorant, brutalized, nay, often undeniably wicked men, clamber to high places now, whom public opinion twenty years ago would not for a moment have tolerated in low ones? Can it be denied that this political degeneracy has steadily induced social degeneracy, so that merit, virtue, character, count for nothing in the balance against mere unworthy success? Can it not be demonstrated that the vilest, the most slavish form of dollar-worship, the most vulgar and contemptible ostracism of education and intellect, never so nearly approached the lowest depths of which they are capable as they do among us to-day?

And yet all these gross evils of *Sans culottes* rulers, money-idolatry, hate and contempt for brain, perversion of the noble theory of democracy to a tyranny of the few in the South, and a tyranny of the many in the North,—all this bragging and inflation and telling of fantastical

lies,—all this shallow, shopkeeping, conceited manner of viewing life and its obligations,—all this pander-like truckling and compounding with a huge national crime by men chronically hoarse with shouting as their first maxim, “*all men are born free and equal*,”—all these and more nauseating excrescences have sprung from roots as pure as snow,—from motives as catholic and generous as ever actuated human intelligence. “All things the worst are corruptions from things originally designed as best.”

America, with noble and lofty liberality, opened her protecting arms to the oppressed, the downtrodden, the miserable of all the nations of the earth. She went further, and offered them freely all the privileges, all the birthrights of her own sons, born and nursed in her bosom. This was magnanimous, but it was not therefore wise. She should have educated before she enfranchised, and the exile required *more*, not less, enlightenment, than the child who had breathed the life-long atmosphere of freedom. The moral and political Caspar Hausers should not have been expected to do credit to themselves or their hosts by entering the arena with *athlètes* before the cramps and prejudices and superstitions of their previous lives had been corrected by the graduated invigoration of the gymnasium. The process is baneful to themselves as well as to those with whom they commingle. The clearness of their perceptions is blunted, among other evils, by the enjoyment of a blessing they have done nothing to earn. Question them on that point to-day, and they will arrogantly claim as a right incontestable, that which is only theirs by generous, if injudicious, concession. America has made the mistake of a too indulgent parent. She has bestowed the reward which properly waits on toil and discipline without exacting those preliminaries. She has enfranchised before she has educated, and the tardy remedy is education, large and universal, but given in the inverse order. The suffrage should be contracted, and, simultaneously, the schools should be expanded; the first need only last for a space, but the second should last for all time.

Even the toleration of that darker Wrong which has so impeded Progress can trace its being back to motives commendable and "designed as best." One who hates it with a bitter and loyal hatred has said,—and his saying deserves respect as that of a man who has breasted all but singly a perfect hurricane of obloquy in his adherence to a just cause,—“To oppose England it was necessary to be United; and to be United it was necessary to tolerate Slavery.” This was indubitably true, and may now be more readily accepted in view of the fact that, happily, to be United it is *not* necessary to tolerate Slavery any more than to oppose England—so far as the great sections are concerned—it would be necessary to be United. But the Wrong should vanish with the necessity which palliated it.

The panaceas for our evils, social and political, are Education and Liberty—and they should be administered in their natural consecution. We are on the right path, but we might almost as well be on the wrong one if we either go too fast or walk backwards. Either is opposed to true Progress, and it is high time to take special pains to avoid both if we would not stumble into anarchy. We walk backwards when we legislate for the extension of Slavery, we go too fast when we confide the Suffrage to the ignorant and undeserving. Nor will this noble country achieve its destiny in greatness or in culture until the belittling scheme for innumerable petty sovereignties each sufficient in and to itself, and each independent of all others, be practically abandoned; a scheme which tends to the establishment of the civilization and manners, as it copies the political system of the aboriginal savages who preceded us in possession of the soil. The pillars are necessary to support the roof and crown of the edifice, but without it neither of them could stand alone. To isolate any of their number is to overthrow the whole. Let Americans take heed that they jealously guard and preserve their beautiful and symmetrical Temple—the precious legacy erected by their ancestors at such bitter cost of blood and travail. Let them take heed that the mad phrensy of am-

bitious oligarchs and the combined efforts of wily and ignorant foreigners shall be crushed alike by inflexible patriotism. So shall the home of Liberty be preserved for the generations to come, and posterity be spared the sad spectacle of our children's children wandering disconsolate among its broken arches and its fallen columns.

CHAPTER X.

UNDER a spreading elm with a fine old house a hundred yards to their right, and the broad Hudson silvering away seaward far below on their left, sat a party whom either the eye or the ear of an observer would have told him were supremely happy. Three lovely girls—who, but for the childish form of the younger, might have shamed the choicest ideal of the Graces—formed a group of unconscious beauty, the effect of which was heightened by the heaps of flowers which filled the laps of the elder, and from which they had crowned the glossy head of their little *protégée* between them. So thought Oliver Vernon, who had approached unobserved, and who stood a few paces off, leaning on his staff, and listening to the musical laughter which pealed from the rosy lips before him. A short space behind, again, stood a man of about fifty years of age, whose spare, sinewy form, long features, and kindly twinkling grey eyes, told plainly that their owner had sprung from the land of the Puritans.

A genuine New Englander was David Greenwood. Shrewd, industrious, and sententious, he came of people who tilled the soil, worshipped God, and spoke their native tongue after the fashion of their fathers. His steadfast integrity had, years gone by, recommended him to the confidence of Vernon, and he had long filled a position such as a steward occupies in old-fashioned families in England. It was even one of greater trust and respon-

sibility, for his attachment to the family and to the interests of its head had been so proved and tried, that most matters were left to his untrammelled discretion, and his authority at Uplands was only second to that of Vernon himself. Between this personage and Aunt Mercy, who had supervised the household affairs since the early death of Mrs. Vernon, and who was the only inmate who ever ventured to dispute David's supremacy, there had existed for many years a solemn flirtation which every now and then threatened to arrive at a climax, and then subsided into the old routine again. The worthy couple appeared to imagine that they were destined to live for ever, and that there was "time enough" always to take a step which should only be contemplated with extreme gravity and deliberation. "It's darned easy," reasoned our calculating Romeo, "it's darned easy runnin' your head into a noose, but it ain't so slick haulin' of it out again." So time rolled on, and Aunt Mercy and Uncle Dave were still in a state of single blessedness.

"Oh, papa!" cried Grace, catching sight of the intruders, "how is poor Gerty? And what does Dr. Saunders say of her?"

Vernon shook his head. "Her bodily health will soon be restored, he thinks—the mental is still dubious. Her head is no clearer than it was on the day she was taken from the wreck—perhaps may never be."

The child's eyes filled with tears, and she took the wreath gently from her head. "I don't want to wear flowers if Gerty is never to get well," she murmured as if in the way of apology.

Vernon raised her in his arms and kissed her affectionately. "You mustn't fret about that, Darling, since 'tis God's will. Gerty doesn't suffer pain. If she had not made the sacrifices she did, you might not now be alive and with us. Does Ally want me to find her papa?"

The child looked at him wistfully, and put her arms about his neck.

"I'd rather stay with you—and sister Grace—and sister

Nelly." For she had been taught to use the endearing appellation.

"You havn't heard any thing, papa?" asked Grace, anxiously.

"Nothing more than I knew before, my child. As to whom the little girl belongs, I entertain no doubt;—but much as to the policy of restoring her. Conflicting claims may arise—and until these are adjusted, at least, it may be better for all concerned that she remains with us."

"Can't I stay always?" asked Ally pleadingly. "I can't go back to Auntie now, for she's got some new little girls—and I don't want to go to a papa I never saw—and Gerty's crazy, and I *must* stay with her."

"Indeed, dear, you shall not leave us if I can prevent it," said Vernon, gently.

"But you *can* prevent it—you are a man, and rich, and strong, and you own all the land about here, and nobody can take me away unless you like."

"Suppose sister Grace had been lost, and a gentleman had found and taken charge of her, shouldn't I have the right to go and take her when I found out where she was?"

"Oh! but you wouldn't if she wanted ever so much to stay where she was, and they wanted her to stay too."

"But all people are not so good and kind as papa," suggested Grace, coming to Vernon's relief, "and might not be so generous, you know."

"That's why I want to stay with him," said the child simply.

"And so you shall," cried the warm-hearted girl impulsively, "and as long as you please, and I don't care who tries to prevent it;" and away she ran over the turf, the tiny philosopher scampering hand-in-hand by her side.

Elinor rose and stood by Vernon's side, and then the two, as if by previous concert, walked slowly towards the cliff.

"You have verified what we suspected?" she inquired, in a low voice.

"I have. The inquiry was immediately successful. I got the reply since breakfast. It is here," and he placed a letter in her hands, which she, after asking leave with a mute sign, put in a pocket of her dress. They walked on in silence for a while, when Elinor again spoke:

"Where is she now?"

"In New York. It is best I should see her myself—after taking legal advice, of course. I shall go to town for the purpose to-morrow."

Another pause, lasting for a few moments, and again broken by Elinor:—

"Do you think it best that I should also go?"

"Under existing circumstances, I should say decidedly not; certainly not before I ascertain the condition of things."

"You do not intend resigning the child into her custody?"

"Not willingly, certainly. The case is a very difficult one. Legally speaking, hers would be, I believe, the best claim. The little one has been in the charge, and practically under the control, of her father. You know how unscrupulous he is; should we give her up, he may give us serious trouble."

"He is not in the country."

"He has returned during our absence, and is now in New York."

Elinor mused for a few moments, and when she spoke her voice was full of disquietude.

"Are we never to see the end of that terrible business?"

Vernon took her hand with an affectionate smile.

"My dear girl, none of us escape afflictions in some form or another. Let us thank Heaven yours have arisen from no fault of your own. There is no need to revive the sad story of the past. I shall do my utmost to induce both parties to leave the child in my charge as an easy and judicious compromise. The mother has sense and discretion enough to perceive the advantage to Ally herself in such an arrangement; the father—whose protection to my mind is

even less desirable—is selfish enough to be willing to escape responsibility if assured that his daughter's future is not to be associated with that of her mother."

"You do not think he will molest——"

"He can have no motive for doing so. Bad as the man is, he is not a person to give himself trouble unless he sees some immediate advantage to be derived from it. Besides, his past life has been so equivocal that he will be cautious about provoking new enemies."

Elinor sighed and proceeded:

"I cannot help feeling guilty at times, surrounded as I am by friends and comfort—feeling as if I were leaving duty unfulfilled, in not at least attempting to reclaim, to restore——"

"I am sure you will do me the credit to believe I have thought of that much and seriously," said Oliver Vernon, mildly; "my conclusion is, as it has been, that, in attempting what is natural and filial to contemplate, you would but mar your own life, and impair its prospects of usefulness as well as happiness, without mending or strengthening that of another. That is a work in the hands of a Higher Power, and one which will be effected in His good season. But, independently of such considerations, you should remember the dying injunctions of your father."

"I do—I do—and not least the one which enjoined me to be guided by your wishes and counsel as his chosen successor." And she kissed affectionately the hand which was clasped in her own.

"Very well, then; both my wishes and my counsel just now are that you should think of this unhappy subject as little as possible," said Vernon cheerfully. "I mustn't have my pretty Nelly moping herself to a shadow, and getting circles about her bright eyes, because of griefs which cannot be remedied, and which she had no hand in causing. Moreover, I shall give her over into the hands of Dr. Saunders, unless she agrees to accept my regimen."

"Which is——"

"Plenty of open air, plenty of exercise in the saddle, and a course of Charles Kingsley's novels!"

"And we too, papa," cried merry Grace, dancing up.

"Are not Ally and I to share in these luxuries?"

"Surely—as fast as you can use and profit by them. Worthy David here says that Dapple and Lily are as glad to see you back as he is, and that they sadly need exercise—and the Shetland pony will do capitally for Ally."

The child's eyes grew brighter and larger at the suggestion.

"I have been on a pony before," said she, "on aunty's plantation; and I'm not a bit afraid."

"That's a darling. Nobody here is afraid of horses or dogs. We are fond of them all, and kind to them, and so they are kind to us. You've been very lucky, Davy, with the stock—not a loss or an accident in the whole year and a half!"

"Well, sir, we've been pooty kearful," said David Greenwood, with his shrewd and good-natured smile; "we've been pooty kearful, and then agin we've been pooty lucky. Them ere Durrums don't stand the winter quite as well as the native critters, which is nateral enough. They have to kinder git used to't. But the heifers and steers as comes from the cross is beautiful and hearty as so many bucks."

"And the people have all got on nicely and amicably together?"

"Sartain. They have their little fidgets and squabbles sometimes, but never nuthin' to hurt. Jim and his wife's been, maybe, a little slack now and then, 'bout keepin' things slick and reg'lar at the big house; but Aunt Massy she's got among 'em now; she's a rarin' and drivin' about, and she'll have the hull thing in apple-pie order in no time."

"Do you think Aunt Mercy improved by her travels?" asked Grace, her eyes dancing mischievously.

"Well, Miss Grace, I thought at first she was altered some. She seemed to be sorter airy, and puttin' on furrin ways. Our folks don't like them kind o' ways. But I guess 'twas

only at first, feelin' a bit strange to get back—I guess she's the same old sixpence. She's a stunner to drive round."

And David relapsed into the profound consideration which usually followed the direction of his thoughts toward the person and merits of Aunt Mercy. His companions were admiring the magnificent panorama which had for years constituted one of their every-day enjoyments, but which, since their return, appeared to their appreciative eyes lovelier than ever before.

"How very beautiful it is," said Elinor, musingly. "Strange there should seem to be so many new attractions about what we have scanned so often and so closely before."

"'Tis one of the advantages of travel," remarked Vernon. "The view remains precisely the same, but your own critical and comparative faculties are more highly developed, so that you see more than you were able to see before."

"After all, papa," said Grace, "in all our ramblings, we have seen nothing more glorious of its kind than this stretch from the Palisades to the Narrows. If, as you say, the highest beauty is the highest use, the harbor itself is beautiful—but its surroundings, in variety, in coloring, in general effect appear to me quite unrivalled."

"And so I believe they are,—although the claims of Naples, of Rio de Janeiro, and of San Francisco, cannot be ignored; and I have heard stout partisans uphold those of Sydney and of Port Royal. We have not, indeed, the architectural elements which lend so much of reverence and of picturesque effect to such a city as Edinburgh, or such a river as the Rhine; but the natural capacities are nowise inferior to those of either or both."

"I have heard people argue against the wisdom of travelling," remarked Elinor, "on the ground of its producing discontent with things humble and inevitable at home; we can, at least, claim exemption from such a misfortune. With us the rule clearly works the other way."

"Much depends on the nature and education of the subject," responded Vernon. "A clown may be ruined and debauched by the glitter and temptation of the unaccustomed city, while a wise man will only see therein fresh beacons to mark the channel of prudence, fresh reasons to appreciate and enjoy with purer zest than before, the calm and unexciting pleasures of his rural home. It is true that some of our young men grow worse rather than better from European tours, and come back greater fools than they went: but on the whole the effect is a salutary one, and I wish that every American who can possibly afford it, would, once at least during life, cross the Atlantic. What is greatly needed with us is the cultivation of criticism and comparison. Our insular situation is not favorable to such culture, and attrition with the incoming foreign element is rather injurious than otherwise, because that element is, as a rule, drawn from the lowest social strata of the old nations. Travel is necessary to obtain attrition with the higher."

"Well, papa, whatever may be the philosophy of the fact, I feel quite sure that I shall be happier than ever for my trip to Europe—shan't you, my Pet?" The latter rather incoherent interrogatory was addressed to the little girl, who, seeing acquiescence was expected, gave it ungrudgingly.

"Most of my happiest, and some few of my saddest days have been passed on this spot," said Oliver Vernon. "May you all, my children, receive here a greater share of the joy—a lesser than my share of the sorrow."

And their hearts beat a grateful response to the aspiration, and even the shadow which had fallen over that of Elinor was dissipated by the light and warmth of the good man's love.

CHAPTER XI.

NEWPORT was, as Miss Zerlina Von Donk very happily described it, "dreadful gay" that season. Almost everybody was there. Almost everybody from legislators, and lawyers, and merchants, to "butchers, and bakers, and candlestick-makers." Sallow Southerners with large diamonds, and Derringers in their trousers' pockets. Boston traders with smug, conceited faces and priggish garments. New York men of various degrees of consideration in the wholesale dry goods, 'W. I.' goods, drug, and boot-and-shoe line. Third-rate Italian singers—choristers and *confidentes* at La Scala, but indubitably *prima assoluta* at our "Academies." Western Congressmen with rustic airs and indescribable habiliments. Gamblers from the great cities laboring under the delusion common to their class, that their dress and bearing made people take them for gentlemen. Shopmen from various quarters, taking a holiday, and sharing after their fashion in the hallucination of the black-legs. Scores of overdressed peacock-voiced women, bridling and shrieking, in halls, and carriages, and over the sands. Brunettes from Louisiana, blondes from Massachusetts. Fresh and rosy girls from the country, worn and pallid girls from the town. Then, besides the general mass—chiefly found at the great hotels—there were many very different people in villas and cottages which dot so thickly the pretty winding roads and lanes extending along the coast. There were many people of goodly estate—some who had got over, a couple of generations back, the aroma of wholesale dry goods, W. I. goods, drug, and boot-and-shoe lines. Some with familiar names, descendants of Revolutionary worthies. Some very large landowners of the North, some very large planters of the South. You always see the names of the latter mixed up with political life, those of the former seldom or never. A few barristers of high repute, and who have made large fortunes, are here with their families: these men—per-

haps the best thinkers the country at present can boast—also refrain studiously, as a rule, from participation in public life. Then there are some people whom it is common to style as of good old families—the Deddingstones, the Skuyduncks, and the Von Quoits—who have handsome properties, and who pay very low taxes, and who have nothing whatever to do, and who never dream by any chance that they owe any sort of duty to their common country, either in a legislative way, or in that of serving the cause of national literature or art.

There are, besides, some notabilities of unquestioned distinction. Our friends the Von Donks, of course, make a sensation wherever they go. Gossamer is very fast, and very free with his money, and the girls are pretty, and will have very good fortunes. Moreover, Mrs. General *will* have a very flashy equipage, which makes people turn round always, and inquire whose it is. The General has "political influence," and a vast number of corner lots and brown-stone houses, so that his individual pomp and circumstance augment the prestige of the family group. Just at present he is making a feeble effort to get quite sober against election time. Then there is Bobbinet, the great merchant, who has established almost a monopoly in lace and kid gloves, and who built the magnificent marble shop in Broadway, which looks like a Brobdignagian shoe-box painted white and interlined. Also, the great Spinner, proprietor of the *Chambermaid's Gazette*, with his fast "team" Bopeep and Rat-trap. Slymer has also arrived, in high feather over the publication of a sensation article about himself in the *Orier*, which represented him as "shaking the thrones of Europe" by some inexplicable process, which, for some equally inexplicable reason, it was the practice of that singular print to attribute to his, Slymer's, "diplomatic" accomplishments. A further announcement under the head of "personal movements" to the effect that "H. Slymer, Esq., Bearer of Despatches from the Court of St. James, had arrived at the St. Germain Hotel," filled his cup of bliss to overflowing, and he

tripped away afterward from Washington to the sea-side as happy as the day is long. Sprigg, also, is of the company, trying to look European, and racking his invention to the last agony to keep up the interest of his daily letters to the singular print aforesaid.

Here, also, are to be seen the Jefferson Bunts, who made a great sensation in Paris the year before last. Miss Henrietta Jefferson Bunt married a real Baron—the Baron De Vieux Fromage—and the family have held their heads very high ever since. They have a gaudy turn-out, with an overwhelming hammer-cloth, a coronet on the panels, and footmen in gorgeous liveries; altogether an affair which made Mrs. General, on its first advent, turn quite green with envy. They tried powder on the coachman when they first came back, but it wouldn't quite do. The founder of this distinguished family, T. Jefferson Bunt, Esq., realized heavily in pork some twenty years ago, out West, but no one knew the extent of his acquisitions until within a very short time back, when the Bunts burst like a meteor upon the starry firmament of wealth and fashion, and have maintained a high pitch of refulgence ever since.

To add to the assemblage of celebrities, we may see, among others, Darius Graball, Esq., the great contractor and speculator, who has made himself a *millionaire*, not by swindling individuals, who feel their losses keenly and have long memories, but by swindling the public, which feels its losses lightly, and has no memory at all. As a reward for transactions which, morally speaking, should have consigned him to the Penitentiary, this adroit person is highly esteemed and respected as a "bold operator"—a first rate "business man." His boorish manners and gross ignorance are quite lost sight of in the halo of glory which surrounds his financial success; and, in spite of a turpitude which no ingenuity could deny or explain away, the admiration for that success is such that the man could, if he chose, be elected to almost any high office.

Such were a few among the many conspicuous or much-talked-of people, who were driving, flirting, bathing, sail-

ing, and fishing amid the glorious breezes and the charming scenery of this the principal American watering-place. A week had passed since their arrival, and although both Cuthbert Boynton and Robert Eliot had reasons for being elsewhere, yet the novelty of their surroundings, added to the hospitable persuasions of the Von Donks, had prevailed upon them to remain a day or two longer. The young Englishman, indeed, found a great deal to amuse him in the motley society and contrasted habits of life and thought which environed him. The curious difference between the sea-side lodgings of England, where people go to enjoy privacy, and the many-storied barracks of American shores, where people go to enjoy publicity, naturally attracted his attention. Nor did he fail to remark the discrepancies in dress and speech which are incident to persons brought together from homes thousands of miles apart, albeit of the same nation. He observed particularly the great number of visitors from the Southern States, and expressed to his companion the opinion that bringing together the different sections, year after year, as it were in informal Congress, should prove beneficial as making the sojourners more conversant with each other's feelings and tastes, and as thus tending to knit more closely the fraternal relations which, in the common interest, should be fostered and strengthened. To his surprise, Cuthbert Boynton dissented.

"As regards the South," said he, while they strolled through the long corridors of the Ocean House, "such might formerly have been the case, but not since the great increase of Abolitionism. Our best people, for example, who once found in the peculiarities of the New Englander only subjects of good-natured amusement, now encounter them with disgust and aversion. They have learned by a gradual and natural process to associate the idea of uncouthness in speech and manner with that of the dishonesty which seeks to rob them of their rights."

"But surely," said Eliot, "Abolitionists, as a rule, are not uneducated persons!"

"Probably not. But we find them to be, generally speaking, very narrow and prejudiced ones. They are not, at all events, people who pay much attention to the graces of life—the *petits soins* of social intercourse. Those with whom the particular prejudice is most intensified readily fall into a vein of vituperation and abuse, which is directed against all who happen to disagree with them. Educated Southerners regard them as vulgar, therefore, as well as illogical."

"How illogical? You will not, assuredly, maintain that people may not consider Slavery to be wrong without being illogical?"

"No, truly—but the mode of putting the case may be, and in this instance is, excessively so. Thus the Abolitionists stigmatize contemporaneous Slaveholders precisely as if the latter had personally originated and introduced the system. They attack *me*, for example, as the guilty party in bringing about a state of affairs which existed before I was born, which I had no hand in promoting, and which, individually, I can have no power to prevent or to change. Such a position is neither reasonable nor gentlemanly; and it is this double conviction, independent of a natural objection to be shorn of their wealth and strength, which so constantly embitters Southerners against the fanatics of the North."

"But still, looking at the matter dispassionately, there can be no resource save agitation for a party which, rightly or wrongly, considers a great evil to exist, and which has no share whatever in the Government; and, I am told, your party has had practical control of the Government for a great many years—certainly since a period anterior to the rise of the Anti-Slavery movement."

"Ah! now you come, after all, to the gist of our complaint. The South holds that, if the Abolitionists were in power to-morrow, they would have no right whatever to interfere with Slavery. The terms of the Constitution preclude such a right. The question is one reserved absolutely to the jurisdiction of the individual States themselves."

The South therefore maintains that there can be no reason or propriety in agitation which points to a course of action which the agitators, if in office, could not *legally* adopt. It perceives, however, that if so elevated, their principles and their professions would compel them to attempt such a course."

"In which event—"

"In which event it sees but one remedy—the repudiation, or rather the dissolution of the Federal copartnership, and the establishment of a separate Southern Government. There are extremists of both sections who aim at exactly that result, both of whom hope to become more prominent and more powerful by bringing it about. The moderates of both sections desire, on the other hand, an amicable adjustment of differences in the interest of a permanent Union."

"But how can such an adjustment be brought about, if you insist, as one of its terms, upon the absolute cessation of the Slavery discussion? This, as it appears to me, is what the South would primarily and chiefly demand, and what the North, however disposed, would find it quite impossible to assure."

"By a general and genuine determination, on both sides if you will, to view the matter in a larger and more liberal spirit. By the North being brought to perceive and acknowledge the unfairness of insisting on a subversive process wherein one side is to claim all the merit of a noble and progressive revolution, and the other to suffer all its humiliation and its sacrifice. Wherein the first loses nothing, the second practically everything, because, through the accident, by no merit and no crime of their own, they happen to be born in this or that section. If Slavery is to be abolished, I think the whole country, and not a part of it, should bear the burden of carrying out the change. When the North shows a spirit of willingness to submit itself to sacrifices, the world will be in a better position to credit its sincerity. The South, on the other hand, should discard the stupid and retrograde dream of establish-

ing an Empire on a basis of Slavery—should exhibit a disposition to accede to the inevitable nature of things as developed by the progress of the age. If the two sections could experience these changes in feeling and opinion, I believe a gradual ameliorative plan of emancipation could be carried into effect, to be compensated by the resources of the entire nation in due course of time."

"And would the South accede to such an arrangement?"

"All the moderates would, and they constitute the great majority. But the longer an agitation continues which tends to illegal, forcible, and sudden emancipation, and which ignores a legal, compensated, and gradual policy, the more difficult will it be to carry the latter into effect. Hence I deprecate such agitation. The more because, ultimately, whatever phases the dispute may pass through—of possible secession, coercion, civil war, negro insurrection—it is precisely the legal, compensated, and gradual policy which will have to be adopted at last."

Eliot thought such a prospective solution would be eminently distasteful to most of Boynton's northern allies of foreign birth—such as McSwindle and his tribe, and he said as much.

"Of course," replied the Southerner, laughing, "we have been compelled to use such tools as came to our hands. Our immigrant friends could not be got to comprehend (or to care a straw for it if they did), the idea of according us abstract justice in our distant isolation. But they *could* understand that an influx of blacks on the northern labor market would reduce the price of their own day's work; and this is the idea which has been constantly and steadily kept before their eyes."

"Do you think the apprehension ill-founded?"

"It is quite preposterous—but it hardly becomes me to say so. The negro doesn't thrive in the North, and could not possibly compete with white labor in any of the present Free States. He loves the climate and soil of the South, and to remove his chains would be to furnish him with a last and conclusive motive for clinging to both.

As it is, more free blacks stay voluntarily in the South than come voluntarily to the North. Setting aside the immense unpeopled territory of the West, which must, in the nature of things, keep up the price of all labor—black or white, foreign or native, for an indefinite time to come—the popular apprehension is a fallacious one. I should think an exodus of Irishmen into the South far more likely in the event of emancipation than one of negroes into the North.”

“But why deceive, when the deception may ultimately produce so much mischief?”

“The necessities of our situation, my dear fellow. We have been growing weaker than the North—in a relative sense—year by year, and have been forced to make up by strategy what we lacked in strength. The vast European immigration happily has furnished us with means—means we have been ready enough to use, however we might despise them. We have at least the apology that we were struggling for self-preservation—a justifiable motive enough. Our foreign instruments were actuated by the more questionable one of a despicable fear—half ignorance, half prejudice—lest their own selfish interest might possibly, at some future time suffer detriment, unless they fought on our side. They cherish, also, a certain rancorous hatred for the blacks, whom they wish to see oppressed, for, no better reason than this jealousy, unless it be that they claim their own race has been oppressed, and wish as few as possible to be exempted. If the Irishman *really believed*, what we often claim, that the Negro is happier a slave than he would be free, the Irishman would be at least half way on the road to being an abolitionist. As to mischief as consequent on these political intrigues and misconceptions, I suppose we must go through the usual vicissitudes of nations. So long as questions which arise are susceptible of peaceful solution, and, in short, are of no momentous consequence, the mischief from such a cause will be comparatively unimportant. When, by and by, they assume a magnitude which affects the national life or threatens to destroy its hopes of future greatness,—*then*, in my judg-

ment, the time will have come for a change, temporary or permanent, and then Americans will rule the country for themselves.”

CHAPTER XII.

THINGS were going on dully enough at Dangerfield's Rest. Stephen's spirits had been sadly depressed since his discovery touching his impaired prospects. He loved the dear old place, every stick and stone of it. There was no room or cranny in the venerable mansion, not a nook or dingle in the far spreading lands, but that it was dear to him for some cherished memory, some by-gone association of his childhood. He had, moreover, a full share of the traditional family pride, and his soul revolted at the thought of the property passing away from his name. Not that, so far as he knew, there was any immediate danger of such a casualty: but he dreaded to hear some fresh intelligence which should involve the contingency hereafter. He had lived thirty years without knowing, without even suspecting, what had just been imparted to him. How could he tell that his father, who had shown so much reticence, did not carry about in his breast some other compromising secret which should come forth to the light when least expected, to complete his ruin?

Stephen cared little for money. He had never known the want of it, and less generous natures than his own become indifferent to golden charms under similar circumstances. But, for the same reason, he was utterly unskilled in its accumulation. Suppose the worse that he dreaded came to pass, how was he to provide for the future,—to say nothing of the wish which would always be nearest his heart—that of relieving his birth-place and home of the weighty incubus which pressed upon it?

Again: for the first time in his life, Stephen's heart was

seriously entangled by the attractions of one of the opposite sex. He had had flirtations innumerable. Few men reach his age without them, especially when to the ordinary inclinations of youth are added an unusual share of manly beauty and the accepted certainty of a fine estate. But these affairs were invariably trifling and evanescent pastimes rather than passions: for although his imagination was perhaps relatively stronger than his intellect, he had a fastidious and exacting taste, and would ever detect in his latest idol some blemish or defect which speedily disenchanted him. Not that his self-esteem was overweening; the belief was common and quite sincere in his mind that any woman whom he could love well enough to marry, he was not good enough to have. Now it happened that, while in the society of Grace Vernon, this old theory of his had quite passed out of his thoughts,—and it only returned when the facts he had learned brought the conviction, that, in a worldly sense, and as related to her, it was uncomfortably true. The result was, that he felt himself becoming more and more attached to the young lady every day.

He had promised to come to Uplands very soon after his arrival. He knew that his father had visited there years ago, and, as he supposed, for the same reason which had led him to omit going into society elsewhere, those visits had long since ceased. It was clear that Oliver Vernon had no unfriendly feelings toward Martin Dangerfield, nor had Stephen ever heard his father express any such toward the former. Hence there was no family reason why acquaintance should not be renewed, and the young man, with his newly awakened sentiments, had looked forward to such a renewal with most pleasurable expectation. Now, however, a qualification interposed productive of some uneasiness. It is but right to say that Stephen had some little—some very slight grounds—to hope that his regard for Grace might be reciprocated. Would it be honorable, then, for him to subject her to the natural growth and increase of such feelings which his presence might produce? To disguise his own admiration, Stephen began to

feel, would be quite impossible. The only solution of the difficulty would obviously be that of absenting himself altogether.

To such a course did he mentally commit himself, not without many misgivings, and by dint of grave efforts at self-control. He was clearly no match now for the daughter and sole heiress of the wealthy Oliver Vernon; and whatever the magnanimity of the father or the disinterested love of the child might prompt them to waive in his favor, it was not the part of a Dangerfield to take advantage of either. To the best of his present knowledge, he would have no other resource than the small margin which might exist between the heavy mortgage which encumbered it and the whole value of the paternal estate; and he was in doubt as to how far even that pittance might be forestalled.

Stephen began to think of his father with a bitterness which he never would have believed any mere worldly consideration could have engendered. He condemned the wretched weakness of the old man's youth with a severity proportioned to the misery he saw it bringing, after so many years, upon himself. He felt as we all do when we suffer from the follies of those who have gone before us, and when we have not ourselves experienced from our own darling vices the extremity of temptation before which they succumbed. He shrank now from asking any further explanations as earnestly as he had sought them before. The absolute silence which his father preserved, and the expression of weary pain which was almost constantly written upon his brow, Stephen accepted as a conclusive corroboration of the truth of Kirkwood's statement; and he supposed he should hear the unhappy details quite soon enough without solicitation, when Martin Dangerfield was ready to recite them.

In the meantime, Kirkwood enjoyed himself hugely. He lounged about the premises, smoking many cigars and drinking much wine, with a face as sunny and a heart as light as the advantage of his position and the excellence of

his digestion would allow. For the present, Stephen, the only antagonist whom he feared, was powerless to assail or even to annoy him. Circumstances had enabled him to force his father into a position from whence he could not retreat, and one in which he could prey upon his substance in detail, as his needs or caprices might suggest. Kirkwood, therefore, abandoned himself with great gusto to the animal enjoyments which were to him so delightful. He rose late, breakfasted luxuriously, read the morning papers, strolled about the garden walks, lolled at full length on the grass, read novels, practised pistol-shooting—at which he was marvellously skilful—dined heavily, and having stultified himself with generous libations of old brandy, betook himself again to refreshing slumbers. He had essayed at first to condole with Stephen on the condition of things; hinted at offering him advice, and even more tangible aid, with a view to the speedy clearing of the property, and so on; but as these amicable advances had been received by the young man with sullen, if not contemptuous silence, they soon ceased. Kirkwood merely shrugged his shoulders, and amused himself in his own way. Long acquaintance with the world, he said, had quite accustomed him to being misunderstood; his dear young friend Stephen would appreciate in time that he was, in reality, the warm and attached friend of both his father and himself. Many would have been far more exacting than he had been in regard to the terms of the mortgage and the conditions of the payment. Of course it was not to be expected that, with his limited experience and knowledge of business affairs, Stephen would see these things in their true light in a moment. By and by he would probably be much more reasonable, and certainly much more grateful. Kirkwood favored Martin Dangerfield with not a little of this sort of talk, especially after dinner. He seemed to enjoy it very much indeed, and was not in the least restrained or deterred by the fact that the old man listened uniformly with a vague look of mingled disgust and terror.

There was only one period of the day when our cheerful visitant exhibited the slightest break in the equable and roseate tenor of his daily life—that when the messenger brought letters from the neighboring village post-office, and which was during the hour before dinner. There was then just a trace of anxiety and expectancy, lasting until he was either aware there were no letters for him, or of the contents of those which he received; whereupon he resumed his usual condition of complacent satisfaction. It was evident that he expected particular advices—advices which might have some bearing upon his future course—perhaps on the duration of his stay at Dangerfield's Rest. When Stephen perceived this, he began to watch his enemy more narrowly than before. He found his old suspicions coming back to him—vague, floating suspicions, that Kirkwood meant his father some injury. Then he began to think of the circumstances under which the liabilities had been incurred which the Rest had been mortgaged to pay. Perhaps this mysterious creditor—this cunning intriguer in whom the sinister and the mirthful seemed so strangely to be blended—might possibly have contrived a scheme to profit by his father's love of play—might have employed subordinates, under favorable circumstances, to cheat him out of the large sums whose payment should be secured by the mortgage of his property. But how to prove—nay, how even to investigate transactions of such a nature, and which had occurred fifteen years ago? 'Twould be difficult, if not impossible. Stephen felt the need of an adviser—somebody of years, of character, and of wisdom, to prompt and counsel him. The more he thought of the subject the better satisfied was he of the propriety of seeking such an assistant; and then, very naturally, he thought of Oliver Vernon.

How far a certain subtle casuistry had led him to the conviction that there was really no one so eligible to afford the aid he sought as the father of Grace Vernon—how far that consideration was supported by the knowledge that in seeking the father he must, almost surely, come in contact

with the daughter—we need not pause to inquire. The human heart and brain, alike complex, seldom decide on action from unmixed motives, and it may be readily supposed that Stephen's presented no exception. A fortnight had passed away and he was becoming weary of inaction—wearied of staying away from Grace. He could make an excuse to himself which should cover, without sully, the honorable course he had decided upon, and which has been described. A fortnight is a long time passed in country shades without society, or worse, with that which is distasteful.

It was on the fifteenth morning, and soon after breakfast, that Mr. Kirkwood sat in the arbor which had become endeared to him as the scene where he had, as he expressed it, "clapped a stopper" on Stephen Dangerfield. The worthy gentleman was buried in romance. He was enjoying in the *Trois Mousquetaires* the somewhat singular and exceptional adventures of MM. *Athos*, *Porthos*, and *Aramis*—and found them very much to his taste. He was enhancing the pleasurable excitement of the narrative, by the ejection of small blue spirals derived from the combustion of a fragrant Havana. Suddenly he heard the pawing of a horse on the gravel hard by, and, looking up he saw—saddled and bridled—Stephen's black mare Vixen. A moment after, her owner appeared, equipped for the saddle, and presenting in his attire a notable change from the carelessness of the past few days. Mr. Kirkwood sighed. He perceived with quick instinct that his respite of calm and dignified enjoyment must give place to action—perhaps to the combat. Young Dangerfield had scarcely been out even for a walk all this time. He had slouched back and forth, staring up and down the river, rambling about the house, to and from the stables, but never out of sight or earshot of the mansion. Kirkwood was too experienced a tactician not to know that a sudden change in this routine boded something new in the way of demonstration;—a cavalry reconnoissance usually precedes an attack in force;—so he commenced to lay his plan of cam-

paign almost before Stephen was out of sight, and was hard at work on it the while Black Vixen swept on at a swinging gallop toward the point which made her master's heart beat to think of far more than did the unwonted exercise—for she went toward Uplands.

CHAPTER XIII.

SHE was standing on the piazza making a very charming picture with a frame of clustering honeysuckles and Madeira vines. A dark green riding-habit, exquisitely cut, displayed to bewitching advantage her moulded figure. An English hat, with slopings of mysterious feathers of equally sombre hue, which was unbroken in the whole costume, save by a bit of cherry riband at the throat, and by the white of the tiny gauntlets. The sun was glinting through the nut-brown hair and lending it a ruddy tint, but it could lend neither light nor vivacity to the smile which played over the sweet face, and which, in parting the red lips, showed glimpses of pearls behind. One little hand had caught up the clinging amplitude of skirt, the other grasped a slender riding-whip. This was Grace Vernon.

A few steps in front and held by a groom, was a snow-white steed, a trifle over fourteen hands, spotless and unexceptionable in condition and caparison. The arching neck was curved far over, and the large eyes appeared to be curiously inspecting the creature's fore-feet. This was Lily.

Such was the group which Stephen Dangerfield saw, the first time he met its principal figure after they came back from sea. He had turned in from the high road at the little stone-lodge, decorously checking as he did so the swift gallop wherewith Black Vixen had favored him all the way from the Rest, and receiving intimation as to "the family" being at home from the gate-keeper. He

came along the winding road gently enough, and in truth with a less steady heart than was usual for stout Stephen to carry in his bosom. Was it that mysterious prescience, which is so unreasonable, so inexplicable, so impossible, and yet so true, which we have all felt, and yet scarcely believe, except the feeling is actually upon us—that innate consciousness which philosophy cannot explain, nor scepticism refute, which warns or gladdens us with unerring certainty of the approach of those we hate or love? Perhaps. All we can say is that before Stephen skirted the little arc in the road which opened the picture to his gaze, his heart was almost in his mouth, and that when he *had* skirted it—to carry out the exceptionable figure—it was quite so. He was abreast of the group and off his horse in an instant, crushing down the compunction that told him he should pause and admire, nor break the lovely tableau until his presence was discovered. For—as he turned the curve in question, the thought struck him that Grace was waiting to be joined by some one, and might be, speedily, and, the moment after, she turned her head.

A little cry—one of those indescribable sounds girls make when they are surprised and pleased and :—

“Mr. Dangerfield !”

“Miss Vernon !”

His strong hand caught one of the tiny white gauntlets, and a rapid incoherent word or too from each, nearly simultaneously, from which emerged, clearly and simply enough, from the young lady :—

“I’m very glad to see you !”

“Are you, indeed ?”

Here their eyes met again, and this time up rushed the crimson to Grace’s brow as both her eye and ear taught her the literal signification Stephen was applying to the common-place expression. She must speak again to break that charm, so she did, hastily, and, of course, unluckily :—

“It seems an age since I saw you !”

“Oh ! Miss Vernon—Miss Gra—”

Stephen paused, and well he did so, for his sense of propriety came to his aid. Preposterous ! He was absolutely on the very brink of a declaration in the first twenty words of his meeting, in an ordinary visit of courtesy, with one he had known barely a week, and a month before had never seen. Stephen thought himself demented, for questions of time and moulds of conventionality always strike men most forcibly. Grace, with her woman’s nature, was more wise. She knew and knew well that love was not a matter of days, nor months, nor years. She knew precisely what Stephen felt, what he was floundering and stumbling about ; but she was mischievous and wouldn’t relieve him. We say she *knew*—meaning in the same sense wherewith women always know by force of interior perception. The man must reason first and feel afterwards : the woman must feel first and reason afterwards—perhaps ; at any rate, she gets first at the truth, which is the main point to be enforced.

And who shall tell us what this love is, which, sown we know not how, grows up and puts forth leaves and blossoms and fruit in due season—this love which is not based on previous knowledge of character, tastes, sympathies—which comes unsought and unbidden, but will not leave except at its own good pleasure. People call it love at first sight, but this cannot be. Is it not rather the passion elicited by an embodiment of what we have loved and cherished long before,—long before we can remember perhaps—ages before, possibly,—far back through the long stages of this marvellous progression and development, which, if it is to outlast the mortal death, may have commenced before the mortal birth ?

Not a gross earthly passion merely. Not a happy accidental combination of this type of head, eyes, complexion, figure, each of which we remember to have admired before ; but the subtle, mysterious, spiritual affinity whose analysis exceeds in its difficulty those of electricity and magnetism as much as that of those marvellous forces themselves transcends the analyses of all lower physical phenomena.

Stephen and Grace walked mechanically to the end of the piazza. Their eyes swept for a moment over the far stretching landscape, ran for an instant over the rippling currents of the wide and glorious river, then turned and met again. Neither spoke a word: and it might have been two minutes before Elinor Grazebook and little Ally and Oliver Vernon came forth from the house, and advanced to greet the stranger: yet it might have been counted as years for them, for they had entered, half unconsciously, the portals of a new life, to which the past was as nothing, and the future, all.

Oliver Vernon gave his guest a hearty and cordial welcome, Elinor a gracious and friendly one, and little Ally insisted upon being lifted in his stalwart arms and kissed again and again. The child had not many memories, and deeply fixed among them was that of the moment when she had been lifted in the same way from the deck of the wreck.

"You have rather neglected us," said Vernon, with his kindly smile; "we expected to see you before, as you were so near."

"Indeed, I appreciate my loss," replied Stephen, sincerely; "my father's affairs have claimed much of my attention, and I thought you might gladly be free of intrusion for a while, after so long an absence."

"So near and old a neighbor could not be an intruder even if there were reasons for others being such. This little lady has particularly felt your long absence. She thinks she has a right of property in you since you were instrumental in her deliverance."

"Dear child," quoth Stephen, very glad as most men are to caress little girls in the presence of older ones they have the decorously restrained inclination to subject to the same attentions.

"Have you seen my other papa?" queried Ally, pounding to Stephen a question she was in the habit of putting to each fresh person she met—and of being uniformly surprised, if not displeased, at being answered in the negative.

"No, my dear. Are you not content with this one?"

Stephen told a fib here, but neither he nor any one else was conscious of the fact at the time.

"Oh, yes. I'm to stay with him always; unless," she added, reflectively, "unless you and Aunt Gracy would like to take me with you!"

Grace blushed scarlet at this somewhat extraordinary and premature sally. There had been talk of Stephen Dangerfield in the child's presence between herself and Elinor; and some little rallying on the part of the latter, who saw before either of the parties most interested, what things were drifting to when on board the *Assyria*. She essayed to atone for her sin by coming to the rescue with friendly alacrity.

"We were going toward Fort Lee. Perhaps Mr. Dangerfield will make up the appropriate number of our escort, as I see he came in the saddle."

Mr. Dangerfield would be delighted. He usually rode a great deal, although his habit had been somewhat interrupted of late. With the permission of the ladies and that of Mr. Vernon, he would gladly make one of the party. The arrangement was effected amid great demonstrations of satisfaction on the part of Ally and the warm approval of Mr. Vernon, who was admiring Black Vixen, and who missed the episodic agitation in progress while contrasting that spirited animal with the gentle Lily. Then David Greenwood appeared with Dapple and the Shetland pony, and a stout bay for his master, and a rather better-blooded chestnut for the groom, and the cheerful party prepared for a start.

Grace became flushed again as Stephen Dangerfield took her dainty foot in his hand, and for the first time put her in the saddle; and this time Vernon noticed it, and remarked on her brilliant color, which, as a matter of course, made things worse. She murmured something about the heat, and managed to get up a little contest with, and caprioling on the part of, Lily, who was much astonished in her innocence by these aggressive measures from her usually gentle mistress. All were safely mounted,

and the cavalcade set out in high good-humor, Stephen carefully placing himself by the side of Elinor, a manœuvre partly intended in courteous deference to her seniority, partly with the artful idea of throwing dust in the general eye apropos of his feelings toward Grace. But parties though they set out abreast, and with conjunctions least desired, inevitably shape themselves into harmonious couplets as they progress, and this instance proved no exception. The first half-hour found Grace and Stephen together in the advance at a distance somewhat greater from the others of the party than was that of the groom again in the rear.

And they talked of the lovely scenery which surrounded them on every side, and which both had been born and bred among; and of books and pictures and the Opera; and of Europe, and their respective travels and adventures; and of horses and dogs, and rural sports and diversions; and Stephen told Grace of how he first bought Black Vixen, and of her wonderful exploits and escapades before and since; and Grace told Stephen the pitiful story of her beautiful Skye terrier, imported with so much trouble, and so greatly admired, to be poisoned the winter before last in town by a wretch, who threw out strychnine on meat, to revenge himself upon cats who had molested his pet pigeons. But neither said anything of what each was becoming more and more conscious, and of which both were all the time thinking far more than of anything else. And, for that matter, what need was there of words? Volumes could not have contained more than had been crowded into that silent tête-à-tête of scarcely two minutes which had occurred on the Piazza. And both were supremely happy; happier than they had ever been before.

Dream on, O young, healthful, and happy beings! Enjoy to the full, while you may, the halcyon visions of the future, over which the dear presence of the other sheds for each the rainbow glories of promised Hope! And be the sad day far distant when you awake from that dream to know—as, alas! sooner or later all must know—that before the Rainbow there must come the Storm.

It is remarkable that not until the present red-letter day was far advanced—not, indeed, until he reached his home, and was recalled from the clouds by his first sight of the dark and inquiring face of Kirkwood—did Stephen remember the subject that had furnished the excuse for his cup of felicity. He had altogether forgotten, while with Grace, the heavy mortgage which existed on Dangerfield's Rest.

CHAPTER XI ..

SOFTLY and serenely glided the days for some time after Stephen's first visit to Uplands. Only for conventionalities' sake, and with great struggling, did he omit riding over the next morning. On the second day he made no bones of the matter, but galloped over directly after breakfast; and, as before, a long ride engrossed the greater portion of the day. Then Vernon, of course, asked him to dine on the day succeeding—Stephen having art enough to plead an engagement when the time was exhausted which could be spent with Grace, so as to husband his invitation to cover future opportunities. Then there were drives and walks, and divers reasons connected with music and chess-play, which, in turn, supplied ostensible cause for Mr. Dangerfield passing a great portion of his time at Uplands. He had never yet hinted, however, to Oliver Vernon aught of the subject whereupon he had proposed to solicit his advice. This was weak enough, no doubt, but we must narrate things as they really were, dealing as we do with living, erring, mortal beings, and not with monsters, perfect or other. When in the immaturity of judgment we harshly condemn, we sharpen our own punishment for the day that the great rush of temptation comes over ourselves. We get to learn for the most part that he is often strongest who most gently entreateth. Stephen

knew perfectly well that he ought not to permit affairs to take their present direction without a candid exposition of his prospects to both Vernon and Grace; but he was in doubt as to the effect of such a step. To be sure, the old man was most generous and unworldly; yet people who enjoy that character very often exhibit remarkable appreciation of the main chance, and obstinate tenacity in clinging thereto when brought to face important secular interests. Stephen Dangerfield, the heir to a very fine property, and Stephen Dangerfield, an idle yet needy man, were two very different persons. If the sagacious parent made no objection to what was progressing between his daughter and the first-named gentleman, it by no means followed that he would be equally contented when he knew what was going on with the second. Clearly, the latter had no right to keep him in ignorance; yet he hesitated. Intoxicated with his new-found happiness, Stephen was hardly responsible for his sin. And we must remember that a strict adherence to duty would, as he feared, nip that happiness in the bud.

Kirkwood observed him with a mingling of amusement and vigilance. With a minuteness of research quite customary with this man in treating any subject of importance to his dear self, he had carefully scanned and noted the Passenger List of the *Assyria*. He recognised the names of Vernon and his party, and drew his own conclusions as to the probability of an acquaintance having sprung up between them and Stephen. We may remark, in passing, that his minuteness was not quite exhaustive in this instance, as there was a certain matter under the heading of "Shipping Intelligence," which he would have found much more interesting than the Passenger List. He was, however, on the right track in his inference as to the nature of the fascination which drew Stephen so often in the direction of Uplands. The question in his mind was first to make sure that the latter was bent on serious relations with one of the two fair girls whom he knew to be there, and then to determine how far such an arrangement might be favorable

or otherwise to his own projects. In pursuance of these ideas he instituted a series of elaborate congratulations on Stephen's improved spirits, and the notable advantages to be enjoyed in the proximity of congenial society, etc., etc.

The young man received these advances with hauteur and reserve. Mr. Kirkwood might have a mortgage on his father's lands, but he certainly had none upon his own confidence. The effrontery of the man was such as to make him capable of anything; he had already suggested the propriety of the Dangerfields' introducing him to some of the better people of the neighborhood;—his next step would, no doubt, be that of making a request to be presented at Uplands—a request with which Stephen determined in advance not to comply. His father had the plausible defence against similar assaults that he no longer under any circumstances went into society. Stephen could only employ the less propitiatory resource of direct refusal. He therefore endeavored to lessen the chances of an attack on the subject by treating Kirkwood with studied distance and ceremony.

Stephen erred so far as his immediate apprehension was concerned. Little regard as James Kirkwood paid to delicacy when it stood in the path which led to his desires, he was willing enough to remember its behests when nothing was to be lost thereby. He had no wish to revive disagreeable recollections, and this would be the result of contact with at least two persons at Uplands;—of the presence of a third, about whom there clung a gentler association,—he was, as the reader has surmised, quite ignorant.

Meanwhile old Martin Dangerfield tottered wearily about, becoming more bowed, more silent, and more sad. He was affectionate to his son, but it was evident he avoided being alone with him. He was civil to Kirkwood at ordinary times, but occasionally would oppose him querulously, and seemed to be approaching that point of emancipation where people throw off all restraint and prepare themselves desperately to take all consequences. Then Kirkwood

would speak to him softly and soothingly for a while, ending always with words of smothered warning, and then the stifled whisper and dark menacing eye re-enforced the subjection which loud words and blatant threats were used to effect before. He was merely substituting the tactics of the serpent for those of the lion; the latter were not exactly safe in the presence of Stephen.

It was remarkable that whatever sallies Kirkwood ventured upon in the way of raillery or ironical congratulation, he never alluded to Uplands or its inhabitants in the joint presence of the Dangerfields. Whether the omission was accidental or designed, the younger man could only surmise. It was, in any case, a matter of no great moment. One day, one of the few, when for decency's sake Stephen had not ridden over to Uplands, he happened to be sitting in the large bay-window of the library, and it also happened that the falling curtains concealed his person from the room. The door leading into an adjacent corridor was open, and along this corridor his father and Kirkwood were advancing engaged in earnest conversation. Stephen's quick ear caught the name of "Vernon," uttered by Kirkwood, and then came from his father a sharp remonstrance, as it seemed, against his companion's allusion. "I like the name as little as you do, Martin Dangerfield," answered his visitor, "so we need hardly quarrel upon that score."

Stephen rose instantly and stepped unperceived on the piazza and so into the garden. He had no wish to play the spy, and least of all if any overheard discussion trenched on such a subject. Perhaps he had a lurking apprehension of special evil in that very direction. Be it as it may, it was his present pleasure—infatuation, perhaps, were the better word—to preserve his halcyon dream intact and undisturbed by any voluntary discoveries of his own. But what he had heard had at least this not unpleasing effect; it removed such little surprise as he had previously felt that Kirkwood had not proposed on any occasion to accompany him to Uplands—and it satisfied him that that gentleman was unlikely to make such a proposition hereafter.

These impressions, which took the force of conviction in Stephen's mind, were, as far as they went, highly agreeable to him.

We may readily imagine, therefore, that he was somewhat astonished and not a little disgusted when, on the day after the incident described, and when at almost dusk he rode past the lodge at Uplands on his way home—he encountered Mr. Kirkwood bestriding a quiet hack of his father's and in the act of proceeding toward the mansion he had just quitted.

CHAPTER XV.

THE last rays of the sinking sun were playing on the volumes which filled the highest shelves in Oliver Vernon's study. In the dusky light might be traced the sober furniture of a comfortable but compact apartment, whose fittings and surroundings spoke, as such things do, much of the character and pursuits of the occupant. Books of philosophy were there, of history and belles-lettres, whereof the general drift, to an eye nice enough to appreciate such distinctions, might be seen to incline towards benevolence, and broad, genial humanity. There were busts in the corners of the room close up to the ceiling, and they were those of philanthropists and not of conquerors,—Howard was there, but not Napoleon. The engravings on the walls partook of the general sentiment, which breathed of generosity and toleration; and a beautiful head of Grace, in crayons, sketched a dozen years before, smiled down from the place of honor over the mantel, a fitting tutelary genius for such a temple.

Oliver Vernon had been writing until the gathering gloom had warned him to desist, and he now sat in his arm-chair wrapped in reverie. The days which had passed since his return from abroad had been days of activity,

and therefore—necessarily in his case—days of usefulness. Few men did more good in their various orbits than did Vernon. Not in mere alms-giving alone, but in the patient seeking out of the *causes* of grief and distress, and in striving to administer conclusive rather than temporary relief. Here, indeed, was the key to his character. We have said before that he was regarded by some as radical in creeds and political opinions; but his principles were, in reality, as those of many are who are assailed with the same reproach, rather the opposite of those which the term should properly suggest. They were seminal rather than radical. He wished not to uproot evil so much as to sow good; not so much to punish the misdirected plants in the maturity of their prejudiced and distorted growth, as to train the new and callow shoots into a harmonious and symmetrical one. He took no pains to explain or to define his position, however, other than his acts implied; they would speak for him in the future if not to-day. Vernon had run twice for Congress in his district, not for the chance of election—for his party was weak, and his own local popularity, however considerable, was inadequate to balance the discrepancy of numbers—but strictly as a matter of principle, and because most of the wealthy landholders of the neighborhood regularly declined entering public life. On the first occasion he was defeated by General Von Donk, who then resided in the district; and on the second by a brawny, hard-drinking Irishman, of the McSwindle class, who had been sent up by his party within the prescribed time for election as a reward for his services in the great city during certain municipal struggles. These results, quite anticipated as they were, had done Vernon more good than harm in popular estimation. His gentleness, his unostentatious charities, his urbanity under defeat, were naturally bruited about, until there was now scarcely a man in the county so much loved and respected as he.

The reverie was interrupted by a knock at the door, and in response to the succeeding permission, a servant with—

“A gentleman, sir, would be pleased to see you.”

“Did he send no card—no name?”

“He said it was unnecessary—you wouldn’t require it, sir. Simply to say he was here, and would be pleased to see you.”

“Where is he now—in the drawing-room, I suppose?”

“No, sir, the young ladies are there. Mr. Dangerfield had just left them. The gentleman heard their voices, and walked into the little dark parlor, the other side of the hall. He only wished to see you, he said.”

“Very well. Show him in. And, Parsons, bring candles directly after.”

A few moments and James Kirkwood stood in the room. Parsons preceded him, and, placing a chair opposite his master, withdrew. There was a brief silence as the two men sat facing each other in the darkened room. Perhaps both were studying the effects of time on the other; perhaps they were considering the chances of the diplomatic struggle about to be waged; perhaps they were thinking of what each knew of the other in days long past; however this may have been, Kirkwood was the first to speak.

“I received your letter—only yesterday. The people in town didn’t know where to forward it. It’s not always convenient for me to leave my address, that any who choose may ferret me out. I became anxious about the schooner not arriving, and wrote to the consignor. He replied, inclosing your letter.”

“Have you considered the proposal that letter contains?”

“Yes and no. It’s a queer coincidence enough. How do you know you are right? There may be some mistake?”

“There is none. The resemblance to both parents would alone be almost conclusive. Then the name——”

“Ay, I called her after my own State. They called her ‘Ally,’ for short, on the plantation.”

“Besides,” continued Vernon, unlocking an escritoire, and taking therefrom a small packet tied with blue riband, “these letters addressed to you, and which are possibly

duplicates of others sent by mail, would seem to place the matter beyond doubt."

Kirkwood took the letters, and, breaking the untouched seal of the first, directly acquiesced.

"It's clear enough. But it was natural to question, the incident being so unusual. It only remains, then, to decide about the future."

"The responsibility and anxiety of which I propose to relieve you of."

"Your object in that is not so clear."

"There is not the slightest difficulty in making it so. So far as intrusting the child to its mother is concerned, there needs no argument to show that such a course were injudicious—to say the least. You and I agree upon that point, and it cannot require discussion, especially as she is willing the child shall be left in my custody, provided you undertake to leave her undisturbed therein."

"Go on."

"The remaining alternative of your taking charge of the little girl yourself," continued Oliver Vernon deliberately, "appears to me almost equally objectionable. Your life has been a disreputable one, and unless a reform took place—of which I regret to have heard no signs—no social position which could accrue to a daughter of yours—especially under all the circumstances—could be an enviable one."

"You go too far, Vernon," cried Kirkwood passionately, "you go too far."

"I hope not," said the other calmly. "What your career was before you went to California I need not recalc—enough, that you know me to be conversant with it. What it has been since, I can, if you wish, recite to you."

Kirkwood waved his hand impatiently, and Vernon continued.

"I agree with you: it is unnecessary. My object is to come to an understanding as quickly as possible. If you question me, I must reply candidly and explicitly. I am willing to take the care and responsibility of your daugh-

ter's girlhood: when she attains her majority she can decide upon her own course for the future."

A knock, and the lights borne by Parsons here intervened, and the latter having retired, the illumination supplied the speakers with additional motive for pausing while each was studying the other's countenance. It was remarkable that while conferring with Vernon, Kirkwood was entirely natural and unaffected. There was not a trace of that assumption of suavity and courtliness which he prized as a valuable weapon in his ordinary intercourse with the world, and which he affected so largely when in the company of Stephen Dangerfield. To Vernon he was thoroughly well known: upon Vernon it was impossible that any hypocritical airs and graces could impose: he therefore confined himself to the outer expressions of the sentiments which naturally and successively filled his breast, and was by turns sullen, grasping, and apprehensive. With a man of less force and character than Vernon he would have been—as in the case of Martin Dangerfield—threatening and tyrannical. Presently he spoke again:

"You seem to give me credit for no sort of human feeling, Vernon."

"I certainly wish I could give you more—and, Heaven knows, I would gladly aid you to deserve it. Your nature is too strong to be a colorless one. You must be either actively good or actively bad: there is every appearance of the latter in your past life and nothing of the former. It may be that you cherish affection for the child you have not seen since infancy—but my knowledge of your character would not lead me to rate it very high."

"I am as I am," replied Kirkwood morosely. "'Tis idle to bandy personalities. It may be in my power one day to serve or punish you, so fair words are wisest. I came not to discuss this subject alone, either. Because I left the country under a cloud, is no reason why I should not have my just dues. The estate of John Grazebrook owes me twelve thousand dollars. You administered that es-

tate. I come to produce my proofs and to demand liquidation."

"How do you know, even if you substantiate the justice of your demand, that there is aught to satisfy it?"

"I know that the girl, his daughter, is reputed to have inherited property from him,—that you made over a third thereof to his wife, who was never divorced,—and that you hold the remainder in trust for the girl. Do you deny it?"

"On the contrary, I acknowledge it to be strictly true."

"Very good. Then here are the evidences of the validity of my claim."

He produced as he spoke sundry papers and notes, which the two men examined and discussed for half an hour. Vernon soon perceived that these documents, if genuine, were conclusive in establishing the legality of Kirkwood's demand: he divined, too, that should he refuse to recognise their force, how strong a weapon might be employed in the threatened revival of scandal and misery which litigation would surely involve. Kirkwood drew up a pencilled memorandum of the added sums with their interest, which he headed "Estate of John Grazebrook to James Kirkwood Dr.," and tossed it across the table to his companion.

"I think you will find that correct."

"I am to understand, then, that, notwithstanding its satisfaction would leave Miss Grazebrook penniless, you will persist in pressing this claim?"

"Is there anything unjust in that? Is not the debt obviously a fair one? I am getting older; I am needy; Miss Grazebrook, under your auspices, will make a brilliant marriage; why should I not have my just dues?"

Vernon pondered for a few moments, and came, as he usually did in questions involving practical action, to a prompt decision.

"There is reason in what you say, and I will comply with your demand upon certain conditions."

"Name them."

"You will agree definitely to my proposition about the child, and make the agreement conclusive by a legal undertaking covering her life until she is of age."

"What else?"

"You will surrender these papers, and give a proper acquittance in full of all claims against John Grazebrook's estate."

"Is that all?"

"Finally, you will promise to leave your child to my unrestricted charge, and in ignorance, so far as any act of yours is concerned, of your true relationship towards her."

"You drive a sharp bargain, Oliver Vernon, in spite of your philanthropic reputation; but be it so. When am I to receive the money?"

"Within three days. I will cause the necessary papers to be drawn by a discreet and practised hand. Where can I communicate with you?"

"At the house of your neighbor, Martin Dangerfield."

"Martin Dangerfield! you at his house?"

"Why not? I am, and for some time expect to continue to be, his guest."

"I had the impression he saw no company of late years."

"Nor does he. I am an exception. We are very old friends."

Whatever surprise Vernon may have felt at this statement, he expressed no more than was conveyed by his first exclamation; and the interview concluded upon a reiteration of the compact and stipulations which have been described.

CHAPTER XVI.

ANOTHER fortnight rolled away, and Stephen and Grace continued to quaff the cup of their new-found felicity. A hundred times did the former think of and defer his resolution to seek the advice of Vernon, notwithstanding the additional reason which had grown up to make such a step necessary as a matter of honor, however questionable as one of policy. As to Kirkwood, the apprehensions excited in Stephen's breast on the evening of his encountering that gentleman on his way to Uplands, had slowly subsided. He had at first coupled this sudden visit to the Vernons with the probability of some statement being made to the head of that family in relation to his own position *apropos* of the mortgage, and felt rather humiliated as he thought of how equivocally he should stand in the estimation of Vernon should the latter thus receive the statement which ought to come from his own lips. But with the specious reasoning common to lovers, he argued that if the intelligence had been communicated, it was useless alike for him to repeat or to deprecate it; he could only await the result, whatever that might be. Soon, however, he came to the conclusion that no such confidence had passed between Oliver Vernon and Kirkwood—a conclusion based on various concurrent circumstances. The manner of Vernon towards himself had not changed in the slightest degree—which in itself was pretty good evidence. Kirkwood became more reticent than before, never making any allusion whatever to the Vernons, or to the incident of meeting Stephen at the lodge. If, from any motive of caprice or malice, he had made the communication in question, it was unlikely that he should never refer to the fact,—the same motive would induce him to suggest, by open allusion or covert sneer, the step he had taken, or its intended consequences. Thus Stephen came around again to face the necessity for an effort of pluck and straightforwardness on his part, and was, to do him justice, on the

point of making that effort. Of the real connecting link which bound Kirkwood to the family of Vernon, we need scarcely say, he was entirely ignorant, and the understanding of which the reader is cognizant was calculated to keep him so. Kirkwood paid no further visits to Uplands, and although the curiosity of Stephen was strongly piqued at the outset, the paramount interest of his absorbing passion soon thrust the other from his attention. He felt that he was doing wrong in postponing an explanation with Vernon, and he was not the man to persevere for any great length of time in wrong-doing. Nor was he willing to avail of the obvious excuse that his acquaintance with Grace was too short to justify conclusive prognostications; for he knew perfectly that his feelings towards her, and he knew *almost* perfectly that her feelings towards him, were as defined and absolute as ever so lengthy a wooing could have made them. But just as he had made up his mind to bring matters to a climax, a fresh interruption presented in the arrival at Uplands of their two fellow-voyagers—Cuthbert Boynton and Robert Eliot.

This visit was in compliance with the invitation given and accepted on board the *Assyria*, and it operated as a diversion in a variety of ways. Vernon—wishing always to do good rather than to be triumphant—was not sorry to bring himself and his family into the familiar contact of social intercourse with one who, both in theory and practice the upholder and representative of opinions so opposed to their own, was yet so cultivated and so moderate an exponent of them. He was desirous, too, that Eliot, as a young Englishman, whose views and experience might have some leavening effect on the future opinions or policy of his countrymen towards America, should have all opportunity of seeing her social life in its various phases, and not return to England with those mere surface prejudices which so many of his morbidly conventional compatriots are so ready to imbibe, and so active to disseminate. He appreciated and deplored the vast deal of mischief which is effected by tourists, who go about collecting microscopi-

cally every little trait, custom, mode of speech or thought, which is calculated by their nice perceptions to be peculiarly offensive and distasteful to the more insular or more fastidious civilizations of the Old World; who, utterly forgetful of the changes and modifications inevitable in the formation of a vast new society, from whatever stock it springs, weakly permit their prejudices to place to the account of Republicanism so much that is justly ascribable to the extended settlement of new territory, and to an unprecedented mingling of races; who, in their ambition to achieve the reputation of being wits and "photographic" depicitors of scenes and incidents, neglect to consider that, when absurdly affecting that descriptive felicity is best attained by emphasizing all that is small and mean, and ignoring all that is great and noble, they are also sowing the seeds of hatred and contempt between mighty nations; who, in a word, degrade letters and themselves, as well as debauch opinion, by choosing to ignore the fact that he who professes to instruct others should be guided in his course by the courtesy, the toleration, and the integrity of gentlemen.

It was obvious that Robert Eliot would not add to the objectionable category we attempt to describe. He was at once sufficiently educated and sufficiently liberal to perceive that there might be good things in America whose existence could be admitted without detriment to England or any other country. He had intellect enough to appreciate that among nations as well as among individuals the true philosophy is to strive to adopt and emulate whatever is excellent or commendable in another, rather than to pass life in stigmatizing and ridiculing whatever is bad or objectionable. He was therefore prepared to be both candid and just—a state of mind likely to lead to very different conclusions from those which have resulted from the labors of most of our European critics and observers.

Thus, when questioned, Eliot did not hesitate to say that, so far as his observation had extended, although our wealthier class was not, as a rule, up to the standard of European culture and refinement, yet that our masses were

much better educated and much more intelligent than their transatlantic prototypes. If our Patricians were less polished, our Plebeians were much more so. He had the generosity to admit what is incontestably true, that the abuses of our large sea-board towns are due in a great degree to the foreign rather than to the native portion of their population;—and that the worst element therein is that derived from the British Isles. He was too well bred to ridicule people whose hospitality he had partaken, so he did not openly laugh at the Von Donks. But it was evident that the class of which they constitute a sample struck him as being absurdly ignorant, pretentious, and illiberal. He was not prepared to admit that the Fifth Avenue Hotel was a more imposing pile than Westminster Abbey, or that the —th Militia Regiment would put to the blush the Coldstream Guards, but he was quite ready to acknowledge that each had excellences and uses in its way, to allow which need not derogate from the beauties or the merits of the other.

The evening mail on the same day which saw the new guests at Uplands, brought a letter for Grace, which that young lady perused in her chamber after retiring for the night; and, inasmuch as she had the bad faith to show it to Elinor, who came from her room adjoining to learn the cause of her friend's half-smothered laughter, we may be pardoned for revealing its contents. They ran as follows:—

NEWPORT, October 25th, 185—.

RESPECTED MISS:—

I hope you will not think me presumptuous that I sit down and take my pen in hand on this occasion. My feelings during those happy hours I passed in your fascinating society aboard the *Assyria* (so soon Alas to end), could not have been entirely unknown to you, and I hope your ob^{dt}. ser^{vt}. has not been too vain in counting them not altogether unreciprocated. My friend and adviser Elias P. Staggars (you remember Elias P., a high-toned and whole-souled gentleman in the Stock Brokerage and Commission line?) assures me that this is the proper method for

making you acquaint^d with the present condition of my sentiments. It is true as you may have heard that there was a sort of engagement (in compliance with the wishes of my mother) with Miss Joanna, first and only daughter of our distinguished fellow-citizen Hon. J. Heydensucker; but I am happy to assure you that owing to the disinterested exertions of Elias P., this is broken off and the hated nuptials will never come off. I am therefore free, Dear Miss, to offer my hand where my heart has long been donated, and my family approve the happy deed. Elias P.'s conduct in the *role* of mediator meets the applause of all. The arrangement conflicted at first with the ideas of Gen. Von Donk (who expects to shortly represent our district in the Halls of State), but he is now utterly agreeable. I need say nothing of my family or means as both are well known to you. Pa thinks I ought to be in some business prior to the blissful event, and as there is a retirement of a junior partner in the house of Brine, Cutts & Co. (In the pork packing line) he proposes to buy me an interest. Their Mr. Cutts and he have had an understanding to that effect, which need not operate should you oppose. We shall have a new brown stone on De Witt Clinton Square close to the park and stocked with entire new furniture. All shall smile propitious, your every wish shall be my law. I have the nicest span on the Island. They beat Spinner's hollow. They are named Filagree and Amethyst, and can show 2.36 to a light road wagon. On hearing from you, I will immediately arrange with Emmanuel Isaacs Esq. (the gentlemanly lessee of the Opera here) for a box quite as large and stylish as the De Buggins'. Hoping soon to receive the favoring reply which may calm and delight my anxious heart, I am

Yours Respectfully,
GOSSAMER VON DONK.

We need say nothing of the response which the following post conveyed to this epistle, further than that it in no wise imperilled the hopes of Stephen Dangerfield.

CHAPTER XVII.

A LAZY afternoon in October. The long drawing-room at Uplands, with windows to the floor, opening on the piazza, and showing through their snowy curtains the nutty brown, and golden yellow, and dappled crimson which glorify the foliage of an American autumn. The Hudson bright and blue, just embracing old ocean at the edge of the horizon. The sky with its deep melting tenderness of tone, broken here and there with flocky lumps of clouds which are standing almost immovable.

Stephen Dangerfield and Grace Vernon pretending to play at chess, their table at the room's furthest extremity, half in, half out of window. Long pauses between the moves, when the gentleman, whose back is turned toward the interior of the apartment, is supposed by the careless spectator to be pondering over the convolutions of knights and bishops, but who in truth is diligently studying the expression of the blushing face before him. Sweet Grace prettier than ever, trying to feign unconsciousness and constantly betrayed by the rebellious color.

At the piano-forte hard by, sits Elinor Grazebrook, softly singing in her melodious mezzo-soprano a fragment from the favorite Opera of the day. Cuthbert Boynton is not so fortunate in his position as Stephen, for his unmistakable expression as he stands watchfully to turn the music, is reflected in the mirror opposite, and caught by the amused eye of Robert Eliot, who is chatting with Vernon, while the latter in turn is caressing little Ally.

It is odd how fast people get on who have made sea-voyages together. The having shared a community of danger and adventure tends perhaps to loosen the chain of conventional restraint, and to increase the disposition to frankness and cordiality. We usually either like very much or dislike very much those with whom we are thus thrown in close contact on the ocean, as the party we describe had good occasion to believe. Again, there is

very little doubt but that love-making is, to a great extent, a contagious disease. We can't help thinking there must be something very pleasant about an occupation others are pursuing with such alacrity under our very noses; and from thinking thus to joining in the popular diversion when the opportunity presents, is but a step. Such was the step—one he was quite ready to take—which the young Southerner adopted very soon after his arrival at Uplands.

His eye and his imagination had been alike fascinated by the exquisitely moulded figure, the classic and harmonious face of Elinor when he first encountered them on the quarter-deck as they steamed out of the Mersey. The admiration of his intellect, the solid esteem of his judgment, were additional conquests made by the unconscious girl as the acquaintance progressed. We have intimated before that from organization as well as from the accidents of association, Elinor was far more reticent than Grace Vernon. The feelings which instinctively fear to be hurt, lie concealed in the breast of the sensitive who have suffered, whilst they play about in the sunshine, and are open as day with those who have neither felt wrong nor smarted under affliction. Grace was early aware of the unspoken attachment of her admirer, while Elinor was quite unconscious of the havoc she was making in the heart of Cuthbert Boynton.

"Dear me," laughed Grace in the symphonied interval between two verses, "dear me, Mr. Dangerfield, that's the third time you have discovered a check on your king. You really *must* move him this time!"

Stephen muttered something which ought to have been an acknowledgment of the impossibility of looking at the board and at Grace at the same time, but which was not.

"Beautiful! most beautiful!" murmured Cuthbert, his eyes riveted to the lovely face of the singer as she ended her strain. Then to cover some little confusion of his own he went on rapidly, "I really don't see why Verdi should be so much decried: grant that his music is emo-

tional, or, as the current slang has it, sensational—why should it not be? For what is music but a power acting upon the emotions through the medium of the senses?"

"I think music something higher and nobler than that," said Elinor. "Your definition might be accurate enough if we consider ourselves as bodies without souls. The higher and nobler part of music, I suppose, must be that which we only catch glimpses of now, but which we shall appreciate and enjoy to the full hereafter. That which is so purely passionnal can have little to do with the soul."

"Verdi is the melodramatist of music," said Vernon, "in the acquired, of course, and not in the strict sense of the term. His is the cup of all honey which cloy long before we come to the dregs. The Italians always appeal to the senses where the Germans appeal to the soul. There is an ineffable dignity, a reaching into the mysteries of the immortal future about Beethoven, for instance, which can never be found in Verdi."

"He's the fashion, however, both with you and in Europe," remarked Eliot, "his melodies certainly captivate the popular ear. I don't think any composer has been so genuinely successful in reaching and pleasing *all* classes in England since the earlier efforts of Rossini and Bellini."

"'Tis the evanescent trick of the times, at least, in some degree," replied Vernon; "the passion of the hour on both sides of the water is for what Mr. Boynton quotes as 'sensational.' Monstrous concerts and exhibitions of all manner of things anomalous crowded together, instead of the various parts being perfected and enjoyed in detail; Novels which appeal to a prurient love for the gross and the marvellous, instead of a healthful taste for the natural and the true: Plays relying upon scenery, mechanism, and 'wonderful effects,' instead of upon originality of construction and talent in composition. The author of *Waverley* now-a-days would have about as much chance (with the masses) if competing with G. W. M. Reynolds, as Shakespeare would have in the same relation with Mr. Bourciquault. The corrupt taste extends to the press and makes possible the

success of such monstrosities as the *New York Crier*. We are worse off in this particular respect than the English, because the lowness of price and consequent habit of appealing to the grossest prejudices of the lowest classes intensifies the evil to an extent which they partly escape. Even the very pulpits have become sensational; the infection extends to theology as well as to literature and art. Of course these exaggerations are but ephemeral; they are unnatural and untrue, and will therefore be short-lived."

"Still, they will achieve a certain good," said Eliot, "on the principle that it is only when mankind have suffered from oppression and tyranny that they fully comprehend the blessings of constitutional freedom. The exaggeration and falsehood of a 'sensation' age will beget and stimulate a healthful appetite hereafter for the natural and truthful. Verdi will thus be the instrument of good in his art in the same manner as other offenders are unconscious reformers in theirs."

"I wouldn't do him injustice," said Vernon; "there is much that is beautiful about his compositions, although in a limited sense. He is certainly not such a blot and deformity in his art as these scribblers we speak of in theirs."

"Limited, I suppose," said Elinor, "because the capacity for very high thought is so seldom compatible with that for describing extreme emotional phenomena. The best qualities of Milton and the best qualities of Byron, if combined, would make a writer who might be the type of an ideal composer."

"A sort of lyrical Shakespeare," remarked Vernon; "I fear the world will have to wait another age or two for him."

"Speaking of Shakespeare," said Robert Eliot, "in my walk this morning I fell in with a face and form which would 'make up' capitally for the stage idea of 'Iago.' A dark handsome man, with a glittering eye, and such a curious expression of alternating subtlety and frankness. A compatriot of yours, by the way, Boynton, born in Alabama, I hear."

"In Alabama?" said the Southerner with interest; "did he mention his name?"

"Oh! no. Our meeting was quite accidental—at the little banking-office in the village. But I heard the clerk in attendance address him as 'James Kirkwood,' and while I transacted the trifling business which took me there, the same official, with that laudable desire for the spread of useful knowledge which seems so common hereabouts, acquainted me with the gentleman's birthplace, adding that he had been a visitor for some time at Dangerfield's Rest."

"Yes," said Stephen from the chess-table, and speaking with some embarrassment, "an acquaintance of my father's. They have some business relations, I believe."

Grace looked very uncomfortable, and Elinor, the color mounting to her face, murmured an excuse, and glided forth on the piazza. A shade came over the usually placid face of Vernon, and there was an instant of awkwardness and silence. Eliot saw with a glance that he had inadvertently been the cause of the general confusion, and with quick good breeding effected a diversion by commencing a game of romps with little Ally, who, as ignorant as himself, entered into his views with high glee. Vernon presently took the opportunity to follow Elinor to the piazza. She took his arm with an affectionate but apprehensive pressure.

"That man—here again?" she inquired.

"He has been here—here in this house—not by my wish, but of his own instance. It was to arrange the matter of which we spoke, and which, as I told you, he was willing to adjust as proposed, and as *she* agreed. He will come here no more. That is included in our understanding, as well as the stipulation that he is not to make known his relation to the child—or others."

"But what can he be doing at Dangerfield's Rest?"

"Of that I am as ignorant as yourself. He explained his sojourn as being a visit to an old friend. I had hoped that ere this he would have taken his leave."

"Is it not strange that Mr. Stephen Dangerfield has never named the circumstance?"

"It appears so, certainly. Perhaps he has an inkling of matters which, in such a case, would impose silence on the score of delicacy. I can imagine no other reason."

"Had you no conversation with him excepting on the subject of Ally?"

"None. There was no other to discuss. Stay—at my second interview with him, which took place at the banker's, he undertook to refrain from molesting *her*."

Elinor marked the good man's venial prevarication, and well understood the cause. At early morning, on the day after Kirkwood's visit, she had, while walking in the garden, discerned a white slip of paper lying in the grass under the study windows. Some document of Mr. Vernon's, she thought, blown out by the wind—no unusual incident. She picked it up with the intention of restoring it, and as she did so her own name caught her eye. It was Kirkwood's pencilled memorandum, headed "Estate of John Grazebrook to James Kirkwood, Dr.," and dated. The story was clear to her. There was a claim against the small property left by her father, which the figures showed to quite absorb her little fortune. Oliver Vernon had satisfied this claim, and intended to keep her in ignorance of the transaction. The untoward accident had baulked his kindly purpose.

"Do not let this trifling incident annoy you, my darling. 'Tis but for once. No one here will allude to the man again, and I will endeavor to induce his speedy departure from the neighborhood. It distresses me deeply that such things should occur, but only because you attach to them an exaggerated importance."

He spoke anxiously, with a loving and still strong arm about her, and, as Elinor looked up with a smile half painful, half wistful, pressed a father's kiss on her pure, broad brow. And Cuthbert, who saw what passed, marvelled what possible connexion there could be between this dark Iago Eliot spoke of, and the beautiful girl who had

so swiftly and unconsciously become the mistress of his heart.

Who has not spent many an hour of the interior life—ever unsatisfying because ending in shadows, ever sustaining because rosy with hope—in dreaming of that ideal which is said to exist for all—whose qualities physical and spiritual are precisely adapted to our utmost needs of love, devotion, use,—whose virtues shall eke out our own peculiar imperfections and blend two natures into the promised harmonious unity? The beautiful theory which teaches this principle as a truth has, at least, its universality to recommend it. It is cherished in the dwellings of rich and needy, of the powerful and the weak, of the scholar and the boor. The ignorant peasant who has neither read nor been told of the poetic thought, will tell you it is yet no stranger to him. Men whose lives have been devoted to hard, petrifying pursuits, as of state-craft, law, figures, mere money-getting, will tell you if you can get at what left of their softer natures, that they too have felt and dreamed of it—and that when they found, or thought they had found, that they were not to be of the fortunate few who realize it, they turned for comfort or oblivion to their present ways of life. Some say, that only boys and girls, young men and maidens cherish this lovely hope, indulge this romantic aspiration. Is this true, silver-haired old man? Is it true, poor faded sister? both going, perhaps, tremulously down to mateless and unloved graves? You do not say so. You say, "if not now, *hereafter*." No, the hope is universal—one proof of divine inspiration in its origin, to add to the greater one—that it *consoles*.

We meet a man, a woman, and we know instantly, magnetically, that they have this or that quality which is also a part of our ideal—the other more beautiful self that belongs to us. Sometimes there are many of these qualities, and we are surprised or attracted to pursue the possessor. Thus many unions come which are mistakes and which cause misery. Yet both parties have been but obey-

ing nature or destiny in so struggling to attain their ideal. They fail; but it is because they are unfortunate, or because their sight is not clear. In either case, they are to believe that the blunder is to conduce to their own ultimate good, and that the happy junction will infallibly take place—*hereafter*.

Cuthbert Boynton had found his ideal. He was firmly convinced of it, and nothing could have persuaded him to the contrary. Certainly his experience was entitled to much respect and consideration. He knew a vast deal about pretty women in a general way. He appreciated the cognate force which lies in handsome eyes, snowy complexions, flowing tresses, budding figures, pretty ankles, irresistible Balmorals, and all the rest of it. He had too much money, and had travelled too much not to have been compelled to march up to these batteries—or past them—in many lands and under various and critical circumstances. The mere fact of encountering a woman and finding her handsome by no means included with him a forced flirtation at any price. He would rather smoke cigars, read books, look at pictures, drive, hunt and shoot. Men get indurated, calloused in a manner, to what was once temptation, who have been accustomed to roam at will, and have been taught by experience to beware of traps and pitfalls. He was courteous, refined, attentive so far as prescribed by convention, to every lady he met, young or old, and quite as a matter of course. But when, as the Fates would have it, he stumbled upon Elinor Grazebrook, Cuthbert knew that his hour was come. She answered in every respect, so far as person was concerned, the creature of his dreams. And, as he got to know her more and more, he saw without surprise, but with exceeding joy, that the nobler qualities quite came up to the air-drawn previsions of his ideal. He felt so satisfied that here was a case of natural adaptation, that he astonished himself one day soon after arriving at Uplands by the sudden suggestion, "Is it absolutely certain that the lady will recognise the fact as thoroughly as I myself do?"

On the same day he set about gathering such information as might throw light on a subject so interesting, and, as became a strategist, he essayed to obtain some knowledge of its topography before venturing into the enemies' country. Grace and Cuthbert were very good friends, as young people always are when enjoying a pleasure in common which each sees without conflicting with the other. The only difference was in their manner of enjoying the pleasure, for Cuthbert was rather serious if not solemn, and Grace was somewhat arch if not coquettish. Would Miss Vernon be pleased to tell him, he asked in confidence, if—that is, if she saw no impropriety in the question,—if Miss Grazebrook had as yet contracted any engagement—that is to say, any attachment? And Miss Vernon blushed, as young ladies usually do at such questions, and said, "None that I know of—unless, indeed it might be for—papa."

Cuthbert would have been annoyed by an approach to trifling but for his pleasure at the information he elicited. He went on:

"Miss Grazebrook has been a member of your family for some years, I believe?"

"Oh, yes. Quite five. Ever since she lost her father. We regard her as belonging entirely to ourselves now; papa as his daughter, I as my sister."

"She has a most engaging character—I mean a most attractive and lovable one."

"Has she not? Every one likes Elinor, except people who now and then try to be a little too familiar with her, and get snubbed for their pains."

"You think her very proud, then?"

"Not exactly proud. She has a great deal of self-respect. Perhaps rather more personal dignity than most girls of her age. She suffered much pain—experienced great misfortune—in earlier days, which perhaps has added to her self-respect, and possibly makes her a little distant with strangers. Those who knew her best love her most."

"I know it," said Cuthbert, "I mean the affection of

Mr. Vernon and yourself is obvious enough—and I presume none know her better than yourselves."

"And none whom she loves better—at least we hope so. We could never part with Grace now."

The young man's countenance fell, and then brightened again at this. There was comfort as well as depression in what he had heard. He stood in silence for a moment, and then made a *coup* in the way of revenge.

"Is it quite impossible that such a catastrophe may occur through the voluntary action of Miss Vernon?"

"Or through that of Miss Grazebrook, you *would* say," cried Grace, the rosy betrayer rushing to her cheek again. "It's not fair of you, Mr. Boynton, after extorting so much of my confidence."

"Pardon," besought Cuthbert with contrition, "one question more, and I'll submit to any penance you have the heart to impose. Do you know of any reason why your friend should not be free to—to—"

"There, I'll come to your relief and shame you by my generosity. Do I know of any reason why Nelly should not receive the addresses of any gentleman who is worthy to offer them? No, none. Will that do?"

"A thousand thanks, and—"

"And you'll remember that my grace was bountiful."

"Indeed, I shall."

CHAPTER XVIII.

CALUMNY lives in republics as well as in monarchies. We do not escape it by changing a King for a President. Rather the reverse; for among the other privileges claimed under the latter, that of making free with our neighbor's good name is by no means to be omitted. And it is a curious feature of Republican society, that, while in its hatred of hereditary distinctions it refuses to honor a

man for the heroic deeds of his ancestor, it insists on punishing him for that ancestor's weaknesses or crimes. The sins of the father are visited on the children here with a vengeance. Whatever may be due to the defects or the merits of our Puritanical heritage, it is undeniable that there exists among us a very strong bias for detraction. This partly arises from the absence of standards. It is also stimulated by the preposterous claim of our newspapers to abuse everybody and everything under the cry of freedom. Our Press, unhappily, has been too much under the control of men who, entirely blackened and disgraced themselves, have been seldom happy unless hard at work begriming and traducing all who come within their sphere, that none may be distinguished as being above their own dirty level. It is true that this is an evil which offers the consolation of most others, namely, that it will ultimately correct itself. But it is no less, while it lasts, a social blemish—a blot on the national character. We claim theoretically to judge and to value individuals for themselves alone; but practically we persecute and underrate them for the misdeeds, real or imaginary, of all who are connected with them. The fruits of such a system are too manifest to require more than suggestion. They lead people to strive not so much to *be* better as to *seem* so. They point their moral at last in the Spartan creed which teaches "not to leave undone, but keep unknown."

Take the most common of domestic illustrations—the case of him or her who is so unfortunate as to have had an intemperate father or an erring mother. How does society treat the innocent offender? Does it smoothe the path and stretch a helping hand for the unfortunate who has suffered so much undeserved trial and misery? or does it take counsel of the usurer, Overreach, to set its foot upon and trample on them? Where is the chivalry which, now we have abolished Feudal remedies, now that we no longer tolerate the duello—where is the generosity, the manly feeling which should protect and uphold the unprotected woman, the helpless orphan? Alas! the substitutes are

yet to come, and the institutions are yet imperfect which protect the person indeed, but leave the unarmed and defenceless no shield to ward the strokes of idle slander or malignant venom at that part most tender and most precious—their reputation. Society treats those who, for every philanthropical and physiological reason, should be treated with the utmost leniency, the most delicate consideration, with a harshness and a scorn which are the precise opposites of the sentiments such cases should justly elicit.

Poor Elinor Grazebrook suffered both the misfortunes suggested by the illustrations we have cited. Her father had been for years notoriously intemperate. His acknowledged talent had only delayed and graduated the social downfall his vice brought upon himself and his family. People care little to cultivate the society, or propitiate the good will of those whom they see, by a slow but certain process, descending in position and influence; and there is no instance of such decadence more inevitable than that of the family of the inebriate. No need to mark the downward steps. Most of us have seen them often enough, and know, if we have not felt, their bitterness. This domestic calamity of itself was enough to sadden so sensitive a spirit as that of Elinor. Doubtless she inherited from the nature which had succumbed in fighting the battle of life, that which made her feel so acutely the consequences of his fall. But then there came the crowning blow to her pride, the last drop in her cup of humiliation. Her mother fell, and with her honor was destroyed, in her daughter's estimation, all hope of ever again filling her proper niche in society. Mary Grazebrook had suffered much to palliate her crime, in the eye of Heaven if not in that of the world, and none knew this better than Elinor. The sickening horror of dragging on year after year in enforced and most intimate association with a drunkard; the wearying alternations of brutality and imbecility; the endlessly broken promises of amendment which the poor wretch would, but perhaps *could* not keep; the disdainful pity of the hard world; the manifold troubles and mortifications

arising from stinted means and failing credit—these are the griefs often borne till death comes with its sad release to one or other of the wretched partners; but which have often enough before Mary Grazebrook's time furnished the stimulus and the excuse for crime such as she was guilty of. The idea which filled her soul after ten years of misery was solely that of *escape*—escape from the wretched life she had not religious or moral strength longer to endure. Had there been a father's, brother's, sister's home open to receive her, she had doubtless sought refuge in it. But there was none such, and the wily villain to whose arts she succumbed, knew well how accidental circumstances were fighting on his side. His feeling towards her was one of all but unmixed animal passion. She was still very handsome, and had one of those amply rounded figures which present voluptuous attractions to strong and profligate natures such as Kirkwood's. As might have been expected, and as has been previously related, the man soon wearied of his beautiful mistress. Before he abandoned her, she had learned to loathe and despise him with an intensity of which she had never before thought herself capable. This aversion, which might otherwise have remained passive, had grown into an absolute thirst for vengeance, when Kirkwood in leaving her had also deprived her of her child. In vain had she searched up and down the land to punish the one and recover the other. Kirkwood carried out his plans with exhaustive sagacity. The little girl had been taken far down into the beautiful State after which he had named her, and the charge accepted by a half-sister of the father, who told his own story of its origin. He then made his way to New Orleans, and took the steamer for California.

Elinor had always felt compunction respecting her domestication in the family of Oliver Vernon. Her acuteness in worldly matters, sharpened by early trials and sufferings, was at no loss to teach her that there were those who would regard the position of Grace Vernon as in some sort compromised by intimate relations with one whose family was

so disgraced as her own. She felt that, whatever her own misfortunes, she had no right to entail their consequences, however remote or indirect, upon her guileless friend. However unmerited by any misdeed on her own part were the slights and scorns of society, her innocence did not justify her in permitting others to share the burden. Such were her reflections and expressed convictions when Oliver Vernon first came to fetch her to Uplands. The good man anticipated, and was therefore prepared to combat precisely such objections. He pointed out that few if any persons moving in the orbit of his country home had ever heard of the disasters which were so momentous to herself. Even if by any chance there might be such, his own position and influence were not likely to be challenged by the offensive bruited of distasteful reminiscences. No really worthy or generous person would dream of visiting upon her the misfortunes of her parents. It was, moreover, highly desirable that Grace should have a companion of something near her own years and tastes—it was, in fact, indispensable. So far as Elinor's delicacy was concerned respecting the independence of her position, the sum her father had secured to her, if not large, was yet quite ample for the needs of a single young lady. These and similar considerations had overborne the girl's scruples, and although counter arguments often recurred to her mind with painful effect, she had never after her first acquiescence seriously thought of them as furnishing grounds for any prospective change in her situation.

Now, however, the case was far different. Whatever may have been the original force of Oliver Vernon's arguments or the conclusion which they established, it was clear that the conditions had been transposed so as to establish with equal force a conclusion exactly opposite. It was now known—or certain soon to be—in the neighborhood, who and what Elinor's father and mother were, or had been. The presence of Kirkwood and the mysterious protraction of his visit at Dangerfield's Rest, together with his admitted relation to the child, Alabama, appeared

to make publicity on these points quite inevitable. Again: the claim Kirkwood set up to the property left by John Grazebrook, while, if resisted, it would lead to litigation involving notoriety damaging to all but himself, if admitted, would leave Elinor in the position of being utterly dependent upon the bounty of Oliver Vernon. In either case she would not be justified in remaining at Uplands.

So reasoned Elinor, and the bitter struggle it cost her to determine on the action her reasoning confirmed to be right, satisfied her the more that there was but one proper course for her to pursue. She must leave Uplands. Leave the noble-minded old man she had learned to love as she never had been able to love her father. Leave the warm-hearted girl whom she loved better than a sister. Leave the sunny and beautiful home whose grand old trees, lovely views, pictures and books, bowers and shady walks—even the humble animals they made pets of—rose painfully to her mind as costing each so many regrets. Every one employed about the place was more or less dear to her, for here—and for the first time in her life, she had been truly happy. To quit the scene which she had grown to love so fondly with all its clustering association of objects, animate and inanimate, was to Elinor like going back to the past—and she looked back on her sad, desolate childhood with a shudder.

Yet she must go. Even if it did no wrong to Grace, she could not now remain. She had suffered deeply enough at times from the stray insinuations or covered sneers of vulgar people like the Von Donks,—but those times were rare, and it was not impossible to avoid them. How would it be now, when the knowledge of her mother's shame should be rife on every lip, and every finger, high or low, be raised to point her out? Anything rather than that. Better be buried far away, deep down in the quiet ground, than hear those whispers, than see those levelled indices of contempt.

To go she was resolved. There were two considerations connected with her departure, upon each of which she was

equally determined. Firstly, as regarded the communicating of her purpose to Oliver and Grace Vernon. She was well aware that they would oppose it by every possible argument and entreaty. Scenes would occur which were sure to be inexpressibly painful to all parties, and which would be productive of no good whatever. Elinor therefore resolved to depart without giving any previous intimation of her design, intending to forward, directly afterward, written explanations of her behavior. She meant to entreat that she might not be pursued or sought out, but hoped by certain precautions to secure herself from discovery in the event of her entreaties being unheeded.

The second consideration had reference to the immediate future, as well as to what the young girl regarded as her career and destiny in life. It was a subject which had long occupied her thoughts, and had been almost shaped into purpose at the time she came to live at Uplands. The aspirations connected with it had lain dormant for a time, but they had never been entirely extinguished. When she lately commenced to persuade herself that duty and self-respect would oblige her to leave Vernon's protecting roof, those aspirations had rekindled in her heart, and had prompted her to take preliminary measures such as should prepare the way for consummation when the hour of her departure should arrive. The measures taken, and the consummation arrived at, will fully appear as we trace Elinor's adventures in the future.

"No good'll come on't."

This was the opinion, rather dogmatically expressed, of sturdy David Greenwood as he sat drinking tea according to his evening custom in Aunt Mercy's own room. The snowy cloth, the fragrant beverage, the pleasant fatigue that comes of labor done and well done, usually combined to make these occasions the chosen ones for gossip, or, as Aunt Mercy said, for a bit of a chat.

"La sakes, Uncle Dave, don't go on like that. It's kin-

der flyin' in the face of Providence to keep a prophesyin' like Jeremiah of what's going to come to pass in the futur'. He's kind and gentle and every bit a gentleman if there ever was one."

"He's a nigger driver, that's what he is. Not that I'd say any thing rily or hurtful of one of the Squire's company outside. But he aint nuthin' more nor less than a nigger driver. Of course there's different kinds. There's good and there's bad, and there's some sorter nootral. I dare say he's one of the best of the lot. Like enough he don't skin men alive, nor brand 'em with red-hot irons, nor chase 'em with bloodhounds; but it's the same cryin' old iniquity. He ha'n't got no business ownin' of 'em at all."

"Well now supposin' he hasn't, he's got 'em, ha'n't he? And he aint goin' to give 'em up, is he? And isn't it better, if they must be in bondage, for the colored folks to be treated like Christians, as Mr. Boynton most likely treats his, than to be tortered and worried like so many wild beasts?"

"Wall, I don't know as it is, Aunt Massy. If they ought to have their freedom, p'raps the treatment which would stimerlate 'em to stick up for't would be best in the long run. These here slaveholders have all but ruined the country our fathers fit for, and I've no likin' for 'em any how. If it weren't for the Paddies we'd a run 'em out o' power long ago, but the day'll come yet I reckon."

"If there's wrong done, the Lord'll avenge it, Uncle Dave. Any how, Mr. Boynton aint responsible for Slavery, is he? He didn't bring the colored folks from Afriky, did he? They were here all ready to his hand left to him by his father, most likely, and what's he to do but treat 'em as well as he knows how?"

"The Lord helps them as helps themselves, Aunt Massy. I reckon he don't intervene directly, but through chosen instruments, makin' 'em gradooaly git wiser and better so's to be fit for the work. It's true the Britishers brought the

niggers here, and our folks didn't want 'em and grumbled like sin about it, but that don't make no difference. The wrong's here however it's brought about, and it's our business somehow to set it right."

"Well, if Miss Nelly marries this gentleman and goes down South with him she's sure to do good there as well as anywhere's else. She won't make things there no worse any way, and I guess she can make him do most anything she likes."

"Yes, there's no mistake, he's awful sweet on her; but I tell you, Aunt Massy, it aint the right thing for our Northern women to go down there aidin' and abettin' to perpetooate slavery. The feelin' of the world's agen it, and goodpeople everywhere are gettin' more'n more sot agen it every-day. It'll have to go under soon or else this country will,—and I don't think it's goin' to be the country."

"May be you're right, Uncle Dave, but I think people ought to marry them they take a liking to, young or old. We allers agreed on that, didn't we?"

"Well, as a ginerall rule, but then there's exceptions. Arter all, you don't even know that Miss Nelly'll have him when he asks her."

"I wouldn't say I knew for sartain, that's a fact. She's dreadful quiet-like, and don't talk much about what she's a thinking on. But I know she likes him putty well, even if she aint fur gone."

"How d'ye know, Aunt Massy?"

"Oh! by things you'd never think of noticin', Uncle Dave, cute as you are. If she comes into a room where she thinks he is, and he aint, there's jest a shade of disappointment in her eye; and her face kinder lights up when he's talkin' to her in a way I never saw when she talked to other folks at home or abroad. Then, when his back's turned (never when he's lookin' toward her) her glance folers him about in a curious studyin' kind of way."

"Is them the things folks do when they're kind o' hankerin' arter one another?"

"They're signs, I reckon. Most folks acts in that way more or less."

"Did *you* ever do any sech by any one you cottoned to?"

"Present company's allers excepted. A little more tea, Uncle Dave? and more sugar than the other? Dear me, how comfortable it is to get back home again. I begin to feel nateral-like now again."

"You didn't *act* quite nateral when you fust got back. I thought you was kinder spiled with foreign airs and graces; but you're gotten round right agen now. Howsumever I'm glad to get you back at any price. Things was gettin' rather rusty in your department."

"You can say that safe enough. Sech shirts and sech socks as yourn I never see in all my born days. I haint got 'em right yet. And as to the house it was a sight to be seen. Dust and dirt everywheres from kitchen to garret. You could write your name with your finger on every wall in the house, and as to the curtains, a shakin' of 'em was like gotten under a land-slide!"

"Didn't last long arter you got here, Aunt Massy. Miss Grace said you did the work of six the first week you got home."

"Bless her heart! *She'll* have a husband that even you won't object to, Uncle David. And another thing, it won't be takin' her away from poor Squire Vernon altogether. They'll be neighbors all their lives."

"Mr. Stephen's a very fine young man, very, and I don't see as there's anything to hender his marryin' Miss Gracy. His father, though, old Mart. Dangerfield used to be a queer one. He lived a riotous life of it up to five and forty years. There's a chap visitin' there now I used to see about in them days, and he's the only one on 'em that ever comes. There used to be a houseful, month in and month out."

"Well, folks change as they git older. I dare say if the old gentleman had took a fancy to marry again he'd been happier."

"Ne'er a time. Look at the Squire; he's happy enough, ain't he?"

"To be sure, but then he's always had Miss Grace. I tell you, Uncle Dave, it makes a sight of difference when there's always a bright smiling young face a lightin' up the house as folks get stricken in years."

"That's a fact, aunty," said David, with something like a sigh. "I'm afraid some folks don't know what a comfort they miss in children till they git too old to have 'em. Talkin' of children, how's that ere colored woman, little Miss Ally's nurse?"

"She's pooty bad," replied Aunt Mercy, shaking her head. "She's never had her right mind, poor critter, since they took her out of the wreck. Dr. Saunders doesn't think she'll last long. He says she must have given the little one all there was to eat—she was a mere skeleton—she sacrificed herself, poor soul, that the charge trusted to her might live."

"And yet they say the critters aint human beings," said David reflectively. "Could a Christian ever so white have done more?"

We may say here that the fears as to the faithful Gerty were soon to be sadly realized. She lingered yet a few weeks, kept up by care and nursing; but she sank ere the family went to town for the winter, and her remains repose among dust which is no whiter in the neighboring village churchyard.

CHAPTER XIX.

"IRREVOCABLE!"

It was the last word he heard from her lips for many a long day; the final strain of that dear melody which he had hoped to listen to for ever. That word, "the seal upon the tomb of hope," ended with its breath the fairest dream his imagination had ever conjured of an earthly Heaven. He looked into the depths of her beautiful dark eyes to see if caprice and wilfulness were not conspiring to hide pity there,—but he could find no trace of such a feeling. He lingered for a moment, knowing that reprieve is sweeter for being tardy, and unwilling to believe that the gentle face where he had read so much of real or fancied encouragement and sympathy should remain hardened into that marble resolution,—but there came no change. Then Cuthbert slowly departed, leaving Elinor in sole possession of the shady nook which had witnessed his ill-starred declaration. Slowly he walked toward the mansion, pondering as he went on the propriety of at once taking leave of Uplands, and,—though he snatched up a tiny lilac glove, and pressed a hasty kiss upon it, and thrust it in his bosom,—he never looked behind.

And Elinor listened anxiously,—cautiously holding her breath to make sure of hearing the last faint sound of the retreating footsteps,—and then there came what she had not known since the death of her unhappy father—a torrent of bitter tears.

"Irrevocable!"

Has the word sounded for you, Reader, and has it been the knell of such a hope? Philosophers tell us that such crushing miseries are the lights and guide-posts which are to bring us to true wisdom and to the highest happiness, and perhaps they are right; but we draw, most of us, slender consolation from such truths in the first bitter hours of affliction. Cuthbert did not, although he attained, let us hope, the average standard of philosophical equa-

nimity in course of time. She sat there that day in a sort of bower looking forth on the distant mountains, and she was musing on her own future whose outlines were as misty and indistinct as their own. Deeply absorbed was she, so that Cuthbert came upon her unperceived. He had not quite resolved upon then and there declaring his cherished passion; yet a less impressible heart would have grown weak and yielding in viewing such a vision.

She was dressed in white that day, with a simple chip hat and a lace mantilla hanging carelessly across her arms. Her lovely gold-brown hair gleamed through the net which confined, while yielding to, its weight. The oval face, with its features so pure and delicate, was upturned, the dark thoughtful eyes bent, as we have said, upon the far-off hills. The young man gazed in silent admiration, and, as he gazed, he felt impelled, all but irresistibly, to throw himself at Elinor's feet and, without preamble, declare his love, and beseech that it might be returned. A bird suddenly flashed across her line of sight, crossing, as it flew, the angle between that line and the point where Cuthbert stood. Her eyes followed mechanically, and fell on the intruder's figure. He raised his hat and advanced.

"I would not willingly have broken the spell, but being discovered, you won't refuse to let me crave pardon for disturbing your reverie."

"My brown study scarcely deserves even that name, Mr. Boynton; mere idleness, almost inanity. If I had a thought, it was of yonder lovely blue hills, and coupling the dimness of their outlines in this hazy atmosphere, with that of our own future."

"I am just about to form a clear idea of my own—that is, of my immediate future. My stay in the North has been more extended than I proposed; indeed, duty rather calls me homeward. I fear the expiration of this week must find me on the wing."

"We shall be sorry to lose you so soon. But why fear going home? I found it such a relief—such a pleasure—

to return here after our long sojourn abroad, that I can only fancy people turning homewards with joy."

"Nor should I have a different feeling if there were those whom I loved—or who loved me—to welcome the journey's end. Life is rather dull for a bachelor on a cotton plantation."

"But your people—the black people, I mean—are attached to you, are they not? I am sure you cannot be other than kind to them."

"Oh! yes; such attachment as they are capable of. But you can readily believe that their society is not precisely all-satisfying. To be sure, there's good hunting and fishing, and all that sort of thing. And the gentry of the neighborhood are up to the average. But there is something, or rather the absence of something, which makes the old home wearisome and sad enough."

"And that something is——"

"Can't you guess—a wife!"

An awkward and bungling way truly to usher in the coming crisis, but people who are desperately in love are extremely apt to be awkward and bungling. A flush swept up to Elinor's brow, but she had abundance of *aplomb* and self-possession, and she answered steadily—

"A deficiency, I should judge, which one in your position might very easily supply."

"Alas! I may not even estimate the difficulty. I have a very strong case to make up, but the judge has not yet heard the evidence."

"You speak enigmatically, Mr. Boynton," said Elinor rising, "but I presume I may safely prophesy that you will gain your cause."

"Heaven knows how happy it will make me to do so; but do not, do not leave me, Miss Grazebrook," for Elinor whose dim suspicion of the drift of the interview began to approach conviction, had turned to depart. "For Heaven's sake do not go now, after such a blissful prediction. You say," he went on rapidly, and possessing himself of her slender white hand, "that I am to gain my cause. Is it

possible that you are ignorant that you are the judge who is to decide it?"

"I? Mr. Boynton, I——"

"Nay, hear me out. You must not, cannot refuse to hear *all* that I have to say, now that I have said so much." And the floodgates of his passion once opened, the torrent rolled on, unrestrained and swift.

"I love you, dearly, fondly. Better than I have ever loved in the past, better than I shall ever love in the future. I have been seeking for you; indeed I have, for years, half hopeless, often, of ever finding you. No, not romance—truth, God's truth, as I do earnestly believe. Don't turn away—don't say this love of mine cannot be returned. You can't know how great, and strong, and fervent it is. No one can ever love you as I love you. It could not be. Don't, don't take your hand away—this little hand I've so often longed to kiss; don't take it from mine, or if you do let it be to give it again, and say it may lie there for ever!" And the suppliant was at Elinor's feet, and covering her hand with the coveted kisses.

"Pray, pray stop; I beg, I entreat,—or must I command you, Mr. Boynton, to desist? Indeed, indeed I had no idea—this is so sudden——"

"Not with me. It dates from the first moment I ever saw you, and has only grown stronger with each that has succeeded. There, I will release your hand; only give me a word—a single word of hope that it shall be restored once more—some time—not to be again withdrawn."

"I am so taken by surprise—I——"

"You hesitate! Can you not speak that word?"

"Indeed, Mr. Boynton, with truth, I fear I cannot."

"Good Heavens, *why*? You are not engaged—promised—to another; in a word, you love no one else?"

"In your sense, I do not." And Elinor slowly recovered her self possession. "I am truly grieved to give you pain—but this has been so hasty—a step for which I am so wholly unprepared——"

"I see! I see!" he interrupted, eagerly catching at the

most favorable implication. "You require time to reflect, to arrange your thoughts, to be reconciled to change, but you don't positively reject——"

"'Tis best to be explicit and candid from the outset, Mr. Boynton," said Elinor, in a grave, sad voice. "That is the precise construction you are to put upon my words."

"No, no, no! For Heaven's sake do not say that. Say that you cannot love me now as a wife should, and as *you* can, but that you may do so hereafter. Say that there are difficulties—family matters—whose importance you exaggerate, but which my strong love may surmount. Say that your guardian is bent upon some other union for you, and you dislike running counter to his wishes. Say anything but that you absolutely—hopelessly—reject me!"

"But none of these things would be true," said Elinor, calmly.

"How!"

"It would be untrue," and her voice shook a little, "to say that I cannot love you now, but may hereafter. It would be untrue to say that there are reasons—family or other—which would present insuperable objections to any step of the kind I might contemplate. It would be untrue to say that Mr. Vernon would desire any union for me which was not in the fullest sense agreeable to myself. But yet I cannot marry you."

"Am I then so distasteful to you?" said the young man bitterly.

Her face was averted at the moment he asked the question, and had it not been it is probable Cuthbert would not have seen the expression which would have made his heart leap for joy to interpret. It was one of ineffable tenderness—a feeling of which she strove to suppress any trace in her voice as she answered.

"To say so would be as untrue as the other."

Cuthbert gave an exclamation of surprise and pleasure, and then reflected for a moment. He could think well and rapidly enough on most subjects, why not on this to him most important one? Presently he spoke, and his

voice was musical with a hope which was mingled with chivalrous deference and deprecation:—

"You will permit me to allude to a subject necessarily rather a delicate one?"

She bowed in acquiescence. "Go on. I listen."

"You are proud—I mean in a certain way—more so than most of your sex perhaps. I can imagine that pride as sometimes leading you to extremes—possibly in connexion with social relations. You are not likely to relish the acceptance of aught which, in the most fastidious sense, you might conceive yourself unable to bestow. I am not ignorant of—of the undeserved pain you have suffered from certain family misfortunes. The attitude in which I have placed myself precludes, I trust, the need of explanation on such a subject so far as I am concerned;—but you, may I ask if your decision is affected by such considerations?"

"I will answer that," said Elinor, with dignity, "and frankly, although the discussion is perhaps unnecessary. My reply is, distinctly not. It might be in the case of a man in any sense my inferior, not in that of a man in every sense my equal. I repudiate and despise the practical injustice of society which would visit the sin of the parent upon the innocent child. Of course whatever disabilities or contumely the world may choose to impose, an individual cannot in his weakness escape; but the soul cannot be compelled to acquiesce in the decision or to cease protesting against its injustice."

"I honor the sentiment, even if, in its utterance, the slender hope I had cherished be shaken," said the young man sadly. "But Miss Grazebrook, nay,—Elinor,—you will forgive the name if it be for the last as well as the first time,—do not say that you really meant to deprive me of every hope. Leave me," he pursued with strong emotion as he saw her growing agitation, "leave me the merest shadow of doubt which shall save me from utter despair. You may yet change your resolution!"

"I implore you not to—to press me further. I grieve,

indeed—indeed I do! To inflict the pain hurts *me* more than you,—but it cannot,—can never be otherwise. My resolution is—"

"No, no! Do not say it! Do not—"

"Irrevocable!"

And when she again looked up, he was gone.

CHAPTER XX.

CLIMAXES are contagious. The day which saw Cuthbert Boynton's departure from Uplands, saw Stephen Dangerfield the happy and accepted suitor of fair Grace Vernon. Stephen had brought himself to the duty point at last, and in making out his case to Oliver Vernon, he had unreservedly communicated the facts, so far as he knew them, relating to the mortgage on his ancestral acres. He narrated how he had at first determined,—feeling it impossible to be with Grace and not declare his attachment,—to abstain altogether from visiting her home; how that, on reflection, he saw the expediency of taking the advice of a calm and wise counsellor upon the question of Kirkwood's revelation, which, in fact, was his object in transgressing his original resolution; and how that, in the sequel, he had been so irresistibly impelled to behave as he had done, etc., etc. Vernon looked very grave on hearing of Kirkwood's connexion with the mortgage and of his domiciliation at Dangerfield's Rest.

"As to money, my dear Stephen," he affirmed, "Grace will have enough for both if need be, and where her happiness is at stake the subject is one of the smallest consideration. But that so fine a landed property, to which your family name has been so long attached, should pass from your hands is more serious. It might perhaps be in my power to purchase this mortgage,—not in your favor," continued he, smiling, as he saw Stephen's gesture of refusal,

"but in that of Grace's children. To what does Mr. Dangerfield state the incumbrance to amount?"

"Why, sir, I have had no discussion with my father on the subject. The sole knowledge I possess is derived from the holder, Mr. Kirkwood. I judged from my father's manner at a time when he knew the information was given me, and, indeed, ever since, that the story was correct. The total, Kirkwood alleged to be in the neighborhood of eighty thousand dollars."

"Have you seen the instrument yourself?"

"Not as yet. I hardly thought it necessary."

"My dear fellow, you are scarcely qualified as a man of business. You, at least, know whether it is properly recorded in the county office?"

Stephen was obliged to confess his ignorance upon this point also.

"In fine, then," said Vernon, laughing heartily, "you have absolutely no evidence that such a bond was ever executed, or that it exists at all, except the equivocal testimony of Mr. James Kirkwood. I say 'equivocal,' advisedly. I have known the man and his career for years, and his relation to the business is of itself sufficient to justify suspicion."

"I perceive I have been very careless and neglectful," said Stephen, with some confusion, "but you know my excuse, sir."

"Aye, and how to make due allowances," replied Vernon, "but really these are points which should be cleared up at once."

"I fear we shall find little comfort in investigation. My poor father is weak and ill, but he certainly would never allow me to be made the victim of so aimless a deception as this would be."

"Has Kirkwood had any dealings with Mr. Dangerfield for any length of time—I mean dealings of which you were cognizant?"

"I gathered previously that he had for a term of years been in the receipt of considerable sums of money from

my father. Why, or wherefore, I could not divine. He has been absent for several years from the Atlantic States."

"And now he comes here, takes up his abode under your roof, and sets up the claim that he is the possessor of a mortgage upon it to an extent nearly equalling its entire value!"

"Precisely."

"And did it never strike you that there might be something wrong in all this?"

"Very forcibly. It was my expressed determination to force an explanation, in fact, which elicited, for my satisfaction, the statement about the mortgage."

Vernon mused for a few moments. He did not believe in the existence of a *bona-fide* mortgage on Dangerfield's Rest at all; but he was at a loss to penetrate the motive which should induce Kirkwood to make the misrepresentation, or that which led Martin Dangerfield himself to acquiesce in it.

"Your first step is clear," he finally said; "it is to ascertain quietly whether such an instrument is on record in the proper registry—and afterwards, whether it be recorded or not, it will be well to ask to see the original paper, which, of course, must be presumed to be in Kirkwood's possession. Once satisfied as to the fact, you can resolve what course to pursue in the premises for the future."

The next morning Stephen rode forth as usual in the direction of Uplands. But he struck off to the right shortly before coming up with the familiar lodge, and galloped some half-dozen miles to the town which contained the County Buildings. With little time and trouble he was enabled to inspect the registers wherein mortgages on real property are recorded, and to discover that Vernon's suspicions were justified by the fact; there was no incumbrance whatever standing against the lands known as The Rest, and a careful search failed to detect the slightest evidence that there ever had been such.

The young man's indignation on making this discovery

was by no means less because it was palpably owing to his own negligence that it had been a tardy one. He had chafed impatiently under the protracted infliction of Kirkwood's presence, and barely restrained the outward expression of his annoyance in deference to his father. He was now more anxious to be rid of the unwelcome guest than ever. It was proper to acquaint his father with the fact of his engagement to Grace Vernon, and family intercourse would naturally and properly ensue, which, in all probability, would bring each of the visitors at the two houses, respectively, in contact with each other. Oliver Vernon had foreseen this dilemma, as the reader is aware, but had thought of it in relation to other embarrassing juxtapositions. His plan had been simple enough before his late explanation with Stephen. Knowing Kirkwood to be thoroughly mercenary, he had proposed to himself to make it well worth the man's while to absent himself altogether from that part of the country, and he then had no doubt in succeeding, and at a moderate cost. Now, however, the case was essentially different. Whether the claim set up by Kirkwood was just or unjust, he had asserted and obviously meant to adhere to and profit by it. He had a hold of some sort upon Martin Dangerfield, the value of which he rated at eighty thousand dollars, and no paltry sum was likely, under such circumstances, to induce him to forego any advantages, direct or collateral, which that hold could enforce.

Stephen rode straight home, with his head full of the significant discovery he had made. Yesterday at the same hour he would scarcely have resisted going over to Uplands before returning, but there had been great changes since yesterday. The sweet half-hour he had passed with Grace, after his interview with her father, had put the seal upon his happiness, and, secure as to the future, Stephen began to reflect that he had duties to perform in the world, and that he might as well set about them. Not the least was that which he owed to his father, that he should not be made the dupe of a designing schemer, such as he was

now more fully persuaded than ever Kirkwood really was. It was also a plain duty to the family with which he was to ally himself, that his own future resources and expectations should be not only properly protected, but clearly and unequivocally defined.

As to Kirkwood and his plans, the reader will have had no difficulty in surmising that at the time the pretension was put forward no such mortgage really existed. The man had skilfully availed himself of accidental circumstances to commit Martin Dangerfield to the tacit acknowledgment of an instrument which he proposed to draw up thereafter, and, watching a favorable opportunity, to cajole or threaten the old man into signing. That Stephen would one day take the step he had now adopted, Kirkwood foresaw was extremely probable. That such a step would be followed by a fresh explosion, he was well aware. When such a time arrived, it would be his cue to employ all his weapons for the consummation of his main design. Avarice had now become the strongest passion of his nature. There were circumstances which might necessitate his hasty departure from the country at any moment. Whether he could altogether control those circumstances or not, he resolved to put himself speedily in possession of the largest possible sum in ready cash. A mortgage on so fine a property as Dangerfield's Rest could be easily disposed of in New York, and the product invested in bills on Europe. Thus armed and prepared, he could take flight whenever events might make such a course prudent or desirable. *Au reste* he would make himself comfortable in his present quarters as long as possible.

It was high noon when Stephen arrived at the house, and questioned the servant who took his horse as to the whereabouts of his father and Mr. Kirkwood. They were at luncheon in the breakfast room, and thither he repaired. Kirkwood at once perceived something unusual in the young man's presenting himself at this hour, and essayed to forewarn his companion of the approaching *eclaircissement*.

"You seldom honor us at luncheon, Mr. Stephen," he remarked, affably, "and we should appreciate the exceptions like the angels' visits. The pleasure of a glass of wine? Capital Sherry, this!"

He poured out a glass for Stephen, and held his own up lovingly in the sunlight.

Stephen waved aside the proffered courtesy, and plunged abruptly into his subject.

"I have been at —, the county town, and I have been looking through the books at the Register's office. Perhaps you will be good enough to inform me why it is that the mortgage you claim to hold on this property is not properly and formally registered there?"

"I could have spared you the trouble of your journey," said Kirkwood, sipping his wine with calm enjoyment, "had you given me the opportunity to do so. As it is, your question had better be addressed to your father."

The old man looked at his tormentor imploringly, and then turned to the inquiring face of his son.

"You know you have never asked me in relation to this business, Stephen," he went on, in a hesitating and embarrassed voice, "else I might have told you that as no mortgage yet existed, such an instrument would not of course be registered."

"Yet!" cried Stephen impatiently, "*yet* existed? Your friend here assured me that it did exist, and had for years existed!"

"Morally, my dear Mr. Stephen—morally, if not absolutely. I did not imagine that a man of your nice sense of honor would feel disposed to claim any distinction, more especially as it would make no difference if you did."

"Spare your sneers, sir. Am I to look to you for explanation of this new mystery, or will my father vouchsafe it?"

"Whichever you please," replied Kirkwood. "It cannot possibly signify to me, since whatever I have done or left undone in the premises has been dictated solely by consideration for the dignity and honor of your family. Its

head can tell you, if he likes, that he executed a formal undertaking to render me this mortgage whenever I should exact it, and that I have been willing to postpone that exaction for his credit and pride's sake. But when you assume a belligerent attitude—an attitude which points to, if it does not quite threaten the depriving me of my rights—I am clearly obliged to declare and maintain them."

"I prefer, sir," said Stephen haughtily, "after what has passed between us, to receive my information from my father himself. Perhaps you will tell me, sir—" turning to Mr. Dangerfield, "if what this gentleman says is true?"

A flush came darkling over the face of Kirkwood such as those who knew him best in old times had learned to dread—but the old man was gazing tenderly at his boy.

"True?" he echoed feebly, "true? Oh, my son, how can I—" he stared about as if looking for help and his eye fell on Kirkwood's—"my son—my poor Stephen—it—*it is true!*" and he poured some wine with shaking hand into a tumbler, drained it off, and clasped his hands again as if in utter helplessness.

Stephen gazed upon him with a strange blending of doubt and dismay. "Father," he cried suddenly, "there is some coercion here; something troublesome—dangerous perhaps—with which you do not trust me. Speak! let there be entire candor between us, and—" looking defiantly at Kirkwood, "we will see who shall dare to threaten or control you!"

"Tush, Stephen Dangerfield, don't try that tone with me—don't take such pains, as 'Richard' says, to curse yourself. Not but that candor has its value, or that it shall be my fault if it be not employed to the full. Speak, my old friend, and satisfy this incredulous son of yours—or shall I do it for you? Shall I tell him of all the little intricacies and mazes of our past history? Shall I tell him that you—"

"No, no, no!" cried the old man. "For God's sake, no. Anything but that. What do you want me to do? In Heaven's name let us end this miserable scene."

"I ask for nothing that is not reasonable and just," answered Kirkwood sullenly. "If there is anything unpleasant it is not I who have brought it about. You concede the justice of my demand. End discussion by complying with it at once. This I have a distinct right to expect. The mortgage is prepared—I will bring it here directly—you can sign and a couple of the servants can witness it. Do you agree?"

"I—I—do agree."

"No, Father!" burst forth passionately from Stephen.

"Be cautious," said Kirkwood, with a gloomy smile, and with this admonition, which might have been intended for either or both his companions, he left the room.

The old man looked on his son with an expression of intense pain and solicitude. Stephen came up and took his withered hand, and kissed his wrinkled forehead.

"Don't mind for me, father. I can stand it well enough if it must be. It is for you I am anxious. I cannot tell what horrible power it is which binds you to this man; but if—"

"Hush, my son," whispered the other, nervously, "you must not anger him. Indeed, indeed, you must not. It is hard you should be the sufferer—you who are so innocent. Heaven help me—I would do all for the best—but what to do I know not."

"Leave all to me," urged Stephen, eagerly, "let me settle with him. I'll promise to be cool—not to lose my temper. I will propose time for consideration, and we can take advice as to the course—the best course—to pursue!"

"No—no. There must be no others admitted into the affair. Witnesses only testify to a signature. But how can I do it? How can I do it?"

His words and manner almost indicated imbecility, and his son grasped for a moment at the idea that he was really not responsible, and that by some means Kirkwood was making him the victim of a craftily constructed delusion.

"You are not well, father—not fit to transact business—

this is too much for you. At least postpone it until to-morrow."

"We must do as he wishes—we must do as he wishes."

"Not with my will," said Stephen, indignantly, "I feel convinced that this is an imposition;—tell me, at all events—did you receive from this man the consideration he alleges he furnished—the sum of money in question?"

"You must not ask—hush—he is here."

The door re-opened, and Kirkwood returned.

"I have brought the mortgage. We will settle this matter at once. The coachman and housekeeper will be here presently to witness the signatures."

"One moment, sir," interposed Stephen, "my father is manifestly very unwell. Whatever the merits of this question, he is certainly unfit to enter upon them at present. Let it be put off for a day, or until his mind and body are in more suitable condition."

"Unwell! stuff!"—the barbarous portion of Kirkwood's nature always grew prominent with opposition, "he has only to sign his name—no great physical or mental effort required for that, I suppose."

"But for the consideration necessary to arrive at a conclusion—"

"That be d—d! He's had fifteen years—time enough in all conscience—"

"The formality of the instrument—"

"I am a practising Attorney of the New York Courts—not yet thrown over the bar—if the instrument satisfies me, you have no cause to complain. Here are pen and ink, Dangerfield. Shall I call in the witnesses?"

The old man took the mortgage and ran his eye over the writing. He took up the pen and toyed with it mechanically for a moment. Suddenly he looked up, and there was a new though transient gleam of resolution in his eye.

"Look you, James Kirkwood, you have often threatened to drive me to the wall, and now it appears you're determined to try it. Be it so. A man who has borne what I have, can bear the rest. Do your worst. This place has

been ours more than two hundred years. I will not sign away my poor boy's land. I will not sign away the heritage of the last living Dangerfield!"

"Oh! you won't, won't you?" roared Kirkwood, now thoroughly enraged; "you won't? By G—d I think you will! And you expect me to give up the hard earnings of a lifetime—fifteen years waited for—because you choose to try to play the cheat! Think a moment—what will the two hundred years of honorable name be worth when it ends in such a one as yours? Do you flatter yourself I'll forbear? That I'll consent to give up all without a blow, because you've become a foolish, swindling old dotard? I'll —"

Possibly the speaker repented his last words as soon as he uttered them, but he certainly did the moment after, for Stephen caught up his untasted glass, and in a twinkling dashed its contents full in his face. Kirkwood uttered a yell like a wild animal, thrust his hand in his breast, and made a quick step towards his assailant. Then with a prodigious effort he checked himself, and with his pocket-handkerchief wiped the wine from his face. Martin Dangerfield sat still, quite paralysed, apparently, with apprehension. Presently Kirkwood spoke—softly, but through his set teeth:—

"I could throw you out of that window, if I liked—but I won't. I could make you with a word crawl at my feet, and beg my pardon—but I'll postpone that pleasure for the present. Remember, I *only* postpone it. As for you, Martin Dangerfield, you see I can control myself to do you a service; I shall expect you to be grateful to me, if for nothing else, for sparing this quarrelsome cub of yours!"

Stephen, silent and pale, but with flashing eyes, made as if to throw himself upon his insulter, but his father hastily rose, and, drawing himself up to his full height, he spoke, and this time his voice was firm and clear:—

"Hold, Stephen! Hold, I request—I *command* you! This gentleman is my guest, whoever or whatever else he may be. I will have no more violence. That which pro-

voked it rests henceforth between my guest and myself—those whom it more immediately concerns. I demand that you as my son shall interfere no further in any shape or form with this business. Should you do so, it will provoke a rupture between us, and do yourself only a greater harm. You do well, Kirkwood, to speak of my name—my honorable name—I had forgotten that, perhaps. Suffice it you shall be satisfied in the fullest sense. No need of further difference between us. Stephen, remember my injunction." So saying, Martin Dangerfield sank back exhausted into his chair.

"Enough," said Stephen sadly. "Be it as you will, my father. But I will not stay to witness or countenance by my presence that which I believe to be a nefarious wrong. For a time I leave you. As for this person," and he threw upon Kirkwood a look of unutterable scorn, "we may meet again when he is neither armed with bug-a-boo threats, nor protected by my father's commands. When this place is relieved of his presence I shall be glad to return to it once more."

He turned on his heel, heedless of Kirkwood's mocking smile, and after a hasty direction to a servant, was in the saddle again. Black Vixen well knew the road, and soon bore him to that consolation which he prized as the sweeter, inasmuch as he felt that for some time after it would not be renewed.

A little week, and the happy circle which had crossed the sea together to reunite at sunny Uplands, was scattered far and wide, with rivers and mountains between those who had composed it.

Cuthbert Boynton was seeking oblivion for the past, if not enjoyment for the present, among his books, dogs, guns, and slaves, on the far-off plantation. His head was too clear and his nature too noble to permit him to under-rate the calamity which had befallen him. In his love for Elinor he was thoroughly in earnest. He was not one of those men of whom you can predict in advance that if

rejected by one woman they will straightway make love to another. His grief was manly and sincere, and such a consolation was the last he was likely to seek for. Nor was he vain enough to solace himself with the thought—which, however, would have been well founded—that Elinor in reality reciprocated his affection; for, when he had gone as far as his delicacy would allow in endeavoring to penetrate the cause of his rejection, he did not permit himself to believe that it was due to anything more occult than the lady's inability to love him.

Robert Eliot did not linger at Uplands after the departure of the Southerner. He had sketched out for himself a considerable tour of observation and travel wherewith he proposed to fill the time until his promised visit to Boynton at mid-winter. The main objects which led him to cross the Atlantic were not likely to be much subserved by a lengthy sojourn among scenes which, however attractive, were yet so much like those of the English home he had quitted as to present no features particularly novel or suggestive. And it may be remarked, that the same observation, he found, could be truthfully applied to many places and persons in a degree for which the perusal of most travels in, and descriptions of America, by his countrymen, had by no means prepared him. Nor was the circumstance altogether to be regarded as due to a want of candor on the part of those writers, notwithstanding so many have earned and deserve plentiful credit for such a deficiency; for the changes ascribable to rapid increase of wealth and population, and which have so marked a tendency to smoothe rough angles and soften provincialisms in a new country, were accumulating at a rate hitherto unprecedented.

Stephen Dangerfield accompanied Eliot to New York, the two young men agreeing to spend a few days together prior to entering upon their new plans. Stephen's, it must be confessed, were indefinite enough, but they included a resolve not to return permanently to The Rest while Kirkwood remained an inmate there. Directly after his arrival at the city, he received an affectionate letter from his father

wherein the latter spoke vaguely of the difficulties surrounding his path, and forcibly repeated his injunction that his son should in no manner interfere with, or seek to penetrate the mystery connected with his affairs with Kirkwood on pain of his serious displeasure,—adding that all would be cleared up to Stephen's satisfaction in the future.

Oliver Vernon, meanwhile, pursued his peaceful studies, his alms-giving, and his improvements, happy in the society of his books, and in the love of all who surrounded or approached him. The little waif he had picked up on the ocean engaged much of his care and attention. Her infant nature was growing and expanding under the genial influences at Uplands, and throwing out tendrils which were daily clasping closer around the hearts of all the household. The death of poor Gerty, her nurse, bitterly mourned as it was, had severed the last link which connected the child with the past—and she naturally sought consolation and happiness of the new friends whom Providence had raised up around her. Vernon became more anxious that the neighborhood should be rid of the presence of the father as the child became more dear to him, and Stephen's recital of the scene which took place on the day of his departure, gave him additional reason for regarding the future with solicitude. He was not yet clear, however, as to the wisest course to pursue in the matter, and pending this uncertainty, he contented himself with watching cautiously to guard against whatever evil might be threatened.

Alabama, too, while roaming up and down the fields with Grace, plucking wild flowers and finding pretty views, had once or twice, when close to the northern boundaries of the estate, caught glimpses of a dark, sinister face peering curiously at her through the bushes; which fact having been represented to Vernon, led to an interdict on the rambles in that direction, and a suggestion as to the propriety of confining voyages of discovery to the south and eastward thereafter. There could be no certainty as to what

a man like that might venture to do, and while he haunted the vicinity they could not be over cautious.

Old Martin Dangerfield returned to his dull, torpid manner of life, speaking little, grieving much in secret, and scarcely showing vitality save when watching or bickering with the intruder who had made himself so galling an incubus on his failing existence. Once or twice when yearning for the presence of his son, he strove to persuade Kirkwood to leave him in peace: but the latter always insisted on the condition which the old man still managed to retain obstinacy enough to refuse. Then would come a repetition of the old threats, but their edge was somewhat dulled by use, inasmuch as Dangerfield had grown to appreciate in its full force the fact which Kirkwood had always shrewdly understood, namely, that to ruin the victim might only prove a barren vengeance which by no means would insure the possession of the spoil.

Aunt Mercy and David Greenwood led on their smooth unchequered lives, ending their daily toil with customary gossip and speculations domestic and political, winding slowly down their hill of earthly being, but apparently approaching no nearer what is sometimes called the goal of earthly happiness. They took small "note of time even from its loss," and seemed to think that wedlock at three score and ten was more likely to bring felicity than at any less mature epoch of existence.

Not so thought Stephen and Grace, who regarded the year which had been stipulated by Vernon to elapse between the date of their engagement and that of its consummation, as a chasm little short of eternity, and to be as tediously bridged. Such a space Vernon thought desirable as confirming beyond mistake or caprice the existence of an attachment which was to be life-long, and as being likely to bring about a revolution in Stephen's affairs which should define and establish his worldly position.

As for poor Elinor, her days were waxing very sad, for they were darkened and embittered by a more than double grief. She felt that approach of despair so familiar to those

who have learned to believe that their current of duty is for ever destined to run counter to that of their happiness—and who therefore see in living on only a constant recurrence of pain and disappointment. Most women in her place would surely have availed of the refuge so lately offered her to be so firmly refused, and well she knew she could love her rejected suitor as she should never love another; but here she had been met by the warning voice of conscientious conviction, whose prohibition could not be tampered with or gainsaid.

The epoch was approaching when, as her plan was, she should cut loose from the dear ties of friendship and of love which had proved so long her comfort, her happiness, and more recently, her consolation. The family were to go to town for a period during early winter, and she was to pay a brief visit to one of her few relations—a sister of her late father, residing in an adjacent suburb. None but Elinor herself knew that from that visit she had resolved not to return to the bosom of the little family which had so loved and cherished her, but to go forth by a perilous stream, to face the billows and buffet the storms of the rude ocean of life—alone.

CHAPTER XXI.

STEPHEN DANGERFIELD and Robert Eliot strolled into Broadway, and from thence diverged towards the precincts lying riverwards, until they had entered upon one of the fruitful and odorous vicinages known as "tenement neighborhoods." The time was drawing nigh for some municipal election, as was abundantly demonstrated by the placarded walls. Gorgeous in yellow, green, and red, appeared the names and claims of the rival candidates. Here were they admonished to "Vote for O'Gorrill," there directed to "Rally for Shaughnessy." On one hand, the

merits of "Gustav Poppenheimer" were profusely insisted upon; while upon the other, in periods equally copious, were blazoned the praises of "Adolph Schwarzenbergen." It was difficult indeed to find a name of Anglo-Saxon origin, such was the avalanche of cognomens Milesian and Teutonic, but an approach to one was discerned at last in a flaming announcement that the "Honorable Lysander Kole" would speak at the Cooper Institute that evening. Even this exception was explained by Dangerfield, assuring his wondering companion that "Lysander Kole," an adroit but utterly unscrupulous demagogue, had so managed as to attach to his interest nearly the whole Irish vote of the town, chiefly, of course, by flattering its grossest ignorance, and pampering its most ignoble prejudices. This man in truth was the high priest, the Magnus Apollo of the McSwindle faction, and perennially expounded the sublime principles flowing from that worthy's cardinal and cherished maxim—"Shtick to the Dimocratic Parthy, and kape down the nagur."

"And here are the forces," said Eliot, "which control and govern this great city."

"Precisely," answered his companion; "they gather here and acquire force by concentration, which they would not have if diffused over our Western territory. Thousands can neither read nor write. Hundreds vote before they have been a month in the country. At such points as this, where the suffrage should be most carefully guarded, it is most shamefully abused; on the other hand, there are States where the suffrage might be unqualified and universal, and no harm done, but in which the opposite policy still maintains itself. Such a State is Rhode Island; there, the men who own the State govern the State."

"Such a condition as this," remarked Eliot, "cannot last for ever. Your people have been so busy in acquiring property as to ignore the necessity for protecting it. The knowledge will come in time, and the same energy they have devoted to acquisition will be given to conservation and protection."

"I hope so," said Stephen; "as an American, I hope so. There isn't much to choose between mob law and despotism; but the latter, at least, is most orderly. The children of these people learn to read, and there's some hope in that."

"Even that may have its dangers, if they are to draw their social and political pabulum from the '*Crier*,' the '*Yahoo*,' and the '*Renegade's Journal*.' But do not the better informed of these new-comers perceive the objections to throwing unaccustomed power and responsibility into the hands of the least enlightened?"

"Of course they do. None know better than educated Irishmen that the lower class of their own countrymen are utterly unfit to vote. But you see the temptation to stifle that knowledge, and to avail themselves of the existing order of things, is too great to be resisted."

"Still, the evil will ultimately cure itself. Your population will speedily be developed, so that any possible immigration must bear a small and constantly decreasing ratio to the yearly average of persons born on the soil. This, with your free schools, will modify matters in a marked degree."

"Perhaps it may, and we count very much on those chances. But the Irish, particularly, are a most stubborn, clannish, and prejudiced race. The ideas which bad men for vile purposes have impressed upon their ignorance may remain in scarcely diminished force with their more enlightened descendants. Thus they have been most sedulously taught to hate and revile the Negro. It is believed by many of the wisest among us that this feeling has acquired ineradicable depth and bitterness. Now, if this postulate be well found, it follows that, unless Slavery is to continue for ever, there will be, some time or another, a terrible collision."

"Why should there be? The country is surely large enough for all, and the negroes, for the most part, are in one section, the Irish in the other."

"Because no such comfortable view of the future is per-

mitted by the Lysander Koles and McSwindles, who do the dirty work for the Southern oligarchs. No, the Irish have been trained to believe that the emancipation of the blacks would be instantly followed by a rush to the North on their part in such numbers as to glut the labor market, and to take the bread from the mouths of white men. Nothing can persuade them that climate, organization, preference, or legislative prohibition even, would prevent such an incredible exodus. Therefore they hate the colored people in advance as prospective rivals and depreciators of wages. This hatred absolutely takes the form of a burning passion. The Irish laborer hates the negro better than he loves liberty. I firmly believe he would rather be himself disfranchised than see the black men free. Listen!"

The gentlemen had overtaken two sons of the Emerald Isle who preceded them on the *pavé*, and Stephen Dangerfield had lowered his voice as they were in the act of passing. The men had the flinty shelving brows, protruding, gorilla-like lower face, low stature, and brawny shoulders, common to their type, and naturally enough, were discussing politics. One had apparently been in the country for some time, and the other was obviously a late arrival. The latter was questioning his more experienced friend as to the distinction between the principal political parties:—

"Jimmy, what's the difference atwixt 'em onyhow?"

"Begad," quoth the Mentor, "sure one of 'em wants to kape the nagurs as they *are*, and the other *wants to make them aqual to the likes of us!*"

The hearty execration which followed this singular elucidation, and which was shared by both speakers, was unequivocal as demonstrating the horror they entertained of a levelling process so monstrous and so unjustifiable.

"Strange," mused Robert Eliot, "strange; that the descendants of men who have made Europe ring with groans and cries of oppression ever since their banner fell at Athlone, at Galway, and at Limerick, should be

staunchest in persecuting and holding down a race no less innocent than their own, and certainly more inoffensive."

The two friends quickened their pace, for, as they penetrated further into the region of tenements, the sights and sounds were even less attractive than at its outskirts. Piles of garbage in the sun offended the senses on every side, and the squalor of the myriads who swarmed in and out of the houses was even more distressing. Stephen began to be quite ashamed of the great city as he marked the effect which this portion of it produced on his companion, and was not sorry when a lumbering omnibus—albeit neither so cleanly nor so fleet as a Hansom cab—enabled them to quit this Slough of Despond rather more rapidly than they had entered it. They soon returned to their hotel to dress, for after several days of anxious expectancy, Stephen had received a little note which made him flush with gratification, and Eliot had no difficulty in guessing a portion of its contents, when his friend advised him that they were by no means to omit repairing that night to the Opera.

There needs no profound theorizing in the doctrine of correspondences to show the relation which exists between political and physical corruption. Show a philosopher fair specimens of the classes who dominate the great city of New York, and he would scarcely need other demonstration to acquaint him that the bulk of its streets and purlieus are as foul and noisome as the rabble who rule them. It is not alone that they suffer less from filth, or that the men they put in office filch the appropriations which should remove it, but that they would be positively unhappy if deprived of its atmosphere. Ignorance and crime seek dirt as they do darkness, and light and cleanliness are equally unlovely in their eyes. They, therefore, insist on consummating the greatest happiness of the greatest number by devoting the city to a chronic reek of foulness and abomination. Their little children would grow up to forsake the political creed of their

fathers if too much of what they saw about them were clean and undefiled; it becomes, therefore, a political necessity, in a manner, to avert such a positive calamity.

The same social conditions and proclivities which encourage pigs in cabins encourage muck heaps in crowded streets. It is too much to expect complete revolution in such a taste as the work of a day. No doubt the effect of association in sights and smells it is, which strikes tenderly on the imagination of the immigrant, and prompts him to prefer the city to the prairie. As the numbers increase, the evil becomes more hopeless; for who can expect these cultivated and benevolent beings to vote against that which they love so well?

New York, a water-shed of an island, flanked by two broad rivers, and washed on all sides by tide-water,—New York a dozen miles long, and scarce a sixth of the distance in mean width,—New York, with a supply of fresh water unequalled by any city of either hemisphere,—New York, with facilities, in a word, for drainage and cleanliness unsurpassed and unsurpassable,—is yet, by shameless misgovernment and speculation, the filthiest city in the civilized world.

Of what use are mere names if we are never to get any of the substances? Are we freemen here in New York because we habitually submit to the despotic sway of an illiterate and unscrupulous mob? Do we show our love of country by giving it up to the rule of the unclean, the vicious, the off-scouring of nations, whose fathers, so far from striking a blow in aid of *our* independence, were never yet able to achieve their own?

Open your gates, O men of America, to the oppressed, the poor, and the heart-stricken of all races and climes. Give them of your plenty, crown them with your abundance. Let them fill your illimitable plains, and raise cattle and corn in your boundless prairies. Build for them public schools without number, that their little ones may come in and be instructed, without money and without price.

Grant them liberty to set up their churches and colleges that they may worship and instruct as they list. Concede all this and more, without stint; but do *not* let them wrest altogether from you the government of the high places your ancestors shed so much blood and tears to the end that you might preserve them pure, virtuous, and free. Do *not* let them, to your own misery, and their own demoralization, usurp privileges which neither they nor any belonging to them ever took a single step to earn. Do *not*, when they come to your shores all raw, ignorant, inexperienced, permit them to assume control over *you*, before they have demonstrated, in any practical manner, their ability to control themselves. Give them the chance to think, the opportunity to learn, send them to the teeming West; give them, each and all, fields and meadows in plenty, so that in a reasonable space they may be cultured up to a higher level, and become really worthy of being incorporated with a Nation of Freemen.

For it is not present inconvenience and mortification alone, but future woe which your present system of sloth and unreason are doing so much to nourish and develop. Political and physical corruptions, like all other evils, will surely, if slowly, bring their own penalties,—penalties which all your arts and your inventions, your ingenuity and your enterprise may not avert unless backed by the vigorous purification to be wrought by your own determined wills. Each abuse has its Nemesis; the name of the first is Revolution, and that of the second is Pestilence.

NOTE BY THE AUTHOR.—It is only an act of justice to remark that the last chapter was written before the accession to office of the gentleman who became City Inspector in the latter part of 1863; since which event much improvement has been effected in that department. Unusual energy has been exhibited, some salutary reforms introduced, and altogether, such a change for the better brought about as to lead to the hope that the new system may be as permanent as it is unprecedented.

CHAPTER XXII.

IT was the first night of the operatic season. The watering places were empty, and the great town hotels were full. The scorching heat which, despite its two great flanking rivers, blisters New York from June to October, was softened by autumnal breezes. The up-town squares had begun to exhibit their customary regiments of well dressed children and their attendant *bonnes*. The pretentious carriages whose coroneted panels attest the audacity if not the descent of so many flourishing traders were once more rolling up and down Fifth Avenue. With the returning tide, therefore, the Janus Gates of the Academy were once more thrown open to make war on the purses—or ears of the fashionables. To believe the *affiches* was, as usual, to believe that no such “array of talent” had ever been brought together as was destined this year to take captive the refined appreciation, the matured and critical judgment of Manhattan. Who could doubt it, who would take the trouble to look at the names? Was not Furini for successive seasons the idol of La Scala? Were not the horses rendered unnecessary to the carriage of Lazzarino by the enthusiastic population of Rome? Was not Picaroni the great grand-daughter of the Doge of Venice, and had not a tiara of diamonds been presented her by Francis Joseph at Wien? Were not the walls of Naples plastered with the praises of Greasiani, who after his pyramidal success in *Rigoletto* rivalled Garibaldi in the affections of that volatile people? Who should doubt the effulgence of a galaxy whereof these glittering celebrities were the constituent stars? Plainly, no one, whose judgment was worth the having, and surely none of the scribbling fraternity whose secured seats for the season had been so eligibly and comfortably “located” by the adroit Impresario.

Moreover, the Press of the city had been sagaciously “worked” in advance, especially through its most venal

and vulgar representatives. And Furini and Picaroni had been chaperoned by the active Slymer to the “palatial mansion” of a virtuous Editor, where more than a taste of their quality had been discussed in anticipatory style by the elect thus permitted to steal a march on the public. For, in view of the slipperiness of his social standing, that particular functionary was apt to strengthen himself by such props in the way of artistic or political celebrity as were willing to lend their talents for such a purpose, taking in exchange good dinners and such public endorsement in time of need as he was able to bestow. Lyrical matters having a closer affiliation with the higher classes than those of the less fashionable theatre, he was wont to take their professors under his special protection; and the attractions of his house were enhanced, as a rule, by the cream of all new-come warblers ere the luxury had deteriorated through common participation.

However, it must be confessed that there were others in the house besides the Vernons, and Elinor Grazebrook, and Robert Eliot, who read the names of Furini and Picaroni with somewhat of misgiving. As to Furini, they could certainly recal his name at La Scala, and in connexion with *Ernani* and *Lucia*; but the recollection, by no means associated him with the heroes of those works, identifying him, on the contrary, with an otherwise reticent individual who became very vigorous and demonstrative in the choruses and concerted pieces. Moreover, while no one could recollect having had the pleasure of seeing Signor Greasiani as *Carlo Quinto*, there were several who cherished a vivid impression that he, Greasiani, was no other than the obliging *avant courier* who precedes and announces the advent of that sonorous monarch. These must be set down as of the number of misfortunes inseparable from an age of steam; for even enterprising impresarios cannot put a protecting embargo on travel, or cut off the facilities which bring and take their exotics for the use of the dear public which pays for them. And, albeit the calamities and losses of operatic managers are proverbial when the

gates of their temples are open, it would seem they must have some mysterious mode of recovery when they are shut, inasmuch as they are for ever returning to the seductive paths which they assure the world have led them to "cureless ruin." So that, after all, the encouragement of rising (if not risen) genius may be regarded as indirectly remunerative as it is unquestionably benevolent.

Notwithstanding imputations on the possible calibre of the principals, there was a very fine house. And Robert Eliot remarked that although the methods of subdividing the auditorium did not conduce to the comparative privacy most esteemed by his countrymen, and common to European opera-houses, yet that the effect produced was decidedly lighter and more imposing.

There were people of all sorts and degrees. Deputations from the Deddingtons, the Skuydunks, and the Von Quoits; relays of the very latest *nouveaux riches*, looked through or over by the former with placid contempt. The entire family of Von Donk were there in a most conspicuous box, over against the De Bugginses. You can hear Violetta squeal, clear into the parquette—at intervals, when the brazen clangor will permit. There are Slymer and Sprigg going into the *Crier* box, and there is Elias P. bowing and scraping to its occupants from his orchestra stall. Yonder sits Lysander Kole, the demagogue, who divides his useful life between out-witting his partners and stimulating the passions of the rabble; whose leading principle apparently is, that by being the propagator of unbridled democracy leading to mob-rule, he will stand the best chance for the foremost place and the gratification of his avowed ambition, when the mob-rule brings its infallible corrector and consequent—irresponsible despotism. There are also divers of his following about the lobbies—those of the well-to-do class—of which there are always some few in every faction—with red eyes and fierce moustaches, chiefly, and an affectation of the Gallic in the cut of their clothes. Sporting-men here and there—whom Eliot would have called "legs"—scrupulously dressed, and deluding

themselves with the idea that every man of the world who claps his eyes upon them does not instantly know their calling. A perfect sea of fair faces inside, radiant with light and color. Gallants innumerable, some unexceptionable in evening costume, some in frock coats, colored cravats, and white kid-gloves, and so on through the various phases of taste and ignorance. Outside and overflowing the *coulisses*, with piercing eyes, aquiline noses, oily locks, and eager but appreciative expressions—a heavy *cordon* of the never-failing operatic body-guard in New York, or elsewhere—the deputation from the children of Israel.

The Opera was tolerably sung, after all. It is by no means certain that an artist who has never sung a *rôle* before, will therefore sing it ill. Excitement, ambition, and responsibility are potent agencies, and, after all, there must be a first time for everything.

The tenor was both sweet and sympathetic, and, in the favorite romanza of the opera, created quite a *furor*. The air was one which Elinor had played on the last day before the departure of Cuthbert Boynton, and she remembered how greatly he admired it, and with what marked earnestness he had alluded to the sentiment it conveyed. We are apt in our selfishness to absorb and apply to our own petty cases all the mystery, the passion, the poetry, our ears and imaginations enable us severally to extract from beautiful music; and although some may grow wise and withered enough to smile at this in later life, there are few to whom the memory of the days when they could feel thus does not bring a soft if chastened pleasure. It might have been the thought of him who had told her of his love, and who was now far away, that made Elinor's eyes fill with tears, as she listened. She looked very beautiful that night, and it would be idle to say she was not conscious of attracting a good deal of attention. Her thought at the moment implied as much, for she was just congratulating herself that the universal regard was attracted to the stage where the tenor was acknowledging a tumultuous *encore*, so that her own agitation might escape notice. Just then, a bustle

behind, and a glance at blushing Grace told her whom to expect. Stephen Dangerfield and Eliot entered the box; and Oliver Vernon said he had something to say to an old friend he espied among the audience, and, after heartily greeting the young men, departed on that mission. Stephen and Grace were speedily absorbed, and the act-drop coming down directly after, threw upon Elinor the task of entertaining the Englishman. There was an interchange of customary compliment and criticism for a space, and then a lull. Eliot thought for a moment, and then, lowering his voice, and leaning over to be slightly nearer to Elinor, said:—

"I shall shortly go Southward, and, as you may have heard us arrange, pay a visit to Boynton. Can I be the bearer of any message or—"

He paused abruptly, for he observed that her eyes were suffused with tears, and her bosom violently agitated.

"Good Heavens! Miss Grazebrook! Ten thousand pardons! What have I done? Shall I—"

"Hush!" whispered Elinor; "don't let it be seen. It will be over in a moment. Yes," she went on more steadily, but quickly, as if urged by an impulse she could not control. "Yes, you may. Tell him how much—how very much—I hope he may be happy—and that I pray unceasingly that he may—*deserve* to be so."

The instant after, she reflected that she had gone too far, that her message might be misconstrued, and she would fain have retracted or modified it. Eliot, too, seemed rather surprised at its purport.

"I thought," he said, "that is—"

"Eliot, just lend me your lorgnette, will you?" said Stephen Dangerfield interrupting; "I can't make out across this huge abyss whether there's somebody vis-à-vis I should bow to or not." And while Stephen was making his observations, Grace turned upon Eliot with a volley of her playful badinage, and his colloquy with Elinor was broken off.

Stephen's brow darkened as he gazed.

"I see," he muttered half to himself, "some one I know, but whether to recognise him or not is quite a different thing." For directly opposite, and looking steadily at the box, he descried the handsome but dark and ironical countenance of Kirkwood. "What brings him to New York, I wonder," thought Stephen; "no good, I may be sure."

As Kirkwood detected his scrutiny, he rose with a shrug of his square shoulders, and made for the lobby. Stephen excused himself hastily to his companions, and, saying he would return in a moment, quitted the box. Threading the motley crowd which was pushing vaguely about the huge circle behind the auditorium, and barely answering with a bow the melancholy salute of Gossamer Von Donk, he quickly gained the opposite side of the house. Kirkwood met him with a bland smile:—

"I rejoice to see that although you have exiled yourself from The Rest, you are not without resources in the way of amusement."

"None, I trust, that meet with your disapprobation," returned Stephen sarcastically. "As to my exile, you will not be surprised to hear that its duration depends somewhat on yourself. May I ask, without presumption, if you have terminated your visit at my father's house?"

"For a day or two only," answered Kirkwood affably. "Like yourself, I don't object to a little variety. You do wrong to absent yourself on my account. We got on very pleasantly before."

"I choose my own associates," said Stephen with hauteur, "and in the selection usually prefer them to be gentlemen."

The color came slowly up to Kirkwood's swarthy cheek.

"You will find it unwise to persist in affronting me. Better make me what I am not unwilling to remain—your friend."

"Do you mean that as a threat, sir?"

"Not a threat—simply a warning."

"A distinction without a difference, after what has passed between us."

"You will realize the difference in good time. For old acquaintance' sake, I can wish no harm to your father's son."

"Always in riddles," answered Stephen contemptuously. "The secret of your miserable connexion with my father I know not, and am enjoined by him not to seek to unravel it. But over me, at least, you have no power. The example would suffice, if any were needed, to induce me to take care that you never shall have."

A strange smile flitted over Kirkwood's face, and for a moment there was something like a trace of compassion there.

"We cannot always control our fate, however strong our will." He paused an instant, and then, with an interest which he strove not to dash with malice, inquired, "*apropos*, may I ask if Mr. Dangerfield is aware of the direction of his son's matrimonial projects?"

"By what right do you ask, and to whom do you refer?"

"By the right merely of friendly solicitude; and I refer to what all the world is talking about—your proposed alliance with Miss Vernon."

"The right is questionable, and the subject unnecessary to discuss. Yet, so far as your question is concerned, the answer is immaterial, and you are welcome to it; he is not. I will add that the scene wherein you bore so conspicuous a part, and my subsequent departure, led me to postpone a natural confidence which there exists not the slightest reason to withhold. What have you to say to this?"

"Nothing," rejoined Kirkwood, with his unpleasant smile; "unless to congratulate, and counsel you to enjoy yourself while you may."

"Your inference is offensive, sir. Neither your congratulations nor advice are asked or desired in such a connexion. Perhaps you'd like me to ask *your* consent or endorsement in the matter!"

"You might do worse," replied the other drily. "I meant no indiscretion, as you some time may learn. When

that time comes, you may possibly be willing to solicit one or both."

"Till then," retorted Stephen, "let the subject be dismissed between us. It's one, be sure, in which I brook no meddling, and in which no father's injunction will tie my hands for the interloper."

"The exception might prove to your disadvantage. But enough. I mean you kindly. I have borne more from you than is my custom to endure in the common intercourse of man and man. Yet a little while and you will see more than one reason to be grateful for my forbearance."

He raised his hat as he concluded, with the show of courtliness he was fond of affecting, and passed on.

Stephen reflected. It was impossible not to believe that beneath this man's assumptions of friendliness there ran an undertone of hostility and menace. Men of his stamp were unlikely to forget or forgive the slights which may be cast upon them, and Stephen knew that an affront to the person was of the bitterest character in their esteem. Hence, he reasoned, Kirkwood must have strong reasons to induce him to play the conciliatory, and to strive so hard to preserve the semblance, at least, of friendly relations with himself. What were these motives? Here Stephen's penetration was completely at fault, and the only course to be taken, consistently with the various exigencies of his position, appeared to be that which Vernon advised—to watch the enemy carefully, and await with patience the developments of time.

Slymer and Sprigg came round to the Von Donk box. Both these gentry were of consequence to the Von Donks. The former, albeit credited as rather a *mauvais sujet*, yet always contrived to have the aroma of fashion or power about him, and so became, to that extent, a proper subject for conciliation. He was constantly going back and forth from Washington, where in point of fact he had nothing whatever to do, except to gather gossip or coin scandal for

the grimy pages of the *Crier*. But he always pretended to be engaged in some very mysterious and momentous business, and the Von Donks were not the only ones who believed it. Slymer was very proud of the recognition or endorsement of all persons of note, of whatever profession or calling. Success was his idol, and no matter what the avenue if A. or B. reached the goal. His principle was to employ his utmost sagacity in the selection of people to-day of little importance, but who to-morrow may achieve distinction. To fasten himself on the skirts of such persons, to perform little offices which should insure a title to their gratitude, became for the time the leading passion of his life; and he generally succeeded.

There was scarcely a man of note in Europe or America that Slymer did not know, or with whom he had not at some time established personal relations. When at a loss for other means he would write absurd notes to his proposed victims, on all manner of subjects which might or might not be of general interest, but whereupon there certainly could be no peculiar interest in common between the party addressed and himself. These missives would generally elicit replies, often brief and frigid enough, but which answered Slymer's purpose. He had become the acquaintance—the possible prospective friend of the great man. His letter was carefully pasted in a book, which the tactician always travelled with, and always showed to every new acquaintance as a sort of guarantee of his own personal dignity and importance. It was impossible to look into the book and not perceive that Slymer had corresponded with many highly distinguished personages; therefore he must, to some extent, be accepted as a distinguished person himself. Another of Slymer's devices consisted in the writing of newspaper or pamphlet "letters" to people of high position, on any favorable political or literary provocation, and whereby, without directly saying as much, he implied, with great art, that he was on terms of cordial intimacy with the parties addressed. As the people of high position would usually, from good-nature or

indifference, omit the invidious task of refuting his implication, Slymer would for the most part carry off his booty of consideration in triumph.

He was adroit in the management of petty intrigues even down into the lower strata of every-day life. By becoming the patron of certain photographic artists and music-sellers, he could always work the small machinery which would make any given person conspicuous if not exactly the fashion. This, by having very large and glaring pictures of the individual to be glorified in the most conspicuous places in shop or gallery; or by having showy pieces of music dedicated to him or her, and making much outcry and doing much advertising over them.

Especially with the ladies did Slymer strive to obtain influence and establish position. He knew the value of social recognition, inasmuch as in earlier life he had outrun discretion and forfeited such as he might normally have claimed.

Recovery was slow, but with perseverance and an unrivalled epidermis it could not ultimately be other than sure. That is, with certain circles. There are others which will not be appeased; but he accounts for this on the assumption that it was only because his obnoxious escapade terminated in a miscarriage instead of a success; and this sounds so plausible that most people believe him,—including the Von Donks.

Personally, Slymer was rather fortunate, for although neither young nor handsome, he was affable, and engaging in address; well informed and cosmopolitan in ideas; and on the whole, only needed to be a trifle less loud, to be unexceptionable as an outside man of breeding.

Sprigg had none of these latter qualities. He was not well bred, and seldom clean. There was the bouquet of the unwashed, the Celtic flavor of the Pewter-Mug about him as there is about most of the *Crier* people, for all it sells so many copies. It may be assumed that these drawbacks were not regarded as such by the majority of those with whom he came in contact, and that the exceptions were fain to put up with them for policy's sake. The Von

Donks did. There would be an election very soon, and the General expected to be a candidate.

The entrance of these worthies was, therefore, hailed by the Von Donk family with as much enthusiasm as fashion permitted them to exhibit, seated *en evidence* as they were in view of what Sprigg described the next morning in print as "the beauty, the learning, and the *haut-ton* of our proud city."

"And what do you think of the new artists, Mr. Sprigg?" queried Mrs. General, after the entrance greetings had subsided.

"Something better than a *succès d'estime*," quoth Sprigg, oracularly, "we must see them in something else before we can quite place them."

"Oh, I think Furini a perfect pet," piped Zerlina, "he sings beautifully, and he acts as well as he sings."

"Rare praise to be deserved by a tenor, Miss Von Donk," said Slymer. "The two qualities are seldom united. Indeed so far as my experience goes, there's no one now but Mario who can be said to have combined them in perfection, and *his* voice is going."

"What d'ye think of Heydensucker's speech, Mr. Sprigg?" asked the General, suddenly rousing from a stupor the effect of so much "drumming and tooting" as he privately assured Mrs. General, and that of brandy and water unwisely proportioned as she was really persuaded.

"Oh, I've had no time to read it attentively as yet. Very witty, isn't it? Job always has something funny to say. What do *you* think of it, General?"

"Well, sir, I don't see no fun in ratting all the time, and our folks none of 'em don't either. He's allers trying to make himself conspicuous, no matter what harm he does the party. He thinks he's throwin' himself forward on the wave of popular ideas, but it's all wrong. The only way is to stick to your party whatever it does and wherever it goes. Them's my sentiments."

"To be sure, to be sure, and highly creditable and original ones," put in Slymer. "By the by, General, is our

compagnon de voyage, Mr. Vernon, to run against you in the —th District?"

"I calculate he will—I hope so, anyhow. There's a kind of doubt between him and Amos K. Tucker, and the convention hain't decided yet. I'd rather have him of the two. Amos K.'s dreadful popular with our laboring feller citizens, and 'll poll a strong no-party vote."

"Let's see—heavy Irish constituency isn't there. Suppose now the *Orier* and the *Yahoo* come out good and strong on Amos K. for being an Abolitionist, that may help to throw him out of the convention, eh?"

"Well, praps—'twould have weight certainly. Suppose you two gentlemen come home with us after the Opera. Our carriage will be here. We'll have a quiet little supper. Staggers is coming too. You know Elias P.? Oh, of course, he came over with you in the *Assyria*."

This pleasant little arrangement being carried without dissent, the conversation turned on their quondam fellow travellers.

"There they are," said Mrs. General, indicating the Vernon box, "sweet girl, Grace Vernon—that's she in white, and the one in purple that's Nelly Grazebrook. Her father drank himself to death, and her mother ran away with somebody. One would think she was a Deddingstone or a Von Quoit, by the way she carries herself. It's always the way with these low people."

"Oh, ma," cried Violetta, "Nelly Grazebrook can't be called low, for she's a very fine mind, and every one says she's so accomplished."

"She hasn't blood, my dear," said Mrs. General decidedly. "That makes the difference between her and certain other people. Only to think of her trying to inveigle young Boynton into a match before he'd been at Uplands a week?"

"Did she though?" asked Slymer, with interest.

"To be sure," affirmed Mrs. General. "That's the reason he went off South so quick. He meant to stay till the Opera came. He told us so at Newport; and he would—for certain reasons"—with a sly glance at her

daughters, "but that this set was made at him, and he couldn't exactly avoid joining them in town when they came."

"But surely the Vernons are perfectly *comme il faut* as respects family, and certainly abundantly rich!"

"No doubt; but she's no relation, you know—only a kind of poor hanger-on. Of course Grace Vernon is a totally different person. Perhaps you don't know what a great fancy she took for our Gossy? Quite marked, I assure you. But Gossy, dear fellow, who's discretion itself, saw it wouldn't answer, considering politics and all."

"They say she's engaged to Stephen Dangerfield."

"Dear me! I thought if to any of the party it would be to Eliot, that young Englishman you know. He came to Newport with us. Nice man very, and thought our society quite as good as Lords and Dooks which he'd always mixed with. See, there he is now! Behind Grace. That looks rather like flirtation, doesn't it?"

"Oh, he's not a marrying man. Came here to see the country, and write a book about it, and so on. I saw some friends of his at Lord ——'s in London—promised to use my influence for him and all that."

"He's very agreeable. I don't like that young Dangerfield. He's too free and easy, and acts as if he thought people in trade not good enough to speak to. Shouldn't you think her father would rather have the Englishman—his own countryman?"

"Oh, Vernon is a thorough American, you know. Been here a great many years, and made most of his money here. The worst of him is he's a radical—an abolitionist. But he has no feelings which are not national ones, although he censures so much what he calls our abuses."

The General here proposed to go out to get a drink, and obstinately ignoring the frowns and winks of discouragement indulged in by Mrs. General, he proceeded to put his proposition into practice accompanied by Slymer and the willing Sprigg.

"I don't like drinkin' in bars," remarked the General,

parenthetically, on the stairs, "but a public man in my position can't very well get rid of it."

His companions endorsed the necessity and condoled with the General on the sacrifices which it entailed; but whether he, they, or both intended a *double entendre* or to accept the speech of the other as such, was manifestly uncertain. By the time they got to the bar—a long, smoky den in the cellar of the huge building—the General's party had been joined by a motley train of political adherents, or those who it was supposed might become such. Stephen Dangerfield met the procession in the passage, and would have taken no notice except to touch his hat to the two or three men in the van who were known to him. But his attention was attracted as they passed by seeing among its number—walking arm-in-arm with Elias P. Staggers, and laughing and talking in high good-humor—Mr. Kirkwood.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE Vernons had a small but elegant house near Madison Square, which they occupied during occasional visits, so saving the necessity for repairing to the, to them, uninviting Hotels. Hither they sometimes came when attracted by a new opera, a celebrated artist, or some other object of interest: hither came Oliver Vernon when business or politics at intervals might call him to town: and hither the family usually resorted to pass the severer part of the winter.

Stephen and Eliot were invited to dinner a week from the day after their visit to the Opera, the latter proposing to set out for the South shortly after by way of Niagara and the Lakes, and the former hesitating whether or not to accompany him. Grace and Elinor were both rather anxious that the young Englishman should find something

more worthy of admiration than they suspected he had found in New York. For, said Grace:—

"You'll remember that although Paris is France, New York is not America."

"Still," remarked Eliot, "New York is the capital of your country."

"Not so," interposed Oliver Vernon, "save in a partial and incomplete sense. For, while Washington is the political, Boston is certainly the literary or scholastic capital, and New York can only be considered the *commercial* capital of the Union. And even this, only in virtue of having more wharves and ships than other towns, which have, except in these and the number of their populations, an equal title to the consideration."

"I'm sure," cried Stephen, "New York is the most *un-American* city in the country. At least it is the only one which permits itself to be exclusively ruled by foreigners, and those of the lowest and most ignorant sort."

"But," said Eliot, smiling, "is not this your own fault?"

"Unhappily it is to a great extent," answered Vernon gravely. "Although numbers certainly must continue to have great sway so long as universal suffrage is tolerated. It is the vice of our system that, under it, minorities are presumed to have no rights which the majorities are bound to respect. The evil reaches its culmination here where the immigrant class is in such excess. Thus property-holders are numerically in a minority, and, therefore, their rights are set at naught by the majority. They pay heavy taxes, which are dissipated and swallowed up by the bad men the majority votes into power. The educated and refined are in a minority, and therefore their rights are ignored and themselves set aside in favor of the ignorant and the debased. However, the evil is not altogether unalloyed, for it is our hope that there may be education and sense enough, as well as numbers enough in the country districts, to counterbalance, in a general sense, the perversions of the town."

"Still you adhere to the system, and the people at large do not seem disposed to change it."

"We shall be *forced* to change it ere long, in some respects, or the wisest and most far-seeing men of the nation are much deceived. In the mean time, we consider it has already achieved a great deal of good. From a lofty and generous point of view, a nation no more than an individual lives, or should live, for itself alone. Our example in modifying and ameliorating the condition of the masses we believe to have a favorable effect on the whole civilized world, which effect, of course, must be gauged by our success. Where we fail or go too far, even the necessary remedies or retrogression will prove to have value of their own through the same force of example."

"I don't know how far the parallel between nations and individuals would be sound as put to the practical test. You know, however, that in England, where there certainly has been no lack of experience, most people are disposed to accept for both, the maxim, *quieta non movere*. Your theory is unquestionably magnanimous, but does it not savor too much of optimism as applied to perpetual change?"

"Any people which accepts as guiding principles a set of ideas which imply a constant *progression towards right* must be, in that sense, a nation of optimists. Its history will be made up of advances and recessions. We hope to make the former always somewhat greater than the latter: so that the general drift will always be toward that which is higher and better: and we propose to educate all men that the number may constantly be on a relative increase whose feelings and interests will prompt them to act in the right direction."

"Such a policy, however noble in the abstract, is not likely to be viewed with favor by those whose privileges and security depend on the preservation of the existing order of things. It cannot obtain for America the sympathies of other great governments."

"Of other governments, no; of the peoples, yes; and

if, as we believe, the policy be good, the beneficial end will be attained, for good peoples will ultimately make good governments. I do not think the founders of the Republic were of opinion, any more than I am, that the best interests of their countrymen were attainable in ultra democracy; yet, perhaps, neither they nor mankind would have been satisfied until the experiment was made, and our great hope now is that it may not cost us too dear."

"We shall certainly have to bring about reforms in our great sea-coast towns," said Stephen, "to keep the respect of the world, as well as to set right mere local grievances. Critics abroad can't understand until they see for themselves how much the nation at large has been libelled and misrepresented by what goes on at the great points of immigration. Why, even Eliot, here, believed before he came, that the *Crier* was, as it claims to be, a fair exponent of *American* character and manners, instead of being what it is, the rowdy organ of the worst class of foreign population. The fact is, that almost everything which is most repugnant to good taste and good morals as viewed from the European standpoint,—such as the vulgarity and blackguardism of the Press, the *Crier* being the lowest type—the selfish and cruel pro-slavery fanaticism,—the outrageous boasting,—the truculent arrogance toward other nations—all these and more, are largely due to foreign renegades among us in a direct sense, or indirectly to the propitiation and delectation of the masses of foreign voters thronging the great cities, who enjoy political power however low their intelligence, or deficient their education."

"Such a state of things should be counteracted," remarked Eliot; "your most eminent and cultivated men, perceiving the evil, should labor to neutralize or remove it."

"That of course must be the ultimate result," responded Vernon, "but hitherto such persons have been criminally negligent. When they discover, as sooner or later they will discover, that the *rights* of property are never permanently respected when its *duties* are unfulfilled, we shall

have a change for the better. A society cannot long remain civilized wherein the very judges are elected by the classes from whose ranks come the criminals it is their duty to punish."

* * * * *

Eliot spoke of his proposed tour, and his intended visit to Cuthbert Boynton. His time was rather limited, and it was not probable he would again see Elinor alone. At the same time he was anxious, not to say curious, respecting the true state of her feelings in relation to the young Southerner. He had watched the undisguised admiration of the latter for the beautiful girl with unselfish interest, and seeing so much in each suitable and congenial to the other, he had hoped for the successful consummation of a match. He was surprised, as others were, by Cuthbert's sudden departure, but reflection led him to believe that the young people, each of whom was so conspicuously fastidious, had had some trifling quarrel, which was unnecessarily magnified into a reason for separation. If such were the case, he resolved that his friendly offices should not be wanting to effect, if possible, a reconciliation. The scene at the opera had rather confirmed his opinion that a real attachment existed, but he wished to obtain from Elinor some additional corroboration. She understood his object, and blushed scarlet at his allusions to the absent one, but she evaded being drawn out further, and, thinking that at the opera she had been already betrayed into going too far, she avoided during the evening giving Eliot any opportunity to pursue his investigations.

Vernon favored Eliot with some advice, the prominent feature whereof lay in the repeated injunction, by all means to include New England and the North-west in his future plans of travel.

"The country cannot be judged," he said, "except by an examination of *all* its parts, any more than it could be a nation without them all. Many tourists from Europe think when they have seen New York and Washington, Niagara and the Mississippi, that they have 'done' the

United States. Never was a greater blunder. To judge the country by its cities we have seen to be fallacious. To estimate the body of the nation without examining its head and right arm is even worse. Those are precisely the parts which make all the difference between these travellers' prognostications and actual events as they occur, and as they will occur in the future."

Eliot promised to be as exhaustive as possible in his researches, and the conversation turned to lighter themes. Stephen and Grace became rather unsocial on the former getting to the drawing-room, and engaged in negotiations of an apparently exclusive character, in a far-off corner. Stephen had determined to escort his friend at least as far as Niagara, and the separation of a week clearly called for elaborate explanations and agreements between the lovers. Then little Ally, looking charmingly fresh and bright in white muslin and pink ribbons, renewed her acquaintance with her favorite Mr. Eliot. For Oliver Vernon was so old-fashioned as to think that adults of a family or its guests were, as a rule, more comfortable when dining without its olive-branches. It was one of his remaining English prejudices—and, sooth to say, many of his American acquaintances counted it one—that the conversation of children, however sprightly, or the relation of their adventures, however wonderful, are better enjoyed and appreciated at any other than the dinner hour, and his prejudices, such as they were, had to be respected.

After a time, Grace and Stephen came out of their solitude. He had told her all about his apprehensions respecting Kirkwood, and how he anticipated losing his patrimony, and had been half provoked by the wonder in her great blue eyes, which asked if *that* was all he was making himself wretched about. And then there was music, and Elinor sang again. And none there knew except herself how many a day would come and pass before her voice was again to be raised in that happy family circle.

"You have no other message—no word?" half whispered Eliot to the singer, as he turned over her music.

"Nothing," she answered in the same voice, through the symphony; "nothing but what you already have."

The little party broke up at last. Eliot had promised to write to Vernon, giving his impressions as they came of what he saw and heard in his journeyings. And little Ally had gravely declined his proposition to take her "down South" again. And Stephen was to write to Grace every day, and she was only to answer when she saw fit. And the same quiet stars which they all gazed up towards and reverently admired when they parted on the stoop, shone down on them all four-and-twenty hours after, but to find them far apart. The Vernons and their *protégée* had returned to their country home, to enjoy the gorgeous coloring of autumn; Elinor had gone to pay her promised visit to her aunt; Mrs. Maberly and the two young men were flying over Western New York, and fast coming within ear-shot of the Mighty Cataract.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MR. Staggers was in his snug and well appointed office situate close by Wall street. Whatever might be the merits or demerits of Elias P.—whatever the obfuscation of his average idea as regards *meum* and *tuum*, he was in his habits, dress, and surroundings, the pink of neatness, punctuality, and order. There was not a speck of dust on the desks, the chairs, the carpet, the oil-cloths. Not a scrap of paper or a pen but was tidily arranged in its place. Moreover, the appointments of the two rooms were altogether appropriate and comfortable. The most fastidious could find no worse fault than consisted in, perhaps, a rather too generous supply of spittoons; and this was a fault which most *habitués* would be apt to consider a merit.

Mr. James Kirkwood had just come in. When he made

his entrance at the door of the front room Hon. Job Heydensucker made his exit at the door of the back room. The distinguished politician had been arranging for a trifling loan anent an impending election, and which, after much demur and haggling on the part of Elias P., he had succeeded in negotiating. To do the Honorable Job justice, he was always large and generous enough in bargaining for accommodations of the kind. The chronic difficulty with him recurred when the time arrived for repaying them.

Kirkwood's business was very simple, and of a character which the Broker had often transacted for him before. He wanted a small bill of Martin Dangerfield's discounted, as he briefly explained.

"Only a thousand to-day, eh, Mr. Kirkwood. Glad to oblige you, whether for one or ten. Old chap's good for it, allus, I reckon. Take a seat, sir, and sit down, and we'll fix this for you in no time."

Kirkwood accepted the invitation so far as to walk into the inner office, while Staggers handed the note to a clerk directing him to draw a check for him to sign covering the sum minus the usual discount.

"People say young Mr. Dangerfield's engaged to Miss Vernon," suggested Elias P. inquiringly.

"So I've heard."

"She'll have quite a mine I expect. How much d'ye suppose old Vernon's wuth?"

Kirkwood explained that he had as yet made no precise calculations on the subject.

"Well, it's a very good thing for both on 'em, I dare say. Though I, for one, would rather it weren't so."

Kirkwood pricked up his ears, and expressed a desire to know the cause of the other's objection.

"Fact is our young friend Von Donk—dashing young feller we were with at the Opera, you know—he's been a good deal smashed there, and as he's a fine feller and a friend, I'd like to have seen him succeed, that's all."

"The Von Donks are very rich, aren't they?"

"Guess the General's got a cool million—rich enough

any way to make his son a better match than Steve Dangerfield!"

"Dangerfield's likely to be pretty well off," said Kirkwood carelessly. "The Rest is an uncommonly fine property."

"Oh, well off, p'raps," replied the Broker, "but sumthin' depends on whether the estate's clear or not, don't it?"

"Do you know whether it is or not?"

"Don't know nothing about it. But if it was dipped at all," added Elias P., slowly, and looking steadily on his interlocutor, "I know it wouldn't be hard to find a purchaser for the incumbrance."

Kirkwood reflected. We have said the two men had had business relations before. They had, in fact, known each other for many years. It did not, therefore, require so long a time, or take so many words for a mutual understanding as it otherwise might have done. There was only a moment's pause then, before Kirkwood spoke:—

"You're not over fond of Stephen Dangerfield, I take it?"

"Oh, I don't say that," answered Staggers, cautiously, "Anyhow, not to a friend of his father's and p'raps of his. It's nateral for us all to like our friends before strangers. I don't cotton to these here landed folks much, that's a fact; however, I hain't got no prejudices. It takes all kinds o' people to make a world. But Goss Von Donk he's got some reason to feel riled at Steve, and I guess he does."

"Oliver Vernon cares little for money," said Kirkwood, in a deliberating tone and as if talking to himself, "but he cares a great deal for landed property and a clear name. I believe he'd rather give his daughter to a man whose family own the soil they live on, than to one who owned twice its value in ships and stocks."

"Money'll buy everything," said Elias P., with reverence, "and every man has his price. Some cost more, some less. Goss Von Donk'll be able to command a good deal, I calculate," he added, reflectively, as the clerk brought in the check.

"Thank you," said Kirkwood, as he received and placed it in his pocket-book. "Landed securities are rather in demand now, are they not?" he queried, looking at his watch.

"Allers good, sir, allers good," replied Staggers, "provided folks don't make too large a mouth on 'em. How much land did you say there was up there?"

"Up where?"

"Why, of Dangerfield's;—Dangerfield's Rest?"

"Oh, about three hundred acres, I believe."

"Old man's pooty feeble now-a-days, aint he?"

"His health is a good deal broken."

"Steve don't gamble nor nuthin' does he?"

"I know little of his habits—I should say, decidedly not."

"Well, since you're making investments for Mr. Dangerfield"—

"I'm doing nothing of the sort."

"Oh, I beg pardon, I'm sure. But you see these different bills of his"—

"Are simply in liquidation of an *interest account* between us."

"Oh, ah, yes, I see. I did not mean to ask the question; you know, Mr. Kirkwood. Ask me no questions and I'll tell you no lies, eh? All is, if you want anything done in my line, I hope you'll give me the chance?"

"Thanks. I'll not forget. For the present I'll wish you good morning as I've an appointment on the Stock Exchange."

Each of these worthies had a point to carry, but Kirkwood had the advantage as he saw the whole drift and aim of the broker's, while to the latter, his own was as a sealed book. Clearly, a very strong engine could be made serviceable by offering an infatuated and rejected lover the opportunity of obtaining a ruinous hold over his rival, and at the same time propitiating the loved one's father in a manner promising to be conclusive. Kirkwood knew perfectly the weak portions of so plausible a scheme, but

of course it was not his cue to blazon them. If he could make any use of Staggers, and, through him, of young Von Donk, he cared little what became of them or their speculation afterward. He had said just as much as was requisite to keep the broker on the *qui vive* to take a hand in a profitable intrigue, and just as little as would readily allow him to throw the thing over if his safety or convenience required. His main object was to place himself in such a position that he could at the shortest notice cut his cable and sail away with the largest possible quantity of spoil, and he was merely buoying out the channel in advance.

CHAPTER XXV.

ELINOR sat in her aunt's little parlor, which, vastly different as it was from the large drawing-rooms at Uplands, was decidedly comfortable and religiously clean. There were books, few in number but not amiss in quality, a few good prints on the walls, a piano-forte, old and worn, but in good preservation, and from the windows could be seen the sea.

Mrs. Maberly was a slight, lady-like woman of fifty, with pale blue eyes, a patient brow, and brown hair thickly strewn with grey. She had seen much trouble in early life, but her later years had been quiet and peaceful. Left a widow some ten years before with a slender income and no children, she had rented the cottage she occupied, having as her sole companion a woman of about her own age who officiated as servant of all work. Elinor had been in the habit of visiting her aunt at intervals, and the latter had often been urged by the hospitable Vernon to return these visits at Uplands. These invitations had been gratefully but steadfastly declined. She was not accustomed to the sphere in which they moved, and would only be uncomfortable should she enter it even temporarily.

Her conviction was that people were better and happier in the position wherein it had pleased Heaven to place them. She would gladly go anywhere when by going she could do good, but preferred not to visit great houses for merely social purposes. So time wore on, and the old arrangement was always adhered to.

As has been hinted, Elinor had a scheme, and it was a scheme in which the co-operation of her aunt was highly desirable if it was not absolutely essential. When she had cautiously unfolded her design of quitting Uplands, and the motives whereby she was actuated in taking such a step, Mrs. Maberly, although she expressed great regret and concern, and begged Elinor to give the subject very serious consideration, could not but admire the conscientious spirit which dictated it, or help acknowledging that, under such circumstances, she recognised its propriety. She had immediately resolved to press upon her niece the acceptance of an asylum in her own humble abode, nothing doubting but that the young lady had contemplated receiving such a proffer. But Elinor proceeded to relate the remaining and most important features of her plan. She proposed, she said, not only to be independent of Vernon but of every one else. Not only to spare Grace any further social detriment which her presence might involve, but to put a gulf between them which would thereafter be impassable. We may remark that Elinor was aware of her friend's engagement to Stephen Dangerfield; but her resolution was rather confirmed than shaken by what she had seen of that gentleman. For, by a species of blunder which very clear-sighted people sometimes commit, she imagined Stephen to be of an exclusive, not to say haughty nature, and a man intensely scrupulous as to the *convenances* of social position, and largely endowed with family pride. It is scarcely necessary to say that, with the exception of the latter clause, she was quite at fault.

Elinor had just detailed her programme and was concluding a speech in its defence:—

"After all, dear aunt," she said, "there is nothing dis-

graceful about it. It is unquestionably honest, and certainly laborious. What if there are narrow-minded people who despise and condemn it? There are bigots in the world who condemn everything they don't clearly understand."

"Indeed, Elinor," said Mrs. Maberly, with a sigh, "I could wish you had chosen almost any other profession. I know that in theory it is unexceptionable enough, but I fear 'tis sadly different in practice. No doubt, there are good people connected with it, but don't we always hear them spoken of as exceptions;—as if to prove the general rule which runs the other way?"

"The malice and injustice of the world," replied Elinor decidedly. "When people are posted *en évidence* in the public view, of course there are ten to repeat and exaggerate what is bad of them, to one who will appreciate and extol what is good. This is the fact with all public callings as well as with that of the Stage."

"I'm afraid, my dear, that the acquittal such a generality implies would be more generous than just as applied to the Theatre. Your dear father was very fond of the society of Theatrical people, and his friends always thought it induced or confirmed his unhappy failings."

"Surely, aunt, you don't mean to infer that you think all actors and actresses are monsters, who corrupt every one who comes within their reach?"

"Certainly, not all; and probably scarcely any with evil intent. But their habits and pursuits have a tendency to demoralize, to some extent, those who mix habitually in their society."

"As how, pray?"

"Well, I cannot help thinking that the constant habit of simulation—pretending to be what you're not—must, after a time, dispose people to take unsound views of life, if not to become deceitful and untruthful. Then there is such a constant pampering of egotism in the applause which is so immediately and personally expected and received, that it really seems to me it must have the effect to weaken self-control."

"Each of these causes," said Elinor thoughtfully, "may, to be sure, have an injurious effect on persons of weak or ill-balanced minds; but such persons are liable to injurious effects in any other walk of life."

"Not in the same degree. The temptations are rarely brought so closely and constantly before them, and they are not so frequently brought into the enfeebled condition which favors yielding to their fascination. You must remember that the life is one of constantly alternated excitement and reaction. Nervous excitement of an exaggerated character, nervous depression following in proportion."

"But there *are* those in the profession who exhibit discretion and self-control; who lead, in a word, worthy and reputable lives."

"Undoubtedly; and, in my opinion, they deserve higher credit than other people, who have only average temptations to resist, and average obstacles to surmount. I only mean to say that the *dangers* in their case are so much greater than ordinary, that it would be very strange—not to say improbable—if their weaknesses and defects should not also be greater than ordinary."

"The life is not least glorious which has to face great hazards."

"Perhaps, but it is often the most unwise one to follow. Besides, people are so very apt to deceive themselves respecting the possession of dramatic ability. If you make a book, or statue, or painting, you can look at it all your life, and compare the criticism of your own matured judgment with that of the world. You can never see your own representation of a stage character. You know what you think and feel, but you don't know that you make your audience see what you think and feel. Here, indeed, a coarse, superficial nature will always have the advantage over a subtle and refined one. The latter has a poor chance with the *vox populi*. Facts as they exist prove it. Popular and successful actors are very rarely highly intellectual or refined persons. They may have a *pretence* of culture, a

certain lacquer of refinement, but it is seldom indeed that they are either thorough or profound. Nor is there a demand that they should be; the bulk of their audiences would neither know nor care about it, if they were so. The mass looks only to gratify its eye and ear; therefore the qualities in demand are those of person and voice. Let these be good, and their possessor will outstrip the closest and most conscientious student; fine perception, scholarly taste, thorough analysis have no chance with them. It is the knowledge of this which has made the theatre lose ground with the educated classes. They cease to respect an institution which, whether it be through choice or necessity, habitually appeals to an order of intelligence so far beneath their own."

"They have the remedy in their own hands."

"Not until their numbers bear a different ratio to those of the masses. That is to say, not until with the spread of education there shall be created a higher and purer taste."

Mrs. Maberly's objections were often urged in a similar strain, but she found Elinor so bent upon the experiment she had long secretly contemplated, that the good lady finally concluded that it were wiser to endeavor to guide her niece than to thwart her. She therefore consented to assist in a trial being made in the manner which we have now to describe. Among the many persons of the profession Elinor's generous but improvident father had befriended, there was one who, as Mrs. Maberly discovered by the newspapers, had attained to the dignity of managing a small dramatic company, in the town of P——, not far from the metropolis.

Isaiah Grinder had been almost everything by turns. He set out in life an unfriended boy, and adopted as a calling what he facetiously termed the lumber business—selling matches. From this he gradually acquired the capital and financial ability requisite for the conducting of a pedlar's wagon, which was in turn abandoned for "keeping tavern," on one of the old post roads leading into Boston. A few

years of increasing railways brought decreasing profits in this formerly lucrative walk of life, and Isaiah took advantage of the springing up of a taste for what were known as "great moral and domestic dramas" in New England to become the director of a travelling company, which devoted its histrionic abilities to illustrating the evils of intemperance, gaming, slavery, and the like pleasant vices, in localities where less virtuous representations would scarcely have been tolerated. By degrees he had increased in substance to become the proprietor of a fixed establishment in the thriving town of P——, as described. His name affixed to an advertisement, setting forth that he would be in New York at the present date, when "stars and ladies and gentlemen of acknowledged ability might apply for engagements at the P—— Lyceum," had caught Mrs. Maberly's eye, and reminded her of some unpaid for professional service rendered the man by her brother, the recollection of which might suggest a willingness on his part to afford Elinor an eligible opportunity for making the experiment she was so determined upon. A note requesting him to call upon her had brought a ready response, and on the following day the manager presented himself in person. He was a long, weedy-looking Yankee, with a shrewd face and a tearful eye, which latter, however, was the product of a natural affection rather than that of excessive sympathetic development. He listened to the case at first with some apprehension, which subsided as he was gradually brought to understand that Elinor's views included the sensible one of beginning at the bottom of the ladder, and eschewed any extravagant notion of pecuniary remuneration.

"There's a heap of highly edoocated young ladies comin' forward into the purfession now, Miss Maberly," he remarked, "but the wust of it is they all expect to be Rayshells and Kimbles right off in a minute. It's a very good pint that your niece is willin' to learn the business in the ardooous career she's sot on enterin' into. I'm willin' and disposed to give her an openin' not forgettin' her good father's

kindness to me. I don't pretend to be able to teach her myself much, tho' I *do* know somethin' about most things I take hold on; but I've got the best stage manager in the States; Mugford, ma'am, the husband of our leading lady, Miss Adeline de Vere. He was at Covent Gardin, Mugford was, years ago. Carried a banner when John Kimble took the part of King John, and Charles his brother took Fork-and-Bridge. Miss Siddons was there and taught Miss de Vere, then an infant, the role of Alonzer's child. He knows it all, he does, and he can put Miss here through in good shape."

This promising interview terminated with the understanding that Elinor should have the chance to make an appearance at an early day, and Grinder mentioned several minor characters of an "interesting" description from which it would be well for her to make a selection. He proposed to defer any permanent arrangement until the degree of the *debutante's* success should supply the basis for negotiation,—a suggestion which seemed reasonable enough,—and took his departure with many expressions of interest and encouragement. Elinor was more than satisfied with this adjustment, and looked forward with eagerness to taking through its means the first step in the avenue, which, as she fondly hoped, was to conduct her to independence and artistic renown.

CHAPTER XXVI.

SO it was determined that Mrs. Maberly should accompany her niece to P——. She closed her little house or rather its front shutters and blinds, leaving the premises in the care of her faithful Margery. Mr. Grinder had promised to procure a suitable and respectable lodging for the two ladies, which should offer the two other requisites of cheapness and proximity to the P—— Lyceum.

Mrs. Maberly, on the whole, rather liked the arrangement. Since Elinor was positively determined on her rash experiment, it was better that it were made in a quiet out-of-the-way place like P——, than in either of the great cities. In case of failure there was far less chance of her being identified, and Miss Ellen Grey could return to Miss Elinor Grazebrook, with tolerable certainty that the fashionable world would not be shocked by the discovery that she had turned play-actress in the interim.

Moreover, it must be confessed that Mrs. Maberly shared in a curious prejudice which, apparently, must be common to great numbers of people in America; she liked any name to designate a place devoted to theatrical performances better than that of a theatre. Plain-spoken enough as a rule, this was the one spade she rather preferred to hear called out of its name. "Garden," "Lyceum," "Museum," "Academy," "Atheneum," and a host of other ingenious aliases, were more grateful to her ear than the obnoxious "Theatre." Mr. Grinder harmonized with the worthy lady on this point quite unreservedly:—

"Our folks don't kinder like," he remarked, "talkin' about goin' to the *theatre*. Some thinks it sounds ungodly, and some thinks it ain't genteel. Church-folks 'll go to my place and see the same drayma they play to all the theatres in the country, as bold as sheep, jist cause it's a *Lyceum*. Studyin' popular prejudices pays now-a-days, marm, I tell you. Look at that ere Aaron Scrimpall, in B——. He's one o' the meanest white men in the States; a kinder cross, 'tween a Jew and a Yankee, with the good pints of both left out. He's made a reg'lar smashing fortune up to B——, by callin' his show-shop an *Atheneum*. Go there and you'll see the white chokers all in a row, strung along like onions on a rope. They'd think they was bound down stairs, sure, if they went to a place *called* a theatre, and half the rest of the folks either think so too, or think their business will suffer by real theatre-going in the eyes of them as do. Everybody knows Aaron's a narrow-souled, skin-flinted, hypocritical cuss. Everybody knows he grinds down all

his people, givin' 'em dimes where they've earned dollars, and cents where they've earned dimes. But then he calls his shop an 'Atheneum,' and he goes to church every Sunday."

Whether Mrs. Maberly sympathized with the moral deterioration which appeared to arise from calling a theatre by a wrong name or not, she was at all events persuaded that it would reflect a shade less discredit on the family for Elinor to come out at a "Lyceum," and took comfort accordingly.

The understanding was that Elinor should play, in the first instance, a single character of moderate length and importance, and then be "left out of the bill" for a few nights. This was ostensibly to permit her to rest, and to "look about her" as regarded the preparation of wardrobe, etc., but in reality the experienced Grinder was well aware that any novice might make a complete *fiasco* and the hiatus would enable him to get rid of her quickly, without the inconvenience and explanation which would be needful if her name were sent to the printers for the performances next succeeding those of her *début*. The character determined upon was *Maria* in *The School for Scandal*, a rôle which, as the Stage Manager assured the aspirant, was a capital one to enable her to acquire "stage ease."

"There's very little to say," said he, "and she's a good deal on. Then she has all the interest—always stands well with the audience—and the dress is very becoming—will be especially so to you, my dear—you don't wear powder, you know, and all the rest do."

Elinor was at first somewhat inclined to resent the peculiar phrases of endearment and familiarity which she found to be in vogue at the rehearsals; but she soon perceived they proceeded from habit, being only employed in a highly conventional sense, and her annoyance abated.

The company, it must be confessed, was rather a shabby one, both as respects the brilliancy of its talent and the condition of its personal effects. The most noticeable artist

was the "hearty old man," a Mr. Radcliffe, who had the manner of a gentleman, although sadly worn and be-sodden. He was an elderly man—past sixty—and always appeared to be in the act of recovering from a fit of drinking. His eyes were mellow and watery from the combined effect, it might be supposed, of spirits and gas-light. His poor, wan face was handsome in outline, although crossed and wrinkled, and his hands showed unmistakable signs of blood. His dress was mean and almost threadbare, but the linen was always scrupulously clean; and the thin brown locks seamed with grey, were brought toward his temples with air almost jaunty in its neatness and precision. Mr. Radcliffe was the "Sir Oliver" of the comedy.

Elinor remarked that Mr. Radcliffe's manner in raising his hat when she came upon the stage of a morning was utterly different from that of any other member of the company, and that his mode of speaking, albeit rather uncertain at times, was free from the marvellous rotundity and finical exactness which she found to be the favorite affectations with most of these disciples of the sock and buskin.

Mrs. Mugford was the Stage Manager's wife, and played most of the juvenile business. She was a large-sized woman, with a hooked nose, an impaired complexion, and had probably seen some fifty summers. She was "up" in a great number of characters, a great stickler for "position," and insisted upon being known in the play-bills as "Miss Adeline De Vere." This was the personator of "Lady Teazle."

"Sir Peter" was a small, irascible man, whom Elinor had seen enact "Peter" in the Stranger and some farce parts from Mr. Grinder's box—kindly lent on one or two occasions prior to her first appearance. He ought to have played "Crabtree," if anything, but he was a favorite with the audience, an indispensable man, and he evinced his appreciation of his own value by regularly refusing to act any but the most effective part in a given piece. "Crabtree," therefore, fell to a poor forlorn-looking man, in a faded

suit of snuff-colored tweed, and who usually enacted the "fathers" in farces and melodramas.

Joseph and Charles Surface were to be represented respectively by a long young man with a bass voice and black hair, and a long young man with a tenor voice and light hair. Both looked rather dissipated, and both were apparently *élèves* of the yard-stick and counter. The remaining characters were cast among various mysterious-looking people in different stages of dinginess and discontent, scarcely one of whom, down to "Sir Harry's servant," but thought himself mightily aggrieved in not playing one of the principals.

In the fortnight that elapsed between the arrival of Elinor and her aunt at P——, and the momentous "first appearance of Miss Ellen Grey" at the Lyceum, the latter passed her time in studying, and otherwise preparing for the arduous duties before her. They were tolerably comfortable in the house of one Mrs. Dawkins, whom after getting over her first horror and suspicion of the character of "theatre folks," they found to be an amiable and kindly person. Elinor had no idea of devoting her best powers in the way of study and analysis to the "walking ladies" she expected to portray during her novitiate. She had the sense to understand, as has been indicated, that a practical acquaintance with technical details was an essential preliminary to maintaining a high position in the art, and she was determined firmly to go through the course she had prescribed to herself. She conceived, however, that this mechanical part of the profession was distinct from the original or creative portion, which latter she believed herself to possess in as great a degree as if she had already passed through the season of probation. She perceived that if the ladies and gentlemen constituting the "stock" of the P—— Lyceum had the advantage of her in point of technical knowledge, she had decidedly the advantage of them in those of education, refinement, and attrition with good society. What she proposed to do was, first to acquire the minutiae, and then to avail of the advantages

she possessed in a wider field. To go on playing *Marias* would never do for her. Elinor made the mistake which has often been made before and since her time. Because the people she was thrown among were, for the most part and in a social sense, unfit to sit down with her in a drawing-room, she imagined that her future success with mixed audiences was to be gauged by a similar ratio of difference. She had, like most of us, to gain her knowledge by experience, and for the common reason—the refusal to profit by that of others.

The eventful night came at last. The night which, as Mugford jocularly observed, was "big with the fate of Cato and of Rome." Mrs. Mugford "my che-y-ld"-ed Elinor perpetually, and advised a careful observation of her own (Mrs. M.'s) manner, as an eligible study for grounding in a good "school of high comedy." Grinder had managed the two papers, the P— *Eagle* and *Daily Bassoon*, very well. He would have one good house out of his prize at all events. The *Eagle* had hinted mysteriously at a young lady moving in the very highest circles, and who was incontestably "the glass of fashion and mould of form," having been secured in the teeth of rival metropolitan managers by the superior enterprise and strategy of the gifted Grinder; and the *Bassoon* had followed suit in an elaborate eulogy on the modesty and good sense of the new candidate for histrionic honors, who, although amply qualified by nature and education for the highest rôles of the drama, and, indeed, to "grasp with one bound the diadem of the tragic muse," had yet resolved to appeal to the well known critical intelligence of a P— audience, in the humbler and subordinate character, etc., etc.

"You disarm hostile criticism by this course," said Mugford, "for K— of the *Eagle*, especially, is very fond of showing his ignorance by affecting the censorious. You should have seen what he scribbled about my *Hamlet*," continued the actor, with a bitter smile; "my *Hamlet*, which for ten long years stood the ordeal of a York circuit, and was

only kept out of London by malignant envy, and the artist's blight—bronchitis."

The various potent arts employed, added to the fame of Elinor's beauty, which spread rapidly in the small provincial town, brought a house quite respectable, both in numbers and character, and Elinor got through her task with great credit and *éclat*. It is true that if she had been a cook, as Mr. Radcliffe observed, with an odd mixture of cynicism and compliment, her good looks and "make up" would have carried her through; and, as she did not happen to clash with the interest, real or imaginary, of any of the *Dramatis Personæ*, she happily escaped any of those little annoyances and embarrassments with which veteran experts are fond of strewing the path of the hapless beginner. The only exception to so fortunate a rule being found in Miss Adeline De Vere, who, in her enthusiasm for the good of the establishment, and in her willingness to gain credit for generosity, occasionally informed Elinor that "she would do," and "not to be afraid," in stage whispers quite as audible to the audience as to the young lady herself.

The result of this auspicious commencement appeared the next morning, first in laudatory notices from the press—including a long communication from "A Friend of the Drama," who was in fact an old Englishman, who kept a drygoods' shop in the same street, and to whom Grinder had graciously condescended to get rather deeply in debt—and, secondly, in the shape of a business communication from Grinder himself, wherein, after congratulating Miss Grey on her brilliant *débüt*, he proposed for her acceptance an engagement for the season to play "First Walking Ladies, and a portion of the light comedy," in consideration of ten dollars per week, and a clear third benefit, to take place in the last month of the season; very fine terms, as he added, for a novice. Elinor thought this was not precisely the form in which she would have described them, but as her resolution had been taken to accept them whatever they might be, she acquiesced, and became that day a regularly

enrolled member of the "Powerful Stock Company" of the P—— Lyceum.

CHAPTER XXVII.

MID-WINTER came and Elinor was still drudging patiently on in the laborious station to which she had bound herself. She had first thought when resolving to quit Vernon's protection, that, by leaving no clue behind, and by changing her name, she might elude pursuit until such a time as she might be able to judge of the success of her experiment. Mrs. Maberly had exerted herself to induce a deviation from her scheme in this respect. She pointed out to Elinor the distress she would inflict upon those who had been such kind friends, should she leave them in ignorance of either her projects or whereabouts. Such a course, too, would be open to misconstruction in other ways. Better state to Mr. Vernon fairly and candidly her motives for the step she had taken and what she hoped to achieve thereby. Better to let him understand, also, that her aunt was to accompany and watch over her. Otherwise, in his anxiety, he would be instituting researches which, whether successful or not, would be equally distressing and embarrassing.

Mrs. Maberly's policy was adopted, and with the result she anticipated. For, while Oliver Vernon deprecated her course, and indulged in much tender reproach that she had not at first taken him into her confidence, he had too much sagacity not to perceive that having gone so far as it had, it would be wise, for her own satisfaction, that Elinor should push her experiment to a definite conclusion. It was therefore agreed that Grace and himself should correspond with her, and that she should keep them advised of all that befel, with a general understanding that if her project were not, after a reasonable time, crowned with a success which

might justify its future prosecution, she should consent to abandon it. Elinor's plan, in which Grinder expressed a willingness to assist her, was to endeavor, after a few months of practice, to make an appearance in the metropolis; a scheme which Mrs. Maberly approved, because she believed it would bring matters to a more speedy conclusion. The worthy lady, while she believed her niece to possess unusual talents, had little faith in her making any great success as an actress: and anything short of this she believed would not satisfy Elinor's ambition. She therefore thought it desirable that the point might be demonstrated *pro* or *con* with as little delay as possible.

Without anticipating as to whether Mrs. Maberly was right or wrong, we may say that Elinor exhibited many qualities such as are generally supposed to contribute to histrionic success. Setting aside her physical advantages of voice and person, she had uncommon self-possession, a great deal of tact, and a very retentive memory. On the other hand, her nature was rather too positive to be readily merged or sunk in artificial character, and although it contained a well of real enthusiasm and a genuine love and appreciation of art, there was a something either of self-respect or *hauteur* unfavorable to that *abandon* which has so much effect in shaping and captivating the popular taste. "All you want, Miss Grey, is to shove on steam," advised Grinder, "The folks likes them as keeps up a thunderin' excitement. It's all very well to come the statooesque and quiet dodge for the boxes, after you've knocked the pit and gallery by tearin' round and a hollerin'. Didn't you hear Mugford yell the other night in that ere Tent Scene in *Richard*?—and didn't you hear 'em yellin' and screechin' back at him?—That's what takes 'em. Why? Cos they think the more noise you make, the more earnest you air."

"All stuff and nonsense, Miss Grey," said Radcliffe privately to her. "These people know nothing of acting either before or behind the curtain. The only proper thing to do would be to get a season or two of practice in some first class English theatre. Even *then*, if you came back

they'd say your style was affected, or that you spoke with what they call an 'English accent,' because you didn't talk through your nose."

"People *do*, however, get money and reputation by the stage in this country," said Elinor rather despondingly.

"Oh, yes," replied Radcliffe, with acrimony, "sometimes they do. If a man has the lungs of a bull and knows how to use them like one, he can get both. Or if he can dance jigs and sing comic songs handily, and knock people about with stuffed sticks, and 'gag' with good grace, he's safe to get them. But any one who imagines that the education and manners of a lady or a gentleman are of any use for the purpose is sadly mistaken. Oh, very good people get on, too, occasionally," he added more gently, "but after all, success is hardly worth having in a calling wherein such as those who do, get the highest prizes."

"Perhaps the audience here is not of the most intelligent character," suggested Elinor.

"Very often as good in the small towns as the average in the large ones," answered the actor. "The real truth is that the best classes of the community avoid the theatre now-a-days."

Various conversations such as these did not tend to impress Elinor with the idea that Mr. Radcliffe took a very cheerful view of the calling he had adopted, and one day when the acquaintance was somewhat riper she ventured to say as much.

"I entered the profession, Miss Grey, from necessity," he replied, gloomily, "not from choice."

She begged his pardon. She did not suppose he had been bred to it.

"Nor was I. As you may have guessed, I have seen better days. Not that I mean to disparage the stage, which is as elevated, theoretically at least, as any other pursuit. But until past middle life I never dreamed of having recourse to it. I commenced indeed, when almost an old man—quite so in experience if not in years;—as it was, I was past five-and-forty."

Elinor was silent, and Radcliffe did not appear disposed to extend his confidences further than to remark that he had been rather successful in youth as an amateur, which had led him to turn to the theatre for a livelihood when the necessity had unexpectedly arisen.

As time wore on, he took more and more interest in Elinor, often giving her useful advice and instruction in regard to her characters and the business of the stage. The old man drank rather freely at times, but although crusty and irritable with others, he was never churlish with her. He never lost, indeed, the manner of gentlemanly deference which his early associations taught him to observe toward one who was so unmistakably a gentlewoman. He excused his habits, the effect of which was occasionally too obvious, on the score of his health.

"I used to drink for excitement, or to drown care, Miss Grey," he said apologetically. "There's no less need on the latter score now;—but I lack strength sometimes to get through my work."

Elinor thought with a shudder of her father's case, and partly for the sake of his memory, partly because of her liking for the lonely old player, she bethought herself of trying to make his situation more comfortable. She gathered from what he said, that he was ill at ease in his lodging, and finding one day that there was a vacant upper room at Mrs. Dawkins, she proposed, after consultation with her aunt, that he should take it. He might use their little parlor, which was always warm, and in some sort cheerful, for writing and study. Radcliffe gratefully assented to the suggestion, and the more readily because he thought he might be of greater professional service to Elinor through such an arrangement. He was an adept in histrionic mysteries and devices, and took pleasure in imparting them to one so quick and eager in availing of his teachings. He taught her much that was new in the art of modulation, and in that of the natural relation of action to passion. He taught her how to make exits and entrances, and how to handle and manage her train

when the character called for such an appendage. He taught her the science of "making up," and its intricate relation to lights and distances. All these and other similar instructions were valuable to Elinor, who grew more anxious to make rapid advance in the mechanism of her art, as the time grew shorter and shorter which separated her from the period of her proposed *debut* in the great city.

William Radcliffe was a man whose character was the legitimate product of a peculiar experience. What it might be in original constituents—what it might have become, if subjected through life to opposite vicissitudes—we may surmise, and hereafter have better opportunity to judge. In early years he had been the victim of two most potent breeders of selfishness—the law of entail and misdirected parental affection. He grew to be an old man before he quite realized the mischief which, in his particular case, these teachers had inflicted on his character; and when he did realize it, the effect seemed ineradicable. Formerly he had accepted the theory that the interests and comfort of all those with whom he came in contact ought of right to give way to his own. As a child, he had permitted others to be punished for his own misdeeds; as a man, he had even conspired that they should be. This moral obliquity had colored his whole career, and even now he murmured ceaselessly at the hardness of fortune which had brought him to a position which was strictly the natural fruit of the seed he had sown. Providence, not he, was to blame that he found himself going down to the grave a miserable and dishonored man. He was unable to perceive the justice of a power which had launched him into life with wealth, health, and every element of material prosperity, to condemn him at its close to be stripped of each and all those advantages he had learned to regard as inalienable rights.

The persons and motives which had surrounded the later years of his life had rather tended to confirm than to

weaken his convictions as to the selfishness of his race. The miserable bickerings and jealousies of the petty circles in which he had moved, although they excited his contempt, only did so because of the minuteness of their causes and objects. It was but the world in little. Life was but a battle in which every man's arm was for ever raised against all others he encountered, to strike or to defend.

When he encountered Elinor Grazebrook, his liking sprang from affinity of manners and, in some sort, culture, rather than from any moral sympathy or appreciation; and this sentiment was naturally, at the outset, a reciprocal one. After a time, however, as each got to see and know more of the inner life of the other, their mutual estimates became of a more complicated character. The old man, so far as he practised any scheme of life, was the slave of a mere bald expediency; the young woman was the willing and devout disciple of a pure, self-sacrificing duty. It was not strange that each came to regard the other as, in a manner, a natural curiosity.

Radcliffe came to discover—although names were scrupulously concealed—that Elinor had left a luxurious home and a comparatively high social position; that such a step was not dictated by necessity, but, whether mistaken or otherwise, by an absolute conviction of right; that, although filled with the ambition of youth and enthusiasm, she would yet elect, if it must be so, to remain in the humbler ranks of a wearing and contemned profession rather than forego that conviction. Then he came to reflect on the circumstances and motives which led to his own situation, and the contrast brought to his cheek something like a flush of shame. Had he lived all these years to derive his first lessons in the great principle of sacrifice from the example of a simple, inexperienced girl?

As the season wore on, he fell ill—very ill, and was obliged for a time to forego his duties at the theatre. And Elinor and good Mrs. Maberly—who had not fancied him over much at first, but who came to forget all prejudice in

her compassion for the lonely, friendless old man—watched and tended him, and dispensed with much of their daily comfort for his sake, until he gradually became convalescent. There could be no *quid pro quo* about this, he reflected, for what could they hope from such as he? Elinor would trudge through the snow to rehearsal, leaving Mrs. Maberly to attend to the wants of the invalid; and on these occasions the good lady would speak, in the warmth of her honest, straightforward nature, of the courage and nobleness which her niece had displayed in facing this hard life, after the ease and luxury to which she had been accustomed; and say that while she did not quite like her choice of a profession, yet that its very drawbacks and difficulties enhanced the heroism of the course Elinor had pursued.

Slowly and by degrees—for it took months to bring about the change—a new light seemed to dawn upon Radcliffe's darkened nature. The gentle and awakening influences to which he was now exposed gradually wrought in his breast a perception of truth—a reverence for good, to which its previous history had been a stranger. The constant reference to the idea of duty which ran through all the intercourse between these two women, and which at first had only excited in him a sort of half-incredulous curiosity, came in time to arouse his reasoning faculties, and finally to enforce his assent. Where he had before been bitter and cynical, he grew to be mild and charitable. Where he had before attributed to all about him the most selfish and corrupted motives, he now strove to interpret generous and kindly ones. He became more exact and conscientious in the performance of his professional duties; and he curbed in a manner which surprised all who knew him, his propensity for strong drink. His health was indeed broken; but the peevishness wherewith he had been wont to bewail his ailments, now all but disappeared, and he bore their load with a new-born meekness and resignation.

Elinor would sometimes speak—without mentioning his name—of the lofty character of her former guardian, and

of the happiness and comfort his philanthropic hand had scattered in every direction around him.

"Would," said Radcliffe one day, "would that I too might do some good before I die."

"To wish it earnestly," Elinor replied, "I have heard him say, is to gain, sooner or later, the power to do it."

Radcliffe shook his head with a sigh. "I fear in my case it is too late."

Elinor and her aunt often talked together with surprise and gratification of the change which seemed to be working in Radcliffe's character.

"Out of Evil cometh Good," said Mrs. Maberly solemnly. "This man has been, perhaps, the instrument of much wrong. GOD has sent us here to awaken his conscience while he is yet on earth."

CHAPTER XXIX.

GRINDER, who sometimes surprised people by unexpected glimpses of good feeling, had proposed that, in view of his health, it might be of service to Mr. Radcliffe to take a trip to New York. It was past mid-winter, and it was necessary if Elinor was to have an appearance in the spring, to settle about the time, before, as he said, "all the nights should be filled up."

Radcliffe gladly accepted the proffered furlough, and undertook the negotiation for Elinor with great willingness, although he anticipated difficulty in bringing it to a successful issue. However, he thought he could make out a better case for the managerial ear than Grinder was likely to do. Elinor possessed qualities which escaped the appreciation of that gentleman, but which would recommend her, if properly represented, to the more discerning director of the Metropolis. Besides, Radcliffe had some acquaint-

ance with the latter, to whom the old actor was known as a person of taste and education.

As Radcliffe foresaw, he had great trouble in making an arrangement. Mr. Badger, the manager of the — theatre, Broadway, had really no time open. He was filled with stars and new plays clear up to June. His company was very strong, and the principals objected to supporting any but artists of recognised position. He had been much abused by the press for giving openings to novices. It had injured his establishment very much. He really couldn't afford to be always at loggerheads with the critics. Radcliffe persisted with an earnestness he would certainly have exhibited for no one else than Elinor. He assured the reluctant Badger that Miss Grey was no amateur: she had been hard at work for months, had perfect ease, great personal advantages, and was a lady of cultivation and refinement. Badger at this point softened so far as to say that he *might* possibly find the young lady a night or so if she could guarantee the dead expenses,—naming a sum equal to about three times the actual ones. To this Radcliffe demurred, but proposed she should "share" after a stated sum. After a deal of sparring and discussion this difficulty appeared on the point of adjustment, whereupon a new one promptly presented. It was quite out of the question, the manager declared, to allow the *debutante* to appear in either of the old pieces; *Juliet* or *Pauline* was impossible; either would kill the lady's success before she appeared. The public were perfectly sick of all the old plays; besides, how could she stand comparison with Miss Heavyport in tragedy, or with Mrs. Furbelow in comedy?

Finally, and with infinite pains and pertinacity, it was agreed that Elinor should attempt the heroine of a new drama which was to be brought out in a brief interval which might be made between two star engagements, and which had been written chiefly with an eye to the talents of Mr. Howlfort, the leading man. There was reason in Badger's assertion that by this plan there need be no invidious comparisons, and this was positively the very best he could

do. On the night the bargain was concluded, Radcliffe started for P—, with Elinor's new part in his pocket, and after having concluded every necessary arrangement.

The old actor had more than one reason for hastening his departure from town. It was not alone that he had accomplished the object of his visit—not alone that the noise of the great city distracted and disgusted him—there was a stronger incentive and one that would brook no delay. In coming from the box-office of the theatre for the last time, he saw just for a moment a female face which, notwithstanding the lapse of many years since he saw it last, he instantly recognised. He trembled with anxiety lest this recognition had been mutual. If such were indeed the case, he would have a motive for quitting, not only New York, but even the country itself. All that night he pondered and reasoned with himself as to the best course to be pursued. He was not sure that he had been seen—but if he were? The change that had recently come over his character bore its fruit here, and when he arrived at P—, he had resolved to remain there and to confront whatever might betide.

A few days after, Elinor and Mrs. Maberly left for New York. All had been settled by Radcliffe, even to the securing of apartments for the term of their stay. The old man did his utmost in the brief interim toward preparing his pupil for her ordeal, and wrote her a long letter filled with fresh advice and injunctions after her departure. The new piece had already been some time in preparation, and after two or three additional rehearsals would be ready for production. The anxious study of her part, and the arrangement of her dresses, completely engrossed the time of both Elinor and her aunt, and the critical day for the final rehearsal quickly arrived.

Wherever the English language is spoken, there are periodical complaints about "the Decline of the Drama." There can be little doubt but that the complaints are based on a substantial ground-work of facts, and friends of the

Stage are more ready to admit their existence because it is their fashion to maintain as an axiom that this declension will never sink so far as to desuetude; that is to say, that the Stage possesses an inherent vitality which must always prevent its extinction, however it may appear, from time to time, to be in a state of decay. A candid examination of evidence certainly establishes this conclusion;—that, whether as regards the current grade of its literature, the character and education of its professors, or the average intelligence and critical acumen of its patrons, the institution has been, for many years past, slowly but surely tending downwards. In England the initial date of this movement is generally considered to be that which terminated the privilege of the Patent Theatres. It is everywhere supposed to be accelerated by the increasing taste for Italian Opera, together with that for Concerts, Lectures, Minstrelsy, and the heterogeneous mass of "Entertainments" which of late have become so numerous and so popular. Some think the Stage is the natural enemy of the Press, as Theology is declared to be that of Science; and deduce that, as in all such contests, the weaker must eventually go down. Others maintain that in a day of railroads, all theatres except the great metropolitan ones in each country, must, in the nature of things, sink first into insignificance, and finally into oblivion. No doubt, there is a certain amount of logical truth in each of these assumptions, more especially as applied to England and her colonies.

But in America, where the complaint of the Decline of the Drama has been as loud as anywhere—and to say the least, where it has been equally well founded—there are, and have been, peculiar causes at work which are not so generally taken into account as their relative importance deserves. The causes enumerated have had their weight on both sides the Atlantic, but on this, others are to be superadded. Dramatic literature, artistic culture, the quality of audiences, are clearly matters which act upon and reciprocally produce each other. Any one can understand how the practised and fastidious judgment of

audiences of whom Johnson, Goldsmith, Swift, were the exponents, produced different results from such as arise in our day through the critical fiat of the frequenters of the Surrey, the Britannia, or the City of London. It is clear enough that our American Stage would gain in dignity should such classes as are represented by the names of Everett, Bryant, Irving, support its honors and adjudge its meeds in lieu of the b'hoys of the Bowery, or even the shopmen of Broadway. Neither does it require demonstration to show how the seductive strains of the Italians have robbed the theatre of much of its old-time support from the wealthy and refined; or that the other forces assigned have had their weight and potency. Yet such is the love for public diversions in America, and such the passion for pictorial illustration—one fruit perhaps of the ultra simplicity which characterizes our governmental forms and usages—that these drawbacks might have been overcome, or their influence to a great extent neutralized, but for the agency which remains to be suggested.

This agency—or rather this deficiency—consists in the absence of almost everything in the shape of *standards* or *examples*, which, until supplied, will inevitably keep the American Theatres in a crude and transitional condition. There is no school, and there is not the species of critical education which could foster and nourish the germs of such a thing even if they existed. That which takes the place of a school is the well known mosaic, compounded of the traditions and conventionalities of the English stage, whose artistic memories receive occasional leaven and reinforcement from actors of English birth, which latter are (for the most part) the only ones tolerated in our larger theatres to sustain principal lines of character. It follows that the side of the drama which teaches—the side which is especially presumed "to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature—" that is to say, comedy of the first-rate stamp—is seldom in *rappor*t with the audience, although the latter will, sometimes for fashion's sake, sometimes to

affect discernment, pretend that it is so. There is nothing national about such a stage, because, to the real eye of the audience, there is nothing natural. Now the stage is respectable, most especially in utilitarian times, just in proportion as its simulation re-produces types with elegance and accuracy with which the spectator is sufficiently familiar to endorse their fidelity. [This, of course, refers to Comedy, the qualities of Tragedy being chiefly heroic and ideal, not human and social.] How does this rule apply to the acting of "Standard English Comedies" in our theatres? The actor who comes here, having been well taught, and who if he has not had the opportunity of mingling at home in the highest society has enjoyed the next privilege, perhaps, of mingling freely with many who *have*, commences with conscientiousness to bestow his copy of Lord This or Sir Harry That upon an American public. He finds, to his disgust and dismay, that the more faithful his picture, the less it is relished by his audience. He learns, by degrees, that he must give them something like the types with which they are familiar, and so from the necessity which exists for those "who live to please" to "please to live," his Courtly and his Surface become, curiously enough, fast young American gentlemen, if indeed they are fortunate enough to escape running into the modern stamp of swell counterjumpers. The metamorphosis is interesting in a scientific sense, but must be admitted to be rather debauching in an artistic one. For, while it is true that the bulk of American theatre-goers would be unable to verify the truthfulness of a representation of ancient or modern "high life" which constitutes so much of the substance of "Standard Comedy," it is evident that only such a capacity is competent to keep the stage in a healthful condition.

We are not yet, as a nation, quite mature enough to have our types or standards of breeding and usage sufficiently crystallized to serve the dramatic purpose; we therefore employ for the nonce those of another nation, with which (fortunately for us in some respects if not in this) we have

a language and a literature in common. But the differences in our social life and political institutions are such as to render the peculiarities and distinctions of a foreign drama distasteful, and therefore, in the absence of a native one, is produced the anomalous hybrid described—Americanized English comedy.

The truth is, that, all affectation and absurdity aside, English comedy has no hold whatever upon American sympathies. It is interesting as a relic—valuable to the scholar and the antiquary—suggestive in the closet—but can retain no abiding possession of our stage. Such a tenure is reserved for a really National Drama, when the time for such an institution shall have arrived; and until then our theatre will continue, as previously observed, in a *transition* state.

It is, however, fair to remark that, meagre as are the indications, the Tragic Muse seems to have a better chance for early and dignified establishment in America than her lighter sister. Tragedy is of course less dependent upon that which is merely artificial and conventional in manner—does not demand from its votaries that attrition with, or close observation of, the distinctive classes illustrated. It is of yesterday rather than of to-day. A man of average intelligence may reasonably assume to have as just an idea of the speech and action of antique heroes, if he dwells on the banks of the Mississippi, as if he mingled with the polished circles of St. James's. Indeed, when considering the expanding influences of vast area, grand natural scenery, the absence of the cramping and belittling tendencies of close populations and sophisticated modes of thought, we may even assume that his ideal would be larger and nobler in the first than in the second case. This may furnish a striking reason to strengthen other accidental ones why the tragic development promises better with us than the comic. Here, indeed, are rudimental traces of a school; defaced by vulgarisms and marred by inelegant excrescences, if you will—but if sometimes crude, usually manly—if often gross, always strong. Chasteness and polish in

art are not inherent, but come rather through the slow persuasions of toil and growth. If the basis be broad, and the material ample, time will bring the subtilizing and refining.

That Melpomene is in advance in the instincts or progress of the American mind is singularly illustrated by the habit of those who are necessary reflexes of the popular taste, the most popular of whom do her frequent homage by playing comedy as if it were melodrama. Those who have seen much French acting can appreciate the effect of a precisely opposite tendency.

The paucity of examples—in the way of professional excellence—is certainly a sad drawback to dramatic prosperity, yet it is more to be regretted than marvelled at. When a stage is rising, its leading professors are found to elevate their audience; when it is sinking, they are tolerably sure to degrade them. The latter is not a gracious office, nor one likely to be attractive for people capable of success in anything else. The absence of self-respect which is promoted by “playing down” to the intelligence—or below it—of a mixed public, is not usually found combined with conscientious study or creative ability. The exaltation of the same quality, which is a consequent when the stage assumes the dignity of a teacher, is legitimately found associated with both. Such is the case in the history of a stage when men like John Philip Kemble, and his fellows, are found at its head, but such is not the case now. Talent for this, as for any other use, is always lying dormant in every community, but it does not appear in such walks unless the public taste demands and requires it. In the latter event it is forthcoming at the exigency, as unheard of generals spring up in war, but not otherwise. The increase of education, the development of social refinement and amenities, the progress of letters, and the attendant culture of higher and purer standards of criticism and appreciation, can alone bring about for the stage the conditions which may terminate its debased or transitorious state, and prepare the way for a reputable and dignified national drama.

CHAPTER XXX.

“CLEAR the stage!”

This was from the prompter, who had been looking at his watch every thirty seconds for the last ten minutes. The stage was dark enough, and not until the eye became accustomed to the gloom could it discern whether it was “clear” or not. Down in the right-hand corner, by the proscenium, was a table on which a mass of papers, books, and play-bills was illuminated by a single yellow jet of gas, springing from a metallic upright, and fed by a piece of flexible tubing. Here sat the Stage Manager, a peaked-looking man, with black clothes and red eyes, scratching away at to-morrow night’s bill. Clear over in the front, a great black void, with glass pendants shimmering here and there, and a profusion of drapery in brown-holland—for the theatre in the day-time is like your town-house furniture in summer, or your railway traveller, and puts on its duster to save the frippery beneath. There is a queer, dank smell, curiously compounded. An odor of earth from under the stage—of orange peel and peanut dust from the front—of glue, and size, and paint from the property and painting rooms—of shavings from the domain of the carpenter—and, permeating all, and to complete the agreeable amalgam, the flavor of gas stealing out of tiny and unstopable crevices from everywhere. Then there are shadowy forms stalking up and down, and across from wing to wing, holding paper “parts” mostly, over which they are anxiously conning and whispering. Nearly all are pale and jaded, so far as can be seen in the dim light. They have that look—which betrays irritation and exhaustion, the avengers sent by outraged nature in the morning, to expiate the excessive strain on the nervous system of the night before. Not all, however. There are some young people—men and women—with apparent freshness, color, and vitality. These are generally “utility” people; aspirants full of ambition, who, not having the money, or perchance

the education to enforce that hearing at the top round of the ladder from which those who have both usually so disastrously tumble, are content perforce to begin at the bottom. Then there are two or three grimy-looking men, with paper caps and brawny arms, standing about in the entrances; and one man with spectacles and Teutonic face, who has emerged from a mysterious hole under the stage, and, after stumbling about a little among chairs and music stands, has established himself in the conductor's seat in the orchestra. He has just lighted another jet of gas at his desk, with the flame from half a twisted play-bill, brought from the manager's table by the call-boy, and is now torturing and screwing up his violin.

"Clear the stage!"

"What's the time, Mr. Huntley?" from the manager.

"Ten minutes past, sir, and thirty seconds to boot. We ought to commence sharp to-day, for we *must* run through the burlesque afterwards. You know, sir, Sadkyn and Rutgers will *never* begin to study their parts until they've got their situations; and we ought to have the scenery and properties by Wednesday."

"To be sure, to be sure. Holla!" looking up; "oh! I say! this won't do. Where's Bloxer? Come, Bloxer, you must give us this scene in Three!"

The principal grimy-looking man, with paper cap and brawny arms, explained:—



"We must fit the traps, sir, some time. Mr. Monkini swears he won't jump through the Enchanted Grot, unless the Vampire can be on the opposite side from the parallel. He'll break his head agen the braces, he says."

"Oh! nonsense. He'll never hurt. Besides, we won't take long. Come, take off this corridor, and give us the palace flats in Three. It isn't fair," continued the manager, in a lower voice to the prompter, "it isn't fair to a novice. The poor thing 'll hardly know where she is at night. Where's the Property-man, where's Planet?"

"He's in his room, sir, a-gildin' of the magic steeds," reported the call-boy.

"Just go and tell him I want these properties *now*, and in every scene. What is there on now, Mr. Huntley?"

"Table and chairs, centre. An *escritoire* at Left Upper Entrance. Scroll for Montford. Purse of gold and dagger for De Roseville. Thunder ready right. Lightning box, ditto," said Huntley.

"Oh! ah! yes. Forgot to put that in the headings," said the manager, bustling back to his table. "Let's see. 'Appalling Effect of the Storm Scene.' That'll do, I guess. She must take us through the three nights, anyhow. Um, um!" running over what he had written,—"'Triumphant D  b  t of Miss Ellen Grey, America's Fair Daughter, who has quitted the home of Opulence and Pomp, for genuine love of Art, to bow submissive to the Tragic Muse. Glorious Vindication of  Youth, Beauty, and Genius.  How many seats did Levi say were taken, Huntley?"

"Only nineteen, I think," replied the Prompter.

"By a house packed from floor to dome with the wit, fashion, and intelligence of this great metropolis. Um, um,—Get on, now do, Mr. Huntley."

"Everybody for the First Act," roared that functionary. "Now, then, Ladies and Gentlemen, pay attention, I beg of you. 'Montford and De Roseville seated.' Montford and De Roseville! Come, now, this is too bad!"

"Who is it?" inquired the manager.

"Montford and De Roseville, sir—Mr. Howlfort and Mr. Grater. They're always late."

"Put 'em down—put 'em down, Mr. Huntley. We're paying full salaries now—no excuse for these liberties. Half past eleven is it? All right. Pass on to Solomon's scene. Who's Solomon?"

"Solomon, Mr. Sadkyn. Call Mr. Sadkyn, Joe!"

Mr. Sadkyn, a stuffy, elderly Englishman, appeared in obedience to the shrill summons of Joe, who took every opportunity of screaming at the utmost power of his lungs as a practical preparative for future histrionic distinction. Mr. Sadkyn was, however, not in the best of humors.

"Why am I bellowed after in this manner? I am usually late, I presume, and inattentive to my business. It is my custom to omit that regard to detail, which, however, constitutes the chief characteristic of the younger members of the profession!"

"I beg your pardon, I'm sure, Mr. Sadkyn. I'd no idea you were close by. Here's Mr. Howlfort and Mr. Grater both late again, and Mr. Badger says to go on with your scene," explained the Prompter in a conciliatory manner, well knowing by bitter experience the sort of morning he was likely to pass if the stout and irate person he addressed were unduly displeased.

"Very good, sir," said Mr. Sadkyn, sternly, "we *will* go on with my scene. Where, may I ask, is Agatha? Is she prepared to rush into my arms at the cue? I see nothing of Mrs. Mortimer."

"Call Two, Joe—Solomon, Agatha. Now, if you please, Mr. Sadkyn, we'll come to your cue,"—and deep damnation deepens with his smile."

"I beg *your* pardon, sir," said Mr. Sadkyn in a highly sarcastic tone, "that, perchance, may be some one else's cue, but it is not mine—at least in this instance. My cue is '*Exit* Montford, Left, De Roseville, Right.—(*Thunder.*)'"

"Oh, come, do get on," from the manager's table.

"I shall have much pleasure in getting on," said Mr. Sadkyn, loftily, "whenever we can approximate with reasonable accuracy the text and the business of the scene."

"For G—d's sake fix it as Mr. Sadkyn desires, then, Huntley," cried the manager, "or we shall stay here all day."

An adjustment was effected, and the scene proceeded with the assistance of Mrs. Mortimer, a rather pretty woman much over-dressed, and with a face plastered with *eau de beauté*.

"You find your own snuff-box, I suppose, Mr. Sadkyn," hazarded the Prompter, at a point where such an article was required in the "business."

"Ah, indeed, sir? You may remember the last occasion

when I obliged the Establishment by such a concession—you may also recal the consequence. No, sir. Upon that occasion I registered a solemn oath to furnish no properties henceforth, not called for from the artist by the most rigid usages of the Profession. Have the goodness to enter distinctly upon the Property List 'Snuff-box for Solomon.'"

"As you please, sir," submitted Huntley. "Ah, good morning, Mr. Howlfort—good morning, sir. You've kept the stage waiting some time, sir."

"Yes, and Mr. Grater," ejaculated the Manager. "Upon my soul, gentlemen, it's very hard. I don't know for my part what the profession is coming to. No wonder it falls into contempt when there's such a want of business-like attention in trifles. You've no right to keep fifty people dancing attendance upon your caprice in this manner!"

Mr. Howlfort walked down the stage with an air intended to represent quiet majesty. A rather handsome dark man with an aquiline nose, and masses of glossy black hair heavily oiled. He wore trowsers of a large check in pattern, a neckcloth of bright colors, and a black cloak or "Talma," faced with velvet. The principal object of his life appeared to be that of striking a deeper key or pitch in using his voice to that of his interlocutor, whoever that might be. Badger had rather a resonant organ, the product in some degree of vast melodramatic practice in early life, but it was altogether eclipsed and put in the wrong both in sound and substance by the reply which his exordium elicited:—

"Mark me," was the sepulchral response. "'Tis now some sixteen years that I've been chained to the oar of the Histriion's drudgery, and never did I know—except myself—a man who could study 20 lengths from night to night and then come perfect and punctual in the morning."

"It's true," said the Manager, somewhat subdued, "you *have* had work, but then you know, my dear fellow, we've had to rather put the steam on this season. So much opposition, you know. There's been the Hippodrome and

the Coliseum, and Zampillaerostation, and the Prestidigitateur, and the lectures on the Megatherium. And it's certainly been easier for you lately. You had only the *Stranger* for Friday and *Master Walter* for Saturday."

"At any rate," said Huntley, "Mr. Grater has no such excuse—there's been very little study for him. Nothing but the father in *The Phantom's Legacy* for over three weeks."

Mr. Grater was a hard-featured man with a high color and watery eyes, and about whom there was a mingled aroma of onions and—something more suspicious. He was the "heavy father," of the company, as Howlfort was the "leading man," and Sadkyn the "first low comedian." Whatever his emotions at the reproaches wherewith he was assailed, he evidently did not think it wise to give them utterance, for he merely smiled a bitter and derisive smile, and fell to poring over his torn and spotted "part."

The rehearsal now proceeded with few or no interruptions until a point toward the end of the first act whereat everybody called out "Yes, yes, The Dance! The Dance!" when an altercation occurred between Badger and sundry delinquent musicians who had lingered overmuch at their beer in the neighboring saloon.

"*Lenore*" did not "come on" until the second act, a circumstance which was dwelt upon with much earnestness by the Manager, as affording the opportunity for so fine a "reception." "You see, my dear Miss Grey, it gives the audience time to get settled in their places, and to grow into a wholesome curiosity for the advent of the heroine. People have got into the way of dining so late, too, that numbers don't come in till the first act is well on. Be sure and recollect to count ten, slowly and deliberately, after you make your entrance, and then curtsy first to the right, then to the left, and finally to the centre of the house. We usually play a farce before an old piece, but Sadkyn won't do it when he has a new part, and to come on in the second act is just as good for you."

When the momentous period arrived, the Manager went to the front for the purpose, as he said, of hearing "how her voice carried." At the same time, Mrs. Furbelow, the leading actress of the establishment, posted herself in a chair in the left corner of the stage by the prompter's table, from which coigne of vantage she watched the progress of events with such close attention as was compatible with carrying on a whispered flow of badinage and criticism with Mr. Gayfield Rushton, the light comedian, who, notwithstanding his name and his undeniable good looks, presented an unmistakably Judean appearance and physiognomy.

"Dress the stage now, ladies and gentlemen! Dress the stage now, *do!*" expostulated the prompter, as the unhappy heroine appeared at centre doors, supported on either hand by the three seedy men, and the three meretricious-looking *coryphées*, who represented the "nobles and ladies," supposed to be visitors at the aristocratic Chateau de Roseville. The heroine could have remonstrated at the remarkable disposition which followed, consisting in spreading the characters at equal distances of four feet apart on the arc of a circle, of which the prosceniums supported the ends, and whereof she was the centre. She was quite certain that such an adjustment was by no means likely to occur in real life; but remonstrance was useless against the weight of tradition and usage, which maintained that this was the most easy and natural relation possible for people so circumstanced, and she held her peace.

Then there followed a vast deal of bickering and much censure, chiefly bestowed on the derelict Grater, who commenced his speech opening with—"So please you, gracious lady," in a bewildered manner, reading it painfully from his tattered MS.

"Oh! yes," said Huntley, with the cutting irony he was wont to employ when he dared, "you'll be 'all right at night,' of course; you always are. How was it with *Gonsalvo* in the '*Legacy*'?"

"I never missed a cue," growled the artist, "and I won't

to-night. I've had a severe cold—quite unable to study. Miss Grey may be sure I won't trouble her at night. I've long waits, and I can easily 'wing' the later scenes."

"I think you'd better," retorted Huntley, "or you'll catch it from the papers worse than you did before."

"Come, get on, get on!" bawled Badger from the boxes. "It's quite eleven o'clock, and we shan't get through by daylight, at this rate."

So the performers "got on," after a fashion, most of the principals being tolerably perfect in the words, and the action finally getting settled and determined by going twice through the more difficult scenes. Poor Elinor was almost ready to faint at the conclusion with the unusual labor and responsibility. The most exacting portions of the piece rested upon her own exertions, and her previous experience had ill fitted her for such arduous and protracted effort. She got through at last, though scarcely giving sufficient heed to the friendly suggestions of Badger, not to wear herself out, and to save herself, above all things, at night for the fourth and fifth acts. The manager, in point of fact, relied rather upon her youth and beauty to "carry her through" with the audience, than upon any great indications of dramatic force and ability. He had seen too many of these amateur exhibitions. They usually ended in one of two ways, even with the cleverest. The public liked "first appearances" of young and handsome women, but they wouldn't stand them afterwards without the requisite hard training only to be got by practice and experience. The aspirants usually abandoned the stage in disgust after a few essays, or retired into the ranks—generally in the provinces—to struggle up by the legitimate gradations.

Elinor had no such thoughts, and indeed no suspicion of what was passing in the minds of others who surrounded her. To her the future was a bright succession of artistic struggles and triumphs, not to be gained without great effort indeed, but effort which, she reasoned, her education and her self-reliance would endow her with peculiar facilities

for grappling and conquering. She was so absorbed in her task that she did not see, or, at all events, did not understand, the ill-concealed pity of even those who were most amiable among her co-laborers. Mrs. Furbelow, who professed the most tender interest in her success, came up after rehearsal, gorgeous in her brocade, her lace, and her French hat, to offer advice and congratulations in advance on the "hit" her dear young friend was to make. She even proposed to direct and superintend Elinor's toilette for the night, but the young lady had fixed ideas on that subject as well as most others, and saved herself from the most dangerous of the Furbelow pitfalls, by gratefully but firmly declining the suggested service. So she went home to her humble lodging—so different, alas! from the happy home she had left—and passed the intervening hours between the present and the impending ordeal, in those alternations of hope and anxiety which generals feel on the eve of the battle which is to make or mar them.

CHAPTER XXXI.

ELINOR failed. We cannot as faithful chroniclers essay to gloss over or color the fact, nor should we have any disposition to do so. For, setting aside any more virtuous reasons for candor, there is a sufficient one in our conviction that she failed because she deserved too well to succeed. Let us examine the seeming paradox.

Not the wisest among men can tell the rational cause for all his sympathies or all his antipathies; but many even among the foolish learn by experience the policy of striving to enlist the one and to assuage the other; that is, by living, talking, acting down to, or up to, the sympathetic or intelligent level of those they would propitiate. In this country, from divers causes, the former process is most in vogue. The politician striving to carry his election, the

priest striving to arrest a mob, the newspaper scribbler striving to write "popular" paragraphs, will proceed upon the principle of arguing at the sympathetic or intelligent level of the mass of their audience. This is politic, perhaps (in a limited and temporary sense), but it is not honest, if the politician, the priest, and the scribbler are above that level; for their influence should be used to elevate and not to degrade. It is their business especially to strive to set up high standards, not to acquiesce in low ones. Otherwise they are untrue to themselves and to others, and this is what Elinor could not be.

Her intellect and her perceptions were above the average level of those of her audience. As a consequence, she did not obtain their average sympathy. Her performance, notwithstanding some crudities, which were incident to comparative inexperience, was full of subtleties of appreciation, studded with bits of nice discrimination, which had cost her much thought and study, but which were utterly lost upon the majority of her audience. She could not, on the other hand, in a given situation exhibit the gross exaggeration and vicious style which that audience would have accepted as highly natural and appropriate to the situation in question. Had she come with a great name, such reticences would have been hailed as the indications of genius; as it was, they were considered to be those of inaptability and want of spirit. It is only truthful to add that those necessary and therefore pardonable amplifications, which give force to style and breadth to action, and whose use is essential to effort in a large house, Elinor's experience was not quite capable of grasping or coping with. Radcliffe had labored to make her realize such probable deficiencies, and to induce her to struggle to overcome them; but, although she placed much reliance on his judgment, she yet thought that even he was tainted by the current exaggeration of the day, and that to follow his advice in that direction might lead her too far. In this she was partly right, but she did not perceive that the low standards of the audiences compelled such a course as in-

dispensable to success, however it might violate a true artistic propriety.

In the days when the boxes gave the law to the galleries instead of the galleries to the boxes, Elinor's essay would have been pronounced a success. But she found to her dismay that we have changed all that. When Mr. Howlfort in the action of the play worked himself into a phrensy of maniacal passion—or what was meant to represent it—on what appeared to her very inadequate premises so far as they were suggested by the exigencies of the scene, Elinor felt sure that no human being surrounded by natural conditions would ever have done the like. But the audience, accustomed to see such tremendous demonstrations arise from similar trifling incitements, were clearly of a different opinion, and applauded his bursting veins and hoarse yells to the very echo. Thereupon the poor girl began to despair; for she felt certain that she could never outrage her own sense of truth—her clear-sighted estimate of the fitness of things—so far as to bid for suffrages by a similar process.

A few persons there were who understood and rated at something like its true value such talent as the *debutante* possessed; and her personal beauty certainly attracted an admiration only unshared by the other ladies of the dramatic company; yet these considerations were insufficient to weigh against the general verdict that she had attempted too much, and that she certainly would never be able to shine as a star of any notable magnitude. The more good-natured were willing to rate her attempt as a *succès d'estime*, the actors whispered "no go" as they brushed past each other behind the flats and wings, the newspaper critics stayed in the drinking saloons during the fourth act, and the Manager at the same time penned a hasty despatch to Mr. and Mrs. Phelim O'Grig (the Hibernian artists), begging them to commence their engagement a week earlier than had been arranged. Elinor was occasionally honored by a little scanty encouragement from a few refined looking people in the boxes, but when the curtain fell, the stentorian shouts for "Howlfort," and the very

feeble and scattering ones for herself, told too plainly which way the popular current ran.

Then the players who had been so full of compliment and of favorable augury at the preliminary rehearsals, were all out of the way as poor *Lenore* passed through the green-room on her way to change her dress, and the trampling carpenters and the blaring orchestra went crashing through their scene-shifting and their waltzes of Strauss, all heedless that they were sounding the knell of the poor heroine's hopes.

Next day—despite the kindly persuasions of Mrs. Maberly, who hardly knew whether to be glad or sorry for the turn things had taken—Elinor saw the papers, and therein read her doom in various periods of flippancy and affected slang. One was “surprised that Manager Badger had intrusted so responsible a character of juvenile tragedy to a mere novice, while Miss Heavyport—” a highly finished and experienced *artiste* of forty-five who usually opened in *Juliet*—“was within his reach and unemployed.” The writer, moreover, “with every desire to make allowances for the nervousness incident to a first appearance before so critical an audience, could not encourage the lady with false hopes of an established position on the Metropolitan Stage.” Another advanced similar deprecation in the interests of a second meteoric expert who “added to her recognised genius the attraction of an entirely new French drama of startling interest and power.” (This great work—translated and adapted by the critic in question—has since created an immense *furor* by its sensation scenes and delightfully immoral tendency.) Still another mature and practised censor—a youth of twenty-three who came last year from a New England country town—damned unreservedly both the play and the actress, but admitted a point in favor of Mr. Howlfort, “whose terrific energy and appalling exhibitions of passion stamped his rendition as for ever famous, and worthy of the very highest niche in the Temple of Dramatic Art.”

Badger came after breakfast, and remarking Elinor's

pallid face and weary brow, spoke a few words of consolation. She might easily be indisposed that night, he observed, and he could change the small bills and put Howlfort up for *Richard*—a customary and satisfactory resource in a dilemma. Elinor gratefully snatched at the chance. She could not bear the idea of facing the same audience again just at present. And Badger, after a remark or two about the weather, and that she musn't mind those “beastly papers,” and a suggestion of the advantages, for a time, of “provincial practice,” bowed himself, rather relieved, out of the room.

Then Grinder put in an appearance, and was very kind and reassuring. George Frederick Cooke hadn't acted in London until he was past forty, and how many times did she think Charles Kean had failed before he made his position there?—not to speak of several native luminaries to his mind of far superior effulgence. The newspapers were all “truck,”—not nearly such good judges of the drama as the local prints of P——. The shrewd fellow knew that Elinor was a pretty face and a great favorite with his audience, and ten dollars a week to go on for almost anything was a different thing from being “put up as a star.” Finally, he advised her trying the summer season with him for additional experience. He wouldn't mind a dollar or two more salary, and she might return directly.

Mrs. Maberly rather demurred at first, for she had considered that this experiment was to be a conclusive one. But Elinor would not hear of returning to the Vernons directly on the heels of this her first defeat, nor would she go to her aunt's humble home to be a burden upon her. Since matters had fallen out as they had, she felt too, that in some as yet unknown way, she was to be of service to Mr. Radcliffe; and this consideration had weight with her aunt as well as herself, as she well knew: so that finally, the good lady consented, consoling herself with the reflection that it might be for her niece's ultimate advantage to see as much of this life as possible, that she might become the more radically disenchanted with it.

And Elinor meekly returned with her views of fame and profit sadly dashed, but with her convictions of duty in no wise changed by her discomfiture. Her heart sank within her as she contrasted what she had achieved, with what in the first flush of youth and resolution she had so sanguinely anticipated. She had taken her course, however, she said, and she must abide by it. If the stage seemed no more promising after another six months, she might become a music teacher—or a governess, perhaps,—but her pride revolted at any prospective step which should not at least be self-supporting. With these thoughts and resolves she returned to P——, and resumed the laborious and thankless life she had borne so patiently before, but which she had hoped so fervently when she departed to have left behind her for ever.

CHAPTER XXXII.

GRACE VERNON TO ELINOR GRAZEBROOK.

UPLANDS, April 20th, 185—.

DEAREST NELLY:—You have been nearly six months away from us, and we all miss you as much or more than we did at first. I miss you more, for the early spring is coming—the first at home for three years—and the grass is springing, and soon the flowers will be here, and the place looks so beautiful! but indeed, darling, Uplands isn't Uplands without you.

You have kept your promise, as papa and I can see, in telling the unvarnished truth about the people and the scenes which surround you. How much you must have suffered, you who used to be so fastidious, to be brought in daily contact with so many mean and petty natures! And although you say that queer old gentleman, Mr. Radcliffe, has been such an aid and comfort and that, for all his cynicism he is a man of feeling and refinement, it is easy to see

that one such person is but slender relief among the mass of disagreeables and detrimentals. How is it that people like that get into and remain in such ungenial positions? It seems to me that he must have committed some fault—some imprudence—in early life, which exiled him from his family and friends; but whatever he is, or may have been, I love him for his kindness to you.

Stephen is still on his travels. He has been a great deal in the South with Mr. Eliot, and they have been on a visit to Cuthbert Boynton. Do you know, dear—but you know your own business best, at least in such matters, if not in any others. That horrid man whom Eliot likened to *Iago*—Mr. Kirkwood, I mean—spends much of his time at Dangerfield's Rest; and David Greenwood says that old Mr. Dangerfield is looking very ill, and cannot last long. I wanted so much to call on and try to comfort him, but papa says no—at least, not for the present. I don't know what it all means, but sometimes I feel as if something dreadful was going to happen. Aunt Mercy says The Rest is haunted, and that Kirkwood and old Dangerfield have dealings with spirits; you know how superstitious she is.

Dear little Ally is growing fast, and continually inquires for sister Nelly—and when she is coming home. She is not as shy as formerly, and is sweetly pretty. Papa is so fond of her as sometimes to make me quite jealous; and he says you are to come back, and keep the peace between us.

Now, dearest, forgive me, but I really think you have tried your wild experiment long enough. Indeed, papa suffers very much from your long absence. He looks older, for all his healthy life and even temper; and he thinks it his duty to enter one of those dreadful political campaigns again—and talks of his home being made desolate when I am taken from him—for you know Stephen expects *that* in early autumn. I think that papa's home ought to be made as happy and comfortable as possible, and am quite sure you could do more good here than where you are; you can't refuse to listen to *such* an argument, I know full well.

It is true that papa acquiesced in your earnestly expressed desire not to seek to dissuade or impede you in your resolution, and that he says what he always said, that, with a person whose character is formed as yours is, it is better to allow any determined line of action to have its course, for that if it results in failure even, it is sure to be the means of some indirect good. But now, dear, you have certainly given the matter a fair trial, and are in a position to rightly estimate your future, and the claims which the happiness of others may have upon it. So do, do, come home again! and make happy the hearts of all who love you so well, most especially that of your affectionate

GRACE.

P. S. Stephen—who only knows of your absence, but not of its motive—writes that you *must* be here in September—for a certain purpose—whatever happens to the contrary.

G. V.

FROM MARTIN TO STEPHEN DANGERFIELD.

DANGERFIELD'S REST, April 10th, 185—.

Your last letter, my son, has given me very serious concern. I am sorry that the information it contains has been so long withheld—both for your sake and mine. What you say about the course I have thought it necessary to adopt may be just or not; in any case, I am unable now to discuss it. None of us can tell in this life when we may be forced to act a part which shall procure us the censure of the world, and yet be obliged to withhold our justification. It is rarely that men learn charity in early life—or women either, though your mother was an exception.

The main subject of your letter renders it imperative that you should return home that we may have a personal conference. Overcome prejudice, if you can, to at least this extent. The person you alluded to has been back and forth during the winter, sometimes at New York, sometimes at The Rest. He is here now, but will no doubt accede to my wishes, and absent himself when you come. Heaven

knows I have tried hard enough to protect your future interests, and I have so far, in the main, succeeded. You will understand this better hereafter. I am too weak and ill to write more,—you must come home, and at once, however brief your stay.

God bless you.

M. DANGERFIELD.

FROM M. G. TO JAMES KIRKWOOD.

NEW YORK, April 25th, 185—.

You have disregarded my former letters. You will find it wise not to disregard this. I wish to see you and at once. If I hear nothing of you by the expiration of a week from this date, you will speedily repent it.

M. G.

ROBERT ELIOT TO OLIVER VERNON.

MONTGOMERY, ALA., April 15th, 185—.

This will be the last letter, My Dear Sir, which I shall be able to send you before I have the pleasure of accepting your hospitable invitation to re-visit your home in the North. I had intended to make a longer stay, but as Stephen is naturally anxious to get home, and we agreed to continue our pleasant association as *compagnons de voyage*, I have made my arrangements to suit his wishes, and we are to meet at Charleston on the 20th on our way to New York.

I left Boynton's plantation two days ago—ending my second agreeable sojourn there with a regret which was increased by finding him in no very happy frame of mind. As you surmise, his feelings are very deeply interested in your charming ward, Miss Grazebrook—and his is not a nature which is easily impressed or which easily forgets. While naturally avoiding intruding on his confidence, it has been made evident to me that he attributes his rejection entirely to personal reasons; a conviction in which I do not agree, any more than you yourself do. On that

point I entertain an opinion which has probably suggested itself to your mind—but I confess that if that opinion be well founded, it suggests little chance for a happy solution of the difficulty.

You question me as to the maturing of my views with respect to the "peculiar Institution," and I must admit that increased facilities for observation and consequent reflection have certainly failed to make me its partisan. In honesty I should allow that *what I have seen* has rather agreeably disappointed me in regard to the treatment of the Slaves—they are more kindly treated, and appear to be happier than I expected to find them. Yet, it would be idle to expect, that, after all which has been said, and in their anxiety to rebut the testimony of their opponents, the masters would be likely to allow the dark side of the picture to be exhibited to neutral strangers.

As regards the northern Press, I find the *N. Y. Crier* and *Evening Yahoo* to be decided favorites, and their reiterated arguments that "amalgamation" would result from emancipation, as well as the ruin of free labor in the North, are highly relished and applauded. To judge however, from the variety of hue I see around me, "amalgamation" is not seriously repressed by the system of bondage, and the candid mind will perceive that granting the right of volition to *both* races would certainly limit the now numerous cases where it is exerted by one in despite of the other. Moreover, the granting this right would surely in one sense cover the question, inasmuch as those of *either* race who dislike amalgamation would be under no obligation to indulge in it. With respect to the free white labor question, it is one of the strongest and most constantly repeated arguments here that white men *could not* perform the field work which is readily performed by black ones. If this be true—and I presume to a great extent it is so—every physiological law indicates that the converse rule must be approximately so; that is to say, that the negroes would be unable to compete with the labor performed by the whites in the climates suited to the latter.

I hear constant discussions among the planters about the relative rights of the National and the State governments, which, it is hardly necessary to add, are not often decided favorably to the former. If the planters have the right side of the case—which I understand you to deny—the subject would be narrowed to the determination whether Slavery is or is not a moral wrong. If it be the last, I confess the constitutional doctrine does not strike me as of major importance. There must surely be an ultimate appeal to right in such things. Our English constitution, unlike yours, is unwritten; but were it otherwise, I don't think the Englishmen of to-day would consent to be bound by an ancestral clause committing posterity to the encouragement of sheep-stealing in particular counties. Unquestionably, if your great nation is to progress according to your cherished theories, it must, sooner or later, bring itself to a willingness to dispense with that which the sense of the whole civilized world now condemns as a barbarism, and most of it as a crime. No power can remain in an exceptional position and keep up with the progress of the age. If all but one of the Christian Powers agree upon any great question of practical morals, the dissentient must speedily lag behind the others in knowledge, in virtue, and in strength.

Nevertheless, in considering all the difficulties of the case, and although Freedom is *per se* preferable to Slavery, I am quite convinced that, for the good of both races, a system of gradual emancipation running into ameliorative apprenticeship, and followed by stringent vagrancy laws, would be wiser than any scheme that could be devised for a sudden and sweeping liberation of the whole race. The latter would only seem justifiable for national self-preservation, and in any other contingency it would certainly appear reasonable that the owners should be compensated.

Boynton,—whose tenderness towards his people is quite in contrast with the conventional abolition pictures,—has made us a half promise to follow our steps to the North. I hope and trust that his prospects with Miss

Grazebrook may brighten, for I really think them admirably adapted to make each other happy. With every kindly and grateful remembrance to yourself and your amiable household, believe me

Sincerely yours,
ROBERT ELIOT.

JAMES KIRKWOOD TO ELIAS P. STAGGERS.

THE REST, April 26th, 185—.

My Dear Sir :—

I shall be in New York this week, and will then be very happy to meet you and your friend Mr. Von Donk to arrange about the business you refer to. In the meantime, you can tell him for his satisfaction that *the marriage he apprehends will never take place.*

Your obedient servant,
JAMES KIRKWOOD.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

MR. KIRKWOOD spent his winter in a manner which he must have found highly agreeable, for it consisted in an alternation of hard drinking and sluggish indolence. Yet, the selfishness of the man was such that in all his successes and in all his torpor he never lost sight of the main objects which he had laid down in his future. Few men would have slept so quietly as he on the brink of a crater from whence volcanic fires might spout at any moment to overwhelm him. But he measured with cunning accuracy the sum-total of his dangers, and the force of the weapons on which he relied to avert them. He knew that a rare and haughty family pride, coupled with a nervous system shattered by years of apprehension, fought on his side with Martin Dangerfield. He knew that a spirit of uncommon

benevolence, an affection which would make heavy sacrifices to save the loved ones from evil or pain, was serving him as a shield with Oliver Vernon. The avarice which had replaced some of his old and fiercer passions grew stronger in his heart as the months rolled round, and his darling hope now was to avail of all the advantages and immunities of his position, until by a well timed *coup* he could assure himself of future competency and find safety in a hasty but carefully planned flight. It was desirable to find some one, who, able to advance a large sum at short notice, would yet have strong motives for not being too particular in the investigation of security. Such a person and such motives he had found in Gossamer Von Donk; and with the valuable aid of Mr. Staggars, he had devoted himself at intervals during the winter to preparing that rich and credulous soil to yield at the proper moment the golden fruit he proposed to gather from it. Kirkwood considered himself armed at all points. If old Dangerfield could be brought to make a genuine mortgage through the threats or cajoleries of his tormentor, why well: but Mr Kirkwood did not contemplate leaving his harvest unreaped even in the absence of such an instrument.

The old man's failing health afforded Kirkwood no little satisfaction; for whatever his power, it was clearly more available over weakness than over strength. Occasionally fierce altercations would take place between them, and these were sometimes overheard by the servants; old retainers of the family, most of them, who would shake their heads and wish Master Stephen would return. For they had a certain dread and suspicion of Kirkwood for all the largesse he would now and then carelessly dispense among them; and they did not think his protracted stay, during the long absence of the heir, boded any good to Dangerfield's Rest. Once or twice there were little whisperings between one of their number and David Greenwood, or some other of the household at Uplands, but this was on rare occasions, and was generally accompanied by

something of that stiffness which is apt to prevail among servants, when the gentry of their respective habitations are not on terms of familiar intercourse.

There were times when Kirkwood would go to New York, and when he did so, he usually contrived to take a liberal draught of those pleasures to which as a younger man he had been so attached. He would find his way of nights to questionable places, where he would perhaps pick up an old boon companion, and the two would swallow bottle after bottle of champagne together. Then Kirkwood would proceed towards the small hours to the favorite haunt where he used so often to be seen in the old days, a dozen and twenty years ago. This was H—'s, the then fashionable hell of the town. Faro was quite as attractive for its old votary now as it had ever been. But he had grown cautious from being burned so often at that fire. His play had lost its old dash and recklessness, and he would wait steadily for the case-cards instead of giving the bank the advantage of the splits. He generally won this winter, which did not however inspire him with foolhardiness. He wanted all the money he could get, he said, and he would rise from the table contented with moderate gains.

As his store increased from its various sources of supply, Kirkwood began to feel the miser's yearning for a safe place for its deposit. No bank or Trust Company in town would serve his turn. Too much time would be needed for transfer in the contingency of sudden departure. The room he occupied at The Rest was unsafe. Should aught turn up against him, it would be the first place searched and rifled. He bethought him of a spot more secure, and one wherefrom he could reclaim his treasure without the aid or knowledge of a living soul. There existed in the great city one particular source of danger; one from whence a blow might come at any time whose chief force might be directed to wresting from him his ill-gotten wealth. A letter he had lately received made him more anxious than ever on this point. Besides, Stephen Dangerfield was

coming home, and with him might arrive fresh complications. All risk should be avoided by timely precautions. So Kirkwood caused to be prepared a compact but strong case such as would stand moisture and mouldy earth, and having, after long and artful reconnoissances, selected its temporary resting-place, with many an inward aspiration for its safety, he committed his hoard to the ground. With proper foresight it was put in a form which should require no additional trouble—no delay in New York to make it available. He was a practised and thoughtful operator, and barring a handful of gold for temporary purposes, his store consisted of bills on London and other Continental cities of Europe.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

IN a luxurious apartment of the — Club in Fifth Avenue were three gentlemen, who, having partaken of a dinner of the satisfactory character for which that well known *cuisine* is noted, had disposed of their persons after the various manners which their taste or caprice had suggested.

Mr. Elias P. Staggers was sprawling at full length on a lounge, with the table laden with fruit and wine in easy reach, from which he occasionally supplied himself with champagne. Mr. Gossamer Von Donk was airing his patent leather boots at the open window, while the brocaded chair which supported his person was tilted back at an agreeable angle against the embrasure. Mr. James Kirkwood was seated under the massive chandelier at the table, making little notes in his pocket-book from time to time as the conversation progressed.

"It is clear," remarked the latter worthy, "that where we are playing a common game and hold the winning cards, all we have to do is to play steadily in concert, to bag all the stakes."

"There ain't no trouble at all about it," said Elias P. "It's a first rate investment any how, and the General's got plenty of cash. He'll let you go in for it whenever I say the word."

"Ya-a-s," said Gossamer, "but I don't clearly see, you know, how a good investment in land is going to insure a dead certainty in a question of love."

"My dear young friend," said Kirkwood, blandly, "all things are uncertain, of course, until they are positively accomplished. What we have to consider in life or in love is the aggregate of chances. Old Vernon cares nothing for money, but he's proud about land. Dangerfield's Rest is the best property anywhere in his neighborhood; therefore he looks with favor on his daughter's marriage with its presumptive heir. Change the situation; let Stephen Dangerfield be set aside and some other attractive young gentleman step into his shoes; and presto, Old Vernon will regard with equal favor the attractive young gentleman."

"Ya-a-s," said the dubious Gossamer, who thought it indicated commercial adroitness to assume suspicion of every new project. "But why should you favor one attractive young gentleman more than any other?"

"That's just the point. I wish to be entirely frank with you. It certainly doesn't signify a straw to me who comes into the place, provided I realize the value of my advances; that is, in a pecuniary sense. But there are things besides money in this world. You, for instance, are willing to go great lengths to be successful in a matter of love. Now, I—for reasons needless to mention—have no great liking for your rival. Therefore, I'm willing to take some pains to cause him to fail, and to cause you to succeed."

"They say she's very fond of Steve Dangerfield," said Gossamer, ruefully, and gulping down a draught of champagne. "You don't either of you seem to think how *that's* to be got over."

"You see, Gossy," said Elias P. reluctantly disturbing his agreeable posture to fill a glass and light a cigar, "you

see men of the world like Colonel Kirkwood here and me, we take a kinder philosophical view of these things, and you don't. Fond of Steve? Well, yes, a girl of her age is fond of any nice lookin', spry young man, 'specially when he's got a good estate to his back. But mor'n half the time they'd rather change than not. All folks likes variety; and when the new kind's got the most money it's darned sure to carry the day."

"In any case," added Kirkwood, "you run no risk and do no harm. You'll have all the advantage of the situation—a *pied à terre*, as the French say. The old man can't last long—but whether he does or not, the mortgage can be foreclosed at will. Finally, and in any event, young Dangerfield will never marry the girl."

"But are you sure of that?"

"So sure, that if you don't hear of the engagement being broken off within a month, I'll give you half my claim on the estate for nothing."

"But why *should* it be broken off—at any rate, why before the fact of the mortgage being in existence,—which you say is a secret so far,—comes to be known?"

"Ah, that I can't answer."

"Don't be too darned inquisitive, Gossy.—Ask me no questions and I'll tell you no lies, eh, Colonel? What do you care, Gossy, so long as you git the gal and the estate?"

"Well, nothing, perhaps; only one feels naturally anxious, you know. And, by the by, perhaps, after all, Old Vernon might object to me for a son-in-law on political grounds."

"Stuff. What the devil difference is politics to you? You hain't run for nothin' yet; time enough when you do. For the matter o' that, you can jest change round before you're married, and change back again afterwards. It's a free country, ain't it?"

"I might do that, perhaps, but then the General"—

"What d'ye think he cares about one party or another? Not a row of pins! He goes for the party that's got most

votes, he does. We're all among friends, and I don't mind sayin', if it comes to that, *I do too!*"

"It argues a generous nature to be willing to acquiesce in the wish of the majority," said Kirkwood, gravely, "and is quite consistent with the nature of our institutions."

"That's so," agreed Elias P., "I always go for doin' what most of the folks wants; or any of 'em, when I kin make any thing out of it; allers except them d—d abolitionists; I'm down on them."

"In a word, Mr. Von Donk," said Kirkwood, returning to the original subject, "I don't think any of the difficulties you name will have any force at all."

"She's a lovely critter," said Elias P., warming with his wine, and gazing enthusiastically at the ceiling, "she was the prettiest gal aboard the *Assyria*, and that's saying a heap. Now, Violetta and Zerlina are mighty fine gals, but she takes 'em down. What a foot and ankle she's got! And she'll have that ere place of Uplands—glorious place—wuth fifty thousand if it's wuth a cent." And he went on dilating for some time on the personal attractions of Grace Vernon, and the substantial excellences of the estate to which she was heiress. Kirkwood marked the glistening eagerness in Gossamer's eye with the approval of an angler who sees the fish toying about his hook.

Kirkwood was in fact playing a bold and deep game. He felt that the storm which had been long gathering might soon burst, and it was necessary for him to prepare for any emergency. His plan was to raise a large sum by a mortgage on Dangerfield's Rest, which document if it could not be genuine should be forged. Either way it was better the transaction should be got over with as little *eclat* or investigation as possible. Once accomplished he could abscond any day at an hour's notice. But, to lessen the chances for investigation, it was desirable that the negotiator should have an incentive beyond a mere eligible investment, so that his prudence might in a measure be blinded. Such a negotiator, with Stagg's aid, he had found in Von Donk. The broker had long dealt with

Kirkwood, and knew him to be adroit enough, whatever his honesty might be. But, as Kirkwood privately arranged to allow him a large commission out of the amount received from Von Donk or the General, Stagg's was not disposed to look into matters too closely. Whatever happened he would realize a profit, and he knew nothing, he said to himself, which should lead him to look with doubt on the affair. As he finished a glowing peroration which summed up in most attractive colors the advantages to be enjoyed by Gossamer from the proposed bargain, Kirkwood rose to depart.

"After all, Mr. Von Donk," he remarked carelessly, as he pulled on his gloves, "I don't know that I care about being precipitate. I may make an exchange and buy a house here on the avenue. New York is really getting a tolerable place to live in. My friend M—, the real estate broker, was telling me this morning of a very fine property whose owner would like a country mortgage. He's going to Europe, and the house is beautifully furnished and all that. See you soon, Stagg's—good night both."

"But Mr. Kirkwood, I say!" said Gossamer in alarm, "you won't do anything positive without letting us know, you know?"

"Oh, dear no. Let me see;—I'll wait three days—will that do? All right. Just oblige me by not naming the matter, that's all. I've some delicacy about my old friend Dangerfield's feelings, you understand."

"To be sure, to be sure; I understand you perfectly. Better not to have it noised about. A—a—I think Mr. Kirkwood that Stagg's and I can arrange the thing if you'll permit?"

"Oh—well; as you please; suit yourself; of course I'm very happy if we come to terms. Stagg's knows all about it. Good night again."

And Mr. Kirkwood took his departure with a meaning look at Elias P. "That's clinched at all events," he muttered as he buttoned the coat across his broad breast to keep out the cool night air. "No more trouble with him,"

he continued, as he strode down the steps of the club into the silent Avenue. "*That* part of the business will run smoothly enough, and now for Mary."

CHAPTER XXXV.

KIRKWOOD strode swiftly on, bearing southward until he reached the extremity of the broad avenue, famous as being the centre of fashionable New York. Then he inclined westward, crossing the small park known as Washington Square, and finally struck into one of those streets running parallel with Broadway, which grow more squalid and dirty as they draw nearer Canal street. He had almost reached the latter when he turned abruptly to the right, up a narrow alley, which ran into a somewhat wider courtyard, and formed the approach to a row of mean-looking houses, low and dilapidated, facing towards the east. Before one of these uninviting tenements Kirkwood paused, and glancing about for a moment, as though afraid or ashamed to be seen entering it, he tried the door, and finding it yielded to his pressure, passed quickly in.

With some difficulty, and more than one muttered curse, he groped his way up two shattered staircases, and stumbling along a long passage, came to a door at which it ended. Here he paused again and listened. There were no voices to be heard within, and satisfied with that discovery, he knocked thrice at the panels, and, receiving the answering permission, entered the room.

It was a shabbily furnished apartment, lighted dimly by a single candle. There were two windows on one side, and a door leading into a smaller room, apparently used as a bed-chamber, on another. The furniture, such as it was, was old-fashioned, and much of it broken. One or two chests of drawers, half-a-dozen common chairs, a large rocking chair, a table or two, and an antique looking clothes-

press, constituted the principal articles. There was also a stove, which looked as if it were used for cooking—a suggestion which found corroboration in a few plates and pans on a sort of dresser hard by. The place, albeit it appeared to combine the purpose of both sitting-room and kitchen, was clean and tidy enough, nor did it need the evidence of the solitary figure sitting by a window, to show that it was commonly occupied by a female.

The figure in question was that of a woman, about forty-five years of age, and who would still have been uncommonly handsome, but for the wretched lines about her face, which told so unmistakable a story of passion, vice, and suffering. A face quite Greek in its character, with massive dark locks fretted with silver, and eyes like coals which had not yet lost all their fire. A strange-looking face, with decided intellect in the broad low brow, and much of resolution about the chin. But the mouth though handsome was weak, the lips a shade too full, and the nose lacked delicacy in the cutting. She wore a dress of some dark fabric, cheap almost to penury in quality and trimming; but she was one of the sort of women with whom one never notices attire, unless indeed it were to remark that it happened to be whole or in rags. By the feeble glimmer of her candle she had been poring over a tattered volume of an old novel, and as she rose on hearing the demand at the door, it could be seen that she was quite as tall for a woman as was her visitor for a man.

"So, James Kirkwood," she said, as he entered, and carefully closed the door behind him, "so you thought it wise to take notice of my last summons. It wouldn't be well to quite set me at defiance, eh?"

"You seem to be going down hill," he answered, evasively, and looking about him; "if it's money you want—"

She waved her hand with an expression of contempt.

"If I refuse money from my own child, it's not likely I'd take it from such as you."

"What *do* you want, then?"

"All in good time. I shan't keep you long. There's plenty of time between this and midnight, and after that's soon enough for your gambling, or whatever other devil's work you happen to be at just now."

"Fair words, Mary; if you've any request to make, you won't find foul ones serve your turn."

"*Request!* from me to you? not now, I fancy, any more than for many a long year. Did my last letter read like a request? No, James Kirkwood; I did not send for you to prefer a request, but to impose a command."

"Who told you where to send?"

"Ask me something I can answer. This much I'll say—my eye is always upon you—don't seek to escape it. I've little else to do or think of now, and it amuses me. Besides I intend to keep you out of mischief."

"In a word," said Kirkwood, impatiently, "why have you sent for me?"

"For several reasons. First and foremost look at this." She tossed a paper across the table, which he took up and opened. It was a playbill of the — Theatre in Broadway—the date, that of the first appearance of Miss Ellen Grey, which event was set forth in flaming capitals at its head.

"What's this, and what is it to me?" he asked.

"Much. Do you know who this Miss Ellen Grey is?"

"No. How should I?"

"I'll tell you. It's Elinor. It's my child."

"How do you know—has she been here—have you seen her?"

"Seen her, no. It was agreed I should not. I keep my word, James, whatever wrong I may do. Besides I don't want to contaminate her—she, at least, shall be free from all taint of my association or example."

"An exemption you did not design for the other," said Kirkwood with a sneer.

"Alabama's but a little child," said the mother wistfully. "I should not have hurt her—and 'tis hard, very hard, to be utterly alone."

Then with a sudden flash of bitter recollection she said:

"Scoundrel that you were to steal her from me! Why, even the very beasts are allowed to keep their young until they have learned to shift for themselves!"

"Come, all that's settled and understood. We have nothing to discuss in that connexion. You asked me to look at this—" touching the playbill—"I *have* looked at it. You told me this stage-struck young woman is your daughter;—good; what is that to me?"

"A great deal. I have heard from her. She wrote me word of her intention, but only partly of the cause. I suspected though—I know her nature pretty well—guessed there was a motive of independence or something of the sort. Then I wrote to inquire of Oliver Vernon. He has informed me lately of what occurred. You have been forging again, James."

"Did you send for me to tell me this?"

"This and something more. Whatever rascality you may have been engaged in of late, you have been unmolested by me. I haven't interfered so long as it didn't trouble me or mine. *Now* the case is different."

"The money was my just due, legally established, and admitted by Oliver Vernon after a careful investigation."

"As to his investigation I know little and care less. As to your claim being a just one, 'tis the merest fabrication and you know it."

"I don't wish to bandy words with you. Suffice it that the claim cannot be disproved, and without that you'd find it rather hard to—"

"To recover the plunder or to punish the robber, you would say. The first may be true enough, but as to the second—think a little, James—would that be so very difficult?"

"What is it you want?"—asked Kirkwood, moving uneasily in his chair, "if you need a few hundreds—"

She burst into a hard laugh. "Once for all, no—I tell you. I'll take no money from any of you. If I were

pinched for a crust I'd be an honest man's pensioner perhaps—certainly not yours."

"Come," he said, roughly, "what the devil is it then that you've brought me here for?"

"What is it? Do you think I'm going to stand by and see my child defrauded of her little fortune, and that by the villain who blasted her mother's life, and blackened her name? Upon my soul, crime must be second nature in you that you can ask so coolly *why* I've brought you here!—That I may in plain words command you to restore to my child that of which you've unjustly deprived her!"

"And suppose I refuse," he added, in slow, measured tones; "setting aside my objections to the form of your proposition, suppose I simply refuse to comply with it?"

"In that case I shall postpone the recovery of the plunder, until I have taken measures to punish the thief?"

"You mean to threaten?"

"Oh! no; I mean to act."

"How, for example?"

"I shall draw up a very brief statement—what may be styled a series of anecdotal reminiscences—running back for some fifteen years, and including some of your most interesting adventures during that period. This will be singularly amusing and instructive to all the people with whom you have lately had dealings, and I shall propose to furnish them each with copies."

"You will?"

"I will. There will be an extra copy, which, however, will be the first delivered, for, the Prosecuting Attorney at —."

"Very good. Now listen to me." He came close to her, and the look came over his face which appeared there before when provoked by Stephen Dangerfield. "Whatever I am, Mary Grazebrook, I'm tolerably safe to strike home when it's a question of revenge, or to stem a coming danger. Betray me if you will. But I swear to you, your life will be the price of the gratification."

"Bah! which of us has most cause to fear? And how

much, for that matter, do you think I care for you? Not enough, be sure, to deter me one instant from any path I'm resolved to pursue. Try, again, James Kirkwood, that strategy won't avail you."

He looked for a few moments into her resolute eyes with something of his old admiration, and said:—

"Why should you seek to injure me, Mary; you never sought to do so before?"

"No, because you were the father of my child; what you have done now—or what you threaten to leave undone—will cause me to forget that."

"She need not have left the Vernons—a piece of mere foolish pride."

"Ah! you are incapable of attributing any but an unworthy motive. But that is nothing to the purpose. What concerns me is, that I will not have her wandering up and down, leading the life of a social pariah—and that of a play-actress is such as much as mine is—because she is deprived of her just right through your thieving selfishness; more, you must give me an explicit reply before you leave this room."

"You will prevent my going?" said he, with a laugh.

"If you go," she went on coolly, "without such a reply, I shall consider the step to involve a refusal,—whereupon I shall act in the manner I have described."

Kirkwood reflected. He knew the woman with whom he had to deal; knew that she had nerve, pluck—was equal, in short, to the performance of more than her threat. Suppose she took time by the forelock, and carried it out; suppose himself to be in custody, where would be his promised reprisal? Besides, things were coming to a critical pass in other quarters. It was clearly a situation in which to fight for time.

"Listen, Mary," he said at length. "You are wrong in your suspicions, but I won't speak of that. The money is no great affair, after all; and I'm sure I wish your daughter well. But I have invested in certain speculations, from which I cannot in a moment withdraw."

"In faro-banks, I suppose?"

"Nonsense; in legitimate mercantile speculations."

"Well, what do you propose?"

"Briefly this. I'll give you a bond to pay back this sum of twelve thousand dollars within a short time, say in ninety days."

"What guarantee have I of its being honored?"

"You have always the same means for enforcing it that you have now. Besides, I'm worth far more than that sum, and it could, in such a case, be recovered by legal means."

Mary Grazebrook mused for a while. She saw that she had an advantage, and did not wish to let its fruits slip through her fingers. On the other hand, Kirkwood was a stubborn and dangerous man, who might at any moment when his blood was up take a great risk rather than succumb to any threat.

"I'll tell you what I'll consent to. I'll take your bond—it shall be a regular legal undertaking, mind—provided you have it here before twelve o'clock to-morrow morning."

"Agreed."

"No shuffling, mind. I know your old tricks, James. No new and ingenious quibbles or evasions."

"No, no; honor bright." And truly Kirkwood was sincere for once. A scandal at the present moment might ruin all his plans. It would cost him nothing to give the bond, and in three months he would in all probability be far away. The truce was, therefore, agreed upon under the stipulated conditions, and the agreement exacted by Mary Grazebrook was placed in her hands, as demanded, by noon of the following day. The possibility of her cunning opponent's absenting himself to escape the fulfilment of his pledge did not escape her attention; but she had good reasons to believe that he was playing for a much larger stake which he would not willingly abandon, and she determined to find additional security in watching his every movement with a vigilance which should permit no elusion of her jealous scrutiny. No such device, she

resolved, should avail him; and the moment he showed signs of retreat should be the signal for the blow she had threatened to fall, and which, with questionable prudence, she had consented to postpone.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

MAY Day had come. Not bright and smiling with flowers as we typify it because we share the literature of a land where it is oftener so than with ourselves—but wild, boisterous, and stormy. Yet dwellers near the sea—or near ever moving waters of any sort for that matter—learn to find and enjoy a beauty in every season, a charm in every variety of atmosphere. And Stephen Dangerfield's eye and taste were open to such influences, so that it was not because the weather was inclement, not that the wind roared and shrieked around the old walls and whistled through the bending trees, that a load was on his heart and a shadow on his brow.

He had arrived the evening before, and even filial duty had not prevented his snatching a short hour to call at Uplands. We need not essay to paint the happy meeting between the lovers. The sight of Grace was as warm and cheering sunshine to Stephen, and he filled up for her the very ideal of manly strength and comeliness. Little either of them thought of money or any other obstacle to their happiness during the delicious moments they passed together. Nor was there aught to suggest apprehension in the cordial and approving smile of Vernon. The kind old man thought no doubt of parchments and settlements as in some sort necessary things to consider in this practical world of ours; but doubtless he thought more of the pithy saying of the playwright's Richelieu; and to look at the pair together might have suggested to even a harsher sire that

"——— The mate for beauty
Should be a man and not a money chest."

No, there was no gloom in Stephen's heart when he started in the dusky evening to drive over to The Rest. David Greenwood drove him over, and imparted to him on the way that Mr. Kirkwood had been absent for some days as he had heard, and had not yet returned. So that he rejoiced that one disagreeable presence was spared him for the time, and that he might see and come to an explanation with his father without *surveillance* or interruption.

Stephen had for various reasons postponed advising Mr. Dangerfield of his engagement to Grace Vernon. Perhaps he thought that Kirkwood was certain to mention the fact; perhaps he dreaded the enforced explanations which must ensue respecting the state of the property. Be it as it may, he had not referred to the fact, until, thinking the time was drawing near when it must be divulged, he despatched the letter which had brought in reply the one which, while it summoned him home, implied ignorance of the subject in question.

Neither had Kirkwood alluded to the matter in hearing of his host. He was in no haste for the *éclaircissement* which the discovery would entail, and wished indeed to suck his orange dry before he threw it away. He had gone to the city, not so much in compliance with Martin Dangerfield's request, as because he wished to prepare his own affairs for all possible contingencies. He had guessed from Dangerfield's troubled mien that he had derived through accident or direct communication from his son, an inkling of the truth, and he hastened to make all snug for the storm.

When Stephen arrived, he was informed that his father had retired, somewhat unwell, for the night, and he would not therefore disturb him. But when they met in the morning, he saw that the old man although affectionate was constrained, and he at once began to connect in his mind the unexplained mystery of six months ago with some impediment to the realization of his hopes with

Grace. His father made no allusion to the latter during breakfast, but remarked at its close that he wished his son to join him in the library in the evening. During the day Stephen again rode over to Uplands, and again did the lovers wander side by side through the old walks and favorite haunts which had witnessed the first buddings of that love which was to last for them always. But Stephen was oppressed with the suspicion of an evil which was to come.

Evening came, and the father and son sat facing each other in the library, the light of a pair of wax candles scarcely illuminating the large apartment. They were gazing on each other, as near relatives will who have been separated, to note the differences wrought by time and feeling since their last parting. The old man had failed not a little since Stephen left him in the autumn. His cheek was ashy in its hue, the thin grey locks were bleaching fast, and the dim eye which peered from under its pent of bristling white brows, seemed more deeply set than before. As for Stephen, travel had rather improved him,—at least so it appeared to the father's partial eye,—and so it had appeared to Grace.

Through the windows could be seen banks of black and drifting clouds through which the rays of the moon now and again would strive to peer; and the wind sighed mournfully through the shrubs and trees.

"You look more sturdy and manly every year, Stephen," said Martin Dangerfield, feebly, "more like my own father, as I remember him when a little child, than like me. God help me! I shall never see his hale and mellow old age boy—havn't lived the life, in truth, to deserve it."

"Nonsense, father," answered Stephen soothingly, "your life is better than most men's at sixty. You mope and shut yourself up too much. You must make a change—take more exercise—live more in the open air."

"Ay—ay—there's much in that, I own—but not all—not all.—Your grandfather and namesake kept the saddle ten

years beyond my present age, but"—with an effort to recal the quotation—

" 'In his youth he never did apply
Hot and rebellious liquors in his blood.'

You see I can quote Shakespeare still. Yet it is not abstinence or exercise alone that makes men live sound and long. It needs a sound clear heart, Stephen,—an unsullied conscience, which *my* father had,—and *your* father has not."

"Who shall say to the contrary? No one in the world but you, sir, I fancy. Who can say anything of wrong that lies at the door of a Dangerfield?"

"Three-score years," the old man went on, not noticing the question, if it were meant for one; "ten more would be the allotted span, but I shall never reach it. There should be grandchildren playing about my knees soon, my son, if I am ever to see them."

Stephen moved uneasily in his chair.

"I would you had them, father:—or any other comfort."

"The old Dangerfield name must not be allowed to die out, Stephen; I shouldn't rest in my grave if I thought it would. Promise me, my boy,—my son,—promise me that it shall not."

"Not if I can help it, sir," said the son, smiling.

"Ay, but that's it. You *can* help it; but, perhaps, you'll not be disposed."

"There is but one course that I know of, and I've expressed my willingness to take that course."

"There is my fear—we've all been such a stubborn race—that you will *not* take it."

"Surely, sir, you remember my letter, and why you have summoned me here?" said Stephen, in surprise, and beginning to think the old man's head was wandering.

"I remember everything, Stephen—everything. Sometimes I wish I could not—but 'tis part of the punishment, no doubt." He put his hand on his son's head and began

to smoothe down the hair as if he were a little child. "I remember when your dear mother died, and how she prayed and begged that your life might be a happy one—and how she made me promise to do all I could to make it so. And now—my son—my only son—Oh, Stephen, Stephen! my boy, my poor boy!" and he broke into a choking flood of grief.

That grief of an aged man which is so solemn and so awful—so piteously contrasting with the superficial passion of youth. Stephen gazed and listened in amazement and concern.

"Father! Father! What is it? What has happened to you? Speak! You'll tell Stephen; you'll tell your son all about this wretched trouble which is killing you?"

"But you won't believe," faltered forth the parent, "you won't believe, whatever happens, but that I loved you, and did all for the best?"

"No, no. Compose yourself, I entreat you. Perhaps talking distresses you just now. Shall we postpone—"

"No, no more repetitions. Let me say what is to be said, do what is to be done." He paused, made a strong effort to recover his self-command, and then went on in a dull, monotonous voice, like one reciting what he has learned by heart. "I wrote for you to come, because it was not well to write what I had to say. It would have been too long—you would have misconceived—in short, it would have been unwise."

"Go on, father; I listen."

"First, I must ask you—are you very much attached to this Miss—Vernon?"

"I love her better than my own life," said Stephen, simply.

A groan burst from the old man's lips, much as he strove to repress it. He resumed hastily, as if to distract attention from the expression of pain:—

"Men of your age fall in with many women they fancy. You are not a child to be led away by a pretty face; but there are others you might see whom you might prefer—at least—like as well?"

"Never. I have chosen. Once and for all."

"Don't speak so positively, Stephen. We all change our minds occasionally. Things unforeseen will occur sometimes. We cannot absolutely dictate our own future."

"Father, in God's name, what does all this mean?"

"It means—and since it must be told the sooner now the better—it means that *this marriage is impossible!*"

"How?"

"Your marriage with this young lady—Miss Vernon—is impossible!"

"Why?"

"It can never take place."

"Not take place?"

"Never."

The younger man paused a few moments, as if to realize the full meaning of what he heard, and then said mildly—

"I ask you, father, to tell me *why* this marriage cannot take place?"

"That I cannot do."

"Cannot or will not?"

"Both. Either would suffice."

"Is this another machination of that scoundrel, Kirkwood?"

"He knows nothing of it—at least to the best of my knowledge and belief. He could neither produce, change, nor modify this necessity."

"The necessity, you mean, for breaking off my engagement?"

"Even so."

Another pause longer than before. Then Stephen rose, and, coming straight in front of his father, again spoke, and this time his tones were full and firm:—

"Look, sir. You say your race is obstinate. I am a Dangerfield as well as you. You refuse to give reasons for an extraordinary prohibition, which sounds more like madness than sanity, and whose effect would be to poison my whole future life, and that of another which is yet

more dear. Very good. Let us understand each other. I shall disobey it."

"You dare not?"

"Why?"

The old man rose slowly, and with feeble and uncertain steps crossed the room, to a sombre-looking cabinet of oak. Then he drew a key from his pocket, and with careful but tremulous fingers unlocked one of its doors. This being opened, showed a space in which were various rolls of papers and parchments, and which was backed by a number of small drawers. One of these was then drawn forth, and a tiny panel removed, which covered the side of the aperture occupied by the drawer when in its place. From the space thus disclosed Martin Dangerfield extracted a sealed packet, and then turned to his son and responded—

"I will tell you why. But first," extending the packet, "read that."

Stephen mechanically read the superscription:

"To be opened by my son after my death."

"MARTIN DANGERFIELD."

"I had hoped," the old man went on in a low voice, "never to have even alluded to the contents of this paper in your presence while I lived. Fate—perhaps it were more reverent to say the hand of Providence—has willed it otherwise. Not that I mean to reveal what is here inclosed—you will know it soon enough. But I show it to you, that you may be more fully impressed with what I now tell you. Stephen Dangerfield—by my honor—by my mother's memory—by the God to whom I shall soon render strict account—I swear to you that if you knew what is here contained you would be as sure as I am that this marriage never can take place! Do you believe me?"

"Why not acquaint me with this secret, that I may judge?"

"Boy, boy!" cried the father passionately, "would you embitter the few poor days which are yet left to me? Can you not trust my honor—the honor of a Dangerfield?"

"We estimate obstacles differently, sir, at different ages,

and from different points of view. *This* may seem to you insuperable, to me easily surmounted."

"Alas! if there were room for doubt, you might cherish such a hope. Youth or age, strength or weakness, are powerless alike in a case like this. Neither one nor all can bring back the Past!"

"But they may atone it," cried Stephen eagerly; "why should a phantom of misdeed, or of mislike perchance, come groping back from the Past to ban the living, breathing happiness of the Present?"

"Man in years, but boy in knowledge," said his father, sadly, "not to know that it is only that which *cannot* be atoned which can never be forgotten—whose consequence can never be escaped, because the cause is inexpiable!"

"There is no such thing," said Stephen, "save in the imaginations which coined the old priest-dogmas of days gone by. There is repentance and atonement for every sin and for every sinner."

"Heaven send it may be so," answered the old man devoutly, "but that is between man and his Maker. I spoke more of human laws and of human customs."

"One word," said Stephen, as his father proceeded to replace the packet whence he took it. "One word—does your visitor—does this Mr. Kirkwood know of the secret contained in that packet?"

"I know your meaning, Stephen. I tell you his knowledge or his ignorance—his good or ill-will—would have no possible bearing on this issue as it concerns you and yours."

He re-locked the cabinet and resumed his seat.

"Now, mark me, my son. I know your nature, and know it may lead you to believe that an unreasonable obstruction—or one it will construe as such—ought to be over-ridden. Let us suppose you proceed to act upon such an assumption. Let us suppose you persist in your engagement. Shall I tell you the result? At the last moment, you will oblige me to take a position which will

force you to break it off, and which will cover our ancient name with ignominy and disgrace."

"You seem to think nothing of the dishonorable position *I* should occupy by breaking off this engagement, without the excuse of an assignable reason beyond a mere caprice," said Stephen bitterly.

"I do not forget it. But of two evils it were choosing the least. Or, rather, one course is possible, the other absolutely impossible. Remember, that had you acquainted me with your views at the outset, what I have now imparted would have been made known to you long before."

"I will reflect," said Stephen rising wearily, for he felt as if it must be that he were in a dream, and that he must go forth into the cool night air.

"Do so. Remember, I ask no promises, nor do I offer to put upon you any commands. You are a man—capable as another of judging for yourself—beyond the years of tutelage or control. I only tell you the simple truth and I ask you to put confidence in my honor. God knows how glad I should have been if all this were otherwise; how glad to aid, and sanction, and bless you in your choice. It is the sole wish left in my withered heart to see a Dangerfield climbing at my knee. Think then how hard it is for me to oppose your wishes, and upon such a subject! Do I not in so doing encounter the risk—perhaps the certainty, of baffling my own cherished hope?"

"You may yet be deceived," murmured Stephen gloomily.

"Do not think it! Do not hope it! It were cruelty in me to allow you to do either. Had I died without giving you this solemn warning before the mischief was irreparable, you would have cursed my memory for the omission."

He rang the bell as he spoke for a servant to assist him to his chamber.

"I can talk no more now. I am weak and faint—failing day by day. You will not have to wait long. Poor Stephen—poor boy! It is hard, I know—hard to bear—but you are young and strong—and your conscience is a clear one. God bless you—Good night."

He went up to his son and stooping kissed him on the forehead, but Stephen made no sign; and long after he had gone and the candles were extinguished, Stephen sat staring into the darkness, and trying to shape into form and coherence the confused and nameless phantoms which his imagination conjured up as part and parcel of the gloomy future.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

STEPHEN'S old vacillation was upon him. He had thought at first that he would immediately confer with Vernon and relate to him without reserve his interview with his father; but he paused, and as usual with him when he paused, he vacillated. Most of all, he feared some strange unthought of disgrace which might be hanging over his house; some buried and forgotten misdeed, perchance, which discussion might unearth, but which silence would leave in oblivion for ever. Yet, was he then to forego his love, to fly her presence without adieux or explanation? He felt that to be impossible. There remained one alternative,—that of regarding his father's prohibition,—his solemn warning,—as the mere fancy or caprice of a weak old man, whose brain was unsettled by the pressure of years and protracted illness.

When he rode up to the piazza at Uplands the next morning, his brain and heart filled with flickering and uncertain purposes, he could have embraced honest David Greenwood for relieving his embarrassment on at least one horn of his dilemma.

"Squire Vernon's goin' to be dreadful busy agin," said Uncle Dave. "The delegation folks have come, and they're beginnin' to worry about the election and platforms and caucussin' and all the rest on't. He hez to spring to't allers when he consents to stand."

"The place is looking very lovely again, David," said

Stephen, with a sigh of relief, as he dismounted, "but I suppose you've had a bleak time of it in the winter while I've been away in the sunny South?"

"Bless you, sir, it's never what you may call bleak here. To be sure, we're kinder set high up, but there's so many trees round, and most on 'em of the evergreen sort, that here at the house it's as snug as can be. But you know how it is at The Rest."

"I've scarcely passed a winter there since I was a child,—and I took little heed of the seasons then,—except so far as they marked the times for fruits and nuts and kites and skating to come round."

"Pity you hev been away so much, Mr. Stephen," said David, respectfully. "It's only a poor man need be reminded of the rollin' stone, may be;—but there's most allers them that comes and gathers the moss in the nest which the rich ones leave—and sometimes carries away the nest itself."

"What do you mean, David?" asked Stephen sharply. "What do you mean?"

"You won't feel bad at anything *I* say, sir," answered David, leaning carelessly against Black Vixen's stalwart shoulder and stroking down her mane. "I'm only afeard that ere gentleman who's stayed so much at The Rest ain't there for no good. You know, sir, servants and folks who stay all their lives round a place get to have a kind of instinct like the dumb critters as to what means harm and what good that comes nigh 'em."

"You think our people dislike Mr. Kirkwood?"

"They *know* he don't mean the master nor his son any good; for all he's very good-natered to 'em, and often gives 'em money and all that. You can allus profit by such things, sir. You can tell of a comin' storm by the cattle, and a pinter's nose is sharper than a human's for the trail of a partridge. I wanted to kinder warn you before; but I hain't got no call gen'rally to be officious. I b'lieve in folks mindin' their own business, tho' we Yankees are called inquisitive. But I wish you'd talk to the little gal—I mean little Miss Ally, sir."

"Miss Ally! why, what does she know about the matter?"

"P'raps jest nothing at all—and agin, p'raps a good deal. She's got a head of her own, and she's shy about talking of anything but her play and such things. But one day I see her in the lane that leads down through our wood, facin' over agin Shooter's Jutty—and he came on the other side of the fence and spoke to the child. I was too fur off to hear what he said even if I'd had a mind, but I jest kept behind the trees to see little Miss come away safe. When she did come, it was very slow and thoughtful like—queer for a little lady like that."

"And you think there's some connexion between this mysterious interview and the gentleman's evil designs at The Rest?" queried Stephen, smiling.

"I don't know nuthin' about that. I only tell you the fact, sir, which hain't been told to nobody else. You can judge for yourself as to the meanin' on't. It's my notion tho' that no such man's that ever puts out his hand without the idee of strikin' somethin' with it. Shall I hev' the saddle taken off the mare, sir?"

"No—yes—" said Stephen abstractedly. "Perhaps it will be best. Many thanks for your advice, David, and for your information. It may be of use some day," and he walked slowly and thoughtfully into the house.

"Dear Grace!"

"Dear Stephen!"

She had been sitting at the piano-forte running half unconsciously over the airs which Elinor used to love so well. Her lover had caught the concluding bars of the last one. It was that which Cuthbert Boynton used so often to ask for, and which he had alluded to during Stephen's visit to his plantation—calling it with a mournful pleasantry the requiem of his lost love. No wonder poor Stephen did not like the augury.

"You look sad this morning, Stephen."

"I shall not, long, in your presence, love."

Indeed, who could? Grace was becoming more matured by the tiny degrees so charming to those who have watched the development of beautiful girls, and with her snowy morning frock and sunny smile she looked the very ideal of a new Goddess—half Hebe, half Venus—who should intoxicate with equal inspirations of mirth and love.

"What do you think I've got, sir?"

"How can I guess? A philtre perhaps to make all fall in love who come in contact with you? I shall object to that."

"Something better—something I really wanted—not what I can do without, you saucy fellow;—see!" and she held up a letter.

"A letter—and from whom?"

"From the dearest, best, purest, most obstinate girl in Christendom!"

"An odd description truly. You mean ——"

"Who should I mean but darling Nelly!"

"I was so selfish not to have asked for her last night. We all knew of her absence, but not the why or wherefore."

"I didn't quite like to write about that. You would scarcely have understood without so long an explanation; and I couldn't bear any one we love to think slightly of her."

"Slightly of one like Miss Grazebrook? Impossible."

"Oh, you men are so odd. You find it so hard to comprehend all the crooks and crannies of a woman's heart—and it's always so much easier to censure than to praise."

"She hasn't committed a murder, I suppose," laughed Stephen, "and that's about the only thing I can think of which would shake my esteem."

"Not so bad as that—but—in strict confidence, mind!"

"In strict confidence ——"

"She's gone on the Stage!"

"Gone on the Stage? In Heaven's name what for?"

"What for? Why, to act, to be sure."

"Miss Grazebrook become an actress."

"Yes. It's not disgraceful."

"Not disgraceful, certainly, if dictated by necessity—but she—"

"She thought it necessary in her case. You know how fastidious and sensitive she is in all her notions. She believed it to be her duty."

"And was it for this that she rejected poor Boynton?"

"Indeed not; and it distressed her very much that he might think so."

"He can think nothing about it—at least so far. I feel quite sure he is, or was when I left him, ignorant of the fact."

"And where did you leave him?"

"In New York—at the Clarendon. We came up from Charleston together."

"And do you think that he—he cares for her as much as ever?"

"I believe that he is madly in love with her; that he loves her *almost* as dearly as I love some one else you know of."

"I'm so glad you think so."

"Why?"

"Because I'm equally certain that she truly loves him."

"Loves him? Then why for Heaven's sake should she reject him—and that merely to indulge in such a wild freak as going on the stage?"

"That's so like a man. I've told you already, silly fellow, that that was not her motive."

"Perhaps you'll tell me now, then, what *was* her motive?"

"I'm not quite sure, Stephen, but that might be a breach of confidence," said Grace seriously. "Do you know how long he stays in New York?"

"He was to go to Boston for a day or two, and then return. We are to meet again at the hotel—but how long he'll remain I don't know. I suspect he'll scarcely go South again without trying to see or hear from *her*."

"And I'm quite sure he won't—if what you tell me of his

feelings be true. Therefore, what you ask me he had better learn from Elinor herself."

"But will she see him, think you?"

"I should scarcely think she would refuse." Grace paused a little and reflected. "Do you know what I'm thinking about?"

Stephen smiled.

"Your thought is much the same as mine, I fancy."

"Mine is of how much I should like to bring this loving pair together; is that yours?"

"Precisely."

"Good. But it must be very delicately managed. I shall write a very careful letter to Nelly, letting her know that he has come North; and you shall write a very careful letter to Mr. Boynton, telling him where she is."

"Agreed."

"And now wait until I fetch my hat and shawl, that we may take a walk, and arrange particulars."

So they wandered about the well known walks and paths, noting each favorite shrub and tree, gazing on each lovely view, all sanctified and precious as entwined into the history of their own love, and plotting their affectionate conspiracy, that others might share the bliss themselves had found so sweet. And Grace told Stephen much of which he was previously in ignorance regarding the sad incidents of poor Elinor's life, and its many sorrows. Yet, although Stephen listened with an eager ear, and built much at first on obtaining through the details of Kirkwood's strange relations with the inmates of Uplands, a clue to his connexion with his father, the reader need not be told that the knowledge thus gained only left that connexion as clouded and mysterious as before.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE stately natural wall called the Palisades, which rises on the west bank of the Hudson, commences to appearance at a point about ten miles above the space where that river debouches into the noble estuary of New York Harbor. We say "to appearance" in view of the fact that geologists find a continuation of the Palisades in the heights of Staten Island, and even trace them further south into the Jersey hills. Towering to a height of some four hundred feet above the level of the stream, it stretches away northwards, maintaining an almost even altitude for many miles beyond. The crest is all but unbroken, for the imperious crags which support it yield scanty outlet for water-courses, and the drainage of the back country is therefore driven westward, to mingle with the waters of the Hackensack. The cross section of this vast wall generally exhibits a sheer perpendicular for a great part of its height, which appears as if it would be quite parallel with a plummet—which perpendicular is then met by a line running straight to the river, at an apparent angle of forty-five degrees to its surface. This latter is the crumbling—the *talus* from the face of the precipice, which, in the course of ages, has slid down towards the stream. We have intimated that this transverse figure is almost uniform, and indeed there are few exceptions; one, however, existed at the time of which we write, which was situated at about a mile from Uplands, and in the direction of Dangerfield's Rest.

Here there occurred a small indentation in the shore, which, viewed in connexion with a corresponding rift or fissure in the cliff above, seemed to indicate that the waters of a creek might at some time have made their way through to the river. There was no other trace of such a thing than was suggested by this conformation, except perhaps that the crest on the north side projected outwards towards the stream, overreaching in truth the accumulations at its

base. Seen from above, this projection constituted a triangular piece of ground, its sharpened apex pointing boldly eastward over the flood below. It was covered with turf, flecked with many rocky outcrops, and it sustained a straggling growth of dwarfed evergreens. The spot was considered dangerous, and a strong fence ran along in such a manner as to form what might be called the base of the triangle, although well inward from the edge of the precipice, from whence sprung its northern limb. This line of fence was met by another, at a right angle, which guarded the ravine, and effectually protected stray cattle or unguarded passengers from the critical ground beyond. There were rather thick woods, both on the side of Uplands and that of Dangerfield's Rest, however, which made it rather improbable that any such risk should arise. This space—valueless save for the picturesque addition it made to the view from below and from the wood on the Uplands boundary—was known to the country round as "Shooter's Jutty."

Perhaps it had been a favorite haunt years gone by for the fowler when the unchecked barbarism which hates game laws as "aristocratic," had not yet succeeded in substituting the more democratic extermination which is the logical consequent of their absence. Be that as it may, the place presented attractions some time back for one of our dramatis personæ—for no other, in fact, than Mr. James Kirkwood.

Kirkwood had an exquisite instinct for things mysterious and hidden—for places unfrequented and solitary. He had found his account many a time in the cultivation of such, and he was not long at The Rest before he made the acquaintance of Shooter's Jutty. He questioned the people at the village—not at the mansion—asking in his careless way what was thought of the spot, and receiving solemn warning as to its insecurity and utter avoidance by all prudent and sensible folks in consequence. These intimations afforded him much gratification, suggesting as they did the safety and isolation of a place environed by

such terrors, and its peculiar fitness for an object which he had in view. As for danger he laughed at it. Many a mountain-road had he traversed in the saddle where the plunging cañon a thousand feet below threatened to engulf the giddy head or the stumbling foot which caused the slightest blunder in the narrow causeway. Many a steep had he thundered down at a half gallop, like those of Downieville and Goodyear's Bar, where his clear, hard brain had instructed him that, as in battle, the most courageous course was also the safest one. The idea of danger to a cool head and a steady foot at such a place as Shooter's Jutty was simply absurd—but then it might be very useful.

And he was quite right. For, when he tried the experiment, after a cautious reconnoissance whereby he satisfied himself that no one marked or dogged his steps, he found the place as firm and steady to his tread as adamant. He lay there a whole afternoon in the shade of the pines, smoking and delectating himself with the superior view which his position afforded of both up and down the river.

Upon his second visit—which was in the grey of evening—Mr. Kirkwood carried under his cloak a long flat metallic box, which, with the aid of a heavy bowie knife—an old and favorite companion—and a small gardener's trowel, he proceeded to deposit in the earth at a point near the end of the Jutty. This he accomplished with great dexterity, arranging the surface of the ground afterward with artistic finish and naturalness.

On the occasion of his third visit, Kirkwood made some additions to his store, selecting this time rather an earlier hour than before. This was an error, especially when it is considered to have been dictated by no worthier motive than that of being able to sit *ad libitum* over his wine after dinner. From such trifling causes will oftenest spring great results. He flattered himself that his stealthy procedures had been unobserved, and in the two first instances he was not deceived; not so in respect to the third, for this time he had a spectator if not an audience. This was on

the day when David Greenwood had seen him speaking with the child, Alabama.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A WEEK had passed since Stephen's return. Kirkwood still tarried in New York, much to the satisfaction of both the gentlemen at The Rest, whose lives glided on with a placidity which would have included content, but for the gnawing presentiments of evil which were cankering the hearts of each. The younger man had gladly availed of the excuse for deferring his confidence, which was furnished by Vernon's absorption in political cares; while the elder was happy in the suspension of strife, and the temporary immunity from menace, let them be due to what cause they might. Yet both were well aware that this was but the deceitful quiet which heralded the approach of the inevitable tempest.

Stephen spent much time at Uplands. The last hours of his love—if last they were to prove—should be like those last notes of the swan, which are said to be its sweetest ones. He had not breathed a syllable to Grace of the cloud which was gathering over their future, and she had rallied him at times on his dejection without suspecting its cause. She had spoken of her desire to see his father—of how, in Stephen's absence, she had thought it her duty to do so—and how her own papa had counselled delay until the return of her affianced. But the latter looked very grave, and spoke of his father's illness, and his unfitness just now to receive visitors, so that although the girl wondered, her delicacy would not permit her to dwell on the subject, and it was therefore abandoned.

One day Stephen had a *tête-à-tête* with little Alabama. Vernon had a great deal of correspondence, and Grace, as often happened, was pressed into his service as amanuensis.

Our hero bethought him of the information he had derived from David Greenwood, and that this was a favorable opportunity for its corroboration and extension. He therefore took the child for a walk, and managed that it should be in the direction of Shooter's Jutty. As they sauntered on, he listened to her artless prattle, and watched his opportunity to introduce the subject of his thoughts. Stephen, like most men of manly natures, was fond of children, and his interest in this one was enhanced by his knowledge of Grace's attachment for her, and of the melancholy and romantic circumstances of her birth and parentage.

"So, Ally dear, you like the walks in this direction?"

"Very much. Only Papa Vernon does not like me to come this way alone—not even with sister Grace—for some good reason, I'm sure."

"And you always do as he wishes?"

The child hesitated.

"Almost always. Once I came a long way over here, picking berries and flowers. I didn't know I was so far. When I thought of it, I meant to go straight back."

"And you did so, eh?"

Another pause.

"Not directly—I was prevented for a little."

"By what? more berries and flowers further on?"

"Oh! no. I wouldn't have stopped for them. A gentleman stopped me."

"Some one visiting at the house, I suppose?"

"No; not at *our* house."

"A stranger, then?"

"He didn't seem quite a stranger," said the child thoughtfully. "I thought I had seen him before."

"And he spoke to you?"

"Yes. I was frightened at first, he was so tall and dark-looking—taller than you, and with very black eyes. But his voice was soft, and he lifted me up in his arms, and kissed my forehead, and I knew then he wouldn't hurt me."

"And what did he say?"

"He asked my name, and I told him 'Ally.' Then he said, 'That stands for Alice, I suppose,' and I answered, 'No—for Alabama.' 'That's a queer name,' he said, smiling, and I told him it was not queer, that my *old* papa had given it to me, because it was the name of his State—the State he was born in. And he asked, 'Where is your old papa?' and I answered that he was gone away, never to come back, and that Mr. Vernon was my papa now. Then he cried."

"Cried!"

"Yes; wet fell on my face, and I looked up and saw he was crying."

"That was strange, wasn't it?"

"No; not strange. He told me why it was. He had lost a little girl, who would have been just my age now, and the thought of her made him cry."

"Oh! I see. That was quite natural."

The two walked on some time in silence. Stephen was thinking—as we all are apt to think on such occasions—"Can this man be wholly bad?" and arriving at that conclusion which experience ever teaches, that, even in the darkest of human souls shall be found some redeeming glimmer—however faint though it be—to grow in time to extinguish evil, and assert immortality; for who shall say in these latter days that any good can ever die? None, let us hope and trust; at least none who believe in immortality itself.

"And that was all?" asked Stephen at last, in a softened voice.

"That was all he said."

"And you never saw him before—never have seen him since?"

"That was the only day I've ever seen him, that I know."

There was a little childish duplicity in this. The truth was, that Ally had wandered into the woods, and had caught sight of Kirkwood when he was busied among the bushes on the Jutty, when he paid his third visit to that

perilous locality. The child's curiosity had been excited, and she had watched all his procedures while he remained on the point. As it was slightly higher than the ground whereon she stood, she was unable to determine precisely what he did; but she felt sure he either took something from the earth, or placed something in it. When he left the spot, she had withdrawn from the wood; and it was when she emerged into the open, near the lane alluded to by David Greenwood, that Kirkwood caught sight of her, and imagined she had been simply approaching from the direction of Uplands. All this Ally had imparted to Grace, who, after grave consideration, had told the child not to speak of it to any one else. Of course that portion which related to her interview with Kirkwood, she need not deny or try to conceal, as it seemed probable from her account that David Greenwood, who joined and took charge of her immediately afterwards, might have witnessed it; but of what she saw occur on the Jutty, she must say not a word.

Grace's policy was dictated by the simplest of feminine considerations. She had been accustomed to hear the Jutty pronounced a most dangerous place to venture upon. If Stephen Dangerfield were apprised of the incident he would as certainly attempt to penetrate the mystery by going there: so that it was best, at least for the present, that he should know nothing about it. Hence her instructions to the child, which were coupled with such information as to their wisdom and propriety as would serve to shield her tender conscience from the soil of a needless deceit. And so Grace determined—knowing as she did, that she could count on Ally's reticence—to keep the secret locked in their own hearts until it might be judicious or safe to employ it for any useful purpose hereafter.

CHAPTER XL.

A RAW spring day. The blustering wind roared through the streets, which were ankle-deep with mud and half-melted snow. Elinor had come in from rehearsal with wet feet, and Mrs. Maberly had forced her to sit by the fire in the little sitting-room, while she herself went forth to do some necessary shopping for the evening's toilette. And, in truth, Elinor was not sorry to be alone for a time, for she had weighty responsibility that night. She hastily changed her *chaussure* and wet skirts, and now sat in front of the little grate absorbed in the study of *Virginia*. For the great Mr. Bellow had come to P—for positively six nights only, and was to appear to-night as the energetic Roman Father; and he had objected strenuously,—albeit he gallantly refrained from expressing his true reasons—to the matured style and somewhat exuberant person of Miss Adeline de Vere to illustrate the shrinking chey-l-d, whose wrongs he was to avenge. "Twere most unwise, my dear," he assured that dubious and rather belligerent *artiste*, "to sacrifice your position in a mere walking lady like *Virginia*, when you have to act *Lady Macbeth* and *Mrs. Haller* on the two nights succeeding. The young lady can get through the part—not, of course, with your finish and artistic vigor—which afterward in contrast with her feeble style and amateurish manner will 'stick fiery-off indeed.'" Miss de Vere was inclined to grumble, but Mugford assured her with secret and vindictive threats that Bellow must be propitiated in view of his own metropolitan designs. Then she appealed to Grinder, but that gentleman insisted that he could not interfere, much as he desired it, with the stage-manager's business. Whereupon Miss de Vere, although somewhat ruffled, inasmuch as her choice in characters was invariably in the precise inverse ratio of her suitability for them, made a merit of necessity, and coolly informed Elinor that her good fortune in being cast for *Virginia* was exclusively owing to her own inter-

cession with Mugford and the great tragedian, whom she had difficulty in persuading to leave her out of the piece that Elinor might have so fine an opportunity for distinction.

Elinor was thinner and paler than when we saw her last. Late hours and hard work had had their effect on a constitution which, although elastic and vigorous, was by no means robust. But her dark eyes and her golden hair were as beautiful as ever, and her complexion almost as radiant. Nor was the symmetry of her rounded bust impaired, although the plain dress of dark stuff did little to set forth its perfections; and, as she sat leaning back in her chair eagerly conning the words with the slight sympathetic tremor of the person which accompanies that of the lips with people who learn much by rote, the same tiny, dainty, arching foot could be seen we first admired on board the *Assyria*.

Elinor was, indeed, passing through a season of sore trial. She had calculated in advance what she would have to go through, but as with most of us in worldly affairs, there had been some things unforeseen left out of her calculation. She had measured steadily the hard, exacting toil she was expected to face and grapple; and her heart did not fail her, for she felt equal to the task. She had contemplated and prepared herself for the deprivation of the suitable and congenial society to which she had so long been accustomed; and consoled herself in the belief that her intellectual needs would be filled and absorbed by study and ambition. She had even anticipated and steeled herself against the probable contempt of some of the coarse-minded and hard-hearted ones who were of the circles she had quitted, and who might stumble across her path in her new career. If she was not necessary to them they were not necessary to her.

But she was not quite prepared for the narrow and sordid associations—the miserable petty jealousies and cabals—the wearisome, exaggerated manners—all which were characteristic of most of the dwellers in the little

world she had entered. She did not know in her innocence, that the very appreciation of her superior education and breeding would bring her persecution and annoyance from the small natures whose worst qualities are nourished by the peculiarities of the lives they lead, and of which the most conspicuous is hatred of any species of superiority they cannot hope to equal or excel. It is true that this hard lesson is to be learned on other stages besides those of small provincial theatres; but in the latter it is pronounced and intensified by the constant recurrence of appeals to the smallest of meannesses—the most contemptible of vanities.

The men—with some exceptions—were constantly annoying her with sickening under-bred compliments, and endeavoring to establish a footing of easy familiarity which Elinor found it quite impossible not to repel—so provoking their ill-feeling by piquing their self-love. The women, lavish in affection and proffered intimacy, each labored to set her against all the others, and naturally resented the cool civility with which poor Elinor thought after a time to avoid entangling alliances, and so diminish the chances of war. Both sexes, possessing greater experience of the Stage, had constantly recurring opportunities of avenging themselves on the new-comer for what they regarded as the slights she had put upon them, and which they characterized, in general, as “putting on airs.”

Nor was it the regular company alone which contributed to the sum of Elinor's griefs and annoyances. There came in due course to the P— Lyceum a succession of “stars—” persons who, with some worthy exceptions, were more vulgar, more exaggerated, and more under-bred than those “ladies and gentlemen” themselves. This was at a time when “character” acting was more especially in vogue. There came numbers of Irish, Yankee, Ethiopian, nay, even Dutch “comedians.” Generally people of no education, who had achieved ephemeral success through the rapidly deteriorating character of dramatic audiences, they were presumptuous, inflated, and exacting. All brought numbers of trashy plays, wherein their own parts were always

conspicuous at the expense of every other, and which entailed constant and ill-requited study on the unhappy "stock." From Elinor's position she had her full share of these delights, many of her rôles being those of fine ladies, supposed to be about forty, who served as foils to the artless, gushing heroines of the female "Star," who in reality exceeded that age. Then it was necessary to be extremely perfect, although the study was often what is called "from night to night." For the "Stars," knowing well their own babble from constant repetition, by no means tolerated any deficiency of the text from the beasts of burden who supported them.

True, Radcliffe had been of great service to her. As we have seen, he fully comprehended her anomalous position, and his knowledge of the world and of the profession taught him exactly what Elinor had to expect in the circumstances wherein she was placed. He warned, advised, and consoled her. Occasionally he would remonstrate with Mugford about imposing upon her too much study. Now and then he would break out at rehearsal and insist that some manifest unfairness toward her in the business of the scene should be corrected or modified. And, although his own position was not of the most important, and his habits rather weakened his influence in the theatre, there was yet a dignity in his bearing, and an undeniable savor of breeding and command in his manner which carried a weight, when he chose, such as few liked to oppose or defy.

But in the frequent intervals of his absence from the Lyceum, Elinor was deprived of even this support; and resolute as she was to go through with her self-appointed task, she passed many miserable hours, which all the kindness and sympathy of Mrs. Maberly did not altogether redeem. That worthy lady, perhaps, viewed with secret satisfaction the *desagrémens* which might tend to disgust Elinor with the Stage, for affectionate and truly attached to her niece as she was, she certainly did not try to color its mortifications with roses, or to paint the grovelling little-

ness of so many of its disciples with an extenuating pencil.

A knock came suddenly at the door.

From Elinor's frame of mind, and from the task before her, it might have been supposed she would hear the forerunner of intrusion with annoyance if not with dismay. But it was not so. The sound impressed her with a conviction of approaching struggle. She laid down her book, summoned her self-possession, and commenced to buckle on her mental and moral armor for the conflict. There was just a thought that she might be in error. Just a thought that it might be a message from the manager to ask her to go on for Miss Simpkins's dozen lines in the farce, that lady having been taken suddenly ill. But the thought was directly dismissed. You smile who have no belief in the reality of prescience; wait yet a little; for the coming generation may be wiser. It was the landlady, Mrs. Dawkins:—

"A gentleman, Miss."

"You told him I was very busy, Mrs. Dawkins?"

"And couldn't be disturbed. He says it's only for a few moments."

"Some one from the Lyceum?"

"No one I ever see before."

"And sent in no name?"

"He said there's no need, Miss: he *must* see you."

Elinor gave a deep sigh. She knew an imperative Will was approaching—one to which she should be forced to give combat. A sad but musical voice spoke in the passage:

"I know Miss Grey will excuse me, madam. I'll not detain her long."

Then a step coming up the stairs, nearer and nearer, and passing Mrs. Hopkins on the threshold, appeared—Cuthbert Boynton. The Landlady went out and closed the door. Elinor rose as her visitor advanced into the room.

"Is this fair?"

"Forgive me—don't be vexed. I couldn't pass through the town and not see you—see you if only for a moment. I'll not distress—or trouble you in any way. Don't be ungracious or unkind to me."

Elinor saw that he looked pale and ill, and she motioned him to sit. He did so at a distance, and she resumed her chair, waiting for a few moments as if for him to proceed. But he remained quite silent, only never withdrawing his eyes from her face. This grew embarrassing, and presently she spoke:—

"Have you been long in the North?"

"Only a few days. I was on my way to Boston—to meet a friend expected by the English steamer. I was not quite well, and remained over on Saturday. In the evening I strolled into the theatre here and saw—Miss Ellen Grey."

Elinor flushed a little. "There is nothing derogatory in that."

"Not in itself, perhaps. Tastes and opinions differ. But you will not wonder that I was greatly shocked. I knew you were absent. Eliot heard so from Dangerfield, but did not, if he knew it, name the cause:—I was greatly shocked."

"And is it this that you have come to tell me?" asked the girl, coldly.

"I scarcely know why I came, except that I could not have remained away. For heaven's sake do not be so hard. Surely my coming cannot do you harm."

"Nor good, I fear," said Elinor, half abstractedly.

"Why say that? Why say a thing so unkind even if you think it—feel it? Was it a crime in me to love you? A sin to do what I could not help then,—cannot help now?"

"This must cease," said Elinor, rising abruptly.

"It shall," he cried eagerly, "only give me a moment. I beg—nay, even demand it!"

"By what right?"

"The right of a pure, honest love bestowed by a full

heart and a faithful one; rejected by a bitter and unkind one; and which only seeks the poor satisfaction to know the true reason of that rejection!"

"I thought all was understood between us," said Elinor mournfully.

"This at least is not."

"Let it be, then. Go on. I listen."

"Cruel, cruel always. Oh! Elinor, Elinor! Is it for this life of wretched mummery, this pitiful ambition, that you could give up one who loved you so dearly, who loves you even now better than living mortal ever can?"

"You forget yourself, sir," she said haughtily. "How can you justly criticise my actions, or call in question my motives?"

"I would not do so. But how explain? You declared your heart was your own. You have quitted an affluent and honorable home. You knew that with consent of mine you could never do what you are doing. Is it unreasonable to draw an inference which seems so obvious?"

"Perhaps not," she replied, more calmly. "Perhaps not—for *you*. I can understand how one bred as you have been—surrounded from birth by such influences as you have been—should find it difficult to comprehend the possibility of another giving up dear friends, loved home, the hope of a happy future; not for a pitiful ambition, as you call it, but for the simple conviction of self-respect—the prompting of inflexible duty."

"A duty to place yourself in such a position! but I will not cavil at terms. You did not reject me for the sake of embarking in this strange career, then?"

"I did not."

"Oh! Elinor! That at least is a consolation. And you are still heart-whole? Do not answer! I know, know in my inmost soul that you are. It is impossible for a love like mine to be utterly unrequited! Now, you may say a word—one little word—to prove I am not wholly blinded and deceived. Only a word; pray, pray, be candid with me!"

"Do you remember the last word I ever spoke to you, before you came here to-day?"

The young man's face fell.

"Alas! too well," he murmured.

"You ask me to be candid with you," she went on, while her face grew marble white, "and I will. The more perhaps that I underrated the strength of your attachment, and so may have done you an unwitting wrong. And if I ask you to remember that word, it is because it is one which should not be forgotten in connexion with what I am about to say."

She paused, as if to collect herself, and drew her hand across her brow.

"Go on," he said, softly.

"You ask me to be candid with you," she repeated, slowly, "and I will." Then rising suddenly, she said, firmly: "Cuthbert Boynton, I love you as I never have, and never again shall, love man—and yet I cannot be your wife!"

He threw himself at her feet, and covered her hands with passionate kisses.

"Elinor, Elinor, Elinor! what happiness and what misery! You must not, you shall not, you *dare* not say it! Look, Elinor. I have nothing in the world to love but you; neither father, nor mother, nor sister. All these long weary months I have thought of nothing but you. I *can* think of nothing but you! Have you the right to crush the happiness of a whole life? To impair its usefulness, to embitter its memories, to send it forth on the world, wrecked, and ruined, and alone? Is this the duty that you speak of? Think you it is a duty that God, who made us, will smile on and approve? No, no, no! It is impossible that he should!" And with the height and intensity of his emotion the strong man sobbed aloud.

Elinor withdrew her hands to cover her face.

"Poor Cuthbert," she said in a soft and gentle voice, which yet trembled as showing how difficult it was to keep from sharing in his audible sorrow. "Poor Cuthbert!

Heaven help me. I did not think it would have been so hard with him."

He caught her hand again.

"Ah! you pity me. You say 'poor Cuthbert;' you never used that name before, and your voice sounds more human than it has to-day. It says that you relent, though its words may not. Say that you do, oh! my love! dear Elinor, *my* Elinor!" And his arm stole round her slender waist.

She disengaged herself hastily, and went to the other side of the room.

"Cuthbert, Cuthbert! let this parting be friendly, at all events."

"Parting? I tell you I will not listen to it! There is some obstacle, I know, which your woman's nature exaggerates—it shall be removed. Do you think I will be stopped by obstacles? You should know me better. Some one's consent has to be obtained? I will obtain it. Whoever it may be, he *shall* consent. Something in your family history, at which your soul revolts, and which you would fain conceal, and believe in your scrupulous pride it should fetter your choice? I know enough—all of it—and there is nothing which should part us—nothing which *shall* part us!"

"Yes; one thing—"

"One thing which—"

"Which will part us for ever."

"And that is—"

"SLAVERY!"

He started back transfixed with astonishment.

"Good Heavens! Do I hear aright! Is it possible that you can be so mad—so fanatical?"

"You think me so; perhaps most would agree with you."

"I should think so. But opinions may differ. We should not quarrel there. I, too, think Slavery an evil. But it exists. By going where it is, you could mitigate the wrong, at least so far as your conscience and means

might permit. *I* did not create the evil. It was my misfortune, perhaps, but not my fault to have been born where it prevails. Would you punish me for that?"

"I would punish no one, but bless all I can," she answered solemnly. "I am no casuist. I cannot with my woman's intellect enter into all the subtle distinctions of the question. But I can recognise the broad distinctions, which are not subtle at all, between right and wrong. I can see that this Right and Wrong are drawing year by year, and day by day, to the point where comes the death-struggle for supremacy of the one, destruction for the other. Shall I, though the least of my country-women, throw my life, my love, any little weight or influence I have or may possess, into the scale of the Wrong? Not for life's, not even for love's sake."

"And is this all?" he asked, with a shade of incredulity in his tone.

"No, not all. That is but a general view. There is a personal one which may strike you more forcibly. It is common to say that Slavery only harms those, masters or serfs, among whom it exists. There is much to be said of that; much of the crying disgrace to our whole nation abroad, the weakening of moral obligations, the truckling to the slave-power of parties—but these are public topics for men to discuss and settle. I have a private one which I have a right—which it is my duty to consider, as bearing on and directing my private action."

"I cannot understand you."

"You will do so. It is but right you should, though it costs me much to enlighten you. You have said you knew somewhat of my family history. What you do *not* know I will tell you, and briefly. A man—a treacherous villain who yet holds his head erect, and walks among honorable men—came, while I was almost a child, into our family circle. He was born, bred, educated among Slaveholders. He was steeped in their habits of life, their modes of thought, their chivalrous notions of honor. He was even said to have owed his existence to one of the abuses which

grows out of their system. To him I owe it that my father went down to a drunkard's grave. To him I owe it that my mother became—what I cannot name. To him I owe it that I have been thrust by force of those stigmas from social position, to lead a life which you evidently think that of an outcast. Do you wonder at my prejudice?"

"I think it overstrained. This man's crime does not implicate me—I was no sharer in it."

"No—Heaven forbid. But that he was capable of such a crime was the direct result of his birth and breeding in social conditions wherein you also were born and educated."

"And for his offence you would therefore punish me?"

"I would not choose to do so; but I would not ally myself to a system which brings forth such offences."

"Yet, had such a bitter experience never befallen——"

"My resolution would be the same. I told you this but as a lower and personal motive which gave strength to, but did not create, convictions springing from higher and broader ones."

"But still," the young man went on, more steadily, and for the moment almost losing sight of his passion in the contemplation of what struck him as so strange a barrier to its gratification. "But still, how absurd—pardon me—how quixotic, to strain private actions into accordance with such generalities. Grant there be a wrong; what can an individual effect by precept or example against a gigantic system?"

"If all acted on that principle, when would the wrong be abated?"

Cuthbert shook his head despairingly. "Enough for me that I am to be one of its victims. I will not affront you with further solicitations; I will not suppose your resolution can be altered; but if some great grief or trouble should come upon you—if there be no other to assist—to counsel—will you—"

"I understand; thanks; I will."

"God bless you, then, and—*Farewell.*"

And a second time he was gone.

Elinor was letter perfect in *Virginia* that night; but it is to be feared that she thought more of her lost love than of *Icilius*. She felt, indeed, as the great conqueror may have felt when he played his last card—when he ordered that last sublime charge of his imperial cohorts on which hung the fate of Europe, and which sealed his own for ever.

CHAPTER XLI.

THERE was a grand party at the Von Donks'. Not a very select one, it must be acknowledged; but candidates' parties at election time seldom are, and that of the Von Donks was not likely to be an exception. There were, indeed, not a few who seldom find themselves within the sacred precincts of the Fifth Avenue save on such occasions as these, when the majesty of the people is about to be vindicated. As usual, the exceptional privilege was not grudgingly enjoyed. Mrs. General was condemned to witness in silent horror her breakfast-room *à la renaissance* turned into a sort of branch Hook and Cuff's, and the conservatory in the rear metamorphosed into a miniature City Hall. The immaculate carpets of the drawing-rooms were pressed by the brogans of the followers of McSwindle, and the boudoir of Violetta and Zerlina was invaded by the whilome denizens of the Pewter Mug. Something of a Celtic aroma flavored the entire atmosphere, and the counteracting agencies of verbena and jasmine were invoked in vain against the subtle yet overwhelming bouquet of whiskey and onions.

There were delegates representing many interests and many classes:—for although it was not in this district that the election was to come off, yet, as sometimes happens, more propitiatory and tributary capital was to be worked up in the metropolis than in the district itself. Thus there were divers rising young traders, junior partners generally,

and known in the firm as "our Mr. So and So." The firm has a large connexion with smaller dealers in the contested district, and the junior partners are to be fascinated by Violetta and Zerlina. There were various city and county officials—beetle-browed men, mostly, with red faces, white eyes, and moustaches dyed jet black; also with that peculiar defiant look the Milesian physiognomy is prone to adopt when its owner finds himself in better company or better clothes than he was formerly accustomed to. There were a few rather objectionable characters (strong adherents of the party), in the shape of proprietors of lottery offices and concert saloons; and there was a heavy detachment of rather dirty people "connected with the press."

There were also scattered here and there a few professional persons of more breeding and culture than those already described, and who therefore possessed less political weight or influence, but whose presence Mrs. General manoeuvred to secure, from a sagacious conviction that something was needed to leaven the otherwise intolerable mass. These gentry were content enough with the Von Donk dinners and wines, and were willing to patronize them on the tacit understanding that no social reciprocity was expected or implied. Furthermore, there was a stray Congressman very much bored—an attorney infamous as being the tool of a well known city editor, and now conspicuous for being extremely mellow, and over-attentive to such young women as he could get to listen to his uncouth blandishments—Slymer in high feather, having his next passage secured across the Atlantic as "Bearer of Despatches," for about the twentieth time—Sprigg in a new-flowered waistcoat and a staring diamond pin (presented by La Picaroni for those stunning "blows" in the *Crier*),—McSwindle and Elias P. who came arm-in-arm, radiant and mysterious with some new conspiracy—a large number of young men and women, lucky descendants of people who had made preternatural fortunes in impossibly short times and by processes altogether inscrutable—and, finally,

Robert Eliot, fresh from his Southern Tour and surveying the motley assemblage with great interest and curiosity.

General Von Donk was seated in a state of bland intoxication at the entrance between the back drawing-room and the conservatory, pressing each new arrival to take champagne in the intervals of his political outpourings, and invariably observing the courtesy of sharing with his guest in the effervescing inspirer. Mrs. General, ablaze with brocade and precious stones, was moving through the rooms in stately curves, and dragging Eliot with her, apparently for the purpose of introducing him to every one they encountered; but after enduring some two-score of these inflictions whose object he was quite unable to divine, her victim managed to extricate himself on pretence of paying his respects to Miss Von Donk, who was in turn trying to escape from McSwindle. Zerlina snapped at her rescuer's arm with avidity, and the mutual saviors wandered into the vicinage of the General.

"'Taint no use talkin'," proclaimed that statesman, "the only true salvation of the country lies in the Democratic Party, allers assomin' and retainin' the reins of power. The hard-fisted Democracy,—them's the ones to rule. Don't you look at it so, Mr. Eliot?"

Eliot was really very much disposed to be candid; and he was on the point of being taken unawares, and making reply that he feared those who spent all their time in hardening their fists were unlikely to do much toward polishing their brains; but he remembered his surroundings and took mean refuge in a discreeter common-place.

"Certainly, sir, the people are the basis of all power in a free country."

"You've ben a travellin', Mr. Eliot, you hev," continued the General, pursuing his prey with implacable steadiness. "I reckon this here's a rather taller kind of a country than you expected—you've been astonished some, hain't you?"

"Very much by the thrift and content of the people, by the beauty of the scenery, and by the great resources of the inner country," said Eliot, heartily.

"Well, now, aint it better to hev' a government like our'n to bring about such blessin's than one like your rotten old European concerns, grindin' down and oppressin' of us?"

"Why," replied Eliot, smiling, "the natural qualities of your country,—such as its extent and productions,—would be the same whatever form of government might prevail. Democratic government in Europe would not change its topography—would not increase the acres of arable soil."

"It mightn't increase 'em," retorted the General with great unction and the swelling elocution he employed when he found himself on the eve of a triumphant point, "it mightn't increase 'em; but it would make them that already exist, available. Why, sir, I understand that in your country, small as it is, you've fifteen million acres of tillable land lyin' uncultivated while thousands of your poor are starvin'!"

"It's true that abuses exist," said Eliot, mildly, "but the one you speak of is constantly undergoing modifications. No system is altogether perfect, and I for one don't pretend that ours is an exception. Even your own, with all its advantages, has drawbacks. There is much of our soil uncultivated which might produce bread; but that which is tilled, remember, is tilled exclusively by freemen."

"The niggers is much better off as they are," said the General dogmatically, "they'd all be barbarous heathen, clubbin' and eatin' each other, if we didn't hev' 'em here for slaves, and if we sot 'em free, they'd relapse into barbarism and never do any work at all. They'd turn out like them darkies o' yourn in Jamaky."

Zerlina at this juncture had taste enough to shorten the discussion by asking Eliot to go with her to the library to see a picture or something of the kind, so that the General was left in undisputed possession of the field.

"I thought your papa was quite safe to win this election," Eliot remarked as he passed up the grand staircase.

"So he is," answered Zerlina—"at least everybody says so. But he's anxious to have a very large majority—what Mr. Staggars calls an 'ovation,' and that's what they're all working for now."

As they reached the landing, the band below struck up a waltz, which stimulated Zerlina's desire to finish the task she had undertaken and return to the drawing-rooms; but when they got to the door of the library—an apartment in the rear of the mansion, projecting over the conservatory—an impediment awaited her.

"La!" she cried, "the wind has put out the gas. I'll find a servant, Mr. Eliot, and return directly."

Eliot would fain have postponed the suggested inspection, and remonstrated against Miss Von Donk's giving herself trouble; but she tripped away, leaving him to grope into the library, and to find a seat on the opposite side from the door, between a window and a large book-case. Presently a servant came in, and relighted one of the jets of the chandelier, but Zerlina appeared to have been detained by something—probably the making of engagements for ensuing dances. As the attendant left the room, the music ceased, and Eliot was conscious of voices on the balcony, close beside him.

"Your month has nearly passed," said the peevish voice of Gossamer Von Donk, "and we've heard nothing of the breaking off of the marriage; I think you must have deceived yourself about its being so certain."

"I never deceive myself," responded a deep voice, which Eliot instantly remembered to have heard before. "A thing may be practically accomplished without your directly hearing of it."

"Ah! yes; but I want to know. Business is business. I can't count on things I don't absolutely know. Elias P. said 'twould surely be as you promised."

"And so it will be. Listen: whatever cause there may have been for delay, it will cease at any time I, myself, choose to appear on the scene of action."

"Well, I wish you'd choose to appear soon then. The

truth is, I can't bear to wait for anything. It may be a fault, but I never have, and I never can."

"You shan't have longer cause for complaint. I start for The Rest to-morrow, and you will soon have good news."

"All right. I can arrange money matters whenever you're ready. The old man's been realizing heavily for election purposes, and I can get what I like."

"I may require it at very brief notice."

"Oh! a day will answer; Elias P. 'll fix that."

Whatever compunction Eliot may have had in listening to this colloquy, it would certainly have been rather difficult to avoid it. The first and most interesting portion had been rapidly spoken, and the noise of the band having ceased, he saw that he could not rise to leave the room without attracting the notice of the speakers. Just as he determined on the propriety of taking that step, he was spared further consideration by the return of Zerlina.

"So sorry to keep you waiting, Mr. Eliot, but pa would introduce me to that horrid Mr. Salvage of Dimity, Drilling & Co., you know, importers of drygoods—wholesale, of course."

Eliot rose instantly, as the young lady entered, and had placed her arm in his almost before she spoke. As he expected, there was an immediate reconnoissance from the balcony; but Gossamer, seeing his sister and the Englishman together, readily believed they had entered the room in the same juxtaposition the instant before. He therefore, with a civil good evening, returned to his companion, leaving Eliot to admire the "Claude" pointed out by Miss Von Donk, and which, as she truly remarked, *was* a very remarkable production.

"Who's that?" whispered Kirkwood, as Gossamer resumed the chair by his side.

"That Englishman, Eliot; he's intimate at Uplands—crossed the Atlantic with 'em," said Gossamer, rather uneasily.

"Do you think he heard?"

"I think not. But if he did—"

"'Twould be of no possible consequence. We deal in certainties, not in uncertainties."

Nevertheless, what he had heard was sufficient to induce Eliot to determine to alter his previous plans, and to set out for Uplands on the following morning.

"And what d'ye think of the chances?" asked Sprigg of Mr. Staggers, as they sat side by side at supper, in zealous encounter with champagne and boned turkey. "What d'ye think of the chances?"

"Fust rate. The General's popular, he is. The people understand him. That's the point. He goes right in among 'em—takes his cocktail and sling with 'em, and pays for their'n," quoth Elias P., conscious that short sentences are most favorable to rapid mastication.

"Begorra, that's it," endorsed McSwindle, tossing off a bumper of sparkling Moselle. "It's the thrue dimmichratic principle to mingle and converse, and take your wishkey wid the people. Then they know you're not stuck up like, and don't purtend to be better than they are thimselves."

"That's so," said Elias P. "Our folks don't want no high-falutin idees in their representatives, 'bout knowing things them that puts 'em in power don't know; and if they keep shut up in their houses, and don't mix with the voters, how kin the voters know they're of the right stamp?"

"Quite right," said Sprigg. "For men who are the servants of the people ought to try and please the people, and do their work in the way which suits the people. Look at *our* success! The Press is the servant of the people, and we write to please the people; suppose we wrote to suit such as are called the cultivated and the polished, how many copies of the paper d'ye think we'd sell?"

Mr. Slymer here expressed the conviction that no such absurd contingency was at all likely to occur in the history of the *Orier*.

"I should say not," said Sprigg, complacently. "Our proud position is based on the popular appreciation of

sound business principles. We aim to please the greatest number who buy the paper, as the General here aims to please the greatest number who vote for Congressman."

"There aint no press," said Elias P. solemnly, "which so truly elucidates the principles of our glorious Constitution. It goes for the greatest good of the greatest number—'specially of our foreign-born fellow-citizens;—and ain't that right? Of course it is. Why? 'Cause it ain't no merit to be born on the soil—you couldn't help yourself—but our foreign-born fellow-citizens come here from abroad of their own accord, so showin' their higher appreciation of our liberal institutions!"

"Hooray!" shouted McSwindle, enthusiastically, and swallowing another brimmer of Moselle.

"Thus," continued Elias P. oratorically waving a turkey bone; "thus, we see the surpassin' merits of our Universal Suffrage. The poor, the ignorant, and the oppressed from all quarters of the globe kin come here and vote to-morrow without troublin' themselves about all them hair-splittin' distinctions which despots invents to blind and oppress 'em to home. They kin vote for the Constitution and the law, and they kin tax property to keep their own representatives well paid for guardin' their interests in the country."

"And to kape down the nagur," supplied McSwindle.

"And to keep the nigger in the place which natur and his gifts obviously intended him for," amended Elias P.

Meanwhile Mrs. General at the court end of the table was apologizing to Eliot for the rather miscellaneous character of the assemblage. "You see we have to do what all people are forced to," she remarked, "where a country is blessed with a free government. All the citizens have votes, and the lower orders must be conciliated as well as the higher ones. You have the same thing in England, I take it?"

"Why, to tell the truth, not precisely. I fear our House of Commons would be something different from what it is if the suffrage were absolutely universal. We have a pro

perty qualification fixed at as low a point as we think consistent with dignity and safety. Our theory is that the country will be most wisely governed if the rulers are chosen by those who have a positive and direct interest in its welfare."

"Ah, but your common people are so ground down by long centuries of oppression, that you'd be afraid to trust them with political power."

"We don't think it would be judicious," replied Eliot courteously, not caring to discuss the ethics of the question.

"How is your friend Mr. Boynton?" chirruped Violetta Von Donk opportunely as Eliot looked around for relief.

"Thank you, well in health when I last saw him. He has gone South again."

"We heard he was desperately smitten with that Elinor Grazebrook."

"Indeed?"

"Yes. Only think of that wicked girl having gone on the Stage!"

"Gone on the Stage!" echoed Eliot with surprise.

"True. She's gone and turned play-actress!"

"Play-actress! Oh my!" chorussed half-a-dozen young ladies in a diapason of horror.

"Not from choice surely?"

"Oh yes—she ran away from home, and came out just for pure love of the thing. It's a comfort to think she failed, though."

"Nonsense, Elinor," said Mrs. General reprovingly.

"Do be a little charitable. She lost her fortune somehow, Mr. Eliot, and being a proud girl, thought she could support herself by acting."

"Say what you like, mother," retorted Violetta in her pertinacious squeal, "but no one in society ever thought she'd come to a good end."

"May I ask why, Miss Van Donk?" asked Eliot gravely.

"Oh," she answered simpering, "I couldn't exactly tell you—but every one knows her father and mother were not reputable, you know."

"But I thought that, in this country at least, people were valued or respected for themselves—not honored for the merits of their predecessors or depreciated for their failings."

"Oh yes—that is, as a general rule perhaps—but of course not in society, you know."

"I see. Then in this respect, at least, you have no advantage over the decrepid old countries of Europe."

"I fancy," laughed Slymer, "I fancy, Mr. Eliot, that social observances in these matters are the same the world over."

"I'm by no means sure of that," answered the Englishman. "It may be prejudice, but I imagine more sympathy and consideration would be extended in Europe to a person really meritorious and accomplished who has suffered such misfortunes, than what I now hear would lead one to expect in America."

"He's a reg'lar prejudiced Britisher, he is," said Elias P. *sotto voce* to Slymer. "You'd orter 've heard the General put him down a little while ago."

The conversation and festivity presently merged into a melange of politics, wine, and flirtation, and Eliot took his leave in the middle of a stump speech indulged in by the General, wherein the favorite dogmas of his persuasion were enforced in a manner which, to the stranger at least, was more emphatic than conclusive. But it must be acknowledged that Eliot's brain was busied with considering his discoveries of the evening, and in striving to trace to a common cause the mischances present and to come which had befallen and which threatened the friends in whom he felt so warmly interested. Still, in what he heard and saw that night the young Englishman found food afterward for serious reflection.

The levelling tendency is the noxious sequent of a generous principle, which comes after democracy as pedantry follows scholarship, or as avarice succeeds prudence. Its aim is the opposite of that of its predecessor, for the one would lift up all to the highest plane, the other would drag

down all to the lowest. This is the fatal excess, feared and deprecated by the Fathers, fanned and stimulated by demagogues, predicted and rejoiced in by kings. It has grown upon America year by year, lowering her standards, sapping her strength, vulgarizing her society. It has grown, not so much through inherent force, as through the tacit acquiescence of the people, who believe that a tyranny of few over many is less just than a tyranny of many over few. The intention has been good, but the mistake has consisted in the assumption that to eschew the former evil implied the acceptance of the latter.

The effects of this tendency are so degrading and so manifest, that to-day, when the true Spirit of Progress is becoming alive to their existence, and clamorous for their correction, one marvels that they should have run riot so long. The one of their number which is most conspicuously injurious,—the evil to which we should, perhaps, assign the credit of pre-eminence in mischief,—is what may be termed The Worship of Mediocrity.

It is truly a singular state of society in which it becomes prudent to avoid the reputation of uncommon wisdom or uncommon virtue,—in which the statesman who assiduously cultivates his intellect, must pay the penalty of subsequent obscurity—in which it is almost a legitimate inference that he who would rise in life, must systematically belittle his understanding;—but has not such a condition of things existed among us?

Have we not ostracized superior ability as the Athenians did Aristides? Americans every day complain of the paucity of instances of acknowledged genius and brilliant capacity among their public men. To such we would say—children of Washington, of Jefferson, of Hamilton, have you made Presidents of your Websters and Clays? If not, cease to murmur that no more Websters and Clays appear among you.

If some enterprising person were to advertise a machine for stunting intellectual development after the manner of the hideous barbarians who flatten the skulls of their chil-

dren, it would excite a great deal of astonishment,—and yet such an engine would be as labor-saving as many other inventions whose advertisement excites no astonishment at all.

The tyranny of the many over the few is NOT more just than that of the few over the many. On the contrary, there is a lowering poison in the former system which may ultimately do more harm than the latter. No masses of people can participate in wrong, and escape personal degradation because they act in large bodies. The soul of the slaveholder is clouded and soiled by the "Institution" if his slaves are ever so happy. The American character is clouded and soiled to-day by the huge wrong of which it has been guilty in worshipping mediocrity, and in permitting a senseless and uncouth jealousy to do injustice to merit.

It must be obvious now, to thousands who a few years ago would have refused to listen to such a proposition, that the evil in question is the legitimate product of placing political power in the hands of the ignorant and the unthinking. It follows that the evil would increase and *has* increased precisely in proportion to the increase of the classes indicated;—and that it will continue so to increase until a remedy be applied. Moreover, the longer that remedy is delayed, the more difficult will become its application: for the ignorant and unthinking are not in the least degree more willing to relinquish their hold on a power they have once wielded, than kings and nobles are. A mob is not more ready to abdicate than a dynasty.

We hear it advanced in the way of explanation, that there exists in the popular mind a vague apprehension that shining talents are dangerous when intrusted with executive power. This is an apology which ignorance does not deserve. It is unfounded in fact. Able men have been kept out of high places from no such apprehension, but for the simple reason that they were hated for their superiority. The ignorant man likes to see his brother ignorant man in the high places, and granting him the power, he is

safe to put him there. It meets his views of the fitness of things, and pampers his egotism by enlarging the field of his own possible achievement.

It is asked, where is the remedy? Can we be sure that it will not be worse than the disease? Alas! the disorder which takes years to culminate cannot be cured in a day. But it is something that the intelligent and patriotic are at last alive to its presence. It is something that the number is daily on the increase who dare say, and say with a loud voice, this gross Wrong, this despicable Corruption, is a living, growing fact, and must be met, battled with, and, by God's blessing, overcome.

We say *dare*, and say it advisedly; for not long gone it was not so. The popular idea of Free Speech obtained then—obtains too much now. The popular idea of Free Speech is that of saying nothing which can offend the lightest prejudice or taste of the lowest grade of your hearers, and being as offensive and disgusting as you please, or can be, to those of the highest. To infringe this was to be persecuted and trampled upon by the lowest grade, always heavily in the majority; and to receive no manner of protection or encouragement from the highest grade, because it never troubled itself with such matters.

We have reached an Epoch which promises better things, albeit the battle may be long and arduous. An Epoch wherein the genuine lover of Freedom and of Right may protest against the wrongs of the many against the few, as well as against those of the few against the many. An Epoch when people cease to be satisfied with the mere *names* of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, and begin analysing, testing, demonstrating, to discover how much they possess and how much they lack of the real substances. The *Worship of Mediocrity* is not likely to increase, as the result of these investigations—these great strides forward and upward.

Perhaps if Oliver Vernon ran for Congress against General Von Donk in 1870, he might stand a better chance of being elected.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE next day Eliot arrived at Uplands, and Kirkwood returned to The Rest. The former lost no time after his arrival in seeking an interview with Stephen Dangerfield, and relating what he had accidentally overheard of the design apparently cherished by Kirkwood. "Depend upon it," he concluded, "that man means mischief if he can effect it. The longer I live, the greater is my confidence in physiognomical signs, and I'm quite certain that my first estimate of Iago was a correct one."

Stephen sighed. He saw plainly that the reasons, whatever they might be, which induced his father to declare his union with Grace to be impossible were known to Kirkwood—were probably part and parcel of the mysterious secret between them. He hesitated a little, and then, as young men who trust each other's honor are prone to do, he made a clean breast to Eliot of all he knew or had learned from his father, both as regards this and other matters, since their arrival in the *Assyria*. He added an account of his earlier recollections of Kirkwood, and the strong aversion with which that person had inspired him. Eliot listened gravely, and at the end did not affect to conceal his concern.

"If your father alone had expressed himself thus," he said, "it might be less serious. As you suggest, his mind may be weakened, or he may exaggerate the obstacle, which may by no means prove insuperable. But Kirkwood, also, evidently regards the matter as quite a foregone conclusion. In any case, if you permit me to advise, I should recommend that you make a full and immediate statement of the affair to Mr. Vernon. In the multitude of counsellors there is, or should be, wisdom; and, moreover, pardon me if I say, that your duty also indicates such a course."

Stephen acknowledged the propriety of this, and explained his motives for previous reticence. It was finally agreed that, as the enemy had made his appearance on the

ground, he should at once impart his story to Vernon as a preliminary to any future operations. Clearly Mr. Vernon would have a right to complain if the fact of Martin Dangerfield's opposition to the match were to reach him through any other lips than those of Stephen. In the afternoon, therefore, the anxious lover took an opportunity of seeking Vernon in his library, and of stating without reserve the circumstances which weighed so heavily upon his heart. The kind old man was both surprised and puzzled by the narration, yet his words to Stephen were full of comfort.

"I can conceive," he said, "of no objections which your father can entertain, unless indeed there may be such as are suggested by pride in connexion with the impaired condition of his fortune. The Dangerfields have ever been a proud and sensitive race. He may perhaps entertain a morbid dislike to acknowledging the state of his affairs, and may cherish a conviction that such an acknowledgment would entail an objection from myself to sanction your union with Grace. Should he know what I now authorize you to use your judgment in telling him—that such a consideration would have no weight whatever on my part—his views may be modified. I have no wish in the premises, save to assure my child's happiness. She is my only one, and, in being my heiress, will be beyond the necessity of weighing mere worldly concerns in her choice. As to any machinations of Kirkwood, leave them to me. Whatever may be his unfortunate power with your father, it cannot avail with me; and, indeed, I think I can manage to thwart any evil design he may be concocting, let it be levelled at whom it may."

And Stephen retired with renewed hope and courage, and feeling strong, as he had a right to feel, in the support of so powerful an ally.

CHAPTER XLIII.

ELINOR was not the Elinor she had been. The current of her life ran on in its old irksome channel, but the perspective no longer included the faery vista of hope, nor were the banks bright and blooming as of old with the flowers of promise. Yet William Radcliffe was wrong when he charged her dejection to the account of her failure in the great city, and Mrs. Maberly was wrong when she attributed it to late hours and repeated fatigues. These, in truth, were but the surface griefs which rather alleviated than aggravated the deeper sorrow below. She could have borne them bravely enough, and, as it was, she never murmured. But her face grew paler and older, and her smile, though always patient, was very sad.

Elinor had not really known the depths of her own heart—had not known the strength of the passion that was lurking there—until she had for the second time rejected Cuthbert Boynton. Men are slow to credit how such feelings can dwell in women's breasts, dormant to their own as to every other perception, and yet be ineradicable. Each man in his own case is accustomed to scan, to analyse, to dissect every feeling—every passing emotion. He learns its weight, its value—he measures its permanence, its evanescence. His masculine nature does not shrink from the task, however inquisitorial. Not so the woman. Her more subtle and sensitive nature, though keener in all its perceptive, hesitates far longer in the trying process of self-examination. Because consequences in her case are more momentous, she oftentimes instinctively covers up instead of laying bare the causes which are to bring them forth. Thus it is that women are often positively surprised themselves when some unforeseen catastrophe unlocks the inmost secrets of their souls, and thus will ruder and coarser-minded men call that hypocrisy and dissimulation which is, indeed, unconsciousness or the instinct of self-protection. So it had been with Elinor when the depths had

been stirred to the inmost by the explanation she had been forced to enter upon. Before that, she could live on, absorbed in her chosen pursuit—absorbed in the discharge of what she believed to be her duty—and suffer little but what was included in the rough and ungenial attrition of her daily life—but not so now. A part of herself was gone out of her keeping, and no effort of resolution, no invocation of the waters of oblivion could make her forget or call it back again.

Radcliffe and Mrs. Maberly were not the persons to delve into another's secrets uninvited, and least of all into those of such a nature as Elinor's; but they watched her growing sadness with affectionate solicitude, and strove in their different ways to temper and assuage it. As to the man, his own nature was changing and growing every day. He had commenced to catch glimpses of that elysium which is possible on earth to all of us—for the first time in his worn and battered life; and he yearned to do good to some one—to bring happiness to some one—during the brief remainder that was left to him. He did more than yearn—he did more than hope—for William Radcliffe had been taught thus late what he had never practised in youth, and nightly prayed that this sweet power might yet be vouchsafed to him.

And the poor actor struggled on, bearing up more manfully than he had ever done under the toils and privations of his lot—struggling day by day to make people happier in little things who came within his humble orbit—and gaining consolation for himself as time wore on, because he saw in the future, clearer and clearer—as God sent that events should fall out—that the aspirations and prayers of his tardy repentance should not be altogether in vain.

CHAPTER XLIV.

KIRKWOOD resumed his old life of easy indulgence, which after the dangers and vicissitudes of earlier days, he had found so very agreeable at Dangerfield's Rest. The man was absolutely incorrigible in his habit of enjoying the present. Even now when the most critical moments in the development of his schemes appeared to be imminent, he lost no particle of the zest wherewith he appreciated the wines, the made dishes, the cigars and the *siestas*, the enjoyment of which had made up the sum of his existence in the most placid ones. Yet, notwithstanding his immense *physique*, his iron nerves and his opaque materialism, Kirkwood was possessed by certain presentiments which were powerful enough to control his future action when he came seriously to consider of it. A conviction was daily gaining strength in his mind, that his tenure both of power and of safety in his present dwelling-place was drawing to a close. It has been seen that he was shaping his personal transactions with a view to sudden departure at no great distance of time; and that his main object was to take with him as heavy a security against future privation as possible; but, mingled with this purpose, and scarcely inferior to it in the importance with which his malignant nature invested it, was his design of inflicting an overwhelming vengeance upon Stephen Dangerfield. The undisguised contempt wherewith Stephen had treated him naturally influenced a resentment which was not likely to be readily appeased; but the personal insult received at his hands was, to a man of Kirkwood's stamp, not to be atoned save through a retaliation equally ineffaceable.

He had hoped, as we have seen, by working upon the pride and the terror of Martin Dangerfield, hopelessly to encumber the estate his son had a right to receive intact. Failing this—and repeated failures had led him to the reluctant conclusion that on this point the old man was

inflexible—he could at least undermine Stephen's happiness by destroying his prospects of union with Grace Vernon. To this end he had sought and found an instrument in the infatuation of Gossamer Von Donk. At the last moment, and when Stephen beheld his cup of joy at his very lips, it should be dashed to the earth, while Kirkwood having plundered his rival to the utmost possible extent, would suddenly vanish, leaving the other actors of the complicated scene to arrange matters as best they might. It will be observed that so craftily had the conspirator managed his intrigues with the various parties involved, that each would have a motive for concealing his own part in the drama until concealment was no longer possible.

Meanwhile, Stephen, who had formerly resolved not to remain under the same roof with his pertinacious opponent, found a reason to forego that resolution in the late intimation of his projects, which had been discovered by Eliot. It would not answer to abandon the field just when the combat promised to begin. He must stand firm, watch the enemy carefully, and be prepared to resist whenever that enemy seemed on the point to strike.

As usual with him, Kirkwood affected towards Stephen a manner of half-patronizing affability; and, as usual, was met by the latter with haughty distance. Yet, it must be admitted that the younger man grew more apprehensive from day to day of the potency of the force which the other might be able to bring against him. Had Kirkwood indulged in threats, had his manner even betokened hostility, Stephen would have known how to meet either the one or the other. Neither, however, was apparent, but in their place was exhibited a bland, self-assured confidence, which was far more threatening and dangerous. There was not a trace of doubt or insecurity—nothing but the easy air of a player who knows he holds the winning cards, and only bides his time to play them. Such was the account carried by Stephen to his allies at Uplands, who, however, agreed that it suggested nothing further than increased vigilance,

and the adherence to his general policy, which was to watch and wait.

Kirkwood, aware of the character of Stephen's explanation with his father, was simply observing what effect it might produce upon his relations with the family at Uplands; and when he saw that the young man's visits were continued there as before, and that the common report of the neighborhood brought no tidings of a rupture of the well known engagement, he determined that his personal interposition had become necessary. He was the more impelled to this by impatient letters, which became frequent from Gossamer Von Donk, and from his conviction that little more could be extorted from Martin Dangerfield, who now seemed to be sinking into a state of lethargy. Once or twice, too, he encountered the lovers, who pursued their favorite habit of taking long rides among the hills, and his animosity was kindled afresh by witnessing such evidences of mutual confidence and unabated affection.

"Do you know," he said to Martin Dangerfield one evening, "do you know that the engagement still remains unbroken between your son and Vernon's daughter?"

"Stephen knows it cannot be," replied the old man, feebly. "I told him it could not be."

"Then he thinks you in your dotage, or sets you at defiance, for he pursues his course despite of you."

"He takes a little time to break the matter, perhaps. Poor boy, he is very fond of her."

"But hang it, man, don't you see the fools are on the brink of a precipice—the next thing will be a sudden marriage—what shall you do then?"

"It must not be; it must be prevented."

"Ay! but how? Your son is not a child; what prevents if the girl and her father agree?"

"He cannot."

"Obviously he does—otherwise Stephen would not be received at the house. Look you, Vernon must be led to believe that your estate is impaired—that you are ruined, in short—then, and then only, he will break off the match."

"He divined that to be the cause of my opposition; Stephen told me as much."

"And he still consents?"

"He still consents."

"Well," continued Kirkwood impatiently, "what do you mean to do?"

"I had hoped to make Stephen withdraw."

"But you see he does not—will not. Things are going to the last extremity. What then? Do you propose to tell—"

"No," said Dangerfield with a shudder; "I can't do that."

"Some one must—shall I?"

"Never! would you be so base, so dastardly? Remember you have promised—sworn! You are a villain, Kirkwood; but you're not—you cannot be—so black as that!"

"Perhaps, then, you'll be kind enough to show me the alternative?"

"I'll think—think and determine," said the old man, wearily. "To-morrow—in a few days, at the furthest. For God's sake, now, leave me in peace."

Kirkwood withdrew grumbling, yet not really dissatisfied with the conversation. He had discovered exactly how the land lay. He had discovered, too, that there was no more time to lose.

"It is clear," he muttered to himself, as he lighted his last cigar before retiring for the night, "it is clear that this *placer* is tolerably well drained. It is also clear that, to wind up affairs, the shortest and easiest course is the best."

CHAPTER XLV.

"SO you like the country," asked Oliver Vernon of his English visitor, as they sat at breakfast one breezy summer's morning.

"Better than from all accounts I expected to like it.—The tourists are almost uniformly unjust, but more frequently unreasonable. It appears to me that most of the ill blood which exists between England and America arises from the persistent refusal of writers to see or to understand that different social and physical conditions produce different characters and manners *without either merit or demerit* of the people thus passively acted upon."

"You would infer, no doubt, that a given number of Englishmen transferred to-day to an entirely new country would become, in the same time, very much what Americans have become—achieve very much what Americans have achieved?"

"Precisely. There would be the same literature, the same religion, the same laws, all enjoyed by the same race, but subjected to other than home influences and conditions. I regard the changes that would be effected as inevitable, and scarcely the proper subjects for either censure or praise. But our stay-at-home countrymen, compact, insular, and prejudiced, insist on the latter view and ignore the former; while the returned emigrant or his descendants invariably condemn most harshly those things which are equally inevitable at home."

"So that, after all, we come back to the universal panaceas—education and toleration. I quite agree with your theory, and find it illustrated with even less than a century's alienation, and without the bitterness engendered by forcible separation. Most Englishmen dislike Canadians and Australians in the same way, and for the same cause: and most of the colonists unhappily return the compliment."

"You must write a book, Mr. Eliot," laughed Grace, "and set your naughty countrymen right. But I think you gen-

tllemen leave one important item out of the account, which is that so many of the immigrants—who come in such myriads in this age of steam—consider themselves to have been badly treated at home; and persuade the old settlers,—whom time and prosperity would lead to ignore such grounds for animosity,—to share in their own."

"That, of course, has its weight," remarked Vernon, "and the more with ourselves that so many of the new comers emigrate from a land which has had genuine cause of complaint."

"I must, however, omit Slavery in my category of toleration," pursued Eliot, "for however originated, and however lucrative, I cannot believe but that, with the education of your masses, Englishmen would ere this have abandoned, or at least ameliorated its worst features."

"A just prejudice," said Vernon, with a sigh. "Yet, our truculent cotton lords assure us that, in the event of the rupture they sometimes threaten, Great Britain would be found on their side in the struggle."

"I can never believe my country would be so base," cried Eliot, warmly. "Some there are, of course, whose trading propensity would stoop to anything to make a profit or to damage a rival; but the nation at large, never!"

"Let us hope there may be no opportunity for the test."

"Amen, with all my heart. Sooner or later the system must go down; yet I fear the longer the delay, the more difficult will be the remedy, and the more tremendous the catastrophe."

"Apropos," said Grace, "what did you think of the plantation of your friend Mr. Boynton?"

"That it contrasted most favorably with many others. Yet, it is true, so far as I could judge, that the average condition of the blacks, in a physical sense, is better than is commonly supposed. It was very painful, however, to see a man of his fine mind and generous nature helping to uphold, and sharing in the benefits of, human bondage."

"You had much discussion on the subject?"

"A great deal—of course between ourselves. Free speech, you know, is scarcely safe down there, especially if indulged in by a 'prejudiced Britisher.'"

"Do you know," said Grace, "that I do not believe Cuthbert Boynton will die a slaveholder?"

"I trust a great many now living may not," said Eliot, smiling; "but why in his case?"

"Oh! you know a woman has the privilege of guessing—more especially a Yankee woman—and I have a presentiment that he'll not."

Eliot shook his head.

"I should be glad to think that the arguments of others would impress him more than my own. He does not believe Slavery to be a good, but he is convinced that it must now be regarded as an absolutely necessary evil."

"People change their opinions; he may not always regard it as necessary to *him*."

"He could certainly live without it. He has some property in stocks and real estate, I believe, not dependent on Slavery."

"Well, when papa and I get hold of him again, we mean to convert him."

"A formidable alliance, truly; and I sincerely wish it success."

The conversation naturally turned upon Elinor, her trials and misfortunes, and the train of events which had led to the adoption of her present profession. Eliot was persuaded that there had been foul play, and that there was a mystery to be solved which would not only result in the recovery of her little patrimony, but also in clearing up the cloud which had so long hovered over the household at Dangerfield's Rest. Grace—warm-hearted girl—avowed that she would long ago have followed Elinor, and forced her return home, but for the restraining prudence of her father. The latter had been in correspondence with Mrs. Maberly, and agreed with her that it was wiser to permit the disease to run its course.

"I never intended," said Vernon, "to allow Elinor to lose her little fortune; but she is so sensitive and high-strung 'twill be a very delicate matter to arrange."

Here Stephen Dangerfield bounded into the room, in a style which quite set decorum at defiance, and with his old joyous expression lighting up his handsome face.

"Have you seen the *Orier* this morning?" he demanded, addressing the assemblage collectively.

"Gracious! No, Stephen," replied Grace, "we never see it. But why?"

"See that!" exclaimed the intruder, handing the paper to Vernon, and pointing out a paragraph.

"Can it be possible?" cried Vernon in astonishment, as his eye ran over the lines; "why, Eliot, look there!"

"What is it, pray?" demanded Grace, "how tiresome you all are! Do read it aloud, Mr. Eliot."

"Surely, Miss Vernon," said that gentleman, "surely you must be a witch! Listen and judge." And he read aloud as follows:—

"SUPPOSED CASE OF INSANITY.

"Cuthbert Boynton, Esq., a well known and hitherto highly respectable planter of — county, Alabama, has just issued papers of Emancipation to all the slaves of his estates. The unhappy gentleman is believed to have been rendered crazy through the arts and machinations of the infernal Abolitionists, as he had lately returned from a visit to the North," etc., etc., etc.

Here followed a withering denunciation of Northern Fanatics, who were represented as being engaged in a widespread conspiracy to break up social order at the South, and the article wound up by demanding the arrest and punishment of the editor of a rival newspaper, who was declared to have personally brought about by some mysterious means the last and crowning atrocity which had been described.

A general exclamation of delight followed this peroration, which Eliot delivered in a highly declamatory style.

"Oh! how happy this makes me!" murmured Grace, with her blue eyes quite filling with tears.

"Boynton's a regular tramp, after all," cried Stephen, all forgetful of his own cares in admiration of the heroism of his friend.

"Truly surprising," said Eliot. "I can scarcely believe my eyes—what a noble action!"

"What a triumph of Principle!" cried Oliver Vernon, wiping his spectacles, and preparing to read the article over again.

"Nay, papa," said Grace softly, and kissing his noble brow; "what a triumph of *Love*!"

CHAPTER XLVI.

ON the following morning the gentlemen of the party set forth for a ten-mile drive to the neighboring town of Cranberry Centre. General Von Donk was stumping the county, and was to speak at that place to-day, on the condition of the country in general and on that of his Congressional prospects in particular. Vernon had yielded to the solicitations of a local committee of his party and would also "express his sentiments" in behalf of the opposite side.

"You'll hear a good deal of 'buncombe,' as we call it," he said, laughingly, to Eliot, "and it won't be all on one side either.—The truth is, our people have run into such inveterate habits of hyperbole that to speak to them plainly without metaphor or exaggeration is to run great risk of being voted a bore. Their palates are too sophisticated with stimulants to fancy simple cookery. However, there is really improvement in this as in many peculiarities formerly rather sharply emphasised. It would be hard to find many Jefferson Bricks or Goliath Gongs nowadays;—at any rate east of the Alleghanies."

Eliot thought of these remarks later in the day and after hearing the observations of General Von Donk; and it must be confessed he marvelled very much what the state of affairs could have been in such matters before the days of improvement set in.

When our friends drove into Cranberry Centre, the little town was overrunning with strangers, heated, fussy, and tumultuous. There were banners and drums and fifes, and stars and stripes, and clouds of dust and crowds of delegates, messengers and boys tumbling over each other in mad haste and confusion. The long sheds by the Churches and "meeting-houses" were packed full of vehicles of every conceivable shape and hue; and all the taverns and bar-rooms were besieged by impatient crowds who kept surging back and forth, alternating between their attractions and those of the halls where the "speaking" was progressing.

As Vernon's carriage drew up before the door of the principal hotel, its occupants could test for themselves that the Von Donk party were hard at work in Acropolis Hall, opposite; for a voice was heard through the long, open windows of that edifice, strained to the utmost pitch of vociferation, but which the party had no difficulty in recognising as that of the doughty General himself. It was now past twelve, and Vernon was to speak at one o'clock at The Parthenon.

Amid the roars and screams which continually interrupted and rewarded the impatient orator hard by, Vernon was recognised and taken possession of by the attendant committee of his own following, and the two younger men strolled across to Acropolis Hall. The room was stiflingly hot, densely crowded, and not altogether inoffensive in other respects, but the new comers managed to get near a window where they breathed in comparative comfort. Nature had forced General Von Donk to moderate the energy of his declamation, and he was just getting to that point where orators of his stamp, finding their voices begin to fail, affect to be contrastedly impressive. He was supported on

either hand by sympathizing admirers, conspicuous among whom were Mr. McSwindle and Elias P. Staggers. After the entrance of Stephen and Eliot, the scene proceeded somewhat as follows:—

THE GENERAL, *solemnly*.

"The right of suffrage which you will soon be called upon to exercise is the proudest privilege of freemen. It enables you to place in the national councils—not rich men because they have so many houses and lands, not college-bred men because they have so much unnecessary learning—but men after your own hearts—men from among yourselves, men of the hard-fisted democracy, who are sure to see that your interests don't suffer, for the good reason that your interests are identical with their own.

"Now, as to the great points at issue in this coming election, some of you think a great deal, and some not so much, and some of our adopted feller-citizens may not have had time to think at all. And this reflection leads to the thought—and my heart swells with pride as I utter it—that the principles of our great party are universal and elastic enough to cover and meet the requirements of each of these classes—petticularly the latter. It ain't necessary for the working man on his coming among us, to puzzle his brains and waste his time in hair-splitting distinctions; all he's got to do is to vote the demerocratic ticket to be sure he's on the right side.

"I'll tell you why. Because voting for the demerocratic ticket is voting for high wages and cheap food, and for upholding the Constitution and the Laws. Because it's voting on the side which supports the Sovereignties of the States, and protects the rights of our Southern feller-citizens in their slaves, against the encroachments of the fanatical Abolitionists who are the worst enemies of the working man. For if the Abolitionists could have their way, it's easy to see the blacks would swarm into the North like locusts, bringing down the price of labor and forcing up the price of food until things got as bad as they are in

the rotten old countries of Europe where the laborer is ten times wuss off than the Southern Slaves.

"Feller citizens, the independent Sovereignities of the States and the institootion of Slavery are inseparably connected—and the demercratic party taking its stand firmly on the Constitution, is for defending in their integrity the Sovereignities and the institootions which the Constitution provides are to remain unimpaired."

A VOICE.—"Neither the word 'Sovereignty' nor 'Slavery' are mentioned in the Constitution at all."*

THE GENERAL.—"Ah, it is objected that two particular words do not happen to be used to express a meaning which was no less clearly intended. The democracy doesn't stoop to chop logic, or to enter into them hair-splitting distinctions I was speaking of. It goes by the spirit and not the letter. The poor man would fare badly indeed if he had to abide by the strained and crooked constructions of radicals and sophists. (*Cheers.*) The gentleman is proberly a Black Republican—(*Hisses*) or a nigger-worshipper—(*Roars of execration*) in favor, no doubt, of amalgamation, and setting up the black man over the white! (*Yells of "Put him out," "Lind him a wipe in the shkull," "Shtomp on the baste," etc., amid which the offender prudently withdraws.*)

ELIAS P.—(*With great enthusiasm.*) "Three cheers for General Von Donk!"

(*Three tremendous cheers, followed by an indescribable sound which ELIOT is informed by a bystander is a "tiger."*)

THE GENERAL—(*after bowing his appreciation.*) "Feller citizens, it is your duty and mine, both by day and by

* * * * "In that Constitution the word 'Slavery,' or 'Slave,' is not to be found. There are, indeed, the words 'persons bound to labor,' but it is not said how bound. And a constitutional lawyer or judge construing the American Constitution with a reference to the Declaration of Independence which is its basis, would not hesitate to decide that 'bound to labor' ought, in a court of justice, to mean 'bound by contract to labor;' and should not be held to imply 'forced or compelled to labor,' in the absence of all contract, and for the exclusive benefit of others."—DANIEL O'CONNELL, Oct. 11, 1843.

night in all times and in all places to crush out the Abolitionists! Like the fabled Upas they *blacken* and destroy all who come within their pernicious influence. As that eminent and high-toned gentleman, my friend the Editor of the *Orier* says, they are, to a man, robbers and cut-throats, and are, moreover, in league with the devil; and who is better able to judge of such qualities and associations than he? Nothing is more easy to see than that those who would commence by robbing our Southern brethren of their rights and privileges, would, if they had the power, end by despoiling ourselves in the same manner. The learned and witty orator who preceded me—the silver-tongued O'Blarney—he who told you that

"You may break, you may ruin the vase if you will,
But the scent of the roses will cling round it still"—

and that

"Man the hermit sighed—till woman smiled,"

among other equally felicitous and apposite reasons for voting the demercratic ticket—has directed your attention to the great fact that the Bible clearly announces and endorses the servitude of the inferior to the superior race, and are not you, my noble and enlightened fellow-citizens, clearly superior to the sooty Ethiopian? (*Assenting murmurs of "That's so," and "Aint we thin?"*) Yes, my friends, it is your proud destiny to be the master race of this continent, and is it not then your manifest duty to put down and crush the radicals and atheists who are not only your enemies, but who, by flying in the face of Providence, prove themselves the enemies of your religion?

"Thus you have every motive of patriotism, dooty, interest and religion to strain every nerve to put down the pestilent faction which is opposed to each and all. In your hands rests the future of this great country—the greatest, the freest, and most magnificent which has existed since the beginning of time. On you devolves the splendid task of governing and controlling, through your representatives, this youthful giant whom your enlighten-

ment and the purity of your principles so admirably qualify you to direct and to rule! And when he lays his potent grasp on the shores of either ocean—when he stretches his colossal extremities to compass either pole—when the proud bird which is his emblem screams with appreciative joy at this tremendous evidence of his expansive capacities—then will it be your glory and your pride that through your own wisdom and virtue these wonderful results have been achieved!"

(Roars of applause, shouts of "Hurrah yer soul" and "Kape down the naygur," and much congratulation of the General, interrupted by the striking up of the band, to whose inspiring strains Robert Eliot and Stephen Dangerfield beat a retreat.)

As they reached the street, they found another crowd pouring in a direction Stephen knew to be that of the Parthenon, the building wherein Vernon was to address his political friends and adherents. Now, although such a distinction may appear to be invidious, it is certainly true that the audience the two friends found assembled in the Parthenon was less objectionable in various respects than that they had left behind at the Acropolis. That it was superior, necessarily, in a moral point of view, we will not venture to affirm; but that the Parthenon soared above the Acropolis in respect of cleanliness and relative innocence of the odor of strong drink, may confidently be put upon record. It is only candid to add that, so far as numbers are concerned, the advantage of the latter assemblage was equally incontestable. Vernon had commenced his address when Stephen and Eliot entered the hall. After passing over various matters of local interests wherein the two parties were at issue, the speaker went on to say:—

"My friends, we affirm that men are nothing, and that principles are everything. It makes very little difference whether I as an individual am elected to represent you in this district. But it makes a very great difference whether the principles of which I am the mere temporary mouth-

piece, or exponent, are disseminated and discussed among you with the view to their subsequent demonstration and final acceptance. You may ask why attempt to disseminate or discuss principles which, whatever their merits, are not agreeable to the majority of the district. I answer that only by this discussion and this dissemination can those merits be properly weighed, understood, and appreciated. The process is a part of education, and the further it goes the more will the people become educated. Some of you doubt this. You do not credit that the mere advertising of certain political principles constitutes any definite portion of enlightenment. Think a little. Is it not notorious that the hold of the leaders of the opposite party is strong in exact proportion to the ignorance or the immorality of their supporters? When immigrants come here from foreign parts, where there are no free schools—no means for popular education—are not those leaders justly confident that in those new-comers they will secure exactly so many fresh voters? When immigrants hail from those parts of Europe which are blessed with some approximation to our own educational system, are not those leaders equally certain that, in a parallel ratio, they are to meet just so many fresh opponents? In those parts of our great metropolis where dissoluteness, ignorance, crime, most abound, do not those leaders find their greatest power, achieve their heaviest majorities? In those parts of our State where morality, culture, order, most prevail, do not those leaders find their greatest weakness, suffer their most disastrous defeats? Tell me what this means if it does not mean—with those notable and reasonable exceptions from which no great issue is free—that one party is identified with education and enlightenment, and the other with ignorance and darkness?

"My friends, every man of you has high responsibilities as husband, or son, or father; but a nation has higher duties than even the collective domestic ones of its children; and this nation has, before Heaven, loftier obligations than any on which the sun has ever shone. Why? Be-

cause those obligations are comprehensive and cosmopolitan to an extent which has hitherto been unprecedented in history. The obligations of other nations have been comparatively circumscribed and isolated in their character; referring almost exclusively to the welfare of their own citizens or subjects. But yours are larger and grander, because they involve the welfare present and future of the whole world. Not only on account of the fractions of other peoples you yearly absorb into your own body politic, but because of the moral effect of your course upon the progress and happiness of the fractions which remain behind. This is the great reason why, whereas other nations have shaped their policy—more or less justifiably—in accordance with the dictates of mere selfish expediency, you are called upon to mould your own in accordance with those of absolute justice and unqualified RIGHT.

"America is strong enough to do right. It is not only the price which she is commanded to pay for her present greatness, but it is the absolute condition of her future existence. Depend upon it, this is the paramount difference between political parties, which have arisen, or which may hereafter arise in our country. By whatever names they may be known, by whatever minor differences they may be obscured or distinguished, the main issue will be between the advocates of Right on the one hand, and of Expediency on the other. The Right will be eternal, self-asserting, and self-protecting, and therefore consistent with the national perpetuity. The Expediency will be temporary, short-sighted, and short-lived, and therefore tend to, or be in sympathy with, national disintegration. The latter will denounce the former as utopian, because there are no historical precedents to show that a nation can do right and live; but the former will reply that conditions exist which never existed before, and that the time has arrived when the Golden Rule may be expanded from its application to the conduct of a man, so as to extend in its noble scope to the conduct of a People.

"Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you,

do ye also unto them.' Behold the plain maxim as applicable to politics as to the moralities of daily life. Demagogues may strive to delude and to confuse; they may insist on this reading of the Constitution, or upon that principle of commercial economy; but the simplest and least penetrating intellect, earnest for truth and ever applying that maxim, need neither be bewildered nor deceived. That simple phrase is the true genius—the vitalizing spirit of our national existence. It is incompatible with the oppression of any race of men, whatever may be their language or their color. America cannot permanently remain an asylum for some and a prison for others. If she has been so prostituted, or ever is so prostituted, the Avenger may come slowly, but he will surely come at last. If, as the heritage of less enlightened days—as a consequence of action taken before our own time (and for which the present generation is not therefore directly culpable), such an evil prevails, it is the absolute duty of every true American to apply the Golden Rule, and to labor calmly, dispassionately, mildly, for that evil's just and peaceable abatement. All the sophistry on earth cannot weaken the force of this injunction. All the cunning and jugglery of interested selfishness cannot destroy its immortal potency.

"Enlightenment and justice are fighting the battle against darkness and wrong; and the latter knowing their intrinsic feebleness, to-day seek to re-enforce themselves with the poor benighted exiles, who seek plenty and happiness on our shores—to-morrow may perhaps invoke the aid of the hoary nations which have cast those exiles forth, and who may gladly assist in destroying the young giant which protects them. The contest is waxing more violent and more bitter. For me, I have hoped, and prayed, and trusted that it might be a bloodless one. But even now the clash of strife comes to our ears from the far Western Prairie; even now the blare of that trumpet is heard which may summon a whole continent to arms. If so—which Heaven forbid—I cannot think of the result as doubtful, but it may be bought at the expense of torrents of blood

and mountains of sorrow. How shall we prevent such a catastrophe?

"Shall it not be by rallying with such numbers and with such enthusiasm to the standards of Truth and Right that the partisans of Falsehood and Wrong will not dare to measure strength with us, but will shrink back appalled from the conflict? I know of no other means—certainly no better ones, for they would leave us the option of accomplishing by mild and equable adjustments what otherwise we may be driven to compel by harsh and violent ones. Hence it becomes us to point out, so far as in us lies, where those standards are. To take in all the light we can, not for our own selfish use alone, but, like the stars, to transmit it for the glory and illumination of all who come within our spheres. This it becomes all of us to do; and this is my excuse for coming before you as a candidate for a district which at this time there is such slender hope of my representing.

"And whatever happens, my friends—for we live in days when the air is filled with portentous whispers, and the earth trembles with foreboding mutterings—whatever happens, despite the threats of faction, and the prejudices of races, I cannot believe that God has raised up this beautiful land to such a pitch of grandeur and of happiness to hurl it down so soon in dissolution and decay. I believe that it depends on ourselves that it shall not be; that it depends on ourselves whether fifty years hence shall find us a free, happy, and united nation of a hundred million souls; or whether the enemies of freedom throughout the world shall hail with rapture a long night of despotism, when, through the sinking of the Great Republic, the sun of its liberty shall have been extinguished for ever."

CHAPTER XLVII.

"WITH all your material prosperity," said Robert Eliot, as they sat after dinner on the piazza looking forth on the glittering line of the distant sea, "with all your material prosperity and the vast service you have rendered to the cause of labor, it appears to me that the *social tone* is very much lowered in America by the absence of an hereditary aristocracy."

"A natural estimate," returned Vernon, "and one not easy to dispute. For although in the golden age of our political system,—that when Washington, Hamilton, and Jay led the Federal Party, and Jefferson, Monroe, and Burr headed the opposition—our social standards, the reflex and complement of public ones, would compare favorably with any in the world for dignity and polish, yet it must be remembered, that the nation was fresh from the habits and traditions of the parent land, and that those standards have deteriorated in proportion to the lapse of years ever since."

"I observe," pursued Eliot, "that most Americans whom I meet, seem unable or unwilling to perceive that distinction or reverence confers reciprocal advantages. They would seem to insist that to set a man above his fellows, for whatever reason, is only to do *him* good and no one else, and that therefore such a practice is to be discountenanced. The notion that self-respect or wholesome ambition is stimulated, or that society is dignified and elevated by a scheme of artificial distinctions, appears to be quite unknown."

"Irreverence is, indeed, one of our besetting sins, and it will so continue until the trade of politics ceases to be disreputable. We must abandon the monstrous folly of electing judges, restrict our suffrage to rational and healthful limits, increase facilities for free education, and, above all, cease to encourage, by office or preferment, vulgar, illiterate, and unprincipled men."

"But will your populace submit to, or accept such sweeping innovations?"

"Far more readily than Europeans suppose. That is the advantage we hope to gain through our plan of universal education. Your American bred in the common schools, is eminently practical; and when he once understands that his condition will be the better for such innovations, he will find means to bring them about. In Europe, such things would cost revolutions; but here we hope to make knowledge take their place."

"It would certainly be no more than fair," said Eliot, laughing, "since, as appears to be the case, the intellect and education of the nation have been willing, as a protracted experiment, to be governed by its rabble—it were no more than fair, that the latter should be willing for a while to change places, and be governed in turn."

"They may be obliged anon, whether they will or no. The abuses which have existed, must, in the nature of things, accumulate to an intolerable climax, and self-preservation will compel their correction."

"And yet," said Eliot, "immigration is on such a vast and increasing scale, that mere numbers may prevent wholesome reform which they think may deprive them of their privileges."

"The Americans themselves increase very rapidly; and the new comers modify as they struggle up from their primary ignorance and darkness. Still, if those considerations were inadequate to the gentler forms of solution—if, in short, a conflict of races were unhappily to arise, the usual result of a struggle between Anglo-Saxon and Celt would be inevitable,—and history shows conclusively, what that is."

"Speaking of our society," remarked Stephen Dangerfield, "I think the undue importance of mere trade and traders has had a prejudicial effect independently of political decadence. We have been more a 'nation of shopkeepers' than your own, for we have no recognised 'estates' save army, navy, and press, and protracted peace for the

first two, and catering for the lowest intelligences for the last, have reduced their counter action to the *minimum*. The number of people one meets who, like Staggers, are perpetually asking how much everybody else is 'worth,' is a shocking evidence of the estimate placed upon mere money-getting."

"You say nothing of the Bar," observed Eliot.

"Oh, we have many capital lawyers, but you see they won't accept public service when uneducated and dishonorable men are equally eligible."

"There again," said Vernon, "the evil is plainly to be traced to the common source. Office must be made desirable for intelligence and probity by diminishing its chances for ignorance and depravity."

"But I'm sure, papa," put in Grace, "you have been willing enough to make a sacrifice of yourself without any such incentive."

"Ah," replied Vernon, laughing, "you see I am one of the exceptions, who have no right to claim credit, because confident of never being elected."

The old happy life at Uplands had been resumed. Once more the time glided by in those healthful alternations of mental culture and country pleasures to which its inmates and their guests were wont to devote themselves. Grace, yet ignorant of the danger which threatened her unclouded existence, lived in a perpetual atmosphere of sunshine and affection. But one element had been needed to fill up the measure—to round and perfect the symmetry of her girlish character, and this had been found in her love for Stephen Dangerfield. The rare happiness, too, of compassing its fruition without the necessity of a practical separation from her idolized parent seemed to leave no drop of bitterness for her approaching cup of joy.

She had written to Elinor, and both Stephen and Eliot had written to Cuthbert Boynton since the news which had given them all such pleasant anticipations of their future relations—and the answers which had been received,

although on both sides somewhat shy and ambiguous, yet fully sanctioned the hope that those anticipations would be realized.

Meanwhile sanguine Stephen was lulled into security by the clearness of the skies, and was working himself into the belief that the inactivity of his enemy was an evidence of weakness; for impatient youth is ever slow to learn that steady and patient preparation will often reduce to a certainty, the success of a project which premature demonstration may utterly defeat. So as Stephen saw no smoke, he believed there could be no fire—which was just the conviction which Kirkwood sought to establish.

Robert Eliot, cooler and more dispassionate, was not so readily satisfied; and his friendly interest led him to watch matters with a wary eye. Yet, even he, after a time, from the absence of any apparent weapon which Kirkwood could wield, inclined to credit that none such could exist;—and thus, as the period fixed for the wedding-day approached, he came to share in the general feeling of security.

If there were exceptions to the participants in this feeling they were to be found in the persons of David Greenwood and Aunt Mercy, who always discussed family matters at their evening tea-drinkings in the housekeeper's room.

"I like Master Stephen," said Uncle David, "he's cute and clever, and a gentleman to boot. I'd a darned sight rather pretty Miss Grace married him than one o' these 'ere cheatin' shopkeepers in the big city. But Aunt Massy, there's a kind of a blight on Dangerfield's Rest. There's been wrong doin's there, and there'll be trouble come of it yit."

"How you talk!" quoth Aunt Mercy; "how can you be so sot about a thing you can't know anything about? It aint charitable, Uncle Dave, let alone the justice on't."

"Well, now, you just hold on and see. I haint lived here nigh onto forty year without having my own idees of things. Why hasn't the old man ever been over here to

talk matters over, and settle about the young folks' affairs? Why is it no one ever sees him about the country or in the village like Squire Vernon, or the other gentlemen that own property? What's the reason he never goes outside his own gates, and never sees any one 'cept that 'ere black-muzzled chap that lives there all the time?"

"Why, Uncle Dave, the old gentleman's poorly—he aint strong and spry like you, and he has to stay in-doors to take care of himself like many of his age."

"Don't b'lieve nuthin' bout it. He's done something or other he's ashamed on, or else he'd show himself a bit now and then like honest folks. However, 'taint my business; only you recollect, if anything happens, I told you all about it beforehand."

This rather equivocal proposition being agreed to, the worthy pair would indulge in the little episode of what was recognised as "courting," which usually wound up their *séances* of an evening. And if the shrewd Yankee knew more than he disclosed, he had the sagacity or the reticence to keep his knowledge to himself until the time should arrive when it might be made useful to those whom he had so long and so faithfully served.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE summer was drawing near its close, and the season was at hand wherein, a short twelvemonth gone, our narrative commenced. Whatever the blow might be which Kirkwood meditated, it had not yet been struck. Stephen's visits at Uplands were as frequent as ever, and the household there was filled with joy at having good reason to hope that Elinor Grazebrook might soon share the happiness of Grace, in a marriage that promised to be as felicitous as her own. As for Oliver Vernon, absorbed in his

charities and his politics, he gave little thought to the prospective harm which might be wrought by the evil genius lurking so near his home. It was only at times when his eye fell on the laughing child whose presence threw sunbeams over his path, that he thought of one who was so soon to shroud it in funereal clouds.

The incongruous party at The Rest still kept together, for the conflicting reasons which have been described; and there was no change in the personal relations which subsisted between them. Martin Dangerfield was sad and silent, and his health was failing day by day. Stephen, while treating his father with exceeding tenderness, found it difficult to believe that his conduct was, or had been, either just or courageous when dealing with their unwelcome guest. The latter the young man treated with ill-concealed disdain, such as would long since have either driven forth or provoked to quarrel a nature more sensitive or a purpose less indomitable.

If Stephen had not been so absorbed in his selfish love—if the judgment and the philosophy which were really in him had had fair opportunity to put forth their forces, he might have read in Kirkwood's mobile countenance a perfect history of sarcastic hate, growing and deepening as the time wore on, until it had now approached a climax of menacing resolve. Not that he was unconventional enough to omit the social smiles and graces which society in her commonplace way exacts, and especially when the intercourse between persons is scanty; but he indulged his physiognomical whims and grimaces when, as was most usual, Stephen was not looking at him. It was only another illustration of the blind, unreasoning folly of people who are head over ears in love; they never dream of watching or preparing for the tiger until they are overwhelmed by his spring.

One morning Mr. Kirkwood had been uncommonly taciturn. He scarcely spoke to either Martin or Stephen, and, although neither cared about the omission for its own sake, the elder man became plainly uneasy for what it

might presage. Once or twice his son happening to glance at his face, noticed an imploring expression there, as it was bent on Kirkwood's; it was but a day afterwards that Stephen quite understood what this meant.

Towards night Kirkwood absented himself, and did not return to The Rest until long after its inmates had retired to their pillows; Stephen had dined at home, and spent the evening with his father.

The next day Stephen was early at Uplands. There was to be a little excursion on the river. Aunt Mercy and Ally were to go, and Eliot was to make some sketches. Oliver Vernon watched from his study window when the merry party set forth; but when Grace's silvery laugh rang up to his ears, he covered them with his hands, and closed the window, and drew down the blinds. He did not quit his study all that day, and when, as the shadows were growing long, and the horizon growing dusky, the party returned, he sent for Stephen Dangerfield to join him there.

What need to describe the wretched interview which, all protracted as it was, made up of wonder, of expostulation, of bitter grief—sanctified by the hard wrung drops of manly tears—memorable as the blighting hour of two whole human lives—can yet be summed up in a single sentence—a single line? For Stephen went forth with the knowledge that his dream was over, and that himself and Grace Vernon must henceforth be to each other as strangers.

No reason assigned—none could be elicited any more than from his father—only this, that the bar was insuperable. No, it could *not* be removed by sacrifices, by gold, by toil, by anything that human skill or pains could devise or enforce.

"I love you even as my own son, poor boy," said the kind old man, tremulously, his eyes filled with tears, "and none the less now that you can never be so; yet it were a cruel kindness to proffer hope which can never, never be realized."

Stephen could not doubt the probity, the honor of Ver-

non, nor could he, as in his father's case, question the clearness of his judgment. It was evident his suit was absolutely hopeless, and there was nothing left but resignation or despair. See Grace? No, he would not; if this were indeed true, perhaps it were better he did not see her. Motives, explanations for her—for the world—her father would undertake, and he, Stephen, would acquiesce in. There was some strange, jumbled talk about their all being friends again some day under favorable circumstances; and Vernon said something about how very excellent and desirable it was, when people had loved so well and so hopelessly as Grace and Stephen had, for them to be friends in after life—and then the old man broke down completely, and fairly sobbed on Stephen's shoulder—and Stephen finally rushed hastily from the room, and quickly galloped away.

Vernon had forgotten, or had otherwise been prevented from naming one injunction he meant to urge—one promise he proposed to endeavor to extort. In the enforced mystery which environed the cruel blow which had overtaken him, Stephen would naturally suspect the malevolent agency of Kirkwood; and seeing, as Vernon did, that the latter, however vicious, was in no wise responsible for this particular evil, he desired to forestall any collision which Stephen in the first flush of his grief might precipitate. When he was alone, Vernon again thought of this, and at once embodied what he had omitted to say in a note which he determined to send to Stephen without delay.

Black Vixen flew over the road like the wind, and her rider was not sorry to seek in the rapid motion some relief from the whirl of agonizing thoughts which chased each other through his brain. Fortune he fully expected to be deprived of—for the devilish machinery which could deprive him of his mistress might as readily wrest from him that which only for her sake he had begun to value. What was there left for him in the future?

Whether prompted by the evil spirits whom he served, or by his own malicious design, Kirkwood was near at

hand. It was just after leaving the Uplands' boundary, and abreast of Shooter's Jutty, that a turn of the road led Stephen to slacken his pace; and, waiting placidly by the hedge, his horse browsing some chance clover under its shade—sate the arch-enemy. He raised his hat as Stephen came on, and saluted him with one of his courtly bows. The young man rode straight up to Kirkwood's side.

"Have you completed *all* the villany you intend to effect in this neighborhood?" he asked in a voice, subdued, but thick with unreasoning passion.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that I would know what further mischief to expect, of which you are the controlling cause."

"You are unreasonable," said Kirkwood soothingly, for he saw something dangerous in his companion's eye and manner. "How can I possibly tell what it is that disturbs you?"

"How can I possibly encounter any mysterious rascality and not believe you to be at the bottom of it?"

"You do me too much honor. For nearly a year you have been good enough to attribute to me whatever of mischance or disaster happens to befall you. If a murrain break out among your cattle, or the wind blows down a chimney pot, you lay the disaster at my door. Very romantic, perhaps, but, I submit, not at all rational."

"Those who walk in the light do not fear suspicion. I have a right to suspect your hand in what has just befallen me."

"It is you who are dealing in enigmas. When I know to what you allude, I shall not find it hard to reply."

"Your ingenuity will fail to exonerate you—in this case at least. You have been overheard plotting the very mischief to which I refer."

"And the eavesdropper?"—

"Immaterial. I am personally responsible for the assertion. I say, you have conspired to break off the engagement which subsisted between Miss Vernon and myself."

"Ah, now I understand. She has refused you, then?"

"Pshaw, man! Practise your duplicity with those on whom it may impose. Keep it for the weak fool whom for your own subtle reasons you have drawn into your toils. Spare yourself the pains with me."

"You attribute your rejection to me, then?"

"I attribute it to the devilish arts which you have devised and set in motion."

"How curiously unjust. I think I may surmise to what you refer. Some one has heard me say that this marriage would never be consummated? Granted. I might have told you as much long before. Suppose I had done so:—you would scarcely have thanked me for depriving you of even this short-lived elysium. When you were to know it—and know it sooner or later you must—it were better from other lips than mine. Did I not advise you to enjoy yourself while you might? Had I been disposed to do you an injury—to curtail your happiness—why did I then refrain from doing so?"

"No doubt, to make the stroke more cruel and effectual. But I shall find a means to balance the account between us."

"Ah, you threaten again: I have told you before how foolish you are to adopt that tone. If you think me so strong, don't you fear to declare open war? Do you think no further evil can betide you?"

"None that I care for. None that your enmity, implacable though it be, can compass."

"The confidence of youth. What if I were to say that my friendship alone it is which stands between you and still greater disaster?"

"I should reply, that the friendship of one I thoroughly believe a heartless miscreant, were a greater disaster than any its withdrawal could possibly entail."

"Beware—the test may be nearer than you imagine."

Their horses were now walking side by side along the road. The gloom of twilight was thickening, but it was not yet so dark but that Stephen would see that Kirkwood's face was whitening with suppressed anger. The

sight, however, to his excited and stricken heart, afforded more satisfaction than if it were a calmer one.

"Beware!" he repeated, with a bitter sneer. "Of what should I beware? What should a gentleman and a Dangerfield fear from such as you? I am not a gamester, a forger, a thief!—There can only be threats—personal accountabilities between equals. What can I have to proffer when a man like you even hints at such a thing—what but utter contempt—what but simple defiance?"

Kirkwood's snake-like eyes absolutely blazed, and his herculean frame shook with rage; yet still, true to his instincts, he suppressed his longing to provoke the explosion until he himself should be out of reach of its devastating effects.

"Don't defy me," he muttered at last. "You'd better not—you'll find it unwise—unwise in the extreme. You may go too far. I am human as well as you; and, when you speak of accounts, remember there are debts for which I, too, may extort payment."

"I believe," Stephen went on with a higher key and increased exasperation, "I believe all your stories and claims to be lies and forgeries together. I have looked into your career—there are others beside myself who know something of its history—more perhaps than you are aware. Beware, forsooth! Of a wretch who comes into my honest home to enrich himself by pillaging a weak old man—practising on his fears for some unknown and imaginary catastrophe!—Of a scoundrel who thrusts his intrigues between a man of honor and a gentlewoman the object of his devotion! Beware! Of one whose life has been one long soil and blot—a seducer who blasts the happiness of families—and who, if report speaks true, is but the nameless bastard of some Southern Slavedriver!"

As he finished the enraged speaker put spurs to his mare as if to be rid of the presence of the object of his passionate denunciation. Kirkwood had listened in silence, but, as Stephen proceeded, his face had undergone swift

alternations from crimson to ashy pallor. His arm trembled as if each moment he might raise it to smite down his accuser. The latter, indeed, was half ashamed that in his anger he had given way to a torrent of mere words—especially as his leaving him gave Kirkwood no time for retaliation. With this thought Stephen slackened his pace, and heard as he did so the horse of the other coming on with long strides in pursuit. In a few moments it was again abreast, and then strongly checked by the rider, who raised his hand to arrest Stephen's attention.

"One word," he hissed in accents of concentrated hate. "One word in return for all your compliments. You would know the reason of your rejection. Henceforth ascribe it to the right cause."

"To you!"

"You mistake. The daughter of Oliver Vernon cannot wed the son of *his brother's Murderer!*"

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE blow had fallen at last, and with crushing effect. A blow which neither sagacity could avert nor caution parry. A blow which in an instant darkened the destiny of two happy and innocent lives, and placed a third at the point of dissolution. For it seemed as if Martin Dangerfield could not survive his son's knowledge of his crime. On the night Stephen came home after his fatal interview with Kirkwood, the father divined through one look at his wretched face that his only son—his heir—was added to the sharers in the miserable secret of his disgrace. The old man spoke not a word, but handed Stephen the key which opened the cabinet containing that history it had been his hope to withhold until after his death:—and then crept quietly to his bed. In the morning he was in a raging fever.

During that awful night Stephen was poring over and reading again and again the papers he took from the cabinet. They told without reservation and with ample details the tale which he expected to find. They told how, for a length of time, his father and William Vernon and Kirkwood had been boon companions, spending many a night in gambling and wassail together; how they had finally quarrelled about some disputed question at cards, and how Martin Dangerfield soon after discovered that Vernon had forged his name to several checks amounting to a large sum which had been duly paid by his bankers in New York. The account went on to state that for a long time they had not met, but that Kirkwood had persuaded Dangerfield to postpone a prosecution and exposure, on the ground that Vernon would replace what he had fraudulently obtained. Pending this delay while walking late one evening in a distant part of his grounds, Dangerfield encountered Vernon and Kirkwood together. All were somewhat excited with wine, and high words passed, when, infuriated by certain harsh epithets bestowed upon him, Vernon struck Dangerfield across the face. The latter closed with his assailant, and in the heat of the struggle a pistol in Dangerfield's hand exploded, and the bullet passing through Vernon's breast laid the unfortunate man bleeding and dead upon the turf.

The narrative then went on to relate how Kirkwood had concealed the body among some bushes, and had then forced the unhappy Dangerfield in a distracted condition from the spot. How, after leaving him at The Rest, Kirkwood had returned, and favored by the darkness of the night and the loneliness of the spot, had managed to convey the corpse down the cliff, and, availing of a boat on the shore, had sunk it, as he afterwards averred, far out in the stream. It was added that the remains were never discovered, and that after a long search, the family of William Vernon concluded that he had either committed suicide or left the country—the conditions of his previous life having been such as to bring either contingency within

the scope of probability. Finally there followed an earnest disclaimer of any evil intent in the sad catastrophe which had occurred, and a passionate appeal from Martin Dangerfield imploring that his son would not curse his memory.

Such, in brief, was the gloomy substance of the documents over which Stephen spent hours in staring with a sort of horrible fascination. There was no more mystery now. The secrets of his father's misery and of Kirkwood's hidden power were alike laid bare. Knowing, too, the passion that family pride had ever been in that father's breast, the son could measure and appreciate the tortures he must for years have suffered, not from remorse alone, but from the ever-present apprehension of detection and shame. Here likewise was the motive for his isolated life; here, more especially, that of his alienation from the neighboring family, which had so often been remarked and wondered at. And here, relentless and insurmountable, was the barrier which should for ever prevent a son of Martin Dangerfield from calling Grace Vernon his wife.

Long and wearily did poor Stephen ponder over the woful tragedy he had perused, and the course of action it was incumbent on him to pursue. His first resolution was that his father's name and person must be kept sacred at all hazards. Should he go, he thought, to Oliver Vernon? No; he was not a man to dread. Vengeance was not in his creed, and even if it were, the misery of fifteen years—the despairing agony of a son—might expiate in his mild eyes even the shedding of a brother's blood. Besides—and Stephen's heart sickened and his flesh crawled at the thought—how could he face that good and sinless man—the father of her who was so pure and beautiful—to discuss the deeds of a felon, and he that felon's son?

But Kirkwood—aye, there lay the danger. He must be bought, cajoled, threatened—anything—to swear an eternal silence for the future.

It was nearly four o'clock, and the cold, grey dawn was glimmering in the east, when Stephen stole forth from his room, and passed into the silent corridor. His father's

door was ajar, and Stephen heard his voice feeble and muttering within. He was calling on his son, and imploring his forgiveness; asleep or delirious, Stephen thought, as he glided softly into the chamber. The old man was in a fitful slumber, the clothes of the couch heaped about him in feverish confusion. His son went to the bedside, and leaving a kiss and a tear on the worn and weary forehead, departed as noiselessly as he came. Then he bent his steps through the long passages leading towards the apartment in the further wing occupied by Kirkwood. A horrible thought flashed across his mind as he went on, thinking as he was of the misery this man had caused, and the misery he yet might cause hereafter. The thought almost deepened into resolve, for the young man's teeth set, and his haggard eyes burned with a desperate fire; but when he had crept into the room where Kirkwood lay, he found it empty; the nest had been lately occupied indeed, but the bird had flown—and Stephen fell upon his knees and prayed.

CHAPTER I.

THE next was a sad day at Uplands. Vernon was not one to postpone a necessary duty, or to shrink from a grief, however poignant, which must inevitably be endured. He had listened to the story told him by Kirkwood with astonishment and pity. At first he was somewhat incredulous; but his informant was armed at all points. He exhibited some unimportant papers, which had been on William Vernon's person at the time of his death—one of them stained with his blood. He told the tale with circumstantial minuteness, such as absolutely enforced conviction. Finally, he showed a brief confession of the deed signed by Martin Dangerfield, which Kirkwood had exacted directly after it had been committed, as one of the pledges

of his own secrecy, and as being essential in case of accidents to disarm suspicion of himself as sharing in the crime. Vernon failed not to perceive, likewise, that the day and the hour corresponded with those of his brother's disappearance; and he remembered that the latter had been even unusually sullen and moody for some time before that event. On the whole, Vernon found himself obliged to accept Kirkwood's statement as literally true.

It remained for him to determine what his own duty might be in the premises; and here again Kirkwood's cunning was not at fault in auguring his resolution. To denounce Martin Dangerfield would not only involve opening up the wretched story of the forgeries, but would tear afresh the heart of his innocent son, and that of his own unhappy daughter. A conviction would be doubtful, and even if it were certain, Vernon questioned whether any real duty to God or man would justify punishment. He resolved, as Kirkwood had anticipated, that, in retaining the secret absolutely within his own breast, he should do what conscience and prudence would alike approve.

We spare the piteous recital to poor Grace of the necessity which existed for the giving up her betrothed. We omit the pious and affectionate dissimulation wherewith Oliver Vernon strove to persuade her it was for the best, while he was compelled to withhold the facts which would show that necessity to be absolute. We draw a veil over the agony of that simple, guileless nature, smitten with its first great grief, and all conscious as it was that the love she was bade to cast forth from her heart never could be replaced on earth.

There are griefs which the pen should not seek to describe, for they leave the tongue dumb it would imitate. Like some terrestrial joys—alas! too few—they come to us as "silence's perfectest herald." Like the stroke which Heaven suffers to leap from its clouds, they leave their victim mute. The emotions which are most tremendous or exalted are those that bring no speech; and they suggest, as do all earthly reaches into the infinite, our relation to

that higher existence when human words shall be no more.

The strange mingling which all are destined sometimes to feel—that of pleasure with pain—was not wanting now. A letter arrived the same day from Elinor, brimming with love and happiness. She wrote that Boynton had sought her once more—every obstacle to their union was removed—and that he begged her consent to its consummation at the same time with that of Grace Vernon and Stephen Dangerfield. She wrote too—in a somewhat mysterious strain—that the causes which would promote the felicity of both alliances were so intermingled, that she was constrained to think there would be a propriety in such a simultaneous celebration. But she would explain all to her dear friends—her guardian and her sister Grace—whom she besought to meet her at once in New York.

Robert Eliot, on hearing the engagement was at an end, immediately sought and obtained an interview with Stephen. He bore an affectionate letter from Vernon, urging his young friend to avoid a collision of any sort with Kirkwood—the warning, as we have seen, coming too late. He likewise advised Stephen—in a guarded manner, not knowing to what extent he might then or hereafter be conversant with all the mournful features of the case—that Kirkwood possessed a certain *acknowledgment*, subscribed to by his father, which it might be well to obtain, should it be possible, in view of any mischievous use to which the possessor might be tempted to apply it in the future. Eliot also apprised Stephen of the incident witnessed by little Ally, on Shooter's Jutty. Grace had communicated it to her father, who thought it right to reveal it to those whom it might chiefly concern. What the man's objects were, Eliot remarked, neither Mr. Vernon nor himself could surmise. He also delicately conveyed an intimation of his ignorance as to the cause of the rupture which had occurred, but added his conviction that there was a mystery about Kirkwood's proceedings yet to be unveiled, and which he was much disposed to aid in discovering. But

Stephen shook his head with a mournful sigh, knowing full well that his visitor, however kindly disposed, must be powerless in view of the circumstances known to Vernon and himself. Eliot learned with interest of Kirkwood's absence, a circumstance which he coupled in his own mind with what he had long before overheard—and shaking Stephen heartily by the hand, urged him to keep up his spirits, for that all would yet be well.

The same evening Eliot left Uplands for New York, whither he was followed on the succeeding day by Oliver Vernon.

The hour had come when Kirkwood's plans should reach their consummation. He had waited even longer than he thought prudent in the hope of avoiding such risks as a forged mortgage would necessarily entail. But yielding and timorous as Martin Dangerfield had been in all other respects, he was firm in his refusal to cripple the estate, and thereby rob his son of the patrimony he had a right to expect. The same family pride which led him to make all manner of sacrifices to prevent a stain being affixed to its escutcheon through the exposure of the deed he had committed, was powerful in restraining him from sacrificing the family lands. At last, Kirkwood realized that his hopes in that direction were futile, and promptly resolved upon the alternative he had always kept in view. In order to facilitate the arrangement which, with the aid of Staggers, he proposed to effect with Gossamer Von Donk, it was essential that the engagement between Grace Vernon and Stephen Dangerfield should be unmistakably broken off. That preliminary was now disposed of, and there was every reason he should complete what he had to do with the utmost speed. Indeed, the threats of Mary Grazebrook were daily becoming more peremptory, for the time had elapsed when it had been stipulated Kirkwood was to make good the sum belonging to Elinor. When to these considerations was added that, from the suspicious character of his movements and the number of interests involved,

his intrigues might, at any moment, be detected and denounced, it was evidently highly desirable for him to wind up his affairs and decamp with his booty.

It was, therefore, within a very brief space that he carried into effect the negotiation of the mortgage, which we need scarcely say was forthcoming in proper form. The signature of Martin Dangerfield, duly witnessed by two old servants of the family, and well known as it was to Staggers, would have borne a scrutiny more disposed to suspicion than the prudent broker found it his interest to be. Gossamer was the more ready to advance the large sum agreed upon, since he heard from Eliot on the third day after Kirkwood's arrival in town, a corroboration of the latter's statement that the obnoxious engagement was really at an end. The delivery of the instrument was prudently avoided by Kirkwood up to the last moment, that he might have as much time as possible to secure his retreat. It was necessary to silence Mary Grazebrook for a little longer, to pay a flying visit to The Rest that he might secure his buried treasures at Shooter's Jutty, and then he was free to depart. All these plans were now on the eve of fulfilment. It was a Friday, the mortgage had been delivered just before the close of banking hours, and the proceeds were secretly turned into bills on Europe; and Kirkwood chuckled with satisfaction as he reflected that in a few short days he should be speeding across the broad ocean to enjoy them.

CHAPTER LI.

A DREARY autumnal evening with the leaves rattling down from the tree-tops, and the wind sighing and moaning ceaselessly through branches that looked pitiful in their bereavement. Such evenings are always saddest in the poor quarters of a great city. No strong shade to throw coolness and mistiness over half the vista, to

temper the staring dirt and meanness of the brighter half. All one dull wearisome monotone, with never a trace of relief or colour to lessen its tedium or soften its melancholy.

It had been very dark during the afternoon, and continued so until it was quite time for the sunset. Then there appeared one of these curious phenomena of the atmosphere which people notice very little because they are so common. The lead colour which suffused the air changed suddenly to a murky pink, which again merged into an ominous crimson. Easily explained, no doubt, by natural laws of light and refraction; but it gave no single person who *did* notice it, the idea of something natural.

On the contrary, it suggested instinctively the idea of something out of the normal and legitimate course—something which served as a precursor to events mysterious and horrible which were to come. So thought James Kirkwood as he peered forth at the skies from the windows of his hotel, and his spirits sank lower and lower until with a violent and angry effort he changed the current of gloomy reflection. "Absurd," he muttered, gnawing the end of his cigar, "thrice absurd! It means simply that we are to have what we shall all be glad of—a fair day to-morrow, and I am conjuring up a horde of avenging furies! Pshaw!"

He was in the reading-room of the house, and he had continued gazing through the windows on the crowded thoroughfare until it grew darker and darker, and the sanguinary glare had quite faded out of the atmosphere. Then, one by one, the street-lamps were lighted, and now they were winking and blazing on the myriad faces of the passers-by. Kirkwood looked at his watch and walked away into the bar at the rear of the building and took a heavy draught of brandy-and-water.

"Time to be moving," he muttered again. "Time to be moving, or this She-devil may yet do me a mischief. None so dangerous as those who have nothing to lose." He drew forth his tablets and made sundry swift calculations. "Quite a hundred thousand in all—enough for any one of my moderate habits. Yet I might make it much more if

she were only silenced. And still what can she do, after all? Denounce me? Where are her proofs?—No; better not stir this time until the nest is well feathered. I must see her, however, and close her mouth for the present. Perhaps I'll make love to her again," glancing at his swart yet handsome face in an opposite mirror, "that never failed yet—even now may answer best of all."

He strode forth from the hotel and presently turned sharply to the left and plunged into the network of streets lying to the westward of Broadway. The man was evidently in a nervous mood, for he paused in his course at one of the abounding corner liquor shops and again fortified himself with his fiery comforter. Soon he reached the neighbourhood we have seen him approach before, and arrived at the squalid court which contained the lodging of Mary Grazebrook. Again he groped his way up the dark and narrow staircase and once more knocked at her door. The room was unlighted, and, as he entered, he stumbled over something just inside; a crash followed, but he recovered himself in time to avoid falling.

"What the h—ll's that?"

"Charcoal, James. Very convenient to cook with, and to light a fire sometimes," said a voice out of the gloom.

"Why in the fiend's name don't you have a light?"

"It's expensive, worthy sir, and besides it drives away my companions—there's much better society in the dark."

"Stuff," he grumbled, closing the door, while his companion proceeded to strike a light. "You can have money enough for the asking."

"Can I? Yes, when you know there'll be no asking, you can be liberal enough, no doubt. But my child—where's my child's money, James? That which belongs to her, I mean—you've broken your word, again, my generous friend;—have you come to tell me why?"

"I've been unfortunate," he said, throwing himself testily into a chair. "Things have gone ill with me. I can't do impossibilities. You must give me more time."

"What an accomplished liar you are, James," said Mary

Grazebrook, turning the light full upon his dark face, and regarding it with a look of contempt, not altogether unleavened by admiration. "You really improve with years instead of retrograding."

"What do you mean by sending me this infernal threatening letter?" he inquired savagely, and throwing her note upon the table. The liquor he had drunk was beginning to make him brutal.

"How handsome and attractive he looks when he's angry," said the woman jeeringly, "but he mustn't think to frighten any one here. We're used to that sort of thing, and it doesn't even make our pulse beat quicker. Feel!" and she stretched forth her hand on which her old marriage ring glinted in the light, and which, as his eyes fell on it, seemed to exasperate him the more. She followed his glance and seemed to read his thought.

"I know what you're thinking of, James Kirkwood. You're thinking of the time when that little circle of metal meant something, and when, if an unhappy wife, I was still not a dishonoured one. You're thinking of the time when you came stealing in, first with looks of compassion, then with whispers of sympathy, then with pressures of the hand and words of manly consolation, paving the way, step by step, inch by inch, to make me the foul thing you afterwards transformed me to. It's a brave recollection, man, isn't it? See here." And she rose abruptly, and opening a defaced writing-case which stood on a bureau, drew forth a miniature and held it up before him. It was that of a handsome, sunny-faced young man, with a bright smile, a clear blue eye uplifted in hope, and curling auburn hair. You could see now where Elinor's wavy blonde tresses came from. "You remember him, too, don't you, James? This was taken in the first year you knew him—he changed sadly in the last one, didn't he?"

"Take it away, woman," said Kirkwood hoarsely, and shading his eyes from the light. "What devil is it that tempts you to bring up all these memories now?"

"It's my humour, that's all," she answered mournfully.

"I often gaze on him for hours together, and why shouldn't you see him sometimes? Am I to bear *all* the punishment, and you escape scot-free? 'Yes,' you would say. That's your idea of justice, isn't it? Justice!" and she gave a scornful laugh, "Justice! Do you believe in such a thing, James, now or hereafter?"

"I'll tell you what I believe—that if you don't put that thing away, I shall do you a mischief—do you hear?"

"Ho, ho! A mischief! As if he could do me any mischief in this world greater than he has already inflicted! Threaten those you can injure, coward,—not me."

"What's come to you, Mary?" he asked, and speaking more gently, "what's the matter with you to-night? We can do no good by quarrelling—do be reasonable."

"Well, I will—I will be reasonable. You're quite right—the time has long gone by for words between us—There should now be only deeds. Come," she continued, restoring the likeness to its place, "come; I'll tell you why I wrote that letter, and in a very few words. It was because you are the father of my child, and although I hate you, and am at no pains to conceal it, yet for her sake I would save you from open disgrace—from penal punishment!"

"Punishment? Pshaw. What can you do—who will believe you—what can you prove?"

"First—not of what I *can* do but of what I have done. I have drawn up a sketch of your life and achievements—nothing omitted that I know of—the thefts, the forgeries, the subornations,—I believe I might add murders, but of them I am not certain,—together with such circumstantial evidence as I have been long collecting and putting together—and this sketch I have sent"—

"To the ministers of the law?"

"No—to Oliver Vernon."

Kirkwood made a quick tiger-like movement as if contemplating a spring, but the woman drew a small revolver from her breast and placed it quietly on the table before her.

"Don't be rash, James. My nerves are steadier than yours, for you've been drinking, I see. Is there need to tell you why I have done this? None, I should say. You had fair warning. You robbed my child and sent her forth to a life of privation, perhaps to become an out-cast in the end, like her mother. It is right that I should protect her if I can. I mean to do so."

He crossed his arms upon his breast, and looked her steadily in the eye. It was his fashion when he once began to believe that he must face danger. When he spoke, it was mildly, almost affectionately.

"There was a time, Mary, when you would not have used these words of menace. Even now you will repent having used them. What you have done is mere spite,—simply that, because it can only harm you and cannot touch myself. Nothing that you allege can be proved against me. Even those letters which might have shown something are destroyed."

"You mistake," she replied coldly, "some of them still exist."

"By your treachery, then."

"Call it what you like—enough remain to answer the purpose."

"Pardon me—but I don't believe it."

"I could convince you, but that will come soon enough. Suffice that what I say is true."

"Ah! you have something perhaps to which, in your ignorance of the law, you attach undue importance. Come, I will be generous with you. Vernon is a soft fool, who will hesitate long before he strikes. Go to him; retract what you have written—say it was suggested by a jealous frenzy, or what you will. Give me such papers as you have, and the same hour I restore, or rather *give* you Elinor's patrimony. Is it agreed?"

"No. I can no longer trust you. Besides, I have resolved that—in this part of the world, at least—you shall work no more evil."

"You refuse?"

"Distinctly."

"Then take the consequences." He rose as he spoke, and her quick hand fell on the pistol. "Oh! don't fear," he continued, with a sneering laugh, "I've no mind to harm you—at least in that way. I'll even tell you how the blow will come, that it may not find you unprepared. To-morrow I shall lodge an information against you for defamation and conspiracy; you have no friends—no means; you will be locked up—incarcerated in a felon's cell, until such time as I choose to take further action to chastise you."

She rose also, and waved her hand with the gesture of a queen.

"Idle. Idle all, James, even if your power were equal to your will. Nay, even were you to kill me to-night—which I don't mean you shall," with a significant glance at the pistol, "it would still do you no good. Your position, indeed, would be far more critical than before—your fate more hopelessly sealed."

"And why—tell me that!"

"Because, James Kirkwood," and her voice concentrated into its deepest and steadiest monotone, "*because that man still lives.*"

"Liar!"

"True, so help me God! Do you think *his* evidence will be sufficient?"

The veins in Kirkwood's throat and forehead swelled up until they stood out in startling relief from his swarthy skin, and his voice came thick and husky.

"And you have written Vernon *this* also?"

"No. I only knew it for a fact to-day—but to-morrow—"

"To-morrow you will communicate it to him?"

"I will."

"That by G—d you never shall!" And he advanced threateningly upon her.

Instantly she raised the pistol.

"Stand back, man, or I fire!"

But accustomed to think and act simultaneously, and

relying upon the uncertainty of her aim, he sprang forward. As he did so, she drew the trigger, and the cap exploded harmlessly. The weapon had been too long loaded. In another second Kirkwood had wrenched it from her grasp, and, transported with his fury, had dealt her a heavy blow in the forehead with the stock. Mary Grazebrook reeled for a moment, and then fell heavily to the floor.

Only for a second did Kirkwood pause to gaze on the prostrate form before him; in the next he had noiselessly locked the door.

"Only in a swoon," he muttered, and then he looked wistfully at the pistol. "No," he went on, "no noise—that would ruin all—yet she must be silenced. Whether true or false, for her to repeat *that* were my destruction. What's to be done?"

He lifted the body, and carried it like a feather to the inner room, where he laid it on the bed, and put his ear down to the mouth. "No breath," he whispered, "but 'twill come soon enough, unless prevented." Then he tried the lock of the door leading from one room to the other. It fastened easily. This was the only outlet. Not even a window to the chamber. The sole ventilation must come from the sitting-room. Suddenly he returned thither, and stepping towards the door, his eyes fell on the basket over which he stumbled on first entering, and a grim smile broke over his face.

"I could not touch her again," said he with a shudder, "but she might easily kill herself with this. How common! and, in her case, how much cause!" With that he descried a closet by the fire-place, and speedily found what he shrewdly suspected must be somewhere on the premises—a portable brazier. Hastily he filled it with the charcoal, and carried it into the inner space. Then he reflected a little, and began searching about for something else. "Women of this sort always keep it," he murmured, "as well as gamblers—sleep must be more than entreated sometimes." Presently he found a phial on a shelf in the closet,

which contained a dark-coloured fluid. This he both smelt and tasted, and became satisfied that the label correctly described the contents. Next he found a spoon, and carrying the phial back into the chamber, he cautiously poured out a few drops, and placed it gently to the woman's lips. Even his iron nerves shook for a moment as her passive mouth received the opiate. "Courage," he thought, "'tis no murder, after all." Strange discrimination; he meant to kill, but dared not directly, with his own hands commit the deed. This done, he again went to the main apartment, and opened the *escritoire*, wherein Mary had placed her husband's miniature. It was filled with papers which, without pausing for examination, he thrust into the stove, and applied the candle. Then he took the picture, and carrying it to his victim's bedside, he placed it carefully in her bosom. The action was mainly dictated by craft, but it was not altogether without a spark of sentiment. "She would wish it," he reflected, and actually took credit to himself for consulting her probable desire. There was a pocket-book in the desk with a little—a very little—money in it; he pondered for a moment, and then added two or three bank notes to the store, and replaced the book in the desk. He examined rapidly to discover if there were any outlets or inlets for air communicating with the room within. There were none. Even at the bottom of the door, which might have been half an inch from the sill, there was a piece of listing, which rendered the place quite impervious.

Finally, he took the candle into the chamber, set it on a chair, and paused. He fancied she had commenced to breathe. No; the body was still motionless—insensible. Then he imagined he heard a step on the stairs, and he held his own breath and listened. No one; the whole place was as silent as the grave. A fresh thought struck him, and he carried the pistol with the hammer down on the exploded cap and laid it on the floor by the bed.

"That's all," he mused; "every thing that can be done. The pistol, the laudanum, the charcoal, each will tell of a

determined suicide. No one saw me enter, none will see me depart. No one may come for days yet, and to-morrow I may be on blue water."

He gazed for a while on the still beautiful face before him, and perhaps the skilful might have traced some lingering compunction on his own marble countenance. He could not all forget that he had once loved and sworn to cherish this poor inanimate clay. But whatever his thoughts or feelings he did not hesitate long. "She or me," he muttered, "she or me. She would be implacable after this—and then—if what she says be true—!" The sweat stood on his brow as he thought of what might happen should he, through weakness or accident, forego his purpose.

"No," thought he again. "No folly, no irresolution. All can be managed but her, and she once gone—"

He stooped down and carefully arranged fragments of paper and shavings which he had gathered in a manner to insure the ignition of the coals. Then he brought more of the latter, adjusting them with extreme nicety so that they might burn with freedom, and without falling upon the floor. "Though for that matter," he murmured, "one would answer as well as the other—but not so safe—not so safe. People might come and extinguish the flames, and rescue her—maimed and disfigured perhaps,—to hunt me for life,—no, that must not be."

At last he lighted the inflammable matter in the bottom of the brazier, and after watching carefully till it was safely ablaze, he took the candle and withdrew. Then he closed the door, locked it from without, and thrust the key well under the listing into the room again. As he did so a convulsive shudder shook his whole frame. Wretch as he was, he felt that the action was irrevocable, and all there was left of humanity in his degraded nature revolted at the deed. But he could not do things by halves. He had gone too far for that. As a final precaution he stuffed some loose paper into the key-hole—it might have been placed there from within, he thought, as well as from without.

He extinguished the candle, passed softly into the entry, locked the outer door, thrust the key under it as with the other, and stole softly down stairs. He waited a moment at the street entrance, but all was silent,—not even the tread of a distant passer-by could be heard,—and he pressed his cloak far up over his face and fled away into the darkness.

CHAPTER LII.

KIRKWOOD went straight to his hotel. There were papers to secure, and he thought it wise to show himself in his familiar haunts before starting by a late train for the North. To do what he had to do, ending with the payment of his bill at the office of the house, did not occupy many minutes. He would send for his portmanteau, he told the clerk, and, should any one call, would he be good enough to say that Mr. Kirkwood had left town. It was with a feeling of relief that the man strode away to cross the threshold of the place for the last time. He had a consciousness that it was well so to manage as not to be easily found, in case of accidents. Yet he reflected that, should the worst happen, the more witnesses to attest to having seen him that evening the better. Therefore, he determined to go to the — Club in Fifth Avenue: he would probably meet Staggers there, or young Von Donk and others of their set. Thus resolved he passed through the hall, and had just set his foot on the pavement of Broadway when some one touched him on the shoulder.

It required all Kirkwood's hardihood to enable him to bear this sudden intimation without either flinching or crying out—but he did so. As he turned he saw and recognised the person who sought his attention—a servant of Oliver Vernon's—whom he remembered to have noticed at Uplands.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said the man respectfully,

"but I was to find you and give you this." He held forth a note and stood as if waiting for a reply while Kirkwood rapidly opened and read it. It was from Vernon and ran thus:—

— STREET, *Friday*, P.M.

"Mr. Vernon presents his compliments to Mr. Kirkwood, and for reasons of importance, requests that Mr. Kirkwood will call at the above address during the present evening. Mr. Kirkwood will find it to his disadvantage should he fail to respond to this invitation."

Kirkwood reflected. "This comes of Mary's letter. Clearly he can know nothing of the other matter. It won't answer to refuse to go. On the contrary, it were perhaps the best of *alibis*. As to this pitiful money of Elinor's, I can promise to restore it if need be—give notes—anything to gain time. He'll scarcely proceed to extremities for the children's sake. Probably he means nothing more than a warning and a suggestion to make myself scarce. Yes, I'll go."

"Tell your master," he said at last aloud, "that you have seen me—let me see—why, 'tis nine o'clock—" looking at his watch, "and that I will have the pleasure of waiting upon him before ten."

"I beg your pardon, sir," again said the man, "but Mr. Vernon thought it might be convenient for you to be driven to the house, and so sent his carriage. Here it is."

Kirkwood looked up and saw the vehicle—the driver on the box—close by the curb. A superstitious thrill ran through his breast. "Have they been watching me," he asked himself, "can these men *know*?—Impossible."

"Have you been waiting long?" he asked.

"About an hour, sir," replied the man. "If we did not find you here by nine o'clock, we had a list of places at which to seek you."

Kirkwood's busy thoughts ran on. "What does this mean? Does Vernon propose to make me a prisoner? Absurd. He can have no warrant—there is no charge—

can be none—at all events not to-night. Well, I'll go—go and face it out, be it what it may. Those concerned will be wary how they drive me to a corner. They know too well what precious scandals I can bring on them all. There is only one man I need fear," and he clenched his hand, and a withering frown knitted his brow, "and only him because he is reckless and impulsive. Damn him! And I to think of departure without settling accounts with the young cub. This comes of old Martin's obstinacy. However, I can pay off the score. Once safe abroad I can cause the thing to be published far and wide. They shall feel that my arm can still reach them, if I *am* three thousand miles away."

Briefer to think these thoughts than to write them. By this time Kirkwood's expression was quite cheerful. He had escaped for a moment the awful thought of the crime he had last committed, and was revelling in the anticipation of mischief to come.

"All right," he cried gaily, as he sprang into the carriage, "'twas fortunate you found me." The door was closed and then a man got on the box, and the vehicle rolled swiftly away. Suddenly they passed a bright, flaring light—it was at the door of one of those pestilent "Concert Saloons," which infest Broadway. Through the glass above the front seat Kirkwood could see the figures on the box. One was the driver whom he had noticed before, but the other—Kirkwood's heart sank with apprehension—who *was* the other? The man who brought him the note was dressed in distinctive drab—trousers and coat alike—but this man's attire was sombre—all black or nearly so. What should be his object? The smile faded from the murderer's lip, and the anxious look of doubt and dread came back again. His fingers began to play nervously with a carefully loaded revolver he pulled from his pocket. Then he drew forth a small bowie knife, and passed his thumb along its edge. Whoever tried to arrest him should make a stiff fight for it—on that he was determined. But resolution could not keep down the stifling

doubts and fears which were constantly rising to his brain, and from which he was henceforth never to be free.

The carriage rolled swiftly on, and the time seemed all too short to its desperate occupant before it drew up sharply before Oliver Vernon's door. So many chances to be weighed, so many contingencies to be guarded against! How much was known and how little? True, he was on his guard as to the revelations of Mary Grazebrook—they were doubtless unfortunate, damaging,—yet he did not believe they could be practically wielded against him. But what else was known? And why was that man on the box? Such were the thoughts and queries which flashed across the active brain now bent on that service of extremest need—to rescue its owner from impending destruction. The bell was rung before Kirkwood alighted, but he sprang up the steps with a sudden purpose, and, as the opening door permitted a flood of light to shine forth into the darkened street, Kirkwood wheeled with a rapid movement and looked behind. The glance was sufficient. Brief as it was, it turned him half sick. He had seen the features of the unknown man on the box;—and he recognised those of a noted detective.

"Courage," he thought. "It is impossible that any one can have wind of the forgery. Neither Staggers nor Von Donk had any spark of suspicion. There must be complaint—investigation—comparison—before such action as this could occur. Days would pass at least—that must be safe. But if no time to detect the forgery how much less to detect the mur—"

"Be pleased to walk up stairs, sir," said the domestic, who answered the bell. The door closed behind him, and Kirkwood was ushered into a rear drawing-room on the floor above. The servant placed a chair, said something about his master coming presently, and withdrew. Was it fancy or was there a click as of turning a lock? Kirkwood did not like to test it—better not exhibit suspicion, he thought, but he rose stealthily and passing to a window

at the extremity of the room, made a lightning-like reconnoissance of the situation. The windows opened upon the top of an apartment below, constituting what is termed an extension, and this was connected again with neighboring structures of a similar character. A sash was open, and Kirkwood perceived that a room next him on the left was also accessible from the roof of the extension, and that the third house in the same direction was evidently on a corner, and had a vacant lot in its rear facing upon a street which ran at right angles to that on which the house itself stood. Satisfied with these hasty observations, Kirkwood glided back to his seat barely in time to anticipate the opening of the folding doors which separated the room he occupied from the one adjoining, opposite the windows. These doors opened noiselessly, and discovered a large and elegant apartment wherein were seated three persons.

At a table covered with papers sat Oliver Vernon, upon whose usually benevolent countenance was a look of thoughtful resolution. Opposite him sat Robert Eliot, whose paramount expression appeared to be that of eager interest. A few paces behind Vernon, dressed in an unwonted suit of black, and with an air of profound gravity on his shrewd, kindly face, was David Greenwood. Whether or not the honest fellow expected to be called upon to act a *Huguet* to his master's *Richelieu*, he had between his knees a stout cudgel of hickory—the most dangerous weapon he had ever been known to use.

"Turn up the lights, Peters," said Vernon to the servant who had opened the doors, "turn up the lights, and then leave the room."

The man obeyed, while the speaker gravely saluted his visitor.

"I sent for you, Mr. Kirkwood, because certain facts have come to my knowledge, of which justice to others compels me to take cognizance—facts in which you are interested as principal actor—facts which, as they have been productive of disastrous consequences, and through your agency, I would gladly give you the opportunity to

atone, so far as it may now be possible, before it is too late."

"I know not what you refer to," said Kirkwood, boldly, "but, if we are to talk business, I suggest that we should be alone."

"What I have to say must be said before witnesses," returned Vernon gently. "It will make no difference to your disadvantage. For at the termination of this interview you will either be disposed to quit the country for ever—or the number who witness your disgrace will be quite immaterial."

"If you sent for me to indulge in empty insults, Mr. Vernon," said Kirkwood haughtily, "you might have spared yourself the trouble. I know the law. I know the consequences of my own actions—better perhaps than you know the consequences of yours—and I'll tell you one, at least, of the latter, which is, that I shall hold you to strict personal account for any defamatory expressions you employ towards me—to-night, or on any other past or future occasion."

"Will you oblige me by coming nearer?" said Vernon, in the same dispassionate tone. "Thank you. You are unwise to lose your temper. It is my custom to speak the truth; you can judge for yourself, when we have finished, whether I infringe it. Do you know this writing?"

"This appears to be a sort of judicial investigation," sneered Kirkwood, taking the paper. "However, I don't object to humor the comedy. Know the writing? Perfectly. More; I can guess, without reading, the contents. Is it strange that a woman like that should cherish hatred under the circumstances, which you know as well as I? Don't you know, in fact, that she has hated and vowed vengeance against me for years?"

"Granted. But if you committed these deeds, her hatred would not absolve, any more than it made you commit them. A man is not privileged to commit thefts and forgeries, because some one has reason to dislike his person or character."

"Tut, Oliver Vernon," said Kirkwood, running his eye hastily over the paper. "What need for us to chop sophistry? I say that these charges are absolutely calumnious and false. I say, further, that if true they are outlawed, beyond the pale of legal prosecution."

"Does that apply to Elinor Grazebrook's patrimony?"

"Bring an action, if you like, and put it to the test."

Kirkwood grew bolder and bolder, as he found the extent and scope of the difficulties he was likely to encounter. So far, he saw nothing he was not confident of refuting or breaking down.

"I certainly intend to endeavor to recover it," said Vernon steadily, "and that without delay."

"Why not have made the endeavor before?" asked Kirkwood insolently. "Indeed, why pay it in the first place at all?"

"Because there were reasons which your cunning was not at a loss to appreciate; reasons why scandal should not be revived. But events have transpired which make the principal of those reasons shrink into insignificance. The lady affected can no longer be prejudiced in a social sense, for her position is now assured. For the rest, if you choose to inflict disgrace upon your own child, you are worse than I take you to be."

"Right is right," replied the other roughly. "These personal considerations have no bearing on the merits of the case."

"I am glad to hear that you think so, for if you are willing to adjust all things in consonance with pure justice, it will simplify our understanding very materially."

"I really see nothing further to discuss. To all that I see here, and to all that you say, I interpose simply a general denial. You challenge my denial. Good. I say, in that case, proceed and establish your proofs. Meanwhile I shall bid you good evening." And with his favorite assumption of courtliness, always most apparent when he was well at ease, Kirkwood rose and prepared to leave the room. A peculiar smile flitted across the face of Robert

Eliot, and Vernon also arose, and stretching forth his arm, said with dignity:—

"Not so, James Kirkwood. I have not yet finished your indictment!"

A chill ran through Kirkwood's breast.

"Strange," he thought again, "strange, this constant dread of the impossible. But there must be no flinching." He resumed his seat with the smile still on his lip. "Pray finish it as speedily as you can, then—I have engagements."

"There shall be no unnecessary delay. First, it is necessary that I should recal some circumstances to your mind—circumstances which have passed between ourselves."

"Go on."

"My daughter was engaged to marry Stephen Dangerfield. The pledge was on the eve of fulfilment. You came forward and prevented it."

"You yourself justified the step and its motives."

"True. You made a long statement whose truth Martin Dangerfield himself has since corroborated and endorsed."

"He has?" asked Kirkwood, with a gleam of satisfaction.

"He has. You declared, and he repeated, that sixteen years ago himself and my brother William had an encounter on the cliff between Uplands and Dangerfield's Rest. That my unhappy brother had forged Martin Dangerfield's name, and that there were other differences between them which led to the altercation. That in the struggle which occurred, my brother met his death at the hands of his antagonist. Finally, that you, having witnessed this tragedy, had religiously preserved the secret until the time you communicated it to me for a special purpose."

Kirkwood paused for a moment in some surprise before he rejoined:—"And which secret you yourself undertook to keep."

"I am not unmindful of that, or of the consequences of

the infraction. For the present, I will ask you if I have correctly stated the facts in question?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Then I may proceed. The concurrent testimony of the only living actor, and the only living witness of this ghastly scene, I regarded as conclusive. You said true—that my child could not espouse the son of her uncle's murderer. You said true—that it was not in my heart to bring this poor penitent, heart-broken man to what is called justice. There the matter ended."

"As was expected—what more?"

"That which is most important, as you will admit. This wretched story, so fatal to the happiness of two precious lives if true, would manifestly become less than trivial if proved to be otherwise."

He paused, and looked at Kirkwood. The latter bowed as in acquiescence. He was listening with breathless interest.

"Less than trivial, to all except the unhappy person who could commit the crime of inventing and circulating so wicked a calumny."

"Who dares to insinuate—"

"Listen and judge. Suppose it had been suggested to me, through a rare and marvellous accident, that, in this encounter, William Vernon did not receive his death-wound; that he was only stunned, although his opponent believed him to be dead; that the treacherous friend who was present conveyed away the body of Vernon while he was still insensible, and afterwards practised on the fear and credulity of the supposed assassin for sixteen long years; that the victim was for a time kept quiet by reported threats of prosecution for forgery put forth by Dangerfield, who was represented as fully knowing the trifling character of the wound he had inflicted; that the pride of Vernon (who had already brought his brother to disgrace in early life by a similar act, of which he himself was guilty) led him to bury himself in obscurity—first in England, and then, after the lapse of years, in this country

once more—disguised alike in name, and person, and in his adopted calling—I repeat, suppose all this had been suggested to me, what should you say to it?”

During this singular narration, Kirkwood was using all his energy to conceal each evidence of apprehension or dismay. But in the effort the blood rushed to his head, and the veins stood in knots on his throat and head. The emotion, which, however, was really stronger than terror, there was no occasion to conceal, and to that he gave full vent. With difficulty he restrained himself from interrupting until Vernon had concluded, and when he spoke it was with a hoarse shout of fury.

“Say? Say it was a d—d infernal lie! a most atrocious lie! I’d swear before God a lie!”

“It is His truth, James Kirkwood,” said a solemn voice from an inner chamber, and William Radcliffe, with Elinor and Cuthbert Boynton, advanced into the apartment. “It is His truth. Add not to your other crimes the sin of perjury!”

Kirkwood stood for a moment transfixed with astonishment and horror. If the dead had actually risen, he had not been more appalled. Nor was there any need of explanation or denial as to identity. William Vernon, with all the changes of time and costume, was not a man to be forgotten by those who once had known him. But had there been none such within reach, the remarkable resemblance between the two brothers, as they stood side by side together, would have been conclusive evidence of the relationship.

“Yes,” pursued William Vernon—for we should no longer call him Radcliffe—“yes, I am he whom Martin Dangerfield—after being sorely tried, and struck by me in a moment of half-drunken frenzy—shot through the breast, and believed afterwards—as I have since learned, but did not until lately know—to have died from the wound. I am he for whose youthful crime my noble brother was permitted to suffer—to exile himself for life in a foreign land.

This unhappy man well knew how to play upon my weak and facile nature. It was not strong enough to face the exposure which he threatened as a consequence of my appearing again in the world. For years did I burrow in concealment. But a merciful God willed that I should do some good before I died, and sent this brave and high-souled girl to guide me to that good as His appointed instrument!”

By this time Kirkwood’s iron nerves had assumed their accustomed supremacy, and he had measured with practised cunning all the disadvantages of his situation as well as the chances for escape from its consequences. He had at first glared from one to the other of the assemblage as if in doubt at whom to spring, and honest Uncle Davy had watched his expression with an anxious eye;—but as William Vernon concluded, the disquietude of the man’s countenance gave place to a ghastly smile, and he waved his hand in his old courtly manner to the company.

“This, it seems, is the denouement of the comedy! Not badly arranged, Vernon, and does you infinite credit. ’Tis idle either to deny or to confess anything when one has to cope with so adroit a manager!—Especially when he has the assistance of so strong a corps dramatique! Sorry I can’t stay for the farce, but the pressure of business must be my excuse—so good night, all; Mr. Vernon, should you have further accounts to settle with me, you know my address.”

And availing himself of the surprise which for the moment this original method of viewing the case engendered, Kirkwood passed swiftly from the room. Eliot was the first to speak:—

“Ought we to permit him to go free? He may yet do mischief.”

“Not so,” said Vernon. “The officers will not permit him to escape. They have their orders.”

Eliot sprang to the door and in a twinkling descended the stairs, but he almost instantly returned:—

“He has not passed into the street,” he cried in a tone of alarm.

"No? Then he must still be in the house," replied Vernon.

The detective was summoned and a thorough search made of the premises, but, as will be surmised, in vain. The bird had flown. The experienced official soon read the riddle, but, as he averred, Kirkwood might now be far away—especially if, as was most likely, he had caught a carriage. Oliver Vernon looked at his watch—it wanted but five minutes of the time for the express train to leave for the north. Too late for that, but not, as all agreed, to despatch warning telegrams to Uplands, and to Dangerfield's Rest, as well as to the authorities along the route. The rain was now pouring in torrents, and David Greenwood was despatched in the carriage to hasten forward these despatches. But he soon returned disappointed. The wires were down, and a storm raging all along the line. David drove to the railway depot where there was also a telegraphic station, and received a confirmation of the statement. A gentleman had been most anxious to send a despatch, and finding it impossible, had just before taken the express train. It was determined, as the next best course to pursue, that Eliot and David should follow by the succeeding train. The fears of the party were, indeed, justified by the facts, for Kirkwood, by dint of surpassing celerity and adroitness, had caught the express, and was flying toward the North.

CHAPTER LIII.

ON this eventful night, so pregnant of consequences to the principal characters of our history, Martin Dangerfield was lying dangerously ill. Since the discovery of the supposed crime which had now blighted the happiness of his son as it long had blighted his own, he had sunk into a stupor, interrupted at intervals by the delirium of fever. Stephen spent much time at his bedside, only leaving the house for an occasional wild gallop over the hills—and for this he selected such hours as were least likely to bring him in contact with any of the inmates at Uplands.

On this occasion the old man's illness had assumed a more alarming phase than before; so alarming that his son resolved, some time after midnight, to fetch the attending physician from the village. For the sake of not arousing the household as well as for that of speed, he went forth to the stables to saddle and ride Black Vixen for the errand himself. The old servant who acted as nurse could take care of the sick man, but could not be trusted to manage the spirited animal. Stephen had set out with an injunction to Williams to watch his father carefully, and had been gone nearly an hour.

Indeed, the road was so dark and difficult that a knowledge less intimate than those of both horse and rider might well have failed to trace it at all. This, together with the fact that he waited to see Dr. Saunders started on his way, accounted for Stephen's detention.

Martin Dangerfield was delirious—not constantly but at intervals, and this was the reason for enjoining vigilance upon his attendant. But it happened, soon after his son's departure, that he turned his face to the wall and slept; at least so it appeared to Williams, who, after nodding and blinking in silence for the better part of an hour, fell asleep likewise.

But the patient was not sleeping at all. As he lay he

could see across the quadrangular space which lay between the wings of the building, to the windows on the opposite side. Since the night he was taken ill, there had been no lights in two particular windows there, until now; and now, for the first time they had re-appeared. So the old man lay, his brain half lucid, half confused, wondering and speculating as to the cause. Anon the paroxysm of the disease would be upon him, and he forgot all things but the consciousness of pain. By and by, after one of these alternations he opened his eyes and saw that the light had again vanished. This gave him a feeling of disappointment, which was relieved when he saw that the mysterious luminary, having quitted its first abiding-place, was flitting from point to point, but generally descending, as he could judge by seeing it at casements which looked forth from the staircases. Finally it reached the angle where the addition joined the main building, sharply turned the corner, and was seen coming through the long corridor toward the wing where the sick man lay. Presently it got beyond the line of vision from his bed and he saw it no more. He waited:—expecting perhaps to hear a tread upon the stairs, to see a figure advance into the room, but there came neither one nor the other. He waited some five minutes and all was still.

Then Martin Dangerfield, after a cautious scrutiny of the sleeping attendant, arose from his couch, and with feeble and uncertain steps, quitted the room and descended the stairs towards the library. Noiselessly he moved through the passages until he arrived at the door, which opened gently to his pressure. Yes, there was the light and there was the man who had carried it. His back was turned to the door, for he had managed to open the cabinet which has been mentioned, and was busily poring over the papers it contained. The old man stood on the threshold, his snowy hair dishevelled about his head, and his long night dress making him appear supernaturally tall. He spoke:—

"Hast thou returned, O mine enemy!"

The click of a pistol lock and a hasty exclamation was

the first response, but as he turned the man recognised the speaker, and replied hurriedly:—

"Silence! I would do no harm. You must have left this unlocked:—I missed a paper of my own and sought not to disturb you. Do not seek to stay or to molest me, or it will be worse for you. See—I am about to go—to leave the country—and I shall trouble you no more."

"No."

"No?"

"You shall not go hence. You seek to rob my son—to despoil him of his patrimony. You thought me mad—unable to denounce you for forging my signature. I am very ill—dead almost—but not mad, and I *shall* denounce you!"

"Fool—you forget that I can denounce *you* in turn."

"I care not for that—I can face that now. A very little longer and all will be over—but Stephen, though he be a felon's son, shall not be a beggar!"

"You rave—no such thing as you hint at has been dreamt of or attempted."

"You have told Stephen of the mur—of the secret which was between us."

"What then?"

"I know you well. You would not have played your last card, except that in doing so you were ready to sweep the board. I have had a warning—not unexpected."

"From whom?"

"From one named Eliot. You have been negotiating a mortgage at New York—there is but one inference—a forged signature."

"False. A vile ridiculous invention."

"Then you will stay here and prove it so."

"No. I do not choose to remain. I have work to do elsewhere."

"You will stay until my son returns."

"He is absent, then?"

In his weakness the old man had committed a blunder. He saw it a moment after, and sought to retrieve it.

"For a few moments only—he will be here before you could leave the grounds; besides—" he advanced towards the bell-rope which hung at the side of the door, "this will arouse the servants."

But Kirkwood was too quick for him. In a second he had intercepted Dangerfield's approach to the bell.

"Hearken!" he said fiercely. "There must be no noise here. It suits me to leave this house as quietly as I came, and I leave it at once."

"That you shall not till Stephen returns."

"Dotard! Let me pass, or—" and he advanced threatening.

"Never! You shall stay to have your share of ignominy—your share of punishment!"

As Kirkwood made for the door, the old man threw himself in his path. There was a brief struggle—wretchedly brief indeed, for what could feeble, broken age effect against such a mass of resolute thews and sinews? There was a sharp blow in the temple, a shrill cry of "murder," and a hurried rush. Down came the bewildered domestic, startled from his sleep, to find Martin Dangerfield lying bleeding on the floor. The opened window on the piazza showed the path of escape taken by the assailant, but Williams would not or dared not leave his master to pursue. That duty was left to Stephen Dangerfield, who five minutes after galloped up, and learned what had occurred.

CHAPTER LIV.

MURDER!

Kirkwood neither knew nor cared now whether he had committed another one. Consistent, at least, through all his crimes, nothing should follow the last and most desperate to endanger his safety, or to thwart his desires. The money—the papers—must be had, and he be far away before the hue and cry of this crowning outrage should get abroad. Everything was red before his eyes—the earth, the trees, the heavens, with their thick, black clouds, through which the pale moonlight occasionally struggled—all, all, blood-red. Still the man tore on with desperate, bull-dog tenacity, unflinching and unflagging; had he suddenly heard the Last Trump, and had known the next hour brought the awful Judgment, he still had held his way.

First he made for the highway, as being the shortest road to his goal; but it lightened up now and then with the moonbeams sprinkling through the trees; and he heard the distant creak of a heavy wagon, making for market, may be; so he slunk away with smothered curses, and fought his way on, over fields and meadows, through hedges and ditches, and patches of woods.

He formed his plan as he went, and to execute it seemed easy enough. He would get what he wanted at the Jutty, descend afterwards to the river's bank, cross in a boat at a favorable point, and take the earliest down train to the city. Then he meant to go to the Battery, and board the Cunard steamer after she hauled into the stream. It would not be prudent to run the risk of detectives before that, for it was possible, if not probable, that the deed might have been discovered during the night. He would go to London, or to Paris; Paris was a gay and luxurious city, and might better suit his taste.

Not that his mind was much occupied with festal or lightsome images. Quite the contrary. It was pressed down with a dull, heavy weight, which, like a mountain

of iron bearing inexorably towards the centre, could neither be resisted nor evaded. He lashed himself onwards; his will was stubborn and dogged enough; no danger of that failing; but will could not serve to rid him of the weight. It was not Conscience; that was long since dead, but the horrible presentiment of coming retribution. He felt it closing densely upon him, cruel as fate, inexorable as destiny.

Suddenly he plunged into an open space, and saw far below him, its dark bosom crossed and spangled with streaks and dots of glittering light, the broad and gliding river. It was red too; dark red in the shadows—ghastly, crimson in the lights. He shuddered, and drew back with a thrill of terror. Others were surely looking at the stream as well as he; and how could any one look at it and not KNOW that a Murder had been committed? He crouched down among the furze, looked carefully at the caps of his revolver, and tried the edge of his knife, to be ready for that doomed first one who should touch his shoulder with the appalling sentence, "Thou art the man."

Then he nursed his head in the hollow of his hand, and strove resolutely to think. What were the chances for and against him? Suppose some one had heard the scuffle in Martin Dangerfield's chamber! Not Stephen, he was absent. But some one of the servants who slept in the same wing! No, no danger of that. Whoever had heard would have come or given the alarm at once. As for Mary, there was not one chance in ten of the body being found in season to work him harm. Even suppose the neighbors, by some unusual accident, *did* discover it, who was to connect *him* with the crime? No one. It would require a long chain of evidence, the proof of motives, witnesses to former association, a hundred things; no, no risk of that. He was safe, then, safe and free as air.

Then again came the sickening weight, or, rather, it grew heavier, for it was never absent—crushing and burning into his inmost consciousness the indelible conviction of an avenging presence, which was close on his footsteps.

Nearer and nearer it came, never halting, never merciful, surely destined to accomplish its purpose, without pity, without pause.

A triumphant gleam swept for an instant over the murderer's swarthy features. What if he should defeat this horrible pursuer, this implacable avenger, by putting between himself and It an impassable chasm. He looked at the pistol again and then at the knife, and played and toyed with the trigger of the one and the handle of the other. He was absolutely on the point of using one of the weapons. The fiend-like Thing could not follow him across *that* stream. Then there came over the man an awful convulsive shuddering as the thought flashed across his mind that It might be waiting for him on the other side.

Again he sprang to his feet and fled. But for the dreadful danger he would have screamed aloud; for his nervous system, steel-like as it was, began to rock and quake under the tremendous pressure. He sought instinctively to restore the equilibrium by great physical exertions. He tore on with superhuman swiftness, leaping fences and gullies, from which he would have shrunk in dismay in a normal condition. Presently it struck him that there was much time to fill, and but little to do before he could take the first morning train. Where should he weary out the hours he had to spare? It was not yet three o'clock,—the train would not arrive before half-past six,—half an hour was time enough in which to cross the river,—to reach and unearth his treasure would take half an hour more,—so there were two hours to fill—two hours of waiting and expectancy. Again he sat down and reflected.

He shut his eyes to exclude the red glare, and for a little space there came wandering over his seared and guilty brow the only soft and gentle expression we have ever seen there. And the moonbeams stole calmly and purely over the murderer's face, and it looked for a moment almost beautiful in its transient and remorseful tenderness; he was thinking of his child.

The only human and kindly feeling in that heart of

adamant—the only trace of softer sentiment which his wretched life and selfish nature had left him—the little remnant of the angel which all his sordidness and crime could not quite blot out—came breathing and speaking up into his face, and brimming his poor wicked eyes with tears; and when he looked out for a fleeting moment upon surrounding nature, seen through the medium of those purifying drops, the earth and skies were no longer red. But he looked down at his hands—and the horrible color came back again.

No, he could not see his child with its mother's blood fresh on his soul. How could he fondle that little head, and stroke down those glossy curls with the fingers that but yesternight had wrought the earthly destruction of her who had borne the child, and whom he had long ago sworn he loved so well. Easy enough to go to Uplands—plenty of time, too. He knew where the child slept—he might kiss, without awaking her,—but the shivering sensation which ran through his very marrow as the thought flew across his brain warned him that he should go mad if he tried to carry it into execution.

Once more he arose and started on with a fresh impulse. Drink! He must have drink! Quick! he must do what he had to do and cross the river. On the other side he could get brandy somewhere, and that should strengthen him to bear up under his fearful burden until he was safe at sea. He became almost cheerful as he thought of this resource, and hastened his steps that the time might be short before availing of it. A few moments more brought him close to the Jutty, and he crossed the fence at the place he knew so well, and crept cautiously from bush to bush as he drew nigher to his hiding-place. Cautiously he stole, to avoid being seen by any chance, in the fitful moonbeams which shone forth at intervals, and must throw out in strong relief the sharp outline of the upheaved promontory.

The clouds had increased in weight and compactness, and as Kirkwood reached his destination, big drops had

commenced to fall, and the thunder to mutter ominously over his head. He noted these facts with satisfaction. The more physical disturbance the better. Every perturbation of the elements furnished him with additional cover and greater consequent security. He reached the top of the cliff, and groping among the brush, soon found the flat stone covered as he had left it, with earth and rubble. He had no spade, but his knife answered the purpose, and with its aid he soon turned up the soil which concealed the box. Everything was undisturbed, and his heart beat more freely as he saw so much of his task safely performed. "So far, so well," said he to himself, and carefully replacing as nearly as possible in the same position the rubbish he had removed. "So far so well," he repeated audibly, "and now for Europe!"

As he spoke, he turned, and saw standing within six feet, and regarding him with fixed attention—Stephen Dangerfield. Neither man spoke, for each knew perfectly well—although for different reasons—that there was nothing to say.

Kirkwood was uncertain as to the extent of the injuries suffered by Martin Dangerfield. He felt, that, although in all probability they were not mortal, they were yet sufficiently serious to warrant the detention of his assailant to abide the result. He ought now, properly, to be in custody, and Stephen Dangerfield was not likely to be too lenient with him. But his life absolutely depended upon immediate departure, and upon no hue and cry being raised in pursuit. To attempt to wheedle or cajole his opponent was hopeless. That device had been attempted and exhausted before. To seek safety in flight was equally idle, for that opponent, besides being younger and lighter than himself, was unimpeded by any extra weight. Kirkwood, at once, realized the remaining alternative, and with characteristic hardihood prepared to adopt it. It would not be the first time he had cut his way through an obstacle which he could not circumvent. Moreover, he was well armed, and had that sort of vigour fresh upon him which

desperation gives—the quality which makes men, as well as animals, fight harder when they have lately tasted blood.

Stephen was as resolved in the course he had determined on as a man could be. He was resolved when he set out from *The Rest*, and the time which had since elapsed served but to make him more inflexible. It would have been easy to bring help, but such a step would have involved a repetition of the threat, and perhaps even the positive disclosure of the damning secret, which, like the sword of Damocles, Kirkwood had so long kept suspended over his house. Stephen felt that he would be justified in avenging the gross insult and personal injury inflicted on his father, though he doubted his right on that score to go the length of shedding blood. But for the long arrears of extortion and insolence which had followed Kirkwood's knowledge of what, at worst, was a terrible misfortune rather than a premeditated crime, he felt he had a right to exact stern atonement. At all events, whatever the complication of motives or provocation, Kirkwood should be deprived of the written instruments wherewith he had already worked so much evil, and threatened so much more. Nor should he, if Stephen could help it, carry away to enjoy in comfort, hoarded treasures whatever they might be, which he knew to have been chiefly extorted from his unhappy father. The box of papers whose whereabouts had been at last discovered, he was determined to have.

The two stood eyeing each other in the moonlight, with every muscle set, every nerve braced, in readiness for a sudden spring. Then ensued a solemn pause, broken by a long reverberating peal of thunder which was almost instantly succeeded by the total obscuration of the moon with dense sable clouds from which the crash had emanated. Down came the rain in leaden drops, and everything was enveloped in pitchy darkness. Stephen advanced a step, as if fearful his enemy might escape in the gloom, and Kirkwood spoke coolly and steadily:

"What do you want? Why do you stop my path?"

"Those papers. Because I mean to have them."

A knife gleamed in the air, and quick as thought, was struck from Kirkwood's grasp by the butt of the riding-whip Stephen carried in his hand. With a fierce cry, the assassin threw himself on the young man, and in a moment they were writhing and struggling on the turf. A terrible conflict ensued, whose result it would have been very difficult to predict. The vast strength and superior weight of Kirkwood would seem at the outset to have given him an overwhelming advantage. But Stephen Dangerfield, though both a lighter and more delicately-framed man, possessed a nervous activity and a fertility of resource which, added to his youth, went far toward balancing the chances of the encounter.

Kirkwood being on the outer side, and near the edge of the cliff, strove to change his position for that of his foe, with the view, perhaps, of hurling him over the precipice. Stephen perceived this purpose and lent every energy to resist it. Both men grew more desperate and determined, for it was now clear that life and death were in the issue. They struggled first to their knees, and then to their feet, their hands and arms turning and twisting into a tortuous grapple from which neither dared withdraw, lest the movement prove fatal. Kirkwood, without being able to change places with his antagonist, had yet, by sheer weight and strength, forced him backward some distance from the original point of the struggle. But in so doing, his foot struck against an obstacle which the younger man turned to account by throwing him heavily on his back, and with lightning swiftness, planting his knee on the heaving chest of his enemy. Then Kirkwood with a supreme effort of his colossal muscles, and seizing Stephen by the throat and body with either hand, dashed him several feet off; at the same instant each recovered a weapon, for Kirkwood's hand fell on his knife, and Stephen recovered his whip.

Again they rushed together, neither seeing until the moment of meeting, the acquisition of the other. The butt-end of the whip once more descended with crushing

force, partly parried by the left arm which flew up to save the head. At the same instant, however, the sharp knife was driven savagely into the young man's side and he reeled and fell to the ground.

Then Stephen Dangerfield heard a strange, rumbling sound, like, and yet unlike, thunder—but there was a slight lull in the storm, and again the moon broke fitfully forth. Kirkwood also fell back from the effects of a blow, which, though deprived of most of its force, had severely bruised his head. It was only for a moment, however, for his practised eye told him he must give his opponent no time for recovery.

Stephen staggered to his feet, half-fainting, and blood streaming from his side, but still self-possessed and undaunted. Fortunately he had stumbled upon a heavy stick, which was safe to do its work more thoroughly than the lighter riding-whip which he now cast away. As he stood with his bludgeon poised, awaiting the onset which his ebbing strength told him must be the last, he again heard the mysterious warning sound which had struck his ear as he fell, but which he had no thoughts for in the critical moment which was approaching.

Forward rushed James Kirkwood, flushed with triumph, for he knew his powerful hand had struck deep, and that no strength or youthful vigour could long keep up when the spring it had opened continued to gush forth. Avoiding the heavy swirl of his adversary's bludgeon, he closed with, and struck him again and again with the knife. Stephen was forced to his knee, each moment blinder and feebler; but nerving himself to a last effort, he threw himself back a few paces, and then rushing at his foe with resistless violence, he managed to deal him a heavy blow in the forehead. The next instant the young man fell and fainted.

Hurled headlong nearly to the edge of the cliff, Kirkwood rose to his knees blinded with blood, but with a smile of savage joy on his face. Strangely enough, he had either forgotten, or as yet been unable to use, his most dangerous weapon. The deadly revolver was in his hand

now, however, cocked, and pointed at the prostrate form of his victim. An instant to dash the gathering gore from his eyes, and to take a steady and collected aim; the next, he pulled the trigger. But, as he did so, the ground between himself and the body of Stephen Dangerfield opened with a thunderous crash. A huge fragment was sundered from the side of the precipice, and fell eastward as it was torn away. The promontory, long overhanging and dangerous—its foundations undermined by the attrition of centuries induced by the ceaseless action of the great stream—had broken away, at last, with the added impulse of the desperate struggle on the crest. The vast mass turned as it fell, and, after some seconds, plunged into the waters below with a hollow roar, burying the body of the homicide for ever in the bosom of the mighty river.

CHAPTER LV.

WILD and furious was the storm which rattled and crashed that night among the hoary hills of the Hudson. The thunder pealed forth its celestial cannonade in those appalling volleys which blanch the cheek, and make the heart stand still with awe. The lightning played in forked swiftness from the Catskills to the Palisades, rifting many a rock, and laying low many a forest tree. The heavens were piled with sooty draperies, which poured forth torrents of blinding rain. The wind shrieked in savage dissonance, as it tore up the valley, and flew round the brow of the cliff. Nature seemed to have ransacked her armory to launch forth each weapon of chaos and destruction. And destruction came to the works of man as well as to those of Heaven. Fragile houses were blown down, and the chimneys crumbled from the tops of the stouter ones. Barns and granaries were destroyed, and the affrighted cattle ran bellowing through the fields. Vessels were torn

from their anchorage, and dashed violently against the shores. The timid nestled closer in their beds, and the superstitious hid their heads for fear. To those who looked forth into the night, all seemed darkness, ruin, and desolation.

And yet the morning broke bright and beautiful. The tempest was brief as it had been violent. Even what it left behind breathed more of sweetness than of bitterness; for the whole face of the earth exhaled a mild and delicious fragrance. And they who looked forth to inhale the spirit of the morning knew not that the powers of the air had been chanting the requiem of a criminal gone to his long account—thought not of aught as coming from the heavens but Hope—for over opposite the warm red sun, circling a mass of sullen but retreating clouds, and putting to shame the cold glitter of the morning star, they saw the Bow of Promise.

It was daylight when Robert Eliot and David Greenwood found the insensible but still living body of Stephen Dangerfield. He had suffered greatly from loss of blood, but youth and a healthful organization soon repaired the loss, and not many days passed before Stephen was himself again. They bore him to his home, where they found his father by no means seriously injured, but attended by Oliver and William Vernon, who had hastened to comfort the old man with the thrice happy news that he who was dead was alive again, and that the proud old race of Dangerfield was saved from the stigma of a felon's name.

And Grace and Stephen, Elinor and Cuthbert, were, after all, married on the same day. To be sure this day was postponed somewhat, by reason of Stephen's misfortune; but it was all the happier when it did come, and none regretted the delay when they thought of the solemn event—so clearly indicating the interposition of Providence—which had made it necessary.

Cuthbert is practising law in the great city, and has never regretted the sacrifice which his love first prompted,

but which his conscience and his reason have taught him, year by year, more thoroughly to rejoice in and approve. Both his wife and himself spend much time at Uplands and Dangerfield's Rest; and of all the pleasant people to be met with at both houses, we need scarcely say that none are more loved or more welcome than themselves.

No inquiries have ever been made for the body of James Kirkwood; and it was judged better on all accounts to let his fate remain, like his corpse, buried in oblivion. The papers with which he had hoped to fly were all found, and both Gossamer Von Donk and Mr. Staggers were very glad to recover their money; and, especially on learning the mortgage was a forgery, to accept the belief that Kirkwood had fled the country through fear of detection, leaving in his haste both cash and documents behind.

It happened that Elias P. failed in business shortly after Kirkwood's disappearance; and some people were ill-natured enough to say that the broker unfairly attributed certain losses and bad debts to that person's account, so that his credit was for a time under a cloud. He has, however, emerged from its shade as often before, and is now carrying sail in Wall street as merrily as ever.

Gossamer Von Donk finally came to marry Joanna Heydensucker. How it was brought about no one knows, but he boasts that at all events he hasn't as much to fear from the Honorable Job as formerly, the latter worthy, by dint of pettifogging, politics, and alcohol, having reduced himself to comparative imbecility. Mrs. General has not yet succeeded in marrying Violetta and Zerlina, although there has been a flirtation on the carpet between the former and Mr. Slymer for several seasons past. As for the General himself, he has attained a rather apoplectic condition, but agrees with his old friend McSwindle and the *confrerie* of the Pewter Mug, in hating the "naygur" as cordially as ever.

William Vernon did not long survive the act which brought happiness to so many. His constitution, shattered by early excess, had only been kept up of late years by

artificial stimulants. He sank into a quiet and peaceful grave, surrounded by friends and relatives, and happy in the blessed conviction that he had done some good before he died.

The fate of Mary Grazebrook has ever continued to be shrouded in mystery. No trace, no vestige of her unhappy life, nor of her miserable death, ever repaid the anxious researches instituted by Oliver Vernon. For, notwithstanding the precautions of her destroyer, the flames he had lighted caught the adjacent wood-work, and by the same hour that Kirkwood slept in his watery grave, only heaps of ashes marked the spot where had stood not only her own but a dozen dwellings which surrounded it. Long, however, before the fire could have expelled it, her weary spirit had passed painlessly away; to find, let us hope, mercy and consolation in the happier sphere beyond.

While her betrayer yet lived she seemed to have some purpose in life; she was not wholly aimless. To ferret out and baffle his insidious schemes had engrossed her thoughts, and was regarded by her in some degree as an expiation of the past. While she could warn or guard Stephen Dangerfield, her daughter, or Vernon, from the evils this man so artfully contrived, her life was not altogether a useless one. That time was past; and with it what she deemed her mission was at an end. Perhaps if we could see more clearly than is yet permitted, we might distinguish a defined relation and purpose in the dispensation whereby these two sin-connected souls were taken from earth on the self-same stormy night; meanwhile let pity draw a charitable veil over the faults and the memory of one who, considering her trials and temptations, was, perhaps, more sinned against than sinning.

Robert Eliot has not yet written his book, but we hear that it may soon be expected. When it appears we do not look for him to see only one side of our shield and declare it all gold—or to view the other alone and pronounce it all silver—neither do we think to find him adopt the course many of his countrymen select as most popular

and proclaim it a composite of baser metal than either—but we hope for a rational, well-bred, and truthful exposition smacking more of the character of the old-fashioned English gentleman than of the new-fashioned English tourist—a distinction which even the most ignorant Americans know tolerably well how to appreciate.

David Greenwood and Aunt Mercy married at last, having been unable to withstand the contagious examples of their betters. It must, however, be admitted that their lives glide on much in the same way that they did before, as David says, “they concluded to hitch hosses.”

Good Mrs. Maberly lives with the Boyntons, and takes the warmest interest in their growing family.

We need scarcely say that Oliver Vernon lost his election,—or that such an event gave him no great concern. Nor need we say that he adheres strongly to those views and principles which have been, in a measure, described. His faith is abiding in the future greatness and *worthiness* of his country, nor has the tremendous tempest which has of late been sweeping over it, shaken that faith or impaired its established convictions. On the contrary, he believes that the reforms and corrections which are essential to the national happiness and dignity, will be facilitated and hastened by the storm which has overtaken us, and which long years of slothful progression and cumulative abuse might otherwise have been consumed in effecting. But Vernon's philanthropy is broad and cosmopolitan, and he deems that whatever betide in the future, the achievements of the past should be credited us by the nations—for—as he lately wrote Robert Eliot, in allusion to the prophecies and wishes of too many English tongues and pens:—“Even if this Union be broken into fragments,—even were its sons scattered to the four winds of heaven,—though every star were blotted from its escutcheon, and the memory of the past obscured like Assyrian legends, we may yet draw consolation from the belief that her example has been of inestimable value to mankind, and that the Great Republic has not risen and flourished in vain.”

Five years have rolled away since these friends of ours sailed over the summer seas in the *Assyria*. They have met again at one of their midsummer gatherings.

Dangerfield's Rest looks much as it did of yore. Little by little, more weather-stained and grey, perhaps, and the ivy is embracing with its loving green arms something more of the stout walls than when we last saw them.

All our friends are there—Oliver Vernon, the Boyntons, Grace, Martin Dangerfield, and the child—grown now into a dreamy broad-browed girl—his son brought from the wreck.—There are little children, too, little Dangerfields and little Boyntons—all, all but Stephen—and he is away fighting the battles of his country.

They are looking forth on the shimmering line of the far off sea, and talking of the absent one. The two old men were never weary of that theme any more than Grace was. Oliver had spoken of Stephen's bringing the little one from the schooner, and of his fondness for her :—

"Strange fate," murmured Martin Dangerfield, "the Instrument to save the child and to destroy the—"

"Poor lamb," said Grace hastily, as Ally came wistfully between the old men, looking up at each.

"Fear not," said Oliver Vernon reverently, "God hath sent thee two fathers now, Alabama !"

"Alabama," echoed Old Martin, dropping his withered hand on her bright curls, "Alabama,"—and, half unconsciously translating the soft name, he whispered—"Here we rest."

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