



"CALL ME LILY, DEAR FATHER," WHISPERED THE CHILD, AND SHE KNELT
DOWN AND CLASPED HER PRETTY HANDS BEFORE HER. PAGE 310.

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BERTHA AND LILY; OR, THE PARSONAGE OF BEECH GLEN.

A Romance.

BY

ELIZABETH OAKES SMITH.

Brother John Bates, is not that the morning which breaks yonder?
SHAKESPEARE.

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Preface.

IN presenting this work to the public, the writer confesses to the faith that it will be found to possess a deeper interest than that of a mere fictitious narrative, and to contain some significant words on questions of vital import to the growth of humanity. She is conscious of having written with entire fidelity to her own highest perceptions of nature and truth, and she believes there are many noble, earnest hearts which will honor her convictions with their sympathy.

Commending to the hopeful and the wise this sincere expression of thought and sentiment, which she has gathered in the best of all universities—that of life's experience—she indulges the modest hope that there are true and loving spirits which will find therein an echo of what is dearest in their own.

Brooklyn, L. I., May, 1854.

To my Mother,

WHO, THOUGH DEAD, YET SPEAKETH,

THIS VOLUME

IS REVERENTLY AND TENDERLY

Inscribed.

Bertha and Lily.

BERTHA AND LILY;

OR,

THE PARSONAGE OF BEECH GLEN.

CHAPTER I.

I said the years with change advance :
If I make dark my countenance,
I shut my life from happier chance.

TENNYSON.

I HAVE not renounced the world, but the world rejects me ; I do not grow bitter in heart, I do not sink into apathy, I do not repine at this ; above all, I do not vex the Eternal Father with my poor egotistic prayers, made up of wounded vanity, selfish discontent, and puerile unbelief. On the contrary, I stand, as it were, poised amid universal relations, and the world goes on around me, and the starry heavens above me, and afar off, down from the very fountain of Divine love, pure floods of ineffable beauty and unadulterate truth are poured upon my upturned head—and thus I feel no isolation, no discontent, no grief. The great soul must be alone; and yet it feels a sweet, benign, lovely affinity with its kind, beyond the expression of all words,

and, as the finer harmonies are evolved in the world, mankind grow into tender relations therewith, and learn to call it—Friend, Sister, Brother.

Last night the shouts of a gay group of children came to my ear at night-fall—then I heard the easy roll of the railway train, as it slid along without effort, leaving a beautiful cloud sailing up the mountain side, and mingling with the glowing twilight; I heard the lowing of cattle amid the hills, and the lapsing flow of the river, and human voices in friendly communion; surely, I said, these are all akin, one to another; man so blends himself into the soul of nature, that there is no discord, no solitude—while *I, I am alone*; then an eagle which had been poised upon a peak above, stooped himself nearly to my feet—slowly he circled around, slowly he raised himself into the blue ether, rising and rising, now a broad, powerful wing displacing the red twilight; now fainter and fainter in the blue above, till my eyes watched in vain for his image, and only a faint thread dropped nearer and nearer along the sky, till it fell at my feet. The royal bird had loosed a pinion when nearest heaven, and the spirit of my invisible friend said take it and write therewith, it may ease thine own heart, it may comfort another's, and so I took up the eagle quill and wrote the following lines, and then this Journal:—

THE SOUL-SOLITUDE.

Alone, alone, in utmost need,
With true-soul banning evil deed,
And heart that breaks not, though it bleed.

All, all alone to solve the doubt—
To work our life-long problem out,
Casting our feeble hands about,

For human help, for human cheer,
Or only for a human tear,
Forgetting God is always near.

The loveliest face hath never brought
Its fairest look—the deepest thought
Is never into language wrought—

And beauty to the highest Art,
Slips from the Painter's hand apart,
And leaves him, aching at the heart:

And music borne by echo back,
Pines on a solitary track
Till faint hearts cry, alas! alack!

Love seeks in vain an answering tone
To that deep meaning of his own,
Known unto God himself alone.

The wine-press must alone be trod,
The burning ploughshare pressed unshod—
There is no rock of help but God,

Beech Glen is about a hundred miles from the great city of New York. The Delaware flows along amid the mountains, and the Neversink goes out of its way to make a friendly call here upon the master of waters. The Allegany Mountains have disposed themselves into an amphitheatre, leaving a plateau of no great space, but of remarkable beauty. This was a favorite haunt of the Indians prior to the advent of the white man; here they kindled their council fires, here celebrated the feast of the new moon, and the harvest of corn; and here the hunter found the returns of the chase compensated well the labor of his enterprise. A well-watered valley is always a desirable location to the savage as well as to the civilized man; the former knows that the soil is fruitful under his imperfect culture, and the wild denizens of the wood seek it to drink of the stream and feed upon the natural meadows. Then, too, there is a something in the great heart of man, which rejects instinctively the monotony of the plain, and the untutored man yields himself spontaneously to an impulse which brings him into relation with these wilder elements, as yet untamed in himself. Hence the Indian sought mountains and cataracts, and listened amid those to the deeper tones of his own heart. The civilized man seeks them from a like sentiment, but more faintly discerned amid the urgencies of traffic, and the hardening spirit of gain. Hence the Indian canoe, in the early settlement of the country, disappeared in the valley of the Delaware, and its level area gave place to the hamlets of civilization, displacing utterly the wigwam, and the simple field of

corn, as well as the council fire of the Indian. The wild deer no longer slakes his thirst in the pure waters, nor does the Indian maiden paddle her light skiff amid the shadows. Now the railway threads the valley, and girdles the mountain, and the shrill cry of the locomotive has usurped the deep melancholy voices of the woods.

The houses of the village have followed the course of the valley, now stepping out into the sunshine of the river, and now nestling under the cliffs—one row of dwellings, and the rude but picturesque church, are ranged under the bust, as one might say, of a huge mountain, which, after rising to the height of many hundred feet, divides itself into two smooth, beautiful swells, resembling a woman's breast, and thence the mountain is called the Paps. Murmuring dells, exquisite nooks, wild and rugged chasms abound in the valley. Huge boulders are found resting amid tangled vines, and stately trees give resting to innumerable birds. Occasionally in winter, a wolf, forced by hunger, penetrates the savage barrier of rocks in quest of food; or the deer, bewildered in his way, stays panting at the gateway of the glen, and then bounds adown the vale, and is lost amid the woods; but the chief animals untamed as yet by man, are the fox and the rabbit, which may be seen at nightfall, when the moon floods valley and river with her silvery light, stealing across the plain, with long, noiseless leaps, to find security elsewhere.

Altogether, Beech Glen is one of the wildest, the loveliest, and most picturesque places of a country rich every-

where in beautiful scenery. Three States of the Union claim a foothold here, at the very point where once was kindled the Council fire of the Indian. The railway threads aloof from a spot held sacred by instinct as well as tradition, and the inhabitants of the Glen see the whole world of noise and thrift pass onward with the locomotive as if unconscious of the spirit of beauty here nestled between the hills.

CHAPTER II.

His words are bonds, his oaths are oracles;
His love sincere, his thoughts immaculate;
His tears, pure messengers sent from the heart;
His heart as far from fraud, as heaven from earth.

SHAKESPEARE.

Now, I will visit Niagara, I said to myself, after years of—no, I cannot say what. But it has been decreed that I should press that chalice from which the agonized heart appeals, with the plaintive, “if it be possible, let this cup pass from me,” nevertheless, we drink submissively—and from thence no human ministry can be of any avail to us. Our course is onward, by the light of stars; we belong to the heights of Nature, and live in unseen relations. So I said, I will visit Niagara. I have toiled up mountains, and have lived ages in the brief moments that allied me to the mighty of all times. I saw Niagara years ago. It was too vast, too overwhelming. The thoughts that swelled my brain were too much for me to encounter, and I longed to be away. But now I will go thither. Now, the ocean from whence it comes, and the ocean to which it tends, are like the infinite past and the infinite future to man; and the ever hurrying rapids, hastening to the final plunge; the

maddening dread ; the wild tumult ; the spray ; the foam ; *the rainbow at our feet, or arching the clouds above* ; aye ! these typify the brief span of life, and now I will go to Niagara. I *comprehend* it. I am serene, joyous, and Niagara is now but a symbol to me. Vast and tumultuous as it is, it sinks into insignificance before the majesty of human passions.

"Let the dead bury their dead." Would that men would learn this. The reminiscent mind is a weak one. The Statesman who looks too much to the past will lose sight of the promise in the future. The Pulpit that looks backward for authority, denies the very doctrine it professes to affirm, that truth is onward. The revelations of to-day ought to put to blush all those of the times that are past, for one oracle fully understood prepares the way for one still higher.

I am alone in the world. I am neither wife, nor daughter, nor sister, nor friend, except to one poor, unlettered man, who served my family when I was a child, and he now is my only friend. No great calamities came upon my kindred, but each and all have been gathered into the granary of death, leaving me alone. My mother, my noble, my great-hearted mother, with her stern integrity, her severe religious faith, her unconquerable self-reliance, and deep spiritual intuitions, went last, God help me ! When I think of what she was, I am ashamed of myself. I should have been a Prophet ; I should have sung all night to the stars, and have caught new inspirations with the coming morn. And yet what am

I ? Nothing—nothing. I shame to say it, to feel it. Yet have I triumphed so far, that now I am greatly calm.

And so I will keep a journal of the times and seasons that will come to me, lest I, solitary as I am, decline in my pathway. I must live amid mountains and rivers, or by the great ocean. I should suffocate upon a plain. I should stagnate by a lake. But a river tending to the sea, *hastening to be lost in what is greater than itself is beautiful and significant*, and so I have come to this place, away from all my early associations, to live till my life be merged in the eternal.

Upon reaching the inn I sent for my friend. I am not ashamed to call this man friend. I should not be on any emergency, were I not, as I am, indebted to him beyond repay ; for he is upright, diligent, and carries a soul so candid that I know him to be mostly womanly in his nature, virginal, as are the pure in heart. I went to this man once, as I would go to God, and say, "hide me in the secret of thy pavilion till the storm be over past." And he did so, with a clear, calm strength, a loyalty and devotion more than human—it was the kindling of the divine within him.

When I met John True, I did not stop to think of the degree of cordiality or dignity to be assumed, but I gave him both my hands spontaneously, and held my cheek for him to kiss, and my tears flowed plentifully, and I was not sorry when he said,

"Now the Lord be praised, Miss Bertha, you have got your beauty back, and you look like no other woman I ever laid eyes on." And then we talked, not much of the past,

and I told John I would live with him, and would have rooms for myself, and make him happy, and a thriving man in the village. "I have disposed of my property, which is enough for us all, John," I said, "and now I am very calm, quite happy, John, and I can make others happy also." I saw that John wept, and looked at me as one looks whose heart aches for another, and so I talked of his own family, and said:—

"So then, John, you are married. Well, I only hope you are as happy as you deserve to be."

John turned his clear honest eyes away from my face a moment, and then answered slowly,

"Well, a married man can't in the nature of things be very happy. He's a sort of slave at the best. But he's a poor mean man that won't marry, notwithstanding. Somehow women see things in a different light from men, and I'm firm of opinion they have a nicer sight than men, but it's a worrying kind of life married people lead."

"John, you alarm me."

"I didn't speak of myself in particular, but of married folks in general. If there's children the woman's always ailing, and complains that we are monsters for causin' 'em so much sufferin'; if there isn't any children they complain contrarywise."

"But, John, why did you marry? Who did you marry?"

John twisted his huge body uneasily in his chair, an ingenuous child-like expression gathered upon his face, and now

he turned his eyes full upon mine. "Miss Bertha," he said, "it isn't the part of a man to be talking agin a woman, and that woman his wife. But, Miss Bertha, I will speak the truth candid-like to you. I knew the woman who married me would have a sort of trial in me. I'm dull and slow of apprehendin', so when I married Defiance Green, I looked upon it I did nothin' more than my duty, and a dubious kindness it was to her."

"This seems very odd, John; how happened you to marry her with such feelings?"

John was silent for more than a minute, and when he spoke his blush was worthy of a woman.

"Well, somehow Defiance took to likin' of me. She tried not to show it; but I knew it always, and knew it was my duty to be considerate, seein' as I had done the mischief. So, when I popped the question, she didn't by no means refuse me; but she's got a great trial in me."

"Why, John, I can't believe any such thing of you."

"Well, she's pious, and I'm no better than a reprobate. She thinks three times while I'm thinkin' once—so my answers and doin's always meet her'n at the wrong place. No longer ago than yesterday, I nigh about killed her with my blunders. She sets the baskets, and pails, and ashes, jist outside of the door, on a big rock, and when I find's 'em there I always knows Defy means me to empty 'em. So I comes home and finds a large kettle filled with something hot, and I takes it to the hog-pen and empts it in. Defy

enymost broke down under it. I'd thrown out all her preserved peaches, sot out there to cool."

I am glad my nature is but little demonstrative in the way of laughing, for my unavoidable smile, slight as it was, annoyed the remorseful John.

"You must have everything your own way, Miss Bertha," continued John, "but I'll tell you a little about Defy, and I know you are not the woman to quarrel with anybody. In the first place, Defy wouldn't lie nor backbite for her right hand. She took care of Dorothy, in her last sickness, and my sister said that of her."

At the mention of this sister, I laid my hand on that of John, and murmured, "She is with God and the spirits of holiest angels, John," and I wept anew, for Dorothy had been more than mother or sister could be to me. I was glad to see John weep as he did, for I had felt all along that he needed such relief, and over this common centre of interest we could both meet. At length he took from his pocket-book a letter, stained and discolored by time and accident, and put it into my hands. It was unsealed, but I did not need John's assurance that he had not read it.

"Sometimes," said he, "I did not know but I ought to read it, seeing it might ease my mind of some doubts. But she went out of her head before I could ask her any particulars, and so I've kept it here ever since, waitin' for something to turn up, and make my way clear."

"Has your wife, do you think, ever read it?" For as yet I dared not open the letter myself.

"No," answered John; "it isn't right to put a log in the way of the lame, nor a stone in the path of the blind. Defy is as good as it is in the nature of such a woman to be; but a woman that's always digging out corners with a stick when her fingers is too small, most likely carries her likin' that way into other things."

I now made inquiries respecting the place and people, and asked John what could have induced him to come to this wild region to live.

"In part," said he, "because people in the old place asked me questions, and sot and talked of the family I have loved, as well as served, from a boy, as they would talk of the heathen. No sympathy, no love-like; but only a sort of satisfaction that they had been unlucky-like."

"Nextly, I remembered how you felt about mountains, and I see a reason for it; but mostly because I found the preacher here an uncommon man in many ways. He saw you once, and his manner was such that it never left my mind, and I inquired him out, and come here to live; for I mean to bring up my children religious-like."

I felt the color leave my face at this announcement about the minister. John observed it, and answered to my look:—

"La, Miss Bertha, nobody in the born world would know you to be the same person. I've never let on that I ever see him before."

This reassured me, and renewed all my faith in the discretion of my good friend. I cannot, must not, will not

revive the past. I have hearsed it to the burial, and now the to-day, the to-morrow, is all that is left me. I will write new records upon my life, so that the past shall be as if it had not been.

CHAPTER III.

As for my wife,
I would you had her spirit in such another ;
The third of the world is yours, which, with a snaffle,
You may pace easy, but not such a wife.

SHAKSPEARE.

A FEW days sufficed to settle me somewhat in my new home. I found Defiance possessed of what might be called the imp of neatness. Nothing in the shape of stain could resist her scrubbing, except her own forehead, which was mottled with brown spots indicating disease, and which, from incessant washing and rubbing, had assumed the color of pale mahogany, and had a polish that might do honor to a table. She has a small figure, very neat and tidy ; shoulders, a little high ; lips, compressed ; and eyes, rather far apart, of a black color, those fixed black eyes that never change, but look out with a steady blackness, like beads, or mice eyes.

She met me in the middle of the room, and gave me her hand, which had a pump-handle feel about it. She did not smile in the least, but her words came out square as from a machine. Her two children were washed, and brushed, and starched, and ironed, to the utmost of those things, and of course, they looked like machines also. Each scrabbled

down from the chair on which she was placed, and ducked me a quick curtesy, and was up again in the instant.

I shall be content much with this neatness of Defiance, for "cleanliness is next to godliness," I remembered; but the next morning when I heard, before it was well light, the little hard heels of Defiance, digging, as it seemed, through the house, my heart misgave me. However, the breakfast was so nice and fresh, and her housekeeping so excellent, that I must be hard to please indeed, if I do not feel satisfied.

Accordingly I had opportunity to make some plans even before I left my bed in the morning. Defiance was cleaning a pantry adjoining my room, and as there was only a board partition between, I was compelled to hear the conversation she carried on, only slightly hindered by the noise of the scrubbing-brush. Now, I should go mad, I believe, to live where the first sounds of the morning should be those of toil, and those of discontent. I would, like Plato, be wakened to the sounds of music—I would have the first notes of the bird, the first incense of the blossom recall my senses from Shadow Land. I, who walk with God in the night time, who behold in sleep the mysteries and beauties of the very soul of nature, would greet Apollo with the music of a Memnon. Thank God, and the forecast of my parents, I am far above want, so that now I may follow the harmonies of life, and when I toil it will be joyously in aid of others.

I found that Defiance (I gathered this from what I heard

as she scrubbed the closet) was far from content at having given me the "best room in the house," and felt indisposed to "wait" upon me. "She's no better than I am," I heard her say; what was the reply of John I did not hear.

"A lady, you say," answered Defiance, "a 'born and bred lady,' well, so am I, and a married woman, and the mother of children into the bargain."

"Faugh!" I could not help to exclaim, and I covered my head in the sheets lest I should hear more.

"Any woman, every woman, can get a husband, if that is all that is wanted in the world. She has but to be tame, orderly, decent-looking, and she is a safe wife, such as careful, money-making men like; such as ambitious men, wishing neither division nor encumbrance in their career, like; such as vain men, conceited men, who want to play "Sir Oracle," like; but are they loved? When women learn to reverence themselves, then men will love and honor them. They marry for a maintenance, and men are aware of the fact, and give them this in accordance with the contract, but the heart is not so bargained for. The woman is in effect *sold* in the majority of cases. She renounces all *personal rights*, that she may be housed and fed. Good God, what degradation! What a desecration of all that is holy in womanhood. The law recognises her only as the property of her husband, and thus the defiance of Petruchio has a true legal foundation, when he asserts of his wife,

"I will be *master* of what is mine own;
 She is my *goods*, my *chattels*; she is my *house*,
 My *household stuff*, my *field*, my *barn*,
 My *horse*, my *ox*, my *ass*, my *anything*;
 And here she stands, touch her whoever dare."

Well, women are content, it may be, in this; they think it womanly dependence; they think it gentle, and refined, to be regarded as dead, except as marriage gives them an indirect existence. I look into my own soul, and there behold so many intimations of individual life, so many sweet, sacred aspirings, which come from no medium source, but direct from the Framer of my spirit, that I cannot so regard myself. Then, too, this view of myself creates, in my own mind, such a reverence for the nature of man—our Brothers, as I like to call the sex, that, I feel all the coquetries of woman, all the *wheeling* and *managing*, so predominant in our sex, as so many outrages and impositions upon the holiness of our humanity, and I see that all these arise from this perversion of our nature, through the mistaken sentiment of dependence.

But, I am an "old maid," as Defiance called me more than once, and how should I know of these subjects? Am I happy? Am I, an isolated, obscure woman, utter and entire mistress of myself, going and coming at mine own will and pleasure, expending money, buying and selling at the dictation of no one, am I happy? Yes, I am happy in all this. I believe it should be thus to the sex, in all external and pecuniary matters. I believe Love to be the *soul-need*, not

the money-getter. I believe Love should be held utterly aloof from the spirit of barter. I believe that the sexes should be entirely independent of each other in money matters. Each should hold and accumulate property, without reference to the other. It should be as honorable in a woman to amass wealth, as in a man; not for the sake of accumulation merely, but because of the privileges it ensures.

Love will find his own harmonies. He is always a poor housekeeper; therefore, it is very hazardous to put him to the purchase of frying pans and furniture, carriages and coal, salt and sole-leather. He is not a good cook; his cakes will be burned, his bread underdone. He hates kitchens and cellars, and laundries, and potatoe fields; but the June rose, the morning dew, the snowy lawn, the fresh drapery, and the dainty footfall, are his peculiar ambuscade. True, he will grow to the depth of anguish and tears, and live on despite of the sable, melancholy garments with which misery sometimes invests him; but he does not covet these, and would reject them altogether, were his nature less divine.

I question myself closely—I think deeply, upon our moral problems, and most reverently do I treat the humblest mind earnestly bent upon their solution. Do I reject marriage? I ask again and again. God forbid that I should do so. It is very sacred, very lovely, in my eyes, and, therefore, to be sustained from pure motives. To me, it seems as if the true motive for marriage, is the desire for children. But the love which may or may not result in this desire is a prior existence. I do not see why two persons, who, at present, are

all the world to each other, should wish to change their already true, pure relation, into one more external, unless this instinct of paternity have become fully developed in them. The one *soul-need* of companionship has become one embracing other, and, it may be, grosser elements.

But am I happy? I ask again. Not quite. Now, however, I am fit for happiness. Now I am *worthy of Love*. Yes, that is it; I am unselfish, I am truthful, I am courageous, I am individual, I am wise. Yes, I feel that I am all these, in a degree according to my capacities. I have sorrowed, but am not embittered. The largest life should bring the noblest love, and yet I prefer my single blessedness above all things.

As these thoughts passed through my mind, I loosened my long hair, and sat up and drew the glass to me, and took a clear inventory of my charms. A pale clear complexion, regular features, a bust and arms that I dare call beautiful, small feet and hands. "This is well," I said. "I hope never to grow old. 'Thou hast the dew of thy youth,' is the most beautiful of benedictions, and youth is in the soul."

At the breakfast I proposed that John should engage men, and build upon the side of his house a new wing, and I drew the model of my rooms at once. "And then Defy must have a girl," I said, "and we must have a beautiful garden, and flowers upon our table when we eat, and they will make pleasant talk and happy hearts."

John looked most gratefully into my face, but Defiance sighed deeply.

"These are all vanity," she said, "and take our thoughts away from more solemn things."

"No; God has lavished flowers and sunshine, singing birds, blue skies, and holiday fields upon us. The storm comes, a brief space amid days of beauty. Pain intermixes with years of health. Happiness, beauty, is the rule, evil the exception."

"We tend to evil as the sparks fly upward," answered Defiance piously.

I grew silent. I saw there was a dead obstinacy, a dull spirit of dogmatism about the woman, with which it was useless to contend; and so I praised the white curds, and the nice bread, and "let my victuals stop my mouth," in accordance with the injunction given in these words by Defiance to one of the children.

I soon learned what I should have thought St. Paul meant by "the thorn in the flesh," had not the great apostle been the sturdy bachelor that he was; for Defiance has the faculty of never being pleased. She never laughs out, but has an inside, hysterical sort of a sound, to go with any very spiteful saying of hers. John is painstaking and diligent, but far from well to do; and I, alone as I am, will devote much of my wealth to his family.

I am little drawn to the children, which I regret; but they have the flat, unmeaning face of the mother, and seem determined not to accept of an idea unsanctioned by her. They say little to their father, and indeed I am surprised to find they regard him with something like hostility. I

learned, subsequently, this was owing to a habit Defiance has of speaking of poor John as "in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity," because he has not as yet become a member of the village church. I found that old maids and non church-communicants are her especial aversion. The former she regards with great contempt. Any girl past the age of twenty, unmarried, falls under this denomination. John has kept my history so entirely from her that she is at a loss to judge of my age, and seems greatly bent upon learning what it may be. I should have been amused at her many attempts to satisfy herself upon this head, were not all memories so painful to me, that it is like the sharp thrust of a sword to have the past revived. Accordingly, I said to her when she plied me with questions :—

"Please, Defiance, never ask me of years, ages, or times of any kind. I never remember a birth-day. I never wish to know the age even of a child. I ask is the child fair? is it true? is it lovely? But its days or years are of little import. I was younger at fifteen than girls are ordinarily at ten. In one aspect I am now older than Methuselah, in another I am a child of seven summers."

Defiance opened her thin lips with a blank amazement, and ejaculated :—

"When you come to give an account for the deeds done in the body, your memory will be sharpened up to strict recollection. Did your mother not have your birth recorded in the family Bible?"

"Oh, yes, I was duly authenticated there and in the parish

register. But come, Defiance, let us climb to the top of the mountain, and see how the world looks beyond the valley."

"No, I cannot this afternoon," she answered, "our female prayer-meeting takes place at three, and I would not fail to be there."

"May I ask the subject of your prayers?" I said.

"We pray for the conversion of our unbelieving husbands," she answered with great solemnity.

"You do not go out in this way to put shame upon your good, true-hearted husband, Defiance?" I asked, with a feeling of pain I could hardly conceal.

"John is a good husband, it is true, but he is far from grace. He is far from acceptance in divine mercy," she replied, with a smirk of conceit that made her little, ugly, hard face, ten times more ugly, hard, and disagreeable.

And so I climbed the mountain alone, and gathered mosses, and brought home wild flowers, and wrote verses, and forgot that men and women are mean and dull; but remembered only the great, nobler aspects to which all respond in periods of emergency.

CHAPTER IV.

Face and figure of a child—

Though too calm, you think, and tender,
For the childhood you would lend her.

And a stranger—when he sees her—

In the street even—smileth stilly,
Just as *you* would at a lily.

ELIZABETH B. BROWNING.

WE become great as we surmount difficulties. We grow noble the more we are thrown upon our own responsibilities. Those who hold themselves amenable to God alone, are hard task-masters to themselves. I did not go to church the first Sunday of my arrival; for, being responsible to no earthly creature, I claim the privilege of winning heaven in my own way. The sermons of our clergy, dull as they must necessarily be, in a profession overworked, and where the mind is bent solely to establish and elucidate old dogmas, I find it impossible to sit them out. Could we have prayers and music—not open prayers, but that silent appeal which might be made so impressive by the aid of music intermingled, and the teachings less vague and generalizing, worship would be more attractive.

To-day, however, I went at the call of the little church

bell, and right glad now am I that I did so. The voice of the pastor is singularly rich and melodious—not loud, but exquisitely cultivated—and the human voice, when so trained, is more touching than any music. Its tones were not unfamiliar, but where I have heard the voice I cannot now recall. Ernest Helfenstein is no ordinary man. His face has a somewhat anxious expression, such as men who are true and earnest always assume when they are not living in accordance with their highest intuitions. He is a bachelor, and lives in an old house embowered in trees, where his ancestors have long lived. His discourse was full of pure, spiritual insight, and prepared with great artistic care. But it was not so much what he said, as the conviction I felt, that a great, true soul, lived behind the words, and gave force to the utterance.

John's pew was in a prominent part of the house, and I had a fair opportunity to see the people. I observed that most of them remained to say a word with the Pastor, and his clear tones and faint smile had a peculiar grace about them. I thought of John the Beloved, and felt that Ernest was akin to that disciple. On our way home I was struck with the appearance of two children who walked before a tall, gaunt man, and a shrewish-looking woman, the latter of whom occasionally addressed the children in a sharp voice, because of their too great speed in walking. This couple, I was told, was Deacon Pettingal and his wife, the keepers of the alms-house, and these children were paupers.

They bore no resemblance to each other, and yet seemed

inseparable. The boy had a roguish, careless tone about him, as if there was nothing in life but what is mean, and bad, and funny. But he was entirely under the dominion of his companion, a girl of nine or ten years. This child could not be passed without observation. She was somewhat thin, and had a restless movement, a half-haughty, half-abashed look. Her hair had been cut very short, and was now just beginning to show curls of the loveliest golden hue, upon which the light played as if in love with the object. I wished to see the color of her eyes, for they were shaded by long black lashes. I could not forbear patting her head as I passed her, for the purpose of making her look up. But she shook her shoulders impatiently, and walked ahead with a quicker step, without lifting her eyes.

"Stop that, you now, Catherine, none of that," said the shrewish woman. "Walk slower on the Lord's day."

Hoping to mend matters, I said, "Catherine, will you not walk with me," and attempted to take her hand, but as I did so, I was shocked to see, the little thing was weeping; the boy saw it, also.

"Get out," he cried, "you only want to make her cry; get out, I say. We live in the poor-house, and don't talk to nobody."

This was a poor beginning, and as persons were attracted by the scene, and stared much at me, as being a stranger, I fell back and continued to observe the children. The girl had a pair of stout shoes, within which her little delicate feet were quite lost; her dress was very short, and left her limbs, most

exquisitely proportioned, visible nearly to the knee; a cotton cape like her dress, concealed her shoulders, and a small straw hat, in part, covered her head. I could not get the thought of this child out of my mind. She pained me all over in my thoughts; she seemed bruised in spirit—out of place, and forsaken. Sometimes it has happened that an old estate falls to decay, and the garden walls are broken down; and what has been the abode of taste and the home of luxury is forgotten. Rank weeds spring amid the hedge-rows, and vines trail along the earth, and noxious plants stifle the rose blossoms that once sent a thrill of joy to refined hearts. The ancient garden has become a common—the village cattle brouse, and household animals find a refuge there. Perhaps, like me, the stranger lingers about the spot, and finds one rose struggling to the light, pale, but beautiful, and more touching from its loneliness. It is a creature of another sphere, living on despite of desolation, because the soul of beauty is loth to abandon its receptacle.

So seemed this child to me, and I devised many plans to remove her from her present situation. I would gladly take her to my own heart and home, but at present we have no room, and when I proposed doing so to Defiance, she looked so spiteful and ill-tempered at the proposal to put *such a child* in any relation with hers, that I was obliged to be quiet.

I returned to the house after church, with so many shadowy images crowding upon my mind, that I shrank from revelations, which, at another time, would have been hailed with

joy. "Not now, not now," I cried, "I am too weak to bear more." It is a beautiful law in our creation, that the eternal past becomes no less a sealed book to us than the future. In the brief span of my recognised existence, have been periods over which I have prayed that the dim Lethe might roll—and the future may have periods, never like the past—for nature and experience are never repeated—but periods to be encountered with a like dread. Once I prayed for oblivion; now I arise from the past to a sublimer future. I would not forget it, but to-day—I am weak—I am cowardly. The moon shines coldly downward, and I feel as if her rays were searching, penetrating like some evil spy into the hidden chambers of my being. Buried recollections start vividly to light. Voices haunt me in my solitude. The little pauper, Catherine, has, more than once, come visibly before me, and her weird, holy eyes look mournfully into mine.

I closed the lattice, and endeavored to sleep, but in vain; it was not till I had relieved my surcharged heart, at the fountains of poesy, that the cool, balmy fingers of sleep played along my wearied senses. I wrote the following in this mood:

SHUT OUT THE MOON.

In the presence of the moon and the starry spheres, we feel no other want than to love, and to be worthy of love.—CORINNE.

Shut out the moon! she hath no welcome here—
She maddens with her sad reproachful ray,

And with her deepening smile, so like a tear—
That stately, calm, unwinking look away—
Shut out the moon.

She glides within the lattice hushed and still,
And lays her cold pale fingers on my brow—
She must away, there is a withering thrill
In every touch of hers upon me now—
Shut out the moon.

The madness of the past—to-day's wild grief—
The blackness brooding on the coming years—
No Gilead balm of hope to yield relief,
And wake the sealed up treasury of tears!
Shut out the moon.

Have I not underneath her pallid beam
Trembled with hopes and joys too bright for earth?
Thrilled through the hours as in a rosy dream
Unto a voice too deep and fond for mirth?
Shut out the moon—

And she looked on beneath her starry crown,
And walked in queenly beauty through the night,
As now she walks—as when she glided down
And bathed Endymion in her hollow light.
Shut out the moon!

Thou queen-eyed sister of the song-god, why
Didst thou to Latmus stoop? why didst thou pine
For human love, and thus come all too nigh
To us, pierced by Apollo's darts and thine?
Shut out the moon.

Her silver feet across the waters glide ;
Her ermined mantle drapes the craggy steep ;
Her fingers part the solemn boughs aside,
Nor wake the wild bird from his dewy sleep.
Shut out the moon.

Do I not know that by the mossy brook
She listens to the bird that darkling sings?—
And shows with her white hand the flowery nook,
Where Love, contented Love, embowered his wing?
Shut out the moon.

Oh! she doth speak too wildly to our hearts,
 Recalls the buried hopes and dreams of years—
 A fond, heart-yearning tenderness imparts,
 From which we wake to wretchedness and tears.
Shut out the moon.

She taketh to herself the look we wear—
She smiles with Love's and Psyche's plaintive eye;—
She apes the stillness, deadness of despair,
Yet sits untouched, un pitying in the sky.
Shut out the moon.

When I had finished the above, I laid my head upon my pillow, and not till then did I feel the soft *aura* upon my brow, which, to me, always precedes sleep. Ah ! nightly am I conscious of the breath of invisible spirits, stealing over my temples, and soothing me to forgetfulness of earth and its wearying pilgrimage.

CHAPTER V.

She was a woman of a stirring life,
Whose heart was in her house : two wheels she had
Of antique form—this, large for spinning wool,
That, small for flax ; and if one wheel had rest,
It was because the other was at work.

WORDSWORTH.

I HAVE been able, with much difficulty, to procure a smart Irish girl for Defiance. I took her to my own room and made suitable inquiries as to her capacity and trust-worthiness, before I ventured to hand her over to her mistress. She has all the frank, impulsive qualities of her people, intermingled with a little harmless craft, which impels the Irish to be all things to all men, with no very holy purpose. But I like the race ; like to have them about me. They make a fine cross, with their lavish unthrift, to the over-providence of the Yankee, and their good-natured hopefulness contrasts well with the energy, coupled with severity, on the part of our people. The Yankee cannot be amused unless his coat is in good repair, the kitchen stocked, and the parlor carpeted. But an Irishman is gloriously indifferent to all, and rushes into fun in spite of rags, or hunger, or home. The Yankee lives for to-morrow, the Irishman for to-day. The one cannot enjoy earth, so anxious is he to win heaven ; while the other makes sure of to-day, and shrewdly sus-

pects that even "purgatory isn't so bad as 'tis cracked up to be." The Yankee scorns to consult his wife, and is nervously afraid of being hen-pecked, while the Irishman submits everything to the "auld woman," and gives and takes blows, as a matter of course.

But I digress. Biddy is very tidy, and has the rare quality of knowing how to hold her tongue. I told her to do whatever she was bid, and I would be responsible for her comfort and wages ; and I really took pleasure in seeing to the little furnishings of her room. In looking for the conveniences of the bath for her, and placing a small bureau, and table, and chairs, over the nicely painted floor, with a pretty rug by the bedside. Then I bought a crucifix, and a pair of candlesticks, and match-box, and gave Biddy especial orders never to carry a light from the kitchen to her room, and to keep all things in order.

Defiance was greatly scandalized at the crucifix, and at first peremptorily refused to have it in the room. "It is countenancing Romanism," she declared. "It is justifying the worship of images, and making ourselves worse than the heathen. What's the use of sending out Bibles and missionaries to the heathen, when we help people to worship stocks and stones at our own door?"

"Surely, of what use is it?" I replied, "while we have work-houses, and prisons, and gallowses, and slave-markets, at home. Oh ! we must rid ourselves of all these enormities, if we hope to present the spirit of divine love to the benighted of other lands."

"I never heard anybody so opposed to all Christian institutions as you seem to be, Miss Bertha, I must say. If our work-houses do not prove the progress of Christian charity in providing for the poor, I do not know what does. I'm sure the clergy always speak of them in this light ; and as to prisons, if people commit crimes, we must have a place in which to keep them from further mischief."

"But Christians should provide against crimes. An ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure, Defiance."

"Well, prisons are a preventive. I heard a very good sermon preached upon that subject. And as for hanging people, when they have committed great crimes, it's nothing more than right they should die for it—as can be proved from Scripture. 'He that sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.' And as for keeping them in prison for life, it's a tax upon society—the good, and virtuous, and industrious would have to work to support a lazy, brutal vagabond. I heard Dr. Cleaver himself preach at full upon the subject."

"But, Defiance, the Bible says not a word of the gallows, and that must be purely a Christian invention, unsanctioned by Judaism. I had thought that the great laws of life were shadowed forth in the quotation you have made, not a legal injunction."

"As to Slavery," continued Defiance, "that can be supported, as everybody knows, from the Bible."

"Well, then, Defiance, if the Bible does sanction enormities

from which the instincts implanted in us by God himself recoil, it is no word of His."

Defiance looked horror-struck. "Then you deny the word of God openly. I thought as much." And she took her daughter Jane by the hand and put her out of the room, as much as to say, "you must not hear these blasphemies."

"Defiance," I said, and I said it sternly, "It is a crime, just as much as any other crime, to misinterpret or falsify the meaning of another. I do not believe the Bible sanctions any of the enormities I have mentioned, even when literally interpreted. But I say, *if it does, it has ceased* to be a revelation of truth to us. We are beyond it in human justice and mercy, and must cast it aside as an obsolete letter. Mind, I say, *if it does*. But the whole spirit of Christianity is opposed to these barbarous and ghastly crimes which society still sanctions under the plea of expediency. But let us say no more."

"I cannot consent to have the crucifix in Biddy's room," persisted Defiance.

"Nevertheless it must be there," I said ; "you need have nothing to do with it."

"I am mistress of my own house," she answered sharply.

This was descending to a pitch of low altercation that quite shocked me. I feared I might have provoked it, and I said very gently :—

"Do not mistake my meaning, Defiance, I wish to aid you—to make you happier. Will you not allow me sometimes to have my own way?"

"You have it always. Old maids always do, and they always make mischief in a family. I was warned against it when you first came."

I was quite off soundings, and hardly knew what to say, and so of course said just what were better left unsaid ; for this little household thorn was bent upon wounding me. Her child, Jane, had come back also, and now stood, with her mouth open, staring at me, and her two braids sticking out nearly straight from the back of her head, in a sort of horror. I spoke in this wise :—

"My dear Mrs. True, you mistake me altogether. I only wish to help you in thought, as well as many ways ; I am quite alone in the world, and could wish to pass the rest of my life with the only person, whom I have found true in his very soul, as is your husband, and he knows more of me than any person living ; has been very faithful to me, and I am grateful to him beyond expression."

As I said this the tears came to my eyes, an unwonted thing for years. Defiance took up my unlucky words—
"Yes, and so you come here to make unhappiness between John and me."

"Woman !" said I, but she went on.

"Yes, John thinks you're a saint on earth, though I've never seen you pray ; and he thinks there's nobody like you under the sun ; and so I, his lawful wife, am made to feel sneaking where you are. Oh ! if it wasn't for my religion, I should die."

The miserable, petty thorn ! I cried to myself. Will the

world ever behold a race of women? True women, deserving the name? No wonder men are base and mischievous, nursed at such a fountain. If I could have my way, I would insist that women, now, at this moment, weak and ineffective as they are, should be admitted to all the burdens of legislative responsibility, that they might be brought to feel their lack of noble culture, and thus set themselves in earnest to amend. While these thoughts swept through my mind, and kept me silent, Defiance went on, in a sharp, whining voice, uttering all sorts of absurdities.

Bridget, I am sure, was fully grateful for the crucifix, and nothing could be sweeter and nicer than the way she kept her room. Observing that I always had fresh flowers in the vase beside my bed, she also began to carry them to her own room, and withal grew so gentle, so peaceful, and cleanly, that I blessed God, as I always do, for the ministry of flowers. Our floral vocabulary is often very beautiful, but I am sure, flowers have a significance deeper than we have yet penetrated. I can tell what quality of mind is most active within me, by my instinctive search for particular blossoms in my walks in the garden or the woods. The rose, the lily, these belong to me always.

For many weeks Defiance has been more than ordinarily taciturn. She goes about the house, leaving a puncture of disaffection here, and a minim touch of blood from her thorn there, and prays, and goes to the "Female meetings" more than ever. John, good, honest blunderer that he is,

does not mind her. He works diligently, comes in from the fields with a great handful of red or yellow blossoms, and sticks them into an old pitcher, the whole flanked by a sunflower, and then sits down quite content. When I explain the beauty or delicacy of the more exquisite blossoms, his eyes fill with tears, and he says, "Yes, I see, but these need nicer feelings than mine. *These* make me joyous-like; *them* distress me with beauty."

I sometimes think the cold, hard spirit of Defiance, her petty and constant fault-finding way oppress my sensibilities also, but I will bear the hazard, for I cannot endure the thought of further change; I am weary and need rest.

Defiance never speaks to Bridget except in the way of command; she does not like to hear her sing, so poor Biddy goes round the house with her warm overflowing Irish heart pent up, and silent, except when she comes to my room, in aid of Jenny, my attendant. "I never talk to servants, it makes them impudent," is the significant remark of Defiance to me almost daily, and yet I do not omit to talk, and say cheerful things to Biddy, and thus relieve the depressing monotony of continued household toil.

Defiance is a great crony with all the ascetic women of the place; she is considered a model of piety, and a great holder-forth in the way of prayer. When she returns from her "female meetings," her face is screwed up to a painful tension of sanctity, and she dilates largely upon the unction of the prayers and exhortations of the sisterhood. She makes John to feel deeply, that he is a sinner of the black-

est die, and that her life is spent in wrestling mightily in his behalf. Indeed, whenever Defiance has been thwarted in any way, she becomes at once religious; a martyr of endurance; rolls up her eyes and purses up her lips, occasionally ripping them apart to give passage to a sigh, and as quickly fastening them together again. Sometimes her mood becomes a singing one, and she goes about the house humming in a ludicrously lugubrious voice,

"My heart is like a wil—der—ness,
Here the wild raven finds her nest,
And there the screaming owl."

She does not think much of Parson Helfenstein, who is far from orthodox she avers, and more than once has given vent to some hints in relation to a general disaffection amongst the people; even declaring that my influence over him has become a subject of comment.

CHAPTER VI.

From fair to fairer, day by day,
A more divine and loftier way,
Even such this blessed pilgrim trod,
By sorrow lifted towards her God.

WORDSWORTH.

WE must now lay aside the journal of Bertha, which seems to have been much interrupted by her various occupations in behalf of the family of John True. We find she had laid out extensive gardens, and built a suite of rooms for herself. She speaks of rose-colored curtains and white vases, and seems to have had an exquisite sense of the beautiful. We find touches of deep suffering, allusions to a hidden grief; and then, like a gleam of light behind a dark cloud, a "silver lining" of pure, calm, holy womanhood.

A few extracts will show not only the structure of her mind, but exhibit also the gleams of new and, to her, unexpected emotions.

Ernest Helfenstein is far more inspired in his career than he has the courage to recognise. It pains me to see him repress intimations of truth, which he should the rather hail with delight. He regards me with something like aversion. To-day I became painfully conscious of this; and but now, as I looked in the mirror opposite, I found I had been

long weeping. Tears are so balmy in their falling that I had been unconscious of them. I do not know why I wept. I am accustomed to sorrow, and my body is but a medium by which the soul makes itself manifest to those about me. I am never conscious of any physical suffering, and it is only when I am utterly prostrated by some great internal grief, that I am aware of its effects upon the material. I have been subdued to perfect stillness. The passions of people about me are so poor, petty, miserable in their kind, that I am filled with a sort of disgust at their exhibition. Good God, how would they be confounded could they penetrate the lava depths of my soul ! The passionless respond to any of all demonstrations, the abysm-flooded soul is eclectic. "You are so cold, so passionless," said Ernest to me to-day, "that you cannot understand the impulses of a nature like mine. You move in the sphere of cold duty, while I am spontaneously prompted to the position I fill."

Duty ! duty ! Well, it is well to evolve from conscience and reason a high and noble adherence to the best promptings of our humanity ; but Ernest does not in the least understand me. I am weeping. I am but a sick girl at heart. I sometimes wish that some mighty emotion, even greater than the past, would sweep away this calm, even flow of the pulse, that my life might wreak itself in one great thought, one sublime act. There is no field for me. Alas ! alas ! I have prayed for repose. I came hither to rest, and behold these tumults. When the volcano has poured its torrent over the mountain-side, it is content to

leave the warm soil for the growth of the vine ; and the tabor, pipe, and the harvest song of the peasant replace the aridness of desolation. But the ashes of the heart reveal no second blooms.

SELF-DISTRUST.

Back into silence, weary heart, nor yearn
In thy dim chambers for the voice of love :
Earth holds for thee no genial, kindred soul,
With sense all bent God's inmost will to learn.
Up, and exalt thee unto things above—
For thou dost lack that easy self-control,
That placidness in life's small common things,
Which leaves no vacancies in other minds.
Forgetful that thy feet earth's wayside press—
That hidden yet are Psyche's blessed wings ;
Forgetful thou, how earth the vision blinds—
Thou dost exact too much of nobleness,
Claiming for love on earth what Heaven can only bless.

I am conscious that my influence over Ernest is very great. He is not happy when I fail to justify his opinions, and I cannot avoid inciting him to what to me seems the truly manlike career. He is apt to fall into delicious reveries, and thus lose occasion—he dreams poetry, while I long to throw it into form, to make it vital in action, and be what ——— once said I was—"a living poem." Ah ! *the praise of a poet is like endowing a woman with a new sense.*

Again, in another date, she says :

Life ! what is it ? To sit in the sunshine, and weave garlands, to listen to music, the many voices of all beautiful nature, as well as the voluptuousness of Art ? This should be—all these, but more also. The rainbow is the child of action, the blossom, the birth of infinite changes, *and happiness is born of change*—even the stagnant pool strives to free itself from corruption. It throws out its malaria to hint that we must aid in evolving life and beauty, if we would escape pestilence and death ; I cannot bide in inaction. I go forth with the infinite stirrings of nature, and rejoice in toil. *Every faculty whispers me a benison, as it goes, in wholesome weariness to rest.*

I cannot sit down in the torpor of grief. Up and beautify the life. Up and do, and the sorrow is but a remembered dream, is the cry of the infinite good in our hearts. No evil is remediless. The soul rejects the stains that evil would affix upon it. Efflux of the Eternal, it rises into the empyrean of the white dome of eternity, and the pure light of love effaces the stain. Oh God of infinite love, I tend to thee ! The stars move onward in their silvery spheres, the universe of matter is but an out-speaking of the everlasting harmonies of the great soul which spake them into being, and we, thy creatures, yearn for ever for the beautiful. When, when shall the soul of our humanity be revealed, perfect, not through suffering ; but love ; love born of infinite beauty.

Man emerges from dens and caves by toil. He becomes master of himself and of nature by toil. We earn the repose,

of the body by toil. God has ordained the great calm after the tempest, and the soul becomes serene by the sweat, as it were of great drops of blood, through its every faculty. Thus does the material man project his growth by the building of temples and palaces, and we build up a fit temple for the Holy Ghost to dwell in, when, by conflict, we master the destructive unharmonious elements of life, and enter into peace.

This morning, I took a rose to my room, and fell into a sort of reverie, as I am apt to do over this flower, and the lily also. It is the effect of this peculiar odor, and exceeding grace, which mesmerise me into a state of exquisite sensuousness, and poetic dreaminess. It seemed to me that the flower was no longer a blossom, but a symbol of the secret soul of a true womanhood. While I sat thus lost in a spell of beauty, a storm swept suddenly down the mountains, the river was lashed into foam, and a large oak, within my range of vision, was wrenched and tossed violently in the wind, uttering great groans and cries, as the storm battled therewith. If a limb yielded to the blast, I observed it jerked itself backwards, and with wrath ; that its boughs were broken, but unyielding. And then I saw that if the soul of man could project itself into a visible living shape, it would give birth to an oak, while a woman would out-speak a rose.

Often, in walking through the forests, I am filled with a strange sense of companionship. At twilight the solemn stateliness of the old woods, answers to the sentiment of

prayer, and I see how naturally and spontaneously the Gothic church sprang from this sympathy, between the cathedral aisles of the forest, fretted with interlaced branches and gilded by struggling sun-beams, and the outgoings of the human heart in search of divine mysteries.

* * * * *

To me a slave is the most unnatural thing in the universe. It is the most terrible comment upon the infancy of the race in a moral sense. Were there, anywhere, the least intimation that Jesus was servilely ministered unto, we could not, for an instant, recognise him as one who revered every aspect of our humanity, and brought to us a heavenly mission of human brotherhood, love, mercy, entire equality. Man, sovereign man, irrespective of sex or color, was the object to be won. "I came not to be ministered unto, but to minister."

* * * * *

This morning, I took the letter of Dorothy True, thinking I must read it. My hand trembled, a sickness and blindness overcame me, and I held it long in silence. The past, the dreadful past, I cannot revive it. The deadly shot seeks not twice the same mark ; the tornado, which has created a desert where once was beauty and gladness, returns not again to toss the ghastly ruin, and play with the broken and disrupted tokens—but time, time the great healer, treads gently over the fallen greatness, and mantles all with pitying vines, that steal like nerves of human sympathy along the shattered trees ; and, softly, like the muffled drum of a sor-

rowful procession, the heavy mosses gather upon rock and bole of mighty oak, so that the howl of the wind is dumb, and the harsh voices of destruction mellowed to faint, scarcely audible sighings. And so I said, I will not seek to know the mystery of this letter. I will bury it for the time being. Then I took a small urn of bronze, dark and sombre-looking, and placed the letter therein, and sealed it up, and then I prayed the good God for comfort. Days, days, did I agonise in prayer, for the past came like a mighty tempest upon me. All the windows of my soul were open to admit shapes of dread—every bye-nook of my spirit became cleansed and winnowed, as when the harvest-man, with great blows, winnows the wheat from the chaff. My eyes poured out unwonted fountains of tears, and my tongue would only cry, "Light, oh, give me light." I made no cry for mercy, for peace, for happiness, but the great cry of the soul within me was for light. As the sun arose above the mountains, chasing the shadows before him, penetrating every nook and valley ; touching the water, lighting the hill-side, warming the bird-nest, and blessing the blossom ; so did a great joy arise to me from out the gloom of this great agony, and I walked a new heaven and new earth, and remembered no more the anguish.

We find occasional notices of Ernest Helfenstein. Mention of his singular genuineness and loveliness of character, and hints of hers in aid of his ministry. Once she says, "Ernest is not in the least drawn to myself. He rather

dislikes me, I fear ;" and again we find her regretting that she is left so nearly apart from human sympathy. She intimates that Ernest does not know his own power—is a dreamer of poetic beauty, but the actual of life is disregarded. He has vague desires for usefulness, but not the grasp essential to achievement. He sits in his old library and revels in the luxuries of thought, while opportunity slips by, and his people are, in fact, little benefited by him, except in the rare privilege of listening to beautiful and artistic essays, and witnessing the daily life of a being of rare mental and moral beauties.

We must now open upon the journal of Ernest Helfenstein, which, strange as it may seem, is of a more practical cast than that of Bertha. The latter seems to have worshipped God through active services to her kind, and her journal is the vehicle for states of mind, or expressions of sentiment, while that of Ernest is the detail of events, irksome to him in their passage, and recorded as milestones to prompt him to duty. Ernest dreams amid the actual ; Bertha lives the actual, and dreams upon paper. *A poetic woman, it would seem, is more practical in life, than a poetic man.*

CHAPTER VII.

A coward, a most devout coward ; religious in it.

SHAKESPEARE.

SUNDAY.—As I gave forth my text to-day—I observed my audience was very small. Deacon Pettingal, who keeps up late of a Saturday night for the purpose of balancing his accounts, was fast asleep before I had half finished, and upon my soul I did not blame him. Worship has become such a mechanical routine, that its true spirit is lost. I understand Bertha (a fine old word, meaning brave) seriously advocates the admission of woman into the pulpit.

By the way, Bertha should preach ; she is brave, spiritual, primitive. I remember the Deacon told her, that St. Paul had forbidden it, to which she replied, with a sweet serenity, "In so far as St. Paul uttered what is partial in its import, he is so much the less inspired. Jesus gave no limited oracle. He taught without the distinction of sex. He addressed the Genus Homo, inferring the teachings applicable to one as applicable also to the other. He did not even address himself to exceptions, however lovely these may be ; but he enfolded our bruised, broken

humanity tenderly under the shadowings of divine love. St. Paul is a mystic of a high order ; and he seems to have understood this better than his followers, when he says in Christ, 'There is neither Jew nor Greek ; there is neither barbarian nor Scythian ; there is neither bond nor free ; *there is neither male nor female.*' "

As Bertha uttered this, in her clear musical voice, with exquisite intonation, her serene face, radiant with her inward convictions, I felt that a woman thus inspired, must be a more effective expounder of truth, than a preacher of our sex is likely to present ; but, I confess to a repugnance also—I trust in God *envy* has no place in my mind—but I will look to it.

I am very dull to-night, and I did not interest my audience in preaching. The storm beat violently against the windows—the old trees creaked against the panes. I grew depressed, and found myself too much interested in watching the good Deacon, and even calculating the moments between his loudest snores, which would start up his wife in utter dismay ; and then she would nudge him, and ahem and look about so wildly, that I could hardly refrain from a laugh. I doubt not dreaming (I hope the Deacon dreams) was better than my sermon, for I saw Jane Gowen write a note with pencil in a blank leaf of the hymn book, and poke it through the balusters of the pew to her lover. Young Benjy Fields only kept awake by chewing vigorously at an immense piece of gum, as he sat with his head stuck back, and his eyes winking, just as I have

seen a toad under a cabbage leaf. Mercy ! how my heart beat as some weary child kicked the pew door.

Children are brought to meeting as a sort of discipline—it is a good method of training them into decorum. The Catholic Church is superior to the Protestant in this particular, for the smallest child is made to feel there the sentiment of religion, by having some share in the ceremonial. I wish people came to pray, to worship, not to cavil, sleep, or be respectable. This respectability is becoming very tiresome in the country. I mean, next Sunday, to tell my people to sin—that they may have the zest of repentance, for their dullness is contagious. As I passed the Deacon and his wife, on my way home, he praised my sermon loudly—I met the eyes of his wife, an anxious furtive glance, whereat I smiled, and the face of the good woman cleared in a very marked manner.

Monday.—Bertha is certainly very fair—a clear, calm woman. I marvel much at her beauty, because she is so conscious of its possession, and tells me she would be less self-poised were it otherwise ; for beautiful women are apt to be less attractive with this consciousness of their loveliness. But with Bertha there is something so infinitely beyond this external view, that it seems to be all in keeping that she should know her attractions, and confess to them as a part of her truthfulness.

She said one thing to me, however, that I did not well like. I am certain we men are so accustomed to reproving and patronizing women that we do not preserve the

truest or highest position with them. Bertha said to me, "Ernest, you are not self-poised—you are lacking in courage." Whereat I winced like a school-boy, and reddened to the eyes. Luckily, Bertha did not look up, or I should have been quite ashamed.

I mentioned to Bertha my plan for instruction. I love the companionship of children. I feel my life renewed through them. I feel the popular system of instruction is very defective ; the household system is worse, because it engenders habits of selfishness and exclusiveness, destructive to the best growth of our humanity. "I will have my twelve apostles, Bertha," I said. "I will take twelve boys and teach them as I wish I had been taught. I will help them to think. I will steer aloof from the low sandy shoals of cant, and avoid the sharp rocks of prejudice. They shall be my friends, my companions ; for a teacher should be a learner also."

"You will take six boys and six girls, will you not ?" said Bertha, as I stopped to breathe.

I was taken all aback, as Captain Garden told me the other day my preaching took him. Six girls ! I was thunderstruck. What on earth could I do with six girls ? I grew nervous. It seemed as if the world were suddenly come to an end. I felt as if in a haze of gauze—beset with smiles—obliged to be amiable—set up for polite behavior. I grew savage in my perplexity. I, a shy country parson, and well nigh a dreamer at that, to have six girls frisking here and there about the house, and making everything in it seem up

for a show—was more than I could think of without a shudder, and so I told Bertha, and a little warmly too, I apprehend.

"If you will divide the apostles, having six of them boys and six of them girls, Ernest, I will aid you," she replied, not in the least disconcerted at my vehemence.

"Thou, Bertha, thou !" I cried. I do not well know why I blushed ; nor why I felt a sudden exhilaration at the thought that this brave woman would be near me.

"Why did you hit upon twelve as the number, Ernest ?" asked Bertha.

"I do not know. There were twelve tribes of Israel—there are twelve solar months in a year—there were twelve apostles—there were—" and I laughed at my whims.

"Parents are not the natural *teachers* of children," said Bertha.

"I do not know that," I replied ; "but I love children, and every man or woman, whose heart is teachable and loving, should feel it a privilege to 'suffer little children to come unto him.'"

"Ah, that is beautiful—that is Christ-like, dear Ernest," said Bertha, with an unwonted animation of tone, and a tenderness of manner that caused a rush of blood to my face. My blushes always annoy me, especially when they come to my face in the presence of Bertha. It seems to me that I view the subject in hand from a less elevated stand-point than she does.

"As I am Egypt's Queen,
Thou blushest, Antony; and that blood of thine
Is Cæsar's homager,"

also passed over my brain, by one of those mysterious double, and even triple, actions of the mind, by which we are conscious of hearing and answering to one thing, while a more delicate and subtle activity is carried on in the centre of the soul; a sort of network weaving another destiny—a prophecy of some future experience. I find so many prejudices and opinions of mine, which I had conceived to be well grounded principles, melting away under the intuitive truths of Bertha, that I begin to think a clear, true woman, one of God's oracles, whose utterances are to be treated most reverently. I am having strong doubts as to the immaculate superiority of men to women. *They* are far holier than *we*, I am sure. The truth is, Bertha has a way of taking the conceit out of man—entirely a *way* of her own. I kept on repeating what she had said—"Ah, that is beautiful; that is Christ-like, dear *Ernest*"—looking, I have no doubt, much like a good boy, who has been commended with a lump of sugar, while Bertha did not in the least heed me.

"I like your plan much," she continued; "it is primitive, evangelic. You will take the girls also, and this will be a clear, lovely star, rising in the East of our humanity."

"Bertha, I see a long perspective of waving curls, and fluttering ribbons, and curvettings, and coquetries, that quite terrify me. Indeed, Bertha——"

"You will take them, and I will aid you, and we will see

how calm and beautiful a woman may be," replied Bertha, interrupting me.

And so Bertha decided for me, in her frank, clear manner. She certainly is very fair to look upon; and yet she is one whom I never think of as one to love, otherwise I should not consent to this proposal.

Tuesday.—I could not sleep last night for thinking over my plan of instruction. It grows quite clear and pleasing to me as I think more upon it. I shall write no books to cumber the world with crude nonsense, and so I will stamp what is best of me upon these pure, plastic minds—and they shall go forth to do a good work upon the world. I will write upon human hearts; I will thrill the living, growing pulse, and thus its growth shall be instinct with my teachings. Bertha was right. The mother is not the best teacher to her children in the present aspect of society. She is exhausted by the pangs of maternity. She is oppressed and servile with much bearing, as was Leah—her children fret and annoy her—whereas the teacher should be calm, cheerful, self-sustained.

The child ceases to love the mother because of the perpetual interdict—the "do not" of the household law. A few generations of children, reared under the "do thou" of the new covenant, would transform the whole social aspect. As I look abroad upon our beautiful country, from my hermit-like retreat, I feel a yearning desire to do some excellent thing in her behalf. I long for the gift of song, of oratory, some new or great thought, some grand scheme for human

good, all to be consecrate to a country so well beloved. But this cannot be ; I am a timid man, as Bertha often more than insinuates, and not freely gifted, and, therefore, a simple work must be mine. I will train these lovely representatives, who shall pledge themselves to train others, and thus the work shall never cease. While I thus thought, my soul went forth in the following words :

THE GREAT AIM.

The world is wailing with its pangs of wrong.
Hunger, and chains, and ignorance all cry
From out the ground to Him, whose searching eye
Sees blood, like slinking serpents glide along
The dusty way, rank grass, and flowers among.
His the dread voice, "Where is thy Brother?" Why
Sit we and weave our common griefs to song;
While that eternal call, forth bids us fly
From self, and wake to human good! The near,
The humble, it may be: yet God appointed.
If greatly girded, cast aside thy fear
In solemn trust, thou missioned and annointed.
Oh! glorious task, made free from petty strife,
Thy Truth become thy Act, thy Aspiration, Life.

CHAPTER VIII.

The young lambs are bleating in the meadows :

The young birds are chirping in the nest ;

The young fawns are playing with the shadows :

The young flowers are blowing toward the west—

But the young, young children, O my brothers,

They are weeping bitterly !—

They are weeping in the playtime of the others,

In the country of the free.

ELIZABETH B. BROWNING.

BERTHA has more than once spoken to me of the Alms House, which she regards as an abomination in a Christian community ; a shame, a reproach to our humanity. All hearts should be open, she says, to the cry of the orphan. Every hearth-stone should be a refuge for the outcast. Yesterday she read passages from "King Lear," in a manner as if a new revelation had been made me ; and then she went on describing Lear as the impersonation of "neglected eld in corners hid." I was so charmed with the soft flow of her voice, that I do not retain the words she used ; but a pervading human sympathy was apparent in every utterance. The confiding, tender old man, weary with conflict, worn with the cares of State, unbraced his armor, and trusting to the sweetness of human love, laid himself to

sleep in the sunshine of filial duty. Age grows infantile in its trust, and its worn muscles covet the creeping of the child, and therefore an outrage upon it is the greatest of crimes. Age confined in Alms Houses is a spectacle to sadden the hardest heart. Ah ! Lear is old age personified in its neglect, its poverty, its rags, and beggary, when the dogs bark at it.

From this she spoke of a little girl of the name of Catherine, whom I had seen in the paupers' pew. Bertha speaks of her as a creature whom neither neglect, nor poverty, nor grief, nor evil associations can injure. True in the centre of her soul. Taught by the living, breathing God speaking along her every exquisite sense. I told Bertha she had made herself very disagreeable to the authorities by her strictures upon the Alms House, "which was, perhaps, an evil, but at the same time a necessary one."

"No evil is necessary, Ernest," she replied. "It is the stepping-stone only to the good. As we rise to better developments we always reject it."

I replied, that evil was the curse of the Fall, and all human beings partook of it and the curse, and nothing but a total regeneration of the creature could ever reconcile him to God.

"The terms of our old theology," she replied, "have so little practical application, that I dislike to hear them used, Ernest. I look upon the Infinite Parent as always winning us to himself—urging, inviting and pleading, as it were, that we should look to the soul of divine Love, the centre and

source of all pervading harmony, and thus grow into the true life, by the contemplation of infinite perfection. But I will send you two pupils, for whom I will be responsible, if you will promise me to retain them for one month, Ernest."

I promised to do so, and she soon after took her leave. I was not sorry, for Bertha always makes my arguments seem vapid and poor, and me like a *flat*, and yet I know she does not design this ; but she has been familiar with all the finer spirits of the age, and what is more, she has dared to examine all questions, not through other and acknowledged mediums, but through the sanctities of her own being, and from her own standpoint.

Wednesday.—Bertha has brought me the two children, a boy and a girl, from the Alms House. I had seen them for the last six months in the paupers' pew. I said as much to Bertha, and intimated that my plan did not embrace that class. I own it. I have a sort of clerical gentility about me, that was quite shocked at this plan of Bertha's. I had thought to bring the children of the better classes about me, and thus create an outside interest in my poor little parish of Beech Glen. I would be a pastoral Oberlin, and my pupils should reflect the sanctity and beauty of my life. Poor unhappy Ernest, thou wert full of self.

"You have named the paupers' pew. Did you ever think, Ernest, what an infamous thing it is in the house of God. But tell me if you are quite certain what you will teach these children ?"

"Why, what I preach every Sunday from the pulpit, to be sure."

"You are quite sure you are preaching a gospel there?"

"I wasn't sure of any such thing. I was preaching just what my predecessors had done ; I was doing no more, and no less."

"If you had been bred in the Episcopal Church, you would be teaching them the thirty-nine articles, like the forty stripes save one of ancient discipline ; but as you belong to the dissenters, you will addle their poor brains over free will and predestination, and all the rough-shod trappings of Calvinism !"

"Bertha ! you quite unsettle my life with your heresies. I will do away the paupers' pew in Beech Glen at once ! I am ashamed never to have thought of it before ; but as for these doctrines—"

"You will consider them, Ernest," said Bertha, with perfect simplicity.

Upon my word, Bertha begins to be very disagreeable. She talks to me as if I were a stupid boy. I have to remember that I have passed through collegiate and theological honors, and am regarded as fully competent to the office I fill. Somehow she sees behind all these considerations, and presents me a glass before which they all fade quite away, and I see a simple, majestic image of divine truth. But it is disagreeable to be made to feel this at the bidding of a woman.

I had just written thus much, when I became conscious of a presence—sweet and clear, and when, the next moment, there was a light tap at the door, I said :

"Come in, Bertha," for I knew it was her essence that had stood beside me.

She opened the door, and placed her hand gently upon my shoulder.

"Ernest, I have vexed you—forgive me—I can speak only truth to one like you."

I pointed to the paragraph I had written, and she read it through, with no change as I thought ; but now I remember she was quite pale when she went out, saying, very softly, "Good bye, Ernest," and then she said, "I will send the children at nightfall ;" and so here I am feeling like a great sulky gawk, who ought to be beaten into good behaviour, and out of conceit by a sledge hammer, rather than by the lips of a noble woman.

Here I am. I, with my dainty ideas and pride of office, about to take two little paupers, without parentage to be acknowledged, into my sanctum, and to share in my companionship. Faugh ! I do not like the thought ; and yet am ashamed to confess to my imbecility. Birth *is* to be considered. Family culture *is* a great good. But—but, these children are not of an ill stock ; but, alas ! their pedigree cannot be registered in the clerk's office of Beech Glen. Alack, the disorder of the world !

While I sat thinking in this wise, I had a strange, beautiful vision. I was conscious of a light in the centre of the

room. Gradually this light began to concentrate itself, and to assume form and color, till I saw the outline of a very beautiful woman, who seemed compounded of light, and clad in a rose-colored robe, sprigged with gold. This robe seemed to float like gauze, and yet gave the impression of massiveness and grandeur. One arm was raised upward, and the other partially so, and the air was that of one with the eyes elevated. The strangest part seemed to be that the face was not visible—a screen, a shadow, something concealed it; and behind this the rays of light were clear and warm. As I looked, the screen slowly moved to one side, and I caught my breath in my eagerness to see the face—but an ineffable brightness—a gleam of eyes, superhuman in their beauty—a glance of inexpressible tenderness—and the image dissolved itself in light. It seems very strange I should have this beautiful vision at a time when I am in so much doubt and perplexity, and certainly in a very low estate.

I have given directions for the children to appear at the breakfast table. I cannot see them to-night. Poor things! I wish their parents had behaved themselves. I do not like the labor of rectifying other people's mistakes. Upon my word, I do not know what ails me. I feel as if I could poke, and punch, and abuse those children. I feel like an incarnate imp. I've looked in the glass—and Ernest Helfenstein is not Ernest Helfenstein. He has a flushed cheek, a fiery eye, and an excited look, not at all like the timid, spiritual parson he is generally regarded.

I hope the children are pretty, so I shall be able to love

them; but, alas! beauty is only the suggestor, not the creator of love. Love being of the soul, is the creator of beauty; *for beauty is nothing but an image in the mind of the observer, transferred to an object.*

I had written thus much when I heard the kick of a stout boot upon the door. I opened it, and there stood that wretch of a boy, with his thumb in his mouth, and looking over his shoulder at something in the shadow of the hall.

"Well," I said.

"Kate's got something for you," he mumbled out, and instantly a slight form darted into the light, and laid a white lily, one of those beautiful water-nymphs that fill the whole life with a sense of exquisite bliss, upon my hand. Both disappeared instantly, without a word. I am sure Bertha planned this. I wish I had seen more of the child. It seems to me her eyes were very black. And so her name is Kate. How like a revelation this flower seems. So pure—so softly perfumed—so light in shape. It belongs to the water—no back-ground else would harmonize with its fair, graceful make. "I will follow thee whithersoever thou leadest." Those words came to my mind without other connection just now. "Thou hast led me by a way I knew not of." Surely I do not know why these passages come to my mind; I have no link of association by which I can trace them. It may be that I am bewildered by my new position, which certainly is a great perplexity.

Thursday.—The two children met me at the dining-room door. Willy seems little else than an echo of Kate. He

tried to do his best, which was to slop a tumbler of water into my slippers ; whereat he giggled, till Kate nudged him and gave him one of her rapid, keen glances. "Well, Willy, are you going to like me ?" I said.

"I d'n-know."

"Think we shan't be good friends ?"

"I d'n-know."

"Think Kate and I will be friends ?"

"I d'n-know."

"Is Kate your sister ?"

"I d'n-know."

Verily ! the child seems to have great poverty of ideas. But he ate with a wholesome appetite, which pleased me. While I talked with Willy, Kate's face changed like a kaleidoscope. But the strangest expression comes from a quick lifting of the lids—a sort of flashing out of the eyes, and then a sudden retreat. The effect is quite startling ; I said to her, "do you think *we* shall be friends, Kate ?"

She shook back the hair from her eyes, gave a sudden flash out, followed by as sudden a retreat, and answered :—

"Not yet."

"Why not yet, Kate ?"

"I never love if I can help it," she replied.

"That is very strange—"

"No, they boiled my little turtle in the soup, and put my toad over the wall, so I wouldn't love anything else."

"What odd things to love !"

"I had nothing else ; they brushed away the spiders."

"Mercy ! what a strange child," I involuntarily exclaimed.

Kate gleamed out, and then retired—while Willy stuck his feet up under the table, threw his body back in his chair, and gave way to a great laugh—which was brought to a sudden close by a nudge from Kate.

Horrible little ough ! He will put me into fits.

"Did Miss Bertha send me the lily, Kate ?" I ventured to ask.

"No, I brought it from the brook ; I was standing on the bank, and they held out their hands to me, and said, 'Let us kiss you, little Kate,' and so I went to them. It was just before the locust tree said, 'good night.'"

I stared at the child, and it seemed to me she looked like the lily all at once, with her pure face tremulous, and her eyes moist with light. I reached out my hand and drew her to my side.

"You are an angel, Kate—I love you," I cried with an impulse of tenderness, I could not resist. Kate gave one flash ; her little image of a woman shook from head to foot, and she burst into tears.

"Do not love me—do not make me love you ; it makes me weep so much," she at length exclaimed.

At this moment, Bertha came just in time to give Willy a large lump of sugar, and thus prevented him from committing the sin of purloining it from the bowl. She pressed her two hands to the cheeks of little Kate, in a way that was very sweet and winning, but did not kiss her. Then she

sent the children into the garden. Bertha and I talked a long while, and agreed that the children should be allowed some weeks to grow accustomed to their new mode of life—In the meanwhile they should amuse themselves, much in their own way, without the intervention of books.

I told Bertha I was quite sure Willy's ancestors, from the third to the fourth generation, had lived upon parsnips interspersed with turnips, garnished with cabbage, and seasoned with pork. I was certain the boy would be the death of me.

"I will write your epitaph," she replied gaily, and soon after took her leave. She certainly is growing disagreeable. I hate to see a woman always calm ; your wise woman is such an abomination.

It seems very strange that Bertha did not kiss Kate ; and yet now I recollect it, Bertha does not kiss her friends in meeting. I am glad of it ; for I dislike this hackneyed kind of tenderness women affect towards each other. There is something unreal about it, something indelicate, too. I do not believe women are drawn spontaneously to each other in this way. If they are, it is not pleasant to witness. If it is affectation, it is of a very poor kind. I will ask Bertha concerning this matter.

It is now Thursday night, and I have no sermon written, and feel very much as if I never should be able to write another. Everything has been said worth saying upon the doctrines I preach, and as for daily life, why, my people are savagely virtuous. I do not know where to catch them tripping.

I can't preach at them for the life of me. As I look down from the pulpit, the array of respectable, moral, dull faces is appalling to me. Every well-ironed cravat looks like a barricade ; the stiff waistcoats, and long, tight silk boddices are so many shields and cuirasses to ward off the sharp arrows of conviction. The people say good morning to me, piously, and speak of the weather with a sort of religious unction, and declare "things are better than we deserve." My predecessor in Beech Glen has left nothing for me to do. He has so swathed, balsamed and glued them into orthodoxy, that they are perfectly mummified therein, and now they need somebody to poke them, as I have seen, when a boy, the keepers in a menagerie stir up the lions with a long pole, whereat the beasts would fetch a great yawn and lie down again. I must get the deacon waked up for the sake of an example.

Friday.—At breakfast, this morning, Willy pinched Kate under the table-cloth, and then giggled violently. He asked Jane, the good woman who does our small work, how long the "old 'un," meaning me, "would give them such good feed." Truly my heart is greatly closed against the child.

Kate merely reddened at the pinch, and did not come out at all. I observed her in very earnest talk with Willy, who listened as one might be supposed to listen to a strange tongue—as the audience does to our Latin speeches at Commencement.

Kate has grey eyes, and not dark when at rest. I had thought them black.

Beech Glen is like to be quite gay for a parsonage. My cousin Julia—cousin by two removes—is coming to stay with me awhile. It is a long promised visit. I do not know how she will like my little protégés—upon my word I had liked to have written bastards. This new state of things is quite intensifying my vocabulary. I do not know what will come of it.

Mercy ! Julia has come ; and that too before I am at all settled in my mind what to do, or what I ought to do.

CHAPTER IX.

A perfect woman, nobly planned,
To warn, to comfort, and command ;
And yet a spirit still, and bright,
With something of an angel light.

WORDSWORTH.

As the carriage stopped at the door, I ensconced myself behind the curtain and marked her appearance, for I had given out word that I should keep my room all day. Indeed, it is my custom always to employ Friday as a fast. God be merciful to me—my people think I am on my knees all day ; and our good Jane has more than once placed tempting tit-bits at my door, thinking I will eat. But I never do. In fact I do not feel in the least hungry, for I am ashamed to say, this Friday is my one lazy period. I give way on it to reveries the most delicious. Lounge—sleep—and, in truth, do anything but pray. I drop the curtains—bolt the door—and then defy intrusion. I feel, it is true, some twinges—it seems a touch—of hypocrisy, but that is justified by the habits of the profession. A reputation for sanctity goes very far with a clergyman. I do not aim at this, but such has become the result.

I heard Jane quite loudly and solemnly making apology for me in the entry. My cheek tingled with shame at hearing the good soul describe me as a perfect St. Paul—a grown

up Samuel—a second Daniel, whose seven times a day prayers, on ordinary occasions, were aggravated tenfold of a Friday. I felt as if I must rush out and deny the charge, for all this ostentation of worship,—holding one's family posted up as to the number of petitions—all at once came over me with a sense of Phariseeism, as wicked as it was ludicrous. I am growing more and more perplexed as to a true life.

As the carriage stopped at the door, cousin Julia put one foot upon the step with the intent of alighting, and then, leaving the foot out, turned for the purpose of taking something from the seat. The movement was a very careless one, and to me, a timid clergyman, quite startling. There was the white strip of stocking, the delicate frill, the pretty gaiter, fully exposed.

I like to judge of character by the foot. Julia's did not strike me as especially small, but it had a limberness, spirit, and grace, which made me think of a wood or water-nymph. It has the Arab arch, too, beneath which a stream might flow. Have a care, Mistress Julia, thou art high in the instep, by which the unlettered designate a proud heart. An arched foot goes with a short upper lip, another indication of pride; a short upper lip attends a large development of self-esteem. I have thee now, Julia, with all thy uncurbed likings and dislikings, thy arrogance and self-assertion, thy cold indifferences and bridling disdains. Alack! a simple clergyman, with two nameless kind of children about him, will be quite out of thy track.

But then the foot was very lithe; the ankle just indicated the joint upon either side. There was a sentiment, a tenderness in its expression, such as we sometimes see in fine statuary. It was this part of the figure that went far to redeem the faults of the Greek Slave. I imagine one might easily love the owner of such a foot. The manner in which it rested upon the toe, was like a Mercury, and indicated ideality. Yes, Julia is a creature of sentiment and imagination, and already that one glance has set me to thinking as I had never thought before. I feel as if a crisis in my life were approaching. I am oppressed without cause. Dreams of beauty flash over my mind, quite bewildering, and I must frame them to verse, or worse will come of it.

LOVE, UNCHANGEABLE.

All things of earth must change; Time spareth not
Nor great, nor small, nor beautiful nor vile—
The glowing thought enchanting men ere while—
Good or ignoble deeds, like dullard's lot,
He beareth onward, all to be forgot.
How bear we, then, our human state? How smile?
If there is nothing Change may not defile?
Oh, human love! sole guest from Eden brought,
Thou art from God's eternal fount a rill,
And hast no touch of our poor earth-decay.
Heart, lonely heart, fear not thy cup to fill;
Love, once thine own, can never pass away;
Pure and unchanging, all enduring still,
Despite wreck, death—Love, unappalled, will stay.

There is something strange in writing poetry. We never know how the thought is coming out. I feel as if I but imperfectly comprehended my own expression in this way, from which I am convinced that poetry is the highest human expression, and nearer allied to an oracle than anything else.

God forgive me—here I am writing and dreaming of Cousin Julia, and penning verses when my people solemnly believe me wrestling in spirit for the ourpourings of grace upon the congregation.

As I just peeped out from behind the curtain, I caught the eye of Willy, who seemed to be on the look out for me. "Hey ! old covey," he shouted, and twisted his thumb over his nose, in a very unbecoming manner. That child certainly is a nuisance. I will tell Bertha to that effect, and have him sent back to the work-house. No, I cannot do that ; the workhouse is a shame and an outrage upon men. I wonder I have never thought of these things before—I never remember to have heard that our clergy have exerted themselves to abate their necessity. If the law of love were fully preached, the indigent would never lack a refuge at our firesides. Upon the whole I begin to feel as if neither I nor my brethren had preached any gospel. We do not strike the blow at the root of any evil till the people have themselves barked away at it, and then we follow suit.

I remember, last week, I was greatly tried in seeing how the women of the congregation passed by poor Margery, who has never held up her head since her disgrace became public. I shall be glad when I am an older man, that I

may act with more independence. I noticed the matrons all went by Margery, with peculiarly solemn, virtuous faces, and the girls with a stare and a slight toss of the head.

From behind the curtain I observe Kate is flying here and there, and everywhere. I have not seen her look up once to my window. She reminds me of a sunbeam. I see a mass of yellow hair, a twinkling of little feet, and then she is gone. Poor thing ! what a pity she cannot take wing and fly to a better world. A girl-child always makes me sad. The world holds so little in store for them. One brief dream of love, then sickness, care, grief. I do not know how they keep so cheerful ; *and yet all noble women have a sad expression of face.* Bertha is serene because she sees a better future. I do not. Bertha says, a woman should vote, and when she talks in this wise, I laugh, or am silent, or talk in a way I am ashamed of afterwards.

I am quite sure the woman-child is superior to the man-child. There is so much about the girl hidden and mysterious ; so many exquisite shades—such attraction and repulsion, such intenseness, as if the nerves were of lightning compound ; such affluence of delight, such depths of misery, each following the other with such rapidity, that we are sure to bring up our sympathies quite at the wrong point.

Julia arrived on Friday, and Friday, so unlucky to others, is my lucky day to meet friends, travel, &c. I like to nurse up these superstitions, dandle and pet them as I would weak, beautiful children, doomed to an early death.

Saturday.—Julia is very cold and reserved. She has an

air of style, a rustle of silks, and, altogether, a sort of commotion about her, that quite makes me nervous. I can't help thinking she is very handsome. I can't help thinking that her figure is peculiarly round and full. Bertha came and sat with her needle, two or three hours this morning. She certainly is beautiful. Julia makes one feel that she is handsome ; Bertha makes one to *think* it. I colored badly when Julia began to talk about the children, and when she said,

"Why, Ernest, you will lose your parish ; your people will not have their pastor become the keeper of a Foundling Hospital." It seemed to me there was much truth in it. "Why, what can you do with the girl after all ? No man will marry her. The boy can do better, but the girl has no hope."

"Is there no hope for a woman out of marriage?" asked Bertha.

"I see nothing in the present state of the world, but for women to marry, have large families, talk, gossip, read cheap books, go round and leave little slips of paper at the houses of women employed like themselves, and then die."

"I did not think you had thought at all upon this subject," replied Bertha.

"Oh, yes ; I have thought ; but our lives are so poor, that, but for flirtations, I should sink into the state of the dormouse," answered Julia. "I wrote verses till I discovered I was not a feminine Milton, and then I gave it up in disgust, and now I am envious to death. I came here, Cousin

Ernest, just to get rid of the Lilliput excitements of fashion. Do you think, Bertha, I have been trying all my life to get in love, and don't succeed. *Une grande passion* would be quite refreshing."

This pretty affectation quite took me by surprise, and being all uttered in a low tone, with a slow utterance, made Julia seem so fascinating, that I certainly thought a woman more attractive for having a spice of the d—l in her composition, a conclusion totally at variance with the dogmas of my profession.

I observed Bertha turned quite pale as Julia spoke, and she then replied,—

"Once I thought as you do, Julia, that a woman's life must be all made up of petty pursuits. I saw no hope in the future, and I made it a point to repress all in my own nature that might isolate me from my kind. I contemned greatness, lest the weak poppinjays of the times should desert me. I held back the beatings of my own heart, because its pulses were louder than others. I turned my eyes from God's living oracles, because they were revealed to me alone. Then I was troubled with frightful dreams. I, night after night, imagined myself consigned to a living grave. I felt the blackness, the compression ; my senses were preternaturally active. I heard the birds in the branches of the trees. I heard the small insects amid the grass. The light wing of the breeze, as the blossoms bent to its caress, came to my sense, and I would say, 'Oh for the resurrection and the life ; oh to be delivered from this body of death.'

"Do you believe that dreams indicate our mental and moral atmosphere? I am sure you do; all at once an invisible voice spoke in my soul and said. 'Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free;' then I arose into a new life. Then I ceased to look through any human mind for authority, and I, too, learned to trust to my own consciousness, as the out-spoken God. From that time I lay no more in a living grave. I sang the resurrection songs, and the vision of the prophet became mine; and now new harmonies awoke in the soul of womanhood, as revealed to me in the coming times. The 'Honor thy Father and thy Mother,' of the Decalogue, has, to me, a new significance. I see that man's freedom is woman's freedom. I see that in a true state, woman will know of no disabilities in which man does not share; but I see, far beyond our present social condition—far beyond our present political development, an ever brightening future. I see woman filling wisely and well aspects denied her in the present; offices for which God has imparted appropriate capacities, one and equal with our brothers; but I see onward, far beyond this, a lovelier future, where man himself has cast aside his cumbrous legislation, and the noise of representation, and the law of God is written upon every heart, and every man is an altar of worship. The earth is a garden of God, and man sits again at the feet of angels, and woman is once more not the slave, not the appendage, not the plaything of her brother, but his great soul-need."

"Bertha, you are inspired," cried Julia, her eyes lamping out sparks of peculiar brilliancy. "Could I see a tithe of

what you behold, I should be; well, God knows there is much in me that will never be brought into the light."

Bertha bent her heavenly eyes downward upon Kate, who had dropped upon her knees before her, the large tears falling from her lids.

"Do not stop," said the little child, "do not stop. The blessed child-angel is beside you, and the angels are binding the rainbow over your head."

"God will speak to you himself, without the intervention of angels, if you are true in your very heart," said Bertha, in a low voice.

"But is there no sphere ordained for women?" I asked, not sympathizing as Julia did, in this current of thought.

"Yes, God designs the sphere of his creatures shall be analogous to the faculties imparted them. In the true state, human toil will be lessened, human legislation abridged; but till that state arrives, imperfect woman must compete with imperfect man, in a sphere side by side with him, sharing his toils, his burdens, and his triumphs. *The measure of capacity is the measure of sphere to either man or woman*. In this view I see no excuse for indolence or imbecility in woman. If ambition be noble and honorable in man, it is no less so in woman. She should no more shrink from responsibility, from mental or moral greatness, than her Brother. But there is a finer essence allied to the feminine organization, which will always flow like silver threads of harmony, intersecting her whole career. Through this she will tend to the peaceful and spiritual manifestations of

being. She will live in nearer relations with the Divine, than it is the nature of the *more material masculine element to do*; she will be more serene, more holy, more peace-loving—she will tend more exclusively to the beautiful. She will do great works but in a womanly way. She will be less recipient, more active; she will learn mysteries of her own being as yet hidden from the world; till, at length, in the language of the Apocalypse, she will be 'clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet.' I have visions of these things, that reveal to me eternal futures, glorious in light and beauty; and now all futures for my sex, through all aspects of the universe, are filled with joy unspeakable."

"But, Bertha," I said, "I do not see how all this is to be, without utterly breaking up the comforts of home and the fireside."

"At some time, Ernest," answered Bertha, "I will give you the true key to womanhood. I will show you, that where perfect love exists, perfect harmonies follow. At some time I will give you the meaning of the moss-rose, one of the loveliest natural symbols of spiritual qualities, but not now. I vex and annoy you with my views, and truth should never wear an unlovely aspect."

CHAPTER X.

Shrined within its charmed hollow,
Many a mystic virtue lay;—
Safely might her footsteps follow
Wheresoe'er it led the way.

SARAH HELEN WHITMAN.

I AM greatly tried. I have not been able to write one word. I see Willy frisking here and there, delighted with his new clothes. Jane inquired where the children were to sit in meeting, and when I told her, in our pew, she reddened greatly. I am much cast down.

Kate has presented me another lily; as she did so her soul flashed into her eyes a very lovely out-look. "I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest," came again to my mind. The bell is tolling; Deacon Hopkins has gone past, and I must go also.

Noon.—As I walked to meeting it seemed to me that a whole revelation grew out of that lily. The medium from which it springs, water, and its own pure whiteness, seemed to symbolize unadulterated truth, and so I took for my text, "Consider the lilies how they grow, they toil not, neither do they spin," and then I spoke for nearly an hour—with a courage quite beyond myself, showing we should follow truth without toilful questionings as to where she would

lead, but trusting in God's love of his own, say, "What is that to thee, follow thou me." I said, Truth often came in an unexpected shape, and then we needed clear eyes to know her divine form, and a strong heart to give her acceptance.

All at once the work I have attempted for these children, struck me as a new revelation. These little outcasts seemed sent expressly to challenge me to a higher and more courageous duty in life. I spoke out, in regard to the Alms House. Called them whited sepulchres, built up by Phariseism, and sustained by the callous selfishness of those who were too apathetic to see that labor finds its equivalent. *The two select men of Beech Glen, together with the overseer of the work-house, rose up and walked out of the house, whereat Willy snapped his fingers, and seemed to think it a species of fun.* Deacon Hopkins, to my amazement, was wide awake, and came to me after meeting, and said, "Now, Parson Helfenstein, you are beginning to preach."

I saw the people stare at the pauper children in my pew, and my good Jane had declined to sit therein, although Julia occupied a seat there. "I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest," I exclaimed in a kind of ecstasy, as these petty trials suggested the magnitude of those to which the earlier Christians were exposed. I even longed for the days of martyrdom, that I might seal my testimony with my blood. And then I seemed to see, as the entire mind opened itself for the reception of nobler truths, the details of life

would dwindle into insignificance, and we should bear our spirits beyond their annoyance. "When," I cried, "shall the earth become one great household, and man a community of brothers? Let us help on the work here in our midst, by going forth with warm human hearts, to lift up the oppressed, help the stricken, and divide our substance with the needy." I came home full of a new life, and ready to do all I had preached. I took hold of Willy's hand to lead him home, for really, what with his new clothes, including a pair of stout shoes, his back straightened materially, and he made very strange work in walking. He twisted along for awhile, and then made sundry attempts to draw his hand away, saying, in a way I found it difficult to understand:—"No you don't; you don't come it over this child. I ain't agoin' to wear these 'ere shoes neither, to please nobody." And so he sat down by the side of the road and took them off—stockings also—whereat the people giggled in a way that displeased me.

I did not mind Willy much, for it seemed to me that I had come to a new birth. I was like a stream far up amid the hills, which worketh onward silently, unconscious of its own power; till some intervening barrier obstructs its course, and compelleth it up to the light—when, gathering volume, it leaps onward from pass to pass, singing ever the song of its disenthralment.

I went to my room at noon. I ate nothing for the day—"indeed I have bread ye know not of," was fully realized in me. I will open my heart freely to the soul of humanity.

I will ask nothing as to its errors, but will respond to its needs. Now I see why my soul revolted at the hard, callous faces of the respectable, the pious, the virtuous in the world's estimation. It was its instinctive recoil from hypocrisy and selfishness. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Now I begin to understand the nobleness of Bertha. As we sat at the table to-night, I poured out a glass of cold water, and turning to her, said—"Bertha, I present this cup to thee in the name of a disciple;" to which she replied, in a low, deep voice, and a lovely flush upon her face :—

"Are ye able to drink of the cup I shall drink, and to be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?"

"They that trust in the Lord shall renew their strength," I answered. Truly, Bertha must be the highest angel of ministry to my soul; for when I am nearest the Divine she is very dear to me, and I see nothing of the rest of her sex. Even Julia, beautiful as she is, hardly crossed my thoughts for the day.

Monday.—Kate knocked at my door just now, a thing she has never done before. I was pleased, for it argued a growing confidence. She held up a lily, saying, "It is the last in the brook," and truly her abundant locks, and a something, I know not what, made me see her again like a lily. I seemed to behold a soul, not a child, and I said :—

"Kate, I will call you Lily."

"And I will call you Ernest," she answered, with a quick outflashing, a slight laugh, and then a flood of tears. I

drew her to me, and she shook back her curls and smiled, for Lily does not well harbor a grief. She laid her two hands, folded, upon my knee, and so many shades of sensibility chased each other over her face that I tried in vain to follow them. I gave it up, and said :—

"What is it, Lily?"

"I will be Lily only to you," she said, while the prettiest of lips was bit into order by very white teeth, and then she pressed my lap an instant and sighed heavily, and then she tossed her hair again and drew up with a sort of little woman pride, and said :—

"Do you love me?"

God shield the child with these passionate sensibilities! I recoiled from her as at something impish. She saw it, and walked to the door with the step of a young stag. "Lily," I cried, "come here." She returned, and looked me in the face, and then it seemed to me that she retreated farther and farther within herself, till there was no outspeaking, and I lost the child, lost Lily, lost Kate—and saw only a beautiful, puzzling little sphinx, without life or sympathy. I never till now felt how the child moved entirely in a sphere of her own, that she created a sphere that nothing might invade. Whatever aspect she assumed was so perfect in its kind, that one was deluded into the belief that it was the true life, till another superseded it, equally perfect in kind; and so I put my arm around her slight figure reverently, as if it had been Psyche's self. How beautiful she seemed, as she came back

from her distant life, and laid her cheek tenderly against mine, just as she would against the shoulder of her kitten.

I am sure Kate was born with a comet in the zenith, and when she finds no sympathy she retires off into her aphelion, and comes up, nearer and nearer to her perihelion, as she enters more and more the orbit of pure sympathy. She lifted up her head, and looked into my eyes—her soul flashed an instant outward, and then seemed to quiver, and gleam with a soft tremulous life so hushed and yet so rich, that I could not forbear holding back her head to drink in its whole marvellous beauty. But she shook me off impatiently, saying, in a manner quite unexpected, "Don't, Mr. Helfenstein."

Never had my name seemed so cold before. Somehow this unrecognized love-child was nestling within my very soul. She was it—me. She was not a child to be trained—a girl to be dressed and petted—she was a soul—she was one of those visions that nightly float before the mind's eye as we verge upon sleep-land.

"Will you not call me dear Ernest, Lily?"

"Do you love me?" she asked again, with one of her out-flashings.

"Suppose I do not love you, Lily?"

"Jane told me you did not love me, that you thought me proud, and that I must not expect to be loved, because—because—Willy is peeping through the key-hole," she said, with sudden transition.

"How do you know he is?"

"Oh I feel it," she replied, and I opened the door, and sure enough there was Willy, with his nose all red where he had pressed it against the old brass knob.

He came forward reluctantly, "I don't care if you don't love me," he said, as if in reply to Kate's question.

"Why, Willy, don't you want to be loved?"

"No," he answered, without the least circumlocution, while Lily looked at him as calmly as a moonbeam upon a rock.

"Why not, Willy?"

"Why, because Granny Pettingal, at the work-house, told me, I was a child of the devil—born in sin, and the Lord wouldn't know what became of me."

I groaned in spirit. "But Willy, you'll be good, and then we shall all love you."

"I hav'n't got a chance to be good now," he replied, "I don't wear any aprons."

"Bless the child! what can he mean?" I ejaculated.

"Why, Granny Pettingal said, if I was good I wouldn't slobber my apron, and now I don't wear 'em, so I don't need to be good."

Verily, I must go to the very foundations to teach this child; and so I impressed it upon him, that it wasn't good to peep into keyholes—that it was not the way to do. If he wished to know anything, he must ask about it, and never listen at the door. He heard me with his mouth

open, and I could see a gleam of better intelligence awakening in his mind.

When I had sent him from the room, I pressed my lips to the forehead of Kate, and said, "I love you a great deal, Lily."

The tears swelled from under her lids, and she whispered, "I see the beautiful child again, because now I am very happy."

I should have covered any other child with kisses, who could talk in this sweet mystic way, but there was that pure instinctive reserve about Kate, that made her seem sacred, as if the good Father had placed a lily at the portal of every sense of the child. I was awed before a girl of ten summers.

Suddenly she started—approached me, retreated—and then with an out-flash, she put her little hand to my cheek, and drew the other to her lips, and turned away to leave the room. "Do not go, Lily," I said.

"I must teach Jeannie, and look to my kittie, and—"

"Who is Jeannie?"

"Why, don't you know Jeannie?" she cried, and now she was not a lily, nor a sphinx, nor a spirit, but a live child of flesh and blood, whose white shoulders and bright eyes were the most beautiful in the world. "Why, Jeannie is my dolly," and she was off before I could intercept her.

Beguiled by the child, the shadows of evening gathered around me, and the period so often devoted to painful thought

had passed away; and now that she was gone, it seemed as if a sudden light had been taken from the room—a fresh, warm, clear light—and now I see that a beautiful soul takes away by its presence the sense of cold and gloom, and that these things belong to the dark earth, and the unhappy dark spirits of the children of earth.

Isaac of old went out at even-tide to meditate. He thought of her, the expected bride, who was to share the tabernacle with this child of promise. The subject of thought must have been of comparative limit in those days, and emotions, being less complex, must have been limited also; while we, with our many resources, crowd into our three-score years and ten a greater experience than a Methuselah could have known.

CHAPTER XI.

A thousand liveried angels lackey her,
Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt;
And, in clear dream and solemn vision,
Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear;
Till oft converse with heavenly habitants
Begin to cast a beam on the outward shape.

MILTON.

BERTHA seems to have been occasionally much annoyed by the pertinacious intermeddling of Defiance, but she rarely enters into any details of the kind. Once she says:—

"Defiance is very wearing. She would, if she could, be a thorough Procrustes in a small way. She persists in retailing all sorts of gossip to me, notwithstanding my repugnance to listen to it. It is in vain I say, when she tells me of some supposed enormity, which is simply an individual having done something *unlike* the mode of his neighbors—" Ah, well, that is the person's way. I respect people who have a way of their own."

"But it's so strange," persists Defiance. "Now I think, if a person does thus and thus, they are no better than they should be."

"Well, perhaps they do not care what you think."

"Not care! why I am as respectable a woman as there is in Beech Glen, and I defy you or any one else to say anything against me."

I was silent. "You don't answer me. I defy you to do it," she replied, her little, keen, black eyes looking like two coals of fire, and her thin lips shrivelled to a single thread.

"My good girl," I said, "I have nothing to say. And if I knew ever so much evil of you I would be silent. I should only seek to help you to the good."

"Girl! you call me girl, do you? I don't wish to be called any such thing. I'm a member of the church, of good standing; a wife of a respectable man to say the least, and the mother of children, and have a right to be treated with respect. But I believe you would take any dirty trollop right out of the streets, and treat her as well as the most virtuous woman in the world."

"I certainly should, Defiance, with this difference. I should treat her with more tenderness. I should soothe and comfort, and incite and sustain her reverently, as one of God's precious children, overcome by the tempests of life; wrecked and bruised upon the sharp rocks of human peril. I should uphold her, morally imbecile, even more tenderly than the lame and the blind are upheld by the kindly human arm."

"Yes, and you would encourage these creatures, and put them on a level with the strictly virtuous."

"What is it to be virtuous, Defiance? Does virtue consist in but one quality; or is it the combination of many?"

"Oh, you are going to talk in your *subtile* way. I will not hear you. You would delude a saint when you set about it," and Defiance hurried out of the room, as if the serpent

himself were about to fasten his coils about her. All this time Biddy had been going round the room under various pretexts, for the sake of listening. When Defiance left the room she said:

"Oh, Miss Bertha, you are not far from the kingdom of heaven. The blessed Virgin was like you, and all the saints love you."

"Bless you, Biddy," I said, and the pure, warm recognition of the good girl was grateful to me.

Defiance is so pertinaciously wrong-headed, and so coldly wrong-hearted, that she would cause me much discomfort were not my inward peace too profound to be outwardly assailed. And yet I am not at peace. There is a deep stirring of my life which at first filled me with alarm, but not now. A great joy has been revealed to me—a joy known only unto me and God. Hitherto much of my life has been a protest, a rejection. Now I accept. Now adown the silvery slants of universal harmonies come heavenly utterances, and my willing ears listen; and a joy too sweet to be tumultuous glides into the holy of holies of my heart and attunes it all to melody. "As seemeth it unto thee good," I replied to this angel visitation, and then I wrote the following, not in doubt nor discontent, but in sure peace.

A REVELATION.

Wells of unfathomed light, that downward pour
From domes of orient pearl, rose-tinged in hue;
Faint music, sweet as night-bird ever knew,
And fragrance born of rose and lily store,

All softly blent, stole my wrapt senses o'er,
The blossom at my feet so strangely grew
To perfect grace, that I my foot withdrew,
As at creation never seen before.
With azure, vermeil, creamy tint, each star
Became a spirit, with a golden lyre
Leaning, and hymning through the dusky night,
To notes responsive, coming from afar.
Touched by a spark from Heaven's ethereal fire,
I loved and was beloved, and all is light.

Lily comes often to see me, and her sweet spiritual nature is one of the finest of human revelations. *She is a seer, a prophet, as all women will be, more or less, as the sex is emancipated from servility.* She has visions of fine essences, who come to her naturally, as to a sister being. A beautiful spirit, which she sweetly names the child angel, is her constant companion. I have had, more than once, a faint gleam of this child angel, but only when Lily was with me. She says it never comes where there are no children, and never where these are unholy and unloving. It never speaks, never laughs, but sits and plays with her and Willy, and when any one comes in, the angel goes away. When they are alone, it comes again, and they are very happy. "Once," said little Lily, "I was not wise and good. I did not know how good God is, and I used to pray, and weep, and think the world was black and unlovely; but the child angel wiped my tears, and showed me the lilies, and the roses, and the singing birds, and I have never prayed any more, for now I know

how good God is, and how much he loves me, and so I do not weep; I do not mind the storm, for I see always *bright flowers and sunshine somewhere, if not here.*"

"That child will die," said the good Bridget, "she is little short of an angel now."

But I feel otherwise. The beautiful, the heavenly do not leave us because of their surpassing loveliness, as being too much for our earth, but because of disease, imbecility, and mismanagement. The world needs all her children; the more divinely perfect, the greater is her need of them. They have a work to do in aid of the beneficent Father, and the great cry of mother earth is, that there is no "strength" in her children.

How reverently I look upon this child, living always in the smiles of the Eternal! Ah! it seems to me such should we all be. Would men and women treat each other more *reverently*; there would be less of evil in the world. *The sins, even, of a woman*, take their rise in a holy fountain. Men do not know how sacredly a woman's affections should be treated, how deeply, in spite of wrong-doing, she honors and worships the sentiment of chastity. The poor Magdalen, spurned, outraged and scorned, holds yet, in the depths of her being, the memory of her days of beauty, *her lily times*, and she seeks to forget them by the coarse revel and the wine-cup. Could women remember this, that deep in the heart of her miserable sister is the angel of the Lily, she would cast a pitying mantle over her frailties, and help her gently to the light. Woman must uphold woman. All the

machinery of reform is idle and ineffective; but when the true, pure, loving heart of a great, noble womanhood shall be revealed to the world, crime and misery will cease to be. It is vain to appeal to our brothers. Women must do the work themselves. They must learn to uphold each other, to be loyal to each other, and then we are emancipated. Then we are individuals, not appendages; companions, not household chattels; citizens, and not children, lunatics and idiots, in the law. But we have much to learn; wisdom, discretion, forecast, all, even beyond these things in our brothers; for when a woman aims at achievement, she is more thoroughly executive than the majority of the other sex.

CHAPTER XII.

The means that heaven yields must be embraced,
And not neglected ; *else, if heaven would,*
And we will not, heaven's offer we refuse.

SHAKESPEARE.

Our good parson seems to have been gradually brought out of his dreamy state into one of much activity. Judging from his journal, Julia occupied quite as much room in his fancy as was consistent with parochial duties, and Bertha was by no means exiled therefrom. It was evident he lived less in forms and more in realities. Old parchment laws, hereditary and acquired prejudices, were melting away under higher intuitions, and individual convictions. *He was becoming a live man.* The opinions of others, the approval of others, began to weigh as nothing when placed in the balance of his own perceptions of truth. The reveries of the visionary, the sensuousness of the poet, yielded to a fine manly grasp of life and its claims. He no longer looked blindly up to the walls of the Temple of Divine Truth, but began boldly to enter the sacred edifice, and to question daringly at her oracles. In all this it was evident Bertha was his guide, even when unacknowledged by him.

At one time he says, "Bertha has not been to see us for

many days, and I feel as if defrauded of my best mind. With her I am never at a loss for thoughts, although I see she is the fount of them. There is never solitude in the presence of Bertha. If she is silent, her face is eloquent with more than words ; and her attitudes, calm, graceful as they are, suggest motion, as of the spheres—something angelic and harmonious.

"Bertha studiously refrains from naming the past, but I am convinced her history is either remarkable in itself or her nature is so remarkable, that a knowledge of her past experience would be full of interest. John True, a great, honest, good man, speaks of her as one belonging to the archangels rather than lower intelligences. I asked him once, in a pastoral way, if he knew her former history."

"Yes, Mr. Helfenstein ; all of it from the days of her childhood."

"She is American," I said.

"Yes, God be praised ! No other country, and no other people, could father such a woman to my way of thinking. But, Mr. Helfenstein, some day, I know it, I feel it, some day Miss Bertha will tell you all, and I think you are man enough to understand her."

Once I ventured a hint to the effect, that our antecedents are often more interesting than the present experience, to which she replied, with a slight shudder, "The past is the ground of the dotard only. Even the wise visit it, only to gather thence a better philosophy. To-day is the point of value ; the past is but the causeway over which we passed

to the present. If we found it rough, it is because a great soul must learn to know its power from a great experience."

Yesterday I found on the table of Julia a daguerreotype, which she had procured of Lily, and which suggested a singular resemblance, and one I had not before observed. It has filled me with a strange perplexity. The portrait is beautiful and remarkable for its serene, pure depths. The sun paints from beneath the surface, and point by point tells of the hidden experience of the face he delineates. Hence all persons look older in the Daguerre than to a casual observer, because to the sun a thousand years is as one day, and one day as a thousand years, while the passage of some aspect of life, momentary it may be, involves the history of years, colors the whole character, and leaves an impress that may go onward to eternal relations, and this the sun paints. The Daguerre is the great revealer of secrets. I lately saw one of a handsome woman of fashion, more than suspected of an impure life. The sun had penetrated beneath the conventional smile, and the conventional look of decorum, and there had found the soul of a satyr, and that he painted.

My own portrait by the Daguerre, has a weird, unearthly look, with a slight expression of pain. I like to see how I stand in the great heart of nature; I do not harmonize well in ordinary surroundings. I require deep shadows, rocks, water, and a rich, warm light, falling like a saint's robe down where the doe leads her young to drink, and the blos-

soms cluster to the dip of the stream. I, Ernest Helfenstein, am a mixture of bravery and cowardice, coldness and sensibility, and I must have these contrasts in nature to represent me fitly. I wish Bertha understood me better—though upon my word I couldn't love her. But then Bertha doesn't care. I wish she did. We men hate to feel that a superior woman doesn't care the snap of her finger whether we like her or not.

Julia said just now—"The fauns and satyrs would not love to dance before Bertha, but the gods would love to bend from their pearly battlements for a look into her eyes."

Thursday.—Beech Glen is in a great state of excitement in regard to my sermon of last Sunday, and because I have taken these children from the alms-house into my family. Deacon Hopkins called just now to talk the matter over. He declared he couldn't see as I had done anything out of the way, but the Selectmen said I was doing great mischief. They said the town would be filled with children without fathers, and the young women would feel as if it didn't matter much whether they had husbands or not, so long as these children were treated as well or better than children lawfully born.

I grew red with indignation, and asked him if there was no such thing as truth and modesty in the world, and if he thought all the people wanted was opportunity in order to do evil deeds.

He replied—"I believe the women folk are pretty nigh

equal to men, Mr. Helfenstein ; *but the little that they lack bein' so makes a great difference.*"

"But you think the women are as virtuous as men, Deacon?"

"No, Parson ; we spare them—that's all."

"And Bertha," I said—"how many men are her superiors?"

"Well, Bertha is like one of the women of the Bible. She isn't like any other woman living."

"And Julia?"

"Oh, she is like them Greek women that we read of. And let me tell you, Parson, as a friend, not to look that way."

I grew red again, and the old Deacon rolled his quid of tobacco over, and eyed me keenly, with a sort of smile on his face that annoyed me greatly.

In the meanwhile my household is not harmonious. Old Jane, the cook, sits, hour after hour, of a long evening, as on a throne, and receives the neighboring gossips, and discusses the affairs of all the people of the parish. Willy has learned to vex and tease her in a variety of ways. She has more than once complained to me in regard to this, saying, very pathetically and pointedly :

"These things is wearing to flesh and blood, Mr. Helfenstein, coming from children, as is honest people's children, but coming from the likes, is too much."

Recently, Jane is so often in the declamatory vein, that the work of the family seems quite out of order, and the

bread has been heavy for breakfast, the meat overdone, and all out of sorts, while Jane fulminates complaints, and philippics, quite to the edification of the neighbors, but certainly not to the advantage of my household.

I am sometimes in the habit of walking up and down the great hall of the house, and there recite passages of my sermons, and meditate upon subjects of interest. The kitchen door opens into this hall, but so absorbed am I in my own thoughts, that I do not observe whether the door is open or shut, and so conscious is Jane of this abstraction, that she goes out and in, or sits and declaims without in the least minding me. To-day, however, I became aware of the frequent use of the word parson, from the lips of Jane, and next, I observed her to say,

"The parson hear me ! La bless you, I might call him a fool right to his face, and he would not understand it. He's a good man, there is no doubt of that, but then he's an infant of a man," and she laughed ready to split her sides ; and Willy coming in, joined her without hearing a word.

"Oh wad some power the giftie gie us
To see oursel'es as ithers see us."

I doubt if we should desire this, if these opinions of us were no more flattering than those of my splenetic housekeeper of me, simple, plain Ernest Helfenstein.

Jane did not like that Willy should laugh at me, and she jerked out her head at him, and gesticulated violently, and then made a grand dash after the boy. Willy rushed

out, and I caught him just in time to save him from a pull of the ears from Jane. I retreated into the library, bearing him in my arms, and verily his weight was astonishing, for he let every nerve and muscle hang like a rag, and his great head rolled about as it had been an unripe pumpkin. When I put him upon the floor, he stood like a machine, with his legs twisted and his clothes all out of place ; but I observed his eye had a fierce look about it.

"What you goin' to do now?" he asked in a sharp voice

"Make you a good boy, Willy."

"You can't do it—you can't, you old Fogey."

My heart rebelled against the child, and I could not venture to speak. I put my head upon my hand, and leaned my elbow upon the table to collect my thoughts, for I began to say to myself, "Why should I, a lover of peace and beauty, why should I, be subjected to all this discord?" and my selfish weakness brought tears into my eyes. The child saw it, and began to straighten himself up.

"You can't do it," he repeated defiantly.

I could not speak ; I felt and thought too painfully for words. My self-love had been so much wounded of late, that I was like a denuded lobster at the season of casting his shell, and had about as much manhood as that retrograde animal. I held out my hand to the child.

"No you don't, ye alligator," he answered.

"What's an alligator, Willy?"

"A humbug, what cries."

I felt so ashamed I did not know what next to say.

"Come, lick me and have it over," said the boy, approaching to my chair.

I laid my hand instinctively upon his head, and said faintly, "My poor child!"

Suddenly Willy rushed to the door, opened it and shut it with a great slam, and presently I heard an outcry, so loud, so like the wail of some dumb creature in pain, that I hastened out to find Willy beating his head against the columns of the portico, and giving way to sundry sounds as I never heard from any other child. Lily had come to his aid, and had put her small hand upon his shoulder, and I heard her say, "Poor Willy," in a sweet, low tone.

"Go away, Kate, go away, Kate!" shouted the boy, and then he stopped short and asked :

"Kate, do you believe there's a devil?"

"No, Willy, only angels."

"I do, Kate ; I see 'em every night, with long tails and red eyes, and they keep saying, 'we'll have you, Bill—they never call me Willy,' " and he began once more his strange cries. I retreated to my study, thinking these two children would better institute harmony without any intervention of mine.

At length I heard a change in the direction of the voice, and then there were two or three hard kicks, slow, one after another, at my door, and then as if a heavy body had been projected against it, a whole volume of sound seemed to be poured through the key-hole into my very ears.

I opened the door, and Willy would have pitched upon the floor if I hadn't stayed him.

"Cant you flog a fellow ; cant you do it?"

"Why, no, my poor boy."

Willy danced up and down, and screamed, oh—oh—oh!—as if subjected to terrible suffering.

"Don't you look sorry at me, don't you look sorry at me." His voice changed to a slight sob, and he fell back faint. I raised him in my arms and laid him gently upon the sofa. I took water and bathed his temples, and he laid with his eyes closed, the tears coursing down his poor little fat cheeks.

"The angels have come, Willy," whispered Kate, bending her lips to the ear of the boy, who lifted up his head and said, "Where, where, Kate?"

"Hush," said Lily, with a sort of womanly way, and pointing over her shoulder ; and there, sure enough, stood a beautiful child, with long flaxen curls parted in the centre of the head, and heavenly blue eyes, looking most tenderly at the poor unclaimed boy of the people. I observed its feet were bare, and it had a small white robe that fell down, leaving one shoulder quite naked. Both children looked confidingly into its face. "What is this, Lily?" I asked.

"It is the Child-Angel," she replied—and now it was gone, and the children both looked disappointed.

"Tell me more of this Child-Angel, Lily," I said.

"They do not like to have us talk about them, and God does not like us to tell about our prayers ; and, dear Ernest,

how can you pray in the church?" All this was uttered with such earnest rapidity, that I was quite confounded. But Willy came to the rescue.

"Let him pray, Kate ; I say let him pray. He doesn't lick anybody fust, like Deacon Pettingal, nor call us children of the devil, like Granny Pettingal."

Lily recoiled all over. It was evident her delicate nature could bear *wrong better than the expression of it*.

"I say, Kate, let him pray—pray away, old fellow !" he fairly shouted—"you don't lie. I've watched you—ye don't sham only a Fridays ; ye don't cheat and say 'tis the Lord's doin's. I never saw you look down from your little bunk up there, to see who liked the way you prayed."

I was astonished at his precocious observation. But this little outlaw had lived without sympathy, and had grown keen in detecting the falsehoods about him. Now, for the first time he seemed to be learning there was another aspect to life. He moved here and there in great excitement, snapped his fingers, and breathed deeply, as if his fat body were in the way of his new revelations.

Then, too, I confess I felt some little qualms as he passed his scalping-knife with such a flourish over my head. Ernest Helfenstein is not immaculate, I said inwardly—there are shams, after all, beyond the penetration of this child, which I see in myself and detect in others. Truth in the secret recesses of the soul God demands of us, and yet we go about hoodwinking ourselves and others.

I see that my project for teaching has been superseded by

adopting these forsaken children ; but I do not regret it. On the contrary, I see I am doing a holier work in the world, and one that must produce deeper results than the ordinary plans of imparting knowledge at present achieve. I never before was conscious of such exhilaration of life—such force of thought ; and, indeed, my pecuniary affairs have been thrifty to a very startling degree since the introduction of these orphans into my family.

CHAPTER XIII.

With eyes so pure, that from their ray
Dark vice would turn abashed away,
Blinded like serpents, when they gaze
Upon the emerald's virgin blaze.

MOORE.

THE parish have just paid up my salary. I took the gold with shame. I inherit a good property ; I have health ; I have mental resource ; I love work for its own sake. I shall think of these things, and it may be, decline the market value of the truth. This cent per cent, I fear me, has a paralytic touch upon the truth-seeing faculty.

I fear my journal will be the mere record of my grievances. I am not happy—am not serene. I pray with a fervor I never knew before. "Out of the *depths* I cry to thee, O Lord !" Yes, out of the depths of my very soul. I seem to see the eternal past and the eternal future. The world is hoary with uncounted centuries, and the springs of my being extend into the dim past till they are no longer mine, but the pulsings of the heart universal. My self-ism yields before sublime and far extended sympathies. I am ashamed of my poor weak life ; in which I have brooded over solitary emotions, or have brought words—words to my ministry, rather than the living oracles of the great God.

Our clergy raise the cry of infidelity always at new doctrines of reform. I am verily persuaded that the scepticism of the world is lodged in the pulpit.

What do we do when unbelief
Is trumpeting his views?
Why, put it in the *pulpit*, sirs,
To keep it from the pews.

My brothers could never preach as they now do—could never be so childishly ambitious for fine churches, and for rich salaries—did they really believe the truths of our religion. They put down reformers who come with new revelations, because the doctrines of these reformers, and the self-denying devotion of these reformers, is a perpetual rebuke to themselves. The clergy have wealth, power. They command the church; they give the tone to literature; they have printing-presses innumerable, by which they might inculcate highest truths; they control the lives and consciences of women. And if the world is no better, it is the fault of the priest.

Lately a celebrated singer was in New York. The clergy went to hear her—attended her rehearsals—made her speeches—praised, flattered her; and yet one, if not more, of her songs was so indelicate that no woman could hear it without a sense of shame.

The poet is the only great, true reformer. His whole soul must be adjusted to the truth, or he is no poet. Hence he sings of wrong—and, like the nightingale, leans upon

the thorn that pierces his flesh, and pours forth his griefs so melodiously, that we forget the anguish in delight of the melody. The poet should sing in the fullness of content; and he will do so in the better ages.

As I walked to church this morning, Julia was with me, and Lily took my hand, while Willy, who is growing very thoughtful, kept close to her side. "Where are the lilies?" he asked, quite softly.

"God has folded them to sleep till the winter is over," little Kate replied; "but they will come again."

After awhile I happened to look at Willy, and, to my amazement, the tears were slowly coursing down his cheeks, dotting his linen collar, and glistening on the front of his jacket. I dropped the hand of Kate, and reached for Willy's, whereat Lily flashed out her soul inquiringly, and then retreated with a smile as she saw the condition of Willy.

We had not gone far, however, before the child broke out into great cries, and dropped my hand. Without speaking a word, he started for home at a full run. The people laughed. Good Deacon Hopkins even had to stop and relieve himself of his quid, in order to laugh decently, while his wife said:

"Parson Helfenstein, that boy aches for a good whipping." But the Deacon interrupted her by saying—"I don't know about that so much, but you can't make a whistle out of a pig's tail."

I gave a hurried glance at Julia, and must say her evident

merriment disconcerted me. But Lily, pure, beautiful, strange Lily, said—"The Child-Angel will come and comfort Willy."

As we walked onward, the leaves rustled beneath our tread, and eddied gustily in our path. A warm autumnal haze lay upon the landscape, and in the distance the cold blue of the water glittered with a bright sheen, that harmonized well with the unclouded atmosphere. I felt my spirits rise under the invigorating air, and I moved with a lighter tread, and became endowed with a more courageous life.

My sensibilities are too predominant; they weaken and distress me. But now that I know my infirmity, I shall be able to regulate them. They help me to a sympathy for my kind, and for that reason I will bear the pangs as best I may. God forbid I should shut up my heart in selfish isolation.

I thought of these things as I stood before the people this morning, I thought, too, of what Lily had said: "how can you pray in church?" I felt its rebuke. I asked, "How much of intellectual vanity, how much of rhetorical flourish hast thou indulged in, Ernest Helfenstein? How often hast thou prayed *at* thy people instead of to the Father of Love and Truth? *How often thou hast prayed a creed instead of pouring out a soul to the fountain of spirits!*" Where thou should'st merge thyself in the divine, how often hast thou cast about to frame fine paragraphs and nicely rounded periods! Shame on thee, thou sham of piety! Shame on thee, Ernest Helfenstein, thou poor ape of a man, practising thy fantastic tricks in the eyes of the pure light."

Filled with this longing for infinite rest in the Divine, I knelt in prayer. I know not what I said—I know not, care not, if well said—I was in the mount with prophets and patriarchs, and, walking hand and hand with Him of Nazareth; I felt as if all the sorrows of humanity were rolled upon my soul, and I had become the mouth-piece to the Eternal; uttering the cry, be pitiful, oh God; send thou the Comforter, thou soul of love.

My text was, "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." I followed, step by step, the pathway of him who renounced self in every shape, and found a sublime joy in ministering to those who live near to earth, and therefore near to sorrow. I showed how he cast contempt upon all conventionalisms; how he sought out the weak and erring, and by his own pure love, was able to penetrate to the inner life of theirs, and thence revealed to them better hopes and holier desires. I showed how he cared nothing for the established church, nothing for the usages of the fathers; how he preached a gospel of universal import, addressed not to sex, nor profession, but to man.

I caught a view of the face of Bertha. Never, never was such a face. *A halo was around her head, such as the artist paints around the saint or the martyr.* Her eyes were wells of light. I do not think she saw *me*, Ernest Helfenstein, at all, and soon I saw not Bertha. My soul was caught up to new heights; my people wept, and I wept with them.

But even here, I know not how, a strange longing for a nearer sympathy came upon me. I, Ernest Helfenstein,

would be taken by the hand and comforted. I would lay my head on some dear shoulder, and dream myself to forgetfulness. I know not how this mood grew over me. I only know it came. I only know I felt my selfish humanity put in its claim to be heard. Ready as I was, to fly with the volition of the archangel to the throne of the Highest, reaching for the harp of the cherub, and glowing with the fire of the seraph, I had laid open in my way the recesses of my own being, and found that Love, ending in the mysteries of the universal centre, has yet its base on earth.

Unconsciously my eyes rested upon Julia. I went on describing the marvellous sympathies, the tender capabilities of our nature, how the softest and loveliest analogies of the external world were in correspondence with the highest developments of man. I felt my voice tremble as I uttered, "Let not your hearts be troubled," as I recounted the infirmities of our will, as contrasted with the greatness of our aspiration. "Let not your hearts be troubled," I repeated, for Julia had buried her face in her handkerchief, and was weeping like a child.

She lifted her eyes to mine as by a magnetic influence. Ah! she was unlike Bertha—beautiful was she with no halo of cold, pure light, but rainbow hues of enchantment floated about her, in the midst of which beamed eyes that thrilled to my soul. My utterance became choked; I drew abruptly to a close. I felt as if I were caught by a creature, such as those fascinated by a serpent behold; undulating pearls and rubies, and heaps of gold and gems, bewilder-

ing the sense, and lapping the soul as in a trance. The shadows of life seemed to float off into distant regions, chased like receding clouds that betoken a fairer day.

Monday.—We have determined to teach the children from the books. To my astonishment, Willy does not know his letters. He has a quick, tenacious memory, and that has misled us into the idea that he understood at least the rudiments of words.

I opened a book of fables, and asked him to read. He took the volume, put his tongue in his cheek, crossed first one foot and then the other, screwed up his forehead, stuck out his chin, and yet said not a word. At last he laid down the book and thrust both hands in his pockets.

"Can't do it," he said laconically, and then opening the book again he pushed it into my face, saying, "Let me hear you do it." I read *Æsop's* fable of the boy and the frogs, whereat he laughed, and cried, "that's prime;" and then he took the volume and recited the story word for word, and with good emphasis.

"Now, Kate, you try it."

Poor Kate looked so ashamed for him, that I verily believe she would have parted with half her own intellect to aid him. I selected a large A, and pointing it out, said, "that is A, Willy."

"By George, is that A?" and he looked down at it as if eyeing some curious monster, and began saying rapidly:

"A is an axe that cuts down the wood. B is a bull that bellows for food," &c., running through the whole alphabet

in couplets of the kind. While thus engaged, I heard something plump upon the floor, and up sprang Willy in pursuit of a large toad that had crawled out of his tunic pocket. Of course all study was at an end, and it was agreed that Lily should aid the child in identifying the letters, before anything could be done for him in the way of books.

CHAPTER XIV.

Yes, I must speak. My secret would have perished
 Even with the heart it wasted, as a brand
 Fades in the dying flame whose life it cherished,
 But that no human bosom can withstand
Thee, wondrous lady. SHELLEY.

IN examining the journal of Bertha, we find it at this period nearly blank. She speaks of the children with great tenderness, but gives no details respecting them. She has evidently aided in furnishing books, toys, and instruction of various kinds. She alludes to the Child-Angel, which is spoken of more than once by Helfenstein. She says:

"Ernest has the soul of a little child, and since he has taken those waifs of the people into his keeping, a pure heaven has descended into his mansion. I verily believe that when any one quality shall be strongly evolved from our being, it will take to itself shape, and be angel or devil, according to its quality. Many times, in nearing the two children, I have perceived a lovely third, which becomes invisible at my approach. Lily has long known this presence, and speaks of it as of a dear, loved companion. She says it plays with her and loves her; but she adds, "It doesn't understand our words; it has *heaven language*, such as good children have in their hearts, and it reads us this in ours."

"This morning," she says, "John came to my room. He was very pale, and dropped down upon the chair nearest the door. I knew some evil approached, for I had felt heavy shadowings pass over me, and last night my invisible friend stood by my bed, and called 'Bertha!' in a voice so plaintive, that I wept. Glad was I to be awaked, for my dreams were oppressive. I wandered a dreary way, bearing a child in my arms—the grief-child of my dreams. So when I saw the paleness of John, I was prepared for evil tidings.

"He has come," was all he could say. And then John sat, with the tears streaming from his eyes, till the vixen voice of Defiance called him out.

"My God! what are we, when one human creature can make another so miserable. Oh! for the time when the soul will assert her affinities, and place a universe between herself and all that is repugnant to her heavenly harmonies. He has come! and wherefore? To re-open the charnel house of the past. I could half curse these magnetic charms of mine, that attract not only what I would, but what I would not. Surely, surely, the deepest love is evolved only by the noblest and the purest, and *he*, amid all his errors, loves only what is holiest."

Again, we find a hurried entry, and the pages are blotted with tears. She says:

"Thank God for mountains—thank him for rocks and waterfalls, the hurricane and the thunder-bolt. Were the earth a huge plain, and the sky a serene dome, and man created as he now is, with his passionate outgoings, the vast

earth would be an arena of howling madmen. Let us go up into the mountains, from whence our strength cometh. The blow is ready to fall upon me, and yet I do not quail. The mighty outreaching of my spirit overleaps time and sense, and I behold a glory which is left without expression. I have written the following, because passion is poetry—grief is music:

"HIDE ME IN THE CLEFT OF THE ROCK, ETC.

"In the soundings of a grief

Deep as is the soul's deep fount,
Never asking for relief

To the mighty hills I mount.

Thou, Oh God! in mercy yield,
That the cleft rock be my shield.

Hide me, Oh mysterious Power

By thy all-protecting hand;
Not in sweet sequestered bower,

Not in some enchanted land;

But in cleft of riven rock

Hide, Oh hide me from the shock.

In the greatness of thy might,

I recoil with awe-struck fear,

For an over-shadowing light

Doth reveal a spirit near.

Lest I faint with human dread

Be the cleft-rock o'er my head.

From thy glory though I shrink,
 Take not all thy rays away—
 Beams ineffable, that link
 Us to thine eternal ray—
 Need the firm rock, cleft in twain,
 To uphold the maddening brain."

Again, she says :

"I have wept—wept ; but now I am calm. I have sat myself down, and took up the threads of the past, one by one. I have faced it, piece by piece. I am stronger for the scrutiny. But, Oh ! *it is sad to think how much the poor heart can suffer.* Why is it ? And yet I have gleams of wondrous beauty evolved from the mystery of grief.

* * * * *

"I took up the little bronze vase. Its touch was serpent cold. I did not open it. Not yet, not yet ; I will wait. Oh there is wisdom in patient waiting. * * * *

"Defiance told me, this morning, that my temper must be very sulky. Poor John knows how it is. He brought me a sprig of chamomile—I smelt it—there was no odor. He crushed it between his hard palms, and it gave out a pure, wholesome odor. 'God bless you, my friend,' I said, and John tried to smile, but the tears came instead. This evening he brought me a flower from the top of the mountain—a tuft of moss, the cups filled with dew. 'The rock upon the mountain has its tears,' I said.

"I have agreed to meet him—once, and for the last time. I cannot have him enter my rooms, consecrated to holy

thought, peaceful dreams, and quaint mystic studies. No, no ; I cannot stay after in a place, and say, 'he sat in this chair ;' 'his hand rested there ;' 'his foot pressed the carpet where I stand.' And yet Nathan Underhill is a kingly man, and scarcely would a woman resist his fascinations. I have been, he says, his evil genius. Aye, can it be that a being, a woman, may act the part of angel to one, and that of devil to another. Tears of blood have I shed for thee, unhappy man ! Will that console thee ? I have prayed for thee as the agonized mother prays for an erring child. I have wept for thee as the loving weep for the beloved ; and yet I love thee not. Oh, our pity is greater than love. It does holier office than love !

"The following letter has just reached me. I knew its contents ere I had read them. As I held the paper in my hands, my palms burned, my head was filled with pain, and a strange oppression grew upon my chest. Nathan, I know all thou wouldst say. I see thee despite of distance and intervening walls. Why, then, come to me when I had buried myself from the whole world that I might escape thee ?"

"Bless you, Bertha, for your letter. Kind, noble, brilliant words. If my wretchedness could make you happy, you ought to be in elysium. But no, you also are wretched, and I have caused it. Oh God ! attest to my penitence. Each word of your letter burned into my soul. I have kissed them with more feeling than ever I kissed woman alive ; I love every letter, and each is graven upon my heart.

Do not bid me despair; beautiful Bertha, do not be inexorable. I am melting, choking, shuddering with grief. A feeling attested as mine has been in the darkness of my dark—dark nights, in the radiance of your presence—in the solemn woods of death—in the face of holy setting suns, no time nor distance can change. Believe this, for God's sake.

"Bertha, fate rules us, separates us; bids us despair, and bids us hope. Let us take her promises as well as her bodeful oracles. How shall I fill you with that trust so needful to your peace of mind? I have given you words, tears, groans. *Pangs unknown before, quiver through me.* Your living presence is borne in my heart; burning as it is borne; burning, but not searing. Did you not *once* give me your great heart? Give me now your sufficient *faith*. I am writing this in a whirlwind of terrible emotions. Bertha, my life is in your hands. I am in a war, a storm of agony, for the past rises like a black cloud before me. Help me to pray for the calm. Yet it is our right to be wretched. Oh, Bertha, speak to the troubled waters that threaten to engulf my frail barque; send your heavenly voice over the waste, and the calm will follow. Come to me, angel of my life; for I shall sink if this continue.

"Let us bury the past. Often have I told you, were you to love another, I should feel no change. Were you to die, my flame would still rise to you in heaven. Saint Bertha, pray for me, pity me, bless me! As now and then a tear of the floods, fast falling for you, lights upon the paper, I omit to dry it, but send it to you. If, from the

corners of the earth, a truer, purer offering can be gathered, let it be given to God. These of mine come to attest your loveliness, worth, wisdom, genius, power, glory, from your slave, brought by you, and only you, into the true life. They are the best that is in him, offered to his Deity, through that Deity's nearest, most glorious manifestation, in created form.

"God bless, God help me; God save us. N. U."

CHAPTER XV.

For what contend the wise? for nothing less
 Than that the soul, freed from the bonds of sense,
 And to her God restored by evidence
 Of things not seen, drawn forth from their recess,
 Root there, *and not in forms*, her holiness.

WORDSWORTH.

ERNEST regrets that no time is left him for poetry. "Alas!" he says, "my brain teems with lofty, artistic conceptions; floods of poetry roll in upon my soul, and yet I find no space to pen them." Bertha replied, when I said this to her:—"The universe is one great, outspoken poem of the Most High; man and his conflicts, within and without, is God's epic; what would you more? Let us help on His work, not ours."

To-day, while I sat reading in my study, with the two children amusing themselves in their own way, Kate tucked her doll under her arm, and crossed the room to say,

"Dear Ernest, don't you hate reasonable people?"

"Perhaps yes, and perhaps no, Lily."

"I heard Mrs. Hopkins say she thought it very weak to cry over your sermon, yesterday," and now Kate looked like a very common-place child, and Ernest Helfenstein a little foolish.

"Is Bertha reasonable?" she asked again.

"Bertha is wise."

All this time Kate was putting a cap on the head of Jennie, and taking it off as often. It did not seem to suit her, for she laid the doll into my arms, and went for another. I sat holding the image, when Deacon Pettingal, and some of the town officers were announced, and Mrs. Pettingal having seen Julia's face through the window, came directly to my room, while the others were ushered into the parlor.

"I should think a minister of the gospel might find something better to do than play dolls with paupers," she said, eyeing me sharply.

I kept the doll, in spite of this rude speech, for I would not trouble little Lily by laying it aside.

Willy made a rapid retreat upon the appearance of the officers, and Lily, who shortly returned, stood in the centre of the room so changed, so unlike herself, that I was alarmed. Every particle of color left her face, the curl even came out of her beautiful hair, and it seemed to cling to her face and shoulders, while her eyes changed to a bright yellow, emitting sparks; her hands and arms fell to her side, and it seemed a breath might transform her into a beautiful white Lily.

"So that girl hasn't done with her tantrums yet?" said Mrs. Pettingal.

Kate's eye emitted yellow sparks; her hair perceptibly curled; she seemed to rise upon her instep; her neck curved,

and her head was thrown back—she was not Lily, she was a young swan.

“Kate!” said Julia in a low voice. The child breathed heavily, and seemed to relax her nerves; but looking at Mrs. Pettingal, she said:

“When I die, I’ll come every night and sit on the top of that great black head-board of your bedstead, and you’ll know ’tis little Kate’s ghost.”

Poor Mrs. Pettingal looked at her with the kind of look that Biddy puts on when she brushes a spider from the wall.

“I’ll teach you something better than that,” she said. “I’ve come to take you back to the work-house.”

I felt my heart close with the same pang that pierced little Kate’s. This was a contingency I had never dreamed of. At this moment the door burst open, and Willy came to the rescue, brandishing two little red fists in close proximity to the red nose of Mrs. Pettingal.

“No you don’t. You don’t get us back to the work-house. You don’t get us agin’ to eat your baked beans and hasty puddin’. Ye don’t get us to call bad names any more; no you don’t; nor to lie to us about God, I tell ye.”

And before I could interfere, he had planted a blow in the centre of the bodice of Mrs. Pettingal, which made about as much impression as the balls of the British upon the cotton bags of Gen. Jackson, at the battle of New Orleans; and from a like cause; for Mrs. Pettingal was tall and lank, with a bodice so long that one wondered how it would be

possible for her to sit down—and when she did so, her shape had a sharp turn, like a half closed jack-knife.

Having banished the two children from the room, I now met the officers of the town, and really I could not have imagined the simple act of taking these two forsaken ones into our family, would have given rise to so much hostility on the part of my people. It was regarded as a bad precedent. My conduct implied a reproach to the town officers, and my sermons indirectly impeached the *most respectable part of the community*. I had said that the system of providing for the poor made poverty, and old age, and misfortune disgraceful. That no distinction could be shown between vice and misfortune in the present system. The woman born in affluence might be married—her property, by that act of marriage, passed out of her hands into those of her husband. He became a spendthrift, an inebriate, a gambler—she had no redress. He squandered her whole estate and died a beggar. His wife, this early minion of fortune, covered with shame, and disgraced in the eyes of the world, by no act of her own, heart-broken, and overcome by the infirmities of age, is brought to the alms-house, with the hundreds who are carried thither by their vices. Little children, also, who should be careless as the blossoms of the field, are here prematurely initiated into labor, privation, and vice.

Then, too, it had been decided that I was engaged to preach, and had no right to meddle with the duties of the town officers. I was paid for a round of Sunday duties and

other services consequent upon births and deaths, and had no right to go beyond my assigned limits.

I felt there was a sort of justice in this. The parish regards its minister as a man regards his wife—as his property. The parson is in effect knocked down to the highest bid of the parish—so much and so much makes him the thrall of his people. Every man, woman, and child, who pays for his support, has a right in him ; may dictate to him, prescribe rules as to housekeeping, marriage, preaching, and praying, which he may disregard at his peril.

As these thoughts rushed through my brain, I felt what a slave I was, and walked the floor, calmly, yet with a kind of resolution such as the shackled bondman feels who has resolved to be free. I thought of the vast stores of learning monopolized by our body. I thought of our claims to moral purity—claims that can never justly be gainsayed ; of our unworldliness, honesty of intention, and singleness of purpose, and yet how we were held in a sort of pupilage and bondage, through salary. “I will be chargeable to no one,” I exclaimed. “Mine own hands shall supply my necessities. Give your money to others. I will none of it. Rather let me perish than refrain to declare the whole oracles of God.”

My visitors were unprepared for this, and the deacons began to fear they had gone too far. Deacon Pettingal, who is tall and stiff as a pikestaff, with long carrotty hair, and a sanctimonious face, groaned in spirit. Deacon Hopkins rolled over and over his tobacco, not as “a sweet morsel under his tongue,” but as if it had suddenly become an

unsavory pill, difficult to be swallowed. Deacon Pettingal has an enormous mouth, only a portion of which is needful upon ordinary occasions, and he keeps a third of it fastened together at the corners, the centre leaving ample space for his few pious words. He lets down these only when he “gee-haws” to his oxen, or when he gives way in prayer. The deacon now took an extra tuck in his lips, as if the next extremity might for ever lock up his aperture for words, and consign him to the condition of Zachariah in the Temple.

“What,” said I, “if abuses prevail in our place, must I not help to reform them ? Must I not help the advancement of truth, and human good ?”

“You do that when you give us an orthodox sermon, two or more, every Sunday.”

“Ah,” said I, in a sort of despair, “the gospel that is acted in the life is the best gospel. The worship that causes the human heart to sing for joy, is the best worship.”

“We engaged you to preach to an orthodox, respectable people, Parson Helfenstein, and we’ll take care of the town business ourselves, and first we’ll take these children back to the Alms House.”

“That cannot be,” I said firmly. “These children have had a taste of better things, and it would be the height of cruelty to re-consign them to the life they have led there.”

The officers then produced two papers for me to sign, by which the children were made my thralls or servants, apprentices, whatever it was, till their lawful age of twenty-one, when they might be supposed capable of owning them.

selves. I was loth to sign these papers, but as that was the only ground on which I could retain them, I did so, throwing them, however, in the fire the moment the officers left, that the children might never know anything of the transaction.

When I had finished this, I said, "Now, gentlemen, allow me to say, I do not belong to the people of Beech Glen. I am no property of theirs. I belong first to God, *next to myself*."

"But, Parson Helfenstein, you won't leave us?"

"No, this is my home. I love the place; I love the people, so far as they can be loved; but I cannot be your pastor upon our present terms."

"We wouldn't like to lose you, parson," said Deacon Hopkins, with a show of real feeling.

"Well then, I will preach in the pulpit, if you wish it, but I shall preach many things that may prove unpalatable to the people."

"We have dedicated the church to sound orthodox preaching, parson," said Deacon Pettingal, "and we begin to think Miss Bertha has unsettled your views."

"Miss Bertha is a woman of sound sense, deacon. She has invested her money in good stocks, in a manly way. She cultivates her ground, and employs workmen, and knows how to make her funds productive. I, on the contrary, have allowed my patrimony to go to ruin, while I preached poor sermons to a cavilling people, who conceived they had purchased me by a salary."

Deacon Hopkins rubbed his hands. "A most extraordinary woman, that Miss Bertha. She has sot all the women to thinking, hereabouts, and now a man's got to mind his P's and Q's."

"A pestilent woman, who ought to be dealt by. I've made up my mind, if she comes to the communion, I'll forbid her the elements," answered Deacon Pettingal.

"I don't know, I don't know about that, brother," replied Deacon Hopkins.

"I think Miss Bertha has scruples as to the present form," interposed I. "She believes in a one entire brotherhood—a universal church. The symbolic bread and wine, she believes, should be proffered to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ, without distinction of age, sex, or condition. It is the type of fraternity, not the privilege of the few."

"She would confound the chosen of the Lord with the heathen and the sinner. She would take away the fear of partaking unworthily, and make the feast of the saints no better than the carousal of the sinner. Oh, my soul, enter thou not into the counsels of such," answered Deacon Pettingal.

Deacon Hopkins looked rebuked at this pious outbreak of his coadjutor. I felt foolish, and was not sorry when the whole party took their leave; but not till I had announced to them my determination to take no more gold of theirs in the shape of salary. "I will preach to you; I will uphold instruction for the people in the primitive way. What you give me shall be the free-will offering of pure love,

not the tribute of hire. I will speak the truth as it is revealed to me, not the dogmas of a sect; and when you are not willing to hear me, I will go elsewhere," I said. And I did not fail to tell them, also, what I had never shown before—that the pastor of Beech Glen was neither unknown nor unsought-for in the world. I showed them letters, in which I had been invited, many times and often, to lecture; and I was more than convinced that the lecture-room was growing to be more effective than the pulpit, for this cause alone—that the lecturer was allowed a broader field and a freer expression of opinion. Jesus did not confine himself to any one locality, but went from place to place, and thus should his ministers do. The *people* go gladly to the lecture-room—unwillingly to the church—because in the latter they find too much of the dead letter, while in the former there is a vitality, a courage, wanting in the pulpit.

CHAPTER XVI.

Then hand in hand these little babes,
Went wandering up and down—
Their pretty lips with black-berries
Were all besmeared and dyed;
And when they saw the darksome night,
They sat them down and cried.

OLD BALLAD.

I WENT to my room quite oppressed by this scene. How long I sat in a half reverie I know not. At length I became conscious that the twilight approached, and there was no sound of the children. A bright fire burned upon the hearth, the long, heavy curtains, that draped the windows, allowed a streak of moonlight to steal across the room, and show the outline of a bust of Milton that stood over my wardrobe. From thence it rested upon a Psyche, which now, for the first time, looked to me like Lily. "Yes, she is a Psyche," I said, involuntarily. It seemed as if the image arose from the pedestal, and then it was not the Psyche, but the Child-Angel. Suddenly the blaze sank upon the hearth, the moon was shrouded by a cloud, and an intense gloom followed upon myself. I felt an indescribable depression—a pang, as if some heart dear to me sent forth its thrill of

anguish, which vibrated in my own. I was lonely, bereft. My eyes fell upon the bed, and I observed a white object in the centre of the crimson counterpane. This was so unusual, that I rose to see what it could be. I found a sheet of paper, marked with strange characters, and blotched and crumpled. Striking a light, I was able to decipher, after much labor, the simple words.

"Good bye, dear father,"

and signed, "Kate and Willy." My heart fainted within me. What could it mean? The paper was blistered with tears. I discovered also other tokens of my beloved children. There was a depression in the side of the bed, and traces of weeping, and I knew that Willy had punched his head in there, and so had smothered his cries. The end of the pillow also had been pressed, I knew, by the sweet head of Lily, and upon the centre lay one long golden curl.

I hastened to find Julia, and relate my fears. We discovered that Lily had taken nothing but the doll, Jenny, and her cloak and hat, while Willy had done the same, substituting a white fleecy dog, with pink eyes, and a red tongue, and a most imperative bark, in place of the doll.

Biddy knew nothing, only she saw them going down toward the river, while Jane said, she had found little Lily putting on her cloak and looking pale; she returned no answer to her questions except to say, she was "going to find the lilies, and live with the ravens."

"Beautiful child!" I ejaculated; and then the term Father, she had applied to me, touched an unwonted chord

of tenderness. Yes, these were my children. Dear as the apple of my eye. I had grown in love, in intellect under their presence. I was more of a man, I had more respect for myself from my relation to them, I was no longer a dreamer. Vague, restless desires had given place to absolute achievement. I was preaching a new Gospel.

These thoughts hurried through my mind as I prepared to go in search of the little ones. I went first to Bertha, in the hope they might have sought an asylum with her in their dread of being sent back to the Alms House. As I neared the house, I saw a tall dark figure enveloped in a cloak leaning against the bole of a tree, and his eye fixed upon the window of Bertha. At my approach he moved slowly away. A glance at the lattice showed that the light within was nothing more than what proceeded from the grate, and through the closely draped curtains might be seen the shadow of a person moving slowly to and fro in the room. I felt an indescribable pang as I observed these things.

There was an air of mystery about John True, which, at another time, might have attracted my attention. He did not ask me to enter, and when I stated my object he came out and closed the door softly behind him.

"Miss Bertha is in trouble," he said, briefly. "I will go with you, Parson, and see if we can find these poor lambs."

Deacon Hopkins planted his square figure to the shape of a pyramid, as if such a giant of a thought had got into his brain that he would be upset without such precaution.

"Mr. Helfenstein, that girl Lily, as ye call her, is capable of doing it—she is, I tell you. She is a wonderful child; and as to that Bill, why if she should tell him to walk straight into the fire, he'd do it, he would."

"What will she do? speak out!" I cried, with an impatience I did not suppose I could feel; and here, let me confess, that lately I find myself far more energetic than I had supposed myself capable of being. I have felt from this course much more respect for myself, for I had fallen into that parchment kind of manner that belongs to our profession, a sort of decorous mechanical move of the body; an outside appearance of respectability, best described by Dr. Channing, as "poor but pious." Now, however, I had impulses and revulsions that were quite human.

Deacon Hopkins thrust his hands deep into his pockets, and looked at me as if pleased with my impatience, and more pleased at some idea which he was coddling over in his own brain.

"Speak, for heaven's sake," I cried, "and let us go and find the children."

"La, parson, yes; the bodies at least."

"The bodies!" I cried.

"Why yes, they may be drowned before now."

I confess, ghastly as the thought was, it did not seem improbable that Lily would conceive of it.

"No," replied John True, "Lily will never think of doing such a thing. I have strange thoughts about that child. I sometimes think she was meant for some other world, and

brought here by mistake. She is what Miss Bertha was"—but he stopped suddenly, and moved in advance of the party.

The neighbors were roused, and now my harshest opposers were ready to aid in the search, and ready in feelings of sympathy. The deacon and I hurried to the river, while others entered the woods, or went in the direction of the city. A white frost was upon the ground, and the new ploughed land crisped under our feet, in the icy cold. The leafless trees creaked and groaned in the gusty air, while the black river hurried on; hurry, hurry, for the cataract was below, and there was the revel of the waters. Every dash of foam looked to me like the sweet face of the beautiful Lily. Poor Willy! my thoughts were terribly painful in regard to him. Lily had power, buoyancy, individualism—child as she was—and her spirit would sustain her through any trial, but poor Willy was but emerging into a new life, and Lily was soul and intellect both, to him, and therefore his acts would only be the result of instinctive reverence for Lily, and from imitation.

Oh, how long seemed the way as we wandered along the river, in the cold midnight? The rabbit, that had come from her burrow to sit in the moonlight, darted here and there; and the sea-bird flew, with its solitary cry, over our heads, while the unceasing, never-tiring river, rolled on, till I felt as if it bore me also away, out into vast, unpeopled solitudes. Then, as a new sense of the danger to which the children were exposed, forced itself home, I hurried onward,

occasionally shouting their names, or replying to the calls of our companions.

The night wore on, and the moon was high and large, having a cold stare upon her face. She was lighting up damp, gloomy pools, or dangerous gorges into which we stumbled, and floundered about till I was totally exhausted. I was covered with mire, and wet with perspiration. I grew sick at heart, for the weather was so cold, I knew the children must perish by the exposure. I heard the people returning to the village, and one by one hailed us, saying we could do no more till morning. The excitement was intense, and as I ascended the hill from the river, I could see people were going and coming from my house, which was in a blaze of light, candles having been placed at the windows, as a mark for the wanderers. As the day neared, there was a quicker stir of the wind, and the twigs and stubble of the field grew more crisp under the foot.

"What's bred in the bone never'll come through the flesh," ejaculated the deacon, starting from a fit of reverie. "These children were born of disorder, and I'm free to think, you wouldn't have made proper behaved people out of them. You see there's a touch of the devil always about sich."

"Well, upon my soul, deacon, let me tell you, I do not see that they are the worse for it. Look at the children of the congregation, of the same age. Why, Lily is not to be named with them, and as to poor Willy, I believe much good was to come of him."

I shuddered in spite of myself, to find I was involuntarily

speaking of them in the past tense, and I was at pains to go over the sentence again, and correct this condition of the verb, having a sort of superstitious feeling that I confirmed a destiny by accepting it.

We had ascended a hill from the river, which was covered with low pines, "*semper loquentes*," through which the soft breeze stole along as if uttering a continuous dirge. In front, the red light of the morning was already showing cheerily in the east; a slight haze from the river, looked like a lovely incense rising to the All Giver; and, despite my anxiety, this aspect of beauty lightened its weight. Between us and the river margin was a deep gorge, holding a small recess in the rocks, called Nancy's Cave, where a melancholy Pariah passed many years in solitude. All at once a loud cry seemed to issue from the ground at our feet, which was prolonged to a low wail terminated by the quick bark of a dog. I was on the point of rushing forward, with cries of delight, for there was no mistaking the voice of Willy, but the deacon held me back, and motioned me to be silent. Descending the bank cautiously, we were able to see into the cave, and the first object we beheld was Kate, with her hat pushed back from her head, upon which the morning light rested as if in love with its object. She looked a young Cassandra, glowing under the kisses of Apollo. However she had passed the long night, her head was erect, her eyes flashing, and her whole air exultant with inward life. "Beautiful exceedingly," was the child. Willy, on the contrary, looked haggard and worn. His face was streaked with

tears, and ever and anon, he threw back his head and gave way to loud cries, aided and relieved by making the dog do his utmost at barking.

"I'm hungry, Kate," we heard him say, preliminary to one of these outcries. When he was once more hushed, Kate said, in a very tragic little queen manner,—

"We shall be a great deal more hungry, dear Willy, but if you don't think about it you won't feel it; and we shall die here as the babes in the woods died, and the robins will come and cover us with leaves."

Willy made no other reply than another great scream, followed by a prolonged bark. I saw the deacon shut his eyes and change his attitude, and he whispered to me in a very emphatic manner:—

"As true as I'm a deacon of the church of Christ, Parson, there's a third child, half naked, with them. 'Like, likes like'—and I believe an angel of God is standing over Lily."

I thought the manner of the child betrayed something of the kind, but I had not time to reply before a third party suddenly entered the cave. This was a huge, distorted being, whose low head and broad shoulders were naked. A mass of coarse hair depended from his chin, and mingled with that upon his head, back, and breast. His legs and arms were preternaturally long, and looked of great power. I recognized him as a wretched idiot I had often seen at the alms-house, who was familiarly called Tiger; and, from his thieving propensities, as well as the dread entertained of his

great physical powers, kept for the most part *chained*. He was the offspring of one of our richest merchants, and but for this propensity to purloin, had given early indications of genius. This hereditary tendency to thrift might have been turned into a legitimate channel, had not the father, by his severity, called prematurely into action the worst qualities of the boy—revenge and hatred. He had been thrown into a fever by the blows and cruelty of his parent, in consequence of a misdemeanor of the kind, and when but partially recovered he rose at midnight and fired the barn. The loss was great, and the father resorted to the usual mode of punishment. The boy, fevered, bewildered, made no resistance; but he went forth to the light, taciturn, solitary, and at length a confirmed idiot.

I have known of very many cases of this thieving quality developed in the families of the wealthy. *It is the blossoming out of the spirit of traffic.* Thus does nature avenge herself for the wrongs of men.

No sooner had this miserable being perceived the children than he pounced upon them at once, tucking Kate under one arm and Willy under the other, much as the shepherd would carry two lambs found disabled after a sharp frost. We called out to the monster; we hurried forward to arrest him, but our speed was no match for him. He could leap chasms at a bound, up and down which we toiled with weary effort. Onward we went, the golden head of Lily tossed here and there, and Willy, it was evident, screaming his loudest, kicking, biting, striking—making the best use of

the many modes of defence which nature has afforded her naked child.

Tiger hurried on, not in the least impeded by his burden. Leaping ditches, striding fences, imperturbable as a machine; sustaining a long shambling trot without any abatement. At length he neared the walls of the alms-house, at the gate of which he set up his inarticulate cries, which were soon answered from within; but Tiger, who had now got a taste of freedom, was not disposed to lose it so readily. Accordingly, having landed the captives where he supposed they ought to be confined, he struck off hastily into the woods, defying all pursuit.

Giving the boy in charge of the Deacon, I took Lily in my own arms, and retraced our steps to the house. The poor child sobbed, put her cheek to mine, and slept.

CHAPTER XVII.

I classed, appraising once,
Earth's lamentable sounds; the well-a-day,
The jarring yea and nay,
The fall of kisses on unanswering clay,
The sobbed farewell, the welcome mournfuller;—
But all did leaven the air
With a less bitter leaven of sure despair,
Than these words—"I loved *once*."

E. B. BROWNING.

Alas! who gives love laws in misery?
Love is Love's law: Love but to love is tyed.

FLETCHER.

THERE is one peculiarity of love that sometimes develops itself in persons of great individualism, who never reach that climax which precedes dotage, but who are so happily organized that every year of their lives exhibits a marked growth over the preceding. I mean that, wherein not a revulsion takes place, but an out growth. The sentiment of Love, its passion, its divinity, remains unchanged in the individual, and yet the object ceases to be the idol of the shrine. Beautiful, attractive it may be, to another; noble it may be in all attributes, yet the heart refuses to enshrine it.

Oh God! what agony must this state produce to the conscientious mind! How would it pray and fast, and

call to the source of all love for light and help ! How it would reproach itself ! how it would search into its ghostly chambers to see if any evil lurked within. How it would question of the stars, those ancient monitors to the pious life, to know if in their round they held any element, which they had now borne off into the trailings of the eternal, and thus have defrauded the once-loved object. How it would struggle to hide the consciousness ! and redouble its tenderness, in the hope to lure back the emotion, and thus spare the pangs of such a knowledge from what had once been the beloved. Alas ! alas ! creation holds nothing that more strongly demands truth than the human heart ; nothing that more sternly tries every spirit to know what manner of spirit it is of.

Miserable, most miserable those who find this state of life intervene in the marriage relation. God help them. They must drag on a life of solitude and despair, or seek in the pursuits of wealth, ambition, or philanthropy, a substitute for that love, which is the bread of life.

But woman, true, pure, beautiful child of the spiritual, she may fold her wings over her chaste bosom, and renew her virgin life—she must do this, if she would not lose the whiteness of her soul ; if she would not be covered with the ashes, and sit a potsherd at the marriage altar.

A woman forgives all things but the not loving. And so she should. In the world of love there is only Love ; ambition is not there, fame is not there, traffic is not there, pride is not there, vanity least of all there ; only

Love. He furnishes forth the sole inhabitant. Its only virtue, Love. Its only wealth, Love. Its only religion, Love. It is side by side with God, in a realm where there is only God—and God is Love.

Woman will pardon all crimes, but a crime against Love. Man may steep his hands in crime, may be an outlaw amongst men, but the woman who loves him, will love on, for his crimes do not enter the shrine of her sanctuary. He is at issue with society and the world—not with her.

Humanity knows no sex in the more intense aspects of emotion, and yet it has always seemed to me that the fervid language of Othello, at the supposed falsehood of Desdemona, was more the utterance of a great-souled woman than that of a man.

“Had it pleased Heaven
To try me with affliction ; had he rained
All kinds of sores and shames on my bare head ;
Steeped me in poverty to the very lips ;
Given to captivity me and my utmost hopes ;
I should have found in some part of my soul
A drop of patience ; but, alas !
—There, where I had garnered up my heart—
Where either I must live, or have no life—
The fountain from the which my current runs,
Or else dries up ; to be discarded there !”

Such has been the current of my thoughts since the strange scene I am about to describe.

The evening after the rescue of the children, I found my-

self oppressed by the multitude of my thoughts, till the overshadowing roof seemed to oppress me, and gave me a sense bordering upon suffocation. I walked out into the woods, where I could breathe freely, and think without the hazard of losing the continuity of thought by anything extraneous ; for, indeed, the presence of Julia is not favorable to abstract speculation. Her swimming movements, at once graceful and feminine, with a slight rustle of muslin and silk ; the faintest hint of rose perfume, and a voice dove-like in tone ; brilliant eyes, yet soft and dreamy at times, and a smile so ready in its response to a genial look or word—all conspire to remind Ernest Helfenstein that sermon-writing is not the whole business of life. I foresee much of suffering for me in the future, but the present is so delicious I close my eyes and dream on. Yes, I—Ernest Helfenstein—timid dreamer that I am, I love this regal beauty. I close my eyes and revel in the memory of her faintest word or look of sympathy. I open my poor heart for the reception of a passion that will work me only misery. But the stars shine—shine on, cold and calm, nor heed the worshippers who bend nightly in their idolatry.

Our little church of Beech Glen stands upon the borders of the wood. As I passed it, on my way home, the simple structure looked so lovely in the moonlight, that my heart yearned tenderly towards it, and I lifted the latch and entered, for we do not deal in bolts or bars at Beech Glen. *We do not remind men that a trespass may be committed by issuing the prohibition.* Closing the door after me, I entered

the body of the church, and walked up the solitary aisle.

I ascended the steps of the pulpit. It seemed to me the house was peopled. Gray-haired men, in quaint old garments, leaning upon oaken staves, walked along the aisles ; staid women, self-poised and matronly, walked beside them, with queer, pinched bonnets, and decent kerchiefs. Children in breeches and buckles, and long waists, and high heels ; then military men in cocked hats. My predecessor in office came slowly up the passage, followed by a group bearing babes in long robes—bridal groups approached, and then the measured step of mourners, in sable garments. How long the vision lasted I know not. I was aroused by hearing a sigh so profound, that it must, according to the old superstition, have brought blood from the heart of the one who heaved it.

Noiselessly I looked over the cushions of the pulpit into the body of the house. Against one of the columns, in the midst of a line of moonlight that streamed through the window, I saw the outline of a standing figure. It was that of a woman. She threw her arms up, but very slowly, as if from a great weight, and I heard her repeat :

“ Oh God ! my God ! ”

Under my breath I repeated the exclamation. It was Bertha. I had not seen her for some time past, and now I was shocked to observe that she was thin ; and, as the moon fell full upon her face, she looked deathly pale. I was held

as by a spell, fearful to make the least movement lest I should alarm her, and filled also with the unmanly curiosity to see how this scene would end. Her head leaned against the column, thus presenting a profile sharply defined in the moonlight. Her hair was thrust back from her forehead as I had never seen it before, and I was astonished at the impression of magnitude which her head presented—feminine, beautiful, it certainly was ; but there was grandeur also, and that halo which I had before seen.

Softly I heard the outer door of the church open and close, and a tall, handsome figure—the one I had seen under the window of Bertha—walked up the aisle. As he came nearer, I observed he had a peculiar firmness of tread, a shape robust but not heavy, and a profusion of crisp hair of a reddish brown, very dark. His movements were elastic, as if under pleasurable excitement. As he neared the pulpit, Bertha slid to the other side of the column, and thus was hid from my view. The stranger repeated her name several times, and then seated himself in the chair of the altar.

All this time I was amazed, it is true, but not a thought of evil on the part of Bertha crossed my mind. She was so true in every shade of life, outward as well as inward, that I could not distrust her. When, therefore, she stepped from the shadow of the column and confronted the stranger, I was curious only, not the least suspicious. The stranger made a rapid movement to rise, at which she lifted her hand and said :

“Say what you will, Nathan Underhill, but keep thy sitting.”

“Nay, beautiful Bertha, thou must sit, and I will kneel at your feet.”

“Nathan, you must drop that tone, or I shall not listen. I go, and we shall never meet again.”

“That cannot be, Bertha, we will never part again. I come here at your appointment, and for no other purpose.”

Bertha recoiled from his touch, and I saw her cold, statuesque manner awed the man, and he retreated slightly ; and even then, so rapid is the action of the mind, all the plays which I had witnessed upon the stage, in early life—all the dramas in which licentious ruffians are represented in the revolting aspect of seizing profanely upon their terrified and disgusted victims, flashed before my mind, and I felt how false these delineations were ; how utterly at war with the best estimate of purity in woman, as well as repugnant to every element of good taste and public propriety. I thought how the *several virtues must be all combined in woman, each as a shield to its companion, and then she is mightier than an armed man*. Chastity may be so solitary, in the absence of all other womanly virtues, that it ceases to be worthy of the name. A woman whose only praise is, that she is immaculately chaste, cannot be virtuous in the true sense. She may have less virginity of soul than the poor unfortunate victim of a weak heart, whom she thrusts to the wayside as a corrupting presence. Let the cold, decorous wife and the scornful spinster remember this, and learn that a virtue even may degenerate into a vice.

While these thoughts coursed with electric speed through my mind, I felt that Bertha—alone, at that solitary hour, in that solitary place—filled the spot with a sense as of a divine presence—an atmosphere of pure, unapproachable divinity—and I could have kissed the hem of her garment with a profound awe.

"Bertha," said the man, "for what purpose have you brought me here, if not to renew our vows? For what purpose, when I have pleaded and implored for this meeting so long? Surely you do not come here to mock me?"

"No, God forbid, Nathan Underhill."

"My own true Bertha!"

"No, Nathan, I am not thine. Do not approach me—*dare* not approach me."

She now stood out in the full light, her head thrown up and her arm extended. I thought of a Fate.

The man confronted her with an air of curiosity rather than awe. I observed a smile, even, was upon his lips.

Bertha saw it also. "Nathan," she said, "I am not the timid, impressible girl you knew years ago. I am changed, body and soul."

"Only to the more beautiful. On my soul, Bertha, I had not dreamed of the revelation you are to me. You are sublime in your beauty and intellect. If I loved the girl, I shall adore the woman."

"Nathan, I will not hear this. I brought you to this house, solitary to all but God, that I may say what it has been in my heart to utter for years. A thousand times I



"NO, NATHAN, I AM NOT THINE. DO NOT APPROACH ME—
DARE NOT APPROACH ME."

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have said, I will talk once with Nathan, and then I shall be silent for ever."

"Do not talk despondingly, beautiful Bertha, I am come now to make you my wife."

Why did the heart of Ernest sink down as if a terrible ice had fallen upon it !

"Understand me, Nathan Underhill."

"I understand you better than you understand yourself. You love me, Bertha ; yes, you love me as you did in years past, when I madly cast, like the base Judean, a pearl away worth more than all his throne."

"Nathan, I never loved you."

A cold, derisive laugh resounded through the sacred edifice, and it seemed to me that a crowd of imps repeated the laugh ; and then a host of demons took up the laugh, and rushed out into the black night, and a troop of devils joined in the chorus, and yet Bertha stood calm and pale, and the halo did not fade from above her head.

"Never loved me, Bertha, when you were all but my wedded wife ?"

"Silence, I tell thee, Nathan, I will not hear the repetition. I can bear the memory of the past, but to hear it repeated would drive me mad."

My head fell upon the cushions, and tears, the bitter tears of human agony, before the crushed idol of the heart, swelled my eyeballs as they fell. The stranger dropped upon his knees, and went on rapidly.

"Bertha, I wronged you, in times past, but here on my

knees I swear I loved you better than life—than my own soul; and I come to beg your forgiveness, and take you to my heart once more; I am free now, beautiful Bertha, and I will devote my life to make you happy, to repair the wrong I did you."

"This is well, Nathan, but it avails not. I can be no wife to thee."

"You *are* my wife, Bertha; in the presence of the angels of God, you are my wife, whom I have never ceased to love."

"I am no wife of thine, Nathan. And now that I am a mature woman, feeling my own power, feeling also the sanctities of womanhood, I thank God I am not bound to thee by any human laws."

"The wrong you have suffered has embittered you against me, Bertha. But it shall be the study of my life to restore you to peace, and we shall yet be very happy. Nothing shall wound you further—no grief, nor shame, shall touch my beautiful wife."

He attempted to take her hand, but Bertha shook her head, and withdrew so coldly, calmly, that even I was amazed.

"Nathan, I have outgrown all this, I can be no more charmed at thy glozings."

"You have loved another, you do love another," he cried almost fiercely.

I thought I could see that Bertha blushed, and I listened breathless for a reply; but she was silent, and he continued,

"You love this milk-sop of a Parson here, who turns his house into a foundling hospital." My head went down behind the cushions, for I verily felt as if he knew of my presence; and my face tingled, and my hands also, as to that, and they were ready to do unclerical duty. By this state of feeling I lost some words of Bertha, which, in truth, I did not wish to hear, for I had doubts whether she did not regard me much in the same light. I heard her say, "You must hear me, Nathan, and then we part, and for ever."

"Bertha, there is not a spot of earth so secret, that it can hold you from me. I will not resign you—never—so help me God."

There was a dead silence, and Bertha went on.

"I was a child, with vague imaginings, and passionate dreamings. I was an ignorant child, a trusting child; I had wept only fancied griefs, righted only imaginary wrongs. Truth, and honor, and love were sacred words to me. You came. You held me aloof from my girlish companions—boys who had shrined me in their young hearts were frowned aside. You brought stores of learning, poetry, eloquence. Still you did not talk love. You filled my life with yourself. The book I read, the blossom I held, the pet I caressed, the sentiment I quoted were all yours. You asked me to be your wife. I neither consented nor refused. You were twice my years, Nathan Underhill; had you revered me then—had you been wise for me then, God

himself could not meet the blessings I would now shower upon you."

"Ah, Bertha, I was mad—selfishly, madly in love. Let my life now atone for all this. But tell me—"

"Nay, thou must hear me out. I was then ignorant of the world, precocious in thought, but ignorant in the nature of human emotions; *a woman, a man, if you choose, in intellect, but less than a child in knowledge of the heart.* Pure as the purest lily, upon the pure waters, in the whole character of my soul. You, a *mature man, a full-knowing man, a calm, self-poised man*—you came; you find in the secluded valley, hid by old rocks, screened by deep woods, seen only by the cold stars, and the far-searching sunlight—you find a clear, noiseless fountain, and you cast bitter herbs therein, and convert that pure fountain into a bitter, boiling spring, tossing its wild waters, till God, in pity, rolled a great stone over it, and sealed it up for ever."

The last words were pronounced scarcely above a whisper, and with a labored utterance as if the tears that she would not suffer to flow retreated to the throat, and choked her voice, and when she said "for ever," the walls of the little church took up the word, and carried it up to the eaves, and back to the columns, and made the thought of eternity grow longer and longer.

"Forgive me, Bertha, forgive me," said the man in a trembling voice. "You have never said you forgive me, though I have implored a thousand times."

"No, Nathan. You left me—you would be gone but a week—it is ten years since then."

"Now, hear me, Bertha. The fatal accident of fire and the wreck of the steamer I need not recount. My name appeared amongst the list of those who perished in the ill-fated vessel. A wild desire for freedom, a reckless love of adventure seized upon me. I knew you all believed me dead. I could now go where I would, I might visit countries unseen before; I might revel, toil, be what I would, go and come at no will but my own. I was intoxicated with freedom; I grew into a fierce love for liberty; I was alone, irresponsible. I might do what I would and none would suffer disgrace or infamy through me. I exulted in my selfish, savage life. Beauty, wine, song—all were at my command. So much did this life change my appearance, combined also with my change of name, that I have been with my nearest, best friends without suspicion. Have been near you for weeks, and even played the lover with you, to be repulsed with scorn. Was it not, Bertha, that you cherished my memory?"

"We cherish what is pleasing to us, Nathan. Bitter memories need no cherishing."

"We met in Italy, Bertha; your mature beauty, the calm, cold grace of your manner; the force of your intellect; the power of your poetic soul, that unutterable sibylline enchantment which lurks about you, and whose power you well know, made me again your worshipper. I was not alone in my intoxication of your beauty. The artistic,

enthusiastic children of the south, knelt to you as to an embodied muse, a reproduction of the Greek Aspasia, with the mystic power of a higher spiritualism. Oh, Bertha, how I gloried in you ! I saw you all serene, with so much to bewilder you, and thought I dwelt in your soul, a living presence. I made myself known, Bertha ; your words of cold deadly scorn are graven in lines of fire upon my memory. I hated you—scarcely could I forbear plunging a dagger into your breast.”

“Nathan Underhill forgets that he was then a husband.”

“Had it been otherwise, Bertha—had I appeared a free man, to claim you as my wife, say, should I have been less—less hateful to you ?”

“Why did you leave your wild life, Nathan ? why did you come back to order and society ?”

“Ah, Bertha, God’s laws are beyond our false endeavors. In the midst of my career I loathed it. I longed for the true and harmonious—for a being who should love me, confide in me, and whom I might foster, protect. I remembered a pale, passionless face, and marble lips, that cried, ‘*Oh, that to-day had never been !*’ It was thine, Bertha, and it has half maddened me.”

“Now, Nathan, I forgive thee ;” and she laid her two hands upon his, and raised her eyes upward. “Let us part now, not in bitterness, Nathan. You say the laws of your own being brought you back to order, to society. These laws are all-powerful with me, and they separate me from thee, Nathan. Let us part.”

“We cannot part, Bertha, I cannot let you go. I am a desolate man ; I have neither wife nor child, nor friend. I have but one hope ; that centres in you—but one ray of light ; that emanates from you. Bertha, do not cast me from you.”

Bertha groaned heavily.

“I love you not, Nathan—never loved you. Would to God we had never met.”

“Bertha, Bertha, I shall go mad ; I tell you the world is nothing without you. Our history in the past is unknown, your fair fame unscathed.”

Bertha recoiled visibly. “Nathan Underhill, there is no such thing as hiding the secrets of our lives. *Pure virgins love me*, but careless maidens avoid me. I am not one of them. Matrons feel instinctively that all mysteries are known to me. We cannot hide the evil of our lives. Spirit answereth to spirit, nerve to nerve, knowledge to knowledge. The vilest wretch who walks the pavé, feels, as she passes the proud woman, against whom no tongue dare wag itself, that there is that in the eye, in the cheek, in the tone and look, which, if known, would sink her to infamy. The grossest wretch who pollutes the air, feels the presence of the soul, the nerve akin to his own in spite of the sanctimonious exterior. Nathan, I have loathed and abhorred myself—I have fasted and prayed—I have called to the eternal elements to annihilate the past and restore me to the lily white, the crystal purity, the centre of truth, side by side with those who walk in white, for they are worthy.”

"Bury your griefs with me, angel Bertha. I swear to you, God's holiest shall not be more sacred than I will hold you."

"No, Nathan, had I loved you, it might have been otherwise; love might have veiled this agony of remorse. Had you returned as you promised—had I been your legal wife, I know not how it had been. Now let us part."

The man sank upon his knees and murmured—"Lost, lost, eternally lost!" Bertha sank upon hers also, beside him; she passed her hands through her long hair, casting it wildly from her. She breathed deeply, and then, as if a full gush of inspiration rushed upon her, she seemed to lift herself into eternal relations. She called to the Comforter; she implored for the divine mother of God to pour a balm into the heart of her child. She cast herself at the feet of the Infinite with groanings that could not be uttered. The man answered groan for groan—he fell forward upon his face. Bertha lifted him, and a suppressed cry broke from her lips,—

"My God, my God, he is dead!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

She moved upon this earth a shape of brightness;
A power that from its objects scarcely drew
One impulse of her being. SHELLEY.

I SAW Bertha fall upon her face, and forgetful of all other considerations, I left my concealment. Before I reached the spot, I became aware of an object lying close to the floor, working its way towards her. I confess, a cold shudder passed over me, and my hair crawled like the snakes of the Gorgon—for I do not pretend to anything more than a moderate share of physical courage. But this did not prevent me from hastening forward to the protection of Bertha, let the hazard be what it might. I was not much relieved to find the strange object thus dragging itself onward, snake-like was Tiger, for it was uncertain what freak he might next assume. He had evidently sought shelter in the little church from the cold air without, and had been attracted by the voices. I was relieved to feel that no one capable of carrying the secret forth to the light had been an auditor.

I lifted Bertha in my arms—she was utterly insensible. A pool of blood was about the head of the unhappy man, showing that life was extinct. A thousand fears crossed my mind. The fair fame of Bertha would be perilled should

we meet any village loiterer on our way out. Then the dead body—the hour of night—my unusual movements at such time and place—all rushed upon my mind, and took the shape of myriads of imps, gesticulating and dancing, and exulting in my discomfiture. The whole universe looked—not like an arena, in the which pure harmony should preside, but seemed a great thoroughfare, in which human beings moved in the midst of pitfalls and dangers of every kind, which they must escape as best they might, while a thousand malicious demons kept ward and watch—lured them to the confines of evil, and when they fell, rushed out to overwhelm them with shame or remorse. The appalling images of the Greek tragedy thronged upon me with vivid significancy. A blind, terrible fate, hedged in us, poor mortals, from which it was useless to hope for escape. To struggle was folly. The issues of life were in the pure soul, which was its own state, and external circumstances reached it not. I despaired of human approval, where men must judge by what they saw; but I rushed out into an eternal and universal good, and thus received the impossible of evil to the soul, and the possibility of evil in circumstance.

On emerging from the church, I was glad to find John True standing in the shadow of the wall. He rushed forward with an angry gesture, and would have taken the insensible girl from my arms, had not the light of the moon revealed my features.

"Parson Helfenstein!" he ejaculated with surprise.

"Is she dead, John True, tell me if she is dead?" I whispered.

John bent over her. "God help you, poor child! God comfort you, poor lady!" he murmured. "No, she is not dead. I have seen her in this wise before."

"Shall we carry her home?" I whispered.

"It is better not—I may speak out plainly, Parson—women is women, the world over. She will talk in her trance. I wouldn't like to have Defi' hear her. Women is women—they don't like to have *their* man think kindly of another woman."

"Bertha is not to be talked of in this way," I said, annoyed at his words.

"Only by women. A man knows her to be treated reverent-like, as if she was a saint," he replied.

"I must go," said great, honest John True, fearful of his vixen wife. "I will come again when I can. You need not fear, Parson Helfenstein. She is with God now, but she will come back." He went to the door—came back—and stooped down suddenly to kiss the fold of her robe. I saw the tears were streaming from his eyes—as they were from mine.

I laid her upon the parlor sofa, bathed her temples, and forced a cordial between her lips, and yet she revived not. How peaceful she looked in her insensible sleep. The dark lashes of her eyes, which were uncommonly long, laid upon her cheek; her masses of hair swept over her arms and fell over the sofa. I trembled as I unfastened the muslin from her throat, that her breathing might not be obstructed; still she gave no token of life. I brought the light to her face. There was no breath—no motion—and yet a lovely

flush was upon her cheek. I dared not call Julia, for I feared that Bertha might utter something that might compromise her when she should come to herself, and I could not have another mind to carry any portion of her secret.

I rubbed her hands, and blew the air into her face, all to no purpose. I remembered the lungs might be inflated by the breath, and stooped down to do so, when she opened her eyes; but they did not rest upon me;—they were raised upward with a look such as I had never seen in human eyes. She began to speak. A horror grew upon me. I was learning too much of this pure-souled woman. I dreaded to hear more. At length her words grew articulate.

"Infinitude of holiness, wash me in a divine fount. The multitudinous seas cannot restore me to the soul without spot," and she clasped her hands in supplication. "Resolve me into the elements, O God, or take the stain out of my life. Is there no Lethe-wave for sin? Virgin Mother of God, Mother without sin, pity thy child!"

Great tears streamed from her eyes. She went on.

"Light unapproachable and full of glory. They present me white robes. Me, Bertha, they crown with lilies. Me, miserable Bertha, they give the pure token of a white stone—me they offer pearly water to drink, from crystal fountains—me they call pure in heart—me, Bertha, bearing for years a great grief, they balm with a holy consolation."

As she uttered these words—did my eyes deceive—no, no; she rose visibly above the couch. Her face shone as if rays of light emanated from her person. Her hands were

white with an unearthly glow—her hair floated out from her head, every hair distinct and beautiful as a thread of gold. I heard a low, sweet sound of music, and I knew that every nerve of the angelic Bertha had become touched by strange melodies, and gave out audibly its response to the universal harmony. How long this period lasted, I know not. Bertha's folded hands were gently pressed together, and then spread outward and upward, and she said, in a clear, soft voice:

"As seemeth unto thee good. Thy will in me," and she rested once more as she had before done, with her eyes closed and no sign of life. I now knocked loudly at the door of Julia, and begged her to hasten below, for I feared Bertha had indeed departed in that beautiful vision, and that I sat only with the ashes that had once been Bertha.

Julia gave a look of surprise at seeing her friend in the room, but when I said, "A great grief has come upon our friend," she was too well bred to be inquisitive, but hastened to bestow those little womanly attentions which women know so well how to impart.

All this time I seemed to see the body lying dead in the cold moonlight of the church. I felt the unearthly chill as the moon crept round and looked into one window and then into another, bringing out now a cold white hand, upon which a costly diamond shone, gleaming and flashing like the eyes of a gnome; and now a cheek so pitifully still; and now the large, handsome forehead; and then slid over the stiffening limbs, that had ceased their wearying pathway.

Yet in all how merciful was that pang that cut short the period of agony! There had been manhood there, power, passion, beauty. Even I felt the spell of his presence, and wondered not that the girl, Bertha, had been magnetized by his electric power. I thought were Ernest Helfenstein endowed with that grandeur of manly physique, would he be what he now is, the metaphysic dreamer, the pale spiritualist, the monkish anchorite? Had the blood of Ernest Helfenstein poured the lava-torrent that flowed in the veins of Nathan Underhill would he have been the thinker, the unpretending teacher of a simple people? Would he not rather have converted the fervid visions, which now are born, and die in the imagination, into a breathing life, filling his own cup with bitter drops, and perhaps invading the sanctuary of another. Weak coward that thou art, Ernest, thy virtue is but a low temperament, and in thy heart thou enviest those who are not so weak in their own esteem as to let "I dare not wait upon I would." No wonder the old monks applied the hair shirt and the rod to their burly, overfed shoulders; it was a cheap way of atoning for their dull lives—I would resort to a like course, did I believe I could whip out of my soul every vestige of meanness. Verily, I have thought a life so pure as mine is right worthy of heaven, and a pretty bright spot there also, but now I see I have no virtue at all. Ernest Helfenstein is but a milk sop—he is but a poor bundle of negatives—he has no courageous out-speaking and out-acting life.

Filled with these thoughts I had neared the church, feeling so much tenderness for Nathan Underhill that my heart yearned to him with a brotherly love. Then I thought of Bertha, and it seemed to me she was cruel to one who, erring, still loved so devotedly. Again the vision of the beautiful woman in her robe of rose color, and sprigs of gold, the radiant head, and the face screened as before, stood before me. Why can I not see the face? Why is this image of beauty presented to me, and the face hidden?

Upon ascending the aisle, the body had disappeared. Instantly it occurred to me that Tiger must be associated with this disappearance. From the instinct that induced him to carry the two children to the gates of the Alms House, I divined he would be likely to go there now, from a vague feeling, that whatever was in his path was a waif, that must be houselled there. Accordingly, I hastened in that direction. Poor Tiger had borne the body, as I had supposed, and then seated himself beside it, upon a heap of withered leaves. A beautiful intuition, (from whence came it?) had induced him to cover the face of the dead with a handkerchief, from his pocket; and there he sat, a huge, shaggy creature, rocking himself back and forth in the cold air, from an instinct common to humanity, that the dead must be reverently guarded.

As I approached, I saw the tears; great drops, were upon Tiger's face. He took my hand, and I shrank, I confess at the contact, and removing the covering, placed it upon the forehead of the dead; then he raised the hand, and saw it fall heavily; all the time looking into my face to see if I could

understand the dreadful mystery. Poor Tiger was shivering with cold, and had evidently been long without food. I made loud knocks at the gate ; for the stars were fading in the east, and the cold, grey haze of the morning seemed ghastly to me, falling upon the head of Nathan Underhill, there by the wayside lying, cut off in all his manly strength, in the perfection of his manly beauty, with no friend to watch his body but this poor, outraged, outcast of our humanity. He, so powerful in intellect and impulse, watched over by this creature, with the mere rudiments of manhood developed in him.

Deacon Pettingal at length made his appearance, and the body was removed to an inner room. Tiger, who seemed quite passive, followed, watching every movement with an excited, and evidently, painful curiosity. Once I was shocked at seeing him raise the hand to his mouth, and bite it with his teeth ; but he performed the same process upon his own, by which I saw he was endeavoring to solve what, to his mind, was a terrible mystery. Ah ! our humanity is infinite, infinite ! not finite. The greatness of its intuitions struggles outward, even when the physique is rock-ribbed and mountainous above it, as in this poor Caliban, this lower than Pan manifestation of us.

I was able, by dint of signs, and various gesticulations to make Tiger understand that he must go and show us where he had found the body ; and here again our inborn adjustment to the Truth, was shown me in a new form ; for when Tiger at length comprehended what I meant, he stared his small,

fierce eyes at me in a way that would have betrayed my prior knowledge in the church at once, had he been able to frame his thought into words. But the deacon had no key to his manner, and therefore he did not regard it. At length I was able to induce Tiger to go with me ; and partly by going myself in the direction, and partly by following Tiger, we made our way directly to the church, where Tiger went through the process of describing the finding of the body, but to my horror he went through, also, a long pantomime, showing he knew of my presence in the pulpit, and the part taken by Bertha, so far as he had been able to comprehend it.

Fortunately this was all lost upon the deacon, who regarding it as a tiresome mummery, cut him short with a long, peremptory shout, as though he thought Tiger deaf. He attempted, at the same time, to seize upon him ; but with a great bound, Tiger shook him off, and escaped from the church.

CHAPTER XIX.

The innocent sleep :

Sleep, that knits up the ravelled sleeve of care,
The death of each day's life, sore labor's bath,
Balm of hurt minds.

SHAKESPEARE.

I HAD slept little or none for two nights, except as I had done so the day subsequent to the restoration of the children, and the sensitiveness of my system to the light, made this repose unrefreshing ; as the light, I am confident, penetrates the system, by other avenues besides the eyes. Now I sank down upon the sofa, so nearly exhausted that I could only learn that Bertha slept, and the children slept also ; when my thoughts assumed that misty, far-off character, preceding the oblivion of the senses. Then I was conscious of a slight movement ; the light disappeared softly, and a refreshing shade let down, as it were, my excited nerves. I knew that Julia had come to attend to my comfort ; that she had closed the shutters, and made me feel as if I were walking in some calm, cool valley, meditative and tranquil. Then a light fleecy substance seemed to lie very softly upon me, and I knew that Julia had laid her velvet cloak, with its lining of swan's down upon my shoulders. Still I could not speak,

so benumbed was I ; but a sweet, delicious consciousness of a rose-enchanted vale, melodies and perfumes exquisite, and shapes beautiful, stole over me, and I slept.

Ah ! so beautiful is sleep—so life-giving ! She takes us from the world, from which we have received rough usage ; blows that fall heavily upon soul and body ; toil, grievous to spirit and flesh ; uses unholy, because ungenial ; contacts repugnant and wearisome ; passions that ennoble or mislead ; affections bleeding in their intensity, and with an opiate touch, a loving, *motherly touch*, she lays us prone in forgetfulness. Or, if it be possible, she does more than this : She caresses the worn faculties to oblivion, and keeps awake those that else might be dwarfed by inactivity. Beautiful sleep ! When the good Father fashioned us with such nice and wondrous calculation of adjustment, not the least wonderful is this goodness of His, in giving us to thy keeping, in appointing thee nurse to the child-man.

Ah, sleep ! beautiful sleep ! if thus thou art to us a tender mother, timely and fair-serving, how much more lovely must be thy child, Death ! If thou art able to take us, world-wearied, and canst so balm, refresh, recreate, that we rise daily with new life, how much more grateful will be that ministry of death—that shall anoint the spirit to a new waking ! How downy seem the shadows that veil thy face, and the repose that thou shalt bring after life's wearisome pilgrimage ! Beautiful Death ! more beautiful than sleep, for sleep restores again to the oft-repeated struggle—the recurring anguish. But thou ! thou wilt reveal the

Unseen, because eternal. Thou wilt restore, not to the old anguish, but to the divine peace—the serene beatitude—the pure good which is at the bottom of all this discord—which is the meaning of all this yearning—the spirit of all this letter of groans and tears, by which *the soul testifies its abhorrence of evil ; its right to the perfect ; its response to the beautiful*. Therefore, Oh Death, with but a wing closing the portal that separates two worlds, I bless thy beautiful ministry, and fold myself to the arms of thy parent, Sleep, till such time as she will lay me in thy bosom, an o'er-wearied, but trusting child.

Beautiful Death ! Thou art but a period—a check in the one aspect, a revelator in another. I look to the heavens—thou art not there. Matter goes on with its laws of eternal import. Stars and constellations grow dim in their courses, but only because they belong to relations universal. Those that shone on the solitary studies of the Magi are now no longer visible, having passed to other spheres. The Pleiad—lost beauty of night's coronal—has but gone to other skies, taken, it may be, another shape, yet a Pleiad still. The earth struggles for the beautiful, and calls to all the elements to crown her with glory ; and the tree and the blossom come, and the water gives the lily and the rainbow, as its nearest response to the call. The mountain shames the dull plain, and the rivers become harpstrings to the cathedral hymn of many waters, and then man rises to perfect and interpret this great soul of beauty. Nature is now content ; for with man came Death, the ultimate of change,

and she felt now she was no isolated creation, but linked to the eternal All-Beautiful.

I slept, after the excitements through which I had passed, and a most lovely vision was revealed to me. I know not why these visions should come to me, for my actual of life is so inferior to my ideal of it, that I look upon myself mostly as a poor representative of a man, and poorer still as a representative of the spiritual relation, such as a priest should be. A priest should be no less a prophet than a priest. He should go from place to place, and gather his disciples about him, as in the olden time. What an anomaly a married prophet would seem ! Who would think of Elijah ascending his fiery chariot with a wife and children in train ? St. Paul did well not to marry. He could ignore partial relations, because he was more intimately associated with those that are universal.

The present is the play-ground of children. The past is the elysium of the dullard ; the future belongs to the prophet. He comprises the past. He has come up through the ages—a *babe of a thousand years*—nerve and brain, sense and reason—not of to-day only, but holding the past and looking into the future. He is as gold seven times refined in the furnace. He has been evolved from the finest models of the race, the whole of whose past experience of many generations is mapped upon the chambers of his delicate, sensuous organism ; every fibre, every globule of which is an alphabet to the world of human science, and thus he reads through a fine instinct, born with him, what others learn by experience,

observation, and books. Blood has done for him what teaching does for others. Hence *he* approximates to the prophet, who is able to discern him.

The clergyman *is* what his name implies. He is a man of and for the clergy. He belongs to a system—is paid to uphold it, and he feels bound to do this even if not in accordance with his own convictions. To preach is his profession. To pray is his profession. He does so more or less mechanically. He cannot well avoid it. A recurrence of certain forms, a return of certain periods devoted to fixed purposes, readily establishes habits in the mind; and words of habit, and feelings of habit, tones of habit, gestures of habit, readily ensue, and the man is a dead man. For your man of routine, of habit, is dead in the very worst sense. He is the modern mummy galvanized—swathed, bandaged, lettered into shape. In the resurrection he will come up in a perfectly decorous and respectable manner, with no flying robes, no falling mantle like that of the prophet, by means of which the waters will be divided, and a great work done when he has ceased on earth.

Honor to the clergyman, the minister, as our good Puritans called him. He is essential to the great system of society now existing. He is a check to much that is evil amongst us. Much of our sacred necessities are wisely in his keeping. In modern days he is nearer to man than the ancient priest. He goes out and in more readily, and has nearer sympathies with him. He is nearer to him in all qualities—even in that of thrift—in a system where every-

thing is brought to the level of traffic, from the vows at the marriage altar to the offering upon God's, from religion and justice down to wood and coal, and bread and meat—all is reduced to the level of traffic.

Where religion is thus systematized it must lose much in apparent sanctity, and the clergyman loses also that freedom of receptiveness, which is the great privilege of manhood. His lost freedom he may regret or not as his nature is large or small; but he must make up his mind to reject salary, or reject truth. The prophet could by no means be bound to officiate so much per week for so much per cent.—to marry couples at so much per brace, and bury the dead at so much per head. No; this is the paid work of the clergyman, and properly so. It is a part of the social labor which he is appointed to perform. Let him marry, then, and go pompously into gorgeous pulpits, and preach fine spun paragraphs to rich and respectable communities; but let him not overrate his stewardship—he is no interpreter of oracles, no revealer of sacred mysteries, but a plain teacher of one branch of human science as the school-master is a teacher of many. The prophet stands upon higher grounds. He should go up into a mountain as Jesus went; he should enter a ship and teach the people by the seaside; he should stand in the Portico as the ancient philosophers stood, and go from city to city unencumbered, and sow broad-cast the truths he has received. He can be no expounder of second-hand dogmas; for he drinks from

the fountain head of Truth ; and the temple made without hands is the fit temple in which he worships.

I thought it was night—a dark stormy night—with heavy thunder and lightning. I am always much affected by thunder storms, and so I thought, in my sleep, it was the same ; and I looked to the sky to see from what direction the storm came. When I saw that one half of the heavens was covered with a dense, black cloud, from whence livid flashes of lightning proceeded, while the other half was entirely clear, I thought I turned my back to this black cloud, saying to myself, “ *I will accept only the beautiful.* ” Suddenly it seemed to me I saw a most magnificent crown in the heavens, composed of stars, so brilliant and so exquisitely arranged that nothing could be more resplendent. While I gazed at this beautiful object, a vista in the scene opened, and I beheld a landscape of ravishing beauty : Vines intermingled with trellises of marble. Waters over vases of crystal, overhung with flowers. Light, at once clear and warm, a golden tinge as of powdered gold steeping all things in a soft radiance—and a voice, which I often hear, the same that used to syllable my name in childhood, whispered :—

“ What thin partitions soul from sense divide,” and the vista closed, leaving me a gleam of vines and arabesque tracery above, what seemed an intervening portal, and I awoke to the sound of music.

CHAPTER XX.

A child most infantile,
Yet wandering far beyond that innocent age,
In all but its sweet looks and mien divine.

SHELLEY.

WHEN Deacon Hopkins and I neared home with the children, we followed the crowd which was making its way into the hall of my house. The kitchen door was wide open, and a great fire upon the hearth, and Jane's invariable boiler and tub in full blast. Indeed poor Jane was never more regally inclined. She declaimed between her tears and the intervals of lading water for her tub with an unction never known before. It was observed that Lily was despatched in a paragraph, “ Well, Lily was an angel, and when you've said that, you've said all we know about 'em ; but as for Willy, he'd wheedle so for cakes, he'd blubber so when he couldn't have his own way. Goodness gracious, how that boy'd use his heels ! I never saw the beat of him for running ; and a young colt couldn't match him for a kick. Many's the time he's hit me a dig with that little hard fist of his'n, and then he'd bolt before you could say, Jack Robinson. But I'd watch for him ; I'd get behind the door and grab him, as he dodged by, and then give it to him some ; he fighting all the time like mad.

The kitchen was all alive with his pranks. He never lied after he knew what it meant ; but he'd a deal to learn, and he owed a spite to the Pettingals that I never saw the like in my born days—had he lived, I'm bound to believe he'd a done something to 'em onpleasant."

Her harangue was cut short by the entrance of the Deacon, with the subject of her discourse lying like a rag over his shoulder. Jane abandoned her tub with a rush, and seizing upon Willy, she plunged him up to the middle into the hot water, and seating herself beside him, she began to rock back and forth, hugging and kissing and stroking the face of the child in a manner quite affecting. Willy gave one of his loudest screams as he felt the hot water, but eventually it seemed to soothe him, and he yielded passively to the kisses of poor Jane, who called loudly for slices of bread and meat with which she fairly crammed his mouth, pouring a tumbler of milk in part into his mouth, and in part into his bosom, till the child fairly dropped to sleep with his mouth half filled. Jane so completely claimed him as her perquisite that it was useless to interfere, and we let her manage it all in her own way.

Lily, on the contrary, did not awake. She was laid softly in her little bed with the light shut out, and she slept, scarcely without motion, through twelve long hours. Then she arose fresh, and fair, and as well as ever. She had taken no cold, and seemed not to have suffered in the least by her exposure.

I sat in my library, wondering how Lily would deport

herself upon awaking—what she would say, and at a loss to divine—when the door opened a brief space, and a heap of golden curls appeared, and then a white forehead, and a pair of thoughtful eyes, and then two roguish lips, that didn't seem at all to belong to the eyes. I held out my hand, and Lily bounded to my arms, as she had never done before. She kissed my cheek—both cheeks—and then was upon her feet again, her eyes full of tears, but a smile still about her mouth.

"Have I been very naughty?" she asked, dropping her pretty head so as to look up through her long eye lashes.

"Yes, child, naughty because you did not trust my love."

Lily's tears were now in full flow, and she put her head upon my shoulder and sobbed violently. "I love you, Lily, you are a dear, beautiful child ; my child thou shalt be, dear Lily. Do not weep," I continued, for it was wonderful how paternal I grew, and how paternal language came to my lips.

Lily put her lips to my ears and said, "I have something to say," as well as she could utter these few words for weeping.

"Speak, dearest, angel child, for, Lily, you are the angel of Beech Glen."

Lily whispered, "If I had only a father, or a mother to kiss me, and call me daughter Lily ! Oh ! Mr. Helfenstein, I have watched the birds, and they feed and love the little young birds till they are able to fly ; and the pretty lilies are hid by the leaves till they are full lilies. Why do I have no father nor mother to love me ? Why do children shun me and Willy ?"

"Call *me* father, will you not, dear Lily?" I said, unable to reply to her questionings.

"*May* I call you father?" said the child, starting backward, and looking into my face.

"You shall be my daughter, Lily. Call me father, you and Willy."

The child drew to my side once more, she put her two hands crossed upon my shoulder, and then her heaps of curls touched my cheek as she laid her head down, weeping softly, like a plant opening its petals, and thus letting fall the dew from the bud.

"Lily, my own beautiful child," I cried, "a creature of my own flesh and blood might not be half so lovely as thou art. I will be thy father, thy friend. Forget all that is past—it did not belong to thee. Suffering, and poverty, and neglect, and cruelty, could not touch the true Lily." Now Lily was my child, and I raised her in my arms and held her to my heart; my tears falling upon her golden hair.

"Papa, dear, dear father," cried the child, "when I am an angel in heaven, as I shall be, I will learn the song of the child angel, and sing it to you. I will fly up to God and ask him for a new glory to be only yours, and I will ask him to take away my soul if it will make you happier."

"Stop! Lily, stop! you make me so happy, I am weeping now."

Lily kissed my cheek, my eyes—and then she smiled, and then she wept and shook her beautiful head, and she laughed as she saw the drops of tears upon my shoulder; and then

she gave one of those looks peculiar to herself, that flash out as if she had a little myriad of souls hidden behind the every day soul, that struggled outward for a look; and then Lily sank upon her knees, and bent her pretty head over her clasped hands. She did not speak, but the gesture said plainer than words, "Bless me, my father!" and never did a more heartfelt benediction fall from human lips, than I pronounced upon this wonderful child.

Oh! sacred seemed Lily, as well as beautiful, with her exquisite sensibilities, and her pure instincts. Goethe's Mignon was a rare creature of poetry and romance, a fair child of beauty and passion, and I thought of Mignon as Lily arose and leaned against my bosom. But Lily was not Mignon—she was no impassioned earth-child—no seedling of a Cleopatra—but she was Aspasia, and Sappho, and Cleopatra, seven times refined. She often has a look that startles me, from its singular resemblance to some person or painting which I have seen; but before I can think whose, or what it is, the face has undergone so many changes, that it is hopeless to recall it.

In all her kisses, I observed Lily never kissed my lips. She had the loveliest way in the world of putting her little hand to my cheek and pressing her lips to the other. I have never put mine to those of the child, and I do believe I should do an unclerical deed by knocking down the man who should presume to do so. I do not believe Prospero ever kissed the lips of the exquisite Miranda. Lily is my Miranda—my pearl—my Lily. How I shall reverence her

beautiful nature. How sacredly will I guard every aspect of her being. I will make her all noble also. *Lily shall have no waste power. She shall have space to be what God designed her.* He has given her beauty and taste. A soul and body rejecting all that is ungraceful, and I will help her to learning—to all culture that shall aid the completion of this exquisite creation. She shall be an artist, an orator, a ruler, or simple Kate, just as her faculties impel. I will not dare limit what God has made limitless.

Willy, after his night of adventure, was restless and fevered, and for many days we kept him on a diet lower than was pleasing to him. Jane stood ready with her cakes and tarts, fully expecting him to coax and wheedle her for these dainties, and then she would smuggle them into his possession in spite of the prohibition. She was greatly affected to find the boy not only patient, but absolutely refusing to take them. She wept incessantly, and declared that Lily was not an angel to be compared to him. She told me, in a sort of confidential way, to prepare myself to part with him, for, she added, "Lily is tough, she hasn't any feeling, but poor Bill has a heart that reaches to his fingers and toes. Goodness gracious! the father and mother of that boy ought to be tied to the heels of wild horses and dragged to death, for leaving him in the way they did."

True enough, the child was very still and thoughtful, and seemed only happy when Kate sat beside him with her book or doll, when he would watch her every movement and ask her innumerable questions. These were not asked

rapidly, but long pauses between, and some tears also. It seemed to me that I could see the whole working of the life within the child. Attributes of character, that might have been dormant forever but for me, were gradually unfolding within him; and tender sensibilities, that might have been lost under coarse, brutal instincts, revealed themselves daily before me, and showed how mysterious and sacred should our humanity be to each other.

The surprise and agony of Cain when he cried, "Am I my brother's keeper?" must have originated in the perception of life in some mystic sense, which he was made suddenly to comprehend. We are all keepers, in some sense, of each other, and the man or woman who does not infuse a newer and better life into those about them, has been false to human trust.

CHAPTER XXI.

Let those have night, that inly love to immure
 Their cloistered crimes and sin secure;
 Let those have night, that blush to let men know
The baseness they ne'er blush to do;
 Let those have night, that love to have a nap,
And loll in ignorance's lap;
 Let those whose eyes, like owls', abhor the light;
Let those have night, that love the night!
 Sweet Phosphor bring the day.

FRANCIS QUARLES.

It did not much alarm me when twenty-four hours elapsed, and Bertha gave no sign of consciousness, for I perceived that the spiritual mechanism was in active force, and it was of little moment that the overwrought body slumbered in quiescence. But as time wore on, and her breathing became less and less perceptible, I yielded to the wish of Julia, and called in Doctor Boneset, the principle physician of Beech Glen. I observed Julia looked on quite composed as the Doctor, who was a little, abrupt-speaking, good-natured man, felt the pulse, and questioned rapidly.

"Soft pulse, skin slightly moist, some great shock to the

nerves. How long has she been in this way?" at the same time lifting the lids of the eyes.

"Twenty-four hours," replied Julia, placing her jewelled fingers over the lids. Strange how calm these women are. I could not bear to see Julia do this in so mechanical a manner.

"Twenty-four hours, aye!" mused the Doctor, thrusting his hands into his trowsers pockets, and raising himself upon his heels. "Terrible shock! she's most gone, aye!" and he looked round. "No use to bleed—blood wouldn't flow; hands not cold much. Very strange case. Why didn't you send before?"

He held her hand in his, mechanically, and I saw how the blue veins were shrunk, and the whole color of life had disappeared. Julia stooped down and kissed the pale brow, and as she did so, she left a tear in its place, which she wiped off with her lace handkerchief. My heart beat quick at the sight of that tear.

"Can we do nothing, Doctor?" she asked in a low voice.

The Doctor applied hartshorn to the nose and felt of the feet, and raised up the hand, and held it to the lamp, where the light shone through the wax-like finger with a faint, ruddy hue. All this time, I confess, I was annoyed; I, a sensitive bachelor, who had scarcely in my life touched the hand of a woman. I marvelled at the indifference of this man of patches and pills, who moved about the beautiful form as if it had been of wood; and I inwardly vowed, that no doctor should ever touch wife of mine; my uneasi-

ness was, at its climax when the Doctor opened her muslin, and laid his red fat hand over the region of the heart. Julia restored the robe to its place, but did not seem at all shocked. She put a little water upon the lips of Bertha, and bathed her temples with the same. I felt all this time I was weak and unreasonable, but my instincts would assert themselves, and I wished a woman had stood in the place of the good, harmless Doctor Boneset, who went about the room, thrusting his hands into his pockets, and sticking out his little short legs here and there, totally unconscious of my annoyance.

"What brought it on," he at length asked, after having gone through with all these preliminaries. This was a question I could not well answer, and I simply replied she had been talking earnestly, and suddenly fainted.

The Doctor made another application over the region of the heart, and I felt actually sheepish with my disaffection, and the necessity of concealing it. On my soul, I believe women like to be ministered to by men in this way, or the practice wouldn't have lasted up to our time.

"Tisn't catalepsy," he said, raising the arm, and observing it fall to its former position, "Can't be roused—too far gone, and yet—the heart beats regular, and the forehead is moist," at the same time, laying his red hand over this beautiful seat of the soul. The Doctor now called for mustard and prepared plasters, which were to be applied to the feet and the stomach, and then took his leave.

It was soon noised in Beech Glen that Bertha was lying

in what the people believed a trance, and proffers of aid, and calls of interest or curiosity filled the parsonage with visitors. Julia met all with the utmost sweetness. I urged her at length to retire, and sat myself in the room all night ; for I dreaded that coarse hands and eyes of mere curiosity should do their ministry upon this, to me, angelic woman. Mrs. Hopkins was to occupy the position of nurse, and I observed she took a large arm-chair, which she had wheeled to the bed-side, and having placed her two feet upon a foot-stool, she rolled her head from side to side, till it was quite at ease, upon the cushions of the chair, and her deep, regular breathing soon told of "nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep."

Jane had left a roast turkey and pies, and coffee, duly prepared upon the table in the dining room. Suddenly I was roused from a deep reverie, by hearing a movement of the dishes upon the table. Opening the door softly, I caught a glimpse of Tiger hurrying out with the whole turkey in his hands, together with other viands. I hastened forward, but the poor wretch, uttering his incoherent gibberish, pushed me back, and hastily clearing the door, disappeared. Upon looking about, I found a dead rabbit and a chicken lying upon the platter, which he had evidently left as a sort of exchange.

As midnight approached, I thought Bertha grew paler, and I took her hand in mine, and sat upon the side of the bed, looking upon her placid face ; when the door opened, and I saw again the child angel, leading in the sleeping Lily,

in her pretty night gear. She crawled into the bed, and laid her arm softly over the bosom of Bertha. Nearer and nearer did the beautiful child draw to the face of the sleeper, till their lips nearly touched. And thus they lay, hour after hour; and I sat by, weeping, and praying that the good Bertha might return to us.

"Bertha, *my Bertha*," I cried, "do not leave me," and I pressed my lips to her hand, and gazed into the lifeless face. And now I perceived a change. A faint glow stole to her cheek—a soft rose hue—and under the pressure of my fingers grew bright, crimson spots, lovely as rubies, and the lips were moist and red. But Lily, sweet Lily, grew momentarily paler. Every shade of color forsook her face, and her breath came deep and labored. I raised her in my arms, and she awoke with a deep sigh. She looked about with a gentle bewilderment, and then casting her eyes upon Bertha, *called her by a sweet, beautiful name*, which, when I could not pronounce, I asked her to repeat; but she would not do so. This reminded me of what has more than once happened to myself in dreams, where I seem to be called by an appellation, which always eludes my waking memory. But Lily did not entirely awake, and was soon fast asleep in my arms.

I gathered the little figure to my bosom, and wrapped it warmly in my cloak, and thus I sat, listening to the soft breath; and conscious of a strange delight, when the child slightly turned and put one arm over my shoulder. How long I remained in this position, I know not; but when I

next glanced at Bertha, she had raised herself in bed, and was looking intently at me. To my surprise, she seemed entirely collected, and though very pale, her eyes were preternaturally bright. Altogether, she seemed so fair—so unearthly in her loveliness—that I was not surprised to see a halo around her head, and faint rays from the ends of her fingers. She reminded me of a form I had once before seen—a blind girl. When she spoke, her voice was like a clear chord of music.

"Ernest, put the child away; I would speak with thee."

I pointed to the Deaconess, as if to impose caution, for my mind divined what would be the purport of her words.

"Poor woman! she will not hear us. She is intermingled with chaos and black night, and there is no divine light vouchsafed her from sleep-land; therefore I may speak."

I carried Kate back to her little bed, and returned to Bertha, who pointed to a glass of water, which, when I presented, she looked upon with a clear smile. "I will give them to drink of *living waters*," she murmured, and raised the glass to her lips, then returning it to me, she said:—

"Ernest, have I slept long?"

"More than a day and a night," I replied.

"How came I here?"

I could not bear this questioning, and I knelt down and said, in a low voice, "Bertha, I was in the church—I heard all, and brought you here in my arms."

"Now God be praised," she replied, calmly. "Ernest, you are not brave, but you are true. Ernest, I have over-

stepped partial relations. I see life and its purposes, from a stand-point of truth, such as was never before revealed to me. I have bathed in light ineffable—I have listened to hidden oracles. My vision is now clear, and a calm so heavenly fills my whole soul, that I shall be as one who has tasted of the resurrection to eternal life in all time to come. Nay, do not speak, Ernest, I see all you would say. The dead man must be carried back to the little church, and we will do him honor in so far as we may. Ernest, I did not love him, but I have suffered agonies of remorse because I could not do so. Now I see it was well—now I am content; but now, also, I see how and why he so clung to me, as if his soul claimed mine as a guaranty of his own immortality. Ernest, every man is, in some way, his brother's keeper, *and every woman must answer before God for the soul of some man.* I may never be linked in aught to Nathan Underhill, *but far off, amid eternal aspects, were threads which passed through my fingers,* and to these he clung. Thank God, I have been no wilful deluding woman, purposely snaring him, from a weak, wicked vanity. Now waken the good woman, and I will arise."

I did her bidding passively as a child. Great was the consternation of the good Mrs. Hopkins to find she had slept at her post. She took me aside to question closely as to the moment of the waking of Bertha, and as to her appearance, and what she had first spoken. I narrated what was essential for her to know as briefly as possible; told her of the few words uttered over the glass of water,

which seemed to supply a brief hint of the mystical. Mrs. Hopkins fixed her round eyes upon my face, and I saw they grew rounder and rounder, as her own imagination filled up the chinks in my disjointed narrative. Subsequently, I heard that Bertha had raised herself in bed amid shouts of alleluiahs, and the period of sleep grew to be extended to three days. It was reported also that her whole skin had turned blue, and that sparks were evolved from her person like those from an electric machine. It was said moreover that she talked many hours in an unknown tongue, and was heard to converse with Moses and Elias. So it is that a subject grows as it extends through human channels.

In regard to Bertha, I may as well anticipate so far as to say, that from this period she partook of no more flesh. She was fond of fruits, the grape especially, but took no wine. I think her cheek was slightly paler, but her health was no way impaired. I observed also, that her figure grew a trifle more full; her voice lower and richer in tone; and somehow Bertha, so noble, so divested of all selfism, grew to be daily more beautiful; more entirely adjusted to life, and its pure offices. It seemed to me that without Bertha, the world would have lacked a harmony. She would have been missed like a star gone out in the heavens, or rather there would have been a void felt in space, just as we should feel, if the water should all at once have recalled its gift of the lily—this out-speaking of the soul within it.

The body of Nathan Underhill was placed in its last

cradle, and stood in the altar-place of the church. He had been staying at the Inn of Beech Glen, where he had paid sumptuously for all attendance, but had studiously concealed his name, even saying in a sort of reckless merriment, when the inquisitive landlord approached the subject too nearly :—

“Good Boniface—”

“My name is not Boniface, but Mr. Stiggins, justice of the peace, s'lect man of the town, and member of the church of God.”

“Well, well, Boniface—”

“I say my name is not Boniface.”

“Well, well, Mr. Stingham—”

“Lord save you, I'll write it out in full.”

“Never mind,” interrupted his imperturbable guest, “shouldn't be able to read your writing. The truth is, Mr. Bon—Stingham, I beg your pardon ; I'm that unfortunate man who was always too late for supper, about whom a ballad was written.”

“Do tell!” replied the landlord, opening his eyes with commiseration, “Dan Tucker?”

“The very same ;” and the guest, with a slight twinkle of the eye, left the room hurriedly.

“Nevertheless,” said Mr. Stiggins, admonishingly, to those about him, “Mr. Tucker, he must be called, for he pays well for his supper if he is late at it, and deserves to have Mister, at least, put to his name, though he seems

more, accordin' to my idee, of a Kurnal, if not Ginerall, than any man that's come under my observation.—I dare be bound to say, he's Ginerall Tucker, to say the least.”

Mr. Stiggins deserved his church membership, for though a publican, he was honest and simple-hearted, and always took all I preached in the pulpit as true gospel till, on reaching the church door, he was met by Deacon Pettingal, or his wife, or a brother of the board of select men, who might be a malcontent, when his faith became unsettled again, till the next Sunday brought him back to the original platform—again to be sidled down by my opponents. Poor Stiggins was a spontaneous believer, but, by no means, a theoretic one.

Among the effects of Mr. Underhill was found an ebony box, inlaid with ivory, carefully locked, and even sealed, directed to Bertha ; this was at once put into her possession, as well as other of his effects, which did not fail to give rise to much conjecture and idle gossip in the village. It was even said, that Nathan Underhill had died suddenly, while attempting to rob the church of its sacramental service (which, by the way, is of Britannia ware), a manifest judgment of God upon him, and that he had appeared the same night to Bertha, while visiting at the Parsonage. He came enveloped in a sheet of flame (so rumor said), and warned Parson Helfenstein to repent of his atheistic notions, and to take warning by what *he* suffered, to prepare to flee from the wrath to come. He then told Bertha, solemnly, to beware of false prophets, and of wolves in sheep's clothing

Declared she was not far from the kingdom of heaven, but she must cast aside the devil and his works (for thus was I not very flatteringly designated), and then telling her to take his clothes, and books, and the ebony box, and use them for the advancement of religion; he vanished with a great shriek, and in an odor of brimstone; whereat Bertha fell into a trance, in which she saw heaven and hell; and saw my predecessor occupying the highest seat in heaven, waving a palm branch, and playing a harp, with a golden crown upon his head, and intently looking upon an effigy swinging in the hottest of the flames, which flames arose at an angle plainly to be seen over the walls of heaven; that, upon nearer inspection, Bertha saw this effigy was a likeness of myself, enduring anticipatory torments for having held heretical and dangerous opinions in Beech Glen.

Indeed the whole village was in a state of ferment, and on the day of the funeral the house would not hold half the people who came from long distances to see the man, upon whom such summary justice had been inflicted, but more especially to see Bertha, who had so suddenly risen from her trance, and who, it was said, was of marvellous beauty; and would appear dressed, some said, in deep mourning, and others averred, in pure white, and address the people.

A nervous excitability was upon the multitude, and more than one woman burst into hysteric tears as the service went on. More than this, it was rumored that the grave was to be made down by the river, at the base of the mountain; and, in fact, in a beautiful grove, near the junction

of the Neversink and Delaware rivers, where the lines of three States met; because the pious dust of the graveyard of Beech Glen would not bear his unhallowed ashes.

The excitement of the people and the continual accession of numbers delayed the service to a late hour; added to this, when the procession was about to form, a sudden shower arose, not infrequent amid the mountains, but which added to the awe of the people, when it was observed, that one flash of light gave voice to a loud reverberating clap of thunder, and a flow of rain, like a deluge. The rain pattered, and danced, and darkened the way, and as it ceased, or rather moved off over the hills to the east, the procession wound its way beneath the shadows of the mountains down to the beautiful valley designed as the resting-place of the stranger.

Neither Julia nor Bertha appeared publicly; but as the procession approached the quiet nook, I was pleased to see two figures, each in a large black cloak, and closely veiled beneath one of the stately trees that garnished the spot. The deep silence of the multitude, the melancholy history of the man about to be consigned to his last resting, the sight of these two women in their long robes, thus presenting the appearance of graceful statuary, or antique mutes, relieving the solitary aspect of the woods and waters with a sense of human interest, all conspired to touch the vein of enthusiasm and poetry in my soul, and I walked onward in

front of the procession, with a new and beautiful gaze into the great soul of mother earth.

Scarcely had the pall bearers placed the body beside the open vault, when the shower, which had left the rustle of its robe upon the forest trees, their bare branches streaming with gems, met a full blaze of the setting sun, and a clear, beautiful rainbow spanned the hills, and hung like a pure smile of divine benignity along the sky. I sank upon my knees, and the great mass of people did the same, and as I repeated, "I am the resurrection and the life," and prayed, no lip uttered prayer ; the calm was as if every heart gave but one great beat.

Then the sweet voice of Julia, clear and penetrating, sang :

"Unveil thy bosom, sacred tomb,
Take this new treasure to thy trust," etc.

and one after another the people joined, sending their voices into the solitudes, as the primitive Christians had made the caves and rocks resound with their pious melody ; and at the doxology, I think, not a voice was silent.

As I returned to the parsonage, I found the tables had been spread with bread and meat, and fruits, and the people were freely permitted to enter and partake. I saw the foresight of Julia in this, for the custom, so beautiful and appropriate in our ancestors, is fast falling into disuse amongst us.

As I looked from my window out upon the scene already becoming obscure in the twilight, I saw a streak of light

between the hills gleamed yet upon the spot, and the gravedigger moved hither and thither at his unfinished task. An hour afterwards he was still there, and another, whom I perceived to be John True ; and as the moon arose higher in the zenith, I observed the outlines of a cross marking the spot. This cross was made of unhewn timber, and was closely bound with evergreen. I knew that Bertha was the creator of this touching tribute.

CHAPTER XXII.

At this the boy hung down his head,

He blushed with shame, nor made reply ;

And five times to the child I said,

Why, Edward, tell me why ?

WORDSWORTH.

AFTER the events described in our last chapter, nothing of moment transpired at the parsonage for some time. The weather was intensely cold, and the earth had assumed her ermine mantle. The mountains showed huge patches of black rock, and the evergreens were laden with fleecy snow. The river was a mass of ice, upon which the skater darted here and there. Now one might be seen moving in all the grace of athletic manhood, while beside him was an ambitious youngster, sprawling in a manner that made him resemble a frog more than anything human. Of a bright night, it was a fair sight to see the people coast down hill upon sleds, and a fairer to see how a natural courtesy made the rudest become gentle when a clear, moonlight tempted the girls out to join in the sport. Sometimes a girl became no unskilful skater, and then the father or the brother showed no little exultation at such a triumph in the family. Indeed, I believe the common mind, unprejudiced by professional arrogance, or conventional pettiness, is always prepared to

hail with approval any well achieved effort of a woman. There is at the bottom of the human heart a generous appreciative love of what is beautiful when allied to power.

I observed these girl-skaters wore their petticoats four or five inches shorter than the ordinary length ; that their feet were guarded by pretty boots fringed at the top, and a warm jacket, edged with fur, and a bright colored scarf wound about the head and tied in a knot beneath the chin, constituted a costume at once piquant and picturesque. I resolved that another winter Lily and William should be out to skate, and myself also ; for I began to feel as if my education was at best but a poor one ; that half the learning stowed away in my brain was so much useless lumber ; while the full training of body, as well as soul—the one made free in every limb, and the other alive to all noble and beneficent impulses—was the true education of a man.

Often did I, at twilight, look out upon the solitary grave of Nathan Underhill. The spot had been selected by Bertha, who had become proprietor of a large portion of the land in that vicinity. I observed the light rested cheerily upon it from an opening between the hills before described, and that the cross stood out in clear relief, when all else in the landscape was commingled and lost in obscurity. Strange thoughts of Bertha, and the perversity of human emotions filled my mind at such times. I observed a path was kept worn always to the spot, for the villagers already looked upon the grove with a strange interest.

All this time Bertha was much away, and I knew little

of her movements, but I observed blocks of stone were gradually collected in the vicinity, under the eye of John True, from whence I inferred that a monument was to be reared. Ah me ! I inwardly sighed, one word of love to the living, is worth more than all this incense to the dead, and then I checked myself, for I knew that Bertha was of a gentle, loving make, and I knew she would have spoken that word if human lips could do so without falsehood.

But I, Ernest Helfenstein, loved now, and such grew the arrogance of the man within me, that I felt as if any woman who had wronged one of my sex by not loving, had committed a deadly sin. I felt as if I could help to crush her. All the beauty of Nathan Underhill, all the strange fascination of his voice and manner, arose like so many injured spirits of manhood, and the woman who could be indifferent to these, was no woman. That was it. Bertha was not a true woman, I said to myself. She belongs to the millenium; I hate such women. Something of all this must have tinged my manner, for one day when Julia quietly reproached Bertha for the infrequency of her visits, she said playfully, and yet her lip trembled at the time :

"Ernest does not sympathise with my views, and I esteem life as being too precious to be filled with unnecessary annoyances."

I tried to parry this remark by a levity I did not feel. I wanted Bertha to prove herself what I had mentally called her—no woman—by an enraged, bitter, unwomanly spirit. But no ; her gentleness was undisturbed, and I had my ill humor to myself.

Somehow or other, if woman is always associated with all that is best and noblest in life, with all that is true and beautiful ; if we go to her in our fullest joy, feeling that her smile is essential to its completeness ; if, in the gratification of our highest ambition, we feel that without her smile our gain is but loss ; if, in our deepest grief, her tear can alone assuage our misery, it is no less true that there is no wretchedness, misery and wickedness in the world that she has not helped to produce, either by her crimes, her imbecilities, or her apathy. She is the last, the divinest creation ; and to her it is given to be a discerner of spirits ; and yet she is a puppet, a doll, a slave, a sensualist, and we love to have her thus, because it gratifies our own self-love. We pour upon her head oceans of flattery in the heyday of her youth, and then, when she should grow noble and beautiful with years, we, who have helped to degrade, despise, if we do not hate her—we would worship an ape, lest, in adoring a God, our self-love should be rebuked.

A certain discontent still prevailed amongst my parishioners, but now it had assumed a new shape. The cross over the grave of Nathan Underhill provoked the ire of the more bigoted, most especially as the younger portion of the community looked upon it with a sort of pious awe, and whenever they went out of a moonlight night, did not fail to bend their steps thitherward. Now this cross was upon private property, and therefore it could not be interfered with ; but this very fact aggravated the state of feeling, because of its impotence. It began to be said there was a leaning

towards Romanism in Bertha, if not in me ; and that Nathan Underhill was an apostate—a Roman Catholic—if nothing worse.

At the parsonage, matters had undergone little change. I had endeavored, but in vain, to induce the children in the village to visit us, in the hope of procuring their companionship for William and Kate, but these poor little machines of childhood, when they came, set themselves up stiff in their chairs, and answered me so like parrots, that I felt nothing would be gained through this. More, also, each one came with a lesson duly prepared, which was, by no means to play with the children from the alms-house.

I have before said, that we used no bolts or bars at Beech Glen, and I was not sorry to learn that almost every night some eatable or other disappeared from the kitchen. Sometimes we found a turkey, a chicken, a wild rabbit, recently killed, in return, and even, in one case, a pig of no mean size was lying upon the floor. As Tiger was still at large, I was at no loss to account for this ; but as my neighbors began to complain of these depredations, I felt more annoyance than I dared to express. I had more than once followed him to the little church, and even went so far as to carry him a heavy blanket one bitter cold night, but further than this, I was at a loss what to do.

Willy had changed very greatly. He was now thin and pale, and I had serious fears for him. He had learned to call me father, and now often came and leaned his little arm upon my knee, and asked me questions in a confiding manner.

One evening as he was leaning this way, he suddenly turned round and said :

“Father, I’ve renounced the devil.”

I could not forbear a smile at this abrupt announcement, and Julia threw back her head and gave way to one of her musical laughs, which instantly brought Kate to the rescue, for she always seemed to see into the spirit of all poor Willy’s attempts to make himself intelligible.

Accordingly Kate said, “Willy has got up amongst the angels now,” and she looked around, as much as to say, you won’t laugh at that.

But Julia did laugh, and added, “So, then, you have renounced the devil and all his works, Willy, have you?”

Lily leaned upon my other knee, as if waiting for me to speak.

“Yes, I *have* renounced the devil,” said Willy, quite with an indignant, positive manner.

“That child will be the death of me,” cried Julia, laughing immoderately ; and I laughed too, and thought never anything could be so lovely as Julia laughing ; but at the same time I put my arm around Willy, and asked him to tell us all his thoughts. Now, I had never been able to caress the child, and this was so unwonted a piece of tenderness, that he hung his head, and looked almost as unattractive as in the first period of his being with us. Lily shrugged her shoulders, and muttered, “I wish God didn’t make us to laugh ;” but Willy, greatly to my surprise, went directly in front of Julia, and said, “You are a great lady, and you

don't know how a poor little boy feels," and then ran out of the room.

My heart smote me, and I followed the child, who was sitting moodily upon the hall stairs, and refusing all Jane's proffers of tarts or cake. I took him by the hand and led him to my room, where I seated him upon my knee, and stroked his masses of hair from his eyes, and now, for the first time, I realized that Willy was a right manly looking boy. That his eyes were bright; his forehead well shaped, although too much covered with hair; and that his make was of that robust, practical kind, that augurs good success in the world. His imagination is not great, but his conscientiousness is, and a stout self-esteem will render him not only effective but dignified. I noted all this while Willy, embarrassed by his new position, and feeling instinctively that my tenderness was conferred by kindness, rather than spontaneity, sat looking down at his hands, which he rubbed and pinched, till he covered them with little black rolls, showing conclusive neglect of his ablutions.

I wiped his hands with his nice, clean handkerchief, which Willy, like most of the people, is apt to regard as a sinecure, and then asked him to tell me all about the evil spirit he had renounced.

"That's it," said Willy, "I used to tell Kate I meant to be a devil when I died, so I might poke up the burning fire for Granny Pettingal. Oh! she's an awful bad woman. She'll catch it when she dies, if she does belong to the church."

I could not refrain laughing any more than Julia, but the



JULIA ATTEMPTED TO TAKE UP THE CHILD, WHICH MADE
HER LOOK MOST LOVELY IN MY EYES.

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child went on to explain how he thought devils were bad thoughts, and wicked ways ; and though never choice in his vocabulary, I found he had a nervous strength of thought, that harmonized well with his language. He liked big words also ; a certain sonorousness caught his ear at once, and a word thus presented to his mind never escaped his memory. As he let me into his mental arcana, in a very emphatic but disjointed manner, I laughed some—for nothing could be more ludicrous than his expressions—but a thorough truthfulness, an honest if not beautiful nature, was so apparent, that I warmed sensibly to the child.

"I'd like to die now, all but one thing," he went on to say

"What is that, Willy?"

"I don't know music, couldn't play on the harp up there."

"Then you think they play on the harp in heaven, do you, Willy?"

"Granny Pettingal said so ; but then she lied so about God, that she'll lie about other things."

My first impulse was to check this irreverent mode of expression, but time will do its own work in that as well as other defects, and I said, "How did Mrs. Pettingal lie about God?"

The child opened his eyes wide, and a sort of amazed, incredulous expression grew upon his face, as if he began to fear I might be what he called a "humbug," as well as others he had known.

"She'd fix us up, and make us say the catechise when the Committee men was coming, and when they was gone, she'd put me down the cellar, and knock my head when I screamed (and I'm great on screaming, I tell ye), and when I told her God was lookin' down at her, she lied about him."

"How, Willy?" I asked, not a little shocked.

"Why, she said I was born in sin, that I was a child of the devil, that I was worse than my father and mother, 'cause I had got their sins upon me, and my sins too. She said, God didn't love me, and couldn't love me 'cause he'd got to visit judgments on me to the third and fourth generation. I call that lying, now I know more about God."

Willy uttered this with the greatest solemnity, while I tried to look grave, but in vain, especially when the little thing spoke so earnestly about his being punished to the third and fourth generation. For the first time I took the child to my heart, and kissed his little cheek with genuine affection.

CHAPTER XXIII.

O, bring me apples to assuage that fire
Which, Etna-like, inflames my glowing breast;
Nor is it every apple I desire,
Nor that which pleases every taste the best,
'Tis not the lasting dewzen I require;
Not yet the red-cheeked queening I request—
Nor that which first beshrewed the name of wife,
Nor that whose beauty caused the golden strife.
No, no, bring me an apple from the tree of life.

QUARLES.

[FROM THE JOURNAL.]

I AM annoyed at the continued absence of Bertha. Her eyes seem to haunt me. I say to myself daily, "I do not love thee, Bertha, and yet I feel a strange uneasiness when away from thee." I have detected also a certain something—is it meanness? is it selfishness? is it enlargement of soul? is it madness? I know not where to place the emotion. When Julia is less reserved and haughty, less the proud, tyrannical belle—and that part of her character makes me hate and love her also;—when I am, in plain words, happiest with Julia, and feel most sure of winning her love, then, at that very moment, my heart sends out tendrils in search of Bertha. Then I feel that she is—I cannot tell how—essential to my happiness. I verily believe this is a downright

kind of spiritual swindling, and I feel ashamed of my rapacity ; but there is the fact remaining, reason as I will. I wonder how many tenants the heart can hold ? I wonder if women are ever caught tripping in this way ? I wonder if heart-breaking, so often described by poets and novelists, is a natural or an artificial state of things. We must love the highest representative of the ideal that comes across our path, let the former loves be what they may. Aye, our humanity needs to be very Job-like, and well is it if we can all say, "In all this Job sinned not."

Bertha has a way of raising her eyes, and looking slightly upward, when engaged in earnest conversation, and then when she allows them to fall upon my face, I shrink from their mournful radiance. The lid is beautiful in itself—a distinct feature—and I never observed hers without thinking of Prospero's words to Miranda :—

"Advance the fringed curtains of thine eyes."

They make you think of a rose leaf that has fallen upon a violet. There is a touch of the Juno also, a something that makes it seem appropriate to call violets "dim," the deep setting of the eye, suggesting the sheltered nook best loved by the violet—

"Fair as the lids of Juno's eyes."

I have reasoned, reflected, wept, prayed, and struggled to rid myself of the state of feeling above described. But all to no purpose.

"The soul is its own place,"

and, like "the wind that bloweth where it listeth, and we hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth," so are these births of the spirit.

From these facts within myself, I learn one great truth. All nature repels fixedness. Man cannot make himself a fixture. When he would plant himself here or there, the whirlwind comes to uproot him. When he would hang himself on some peg, it proves too weak to sustain him. When he will consent to shackles and bonds, his limbs grow too large for the bolts. When he becomes blind of eye, the vision turns in upon the soul, and he is visual in every sense. God has issued the interdict to idleness and limitation by ejecting him from his fairest gardens, rather than permit him to eat of the tree of life, before he has earned by the labor of thought, soul, sense, to hunger and thirst for its fruits. We must climb the symbolic ladder step by step. Angels, archangels, up to sublimer hierarchies.

Ah me ! I am far, very far from content. Julia is in no way adapted to me, and yet my soul is well nigh absorbed in her. I am content only within reach of her voice. Her smile haunts me perpetually. I feel a soft, dreamy atmosphere gathering over my spirit, and I begin to question whether all this aspiration, that leads me to high aims, be not, after all, a delusion. Oh for summer time's lapsing fountains and fragrant blooms, and an oasis in the desert with Julia. Do we not defraud ourselves by our asceticism ?

What am I, that I love this creature of fascination.

Women delight in show, in gaiety, in petty triumphs. What to them is the soul of a lover, if he cannot lay splendor at their feet? I am not gay; when happiest I am tranquil, prayerful. I am exacting, well nigh jealous. But oh! the infinitude of gratitude I should feel—the soul-deep tenderness that would well from the fountains of my being toward one who would love me for myself alone. Who would be happy in my happiness—which is so unlike what the world calls such. The unthinking might call my joy sorrow, so nearly is it allied to tears, because to me it is an unexpected revelation.

A beautiful woman is so holy in my eyes, and yet these beauties flirt and covet admiration; and I, a plain country parson—what would be the value of homage like mine? Beauty is for admiration—it has a right to homage. Somehow we always have a rebellious instinct, that rises up with disaffection when these rare creations are metamorphosed into Mrs. Browns and Joneses. We feel a secret pleasure when we find they are not quite happy. We think Mr. Jones and Mr. Brown very good sort of men, but we always wondered at their presumption, and are better at ease now we find they are like to be punished.

I suspect, if our best pattern of saints would deal honestly with themselves, they would be astonished to find how much of the devil they harbor inside. For my part, I feel remorse of conscience if my old stereotyped vocabulary gets the better of me in the pulpit, and I speak in bad terms of him. I can sympathise with the good Spaniard of whom Selden

relates—that being near to die, and being warned by his confessor of the torments that Satan was preparing for him unless he repented and bought absolution from the church—he replied he hoped not—he hoped the Don was not so cruel; whereat being still farther reprimanded, he said he thought it best to treat the Devil with respect, because, should he fall into his hands, he might receive better treatment for having done so.

Julia is fully aware of my admiration. When I am most enraptured with her, she has a soft, dreamy voluptuousness about her that bewilders me. Her eyes droop, her step is languid, her voice low and soft, and the accents seem to linger upon their beautiful portal, as if loth to leave their resting place. I know now what Milton meant by “linked sweetness, long drawn out.” He must have found somewhere in his experience a Julia—rich, sensuous, delicious—whose presence is a perpetual sense of the womanly; nay, I had almost said the *feminine*, and seems a tribute to masculinity. I feel no impediment, no rebuke in her atmosphere. I am Adam to whom Eve has been revealed. I ask for no diviner revelation of womanhood. She smiles softly, and I repeat:

“Blest as the immortal gods is he,
The favored youth that sits by thee,
And sees and hears thee all the while
Softly speak, and sweetly smile.”

Whereat Julia smiles more ravishingly still, and says:

"Ah, Ernest, you make me in love with poetry, with beauty, with *myself*."

"Nay, Julia, beautiful Julia, love me," and more I would say, but upon the instant I think of Bertha, and my lips pay a divided homage. I do not think Julia knows or suspects this, for when I will *talk* love to her, she grows merry, and sometimes grave.

Yet another thing. No sooner do I shut myself in my room, and grow devoted to my profession, than I hear Julia's delicious voice in the hall, or out in the sunshine. I catch gleams of her down by the river and up the side of the mountain, and she returns so bright, so piquant in her demi-masculine dress; so rosy, healthful, and bewildering, that all my philosophy is at fault, and I am the poorest thing in creation—a shy spiritualist, a pale country parson, ignorant of the world, indifferent to it also—madly in love with a dashing city belle.

Aye, this beauty! We have not learned the sacredness of its import in the human economy. We haven't yet learned to reverence it as the out-speaking face of the beautiful-loving God. We haven't yet learned to walk this fair earth, carpeted as no human palace was ever yet adorned for earthly footfall; columned, and festooned, and domed, and lighted, as no hall designed by human hands could ever rival; founded upon the everlasting hills, and resounding with music whose organ-pipes are rivers and cataraacts, symphonied by the cool, silver-tongued breezes, stealing up from the valleys, and over broad seas, to mingle with the deeper

toned winds from the frozen North, and the hoary icebergs. Regal fair is the brave earth, and lover fair is the sweet earth; and in this, our Father's house, where are many mansions, beautiful women are the pictures which the good God hangs about this his gallery; and yet we profane them with our unhallowed uses, and drag down their loveliness from the crystalline walls, till their glories trail in the dustiness and degradation of the portal. Beauty is for homage, and when it fails of the oblation, it rightly feels itself defrauded of its heritage.

Julia never fails to demand this; she feels herself regal, and the bended knee is instinctively awarded her. She is too conscious of her beauty to be vain of it, and too much herself to be *very* miserable through another.

Should I become her husband, I shall be a poor, jealous creature, dancing attendance upon her whims, to be laughed at for my moodiness and be called a "dear goose" for my jealousy. She would love me the better for my exactions. She would use her tether to the utmost, so that I should need be diligent in my keeping, or she would be ready to slip through my hands. My office would be no sinecure, for she would lead me a perpetual chase, and every day I must win her anew. Capricious, wayward, deluding, beautiful daughter of the *first* Eve, I call thee, Julia, and then reveries and terrible visions come, and in one of these I wrote the following:

JEALOUSY.

Alas! for he who loves too oft may be
Like one who hath a precious treasure sealed,

Whereto another hath obtained a key ;
 And he, poor soul ! who there his all concealed,
 Lives blindly on, nor knows that mite by mite
 It dwindles from his grasp ; or if a thought
 That something hath been lost, his mind affright,
 He puts it by as evil fancy-wrought.
 Yet will there sometimes come a ghostly dread,
 From which the soul recoils ; he tries to sleep,
 Aye, rest ; and when he wakes, all, all is fled.
 Thus we may garner up our hearts, and keep
 A more than human trust, and yet be left
 Bereft of all ; of hope, of faith, of love bereft.

Lily perceives that I am abstracted, and in a slight degree irritable. She said, this morning :

"I am so glad it storms to-day. Now I will be cross ; now I will do up all my naughtiness. Now I will scold Jennie, and pinch Kittie's ears, upset Jane's butter-dish, and tread on Julia's best satin."

"Kate, Kate," I cried, "why all this ? Come and kiss me, and tell me why."

"No, I will not kiss to-day, indeed I will not. I will rejoice in badness."

"But why, Kate ?"

"Because of the storm. Do you not see how the wind is doing its best, and the rain comes right down. I hate a fog ; let it rain or storm—no half way."

"Who is half way, darling ?"

"Hark ! did you hear that rock come down from the mountain ? I wish I was a rock."

"Lily, precious Lily, why ?"

"Then I should never care if people did not smile, nor talk, nor love me," and a full flood of tears, and a rush to my arms, told of the sluice-way given to her sensibilities.

Last night the wind blew furiously. I could not sleep ; I never can when the wind blows. That mysterious power, unseen, yet resistless—falling like an invisible wand upon the cheek—stirring at the latch, and upheaving the foundations, shaking the old forest, and denuding the mountain—lifting the ocean as it were a small thing, and tossing navies as if they were bubbles, and filling cities with consternation, and yet itself invisible—fills me with a wild, supernatural terror. It is fearful as death itself ; nay, more fearful, for death has a shape of disease, accident—an external form to designate his approach—while the wind is shapeless, formless ; we see the havoc of his pathway, but we cannot say, "Lo, here ; lo, there !"

The old house rocked in the blast, and I felt as if thus the solid earth tottered beneath me—as if I thus rocked and swayed from side to side, as at an invisible destiny. I felt like a reed shaken by the wind. I know what Bertha would say. I have heard her say it :

"Arise, *grasp the reed*, and make it strong with a great purpose. The true destiny is *made*, not imposed. *We are greater than the elements. We are fate. We command the eternal*, or the element sweeps us away, the fate subdues us, the eternal slips from our hold. There is no impediment in our way—no disability. *We create lions in our path, and*

then tremble at their roaring. We pile up impediments, and then die at the base of the barrier. The Titan but touched the earth because he would scale heaven—we bury ourselves beneath it, and then mourn because heaven is hid from our vision."

I think of Bertha, and instinctively I rise from my chair, and walk the room as at a sense of the divine within me. I am braver, nobler—I know not what I am. I think of Julia, and *dream spell-bound in my chair for hours*, listening to invisible melodies and far off harmonies. I am a man full of human thoughts and human sympathies, and I cry :

"Oh that the desert were my dwelling place,
With one fair spirit for my minister,
That I might all forget the human race,
And, hating no one, love but only her."

Ah! thus I think, thus I dream, and in the meanwhile my life wears on, and I lose sight of the great aims to which hitherto all my thoughts have tended. I go through the routine of duty in a cold, spiritless manner, and I grow paler than even my wont, and sit by my desk scribbling unmeaning characters—sketching, now a dog, now a sign-board, and now Julia's face; and writing her name and mine side by side, and trying even how Julia Helfenstein would look on a card.

Imbecile that I am. Pains dart through my head; my step is languid. I wish there were a race of giants, to take me in their arms and dandle me like a sick baby. I am weak, and do not desire to be strong. I long "to be minis-

tered unto, not to minister." I try to pray, but prayer is the expression of a great need. It is the heart, the whole soul rushing out to claim eternal affinities. I feel none of this. Give me the *now*, is the cry with me. I am the Esau, ready to sell the best heritage of my soul for the mess of pottage. Ah me! Scarcely have I life to analyse these emotions—scarcely life to repeat with the brave old Quarles:

"Shine home upon thy creature, and inspire
My *lifeless will* with thy regenerate fire;
The *first degree to do is only to desire.*"

CHAPTER XXIV.

A poor sequestered stag,
That from the hunter's aim had ta'en a hurt,
Did come to languish. SHAKESPEARE.

THE winter is yet intensely cold. I find poor Tiger is abroad, eluding all pursuit with wonderful speed and dexterity. He will not come openly to the house, but in the morning when the night is cold, we find, by the heaps of coals upon the hearth, that he has made his lodgment by the kitchen fire. I have carried various articles to the church, and I find that he instinctively conceals them amid the rubbish under the stairs. Gossip is much alive in Beech Glen, but on the whole, affairs are tolerably quiet for a country village. I was congratulating myself upon this order of things, when a new event roused our good people from their lethargy, and set every man, woman, and child, into a praiseworthy alertness. I am happy to say, that no one was disposed to dodge his responsibility, but each shouldered his burthen of gossip with a patience and pertinacity worthy of John Bunyan's Pilgrim. Beech Glen also has a people with lively imaginations and good inventive capacities, and the scandal concocted by them would do justice to any village in Christendom. I am not in the least what may be called

a vain man, or I might have been flattered at the prominence given to me in these matters. I even remonstrated with the elders of the church, at the "bad eminence" I was likely to attain through the diligent tongues of these busy-bodies. Whereat Deacon Hopkins told me, in his most solemn and urgent manner, that I must marry.

"The truth is this, Parson; you being a likely looking man, and marriageable, all the young women naturally turn their eyes that way, and our young men, seeing the lay of the land, as naturally abuse you because the girls play shilly-shally, now off and now on, in a sort of expectation. There never was so much finery worn in our church as there is now, and fathers get tired of the expense, and mothers bake up pies and cakes, and call together private prayer-meetings, and hold sewing-circles, and eat for you and drink for you, till 'tis past enduring. I'm thankful I've got no darters to dispose of. Gals are a terrible bother in a family."

Here was a new aspect, and I inwardly resolved I would sacrifice myself for the good of Beech Glen. I will marry Julia, I said, silently, and with as much conceit as can well lie under a white cravat, and fully equal, though in a different style, to that of any Broadway dandy.

But I must go more into detail. One evening—it was a cold, snowy evening—we were all seated about the fire—Julia in a large easy chair, and exquisitely dressed in white muslin, with a loose embroidered robe of rose-colored cashmere over this, slightly drawn about the waist with cord and tassel. One white-slippered foot rested upon an otto-

man, and her hair thrown back from her forehead, exposed to full view her exquisitely moulded features. She held a wrought screen in one hand, from the arm of which fell back lace and embroidery, and showed the round, beautiful arm, with its bracelets and pretty knot of amulets. I have a natural fondness for elegant attire, and love to see a beautiful woman appropriately dressed ; and as I looked upon Julia, in her lace and embroidery, suiting so well her indolent, voluptuous attitude, I could not refrain from stooping to kiss her hand, and telling her she was lovely as a dream.

" Ah, dear Ernest," she said, " you are poetry ; your admiration makes a woman long for superadded charms to justify your homage."

I am a good reader, my voice is clear and flexible, and regarding this as an accomplishment all essential in a family, I have cultivated my powers with some considerable care. I had been reading " Coleridge ;" the book was lying upon my lap while we each made our comments. Lily stood leaning her head upon my bosom, and her little heart keeping time to every cadence. When I closed she said :

" Crystabel was not good."

We all stared, and asked why.

" Because, had she been all good, she would have *felt* in her soul, the badness of the strange lady, and then she couldn't have slept in her arms."

At this moment we were all startled by the wailing cry of an infant, apparently at the door. Lily was the first to open it, followed by Willy. A loud cry from the children



JULIA ATTEMPTED TO TAKE UP THE CHILD, WHICH MADE
HER LOOK MOST LOVELY IN MY EYES.

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brought Julia and myself to the spot. The first defined object that presented itself at the door, was the lovely Child-Angel, with its slight robe, and bare feet and shoulder, standing outside. But soon I saw that Tiger was crouched down upon the steps, holding in his great shaggy arms a babe, which cried piteously. No sooner was the door open than he came in and laid his burden down upon the rug, and then commenced a series of manœuvres, from which I inferred he wished to enlist our sympathies in behalf of the little creature.

Julia attempted to take up the child, which made her look most lovely in my eyes, for its garments, though rich were much soiled, as if they had been under the hands of Tiger some little time. The child might be two months old, and screamed lustily, whereat Tiger covered its face with his great palm, and gesticulated violently ; at the same time, he brought from the recesses of an old coat a small dog and a kitten, and laid them beside the child ; and then he pinched the two animals and the baby to make them cry, and laughed and shook his great body from side to side, seeming to intimate that each was the young of its kind, and must be looked to.

Here was a dilemma indeed. Willy rushed for the dog, and Lily tucked her hands under her arm-pits and stood looking piteously at the poor babe, and then she took it in her arms and sat down in silence. Poor Tiger approached and laid his great hand upon the golden head of Lily, who

did not shrink nor speak, although I felt extreme disgust. Again Tiger softly touched the head of the child, and when she looked up the tears were streaming down her cheeks. Tiger saw it, and his huge body shook and trembled, and pitiful sounds came from his throat, and then he laid down at Lily's feet, and placed one foot upon his neck, and thus they sat for more than a minute.

By this time the whole household was gathered, and looking upon the strange group. The exhausted child had fallen asleep, and Lily sat, bereft of all her sweet smiles—the tears streaming from her eyes, which were fixed upon the face of the little sleeper. I could not bear this mute expression of sympathy with the poor outcast, and I took it up, and lifted Lily upon my knee, whereat Tiger looked on intent to see what would follow.

"What shall I do with the child, Lily?" I asked.

"Love it, dear father, and make it into an angel, to meet you in heaven. The Child-Angel brought it here."

Tiger went out and brought in a handsome basket, containing an embroidered pillow, and folds of flannel bound with ribands, but there was no clue to the discovery of the parents, and we inferred from the gestures of Tiger that the parcel had been left at the door of the parsonage. Julia now fed the child with warmed milk, and Biddy bathed it in water, and we all pronounced it a very beautiful gift, though, I confess, I felt somewhat appalled at the household I was like to have. I saw that study, artistic

labor, must be, in a good measure, resigned. Finely written sermons, with elegantly turned paragraphs, must fall quite into the background.

When the household were all quiet for the night, Biddy having volunteered care for the new comer, I remained in my room, seated by the fire, thinking of the strange warp and woof of human life, and fully determined in all time to come to live an unselfish one—to live a gospel as well as to preach it. I heard the fire crackling on the kitchen hearth, and knew that poor Tiger was there—a harmless idiot—who had become magnetized to my dwelling by the spirit of love. I looked through a side door and saw him stretched before the flames—his keen eyes, from beneath their shaggy penthouse, fixed thereon with an expression of pure animal content, such as we see about a fine Newfoundland dog. From his appearance, I inferred that he slept through the day, and selected the warm kitchen of the parsonage for the one spot of his enjoyment. After awhile he began to move stealthily about the room. He took down a large, bright pewter platter, and admired it for some time, then he brought out a chicken-pie which Jane had prepared for our breakfast. I really wished he would let the savory dish alone. But no; the odor was too tempting, and I looked on while my breakfast was disposed of without the least regard to my morning predilections in that line. When the pie was finished, he caught sight of a pair of boots belonging to Lily, which, indeed, looked more like pretty toys than anything of use. He turned them over and over, stood them on the palm of

his great hand, and laughed with a chuckle of delight, and tucked them into his bosom.

Long after I went to my bedroom I heard the steps of Tiger about the house ; but I had no fears for him. In the morning Jane found him still in the kitchen, which produced a great commotion. Up she came, and knocked loudly at my door, declaring I must come down and turn Tiger out ; and she did not lack for words about the pie also. I bade her return and take no account of Tiger—and all the way down stairs the good creature marked her path by sundry mutterings, not at all flattering to the intellect or manhood of Ernest Helfenstein. But I never feel aggrieved at these little thorns. Utterance of any kind is a comfort, and these devils, in household words, may better find space than be kept caged in the breast, where they are apt to change their names, and instead of black, ugly devils, as they are at once seen to be when brought out to the light—they pass, when kept caged up, for angels of patience and angels of endurance.

CHAPTER XXV.

Virgins, *tuck up your silken laps*, and fill ye

With the fair wreath of Flora's magazine;

The purple Violet, and the *pale-faced lily* ;

The pansy and the *organ columbine* ;

The flowering thyme, the gilt-bowl daffodilly ;

The lowly pink, the lofty eglantine ;

The blushing rose, the queen of flowers, and best

Of Flora's beauty.

QUARLES.

There's beggary in the love that can be reckoned.

SHAKESPEARE.

THERE is a selfishness, a pride, a deep-heart skepticism in the efforts we make to withstand the omnipotent passion—love—in its divine sense. I know nothing of the grosser passions, and cannot talk of these. I have been very miserable of late. I am steeped to the lips in an exacting, nay, fretful love, for Julia; and be it known, I pine also at the absence of Bertha. Her indifference is most painful to me. I do not know if this be anything more than irritated self-love. But whatever it may be, I am far from content.

Last night I placed me at the judgment bar of my soul, and questioned myself, and cross-questioned myself, till I

trembled at the judgment I was compelled to pronounce upon my short comings. I detected so much that was poor and mean, which I had stowed into by-corners, and labelled with all sorts of sentimental names, that I took pleasure in tearing these away and seeing myself in my true light. I was ashamed to find how vulnerable I am—how many thorns have the power to pierce me. How I hug myself in my impotency, lest I should receive a wound, and how my body with difficulty keeps its upright attitude, because of the tortuities within. I resolved, in all time to come, to hold my face upward to the light, and to fear no revelation, however startling it might seem. What am I, that I dare close my eyes from any ray coming down through the eternities to beam upon my purblind sight? And then, while I thus mentally castigated myself, there came an odor of rose from the tree at my window, and I felt the presence of Julia—and longed for that of Bertha also.

"Ernest Helfenstein," I said, "thou wilt need to walk the fiery ploughshare—the gridiron of the ancient martyr were all too lenient for thee—stripes and penance will not reach thee—thou must tread this wine press alone—thou must sit amongst lions and walk through the burning furnace; and then I half doubt me if there be enough left in thee to claim the right to a resurrection."

But, as I said before, I will walk this path—it may be a new light will be revealed. I do love Julia. I do not love Bertha. So far all is well. This streak of acquisitiveness, this tendency to monopoly, is but the poor, mean, grasping

spirit of an over-indulged boy—and so I gave myself up to dreams.

I know not what will come of this. "Consider not," a voice seemed to say. "Faith and love will bring about all harmonies." And now I dare the worst; now I defy destiny, and feel myself magnified at the vastness of my emotions. Love it is, that opens eternities to us. We close our hearts against it, and become dwarfed and commonplace. The world has known few women of full life, form, soul; and all these have been sanctified by terrible suffering. They have come to sanction the dreams of a great manhood, and to make us loathe the vain, petty, joyless women of every-day life. Upon my soul, I believe if ten women of our day were all compelled to the crucible, the compound would hardly result in one full creation.

Julia is a full, beautiful woman—

"Not too wise nor good,
For human nature's daily food."

She imparts a charm to the simplest thing. She breathes an atmosphere of poetry about her, a soft, lovely repose—and yet it is not repose. I would be the hero of some Castle of Indolence, with her by my side, smiling and weaving melodies, and floating in curves never wearying to the senses. She multiplies my thoughts; she quickens my fancy; she gratifies my self-love. I am not sure but half the love, so called, arises from the gratification of this egotism. We love a woman not because she is a noble or

beautiful creation in herself, but because this self-love of ours receives no check through her.

I am not miserable at the uncertainty of a return on the part of Julia, now that I stand in true relations with myself. I am sure that a nature so exquisitely sensuous as hers, must cover a deep passionateness, but her character is so flexible, and her "variety" so infinite that I grow glad in beholding her. It must be the grossness of passion, that produces the silence and timidity of which lovers complain, but where it arises from the higher sentiments, the exhalations from the base of the column will not dim the clear beauty of the capital.

It is June, rich, balmy, beautiful June. Julia is a summer child ; she grows more lovely as the light strengthens and the warmth increases. Her complexion is fairer, and she seems born for summer times, fresh blossoms, and water melodies. In a garden she seems to be a part of nature. She is a rose, a vine, a pomegranate. She is rich, luscious-looking. I cannot separate her from these lovely surroundings into which she blends like some fair nymph called forth by the kisses of sun and shower. She wears roses in her hair; they swing at her girdle; she puts a leaf between her lips, and I know there is not a little coquetry in the act, but I am bewitched none the less. She blows the down from the dandelion like Margaret, and gives pretty vaticinations. She says sweetest things upon all subjects, and yet I never associate a book with her. She quotes poetry lazily, as if the words of another saved her the trouble of

compounding them. She eats fruits also as if enjoying them, spills the juice over her red lips, and wipes them with her pretty, dainty, laced handkerchiefs, and shows her white teeth with a laugh like a bird's carol. When a remove beyond her languid mode of sitting, she will take her rings from one finger to another, and you cannot but think how plump and fair her pretty hands look ; or she bites the tips of the fingers, and you cannot choose but see how bright the tint of the blood beneath comes out like a touch of the strawberry. You never forget she is alive.

While I thought these things, I tried to think wherein the beauty of Bertha consists, but I cannot do it. She is wondrously beautiful ; but it is of a kind that recedes, and shades into something so intangible to the senses, that I cannot tell how nor what it is. I would call her serene. I would say that she stands a queen in the soul of nature, not as part and parcel of her. I would say nothing could detract from her sublime self-hood. Time will but ennoble her. Sickness stands aloof and rebuked before her. Poverty cannot touch her. She is herself—she is sovereign to all that breaks down and mars the integrity of others. I recall the scene in the church, but Bertha outlives all that is hurtful. Ah ! so gloriously does she bear her cross upward, that it has become a crown and sceptre. The thorn precedes the cross—the cross presages the crown. Let me but kiss the hem of thy garment, Bertha. Let me but know that I am not contemptible in thine eyes. I follow thee afar off.

And now let me record it—I am beloved. I sing anthems of praise. “I praise thee, I bless thee, O Lord,” came to my lips, in a sort of holy rapture, as the certainty was revealed to me. Deep calleth unto deep. There is an abyss of joy in our souls, inborn and unsearchable, which only love reveals to us. Undreamed of harmonies well up from the recesses of my soul, and I walk as in a holy rapture. Discords that may have dis severed me from my true self, have ranged themselves into what is more truly me, and become melodies. I seem to have laid down all perturbations, and to have taken up an angel life. My intellect is more objective, my emotions better defined; and my imagination has broken from the shell of the chrysalis, and soars into a pure heaven. Love is the soul’s atmosphere, and we must breathe it or “dwindle, peak, and pine.”

I fear me that I do not preach with my ordinary fervor. Lily looks wonderingly into my face, and puts back the hair from my forehead, and sighs—whereat I say, “Why do you sigh, Lily?” And to-day she said:

“My heart is shutting up as if *the night* were coming.” An allusion borrowed from the flowers at nightfall.

“The night coming?” I repeated, with a pang I could not define; and yet I knew that my absorption in Julia had estranged me from my protégés. I knew the cry of the babe in the house annoyed me. I knew I was at heart selfish in all this—but I love Julia, and am beloved.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A savage wildness round him hung
As of a dweller out of doors;
In his whole figure, and his mien,
A savage character was seen,
Of mountains and of dreary moors.

WORDSWORTH.

The likeness of a shape for which was braided
The brightest woof of genius, still was seen.

SHELLEY.

REVOLTING as was at first the presence of poor Tiger, he has become a not unwelcome inmate of my family. We have even learned to be amused at his grotesque clumsiness, and do not dislike his awkward movements. In the true human mind there is every grade of sentiment, and every shade of affection, as well as varying perspectives of the beautiful. Hence it is that the most cultivated taste, delighting in the more ideal conceptions of the Greek art, will have not only the purest models of the beautiful about him to gratify this higher idealism, but a niche also for Indian art—huge Oriental creations, and vases massive and cumbersome, upon which his intermediate taste will repose. He will delight in pets of various kinds—from the slim

greyhound and dainty canary down to the animals of a more grotesque character, not excluding the half-animated terrapin, and that perpetual sphinx, the snake.

And so it is in regard to Tiger. I find he has no malice—he is not vicious nor melancholy; he only lacks employment to make him quite happy, and we are all glad to minister to his imperfect capacity for enjoyment; and further, by one of those adaptations of the mind we are growing half-proud of our monster, our Caliban, as eastern princes used to be proud of their dwarfs and giants, hump-backed porters, and one-eyed servitors. Oh, it is the miserable, selfish, inhuman spirit of traffic that helps to build up asylums for these wretched *mistakes* of nature. People must have time to grow rich, and so they cast out these proofs of their violations of nature to be cared for by the public at large, and thus we have the terrible spectacle of deformity, and deprivation by the wholesale; the aggregate of blindness, and deafness, and idiocy in communities, ghastly to contemplate.

Tiger follows Lily with a reverent docility as touching as it is suggestive. If he hears the tones of her sweet voice, he bends his shaggy head, and something meant for a smile illuminates his uncouth features, and one would imagine his dim mind to feel—

“O, list! I hear

The small, clear, silver lute of the young spirit,
That sits in the morning star,”

so pleased and soothed does he become. Through her, vague

spiritualisms penetrate inward to his soul, and reveal its white citadel not in ruins, not obliterated, but sealed up, sealed with a strong earth-charm, which only the dear angel Death shall remove. Pure white are its chambers—fairly hung with misty pictures; gems and pearls gleam there in barbaric wealth, ready to be strung into bright coronals; and sweet faces look in sometimes, with clear, holy eyes; and there is one, very still, very soft—very beautiful is it—only there is that about the lips telling that the fibres of the heart have been wrung; and that about the eyes revealing shadows of the heaven to which she belonged; and when that face looks in, the poor idiot smiles and listens; and you can almost hear his unachieving lips whisper, “Mother.” But they never do, and the good God calls away the image, and he is happier that it is so, for the spell is too mighty that hangs upon him; his soul is the enchanted palace of Beauty where she sleeps—sleeps in all her loveliness, till the call come, saying, “Arise.”

Another joy is poor Tiger's: the babe Perdita, for thus have I named the child, he takes in his arms and sits in the sunshine out under the trees by the hour. Her cries put him into great commotion, and he shambles up and down in a comical manner, while her smiles seem to give his poor dim soul a sweet peace. I have had many trials in Tiger. He thinks the whole neighborhood should be tributary to us, and many have been the ducks, and geese, and turkeys, and chickens that have found their way unauthorized into my kitchen. I was obliged, at length, to put up a notice to the effect, that

I would pay for these delinquencies if the owners would come forward and make claim. Human nature is in its recesses generous after all, for no one has come as yet, except a youth, who keeps a small market in the village. He drove up to the door one day with a "fast horse," and in a state of great excitement—indeed so great, that he stood up in his wagon, at the risk of breaking his neck over the hills—and brought up square at my door. Without let or hindrance he stalked into the kitchen and seized a brace of ducks lying upon the table. Tiger grappled with him, and certainly had the better by all odds in the contest, when I interfered. He declared in a loud voice that his shop had been robbed a hundred times, but this was the first time he had been able to trace the thief, and he added not inappropriately (barring some oaths), that he thought it—

"A blamed shame that a minister of the gospel should live on stolen poultry."

I felt the reasonableness of his complaint, and offered to pay him any amount required. He certainly named a larger sum than I had anticipated, which I promptly paid, and he rode away in quite a crestfallen manner. He had not paced more than half way down the hill when he returned with an uneasy look, and scratching his head under his cap in the region of conscientiousness, he said, "Parson Helfenstein, I'm not quite sartain but I've took too much out of you, but I felt riled like, and needed the money to pay some bills."

I told him candidly I thought he had done so, but bade

him keep the sum, and let it go to the amount of future depredations, which Tiger would most likely make.

I could see that Tiger comprehended somewhat of this scene, and when I the next day gave him a basket and some money, and we went together to the market, and he saw me take the goods, and I showed him that I gave money in return, he opened his mouth very wide, for his great white teeth are very striking, and a ray of intelligence evidently reached him; for about the same time next day, Tiger made his appearance with a stiff white collar pulled up to show its utmost, and the market basket in hand, and signified that he wanted an equivalent for the poultry which he seemed to think we were bound to have for dinner.

One bright moonlight night, also, Tiger wrought many hours in removing a pile of wood from his father's yard to mine, and in the morning he called me triumphantly to admire the acquisition. He seemed greatly mortified when I made him to understand that it must all be carried back again. Indeed for many days he was sullen, and morose, and refused to do the small chores which Jane exacted from him. But when Lily came to him with a vase and gave him to understand that she wished it filled with earth, and showed a lovely, blooming china primrose which she wished to plant in it, all the moodiness of Tiger disappeared.

Lily is a "discerner of spirits." There is no state which she does not comprehend as by a beautiful intuition. An inborn reverence for human attributes is a deep abiding sense with her. So sweet a sympathy does she display, so

lovely and tender a little womanhood is there about her, that she foresees the result of all that is done for Tiger, and instinctively watches the issue. For instance, he was untidy in his person, and Lily showed him her own hands, and then washing them in his presence, in clear water, repeated "Clean hands," over and over, till Tiger's poor benumbed faculties surmounted the difficulty, and he too washed his hands, and repeated the words.

This was a great advance, and now Tiger created a great demand for soap and water ; and when I had him furnished with clothing of a suitable kind, the dawnings of self-respect became daily more visible.

"Tiger is wiser than he was, and Tiger is happier than he was," Lily would say as we talked in the twilight.

"And Lily—how is it with Lily?" I said.

"The lilies will soon be here, and then I shall be quite, quite happy."

"Then you are not quite happy now."

Lily flashed out in her old lovely way, and laid her pretty cheek to mine, and then gave me a sharp bite of the ear. I started with a slight outcry, which caused her to giggle, and toss her curls, and she ended by one of her prettiest kisses upon the spot, and whispered also, "I do not love Julia ; Cousin Julia, I do not love you," she repeated, turning to the table where the lady in question was draping a wreath about a marble vase.

"O ! I shall die of grief," murmured the beauty.

"She doesn't care a bit," said Lily. This time Willy

came out and said, "I love you, Cousin Julia ; I love you, and I would give all my new books for a kiss."

"Keep the books, Willy, but you shall have the kiss," and she held back the head of the child, and pouting her red lips, placed a kiss upon those of Willy, whose cheek grew not red, but ashy pale at the touch ; perceiving which, Julia kissed him again and again, saying, "You little coward, I will bring the color back," and Willy soon learned to fight for kisses, and to dart from behind the doors, and out of corners, for the coveted gift.

One day Julia brought out a long crimson sash with deep fringes at the ends, and put it over the blouse of Tiger, winding it twice about his waist. I liked this well, but when she produced a crimson cap, of a Greek form, with a little bell attached to the long point which hung over at one side, and jingled as he walked, I was not so sure. Tiger was delighted, and stepped high, and cut up various antics to make the bell ring, and Julia clapped her jewelled hands, and laughed, and called him "Wamba," and "the king's jester," "knight of the silver bell," and other pretty epithets.

Lily eyed all with a sad face. She dropped her head and looked up through her eyelashes, a smile in spite of herself coming to her lips. Then she went up to Tiger, and assuming a little queen air, she stamped her foot, and demanded the cap. Tiger's face fell, and taking the article from his head, he twisted his body into all conceivable tokens of submission, and presented it to the child. Lily walked to the table, and taking up the scissors cut off the

obnoxious bell, and gave the cap back to Tiger, who received it with no little abatement of his pleasure.

As the spring opened, and we were all out arranging the garden, planting flowers, digging, grading, and transplanting, Tiger was a very Caliban in bearing burdens. He dug with the pertinacity of the mole, and the power of a giant. Indeed we were compelled to keep a sharp look-out, for Tiger went right on, carrying his spade through all impediments, and even in one instance, a tree which stood in the line of march, but for my timely observation, would have bowed its honors in the dust. By dint of care, and skill in teaching, Tiger began to exhibit no little growth of capacity, and when at length the seeds appeared above the ground, and blossoms to unfold themselves, he became overburdened with new thought, and was obliged to shut himself up for many days—his poor brain having recoiled into its original stupor—and he slept nearly the whole period. We were all shocked at this relapse; but when he came out of it, we perceived he had gone a Sabbath-day's journey, as it were, towards a better development. He went into the garden and walked amid the springing vegetation with a melancholy look, and cast his eyes in all directions, in search of the secret of production. Lily walked by his side, and told of God and the angels, and poor Tiger listened as if conscious of a pleasure.

When, however, the season advanced, and he saw the "embattled corn" standing like "serried host," and the great-leaved sun-flower spreading forth its blossoms of yel-

low, Tiger reached sundry wise conclusions, which required all the sweetness and dignity of Lily to circumvent. Placing the child upon his broad shoulder—a way in which he loved to carry her—he took her to the tree before mentioned, which he had thought to uproot; and by the few words he had learned, and the use of many gestures, he gave her to understand that it was large, and strong, and of use. Then he carried her to the sun-flower, and the corn-field, and shook the plants, and pointed back to the tree, and implied that these were worth having—fine, large, like the tree. Then stooping to the beds of violets, and roses, and verbenas, he did not fail to make use of many expressions of contempt, and finally proposed to uproot them all and plant corn and sun-flowers instead.

Julia and I laughed immoderately, but Lily wept; whereat Tiger disclaimed doing it, in his imperfect way, and seemed greatly distressed; but when the child placed Tiger by the sun-flower, and gave him to understand it was like him, and then pointed to the flowers, and showed they were like her own sweet self, poor Tiger knelt down before them, and spread his huge hands protectingly over them, and looked up as he knelt, into the face of the fair child, with so much reverence and love, that even the gay-hearted Julia was affected, and murmured:

"We are fearfully and wonderfully made."

Oh how this touch of mysticism endeared Julia to my heart. How it seemed to reveal new shades of loveliness, and how I thought she was another Bertha in embryo, and the

world a charmed paradise for her presence. But when I turned to say all this and more, I found her in the midst of the strawberries, her lips deeper dyed from the fruit, and she sucking the ends of her fingers like a school-girl. I forgot mysticism, everything but her surpassing earth-loveliness.

CHAPTER XXVII.

But chiefly women, whom my voice did waken
From their cold, careless, willing slavery—
Sought me.

SHELLEY.

I must now return to Bertha. The valley through which the Neversink winds its way was undergoing great changes, and yet so all in harmony with the place, that art rather lent a helping hand to nature than obscured her beauties. A small stream that found itself in the valley, on its way from the mountain, had been turned through an arch, and now sparkled upward, at the will of the architect, in a beautiful fountain. Over this fountain had been constructed a stone structure, in the form of an octagon, consisting of as many arches. Roof, there was none; but from the top of the arches sprang reaches of stone, centering to a dome-like centre, sufficiently large to hold the ashes of Nathan Underhill, which were removed hither. Around this was wrought in stone, "The gift of Nathan Underhill." Ivy had been planted with great care at the base of the arches, and was already beginning to shade and beautify the spot. The water was so adjusted that it might flow in soft murmurs beneath the dome—falling from terrace to terrace, until it

mingled with the river, or force itself out through the trellis-work of the dome, and was wasted in mist and rainbows.

The effect of this mausoleum—at once light, graceful and sombre—affected me with inexpressible melancholy. Often, as I stood beneath it, and looked up to the sky, which showed a single circle of blue, traversed by fret-work of stone, with the festoons of ivy dropping from the arches, a terrible pang shot through my heart, and I felt that Bertha had symbolized the man, when she devised his sepulchre. There was the bold, strong, massive, stone-like nature—there was the indestructible arch, revealing the unescapable destiny—the pointed arch, showing that he struggled manfully—but the iron law, also, which at length bound him in. There was the dark ivy clinging to the arch—Nathan Underhill was not the man of the future, but the man of the past and the present—while beneath, and amid all, flowed a beautiful, pure fountain, like the waters of eternal Truth.

Yet was the spot most lovely—rare plants clustered about it, which I could see were all in keeping with the place. The purple Michigan rose covered the trellis which lined the avenue to the fountain. The arbor vitæ was trained into hedgeways, but ever as you removed from the mausoleum, the brighter sunshine played upon flowers of gayer aspect—and walks and arbors, covered with grapes, roses and woodbines, told of life full of cheer.

When all was done, a slight fence of wire surmounted a stone base, and portals open for the people, made this the

great attraction of Beech Glen. Stone vases were placed here and there, but no statuary—although tablets and inscriptions were not wanting.

These grounds adjoin the garden of the parsonage, and Bertha now proposed that a small chapel, or whatever I might choose to call it, should be built near the junction, for the purpose of instruction.

“I could wish,” said Bertha, “once a week, or oftener, to meet our people here. I will prepare readings, or lectures, upon such themes as shall best provoke thought and culture. And you, Ernest, will you not aid me—aid our women to think, feel, and act as women should, when so much of the world’s destiny lies at their mercy?”

I winced after my old fashion. This looked like an encroachment upon my prerogatives, and seemed to imply, also, that my people needed teaching beyond what I was imparting to them. I think I reddened. I know I looked foolish; for the mean feeling in the soul, however disguised, will impart itself to the face. But Bertha went on with a serene sweetness:

“In the pulpit the clergyman is not altogether free. He is confined to a round of prayers and labors, that often have little effect in elevating or ennobling his people. I desire this little temple to be a spontaneous offering to God, where the form shall be more or less elaborate, as the spirit of true worship is realized within us. I would have it decorated with flowers. I would have it sacred to all that is pure and

beautiful. No man or woman should enter it with foul feet, or desecrate it by a spit."

I smiled, and Bertha opened her eyes in her earnest way.

"You will make your little temple holier than our place of worship," I said.

"Assuredly I would. It must be dedicate to the deepest sentiment of truth and beauty. The speaker must present the best example of taste. Ernest, I would not have even you enter this temple in the every day suit of black, with a slight tinge of rust."

I reddened again, but Bertha did not see it.

"But I would have you wear a robe of lawn—for I am persuaded that in elevating a people, the dress of the teacher is of no mean import."

And so, under the shadow of the mountain, grew a lovely temple designed by Bertha—a sort of portico, consisting of colonnades surrounding a circular building, terminating in a dome, through which the light entered, softened by ground glass. A delicate stand, like the unfolding of a white scroll, faced with crimson, composed the speaker's desk—leaving the person in full perspective—while vases filled with flowers ornamented the shafts and niches of the wall.

When all was completed, Bertha, at the close of the Sabbath exercises, with my permission, explained her plan to the people. There was much staring, some whispering, and attempted tossings of the head, amongst the feminine portion of the congregation, but the calm earnestness of Bertha at

length allayed prejudice, and I had the mortification to see that her lectures were better attended than my own. Women had learned to understand somewhat of the pure, unselfish nobleness of her character, and sought her teachings from a genuine interest. She taught them botany, horticulture—she suggested new modes of industry, improvements in housekeeping—in dress. She gave them higher subjects for thought, and encouraged them to question her. Soon old and young, men and women, learned to prepare eagerly for Bertha's days in the pretty rotunda: indeed nothing could be more picturesque than her audience, in their improved costume, garlanded with flowers, and their faces wreathed with content. She looked, also, to the embroidery of the maidens, and the work of the matrons; for her auditors were encouraged to bring their knitting or needlework with them, except upon evenings when the lecture was general.

And here I may as well confess—I am not as spiritual as in days past. Since my passion for Julia has assumed shape, and I am an accepted lover, I am losing sight of my great plans, and if the truth must be told, am growing a little ashamed of my former visionary enthusiasm, as I am now apt to call it. I think sometimes, with a sort of shudder, that this is a retrograde state—that I may be likened to the Israelites, who longed for the rich porticoes, the luscious fruitage, and sunny atmosphere of Egypt, and thus despised divine aliment.

In the meanwhile the cultivation of flowers, recommended

by Bertha—the readings which she has established—the discussions in which she has engaged my people, are all working a marked change amongst us. There is greater gentleness and sweetness of manner beginning already to prevail. Books are in greater demand, and the gaudy ribbons and unmeaning knots and bows which disfigured the women, are yielding to a more tasteful and simple display. Bertha has done more in a few months than I have done in years of labor. She has seemed to pour oil upon the troubled waters of Beech Glen—and all has become not only peaceful, but harmonious.

All this is well for the people, but how for me, who should have done this lovely work myself! I am ill at ease; Julia, too, is thoughtful; I imagine her fine spirits are deserting her; that she sees into the state of things in the parsonage, and inwardly condemns me. Alas! my own conscience has done so already.

Bertha is the true genius of Beech Glen. She sees into the souls of others. She does not wait for others to move first; but, no matter how great the wrong, her clear voice and wise counsel are freely imparted and the evil disappears. Lily lives in the soul of Bertha; and I find, also, even Tiger goes to the fountain to hear the wind sigh through the arches, and sits on the steps of the temple listening to the beautiful, womanly cadences of Bertha's voice, as if spell-bound by the music of an Ariel.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Only bend thy knee to me—
Thy wooing shall thy winning be.

PHINEAS FLETCHER.

WE sat together, Julia and I, looking off into the western sky, where the dying day went down in purple and gold. I held her hand in mine. It did not thrill beneath my touch—she was calm, still, thoughtful. She seemed to be enough in herself, and to have no word for me. Every vestige of her pretty coquetry, which so often annoyed and yet enamored me, was laid to sleep.

“Do you love me, Julia?” I had asked the question a thousand times, and as many times had my heart thrilled to the simple, “I love thee,” and yet the question and the answer were always new. For the Julia of yesterday, and the Julia of to-day were never the same, and each time that I said, “Lovest thou me,” and she replied, “I love thee,” was as a new revelation. And now as we thus sat, and I said, “Do you love me?” she made no reply, but kept her eyes fixed upon the purple sky as it leaned over the mountain, to look its last upon our beautiful valley.

At length she turned her eyes full upon mine, and slowly

a smile of ineffable beauty gathered upon her face. The depth, the fulness of the answer would have more than contented me at another time, but now I was so absorbed in her that words, words of rapture, volumes of love's delicious vocabulary would have been insufficient to meet the great needs of my being. I was moved even to tears, and said,—

"Julia, no woman can love as a man can love."

"No, but she loves as *woman* can, Ernest."

"Julia, woman's love is as a blossom upon the wall, or sunshine in the valley—beautiful, but fleeting—yielding to other necessities, blending into other emotions; while man loves as the oak must love its kind, as the mountain rooted, and the sea inexhaustible. It would shatter a woman—she would be consumed like the beautiful one who demanded a Jove, armed with the thunderbolt."

"Ah, Ernest, you are a poet, and Bertha is a sibyl," and she gave me a look so penetrating, that the shadowy Bertha, pedestalled in my heart, seemed to step outwards to confront her.

"Why, Julia, do you name Bertha?"

Again she was silent—and again my poor perplexed soul struggled for clearness. At length Julia laid her hand softly into mine, and whispered—

"My friend, I love thee."

She had never before called me friend. I had never before seen her cheek pale, and her lip tremble as now; never before had I seen her weep. Ten thousand times

dearer did these tears make her to my heart. Ten thousand issues of love waited their advent.

"Oh, too convincing, dangerously dear,
In woman's eye, the unanswerable tear,"

I murmured, reverently kissing her hand—but Julia was now as calm as Bertha is calm, and she sat looking at me with a sweet, sad look, that went to my heart, while a myriad of thoughts rushed like an armed host through my brain.

Why do I love Julia better for her tears? I asked myself. Is it that tears are a tribute to our supremacy? Is it that tears give us a new sense of the dependence of woman? Is it that it is a revelation of her tenderness, her subordination?

No, no; it is something holier than this. It is the revelation of her child nature to us—it is the full transfiguration of womanhood which we behold. We have seen, it may be, the masculine within her, by which she competes intellectually and morally with us; we have seen the woman in its self-reliance, and the consciousness of its worlds of enchantment; and now she weeps, and the lonely *child*-woman is before us—the baby Cupid of Venus—and we yearn to shelter what may be even then stronger than ourselves; we long to protect that, which, in time, may overshadow ourselves. Yet is this the last triumph of the divine passion; and the tear, the testimony of weakness; *the cross to the smile*, achieves the last conquest of love.

I have seen Bertha weep, but hers were more than human

tears—they awed me as before the agonies of a God. But Julia's tears were all human—all lovely—and I trembled and adored with human emotions. Scarcely conscious of the import of what I was to say, I said: "Julia, do you remember what Goethe's Lothario says of Aurelia—'*Alas! she was not lovely when she loved.*' But thou, Julia—love makes thee more transcendently lovely."

"Not lovely, because love was not her true element, Ernest. Passion belonged to her; but love, which is so serene, so vast, so eternal, was too great for the character of Aurelia. She had one absorbing passion for her lover—but no *great soul, reposing, swimming, undulating in depths of the empyrean essence.* Love with her was the thou and I, not *the blending of spheres, adjusted to eternal harmonies—the one love out of the soul of love.* It was the birth of the all-knowing; it was not the all-pervading, the glowing, translucent seraph."

"Thou art Bertha," I murmured involuntarily.

Julia's cheek turned to an ashy paleness. She half arose from her chair, sat down, and then gave way to a flood of tears—so profuse, and blent with sobs so deep, that I had no word of comfort to utter, because the cause was utterly hidden from me.

I took her hand in mine. It had become deathly cold—"Julia, tell me, Julia—am I the cause of these tears—have I pained thee? Tell me wherein I have erred." And I sank upon my knees, as before the holiest shrine of the Infinite.

She grew calm, and without any movement other than dropping her handkerchief from her eyes, she looked down upon me with a look of ineffable tenderness.

"No, Ernest, thou art not the cause. It is God. It is Nature. It is well—well for you; but oh my God! what for me?"

I knew not what to say. I comprehended not this mood of hers.

She went on in a trembling, low voice, just one remove from a whisper:

"Ernest, you are a poet—Bertha is even greater than a poet, if earth can afford a greater. All must love such who have the power to love what is beautiful—the soul to reverence what is great. Ernest, I love you. Hear me—I love you—even from the very depths of my soul, I love you."

How grandly beautiful looked Julia as she uttered this—she, with her full, luxuriant beauty, her bright, impassioned eyes, and low, fervent voice—and yet my heart sank within me, for never had she seemed so spontaneously abandoned in her glorious expression of sympathy with me. And while she uttered the words I most wished to hear, my prophetic soul divined that beneath them lurked a meaning deadly to my peace.

Julia plays the harp exquisitely, and she touched its chords now with a glow of inspired passion, that forbade any reply on my part. The words gushed out with a wild fervor from her lips, and I beheld a Pythoness, rather than the indolent,

coquettish beauty. The song seemed to be adapted to the motto—

“WHEN I AWAKE, I AM STILL WITH THEE.”

I wait the dawning of the opening day,
Intent to mark how soft the light
Steals blushing from his crimson couch away,
With purple curtains looping back the night;
And when the ruby glow fades into rose,
Flecked with Danæian gold,
My ardent bosom inly glows,
And all their pearly orbs uncloze.
Ah! linger not on mountains cold,
But like the roe, athirst and free,
Come thou enamored one to me.

All my desponding doubts and sickly fears
Flee in the radiance of thy smile,
Which turns to rainbows all my gushing tears,
As purple mists the mountain tops beguile.
Oh, blessed morn! Oh, sweetest day arise,
When, like the bounding roe,
My love shall come with beaming eyes,
Up from the bed where now he lies
In coy disdain; for well I know,
By rapturing glow that steals me o'er,
My love stands waiting at the door.

I rise and let thee in. Ah! thy dear head
Is wet with dew; thy amber locks
Are damp and heavy in their golden thread.
Ah! never more, when my beloved knocks,

Will I delay to ope the closed door,
And him with kisses sweet,
Stay till the shadows are no more—
Stay him with apples from my store—
With milk and honey stay his feet;
For my beloved grieves when I
Fail his delighted feet to spy.

“Julia,” I whispered, overcome by the impassioned melody of the singer—her hand dropped from the instrument, and without a word—with one wild glance of love and beauty—she glided from the room.

For many days we scarcely met, and when we did so the sweet eyes of Julia were averted from me, while most of her time was passed in her own room. I laid bouquets at her door. I even ventured upon the unclerical act of a serenade under her lattice—for the moon was large and bright, and the stirring of airs “from the sweet South over a bed of violets,” wrought delicious spells of sensuousness along my nerves. I, loving and beloved, saw no cause for coldness, nor estrangement, and I would not accept the aspect of grief; therefore my words were of trust and tenderness, which I hoped might awaken a response. Touching my guitar very lightly—for a clergyman is not supposed to have ordinary affections and poetic impulses, far less a serenading proclivity—I sang in a low voice, as if fearful I should be heard, the following words:

SERENADE.

Good night!
 Curtained lids, with fringes deep,
 Guard those dove-eyes in their sleep—
 Downy Slumber, till the light
 Softly gilds the eastern gate,
 By my lady's couch await.
 Good night!
 Good night!
 At thy casement I will chant
 Words that shall thy pillow haunt—
 Thou shalt languish with delight;
 Dreaming sweet of lover dear,
 Dreaming soft of lover near.
 Good night!

"Oh, these women!" I muttered, as I caught a gleam of white muslin between the curtains—but Julia merely lighted a taper for a moment, and then all was hushed as before. I waited in the hope of some more tender recognition. I looked for, at least, a rose from the many that clustered around her lattice, but none came. The night-bird sang "darkling" from the wild wood copse, the low chirp of the insect mingled with the faint stir of the summer leaves—the continuous flow of the water came ever and anon to the ear, while the whirl of the bat added to the solemn voices of the night. Occasionally the bark of a dog, or the low of cattle, mistaking the hour, broke the stillness and caused the nerves to tingle, and then all was hushed.

Weary with waiting, and oppressed with my emotions, I turned to enter the house, when a note fell at my feet.

"Ernest, I am wiser than you will believe. I put by my own heart, that I may save yours. You will soon forget me, and God grant that you may do so. I shall leave you, and enter once more that world of vapid folly which claims *me*; while *you*, Ernest, are privileged to walk heavenward, buoyed up by holiest duties. Sleep, best, dearest, and do not dream of

"JULIA."

Of course I did just the contrary of the last injunction, and wasted half the night in reverie, and slept not till I had written a letter and poem to Julia, beseeching her to explain this new freak, if freak it were—this inexplicable mood. She returned them to me blistered with her tears.

In the meanwhile I was miserable in the extreme. Conscious of neglect in my parochial routine, or rather going through it as a routine divested of all vitality, I felt like a machine more than like a man. I worked externally. I was like one of those mountains thinly crusted with lava, beneath which rolls a volume of liquid fire. I knew all that transpired in my parish, but knew it only in half my faculties. I even found that I stepped with caution, lest the state of my mind should be revealed.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Is it well to wish thee happy?—having known me—to decline,
On a range of lower feelings and a narrower heart than mine.

TENNYSON.

WHILE I was indulging this frame of mind, or rather found it impossible to be at rest with myself, I took my way to the "Underhill Fountain," for so people call the mausoleum of Nathan Underhill. The full flush of summer being now upon us, the foliage is abundant, and kept fresh by the dew of the falling waters. I found a small bench had been recently placed amid a cluster of vines, and a stone tablet sustained a beautiful vase of the same material. Around the marge of the cup was wrought, "I will give thee to drink."

"Yes, gall and wormwood," I muttered to myself, "Whoever loves aught born of woman, must drink this to the dregs."

"Nay, Ernest, nay"—said the sweet voice of Bertha. "The wormwood we drink is the chalice of our own passions commended to our lips. We are not in harmony with ourselves—with the universe—and, therefore, do we drink of the cup of trembling. Look, if there were no rock there would be no shadow for the weary ; if there were no valley,

there would be no mountain of triumph ; if there were no grief-imparting women, there were no love—no joy—there would be no *voice* but for the sometime *silence*. Beautiful friend, I will pray the Father, and he will send the Comforter."

As she glided past me she descended the *three steps* that lead to the fountain, leaped across the space, and was lost in the shadows of the garden.

"Nathan Underhill loved a spirit, a cold, intellectual abstraction, and there he lies, cut down in his manhood, sleeping to the requiem of the waters, and honored in his untimely sepulture like Jonathan upon the mountains of Gilboa. Said I not, we drink the cup of bitterness in loving woman? But alas! for Bertha. Does she hold to vigils and prayers by his tomb? Does she, panoplied in her true nobleness, scare away the night-owl and the intruder while she goes up and down these grounds, sacred to the dead? What is life? what is the human heart? Do we pursue but phantoms, worship but projections from ourselves—chase ideals, and pine like the youth to be reabsorbed into the soul of nature, because our desires centre in ourselves? Oh, death, death! eternal death were better than this."

I had said all this aloud, for in certain states of feeling the utterance of words audibly is a relief; and now I was about to retire when I was conscious that Julia stood by my side.

"Ernest," she said, "I followed you here, because here

I can say what must pass between us, and I pray you, dear Ernest, forgive the pain I have caused you. My mind has not been clear. I *felt* rather than *thought*. But I have become so clear that now I will talk."

She seated herself upon the bench, and all the witcheries of her voice and eyes worked their spell about me, and I felt that I would peril my very soul to call her mine. I knew this to be impious. I knew that atonement must be made.

"Heaven bless you, Julia. Your mood has been inexplicable to me, but now it is past, and you are more than ever dear to me. Do you love me, Julia? Say a thousand times, 'I love thee,' for my heart bleeds for the assurance. It is skeptical, and weighed with self-distrust. It is weak, and needs upholding. It is far from God—far from peace."

"Ernest, take the assurance into your deepest heart. I love you, Ernest. I will not disguise one shadow of the truth from you or from myself. I love you, Ernest. I would the very heavens might repeat the words."

We wept together—and now a terrible jealousy took possession of my mind. I could not bear to think that any other human being had felt the touch of her hand, or the pressure of her cheek. I would have had her like the frost flower upon the heights of Jura, or a lily in some pathless desert; and I would climb the peak for this gift of the cold moon. I would penetrate the wilderness to gather this out-breathing of the waters. Is there soul enough in woman, I said, in my returning pride—is there soul enough in woman

to redeem her even from a single stain? Filled with these thoughts, I said:

"Ah, Julia, you love me, but love is the amusement of woman. You have loved before—and many times. Women, children love you; and no man approaches you unscathed. What can homage like mine signify to such a being? Nothing, Julia—nothing but for its virginity. *I never loved before.*"

"I never *loved as now*," she answered in a low voice. "Are you happy, Ernest?"

"No, Julia, no; my passion is too profound for happiness. It stirs my being too deeply. You are a creature to absorb the life-blood. I half doubt if there be not a tinge of hatred mingled in my devotion—a spice of black spirit, that might lead me to crime."

"Bertha leads up to the angels of God," answered Julia.

"Why do you name her, Julia? There is that about Bertha which is akin to the basilisk—I wither in her presence. Are you jealous of Bertha? that you call her to my mind."

"No, Ernest. I know my own power—my own worthiness too well for jealousy. But, Ernest, I have thought much of late. Your love is not well for you. You do not write—you do not study—you do nothing in life."

"No, nothing but love. Be mine, then, Julia—be mine, and then I will win fame, glory. I will do a great work in the world."

"You would be cured of your love through marriage, in

order to begin your work. You would make me a potsherd, that you may be exalted to the altar."

"Julia!"

"Nay, Ernest, I have learned of Bertha to analyze. I have learned new dignities through her."

I knew in my heart these women were right. I knew that selfishness is too often at the base of what we call love. I knew, also, that women have an under-current of discontent, which neither they nor we understand; and I saw that Julia had revealed the key to it. I was silent.

"No, dear Ernest. Ours would be but a dissevered life. We have little in common. I feel it, Ernest."

"And yet you love me!"

"Deeply, entirely, Ernest, with my whole heart."

"And I—I do nothing but love you, Julia. I am miserable without you."

"My dear, best friend," she replied, "this is not well—this is not true. It annihilates—it neutralizes you. It is destructive, ruinous. I am in God's place to you."

"Be mine, then, Julia. Be my wife and all will be well. We will live a charmed life—a life of poetry."

"Ernest, hear me. I know not why, but my instincts tell me this would not be a true marriage. It may be pride. I know not what it is. But I feel that you are to ascend to greater heights, while I should be but as a stepping-stone. Once yours—and I know your nobleness—your beauty of life—you would be tender, honorable, devoted, generous—but I am as exacting as yourself. A wife should not be a

Xantippe to scourge a man into virtue, and I am not one to be a household convenience. I must reign wholly in the heart of the man I marry. *He must love me as he can no other human being, even if I do not regard him in the same light;* and knowing he so loved me, would render vows, otherwise repugnant to me, binding and enduring."

"What do you mean, Julia? I do not comprehend a word you are saying. You could never be a Xantippe."

Julia laughed in spite of her grave mood, and added in a playful tone,

"I won't be the occasion of virtue or greatness in my husband. He must be himself, in spite of me, or I should despise him. Marriage should be the crowning beauty of life, not its routine. I will not be a medium for any of the graces to you, Ernest."

"Beautiful epicurean, exquisite voluptuary. You would have me a *bonne bouche* ready for the swallowing."

"Just so—ready made, without my gilding."

"I am that already, Julia. Take me, I make no resistance."

"Yes, Ernest is that now; but the wife of Ernest should leave him no chance for side thoughts. The one who would be his wife must be very sure that the world does not hold a woman greater or lovelier than herself."

There was this sentimental tendency to swindle—this monopolizing infirmity of mine, fairly exposed to view! What could I do? What could I say? I said what I felt and thought at the time.

"Julia, earth does not hold a being lovelier than yourself. You are a woman in life and soul. Even the *pretty curve of the hair over your brow—the incipient lisp—the slightly uncertain step*—are all womanly. You are inconceivably beautiful to me, Julia. Your thoughts, emotions—all are womanly."

She interrupted me ; but there was a lovely humidity in the eye—a soft sigh, and a tender smile, that no words could describe.

"Ernest, you are a poet, and must be loved. Do you believe I love you, Ernest ? I would have you know this fully."

"Well, what then, Julia ?"

"I cannot, will not marry you."

I started to my feet. "Julia, this is all folly. You must—shall be mine. Loving me, who else could—should call you wife ?"

Again she burst into one of her paroxysms of passionate weeping, and I reviled myself as the cause.

"Ernest," she said, "Bertha is too noble to die of love. I can be generous—I am too weak."

"Now, Julia, you are a double sphinx. If woman's nature, in its greatness, is so little to be comprehended, we must thank God that the majority are the poor, vapid things they are." I said this sternly, bitterly.

"I know myself, Ernest. I have a touch of something—I know not what it is—do not care. It is that which makes the shape of the serpent beautiful to me"—and she

showed a bracelet of the kind upon her wrist—"the glitter of steel in the hands of another is frightful to me. But look here ! in my own hands, it is a fascination," and she took a small dirk from beneath her girdle, and held the glittering point in the moonlight. "It is that which makes the power of the horse terrific. But give the reins into my own hands, and I am full of exultation. I confront unescapable danger with a strong courage, but recoil indolently from its approach. In a word, I am a great coward and a small tyrant."

"Creature of fascination," I murmured, "and you think to escape me."

"Yes, Ernest ; and I will escape you. I hold the dirk—I carry the reins with you—and yet entirely do I love you."

I was awed at her magnificent femininity, as I had been by the magnificent womanhood of Bertha—and I felt in my heart each would make a law to which I must yield.

I knew that what she had uttered was all true. The intensity of the priestess consumed the offerings of the worshipper. I was but an over-grown boy. I should be but a poor slave, turned hither and thither at the caprice of this all-powerful beauty. She would glory in subjecting me to her whims. She would overwhelm me with taunt and jest, and condemn me to the spindle of Omphale, or help me to luxury and inglorious ease. Oh, woman ! woman ! read yourself to us, that we may be wise above all recorded wisdom.

"Julia," I said, "you have been used to adulation, and you send out snares to win it."

"Ernest!"

"Well, then, snares are about you—you have been used to power—and you do not scruple to subject a harmless country priest to your spells. You have always been loved, and therefore the sentiment is of little value to you."

Again she wept, and said softly—"Ernest, do not do your own great nature the injustice to think you would love what would be all unworthy of your esteem. I seek but to protect myself. One of us must absorb the other. I have all the light artillery of my sex, and the skill to use it—I must enslave or be enslaved. I reverence you too much, Ernest, to do this with you."

"There is something beneath this, Julia, which I do not understand."

"Time will make all clear to you, Ernest"—and so we walked homeward—I with a feeling as though something had been lost to me, yet with a conviction I might *re-win* it, and Julia talking of the days of her childhood—the years before we met, when we each heard so much of the other. I was called the poet of the family—she the belle and beauty.

"How I wish I had known you in those days, Julia. Would you have loved me then? Would you have then refused to be my wife?"

"I know not. Thank God that we did not meet, Ernest. It is better as it is. I will marry some man of dollars and

cents, Ernest—some great, dull banker, whose soul is in his exchequer, and who will wonder and doat upon my beauty, and think my wits half-turned by sentiment; but whom my lazy laugh and simplest kindness will bring to my feet. I shall have no scruple in playing upon his sensibilities. Indeed, I shall do him good service by giving him torment enough on earth to make him think of heaven." All this was uttered in a delicious, slow voice, with a half mocking smile.

"You will do no such thing, heartless creature that you are. I will see to it you do not, by marrying you myself."

"That is kind in you, Ernest."

I was piqued at her ironical air, and said, "I do believe you are more than half devil, Julia."

"I dare say," she answered, carelessly. "At any rate, I have so much of him, that I dare not marry you, Ernest. I should be the ruin of a sensitive nature; I should be miserable with a thoroughly generous, consistent one. Indeed, you remember the story of 'Beauty and the Beast.' I do believe I want a sort of bear to carry about with me, who would not be made wretched by my humors, and who would worship me with a kind of blind, never-wearying homage."

"Julia, Julia, I cannot believe this is you."

"It is I, nevertheless."

"You in your worst aspect."

"Our worst aspects are still ourselves."

"But you could put all this by."

"There you are, Ernest ; I covet a blind homage. If I were a giant I should hate a dwarf ; not because he is mean, and weak, and little, but because it takes a dwarf's optics to spy out the defects in a giant's armor."

"You will never be a wife, Julia."

"Assuredly I will, but not to a man of genius. I will be the appendage to a man high in office, who will show me off as he would his official insignia. I am proud and reliable—he will be sure that with all my beauty and love of homage, his name will *never* be compromised through me. Or I will condescend to wear the gems and rich robes of a merchant. Doing his wealth ample justice by my extravagance."

"And yet you love me."

She turned suddenly—the tears gushed to her eyes—she threw her arms about my neck, and gave me one kiss—that kiss—I will not describe it. In an instant she flew up the stairs, for we had entered the door at the moment, and I saw her no more that night.

CHAPTER XXX.

The child is father of the man.

WORDSWORTH.

I FELT the necessity of rousing myself from my state of mental disquiet, for the sacraments of the church were nigh at hand, and I looked with deep dread, lest I should go before my people, and stand up before God with a spirit unbecoming the occasion. I am religious both by nature and education, and my sense of order and love of the beautiful often cause me to regret the nakedness of our Puritanic worship. I am well aware that God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in the spirit. But the mind most freely alive to the sense of worship delights in form and ceremonial—incense and harmony, prostration and the Miserere, seem to be essential to that pure idealism, which exalts the standard of infinite holiness by multiplying the symbols of approach.

I am sure this is a necessity in public worship, unless we are willing to see it decline. In our approaches to God in solitude we need none of these—but when we assemble ourselves together, each member seems to bear the burden of his neighbor's guilt—a hidden, mysterious gloom hangs upon us, and an inner consciousness responds to the propriety of a ceremonial otherwise unmeaning. In this way it is that

the pure and innocent respond most deeply to the magnificent hymn of the "Dies Iræ," and in this way it is, by creating a human dramatic interest, that the Roman Catholic religion takes such a deep hold upon the mind.

I had given notice that the sacrament of baptism would be administered upon an appointed day ; and now I thought it best to take my three children to the altar on this occasion. Bertha and Julia were both present when I announced my intention, and I added also that I must claim some aid from them, to see that the ceremonial was duly provided for.

Julia having a preference to the Episcopal form, proposed that the children should be provided with god-mothers, who should present them at the altar.

I observed that Willy immediately went to Julia, and whispered, that she must be his god-mother, and made sundry promises to behave well, and hold still, and be a first-rate boy on the occasion.

Lily leaned on the knee of Bertha and sighed heavily, whereat Bertha parted the hair of the child from her brow, and looked fondly at her, and then said—

"Tell your thoughts, Lily."

"They haven't come yet," answered the child.

"You are very true, Lily ; wait till you are clear."

Then the child came to me, and looked into my face with a troubled air.

"Papa, do you promise for me, that I shall always be good, and that I am partly to belong to the church?"

"Something like that, Lily."

By this time Willy was by my side, and watching the words of Lily.

"*I don't know what it means to be good,*" said Lily.

"Not to lie, and steal, and swear," cried Willy, with an air of great promptitude and complacency.

"No one does such things, Willy, but poor bodies without home and friends."

Willy looked puzzled and rebuked also.

"I wish we didn't make promises in the world," continued Lily. "I always want to do the very thing I promise not to do, and the thing I promise to do, I begin to think how I shall not do it."

"Perverse little girl," said I.

"True woman, every inch a woman," said Julia, laughing gaily.

"True spark of infinitude—tending spontaneously to the good—child of the new testimony ; rejecting the interdict, and responding to the 'Do thou,' " said Bertha, caressingly bending her lovely eyes upon the child, who had buried her face in her bosom.

"'Tis just so," said Willy, "whenever I promise to be good, I'm unhappy all the time ; but let me alone, and I somehow get along without doin' mischief—but make me promise, and I want to sit right down and not stir at all, or go right off and do something bad. Father, I guess I won't join your church yet."

After much talk and many explanations, the children

were brought to a better understanding of the case, and it was agreed that Bertha should present Lily ; and Julia, Willy, on the occasion.

Lily remained exceedingly thoughtful, and as usual with her, transferred all her emotions to her doll-baby, Jennie—who now, more than ever, became the recipient of her mental frames. She told Jennie that a very solemn event was to transpire—that she was to be formally made over to God, and she must pray and fast, and be very miserable, as church-people always were. She told her to draw down her mouth, and wrinkle up her forehead, and when she smiled make a face as if it hurt her ; and then Jennie was made to reply in a very pertinent manner, which her guardian affected to cut short by saying, “You are too little to know anything about it, and so you must think just as I tell you, Jennie.”

Bertha sat one day listening to this prattle of Lily’s, when she, in a manner quite unusual with her, began to talk of her own childhood.

“What we were in leading strings we are in our mature life,” she remarked. “There is nothing in ourselves to-day, the germ of which was not visible then. Education may modify, but it does not recreate. We feel that with our blood came the inheritance of gifts, *and thus it is through blood that atonement or reconciliation is to be made*—the blood of the races which shall eventually redeem our humanity.”

“Bertha, I do not comprehend your meaning ; but it seems to me like a denial of our most precious faith.”

“Words are of little moment, Ernest. It seems to me we literalize and materialize quite too much. The Orthodox Jew looked for a Messiah seated upon an external throne. Literally he had a right, from the words of prophecy, and the aspect of tradition, to expect this ; but the modern Orthodox Christian rejects this view of the ancient people, and yet clings to a belief in an external flow of blood, and a literal Cross, as the means of salvation. May not this, too, be abandoned, and a more spiritual import, a higher insight be acquired in this also ? May not redemption from evil be reached by man through the *hereditary transmission* of what is best in the nature of our humanity ? and thus, may it not be even literally true that we are redeemed through the flowing of blood ? Then, also, as to the doctrine of the Cross : do we yet understand its true internal sense ? Why should the Cross be one of agony ? why not rather one of glory and of triumph—the surrender in the individual of the mere grovelling to the higher attributes ?

“The Cross is the symbol of our humanity, just as the circle is the symbol of the universe. Look at it—there is the horizontal—the upright. The human being spreads out his arms, and behold, he forms the Cross. Look at the snake ! he undulates level with the earth. He has neither arms, nor wings, nor legs to raise himself from his prone condition. He bites the earth, he licks the dust—he *absorbs its juices, and generates its poisons*. His voice is *cadenceless*—just the lowest and harshest remove from *utter silence*. He glides in and out, and threads his subtle way noiselessly, search-

ingly, purposely, and all *without an angle*. He is the impersonation of vital matter; the spirit of material wisdom; the living lava-stream of gold, the net-work of rubies. *He has life, but not heat—fascination, but not love*. He is the embodiment of material beauty, that lures and fascinates; that fires the sense and deadens the soul. He is the god of the material, whose wills centre in himself; and, one and all, he is the devil.

Now, the serpent, this god of the material, is simply a vertebra. Take this vertebra prone to the earth, this horizontal line of the serpent, and place the perpendicular to it, which is the vertebra of a man, and you have the image of the Cross. You have the shape for a man—a god, if you will. Thus, when the Egyptian-nurtured Moses *lifted up the serpent*, he symbolized the lifting up of the spiritual over the material. He showed, by an outward sign, whose import he could but shadow forth, that the upright or spiritual man must be lifted, and must cross the prone material man, who licks the dust of the lower senses.

The horizontal vertebra is a serpent. The perpendicular vertebra, a man; and here is the true Cross; and thus, in the *One holiest and loveliest*, were all these things exhibited as an outward sign. We have the agony of the sweat, as it were, of great drops of blood, in our suffering humanity; we have the feet that spurn the horizontal earth; the hands that grasp for the eternal, triumphant good—penetrated also with the anguish of the nails that would fasten us to the present and the sensuous. We have the dying thirst for

living waters; the presented gall and vinegar of worldly disappointment, till the very God within us cries to the Unseen, My God! my God!"

No wonder, I thought, that our people listen to this woman as to a prophet. True or not true, she utters her deep convictions with the reverence of inspiration, and thousands must and will believe her.

Bertha went on. "Nature herself abhors the plain, and she gives us the mountain, which is the Cross to it. Man, also, in his highest art, aims to raise structures that shall counteract the horizontal, and he flings the beautiful arch to span river and valley; the heavenly dome uprises; the taper obelisk points a finger upward, and the stately tower breaks the line of vision with battlement and turret; while far back in the ages the infant man projected the pyramid to be like the everlasting hills, a Cross to the plain."

"But, Bertha," I said, "you are taking away all the dogmas of the Pulpit—you will leave us nothing to expound."

"Love, eternal goodness—the life and sayings of Him who represented, in His own great, beautiful life, the ultimate to which our teachings tend—surely, Ernest, subjects like these are exhaustless. The true believer does not ask a creed, but only for those instructions of truth which will strengthen, and ennoble, and beautify the life. Tell me, Ernest, are we not stickling for *forms*, when we should rather seek for light? Do we not uphold conventional virtue, when the soul of infinite love and divine purity is hidden from us? Are we not as literal and as gross as the Jew? And do we not

persecute, rail at, and abuse those who reject the common faith, as cruelly and as vindictively as they?"

"True, Bertha; but these opinions were not yours in childhood. You were bred fully in our orthodox faith, I have heard you say."

"Yes, but I protested against these doctrines, even then. The spirit asserts itself always, if we are true to its monitions. I had an inner consciousness that rejected evil, and suffering, and death, as things that could not touch the soul. As I sit listening to Lily, I seem to revive my own childhood. I seem to see myself again, with my household of dolls, and I, enacting my little life-drama with these puppets. *Strange spiritual and metaphysical teachings did these dolls receive; and they were a numerous family, each one being, as it were, an image of the state of my mind;* hence I loved these little rag creations, made with my own fingers, and *made a little answering shape to some soul-life of mine,* better than the stiff, hard doll, of wood or wax, that sat in state, a great unloved fixture in my play-house. I revive with infantile delight these child-ideals, and the grave, intellectual subtleties I used to pour into their dumb senses. Oh! the profound abstractions, the dramatic episodes, and terrible passions of which they became the recipients. I was light as a fairy, and used to personate angels flying from heaven, bearing a gift-child for me to love; and I did love it, really teaching it all I knew, and training its moral sense just in proportion as I myself grew.

"But I am growing very egotistic," she continued,

checking herself, with a slight blush upon her lovely cheek.

"Go on; pray go on," said Julia. "I too recall my childhood, and see that what I was then I am now—my grief as real, and more oppressive, because I was more impatient of control; for from the first I was restive under authority"—and Julia laughed; but it was a sweet, timid laugh, which gave me a new phase of her character. But this was indeed a revelation of Bertha to us, such as I had never dreamed of beholding; and now I found it difficult to think that Bertha had ever been a child—that thought had grown in her mind as it does in the minds of others—and I was well pleased to find this full-grown Minerva had once been a babe, and a growing child like ourselves.

"I pray you go on, Bertha, and tell of all your younger days and early loves," I said.

CHAPTER XXX.

Sabrina fair!
 Listen where thou art sitting
 Under the glossy, cool, translucent wave,
 In twisted braids of *lilies* knitting
 The loose train of thy amber-dropping hair.

MILTON.

From the realms of "Shadow Land"
 I see thee mid the orient's kindling bloom,
 With *mystic lilies* gleaming in thy hand.

SARAH HELEN WHITMAN.

THUS urged by us all, Bertha continued in a musing tone, unlike her ordinary purpose-like manner:—"I sometimes think there are tides, ebbs and flows, to the human soul, as there are tides in the air and sea. We are conscious of an accumulation of thought—of a steady increase of emotion—as if the ocean-drift, as it were, forced by concentrate currents, impelled us, we know not how, or why; and we awake and find ourselves landed upon some *terra incognita*, unconscious of how we were brought hither. I feel a strange loosening of the tongue, which restores my childhood to me with renewed tenderness. Childhood is no more a happy

period to us than any other portion of our life. Indeed, my own emotions were at that time so disproportioned to my years, that to me it seems a sorrowful period."

"Aye," said Julia, "but we love the time because of its innocence."

"In life we have a problem to solve. We have a purpose to gain—a race is to run—and if we are travel-stained, it is better thus than to be ignorant, and passive, and inert. It seems to me, a heart kept to its purity, affections longing for the good, desires centering in the divine, are the *results* to be obtained by the turmoil and struggles of life; and the state thus reached by a hearty grasp of life, is a higher one than that innocence which is but ignorance."

"And yet this innocence is very heavenly. I wish daily I could be a boy once more," I answered, after a pause.

"The reminiscent state is a poor one. The *man* should be more joyous than the *child*. The heights we climb should make the shadows of the valley grow painful to us."

"But tell us of your childhood, will you not, Bertha? Tell us of your boy-lovers. The loves of childhood are so sweet and single-hearted," said Julia.

"My childhood was what is ordinarily regarded as a happy one. Health, and culture, and competence, were mine. Ours was an old family—with heir-looms of silver, heavy brocades, high-heeled shoes, and courtly costumes; old cabinets with secret drawers, and full of family histories. There were broad-swords, and priestly implements, also, and stately portraits, belonging to our ancestry. I was full of

curiosity to learn the history of these relics. I tired everybody with my questions—I masqueraded the house in those antique robes. Indeed, my pertinacious spirit of inquiry would have made me a sore trial in the household, but for a certain winningness, I may call it, which made me a general favorite. I danced and sang, and improvised—all in a spontaneous manner, as far removed from affectation as vanity.”

The continuous flow of Bertha’s voice, so delicious in its intonation, had lured Willy even to her side, while Lily took a seat at her feet, and more than once she kissed the hand of the speaker. I turned my eyes upon Julia, and met hers fixed upon mine, with a look so intense and penetrating that the blood rushed to my face. That blush, I do not understand it. What lurking spirit was it, startled in its sanctuary, or slinking into secrecy, that thus became manifest? Bertha continued—

“My masses of long, golden brown hair; my strange eyes—people always called them strange—attracted attention. Then my temper, though vivacious and wilful, was never obstinate. If I was called beautiful, or a little angel, it never excited my vanity; the words seemed to express something in and through me, which I felt instinctively must be holy. The Saviour, I knew, had blessed little children, just as he had commended the blossoms of the field; and it seemed that children, being of the kingdom of heaven, must be loved as such. An evil disposed child filled me with terror. I could not comprehend such a manifestation, and used to cast about wildly to discover the cause.

“I was a sort of supernumary conscience for the whole neighborhood. If man, woman, or child committed what I regarded as a sin, I made the person the subject of long continued prayer, in proportion to the offence. I used to tell children, they need not be unhappy any longer than sufficed to ask God’s forgiveness for the wrong they had done, for I would pray the Father for them, and He would hear *me*, and bless and forgive them.

“I remember an old sailor, familiarly called, Uncle Zeke, a good-natured, reckless, swearing, drunken wretch, who always had some pretty name for me, such as ‘Lady-bird,’ ‘Little Red Riding Hood,’ and ‘Queen of the East,’ or the like, cost me years of vigils and prayers. I was greatly scandalized to find no amendment in him. One day I went to him with tears in my eyes, and told him the wrestlings I underwent in his behalf. I shall never forget the way in which he rolled his quid over in his mouth, and the gratified air he put on. Indeed, it was more an air of triumph that quite mastered his drunken fit.

“‘Now, look here, neighbors and messmates. Nobody cares for Uncle Zeke; nobody cares for the drunken sailor. The minister doesn’t pray for him; respectable people steer clear of him; but look here—Uncle Zeke’ll sail into port ahead of you all, *convoyed* by this here angel,’ and he burst into a fit of tears, that quite overcame me, and caused me to redouble my efforts to reclaim him.”

Lily kissed her hand tenderly, and again I met the same penetrating look from Julia, at which I blushed as before;

but Bertha, confident of our interest by the wrapt attention we gave her, continued her reminiscences.

"I was the pet of philosophers, and poets, and artists, and thinkers of every kind, who listened to my little questionings and improvisings with delight. I afterwards learned—though even at that time I had so little self-consciousness that I never once remembered that I was a child, and was unaware that I talked beyond my years—I was treated with the utmost reverence; school girls might pinch my plump shoulders, or pull my long curls; but no such liberties ever came from the other sex, who rarely ever kissed my forehead, never my lips. I had an instinctive self-subsistence, and a pride that appeared in the tone of my being, rather than in any marked expression of it. I disliked to tell my little griefs, although sympathy was pleasing to me, from a consciousness that people did not *reach inward to the true spirit of my grief, but responded to something which I did not regard at all*; hence a supposed injury wounded me more in the recital than in the infliction of it."

Here Lily stole to my side, and put her arm around my neck to whisper in my ear,

"Bertha's child soul was like mine, only, only she was wiser; but then, you know, I don't care to be wise nor good."

I was so intent in my listening that I motioned Lily to be quiet.

Bertha continued, "I remember I used to avoid trains of thought, and speculations of various kinds, with a vague

feeling of their being too vast for me. My mind was of that accumulative kind, by which I dreaded the growth of a new element, especially if it were painful in kind. I learned early to stop myself, when I found I was talking beyond the sympathies of those about me, lest I should be left too much to myself, as I sometimes was; children often saying petulantly, 'I don't understand one word you say,' and harsh people stopping me short with, 'Hush up,' which caused a sort of dismay in me. This taught me early to impersonate objects and ideas, that I might not feel lonely. When I did not dare to utter aloud my intuitions to a little companion, lest she should pronounce the oracle obscure, I would pour it all out to my doll baby, and feel greatly comforted by so doing."

"Had you no boy-lovers, Bertha?" interrupted Julia. "I remember, when I was a little thing, I used to be delighted when, in playing forfeits, my boy admirers would redeem the whole forfeit of 'kneel to the wittiest, bow to the prettiest, and kiss the one you love best,' to my little self. Ah me! I wish we didn't get used to admiration—the delight we feel at first soon passes off, and then it is a great bore."

"Not quite, even to Julia," answered Bertha. "I think all who are conscious of possessing any power, are fond of its acknowledgment."

"But not for beauty. You do not value your beauty in the least, I am sure," said Julia.

"There you mistake me, Julia," Bertha replied in her own candid way. "Everybody calls you beautiful, Julia." (I

observed here that Julia let her head fall slightly to one side, and a sweet smile and flush stole over her face, and I thought she had never looked more enchanting.) "You look rich, and fresh, and seductive, even to me. Were I a man, I could not fail to love you." (Here Bertha turned her clear eyes to my face, and the blood mounted to my temples.) "For myself, poets and artists call me beautiful; but the common observer sees nothing in any way attractive in my looks."

"But these are the highest authority. They would paint you for a Sibyl, me for a Venus," whispered Julia to herself.

"I am glad to suggest beauty always. I believe it a great and desirable gift. It is a part of the harmonies. We all feel a pang when age or toil mars a single charm; and if we have not reached a *something* which answers to a more august conception of life, we are apt to grow petty, mean in spirit, or embittered. Hence the world of envy, of jealousy and scandal, arises."

"Now tell me of your little boy loves," said Julia pertinaciously.

"I think little boys stood in some considerable awe of me—as large boys do now," Bertha answered, with a low laugh. "I remember they used to bring me birds' nests, and flowers, and go long distances to procure lilies for me in their season."

(Willy now stole to the side of Lily, and knelt down at the feet of Bertha.)

"I love to think lilies belong to me"—(Here Lily kissed

the speaker's hand)—"the beautiful water-lily, I mean. This flower is so lovely to me, that I find no words to express what it suggests. A soul-life, an inner consciousness, a sphere of unstained purities—of translucent, transparent harmonies—away from the external senses, which I cannot describe." (Lily arose and laid her cheek to that of Bertha, and I started up to detect a something in the looks of the two, which had before struck me, but which always eluded any definite grasp, and now it was gone—only Lily grew to be like a water-nymph.) "From childhood, the rudest boy in the neighborhood would go far to procure lilies for me. If I place my hands upon each side of my head, over the region of hope, and love, and ideality (according to Dr. Buchanan's theory), I fall into a soft, dreamy state. This is so delicious, that one of less integrity of life might be tempted to repeat it. I seem to float in air—my senses are cottoned upon me—faint music and exquisite odors float about me. The Lily at once throws me into the same state." (Lily clung nearer to the neck of Bertha, and her golden hair wholly hid her face; yet the arm of the child, the curve of the bust and limb beneath her short dress—either of these suggested the child Lily, and no other child.

Bertha's rich hair—

"Of brown in the shadow, and gold in the sun,"

Contrasted with that of Lily's head, and the upturned face of Willy, made a group, at once striking and picturesque.

"Once," continued Bertha, I was walking in Broadway,

when a youth passed me with a handful of these flowers; *suddenly he turned back* and begged me to accept them, in a manner so ingenuous, that I could not refuse the beautiful stranger youth."

"Well done, Bertha," said Julia, with a laugh. "What more came of it? Did he follow you home? Did he write to you?"

"No, nothing of the sort. I never heard more of him."

"What a pity! But you dreamed of him, Bertha?"

"I am afraid not; and yet I remember his exact looks. I could paint them at any time."

"Smitten, as I am a true woman!" laughed Julia.

"I would not willingly forget the lovely youth," replied Bertha, "any more than I would have any other aspect of beauty fade from my mind."

"How many of these episodes do women cherish?" I asked, with some asperity.

"How many live in the man's mind, think you?" asked Julia, with one of her most penetrating glances.

"One, Julia, obliterates all such memories," I replied, making an excuse to cross the room so that I could say it to her ears alone.

"At another time," continued Bertha—(Lily now sat down, holding Jennie in her arms, with a grave, little old woman way, entirely her own, while Willy kissed her hand sily, at which Lily flashed out her eyes, and then maliciously presented Jennie for a kiss, which Willy gave with great docility)—"at another time I was riding in the cars,

and when the train stopped at the station, a bashful youth stood under my window with lilies in his hand. He looked up, colored, and then holding up the flowers, said, 'Will you take them?' 'Buy?' I asked, uncertain of his intentions; 'No, no, take them;' and he was gone before I could more than look my gratitude."

"Love at first sight, as I am a living woman!" ejaculated Julia again. "Alas, poor Hodge! Did he not jump on the cars and ride to the next depot, that he might have another peep?"

"I do not think he saw me, Bertha; but a lovely insight, unknown to himself, demanded the response."

"I do not believe you would know it if a man loved you with all his soul, Bertha. You would analyze it away into something else."

Bertha colored so deeply that, for a moment, I, who followed with my eyes the blush as it crept to her kerchief, thought she eclipsed even Julia.

"I certainly believe that much which passes for love between the sexes might be traced to quite other emotions. I have no vanity to mislead me; indeed, I should be more engaging with a trifle more of that approbateness, which imparts flexibility to the character."

"I shall not fail on that score," laughed the wayward beauty, "I own to a full endowment."

"You are very lovely, Julia; yours is a creation very perfect in its kind," said Bertha, looking at Julia with a frank, admiring look.

"I will not be analyzed too closely, Lady Bertha," answered the other ; "but tell me some of your early experience, for I see you have had hosts of admirers."

"I do not know that—I arrest attention. I pique observation. I have intellect, and I hold oracles, I firmly believe. But in regard to the lilies : I was once riding also in the country, when a sportsman, who had waded into the water in pursuit of his game, emerged with it, and lilies also. He instantly held them up to me, with a frank, pleasing air, and asked my acceptance. I am sure that the delighted gratitude with which I took the gift was thought of quite as much as the results of his sporting. I was right glad that God had given me quick and unembarrassed utterance, for I am sure a ready, warm response to the sentiment of a gift is of more value than the gift itself."

The ring of the tea-bell now interrupted our conversation, which was renewed at the earnest solicitations of Julia ; and, in truth, I learned much of the sentiment of womanhood through these conversations of Julia and Bertha.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Before

A woman's heart beat in my virgin breast,
It had been nurtured in divinest love.

SHELLEY.

WHILE attending to the routine of the table, I was conscious of an undercurrent of thought in regard to Bertha, such as I had never known before. She had hitherto seemed shadowy, unreal to me. Even the terrible scene in the church, which I had unintentionally witnessed, and to which Bertha had never, but in one instance, alluded, had an unreal, unhuman aspect about it, as if ordinary emotions were beyond her ; but now, these details and reminiscences of hers brought her nearer to us, invested her with a human interest, and she looked fairer to the eye, even than I had been accustomed to regard her.

"Now the story of your first love," said Julia, in a sweet, caressing manner. "I have an idea that Bertha's lovers must have been very grand. A man must have a double stock of manhood, who would dare confess to such an emotion for her," said Julia, partly to herself, and partly, as I thought, to me.

Bertha replied after a pause, in which all the color left

her face, and then returned slowly, while her voice seemed wondrously musical—

“My first lover was when I was about nine years of age. I was sent into the country to pass a few weeks with some friends of my mother. They were a pleasant country family, with some intelligence, especially in the older members, very religious, and very much respected by the neighbors. The house was large and handsome, the trees and shrubbery fine, ‘green to the very threshold.’ There were two little girls, and two awkward boys, whom I scarcely remember. The girls were step-sisters, of my own age. We used to go to the country school together, and I remember the pain I felt at the distrust of the country children at my city manners, and their envy at my more genteel dress. I proposed, one day, that we should take off our shoes and stockings and leave them beside a stone wall, that we might go into school with bare feet, like most of the children. We all did so ; but I was the principal sufferer. I bore the uneven ground like a martyr—never flinching at stubble, nor stone, nor dust, although my feet were in a sorry plight. At length we moved to the short grass and clover at the wayside, as being less painful to the feet, notwithstanding the fears we all entertained of snakes. Here my discomfiture became complete by stepping upon a ‘bumble-bee.’ I picked the insect off, but the pain became almost intolerable ; the more that *my system of ethics precluded any manifestation* of suffering. I was preparing myself for martyrdom in the time to come, and hence *I regarded any inflicted pang as a God-send,*

to make me ready for the stake upon which I fully believed I was hereafter to expire. I used to nerve myself, by various childish inflictions, to the endurance of pain, and on this occasion gave no demonstration of the torture my sensitive nerves were enduring, till I fainted from its excess.”

“This is Bertha, then,” I said to myself. The child Bertha and the woman Bertha are the same. Now as I looked at her, she seemed like a fair young child ; and as I turned from her to Julia, I met the latter’s eyes, but Bertha had raised hers slightly upward, and did not seem entirely conscious of our presence, for she talked as if in a reverie—as if she were transformed to a child while indulging in its reminiscences. Bertha went on—

“We children lived for two or three weeks an almost wild life, for I was never tired of the woods, and pastures, and green fields, nor of paddling in all the brooks, and ducking under all the cascades that came in our way. I was a perfect fawn, delighting in beautiful coverts, and listening to wild echoes. The trees were solemn mysteries, that hung over me with dark, whispering awe ; I tried to learn the language of the leaves, and the meanings of the green lizard, as it stole out and in ; the song of the bird I thought I understood, and the chirp of the insect ; but the dumb toad, and lizard, and tortoise, and snake—all *clinging so closely and silently to the earth*—had each and all a fascination about them—a something from which I recoiled with dread, and yet longed to investigate. I could not leave them, but remained looking down upon them, in their damp, mossy

beds, quite to the annoyance of my little friends. At this time I supposed it a moral duty for a girl-child to kill every snake that came in her path. I used to repeat the charm, 'the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head,' and truly the snake was quiescent to a wonderful degree, while I, shuddering with horror at the supposed duty imposed upon me as a bit of womanly representative, took its life. I fully believed the serpent must have, under his external integuments, either *arms, or wings, or legs*, folded away, and to be used, perhaps, in a sort of resurrection. To establish this theory of mine, I once buried a dead snake in a little perforated box, that I might at leisure examine his anatomy. As I had foreseen, the ants left me in a few days a very beautiful preparation ; but great was my dismay to find nothing but a long back-bone, perfectly white. This was a terrible revelation, and, of course, death to my supposed theory growing out of it. But the mystery of the serpent was one of constantly returning interest, and when the farmers assured me that no *snakes ever staid upon grounds where sheep were pastured*, I had thought enough to tax my brain for weeks. I used to weep over the lovely, imperfect suggestions which this fact in natural history presented. The one animal, the extreme of innocence, the other of subtlety. It looked so in accordance with the true order of nature, that these creatures, so diametrically opposite, should not be found in juxtaposition, that I used to pray the good Father to teach me of this world of ours—so beautiful and so hidden to the careless eye."

I observed Willy had placed his little palm over the wrist of Julia, to hide a bracelet which she wore in the form of a serpent.

"Do not hide it, Willy," said Julia carelessly, as Bertha paused. "I dare say it belongs to me. Cleopatra was 'the serpent of old Nile,' and people say I am fascinating, which of course means *serpent-like*, or devilish."

"No, no, you are not that," answered Willy, coloring deeply.

Julia laid her plump hand upon the child's head and then drew him toward her, where his cheek rested amid the laces of her bodice. Julia never did an ungraceful or ineffective thing, and certainly I thought the boy was too young to appreciate his privilege.

Bertha also bent her eyes upon Julia for a moment and then said :

"You are not quite happy, dear Julia—not quite content with yourself. Would you change yourself for another?"

"No ; I see much that is noble out of myself, and I see that I am not so," answered the beauty. "But I know what I am, and what I am not, and live up to the design in me."

"That is very lovely. The porcelain vase is never put to culinary purposes ; the pure alabaster is not for the rough wall of the highways. It is well to learn our capabilities. God appoints the great pang for the great heart—the steep hill and flinty pathway for those whom he designs to gird unto magnanimous achievements."

"Ah, Bertha, I never knew from my own experience, the meaning of either envy or jealousy, otherwise I should covet your womanly eloquence, and beautiful insight. But we interrupt your story—pray go on."

Thus urged, Bertha continued :

"I remember those two girls, of whom I spoke, were cheerful companions, following my lead generally without a demur, climbing hills because I would climb, and going upon the most extravagant excursions, plunging into swamps or rivers because it was my way to do. Nature, from this unobstructed companionship, seemed more a part of myself, and less overwhelming than hitherto, and I enjoyed more than I had ever supposed it possible for me to enjoy, because of the excessive sensitiveness of my nature, by which I was apt to pass from enjoyment so oppressive, that it merged into pain.

"One piece of mischief I learned to enter into with great zest, the more because there was a touch of terror in it, always fascinating to me. We used to go into the great farm yard, where were cattle of all kinds—horses, cows, oxen and sheep, amongst which I grew quite fearless. We used to each select a handsome cow, determined to milk her. Our awkwardness would cause the creature to run, and we always in full pursuit, and laughing like mad creatures, till horses, cows, and sheep were all in commotion, and the dairy men and women in a great rage. This heightened our perversity, especially mine, till I grew perfectly impish in fun, and being very agile, I did any amount of annoyance by scampering about and dodging the work-

people, who threatened me, and yet laughed immoderately at my wilfulness. One twilight the youngest of my little friends and I got into a severe dispute in regard to one of the cows, which each of us imagined belonged to us exclusively to torment. I was a polite, well-trained child, unaccustomed to the use of vehement language of an angry kind, and I remember that I gesticulated much upon the occasion, and felt a sort of inward pride at my own unwonted fluency in this new line of expression. I must have been very provoking, for my little friend first burst into tears, then struck me, and ran into the house to lay the whole matter before the child's tribunal, always, its mother.

"I was utterly confounded; the blow, and the sense of disgrace brought me at once to my senses. I could not comprehend myself. It seemed as if it were not I, but a wild creature who had taken possession of my little body; I felt impish and mean, as if I had been possessed; I could not comprehend it; I never should be quite sure of myself again. I wept bitterly, and hastened to our excellent hostess, feeling all the way as if I had grown to ten times my size, and must be black in the face and twisted all out of shape. I confessed the whole, taking all the blame upon myself, and exaggerating my own fault quite to the exonerating of my friend, not from a sense of generosity, but because I could see no evil anywhere but in my poor self. My hostess received me coldly, and directed me at once to go to my own room. Of course this completed my misery. It seemed to me that no house was large enough to hold my

poor little body, distended by so much wickedness, and darkened by such disgrace. The roof would suffocate me. I wished I could be at once buried up as Pharaoh and his people were buried, of whom I had read and pondered over in the Bible. The disproportion of my feelings to the occasion did not once occur to me. I went out of doors to the apiary, where the trees were dense and the grass fresh and *untrodden*, and the coolness and repose tranquilized me ; for *nature has always a fitting balm for us whenever we appeal to her pitying heart*. I remember, as if it had been a new revelation, this tender aspect the trees now assumed, which before had always been solemn and mysterious, and invested with awe.

"I ought, before this, to have said something of the eldest son of the family, a young man engaged in the study of the law. I had avoided him instinctively, because he was a student, and had a grave majesty about him, which I did not care to encounter in my new aspect of life. I dreaded that he might wish me to talk as persons of his character always did, thereby arresting my sense of freedom. I remember he was gentle and calm, with a sweet smile, and often held his hand out to me as if desirous to win me toward him. But I was in love with my liberty, and enjoyed my own freakishness too well to be brought over. I felt I was changing much, and was not quite at rest in my mind about it ; most especially as I found my devotional feelings were less active. As I said, I had repelled Mr. Oscar, for so was he called, in all his gentle advances, not-

withstanding his sisters bounced into his lap, and pulled his skirts, and declared he was the best brother in the world.

"While I sat under the trees, feeling so very wretched, an arm was put very gently around my waist, and a kind hand laid my head upon a broad, warm shoulder. All my childish grief broke forth at this manifestation of tenderness ; I wept as if my poor little heart must break, he all the time laying his cheek down to mine, and patting my shoulder as a mother soothes a sick child. Gradually I grew more composed, and told Mr. Oscar, for he it was (and I knew it in my heart without looking into his face), and I felt as if he must know I felt it, and must know that I loved him in my heart, and had always loved him, though the time had never before come when he should know it. As I began to say, I told Mr. Oscar just how it was—how I had been all the time for weeks like a possessed child, till I reached the climax, when his sister struck me. Indeed so ill-bred and unlovely did I seem in my own eyes, that I could not see wrong even in the blow on the part of his sister.

"I told Oscar so, ingenuously, and grew quite eloquent in heaping abuse upon myself, and striving in the utmost sincerity to make him realize the whole extent of my ill temper and ill life for many weeks. I remember he told me I was not so very naughty, and that I drew back with a recoil, telling him I feared he could not be quite so good as I had supposed, or he would see the matter just as I did. Though I had confessed my fault and asked pardon as a

little lady should, still I felt I was just so much less worthy of being loved.

"Mr. Oscar's grave, beautiful smile, as he smoothed my hair, and looked tenderly into my face I recall, even now, as one of the most expressive I have ever known. He proposed I should pray as I sat beside him, which I did readily; and the image comes back vividly to me, of the clear moon and stars gleaming upon Oscar's head through the drooping foliage, as he bent his downward, and I lifted up mine, all grief-stricken in prayer.

" 'Will you promise me one thing, Bertha?' asked Oscar.

" 'I do not like to promise; it makes me too unhappy, lest I should break it.'

" 'Well, do as you will; but I should like to have you pray every night at my knee before you go to bed: will you not?'

" 'Yes, it will make me quite happy; and I will tell you all that troubles me.'

"He carried me in his arms to my chamber door, and then kissed my forehead and said good night. From that time, during my whole stay at the house, he never failed to be at home when my bed time came. I learned subsequently that he made all his plans to that effect; often, when away many miles, he would come home; listen to my little child-prayer, imprint that reverential kiss upon my brow, and then retrace his path to complete the business of the time.

"I learned to watch his return, and to welcome him with

delight, and to wonder whether Mr. Oscar's smile would be grave or gay on his return. I saved bits of poetry, and choice passages from books to recite to him; and subjected my most abstruse speculations to his consideration. I would look at the moon and stars with him, and learned for the first time in my life *that most exquisite of all emotions, utter silence with a being in whom we feel entire sympathy.*

"Sometimes, as I looked away to the sky, I felt that Oscar's eyes were upon my face; and this did not annoy me, for when I looked into his there was always that deep, holy smile that inspired entire confidence, and when I said, in my innocence, 'I love you, Mr. Oscar,' I wondered why he should sigh deeply, and the tears gush to his eyes, as he whispered, 'God bless you, angel Bertha.' And then I would lay my hand gently upon his cheek; and once, and only once, I kissed it, for I thought surely Mr. Oscar has some great grief which I cannot know, but I can comfort him.

"I ceased to lead the wild gipsy life I had before led, but stayed at home all day and played with my dolls, because he desired me not to go to the woods till twilight, when he would go with me. At night, when I had said my prayers, kneeling down, with my hands in Oscar's, I laid awake after I was in bed, trying to think why his smile grew every day more sweet and tender, and why he said, 'God bless you, dear, good Bertha,' always with more fervency. And then I made a thousand childish plans to please him, and wile him from his grief. I would tell him more and more of God, and his comfort, and assure him

that all would yet be well. In the morning, I poured out my whole little stock of consolation, and then it seemed quite natural that Oscar should say, 'You are a blessed child, Bertha,' and that his eyes should be full of tears, for mine were the same.

"I did not know till years after this the meaning of it all; and, perhaps, had never known if he had not revealed to a mutual friend, the deep, all-pervading sentiment of an attachment thus conceived for a mere child, and which he called the Amaranth of Love. *We never met again.*

"But I have talked too long," she said, suddenly, and resuming her ordinary serene, cold aspect, she soon after took her leave.

"And this is Bertha," I said. There are certainly aspects of human sympathy and tenderness in her character which I had not supposed belonging to her. Then I recalled the penetrating tones of her voice, which, once heard, could never be forgotten, and I began to weave fables of the Loves of the Lilies, when I fell asleep.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

I can give not what men call love—
But wilt thou accept not
The worship the heart lifts above,
And the heavens reject not—
The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar
From the field of our sorrow.

SHELLEY.

BERTHA'S journal, at this time, exhibits a period of peculiar and beautiful calm. She says :—

"To have met a being like Ernest Helfenstein is to me a great joy. He confirms all my faith in the good, the innate, inextinguishable good of our kind. To me he is the impersonation of John, the beloved of Jesus. I say to myself, it does not harm thee, Ernest, that I love thee, for mine is of that pure, unselfish kind, that asks no return. I know that in the deepest, holiest chamber of thy heart, I sit the veiled Isis of thy worship. Thou dost not know it, but still I am there. I am thy friend, thy counsellor. Ah! blessed are the hearts that enshrine one object sacred to *silence* and to God.

"Ernest loves Julia, the beautiful feminine Eve. She is dear to me also, *but not because she is so to Ernest*. I think, were I less magnanimous I should love her less from this cause. I do not believe in the mawkish sentimentality women affect towards each other. A weak woman may love a strong one, even when she knows that she divides a shade of the affections of her lover ; but a great woman has no such flimsy sentiment. She is more likely to hate the harmless object who may have gathered but a crumb from her own affluent table.

"For myself I do not wish to be other than I am. The soul that finds not repose in itself, will find it in no created object. I look upon the simple loves of the village girls, who come to me with their bits of romance, with peculiar interest, and am surprised to see how little fills up their gentle, placid hearts. Alas! these are the household women—fair, limited, and submissive ; children climb their knees, and gambol in the sunshine, and they are content. Bless God for these dear ones ; but most should we bless him for the Prophets and Sibyls, whose winged feet rest tenderly upon the hearthstone, because from thence they grasp the circle of the universal. * * * *

"It is a small thing to hold back the heart. What would I? Nothing—God knows I ask nothing upon this brave earth, but light and love to adore. Sometimes, as I sit musing alone, and weeping, I know not why, my invisible friend, he who called to me in childhood, and still speaks to me in the night watches, stands by my side, and I am so

filled with divine, ineffable love, that my senses respond to the airs of Paradise and the music of the spheres. Why hidest thou thy face from me, oh spirit of celestial beauty?—thou who dost more than fill up the measure of my desires. Why dost thou hide thyself in the pavilion of thy brightness?

"The love that desires to be known is not love, it is vanity, it is ostentation, anything but a pure spirit of visitation. Let me know that the poet has thrilled to the heavenly passion, and I would never ask the name of the object. Oh that the ages could have known that Tasso loved, and never known that it was Leonora. Oh that the passionate soul of Heloise were still glowing in the story of human greatness, and it were hidden from us that Abelard responded thereto! *Give us great hearts, that we may afford to bury up great names.*

STANZAS.

Hide, earth, our names in silent shade,
Nor tell how deep the deep heart-glow ;
We walked a causeway undismayed,
Where torrents foamed and raged below ;
I could not bear that coming years
Should keep the record of our tears.

We lived—we loved—a gush of song
Tells the wild tale of human woe—
A broken heart—a wildering wrong,
Is all the world will ever know.
Say that we met—we loved, we wept ;
'Tis thus love's registry is kept.

I have just had a long interview with Julia—she would have told me much, very much, but I checked her. “So beautiful is silence,” I said. “We must ourselves penetrate to the light. Human counsel is hazardous in the great needs of the heart. I do believe that prayer opens the heavens to us. I dare not hear you, Julia.”

“Thou haughty Sibyl !” she replied.

“No, no, dear Julia, I am very reverent. I would not have Love become a gossip or a brawler, any more than I would have him a bond-slave. It seems to me, the deeper and purer is his presence, the more sacredly should the rose of silence guard the portal. You love, and are beloved—I bless you both.”

“Bertha, I am miserable, I am weak, and *therefore* miserable,” cried Julia. “I would not marry Ernest ; no, not unless he were deaf and blind. I will not wed him—I do not know what I say, Bertha, but I wish I had never come to this place. Hark ! Bertha, do you think I would live to be that poor, miserable, contemptible thing—a jealous wife ?”

“Nay, Julia ; that is a disease wherein the patient must minister to himself.”

“Would you wed a man, Bertha, whom you suspected to hold a woman in the world as more ideal than yourself ? You know you wouldn’t. It would convert you to a bond woman, a Hagar ; and you would feel yourself degraded. Do you think I would live to watch my husband’s moods—when he was gloomy to think *she* was in his thoughts—

when he was gay, he had been smiled upon by *her*, if he kissed *me* he was thinking of *her*, and in his deep wandering in some enchanted vale with *her*, the angel of his dreams ? I tell you, Bertha, a woman has much to consider before she ventures upon marriage.”

“What would you, dear Julia ? Would you have your lover less than he is ?”

“Yes—no—Bertha. I would, upon my soul—I would have him less, rather than divide with another, even a shadow of a thought.”

“Ah, Julia, life is very mysterious. I wait patiently for God’s truth in me. I would say to my lover, if there is one in the world to awaken a higher life in thee, any angel to breathe to thee a better revelation, go ; God forbid that I should be a hindrance. I would send him onward from angel to archangel if I could. It is true, I may hold back the throbs of my poor anguished heart lest it break. I may breathe softly lest the heart-strings rupture—but what then ? I would give him a God-speed to the very gates of heaven, though I myself sink down into some dim valley, and shed unavailing tears—tears that would scorn to call him back ; he has passed *out of my sphere*, just as I *might* have passed out of his, and nothing is left me but to pray the Father, and he will send the Comforter in some shape,—what, I know not.”

“Ah, Bertha, Bertha, your philosophy will drive me mad.”

“And Julia left me to—my tears—yes, my tears, and

here I sit, asking if Love, absolute Love, will suffice us. It seems to me that under his beautiful presence we should grow very calm ; and so we should, did not the desire for possession intervene. It is *my* lover, *my* wife, *my* husband, everywhere mine and thine ; not us and we ; or better still, the sublime I, meaning all.

* * * *

"Last night, I sat upon the stone bench in Underhill grove till past midnight. I am very lonely. My poor heart aches for companionship—yet it cannot be. Some fear me, all love and reverence me as a being unakin to themselves. The grief-worn come, and the afflicted seek unto me, little children bring me flowers and sweet words, and I caress them. They grow very gentle and loving in my presence. I sat hour after hour alone. Young men and maidens came to the grove. They did not see me in my little vine-covered nook, and only the murmur of tender voices came to my ear, broken by a silvery laugh at intervals. The fountain poured itself from basin to basin with a continuous flow ; the bat hovered through the gloom, and the fire-fly darted here and there. All seemed complete in being but myself. While I thus sat in half-discontent—no, no, not discontent, but weighed with unutterable loneliness—I knew that John was not far distant, and I knew by the many *hems* that he was making, he wished to speak with me. 'Come hither, John, my best friend,' I said. He took a seat, and waited a moment before speaking.

" 'Miss Bertha,' he said, 'it's impressed upon my mind

that you ought to read that letter of my sister Dorothy's. You said once, you were not strong enough. But God will help you, or take you, Miss Bertha,' and with a quick movement he left me.

"Coward, cowardly creature that I am. What does it matter whether I live or die ! whether I am sorrowful or glad ! I looked up at the eternal stars, so tranquil, and it seemed to me vast vistas opened, and I felt not the companionship of mortals, but of unseen worlds. I grew into a great joy. My heart was filled with awe, and all the eternities of the past, and all prophecies of the future hailed me as one known and beloved. While I thus exulted, I had a vision as of a noble youth leading forward a lovely child, saying, 'Bertha, be comforted.' Nathan Underhill, in his pristine beauty, it was ; and the child—* * * *

A whippoorwill sang in the grove near by. I hastened homeward. I knew that letter would reveal the one obscure spot in my history. Life or death. I held the cold vase in my hand. I grew cold as death. It seemed to me, at length, that it was not a cup of bronze whose touch chilled me to the heart ; but a serpent, writhing and hissing, and threatening. 'Spare me, good God !' I cried—'spare me—the possible ; oh, *the uncertain—blessed is it, for hope is at the base.* Let me not know that blood is upon my skirts. When the raven returned not to the Ark, its inmates were spared the agony of certain ill.'

Then it seemed to me the bronze grew furnace-hot in my

fingers, and wreathed flames choked my breath ; ghastly forms flitted by me, and the wainscots cracked and heaved as if invisible beings thronged to my retreat. The table swayed hither and thither, and faces grinned, and pointed, and lolled their tongues at me. Now will I put these ill shapes beneath my feet, I said, and I arose into the white light of a serene trust in God. Slowly I unsealed the casket, and read the scroll.

"Oh, it is well—divinely well. Every impulse that is beneficent is from God. We are led wondrously even by the finger of the good Father. Those that called themselves *friends*, have been most cruel to me ; but God has helped me. Cowardly was I—as if the dear, Infinite, All-loving, would leave me to snares and pitfalls. He answers not to our short-comings, but to our infinite desires ; and these are the sum of the soul.

"I opened the door and called for John True, and bade him read. The good John dropped upon his knees.

"'I knew it, Miss Bertha. I have said so in my heart again and again. Ah ! you must not stay with us, Miss Bertha ; you must not have a spot of cloud so big as a man's hand upon your sunshine, and you must leave me and Defiance—'

"'Yes, that she must, interposed a sharp voice,' and the thin face of Defy was at the door. 'It's a pretty sight—my husband on his knees before another woman.'

"John did not speak, but he lifted poor Defy as he would

have lifted a broom-stick, over the the door-sill, and long after I heard the steady flow of John's great, honest voice, broken in upon by the shrill tones and smothered sobs of his wife—'patience, patience, good husband.'

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Speak not! he is consecrated—

Breathe no breath across his eyes ;

Lifted up and separated,

On the hand of God he lies

In a sweetness beyond touching—held in cloistral sanctities.

E. B. BROWNING.

[FROM THE JOURNAL OF ERNEST.]

Sunday.—The day is one of exceeding beauty. The birds are jubilant in the sunshine, and the pair of robins which have for years built their nest in the elm which shades my window, are busy providing for their young. One of these robins many years ago, by some mischance, broke his wing ; but I do not see that he is less alert, or less joyous. Ah ! well would it be for us did we also cling to the beautiful, and ignore all that would mar this divine sense.

As Julia came from her room to join us on our way to church, I observed that her eyes were red and swollen with weeping. Willy looked into her face with a child's questioning, and then drew her down and kissed her very softly. He took her gloved hand between his two fat palms, and caressed it and kissed it many times. Bertha was seated in

the porch, with Lily at her knee, and the warm, gentle air, waved the vines to and fro, and gave a lovely light to each. Jane carried the babe, Perdita, in her bravest manner, spreading out her long, embroidered robes, so as to make a great show of them. Tiger shambled along beside us, and thus we entered the church.

A short prayer commenced the ceremonial, and amid the low play of music, the mothers of the village bore their babes forward to the altar. I had decided that my family should be last. I had given them no training, trusting to the sweet spontaneities of childhood, and knowing that Perdita was easily amused. First came forward Mrs. Pettingal. She bore her youngest hopeful in her lank arms, very much as a boy would carry a stick. I wished in my heart I might have been spared this child as the prelude to the beautiful rite. The Deacon and his wife, both lank and old, had countenances of a most forbidding aspect ; and when the former took the little, blue, skinny looking creature and held it up to receive the sacred drops, I half recoiled from my duty. The child seemed all angles, hard and bony, and stuck out feet and hands in a very unpleasant, threatening sort of manner. It looked as if the old age of all the Pettingals had come down upon its head. It was weazened and dry, and to my inner vision, not a creation of a few months, but of centuries. I fear me my benediction was not as cordial as it should have been. Other infants followed—fine little animals—fat, and screaming lustily, as if rejecting the sacrament.

My own family now gathered around me. I, a fatherless man, with my lovely group of children—I observed that Tiger came also among them. I took little Perdita in my arms, who smiled in my face, while I addressed my people, she holding on to my thumb, and looking about, and crowing as babies will. The congregation was hushed as death, and every eye eager to see my household. As I went on to speak of the misery and destitution to which these children might have been exposed, and as I blessed the good Father who had put it into my heart to save them, every eye was wet; and now, for the first time, Ernest Helfenstein had the hearts of all his people with him. I called the dear ones after my own name. As I sprinkled the water upon the brow of Perdita, she closed her pretty eyes, and then snapped them open with such a lovely babe-gee, that I kissed her tenderly before handing her to the arms of Jane. Next came Willy, led by Julia, with a sweet, downcast look. The boy bent his neck, and sobbed inwardly; and as I closed, he lifted up his head for a kiss. I felt my heart arrested as it were when Bertha approached with the beautiful Lily. Her face was without color, her step faint, and beneath her long veil I could see that a flood of tears poured from her eyes. “Call me Lily, dear father,” whispered the child, and she knelt down and clasped her pretty hands before her. Oh, how inexpressibly holy looked the child!—how natural did it seem that a ray of sunshine should struggle through the little window, and rest like a glory upon her beautiful head! Then, too, the attitude of Bertha—half-bent, with

one pale hand resting its fingers tenderly upon the shoulder of Lily, her long white veil falling to her feet, and her white robe stirred by the wind, she seemed like a pure spirit bending protectingly above her. I did not weep, but my lips broke forth in words of joy and praise, and I longed to send forth into all the world the spirit of pure love that rested then in the hearts of the people of Beech Glen.

Lily arose from her knees as I ceased, and stepping back a pace, leaned her little arm over the shoulder of Tiger. I had not observed him till now. There knelt the huge ungainly figure, but a gleam as of something holy was in his eyes, and I said, “Yes, Tiger, thou shalt receive the seal also. Thou shalt be owned as a part and parcel of our divine humanity, effaced, and bruised, and broken as thou art.”

Tiger wept and kissed my hand, and played in a moment more with the golden curls of Lily, as if she were the angel of his poor, dim world. I preached no sermon from any text that day; but I went from place to place. I rebuked one, and encouraged another. I spoke as if the soul of each one were visible to me, and each one hailed me as a father. Then I administered the sacrament not to a few elected ones, but to all—man, woman, child. We went home all of us, as if we had been at the very gates of heaven that day. Many of the people went with me, and we sang hymns, and we planned to make Beech Glen a garden of beauty—a home in which should be no more found envy, or jealousy, or uncharitableness. * * *

As the people went away, and the household was still, I sat long and calmly by the side of Julia. She was paler than I had ever seen her, and her tears flowed plentifully. "Julia," I said, "we love as few have ever loved in this world. Why will you make us both miserable by refusing to be mine? Ah! Julia, Beech Glen is too poor and too obscure for you: you covet fashion, adulation, and to secure these you will wreck your own and my happiness."

"No, Ernest; you mistake me. You will learn hereafter that I have done well. You will even think that Julia is not devoid of nobleness," she added, with a fresh burst of tears. I held her dear hand passive in mine, and we wept together. She seemed like a sweet sister, a lovely child, to me that night, and her little hand, scarcely larger than Lily's, and rich with jewels, brought the thoughts of Peris and Houris to my mind.

"We are two unreasonable children, Julia, and I will assert the rights of manhood, and compel you to be happy, and to remain and be my wife," I said.

Julia shook her head. "This is but an impulse, not a continuous life with us, Ernest; I have little in common with Beech Glen. I may find a world in which I also may do good, but not in the way that you and Bertha do it."

"I and Bertha!" Our names had never before been thus coupled, and the blood rushed to my face. Julia arose from her seat, pressed her lips to my forehead, and then left me, too self-conscious to arrest her. She placed a paper in my hands, from which I read the following:

We meet no more in silent bower—
No more in festive hall—
Nor when comes on the twilight hour,
And night-dews 'gin to fall;
The stars in silent beauty shine,
As once they shone on high,
When all thy blessed looks were mine,
Though only now thy *sigh*.

No bitter grief, I know, is thine,
Or else I might deplore;
The stream on which the stars may shine,
Sleeps tranquil as before.
The rose may smile on many a bird,
Though in her breast may lie,
Until the nightingale be heard,
Her sweetest breath, a *sigh*.

I shall be in thy deepest heart
A blessing and a pride—
We met to love, we met to part—
I was not for thy bride.
And now when holiest dreams arise,
My spirit will be nigh,
A tender light in those dear eyes,
And on thy lip a *sigh*.

I sat long holding the lines in my fingers, hardly conscious I did so. I heard the leaves quiver to the touch of the night-breeze, and the curtain swayed back and forth at the window, wafting to my senses the odors of the plants from

the garden ; but I did not heed the beauty of the external world, for within all was dark and despairing. I looked up to the stars, and it seemed to me that while I gazed upon them, they started into a wild dance—comets and planets, hurtled through the sky in tumultuous disorder, as if chaos had come again. My ears rang with bells, and cataracts foamed and roared therein. I tore open the collar at my neck, for I was oppressed and suffocated by the boiling of my blood.

"This is life," I said ; never fruition here—never just what we hope nor desire. The full cup quaffed, but enlarges the life for deeper draughts. We grasp the attainable, and in the very act our eyes look onward for the unattained. We tend to God—we centre in the Infinite, and thus do we spurn content in the finite.

Julia, thou art right. I love thee madly, but not wisely. Very beautiful to me will be thy memory. Thank God, I met no scorn, no unwomanly coldness from thee. Thou didst love also. I bless thee for it, loveliest, sweetest daughter of Eve. I bless thy great heart, while I condemn thy wayward will. Thou hast cut the Gordian knot for me. Alas ! alas ! how many knotted cords and bands bind together discordant elements, and there is no sharp sword nor daring hand to cut the knot !

Ah ! these unappeasable longings ; these vast and unquenchable aspirings are prototypes of the magnitude and elevation of the great future that awaits us. I tried to still the throbbing of my temples by writing ; but when I

had written one stanza I cast aside the pen, for the stringing of words seemed child's play to one who longed for the Titan upheaving of the solid earth to scale the battlements of the Unseen. I said—

There sure must be,
In some refulgent, far-off clime,
A place where we,
Robbed and defrauded here, in time
Shall garner there
The fruitage sown in sorrow here—
Blooms doubly fair,
Watered by many an earth-born tear.

My mood changed, and then I saw myself—not as I am to-night, fevered, wretched, and alone, but as in the future—weighed ever by a secret grief—looking upon the brave, beautiful world, as if a sun-beam had died out of it—a sweet tone of Paradise made dumb forever—a blossom fairer than Eden-blooms, borne off into darkness and death. And I wrote with the tears falling in showers upon my paper—verse after verse, depicting the grief and the despair of love. I did not see the egotism which assumed that the universe must be in gloom because I am miserable ; for I believe in my heart that grief and wrong are so at variance with the ultimate designs of the good Father, that even as Jesus taught, the whole harmonies of the heavenly spheres are augmented when even *one* creature is lifted into a benign, true life.

But, as I said, I was carried onward into the future of my grief, and addressed Julia in this wise :

There's not an hour of any day,
Nor dream of any night,
But brings to me thy form alway,
Though absent from my sight.
The passing winds thy name repeat—
The flower gives back thy face—
The wilding bird, with music sweet,
Revives some witching grace.

Oh, fairer than the lily fair;
Oh, sweeter than the rose;
The sun upon thy golden hair
Delighted to repose.
For me there is no sunlight now—
No bird nor any flower—
I only see thy marble brow,
And thy deserted bower.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Time shall teach thee what it is to grieve,
And to rejoice. FRANKLIN'S SOPHOCLES.

Mark how the widowed turtle, having lost
The faithful partner of her royal heart,
Stretches her feeble wings from coast to coast,
Hunts every path ; thinks every shade doth part
Her absent love and her ; at length, unsped,
She rebetakes her to her lonely bed,
And there bewails her everlasting widowhead.

QUARLES.

MANY weeks have transpired since I last wrote in my journal. Julia left me, and I was as one utterly desolate. I grew ill, and now I felt how exceedingly happy children can make a household. Willy came and sat by my side, and talked quite in a dear old man way, and Lily laid her little head upon my pillow, and moved a space aside to place Jenny, the doll, by my cheek. Willy held my hand, and Lily asked of my pains.

"Is it in your head or in your side, dear father," she questioned in a pretty solemn way.

"In neither, Lily."

"Well, tell me, please, where it is, and I will make gruel and tea for you."

"You cannot cure me, children," I said.

Lily put her head close to my ear, and whispered, "You are so sorry that Cousin Julia is gone."

"Are you not sorry also, Lily?"

"No; I do not love her, but Willy *does*."

"Why do you not love her?"

"Because the Child Angel always goes away when Julia comes; but it loves Cousin Bertha."

At this moment John True came in: he talked of the people of Beech Glen; but his great object seemed to be to cheer me, and to impress, as it were, upon my mind, that in our day women might live who were as holy, and noble, as the Prophetess of the Jews. I knew he meant Bertha.

"It makes a man more sure-like of another world," continued John, "to have seen one such woman."

"But such women have little human emotion," I said, doubtfully.

"It seems to me," continued John, "that we may cut off a piece from the head of a man or a woman, and you have, after slicing from the top part, a devil (I shuddered all over at this illustration, for the top of my head is very sensitive); and then you may go on, and leave the head of one beast after another till you have only the reptile. Now, take any head and add—add to it, and you make us nearer and nearer to the angels; but the reptile, and the devil, and the purely human are all there, and must have

a certain kind of action, more or less in proportion to their size-like; and they must love; or it may be, hate and sin, just as they are nearest to the good or the bad."

"That cannot be," I said; "the greatly human are not tempted as we weaker ones are tempted."

John fetched a long breath. "The great heart has the most to endure; it is weak and it is strong." I thought of Bertha, and I knew he thought of her also. I could see through the transparent plans of John. "Bertha is very noble," I said, in a low voice.

John fixed his eyes steadily upon my face for more than a minute, and then went on.

"Parson Helfenstein, did you ever see Miss Bertha before she came to Beech Glen?"

"I think not."

John drew close to my side. "Parson Helfenstein, I have watched you year after year. There is not a sign of falsehood about you; I can trust you, and I will trust you. God has made you for one another just as much as ever he made our souls to love the truth, and our eyes to love the light. I will speak."

I arose in my bed, for Bertha was in my thought like an inspiring angel.

"Yes, Parson Helfenstein, I will speak. Do you remember when you were at the Sault St. Marie? What did you see there?"

"Heavens and earth! It was Bertha. A thousand times has the soul-deep voice of Bertha, her heavenly

and divine patience reminded me of something which I in vain sought to recall. I see it all now. I remember an Indian wigwam—the awe of the savages. I remember a man and woman were there whom I scarcely noticed, so absorbed was I in that strange vision. A beautiful girl I saw with long hair, white as snow, and totally blind. She sang holy hymns, and replied to my words in a sweet unearthly voice. I fell upon my knees and prayed fervently, and wept also—and that was Bertha !”

“ Yes, it was Bertha. Her friends were unkind—my sister and I took her to this wild, solitary region till her strength came back. Her hair grew white, her eyes blind with weeping;” and John wept freely at the recital.

“ John,” I said, “ come, build a bower room for Bertha, here, opening to my library. Make it spacious, arch it, and alcove it ; make it like the sanctuary of a saint—with cross and niche for prayer ; make it lovely as a dream, with white columns and bath of marble, and interlacing vines, and tinge of rose blush—fit for a beautiful woman.”

“ But, Bertha”—interposed John.

“ Say nothing, my good, true friend,” I replied ; “ build me a bower, and it may be that Bertha will reject me as did Julia. But there is no prophecy without its field for accomplishment. Some fair bride, in some time to come will rest in the bower we shall build, if not that of Ernest Helfenstein.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

And down the river's dim expanse,
Like some bold seer in a trance,
Seeing all his own mischance,
Did she look to Camelot ;
Or when the moon was overhead,
Came two young lovers lately wed ;
“ *I am half sick of shadows,*” said

The Lady of Shalott.

TENNYSON.

Oh, I see the crescent promise of my spirit hath not set,
Ancient founts of inspiration well through all my fancy yet.

IBID.

THE journal of Bertha records the absence of Julia and the illness of Ernest.

“ I have sent him flowers from the garden, and have taken charge of the children,” she says. “ I told Defiance he was ill, to which she replied :

“ ‘ I don't wonder ! He got dead in love with that Miss Julia. I know it ; I saw it.’

“ ‘ Well, what then, Defiance ?’ I replied.

“ ‘ Why, he ought to be ashamed of it ; he, a minister of the gospel, ought to be above such vanity. Pretty wife she'd make for a minister ; titrivating about, belaced and

bejewelled, ready to kill. No, Miss Bertha, *I look upon your opinions as little better than blasphemy*, but you'd make a better wife for the clergy than Miss Julia. A clergyman ought to marry to please his parish, more than to gratify his own carnal pleasures.'

" 'Oh, Defiance ; he swears to love in the marriage contract, and, ten to one, he couldn't love the woman who would please the parish.'

" 'That only goes to show he's sold under sin, and not fit to preach repentance to others. There is Miss Mehitable Dusenbury, a nice, pious girl—one that prays a good hour in our private meetings, as I've told Parson Helfenstein with my own lips ; for many's the time my knees have ached when she's got through. Now, Hetty would a' had him ; I know she would. Perhaps he'll have her, now this Miss Julia's gone. And there's Sophronia Hutchings, with a little squint of the eye, it's true ; but that oughtn't to be an objection to a pious mind. I've known her to near about go crazy trying to write verses, because the Parson does ; but to my mind, a parson might be better employed. And as for Susan Lincoln, she wore her bow the pulpit side of her bonnet, and jined the church—all out of liking for the Parson ; and then, Lord bless you, he talked to her more like a father than a young man of thirty or thereabouts.'

"I couldn't refrain from a laugh as Defiance rattled on, all the time braiding Jane's hair, and binding ribbons about the ends, with a strength that would set at naught the wear and tear of at least one day of obstropelous girlhood. I

laughed more merrily than is my wont, as these gaunt, lack-a-daisical, and uncouth spinsters appeared, one after another, to my mind's eye, leaning on the arm of the sensitive Ernest.

"I drew on my India-rubber gloves, and donned my garden costume, leaving poor Defiance to her plans, while I dressed the vines around my lattice, removing the blighted leaves, and supporting the trailing branches. I find the wrens have built their pretty miracle-seeming 'procreant cradle' amid the twining branches of the rose. I am greatly pleased at this. Already the robins and the sparrows contend with my doves for their moiety of crumbs ; the stone vase at the end of the balcony, daily filled with fresh water, arrests the attention of many a wilding bird who hovers lightly above it, and then perches upon the rim to drink—anon he plunges in and laves his delicate wings, and flies again to the desert, where beats a heart glad at his coming. I watch his going with tearful eyes, but his beauty has made me glad, and his song vibrated upon my heart—what would I more ? Do I envy the happiness of God's creatures ? Yes ; for I am greater than they. I am infinitely better adapted to happiness ; and yet I sit in my solitary bower, making an hundred hearts glad, while mine own is desolate.

"Ah me ! I will to my garden. As I passed along, I saw the pious Hetty at the door of the parsonage, with a square package, nicely covered with a white napkin—something, undoubtedly, to tempt the appetite of the Pastor. Jellies, and broths, and tarts, are lavished upon the good Ernest ; his heart must be harder than the nether mill-stone.

if he resist so much kindness. Even Defiance has contributed her stock—no doubt preliminary to recommending a *suitable* wife for the Pastor. I think I hear her little, sharp voice, dilating upon the charms and graces of Hetty, and see poor, patient Ernest, trying to look polite and interested. Ah! we *do* need a stout individualism to face this world and its dull, intermeddling people. It seems to me, one of the greatest annoyances to which a manly clergyman is subjected, must be this everlasting coddling from the women. And yet I don't know but it is agreeable to them; were it otherwise, of course it would fall into disuse. Women treat the minister as if he were a big boy, to be wheedled and conciliated through the palate. The geraniums and verbenas create a wilderness of sweets about me—but I am not content. I am alone—my beauty will fade—my life die out; and hereafter there will be a procession bearing the solitary spinster away to her lone grave, and she will be forgotten. I know not why I should stay here, except that all places are alike to the soul—which 'is its own place.' Were I less intellectual—less individual—I should go to a convent, and end a dawdling life in unmeaning ceremonial. But as it is, I must toil in the best field open to me—which is here.

"Meseems it were pleasant to wait the coming of the beloved; to feel the pulse quicken as his footsteps awakened the silent echoes—to cull blossoms for his eye—to be joyously beautiful because he is joyous through our joy—to read the thought afar off, and reply thereto in silence more lovely than words. The one who answers to our thought is ours.

Ernest penetrates to the very soul of my speech, and answers thereto. He grows a lovely, inspired child-man, when in my presence, and he does not know that only love can effect this. Not for worlds would I interpret this to him. Were it the true, essential life to him, he would read its tokens—till that time comes I can wait. It may never come in this sphere of being—I can still wait.

"Ernest is Hamlet-like; princely in his honor, lovely in his affections, reflective more than executive. He looks for some turn in events—some God-send interposition that shall bring about what he desires, and thus exonerate him from action. Ah! life is to do, as well as to be. We are the instruments of Fate, and Fate is but human Will. What we will is ours. We have but to seek and we find; knock, and the infinite is opened to us. Nothing is hidden from the searcher.

"I remember Ernest's reading of Hamlet. It was far finer than anything I ever witnessed upon the stage, and the passage, —

'Do you not come your tardy son to chide,
That lapsed in *fume and passion*? Let's go by
The important acting of your dread command?
O, say!"

brought the tears to his eyes.

"'Do you adopt the reading of Collier?' I asked, observing he substituted 'fume' for the old reading of 'time.'"

"'I do in this passage, most decidedly. The Time that elapsed was not very great; but Hamlet, incapable of sud-

den action, called to a deed of vengeance from which his delicate sensibilities, and intellectual tendencies revolted, strives to rouse up a foreign and extraneous element, in part real, in part feigned, to render him equal to the task enjoined him. His madness is a constitutional infirmity of will, which readily verges into real madness, when a weak faculty is unduly taxed. Hamlet is the greatest of Shakspeare's plays, and one which only a pure mind can fully appreciate. I sometimes think Hamlet is a sort of a clergyman,' he added, with a slight laugh, 'we are so apt to 'fume' as he did; when it would be more manlike to achieve. It is one of the few plays which our profession can appreciate quite as well as the play-goer.'

" 'Then you are opposed to the theatre,' I replied.

" 'No, but it is forbidden our profession; and although I would sometimes gladly go, I do not; because public opinion is against it.'

" 'Ah! Ernest, is it well to let *'I dare not, wait upon I would?'* It seems to me the very province of the preacher is to *make* public opinion—not to follow it; to *lead*—not be led. The masses will go to the theatre; to me, it seems an engine, not second to the pulpit in moral force. Give this over to the degraded, and the unprincipled, and it is a stream of never-ending corruption. Let the cultivated, the good, be there to approve or condemn; let the virtuous act there as public censors; and the actors would be compelled to reform. Vicious, and corrupting plays would be banished; and the public taste demand new and

healthful aliment. The clergy have written plays, but not always those of highest taste or morals; as witness, one or more of Maturin's. In Europe, the ripest scholars and most distinguished *littérateurs* take the office of Stage Managers; while in our country, half-educated foreigners, with their transatlantic prejudices and predilections, or men of little or no culture from among ourselves, occupy a position demanding the highest moral and artistic insight. It seems to me that wherever our humanity most congregates, under whatever aspect, there our clergy should be panoplied in the purity, and the heart-singleness of him who went about doing good—his white skirts unsoiled by the presence of publicans and sinners.'

" Ah me! I recall so much that Ernest has said, so much that he has quickened in my own mind, that my life is becoming little more than a reflex of his. And so it may be—marriage to me would be a sort of moral, intellectual, and individual death. And yet, in the true marriage, it is not necessarily so. In most of marriages the parties strike a balance, and produce a sort of average between them, by which neither is of very great import. I closed my eyes just now and I found myself in a reverie, such as come to women, married or single. Dreams! Dreams of the Ideal, which cling to the woman-heart till the world renders it utterly callous—and then, God help her; angels fold their white wings, and glide silently from the threshold.

" I, a solitary spinster, imagined a lover. I will not tell whose form he took. I said:—We are unlike in our modes

of thought ; and yet we are each truth-seeking and truth-loving, and therefore do we harmonize. He has better defined lines ; I, more perspective. He is fond of abstract reasoning ; I, of spiritual insight. He tends to the real, I, to the ideal ; and thus we never weary. I have always something to learn of him—he, of me. When he is grave, I grow merry ; when he is melancholy, I spiritualize ; but if he weeps, I weep also ; but always with more hopefulness than he, and my tears are sooner dried, for I am the *comforter*.

“I never watch his, my lover’s, mood ; but I fit into it, unknowing the how or why. He watches mine more. He sometimes looks anxiously at me—he is disturbed at my calm ; but I raise my eyes to his—I smile ; I know not how it is on the face, but in my heart it is sunshine. I put my hand in his—he covers it with kisses. He folds me to his heart as if I were a portion of his own soul. *I do not know whether the words uttered are mine or his.* I do not know whether the eyes are his or mine, or God’s own. I do not know whether I am child or woman, or a thought only—a sweet, delicious thought, reposing in its own singleness of joy.

“I do not think of marriage. The bridal pair should be looked upon reverently—they should receive beautiful gifts. The Jew was exempt from military duty a whole year after marriage. Moses had a dim shadowing of the ease, the almost lavish luxury and beauty which should invest the marriage of love. Chastely beautiful should be the bridal

bower. The married pair may be humble in life, toilsome and uncultivated ; but true love is an apt pupil. He is modest and reverent, and delights in the fresh blossom, the snowy veil, the sweet seclusion, and lavendered comeliness. The rose is upon the pillow, the flower-vase upon the table, the crucifix suggesting prayer, and the saintly beatitude inviting praise.

“Thus far had I written—there is a step upon the threshold ; I know it is his—only his. I blush—I tremble ; Ernest, it is thou—*thou my lover*—and the tears gushed to my eyes. Lie thou there, my eagle quill. I may never need thee more ; but I will keep thee, brave pinion, for thou hast buoyed me up when the shadows of the valley lay low upon me. Record this song of gladness, oh ! eagle plume, and then thy task is done :

DOST REMEMBER.

“Dost remember in the sunshine
How we loitered one bright day,
While the shimmering, green woodbine
Kissed the fountain in its play?
And the roses, over-flushing,
Scattered crimson all along ;
And my cheek too pale for blushing,
Hid itself the leaves among?

“Dost remember in the nooning,
Deftly still the fountain played
Over moss-rocks, idly crouching
To the violets in the shade?

'Ah!' the rock is but repeating,
 Some old babble o'er and o'er—
 'Give us two,' I cried, 'a greeting
 Lovers never had before.'

"Dost remember, half in scorning,
 Thus I answered back the brook?
 For the blush since early morning
 Gave my cheek too bright a look,
 And my laugh came soft and slowly
 In the shadow of the woods;
 And despite of pride, more lowly
 Was the fitting of my moods.

"Dost remember, thy replying
 To that mockery of mine?
 Oh, thy voice was like the sighing
 Of the fountain and the vine;
 And the sweetest words were spoken
 In that calm and lovely dell—
 Sweetest silence, sweetest broken
 By the words, 'I love thee well.'

"Dost remember, how I trembled,
 Nor upraised to thine my eyes?
 Knowing well that I dissembled
 In my meaningless replies;
 For thy hand with slightest pressure
 Touched my own like mystic spell,
 And the fountain poured its treasure;
 But to me it silent fell.

"Dost remember thy dear saying,
 'Love that's told lacks one best token :
 What is ours is past the praying—
 Sweetest words are left unspoken?'
 Thus we two became a power,
 Holding earth as at our feet—
 Brook, and bird, and leafy bower,
 Silent grow when lovers meet.

"Dost remember that still gloaming,
 And the deeper life we bore—
 How the woodland since the morning
 Grew more solemn than before?
 Deepest meanings overflowing
 From the mystic spring's etern;
 But the sweetest was the knowing
 Thou shouldst leave me—to *return*."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

* * * that thou art happy, owe to God;
That thou continuest such, owe to thyself.

MILTON.

[FROM THE JOURNAL OF ERNEST.]

AFTER my interview with John, I arose, ashamed of the illness which was in the mind—not body. It was the sun-dering of cherished hopes which left me supine and bereft of that relation to the beautiful which is the base of our vitality. Now a new star had arisen in my soul; angels went and came with new songs, and I longed to go forth in quest of the object which had unknowingly reigned in my inmost heart.

It was early June. I remembered how lovely, a year before, Julia looked, as the summer came. Thou art indeed noble and true, fairest of the daughters of Eve, I said; but Bertha is the daughter of a new era—her foot may have been defiled with dust, but her eyes penetrate to the divine. The thorn hath pierced her brow—the gall hath touched her lips; she hath bent beneath the Cross, but lo! she is transfigured before us. Thus did I talk to myself, and entered the dome where Bertha instructed my people. Lily rested at her feet—Tiger, upon the door-step, listened

to the soft flow of her voice; and maidens and matrons, with needle in hand, learned much that women should learn from the lips of woman only.

"Come in, my friend," said Bertha, extending her hand to me. The hour for closing the readings had arrived, and soon the little sanctuary contained only Lily, and Bertha, and Ernest.

We were all silent. Bertha's silence was eloquent as words. She stood, and her attitude was eloquent also. A sculptor would have chosen her for a new divinity—the expression of a new revelation of womanhood. Lily went out in chase of a butterfly, and I approached the spot where Bertha stood. She blushed—she stepped aside; I thought of the lovely Genevieve of Coleridge. She divined my thoughts, for she looked into my eyes, and read my soul there. Suddenly Bertha raised hers upward, and the slight blush I had first discerned, faded to a marble whiteness. "Do not speak, Bertha," I said "do not speak; you are the vision of Sault St. Marie. You are the white-haired, blind vision that has haunted me for years."

Bertha's eyes fell softly upon my face, "Ernest," she said, "I have borne my Cross. I have pressed in secret the thorn to my side; I dared not face till now my whole destiny. But now—now I hide nothing from the light—nothing from my own soul. Lily—" she was silent.

Then that resemblance, which so often had puzzled and perplexed me, was at once explained. She gave me the letter of the faithful Dorothy, to read, who had sickened and

died on her way, after having sought and found the child so long hidden from its mother.

Thus we talked and went forth instinctively, seeking the sweet haunts of nature, where the waters steal softly onward, and the flickering leaves work double spells upon the face of beauty. I know not how I told my love—if ever told. I only know that Bertha's dear hand was in mine, that her tears fell heavenly soft upon my shoulder, *and I did not think of Julia*. My life was full.

Ah! to adore beauty—lovely in itself, yet ever receding from the material—to be one in thought with a mind our equal—our superior it may be, yet wholly womanly in its tone—to be loved, and to love from the depths of sentiment, where each have a blending of that passionate enthusiasm which vitalizes and exalts the life, this is to love truly, and with the foot upon the threshold of the Eternal; and thus do I and the heavenly Bertha love.

It is many weeks since this assurance became mine, and every day I find some new aspect of life, more noble and more beautiful, in Bertha, than I had hitherto conceived. How delicately did she say, "Ernest, you are an admirer of Milton. He thought it not seemly to marry even a widow. Wait, think; marriage is too holy, too lovely to be lightly assumed, or to leave upon it even the possible of discontent."

To my urgent request, she at length allowed it to be known that we were betrothed. Indeed, we made the ceremony public after the German mode, that our position might be held the more sacred in the eyes of our people.

We were betrothed in the month of roses. It had been

agreed that Lily (now doubly dear to us both) and Willy, should usher the procession to the church of Beech Glen. The people were now all one in heart with their pastor. The little edifice was garlanded with flowers, and all along children and youth lavished blooms upon our pathway.

One thing was most noticeable. As Bertha came forth to meet me, she was clad in a rose-colored robe, sprigged with gold, and a white veil hid her face from me. It was the vision I had so often seen—the hidden face also. Softly Bertha put aside the veil, and now the face was no longer hidden.

What of Julia? does the dear reader ask? Julia's tears were soon dried. Her marriage *preceded* that of Ernest, although she had the work all before her—a lover to win, as well as wealth, and fashion to gratify. Her marriage realized her own idea of Beauty and the Beast, for never was a rich, loving soul, more uncouthly set. Julia declares she is delighted that nobody will envy her her husband, while they do envy her carriage, her velvets, and diamonds.

She writes long letters to Beech Glen, in which she does not fail to laugh at her former "terrible hallucination." The truth is, she says, "a poet makes the unreal seem so like truth, that we lend ourselves to it without questioning. There is a charm about Beech Glen, that quite bewitched me. I'll not venture foot upon it again till I am old, grey headed, and miserable—which means *never*; for a woman is a fool to ever count more than twenty-five. And nobody wears grey hairs since the invention of dye; and as for misery, I cannot for the life of me stay put in that line"

"I write verses for the magazines—perfect love verses, thanks to you, Ernest—all about unfortunate attachments and broken hearts, and I declare to you I shed real tears while I write them. I have wet a half dozen pocket-handkerchiefs over a single poem. I am growing very popular, for the public favors misery. My husband, dear, good soul, said, this morning, 'Why, Julia, I fear you are not happy ;' and you should have seen how I assured him to the contrary. The world is stupid enough, I am sure, and I should really be miserable in it, were I not able to write—but a few lines of poetry, a few tears dropped upon the paper, quite sets me up again. It seems very nice and romantic to have a *secret sorrow*, whether real or imaginary."

And so Julia lives, as thousands of women do, by crushing out the heart—by living the surface of things ; fearful to encounter the deep, earnest revelations of life, lest they should conflict with the gay ease, and smooth, unmeaning, routine of fashionable life.

"Content to dwell in decencies forever,"

they close their eyes to the sweet and ennobling teachings of nature ; and, like the deaf adder, that "will not listen to the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely," they will not listen to the beautiful, universe-pervading voices of Eternal Truth.

THE END.