

See müller, Mrs. Anne Moncure (Crane.)

EMILY CHESTER.

A NOVEL.

"It is in her monstrosities that Nature discloses to us her secrets."

GOETHE.



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To

MY MOTHER.

"Such as I have give I unto thee."

EMILY CHESTER.

CHAPTER I.

"Here is her picture."

Two Gentlemen of Verona.

THE two had been sitting there for perhaps an hour, without speaking. There was evidently between them that total lack at mutual entertainment, which may equally well be the result of extreme intimacy or an entire lack of congeniality.

A man and a woman.

As the story I have to tell relates chiefly to the lives of these two, and as their peculiar physiques exercised a singularly potent influence upon it, I shall give you a minute description of what these mute figures looked like.

She was a woman of perhaps eighteen years; an age which in any one else would seem to suggest the term girl, but somehow no one ever thought of using it in connection with Emily Chester. She was so essentially and distinctively a woman, that no other word seemed to express her. Rather above medium height, and from manner and carriage having the effect of even greater stature, she had that beauty, so little appreciated by women, but adored of gods and men,—a full and magnificently developed figure. It was well matched by the partially visible arm, round and white, hanging carelessly down by her side in that most becoming position in which the human arm can be seen, displaying as it does the fine, gradual taper from shoulder to finger-tips. The hands (a point in which Nature rarely fails to speak out the character) were thoroughly well formed, but quite large; looking as though strong muscles might lie under their soft, white flesh.

She was neither blonde nor brunette; but a rich compound of both, verging strongly, however, toward the fairer type. Bright brown hair, with the broad, deep waves of which, as she sat there,

the evening sun worked golden wonders; but it was rich, red gold that his alchemy produced, not pale yellow gleam; — cream-colored skin, usually pure from all tinge of red, but, when the slightest excitement brought the quick blood to her cheeks, tinting to an exquisite pink like the heart of a tea-rose. The outlines and curves of the face were freely and powerfully moulded, just deviating sufficiently from the classic line to preserve perfect individuality, to save it from that restricted, all-made-on-the-same-pattern look with which entirely regularly faces are apt to weary us. Forehead broad, and rather low for the rest of the face; eyebrows delicate and graceful, though straightened from curve by the clearly defined perceptive faculties under them; nose and mouth large and strongly marked; lips very full and singularly mobile and expressive; chin like rounded marble, whose sweep told unmistakably of strength, perhaps of endurance; eyes large, finely set, and of clear gray; — all went to make up a face which few persons had ever looked at without a curious sense of its power, apart even from its beauty.

Such was the appearance of the woman as she sat upon the lounge by the long window. In her attitude she seemed to have struck such an exact centre of gravity between sitting up and lying down that a conscientious person must decline describing it under either head. To look at her gave one involuntarily an Oriental sort of feeling, suggestive of divans and daises. Hard sofas always relented, and straight-backed chairs became converts to the opinion that the curve is the line of beauty as soon as she occupied them. No matter what mood or position she chose to assume, it became for so long a time as she saw fit to retain it an impossibility to imagine her in any other. So, though her companion had watched her in a hundred different phases of mind and body, he would have found it hard to recall one of them; to have any other consciousness of her than as she sat there in her careless, luxurious repose, gazing quietly out of the window in that state of dreamy speculation which young persons are under the delusion of considering *thinking*.

This companion was a small man, some ten or fifteen years her senior, with nothing very striking about him at first sight, except a singularly unpleasant general effect; which invariably deprived any one of all desire for closer proximity or further acquaintance.

And this physical effect, instead of decreasing with familiarity, only grew with every fresh degree of intimacy. Not that the man was absolutely without good points; he had several fine features. But by some strange law of his nature, that which in any one

else would have been beauty, in him but intensified his repulsiveness. His forehead, for instance, was fine; strong and high, though slightly narrow; but it had such an impressive effect of belonging to a sort of mental inquisitor, that any brow, no matter how much its phrenological inferior, was a relief after it. His teeth, too, were gleamingly white and perfect, but they only served to give him, when he laughed, an absolutely satanic aspect. His eyes were of dull, leaden gray, and seemed to lie in wait behind eyelashes of no particular color, which protected them from scrutiny as effectually as a pair of spectacles. His nose and mouth were essentially coarse and ill-formed; and the muscles of the latter, when he laughed, seemed drawn by some convulsive, involuntary force. It was in every sense the lower part of his face. His hair, moustache, and beard were all of that peculiar whitish brown that generally betrays Teutonic blood in the veins of its possessor, as it did in this case.

Here mind and body corresponded. The only possible brain for such a head to hold, it held, — that of the speculative German type (the word German, like that of Yankee, having become more a mental than a geographical definition, though here it was applicable as both); and, as usually, its traces were stamped upon the outward, visible man. Upon the whole, like a certain class of his partial nationality, of which Mephistopheles is only the final development and intensification, Max Crampton did certainly look and seem a mind and body with the heart left out.

But, in spite of these drawbacks, there was that about this man to which you could not help rendering involuntary homage; even though it were paid in the form of unwilling respect and fear. You felt instinctively his enormous mental strength; that, had he chosen, he could have bent you as easily to his will as the physical giants of old could double up a bar of iron. He justified his name of human *being* in its most literal sense; having a mental truth and precision, a constitutional indissoluble allegiance to reality which served him in place of conscience; for which article, in the ordinary sense of the word, he was by no means remarkable, though of his own kind he had a most unusual quantity.

This same mental conscience had, from nature and habit, shaped in a great degree both his moral character and conduct. He was far too clear-sighted to be a wicked man. Vice, and especially the minor immoralities, looked to him simply weak and silly. Crimes struck him chiefly in the light of mistakes in calculation; a want of sufficiently keen perceptive faculties in the offender. From a wrong

action, neatly and completely done, he could not possibly have withheld his admiration. Though he never indulged in such luxuries himself, well knowing that in the long run every such action brings, with mathematical accuracy, its own reward. He would have fully entered into Lord Steyne's feelings, when he said of Becky Sharp, "She's magnificent at lies!" The only two sins of which he seemed to take personal cognizance, as such, were hypocrisy and affectation. Upon these he was positively savage. He really seemed to feel divinely commissioned to head a crusade against them, and to sound the old Scriptural battle-cry, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!"

It is Carlyle, I think, who says that we each contain within ourselves the highest heaven and the lowest hell. If this remark were ever true of a human being, it was so of this man. But although now over thirty, he had reached this period of life without circumstances ever having developed either extreme of his character. Hitherto his existence had been very much that of any cultivated, wealthy gentleman, having his own tastes and ideas, and being perfectly free to follow them. So he had rubbed on through life, self-poised and very slightly influenced by persons or things around him. Stuff for something almost above or below humanity here; but how this immense raw material will be worked up, whether he will turn out angel or devil, the outward forces which existence will bring to bear upon him will probably decide.

Until two years ago nothing had ever taken an irradicable hold upon him; no lever of sufficient strength, no engine of adequate power to the moving of this deep, large nature had ever been brought near it. But within that time he had met the woman by whom he then sat, gazing at her with a look such as women seldom receive and men seldom give; for it is only possible when a man has seen his highest ideal of womanhood perfectly realized, when every claim of his nature is satisfied in the rich fulness of a corresponding being. God pity, yes, God help any man who, feeling this, has not the power to be to that woman what she is to him; for he is bound soul and body by a chain of Nature's own forging, against which his most frantic efforts will be totally powerless. It was not so much that Max Crampton loved Emily Chester; for there were times when he felt as though he hated her; but he literally gravitated to her with a force of attraction entirely beyond his own control. She was his portion in life, and to come into the inheritance thereof was all he asked of fate. She was the only person who had ever fully compre-

hended him; as indeed for any one to be known by her was to be thoroughly appreciated for once in their lives. With her, however much she might at times differ from and oppose him, he had none of that annoying sense of being entirely out of time and place, with which a conviction (the result of sad experience) that about nine tenths of what you say will be taken in an exactly opposite sense from that in which it was spoken will inspire even the most ardent spirit. For the first time in his life he found that perfect mental freedom was possible apart from solitude.

And now this man sat by her side upon that bright afternoon, and she gazed idly out upon the autumn-tinged trees, and thought of something else. Does not that one sentence tell all? Does it not repeat the old, unending story of a man's wasting heart and life in efforts to make a woman love him; by artificial means, a sort of hot-house system; when she never would do so by simply following her instincts. But great Nature is never mocked, and such an imitation is apt to entail upon its possessor the fate of a moral Prometheus.

But the lady had grown weary of the silence and her position, and so, turning from the window and towards her companion, she changed both.

"Max," she began, rather slowly and dreamily, evidently following out the thought that had been vaguely occupying her mind, "did it ever occur to you what a strange thing love is?"

Now that was a question to put to a man in his state of mind! But he looked at her in a quiet, composed way; for in self-control he rivalled the description given of Talleyrand, — that, had he been stabbed in the back, his face would have shown no indication of it, — and parried her remark by simply saying, "Why do you ask me that question?"

"Because," said Emily, who, like most very young, careless, self-absorbed ladies, was easily satisfied with any form of answer, and had asked the question more as a prelude to expressing her own speculations than from any desire to know his thoughts on the subject, — "because I have been thinking over all the love affairs of which I have ever known anything; and what strikes me most is, what a very different thing love is to different people."

"I think that might easily arise from the difference in the objects of their devotion," he coolly rejoined.

"I don't exactly understand," she answered; a little puzzled, her attention in consequence passing from herself to him.

"Why, you don't suppose," he exclaimed, with that faintly defined sneer in his voice which was its customary undertone, "that all love is personal? For instance, there is the love of money, which is said to be particularly inspiring, and yet I never knew it to produce any personal devotion except in the case of heirs and heiresses to great fortunes, when its effect in that way is marvellous. I asked Kate Singleton, the other day in New York, about a week after she married Tom Brown with his half-million of dollars, 'whether she was scared and agitated during the ceremony.' 'Yes,' she said, 'very much so; so much so that she heard only one sentence during the whole scene.' And when I asked what that was, the girl had the rare honesty to say that it was, 'With all my earthly goods I thee endow.' I thought to myself, O wise woman, what your knowledge of and devotion to the multiplication-table must be! And I bowed over her hand with more respect for her intellect than five minutes before I had thought possible."

"Of course, Max, you must have your sneer," said Emily, in return, rather provoked at this wilful misunderstanding of her meaning; "but having had it, suppose you now give me a serious answer. What I mean is, that it is so strange that that which is the crowning joy and glory of some persons' lives should be to others nothing but sorrow and misery."

"Miss Emily," said he, taking her much more at her word than she had intended, and almost startling her by the strange earnestness of his tone, "I firmly believe that the great Ruler of all things gives to each of his creatures that which is best for them, or rather that which tends to their greatest final development. With a large class of persons, happiness is the only possible means of expansion; the blossoming and blooming of their characters requiring moral sunshine just as much as a flower does physical sunshine. And so through life some angel really seems given charge concerning them, lest at any time they should dash their foot against a stone. But there are others, again, so strong that pain and suffering are their natural food, possessing positive nutriment for them. They are like salamanders, in the popular belief; fire is their native element. The world has always had its supply of them, from the old-Stoics to thousands around us in this nineteenth century. As one of your own poets hath said, —

"There's a joy in the heart of pain."

"Yes, and you recollect what Bettina wrote to Goethe, that 'if we

were strong, we would know that the greatest pain is the greatest joy."

He made her no direct answer. But a shade came over his face at her words; as though, however it might suit him to theorize on the subject, he shrunk from her even having a comprehension of suffering and its effect; as though this "greatest joy" were a blessing he could willingly dispense with in her case.

"Do you know, Max," she began again, earnestly, "I think you and I are of this salamandrine nature. It positively scares me sometimes to feel what power of endurance I have. And, as I suppose God does not throw away material by giving us power without at some time in our lives putting it to use, I have no very strong hopes of a happy future."

The man's face softened and humanized in spite of himself, as he looked at her and thought what strange pain it would give him to see any cloud come over that bright young face, however much it might contribute to her development. So he said, in what was for him a very gentle manner: "It is a kind Providence which hides our coming lives from us; for it is not the burden of any single day, but the looking at what we will have to endure in a mass, that terrifies us. We forget that the same Power who sends the burden sends the strength to bear it: it is like the air, which would crush us, but that the outward pressure is in exact proportion to the inward."

"For He knoweth your infirmities," said the girl, softly.

"Yes," was the characteristic reply, "and it is cowardly to say that our punishment is greater than we can bear."

There are few things more astonishing to me than the way in which we hear talented young people talk of life, as these two were doing, when their personal, practical experience of its sorrows and trials is no larger than that of children. To be sure, Max Crampton, though only an observer of life, had looked curiously and keenly at its varied phases as others passed through them; but Emily Chester had certainly, as yet, nothing but intuition to teach her the use and true office of pain.

They had risen from the sofa, and were standing by the marble bracket of the mirror, upon which was an old-fashioned vase of rare and brilliant hot-house flowers. Their rich, abounding perfume stealing up, affected the girl's senses keenly.

"Are they not beautiful, Max?" she exclaimed, looking at and smelling them with an enthusiasm that belonged to her age and temperament.

"Well enough in their way, as the result of hot air and glass; for myself, I prefer wild-flowers. By the way, where did you get them?"

"Frederick Hastings sent them to me this morning, rather to my surprise," she answered, simply; but the slight, unconscious smile that formed upon the lips as they spoke the name told of pleasant associations with it.

The information would of itself have annoyed the man; but the way in which it was given edged his irritation even more keenly. So he said presently, with a slow sneer: "I really can't understand your liking for that man. You must feel your enormous mental superiority. Why, mentally and physically, he is as weak and beautiful as a woman. I should think your natural feeling towards him would be somewhere between contempt and pity."

Ah, Max Crampton! have you lost your senses? How else could you be so suicidal as openly to attack and undervalue the man whom, of all others, you most wish this woman to dislike; thereby forcing her to take up the defence. As though you did not know, far better than any one else, that your underrating him is the surest means of making her overrate him. But it only shows the difference between the man and the lover. When was there ever a man who could always act sensibly when love and jealousy were in the question? Worse still, it was evidently a sore subject he had touched,—an old battle-field between them, from which each had retired, wounded, before now. So if she returned to the attack, there were old defeats to be avenged as well as this fight to be won.

He did not throw down the gauntlet in vain; she took it up instantly, as she invariably did.

As she heard his words, the color just defined itself in her cheek; the slight frown faintly contracted the brow, while it dilated the strong eyes. But anger suggested to her instinctively the necessity for self-control; as sharp feeling, of any kind, always does to persons of her stamp. To conquer, or even make stand against him, she must assume his usual vantage-ground of mathematical precision and coolness, which he had relinquished. So, after a moment's pause, she answered, in a tone as measured as his had been, and with an indifferent, lazily scornful drooping of her eyelids, which altogether scarcely formed a manner by which any one would have chosen to be addressed.

"You don't believe that," she said, steadily; "or if you do, you simply reflect upon your own want of, or rather coarseness of perception, and not upon the person you are attempting to criticise."

The man looked at her with grim admiration shining out of his eyes. Even when turned against himself, he could not help internally applauding her perception and courage. For she had hit the exact truth: he did not believe what he had said. It was simply what he would have liked to believe; still more, what he would have liked to convince her of.

"He is not strong in the same hard, forcible way that you are," she coolly went on, in haughty indifference to the admiration she perfectly understood; and looking at him as though Frederick Hastings lost nothing in her opinion by the difference between them. "His power is, as it were, chemical; while yours is mechanical."

"You have said it," the man responded, with perfect *sangfroid*; his fellowship in the truth she had stated, and her way of stating it, getting the better of personal feeling.

"I have simply an inclination to laugh when I hear most persons pronounce Frederick Hastings weak, as they have no chance to know better," she went on, unconsciously excited to further explanation, and, strange to say, to further aggression, by the subtle flattery of the reluctant admiration she had wrung from him. "But with you the case is different. You know as well as I do, that circumstances and cases might arise at any moment in which you would be the weak, incapable, and he the capable, triumphant victor."

She was coming a little too close home, was telling the truth rather too plainly now.

The man's face flushed to a dull red, and he caught his lip savagely under his gleaming teeth; as though at the moment he could have gladly annihilated, not only the man with whom she was so accurately balancing him, but even the proud beauty that coldly faced him with a resolution equal to his own.

The sight of his wrath, instead of daunting or softening the woman, seemed only to excite its reflection in her; and under its influence (after the fashion of her sex) she administered a final cut, which she might otherwise have spared him.

"But it is not for his strength that I chiefly hold to him. He might be as feeble as you try to believe him, and yet he would be valuable to me. He is so thoroughly harmonious. In all the time I have known him, he has never once grated upon me in any way. I sometimes think my liking for him is physical, a matter of the nerves. I look upon him as one of my constitutional weaknesses, as he attacks me in my most vulnerable point; for whatever offends my senses is to me the unpardonable sin. I believe I should hate an

angel from Heaven if he were discordant." She said this, looking at him with a slight personality in her voice and manner, which he repaid by a steady glance of defiance. And there they sat, looking at each other very much as two amiable tigers might have done whose minds were not fully made up as to the propriety of an encounter.

But presently she carelessly turned away her eyes, as though she were tired of such active proceedings. And so the storm blew over, as it always did, though the silence which succeeded for some moments showed that the elements had been disturbed.

"When will you let me give you a German lesson?" said Max, getting up at last to go,—"to-morrow?"

"O no. Not this week: I have too much housekeeping to attend to;—preserving, &c."

"Before whose importance I and my unfortunate German lessons fade into insignificance, I suppose?"

"Precisely," she replied.

"Then I suppose I am to be in a state of honorable banishment until next week?"

"Yes, I shall be too busy" ("Or too lazy," he parenthesized; but she took no notice, and went on in calm disdain with what she had to say) "to think of German until then. By the way, I forgot to ask you, are you going to Mrs. Dana's on Friday night?"

"Yes, I suppose so. Although it will be a bore. I declare, the parties a man seems obliged to go to during a winter ought to be taken as some atonement for his sins during the same time. But I am always doing something that I detest, merely because other people do it."

The quick, coquettish gleam in her eyes showed him that she had taken his general term of "other people" in a particular sense, as she well might, for in no other light did his sentence possess even a shadow of truth; so he laughed slightly as he said: "But I shall meet you there; which will be the silver lining—of which we always hear—to this particular cloud. So good by until then." And, taking up his hat from the easy-chair into which he had thrown it, in a moment or two more he was out of the room and out of the house.

CHAPTER II.

TIME and place. For the first, the autumn of 1849; and for the second, Baltimore, Md.

Facing one of its squares, stands a large, very comfortable rather than handsome house. Here the Chesters have lived for years, and it was in its parlor that Max and Emily had sat that afternoon.

This room, far more noticeable for comfort than for elegance, had as marked an individuality as is possible in an unprofessional apartment, and spoke clearly of the habits and tastes of its usual occupants. No two pieces of furniture could have been accused of relationship on the ground of likeness, as each had been bought in an independent manner, just as it had been wanted. Each article had originally been very handsome, but everything had now a delightfully half-worn effect that notified all comers they might make themselves as cosy as possible, without taking off the gloss of anything; that uncomfortable ingredient in most city houses having been removed so long before, that its very name was forgotten. The easy-chairs and sofas had a general air of having been lounged in, in every imaginably careless and agreeable position. Any table so unfortunate as to have a marble top was for the most part deprived of its natural rights and uses, and confiscated to the common good in the form of tablet or drawing-board; generally displaying sketchy profiles, or more elaborately worked-up front faces of young ladies and gentlemen, puzzles, battle-scenes, ships in full sail, or any other little piece of fancy that might strike the persons surrounding it. They were often so full of scraps of poetry and prose as to rival Mr. Weller's moral pocket handkerchiefs in point of instruction.

One striking feature of the room was the quantity of books, pamphlets, and papers scattered over it, as though the great, old-fashioned book-case, that nearly covered a side of the back parlor, had planted small colonies in every direction. The volumes had been purchased upon the same principle as the furniture, one at a time; and were consequently of every description, and in almost every stage of dilapidation, from the pamphlet with its leaves just torn open, to the favorite work the least touch of which involved a sudden separa-

tion of book and cover. As characteristic as these were the piano and music-stand. Merely to have turned over the contents of the latter would have imparted a pleasurable sensation even to the finger-ends of a true musician.

Altogether, it was a room calculated to distract any one at all devoted to that law, which we have at least Mr. Pope's authority for supposing to be Heaven's first; but, on the other hand, it possessed marvellous resources for enjoyment for those who constantly occupied it. It was in this house, of whose apartments this room was a fair specimen, that Emily Chester was born, and under the influences it indicated that she had been reared.

And now let me tell you who these Chesters were. Evan Chester, Emily's father, was the descendant of an old and wealthy family in one of the Northern States; but his grandfather and father having lost everything in the Revolution, he had begun life without a friend or a dollar. But to a man of his indomitable energy this had been rather a spur than a drawback. Entering business, he would before many years have acquired great wealth, but for the fact that he constantly reduced it by giving all possible surplus time and means to religious objects. In this way he had succeeded in rendering himself through life only what is termed "well off."

In fact, he was an enthusiastic, constitutional philanthropist and religionist. This was the form which a certain width of mind and character had taken, under the bias and moulding influences of the peculiar circumstances of his life. Tied down by necessity to the sternest practical realities, in their minutest details, a noble superiority to earth and its small ambitions and successes, an inherent, imperative claim in his nature for some higher aim to live for than the wretched, soul-degrading one of merely accumulating dollars and cents, had asserted its existence, had kept itself alive in this way. An innate fidelity to truth, an instinctive perception of reality, (which is very near akin to genius, if not itself,) had long since shown him the smallness and poorness of all worldly considerations, the cares of the body as compared with those of the soul. His hopes, aims, and thoughts had passed this wind and wave tossed sea of life in which we poor worldlings strive to cast anchor, and were fixed in an eternal haven of peace.

But here the practical sense, the ruling instinct of his nature, came in, and translated religious sentiment into action. His life was that sentence of the Lord's prayer, "Thy kingdom come on earth," made animate. Churches and missionaries, at home and

abroad, he supported and worked for with untiring zeal and self-sacrifice. A colony, a school, or emigrant on the coast of Africa, a missionary station in India or China, were to him objects of the most intense interest; in whose service he spared neither time, pains, nor money, and in comparison with which he held mere business advantage as nothing. He was a man of powerful original mind and general information, although, as he sometimes laughingly said, quoting from his favorite poem, "In his youth,

'chill penury repressed his noble rage,
And froze the genial current of his soul.'

Had he lived in other times and different circumstances, he would probably have been a great reformer or leader of revolution. Indeed, I have often looked at him and thought what a magnificent martyr he would have made, if he had only had the opportunity: had Bloody Mary, Alva, or St. Dominic gotten hold of such a condensation of dauntless courage, stern endurance, and unshakable faith. Some one once said of him in Max Crampton's hearing, that, "had he lived in Cromwell's time, he would have been one of his greatest generals." "No," said Max, "he would have been Cromwell himself."

Seeing only the hard, outer crust of his character, no one but those who saw him daily, and so grew to really know him, or were Heaven-endowed with rare delicacy of perception, or perhaps likeness to him; no one but these ever imagined the warm, true, tender core encased within. Through his nature, generally supposed to be something of the consistency of granite, ran a strong vein of poetic sentiment which contrast only rendered more beautiful. Exquisite, tender, emotional poetry, such as Cowper's "Address to his Mother's Picture," or his "Castaway," would bring the quick tears of æsthetic emotion to his eyes. The strong, worn, massive face would grow beautiful with the softened loving light that shone from it.

With the intensest belief in his own convictions, he had little power to explain them to others or to enlist their sympathy or concurrence. Eminently what Mr. Carlyle would call "inarticulate," in the sense in which he uses it with regard to Frederick William of Prussia; and, indeed, Mr. Chester has often reminded me of what was highest and most admirable in this singular specimen of royalty.

The likeness between himself and his daughter was strong and fundamental, but not at first sight very recognizable. She, a woman, fluent, luxurious, elegant; peculiarly open to outward influences,

upon whom the claims of the body were large and imperative, however imperially the regnant soul might control them; he, a man, who ignored the world and disdained the flesh,—between the two there seemed little chance for sympathy, much less for identity. And yet, to a certain extent, the oneness was there. It was as though her frame, the bones and sinews, were a recast of his own on a smaller scale, but so covered over by entirely different flesh and blood as to make the change to the eye complete. But the superficial difference left the foundation unaltered. Agreeing in none of their tastes, and few of their opinions, each had a respect for the other's ideas; which, on the girl's side, amounted to a species of hero-worship. It suited well her stern, Romanesque pride, to feel that her plain, old-fashioned father was, for originality, strength, truth, all that makes a man mentally or morally worthy, immeasurably beyond any man she had ever known, superior in every sense to the fashion of this world, which passeth away. It was this influence that fixed her standard of manhood for life, and perhaps biassed its events and her actions.

As a father, he was indulgent. But it was an indulgence which arose partly from carelessness; as his mind was almost always occupied with some scheme of business or philanthropy. His children had every advantage of education or improvement of mind or body for which they asked; but it never occurred to him, as a part of his parental duty, to become acquainted with their thoughts and feelings, or their interests and aims in life. So they went on unguided, upon their own way; he being perfectly satisfied so long as they were.

And the mother, who could at least have done her share towards supplying this want, had died when Emily was ten and Philip an infant. It was from her that her children had inherited that side of their characters which differed so essentially from their father. She had belonged to one of the conspicuous old Southern families, and through her Emily counted more than one Governor of her native State, in the Colonial and Revolutionary times, in her pedigree. Besides, she had what somebody calls "the American patent of nobility," her grandfather having signed the Declaration of Independence; and surely, as far as she was concerned, the fashion of such proceedings had not died out in the family. Certainly no red Indian, just from his native woods, could have a more supreme disregard for any cramping conventionality than did this girl, in whose veins ran the polished blood of courtiers and statesmen. The only other member of the family was Philip, a boy of eight, with a head

and face like Aristides the Just, and hands and feet, and indeed limbs in general, which were a great inconvenience to everybody else, whatever they were to him. Too young as yet for any decided development of character, there were already features traceable in it strongly resembling his sister's.

Max Crampton's antecedents claim some explanations. Maximilian Crampton, or Max as he was generally called, was the only son of a wealthy New York merchant. This gentleman, when almost a boy, upon his first European tour, had fallen in love with and married a young German lady of considerable beauty and position. He brought his bride to this country. But the complete change of life and climate were too severe for a frail constitution, and after a few years she had died, leaving him with one child, the Max of this story.

Since that period Mr. Crampton had given up all idea of matrimony, and leading a sort of bachelor life, had devoted himself to business and the care of his son; in which individual he could see no shadow of fault, and whom he indulged to the most unlimited degree. Had Max been a boy of different temperament, it is probable that he would have died young from dissipation. As it was, he lived on very comfortably, and chiefly sinned mentally. There was strong congeniality of taste between father and son, especially in their love of Art, which frequent residence in Europe for long periods of time had cultivated to a degree unusual with Americans. Improvement of mind and taste had been Max's chief employment in a life which would otherwise have looked rather idle. Inheriting too great wealth and position for his ambition to have any room to work in that direction; his respect and care for the opinions of his fellow-men too infinitesimal for fame to be any incentive to him to strive to rise in political life, there really seemed little work ready for his hand. He might have fallen back upon literary composition for occupation, but that in this case he lacked the power as well as the will. His mind, strong and large as it was, consisted of talent only; genius, in the sense of creative faculty, was not his. So circumstances had thrown him back upon rather a *dilettante* existence, strangely at variance with the natural bent and capacity of his character.

When about twenty-five, upon a short accidental visit to Baltimore, he had met Emily Chester, then a little school-girl twelve years old. Taking a violent fancy to her, he had prophesied almost all that she afterwards became. But their acquaintance had been very short, and a gay bachelor's life, both in New York and the great European

cities, had soon half obliterated the impression; so that his recollection of her was chiefly a dim, general idea that there was a very remarkable child growing up somewhere in that part of the country.

About two years previous to the beginning of this story, and when she was just sixteen, he had happened to be there again. Circumstances reviving his old impressions, he inquired for her, and had been almost startled to see the realization of his own predictions. A very few weeks of acquaintance had sufficed to teach him that the child was the most powerful attraction that bound him to this country, or indeed to life itself.

From that time forth he set diligently to work to cultivate and mould her to his wish, swearing an oath to himself, by the strength of his own will, that at some time in her life this woman should be his wife. He had the same exquisite pleasure in seeing this great heart and brain develop under his hand that an artist has in watching the visible presence of his ideal, gradually, from his own endeavor, take form and come into life.

He had taught her a little of almost everything, until it was impossible for her to have a mental perception with which he was not in some way directly or indirectly connected. Thus his intellectual ascendancy over her had become absolute. But if he ruled her brain, surely she had her revenge upon his heart.

CHAPTER III.

ON the night on which Mrs. Dana was to give her party Max rung Mr. Chester's door-bell and inquired if Miss Emily had gone yet.

"No, sir," said the servant. "I think she is just dressing. But walk in, Mr. Crampton, you will find Mr. Chester in the parlor."

So Mr. Crampton walked in, and found Mr. Chester deep in a pile of newspapers.

"Ah, Max, good evening," said that gentleman, without rising or relinquishing the paper he held in his hand; for Max was too familiar a visitor to be treated with any ceremony. "I believe Emily is up-stairs, getting ready for a party."

"Yes, sir, I knew she was going out to-night, and called to go with her, if she will let me."

"O, I don't expect she will make any very violent opposition," said the old gentleman, benignly; for Max was a particular pet of his, to the great general astonishment, as two men more diametrically opposed in sentiment or opinion could hardly be found. Yet, strange to say, the admiration was mutual. And whenever Max (who took the name of almost everything in vain) got down upon religionists, he always put in a saving clause concerning Mr. Chester, whom he declared to be the truest man he knew.

"Who gives this party?" asked Mr. Chester, presently, taking up a fresh newspaper.

"Mrs. Dana is the lady who offers herself as a victim for the good of society for to-night," answered Max. At which mild joke Mr. Chester laughed; as old gentlemen always do, when young people offer them any such refreshment.

"Well, you young people must have your own pleasure," he said, benevolently, folding his paper so as to begin upon a new side. "Now I would rather sit quietly here in my own parlor than be at the grandest of your parties."

Max looked as though he knew some one else who would equally prefer staying where he was. But he said nothing, and left the old gentleman under the delusion that he considered party-going the

highest earthly bliss; which is the settled conviction of old people concerning young ones.

"What, Max, you here!" said Emily, coming into the room with her wrappings in her hand. Which courteous salutation Max merely returned by a nod, indicative of the fact that he was indeed there; and leaving her father, he came to where she stood under the chandelier, and began a deliberate survey of her appearance. And surely if, as Mr. Keats has led us to believe, "a thing of beauty is a joy forever," his pleasure in merely gazing at her might have been eternal.

Her hair, dressed in the simplest possible fashion, gathered together in one heavy, low-drooping mass, thus accentuating its imperial shape, was totally without ornament. Only the long, pendulous ear-rings of rose coral, that so softly contrasted with the faintly flushed cheeks, served to mark the splendid poise of the head and define its exquisite variations, as the plummet does the perpendicular and the deviations from it. Her dress, of some thin material, and of that bright blue color to which the possessors of brown hair are so justly addicted, was, apart from its floating profusion, of equally unbroken simplicity, except that upon her bosom hung a heavy cluster of pink azalias, whose delicate bells looked as though they might have been carved by some hand of marvellous skill from the same frail, beautiful ocean wonder as the ear-rings. All was young and fresh and fair as the youth and beauty she rejoiced in. As she stood, she was as harmonious as a strain of perfect music.

"It is the cloudless sky, or rather the early morning faintly tinged with young dawn, instead of the silver cloud-lining, I prophesied," he thought, as his eyes scanned her with luxurious sloth.

But his scrutiny was cut short by the servant's announcement of the carriage.

"Then I think we had better go immediately," said Emily, throwing her opera-cloak around her, and drawing its hood over her head, as she spoke. So, bidding Mr. Chester good-night, they went out.

"I have a great mind to send you to ride with the driver," she laughingly suggested, as, getting into the carriage and sitting down, she found how her light dress expanded into blue waves around her.

"But suppose I have a great mind not to be sent?"

"Max, what did you come for at all? No one asked you," she exclaimed, with a quick change of mood and a sort of petulant impudence, to which he was perfectly accustomed.

"I should think it possible that I came because I felt like it."

"Well, now you are here, come in quickly, and shut the door, or I shall catch cold."

Which direction he quietly obeyed, and they drove on for some time in silence, during which the girl's conscience began to smite her; so she said, presently, in rather a conciliatory tone, "Max, if I were to treat you politely once, what would you think of it?"

"Well, I should think you were slightly bored, or rather stupid, from some cause or other," he coolly rejoined. And she ceased all further attempts at a civility which really did not seem very necessary.

The carriage had by this time stopped to take up Mrs. Grey, a lively little lady who often performed the part of *chaperon* to Emily; and who, being a great friend and ally of Max's, chatted with him in the briskest manner until they arrived at Mrs. Dana's residence, and the door of the dressing-room closed upon Emily and herself.

After giving those last few touches which are the sacred mysteries of dressing-rooms, and being carefully shaken out by the sable guardian angel of the precincts, they descended; and were soon laughing and talking in the midst of a crowd of acquaintances.

Very soon Emily became conscious, by a species of animal magnetism, that Frederick Hastings was on the outskirts of the party, waiting for some sign of recognition from her; and with that instinctive perversity which such women sometimes evince toward those they really like, she instantly turned her back upon him and displayed an increased interest in the conversation. Understanding this proceeding perfectly, Frederick Hastings made not the slightest effort to oppose it, but stood quietly by (with that perfect ease and comfort to himself, in all situations, which was his striking peculiarity) until such time as her majesty should think fit to turn round. And her majesty, being thoroughly aware of the childishness of her action, turned presently, and said, "Good evening, Dr. Hastings," with a slight stateliness of manner, which was the involuntary balance of that very consciousness.

He vouchsafed a quiet bow and smile in return, and stood by her side a few seconds before he remarked, "I scarcely expected to see you here to-night, knowing your aversion to such gatherings."

"No, I am not generally fond of parties, and, indeed, parties are not fond of me."

Which was the exact truth. Emily was no belle; people in general being rather afraid of her. Even those who admired her did so

at a safe distance, for she was thought high-tempered, satirical, and haughty; and all three counts in the indictment were fully proven. Her careless freedom of speech, that spared neither friend nor foe, greatly contributed to her unpopularity; as her name was, in consequence, generally mentioned in connection with some annihilating retort or sarcasm, very amusing to hear of, but scarcely inviting when the chance of personal application came into the question. It was only a few daring spirits, such as Max and Frederick Hastings, who cared to venture upon any very familiar acquaintance. It would otherwise have been singular that a girl possessing so many attractions as she, who had done no active harm to any one, should not be a favorite; a fact of which she was fully cognizant.

Frederick Hastings had been gazing down at her as she spoke, and now resumed the conversation with, "You are looking remarkably well this evening."

The face she turned towards him with a quick movement had darkened curiously with roused pride; for she always resented any direct expression of compliment as insulting. But he received her look with such unruffled composure, as though he had merely announced some broad, abstract truth, that she said nothing, and felt rather foolish and ashamed of her inclination to consider personal that which was so perfectly general.

"I heard you practising as I passed your house this morning," he went on; change of subject being the only outward notice he took of the protest her face had made.

"Yes," she answered, a little quickly, glad of an easy mode of retreat after her slight defeat.

"Whose music was it? I fancied it was Chopin's 'Impromptu' I heard."

"So it was."

"But you do something besides practise, I hope. What have you been reading lately?"

And the conversation turned with great earnestness and vivacity upon the late literature.

Max Crampton had the pleasure of standing upon the opposite side of the room, watching and following this talk as her face translated it. The interest and pleasure it expressed were only the more annoying to him, because unconsciously exhibited, and therefore real. Chance had thrown him next a pretty doll of a girl, and his humor found vent in entertaining her with a sardonic sarcasm so entirely beyond her comprehension, that she only received a general idea that Mr. Crampton was being exceedingly complimentary.

Presently, finding this very slow work, and growing heartily tired, he sauntered down the room to where Emily and Frederick Hastings stood; impelled more by unwilling gravitation and curiosity than by any liking he had for the gentleman, whom he regarded with that accentuated dislike we give to persons we would despise, yet cannot.

"What have you done with your pretty companion?" said Emily, turning to him as he stood near.

"O, she called me a 'horrid wretch,' and told me to go away, so I took her advice. Good evening, Dr. Hastings." And the two gentlemen shook hands rather ceremoniously; for though they had met very often during the two preceding years, their acquaintance had never flowered into anything like intimacy.

"We were speaking, Mr. Crampton," said Frederick Hastings, with a courteous desire to give him a place in the conversation, "of the difference in social qualities between Continental Europeans and Anglo-Saxons. I should think you could speak as one having authority on this subject. You have lived many years in Europe, have you not?"

"Yes, I was educated at Heidelberg, and have since rambled all over the Continent. As far as my experience has gone, I should say that one great difference was, that when a Continental European is either pleased or amused, he is not in the slightest degree ashamed to show it. They leave respectable misery to, aged and venerable beggars, whose stock in trade it is. I declare I have been to English and American dinner-parties, which were only an enlargement upon the Egyptian plan of having a skeleton at their feasts; for a large part of the company seemed to come in that capacity."

"I don't think we are very Egyptian to-night," laughed Emily, "for we have not even one skeleton, unless Max here will kindly consent to fill that office." Which Max promptly declined doing.

"Have you been playing chess lately, Mr. Crampton?" asked Frederick Hastings, wishing to turn the conversation from its slightly personal character, and referring to their last meeting which had been around a chess-board. After what has been said of Max Crampton's character, it must be unnecessary to tell the reader that he was a devotee to that game.

"No, I have had no opponent."

"No 'foeman worthy of his steel,' he means," said Emily, laughing. "He has been making Herculean efforts to teach me, without the faintest success, for I detest chess. I look upon it as absolutely demoralizing; and being addicted to chess, as something like being

addicted to gambling. A good player, which presupposes a certain natural formation of mind and character, to me peculiarly inhuman and revolting, seems instinctively to reduce all life to a game, and all actions to so many moves on the board. It decreases human sympathy, of which there is not too much in the world."

"Miss Emily has mounted one of her hobbies now, which accounts for her slightly didactic earnestness," sneered Max.

"You ought to say, rather, that I am declaiming against one of your hobbies, and so you don't like it. But you ought to allow me some revenge for the long, dreary hours you have made me spend over it."

Frederick Hastings found, in spite of all his benevolent efforts, skirmishing seemed the order of the evening. So, as a last resort, he asked her to dance. She consented, but with a slight surprise in her face; for these two seldom wasted the time in dancing which they might otherwise use in talking.

If Max Crampton had looked as he felt at that moment, he would not have been a very pleasant object to contemplate. He had settled it so conclusively in his own mind, that if she danced it should be with him, that he had forgotten to insure his claim. Now he was left to watch some one else occupy the place he had considered his own.

But he took care to remedy his mistake as soon as possible. They took their places in the next set, and while waiting to begin, he said, "Who is our *vis-à-vis*, — this pretty girl opposite?"

"Why, you might know by the likeness, — it is Clementine Hastings."

"O, I understand, — Miss Dr. Hastings."

"Well, it must be confessed," laughed Emily, amused at his way of expressing his meaning, "she derives much of her interest from her brother."

"Is she as much like him mentally as she is physically? If she is, she must be worth knowing. You know I never disputed his mental excellence, if you parse him intellectually in the feminine gender."

He looked at her a little viciously as he said this; but she took no notice of the challenge, except, as she answered, her manner shaded to a cool, haughty quietude.

"No, as far as my knowledge of her extends, which is no great distance, she seems only a good-natured, refined little lady; although her brother tries desperately to make her a literary one, by dosing her with all the heavy and serious literature in existence."

"It is our turn, Miss Chester," exclaimed the voice of Miss Clementine, totally unconscious of the criticism she was undergoing; and the dancing interrupted further conversation.

The evening went on, with the dancing, flirting, eating, and drinking usual to parties, and in the usual proportions, until quite late, when Emily found herself sitting in the library, talking with her first partner.

"My dear," said Mrs. Dana, approaching her, "my cousin, Mrs. Fenton, is here from Virginia, and I have promised she should hear you sing. It will be her only chance, as she leaves town to-morrow."

"It would indeed gratify me to hear Miss Chester sing," said a sweet, kind voice, that made Emily turn quickly to look at the speaker. She marked little. There was nothing particular about her, except that pleasing manner, or rather want of manner, which belongs to elderly Virginian ladies.

"I am sorry," said Emily, gently, "to refuse; but I dislike to sing in large assemblies."

"O, you can't urge that in this case," said Mrs. Dana, "for we shall be quite private here in the library. Half the people are still in the supper-room, and can't hear you."

"You had better go at once, you won't be able to get out of it," said Frederick Hastings, in a low voice, looking down at her with a sort of laughing pity in his face.

She went to the instrument. He followed her, leaning upon the piano, at her side. She sat down, and, making a few careless chords serve as prelude, began singing Malibran's exquisite little echo-song, commencing, "*Chagrin d'amour*."

The voice was what the rest of the woman necessitated, — rich, low contralto; strong, flexible, and passionately expressive as the face; yet with a fresh, dewy sweetness in it that penetrated the senses like the perfume of spring flowers. Trained musically to a rare degree, all the culture and power of her nature found expression through this channel.

As the tender, simple pathos of the composition vibrated through the beautiful melody, no wonder that the room grew still, and those who stood round her silently listening were strangely thrilled and touched.

As she finished, and was about to rise from the piano, Mrs. Fenton laid her hand on her shoulder and said, in an almost wondering tone, "Why, my child, do you know how exquisitely you sing?" At which simply expressed compliment Emily laughed and blushed in

a naive, girlish way, that any one who had seen her only in her moods of pride and sarcasm could never have believed possible.

"I shall be glad to sing for you again at any time, but just now my audience is growing rather large." And rising, she passed with Max and Frederick Hastings through the long window of the library into the conservatory, where they talked of music and art for the rest of the evening.

In all their after lives, neither of those men ever lost the impression of the bright picture of that girl as she sat singing and blushing in that old-fashioned library. Years hence, when all else will have so utterly changed, Time will reproduce and bring it back to them with strange exactness.

Mrs. Gray coming soon to say it was time to go, the four left together, Frederick Hastings accepting the seat in the carriage offered him by the elder lady. They drove back in that state of general content which a pleasant evening invariably inspires; so different from the dismal, headachy next mornings.

"Don't forget your German lesson for Monday, Miss Emily," said Max, as he handed her out of the carriage.

And after "good-nights" all around, they parted. The ladies to bed, and the gentlemen to their cigars.

And now, having made all our party comfortable for the night, sit up with me, kind reader, while I tell you something more of Frederick Hastings.

He and his sister had been left orphans at an early age. They had grown up much according to their own devices, as the maiden aunt to whose care they had been confided, and with whom they resided, was too indulgent to do anything except attend to their physical comfort.

With regard to their affairs, they were in perfectly easy circumstances, though not wealthy. Consequently he had adopted a profession, entering the navy as surgeon, when very young. After visiting nearly all quarters of the globe in this capacity, he had wearied of it, and, retiring from the service, was now leading a slightly good-for-nothing life upon shore; practising medicine to be sure, but to a very mild degree.

At the period of his introduction to the reader he was about thirty; but he had the great advantage of appearing to be of this age (when a man just reaches his strongest power of fascination, and near which it perhaps culminates) for the last four or five years, and would probably continue to do so for the next four or five to come.

He was chiefly remarkable for his wonderful popularity among women, which really seemed a species of fatality. Sensible or silly, old or young, strong or weak minded, it seemed to make not the least difference: they all came and bowed down at his shrine, and offered up incense.

Still more extraordinary, this incense, instead of getting into his head, intoxicating and rendering him top-heavy, left him the same natural, simple-mannered gentleman it found him. Instinctive taste saved him from faults almost inevitable in his position.

Tall and elegant of figure, with feet and hands, and indeed appearance in general, of high-born effect, he was anything but strictly handsome. And yet women extolled his appearance, and glorified his very defects into beauties.

Beyond his knowledge of English literature, his cultivation, except so far as travel and observation had necessarily accomplished it, was not remarkable. Many girls far exceeded him in acquirement, and yet these very girls looked upon him as an infallible critic, and the most original, keen-sighted women talked to him for hours with increasing interest.

He had an intuitive, womanlike perception of character (thus far Max was right in his feminine classification of him), which was one great cause of his popularity; for it made him, as Emily Chester said, "so harmonious." Certainly, to hear this man talk, at times, was as soothing as listening to sweet music. His dress and manner were both rather careless, but this only added to his general effect, for it seemed to show the material of which he was composed was so fine in grain and texture as to render polish unnecessary.

Added to all this, he was an honorable gentleman. His faults were more truly shortcomings, and in a measure the effect of education.

With Emily Chester's intense sensitiveness to outward influences, either agreeable or disagreeable, it was no wonder he possessed nearly as much power over her in his own way as Max did in his. The difference was, that Max used and concentrated his power for one purpose, and Frederick Hastings did not. Yet he did not dislike her; on the contrary, he liked her exceedingly, — in fact, took her in small doses, as a sort of mental stimulant. But he no more thought of falling in love with her or marrying her than he would think of living entirely on opium or brandy, — his brain not being of that intense power to which such food is natural. A conversation with her had the same exhilarating effect upon his mind that

physical exercise has upon the body. She gave him ideas, and strong, forcible expressions of them, acting, in literary matters, the part of reviewer and publisher's list of books.

Added to the mere pleasure in his society, she had a hearty friendship for him, such as few women are capable of in any degree. Consequently she strove to strengthen his character and correct his faults; and in this way her manner towards him was often such as would have admirably suited his venerable grandmother. Believing that to all persons with whom we are intimately thrown we have some mission to perform, she was sometimes unsparing in her exposure of his faults. Much on the principle of the old Inquisitors, who professed to torture their victims — for the victims' own good.

CHAPTER IV.

THE next Monday afternoon found Max Crampton in Mr. Chester's parlor, according to his previous engagement.

"Tell Miss Emily I am waiting for her," — and the servant went to obey him. And he, knowing from experience that it was a chance at what distant period of time she might think proper to descend, went searching among the books until he found a magazine that suited him, when, being comfortably ensconced in an easy-chair, he felt prepared for any demand upon his time and patience.

He had been sitting there about three quarters of an hour, when the door opened, and Emily appeared with a pile of books in her arms.

"Good evening," said Max, in a slightly sardonic tone, "I hope you did n't hurry yourself on my account."

"I could n't help it this time, Max, indeed," she answered, apologizing by her voice as well as by her words; "I was lying down asleep when you came, and have just gotten up." And the girl's flushed cheeks and slightly hazy eyes corroborated her statement.

"I don't think you are entirely awake yet, at least you don't look so," said Max, observing the face and figure, about which the soft, luxurious warmth of sleep still lingered, with a perception of its beauty that was visible in spite of him, and laughing as he spoke.

"And I don't feel so either," she answered, lazily drawing her hand across her eyes, while she echoed his laugh; "so you will have to take that as an excuse for any extra stupidity during my lesson."

"How does the lesson come on?" he asked, taking up one of the books from the sofa, where she had thrown them.

"Why, unfortunately, it does not come on at all; it is perfectly stationary."

"I am afraid the motive power has been small," said he, looking at her rather gravely and quietly. To which she made no rejoinder, except a generally deprecating expression, looking altogether like a pretty, scolded child; whereat Max Crampton involuntarily laughed, as she probably intended he should, for the expression of her face

changed into gay, mischievous triumph at having averted what she peculiarly disliked, a reproof from Max Crampton when her conscience told her he was right.

"Well, we will begin and make the best of it, at any rate," said Max. They sat down, and she began repeating German verbs with the most good-girl expression imaginable, to all of which he listened with equal gravity. She might have been ten and he sixty, from the schoolmaster-like manner in which he corrected her slightest mistake; for he was a strict teacher, — his interest in her making him so.

"That will do," he said at last, and taking up a volume of Schiller's plays, he set her to work upon it.

"My goodness!" she exclaimed presently, after the fashion of girls, and in a quick, petulant tone, as she stumbled through the difficulties of "Don Carlos."

"Really, I can't say that I exactly perceive it in such a miserable translation as that; I should have thought 'my wickedness' a more appropriate expression of opinion."

"Max, don't hit a fellow when he's down," she expostulated. Which mention of herself in the masculine gender made the muscles of Mr. Crampton's mouth quiver with amusement. But he made an effort to retain his gravity, and said, "I think it would have been an improvement if 'a fellow' had studied his lesson, instead of coming here without having looked at it."

"I won't do so any more," pleaded the girl, with such an intense and ridiculous humility and contrition in her face and manner as made her look about five years old, and which was entirely too much for Max Crampton's self-control; for he forgot his resolution, and laughed outright.

As soon as they were quiet again, — for she had joined in the laugh, glad of any relief from the drudgery of reading German under so strict a master, — Max said, "Well, let us have one more trial, and see if we can do any better." At which suggestion she immediately sunk down again into utter wretchedness, but, considering it best to obey instructions, she began again. But with no better success than before; for as the mistakes and corrections came faster and faster, Max's face darkened, until he said at last, in no very pleased tone: "You are evidently very much out of practice; I don't believe you opened these books while I was in New York." A remark of which Emily thought it best not to take any particular notice, and he quietly closed the book and put it aside.

"*Batti, batti, O bel Masetto!*" sung she out of her favorite "Don Giovanni," and turned her soft, pink cheek towards him, as though she expected the requested punishment would be immediately administered thereon, and was quite ready to obey the Scriptural injunction, and turn the other, too, if necessary. But all this not having the slightest outward effect upon Mr. Crampton, — for though he appreciated it intensely, as he did all her childish, kittenish ways and pretty devices, he thought it best in his present character to appear totally unconscious, — she said presently, "Max, don't look so cross; it is n't becoming to your style of beauty."

"Thank you," he rejoined, coolly, "I prefer looking so, I admire that expression of countenance."

"But I don't; and I won't sit here to be talked to and looked at in that manner," returned the girl, growing a little angry at the continued failure of her efforts for peace. "I shall get up and go up-stairs, if you can't be more agreeable."

"Stop, sit still, and I will try to play the agreeable a little better," he exclaimed, catching her arm as she attempted to rise. But she shrank from his touch with a sharp, involuntary motion strange to witness; for the girl, whose whole surface seemed formed like the tongue, of ends of nerves, had the strongest physical repulsion from this man, whose physical unloveliness grated upon her to an extent that sometimes amounted to intense pain. So she turned to him now with a strange, agitated expression of face which he only half comprehended.

"What will you have me do to please you?" he asked.

"Nothing, if you don't feel like it; only don't be so actively disagreeable," she answered, rather breathlessly.

"Well, as you won't read German, what do you say to talking it with me?"

"Good gracious, Max!" she exclaimed, in the most aggravated tone of voice, "that is too much. Why, it's about as though I had declined being imprisoned for life, and you had immediately offered me the mild alleviation of hanging; for I know you would never keep to easy German, but would get upon some intricate subject, and then I should be instantly stranded and obliged to come to a full stop, at about the fifth sentence."

"I must say, my first attempt at being agreeable is not a success," laughed Max.

"No, but don't be weary in well-doing; I shall appreciate the motive, at least," said Emily, consolingly.

"I can tell you one piece of news that you will be glad to hear," exclaimed Max, as he suddenly thought of it, "and that is, I have gotten your favorite Jack Frazier to promise me to give up his ruinous habit of drinking, which will otherwise certainly kill him, and I really believe he will keep his promise."

"Max," said the girl, with a strange trembling in her voice and her eyes shining with pleasure and loving-kindness, "I can't tell you how happy that makes me, as much on your account as his; for I know you never could have accomplished this without great pains and long effort. Such actions are not lost, either here or hereafter."

"O no, I deserve no credit. It was only a move on the chess-board," he answered, referring to her speech on the subject at Mrs. Dana's.

The girl's look had given him a dangerous inclination to kiss her on the spot, and he had repressed it by being a little more cold and sardonic than usual.

"If you make such disagreeable speeches, Max," laughed Emily, too well used to receiving such answers from him, when any humane or Christian action of his was commented upon, to be surprised at the present one, "I am afraid your second effort will be as great a failure as your first."

"Suppose we change offices then, and you take my place of entertainer; for I feel very much like saying as the old clergyman did when preaching to a sleepy congregation: 'My friends, if you think this is easy work, all I have to say is, just come up here and try it.' So suppose you just 'try it.'"

"If I do, I shall use other power than my own to produce harmony." And crossing the room, she seated herself at the piano. Max followed, and threw himself down on the lounge next her, well knowing from experience the treat that awaited him when Emily volunteered to play. For on such occasions she played for the love of it, with the spirit and understanding, so different from the forced work which is the result of begging, or polite compulsion. After playing cadenzas for a few seconds, she fell into that exquisite "song without words,"—the *adagio* of Beethoven's *Sonata Pathétique*. As she played it, with heart and soul and absolutely loving fingers, the man heard—what I am sure is contained in it—the last struggles and sufferings of a conquered soul who has fought a good fight against Fate. The brave, torn human heart wails and sobs as though chanting its own requiem, with an undertone of the old unconquerable spirit. The heart's blood from

a death-wound seems to flow through it; a heart whose struggle and agony forever ceases, whose life dies out with the echo of those last faint chords.

When she had finished, neither spoke; and presently she began again, this time with the Sonata in A flat, which opens with strains almost sacrilegious to play in ordinary times and seasons, or to inappreciative ears. The sun went down and the twilight gradually deepened, until her figure sitting there grew dim and indistinct; and still she played the music of the great composers who have hallowed and sanctified the world with their sweet singing, and who, though dead, yet speak; and still Max listened.

She stopped after some time, and was resting her head against the music-desk in front of her, when Max quietly rose to leave.

"Don't go, Max," she said, gently. The man resumed his seat without speaking, and they sat there in the darkened twilight and communed with their own hearts, and were still.

The quiet was broken by Mr. Chester's entrance, calling to the servant for light.

"Good evening, Max," said he, when, the gas being lit, he could recognize the occupants of the room. "Emily has been treating you badly, keeping you in darkness. I don't know how it is, I don't think her deeds are particularly evil, but she certainly loves darkness rather than light."

"Your father would have me imitate Goethe, I suppose, and ask for 'more light.'"

"Yes," she answered, laughing, "he and I are always having small skirmishes as to the propriety of closing the shutters and letting down the curtains, and all other means of shutting out intrusive sunshine."

Mr. Chester was soon deep in the newspaper he had taken from his pocket, which appeared always to reside there, and to which he displayed the devotion usual with gentlemen of his age. I wonder that no great poet has yet written an "Ode to the Everlasting Newspaper," à la Sartor Resartus. It would be received with an outburst of applause from the whole American male population.

The conversation between Max and Emily went on in that quick undertone, that with old people has about the same effect as a different language, and which, consequently, young people so often use in their presence; until a servant came to the door and said, "Miss Emily, will you step here?"

"Excuse me, Max," said she, rising, "it is some housekeeping affair, I suppose, about which she wishes to see me."

"Certainly I will excuse you for such a weighty reason as that; I am aware of the momentous importance of housekeeping. Have I not read of Mrs. Todger and the cares of gravy?"

"Well, I must follow Mrs. Todger's example, and go and attend to my particular cares of gravy, or whatever happens to stand for them in this case." And she passed out of the room, leaving Max to entertain himself; for Mr. Chester was too much absorbed to be conscious of Emily's absence. Left to his own resources, Max leant back among the cushions of the lounge, with his arms folded, and soon fell into a deep study. Sitting there thinking, his face grew colder and harder, until at last he might have been an image of Fate, so stern and relentless was his expression. To look at him was to have an instant conviction that any purpose of his possessed a sort of inevitability, against which it would be worse than useless to struggle.

And so far as inflexible will and untiring patience can accomplish anything, this man did indeed work out his own destiny, never knowing the shadow of defeat except when he worked in defiance of and in opposition to the law of nature, in which case there can be but one result. Nemesis is no traditional myth, but a terrible reality working in this and all other days. One great element of his success was, that he had thoroughly learned the difficult lesson of waiting as well as laboring; he knew the deep wisdom of Solomon's instruction, of a time for all things, especially a time to refrain from action.

His reverie was interrupted by Philip Chester's dashing into the room with that general noise and confusion which always attends the smallest movement of natural, healthy boys of his age. His face brightened visibly as he saw Max, for whom he had the strongest admiration and liking, chiefly arising from the fact that Max always took pains to interest and talk to him, but partly because his strong sense and ready wit found an answer in the boy's own character. So when he called to him: "Philip, come here and talk to me," Philip came and sat down by his side, very well pleased, though rather abashed by the responsibility of his position. But he made an effort at conversation, by saying, "Mr. Crampton, where is Carlo? why didn't you bring him with you this evening?"

Carlo, be it understood, was Max's great St. Bernard dog, which he had brought with him from Europe, saying that, if he were not the noblest companion Europe could afford, he was at least the noblest he could bring away. Carlo was his constant attendant, and their mutual devotion was wonderful.

"Why, Philip," he answered, "I am sorry to say Carlo is at present condemned to solitary confinement. He has lately been doing, what I am sure you never do, behaving himself very badly, and disgracing both himself and his master."

"How?" asked the boy.

"Why, it appears he has contracted a habit of making sallies into the hotel kitchen and helping himself to whatever he fancies, without either waiting to be invited or asking leave. At first I could n't believe that a dog of Carlo's high moral character could be guilty of such dishonesty and greediness, but the evidence in the case was too strongly against him, and I was obliged to restrict his walks abroad," said Max, with a perfectly solemn gravity that appeared to afford the boy the most exquisite amusement.

"Ain't he a thundering big fellow?" he said, rubbing his hands in his glory in his friend's felonious exploits.

Mr. Crampton smiled slightly at this rather singular association of canine and electrical ideas, but answering the spirit rather than the letter of the boy's remark, he said, "Yes, and he is as brave and strong as he is large."

"And you take him about with you wherever you go, don't you?"

"Yes, Carlo has been quite a traveller; he has been with me nearly half over the world, entirely over Europe and America."

"I wish I could go all over Europe and America," sighed the boy. "I think I should like to be Carlo, and travel about with you all the time."

"O, I scarcely think that metamorphosis will be necessary to bring about such a result. Perhaps you may travel with me one of these days, though in a different capacity from that of my dog."

"Won't that be grand," said the boy, growing excited at the suggestion of such a prospect. "And you will take me to see Switzerland and the Alps, and stir up those old fellows at St. Bernard's that send down the dogs to help people in the snow,—Emily told me all about it," he went eagerly on, his excitement very much exceeding his coherency,— "and take Carlo with us. I wonder whether he will know the place."

"Not from personal observation, I suspect; as to whether he will recognize it as the home of his ancestors I confess I am not sufficiently posted up in dogology to decide."

"And then we'll travel over Italy. '*Italia, O Italia, thou that hast the fatal gift of beauty,*' as Emily keeps saying ever since she commenced taking Italian lessons," Philip went on, with the most

ridiculous imitation in small, of his sister's large, earnest tones and manner. "By the way, she must go with us," he suddenly added, "she would like it so much; besides, we would have so much more fun."

"I think, myself," said Max, with an odd smile, "that she might be some slight addition to the party."

"If I make Emily go, will you promise to take me too?" inquired the boy, who, young as he was, had a keen suspicion that his best chance of influencing Max was through his sister.

"Yes, I will promise as solemnly as you please to take you upon that condition; but are you sure that you will succeed in inducing your sister to go."

"O, Emily will do anything I beg her to do; I thought you knew that, Mr. Crampton," and the boy opened his great eyes at him as though he wondered he should doubt his power for an instant.

It struck Max that perhaps the boy was right, that he might, after all, be his most influential ally.

"But if Emily can't go yet, you can wait, can't you, Mr. Crampton?"

Mr. Crampton said, yes, he could wait; and indeed he could, few persons as well.

"Were those your horses you were driving, when I met you the other day?"

"Yes; would you like me to drive you out with them?"

"Would n't I, though!" exclaimed the child.

"Come down to the hotel, then, to-morrow, early in the afternoon, and we will take a long ride."

"And may I take the reins?"

"I am afraid not; they are rather wild for such little hands as yours to guide; but we will see about it when the time comes."

"But suppose Emily won't let me go," suggested Philip.

"Why, I thought you said just now that she would do anything for you that you asked."

"O yes, I know generally; but sometimes she takes it into her head that I am going to break my neck, and then she won't let me stir a step. Just like girls," he added, with immense contempt and in the most injured tone; for his masculine dignity had, upon various occasions, been deeply insulted by Emily's fears for his safety.

"Suppose you ask her, Mr. Crampton."

"I think you had better ask her yourself, Philip; though I will second your motion, if you wish it."

"That will be the very thing," returned the boy, with great satisfaction; for the arrangement had an effect like his school debating-society, to become a member of which was his highest earthly ambition.

This plan had just been agreed upon, when the servant announced tea, and Mr. Chester rising superior to the fascination of his newspaper, he and Philip and Max went out to the dining-room, where Emily was waiting for them.

It was a pretty sight to see Emily Chester at the head of her father's table, for she presided with an odd little assumption of matronly dignity very piquant to witness. So Max thought as he watched the soft, white hands move among the tea-service, and concluded that surely tea made by such hands must have a peculiar flavor. He thought of the time that he had sworn to himself should come, when she would sit at the head of his table, and smiled to himself to think how little she dreamed of such a future, and yet how inevitably it would come to pass; for he had too firm a faith in his own strong will to doubt in the least his ultimate success, although he perfectly appreciated the obstacles before him.

"Max," said Emily, "these are some of my famous preserves."

"Ah, indeed!" he answered, by no means so overwhelmed with admiration as she thought their resplendent merit demanded.

"Hand them to Mr. Crampton," said she to the servant, thinking the sense of taste might perhaps be more inspiring than that of sight.

"No, I thank you, not any," interposed Max. "I am not fond of sweet things."

"If you were, I am afraid it would be upon the principle of the attraction which opposite things possess for each other," said Emily, rather revengefully, in return for his self-possession upon the subject of her housekeeping.

"*Les extremes se touchent*," I suppose you think," he returned, quite coolly. "But if I liked preserves in general, you must recollect that I have a particular cause of complaint against these, for I suppose they were the cause of your neglect of German."

"O no, don't lay the blame of my shortcomings upon them."

"I strongly suspect they had a good deal to do with it."

"No," laughed Emily, "I am driven to confess that it was the result of natural depravity, and nothing else; for if I had not been housekeeping, I should probably have been wasting my time at something not half so useful."

"If you put it to the score of natural depravity, you have reduced the fraction to its lowest terms, and there is nothing more to be said."

Mr. Chester, who had been paying little or no attention to what he ordinarily classed under the general head of "the young people's fun," here interrupted the conversation by asking Max what he thought of some of his philanthropical schemes. Upon which an earnest discussion ensued; as Max was one of the few people who ever ventured to oppose Mr. Chester in any of his pet ideas, and he invariably expressed any dissenting opinion which he might happen to hold, but in a quiet, cool manner that always obtained that gentleman's respectful attention.

The discussion might have continued to an indefinite period, had not Mr. Chester caught sight of the clock, and suddenly remembered that he had an engagement at a few moments from the present hour; so, excusing himself, he rose from the table and hurried from the room, telling Max as he did so that he must finish that conversation with him another time. To which Max's lips politely responded that he should be extremely happy to do so; but Max's heart devoutly hoped he might forget it before the next time they met.

The young people sat round the table with that absence of all ceremony which was the fashion of the house.

The conversation between Max and Emily had gone on quietly for some time, when Philip, recovering from the absorbing interest of the preserves, which, unlike Max, he had by no means slighted, suddenly called out, "I say, Emily."

"My dear, if you were to particularize as to what you say, I think I might have more ease in giving you a definite answer," returned she.

"Mr. Crampton says he will take me to Europe with him one of these days," continued the boy, without noticing her answer.

"I don't think Mr. Crampton meant that offer very seriously, at least I would n't put much faith in it, Philip," said his sister.

"O yes he did, though," urged Philip; "and he says he will take you too; that is, I mean if you'll go."

Max watched her keenly as the boy said this, to see how she bore the suggestion, but he learnt little from her face, for she only said, carelessly, "Mr. Crampton is very kind, but I am not quite ready to start for Europe just yet."

"That does n't make any difference; he'll wait, he said he would," persisted the boy.

This was too much for Emily's patience, and she said, in a very grave and stately manner, "I think it very probable, Philip, that I shall live and die without seeing Europe."

"But what will I do, then? Mr. Crampton only said he would take me if I could get you to go."

Poor Emily, she knew without looking at him that Max Crampton's eyes were upon her; and though she was totally unconscious of the aim and purpose of his life, she could not have been a woman and ignorant of his admiration for her.

"Philip," interposed Max at this extremity, "I would n't despair. I don't think it at all likely that you will live and die without seeing Europe, although that seems to be your sister's desperate resolve."

Emily was only too glad to join in the laugh with which Philip answered this speech; but the boy could not help wondering why she began talking so earnestly about a book which he had heard her pronounce that very morning stupid and unentertaining. But Max received this, as he did the rest of the proceedings, with perfect coolness, and talked on quietly until they went back to the parlor.

"Emily," said Philip, coming into the room with his school-books in his arms, "are you going to help me with my lessons this evening?"

Emily hesitated a moment, but then said, "Yes, Mr. Crampton will excuse us for a little while, I suppose."

"Mr. Crampton will not only excuse you, but will be very glad to be made of use in such a service," laughed Max.

"Then I think I will hand him over entirely to your tender mercies. You will find him a strict master, Philip," said his sister, recollections of her own lesson in the afternoon coming over her.

"No, I protest against any such arrangement," urged Max, strongly; "this is to be a partnership business, or I refuse to enter it."

"Well, then, you can both help me," said Philip, with the air of a man who has cut the Gordian knot.

"Philip has settled the matter," said Max, taking his seat by the table and opening the school-books. Emily followed his example, and they were soon deeply engaged in piloting the boy through the intricacies of his lessons, which, as he went at it with hearty goodwill, and was far advanced for his age, was not so uninteresting a task as at first sight it might seem.

"Philip," remarked Max, after they had successfully guided him to the end of his difficulties, and the books had been put aside, "I wish you would infect your sister with a little of your industry in studying."

"Why, you don't mean to say she don't study like everything?"

"I am afraid it must be confessed that her devotion to study is not quite as remarkable as it might be," returned Mr. Crampton.

"Won't I be down on her with that the very next time she gets at me for wanting to stay home from school. She's always preaching

to me about the 'importance of study' and 'the necessity of education,' or something of the kind," exclaimed the boy, with intense delight at his anticipated overthrow of his sister.

"Next time, I think I should try my own ability in the ministerial capacity," suggested Max, enjoying the boy's exultation.

"Max, don't put rebellious ideas into that child's head," exclaimed Emily; "I have trouble enough with him already on that subject."

"And," continued the boy, determined, now that he was in for it, to have his say well out, especially with the reinforcement of Mr. Crampton's presence and encouragement, "I don't believe she had looked at that German lesson this afternoon, for I had to help her look for her books before she came down-stairs."

"Hush, Philip," said Emily, alarmed as to how far this telling tales out of school might proceed; "don't you know little boys must be seen and not heard?"

"O yes, that's just what you always say. When I grow to be a man," said the boy, rising in dignity and his own estimation at the thought that that happy period would one day arrive, "if anybody dares to say that to any child when I am by, why I'll thrash 'em! Just let them try it once," continued he, greatly excited at his own wrongs and those of his suffering brotherhood.

"Philip, I think when young gentlemen of your years get into such a state of excitement they had better retire for the night," Emily quietly remarked, in a warning voice; upon which Philip thought it best to subside into silence.

Max was looking at the boy in amused silence, when his attention was drawn in a different direction by Emily's coughing rather hoarsely. In answer to his quick look of anxiety, she said simply, putting her hand to her throat, that it hurt her, was a little sore.

"You have taken cold; how did you do it?" he asked, rather shortly.

"I suppose I caught it this evening, when I went to sleep near the window," she confessed, reluctantly.

"Don't do that again," he said, involuntarily speaking in that hard, peremptory way into which he was so apt to fall when nearly touched or very much in earnest.

The girl looked up with the surprise and quick anger in her face which were the invariable signals of revolt at any assumption of authority on his part, an effort that always provoked her intensely.

Max recognized the well-known signs; but instead of calming them by a pleasant word or change of manner, some demon within

him tempted him to rouse and aggravate them. "You know you belong to me, and I can't allow you to injure your health," he coolly went on, the sardonic expression of voice and face deepening.

The woman simply rose, and standing before him looked down at him; thus placing the distance of her splendid height and presence between them. The look of the pair, then, was certainly not that of master and slave, of captive and ruler. The man answered the movement as though it had been speech.

"Yes," he returned, "I know you fancy yourself free." Still looking down at him, she laughed a long, low laugh, that was too amused for scorn and too scornful for amusement; and then, turning carelessly away, walked into the next room and stood by the centre-table, lazily turning the leaves of the books upon it.

The man's eyes followed her, scintillating strangely.

"Yes, wild eaglet as you are, with your flashing eyes and curving neck," he hotly thought, "little as you think it, you are already bound. Untrammelled as you imagine yourself, freely as you soar, the chain is already around you; your master has come, and in his own time will draw you back to his side, to bind you there forever. In the mean time, dream on your pretty dream of freedom."

Have a care, Max Crampton! The chain you are laboring to forge is as yet but a silken cord, and the captive is strong, capable now of rending it at any moment.

Carrying out his usual policy of outward imperturbability, he began talking to Philip of some indifferent subject within the boy's comprehension, and carried on the conversation perhaps fifteen minutes. In the mean time Emily came quietly back and stood by the mantel-piece, leaning against it. Max tried to draw her into the conversation, but she seemed little in the humor to take interest in anything he had to say, at least for that evening. Seeing his efforts were likely to prove worse than useless, Max rose at an early hour to take leave.

"Don't go yet, Mr. Crampton," said Philip, recovering from his late defeat, "for I know Emily's got a scolding ready for me as soon as you get out of the house."

"If that is the case," answered Max, laughing and resuming his seat, "I can't think of letting you bear it alone."

"O no," said Emily, in her softest tones and grandest manner, which Max knew instantly meant mischief, "Philip and I will make a compromise; I will relieve him from all fear of a scolding, and he shall relieve me from your presence."

Max got deliberately up from where he was sitting, and, crossing to where she stood, looked steadily and quietly into her eyes, which by a species of magnetism he forced her to raise to his, and said, in a tone too low for the boy to hear: "I am not going while you feel towards me in this way. You can't let this nonsense seriously divide us," he added, with almost passionate earnestness of manner.

"I am not angry, Max; at least not now," she added, as she saw his look of unbelief.

"Will you prove it, by sitting down here, and talking to me like yourself?" and, taking her hand, he drew her towards a sofa.

She made no resistance; but sat by him, as he talked to her, until all shadow of her displeasure passed away, and her eyes beamed with that bright, happy light in which he so loved to bask.

The hours flew by, and still Max Crampton could not summon courage to break up this, to him, heaven on earth. At last, Mr. Chester's ring at the door-bell did this for him; and with an effort he rose to say good night.

"Good by, and try to treat the German a little more kindly in future," said he, by way of valedictory.

"*Gute Nacht, lieber Freund!* and don't think me totally ungrateful for all your kindness and pains," continued the girl, with a kind, grateful expression in her eyes, that made Max think it best for the safety of his self-possession to beat a quick retreat. This he did; and went home with the brightness of those eyes, which he seemed, by some curious physical process, to have absorbed into his brain, seeming to lighten and vivify a whole life before him.

And Emily went quietly off to bed, thinking what a glorious fellow Max was mentally, and how much stronger and really more worthy of reverence than any one else she knew. And then came a feeling of almost angry contempt for herself, that she should ever let her physical repulsion from him influence her manner or feeling towards such a kind, true friend. She went to sleep, resolving that it should not be so in future. Poor child! she little knew the perfectly hopeless task she had set herself; to oppose and conquer that which had its root in the very foundations of her nature.

The next day, I am happy to say, Philip got his ride, Mr. Crampton having offered himself as security for his safety of life and limb. He came back nearly wild with excitement, and saying that Mr. Crampton had let him drive part of the way; "and did n't I make those fellows go, though!" said the boy, exultingly.

CHAPTER V.

THE winter came on, the weeks and months passed, and still Max labored and waited.

As for Emily, she lived on the same life she had led ever since she had become a woman, which period dated from about her thirteenth year. Her position in her father's family gave her full physical employment, and Max and her own nature took care that her mind should not be idle. I seriously question whether, in this case, a person can be thoroughly miserable even under the most trying circumstances, and Emily had almost everything to contribute to her happiness. With her large nature and superabundant vitality, she lived her life freely and fully; receiving happiness not as a criminal to whom everything of the kind is an indulgence, but as her natural right and inheritance. She could not look at a bird or a flower, and believe that the physical enjoyment God gives so abundantly to them he could ever deny to that part of creation made in his own image. And she knew that, as the great Father sends both, we have no more right to refuse pleasure than sorrow, each being meted to us at the times and seasons, and in the exact proportions, best suited to our ultimate good.

Her want of training and discipline in her childhood had had its advantages as well as disadvantages; for she thus escaped the dwarfing, cramping early influences that fill the world with deformed hearts and minds.

Her father's strong puritanical character might have injured her in this respect, but that he lived a life almost entirely apart from his children, especially during the years in which his daughter's mind had been chiefly susceptible to formative influences. So, having no one to teach her the heinous criminality of such a course, the girl followed the dictates of her nature, and lived a happy, vigorous life. Her physical health aided her in this; for though her constitution was not strong, and you would have instinctively dreaded to see her attacked by disease, still she was essentially wholesome, her flesh having that firm, healthy appearance never seen except in persons of simple appetites and habits. She was perfectly English in her

devotion to exercise, and her long walks were the wonder and admiration of her whole circle of girl acquaintance. And many of these bright, clear winter afternoons she spent, literally, in the highways and hedges, the high, airy, thinly populated streets around the city; sometimes with her brother or Max for escort, but often by herself; for she had that love of solitary walking which is apt to be a characteristic of active-brained, speculative girls.

She made great mental progress this winter, practised and studied hard, and, as to reading, absolutely gormandized books. It was only in after days that she appreciated the value of this period of her life and its occupations, after the nutriment of the mental food taken at this time had passed into bone and sinew. She was unconsciously, by merely following the tastes and instincts of the moment, strengthening the fortress for the siege that was to come.

It was one of those early spring afternoons, when the weather flatly contradicts the calendar, and is as brisk and cold as winter, when it suddenly struck Emily, after she had practised herself into a state of almost temporary imbecility, what a splendid idea a good, quick walk would be. So, running up-stairs, she put on those articles of dress which girls invariably denominate "their things," *alias* bonnet, shawl, and gloves. She was standing upon the steps putting on the last-named articles, — for a girl who, except in full dress, put on and fastened her gloves before getting outside the door would be a new feature in humanity, — when she saw Frederick Hastings come sauntering up the street, and of course immediately, with mingled pride and perversity, started off at a quick pace in an opposite direction.

But Frederick Hastings had seen her, and, being that evening dreadfully on his own hands, he had no idea of being deprived of such an opportunity of relief from his burden; besides, like all lazy gentlemen, he was fond of strolling about the country with girls; so he started in pursuit.

"Well, Atalanta, whither are you flying?" he said, as he caught up with her. "I have been chasing you for the last square."

"Have you?" she answered, indefinitely, too proud to confess knowledge of, and too truthful to profess ignorance of, the fact.

"I am glad to see you have the good taste to appreciate this weather and make use of it. People who neglect such an opportunity for exercise don't deserve good health."

"They certainly don't get it, whether they deserve it or not," she returned, laughing.

"Yes, and that is the reason why pale cheeks are so numerous. If I were an absolute monarch, I would make a law on the subject, and put any one in prison for a term of years who broke it; so that, if they would not take advantage of fresh air and sunshine, they should not. Why, the present race of women are absolutely degenerating for want of employment and exercise," he added, with some vehemence.

Emily glanced at the elegant, lazy figure at her side, and felt very much like asking what the present race of men might be said to be doing. But knowing him to be the exception and not the rule, she only said, "It is well that I am so free from blame on this subject, or I might consider this attack on lazy young ladies as personal."

"You need not, for you are one of the few women I know whose ideas on the subject of exercise go beyond a short stroll, and you show it in your appearance. Most women look like plants reared in darkness."

"For goodness' sake, spare me the rest. I know exactly what you are going to say. I never knew any one who could bring the words *women* and *exercise* together without mentioning celery or some other vegetable illustration. I am bored half to death about the whole affair; for, besides the harangues I am always receiving from friendly elderly ladies, who show their tender interest in your health by always telling you how dreadfully you are looking, I haven't been able for years to take up a magazine without opening to an article on health, in which we poor women are made to play the part of dreadful example. It provokes me the more, because, as far as that is concerned, my conscience is so perfectly clear."

Dr. Hastings laughed at this speech, and said: "I shall certainly never mention the subject to you again; far be it from me to add a single grain to such sufferings."

"You and Mr. Crampton," he resumed, "walk out together every day, don't you?"

"O no, by no means every day; I often prefer going alone."

"But how is he to know that?"

"I tell him," she returned, coolly.

"Truly, you are civil to Mr. Crampton," said Frederick Hastings, far more concerned for Max than Max ever was for himself.

"O, Max and I have made the same agreement that Frederick the Great made with his subjects: they were to say what they pleased, and he was to do what he pleased."

"And which is the gainer by the arrangement?" he asked, with amused curiosity.

"We are both gainers in our own way," she replied; "the difference is, that he is a man, and I am a woman, and of course care to secure different privileges. I can let you into one secret, Dr. Hastings," she said, laughing, "which may be of use to you at some period of your life, and that is, that you can govern any woman by letting her talk as much as she pleases. The most apparently strong resolution will oftenest evaporate in words; and then, if you are quiet enough, and don't draw her attention to the fact, you can make her do the exact opposite of the very thing she has almost sworn to do. This is true, too, of weak men, and is the secret of the way in which strong, quiet women so often rule them. I think I shall write out a tract on this theory one of these days, and distribute it to all those gentlemen who have any difficulty in controlling their respective wives," she went on, with that enthusiasm peculiar to the explanation of pet ideas.

"But how can this form of government have any effect on you, when you see through it so clearly?" he asked, making the personal application of her doctrine.

"O, all women are alike in nature; the only difference is, that I do with my eyes open what they do blindly."

"Well, if that is the case, I congratulate you and Mr. Crampton most sincerely upon your arrangement; it will, no doubt, contribute very much to your mutual happiness during your future life," and the wicked laugh in his eyes would have explained his meaning, had any explanation been wanting.

"If you mean to indicate by that," she returned, with that calm directness which was always instant death to any attempt to tease her, "that I am or ever shall be engaged to Mr. Crampton, you are exceedingly mistaken. I shall never marry," she added, quietly.

Frederick Hastings felt inclined at first to laugh outright at this declaration from a girl of nineteen; but, looking at her, he saw in her face such an expression of steadfast earnestness that he was struck, and said simply, "Why do you make that declaration of independence?"

"Because, if I were to marry, I should die, I should suffocate!" she exclaimed, passionately. "I have lived a free life too long, not to revolt from the very shadow of a chain."

"But a true marriage is not a state of bondage, as you seem to think it, but of perfect freedom, as all our weaknesses are strengthened and our deficiencies supplied by a corresponding nature," he replied, very earnestly.

"Dr. Hastings," said she, turning fully round and looking at him with those strong, clear eyes, "did you ever see this true and perfect marriage of which you talk? I never did. There may be one in five hundred thousand; but has any one of us the right to believe that we are to be this favored individual? And then think of the horrible consequences of such an irrevocable mistake," and the girl shuddered as she spoke, "'to have and to hold, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness, in health, until death do part us!' If I were to marry, I should pray that death might part us then, on the spot, before I woke up from my delusion!" and she hurried on, as though striving to escape physically from her own suggestion.

"But marriage is the law of God and nature," said Frederick Hastings, after a few moments of silent walking, during which the girl's excitement and pace slackened; "and do you think you do right to oppose it, even in an imperfect form?"

"I don't oppose it in any one else; but I believe it to be every woman's duty to render herself capable of living without this occupation for heart and mind; and she can only do this by developing the internal resources of both. It is the aim of my existence to become a self-contained, self-sufficing woman, depending on myself for happiness, and capable of living any life which God may send me, no matter how lonely." As she said this, with her bright, fearless eyes flashing, and in her high health and pride, Frederick Hastings thought, almost involuntarily, how would she look uttering the same sentence ten years from the present time.

"My friend, I hope most earnestly that you may succeed; no strength, either natural or acquired, is unnecessary in the battle of life." He spoke gently, almost tenderly, for the girl's courage and brightness touched him; but there was the whole of the ten years' difference in their experience in his tone. "And even if you fail, no effort is lost," he added.

"Yes, and it is better to die striving towards a higher stage of existence than to live on in a state of comfortable indifference to all progress and development. But suppose we were to choose a serious subject of conversation now; I am afraid we shall grow light-minded if we go on at this rate," she continued, laughing.

"I doubt whether we shall be able to be in earnest immediately after such continued jesting," he returned, in the same spirit.

"Well, if you doubt the ability of our brains, suppose we try that of our feet," and off she started, walking at a desperate rate, with

that hilarity which brisk exercise always produces in healthy young people.

"Stop," he cried at last, after she had walked both herself and him entirely out of breath. "If you always go at this rate, you will have to get a locomotive for an escort: it would be the death of any mere human gentleman."

"O, this is retribution for your evil speeches about women's want of exercise; I am avenging the wrongs of the whole sisterhood; I hope you enjoy your punishment. But now I am going to try how you can run," and before he could make her the least answer, she was flying over the ground as fast as her feet could carry her, her flounces and ribbons forming gay streamers in the wind. By this time the man's blood was stirred up; and no school-boy ever ran a race with more hearty good-will than did that elegant gentleman dashing after that flying figure. He could not help laughing at his own boyish pleasure as he found that his longer steps were fast gaining upon her quicker movements.

When he reached her at the foot of a slight hill, they were both in a perfectly breathless state, and could only stand laughing and looking at each other.

"There!" she said, when she was once more able to speak, "you look ten years younger than you did."

"I certainly feel so; as soon as I get home I shall examine the record to see whether I have not been laboring under a mistake as to my age. I don't think I can possibly be more than twelve!"

"I have been exercising my benevolence this evening, sharing one of my luxuries with you. If you could get some one to do you the same service every day, there might be, I think, some hope for you. What you need is a good shaking up, both mental, moral, and physical."

"I know it," he returned, with a gentlemanly honesty that made Emily feel rather ashamed of her broad assertion, and very much like apologizing for it; so she said, "It is rather a compliment to tell a person that shaking up would do them good."

"I confess I don't see it exactly in that light," he returned, in rather an astonished tone.

"Why, it presupposes that there is something in them worth the trouble of shaking up. I know many persons upon whom any amount of that process would be attended with very little benefit."

"Well, that is certainly a comforting view of the subject," he answered, laughing.

They had turned back towards the city, and, having reached the limits of civilization, were conducting themselves according to its regulations, by walking along quietly, when Emily resumed the conversation very much in the grandmother style.

"I seriously think, Dr. Hastings, that vigorous exercise would be of immense service to you in everything; we can never calculate the effect of the body upon the mind, and, indeed, I think perfect health is physical religion. I am sure the mental and moral improvement would be great. I wonder," said she, with an expression of almost painful earnestness in her face, as she looked at him, that relieved her words of any shadow of impertinence,—"I wonder whether you will ever wake up and fulfil your possibility and capacity; if you ever do, the world will be better than it was before."

"I am afraid it is too late; men seldom change at my age," he returned, sadly, fully appreciating the spirit of her remark.

"It is never too late, Dr. Hastings," she said, with a strong, hopeful enthusiasm, that lowered while it swelled her earnest tones; that shone brightly upon him from her clear eyes. "I can never believe that any period or position in life can be without its duties to be performed, its battle for truth and right to be fought. I can see two ways open for your redemption,—religion and love. If either the angels of love or duty were to come down and trouble the waters, I think their stagnation would be at an end."

"And I can only stand and wait until such an angel shall come down and perform its holy office," he replied.

"If you would labor as well as wait, the time would be much nearer, I think. It would not be easy or pleasant work, I admit, but the reward would be divine."

"I suppose you agree with your friend Bettina,—'All transition into the divine is painful, but it is life.'"

"Yes. Bettina and I agree in most things," she added, with a slight laugh. "But it is getting late," she said, as she noticed the growing darkness, "and if we don't hurry home, papa will be inconsolable without some one to pour out his tea."

"Come, then, we will try to save him from that distressing state of mind," and they walked on at a brisk rate, laughing and talking until they came in sight of the house, when Philip came dashing towards them, calling out, "Why, Emily, we thought you were lost."

"No, here I am again."

"Mr. Crampton and Carlo and I had a splendid walk; Mr. Crampton hid his handkerchief and gloves, and Carlo found them, and he

promised to find me too if I get lost," the boy breathlessly exclaimed, making one singular compound word out of his whole sentence.

"Who promised, — the dog?" asked she.

"No, of course not," he exclaimed, with insulted dignity; "Mr. Crampton."

"O, I thought from the form of your sentence that Carlo must have miraculously obtained powers of speech. But how came you to go out with Mr. Crampton?"

"Why, he came just after you left, and asked me to go," said the boy. "We got back a little while ago, and when he found you had not come home yet, he said he would wait and see whether you arrived safely."

And so they found when they reached the steps, for there sat Max and Carlo, waiting with equal gravity.

"Good evening," said Max, generally, as the party came up; "I was beginning to fear that you had deserted us forever, Miss Emily. I did not know that you were in such good hands: the servant told me you went out alone."

"So I did, but Dr. Hastings caught up with me on the way."

"Miss Emily has been playing Atalanta all the evening," said that gentleman, laughing.

"And yet you reached her! What are your Hesperidean apples, and how do you use them?" Max asked, a little quickly, with a deeper meaning rising up through his words and tone than their apparently careless one, and reaching its full expression in the glance of strange, smothered envy, that went slowly up over the handsome, negligent face and figure that stood before him as he spoke.

"If any beneficent goddess has conferred such a blessing upon me, I am certainly in a state of most ungrateful unconsciousness of her favors; though in this case I give thanks for the result, if not for the cause," was the careless, good-humored answer he received.

This unconsciousness did not seem to lessen the cause of envy in the man's eyes; his glance seemed rather to deepen in its meaning, but, as he said nothing, Frederick Hastings changed the conversation.

"Is this your dog, Mr. Crampton?" he asked, making friendly advances to Carlo. "He's a magnificent fellow."

"Ain't he?" said Philip, strongly approving that sentiment.

"Is he fierce?" inquired Frederick Hastings, laying his hand rather cautiously upon the dog's great shaggy head.

"No," said Emily, laughing, "unlike the dogs of Dr. Watts's acquaintance, he does *not* delight to bark and bite. I don't think Dr

Watts would ever have written that libel upon the moral character of dogs if he had known Carlo."

"You and Carlo are great friends, are you not, Philip?" said Frederick Hastings, after the laughing at Emily's sally had stopped. The boy was playing all sorts of pranks with the dog, all of which he received with great dignity and leniency towards such childish weaknesses.

"That we are," returned the boy, throwing his arms around the dog's neck, and nearly reducing him to strangulation.

"Stop, Philip!" exclaimed Emily, rather alarmed; "if you treat him so, I am afraid he will falsify my good account of him."

"O no, he knows what I mean." And it really seemed as though he did.

"I am afraid Philip's interest in me is chiefly on Carlo's account; I shall have to reverse the old proverb, and instead of saying, 'Love me, love my dog,' say, 'Love my dog, love me,'" laughed Max.

"Come, Philip!" said Frederick Hastings, "confess. Don't you love Carlo better than Mr. Crampton?"

Now this was really what Mr. Swiveller would have denominated a *staggerer* to Philip, whose conscience would not let him deny the assertion, and yet whose politeness was immensely shocked by it.

"Carlo is younger than Mr. Crampton," insinuated he, at last.

"And consequently you look upon him more in the light of a companion," said that gentleman, laughing.

"Yes," exclaimed the boy, eagerly, catching at any assistance in his dilemma.

"Bravo, Philip!" said Frederick Hastings; "you are quite a Yankee for answering difficult questions."

"I am not a Yankee!" cried the boy, indignantly, not quite understanding the remark.

"O, I had no idea of running foul of such violent prejudices; don't you think, my little friend, you are rather young for such strong political sentiments?"

"No," returned the boy, valiantly. "I am going to be a man one of these days, and vote."

"Then, Philip, I think there will be plenty of time before then to announce your platform," said his sister, by way of a hint in the little-boys-must-be-seen-and-not-heard direction. "Has papa come in yet?"

"Yes, he's in the parlor."

"Then I must go in and see that he is comfortable," said Emily. Will you walk in, Dr. Hastings?"

"Not this evening," he replied, "but I am coming to see you again very soon, to finish our conversation."

"I am not going to ask you in, Max," Emily said, laughing, "for if I did, I am sure I should not retire in that Christian frame of mind that is desirable." And bowing, she passed into the house.

As soon as Philip could be prevailed upon to say good by to Carlo, the two gentlemen walked on down the street together. As they came near the hotel at which Max was staying, he said: "Dr. Hastings, you have never yet been to see me, though I have so often invited you; suppose you come in with me, and pay me your first visit to-night."

"I shall be very glad to do so," he returned, and followed Max into the hotel. He was pleased at this chance for a better acquaintance; his interest in Max having been greatly excited by his afternoon's conversation with Emily Chester. Hitherto he had looked upon Mr. Crampton's success as almost certain, but after her recent declaration of independence in the afternoon, he was intensely curious to know why a man like Max Crampton should still be so unremitting in his pursuit of her. He wondered whether it was resolution, or want of resolution, that produced this effect, as it might be the result of either; whether his faith in himself was so strong as to render him confident of ultimate success, or if he were only too weak to tear himself away. All this passed through his mind, as he went up-stairs and entered Max's sitting-room.

The bright, glowing fire was such a pleasant contrast to the chilly night-air, that Frederick Hastings threw himself into an easy-chair that stood before it, before he noticed the rest of the apartment, which he soon turned to do with some curiosity. It was an odd room, and, though only a temporary residence, by no means uncharacteristic of the owner's mind; at least, so the man thought as he glanced round it. There were books and papers in several languages, all over the room, on sofas and chairs, or under them, just as they had happened to fall when last used. A piano stood open, in one corner, with music strewn over it; for though Max had cultivated his musical talent far more mentally than practically, he was no mean performer, but he usually reserved his playing for his own entertainment. There were boxing-gloves and foils lying upon a sofa near the fire, and on and over the mantelpiece a bewildering collection of pipes. Having noticed all of this, Frederick Hastings turned round to the

fire again and made himself still more comfortable in his easy-chair. Mr. Crampton, having rung for his servant, and ordered light and wine, now came to the fire and said, "Which will you have, cigars or a pipe? I am German enough to prefer a pipe."

"I think I will follow your example, for this evening, at any rate."

Max handed him a meerschaum, and, taking one himself, they were soon comfortably smoking and talking. As these two men sat there, they seemed to divide between them all the gifts that Heaven can bestow upon a human being; together, they would have formed a man of ideal perfection; apart, they were each of them terribly lacking in several things needful. To one had been given the ten talents of intellect, cultivation, strength of will, wealth, and position; to the other, the one gift of perfect grace and beauty in word, thought, and deed. Their lives proved which of the two was the most richly endowed.

"I am really more healthily tired than I have been for months," said Frederick Hastings, presently; seeming to extract an incalculable amount of rest and ease out of his luxurious seat, and his careless attitude in it.

"You are not used to Miss Emily's violent exercise; I imagine running is not your usual mode of progression," returned Max.

"No, I had a general idea that it was properly confined to boys and the other lower animals; but I think I shall patronize it in future."

"That Emily Chester is a singular girl," he continued, after they had been smoking for some time in silence.

"Very," returned Max, dryly, and went on smoking.

"She has immense talent and power of will," again essayed Frederick Hastings.

"Yes," was Max's monosyllabic answer, and again he applied himself to his meerschaum; it was little pleasure to him to see his idol handled by inappreciative, if not irreverent hands.

Frederick Hastings began to find this rather up-hill work; but his interest in the whole affair was only intensified by Max's manner, so he made another effort.

"She seems determined to remain singular, for she was preaching a perfect crusade against matrimony this afternoon."

"Yes, she favors me with harangues upon that subject occasionally," sneered Max, in reply, with a queer smile.

"Do you think anything could break such an iron resolution as hers?" asked Frederick Hastings, determined, now that he had made a start, fully to carry out his purpose.

"Yes," returned Max, coolly, "two things."

"What are they?" he demanded instantly, with that perfect lack of ceremony, which even the most conventional used when speaking to this man, whose own absolute directness seemed to annihilate everything of the kind.

"A man whom she really loved, or a man who really loved her," was the quiet response.

Frederick Hastings thought this proposition over a little while before he said: "I can believe that love would change a woman's whole nature, and set at defiance her most fixed determination; but do you mean to say that a person for whom she naturally cared nothing could ever acquire such influence over her as to make her act in contradiction to the law of her being?"

"My friend," said Max, turning round and looking steadily at him, growing much less attentive to his pipe, "a thing is only impossible as the means for its accomplishment are inadequate. All things become possible to a sufficiently strong will. Don't be alarmed for the orthodoxy of that saying, though it comes from my heretical lips; I can give you chapter and verse for it. Do you recollect what the Great Teacher said, 'If you had faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye could say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, and it should be done'? What the world wanted in that day is just what it wants in this, that men should have faith in themselves; for faith, in its practical effect, is only a sublimated and intensified form of will. The idea which all the great actors in the world's history have had, that they were divinely commissioned, arose, not only from their knowledge that God must preordain all things, and that they were the means used for his ends, but from an astonishment at the effect of their own actions. They could not believe that an exertion of human will could possibly be attended with such results. If men would only believe in their own capacity, how many more workers there would be in the world; for, after all, a firm belief in our power to perform an action is the shadow of its coming accomplishment."

As he said this in his concentrated way, Frederick Hastings felt small and weak before him. Then he thought of Emily Chester as he had seen her that afternoon, with her will and character equal in force to this man's, though not in concentration or power of endurance, and almost shuddered to think what the result of a conflict between two such opposing forces would be. He was perfectly satisfied by this time as to whether Max's actions were the result of

resolution or irresolution. It was several moments before he said, "But courage is as necessary as faith, for the accomplishment of any great action."

Which speech evidently found favor in Max Crampton's eyes, for he answered, earnestly: "But courage is one of the best results of faith, either in ourselves or in a higher Power. What you speak of is more truly energy, which enables us to make the requisite physical exertion. A man who lacks energy can never attain anything more than a passive, negative goodness, and generally not even that."

"Really, Mr. Crampton," said Frederick Hastings, laughing and shrugging his shoulders, but with a satirical bitterness in his mirth that seldom found its way into his words, — "really, you are coming down on me rather strongly now; for a want of energy is generally considered the sin that doth so easily beset me, and I am afraid there is a good deal of truth in the charge. When people begin preaching to me, with the most benevolent intentions, about active goodness, industry, a career in the world, and all that sort of thing, I always feel like making them the same answer that the beggar did Montaigne, when he asked him why he did not work: 'My dear sir, if you only knew how lazy I am!'"

This was scarcely the reply he had made to Emily Chester, when, but a few hours before, she had touched nearly upon this very subject, but his words had certainly changed no more than his auditor.

Max laughingly apologized for any inadvertent personality in his remark, and said, "When I get upon high moral ground, I never know when to come down from that elevation."

"O, pray don't descend on any account. Go on with what you were saying when I interrupted you," returned Frederick Hastings; "I want to hear what you have to say on the subject."

"I am afraid, after what you have said, you will think I am preaching a sermon, with you for my text," said Max.

"O no," he replied, "not at all; and if I did, I should only feel complimented; for nothing flatters a man so much as having his faults delicately appreciated and skilfully analyzed, not even having his virtues treated in the same way. Besides, you know the opinion of our mutual friend, Mr. Pope, upon this subject, —

'Thyself to know,
Make use of every friend and every foe.'

"In which capacity am I to serve this evening?" asked Max, gayly.

"As a friend, I hope I may say," returned Frederick Hastings, with his exquisite fascination of look and manner. And from that moment Max Crampton understood and looked leniently upon the weakness of all the young women who fell in love with this man. "But don't let my feelings stand in your way; I am used to receiving such moral chastisement," he continued.

"I have no doubt of it. Men of your stamp almost universally suffer from the equal misfortune of being either over or under rated, though this is partially true of all classes; to be taken at our exact real value is, I think, that which happens seldomest to us in this world."

"I don't know what smart somebody it was who said that the point equidistant between the opinions of our friends and our enemies is about our true position," rejoined Dr. Hastings.

"I agree with the smart somebody, whoever he was; we are all of us a great deal better and a great deal worse than any one beside ourselves has the slightest idea of. Do you know I am fast coming to the conclusion that men are much more nearly on a level as to capacity than we imagine? If a man has a large proportion of any one faculty, he is almost sure to counterbalance it by a deficiency in some other; poetical geniuses lack common sense, and common-sense people poetical genius, and so on to the end of the catalogue, as a general rule."

"But what do you make of universal geniuses? for such phenomena do sometimes appear upon the earth."

"O, they are just as much exceptions as idiots are, with whom they balance."

"But," said Frederick Hastings, by no means disposed to receive this doctrine, "you don't think this is true morally?"

"My friend," said Max, earnestly, "I am afraid it is a great deal more true. Our faults differ in quality; but who shall say they differ in quantity? Few persons do more harm in the world than good, conscientious men; for they compel every fresh, original, free-born soul, over whose bodies they have the least physical control, to accept their own personal rule of conduct, as the single and infallible measure of right, and often give full play to prejudice and passion, because, having acted from conscientious motives so often and for so long a time, they grow at last to believe themselves incapable of having any other. I have always found that no one's faults are so perfectly hopeless as those of a good man. You may induce sinners to repent, and prodigals to return to their fathers, but before a good mistaken man you can only stand by in despair."

"Well, if you believe good people more imperfect than they seem, do you carry out your doctrine by believing bad people better?"

"Yes; I believe that the divine nature which God implants in each of his creatures is never totally extinguished. The falsest and most malicious person I ever met proved this to me by showing a beautiful love and repentance towards a little child. Besides, a great deal that passes for wickedness is so much more truly weakness."

Poor Dr. Hastings! He felt how perfectly true this was in his own case, and by no means fulfilled his promise of feeling complimented. It is singular how much any one prefers being called wicked to being called weak. Call a man a villain, and he may forgive you; call him a fool, and keep out of his way for the rest of his natural life. But as Frederick Hastings had not the slightest ambition to point the moral or adorn the tale, he showed no consciousness of the suitability of the remark to himself, and only said, quietly: "The current of circumstances into which an individual is thrown is often so strong as to deprive him of freedom of action. I am sure an incalculably greater number of persons drift into evil than ever deliberately steer towards it."

"Strong natures create a current of their own instead of following that of others," was the characteristic reply; "but I agree with you that it is not fair to leave out the influence of circumstances in our judgment of a character. To bring the matter home," he said, laughing and apologizing slightly by his tone and manner, "Miss Emily Chester says, that under different influences you would have been a different man."

"And as it is, I suppose she thinks I have succeeded in becoming a very indifferent one," exclaimed Frederick Hastings, with some of the same bitter mirth with which he had once before spoken, and which struck Max as much as his quick retort. But he protested against this deduction from Emily's remark; for poor Max thought rather ruefully what her real opinion of this man was.

"Miss Emily is a keener judge of character, and her good opinion is, even intellectually, better worth striving for than that of most men," returned his companion, in answer to Max's defence of her words.

Max nodded in reply, as though he considered that a rather settled conclusion.

"But, Mr. Crampton, I shall stay here all the evening, if I go on, or rather stay still, at this rate," said Frederick Hastings, rising and laying his meerschaum on the mantelpiece.

"I wish you would," said the other, in his direct way.

"I should, if it were not for a previous engagement," rejoined Dr. Hastings, with equal simplicity.

"Come and see me often. Drop in at any time; I am almost always at home, and when I am not, my wines and pipes are, and you could find books and papers enough to amuse yourself with, if you would take the trouble to pick them up, for my library usually resides upon the floor," said Max, looking round the room and laughing.

To have appreciated this remark to its fullest, truest extent, Frederick Hastings should have known what a rare condescension it was on Mr. Crampton's part (far rarer with him than even with most young men of his stamp and in his position) to give any one the freedom of his private domains and favorite luxuries; but he was fascinating Max just as he fascinated every one with whom he came in contact.

"I shall certainly avail myself of this invitation, if you will promise not to let all the reciprocity be on one side," and, bidding Mr. Crampton good evening, he left the room; leaving Max to smoke and dream far into the night.

And now, being thoroughly convinced that Emily Chester was fully determined never to marry, and that Max Crampton was infinitely more fully determined that she should marry him, Frederick Hastings suddenly came to the conclusion that he was desperately in love with her himself. As soon as she was entirely beyond his reach, he instantly considered her the only prize worth striving for. She might have loved him to distraction, might have wasted body and soul in efforts to win him, and the only reward it was in his nature to give her would have been an effort to feel grateful, and a success in feeling bored. After all, how few men or women can bear being loved! But as she was totally independent of him, and therefore rose above him, he straightway bowed down and worshipped at her shrine. He spent nearly all night in mentally contemplating the impression, or rather picture of herself, which she seemed to have stamped upon his brain during their afternoon's walk. Then he thought of her high aims in life, of her talent and cultivation, of her fresh, strong originality which made all other women seem in comparison with her so insipid, small-natured, and characterless. To win this girl seemed the only thing which, at present, made life worth living; and he dropped asleep at last, firmly persuaded that in Emily Chester was vested all his future happiness.

CHAPTER VI.

IT was a night or two after his interview with Max Crampton, when Frederick Hastings, allowing his body to follow the example of his mind, which had done nothing but run in that direction for several days, found himself waiting for admittance at Mr. Chester's door.

The servant ushered him into the parlor, and there he found Philip, Mr. Chester, and Max round the large open wood-fire that was one of the most attractive inanimate features of the house.

Mr. Crampton was evidently still under the influence of their last meeting, for he came forward to welcome him with a pleased expression, which had certainly never come into his face before at seeing Frederick Hastings in any portion of the world where Emily Chester was likely to meet him.

Mr. Chester was lying, propped up with cushions, upon a lounge drawn to the fire, looking so badly that Frederick Hastings asked him, as he shook hands with him, whether he had been ill.

"I have been too sick to leave the house for several days," he returned; "I think I have taken a heavy cold."

Dr. Hastings thought, as he looked at him, how terribly he had broken in the last year or two, so he said, "Mr. Chester, I think you work too intensely; you give yourself no rest; why don't you retire from business, for one thing?"

"I shall never retire from business so long as my mind and body permit me to carry it on, for from long habit I should be miserable without some constant occupation. As to my labors outside of my business, I can never give them up, as I believe that the great God who sent me into this world has for every moment of my life some work which it is my duty earnestly to perform."

"But in doing your duty to others, you have no right to overlook your duty to yourself," returned Dr. Hastings, whose professional interest in the subject was waking up.

"My young friend, do you recollect who said, 'Work while it is yet day, for the night cometh, when no man can work'?"

"But God in giving this command could never have meant that in

obeying it you should do injury to the nature which is his own gift. He gave you your body just as much as he did your soul, and holds you equally responsible for your treatment of it," said the young man, earnestly.

"I have tried to spend my life in performing greater duties than attending to my own physical ease and comfort," was Mr. Chester's answer, and the lines worn round his mouth and across his brow showed the truth of his assertion.

"But no duty can be called small or worthy of neglect, especially one which is more a debt to humanity than to yourself; for the human race can never attain physical perfection until generation after generation shall have acknowledged and lived up to this duty," urged Dr. Hastings.

Mr. Crampton had been sitting by, a quiet but attentive listener to this conversation; but he here interposed, "I have always thought that the slow suicide which we see persons in this way committing around us every day was just as criminal as the use of any of the quicker modes of death."

"Certainly it is; it is only a question of time."

"It is very well for you young men to speculate about duties; but all that an old man can do is to strive to spend the remnant of life which God allows him in his service," said Mr. Chester, in a stern tone.

"It is because I know the way in which you use life, that I would strive to induce you to use the means to prolong it," returned Frederick Hastings, with an exquisite gentleness of voice and manner that made Mr. Chester's face visibly soften, and Max Crampton look at the speaker in admiration.

"After all, it is our life, not our death, which is the great matter," said Mr. Chester, presently; "for this is under our own control, while our death and future state must necessarily be left to a higher Power. A man who is always thinking or talking about either of these things, when he ought to be considering his present duty towards God and man, has not a proper spirit of progression."

"To attain the highest life, is to live each moment truly and fully, and let the future take care of itself," returned Max, in his quiet, concentrated way.

Here were a speculative, free-thinking German, and a rigid old Puritan, meeting and agreeing upon the common ground of their perfect honesty and earnestness. Truth is a unity, however different the form in which it appears; if good men could only be brought to

perceive and acknowledge this, how much sorrow and misunderstanding it would save. Frederick Hastings was struck with the singularity of their agreement, but they were too simply in earnest to think of anything of the kind.

They were silent for a little while after this, as men are apt to be when they have said anything which they really think and feel. Mr. Chester lay with his hand shading his eyes, and the two young men sat gazing quietly into the fire, the gleaming coals and fantastic flames presenting a different picture to the mind of each. Strange that even in so small a matter as a fire we see, not itself, but our own translation of it.

The sound of the opening door aroused them, as Emily came up the long room with a goblet in her hand.

What singularly different feelings stirred the hearts of these men as they watched and waited her approach, and yet they would have each given them the same name. The one loving her with a strong man's earnest, human love, in which every particle of his nature bore its own part; the other regarding her with a sort of æsthetic worship.

"Well, Hebe!" was Frederick Hastings's salutation as she passed him; and her bright, fair beauty, as well as her occupation, made the appellation by no means inappropriate. Her only recognition of him or his speech was a quick, answering glance; for, from their peculiar fitness for that capacity, she had formed a habit of delegating the office of speech to her eyes.

When she reached her father, she knelt down by his side; gayly following out Dr. Hastings's idea, she called him Jupiter, and offered him the cup.

"Ah, nectar and ambrosia, I suppose," said Mr. Chester, taking the goblet, and looking into its contents with great apparent curiosity.

"No," returned Emily, with decision, "I acknowledge the ambrosia, but I deny the nectar; that is coming presently, in the form of hot lemonade."

"I hope neither of you gentlemen have the slightest doubt that the ambrosia of the gods was anything but flax-seed tea," remarked Mr. Chester, upon tasting the draught, and finding it to be that compound.

"I, at least, hope that the rash spirit of inquiry in the nineteenth century has not quite reached that point," laughed Max.

"I shall set it down, hereafter, as the sixth point of faith," was Frederick Hastings's orthodox declaration.

"My dear," said Mr. Chester, presently, after he had made several ineffectual attempts to finish the glass, "I have no doubt that the gods found ambrosia exceedingly delightful, — because if they did n't I don't suppose they would have used it so largely as an article of diet; but — whether it arises from the weakness of humanity or from some other cause I can't say — I must confess that tastes differ."

"Make an effort, Mrs. Dombey!" suggested Emily.

"Miss Emily is invoking the aid of her patron saint; I notice that, whenever her private resources fail, she falls to quoting her favorite authors," interposed Max, rather wickedly.

Emily made a little provoked *moue* at him, in return for this speech, which, though charming in its way, was certainly not goddess-like.

"If that remark can be found in anybody's works, I hope Miss Emily will mention the author's name," said Frederick Hastings, amused at her odd mode of answer; "I should imagine the study of them might be rather entertaining."

"I can't recollect, at this precise moment, where I met with it," she replied, gayly; "but if it will be any satisfaction to the company, I will order a Dictionary of Quotations."

"If the quotations are to be of the same sort, I am sure nothing could be more delightful," he returned, laughing and bowing.

"O," said Max, sardonically, who, as was often the case, seemed to be temporarily possessed of an evil spirit, "you are, perhaps, scarcely aware of Miss Emily's peculiar fitness for the compilation of such a volume; the size and variety of her collection is wonderful."

As she heard this speech the girl's whole face seemed to vibrate with the proud anger that blazed from her eyes, but the next moment it had sunk down into its coldest, haughtiest composure, and the slightly averted head and figure merely attitudinized silent scorn, the more evidently intense and concentrated because it found no other outward expression.

Frederick Hastings had a general impression that, when Emily Chester and Max Crampton came near each other, the mixture bore a dangerous resemblance to gunpowder; but when either of them made sharp speeches, he had the comfortable sensations of a man who sees live coals brought near that explosive material; so, by way of averting evil consequences, he turned to Emily and said, very much in her own grandmotherly style, "'But, children, you should never let your angry passions rise,' upon the authority of

your friend, Dr. Watts. You see, Miss Emily, I follow your example, and avail myself of foreign aid."

The laugh with which Mr. Crampton received this moral precept seemed to exorcise his evil spirit, and Emily turned towards Frederick Hastings, her mobile face bright with amusement at the turn he had given the conversation, and her whole spirit and manner softening and harmonizing as they always did under this man's influence. Frederick Hastings hated dissension; he never showed harshness or sharpness either in word or deed: it was not "his nature to." Such men have a natural affinity with goodness, and evil is to them physical discomfort. The moral atmosphere of the room once lightened, his comfort was materially increased.

Mr. Chester, who had shown strong marks of approbation at the mention of Dr. Watts, said, in answer to his remark, "Emily could scarcely have a better friend."

"Yes," she rejoined, "Dr. Watts is about my earliest recollection, especially 'Let dogs,' &c., to which permission I am sure I never offered the least objection. I have been lately refreshing my memory, though, by an effort to bring Philip up in the way he should go; but I find his preference is very strongly in favor of Robinson Crusoe."

"I suppose he would not only 'let bears and lions growl and fight,' but he would like very much to be present at the action," said Max. "I am afraid he was surreptitiously inciting Carlo to a street encounter the other day, when I came upon them, to the extreme disappointment of both, I suspect."

"I have no doubt of it. South Africa, with plenty of lion-hunts, is Philip's idea of Paradise. I am afraid he will never be an orthodox member of society; he has an unfortunate tendency towards having ideas which are his own peculiar property."

Philip had been lying curled up on the rug before the fire all the evening, totally absorbed in a delightfully impossible desert-island story, which, after the fashion of that style of literature, collected specimens of the whole animal and vegetable kingdom into a few square miles in the Pacific Ocean, latitude and longitude very indefinite.

But by this time his interest in the story had grown too intense for further endurance; so he suddenly called out, "Emily, did they ever kill the tiger that ate up the little boy?"

"What tiger? What little boy?" asked his sister, rather surprised at this abrupt address.

"Why, the little boy in this book! You said this morning you had looked it over," he returned, in a state of amazed indignation, that any one who had ever tasted the delights of such a story should ever become so insensible to them as to require the slightest prompting on the subject.

"O, I recollect. Yes: his father kills the tiger."

Philip's sigh of intense relief at this announcement was received with a perfect shout of amusement.

"Philip," said Dr. Hastings, when he had regained his composure, and speaking with great gravity, "I don't think you can be allowed to read any more desert-island stories, if they are all like this one. Why, you are growing positively bloodthirsty."

The boy looked at him steadily, with his great, solemn eyes, while he thought this remark over.

"If a tiger was to come and eat up your little boy, would n't you shoot him too?" he asked, at last, with great earnestness.

Dr. Hastings thought it best to dodge this appeal to his natural feelings, and insist strongly upon the tiger; so he said, "But suppose the tiger was hungry, he was only following out his nature in eating up the child."

"And was n't the father following out his nature in killing him for it?" retorted Philip, triumphantly, with an unexpected and precocious perception of logic that took Frederick Hastings not a little aback. The laugh was now on the boy's side, and no one joined in it more heartily than his opponent.

"But tell me honestly, Philip," he continued, presently, "if you were a tiger that had not had anything to eat for a week, do you think you could resist the temptation of a nice little boy?"

This appeal to Philip's powers of endurance routed him with great slaughter; for, whatever might be his feelings in the present state of the case, viewing himself in the light of a savage animal in necessitous circumstances, he could not conscientiously bring himself to say, that, among tigers, he would not have done as the tigers do; so he sat looking at Dr. Hastings in great perplexity.

"But I am not a tiger," he suddenly exclaimed, his face lighting up with great relief from the moral responsibility of the whole affair; "so how can I tell what tigers feel like?"

"Philip has made a short cut out of his difficulties; he is by no means conquered yet," said Max, when they had stopped laughing at his masterly retreat.

But though not conquered, he had no wish to stand another

charge; so he absorbed himself deeply in his book as the best mode of defence, and Frederick Hastings, seeing that any further attempt to make him talk would really worry the child, kindly turned the conversation in another direction. By no means the smallest beauty in this man's character was his invariably delicate consideration for the feelings of children or servants, or any one whom age or position placed slightly in his power.

"Ah, here is the nectar," said Emily, rising, and laughing, as the servant interrupted the conversation by appearing at the door with the hot lemonade.

"Come, Jove!" she continued, as taking the glass she again knelt by the lounge and offered it to her father.

"My dear, if I am to enact that character, I shall request a large proportion of nectar in my diet," returned that gentleman, drinking the contents of the goblet with great satisfaction.

"The Olympian god has but to command his humble cup-bearer, — has but to nod, and she obeys," said she, bowing low before him with merry humility. And as they looked at that kneeling figure with its drooping, bending grace, Max Crampton swore afresh to himself, that heaven and earth should pass away, before one jot or one tittle of his oath should; and Frederick Hastings yielded up his almost adoring admiration as involuntarily as a flower does its perfume.

"My little girl is very good," said the old gentleman, drawing his hand caressingly over the bright hair of the bowed head.

Both gentlemen felt an involuntary inclination to laugh at the application of such a term to that magnificent face and figure; but it is a singular circumstance that a large majority of fathers never can be brought to comprehend the fact that their daughters have ceased to be children, and treat them accordingly. They never quite lose the impression of the days when their foot performed the part of Arab steed, and the now grown-up young ladies rode that wonderful ride to Banbury Cross. Emily was just as much his "little girl" to Mr. Chester now as she had been when a seat on his shoulder was to her the highest earthly elevation.

"Miss Emily is earnest in her devotion to Jupiter," said Max, as she retained her kneeling position.

"O no," she exclaimed, laughing, and springing lightly to her feet, "Jupiter is not my deity; I offer up incense to Venus. I adore beauty," she added, passionately. "If I had lived in the ancient times, I should have set up an altar to the goddess of beauty, and worshipped devoutly thereat. As it is, if I ever have a house it shall be a temple to Venus."

As Max Crampton heard these words, he, for once in his life, rejoiced and gloried in his wealth. Generally he had a contempt for it, as a matter of hereditary accident, especially when he found that it brought him consideration which his unaided manhood would never have procured, and the givers of such homage found themselves repaid with the fiercest scorn. But now there arose before his imagination a vision of the palace of fairy-like beauty which he would rear for his love; of the loveliness with which he would surround her; of how, through his power and means, happiness, development, and sunshine might stream in upon and vivify this girl's heart and brain. And as he thought what a powerful means this might be made towards his great end, Max Crampton experienced his first sensation of the love of money.

"I think, upon the whole," suggested Frederick Hastings, laughing, "it is better not to have a house."

"Why?" asked Emily, rather astonished at this apparently self-denying statement.

"Because, if you had a house you would probably be obliged to take it as you could get it; but if you would dispense with a local habitation and content yourself with a merely ideal residence, you could make it anything you chose. Why, Miss Emily might be in present possession of her temple to Venus in this way," he added, gayly.

"Well, that certainly allows a glorious contempt for ways and means," returned Emily; "but the truth is, my Spanish possessions already bear an uncomfortable proportion to my real estate."

"There are a good many of us whose property is much in the same condition," said Frederick Hastings.

"It is a very improper condition," said Mr. Chester, decisively; for, like all persons who have a natural tendency towards enthusiasms and large-sized philanthropies, he was firmly persuaded that he was the most practical and unromantic of men, and was always particularly severe towards any sign of speculation in others.

"O no, I don't think so," returned Frederick Hastings; "our beautiful delusions are probably our most valuable possessions, and nothing is more cruel than to deprive any one of them without necessity; you are taking away that which no power, earthly or divine, can restore."

"I agree with you," said Max, earnestly: "to believe is the highest enjoyment; the worship of a false god is better than atheism. I feel rather strongly on this subject, as it is a pleasure I seldom enjoy," he added, sadly.

"That is true, Max," interposed Emily, "I have noticed it often; I think you are a constitutional sceptic."

"Yes," he replied, "my evil genius compels me to see people and things in the clearest and most searching light. I sometimes envy others their power to be deceived. On the other hand, when I have tried, and proved a person worthy of trust, my faith is absolute; and when the storms descend, and the winds beat, it is my triumph to show it is founded upon a rock."

Often in their involved after-lives, this sentence, spoken upon the impulse of the moment, came back to the recollection of these three persons, and Max was often called upon to redeem, through trial and suffering, the promise of this night.

"You are a true friend, Max," said Emily, gently; "I at least have reason to know that."

"I have pleasure in my friendships, which no one could comprehend to whom the blessing was less rare," he replied, with an involuntary expression of feeling in his tone and manner strange to see and hear in him.

"Your friendship is an active, working principle, Mr. Crampton," said Frederick Hastings; "at least, it seems to be so in Miss Emily's case. I have given up asking her where she learned anything; she invariably attributes the whole credit to you."

"He deserves it, I am sure!" she exclaimed. "Max has been a mental missionary to me," and her intellect seemed to look through those clear, steadfast eyes, and bow down and do reverence before him. He received the homage imperially, as his due as her mind's sovereign and ruler; but through the intense pleasure in her involuntary acknowledgment of his superiority came a keen, sharp pang.

"If she had loved me in the faintest degree," he thought, "she could never have shown her preference in this frank manner; and what is mere friendship or liking to me, dying of thirst for love?"

The only outward expression of this deep feeling was an unconscious look of such passionate earnestness, that under it the girl's cheek flushed crimson, and she turned hurriedly towards her father to cover a confusion for which she could have given no definite reason.

Mr. Chester had been gradually falling into a doze during the last few minutes, and as Emily arranged the pillows and screened his eyes from the firelight, the doze became sleep. Both gentlemen watched her, bending with loving care and tenderness over her father, and either of them would have been willing to undergo

much to be the objects of like attention. There is probably no earthly torture which Max would not have endured to have attained such bliss; with him, her love would have annihilated, swallowed up, all consciousness of agony; to him the valley of death, illumined by her presence, had no shadow.

"When pain and anguish wring the brow,
A ministering angel thou,"

murmured Frederick Hastings, under his breath, yet not so low but that both Emily and Max caught the sound.

"I think the first part of that quotation would be more appropriate," sneered Max, who, after his general fashion, was revenging himself for his slight exhibition of feeling, by reacting into apparently more intense coldness and hardness than usual.

"Yes," exclaimed Emily, turning round and laughing. "I have no doubt Max thinks, 'uncertain, coy, and hard to please,' an exact description of me."

"Precisely," he returned, "especially the 'hard to please' part."

They had both regained their equilibrium during this little skirmish, and were now quite cool and comfortable; indeed, a sort of mild battle went on continually between these two, and was their normal state when together. Frederick Hastings may have had some perception of this; at any rate, he let them go on without any interference from him, merely listening to and watching them with an amused expression, which, when it rested on Emily, was full of vivid admiration.

"I am not hard to please," she responded, gayly, "except sometimes when — when I can't help it," she added, in a lower tone, and with a strange, impatient bitterness, which neither the words nor the occasion seemed to justify.

Frederick Hastings looked at her in some perplexity, scarcely knowing what to make of her abrupt change of manner; but Max, — poor Max! it was no mystery to him: he understood her meaning, perhaps, better than she did herself. In teaching this girl, during the winter, he had learned many things himself, and one of these was some partial perception of her instinctive repulsion from him; but if his determination was half as fixed and unbending as his face was at this moment, surely even this obstacle must go down before such indomitable energy and resolution. Longer waiting and laboring, perhaps, but what he had sworn should come to pass.

"I am afraid your exception is more important than your rule,"

said Frederick Hastings, looking at her curiously. "What do you mean by saying that you can't help being hard to please?"

"I hardly know whether I can make you understand," she returned, with a strange trouble in her face; "it is so entirely a matter of feeling and sensation that I can scarcely define it to myself. I think I must be magnetic; I can't explain the singular attraction and repulsion which persons and things have for me upon any other principle. That which is for me, in any shape, I seem bound to by an invisible magnetic chain, while that which is not for me, which is unlike me, drives me from it with equal force."

"Did any one person or thing ever exercise both these influences upon you?"

It was Max who spoke. The glance she turned upon him was absolutely fierce in its searching power, but he bore it with such perfect self-possession, and his look and manner displayed such a purely intellectual interest in the conversation, that her face grew quiet, and, giving him a simple "Yes," in reply, she turned again towards Frederick Hastings.

"Do you really mean that 'Yes'?" Hastings asked, in an astonished tone.

"Certainly," she responded. "Why do you doubt it?"

"Because I don't exactly see how it is possible."

"Why, it is the most natural thing in the world. I am attracted or repulsed as the different poles of a person's character come in contact with me; just as what is congenial or uncongenial with me in them predominates."

"As the centripetal or centrifugal gains the ascendancy," said Max, quietly, apparently absorbed in a contemplation of the fire.

"Exactly!" exclaimed Emily, looking towards him with quick surprise; "Max has given you the precipitate of my solution."

"Really, Mr. Crampton seems to understand you better than you understand yourself."

"Very probably; that is too ordinary an occurrence to be very surprising."

It was a queer smile that crossed Max Crampton's face as he heard this sentence, but his attention and interest in the fire covered it from observation.

"Perhaps Mr. Crampton pays more attention to your words and ideas than you do," suggested Frederick Hastings, rather wickedly.

"That would certainly be very easy to do," she returned, carelessly; "neither my words nor actions are the result of much thought."

Bettina's expression flashed across Max's mind, where she says to Goethe, "I remember your expressions much more accurately than you do, you are so much dearer to me than you are to yourself." Not Emily Chester's lightest tone or look ever escaped him, let his apparent preoccupation be what it might.

"No," said Frederick Hastings, in reply to Emily. "I don't think you quite come up to the rule of thinking three times before you speak once."

"She is a practical Quaker," interposed Max, "and only does what the spirit moves her to do."

"And the spirit is sometimes rather abrupt in its movements, is n't it?" hinted Dr. Hastings.

"Ask Max," she replied; "I don't like to make humiliating confessions."

Frederick Hastings looked round at Max without speaking, but the other answered his look as though he had done so.

"I must confess that Miss Emily's spirit does sometimes bear a dangerous resemblance to an evil or familiar spirit," he said, sardonically.

"Max!" exclaimed the girl, energetically, "I am surprised, I am disappointed in you; when I trusted my character in your hands, too! Why, it is enough to give any one an *et-tu-Brute* sort of feeling."

Her tone of injured confidence and friendship was so irresistibly comic, that both gentlemen burst out laughing simultaneously. But she did nothing of the kind, only sat up with great state and gravity; which was merry affectation, with a single grain of provoked feeling at bottom, occasioned by Max's tone and manner.

"You see how right I was, Dr. Hastings," continued Max, nodding towards Emily; "I spoke from long and sad experience."

"Why, upon my word, Miss Emily," laughed Frederick Hastings, "Mr. Crampton would represent you as quite a good form of discipline for a person in progress towards the honors of canonization."

"I am afraid, then," retorted she, "that my talents in that line are destined to be wasted. I never expect to meet any one who is travelling that road."

"I would not be too sure," said Max, coolly. "How do you know but both Dr. Hastings and myself may be candidates for that honor? I have no doubt we will both be tormented enough during our lives, if that constitutes any claim to such preferment."

Frederick Hastings hastily disclaimed any such aim in life.

"So, Saint Maxwell, you will have to bear both your cross and your crown alone," said Emily, gayly.

Max said nothing, but looked fully competent to bear any amount of crosses or crowns that might fall to him.

"Really, Mr. Crampton, I think it is time we were going," suddenly interposed Frederick Hastings, as he perceived that Philip, under the soothing influence of the idea that retributive justice had certainly overtaken his enemy, the tiger, had gone calmly to sleep near that gentleman's feet. "We have put two of our audience to rest, and I am afraid Miss Emily will be the next victim."

Emily repelled the calumny with scorn, and declared her ability to talk for hours longer, if they would promise to make themselves agreeable enough to make it worth her while to do so.

"I could not possibly accept such a challenge," returned Frederick Hastings, instantly, "the very thought that I had to talk would drive every idea I ever had out of my head. Or if I did manage to say a few words, they would be so insufferably stupid that you would be at least half asleep in five minutes."

"I think it would be wisest to retreat while we can still do so with honor," seconded Max.

"Yes, two victims are as much as my conscience — otherwise, vanity — will endure," said Frederick Hastings. "So, good night," he added, taking her hand.

The young face which was raised towards his was so attractive in its brightness that he heartily repented his proposal to leave, and, only that the hour made such a proceeding out of the question, would have instantly resumed his seat. But the eyes said "Good-by," and he reluctantly turned towards the door.

"Good night, Saint Maxwell," she exclaimed, turning gayly towards him, "I suppose I ought to ask your blessing."

His blessing! As though it did not rest upon and surround her at all times. So Max thought, as he made no verbal reply.

"If that is to be one of the privileges of the order, I think I might be induced to enter it myself," said Frederick Hastings, laughing.

"I think it would be better if we were to reverse the matter and claim the Santa Emilia's benediction," suggested Max.

"*Pax vobiscum*," was the instant reply.

"Which, being interpreted, means, I suppose, pleasant dreams to us."

"Precisely," she rejoined, as they bowed, and passed out of the door.

Little as they know or think it, they have seen her for the last time in her unclouded youth and brightness. Never again shall those eyes look at either of them without at least the shadow of some pain or sorrow mingling in the glance. The cloud, which, unconscious as she is of it, hangs above her even now, will, the next time they see her, have wrapped her in its terrible darkness. That night the angel of Death entered, and Mr. Chester was called; the night came to him when no man can work. It is painful to think that in our highest happiness the step of Death may be even then upon our very threshold.

And with this terrible sorrow fast coming, and almost upon her then, Emily, after having seen her father and Philip made comfortable for the night, went singing gayly up-stairs to her room in happy unconsciousness.

CHAPTER VII.

"JAMES," said Emily to the servant, as she entered the breakfast-room the next morning, "has Papa come down yet?"

"No, Miss."

"You need n't bring in breakfast just yet, then," and taking up the morning's paper she began reading.

She had been doing so for some time, when Philip came prancing into the room in his usual equine fashion, and called out, "Emily, do let's have breakfast; I've been up an hour, and I am as hungry as a bear."

"You look frozen enough to be an Arctic bear," laughed his sister, as he stood rubbing his hands before the fire. "What have you been doing, so long in the cold?"

"O, a whole crowd of us were flying our kites off Tom Jenkins's shed."

"I think I shall take to flying kites myself, if it gives every one such a color as it has given you," she answered, stroking the boy's cold, rosy cheeks.

"O yes, do!" he exclaimed, charmed at the novelty of the idea. "I'll teach you how. Why, you see, you just jerk him so," he explained, beginning in the fulness of his enthusiasm to fly an imaginary kite on the spot. "And then it's such fun!"

Emily suggested that their ideas of fun might possibly differ, but Philip could n't possibly understand such a want of appreciation on her part, and insisted on his first position.

The entrance of breakfast changed the current of his thoughts somewhat, but he continued to enliven the meal with vivid accounts of what he and the "other fellows" did at school; to all of which Emily listened with great apparent interest, showing a surprising acquaintance with the persons and plays he mentioned.

"Come, Philip," said she, when they had finished both breakfast and conversation, "suppose we go up-stairs and see how Pa is, and what he will have for his breakfast. Keep everything hot and comfortable for him," she added, to the servant, as she went up-stairs, the boy frisking on before her, varying his mode of progression by

generally springing up three or four steps at a time, and then coming to a dead halt.

"Knock first, Philip," she called to him, as he reached the door before her; but Philip's knock getting no answer, he opened the door and they entered the room.

Mr. Chester was lying with his back to them, apparently asleep, and they passed softly round the bed, for fear of disturbing him.

A single glance at the dead face before her, and Emily Chester comprehended the whole truth with her entire being. She had a horrible sensation, as though she were freezing from her heart outwards.

"Emily!" cried the boy, terrified more by the living face at his side than by the dead face upon the bed, "what is it? what does it mean?"

The lips, cold and white as those of the dead man, seemed to make an effort to speak, but no word or sound came, or answered the endeavor.

"O Emily," he shrieked, as the truth dawned upon him, "is he dead?"

The same faint, inarticulate effort to reply, and the same result. How long she stood there, with the boy clinging convulsively to her, and weeping bitterly, she never exactly knew. The freezing process seemed to have stopped when it reached her brain, and left that organ in a state of preternatural acuteness, so that the best thing to be done, under the circumstances, suggested itself in the most natural manner, as though it were quite an ordinary and indifferent occurrence. She found herself speculating in a generally theoretical way as to whether the limbs that felt so lifeless and cold could possibly support her on her way down-stairs. Presently she raised the boy, and, taking his hand, went quietly to the parlor, and, sitting down at a writing-table, began to write. Philip stood by, awed into quietude by the pale, stern face and resolute manner. How numb and useless her fingers felt as she took up her pen, but the handwriting that came from them was as free and elegant as ever. Her note said:—

"MR. GRANT:

"My father is dead. Will you come to us?"

"EMILY CHESTER."

Nothing more; this sentence seemed all that her brain contained; another word would have been an impossibility.

Mr. Grant had been her father's firmest friend during his life, and now she instinctively appealed to him to perform the last services for him.

She folded and directed her note with perfect regularity, and, taking it in her hand, went out to the breakfast-room, where the servant still waited.

She rather wondered if her voice would come at her bidding, if she attempted to speak. It came; husky, broken, and sounding strangely in her own ears, but said, quite distinctly, "James, I want you to take this note to Mr. Grant."

"Miss Emily, what is the matter?" cried the servant, in a scared voice, taking no notice of either the direction or the paper she was handing him.

"Your master is dead," she returned, quietly.

The fact had become so thoroughly a part of her life and experience, that the man's horrified astonishment at the announcement occasioned her chiefly a sort of weak surprise. It seemed to her almost a remote event; she felt so far removed from her former self that it seemed impossible that some long period had not elapsed.

"Take the note as soon as possible," she said, a second time, and went back to Philip, in the parlor.

They were all and in all to each other now. They were very quiet and silent; there was no need of speech between them; Philip's clinging arms around her neck, and her close, answering embrace, were enough for them, and spoke of that which could never be put into words.

Mr. Grant found them in the same position when he arrived, about an hour later. Her note had been handed to him at his breakfast-table, and he and his wife had started immediately for Mr. Chester's house.

"My poor child," he said, as he came to her and took her hand. "This is a heavy affliction for you to bear. Indeed, for us all," he added, and the honest old gentleman's eyes glistened with tears of real grief. "So sudden, too. Why, yesterday afternoon, when I called to see how he was, he said he hoped to be out again to-day. It is terrible to think of."

He would have gone on talking, trying, in his simple, old-fashioned way to comfort her, but, somehow, the pale, still face that was raised towards him stopped him. This was a form of grief so different from his own that it utterly confounded him; he could not understand it. He had expected to find her in a state of almost hysterical agitation, in which case he would have been quite at ease, as it would have been only what he considered natural. But this quiet, despairing acceptance of the blow was beyond his comprehension.

and shocked and bewildered him inexpressibly; it was out of his power to make any effort to console such an image of despair. He would have been utterly at a loss, if it had not been for his wife. She had not spoken since their entrance; her quiet kiss speaking of more sympathy to Emily than any words could have done, and she was now standing by her, stroking her hair in a gentle, motherly way.

"My dear," said she, "you look very pale and exhausted. I think you had better come up-stairs to your room and lie down."

To the lady's inexpressible relief Emily instantly rose, and, with Philip's hand tightly clasped in hers, followed her up-stairs. Could she be the same person who had gone merrily up those steps with Philip dancing before her, and could it be but an hour or two since she was a gay, happy girl. How old she felt, and weary. "Stricken in years"; the expression came to her mind involuntarily.

Being relieved of the hardest part of his task, his duty to the living, Mr. Grant went to perform his duty to the dead, a sad office for him, for he had sincerely loved and honored Mr. Chester.

When Emily reached her room, instead of following out Mrs. Grant's suggestion of lying down she dropped wearily into an easy-chair by the fire. Philip stood by her for a minute, and then seating himself at her feet laid his head in her lap.

Mrs. Grant went softly about for a little while, arranging the fire and the curtains, and making the whole room look bright and comfortable, and then stole gently out to see her husband and assist in making the necessary funeral preparations.

How Emily thanked her with her whole heart then, and through all that sad time, for letting her alone; no possible attention could have been so grateful as this considerate want of attention. Pity her, O friend and reader! a woman in her first grief! As we grow older we learn that sorrow is not eternal, that we can and do live through it, and, the reaction coming on, are perhaps very happy; but in our first grief we have all this to learn, and all light and hope seem blotted out from earth forever.

They sat there quietly through the long day, the boy dropping asleep from exhaustion, and Emily into that physical apathy which, with her, was always the reaction from great excitement, as indeed it is with most persons of intense nervous susceptibility. She heard sounds through the house, and she had a sort of intellectual perception that they were the preparations for her father's funeral, but they affected her no more than any other sounds would have done.

Late that afternoon Max Crampton was sitting with a newspaper and cigar in the reading-room of his hotel, when one of his young acquaintances came sauntering in and sat down by him. They had been talking carelessly for some time, when the man suddenly said, "I say, that's a terrible thing about Mr. Chester."

"What is it? I have not heard anything very terrible lately," replied Max, indifferently; for having seen all the Chesters in whom he had any interest alive and happy only the evening before, it never occurred to him that the man could possibly refer to them.

"Why, he is dead; I wonder you have n't heard it before, as you and Miss Emily are such friends. What's the matter?" he exclaimed, in an alarmed voice, for Max had started up, and was standing before him with a face that fully justified the question.

"It can't be true!" Max cried out vehemently. "I saw him last night."

"That's the very thing, so sudden; found dead in his bed this morning. It must be true, for Mr. Grant was out getting ready for the funeral, when I met him and he told me of it. Halloo! where are you going? Don't run over a fellow," he remonstrated.

But Max was gone, without giving him either answer or apology. He probably never went over an equal space of ground in the same number of minutes in his life. As soon as he came in sight of the house, the long streaming crape from the door crushed any faint hope which he had that the man might have been mistaken.

"I am very glad to see you, Mr. Crampton," said the old servant, gravely, as upon opening the door she recognized Max's familiar figure. "This is a house full of trouble. The Lord has called old master home," the old woman continued; for, like many of her class, her expressions were very religious.

"I have just heard it, and came immediately to see if I can be of any service," Max replied.

"I think not, sir. Mr. Grant has been here all day fixing everything; but maybe Miss Emily would like to see you."

"How is she?" asked Max, eagerly.

"Why sir, she's very quiet, but she do look dreadful."

Poor Max! he knew what this meant. It wrung his heart to feel that his utmost effort could not alleviate the suffering he knew to be so intense. He wrote a few earnest words upon his card, asking to see her, or at least to be permitted to perform some service for her; but the servant who took it up to her came back in a few moments, saying, that after glancing at it, Miss Emily only shook her head and handed it back to him.

"Ask Mr. Grant if he will step here for a minute."

That gentleman came instantly, and from him Max begged earnestly to be allowed to share his labors. Mr. Grant thanked him, but said that he and his wife had already attended to everything that was necessary.

"When will the funeral take place?" Max inquired.

"To-morrow morning."

"What was the immediate cause of Mr. Chester's death, do you know?"

"Not exactly. The doctors talked to-day of heart disease, but they did not seem to agree very perfectly among themselves."

This was true, both then and afterwards, the only settled thing about the matter seemed to be that Mr. Chester had gone to his long rest, and the ghastly truth remained that Emily and Philip were orphans, alone in the world.

"And Miss Emily? how does she bear all this?"

"Poor child," said Mr. Grant with a pained, perplexed expression of countenance, "she seems completely crushed by it; I am afraid she will be ill after it. My wife has been with her all day, and she says, the best thing for her is to be let alone and kept perfectly quiet."

"I think so too," returned Max, with an intense feeling of gratitude towards Mrs. Grant, that no service rendered to himself could ever have occasioned in him. "I hope Mrs. Grant will stay with her to-night."

"O, certainly. We will both be here of course."

"And you can think of no way in which you can make me of use?"

"Not now, but if anything happens, so that I have the slightest need of you, I will certainly let you know."

"Thank you," rejoined Max, earnestly; and finding that he was only retarding instead of helping Mr. Grant, he could only bid that gentleman good-night, and go home with a heavy heart, to wait the result of all this pain and sorrow upon that which he held dearest on earth.

It was growing quite late that night, when Mrs. Grant came to Philip, and said, gently, "My child, you look very tired; don't you think you had better go to bed."

"O, don't let them take me away from you," whispered the boy to Emily, with his arms tight round her; for, with the presence of Death in the house, he seemed to have a horror of being parted from her for a single moment.

"Philip will lie down here on my bed, Mrs. Grant," Emily replied.

"You must come too," again the child whispered, keeping fast hold of her.

She went with him immediately, and he was soon fast asleep, with his head on her bosom. But as soon as all was quiet through the house, Mrs. Grant—who was lying upon a couch on the opposite side of the room—saw her rise, and gently disengaging herself from his clasp, come back to her place by the fire.

It made her nervous to lie there and watch, by the dim light, that motionless figure, with its strange eyes so full of dull misery gazing vacantly into the fire. She could no more sleep than if she had been in the presence of a ghost; and so through the long hours she seemed compelled to watch Emily with the same fixed gaze with which Emily regarded the fire.

It was an intense relief when daylight came and removed some of the ghostly influence from the room; but Emily paid as little attention to the light as she had to the darkness.

Mrs. Grant came to her at breakfast time, with the inevitable tea and toast which is invariably administered to all persons who are either ill or sad, and, trying to arrest her attention, said, "Emily, my child, I want you to eat this for me." But Emily's slight negative gesture in return was hopelessly conclusive. Still Mrs. Grant made another effort: "My dear, you will be ill. Do take this cup of tea." I wonder if there ever was any form of suffering—mental, physical, or spiritual—for which women would not prescribe a cup of tea! This time even Mrs. Grant's kind courage failed before the emphasis of the answering movement, and she was forced to console her kind heart by watching Philip at his breakfast. It is a part of every woman's creed, that, no matter what the misfortune may be, if you can only get the person suffering to eat, happy results must follow; if they can only accomplish this, their minds are perfectly easy as to consequences. So poor Mrs. Grant was more seriously alarmed at her total failure in inducing Emily to eat than at any other part of her conduct.

The funeral had been appointed to take place at eleven o'clock, and its preparatory and attendant sounds soon began to be heard both in and around the house. It had nearly reached that hour, and still Mrs. Grant had not summoned courage, or decided in what way to ask Emily whether she wished to appear at the funeral or not. At last, recollecting that in this case, as in all cases, the simplest way must be the best, she quietly and gently inquired of her what she intended doing.

"We will go," was Emily's brief reply. She felt as though it would be a sort of desertion not to go with her father as far as she could upon his earthly journey.

"Then you must dress immediately, my child."

And Emily began putting on the suit of deepest mourning, which Mrs. Grant had provided, in a mechanical, automatic fashion, strangely at variance with her usual artistically careful adornment of her person. The elder lady's heart sunk lower and lower as she watched her; for she had a woman's appreciation of this want of care for her appearance.

She was scarcely ready when Mr. Grant came to say that the clergyman was waiting for her for the services to proceed; but in a moment or two she took his arm and they all went down.

By the parlor door stood Max Crampton and Frederick Hastings, saying very little to each other, but drawn together by a tacit sympathy, and both waiting with an almost sickening anxiety for Emily's appearance. As they caught sight of her face through the heavy black veil that shrouded it, Frederick Hastings involuntarily started with horror. Max's face and figure were absolutely stony in their repose; but he drew his breath in that lengthened, careful way, as though the pain at his heart was so intense as to obstruct his breathing, or to render the effort almost intolerable. Could that be Emily Chester; could those hollow eyes, with their terrible, black circles around them, be the same that had flashed and brightened so bewitchingly at their last meeting in that very room; could the hair drawn so carelessly back from the face be the same golden waves that had clustered and flowed so loosely around it when they had so envied Mr. Chester his right to caress them? It seemed impossible, more than they could believe, that a few hours could have wrought such work, could have left such traces. They stood speechless in a sort of still horror! But Emily passed on towards her seat, unconscious of their presence and of the overwhelming love and pity with which their hearts ached and bled.

The rooms were crowded with persons; for though Mr. Chester was apparently too stern a man to be very much loved, except by his intimate friends and connections, he was universally honored and respected; but Emily sat, with those hundred pitying eyes upon her, as cold and solitary as she had been in her midnight watch in her own room.

She heard the minister's voice quite distinctly; saying in words what Mr. Chester's life had spoken so much more powerfully in ac-

tions; but it seemed to come from some great distance, either of time or space, and she seemed to be catching only the echo of it. After a little while it stopped, and then there seemed to her a long pause, through which came the sound and sight of closing the coffin and carrying it out. She had made no effort to see the body, and she made none now; she did not think of that pale corpse as her father; besides, she had an intense physical horror and repulsion from Death, which was entirely apart from her love for her father, and utterly beyond her control. She had a remote, shadowy consciousness of being taken to the carriage, and then, after some time, from it. This time, it was a graveyard, and they were presently at the edge of a grave.

Again she heard the clergyman's voice, saying, "I am the resurrection and the life." This was all she heard distinctly; for the words kept repeating themselves over in her brain, drowning everything else; until she found herself again at the carriage door.

She was about to enter with Mr. Grant's aid, when she felt herself assisted by an arm and hand soft and gentle in its touch as a woman's. There was no need for her to look up as she did, to catch the glance of loving compassion from those beautiful dark eyes, to recognize her support; but in their warm, tender light, the ice that had bound heart and brain suddenly dissolved into hot, burning tears. The rush of the thawed waters was at first terrible, and the sobs agonizing to hear in their convulsive violence; agonizing indeed, to more than one heart that stood listening to them. Mr. Grant and Philip were in a state of wild dismay. Frederick Hastings was soothing the boy in his undemonstrative, wordless manner, and trying to make Mr. Grant understand how much better this was for Emily than her late petrified repose; when he saw Mrs. Grant's look of all-comprehending sympathy resting upon her, and instantly relinquished his office of comforter, to her. He handed her into the carriage with more than his usual chivalrous deference, for this was not only a woman, but a good woman. He hurried Mr. Grant into it, and, closing the door, turned hastily away; not wishing, in his delicate consideration, to be any longer than possible witness to an emotion which he felt to be sacred.

During all this, Max had been standing by, to all outward appearance very calm and quiet; but feeling, internally, as only his deep, strong nature could feel it, how utterly, constitutionally powerless he was in this, her hour of trial. At that moment he would have given up every earthly hope or advantage to have been able to perform, at the cost of any amount of suffering to himself, what Frederick Hastings had done almost involuntarily. And yet with the full

acuteness of all this upon him, so perfect was this man's love, so far beyond any pain inflicted upon him was the slightest service or comfort rendered to her, that, as Frederick Hastings turned towards him, he met him and held out his hand to him, expressing by that gesture an emotion which made that composed and elegant gentleman flush up like a boy at receiving. They rode back to the city together, in almost perfect silence, but their parting was as earnestly friendly as it was undemonstrative.

And Emily? The sobs grew gradually less stifling and convulsive, until at last she sank into a state of low, nervous weeping, very unlike the fiery flood that had at first fallen from her eyes. In this state she reached home; when Mrs. Grant, like the good, motherly woman that she was, put her directly to bed, and nursed and comforted her like a child, and, indeed, physically, she was little else at present. At last she sunk into that heavy, profound sleep, which results from the perfect prostration of the whole system, and continued in it so long that Mrs. Grant was almost alarmed; though the relief of this night, in comparison with the one that had preceded it, was inexpressible. It was a human being with which she had now to deal, not a pale ghost; and she lay down and slept by Emily's side, peacefully and thankfully.

It was bright daylight when Emily awoke, and, to Mrs. Grant's astonishment, she quietly arose and began dressing. The elder lady had fully expected that a severe illness would be the result of all that the younger one had endured; but Emily was young, and the springs of life reacted strongly and vigorously. Besides, it is not a single sudden blow that crushes permanently, but the long endurance of a heavy burden or the accumulation of small ones.

Mrs. Grant watched her narrowly as she dressed, especially as she arranged her beautiful hair, and was inwardly delighted to see that the natural taste and care for her appearance had returned. They went down to the breakfast-table together, and Emily resumed her household duties, with only her black dress and the quiet grief in her face and manner showing the ordeal through which she had passed.

Mrs. Grant went home that day, and Philip and Emily were left alone for a day or two, seeing no one, not even Max, though he called several times to inquire how she was.

She had heard nothing of Frederick Hastings since the day of the funeral; but a handful of spring violets, simply left at the door for her, were too characteristic of the giver, and had too much in common with him, for her not to know instantly from whose kind hand they came.

CHAPTER VIII.

AS soon as the first shock of Mr. Chester's death was over, Max Crampton began to reflect upon this event, as he did upon all events, with reference to the great aim of his life.

Would it retard or forward that? was she nearer or farther off from his grasp than before? would all this increase or shorten the length of his pursuit? He could scarcely tell until he had seen her, which he was very anxious to do, but he thought that the late circumstances would help him, bring him nearer his object. She was alone now, without any near male relative, and this of itself would give him many opportunities of serving her, of rendering himself necessary to her. Besides this, the loss of her father would leave a great want or void in her heart, which would naturally cry out for something to occupy it, and Max was far too clear-sighted not to know the striking advantage of pleading for admittance at such a moment. He had seen too many apparently unaccountable matches result from this cause not to know its value. He had seen old belles, after reigning for years and discarding dozens of worthy men, at last, when they began to grow *passé*, astonish every one by marrying some one utterly their inferior. He had watched this constantly recurring circumstance, until he had learnt the law that governs it. He saw that in such a case it is not any attraction that the man possesses in himself, but his happening to supply a great need in her nature of which she has just become conscious, or rather acutely conscious; that, playing at this exact moment, the weakest man will win where the strongest has previously failed. A man of singularly minute observation, once said to me: "I have noticed that young ladies seem to go through three stages of feeling with regard to matrimony. When they first grow up, and come out into society, they of course consider it the end and aim of existence; but in a year or two they become indifferent, and seem to lose all care for it; but as they grow to be about twenty-five, and so on, their old anxiety returns stronger than ever." Only a working of the same law. At twenty-five the craving for some occupation of heart and mind begins to be keenly felt, to be imperative in its demands, and women unfortunately

gratify it, even at the cost of making a wretched imitation and degradation of that true and perfect marriage which is alone blessed in the sight of God.

Appreciating the advantage which circumstances had thrown in his way, Max valued it accordingly. As he thought of all these things, it was the third morning after Mr. Chester's funeral, and he was in his room at breakfast, for he mitigated his hotel life as much as possible, by having all his meals served in private. He sat balancing his teaspoon on the edge of his cup, very much as he was balancing his prospects; physically eating his breakfast in a lazy, indifferent fashion, mentally reviewing his forces in a swift, vigilant way, as acute as it was silent.

He had been engaged in this manner for about an hour, when the servant entered with the papers and letters that the morning's mail had brought. Max took them and glanced over them, but found nothing of importance, until upon one of them he recognized his father's handwriting. He hastily opened and read it. It told him that his father's health, which had been weak when he had last been in New York, had since then failed rapidly; so much so that the doctors ordered a sea voyage immediately, and a summer at the German baths. It asked Max to go with him, to be his companion and nurse upon this journey. It ended by saying that sickness and pain, away from home, and among strangers, would not be so hard to bear, so gloomy a prospect, if Max, the only one left him upon earth to love, were near him to comfort him. Would he go? If so, he must be ready to start by the next week's steamer.

Max finished the letter, and, turning to the servant, who was arranging the room, said, "You can go, I shall not want you again."

The man, used to implicit obedience to his master's slightest word, left the room instantly. And then Max's head sank down upon the table before him, and he sat there, feeling, not thinking. There was no need for thought, the path of duty lay straight and narrow before him, and he knew he must walk it, let the consequences be what they might. He had a sickening consciousness that he must go and leave all his hopes and plans, even now, just as they were brightening, just as it seemed possible to obtain the prize for which he had striven so long and earnestly. His whole being rose up in protest against this suicide of feeling, but he knew it was useless, that the sacrifice must be made. If he went now, how long might he not be obliged to stay away; it might be months, even years before he could return, and what might not happen in that time. Emily might

even marry some one else in the meanwhile, and the image of Frederick Hastings and the whole scene of their last meeting rose up before him to add to his trouble. No! let come what would she should never marry another human being; he would move heaven and earth to prevent it.

And, strange to say, he was impelled to this determination as much on her account as his own; for with the full knowledge that she had not at present the slightest love for him, this man had thoroughly convinced himself that the very best thing for her would be a union with him. Who would love and care for her as he would; who would so minister to her lightest thought or wish; who else was strong enough to govern and guide such a brain; above all, with whom would she ever reach such a high point of growth and development as with him. No! he had rather see her dead than that she should lower to any one else's level. And yet all this might come to pass while he was too far away to know of it or oppose it. What could he do? This duty had come to him and must be fulfilled, for Max was too true a man even to think of flinching where truth or duty was concerned, least of all when it had reference to his father, to whom his love, like every feeling of his nature, was deep and devoted. He must go; that was fixed; and yet this earnest passionate love for this woman constrained him to stay. No wonder he sat fighting himself, striving to gain self-possession and mastery over his own nature. Was there no help? There seemed none, until at last an idea struck him. Instead of leaving her, why not, if he must go, at least make the effort to take her with him. Might not the present time, when she was alone, and sick and sad, be at any rate the most favorable time for ending all this laboring and waiting. At least he would see her; and unless his cool judgment, which he knew no intensity of feeling had ever been able to disturb, should tell him that such a course would be suicidal, he would "put it to the touch to win or lose it all."

He rose to his feet, planted upon this resolution; but the strong man actually trembled to feel how near to him perfect happiness or perfect misery might be. It required all his indomitable will to decide on this step, involving as it did his whole life. But he despised himself for this feeling, as cowardly, and only hardened in his determination.

It was afternoon before he carried his resolution into action, and set out for Emily's home. As he walked thither, he might almost have been an automaton, so entirely did he, by an effort of his iron

will, refrain from either thinking or feeling. He had his fixed purpose, and beyond or outside of that he was resolutely unconscious. He would judge as to the feasibility of its execution as coldly and impartially as though the event had not the slightest bearing upon his life or happiness.

Upon inquiring for her at the door, the servant, thinking she was in her room, went to find her, and he quietly entered the parlor by himself. She was there, and he stood watching her for a few seconds before she became conscious of his presence. She was sitting in her favorite seat by one of the long windows, gazing into the deep blue sky beyond, with eyes that had something strangely akin to it in their clear depths.

"*Santa Emilia!*" If he had said it in gay mockery before, how reverently he thought it now. The softened, saintly beauty of the face awed him as though he had been in the presence of something holy. This was a new phase of the beauty he adored, a new expression in the face, every change of which he had previously thought he knew by heart, literally by heart. And yet how humanly beautiful she looked too, in her simple black dress, heightening by contrast the exquisite, delicate complexion, and brightening and developing the gold that always seemed hidden in her hair. How minutely he noted every point of her appearance in the single moment he watched her, as indeed he would have done had he been upon his own death-bed.

He crossed the room, and roused her attention by pronouncing her name. She turned quickly, recognizing the voice, and the kind, friendly smile sprang up in her eyes and shed its light over the whole face.

"Max, is it you? How glad I am to see you!"

How glad he was to see her he did not attempt to say, but sitting down by her only looked at her as though she were indeed the light of his eyes.

"When did you come in? how long have you been standing here?"

"Only a moment. The servant told me you were up-stairs, so I did not expect to find you here when I came in. But I am sorry to have interrupted your reverie; it did not seem a sorrowful one, to judge by the expression of your face."

"No, not sorrowful," she answered, quietly, and the earnest, steadfast eyes wandered back to their old resting-place.

"What were you thinking of so intently?"

"I had been thinking of the past, and then of the future, and then," and her voice dropped lower, "of the end."

The last word struck Max like a physical blow.

"You must not think of such things," he exclaimed, hurriedly; "think of the present; you will be better and happier for it."

"Yes, I know that is true, and I have thought of it."

"What have you thought; what are you going to do?" he asked, earnestly.

"My duty, I hope; whatever I may find that to be, and it is never very far off if we will take the trouble to look for it. Besides, I have still Philip to love and take care of."

"But who will take care of you?"

"First, I shall try to take care of myself, and then," she exclaimed, her voice growing low and thrilling with the high, firm faith within her, "the good God is above all things!"

"No, not sorrowful." She had spoken truly.

The hope and determination with which Max had entered the room, and which had since been gradually expiring, gave up the ghost at this sentence.

"And this," he thought, in bitter scorn of himself, "this is the woman whom I thought it probable I should find needing my love and assistance, who might accept it from necessity. Fool that I was, to fancy that a human being in full possession of herself and her trust in God could ever need human assistance towards happiness and peace. Further off, higher above me than ever. There is no hope; I must go alone."

"I have come to bid you good-by," he said, presently.

"Good-by," she cried, with astonished concern, "what do you mean?"

"I mean I am going to Europe."

"Going to Europe!" she again echoed. The hand involuntarily stretched towards him, and the troubled look in her eyes, were hard to bear with composure; though he was too clear-sighted to gather any vain hope from this unwillingness to part from her old friend or to confound it in the slightest degree with love. It was a few seconds before he gained breath to say, "Yes, I must go."

"O Max, I am very sorry!" she returned.

As before, Max made no effort to express his feeling.

"But why must you go?" she continued, "is it for pleasure?"

"For pleasure! Good heavens, no!" he exclaimed, vehemently. "I go because I have no choice in the matter."

"Why?" she asked.

"I heard from my father this morning," he rejoined; "he has been so ill all this winter that the doctors have prescribed travelling and the German baths for him. He wrote, asking me to accompany him."

"Ah, I see now. And you go, of course."

"Of course," he echoed.

"True to yourself and to duty, as you always are, Max," she said, gently.

"Hush!" he answered, hastily; "I don't deserve your praise; I have not made this sacrifice generously, or with a good grace."

"But you have made it."

"Because there was no alternative."

"But, Max," she suggested, presently, as the fact struck her that his manner had made her look upon the necessity for his departure as a heavy cross to him, when in reality she saw no reason why it should be viewed in that light, — "but, Max, it will not be very hard for you to go, as you have very little to leave. You take with you the person you care most for," ("If this were only true," thought Max,) "and, besides, you like Europe and European society."

Again he was silent, making no opposition to her statement. Unless he could tell her all, it was worse than useless to say anything.

"When do you leave?" she asked, breaking the pause which followed her remark.

"I shall start for New York to-morrow morning."

"So soon?"

"Yes, so soon."

He had determined she should write to him when he was gone, but how to make her promise was the question. He concluded, at last, that, instead of asking it as a favor, and so suggesting the possibility of a refusal, he would speak of it as an arrangement too settled to require further attention.

"I shall write to you as soon as I get to England," he remarked, quietly.

He got what he wanted, a simple acquiescence.

"And you will answer punctually, of course."

Again an affirmative, and that point was gained. To judge by his manner, it seemed to him one of very small importance, but he inwardly sang hymns of victory. He had still this means of influencing her, and he could trust himself to use it; he would carry out his likeness to St. Paul, and make his letters weighty and powerful. He considered it best to change the subject of conversation.

"You will still live in Baltimore, I suppose?"

"Yes, it will be better for Philip, I think."

"But for yourself? Have you no preference in the matter?"

"Certainly not in favor of staying. I neither like enough nor am enough liked in this city for it to afford any very strong attractions for me," she added, a little bitterly.

"Then you would not be very sorry to leave it."

"Except for Philip's sake, — no."

Philip again. Max's old idea, that the boy might, perhaps, be the strongest motive power he could bring to bear upon her came back to him.

"Then I shall continue to direct to you here, until you write me something to the contrary."

"Certainly."

"I shall not be surprised to hear that you have changed your residence," he still persisted.

"Why?" was the slightly astonished reply.

"It is possible that you may have changed more than that before I see you again. I may find you under another name when I come back," he rejoined, forcing himself to put his worst fear in words, to gain an object he had in view.

"As I have often told you, I shall never marry, if that is what you mean," she answered, steadily.

"You don't know what you may do," he returned, almost sternly. "It is idle to talk of what we would do under totally different feelings and circumstances. It is almost as impossible for us to anticipate or account for our actions in different states of mind and body as for those of another distinct individual."

"Well, I will qualify my assertion, and say, that is my present view of the subject; but I don't think either time or circumstances will change it."

"We shall see. But, at any rate, make me one promise."

"First, tell me what it is. You certainly can't expect me to promise in the dark," she answered, with a slight laugh.

"Promise me, that whenever you marry you will let me know, long enough beforehand, to be at your wedding." In this case, he thought, it can never be irrevocably finished without my knowledge, and it will go hard but I stop it.

"A very unnecessary promise, Max," she answered, shaking her head.

"But make it, at all events."

"Well, I do."

"Seriously?"

"Yes, seriously; but I think you will find me waiting in my old place when you come again."

As she spoke he took her hand, and the movement naturally made her look up. As she caught sight of his face, and before either he or she were quite conscious of what she was doing, she snatched her hand from his grasp and sat before him with an expression in her eyes that gave Max a sensation as though she had actually struck him. He had looked at her with the old Mephistophelean smile on his face, and her whole nature started up in fierce disgust and revolt against it. The fundamental antagonism of their natures asserted itself even now, when they were parting, it might be forever. Max looked at her, and understood, and clenched his teeth at the sight. He could have crushed her to death in one wild, passionate embrace of mingled love and hatred, if he had had the power. A moment after she realized what she had done, and deeply repented it, especially under the circumstances; she was mad and wicked thus to pain and insult her faithful friend, when, possibly, she might never see him again. She held out her hand resolutely to him, as she said, "You must not go yet"; he was standing, and she, little knowing the iron purpose within him which led him to endure all things, thought he would leave instantly. "You have not said good-by to Philip; he would be dreadfully disappointed if you went away without his seeing you."

She was doing what women always do under similar circumstances, catching at any excuse to keep him under her influence, until she could succeed in removing the impression of her own action. He took her hand just as though it were the first time in his life that he had done so, and she were his most ordinary acquaintance.

"I will go and call him," she continued, and passed instantly out of the room to do so, leaving him no alternative but to wait her return; which he did, standing exactly where she left him, moving neither face nor figure. He could not afford to abate one iota of his rigid self-control; time enough for that, and for what he well knew would follow it, when he was once more alone with himself. He did not have long to wait, for she came back almost immediately with Philip dashing on before her.

"Mr. Crampton," he cried, as, in his excitement, he seized hold of him, "are you really going away, as Emily says?"

"Yes, Philip, really."

"O, what makes you go; don't you like to stay here with us?"

"Like to stay here with us"! the words thrilled through him; even at this moment he felt that the pain and doubt and anger of this love were a thousand times more precious to him than any joy which heaven or earth could offer him apart from it.

"We can't always do what we like, Philip; we must sometimes do what we must," he replied, rather less stonily than he had at first spoken.

"Why, I thought grown-up gentlemen always did what they pleased; I did n't know anybody could ever tell them that they must do anything. Nobody shall tell me so, anyhow, when I get to be a man."

"But suppose you have to tell yourself so; do you think it will be much more than a change of masters?"

This shot considerably over Philip's head, and after puzzling his brain for a few moments, to find out what Mr. Crampton could possibly mean, he gave it up, and began talking of what interested him much more.

"Are you going to take Carlo with you?" he asked.

"O, of course; Carlo and I are inseparable."

"I wish I was Carlo," sighed the boy.

"Why," laughed Max; "because you would like to go with me?"

"Yes."

"Why don't you go, then? If you will perform your part of our contract I will certainly fulfil mine," Max rejoined, catching at the suggestion in spite of his better sense, which told him its uselessness.

"Do you mean my promising to make Emily go with us?"

"Yes."

"O, Emily, do go, please go!" exclaimed the boy, eagerly, throwing his arms around her, and striving by all manner of caresses to carry his point.

Although Max knew perfectly well what her reply must be, he could not help waiting for it with a painful eagerness, even while he despised himself for such weakness; but he saw instantly, by the unembarrassed amusement of her smile, that she took his remark in its lightest sense, merely as a good-natured effort to humor Philip.

"I can't go just yet, Philip," she returned; "but perhaps one of these days, when you are a man, and old enough to travel and take care of me, we will go together."

"How long will it be before then; how old must I be?" he demanded.

"That will depend upon yourself; some boys are men at eighteen, and some are never men."

"Then I'll be a man at sixteen," he announced, conclusively; becoming unconsciously Napoleonic in his determination; and letting go his hold of his sister he drew himself up with great dignity and composure, as though even now he quite felt the responsibility of his position.

"But, Philip, this is n't fair; it's a regular desertion of me," remonstrated Max; "what becomes of our bargain of all going together?"

"O, you see," returned the boy, quite smoothly, "when we are ready, we can just tell you we are going, and you can come too."

"Well, that is a rather better provision for me than I thought you were going to make," replied Max, laughing. "But then, with this arrangement, both you and I will have to wait so long."

"But you said you would wait," stated Philip, argumentatively.

"That seems to be my part in relation to most things," he returned, with sudden bitterness, neither words nor manner addressed to the child. "I seem scarcely to have done anything else in life."

"They also serve who only stand and wait." It was Emily who spoke, and looking into that true, earnest face, he gained fresh strength and courage for the battle of life. Courage, Max Crampton! The battle is not yet over; strong will and brain may yet conquer over all obstacles, as they have done before. So he thought, and vowed they should.

But it was growing harder and harder to leave, and he felt that, if it went on much longer, even his self-possession must falter. He almost wished he had gone while her angry mood had lasted; but then he would have lost that last look and sentence, for which no price of suffering was too great. He felt he had better go now, while he was still strong enough.

"You will think of me sometimes, while I am gone, won't you, Philip?" he asked, addressing his question singularly, but meaning it plurally.

"O yes, and Carlo too," returned the child, solemnly.

Max made a decided grimace at this equality of sentiment, which granted rather more than he had asked for.

"Philip's canine devotion is certainly not very flattering to his merely human acquaintances," laughed Emily. "I really believe he

would look upon any one's calling him a dog quite in the light of a compliment."

The boy could n't imagine what made Max shrug his shoulders, and Emily laugh so; but went on with perfect good faith, "You'll take care of him and bring him safe home, won't you, Mr. Crampton?"

"Really, Philip," exclaimed Emily; "you are too bad. Suppose you were first to ask Mr. Crampton to take care of himself and bring himself safely home. Don't you think that would be better?"

"Ask me, yourself," interposed Max, quickly. "I should like to go away with such a commission from you. I should like to feel that I were valuable enough to you for you to give it."

"Max, how can you talk so, when you know that my kindest wishes always go with you," she returned, almost reproachfully, hurt at this light estimate of her friendship.

"Do they go with me now?"

"Now, and always."

"Good-by!" he exclaimed, abruptly, not daring to trust himself for another second; and before she could even return his farewell, he was gone.

She was too well accustomed to Max's ways to be either surprised or hurt at this; but she sat down by the fire, feeling very lonely and desolate. This parting seemed to open her wounds and make them bleed afresh; and soon tears began to fall, — tears which, if Max had seen or known of them, would have been to him as the drop of cold water for which the rich man prayed in his torment.

But he knows nothing of even this faint degree of comfort, as he sits through the long night in the silence of his own room, with the volcano which has raged concealed within him, now bursting forth and overwhelming him with its fiery torrent. But through and above all this wild agony and unrest shone his immutable purpose, fixed and clear, just as the quiet stars shine above the clouds and storms which cover and seem to annihilate them.

By the next night Max was in New York with his father, talking so cheerily and hopefully of their intended journey, that Mr. Crampton — upon whom his son's presence always had the effect of the fountain of youth — grew stronger before his eyes. Instead of a dreary pursuit of health, as he had previously regarded it, it seemed gradually to transform itself, under Max's influence, into a delightful pleasure excursion. They talked over their old European pleasures and reminiscences, until Mr. Crampton grew really excited on the subject, and anxious to start.

"By the way, Max, where have you been since you were here last fall?" asked his father, incidentally; for he had a general idea that his son spent his time chiefly as another gentleman is currently reported to do, in going to and fro in the earth, and in walking up and down in it.

"In Baltimore."

"All the time?"

"Yes."

"Why, what on earth could you have found to entertain yourself with there for so long a time?" was the next astonished inquiry; for Mr. Crampton, as a mixture of European and New-Yorker, looked upon Baltimore as rather a small provincial town, where things must necessarily be rather slow.

"O, I found some people there that I liked, so I stayed," was the careless reply. "They were not many, to be sure," he continued; "but of course I could n't ask a higher ransom for any city than that offered for Sodom and Gomorrah. Ten really congenial persons would redeem any city, of any possible population, in my eyes."

"I should think you would be exceedingly lucky to discover the ten within your own circle," responded his father, gayly; "but we will make up for any *ennui* which either you or I have suffered, when we once get abroad."

And the conversation dropt off into another channel; Mr. Crampton looking upon this Baltimore residence merely as one of his son's whims, and Max made no sign to the contrary. As they parted for the night, he said, "God bless you, my son, I had not believed there was so much happiness left me in life," and turned off towards his room, perfectly satisfied, little dreaming of the heavy cross he had given that son to bear.

The next week they were sailing upon the broad Atlantic; Max tending his father with a care and devotion the root of which was a desperate resolve to keep alive the only being on earth who really loved him.

CHAPTER IX.

THE morning of Max's departure from Baltimore Emily sat in her room making a listless attempt at sewing; but the hands rested very often idly in her lap, as she thought and wondered how she should ever become accustomed to his absence. He had been so intimately connected with all her thoughts and occupations, that it seemed almost impossible to continue them without him. The old, familiar work would seem strange without the usual guiding hand. She felt her girl-world was broken up, had passed away forever, and her foot was on the threshold of a new phase of life. She almost shuddered as she wondered what it would bring forth; life looked so strange and untried before her, especially now, when she must fight the battle, and win or lose it alone, depending only upon her own resources. She little knew how long or how weary that conflict was to be.

But her thoughts on the subject were interrupted by a servant's coming in and saying, "There is a gentleman down-stairs who wants to see you, Miss Emily," at the same time handing her a card, upon which she recognized the name of the lawyer who usually had charge of her father's legal affairs. She went down to the parlor immediately.

As she entered, a rather elderly gentleman rose and bowed,—a bow which began in mere ordinary civility, but which ended, as he gained a full view of her appearance, with that indescribable accentuation of deference which is the homage invariably and involuntarily rendered to a young and handsome woman.

"Miss Chester, I presume," the gentleman remarked

Emily bowed.

"And this is Mr. Wilson," she said, glancing at the card which she still held in her hand.

It being the gentleman's turn to bow, he did so.

"I called to see you this morning on business," he continued.

Emily took a seat, and motioned him to follow her example.

"You are aware that I was your father's legal adviser, I suppose," he went on to say, when he had obeyed her direction.

"Yes," she said, "she was aware of it."

"I am the executor named in the will."

So Mr. Grant had told her.

Mr. Wilson grew very uncomfortable, and scarcely knew what to say next; he had come on an exceedingly unpleasant errand, much more so than he had previously realized. He had looked upon it as a mere matter of business, but now, when it came to the actual performance, his courage began to falter. To feel obliged coolly to tell that bright young girl that her whole earthly resources were gone, that henceforth her own exertions were all she could look to for support, made him feel like a positive ogre; and yet it was this that duty imperatively commanded him to do.

"Well," thought he, "as there is no help for it, the sooner it is all told and over the better for all parties."

"It was generally supposed, Miss Chester, that your father left a large fortune, but I am very sorry, on your account, to say that it is not so. The truth is, he had involved himself rather deeply by some of his philanthropic schemes; besides which, he had been speculating largely in the last year, and it will swallow up his whole estate to pay the debts thus incurred," he added, hastily, wishing to get the worst told as quickly as possible. And having done so, he looked anxiously to see the effect of his announcement.

The blow came suddenly, but Emily bore it bravely, without the slightest perceptible flinching.

"Upon my word," thought the lawyer, immensely relieved by the total absence of hysterics, and any other scenic demonstrations, "this young person has uncommon pluck. I wonder how many men would stand such news as firmly. I wonder what is going on behind that steady face."

"Will the estate be large enough to pay all the debts against it, and leave my father's name and credit free from reproach?" she asked, quietly, after a few moments' pause, all the stern, intense pride of the woman's nature speaking out in the question.

"Entirely," he replied; "as nearly as I could judge from so hasty an examination there will even, I think, be a small surplus; not very large, but still something to rely upon. At least, my dear young lady, you may depend upon my strongest efforts to gain it for you," he continued, with a real kindly earnestness; for her bravery interested him, and roused his admiration both as a man and a lawyer.

"Thank you," she returned, gratefully.

"If your father had lived to mature and carry out his plans, he would probably have made a great deal of money by these very speculations, through which, in the present state of affairs, he has lost nearly everything. I have suspected for some time that he was venturing rather far, but I had no idea of the full extent until I came to wind up his affairs. As soon as I had fully examined the matter, I thought it right that you should know the truth immediately."

"Yes, I had much rather know the whole truth at once," she rejoined.

"So I judged. But I won't detain you any longer this morning, Miss Chester," said the gentleman, rising to take leave, "I shall see you again as soon as there is anything definitely settled in this matter. If I can be of any assistance to you in your plans for the future I assure you it would give me great pleasure. Recollect I have some claim upon you in this matter, as your father's friend and executor," he added, kindly.

"I am very much obliged to you," she replied.

"Wait until I have given you some cause to feel obliged," he said, pleasantly; and, bidding her good morning, took his departure.

He was gone; but Emily sat just where he had left her, thinking, probably for the first time in her life, — a very different state of mind from the dreamy speculations she had previously called by that name. For the first time the practical responsibility of providing for the bread-and-butter cares of life came home to her. Her father, like almost all fathers, had always represented to her a species of Aladdin's lamp, and to "ask Papa" (those words, magical in all households) had been equivalent to rubbing the lamp, and attended generally with the same results. His consent or denial had been the only gauge of practicability she had ever known; but now the practicability would lie in the measure of her own exertion, and she must be her own lesser Providence.

But, strange to say, the view of her future life, which a few hours before, when it had lain aimlessly and indefinitely before her, had depressed her, now, when it represented an earnest, severe struggle, roused and excited her. She had longed for independence, and here surely was a chance for it, though in a different form from that in which she had asked it. Here at least was an aim, a purpose in life, and the great forces within her, which had always hungered and thirsted for employment and action, started up and sang triumph at the prospect. The loss of money was a small trial to her, caring for it, as she did, only so far as it was a necessity; her pride being of too

intense and personal a character to have any connection with the matter; and she was not afraid of actual want, she could easily work and support both Philip and herself; others had done it before her, why not she? there was always need and payment in the world for good, honest labor.

"Ah, my dear old friend," she said, as she went to her piano and opened it for the first time since her father's death, and ran her fingers over the keys, "we have spent many hours together for pleasure; now we will see what can be done for duty."

What had previously been the pleasure of her life should now become its business, and music be literally her comfort and support. She was glad of this, she was glad to think that the work of her life should be to teach that which she most loved, that it was a soul-exalting, not soul-crushing labor, to which she would be bound. The more she thought of her loss of fortune, the less she was disposed to look upon it in the light of a calamity; take away the imaginary terrors, and surely there was nothing so very dreadful in the reality; at least, nothing that could not be vanquished, if resolutely faced and fought. If she were only strong enough to fight the battle and conquer, if health and strength and firmness of purpose would only hold out to the end. But she was far too young and too vigorously alive to have any real fear on these points, to appreciate the danger to be apprehended from their failure. It is only after we have tried and failed, after we have been in the school of that bitter teacher, Experience, that we learn truly to judge of the strength of the obstacles and foes life forces us to encounter, that we learn to look upon possible, even probable defeat, as one of the chances which must be calculated. Early youth is triumphant; it has no fear of any conflict, as it has no doubt of the issue; as it looks towards the future, all its efforts to come seem successes, all its battles victories.

So Emily Chester, in viewing the life before her, gave little room to the thought of the possibility of defeat; her enthusiastic nature was too much kindled at this opportunity for development and independence to think for more than a moment of anything but the bright side of the question. No young knight of chivalry, riding forth to do battle for God and his lady-love, was ever fuller of high hope and enthusiasm than was this girl as she prepared to go forth upon her career of earning her daily bread. A career not apparently very exalted in the outward view of it, but so to her, knowing, as she did, that any work, when it becomes duty, grows noble. She knew the truth of dear old George Herbert's words, —

"A servant with this clause
Makes drudgery divine;
Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws,
Makes that and th' action fine."

Ah, friend, the world, the flesh, and the Devil continue through all ages, while bravery and chivalry still go out to meet them, though in manifold guises.

The unwonted sound of the piano had drawn Philip to the parlor, and as she saw him, Emily recollected that he must be told of the change in their circumstances.

"Come here, Philip," she said; "I have something to tell you."

"What is it?" asked the boy, as he came and leant upon her shoulder, a support which her sitting position rendered irresistibly convenient; for he was no exception to what really seems a law in the nature of children, that they must have something to lean upon, if required to stand still for five minutes.

"Is it bad news, Emily?" inquired the boy, rather apprehensively.

"I don't know whether you will call it so or not," said she, smiling, for she knew she could trust him to think as she did about it.

"Do you call it so?" was the next question, asked with a keen examination of her face.

"No." The answer came clearly and decidedly, and Philip was perfectly satisfied; his faith in his sister was entire.

"Go on, then, and tell me what it is."

"Suppose I were to tell you that in future you and I must try to take care of ourselves; that, instead of being rich, we are now poor, and must earn the money we are to live on; would you be very sorry?"

The boy said nothing, but stood looking at her earnestly, with a blank, troubled expression of countenance. His ideas of poverty were chiefly derived from the little ragged children who came to the door begging for cold meat, and that race of old women who affect street corners and palsy, and certainly neither occupation afforded a very enlivening prospect for either Emily or himself.

"Why, Philip, it is not so very dreadful," laughed his sister, as she saw and understood the look in his face. "We will only have to live in a much smaller house, and give up a great many things to which we have been accustomed, but which we can do very well without. Then I shall teach music and get enough money for everything we want, and we can be very happy, my darling, if we choose."

"Certainly we can," returned the child, eagerly, very much relieved by this statement of the case. "I thought, at first, you meant *really* poor," he continued, with explanatory emphasis on the word.

"Give a poor dog a bone," is what you expected to be saying soon, I suppose," exclaimed Emily, gayly. "No, it has not come to that yet, and I am not afraid it will, so long as health and strength last."

"And I will be a man one of these days, and then I can work and support both of us."

"Yes, my darling; but in the mean time we will try what can be done by teaching. By the way, Philip," she continued, merrily, "going to Europe is one of the things we will have to give up."

"O, well, we can do without it; it won't kill us to stay at home."

"That is right, my boy," said Emily, looking at him with proud, loving eyes; "if you think of all privations in that way, you will not find them very hard to bear. The great thing, after all, my dear, will be to be brave and true, and recollect that God helps those who help themselves."

"And we will help ourselves, won't we?"

"Yes, we will try."

CHAPTER X.

THE house and furniture were to be sold immediately, with the rest of Mr. Chester's property; so Emily and Philip were to leave it as soon as possible. Mr. Grant had rented a small house in a pleasant part of the city for them; a very bird-cage of a house, but, as Emily gayly told him, the birds who were to live in it would not sing any the less merrily for that.

She was busily employed during several days in superintending the removal and arrangement of the small part of the furniture she had concluded to retain. Besides her piano and books (her own personal property) there was her father's arm-chair, and the work-stand at which she could recollect seeing her mother sit and sew, as she taught her to read and told her stories, chiefly out of the Bible or Pilgrim's Progress, until little Benjamin and Samuel, and Christ blessing little children, became to her living realities, and Mr. Great-heart a personal benefactor. Perhaps, in her own life-struggle, her childish recollections of poor Christian, and his battle and victory, came back to her not unfrequently. Then there was the lounge upon which her father had lain, the night before his death; she could not see that sold to strangers. These things had little value to others, little intrinsic worth, but to her they were precious. In this way the interior of her new house looked pleasantly familiar and home-like, furnished, as it was, with the relics of her old home.

At last all the preparations were finished, and they were to enter their new house permanently upon the next morning.

It was now Friday night; the week had been a trying, fatiguing one to Emily, and this was the last night they were to spend in their old house, where they had both been born, and from which both father and mother had passed to their better home.

"Come, Philip," said his sister, "let us go and bid good-by to the dear old rooms."

But the desolation of the half-dismantled apartments through which they passed, and, most of all, their father's room, where the ghost of that terrible morning seemed to rise up before them, soon sent them back, chilled and weary in mind and body, to the fire in the one from which they had started.

They sat by it a long while in silence, until Philip dropped asleep, and Emily, taking her Bible, began reading to herself that chapter to which we all turn instinctively in sorrow, where the Divine voice says, "Let not your hearts be troubled," and tells us of the Father's house, with its many mansions. And so closed the last hours of the old life. A new life and new surroundings from to-morrow was her thought; that she might have strength for it, her hope and prayer.

But in the fresh spring sunshine of the next morning, both her present and future brightened, and she and Philip took possession of their new residence in quite a flood of high spirits. The novelty of the change excited and amused them; predisposed as they were, constitutionally, to perceive the ridiculous side of everything, the very size of the place, so unlike anything to which they had been accustomed, had something comic to them in it.

"Well, I suppose everything has its advantages, even a small house in contradistinction to a large one," said Emily, as she came into the tiny parlor; "for instance, if this room were any larger, we should not have Mr. Swiveller's requisite for an apartment, 'a fine view of over the way,' in such perfection from all parts of it."

"And then we won't have to get up for anything. Just look here! I can sit by the fire and reach the books on the table, in the middle of the room," returned Philip, tilting his chair dangerously in illustrating his remarks.

"If you don't take care you will have to 'get up' from the floor," his sister rejoined, laughing.

"Emily, I think your piano will about fill the back parlor," continued Philip, consideratively viewing that diminutive apartment.

"O no, there will be room for you and a good many other things."

"Then the walls will have to stretch or break."

"Well, in that case the front room will still be left for you to emigrate to, and you can fit it up as your special domain, and play Robinson Crusoe, monarch of all you survey in it, if you choose."

Philip accepted the arrangement as a good proviso.

They spent the whole day in arranging things exactly as they liked them, especially the small articles, such as books, flowers, ornaments, &c.; in fact, changing a house into a home.

The Sabbath calm of the next morning was a true rest to the body and soul of Emily Chester; she and Philip remained at home during the morning, remembering the Sabbath day and keeping it holy with good, true thoughts and feelings; a quiet, still time; but

who knows what strength for the conflicts of life is born of such rest. In the afternoon Emily proposed they should go to church, and, Philip willingly acceding, they started for the church where they had worshipped so often with their father.

But if this Sabbath day found Emily Chester peacefully happy, it found Frederick Hastings anything else. He was in a state of mind and body which, I suppose, comes to us all at times, but which, more particularly, belongs to women and men of his peculiar temperament, — a nervous restlessness, an utter weariness of himself and everything around him.

He longed to be out in the country, under the green trees and upon the broad fields of our mother earth, alone with God and Nature; or with some strong, congenial human nature which would both soothe and strengthen him; some heart too wise and tender and true to feel anything but loving pity for sufferings, which, to those who have never felt them are purely imaginary, but to those who know their power, only too real. He felt the need of some one who would realize for him Charles Lamb's "sympathetic solitude," to whom he could be as deliciously unreasonable as he chose, without the least fear of misconception; he longed for some outward influence, some good angel to deliver him from this wretched state. The flowers in the hand of a child who was passing seemed to tantalize him as a faint taste of a draught for which he was thirsting. He was tramping down the street in a mechanical, dogged way, with a dull, half-sullen resolution to bear it just as long as it was to be borne, when he came opposite the old church to which his visits had grown fewer and fewer since his boyhood. It was long before the hour of service, and the quiet solitude of the place struck him as the very change and relief he wanted. He went in and sat down among the empty pews.

Although we know that the kingdom of God is within us, there is an involuntary feeling of sacredness connected with the humblest building dedicated to His service. The place where prayer is wont to be made is truly consecrated, if, among the multitude of words, one humble, sincere petition has gone up from it before the throne of God. Frederick Hastings felt all this, the influence of the time and place, in a degree unintelligible to a coarser organization. His restlessness seemed to fade away before the stillness of eternity. Boyish recollections came back to him of the long hours he had spent in those pews, listening to sermons, the greater part of which were in an unknown language to him; but through all of them

ran a spirit of true Christianity to which his heart and conscience answered as the human heart and conscience answer only to truth. As he thought of these things which endure forever, all earthly pain and suffering grew light and trivial by the contrast, and the burden which had been upon him when he entered seemed to have lost its weight. He sat there a long while, growing gradually into a happier, healthier state of feeling, until the church began to fill with the congregation for the afternoon service, when his true worship and service being over, he rose to go out.

As he turned to do so, he saw a tall figure with heavy, black draperies come up the aisle. His heart sensibly quickened its beat as he recognized Emily Chester. It was the first time he had seen her since he had helped her into the carriage on the day of her father's funeral, having always missed her when he called, in the confusion between her new home and her old.

As she walked on, many curious and rather sympathizing eyes were turned upon her; but, as they saw the steady composure of the face under the black veil, the sympathy died out, and people shrugged their shoulders, and repeated, for about the thousandth time, "What a strange girl that Emily Chester is!" She came and took her seat within two or three pews of Frederick Hastings (who upon seeing her had immediately reseated himself), but unconscious of his vicinity; for they were so placed, that, although he could see her distinctly, he was rather out of her range of vision.

And he sat and watched her earnestly, reading in her face, as in a book, the result of the last two weeks. He saw that she had passed from girlhood to womanhood; that the face had gained immensely in depth and power; that a great division of her nature, previously undeveloped, had been awakened and brought into action. There had been a battle with grief, but it was the composure of victory over herself that he read in the serene brow. Yes, she had come out of this struggle nobly, worthier of his admiration; of what he thought his love, than ever. It made him feel nobler himself to be the friend of that grandest human spectacle, — men or women true to themselves.

The service began, and he heard the text given out. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble." Those words, vital now as when first spoken, annihilate time, and make us feel, that, in spite of the long ages between us, David, king over Israel, is still a man, and consequently our brother. But the sermon was dim and indistinct to him, reading, as he did, a far higher translation of

the text in the face before him. The peaceful trust expressed there was a more powerful testimony to this refuge and strength than any spoken word could have been. To those able to receive it, does not every noble face preach a sermon, perhaps the highest given us? To Frederick Hastings this woman's face came, this Sabbath day, as a true Gospel, glad tidings, rousing and answering to that which was highest in him, as it is in all men, the element of true reverence, of religion, which underlies all real greatness. To everything holy, wherever he recognized the Divine element, even dimly, he gave humble, awe-struck reverence. The faculty of worship was, in his character, developed to a rare strength and nobleness, making those who knew him, who were worthy enough themselves to appreciate and recognize the divineness of this trait, realize the expression, "little lower than the angels"; for what is the employment of the angels in Heaven, of singing praise to God, before his throne, but an infinite extension of this reverence and homage paid to Divinity on earth? It was to this part of his character that Emily Chester gave her intensest respect and admiration, tintured sometimes with even a deeper, holier feeling; it was to this that he owed his oneness with her; even, at times, his superiority over her. His very lack of what we usually term strength, forgetting that all ability is strength, enabled him to rise to a greater height, to breathe a rarer atmosphere, than most men are conscious of. No wonder Emily Chester was his true friend, for she was cognizant of his nobleness through her own nobility.

And there they sit in that old church, two human beings, apart from each other, apart from the semblances around them, united by receiving and feeling God's truth. Verily, a Sabbath day's journey for both of them.

The service ended, and the congregation began to pass out.

As Emily came down the aisle the people turned aside to let her pass, without attempting to speak to her; even those who had known her from her childhood; not doing so from any particular ill-will, but from an uncomfortable sensation that she did not need them, that she could do without them; a feeling she had always inspired in general society, and which is apt to be resented with dislike, as she was soon to realize.

As she passed the threshold Frederick Hastings stepped to her side. She looked up with quick recognition and pleasure, but gave him no audible welcome; indeed, neither spoke for a long while, as they walked on through the delicious spring air, until he said: "Did

it ever strike you that the sunshine seems to acquire a softness, a tranquillizing influence on the Sabbath, which belongs to no other day? Of course it is an imagination, but the power of it comes over me very strongly at times."

Her face changed into quick, answering expression before she said: "I thought that feeling was confined to women and poets. Do you recollect Motherwell's 'Summer Sabbath Noon,' and the expression in it, —

'in this quiet loveliness
We own that love and power,
Which, like the softest sunshine, rests
On every leaf and flower'?

Such a day as this always brings it back to me."

"I had forgotten it," he replied. "I thank you for reminding me of it. I can understand that feeling; for the sunlight does seem to me, sometimes, like visible peace and mercy. I suppose that is one reason why we are so much more susceptible to the influences of Nature as we grow older, as we begin to feel the need of rest and pardon."

She made no answer, and they walked on, realizing the truth of their words, until she broke silence by saying, "I was rather surprised that you should have been at church this afternoon."

"I suppose so. I confess I am not very often to be met there, but I dropped in this afternoon to get rid of myself. I was tired of myself and everything else," he added, a little hurriedly, the shadow of his late strange wretchedness reappearing in his tone.

"Are you rested now?"

"Yes. I had been sitting there a long while before you came in."

She glanced up at him as he spoke, and instinctively comprehended his previous mood and subsequent change of feeling, more perfectly than an elaborate explanation would have enabled another to do.

"The best way of relief in such a case is to lose ourselves in higher things." She spoke very quietly, but he saw he was understood.

Philip, who had been straggling irregularly around them, just as his fancy dictated, now came to Dr. Hastings's side, and taking hold of his hand, — a hand in which he had felt a peculiar sense of loving property ever since the day of his father's funeral, when it had rested so gently on his head, — said, "Dr. Hastings, you won't go away, will you?"

"No, Philip, I certainly have no present intention of doing so. But why do you ask?" he replied, a little puzzled at the boy's question, and his entreating manner.

"Why, because everybody seems to be going away. I thought Mr. Crampton would stay with us always; but now he has gone, I am afraid everybody will leave us."

"Mr. Crampton!" re-echoed Frederick Hastings, with sudden curiosity and surprise; "has he gone?" he demanded of Emily, not of the child; and watching her keenly as he spoke, for this was strange news to him. "Can the game have ended," he thought, "and in his defeat."

"Yes," she returned, calmly; "he has gone to Europe."

"Why?" he was irresistibly impelled to ask.

"He was obliged to go with his father, whose health required it."

"Was that the only reason?"

"The only one I know of."

"Ah!" It was rather a long-drawn exclamation, addressed more to himself than to her. His mind instinctively went back to the night when he and Max had sat smoking, and talking together of Emily Chester; and as Max's words and manner rose up before him, he thought, "Poor fellow! poor fellow! Fate seems against him; even his will may prove powerless before the force of circumstances."

"You must miss Mr. Crampton very much," he continued, speaking once more aloud.

"Yes, having lost everything else, we can scarcely afford to lose our friends. But Philip and I will now have to learn what it is to be alone in the world, and poor."

Poor! This, too, was news to him. He could hardly realize it. To hear that regal-looking woman talk of being poor had an element of absurdity, of incongruity in it, that, at first, chiefly gave him an inclination to laugh.

"There is such a thing as being so rich and strong in ourselves that poverty is an impossibility," he returned, almost involuntarily.

"I hope Philip and I may not be found wanting, for we certainly have nothing now but ourselves to rely upon."

"Do you mean that, seriously?"

"Very seriously."

"Are you very sorry to be thrown upon your own resources?" he asked, intensely curious to know how such a woman would look upon the total loss of fortune, which most women regard as the heaviest misfortune that can befall them.

"No, not if I am strong enough to bear it, which yet remains to be proved. Besides, I have always thought I was leading too easy a life; that I was capable of, and consequently ought to have, more work to do in the world; and now Providence has sent it to me."

"Then your loss is not hard to bear."

"I do not feel it so now; it has taken nothing from me which I really value. Besides, that which is sent us to endure is always best for us, as we will see for ourselves in the right time."

"Do you recollect Goethe's remark, when he was a child, about the earthquake at Lisbon?"

"That God knew very well no earthly misfortune could hurt an immortal soul, do you mean?"

"Yes."

"I have often thought of it," she replied, earnestly. "I wish I could learn never to forget it. But there is one thing that Philip and I can say, what old Martin Luther used to sing, '*Eine feste Burg ist unser Gott*.'" And the look he had noticed while in church came back to her face as she spoke.

"Is that a reminiscence of Mr. Crampton?" he asked, smiling at her translation of the afternoon's text.

"Not exactly, although I believe he was the first person I ever heard quote it. He is fond of recalling all Martin Luther's sayings and doings."

"From a fellow feeling, I suspect."

"Yes, I suppose so. Unorthodox as he is, Max is a Protestant on all subjects."

"If force of will has anything to do with it, he certainly has some such material in his composition as the old Reformer must have been made of," Frederick Hastings replied, as he again thought of the interview which had been such a revelation to him on this subject.

"I wonder if she has any idea of the purpose to which all this power is devoted," he could not help internally speculating. "I suppose not, or she could not talk of him in this perfectly cool, unembarrassed way. Poor fellow! he must have found it hard to go," he continued to himself, feeling as sorry for his rival as it was in human nature to do, with the full knowledge of what this absence meant towards his own chance of success; thus unconsciously verifying those villanously true lines of Dean Swift's, —

"In all distresses of our friends,
We first consult our private ends;

And Nature, kindly lent to ease us,
Points out some circumstance to please us."

So Frederick Hastings, with the real value of the prize he longed to gain, and his own appreciation of it, both increasing hourly, did not quite break his heart at the thought that Mr. Crampton was, by this time, safely landed in Europe; though rather than have taken an unfair advantage of him, by word or deed, either in his absence or presence, this honorable, high-minded gentleman would have submitted to any failure and loss. As it stood, it was an open, fair game, which either might play, taking the chance of winning or losing with perfect honor to himself and his rival. And to play he had decided.

They had arrived by this time at the door of Emily's new house, and stopped, to Frederick Hastings's astonishment, though he was too perfectly well bred to exhibit any sign of it.

"We live here," said Emily, simply, in explanation. "Will you walk in?"

"Not now. You certainly are not going to desert this beautiful evening for indoors; don't those trees in the distance tempt you to walk on towards them?" For the house, situated on the edge of the city, had a full view of the country, which was beautifully arraying itself in spring apparel.

Emily confessed that they did.

"Come, Philip," said Frederick Hastings, "you don't want to go in yet, do you?"

"No," returned the boy, "I had rather stay out here. Come on, Emily," and starting off in front, he left the others to follow. Which they did, sauntering slowly on, and talking gently of thoughts and feelings which either would have been chary of producing under other circumstances, and with a less perfect certainty of being understood, — a state of mind and body which I take to be as near Paradise as is attainable upon this earth, as close to the garden of Eden as sinful mortality can approach.

And so they found it. To use that beautiful old Hebrew expression of friendship, "They took sweet counsel together."

How much time and place have to do both with feeling and its expression! It is impossible to know persons, seeing them always under the same set of circumstances; it is always an open question, whether they really do not possess beauty of thought and feeling, or whether it is only that we have never seen them under influences to bring it out. I have been amazed and humbled before the presence of delicacy and beauty, brought to light by some little circumstance,

in a character which I previously thought I knew perfectly, though totally unconscious of its possessing the shadow of such an attribute. Surrounding beauty will evoke some answering ray out of the hardest and coldest; who can calculate its influence upon natures in perfect harmony with it? Upon Frederick Hastings and Emily Chester beauty had a positive moral influence, and the blue sky above, and the soft air around, made them really better human beings.

It was late, and growing dark, when they parted at Emily's door, and Frederick Hastings walked away, feeling that the truest Sabbath he had spent since his boyhood had passed. Truly God's day, — a day of rest and peace.

CHAPTER XI.

IT was early in the ensuing week, when Miss Clementine Hastings made her appearance one morning in Emily's little parlor. After talking for some time about the weather, and such exciting topics, she turned the conversation upon music, and said, with that high-bred delicacy of manner which seemed to belong to the blood, and which, joined to the actual physical likeness, made Emily almost fancy for the moment that it was her brother speaking: "Miss Chester, I would give almost anything to be able to sing as you do. I thought so when you were singing one night last autumn at Mrs. Dana's. Brother Fred says you have the sweetest voice he ever listened to."

"That certainly must be a newly formed opinion of 'Brother Fred's,'" thought Emily to herself, in some slight astonishment, "for I never heard any intimation of it before." Emily little imagined how many of Frederick Hastings's opinions concerning her were newly formed, or rather reformed.

"I am almost ashamed to ask you to accept such a poor scholar as I am afraid I should be," the lady continued; "but if you would take the trouble to teach me, I should be extremely obliged."

"It would give me great pleasure to have you for my scholar, Miss Hastings," Emily replied; and she spoke truly, for she felt this kindness keenly, and knew from whose hand it came.

"Thank you," returned Miss Clementine, evidently very much relieved, "I was afraid you might be offended at my proposing it."

"My dear," said Emily, smiling, "I hope I never was quite foolish enough for that; and now it would be ridiculous, as teaching is to be the business of my life." And with a few words as to time and terms, the matter was settled.

"And I am really to come in for my share of your care and pains," Miss Hastings remarked, gayly.

"Yes, and I shall have to be particularly strict and exact with my first scholar, by way of example to the rest. Are you not frightened at the prospect?"

"O no!" But the disclaimer was uttered with a little eagerness

of manner that plainly showed Emily she had unintentionally struck close home.

Now the truth was that Clementine Hastings had been in a state of nervous terror ever since her brother had suggested this plan to her. How on earth could she summon courage to ask haughty, splendid Miss Chester, whose sarcasm everybody feared, and to whom even her brother (of whom she stood in the greatest awe) rendered homage and deference, to give her music lessons! And yet it had to be done, for Frederick's word was law at home. She shuddered on her way to the house, thinking of what she should do when she got there; making horrible suggestions to herself, of how Miss Chester might not like her proposition, might get angry at it, and wilt her with a single look, as she had seen her do stupid, slightly intoxicated men at parties, when they attempted to speak to her. How could she ever get out of the room afterwards, if she did! She thought she would take the precaution to sit near the door, at any rate, so as to facilitate escape in such a case. Emily little imagined how the poor child's heart was beating as she rose to welcome her, and what a degree of fright she was unconsciously inspiring.

So, now that the dreaded ordeal was successfully passed through, Miss Hastings became so elated that she talked briskly for the next half-hour with that amiable pointlessness which characterizes the conversation of women of her stamp, and which leaves the listener with an equal conviction of their want of evil intention and ideas.

Something like this passed through Emily's mind as she listened rather abstractedly to Miss Clementine's ladylike commonplaces, and made general assents at appropriate intervals. To find that, upon near approach, the awful Miss Chester she had so dreaded to meet was not a species of dragon, with fire darting from her eyes instead of her mouth, but a simple-mannered, kindly lady, with whom she felt perfectly at ease from the moment she looked at her with that fascinating, exquisite smile, was a deliverance for which Clementine Hastings did not know how to be sufficiently thankful. She took the invariable woman's way of showing her gratitude and good feeling by begging her to come and see her, and telling her all the compliments she had ever heard paid her. There is nothing by which young women show their own vanity more fully than by this naïve, instinctive fashion of addressing it in others. I have never seen a young woman who did not seem to regard telling any one a compliment as the "open sesame" to their hearts, and there can

be no doubt that many women's fascinations depend almost entirely upon their adroit use of this and kindred means to put people in a good humor with themselves. Ask any great belle, and, if she is candid, she will tell you that she has succeeded in making others admire her by first giving them a chance to admire themselves. We cannot help liking those who display us in an advantageous light to ourselves and others, and the woman who can do this will be a belle despite a want of fortune, beauty, intellect, and rank. Such women, accepting Solomon's conclusion, that "all is vanity," read a new meaning in that old saying, and put their knowledge to good purpose.

But Miss Hastings is innocent of any such intention or thought, and only talks so to Emily because she is in a general good humor, — the reason of many sayings and doings in every woman. They parted with pleasant wishes on both sides, and an agreement that the music-lessons should begin on the following Monday.

"Brother Fred," said Clementine, when, late that afternoon, she was reporting the success of her embassy, giving him an account of her visit, and growing confidential under the cover of the favoring twilight, "I always thought Miss Chester handsome, but this morning, when she smiled, her eyes made me think of an angel."

At which speech, from such a source, Frederick Hastings was too dumb from astonishment to make any attempt at answer. But three distinct times during that evening, which for a wonder he spent at home, Clementine was immensely confused at discovering that her brother was looking fixedly at her, as though she were a new and distinct idea just presented to his mind; an amount of mental attention which he so seldom bestowed upon her, as to make it more overwhelming than pleasant; for though a kind, attentive brother in other things, there was too little mental congeniality between them for him to be a very conversational, companionable one. A state of affairs sure to ensue, when a man has the good or bad fortune to be the only intelligent or literary member of a family, than whom a more lonely, necessarily self-contained human being can hardly be imagined, if he be true to himself. But the worst effect of this circumstance is, that under it nothing short of a miracle can save a man from intense self-conceit. Being constantly in contact, and unconsciously comparing himself, with his mental inferiors, he insensibly passes from a knowledge of his relative, to a belief in his positive superiority, his attainment of high mental elevation. A conscientious, diligent, unswerving pursuit of all people and things

really above him is the only salvation for a man in such circumstances.

The cause of Frederick Hastings's apparently miraculous preservation from this terrible fault — a fault which is an entire barrier to all true greatness — was, I think, his sincere and enthusiastic devotion to the good, the true, and the beautiful, in every form. In this way he constantly compared himself with the ideal above him, rather than with the realities around and below; by constantly looking up he learned his distance, not from earth, but from Heaven. The glorious reward he had gained, which Heaven vouchsafed to him, for his truth to it and to himself, was a perfect *teachableness*! For which progress in the Divine life no price can be too great; for what does it not comprehend, — a oneness with all good things, an openness to all holy influences, a realization of our Saviour's saying, "He that would be great among you, let him become as this little child." "Except ye become as little children, ye cannot enter the kingdom of Heaven." Upon no other terms will our Father grant us entrance into his kingdom, either in this world or the next. From the poorest servant or child who could have taught him anything, from whom he could have gained fresh views of life, Frederick Hastings would have learnt thankfully; for in so much he acknowledged their superiority. After all, the first step towards knowledge is a willingness to learn.

So when Frederick Hastings heard his sister express an appreciation of Emily Chester's highest beauty, which he had thought utterly beyond her comprehension, he concluded that he had never done that young person justice; and thought rather remorsefully that she might possibly have feelings hidden away in her quiet little brain, which would be as much a mystery to him as he had previously supposed his would be to her. His manner, when he bade her good night, puzzled the little lady considerably; it was as though he had done her some injustice, and wished to compensate her for it; a manner which increased rather than diminished, as he grew to a fuller comprehension of the truth, that every human soul, even the most meagre, has some mystery, some view of life, which it would be impossible for any other to take, and which, could we receive it from them, would be a lesson and revelation to us.

Before the week was out Emily had twelve scholars engaged. To her surprise, they had come to her, asking her to give them lessons. She wondered how they knew her resolution to teach, and still more how they became willing to assist her in carrying it out. She felt,

instinctively, that, whatever the cause might be, it was no particular friendliness to her. At last she noticed that nearly all her scholars were from families in which Frederick Hastings's smallest suggestion was considered oracular; and, taking this hint, she found that, in almost every instance, some slight, apparently careless word or action of his had been the moving cause. She well knew the quiet, almost imperceptible manner in which this true gentleman had rendered her this service, for it was not the first time kindness had fallen upon her path from the same unseen hand. She did not attempt to thank him, she did not even mention the subject to him; to use Emerson's beautiful words, she "from speech refrained, nobility more nobly to repay"; but in her prayers, when with the thought of God came the remembrance of all goodness and likeness to him, the full heart overflowed, and she prayed that "the Father who seeth in secret would reward him openly." It is much when a man's name finds place upon a woman's lips in her prayers; it is more when it finds that place, not, as is usually the case, from forgiveness, but from gratitude. Such prayers must, like guardian angels, protect a man in some degree from sin and suffering. Frederick Hastings's recompense was indeed a rich one.

But there was another cause which, strange as it may seem, contributed wonderfully towards Emily's success, that is, outward success, and this was the tacit dislike and resentment which were almost universally felt towards her. An opportunity for patronizing a person who had previously either entirely ignored her existence, or treated her with haughty indifference, was too delicious a little piece of revenge for any Christian woman to be reasonably expected to deny herself its use.

To condole with "poor, dear Miss Chester," and say that they would take great pleasure in patronizing her, (which, in a certain sense was intensely true,) was entire satisfaction to female friends for all their former grievances; for, though these speeches seemed to slide off from Emily's icy grandeur of manner, and to any man she would have seemed unconscious and unmoved, a woman's intuition penetrated instantly through her disguise, and saw beneath the haughty old blood at boiling point. Then it presented such a charming opportunity of "having your cake and eating your cake," for they got the reputation of doing a beautifully forgiving and generous action; and when they talked, as they took occasion to do to all their friends, especially gentlemen (who, in women's quarrels, are invariably deluded into thinking the wrong side the right one), of "poor

Miss Chester's unfortunate temper," and continued piously to remark that, of course, as Christians, they felt it their duty to overlook such weaknesses, and do all they could to help her; both they and their audiences looked upon them quite in the light of saints, and they felt themselves to be ornaments both to the church and to society.

From your amiable women, who are always forgiving their friends in general, "good Lord deliver us."

After all, men know nothing of revenge; they either shoot or cheat or injure each other in some such substantial, material way, with a loss of reputation to themselves; whereas a woman, in their place, would do five times the execution, and, at the same time, cover herself with glory and honor.

When you see a woman particularly polite and forgiving to her female friends, take care; for, as Mark Tapley said of a rattlesnake curling itself up like a corkscrew at the side of your bed, "it means venom!" The immaterial inquisition which is established among women rivals, in point of suffering and secrecy, its famous material prototype, and a woman sees and feels thumb-screws and racks where, to the uninitiated, appear only smiles and caresses. Poor Emily! a terrible ordeal, whose strength to try and torture she little realized, was prepared for her.

CHAPTER XII.

THROUGH the kind offices of Mr. Wilson and Mr. Grant, Emily's list of scholars increased to twenty, affording her an income that amply met her expenses, which she took care should not be large. The real wants of Emily and Philip were not many, and except for the inconvenience that necessarily attends any complete change of habits, they found their new economical life not at all hard to bear; indeed, there was a certain spicy variety that they enjoyed not a little. All who have read Charles Lamb's inimitable essay upon "Old China," in which Bridget Elia, that dear old maid who now counts as her lovers all true hearts, speaks with such loving regret of the small excitements and perplexities of the days of their poverty, will understand this feeling in two young, healthy souls and bodies. Young and healthy! Those two words, what do they not mean. What sorrow can really overwhelm us while we have these two defences still unbroken? "In thy youth, before the evil days come!" Ah, friend, human experience has been about the same, from Solomon's day to ours.

As far as her home-life went, Emily was happy. It was only the constant contact with her dear Christian friends, rendered inevitable by her music-teaching, that made her wretched while it lasted, and the shadow of which would even enter and darken the sunshine of her home. With her scholars themselves she had little trouble, except from incapacity, for they were chiefly very young girls, who soon grew devoted to her; but from their mothers and elder sisters Emily endured silent agonies.

To be poor and utterly deprived of worldly show did not affect her pride in the slightest degree; but to be obliged to receive favor and patronage from those whom she detested, and who detested her, made it blaze up and scorch her with its burning. She felt as though she could have borne anything better than this covert attack upon that which was at once her weakness and her strength, saving her from one form of pain only to increase her sensitiveness to another.

When she gave a lesson with no one present but the scholar,

things went on very smoothly, for she soon gained her admiration and respect. She saw that with her music was no light accomplishment, but a deep, holy study, in which every power of the heart and mind can be employed; that to her all good music was sacred, and might be justly named so. To understand it was not the ability to play a succession of trifling waltzes and polkas for the entertainment of light heads and feet, but a capacity to enter into the highest, purest revelations of beauty yet granted to humanity. She saw that Emily Chester felt as Beethoven did when he said, "I know I am nearer my God in my art than others are." To have this standard constantly upheld necessarily raised aims and ideas, even with the incapables, who are the trial of every teacher's life, for it at least taught them the existence of such thoughts and feelings; but where the soil was in any degree fit to receive it, the good seed soon began to spring up. Not only on music, but upon any other subject where she saw the least gleam of intelligence, both conscience and inclination made her strive to develop it into a steady light.

When free from irritating influences, allowed to be natural, her lessons were often a source of pleasure and interest to her; but the moment any one else entered, and the polite impertinences and feline caresses began, Emily grew volcanic, with her seething blood and hard icy exterior. Of course she could not condescend to the smallest outward notice of that which nearly convulsed her internally; but she would set her teeth while it was going on, and then return home and be hours in regaining her self-government and composure. She found herself growing habitually cold and hard in manner, from the effect of such constant self-control. As soon as she reached the quiet of her own little home, she would try to forget such troubles, strive to put away the recollection of them until again obliged to encounter them; but her success was not very great, for if the cause was forgotten, the effect still remained.

"Dr. Hastings," said Philip, one morning, when that gentleman had dropped in to see them, and, finding Emily out, had sat down to talk to the child until her return, — "Dr. Hastings, I am always glad when you come here."

"Are you, indeed! I am very glad to hear it, I am sure," Frederick Hastings replied, laughing and feeling very much complimented at this expression of opinion. The boy took no notice of his amusement, but went on gravely and innocently, "Because when you come here Emily always looks happy."

"Ah!" said Frederick Hastings, and was silent for a moment or two. "But, Philip," he continued, presently, "isn't she always happy?"

"No," said the boy, decisively, "I know she is n't, or she would n't look so — so —" he stopped, unable to find a word to express his meaning, but contrived, from their mental and physical resemblance, to reproduce in his small face such an exact copy of the fixed, stern look which Emily's often wore, that Frederick Hastings recognized it immediately, from the shadow of it that he had sometimes seen still lingering.

He made no reply, but sat thinking quietly of this new disclosure. He scarcely knew which was the strongest, his pain at the thought of her pain, or his pleasure that he could in any degree constitute her happiness. If his presence was to her what hers was to him, what bliss might not be within his grasp? He hardly dared to think of it. At any rate, let his fate be what it might, to be able to serve her, to make her path smoother, easier to tread, was worth striving hard for. He could have fairly kissed Philip for the pleasure he had innocently given him.

Philip was right; Emily Chester *was* happy when Frederick Hastings was with her. Added to all he had previously been to her, he was now such an inexpressible relief; to escape from all her annoyances into such an atmosphere of congeniality and beauty, was like ascending into heaven. He brought back to her her old girlish self, when her knowledge of sorrow or trouble had been confined to its name, when life stretched out like fairy-land before her; and how could she help blessing him for the change, and repaying him with sweet, bright smiles and words? Disliking general society as she did, he was all she needed, — a true friend. They read the same books, thought the same thoughts, pursued the same aims, from their very differences supplying to each other just what each needed. He was almost constantly with her, dropping in at any hour; if she were absent, either entertaining himself until she returned, or making some new book or music or flowers serve as his card; if she were at home, talking or reading to her, or sometimes doing neither, until he saw the weariness pass away, the darkness fade out of her face, to be replaced by brilliant sunshine. Then came his reward, for the reaction would naturally excite her, and she would talk for hours as he had never heard any other woman. Her wit, keen insight into character, extensive, though rather desultory reading, all came into play; until, under their influence, his

taste grew almost morbid, so that he could scarcely endure with patient civility the ordinary fashionable nothings which form the conversation of most girls.

From every one of these meetings he went away truer and stronger; with a keener relish for life; with a deeper sense that God put him into this world, not for his own amusement, but to do His bidding, to keep His commandments. Contact with this strong, real character had the same effect upon him that the touch of his mother earth had upon the fabled Antæus.

His girl friends said they did not know what had come over Frederick Hastings; he used to be so entertaining, had such quantities of small talk; but now he was so grave and quiet, and when he did talk, it was about some stupid old book or something equally dull. The truth was, he had once or twice inadvertently spoken of some subject upon which he really thought and felt; but the blank amazement with which it was received soon cured him of such folly, and made him change his company or his conversation.

But men looked very differently at this change, and, after talking to him with an interest which they had certainly never displayed in him before, (for what man particularly successful among ladies is ever liked among men?) went away and said, "They had always thought Frederick Hastings would come to something, if women would let him alone."

And to something he was certainly coming; to completeness perhaps, to development certainly. But for the present at least he was very happy, and he accepted and enjoyed his pleasure to the full.

Emily and Philip had a fashion of taking long walks, before breakfast, over the far-away hills, in pursuit of health and wild-flowers, and Dr. Hastings performed marvels of early rising to accompany them,—marvels at least in his own estimation. When he had first proposed going with them, Emily mentioned that he would have to get up before five o'clock, thinking that this would definitely settle the question. He was rather aghast at that prospect, having, in the last few years, since he had left the Navy, gradually acquired a general idea that five o'clock was somewhere in the night; but upon being told that the sun would certainly be up at that hour to keep him company, he resolved to venture, and the next morning made his appearance, looking so ridiculously wretched and out of place that Emily and Philip laughed till they were tired. But he soon got over that, and became as much devoted to such excursions as they were.

As Philip said, what "splendid times" they had! How they made the woods ring with their merry laughter! what enthusiasm over each new discovery of wild-flowers, what delightful little encampments under the trees in the early sunshine, until they grew as young and fresh as the morning! Who knows the keen pleasure of such gypsyish proceedings but one who has tried them! And then the charming little breakfasts they had together when they returned home; where each performed such wonders of eating and talking; where the mental and physical food were equally good, or at least equally enjoyed. Everything acquired an entirely new flavor; the very bread gained quite the effect of a luxury. Frederick Hastings intimated it as his settled conviction that there never could have been such coffee made before, and very much doubted whether he had ever previously been acquainted with the true taste of hot rolls. So they would go on until nine o'clock, when Emily's engagements began and Ixion was bound to his wheel.

An honest, simple life, nearly approaching Dr. Watts's ideal of "books and work and healthful play"; and O the happy hours it contained,—hours to which they looked back in after life with a sort of loving wonder at their own enjoyment! If this could have been all, if there were no other side to the question, if they could only have been let to live in peace, what more would they have desired? But this was not to be; for during the day the usual trouble was almost sure to break out, and Frederick Hastings would come back in the evening to find her sick and nervous from its irritating fatigues; wearing that fixed, rigid look, the meaning of which he had begun to know, and quietly begin his good work of exorcising the evil spirit.

Not that he in the least suspected the true cause of her disquietude, for he attributed it to the fatigue arising from her wearing occupation; but as he wisely thought, whatever might be the cause, it was the effect only which he could alleviate, at least for the present. And so he would soothe and strengthen her, not by any visible effort, but his very presence, the very sound of his voice, had a sort of mesmeric influence over her. His simple, careless repose of manner, making no effort for himself and requiring none in any one else, rested her as nothing else could have done.

Growing up alone, without either sisters or girl friends, he was the only person, except Max, whom she had ever known intimately, and now that Max was gone Frederick Hastings almost gained his share, as well as his own, by stepping into his place.

But there were times when he felt his inability to supply Max's place, and coveted his peculiar strength as much as Max had ever envied him his. Sometimes he felt that she was stronger, larger natured than he, that she had thoughts and ideas to which he had nothing to give in return; and yet he knew that it was upon this very mental strength and superiority that Max had planted his firmest dominion over her; that where he could but reach and appreciate, Max reigned.

Sometimes she recognized this herself. When the conversation turned upon subjects which she and Max had talked over, or when she made fresh mental progress, entering, to her, unknown fields of thought, she felt a want which Frederick Hastings had no power to supply. She knew that her mind's master was gone. No strong hand now to rule over her, guiding and strengthening, forcing her to be true to her highest mental perceptions. Sometimes, as they talked of deep, earnest questions of truth, her face would grow abstracted, and he plainly saw that her thoughts were above and far from him, and he knew that had Max been there it would have been his hour of triumph.

Yet such was the strange law of this man's nature, forcing him to most admire and crave that which was highest above him, that her dominion over him was never so great, never so firmly fixed, as at such moments. Had she been upon his own level, he must soon have passed her and gone on to some higher revelation; as it was, by always being above him, she gave him what his nature most required, — a goal to strive for, something to attain, something to worship. Men of this stamp are the worshippers in this world; an ideal is much more satisfactory to them than a reality. When Emerson said, "We never forgive those who overvalue us," and, "Dear are our friends, but still dearer are those who reject us as unworthy, for they open a new heaven for our attainment," he gave speech to this very feeling, which lies undefined in a thousand hearts, inexplicable as it may seem to those who have never felt it.

Emily felt the difference between these men — what opposite divisions of her nature they each answered to — more strongly as Max's letters began to arrive, as they did about this time, in rather quick succession, without waiting for the ceremony of a direct answer to each, which would have necessarily made rather a slow, meagre correspondence.

And these letters certainly redeemed Max's vow that they should be "weighty and powerful." Besides telling all he met with which

was likely to entertain or amuse her, — and a translation of life seen through those keen eyes could hardly be anything else, — they spoke of those things which they both held highest, of earnestness and truthfulness and duty, until both her mind and heart felt strong and brave.

Under the influence of all this, Emily did what all women do for absent persons towards whom their thoughts are a good deal turned, created an ideal for herself in place of the reality, and regarded it accordingly. "Tis said that absence conquers love, but O, believe it not." Believe it not, indeed; I am sure that in many cases it creates it. Little as Max thought it, his going away had been the best move he could have made towards success. It gave room for her imagination to work, to change a disagreeable personality into a beautiful ideal.

Not that she in the slightest degree loved him: it was entirely a matter of the mind; but as in his absence the physical repulsion and disgust towards him had nothing to sustain it, it naturally died out, and as his letters increased rather than diminished his mental ascendancy over her, she could not look upon him in the same light in which she had previously regarded him. The war in her nature which he had always created between brain and nerves (of which in equal parts she seemed entirely composed) ceased of itself with the provoking cause, and she began to have exclusively pleasant, agreeable thoughts and feelings connected with him. Poor Max, how little we understand our own fate! What he had counted his great loss had become his great gain, at least, towards the accomplishment of his purpose. Nature was working for him now instead of his working against nature, and the difference in his success was very perceptible.

About this time Emily received other letters, too, from her relations, both on her father's and mother's side, who, upon hearing of her loss of parents and property, wrote to offer her sympathy and aid. The first she thankfully received, but the second courteously declined; so the correspondence ended, as they were all distant relations, and personally strangers to her. The offer had necessarily been more one of duty than of feeling, and both parties were relieved when it had been made and declined, and they continued to walk their separate ways through the world, without any further connection with each other.

CHAPTER XIII.

MAX and his father, after crossing the Atlantic, had passed through England and France, travelling rapidly until they reached the German Baths. They were now staying at Baden Baden, the place which Thackeray describes as "the gayest of all the booths in Vanity Fair."

It was here that Emily's first letter reached Max, telling him of her change of fortune. How he had watched and waited for it, counted the days to the earliest time when it could possibly arrive. It was handed to him, among a parcel of others, as he and his father sat at breakfast together. He felt what it was, almost before he saw it, but he laid them all down quietly upon the table before him, and went on eating and talking, as though the merits of the picture which his father and he had been discussing were the only consideration which at that moment at all interested him.

That small document, as it lay before him, condensed and represented the aim and interest of his life. He sat and looked at the flowing, elegant handwriting of the superscription, "*Maximilian Crampton.*" His name had certainly never looked so pleasantly to him. "She must have written it in a sweet, sunshiny humor," he thought, "or the curves never would have been so round and perfect." And then he thought of the soft hand which must have rested upon the paper as she wrote it, of the lips and eyes which must have bent over it, until for a moment Baden Baden was gone, and he was once more in the old parlor, seeing her face to face. His father's voice brought him back to the present.

"Max," said he, as his eyes, following the direction of those of his son, rested upon the letter, "that is a remarkably fine hand! Whose is it?"

"I think it is from a friend of mine, in Baltimore," was the cool response, without any offer to open it or further enlighten his father.

"Whoever your friend is, I wish you would follow his example in this respect," said Mr. Crampton, for his son's strong, characteristic, unbeautiful handwriting was his abhorrence.

Max made no attempt to explain his father's mistake as to the sex of his correspondent, which the steady freedom of the hand certainly left undetermined; and so the matter dropped, Mr. Crampton remaining under the impression that it was some promising young man.

At last the breakfast, which it seemed to Max would never end, came to a close, and having successfully chained his father to the spot with newspapers, he made his escape.

Safe in his room, secure against intrusion, now for the fulness of his pleasure. He opened the letter carefully, almost tenderly. The very paper which her hand had touched was dear to him; independently of its contents, it was a little white messenger sent him from her. He smiled to himself as he thought how astonished those who knew him as the sneering, Mephistophelean Max Crampton would be to see him sympathizing so fully with the feeling that made Romeo use the expression, "O that I were a glove upon that hand, that I might touch that cheek,"—an expression which, in our old, cold moods, seems to us sickly and sentimental, but in our young, warm moods so perfectly natural.

He read the letter from beginning to end, giving as it did a history of her life since they parted, of her loss of fortune, and present occupation.

For the next few hours, like a caged lion, this man fiercely raged. Still and immovable outwardly, only the clenched hands and set teeth showed the internal combat. Why was he chained here helpless, when she might be needing him? He knew she had no near relations, no legal protector; why was he, who would have so gladly been more to her than any brother or friend could be, utterly unable to be near her and help her now, when for the first time he could have served her? It was the last misfortune he had ever imagined would come upon her; he had always considered Mr. Chester wealthy, and, besides, had looked upon his own fortune as dedicated to her and her service. This was worst of all, to think that he should be leading a lazy, inactive life, with more wealth than he could use, while she, for whom he would gladly have surrendered every cent of it, was working for her support. This must not be so. Something must be done; if she would not share his life, she should share his fortune. But even as he thought it, he knew how utterly hopeless such an idea was, how even his wild love could never give him courage to carry out such a thought. The haughty, independent spirit, the indomitable pride, were obstacles too great for even his overcoming. He would go to her at any rate, he might

be able to effect something if he were on the spot; but then came the recollection of his father, sick and totally dependent upon him. It was impossible; he sunk down, weak and conquered by the inevitable, before which the strongest and weakest are the same. It was only another burden to be borne, he could only stand and wait.

He took up the letter and read it through again, trying to put aside all passion and feeling, and look at it from her point of view. It was written apparently in the merriest humor, showing only the bright side of the picture, keeping all her secret anxieties to herself; for she well knew that learning the bare fact would be hard enough for Max to bear, without any of its aggravations. To see how bravely she bore it, or rather, from her own account, how little she had to bear, gradually comforted him, made the pain less intolerable. Then this state of affairs could not last forever, his father must soon be better, and he be free again. If she, a girl, set him such an example of brave endurance, might not he, the strong man, at least follow it by taking up his cross, which he knew to be much the heavier of the two. Her trial was only to suffer; but his, O far harder! to see her suffer with no power to help. But if his burden were greater, only the more reason for enduring it courageously. And he came back to his old conclusion, which seemed to repeat itself through his life like the refrain of a song, "Stand and wait."

There was one thing in her letter which caused him a strange emotion, that gave him singularly mingled pain and pleasure. This was her grateful mention of Frederick Hastings's constant kindness. He too was very thankful to Frederick Hastings, but the gratitude cost him such an effort as he would have found hard to repeat immediately. He well knew to what advantage this simple-mannered, cultivated gentleman must appear under such circumstances; he thought of the homage which his real elegance and beauty had wrung even from him, and his heart and courage sunk as he went on thinking of what must be the inevitable effect upon such a woman as Emily Chester, to whom beauty was as the air she breathed. He thought of the numberless little kindnesses of which she spoke so gratefully, and did not need to be told of the exquisite way in which they had been rendered.

He read over her vivid account of the pleasure of their morning walks and country excursions, until he felt as though he would have given all his earthly possessions to have been with them for one hour, to have seen the state of the case for himself, to have been able to strike at least one blow in his own cause. The advantages which he

thought he had gained by two years' earnest striving seemed gradually floating away from him, and Frederick Hastings, with little or no effort on his part, to be gathering the whole reward. Was this what all his pains and efforts for the cultivation of her mind and tastes should go for, as arms and defence against himself, and as aid to his rival? The old fable of the trial of strength between the north-wind and the sunshine came back to him with cruel significance.

The storm that had raged within him at his first reading of the letter began to rise again; but he quelled it imperiously, determined to hold to his resolution of enduring all things, whatever should be sent him to bear, — a resolution which his whole life tried to its utmost tension, but never broke.

One thing comforted him, though; he had her promise that she would never marry without his knowledge, and to this he held on with both hands. This, and his unfathomable belief in the power of the human will, especially his own, were his anchors in the sea of life before him, and to them he trusted.

How long he would have sat there, occupied with this, to him, never-ending subject of thought it is impossible to say, had not he heard his father's voice at the door calling to him; and upon hastening to open it was surprised at his asking, "Are you ill?"

"No," he replied; "why do you ask?"

"Because you have been in your room all day; I was afraid something was the matter."

"All day!" Max exclaimed, but upon looking at his watch found that his father was right, that the day was nearly gone.

"I was reading," he said, in explanation, "and was too much interested to notice how time passed."

"You must have been very pleasantly occupied," remarked Mr. Crampton.

Max did not feel called upon to explain very particularly as to the pleasure of his day's occupation, and so said nothing in reply; but upon Mr. Crampton's proposing a ride, he willingly consented, and they started off together: the elder gentleman soon laughing gayly at the younger one's sallies of wit and sarcasm.

The letter which Max wrote to her that night Emily Chester kept to her dying day. Not only now, but through all her life, those words of encouragement and pity and love would come back to her like the voice of her guardian angel.

"Max," said his father, the next morning, when he found himself

somewhat on his own hands, "where is that book you were so much interested in yesterday? I should like to see it; I want something to entertain me."

His son made no answer, but quietly handed him a late English novel. After reading it for several hours Mr. Crampton threw it down, saying that it did not come up to his expectations. Max smiled, made some general observation about the differences in tastes, and the subject dropped.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE summer had come, and with it a break in Emily's servitude. Most of her scholars had left for the country or watering-places, and consequently her time became her own, to occupy as she chose. The pecuniary inconvenience this might have involved was more than met by the circumstance that about this time Mr. Wilson was able to fulfil his promise of saving something from the wreck of her father's fortune. In itself it was by no means a large sum, yet Emily not only made it support them through the summer, but laid up much the larger part of it for that "rainy day" which she knew must come if her health and strength failed, and which was consequently the skeleton at all her feasts.

To both herself and Philip it was a new and disagreeable necessity to spend the long, hot summer in the city; but they made themselves as cool as possible within doors during the heat of the day, and took full advantage of their proximity to the country in the very early and late hours.

Emily's chief occupation now was Philip's education. Since his father's death, he had, as he said, gone to school to her; but in the press of her engagements she had been unable to pay that strict attention to him which she wished. So with increased leisure came this duty to be performed, and they both went to it with vigor. Frederick Hastings approved of this state of affairs. Formerly, he could only see her either in the early morning or at night; now, at any hour he could get away from the glare and bustle and noise of the outside world, and retreat to that cool, dark little parlor, usually fragrant with flowers, with the certainty that he would find them both ensconced there; Philip busy with his lessons, and Emily sewing or reading or hearing the lessons aforesaid.

The great relief to her was, that she could read and think; could feed the hungry mind that craved fresh food, had been demanding it during the past months.

"Do you know," said she, one day, when Frederick Hastings, coming in unexpectedly, found her lying down with a book in her hand,—"do you know I am fast coming to the same conclusion that the poet

Gray did when he said that 'his idea of heaven was to lie on the sofa and read new novels.' If he included a fan and iced lemonade during the summer, he would have expressed my opinion exactly."

Frederick Hastings thought to himself, that, if the poet had uttered that sentiment under the present circumstances, he would have expressed his idea of heaven also; but he kept his opinion to himself, and only said in reply, "One thing is, that you have lately had very little chance to gratify your ravenous appetite for books."

"I have had no chance," she returned, with a sort of wearied impatience; "I have been in a state of positive mental starvation. I think if it had gone on much longer I should have died of it."

"That would be something new in the list of deaths," he exclaimed, laughing; "I have heard of many deaths from want of physical food, but never one from want of mental. It would certainly be a new disease in the history of medicine."

"And yet I am sure that I shall die of some such disease," she replied, with a tone of conviction in her voice that surprised him; "not of mental starvation, of course, but I feel certain that my body will die, not from a physical cause, but from a mental or moral one. With me it is literally true, even in this world, 'Fear not those that kill the body, but fear rather those that kill the soul.' As soon as either my heart or brain are conquered, my body will follow as a necessity."

Her manner, and the suddenly serious tone she had given to their merry conversation, startled Frederick Hastings, and made him exceedingly uncomfortable; his knowledge, as a physician, told him that she had correctly appreciated her peculiar constitution. He could not bear to hear her talk so, it chilled through him like a prophecy; so, dropping the subject hastily, he began abruptly to talk of something else.

When the season of migration had arrived, and all his friends were Springward bound, Frederick Hastings had secretly bewailed his fate at having to go, and deferred it as long as possible, in a manner highly unaccountable to his aunt and sister, who, being very glad to get away themselves, could not understand his not being so too. At last it struck him that, if going to the Springs were a pain instead of a pleasure to him, why should he go at all? The chief reason he could give himself for going was, that he always had gone; but, upon philosophically considering that it would be rather better to stay at home for his own convenience

than to go for his own inconvenience, he resolved to remain where he was, and let his aunt and sister go with a party of friends who were about to start, which they did, much to the satisfaction of all parties. Miss Clementine and her aunt were glad to be released from awaiting the movements of such an irresolute escort; for, as the young lady remarked, "If we go on waiting for brother Fred, I don't think we will get off at all," which certainly looked probable.

It was in this way that he came to be still in the city during the hot season, deriving an amount of pleasure and entertainment from his present position which he had never found at any watering-place.

O the delicious laziness of those long summer days, when they did whatever they pleased (which was generally nothing), so free from constraint or conventionality! when they read and talked and sung; when Frederick Hastings began to have, for the first time, some true idea of what music really is; when, as she would play strain after strain from the great masters, he grew to *feel*, as well as know, that music is as vivid and intelligible an expression of passion and feeling as poetry, which he had previously thought its chief form of speech, at least the one whose meaning was most translatable by him. O, the merry times they had, extracting amusement from everything! How they laughed when Frederick Hastings suddenly appeared one day in a new light, by displaying a remarkable talent for imparting knowledge to children, developed by his attempting to hear Philip's lessons! after which he regularly installed himself as the boy's tutor, exhibiting a devotion to the cultivation of that young person's mind, and a regularity of attendance, which were truly edifying.

And then their marvellous housekeeping! the dinners, where the bill of fare was, to say the least of it, novel. Anything particularly outlandish was considered a triumph; for there was not only the pleasure of eating it, but all the delightful uncertainty beforehand of not having the least idea how it would taste. Wonderful, unheard-of receipts out of cookery-books, especially those with remarkable names, which Emily tried to see what they would come to, were looked upon with great favor. Think of the excitement of having for supper a cake which they had positively seen Emily make with her own hands; the eggs of which they had watched with wonder and admiration from their shells up to their final attainment of that miraculous consistency which precedes their introduction into that compound; a pleasure only marred by the

secret disgust felt when, upon eating it, it was discovered to taste like any tame, civilized cake. To relinquish the manufacture thereof was a thing tacitly decreed from that time.

They still continued their morning excursions; only going and coming back earlier, as the sun became intolerable very soon after its rising. The stars were sometimes in the quiet skies when they started, and they would watch the sun rise as they walked. Such proceedings necessitate two things, — early rising and siestas; that is, a loss of sleep during the night and a making up for it during the day. This practice is pleasant enough to persons who have nothing else to do; it creates such a charming variety. There had been a suspicion that Frederick Hastings's "office" (which, with its attendant sign, was the chief evidence of his being a practising physician) was mainly devoted to smoking and slumber. As European doctors are physicians to sovereigns, so Frederick Hastings seemed to be physician to his sovereign self, and certainly his treatment was lenient. This was undoubtedly the appearance things had, though he really did more good professionally than the world gave him credit for: it being anything but his fashion to proclaim his deeds of any kind from the house-top.

They were all sitting at breakfast one morning, after a long walk, — Frederick Hastings having gladly accepted Emily's invitation to come in, happy to escape the servants and solitary meal at home, — when, upon being offered some dish, he refused it upon the plea of a headache.

"What gave it to you?" asked Philip.

"Loss of rest, I suspect," was the reply.

"Did n't you sleep last night?" the child continued.

"No."

"Why not?"

The conversation was growing catechetical, and Frederick Hastings hesitated slightly, as though he did not care to pursue it.

"Hush, Philip!" said Emily, "don't you know you must not ask so many questions."

"But I want to know, and how am I to know without asking?" returned the boy, taking moral grounds, and presenting it to her sense of justice, whether the gratification of his thirst for knowledge were not a sufficient justification of any seeming impropriety.

"I must say I don't perceive the necessity for your knowing, especially when the thing to be learnt is Dr. Hastings's private affair."

"O no," interposed the gentleman, quickly, "Philip is welcome

to hear all about it, if he cares to. The truth is," he continued, addressing the lady, "whenever I have a patient dangerously ill, the anxiety and responsibility always keep me awake. I was called in, the other day, to see a man so ill that I despair of his recovery. Yesterday he was lower than ever, and I spent last night in devising expedients to save him, if possible."

"I suppose," said Emily, with that perverse, sneering falsity to ourselves into which an evil spirit sometimes tempts even the truest, — "I suppose it must have been some very important personage to excite you to such an effort."

"It was an Irish laborer," was the reply, spoken very quietly, but with a cool gravity that made her feel thoroughly ashamed.

Never in all her life had she liked him as well as she did at that moment, when she felt that he rose above her, that he was truer than she. She sympathized for the moment with Emerson, —

"Had I a lover who was noble and free,
I would he were nobler than to love me."

"What a power this man's quiet dignity gives him!" she thought, as she looked up at him. She began to understand why Frederick Hastings was implicitly obeyed, even feared, by those with whom he lived; why, in spite of all his elegance and gentleness, no one ever took liberties with him. She had previously thought it was because he was never the offending party; but now she saw something else assisted in bringing about this result; that the way in which he received anything verging towards insult, the cool, quiet retreating into himself, the presentation of a surface of such perfect politeness that it looked dangerously like cold contempt, the entire cutting himself off from anything so far beneath him, were productive of feelings in the offender which few persons cared to undergo a second time. From the slight chill she had received, she knew what the freezing power of his entire scorn or anger must be.

She wished to apologize to him for her worse than silly impertinence; but as he saw in her face her regret for her speech, he changed the conversation, and gave her no chance to return to the subject.

But during all his visit her manner towards him had a remorseful something in it which touched him inexpressibly, and made him angry with himself for his unintentional rebuke to her. What right had he to sit in judgment upon her for a light, careless remark, not meant when it was uttered? He felt as if the apology ought to come from him, for letting his manner condemn her so strongly.

He stayed a long while, trying to counteract the effect he had produced, and succeeded partially; but not entirely, for Emily's own sense and conscience were against him.

So this life went on, with only such little incidents to ruffle its calm happiness. Many girls would have felt strange and lonesome, so cut off from society of their own sex (for Mrs. Grant was her only really intimate female friend); but as Emily had been brought up to live alone with her father and brother, with Max as her constant companion, such a life seemed to her perfectly natural.

She imagined that in this way she had gained an ability to maintain her own mental poise, to look entirely within herself for happiness. She had yet to learn how hard a trial it is to give up human friendship and companionship after we have once become accustomed to it. She had still to know, that for every woman it is with the food of the heart as with that of the body, — it is possible to exist upon a very small quantity, but that small quantity is an absolute necessity. There is a certain degree of heart starvation which will kill any naturally constituted woman. Of course this point varies with the differing counterbalancing power of mind and body, but that does not prevent its existence.

Emily Chester did not yet comprehend that the friendship and congeniality of Frederick Hastings was the present support of her much valued independence. She did not then know how we all fulfil God's law, — that it is not good for either man or woman to be alone, — by either ossifying or dying, when the relief of human sympathy is withdrawn. She had never sought his aid, and as it had always been wordless, formless, she had no idea how much she relied upon it, how necessary it had become to her.

The day was fast coming when she would learn this, and many other things of which she was now peacefully ignorant.

CHAPTER XV.

TIME went on; until, with the return of the early autumn and her scholars, Emily's occupations recommenced. With the renewed necessity for mental and physical exertion she found that the long, hot summer, pleasantly as it had been spent, had done her serious injury. So sensibly had it weakened her, that the same amount of labor which in the spring she had been well able to perform she now found painfully fatiguing.

The return of the cool weather might have counteracted this, but that the constant strain upon her energies left her no opportunity to recruit. To rise in the morning feeling weak and tired was a poor preparation for her day's work, and yet this was now habitually the case. She strove not to think of it, to deny it even to herself; but the fact was too fixed and obstinate to be overlooked. Try to conquer it by force of will, to lose sight of it in pleasant considerations as she would, the stubborn truth remained. Part of her strength gone, part of her defence broken down! But she shut her eyes to it, and walked on her way as resolutely as ever.

Before Frederick Hastings she guarded her manner so carefully, was so uniformly cheerful, that she did not think he had noticed any change in her. But she could not deceive the kind eyes that watched her so attentively, — eyes, too, sharpened by professional experience. He knew the fluctuations of the delicate color, the shades of expression in her eyes too well, not to read their language unerringly. The gayety and vitality summoned at command were no disguise to him.

He saw that she was unequal to the life she was leading, and resolved to do what he could to end it. Not understanding himself or the law of his own nature, he imagined he loved her with that individual, human love which is required for married happiness. It is not, "I love beauty generally, and this manifestation in particular, as the highest I have ever known," (which was exactly Frederick Hastings's feeling,) but, "I love this woman with all her faults, failings, and weaknesses: she is my other half; the true wife which God has sent me, and I love her now and forever." Max's voice could

have spoken these words truly, but Frederick Hastings had never experienced their meaning, and constitutionally never would. Assisted by Max's clear-sightedness, he had discovered Emily Chester's rare worth; he had learned that she was one of those women, few and far between, who are really worth marrying, — women so valuable in themselves, so mind-body-and-soul-satisfying, that it is no loss to give up the whole world to gain them. Knowing himself so little as to think his happiness lay in the possession of his ideal rather than in its pursuit, he made up his mind to strive for its immediate attainment.

Emily's own condition urged him to this attempt with more hope of success than he would otherwise have had. As his wife, she would at least have ease and comfort, relief from all wearing responsibility, which he knew she needed sorely. To end this mode of life would, he hoped, contribute to her happiness as much as to his own. Still, as he thought of her self-reliance, of her real superiority over him, most of all, of Max's mighty influence, the result looked doubtful enough, and he grew nervous at the task he had set himself. But, unconsciously true to the principle of his nature, this acted only as an additional incentive, only strengthened him in his resolution.

At last the crisis came.

It was night. Frederick Hastings and Emily were sitting in the parlor alone; for Philip was deeply engrossed with his lessons in the next room. They had talked gravely of many things: of our moral responsibility; of our duty to those around us: and the conversation gradually descending from its general to a slightly personal character, Emily said, half laughingly, quoting her own words, uttered during the first walk they had ever taken together, — a walk memorable to Frederick Hastings from its consequences, — "You know the sentence passed upon you: I see it more clearly than ever. You will never wake up to your true self until either the angel of love or of duty comes down to your rescue, to trouble the waters."

"I think the angel of love has come down," he replied, with that *indescribable something* in his voice, the meaning of which every woman knows so well.

It made her look up at him quickly.

"Do you understand me?" he asked.

If the words had been insufficient, surely the face that looked at her would have been enough: it was vivid with an earnestness of which she had never dreamed it capable. The scars of the conflict which went on within her breast during the next single moment

Emily Chester bore to the day of her death. Her face seemed to grow thin with the sharp agony. She saw, as it is said we do in the instant of death, all things grow plain to her. A moment's silence, and, looking at him, she shook her head sadly and slowly.

"Stop!" he cried, vehemently, as he saw his doom written in her face, — "stop, you can't decide so hastily, and in this way. I know you are far above me: better, stronger, higher than I: but think what hangs on your decision. You are my hope for heaven and earth!"

He stopped, overcome by his own earnestness; for now that he seemed about to lose her forever, Max himself could not have pleaded more passionately.

"You are the first person who ever showed me my duty," he exclaimed, as she made no answer; "you are the only person who could give me strength to perform it. What will my life be without you?"

"Dr. Hastings," (the lips that spoke were very white, and the voice low and quiet,) — "Dr. Hastings, what would your life be with me? Hush!" she said, gently, as he attempted to interrupt her. "Let me speak now. I understand you better than you understand yourself. I know you think you love me."

"Think!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, I mean what I say. You think you love me as you ought to love the woman you marry. But you are mistaken. You only wish for me because I am out of your reach. If I were to love you, or marry you, to meet you on your own level, I should inevitably lose my power over you. All might go well for a time, but you would soon grow weary of anything which no longer required pursuit. In ceasing to be your aspiration, in becoming to you a possessed reality, I should give up my strongest hold upon you."

"My God, how can you do me such injustice!" was the passionate rejoinder, — "I, who love you so that I would live or die for you?"

"Ah, friend," cried the woman, with that which began a gasping sigh, but died at its birth under the pressure of her rigid self-control, "that, too, may be so, but the truth still remains. It is not very hard to die or live for those we love; but do you know the love required to live *with* them? What amount of it can stand before a conflict of natures?"

O Emily Chester! strong, suffering woman, the day is to come when this sentence will have a fearful meaning to you. "A conflict of natures!" She had read the prophecy of her life, had spoken her own doom.

"Emily," said the man; and at the sound of her name, spoken with

such pleading, loving earnestness, the woman trembled from head to foot, — “if you could look into my heart, I believe you would find my love sufficient for any trial.”

“Dr. Hastings,” she cried, wildly, lifting her hands towards him with a sort of imploring terror, “have mercy. Don’t make this duty harder to perform, this cup more bitter to drink. Better thank God for giving me strength to prevent two wretched human beings from consummating their own life-long misery. I tell you again, that, in spite of our present feeling, we do not really love each other. You are constitutionally insufficient for me, and I, as your equal, by my position, would be so to you; we would soon weary of each other, and be wretched.”

“Never,” exclaimed he, “we could never be wretched together. O Emily,” he broke out into wild pleading, “think of the hours we have spent together, think of this happy summer.”

“Hush, hush,” she said, imperiously, but her voice quivered as though a spasm had gone over her frame. “I don’t dare to think of the past, but I know and see what the future would be. It is useless to talk, — useless.”

It seemed as though some dreary Fate had moaned out the words, and they sank like lead upon Frederick Hastings’s heart.

“And this is your irrevocable answer? In the name of all our past happiness, think before you decide forever.”

“This is my irrevocable answer,” she repeated, almost mechanically; but there was death to all hope in her voice.

They said no more, but sat very still for a long while. At last Frederick Hastings rose.

“Good by,” he said, quietly, as he extended his hand to her.

As she looked up at him, and gave him hers, the expression in her face brought the quick tears to his eyes.

“There is one thing you must remember,” he said, very gently, as he softly held her hand, “if my foolish dream of happiness has vanished, your lasting work still remains. You have denied me earthly affection, but you have shown me the heavenly love. You have made me a better man.”

O words, the sweetest that ever fall upon a woman’s ears, — not in vain has she lived to whom any man can utter them! Through all her life they echoed through Emily Chester’s heart, their music never growing fainter, never losing its sweetness. As she heard them, her face wore a look that made Frederick Hastings feel as though he would like to kneel to her for her blessing.

For a moment more he stood gazing at her, all his love and pity and pain shining down from his eyes upon her.

“Good by,” he repeated, and, pressing her hand to his lips, he passed out of the door.

“Good night, Dr. Hastings,” called out Philip from his lessons, as he heard his departing footsteps.

“Good by, my boy,” said that gentleman, coming back and laying his hand kindly on the child’s head.

“Not good by,” said the boy, “good night! You are coming back to-morrow.”

“Good night and good by both, then, my child,” and before Philip could demand any further explanation he was gone.

Philip put away his books, and sauntered up to bed, wondering what made Dr. Hastings look so strangely, — a speculation which was soon lost in sleep.

And Emily sat still where Frederick Hastings had left her. She had resisted and conquered him; now to fight the battle with herself.

There is a large class of persons (a class to which both Emily and Max eminently belonged) with whom the intellect seems to be an independent power, separate from themselves. In any suffering or agitation of their natures this sovereign appears to remain utterly apart, — maintaining his supremacy, opposing and controlling the mutiny of the other faculties, the remainder of their beings.

So Emily Chester found it this night. Her intellect seemed to stand at her side with a separate existence; like a demon, issuing relentless mandates, against which heart and flesh rebelled desperately.

“I have wilfully blasted my own happiness,” moaned the woman.

“You have acted very rightly, very sensibly,” said the demon, coldly.

“But I loved him,” pleaded heart and flesh.

“Don’t be blasphemous,” exclaimed the demon, angrily, “you know too well what love is to find excuse for talking in this manner. You did not love him. He suited your nature as all beauty does; but, except your extreme friendship, your feeling for him was only a stronger expression of your devotion to music, poetry, sculpture, painting. Don’t be so untrue or so incorrect as to call that love,” it went on, contemptuously.

“But he suited my heart and flesh to its finest fibre,” extenuated the woman.

“Because a bountiful God gave you a great appreciation of

beauty," continued the demon, "an intense æsthetic perception, are you to be so ungrateful, so false to the rest of his gifts, as to sacrifice all things to it? Will you gratify one half of your nature at the expense of the other equal division? Make a partial marriage if you dare! Marry for the flesh, and bide the result at your peril!" came the reply, sternly and menacingly.

"I dare not, I dare not," was the conquered response.

"No," laughed the demon, "you have not quite lost your senses yet. You know too well the certain mutual misery such a course would produce."

"But I would have done him good," the woman faltered, and gained courage at the thought: "he said I had made him a better man."

"Don't think to blind yourself by such means," said the stern tyrant at her side. "You know perfectly well that your first duty is truth to yourself: that God gave you to perform; the other you would assume. Besides which, no falsity to ourselves can be of lasting benefit to others; the punishment comes sooner or later, and often involves the very person for whom the sin was committed."

"He made me better, too," she expostulated, trying to change the ground of the discussion: "I was gentler and kinder under his influence."

"Soho!" sneered the demon: "just now it was the good you were to do him; now it is the good he was to do you. Go on, if you are determined, and eat the forbidden fruit; but recollect the inevitable penalty." And heart and flesh quailed before the challenge.

"But He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, He leadeth me beside still waters," they faintly murmured.

"Green pastures and still waters are not for you. There is hard work before you, both to do and to suffer: pain and trial are the means for your development; burning sorrow and bitter tears are the sunshine and rain which shall fertilize your life. Coward, take up your cross and bear it."

And so this conflict wore out the long night, until the morning sun rose upon a torn, bleeding heart and conquered flesh, with intellect sitting in cold, quiet dominion over them.

"Emily," said Philip, next morning, as he came up to his sister and began stroking her white cheek, "what makes you look so pale and tired?"

"My head aches, dear," was the response.

What a merciful provision of Providence it is for women that heart

and head usually ache together: how easy it is to acknowledge the one, what a relief to use it as a shield to the other!

To all the many questions addressed to her that day, upon the subject of her appearance, she gave the same convenient answer. What she suffered, she never could have expressed. She thought the hours would never pass. She sat mechanically correcting mistakes, saying: "F sharp, if you please; finger that run as you would the corresponding scale: no, B flat": and so forth and so forth, as the case happened to require. She had a sensation of vibrating to every sound, as though she were the instrument, with her bare nerves for keys and strings.

When she came home at night, her face scared Philip. She was worn out, body and soul. She soothed the child by telling him that she had a violent headache, and was tired and would go to bed. He did not mend the matter much by saying that Dr. Hastings would soon be there, and would tell her what to do for it; for Philip's faith in that gentleman's skill was unbounded.

A week passed; and still, to the boy's utter astonishment, Frederick Hastings did not make his appearance. They did not even hear of him, for his sister also failed to appear upon her lesson day. Both Philip and Emily watched anxiously for her coming, though with very different feelings. To her next lesson she came. As soon as she entered, she apologized for her broken engagement.

"You must really excuse me, my dear Miss Chester," she said, "for disappointing you, as I could not help it. I have been so very busy getting brother Fred ready to go. He is to be gone so long, that I had a great many little things to attend to for him."

Emily made a movement which in a less controlled woman would have been a violent start.

"Going!" she thought, "where? What could all this mean?"

But Miss Hastings evidently thought Emily knew all about it; which, from a knowledge of their great intimacy, and ignorance of the present peculiar circumstances, was very natural, and so went on in the same strain.

"I am so sorry he has re-entered the navy. I begged him to give up the idea, and stay at home; but he was determined to go. He only came home from Washington this morning, and is off for New York to join his ship to-night," said the girl, giving particulars for which Emily had no power to ask. "By the way, he asked me to give you this," Miss Clementine continued, handing Emily a little note.

Emily took and held it in her hand in a sort of stunned, mechanical way; but made no attempt to look at it. The lesson began and ended; how, she scarcely knew. She was only conscious it was over, and she was once more alone. She opened the note, and read:—

"Farewell, farewell. I am going away to try to do what you have shown me to be my duty,—to live less for myself and more for others; to serve God by serving my fellow-man. It will make my task less hard to remember whose hand pointed it out, whose words gave me strength to attempt it. Farewell. God bless you; God help me."

The writing began steadily enough, but the hand which had penned the last sentence had trembled so that the words were scarcely legible.

Years after, when some of the actors in this story were quiet in their graves, this scrap of paper was found in Emily Chester's Bible, and returned to its writer.

"O Emily," cried Philip, bursting into the room with his face pale with excitement, "I met Miss Clementine, and she says Dr. Hastings is going away to the Mediterranean, to stay for years. I am so sorry; what shall we do without him?" And burying his face in his sister's lap, the boy sobbed as though his heart would break.

"O Emily, he was so kind: I liked him so much! I liked him so much!" he exclaimed, brokenly.

"I, too, dear," was the simple response; but the tears in her voice were far more bitter than those that fell from Philip's eyes.

CHAPTER XVI.

EMILY CHESTER had no time to live down this sorrow in quiet: necessity compelled her immediate contact with the hard world; obliged her to present her sore, sensitive surface to constant irritation, to any blow which might be aimed at it.

The cause of Frederick Hastings's sudden departure began to be suspected; and though all the young ladies outwardly sneered at the very idea of such a thing, they secretly believed it; and in a quiet, ladylike way, took care to revenge themselves upon her for depriving them of such a conquest. If they had willingly pained and hurt her before, with only her general pride and sarcasm for provocation, judge what must have been their conduct now, smarting under the aggravation of this new defeat.

It was sometimes intolerable. A year before, she would have laughed at the thought that any one could ever have had the power to torment her to such a degree; but what lessons in human suffering had she not learned since that time! Then, a fresh, healthy girl, guarded by every defence against harm, to whom sorrow was only a name; now, a suffering woman, with broken health and weakened purpose, struggling alone in the wide world; but still preserving the same proud, cold face, let the inward battle or defeat be what it would. This resolute self-control was the true secret of much that was given her to bear; as it prevented people from realizing the extent of the harm they were doing, and provoked them to still further aggressions. It is said, if the victims of the French Revolution had suffered and died less stoically, they would have been far fewer in number; so if Emily had been a weak, cowardly girl, who would have cried out at the slightest pain, it is probable that she would have become quite a pet in society, and have been caressed and made much of. Nothing pleases people more than to patronize and condole with some engaging sufferer; besides being an inexpensive way of disposing of spare sentiment, it gives them such a delightfully benevolent, righteous sensation. I know of no claim to consideration so universally admitted as interesting misery; and no offence so unpardonable as making people feel you can do without them.

"I declare," said Miss Nellie Armstrong, elder sister to one of Emily's scholars, addressing the remnant of the family group which still encircled the breakfast-table,—"I declare, that Emily Chester is enough to put anybody out of patience for the rest of a natural life."

"She seems to put you out of yours," replied her brother, looking up from his newspaper, "pretty effectually; she is your standing cause of complaint. What's the special aggravation now?"

"O, the same old thing. It provokes me to death to see her sitting there giving her lesson, with that look on her face as though our existence and all that concerns us were a matter of the supremest indifference to her. The worst of it is, that you can't provoke her out of it, say or do what you will. If I could only get her to answer back once, to quarrel with me, I should be perfectly happy; but not she: she could n't possibly compromise her dignity so far. I can't even make her show that she understands me."

"But, sister," said Emily's scholar, interrupting this tirade, "Miss Chester is n't so when you are not there. She's just as kind and pleasant to me as she can be. I don't care what you say, she's the nicest lady I ever knew," was the indignant protest of outraged juvenile friendship.

"O yes," said the other, with increased aggravation, "pleasant enough to you, because you bow down to her and think her perfection. I was in the back room yesterday, all the time you were taking your lesson, and sure enough my lady was sweetness personified; but the moment I made my appearance, she might just as well have been an iceberg endowed with powers of speech. I tried for half an hour, in every way I could think of, to get out of her whether she really turned off Frederick Hastings; did everything but ask her point blank, and knew just about as much when I ended as when I began. I could not even make her blush like any ordinary girl, which would have been some relief; she only got whiter and whiter as I went on, and set that mouth of hers until she looked as though she were afflicted with temporary lockjaw. Not that I believe there is the first word of truth in it," she continued, with angry contempt. "Everybody knows that Frederick Hastings is entirely too devoted to his dear self, and his dear self's comfort, to do such a thing as to address a girl without a cent in the world."

"Ah," thought her brother, "Frederick Hastings! That's the trouble, is it. I thought Miss Nell must have some special cause to rouse her to such an outbreak."

"Why can't you let that poor girl alone, Nell?" he said aloud. "She does n't hurt you, and you're always pitching into her about something or other."

"Come, now," retorted his sister, this interference changing the object of her wrath, "you are about the last person to take up Emily Chester's quarrels; to play knight champion in her behalf. She finished you up with one sentence the first time she ever saw you."

The young man colored crimson at this home thrust, but answered bravely, "Well, if she did, she came very near the truth, and that does n't prevent my pitying her now, when she is poor and needs friends."

"How did she finish up Harry, Nell?" asked the mother, who had been listening to the conversation. "I never heard anything of it."

"O yes you did, at the time, but it was so long ago you have forgotten it. It was when we were school-girls together, at a May-party," said the girl, laughing aloud at her brother's past, and to his present discomfiture. "Harry came a little tipsy, so much so at least that he did not know what he was about, and made himself generally ridiculous. He danced with Emily, and made so many foolish speeches, and acted so insanely, that everybody laughed, and my lady grew furiously angry. Everybody saw how provoked she was to be placed in such a situation; and so, to make bad worse, what should that wicked Dick Carter do but go up and ask her, 'Whether her last partner had not excited her admiration?' 'Yes,' she said, instantly, 'as a beautiful illustration of the law that extremes meet: I did not know which to admire most, the lightness of his head or his feet, their claims were so perfectly balanced.' I thought Dick Carter would have killed himself laughing at the answer; he did not stop telling it for a month."

"May be she did n't say it," put in Emily's scholar; "perhaps he only said she did."

"O no! Harry could not lay that flattering unction to his soul, for he heard her himself. I never shall forget his face," she continued, bursting out into fresh peals of laughter as the recollection came back to her; "such a nipped-in-the-bud expression I never beheld in my life."

"What did you do, Harry?" asked his mother.

"I!" he exclaimed. "Left. Went home just as fast as I could get there, and have never made my appearance at a party in such a condition since. That once was enough for me; as Nell says, it finished me. I got what I deserved, to be sure; but that speech has

kept me at a respectful bowing distance from Miss Emily Chester from that day to this, and always will; though yesterday, when I met her in the hall looking so pale and tired, I quite forgot my old grudge."

"But you take pretty good care to keep out of the way of fresh encounters," retorted his sister.

"Self-preservation is the first law of nature, you know," laughed the young man.

"Why do you scold me, then, for getting angry at her haughty ways, if you don't like them any better yourself?" asked Miss Nell.

"It's entirely different," was the answer. "I don't ask you to love Miss Chester, for I don't do that myself; but I do ask you to let her live in peace, and not worry the life out of her in the way you do: I saw it in her face yesterday. Besides, I don't believe the danger of her sharp tongue is half as great as it used to be," as the remembrance of the pale, weary face he had seen the day before returned to him. "You girls hate her just because Frederick Hastings cares a thousand times as much for her as he does for all the rest of you put together. I don't wonder he left this part of the world as soon as she discarded him. She's handsome enough for any man to go wild about."

This speech was like fire to gunpowder, and produced a violent quarrel; which Miss Nellie wound up by saying, that she hated Frederick Hastings, — that she was very glad he had gone to the Mediterranean, — that if she had a cherished wish in her heart, it was that he might never come back again.

This *might* have been true; but one thing certainly was so, that from that day her dislike of Emily Chester increased practically and theoretically a hundred-fold; if such a growth were possible, considering the original stock.

And so the punishment of her sins, both past and present, came upon poor Emily now, when she was least fitted to endure it; when she was overwhelmed with sorrow, toil, and ill health. Not only the strength to bear grew less, but the burden heavier. Besides the number of persons who were really her enemies, with whom hatred of her was a positive feeling, there were many with whom it was negative; many who, without having any present ill-will towards her, were, like Harry Armstrong, prevented from being her friends by the recollection of some sarcasm, uttered perhaps, as in this case, in her childhood. I really believe there is nothing in which the principle of life is so indestructible as an ill-natured epigrammatic sen-

tence. Under some casual influence, a dozen words will probably consolidate themselves into a telling sentence, spoken at one moment to be forgotten the next; and yet this single saying will go on through years, hurting more persons, doing more absolute mischief, than a piece of artillery would in the same time. A capacity for making such speeches, though a powerful weapon of defence, can only be looked upon as a curse, especially in a woman. If indulged, it becomes at last a habit, a mere colloquial form, to such an extent as to be no indication of the speaker's opinion of the person criticised. If temptation should offer, they who indulge in this practice would make the same remark about the person they loved best, and without any change of feeling towards the victim. It is exceedingly difficult to bring the evil of such a course home to any one's heart and conscience, and I believe nothing but time and experience will ever do it; for, not having the faintest ill-will in what they say, they cannot realize that it has the same appearance and practical effect as though they had the deepest malice. Their words pass out of their memories with the occasion, whereas the victims never forget or forgive. In this way, Emily had no recollection of ever having offended Harry Armstrong, and only thought of that young man, when she thought of him at all, with kindly feelings. This was only one case out of a dozen, and she was now unconsciously reaping the harvest, the seeds of which she had unconsciously sown.

Besides the girl's own dangerously keen perception and power of expression, one great cause of this had been Max's influence. Thoroughly appreciating the love of amusement and lack of ill-nature which prompted it, he literally revelled in the quickness of her merry sarcasm; offering himself at any time as a whetstone for her wit, and being the first to admire and applaud, no matter how much victimized thereby. Frederick Hastings, too, had never misunderstood her in this, and aided the bad habit. Both these men had been able to feel the throbbings of the true, loving, human heart which beat through it all; once certain of that fundamental fact, the stream of casual feeling and expression which danced over it only amused and enchained them.

But both these friends are gone, — friends in the truest sense of loving and understanding us; and Emily is alone, and worse than alone, for her internal resources are failing fast.

Now she began to know the value of human love and sympathy. Philip, a child, too young for any comprehension of her life's trials,

and whose hope and spirit must be kept fresh and unclouded by the consciousness of suffering; Frederick Hastings gone, perhaps, forever; Max, writing of his father's continued ill-health, of their being ordered to winter in Florence, and so of the present impossibility of his return; all earthly supports seemed taken from her. Heart and flesh cried out for comfort, only the touch of a hand which told of perfect comprehension and sympathy. That she had once known this relief in its highest form, that loving tenderness had at times lifted the heavy burden from her weary shoulders, only made her present need greater, her craving more intense. Mrs. Grant was kind, and Emily was grateful; but the mental distance between the two women was too impassable for her to supply the food for which Emily was starving. It taught her the utter difference between kindness and sympathy; the one, which any well-intentioned person can supply; the other, which it is only possible to obtain from those rarest and highest of God's blessings, true friends; and fate had sent the only two persons to whom Emily could have given this name far away.

To go home, worn out in mind and body, and, instead of the cheering, soothing presence and voice, of the mental and moral congeniality in which she could forget all, to have only her own wretched heart and memory to commune with, or Philip to entertain, and amuse with false, miserable efforts at gayety, at times almost maddened her. Then the dull, apathetic reaction that was the sure result of such excitement she felt was increasing on her daily; an apathy which seemed to deprive her of all life or interest in life, all care for the present or future. Hope and feeling were consolidating into an intense longing for rest, for relief from the weight of the burden of this life, which was crushing her. But for Philip, how gladly would she have lain down and died. But no such easy fate is reserved for her; she must be up and doing, walking her appointed way until the end, though failing fast.

But the worst of all was to feel that she was conquered; that she, who had begun the battle of life with such sure hope of victory, was defeated. There is nothing, I think, so terrible to strong, earnest natures as to have any insufficiency in themselves brought keenly home to them. Failure is bitter, even when produced by outside causes; but to be defeated from a want of endurance or capacity in themselves, is almost death to them. So Emily felt when she knew she had miscalculated her strength,—that she who had thought herself strong enough to suffer and overcome every trial and obstacle life

could bring, and glory in the conflict, must now bend low, crushed, not only by external pressure, but by lack of strength to endure. What humiliation that others can put upon us is to be compared to having weighed *ourselves* in the balance and found ourselves wanting? To such persons, the only judge capable of pronouncing their death-sentence is their own keen, relentless perception: when its fiat has gone forth, the flattery of the whole world could not convince them to the contrary. It was before this tribunal that Emily Chester veiled her face and sank down in the dust. And so the burden grew heavier, and under it the weary bearer sank lower and lower.

By the time the spring opened and began to grow warm, her strength was so utterly gone that teaching became impossible. If it had not been for her previous care and economy, the brother and sister would now have experienced actual want; but Emily had dreaded this day too long and too much, not to have provided for it, at least partially.

But as she lay upon her sofa day after day, so weak that the least movement made her faint and sick, the thought of the future haunted her like an evil spirit. If she continued in this condition, what would become of them, gradually consuming their resources, with nothing to look forward to when their present stock of money was expended? In the event of her death, which she felt sure was rapidly approaching, what could Philip's prospect be, a child with no one to look to in the wide world? In either case, the future was dark as midnight. She would lie and watch Philip, as he sat by her or moved softly about the room, waiting on her or nursing her with the utmost gentleness; for his love for his sister seemed to transform the boy and teach him a woman's tenderness of manner, or rather to develop it in him, for surely the root of it is in all manly natures; she would watch him until her brain grew numb and paralyzed with thinking what the future might bring upon him. She had but one hope, and this was Max. She knew how true his friendship had been for her; surely Philip would find a protector in him after she was gone. She had kept all her trouble from him, had tried to make her letters cheerful to the last, for at present she was too weak to write at all.

She would have made Philip write to him, to come to her once more before she died; but she knew that Max was riveted to his present position by the chains of duty, and what right had she to break them? No, the support of his strength would be denied her; but for Philip's future comfort she firmly trusted him. And yet,

though she rigorously taught herself the impossibility of it, she intensely craved the relief that the very sound of his steady, quiet voice would have been to her. In her weakness, how she longed to lean upon the strength of another; try as she would to still this cry for earthly help, it would make itself heard.

But even this was swallowed up sometimes in the miserable apathy into which she was sinking deeper and deeper, which benumbed sensation and perception. Her nerves grew dull, just in proportion to their normal sensitiveness. Her physical feelings, her attractions and repulsions, formerly so dominant, sank down into a dead level of indifference. Persons and things lost all their interest for her, except Philip: towards him she never changed; the faint smile would always appear, the weary eyes light up at its bidding.

So their life went on towards the dark, shadowy future.

CHAPTER XVII.

AS Max had written, he and his father spent the winter in Florence, and the spring found them still there. They led a quietly luxurious existence (Max would have scornfully denied it the name of life), devoting themselves to the cultivation of Mr. Crampton's health. His son made all things subservient to this consideration; not only on account of his love for his father, but because anything which contributed to this end brought nearer the day of his liberation. He cared little how the time was spent, so that it passed, shortening the period of his exile.

They attracted much attention, this father and son; so inseparable, yet so different. It would have greatly surprised those persons who saw and thought they knew this worldly-wise, Mephistophelean man, whom they half dreaded and more than half disliked, over whom they shook their heads as "evidently heartless," to know that at that very moment he was lavishing the whole hope and power of his manhood in a wild, romantic passion for a woman with no earthly attraction outside of her own mind and body.

The craving to see her was growing more and more painful every day; the very season of the year seemed to aggravate it, not only from the truth of Tennyson's saying, that naturally, "in the spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love," but in the spring he had last seen her, and now every soft breeze or fresh flower seemed intimately connected with her, laden with remembrances. A year had gone since they parted, and through every hour of that time this love had been his one absorbing thought and feeling. He felt like saying, with Bettina, "I take a map and draw a line from where I am to where you are, and all outside of it is nothing to me." He had quoted it half laughingly in one of his letters to Emily, and she had taken it as it was apparently meant, little dreaming of its exact truth. It was bitterly hard always to wear the same careless, indifferent face, with this hungry desire unceasingly gnawing at his heart. Resolution less stern than his must have failed under the constant pressure; but he bore it unflinchingly. Only once had his father even remotely suspected the true state of the case.

They were visiting a friend, when, music being proposed, a lady sat down to the piano and began singing Beethoven's divine "songs to the distant beloved one," in which, if ever, the human heart has found an adequate expression of its love and pain. At the first strain Max knew what was coming, and felt an insane desire to escape. He had heard Emily sing them until every note had acquired the sound of her voice, and vibrated through him as its tone would have done. "*Ferne geliebte!*" What could the singer or audience know of the true meaning of those words? he felt as though it were desecration, sacrilege. And yet the lady sang it well; too well Max soon felt, as the song began to tear his heart. It went on until she came to the words "*innere pein*," with their terrible minor repetition and *ritardo*. "Inward pain!" He could have shrieked as he heard it! His father happening to look up, caught, for a second, the expression of his son's face. It startled him.

"I wonder," he thought, painfully, "whether this can be a reality with Max, or if the singer has anything to do with it?" But the idea was so totally at variance with all that he knew of his son's life and character, that he dismissed it as absurd, and attributed his unusual emotion to his appreciation of the music, which he knew to be extreme. This did not prevent his leading the conversation towards the song and the singer, the next time they were alone together; but Max's answering criticism was given with such careless, unembarrassed interest, that Mr. Crampton was perfectly reassured, and thought no more of the subject.

The lady herself made more than one inquiry about "that queer-looking man who leant upon the piano all the time she was singing." She knew by an instinct, which all artistic natures possess, that she had one appreciative listener. He had said nothing, given her no audible praise, but her singing, through the whole time, was for him. In return for his appreciation she had tried to give him pleasure; she little dreamed of the pain mingled with it. So our lives touch for a single moment, to unconsciously mingle happiness or suffering in the cup we are all drinking, and then pass on to meet no more.

As the days passed Max's anxiety deepened, for they brought no news from Emily. A month had gone by, and still no letter. He began to haunt the post-office nervously, as though that would hasten its arrival; for which want of self-control he duly despised himself, but still kept up the practice.

There was an additional sting to his pain, which until late this winter it had never possessed. He had heard of Frederick Hastings's

departure in the autumn, with a feeling this usually rigid, merciless examiner of his own motives did not care to scrutinize. His punishment had arisen from the very truth of his love; for, in spite of herself, Emily could not help showing the bitter pain the loss of this friend had caused her; and how could he see her suffer without partaking of her suffering, — a participation which grew as he traced in her letters her increasing need of such a comforter, until he could have found it in his heart to wish him back, even knowing how it must affect his own prospects? Anything to shield her, anything to soften the path her sore feet were treading. Though by no direct word had she ever told him her sorrow, there was an unconscious undertone in her letters which wrung his heart.

"Max," said his father, one night, as his son sat by the open window, smoking, and looking out, with eyes that appeared to be viewing the moonlit prospect, but before which, in reality, shone a vision of a woman, seated beside another window, with a noble face and clear eyes looking skyward, — "Max, I think my health has improved very rapidly in the last few weeks, don't you think so?"

"Yes," said his son, rather absently; the vision was too sweet and vivid to be parted with immediately.

"So much so, that I really think I shall go home this spring, instead of staying here during the summer," continued the elder gentleman.

Max's cigar, which he was raising to his lips, suddenly stopped short of them.

"The voyage would do me good," Mr. Crampton went on; "besides, I am fast approaching that age when going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it, becomes a laborious occupation. I want to settle down quietly in my own home once more. I wish I were there now," he said, as the pleasure of the prospect grew upon him.

Mr. Crampton wondered that his son still sat with his back to him, and made no answer.

"Perhaps he does not wish to go. I am selfish to bind him down any longer to a dull, sick old man," thought the kind gentleman, penitently.

"If you would prefer staying, you must not think of going," he said, aloud. "I am perfectly well enough to travel alone now, and I do not forget that I owe it to my son's faithful care and nursing. You need freedom and recreation, and you will enjoy them more easily here than at home."

"I prefer going," was Max's laconic answer, still with his face towards the window.

There was a sound in his voice which made his father look at him curiously. It seemed to pulsate, as though obeying the motion of the wild throbbing of his heart. Max heard it himself, and clenched his teeth in his resolve to master it.

"Are you sure you are speaking on your own account, and not on mine?" questioned Mr. Crampton, as he found that he learnt nothing from studying the back of his son's head.

"Quite sure," rejoined Max, turning towards him at last. He had gained the control of his voice, and so could afford to use it more freely, — could trust himself better after the first intensity of his feeling, the shock of his liberation, had been brought under subjection. "Would you be willing to start to-morrow?"

"To-morrow!" echoed his father, in blank astonishment, "why, what reason can there be for so sudden a departure?"

"Only that you said you wished you were at home now; and as I certainly shared the desire, I thought the sooner we went the better for both of us," was the cool response.

"Well, my son, just as you choose, just as you choose," returned Mr. Crampton, rather bewildered, and, as usual, giving up all attempt to understand his son's motives; "I shall certainly be very glad to turn my face homewards."

"Then we leave to-morrow," half asked, half announced Max.

"Yes," said his father, "and I think I will go to bed now, as I shall need strength for the journey."

"I think you had better," replied Max; and Mr. Crampton, bidding him good-night, retired.

Max was left alone with his great joy. He was free to go to her; he should soon see her. The thought seemed to set his blood on fire, as it coursed through his veins. He could not sit still, but paced up and down the floor for hours, with a strange feeling upon him that any motion was a progress towards her, brought him nearer to her. He was intoxicated with delicious expectation. But as the fever of his great joy spent itself, there came as its reaction the fear and nervous dread which always accompany such a blessing. He felt that something certainly must happen to prevent the realization of his hope, — that he would never reach home, or, reaching it, would find her no more. The intolerable pain that the very shadow of such a thought cost him warned him not to brave its second suggestion. He put it from him as he would the whisper of an evil spirit.

And so that gradation of feeling went on which those who have experienced any extremity of joy well know to be its certain accompaniment, until Max felt his self-control returning, his ability to resume his usual garb of passionless coldness.

The next day, he was intentionally too busy with preparations for their departure to allow time for either definitely thinking or feeling. The afternoon saw them off.

What he experienced on that homeward journey, who shall tell? The swiftest conveyances seemed to him to creep along, — the very steam-engines to be miserably weak and slow compared with his fierce impatience. As the distance between them grew less and less, the attraction grew greater; every mile of the road over which they passed added to it. At last, when they had embarked from Havre, and were once more upon the ocean, it appeared to Max that they would never reach the other side. To have seen that indifferent, composed-looking man sauntering up and down the deck with his father, or lying upon it with a book, — though the volume he was really reading was seldom the one before him, — who could have imagined the passionate unrest and longing which was consuming him?

But the end came to their journey, as to all things; and when at last they saw the sun rising over New York harbor, Max "thanked God" with a depth of sincerity which seldom accompanies that exclamation. Only a few hours more, and he should be with her! It was too much to believe; the nervous dread came back to him; he felt as though he should die before the fulfilment of his happiness. "Only these few hours of life, until I see her once more, if I die the next moment," he pleaded with Fate. But his iron hand stifled such weakness, and he stood talking in the most interested, genial manner to his father of their New York home, with its friends and acquaintances, as though the pleasure of seeing them had been the sole cause of his return.

Mr. Crampton was actually boyish in his demonstrations of pleasure when they were once more seated at their own table, in their familiar home; but his equanimity received a shock, when Max quietly told him that he should start for Baltimore that night. His father looked at him in silent astonishment for a full moment, and then resignedly sunk back into his easy-chair and non-comprehension.

"I have some friends there whom I wish to meet," was Max's only explanation of his intention, which he carried into effect.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE next morning found him in Baltimore. Could it be possible that he was in the same city with her; that before many moments he should once more look upon that face, to him more beautiful than that of an angel? It seemed like a dream to him, as he drove rapidly from the hotel to her house.

He reached it and entered; merely sending up word by the strange servant, that a gentleman wished to see her. He would not deprive himself of her first look of glad surprise; he had thought of it, dreamed of it, too long to relinquish it now. It was still early in the morning, at least for visitors, and Emily, whose weakened state did not allow her to sit up more than part of the day, had not yet risen. Dressing had become to her a slow, laborious operation; so Max sat a long while in the little parlor before she came down. How the old times rushed back upon him, while he waited her appearance, as he had done so many times before. There was the lounge upon which they used to sit during those German lessons, that delicious farce of teacher and scholar, the most fascinating play he had ever witnessed. There was the piano on which he had leant as she sung through long evenings; books they had read together, many of which he had given her, everything was vitalized by some remembrance. The year of their separation vanished; he was living in the dear old time once more, waiting the pleasure of a careless, light-hearted girl.

Presently he heard the footfall for which he had so often listened; slower than of old, but to him recognizable among a hundred.

He rose hurriedly, with a wild passion which defied his control, and advanced to the door. She was coming, in another instant he should see her face to face.

The door opened. For a moment, the flush and radiance of her joy so bathed her in color and light, that it was indeed Emily Chester, the brilliant, unbroken girl he had left, who stood before him.

"Max," she cried out, as he clasped her hands, "O Max!" Only this one word; but all her sorrow since they had parted, her struggle

and defeat, her longing for support, the relief his presence had brought, — all this was comprehended in the tone of its utterance.

It was too much for the worn heart and frame, and the next moment the head sank down upon her hands, and she burst into tears. Seated upon the sofa, to which Max almost carried her, she wept with that *abandon* only possible in those who rarely give way to their emotions. Supporting her tenderly, Max tried to soothe her with words, and caresses of passionate love, but she was scarcely conscious of them; the reaction of the self-control she had exercised so long was making itself felt now, and would have its way. But the violence of her emotion worked its own cure, and soon the hysterical sobbing subsided, and she grew able to speak.

"O Max," she said, raising her tearful eyes to his face, "I have had such need of you, — such need of you. And now you have come, I feel as Christian must have felt when the burden rolled from his shoulders."

If ever man's love were true and perfect, preferring the happiness of the loved one to his own, surely his was so; but how could he help the exquisite pleasure that thrilled him at these words. The hope so cruelly disappointed at their parting, that he might one day enter into some relation with her heart through its own internal need, seemed now fulfilled; in this way he might win what he had been unable to conquer.

But this feeling had little time to live, for as he looked at the uplifted face, from which the flush of excitement had passed, he saw with horror the work of the last year upon it. The straightened cheek, the settled gray shadow round the eyes, the weary droop of the mouth and eyelids; what had produced them, what did they mean? The death-like pallor to which her face had returned, as apparently its settled hue, made his heart stand still with terror. Had he left his beautiful flower, to find it again withered and broken? Good God! had he come home only to see her die? It was impossible; he would not believe it: and yet when he saw her sink back among the pillows, utterly exhausted, this probability rose up before him, refusing to be denied or shaken off.

He tried to make her talk, anything to destroy the terrible likeness the extended figure, with its half-closed eyes, bore to a corpse; but he found this hard work, as the old lethargic apathy began to claim her as its own. Its dominion increased, until an intense expression of relief and rest pervading her whole face and figure was the only evidence of her consciousness of his presence. She looked

like a tired child who had fallen asleep; so complete was the relaxation, mental and physical. He watched her, tracing the lines and changes suffering had made, until tears, which no personal suffering could have drawn, sprang to his eyes. What she must have borne to leave such traces he did not even dare to think or imagine; thank God, it was over now, at least as far as human effort could influence it. He saw his way clear before him, and as he sat there, laid out his plan of action.

The only thing that roused her was Philip's entrance, and his overwhelming pleasure at seeing his old friend. The child did not know how to give sufficient expression to his joy; he clung to Max, danced round him, telling him over and over how glad he was to see him, how he had been wishing for him for so long, how he had begun to think he never would come; and Emily, opening her eyes, smiled partly in assent, and partly at the boy's pleasure. At last Philip grew quiet, and, sitting down by Max, began to tell him in half-whispers, in answer to his inquiries, all that he knew of what had happened since their parting. He was particularly earnest in his description of his and Emily's sorrow at Frederick Hastings's leaving them, and from the child's innocent account of that event Max gained a very correct idea of its cause. As to her motive for such an action he could only conjecture, but of the action itself he was sure. What a relief this was would have been hard to express; whatever her feeling might be towards him, at least she did not love another.

The day went on until its close, when Max took leave, reluctantly indeed, but when he thought of the difference between this and his last parting, that for a year, and this for a single night, he was too thankful to murmur. It was less hard to release her hand, when he knew that in a few hours he would again hold it.

"Good by," he said, "good by." And the eyes lighted up once more at the sound of his voice.

He went immediately to the house of the physician, who, as Philip had informed him, attended Emily, and asked him to tell him honestly what he thought of her case. The Doctor hesitated at first, but guessing the truth, at last said frankly, that another summer in that hot city would kill her.

"Not that she has any particular disease," he continued; "I almost wish she had, for then there would be something definite to combat; but it is a general breaking down of the whole system, nervous and physical, before which medicine is powerless. The truth is, she has an unfortunate nervous susceptibility, which renders happiness and

comfort necessary to her existence. From what I have seen, I should think she has had very little of either lately," he added, pityingly.

"You think, then, she would recover, with perfect rest, and a change of scene?" said Max, hurriedly changing the subject of conversation. His knowledge of her suffering was too fresh and sore to bear being touched by a stranger's comments.

"Certainly," returned the physician, "if she were taken away now, and given entire peace of mind, in a few months she would be a totally different woman. It is her only chance of life, and I think pleasant companionship would be a decided assistance to such a plan," he suggested, with a slight laugh, of which Max took no notice, but thanking him heartily for his information, bade him good evening. The man, however, followed him to the door, with the firm conviction that he was ushering out the future husband of Miss Emily Chester.

Very little sleep visited Max Crampton's eyes that night. He was nerving himself for the work of the morrow, as he had resolved he would then ask that question to which all his previous actions had been but as the moves in a game of chess to the final checkmate. Of all nervous beings, a man really in love is perhaps the most so; and knowing this, he felt the necessity of getting himself well in hand before precipitating the decision. How he succeeded was shown by the cold, stony look his face wore next morning, when he appeared in Emily's parlor; a certain proof that some fiery emotion either was or had been agitating him.

The repose of his face gave way in spite of himself for a moment, as she smiled his welcome from the sofa where she lay, waiting his coming. Sitting down by her, he began again his watch of the previous day. They said little or nothing, she lying perfectly passive. She had apparently given up all responsibility, resigned all volition, as thoroughly as though her guardian-angel had made his appearance and taken her fate in his hands. At last the man, laying his hand on her arm, said very quietly, "Emily, listen to me; I have something to say to you."

She looked up at him, and he, looking down into her eyes, seemed to claim her as his own, body and soul, through his divine right as the stronger.

"Will you be my wife?" he asked simply, but the concentrated force of his low voice bent her to his will like physical strength.

"Yes."

The word seemed to come from her lips not so much by her own will, as produced by some outward controlling force superior to it. His steady eyes fixed upon her left her no power to make any answer but the one they dictated.

The shout of triumph that vibrated through every fibre of Max Crampton's frame as he heard the word found no audible voice, but the grasp upon her arm unconsciously tightened, until she gave a sharp cry of pain. It brought him to himself. He could have killed himself for having hurt her. He broke out into fierce self-reproaches and pleadings for forgiveness; for the single time in his life, all the love and passion pent up so long rose in wild insurrection and found speech. It almost stunned Emily Chester as she heard it. But soon the hand lifted wearily to her head stopped and controlled this outbreak, as no force could have done, and he sank down into himself.

Never in after years did his expression of face or manner recall this hour without giving her a sensation of terror, making her feel like a reed shaken before the wind. The countenance that looked to others so cold, to her represented the wildest display of passion of which she had ever conceived. She knew now what it was to be loved with all a man's heart and mind and strength. As soon as Max regained his self-control they returned immediately to their old relations, and Philip, coming in a few moments after, could have formed no suspicion that words had been spoken which would change the whole current of their lives.

It was late in the afternoon when Mrs. Grant called for a few moments to ask how Emily was. She was delighted to see Max, and at the sight of her his way cleared up before him, and he formed his resolution instantly. She soon rose to leave, and he, offering himself as escort, accompanied her.

"Mrs. Grant," said he, as they walked along, "I am going to marry Emily Chester."

"My dear Mr. Crampton, I am delighted to hear it!" exclaimed that lady heartily. "If ever a poor child needed some one to take care of her, she does; if the present state of affairs goes on much longer, she will die."

"So I think; and so the sooner I can marry her and take her off to Europe, the better. Now, to do this I want your assistance."

"If there is anything I can attend to, I am sure, Mr. Crampton, I shall be delighted to do it," she returned, with far more sincerity and meaning than that sentence is usually spoken.

"If you will get Emily and Philip ready to start for New York by day after to-morrow, I shall be your everlasting debtor."

"Day after to-morrow!" repeated Mrs. Grant, in astonishment. "To start for New York! Why, when will you be married?"

"The same day; just before we leave," was the answer.

"But is Emily willing to be married so suddenly?" asked Mrs. Grant.

"I have not proposed it to her yet," returned Max, quietly.

The lady looked at him for a minute as though she thought he had lost his senses. The steady, self-reliant look with which he answered her glance satisfied her on that point.

"I will certainly secure her consent, if you will be so exceedingly kind as to prepare her for her journey," he said, in reply to her look; and added, "There are so many things necessary to a woman's comfort, which none but a woman can know or attend to."

Mrs. Grant had by this time come to the conclusion that gaining Emily's consent was his responsibility, and not hers, and that she had better let him bear it; so she merely repeated her offer of her services, and they parted with hearty good-will.

Max went straight back to Emily, to announce his intention, and prepare her for Mrs. Grant's appearance upon the following morning.

"Emily," said he, quietly, as he stood by the sofa and looked down at her, "we are to be married day after to-morrow."

She started up, as though with a wild, impotent desire to escape from some horror suddenly presented to her view. The expression of her face at this second haunted him during many after years. But, before he could speak, it had vanished, and she had sunk back with closed eyes into her old apathy.

She listened with indifference to his further explanations of his and Mrs. Grant's purpose, having apparently but one feeling, and that a dislike to anything involving a change of position. He tried to revive some of her old, glowing enthusiasm, by talking of art and beauty, of the glories of Europe and the Orient; but the chord answered feebly to his touch and the music was low and uncertain; until at last he had not the heart to disturb any longer the rest and peace which seemed all she craved.

"Philip," said he, as in passing out he met the child near the door, "would n't you like to ride out with me to-morrow morning?"

"That I should," said the boy.

"Well, then, be ready early, and I will call for you," returned Max.

"And we will take a nice long ride, just as we used to?" asked Philip.

"Yes, just as we used to."

"That will be splendid," cried the child. "Why, Mr. Crampton," he continued, pathetically, "I have n't driven a horse since you went away!"

"Then you shall certainly have that pleasure to-morrow, if only to make up for past privations," replied Max, laughingly.

"I like to walk with you, too," said the boy, his ideas of politeness receiving a shock, as it occurred to him that Max might think he wanted to go with him only on account of his horses. "I like to go anywhere with you."

"I am glad of it, Philip, as there seems a probability of our being companions for some time."

Philip looked at him very questioningly, but Max vouchsafed no further explanations, reserving them for the more convenient season of the morrow.

CHAPTER XIX.

DURING their ride Max explained all his plans to Philip, both matrimonial and migratory. The boy was charmed, and expressed his delight volubly, to the great entertainment of his companion; who felt, besides, that he had gained an important ally.

When, on their return, he dropped the child at his home, Philip ran into the parlor, where Emily lay, and, throwing his arms round her, said, "O Emily, I'm so glad, so glad!"

"Are you, my darling?" she responded, looking lovingly into the bright eyes. "I am glad, too; for you. There will be some one now to take care of you — when I am gone," she added, half to herself.

"But we are all to go together," replied Philip, misunderstanding her; "he said so; we are to leave in the first steamer that starts for Europe, after we get to New York. And then, O Emily, think of going to the Alps, and Italy, and everywhere else! It will be too grand!"

The smile his enthusiasm brought into her eyes made her, while it lasted, almost her old self.

Mrs. Grant's entrance and congratulations interrupted the child's, and for the rest of the day the old lady and Philip were merrily busy with their numerous preparations.

There was one duty Max had to perform which he undertook with reluctance. This was to inform his father of his approaching marriage. He could not bear to give even a glimpse of his heart-life to one who had been a total stranger to his secret world of happiness. But it was necessary, and so such feelings were put aside. As a natural consequence, his note was brief and cold. It ran thus: —

"DEAR FATHER, —

"I am to be married to-morrow morning, and shall be in New York by night. The name of the lady is Emily Chester. As you will soon see her, and can judge for yourself, any description from me is unnecessary.

"M. CRAMPTON."

Max thought, as he wrote it, that it sounded very much like a telegraphic despatch; yet it was impossible for him to alter it. He did not try, but sent it off, to descend upon his father like a thunder-bolt.

I believe the feelings which the last night of their single lives brings to each person (though so very various) are to each a revelation. It is like leaving the firm land with which we are familiar, and launching out upon some wide ocean, setting sail for climes brighter, sunnier, but still unknown. Thus Max felt, as he watched out the last night of his bachelorhood, in that state of intense, still excitement peculiar to such natures. Heaven and earth seemed to him to be singing hymns in harmony with his whole being. The height of his great joy and love humbled and solemnized him.

And then, with an entire revulsion of feeling, there would sweep through him the fierce exultation of his triumph and victory. All for which he had strained heart and brain was now his by the combined might of circumstance and his own will. He had conquered and overcome all obstacles; and to triumph over opposition is the glory of all masculine natures, even when the object to be attained is in itself valueless. His mind kept reverting to Frederick Hastings, and their present relative positions. Who could have prophesied it, seeing the three together a year and a half ago? He himself had not believed that Emily Chester would be able to resist the gravitation of her own nature to this man, if intensified to a certain degree by his corresponding will and action. Out of the fulness of his joy he found strength to pity his former rival very sincerely, — a feeling rendered much more vivid and intelligent by the perfect knowledge of what he himself would have suffered under the same circumstances. Yet there was mingled through it a strange species of contempt.

"To have held such a hand, and yet to have lost the game, after all," he thought, "through want of strength and skill in the playing. If I had had one tithe of the constitutional advantages, the gifts which bountiful Nature gave him to commence with, I should have annihilated all opponents at the very outset, and won the game before they had even a chance to play. Except that the issue was too important for such diversions, one could almost have found heart to teach him how to handle his cards, to show him his strongest game. Had some one else occupied my place, Dr. Hastings should have been the winner; for I should have done him the service of quietly directing his play, unknown to himself, if only for the mental excitement.

That man's harmonious beauty could have performed miracles, if he had known how to use it. I would have waked him up to a practical knowledge of his Orphean powers, and Eurydice should have followed him from Hades, or to it, at his will. Thank God, he did not recognize or know how to use his own wonderful form of strength; or into what hell of suffering, what mental and moral lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, should I not have sunk?" And Max forgot both his pity and his contempt for Frederick Hastings in his thankfulness that he had been spared this trial. Different feelings and phases of his character, apparently as far from each other as heaven is from the dark abyss, rose and predominated, each in its turn, as he kept watch and communed with himself that night.

Emily Chester also was living and feeling this night. Lying in that peculiar state just between waking and sleeping, — that shadowy region between a consciousness of the material and the immaterial, of the sensuous and the spiritual, — the life-essence of a dream haunted her, — constantly changing its form, but always the same in spirit. It seemed to her the shadowy transmigration of the soul of a dream. Do not our dreams sometimes find souls, acquire an immortal part, by embodying some deep, indestructible principle of our natures, veiled for the time from our waking senses?

She was on the sea, surrounded with comfort and pleasure, sailing on through fair wind and weather, but always with a consciousness that they were going on, on, to the rock upon which they were to strike and go down. The body of the dream died, and the soul took another form.

She was in some vivid tropical region, ascending a height of paradisiacal beauty; cool shade and brilliant flowers lured her on, a heaven of color and light crowned the summit; but she knew that that summit was a terrible precipice, beneath whose flower-enamelled edge yawned depths of horror and darkness, and that the bright path she was treading led straight to its brink.

Again, she was at Niagara, upon the lake above the Falls, floating on, floating on, through the soft evening wind, over the rippling, burnished surface; but always with the sound of the rushing waters in her ears, and a knowledge that she was drawing nearer and nearer to that last plunge.

Was it that perception of a certain degree is never quite overcome? or was it that the demon, whose clear-sightedness had once before saved her from the fate of a partial marriage, was now striving, in a shadowy, benumbed way, to show her her danger? If so,

O demon, your efforts are useless; you are powerless before Fate; she is drifting with the current of time, and the sharp rocks upon which that current will dash and mangle her are lying far down, out of sight, until the appointed hour shall arrive.

Surely the sun never shone upon a stranger bridal party than was assembled that morning in the small parlor. Max, in apparently his coldest mood, Emily, pale and weary, in the simplest dark travelling-dress, were truly little suggestive of wedding joy and festivities. Mrs. Grant and Philip were happy, and looked it; the former, if for no other cause, would have been so from her woman's love of such occasions. She tried to make the whole party cheerful and merry; but that is an impossible task without some reciprocal assistance, which in this case neither Max nor Emily could afford.

The clergyman came, and they stood before him, to be joined together in the bonds of holy matrimony. Was it the sound of the man's voice, or was it the look in Emily's face, which brought back so vividly to Max the last time they had all met: that meeting by the side of an open grave? The grave, with its coffin, seemed for a second to yawn at his feet. But he forgot it all as he heard the words, "to have and to hold, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness, in health, until death do part us." Her prayer, uttered in the old time, that when this moment came she might die on the spot before she woke up from her delusion, passed ungranted, and the service went on. "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder," said the voice of the preacher. O, if they could have heard that other voice, the voice of God and nature, saying perpetually, through all ages, "what God has put asunder, let not man join together." But the fierce passion of one had drowned the sound to him, and the ears of the other had waxed dull of hearing.

It was over; she was his; no power human or divine could now part them while on earth. Max Crampton's cup of happiness was full to the brim. A quiet leave-taking, and they were soon whirling on by railway to New York. To all appearances he was absorbed in the book he held open before him, though the leaf was scarcely turned for hours together. Emily leaned back, her hand shading her eyes, and her veil covering both. Philip occupied himself generally with staring out of the window, and refreshing himself by various dives into a lunch-basket, which his friend Mrs. Grant had confided to his special care.

Thus they went on, until at one of the stations a gentleman entered the car and began looking for a seat. As he came near them

he suddenly caught sight of Max, and springing forward seized him by the shoulder, crying out: "Why, Max, my dear old boy, the last person in the world I expected to see! How on earth came you here? I thought you were in Europe."

"So I was," said Max, greeting him with apparently equal pleasure, "until a short time ago; but I suppose it is quite possible to return, and I did so the first of this week."

"Ah, that is the way in which I missed hearing of your arrival; I have been away from New York for a month. But I should have thought Alice would have been sufficiently excited at the return of her old tormentor to have written me word of it."

"I am not sure that Alice has heard of my reappearance, at least I did not see her; I came directly through New York to Baltimore. But, Jack," he said, turning towards Emily, "you must let me introduce you to my wife. Emily, this is my cousin, Jack Harrington, of whom you have heard me speak so often."

If Emily had been Medusa herself, she could hardly have struck the man into a state of stonier astonishment than she seemed to do by her simple bow. He bent his head in a vague, mechanical way, and then turned with a face of blank distraction towards Max. That gentleman charitably backed him into the nearest seat, and sitting down beside him coolly waited until he should have sufficiently recovered from the shock to ask questions. At first the man seemed incapable of doing anything but stare at him in bewildered amazement; but presently he found strength to feebly inquire, "When were you married, Max?"

"This morning," returned Max, very much as he might have answered question number one of the Catechism.

"Rather sudden, was n't it?" again faintly essayed Mr. Harrington.

"As far as the execution was concerned, yes. The intention I have had for years."

"Ah, indeed!" was the slightly stunned rejoinder, and Mr. Harrington began vaguely wondering how many more intentions Max might have had for years, of which he, his friend and cousin, was equally ignorant.

"Was your father at your wedding?" he asked, presently.

"No," said Max, "he knew nothing of it until this morning. I wrote saying I should be in New York to-night with my wife. No, I have not lost my senses," he added quickly, answering the look in his cousin's face, and laughing in spite of himself. "Come, Jack, you

have known me long enough, and ought to have known me well enough, to be sure that when I do a thing I have my own good reasons for it, or at least think I have."

"So I do, old boy, so I do," responded the other heartily. "Only at first it was a knock-downer," he continued, with a queer contortion of visage. And the conversation passed to general topics; Max talking with a freedom and pleasure which indicated a rare companion. But through it each gentleman found himself apt to forget himself, and grow absorbed in watching that proud, white profile, indicative only of such weary indifference. They made no effort to talk to her or of her; the face itself invited neither inquiry nor comment. The suffering of the last year had taught it an habitual look of resolute self-containment, which few persons cared to assail, especially a stranger like Jack Harrington; and as for Max, he understood her too thoroughly to attempt to disturb her. Philip had come over to their side of the car, and was listening to their conversation with intense relish. In his first position the distance and noise prevented his hearing anything said, and yet, before ten minutes had elapsed, he had come to the conclusion that he liked the stranger gentleman exceedingly; why, the child could hardly have defined. He did not know that it was the payment Jack Harrington invariably received for the pleasure his bright eyes and cheery laugh gave to all who saw and heard them.

The day had passed, and the evening shadows were gathering before they reached New York. As they neared the city, and crossed the ferry, the whole party relapsed into silence. Max was a little anxious in expectation of the approaching meeting with his father; not that he for a moment doubted his perfect kindness and approbation of his marriage, but he felt that, not knowing the peculiar circumstances in which he had been placed, he might justly think the notice he had received of that event very short, especially when his deep interest in it was considered. When they landed, and Max caught sight of a tall, stately form making its way towards them through the crowd, it was with rather a more nervous intonation than usual that, as it reached them, he announced, "My father."

The gentleman so presented first shook hands cordially with him, and then, without allowing him time for further introductions, turned immediately to Emily, and, taking her hand, said: "And this, I suppose, is my daughter. My dear, I am very glad to see you," and, stooping, kissed her.

It was too dark to distinguish the faces clearly; but the expres-

sion of every one of them altered pleasantly at the words and action; and Max's voice had lost its disturbing element, as he drew his father's attention to Philip and Jack.

Being patted on the head was by no means the way in which Philip usually liked to be saluted, as it slightly compromised his age and dignity; but the manner in which Mr. Crampton performed that ceremony so mitigated the insult, that he came to the conclusion it might be bearable, at times even pleasant. The child noticed, too, that the elder gentleman seemed as much pleased at Jack Harrington's appearance as his son had been; but upon their immediate adjournment to the carriage, this gentleman refused to accept the cordial invitation to enter it, and go home with them, upon the alleged consideration of the despair into which his family would be thrown at any further deprivation of his presence. So, with a merry good-evening, he saw them off.

The ride was performed in almost total silence, broken only by a few casual remarks between Max and his father, until at last they drew up before the stately mansion, which had been Max's home in name, though in little else. Mr. Crampton assisted Emily to alight, and handed her up the broad steps into the brilliantly lighted hall; and then, bowing over her hand, with old-fashioned, courtly grace, said, "Let me welcome my daughter home."

Emily tried both to speak and smile her reply; but she was so thoroughly worn out, that both eyes and lips literally refused to perform their office. Mr. Crampton saw that she was so fatigued she could scarcely stand. Max perceived it also at the same instant, and, coming hastily forward, said: "She had better be shown to her room immediately. She has been ill for months, and was, I am afraid, too weak to take this journey,"—and, suiting the action to the word, rang the bell for the servant to show the way, and wait upon her.

The exquisite beauty and elegance of her apartments was totally lost upon Emily, who felt as though her very sight and hearing had failed. To be allowed to lie down and be at rest was all she asked, whether the couch were of the richest or plainest. That each article in the room might have held its place worthily in a palace, would have been to her, at that moment, a matter of the supremest indifference, had she become conscious of it. The maid who removed her wrappings, almost as though she had been a child, thought she had never seen so pale and passive a lady. It touched the woman to see any one so young and so shattered, and she served her with a

gentleness money could not have purchased. But the lady soon dismissed her, and, when alone, sank down, too utterly weary to know or think or care for anything in heaven or earth.

As she left them in the hall, father and son had watched her until she vanished in the curve of the spiral staircase, when, turning simultaneously, their eyes met, and each read the other's thoughts.

"So, my son," said Mr. Crampton, kindly, "you have taken unto yourself a wife. I am very glad, if it will add to your happiness."

"Add to my happiness!" echoed the son, "I ought to be a good man, for God has given me all I asked in life, — the one blessing I craved of him."

The sentence was spoken so low, that not even Philip, who stood at only a few yards' distance from them, caught its meaning; but there was that in the tone which gave it an intensity of emphasis impossible to describe, — an emphasis only possible to words when the whole force of a man's being goes to the saying. It gave Mr. Crampton an insight into his son's inner life and springs of action, which he never forgot; it lighted up many things which had hitherto been impenetrably dark to him.

"You are, indeed, a fortunate person to have recognized your happiness, and to have succeeded in winning it," said Mr. Crampton, slowly, after a pause. He was no longer a young man, and life had shown him the rarity of such a fate. He laid his hand on his son's shoulder, with a strange mixture of love and pity shining in his face. Probably in all their lives these men had never felt their relationship so keenly.

"I was afraid," said Max, with a quiver of really human emotion in his voice, "you would feel hurt, when you received my letter, at what seemed my previous want of confidence. But I could not act otherwise; I did not tell you anything, because, in fact, I had nothing to tell. The close of this affair, which for years I have been striving to bring about, has come almost as unexpectedly to me as to you." This glimpse of fellow-feeling was softening Max into a strangely confidential mood for him.

"I was not hurt, Max," returned his father, gently, "because I was sure you had done in this, as in all things, what you judged right and best. I had not trusted my son through so many years to doubt him now," he added, with proud affection; and his son felt humbled before this absolute faith and trust.

"I hope I may justify your confidence; give it a deeper cause than your partial love," he said, earnestly.

"Ah, Max, it has worn very well to have its only foundation in my partiality," said his father, smiling. "I think some one else will be willing to give the same testimony years hence," he continued, glancing towards the stairway up which Emily had disappeared.

"Heaven grant it, or better we had both died before this day!"

"Little fear for the contrary, little fear; truth as constitutional as yours is not apt to fail those who depend upon it," said Mr. Crampton, unconsciously showing his relationship to Max in his form of expression. "But where is that child?" he suddenly exclaimed, as in turning he discovered that Philip had disappeared.

"Where is he, to be sure?" said Max, with some concern; "started on a voyage of discovery, I suspect, to amuse himself. I am afraid he will get hurt."

"He is in the dining-room, sir," said the servant, who came to announce dinner, "playing with Carlo."

There they found him and Carlo in a state of mutual excitement, romping at such a rate that they seemed making up for lost time. The truth was, Philip had heard a canine voice in the vicinity, while standing in the hall, and, suspecting its owner, had started off in immediate pursuit. This was the first time he and Carlo had met, as Max had left the dog in New York during his brief visit to Baltimore. But, eager as their play was, Carlo deserted the instant his master entered; to Philip's extreme mortification; a feeling which increased when he found that not the most tempting offers from his plate during dinner could induce him to leave his owner's side. He must have created a severe conflict between poor Carlo's spirit and flesh, appetite and devotion; making his unwavering adhesion to Max quite a moral triumph. From that hour Philip's confidence in any appearance of friendship in dogs was thoroughly undermined; and for some time after he received Carlo's advances very coolly, with a strong sense of injury.

Mr. Crampton, Max, and Philip were the only persons at the table; and the two gentlemen teased and petted and indulged the child, until it was evident that, if things went on at this rate, master Philip stood a fair chance of becoming as spoilt a little personage as the city of New York contained. His perfect independence of thought and manner, his mingled wit and *naïveté*, surprised and delighted Mr. Crampton; whose only idea of boys was derived from the period of Max's existence, when he had nominally belonged to that class; so the reader can well imagine that Philip presented a new view of the subject to him. But the child was too tired with

the day's journey not to grow weary before long of being "drawn out," and soon deserted the table for a neighboring sofa, where he fell fast asleep. The two gentlemen sat over their wine, talking long and late; Max telling his father his plans, as far as he had arranged them, and leaving him many commissions to be executed in his absence.

When Mr. Crampton entered the breakfast-room next morning, he thought it entirely without occupants, and so proceeded to make himself comfortable until the rest should assemble. But he had scarcely done so, when he became conscious of some one softly whistling near him, and looking round the room discovered Philip curled up on a lounge, with his chin resting on his hand, gazing steadily up at a Landseer that hung near. The sight was a welcome one to him, for more than one reason. He had had his decided doubts as to the safety of letting such a little colt loose in a house which was almost a gallery of art.

"But a child who could be so deeply interested in a picture, must certainly have some care and reverence for all beautiful things," he thought, very much relieved. Listening for a few moments before interrupting the boy, he found, to his surprise, that he was whistling, with no little grace and accuracy, Mendelssohn's "Song of Spring," one of his "*Lieder ohne worte*."

"Where on earth could he have caught that? I thought boys never whistled anything but 'Yankee Doodle,'" speculated Mr. Crampton, who had heard that melody largely indulged in by such performers in the street.

"Philip," said he, rising, and advancing towards the child, "what is that you are whistling, do you know?"

"No," was the careless reply, "it is something Emily plays; I don't know what the name of it is."

"So," thought the gentleman, "she's musical, is she! Good music too! Well, that's hopeful." And then, like a flash, came back the recollection of the song they had heard in Florence. He understood the meaning of that scene now. "*Ferne geliebte*." He could comprehend the memories which must have thronged back at the sound.

"Poor fellow," he thought. "Heaven forgive me for the pain I must have caused him during that year of absence. I little dreamed the extent of his sacrifice."

"I say, though, that's a jolly picture," said Philip, glancing up at Mr. Crampton's face, and then nodding towards the painting he had been studying.

"So it is. Do you know anything about pictures, Philip?" asked the gentleman, amused at the boy's style of commendation, and led into this rash question by his late musical display.

"I know about this one," was the reply, "because Emily had it in a book, and she told me all about it and who painted it."

"Did she?" rejoined Mr. Crampton, who found that he was likely to gain a good deal of information concerning his new daughter's tastes from this unexpected source.

"It's exactly like a dog I know," continued Philip, gazing critically at the picture, which represented more than one of those animals.

"Is it?" said Mr. Crampton, continuing his interrogative form of reply, and smiling at the class of Philip's acquaintances.

"His name's Philibert," remarked Philip, introducing his friend by name; "he belongs to one of the boys at school, but his sister named him."

"I should think so," said Mr. Crampton, "and she must have been taking a course of G. P. R. James's novels before she did it."

The child looked at him as though he did not quite comprehend.

"We don't call him that, though," the boy went on ("I am glad to hear it," said Mr. Crampton); "we call him Phil. And they call me Phil, too, you know," he exclaimed, suddenly becoming excited; "and when we were all playing together, the boys used to look at me and whistle and say, 'Here, Phil, here, doggy, doggy'; and when I wanted to fight them for it, they said, 'O, they did n't mean me, they were not thinking of me, they were only calling the dog.' But they did n't get me to believe such a thundering big story as that, and I made them stop it."

Mr. Crampton felt like inquiring the number and size of the giants which this little Jack had demolished, in the process of "making them stop it," for the valor and contempt expressed in his face were worthy of that redoubtable champion himself. But Philip seemed to think that such conduct had better be consigned to oblivion; so, after venting his revived wrath in a few more angry expressions, he went back to discuss the pictures of his own accord.

"Emily has another one that I liked. She said the same man painted it. It was a hat and feather, and dogs and spurs; don't you know?"

"You must mean the 'Cavalier's Pets,'" said Mr. Crampton, as, with some effort, he recognized that picture in Philip's rough sketch.

"Yes," replied the boy, "that was the name under it. I know, because I asked Emily what a cavalier was, and she told me all

about them. She said I ought to know, because some of them were our ancestors," continued the child, looking very much like a miniature Sir Walter Raleigh, as he spoke.

"So," thought Mr. Crampton, "good blood, as well as brains, in the family! Upon my word, this grows satisfactory."

The gentleman's democratic ideas were, like those of many Americans, entirely confined to politics.

"You will see pictures to your heart's content when you get to Europe, Philip," said he, resuming the conversation.

"O yes, I know I will, and statues, too."

"Have you ever seen any statues?" asked Mr. Crampton, wishing to see whether the boy knew what he was talking about.

"Not many," was the reply. "Emily has a beautiful little one of Beethoven, that Mr. Crampton gave her."

"Of Beethoven! Why, what do you know of Beethoven?" said the gentleman, laughing, and tapping him under the chin.

"Why, I know a great deal about him," returned the boy, stoutly; "he wrote all that music that Emily is always playing," he added, with a queer grimace of his small features, — displaying even at that early age the genuine masculine hatred of practising.

"Well, I believe you do know something of him. But come with me now, and I will show you some beautiful statues, and pictures too." And the two started, hand in hand, for the drawing-room.

"Max," said Mr. Crampton, as, upon their return to the dining-room, some time after, they found that gentleman sitting by the window, reading the morning's paper, "you will certainly have a charming little travelling-companion in this child; he is really remarkable. He seems to have a genuine taste for art and beauty, and really to know something about them."

"Yes," replied Max, "he has plenty of sense; but it is not singular that he should be able to talk about that which he has heard discussed all his life."

As Mr. Crampton's only sight of Emily had been during the moment or two she had stood in the hall the night before, with her veil shading her face, his curiosity concerning her appearance was still unsatisfied. So, when that morning she entered the breakfast-room, he naturally looked up with vivid interest. He exceedingly approved of the simple, but almost stately grace with which she came towards him, as, rising, he advanced to meet her. His artistic, cultivated eye took in instantaneously the splendid curves of the figure and the queenly formation and carriage of the head and shoulders.

"Upon my word, the fellow's taste does him credit!" he thought. "In spite of its deadly paleness, it is a grand face and figure. But I might have known I could have trusted Max for that; he always knew well enough what a really beautiful woman is, and I don't wonder that he has been so blind of late to ordinary prettinesses."

"Good morning, my daughter," he said aloud, taking her hand, and pressing his lips to the graceful brow raised towards him, — noticing almost instinctively, as he did so, how soft and white it shone, contrasted with the rich brown hair that defined it.

At the sound of his pleasant, kindly voice, she gave a quick glance to his face, and then, as if moved to it by some sudden impulse, raised her lips towards his. The old gentleman positively flushed crimson with pleasure, as he stooped to give the caress she had mutely asked.

"You have made an old man happy as well as a young one, my darling," he said; and the bond which this moment established between Emily Crampton and her father endured to the end of their lives.

That Max was just then, to all outward appearance, engrossed in what was going on on the other side of the street, did not diminish the keen pleasure this momentary scene sent thrilling through him. He was perfectly cognizant of it, to its minutest particular, — conscious even of the coming and going of the faint rose-color that for a second tinged her cheek. He seemed now, as at all times, to have, like a spider or fly, eyes all over him, — than which no faculty can be more annoying in a human being. It gives such an uncomfortable advantage over other persons less fortunate, and effectually secures general dislike. But Max kept his knowledge to himself, and did not even turn away from the window until his father had placed Emily at the table, — where, in consideration of her evidently painful weakness, he did not even ask her to preside.

Max felt perfectly sure that the news of his marriage would fly like lightning through the circle of his acquaintance, and so fully expected that some of them would gratify their curiosity by calling upon him that day; especially as it would also be known that they were to leave for Europe upon the next. So, as soon as the breakfast was over, it being by that time near midday, Max established Emily in the quiet, luxurious library, and, leaving her to his father's tender mercies, betook himself to the drawing-room with Philip, to receive the enemy, who soon appeared, quite in force, — intimates and would-be intimates, by numbers. But, in spite of their united

efforts, Max was neither to be coaxed, bullied, nor teased into producing his wife for general inspection and criticism. Even when Jack Harrington made his appearance with his mother and sister, his answer was the same: "She had been ill for a long while, was very much fatigued with yesterday's journey, and needed perfect rest and quiet to prepare her to start again upon the morrow, and so must not be disturbed by the sight of strangers."

This was his ultimatum, which Jack alone, with the impression of that still, proud face freshly upon him, made no effort to oppose. In reply to some direct question, Max admitted that Philip was very much like his sister in face; whereupon the child's physiognomy was so minutely and persistently examined that he was fairly stared out of countenance, and fain to beat a retreat. Except this crumb of information, they were all obliged to go away with their curiosity in as hungry a state as when they entered. And go away they soon did, when they found such to be the case.

That night, this strange marriage was the prevailing subject of gossip in all the fashionable saloons of New York. Young New York, male and female, wondered and made itself merry; while Old New York, male and female, desponded, and shook its head over the whole affair.

"So, Miss Alice, your cousin Max has really been and gone and done it," said a slightly fast young man to Alice Harrington, almost immediately upon her entrance into the ball-room, which she that evening graced with her presence.

"Yes, so it would seem; though from actual personal observation I know no more of it than you do."

"Why, it's very extraordinary; that's the same answer I get from everybody; but I thought you, as one of the family, would be an exception."

"No, indeed, we shared alike in the attack and defeat. I knew, as soon as I saw Max's face, that all attempt at persuasion would be pains thrown away; for he had on what we used to call, when we were children together, his law-of-the-Medes-and-Persians look. He was always the queerest boy alive."

"So he was," sapiently rejoined the young man, who, though he had had for years an "Ah-Max-how-do-you-do" acquaintance with Mr. Crampton, knew about as much of his real self as he did of the internal existences of the inhabitants of the South Sea Islands, — "so he was, and that is why I was so surprised to hear of his marriage. I did not think any one would ever be smart enough to catch such a

wary old bird as he, especially after all the snares he has escaped!"

"Did it ever occur to you," said Alice, with chilling hauteur, "that the 'catching,' as you call it, might have been on his side? I think it might have been so," added the girl; for now that Emily was indissolubly connected with her, she felt called upon to sustain the family credit, by defending her from impertinent suggestions.

"I think, indeed, it might have suggested itself to him, if he had ever seen the person 'caught,'" struck in Jack, coming to the rescue, to the young man's intense relief. He was one of quite a group which a common interest in the subject had drawn together round Alice.

"Why, have you ever seen her?" exclaimed half a dozen voices at once.

"Yes," said Jack, who immediately rose in the public estimation as a person possessed of important information.

"Is she handsome?" "Is she young?" "Is she smart?" "Is she rich?" rang out the chorus again in different parts.

"One at a time, for mercy's sake!" cried Jack; "how am I to answer you all at once? Now, then, each one in his turn. What did you ask?"

"I inquired if she were handsome," returned the person addressed; but she put the question in a much lower tone and quieter manner than she had originally spoken it.

"She is as handsome," answered Jack, oratorically, "as a woman, totally without color or life, can be. Imagine a marble statue in travelling clothes, and you will very nearly have Mrs. Crampton as she looked when I had the honor to be presented to her. I assure you, when Max introduced me, I had an irresistible inclination to follow Leperello's example, and take off my hat, and say, '*O statua gentilissima!*' Or, rather, I should have had that impulse, if I had had my senses about me," added Jack, half to himself, as he suddenly became conscious that he was merely turning a neat sentence, and recollected that at the time he had thought of nothing of the kind. It is remarkable how *apropos* and witty we become in our afterthoughts. Upon the whole, the difference in men's social agreeability lies, not so much in what they think as in when they think it, — whether they can have their bright thought ready at the right moment or not.

"Now, then," said Jack, hurrying away as fast as possible from the unpleasant consciousness that he was representing himself as of much quicker perception on this occasion than had been the fact, — "now, then, Number Two, what do you want to know?"

"I inquired how old she was," was the reply. The speaker, being a lady of rather uncertain age herself, had her mind naturally led to that particular. She was one of those quick-witted, ill-natured females, so universally disliked by men and women, — though particularly by the former, whom they especially insult and aggravate by exceeding them in sense, and being total protestants against the general worship offered them. Max, though, had had an odd liking for her, as he had for cayenne pepper, and had often listened to her witty ill-nature by the hour, — a liking more than returned, especially towards his fortune and splendid establishment; so that it was towards her, among others, that the first speaker's remark about the snares Max had escaped had been directed.

"She is quite young," said Jack, answering her question, — "not more than twenty, I should suppose; though she looked so ill, and had so evidently lost her freshness from that cause, it would be hard to decide exactly."

"So, I supposed she was some silly, childish girl. I knew she had not arrived at discretion, either by years or any other route, or she never could have married such a Quilp of a man as Max Crampton of her own free will, — unless, perhaps, she were laboring under a temporary fit of insanity."

The laugh which passed round the group at this announcement was decidedly equivocal; and one young man whispered to Jack Harrington to "ask the lady for the exact date of her own recovery from the malady she had described." Jack merely extinguished this ambitious young person with a frown, and went on with his conversation.

"I don't think myself that her will had much to do with it; at least, she did not look as though it had."

"Come now, Jack," said his sister, "don't be ridiculous. We don't exactly live in the Dark Ages, so he could not possibly have made her marry him, if she had not wanted to."

"I am not so sure of that," replied Jack, with a slightly perplexed face; "it sometimes occurs to me that the nineteenth century has decidedly the advantage over its predecessors in that particular. We don't use brute force, to be sure; but we have our own ways of bending the human will, and I think they accomplish the matter even more effectually; at least, I could not help thinking something of the kind yesterday, though I really don't see now what particular reason I had, and very probably I am entirely mistaken in applying the remark to this case," he added, his face clearing up as he thus comfortably disposed of his doubts.

"Of course you are," said Alice, — "not that I believe it applies in any case. I have no doubt she loves him very much, and that he gained her heart as well as her hand."

"Yes, especially as it is to be supposed that he exerted his usual five-hundred-ordinary-man power to secure it," laughed Jack.

"In love with Mephistopheles! Surely that would be a miracle worth witnessing!" exclaimed Number Two, whose usual cognomen was Gertrude Weston, and who was the only person in the group who comprehended Jack's idea.

"Really, Miss Gertrude," interposed the young man who had begun the conversation, "you do call people by the cruellest names; just now it was Quilp, and now it is Mephistopheles. I don't know which is worst."

"Fortunately I can give Mr. Crampton the benefit of a choice. There are others upon whom I should find it hard to confer a like favor," she returned, with cool scorn.

The man felt himself indistinctly insulted, but had the unexpected good sense to smart in silence under a wrong which he was unequal to revenge.

"Go on and tell us more about this Mrs. Mephistopheles, Quilp, Crampton, or whatever you choose to call her," continued Number Two; "I have some curiosity on the subject."

"Well, what do you want to know? Ask on," replied Jack.

"You have n't answered my question yet," put in a fresh speaker.

"What was it?"

"Has she any sense?"

"Can't say, positively, because I did n't hear her speak five words; but if looks go for anything, I should decidedly say she had sense, and that in any quantity. And as for pride!" — Jack here found words insufficient, and could only express his sentiments by a low whistle.

"Is she so haughty-looking?" broke out the whole party at once.

"Haughty-looking!" repeated the man; "why, Lucifer's eldest daughter, sole heiress of her father's peculiar property, might fittingly take lessons of her in general effect. Her pride is so still and cold, that I really felt quite frozen by merely sitting near her."

"A pleasant prospect for the family in general, who will necessarily be thrown with her," said Alice, in some dismay.

"O well," laughed Jack, "don't be scared before there is any necessity for it; she is going away to a warm climate, so perhaps she will thaw by the time she comes back."

"Very little hope from that influence, I am afraid, as she came from a warm climate."

"By the way, where did she come from?" asked one of the gentlemen.

"Baltimore, I believe. At least, Max said he was married there," returned Jack.

"Who was she?" inquired another, "do you know anything of her family or connections?"

"No more than you do, except that her name was Emily Chester; and even that, Uncle Crampton told me. Max is by no means a person of whom you can ask questions *ad libitum*; at least, I never could, and the other day I did not even begin."

"Then you don't know whether she was rich or poor?"

"No. But it will make very little difference now; for as Max's wife she will be rich enough in all conscience."

"Well, ladies and gentlemen, is there anything else you would like to ask?" inquired Jack, blandly; for, under the pleasant delusion that it was impossible they could have more questions in reserve, he thought he could afford to appear very obliging.

But he was undeceived; for, for the next hour he was overwhelmed with inquiries as to the color of her hair and eyes, her complexion, height, dress, and all sorts of particulars which gentlemen never accurately notice, or at least never remember, until he bitterly repented having acknowledged that he had ever seen her, and felt now like blindly denying it, as the only way out of his difficulties. What made it worse was, that this was only a public repetition of the private family catechism he had gone through, from which he had come away with the comforting information that he "had no eyes or memory"; all because to most of the questions he was obliged to answer "that he really had not noticed, or did not recollect," to their great disgust and his humiliation. In a rash moment he had forgotten this previous trial, and invited the persecution he was now undergoing. It was noticed that Jack left very early that night, and well he might, for he was nearly badgered to death. Heaven help any man from whom women are attempting to extract personal information, which he is expected to possess through the use of his eyes, and does not happen to have. If he does not come out of that ordeal with a diminished opinion of himself and his perceptive faculties, he will be a miracle on earth.

It is singular how soon we become habituated to any new and agreeable state of affairs; how in a few hours some person or thing

will have become essential to our happiness. The life which appeared complete the moment before their entrance into it will, upon their departure after a few hours' intercourse, seem void and imperfect, lacking its most necessary element. Thus it was with Mr. Crampton. After possessing this beautiful woman for his daughter he could scarcely realize how he had been contented with his previous existence. And now, as soon as her presence had grown a necessity, he was to be deprived of it, for he had refused Max's invitation to accompany them; first, from an idea that young lovers (as he thought this pair) were better off and happier without the company of their elders; and, second, he thought this sacrifice due to Max, in return for his son's generous self-denial of the last year.

"It is but right he should have his wife entirely to himself, at first, without my attempting to share either his or her attention," thought the kind gentleman. "I divided them last year; I must not do so during this. But it is hard to part from them; I envy the boy the privilege of waiting on and serving her. It is selfish, though, to be thinking of my happiness instead of theirs, and I must not let it go further."

The steamer in which they were to leave for Europe was to start next morning. But Emily looked so wretchedly pale, so totally without strength or care for anything, that Mr. Crampton felt justified in uniting his interest with what he thought hers, and pleaded for another week's delay. But Max, well knowing that this was more than mere temporary fatigue, which a few days' rest would overcome, was quietly inexorable, and shook his head to all arguments and entreaties. If she had by word or look expressed a wish on the subject, he could hardly have found strength to resist it, — even conscious, as he was, that her health, perhaps even her life, hung upon the speed of their departure. She spared him this trial by her perfect passivity; and his father's arguments he could refute, or oppose with a simple negative.

Except for Philip's gayety and noisily expressed pleasure at the prospect of their journey their last breakfast together would have been a very quiet meal. Max's happiness had, since his marriage, been too deep and intense, for light, careless words to rise easily to his lips. Feeling and living in this great joy, it was only by an effort that he came out of it sufficiently to talk of trifles; consequently he made little effort to support the conversation. Mr. Crampton did scarcely anything but look at his daughter, and think how dreary the table would seem when her figure was withdrawn. He was almost

tempted to break his resolution, even at that last moment, and go with them. But even as he thought it, he caught the expression of Max's eyes as they rested momentarily upon his wife's face. What he read there showed him plainly that this was a feeling in which he had no part; that this was a union upon which he ought not to intrude. He gave up the idea instantly.

At twelve o'clock they were upon the steamer, ready to start. Mr. Crampton stayed with them until the final moment, and there was something very much like tears in his eyes, as, tenderly pressing Emily to his breast, he gave and received her farewell kiss.

"Good by, my boy; take care of her and of yourself," he said to Max, and had only time to shake hands with him and with Philip, and reach the shore, before the steamer put off.

So they parted, — they for the broad ocean, and he for his lonely home, the desolation of which was at first unbearable, after his late unusual number of companions.

CHAPTER XX.

TO Max's keen disappointment, the sea voyage and air had by no means that rapid and visible effect upon Emily's health for which he had hoped. The old listless apathy still wrapped her like an invisible shroud. He saw that the springs of life had been too thoroughly relaxed easily to recover their tension; that the terrible strain of the last year upon her nervous system must have its complete reaction before any equilibrium could be hoped for. He tried to follow the dictates of his reason, and wait patiently for it. Even with this drawback, what words can express the fulness of his happiness? It seemed to him sometimes too great for truth, that he must be living in a delicious dream, from which he would wake to some desolating reality. But his privilege of being always near her, of clasping her in his arms, of covering with kisses lips and cheeks, of drawing back at his will the gleaming, silken masses of hair from those delicate temples, was a bliss which thrilled through him too keenly, which sent the blood seething through his veins in too human a fashion for this mood to last long. Not a dream nor an ideal, but a beautiful woman and his wife. His devotion was too deep and true for him to lavish expressions of it upon her which could only disturb or repel her. He lived, moreover, in the hope that one day she would grow to love him, — give him something beyond friendship and intellectual sympathy; and knew that to persecute her with his affection was not the way to attain his object. Up to this time he had simply determined to marry her through and over all obstructions. Now, his love having, as love always does, only grown hungrier from the food it had received, he craved something more, — longing for the soul of married life as well as its form. Not content with the right and opportunity to caress her, he desired to feel her cheek flush and brighten under his kisses; that his passionate love might evoke some corresponding warmth from this pale statue. Once the obstacles to his present position seemed insurmountable: could not the same indomitable will and determination gain him further success? They should attempt it; and the prospect looked to him fair.

By the time they had crossed the ocean, and, passing through England and France, arrived at Baden-Baden, summer had come. Max had brought Emily hither, hoping she might be benefited, as his father had been. But after some time he found himself obliged to abandon this expectation. Not the waters, not a change of scene or air, not his untiring devotion and watchfulness of every thought and wish, availed to recuperate the vital forces. It was agony to him to see day after day go by, and still the cheek retain its death-like pallor, the eyelids their weary droop. He had not realized until then how certainly he had counted on her speedy recovery; the disappointment showed him the extent of his hope. Having tried every scheme that love could devise and money execute, he was fain to give up and trust to Time, the all-healer, to accomplish that which it seemed impossible to hasten by human agency.

As the autumn came on, and the weather grew cooler, they left Germany for Italy, and settled quietly down by Lake Como. Here, with perfect rest and the influence of the climate, Emily began at last visibly to recruit. The good she had really derived from her summer travelling, which the attendant fatigue had prevented from being seen, now began to show itself. The improvement was slight enough at first; but how instantly recognized by the keen eyes of her watchful husband! It came to him as he was ready to despair, it came like water to a thirsty soul; and he saw the promise being fulfilled in the brightening eye and quickened step, he felt as though new life had been given to him. She would soon be herself once more, and the prize he had striven for would be his indeed.

But as time passed, and rich streams of health and strength flowed through her veins, Max saw that it was not exactly her old self that was returning. Her long apathy appeared a chrysalis state, from which she had emerged into a more developed stage of existence. If he had thought her worthy of adoration before, what could he feel and think now, when she looked almost like the glorified spirit of her former self? Every pang she had endured and conquered had yielded up to her in return its treasure of beauty and development as compensation for her sorrow. The change sometimes troubled Max, filling him with vague dread. But as strength and loveliness became permanent, he lost this feeling: it was swallowed up in his happiness as he luxuriated and basked in their light. He was so intoxicated with the present, every moment brought such an intense, full life to be lived, that it was impossible to give a thought to its successor.

For all that Max Crampton suffered during his life, he held the heaven in which he lived during these days as perfect compensation. Had he died then, he would have gone out of the world judging himself most richly blessed. It is awful to think of the delusions under which we live: how little we recognize at first sight either blessings or curses; how, as we draw near the end, and the terrible clear-sightedness of death comes upon us, we see that what we have called our sorrow has brought forth joy, and our joy sorrow.

With Emily's returning health, all her constitutional peculiarities had revived with increased strength and vigor; her morbid sensitiveness to outward influences seemed to have grown with her growth and strengthened with her strength. In consequence, about this time, a blasting horror rose like a spectre in her path; from which she shrank back in terror, crying unto God to be delivered from its power. The repulsion towards Max, which had come over her with such force even in her girlhood, was now increasing upon her daily with fearful rapidity. It had begun with a faint return of the old sensation; and she, with a frightful consciousness of its consequences, had sternly ignored its existence, had resolutely blinded herself to the truth. This battle with, and denial of, instinct, resulted as such conflicts inevitably must. Not only defeat, but insulted Nature avenges herself and increases her demands just in proportion as she has been defrauded. Now, with Max's constant presence and unconscious aggravations, it had grown to be almost a mania with her. But here resolution and self-control stepped in, and, keeping ceaseless watch and ward, forbade, let the feeling be what it might, any sign of it to appear. Shrinking flesh and recoiling nerves stood still, at the mandate of the unbending will. Max sometimes wondered why the lips he kissed were so white and compressed. But he made no effort to solve the mystery; having long ago learned the uselessness of any man, even the subtlest, attempting completely to comprehend any woman, even the simplest. He knew there were a hundred recesses in her nature into which he could never enter, — oratories and confessionals of whose existence he was totally ignorant; and he counted this one of them. He little dreamed of the Spartan-like control with which that woman sat and endured a caress, which gave her the same sensation as though some loathsome reptile had drawn its slow length across her. With his previous introduction to this feeling in her towards him, it would seem strange that he did not now suspect it, but for the fact that he only knew it by its old form of open manifestation; and she, being

thoroughly on her guard, took care that none should now appear. Also, besides the unconscious tendency in human nature only to see and believe that which runs with our inclination, the man was so drunk with happiness, his brain so filled and saturated with bliss, as to deaden its usual perception. The awakening is coming closer and closer upon him, and yet, until the last moment, he sleeps on, and the future is veiled in merciful darkness. His Paradise blooms to him as fair and imperishable as ever Eden did to Adam.

For two or three months this experience went on; Emily's health becoming every day more firmly established, but the conflict in her nature growing intolerable. With her entire faith in Max, with her intellect yielding allegiance to his, with her deep gratitude and friendship towards him, she felt that, but for this terrible thorn in the flesh, she could have been peacefully happy. Fate seemed with one hand to lift a sweet cup to her lips, and with the other to mingle bitter poison with every drop. Sometimes when they read or talked together, when Max's brain asserted its dominion over her, she would forget all other feelings, and, in her keen enjoyment of the present, almost fancy she loved him. But soon some slight gesture or expression of face would call up the haunting spectre, and from its influence she could only seek refuge in her sternest self-restraint. Still Max seeing, saw not. But an hour was coming which should show him that to which his eyes should never again close. That hour came.

It was late one autumn night, the whole household had retired. Yet Emily, being in that state of physical oppression and mental fatigue to which all nervous persons are at times subject, did not care to follow their example. Stepping through the long window, she began pacing up and down the moonlit balcony; at first with a quick, nervous step, as though possessed by some restless spirit. More than once during that day her self-command had been taxed to its utmost, and her nerves were still vibrating from the tension. But soon, true to her constitutional sensitiveness, she began to feel the influence of the time and scene. Her pace gradually slackened, the stern, set look faded out of her face, and presently she was walking slowly to and fro, looking as calmly happy as in her girlish days when she trod the familiar porch in her home beyond the sea. Those days came back to her to-night with a strange force and freshness. Feelings and incidents until now forgotten started up and claimed remembrance. In the shadowy moonlight, ghosts of that dead time seemed to gather and rise before her.

Again and again Frederick Hastings's face would appear,—the beautiful eyes shining down upon her, the pleasant voice sounding once more in her ears. O the simple, happy life they had lived this very time last year! she found herself growing fresh and young from the very memory of it. Snatches of poetry they had repeated upon just such nights formed themselves involuntarily upon her lips; she almost laughed as she found herself singing softly the songs he loved best. As she passed up and down the balcony, with all her armor of self-control completely cast aside, as careless and unrestrained as she had been in her earliest youth, Max stepped from one of the doors opening upon the porch, and coming gently behind her caught her in his arms.

"My bird will lose its voice if it sings any longer in the night air," he said gayly.

The words were still upon his lips, when she tore herself from his grasp, drowning his sentence in a sharp, irrepressible cry of horror. The full splendor of the moonlight was upon them, revealing every look and gesture with a cold, awful distinctness. The sight it revealed to Max Crampton's eyes burned through them into his brain, there to remain while life lasted. It was the vision of a woman shrinking, almost crouching, against the angle of the balustrade that stopped her flight, with hands stretched out as though to drive him off; every particle of her expressing disgust, horror, loathing, with as frightful a power and emphasis as though each fibre had found a separate voice and shrieked its abhorrence. The glance she had given him at their parting, a year and a half before, was to this as the evening wind is to the wildest tornado. As he looked, the man's face grew savage in its wild defiance. A moment more and he raised his hand to his eyes as though to sweep away some terrible mist that covered them. The hand fell, and the face thus left bare was deathlike in its calm despair. Its cold, stilling influence fell upon the woman, and she made a ghastly effort to regain her self-control.

"You scared me so terribly," she gasped out, as though fright had been the cause of her emotion. To see the effort that the failure required, showed him, as nothing else could have done, what a success must have cost her,—a success, he now knew, every day of the last two or three months must have witnessed. The meaning of that stern, white look her face so often wore! He had learnt it now; it was a mystery no longer. As the memory of all his loving caresses, and their inevitable consequence, came back to him at once, the man's features contracted with a spasm, as though some intolerable

physical agony had struck him. It passed, and its previous expression returned. As it settled down upon his face, Emily saw that all disguise was hereafter impossible; that in one unguarded moment she had rendered past and future self-control useless. Looking into each other's eyes, both saw that the other knew, — that standing there face to face, husband and wife, bound together before the world by the strongest earthly tie, they were as entirely divided, as utterly apart, as though one had been in heaven and the other in hell; that, no matter where their road of life might lead, or how they might walk it, always between them this spectre would hold its place, its power never growing weaker, its presence never less terrible. They made no vain resistance; no childish cries for mercy. Their fate was upon them, and only endurance and submission remained. Henceforth their portion was to be "death in life." As a full perception of this gathered and burst upon the woman, she threw up her hands before her eyes, as if to shut out the horrible sight and knowledge, and with a gasping, wailing sob upon her lips, fled past him, down the balcony and hall.

Max stood motionless, only following her with his eyes, until her retreating form was lost in the doorway of her apartment; and then, turning slowly, walked to his own room.

He had seen his hope and happiness die; now came its burial. His fairy palace had fallen around him, and he sat down among its ruins. Hour after hour that still figure, with its folded arms and calm, deathlike face, sat there with a sensation as though he were keeping watch by the corpse of his beautiful past, looking his last upon it, before it was wrapt in its winding-sheet and placed in its eternal sepulchre. Scene after scene appeared, each with a new light upon it, with a new meaning. The chill of death seemed to have freed his perception from all delusions, and clearly and more clearly he saw his great error, — that in working his own wild, passionate will, in defiance of the warnings of Nature, that in using his strength of character and purpose gradually to deprive another human soul of its birthright of freewill, — he had sinned against God and Nature, and must now suffer the inevitable penalty.

"Submission! submission!" sternly commanded the iron will to the humanity which cried out for mercy. Looking again upon the face of the dead past, he saw much more, — words, smiles, and looks, slight in themselves, but upon which he had rested hopes that he had so loved and lived upon that they had become a part of his very being, but which must now be given up, though his heart bled and

his soul failed in the effort. The beautiful illusions of the last few months must be buried far from sight, and the door of the sepulchre closed upon their very ghosts. Thus he gradually laid away the body of his past, from which the spirit and life had been riven as though by a stroke of lightning.

The night went by, and the morning dawned upon him still sitting there motionless, still performing the same burial service.

The sunlight streaming in and dazzling him with its brilliancy roused him, and he rose to his feet. His watch by the tomb was over, he had rolled the stone to its mouth. With the day came life and the future. The future! Could he live it, was it possible for human nature to drink such a cup?

"Submission! submission!" again the inexorable mandate sounded, but the voice was a moan. *His* future! The blackness of another's burst upon him at the thought. He had previously uttered no word, but now the lips moved, and "Emily! poor Emily!" fell from them. In this terrible parting pain — which he felt, O how sorely! to be only his — he had lost sight of the strange torture life was and would be to her.

"God forgive me! I thought my love true; and yet through all these years I have sought my happiness in defiance of hers, and now I forget her pain in thinking of my own. I have madly taken her fate in my hand; I have done her this fearful wrong. Heaven help me to keep my selfish love from adding to it in the living death we must now lead. What right have I over her, but that which I have wickedly gained, that which she would never have given me of her own uncontrolled will. Henceforth she shall be free from the torment of my visible love, and I will go back into my old place as — friend." He stopped, for the irrepressible bitterness in his tone drowned the words and stifled speech. A moment more, and —

"My God! my God!" he burst out in fierce agony, his passion sweeping all restraint before it, "is this to be the end of my life's hope and dream? Am I to live, only to kill by inches the woman I adore, and to witness day by day" — again he stopped — "her loathing for me," he was about to say, but the words died away on his lips. They called up the vision of the night before; the picture then burnt into his brain started out with such frightful vividness, that he could think of no words to utter what it declaimed in every line.

His face had sunk down upon his hands as the horror it represented closed over him. He had lost the anchor of his life, and was drifting out on this sea of wretchedness, whither he knew not. At

last the tide flowed back, and he lifted his head with a long, sighing sound, as though life had been temporarily suspended, and had but just returned. The waves seemed to have stranded him upon some lonely rock, there to live and die, cut off from humanity and human sympathy.

"Alone, alone, all, all alone, — alone on a wide, wide sea."

Why did this familiar line suddenly spring up in his memory and stun him with its endless repetitions, sounding like the voice of Fate in his ears? He had always lived apart from his fellow-men; but now the star upon which his eyes had been fixed, whose light had cheered and guided him in this spiritual solitude, was set forever, and he was left indeed alone in his desolate darkness.

"Submission! submission!"

As he lifted his eyes they fell upon a mirror opposite, and he saw his face reflected in it. The traces of the night were fearfully visible upon it.

"This will never do, — never!" he muttered through his clenched teeth. "Have I turned idiot or fool, that I should hold up my heart for men's amusement, after this fashion? Besides, shall I add to her pain by letting her see what mine has been? It will never do." And catching up his hat, he went rapidly down-stairs and out of the house, though instinctively by another way than that which led through the balcony; resolved, by some means, to recover his usual appearance before he and she met again.

When, hours after, he came back, fresh air and strong will had removed the more striking marks of discomposure, and to a careless eye he was his usual cold self again; but his face retained a look which that night had engraved upon it for life, yes and for death, — for his very corpse wore it, — the look of a man who has played for all, and lost all.

But another fearful watch had been kept in this house. Down upon her knees, Emily Crampton wore out the night praying Heaven for the help earth utterly denied. Cut off from human, outward aid, her nature turned traitor to her will; from whom could succor come except from the great God? Still her cry went up, and still no answer seemed vouchsafed, until she found herself unconsciously repeating the words of her childhood's prayer, "Our Father who art in Heaven." "Our Father!" Was it not enough. It came to her like an angel's voice, and she clung to the word with a desperate faith, — a faith born of despair; for it was all that stood between her and destruction.

CHAPTER XXI.

FEW of us ever realize the servitude of even the most independent to the usual family habits. The night may be spent in wrestling with the shadow of death, or, far worse, with that of life; but when breakfast is ready, we must be ready also, under the penalty of wondering looks and catechism. The decision of all our hopes may be pending in secret; but if the dinner hour arrives, that ordeal must be undergone. Sickening anxiety or disappointment may be stealing round our hearts; but supper is announced, and which of us dare refuse to appear without some material reason to allege? The outer life must be kept smooth and unbroken for general inspection, let the inner workings be what they will. Heart and feeling are not allowed for in the calculation; or if so, it is at our own peril. Our old friend Ixion, reappearing constantly in a fresh form; the allegory still holds, through all the improvements of our nineteenth century. Emily Crampton realized this, as on the morning every moment brought nearer and nearer the time when she must go to the breakfast-table and there see her husband face to face, — a meeting that must take place sooner or later, whose terror could only be increased by being openly deferred. But, as she tried to steel her nerves for the effort, she felt as though will and flesh must fail before such inhuman trial. How could she bridge over the great gulf the preceding night had set between them, with the conventionalities of existence? And yet she knew that this was the task set, not only for this moment, but in some way for every instant of her future life.

"Be wise, accustom yourself to the weight of this cross, for you are to bear it to the end," said unrelenting reason and perception. And she struggled to obey.

She tried, just as Max had done, to remove the traces of the past night; taking off her evening dress, and assuming morning costume with scrupulous care. The sunny radiance of her hair almost gave color to the cheeks upon which it rested; and the features, obeying the mastering will, fell into quiet self-possession. Knowing that she had done all she could to attain her end, and that every delay would

but make the ultimate trial worse, she walked steadily down the stairway, though with some such sensation as if she were descending the steps to the bottomless pit. As she reached the doorway, for a second it seemed too much, and she stopped to gasp for breath. It was but for a moment, and then she passed into the room, to find Max standing quietly in his accustomed place waiting for her, just as he had done every day since their marriage. He came to meet her with his usual morning salutation, neither adding to nor leaving out one iota of his general routine. He had settled the part he would act, and he carried it out faithfully.

At the sound of his voice the hot flush scorched over her cheek and half-blinded her; but as she caught the steady, unwavering look of his eyes, it faded suddenly as though chilled away by their cold light, and they were both, to all appearance, equally composed. The man's lips paled as he saw it all; but the heavy moustache that shaded them rendered this imperceptible, and no rebellious muscle dared to tell of the inward conflict. In this brief moment Max Crampton had intentionally settled the rôle of their future lives. The maxim runs, "It is the first step which costs"; it is certainly that which decides. He had said, by his manner, more powerfully than any words could have stated it, —

"This is the rule by which we are to walk; the old life in appearance in every particular. Our secret must remain our own, and to effect this we must live as though the haunting spectre were as unseen to our eyes as it shall be to those of others. This is what you must endure, that from which I cannot save you."

"I accept the necessity," was the reply her face showed him, "so let it be." And so it was, there and thereafter. A stranger looking in upon them would have thought them a rather quiet, reserved, but exceedingly courteous pair of friends, breakfasting together. Not the smallest accustomed civility was omitted, everything went on just as usual. The servant who attended, though a quick-witted man, — Max's body-servant, for years in the habit of watching his master's looks and obeying them, instead of waiting for spoken orders, — saw nothing beyond what he usually witnessed. Even Emily, sitting there, eating mechanically she knew not what, grew bewildered, and inclined to doubt the evidence of her senses. She felt as though the scene of last night must have been a nightmare; and that this was only a continuation of the life she had been leading for the last two or three months. But a glance at Max's face, with that strange new look upon it, pierced through the illusion and destroyed it instantly. With that result, the cause must indeed have been real.

At last the form of the meal was over, and Emily rose from the table, wondering how far and how long this acting was to be kept up. She knew this day would be the model to which the rest of her life must be conformed. She had been in the habit of going to her sitting-room directly after breakfast, to practise music, read, or amuse herself in some such way, and Max had always followed her. To-day she went, but she spent the morning alone. She knew then that he would never again intrude upon her private domains; that it was literally only in their outer life, when other eyes were upon them, that she would be required to keep up her part.

She sat there through the long hours, with that desolation upon her which arises, not from loss of happiness, for that had gone long ago, but, far worse, from destruction of all aim and purpose. The preceding months had brought terrible pain, but they had also brought vivid life, — exercising and developing all her powers. So true was this, that, in the midst of it, her physical nature had obeyed the same law, and health and beauty had even increased.

"I meant to be a good wife, I tried to keep my marriage vow," was her moan; "but that is all over now," and life stretched out before her, an existence of idle, aimless endurance.

So it went on for days. She tried to read and study, but it was useless. She found herself mechanically repeating the same sentences over and over, with her mind wandering off between each word and gaining no definite idea in the end. Giving this up as hopeless, she endeavored at least to employ her hands, — practising, sewing, anything for occupation; but with little better success. Almost continually alone; for Philip, like a true boy, passed nearly all his time out of doors, in boating and other amusements, which Max had taken care to provide for him, upon their first coming abroad; she grew terribly nervous and restless. Hour after hour, day and night, she would walk up and down her room; with that hurrying step, never resting, always hasting, as though flying from herself. She little knew that on the other side of the door between Max's room and hers, — a door now never opened, — sat a man listening, listening, across whose crushed life she was walking, upon whose bare heart every footstep fell. As long as her walk might be, so long was his watch; night after night, until she had fallen asleep from sheer exhaustion, he never left his post. This restlessness was getting intolerable, growing to be a mania; and listening, in the solemn darkness, Max's never-failing love and tenderness sought and found the remedy.

"Philip," said he, one day at the dinner-table, when the child had been running on for some time about the "fun" he had been having, "don't you think we have been staying here long enough? How would you like to travel again; to see more of Italy and the rest of Europe?"

The boy was of course charmed at the idea of a change, and said so.

"Would you like it?" Max asked, addressing Emily.

"Yes." Her face was bent over her plate as she spoke, but he caught the gleam of her eyes; there was a flash in them, as though she had been restored to fresh air and sunlight.

They went. Over the track we have all journeyed through, if not in body, at least in spirit. Italy, Greece, — those lands upon which God and man have combined to lavish beauty, — ground hallowed by song and story, — they trod with reverent love and admiration. Egypt and Palestine, — the one, where are gathered the broken relics of a dead earthly grandeur, of a departed human empire; the other, still radiant as the scene and source of an invisible kingdom, of an eternal sovereignty, — the very land glorified by the long-gone footstep of the Divine Spiritualist; — to these they came as pilgrims, to bow at the shrine of an elder time and at that of all time. Other phases of the Orient fascinated their Occidental eyes. Constantinople, with its mosques and minarets; Damascus, with its arabesque lattices and balconies; its shady bazaars filled with strange fabrics of gorgeous color and sheen; with precious stones of mystic tracery and value; with rings, graven with cabalistic devices; cimeters with which Saladin may have severed veils of gossamer; and all embalmed, as it were, in an aromatic atmosphere, heavy with the perfumes of strange spices and gums, attar of roses and musk, myrrh and frankincense, such as those merchants of old were carrying down to Egypt. Amid a hundred scenes of Eastern life and country, of widely different interests, they wandered and lingered; but always with some subtle charm, drawing and binding them to each. Then again returning to Europe, they traversed its multitude of cities and landscapes, whose beauty is a part of the common heritage of humanity; which renders it little wonderful, that we American "heirs of all the ages" naturally long to go and inspect our splendid patrimony, to enter into our noble estate. Switzerland, with its Alps, glaciers, and lakes; the Rhine, with its natural beauty interwrought and overwoven with a magic web of association; of which history, romance, fairy legend, poetry, furnish the warp and woof, lending

their varied hues to form its many-tinted radiance. Here Lorelei, born of mist and moonlight, seems to rise from the whirling, dashing waters, singing her soul-alluring song, casting around her her deadly enchantments; and as we glide swiftly away from the delicious danger, it is only to pass under the shadow of some dark castle or rock, where, a few hundred years ago, we would have shivered before a less beautiful terror, — would have grown pale before the stern, material peril of armed force, and lawless, crime-stained men.

The beauty and grandeur Emily's young imagination and soul had craved she now lived and revelled in. All she had read or dreamed of was realized.

With this constant excitement and mental and physical pleasure, such an unutterable relief from her previous state, she was at times happy. She had grown sufficiently accustomed to their new position to meet Max without the necessity for such wearing self-control as had been required at first; and he, knowing terribly well where the unhealable sore lay, took careful pains to avoid touching it. Besides, there was everything now to develop their mental congeniality. Every beauty of Nature or Art in that region was to him as a friend familiar from boyhood; and what pleasure could equal his, as he watched her glowing appreciation; as he lived over in her his other self, his own youthful enthusiasm, feeling that this was a God-given tie between them, which neither time nor trial could break. As they stood silent in some grand cathedral, or before some divine inspiration of painting or sculpture, the spectre would fade away, and they would partake of this communion of beauty as two disembodied spirits might have done, freed from all earthly pain and imperfection. At every shrine of beauty, they knelt in united worship.

But even this must fade; this last drop of happiness must be poisoned. For soon the avenging, reactionary pain which had invariably sprung from every pleasure of this woman's life, made its appearance. She became gradually conscious that the course she had adopted was demanding a fatal price; that by thus increasing her sensitiveness to beauty she was intensifying in still greater measure her susceptibility to discordance, to want of grace. So accustomed had her eyes grown to exquisite form and color, that to look upon their opposite was actual physical pain. In her position, she might well shudder at this, as she felt it growing and having its full practical effect. The spectre was a terrible companion in these days. It was worse than anything she had previously known. Even

the darkness that had closed down upon her after that never-forgotten meeting upon the balcony was more endurable than this. Then she thought she had reached the extremity of suffering of which she was capable, and the idea had brought its own strange relief. Now there seemed opened before her a vista of unknown sorrow. It renewed the torture of suspense, which bitter portion she had supposed in mercy forever withdrawn from her lips. There is no blow so crushing, I think, as to find an evil, which we have imagined conquered, lived through or down, come back to us more cruelly regnant than ever! We sit down before it in passive despair; for what use can there be in fighting a foe over whom we have found the victory to be a mere illusion? Thus Emily Crampton now felt. She seemed to herself enclosed in some terrible labyrinth, and that any path by which she strove to escape could only lead to more imminent destruction.

"What shall I do! what can I do!" she exclaimed in her agony; "is this to go on growing worse and worse until it kills me?" The affirmative that reason, feeling, her whole nature, gave for answer, she did not dare to articulate to herself.

She was standing in her chamber, leaning upon the marble slab beneath the mirror, her face buried in her hands, with a feeling at her heart of utter uselessness, except to give and bear pain, when by a slight movement she accidentally threw something down. Turning mechanically to see what had fallen, she found it to be her Bible, which she had left upon the bracket some time before. She stooped to pick it up, and as she did so, a paper fluttered out. Taking it up tenderly to replace it, for she well knew what it was, her eye fell upon the written words: "I am going away to try to live less for myself and more for others; to serve God by serving my fellow-man."

"O friend!" she cried, as the warm, softening tears sprang to her eyes, "dear friend, you have found the true path; I will try to follow you upon it! — I will try."

She sat down and thought earnestly, with an unspoken prayer at her heart, to know what her work really was and where it lay. With the light of that sentence — which had come to her like the light of Heaven in her darkness — shining upon her way, it grew clearer and clearer. Cut off a good, true woman's home and heart life, and how instinctively she supplies its place with active charity; just as certainly as a false or misguided one turns to dissipation. This was now Emily's resource. She saw that the introverted life she had been leading was unhealthy in any case, particularly in

hers; that her great aim must be to forget herself. She would go back to New York, to her home, where she could form some settled plan; where, as in every great city, there must be want and suffering to alleviate, work in helping and bettering humanity for willing hearts and hands.

"If my bitter experience has taught me that there are some sorrows beyond all comfort, how much greater reason for striving to relieve all lesser suffering. And I will strive, so help me God." She rose up with a hope and peace in her face which was almost akin to happiness. She had found an aim, something upon which she could lean for rest, trusting that it would not break and pierce her through, as everything else had done.

When she came down to dinner, Max's eyes saw the change instantly. Could it be that she had grown really peaceful, that the old pain was becoming less acute? was it possible that his ever-gnawing remorse was to have this alleviation? He was afraid to believe it; some chance word or look would dispel the illusion, and bring back the accustomed expression of troubled self-control. But no; there it shone still, the same look he had seen in her face the day he had left for Europe, when he had watched her gazing into the deep-blue sky. It stirred him strangely; it was hard to be quite cool and collected with the feelings of past and present thronging upon him. Could he believe his own ears? Did some of the girlish enthusiasm and freshness really thrill through her voice as she spoke? Instead of the sound he had traced through it so long, of a woman held under rigid self-control, afraid of herself, afraid of free thought or feeling, much more of free speech, — could it be, that he now heard the voice of one who had found some outlet through which her life's current could flow rightly and freely? He distrusted his own senses; he feared it would all vanish away, leaving only the remembrance to embitter reality. But still it shone on, and when she left the room its light was yet upon her face.

They were in Paris now; had been staying there for some time, leading quite a gay life, chiefly because Max so contrived it. He thought anything better for her than solitude and inaction, and took his measures accordingly. Cultivation and amusement were still possible, and he brought them to her through every avenue which wealth and long previous acquaintance with the city opened to him. As for Philip, his life was a series of delights, the child was fairly intoxicated with pleasure. This might have had a dangerous result but for the strong hand that maintained its guidance over all. It

was a strange bond between them; this child, loving each so devotedly, upon which each poured out such affection and kindness. Here they could meet, at least in feeling and action, and they did so.

But sometimes a fierce jealousy of the child would come over Max — the strength of which is only possible in such natures — when he saw him giving caresses, and receiving the evidences of a love for which he would have so gladly laid down his life. But conscience and honor kept this feeling from venturing beyond the recesses of his heart, and strove to crush it even there. Philip little dreamed, that many an unexpected gift or kindness from Max was an atonement, an outward counterbalancing of some injustice of the heart.

Max had another strong reason for drawing his wife into company. There he could see her and enjoy her society on an equality with any other friend; and the spectre being temporarily laid, he triumphed in the impression her beauty and talents everywhere created. When outward circumstances, such as sight-seeing or cultivated companions, excited her, she was easy and natural, talking with fresh, sparkling brilliancy, without effort or self-consciousness; and who appreciated it half so well as the quiet, cold-looking man who usually stood at some distance from her, though within hearing; seldom speaking himself, but when he did, the sentences, with their force and concentration, striking the hearer as bullets do a mark. Then he gained what he sought, her involuntary intellectual sympathy and homage, shown by the quick-flashing glance of her eyes towards him. No wonder Max accepted and gave invitations, — filling his salons with accomplished, agreeable people, — as it procured him the one companion, the only society for which he cared. Fulfilling his office as host, omitting no duty, he still managed to be always near, losing not a single word or look. A strange substitute this, as he sometimes bitterly thought, for the united life, the perfect marriage of which he had once dreamed. But he was too wise, too hungry for his heart's food, not to secure, by every means, the meagre portion still within his reach.

Had Max Crampton been radically either a weak or wicked man, his time, since that night in Italy when his whole life's aim and hope had been rent from him, would have been spent in wild dissipation, in unbridled license. Totally deprived of all home existence, happiness, and occupation, thrown entirely back upon himself, if that self had proved insufficient, he must have fallen, sought refuge in the gratification of unrestrained passion. Over him his passional

nature would have asserted its claim to unlawful indulgence but for his constitutional, ingrained truth. *Treu und fest*, was the unconscious motto of his whole Teutonic character. To him there was but one woman, as there was but one God; to such a nature, a plurality in love was as impossible as a plurality in worship. Besides this, a great, true love, even when utterly hopeless, must purify and ennoble the life. The centre of gravity of his whole being fell within this woman, and no storm or trial could disturb it; his was indeed a true marriage vow, taken and kept until death did part them; because its reality lay, not in the words, but in his mind, body, and soul, long before they were spoken. So, through his truth and his love came Max Crampton's salvation from sin and destruction.

They were going to a ball that night, and at the usual hour for starting Emily came down in evening costume. Max was reading a letter from his father; he was afraid to glance at her as she entered, dreading to see the peaceful calm he had last observed upon her face replaced by the expression he so feared and hated. But no; when he dared to look, it still held its quiet reign.

He came to her, handing her the letter, and telling her whom it was from. She stood under the chandelier, reading it; and he stood watching her, a sufficient occupation for him at any time. The letter was full of affection for both of them, speaking of the time when they would return, of the happiness the writer anticipated when they should all be once more settled under the same roof. Emily's heart softened and warmed as she read it.

"Max," she said, with her cheeks flushing, and with a slight breathlessness of voice and manner (for this opportunity of explaining her thoughts and wishes had come upon her with rather startling unexpectedness, and yet she felt it must not be lost), "suppose we go back to him now. He would be glad; and I think," she hurried on, "we too would be happier at home, with some settled aim, with an opportunity to live more for others."

She stopped; it was harder to put into words than she had expected. She wondered if he understood her feeble, imperfect explanation. No answer coming for a full moment, she looked up to see what his face said.

It spoke of such unchangeable love and pity, of such perfect comprehension and sympathy, of such never-dying remorse and self-condemnation, that it was more than she could bear.

"Max! Max!" she implored. She got no further, but the voice sounded like a cry for forgiveness.

"Yes, my darling," was the only answer, spoken very softly, very quietly; but she heard through it how entirely blameless he held her; how all his pity was for her; how to him even this state had been a great gain.

She could say nothing in return, she made no attempt; for what help could she bring to two lives irrevocably rent asunder? but she put out her hand to him, as she might have done to one who had surrendered this life and its hopes, from whom earth was fast fleeing, and heaven drawing near. He took it gently in both of his, and they stood looking into each other's eyes, for the first time for many long months.

Strange feelings, bitter experiences, had come to both during that time, and the dark record was visible to each as they looked, — a record at which they inwardly shuddered and trembled; but out of its black depths they seemed to see a strangely different form arise, as it were an angel, beckoning, guiding them on towards a higher life, towards God and his eternal home; and they knew that from henceforth each would follow it, that, no matter what abyss divided them, they could still join hands over it as co-workers, fellow-laborers in this evil world on the side of God and humanity.

"The carriage waits," broke in from the outer world, through the voice of the servant, and they turned and descended without further word or look; but with altered feelings from those which had filled their hearts an hour before.

The gay Frenchmen who bowed in admiration before Emily that night, pronouncing her *charmante, avec l'air d'une reine*, little imagined the thoughts that filled her heart and brain, or the scene from which she had come.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE next morning, by tacit mutual consent, they began making preparations for departure. Max would have followed, under any circumstances, his wife's slightest suggestion of a preference; but now, understanding and partaking of her motive, he was as anxious as she to carry it out.

Before another week had passed, they were on board the steamer bound for New York; leaving their pleasant French friends "*désolé*," as they said, at their departure.

Their momentary spiritual recognition did not in any way affect their outward relations. They led the same divided life as hitherto, from the same terrible necessity. Max was too clear-sighted to attempt to cross the barrier which great Nature's unconquerable arm had set between them; too wise to fancy that a mutual exaltation of aim had in any degree altered the constitutional antagonism of her *physique* towards his. "Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther." The point at which he had long ago said this to himself, in his everyday intercourse with her, had in no degree varied, and he knew it. During the rapid voyage across the ocean, they saw little or nothing of each other, except in the populous cabin or deck; and then their communication was just sufficient to satisfy the many-eyed, for whose inspection it was intended. Both were glad when the American shore came in sight, when they arrived at the city which in future they were to call home.

It is very pleasant, at any time, to return to a warm, earnest welcome; to see the love which has held us in its cherishing remembrance, as true as when we parted; to know that our coming brings sunshine and happiness; and Emily's starved heart experienced this to an unusual degree, when, as soon as the steamer touched the wharf, Mr. Crampton sprang on board, and began kissing her and welcoming her, and indeed all of them, with words and smiles, with the joyous enthusiasm of a very boy.

"Why, my old equanimity has hardly recovered from the surprise and pleasure of your letter, announcing your coming, and here you are in the flesh, to permanently overturn it," he exclaimed, gayly.

"When I heard of the pleasant times you were having at Paris, I gave you up for at least a year or two longer. I did not believe any one would be able to break through the fascination of that delightful place."

"Then you will feel complimented to hear that it was there Emily first proposed returning to you," rejoined Max, pleasantly.

"Was it? My daughter has not quite forgotten me, then," said the charmed gentleman, fondly stroking Emily's hair.

She smiled up at him, but made no more definite reply.

They left the steamer, and were soon at home, — the same home to which she had come upon her wedding-day. Probably both Emily's and Max's minds were reverting with strange sensations to that day and its consequences; for they were both very pale, and seemed sedulously to avoid meeting each other's eyes. The same hall in which she had stood on that memorable night, the same kind face giving her welcome: *she* only changed. Mr. Crampton was astonished and delighted with the alteration in her health and appearance, and complimented her gallantly upon it. She gave him merry thanks in return, but with a strange expression mingling in the smile on her lips; as she thought how different his words and feeling would have been could he have looked beneath the surface, and seen the awful changes the same time had wrought in those two lives, in the human hearts throbbing so near him. The expression deepened with fearful rapidity, as, turning suddenly, she encountered Max's gaze, and saw in his eyes the counterpart of her own thought, but overcome, beaten down by the old passionate love, which, in spite of superhuman self-control, would at moments shiver all chains, and fiercely assert its outraged existence.

Her face brought the man to himself instantly. In a moment he had come forward and given some ordinary direction to the servant in a dry, hard tone, that made his look of a second before seem an impossibility. Chiming in with his father's humor, he exerted himself to talk for the general entertainment, with such success that they were soon, to all appearance, a party of genial friends recalling pleasant reminiscences, talking of far-away scenes and persons familiar to all.

Mr. Crampton's announcement of their intended return had created a sensation among their circle; whose original curiosity and interest in Emily had only increased, from the rumors of her beauty and success in society which had reached them from Europe, *via* travelled brothers and cousins. But recollecting their defeat upon

a similar occasion, and that their time and chance were by no means so limited as then, they forbore to make such an immediate descent upon her.

So it was that, on the second night after her arrival, their curiosity was still unsatisfied. It was an opera night. A great prima donna was to sing *Don Giovanni*, and all musical New York sat waiting to hear her. With the known tastes of the Cramptons, it was not wonderful that inquiring eyes and *lorgnettes* were turned towards their accustomed place, particularly those of a group where Alice and Jack Harrington were the centre.

"Jack, do you think she will be here this evening?" asked one of the young men.

"I saw Uncle Crampton for a moment at the club this afternoon, and he said he thought it probable," answered Jack.

"If she comes, we shall have the pleasure of seeing two statues to-night, according to Jack's account of her," suggested Alice.

"Yes, I remember," said the first speaker, laughing, "a sort of human iceberg. Eh, Jack?"

"Worse than that," answered Jack. "I positively had to feel myself, after that day's ride, to see whether I was still flesh and blood; whether I had not been turned into stone."

"Come, Jack," exclaimed one of the party, in horror; "you don't mean to say that we are to have a social Medusa among us?"

"My young friend," responded Mr. Harrington, mysteriously, "just wait until she looks steadily at you once, and if you don't come to the conclusion Medusa must have been quite a pleasant associate, in comparison, all I have to say is, opinions and tastes differ."

"Alluring, I must say!" responded the gentleman, shrugging his shoulders.

"Nice style of wife," put in another. "Can't say I envy Max his position."

"It strikes me," said Miss Gertrude Weston, who was one of the party, "that Mr. Crampton neither needs nor desires envy or pity, being quite capable of taking care of himself."

This lady had a fellow-feeling with the sardonic part of Max's character, which sometimes prompted her to speak in his defence, most unexpectedly; besides the satisfaction she felt in differing from everybody present. The conversation ceased a moment, for Miss Gertrude generally succeeded in giving her hearers the impression of being physically chilled.

"I think so myself," said Jack, breaking the pause; "if anybody

could be equal to such a state of affairs, Max certainly is. Being naturally stony himself, I suppose it has not the same effect upon him as upon ordinary humanity."

"There they are now!" suddenly exclaimed Alice, and the whole party turned, by one impulse, towards the direction in which she was looking.

They watched Max and Philip coming first, then Emily with Mr. Crampton. Max in his quick-sighted way observed the many eyes fixed upon them, and glanced at his wife. Then he looked down as if to cover the triumph which would flash out, in spite of him, from his leaden gray eyes.

She was in her sweetest, gentlest mood, talking gayly to her father as she entered. The contrast between the sombre hue of her black velvet dress and the radiance of her snowy complexion and burnished hair was dazzling. For a moment, the party who had been awaiting her arrival sat and gazed in silence, stricken into speechlessness by a beauty so different from anything they had expected. Suddenly Jack found himself the centre of a circle of wrathful eyes, all burning to vent their indignation upon him for this apparent deception.

"Marble statue, indeed!" gasped one of the gentlemen, as soon as his ire allowed him to speak.

"Iceberg!" suggested another, as though the reproach that one word must be to his conscience was enough.

And the whole company finding their voices, the storm broke with fury upon Jack's devoted head. Poor Jack had been himself utterly bewildered by the change in Mrs. Crampton; but he suddenly rallied, and returned the charge with more than equal valor and effect.

"I merely described her to you as I saw her two years ago," he exclaimed; "and when I called her a statue and an iceberg, I told you the truth. She was then the palest, most impassive human being I ever beheld. If the lady were ill, in an unnatural state of mind and body, how was I to know it! If such a woman chooses to go to Europe and come back healthy and beautiful, am I to be held responsible for it?" And suddenly recollecting that his cousinly duties invited him to Mrs. Crampton's side, before the irate little circle was able to respond he had quietly walked off.

There he was in a moment sitting by her, and talking with a sublime superiority to any past expression of opinion which savored of the heroic. He took pains to recognize his late companions, smiling upon them with a condescending pity capable of aggravating more saint-like natures.

The little party did not mitigate its scrutiny and criticism. Alice was charmed with the appearance of her new relative, and expressed her opinion earnestly.

"Yes, she is handsome," admitted one of the ladies, with that peculiar reluctance of voice and manner with which ladies compliment each other's appearance.

"'Handsome!' By Venus and the Graces, that's a mild statement of the case," essayed one devotee, who had evidently a mythological tendency.

Miss Gertrude Weston's patience had for some time been failing, and this last remark finished it.

"Sir," said she, suddenly turning upon the rash young speaker, to his extreme discomfiture, having no idea at what point he was to be attacked, — "Sir, as it is evident you intend to go through the list of female heathen deities, allow me to suggest the Muses for your use. You have the whole nine of them before you, so they ought to last you some time."

Having thus effectually destroyed his usual outlet for feeling and compliment, she turned her back and bestowed her attention on the opera. The young man muttered something about his firm faith in the existence of the Furies; but not daring to give this open expression, he collapsed into silence.

The ladies now tried in a polite, unattackable way to depreciate both her appearance and dress; but the radiant beauty and latest Parisian costume alike defied their efforts. Miss Weston had intended at first to play the same game, but seeing at a glance its uselessness, was now comforting herself with the reflection that she was probably a beautiful fool.

"That Max Crampton married her is no evidence to the contrary," she thought, sardonically; "for, with all his sense, he is only a man, and consequently would do anything for a pretty face."

Perhaps the prima donna had reason to complain that night of her usually devoted listeners. Even Emily's attention was much divided with Jack and Mr. Crampton sitting by her in the highest spirits and an irrepressible state of conversation. When it came to "O statua gentilissima," Jack considered it safest to become absorbed in contemplation of the stage, to escape the looks of taunting reproach he knew were being showered upon him by the party opposite.

When the opera was finished, and they were going out, he found most of the gentlemen of the other party at the entrance, waiting to see them pass. He bowed with overwhelming politeness, but they

did not seem much affected by his kindness; for catching his eye as he accidentally fell behind the rest, they surreptitiously shook their fists at him as a traitor and deceiver. It required moral courage, as he called it, or impudence, as they named it, to venture back among them, after having assisted Mrs. Crampton to her carriage. But he did so, and got such a vocal castigation that he declared himself physically sore for a week afterward.

It was agreed they should all go to call upon her the next day; they demanding that Jack, in compensation for his deception and evening's desertion, should be made to give Mrs. Crampton in private a slight sketch of each of them in the highest degree commendatory. Whether Jack would come into this arrangement seemed doubtful, as he was heard to murmur something about "the impossibility of sacrificing his conscience even to the claims of friendship"; but he allowed them to go home without entirely destroying their pleasant delusions on the subject.

CHAPTER XXIII.

EARLY the next morning, Jack Harrington, taking advantage of his connection with the family to disregard inconvenient ceremony, made his entrance into the Crampton drawing-room. I say "taking advantage of his connection with the family," but I fear, had inclination prompted, he would have done much the same under any circumstances. Although aristocratic in his bearing, refined in word, thought, and deed, he had the same regard for the usual rules of ceremony as for the tenets of Buddhism. Whatever he desired to do was done, without further discussion with himself or any one else; and that, too, with such an unclouded conviction of its propriety, that bystanders could not avoid coming to the same conclusion, vaguely believing whatever was done with such *aplomb* must of necessity be right. Everybody liked Jack, because it was a sheer impossibility to dislike him. He had often declared it an article of his creed, that there is a hearty laugh in everybody's composition, and evidently considered the general drawing out thereof his mission. His success certainly tended to confirm his doctrine. Grim old gentlemen, of apparently the most unpromising material, had, under his influence, come out as brilliant illustrations of his theory. Steady-going elderly lawyers, whose whole idea of existence seemed bound in calf, to whom John Doe and Richard Roe were the solid, unwavering realities, and all the rest of literature, and most of humanity, unprofitable imaginations, had been known to laugh genuine laughs with him, and to have listened with interest to his conversation, although it were foreign to law-libraries and unknown to court-rooms. Even Methodist preachers of afflicted countenances and solemn demeanor possessed no terrors for him; for he had been known to invade their parsonages, and there sing comic songs to the great mutual edification. Jack was generally supposed to have a larger circle of clerical acquaintances, of all denominations, than any other man in New York. It was told by one of his contemporaries (a young man who possessed for a father a Wall Street banker of truly forbidding appearance, and a particular enmity towards tobacco in his business quarters), that, being one day obliged to pay his

parent a visit in his sanctum, he heard, as he came near, a sound which a warm imagination enabled him to suppose his father's laugh. On opening the door, there were his father and Jack Harrington carrying on a lively conversation, Jack making himself comfortable in an easy-chair, puffing away at his fifth cigar, and the elder gentleman's face smiling out in grim pleasure through the smoke. He afterwards said, that if Jack had not come to the rescue with the suggestion of a chair and cigar (one of which he took, but the other prudently declined), he should have fainted on the spot from astonishment. "Why, Daniel in the lion's den was nothing to it," he protested.

Here was the secret of the universal love he gained, as he once said to Max: "I have a constitutional liking for introducing people to their better selves; an acquaintance, my dear fellow, eminently well worth making at any time."

But under this pleasant exterior slept a brave, keen spirit, apt to flash up with startling energy at the sight of cowardice or meanness. That slight, firmly-knit frame had been known to accomplish curious feats, when roused by deeds of injustice. He was not handsome; but refined and pleasant to look at, with his rather high, delicate features, light wavy brown hair, and white teeth. This at least was the impression Emily had unconsciously retained of him, when she rather surprised herself by recognizing him at the opera. The name and character attached to this memory had for years been familiar to her, through Max. His father and Jack were the only persons of whom he had often spoken, — of the latter he talked freely; describing his independence and geniality, his courage and keen sense of humor. When young, they had been at school together, and Max, from his relative age and position, had played the part of "big brother," — and he played it still. It was not singular, therefore, Mr. Harrington should have been kindly received by Mrs. Crampton, the night before, or again when looking up from her book she saw him enter in the morning.

Max, Philip, and Mr. Crampton were present, and each gave him their characteristic and sincere welcome.

"Good morning, my dear Jack, I am exceedingly glad to see you," said Mr. Crampton; who, being near the door, was the first to shake him by the hand, and manifest his stately but gratified politeness.

"Ah, Jack," was Max's composed demonstration of pleasure, glancing up from his newspaper to nod as he passed. Philip came quickly

forward to be spoken to by his old favorite. Returning each of these salutations in its kind, Jack made his way speedily towards Mrs. Crampton.

She merely smiled and gave him her hand. But in a few moments they were talking in a friendly and familiar way. They had much in common, and instinctively paid each other the highest conversational compliment, — that of taking for granted, after the first few words, their mutual comprehension and cultivation. We meet as strangers in the world, and talk in a tread-mill round of demure commonplace, until by a chance word or look we suddenly strike the key-note of our own mind, and hear the responsive chimes involuntarily sound.

So it chanced between these two; and Max, from behind his newspaper, looked and listened with strange feelings. Much as he loved Jack, when he watched him take his wife's hand, it made him angry. He could not bear to see a stranger coolly take what he knew he, her husband, sitting there within a few feet of her, did not dare to claim. Yet he was glad to watch her enjoyment in this free interchange of thought and feeling, and to see her mind working with its old vigor and elasticity. Sitting there, he covenanted afresh with himself, that, let the cost be what it might, he would make it his aim to bring her pleasure from this apparently last remaining source. Down, selfish love! down, cruel jealousy! down that hungry, craving passion, which made her lightest word or look given to another exquisite torture to him! This degree of reparation was in his power, and should be made. He was suddenly aroused from his reflections by hearing Jack exclaim, "By the way, Mrs. Crampton, I entirely forgot I came here this morning to make a confession and plead for forgiveness!"

Then Mr. Harrington proceeded to give a ridiculous description of last night's scene at the opera, condemning himself and begging for pardon; feeling sure she would hear of his criticism, he thought it best to forestall all other accounts by his own. At the end, and in explanation of the first description he had given of her, he said: "I saw you upon your wedding-day, Mrs. Crampton, though I hardly suppose you recollect it. I could scarcely expect not to be lost in the superior interest of such an occasion; besides, you looked too ill, I thought, to be conscious of much that went on around you."

He had barely spoken the words, when, to his horror, the face he had seen two years before was again before him. The same corpse-like hue, the same fixed expression. He seemed to have raised this ghost by merely naming it; and the witch of Endor, when the dead

rose in unexpected obedience to her call, could scarce have been more startled. It was but for a moment, and then the spectre sank back into its grave as suddenly as it had appeared. Then she said pleasantly, though the voice was low and the face slightly averted: "You are mistaken, Mr. Harrington; I remember it perfectly. I recognized you immediately, last night."

Jack Harrington's self-possession was great, but it was not equal to making a cool, ready answer. She saved him the trouble by criticising the performance of the night before, until he was able to respond. Then they talked on, apparently as before; but Jack's first fresh enjoyment had been scared away.

He turned to speak to Max, but discovered he had left the room, nor did he return until their morning guests began to arrive.

It was soon an assemblage of the "dear five hundred friends," — a possession upon which Emily now entered in right of her position as Mrs. Max Crampton. They came and went, seldom leaving any impression. Jack was standing by her, talking, when she noticed that he changed color slightly and hurried a little in what he was saying. At the same moment she heard Mr. Crampton's voice saying, "Emily, my dear, this is my old friend Dr. Weston."

A tall, stately-looking old gentleman bowed before her, and said: "It gives me great pleasure to welcome Mrs. Crampton home. My dear," he added after a second, and his voice lost its ceremonious sound, and he took her hand, — "my dear, I once welcomed another Mrs. Crampton to this house: I knew Max's mother. Ah, Crampton, those were the days when we too were young!" and the two men looked at each other as though the present were just then almost lost in the past.

"But I forgot," said Dr. Weston, recovering himself; "my little girl is with me, whom I wish you to know. Bertie, my child!"

There stepped forward at the call a little fairy of a woman, from whose golden curls, which neither time nor fashion had been able to restrain, there looked up at Emily a face, whether of child, woman, or angel it was difficult to say, perhaps because there was something of all three, while a soft hand was held out and a sweet voice greeted her. Not to kiss Bertie Weston, in defiance of all ceremony, was an impossibility; Emily did not resist the impulse, and Miss Bertie only blushed with pleasure as she retreated to her pleased "Papa." She was too much accustomed to such receptions to be surprised.

The salutation Max gave her a little later would have been sincere and earnest, had she been a stranger old and ugly, (instead of

one of his beautiful child-pets, upon whom for years he had showered sugar-plums and toys,) in gratitude for the smile of genuine pleasure she had called up in his wife's face. He saw the whole of this meeting, even though Miss Gertrude Weston was at that moment speaking to him.

"So," she said, "it is in the character of Benedict the married man that we this morning see Mr. Crampton!"

Max merely bowed in reply, and looked at her with the expression she knew so well, — that passive consciousness of superior strength which had hitherto always kept her under control. But to-day she was sufficiently irritated to go on in defiance of it.

"Pray introduce me to Mrs. Benedict," she next remarked.

Max very quietly did so, and Dr. Weston's interposition of "my sister, Mrs. Crampton," gave her a local habitation as well as a name in Emily's mind.

"I suppose you think she is handsome," the lady continued as they stood at one side, speaking under cover of Emily's conversation with Dr. Weston, and leisurely surveying Mrs. Crampton through her eyeglass.

"Yes," Max coolly said; "he thought so."

"Talented, too, I suppose you consider her."

"Yes," Max again responded; "he was under that impression."

"And being all this, she was counted worthy to become Mrs. Max Crampton, she married you!" the lady sneered, turning her eyeglass now upon him, and ending her sentence with a glance that scornfully took in his whole appearance. She took care to give her remark the appearance of raillery, and to make the look and emphasis too slight to be noticeably impolite, but quite pointed enough she knew for Max's comprehension. The truth was, she had convinced herself that Emily had married him for money, and now wished to communicate the same idea, by impressing the impossibility of her having acted from any other motive, upon his mind. She had her revenge at that moment for any wrongs, real or fancied; for though the dart gained its force and sting from a far different cause than she imagined, it struck home with terrible effect. But his simply repeated affirmative and unmoved face gave no sign of this, and she thought it best to relinquish him for the present, and condescended to become civil to her next neighbor. Among the crowd of visitors came Mr. and Mrs. Harrington, Jack's father and mother; pleasant, educated, rather commonplace people, she heard Max pronounce them long ago, and her perception now confirmed the judgment. The lady was Mr.

Crampton's sister, somewhat like him in appearance and manner; like him especially, Emily thought, in her kind, parental attentions. Alice was with them. Jack had stepped to Bertie Weston's side after her introduction to Mrs. Crampton, and had remained there ever since; but he came forward as his family party entered, and presented Alice himself, as "*his sister*," laughingly demanding particular consideration for her in that capacity.

To look at Alice Harrington was to dream of Italy, to be transported for the moment to its skies and summers. Great black eyes, languid almost to sleepiness, bringing to the beholder a conviction of strange flash and fire in their depths; silky masses of hair of lustreless gloom, small, ripe, crimson lips, parting over slender blue-white teeth, delicate, well-formed features, covered by a skin so clear and pale as to suggest frail china or sea-shells, formed the face of a singularly beautiful woman. The soft, bastard Latin almost formed itself upon Emily's lips as she looked and spoke to her. Her appearance so absorbed the first moment, that Emily hardly found words to answer Jack's merry recommendation. She wondered what was underneath the surface: something worth getting at, she was confident. There was no opportunity for discoveries now, but she was confirmed in her opinion when Max said at dinner, in reply to her comment upon her exceeding beauty: "Yes, and there is more than mere outside. There is a large amount of undeveloped character in that girl. I have seen her deeply excited about good things."

Both took at that moment an unspoken resolution; the one, to follow further this acquaintance, the other, to make an early opportunity for his wife's enjoyment in this direction.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE autumn had begun before they left Paris. It was now late in the season. The Indian summer had come with its soft, hazy days, tempting one to give their true description in misquoting Moore:—

"Shining on, shining on, by a shadow made tender."

The weather assisted Max materially in his efforts to bring Alice Harrington, Bertie Weston, and his wife constantly together. Driving, horseback-riding, parties of pleasure of all kinds, he instigated Jack to propose, and then quietly carried out himself. He gave a succession of impromptu dinners and suppers, where mental and physical refreshment were equally perfect and *recherché*.

Whoever else composed the company, Alice, Jack, and Bertie were never absent. With outward circumstances assisting their natural congeniality, they soon became devoted to Mrs. Crampton; giving her that disciple-like admiration which young, enthusiastic natures so often render to fully matured womanhood. She formed a centre of attraction, around which they lovingly revolved.

The relief and pleasure were very great to Emily. Never, except during that one happy summer, had she known anything of friendly companionship. Even in her youth she had no girl friends, and now she was tasting that pleasure, mixed with an almost maternal feeling; caused, not by the difference in years, which was slight, but by the incalculable difference in development. Towards Bertie she began to have somewhat the same feeling as towards Philip. The careful tenderness, the spontaneous self-forgetful interest in everything that concerned her, in fact, the almost motherly love, which made his happiness her strongest motive power on earth.

They were the only persons to whom she had ever given the outward testimonies of affection, the only two upon whom her caresses had been lavished. When they would come to her, perhaps at twilight, to hang round her, fondle her, disarrange her hair in their careless play, those were the sweetest moments she knew.

As to Philip, he adored Bertie Weston. She was his chosen

friend and playmate. He considered the eight years which, according to the family Bible, divided their ages, a pure fiction, and told Emily in confidence that he was in love with Bertie, and as soon as he was twenty he should marry her. But I am afraid it could not have been true love, for its course certainly ran with a perfect smoothness, which even Mr. Harrington's interloping attentions could not disturb. The said attentions were sometimes inconveniently many, especially when he wanted Bertie to play with him or let him ride her on his pony. But having a weakness for Jack himself, he did not wonder much that she liked him; besides, that gentleman did not disdain gracing such occasions with his own presence, and assisting materially in the general entertainment.

"The company is good," he explained one day, as he followed the pair into the yard; where Philip, with the assistance of a whip, a long bridle, and a series of exclamations, such as "Get up, sir!" "Whoa, sir!" "There now, sir!" was putting his unfortunate beast through a succession of rears and springs; which he announced as—"showing them how his pony could dance." As the orchestra for this Terpsichorean triumph was his own whistling, the music, interrupted by his other labors, was rather intermittent; until Jack kindly took that department off his hands, whenever he was not incapacitated by laughing. But this was so often, and, as Philip indignantly protested, always "just as he was beginning to dance so beautifully," that the change was not much for the better. Philip declared, "It was n't fair," and that "he was going to show Bertie another time, and then Mr. Harrington should n't come."

But Jack succeeded in making his peace, by tempting offers of himself assisting in the pony's education, which the boy could not resist. He secured an invitation to the next of these exhibitions; but being a merciful man, managed to alter the order of exercises, for which the wretched animal, had he known it, owed him a debt of gratitude. Perhaps it was this debt which Miss Bertie intended to pay with the smile she gave him as she noticed and seconded his purpose.

Emily had another interest in Bertie. She was watching the love-dawn of her life. Jack Harrington was supposed to have worshipped those blue eyes and golden curls since a very infantile period of their existence. Certain it is, he had been her devoted attendant ever since the days when he carried her books to school; and, like any knight of old, challenged to personal combat presumptuous boys who aspired to her notice or doubted her perfection. Though its

manifestation had of course changed with years, the feeling remained the same; only taking a different aim and meaning as the man superseded the boy.

Bertie had long known his love for her; but of late she had gained a far deeper consciousness of it, by the response her whole nature was gradually giving to his. In the old time she could meet him with the same genial welcome she gave other pleasant friends; but now the eyes had grown shy, and his coming made the color on her cheek waver. Mr. Harrington did not consider this an altogether unfavorable symptom, and had the young lady's voice been the only one in the matter, would not have despaired of success. But Miss Bertie, like many young women, was possessed of a father, who had also an opinion on the subject. Unluckily that opinion was a contrary one.

"A very good fellow," Dr. Weston would say, over his wine, to Mr. Crampton, as that gentleman sometimes attempted to put in a word for his nephew. "Upon my soul, a most capital fellow," and here the Doctor's eyes would twinkle with amusement at some recollection of his last meeting with Jack; "but as to giving him my Bertie, I could not think of such a thing. The little lamb I have carried in my bosom all her life to keep the wind from blowing upon her too roughly, to be handed over to that careless, hair-brained chap! Nonsense! it is ridiculous to talk of it. Let him take steadily to the law, and some full-grown, strong-minded woman, who will not only take care of herself, but of him and his affairs too. It's the only chance such men have of ever coming to anything, and I advise him as a friend and well-wisher to avail himself of it."

The only defence Mr. Crampton could set up was Jack's universal kindness, and his irreproachable character as a son and brother. But this was attended with so little effect, that he could only go home and be particularly kind to his nephew for a week to come; privately comforting him with repeating "a faint heart never won fair lady," and similar consolatory sentences.

There is a fixed opinion in this world, that a man who laughs himself, or makes others laugh, never can, or at least never will, do much of anything else. It was under this statute that poor Jack was tried and convicted. But fortunately there was a quality in him which would one day force the judges to reverse their decision. Under his careless exterior was a capacity for earnest drudgery which seldom lets its possessor live and die a cumberer of the ground. Best of all, there was in him an ever-increasing consciousness of his account-

ability to his Maker for time and talents, which would eventually redeem and make him a true man, striving to do his own duty, and so accomplish His work.

With more than one good influence had a kind Providence encircled him, but the chief was Bertie Weston. Earth had lavished many gifts upon her; she was beautiful, intelligent, accomplished; but their brilliancy grew pale before the light of heaven which shone in her face; to see her was to know from henceforth what is meant by the "beauty of holiness." She was a Christian, not only in the ordinary meaning of that much-abused term, but in its purest sense. The childlike love and faith towards God and his Son which dwelt in this woman's heart went out every moment into loving, self-forgetful acts and words. Her life and character, in their nearness to what her friends were wont to call angelic loveliness, gave them a strange, watchful pain, as though she were fast becoming too well fitted for heaven to be long on earth.

Yet Bertie was no strait-laced devotee. She went to church, not every day, as is the fashion of some good ladies, but it always seemed a privilege to her, when occasion served, to go up to His holy temple, to gain there from some good man, whose life exemplified his words, a freshened consciousness of duty, a more active love to God and man; and the poor children whom Sunday morning saw assembled around her were witnesses for the truth and worth of her religion.

On the other hand, no party of pleasure was thought perfect without her merry laugh and pleasant wit to enliven it, no dance complete unless her form flitted through it, the smile from her sweet face softening and purifying all hearts. If Jack Harrington thought her an angel, he certainly was not alone in that opinion; nor, indeed, was he alone in his lover-like devotion to her, for there were other young men who endeavored to pay her equal attention. She was good and gentle to them all, unconsciously making them better men, raising their standard of Christian womanhood every time they saw her; but none of them could take as special encouragement what was but her universal manner. It was only since she had been a little less kind, a shade less serene, that Jack had begun to hope. The change had come about a year ago. Since then he had addressed her formally, and been refused upon the ground of her father's unconquerable opposition. They now met simply as dear old friends. Poor Jack was sorely tried by this state of things, yet he was too honorable to urge his suit against her idea of right. He

could only wait, hoping in time Dr. Weston might alter his opinion, striving by his life to give him cause to do so.

But Dr. Weston, though kind and polite to Jack, showed no present sign of change. He was a man of violent feelings and prejudices, and when he once took up a position seldom relinquished it. His character and manners were such a strange mixture, that a believer in transmigration of souls would have said it was the spirit of some duke of the *ancien régime*, under Louis Quatorze, which, after passing through an intermediate stage of grizzly-beardness, had reappeared in this form in the nineteenth century, — either phase of existence predominating according to prevailing outward influences. The consequence was, his friends and his enemies held equally sincere and directly opposite opinions concerning him. Like most strong natures, he was liked and disliked with equal cause and warmth. One reason of this was, his scant respect of persons. If one were really ill, whether high or low, whether he were to be paid lavishly or not at all, he would attend them to the best of his ability. But woe unto the fine lady who sent for him for the pleasure of discoursing about her imaginary ailments; such invalids obtained no mercy from his hand, or courtesy from his tongue.

"Dr. Weston," said one of these interesting patients, "you don't pay my case the attention it requires; you come to see me so seldom that you don't appreciate my sufferings."

"Madam," said the old gentleman, the bear's claws rapidly making their appearance, "I come to see you much oftener than is at all necessary. I should not have been here to-day, but there is a man around the corner whom I was obliged to go to, and so came on a little farther to you. By the way, that man is not only very sick, but very poor, so the best thing for you to do is to get into your carriage and carry him what he needs. It will do you good, madam, both physically and morally; so don't neglect it," he commanded, with an authority that left no room for complaint or refusal, and bowed himself out before the astonished lady had time for either. And before the day was ended he had visited more than one poor broken woman, with a gentle consideration and beautiful deference for her weary, heavy-laden womanhood, which seemed to throw a very glory round his old gray head.

Sometimes it seems, when the great final account comes, when the test will be whether, seeing him a-hunger, we gave him meat, whether, sick and in prison we visited him, the lives of these humble physicians will, with the lustre of such deeds upon them, shine with

a radiance before which heroes and conquerors will veil their faces. Except some women, — who purify and redeem this world by living in it, — whose lives will bear that proof as well as theirs?

Dr. Weston's life, though it had many mistakes and faults, was, in its practical usefulness, worthy of a true man. It was generally agreed, that he made more severe speeches and did more generous actions in a year than any one else in the city. He even gloried in his severity, from a conscientious point of view, looking upon it as a talent for the constant use of which he was responsible. One of his lady friends endeavored to remonstrate with him upon what she called his "habit of hurting people's feelings."

"Feelings, indeed!" he retorted, with superb disdain, "say hurting their vanity, and you will be exactly right. My dear, I am an old man, but I think I can honestly say, that never in my life have I wilfully hurt any one's feelings, and I hope I have not done it unintentionally. As to vanity, that's quite another thing." And the old fellow rubbed his hands with exultation. "I comfort myself I have done my share towards destroying that article in this world; and so far, I have not lived in vain. I don't know how many young people I have improved in this way, as they themselves have acknowledged, when there has been sufficient good left to make them take correct views at last. When the disease was organic, of course they judged the remedy only by its temporary unpleasantness, and then —" the old gentleman stopped here, only finishing his sentence with an ominous shake of the head.

The intimate acquaintance and tender friendship of this man was the privilege of Emily Crampton when she came home to New York. They quickly understood each other, and Dr. Weston, charmed at first by her beauty and grace, soon gave her a place in his heart very near Bertie. On the lady's first arrival, he felt delicate about continuing his familiar visits, which a long intimacy with Mr. Crampton's bachelor-hall had rendered habitual, but since the household had fallen under female administration might not be so agreeable. This scruple was soon forgotten; not only from the welcome he always received from Mrs. Crampton, but from his understanding of her character. He had expected some fine lady to whom the bear would be instinctive, but the Louis Quatorze necessary; finding a woman after his own heart in everything, was a most grateful surprise. He would have done anything to serve her, and she gave him many opportunities; since it was through him she was first enabled to carry out the resolutions which had chiefly induced her return to America.

She simply and quietly told him, one day when they happened to be alone, of her consciousness of the responsibility attached to her position and means, and earnestly begged his help in finding her some good, needful work. As he listened and replied, there was in his manner a high, pure grace the stately French nobles might have envied. After that day they worked together as faithful allies. The interview occurred a few weeks after her arrival, and the result made her acquainted with hitherto unguessed deeps of human misery.

This life was already bringing its own reward. It gave her an absorbing interest, took her out of herself, and brought a healthier state of mind than she had known for years. To stand face to face with the suffering of the world made her appreciate better the blessings with which her life overflowed. She could not come away from those wretched abodes of poverty, to her own splendid home, without increased gratitude to the loving hand which had surrounded her, not only with ease and comfort, but with such exquisite beauty. She was able to look, not only at her causes of suffering, but at her sources of happiness; a lesson more easily learnt, as it was now, as always, the aim of Max's life to save her from any revival of the old pain. This was less difficult as they only met at the usual family reunions, when he planned that Alice, Jack, or Bertie, or some agreeable mutual friend, should generally be present. The price he paid in self-denial and control was nothing to him when weighed in the balance with her peace of mind. He had thought of himself and his own pleasure enough to inflict lifelong misery upon them both, he bitterly reasoned; it was time now to give some consideration to her tranquillity. And so by the upright intentions of each, and his steadfast watchfulness, they lived on day by day with no new burden to bear.

She did not tell Max of her recent employment, or indeed any one else; but she was sure in his own way he also was doing a part of the same work. She did not know he was always near her wherever she went; his manly power and influence smoothing the way, bringing about her aims, realizing her wishes. She sometimes thought the difficulties in her path vanished magically; but she generally attributed it to Dr. Weston's care or a kind Providential influence: never to the true cause. That was known only to the God who watches over us all.

CHAPTER XXV.

FORTUNATELY for her, Emily Crampton's life was now one of almost constant occupation. The social duties, natural to her position, were a heavy demand upon her time; the round of fashionable gayety, in which she played her part, occupied those hours left void in her unsympathetic home-life. She usually enjoyed both parties and balls, because, whether at home or abroad, her particular friends rallied round her.

She had influence in society, both because of personal attraction and her position, and she used it conscientiously. It was her endeavor to make those with whom she came in contact raise their standard of judgment above the *parvenu*, narrow-minded one of money and fashion. She endeavored to show them the value of men and women apart from their names and possessions. Artists of all kinds — those priests and soldiers in the service of the Beautiful — she encouraged and honored in every possible way. She reverently acknowledged the presence of genius. For what is genius but a God-sent message, and the power to interpret to the duller ears and dimmer eyes of humanity? Beethoven was right, — "Nearer to God than others." Yet it is sometimes hard to recognize; for we often come in closer contact to the outer humanity than the inner divinity. When genius speaks to us from afar, the divine principle stands wrought out, naked and radiant, with no veil to hide it from our vision; but take the creator of this beauty, the person from whose brain and heart sprang this spiritual birth, at the moment when strong and vigorous it is struggling for utterance, demanding execution, and which of us would recognize him? Perhaps to our eyes he would be irregular, self-absorbed, dogmatic, and we might find it hard to penetrate deeper than the covering.

It would be a convenience to the majority of mankind to have angels, geniuses, and such irregular beings sent down labelled, by way of preventing unpleasant mistakes. It is awkward that only those who possess a certain amount of the divine fire themselves are able to recognize its veiled flame and flash in others. But this clear-sighted woman was able to pierce the darkness, and claim true

power as her kindred. In this she and Max were thoroughly united, both in sentiment and practice. Their house was a rendezvous for authors, painters, and musicians; it breathed an atmosphere in which they bloomed and flourished. Mr. Crampton also enjoyed and was fitted for such society. It made their outer life smoother, — I might almost say happier, — this seeking pleasure from the same sources. At least one enduring tie remained to connect them; and Max, to whom his wife was becoming, if possible, more and more the very breath of life, strove to strengthen it. He looked upon every mutual liking as something gained, and both were instantly conscious when such was the case.

Another opportunity for doing good was thrown in Emily's way, by the time winter fairly advanced. Bertie Weston had been staying with her for a time, — an arrangement very pleasing to Dr. Weston. Chiefly because Bertie, having neither mother nor sister, he thought Emily a good substitute for, or mixture of, both towards his little girl. Himself, Bertie, and her Aunt Gertrude formed their family circle; and although, to do Miss Gertrude justice, she was always kind to her niece, perhaps from want of temptation to be anything else, her father was glad to find for his child a younger and more genial companion. So it happened, that, being there one Sunday afternoon, Miss Bertie came down with her bonnet on.

"Why, Bertie, my dear," said Mrs. Crampton, as she chanced to meet her in the hall, "where are you going? Not home, surely."

"No, not to stay," said the girl, flushing slightly. "I am coming back in an hour or two. I am going to my Sunday school."

"Your Sunday school!" echoed the lady. "What is it? where is it?" she asked, with quick interest.

"It is scarcely a Sunday school," the girl went on to explain, with hesitation; "it is only some children I have picked up among papa's poor patients. I teach them a little every Sunday afternoon at home."

"Will you take me with you?" her friend asked eagerly.

"Would you go, — would you really care to go?" Bertie exclaimed, with delighted surprise.

"If you will take me."

"Yes, dear Emily, this will be a real pleasure."

And before five minutes had passed, they were walking quickly towards Bertie's home.

Emily found, as Bertie had said, it was not a regular school, but a collection of poor children, whose bodies she and her father had

clothed and fed, as she was now trying to feed their minds and hearts. It was strange, considering Emily's early associations and her father's views and principles, this should have been new work to her! During childhood her mother's religious teachings had been too faithful to leave room for outside instruction; and as she grew older she became too self-absorbed to feel the demand of this duty upon her. Now it came to her for the first time, with only willingness for her guide. Do we all know what a lever the Sunday school may become?

A great instrument for good to the individual and the country, bringing us as it does into direct contact with the poorest, most degraded class of society, giving an opportunity to help mind and body, and taking children at an age when it is possible to do so. It comes home to the root of social and national evil; for these wretched boys will one day be voters, and take their part in the ruling of the land.

It is apparently a work neither pleasant nor very successful. It seems a hopeless task sometimes, when, after months of wearying labor, we find how little is accomplished towards raising these heathen in a Christian land from their original level. But we forget we are only sowing the seed of a distant harvest, and can scarcely expect to watch its growth; we can do the planting, and God shall give the increase. If we induce a miserable, dirty child to wash its face and hands once a week, and feel that good men and women have an honest interest in its welfare, an active desire for its good, surely something has been done. Beside, it is a battle in which many can fight. The most delicate girl as well and bravely as the strongest man: and the duty lies near; it is no far-off work. Thus Emily felt, as she sat down among Bertie's children and tried to gain their attention. She was too wise to attempt this by anything approaching a sermon. But she talked to them of their every-day affairs, and what happened in their homes; seeking to show a genial interest in all they said, and to create a kindly feeling between herself and them. She related to them incidents such as might have happened any day in their own lives, of boys and girls who had been honest and kind and brave; not grown-up, and to them impossible heroes, equally beyond their comprehension and imitation, but instances of goodness and heroism such as their young hearts and consciences instinctively understood. She sang to them and with them soft nursery-hymns which her own mother had taught her. She counted all her cultivation, her toilsome practice, labor well spent, if her voice could now give pleasure to these starved hearts and awaken the spirit slumber-

ing in these little breasts. She had sung to many listeners; her voice had thrilled hundreds of hearts whose pure devotion to music was their nearest approach to a religious sentiment; famous men had murmured their rapturous admiration of its power, and its pathos had drawn unwonted tears; but all this had never brought her the pleasure that warmed her heart as these poor little things, hanging round her, begged her to "sing about the angels again." Their hands reached and struck the deepest chord of her nature,—one which in her case was never to give out its full tone and power. No small hand would ever come, to whose lightest, unconscious touch its richest music would answer.

So this afternoon, strangely occupied for her, passed, until the early winter twilight warned them of approaching night. Then they parted, Bertie returning home with Mrs. Crampton. Dr. Weston, whom they met coming in as they were leaving, insisted upon escorting them back, and kept them merry as they walked through the crisp, winter evening air. They behaved like so many free, happy children. It was Emily Chester, the girl of the old time, whose words flowed with merry rapidity, whose laughter rang out with silvery clearness,—not Mrs. Crampton, who walked through life and society with such serene dignity.

But Mrs. Crampton came back, as if by a species of magic, when she stood on the threshold of her mansion and invited Dr. Weston to dine with them. He accepted the invitation as a matter of course, and passed in to receive Mr. Crampton's familiar welcome. It was Mrs. Crampton, also, though in a mood less cool and reserved than usual, who presided at the head of her splendid table. While the ladies remained the conversation was brilliant, for Emily entered into it freely, and Max exerted himself in return, as he would have done for the entertainment of no other human being. The intellectual fitness between them made a spontaneous conversation possible and brilliant. Max never talked so well as when excited by the appreciation and enjoyment of his wife. Thus they talked to-night, forgetting all antagonism in their intellectual sympathy.

The rest of the party were in high spirits, especially Dr. Weston; he and Mr. Crampton joking like two stately, jolly old boys. At last the ladies rose to leave the gentlemen over their wine. Philip refused their invitation to accompany them, taking a firm stand upon his dignity and the masculine gender. He liked too well the mingled petting and teasing which the two elder gentlemen always bestowed upon him during this interval. So the ladies passed out of the dining-room alone.

They took their way by tacit consent to the library. Except her own especial apartments, this was Emily's favorite room, which was saying a good deal for it in such a habitation. It was a house of great size, with something of antique elegance; such as is seldom seen in America. The heavy mahogany and oak panellings were dark with age, the marble mosaic of the hall-floor had worn smooth with the tread of more than one generation; in fact, the old-fashioned magnificence of the house was altogether congenial to the taste of its beautiful mistress. In spite of the costliness of every article, that was the last consideration to occupy either possessor or beholder. It seemed the natural habitation of its tasteful occupants, to which they were fitted as instinctively as the bird to its nest.

But of its beautiful general apartments, Emily loved best this spacious library. As they entered, the wood fire blazing upon the hearth was the only light the room contained, but it was sufficient to reveal its invitation of rest and luxury. The thick carpet, and heavy crimson hangings upon wall and window, shut out the very remembrance of tumult and confusion. Cushions and lounges anticipated fatigue; books of all kinds lined the oaken cases, from the classics, heavy with gold and leather-covers, to the magazines of yesterday. The firelight, as it streamed out, fell upon the busts of poets and philosophers, and lighted the commanding beauty of the Venus di Milo, whose perfection stood revealed against the crimson wall. Rising and falling, the glimmer of the fire half betrayed the shadows of a Rembrandt, glowing in the brightness of a sunny landscape, and other rare and costly pictures.

But it shone upon nothing so fair as the woman who now traversed this room. Bertie, tired with the exertions of the day, threw herself almost immediately upon a couch by the fire to rest. But what had exhausted the slighter frame of the girl had only excited the matured woman. The involuntary excitement, which at times dominated her nature, was to-night in the ascendant. She could not keep still. She would have revelled in the cold night air, walking in it for hours; anything to expend this overflowing vitality. As it was, she moved restlessly about, drinking in the surrounding beauty, seeming to absorb every ray of color and light with which the apartment glowed. This lasted for a time. Bertie's belief in her was such that she never dreamed of commenting upon or interrupting her mood; then she came to the fire and sat down upon a cushion at the girl's feet.

"Bertie," she said, "the restless spirit of the wind that blew so

freshly upon us this afternoon, or that of those untamed children, has passed into my blood to-night. Let me lay my head upon your lap, as I saw them do, and try if it will exorcise it."

For answer, tender arms were thrown around her neck, and the splendid burden of her head laid gently down on Bertie's knee. There it rested, the lady seeming glad of the control of those clasping hands.

Gradually the necessity for restraint lessened; she was harmonizing with the indolent luxury of the time and place. Her frame relaxed into a soft languor, the face took a dreaming loveliness, the drooping eyelids rested upon cheeks delicately flushed; the atmosphere of sensuous bliss she was breathing pervaded her being with its subtle influence. With her head still lying in Bertie's lap, she slightly altered her position for one more free and voluntary. Half reclining there, — with her statuesque form, her perfectly moulded arms and shoulders, which her dinner-dress left visible, while its deep, rich color defined their pure outlines, — she looked like some antique marble, draped in robes of Oriental splendor. Heart and brain were locked in dreamless trance, but her nervous system was still strongly predominant. She gazed listlessly into the fire, conscious of no defined thought, only a vague sense of pleasure which seemed lulling her brain to deeper sleep.

Soon this inner harmony dimly sought and found expression. She began softly to sing; in a faint, musical murmur. Gradually the original power and strength of the woman began to rise, and mingle with the sound. The voice took a deeper flow and passed into definite song. It wavered tunelessly for a moment, as though unable to decide which impulse to follow, — rising at last purely and steadily in that divine prayer of Agatha, from "Der Freyschutz." The words were German. The translation runs: —

"Softly, slowly, numbers holy,
Bear on high my spirit lowly.
Music swelling, fond hopes telling,
Waft my prayer to Heaven's high dwelling.

"On me bending, smile befriending
Lord, without beginning, ending.
Thy great help in danger yield us,
Send thine angel guard to shield us."

The sound floated out into the room, past the partially opened door into the hall beyond, which Max had just entered. He had made his escape from the dining-room, and was on his way to the front

door, hat in hand. Hearing and recognizing the voice, it drew him towards its source. So guided, he reached the library-door and looked in. Then he knew what that rich man felt of whom we read, when, looking across the great gulf, he saw the lost heaven open upon his sight. Great God, for those eyes to rest upon that vision! Yet it was not a perfectly new sight to them. In her careless, impulsive girlhood, many twilights had he spent in watching her thus in the same attitude and occupation. But then he was near her; near to her soul and heart. The clear, frank eyes met his with pleasure; the smiles which sprang to them found life, not death as now, from his coming. Then this unnatural union had not produced natural disunion; their relative position was what God and nature intended it should be.

Looking at her then, he had vowed, had lived in the immovable faith, that their oneness should be perfected. He had used every power to bring about this unity, to consummate this marriage. He had his wish. Now he must accept the work of his own hands, the wages of his own labor. This woman was his wife; yet he stood here, infinitely more divided from her than had she been dead and in her grave.

His wife! He saw what that word can mean, — the perfection of mutual love, a God-instituted unity; and these he had once dreamed would be his. He would have given his life to be in that girl's place. A wild desire seized him to clasp her again in his arms, close to his heart, as he had done in those early marriage days. Only one moment of the old bliss, and he would be content to go.

"She is your wife, she belongs to you body and soul, by the law of God and man," desire cried to him; "and will you stand here an outcast, an abject suppliant for her tolerance? Are you a man, and will you calmly see that girl usurp your place, without a struggle to regain it? Tear away all intruding claims, and assert your long insulted, defied right over her."

The fire, fallen from its first blazing brilliancy, now brightly illumined only a small circle, leaving the rest of the room in a crimson twilight. It seemed to concentrate its light upon her reclining figure. He saw two rings glitter upon her hand; one, the plain, heavy circle of her wedding ring, the other, the great diamond he had given her after their engagement. The sight of these symbols fanned his passion strangely.

"Mine! mine!" he muttered, with a fierce concentration, terrible

to hear; as though he would claim his own, in defiance of heaven and earth.

Still the music went on, though the song had changed; still the beautiful singer reclined in pure repose, still the magic spell of the hour and place maintained its sway.

The storm raged, but noiselessly; a spiritual, soundless convulsion of human nature. The lightning which was devastating that heart did its work silently; there was no awakening thunder to startle those who heard it into terror or sympathy. But it was reaching its climax. He passed the threshold, though not within her sight; a moment more, and its force would have hurled him into some fatal outburst. But suddenly the spectre, always keeping watch between them, arose in his path. Its cold, invisible arms forced him back, with a power he had no strength to oppose; chaining his nature with fetters not to be broken. At its dread call, a vision came to his sight. Not the one on which his eyes had rested, but that which another moment would have brought forth: not the view of that woman lying in her serene loveliness, but starting to her feet, with every nerve and muscle at its utmost tension; vibrating with a scorn which could wither and consume his whole nature as truly as the fire could annihilate his physical frame. It was enough. He turned and passed out of the room, out of the house; without a word, without another look.

The shadow of that night-vigil in Italy closed down and wrapt him in its deadly folds.

"Alone, all alone, out on a wide sea."

The voices of devils seemed to shriek it after him, mingled with mocking laughter, as he traversed, deep into the night, the streets of that great city. He longed for physical exhaustion, and in some degree he found it. The chill dawn saw him enter his own door, too weary and worn in body and soul for feeling or much consciousness. A different man might have been driven to mad excess by such hours of misery; but truth and love still held ennobling sway in the long-suffering soul. It was but a short time before this incident that Bertie Weston had been looking over and admiring with Max a portfolio of engravings, which lay upon one of his drawing-room tables. A day or two after this Sunday night she found upon her own table a large package. It contained a similar collection, with a pleasant message from her old friend Max. As a kindness, she understood the act; as an atonement, she little imagined its meaning.

When Dr. Weston and Max met, shortly after, the latter turned the conversation upon Jack Harrington; speaking of the character he had developed during the last year, — of the persevering energy he was gaining with every day, how he was continually earning increased respect and admiration. The younger man had always possessed a singular degree of influence over the elder, founded, perhaps, upon the very difference in their characters. When Max gave an opinion, it was apparently a purely mental perception, and convinced like the evidence of the senses. Dr. Weston made him little or no answer at the time. But that night, as his daughter came to kiss him before retiring, he said gently, well knowing the feeling with which she would listen, that it gave him pleasure to see and acknowledge the improvement in Mr. Harrington's character. If this went on, with his natural talents and singular kindness and pureness of heart ("which I always acknowledged, always acknowledged," parenthesized the old gentleman earnestly), "the time might possibly come when he would be worthy of the great blessing," he hesitated here, "of a good wife," he added hastily. And kissing his daughter again, he turned quickly away, as though he had not courage to face a prospect thus suddenly presented.

The girl went up-stairs with her heart throbbing and her frame trembling with the unexpected joy of this hope. Who or what could have wrought this miracle? The change, she knew, was in her father, not in Jack. But what power had so influenced his eyes. She concluded, at last, that some incident, in which Jack's true character had shone out, must have come to his knowledge, and altered his opinion. She knew, like all enthusiasts, he was subject to strong revulsions of feeling; and often a slight thing touched his heart or convinced him he had been wrong, and would throw him as far on one side as he had previously been upon the other. Some such cause, she fancied, had now been at work. She little imagined the power brought to bear upon him, its cause, or the strange atonement of which it was a part.

When Max Crampton saw his wife for the first time after that night-vigil, he determined she should have no cause to suspect it by any change in his manner. The shadow of no pain of his should fall upon her, if human strength could prevent it. Yet there is a limit to human strength, as he then found.

They met in the drawing-room, just before dinner. There were a number of persons present; enough for the sound of their united voices and movements to form a cover for any undercurrent of

words, expressions, or actions. He went to address her, with some general remark, as usual, and believed himself sufficiently recovered from that strain and jar to make his nature answer steadily to his determination. He had miscalculated his power.

She stood apart from the rest, when he approached to speak to her. The words were nothing, but the voice! It so vibrated with an immeasurable love and tenderness, with a divine compassion, as to make it such a sound as in all her life she had never heard before. He knew it instantly himself, and seeing his mistake, stopped short. He had said enough. She looked up at him, for a moment, speechless. It was the same face she had seen the day before, except it was very pale, and the look which had come into it upon that night in Italy was much more distinct than usual.

"Are you ill?" she asked, after a pause, in which she gained breath to speak. Her voice was scarcely audible. But she spoke with a trembling earnestness, in which conscience, remorse, friendship, gratitude, and above all an overwhelming self-condemnation were expressed. It shook the man's whole frame as he heard it.

"No." It was all his answer. After the warning which the last moment had given him, he did not dare to go further.

A moment or two more, and they had passed to the dining-room.

A quiet host was Max Crampton that day, and, beyond the necessary duties of his office, singularly impassive; but his guests were accustomed to his undemonstrative manner, and were not surprised at this increase of its peculiarity. Mrs. Crampton's face, as she presided, was very white, and her voice sounded low and constrained, as though she were afraid to use it or put any strain upon it, lest it should fail her.

So they sat through the dinner, which at last came to an end, as all earthly pain and suffering must.

CHAPTER XXVI.

TIME went on. Days, weeks passed, and, as far as it is ever possible, they fell back into their old existence; except for the ineffaceable scars of that sad night.

Emily's life was a further carrying out of the aims that already had absorbed her in the beginning of the winter. She labored with the earnestness of a nature that found no other legitimate outlet for its warmth or energy.

By her effort, the little Sunday school Bertie had established increased rapidly. It certainly had every advantage that money or strength of will could bring. She procured a pleasant room, and rendered it attractive by every means in her power.

The ladies found an unexpected assistant in Jack, who volunteered as teacher as soon as he heard of the project. He worked faithfully, but certainly in a new way. It was no unusual thing for him to gather a crowd of children and keep them laughing and crying through a whole afternoon, by stories, and end by treating them to cakes or confectionery from overcoat pockets which he vowed were made for the special conveyance thereof. As a matter of course, the children fairly adored him. He averred, if any one could truly say with Dr. Watts,

"Whene'er I take my walks abroad, how many poor I see,"

he was that person; for he never ventured into the streets without being publicly claimed as the dear friend of various dirty and ragged girls and boys, whose every-day appearance was in strong contrast with their Sunday show, and rendered it difficult for him to recognize his admirers. The young ladies and gentlemen who were with him on such occasions professed to believe a large majority of his acquaintance permanently resided in the gutter. Jack laughed much over his Sunday-school experiences, told rare stories of his children's sayings and doings; but in his secret soul their unsophisticated devotion, and the good he felt he was doing, gave him a pleasure few except Emily and Bertie could understand.

As for Philip, he enjoyed nothing more than making excursions into "Emily's school," as he called it. He made brilliant offers and attempts at teaching; but, as it was noticed that such efforts passed, after the first five minutes, into a conversational interchange of experiences on the subject of horses and dogs and games, and rather disturbing transfers of marbles and such like wares from Philip's pockets, it was thought best he should occupy the position of honorary member, and leave active participation to older heads and tongues. This was decided one afternoon, when it was discovered that the only subject upon which he had enlightened his class, during two hours, was the mingled exploits of Carlo and his pony; suspicion, leading to inquiry, having been first excited by the unwonted quietude and thrilling interest with which they listened. Jack skilfully absorbed the whole fraternity within his circle of jurisdiction, and soon had no more interested hearer than his late fellow-teacher. The arrangement was henceforth a permanent one. Philip still occasionally referred to "his class," in a dignified, official way, but neither he nor any one else exactly defined his position in it.

Alice, from her devotion to Mrs. Crampton, sometimes exerted herself to lend a helping hand, but only occasionally. She would come in, with her great, dreamy eyes, and delicate, languid manner, and try to bring her thoughts down to take an interest in these children, who really seemed to her creatures of another sphere. Had they been small, angelic monstrosities, no doubt she would have liked the work and attended quite regularly. But as they were only ugly, rude, coarse little human beings, they bored and disgusted her fearfully, by the violent collision into which they came with a network of false sentiment and pampered, unhealthy sensitiveness, with which habit and a misguided cultivation had surrounded her. She had lived too exclusively in the rarefied atmosphere of mere society, to be able to breathe easily the free air of broad humanity. More than this, her original nature, so far as it had been developed, was chiefly that fitted to her station and mode of life. What time might make her was yet to be revealed. At present she was only a cultivated lady; whereas, Emily Crampton was a woman, as truly as the great mother of humanity when she stood fresh from the hand of the Creator. Alice saw good in her own sphere, from her own point of view, while the broader nature of the other embraced excellence and truth in all spheres, all ages. Over the lady, art and culture had reigned undisputed, until they had bound down the original germ with their stifling overgrowth. With the woman, great

Nature had always been supreme, using the two rulers of the other as her bondsmen, or more truly, as her lovers. Whether Alice Harrington can ever approximate to this, whether she will ever rise to the dignity of an earnest worker, the future must show.

At this time she loved best to lie in Mrs. Crampton's luxurious library, or her own scarcely less beautiful home, and read poems and stories of noble women, of generous self-denial and unselfish exertion, while the others went off to what she deprecatingly called, "that exceedingly laborious Sunday school, which was really more than her nerves or strength would bear." Mrs. Crampton gave only a loving smile in answer to this. She knew it was best to leave her redemption to the experience of life and the workings of her own nature.

Max took no outward part in this scheme, (the aid he rendered it in an unseen way they did not suspect,) first, because he was too generous to mar his wife's pleasure in the work by his presence; and, second, because of a constitutional incapacity for any personal share in it. With the exception of Philip, whose liking for him was more that of a man than of a child, he had never been able to gain the love, sometimes not even the tolerance, of children. They regarded him with mingled fear and dislike, which no effort of his could overcome. All his life this had caused him pain, but now he felt it the more keenly, as it cut him off from personal labor where he would have liked most to bestow it. Knowing this, he stood quietly aloof, and gave only his wealth and influence, but too unostentatiously for his intimate friends to discover its extent.

They believed him a sceptic, as the world in general did, — the last person who would feel any interest in such a project. The influence of the Mephistophelean face and manner had long been too great for them to believe any good Christian spirit could be working under them. Only Emily had gone deeper into this strange nature, had seen the principle that actuated it every hour.

Jack Harrington, perhaps, in some slight degree, shared this knowledge, but he was the exception. To the rest, he appeared simply a strong, clear-headed intellect, without faith in, or fear of, God or man. This belief influenced all their sayings and doings towards him.

One Sunday morning, towards the close of the winter, Mrs. Crampton, Alice, Bertie, and Jack coming in from church, entered the library where Max was reading. They were walking about the room, talking in a desultory way, before the ladies went up-stairs to remove their wrappings, when Alice said abruptly, "Max, do you ever go to church?"

The man looked up from his book with a queer smile, and said quietly, "Yes, sometimes."

"How often is sometimes?" she again asked, wishing for more definite information.

"As often as I conscientiously think I can bear it."

"Conscientiously think you can bear it!" echoed the girl, looking at him with her great eyes full of astonishment. "I should have thought your conscience" — she hesitated a second before pronouncing the word, as though she considered its existence hypothetical — "would have forced your constant attendance."

"On the contrary, it forces my constant non-attendance," was the cool rejoinder.

"I don't understand you," the puzzled lady returned, her ideas entirely confused by this new view of the subject.

The expression that passed over Mr. Crampton's face seemed to indicate he thought that probable.

"Alice," he said, this time shutting up his book and turning fully towards her, "I will leave it to your own common sense."

The lady looked scared at the responsibility.

"Agreeing to put aside all consideration of ourselves as intellectual beings, as completely as it is done by most preachers, I hold that any true religious teaching is addressed to and satisfies a part of our nature, as far beyond any intellectual gratification as the immortal soul is beyond the mind, which in a degree we share with the very brutes; putting, I say, all such consideration aside, I ask you honestly to confess whether I should gain most, help or hinderance, towards a higher life, by going periodically to a place where wealth and its equivalents are as evidently the first consideration as they are on Wall street; where a man gets up and talks to me for an hour of 'extinct Satans,' a man whose ambitious life gives the lie to all that is true or vital in his words. I confess I seldom have sufficient strength to be justified in subjecting myself to such an ordeal."

He paused, but received no answer. They were looking at him in astonishment at his unwonted condescension in explaining his motives for any action; a thing scarcely paralleled in their almost life-long intercourse. A moment more, and he went on still further. "But I have my own places of worship, where I get the good I seek."

"Where are they?" asked Alice abruptly, her interest and curiosity once more gaining the ascendancy.

"I am afraid you would hardly recognize them as such," he returned, the queer smile coming back into his face; "but they are such to me. This morning it was the — road." He did not mention that, on his way thither, more than one needy fellow-being had been fed by his bounty and care.

"Really, Max," said the girl, deprecatingly, "I don't see how that can be called a place of worship."

"Alice," he returned, earnestly, "what is the value of any place or form of worship, but that by its means we are brought nearer to God? Whatever does this for us, serves as the true temple; whatever fails to do this, is a clog worse than valueless. Ah, child," he went on, thoughtfully, as though some recollection were involuntarily pressing him on, — "ah, child, I have been through scenes which were to me very mounts of transfiguration; where I could have said, with the disciple, 'Let me build here a tabernacle,' where I raised a spiritual altar and laid on it a sacrifice, where —" he stopped suddenly, with a consciousness that his words and thoughts were betraying him, and to whom he was speaking. Except for his unfathomable self-control, he would have faltered; as it was, with a single effort he collected his wandering thoughts, and beginning a fresh sentence, continued calmly, "Do you recollect the little Methodist chapel we passed yesterday, as we drove through the edge of the city?"

"Yes," said the girl, slowly, wondering what could be coming next.

"That is another of my places of worship."

"Why, what can you find there?" pursued his astonished questioner.

"What I failed to discover in your grand church, — the presence of God, men and words vital with the spirit of true religion."

"But, Max, how can you bear the want of even common education with which this is mixed? I once accidentally heard the man who preaches there, and he could not speak good grammar."

"My dear," said Max, quietly, "I don't need instruction in grammar, and so can afford to dispense with particularity on that point. I don't go there to get what any schoolmaster can give me, but what I can gain nowhere else so well, and which the good God has sent me through few channels, — something which makes that illiterate man a truer prophet to me than the long list of pulpit orators to whom I have listened. That man's mere existence makes me better and truer. I see an uneducated human being, with rough exterior, but whose every action and word is so illumined by the spirit of God that he comes to me like a living testament. I hear him speak of,

truth and duty with an awful earnestness, which shows that to him, at least, they are realities; he strikes past my mere intellect, down to my heart and conscience, and in God's name will not be refused. Child, I come away with an immovable faith in the eternal justice and goodness of God; I come away strong and willing to do and suffer His will; believing that, when this life is over, we shall know even as we are known, and shall clearly behold all the way he has led us back to himself. This is the message that poor, ignorant man brings me. Alice, even mentally, he must be our superior, for every moment of his life is based upon the knowledge which so few of us ever attain, of the true relative value of soul and body, of time and eternity. — A lesson weary and difficult in the learning," he muttered to himself, and then said no more.

"Can this be Max Crampton, — sneering, sceptical Max Crampton, whom we have known as such all our lives? or has some other spirit temporarily taken possession of his body?" was the unspoken thought of his hearers.

Alice had an impression, that, although using her name, he had long ceased to address her; that he was in fact speaking to some one beyond her. So strong was this sensation, that she glanced over her shoulder to ascertain its truth. In the recess of the window behind her stood Emily's motionless figure turned from them.

"But, Max!" she suddenly exclaimed, uttering the thought the sight brought to her mind, "your wife finds good in going to our church, and I thought you never differed in opinion."

"I know Emily goes," the man replied, with that softened inflection which always came into his voice in mentioning his wife's name; "but she is far better than I."

What a strange, slight movement, in the hitherto still figure. It was as though the spirit within her had flung up its arms in passionately earnest denial, and covering its face had cried out, "Unclean! unclean!" Only the clear-sightedness of one person saw and interpreted the almost imperceptible gesture.

Not knowing what to say in reply to Max's last sentence, Alice did not attempt to carry on the conversation; and shortly Mrs. Crampton broke up the party by moving towards the door. Max arose to open it. As she passed him their eyes met; tears were in hers. She gave him one look, which he never forgot; the blessed brightness of which nothing ever extinguished. He knew from that hour, that, whatever she might give to others, to him she gave, next to her God, the highest reverence of which her nature was capable.

The exquisite spring-time was now fully come, and Emily began to resume her girlish habit of long walks. They were a physical outlet for many conflicting feelings. Sometimes she was alone, sometimes Alice or Bertie were her companions. She liked to have them with her; neither of them were a restraint to her, since she was too well disciplined to fear her thoughts would be outwardly visible, except under rare and unexpected excitement. They were accustomed to her long silences, and respected them. Among the poor she usually went alone, or accompanied, perhaps, by a servant who carried whatever she wished to distribute. As great a resource as this charitable occupation was to her, she sometimes received strange wounds through it.

"God bless you, good, happy lady," said a poor, grateful Irish woman, whom she had found in utter poverty, surrounded by hungry children; yet so fitted for her lot, and contented with it, that Mrs. Crampton envied her from her heart. She wondered why the lady's face changed, and why she hesitated in what she was saying. She forgot it, however, when Mrs. Crampton went on with her sentence, and soon after left.

"Good, happy lady." The words rung in her ears.

"If either were true of me!" she thought, as she hurried on, scarcely knowing whither she went. "And that she should say and think them, — she, with whom I would gladly change places."

"Change places." At the words, the sleepless, relentless perception spoke out.

"This changing of lots, of which you speak so smoothly, are you worthy or capable of it? Are you any more able to bear that woman's life than your own? have you not been weighed in that balance and found wanting? did you not once try to be a self-sustaining laborer in this practical world, and what was the result? Failure, total failure, as you well know. Towards any good purpose you would be as ineffectual in her position as in your own." The thought had power to control the rebellious heart and bring it under subjection.

Approaching her home, she thought of the innumerable earthly blessings it contained, of the comfort and beauty with which her life overflowed, and the cry came up from her heart: "Verily God is just. Deeper than all appearance lies the truth, that He sends us equal good in the different ways He sees best. That woman and I are equally receivers of His bounty, — equally children of His love. The life He sends must be borne, — must be borne."

CHAPTER XXVII.

DURING these years where is Frederick Hastings? what has been his work? In that cruise to the Mediterranean he has revisited many countries; often passing over the ground Emily had but a short time before trodden. Since his departure from home they had never met; yet to him it seemed they had never parted. As he touched the classic ground he had hoped and dreamed they might one day see together, every lovely thing spoke to him of her. When at night, with the southern sky bending over him, he paced the solitary deck, involuntarily that word-music came to him, —

"Not the angels in heaven above,
Nor the demons far under the sea,
Can ever dis sever my soul from the soul
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee"; —

and it was true with him.

The pledge his parting words had given her he had striven to fulfil. In the small world of a man-of-war he had found work. His profession, the times and seasons when his presence was necessary, gave him unusual opportunities for gaining influence, and using it well. There was not one of that hardened crew but gratefully acknowledged some kindness from his hand; in time, not one but would have made any sacrifice for him. His manner towards them, so thoroughly kindly in its high-bred simplicity, controlled them when any assumption of superiority must have failed. By treating them as fellow human beings, he forced them to respect both him and themselves; a respect, with all his kind words and generous deeds, never to be forgotten or deviated from. He understood the trouble any such weakness must bring about, — an injustice far more to them than to himself.

This point had been settled between them shortly after he came on board. In spite of the liking they had taken to him, there had been a decided inclination to laugh and sneer at his elegance and fine manners; at length one of the crew, more of a dare-devil even than the rest, determined to provoke him, simply to see his *stuff*; and so, be-

fore his very eyes, neglected a command he had given. The man expected an oath, or a scolding, perhaps, or a calling in of higher authority. But none of these came; there was simply a change of expression around the mouth and eyes, and the surrounding atmosphere seemed to fall suddenly below freezing-point. The gentleman did not trouble himself to repeat his words, but turned and looked at the man in a manner not to be misunderstood, and then walked away with the same expression on his face. Coming back some time after, he quietly thought he had seldom seen an order so faithfully executed.

That was the last of it; but it was enough. The scene had many witnesses, and the impression was indelible.

Max Crampton long before had said, "It occurs to me, Miss Emily, beneath your friend's elegant exterior, there exists somewhere a substratum of granite against which it would be possible to severely injure one's self, were one so foolish or unfortunate as to come into collision with it."

A belief in that geological formation spread itself through the inhabitants of that small floating kingdom, protecting Frederick Hastings from all further aggression. And now that he had taught them to respect him, he could afford to make them love him.

The effect soon became visible, both among officers and men. They grew to have an admiring loyalty towards him; and if they were in any trouble, invariably came to him.

Leaning over the side of the vessel and watching its track, they would talk to him of what they held nearest and dearest. But through their confidences there was one rare compliment implied; no matter how important the secret committed to him, they never required any pledge of silence. The man's honor and delicacy were fixed facts. Every one among them was better for having known an honest, refined gentleman; and remembrance lingered around them for good to the end of their lives.

Yet it was soon to be only a remembrance; for the cruise was over, the vessel lying in New York harbor, and Frederick Hastings about to leave for his home.

He was nervously anxious to be there, to see, or at least gain some intelligence of Emily, of whom he had heard nothing since a few months after his departure. His sister's marriage to a wealthy Southerner had taken place about that time, and his aunt had gone to live at their new home in Louisiana, thus cutting off his only means of hearing of Miss Chester. Therefore he was ignorant of the events of her life since they parted; nor even sure that she was alive. No wonder he was impatient of delay.

He was passing down Broadway, attending to some necessary preparations for his journey, when he heard his name called in tones of joyful surprise. Turning round, he found himself seized in the friendly grasp of a young lieutenant, with whom he had, a year or two before, excursionized over the coast countries of the Mediterranean. He was a gay, gentlemanly fellow, with more heart than brains, whom Frederick Hastings had befriended through many scrapes and difficulties. The man's manner towards him now proved his gratitude for past kind offices. As soon as he had given vent to his enthusiastic pleasure, they proceeded together, talking eagerly of their past adventures and present prospects.

Thus they went on, until Frederick Hastings's arrival at his place of destination obliged them to separate.

"By the way," the young man exclaimed, just as he was turning to go, and, as the thought struck him, turned back. "My mother gives a ball to-night. Grand affair; no end of 'beauty and fashion,' and all that sort of thing, as the newspapers say. If you have any curiosity concerning the feminine gender of New York, here's your chance. It's rather slow work, not much like the old fun at Paris; but one evening of it won't use you up; so, apart from personal considerations, I advise you to try it. Of course I must be there. Good boy, you know," he added, laughing. "But first we must dine together, you know! Good by, and don't forget the dinner-hour." And lighting a fresh cigar, and nodding, he was off.

That night, as the young man had said, his mother's house, one of the most fashionable in the city, was thrown open to the splendid confusion of an evening party. It was the usual scene such occasions present. Light, odor, radiance, and beauty had been called forth in their utmost power to contribute to its brilliancy. The profusion of flowers, forming odorous mosaics in every available space, was a harmonious accompaniment to the beauty of the women, who swept through that throng like gorgeous birds trailing their rich plumage. To unwonted eyes the scene was like a glimpse into Aladdin's palace itself.

Mr. and Mrs. Max Crampton, with their usual companions, Alice, Bertie, and Jack, were present, being considered almost a necessary part of every brilliant reception. Mrs. Crampton was so beautiful to-night that, as she entered, a positive hush went over the assembly. It was certainly like a vision of loveliness. Her white dress, composed of some gossamer fabric, and the rarest old lace, the spoil of a sacked convent centuries ago, floated around her in cloudlike

draperies, through which her wonderful diamonds gleamed out. And from its misty, indistinct folds rose the statuesque head and shoulders pure and clear. Her hair, gathered as usual, softly back from her face, drooped in massive golden coil upon her neck; and again surmounting her brow like a crown, the diamonds shone. They passed up the room, and saluted the hostess before the assembly quite recovered its equilibrium. But as it did so, the murmuring voices were occupied in praise of her beauty.

"Is it Undine before or after she was *beseelt*?" asked a stranger.

"After she was *bésold*, most decidedly," instantly sneered Miss Gertrude Weston, who was standing near, and who lost no opportunity of promulgating her pet theory upon the Crampton alliance. The half-nervous laughter with which her sarcasms were always received went round the company, and the questioner smiled as though he were listening to an old story.

"She certainly did not marry him for his good looks," admitted one of the gentlemen, as he followed the party with his eyes.

"Why, is that small, plain man walking at her side the husband of your beautiful Undine?" asked the stranger, in surprise.

"Yes," was the laughing answer, "that's our nineteenth century edition of beauty and the beast."

"To judge by his appearance, I should think he would be fonder of another kind of *meerschäum*."

"Rather fond of both sorts of sea-foam, I fancy," was the careless reply, accompanied by a laugh.

"Sir," said Miss Weston, suddenly charging to the rescue of her old favorite, and turning upon the stranger with a manner that rather alarmed him, — "Sir, I would strongly advise you to understand a subject before you express an opinion upon it. That small, plain man, as you call him, possesses a power which constitutes him the legitimate ruler, not only of most women, but of most men."

By thus unfurling her banner for the defence, the lady effectually routed all assailants, and put a stop to further conversation; for, not knowing after this whether any expression of opinion were quite safe, they thought it best to keep silence, and disperse as quickly as possible.

The hours passed as they do at all parties: to some, flying on the wings of youth, pleasure, and gayety; to others, dragging their slow length along, laden with aching hearts and heads; to still more, merely keeping step with slow-paced indifference and ennui.

It was growing late when Frederick Hastings came in; intending

to stay only a short time, and so, with the least trouble to himself, fulfil his promise to his friend, and gratify some slight curiosity he had on the subject. He preferred sauntering through the rooms, and looking around him at his leisure, to taking any more active part in the proceedings. He had taken a complete survey of the apartments, and now stood leaning with folded arms against a pillar, idly watching the bright stream that passed before him, with the passive pleasure of a picture-gazer. Suddenly a movement of the crowd enlarged his range of vision, and he saw standing at the head of the room a figure which, though the face was half averted, put an end to his generalities in an instant.

"Good heavens! what a beautiful woman," was the thought which rushed to his lips. "Who can it be? It is impossible I should have seen her before, and yet her appearance is strangely familiar. If she would only turn her face this way, I might recognize her!"

But still the lady kept the same position, and still he wondered.

"But no, if I had once seen her, I could never have forgotten it. Besides, I have never looked at anything so lovely, except —" and here his thoughts wandered into dreams, out of the past there looked at him a pale, noble face, and tears were in the eyes as he had last seen them; "but even she," he thought, coming back to the present, "was not so queenly as this vision. Who *can* she be?"

Seeing his host passing near, he put the question to him.

"Who is that?" echoed the man, as Frederick Hastings pointed her out, "why, my dear fellow, that's the handsomest woman in New York, — that's Mrs. Max Crampton. She was a Miss Chester, or some such name I believe, from the South."

Gazing before him, at the object of his speech, the gentleman did not notice the shiver which passed over his listener's frame at the words, or that for the next few moments he rested heavily, as if for support, against the pillar where he had just now been so carelessly leaning.

"So, we are shaken out of our elegant indifference at last, are we?" the speaker went on, gayly. "I don't wonder at it. Just the person to suit you, too; for they say she has any amount of sense and cultivation, and that sort of thing. I don't venture on such difficult navigation myself very often; I prefer smoother, more known waters, — but it must be your native heath," he continued, suddenly bringing his simile to dry land. "Shall I introduce you?"

"No."

What exertion it required to articulate even that one word!

"Frederick," said his friend, observing how pale he had grown, and what a strange, eager look had come into his eyes, "you look as though you were tired or ill. Come into the supper-room and take a drink."

Again he received a monosyllabic negative, spoken with scarcely less effort than the first. Believing Frederick Hastings had fallen into what he had been accustomed to call "one of his queer moods," the young man thought it best to let him alone, and shortly left him to his own reflections.

They were concentrated into one thought and consciousness. It was she, indeed! He stood perfectly still and watched her, as if that alone were unspeakable content.

When would she turn and see him? was his next thought.

See him! My God, will the man ever breathe upon this earth who can comprehend a woman! She had seen and recognized him the moment after his entrance. And standing there, in the splendor of her beauty and magnificence, she is blind and faint with the rush of old feelings and memories. Her eyes are turned towards the person who addresses her, but they see nothing; his words fall upon her ears, but they convey no meaning. From force of habit she smiles vaguely in reply, but the gentleman sees only its sweetness, and is well satisfied with his answer.

On the opposite side of the room from Frederick Hastings, and so placed that the face averted from him was turned directly towards them, stood a group of gentlemen. Max was one of them; as usual neither near nor far from his wife. They were talking in a desultory way, and asked him a question which, turning to answer, Mr. Crampton saw his wife's face.

However unintelligible its language might be to others, he always had the power to translate its meaning with fatal precision. The smile that illumined it might have deceived more careless eyes, but not his. He looked through its soft glamour to see the lines around the mouth drawn sternly enough for a martyr. What had wrought this? The effect was terribly clear, but where was the cause?

The conversation around him had taken a fresh direction.

"The — ship of war has come into port," said one of the gentlemen. "I met one of the officers on the street to-day. A very fine fellow, by the way. Do you know him? Frederick Hastings."

The words had fallen almost unnoticed upon Max's ears, until the last. That came like a thunderbolt. She must have heard this

news before he had. And had the mere knowledge of his return the power thus to move her? The man set his teeth at the thought.

Suddenly the naval antecedents of his host, and the strong probability that Frederick Hastings might be present, struck him, and he glanced hurriedly round the room for confirmation or denial of his idea. Directly before him, though at quite a distance, he saw the object of his search. Standing just as he had seen him a hundred times, with the old, careless, unconscious grace, the indefinable air of refinement and beauty pervading his whole appearance. Thank God, it is not by our temptations, but the degree of our resistance of them, that we must finally be judged; for at that moment Max Crampton was at heart a murderer.

A moment more and conscience and reason awaked in full vigor, to assert their eternal dominion over his nature. The struggle was short and sharp, but decisive. He remembered their present relative positions had been brought about simply by the exercise of his own unbiassed will; he, and not they, had divided this bitter portion among them, which he now strove to cast from his lips. He thought of the old friendship, the constitutional harmony of two congenial natures, which he knew to be the only bond between this man and woman. He recalled his solemn determination never to let his selfish, absorbing love stand between her and any happiness that might still be left her in life; any chance of enjoyment, of the possibility of which he had not already robbed her. And then he took his resolution. He waited for its execution until he could calculate surely upon his own strength and self-possession.

Mrs. Crampton might have been a statue for any movement she had made since Frederick Hastings's gaze rested upon her. She still held her position and he his watch. Presently her companion discovered they were within the draught from an open window, and proposed they should move to a different room. The words were to her mere sound; but seeing his offered arm, she mechanically took it, and they passed on to the door, straight by the pillar against which Frederick Hastings leant. Her dress swept against him as she passed. As it did so she looked up; then they stood an instant face to face, looking into each other's eyes. Their mutual comprehension of what that moment involved rendered any outward expression impossible to either of them. The intensity and fulness of their feeling annihilated speech; even to her companion's eyes they seemed indifferent strangers. Another instant, and passing through the door she was lost to his sight.

All this Max witnessed and understood. Before Frederick Hastings could make any movement to follow her, Mr. Crampton had crossed the room and welcomed him to New York as an old friend. He toned his words and manner to exactly what he thought such an occasion would ordinarily require; he agreed with himself to be precisely what his conscience held to be just, neither warmer nor colder, and he fulfilled his bond. It was the Max Crampton of three years ago who spoke, who gave him exactly the same friendly welcome he would have done then, who maintained, to the smallest particular, the course he would have held, if the intermediate past had no existence.

Frederick Hastings found it hard to follow his example. The consciousness of both past and present was too vivid for him to ignore its influence thus resolutely. He could not forget this man had won where he had lost, or that his own existence was irretrievably commingled with that of the stake for which they had played. His manner was hurried out of its usual repose, and his voice was low and scarcely steady, as he answered the natural questions by which Max sustained the conversation. He had not Mr. Crampton's self-possession, preparation, or strength to support him through his part in this interview. He could only follow the lead of the stronger nature. This he did, when Max said presently, in a quiet way, but looking away from his companion: "I suppose you have not quite forgotten our mutual friend, Miss Emily Chester. She is now my wife, and will, I am sure, be glad to welcome you home. Shall we go to her?"

Fortunately for his listener he did not demand or even wait for an answer. He was too wise, he had calculated too accurately the strength of both, to venture upon such imprudence. As he finished his sentence he moved towards the next room, the other following with a sensation as though, for the time being, Max's will had taken the place of his own volition.

They found Mrs. Crampton surrounded by her little court, where she was performing her usual part in a strange, automatic fashion. Her eyes were turned in another direction, yet she felt their approach as keenly as if those coming feet touched her bare, vibrating nerves. She awaited their arrival with the same passive feeling of expectancy with which we watch the nearing of any catastrophe, whose utter inevitability has annihilated all thought of escape or resistance.

They came, and Max's voice sounded at her side; and his stern

will had power to make it, even to her ears, the usual tone, the usual manner. It said, "Emily, your friend Dr. Hastings is here, and waiting to speak to you."

He did not say "our friend." His constitutional truth saved him from this verbal translation of a spiritual lie.

Mrs. Crampton turned very slowly and offered her hand to Frederick Hastings, who stood before her. He took it, bowed low, and then relinquished it; neither of them speaking, not even looking. Bystanders thought Mrs. Crampton's welcome singularly cold towards one who bore the name of friend; so much so, that its chilling influence extended even to them, making the conversation, interrupted by his entrance, difficult to resume. Max watched this meeting as he would have endured any terrible operation which his judgment had pronounced right and necessary, and which his own will had consequently brought about.

He saw the complete break in the conversation, and met the occasion in his usual practical way. First, by presenting Frederick Hastings to the rest of the party.

Alice stood next Mrs. Crampton; the fair Anglo-Saxon beauty contrasting sharply with dark, Southern brilliancy. The girlish beauty of the one, dwarfed, as it must ever be, before the perfected, developed loveliness of a woman. The girl's dreamful eyes rested upon the new-comer with a naive, wondering admiration shining out of their depths; for no discipline of society had yet schooled the involuntary expressiveness of that mobile face, nor the discipline of life. Her instant appreciation of their new guest, as he bowed to her, was as clear and emphatic in her face as in her mind.

But Frederick Hastings was too much absorbed to notice this, or indeed anything about her except a momentary perception of her beauty; for, having completed his mechanical salutation of the party, his eyes went back to its central figure and there rested. By sheer force of will, brought to bear upon himself and those around him, Max Crampton kept up a flow of talk during the next half-hour; covering thereby from observation the strange silence of two of that company, whom he never, through it all, released from his watch.

As to the lady, a spell seemed to have fallen upon her, dulling, almost deadening the senses, and she made no effort to conquer its influence. The wild tumult of the internal conflict drowned outward sound. The concentration of her being around one sensation made all outside impressions slight and faint. At length some one suggested the lateness of the hour and the idea of leaving. Mrs.

Crampton assented with an almost fierce gesture of eagerness, yet without a word, and the party was soon on its way towards home. As Mrs. Crampton approached her carriage, Frederick Hastings's tall form moved to its open door, and stood waiting to assist her. As he did so, without word or look on either side, the recollection of the last time he had seen those two together flashed upon Max. It had been in exactly the same attitude, upon the day of her father's funeral. Was the likeness only in attitude? Were not their relative positions essentially the same at this moment as in that time long gone, when he had been powerless and Frederick Hastings all powerful? Was not the law of their natures as potent now as then, and working as absolutely? The action brought that remembrance back upon him with the keenness of a dagger's thrust; yet he watched in silence. Whatever he felt, it found no expression, and in a moment more he was politely inviting Frederick Hastings to his house. Then he sprang into the coach, closed the door, and they drove off. Frederick Hastings followed them with his eyes until they turned into the next street, then walked slowly on towards his hotel.

He had seen her, and what had the meeting brought him? Except at the first moment, when the shock of its unexpectedness and of the news of her marriage was upon him, it brought almost unalloyed happiness. There had expired within him, as he heard her new name, a hope, of whose continued existence he only became conscious through its death-struggle; the very ghost of a hope, whose palpable form had been dead and buried years before. Further than this, the knowledge of her new position affected him slightly. His feeling towards her did not alter; thank God, there was no need for it: it could be no higher and nobler. It had always been rather a form of worship than of human love, more a devotion than an idea of possession; a feeling which her present position, placing her farther from him than ever, only tended to increase. It was the same beauty he had dreamed upon the Mediterranean; the same vision whose light had shone steadily upon him in far-off lands; the same brought close and rendered tangible.

Less than an hour after Frederick Hastings had watched them drive away, Max Crampton sat alone in his own room, facing this turn of Fate. Suddenly there came a sound through the closed doors dividing the apartments, — a sound terribly familiar to his ears. Once the haunting fear of its return had power to stop the very breath upon his lips. It was only that of a woman pacing ceaselessly to and fro within the confined limits of her chamber; only that, but it

had in it the essential principle of all the baffled escapes, all the vain flights, all the fruitless echoes, of the one deathless struggle against loathed bondage that the world has witnessed. Every form of imprisoned life seemed to mingle in its voice of desperate, impotent resistance. The dull moan of a human being, immured in some black dungeon's depths, was there; but the moan rising gradually, risen to shrieks of agony, as the torture is upon him of some momentary glimpse of the free air and life and love beyond those dead enclosing walls, — all this and more the listener seemed to hear, as the sound of that incessant, hurrying footfall smote upon his ear.

With Emily Crampton this night, it was a woman's nature in wild revolt against an unnatural chain, crushing her body and soul; a chain now rendered galling beyond the power of human endurance by the recollection of a time when its weight was not upon her, by the knowledge brought so keenly home of freedom and happiness outside of her captivity. No human energy could control such an outburst of insulted, defrauded nature. It must go by its own way to its own end.

But it died, only to have its resurrection in another form. It was the old, heaven-appealing cry for freedom; this woman's spirit, bound by human law with which its nature had no correspondence, fettered by an adamant chain imposed upon it in defiance of its free will, seemed calling to Heaven for its defrauded birthright.

But even this call, fundamental and impossible to silence, grew weak and faint before one other. It was that demand before which, with a true woman, all else becomes as dust and ashes in the scale.

The gnawing, insatiable hunger of a heart, strong, empty, and desolate. The rest of her suffering, the undying claim of soul and body for freedom, she had shared in common with oppressed humanity; but this last extremity of torture seemed the peculiar, essential curse of her womanhood. This heart, never permitted its rightful, natural sustenance, kept for years in the sternest subjection, was to-night asserting its down-trodden sovereignty, crying out, Vengeance is mine! But, alas! wreaking that vengeance upon itself in suicidal triumph. What place was there for its expansion in her narrowed life? Was not its very existence her subtlest peril? What danger or pain, in all that surrounded her, had she to fight or fear greater than the mighty conqueror within, capable of defying her utmost efforts of will, if once it gained sway? But the temptation to satisfy this sharp, heart-hunger through sorrow, even through sin, was not, thank God, upon her. No forbidden fruit, no apples of Sodom hung

within reach to madden her; no hand held food to her lips which it seemed equally death to receive or dash from them; only the cruel, ceaseless pain of starvation added its crowning pang to her agony, rendering it such a burden as is seldom laid upon frail, fainting humanity.

But out of this sea of misery, whose billows had risen one by one to overwhelm her, with which she had struggled like a drowning woman, there was coming an influence which had power to say to its winds and waves, "Be still!" and to enforce its command. The clear, strong intellect was asserting its indestructible, constitutional supremacy. It forced her to look her position and future life straight in the face. In all its conflict of feelings, of even natural, inalienable rights, it showed her one fixed fact, — and from that it never swerved. "You are Max Crampton's wife," it seemed to write upon the wall before her eyes in fiery characters, such as shook feasting Belshazzar upon his throne; "there lies your duty." "You are Max Crampton's wife," it repeated, in inexorable reply to the nature which shrieked its resistance to this death-sentence. "You are Max Crampton's wife," it echoed and re-echoed ceaselessly, unchangeably, in the face of argument, pleading, even in defiance of appeal from man's transient law of bondage to God's eternal law of freedom. And now to the man who listened, there seemed a strange change in that step. It was the tread of a woman struggling on under the weight of a burden which was slowly, but steadily descending upon her. What would he have done to be able to lighten or bear it for her. What he must do was to sit there listening, and powerless.

Compelled by this ruthless perception of fact and duty, the woman saw the way she must walk opening before her; its end veiled in thick darkness. Towards that end she must journey with only the sentence, "You are Max Crampton's wife," for chart, compass, or guide.

The hurrying feet had even now entered that path, were even now moving towards their end. But he upon whose ears their sound fell heard it with sickening, heart-failing terror; for he had a sensation as though listening to a woman hastening on to her own grave.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE next day Max Crampton waited, almost in spite of his own will, for a certain ring at the door-bell which he knew would come.

It was afternoon, when, sitting in the library, whose open door commanded a view of the hall, he heard the ring; heard the familiar voice inquire for Mrs. Crampton; saw the familiar form enter and pass into the drawing-room. Some time after, he did not know how long, it might have been an age compressed into a moment, or a moment expanded to an age, if measured by feeling, he saw his wife's figure coming slowly down the broad stairway. He had not seen her since he had watched her ascending the same steps the night before; for Mrs. Crampton's non-appearance at the breakfast-table had become too habitual to occasion remark. What he desired now, was one look at her face. With the key he held to its meaning, that would be sufficient. As she turned to enter the drawing-room, for a moment her full face was towards him.

Beneath its white surface he saw the forces and feelings, which the night before he had heard in raging conflict, lying now subjected to the stern will ruling over all; yet still he knew them to be cruel and strong, from her weary look, as if longing for rest, for escape from the consciousness of pain gnawing at her heart. All this he recognized. Then the door closed upon her, shutting him out from further knowledge of what that interview might mean.

Except that Frederick Hastings was rather pale, and his manner slightly hurried from its usual quietude, he was the same, both in feeling and appearance, he had been three years before, — indeed, ever since he had intimately known her. Waiting, with the past and present so intermingled that he was unconsciously expecting Emily Chester, his girl friend, to appear, he moved slowly about the room, pleasantly conscious of its beauty, glancing at the pictures that lined the walls until he came to one which fixed his attention, where the others had failed to arrest it. It was a portrait of Mrs. Crampton, taken while in Europe, and perfect in its beauty and its life. He stood absorbed in the memories the sight brought back, and was not

roused until the rustle of her dress suddenly brought him to a consciousness of his position at the moment.

Turning at the sound, the original stood before him. It was like being partially awakened from a dream, which reality is but continuing. His first words when he took her hand (naturally as he would have done years before) showed the time and place from which she had called him back.

"You have reared your temple to beauty, I see; and Venus reigns over it," he said, glancing from her to her picture. He spoke as though continuing some conversation lately interrupted. But even as he did so, an amused smile came upon his lips as the absurdity struck him of compliments passing between them; friends who had breathed so long together the atmosphere of simplicity and truth.

Almost unconsciously to herself the smile found a translation in the lady's face, stirring its white immobility. God help us, we are bought and sold to those whose natures answer and supply the wants of ours. At his first word and look his influence over her was as potent as though time had stood still, and they were standing in the little parlor at Baltimore. The old intangible pleasure in his presence penetrated, subdued her with its subtle power, now as then. Right, Max Crampton, terribly right; this is indeed Orpheus, and the music of his voice and manner is floating in upon Eurydice's ears, bewitching her with its strange sweetness.

It had been emphatically Mrs. Crampton who had entered that room; the cold, statuesque lady, the outwardly hardened woman, whose nature had been strung to its utmost tension. But it was not Mrs. Crampton who looked at him now. The girl and woman of past and present were strangely intermingled; but the former was ascendant. The pain and weariness were stilled; fresh water seemed held to the parched lips and cool winds to fan the fevered breast and brow.

"So you remember the vow to raise such a temple and altar which I made in the old time," she said at last, lingering upon the concluding words with the tenderness of voice we use involuntarily speaking of the loved and lost.

"Yes, I remember,"—his look telling how much and how well. But his tone was unlike hers, for he spoke of the living, not of the dead, well knowing all that had vitalized the past was as truly existent now as then; their congeniality and spiritual unity was the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.

And he was right; even as he spoke it all came back, annihilating the separations of time and circumstance and restoring their old communion.

Seated beneath that portrait—now, with her changed expression, scarcely to be called a likeness—they talked of those long gone days, of the innocent feelings and pleasures which had made those hours such happy ones, avoiding, by an unconscious instinct, reference even in thought to their end or any suffering they contained. Seated there they talked of all this, forgetting everything but the pure happiness of their reunion. More and more the lady's face changed, until it seemed its very physical formation had altered. The girlish softness came back to every feature; the icy mask gradually formed over it with passing years dissolved before the warm sunshine of this presence; light-hearted smiles began to rise, at first with a tremulous, uncertain light, such strangers had they become to her lips and eyes, but soon gaining their old brilliancy, better still their old unconsciousness. A brief hour of forgetfulness is vouchsafed her; and in it she dreams a dream of peace. Rest! worn, heavy-laden woman, for one short hour. Over the trackless desert of her life she has toiled on, determined to compel obedience from fainting soul and body; but now her path had led to a green oasis, and its tranquillity conquers her. No wonder for a little while she sleeps and dreams, although the time be short!

The daylight faded, and was followed by the light of lamps, unnoticed by them, and without interrupting the flow of their pleasant talk.

It was now within a few moments of the dinner hour. Mr. Crampton, with Jack Harrington, had entered the house a short time before, and now naturally came toward the drawing-room, where the family were accustomed to gather before the announcement of dinner. Max saw them as they crossed the hall, from his place in the library, and joining them, the three entered the room together.

The glance, swift as thought, and keen as lightning, Max shot across the room showed him a sight he had not seen for years; one he believed he should never again see, until becoming like little children they might pass to a new sphere, and find a new youth with the beauty of the old. It showed him, not his wife as she had looked to him during their years of wedlock, not the woman he had married, nor the one from whom he had parted the year before that marriage; but Emily Chester, as he had seen her the night before her father's death; as he had never seen her since. The face, tone, expression, the very attitude, were the same. Just as she had looked up at Fred—

erick Hastings then, she was looking now. Just as she had turned towards Max that night, she turned now, as he greeted Dr. Hastings and presented him to his father and to Jack. By a power he well knew, all the terrible work wrought by the four intervening years had disappeared from sight, even from memory, since he had watched her slowly descending the stairway. He had proved his own powerlessness to do aught but increase the burden his hand had originally given her to bear; he now witnessed another's ability to make her unconscious of its existence. The spell was so strong that his coming had no power to break it. The calm smile of the face was not as usual struck dead at his glance. Its sweetness rested even upon him in passing.

The interruption to their *tête-à-tête* was but momentary. Frederick Hastings resumed his seat, and with it his conversation. Mr. Crampton and Jack strolled off down the room, in various idle ways getting rid of the time until dinner.

Max seated himself at a table near the centre of the room and began turning over a portfolio of sketches, thereby engaging his hands and eyes, but none of his other senses. They were fastened upon the tones and laughter that floated from the recess in which those two were sitting; fastened with a deadly tenacity, as though to him more than life, more than death, hung upon them. Not that he for a second offered the dastardly insult to himself or to them of misinterpreting their meaning. It was perfectly clear to him. Peaceful forgetfulness of pain in the present, happy memories of the past, were all it spoke of. And to this he must sit and listen, knowing its essential bliss was an exemption from consciousness of him. His bodily presence was indeed before them, but the recollection of his real being, his despotic power over and place in their lives, was for the time totally effaced.

The same happy oblivion continued until the servant announced dinner; went on, as they passed to the dining-room; Mrs. Crampton and Frederick Hastings leading the way. Here Philip came forward to welcome his old friend; his cheeks flushing and his eyes glistening with what looked marvellously like tears of joy. There was something touching in the child's devotion and the chivalric tenderness with which it was received. The simplicity and truth of both natures bridged over the difference in age and habit, and made child and man equals in spirit.

No matter who came and went in that house, Philip's position at the table had always been at his sister's right hand. But to-day he left

it, and coming round took the chair next Frederick Hastings, he being seated at her left. So placed, they formed a little coterie at the head of the table, as Max, Jack, and Mr. Crampton did at its foot.

The conversation went on as in the drawing-room, with the addition of Philip's voice; which Max in his ceaseless watch found mingling constantly with the tones of the others. Talking as they naturally did of their old merry meals, they, even to the child, grew oblivious to their surroundings, and almost fancied themselves alone once more in the little dining-room in Baltimore, sharing some irregular, gypsyish repast. No wonder their careless mirth contrasted sharply with the quiet conversation at the other end of the table, in which Max bore his accustomed share. He had thoroughly prepared himself for this time during those hours spent in the library; knowing the power of the trial, and that intelligent, if unsuspecting, eyes would rest upon him while he suffered. Hitherto, he and his wife had been the only actors in the masque they had presented to the world's view. Their parts had agreed too thoroughly, they had supported each other with too perfect an intuition, to excite suspicion even among those constantly about them. They were only considered "very peculiar," and as following their mutual will after their own way.

But now another figure appeared upon the scene, to give perhaps a terribly different aspect to past and future. Worse still, one of the actors had strangely forgotten her part, even the necessity for attempting to act it. The whole responsibility falling upon him, he took up the neglected burden and duty. What the effort cost him, he alone knew. As for its outward effect, — all the while Jack Harrington talked, he vaguely felt how much colder, more inscrutable Max's face was growing day by day; that face, which had been a problem to him all his life. There was now upon it a gray pallor; such as might come from some inward concentration of the man's nature and congelation of his heart's blood; but both fast verging towards exhaustion.

Mrs. Crampton, too, Jack could not help regarding curiously. She was so singularly altered, he could hardly realize her to be the person he had previously known. The cool, conscious self-possession; the intangible barrier of proud reserve, which he had never seen broken down even in her gayest moments, had now melted away like morning mist. All that had most individualized her to him, since their very first meeting, seemed to have disappeared utterly. No wonder his eyes had a puzzled look as they rested on her; as though some of his most fixed ideas had been suddenly confused.

As for Mr. Crampton, having spent nearly a lifetime in becoming accustomed to Max's general inexplicability, the present occasion did not strike him as anything extraordinary. So he talked and ate just as usual, except for the bland pleasure with which he viewed his daughter's unwonted gayety and happiness at meeting her old friend. Certainly he and Jack were the only members of the party conscious of the time the dinner occupied. With the rest (except one solitary heart), pleasure had annihilated all such remembrance; with that heart, pain had accomplished the same result. Had that happy trio kept their place until morning light, Max would have held his with the same undemonstrative endurance.

At last Mrs. Crampton rose to leave the gentlemen over their wine. But Frederick Hastings, caring little for such an arrangement at any time, declined being left, and quietly followed her into the drawing-room. Max settled the matter for the rest of the party by rising instantly and accompanying them. Reaching the room sooner than he, they had retaken their places before the others entered; resumed them exactly, except that Philip was curled up on the same sofa, with his head in his sister's lap, a position for which his increasing years had not diminished his fondness.

The party naturally retained its separated character. The later comers gathered round the central chandelier engaged over politics and newspapers; the exact division of employment being that Max's eyes rested on the newspaper in his hand, while Jack and Mr. Crampton discussed the other never-failing subject of interest to the masculine American mind of any age and condition. So things went on until the ormolu clock upon the mantel-piece rang out eleven; when Max heard Frederick Hastings say, —

"Eleven o'clock! I had no idea it was so late. I must go, as I have still an engagement to fulfil to-night. But not before I have heard you sing once more."

Max got up and opened the piano.

They came to it; she taking her place and they theirs, on either side of her. For a moment or two her hands wandered over the chords, as though uncertain what to sing; then, unconsciously guided by a mingled memory and instinct, they fell into the light prelude to *Chagrin d'Amour*; and the clear tones rose to that exquisite air and words, just as they had done when they three last stood in exactly the same position. The memory struck both gentlemen on the instant. The way in which they evinced it was certainly no slight evidence of the essential difference between them and their

situations. Frederick Hastings gave a quick glance of pleasant surprise towards Max, expecting to read the same recollection in his face. But he was mistaken. That face represented an expressionless calm, with the eyes nailed upon the key-board.

While she had been singing Jack had joined the group, and as she finished he exclaimed: —

"Mrs. Crampton, that is one of my musical devotions, but I have never heard you sing it before."

"No," she answered slowly, looking at him in a dreamy way, and playing soft, low arpeggios as she spoke. "I had quite forgotten it myself. I wonder what can have brought it back to me so clearly to-night."

Frederick Hastings smiled as he heard the words, having traced the cause already by the light feet of memory. But having failed, as he thought, to arouse any corresponding recollection in Max, he did not attempt it with her.

The lady rose from her seat, and, Frederick Hastings repeating that an engagement awaited his fulfilment, the two sauntered down the room towards the door, Max following as it were, because he must. Moving slowly on, they began talking of the pictures they passed. They had looked at and admired many; when, just by the door, they came to a small, but exquisitely painted scene by an American artist, whose name, then unknown, has since become renowned.

It was a waterfall tumbling over rocks, from its source among the snows and pines of a northern mountain; so bright and clear, you seemed to feel the cool sunshine glittering upon and through it, to hear and breathe the keen, rushing breeze that flung off its edges into diamond spray.

Before this Mrs. Crampton stopped, directing her companion's attention to it; speaking with enthusiasm both of the picture and the painter, personally. Wishing to make some point more evident she attempted to touch it. It was hung quite high, above several others, and, finding it out of her reach, she stepped lightly up on an ottoman beneath it. Turning to descend, a moment after, both gentlemen naturally put out their hands to assist her.

A stronger contrast than those two hands presented would be difficult to find. The one, exquisite in texture and fine tapering lines; the other, large, radically unbeautiful, but iron-strong to grasp, to have and to hold its own.

Before she had time to accept either, Max's grasp was upon her wrist. He had intended merely to touch it so far as to aid her descent; but the spirit within him had risen in the last moment to a

power defying the control of mere flesh and blood. Hitherto he had endured faithfully; but now soul or body must give way. For the next moment, had her wrist been encircled by a burning iron band the sensation would have been the same. For the second time in his life, the force of that man's nature had uttered itself in one gesture of unnatural mechanical strength. Had he literally clasped manacles on her, he could have no more riveted his chain upon her than he had done in that instant.

"You are Max Crampton's wife," was the sentence which conscience, intellect, and honor, inexorable judges, had passed upon her, as she stood at their tribunal the night before.

"You are *my* wife," had in that moment been branded upon her shrinking flesh.

Less than three years before, she had shrieked at a far slighter form of the same sharp agony. What those years had been was terribly clear, as the lips, instead of parting, only closed more and more tightly; they, like the face, struck to a dull, awful white. She stepped to the floor and stood voiceless, motionless.

Releasing her arm as swiftly as he had taken it, Max Crampton moved towards the shadow of the wall, with the sensation of a man who has accidentally dealt his own death-blow.

Frederick Hastings, seeing only the outward action, withdrew his hand, and quietly went on with his reply to Mrs. Crampton's remark. In doing so, he naturally looked at her. Although she was standing with her face away from the light, he was struck by her extreme pallor. Attributing it to weariness, he blamed himself for not having noticed it before, and, as far as the exertion of entertaining him was concerned, relieved it.

"Good evening, Mrs. Crampton," he said almost immediately. And the pleasant, gentlemanly clasp held momentarily the very hand upon whose wrist that mark was still burning; a sign-manual he must have seen, had not his eyes been resting upon the face. Then he bowed and left.

Until the sound of his retreating footsteps was lost in the closing of the heavy hall door, that husband and wife stood still, just as he had left them. Then Mrs. Crampton, without word or look, passed out of the apartment on to her own room. There, not raging in mad, impotent revolt, as she had done the night before, but seated, statue-cold and pale, looking only at the fiery impress upon her arm, she resolved with God's help from that hour, wherever it might lead her, to follow but one truth, one duty, whose inexorable manacle was branded in that burning on her flesh.

CHAPTER XXIX.

YEARS before Max Crampton's marriage, his father had said, if such an event ever took place, he should build for himself and for his children a summer residence upon the Hudson. When it actually came to pass, and they were about starting for Europe, one of the many commissions Max had given the elder gentleman was the carrying out of this design, according to a plan of his own, arranged long before.

During the years they had spent abroad, Mr. Crampton executed this project *con amore*. The result was a house and grounds made beautiful by art and nature. To collect objects for its adornment had been an aim never forgotten by Max during their travels, who sent home his collections from time to time. Thus, as in their city home, the master was visible even in the minutest details. It was the casket for his jewel, the home for his love. Surely he had made it a fitting one. Her tastes spoke out at every point. The works of Art she had admired in far-away countries were there to welcome her with their remembered beauty. Even her favorite flowers bloomed in conservatory and garden. Everywhere the devotion with which this temple had been reared was visible to eyes that knew to whose service it was dedicated.

It was here they were to spend the first summer of their married life at home. Not alone: that is the prerogative of happiness, or at least of peace; but with a large party of friends, among whom, of course, were Alice, Jack, and Bertie. The plan had been arranged during the previous winter, and its fulfilment was anticipated with pleasure by all of them. The time for their departure was already settled for the latter part of the week, at the beginning of which Frederick Hastings reached New York; and their preparations proceeded of course without reference to his advent. This was the outside state of affairs upon the day he had dined with the Cramptons. Of their internal condition the preceding chapter has given a view.

The crowning event of that night, and its effect, was no inaccurate test of the change in this woman. Three, two, yes, even one

year ago, the smallest exertion of brute force over her would have aroused her nature to fury; would have enlisted all the strength of her being for resistance, for evil; would have perverted even its good to the same bad end.

The difference in its present effect measured the road she had travelled. Thank God, it measured something more! It proved how far the heaven-spoken, earth-reiterated truth, that all things shall work together for good to those who love the Lord, had been verified in her life. In the old time this trial would have maddened her to spurn if not to shiver the chains of duty. Now she clung to them, voluntarily tightened them, as her only certainty or safety. So far had life and the Hand which is above us all brought her: such and so much had it made and taught her.

But there was a reverse side. The seemingly inevitable, counterbalancing evil accompanied this good. The price of this spiritual advance had been paid (O, hard law of nature!) in physical vitality. What before would have roused now crushed her. Had her physical nature possessed its primal vigor, this attack might still have met with a different reception. Not a little of the power each of those men had obtained over her that evening was owing to the fact they had taken her nature at its farthest ebb of the previous night's flood-tide. For the rebellion of those hours, for the body's short period of usurped sovereignty, the soul had exacted payment to the uttermost farthing; a loss once suffered it could never regain. So the same measure being laid to her vital force registered a falling tide of life and strength within her. But this weakness only showed itself in its spiritual effect; apparently, materially, she was in her highest health and beauty. As yet, this cloud in the horizon of her destiny is but as a man's hand.

Max Crampton had not expected his wife's appearance at the breakfast-table; had not permitted himself to believe that a period would so soon be put to the exquisite torture of his suspense as to the exact limit and effect of his own work. Yet there she sat just as usual, except that her white beauty was a shade more cold and statuesque. The ice had reformed over soul and body and enclosed her with the old barrier of freezing splendor. A steady scrutiny from any other person at the table would have discovered nothing unusual; a single glance of her husband's eyes discovered two changes, slight in themselves, but to him fraught with a meaning needing no interpretation. On her left wrist she wore a broad bracelet of woven gold. What darkening mark it hid he well knew.

The other change was in her eyes. Accustomed as he had thought himself to their every possible variation, in the last few hours an expression had grown into them entirely new to him. It riveted his attention, not from its degree, but from its quality; as of one who had gazed intently after something visible only to herself, until the power was lost of seeing things irrelevant. Thus much of the result he gathered instantly; for its further development he must wait. To atone for what he had done, or to implore forgiveness, there was no humiliation or pain he would not gladly have undergone. But he knew the hopelessness of such an idea; explanation, forgiveness, is but for the loving or indifferent, — never for such as they.

As may be readily supposed, Frederick Hastings had abandoned his plan for immediate departure. His only relatives were in Louisiana, and a journey thither at this season was rendered unadvisable by the unusual prevalence of yellow-fever. His sister had written him, before his departure from Europe, begging him not to run the risk of coming South, and partially promising to come North during the season. Consequently he intended to spend his furlough at his Baltimore home. But now New York contained its chief attraction in the strongest influence, the truest friendship he had ever experienced, and he was content to stay where he was. He had fallen so completely back into their old habits, it would have seemed unnatural to him not to call the next day to inquire if she had recovered from her fatigue of the previous night.

When late in the afternoon he did so, he found Max sitting alone in the drawing-room. That gentleman gave him his usual greeting, and the two stood quietly talking for a few moments, but with attention more fixed upon the door than upon anything either was saying. Presently it opened, but only to admit the servant.

"Mrs. Crampton was engaged, and begged to be excused," was the message he delivered to the visitor.

Frederick Hastings looked what he was, very much disappointed; but neither felt nor evinced any surprise at so customary an action. The footing upon which they had parted the night before precluded the suspicion of any deeper motive for her refusal than some momentary preoccupation. He simply expressed his regret it should be so, and in a little while, refusing his host's invitation to stay, he took leave.

But to Max her message bore a different meaning.

"So," he muttered in long-drawn ejaculation between his teeth, when he was once more alone, "she has no wish to put herself again within the reach of my brutality."

Not knowing his wife was unconscious of his presence in the house, and ignorant of the one resolution on which her every action was henceforth to be founded, no wonder he misinterpreted her motive.

"She surrenders this happiness, which I her lord and master would otherwise tear from her, having sufficiently proved my power and will for such work," he muttered to himself. "And this is the way I have kept my determination! Good God! have I lost my friend as well as my wife, and that, too, by my own action?"

For a while he must bear the agony of believing even her friendship gone, its place usurped by fear. Soon he will learn to judge her more truly.

Though the Cramptons were leaving town very early this year, it was late for either party giving or going. Still, while people are in town they will assemble. To-night they did so at the house of one of Mrs. Crampton's friends. Too warm weather for dancing, they came together apparently for the purpose of eating ices and talking over their plans for the summer.

Emily fulfilled this engagement as she did each one, otherwise she must give a reason for declining. So there she was, her real self, unaffected by outward circumstances to which she was perfectly indifferent.

But this indifference was sharply pierced through when she saw Frederick Hastings making his way towards her. She had not looked for his presence. Forgetting this was not his first visit to New York, he was the last person she expected to meet in general society.

He came and bowed in his quiet way; his pleasure at seeing her frankly visible in voice and manner. But certainly his pleasure met little response in the lady's salutation. Exquisitely courteous, graceful, even coldly friendly as her greeting was, for any sympathy evinced between them she might have been an inhabitant of another sphere. It struck through the man like a chill, so different was it from anything he had counted upon. He had parted from her with that peculiar sensation of nearness, as though the interview had fused their natures into a purer, nobler unity; the result of communion with our real, heaven-bestowed friends.

With this feeling strong upon him Frederick Hastings had come here to-night; but what had he found? A cold, imperial woman, who received his greeting like a queen from the throne of her beauty and magnificence. He had a sensation of being utterly outside the circle of her interest; one of the recipients of her polite indiffer-

ence. A chilly, dreary feeling came over him, as though the light and warmth of the room were rapidly failing.

But instead of the awkward pause or instant retreat, which a less perfectly bred man would have deemed inevitable, he began quite composedly the ordinary conversation he would have addressed to her had she really been the elegant ball-room stranger her manner indicated.

The responses, though perfectly courteous and appropriate, were uttered with a clear voice whose still cold froze every genial thought and feeling he possessed. All they had in common seemed to have disappeared; scarcely enough left to support a few trifling sentences. As is always the case, their present separation was in proportion to their previous unity.

He would now gladly have retreated; but turning to do so, he found himself face to face with Alice Harrington. He made some passing observation, he hardly knew what, and she answering with a pleasant readiness, very different from her usual languid hauteur, he found himself engaged in conversation almost before he was aware. Being in this position he retained it, as it gave him an opportunity of remaining near and watching Mrs. Crampton without attracting observation. Perhaps he might thus discover some reason for the change in her, which now filled him with amazement and pain.

Frederick Hastings had an almost unconscious power of pleasing women; and now, although his real interest was painfully fixed elsewhere, and the deep undercurrent of thought and feeling struggled on to the solution of one point entirely beyond the subject of their talk, that talk went on, and the portion he sustained with an harmonious repose which gave Alice a sensuous pleasure, like that of listening to music. Her great, dark eyes rested upon him with an interest and naïve admiration which seldom woke their latent power, — an expression he had seen before in the faces of women, and for which he cared as little as human vanity will allow.

He was really watching Mrs. Crampton's conduct towards the gentlemen to whom he had given place. They were chance acquaintances, and her reception of them was much the same she had given him. Noticing, as time went on, it underwent no change, and remembering how cold and quiet she had been at the ball on the night of their first meeting, he began to imagine this must be her customary manner in public even to her friends, and that she reserved all sign of feeling and sympathy for the more congenial

atmosphere of her home. The natural reaction from his first shock was gradually coming over him. The distance from her to which it had thrown him necessitated an equal returning. As he looked at the familiar face and form, the very poise of the head so well remembered, it grew more and more impossible to believe that anything seriously divided them. Either her coldness was habitual to her on such occasions, he thought, or caused by some outside irritating circumstance with which he had no connection. Brilliant and unclouded as her life seemed, it still shared the common lot of humanity, and must contain many such, of which he knew nothing. It was ridiculous to weigh a momentary manner against years of trust. He would put away this temporary scepticism, this infidelity of the heart, and have more faith in himself and in her. How often had he heard her say, in the old time, that "friendship without faith was a farce; that lacking this foundation, the slightest opposing force must scatter it to the wind."

Alice saw the dreamy, happy smile float up from the depths of the dark eyes that looked down upon her, as the old enthusiastic look and tone came back to him as visibly as though Emily Chester were speaking the words at this moment. But the girl little imagined its source. She naturally supposed she had in some way caused it; and the idea filled her with a timid, nervous pleasure and triumph, strangely at variance with her ordinary repose of conscious beauty and indifference.

Frederick Hastings had by this time reacted to his original feeling with regard to Mrs. Crampton, with an added penitential sense of having doubted her. A sense which somehow found its expression in his unusually cordial greeting to Max, when, later in the evening, that gentleman joined the group.

Unlike his wife, Max had fully expected to meet Frederick Hastings to-night, knowing better than she the extent of his acquaintance in the city, and judging him by himself, he felt sure that he would find some means of being here. He had come hither with a fixed resolution concerning him, which he now watched an opportunity to execute. He had seen his wife's cold reception of Frederick Hastings, and had put the same construction upon it as upon her refusal to see the same gentleman on the previous day, — that she was acting from absolute terror of him. To prove by a single action the falsity of this fear, to make some slight atonement for what he had called his brutality, was now his hope and determination.

Chance favored him in the execution of his purpose. He found

them talking of his country-seat and their approaching departure for it, on the day after the morrow. Alice, who had paid it a flying visit of curiosity and observation, with Mrs. Crampton, was giving Frederick Hastings a rapturous account of its beauties both natural and artificial.

"Take care, Alice," said Max's quiet voice presently, "you will leave nothing for Dr. Hastings to see for himself. He will have lost all the pleasure of surprise when he comes to visit us, as I hope he will very soon. If you have no more agreeable way of spending the summer," he continued, addressing that gentleman directly, "we would be very much pleased to have you join our party."

However much Frederick Hastings might have lost for the future of the pleasure of surprise, he certainly possessed it for the present as he heard the words. It was very apparent in his manner, as he readily and frankly accepted the invitation.

A moment afterwards, it struck him Max had spoken plurally, had said "we" would be glad to see him, and he naturally looked towards Mrs. Crampton for her to second the use of her name.

But that lady, though standing very near, was completely turned from them, talking to the gentleman next her with more apparent earnestness than she had exhibited during the whole evening. Seeing this, he supposed it impossible for her to have caught the sense of her husband's remark. But it made no difference, he thought; the reception she had given him at her city home answered for her. He dismissed the consideration as too trivial for further thought, and took his part again in the conversation.

Sometimes it seems that the larger, and certainly more important part of what every woman really hears, is what she appears not to hear. Had Mrs. Crampton heard that sentence? Yes, and with a sensation as though the ground were sliding from under her feet. Her trust for the future had been in this departure, and the separation she supposed it would necessarily involve. The conflict between duty and nature, which was rending her asunder, must then in some degree cease, with the removal of its latest, intensest aggravation. In that moment, all to which she had anchored her future, all to which she had caught and clung in her despair, seemed stricken from her desperate grasp, and she seemed floating helplessly away, whither she knew not. If he kept his word, and came to them for this summer, — as Max's fatal cordiality and atoning self-abnegation had induced him to promise, — she knew the torture would be upon her, not as now occasionally, but hourly, momentarily, for months to

come. A wild, dark horror of the future enfolded her. She felt that she could not, literally could not, bear what was coming; that reason must give way beneath the trial; that life itself must fail under such a strain.

Perceiving the relation of her own strength to that of the forces working upon her, she could see nothing before her but destruction, either in case of victory or defeat. A mad impulse took hold upon her for flight, annihilation, anything to save her from walking the road that seemed narrowing with a frightful rapidity to a point where she must lose her foothold. Yet feeling this, and looking straight on to a prospect to whose blackness this impulse became by contrast light, the discipline of a lifetime gave her power to stand there and listen, even talk, in a way which (not seeing her face) baffled Max Crampton's subtle perception and Frederick Hastings's intuition.

This she did until it was quite late and their original party had collected previous to leaving together. They were standing in a close group. Even those to whom it had been an ordinary evening party were weary enough, from the weather and the hour, to be quite willing to go. Frederick Hastings was still near Alice, but both were much nearer Mrs. Crampton than heretofore. The conversation was flagging over the whole company, as it always does at the end of such an evening, when people have worn out the subjects originally started and are too tired to begin fresh ones.

Bertie Weston was hanging upon Mrs. Crampton's arm in her childish way. As a natural consequence Jack Harrington stood in front of them. That gentleman's wooing had sped famously this winter, as far as the lady was concerned; but with her father, matters were still in a state of unpleasant vagueness. Leaning upon Mrs. Crampton, Bertie began idly fingering the bracelet upon the arm next her. It was the same broad band of gold which had shut out, even from her own sight, the purple mark ever since it had darkened her arm; yes, and her life, too. She did not notice what the girl was doing, until she felt her changing the position of the band. "Stop!" the lady cried, with a quick, agitated tone and gesture, so unlike her usual serenity as to draw the disengaged attention of the whole group upon her.

The thought of what that girl's careless hand might have disclosed (and to whose eyes) had so startled her that her first movement was to tighten its clasp, although it was already so close that Bertie could scarcely move it. As she did so she became conscious of the effect her manner had produced. Scarcely a second more, and look-

ing up she said, with a silvery little laugh, "My dear, excuse me; but it makes me ridiculously nervous to have any one touch any part of my dress."

"You thought I had broken it?" returned the girl, mistaking her first movement for an examination of its condition. "I should have been sorry to have injured it, as you have evidently taken a fancy to it. You have worn it every time I have seen you for the last few days."

To this remark Mrs. Crampton gave only the indefinite answer of a smile. False reasons would have died upon her lips in the presence of one of that party, who knew the truth with such terrible certainty.

"It is a fancy in which I cannot join Mrs. Crampton," said Frederick Hastings, taking up Bertie's remark. "I often wonder why ladies wear and seem to like that heavy gold jewelry. It has something savage, barbaric in it, to me. Those massive bracelets always remind me of golden manacles. They look to me like the gilded fetters with which a satrap might load some favorite Circassian slave; petted and adored, but a slave still."

Was there ever in any human life or form a mortal point to which all arrows, even the most random, did not tend with an absolute fatality? From the old story of Achilles, to our own small life-experiences, does not the same truth hold?

Frederick Hastings's remark had been made upon the most careless, momentary impulse, — was the expression of one of his peculiar, fastidious notions. Mrs. Crampton's connection with the subject had given him sufficient interest in it to express his thought, but she was the last woman in the world to whom he imagined his idea applied, so little knowledge had he of how this marriage had really been effected, or of their present relation to each other. But his words struck home with a cruel force upon one whom he even then envied as his happy successful rival.

Both that husband and wife were very still for a little while after. It was in each the reaction from a simultaneous impulse to start and look up, as we involuntarily do at receiving a physical blow. Mrs. Crampton must have wished to save both from the chance of a like stroke, for not long after she proposed leaving. The idea was a welcome one to all, and she turned to put it into action.

Frederick Hastings came to her side when he made his characteristic comment upon her bracelet; and now, partly for the pleasure it gave him and partly to show her that no mere manner could affect

his belief in her friendship, he offered his escort through the suite of rooms. But the lady, with a smile and a slight bow which might have meant anything, turned to her husband and took his arm. It was the first time in her life that she had done such a thing voluntarily.

For a moment or two as they walked on, Max breathed with difficulty. Presently he glanced at his wife's face. He had expected to see in it some such look as must have been in that Spartan boy's face; such a degree of pure determination, as would have sufficed to keep her hand in its present position had it rested upon burning coals.

What he had expected was there indeed. But reigning over it was that expression he had first noticed in her face two days before. Some comprehension of its real meaning broke upon him; some perception that her dominant motive (whatever minor ones mingled with it) was duty, not terror; was fear of God, not of him!

His latest keenest source of misery died at the instant; and from its ashes there sprang up a strange content; a spiritual exaltation, equally beyond this earth's happiness or suffering, vouchsafed only to whom out of the bitter has come the sweet.

When a man of Max Crampton's power fixes upon one woman his love and hope and life, — when she becomes his religion, and embodies his every idea and feeling higher than this world, — to find her truer and nobler even than he held her is more than compensation, though the very pains of hell get hold upon him. For the utmost devotion of what being under the sun would he have relinquished one iota of even his ineffectual claim to that cold woman at his side, from whom had proceeded, in some way, every sorrow and pain of his life; but a sorrow dearer from that cause than joy, apart from her. He had lived out the truth of Schiller's inspired saying, "The highest bliss, next to the pleasures of love, is its pains."

But his self-abnegation did not fail now. He quietly released her hand, at the earliest moment he could do so without attracting attention; the hand he had not touched, except upon one fatal occasion, for weary months; which he had never touched without retaining the sensation for days after.

Frederick Hastings had necessarily stepped back upon Mrs. Crampton's courteous dismissal of his services; but her smile and his determination to trust her deprived his disappointment of any hurt or angry feeling it might otherwise have had. Again he fell back upon Alice's tender mercies, walking down the room and talking

with her. He received in return a degree of attention not very exhilarating to her original escort, whose legitimate claims she ignored with that calm indifference to other people's feelings peculiar to handsome, self-indulgent young women.

Both they and the carriages were soon ready to start. Mrs. Crampton's only farewell was a bow which included the whole group, as she passed them on her way to her coach.

Alice parted from Frederick Hastings with a merry *au revoir*. A moment after, as Max entered the carriage, his voice took up her remark and said, — "Don't forget, gentlemen, that our leaving for the country is agreed upon for day after to-morrow morning. Remember, Dr. Hastings, we have your promise to join us, and shall hold you to it."

Their responses of pleasure were lost in the roll of the carriage-wheels.

CHAPTER XXX.

THEIR next reunion was upon the Hudson River boat, at the day and hour appointed, but their number was greatly increased. It was a large and queerly assorted party; evidently the result of invitations given by different persons to suit a variety of tastes and friendships.

There were stately old gentlemen of Mr. Crampton's clique; whose decisions upon wines, pictures, and artists were unassailable, and whose old-fashioned courtesy was equally perfect to everything in the form of woman, including even the servant-maid who waited upon them, and their own wives and daughters.

There were the said wives and daughters. The former, placid, polite, elderly ladies, devoted to their daughters and their diamonds. The latter, handsome, self-willed, merry girls, devoted to themselves, pleasure in general, and more or less of the opposite sex of corresponding age and circumstances.

There were a number of these, chiefly fine-looking, well-bred, young fellows, in a very good humor with themselves and things around them. Some were men of original mind and cultivation; but upon others Heaven had certainly not bestowed intellect in proportion to its other gifts.

They were of all ages, from twenty-one to thirty-five or eight years. The elder ones had been Max's schoolmates, yet to this day they were mere acquaintances. A perfect civility and certain intellectual respect were all that ever had, or ever would, exist between them; while to a man they were "hale fellows well met" with Jack Harrington.

Another tie between them was their universal admiration for Mrs. Crampton. Few ladies of the mediæval time could count a larger train of chivalrous, devoted knights than Emily, had she summed up the friendly spirits who offered her this serio-comic homage.

In return, she had always a pleasant word or smile for each, and a kind action if it were possible to serve them. Their invitations had been given by Jack, but both Max and his wife had cordially seconded them. Society was necessary to their mutual freedom, and their circle of guests was one of the most agreeable.

They had been obliged to ask Miss Gertrude to accompany Bertie, although the company chiefly regarded her as they would have done a dangerously sagacious dragon. Yet, in truth, she had altered her conduct with reference to Emily, and that, too, quite sincerely; for, whatever were her faults, deceit was not largely represented among them. She was too keen-sighted to believe Mrs. Crampton the serene, happy woman she seemed, and this deprived her dislike of its real sting. If her rival, as she chose to consider her, had won, surely the victory had not been an entire triumph. The cause of Mrs. Crampton's discomfort she might not know, but she was certain of its existence. Whatever Emily suffered, Miss Gertrude held it a proper revenge vouchsafed to her and a just retribution for a mercenary marriage. This morning her manner towards Mrs. Crampton was really cordial; a politeness she extended even towards the rest of the company.

Frederick Hastings came on board just as the boat was starting. By those with whom he had no personal acquaintance, he was viewed with the opposite feelings which attend the entrance of an elegant, accomplished gentleman into any circle, before influencing friendship or love have begun to work. In exactly the proportion that he is looked upon by the ladies as an addition, he is regarded by the gentlemen as a subtraction from the general prospect of enjoyment. To the one, he presents the possibility of fresh conquests, or at least added excitement; to the other, the probability of a division, perhaps abdication, of their dominion. But this instance did not give much ground for such hopes and fears; as Frederick Hastings was apparently unconscious of either party.

Having passed literally through the hands of Jack Harrington and Co., whom he met first, he went on to the upper deck. There a portion of the party, among others Emily, Max, Alice, and Bertie, were sitting in the soft breezes and sunshine of the early year and morning. He made his pleasant salutation to each in turn; but the way in which it was received by the four persons particularized was singularly different.

Max welcomed him as his guest, failing in no point he held it his place to fulfil. Mrs. Crampton's manner was what it had been at their last meeting; the same perfection in form, the same fatal though intangible want in spirit.

To both men it brought keen pain. To Max, because he knew she was doing violence to her whole nature in struggle for devotion to something higher.

How should he prevent her from making this sacrifice to him was his almost despairing thought.

The suffering of another kind that must come, if, through his effort, she were to exhibit her real feelings to Frederick Hastings, he did not take into consideration. Whatever involved simply his own power of endurance was seldom the subject of much calculation with Max Crampton. The extreme friendliness with which he addressed Dr. Hastings a moment or two after was intended to influence another than that gentleman.

To Frederick Hastings her manner brought sore disappointment. He hoped its unaccountable change would have disappeared, that they would be once more natural, unconstrained, and happy. But he found himself still held at the same cold distance.

Alice's smiling welcome formed an agreeable and convenient refuge from this position.

"Faith, faith in human truth and friendship; love and charity in thought and judgment," was the Scripture he read to himself as he stood in the centre of that gay throng, with his folded arms and attitude of unconscious grace, none of which was lost on that proud, passionate girl, upon whose richly tinted beauty he was looking with slowly smiling eyes, and with whom he was exchanging such careless, pleasant talk.

For the rest, it was the merriest of merry parties. Even the stately elderly gentlemen forgot their stiff dignity as they participated in the exhilaration of the time. Before the excitement could die out and become fatigue, they were at their journey's end; had left the boat and entered the carriages bound for their new home.

This place had been called Eichwald, — a cognomen it had acquired, as it were, by accident. Years before, Max and his father had come hither to look after some improvements then being made in the grounds. As they walked through the woods Mr. Crampton drew his son's attention to the surging sound of the branches above their heads. "*Der Eichwald brauset,*" rejoined Max, quoting Thecla's words. From that hour Eichwald, or Oakwood, had been its name.

They had not ridden far before they passed the lodge gates and entered the extensive grounds around the house. Their view, as they drove through the long winding avenue of elms and oaks, was necessarily circumscribed, but it was enough to change all conversation into exclamations of surprise and delight at the extreme beauty of the surroundings.

Mr. Crampton had owned the land for more than thirty years,

having purchased it shortly after his own marriage, intending to form for himself such a place as he had now made for Max. Its great natural advantages of river prospect, water and wood, had been its original attraction and the cause of its purchase. But his early widowhood having defeated these plans, he only cultivated the place with reference to his son. He had improved it in every imaginable way, planning for Max's future happiness since he had long ceased to care to work for his own. The saplings he had then planted now cast down shadowy blessings upon his home from their green arms. In the broad woodlands surrounding his house and gardens he had preserved with reverent hand "the forest primeval." Through it tumbled and played the most jubilant of streams, whose rush and ring over the stones filled the solitude with music.

Down to the edge of this forest belt swept a grassy slope, where the sunlight and the clouds seemed mirrored. Looking down from any of the arbor-crowned hill-tops of the grounds, there was to be seen, between the house and the woods, a dense, shadowy circle of solemn old trees, which gave the beholder a sensation of awe, almost of fear. Nearer the house art and cultivation were allowed to hold fuller sway. Flowery terraces, conservatories, ornamentation of every appropriate kind enriched the grounds of this exquisite residence. It was a magnificent mansion both in size and construction, placed upon the highest elevation of the park, facing the river in the distance, whose prospect was not cut off by the trees encompassing the house.

What the care of both Max and his father had made the interior I have previously stated. Frederick Hastings gave it the most fitting title, when, standing between the pillars of the piazza, with the whole view spread out before them, and the long windows and open hall-doors revealing glimpses of further beauty, he said, "Mrs. Crampton, you have brought us other pilgrims, like Christian, to the 'House Beautiful.'"

Before she knew it, the answering light of recollection and appreciation had brightened in her eyes; but only to die down, almost as soon as born.

They went in, having partially satisfied their curiosity and admiration, to find rest, and to make preparation for dinner. But the younger members of the party did not avail themselves of this accommodation so readily as the elders. The former, at least the male portion of it, were to be found, for hours after, walking up and down rooms, comparing the relative merits of sofas for siesta purposes;

playing fragments of games at billiards, and trying and discussing Max's collection of pipes in the smoking-room. This last employment found the greatest favor; for here they gradually collected, smoking, talking, and laughing, until scattered by the servant's warning of the rapidly approaching dinner hour.

And now the life had fairly begun to which Emily had looked forward with sickening dread; a dread fully justified as the days flew by, and what she had anticipated became a daily reality.

The time certainly passed very swiftly to many, on the wings of constant entertainment and occupation. There were several country-seats within pleasant riding distance; whose owners, friends or acquaintances of the Cramptons, had followed their example in coming to them early in the season. Thrown upon one another for amusement, they combined resources and kept up a round of dancing, dinner, riding, and fishing parties, picnics and pleasure excursions of every kind.

At Eichwald, the rule of the establishment had been from the first, that, like the ancient Israelites, each should do what seemed good in his own eyes. This state of affairs slightly shocked the respectable elderlies, until they found their rigid punctuality and conventionalism were as amply provided for as was the lack of it in others. Such a variety of opinions and practices as to the proper hour for rising, and consequently breakfasting, was probably never before assembled in one private residence. From those old gentlemen of the hypochondriac-dyspeptic order, who eat and sleep as though they were a species of clock, whose regularity could not be interfered with for a single second without seriously damaging the works; from these, there was a sliding scale down to the young ladies who had danced, sung, or ridden themselves into exhaustion on the previous evening, and young gentlemen who had reduced themselves to a similar state by a like process. But even these were not to be counted upon in their late rising; for any fine morning might see them calling for coffee at six o'clock, previous to starting on some wild excursion, by land or water, as the case might be.

Before or after breakfast, as best suited the convenience of the riders and the state of the weather, the horses were ordered for a long gallop over the hills.

Whoever else went or remained at home, this was Mrs. Crampton's rule, kept up both for pleasure and health. Although only a portion of the company, it was always a large party, met and joined by reinforcements from the neighboring country-seats.

The collective effect of the cavalcade was quite imposing, nor was the interest impaired by a closer scrutiny.

Mrs. Crampton and Miss Gertrude Weston were its most striking figures, Miss Gertrude's raven-haired and swarthy-skinned beauty requiring an habitual wearing of red to tone it into brilliancy. Riding was her favorite recreation, as it gratified both her temperament and her vanity. Consequently she was always one of Mrs. Crampton's companions, making that lady look only the fairer. Whenever Max was of the party, Miss Weston chose him for her escort. Chiefly because, when in a good humor, she could cut up the rest of the company for his and her own amusement (Mrs. Crampton excepted, — upon her, profane hands were never laid in that presence), and get the reply she liked best; the grim Mephistophelean smile, or a cool, sardonic Roland for her Oliver. If her humor changed and grew savage, even against him, she could always fall back upon her old game of neatly and invisibly lacerating him upon the subject of his marriage.

Max's presence was the result of his wife's expressed wish. Upon no other terms would he have risked marring her pleasure. He did not accompany them upon their rides until a week after their arrival.

He was standing upon the piazza steps one morning, watching the usual party mount, — a process which, from the size and character of the company, was the work of time.

It was a brilliant scene; that varied party with its picturesque surroundings, here in the bright sunshine and there under the waving trees. Many were already mounted and trying the rival paces of their horses up and down the long avenues; the ring of merry laughter and horses' hoofs upon the gravel forming a queer *crecendo* and *decrescendo* as they alternately distanced or approached the house. Some of the ladies were being assisted to their saddles; others were leaning from them, listening in smiling, blushing silence to the sweet nothings (so often everythings) murmured by the gentlemen whose hands were upon their respective bridles or horses' manes.

Alice Harrington was one of these in position, but certainly not in spirit; for she was giving short, inattentive answers to a handsome, bashful young devotee, who was striving to be agreeable with the most deplorable want of success. She was looking magnificently this morning. Perhaps it was the black velvet hunting-jacket and cap she wore, that blended so well with the peculiar softness of her skin, hair, and eyes; perhaps more truly it was vexation, irritated pride, even unconscious sore-heartedness, which gave that added brilliancy to cheek, lip, and glance.

Whatever it was, her eyes wandered often and restlessly to where Frederick Hastings stood upon the steps, seemingly waiting for his horse to be brought, and apparently forgetful of her very existence. He had not come near her since Mrs. Crampton had left them upon their rising from the breakfast-table, where, according to a habit already become a rule, Alice's seat had been next Emily's and Frederick Hastings's next hers.

Do what she would to prevent it, this relative position was brought about hourly, momentarily, by the unconscious volition of Alice Harrington and the conscious will of Frederick Hastings. Alice had never distinctly stated it to herself, that to approach Mrs. Crampton was a sure way to draw Frederick Hastings to herself. If she had, pride, every womanly feeling, would have made her disdain such efforts. But a pleasant uniformity of result had led her insensibly into a uniformity of action. Further than this she did not look. She only knew when they three were together, her enjoyment was at its height; for Frederick Hastings undoubtedly exerted himself far more to be agreeable than at any other time. Like many young, enthusiastic persons, she accepted unquestioningly her own actions and motives; like most women, especially good ones, she did many things with perfect serenity from which she would have revolted had she been sharply awakened to their real character. One other influence strongly favored her delusion. Her only feeling in connection with gentlemen had hitherto been a calm, supreme indifference. It would take time and bitter experience to teach her the old independence was gone.

At present it would be hard to convince her that the secret of the vague discomfort she feels, but thinks so unaccountable, is the total lack of attention from that quiet gentleman who still stands upon the steps, though the groom below is holding his horse in waiting. We must live long or rapidly before we stop accepting results as the whole of life, before our self-consciousness passes beyond them. Perhaps this blindness is the real, essential youth over which we mourn.

Alice only knows that her interest in the ride is strangely gone; that what was yesterday so charming is to-day wearying; that she is tired, and wishes she had stayed in-doors.

But her eyes will turn towards the steps with an unwilling pertinacity, at which she feels a provoked wonder, where stands Frederick Hastings, more graceful and handsome than ever in the fresh air and light, and the loose summer clothing so becoming to his figure.

Mrs. Crampton had not yet appeared. A group of gentlemen oc-

cupied the walk near the foot of the steps, waiting her coming, each hoping for the good fortune of assisting her to mount. The same hope had kept Frederick Hastings in his present position, half-way up the steps, and still maintained him there, though the horse visibly and the groom invisibly were growing impatient at his delay.

Max stood upon the piazza above, quietly watching them all; he had no intention of accompanying the party. He took this, as every opportunity, of trying to convince his wife how little he wished to watch or restrain her in anything. An effort which, in its hourly exercise, contributed as much as anything else to defeat her intended avoidance of Frederick Hastings.

They were nearly all ready to start before Emily came through the hall-door. As she crossed the piazza it was not Max, but Frederick Hastings who turned at the sound.

Colder, haughtier in face and manner than usual, she came and stood for a moment on a line with Max. The dark-blue riding-dress covered the magnificent form to throat and wrist, the dark-blue velvet riding-hat and plumes swept the curve of hair and cheek, — brightening the one until it looked like a rippling wave of gold, and contrasting the other into fresh color and light.

At the foot of the steps her horse was held in waiting. She slowly drew on her riding-gloves, and then, gathering up her flowing skirt, turned to descend. As she did so she made a slight but imperative gesture to Max to follow and assist her to mount. As he obeyed, Frederick Hastings and the other gentlemen fell back disappointed; the former apparently waking up to the consciousness that his horse was likewise ready. She had mounted, and Max was handing her the reins, when, stooping slightly, she said in a very low voice, "Will you go with us?"

He looked up at her face for a second. The words had been a question, but the eyes spoke an entreaty. He quietly turned to the servant and ordered his horse. Why she had asked this, he might not know; it was enough for him that it was evidently her earnest wish.

"Why, Max, we heard you were not going! We thought you did not care to ride!" called out a dozen different voices in various forms of expression, as they heard his words to the servant.

"I have changed my mind," was the cool response; and after a few moments' additional delay they started.

But he rode at Miss Gertrude Weston's side; not as Emily had intended, at hers. Before five minutes were over, she found herself,

just as usual, between Alice and Frederick Hastings. This relative position was more easily attained by him, as the rest of the party began to feel a delicacy in intruding upon a combination so invariable as to seem the result of the wishes of all three; especially since Frederick Hastings was known to have been an intimate friend of Mrs. Crampton, long before she had ever heard of them. The accustomed fatality entangled her, despite her every effort.

The gentleman and younger lady kept up a merry conversation; Alice soon naively wondering why she had been so miserable a little while before, and how she could have mistaken her own tastes so entirely, as not to think riding delightful. But Max, who during all his talk with Miss Weston watched that clear profile beyond the blue, shading plumes, saw that through all it retained its look of cold composure; that her part in the conversation was nearly confined to monosyllabic responses.

From this morning he took his place habitually in those excursions. Day after day her eyes repeated the sentence her lips had then formed. But he was always intentionally passive, and his presence as little effectual towards her object as upon that first morning. Even her power could not compel him to play the part of tyrant or spy over her.

Through this maze of conflicting feelings, wills, and circumstances, apparently involving her more and more at every step, Emily Crampton struggled to hold a straight and fixed course. Remembering the constitution of this woman, and the large influence, both natural and acquired, Frederick Hastings possessed over her, it will be difficult to calculate the strength she needed for her work in every hour; — a strength to be exerted, let the price be what it would; though the sure reckoning must one day come; though the payment drain body and spirit of vitality.

But the worst element of her trial, its strangest pain, proceeded from the dark, central mystery of her life; her innate, unconquerable repulsion from her husband, now intensified to an unprecedented degree by her unnatural resistance and strife against it. As far as she knew Frederick Hastings's spiritual dominion to extend over her, to just such an extent did she strive to counterbalance it by a material reaction towards Max. Her conduct concerning the rides was only one of a thousand instances hourly occurring. The vow she had taken upon that night, when "*You are my wife*" had been so fearfully engraven into her nature, she was now keeping. That look of having shut out sight or consciousness of every thought but

one, was in her eyes for days together. No wonder time was to her but a measure of pain; no wonder, with the knowledge of what it would assuredly bring, the dawning light of each new day seemed to blast her sight.

And this she endured, when at any moment she might have escaped into temporary elysium, had she been willing to cast away duty for inclination, the spiritual for the sensuous, the eternal Heaven for the fashion and joy of this world which passeth away.

CHAPTER XXXI.

FREDERICK HASTINGS'S conduct during this summer was in a large degree the result of a partially mistaken, but higher motive than might at first appear. Chiefly impelled towards his present course, like all men of his stamp, by a pursuit of his own pleasure at the moment, a more generous motive, nevertheless, mingled with his purpose, satisfying his better nature. He had been in the house with Emily but a few days before his woman-like intuition revealed to him that her real feeling remained the same towards him as when she so painfully rejected his proffered suit. Even in this day or two, his faith had become knowledge.

But his intuition did not rest long within this boundary. Soon it passed on to a partial perception of the woe of this royal heart; of the misery of this seemingly brilliant life. But he arrived merely at a knowledge of results; causes and motives were as deeply hidden from him as from the most careless spectator. To have observed a stranger walking the same difficult track would have roused his interest; no wonder, when she was the central figure, the subject should absorb his attention unceasingly. She was in his thoughts both waking and sleeping. Even in his dreams this solitary face and figure appeared; sometimes peaceful, sometimes arch and happy as only memory could now represent her, sometimes cold, statuesque, even corpse-like as he shudderingly thought, the woman of the present moment.

It was the night of only the second Sunday they had spent at this place, when Frederick Hastings sat smoking at the open window of his chamber, thinking with a weary, perplexed pain at his heart of all this short period had shown him, had compelled him to see.

Midnight had long past, and that great house was as still as the dim, quiet woods encircling it. Never a good sleeper, because of constitutional nervousness, he was far too full of anxious thought to have slept this night. The vines growing about the window threw their trembling shadows upon the moonlit floor; but the shadow upon his face was apart from these, darker and more settled. He was striving to understand himself and others, to perceive and de-

cide upon his own best course. He was trying to obtain an unbiased view of the whole premises, to deduce unknown results from known causes, and unknown causes from known results. It was harder, more bewildering work than he had anticipated. With his partial insight into them, circumstances, actions, motives, and feelings seemed only to contradict one another. Turn which way he would, he only plunged deeper into a labyrinth of doubt.

Out of it all he could but deduce three certainties. First, that her marriage, by whatever means it had been brought about, was a fatal, life-long mistake. What the real flaw might be in her position was of course hidden from him; but the effect went down in his calculation as one of the known quantities. The second fact was, that now as ever, by every pure, natural feeling, by every law of her nature, she was his sympathizing, comprehending, devoted friend. Third and last, whatever influence he had ever had over her, he still fully possessed, its power even intensified, he believed, in proportion as its outward manifestation was repressed. He vividly recollected how he had sometimes in the past watched her gradually lose the consciousness of suffering, even of weariness, in her involuntary sympathy with his thought and feeling; he well knew he had seen the same instinctive sympathy manifest itself in a different form during the last few days. Not as then, appearing freely and healthfully, but stealing into view in spite of the sternest surveillance, only becoming perfectly visible, when, as it were, the sentinels had fallen asleep, or been lulled to rest; but cowering behind the ramparts of pride and self-restraint the instant they were roused and sprang to their posts. How often in these two weeks, when she had forgotten herself and the chance of observation, had he watched the old transformation go on. He knew the meaning of the softened, tender atmosphere then enveloping her face. Beyond her volition was the faint, unconscious trembling of the sensitive mouth, across which delicate shades of expression quivered. The drooping lids and long lashes could not quite cover the light of appreciation and sympathy that gathered in her eyes as he spoke. The shadow passed from his face, and the dreamy smile came back into the beautiful dark eyes, even as he remembered it.

That Mrs. Crampton, when roused from one of these moods, reacted into very iciness, withdrew from the party or drew near her husband if possible, he also knew to be invariably the fact. And for this, though he had tried many solutions, he had been totally unable to find one to meet all the difficulties of the case. His first suppo-

sition had been; that her husband exercised over her an unseen, but morbidly jealous tyranny, ruled her with an invisible rod of iron. But much as he was predisposed to take this view, not only from the solution it afforded for his mystery, but from his previous acquaintance with the undemonstrative but relentless strength of the man's will, love, character, and purpose, it literally could not exist in the mind of a rational being, witnessing what he did day by day. The perfect freedom of thought and action Max even forced upon her, by his determined passivity in every case in which she tried to substitute his decision for hers; the quiet, but ceaseless working for her comfort, happiness, and relaxation entirely apart from himself, were facts to which his senses continually gave evidence.

Seeing Max's conduct thus clearly, he could not so blaspheme against all truth, honor, and generosity, as to believe his wife's course the result of his coercing will, or even the fear of his anger. One thing alone would have given the flat denial to this surmise. It was the knowledge every day confirmed, that, instead of standing between them by his influence as master of the house over persons and events, he uniformly used that influence to throw them into each other's society, to encourage any sign of genial intercourse between them. He was conscious his power over her was never so great as when he had talked of some subject around which old memories of earnest, familiar converse lingered; he was still more conscious that in a majority of cases he had been led into such conversations by Max himself.

Witnessing all this daily, a belief in Max's active jealousy became an absurdity; and as suspicion after suspicion met the same circumstantial refutation, he was forced to give up the difficulty as insoluble.

But this at least he knew, that he had power to bring temporary peace, even vivid happiness, to this weary, heavy-laden woman; if she were ever the reflection of her old joyous self, it was he who brought back to her her lost youth. And this honest, high-minded gentleman thanked God with his whole soul that it was so, that he could in any degree return the good influence she had shed so freely upon his life. Instance after instance of his power to produce this effect came back to him, as he sat thoughtfully smoking in the cool night-air and pale moonlight.

He thought of a scene that had passed, only the previous afternoon. The beauty of the weather had lured a large party of them into a long stroll over the grounds. They rambled on: down the

long, shady avenues; across the green sunlit sweeps of grass; breaking with ringing laughter the solemn stillness of the dark circle of trees; drinking at its bubbling fountain; gathering hands, arms full of flowers and trailing vines from terrace, walk, and arbor; until at last, flushed and slightly fatigued, they sat down upon one of the grassy slopes to rest and watch the sun go down over the river.

The ladies in their straw garden-hats, and delicately tinted muslin dresses, and the gentlemen in careless summer costume, had little fear of contact with the sun-warmed earth, either for health or clothes. The time and the exquisite atmosphere were sufficient to render mere conscious existence a luxury. They all sat down among the heaps of flowers they had gathered, already drooping and filling the air with perfume. It seemed happiness enough to rest and be fanned by the gentle breezes stealing up from the river.

The sun was just going down behind the opposite hills, shedding his light in long, slanting lines over the intervening woods, river, and green fields. The heavy clouds were piles of gorgeous glory, and no wonder the watchers sat regardless of all else.

But the silence was gradually broken. That slight, æsthetic delirium, which any manifestation of great beauty either of word, sound, form, or color invariably induces in certain constitutions, was beginning to rise in more than one of them, and in none more powerfully than in the sensitive Southern organisms of Mrs. Crampton and Frederick Hastings.

The latter was telling Bertie Weston of different sunsets he had witnessed in various parts of the world, both by sea and land. His slightest intercourse with this girl was worth watching. They had taken to each other from the first; she recognizing in the other her own intrinsic purity and worth, with the unerring instinct of childish innocence. But so entirely did Jack, like the famous Irishman who captured the prisoners, "surround" her, that the former gentleman seldom had a chance for anything like lengthened conversation with her.

Philip, too, was another barrier between her and every one else. The general environment the two managed to keep up shut out intruders, and effectually prevented Frederick Hastings from falling back upon her society for occupation, as he had done upon that of Alice. But this evening Philip was absent; and Jack, not having the power to be upon both sides of her at once, left him a chance, valuable by its rarity.

The subject had come up in connection with the scene, and the

talk had been directed to its present channel by an allusion to mutual recollections, made by Max to the last-named gentleman. Some inquiry from Bertie had followed, and, with Max's continued slight questionings, had involved Frederick Hastings in a series of vivid descriptions, that soon carried both speaker and listeners beyond the thought of such promptings.

When he first turned to answer Bertie, it was with that look of amused pleasure in his face which always came into it when she spoke to him; some such expression as would have been there had a bird lit upon his shoulder to sing in his ear, or a delicate little kitten put up its head to be stroked. But as he went on, his mental audience evidently changed; he was speaking both with and to a different spirit. What he was now saying he was addressing to one silent member of that party, just what he would have spoken had none of the others been present.

It was not strange they listened in absorbed silence. He was telling — not of such scenes in Italy, the Alps, the Rhine, and the hundred other places from which each one of them had watched it as often as he — but of looking at it from shipboard in various latitudes. As the excitement of memory rose, he went back to his very youth, with its long journeyings, (involved in his naval occupation,) and told of sunsets in every quarter of the globe; of the Nile and the Ganges; of the far up coasts of North America and China; of "summer isles of Eden lying in dark purple spheres of sea" in the South Pacific Ocean; and of the red sands of the African desert.

As he spoke of all these with his peculiar freshness of impression and instinctive poetic appreciation, even to Max, who in his years of travelling had seen for himself all that he was now hearing described, even to him, the recollection took new beauty as he listened.

The sun had been above the horizon when Frederick Hastings began speaking. By this time it had disappeared below it, but all were too engrossed to notice the fact. He and Max had little thought except for an averted face and figure, in which every word he had spoken, every emotion or sensation he had described, had found a perfect translation. No mesmerism could have placed her more thoroughly *en rapport* with him than she then was. The glowing cheek, the trembling lips thrilled with sympathetic expression; not one iota of its hurrying changes had been lost upon either of those watchers. They produced the subtle intoxication which had carried Frederick Hastings through his narrative, and filled it with vivid power. The

magic of happiness, youth, and beauty was coursing through her veins, radiating from every pulse of her being.

"So, Miss Bertie," he said, as he finished his last sketch, speaking to her but not looking at her, "in all these ways and places I have seen the sun-god 'sit upon thrones in a purple sublimity.'"

He saw what he looked for. He saw the quick recognition that brightened over her face as she heard his quotation. How often they had talked over Mrs. Browning's "Rhapsody of Life's Progress" together!

"Among all the beautiful sunsets you have seen in different parts of the world, you would find it hard, I suppose, to say which was best," the girl returned; "difficult to decide which you would rather see again?"

The gentleman must have hesitated for a moment; at least that space of time had elapsed before he replied, and when he did so, his voice was altered, — low and quiet, but singularly distinct.

"No," he said, "that decision was made long ago, and it will never be changed. Of all the sunshine in which I have stood, none has brought me such warmth and happiness, such health and pleasure, as that which falls upon a lane leading out of Baltimore to a green hill-side, where in the early spring evenings I have gathered violets."

Again he looked and again he saw. It was scarcely a perceptible motion of the figure; but as if a thrill of intenser life passed through the frame, closing the hand with a quick clasp upon the flowers it held, as though from involuntary association with their species. The present fled from her consciousness, she was once more walking the green lane, once more God's sunshine in the world and in her soul was falling upon her.

Max likewise saw. And a description of a sunset from this very hill, (which had stolen into one of Emily's letters, almost unawares, as she wrote to him one night after having walked thither in the afternoon with Frederick Hastings and Philip,) came back to him word for word in its glowing enthusiasm, strong enough to bring the picture before his eyes as though she had painted instead of written, had transferred the tinting from sky to paper. He had suspected then, but he knew now, what influence had so vivified her words.

There had been a general outcry of astonishment at what appeared Frederick Hastings's singular choice. Each had a pet view which each had expected would receive the preference. But that a man should go nearly over the world and then settle upon some simple scene in his own country as, at least to him, the best and most beautiful, they could not at first comprehend.

"Pray, Dr. Hastings, what can be your reason for this arrant piece of partiality? It will have to be a very good one to excuse it," said one of the young ladies; who, having spent half of the previous year in skimming over Europe, was duly shocked to hear anything at home preferred to anything abroad.

"Baltimore is my native place; the happiest hours of my life have been spent there, and you must understand the power of such associations to render certain scenes sacred," he replied, giving his decision an explanation which silenced if it did not satisfy the company.

"Mrs. Crampton," said one of the gentlemen who sat near her, "you, too, were born in Baltimore, I believe; have the associations around it the same power over you as over Dr. Hastings?"

The question was carelessly, generally put, but the lady started as the direct address roused her. It was as though the sounds preceding it had not penetrated the sweet silence that enfolded her, as though this had suddenly shaken her from heavy sleep or a deep dream. To his surprise she made not the slightest effort to answer him, either by word or look. But rising a moment or two after, her face and figure were white and still, as if the life-currents were stopped.

"It is cold," she said involuntarily, and actually shivered as she spoke, though the hot summer sun had just disappeared, and his power was still strong upon everything around her.

"We had better go home, I think," Max quietly said, "the dew will soon be falling."

"Yes," she answered, catching at the suggestion in a nervous, breathless way, and passing to his side.

He stopped for a moment to pick up her garden hat from the ground, where it lay filled with flowers. Then they walked on towards the house, side by side, neither speaking.

The rest followed. Frederick Hastings and Alice side by side as usual. They, too, were very silent as they sauntered home, though a different cause produced the same result in each. The girl was wrapped in a delicious sense of enjoyment, whose cause she did not care to inquire, whose perfection she had no wish to mar by speech. He was thinking intently of all he had that afternoon accomplished and witnessed, striving to understand Emily's sudden revulsion of feeling and manner, but discovering nothing certainly except the trance of happiness into which he had magnetized her, and the cold, impassive state with which she was walking slowly on before him.

When they reached the house, the long summer twilight had fallen.

They hurried away to their respective rooms to make hasty preparations for the dinner already awaiting their arrival. During that meal, at which the company was unusually brilliant, and indeed during the whole evening, Frederick Hastings found, do what he would, he could get nothing more than a single sentence at a time with Mrs. Crampton. So quietly was this effected, that, even when he came to think it over, he could not decide whether this arose from the working of her own will, or was simply the result of circumstances. The next morning she had fallen back into her usual rôle of a calm, courteous hostess.

It was the scene and events of this whole afternoon, which came back with such force to him as he sat smoking by the open window, upon that Sunday night, — his thoughts engrossed in vain efforts to solve the same problem which had then baffled him, — came back to him, not to unravel the mystery, but simply to confirm his belief in the only three certainties he could perceive in their relative positions.

These he thought over long and earnestly. He was roused at last by the hall clock striking four, each stroke ringing through the silent house. The moon had gone down and darkness had fallen, not only upon the grounds, but upon the apartment in which he sat. His cigar had smouldered away to ashes.

Rising with a weary sigh, he struck a light to prepare for retiring for the night. "God help her," he murmured to himself. "What little happiness I can bring her shall be hers."

He little imagined the bitter after-draught which poisoned that pleasure, the far more than counterbalancing penance she demanded of herself for each indulgence.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE weeks now chasing each other in rapid succession, realized all the two preceding ones had promised. The conflicting elements grew more and more pronounced, as each strove to effect his or her own purposes.

Alice still lived in her imaginary happiness. Bertie and Jack went on loving one another and beloved by all. Max's quiet figure stood in its own place, waiting and enduring. Frederick Hastings, since that Sunday night when his conscience and intellect were enlisted in an aim where intuition had previously been his sole guide, steadily pursued the purpose he then placed before himself, little dreaming what he was doing.

Upon Emily, this incessant spiritual strain and conflict was beginning to work its inevitably destroying physical effect. The serene repose was gone, and in its place was only a forced calmness, the result of resolute will, — a calmness that faltered, failed, despaired, when that will relaxed or circumstances beat down its gradually diminishing power of resistance. Slowly but surely the material effect was becoming visible; slowly but surely the soul was laying waste, was consuming the body.

Both Max and Frederick Hastings perceived and watched the progress of this change, each vainly striving, in their different ways, to save or succor her. They saw that unless stern volition and self-consciousness kept the nerves steady, they vibrated with spasms of pain at the smallest cause. Even at slight sounds she would start and tremble distressingly; instead of the soft diffused tinting of health and beauty, native to her cheek, the color had now centred in one deep red spot, — a fever-flush, alternating only with utter pallor. Exercise became daily a greater exertion. She still took a morning ride, but her other active habits were gradually failing. Racked and torn by conflicting influences, all she apparently desired was rest; and finding that an impossibility to her spirit, she clung even to its physical semblance.

This utter weariness alternated, as though by pulsation, with mental excitement and bodily fever. Occasionally, when the trial of the

day had been more than she could bear, the old walking mania would return. Then, looking into her own life, she seemed to herself but a second Hypatia, torn to pieces by invisible forces instead of human hands, suffering that frightful death in the agonies of her spirit.

Loving neither of these men, their claim upon her was none the less potent because her heart was vacant. The one held her by his intellect with conscience and moral sense entirely enlisted on his side; the other, by his dominant motive power over the supersensuous portion of her being; between the two, she seemed literally torn asunder. They were parting her nature between them; but still leaving her heart the mightiest element, unoccupied, unclaimed, because to neither had it been granted to possess himself of the uncounted wealth of its dominion.

But the element really most to be dreaded in this trial was its constant pressure, — the fact of a ceaseless recurrence of small circumstances and temptations to be met and conquered, eating away her existence, as dropping water crumbles stone. Morning, noon, and night the delicious poison was held to her thirsting lips; all things wooed her to taste and live, or if the need were, to eat, drink, and be merry, and to-morrow die. And it was this food that her own hand must ever put away beyond the reach of her craving lips.

Every day witnessed some new instance. One I will relate to represent them all, which occurred upon a night soon after their arrival at Eichwald. Emily was leaning back in an easy-chair by one of the long drawing-room windows, at a little distance from the many other occupants of that brilliant apartment. The quiet, solemn eyes were turned towards the darkness, away from the dazzling scene within doors, of which she was scarcely conscious. It was the waking rest of a spirit-weary woman, in semi-oblivion of all things, even of definite remembrance of her own unhappiness.

She had sat there a long while; for besides the perfect freedom allowed every one, they were all too well accustomed to her habits to wonder at or interrupt her; when she was roused by a magnetic perception of a near presence. Some one leaned with folded arms upon the high back of her chair.

"Mrs. Crampton," said the voice softly.

The lady did not stir.

"Mrs. Crampton," it repeated again, a shade more earnestly.

A slight imperious movement of the head said, "I listen."

"It is so late in the season for violets, that I was surprised to find

a few still remaining on one of the hillsides. I left them just as I found them. Will you go with me early to-morrow morning to gather them? As we used once to do, — as we used once to do," the man repeated, his voice lowering as he spoke.

The face had been averted at his first speaking, but it was now turned directly away from him. What would she have given to go! What would she not have sacrificed to roam once more over the green hills in such a quest, — to fancy herself, even for one hour, the happy, untrammelled woman she had been when they last had done so!

Philip, tired out with his day's play, was lying with his head upon the cushion at her feet. Hearing Frederick Hastings's sentence he sprang up, roused to breathless excitement at the prospect of a return of their old pleasure. "I know where it is," he broke in abruptly. "They are beautiful. We'll take her there, Dr. Hastings, won't we, just as we used to?" the boy went on, re-echoing the gentleman's words.

"I cannot go," was the answering sentence, which parted the cold lips and stirred the haughty face for the first time.

"Why not?" pleaded the voice at her side; while the child broke out into half-commanding entreaties.

"Why not?" Great God! did he know what he was doing or saying? would they drive her mad among them all? was the woman's almost frenzied thought. There came a dangerous, hunted look in her eyes, and she glanced hurriedly around her, as though meditating some desperate escape. In doing so she caught her husband's eye. Standing not very far off, his keen ears had heard every word that had been spoken.

Then it was his eyes repeated with tenfold force the sentence he had spoken to those very listeners, so long before, — "My faith is absolute; and when the storms descend and the winds beat, it is my triumph to show it is founded on a rock."

"Max, save me, — save me or I perish," — the woman's face cried to him, as she read the meaning of those steady eyes.

In answer to her appeal he came forward, saying quietly, "I too know the place; it is certainly beautiful. You have chosen well for your excursion Dr. Hastings; it will be a fine opportunity for gratifying the violet-hunting mania which has possessed Miss Bertie and Alice, since the tribute you paid to its pleasures the other day. You will be overwhelmed with thanks for your proposition."

He had not raised his voice; but had intentionally spoken so clearly that all around heard him.

The young ladies, catching the sound of their names linked with Frederick Hastings and violets, eagerly advanced, full of inquiries and interest; in a moment more the latter gentleman found himself the centre of a circle of merry questioners and volunteers to accompany him upon the expedition he was supposed to have planned and proposed for the general entertainment.

A heavy shade of disappointment passed over him, as he saw his purpose so entirely changed. There was nothing left but to reply to their inquiries and courteously offer himself as guide and escort. He had necessarily left his place behind Mrs. Crampton's chair when the party and conversation became general, and the lady had fallen back into her previous position. The face was again turned to the darkness, but Max saw that look pass from the eyes, and an expression of intense relief come upon the drooping mouth. He could now afford to let matters take their own course, without his presence or direction, and he did so.

Frederick Hastings's plan offered too pleasant a chance for variety and excitement not to be eagerly carried out by the younger portion of the household. Consequently, the next morning about sunrise the hall and piazza were filled with ladies and gentlemen in summer walking costume.

Early as it was, they found Max there; apparently for the pleasure of seeing them off, as he steadily resisted all persuasions to accompany them. Frederick Hastings, coming in a little later, gave one quick glance over the company, and then quietly took up his post at the foot of the stairway, leaning carelessly upon the balustrade. The party seemed complete; but still Frederick Hastings did not propose starting.

"What are we waiting for?" said Alice at last, growing impatient of the delay and of the fact that ever since his entrance he had stood silent, in the same place, scarcely noticing her.

"Mrs. Crampton has not yet come down," he quietly replied.

"Is she going?" asked the lady; "she did not say so last night."

Frederick Hastings turned quickly towards her.

"Did she say she would not go?" he rather hurriedly demanded.

"No. But she seemed too weary, I thought, for such unwonted early rising and exercise."

"Unwonted! Not always so," the man thought, with a smile which Alice noticed, and wondered what there could have been in her words to have brought it forth.

"Perhaps her liking for such excursions is greater than you think.

"At any rate we will wait until we know certainly whether she will go," was his verbal reply.

Max rung for a servant.

"Knock at Mrs. Crampton's door," he said to the man when he appeared; "ask if she is ready, and tell her the whole party is waiting for her."

He carefully framed his message so as to exclude the idea, both in her and in those who heard him, that he for an instant doubted her intention of accompanying them.

The man went, and they waited. He returned, and at least two of that party listened eagerly for his reply.

"Mrs. Crampton told me to say you need not wait for her. She has a nervous headache and cannot go."

Max's face did not move, but Frederick Hastings's did. He was biting his lip under his heavy mustache, in a nervous way very unusual with him. Then he took up his hat with a half-weary look, as though all interest had died out of the expedition for him, and headed the general exodus from the hall without a word.

Their destination was at a considerable distance from the house, a mile or two beyond the park gates. Towards it they strolled, under Frederick Hastings's guidance, with that buoyant, demonstrative merriment such circumstances develop in healthy, happy young people.

Though their conductor was courteous and attentive, his interest in the excursion was by no means what they had expected. At last they began laughingly to inquire "whether Baltimore sunshine and violets alone had power to raise his enthusiasm." The gentleman made some gay evasive reply, and endeavored to arouse himself more thoroughly to the scene and persons around him, with what appeared to most of them perfect success. But Alice, who as a matter of course fell to his charge, felt rather than saw that during the whole walk he was slightly abstracted, his thoughts wandering elsewhere. Whither, she wondered, with a sensation of disappointment, of some want in herself, stealing over her. Acting somewhat in contradiction to his inclination, he unconsciously overdid, or at least accentuated, his purpose in carrying it out. The apparent devotion of these two had long before this been set down by the rest of the company as a country-house flirtation, and as such wondered at and interfered with by nobody.

If the object of the party in going upon this search had been to obtain brightened colors, flowers, and fun, they certainly succeeded;

with the addition of damp feet, some slight fatigue, and, with the ladies, dew-draggled skirts. Altogether, in appearance so decidedly worse for wear were they, that, coming home between eight and nine o'clock in an uproarious state of mirth and mischief, they were fain to avoid the front of the house, from which they had departed in their pristine glory, and effect an unnoticed entrance by a side-door. Once inside, they scattered to their rooms to array themselves in fresh attire before appearing at the breakfast-table.

Assembling a little later for that meal, they found Max, Emily, and several others just seated. The lady's wretched pallor answered, more conclusively even than her words, the innumerable questions as to her alleged headache. Frederick Hastings was not one of the questioners. His experienced, professional eyes saw more fully the physical result, though not its cause, than the sufferer herself. He did not choose to annoy her with inquiries he could answer as well without. Neither did he think his feeling for her required this expression.

He and Alice came and took their usual places next her.

"Mrs. Crampton," he said, laying a tiny cluster of violets by her plate, "I have brought you home your share of the spoils."

The lady's lips and eyelids quivered for a second, as though they would both have answered him had they followed their natural impulse. As it was, she slightly bowed her thanks without looking up.

Through all that breakfast the violets lay just where he had placed them. Even when the meal was over, she was moving away without having touched them. Max came round the table.

"Emily," he said, gathering them up in his hand, "you are leaving your flowers."

She turned towards him at the sound of his words, a hot flush sweeping over her face, as though the crimson blood that caused it had come and gone with one labored pulsation of her heart.

"You had better fasten them in your breastpin," he went on, "otherwise they will be scattered and lost. They are too pretty an offering to meet such a fate," he added pleasantly to the giver, as he held them out to his wife.

Her hand made no corresponding movement. Her hesitation was so marked, that Frederick Hastings, standing by and watching them, was about hastily to disclaim for his little gift any worth or wish to be preserved. But before he could do so, she took the flowers with a cold decision in her manner that placed the matter beyond com-

ment. Unclasping the brooch that held together the open throat of her delicate breakfast wrapper, she gathered in it and fastened the stems of the flowers, obeying her husband's directions to the letter.

Frederick Hastings, observing this, could only wonder more and more blindly what was the mysterious cause of this incessant war of feeling, where was the broken or untuned string in the instrument making this eternal discord. Kindred circumstances taught him daily its existence, yet nothing further of its nature. No wonder: complex and mysterious, even to those who endured its workings, this life secret was scarcely to be comprehended by the most subtle observers.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

IT was now the latter part of August, true August weather. The midday sun was fiercely hot when the days were clear, but the mornings and the nights, always cool, at times became chilly. Consequently the evenings, passed during June and July in the open air, now brought them to the house. Instead of pervading the avenues, walks, terraces, and lawns in pairs or groups, as they had done a month or two before, they were now chiefly to be met with after nightfall promenading in the same companionship the long halls, dancing in the drawing-room, or engaging themselves as they best might with in-door amusements.

One of these cool evenings Emily excluded the light from the upper end of the drawing-room, and sat in the twilight watching the gayety in its lower extremity. Her own small circle drawn closely as usual around her, save her husband, who had been called to New York on business, and Frederick Hastings, an unwilling absentee in the billiard-room. The latter gentleman was bent, however, upon a speedy return, and was already making his way to the drawing-room when he was stopped by the request of a young girl to come and see one of Hogarth's engravings. He went, of course, but found she not only intended him to come, but to stay; that her call to him had, in fact, been a dexterous little provision for her own evening's entertainment.

A keen feeling of annoyance came over him as he saw how completely he was caught. But finding there was no help, he quietly set about making the best of it, true to his constitutional instinct of extracting for himself the extremest ease and enjoyment from any existing circumstance. Keeping to subjects he knew were within her comprehension, he drew out her opinions, until he found to his surprise she was entertaining him, not he her. It was quite a novel amusement, this viewing life through a new medium. The contrast between people and things seen with his eyes, and the same individuals and objects looked at with hers, was so comic, that more than once his gravity gave way before it. Besides this, the girl's talk had in it an element of saucy fun, (sufficient brains did not enter into its

composition to allow it to be called wit,) and at this he could laugh openly. Altogether, not being able to get what he wanted, he took what he could get, and found it by no means as bad as it might have been.

The party at the head of the room were necessarily witnesses of this laughing pair and the attendant circumstances. Alice watched them with a discomfort which found vent in a slight restlessness; she was scarcely still for a moment. Mrs. Crampton looked on with a repose and acquiescence far deeper than usual; her only sensation was one of thankfulness that here she could be passive even in thought. Bertie's ideas were employed in a closer quarter. As to Philip, after passing various complimentary judgments upon Frederick Hastings, (his loyalty towards that gentleman having only grown with his growth,) he suddenly gave it as his most decided conviction that his companion was "a thundering pretty girl."

Alice received the announcement with a start, followed by a long gaze at the person in question, and realized, as she had never done in all the weeks they had spent together, the truth of the boy's words. The light and color faded out of Alice's face very perceptibly as she watched the pair, with sharpened vision,—as she saw him attracted by another, almost as much, she began to fear, as he had ever been by her. Her train of thought and feeling was partially broken by Jack's laughing a low, amused laugh, and saying:—

"Just look at that Hastings! He is completely caught, and I have no doubt is wishing himself out of it with all his heart; and yet he is not only making himself as agreeable as possible, but is actually making her so too. It is my belief the man's nature is analogous to that of a flower," ("Violets," parenthesized Alice,) "he so instinctively discovers and basks in every attainable ray of sunshine. Yet he is a capital fellow!" he exclaimed, his tone changing from laughing criticism to hearty admiration. "I never was so agreeably disappointed in any one in my life. The first time I ever met him,—you remember the evening, Mrs. Crampton?—we dined together at your house."

"Yes," the lady said, "I remember it." But Alice noticed, with a slight wonder, that he had to wait a moment for his answer.

"That first time," the young man went on, "I took him for the usual fine-gentleman nonentity. The truth was, the very size of the man's hands and feet, and his perfect knowledge of how to dispose of those members, added to his general air of never having been

particularly excited in any way in his life, were calculated to produce a feeling somewhere between contempt and irritation in the masculine mind. I suppose they counted as much against him with me, as they do for him with ladies. But in spite of this complimentary first opinion, I had not stayed here two days before I found he had fairly fascinated me."

He gave this expression of friendship with cordial earnestness; and Alice and Emily listened, with that still pleasure warming their hearts with which women, even the coldest and most selfish, hear the praises of a man whom they either love or admire. It is a curious fact, no service or compliment you can pay a woman ever awakens her gratitude and kindly liking so keenly and lastingly as the slightest appreciation of the man she delights to honor.

"He has certainly chosen his profession rightly," Jack continued, after a moment's pause, "I should almost say instinctively, for his delicacy towards weakness and pain in every form cannot be entirely the result of professional drill. For that reason, except I believe he has in him a good stroke of fight for a good cause, I should say his name was a perfect misnomer. At any rate, I never call that harmonious man 'Dr. Hastings,' without a feeling of amusement. Hastings, indeed! Why, what possible association of ideas can a person have with such a name, but of a great battle between the Normans and Saxons,—of putting human beings to death, instead of healing them."

"His first name is better and truer," said Bertie softly. "Do you know, Emily," the girl went on, addressing Mrs. Crampton from an instinctive feeling that she would best understand her,— "do you know that I never see or speak to him without being strangely reminded of its German form and meaning."

What a smile was in the lady's eyes, as they turned and shone down upon her. The hand had been slowly stroking the golden curls, but it now rested upon the head as though with an actual blessing.

"Yes," she answered; "*Friedrich*,—rich in peace. I could pray no better prayer for my dearest on earth, than that that name might become to them a reality," she added, with a compressed, craving earnestness, strange to hear.

"The Lord of peace himself give you peace, always, by all means," Bertie's voice murmured. "St. Paul's benediction is still our best prayer for ourselves, our best blessing for those we love."

"Do you believe his name is fitting? Do you believe he is really

"rich in peace?" Alice demanded of Mrs. Crampton, turning upon her swiftly and awaiting her reply, as a priest might listen for the utterances of his oracle or a disciple for the words of his master.

"Child," she answered, a strain of weary bitterness sounding through her voice, disharmonizing it, "peace is the crown of victory. While the battle is going on, we can only fight and bleed, hoping for the end that we may win the reward."

"What is it he is fighting?" the girl again demanded, with an earnestness almost fierce, her previous manner intensifying tenfold. "What is it that strikes both him and you so cold and dumb sometimes?"

Whatever it was, it might have been upon the lady now, so cold, so very freezing, were the face and manner she turned upon her impassioned questioner.

"As for Dr. Hastings, you have the same opportunities for observing him that I have. If you wish any further knowledge of his thoughts and feelings, you must ask it of himself. Of myself I can tell you nothing."

It was Alice now whom something had struck dumb.

Late in the evening, in fact just before they were retiring, Frederick Hastings came through the long window at their side. He had been promenading the piazza with his late drawing-room companion, under the same polite compulsion, and had but this moment succeeded in passing her off on another escort.

"Come out upon the piazza," he said, as he came to them, "come out and look at this glorious moon, — it is at its fullest, and the night is radiant with its light."

Though speaking to the whole party, he had particularly addressed Mrs. Crampton, but she did not even stir to obey his call. Bertie's head was raised for a moment; but finding its resting-place motionless, it resumed its position, too well contented to care for a change, even a pleasant one. Jack also showed some signs of going, but seeing Bertie's wordless decision, he adopted it as his own.

"Come, Miss Alice!" Frederick Hastings exclaimed, as he saw the response the rest had tacitly given to his call, "you surely will not slight all this heavenly beauty. Come!"

And Alice went.

They stood for a few moments without speaking, leaning upon the broad stone balustrade, and looking out upon terraces, fountains, statues, and dark woods, flooded in silver. Turning to speak, the gentleman found the magnificent dark eyes at his side had glided

from this almost enchanted beauty and were resting upon his face with a strange questioning intentness. He was too sensitive for the consciousness of scrutiny not to render him a little nervous, and slightly annoy him; especially if, as in this case, he became suddenly aware of it.

"Well, Miss Alice, what is it?" he said, laughing slightly, but showing that her look had discomposed him. "Has any remarkable change passed over me, since you last saw me, that I require fresh study?"

His voice, though he had spoken in his usual rather low tone, vibrated through the still night-air, and brought every word almost as clearly to the hearing of the party they had left as though they had stood side by side with the speakers.

"I was thinking of something Emily said this evening of you and your name, and wondering whether it were true."

"What did she say?" The man's tone had changed strangely since his last speaking. Now it thrilled with the intensity of his interest.

"She was speaking of its German form," the girl answered. "'*Friedrich*, rich in peace,' she said it meant. And she said, too, 'that she could pray no better prayer for her dearest on earth, than that name might become to them a reality.' She did not say whether it had become a truth with you, — something deeper than a name; and it was this I was trying to discover."

For a little while no answer fell upon the listeners. Had they been looking as well as listening, they would have seen that in that moment he had lifted his cap from his head and stood uncovered in the moonlight.

"Miss Alice," he said at last, speaking with an earnestness which would have been passionate, but for the reverent tenderness which deepened and shook it, passing entirely over her last sentence, and answering only the words she had quoted, "from the depths of my heart, I too pray that prayer for my dearest on earth. God pity us! it is needed."

He turned without another word and entered the house; but by another way from the one he had left it. Alice walked by his side, equally silent. At the threshold they parted.

Before many moments were over, more than one of those speakers and listeners had sought refuge in quiet and darkness for thoughts and feelings they could not endure in the presence of light and mirth.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A MONTH came and went. The end of August changed to the end of September, with the equinoctial gales blowing, carrying storm and rain upon their wings.

Mrs. Crampton too was changed, yet her strong will concealed the ravages of her life in a degree from all.

The unremitting observation of both Frederick Hastings and Max saw deeper than others, but she partially blinded even them; the eyes of the former, sharpened by professional experience, were beginning to read, in apparently slight signs, a meaning he did not dare to admit to himself. He put it away as an impossible evil.

As for Max, though none of the symptoms Frederick Hastings observed had escaped him, they could not for many reasons lead him to the same conclusion. Deadly, indefinite fear of what the future might bring forth swept over him at times, but the cold darkness passed from his soul in the light of her presence.

When this weather began, it was greeted as a not unpleasant variety by the gay portion of the household, voted a species of atmospheric high tariff, of elemental protective policy, from its power in developing internal resources. All the in-door amusements they had hitherto enjoyed they now pursued with redoubled zest.

Sometimes they spent their mornings together, the fingers of the ladies occupied with varieties of fancy-work (in which, of course, that interminable crocheting, so wearying and bewildering to the eyes of the uninitiated, especially of the masculine gender, held its full place), while one of the gentlemen read aloud from some novel or poem; the rest being chiefly employed holding skeins of worsted or silk while their owners wound them, enlivening their work by quiet little flirtations under cover thereof. When this gave out, they ameliorated their condition by disarranging the ladies' work-boxes; the never-failing resource under such circumstances. Forming, as Miss Gertrude Weston told one of them, when he rashly attempted to serve hers after the same fashion, an admirable and Hogarthian illustration to Dr. Watts's remark, that "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do." To partially wind and unwind spools of

cotton is an occupation which seems to possess, for gentlemen so placed, a mysterious fascination. Likewise being allowed to snip the thread into minute bits with the scissors is wonderfully effectual, as with children, in keeping them quiet and entertained. It is amusing to see how some of the gravest men share with women and children this liking for having their hands occupied. Madame de Stael, with the wisps of paper to twirl in their fingers regularly handed to herself and company, was only the extension of a feeling most of us partake in some degree.

Many and various were their morning occupations, the chess-board proving a great favorite among the gentlemen. But among all the players Max stood first, the acknowledged champion in the lists. Whoever succeeded in conquering the rest was handed over to him for short and speedy demolition. His decisions were quoted as unanswerable authority; even his father had been known to accept without getting angry (O unparalleled circumstance in the history of chess-playing!) one of his quiet suggestions as to a move.

Hitherto he and Frederick Hastings had never thus opposed each other. But upon one of those rainy days when chess was more the fashion than ever, chance pitted them against each other.

Frederick Hastings had been playing with one of the young men, and, rather to his own surprise, had won. The gentleman, wishing to redress his wrongs by proxy, challenged his conqueror to try his skill against Max, who just then sat talking to those who stood round his board.

There was a visible hesitation in the manner of both, before Mr. Crampton courteously repeated his challenge and the other rose and came forward to accept it. His original opponent had scarcely expected Frederick Hastings would do so with the certainty of defeat before him. But he had little of the small vanity which makes us refuse to do what is most fitting under the circumstances, simply because we are afraid of not shining sufficiently in the doing. So, merely remarking that "he had no reputation to sustain," he sat down opposite Max and began arranging his pieces. Neither gave the other the least sign of what was in his mind, but both were thinking of that other game in which they had contended, — who had won and yet who had been the real victor. Their decisions upon this last clause would have differed.

Then the contest began. Max playing, as he always did, a daring game, requiring the closest attention and clearest foresight, — one that might be lost at any moment by the omission of a single link in his

chain,—but playing, too, with his apparently inevitable success. The rest of the company formed a close, excited circle of watchers; most of whom, especially his late antagonist, were laughing to see how Frederick Hastings's mental bones were being crunched by the giant into whose jaws he had ventured.

This was the state of things when Mrs. Crampton and Alice came down the stairway, dressed for dinner. Hearing the rustle of garments, the gentlemen naturally turned to see who was coming. As they recognized the pair, there was a general murmur of amusement which the ladies did not at first understand. "Come witness this battle," they called out. "Come and cheer on your respective knights to victory."

They drew them within the circle, giving them place behind Frederick Hastings. There Alice remained, but Mrs. Crampton passed over to her husband's side of the table and stood a little behind him. An arrangement much applauded by the bystanders as a more equal division of forces.

Frederick Hastings looked up,—Max looked straight before him. His wife was out of his sight, but he could see her reflection as visibly in the face opposite him as in a mirror. It was as though some soft coloring or light were falling upon it; the eyes grew dark and luminous as, passing him, they rested upon the figure just behind him.

The circle contracted, the outsiders trying to gain a better view of the board. In doing so they naturally pressed against Mrs. Crampton, until, in making way for them, she found herself so close at her husband's side that her flowing dress swept partially over him, and her hand resting upon the back of his chair brought her arm almost in contact with his shoulder.

To have the heaven of her beauty bending over him stirred every pulse in the man's frame. The old fever swept through him; sense and perception seemed drowning in pure consciousness of her. The sounds and persons around him grew indistinct and mingled, the board a mere set of glimmering squares. But very little outward evidence of this he gave as he sat leaning forward, his head resting on his hand, his unseeing eyes fixed upon the chessmen.

"Now by the lips of those you love, fair gentlemen of France," laughed one of the young men, recollections of Macaulay's ballads evidently coming over him, "fall to and decide the battle."

"Come, Max, it is your turn. Go in and win, old fellow," said Jack, accustomed to his rapid and unerring play.

Gathering a dim idea of the sense of the remark, the man mechanically put out his hand and moved, he neither knew nor cared what or where.

A murmur of extreme surprise followed the action. Coming from him it might well cause astonishment, for it bore no possible relation, as far as they could see, to his previous plan. So evident was this, that Frederick Hastings waited a moment to see whether he would not change it. But Max merely motioning him to go on, he concluded with the others that some brilliant stroke of policy, too deep for their comprehension, was being executed. It was so unexpected, however, that some time elapsed before he could decide upon his corresponding move.

During that interval Max's will fought a sharp battle, with the old, certain result. When Frederick Hastings's determination had been made and carried out, his opponent reigned as supreme over himself as ever. Though the bending figure retained its place, he had compelled himself to the same steady clearness he had possessed before her coming.

Looking now at the board, he saw the game was virtually over; that one radically false move had taken it entirely out of his hands. He continued it a few moments as a matter of form, to let his opponent work out a perception of what he foresaw.

"Checkmate!" cried out a dozen voices in surprise.

Max merely bowed his assent, and quietly rose from the table, leaving Frederick Hastings even more taken aback than were the others at his unexpected fortune.

"Why, Max, what has come over you?" they exclaimed, looking at him as though they expected to see some change to justify his defeat. "It was all that one unaccountable move! What on earth possessed you to make it?"

The gentleman only shrugged his shoulders and proposed they should go to dinner.

"And to think, after all our trying and failing, you should be the one to play with Max and win," said one of the young men, turning upon Frederick Hastings and surveying him as though he were a natural phenomenon.

"He who wins in great games can afford to throw away small ones," was the reply.

No one answered him. The party passed on to the dining-room; he, like many of the rest, believing after the arrival of the ladies Max had, from some reason of his own, intentionally given him the game.

The storm continued day after day without cessation, until it seemed every possible in-door pleasure was exhausted, when one evening Mr. Harrington proposed they should have tableaux. There was great difficulty in choosing the subjects; and after a dozen scenes from drama and opera had been discussed, they turned to Max, determined to abide by his taste.

"Why don't you fall back upon ancient history?" he replied. "That at least has the advantage that you can't be tired of seeing it. And then no matter how you get it up, no uncomfortable eye-witness can come down upon you with either knowledge or precedent. Your resources are quite sufficient. Why, Miss Gertrude alone would furnish Queen Vashti, Cleopatra, Zenobia, the Queen of Sheba, and half a dozen other distinguished ladies of the ancient time and a brunette order of beauty."

"Upon my word, that's the very idea!" exclaimed Mr. Harrington, having evidently in a moment settled it all in his own mind. "So come on."

"Where are you going?" they all asked at once.

"To the dining-room. We will have them in the conservatory at the end of it, and use the sliding-doors instead of a curtain."

To that room they all followed him and began examining the facilities the premises afforded. They did credit to Jack's perception. The conservatory was reached by a step or two from the floor, and upon this foot-lights could be arranged; the stained glass doors shutting out the actors from observation until the proper moment.

The question of further ways and means was then broached. But Jack proposed they should leave all such considerations to him.

"The first thing is to select my corps of actors. The rest of you may go where you please, so you don't come past those doors and disturb us. Recollect, Mrs. Crampton constitutes me commander-in-chief of these forces, and I shall court-martial the first person who disobeys my orders. And now to choose! Miss Gertrude, you will come with us, if you please," he said, bowing to that lady first. "And you," he went on, after a moment's scrutiny of the assembled company, to a young man whose coal-black eyes and hair and slightly aquiline features might easily have led a stranger to suppose him of Hebraistic origin. Then followed the selection of some half a dozen other gentlemen of somewhat similar appearance. "Come, Alice, I want you, too," he said, last of all, to his sister who stood near, and then ushered his company through the glass doors, leaving the rest to wait with such patience and resignation as they could summon.

For the next half-hour they heard from behind the glass doors a mingled sound of talking and laughing, moving plants and tacking up draperies, gliding about of ladies' maids, laden with their mistresses' stores of jewels, velvets, shawls, and such like brilliant-colored and effective wares, sent by their owners as contributions to the stage properties.

Though all this was apparently extremely amusing and exciting to the actors therein, it could not be so to those who only filled up the interim by conversing and criticising, as they promenaded the long dining-room. Consequently their patience was nearly exhausted when premonitory symptoms appeared, promising a speedy termination to their waiting.

Premonitory symptom No. 1. The servant entered and began arranging the foot-lights. The spirits of the company visibly brightened.

Premonitory symptom No. 2. The servant removed all other lights from the room. The interest growing vivid as the climax approached, there was a general rush towards the upper end of the apartment; the best view, of course, being at the farthest distance from the picture.

Premonitory symptom No. 3, and final. A man came through the side-door and took his place in front of the foot-lights. It was Jack. But so completely was his appearance and manner done into that of a fashionable showman, that at his first bow he was greeted with laughter by his expectant audience.

"The subject of this masterpiece," he began, "ladies and gentlemen, is that famous scene in Biblical History, Solomon welcoming his distinguished visitor, the Queen of Sheba, to his palace. I beg leave to draw your attention to the originality with which the artist has developed his idea; also to the fact that he has introduced a character, whose existence has been most shamefully ignored by historians; I mean one of his Hebrew Majesty's angry and jealous wives. This lady it has been the artist's high privilege" (here a bow to the female portion of the audience was skilfully introduced) "to rescue from the most unmerited oblivion and place in her true position before the world and appreciating posterity. With these few explanatory remarks, I leave you, ladies and gentlemen, to form your own unbiassed judgment upon a creation of genius pronounced immortal by all who have ever seen it."

Amid the absolute cheers of the company and his own deprecating and universal bows, he conveyed himself out of the room.

Then the doors slowly parted. "Solomon in all his glory" seemed indeed to stand before them. Notwithstanding inaccuracy as to form, the spirit had been so truly caught, that they breathed the very atmosphere of the Orient, from the luxuriant tropical flowers, which formed part of the background, to the dark, haughty face of the Queen, coming with gifts of gold and jewels in her hands.

Upon the right hand, just risen from his throne and advancing upon the dais to welcome his guest, stood King Solomon. The wearer's ordinary black dress was entirely covered from sight by artistically arranged shawls of Eastern fabric, and of such brilliancy of hue as that sense-pampering monarch of old might well be supposed to have delighted in. They brought into bold relief his strong aquiline profile and raven hair, mustache, and beard. The Queen of Sheba herself might well have looked kindly upon her kingly host if he greeted her with as noble a presence as his modern representative now made.

Around him stood the high officers of his court, with sight and interest fixed upon their advancing guest.

Miss Weston was certainly magnificent this night. Those who had previously been scoffers upon the subject of her personal attractions were silenced from that moment. Her large, bold, swarthy beauty was sublimated, by picturesque dress and artistic surroundings, to a grandeur which had in it something beyond our cramped times and customs. She looked an Amazonian queen or Oriental Empress, one who could lead on armies in person, could conquer and rule whole nations, before whom men bowed down both body and mind.

"By Jove, a man might well pay homage to such a queen!" muttered one of the young men, with a curious, reluctant enthusiasm; as though forced into it, in spite of his own will, by her splendor.

"I will take some savage woman, she shall rear my dusky race!"

Upon my soul, it's enough to make a man feel like doing it to look at her. I never appreciated the force of Mr. Tennyson's words before."

Her dress, though of barbaric magnificence, was by no means entirely savage; indeed, it suggested the idea that purple and fine linen were as well known to her majesty as to King Solomon. Its prevailing color was vivid scarlet; even in the glittering, many-hued turban, it held its predominant place. But thrown over her shoulders as a mantle was what Jack gloried in as the finest of his tropical stage

properties. It was a tiger's skin Max had brought home from the East years before; induced to do so from having been in at the death of its owner. Whatever the original Queen of Sheba might have said to such an article of dress, it was certainly wonderfully effective in the present case. She wore it, too, with a wild grace, and becoming air of rightful possession.

By an unlimited outlay of Turkey red, and a skilful introduction of silver waiters to represent shields, Jack had really done wonders with Mrs. Crampton's colored servants in forming the train of the Eastern Queen. Placed judiciously in the shade, so that neither their number or accoutrements were clearly discernible, they formed a background to display the majesty of their Queen.

But all this material gorgeousness, both animate and inanimate, vividly as it arrested the attention of the lookers on, did not hold it for a moment after the real effect was taken in. The true force and originality of the scene lay elsewhere, and upon it their eyes and interest gravitated with instinctive unanimity.

Far in the background, towards the centre of the picture, a small, white hand clutched and held aside the branches of a thickly twining vine, and through the opening the head and bust of a woman looked out and caught the light. A magnificently beautiful woman! yet surely at this moment entered and possessed by some demon.

It was Alice. But such an Alice as none of those who now looked at her had ever before seen. Dressed in an orange silk jacket, torn open at the throat as though its wearer were stifling; a long, orange silk scarf wound round the head, its ends falling with the hair that flooded her form with its gloomy masses; the light of the diamonds scintillating upon breast and arms, and hands darkened before the blaze of eyes that seemed to shoot out living flame; sufficient, it almost appeared, to shrivel before their sight the stately rival upon whom it fell. The small, white teeth shining through the parted crimson lips, and gleaming with a savage instinct as though they could have torn out her heart. As the hot breath quivered forth, the watchers almost expected the lips to blacken; looked at least to see the leaves and flowers droop and fade as it passed by them.

Jealousy, cruel as the grave; anger, as ruthless as death; passion, mad, wild, and uncontrollable as raging fire, stood there incarnate: found room for fearful climax in that slight, frail form. Motionless and speechless, unnoticed and uncared for by king or queen, by even the humblest actor in that splendid scene, to the lookers-on she filled the atmosphere with ill-defined horror.

The picture lasted about three minutes, the spectators remaining almost as still as the actors. Then the sliding doors slowly closed; and in a second the spell was broken.

There was soon a general movement towards the other end of the room to see and compliment the actors. Mrs. Crampton was carried on more by the tide than by direct volition.

"Miss Alice is magnetic," said a quiet voice at her side; and she then perceived who was walking by her. "I never approach her without perceiving it," Frederick Hastings continued, falling instinctively into his old habit of expressing his impressions as freely and unquestioningly to her as though he were thinking aloud. "There must necessarily be a thunder-storm in such a woman's nature before she is twenty to clear the air."

He saw even in the dim light that his words were understood and appreciated. But there was no opportunity for an answer, as he was almost immediately separated from Mrs. Crampton by the crowd about the stage. He turned, therefore, to pay his homage to Miss Gertrude, and say pleasant things to Jack and such of the actors as were near him. But he did not stay long, for this was by no means his purpose in coming this way. He had a keen curiosity to see Alice's present state, to watch the mood in which her late vivid exhibition of passion would leave her.

Looking about he caught sight of her reclining upon a garden-seat, with a group of congratulating friends around her. He saw at a glance she had returned into her old self as completely and abruptly as she had left it; it was now the Alice of every day, only more languid than usual. He noticed a droop in the eyelids; a slight mistiness in the eyes, where the fire had burnt so hotly but a few moments before; and a relaxation of every muscle and nerve. "Out of whom went seven devils," muttered Frederick Hastings to himself as he came forward to speak to her. "Are you sure, Miss Alice, that it is quite safe to approach you even now?" was his laughing address.

The girl rose from her seat and stood before him like some pleased, happy child, as he gayly complimented her appearance, costume, and the power of her acting. The other gentlemen seemed gradually to evaporate. At least, before five minutes were over not one was to be seen; an absence of which Alice was as oblivious as for the last few moments she had been of their presence.

In putting aside the vines during the tableau, a spray had broken off in her hand. She still held it, and as she stood listening, with

rather downcast head and eyes, through the long lashes of which the happy smile glimmered, she was unconsciously breaking off leaf after leaf with her delicate fingers.

"Pleasant to the eyes, yea, verily," thought Frederick Hastings as he looked down at the exquisite beauty of the girl in her picturesque dress and attitude; and an expression of genuine admiration came into his face, that might well have been mistaken for love by any one not initiated into the strange secret of these involved lives. So they still stood when Jack came up the stage. As his eyes took in the graceful little *scena* the pair formed, his eyes gleamed with a new idea.

"Well, Jack, what is to be your next tableau?" was the exclamation with which one of the young men greeted him.

"I have just decided," was the reply, "but it will be time enough for the rest of you to know when you see it. And now, ladies and gentlemen, I must ask you to vacate my premises, so that we can clear away for action." And without further ceremony he walked them before him off the stage as though they had been geese. "Not you two," he said, as Frederick Hastings and Alice prepared to follow, — "I want you. And you also, Max," he exclaimed, catching his arm as he passed.

"No, no," Max returned, decisively. "Why, man," he went on with grim impatience, though he attempted to laugh as he spoke, "you'd scarce expect one of my age to appear in public on the stage, would you?"

"But you must," Jack replied; "we can't possibly do without you." And thus urged, Max was forced to stay, sorely against his will.

Before the impatient crowd dared expect, again the doors were opened.

"The garden scene in Faust!" exclaimed Miss Gertrude, who had seated herself near Mrs. Crampton, at the head of the room.

She was right. The thought had been suggested to Jack by the unconscious likeness Alice and Frederick Hastings had borne a few moments before (both in manner, expression, and attitude) to Margaret and Faust during that famous dialogue.

The interest and merit of the picture depended upon the power with which each should express the feeling of the poet. Very little had been attempted either in the way of scenery or costume; indeed, very little was needed. The conservatory provided the first ready made, and the second was sufficiently well represented by a simple dress of white muslin.

The part of the lovers was earnestly enough given to satisfy the highest expectation of the audience. Frederick Hastings's admiration of the beauty of Alice at that moment being quite sufficient for any but the most observant eyes.

Jack had chosen that exquisite moment of hesitation and expectancy, when the result of the sweet superstition is still uncertain; when the leaves of the flower she is plucking are but half exhausted; when "Er liebet mich," and "Er liebet mich nicht," have quivered alternately, not only over the trembling lips, but through her whole being, until both hope and fear have risen to intensity.

There stood the loving woman whose heart had just awaked to know its need, its weakness, and its strength. In being herself simply, Alice bore her part more truly than any dramatic talent could have enabled her to do.

At a little distance, as though having paused for a moment in their walk, stood Martha and Mephistopheles; the face of the latter looking past the woman, with eyes fastened upon the lovers, and wearing only too frightfully the visage of the fiend.

There was indeed a fearful likeness. It seemed the man was seeking revenge upon himself and others for these days and months of repressed passion. A strange conjunction of circumstances and physical appearance gave him the ability and will at the moment to render this marvellous dramatic creation a representation terrible in its perfection.

Sitting next Mrs. Crampton, Miss Gertrude Weston's keen and curious eyes did not fail to observe that, after one long look, the lady's head slowly drooped until the hands met and covered the face. So she sat, shielded from the observation of the company.

"Upon my word, Max is enough to make one's blood run cold," whispered one of the young men over Miss Gertrude's shoulder; and as he spoke, shrugging his own shoulders with almost a shiver. "I've seen something like the same look in his face before, and it always gave me a sensation of being uncomfortably near the Old Boy before my time; but to-night he is the very Devil himself!" the man continued, with a freedom of speech he would have been chary of using to any other lady in the company.

Miss Gertrude returned an assent of grim pleasure to this tribute to her favorite, and did not feel called upon to appear in any degree shocked.

Mrs. Crampton might or might not have heard this whisper. She certainly gave no outward sign of having done so; but sat until the

close of the scene just as she had done at its beginning; sat so, indeed, until the lights were brought back into the room.

Alice and Frederick Hastings left the stage as soon as they were at liberty, and came up the room to resume their places among the spectators. As usual, they came at once to Mrs. Crampton's vicinity, and began making gay, impudent demands for praises of their performance. Looking up at them for the first time, the lady gave what they asked, very gently, very quietly.

But the task of replying, indeed of saying all that was said after Mrs. Crampton spoke, fell entirely upon Alice. Frederick Hastings was far too much absorbed in watching the face necessarily raised towards them in speaking.

As he did so, all light and joy seemed flickering, dying out of life. Not only its deadly pallor, but something in its expression apart from physical change, brought back his old presentiment of coming danger to her, with a force it had never before possessed. He saw at a glance the work of the last four months. Circumstances had thrust aside every veil; and to-night, for the first time since his return, he was seeing her real face.

Even Alice partially perceived the change, though dimly comprehending its meaning. But it was sufficient to make her look narrowly from one to the other, to cause the merry flow upon her lips to slacken and at last totally to cease.

As for Frederick Hastings, what could he say? What pleasant words had he power to utter, with this shadow of the future darkening over him, with this voice from the dread "To Come" crying warning in his ears?

So it happened that when Max came forward none of them were speaking. He had left the stage and started to come up the room with his fellow-actors, but had been delayed on the way. At the sound of his footsteps, directly behind them, the two standing turned to see who it was. His wife had no need to move; he was in a direct line with her. As she caught sight of his face, where the traces still lingered of his almost demoniacal possession of a few moments previous, as she suddenly saw this vision directly before her, the cold, white quiet of her own face was convulsively shivered. And, as if to shut out the sight, again the hand went swiftly up to the eyes; but with a faint, piteous attempt to make it seem an accidental movement, to hide its meaning even from him, that made Max Crampton wish himself in his grave. But he was its sole witness. The others merely saw, when they turned back from satisfying their cu-

riosity, that Mrs. Crampton had resumed the attitude in which they found her at their coming.

To three of that group speech would have been nearly akin to impossibility. Even Alice found herself without anything to say. So when Jack made his appearance a moment or two later, creating a new centre of attention for the whole company, he little knew the relief he brought. Of course there was a general demand to know what he was next going to give them.

"For Heaven's sake, let it be something sufficiently Christian to take the taste of brimstone out of our mouths, which your Mephistopheles and company have put into them," stipulated the young man who had previously expressed his opinion of Max's performance, and who now continued his remarks rather unrestrainedly, considering who were among his audience.

Jack promised thus far, but was inexorable in his determination to give no further satisfaction to their curiosity.

"Mrs. Crampton," he said, presently, after he had crossed to her side and stood there a few seconds with a slight hesitation in his manner.

The lady looked up and listened.

"Mrs. Crampton, I have come to throw myself upon your tender mercies. The truth is," he went on, laughing, quoting, "'I turn to thee in time of need,' for I cannot carry out my next idea without your assistance. I must give up the scene unless you will consent to act."

He had expected to combat extreme reluctance on her part, but, to his great pleasure and surprise, she simply rose and followed him without a word; as she would have followed anything anywhere, to have escaped from the purgatory of her present position. The rest of the company made way for the pair with much the same sensations Mr. Harrington was experiencing.

When Jack had conducted Mrs. Crampton behind the scenes, the first thing he did was to draw a seat to one of the open windows and deliberately place her in it.

"Mrs. Crampton," he began, "I have asked this favor of you because I did not believe any other woman in that company had lived sufficiently to seize and represent my idea. But first, you must look less like a ghost than you do at this moment. My *dramatis personæ* are entirely human," he parenthesized with a laugh. "The noise and heat of the room have been too great a tax upon you," he continued with kindly love and consideration. "Indeed, I am afraid you

are not able to bear all the trouble we have been to you this summer. I wonder Max does not turn us all out of the house, as I am sure he would, if he saw you now. You look sick and weary, as though we were wearing away your life."

"Wearing away your life!" When the sentence struck her, she visibly shrank back into the deeper shadow; as sore, exquisitely tender flesh will instinctively recoil from the motion of a blow.

The moment the words were out of his lips, Mr. Harrington regretted them, because of that slight movement and something in her face. A dim perception that Mrs. Crampton was neither strong nor well had more than once come over him in the last month or two; but to-night was the first time her face had given evidence to him, as to Frederick Hastings, of anything like the real extent of the evil. Even now he only saw enough to render him a little anxious and concerned, to make him earnestly offer to change his programme and release her from any exertion or excitement that might be beyond her strength.

"No," she said, sitting up in her chair after a moment or two, with a face more like her own in expression, if not in color, "I will hold to our compact, if you please."

She knew the alternative of question and criticism if she changed her purpose, and so chose the lesser evil.

"Now tell me your plan, and let me see if I am capable of fulfilling your requirements."

After a half-hour of conversation and arrangement, the lights were again darkened, the hush of expectation went over the crowd, and in a second more the picture was before them. In the darkness, looking out at it, stood Frederick Hastings and Max Crampton, shoulder to shoulder; the consciousness of themselves and each other lost in the stronger influence now controlling them.

It was Tennyson's "Princess," as they saw at a glance. That imperial woman, whose proud, high nature rebelled against any chain, real or imaginary; who could not be so false to all truth as not to know herself the superior of the ordinary race of men, before whom social law called upon her to bow as her rightful lords and masters.

But it was not in this early time of hope and faith and pride they now saw her. That day had clearly been, but was past forever. It was a conquered woman who sat there; one who had struggled with terrible tenacity, only to find every defence crumble away, every weapon crush in her grasp.

The tableau preceding the final scene of the poem was before

them, when the pale lady is keeping watch by night at the side of the wounded prince. He has lain and listened to that confession of failure, slowly dropping like heart's blood from her lips.

The lips are silent now, but the unspoken words are shadowed in her bending, motionless figure :

" Her voice

Had choked; her forehead sunk upon her hands,
And her great heart through all the faultful past
Went sorrowing in a pause he dared not break."

It was small wonder that the guests felt themselves thrilled by what they considered great acting. Small wonder that Max Crampton felt his spirit sink beneath this living truth. Through the perfect silence, a faint intonation in the breathing of the man next him fell upon his overstrained senses, and the consciousness of his companionship came back.

"Between us we have wrought this, and we stand together and witness the perfection of our work," was his thought.

He glanced at the absorbed face at his side. Infinite tenderness, pity, and pain, even dread, shone out from the dark eyes towards the drooping form upon which they rested; but neither remorse nor self-reproach mingled in the look.

"No," thought Max, "that cup is reserved for me to drink."

So far off was Frederick Hastings still from any comprehension of his true relationship to this woman, or his strangely mingled influence over her, so little knowledge had he of his own agency in bringing about the result they now saw.

How long the scene lasted neither could have told. But when, through the closing doors, it vanished gradually from their sight, they roused themselves as from some fearful nightmare, in which centuries and seconds are the same.

When the actors returned, Mrs. Crampton was still in the soft, white wrapper that had formed her sick-room costume. The eyes that fastened so keenly upon her as she entered saw that, even in the short space of time intervening between their last sight of her and this, the reaction had come on. Extreme physical exhaustion had stilled all other sensation.

The company thronged round her with earnestly given praises and wonder at her power of unspoken expression; but she stood silent and passive. A weary grace pervaded her figure; from the waves of golden hair resting heavily on her cheek to the relaxed hands slightly locked together, in every fibre the same ebb-tide of strength and vitality was visible.

Presently Frederick Hastings said, addressing Alice and a group of her companions: "Where do you suppose your roses will be to-morrow morning, if you sit up much longer to-night? Do you know it is fast approaching the small hours 'ayant the twal'?"

There was one exclamation of surprise from the group, one hasty resolution to retire, and Mrs. Crampton was left to rest and quiet as soon as she, too, chose to claim them. Her eyes were fixed upon the floor, but Frederick Hastings saw that old look of relief hovering over the mouth: that look was reward enough for him.

CHAPTER XXXV.

ON the following day the company were again disappointed. It was still cloudy and raining slightly, with a tantalizing sky which idle people cannot help watching, because of the constant balancing of hope and fear.

Again the various in-doors amusements were in requisition. Mrs. Crampton occupied herself with her father at the chess-board, while Alice Harrington sat at the piano. Frederick Hastings stood by her, talking. Save for the presence of Gertrude Weston, their *tête-à-tête* was private and undisturbed. But the girl was saying almost nothing; only sitting perfectly still, with her hands upon the keys, looking up at him with an expression of blind rest and joy in love. So far as this was admiration he saw it clearly, (no man's vanity ever allowed him to remain obtuse to such homage,) but any more serious or dangerous element was shut out from his perception. Paying back admiration for admiration, entertainment for entertainment, he reckoned the account well balanced, and was conscious of no further indebtedness. It was in this way that a man of his sense of honor could act towards this girl as he had done during the entire summer. But his blindness had little effect upon the result; that was irredeemably the same.

The tableau of last night, and its present partial reproduction, had awakened Miss Gertrude Weston's attention to Alice's state of mind. She could not repress a human impulse to save her; at least to hint to her the utter futility of dreaming she could ever possess and control this nature, bound by every law of attraction to something beyond her. For Miss Gertrude's keen perception and close study of Mrs. Crampton's character, and her influence on those around, had led her to a partial solution of the relation between her and Frederick Hastings.

It was this impulse which drew Miss Gertrude's eyes away from the clouds, away from the novel she was reading, and riveted them upon the girl so near her. As the moments went by and what she wished to prevent went on, she gaining no opportunity to carry out her purpose, she grew restless, angry, and impatient, until chance threw the desired opportunity in her way.

A servant came in with a message from one of the gentlemen in the billiard-room, asking Frederick Hastings to step there for a few moments to decide some question under discussion, of which he was supposed to be the best judge.

"Will you come, too?" he asked, as he apologized for leaving her.

"No, I will stay here and practise until you return." And with this agreement he went.

Instead of beginning anything requiring attention, she fell to softly playing modulations and cadenzas, recollections of old thorough-bass exercises, through which habit guided her without direct volition; while her thought floated out into reverie, which would have rendered such volition impossible.

Miss Gertrude allowed her to play for some moments. Then rising and summoning up her faculties, she came forward to the task she had set herself with somewhat of that species of benevolence surgeons are supposed to feel when they perform a torturing operation to save life.

"So, Margaret, your Faust has deserted you for the present," Miss Gertrude began, saying the first thing that came into her head, to introduce the conversation she wished to bring on.

The girl started at the voice, but continued playing without answer; the elder lady could only choose between letting the conversation drop or carrying it on entirely by her own effort. As Miss Gertrude seldom allowed difficulties to baffle her, she naturally selected the latter alternative.

"You played that part well, last night," she continued, perfectly at her ease under the responsibility she had assumed, and paying the compliment with an air of cool superiority, "in spite of the drawback of your black eyes and hair, the incongruity of your personal appearance with our preconceived ideal German peasant-girl. But I don't give you any particular credit, as it was nature, not you, that spoke out, and the result was a necessity. It was a pity your friend Dr. Hastings could not have had the same chance."

At the name and sentence, the girl's figure moved slightly, and the eyes cleared of their softening haze. She was not only listening now, but hearing and comprehending the words as they fell upon her ears. Miss Weston saw her advantage, and followed it instantly.

"With another Margaret his part would have been as perfectly played. I imagine if Mrs. Crampton had stood in your place, (in spite of the man's radical weakness and want of dramatic power,)

truth so strong and instinct so exquisite would have guided him in expressing devotion, that the living, breathing Faust would have seemed to stand before us." Miss Gertrude said this, looking quietly at Alice, as though she were making the most natural remark possible.

The sound of the playing stopped. The girl had turned completely round upon her; amazement, incredulity, anger, even fear, troubling the depths of those great black eyes.

"What do you mean?" she slowly said at last, as though gradually by an effort recovering her mental equilibrium, which some sudden blow had destroyed. "I don't understand you. Except as her old friend, what possible connection can there be, can you mean to assert that there exists, between Mrs. Crampton and Dr. Hastings?" she continued, the internal excitement rising in voice and manner as she spoke.

"Only that which exists indestructibly between the tide and the moon, the satellite and the planet, between the planet and the sun, or any other instance of the law of attraction and gravitation you may prefer," the elder woman calmly responded, her voice and manner as cool and undisturbed as the steady eyes with which she held her questioner.

"Miss Gertrude!" the indignant, tortured girl cried out, as she hurriedly rose, "how dare you talk so of Emily, standing here, too, in her own house!" Even at this moment womanly pride and instinct showed her her only course; taught her to shield herself by fighting Mrs. Crampton's battle, as by making any personal defence she would admit its necessity and so acknowledge her weakness.

"Child," Miss Gertrude replied, without the slightest discomposure, placing her hand on the girl's shoulder, and reseating her far more by mental than physical force, "sit down and listen to me. I neither mean, nor do, any wrong to Mrs. Crampton by what I have said. I merely stated a simple fact, over which they have no more control than you and I. I confess at first I thought we were witnessing the return of the lover whom she had deserted when she married Max for his money. But after we came here and I saw them constantly together, and, what is more, began to understand him better, I changed my opinion."

The girl was listening as though she had no power to do otherwise, and yet did not quite take in the meaning of the words she heard; as though some far more absorbing thoughts were coming between her and all other considerations. Miss Weston went on, therefore, delivering her opinion as she had been longing to do for months, having it all her own way.

"I don't believe either of them have ever touched her heart; that is, if such an article can be counted among her personal property, which is problematical, as I have noticed it is generally left out in the composition of your magnificent white, luxurious women. I suppose they have enough beautiful body given them to make up for any such trifling injustice. As to Mrs. Crampton, I rather think her heart must have been made up to her in nerves. To do her justice," — Miss Weston was speaking with a slight reluctance now, — "I really believe the only actual hold Frederick Hastings has upon her lies in those nerves; but I more than doubt whether that power has ever been strong enough to induce her to even promise to marry him, though I suspect he has committed the folly in his day of imagining himself really, humanly in love with her and telling her so."

Miss Gertrude's keen perception had certainly done her good service in the study of these persons. And such was the temptation to speak out for once the result of her investigations, that she was fast forgetting the original purpose with which she had begun the conversation, and was rapidly verging toward a soliloquy on another subject.

"To be sure," she went on, in this frame of mind, "she only escaped that mistake to live on to commit the sin of selling herself to Max. But perhaps, after all, even that was a higher fate for a woman of her undeniable power," — Miss Weston was again speaking with a little hesitation, — "than to throw herself away upon that weak man."

"Throw herself away!" It was Alice's indignant young voice that rang out, almost unconsciously echoing the words. She had heard the woman's criticism upon Mrs. Crampton, though scarcely realizing its meaning, and had sat quietly by, unable to answer or contradict. But at the last expression, Nature was too strong, and spoke out uncontrollably, finding voice and strength, ways and means, as she always does, to accomplish her purposes. "Miss Weston," she hotly went on, "you never liked him, you never did him justice!"

The elder woman looked down at her. Again pity and contempt fought for dominion in the slow smile that dawned in her eyes. The girl herself had recalled her original intention, and she now prepared to resume her task just where she had left it.

"You are mistaken," she quietly answered, "I do him more perfect justice than you, as I see him so much more clearly. As for liking him, perhaps my feeling towards him is not quite what you would christen by that name, but it is what I call such. I like him as I do

music and flowers, soft south-wind and summer skies, peaceful landscapes and bright rivers, all the natural beauty that the God who gave us our æsthetic perceptions likewise put into the world to satisfy them. And this I am sure is also Mrs. Crampton's feeling towards him; only to a degree which neither you nor I will ever have the constitutional capacity to fully comprehend. But as to bestowing on him any human feeling of love, such as I would give to a real man, I would as soon think of offering it up at the feet of a beautiful statue, for by the mingled influence of constitution and circumstance, he is as utterly cut off from appreciating or reciprocating it. Alice," — the lady was speaking so slowly that each word seemed to have time to drop like a leaden weight into the heart of her listener before the next one followed; no wonder that the girl heard with some such sensation as criminals may have when they stand at the bar and hear the judge pronounce their death-sentence, — "Alice, to all women but one (and even she is no exception in any true sense), if the flower speaks truly, it says '*er liebet mich nicht*.'"

And Miss Gertrude, having finished her work and delivered her valedictory over it, walked back to the window from whence she came.

"The sun has come out, and we are to have a clear, bright day, after all," she said, as she looked out. But turning around to make some further remark upon the same subject, she found she was alone. The girl had slipped away, forgetful of her promise to Frederick Hastings to await his return, forgetful of all things but a consciousness of oppression, of chilly weight, upon every sense and feeling.

Her first instinct was to escape from observation, to try to settle in some degree her bewildered senses. How she gained her room she hardly knew, but there she found herself standing with the door locked behind her.

Then all she had heard returned to her, but with an entirely different effect. The reaction came on, the hot, violent nature regained its predominance. She could not, she would not believe in the truth of what had been shown her. She seemed to have emerged from some unnatural, evil influence which had cruelly distorted all things, and to be recovering her power of seeing them in their proper light. As to the vision whose influence had for the time petrified her, it was all a fiction of Miss Weston's, concocted between her imagination and her love of mischief. What had appeared a certainty when she had heard it, backed by the speaker's strong will and conviction,

seemed to her now, when left to the control of passion and inclination, an impossibility. How could the sunlight be dancing so merrily upon the floor, the birds singing, the trees rustling, all nature brightening and rejoicing; how could the laughter and merry voices of those upon the piazza come up through her window in gay chorus, through which she distinctly traced Frederick Hastings's pleasant tones, if this awful fate were about to descend upon one who was at least their fellow human being?

And yet, — and yet there lay at the bottom of her heart an icy spot which not all this heat and violence could melt or warm, — a cold doubt and dread, the concentration of a thousand memories of scenes she herself had witnessed, of influences she herself had felt.

There came a knock at the door. In the conflict of contending feelings she did not notice it until she heard Mrs. Crampton's voice calling to her. Then she answered that she was there, but without opening the door or coming to it.

"We are going to ride. Do get ready and come with us," was the sentence she next heard.

It flashed upon her that this was the opportunity for settling all her misgivings. They three would probably ride together as usual, and watching the others with her sharpened vision she would judge for herself.

"I will go. I will be with you in a moment," she answered, and Mrs. Crampton passed on down stairs.

Very few moments elapsed before Alice made her appearance among the gay party about to start. As she came out upon the piazza, she looked, with her trailing dress and plumes, like some gorgeous tropical bird. A deep crimson color seemed almost stained upon lips and cheeks, while a keen, eager, even stern brilliancy was in her glancing eyes.

From the mingled throng she singled out, at the first second, the two figures in whom all her interest centred. But their relative position helped her in no degree towards what she was seeking.

Mrs. Crampton was already mounted; and Frederick Hastings, having assisted Miss Weston to the saddle, was carrying on with her a merry conversation. He really enjoyed Miss Gertrude's society. Her wit and severity, alarming or incensing to most men, had a precisely contrary effect upon him. She never angered nor discomposed him, as he caught upon his keen sense of humor all that struck so sharply upon other men's vanity or temper. Miss Weston, on the other hand, was too genuinely talented not to appreciate the

best of Frederick Hastings, and what she said to Alice about her liking for him was the exact truth.

Consequently he was in no hurry to leave, but stood by her with his hand on her horse's neck, gayly chatting, to their mutual entertainment, until every one else was ready to start. Then, some one calling out that this was the case, the girl, who had not removed her eyes from him for a single moment, saw him merrily raise his cap to Miss Weston and walk off to where his horse was being held.

Alice had silently taken her place next Mrs. Crampton, at the head of the cavalcade, and in a moment or two more he rode up to her side. He began to reproach her gayly for not waiting for him in the parlor, according to her promise. But instead of entering into a laughing quarrel with him, as she generally did, she answered so slightly, with some indefinite excuse, that he relinquished the subject and rode on in silence.

They three were seldom a talkative party, but this morning they were less so than usual. Mrs. Crampton, ordinarily the most passive one of the trio, was to-day its most pleasantly excited member. Though the conversation was of the slightest kind, Frederick Hastings was conscious of no poverty of entertainment. With that face so near him, with its delicate, varying shades of expression to trace and read, what need could he have for interest or excitement? Thus occupied, he willingly fell into the silent mood of the others.

Alice's watch over these two never failed for a second; but her vigilance was to small purpose, except—except—once or twice, when Mrs. Crampton casually spoke to him, turning as she did so the radiance of her countenance upon him; undemonstrative as he was naturally and habitually, there was, as he answered, an impalpable something mingled with his courtesy which Alice felt rather than saw, whose existence she attempted to deny even to her own consciousness, but which, nevertheless, helped to rouse within her the growing storm. Thus she rode on; poor, weak human nature desperately holding to a falsity.

Their ride proved a long one. For mile after mile they went on, through woods, along roads, by the river-side, anywhere and everywhere their fancy dictated. Long restraint added such zest to their enjoyment, that when at last they turned their horses' heads homeward it was reluctantly and under protest.

As they neared the entrance of the park they were joined by a party of gentlemen from one of the neighboring country-seats, who had ridden over to say good-by before leaving for New York the next morning.

After the usual salutations, and a few words relative to their proposed departure, they left this trio and several detached couples in the rear, to join the majority of riders at some distance in front. The lingerers dallied long in the sunshine, even after the rest of the party had dismounted and entered the house. The sunshine was too grateful to leave, so garden chairs were placed upon the lawn, that its freshness might be fully enjoyed.

"Verily, Max Crampton," said one of the young men, "your lines have fallen in pleasant places, and yours is a goodly heritage, of which I could find it in my heart to envy you."

"My heritage certainly wears its brightest, most enviable look to-day," Max answered, a little slowly; and with the end of the sentence his glance reached the landscape. At the beginning of the words it had rested upon his wife's face. The health and happiness which, for the present hour, there rose to its enfeebled flood-tide, carried upon its swell both the man's passion for the present and blind, false hopes for the future. The face, as it looked now, seemed to obliterate, not only from his memory, but even from his comprehension, its appearance as he had seen it the night before.

"Rain-awakened flowers," rejoined Frederick Hastings, answering the apparent meaning of Max's words.

"It might even be the garden in which the sensitive-plant grew," said one, as if called upon to trump this last speech; there is also a

'Power in this sweet place,
An Eve in this Eden; a ruling grace
Which to the flowers, do they waken or dream,
Is as God is to the starry scheme.'

And he bowed low to Mrs. Crampton.

The lady gave a quiet, rather careless smile in return; too well accustomed to the speaker and his idiosyncrasy to be at all discomposed at the extravagance of his compliment. But the smile lost its carelessness, almost its existence, as she heard just above her Frederick Hastings's voice, speaking rather low and saying, "You should have gone on to the next verse; that is even truer."

It was not in the nature of the young man to resist; he eagerly caught up the strain and gave it voice.

"A lady, the wonder of her kind,
Whose form was upborne by a lovely mind,
Which, dilating, had moulded her mien and motion
Like a sea-flower unfolded beneath the ocean."

"Go on! go on!" nearly every voice cried out as he finished the verse. Again the young man was weak before temptation, continuing through the whole of the second part of the poem, until he came to the last verse.

"This fairest creature from earliest spring
Thus moved through the garden ministering,
All the sweet season of summer-tide;
And ere the leaf looked brown — she died!"

They were all familiar with the lines, had known perfectly well what was coming; but as the last word fell upon their ears with its personal application, a slight chill shivered through the company, deepening as it well might in passing over at least two of them. It struck even the speaker, confusing him not a little. He had fully expected a chorus of admiration to begin as soon as his solo finished; its non-appearance disconcerted him; especially as he was conscious of not having afforded the party the soothing or agreeable entertainment he or they expected. So after a moment or two of, to him, rather embarrassing silence, he broke through the constraint by passing from the defensive to the offensive, and saying: "By the way, now that I have done my share towards the general entertainment, it strikes me that some of the rest of you might return the favor." He thought it best to assume high ground; taking their gratitude and obligation as a matter of course, and making his demands accordingly. "You, Max, properly, as host, you ought to have led off. What have you got to say for yourself now to make up for it?" "My dear fellow, I hope you don't expect sentiment from me," Max rejoined, in a hard, dry tone. The beauty of the poem and the application had touched him nearly, and its end shaken him so far as to produce this invariable result.

"Well, no, not exactly sentiment," laughed the young man in reply. "I am aware that is not precisely in your line; nevertheless, I am not going to let you off without something in the way of poetry, if it be only a single verse. No, nor any of you," he added; "so you may prepare yourselves. Come, Max, you might as well make up your mind to begin, for you will have to come to it sooner or later."

Curious to see what selection he would make, Miss Weston, Jack, Bertie, and Frederick Hastings strongly joined in the attack; until Max began to perceive, in his case at least, the old proverb had come true, "The longest way around was the shortest way across." Judging by his manner that they had carried their point, they stopped talking to give him a chance to do as they had asked.

"If you are like the Norsemen in Hypatia, and care for nothing but 'cool sagas,' I am afraid you will be dissatisfied with what I can offer you," Max began. "My specimen is open to Pelagia's reproach of being 'all about stupid right and wrong'; but you must make the best of it, as it is all I am going to give you." And he went on:—

"Thy lot is appointed, go follow its hest;
Thy journey's begun, thou must move and not rest.
For sorrow and joy cannot alter thy case,
And 't is running, not raging, will win thee the race.'"

"Very well indeed, and just about what we might have expected," the first speaker blandly remarked, with a most patronizing nod, as soon as Max's voice ceased; enacting his customary part of poetic censor.

Alice was beside Max, and as there was evidently nothing more to be made out of him, they fell upon her as the next victim. The girl had been sitting silently by, a dreary listener, if indeed a listener at all. Except when Frederick Hastings had spoken, she had scarcely heard a word. She was thinking of other scenes like this, in which her part had been played with such different feelings. Her scrutiny of Mrs. Crampton and Frederick Hastings had brought no definite result, but it was sufficient to fill her with undefined, though she still resolutely believed, causeless despondency.

"You must let me off. I can't remember a single line," she said, rousing herself wearily and speaking as a sick, tired child might have done.

"Why, Miss Alice, I should think your favorite Locksley Hall would rescue you from such a dilemma. I know you have every word of it at command."

As Frederick Hastings, for it was he, addressed her, with his pleasant voice and smile, the girl glanced up quickly, looking as though clouds had parted and a sudden ray of sunshine struck across her face. He had barely finished his sentence before, as though moved to it by an impulse beyond her will, she exclaimed,—

"Comfort! Comfort scorned of devils. It is truth the poet sings,
That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things!"

The emphasis and passion with which she uttered the words,—passion not loud, but low, deep, and concentrated, with a vibration through it of something almost fierce,—took her hearers a little aback. They occupied the momentary silence that followed with

looking at her in some astonishment. To judge by the expression in Frederick Hastings's eyes, it seemed probable his suggestion had brought forth unexpected fruit.

If Miss Gertrude's attention had not been diverted, her decided impression would have been that the purpose of her morning's talk with Alice was being rapidly accomplished. But Miss Weston was intent at that moment upon what she considered far nobler game. It was a custom with this lady to choose for her inspection that one of the surrounding objects which offered the greatest prospect for entertainment; in fact, never to hunt small deer when larger prey could be pursued. In this case she had been watching Max ever since they had been sitting there, noting each indication of word and manner, and approximating to its real meaning with her ever-increasing accuracy. Her interest in all this quite swallowed up her consciousness of poor Alice and her affairs, though in the morning they had afforded her considerable excitement.

As for the girl, she, after her usual fashion, had passed out of her fit of excitement as instantaneously as she had entered it; and was now sitting in the same languid, weary attitude, wearing the same dull, absorbed, purposeless expression as before she had spoken.

Miss Gertrude had been sitting with her face towards Max, slightly turned away from the rest. When addressed, she looked round at the speaker with an expression singularly unfamiliar in that face. Unlike their usual haughty brilliancy, there was now in the eyes a troubled sadness, a grave pity, that stilled and chilled away their merriment.

"Did you ever see," she said, slowly, following out her own idea in calm indifference to whatever theirs might have been,—"did you ever see an old English poem, by Henry King, Bishop of Chichester, addressed to his dead wife? I have not thought of it for so long, I have nearly forgotten it, except this one verse:—

'Stay for me there. I shall not fail
To meet you in that narrow vale.
For, hark! my heart, like a soft drum,
Beats my approach, tells thee I come;
And, howe'er long my marches be,
I shall at last lie down by thee.'

"Whew!" ejaculated the first speaker, under his breath, to Jack, who happened to be his next neighbor, "very pretty indeed, and all very well in its way; but I do wish we could avoid being quite

so funereal. The first thing I must do, was to stumble upon a death, and here is Miss Gertrude introducing another corpse into the conversation. I would enter an open protest if I were not afraid of bringing down a storm upon myself and cutting off all the further resources of the company. Now I am going to try Miss Bertie, and I will wager you a hundred to one that she will serve us in the same way." And he forthwith fulfilled his word.

The girl looked up with a quick smile into Mrs. Crampton's face, and seemed to make a suggestion.

"Repeat it aloud," they heard the lady answer.

And Bertie repeated it. It was a single line from Mrs. Browning's "Cowper's Grave,"—

"Named softly as the household name of one whom God hath taken."

As the sweet, girlish lips and voice spoke the words, there was not one of them who did not comprehend and sympathize with Jack's love.

"I told you so! I told you so!" exclaimed Mr. Sinclair, the poetic critic, in triumphant *sotto voce*. "I knew we should have another dead body on our hands, and here it is!"

But his remark was lost upon Mr. Harrington, who was too thoroughly engrossed in looking at Bertie to waste attention upon anything else. He did not wait to be asked for his poetical contribution, but gave it voluntarily, as though at the moment it were all he was capable of doing or saying:—

"Her angel face,
That made a sunshine in a shady place!"

The most beautiful expression, perhaps, in the whole length of Spenser's "Faery Queen"; and in this case no one smiled or cavilled at it as hyperbolical.

Mrs. Crampton and Frederick Hastings were now the only two who had not complied with Mr. Sinclair's demands; and as he was always chary of disturbing the lady, he tried the gentleman first. Frederick Hastings, too well-bred to evade the legitimate claims of any company he was in, proceeded to do for the entertainment of the others what they had done for his. But it must be confessed in this instance he had another motive for his immediate compliance. He longed to bring back into that cold, calm face the light and flush which only old memories could stir. Considering the temptation, let us forgive the selfishness,—let him be beaten with few stripes. If we can summon a strain of music at will, it is difficult to refrain

from sometimes touching the chords, if they lie directly under our hand.

"Do you remember," he began, addressing no one by name, but looking downward, "that couplet in Richard Lovelace's 'Farewell to Lucasta'?"

"I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Loved I not Honor more."

As he spoke the words, they ceased to belong to Richard Lovelace of two hundred years ago; it was Frederick Hastings uttering his own feeling and belief, his love and religion, with an intensity of expression rarely enough discovered by him.

Alice Harrington sat directly opposite. She now saw and heard for herself. All that Miss Gertrude had vainly striven to perform in the morning by force of argument and will was accomplished by those words and the voice speaking them. The tone was so unconscious, so involuntary, it was the voice of Nature and truth. Prepared as she had been, the effect was pure, absolute conviction.

The eyes and attention of the party were naturally resting upon the speaker; but a moment after he ceased, there was a slight stir and rustle of garments that made most of them look in an opposite direction. Alice had hastily turned before any one caught sight of her face, and was now moving rapidly towards the house.

"What is the matter, Alice? where are you going?" Miss Weston and Bertie both called out.

But they received no answer. And those who chose to watch her further only saw the hurrying figure move on under the heavy shading trees of the avenue, and pass up the wide steps to be lost under the shadow of the piazza. But Bertie was probably the only person who gave her the slightest attention beyond the first five steps; the rest were too much occupied in the nearer, more vivid interest of Frederick Hastings's quotation. As for him, he was probably unconscious of her going; the whole power of his senses was engrossed in watching the rose-flush overspreading the cheek so near him, a flush that tinged even the throat with its delicate color.

"Now, Mrs. Crampton, it is for you to complete this verbal bouquet," said Mr. Sinclair, addressing that lady with his finest manner, and taking up the thread of the conversation Alice's movement had momentarily severed.

The rich voice rang out on the instant, following its own intention, not his.

"Had I a lover
Who was noble and free,
I would he were nobler
Than to love me."

Twice in her life, Frederick Hastings had brought these words to her lips involuntarily. But this time they passed to audibility, with a new meaning, a new mission.

As she finished the lines, she rose, and, gathering up her long riding-dress, said, in the same clear tone, "I think we had better follow the good example Alice has set us. I doubt whether we shall add to either our health or happiness by remaining here longer." And deciding the matter as far as she was concerned, she passed through the circle and led the way to the house,—the others following.

Mr. Sinclair came last, with rather a perplexed, disappointed expression of countenance.

"I wonder," he said, in an undertone to Jack, as he caught up with that gentleman,— "I wonder what induced Mrs. Crampton to put us off with that ridiculous saying of Emerson's, which no woman could ever convince me she really meant or believed, if she were to swear to it until she was black in the face. There I was, preparing myself for something quite remarkable."

"Something in the 'cool saga' style, as Max would say," interpolated Jack.

"Yes," returned his companion, "and instead I am given such preposterous stuff as anybody's wishing anybody else to be nobler than to love them. Upon the whole, I am fast coming to the opinion of the dirty-faced man in 'Pickwick Papers,'—'rum creeturs is women!' Even the best of them, even Mrs. Crampton," the young man concluded, with a shake of his head.

Jack laughed and shrugged his shoulders, but declined to offer his opinion on so intricate a subject. He was perfectly satisfied with the present state of things, which was to walk directly behind Bertie Weston and watch her light figure trip over the grass by the side of her taller companion.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

MRS. CRAMPTON observed at dinner that Alice's seat by her side was empty. It reminded her Alice had not been seen since she left them in the avenue. Calling one of the servants she said, "Go and see if Miss Harrington knows we are at dinner."

The servant went, and returning a little while after, said, "Miss Alice was lying down in her room, with a headache; she did not wish any dinner, did not wish anything." And so the matter rested. Mrs. Crampton and Frederick Hastings, who heard the message, naturally concluded her ride had over-fatigued her.

The two sat during dinner with the vacant seat dividing them, scarcely exchanging a sentence. Frederick Hastings had on his other hand the same young lady who had once before secured his lengthened companionship through the medium of Hogarth's engravings and her own impudence. Accident having done for her now what her own will had before accomplished, she was evidently determined to make the best of her time; setting herself to work to engross and amuse him; he, as on that previous occasion, calmly making the best of a bad bargain.

Alice's absence was on one account a relief to Mrs. Crampton, — it broke up their usual trio and exempted her from any share in the conversation. Benefited by her ride, she was, in that state of repose of mind and body which she had learned was now her only safe form of happiness. The dinner was finished with very little demand upon her attention or thoughts, even as hostess; and when she rose to leave, she still looked what she was, — tranquilly indifferent to whatever surrounded her.

The ladies remained awhile in the drawing-room, but soon perceived the gentlemen intended to prolong their talk at the table, upon this their last night. Therefore they agreed to adjourn to their own rooms in order to refresh themselves by early sleep, after their long ride. This decision soon left Mrs. Crampton at liberty, and the first thought her freedom suggested was of Alice. She would see how she was, whether there were anything she could do for her, or if she would like her companionship. Passing quickly up stairs and

along the hall, she knocked at her door. There was no response. Again she tried to arrest the attention of its occupant, but with the same result.

"Asleep, probably," she said to herself; "I will not disturb her." And she descended again to the lower story.

Going down the long hall with the intention of returning to the drawing-room for a book she had left there, she passed the open door of her cabinet. The room would have been dark but for the glory of the moon, whose rays streamed through the long windows, striping the floor with broad bands of light. It looked so peaceful and quiet that she gave up all other purpose instantly, and entered, closing the door behind her.

The piano stood open, and from old habit she sat down before it. Not to play, only to fold her arms on the music desk and lay her head upon them, as she had done so many hundred times when a tired girl weary with practising. The grandest music and poetry of the world lay strewn around her; but she gave them little heed, her thoughts were engrossed elsewhere. There was running through her brain a fragment of an old hymn she had heard her father sing at family prayers, in her childhood:

"For strangers into life we come,
And dying is but going home."

She had never seen the words in print, and so entirely were they connected with her father, she seemed to be listening to his voice repeating them rather than to memory.

They bore a new meaning to her now.

This entire summer had been spent in such immediate conflict with herself, such incessant struggle for hold upon duty and truth, she found no time to think of what even a day might bring forth. Besides, her whole life had been so marked by singular alternatives in both physical and spiritual strength, that she had ceased to regard them as anything serious, had learned to look upon them as constitutional and transitory. But for the last month or two there had been growing upon her a consciousness that she had never before been in the same state as now, that her life's spring had never been bent so low, that her grasp on existence was weakening day by day. This conviction assumed for the first time the form of definite thought, the night before, as she looked at Max as Mephistopheles. The refuge it had then presented would have convinced her will if not her brain.

What could such a prospect bring to this weary woman but a

nearer surety of rest and peace? "*Until death do part us.*" Since that night in Italy she had known this was the one solution to her life's tragedy. Since Frederick Hastings's coming, when the sharp struggle of the present had left her the power for one second's thought of the future, she had seen more clearly than ever the only way out of the dark labyrinth in which they seemed lost was the road that ended in a grave.

Now she saw that grave was to be her own. Knowing this, she could lie there like a tired child and listen to that old strain sounding through her father's voice, —

"And dying is but going home."

She lay still and quiet, her head resting upon her folded arms, until the changing position of the moon threw its bewildering beams full upon her face. Then she rose slowly and walked to the window through which the light flooded. Opening the glass door, she breathed the fresh night-air. The demand for it seemed to grow with the supply; the rustle of the wind through the trees invited her, and she answered by throwing a shawl about her and stepping through the window out into the same avenue where they had sat in the morning.

She walked slowly under the trees, looking up to the resplendent heavens, content to breathe the air and feel it lightly lift the hair upon her forehead. She had proceeded a short distance when she heard close by her a quick, sharp sound that startled every nerve in her frame. Stopping instantly and glancing hurriedly round to ascertain the cause of her fright, she saw upon the other side of the avenue, just in a line with her, on the spot where she had sat a few hours before, the form of a woman prostrate upon the ground. Her body lying upon the cold stones of the walk, but the face and the clenched hands pressed down on the garden seat; and the whole frame convulsed with deep sobs, strong enough it would seem to part soul and body. A second glance at the figure, beautiful even in its grief, showed her plainly who it was.

"Alice!" she cried out in horror, hastening to her side, "what is the matter? why are you here?"

A tearless, gasping sob, which seemed literally to rend the slight form, was the only answer.

"For your own sake, for Heaven's sake, get up from these cold, damp stones! You will die if you lie here!" the lady's terrified voice exclaimed. And coming a step nearer, she laid her hand on her shoulder to coax or assist her to rise.

The girl started as though the touch had burnt her; and dashing up her head, raised her arm and literally struck away the hand.

Mrs. Crampton stepped back in terror before the gesture and the sight of the ghastly face raised towards her.

"How dare you come here? how dare you come here?" burst from the white lips, in a voice husky and broken with passion. "You of all women in the world. Have you come back to the scene of your triumph and my despair, to gloat over the memory of it?"

The lady stood dumb; fear and amazement taking away all power of speech. "Was Alice mad, or had she herself lost her senses? What could this raving mean?" were the thoughts that rushed confusedly through her bewildered brain.

"You may well come back to this place, you whom he adores," the passionate, thickened voice essayed to utter, — to this very tree where he leaned when he said — "The words ceased, another fearful sob had torn the rest of the sentence from her lips; and the girl seemed actually to grovel in the dust, as one after another its fellows shook her like convulsions.

Her meaning, the meaning of the whole scene, burst upon Mrs. Crampton. She stood as one stunned.

"I might have known this would be. If I had not been so absorbed in bearing my own pain, I might have foreseen this would certainly come," she murmured bitterly to herself. "But what could I have done to prevent it?"

A moment more passed before she moved. Then she stepped back to the girl's side.

"Alice," she said, again laying her hand on the girl's shoulder and keeping it there, though again she strove to throw it off, "I have something to say to you, to which you *must* listen."

She seated herself upon the rustic bench, and, stooping, partially lifted the girl's slight form in her arms, laying the fevered head upon her lap. For a moment there was a sharp, almost savage resistance; but it lessened and then ceased. The kind, firm arms helped and comforted the agonized heart and frame in spite of themselves.

"Now look at me and see the truth of what I tell you." And raising Alice's head, she forced her to fix her eyes full upon hers. It would have been hard to tell which of those faces was the whitest, or which eyes were most destitute of hope for this world. "That there exists between Frederick Hastings and myself a constitutional affinity, which I have no power to break, I do not attempt to deny. But when I tell you, except upon one occasion, — when he learned

his total mistake, — no word or thought of love has ever passed between us, I state a truth which you *must* believe."

She spoke the words as though they were dictated by some superior force, and as if the essence of her life-history were distilled drop by drop through her lips. Such conviction as each syllable expressed could never be simulated, and the listening girl took in each shadow of meaning in word, voice, and manner.

There was no need to raise the prostrate head now. She had started to her knees, with a face of such uncontrollable joy, that Mrs. Crampton shrank back scared at the effect of her own work. A fear, lest she might give the girl her most fatal wound by administering false hope, struck through her. But before she could attempt to repair any such injury, Alice's own perception seemed to have done it. A single sentence, however strong, could not stand long against what she held to be the evidence of her own senses. The light in the face had faded into black darkness when it again sunk down, and from the lips these words came with almost incoherent despair: "Emily, Emily, think of what I myself have seen, think of what this very spot has witnessed, and tell me how can I believe what you say? What can I think but that —" She could not put it into words, and the sentence died out in a wailing murmur.

Then there was dead silence for a little while, broken at last by Mrs. Crampton's voice, speaking with the same low, deep emphasis as before.

"Think nothing, Alice. If you were to spend your life in attempting to explain what you imagine you have seen, you could reach no nearer the truth than you now are. You are touching the edge of a mystery in nature, which even I, its centre, have no words to define, have no control over beyond the weakest endurance, — but by the honor of every life and soul involved in its power, I have told you the truth, and you must believe it."

Again the rustle of the leaves and the sighing wind were the only sounds that broke the stillness. Then, so low that it could scarcely be heard above them, could hardly be distinguished from them, the faint murmur of Alice's voice came stealing up towards Mrs. Crampton.

She bent down to catch the words.

"Emily," she was saying, with such an unutterable vibration of love and hope pulsing through her tone that the lady could scarcely believe it to be the same voice she had heard five minutes before, and listened eagerly for the words as they came, — "Emily, tell me;

if all this be true, — if, as you say, his heart be still free, — tell me, you who know him so thoroughly, if he might not — not now, I know, but at some future time, no matter how far off — might not come to love me."

The sentence had slowly dropped in soft, confused fragments upon her ears; but as she comprehended its meaning, Mrs. Crampton raised herself suddenly and sat as if searching for some answer to such a question.

What she feared had come to pass. The girl had extracted the sweet poison of delusive hope contained in the healing potion she had given. She must instantly destroy this hope as she valued Alice's future happiness. Understanding Frederick Hastings fully, knowing from what her own power over him was derived, she saw nature barred every step of the way by which Alice would strive to attain even the smallest portion of his love; she saw it would be kinder to strike her dead upon the spot, if need were, than to let her take the first step on this road whose end she plainly perceived.

But how could she tell her! Heart and flesh shrunk from the task. She knew the girl had allowed false hope to steal for the second time into her heart, and its final death-struggle would be even more unendurable than the first pain.

In vain she sat striving to frame a fit answer while Alice lay motionless, awaiting the word that was to seal her fate, listening as though her whole frame were a single nerve, and every faculty of her being merged in the one sense of hearing. As moment after moment passed, human nature could endure it no longer. Believing, yes, knowing that her whole future hung upon the woman's decision, (so perfect was the faith in her truth,) she could not patiently bear the torture of this lengthened hazard of the die. Turning her face slightly, she looked up. The demand of those hungry eyes was not to be resisted. One sentence must do the work, and it was spoken.

"Alice, I think not."

The girl lay at her feet as though a bolt from Heaven had stricken her.

"My child! my child!" Mrs. Crampton almost shrieked, as she again raised Alice in her arms with such pity and love, with such wealth of tender caresses, as could scarcely have been exceeded were she indeed her own. But for a time her utmost efforts were useless; the girl seemed petrified by hopeless misery, and words were powerless to rouse her.

"Alice, you *must* learn to live through it!" Mrs. Crampton's pas-

sionate wail broke over her. "A woman, born into this world, how could you dream of escaping the sorrowful weight of woe life brings? There is no way of escape."

She had stirred her at last. She was speaking with a dull, levelled voice, as though the petrification had partially extended to its tones.

"There is one way, — to die."

As she heard the words, terror gleamed up in her listener's eyes. "Suicide! was that her meaning?" Knowing the uncontrollable nature with which she was dealing, she could hardly calculate to what extremity this excitement might carry her; but her fear gradually diminished as she saw that the intense and continued pressure of misery had made her numb and cold. The active violence of her grief was dulled.

"If you could go home to God and be at rest, knowing what I do of life, I — could not say no," the lady answered at last. "But we cannot die. We live until our cup of suffering has been filled and drank; you must learn to live and endure." Speaking the words, her voice trembling with love and sorrow, she drew the girl closer to her beating heart, as if to impart some of its own patience and strength, faithfulness and courage.

But Alice coldly disengaged herself and turned wearily away.

"Go away," she said, in the same dreary tones; "what do you know of suffering? how can you teach me to bear my pain? What feeling can we have in common, — you to whom everything in life has been given, and I who have nothing?"

"Everything which is nothing, and nothing which is everything!" burst from the deep, tried nature of the woman, and passed through her lips before she was conscious she had spoken. "Child," the words hurried wildly on, impelled by an almost fierce bitterness, "do you dream the misery of this terrible world could exhaust itself upon your one heart and life? Recollect, you are still free! Do you hear me? do you know what that word means? Learn now to bear your own burden; it will demand your utmost capacity, and don't try to measure and weigh that of others, whose very reflection would annihilate you."

The broad, swift current of her roused nature broke down the girl's dull apathy. She was looking at Mrs. Crampton now with a painfully eager expression in her face.

"Emily, do you, whom I thought so happy, know anything of pain? Can you really pity and help me?" she exclaimed, with that

awful craving for companionship through unknown darkness, whether material or spiritual, which possesses weak humanity.

She again waited long before the answer came. Already the moon was sinking and the avenue was growing dark; but it seemed to lose some of the light it still possessed as the lady's voice broke the silence, — a voice sunk utterly from its late passionate swell.

"Alice," it began, with the concentrated, measured emphasis she had previously used, "it will convince you at least how I love and pity you, if not of the help I can give you, when for your sake I compel myself to say what I thought would never pass my lips on earth. Yet I would come back from the grave to perform this duty if I could, and I do it now under a seal of silence equally sacred. You have heard of shipwrecked men and women drifting on the ocean, dying of thirst, with the world of waters around them. Such a shipwreck in life have I suffered, such a gradual death have I been dying through every hour of this summer. But worse than this —"

The voice had lowered, deepened, and now stopped. When it again fell upon the keenly listening ears, it had sunk almost to a whisper, was so nearly suffocated, it required the whole force of her attention to distinguish the words.

"Two long, weary years," it said, and by a strange prolongation of the words seemed to drag them out to the centuries they had been to her, "a spiritual form of the old torture, binding a dead body to a living one, has been upon me: I have been fettered by clankless, invisible chains."

The whisper died out into the stillness it had scarcely broken, and the silent darkness seemed to close over the bowed head like a pall. The girl kneeling before her, with her arms resting upon her lap, felt with terror that the whole frame was trembling, shaken by some internal conflict. Accustomed to rely upon her strength and composure as upon a foundation of rock, to watch it now totally give way, gave her a shock and a conception of suffering no words could have conveyed. It so shook all her preconceived ideas, that for the moment her own sense of pain was swallowed up in fear and amazement at the other's agony.

But Mrs. Crampton was conquering herself rapidly. The trembling ceased; and though for a long while the hands still covered the face, all other signs of emotion disappeared. When at length she raised her head and looked full at the girl, her eyes were not only quiet, but a deep, sweet peace shone from them; such as had been

there earlier in the evening, when she laid her weary head upon her folded arms on the music-desk.

"And yet through all this, Alice," she said, slowly, "I can still, thank God! believe in His perfect love and mercy. My darling, our faith is worth very little until we say truly, 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.'"

"Can you really say this?" the girl exclaimed, with breathless eagerness.

"Yes. It is not hard for me to believe the Love that could die for us is still mighty enough to send us sorrow, affliction, death itself, and whatever in His Wisdom He knows to be necessary for our purification. In this faith I walk on to the end, confiding all things to Him. My hard life lesson has taught me this, and this I would have you learn now, if it be possible, before you know greater suffering."

"Will you help me to learn it? O Emily, let me feel your hand sometimes, as I try to walk my dreary, barren way. Let me come to you and be my real, miserable self, when I keep up the wretched farce of a peaceful face to the world."

The last words showed clearly that pride and instinct (the two safeguards a wise and merciful Providence has placed around a woman's heart) were resuming their proper power and place. Mrs. Crampton saw, whatever Alice might suffer, it would at least be endured silently and bravely, maintaining her own self-respect.

"While I live, I will never fail you," she answered. And bending down, she kissed the girl's cold forehead.

"Now, come," she said, rising and folding her shawl round Alice's chilled, almost shivering figure,—"come home and rest; gain the strength you will need for to-morrow."

She led her along, the girl submitting obediently to her will, up the avenue, across the lawn, to the side of the house in which Alice's room was situated, just over the dining-hall. The gentlemen were still at the table; the brilliant light the closed window-shutters could not entirely keep in struck across the path in front of their feet; the echo of ringing glasses, of merry, excited voices, was borne out upon the night-air. Here the girl made a violent and sudden resistance to the guiding hand.

"I cannot go back there, I cannot," she repeated with desperate emphasis. "I came away to get rid of that horrid sound," she said, shudderingly; "it almost maddened me. Emily, I heard *his* laugh."

The words seemed to choke her; her whole agony came back, submerging her in its way. But for Mrs. Crampton's support, she

would have fallen. She pleaded to be taken beyond the dreadful sound.

"Come to my room until all this is over. It is quiet there at least," said the other. And they passed round the house to another entrance, on the opposite side of the building.

* * * * *

It was past midnight, yet the gentlemen in the dining-room still hesitated to break up their pleasant circle. "I say," at length one of the young men remarked, "what a wretched idea it is, that this party, who all suit each other so exactly, must separate to-morrow!"

"I don't see the necessity for separating," answered Jack. "Why are you going?"

"Because I am obliged to. I must be in New York by the end of the week; I have important business to attend to," was the rather doleful reply.

"But there are two sides to this subject of parting," seconded one of his fellow-visitors. "It is not only why do we go, but why do you stay? You can't say it is because you are obliged to, and I have no doubt Max here would be glad to get rid of you; for you have all had possession of his house long enough to have made him repent, in sackcloth and ashes, ever inviting you to it. Suppose we go home together, Max and all of us? If you will agree to that, we will wait until Friday for you, and then when we get back to New York, we can meet as often as we choose. What do you all say to it?"

Upon the whole, the proposition seemed to be favorably received. Jack, who had the subject of leaving painfully upon his mind ever since his interview with Mrs. Crampton, the night before, caught at the idea and seconded it warmly; though he partially veiled his purpose under a strain of wit and nonsense.

Beyond giving such assurances as courtesy demanded of him, Max had remained perfectly passive during the discussion. But he heard it with a glad sense of near deliverance from torture.

Frederick Hastings, too, listened silently, but with different sensations. Their departure could only be to him the breaking up of a beautiful dream; the end of a summer, through which he had lived on, simply enjoying the happiness every day brought. The proposal of any change startled and pained him. He knew it could only be loss to him. Once back in the city, circumstances and conventionalities would combine to part them, as they now combined to throw them together. He had a conviction that the advantage thus placed within the power of her will would be used ruthlessly against him and herself.

Ah, well! there is after all a certain justice in this world; there was little need now for Alice to fly from the sound of Frederick Hastings's laughter.

Soon the party broke up for the night. As they went off to their rooms, they could be heard, in halls and upon stairways, discussing their plan with great animation.

But the two men whom it so nearly concerned gave little outward sign of any feeling of theirs, and parted with the quietest "Good night."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE next morning their plan was laid before the ladies at the breakfast-table, and the decision was in favor of their speedy departure.

At the first reference to it, Frederick Hastings (who was looking pale and grave, as though his sleep had scarcely been very sound or refreshing) raised his eyes, quietly, yet eagerly, to Mrs. Crampton's face. If his object were to discover her wish on the subject, he was but meagrely rewarded. Face or manner told but little of what might be passing within.

At length, being laughingly appealed to by Jack as to her desire to get rid of them, which he held must necessarily by this time be her predominating sentiment regarding them, Mrs. Crampton said a few courteous words as to the pleasure their company had given, and its prolongation would still afford her. But there was through her voice an almost imperceptible intonation, which gave to her words the very lie direct. To enable her to speak in such a tone, some great relief must have come in the last few moments. Through the thick darkness a ray of light must have struck. This was the unmistakable message her voice conveyed to the two men waiting for its sound.

The involuntary answer each face gave was well worth noting. Frederick Hastings's eyes drooped wearily down, and the pale, grave look deepened, as if his pulse slackened and the world grew cold.

From Max Crampton's dull eyes came one keen flash, passing the refined, beautiful face of his rival, in cruel triumph, and resting on his wife with a depth of love such as few human hearts can know.

Their departure was then definitely settled for the morrow; and from that moment it was the only topic of thought or action.

Emily's first voluntary movement upon hearing of their new plan had been to convey the news to Alice. The latter had not appeared at the breakfast-table, pleading for her absence the same headache that had served her as an excuse the day before. Many

questions were asked as to Alice's health, and much polite condolence expressed concerning her; but Mrs. Crampton was glad from her heart the girl was not within hearing or seeing to perceive that Frederick Hastings's inquiries did not come until some one else had suggested the subject, and that his regrets were then expressed in a half-absent, preoccupied way, which even his habitual courtesy could not conceal. Mrs. Crampton was too thoroughly a woman not to appreciate, without the need of experience, the exquisite torture such unconscious indifference would be to that passionate, aching heart. When, a little later, she went to tell Alice that the trial of resuming their ordinary intercourse, even for a few hours, would be spared her, she carefully left out any allusion to Frederick Hastings's questions about her or his manner of putting them.

She found her, indeed, weary and ill, and remained in her room during the whole day, except when called away by her duties as hostess. Little was said between them. The lady merely sat by her bedside, sometimes fanning her or smoothing back the hair from her forehead, sometimes quietly reading to herself; it made no difference what she did; her presence satisfied the girl. She seemed to cling to the stronger woman as to her hold on life.

"Come back, O come back soon," was her whispered entreaty whenever the other was obliged to leave her; and she faithfully answered her failing sister's cry for help.

Nearly every lady in the house visited Alice during the day, with wishes and offers tending to her recovery. But Mrs. Crampton's invariable reply was, she would be better soon, she only needed quiet; and then by a sort of courteous legerdemain gently and politely conveyed them out of the room. Even when Bertie came, which she did more than once, Mrs. Crampton said, after a while, she had better go and walk with Jack and Philip, the latter having come to the door with an entreaty to that effect. The fair, bright young face was too sharp a contrast to the pale, sad one upon the pillow, to be pleasant either to sight or feeling. Emily's instinct told her there was little room for companionship between the two. Better her calm, shadowy presence now, than the radiance of the other's sunshine.

So the hours of that day went by.

To Max they passed very differently, and much more rapidly; because through many of them he was occupied in arranging the business attendant upon the breaking up of his summer establishment; and through all he was borne on by the exciting conscious-

ness of what this going, even more than voluntary on his wife's part, meant to him.

To Frederick Hastings the hours dragged heavily; he sat until near noon, silent among the gay idlers, then he arose and left the room. They neither saw nor heard of him again until late in the afternoon, when they observed him returning with rapid strides, as if from a very long walk.

His mood at dinner had quite changed. He was nervously excited, as he had before been nervously depressed. He seemed determined to make the best of the moments so rapidly lessening; they grew precious in his sight as their number became smaller. This last evening they were to spend together while under the same roof should yield him some pleasure as well as pain, some blessing as well as heartache. Taking Alice's place at the table next Mrs. Crampton, instead of his ordinary seat, and forgetting its usual occupant as entirely as though he had never seen her, he cut the lady off from the rest of the company, and engrossed her attention as completely as though they two had been dining alone. If ever Frederick Hastings's good angel aided him, it did so then; if ever his star was in the ascendant, it ruled that night. Every beauty of mind or body, every delicate, subtle fascination he had ever possessed or been able to exercise seemed to come voluntarily and enlist themselves in his service. There was no exertion, no effort, yet he accomplished what no strength or toil could have effected.

For a little while she struggled bravely. But what could she do, what had she ever done in such a case? how could she be hard and icy, or even remember the existence of cold and darkness, with this sunshine warming every fibre of her nature? The old spell worked with the old result.

From his end of the table Max watched Frederick Hastings's action and its consequences with different feelings from those usually excited. The old, fierce passion for the woman, the old, wrathful jealousy of the man, were not dead; but, controlling both feelings, there was for the latter a sense of grim triumph, a large pity.

"Go on," he thought; "make the best of your hour; you may well do it, it is short enough. From to-morrow the tables will be turned, and you will only see her, as indeed you do now, at the mercy of my asking."

But even at that moment he knew it was an ability he had pledged himself never to exercise in his own favor. Still, the passive knowledge of his power, the consciousness of what he could do, and yet

withheld his hand from performing, could not count for nothing with him. Max Crampton was neither saint nor angel; and the sense of his dominion over those who held his happiness so entirely within their grasp, still more his sense of authority over himself, to forbear using weapons always in his hands, tempting him with their strength and keenness, was a sweet morsel in the midst of his bitterness. He had this thought, and the rapidly nearing termination of his hourly torment, to strengthen and stand by him in this fresh strain upon his endurance and patience.

But the trial ended sooner than he had hoped. The dinner over (unlike the previous night), ladies and gentlemen left the table together, declaring their intention of keeping the party perfect during this their last evening. When Mrs. Crampton rose, the whole woman changed, — expression, face, manner, as if she were suddenly awakened to herself, and the fine white mask was upon her face instantly. In the slight confusion of so large a party leaving the room, Frederick Hastings lost his place at her side, but not his view of her countenance. He knew instinctively what her next movement would be. The calculation suggested, perhaps, his first thought of Alice during that day. He knew Mrs. Crampton would take refuge with her immediately, would make her the plea for instant departure and continued absence.

He had never before openly attempted to cross her purpose of leaving, but to-night circumstances excited him. When she reached the foot of the stairway, there he was before her, his hand resting on the balustrade, his arm barring the way.

"You must not go," he said, with a laughing authority in his tone, very familiar to it years before, and looking down at her with a glance which was the expression of his voice translated to his eyes. For a second she stood still, saying nothing. She did not look up; her mind's eye saw too clearly and warned her against that. Her stillness strangely altered his mood and manner.

"It is the last night," he said, his voice sunk to a whisper; "the last night of all this happy time, — the second summer we have spent together. Let this, at least, end in happiness, in —" He stopped, pain and tenderness quivering along every word of his unfinished sentence, past and present speaking out in the tone.

He had ruined his own cause, had by his own action rendered what he asked an impossibility. She did not dare to stand there longer. She had no power to speak, but she gave a gesture with her hand, earnest as it was slight, and before it his arm lowered and

fell. She bowed as she passed him, in acknowledgment of his having made way for her, as though thanking him for some ordinary courtesy.

She did not allow herself to hurry, but went steadily on until she reached the first landing, and turning the corner was out of his sight. Then she sped swiftly down the hall to Alice's room. Entering, she found its occupant had fallen asleep. Glad of the stillness, she sat down to watch by her side. For an hour the girl slept, and for an hour she kept her post, while the grief and pain at her heart returned with sevenfold violence. She believed she had conquered herself, but the agony of that time surpassed the suffering she had known.

In all this darkness there was but one faint distant light, one evidence of dawn; how far or how near that might be she could not tell. Human nature could not endure always. "*And dying is but going home.*"

When Alice awoke, it was to find tender hands ministering to her, soft words and lips caressing her with a love and care which perhaps took their accentuation from cruel pain, remorse, and penitence.

Frederick Hastings turned slowly from the foot of the stairway, after having watched Mrs. Crampton ascend it, and walked towards the drawing-room. Passing through the door, he was too preoccupied to notice who was near him, whose figure stood just within the entrance, commanding a view of the hall. But Max saw him, and saw, too, that his late excitement was totally extinguished, that the pale, grave look of the morning had again settled down upon him.

Very pitiless were those observing eyes. "Let him suffer," their owner muttered. "It is but just he should bear a small portion of our intolerable burden."

He had seen his wife's refusal, and had read her motives far more clearly than had Frederick Hastings. Perhaps it was some perception of what it had cost her which rendered him so cruel and hard.

As their hour for leaving the next morning was early, breakfast was served in the respective rooms, and there was no reunion before the moment of departure.

Emily was among the last to come down. Alice was with her. As soon as the girl appeared there was a general movement towards her of her dear friends. During all their kind questions and remarks she retained her hold upon Mrs. Crampton's arm, that lady affording her the support of her presence, and an occasional word in the conversation whenever it seemed needed.

Frederick Hastings quietly kept his place among a group of gentlemen who were talking together and watching the carriages drive up. Neither did he give any sign of recognition until he felt his turn had come. Then he came forward. Perhaps the girl's clinging hand upon the lady's arm was not all that shook it, perhaps some of the trembling was its own; but if so, there was no evidence in the face. Alice's falling veil threw a protecting shade over whatever her countenance might involuntarily reveal. So, when Frederick Hastings said, in his pleasant, kindly way, how sorry he was she had been indisposed, and how glad to see her well again and once more among them, she answered with a few quiet words, spoken in a tone of careless, friendly courtesy, for which the strong woman at her side gave her unmeasured credit and respect.

Fortunately, there came just then a request that they should start, as otherwise they would be too late for the boat. They went down the steps to the side of the first carriage, Frederick Hastings assisting Mrs. Crampton and then Alice into it.

"Get in yourself," said Max's voice just behind him, and he eagerly accepted the invitation.

Max following, they drove off immediately.

"Put up your veil, Miss Alice," said Frederick Hastings, as he let down the window next her, "this fresh morning air is your best medicine."

It was Mrs. Crampton's hand that raised the falling lace. Alice's courage and her faith in herself were not quite sufficient.

"Nervous headaches are seldom considerate enough to leave much color," the lady said with a smile, as her hand lightly crossed the girl's cheek, giving thereby the most plausible reason for its extreme pallor.

It was at her face, not at the girl's, that Frederick Hastings was gazing; at its colorless hue, for which no convenient headache stood sponsor, or was even offered as such. And as he looked, the old, haunting fear smote him cruelly.

"Mrs. Crampton," he said presently, with an earnestness he could not get out of his voice, though he smiled as he spoke, "this rainy weather has thrown you out of your good habits of walking and riding. You must not let it do so permanently; you must take all the air and exercise you can bear. Excuse me," he continued, trying to cover with a laugh the peculiarity of his voice and manner, "but my profession, you know, gives me the right to speak as one having authority in this matter."

An instinct warned him not to meet the stern, fierce inquiry of Max Crampton's eyes. The man could have slain him for thus countenancing his own terror; that another should even suspect the existence of the fear which haunted him seemed to give it a reality he had never before granted it, and which he now endeavored fiercely to deny. He resolutely fought it off, trying to heat his cold dread and pain into righteous anger and hot hatred.

For the lady, she had only time to smile her thanks and promise to take his advice, before they were at the landing.

Their sail down the Hudson aroused them all by the beauty spread before them; but Frederick Hastings noticed by midday the fatigue had exhausted Mrs. Crampton, and her eyes had a weary, feverish haze over them, and a bright red spot came in either cheek. He was glad when the boat touched the wharf, glad that she would soon be in the quiet of her home, however much that arrival might cut her off from him, as he drearily presaged.

The boat had stopped and they were waiting for the first rush to be over. Mrs. Crampton was seated near the middle of the cabin, in a line with the door. Frederick Hastings was standing near, listening for her reply to some question he had just put, when, in looking up, the light struck sharply upon her raised face. Dr. Weston had come down to meet his daughter, and was at that moment entering the cabin. As he did so Mrs. Crampton's expression caught his experienced eye, and he stood for a second as one stunned by the ravages of these few months. He mechanically walked up the cabin, forgetful for what he had come, and was actually passing Bertie without seeing her until she called to him. Then he had not only to welcome her, but each of the party in turn. By the time he reached Mrs. Crampton his outward composure was fully regained. The only visible effect of his new knowledge was to make his salutation a little laboriously gay and impressive; scarcely the simple, affectionate greeting he usually gave her.

That night, as Bertie went to bid her father "good night," she found him sitting by his study fire, looking as though something perplexed and oppressed him.

"My dear," he said, as he drew her down upon his knee, looking rather absently at her as he put back her curls, "you have had a very pleasant time in all this ruralizing; at least you look much better for it."

"O yes," the girl replied, "it had been charming; she might well show how much she had enjoyed it, and how kind and good they had all been to her."

"You were with Mrs. Crampton a great deal of the time, I suppose," her father said, presently, after a slight pause.

"Yes," Bertie answered, slowly and rather considerably, "but not as much as I expected or is generally the case when we stay together. It was so large a party, her time was necessarily divided. Besides, she seemed to like staying in her own room, to prefer being by herself more than I ever knew her to do before."

"But when she was with you all, did you notice any change in her? was she quite like her usual self in manner and appearance?"

"No," Bertie answered, "she was often very different from what we knew her last winter; colder and quieter, even haughtier, I thought, sometimes. And then, papa, she was what *you* would call nervous, in her still way; so easily excited, and then again so easily tired."

"Ah!" said her father, slowly, and was silent for a little while.

"But why do you ask all this, papa?" his daughter inquired, wonderingly.

"O, for no particular reason," said the old gentleman, quickly coming out of his abstraction, "except I did not think her looking particularly well or cheerful this morning. You must go and stay with her, my darling, now she is quiet and out of all this bustle. I shall lend her my sunshine for a little while," he added, laughing and sending her off to bed with a merry "good-night."

But after she was gone, he apparently took up the thread of his troubled thought just where she had broken it.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

SINCE the day of their arrival in New York, three months have come and gone. The autumn has passed, and it is now winter, rapidly verging towards Christmas. There has been little change as to persons or events; each week has left its record very like its fellows.

For a little while after Mrs. Crampton's return, there was a general feeling of fear concerning her health among those who had not seen her during the summer. Some of this reached her ears, in the form of politely expressed regrets that "she was not looking quite so well as when they last saw her," and hopes that "she might improve with the cool, invigorating weather they were then having." But the lady smiled away remarks of this kind with such perfect serenity, that they naturally died out; especially as their cause did not increase with any visible rapidity, and the change ceased to strike them as their eyes grew accustomed it.

Dr. Weston contributed largely to this result. Whenever the idea was hinted to him, he developed the bear immediately, and would say: "Nonsense, nonsense; don't be getting silly notions into your heads, or putting them into hers. If you want to accomplish the mischief you think already done, you are taking the very best way by frightening her with this bugbear of ill-health."

Whatever his real opinion might be, this was the face he carried to the public. To Mrs. Crampton herself he indicated the same thing by always acting and speaking as though he considered her perfect health and spirits things to be taken for granted.

This was an unspoken decision to which Max had looked with sickening anxiety. But being upon another part of the boat when Dr. Weston arrived, and so missing the effect the first sight of Mrs. Crampton had upon him, he could get no clew to his opinion beyond what his manner had since then conveyed. As this accorded with his strongest hopes and wishes, no wonder he grasped and clung to it tenaciously. He fled from his dark fears. And in some measure his wife's outward appearance justified his blindness. The constant, hourly strain upon her being removed, she was really more peace-

ful and quiet, both mentally and physically, than had been possible during their life in the country. Her manner and appearance were less subject to abrupt changes and contrasts. If she were pale and weary now, the painful flush and vivid fever did not so regularly return.

This change in no degree deceived the person to whom it all related. She knew the flowing out of the tide of life might momentarily retard or quicken, but in reality it was falling, falling, and its lowest mark could not be far off. She gave no outward sign of her knowledge, quietly acquiescing in the manner of those around her; though her heart failed as she thought of the time when they, too, must learn the truth.

She would have found it impossible to blind Frederick Hastings's clear-eyed experience, except that he now saw her comparatively seldom. But his faint perception of the truth was a black shadow that darkened over his life, and shaded the very sunshine. His presentiment, that upon their return to the city he would find himself separated from her, had proved correct. He met her constantly in large assemblies, at evening parties, at dinners, the centre of crowds of gay, witty, distinguished people; but had she been an empress seated upon the throne of her realm, and he the merest observer of her splendor, there could have been no deeper gulf between them. Although, like all their summer visitors, he had the privilege of dropping in at all hours, he never met her alone; nor had he been able since their return to speak to her except by joining in the general conversation. Even then, if it were possible, it was always some one else she answered.

But rigidly calm and cold as was their intercourse, it covered now as ever a thousand unspoken words, and shook the woman's soul as she held this unflinching course; while the man's nature was stirred to a stormy power it had never before known. The bitter after-taste was coming now after the delight of the summer. It was indeed winter with them, and the flowering and bloom of his existence seemed withered before it.

With Mrs. Crampton, let the body fail as it might, while it contained that dominant spirit it should execute its will. Even when he assumed his old place at her table, he found the same cold distance between them. Here, as in a thousand other ways and places, Alice's presence was sorely missed: for the girl's place was now empty wherever she had usually been seen.

One morning, a few days after their return, she had come into

Mrs. Crampton's sitting-room. After trying to talk of indifferent subjects, she broke a slight silence by saying, a little hurriedly, looking another way as she spoke, "Emily, I am going to Boston to spend the winter."

Emily gave one quick look at the averted face, and no further explanations were either asked or given. But presently she rose, and coming to the girl's side, stooped and kissed her.

"When I come back," whispered the other, in a voice half stifled by pain, "when I am able to take up my life again, you will teach me how to use it."

Mrs. Crampton's face must have answered, her lips did not. There was a long pause, which neither cared to break; and then the girl rose.

"Alice," said the lady, looking at her with a pale, steady face, "if I should want you, should ever have some great need of you, will you come to me?"

"At any time; from any place."

And with this compact they parted.

Frederick Hastings had heard the news of her going very tranquilly. But since her absence had exercised such a powerful reflex influence on his happiness, he looked at it in a different light. Perhaps he thought of her oftener, and wished for her presence more sincerely than he had ever imagined he should do while he lived.

The life of the last three months was beginning to tell visibly also upon him. He had grown paler and thinner. Instead of the calm, rather indifferent look his face usually wore, it was now habitually anxious, almost stern in expression. Instead of the old repose of manner, he was now restless and nervous to a degree strangely unfamiliar. His life seemed to have lost its aim.

Either to leave, or to stay and witness her slow fading, powerless to aid even by his sympathy, were equal misery. The decision he could not make was suddenly and unexpectedly made for him.

Calling early one morning at the post-office, a package was handed him. He knew instantly what it was; it bore the government official stamp. Sailing orders, of course; but where would they send him? Tearing it open, he found he was ordered to the coast of China; and the vessel, which had been repairing at New York, was to sail the same day. Which was greater, the pain or relief of going? It would have been hard to decide. He himself was so stunned by the event and its suddenness, that he could not analyze his own sensations.

He hurried down the street to make the preparations necessary to so long an absence. Knowing from experience what these would be, he was not long in disposing of them, and soon stood free to arrange the one important matter involved in his leaving.

It was still morning, long before calling hours, when he turned his steps in the direction of Max Crampton's dwelling. It was not until he had reached it that the full realization of what he was about to do came over him. Then his heart failed. He found his hand trembling upon the bell as he pulled it. He felt he could not go; a vague idea came over him of giving it all up even now and staying. But it died out, and when the servant opened the door, he stood there looking so dark and gloomy that the man, who had waited on him often during the summer, asked respectfully, as he ushered him along the hall to the drawing-room, "whether he were quite well?"

Frederick Hastings gave him an affirmative answer, and passed into the room.

Max was its only occupant. He was seated in an arm-chair, before the wood-fire, apparently dividing his time between a book and his own thoughts. He put aside both when he saw his visitor, and rising, gave him his usual studiously courteous welcome.

Then they sat down within the pleasant circle of the fire's glow, which the keen air and the snow upon the ground outside made even pleasanter by contrast. But Frederick Hastings could not this morning converse. His eyes and thoughts were constantly tending towards the door by which Mrs. Crampton would probably enter, if she came at all. Max carried on the conversation. But when answers were required of the other, they were scarcely ready, and the words would sometimes hurry a little, in spite of his efforts to prevent it.

Max noted the difference instantly, as he instantly did any variation in Frederick Hastings's manner, and sharply looked for the cause, which might nearly touch him and his happiness.

"What is it now?" he thought, savagely. "Is it pleasure or pain that is stirring him so?" The old fiery jealousy flamed up. "Listening for her coming, I suppose! But I fancy, unless he waits a long while, it will, this morning, be love's labor lost," sneering and jeering mentally at his own and the other's pain.

Thinking of this, he too forgot to talk; there was a silence of some duration, when Frederick Hastings said: "I came this morning to say good-by. I have just received notice that I am attached to the S——, now lying in the harbor. We go on board and leave for the coast of China this afternoon."

Max Crampton sat staring straight before him, his face turned away from the speaker as it had been before the words were uttered. Presently he wheeled sharply round and looked at Frederick Hastings, who scarcely met his glance with composure. There was, as he gazed, a remarkable expression in Max Crampton's face; one which seldom had place there, perhaps never before, except when it had been turned towards his wife. There were traces of his late fever of triumph; but dominant over all was a strange, deep pity.

"You must not go without seeing Emily," he said, concisely. "You will find her in the conservatory." And taking up his book once more, he left him free to follow his direction.

He did so, going down the room to the conservatory, upon which it opened. The sliding glass doors were drawn back, the heavy curtains which covered them looped partially aside. He put them away to give room for his tall figure; then they dropped again, shutting him off from sight.

This conservatory had been a pet luxury with Mr. Crampton for many years, and Max had inherited his father's taste; indeed his mother's, too, for it had been originally begun for her pleasure. Unlike most of her husband's projects, it had not been cut short by her early death; but kept up with unceasing care. Since Emily's entrance into the family it had been enlarged; so it was now of a size and magnificence rarely to be met with in a private house, especially a city residence. It was like an Oriental garden. And through its spicy luxuriance Frederick Hastings made his way without finding the object of his search or any evidence of her presence. Farther on he went, still seeing nothing of her, until he came to the entrance of a short branching avenue, where the rarest flowers bloomed best and brightest.

Just at the head of it she stood, unconscious of his presence. Her noble white beauty in her brilliant dress making her appear only the statelier flower among stately blooms. Her husband delighted to see her wear that gorgeous blue robe, bound at the waist with cord of gold. He found the fabric in Damascus, and thought the color beautiful enough even for her. Her hair was gathered back plainly in a Grecian knot, as usual, but her impatient hand had brushed its waves slightly away from her face, whose soft pink tinting was a far healthier shade than was often upon it now.

"The tide is in," thought the man.

He might well stand content with gazing. She was busily engaged in one of her favorite occupations, — cutting fresh flowers to

fill the hundred receptacles for them with which the house abounded. A large basket stood by her side, and into it, as she broke their stems, she flung them lightly down. It was already full to overflowing, but still she went on increasing her store.

She was endeavoring to break a *micra phyllia* rose, such as grew round her sitting-room windows at Eichwald. But the branch was almost too high; she failed to catch it the first time, and had to make another effort. As she did so, Frederick Hastings stepped noiselessly behind her, and, reaching over her shoulder, said, "Let me pull it for you."

Her arms dropped in a second, and the spray came off in his hand. Then, with a breathless hurry in her manner, as though striving for deliverance from some danger, fleeing for her life, she glanced around to discover some way of escape.

"The tide is out," he might have said now; for the life current had set back with a rapidity that left her face bloodless.

There was but one path, that by which she had come, and he stood directly in it. She saw this, saw she was helpless, that she must stay and hear whatever he had to say.

"I am going,—going away for years," he said, without preface, his voice very low and carefully steadied.

"Going,—going away for years," he saw her lips soundlessly repeat, as the expression of her face utterly changed and she looked wildly up at him.

This was what she had prayed for, that he might go. Yet, now her prayer was granted, did she find it a blessing or a curse? Was the news of this parting a joy and a relief? God help her,—no!

He took both her hands in his and looked down at her, but she hurriedly caught away one of hers and pressed it, it seemed unconsciously, to her side.

"I am come to bid you farewell,—a long farewell," he said.

The full significance, the terrible truth of the words flashed upon both, the second after he had spoken them. Each knew this was, indeed, a long farewell, a parting for all time.

Then all earthly pain and mystery and sorrow grew trifling and faint to them both; even their shadow rolled off like a cloud from the woman's soul; and upon the face she now raised so calmly towards his the light and peace of that heaven towards which she was so fast journeying seemed already shining, as though reflected from near glory and holiness.

"Friedrich," she said at last, with a low, deep intensity.

It was the single word her lips audibly uttered during this whole parting. She had said that its meaning was the prayer she would pray for her dearest on earth; but it was scarcely as a petition she now spoke it, it was rather as if claiming some glorious inheritance, reminding him of some great treasure they two shared, of which time and sense could never henceforth deprive them, which death and eternity would only perfect.

He entered into her meaning, and caught her spirit; some reflection of her look was on his own face, when, after a while, he said quite tranquilly, "Good-by. I say it with its best, its oldest meaning,—God be with you." And pressing her hand once more he turned and left her.

A moment or two after, Max, still waiting in the drawing-room, saw him enter from the conservatory, pass into the hall through one of the lower doors and so out of the house, the spray of roses still in his hand.

A little later, his wife came out through the same way and passed on up stairs; with a face so white and yet so calm, Max Crampton scarcely knew if he had seen her walking in the flesh.

A few days after, Max, going into the conservatory, found the basket of withered flowers where she left it. He took it up and carried it to his own room. There it stood for many years with its crumbling contents undisturbed. He might well keep them, they were the last flowers she gathered upon earth. From that hour she never entered the conservatory.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

FROM that day a change came over Mrs. Crampton. The very conflict and struggle of her previous life, surely as it was eventually destroying her, for the time being kept her vividly alive. But since the necessity for effort had been removed she seemed gradually sinking into total passivity, to be letting herself float away on the current of time and circumstance, without even catching at a straw to prevent it. When the new year had fully opened, January come and nearly gone, the change became very striking, — not only to Max, but to his father also.

Mr. Crampton, easy and unsuspicious as it was his nature to be, could not avoid seeing that his daughter had seriously altered. During the summer he had no chance for anything like minute observation, even had he been the man to make it. But now a perception of the contrast forced itself upon him. Doubts and fears as to her health had for some time been silently, but sorely, troubling the old gentleman. One day he said to Max, a little cautiously, "I am afraid Emily is scarcely as strong and well as she used to be. She strikes me very often now as looking pale and languid. Of course it is nothing serious," he added hurriedly, "still I thought I would like to know what Weston thinks of her. I shall ask him to drop in some quiet morning in a friendly way, and make his observations without annoying or frightening her. He will be able to satisfy us; and, no doubt, prescribe something which will quite restore her."

"If you have no objection, I would rather speak to him myself," said Max, quite steadily.

"Certainly not," rejoined his father. "I am perfectly satisfied with any arrangement, so that our minds are set at rest on the subject."

And as his son got up and left the room a moment after, this agreement seemed fixed upon.

Going down to Dr. Weston's office that afternoon, Max frankly made his request in his own name, asking too that it might be executed in the way his father had suggested.

Consequently, one morning he drove up to Max's dwelling, and, dismissing his carriage at the door, asked for Mrs. Crampton. He was shown directly into her sitting-room. The greeting between them, and the conversation of the next half-hour, was much as usual in their constant, familiar meetings. This pleasant flow of words and smiles had gone on for some time, and still Dr. Weston had found no opportunity to bring the conversation to the real object of his visit. His aim was to let the subject of her health come in naturally, as though it were the suggestion of the moment. But the longer he waited, the harder he found this to do, without alarming her by his abruptness, and so giving her the very idea of danger he so much wished to avoid. His own knowledge of the truth made him far too painfully nervous to approach it with even simulated ease, or speak of it lightly to her to whom it was a question of life and death.

He had asked her some question about her school, and the answer was necessarily a slightly lengthened one. As she spoke, he sat looking at her, apparently listening; but her words grew rapidly mingled and confused to him, their meaning overpowered by some bewildering trouble, of which his face was giving evidence to a degree he was too absorbed to be conscious of.

The lady ceased speaking; but he had not time to change his position or expression, when, looking steadily at him, she said, "I know it; I have known it for a long time."

Dr. Weston started. "What do you know?" he asked, with a hurried, miserable attempt at gayety; trying to persuade himself he did not understand her.

"That I am slowly dying. The end is fast coming; for me this world will soon be past."

He hastily put out his hand, as though to prevent her from finishing her sentence; had tried to interrupt her with some vain denial. But the calm, grave conviction with which she ended made his effort die like some weak impertinence.

"Child," he broke out instead, with an irrepressible demonstration of grief, "why will you let it be so? You are dying, in part, of that fatal disease to a woman like you, — a want of desire to live. If you would fight death as desperately as you have combated other foes, — if you would oppose it as valiantly as you have the world, the flesh, and the devil, — even now life might still be possible."

Very pale had the lady's face grown while he had been speaking; and her manner had become coldly reticent, as always when any one

approached the dark secret of her life. "Dr. Weston," she said, slowly, "I am not capable of taking up my life, now I have so nearly laid it down; it does not give me the ability or wish to prolong it one hour beyond the time when a merciful God will release me. You are talking of what you necessarily know nothing."

"Dear child," he said, "I have not been of the seers who see not. We of the other 'Holy Office' have no need of confessionals. At times, the open secret of the lives around us grows plain to us. I have always feared the end unless some help came."

"And I knew the end, and knew, too, that no help could come," she said, with a peaceful gravity which stilled the agitation he found it difficult to repress.

She said nothing more; so they sat until the recollection of the report he must make of his visit, and to whom, flashed upon Dr. Weston. "But Max!" he exclaimed, the word following involuntarily upon his thought.

It was she who was agitated now; it was her calm that was shattered. She was leaning forward with an imperious look and gesture. "Promise me," she demanded, "promise me you will sacredly withhold every word that has passed to-day from him; that you will faithfully keep the truth from coming to his knowledge."

"My dear," said the old gentleman, with grave hesitation in his manner, "I cannot give this pledge unconditionally; perhaps it is my duty to tell him."

"You don't know what you would do," she cried out, almost wildly. "Poor Max! it would kill him. Don't take away from him the few days of delusion he still has left."

"But he ought to know in time. Think how much more crushingly the blow will fall, if it comes with total unexpectedness. In mere justice and mercy, some one must tell him."

Her face sank down upon her hands. Presently she looked up at him with piercing scrutiny, and said, in a low, compressed tone, "Will it be soon and sudden?"

He understood her, and answered without further explanation, "Not very soon, I think; but when it comes, probably sudden."

"Then I will tell him myself; and in time to make such preparation as he may."

"You give me your word for this?" he asked.

She bowed her head in sign of assent.

"Then I promise that from me Max shall know no more than he does at present."

His whole interview had been so painful to him, and the latter part of it so trying to her, that, now he had done and said all that duty required, he closed it as soon as possible.

Rising to go, he stood by her, and, looking down at her, said, "Poor child! poor child!" in a voice shaken with love and sorrow.

"Dr. Weston," she exclaimed, looking suddenly up, with a quickened expression in her face, "I have one request to make of you, — one strong wish left on earth. If I shall never know what happiness is in my own life, let me at least see it in that of another."

He looked inquiringly, not catching her meaning until she said, simply, "Bertie."

Then he knew, and in his turn his face changed rapidly.

"She loves him and he loves her, and I know their life together would be good and happy," she urged, softly, as he still stood hesitating, making no reply.

"Perhaps you are right. I believe you are; at least, it shall be as you wish," he answered, with an effort.

Then he went away. But the kiss he left upon her forehead was as tender as it was sad and solemn.

Meeting Max that very afternoon, he told him, tranquilly, as though it were a matter about which even serious thought were unnecessary, (with his physician's look and drill standing him in such stead as perhaps it had never been called upon to do before in his life,) he had been to see his wife, according to their agreement; had found her with no organic disease, though suffering from nervous prostration; that his only prescription would be rest and quiet.

Then he changed the subject of conversation. And soon after Max went home, to share with his father the great relief of this verdict.

CHAPTER XL.

DR. WESTON was true to his word. He had long been softening towards Jack, and he now surrendered entirely and formally. Bertie's happy, blushing face would, of itself, have told Emily the practical effect of her words. But the girl did not give time or opportunity for mere imagining. She came to her immediately and told the fulness of her joy; how her father had not only consented to their engagement, but to their immediate marriage; even graciously remarking that, after so long and patient a waiting, such an arrangement was even best. A stretch of goodness Bertie could not comprehend, but which Emily did.

The wedding preparations went hastily forward; as well they might, the wedding-day being fixed for the 1st of March.

When Max was told of the new turn of affairs, he gave them his sincere congratulations; little imagining how it had been brought about, or what it signified to him. After that, he and his wife had a few moments' conversation, and arranged what their bridal gift to the pair should be.

From that time forth, whenever Mrs. Crampton went out during the day, (it was growing to be a far seldomer occurrence than heretofore,) it was apt to be alone; and it was noticed her errands seemed very often among house-furnishers, singularly often for one whose own home was so exquisitely appointed as to admit of few additions. Also it was to be observed that her carriage waited for her, hour after hour, and day after day, before a vacant house Mr. Crampton owned in one of the pleasantest parts of the city. Max, whose guardian care no more left his wife in this than in anything else, would have striven to prevent her attending to it herself, fearing the excitement and exertion would be too much for her, (as indeed they were,) only he had not the heart to deprive her of the pleasure.

Alice had been informed as soon as the engagement was a fixed fact, and returned a week or two before the wedding; though marriage ceremonies and preparations were scarcely the occupations in which she would have chosen to participate.

The first moment of her meeting with Mrs. Crampton was rather a nervous one for both. But it took little time for the lady to discover, with great pleasure, that Alice had changed since they parted; she was far less excitable, and a great weight was lifted from her mind at finding the other so much more able to take care of herself, and possessed of greater resources than she had believed possible.

A few days before the approaching wedding, Emily said to Bertie "that she and Max would be glad to have Jack and herself ride with them the next morning." The girl assented without asking questions; and the next day early, as they had agreed, the carriage was at Dr. Weston's door.

They had driven but a short distance, when the carriage stopped at the vacant house before which it had been so often drawn up during the past month. From its curtained windows and pleasant, well-kept appearance it now had an effect of being vacant no longer. Here Max got out, and asked them to do likewise. Two of them complied rather wonderingly. They followed him up the broad front steps. He opened the door and ushered them into the house, saying quietly, "Miss Bertie, here is the box of sugar-plums I have always promised you for a wedding present."

They both understood what he meant, but their gratitude could find no words; so Max went steadily on, they walking after, up stairs and down, through every room of the exquisite home he had provided for them, and Emily had arranged with such care and taste. Nothing had been forgotten in this labor of love, nothing omitted that could add to its comfort and beauty. To give the house, on this their first view, a homelike look, bright fires had been lighted in the grates, and sweet flowers bloomed in every vase; flowers from Mrs. Crampton's conservatory, although *not* gathered by her own hand. They went on silently until they had been over the whole house and had returned to the hall from whence they started.

Bertie was the first to try to speak; but her words came thick with gathering tears. Jack assented to what she attempted to say, with a voice wavering dangerously between laughter and tears, though resolutely attempting the first. And catching Max by the shoulders, he whirled him off down the hall into what was intended, upon the whole, I suppose, as a new and brilliant improvisation upon the old idea of shaking hands. During this performance, Bertie fell to kissing Emily as though she had never done so before and was making up arrearages.

And so there went off, in the queer reactionary direction of a

general laugh, emotion which, if it had followed its first impulse, would have forced for itself a decidedly serious expression.

The day after, the marriage took place. The ceremony was over, the wedding-breakfast had ended. If good-will and good wishes could insure happiness, the future life of this pair would be one long scene of love and peace. Then came the farewells. They were to leave immediately upon a bridal tour.

Dr. Weston, with his resolute ignoring of his personal feeling, turned a bright, encouraging face on his daughter, even when he gave her his parting kiss, unclasping the arms that clung so tenderly to him, and putting her in the carriage with his own hands; he never faltered for a moment in his delicate self-forgetfulness. When she had gone, he came back into the house.

In the hall stood Mrs. Crampton, resting a little heavily against the table by which she stood. As he passed, he put out his hand. For a moment, not only hands but eyes met; then he disappeared within his study, and was seen no more during the day. Further attention to his guests was left to Miss Gertrude, who was quite equal to this, as to any emergency.

Carriage after carriage drove off with their occupants, rapidly dispersing the crowd of guests. There was scarcely any one left when Mrs. Crampton's coach was announced. She was still just where Dr. Weston had parted with her. Alice stood silently at her side.

"Come with me, Alice," she said. "You promised to come when I needed you."

She went without a word. They drove home in almost perfect silence, as was the habit of these two sometimes when together. Each had her own engrossing thoughts and feelings, her own difficult problems to solve; and to each, the presence of the other brought a sense of restful companionship, with no shadow of restraint.

Alice sat upright, gazing out of the window; but the great shadowy eyes were in reality seeing only pictures of the mind. Mrs. Crampton was leaning wearily back, with drooping eyelids.

"My account with this world is fast closing in," she was thinking. "There is but one task left; then my work will be finished."

Alice not only went, but remained with her. She did not ask unanswerable questions; since the midnight vigil they had kept together under the dark trees, she knew Mrs. Crampton's life contained much she could not understand. She only knew now the health and strength of the other had waned with painful rapidity, and between them the knowledge that each was bearing some hope-

less sorrow was a bond of silent sympathy. In her own great need, Emily had upheld her; now she needed support, and the girl faithfully strove to minister to her. Alice did not at all realize the illness of her friend, and therefore was not unfitted for her office by terror of the future. Mrs. Crampton did not break the peaceful calm of their intercourse by unnecessary revelations. She would have no harsh interruption (except the unavoidable one) to the quiet drifting out of her life.

Dr. Weston, who was apt to drop in at the early morning or late twilight, whenever he thought he would be most likely to avoid inspection, presented no obstacle to this course. When he found Alice, he smiled and nodded approvingly, telling her privately one day, that nothing could be better for Mrs. Crampton than to have some pleasant companion always with her.

She had already grown very weak. Max could not help seeing she had given up her walks, and riding seemed, instead of invigorating, to fatigue her beyond her strength. Most of her time was passed in her own apartments, as he painfully suspected, in lying down. Even during such parts of the day as she spent with the rest of the family, (she held resolutely to her old routine,) it was generally in some easy-chair or sofa, which she left reluctantly for any cause.

One sign struck him more acutely than any other, — she had ceased attending her school. Whatever had been her other occupations, this had never before been neglected; even during her summer's absence she had provided for it, and on her return had resumed her place there. But for the last few weeks Alice had gone in her stead. Knowing the strength of her will, this single circumstance shook the fabric of false hope he had reared upon Dr. Weston's decision. Still he felt only a dread of what might come, he had no knowledge of what was already upon them.

Yet she knew the time was growing short, and that remaining duty must soon be fulfilled, if ever.

It was one of those Sunday afternoons when Alice and Philip were at the school, that this thought pressed heavily upon her. She was in the library upon a sofa drawn up near the fire, — although it was now April, the weather was still cold, — lying with one hand shading her eyes, while the other held open the place in the book she had been attempting to read. Max was upon the opposite side of the hearth, gazing into the fire in a strange, absorbed way, watching the burning wood sparkle, flame, consume, and smoulder, as though he were reading some story in their brilliant, brief existence;

when coming out of his reverie, he was startled (though he gave small outward evidence of it) to discover his wife intently gazing at him through the slight veil of her parting fingers. He grew nervous under her look, and began moving about the room as though tired of sitting in one position. But whenever he came within her range of vision, he found the eyes still following him, with the same peculiar light or rather darkness in them.

At last drawn back to the fireplace, as it were against his will, he leaned against the mantelpiece with his face half turned round from her. He observed the dead whiteness of her hand, the utter lassitude expressed in every line of the figure, and the old fear for her returned with a determination to try travel and change of scene, which had once restored her. A month or two before he had proposed it. But she had given the proposition a decided negative. As Dr. Weston's recommendation of rest and quiet seemed to indorse this decision, Max had not dared oppose him. But as she lay before him now, the likeness to what she had been previous to her marriage was so striking, he could not help making one more effort to induce her to try the remedy, then so effectual. He stepped to her side, and sitting down by the couch said, as though making some casual proposition: "Emily, have you not changed, or will you not now alter your opinion of our travelling this spring? Not to Europe," he added quickly, with an intuitive sense that there were memories and associations connected with that land whose reawakening would scarcely conduce to her restoration, "but to South America, perhaps, or to some other new country."

"Yes," she said slowly, with her clear eyes turned upon him. "I am going away, and to another country, — but not quite yet."

Whether it were more the words or the look could scarcely be said; but in a second her full meaning flashed over him. He saw as an inevitable certainty what had seemed to him impossible even to contemplate in thought. Then burst from his lips a cry to Heaven for mercy. Hitherto he had borne with stern defiance whatever fate brought him; but to-day the strong man's self-dependence was crushed, and he must call upon a stronger than he for deliverance, for mercy.

"Not that," he cried, starting to his feet and gazing wildly at her; "anything but that, anything but that."

But the answer her eyes had given him changed not. Their deep, unutterable compassion overwhelmed him; he sank down under the weight of his grief as though himself stricken by death.

For a little while she lay perfectly quiet, watching with sad wistfulness the bowed head and covered face of the man, which were horribly still. Then she rose slowly into a sitting posture and laid her hand upon his shoulder.

"Max," she said; that touch and voice had power to stir him. "There is no help, it must be borne," she continued softly, using the sentence which for years had been so constantly in her thought, so incessantly repeated within her, that it had long since become the one her lips most easily echoed.

With his nature reawakened as it were by her touch, the man looked up at the face so near him. As he did so, the consciousness that the days, even the hours, when he might look upon that beauty were numbered, that they were swiftly melting away atom by atom, with a calm regularity which no human love or suffering could arrest, — this consciousness burst upon him.

"My God!" he cried out, "what have I not borne, and what is my life of endurance worth, if it brings me now what I *cannot* bear!"

The low, deep intensity with which he spoke no language could attempt to describe. It absolutely terrified her; she sank back upon the pillows with a white, scared look in her face, her lips drawn and compressed as though from physical pain.

"And you," he went fiercely on, as he saw the change in her, — "you, whom I love so much, that to prolong even the wretched life we have lived, to lengthen it but one year, I would barter all else existence could hold; you I have slowly murdered, and if you spoke the cruel truth, you would curse the day when I first darkened your life."

"Max!" her voice arrested him. She was sitting up now with a sort of divine fervor animating her face, vibrating through every word she spoke, "I have always feared I should die and leave you believing this falsehood, to pass the rest of your life under this delusion. Standing as I do now, with the shadow of eternity fast gathering round me, with all mysteries growing plain, you will believe me when I say, that, looking back at my life, I would not have had it other than it has been. O friend! truest that woman surely ever had, you came to me when no other friend could help me, and since that time every moment has but given me stronger, higher proof of your love and truth. It is far, far better as it is. Even now I can see and feel it."

The man made no reply; her words and their meaning scarcely penetrated his stunned perception. It was not until long after that

he found they had sunk down, word for word and letter for letter, graven into his heart and brain.

Her enthusiasm and excitement died rapidly out. When she spoke again, both voice and manner had changed entirely.

"Do you remember," she said, lingering on the words as our feet involuntarily loiter over spots sacred with association, "do you remember that verse of Horne's 'Butterfly at Sea,' which we used to repeat so often long ago?"

'He dies, unlike his mates, I ween,
Perhaps not sooner nor worse crossed;
But he hath known and felt and seen
A larger life and hope, though lost
Far out at sea.'

It seems to me now as a prophecy, and a prophecy which is being fulfilled."

To see her lying there, speaking with such unwavering sweetness, was more than he could bear.

"Great God!" he broke out, "when this prophecy, of which you speak so calmly, is accomplished, must I be left to endure life? I cannot, I will not stay; I must follow you."

"Yes, Max, you will live after me," she answered, with even a serener peace than before, though under it her enthusiasm was mounting and rising like a return wave. "I know that the good God will never let the glory of that heaven, in which I hope to stand in His presence, fade and darken to me, as it would if my truest earthly friend should prove faithless. However crushing my earthly life has been, I hold to the hope of perfect peace hereafter; an inheritance I am even now in some degree possessing. And, Max, it is you who render this possible. Looking back at my short, unprofitable life, laying down its unfinished labor, I should do so with trouble and regret, but that I know, — yes," she repeated, with a triumphant faith, "I know that a stronger, better hand than mine will take up every burden and task I have left, and will accomplish it to the end. I leave all my miserably attempted work to you, with a glad certainty of the result. Even those poor little school-children; not only with the old divine meaning, but with a new human sense I say, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, my little ones, ye have done it unto me!' And then, Max," — it was strange to hear how her voice had altered with this last fragment of a sentence; she was speaking as though touching a subject on which she was afraid to allow herself further liberty from rigid self-control, — "Philip! How

could I die? how could my strong soul consent to leave this body and part from him, if I did not know to whom I left him? Take care of him. Max, take care of him," she cried, forgetting all else as the heart of the woman struggled beyond her control. "Oh, my darling! my darling!" she wailed out, as her head sank down upon her hands.

The very compression of the tone, the powerful effort she made to keep it down, only measured the agony of sorrow from which that single utterance came.

And Max must listen and comprehend. Loving her as he did, he must sit there and hear her talk of leaving him, as she might speak of some long journey, difficult of travel, perhaps, but whose end was happiness and rest; try to soothe him with a soft hand, unshaken by any real participation in his pain; and yet the very thought of that child had reduced her to this. The next few seconds were terrible for both of them to endure.

Then, as though answering her call, the front door opened, and Philip's voice sounded through the hall, laughing and talking with Alice as he came.

"Hush!" she cried, starting up as she heard him, with a desperate effort at composure, "he must not know yet."

She had hardly time for the words before he was in the room, coming gayly towards her. She tried to smile in return, but the quiver upon her lips passed strangely over her face. The next moment she had fainted.

That night Max Crampton learned what suffering life can hold, yet out of that suffering was given him a new strength.

CHAPTER XLI.

THEY were at Eichwald now. It was the beginning of June, and unusually warm weather. Flowers were everywhere blooming in such lavish wealth that the walks, arbors, and terraces were a very wilderness of color and fragrance. Soft winds were blowing, and doors and windows opened to receive them. The rolling, grassy slopes had resumed their covering of velvety green; the stately old trees were again sharing Nature's new birth, as some of them had done for a hundred years, their rustling young leaves murmuring the same song of rejoicing their fallen predecessors had so often repeated: Very beautiful were all things now, in and around that silent house.

Its few quiet occupants afforded a strong contrast to the gay throng that had filled it upon their last coming. It was here Mrs. Crampton had asked to be brought, as soon as she was able to be moved, which was not for some time after that long swoon. For many days she had been unable to rise from her bed; had lain in a dreamy stupor, incapable of thought, almost of feeling.

Both she and Max then believed the end was come.

At length she rallied and desired that they would bring her to this place. But after that Sunday afternoon further disguise of her state was impossible. She was now an acknowledged invalid; though to what extent, she, Dr. Weston, and Max alone imagined. Philip and old Mr. Crampton never dreamed her health was more seriously affected than just before her marriage, or that recovery was less certain than then.

But she and Max knew the truth; he bearing the knowledge and the hourly proof of it with a self-control and all-enduring patience which in these days had grown to be almost superhuman. Except that his old care and watchfulness were as nothing in comparison with his present attention, that it seemed to torture him to have her for one moment out of his sight; and when at times his eyes rested upon her they beamed an all-devouring glance as the thought came over him he was looking his last; except these outward tokens, there was nothing in his manner to arouse the suspicion and alarm of

those around him. So day after day glided swiftly by, and only those two knew the sad certainty growing nearer with each night.

One bright, soft evening, when the air was full of warmth, Emily, Max, Philip, and Alice were assembled in her cabinet. She had been too weak for several days to rise from her bed; but this afternoon she seemed stronger and was tempted from her room. Philip and Alice were having a jubilee over her reappearance, making a sort of triumphal entrance of it.

"Look at her, Max," said the laughing girl, as she knelt by the lounge where she lay admiring the lady with that enthusiasm for her magnificent beauty which she had always manifested, "she will presently be strong and well; she does not look at this moment as though she had been ill a week. She will soon be among us, annihilating us young pretenders, taking her place as the queen of fair women. Don't you see her crown of glory?" she went gayly on, as she smoothed the glittering hair back upon the crimson pillows.

She did indeed look radiantly lovely. Her beauty seemed to rise to its original power and splendor to bless once more the eyes of that watching, all-suffering man.

But after a little while a strange dimness and weariness crept over her; the eyes began to droop, and the features slightly to relax, as though in sleep. But the red sunlight dyed her with its rich coloring, and, if the face were growing very white, left no chance for that pallor to be visible.

"I am cold," she said at last, rather faintly.

"Chilly such an evening as this," exclaimed Alice. But recollecting the difference between her health and the invalid condition of the other, she took up the heavy India shawl that lay near and wrapped her in it.

It was singular what an effort it required from the lady to rise sufficiently to allow the shawl to be put round her. When it was done she sank heavily back.

"What shall I do to amuse and refresh my queen?" said Alice, a little nervously as she saw the exhausted state of the other, though she laughed slightly as she spoke. "*Singen will ich, kieder singen*," she added gayly, quoting from the *Ferne geliebte*. "So I will, only as I have no voice they will necessarily be songs without words."

Going to the open piano, she began softly playing. Before Max quite realized her purpose, he heard the opening notes of the *adagio* of the *Sonata Pathetique*, which Alice always connected with Emily from her love for it; but which to him bore a different relation.

The old song, with the old meaning, and that meaning now grown fearfully clear and applicable. It had always seemed to him the requiem of a brave, conquered soul; but he had little dreamed for whose spirit he should listen to it as a passing-bell.

She had played it entirely through; had uttered that soul's long trial and story in those weird tones; those last faint chords of despair or resignation had died softly out, and she would have caught it up again and poured out the strain with a passion she herself scarcely comprehended, but that Max could endure it no longer.

"Hush, Alice," he cried, in a repressed, stifled voice, "she has fallen asleep."

He was right. Asleep! "For he giveth his beloved sleep."

The sun was rapidly sinking, its color and flush had risen from the figure, but still fell upon the face, hiding a fearful secret under its veil.

"Go on playing," said Max after a moment, "but softly. I fear the sudden silence may rouse her."

Alice obeyed. She began playing Taubert's *Campanella*; but so gently and low, that the music seemed to come from afar off. The sweet strain rose and fell like a benediction upon this closed life.

And as she played, the sun sank lower and lower.

Suddenly, a faint sound not only stopped her moving hands, but checked the very course of her blood. It was not a cry, scarcely a moan, but it had in it the sound of a strong man's heart breaking. Over the dead form, his figure was cowering. The sun had gone, the veil had passed away and the awful truth lay bare before them. She heard Philip's shriek as they both sprang forward; but its terror and agony were swallowed up in the faint sound that had preceded it.

The boy's frantic effort to pass him roused the man. "Stand off," he said. "You had her while she was alive, now she is mine."

If Death and Fate had commanded, it would have been as possible to have opposed or defied them.

"Go," he said. And even with his sister lying before him, the boy did not dare to disobey. Alice led him passively from the room, and closed the door upon the dead woman and scarcely living man.

Then Max Crampton sank down by that couch, and clasped once more the one love of his existence, which life had withheld and Death alone given back to his arms. The single blow that could annihilate him had fallen, and under it he lay stricken. So through

that long night he lay, the living almost as lifeless as the dead; only the faint, flickering breath upon his lips proving the difference. Darkness and cold made little matter now to either, wrapped as both were in the shadow of the grave.

The chill, dull morning was breaking, when consciousness dimly grew upon him that some one was calling. The voice had been speaking at intervals for some time, before it had sufficiently roused him to perceive it addressed him. It was his father, who had kept watch outside of the door all night; not daring to cross the threshold, to intrude upon that mystery of sorrow; and who even now could only stand afar off and plead for leave to enter.

It awakened him to outward perception and consciousness.

He released the form, laid that stately frame softly on the pillows; and stooping, left his farewell kiss upon the marble lips and brow.

My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

That promise had been fulfilled, that peace was upon him when he turned and left her. It was still upon him when they laid her in her solitary grave, within the circle of dark trees; near the home she had made so beautiful; near the man whose devotion to her work only ended with his life.

"Bertie," whispered Jack to his weeping wife, upon the night when the intelligence of her death had just reached them, "I think the music in heaven, the new song, must be sweeter to-night than ever before, with the voice of another angel before the throne of God."

THE END.