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THE

BRIDE OF LLEWELLYN.

BY

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AUTHOR OF "THE MISSING BRIDE; OR, MIRIAM, THE AVENGER," "A BEAUTIFUL FRIEND,"
"HOW HE WON HER," "A NOBLE LORD," "TRIED FOR HER LIFE," "DESERTED WIFE,"
"CHANGED BRIDES," "LADY OF THE ISLE," "BRIDAL EVE," "CRUEL AS THE GRAVE,"
"THE WIDOW'S SON," "ALLWORTH ABBEY," "LOST HEIRESS," "FAMILY DOOM,"
"THE ARTIST'S LOVE," "GIPSY'S PROPHECY," "HAUNTED HOMESTEAD,"
"FALLEN PRIDE," "VICTOR'S TRIUMPH," "THE CURSE OF CLIFTON,"
"SPECTRE LOVER," "MAIDEN WIDOW," "FORTUNE SEEKER,"
"THE TWO SISTERS," "FAIR PLAY," "FATAL MARRIAGE,"
"PRINCE OF DARKNESS," "THE BRIDE'S FATE,"
"MOTHER-IN-LAW," "THREE BEAUTIES," "INDIA,"
"DISCARDED DAUGHTER," "WIFE'S VICTORY,"
"LOVE'S LABOR WON," "RETRIBUTION,"
"THE CHRISTMAS GUEST," "VIVIAN,"
"THE LOST HEIR OF LINLITHGOW."

'Tis a tale of tears and sins,
Of love's glory and its gloom,
In an old Hall, it begins,
And it ends —

OWEN MEREDITH.

PHILADELPHIA:
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OF NEW YORK,
THIS BOOK IS INSCRIBED,
AS A
TRIBUTE OF ESTEEM AND AFFECTION,
FROM HER FRIEND,
THE AUTHOR.

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THE BRIDE OF LLEWELLYN.

CHAPTER I.

THE TRAITRESS.

All treachery could devise was wrought
 Against them—letters robbed and read;
 Snares hid in smiles; betrayal bought,
 And lies imputed to the dead.—*Owen Meredith.*

OCCASIONALLY, once in a century or so, there appears in this world a being in the human female form of whom it may be said, that if we did not know her to be a woman, we should believe her to be a devil.

The records of historical biography have shown us a Lucretia Borgia, a Catherine di Medici, and a Countess of Essex. And the records of criminal jurisdiction have exposed to us a Brinvilliers, and a Lafarge, and Schölen.

If it were not for the records of history and jurisdiction, we should not believe that such monsters could exist in this world of ours.

I have purposely alluded to these evil notorities to prepare the minds of my readers to contemplate, without incredulity, a woman as subtle, as cruel, and as remorseless as the worst of those that I have named.

And this is her story.

General Griffith Llewellyn was a Virginian gentleman of Welsh extraction, and of high rank, great wealth, and wide fame; he lived in a stately mansion, owned broad planta-

tions, and ruled over many negroes. He had won immortal glory in the wars of his country, and had retired from the service late in life, and married an old sweetheart, and settled down upon his beautiful country-seat, "Kader Idris" (which was named after a famous place in his ancestral country), and situated in one of the most mountainous counties in Virginia, there to enjoy domestic happiness in the "bosom of his family," and to repose "upon his laurels."

Only one child blessed this late union—Gladys, "sole daughter of his house." They gave her this name because she was the delight of their lives. And they loved her with an idolatry that only old parents can bestow on the child of their age. Bright, buoyant, beautiful, she seemed to bring sunshine, summer, and joyousness, wherever she came.

Gladys had one occasional companion—Arthur Powis, the son of one of General Llewellyn's brother officers who was slain in battle, and who, with his dying breath, confided the orphan boy to his chosen bosom friend.

General Llewellyn proved faithful to the trust. He took Arthur to his own home; bade his wife receive the boy as a son; and bade his baby daughter love the lad as a brother. When Arthur was about fourteen years of age the General's influence procured the youth an appointment as a midshipman at the Naval Academy of Annapolis—from which he had the privilege of returning twice a year, at midsummer and at Christmas, to spend his holidays at Kader Idris.

Now who can tell when or how love first springs up between a youth and a maiden? No one. Not even either of the young creatures themselves.

At first Arthur's pleasure in going down to Kader Idris at midsummer and at Christmas, was simply that of the school-boy returning home for the holidays. And the delights that he anticipated were only those of country freedom and rural sports—in summer, boating, fishing, riding, etcetera; in winter, hunting, skating, sleighing, and-so-

forth; and, at all seasons, gormandizing, which is a natural and excusable passion in a healthy, growing boy, who has a good deal of flesh and bone to make before he can become a strong, athletic man. And especially is it so in a boy coming from the short commons of a public school to the lavish abundance of a planter's house. And so, at first, all Arthur's enjoyment of his visits to Kader Idris was "of the earth, earthy." And so gradual was the change that came over his nature, that he did not know exactly when it was that all his anticipations of pleasure in holidays spent in the country concentrated in the one prospect of meeting Gladys.

And as for Gladys?

Why similarly, at first, all her pleasure in looking forward to the coming of her boy-friend, was simply that of a solitary child expecting the arrival of a playful companion. And all the delight she anticipated in his visits was that of sharing with him her mountain-home and rustic pastimes, and taking part with him in the larger liberty and rougher sports of his boyhood—in the summer's boating, fishing, and riding, and in the winter's hunting, skating, and sleighing. And with her, also, the change that stole over her heart came so slowly and gently, that she never knew when or how it was that all her imaginations of happiness in holiday times brightened into the one heavenly vision of meeting Arthur.

It was thus that their spirits moved simultaneously and in unison; and before they knew it they were one in heart and mind.

The discovery was made in this way:

When the girl was fifteen years of age and the youth was eighteen, he was appointed fourth midshipman on the United States sloop-of-war Neptune, which was under orders to sail for the Pacific on a three years' cruise.

Before going to Portsmouth to join his ship, he came down to Kader Idris to take leave of his friends.

Three years to these young creatures seemed like three eternities, of which of course the first one could never end. In their despair at the thought of separation their love revealed itself. And so, when Arthur had raved and vowed and protested like Romeo, and Gladys had wept and blushed and promised like Juliet, he jumped up and rushed away to her father in the library, and standing before him flushed, trembling, but resolute, he saluted him as he would have done his captain on the quarter-deck and said:

"If you please, sir, I love Gladys dearly."

"It would be odd if you didn't, after all these years of companionship, especially as everybody loves Gladys; but why take the trouble to come and tell me this?" said the old gentleman, without looking up from his newspaper.

"Because, if you please, sir, Gladys loves me—a little—also," said the boy, modestly.

"All right; I told her to love you; we all love you, my lad; but why come to me about it now?"

"Because, sir, if you please—we wish to—GET MARRIED."

"To do—WHAT?" thundered the old gentleman, dropping his newspaper and staring at the youth. "*What* is it you want to do?"

"To get married, if you please, sir," answered Arthur, flushing deeply.

"WH-EW!" cried the general, rolling up his eyes in astonishment, and then bursting into a loud laugh of derision. "Wh-ew! Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha! Ho-ho-ho-ho-ho! *When* would you like to get married, pray? Next week? to-morrow? to-day? this minute?" he demanded, to the great confusion of the poor young suitor.

Arthur, though very much abashed by this ridicule of his pretensions, was withal so conscious of the depth and strength of his love for the beautiful Gladys, that he plucked up a manly little spirit of his own, and answered firmly, though respectfully:

"Yes, sir, if you please, next week, to-morrow, to-day,

(this minute, or as soon as Gladys will consent and you approve!)"

"Humph!" said the old gentleman, staring at the youth; "it is easy to see that if you do not illustrate American history by brilliant naval achievements, it will not be for the want of self-confidence—I might say self-conceit."

"I do hope that I am not conceited, sir. I know that I am not worthy of the great boon I ask you to bestow on me; but I shall strive to become so," said the youth, earnestly.

"Bosh! you little midge. You are nothing but a baby. You talk of marriage! Bosh! I say. Go, spin your top! Go, fly your kite! Go, pitch marbles!" exclaimed the old gentleman, with growing impatience.

"Sir," modestly suggested the "baby," "I am in my nineteenth year, and I am an officer in the United States Navy."

"Bosh! I tell you. Nineteen and a middy! Why, sir, I was fifty and a major-general before I even thought of marriage!" growled the old man.

The youth turned pale. His look of consternation was almost ludicrous. The idea of waiting until he should be fifty years old and a commodore, and marrying at that fossil age, was simply appalling. However, he managed to control himself, and to answer, with tolerable calmness:

"Sir, I am willing to wait any reasonable length of time, with the hope of having Gladys at the end of my probation. So, if you would but sanction our engagement, we should be satisfied. Will you do this?"

"No, sir, no—assuredly not! There are objections more insurmountable than those of your extreme youth and subordinate rank."

"If you please, sir, what objections?" faltered the poor over.

"Inequality, my lad, for one."

"Inequality, sir?" repeated the youth, flushing.

"Inequality, sir," reiterated the old gentleman, with emphasis.

"I beg your pardon, sir; but will you be good enough to tell me in what this great inequality is supposed to consist? Certainly not in age, or in station, or in personal attributes."

"Nor in folly, nor in vanity, nor in heedlessness! In all these things you are about equal, I should judge by the present proceedings. But you are unequal in point of fortune! Gladys Llewellyn is the heiress of millions—you, of nothing!" said the general, bluntly.

"I am sorry for that, sir; but it is not my fault; and I know if she had nothing, and I had millions, I would gladly give them all to her," replied the boy, naively.

"Yes—but you see you have not got them, and she has. You have nothing but your middy's pay," growled the old man.

"I have my prospects of promotion, sir," replied the youth.

"Oh! prospects of promotion. Prospects of a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow! Prospects of a soap-bubble! You'll be gray before you are a lieutenant; bald before you are a commander, and decrepid before you are a captain!"

"Not if there should be a war with England, sir. There would be very rapid promotion in that case."

"Here's a pretty cut-throat villain! Willing that there should be war between two great nations, and millions of lives sacrificed, that he may be the more rapidly promoted, and marry his sweetheart the sooner."

"I am sure I did not say any thing like that, sir!" exclaimed the astonished boy.

"I am sure you did! And I am sure that the man who set his neighbor's house on fire that he himself might roast his own eggs, was an angel of fair dealing compared to you."

"Indeed, sir——"

"Stuff! nonsense! balderdash! Let me hear no more of this folly. I was your father's friend, Arthur; and for his sake I wish to be yours; but let me never hear any more of your pretensions to the hand of Gladys! I am willing that you should consider her as a little sister, and in no other character, toward yourself; for in no other relation can she stand to you."

"But—under other circumstances, sir?" pleaded the distressed boy.

"Under no other circumstances whatever! So never let me hear of this again."

"Never! sir?"

"Never, Arthur! Now leave me."

With the deepest sigh, the disappointed youth turned and went out of the room, to report his failure to Gladys.

And the old gentleman took up his newspaper, and settled himself in his arm-chair, saying, triumphantly:

"Well, I fancy I have put a pretty effectual stop to *that* folly! Marry Gladys, indeed! The fellow is mad! I would see him at the deuce before he should do it—as well as I loved his father."

So far, so well. But General Llewellyn, unfortunately for his consistency, arrived at this conclusion without the help of two of his able counsellors, namely, Gladys and her mother. Gladys, who would not have Arthur's heart broken at any price; and her mother, who would not have Gladys crossed.

Even while the general sat congratulating himself on his firmness in having exercised his authority, the rebellion against that authority was on foot.

Arthur went immediately from the presence of General Llewellyn to that of Gladys.

Throwing himself down on the sofa beside her, with a look of despair, he exclaimed:

"Oh, Gladys! Gladys! it is all over. Your father refuses his consent to our engagement, and forbids me even

to hope! and—in short—my heart is broken, my spirit is embittered, and I wish we were both dead!”

“No, no, no,” objected Gladys; “not at all; I don’t see it. Tell me what he said.”

Arthur related all that had passed in the interview between the general and himself, and ended by declaring himself infinitely miserable and earnestly desirous of death.

“No, now; don’t talk so. I will tell you what we will do.”

“What—what?”

“We will go and tell mother. *She* will make it all right.”

“Oh, you good, clever, darling Gladys, to think of that! To be sure she will. Come along—let us go directly.”

“Stop! now I think of it, I had better go by myself. I can do more alone.”

“Yes; I think so, too. Then go, Gladys—dear, best, beautiful Gladys, go! and make haste back.”

Gladys went in search of her mother, and found the old lady conveniently seated in her arm-chair, at the window of the back parlor, engaged in knitting.

Gladys, like a sly puss as she was, cast herself in her mother’s arms, and burst into tears, to begin with.

“Why, Gladys, darling; what’s the matter with my pet?” inquired her mother, in alarm.

“Oh—oh—oh!” sobbed the girl.

“Dear, dear, dear! What is the matter, Gladys? You frighten me, so.”

“Oh—oh—oh!”

“For heaven’s sake, Gladys! What is it, my love?”

“Oh—oh—oh!”

“This—this is dreadful. Tell your mother, my darling. Tell your own mother, who loves you a thousand times more than her own life. Tell her, Gladys.”

Then the whole story came out; her lover’s suit, and her father’s “cruelty.”

“And, oh, mother, poor fellow! to think he is going off, to be gone so long that it seems to be forever. And it is

so cruel to send him away unhappy. And if he goes away so, I shall break my heart, mother; for I love him so dearly!” with a fresh burst of tears.

“Well, well, my darling—there, don’t cry. It shall all be right. There, dry your eyes, now. Your father loves you, and would not make you miserable for the world, and you know it. And if he sees that your heart is really set on this young man, he will withdraw his refusal and consent to your engagement; for really, the youth is a good youth, with not a fault in the world, as far as I know——”

“Oh, mamma, dear mamma! thank you!—thank you a hundred times for saying that of him; for it is true, he is good!”

“Yes; I think so. Well, and he is at least a gentleman by birth, education, and profession.”

“Yes—yes.”

“And as his proposal is not so very unreasonable——”

“Oh, no, mamma, not unreasonable. He only wants us to be engaged, so that he may be sure of having me some time or other, if he and I should both live. And it is such a pity that he cannot have *that* to comfort him on his long, lonely voyage.”

“He shall have it, my dear. There, don’t cry any more.”

“But my father?”

“I will talk to your father, my darling. He is neither unreasonable nor unkind, and he will make it all right.”

“*You* will make it all right, darling mamma,” exclaimed Gladys, embracing her mother in an excess of gratitude and joy, and then bounding off to convey the good news to Arthur.

Mrs. Llewellyn went off to find the general. The great argument she used with him to effect her purpose was the true one.

“Gladys’ heart is set on Arthur. If we send him away disappointed and hopeless, she will be wretched and despairing.”

General Llewellyn objected, argued, coaxed; then growled, swore, and—yielded.

That night the young lovers were made inexpressibly happy by the consent of the parents to the immediate betrothal. It was arranged that the marriage should take place upon the return of Arthur from his three years' cruise, and that the young pair should make their permanent home at Kader Idris, so that the only daughter should not be separated from her doting parents, and the young wife should not be without protection during the professional absences of her husband. This arrangement was highly satisfactory to all parties concerned.

"You see, father," said Mrs. Llewellyn, addressing the general, "that this is just as it should be. Arthur is, under all the circumstances, the very best husband we could have for our girl. We know him; he is a gentleman, a good soul, and he loves us as well as her; and he will be contented to stop with us and leave her with us; and so we need not be parted from her; whereas, if we were to marry her to a wealthy man, he, the wealthy one, would be for carrying her away from us, and that would break our hearts. So you see how every thing happens for the best."

The general growled an admission that if Gladys were really obliged to be married sooner or later, why, perhaps, it was just as well that she should marry Arthur, whom they knew and esteemed, and who would not take her quite away from them.

And so Arthur departed on his three years' cruise, full of sorrow at the separation from Gladys, but full of hope of the happiness that awaited him at the end of his term of probation.

But, ah! how much may happen in three years to change the destiny of men, women, and nations.

Gladys wept bitterly for awhile, but was comforted by the most affectionate of mothers. And sympathy, and time, and an occasional letter from Arthur, restored her

bright cheerfulness. Before the end of the quarter, Gladys had ceased to mourn the departure of her lover, and had begun to anticipate his return.

But greater trials awaited the poor girl.

Near the end of the first year of Arthur's absence, her good, loving, sympathizing mother grew feeble, took to her bed, and died.

Gladys and her father were both inconsolable, and both incapable of directing their family affairs.

At this crisis a sister-in-law of General Llewellyn's, the needy widow of his younger brother, came uninvited to keep house for him.

This lady, Mrs. Jay Llewellyn, had been twice a wife, but only once a mother. Her only son, James Stukely, a lad at this time of about fourteen years of age, was the offspring of her first marriage. She brought him with her to Kader Idris, the broken-spirited master of the house making no objection to this double intrusion.

Mrs. Jay Llewellyn, a handsome, stately, fascinating, and unscrupulous woman of about forty years of age, addressed herself with great art to the task of winning the confidence of the widowed husband and the affections of his motherless child. And she succeeded in both objects. General Llewellyn loved and honored her as one of the best and wisest of women. And poor unsuspecting Gladys paid her in the pure gold of true affection and gratitude for her own base counterfeits of interest and sympathy.

Could the father or the daughter have read that woman's heart aright! Could they have divined her purposes! For from the very first hour of her entrance into that house she was "mistress of the situation," and had formed her plans accordingly. And she was resolved that, come what might, by fair means or by foul, her own half idiotic son, James Stukely, who was of no kin to the Llewellyn family, should become the master of the Llewellyn estate, including Kader Idris and all its vast dependencies; and to effect

this purpose she did not hesitate to plan the destruction of the heart-broken old man and his motherless child.

This was what happened. Within a few months after her arrival at Kader Idris, and just in proportion as she won the confidence of General Llewellyn, General Llewellyn's health failed. And this was the commencement of her strange success. His appetite failed; his flesh wasted; his strength waned; his health declined; yet with no tangible disease.

Doctors came; felt his pulse; looked at his tongue; sounded his lungs; and consulted over his case; but without ascertaining the presence of any distinct malady.

"It is a gradual breaking up of his constitution," they concluded.

Friends visited him; condoled with him; questioned him; but without arriving at any more satisfactory result than the physicians had done.

"He is pining after his wife," they agreed.

Gladys looked anxiously from one face to another among physicians and friends in the hope of gleaning some encouragement; but in vain; for whatever might be their various opinions as to the cause of the old man's decay, their unanimous decision was that he must soon die; and they betrayed their conviction in their looks.

At this time, "Mrs. Jay," as she was commonly called, was a host in herself. She nursed the invalid; she cheered Gladys; she entertained the visitors; flattered the doctors; and made herself not only agreeable, but indispensable to everybody.

In the first stage of his illness, the old man was still able to walk about the beautiful grounds around Kader Idris, though he looked pale, thin, and cadaverous, and was obliged to lean upon a stick.

But as the season advanced, the weather grew cold, and his illness increased, these walks grew fewer and farther between, until at length he was confined to the house, where

he was soon enabled, only with a great deal of effort, to get from his bedroom to his breakfast-parlor and back again.

At last even this became an impossibility, and he was confined to his chamber, where his only migrations were from his bed to his easy-chair.

Gladys was now his almost inseparable companion; and often when she sat by his side, reading to him, or playing on her guitar, or doing her needle-work, he looked at her with the most anxious affection expressed in his wasted face.

They were sitting thus one day, near the close of Arthur's second year of absence, Gladys reading from Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and the old man watching her tenderly, when he suddenly broke forth with these words:

"Oh, that I might live until Arthur comes back, so as to see you married before I die, my darling!"

Gladys dropped her book, arose and put her arms around her father's neck, laid her fresh cheek to his wasted one, and said:

"Dear, dear papa, do not be so anxious about me. What am I that you should disturb yourself so? And do not think of dying! Oh, you will live many, many years yet! At least, I do hope and pray that you may," she added, stifling the sob that arose to her throat.

"Ah, heaven grant it, my child! but the aged must drop into the grave as the ripe fruit to the ground. And the only bitterness death has for me is the thought of leaving you alone in the world," he said, in a voice quivering with the emotion that he could not entirely govern.

Gladys could scarcely repress her tears, but they were for him rather than for herself then, as she replied:

"Dearest, dearest papa, do not grieve so! do not let the thought of how I should be left trouble you so much. My own, own papa, do not let anxiety for me add to all the other sufferings that you have to endure. Do not think of me. Providence will take care of me. Think of your own dear life and health. Try to bear up and conquer this weakness, and get well."

"Oh, Gladys! how hard I do try! how hard I do try! For your sake, Gladys! for your sake! But the ripe fruit loosened from its stem, shaken by the wind, ready to fall, might as well try to hang on the tree forever!"

She could not trust herself to answer in words; she only laid her cheek closer to his.

"Gladys, my darling, do you love your Aunt Jay Llewellyn?" he suddenly asked.

"Oh, so much, papa! Next to my own dear mamma in heaven, I love her better than any lady I ever saw. She is so good, so kind, so sweet! oh, so very sweet!" said Gladys, earnestly.

"I am very glad to hear you say that. Yes, she is an angel! Or, rather, she is something better than that. She is something more to our purpose. She is a wise, good, true woman. Don't you think so?"

"Oh, yes, papa."

"Gladys, my child, if it *should* be the will of the Lord to remove me from you before the return of your betrothed husband, would you like to be left to the guardianship of your Aunt Jay?" he inquired, earnestly.

She started slightly and paused a moment; then, looking at her father, and reading eager anxiety in his countenance, she answered quickly, as if to atone for her hesitation:

"Oh, yes, papa, if you would like it."

"But would you yourself be satisfied with the arrangement, my dear?"

"Yes, dear, dear papa! with any thing you like."

"That is not the question. Not what I would like, but what you would like, my child! Now, would you be satisfied with your Aunt Jay for a guardian? If you would not, say so. I will not leave you under the control of any one against your will. If you would prefer the Reverend Mr. Fenton and his wife, say so, my dear."

"Oh, no, dear papa, I do not prefer any one above another! I hope and pray there will be no need for me to have any guardian but yourself, my own dear papa."

"That will be as Heaven wills. But you think well of your Aunt Jay; do you not, Gladys?"

"Oh, yes, papa."

"So do I. I think she would be kind to my orphan child. I do think she would," he said with so much emotion that his daughter, heroically repressing her tears, replied:

"Oh, yes, yes, papa! Oh, my own dear papa! Do not distress yourself so much about me. If Providence should bereave me so heavily, Providence would take care of me."

"Yes, in the end—in the end! As a Christian I must believe that. And yet, I should rather see you married before I die. Young as you were then, I almost regret that I did not consent to your marriage with Arthur before he went to sea," said the old man, with a deep, prophetic sigh.

"Dearest, dearest papa, you will live to see me married! You will live to see me quite an old woman myself before you go to heaven! At least, I hope and pray you may," she added, her natural sincerity always coming in the way of her eager wish to cheer her father.

"The Lord grant your prayer, my child, if it be his will. If not, why then his will be done. But cheer up, my darling! Do not let me sadden you. It is the order of nature that parents should go before their children. And remember, my child, that when at last I shall be called to leave you, I shall go to our Lord, our Saviour; and to all the good, and wise, and great, who have been in heaven these many years; and to the familiar friends of my mortal life who have gone before me; and to my own dear wife, your sainted mother, Gladys."

And she tried to be cheerful for his sake.

Many such conversations as these the father and daughter held together, hoping to console and strengthen each other before the coming separation.

The old man had several years before made a will, be-

queathing the whole of his real and personal estate unreservedly and unconditionally to his beloved wife, knowing that, in the event of her surviving him, she would, in her turn, bequeath it in like manner to their only child.

Now, however, that his wife had gone before him, he thought it necessary to make another will. So he destroyed the first one and executed a second, devising his whole estate to his only daughter, Gladys, and appointing as her guardian his esteemed friend, Mrs. Jane Llewellyn.

In the whole course of his long life this was the only act of madness that General Llewellyn had ever committed. And this may be said in his defence—that Mrs. Jay Llewellyn was so tender, so affectionate, so devoted, and so self-sacrificing—in appearance—that she might have deceived an angel of wisdom as she deceived this simple veteran and his artless child.

True, neither the father nor the daughter were left without a witness against her, in the depths of their own hearts; a witness whispering that this fair, smooth woman, was not true and trustworthy, but false and dangerous; a witness speaking not through their reason, but through their instinct; a witness never succeeding in inspiring a suspicion, but only a misgiving. It was this misgiving that caused General Llewellyn to heave that deep prophetic sigh which accompanied his expressed regret that he had not married Gladys to Arthur before the latter sailed on his last voyage.

Neither father nor daughter ever spoke of this secret, dim misgiving, because they disbelieved in it, they were ashamed of it, and they reproached themselves for even feeling it.

How could they do otherwise in the presence of Mrs. Llewellyn's admirable, irreproachable character and conduct?—her daily ministrations of tenderness and benevolence?—her wisdom and goodness?—her sweet humility and self-devotion?

I tell you that when either father or daughter became conscious of the "still small voice" that warned them against this devil in the garb of an angel of light, they felt shocked at themselves; the old man called himself a "beast," and the young girl deplored her own ingratitude; but neither spoke to the other of what was sometimes felt in the bottom of each heart.

Two days after the execution of that fatal document that gave his daughter, for the term of her minority, into the irresponsible power of a female fiend, General Llewellyn expired.

This was the manner of his death:—Having persuaded himself that he had arranged all his worldly affairs in the manner best calculated to promote his daughter's welfare and happiness, he felt calmer and easier in his mind. And having eaten a better dinner than usual, he composed himself in his easy-chair, to take his usual afternoon nap. His daughter sat sewing by his side, keeping up the fire, and watching him with affectionate vigilance. She arose and bent over him, once in awhile, and noticed that he breathed softly and regularly; and she knew that he slept soundly and comfortably. And although he slept much longer than usual, and although his favorite servant, Aunt Ailie, brought up his tea at the usual hour, his daughter would not allow him to be disturbed; he still slept so sweetly, breathed so softly.

At length, however, when she looked at him again, she perceived that he did not breathe at all; she caught up his hand, it was cold; she felt his pulse, it was still; and then she knew that he was dead.

She made no outcry; her heart seemed suddenly to stop and become as still as his own.

Then she flew silently out of the chamber and down stairs into the presence of Mrs. Jay Llewellyn, seated in the drawing-room, and exclaimed, in a low, breathless voice:

"Oh, Aunt Llewellyn! come to papa! he is—he is——"

Her strength failed and she leaned tremblingly upon the back of Mrs. Jay's chair.

Mrs. Jay did not wait for the end of the sentence. She quickly arose and went up stairs, followed slowly by Gladys, who tottered and held on to the balustrades for support.

Yes; the old man had sunk into his last earthly sleep. Mrs. Jay's hasty but careful examination left no doubt of that.

She put her arms around Gladys, and drew the orphan's head upon her bosom, and whispered tenderly:

"Your dear father is gathered to his fathers, my darling. Let us bow in humble resignation to the will of heaven."

And she led her gently to the sofa and made her lie down, while she rang and summoned assistance.

The household servants gathered into the room.

Mrs. Llewellyn told them, with impressive solemnity, what had happened, and directed them what to do.

Awe-stricken and half heart-broken, they lifted the body of their beloved old master and tenderly laid it upon the bed.

Then some of them remained in the room, reverently watching beside the dead, while others hurried away to fetch the family physician and the family clergyman.

In the course of the day these arrived, and did what they could do under the circumstances, which was next to nothing.

The physician pronounced the sudden death of General Llewellyn to be just what might have been expected any day for the last month. And the clergyman spoke religious consolation to the bereaved daughter and sister. Gladys listened humbly, reverently, and gratefully, and tried to take the good counsel to heart. But as she was perfectly silent, and as Mrs. Llewellyn was fluent in her responses, the clergyman went away with the impression that the maiden was rather insensible and that the lady felt the event very deeply.

A few days after this the remains of General Llewellyn were taken to Stanwell and buried with military honors,

with all the pomp, pride, and circumstance of war and of death.

And the orphan returned to her desolate home.

The will of General Llewellyn was read in the large dining-room by the family solicitor, in the presence of the family physician, clergyman, friends, and servants

And then the funeral guests dispersed.

CHAPTER II.

THE TREASON.

In life's great Lazar-house each breath
We breathe may bring or spread the pest,
And daily each may catch his death
From those that lean upon his breast.—Owen Meredith.

MRS LLEWELLYN assumed the reins of domestic government; but she did not at once throw off her mask. It was not as yet necessary to do so. She was very kind to Gladys, sympathizing with all her sorrows; consulting all her tastes; and indulging all her inclinations; and therefore securing, for the time at least, her gratitude, affection, and confidence.

Gladys grieved deeply for the death of her father; but the grief of youth is not lasting. Youth buries its dead in forgetfulness. Youth's eyes are not turned to the past, but to the future. And so it followed that, as the months rolled on and brought the close of the last year of Arthur's absence, Gladys ceased to weep for the loss of her father, and began to look forward to the return of her lover. It is true that she had not heard from him for many months; but she comforted herself for the want of his letters by the reflection that he must be on his voyage home, and that he must arrive sooner than any letters from him could reach her.

Some unaccountable reluctance restrained Gladys from speaking to her aunt of her betrothal, although she knew that Mrs. Llewellyn was perfectly well acquainted with that betrothal, as she was with all the family secrets, or rather the family affairs, for there never had been any secrets in that simple household.

At length, however, when the end of the year came, and no news had reached her of Arthur or his ship, her reluctance to speak was overcome by her anxiety to hear; and so one day in the early autumn, when Mrs. Llewellyn and herself were sitting together, engaged in needle-work, out in the vine-shaded porch, she said:

"Don't you think it strange, Aunt Llewellyn, that I do not get any letters from Arthur?"

"No, my love, I do not. I think it quite natural."

"Oh, I know that the Pacific is a long way off, and that when he once starts to come home I can hear no more from him until he gets here; but, indeed, I think his ship ought to be in port by this time. It sailed for a three years' cruise, which was long enough in all conscience; long enough to break one's heart. But even the three years have come to an end at last, though the cruise it seems has not, as the ship is not in port. What can be the reason?" said Gladys, with a sigh.

"My dear, the ship is in port," said Mrs. Llewellyn.

"The ship in port, Aunt Llewellyn! Arthur's ship! Why did you not tell me so before? Oh, when did she get in?" exclaimed Gladys, starting from her chair in the excess of her joy and restlessness.

"My dear, when I say that the ship is in port, I speak from moral conviction rather than from actual knowledge. I have no doubt that she is in; though I do not know when she got in, having seen no notice of her arrival."

"Oh, then we may expect dear Arthur any day, any hour, ah, almost any minute! Oh, think he may be even now turning into the road!" exclaimed Gladys, excitedly.

"My dear, I do not think that he will come," said Mrs. Llewellyn, gravely.

Gladys paused in her restless flutterings, and stood as if transfixed, and stared at Mrs. Llewellyn, repeating with pallid lips:

"Not come! Arthur not come! Oh, Aunt Llewellyn, something has happened to him! What is it? Is he ill or——"

She could not speak the other dread alternative: she turned deadly pale, reeled, and grasped the back of the settee for support.

"He is alive and well for aught I know to the contrary, Gladys," said Mrs. Llewellyn.

Gladys soon recovered herself and, smiling, said:

"Then he will soon be here, for he is not false and fickle. He is good and true. That I know."

"He may or may not be what you think him, my child. Yet he will not come," persisted Mrs. Llewellyn.

Again Gladys became alarmed; but not to the extent that she had been before.

"Oh, why do you continue to say that? What has occurred? It can never be that he has been left behind at some foreign port?"

"Oh, no; I suppose not."

"Nor could he have got into any trouble, or been court-martialed, or any thing like that. Because if he has I know it must have been upon false grounds."

"No, my dear, there is nothing of that sort that I know of. I have no doubt that he is with his ship and in good standing in his profession."

"Then why will he not come? Of course he will come! Why should you think otherwise?" said Gladys, beginning to pout.

"My dear, I had better tell you at once," said Mrs. Llewellyn. And then she paused and reflected a few minutes, while Gladys waited eagerly to hear what she had to say.

Yes; the hour had now come at which she must prepare to lay aside her mask and show her true aspect.

"My dear Gladys," she commenced, "if I have not broached this subject to you before, it has been from my great affection for you, and my great reluctance to give you pain. Had you, however, sooner mentioned this young man's name to me, I should have been sooner forced to make the communication that I am now about to make. But you never spoke of your lover to me until this afternoon; and I for my part felt glad of the delay and hoped that you had forgotten him."

"Oh, Aunt Llewellyn!"

"Now, however, that you have brought up his name, and revealed to me, I am sorry to say, that you still care for him, I am forced at last into an explanation that I fear will give you much pain."

"Oh, Aunt Llewellyn! What is it that you can have to say of Arthur that is to give me so much pain, since all is well with him? Speak at once; only speak no ill of him!" entreated Gladys, clasping her hands.

"I shall speak no ill of him, since I know none," said the lady, with an air of candor. "You know, Gladys, the great mark of confidence given me by your dear departed father when he made me the guardian of his daughter, the trustee of his estate, and the executrix of his will?"

"Yes, madam."

"It was really a great proof of his confidence in me, since it invested me with all a parent's power over his daughter during her minority."

"I know it, madam."

"It is a power that I shall never abuse; since I hold myself responsible to the Lord himself for its exercise," said the lady, solemnly.

"I am sure you do, Aunt Llewellyn. But—about Arthur?" said Gladys, beseechingly.

"Yes, about Arthur. Well, as I said, the late General

Llewellyn had great confidence in my humble self, of which he has given abundant proof. But not even in his last will did he give me a greater proof of confidence than he afterward gave me in intrusting to me the management of a certain delicate affair. Can you guess the nature of that affair, Gladys?"

"No, indeed, Aunt Llewellyn, I cannot."

"Then I must beg you to look back three years, and recall the day upon which your late lamented father first became acquainted with your misplaced affection for this young midshipman."

"'Misplaced,' Aunt Llewellyn! Oh, not misplaced!" said Gladys, lighting down upon this one word in alarm.

"In *his*, your father's estimation, sadly misplaced. You remember, Gladys, how violently he was opposed to the very idea of your marriage with Arthur?"

"At first; but only because he had formed very ambitious projects for the advancement of his child. He had no personal objection to Arthur, whom, on the contrary, he loved and esteemed very, very much."

"I know nothing about that, my dear; but I *do* know that he firmly opposed your engagement."

"Only just at first, when it took him by surprise, in the midst of his more ambitious thoughts for me; but afterward, upon reflection, he sanctioned it."

"I think you are mistaken, my love, in supposing that your dear father ever, by word or deed, sanctioned your engagement with that young man. The *mésalliance* would be too absurd."

"Oh, Aunt Llewellyn, he did! indeed he did! Not only formally sanctioned it, but approved of it and took comfort in it. Oh, and he even, poor, dear father, expressed his regret that he had not permitted us to be married before Arthur sailed."

Mrs. Llewellyn's impassable features expressed astonishment.

"That is very strange, for many reasons, very strange. In the first place, you were only fifteen years of age, and the marriage of such a mere child, even with the most eligible party, which this young midshipman certainly was not, would have been highly improper."

"My dear papa, in his last illness, on looking back, did not think so. He thought, as Arthur had been then on the eve of departure for a three years' cruise, that the nuptial benediction would have been no more than an indissoluble betrothal; and would have differed from the betrothal only in securing to me a legal protector."

"I think that your dear father, terribly shaken by the loss of his wife, could not have been at all times perfectly consistent in his last illness, at least he seems to have changed his mind very often. At all events, Gladys, my dear, I think it a happy thing for you that there was neither marriage nor betrothal to bind you to a young man so much your inferior in social position."

"Oh, Aunt Llewellyn! there was a betrothal! a solemn betrothal, blessed by my sainted father and mother on that sorrowful day of our separation for three long years! a betrothal that I hold to be as binding as any marriage! and that Arthur considers equally sacred!" said Gladys, with the tears starting to her eyes.

"A mistake, my love—a mistake, I assure you. Now listen to me. I opened this discussion by informing you that your father had given me a proof of his confidence in intrusting to my management a very delicate affair. You must have guessed by this time that this affair was no other than your relations with young—what's his name?"

"Oh, Aunt Llewellyn, I hope——"

"Listen to me, my dear. Your dear father made me his confidant; he intrusted to me all his secret troubles;—the greatest of all these was his grief at your misplaced attachment——"

"Oh, Aunt Llewellyn! It never ever talked so to you, he

must indeed have been wandering in his mind, under the influence of fever and delirium! It is all so inconsistent with what he has said to me!" exclaimed Gladys, divided between her emotions of grief, surprise and amazement.

"My child, your dear father was never calmer, or more coherent, than when he talked to me of this matter and intrusted to me two letters that he had prepared—one for you and one for your lover. The one for you was to be retained by me until I should see the proper time for delivering it to you. The one for your lover was to be sent to him through the Navy Department."

"And you sent it, Aunt?"

"I sent it, my dear. No doubt Arthur received it in due time, and that is the reason he has not presented himself here."

"Oh! but he will do so—he will do so. He is my betrothed, and we were to have been married immediately upon his return, and nothing but death will prevent him from keeping his appointment!" exclaimed Gladys.

"My dear, that very letter forbade his approaching the house, or yourself."

"Oh, how could my father have written such a letter as that after all his promises! after all that he has said to me, too! and without telling me of it! But he never did it! No, no, dear, dear father! Your lips are dumb in death, or they would deny this charge; but your daughter will not believe it of you even though you cannot deny it!" exclaimed the girl, passionately.

"Gladys, my love, do you know exactly what you are saying in your excitement? Do you know, my dear, that you are aspersing *my* character for truthfulness? Gladys, remember that it is *I* who tell you that your father wrote that letter. Do you mean to insinuate that I spoke falsely?" said Mrs. Llewellyn, with a fair assumption of candor and forbearance.

"Oh, no, no, no, Aunt Jay! I did not mean to insinuate

any thing against you. But indeed I am so troubled that I hardly know what I say, or even what I think. Forgive me, Aunt Jay, if I have said any thing improper," said the gentle girl.

"I will hand you your father's letter, Gladys; perhaps that will settle your doubts, if you really have any," said the lady, speaking with dignity.

"Oh, Aunt Llewellyn, how I wish you had given me the letter and this explanation before this!" exclaimed Gladys, bitterly.

"My dear, the time for doing so was left to my own discretion. Your father hoped, as I did, that the letter he had written to the young man, would keep him away, as no doubt it has done; and that time, change, and absence, would cause you to forget him, and so obviate the necessity of my interference, in which case I was not to give you the letter at all. But seeing now that you still remember him, and look forward with anxiety to his return, I think it best to give you the letter with its explanation."

And so saying, Mrs. Llewellyn left the weeping girl and went into the house, whence she soon returned, bringing the fatal letter.

"You know your father's handwriting, Gladys," said the lady, as she put the letter in the orphan's hands.

"Oh, yes, yes," sighed Gladys, as she looked at the superscription, and pressed it to her lips.

"Read it, then."

Gladys did not need this direction. She quickly broke the seal, and eagerly devoured the contents of the letter. It was addressed on the inside—

To My Beloved and Only Child Gladys from her Dying Father.

MY DARLING:—I write this from my chamber of death! When it reaches your eyes, the heart that dictates it, the hand that traces it, will be cold and still for evermore. It

will come to you then as a message from the grave. As such let it be heeded. My Gladys, you never disobeyed me while living, and I feel sure that you will never disregard my dying command—a command laid on you, my dearest child, for your own happiness alone! You know how strongly I have always been opposed to your misguided fancy for young Arthur Powis; but you do not know how anxiously I have desired your union with a certain other. I adjure you, therefore, Gladys, as you value the blessing of your dead father, as you dread his curse, to break off all correspondence with young Powis, and to make up your mind to receive as your destined husband my esteemed young friend, James Stukely, the son of my beloved sister-in-law, your honored aunt, Mrs. Jay Llewellyn. And that just in the degree in which you receive and obey this, my last command, may the Lord bless and save you, in this world and the next, is the prayer of your loving and dying father,

GRIFFITH LLEWELLYN.

The letter fluttered from her relaxing fingers and fell to the floor. And she gazed out into vacancy with blank consternation depicted upon every feature of her white and motionless face.

"Well, Gladys! what do you think now?" inquired Mrs. Llewellyn.

She started out of her trance of amazement and answered wildly.

"Madam, I do not know what to think, except that I must be mad! My father never wrote that letter! Oh, no, no! my father never could have written that letter! he never could have stabbed his child to the heart like that!"

"Gladys!"

"Ah! forgive me! I forgot! I forgot that it was you who said he wrote it! I beg your pardon, Aunt Jay! But I am bewildered! It is all so strange! Oh, I wish Arthur were only here to consult with me! Oh, I hope I am not

going mad! But I must be losing my reason, since I cannot understand this at all!" And Gladys threw her hands up to her head, reeled, and sank down upon the settee. She had not fainted, however. A glass of water brought to her by Mrs. Llewellyn helped to restore her strength.

"Thank you, madam," she said when she had drunk the water and returned the glass. "I will go to my room now, and try to understand this. Give me the letter, please." And she arose and took the letter from Mrs. Llewellyn's hand and retired.

That cruel letter was almost a death-warrant to Gladys. She could not believe in it; yet she dared not doubt it. She was half-crazed with her perplexity, and she prayed for the return of Arthur that she might show him *her* letter, and read *his*, and that they might together seek some solution of the mystery; for, notwithstanding Mrs. Llewellyn's explanation, a mystery it remained to her. She did not leave her room again that afternoon, and she did not sleep a moment that night.

In the morning, however, she came to breakfast, but looking pale, haggard, and hollow-eyed, like one just risen from a grievous fit of illness.

Mrs. Llewellyn kissed her tenderly, but did not allude to the subject of the letter; and Gladys, for her part, shrunk from it.

After breakfast Mrs. Llewellyn retired to write a summons to her son, who was now at the Virginia University.

And Gladys, with the restlessness of one half-distracted with anxiety, put on her little black hat—she was still in deep mourning for her father—and strolled out upon the front lawn.

Nearly an hour she had spent in wandering listlessly among the shaded walks of the beautiful grounds, when happening to look up, she saw a dust in the road skirting the forest in the middle distance. While she still looked, a horseman came in view

Then, suddenly, with a wild cry of joy, she bounded from the spot where she stood, and ran like a deer across the lawn to the outer gate.

Simultaneously the rider dashed up, and threw himself from his horse.

And the next moment the long-severed, betrothed lovers, were clasped in each other's arms.

How changed they both were in all but their mutual love, and yet how instantaneously they recognized each other. Arthur, who had gone away a slender, fair-skinned stripling, a mere slip of a boy, had now returned a tall, broad-shouldered, sun-burned man. And Gladys, whom he had left a light-hearted child, was now a pensive woman.

At first, their embrace was a close, fervent, silent pressure of heart to heart, and then both spoke at once.

"Oh, Gladys!"

"Oh, Arthur!"

"Oh, what a happiness to meet you again, my love!"

"Oh, thank heaven that you are here at last, dear Arthur!"

"But you are so pale, my darling! Have you been ill, Gladys?"

"Oh, no; but I have suffered so much! I have been so anxious about you! For six months I did not get a letter!"

"Why, I wrote to you by every ship! I wrote even up to the last week before I sailed, by the Peacock, who sailed *five* days before us and got into port *ten* days before us. You should have had a letter about twice a month, regularly; and you should have had one within the last week."

"I have had none for the last half year."

"There must be some foul play here that shall be inquired into!" said the young man, with a frown.

"Oh, no! who would be so guilty?"

"Whoever it was shall be punished for all they have made you suffer, my darling. And oh! how much of suffering your poor little face reveals!" said the young man, taking her head between his hands, and gazing tenderly upon her.

"Oh! it is not anxiety about not hearing from you that caused the worst of my suffering, dear Arthur; for, although I could not hear from you, I was sure you were on your way home, and that comforted me. But yesterday, Arthur, only yesterday, I heard for the first time of that cruel letter that was written to you."

The young man's face grew dark.

"Ah! that letter! Who forged that letter, Gladys?" he inquired, sternly.

"Oh! then you do not believe that poor papa wrote it!" exclaimed Gladys, in pleased surprise.

"Certainly not. Do you?"

"Oh, Arthur! I do not know what to believe! I am perfectly confounded! But if papa did not write the letter, or the letters—for there were two of them, one being addressed to me—who did?"

"Ah! that is the question!"

"Arthur! I don't believe papa wrote those letters, and yet I don't dare to believe that he didn't!"

"Why, Gladys, don't you dare to believe that he didn't?"

"Why, because my Aunt Llewellyn says that he wrote them, and gave them to her to deliver."

"Gladys, who is Mrs. Llewellyn?" inquired the young man.

"Oh, she is an angel, Arthur!"

"Very possibly. But what is she to you?"

"Oh, of no *real* kin, you know! She is only the widow of poor papa's half brother! But for all that, she has been an angel of goodness to us all! She came without waiting to be sent for, directly after poor mamma's death, and took charge of every thing, and kept house for papa until his death. And now she is so good as to stay and take care of me."

"Yes. She is a penniless widow, I believe?"

"Y—es, I believe so."

"With a portionless son?"

"Yes."

"Whom she wishes to provide for by marrying him to you!"

"Oh, Arthur, how absurd! James Stukely is nothing but a boy, and a half idiot at that!" said Gladys, laughing.

"He is now sixteen years of age, and a freshman at the University of Virginia."

"But for all that, I tell you, he is a half idiotic boy. And the idea of his ever marrying any body is preposterous!"

"Yet his mother intends that he shall marry you and come into the possession of the Kader Idris estates."

"Oh, Arthur, how ridiculous! His mother never breathed such a thing!"

"No, perhaps not; but she put it into the letter she had written to me."

"Arthur, dear, do you believe that Aunt Llewellyn had any thing to do with these letters beyond receiving them and mailing yours and delivering mine?"

"I can believe any and every thing, of any and every body, more easily than I can believe that your poor dear father could have been guilty of writing those letters?"

"I am so glad to hear you say so, Arthur! for to tell you the truth, I agree with you, although I should have been afraid to express myself as you have done."

"Gladys, of course, then, you do not mean to be governed by those letters?"

"Of course not, unless I could be convinced that they are all genuine."

"That you will never be! On the contrary, you will soon be convinced that they are base forgeries! For I mean to sift this matter to the bottom! And by all that is high and holy, good and true, when I discover the forgers who have dared to desecrate the name and memory of the dead, I will prosecute them—be they men or women,

high or low, with the utmost rigor of the law!—Gladys! have you that letter about you?"

"The one that was written to me? Oh, yes."

"Give it to me, my dear."

"I will, when we get to the house, dear Arthur! It is better for us to go there at once."

"And be confronted with Mrs. Llewellyn!"

"Ah no! She is spending the forenoon in her room, writing."

"Very well, then, my darling, we will go up to the house."

CHAPTER III.

ARTHUR AND MRS. LLEWELLYN FACE TO FACE.

"Those are the likeliest copies which are drawn
From the originals of human life."—*Roscommon*.

LEMUEL, the hall footman, who in boyhood had been the constant attendant of young Powis in all his rural sports, was standing at the front door. Immediately recognizing the new comer, he impulsively ran out to greet him with a joyous yet respectful welcome.

"Well, Lem, old fellow, is that you? How does the world go with you?" inquired the young sailor, cordially shaking the hand of his humble friend.

"Upside down, Marse Arthur, sir; wery upside down, indeed, since de ole marse and missis done 'parted this life. Glad to see you back again, hows'ever, sir, and hopes now, afore long, as dere'll be another young marse and missis ober de ole hall, to reign ober us all and put things to rights," answered Lemuel, liberally displaying two rows of ivory in a jet black setting, as he grinned from ear to ear.

"Thank you for your good wishes, old fellow. I hope so too," replied the young man, good humoredly.

Lemuel, with much formality, now led the way to the drawing-room, and, with a grand flourish, threw open the door.

"Shall I denounce your revival to de madam, sar?" inquired Lemuel with a succession of bows.

"No; certainly not. I understand that Mrs. Llewellyn is engaged in her own apartment. Do not disturb her on any account," said the young man.

Lemuel paused with the door in his hand, as if he waited and wished to do something to show his devotion to the guest.

"You may bring some wine and sandwiches here, directly. But stay! Arthur, perhaps you would like to go to your room first? You know where to find it. It is your old room, kept ready for you all this time. Lemuel will attend you," said Gladys.

"No, no, dearest. I wish to go nowhere until I have had a talk with you. I must make use of the present opportunity, lest we should be interrupted by your aunt," replied Arthur, in a low voice.

"Then, Lemuel, you may just bring the refreshments here, as I ordered," said Gladys.

With a flourish of bows, the footman backed himself out on this errand.

"Now, then, dear Gladys, this letter," said Arthur, impatiently, as he led her to the sofa and seated himself beside her.

She drew the paper from her bosom and put it into his hand.

He opened and read it slowly, with scornful eyes, flushed cheeks, and curling lips. When he had finished it, he did not return it to her, but put it securely in his own pocket, from which he also drew the other letter and handed it to her.

She opened and ran her eyes carefully over it. It was the same in effect, and very nearly the same in phraseology, with the one that had been written to her. It ran as follows:

"MY DEAR ARTHUR:—I write this letter with death upon me. When it reaches you, and while you read these lines,

the hand that traces them will be mouldering in the grave. Stop and let that thought sink into your heart before you read further. And now, as a message from the dead, as a voice from the grave, receive and revere my words! As I have ever filled a father's place, and done a father's duty by your orphaned boyhood, give me now a son's attention and obedience! You are aware how strongly I opposed your wish to marry my daughter Gladys. This opposition, Arthur, grew out of no personal dislike to yourself, as you may feel assured, but out of other designs that I had formed for my daughter's welfare and happiness. For years it has been my cherished wish to live to see my darling, at some future time, the wife of my esteemed young friend, James Stukely. But the hand of death is on me. I cannot live to carry out my plans for my child's good. Dying, therefore, I solemnly adjure you, as you value the blessing of an old man who has been more than a father to your orphanage, and as you dread his curse, give up all pursuit of Gladys, and leave her to the man chosen for her husband by her parents. And as you obey or disobey in this, may the blessing or the curse of heaven attend you through life, and unto death.

GRIFFITH HUGH LLEWELLYN."

"No; my father never wrote this letter; in his last illness he was too conscientious to have attempted to break our engagement; he was, also, too affectionate to have bequeathed us so much sorrow; and, more than all, he was far too reverential than ever to have seized on the prerogative of Divinity, and to have launched threats and curses in the shocking manner that he is made to seem to do!" said Gladys, returning the letter. But as he took it she suddenly snatched it back, saying:

"Stay! I did not think of it before! but I *did* notice a something singular about that signature! Let me look at it again!"

He yielded it up with a look of surprise; and she examined it closely.

"Well, dearest, what have you discovered?" he inquired.

"Look at this signature. Do you see nothing strange about it?" she asked, fixing her great dilated eyes upon him and then pointing to the name.

"No!" he answered.

"It is tremulous!"

"I see; but that goes for nothing, since it purports to have been written by a dying man, whose hand must be supposed to have trembled in the effort of writing."

"Yes; but, dearest Arthur, look at the letter; there is no sign of such tremulousness in that; but only in the signature! And, besides, even in the signature the tremulousness is not that of a *failing* hand, but of a *tracing* hand! Look at it! There are no hair strokes in the letters. They are all of one thickness, and full of minute irregularities, such as the lines of my drawing used to be when I would put the copy up before a window-pane and trace my subject, instead of drawing it by eye."

Before Gladys had done speaking the young man had repossessed himself of the paper and was examining the signature with great carefulness by the aid of a pocket-lens. Then he took the other letter from his pocket, and examined the signature of that, and then he compared them together.

"Well?" eagerly exclaimed Gladys, who had kept her expanded eyes fixed upon him all this while.

"Well, dearest, you are perfectly right. These signatures are both traced. And from precisely the same copy. And each has been traced twice. First, by placing the paper over the copy against a window-pane and using a lead pencil, and then by laying the paper on a table or desk and going over the pencil marks with pen and ink. If you will take this lens you will be able to see the pencil mark under those minute irregularities of the pen strokes," he said, drawing a stand before her, laying out the two letters upon it, and placing the lens in her hand.

"I *do* see it now! Why these signatures must both have

been traced from some one autograph of my father's in the writer's possession," said Gladys, gazing as if her eyes were fascinated to the paper.

"In the *forger's* possession! Don't let us confound terms, Gladys! These letters are forgeries, and Mrs. Llewellyn is the forger!"

"Heaven of heavens! Arthur, how can you say that?" exclaimed the deeply shocked girl.

"Because I firmly believe what I say. If they were not forged by Mrs. Llewellyn, by whom were they forged?"

"Oh, Arthur, not by her! not by her! She is so good, so kind, so true. Poor papa thought she was an angel."

"Did you ever learn from books, if not from life, that there are hypocrites in the world, Gladys? Have you never been taught by the Holy Scriptures, if not by experience, that there are devils in the form of angels of light?" said the young man, with eyes flashing indignation and scorn.

"Oh, Arthur, Arthur, do not tell me any more just now. Let me get over this. Give me a little time. Oh, I had almost rather die than hear of such things, and especially of Aunt Llewellyn. But I cannot believe it of her. Oh, no, Arthur; I cannot believe it. I cannot!" exclaimed Gladys, shrinking and shuddering and covering her face with her hands.

"Heaven knows that I would willingly conceal from you the existence of so much and such deep evil, my pure lily. But when this evil lays wait for you and threatens your happiness, if not your destruction, I must reveal it to you at whatever cost of temporary pain to yourself, Gladys," he said.

She did not answer, except by dropping her covered face upon the stand, and moaning softly.

"Listen further, my dearest. Observe the cruel art with which those letters were constructed. They were intended first to deceive us, and, if that should be impossible,

secondly to deceive others. And hence from the beginning to the end of those letters there is neither admission nor denial of the act of betrothal between us. If there had been a denial of it, we should have seen at a glance that it was falsehood and not the work of your father, whose word was truth. While if there had been any admission of our betrothal, it might have been construed into legal consent and defeated the very purpose for which the letters were forged, namely, to prevent our marriage. The letters were, therefore, carefully worded in a manner calculated to impress us with the idea that he did not deny, but repented, having consented to our betrothal, and to persuade others, who knew nothing about it and who might be called to judge, that he never had countenanced, or even been cognizant of such an engagement. That was very good art; but the tracing of both signatures by the same pattern was very bad art. Don't you see?"

"Oh, I see, I see! and I believe the letters to be forgeries; but I cannot, oh! I cannot believe Aunt Llewellyn to have been the forger. Consider, it is a crime! a crime punishable by imprisonment in the penitentiary! And she is a lady! Oh, horror! horror! horror!" exclaimed Gladys, pressing her hands before her face.

"Gladys! come what will, I will test this matter!" said the young man, firmly, but kindly, as he bent over her bowed head.

Both were so completely absorbed by each other, and by the subject they had in hand, that neither heard the opening of the door, nor perceived the entrance of Mrs. Llewellyn, until she stood in her deep mourning robes, tall, stately, and sternly beautiful before them.

"I had scarcely expected to see you at Kader Idris, Mr. Powis. Gladys, my love, retire to your own room. I must speak to this young man alone," said the lady.

Gladys, pale, silent, and trembling, arose to obey. But Arthur Powis also arose, clasped the hand of Gladys

closely, bowed to Mrs. Llewellyn, and, standing before her, said:

"You can have nothing to say to me, madam, which may not be heard by my betrothed bride, Miss Llewellyn."

"If Miss Llewellyn had any sense of propriety she would obey her aunt," said the lady.

"Let me go, Arthur," pleaded Gladys, trying to disengage her hand.

"No, dearest, I cannot. For your own sake, I dare not," he replied, tightening his hold upon her. Then, turning to Mrs. Llewellyn, he said:

"Cast your reproaches upon me, madam, since it is I who detain my promised wife beside me, that with me she may hear what explanation you have to give concerning these letters; for it is of these letters, I presume, that you intend to speak," said Arthur Powis, laying his other hand firmly upon the two letters that still remained upon the table. He did this partly to indicate them and partly to keep them from her possession, for she had put out her hand as if to take them up.

"Yes; it is of those letters that I wish to speak to you. But she has heard about them already. And it is a painful subject with which she need not be annoyed again. Therefore, to spare her feelings, I recommended that she should retire," said the lady, calmly.

"Ah! if consideration for *her* feelings, madam, was your only motive for wishing her to withdraw, I have no more to say. I will leave it to the young lady herself. Gladys, my dearest, what do you say?"

"If my aunt does not mind, I would rather stay," said the young girl.

"You hear, madam. Pray proceed."

"Very well, then. I will," said the lady, advancing her hand again to take up the letters.

"If you please, madam, *no*; excuse me; I cannot suffer these documents to pass out of my possession," said Arthur

Powis, as he took the letters up, folded them carefully, and stowed them securely in his breast pocket.

"You are absurd," said the lady, as she threw herself into a chair near the sofa and motioned Arthur and Gladys to resume their seats. "You are very absurd. What good can the possession of those letters do you, unless, indeed, they could serve to remind you that your presence here is unexpected and unwelcome; yes, and even forbidden."

"I am here, madam, by arrangement, to keep an appointment, to fulfil a contract," said the young man, haughtily, never letting go the hand of Gladys, which he held firmly clasped in his own.

"Of what nature, may I ask you, sir?" inquired the lady.

As she spoke she looked at the young man, and he raised his head, and their eyes met as he answered her question. And though he spoke in a low tone, such, as she had used, and though the manner of both was calm, it was with the fearful calmness that precedes the bursting of the storm. The atmosphere in which they were seemed charged with death, and amid the awful stillness you could see the darkening of the sky and hear the muttering of the thunder.

"Miss Llewellyn is my promised bride; we were betrothed three years since, with the consent of both her parents; our marriage was arranged to take place immediately after my return from the voyage that is just now completed; and I am here to claim my wife."

"What proof have you to offer of the truth of these ridiculous statements?" sneered the lady.

"The word, madam, of a man whose honor has never been doubted; and if that requires support, the corroborative testimony of a young lady whose integrity is beyond question."

"Humph! the unsustained assertion of a pair of silly lovers against the positive proof of General Llewellyn's own handwriting."

"General Llewellyn's own handwriting?" repeated

Arthur Powis, betraying the scorn that he could no longer conceal. "Madam, show me General Llewellyn's own handwriting, objecting to the consummation of my marriage with Miss Llewellyn, and I will take my hat and leave this house, never to return to it."

"If you will look at the letters that you have so jealously concealed in your pocket you may see it for yourself."

"Madam, neither myself nor Miss Llewellyn can accept those forgeries as the writing of General Llewellyn!" said Arthur Powis, resolutely.

"Forgeries, sir?"

"FORGERIES, madam."

"You insult me, sir."

"I have not even accused you, madam."

"What do you mean, then, by saying that these letters are forgeries?"

"I mean just what I say!"

There was a pause between them for a few minutes; an armistice, during which the two belligerents glared at each other with looks of mutual hatred and defiance; but still, in resuming the subject, neither of them raised their voices above the ordinary polite conversational tone.

"How do you dare to make this assertion, sir?"

"Because I know it to be true."

"Pray how do you know it?"

"From certain signs in the manuscript, that shall be pointed out at the proper time and place."

She turned a shade paler for a moment; but quickly commanded herself and said:

"Listen to me, Mr. Powis, and when you have heard what I have to say to you—then repeat your calumnies, call those letters forgeries, at your own proper peril! Sir, I saw those letters written, signed, sealed, and delivered."

"Very likely, madam; but not by General Llewellyn!" said Arthur, sarcastically.

"Those letters were written, signed and sealed by General

Llewellyn, in my presence, and delivered by his hand into my hand to be sent to their destination," said the lady, with resolute effrontery.

"Excuse me—let us be exact. You are sure that these are the very identical letters of which you speak?" said Arthur Powis, drawing them from his pocket and displaying them before her.

"Yes."

"And you saw them written by General Llewellyn?"

"Yes."

"And also signed by him?"

"Yes."

"Then, madam, will you be so good as to explain how it happens that these signatures were first traced with a lead pencil, and afterward retraced with a pen and ink?"

For a moment Mrs. Llewellyn's self-possession forsook her; and the lips were pale, and the voice was tremulous, with which she answered:

"It is not true; they were not so traced."

"I beg your pardon, madam, but the pencil marks are quite perceptible. Both Miss Llewellyn and myself noticed them."

By this the lady had had time to collect herself. With a derisive smile she answered:

"Oh! Ah! I recollect now. General Llewellyn wrote both letters, and intending to write something else in addition to them before signing, laid them aside until he should feel stronger. Alas, he never did feel stronger, but fearing that death should overtake him before he could complete his task, he attempted to sign them, one morning, as he lay upon his bed too ill to rise. He found that he could not succeed with a pen and ink, and so he signed them both with a pencil. Afterward, when he was able to sit up, he retraced the signatures with pen and ink."

As Mrs. Llewellyn made this answer she looked full in the face of Arthur Powis, and their eyes again met. Her

eyes were full of derision, triumph, and defiance, as though she had said, "Probe, search, investigate! I am equal to the explanation of any ugly circumstances that you may please to discover." His eyes were full of the fiery scorn that a noble nature feels for a base one.

"Madam, we understand each other. You know exactly what I think of the explanation you have given me. And I know how little you care what I may think of it, so long as it serves your own purpose. I have only this to say—that neither myself nor Miss Llewellyn can accept those forgeries as genuine, or hold ourselves bound by them," said Arthur Powis, firmly.

The lady put her hand to the bell and rang a peal that presently brought Lemuel into the room, with a tray of refreshments in his hands and an excuse on his lips:

"I beg your pardon for bein' so long, madam; but dere was no sandwiches made, and de key ob de cellar was lost, and——"

"Set the tray down on the table and show Mr. Powis to the front door," said the lady, sternly.

But Lemuel was so amazed at this order that, instead of obeying it, he stood staring alternately at the old lady and the young man.

"Never mind, Lemuel. I can find the door for myself when I am ready to go," said Arthur Powis, laughing, and rising.

"My dear Gladys, I am here now! Therefore keep up your spirits and be firm. As soon as I reach my lodgings at Standwell, I shall write to you, asking you to name an early day for our wedding. Think of it meantime, my dearest, so that you may be able to give me an answer at once; for I shall not trust my letter to the post, Gladys, but I shall send it to you by a special messenger, who will wait for your reply," said Arthur Powis, as he stooped over her hand and pressed it to his lips.

"Mr. Powis, I cannot allow that! You forget yourself,

sir! I cannot sanction any communication between yourself and my ward!" said Mrs. Llewellyn, arrogantly.

"My dear madam, your sanction, however desirable, is not absolutely necessary. I have had that of the parents of this young lady, whom I hope, before many days, to call my wife," said Arthur.

"Sir, you never had the sanction of which you boast; or, if you think you ever had it, you must now be assured that it has been rescinded by the letters in your possession. And as for your vain hope of calling Gladys Llewellyn your wife in the course of a few weeks, nothing could be more absurd. She is a minor, and wants three years yet to be of age. By the laws of this State a minor cannot legally marry without the consent of parents or guardians. Her parents are dead. I am her sole guardian; and I never will consent to her marriage with you, or to her holding any sort of communication or correspondence with you. And now, sir, as our conference is at an end, I hope you will have the good taste to withdraw."

"Certainly, madam. Gladys, my own dear one, you will be firm and faithful?"

"I will, Arthur! Cost what it may, I will!" answered the young girl, in a resolute tone, though her face was pale with apprehension.

"Good-by, then! May the Lord save and bless you, my own dear Gladys!" he said, pressing her hand once more to his lips.

Then, with a low bow to the elder lady, he withdrew from the room.

He had to wait outside until his horse was brought him.

Just as he was getting into the saddle, Lemuel came hurrying out of the house.

"Oh, Marse Arthur, sir, I just this minute done got away!" he exclaimed, breathlessly, running up to the horse-block.

"Good-by Lemuel!" said the young man, holding out his hand.

"Oh, Marse Arthur, aint you got no other word nor *that* to say to a faithful servant?" said Lemuel, with a grieved look.

"Yes," exclaimed Arthur Powis, impulsively. "Yes, Lemuel! I have a charge to give you! Watch over your young mistress! And if any thing goes wrong, bring me news of her directly."

"That I will, Marse Arthur!"

"I may trust you with this mission, Lemuel?"

"That you may, Marse Arthur! Good as any misshum-merry as eber went out to de Debil's Icy Peak!"

"Very well, then. Good-by."

"Good-by, and God bless you, Marse Arthur! And hopes you will be coming back soon a triumphing!" said Lemuel, as the young man rode off.

As soon as Arthur Powis rode into Standwell and up to the "Rest," as the principal hotel was called, he saw his horse put up, partook of a slight repast, and had set out immediately for the office of Mr. Fardell, the principal lawyer of the town.

He found the great man in; but had to wait a long time in the outer office before he could obtain the private interview he sought.

At length, when he was closeted with the lawyer, in the little back office, he slipped a fee of fifty dollars in his hand and opened his business.

He told Mr. Fardell the whole story of his relations with the Llewellyn family; his betrothal to Miss Llewellyn; the time fixed for their marriage; the will of General Llewellyn; the recent interference of Mrs. Jay Llewellyn; and in brief all the circumstances with which we are already acquainted.

He ended by laying the two letters before the lawyer, and calling his attention to the suspicious appearance of the signatures.

"Now, sir, remembering all that I have told you, and looking upon these signatures, what do you think of them?" inquired the young man.

"They certainly, taking all things into consideration, appear to be forgeries," replied the lawyer.

"Sir, they *are* forgeries! I *know* them to be forgeries! But I wish also to know how I shall go to work to *prove* them to be forgeries?"

"In the first place, whom do you suspect?"

"Mrs. Jay Llewellyn, of course."

The lawyer slowly shook his head.

"What does that mean, Mr. Fardell?" testily demanded the young man.

"Arthur, I might pocket your fee, and as many more on the back of that as you might choose to throw away on a hopeless cause. But I will not do so. You have not a particle of foundation to build a case upon. If you were to attempt to do so, your case would fall to the ground and overwhelm you with confusion," said the lawyer, frankly.

"But the very suspicious circumstances, Mr. Fardell?" asked the crestfallen youth.

"Are only suspicious circumstances to you and perhaps to me."

"But I am morally certain that these letters are forgeries, and that Mrs. Llewellyn is the forger."

"Moral certainty is not convicting testimony, or many very highly respectable ladies and gentlemen would be usefully employed in the penitentiaries, instead of lounging and idling in fashionable saloons and drawing-rooms," said the lawyer, smiling.

"Then what shall I do in this matter? This is what I want to know."

"Do nothing at present. Above all, do not attempt to prosecute Mrs. Llewellyn; for, by so doing, you would only ruin yourself. You know that, whatever her real character may be, her general reputation is of the most unquestionable description. My advice to you is just to do nothing; but wait until the three years of the young lady's minority have passed, and then claim her promised hand. If she is

constant, she will then bestow herself and her fortune upon you. If she is not constant, you will make a happy escape."

"Good heaven, sir! how coolly you talk. 'Wait,' and 'three years,' and 'if she is constant' or 'not constant!'" exclaimed the young man, with a shiver.

"You know I am not in love, Arthur! But, really, that is the best advice I have to give you. And it shall cost you nothing. If, at any future time, you wish to consult me on this or any other topic, I shall be at your service. At present I am keeping a client waiting, with whom I have an appointment at this hour," said the lawyer, rising, and laying the fifty dollar bank-note before young Powis.

Arthur took it up, thanked his old friend, bowed and left the office.

He went back to his apartment at the Rest, and threw himself into his chair to ruminate.

He felt that he must abandon all idea of loosening Mrs. Llewellyn's grasp upon Gladys by any legal prosecution. So far he must take the lawyer's advice, but further than that he would not. He could not bear the disappointment of having his marriage put off at all. And the thought of waiting three long years for his bride almost drove him wild. And then the idea of leaving Gladys in the irresponsible power of that ruthless woman, filled him with horrible forebodings.

"She is so artful and unscrupulous, that she might even force or cheat my poor love into a marriage with her imbecile son!" said Arthur to himself, with a shudder.

"I will run away with her! I will marry her out of hand! I am perfectly justified in doing so. And, more than that, I am honorably bound to do so. Her dear father and mother consented that our marriage should take place at this period; and they left their orphan girl to my care. And shall I pause now, because of a couple of forged letters that I cannot yet prove to be forgeries? No!" cried the young man, with energy.

And he deliberately determined to marry Gladys in defiance of her false and treacherous guardian. His midshipman's pay was but a small income; but it would support two young persons in the early, inexpensive years of wedlock; and in the meantime he would be promoted. And at the end of three years Gladys would come into her property.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ELOPEMENT.

"Ere yet his boyhood's years had flown,
He gazed on her as some fair star,
And wildly worshipped, as it shone
Above his humble world afar.
Then while he gazed and still adored
On wilder wings wrapt fancy soared.—*Leonora.*

As soon as Arthur had left her, Gladys went to her own room, and shut herself up.

How much she had lived in the last two days! The letters from the dead; the breaking off of her marriage; the return of her betrothed. All these events had crowded her life with a host of thoughts, feelings, and excitements that she could in no way bring into harmony.

All was chaos.

At one moment she was overwhelmed with grief and shame for her aunt's treachery and crime, and the next filled with horror and remorse for her own sin and folly in daring to suspect that such a saint as Mrs. Llewellyn could do any wrong. Sometimes she resolved to disregard those questionable letters, and to be guided entirely by the wishes of Arthur Powis, as the approved choice of her parents, and as the only living being whom she could implicitly trust. At other times she shrank timidly from being influenced by him at all, and sought to persuade herself that her only safety lay in obedience to the dictates of the letters.

Restless through all this confusion of thought, she started up with the intention of going out for a ramble through the autumnal woods.

But when she put her hand on the knob of her door, she found that it was locked on the outside.

She was a prisoner in her own room!

Now, Gladys had a high spirit—her aunt called it a bad temper.

Finding herself subjected to the insults and inconvenience of personal confinement and restraint, she flew to the bell and rang an angry peal, that presently brought her own maid running up in alarm to the door. Bessy tried it, found it fastened, and then knocked.

"Come in," said Gladys, sharply.

"Please, Miss, I can't open the door."

"Isn't the key on the other side?"

"No, Miss."

"Then go down to Mrs. Llewellyn, and give her my compliments, and say that I desire to see her here in my own room."

"Yes, Miss," said the girl, retreating.

Ten minutes elapsed, and then the sound of soft footsteps was heard approaching; a key was placed in the lock and turned; the door was opened; and Mrs. Llewellyn entered, and carefully locked the door after her, and withdrew the key, and put it in her pocket.

Gladys was standing in the middle of the room, with her slight figure drawn up to its proudest height, her cheeks flushed, her nostrils quivering, and her eyes blazing with indignation.

"Well, my love, you sent for me. What is your wish?" inquired the lady, calmly, sinking into an easy-chair.

"I wish to know, madam, what is the meaning of this insult that is offered to my father's daughter?" demanded Gladys, turning upon her.

"What insult, my dear?" coolly replied the lady, adjusting the ribbons that adorned her dress.

Gladys, speechless with rage, silently pointed to the locked door.

"Oh, if you mean *that*, I will tell you. Sit down, my dear—sit down. Do not stand there, burning, and quivering, and palpitating, like a little bombshell ready to explode. Sit down, while I answer your question."

"I think, madam, that I will never sit down in the same room with you again! And I tell you now, that if I ever had any saving doubt about the history of those letters, that doubt is removed by your conduct of to-day!"

"Gladys, how dare you! What do you mean? Stand there, if you prefer to do so. The attitude is at least more respectful. But take care that you give me no insolence; I will not bear it!" said the lady, haughtily.

"Will you explain your conduct, madam?"

"Certainly. I am your legal guardian, standing in the place of your deceased parents, holding a high trust——"

"A trust that you have betrayed, madam! I can no longer be deceived on that point," exclaimed Gladys, with flashing eyes.

"Silence, miss! Silence, this instant! or I will teach you not only by personal restraint, but by personal chastisement, that you are absolutely in my power, and bound to obey my will! I will leave you to reflect upon this with what profit you may, and when you are in a meeker mood I will come to you again," said the lady, haughtily.

And with these words she withdrew from the room, and locked the door behind, leaving Gladys transfixed with amazement and burning with rage.

"Good heaven!" exclaimed the girl, starting, and rushing up and down the floor. "Am I awake, or is this a hideous, mocking dream? What was that she dared to say? Or could I have heard aright? Did she threaten me—*me* with personal——! Ah! the wretch! If she had laid the weight of her hand upon me I should have——! Now I know how it is that people may be driven to——! To threaten me.

me who was never degraded by a blow in all my childhood and infancy! ME whose person was always sacred from such violence even by my own mother and father and nurse! Heavens! if she had struck me, I should have——! Yes, I should have killed her!"

Suddenly, as she said this in the transports of her rage, Gladys threw back her head. And as she did so, her eyes fell upon a picture hanging above the mantel-piece.

As she looked upon this picture she became perfectly still; her face that was convulsed with rage grew calm; the fire died out of her blazing cheeks; tears filled her eyes.

"Heaven forgive me," she softly breathed; "heaven forgive me. What am I, poor child of dust, that I should grow furious at the bare threat of an outrage that thou, the Son of God, didst bear without a murmur? Oh, Saviour, by thine infinite love, give me a portion of thine infinite meekness," said Gladys, sinking on her knees and melting into tears.

What was the picture that had moved Gladys so deeply? That had arrested her, in the very tempest and whirlpool of her passion, and had softened and subdued her, and brought her to her knees?

It was a simple engraving from the "Ecce Homo" of Corregio. It represented our Saviour, bleeding from the recent scourging, crowned with thorns, and wrapped in the mocking purple robe, at the moment Pilate presented him to the Jews, saying—"Behold the man." The artist had caught the spirit of the text, and the divine patience in that pictured face subdued the angry passions of the beholder.

When Gladys arose from her kneeling posture, she sat down by the open window, and leaning her elbow on the sill, looked out upon the peaceful scenes of nature. Under her eyes lay the ornamental grounds immediately around Kader Idris; and all glorious with rich autumnal flowers blooming and glowing in the afternoon sunshine. Beyond them wound the Serpentine river, and beyond that arose the

Alleghany Mountains; and in the far distance towered the Peaks of Otto.

Soothed and strengthened by the peaceful beauty and majestic sublimity of the scene, Gladys sat ruminating far into the evening. She sat until the sun went down, firing the heavens and the earth with his retiring rays, until the western horizon, with all its broken and prismatic clouds, blazed as with a general conflagration; and every mountain top and every forest tree, and every stream and river glowed ruddy red beneath the glare. She sat until all this gorgeousness of coloring faded out and the moon arose, silver gilding all the scene, until all that had lately flamed like rubies in the sun, now mildly beamed like pearl beneath the moon.

And still Gladys sat there, while her room grew dark. She did not ring for lights. She dreaded another interview with her aunt; she dreaded another outbreak of her own temper; and so she resolved to remain quiet as long as circumstances would permit her to continue so.

In truth, Gladys had a good deal to contend with—not only of external wrongs, but of evils in her own nature. She had come of a proud, passionate, overbearing race, who in their old ancestral country had been lords of the soil and masters of many vassals; and in the country of their adoption had been planters and slaveholders for many generations. All their circumstances had fostered a high, arrogant, despotic spirit. Gladys was of their blood, and at the slightest provocation this blood was apt to take fire. She had received a religious education; but had been trained with the utmost tenderness and gentleness. She had never been subjected to harsh contradiction or to any thing approaching corporeal punishment, which latter she would have regarded as the deepest degradation.

It is said that we know not of what spirit we are. Certainly Gladys never knew until this day what spirit she was of. Never in her life before having been subjected to insult, she never knew the murderous wrath that lay latent

in her own soul. And now that it had broken out and shown itself to her in all its hideous destructiveness, she was appalled.

"Oh, heaven! I am no better, not a whit better than those who suffer death by law for their crimes!" she said to herself, with a shudder.

While she sat thus, she heard the key turned in the lock, and looking up, saw Mrs. Llewellyn enter the room, followed by Bessy, bearing a tray with tea and cakes.

Now apparently Mrs. Llewellyn herself had regretted her harshness to Gladys, not because of its unkindness, but because of its bad policy. For certainly it was her cue to retain the affection of this girl whom she wished to bend to her will. And to do this she must govern her as gently as possible. These considerations were not, however, strong enough to induce her to make any apology to Gladys; but only to modify her manner to the poor girl.

"Draw that stand up to the side of Miss Llewellyn's chair, and set the tea-tray on it. And then leave the room," said the lady to the servant.

And when this order was obeyed and Bessy had left the room, Mrs. Llewellyn carefully locked the door behind her, and then seating herself beside her ward said, in a grave and not unkind tone:

"Gladys, while you take your tea, I will tell you the reasons that have induced—I may say compelled me, unwillingly, to subject you to this temporary restraint."

"I should be glad to know them, madam," said the young girl.

"And I hope that you will listen to them without giving way to the unbecoming anger that betrayed you into much injustice, nor to say gross impropriety of word and manner, toward myself."

Gladys glanced up at the pictured face over the mantel-piece, and answered:

"For all the wrong that I may have been led into, Aunt

Llewellyn, I beg your pardon, and that of the Lord. I always knew that anger was sinful, but when I think of our Saviour's example of patience, I feel that it is inexcusable."

"I am glad to hear you say so. Now drink your tea, while I tell you why I deem it right to keep you under some temporary restraint."

At these last words the girl's cheeks flushed and her eyes flashed again, but she controlled herself and remained silent, while Mrs. Llewellyn proceeded:

"Gladys, I began by saying to you that I stand in the relation of a parent toward you during your minority. I consider that relation a holy trust, which I have not betrayed, although you have charged me with having done so."

"I beg your pardon if I have wronged you, Aunt Llewellyn."

"That is understood! Holding the relation I do toward you, and feeling a deep responsibility for the trust, I must consider your welfare and happiness the paramount objects of my life. To secure those objects I must separate you from that dangerous young man whose influence over you I have every reason to dread. The only way in which I can do this is to seclude you in your own room during the stay of this young man in the neighborhood. In doing this, I am sure that I do but carry out the views and intentions of your father. I shall make this transient seclusion as happy as the circumstances will permit. You shall have your music, books, birds, flowers—in short, all that you require for instruction or amusement, removed into this room. And as soon as I feel assured that Arthur Powis has rejoined his ship, your restraint shall be at an end. Now, Gladys, I hope that you understand me?"

"I think I do, Aunt Llewellyn."

"And I trust that you will submit cheerfully to this arrangement."

"I trust in the Lord that I shall be led to do right," said Gladys, pressing her fingers together in the earnestness of her feelings.

After a little more conversation the lady rang the bell, and ordered the servant who answered it to take away the tea-service.

Then she bade Gladys good-night, locked her in, and went down stairs.

"What is right?" inquired the perplexed girl of herself, when she was left alone. "What is right? Ought I really go so far as to give up Arthur? Oh, no, no, no, no! I could not do that if I would, and would not if I could. He was my mother's and my father's choice, as well as my own. I am sure of it. No; I will not give him up. I will try and control my temper; I will treat Aunt Llewellyn respectfully, and will not give her revilings for revilings. But—I will be faithful to my love!"

Half that night Gladys sat at that window, gazing dreamily out into the starlit night. When, at length, she went to bed, worn out with excitement, she slept well until morning.

The next day, according to her promise, Mrs. Llewellyn sent into Gladys' room every thing that could be supposed to render the girl's captivity endurable.

But Gladys could not fix her attention upon any one thing. Needle-work, music, drawing and reading were tried successively, and tried in vain. She spent her time in walking restlessly about the floor or gazing from the window, and in longing to communicate in some way with Arthur, and in wondering when that desire would be gratified.

On the second day she grew more weary and anxious than ever; and she walked about less, and sat looking from the window longer. As she sat there, late in the afternoon, she saw Lemuel with the wooden rake raking up the dried leaves that were lying in heaps upon the lawn.

She tapped upon the window-pane until she had attracted his attention, and then threw up the sash and spoke to him:

"Hist, Lemuel! look up here!"

After the manner of his kind, Lemuel looked all around the horizon, and then up into the tops of the trees, and everywhere else but at the right place.

"Here, Lemuel! up here!" cried Gladys, in a tone eager from anxiety, and half-suppressed from the fear of being heard by others than the one to whom she spoke.

Lemuel looked up to the top of the chimnies, and, seeing no one there, brought his eyes down to the level of the second-floor windows, where they encountered the anxious gaze of Miss Llewellyn.

"Laws, Miss Gladys!"

"Hush, Lem, or speak very low! Is there any one within sight or hearing?"

"Laws, no, Miss Gladys—not a single soul in dese here parts of de grounds!"

"How came you here?"

"Why, you see, Miss Gadys, de madam done took me off de hall-door and put dat misable deaf-and-dumb devil—begging your pardon, miss; begging your pardon humble for using bad words, but he is a devil—Jude, dere in my place, which is perfectly widiculous, 'cause he can't hear, nor likewise speak a word, but only make signs, or take in a card, or shake his head and refuse to take it in. So what de use of putting he dere?"

"I suppose Mrs. Llewellyn had some reason for doing it. And so your duties are changed?"

"Yes, miss; and I is 'lieved of my command in de hall, and 'signed to de department ob de ornamental gardening."

"Do you like gardening as well as waiting?"

"Well, miss, to me personable it don't make much dif'ence. Wot I 'siders is de wisiters."

"Yes! Come here, Lem. Come closer. I have something particular to say to you."

The boy came, dragging his rake behind him, and stood immediately under the window from which Gladys leaned.

"Lem," whispered Gladys, "have you seen Mr. Powis since the day before yesterday?"

"No, miss."

"Have you heard of any letter that has been left here for me?"

"Yes, miss; de berry same morning—which it was yes'day morning as I 'lieved from duty in de hall—and just afore I was so 'lieved comes up a messenger on hoss-back from Standwell, as he said, and 'quires for you, saying as he has a letter which he must put into your hands special. And I was just a gwine to look for you when de madam came out and axed the messenger what he wanted. And the messenger told her that he wanted to put a letter into Miss Llewellyn's own hands. De madam told him how she wouldn't 'mit of him giving no letter, and so she ordered him offen de premises."

"I thought as much. I really did. Lemuel, that letter was from Mr. Powis."

"So I s'picioned, miss."

"And you know he had a perfect right to send me a letter."

"In course I does. Didn't ole marse tell all we collored folks how you and Marse Arthur was engaged to be married, and how us was to 'sider him and look up to him as our futur' marster?"

"Yes, I know; and I wish your testimony to that effect could be taken in the courts, Lemuel; for it would save us from a great deal of distress. But it cannot, and so there is an end of that. But, at any rate, you know, Lemuel, that Mr. Powis has a perfect right to send me a letter, and no one has a right to intercept it?"

"In course I does, Miss Gladys."

"But the letter he wrote me, which was a very important one, for which I have been anxiously waiting for the last

two days, has been stopped and sent back. And I have no writing materials at hand, or I would write to Mr. Powis, and send the note by you. But you can take a message for me, Lemuel?"

"Sartain I can, Miss Gladys. 'Cause why? Why, 'cause I feels bounden to 'bey you 'fore any body else on dis 'state; for, no matter who has de power, you has de right to give orders here."

"Unfortunately, I have no right to give orders, and shall have none for three years to come; but never mind about that now, Lemuel. And neither do I wish you to neglect any task Mrs. Llewellyn has given you, to do any thing for me. But after your day's work is done, Lemuel, you have some time to yourself, and I ask you only as a favor to take a message for me then."

"Why, Miss Gladys, de werry greatest favor and honor and kindness as you could do *me* would be to set me to work for you in any way in dis world. And soon's ebber de sun sets I shall be done my day's task and at your sarvice, miss."

"Very well, Lemuel; come to me, then," said Gladys, drawing in her head and letting down the sash.

Lemuel resumed his work.

Gladys seated herself at the window to wait until the sunset hour released the boy from his day's work.

Blood red and shorn of all his rays, in the dull autumnal mist, the sun went down that fatal night. No sooner had that great red globe of fire dropped out of sight below the horizon than Lemuel threw down his rake and presented himself under the window.

Gladys again threw up the sash and looked out.

"Lemuel, are you quite alone out there?" she asked.

"Quite, Miss Gladys. No one anywheres nigh."

"Listen, then. This is the message you must take to Mr. Powis. But stop—do you know where to find him?"

"Oh, yes miss, at the Rest Hotel in Standwell."

"Right. Well, then, tell Mr. Powis that I did not get his letter, and tell him why I did not get it—though I suppose he knows all that already from the report of his messenger."

"Yes, miss."

"Tell him also that I am compelled to send you to him because I have no other means of communicating with him."

"Oh, Miss Gladys, that's *all* right! Marse Arthur, when he left here t'other day, give me commission, so he did, to watch over you, miss, and bring him news of you whenever I could."

"Mr. Powis did that, Lemuel?"

"'Deed, miss, he did; but I haint had no news to go to him with by reason of not seeing you until this evening."

"My poor Arthur!" murmured Gladys to herself. Then speaking aloud—"Tell him, Lemuel, that I would write to him, only that I am a prisoner in my own room and deprived of writing materials."

"A prisoner in your own room!" exclaimed Lemuel, opening his mouth and eyes in consternation.

"Why, yes, Lemuel. I thought you knew that."

"Me know it! No, Miss Gladys, none of us colored folks don't know it! Leastways none of us outen de house; less you might be sure we wouldn't stand it—no, not one minute! What! *we* know our marster's onliest darter, who is de rightful queen and mist'ess ober ebery thing and eberybody here, kept a prisoner in her own room by a inter-oper like de madam! And *we* put up wid it? No, Miss Gladys! We'd done raised a resurrection for dis and busted open ebery door in de house to deliber you! And we'll do it yet 'fore two hours is ober our heads!" exclaimed the loyal negro, with all his hot African blood boiling at the outrage that had been inflicted on his young lady.

"Hush, Lemuel! Are you going crazy and going to break the laws and all that? Why, you would only get yourselves and me into greater trouble. Mrs. Llewellyn is my legal guar-tian and the law is on her side."

"If de law is on her side, de law is a grand vilyun! And we wont submit to it. We'll be true to you, Miss Gladys. You's our young lady. And we's your people. And we'll hab you out o' dat, or die for it!" said the boy, with a gasp and a sob.

"Well, so you shall have me out, but not by violence. You will obey me, I hope, Lemuel, if I *am* a helpless prisoner here?"

"Wont I? And wont I obey you ten times more submissive because you *is* so?" sobbed the boy.

"Well, then, Lemuel, do not attempt any rebellion against Mrs. Llewellyn's authority. But go quietly, and without saying a word to any other person, to Mr. Powis, and tell him all that I have told you. And wait to see what he himself proposes. No doubt he will do all that is right. Now go, like a good lad, while you have an opportunity."

"I'll go; yes, I'll go. But if Marse Arthur don't find a way of getting you outen dis here place afore to-morrow night, I hopes and trusts as you wont try to 'vent me of doing it; 'cause if you did, my heart would bust, Miss Gladys," said Lemuel, wiping his eyes with the sleeves of his jacket.

"Mr. Arthur will be sure to find a way. Never fear, Lemuel. Go on, now, and make haste."

"I'm agoing, Miss Gladys," said Lemuel, with a finishing sob and an awkward bow, as he turned his back upon the house.

And Gladys closed the window and sat down beside it, half frightened by the step she had taken, to await the issue.

"It will take Lemuel an hour to get to Standwell, and Arthur another hour to write me a long letter, and then Lem a third hour to get back. It is now about five o'clock. It will be eight before he returns. How long to wait!" sighed Gladys, to whose impatient heart the three hours seemed three years.

At six o'clock Mrs. Llewellyn came in, attended by

Bessy, bringing Miss Llewellyn's tea. The elder lady always was present on these occasions to prevent any communication between the young lady and her maid.

After a poor pretence of taking tea, Gladys pushed the waiter from her; and Mrs. Llewellyn bade the young girl good-night, and left the room, followed by Bessy with the tea-service. And Gladys was locked up for the night.

CHAPTER V.

THE FLIGHT OF GLADYS.

How beautiful she looked, her conscious heart
Glowed on her cheek, and yet she felt no wrong.
Oh love, how perfect thy majestic art!
Strengthening the weak and trampling on the strong;
How self-deceitful is the sagest part
Of mortals whom thy lure hath led along.—*Byron.*

THE last two days had been passed by Arthur Powis in the most intense anxiety. Twice he had been to Kader Idris, trying to see, or hear from, or in some way communicate with Gladys. On both occasions he had been ingeniously frustrated by the arts of Mrs. Llewellyn, and had returned to his hotel, bitterly disappointed.

On this, the evening of the second day, he was sitting in his room, engaged in writing a second long letter to Gladys, in which he proposed their speedy marriage, and which he hoped to find some opportunity of sending to her, when there came a rap at the door, followed almost immediately by the entrance of Lemuel.

"Well, boy! Well! what news do you bring me? How is your young lady? How is Miss Llewellyn?" exclaimed Arthur Powis, starting up to meet the messenger, and hurrying question upon question in his eagerness for intelligence of Gladys.

"Yes, sir; I bring you a message from Miss Gladys; which the old madam, she's been and locked her up in her room, and wont allow her no paper nor likewise pen nor ink to write to you with——"

"WHAT! Locked whom up?" cried Arthur Powis, cutting the negro short in his story.

"Miss Gladys, sir; which the old madam has locked her up in her own room, and wont allow her no paper, nor likewise——"

"Boy! do you pretend to tell me that that woman has dared to turn a key upon Miss Llewellyn?" exclaimed the young man, with suppressed fury.

"Well, sir, I can't say positive whether it was a key or a bolt, or it might even be a bar, but she is fastened in, and there has been for the last two days—without paper and likewise without——"

"Heaven and earth! If ever I have that woman in my power, nothing in this world shall induce me to spare her—not even consideration for her sex! Dared to imprison Gladys!" cried Arthur, stamping.

"Yes, sir; without paper and likewise pen and ink, which is the reason why as Miss Gladys didn't write; but trusted me long of a worded message——"

"A verbal message—what was it?"

"What I just been a telling of you, sir—how she is 'fined into her own room, without paper and likewise——"

"Was there no other word she sent me? You told me *that* before. What else did she say?" anxiously interrupted Arthur.

"No, sir; dat was all the message she sent to you; but she oberbed to me as how you would know what to advise, and how I must wait here to take your orders; and then get back as soon as I possible could. Oh! I ought for to tell you, sir, as Miss Gladys knows de reason why she didn't 'ceive de letter as you sent the day before yes'day."

"Yes? She knows that I wrote to her very promptly;

but that the letter was stopped at the door and sent back to me? She knows that?"

"Yes, sir; 'cause I was on de spot and saw it done, and I telled her."

"I thank you, Lemuel; I thank you very much, my faithful fellow; but how did *you* contrive to speak to Miss Llewellyn?"

"It were providential, sir! De madam she 'lieved me of duty at de hall door, fear I should be passin' of letters or messages back'ards and for'ards, I s'pose; and put dat deaf and dumb Jude dere; and 'signed me to de department ob de ornamental gardening, which I was raking up de dry leaves on the lawn underneaf of de west windows, when Miss Gladys saw me and spoke to me, and sent dis message to you."

"Thank you, Lemuel! Thank you again, my good fellow! Wait! wait!" said Mr. Powis, walking up and down the floor, with his hand upon his brow, as in perplexed thought.

The black boy backed to the door and leaned against it, resting while he waited.

Arthur Powis, after walking a few paces up and down the room, sat down at his writing-table and added a postscript to the letter which had been interrupted by the arrival of Lemuel.

"Boy, can you find any means of getting this into the hands of your young lady?" he inquired, as he folded and sealed the letter.

"Yes, sir."

"Are you certain?" repeated Arthur, rising from the table.

"Sartain sure, sir."

"How will you manage it?"

"Why, Miss Llewellyn will be a watching for me; and when I go under her window I will ax her to let down a string, and I will tie the letter to the end of it so as she can draw it up."

"And if she has not got a string?"

"Why then I can climb up to the window with a little trouble and hand it to her."

"Very good. And now, Lemuel, tell me, is there a—— But stop! You are faithful to your young lady?"

"Oh, sir! faithful to her as I am to my Lord and Mars-ter in hebben!" said the black boy, fervently.

"Yes; I am sure you are! I should not have doubted it for an instant. And indeed I did not doubt it, my boy! I only hesitated a moment."

"Well, sir, what was you agoing for to ax me? You said, Is there a——? and you stopped."

"Is there a light, strong, safe ladder about the premises at Kader Idris that would reach from the ground to Miss Llewellyn's window?"

"Yes, sir, lots of 'em."

"Could you convey one secretly to the spot?"

"Sartain sure, sir!"

"Then that is all that I shall require of you at present, Lemuel. I must trust to your tact and discretion to get this letter into the hands of Miss Llewellyn, and the ladder at the spot, safely and secretly."

"Yes, sir; I wish it was as easy for everybody to get to hebben as it is for me to do all dat!" said the black boy, taking his old felt hat up from the floor.

"Very well, then. Lose no time in getting back, Lem."

The faithful fellow ducked his head and disappeared.

After Mrs. Llewellyn had left her, Gladys remained sitting at the open window, looking out into the night, and waiting for the return of her messenger.

"Two hours yet," murmured the girl to herself—"two long hours must pass before he can get back; but I will be patient."

Slowly and heavily passed those two hours to the lonely captive. Her room was far removed from the inhabited portions of the house. The family were all within doors,

engaged in their evening avocations or amusements. The lawn was deserted, and there was not a sound to disturb the silence of the night except the chirp of innumerable insects, whose tiny, shrill notes seemed only to make the solitude more lonely. The night sky, studded with stars above her head; the changing foliage, alive with chirping insects beneath; these were all she saw or heard from her post of observation.

Seven struck from the ormolu clock on the mantel-shelf.

"One more dreary hour—how long! how long it seems!" sighed Gladys, dropping her tired head upon her hand as she leaned on the window-sill.

A bat flew through the open sash into her room, and frightened her; and after beating itself wildly about from wall to wall, struck itself sharply against the marble mantel-piece and fell dead on the floor.

Gladys started with a shudder, picked it up and threw it out, and sat down again, trembling, and almost hysterical through solitude and suspense.

But half the hour had gone, when she heard the sound of a cautious step softly crushing the fallen leaves under her window.

She leaned out.

"Hsh—" whispered a voice below.

"Is that you, Lemuel?" she inquired.

"It aint nobody else, Miss Gladys."

"Good boy! you have got back sooner than I expected."

"I run nearly all the way there and back, Miss."

"Good lad! Lemuel, I will reward you well when I come into my property. Did you see——"

"Oh, Miss, I don't want no rewards but the pleasure of sarving you."

"Thank you, Lemuel; but never mind that now. I asked you did you see Mr. Powis?"

"That I did, miss; and I telled him eberyting, and he guv me a letter to bring you, as I suppose will explain eberyting else."

"Oh, Lemuel, how will you get it up to me?" exclaimed Gladys, eagerly.

"Has you got sich a article as a string, miss?"

"Yes—no—yes: will a very slender one do?"

"If it is strong enough to hold a letter, miss."

Gladys flew about the room almost as wildly as the bat that had beaten itself to death had done, and at last found her crochet work; she broke off the thread, and taking one end of it in her hand, threw the ball out of the window, saying:

"Tie the letter to that, Lemuel, and I will draw it up."

The black boy obeyed as well as his clumsy fingers would permit him to do, and in three minutes Gladys had her lover's letter in her hand.

"Wait outside until I have read it, Lemuel," she said, closing the window, and drawing the curtain before striking a light.

Then she eagerly broke the seal and began to devour the contents of the letter. The body of that letter was but the usual ardent, eloquent effusion of youthful love, and need not be repeated here. But the postscript explained that the writer would follow the letter within an hour.

Hastily folding it up, Gladys went and opened the window, and called cautiously to her servant:

"Lemuel, Mr. Powis will be here presently. Keep a bright look-out, lest any one else should be in the way to discover him. And if you see any one near when he is coming, slip away and warn him."

"You may trust me for that, Miss Gladys."

An hour passed, and the stillness of the night grew deeper.

And then a firm, light step was heard approaching, and the next moment the voice of Arthur sounded, speaking beneath the window:

"All well here, Lemuel?"

"All well, sir; nobody about but Miss Gladys, 'sides us, an' she awaiting at de window, still as a mouse."

"Gladys, mine own!" whispered the young man, looking up.

"Yes, Arthur—I am here," she answered, leaning out.

"Heaven bless you, my dearest! Wait a moment, Gladys," said the young man. Then turning to Lemuel, he whispered:

"Have you brought the ladder?"

"Not yet, sir. It was too soon to venter when I first got back, 'cause I might have met some of de hands; and 'sides which, Miss Gladys ordered of me to watch here to keep de coast clear, or leastwise to warn you if anybody was near when I see you a-coming."

"Yes; that was quite right; but I hope now that you can get the ladder without any further delay."

"Oh, yes, Marse Arthur! now, this minute, sir," said the black boy, hurrying off.

As soon as the servant was gone, Arthur Powis climbed upon the sill of the drawing-room window, and holding by the cornice, said:

"Gladys, my love, lean down here."

She did so, almost at the risk of losing her balance and falling to the ground.

"Gladys, my dearest, you must trust yourself to me to-night, and henceforth, forever!" he said.

"Oh, Arthur, what do you mean?" she asked, trembling with alarm.

"You must give me a legal right to protect you."

"Oh, Arthur——"

"Gladys, my darling, you must be my wife."

"Some day—some day—if I live, you know I will, Arthur."

"Gladys, you must be my wife within twenty-four hours from this! And to effect this, Gladys, you must leave this place with me to-night," said the young man, firmly.

"An elopement! is that what you propose to me? Oh, Arthur! I never, never can consent to such a proceeding," exclaimed the agitated girl.

"Gladys, you will consent to it within the next half hour—that is, if you love me, and if you are reasonable. Gladys, darling, listen to me. The time has already arrived which was fixed for our marriage by your dear deceased parents. If they were living, our marriage would take place; for it was the settled purpose of their hearts that it should. But that purpose has been frustrated by the treachery of the guardian they appointed to take charge of you. And your property, your peace, and even your person is exposed to imminent danger so long as you remain in the power of that false and ruthless woman. You must escape with me to-night!"

"But, oh, Arthur!—to leave my home secretly and by night—to steal away in the darkness like a guilty and cowardly creature—I cannot! I like to be straightforward and above board in all I do!"

"So do I!" exclaimed the young man, earnestly; "so do I, in almost all cases. But there are cases in which one cannot be straightforward and above board. And this is one of them. We have no power to unmask and punish Mrs. Jay's treachery and forgery. So we must escape ruin from both by stratagem. We have no power to deliver you by force; so we must do it by stealth."

"Oh! I wish I knew what was right," sobbed the girl.

"Gladys, I will put you in the way of finding out. Supposing your dear father and mother, looking down from their blest abode upon their orphan child in her captivity and wretchedness, and knowing all the circumstances, could advise her—what do you suppose in such a case their advice would be? Would they counsel her to stay here in the power of that bad woman and exposed to all her arts, or would they advise her to escape to the protection of one whom they themselves had accepted as her husband? Speak, Gladys!"

These questions seemed to strike the young girl very forcibly. She dropped her head upon her hand, and appeared to reflect very deeply.

"Speak, Gladys!" once more implored the youth.

"I think—I really do think that they would rather that I should go with you than remain here; and suffer all I do, and risk all I shall. I know my dear papa regretted that we could not be married before he died, so that he could leave me in trustworthy hands," said Gladys, slowly and thoughtfully.

"Then he did *not* trust Mrs. Llewellyn?"

"He never expressed any distrust of her; and certainly, the fact of his making her the guardian of his daughter and the trustee of the estate, would go to prove that he placed the greatest confidence in her. Yet for all that, I think there were times when he *instinctively* distrusted her; but as it seemed against all evidence and all reason, he struggled against that distrust, and acted in defiance of it."

"Fatally! Well, Gladys, my dear, you must now do what you believe your father and mother would approve of your doing in the extremity to which you are reduced. I see Lemuel approaching with the means of your escape. Get yourself ready, my dearest one, and in a few minutes you shall be free."

Saying this, Arthur Powis dropped off the window-sill, and turned to meet Lemuel, who had just arrived with the ladder.

They adjusted it to the window.

In a few minutes Gladys appeared at the top, arrayed for her departure; but looked down and hesitated, timidly.

"Do not attempt the descent alone, my dearest. Lemuel, steady the ladder, while I go up!" exclaimed the young man, as he ran up.

As Gladys, with her hand in his, still hesitated, he took her up gently in his arms, and brought her down carefully, and set her upon the ground safely.

"Now, love, you are free! Lean on my arm, and let us hurry from this place," he exclaimed, drawing her arm with'n his own, and walking away at a rapid pace.

"Good-by, Lemuel! Good-by, dear, good Lemuel!" said Gladys, thoughtful, even in this exciting moment, of the feelings of her humblest slave.

"Oh, yes! good-by, Lemuel! Call next week at the Rest, and ask for a parcel that I will send to you there! It shall be a handsome present, Lemuel!" exclaimed the young man, suddenly recollecting his indebtedness to the black boy.

"I don't want no presents, I am much obliged to you, sir; leastways not for *this*. Good-by, Miss Gladys! The Lord bless you, miss! And he will, too." And the black boy threw himself sobbing upon the ground. And the fugitives pursued their flight.

"You have something there under your shawl, dearest. Give it to me to carry," said Arthur, as they hurried along.

"It is only a leather travelling-bag," said Gladys, producing it.

A good heavy one it was, as Arthur found when he smilingly took it from her.

They hastened on through the ornamental grounds; through the kitchen gardens; through the vineyards; through the orchards; through a meadow; and then came out upon a by-road, where, under the thick shade of some evergreen trees, stood a carriage and horse.

There was no driver, and the horse was tied to a tree.

"Get in, my dearest," said Arthur, carefully putting Gladys into a back seat, and setting the carpet-bag at her feet.

Then he untied the horse, jumped in and took his place by her side, and set off at a brisk trot.

"Oh, Arthur!" cried Gladys, dropping her head upon his shoulder, "I am so terrified and so ashamed!" And she burst into tears.

"Think of your dear father, Gladys. Think of your sainted mother, my love! Think how they would approve this step that you are taking! And have courage and com-

fort, my dearest," said Arthur Powis, gently caressing her.

But the road that was bad at all times, was worse at night, insomuch as it was then really dangerous to travel. And so Arthur was obliged soon to leave off caressing and comforting his bride elect, and was compelled to give his whole attention to the duty of driving and guiding the horse through the perils of the way. And Gladys sobbed quietly in the corner of the back seat. Suddenly she broke forth again:

"Oh, Arthur, *where* are you taking me? I had not even sense or recollection enough left to ask you *that* before."

"To the nearest point, my dear girl, where we can be united."

"But, oh, Arthur!" she exclaimed, with a shudder, "it has just occurred to me——"

"What has just occurred to you, mine own?"

"We must go back! I must give myself up again to Mrs. Jay!"

"Gladys!"

"I must, Arthur! Indeed, I must!" she exclaimed, laying violently hold of his arm to prevent his driving on.

The horse began to rear and plunge, and back amid the holes and gullies and precipices of the mountain road.

"Gladys, you are mad! You will get your neck broken!"

"Better have my neck broken than to go on!" wildly exclaimed the girl.

"You *are* mad!" cried Arthur, springing from the carriage and taking the ungovernable horse by the head.

When the startled animal was reduced to order, and the carriage stood still, Arthur, holding the horse's head, said:

"Now, Gladys, what is all this? Why do you wish to return?"

"Oh, Arthur, I must! I must! indeed I must return! You never would take me away against my will!" exclaimed the girl, in wild affright.

"Certainly not!" answered the young man, bitterly; "but I ask you why you have so suddenly changed your mind? I have a right to know that, Gladys, before I turn back with you."

"Oh, yes, yes; it was because I recollected something! Something of the utmost importance! Oh! I must have been mad indeed, ever to have forgotten it!"

"What, Gladys! what?"

"Oh, that we could not be legally married without the consent of my guardian while I am a minor!"

"Is *that* what troubles you, Gladys?" inquired the young man, in astonishment.

"Oh, yes, yes! what a fatal thing it would have been if I had not remembered it in time!" exclaimed the girl, wringing her hands.

"Dismiss your fears, Gladys! All is right; or it will be so," said the young man, calmly, resuming his seat by her side, taking the reins and driving on.

"What is all right? How can it be all right? Arthur! you must not proceed!" she exclaimed, again attempting to seize the reins.

"Gladys, my dearest, I can neither permit you to break your neck, nor to return to your prison, nor to do yourself any other fatal injury. Listen to me," he said, holding her hand so firmly, and speaking so resolutely, that she was constrained to attend.

"What do you mean? You would never take an unfair advantage of this step that I have taken? No, I know you would not," she whispered.

"Heaven knows that I would not."

"What, then, do you mean? We cannot be legally married without the consent of my guardian!"

"Not in Virginia, Gladys! That is what I was about to explain to you. Not in Virginia, because Virginia still retains some old and barbarous laws, relics of the feudal ages, and discredits to modern civilization—laws that every other

State has discarded. So we cannot be married in Virginia. But we can cross the Potomac into the neighboring State of Maryland, where the laws of man do not presume to controvert those of God—and there we can be legally married."

"Is that so?" she inquired, in surprise.

"If it were not, would I say that it was? If it were not, would I have taken you from your home?"

"Oh, no, no, no; I am sure you would not! I can trust in you, Arthur! I do trust in you from this time."

"Indeed you may, Gladys! Heaven knows that you may! Your welfare is dearer to me than my own life. And now, darling, let us improve the time, and make for Maryland as fast as we can," said Arthur Powis, touching up his horse, and putting him to his best speed—or to the best that was consistent with the dangers of the night's journey along that dark road.

At eleven o'clock the moon arose, and gradually ascending through a cloudless sky, illumined all their way.

"The worst is over now, my brave girl! The darkness has all passed away. We shall have the moonlight until the sun rises; and before the night comes again, we shall be at our journey's end," said Arthur, turning for a moment to caress his bride elect.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MARRIAGE.

"Oh, beautiful! and rare as beautiful!
 Theirs was the love in which the mind delights
 To lose itself when the old world grows dull,
 And we are sick of its hack sounds and sights."—Byron.

As the dawn grew brighter, Gladys observed that they were slowly winding up a mountain-road, bordered on each

side by heavy woods. On the right hand side, where the ground was higher, these woods rose tier upon tier until the highest trees seemed to touch the heavens. On the left, they fell terrace below terrace, until the tops of the lowest seemed lost in the shadows of some fathomless abyss. The morning, kindling into day, lighted up all this affluence of autumnal foliage, until the brilliant hues were almost too gorgeous to look upon. Here, as far as the eye could reach, above and below, glowed colors so splendid that no artist could hope ever to transfer them to his canvas; the deep, dark green of the changeless pines and cedars contrasted finely with the burning crimson of the changing oaks, and the shining gold of the sycamores, the gleaming silver of the pale, ghostly maple, and the glowing purple of the sombre dogwood. And over all were the deep blue heavens, and the rosy light of morning.

Even in the midst of their intense anxiety, the lovers could not help enjoying this glorious scene. Silence fell between them as they contemplated it. And though their souls were in communion with each other, as well as with nature, their lips spoke nothing. Those who really love nature make no fuss about it; their love is too reverent.

The winding road took them around the side of the mountain, and down on the other side, to a little hamlet situated in a deep, verdant vale, and thence called Greendell. There, built on one side of the road, was a blacksmith shop, a post-office, and a country store-house; and on the other side was a nice, quiet hotel, which was a white, framed house, with green blinds and long porches, all shaded with acacia trees, and running vines, in all the brilliant foliage of autumn.

Here Arthur Powis drew up his tired horse, got out, and lifted his betrothed from the carriage.

Waiter, groom and hostler gathered around him.

"Take my horse out, rub him down, and give him a feed," he said to the hostler. Then, turning to the waiter, he said:

"Show us into a private parlor."

The waiter bowed low, and, walking before, ushered them into the house, and into a pretty room with neat furniture, fluttering white curtains, and windows that looked out upon the woods and hills.

"Will marse have breakfast?" inquired the man, bowing and waiting orders.

"Of course. Gladys, dear," said Arthur, turning to her and speaking low, "what will you have?"

"Oh, Arthur, just what you like. Please order it for me; indeed I cannot do so yet," said Gladys, blushing intensely with embarrassment at her new position.

Arthur Powis paused a moment in perplexity. He knew very well what he wanted for himself, but then something delicate was required for Gladys. Suddenly he spoke:

"Get some coffee and tea, and let both be of the best; some white sugar and rich cream; some light bread, and fresh butter, and poached eggs; some broiled partridges, and"—here he spoke for himself—"some buckwheat cakes and beefsteak."

"Yes, marse."

"How soon can it be ready?"

"In 'bout three quarters of an hour, sar."

"Very well; now go and send the landlady or the head chambermaid here."

With a low bow the waiter withdrew to obey.

Arthur turned toward Gladys. She was standing at a back window gazing fixedly out, yet as if she saw nothing. He stepped to her side and looked into her face. Her eyes were full of tears and her cheeks were white as death.

"Gladys! why, Gladys! dearest love, what is the matter?" he inquired, tenderly stealing his arm around her waist.

She shrank from him, shrinking as it were into herself.

"Why, Gladys! beloved!" he said, laying his hand gently on her shoulder.

"Oh, don't touch me! please don't, Arthur! I cannot bear

it now; indeed I cannot!" she exclaimed, in low, vehement tones.

"Have I displeased you, Gladys?" he inquired, tenderly, but a little reproachfully.

"Oh, no, no, no, dear Arthur. It is I! It is myself!"

"What is the matter, then, Gladys, that you should throw me off in this way?"

"Oh, don't be angry with me! Have pity on me! I am so frightened and so ashamed; I feel as if I had done so very wrong; and as if it were so improper and so shocking for me to be here alone with you in a hotel," she murmured. And as she spoke her face, neck, and forehead grew scarlet with burning blushes.

"But you are doing no wrong, dear Gladys. You are carrying out the plans of your parents for your future happiness."

"I know; and I do not really *think* that I am doing ill; but I *feel* as if I were; I cannot help it, dear Arthur," she said, smiling through her tears and blushes.

That smile reminded him of sunshine on a dew-spangled rose; and, laughing lightly, he stooped to kiss her, saying:

"Nonsense, love."

But she quickly evaded the caress, exclaiming, breathlessly:

"Oh, Arthur, don't! please don't kiss me, or even lay your hand on me, while we are alone together here. And don't be angry with me, dear."

He dropped his hand and answered, slowly:

"No, I cannot be angry with my dearest one; my only dear one; but I am hurt, Gladys, that you put me from you in this way. What is the reason?"

"I don't know, Arthur. It is not unkindness, dear; but I cannot help it. I am distressed, ashamed to look any one in the face, and even afraid of you."

"Afraid of me, Gladys?"

"Yes; don't be hurt with me, please; I know that I am

foolish; but have patience with me, dear, until—until—
And then I will not cross you any more. I will be good," she answered, in a voice so low that he had to stoop to hear it.

"I understand you, Gladys. I understand you thoroughly, my love. I have been very thoughtless. I should have studied your feelings more. But I am a rough sailor, Gladys. And I beg your pardon. From this time, dearest, you are as sacred to me as a queen," he said, earnestly, as he raised her hand to his lips, bowed over and relinquished it.

She turned on him a smile full of tenderness and devotion, as she murmured:

"I am your own, dear Arthur; mind and heart and soul your own; only bear with my weakness a little while, and then——"

The bustling entrance of the landlady cut short their interview.

She was a stout, middle-aged, motherly matron, dressed in an imitation lace cap, with many flying blue ribbons, and in a cheap calico gown.

Arthur turned and addressed her:

"Will you be so good, madam, as to show this young lady to a room where she can take off her bonnet."

Without immediately replying, the landlady looked suspiciously from the one to the other of her guests, as if trying to discover what their relations to each other might be. They were not brother and sister, that she settled at a glance; for there was not a vestige of family likeness between them.

Arthur was tall, broad-shouldered and athletic, with flaxen hair, blue eyes and fair skin.

Gladys was petite and elegant, with hair and eyes as black as night.

Therefore, of course, they could not be brother and sister. Beside, the young lady was in deep mourning, covered with bombazine and crape, and the young gentleman wore a naval uniform, without a vestige of grief about him. And

that was curious, too. So the landlady gazed until Arthur startled her by impatiently repeating his question:

"Will you show this young lady to a room where she can take off her bonnet?"

"She can take it off here, for that matter," was the cool reply.

"But she wishes to change her dress—I mean to prepare for breakfast," said Arthur, sharply.

"Come along, then, miss."

Gladys followed her conductor up stairs into the room immediately over the one they had left.

It was a pleasant chamber, with more fluttering white curtains, more green blinds, and more windows looking out upon the woods and hills.

Gladys took off her black bonnet and cloak, and was taking down her back hair previous to combing it, when the landlady, who was busying herself with the ewer and basin at the washstand, suddenly came out with this appalling question:

"Is that young man down stairs your brother, miss?"

Gladys fell into a trembling fit.

"No, ma'am," she answered, in a voice so low that it was almost inaudible.

"Is he your husband, then?" inquired the woman, magisterially.

"No, ma'am," breathed Gladys, in a voice even lower than before.

"I'm very sorry to hear it, miss. It is a very dreadful thing for a young lady to be travelling about all over the world with a young gentleman that is nothing to her," said the landlady.

"He is my betrothed," murmured Gladys, in a faint voice; and, utterly overcome by shame and embarrassment, she dropped her head and sank into the nearest seat.

"Your betrothed? What's that? Your sweetheart?"

"He is going to be my husband. We are on our way to

Maryland to be married," replied Gladys, speaking scarcely above her breath.

"A runaway match! That is shocking! Such things never turn out well, young lady! I advise you to pause while there is time—though, indeed, it may be already too late; but that depends upon how far you have come. Ah! I guess how it is! I dare say, now, you are an heiress, aint you now?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"To a good, large fortune, I'll be bound."

"Yes."

"And you aint of age yet? Why no, you can't be; you are no more than a child."

"I am eighteen."

"Don't look more than fifteen! Well, and the young fellow, down stairs, I dare say now as he has got nothing?"

"He has a noble heart that outweighs any fortune I could bring him," said Gladys, earnestly.

"Oh, of course! just so! just as I thought! a fortune-hunter running away with an heiress. Child, I ought to stop you where you are, and send word to your parents. I am a mother myself, and can feel for their distress," said the woman, solemnly.

"Oh, if you are a mother," cried Gladys, clasping her hands; "if you are a mother, have pity on me, for I have none; I am an orphan, without a friend in the world except the young gentleman who is to be my husband."

"Child, he is your worst enemy, if you did but know it. Let him go. If you are an heiress, you will find friends enough besides him. And he is your worst enemy, as I said before! Why, honey, he'll squander your fortune in riotous living, and bring you to poverty; and if you complain he'll beat you. I know it. I have seen so many cases of that sort."

"Oh! how you wrong him! how mistaken you are in him! how unjust! He is truth, and honor, and goodness personified!" exclaimed Gladys, fervently.

"I dare say you think so, poor child! But I am more experienced than you, and I know better? He is a fortune-hunter and a spendthrift, who will squander your money and break your heart! You had better be advised by me, and let me keep you here and send for your guardian; for if you have no father and mother, poor child, you must have a guardian."

"Oh no, no, no! pray do not send for any one! You are utterly mistaken! He is not what you think him. In proof of it, I assure you that he was approved by my parents. We were engaged with their consent!" exclaimed Gladys, earnestly clasping her hands.

"Then if you were engaged to each other with the consent of your parents, why, in the name of the seven wonders of the world, should you run away to be married? It looks discreditable."

"I know it looks so," said Gladys humbly.

"Then why do it?"

"Oh, I had better tell you all about it. You look good and true. I had better tell you."

"Yes, child, do," said the lady, settling herself down in the arm-chair for a good gossip.

In a very few words Gladys told her touching story.

The landlady listened attentively and watched closely. The truth was apparent in every word and look of the speaker, and it found its way to the heart of the hearer.

"Poor child! poor motherless girl! if this is so, as I believe it is, I do not blame you! You could not have done otherwise. I am sorry I spoke harshly to you; but you see I did not understand how it all was; and it looked badly," said the landlady, kindly, as Gladys finished her story.

"Oh, I know! I know it did! and it does still!" said Gladys; and finding now a sympathizing, motherless woman, the motherless girl poured out to her all the embarrassments that had so distressed her since her arrival.

"I know, my dear; I know all about it. You would feel better if you had some third person with you."

"Oh, yes, yes; but I have no one; not a friend in the world, except the one who is to be my husband."

"I'd just as lief as not. I don't see why I shouldn't. I can leave the house for a day or two in the care of sister Ann and the boys. I believe I will," said the landlady, communing with herself. Then speaking aloud, she inquired:

"How far are you going, my dear?"

"To Harper's Ferry, where we will cross into Maryland."

"Would you like me to go with you, and be your mother until you are married?"

"Oh, if you would! Oh, if you would!" passionately exclaimed Gladys, clasping her hands.

"Would the young gentleman like it?"

"Oh, yes; he would like any thing that would add to my comfort. He will be very grateful to you."

"Well, then, I'll go; so no more about it," said the woman.

"Oh, I thank you! I thank you more than I can ever tell you! But, will it not inconvenience you, this journey, taken only on my account?"

"N—no," said the woman, hesitating. "It will not inconvenience me, but quite the contrary. I have a daughter married at Harper's Ferry, whose husband keeps a hotel there; and I have been thinking of visiting her for some time; but I had no company, and I never like to travel alone. So if I can serve you, and benefit myself at the same time, we shall both be pleased."

"Oh, that we will! I should not have felt easy if I had thought you were about to sacrifice your interest or pleasure for the sake of aiding me, a perfect stranger," said Gladys, smiling.

"Child, I might have done it for all that. My love for my own girls makes me feel for other young creatures, especially for motherless ones. And now, dear, hadn't you better make haste and wash your face, and do up your hair?"

I reckon breakfast will be ready by the time you get through," said the landlady, rising to leave the room.

"One moment, please. All this time I have not ascertained your name," said Gladys.

"To be sure! Why, did you not see it on the sign-board—Parker's Hotel? That's my name. I have carried on the business ever since my poor husband's death; and more for the sake of his memory than for any great profit it brings me; for you see, as long as the sign-board of Parker's Hotel swung before the house, it seemed to be like he was not altogether quite gone—that something was left of him still. And besides, dear, I was jealous of anybody else's name hanging up there in place of his; and so, instead of selling out the business, which I might have done, at a good price, I just kept it on for his sake; and I mean to do so as long as ever I live."

The talkative landlady spoke very cheerfully as she poured this little bit of family history into the ears of her young guest; but the girl's dark eyes were full of tears, and her face full of pity, as she said:

"You are a widow, then? Oh, how sad it must be to lose one's husband! The saddest of all human bereavements, I do think!" And as she spoke these words, the shadows of life's darkest possibilities crossed her mind, and she thought how desolate her own lot might be. And so she pitied the widow, who, having lost her husband, clung so closely to every thing that had been a part of his life.

"Ah, well," said the landlady, with a sigh, "so it is. But in time we get reconciled to all things; and if it were not so, the business of the world could not go on at all. Besides—we shall meet above," she added, reverently.

"Yes, you will meet above," answered Gladys.

And then the good woman left the room.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MARRIAGE BREAKFAST.

One bosom to recline upon,
One heart to be his only one,
Are quite enough for love.—*Moore.*

WHEN Gladys had renovated her toilet, she also went below to the sitting room, where she found breakfast already on the table.

"Oh, I hope I haven't kept you waiting until every thing is cold, Arthur," said Gladys, suddenly remembering how much such "waiting" used to annoy her father.

"No, dear, the coffee is just this moment brought in. Take your place, and try to think that you are at home. You have done the honors of your father's breakfast table often enough to be used to the duty," replied Arthur, smiling, as he led her to a chair.

Ah! but this was not her father's table; and Gladys felt the difference, and blushed deeply, as she sat down and began to arrange the cups and saucers, preparatory to pouring out the coffee.

While they were eating breakfast, Gladys described to Arthur her interview with the landlady, and told him of her offer to accompany them on their journey.

"She was harsh with me at first, Arthur; but it was only because she thought that I was doing very wrong, running away from my father and mother, or guardian; but when she saw how it was, she was very kind to me; for she is a conscientious, good woman, Arthur. Now, dear, how do you feel about it? Will it annoy you if she accompanies us? For it is not too late to change the arrangement. I can thank her, and release her from her promise."

"Annoy me, Gladys? No, dearest! I shall be very thankful for every protection that you can throw around you, to shield your delicacy," answered Arthur, who, though

he would have much preferred a tête-à-tête journey with his beautiful betrothed, was ready to make any sacrifice to her feelings.

When they arose from the table, and rang for the waiter to give orders for a fresh, strong horse to be put to the carriage, the landlady entered the room.

"This is Mrs. Parker, dear Arthur," said Gladys. "Mrs. Parker, Mr. Powis."

"I thank you very much, madam, for your great kindness to Miss Llewellyn," Arthur began to say, with a bow; but the landlady cut him short by exclaiming:

"I don't know as there is so much kindness in it! I want to go to Harper's Ferry, anyhow; I want to see my daughter as I haven't seen since she married and went there, six months ago."

"I hope it will not trouble you to get ready in a hurry," said Arthur, smiling, "because we must be off in an hour."

"Oh, dear, no! I packed my trunk while you were at breakfast. And I shall be quite ready by the time Miss Llewellyn puts on her bonnet," said Mrs. Parker, hurrying out.

In much less than an hour, the party entered the carriage, to which a powerful draught horse, more remarkable for strength than elegance, had been attached.

"Now, young gentleman," said the landlady, as Arthur handed her into a back seat, "I hope you are a good driver, because the nearest route to Harper's Ferry is right over the mountains, and the very worst road that ever was in this world."

"I am a skilful driver, I fancy," said Arthur, smiling.

"Well, I hope so," said the landlady, doubtfully. "Sailors aint generally so, you know."

"But I was a skilful driver long before I ever saw a ship."

"Indeed!—Hand that hamper up carefully, Joe; or you will drop it and break some of the plates!—There, stow

that hamper carefully away, young gentleman, for it holds all our dinners—and if *that* comes to harm, we shall go hungry; because our road lies through what you might call a 'howling wilderness,' where you might travel all day long without ever reaching a decent house where you could get an eatable meal's victuals," said the landlady, giving her whole attention now to the safe bestowal of a certain oblong wicker-box that seemed to be well packed with edibles.

When that job was completed to her satisfaction, Gladys was handed in to a seat by her side, and Arthur sprang into his place and took the reins; and the carriage started.

Through all that glorious autumn day they pursued their journey; and if the mountain-road was dangerous, the danger was more than balanced by the beauty of the scenery. For here the mountains are thickly clothed by the primeval forests, and in the autumn their changing foliage presents all the most gorgeous colors in nature; while the gray rocks, jutting here and there, and the cool, unchanging evergreens, and many streams and waterfalls, give variety and tone to a scene that would otherwise be too dazzling in its splendor of coloring.

Late in the afternoon they reached the banks of the Shenandoah, and continued their journey along its course until they reached the place of their destination, Harper's Ferry.

Even in the midst of her intense excitement, Gladys could not but be impressed by the beauty and sublimity of this place, one of the most magnificent pieces of natural scenery in our country. Here the Potomac and the Shenandoah rivers, uniting, rend a passage through the Alleghany Mountains, whose gray rocks rise each side of the rushing river to the height of twelve hundred feet. The sides and summits of these mountains, like all others in Virginia, are clothed with the most luxuriant forests.

But I have described this place elsewhere, and will not weary my reader with it here.

Gladys saw it for the first time very late in the afternoon of a September day, when all the magnificent and splendid scene was lighted up as by a conflagration with the rays of the setting sun.

They drove along the main street of the town, and drew up at a picturesque little hotel, that, in Europe, would have made the fortune of its proprietor.

"This is my daughter's house—I mean my son-in-law's; but it is all the same. It is not a big house like the 'United States' further down the street over the way; but it is neat and comfortable, and home-like," said Mrs. Parker, as she made her arrangements for alighting.

"I am sure it is," answered Arthur, as he handed her out.

Two or three negro servants came out to take the horse and receive orders from the guest. But Mrs. Parker, leaving Arthur to attend to Gladys, gave the orders herself—first asking questions:

"Here you, Jim, how is your missis?"

"She's all right, mum," answered the man.

"How is your marser?"

"He's all right too, mum."

"And how is business?"

"It's all right, mum."

"Then there's nothing wrong?"

"No, mum."

"Thank heaven! Now, Jim, run in and tell your missis that I have come; and then run out and put up the gentleman's horse, and rub him down, and give him a good feed."

"The gentleman, mum?"

"No, you idiot! the gentleman's horse; but first run and tell your missis I've come."

The man started to obey; but it seemed that somebody else had been before him with the news, for at that moment a pretty young woman burst out of the house, and threw herself in the arms of Mrs. Parker, and burst into tears of joy

"Ah, you so glad to see me as all that, Nelly?" said the elder woman.

"Oh, mother!" sobbed the younger.

"There, there, Nell! Don't cry! I have come to stay a whole month with you. But I have brought you some guests. Attend to them first, dear; especially the young lady, and after you have done that we will have a good long talk."

Mrs. Parker then presented her fellow travellers to her daughter, and they all went into the house together.

The young hostess—her married name was Barton—took Gladys up into a neat bed-chamber, supplied her with all that she required after her journey, and then left her.

As soon as Gladys was alone, her spirits sank; the old feeling of wrong-doing, and of humiliation and timidity, returned upon her in full force, coupled now with a vague presentiment of approaching evil. Slowly and sadly she went through her toilet. And when she had completed it, she sat down on a low chair and wept.

At the end of an hour, her motherly friend, Mrs. Parker, found her thus. The good woman entered gaily, saying in a chirping tone:

"Well, my dear, the tea is all ready, as good a tea as ever you sat down to! Yes, as good as you could get at my house, or even your own."

Then seeing that Gladys was in tears, she exclaimed:

"Why, what's the matter now? What ails the girl?"

Gladys wept, but could not speak.

"Come now, what is it? Tell me," said the woman, sitting down by her side.

The maiden dropped her head upon her friend's shoulder, and weeping, softly answered:

"I do not quite know; there is no real cause, so I suppose I am weak and foolish."

"How so, dear?"

"Oh, I feel as if I was doing something so very wrong."

"But you know that you are not. The young man you are about to marry was your parents' choice for you."

"I know; but—I feel mortified and alarmed; and I feel almost like retracing my steps."

"What! backing out! That will never do now; you have gone too far, my dear. Beside, you would feel as badly, or very nearly as badly, if you were going to be married in the most regular and pleasant manner in the world, in your own drawing-room, with all your friends around, and your mother to dress you, and your father to give you away, and your own old family parson to pronounce the marriage benedictions."

At this mention of her father and mother, and her marriage at home under happier auspices, poor Gladys burst into a passion of tears. The contrast of that imaginary picture with the real facts, was too much for her; a keen sense of her orphanage wounded her to the heart; and she wept bitterly.

"There! weep on my bosom. It is nothing, and it will soon be over. Every sensitive and thoughtful girl feels just as you do when she is on the brink of a new life. But she would not back out if she could. Neither would you—would you, now?"

"Oh, no—no, indeed," said Gladys, through her tears.

"No, of course not; it would not be just to *him*, you know. And he is a fine young man; I see that very plainly; and he will make *you* happy."

"Oh, yes, indeed! I know he will—bless him! And it is very unkind to *him* for me to weep so much; but I will never let him see me do it," said Gladys, lifting her head and wiping her eyes.

"You will not weep after you are married. He will console you for all," said the good woman, gently.

"I know it. Well, I suppose he is waiting for me now. Are my eyes very red?"

"No, dear; come along."

"Oh, Mrs. Parker, how good you are to me!" exclaimed Gladys, with a sudden outburst of gratitude. "What in the world should I have done without you! I believe I should have gone crazy or died of humiliation and fright, if you had not come with me. I shall thank you all my life."

"There, dear, you needn't say another word. I know all about it, better than you do. Now let us go down."

And arm in arm they went down into a pleasant, private parlor, where the tea-table was ready set.

Arthur advanced to meet her.

"I have not been idle since you left us, love. I have found a minister who will unite us to-morrow morning. We will walk quietly across the bridge to the Maryland side of the river. There is no church there, nor even a house; but there, at the foot of the Pinnacle Rock, there, under the open sky, in a 'temple not made with hands,' we will exchange our vows," he whispered.

Gladys returned the affectionate pressure of his hand, but made no other reply. And the entrance of the waiter with the tea-urn put an end to this little passage of love.

"Will you please take the head of the table? You do not know how embarrassing it is to me to do so," whispered Gladys to her friend.

Mrs. Parker laughed and complied.

As soon as tea was over, by the advice of the good woman, Gladys, worn out by fatigue, excitement, and loss of sleep, bade Arthur good-night, and retired to her room.

Mrs. Parker accompanied her, and did not leave her until she had seen her in bed and asleep.

Gladys, thoroughly exhausted, slept late into the next morning. No one would allow her to be disturbed until she waked. But when at length she opened her eyes, recollected herself and rang her bell, Mrs. Parker was the first one in her room.

"Get up as quick as you can, my dear; every thing is

ready and everybody waiting for you; the minister is down stairs, and we think the sooner the ceremony is performed the better. We can just walk across the bridge and have it over at once; it won't take long, and then we can come back to breakfast," said the good woman.

Even before she had ceased speaking Gladys was out of bed and at her wash-stand.

There was a knock at the door.

Mrs. Parker went to open it. There was the young hostess with a large strong cup of coffee in her hand.

"That will do, Nelly; you can go; we don't need you, dear; she will be down directly, tell them," said Nelly's mother, taking the cup of coffee from her hand and shutting the door.

"Here, my dear, you must drink this, the whole of it, to keep you up until we get back to breakfast," she said, bringing the refreshment to Gladys.

"How good you are to me," said the grateful girl, for the twentieth time, perhaps, as she took and quaffed the coffee.

Gladys soon completed her simple toilet, and they went down stairs. On their way, Mrs. Parker darted through a side door into another room, and instantly returned with her bonnet and her gloves in her hands.

"Nelly and Ned and myself are going across the bridge with you, my dear. We would like to see the ceremony performed, and besides it will look better," she said, as they continued their way.

"Oh! yes, yes; thank you," exclaimed Gladys, eagerly.

When they got down stairs they found the bridegroom, the minister, and Ned and Nelly Barton waiting. The minister, the Reverend Mr. Jones, was introduced to the bride-elect, and the party at once set out. Mr. Jones drew the arm of Gladys within his own, and went in advance, followed by Arthur and the others.

As the bride was dressed in deep mourning, and there

was not a single bridal favor in the whole party, there was nothing about them to attract the attention of the curious as they passed down the main street. When they came nearly opposite the great hotel of the town they turned into the cross street leading to the bridge.

When they were half way across the bridge, over the channel of the river, with Virginia on the one side and Maryland on the other, the minister paused and said:

"We are now out of the jurisdiction of Virginia and within that of Maryland. It is really not necessary to go any further, unless you particularly wish to do so. Your marriage would be quite legal if performed here. Many marriages are performed here, as Mrs. Barton knows."

"Oh, yes," said the young hostess; "two or three runaway marriages every week. It is only necessary to be beyond the boundary line of Virginia to make them legal. And we are so here."

"It shall be as Miss Llewellyn pleases," said Arthur, appealing to his bride.

"Oh, pray, then, let us go quite over to the other side. It is so dreadful to be married on a bridge," whispered Gladys, beginning to tremble.

That decided it, and they went on their way and reached the other shore.

"Well, we are on Maryland ground now, beyond all question," said Mr. Jones, cheerfully, as the whole party paused at the foot of the tremendous "Pinnacle."

The minister led them close under the shadow of the great rock and began to prepare to perform the rites.

"Dear me," exclaimed Mrs. Parker, in a low whisper, "I never thought of it before!"

"Thought of what, mother?" inquired her daughter, in the same low tone.

"Why, she is as good as doomed! she is going to be married in black, which is always considered an unlucky omen! And not only black, but the deepest mourning,

bombazine and crape, which is worse than all!" said the good woman, with an appalled look.

"But she wears it for her parents, so how can she help it? Besides, I don't believe in omens, mother. Do you, yourself, really now, mother?" inquired Nelly, smiling.

"N-no, I don't know as I do; but they always make me feel very uncomfortable when they happen to be bad ones," replied Mrs. Parker, making a fine distinction.

Gladys perceived that they were whispering together and she looked uneasy.

Nelly noticed this and effected a diversion by laughing and saying:

"What queer bridesmaids we are—mother and I—Miss Llewellyn!—an elderly widow and a married woman to wait on a young lady bride! I think it is too absurd, or would be, only that they say it is lucky."

Gladys smiled faintly in reply; but she was too agitated to trust herself to speak.

The minister opened the book; the party grouped themselves properly before him; the rites were begun; and there, in the great temple of nature, under the lofty arch of heaven, before the high altar of the mountain, Arthur Powis and Gladys Llewellyn pronounced their vows and received the nuptial benediction.

CHAPTER VIII.

PURSUIT.

Happiest in this... her gentle spirit
Commits itself to yours to be directed,
As from her lord, her governor, her king.—*Shakespeare.*

As soon as the marriage ceremony was over, and the usual congratulations were offered and accepted, the wedding party retraced their steps across the bridge and back to the little inn, where, by the orders of the young hostess,

a marriage breakfast had been prepared and laid in the private parlor.

Here, when Gladys and her friends had taken off their bonnets, the bridal party re-assembled around the table. Mrs. Parker presided; the Rev. Mr. Jones asked the blessing; the bride and bridegroom sat on the right hand side of the board, and the host and hostess on the left.

"This is not the breakfast, nor are we the guests that should celebrate the union of the son of Colonel Powis with the daughter of General Llewellyn; but as for the breakfast, 'half a loaf is better than no bread;' and as for the guests, 'when there is no better company, welcome trumpery,'" said Mrs. Parker, laughing, as she poured out the coffee.

"You disparage your hospitality and wrong yourself and your daughter, dear Mrs. Parker. Your breakfast is excellent, and you are the best friends we could have found in our need. I hope that neither"—Arthur paused and blushed like a girl as he gave his bride her new name—"Mrs. Powis nor myself will ever forget what we owe you, or cease to remember you with gratitude and affection."

"There! that will do, young gentleman. We did it to please ourselves," replied the landlady.

And probably she spoke the truth. Most gossips of her class delight in a wedding—especially in a *justifiable* runaway match. And if ever a runaway match could be justifiable, that of Arthur Powis and Gladys Llewellyn certainly was.

They could not linger over the merry wedding breakfast, because Arthur had taken places for his bride and himself in the Baltimore stage coach that was expected at the door in half an hour, for he purposed to take her to Washington, where his ship now lay for repairs.

So they soon arose from the table, and went to their several private apartments to make ready for the journey.

In twenty minutes afterward they took an affectionate

leave of their new found friends, seated themselves on the back cushions of the capacious old stage-coach, and commenced their journey.

Nelly Barton slipped off her shoe and threw it after them "for good luck." Ned Barton hoped they would be as happy as he and his own wife were. Mrs. Parker said, "God bless them;" and then the three returned into the house.

The old stage-coach had scarcely rumbled out of the eastern extremity of the town before a heavy travelling-carriage rolled in from the west, and drew up before the great "United States."

Nelly, from the window of her little sitting-room at the end of the house, saw this equipage stop, and she immediately called out to Mrs. Parker:

"As sure as you live, mother, there is Mrs. Llewellyn's carriage, and she has come in pursuit of the lovers. How glad I am they are married and gone."

Mrs. Parker came hurrying to the window, where she joined her daughter to look out.

"Yes, that is the madam's carriage. I have seen it often and know it as well as I do my own gig. And, yes, that is Mrs. Llewellyn herself getting out and going into the 'United States' to look for the runaways, as if there wasn't another inn in the place. Well, they'll not be able to give her much information there, that's a comfort."

"Don't be jealous, mother," laughed Nelly; "we don't pretend to rival the old hotel."

They continued to strain their eyes down the street to watch the result. Presently they had their reward.

The lady came out politely attended by a waiter, who bowed with every alternate word, and with many flourishes seemed to be pointing out Nelly's own house.

"Ah, you see, the 'United States' people saw us all go over the bridge this morning, and I dare say some of them watched us through their spy-glass and witnessed the mar-

riage just as well as we did who were on the spot. And now, you see, they know who the lovers were by the lady's description, and they have gone and directed her here," said Nelly.

The young hostess appeared to be right, for, even as she spoke, she saw Mrs. Llewellyn re-enter her carriage, and saw the coachman turn his horses' heads in the direction of the "Bells," as Nelly's little inn was called.

In three minutes the handsome carriage drew up before the door, and the handsome woman dressed in deep mourning alighted, and with a stately air walked into the house.

Ned Barton, the young host, received the lady with all the respect due to her rank, and, in answer to her questions respecting the lovers, he ushered her into Nelly's sitting-room, saying:

"Here is my wife and her mother, madam, who can tell you more about the affair than I can."

Nelly and her mother looked at each other in a state of mind between triumph and consternation, and then they arose to meet the lady.

"Keep your seats," said Mrs. Llewellyn, haughtily waving her hand, as, without waiting for an invitation, she threw herself into an easy-chair.

The mother and daughter bowed and sat down again.

"Now, which of you two women was it who aided and abetted my ward in her most disgraceful elopement with that disreputable fortune-hunter?" she inquired, insolently, as soon as the host had withdrawn.

"It was I!" exclaimed the two, both speaking at once, half in terror and half in defiance.

"Ah!—both, it appears!" said the lady, severely.

"Yes, ma'am, both!" exclaimed Mrs. Parker, who was the first to recover herself. "Yes, ma'am, both of us was in it, and proud to be so. And when you talk about its being of a 'disgraceful elopement' and him being of a 'dis'—here the good woman stumbled in quoting an un-

familiar word—"dis-re-parable fortune-hunter,' you do an amiable and highly respectable young lady and gentleman a great wrong, ma'am; and I expect it aint the first, and mayn't be the last, as you'll do them; and I feel free to tell you so."

"Woman!" exclaimed Mrs. Llewellyn, in haughty surprise.

"No more of a woman than you are yourself, ma'am. And quite as much of a lady, if it comes to that! leastways in principles."

And Mrs. Parker was upon her feet, with her arms a-kimbo, in an instant.

Mrs. Llewellyn, in her fastidiousness, rather shrank from a wordy encounter with an amazon who did not stop to choose her words; so she commanded herself as well as she could, and inquired:

"Are you aware that you have broken the law and committed a felony, in aiding the abduction of an heiress from her home? And that the penalty for such a crime is imprisonment in the State penitentiary for a term of years? I say, were you aware of this?"

"No; I wa'n't aware of it until you *told* me, and I aint aware of it *now*. And I don't believe it's *true*; and I don't care if it is. Lor'! tell *that* to the horse marines. If everybody as helps a pair of lovyers to get married is to be sent to prison for their pains, this town would be half emptied of its people, and the penitentiaries would be so full, you would have to build new ones. Don't try *that* on me, ma'am, please; it wont fit," said Mrs. Parker, half angrily, half derisively.

"I say, that whether you know it or not, and whether you believe it or not, you *have* exposed yourself to great danger from a criminal prosecution. And you will find it so, unless you do what you now can to repair the wrong," said Mrs. Llewellyn.

"And what may that be? I can't unmarry them again, can I?" inquired the landlady, with a sour smile;—not

that she was the least frightened by the words of the lady, but because she wished to know exactly what was meant.

"No, you cannot unmarry them, but you can give me a full and particular account of the whole affair, as far as you are acquainted with it."

"Oh, yes! I can do that very well," exclaimed Mrs. Parker, with alacrity; for she felt sure that the narrative would fill her unwelcome visitor with despair of ever being able to undo a knot that had been so firmly tied; and she could not imagine any possible harm that could accrue to the young pair from her disclosures.

So, with secret satisfaction, she commenced and related the whole story of her acquaintance with the lovers.

When she reached that part of the tale in which she spoke of her own ill-founded suspicions of Gladys, and her half-formed intention to stop the fugitive and send word to the guardian, Mrs. Llewellyn broke into the discourse with—

"Oh! if you had but done that, you would have been munificently rewarded. I would not have minded giving you a thousand dollars."

"I am very glad the temptation wasn't thrown in my way just when I was in doubt what to do, ma'am. It might have decided me, ma'am, and decided me wrong; for money is a great blinder, and that is a fact. As it was I did right; I feel I did," said the landlady, stoutly.

"Continue your narrative," said the lady, haughtily.

Mrs. Parker complied, and finished her story without another interruption.

"And so, ma'am," she said, in conclusion, "you see they are married fast enough, and have gone to Washington to spend the honeymoon. His ship is there, and—oh! I forgot to tell you—he is just made into a lieutenant."

Mrs. Llewellyn arose, thanked the landlady for her information, and, declining all refreshments, re-entered her carriage and drove back to the larger hotel.

One night Mrs. Llewellyn remained in Harper's Ferry to

rest and recruit herself, and the next morning she started for "Kader Idris," where, late in the afternoon, she arrived, looking terribly worn and haggard.

No friend had that grim lady in that house. She had servants who did her bidding in fear and hate. And she would have been alone in her criminality, but for the existence of one slavish and irresponsible instrument—the deaf and dumb negro. Him she summoned to her presence on the same evening of her return home. And with him she had a long private interview—though how so long a consultation could be carried on without the aid of speech remained a mystery to all the household except the parties concerned.

The morning succeeding this conference, Mrs. Llewellyn, without telling her servants where she was going, or when she would return, left home for an indefinite period, attended by the deaf mute.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BRIEF HONEYMOON.

From the home of childhood's glee,
From the days of laughter free,
From the loves of many years,
Thou hast gone to cares and fears;
To another path and guide,
To a bosom yet untried.—*Mrs. Hemans.*

MEANWHILE the young couple pursued their journey. It was late in the evening of the day of their departure from Harper's Ferry that they reached Washington city; too late, indeed, for Gladys to see any thing of the Federal capital, which was entirely new ground to her.

They stopped for the night at one of the principal hotels on Pennsylvania Avenue

But as the young lieutenant's limited salary would by no means support *that* style of living, they went out early the next morning in search of cheap and respectable lodgings.

But as lodgings both cheap and respectable were not easy to be found in the heart of the city, even at that time, their search was for some time vain.

After spending nearly a whole day in walking through the principal streets of the city, they found themselves late in the afternoon before the gate of a solitary house, on the eastern suburbs, to which they had been directed by some one who had seen an advertisement in the morning papers, that there the proprietor had promised the comforts of a home to "a gentleman and his wife, or two single gentlemen," who might be disposed to become inmates.

Now, then, Arthur and Gladys stood before the gate, and surveyed the scene. Through a vista of many ancient trees, they saw, at some distance off, an old-fashioned country-house, that stood in the centre of a larger garden than many people can afford to have near the city at this day. The old apple and peach-trees that surrounded it, bent under their loads of autumnal fruit. The vines that climbed over arbors in the garden, and over porches around the house, were heavy with their wealth of grapes. Rich-looking yellow pumpkins lay like lumps of pure gold ore on the ground; tomatoes hung like huge cornelians on their dying vines. In old-fashioned flower-borders gaudy dahlias, chrysanthemums, and other late autumnal flowers, glowed refulgent in the last rays of the setting sun. An atmosphere of perfect peace surrounded this old suburban house.

"I like this place very much," said Arthur, leaning over the old, unpainted, wooden gate.

"So do I," said Gladys. "I think we should be happy here, if it were not too far from the navy yard, Arthur."

"It's not too far for me, love; I shouldn't mind the walk at all."

"Then it is altogether right! I wonder what sort of people live here."

"We shall see in half a minute, love," said Arthur, lifting the wooden latch and passing in, with Gladys on his arm.

A long, grassy avenue, with but a narrow, worn foot-path in the very middle, led them up to the old house, and under an old porch and to a dark green door, without either knocker or bell for the convenience of visitors.

Arthur rapped loudly with his knuckles and stood awaiting the result, while Gladys sat down upon one of the rustic benches of the porch and rested.

In a moment the door was opened by the landlady in person, who stood smiling benignantly upon the visitors, and waiting for them to speak.

But if the house was old-fashioned, good gracious! what was the landlady? Imagine a tall, thin old lady, of any age you please between seventy and a hundred, with a pale face, gray hair, and dim blue eyes; and dressed in an antediluvian style, in a high-crowned muslin cap, with broad ruffle borders all around her face and tied under her chin; a clean, faded calico gown, made with a short waist and tight sleeves, and a long, plain, straight skirt, of the same circumference all the way down from her arm-pits to her feet; a white cambric triangular handkerchief pinned over her bosom, and a long, narrow white cambric apron tied before her gown, and you have a true picture of Miss Polly Crane, the maiden lady, who stood within the door, smiling affectionately down on our young couple.

"We are here, ma'am, in answer to an advertisement in this morning's paper," said Arthur, bowing.

"Y-yes—(the old lady pronounced this word ee-yase, with the softest tone, and gentlest drawl, that was really not the result of affectation, but of a true and excessive courtesy;)—y-yes; please to come in and sit down," she said, leading the way into a large, low-ceiled, shady parlor, into every window of which the branches of the trees without intruded.

"I will call Milly, I never do any thing without consult-

ing Milly," she said, as she sat chairs for her visitors, and left the room.

"I like the landlady as well as the house," said Arthur.

"So do I," said Gladys. "I wonder how they manage to get the branches of the trees out when they want to close the windows for the night, or do they ever close them?"

Before Arthur could form any opinion on this subject, the door opened again, and two old ladies entered, so perfectly alike in face, form, dress, speech and manner, that it was almost impossible to say which of them had been the one who first met the visitors at the door.

While Gladys was trying to solve this problem, the first one advanced, beckoning on the other, and saying:

"Milly, here is a young gentleman and lady, come to see about the rooms. Sir, this is my sister, Milly."

Arthur arose and bowed, saying:

"I am glad to make your acquaintance, ma'am."

"Y-yes," said Miss Milly, in precisely the same tone as that in which her sister spoke; "y-yes—just so. And what might be your name, sir, if you please?"

"I beg your pardon! I should have introduced myself by name before. I am Lieutenant Powis, of the navy."

"Y-yes; and the lady?"

"Pardon again! My wife, Mrs. Powis," smiled Arthur.

Gladys arose, blushed, curtsied to the old ladies, and sat down again.

"And you have come to look at our roo-ooms?" gently drawled the old lady, making two syllables of the last word.

"Yes, ma'am."

"We will call Jenny. We never do any thing without consulting Jenny," said Miss Milly, and she left the room, followed by her sister.

"Wh, what very odd old ladies! but, indeed, I like them with all their oddity," laughed Arthur.

"So do I," agreed Gladys. "But I wonder why they

couldn't all have come in together, since it is necessary that they should all be present, and not come singly?"

"Routine, perhaps, my dear," said Arthur, just as the door opened for the third time, and in came three old maiden ladies, all so exactly alike that it was quite perplexing to distinguish the first, second or third from the others.

"Jenny," said one of the sisters, "this is Captain Powers, and this is Mrs. Powers, come to look at our rooms. Captain Powers, this is my sister Jenny. Mrs. Powers, my sister Jenny—or, as strangers call her, Miss Crane, she being the oldest—that is to say, a very little the oldest."

"I am happy to know you, Miss Crane," said Arthur, politely, while Gladys arose, bowed, and resumed her seat.

And in truth, both the young people were glad to learn the family name of these simple sisters, for to distinguish Miss Polly from Miss Jenny, or either from Miss Milly, seemed a total impossibility.

"And would you like to look at the rooms now, Captain Powers?" inquired Miss Jenny.

"If you please, ma'am; but your amiable sister has made a slight mistake, I am Lieutenant Powis," said Arthur, bowing and smiling.

"Indeed, sir! Well, that is just like my sisters—they both are forgetful of names," said Miss Jenny. "Will you come and look at the rooms now?"

"Certainly."

"Stop a moment, if you please, sir. I will call Harriet. We never do any thing without consulting Harriet," said Miss Jenny, going out of the room, attended by her two sisters.

"Mercy on us! is there a fourth!" exclaimed Arthur.

"So it seems! I wonder if there is not a fifth, also?" said Gladys, laughing.

"And a sixth?" said Arthur.

"It is like a fairy tale, of the seven sons, or the five-and-twenty princesses, where all are so much alike that——"

Before Gladys could finish her sentence the door opened the fourth time, and in came the three sisters, followed—not by a fourth sister, but by a middle-aged negro woman, of whom it would be difficult to say whether she were the biggest, or the blackest of her race. She was dressed in a faded blue cotton gown, with a white handkerchief tied around her head, another white handkerchief pinned over her bosom, and a white apron tied before her rotund person.

"Harriet," said Miss Jenny, bringing the woman forward, "this is Major Powell, of the army, and his lady, who have come to take our rooms. Make your obedience to them directly."

Harriet made a very low curtsey, and stood with her fat arms crossed over her stout chest.

"Major Powell, this is our woman Harriet. As I mentioned to you, we never do any thing without consulting her; not that we make an equal of her by any means; but because she is a good, faithful old family servant who has our interests at heart."

"I am glad to make Mrs. Harriet's acquaintance," smiled Arthur. "And now, as it is getting late, may I ask to see the rooms?"

"Or is there any one else you would like to call into council?" suggested Gladys, mischievously.

"Oh, no," answered Miss Jenny, quite seriously; "there is no one else. The colonel can see the rooms whenever he likes. Harriet, show Colonel Pollard and his lady the rooms, and tell him the terms."

"Will you please to follow me, sir and madam?" said the woman, opening the door leading into the hall, and then going before the visitors up the broad stairs and conducting them into a large bedroom immediately over and exactly like the parlor, in all respects except in the matter of furniture. Here, too, the overgrown branches of the trees without projected into the windows.

"I like the room very much," said Arthur.

"So do I; but how do you manage to close the window-shutters?" said Gladys.

"This way, ma'am," said Harriet, going to the windows and unfolding the wooden shutters that were folded into each side of the window frames and shutting them against the intrusive branches, which were in that manner shut out.

"Oh, I see," said Gladys; "but why don't the ladies have the trees trimmed?"

"'Cause they is better as they is. They serves as curtains and saves buying. In summer they keeps the sun out'n de house. And in winter de wind."

"I shouldn't think they would keep much wind out in winter, when their branches are bare."

"Anyways they *tangles* it and breaks its force," persisted Harriet, as she closed the last window with a violent push and turned to the visitors.

"Well, I think we like the rooms. Now, what are the terms, my good woman?" inquired Arthur.

"Why, young marster, for yourself and the young madam, it will be twenty-five dollars a mont', including ob ebery ting."

"That is liberal and—latitudinarian!" laughed Arthur appealing to Gladys.

"It is very, very reasonable, after what we have seen and heard to-day," said Gladys.

"Well, aunty, I think we like the terms as well as we like the rooms. We will take them," said Arthur.

"Stop a bit, young marster. In de fus place, we demands deferences," said the woman, folding her arms over her apron and swinging herself from side to side.

"You demand—*what*?"

"Deferences," repeated Harriet, firmly.

"What the deuce do you mean by deferences?" inquired Arthur, twisting his face into a very strange expression between frowning and laughing.

"I mean, young marster—has you got any 'sponsibilities?"

"Responsibilities?"—Gladys, that means—children! No, aunty, we have no children."

"I don't ax yer 'bout no chillun! Yer nothin' 't all but chillun yerselves!" said the woman; while Gladys, blushing and laughing, turned away.

"Then, my dear, good soul, what in the name of common sense *are* you asking us about?" demanded Arthur.

"I telled yer before, young marster? I ax yer 'bout deferences and 'sponsibilities."

"But what do you *mean* by deferences and 'sponsibilities?" laughed Arthur.

"I means some un as can speak for you and prove how you is all—all you 'fesses for to be," explained Harriet.

"Oh! you mean *references*. Certainly! Quite right. I can refer your mistress to Commodore Dash at the navy yard, and the Reverend Doctor Starr of Christ Church. Will they do?"

"Berry well, indeed, young marster. Dey is de rale first quality ob de gentle folks," answered Harriet.

"Now I suppose we may consider the affair quite settled?"

"Yes, young marster."

"We can come—when?"

"Any time you please, sar."

"Then we will be here early to-morrow morning. And now lead the way down stairs, as it is getting late."

The woman curtsied and obeyed.

When they went below, Arthur and Gladys stopped at the parlor door only long enough to bid the sisters good-evening. And then leaving Harriet to explain to them the result of the negotiations, the young pair left the house and garden and made the best of their way back to their hotel.

They were tired and hungry enough to enjoy the late

fashionable dinner of the establishment, and the quiet evening that followed it.

Early the next morning they hired a carriage and drove out to take possession of their new lodgings.

The three sisters received them with great distinction, followed Gladys to her room, took off her bonnet, mantle, and furs, with their own hands, insisted on ordering a cup of tea for her directly, although she assured them that she had breakfasted only an hour before. And, in short, they proffered so many attentions that any one but Gladys would have felt bored by their officiousness. But to the orphan girl all this was exceedingly comforting, and she met their affectionate zeal with such evident gratitude as completed her conquest over the old ladies' hearts.

After they had sufficiently rested, Arthur and Gladys wandered through the old-fashioned garden, and regaled themselves upon the rich black English peaches with which the trees were loaded, and the sour apples that lay upon the ground, and the luscious purple grapes that hung from the vines.

"Well," said Arthur, "how fast I am promoted."

"Promoted? I should think so. At the rate these dear old ladies are advancing you, you will be a major-general in a month!" laughed Gladys.

"In a day, dear; in a day. It has scarcely taken them twenty hours to transfer me from the navy to the army, and raise me from a lieutenantcy to a colonelcy," said Arthur.

Both laughed; for at this hour—with all their troubles over and all their dangers past, or supposed to be—they were gay and happy as two careless children.

Suddenly the bright face of Gladys became grave with remorseful tenderness, and she said:

"It is wrong to laugh at them. They are very old. I fear they are in their dotage."

"But we were not laughing at them, dear love. We

were laughing at my amazingly rapid promotion. That is surely a subject of laughter. But I wish, dear Gladys," he added, growing serious in his turn, "that for your sake my promotion could really be a little more rapid than it is."

"Oh, Arthur, you wicked fellow, be content. What in the world do we want that we have not got? And in a little less than three years Kader Idris will be ours," said this inexperienced girl.

And in such talk—half grave, half gay, and in wandering about the quaint old garden—the newly married lovers passed the remaining hours of the morning.

At two o'clock, the early dinner-bell summoned them to the house.

In a large, pleasant, old-fashioned dining-room, with tall windows, shaded by blue paper blinds, and a floor covered with a home-made carpet, and high-backed, straw-bottomed chairs ranged around the walls, the table was set.

The old ladies had arranged the dinner with an affectionate zeal that seemed better suited to beloved invited guests than to ordinary boarders. They gave Gladys the pleasantest seat facing the windows, so that she could look out into the garden and watch the bees that were at work near at hand. And they begged "the colonel" to take the post of honor at the foot of the table. And they pressed upon the young pair every delicacy that was upon the board.

"This is not like your great hotel dinners, Colonel Pollard; but I dare say it is just as wholesome," said Miss Polly, as she helped Arthur to a liberal allowance of boiled fowl with egg-sauce.

"No, indeed, it is not like our 'great hotel' dinners in any one respect; for it is a great deal better in *all* respects—better cooked, neater, more cheerful and orderly," said Arthur, to the immense delight of Miss Polly, who exclaimed, gleefully:

"There! You hear that Milly? You hear that, Jenny?

Now we must tell that to Harriet! It will encourage her to continue to do her best."

And so when Harriet came in to change the plates she was informed that "Colonel Pollard" approved her cooking far above that of the French cook at the great hotel where he had been stopping.

Harriet tucked her head down upon one shoulder and giggled, saying that she reckoned as how marse colonel only said so to please her and 'courage her, but for her part she didn't 'tend to 'pare her plain dishes with the cookinary arts of the great mounseers, etc., etc., etc.

After dinner, the sisters retired to their own sanctum, wherever that might have been; and Arthur and Gladys went into the shady parlor, that, having no other occupant, seemed tacitly given up to their exclusive use.

"Well, dearest, this is the last whole day that we shall pass together for some time; for you know my leave expires to-night, and I must rejoin my ship to-morrow morning. But never look sad on that account; for as long as I am at the navy yard I shall be able to pass the greater portion of my time with you. I shall be able to come home almost every evening. You will not be sad, will you, Gladys?"

"Oh, no, Arthur! I will not be so unreasonable," smiled the girlish bride.

"And you think you will be contented with these old ladies?"

"I am sure I shall! I feel as if I had known them all my life! Good old souls! I do believe, Arthur, if you had hunted Washington over, you would not have found a happier home for me."

"Thank heaven for that, dearest! And there is another circumstance. Whenever I am off duty, I shall be able to go around with you and show you something of Washington."

In such pleasant chat as this they passed the afternoon, until summoned to the early six o'clock tea.

And what a bright, cheerful, attractive object that tea-table was, with its snow-white cloth, its quaint, old-fashioned china, its fine tea, crystal sugar, rich milk and cream; its golden-hued, sweet, fresh prints of butter, its delicate home-made bread and cakes, its honey and preserved fruits and made dishes; and, above all, the happy old faces that smiled around the board.

Soon after tea the weary young pair retired to rest. And so ended their first day in their new home.

CHAPTER X.

THE SWOOP OF THE VULTURE.

Is there no constancy in earthly things?
No happiness in us but what must alter?
No life without the frequent change of fortune?
What miseries we are unto ourselves,
Even then when full content seems to sit by us,
What daily cares and sorrows?—*Beaumont and Fletcher.*

THE next morning, immediately after breakfast, Arthur took a gay and loving leave of Gladys, and started to go on board of his ship, to report for duty.

Gladys, standing at the rustic gate where she had parted with him, watched him quite out of sight, and then went back to the house, ran up into her own room, threw herself upon a chair, and burst into tears.

This was very weak and foolish, as she frankly said to herself, because he was only gone for the day, and he would be back again at night. But then this was the first time he had left her since their marriage, and she felt so lonely in the strange house, that she could not help weeping a little.

When she had wept herself into a state of composure, and while she was quietly wiping her eyes, there came a rap at her door.

"Come in," she said, expecting to see Harriet, who fulfilled the duties of chambermaid as well as cook.

"If you please, ma'am," said the woman, curtsying at the open door, "the young ladies, ma'am, sends their respects to you, and says how they hopes you wont 'main up here a-mopin' by yourself, but will come down to their sittin'-room, and look at their fancy quilt, as they've just stretched out in the frame; and they'll be very glad to see you."

"The young ladies! What young ladies, Harriet?" inquired Gladys, with surprise and interest; for youth loves the companionship of youth; and visions of social enjoyment arose before the young bride's imagination. "What young ladies, Harriet?"

"Why, o' course, *my* young ladies, honey."

"*Yours*?"

"Yes, honey, my young misseses."

"I thought you belonged to the Miss Cranes?"

"Why so I does, honey. It's them as I 'ludes to."

"But—you spoke of *young* ladies; are they relations of the landladies?" inquired the mystified Gladys.

"Lors bress my soul and body, honey! aint it dem as I'm a talking 'bout all de time? De lan'dies, my young misseses, de Miss Craneses—Miss Polly, and Miss Milly, and Miss Jenny Crane?"

Gladys stared for a moment in the deepest perplexity.

"Lors, chile, de colonel goin' away must a 'fused your head! It's my three young misseses as you lives 'long of as has sent me to fetch you," said Harriet, just a little impatiently.

Then Gladys, as the truth broke on her, and she understood the whole matter, burst into a gay laugh.

This honest, stolid, middle-aged negro woman, who called the venerable old ladies her "young" misseses, had doubtless been taught to do so when she was an infant just learning to talk, and 'hey were spinsters of about twenty-five

years of age. And from habit, she had gone on calling them so ever since.

This reminded Gladys of her own home, where she had often heard bare-legged little urchins speak of their gray-haired master as "young marse," in imitation of the veteran negroes, who remembered an older one.

Nevertheless, Gladys laughed, as she answered:

"Tell your 'young ladies,' with my respects, that I thank them, and I will be down presently."

Harriet went away to take this answer; and Gladys soon followed her down stairs, and into a pleasant back room, that overlooked a poultry yard and a wheat field, with a barn and some ricks.

This room was furnished, like the others, plainly and neatly, much of the furniture being of domestic manufacture. There was a home-made carpet on the floor, and green paper blinds at the windows, and a green paper fire-board against the fireplace. And there were plain deal tables, and wooden chairs with plaited straw seats, all of domestic manufacture, ranged against the walls. And over the mantel-piece, and between the windows, were quaintly-colored wood-cuts, representing saints and angels, with red and blue dresses, and yellow glories around their heads.

In the middle of the room, a very gay patchwork quilt was stretched in its frame for quilting, and around it sat the sisters. As neither of them ever did any thing singly, all arose at once to meet and welcome their guest.

"What a beautiful quilt!" exclaimed Gladys, more in good-nature than in sincere admiration, as she approached the frame and looked at the design of the patchwork—groups of gorgeous flowers, shaped out of bright-colored scraps of calico, and sewed on a white ground.

"Yes; we thought you would like it. It is to compete for the prize in the needlework department of the Agricultural Fair," said Miss Polly, gazing with pride upon her work.

"I think you ought to get it for this elaborate piece of art," said Gladys. "But come, now, if I am to sit with you, I must help you. I can quilt beautifully—quilting is a country accomplishment, you know."

"Oh, Mrs. Colonel Pollard! The idea of our troubling *you* to quilt! We could not think of it, ma'am," said Miss Milly.

Gladys did not stop to correct the mistake in her name, nor to argue the question of her assistance. For the first, she had so often gently reminded the sisters that she was only Mrs. Lieutenant Powis, and they had so often meekly begged pardon, and so inevitably fallen into the same blunder again, that she finally yielded the point and consented to be—with them—Mrs. Colonel Pollard, for the remainder of her sojourn in the house, if not for her life. For the second, she took her "housewife" from her pocket, fitted on her thimble, threaded her needle, and seated herself beside Miss Jennie, who sat on one side of the frame opposite to Miss Polly and Miss Milly, who sat on the other.

"Well, if you will, you will, I suppose," said Miss Jenny, resignedly.

"Certainly," said Gladys, laughing and commencing work.

And as her youthful eyes, and nimble fingers, and better skill, enabled her to do the work three times as fast as the three sisters together could do theirs, she was soon considered an immense acquisition.

"It would be downright robbery to take board for *you*, child!" said Miss Polly, bluntly.

Gladys looked up in amazement.

"Downright robbery!" persisted Miss Polly. "For just consider—this quilt is to win a prize of one hundred dollars. Besides which, it is worth a good sum in itself. Now, *we* are three and you are one. Now, you are doing as much work as we three together. Now, three into one hundred will go—oh, good gracious alive! how is one to get three into one hundred!"

"Call in Harriet. She's good at figures. (She always counts up the market money correctly you know)," advised Miss Milly.

As this counsel met the general approbation, the woman was summoned and the matter explained so her.

"You mean," said Harriet, "that over and above de actiwell wally of de quilt dere is a hunded dollars prize money as ought to be 'wided fair and ekal 'mong dem as quilts it?"

"Yes, that's what we mean! And as Mrs. Colonel Pollard does as much as all three of us together, we want to know how much her share ought to be," said Miss Jenny.

"Well, den, it ought to be just half, of course; fifty dollar for you three, and fifty dollar for her one," said Harriet.

"There, now," said Miss Polly, "see how quick Harriet made it out, without doing any sum either. Now, you see, Mrs. Colonel Pollard! If you insist upon helping us at this rate you will be entitled to fifty dollars prize money, and it would be downright robbery to ask your board."

Gladys laughed and blushed, but answered gravely:

"I please myself, Miss Polly."

With any creatures less simple and innocent than these sisters, she must have been angry; but she could not be so with them.

Harriet was about to leave the room, when Miss Milly stopped her.

"Wait! we might as well order dinner while you are here! Mrs. Colonel Pollard, my dear, as the colonel will not be home, we have no one but you to consult. Now what would you like for your dinner?"

"Any thing at all that is convenient, Miss Milly."

"Oh, nonsense, honey, speak your mind! I will tell you what we have got now, and you can pick and choose. First, there's the young pig as we killed yesterday, which

would be very nice roasted with sage and inyuns—but perhaps you think it too airy in the season for roast pig; and maybe you don't like inyuns, which they certainly do affect the breath?" said Miss Jenny, putting in her word and pausing for a reply.

"Any thing you please, my dear Miss Jenny; it does not matter to me."

"And then there's a leg of mutton that would be nice with caper sauce. And there's a pair of ducks——" said Miss Polly.

"Whatever you like, Miss Polly."

"No, no, but what *you* like, my dear! Now *do* tell us!"

Gladys looked from one sister to the other, trying to find the direction of *their* inclinations; and fancying that they set strongly toward roast pig, she decided in favor of that savory dish. And Harriet received her orders accordingly, and retired to execute them.

The sisters were very talkative; but in their garrulity, they were more communicative than inquisitive; fonder of narrating their own family affairs than of inquiring into those of others. Gladys was pleased with these traits of character, as they saved her the trouble of parrying awkward questions. In the conversation that followed, she learned much of the sisters' history.

In the first place, they were Catholics, as their forefathers had been, and as Gladys had already guessed from the pictures on the walls. Now, though this young lady had been brought up in the Protestant faith, she had also been educated in the spirit of religious toleration, so she did not like her kind hostesses the less for a difference of opinion.

She learned, besides, that they owned the house and the market-garden in which they lived; that they had one other sister, the youngest of the family, Amy, who had married, against their parents' will, a northern man of the name of Hart, and had gone off with him away to the North; and of her, long ago disinherited and exiled, if not dead, they

had not heard for many, many years; and that they had a brother, a priest, who had charge of the parish of St. Peters, near the Capitol Hill, and who came once or twice a week to take tea with them.

These and many other minor matters were gratuitously told to Gladys, who listened with friendly interest.

Upon the whole, her day passed very cheerfully.

Late in the afternoon she put on her bonnet and walked in the direction of the navy yard to meet Arthur. And she met him within half a mile of the house, and they strolled back through the fields together.

"I have my furlough renewed for a week, dear Gladys! When I told my captain how lately I had been married, he laughed, and voluntarily gave me another week's leave of absence. So, as to-morrow is Sunday, I will take you to church; and on Monday we will go and see some of the public buildings," said Arthur, as he drew her arm within his own and walked her on toward their temporary home.

Their programme was carried out to the letter. The next morning they walked down to the Episcopal Church, and heard a satisfactory sermon from the pastor, Doctor Starr. On Monday they visited the Patent Office, the Post-office, and the Capitol. On Tuesday they went over the State, War, Navy, and Treasury Departments. On Wednesday they went over the President's house and grounds. On Thursday they visited the Georgetown College and Convent. On Friday they went through the Arsenal. On Saturday morning Arthur said to her:

"Now, dearest, I think we have made very good use of our time, and seen as much as it was possible to see in six days. This is the seventh and last day of my furlough. I have reserved for this day the greatest treat of all—the treat of showing you over my ship! So get on your bonnet and we will start.

Gladys lost no time, you may be sure. She was soon ready

And they set out gaily to walk on that pleasant autumnal morning.

"They reached the navy yard in good time, and went down to the water's edge. The fine frigate "Neptune" lay about a quarter of a mile from the shore.

Arthur hailed the ship, which immediately sent a boat to bring the young couple off. Arthur lifted Gladys in, and they were swiftly rowed to the side of the frigate.

The captain, who was expecting this visit, met them on the deck.

Arthur presented Gladys, who was received with much gallantry and distinction, and introduced to the officers, and to their wives, who had come on board to meet the young bride.

They all went over the ship together. Gladys was interested in every thing that was shown her—the decks, the ropes, the sails, the rudder, the guns, et cetera; but most of all, in Arthur's little cabin, sacred in her eyes from his three years' occupation of it.

"And did you really go around Cape Horn in this cabin? And when you were on the Pacific, did you really sit here and look around you, and see the very same objects that you see now?" she smilingly asked.

"Of course I did," laughed Arthur.

"Well, that seems the quaintest part of a sailor's life, to me! For when we lands-people go away, we leave home and all our familiar surroundings; but *you* take your home with you everywhere!"

"So far as a dwelling-place makes a home, I suppose we do," said Arthur.

When they had finished their inspection of the ship, they were invited into the captain's cabin, where an elegant collation was spread.

After they had partaken of this repast, they bade farewell to their hospitable entertainers, and set out on their return home.

The mountain-girl was a good walker, and she declared that she was not the least fatigued; and she declined the carriage that Arthur would have called for her.

As they walked up Garrison street, however, talking gaily of the pleasant events of the day, an incident occurred that disturbed the peace of Gladys. As a carriage rolled rapidly past them, she started, turned pale, and convulsively clasped the arm of Arthur.

"Why what ails you, my dearest? Are you afraid of being run over?" inquired Arthur, drawing the trembling little hand closer within his arm.

"Oh, no, no, no; but—didn't you see?"

"What, love?"

"Mrs. Llewellyn was in that carriage!"

"Nonsense!"

"She was, indeed! I saw her! She met my glance and drew back!"

"But even if this is so, why should it disturb you? You are safe."

"Safe! Oh, yes; I know I am safe with you, dear Arthur! I know she cannot separate us now; but still I tremble at the sight of that woman!"

"Your trembling is but the effect of association, the reflex action of the old tyranny and oppression."

"Oh, it is not altogether of the past I think! I tremble for the future!"

"But, dearest love, why? She can do you no manner of harm, except in keeping you out of your inheritance until you are twenty-one. And we know that already, and are reconciled to it."

"I know she cannot really harm me; but, I shiver at the sight of her, as we are said to do when we pass over the spot that is to be our own grave!"

"Sheer nervousness, my darling! Think no more of Mrs. Llewellyn! Her day of power over you is gone," said Arthur, drawing her arm closer to his side

They sauntered on at a leisurely pace, and at sunset reached their suburban home, where they found the tea-table set, and Father Crane, the priest of St. Peter's, there to spend the evening with his sisters.

He was a tall, thin, fair-faced, gray-haired man, very like his sisters, so like them that he had a humorous way of classing himself among them as—"Myself and the other old ladies."

Father Crane was presented in due form to "Colonel and Mrs. Pollard."

Arthur took the first private opportunity of correcting that chronic mistake in his name. But as Father Crane called the young couple nothing but "Sir" and "Madam," Arthur had no opportunity of judging whether he profited by the correction.

The priest went away the same evening. And soon after his departure, the family separated and retired.

And thus ended the young couple's holiday week.

The next day, although it was the Sabbath, Arthur was obliged to report for duty. So, after breakfast, Gladys, as before, walked with him down to the gate, to take leave of him there. She was much more cheerful than on their preceding short parting of the week before. No shadow of approaching evil clouded her spirit. He kissed her gaily, and went out of the gate. Then he turned around and lingered a little while, looking at her and talking. And at length he said he really must go. And she stood on tip-toes to kiss him over the gate; and then he laughed and hurried away—she steadily watching him and he frequently looking back and smiling at her, until he was out of sight.

Then she returned to the house.

Gladys went to church alone that morning. As the walk was very long she did not go again in the afternoon, but remained quietly at home, while the old ladies went to vespers at their own church. But the young bride was not lonely. Her thoughts were pleasantly occupied with anti-

cipations of her husband's speedy return. He had promised to be back by sunset to tea, and the sun was nearly down.

She walked to the gate to watch for him. And then, as the afternoon was so fine, she strolled out to meet him on his return. She strolled a much longer way from home than she had expected to do when she passed the gate; but still she did not meet him. The sun went down; the shades of evening came on; and still she walked on; but still she did not see him.

She met the old ladies, however, on their return from church; and very much shocked they were to see her.

"Dear me, Mrs. Colonel Pollard, my dear, is this you walking all alone by yourself at this solemn hour of the evening!" exclaimed Miss Polly, and all her sisters joined in the chorus.

"I came out to meet my husband; but he is late, and I have walked further than I intended. I cannot think what keeps him," said Gladys.

"Why, child, it is likely as the Colonel has come the other way and is at home now," said Miss Milly.

"Is there another way?"

"Why, lor', yes, a short cut by the Eastern Branch river."

"Oh, then, I suppose he has taken that path, and is at home. I will go back with you. How fortunate it is that I met you! It would have been dreadful for me to have had to go home alone at this hour," said Gladys.

"It would have been dangerous, my dear," said Miss Jenny.

They walked on rapidly, considering the age of the sisters; but it was quite dark when they reached the house.

Gladys ran in.

"Has my husband returned?" she eagerly inquired of Harriet.

"Lor', no ma'am! I thought as you would bring him home 'long o' you," said the woman.

"What *can* keep him?" complained Gladys.

"Duty, my dear child, I reckon. You know these military and naval gentlemen's time is not their own," said Miss Polly.

"True! very true! Don't wait tea for him, dear Miss Polly. You are tired, and want your tea, and he may not be home until late. Oh, yes! it is all right!" said Gladys, trying to restrain her impatience, for as yet it was not anxiety that she felt.

"Well, dear, just as you say. We can keep the kettle over the fire, and have fresh tea made for him when he does come, you know," said Miss Milly.

And as the bell rang almost immediately, they all took off their bonnets and went to the table.

After tea, Gladys went and sat upon the porch to watch and listen for the beloved footsteps that she expected every moment to hear. But she heard no sound but the sighing of the wind among the trees, the patter of the falling leaves, and a strange, regular, monotonous flitting over her head, for which she could not account. When, however, her eyes became accustomed to the gloom, and she could clearly see the star-lit sky, and the tree-studded ground, and could even discern the distant gate, she saw that the noise was produced by the flitting out of innumerable bats, that came from a hole in the roof of the porch, singly and at intervals of half a minute, and flew off into the night-sky.

Gladys was so amazed at the great number that came out, that she began to count the remaining ones as they appeared. And she was so interested in this strange amusement that she forgot her impatience for Arthur's return.

The bats were still flitting out, at the rate of two a minute, and Gladys was still counting them as they appeared, when suddenly Miss Jenny opened the door and spoke to her:

"My dear Mrs. Colonel Pollard, it is half-past nine, our bed-time; ha'n't you better come in out of the night air?"

"Oh, no! please Miss Jenny. The night air doesn't hurt me. It is so pleasant. You go to bed. I will sit here and wait for my husband. He will soon be here now. And when he comes we will take care to fasten up the house all right," pleaded Gladys.

"Well, my dear, just as you please. Good-night, honey."

"Good-night, dear Miss Jenny."

The old lady retired and Gladys resumed her lonely watch. She gave over counting the bats, and sat watching and listening. Long, long, she remained there on her dark vigil. Still she was rather impatient than alarmed; for, at last, when she was worn out with watching and she fell asleep on her post, it was with these words on her lips:

"He is on duty; oh! I know it is all right!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE PREY.

Oh! how this spring of love resembleth
The uncertain glory of an April day,
That now it is all smiles and brightness
And by and by a cloud takes all away.—*Anon.*

"WHY, honey! Why, child! Why, Mrs. Colonel Pol-lard, my dear! Why, you have never been sitting here all night; a sleeping in the open porch; and a catching of your death in the night air, with the house door wide open for anybody to come in and cut all our throats and rob the house! Oh, dear! deary me!"

These were the words, accompanied with several gentle shakes, that aroused Gladys from the deep sleep of exhaustion into which she had fallen, and in which she had lain since midnight.

She started up, shivered as with an argue fit, rubbed her

eyes, gazed around, saw that it was broad day, and recognized Miss Polly Crane.

"My dear child, whatever did you do such an imprudent thing for? It was enough to a-kill you!" continued the old lady.

While she spoke, Gladys, so suddenly roused from a deep and dreamless sleep, stared around in utter bewilderment, unable to remember where she was or how she came there. But then, as her memory slowly returned, she grew alarmed, looked anxiously at Miss Polly, and exclaimed:

"Oh! Miss Polly, has my husband returned, yet? Do you know any thing of him?"

"Why, lord, child, how should I? I have just got up and opened the house. And I never was more surprised nor more shocked in my life than I was when I saw you a-sitting there on that identical green bench, with your head leaned down upon your hand, fast asleep. My goodness, honey, what ever *did* you do it for? Don't you know you risted your life? In the fall of the year, too, when fever 'n' argue is going about like a roaring lion, a-seeking whom it may devour? What made you do it, honey?"

"I fell asleep while I was waiting for my husband! Oh! what can have kept him away all night? But perhaps he might have come home in the night, and passed me in the dark without seeing me, and gone up stairs and gone to sleep," exclaimed Gladys.

And full of this wild idea, she started up and ran away to her chamber to ascertain the truth.

In a moment, however, she came running back, saying:

"He is not there! He has not been there! I might have known it before! Because if he *had* come home in the night, and passed me in the dark, and gone up into our room, he would have missed me directly and made inquiries and found me. Oh, dear me! *what* could have kept him out all night?"

"My dear child, didn't you warn me yourself that sometimes he would be away all night on military or naval duty?"

"Oh, yes, to be sure I did. It is that which has kept him! Oh, of course it must be that, and I won't be a fool," said Gladys; but she shivered as she spoke.

"I tell you what, my dear, you have took a bad cold, that's what *you* have took. Now, come right into the kitchen-fire and warm yourself, that's a dear. And Harriet will have a hot cup of coffee ready in no time," said Miss Polly, leading the way into the house.

Gladys obediently followed, and sat down shivering in the chimney-corner, holding her hands over the blaze, and watching the kettle boil, while Harriet ground the coffee.

"Now, what do you think of this child, Harriet? Do you think she hasn't been sitting up all night waiting for that husband of hers to come home, and he on duty all the time?"

"That's bad! I makes no doubt she's cotech cold, by her shivering and shaking so much. I 'vises you to go to bed, honey, and be kivered up warm, and I'll bring you up some hot coffee to the bedside," said the colored woman, kindly.

"Yes, do, child," added Miss Polly.

"No, thank you both very much; but, as soon as I have taken something to give me a little strength and warmth, I am going down to the navy yard," replied Gladys.

"Down to the navy yard!" exclaimed mistress and maid in a breath.

"Yes; because I cannot bear the suspense. If he was on duty all night, he may also be engaged all day; and he may not be able to return before night—perhaps not even at night; and in the meantime I should be half dying with anxiety. So, odd as the proceeding may seem, I shall go to the navy yard, and to his ship, to inquire after him," said Gladys; but as she spoke her teeth chattered like castanets.

"I tell you what—you've got an ague on you now! And you must go to bed. And I will send a messenger down to the ship to make inquiries for you," urged Miss Polly.

"No, no, thank you! Indeed, I could not wait for any messenger to go and come! I must know all as soon as possible," persisted Gladys.

And no arguments or entreaties could move her from her purpose.

She would not even wait for the regular breakfast to be got ready, but went up stairs immediately to make a hasty morning toilet; and then, as soon as the coffee had boiled, she drank a cupful nearly scalding hot. And then set out upon her long walk.

It was one of those fine, bright, frosty, bracing mornings common to that season of the year; and between the effects of the exhilarating atmosphere and the coffee she had drank, and the hope of speedily seeing Arthur, Gladys felt her health and spirits revive.

"If he *has* been on duty all night, he *may* be let off early this morning; and in that case I shall meet him on the way! How surprised he will be to see me! And ah! if he is still on shipboard, how *more* than surprised—how shocked he will be to see me coming *there, alone*, to seek him! Perhaps he will be angry; but I do not think so. He may think I act very foolishly, but he will not be angry with me. At least, I know nothing that he could do would make me angry."

Such was the course of her thoughts, as she walked on through the cornfields, until she drew near the streets, and entered upon the navy yard hill.

In a few moments she reached the gate, and entered and crossed the whole length of the yard to the water's edge, from which she saw the ship lying at anchor, about an eighth of a mile from the shore.

She stood there and waved her handkerchief, hoping that some of the officers on deck would see her, and send off a

boat to fetch her. Her hope was realized. Captain Williamson, standing on deck, glass in hand, was the first to observe her. He immediately dispatched a boat with an officer and four men to her service.

The young midshipman in command smilingly saluted her as he stepped ashore, and asked:

"Do you wish to go on board, Mrs. Powis?"

"Yes, if you please. No, perhaps not. I really don't know yet. I came down to inquire after my husband. Is he on shipboard, do you know?" inquired Gladys, hesitating and blushing in her embarrassment.

"No, madam, he has not been here yet this morning," answered the midshipman.

"No! why, has he not been on the ship all night?" exclaimed Gladys, in alarm.

"Oh, no, madam! The captain did not require him."

"When—when did he leave the ship?"

"At four bells. I brought him off myself."

"Four bells—what is that?"

"Six o'clock in the afternoon, I mean, it was when I brought him off, and he set out to walk home."

Gladys threw her hand to her head, and reeled as if she would have fallen; but recovering herself with an effort, she said:

"Mr. Mills—you *are* Mr. Mills, I believe?"

"Yes, madam—that is my name," said the boy officer, touching his hat.

"Mr. Mills, then—did he—my husband, I mean—say where he was going?"

"Yes, madam; he said that he was going directly home, for that you were not as well as he could wish, and that he was very anxious on your account."

Gladys had turned as pale as death, and she was trembling in every limb, when she said:

"Mr. Mills, he never came home last night. Oh! do you think there is really any cause to be alarmed? There are

no such persons as footpads or highwaymen about the city, are there?"

The young officer had stepped back a pace or two, and was gazing at her in surprise:

"Oh, answer me! You do not think there is any just reason for anxiety, do you?" entreated Gladys, clasping her hands and raising her eyes appealingly to the face of the lad, for want of a more experienced counsellor.

"Blest if I know, ma'am! Not home all night, after his hurry to get there! That is very odd!" replied the boy, quite startled out of his self-possession and politeness.

"But—might not something have prevented him—something not dangerous, I mean—something like business, or news, or the arrival of a friend?" gasped Gladys, catching at these vague conjectures, as the drowning catch at straws.

"I—don't know, I'm sure, ma'am," replied the young officer, who showed as much consternation as Gladys herself.

"Mr. Mills," said the young lady, striving to attain composure, "I must request you to assist me into the boat. I will go on board the ship, and see Captain Williamson. Perhaps he will be able to throw some light on this subject."

"Perhaps he will, ma'am. Take my hand," said the youth, gallantly aiding Gladys to step into the boat.

"Give way, boys," he said, as soon as she was seated.

And the boat was shoved off.

They soon reached the side of the ship, on the deck of which they found Captain Williamson waiting to receive the visitor.

"Good morning, madam," he said smilingly, holding out his hand to assist her in reaching the deck. "You look rather pale and tired with this climbing. Never mind. There! you are safe now. Where is Mr. Powis? And why is he not with you?"

"Ah, why indeed, sir! I came here in the expectation of hearing from him! He has not been home since yester-

day morning!" said Gladys, as she stood, white, panting, and nearly breathless, before the captain.

"Not home since yesterday morning! Why—where is he?" demanded that officer, in surprise.

"Ah, sir, I do not know! I came here in the hope of finding out!" replied Gladys, beginning to wring her hands.

"Why—that—is—very—strange," said the captain, slowly and emphatically dropping each word like a bullet, as he gazed inquiringly upon the face of Gladys.

"Oh, sir! may he not have gone out on business, up to the Navy Department for instance; and might not the secretary have sent him off on some sudden duty, that left him no time to explain to you or to take leave of me?" said Gladys, clasping her hands and fixing her imploring eyes upon the face of Captain Williamson, as though she were praying him to say yes, and give her some comfort.

But even in the midst of his own anxiety, the captain could not help smiling at her simplicity. But he had not the heart to resist those pleading eyes and hands, and dash her last hopes to the ground. He answered evasively and even insincerely:

"We cannot tell what may have detained him; nothing that need give you any uneasiness, however, I am sure."

"Oh! do you think not? Are you sure not?" she inquired.

"Certain. I will, however, inquire among my officers; they may know something of this strange absence, or its cause. Mr. Powis may have dropped some words while in conversation with them, that may afford some clue to this strange affair."

"Oh, do, do, do, Captain Williamson! and I shall be deeply indebted to you," said Gladys, earnestly.

"Step into my cabin, then, Mrs. Powis. My wife is there, and will be glad to see you," said the captain, taking the hand of the young lady and conducting her to the door of the cabin, where Mrs. Williamson received her very kindly, and offered her cake and wine.

After an absence of fifteen minutes, the good captain returned.

"Oh! what news?" exclaimed Gladys, as he entered the cabin.

"None whatever, my dear lady, except that during the day, yesterday, Mr. Powis was heard several times to express great anxiety to get home early on *your* account, as he said that you were indisposed in mind and body," replied the captain.

"Oh, dear me! it makes it all the more alarming, that after all he should not have got home at all! Oh, something *must* have happened to him!" exclaimed Gladys, wringing her hands.

"What is all this about? What has happened, my dear?" inquired Mrs. Williamson, who had not yet heard of the disappearance of Lieutenant Powis.

The captain told her the circumstances, but added cheerfully:

"There is no real cause of alarm."

"Oh, no, certainly not!" chimed in the captain's wife. "You will find it is all right. Something or other, not of a painful nature, has happened to detain him a little. That is all."

Poor Gladys looked from one to the other of her companions, trying to believe them and to take comfort from their words.

"Why even *now* he may have reached home," said the captain.

"And be waiting anxiously for your return," added the captain's wife.

"Oh! so he may! I will go directly," said Gladys, starting up, all exhausted and trembling as she was, to set out on her way home.

"Stay, my dear madam. You did not ride here, I fear? I saw no carriage on the shore," said the captain, detaining her.

"Oh, no, I walked," replied Gladys.

"Then you are certainly not able to walk back. Stop here with my wife until I send over and have a carriage brought down to the shore to meet you."

Gladys hesitated, feeling her weakness, but being unwilling to wait.

"Do, my dear, take my husband's advice! You are too much worn out to walk back! And even if you were not so, you would not reach home so quickly by walking as you will by riding," said Mrs. Williamson.

Again Gladys looked from the one to the other in helpless embarrassment, and then suddenly taking a resolution, she answered:

"Thank you, yes; you are right; I thank you very much indeed."

The captain went out and gave the necessary orders; while Gladys remained with his wife.

In half an hour the carriage was reported to be waiting on the shore, and the boat to be ready near the starboard gangway.

Gladys arose to take leave of Mrs. Williamson.

The captain then conducted her from the cabin.

"If my husband should report here before he shows himself at home; or, if you should hear any news of him, will you be so very kind as to send and let me know? I am aware that this is a great thing to ask of you; but I trust in your pity for my great anxiety," said Gladys, as they descended the side of the ship.

"Your trust is well founded, my dear lady. Immediately upon the first news I receive of Mr. Powis I will send a man to inform you," said the captain, as he handed her carefully into the boat, and arranged her comfortably on her seat.

"Thank you! oh, thank you very much, sir!" said Gladys.

The captain bowed, returned to the deck of his ship and stood there, hat in hand, until the boat was pushed off.

When it reached the shore, Gladys got into the carriage that was waiting for her, gave the proper directions to the driver, and was driven off toward her temporary home.

The roads were good, the horses fresh, the weight light, and so the speed was very rapid.

But to the anxious mind of Gladys the way seemed long. She was beginning to feel very ill. Shivers of cold were succeeded by flushes of heat and fits of fainting;—and through all, her head was throbbing violently.

At length the ride came to an end at the little rustic gate leading into the grounds around the old house.

The driver alighted and put down the steps.

Gladys got out, but found that she could scarcely stand or see. She searched her pocket for her purse to pay the man who stood waiting for his money, but she could not find it. Then she remembered that she had left it in her bureau drawer.

"Wait here a little while; I will send you the money," she said.

And with reeling brain, and fading sight, and failing limbs she tottered toward the house, and nearly fell into the arms of Miss Polly, who received her on the porch.

"My dear child! how ill you do look! have you heard any bad news? has any thing happened?" said the kind-hearted old lady as she tried to support Gladys, but staggered under her light weight.

Gladys shook her head.

"I have heard nothing satisfactory. And I fear, by your looks, that *you* have not either. He left the ship at six o'clock last evening to return home. That is the last his brother officers have seen or heard of him. I had hoped to have found him here. Oh, dear! There, Miss Polly, thank you. I must go up stairs now, and get my purse to pay the carriage. I was obliged to ride home," said the poor girl, gently disengaging herself from the old lady's arms; but immediately, when deprived of that support, sinking upon the bench of the porch.

"Indeed, you sha'n't go to no up stairs at all until you have recovered yourself. Where is the man? and how much is it? I will pay him, and then you can settle with me arterward," said the old lady.

"Thank you, dear Miss Polly. He is at the gate. It is only a dollar. I will return it to you when I go to my room," said Gladys. But her voice came in short, faint jerks, as with a great effort.

The old lady took a little wash leather purse from her own bosom, counted the money that was in it, and set off as fast as her feeble limbs would carry her to the gate.

She paid and dismissed the carriage and returned to her guest.

Gladys had changed in the little time occupied by Miss Polly's absence. Gladys leaned forward upon the arm of the rustic bench, and her face was white and convulsed as if in mortal agony.

"Why, my dear, dear, dear child! what is the matter?" inquired Miss Polly, running to her in alarm.

"I don't know! such a pang caught me in the side! and it took away my breath!" gasped Gladys.

"I'll tell you what, you have got the pneumonia from sleeping out in the porch all night! that's what you've got! Now, what will Colonel Pollard say?" exclaimed Miss Polly.

Gladys did not attempt to reply. Her face expressed so much suffering that the old lady hastened to say:

"Come in! come right in, and go to bed, and we will do what we can for your relief."

Gladys had no alternative. She immediately arose to follow this advice.

Miss Polly drew the young creature's arm within her own, and helped her up the stairs, and into the chamber, and got her to bed.

The old lady's misgivings were well grounded. In a few hours Gladys was extremely ill, and great bodily pain was added to excessive mental anxiety.

The sisters became alarmed, and took the responsibility of summoning their own family physician—Dr. Brown, who, when he saw his patient, pronounced her disorder to be typhoid pneumonia, brought on by fatigue, anxiety and exposure to cold. That night Gladys became delirious, and forgot all her troubles in the wanderings of a disordered imagination.

The next day Captain Williamson came in person to inquire after the lieutenant. But the Misses Crane could give him no information, except that he had not been heard from by them or any one in their house, and that his young wife was lying at the point of death. And the captain went away full of sorrow, anxiety and conjecture, to report the case to the police, and to invoke their aid in seeking to discover the fate of the missing man. For many days Gladys hovered between life and death. The three sisters nursed her faithfully, tenderly and disinterestedly. The old priest came and prayed by her. And the captain sent every few days to inquire how the patient progressed.

And still Arthur Powis did not return.

CHAPTER XII.

OMINOUS.

Between the acting of a dreadful thing,
And the first motion, all the interim is
Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream;
The genius and the mortal instruments
Are then in council; and the state of a man,
Like to a little kingdom, suffers then
The nature of an insurrection.—*Shakespeare.*

ILLNESS is very expensive. The sisters found it so. Their ready money, advanced without hesitation for the purchase of necessaries for the sick room, was soon expended. And then, as they did not wish to go in debt, they searched

for their patient's purse and found it. It was such a slender little purse, with such a pitiful little sum of money in it—only a few pieces of silver! The sisters felt that it would be cruel to draw upon that small fund. And smiling and shaking their heads, they put it back. And they borrowed a few dollars from their brother, the priest.

And still Arthur Powis did not return.

Some one else came, however. It was the ninth day of Gladys's illness, in the middle of the forenoon. She was lying in a deep sleep that her nurses knew would prove a sleep "of life unto life, or of death unto death;" for this was the highest crisis of her illness; and she must either sink into coma and death, or else awake to full consciousness and life. Miss Milly and Harriet, who had just relieved Miss Polly and Miss Jenny, were sitting, the one on the right side of the bed, and the other on the left, when the sound of wheels was heard, and a carriage stopped at the gate.

Miss Milly arose softly, went to the window, pulled aside the curtain and peeped out.

It was a hackney coach that stood at the gate; and a lady in deep mourning had just alighted from it. She was a tall and stately woman, and she walked slowly and majestically up the avenue leading to the house.

"I suppose Polly and Jenny are a taking of a nap after their night-watching; so I had better go down and see who this visitor is and what she wants," whispered Miss Milly to her coadjutor of the sick-room. And then she went down stairs for the expressed purpose.

When Miss Milly opened the door to receive the strange visitor, she also saw that the doctor had just passed through the gate and was coming up the gravel walk.

"Is this Ceres Cottage?" inquired the lady.

"Yes, ma'am, this is Serious Cottage," answered Miss Milly.

"Where the Miss Cranes live?"

"Yes, ma'am, will you walk in?"

"If you please. Are you Miss Crane?" inquired the lady, as she followed her conductor into the parlor.

"No, ma'am; I am Miss Milly. Will you take a seat?"

"Thank you. You have a young lady boarding here, I believe?" inquired the visitor, as she sank into an easy-chair.

"Yes, ma'am; a young married lady, she is a lying at death's door at the present moment of time."

What effect this announcement had on the visitor, Miss Milly could not know, for just at that moment the doctor quietly entered the room, saying:

"Good-morning, Miss Milly. How is my patient?"

"Good-morning, doctor. Just the same, sir; just precisely the same, for all that I can see. Will you go up now and look at her?"

"If you please," said the doctor, then bowing to Miss Milly and to the strange lady, he turned to leave the room.

Miss Milly stood hesitating whether to remain with her visitor, or to attend the doctor, and then she said:

"If you will please to excuse me, ma'am, I will show Doctor Brown up stairs."

"No, no, Miss Milly, it is not necessary, I assure you. I suppose there is some one up there with her?" said the doctor.

"Oh, yes, sir; Harriet is there."

"That will do then. You remain with your visitor," said the doctor, leaving the room.

Miss Milly turned to the strange lady, saying:

"Now, ma'am, what might be your wishes?"

"I wish to see the young lady as soon as possible. Is she very ill?"

"At death's door, ma'am, I am sorry to say. Might you be of any kin to the sweet young lady?"

"I am her aunt by marriage, and her guardian by law. What is her illness?"

"Typhoid pneumonia, the doctor says."

"How long has she been ill?"

"Nine days."

"How long has she been with you?"

"Near about three weeks, ma'am."

"She came here in company with a young officer?"

"Her husband, ma'am. Yes."

"Umph!" groaned the lady, as if in grief, contempt and incredulity.

"And oh, ma'am, what do you think? He is a-missing! But perhaps you know that already, and more besides, and have come to tell us news of him?"

"No, I did not know he was missing; but I am not surprised to hear it—not at all; it might have been expected."

"MA'AM!" exclaimed Miss Milly, in amazement.

"This young officer was in the navy, was he not?" inquired the lady, ignoring the exclamation of Miss Milly.

"Yes, I believe he had something to do on board of a ship," answered Miss Milly.

"Yes, of course; it is the same. So he has left her?" sneered the lady.

"MA'AM?" gasped Miss Milly, discrediting her own ears.

"I say, so he has left her already! Well! I thought he would do so; but I did not think he would do it quite so soon."

"Ma'am, he is a-missing! which his friends do fear he is killed!" said Miss Milly.

"Oh, yes, I dare say! Has his body been found?"

"Oh, no, ma'am."

"Then how can you suppose that he has been killed?"

"Why, ma'am, because he doesn't come back, neither to his wife nor to his ship; and he's been a-missing ten days, which he suddenly disappeared the very day as the young lady, heaven bless her, was took ill, and which the doctor says how it was *one* cause of her illness"

"Yes, I have no doubt that his desertion affected her very deeply; though it was just what she might have expected; for such cases as theirs always end in the desertion of the one by the other."

"Lor, ma'am, how can you talk so! He never deserted of her! Why, she was the apple of his eye and the darling of his heart, she was! And of all the young married people as ever I see, them two was the lovingest and the happiest."

"Married!" exclaimed the lady, in bitter scorn. "Do you really suppose they were married?"

Miss Milly dropped her jaws and opened her eyes and stared at her visitor—aghast!

"Do you now really think that that boy and girl were married?" repeated the visitor.

"Oh, ma'am, for the Lord of Mercy's sake, don't insinuate as they were *not* married! don't!" implored Miss Milly, clasping her hands.

"I am sorry to shock you, my good woman; but it is best that the truth should be told—nay, it is absolutely necessary that it should. The young lady in whom you seem to take so much interest——"

"I do; oh, indeed, I really do, ma'am! And so do my sisters, and so does my brother, and so does Harriet—she is our colored woman. Oh! please don't say any thing against the young lady, ma'am," said Miss Milly.

"Whatever I say, or omit to say, will not alter the facts, will it?"

"Well, no, ma'am; I do suppose not."

"Now, then, what I have to say is this; that about a month ago, or some thing less, this young lady eloped from my house with the young officer whom she calls her husband."

"And who is her husband, ma'am. I would' make my affyda-vv of it with a free conscience," stoutly asserted Miss Milly.

"That is impossible—quite impossible; she is a minor, and cannot legally contract marriage without the consent of her guardian, until she is of age. No! she has eloped with this man, whom she cannot legally marry; and it appears, that even in this short time he has grown tired of her and deserted her; and I have come very opportunely to rescue her from a life of sin."

"Oh, ma'am, ma'am, how cruel of you to speak in that way of the very innocentest young couple as ever I seen in all my life! just for all the world like two blessed children. I'll never believe ill of them, ma'am—never!" said Miss Milly, shaking her head.

"Do you mean—do you dare to hint that I have slandered them!" sternly demanded the lady.

"Oh dear, no, ma'am! I don't dare to do nothing at all. Only I won't believe no ill of that there blessed young couple—no! if I die for not doing of it. So there now!" said Miss Milly, with her aged eyes flashing luridly, like an expiring fire, through her tears.

Before the strange lady could reply to this speech, the door once more opened, and the doctor re-entered the room.

"How is she, doctor? how is the dear young creature?" inquired Miss Milly, wiping her eyes.

"I must answer you as you answered me, using your own very words—'She is just the same,'" replied the doctor.

"Will she get over it? Is there any hope?"

"I do not know whether she will get over it. There is hope, of course. A few hours will decide her fate for life or death."

"Can we do any thing now, doctor?"

"Very little. I have left full directions with the colored nurse, who seems to be an intelligent and faithful woman," said the doctor.

"A word with you, if you please, sir," said the visitor, accosting the physician.

"Certainly, madam!" exclaimed the latter, in surprise.

"I wish to speak of the unhappy young lady, your patient."

"I am at your service, madam."

"This young lady has been very imprudent, very unfortunate, and ah! I fear indeed, very culpable also," said the lady, in a tone of deep feeling.

"Madam!" exclaimed the doctor.

"I never will believe it," interrupted Miss Milly.

"A few words will explain how this matter stands: This young lady is my niece and my ward. About a month ago she eloped from my house with the young officer whom she calls her husband—but falsely calls so, because she is a minor, and cannot legally marry without the consent of her guardian—a consent that has never been given. I, her nearest living relative, as well as her guardian, have come in pursuit of her. I have arrived opportunely, when, as it seems, the unprincipled wretch who enticed her from her home has deserted her, and left her destitute and among strangers."

"I am very much surprised and grieved at what you have told me, madam," said the doctor, elevating his eyebrows.

"Oh, sir, don't believe it! Please don't believe any thing against them darling young folks. If they runned away it was for love. And if they is not married, they thinks they is, poor dears! And I *know* they is, too. They's two angels of goodness, they is; and my brother thinks so, too; and he is a priest, and *he* ought to know," said Miss Milly, earnestly.

"This simple, tender-hearted creature has been imposed upon. It is not worth our while to reply to her. What I wish to know is *this*, doctor—whether, if my unhappy young charge should awake to consciousness, it would be safe for me to announce myself to her," said the lady.

"Judging from what you have told me, I should say it

would not be safe, madam. Under these unfortunate circumstances, even if she were in good health, your sudden appearance would necessarily be very agitating to her; but in her very critical state, if she were to awake and find you near her, the sight of you might be fatal to her," replied the doctor, coldly.

It was a noticeable fact that all persons now spoke coldly to this lady. There was nothing that she said which might not have been strictly true; there was nothing that she did which might not have been quite right; yet her manner did not inspire confidence; on the contrary, it engendered distrust.

"The life of the young lady is very, very dear to me, indeed," she said, "and I shall be very careful how I make my presence known to her. I suppose that while she lays in this state of unconsciousness, I might, without danger to her, sit by her and watch?"

"If you would be very careful to note the first indications of a return to consciousness, and retire before she could recognize you," said the doctor.

"I should be sure to do that. And now, Miss Crane," said the visitor, turning to Miss Milly, "as I understand that you take boarders, and as I wish to be on the spot to watch over my niece and ward, I would like to know whether you could accommodate me with a room."

"I will call Jenny; I never do any thing without consulting Jenny," said Miss Milly, leaving the room.

The doctor bowed and took his departure at the same moment.

The visitor, who had been walking slowly up and down the floor, now sat down to wait the entrance of the sisters.

Miss Milly soon returned, bringing in Miss Jenny.

"Jenny," she said, "this lady is Mrs. — Mrs. — Dear me, ma'am! I am sure I beg your pardon, but I have forgot your name! My memory do get very bad."

"I do not know that you ever heard my name; I am

sure that I never announced it to you. I am Mrs. Jay Llewellyn, of Kader Idrys, in Virginia. I am the aunt and guardian of the young lady who boards with you. I also wish to obtain a room and board here, for a few weeks, that I may watch over my unhappy young charge during her illness," said the visitor, addressing both sisters.

"'Ee-es!" drawled Miss Jenny; "certainly, ma'am; I dare say; but I will call Polly. We never do any thing without consulting Polly."

And Miss Jenny left the room, attended by Milly. And soon both returned, bringing in Miss Polly.

"Polly," said Miss Jenny, "this lady is Mrs. Jane Louisa, of some place in Virginia—I forget what——"

"I am Mrs. Jay Llewellyn, the guardian of the young lady up stairs. And I wish to board here to take care of her, if I can be accommodated," said the visitor, curtly.

"'Ee-es; certainly, ma'am; but we will call Harriet: We never do any thing of importance without consulting of Harriet, who is our housekeeper and right hand woman, said Miss Polly, going out, followed by both her sisters.

Mrs. Llewellyn made a gesture of scorn and impatience. But she had not long to wait.

Soon the aged sisters re-entered, attended by their maid.

"Harriet," said Miss Polly, "make the deepest courtesies to this lady. This lady is Mrs. James Lewis, the gardeen of the poor, sick young lady. Come to nurse her. 'Ee-es. Now I want to know if we can accommodate her comfortably?"

Harriet made a half a dozen deep courtesies in quick succession, and then answered:

"Dere's de back room a joining on to de young madam's room. I would show dat to de ole madam. And she could see ef she'd like it."

"Do so, then, Harriet. Ma'am, if you'll be so good as to walk up stairs, she will show you the room."

Mrs. Llewellyn arose, drawing her shawls around her,

and followed her conductor up stairs to a spacious, but plainly furnished back chamber, with one door opening on the passage and another door communicating with the room of Gladys.

Mrs. Llewellyn threw open the back windows that overlooked the vegetable garden, poultry yard and corn-fields, and then by the light she turned to examine the room. She was apparently satisfied with it. She turned to Harriet, saying:

"I suppose that *you* are really the only executive power in this house."

"The *which*, ma'am?" respectfully inquired the puzzled woman.

"You are the only business woman?"

"I sees to all de young ladies' business, yes, ma'am."

"The *young* ladies?"

"The Miss Craneseses, ma'am, yes, ma'am."

Mrs. Llewellyn looked puzzled in her turn; but was too busy to seek an answer to the riddle. She came at once to the question of board.

"What are the terms?" she inquired.

"Well, ma'am, fifteen dollars a month where a single pusson takes a large room to derself. But when *two* takes it, we charges of 'em bof only twenty-five dollars a month," said Harriet, folding her arms and rolling her fat person from side to side with good-natured importance.

"That will do. Perhaps I shall require extra comforts and attendance. If so, I will pay for them."

"Just so, ma'am. But now ders anoder question."

"And what is that?"

"Long as de young gentleman is goed away without a settling for his board, or the young lady's board, who is a gwine to settle for it? that's what I want to know," said Harriet, respectfully.

"I shall. From this moment I assume all the debts, expenses, and responsibilities of this young lady. You may tell your mistresse so."

"Yes, ma'am; thankee, ma'am; that's very hon'able, indeed; I must say it ralely is."

"That will do. I do not require your approbation. Attend me down stairs."

The visitor went below; explained to the old ladies that she would like to enter upon her new lodgings that same afternoon; received their courteous acquiescence; and departed to settle her bill at her hotel, and to bring her luggage.

After she was gone the three sisters put their ancient heads together, set their spectacles up on the top of their caps, and discussed the visitor.

They did not, either of them, like her; and they did not know why; her looks, words, and actions were unexceptionable; and so, after comparing notes one with another, the three good creatures decided that they themselves were in fault—being unjust and prejudiced; and that Mrs. James Lewis must be altogether in the right.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FELL WATCH.

Days lay she in that state, unchanged though chill,
With nothing livid; still her lips were red;
She had no pulse, but death seemed absent still;
No hideous sign proclaimed her surely dead;
Corruption came not, in each mind to kill
All hope; to look upon her sweet face bred
New thoughts of life, for it seemed full of soul;
She had so much, earth could not claim the whole.—Byron.

EARLY in the afternoon came Mrs. Jay Llewellyn, or Mrs. James Lewis, as the sisters called her.

The lady established herself in the big back bedroom adjoining Gladys' chamber; and then took up her watch by the bed. Baleful watcher! She sent every one out of the

way, and then opened a window to admit the light into the darkened room, and went to the bed to examine the face of the sick girl.

Gladys lay upon her back; the pillow had been withdrawn from under her head to favor the action of the heart and lungs in the functions of circulation and respiration. Her hands had been folded across her bosom in the attitude of prayer, and they rested there quiescent. Her long, black hair, unbound, floated down each side her white cheeks and neck, and lay in masses on the snowy coverlet, which was drawn straight upon the bed. Altogether, the aspect of the insensible girl was that of a beautiful corpse laid out for burial.

Mrs. Jay took one of the docile hands and felt the pulse, and then shook her head as gravely as any doctor could have done, saying:

"She must not die; or all our plans must fail! She must live, for through her all our chance of getting Kader Idris is gone! Failing her, the estate goes to a distant male relative in Wales. She must live! She must live! or all is lost! I will call in more advice."

And the lady dropped the poor, little, helpless hand, and left the room to write a note and find a messenger to take it to its address.

That night, in answer to the summons, Doctor Seward, one of the eminent physicians of the day, arrived at Ceres Cottage to hold a consultation with the family medical attendant.

The end of that consultation left the case where it found it; that is to say, the doctors decided that they could do nothing at present, but leave the patient to nature and await the issue. The highest attainment of medical science is to know when *not* to interfere. Perhaps to the knowledge of that rare secret Doctor Seward owed his great success in the profession.

However that might be, Gladys, left to nature, lay calmly

sleeping that death-like sleep until late the next morning. The room was in almost total darkness, and Mrs. Jay, who had watched all night, was sitting in the deepest shadow by the bed, when, with ears preternaturally acute in the stillness of the room, she heard the sick girl stir, and, in a few seconds afterward, murmur:

"*Water.*"

Fearing to put out this feeble light of life by any shock, Mrs. Jay forbore to approach nearer the patient, but glided on tiptoes to the door, and went down stairs to the back parlor, where the ancient sisters were all three at work at their quilting-frame.

They looked up simultaneously, as if asking with their eyes the question their lips were tired of framing:

"How is she?"

"She is awake; and conscious also, I think. I feared to approach her, lest the sudden sight of the guardian she deserted might overwhelm her. Will one of you be kind enough to go up stairs?"

All three of the sisters shuffled up from their places, dropping scissors, spools, thimbles, et cetera, that all fell rattling upon the floor.

"One at a time, good friends. My poor girl should be approached very gently," Mrs. Jay remonstrated.

"Then I'll go; and you two stay here; and tell Harriet to make that wine whey, and make it directly; and let it be good and strong. For the doctor said, if she did wake in her right senses, she was to have *that* directly to strengthen her," said Miss Polly, as she scuttled out of the room and up the stairs.

She entered the sick chamber, drew the window-blind up a little way, and hurried to the bedside.

Gladys was rolling restlessly about and moaning a half-unconscious cry of—

"*Water, water, water!*"

Miss Polly hurried to the jug of ice-water that sat upon the side-table, filled a glass, and brought it to her.

How eagerly she quaffed the water, looking up into the old lady's face with bright, grateful, questioning eyes, as if she enjoyed the drink, and thanked without fully recognizing the giver.

Then, with a sigh of deep satisfaction, she sank back upon her pillow, and immediately dropped into a profound, healthful, natural sleep.

Miss Polly stepped down stairs to report progress.

"The crisis is past, I am sure, and she is saved. I will watch by her this afternoon."

Then she returned to the sick chamber and resumed her post.

Gladys was sleeping well, breathing regularly, and perspiring moderately.

"Oh, she will get well; she will get well;" said the old lady to herself.

Miss Polly kept her post until dinner time, when she consented to be relieved for half an hour by Harriet. But as soon as she had eaten a hasty meal she returned again to the bedside of the beautiful young patient.

Gladys slept on until late in the afternoon, and then awoke again. Seeing Miss Polly sitting by her, she calmly inquired:

"Has Arthur come in to his tea yet?"

Ah, by that question the good old lady knew that the poor girl's faculties were not yet fully restored, and feared that they might not ever be. She answered prudently, however:

"No, my dear, he hasn't come in just quite yet. This is earlier than he usually comes, you know."

"Is it? Why, I thought it was growing quite dark; but now I see that the window-shutters are closed. Miss Polly, I don't remember lying down here," she said; but her voice was growing very faint from the exertion of speaking these few words.

"Why, my dear, your head has been bad, and you have been so sound asleep. You are hardly awake yet."

"Yes; let me see—how was it?" said Gladys, putting her hand up to her head, and contracting her brows as if endeavoring to recollect.

"Oh, my dear, darling love, you mustn't do that; you mustn't indeed; you mustn't try to think; if you do it will make your head bad again!" Miss Polly exclaimed in alarm.

"Was it—was it a *sunstroke*?" Gladys inquired, in a failing voice.

"Yes, my little angel, it was a *stroke*—a *bad stroke*," Miss Polly said, gladly seizing upon this explanation, and forgetting, as her patient did, that sunstrokes do not fall at such a season of the year as that was.

"But—how did it happen?"

"Now, my own dear pet, you mustn't ask questions, nor puzzle your head; you mustn't talk, nor think, nor do nothing but eat and sleep. And now, my pretty darling, I am going to get you some nice wine whey, that will do you a world of good. And you must lie quite still, like a good pet, until I come back," Miss Polly said, coaxingly, as if she were speaking to a young child.

She flitted softly down stairs and soon returned with some rich, spicy port wine whey, whose aroma was in itself almost enough to revive the sinking vitality of that delicate patient.

Holding up the head of Gladys with one hand, she administered the refreshment with the other.

"There, open your mouth wide, my little bird, and take in a big teaspoonful at a time," the good old lady said, being delighted to see Gladys swallow the liquid so eagerly.

Miss Polly permitted Gladys to drink every drop, and then she bathed the patient's hands and face with the refreshing and composing rosemary water, and made her close her eyes and lie still.

Gladys was soon again asleep. Indeed the young lady's return to life was very much like a new-born babe's com

mencement of life—it was nothing but sleeping, feeding and trusting.

In the evening the two physicians paid their usual consulting visit. Gladys was asleep when they arrived, and they would not awaken her. They made such an examination as the circumstances permitted, took the report of Miss Polly, and then pronounced their patient out of immediate danger; but warned Mrs. Jay Llewellyn that she must be exceedingly careful in announcing her presence to Gladys, lest the shock should be fatal to her recovery. Then leaving directions for the treatment of the patient during the night, and promising to come early in the morning, they departed.

As soon as the doctors were gone, Mrs. Jay summoned the three sisters to the parlor for a consultation among themselves as to the best means of breaking the news of her arrival to Gladys. Miss Milly and Miss Jenny left their quilting-frames to obey the summons. And Miss Polly called Harriet to take her place by the bedside of the patient, and went down and joined the circle. The character of this consultation will be known by its results; so it need not be detailed here.

It is necessary, however, in justice to the Misses Crane, to say, that it was very long before Mrs. Jay could convince them of the propriety of sacrificing truth to expediency; that Mrs. Jay took them no further into her confidence than absolute necessity demanded; and that she persuaded them all was to be done only to save the life or sanity of Gladys.

If these excellent old ladies had trusted their first impressions of Mrs. Jay, they would never have trusted that lady herself. As it was, however, they had allowed their instincts to be overcome by the specious manners of the traitress.

Miss Polly undertook to break the news to Gladys, and also to deceive her with the "pious fraud" that they had decided to put upon her; but Miss Polly insisted upon

being allowed to take her own time about it, and to wait until she should feel assured that Gladys was well enough to receive the communication.

Tearfully Miss Polly went to resume her watch.

"I wonder whether I am justified! I wonder whether I am! I wish they hadn't put it upon me to do! They know, at least my sisters know, that I can't abear deceit, and never could! I wish I could talk to a priest about it! I do so! But that's impossible now, because I must stay here and watch for her to wake. They say as how if she do wake, and find out he's still a'missing, and s'posed to be runned away, or murdered, as it would throw her back and drive her raving mad, or hurry her into her grave! Well, now, let me see! Wouldn't it ralely be more Christian in me, not to be so selfish about my own salvation, but to tell a little story and commit a little sin, that the good Lord would forgive because I should be sure to be sorry for having to do it, and so save this poor child's life and reason; than to go and blurt out the truth and drive her into the madhouse, or into the grave? But then I don't know, either. I do *hate* deceit worse nor poison! And I don't believe in 'pious frauds;' nor likewise in 'doing evil that good may come;' nor moreover in 'the end a justifying the means;' nor none of that; nor never did; let them say what they may! Oh! deary me! why didn't they get somebody as like lying better nor I do, to lie for them? I don't like lies, neither white nor black! And white lies must be worse than black ones, 'cause white shows dirt so!"

Thus the old lady communed with herself, as she sat by the bedside of Gladys.

Her firmness, however, was not put to the test that night. Youth, nature, and a good constitution were doing all that was possible for the patient's recovery, in holding her now in a deep, healthful sleep.

Miss Polly sat by her until midnight, and then, seeing that Gladys gave no signs of awakening, she summoned Harriet to relieve the watch.

The colored woman came softly into the room.

"Harriet, I am tired to death with sitting up. I want you to make me a bed on the floor here. Can you do it without making of a noise?" Miss Polly whispered.

"Of course I can, miss," answered the woman, who immediately left the room to fetch the required bedding.

When the bed was made, Miss Polly loosened all her clothes and laid down to rest, saying to Harriet:

"You will take my place by the poor young creetur's bedside, and if she should wake you must not speak to her, but you must rouse me directly. If she should not wake, you must let me sleep until the dawn of day, and then wake me. And—above all things, you must be sure to—um—um—. Above all things, you must—um—um—you must be sure—sure—um—m—me——"

And with her sentence incoherent and unfinished, Miss Polly, worn out with watching, dropped into a deep sleep.

And Harriet settled herself in the comfortable easy-chair, and *she* fell asleep. And Gladys also slept until morning.

Miss Polly was the first to wake. The light of day stealing through the slats of the window-shutters unsealed her eyelids. When she raised her head and looked around she saw that the room was in the first subdued light of morning twilight. The night taper still burned on the mantel-piece; the night watcher still slept in the easy-chair; the clock on the corner shelf pointed to the hour of six.

"Well! upon my word!" Miss Polly said, indignantly, as she gazed upon the sleeping nurse and got out of bed to awaken her. She went up to the side of the patient's bed and looked at Gladys, and found her sleeping wholesomely. Then she took the slumbering nurse by the shoulder and shook her rudely, saying:

"Well, I declare! You're a pretty one, aint you, to leave by :. sick-bed? Wake up, you great, heavy, addle-headed t. ing!"

Harriet started, yawned, stretched herself, stared and exclaimed:

"Well, lors! I do believe as I must a drapped off to sleep!"

"I believe you have slept the whole night through! you unfaithful creetur!" Miss Polly wrathfully exclaimed. And the old lady was so far right as that Harriet had slept soundly on her post ever since she had taken it.

"Indeed, indeed, indeed, Miss Polly, ef it wer' de lastest word I had to speak in dis world, I jus' dis minute done los' myse'f a-noddin' a bit!" Harriet answered so earnestly that Miss Polly was obliged to believe her. And the black woman really thought that she was speaking the truth, because her sleep of six hours had been so deep that it had annihilated time, and she supposed that she had only winked for an instant and then opened her eyes again.

"Well, then, since you have not been asleep, tell me how Mrs. Colonel Pollard has passed the night?"

"Oh, ma'am, she have slept like a angel."

"Very well, then. Now you go down and have the kettle boiling, ready to make her a cup of tea the minute *she* wakes."

The colored woman arose, yawned, stretched her limbs and went out to do her mistress's bidding.

Miss Polly removed the bedding she had used from the room, made every thing tidy, and then attended to her own simple toilet. And when that was completed she took her seat beside Gladys. She sat there long and patiently while the sleeper slept as only an infant or a convalescent can.

At last Miss Polly, feeling oppressed by the closeness of the room, thought that even the sleeping patient would be the better for a little fresh air, and therefore arose and hoisted one of the windows, and partly opened one of the shutters. The fresh air revived the old lady so much that she thought she would go and see how it affected Gladys. She went to the bedside and stooped over the sleeper to examine her by the light of day.

Yes! Gladys was fast recovering. She was sleeping the fine restorative sleep of convalescence; her breathing was regular, her pulse calm, her skin moist, her cheek flushed, not with fever, but with returning life.

"Well, thank heaven for this," said the old lady, fervently.

Almost at the same moment, Gladys opened her beautiful eyes, and looked serenely into the face of her nurse.

"Where is Arthur, Miss Polly? Has he already risen and gone away?" inquired Gladys, still evidently a little confused in mind, though so well restored in body.

"Ye-ye-yes, my dear, he is gone away," faltered the old lady, who was not prepared for the style in which her patient put this question.

"Oh, dear! why did he go away without bidding me good-morning?" Gladys fretfully inquired.

"Why, don't you know, my dear lovey, that your poor head has been very bad, and that you have been asleep? It would not have been safe to have waked you."

"Did he get his breakfast quite comfortable, Miss Polly?"

"Quite comfortable, my dear."

"But I wish he had waked me! How could that have hurt me? I am all right?"

"Yes, dear, you're all right *now*, because you have had such a good sleep; but you were not all right then."

"I don't know, I don't remember! It seems to me that some one told me, or else I dreamed I had a sunstroke. Was that it?"

"Yes, dear, it was a stroke—(ah, a heavy, heavy stroke)!"—added the old lady, mentally, as she arose and brought a basin of water and a towel to wash her patient's face and hands. When she had done this, she combed her hair. And then she rang for Harriet to bring up the tea and toast; and propped Gladys up in bed, and sat the tray before her.

Gladys ate and drank with all the avidity of a young convalescent; but while she did so shadows of thought or

of pain would pass over her expressive face, and she would look up anxiously and inquiringly at Miss Polly. When she had finished her meal, and Harriet had removed the tray and left the room, Gladys turned to her kind nurse, and said:

"Miss Polly, there was something before my illness that I am trying to recollect, but cannot; thick shadows lie all around that period."

Miss Polly sighed deeply, crossed herself, and sent up a mental appeal to the "Mother of Sorrows" to help this afflicted daughter, and then answered:

"Yes, dear, there was a something; but it is all right now."

"What—what was it, Miss Polly?"

"There now, don't be alarmed! nothing but what might have been expected, dear—no harm!"

"What was it? Oh, tell me, Miss Polly! It was something about Arthur!" exclaimed Gladys, trembling, but not much, for extreme debility had weakened her sensibilities, and she did not feel as much as she might have done in her full strength; and, besides, the words of Miss Polly were rather encouraging than otherwise.

"Yes, my dear, it was a somethink about Arthur; but it was somethink very fine about Arthur! so you have cause to rejoice, rather than to lament."

"Tell me! tell me!" said the young wife, eagerly.

"Well, you know, my love, that when you asked me just now if he had risen and gone away already, I told you yes."

"Of course you did."

"Well, my dear, I told you true; but it was not *this* morning that he went away, but several mornings ago."

"Yes—yes—I begin to see light—I am almost on the verge of remembering all about it! If you will let me study a minute I shall know it all!" Gladys said, as she clasped her head with both hands, closed her eyes, and contracted her brows in intense thought.

"No, my dear, don't you try to think, for it will only make your poor little head bad again. I will bring it all back to your mind, and tell you more besides."

"Do then, Miss Polly."

"Well, my dear, you know that last morning—a Sunday morning it was—when he got his breakfast all comfortable and went away, promising to come back in the evening?"

"Yes."

"And you know you went to meet him? And you didn't meet him, but you met us coming from church, and we brought you home?"

"Yes, oh yes—I remember that! What else?"

"Why, that he didn't come at all that evening, nor the next day; and so you were taken ill; and you have been ill ever since."

"Oh, yes! but about Arthur! where is he?"

"He is all right! He never come back to the house at all, and good reason! For when he was on his way from his ship to his wife that identical Sunday evening as he never come home, he was met by a messenger from the Secretary of—of—of——"

Miss Polly had forgotten her lesson, and she stopped in confusion.

"Of the Navy?" suggested Gladys.

"Yes, honey, in course, of the Navy. He was met by a messenger of the Secretary of the Navy a-bringing of a written order for him to report to the Navy De—De—De——"

Miss Polly was at a loss again.

"Department?" prompted Gladys.

"That's it—Department! To report to the Navy Department. And so he did immediate, Sunday though it was. And when he got there, the Secretary handed of him a commission which raised him to the rank of—of——"

"Captain?" suggested Gladys, wonderingly.

"No, it was a somethink that commenced with a 'com.' Let's see. Committee?—no! Commissioner?—no! Commodore?—yes! I reckon that was it, honey—commodore!"

"But they don't raise lieutenants to the rank of commodore at one hoist, Miss Polly. I don't know much of the regulations of the service; but I know that much. Wasn't it commander you were trying to think of?" smiled Gladys.

"Oh, yes! surely so it was! What an old fool head mine is to be sure. Commander! sartainly. I might have known it, because he was ordered by the Secretary to go immediate to Norfolk to take command of the ship Potomac. I remember that well enough, because it is the name of our river."

"And is he in Norfolk?" eagerly exclaimed Gladys.

"Yes, honey. He had to go and start immediate. He begged leave to come home and get his wife and take her along with him. But the Secretary told him there was a boat to start for Norfolk in a half a hour's time, and how he would only have time to hurry to the wharf and jump aboard of her. And as how he could write to his wife, and she could follow him and bring all his clothes. And, last of all, as how it was a officer's duty always, and especially after being promoted, to obey orders directly and without grumbling. And so *our* one obeyed at once, and hurried down to the wharf, and jumped aboard the steamboat, and started to take command of his fine new ship. And while we all was a-fretting over his disappearance, he was a-going where glory waits him."

"Oh, Miss Polly, you have made me so happy. But are you sure that this is indeed true, and not a false report?" eagerly demanded Gladys.

"Why, in course it is true, my dear. How ever can it be false when there's the dokkerments to show for it? And didn't a messenger come here the very day you went out of your head? And didn't he bring a message from him, how you was to pack right up and folly him to Norfolk? And didn't he bring you a sum of money to settle the board, and to buy you an outfit, and to pay your expenses to Norfol'k? Which that said sum of money is in your

bury-drawer at this present speaking? Which, if you don't believe me, there is the money to prove it. And if you don't believe that, you can go right down to Norfolk soon as ever you are able to travel and see for yourself," said Miss Polly, now quite out of breath with vehement lying.

"Oh, dear, dear friend! how happy this makes me. Of course I believed you at first, only it seemed too good news to be real!" said Gladys, earnestly; for, notwithstanding her innocent boast that she knew "something" of the regulations of the service, she was really too ignorant and too inexperienced to be aware how unlikely it was that this story should be true. "How happy you have made me," she said, kissing Miss Polly's withered hand.

"Ah! haven't I though, honey, neither!" exclaimed the old lady, joyfully. ("And won't I have to pay for doing of it by years of sarvitute in purgatory neither!" she added ruefully.)

"But, oh, Miss Polly, I have just thought of something!" said Gladys, with anxiety.

"And what is that, my dear?" inquired the old lady in alarm; for she was in constant dread of having her "white lies" discovered.

"Why, Miss Polly! I have been ill so many, many days! What if the ship should have sailed during my illness?"

"No fears of that, honey. The ship haven't sailed. It is one of these ere store-ships as have got to stop where it is for a bit," said the old lady at a venture.

"Is it, indeed! That is good. I am so glad," exclaimed the young wife, who now accepted every thing that was told her as truth, because, perhaps, she was too much enfeebled in mind and body by her recent illness to be critical.

"Yes, honey, that is first-rate; because he won't have to go to sea and leave you for some time," said the old lady, rubbing her hands as though she were really beginning to enjoy her new role of lying. At least she enjoyed the

pleasure she was imparting to the poor, bereaved young wife, of whom no friend could say with certainty whether she were deserted or widowed.

"But, oh! I say, Miss Polly, how very uneasy, how dreadfully anxious poor Arthur must have been, and must still be, at not hearing from me—not even getting an answer to his message all this time!"

"Oh, no! oh dear, no! not at all; by no means. We writ to him, and told him as how you wasn't just that well as we could wish you to be for to set out on to a journey; but as soon as you was better you would folly him."

"Ah! that was very kind, very thoughtful. How good you are to us! Heaven bless you!" exclaimed Gladys, fervently.

("Well, I hope it will. I'm sure I need it! A-lying, and a-sinning, and a-sinking of my soul farther and farther and farther down into the bottomless pit, every time I open my mouth!") said Miss Polly to herself.

"When did you write to dear Arthur last, and when did you hear from him last?" vehemently inquired Gladys.

"Well, honey, I writ to him a-Monday, and I got an answer back from him a-Thursday. And this is Saturday."

"Was he quite well then?"

"Oh, yes, indeed, honey."

"How often do you write to him, and how often does he answer?"

"Well, honey, I most in general writes to him a-Mondays, and he most in general writes to me so I get the letters a-Thursdays."

"Miss Polly, does he ask very, very particularly about me?"

"Oh, yes, dear! very, very particular!"

"Will you let me see his letters? Run and get them for me—that's a good soul!" said Gladys, eagerly.

"Oh, my dear, dear child, I darn't—indeed I darn't! The doctor said as how I wasn't to let you try your eyes

onto nothing, especially letters. But I can tell you this: they are all chuckful of the best of news and the truest of love. He is all right, and quite well, and very hopeful, and looking forrard with the greatest of joy to your arrival," said Miss Polly, cheerfully. ("Here I go, lying faster than a horse can trot!") she added lugubriously to herself.

"When I get a little stronger, you must let me read them all, Miss Polly."

"To be sure I will, my dear."

"When will you write to him again? You will not wait until Monday to do so, will you?"

"Oh, no, my dear. It is my intentions for to write to-day, and tell him the joyful news, as how you are recovering fast," said the old lady gleefully. ("There they are—a whole lot of fresh ones, to be set down to my account!") she added, mentally.

"Oh, thank you, thank you, dear Miss Polly! Write at once; write now, this minute! That is a good, kind, sweet soul! Do, Miss Polly!" exclaimed Gladys, earnestly.

"Ahem! There's time enough, my dear. The mail don't go out until nine o'clock at night. (There's another one; oh!)"

While she was groaning under her increasing burden of sin, there came a rap at the door.

Miss Polly went to open it.

"Breakfast is ready, miss, and I have come to stop with the lady while you go down," said Harriet, who stood at the door.

"Very well; but you needn't come in, nor likewise stand there. The lady don't want no watching now. So you can go down stairs and mind your work, and I will come presently," said Miss Polly, shutting the door in the face of Harriet, for the colored woman was not a party to the "pious fraud" with which the conspirators had determined to deceive Gladys, and therefore it was not considered safe that she should be left alone with her, lest by some inadvertent word she should radeceive her.

Having shut the dangerous intruder out, Miss Polly went back to the bedside of the patient, and said:

"Now, my dear lovey, I am going down stairs to get a bit of breakfast; and I sha'n't be gone over ten minutes or a quarter of an hour. Now you lay hear, and look through the half-open shutter of that window, and look out onto the trees and fields and sky, which I never did see a finer day nor this is for the season of the year. Now will you?"

"Yes, I will. Thank you, dear, good, kind, Miss Polly. Kiss me, before you go," said Gladys, putting up her face and lifting her arms.

Miss Polly stooped and kissed her, receiving her innocent embrace with some compunction, and then she turned and left the room, locking the door and taking away the key, lest Harriet should intrude.

"I never *did* see such a propensity as people have for locking me up! I must have been born under a prison star, if there is such a one!" said Gladys, with a rueful smile.

CHAPTER XIV.

ON THE ROAD TO RUIN.

Easy is the descent to hell.—Horace.

—Paved with good intentions.—Proverb.

MEANWHILE Miss Polly hurried away, groaning within herself:

"Oh, what a lost and ruined sinner I am, to be sure! Oh, what a hardened, reckless Judas Askharriet I am! To be a-taking of her sweet, soft, loving kisses, and to be a-deceiving of her in this way! Why, I almost hate myself, I do! I wouldn't wonder at any thing as I might be tempted

to do now! I wouldn't wonder if I was to take to stealing as well as lying! and then to murdering as well as stealing! Oh, of course, for there aint no stopping a-sliding down this precipice. I'm going straight to the bottomless pit, and I know it!"

As Miss Polly breathed these awful words, she opened the door of the dining-room, where she found her two sisters and Mrs. Llewellyn already seated at the breakfast.

"How is your patient?" inquired the last-mentioned lady.

"Oh, she's all right, bless her! It's me as is going to my ruin," whimpered Miss Polly.

"Why?" demanded the lady.

"Why all along of lying! and of deceiving of a heavenly angel!" snapped Miss Polly, savagely.

"But we deceive her now to soothe her mind and save her life. When she grows stronger and is able to bear the news, we will undeceive her. And, meantime, we will hope that before it is necessary to give her so much pain, the re-appearance of Arthur may set every thing right," said Mrs. Llewellyn.

"I hope to goodness gracious it may; but how can it, when you say as the marriage isn't legal?" snivelled Miss Polly.

"We will have the ceremony performed over again in my presence and with my consent, and that will make it legal," said Mrs. Llewellyn.

"Well, I do hope as the dear young man *will* turn up, that I do!" said Miss Polly, and, somewhat mollified by this view of the case, she began to eat her breakfast.

"Have you broken to her the news of my presence in the house?" inquired Mrs. Jay.

"No; do you think I would stuff two hot potatoes into her mouth at the same time? No! I told her lies about her husband to-day. To-morrow I will tell her lies about you," growled Miss Polly, who then gave her serious attention to her coffee and muffins.

"It is just as well, perhaps," said Mrs. Jay.

Miss Polly did not linger long over the table. She swallowed her breakfast with unwholesome haste, and returned to Gladys.

"Why did you lock the door, dear Miss Polly? I have an especial dislike to being locked in," were the first words of the young lady.

"Why, honey, you see—(Now what lie shall I make up?)—honey, you see, as I was afraid as Brother Peter—that is the priest, you know, as is a-staying in the house—might a-made a mistake in the door and walked into your room, which as you couldn't get up to fasten it yourself, you know——"

"Yes, I know. Thank you, Miss Polly. You are always so thoughtful! Now wont you please get pen and ink and paper and write to Arthur. And write on the stand by my bedside. And when you have written your letter, I want you to write one for me, which I will dictate."

"Yes, honey, yes, to be sure! (Here I go, down, down, down the precipice! From telling of lies, I'm a-taking to writing of 'em! And that's—why that's forgery!—*forgery*! I knew it! I said so! I felt I couldn't stop myself when I once entered the broad road that leadeth to destruction! From lying I have got on to forging. And by next week I shall be ready to begin stealing; and the week arter that, murdering. And where will it all end? What next? Why I shall be a Pirate on the High Seas afore I die, I know I shall!") thought Miss Polly, raising her dim blue eyes and trembling old hands in horror as she left the room to bring stationery.

And when she returned she seated herself beside Gladys and wrote the two factitious letters that were to deceive the young wife and give her peace.

"The post-office is a long way from here, I know. Who is to take the letters, dear Miss Polly?" inquired Gladys.

"Why brother Peter, honey, in course, he always does. (There's another one.)"

"And will you ask him to inquire if there are any letters for any of us? You know there might chance to be one from Arthur, although it isn't your regular day for expecting one."

"Yes, honey, I will tell him," said Miss Polly, who then left the room for the ostensible purpose of dispatching the letters.

But instead of sending them off, on their fruitless mission, she just put them into the kitchen fire and watched them until they were burned to light ashes.

"Umph—humph, I am a-getting along! Oh, I am a-getting along famously! The Devil must approve of me. Now from lying and forging I have come to intercepting of letters—*that's* stealing; and a-burning of letters—*that's* arson! aint I a-going of it with a rush, neither? I ralely do think as I never heerd of a human creetur as was a-going to destruction faster'n I'm a-going! And the worst feature in my case is, as I'm a-getting so *hardened*, as it don't seem to hurt my conscience no more. Sinning seems as easy as eating," said Miss Polly, communing dolefully with herself, as she returned to her charge.

She found Gladys, after the excitements of the forenoon, fast asleep. And so Miss Polly returned to the kitchen to prepare a delicate meal, that it might be ready for the patient by the time she should awake.

As Gladys ate with a relish that day and slept soundly that night and awoke refreshed the next morning, it was agreed between the sisters and their guest that the patient should now be informed of her aunt's arrival.

Accordingly, when Gladys had been washed and combed, and had had her bedding and her clothing changed, and had been further refreshed by a good breakfast, Miss Polly seated herself beside the convalescent and began:

"You feel well and bright and cheerful this morning, honey, don't you now?"

"Yes, dear Miss Polly, thanks to your kind and tender

care of me, I feel quite comfortable, and also quite equal to the pleasant task of reading Arthur's letters. Will you let me have them now?"

"No, my dear, not yet; you really mustn't try your eyes yet. Wait until to-morrow. (And to-morrow, thank goodness, that proud madam will have to do the lying for herself)," said Miss Polly, speaking of course the first part of this paragraph to Gladys, and the second part to herself.

"Then to-morrow I may see them."

"I shan't make no objections myself, honey, (Mrs. James Lewis may do as she pleases)," said the old lady, speaking as before—half aloud to Gladys, half mentally to herself.

"Very well, then, I will look forward to to-morrow," said Gladys, smilingly.

"And now, lovey, I have something else to tell you," said Miss Polly, gently caressing her black hair.

"What is it, Miss Polly?" inquired Gladys, carelessly, as she lay playing idly with her own white, tapering fingers.

"It is something very pleasant about a friend o' yourn."

"Oh! it is about Arthur. He is coming to see me. Perhaps he is here already!" eagerly exclaimed Gladys.

"No, honey—he isn't here; he's aboard his ship at Norfolk. Nor likewise is it about him as I'm a-talking to you; but about another good friend of yourn."

"I have no other friend in the world, Miss Polly."

"No other! Oh, that sounds very harsh and onthankful! You have a many friends," said the old lady, reproachfully.

"I mean I have no others after Arthur, except yourself and your sisters. I did not forget your kindness when you spoke, believe me, Miss Polly. But after you, I have no other friend."

"Oh, yes, lovey, you have! You think you haven't, because you have had a little falling out with your relations. But they are ready to forget and forgive. And I hope you are ready to be reconciled to them."

"Oh, Miss Polly! what do you mean?" exclaimed Gladys, beginning to tremble.

"I mean nothing but what is perfectly pleasant, honey, so don't be scared," said Miss Polly, also beginning to tremble for company.

"What friend are you talking of, then? Oh, do speak?"

"Now, don't, honey—now, don't agitate yourself. The friend I mean—which she is a good friend—is the motherly lady as your dear parents left you in the care of."

"You speak of Mrs. Jay Llewellyn! Oh! Heaven help me." And Gladys covered her face with her hands.

"Now, don't take on so, honey—now don't. She's come of a friendly errand; she is, indeed."

"SHE IS HERE, THEN!" cried Gladys, wildly, dropping her hands, and staring at the speaker.

"Oh, now, my dear, darling dovey, don't look that-away, or I wont tell you any more about it! She's come to do you good, she is."

"She has come to separate me from my husband if she can."

"No, no, no—she aint! She's willing to forgive and forget, she is"

"SHE willing to forgive and forget!" cried the young wife, indignantly.

"Yes, my dear, she *is*. And, let me tell you, though you don't seem to see it, there may be a good deal to forgive and forget. Only young people, especially young lovers, is so onreasonable that they think every body in the world, especially their own kinsfolks is wrong, and only them is right."

"Oh! you don't know—you don't know, Miss Polly. I must tell you all about it."

"I know *this*, lovey: I know that since in this house she's been, she's watched over you with all the loving kindness of the tenderest of mothers."

"SHE watched beside my sick bed! Oh, angels in heaven!

to think that, while I lay insensible and helpless, my dreadful enemy sat beside me, glaring on me with her baleful eyes!" And Gladys shuddered, and covered her head.

"Well, honey, you needn't hide your face from *me*. You can't think as *I'm* a glaring enemy, baling on you with my dreadful eyes," whimpered Miss Polly, snivelling, and wiping her dim, meek, little orbs.

"Oh! Miss Polly, if you knew—if you only knew. But I will tell you all about it. I will tell you at once; for I believe that it will try me less to tell the whole story than to keep it to myself."

And in a vehement, earnest, indignant manner she poured out the story of her betrothal, her parents' death, her lover's return, and Mrs. Llewellyn's treachery; and of her own subsequent imprisonment, elopement, and marriage.

Throughout the breathless recital, Miss Polly, also breathless, sat staring with open eyes and mouth. At its close, she said:

"That's the dreadfullest story as ever I heard! But maybe it isn't as bad as you think, deary. The old man—your pappy—might a-changed his mind, and writ them letters arter all. Old men is so changeable, 'specially when they're a-failing. I knew an old gent as made his will nineteen times in his last illness; and then tore up the nineteenth will, and was just a-going to sign the twentieth, when he died! And a good job, too; for the law, which aint so fickle-minded, made a more juster will than any he ever did. So, you see, the old man, your pappy, might a-changed his mind and writ them letters. And then it was nateral like, as your aunt should a-wanted you for her own son, for who wouldn't like a darter-in-law like you? So you musn't blame her too much for using harsh measures with you, lovey. And anyways, now that you have taken this t'other young man, and it can't be helped no way in the world, your aunt, she's willing to let by-gones be by-gones, and to forget and forgive, and to be reconciled like

Christian relations; which she has travelled all the way from Virginny to this place to tell you about it; and she found you onsensible; and she watched by you day and night, faithful; and she always slipped away the minute you showed signs of waking up, for fear the sight of her might shock you; but now that you are so much better, she has asked me to come and break to you the news of her arrival, and find out when you can see her."

"I cannot see her at all, Miss Polly!" said Gladys, firmly.

"But, my dear child, your aunt, your guardian, the lady as was placed over you by your dear deceased parients, who must a-knowed her better nor you could, and trusted her, else they never would have left you to her; and the lady as has nussed you so tenderly; and as is so willing to forgive and forget——" Miss Polly expostulated.

"Oh, I see, she has cast a glamour over you, as she did over my poor father, and as she did over me. I will not see her! I cannot see her! I cannot trust her, and that is the long and short of it, Miss Polly," said Gladys, turning her head to the wall.

And all the old lady's arguments could not prevail on her to change this decision.

"Well, then, all that's left is for me to go down and tell this to Mrs. James Lewis, and let her do as she likes," said Miss Polly, rising.

"Mrs. — *who*?" inquired Gladys, turning her head.

"Mrs. James Lewis, my dear, your aunt."

In the midst of her vexation Gladys laughed.

"Yes, Miss Polly," she said, "you may go and take my answer to Mrs. James Lewis. And if you will give me the Bible, I will read until you come back."

"Yes, my dear; but you wont find nothing in that good book to encourage of you in a unforgiving disposition toward them as you think is your enemies when they aint; nor likewise ondutifulness to pastors and masters!" said

~~the~~ old lady, as she took the pocket-bible from the dressing-table and put it in the hands of Gladys.

Miss Polly went down stairs to report. She was not easy in her mind. She felt it to be a sort of duty to try to patch up a peace between the bereaved and desolate young wife and the only protector she was likely to find in this world; yet she could not fully trust Mrs. Jay Llewellyn. All that lady's plausibility failed to inspire her with full confidence. She suspected Mrs. Llewellyn, and blamed herself for doing so; the story told by Gladys strengthened this suspicion, but did not quite confirm it; and, upon the whole, she was still inclined to favor the reconciliation between Gladys and her guardian as the best thing that could happen for the unprotected young creature.

So she went straight to the parlor where Mrs. Llewellyn sat alone.

"Well?" inquired that lady, looking up.

"Well, ma'am, it aint so very well."

"You have told my niece of my presence in the house?"

"Yes, ma'am," said Miss Polly, sitting down and sighing.

"And—what did she say? Why can you not tell me, woman?"

"'Cause, ma'am, it aint so pleasant to tell. Mrs. Colonel Pollard shrinks from seeing you, ma'am."

"That is quite natural. But you should have explained to her how willing I am to forget the past, and receive her in my arms again."

"I did, ma'am; I told her every thing as you told me to tell her; but it didn't do no good. She said she couldn't see you."

"You are an old lady, able to speak with authority to the young. You should have reminded her of her duty."

"I did so, ma'am, but she didn't seem to see it."

"What obstinacy! Ah! this will never do! I must leave here within a few days, and she must be prepared to accompany me."

"Oh, ma'am, for mercy's sake, don't ask *me* to prepare her no more for nothing else! I've done sunk my soul half way down to the bottomless pit, along of preparing of her now! If you would only take the rest of it on to yourself, ma'am, now, it would be a great load off my mind!" pleaded Miss Polly.

"Don't be alarmed, Miss Polly. I relieve you from your unpleasant charge from this hour. And all I ask of you is that you will not contradict any thing that you have heretofore said to her, and that you will not interfere between me and my niece," said Mrs. Jay.

"Me interfere! The laws bless you, ma'am, I am too glad to wash my hands of the whole on it! Only I hope and pray as you will be good to the poor, dear young creeter!" said Miss Polly, earnestly.

"Have I not *always* been good to her?"

"Ever since I knowed you, ma'am, you has, that's certain."

"Then I always *shall* be good to her. And from this hour I assume the exclusive charge of my niece. I shall prepare her to leave the house in a few days," said Mrs. Llewellyn, as she left the room to go to the chamber of Gladys.

Miss Polly gazed after her, murmuring:

"Oh, dear! I hope it may turn out well!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE VULTURE AND THE DOVE.

Such protection as vultures give to doves,
Covering and devouring them.—*Schiller*.

MRS. LLEWELLYN went softly up the stairs and rapped gently at the door of the sick room.

"Come in," said the sweet voice of Gladys, who probably expected no one but some member of her landlady's kindly household.

Mrs. Llewellyn entered, and walked quietly up to the side of the bed, and said, calmly:

"I am glad to find you so much better, my dear."

Gladys gazed at her with an expression of countenance something between consternation and defiance, and answered nothing.

"You will soon be quite well now, my love," continued the lady, sitting down in the easy-chair by the bed and taking the patient's hand.

But Gladys snatched her hand away without deigning to reply.

"My love, you should not meet my friendly advances in this spirit," said Mrs. Llewellyn, in a gently reproachful tone, as she bent over the girl.

But Gladys turned her face to the wall and continued silent.

Mrs. Llewellyn was a woman not easily embarrassed

"Gladys," she said, "I think that you mistake the motive I have in coming to see you."

"I do not. I feel that you come here to try to part me from my husband! *To try*, for that is all you can do; you cannot part us! And I think it is cowardly as well as cruel of you, Mrs. Jay, to force yourself upon me in the absence of my husband, and when I am ill, and alone, and helpless," said the young wife, without turning her head.

"Ah! you speak at last, and now we shall come to understand each other. I knew that you had mistaken my motive in coming here. I have come, Gladys, not to attempt to separate you from your husband, because that would now be unlawful as well as harsh; but I have come to be reconciled to you both; to give you both my blessing; to invite you to Kader Idris; and to yield up possession of the estate to you."

Gladys turned her head around and gazed at the speaker in astonishment.

"Well, you may stare, my love; but such as I have stated it is my purpose in seeking you. It is true that I did my best to prevent you from making what I considered a very foolish marriage, which was also very distasteful to your parents; but you have made it. 'What's done is done;' and now nothing remains for me but to make the best of it and do what is right to be done on my part; and that is, to give the right hand of fellowship to you both, and to install you in the possession of your home and your estate. Will you give me your hand now, Gladys?"

"Aunt Llewellyn," said the young wife, hesitatingly, "if I have wronged you, I earnestly ask your forgiveness and that of the Lord. But I feel confused and uncertain; for I am but a poor, simple country-girl, after all; and I am weak in mind and body from the effects of my recent illness," said Gladys, as she held out her hand.

"And now, love, we are friends again," murmured the lady.

"I—hope so. But, Aunt Llewellyn, I must write and tell Arthur. You know he is in command of the store-ship Potomac, at Norfolk?"

"Yes, dear; but I think that instead of writing to him you should go to him."

"Oh! do you! I'm so glad! That is what I wanted to do, only the dear old ladies wouldn't let me think of it, because they said I was not nearly strong enough to undertake the journey. But I know I am!" joyfully exclaimed Gladys, whose last suspicions were now put to flight; for, she reasoned, if Mrs. Llewellyn advised her to go to her husband, Mrs. Llewellyn could not have any latent designs to part her from him.

"The old women mean well; but they are mistaken, my dearest. You and I both know that when you are once on board the boat every revolution of the wheels that take you to Arthur will give you new strength."

"Oh, Aunt Llewellyn! that is true! And how much I thank you for thinking of it. When can I go?"

"There is a boat leaves the Seventh street wharf at four o'clock to-morrow morning. I see no reason why you should not go by her."

"Oh, don't you! Oh, that is so delightful! How long will it take her to reach Norfolk?"

"About twenty hours," said Mrs. Jay, at a venture.

"Oh, then, I shall see Arthur as early as Tuesday morning."

"Yes, my dear; and you will tell him from me that all shall be forgiven and forgotten. And, that, as soon as he can get leave of absence from his ship, he must bring you to Kader Idris, where I will give you both a warm welcome and put you in possession of your estate."

"But, oh, Aunt Llewellyn, will you not go to Norfolk with me, and say all this to Arthur in person?"

"No, my love; it is better, under all the circumstances, that I should not."

"But you will write to him, then?"

"No, love; you yourself shall have the pleasure of first announcing to him this good news—if you consider it such."

"Oh, do I not? the best news that I ever heard!"

"Very well, then; you may bear it to him; after which, if he chooses to write to me, I will answer his letter. And, in any case, I will await his arrival at Kader Idris," said Mrs. Llewellyn.

All this seemed so perfectly frank on the part of the elder lady, that the returning confidence of the young wife was restored and confirmed.

"I think I had better rise and pack up my clothes. I feel quite strong enough," she said, as, with the fictitious strength lent to her by excitement, she arose threw off the bedcover, and stepped upon the floor.

"No! no! lie down again, I entreat you, Gladys! Lie down again, and save your strength for the journey. I will pack your things, and I will not trouble you to get up until

it is time for you to take your seat in the carriage that is to convey you to the steamboat wharf," said Mrs. Llewellyn, in seemingly tender anxiety.

Gladys, smiling, obeyed, saying:

"It is hard to be inactive when one is so impatient. And so I shall have to lie still here until to-morrow morning."

"Not so, Gladys. I should recommend that, as the boat leaves at the early hour of four to-morrow morning, you go on board this evening. In that manner you can secure a quiet night's rest, undisturbed by anxiety, or the necessity of rising at midnight, and taking a long ride to be in time to catch the boat."

"Oh, that is best of all! I shall feel ever so much further on my journey when I am once on the boat," she cried, gleefully clapping her hands in her old joyous way.

"Yes, my love. And what a pleasant surprise that will be for him, will it not?"

"Oh, yes; he will see me about as soon as he gets my letter."

"Exactly; and now, love, I will attend to your packing. Where are your keys, and have you a travelling-trunk? You had none when you left home so suddenly," smiled Mrs. Llewellyn.

Gladys blushed, and laughed, and said:

"That is my travelling-trunk standing in the corner under the window. And my keys are in the dressing-glass drawer."

Mrs. Llewellyn was soon busily engaged in packing the slender but tasteful wardrobe of the young wife. In the course of her researches through the bureau drawers she came upon a folded paper, partly printed and partly written. It was the marriage license of Arthur Powis and Gladys Llewellyn, signed by the county clerk, and countersigned by the officiating clergyman. This document Mrs. Llewellyn secretly slipped in a private receptacle of her own pocketbook.

When every thing except Gladys' travelling-dress was packed, and the trunk was locked and strapped down, Mrs.

Llewellyn descended to the parlor to inform the landladies of the suddenly arranged journey. She found no one in the parlor except Miss Polly. The other sisters had gone to church.

"I shall take my niece away this evening, Miss Polly," said Mrs. Llewellyn, calmly seating herself.

"This evening! Oh, no, you don't mean it. It would kill her. She is not near able to go. And—she will never consent," exclaimed the old lady, in utter astonishment.

"Yes, I shall take her away this evening. It will do her good. Every mile of the journey will give her new life. And she is anxious to go."

"Anxious to go! What! with *you*, ma'am?"

"With *me*. You see that she has come to her senses."

"Well, well, well, well! I trust in the Lord as I have done right and no harm will come on it! Dear, dear, dear, dear! but I feel as if I was the betrayer of innocent blood, that I do! Oh, ma'am, do leave her here a few days longer!"

"Miss Polly, you must be aware that we could not, even for a few days longer, conceal from her the alarming fact of her husband's mysterious disappearance; and the horrible probability of his murder. When once she hears of his disappearance or suspects his murder, she will fall back into illness and perhaps into the grave. How much better, then, that I should take her away *now*, while it is yet possible to do so! And if she must learn the fearful truth, as of course she really must, and if she is to be ill unto death again, is it not better that she should then be at home among the familiar scenes and familiar friends of her childhood than that she should be here in a strange, though pleasant place, among strange though kind people? At her own home, among her own people, the blow will be more lightly felt, and the illness better borne than either could be here with strangers. Do you not see this?" inquired Mrs. Llewellyn, in an insinuating voice.

"Ye-ye-yes'm; I s'pose you must be right, though it do

seem awful wrong to haul her out of her sick bed, and take her away so sudden! Oh! how I wish Sister Milly and Sister Jenny would come back!" sighed Miss Polly.

"But why? *You* are more capable of forming a correct judgment than either of the others! Another thing—how would *you* bear it, if Gladys were to find out the truth while she is here?"

"Oh! I couldn't bear it at all! I know I couldn't! I dar'n't face her after telling on her so many lies, even if it was to save her poor dear life, as I did it," sighed Miss Polly.

"There, then, you see! You must resign yourself to see her go at once," said Mrs. Llewellyn, as she arose to leave the room.

When the other sisters came from church, they were told of the projected journey, and were loud in their objections to the proposed measure. Their arguments were precisely the same as those advanced by Miss Polly—that the journey was too sudden; that the patient was too weak to bear it; and that it would make her ill and perhaps kill her; and that she herself would never consent to it.

And Mrs. Llewellyn's replies were the same that she had made to Miss Polly. That the journey was perfectly well-timed; that it would do the patient good; that Gladys was anxious to go; that it was desirable she should be at home before learning the dreadful news of her probable widowhood; and finally, that it would be very trying to the old ladies themselves to have Gladys discover the "pious fraud," by which she had been deceived while in their house, and to which they themselves had been a party. These arguments, brought to bear upon the landladies with all the strength of Mrs. Llewellyn's will, and all the authority of her position, at length convinced, or at least silenced them; especially as they felt that they had really no right to interfere, and that at last Mrs. Llewellyn would do just as she pleased, regardless of their opinions.

Gladys, too, seemed restored to sudden health as by a

miracle. The hope of soon seeing Arthur electrified her into new life. She talked cheerfully, she laughed gayly, and she ate well, though hastily. She ate to please her landladies and to keep up her strength, rather than for any satisfaction to herself; for, in truth, joy had taken away her appetite as effectually as grief could have done.

At sunset the comfortable travelling-carriage of Mrs. Llewellyn was at the door. And that lady, having settled the whole board bill, and satisfied all claims against Arthur and Gladys, wrapped up her young charge warmly, for the autumn evening was chilly, and placed her on the back cushions of the carriage, and took the seat beside her, and gave the order to drive off.

The three old sisters followed the carriage down to the gate, and stood looking after it as long as it was in sight.

And Gladys, leaning from the side window, continued to kiss her hand, and wave her handkerchief to her old friends as long as she could discern the three weird figures leaning over the old gate in the light of an autumn sunset.

"Oh! what ever will the doctor say to us when he comes to-morrow morning and finds them gone," said Miss Polly, in dismay, as they retired from the gate.

The carriage rolled rapidly on its way; but the distance was long, so that it was quite dark when they reached the steamboat wharf.

Mrs. Llewellyn alighted and helped Gladys out, and then told the coachman to wait.

Wharf porters crowded around her for orders. She directed one of them to convey the large travelling-trunk, that was strapped to the back of the carriage, on to the deck of the steamer. And while the man was obeying, she drew her thick veil over her face, and drew the arm of Gladys within her own, and led her on board, and down into the ladies' cabin.

As yet there were no passengers on the boat, and no one occupied the cabin but the stewardess, a respectable looking colored woman.

"What is your name?" inquired Mrs. Llewellyn.

"Rachel, madam."

"Well, Rachel, I wish you to be very attentive to this young lady, who is in extremely delicate health, and who is also excessively nervous."

"Yes, madam—certainly."

"She has come on board to-night to save her from the distress of being waked up early in the morning."

"To be sure, madam. Many ladies does come on over night, when we are to start so early in the morning."

"Then I wish, before any one else comes, that you would give her the best berth at your disposal."

"Certainly, madam; none are yet bespoken; the young lady can take her choice."

"I will choose for her," said Mrs. Llewellyn, as she went through the ladies' cabin, inspecting and comparing the berths. When she had found what she considered the most comfortable one, she threw Gladys' shawl and travelling basket upon it, by way of establishing a claim to it, and said:

"The young lady will occupy this berth."

"Yes, madam—certainly. And now will you please choose one for yourself, ma'am, before the other ladies come?"

"I am not going on this boat."

"Oh! I beg your pardon, ma'am; I thought you was."

"No; that is the reason why I bespeak your best attentions for this young lady. When she gets to Norfolk her friends will meet her. If they should fail to do so, you will have a carriage called to take her to a hotel."

"Certainly, ma'am."

"And here is something to help you to remember my directions," said Mrs. Llewellyn, putting a piece of gold into the woman's hands.

Rachel made a curtsey in acknowledgment.

Mrs. Llewellyn went to Gladys, who had sunk, overcome by fatigue, into an arm-chair.

"My love," she whispered, "you had better not attempt to leave the cabin, either for the deck or the dining-room, until the boat reaches Norfolk."

"Oh, I shall not attempt to do so, I am very, very tired. I think I shall 'turn in,' as dear Arthur used to say, directly."

"That is right. The stewardess—Rachel is her name—will bring you your tea, or any thing else you may wish. She will also take your fare and bring your ticket. Now is there any thing else I can do for you before I go?"

"No, dear Aunt Llewellyn, except to take my thanks for all your kindness to a perverse girl."

"Nonsense, my dear. Good-by! God bless you! Give my love to Arthur. Tell him that the same night that saw you embark on the good steamer 'Pocahontas' for Norfolk, saw me start in the Winchester stage-coach for Virginia, to be ready to receive you at Kader Idris! Once more, good-by!" whispered the lady, as she stooped and kissed her dupe and hurried from the cabin.

"No one but the stewardess saw me, and even she did not see me distinctly, for I kept my back to the light and my veil half drooping over my face the whole time I was in the cabin, so that none shall be able to swear to my identity, *if it should come to that*," said Mrs. Llewellyn to herself, as she re-entered her carriage.

"Drive for you life to Alexandria! I must catch the opposition boat that left Washington at eight and will leave Alexandria at half-past nine to-night. *I must reach Norfolk before Gladys does.*"

These were the words that Mrs. Llewellyn spelt rapidly upon her fingers as her deaf mute Jude put up the steps and closed the door of the carriage.

The mute obeyed with such promptitude that they reached Alexandria in little more than an hour. The carriage was left in the care of Jude, and Mrs. Llewellyn embarked in the Banshee for Norfolk.

CHAPTER XVI.

A FEARFUL DISCOVERY.

Pierced by severe amazement, hating life,
Speechless and fixed in all the death of woe,
As if the marble struck, devoid of sense,
One stupid moment motionless she stood.—*Thomson.*

MEANWHILE Gladys, attended by the kind-hearted stewardess, took her tea. And then, feeling very much exhausted by the fatigue and excitement of the day, she undressed and turned into her berth, and fell asleep with the happy thought in her mind:

"By the time I wake again, I shall be steaming down the river on my way to see Arthur!"

The night passed quickly as the shifting of a scene. So deep was her dreamless sleep that she was not awakened, either by the bustling entrance of newly arrived passengers, or the noisy preparations for getting the boat under way.

The Pocahontas, punctual to her time, started at four o'clock, while, of course, it was yet very dark. But still Gladys slept.

So when at last she awoke, the sun was high in the heavens, and the boat was far down the river. The cabin was solitary but for the presence of the stewardess. The lady passengers were all enjoying the fine day and the beautiful river scenery from the deck. At first Gladys could not recollect where she was, or how she came there, but as memory returned, she smiled to think that she was on the steamboat and on her way to her husband.

"How far have we come from Washington now, stewardess?" she asked.

"Forty mile, ma'am," answered the woman.

Gladys immediately arose and dressed herself; then sunk overcome with fatigue into the arm-chair; for she was still

very weak, and excitement only lent her a fictitious strength, to be paid for in subsequent prostration. The stewardess brought her breakfast into the cabin. She ate with appetite and was refreshed. And then, forgetting her promise, made sleepily to Mrs. Llewellyn, not to leave the cabin, she went out and climbed up on deck and sunk half fainting, but very happy upon one of the wide benches, where she sat drinking in new life from the freshness of the sea-breeze that could now be felt blowing up the river.

As she sat there, her appearance was singular enough to attract the attention of every one on deck. In the first place, though she was nearly nineteen years of age, her form was so petite and her face so child-like, that she could scarcely have been taken for more than fourteen. She was still dressed in the deepest mourning; and her face was deadly pale and thin; and her eyes sunken and hollow from recent illness; and the joy of anticipation that beamed from this death-like face gave it a strange, wild, insane aspect that excited the utmost interest among her fellow-passengers.

"Who is she?" "Where did she come from?" "Is she crazy?" were some of the questions asked.

"No one knows." "She came on board last night." "She was attended by a lady, who put her in the care of the stewardess," were some of the answers.

"Poor, dear, afflicted child!" "What a shame to let her travel alone!" "She might do herself a mischief," were some of the comments.

But no one spoke directly to Gladys, who happily unconscious of all this whispered talk, kept her eyes fixed greedily upon the onward course of the river that was flowing toward Arthur.

Altogether, the voyage to her was a very pleasant one. The weather was splendid, and the scenery magnificent; and, wrapped in the contemplation of nature and in the anticipation of meeting her husband, Gladys was too ab-

sorbed to observe the strange looks and stranger comments of which she was the object. She remained on deck all the morning. But at dinner-time she went down and joined her fellow-passengers at the dinner-table, where she dined in an absent-minded sort of way, evidently without knowing or caring of what dishes she partook. She returned to the deck in the afternoon, to watch until the boat left the mouth of the river and entered upon the broader waters of the bay. And then, feeling very much exhausted, she went down into the cabin, got a cup of tea from the stewardess, and turned in for the night, and fell asleep, murmuring:

"When I awake to-morrow morning I shall be at Norfolk."

She slept well for several hours, but not so deeply as she had on the previous night, for the noisy entrance of the lady passengers immediately awakened her. They were all talking fast, and all talking together, so that she could distinguish but little of their conversation. At length, however, she heard one of them say:

"Stewardess, who is that crazy girl you have got here?"

"Lord, ma'am, it's more than I know. She was fotch by a lady, who put her in my care, and said as friends would meet her at Norfolk."

"I think it is very wrong to let such a poor, afflicted creature as she is travel by herself."

"So do I, ma'am. But I hadn't the least idea as she *was* afflicted until one of the ladies said so. I thought she was only sick."

"Why, she is quite deranged; don't you see it?"

"I see it now, ma'am, certainly, though I did not at first."

"Is she harmless, do you think?" inquired another lady.

"Oh, yes, miss; harmless as a infant baby, I am sure."

"You never can tell," said a third. "These sort of people break out into fury when you least expect them to do so. I'm sure she might set the cabin on fire, or jump overboard, or something. Indeed, I don't think we are at all safe. It is really quite shocking—the idea of sleeping in a steamboat cabin in the open sea with a crazy woman. Suppose she *was* to get up while we are asleep and kill some of us, or set the boat on fire!"

"Oh, horrible! most horrible! there can't be any thing half so horrible as a fire at sea!" exclaimed a fourth lady.

"What *shall* we do?" inquired several, speaking together.

"Let's set up all night," suggested one.

"No; we would be sea-sick," answered many.

"Let's send for the captain," suggested another.

"It would not be of the least use. *He* doesn't believe she is dangerous; he *said* so on deck this evening," replied several.

"I tell you what we will do," said the lady who had first spoken. "As we are the persons that are in danger from her, or that are in the *most* danger from her, we will 'take the responsibility,' as General Jackson says, and we will *tie* her!"

"Yes!" "No!" "That is the best way!" "Oh, that will never do, Mrs. Brown!" exclaimed various voices speaking the differing opinions at once.

"Yes, I tell you! it is for her own good as well as ours. It is to prevent her from doing herself harm, as well as from doing us harm."

"Oh, yes! Tie her—tie her! It is not safe to leave her loose to cut some of our throats, or throw herself overboard, or set the steamer afire, or something," exclaimed several. And as the majority were in favor of the motion, it was carried.

"We can tie her while she is asleep. We can do it with our pocket-handkerchiefs, and we need not hurt her, or even

awaken her," said the lady who had first made the proposition.

"Yes, but who will undertake to do it?" inquired a timid one.

"I will," said the proposer of the measure; "but some of you will have to stand by me to help, in case she should resist."

Several of the strongest and boldest volunteered for this dangerous service of securing one feeble girl.

Gladys, who had been a trembling listener to their discourse, now sat up in her berth, drew aside her curtain, clasped her thin hands together and looked imploringly at them as they approached her.

"Oh, she is awake!" cried one lady, shrinking back.

"See how wild she looks!" cried another.

"The fit is coming on!" exclaimed a third.

And they all drew back for an instant; but then rallied and approached her again.

"Indeed, I am not mad, ladies!" pleaded Gladys; but her pale and haggard countenance, her sunken and hollow eyes, and her strange excited manner belied her truthful words.

"Not mad! No, poor afflicted creature, who ever heard of a mad person owning up to being mad!" moaned an old lady.

"But indeed, I am speaking the truth! I am not mad! I have never been mad in my life. I have only been ill of a fever," pleaded Gladys.

"Oh, yes, of course, poor child! brain fever it must have been," said an old lady.

"No, it was typhoid, I believe."

"That very often affects the brain and leaves it in a weakened state."

"Oh! but I am well now, quite well," urged Gladys, clasping her pale hands tightly and fixing her wild eyes imploringly upon her tormentors.

They looked at each other inquiringly, while their ring-leader nodded her head and drew a strong pocket-handkerchief from her pocket.

"Indeed I am well now! Indeed I am! I am on my way to join my husband!" cried Gladys, in wild alarm, as she witnessed these preparations for binding her.

"Her husband! The child! Hear her! Talking about a husband at her age!" cried the old lady, in disgust.

"Perhaps she has been crossed in love, and that has been the cause of her derangement," suggested a young lady, who was returning from boarding-school.

"Crossed in a fiddlestick, Malvina! Why she is too young! She is not more than thirteen or fourteen years old," snapped Malvina's maiden aunt.

"Indeed, I am eighteen, and I have been married some weeks. My husband is on the United States store-ship Potomac, now at Norfolk, where I am going to join him," exclaimed Gladys, wildly wringing her hands, and fearfully glancing from one to the other of her persecutors.

"There! you see she is growing worse and worse; seize her!" said Mrs. Brown.

The stoutest woman of the party pounced upon Gladys, who struggled, begged, and at last screamed.

Other women came to give assistance; and then the struggles and entreaties of the poor girl were equally vain; but her screams "waked the welkin;" or at least they disturbed the captain and the mate on the upper deck, and the gentlemen passengers in the dining-saloon, and many of them came running to the door of the ladies' cabin, inquiring, in great alarm:

"What is this? What is the matter? What has happened?"

The stewardess ran to answer them.

"Oh, gentlemen, it is nothing much. Only the poor afflicted girl is in fits. The ladies can manage her. Please go away, gentlemen. It isn't proper for you to be here."

The gentlemen retired, with muttered comments of:

"Poor girl!" "Poor unfortunate creature!" "What a pity!" et cetera.

And in a few minutes Gladys was overpowered, gagged, and tied hand and foot, and she lay gasping, breathless and exhausted on her berth. And her tormentors stood around her, gazing at their work, and panting from the effect of their exertions.

"We did it for your good, child," said Mrs. Brown.

"To keep you from doing yourself a mischief," added Mrs. Grey.

"Now, you keep still, like a good girl, and no one shall hurt you," put in Miss White.

Gladys only gasped in reply.

"Lors! indeed, I'm afraid she'll smother. We had better take that napkin out of her mouth. What do you say, ladies?" inquired Mrs. Jones.

"Just as you please. She can't do much harm with her mouth, except to scream, and I reckon she will soon get tired of that fun," said Mrs. Brown.

And then, as the ladies all agreed that the gag should be removed, the napkin that they had rolled up and forced between the extended jaws of poor Gladys, to the serious risk of their dislocation, was now taken out, to her inexpressible relief.

"Now, then, do you feel better?" inquired Mrs. Jones.

"Yes, certainly," replied Gladys.

"And if we leave your mouth free, will you be a good girl, and not yell out like all-possessed?"

"I will not scream again. I see that it will be of no use, as there is no one here to take my part."

"Ah! that's just like crazy people—they always think everybody is their enemies," said Miss White, interrupting Gladys; who, however, resumed her speech, saying:

"If you will be so good as to turn me over on my right side, and arrange my dress and counterpane decently and comfortably, I will try to submit quietly to circumstances

and lie here until we reach Norfolk, when I hope that you will either set me free to seek my husband, or else send for him to come to me."

The ladies complied with her request, and arranged her as comfortably as they possibly could do under the circumstances; for, indeed, their motive throughout the whole affair had been only to secure their own safety with as little inconvenience as possible to the supposed lunatic.

When they had arranged her properly, and drawn the white curtain before her berth, they all prepared to go to rest, congratulating themselves that all possible danger from the "mad girl" was now over.

CHAPTER XVII.

ENSNARED.

Thou hast prevaricated with my trust,
By underhanded means undone me;
And while my open nature trusted in thee,
Thou hast stepped in between me and my hopes,
And ravished from me all my soul held dear.—Rowe.

WHEN the cabin was at last still, Gladys, with her hands and feet fast tied, tried to compose herself to sleep; but for a long time tried in vain.

"I would like to know," she said to herself, "what star presided at my natal hour, that makes it my fate always to be restrained, imprisoned, or fettered? My guardian locked me up in my own room to hinder me from entering into a marriage that my parents had approved. Dear Miss Polly locked me up to prevent my being intruded upon. And now, these good ladies tie me hand and foot lest I should go mad in the night and cut their throats or fire the steamer!"

Something ludicrous amidst the seriousness of the whole

affair struck the mirthful chord of Gladys' heart, and despite her fetters she laughed aloud.

"*Hear her!*" muttered Mrs. Brown, in an awful whisper; "that was a real madhouse laugh! If we had not tied her down, we should all have been burned in our beds!!"

And all the other ladies silently acquiesced, and shuddered!

Gladys did not find it easy sleeping with fettered limbs. Her rest was broken throughout the night. And she was glad when morning came.

When the ladies had risen and dressed themselves, they voluntarily released Gladys, informing her that she might get up and put on her clothes, as they would soon be at Norfolk.

Gladys eagerly availed herself of the privilege. At first, her limbs were rather stiff; but still she managed to make her toilet, and to join her fellow travellers at the breakfast table in the saloon.

There she was very much annoyed by the curious regards of the gentlemen passengers, who saw in her the reputed lunatic who had fallen into fits in the ladies' cabin on the previous night. But Gladys bore all this very good-humoredly, supported as she was by the thought that she would soon be with her husband, and that all her troubles would then be over.

After breakfast, she went up on deck to watch the approach to Norfolk. Here also her appearance, as a suspected lunatic, attracted much attention, and occasioned many remarks. But her eyes and thoughts were so much engaged and interested in watching the shipping lying off Norfolk and Portsmouth, and conjecturing which might be the ship commanded by Arthur, that she remained utterly unconscious of the annoyance.

Presently the steamboat ran in alongside of her own wharf—the bell rang, the engine began to blow off her steam, the gang-plank was thrown down, and the passengers crowded forward to land

Gladys was not quite heartlessly forgotten.

"Poor creature," said Mrs. Brown, "I hope her friends will meet her punctually. Indeed, if I had time, I really would look after her myself."

"Oh, the stewardess will do that! She is paid to do it," said Miss White.

When all the ladies had landed, Gladys remained standing on the deck, in a state of perplexity, until the stewardess, observing her, came up to her side.

"So, miss, your friend has not come on board to meet you and take you away," said the woman, respectfully.

"I am not 'miss;' I am madam; and it is my husband, Commander Powis, of the United States store-ship Potomac, that I have come to meet. He has no reason to expect me so soon; and I am an inexperienced traveller, and I feel rather uncertain how to proceed," said Gladys.

"Then, miss—I beg your pardon, I meant to say, ma'am, only you look so childish to be married—hadn't you better do as the other lady recommended, in case no one came to meet you?"

"What was that? I don't remember."

"Why, let me call a hackney-coach to take you to some nice, quiet hotel, where you could stop till you sent for your husband and got him."

"Oh, yes; thank you—I had better go to a hotel first," said Gladys, eagerly.

The stewardess went to the side of the steamboat and beckoned a carriage that was standing on the wharf. And while it was drawing up, she had Gladys' luggage brought forward. And in a few minutes Gladys was seated in the carriage, to the door of which the kind-hearted stewardess accompanied her.

"What hotel would you recommend, stewardess?" inquired Gladys.

"The Blank House, on Dash street, is a nice, quiet place."

"Thank you! Good-by, stewardess! Drive to the Blank House, on Dash street, coachman."

The carriage drove off, and in a few minutes drew up before the hotel in question.

Gladys alighted, paid and discharged her carriage, and walked in by the ladies' door to the house. Here, again, her extreme youth, her deadly paleness, her deep mourning, and her excited manner attracted attention and occasioned remark. But landlords and waiters have more eyes for money than ears for gossip, and so, though they wondered to see so young and helpless a creature travelling alone, yet as they perceived she had a large travelling trunk and a well-filled purse, they furnished her with the room she required, and answered the questions she put.

"Can you tell me how I can best reach the store-ship Potomac, waiter?" she asked of the dignitary who ushered her into her room.

"I really cannot, miss; but I can ask the clerk of the house."

"Do, if you please," said Gladys, feeling all a young wife's annoyance at being "missed" by a waiter.

Presently, in answer to her question, the clerk of the house appeared in person.

"You were inquiring for a ship, miss?" he asked politely.

"Yes, sir; I am Mrs. Powis," said Gladys, lifting her graceful little head with an assumption of matronly dignity; "and I have come down to join my husband, who has recently been appointed to the United States store-ship Potomac, lying off Norfolk. And I wish to know how I can best reach that ship."

"I think, madam," said the clerk, in a slow and hesitating manner, "that there is some mistake. There is no such ship in the Norfolk waters."

"Oh, yes, there is, sir, indeed! The store-ship Potomac, commanded by my husband, is certainly at the Norfolk navy yard," said the young wife, in a tone of annoyance, for she felt fretted and uneasy at what she mentally called the stupidity of the clerk.

"The navy yard, madam, is not at Norfolk at all; but at Portsmouth, across the water."

"Oh, well, it is the same thing! I am sure it is as often, or oftener, called the Norfolk navy yard as the Portsmouth navy yard! And at all events, it is there that my husband's ship is stationed."

"I am very sure, madam, that there is no such ship in the Portsmouth navy yard. The only store-ship there is the Michigan, and she is commanded by Lieutenant Brown, whose lady came down from Washington by the Pocahontas this morning, and is now in this house."

Gladys, so pale before, now turned ghastly white, as a suspicion of the truth that she had been deceived and entrapped burst upon her dismayed mind.

But summoning an almost superhuman energy to her aid, she inquired:

"How can I best and soonest reach the Portsmouth navy yard?"

"By the ferry-boat of course, madam."

"Then please to order a carriage for me immediately. I must go there at once."

The clerk left the room to comply with this request. And Gladys sank nearly swooning into her chair to await the carriage, which was soon announced.

"Drive quickly to the Portsmouth ferry-boat, and I will double your fare," she said, to the coachman, as soon as she was seated in the carriage.

The coachman obeyed with a will, and soon set her down at her destination. She hastily thrust a quarter eagle into his hand, and, without waiting for the change, ran on to the ferry-boat that was just leaving the wharf.

"Good gracious me alive! if here isn't that poor, crazed girl again!" said a voice at her elbow.

Gladys turned suddenly and recognized her fellow-passenger, Mrs. Brown, and remembering what the clerk of the hotel had told her, she clasped her hands and raised her eyes exclaiming:

"Oh, madam, does Lieutenant Brown command the only store-ship here?"

"Of course here does," said the astonished lady.

"And you have come here to join him?"

"Yes! Is that any business of yours, my girl?" demanded the lady, with a jealous snap of her little black eyes, as she recalled various instances of the brave lieutenant's gallantry.

"Oh, madam, have pity on me; answer my questions kindly. I am a poor, inexperienced country-girl, motherless, fatherless, friendless——"

"And deserved to be so, no doubt," said the lady.

Gladys winced at the cruel retort, but continued her pleadings.

"I have been very unhappy and am so still. My husband went away; and I had a bad spell of illness, in which I nearly lost my life—and—I fear that I have been betrayed——"

"Umph—umph! the old story! did the child live?" demanded the lady, with suppressed fierceness.

"The child, madam; what child?" inquired Gladys, in innocent amazement.

"Why *your* child! *his* child! *The* child! Oh! wont I give it to him, when I see him!" exclaimed the lieutenant's wife in a furious whisper.

It was now Gladys turn to think her companion mad.

"I am not speaking of any child, madam! I am speaking of my missing husband, and of my own miseries. I came down here to find him. I was assured that he was in command of the store-ship here. Can you tell me if he is?"

"Oh, of course, it is very likely I would tell you! Ah! wait till I get on board the *Michigan*, that is all! I will give Arthur Brown my opinion of his conduct, for once in my life! And then I will go back to my father! I will go back to my father and apply for a divorce! I will! I will! if I die for it," exclaimed the incensed woman, in a hoarse whisper through her grinding teeth.

"You must be so much more experienced in naval affairs than I am. Can you aid me in finding my husband?" pleaded Gladys, who had not caught the violent words of the lieutenant's wife.

"How dare you apply to *me*, you wretch! Look here, you abandoned creature! If you dare so much as show your face on board the '*Michigan*,' I will have you taken up, and sent to the work-house as a common vagrant!" exclaimed the enraged woman, as she twitched her dress from the contact of Gladys black gown, and turned her back upon her.

Gladys shrunk back appalled, and gazed in consternation upon the fury she had unwittingly aroused. She did not understand one word of the tirade that had been poured out upon her own most innocent head. And before she recovered her panic, the boat landed at Portsmouth.

Gladys hurried on shore, and hastily inquired her way to the navy yard.

The old man of whom she sought this information gave her careful directions, and then looked wistfully after her, murmuring, half aloud:

"Poor thing! what ails her?"

"She's crazy!" said one of Gladys's fellow-passengers of the "*Pocahontas*," who happened to be present.

And all who heard the question and answer looked curiously after the reputed lunatic.

And indeed the whole look, manner, and appearance of the wretched girl, as she went through the navy yard with clasped hands and wild eyes and pleading voice, begging of every one with whom she met, information about the store-ship *Potomac* and Commander Powis, favored the supposition of her insanity. Some laughed at her, some insulted her, and all assured her that there was no such ship and no such captain as she sought at the Portsmouth navy yard.

Nearly maddened by despair, she left the yard; but then

a group of all the idle boys about the street collected about the "crazy girl," with hoots and cries and jeers; and with mocking questions of:

"Have you found the capting yet?"

"Has that 'ere ship come inter port?"

"Don't you wish you may get it, crazy Jane, eh?"

"Sing us a song, and let it be a good un, or we'll wollop ye."

Phrenzied with affright, Gladys turned to fly, and ran—into the arms of Mrs. Jay Llewellyn!

"Let me go! Let me go! You have deceived and entrapped me!" she screamed, as that lady's arms closed like the folds of a serpent around her.

"No, I will not let you go! You are now within the jurisdiction of Virginia. I am your guardian. You are my ward. And I take possession of you in the name of the law!" hissed the woman into the tortured ear of her victim.

"I am the lawful wife of Arthur Powis, and your rights of guardianship have been superseded," said Gladys, struggling wildly to release herself.

"You are no one's wife!" exclaimed Mrs. Jay, raising her voice, so that the crowd who were beginning to collect, might hear her words. "You are no one's wife! You are a lost, ruined, and abandoned girl! But you are still a minor and my ward! And you must come home with me."

"I will not! I will not! You have deceived me with a lie! You have betrayed me with a kiss! You have separated me from my husband! Yes, Mrs. Jay, you have! I know you have! I knew you would do me some fatal harm from the very moment that I recognized you as you passed me in the carriage on Garrison street that last day that I ever spent with my dear Arthur. Oh! that I had only trusted that instinct rather than trusted you! And now you have parted us. Perhaps you have made away with him! perhaps you have murdered him! I believe you

capable of doing so! But I will seek him all over the world! And if he is living, I will find him! And if he is dead, I will avenge him! You have kindled all the Llewellyn's blood in my veins now! And once on fire, it is not easily quenched!" cried Gladys, striving desperately to free herself.

"You see, good people, how very mad this poor girl is! Ah! it is easy to read her story, poor thing! the victim of a villain's perfidy!" said Mrs. Llewellyn, sweetly, to the gaping crowd, who sagely nodded their heads.

"It is false! false as your own black, cruel heart, Mrs. Jay! Mrs. Jay! I will not call you Mrs. Llewellyn! You are a dishonor to our family name! Mrs. Jay! Mrs. Jay! Mrs. Jay-bird! vulture! kite! crow! let me go, I say! your beak and talons are red with the blood of the innocent, now! Let me go!" screamed Gladys, striving as if for life against death.

"Good people! will one of you assist me to place this unfortunate girl in the carriage?" said Mrs. Llewellyn, appealing to the crowd.

Several men immediately stepped forward to offer their services.

"You, sir, you look like a family man! Pray lend me your aid; that will be quite sufficient," said Mrs. Jay, selecting from the number that offered, a respectable gray-haired man, who immediately laid his hands upon the struggling girl.

But little assistance was needed to subdue her now. Her superhuman struggles had exhausted all her strength; her intensely strained muscles suddenly relaxed; and she fainted in the arms of her deadly enemy.

"That will do! Put her into the carriage, sir," said Mrs. Llewellyn.

And the old man, an unconscious accomplice of crime, lifted Gladys tenderly, and placed her in the carriage.

"I thank you very much, sir," said Mrs. Llewellyn, as

she also entered the carriage and took her seat at her victim's side.

The old man raised his hat and bowed deeply as the equipage rolled away.

And thus, for the time being, at least, Mrs. Jay Llewellyn gained the victory.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN THE VULTURE'S TALONS.

What! are my doors opposed against my passage?
Have I been ever free, and must my house
Be my retentive enemy, my gaol?
The place which I have feasted, does it now,
Like all mankind, show me an iron heart?—*Shakespeare.*

"DRIVE to the ferry-boat, and on it," was the order given by Mrs. Llewellyn to the coachman, who immediately turned his horses' heads to obey.

Mrs. Llewellyn drew down all the blinds of the carriage as it moved rapidly on its way.

Then she took upon her bosom the head of Gladys, who remained insensible to every thing that was going on around her.

And thus they drove on to the ferry-boat and crossed the water to the city.

"Where, now, madam?" inquired the coachman, springing from his seat and opening the carriage-door.

"To the Blank House."

The man remounted to his place and the carriage drove off.

When it drew up before the hotel in question, the lady beckoned the coachman to the window, and said:

"Go into the house and call the landlord, or the clerk, or some responsible person, to my assistance."

The man went and brought the clerk, who approached hat in hand, and bowing before the arrogant woman.

"You see the condition of this unhappy young lady? She is quite insensible and perfectly helpless. I require some assistance in removing her to the house," said Mrs. Llewellyn, pointing to the lifeless-looking burden on her lap.

"Certainly, madam. I can carry the young lady in, if you will permit me to do so."

"Thank you, yes."

"And—shall I send a messenger to fetch a physician?"

"No; no physician could do her any good. Her case, though not at all dangerous, is quite hopeless. It is the mind, you understand, rather than the body, that is afflicted."

"Ah, yes, poor young lady! We all thought there was something not right *here*," said the clerk, pointing to his forehead.

"Exactly; and unfortunately we allowed her too much liberty. And, with the cunning that frequently attends insanity, she managed to elude our vigilance and make her escape and travel on here in pursuit of some ignis-fatuus raised from the miasma of her own diseased brain."

"Ah, yes, madam! we know! a commander and a ship that had no existence but in her imagination. A sad case!"

"Extremely sad. Now, sir, if you please, pass your arm under her shoulder as I raise her head. It is excessively awkward, removing a fainting woman from a small carriage," said the lady, as she aided the clerk in his difficult task.

At length between them they got the insensible girl out of the carriage; and the clerk, whose name was Penn, bore her with tender and respectful care into the house.

"Take her at once to the rooms I have engaged," said Mrs. Llewellyn, who had followed him closely.

The clerk obeyed. And when he had carried her up two or three flights of stairs, and laid her on the bed of a spacious upper chamber, and turned to leave the room, Mrs. Llewellyn stopped him:

"One moment, Mr. Penn. When does the Baltimore steamer leave?"

"At six o'clock this evening, ma'am."

"Be so good as to send and engage a double state-room for me and my unhappy charge; and pay our hotel bill and bring me the receipts and the change," said Mrs. Llewellyn, putting a well-filled purse in his hand.

When Mrs. Llewellyn found herself alone with her victim, she approached the bed and looked upon the face of Gladys—the face so pale and thin, so worn and drawn with sorrow and sickness, that it would have melted any heart less hard than that of the woman who contemplated it.

"So, you poor, weak, miserable girl! You thought, with you lover's aid, to baffle me, did you? Well, you are here, in my absolute power again. And he is—not likely to give us any more trouble. Only live, my girl! Only live long enough to become the wife of James Stukely and the mother of his child, and then—die as soon as you please. I wonder will the strong Llewellyn mind bend to this? I wonder will the proud Llewellyn heart bear or break. We shall see!" said this fell woman, as with the stern, ruthless and malignant aspect of a fiend, she seemed to swoop over her prey.

She made no effort to bring Gladys out of her swoon. She knew that in such cases the victim is better left to nature, and that in this particular case the longer Gladys continued in helpless unconsciousness the better it would suit her own evil purposes.

She left the bedside and went and opened a small medicine chest, and began to prepare certain powerful drugs—not stimulating and strengthening medicines to rouse the failing mind and body of the patient—and not exactly

deadly poisons to utterly destroy life—but what was really as fatal as the last mentioned agents—baleful sedative-tonics that excite hunger and appetite and promote digestion and nutrition, while they lower the action of the brain and heart, and nearly paralyze the intellect and will, and thus save the body while they destroy the mind. Divine medicaments these are when used with judgment and conscience; devilish poisons when used with rashness or malignity; known to certain good doctors of the middle ages, and used to obtund the poignant anguish of grief that but for them might have been fatal to life; known, also, to certain wicked alchemists, and used by them to destroy the moral free agency where it was desirable to enslave rather than to kill; known, lastly, to Mrs. Jay Llewellyn, who had made the science of toxicology the favorite study of her life, and about to be used by her to restore the bodily health and to palsy the mental and moral energy of her unconscious victim.

While she was still busy at her demoniacal work, a moan and stir on the bed warned her that Gladys was recovering her consciousness.

She quickly arose, and prepared a mixture, and took it to the bedside, and lifted the head of the poor girl, and placed the draught to her dry lips.

And Gladys, scarcely half conscious of her act, instinctively swallowed the liquid and became quiescent.

There came a rap at the door.

Mrs. Llewellyn quickly dropped the head of Gladys, drew the curtains before the bed, and went to see who was there.

A stranger to her. Mrs. Lieutenant Brown.

"I beg your pardon, madam; but you must have mistaken the room," said Mrs. Jay, drawing herself up with her most repellant aspect.

"Oh, no, not if you are the care-taker of that young woman who came down with me on the Pocahontas this morning," said Mrs. Brown, deliberately walking into the room.

"But we have not the honor of your acquaintance, madam!" said Mrs. Jay, haughtily.

"*She has*," replied the visitor, nodding her head emphatically. "I am the wife of that man she followed down here." And her little black eyes snapped vindictively.

Mrs. Llewellyn was not a woman to start at any thing; no not even at a shell that might happen to burst in her presence; but she certainly did draw back and gaze steadfastly at the speaker before her.

"How did you know that the young lady followed any one down here?" she inquired.

"I am sure she made no secret of it. She did nothing but babble of her sweetheart—her husband she called him, the deceitful wretch!—all the time she was on the boat. But how she could have pretended to think he was her husband, when he had a lawful wife living, I don't know!"

"But—you do not mean to say that the lieutenant had been married before?" inquired Mrs. Jay, speaking, of course, of Arthur Powis.

"Don't I, though? Yes, I do! He had been married to me four years, the monster!" cried Mrs. Brown, speaking of course only of her own husband, Arthur Brown.

"My dear madam, this is very shocking news to me!" exclaimed Mrs. Llewellyn, with every appearance of grief in her face, but with secret delight in her heart.

"Shocking?—if you knew what I have suffered from that man's behavior, your heart would bleed for me," exclaimed the self-tormentor, bursting into tears.

"My dear madam, pray sit down and tell me all about it," said Mrs. Jay, who really thought that now she had discovered a secret in the life of Arthur Powis, that would make his very memory abhorrent to Gladys.

Sobbing hysterically, Mrs. Brown threw herself into a chair, and poured forth the history of her fancied wrongs; and as she always mentioned her unlucky husband as

"Arthur," or "the lieutenant," and as this name and title applied equally to the lost Arthur Powis and the slandered Arthur Brown, neither Mrs. Llewellyn nor her excited visitor had any means of discovering their mutual mistake.

"And now, ma'am," said Mrs. Brown, wiping her eyes, as she ended her story, "I have taken the liberty of calling on you, and begging you to take the young woman away as soon as possible, for her sake as well as for mine and for Arthur's. Upon second thoughts I don't blame her so much, poor thing, for Arthur is very handsome and captivating, and that's the sacred truth! or, he wouldn't ever have got over me as he did; and no doubt he made her believe that he married her. I blame *him*; but though I do blame him so much, and feel so angry and outrageous sometimes that I feel as if I must either divorce him or kill him outright, yet you see I like him too well to part with him altogether, especially as he has so lately come off a long voyage. So I must beg and entreat you, ma'am, to take the young lady away with you. I know she is quite crazed and that he was the cause of it all; but then she *might* come to her senses, and they *might* meet, and *then*! And so, you see, it is better for all concerned that she should be taken away at once."

"I have already engaged a passage in the Baltimore steamer, that leaves the wharf at six this evening," said Mrs. Llewellyn.

"Oh! I am very glad. And, ma'am, I hope you will not feel offended at any thing that I have said this morning."

"Oh, no! The unhappy young woman is no relative of mine; she is only a poor orphan that I have taken charge of from motives of charity, and that I am unwilling to desert even now in her fall," said Mrs. Llewellyn, graciously.

"Oh, madam! how very kind of you. Providence will surely reward such benevolence as yours," said the lieutenant's wife.

At this moment there came another rap at the door. And Mrs. Llewellyn, knowing that this must be the clerk, arose and opened it.

As Mr. Penn entered, with a purse in one hand, and a roll of papers in the other, Mrs. Brown arose and took leave.

"Do you know that lady?" inquired Mrs. Llewellyn, when her visitor had left the room.

"Yes, madam; she is Mrs. Arthur Brown, and she stops here whenever she is in town," replied the clerk.

"Mrs. Arthur—*whom*?" quickly, demanded Mrs. Llewellyn.

"Mrs. Arthur Brown, madam, the wife of Lieutenant Arthur Brown, who commands the store-ship Michigan, now at the navy yard," replied the clerk, as he quietly laid down the purse and papers upon the table before the lady.

"Are you sure of what you say?"

"Oh, yes, madam! The lieutenant is in the house now. Have you any further commands?"

"Oh, no! except that you will have a carriage at the door, at four o'clock, precisely, to take us to the boat."

"Certainly, madam," said Mr. Penn, bowing himself out.

Mrs. Llewellyn sat down and laughed—a noiseless sardonic laugh. The mystery was out. "Trifles light as air are to the jealous confirmation strong as proofs from Holy Writ." And from a few coincidences, the jealous wife of Lieutenant Brown had mistaken the "Arthur" sought by poor Gladys for her own Arthur, and through that mistake would, doubtless, lead the unlucky lieutenant a terrible life, for some time to come. And Arthur Powis had been no bigamist; but, notwithstanding that, Mrs. Llewellyn thought she could turn this mistake to such good account, as to persuade Gladys that he had been one, and that she had been led into a fictitious marriage by an already married man; for there had been such seeming truth in all poor, jealous, deluded Mrs. Brown had said, that it would be

only necessary to repeat it word for word to make Gladys believe it.

The few remaining hours of Mrs. Llewellyn's stay in Norfolk passed quietly. She took luncheon in her own room. She fed Gladys with beef-tea and port wine, nourishing and strengthening liquids, that the stupified girl could swallow without difficulty.

And at four o'clock, precisely, she had Gladys lifted from the bed, and taken down and placed in the carriage. She also got in, and took the girl's drooping head upon her false bosom. And in this way they drove to the steamboat wharf, and embarked on the Baltimore steamer—the coachman helping to carry Gladys down into the cabin, and receiving an extra fee for his services.

When Gladys was once laid upon her berth, Mrs. Llewellyn locked the state-room door, and went up on deck to enjoy the sunset on the water, and to watch the receding shores as the steamer sailed.

She took supper with the company in the saloon, and then, with a cup of coffee (into which she dropped a sedative powder) in her hand, she went down into the ladies' cabin, and unlocked the state-room occupied by Gladys.

There was not a soul in the cabin. The ladies were on deck, enjoying the effect of the moonlight on the water, and even the stewardess was absent, probably getting her supper. Mrs. Llewellyn knew all this, and timed her visit to her victim accordingly.

As she opened the state-room door, the light from the cabin without fell upon the pale face of Gladys, as she lay quiescent, with half-closed eyes, upon her berth. She looked up, and seeing Mrs. Llewellyn, said:

"You have deceived and betrayed me, Mrs. Jay. You have entrapped me into your power. But be assured that I *know* you cannot retain me in your custody; and that there will speedily come a day of deliverance for me, and of retribution for you. And the certain knowledge of this enables me to bear this indignity as calmly as I do."

Gladys spoke firmly, but without the least excitement, for although the stupefying effects of the drug that was administered to her had passed away, yet the subduing effects of it remained and rendered excitement as yet impossible.

"I am the best friend that you have in the world, my dear, as you will very soon find. Here, drink this coffee."

"If I take it from your hand at all, I do it under protest! And if I drink it at all, it is because I think it would be wrong wantonly to injure my own health by abstinence, and I feel myself under the necessity of taking something to keep up my strength, for I must keep up *that* in order to withstand *you*, Mrs. Jay," said Gladys, as she took the cup and eagerly drank the coffee; for the drug had made her hungry as well as stupid.

"Put your compliance on any ground you like, my love, so that you do yourself good," said Mrs. Llewellyn, smiling grimly.

Gladys drank all the coffee, fixed her eyes defiantly on Mrs. Llewellyn as she returned the empty cup to that lady, and then—suddenly dropped back upon her pillow and fell asleep.

"It works admirably! It could not work better!" said Mrs. Llewellyn, as she locked the door of the state-room and returned to the deck.

Although she had taken passage on the Baltimore steamer, her destination was not Baltimore city. She would not yet, for many reasons, venture to take Gladys into the State of Maryland. So, about midnight, when the boat stopped at Heathville, a small seaside town on the Virginia shore, she prepared to land.

Gladys, in a state of stupor, was lifted from her berth and borne in the arms of a stout steamboat porter to the landing, and placed in a large travelling-carriage that was waiting there for the travellers. Their luggage was next brought from the boat and piled up behind and above the

carriage. And then the porters returned to the boat, and the boat steamed on her way up the bay.

Mrs. Llewellyn, left standing by the carriage, beckoned her coachman to come down.

The deaf mute, Jude, obeyed, and stood before his mistress.

It was a very lonely scene, and picturesque in its loneliness. The village was asleep; its lights were darkened; its houses closed; its streets deserted. There had been no passengers or freight to be taken *on* to the passing steamer, and none to be put *off* her, with the exception of Mrs. Llewellyn and her charge, and their luggage. And if any wakeful inhabitant had heard the stopping of the passing steamer, he had probably turned over and gone to sleep again. The village was so still, that the only sound heard was that of the gentle surge of the waves upon the shore; and so dark, that the only lights visible were the lamps of the travelling-carriage; and so solitary, that the only life visible was that gathered around the carriage.

Mrs. Llewellyn rapidly spelled upon her fingers the questions:

"Are the horses quite fresh?"

The mute nodded.

"Are the roads good?"

A nod.

"It is now twelve o'clock. We must make thirty miles before six to-morrow morning; then change horses and breakfast at Pebbletown; and then get to Kader Idris by six in the evening. This can be done?"

Another nod.

"Mount your box, then, and drive as fast as is expedient; but don't exhaust the horses at the onset," said Mrs. Llewellyn (with her fingers) as she got into the carriage.

The deaf mute put up the steps, closed the door, mounted the box and drove off.

I need not describe the journey at length.

At sunrise the next morning they stopped at a mountain hamlet and hotel, and changed horses. Mrs. Llewellyn did not leave the carriage, but had breakfast brought to her there; and she ate heartily, and fed her victim on nutritious liquids, and drugged her with sedatives. And then, with fresh horses, resumed their journey.

At noon they stopped at a village at the foot of the mountain, changed horses again, took luncheon in the carriage, and with renewed strength went on their way.

At night they reached Kader Idris, and poor Gladys, more dead than alive, was lifted from the carriage and conveyed to her own room and laid upon her bed where Mrs. Llewellyn sat contemplating her in triumph.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE PALSIED HEART.

"Tis sad to see the light of beauty wane,
Know eyes are dimming, bosoms shrivelling, feet
Losing their lightness, limbs their lily roundness;
But it is worse to know our heart-spring gone,
To lose hope, care not for the coming ill,
And feel all things go to decay with us.—*Bailey.*

MRS. LLEWELLYN knew that her victim was now absolutely in her power. So cunningly had that ruthless woman laid and carried out her plans that there was no possibility of her being detected in them.

There had been a dark deed done beside the night-shaded waters of the Analostia; but her only accomplice in that work had been a deaf, dumb, and half-idiotic negro, who knew just enough to obey his mistress's commands and no more—commands that were communicated to him, not through the regular deaf and dumb alphabet, but through an arbitrary alphabet taught him by his mistress and intel-

ligible only to Lim and to her. So he could not, if he would, betray her. She was safe in her crimes and Gladys was entirely in her power.

"So far, so well! But now we must be more careful in the further administration of our sedatives. We wish to dull the intellect and subdue the will; but we do not wish to destroy health and endanger life," she said, as she gazed upon the pale, thin, placid face of her victim.

Then, feeling sure that Gladys would sleep undisturbed through the night, Mrs. Llewellyn left her lying there, locked the chamber door upon her, and went down stairs to enjoy the luxurious supper and downy bed that had been prepared for her own comfort and refreshment.

Early the next morning she visited her patient.

Gladys was more awake and alive than she had been at any time since falling again into the hands of Mrs. Llewellyn. The effects of the drug had not, however, entirely passed away; she was still rather quiet, and her voice was calm as she raised her eyes to the face of Mrs. Llewellyn and inquired:

"How came I here? I seem to have come in a dream."

"My dear, I brought you here! to your own old home, to the only home now left you. Shall I explain? I will do so, though the explanation will be a painful one to both of us. Soon after you left Washington, I learned, to my astonishment and sorrow, that we had all been deceived and that you were deserted——"

Mrs. Llewellyn paused and looked at Gladys to see how she would receive this communication.

But the large dark eyes of the young wife were fixed in quiet wonder upon the face of the elder lady as though she did not fully comprehend the purport of her words.

"I learned, also, that there was no such store-ship as the 'Potomac' at Portsmouth navy yard, and that Lieutenant Arthur Powis had certainly not been promoted to the rank of commander, but, on the contrary, had had his name

stricken off the navy list for absence from his ship without leave——”

Again Mrs. Llewellyn paused to read the face of the listener.

But the eyes of Gladys were unmoved in their non-comprehending gaze.

“All these facts I learned from the very best and most reliable authority—a naval officer of high rank whom I met at Alexandria. I lost no time in hurrying down to Norfolk after you; for I could well imagine how desperate your situation would be when you should discover the deception that had been practiced upon you—and upon us all. I arrived at Norfolk, learned by diligent inquiry the name of the hotel at which you had taken a room, went there, and traced you from there to the Portsmouth navy yard, where I found you wandering the streets in such a fearful state of excitement as to border on insanity, and followed and tormented by a crowd of rude boys, from whom I fortunately arrived in time to rescue you. Can you recall no part of this affair to your mind?” said Mrs. Llewellyn, looking wistfully into the quiet face of Gladys.

Gladys put both her hands up to her forehead and began to smooth it from the top to the temples, as if she would have cleared away the mists from her memory, and she answered, slowly:

“Yes—all of it, I think; but it seems like a distant, dreadful dream.”

“Then, you must know, my dearest, that Arthur Pow.s has left you!”

“No!” said Gladys, almost with energy; “I know that he has not. I know that he is good, and true, and faithful! I know that much, although I am so changed by grief, or illness, or anxiety, or something, that I scarcely know myself! I am so dull and still that I can scarcely think or feel; but I know that he is good and faithful, and I should know it even in my madness, if I should go mad—even in

my death, if I should die! You cannot shake my faith in Arthur, Mrs. Jay!”

“My poor child! What if I were to tell you that he had deceived you with a false marriage? What if I were to tell you that he had another wife living at the time he pretended to marry you?”

“I would not believe it, Mrs. Jay!”

“What if I were to tell you that I met this other wife in Norfolk?”

“I would not believe it, Mrs. Jay!”

“Gladys! do you mean to accuse me of falsehood?”

“No, Mrs. Jay; you may have met a woman who claimed to be Arthur’s wife; but if you did, she must have told you a falsehood, or you must have misunderstood her.”

“Gladys, I can prove the truth of what I say. But I will not argue with you now, my dear; I will rather comfort you. If he has deceived you with a false marriage, Gladys, you have the comfort of knowing that you are not to blame; that the marriage, if false, is not binding; that the fate that makes you desolate leaves you free; and that you are once more safe in the home and among the friends of your childhood.”

“My marriage was legal; my husband is true; and my faith in both is not to be shaken,” said Gladys, firmly, but very calmly; for the influence of the sedative was still upon her; and the words that in her normal condition would have burst forth in a passion of indignation and grief, now dropped in quietness from her lips.

The entrance of the deaf mute with the breakfast tray put an end to the conversation.

Gladys sat up and ate with some appetite, gently wondering all the while, why she could not reflect or grieve, and why she could eat.

In a few days, Gladys was out of her chamber and wandering in a listless manner about the house, and vaguely marvelling how she, a bereaved wife, scarcely

knowing whether she were deserted or widowed, could not either feel or think, and yet could eat and sleep! She was ignorant of the very existence of that powerful drug that was daily administered to her in her food.

No key was turned on Gladys now; there was no necessity that there should be; she was free to roam the house and grounds, and even the whole neighborhood, if she wished; but there was no danger of her doing so, for the ruthless woman who played so recklessly upon her soul's life, knew full well that Gladys was incapable of carrying out, or even forming a purpose. Her strange condition caused much anxiety and conjecture among the old servants of the house. They had been told that Arthur Powis had eloped with her, and then abandoned her, leaving her ill, in debt, and among total strangers. But they did not believe this. And though they did not pretend to surmise the fate of Arthur, they gave a very decided opinion upon the case of Gladys, namely: that she was *oe witched* by the devilish spells of that potent sorceress, Mrs. Jay Llewellyn. And they were not very far wrong.

"You see, children," said Allie, addressing her companions in the kitchen, "I should think as how she was a-fretting arter Marse Arthur, only you see she never *does* fret; you never see so much as a drop of water in her eyes—so it aint that. And then, ag'in, I should think as her health was a-failing of her, only you see she never refuses of her victuals, nor, likewise, loses of her sleep—and folks as is in bad health cant eat and sleep as *she* does; so it aint that! Now what can it be, then, 'less she's *'witched*? And that's just what's the matter—she's *'witched*."

And this opinion seemed so reasonable, that it was unanimously received and passed as the verdict of the kitchen.

Old neighbors, old friends of the family, called to see Gladys. They had heard that she had made a scandal of some sort—had eloped with some young man, who had deserted her, and that she had been brought back by her

guardian; but they could not ascertain the truth of the story from mere report; and it was much too delicate a matter to mention to any member of the family concerned.

When they came to see Gladys, Mrs. Llewellyn threw no obstacle in the way of their meeting her; but she put a very formidable bar against their conversing intelligibly with her. Always before sending for Gladys to come down and see the visitors, she would forewarn them that the intellect of her ward was in a very feeble and excitable condition, and entreat them to be cautious how they talked with her. And then she herself would make it a point to be present at the interview, to see that her advice was followed. This course of conduct on the part of Mrs. Llewellyn, formed an effectual preventative to any confidential communications between Gladys and the old friends of her parents.

And these old family friends always departed under the impression that Miss Llewellyn's mind was seriously deranged.

Thus passed the autumn months at Kader Idris; and brought at length December and the Christmas holidays, when Master James Stukely, aged eighteen years, was expected home to spend that festive season.

Mrs. Llewellyn had spoken freely, both in the house and in the neighborhood, of the approaching marriage of her son and her ward, which she said was fixed to take place at Christmas. And when she saw astonishment expressed in the face of any neighbor, who very naturally wondered that a girl whose mind was suspected to be deranged, should be supposed a fit subject for marriage, she would calmly explain that this marriage had been the favorite project of the late General Llewellyn; and that upon her submitting the question to several eminent medical practitioners, they had decided that marriage was the only thing to save the reason of the patient, who was really after all, more nervous and hysterical than insane. And the simple country-

people believed Mrs. Jay Llewellyn, who had always been a sort of oracle among them.

Greatly incensed were the old family servants when ordered to begin preparations for the approaching marriage.

"It is a shame," said Ailie, lifting up her hands and eyes, "a crying shame, first to put a spell on the gal to 'witch her, and then take the advantage to marry of her off to that idiot of a Jim Stuke! Mrs. Jay just does it all so that fellow o' hern'll come into the property. 'Pon my word, somebody ought to put a stop to it. For that poor gal, if she marries of that fellow, wont no more know what she's a-doin' of nor if she was a-walkin' in her sleep. 'Tis 'stonishing what has come over Miss Gladys, to make her so dull and heavy and onfeeling; but I know it is a spell put on her by that old woman—I know it! And I'm a-going to watch her good from this time forth, to see if I can find out what it is. And I wish to the Lord, I do, as how I had begun to watch her before! I might a' diskivered somethink."

And true to her purpose, from that hour Ailie, with a caution, subtlety, and secretiveness only to be found in the African woman, began to play the spy upon Mrs. Llewellyn. She got a fellow-servant to do her work, while she dogged the steps of the suspected sorceress, of whom she very seldom lost sight, yet to whom she never once betrayed her proximity. Ailie had the most cunning way of gliding noiselessly about the house, slipping swiftly behind doors or window-curtains, or into closets, or wardrobes, or under beds, or sofas, or somewhere else out of sight, and there lying in wait, listening and hearing all she wanted to know, that ever was possessed by rat, fox, negro or detective.

And in due course of time her perseverance was rewarded. She had bored a gimlet hole in the thin board partition that separated the pantry from a closet, used by Mrs. Llewellyn for the storage of roots, seeds, dried herbs, and

domestic medicines—the key of which was always carefully retained by Mrs. Llewellyn.

On a certain day she saw Mrs. Llewellyn go into this closet, and lock herself within it. Alice immediately stole into the pantry and noiselessly turned the key—locking *herself* in. Then, with her eye screwed into the gimlet hole, she watched her mistress.

She saw Mrs. Llewellyn open a little medicine-chest; select several small vials, each containing powdered drugs; take a pair of small scales; weigh out certain portions of each drug, and carefully mix them all in one mass. Then she saw her cut a piece of white paper into four small squares; divide the powder into four equal portions, and do them neatly up in the pieces of paper. Ailie watched her until she saw her deposit the four little folded papers in her pocket book, and then replace the scales and bottles, and lock the medicine-chest. Then Ailie slipped out of the pantry to hide herself somewhere else, and lie in wait to discover Mrs. Llewellyn's next motion.

This time Ailie concealed herself within the closet of the dining-room, where the table was set for an early tea. Here a small fracture in the boards afforded Ailie a peeping-hole. And from this lair she watched the proceedings.

She saw Mrs. Llewellyn come in, take her seat at the head of the table and ring the bell for the tea to be brought in. Lem answered the summons with the tea-urn.

"Let Miss Llewellyn know that tea waits," said the lady. And Lem went out to obey the order.

And Ailie watched "with all her eyes." She saw Mrs. Llewellyn's hand go down to her pocket and withdraw the pocket book. Then, as the lady sat with her back to the closet, the hand with the pocket book in it went out of sight. And stare as she would through her peep-hole, Ailie could not see it—until—yes! the hand was suddenly raised with a small open paper in its fingers and held over a cup, or the right, into which a powder was poured. In

another moment the empty paper was returned to the pocket, and the powder in the bottom of the cup was covered with sugar and milk.

All this Ailie saw from her ambuscade.

"That is it! That is the spell she is a-putting on her! But, sure's my name's Ailie Airie, she'll never put another one arter this!" said the woman.

In another moment, Gladys entered the room, and took her seat at the table silently, as was her dull custom now.

Mrs. Llewellyn filled up the drugged cup with tea, and handed it to the victim, who, stirring it lazily, drank it leisurely.

"Is your tea agreeable?" inquired Mrs. Llewellyn.

"I—don't know. Yes—I suppose so. I dare say—it is very good," Gladys heavily replied.

"Now," thought Ailie, from her hiding-place, "I'd put it to any body as ever knowed our young mistiss before, if this dullness is natural to any one as used to be as full of life and fun and spirits as *she* was. The spell's in them powders! that's where it is; and I'll let on to her about it as soon's ever I get the first chance."

Gladys soon arose, and lounged lumpishly away from the table.

But Ailie was obliged to remain in her hiding-place until Mrs. Llewellyn left the dining-room.

Then Ailie made her escape, and went out to try and find an opportunity of speaking with her young mistress; and she found it almost immediately.

Mrs. Llewellyn had ordered the carriage for a drive; and she soon came down stairs, bonneted and shawled, to drive to Standwell to meet her son, who was expected to arrive there by stage-coach from Charlottesville that evening.

When the carriage containing Mrs. Llewellyn had rolled out of sight, Ailie went back into the house to search for her young mistress.

She found her in the drawing-room, sitting back in a large easy-chair before the fire, and apparently sleeping.

"Miss Gladys, honey!" said Ailie, tenderly, approaching her; "Miss Gladys, child!"

"Well, what do you want Ailie? I wish you would let me alone," said the victim, indolently.

"Miss Gladys, honey, I want you to come up inter your own room, where I can lock the door, and talk with you confidential, without the fear of eaves-droppers afore my eyes."

"Well, why can't you talk here? It is so tiresome to go all the way up stairs. And—I wish you would leave me alone."

"Miss Gladys, chile, I wouldn't disturb you, only you see—*it's about Marse Arthur!*" said Ailie, very artfully, for she thought if there was one word beyond all others sure to rouse the attention of the young wife, it was the name of Arthur Powis, with the chance of hearing news of him.

But there was no start, no change of color, no evidence whatever of excitement on the part of Gladys; only the heavily lifted eyes and slowly formed question:

"Of—Arthur? What—of Arthur?"

"I want to talk to you about him, honey, if you will come up inter your own room, where we can talk confidential, without nobody interrupting of us. Come, honey," said Ailie, gently and respectfully taking the hand of Gladys, partly to assist, partly to constrain her to arise.

Gladys mechanically obeyed the motion, and allowed the colored woman to take her up stairs.

CHAPTER XX.

A HORRIBLE REVELATION.

The sitting of thine eye and cheek proclaim
A matter from thee; and a birth indeed,
Which throes thee much to yield.—*Shakespeare.*

Her friendship is a lurking snare,
Her honor but an idle breath,
Her smile the smile that traitors wear,
Her love is hate, her kiss is death.—*W. G. Simms.*

WHEN they reached her chamber, Gladys sank heavily into an easy-chair before the fire, and seemed to forget the very presence of her companion, as well as the subject they had conversed upon.

Ailie locked the door, and then, using the privilege of an old family servant, she drew a chair to the fire and seated herself beside her mistress.

"Miss Gladys, honey, I gwine to talk to you about Marse Arthur now, honey. Is you a-listening to me?"

"Yes—what about him?" dully inquired the benumbed creature, without removing her eyes from the fire, into which they were vaguely staring; "what of Arthur?"

"Honey, they do say hereabouts as you *did* run away with him, but as how you really was married to him."

Here Ailie paused and looked at her young mistress; but Gladys had relapsed into absence of mind, and sat staring into the fire, apparently oblivious of every thing.

"Oh! dear me, how 'voking! It is like trying to keep a drowning man afloat to try to keep her attention up to the top of any sensible talk," complained Ailie, as she took and squeezed the arm of her young lady, and inquired, earnestly.

"Miss Gladys, I wants you to 'tend to what I asks you, and to answer me true: *Was* you really, and truly, and lawfully married to Marse Arthur?"

"Yes I was," said Gladys, indifferently.

"Are you sure of it, honey?"

"Yes, I am. But you tire me. I wish you'd leave me in peace," said Gladys, languidly.

"My dear, dear child, would I leave you in peace if I saw you a-floating down the stream, right into the mill, to be ground up in the machinery? No more will I leave you in peace now, for you is a-floating on, unconscious, to a worse destruction. Miss Gladys, honey, is you a-listening to me?"

"Yes—but if you knew how it tries my head to listen, you would not talk to me so much."

"It is to pluck you out as a brand from the burning that I talks to you, honey. Miss Gladys, you say how you is really, and truly, and lawfully married to Marse Arthur?"

"Yes, I am."

"Well, then, honey, if you is really, and truly, and lawfully married to Marse Arthur, how you gwine to marry Jim Stukekey at Christmas. To marry two husbands is bigotry."

"I am not going to marry James Stukely. That is all nonsense. I am the wife of Arthur Powis," Gladys replied, with such strange calmness that Ailie groaned in despair as she mentally asked herself the question: "What *will* rouse her?" Then she thought of something that *might* do so, and she inquired, solemnly:

"Miss Gladys, honey, where is Marse Arthur?" and she looked intently in the young wife's face to watch the effect of her words.

But Gladys only passed her hand once or twice across her forehead, and answered, slowly:

"I—don't know. He—is somewhere. He—will come back sometime. He is true!"

He is true! that last sentence only was pronounced promptly and decisively.

Poor young wife! in the midst of her shattered intellect one idea was left unshaken—faith in her husband's truth.

Ailie gazed compassionately on her.

"Miss Gladys," she said, "long as you's the wife of Marse Arthur, what will he say when he comes back and finds you married to another man?"

Gladys frowned and looked somewhat perplexed and troubled, but not much either, as she answered, reprovingly:

"What nonsense you talk, Ailie; your brain must be softening. What you fear can never occur; and you offend me when you speak of such a chance. Arthur is true; he will return; and all will be well."

"Laws, honey, I aint a-saying as he aint true to you, or as he wont return back again; but I *is* a-saying as all will not be well unless you rouses of yourself and tends to my words," persisted Ailie.

And as Gladys did not reply, Ailie stooped forward and looked in her face.

But since her last fretful answer, she had fallen into a deeper apathy than before.

"Humph! Well, laws! it's like lifting of a stalled wagon out'n the mud; fast as you gets up one wheel down goes another. Laws! why didn't I think of it before! *Haartzhorn* gets people out'n fainty-fits, and maybe it may get *her* out'n her stupid fit. I'll try it," suddenly exclaimed Ailie, as full of eagerness she started up and hurried down stairs.

In a few minutes she returned, bringing a mixed cordial of ammonia, which she placed at the lips of her young mistress.

"Miss Gladys, honey, drink this. It will do you a world of good."

"I do wish, Ailie, that you would let me alone. You are all of you always worrying me to do something, or take something, or say something," exclaimed Gladys in a tone of vexation, as she received the glass. But, accustomed lately to do whatever she might be told to do, she drank off the cordial.

It acted like magic.

Without well understanding the case, the poor, ignorant, but zealous colored woman had hit upon the very antidote of the poison, and had administered the most powerful stimulant to counteract the effects of the most potent sedative.

As the ammonia quickly diffused itself through the deadened system of the unhappy girl, and gave her life, warmth, and sensibility, she looked up wonderingly in the face of her attendant, and then suddenly threw up her hands to her own face and wept long and passionately.

"Well, I don't most in general like to see people cry; but as for you, honey, I think it is a rale good beginning; shows how you is a-coming to yourself. Take some more *haartzhorn*," said Ailie. And she flew down stairs, and in an incredibly short space of time returned with a second cordial of ammonia. And this time Gladys drank it off without a word of objection. It would have been too much for any one in a normal state of health, but not for Gladys, long benumbed by sedatives. The stimulant was just what she required. As she returned the glass to Ailie she said:

"Oh, my good nurse, what has happened to me? Have I been growing heartless or idiotic? Oh! was ever any one in my position so utterly indifferent? My husband missing, perhaps murdered—Heaven only knows! and I eating, drinking, and sleeping; thinking nothing, feeling nothing, and caring for nothing but my own ease! Oh, what has happened to me? And what is going to happen? I feel as if my life, or my senses, or, perhaps, even my soul, were lost, or about to be lost! What is the reason, Ailie?"

"Honey, you hasn't either lost your senses, or your life, or your soul. Nor likewise is you 'ither onfeeling, or on-sensible, or any thing. But 'deed you has acted so dull and dumb as we all had begun to think as you was 'witched."

"'Witched! What's that?"

"Well, honey, it's 'witched with witchcraft as we-dem thought you was. But you wa'n't 'witched, honey, you was only dosed."

"Dosed?"

"Yes, honey; dosed every day of your life, if not at every singly meal you ate, with a dose to steal your senses away and make you dull and stupid and submissive and easy to manage."

"Oh, Ailie! Can this be true?" exclaimed Gladys, in dismay.

"As true as I am a living sinner, Miss Gladys. Ax yourself! What could a-put you in sich a dead-alive way but doses?"

"Oh, Ailie! Who has done this? But I need not ask! There is but one human being in the world, as I trust and believe, who could be guilty of such black treachery."

"No, sure enough. You needn't ask, Miss Gladys. You know a'ready as it was Mrs. Jay and no one else."

"How did you find it out, Ailie?"

"Honey, when we all seen you a-pining away and losing yourself, not like a young gall, fretting and falling ill, but p'cisely like an ole 'oman a-dropping into her dotage, we all s'picioned Mrs. Jay the first thing. And as I telled you afore, honey, first we s'picioned as how she had 'witched you with her witchcraft. And I set myself to watch her to see how she did it. And hadn't I a time of it, a-following up that old 'oman and a-keeping out of her sight? For, laws bless you, child, ef she had a-diskivered me a-spying on to her, my life wouldn't a-been worth the snuff of a candle; she'd a-dosed *me* next. Well, honey, I bored gimbletholes in out o' the way places, in doors and partitions and sich. And at last, this precious evening, I diskivered something! She was in the physic-room, and I stole into the pantry and peeked at her through my gimblethole. And I seen her make the doses. But that didn't prove nothink. She might a been making innocent physick for some o' the

poor folks round. So I stole away and hid myself in the parlor cupboard; cause you see, honey, the first tea-bell had ringed, and I knowed how she would come *there* next. Sure 'nough, so she did. And I peeked at her through my other peek-hole; and I seen her--while she was a-sitting there all alone by herself afore you come in--I seen her, I say, pour one of the little doses into *your* teacup and then kiver up the dose with cream and sugar--and then you come in and drank it!"

"Oh, Ailie! you saw my cup drugged! and you let me drink it! Oh, Ailie! *you*, my old nurse! how could you--*could* you do it?" passionately exclaimed Gladys.

"Lors, child, what could I do? 'Sides which I knew it wasn't rale rank p'ison as she was a givin' of you; for I knowed well she didn't want to kill you," said Ailie, apologetically.

"You should have rushed out and dashed the cup from my hand and denounced her as a poisoner!"

"Yes, honey, and got myself tuk up and sent to jail for disorderly conduct and violence. And what good would that a-done anybody? 'Sides which, as I said afore, I knowed it wasn't rank p'ison as she was a givin' of you. I knowed she didn't aim at your life--"

"No! but at all that made life worth the having--at my will! at my conscience! at my intellect! Oh, Heaven! at my peace! at my honor! at my happiness! Oh, Ailie! Ailie! how could you, *could* you stand by and see it done! Why didn't you, oh, why didn't you, rush out and prevent it!" bitterly exclaimed Gladys.

"Lord, honey, I dar'n't do it for my life! I am as 'fraid as death of that ole 'oman. 'Sides which, honey, I hadn't no idee as she aimed at so many things as you say! I thought in my soul as she only aimed to stupify you, and make you marry Jim Stukeley when you wan't a-knowing what you wa' a-doing of! And the Lord knows I thought that was bad enough, but I didn't think of any

thing worse; and I hoped to be able to prevent that, humble as I am. So——"

"I marry James Stukely! *Could* there be any thing worse than that? And yet that must have been her final object! I marry James Stukely, indeed! Before I would do it, I would send a bullet through his brain, and think I had made a holy sacrifice!" cried Gladys, as all the old Llewellyn fire flashed from her eyes.

"That's right! that's you! You are coming to yourself again! and that's the way I like to see you, honey!" gladly exclaimed Ailie.

"Was it the ammonia you gave me that has restored me, do you think, Ailie?"

"Oh, the haartzhorn? Yes, honey, that fetched you to."

"Well, then, bring me the vial, Ailie! I may have occasion to resort to it again."

"I will, honey, afore the evening is out. But now you make good use of the time while the old madam is away, and lay your plots ag'in hern. She mought be back and interrupt us any minute, you know. So it is better for to get through afore she comes. I can slip the haartzhorn in your hand any minute, you know. Now, honey, 'sider what is best to do."

"The best plan is always the most straight-forward one—and that is for me to get up to-morrow morning and order the carriage, and drive to the nearest magistrate, and lay the whole case before him," said Gladys, resolutely.

"Yes, honey, there aint no doubt as the best plan is the most straight-forward one long as you deal with straight-forward people; but when you has to deal with carcumwenting folks, you must meet 'em with carcumventions."

"I don't like crooked ways," said Gladys.

"No more do I! but, honey, though you may have more book-larning than I has, you hasn't got the experience of life as I has, or you would know as there's a deal more crooked ways nor straight ones, in this world."

"And even if it is so, I will take the straight instead of the crooked!"

"Yes, honey; but s'pose the straight leads you right over a prisypess, or up agin' a black wall, or down into a dark hole? And s'pose the crooked one, going round and round, fetches you slow and sure right to the place where you want to go? how then?"

"I don't believe the straight path would lead to any harm, or the crooked one to any good—there!"

"Listen to me, honey, and don't let us talk any more mathephysics, but let us keep to the point. Now, 'spose you take the straight road you are a-speaking of, and s'pose you get up in the morning and order the carriage, who do you think is gwine to obey the order?"

"I should think any of my father's servants would obey any reasonable order of his only daughter, and sole heiress," said Gladys, erecting her proud little head.

"Yes, honey, if she was of age, and mistress of the house. But, you see, she aint of age, nor likewise mistress of the house. She is a—what-do-you-call-it, and Mrs. Jay is mistress. 'Sides which, Mrs. Jay has done mystified some of the servants so, as they ralely do believe you is out of your mind, and so they wouldn't venter to obey you; and she has done terrified others so, as they dar'n't do nothing agin her orders. So, you see, honey, as how you couldn't get the use of your own carriage and servants, if you was to order 'em from morning till night!"

"Then I would walk."

"Yes, honey, and you would get just about half a dozen steps from the house, when you would be seized and lotch back."

"Then I must be very cautious in my movements. But get to a magistrate's office, I will."

"Just so, honey; and if you should be so fort'nate as to get there and make your complaint, the first thing as the magister would be bound to do would be to send for Mrs.

Jay to meet the charges agin her. Now, Mrs. Jay is a great lady in this neighborhood, and is a-growing greater every day. 'Sides which, she is your gardeen. 'Sides that, she's done reported how you run disreputable away 'long of a young man, and how he deserted you, leaving of you destitute among strangers, and how it took sich an effect on you as to run you crazy; which, honey, your own state, brought on by the physie she give you, did perduce that impression on all that come to see you. Now, honey, you know she would tell her own story to the magister. And she would send for the neighbors as saw you in your dumb, dull, ondifferent state, to prove as how your mind was weak. And who would be believed? Mrs. Jay, who is, right or wrong, a lady of standing in the neighborhood, and your own gardeen as well; or you, a young gal as so much has been said agin, and so much would be falsely swore agin? Why, sartain, Mrs. Jay would be believed, for she would prove every thing she said to the magister's sassagifaction; whereas, you could prove nothing, not even as Mr. Powis hadn't deserted you, 'cause you can't even tell where he is. And so you would be handed over to she, until you are of age, and then you'd be a deal worse off nor you are now, for she would be sure to take her spite out of you for trying to get away from her! And *there* would be the end of your straight-forrard road; and how do you like it, Miss Gladys?"

"Oh, Heaven! to be caught in the toils as I am! I am a poor sparrow in the fowler's net! a poor fly in the spider's web! What shall I do?"

"Fight the devil with his own weapons, honey. Carcumwent carcumventions *with* carcumventions! Cross crooked ways *with* crooked ways! Or, to let alone mathe-physics and come to the point again, do this:—Stay quiet where you is, 'cause you aint got no other home, and this is the proper place for you. And don't let on to Mrs. Jay as you *suspicion* ny think ag'in her, much less as you *know* any think. And lay low and say nothink."

"And take her baleful drugs whenever she chooses to administer them! And commit the dreadful sin of marrying James Stukely whenever she has reduced me to a state of idiocy low enough to consent to do it—I'll die first!"

"No, no, no, no! nothink of that! You and me together will carcumwent her carcumventions! And we will begin to-morrow morning. You know I waits on the breakfast table? Well, honey, it is in the *first* cup as she always puts the drug, 'cause you see she wouldn't have a chance o' putting of it in another one without being seen. So it is in the first cup as she puts it. Now, honey, to-morrow morning, when you takes up your cup of coffee, you make your hand tremble and shake till it upsets the cup and spills the coffee; then I will run and take away the cup and wipe up the slop, and bring you a clean cup. And so you will 'scape drinking of the physie, and without 'citing her suspicion, as she will think it is all nervousness. And then at dinner, honey, don't eat any thing but what can't be p'isoned; refuse the first things put on your plate and ask for a clean plate and choose somethink as can't well be drugged. And you'll 'scape the drug ag'in without 'citing of suspicion, 'cause she will set it all down to a sickly appetite. And at tea-time, honey, say as how you don't like tea any more, and you'll take a glass of new milk, which I will run and bring it to you myself. And you'll 'scape the drug a third time and likewise without 'citing suspicion, for it will be set down to a changeable appetite. And meanwhile we can watch *her*; and we can wait for what may turn up. And you, free from the drug, can keep all your wits about you, and show to every one as comes to the house how reasonable you are, and when the time comes, which I'm afraid it will come pretty soon, you can refuse p'int blank to marry Jim Stuke, which nobody on the face of the yeth can compel you for to take him. And at long last it is but to live long o' your gardeen in your own mansion-house as comfortable as you can, for

scarce three years, until you is of age, and comes into your 'state, and then you can turn round on her and turn *her* out, and serve her right! So you see, honey, the crooked way may be the longest way *round*, but it is the surest way *there*! And this is the longest speech as ever I made in all my life, and I hope you'll tend to it, as I'm quite out o' breath!" said Ailie, panting.

"Perhaps you are right, Ailie. I will think about it. But oh! I would rather go out in the world, and earn my own bread for the next three years, than live in the same house with this wicked and dangerous woman!"

"Yes, honey, but you can't do it. You aint got no experience in anythink as money is made by. 'Sides which, she would never let you go if she knowed it, she being your gardeen. And if you was to run away without her knowledge and consent, she would go after you and catch you, and maybe say you were mad, and clap you in a 'zylum, and that a way keep you out'n your own, not only for three years, but for just as long as she chooses."

"Oh! is there no way out of this misery?"

"I don't think there is, honey, exceptin' the way I tells you of—to live here quiet, and live down scandal, and wait patient till you is of age, and can turn the tables on the ole madam."

While Ailie spoke, the sound of carriage wheels was heard approaching the house.

"That's her! Talk of the dee and his imps appear. I mustn't be cotch having of a private confab 'long o' you, honey, else she'll s'picion somethink. But you mind and 'member what I told you!" said Ailie, as she arose to leave the room.

"I will—I will indeed, nurse."

Left alone, Gladys thought over all that she had just learned.

"I was wrong in reproaching my old nurse. She was right in not bursting out and violently interfering, for I

see now that such a course would not only have been useless, but dangerous. For I was then too far gone in apathy to have understood her; and if I had not drank that drugged cup, I could easily have been cheated into drinking another very soon. And as for poor Ailie, she would have been punished for her violence, and sent away, or perhaps imprisoned; and I should have lost her services. She was right in other matters, too, for even if I were to go before a magistrate, how easy it would be to charge me with insanity, and establish the charge, too, especially as I *have* acted strangely. And if I were to accuse her of producing all those appearances of mental aberration in me, by the administration of those deadly drugs, how easy it would be for her to repudiate the charge, by making it seem that the powders she gave me were harmless and beneficial medicines! And the weight of her character would tip the scales of justice, and my cause would go down. No! I will stay here quietly; I will be patient and hopeful; I will profit by Ailie's lesson, and perhaps improve upon it! There is Mrs. Llewellyn coming to my room. Now for a little acting!" said Gladys, as she heard the step of her guardian at the door.

Gladys had just time to conceal the glass tumbler, from which she had drank the cordial of ammonia, under the valance of her resting-chair, settle herself back among the cushions, fix her eyes upon the smouldering fire, and assume that look of placid dullness that had never been natural, only lately been habitual, and was now merely a piece of fine acting for the purpose of evading Mrs. Llewellyn's suspicions.

"Gladys, are you awake, my dear?" inquired that evil woman, approaching her ward.

"Yes," was the soft, dull, careless answer.

Mrs. Llewellyn took the seat that had lately been vacated by Ailie, and drew it to the side of Gladys, and gazed into her face.

Gladys was lying back in the resting-chair, and staring stupidly into the smouldering fire.

"Gladys, my love, your Cousin James has arrived," said the lady, laying her hand carelessly upon the young wife's shoulder.

Gladys made no reply; for she seemed never to speak unless compelled to do so by a question being pointedly put to or forced upon her.

"My dear, I tell you that your Cousin James Stukely has come to spend the Christmas holidays with us; are you not glad of it? Say, Gladys?"

"I—Yes—No—I don't know," answered the wife of Arthur Powis, vaguely.

"Tut, tut, tut, my dear! You don't know whether you are glad of your cousin's arrival or not. How is that, Gladys?"

"I—What was it you said? Say it again?"

"Oh, dear! I said that your Cousin James Stukely has arrived from college, on a long visit to us. And I asked you if you are not glad to hear it?"

"I—dare say I am. But—it tires me to think whether I am or not."

"Why, what *do* you mean, Gladys?"

"I don't mean any thing."

"So you do not care about James's coming?"

"I—No—Yes—I suppose I ought to—I dare say I do—But it tires me to think whether I do or not—I will care if you want me to," said the young wife, stupidly and submissively.

"Gladys, my love, listen to me. It is not late; it is only nine o'clock. And you are not undressed; you are looking very nicely in your demi-toilette. Would you like to go down into the drawing-room and welcome your cousin?" said Mrs. Jay, in an insinuating voice.

"I—don't know whether I would or not. And—it tires me so to think—But—I will if you wish me to. I will—do

any thing you wish, so you don't ask me to think about it. It tires me so to think," murmured Gladys—first pretending to rouse herself, and then affecting to relapse into torpor.

"Ah, ha!" muttered Mrs. Jay to herself, as she gazed with satisfaction upon the seemingly stupefied young woman before her. "Ah, ha! This is better than I could have desired. She is more of a senseless tool than I ever knew her to be. More even than I wished her to be! Heavens! But it will be very easy now to put her through the marriage ceremony that shall make her the wife of James Stukely, and constitute him the proprietor of Kader Idris. We shall only have to tell her what to do and she will do it mechanically. Meanwhile I must leave her alone for the present, and wait until to-morrow morning to present her to her future husband, and the prospective Lord of the Manor of Kader Idris."

Then speaking aloud, she said:

"Gladys, my love, I will not require you to go down stairs to-night. I see that you are really too wearied. I will leave you to repose. Good-night, my dear."

Gladys seemed too far gone in stupor to hear.

But when Mrs. Jay had fairly turned her back to leave the room, the little actress looked over her shoulder and threw after the retreating figure of the traitress a glance and smile of triumph.

CHAPTER XXI.

GUILE FOR GUILE.

Look like the time; bear welcome in your eye,
Your hand, your tongue; look like the innocent flower.
But be—the serpent under it.—*Shakspeare.*

THE next morning the breakfast-parlor at Kader Idris wore quite a festive aspect.

A roaring fire of hickory logs blazed in the broad old-

fashioned chimney; deep red-cushioned chairs were drawn up on each side of the hearth; a thick red carpet covered the floor; and heavy crimson curtains excluded the wintry blast.

In the middle of the room stood the breakfast-table, draped with its snowy damask, adorned with its best silver and Sevres china, and covered with all the delicacies and luxuries of the place and the season.

The room was as yet vacant.

Mrs. Llewellyn and her son, James Stukely, entered together.

The last-named individual merits some description.

He was a tall, long-limbed, narrow-shouldered, hollow-chested, sickly-looking lad of about eighteen years of age. He had a small head, covered with scanty, sandy hair; a long white face; a receding forehead, and depressed chin, that made his thin aquiline nose look something like the beak of a bird; and light-blue eyes, of no sort of expression. He was dressed in a clerical suit of black, with a white cravat.

He was passing through college with very little benefit to himself. He was capable of being educated up to a certain low point, but not above it. He possessed a fair memory, but a weak understanding. He could recollect, but not reflect. Of him his classmates were accustomed to say, that "He had not his right change;" "he had a room to let in the attic;" "he had a tile loose;" and other phrases popularly accepted to illustrate deficiency of intellect. In general he was very easily managed; but when his particular whim of the moment was crossed, he became ungovernable—grew, in common parlance, "as obstinate as a mule." Such was the mate proposed by Mrs. Llewellyn for the bright, beautiful, and intelligent daughter of General Llewellyn.

Mrs. Llewellyn was speaking, as she preceded her son into the breakfast-parlor:

"This escapade of Gladys does not seriously affect her honor, you must know, Stukely."

"Ah, indeed!" exclaimed the young gentleman.

"Certainly not. She believed herself a wife, and so, though the marriage was illegal, she must be held blameless."

"Extraordinary!" said Mr. Stukely.

"Arthur Powis is missing."

"Ah, indeed!"

"Yes; I told you so before. And it is not certainly known whether he has abandoned his supposed wife, and at the same time deserted the service, or whether he has been robbed and murdered."

"Extraordinary!"

"In any case, Gladys is free; was always free, in point of fact, since the marriage was illegal."

"Ah, indeed!"

"Yes; so now the way is clear for you to woo and wed the wealthy heiress of Kader Idris, and become one of the richest landed proprietors of the country."

"Extraordinary!"

"James Stukely!" exclaimed the lady, impatiently, "I wish, once for all, that you would give up that idiotic and very irritating habit you have of interjecting 'Ah, indeed!' and 'Extraordinary!' into the conversation, and saying nothing else."

"But what do you want me to say, mother?"

"Bah! say any thing to show that you have listened to, and thought about, what I told you. Say what you think!"

"Well—I think—suppose she won't have me?"

"She will have you if you ask her."

"Ah, indeed!"

"I shall advise her to do so; and she is so docile now that she will do any thing I advise."

"Extraordinary!"

"There you are again!"

"Well, mother, what *can* I say?"

"Say what you think of all this!"

"Well, I think—suppose the other fellow should turn up with bowie-knives and six shooters?"

"If by 'the other fellow' you mean Arthur Powis, reassure yourself. He is not going to 'turn up.' He is safe enough."

"Ah, indeed!"

"There you go again!"

"Well, mother, what *shall* I say?"

"Whatever you think, stupid! I have told you so a dozen times."

"Well, I think it is all very—extraordinary!"

Mrs. Llewellyn stamped with impatience; but the angry reply that arose to her lips was arrested by the quiet entrance of Gladys.

Gladys, with her face deadly white, and her form clothed in deep black, looked the spectre of her former self.

"Don't forget to kiss her, stupid, when you speak to her," hastily whispered Mrs. Llewellyn, as she left the side of her son, and went to meet Gladys.

"My darling, how are you this morning? Here is your Cousin James, so anxious to see you and pay his respects," said Mrs. Llewellyn, as she took the hand of Gladys, and led her toward the fire.

"How do you do, Cousin Gladys? I am sorry to see you looking so badly," said Mr. Stukely, snatching up the hand that Mrs. Llewellyn had let go, and making as if he would kiss her; but Gladys drew back, and Mr. Stukely had not the impudence to follow up.

Mrs. Llewellyn frowned on him, and then rang the bell for the coffee to be brought in.

Gladys did not speak; she looked vacantly from the mother to the son, and then sank languidly into her place at the table.

Mrs. Llewellyn and Mr. Stukely took their places. The coffee was brought in, and breakfast began.

Mrs. Llewellyn filled out a cup and handed it to her ward.

Gladys took it, but her hand trembled excessively, and cup and coffee fell from it to the floor.

"How very nervous you are this morning, my dear!" said Mrs. Llewellyn, in a tone that she wished to make compassionate, but only succeeded in making querulous, as she rang the bell.

Ailie, as by previous arrangement with Gladys, answered the summons.

"Bring a fresh cup and saucer here, and then pick these pieces of broken china and wipe up the slop," said Mrs. Llewellyn.

When her orders were obeyed, she filled out a second cup of coffee, which with her own hands she placed safely before Gladys.

And the breakfast proceeded without further interruption.

"The day is so fine and bracing, that I think you had better take a drive this morning, Gladys. What do you say?" inquired the lady.

"If you please, Aunt Jay."

"It will do you good. Your cousin will drive you in the buggy with great pleasure, I know."

"Certainly," said Mr. Stukely.

"Do you know, James, that Gladys has not taken a drive once since her return home."

"Ah, indeed!"

"No; she has done nothing but mope about the house."

"Extraordinary!"

"You must try to rouse her."

"Certainly."

"Gladys, my dear," said Mrs. Llewellyn, as they all arose from the table, "you had better go to your room and get ready. We will have the carriage at the door in half an hour."

"Yes, Aunt Jay," said Gladys, leaving the room like one walking in her sleep.

Gladys went to her chamber and obediently put on her bonnet and cloak and sat down by the window to wait. But she had not really the slightest intention to take a tête-à-tête drive with James Stukely.

Presently Mrs. Llewellyn entered the chamber, bringing a glass of wine in her hand.

"Here, my dear, you were so nervous at breakfast this morning, that you seem to require something to settle your nerves before you go for your drive."

"Thank you, Aunt Jay. Set it on the table, please."

"You will not forget to drink it, my dear?"

"Oh, no, indeed, I shall not forget it."

"My dear, I will send for you as soon as the carriage is ready."

"Thank you, aunt."

"And—you will remember the glass of wine?"

"Oh, yes, I will remember it."

Mrs. Llewellyn left the room. And when she was gone, Gladys arose and took the glass in her hand, saying:

"Oh, yes! I will not forget the glass of wine! I will remember it! I will take good care of it! for I understand it! And some of these days, Mrs. Jay, I may hang you with this glass of wine!"

And Gladys took the glass and poured its contents into a clean vial, corked it tightly and locked it up in her dressing-case. Then she sat down in her chair and began to turn herself to stone as fast as she could.

Meanwhile Mrs. Llewellyn communed with herself:

"I must keep her under the influence of the drug, if I wish to manage her. Already she had begun to recover a little, from not having taken it in her coffee this morning. If I had not given her a dose in the wine, by noon she might have become quite troublesome. I had better make sure that she does not forget to drink the wine, however."

And so, instead of sending for Gladys when the carriage was ready, Mrs. Llewellyn went for her. On entering the chamber her first glance was at the glass.

It was empty.

"All right! Gladys has taken the drug," she thought. Then approaching the chair, she said:

"Gladys, my dear, the carriage is ready."

No answer.

Mrs. Llewellyn stooped and looked at her.

Gladys was sitting back in her chair and staring vacantly out of the window.

"Gladys, my love, the carriage is waiting."

No answer.

Mrs. Llewellyn laid her hand on the girl's shoulder and gently shook her, saying:

"Gladys! Rouse yourself! Do you hear me? Your cousin is waiting to drive you out."

No answer.

"Oh, dear, I have given her an over-dose, I do suppose! Or else, perhaps, its administration in wine has caused it to act more promptly and powerfully. Gladys! Gladys, my dear!" exclaimed the lady, shaking her ward roughly.

But not one word, good, bad or indifferent, could she get from the statue.

"I have given her an over-dose! I must be more careful for the future. But after all, a fine drive in the fresh air will be the best thing for her, if I can get her to the buggy. Gladys!" said Mrs. Llewellyn, slipping her arm under the arm of the girl and attempting to lift her, hoping that she would mechanically obey the impulse and rise.

But Gladys was a dead weight.

Mrs. Llewellyn dropped her back in the chair, and went to the head of the stairs, and called her son.

Mr. Stukely came sauntering up.

"She is in one of her strange moods. Give me your assistance here, James. If we can raise her to her feet, and lead her down stairs, the fresh air will recover her, and she will still be able to take her drive, which will certainly do her a great deal of good."

Mr. Stukely stared stupidly at the statue-like form of his cousin, and muttered:

"Extraordinary."

"It is not serious, far less dangerous; so you need not be alarmed, James. She is often thus."

"Ah! indeed."

"I wish you to help me."

"Certainly."

"Put your arms under one of hers, while I put mine under the other, and let us see if we cannot get her down stairs, and put her into the buggy."

They made the effort; but Gladys was such a lifeless burden, that Mr. Stukely dropped his half of it, and said:

"It's no go. She's not fit."

"What do you mean? Yes, she is. The drive will do her good."

"She's not fit to go; I can't take her," said Mr. Stukely.

"I tell you she will revive the moment she gets into the air, and she will quite recover when she begins to feel the motion of the carriage."

"I can't risk it."

Mr. Stukely was in one of his obstinate fits, and Mrs. Llewellyn knew that she might just as well attempt to move Mount Rock as to move him. She sent him out of the room, and soon followed him, leaving Gladys to recover at her leisure.

Gladys condescended to come gradually to life in the course of the forenoon. She joined the family circle at dinner. And as she felt well assured that Mrs. Llewellyn would not attempt to dose her a second time that day, she ate her dinner freely and without the fear of poison before her eyes.

Gladys acted skilfully—adroitly evading every attempt of Mrs. Llewellyn to administer a sedative or to force her into a tête-à-tête with James Stukely. And in the absence of the deadly drug, her mind rapidly regained its healthy tone.

But in the same proportion that her intellect recovered

power, and her will strength, her anxiety and distress at her husband's mysterious disappearance and prolonged absence revived and increased. She remembered, however, that a man of Arthur Powis's rank and profession could not disappear from the world without creating the greatest sensation, and setting on foot the most diligent investigation. She remembered also that she had been enticed away from the city, and entrapped into this remote country-house, before she had any opportunity of joining in the search for her missing husband.

And so she resolved to write to certain parties in Washington. She wrote to the Secretary of the Navy, and also to the captain of the Neptune, entreating them to inform her what, if any, intelligence had been received of the missing lieutenant. And she intrusted the letters written to Ailie, to be posted at Standwell.

She knew that more than a week must elapse before she could hope for answers; and she resolved to bear the suspense as well as she could. But as day followed day without bringing her any comfort, her anxiety and distress increased. And the most difficult part of her acting was to conceal from the lynx eyes of Mrs. Llewellyn this growing mental anguish, that must certainly, if perceived, have aroused that lady's mind to a suspicion of the truth.

Meanwhile Christmas day drew near—Christmas day, which Mrs. Llewellyn had resolved to desecrate with the forced nuptials of her ward with her son.

In every thing, except one, Gladys was all apathetic docility; and Mrs. Llewellyn believed her to be still under the influence of the drugs which she supposed that she daily administered, but which Gladys always contrived to evade. That one thing to which Gladys would not submit was the marriage engagement to James Stukely. To every other proposition she answered, indifferently, "Yes," "if you like," or "Just as you please." But to this one she always replied, "No," "I will not," or "I'll die first."

"It is very provoking," said Mrs. Llewellyn to her promising son. "I can get her to do any thing in the world I ask her to do except to consent to marry you."

"Extraordinary," said Mr. Stukely.

"But never mind! The preparations for the wedding shall go on all the same as if she had consented, and when all is ready I will dress her, and lead her down before the parson. And she will obey mechanically, and be married before she knows it."

"Not if I know it, she wont," said Mr. Stukely.

"Why? what now?" demanded his mother.

"I want her to love me first."

"To love you, you stupid blockhead! What difference does it make whether she loves you or not?"

"A good deal to me."

"Do you love *her*, then?"

"Yes, I do."

"Well, then, I will tell you this for your comfort, James, that twelve months after marriage it does not matter in the least degree whether the couple have married for love or for convenience."

"Ah, indeed?"

"No; because in twelve months after marriage, by the mere process of living together, the love of those who married for love will have *cooled down* to friendship; and in the same space of time the indifference of those who married for convenience, will, by the same process, have *warmed up* to friendship."

"Extraordinary."

"And I will tell you another thing: people that marry in positive dislike to each other, often love after marriage."

"Do they though, now, really?"

"Yes; and such will be the case with you and Gladys."

"I don't dislike her, but she does me, I know."

"She wont dislike you after marriage."

"If I thought that I would risk it."

"You may take your mother's word for it, my son. I know women, and I know Gladys more than all women."

"Extraordinary"

CHAPTER XXII.

THE FOILER FOILED.

Do I not in plainest truth

Tell you—I do not and I cannot love you.—*Shakspeare.*

Repulse upon repulse met ever—

He gives not o'er, tho' desperate of success.—*Milton.*

MRS. LLEWELLYN kept her word, and vigorously pushed forward the preparations for the wicked wedding.

A special license was procured. The services of the Reverend Mr. Kellogg, an old, imbecile, and superannuated minister of the gospel, who had long retired from the pulpit, were engaged. And the ceremony was arranged to be performed in the drawing-room of Kader Idris, at an early hour on the morning of Christmas day.

Mrs. Llewellyn's motives in the selection of time, place, and minister, were obvious. In the privacy of their secluded home, where few ever now intruded; and on the forenoon of Christmas day, when all the rest of the world would be at church, they would surely be safe from observation and interruption—a desideratum "devoutly to be wished," in case, at the last moment, Gladys should break out into open rebellion. And the doting old minister, pleased to the soul to be unexpectedly called upon once more to perform one of the pleasantest duties of his profession, was too blind, deaf, and credulous, to be dangerous. He would entertain no dark suspicions, ask no ugly questions, and make no public scandal, under any circumstances whatever. At least, so thought Mrs. Llewellyn.

On the morning of Christmas eve, every thing was ready.

In the evening of the same day, Ailie went up into her young mistress's room and locked the door on the inside. Then, using her long-accorded privilege, she drew a low chair to her mistress's feet, sat down on it, and said:

"I done been trying to get a chance to come and talk with you all this day, Miss Gladys, honey, but I aint been able to slip away from the madam until now. And now, Miss Gladys, I gwine ax you good—how far you gwine let this cussed-in-fun-nally nonsense—begging your pardon—go on?"

Gladys smiled ambiguously, but did not at once reply.

"Honey, does you know how every thing is ready?"

"Is it, Ailie?"

"I believe you, honey! You aint been down stairs to-day, so you aint seen nothing."

"I have not been well, and Mrs. Jay has graciously allowed me to keep my room."

"Yes, honey; she told we-dem down stairs as it was the proper thing for you to do; and as all brides kept themselves precluded the day before marridge! But that wasn't what I was a-going to tell you, honey. I was a-going to tell you what they has been a-doing of down stairs. First of all, they've depredated the drawing-room most beautiful with all the flowers out'n the greenhouse."

"I am afraid they have depredated the *greenhouse* to *decorate* the drawing-room," smiled Gladys.

"Well, yes, I believe it *was* deck-o-rate; though why they should call it 'deck,' seeing it aint a ship, I don't know! And they've set—*sich* a breakfast-table in the dining-room! with a pound-cake on it about a yard a half high; which whoever heard of pound-cake for breakfast! I do think how the old madam is getting lunny!"

"I believe pound-cakes are usual at wedding breakfasts, Ailie."

"Well, I think it's contemptu-ous. But that's nyther nere nor there! Well, an I Mr. Jim Stuke's wedding-suit

is come home—which it is blue broadcloth, lined with white satin, and with 'broidered blue silk buttons!"

"How fine!" smiled Gladys.

"Yes! and yourn has come, which it is white satin, trimmed with white lace flounces, with a white vail and wreath. And which the ole madam was just about to have it fotch up to you, to see it tried on herself, when lo! and behold! who should drive up but that 'ere doty ole parson; Mr.—Mr.— I forget his ugly name."

"What doty ole parson, Katy?"

"Him as was bespoken to for to 'form the marridge sirrimony; which much good may it do him! Mr.—Mr.— Lord, chile, *you* know who I mean—him as was superambulated out'n the pulpit for being too old to preach, about ten years ago, come next Easter—which it was the first time as ever I heard tell as ole age was a sin in any body let alone a minister."

"Oh, you mean Mr. Kellogg."

"Yes, honey, Mr. Kill-hog, and a pretty name *that* is for a reverunt parson! Well, anyways, he's come over night so as to be here airly enough in the morning. And the ole madam she showed him the license, and I seen her do it."

"What did he say, Ailie?"

"Well, he read it to hisself, he did so; and he said, says he, 'A hum-hum.' And 'a ha-ha.' And the old madam says, says she, 'Quite so, sir; you are quite right.' And then I come away; for I was perfectly misgusted to hear how that poor old fellow hummed and ha'd and driveled, and how that ole cuss—begging your pardon, Miss Gladys—fooled and flattered of him. And then I took the opportunity, which it is the first one I have had this live long day, to come up here and talk long o' you."

"It was thoughtful of you, Ailie."

"And now, honey, I axes of you ag'in, *good*, and I wants you to answer me—How long you gwine let this funnelly foolishness go on?"

Again Gladys smiled dubious'v as she answered:

Again Gladys smiled dubiously as she answered:

"Just so long as I please, Ailie, and no longer. I have told Mrs. Llewellyn that I will not marry James Stukely; but I have told her so without excitement, and so she does not believe that I am in earnest. She thinks from my calmness that I am still under the influence of her accursed drugs; still indifferent; still apathetic to fatuity; and that if she should give me an extra dose at the last hour she will be able to fool me into doing exactly what she wishes. Well, I will humor her to a certain extent. I will allow her to deceive herself. I will allow her to take me before the minister. But then, Ailie, you will see what will happen!"

"Honey, I wouldn't let things go as far as that. 'Deed wouldn't I. It's dangerous play venturing *too nigh* the edge o' the prissypess, and that I tell you—good!"

"I can take care of myself, Ailie?"

"Well, honey, I aint so dead sure 'bout that; so I shall pray hard to-night as the Lord will take care of you. Laws-a-mercy! if there aint the ole madam a-coming out'n the parlor now; and I dessay as she's a making right for this here room, so I must run away," said Ailie, making good her retreat.

Mrs. Llewellyn soon after entered, followed by one of the younger maid-servants bearing the bridal-dress.

"Here, my dear, I wish you to try this on," said the lady.

Gladys arose with a smile, divested herself of her mourning robes, and allowed her aunt to array her in bridal costume, placing the veil over her head and the wreath on her brow.

"The effect is beautiful," said the lady, leading her docile ward up to a tall dressing-glass. "Look, my dear!"

Gladys glanced at the reflection of her form in the mirror and smiled—a strange, ambiguous, threatening smile, if Mrs. Llewellyn could have read it aright.

"You will be reasonable now, my dear, I hope, and reconcile yourself to a measure in which your honor and happiness are concerned. Will you not?"

"I will do almost any thing you wish me to do, Aunt Jay."

"That is right. That is the way in which I like to hear you speak."

"What is it you wish me to do now?"

"Nothing now. Something to-morrow. Good-night, love," replied Mrs. Jay, kissing her.

"She is coming to life again. She is asking questions. I must give her a heavier dose to-morrow," said the lady, as she left the room.

A brighter Christmas day than that on which the wicked wedding was arranged to take place never dawned. A heavy snow had fallen during the night and covered the ground thickly with a bridal mantle of pure white. Toward morning the sky had cleared off very cold, and the frost had adorned every tree and bush with crusted clusters of pearls and diamonds, so that when the sun arose the whole scene was lighted up with dazzling splendor.

Within the house all was bustle and preparation. The members of the household were early astir. In the drawing-room a white marble table was arranged and decorated as an altar; and the "church service," the marriage license, and the wedding-ring laid ready upon it. In the dining-room a luxurious breakfast was prepared for a small party. And in the little morning-room a preliminary meal was laid for three—Mrs. Llewellyn, Mr. Kellogg, and Mr. Stukely.

Within the chamber of Gladys all continued dark and still. She had not been able to compose herself to sleep until long after midnight, and when she did so she slept until a late hour in the morning. It was ten o'clock when she rang her bell.

Ailie answered the summons, bringing with her a tray upon which was arranged a delicate and tempting repast.

"Here, honey. I done outwitted the ole madam this morning. I done got your breakfast with my own hands 'fore she came down, so as to have it ready to put on the tray and fetch right up to you the minute you rung your

bell, afore she could send you up any poisoned truck. And, fortinit, she is at the present moment of time in her own room a-dressing for the sirrimunny. And so now, honey, you can 'joy of your eating 'dout the fear o' being p'isoned,' said Ailie, as she sat the tray upon the stand.

"I thank you, Ailie; you are very thoughtful," said Gladys, as she arose. She bathed her face and hands, threw on a dressing-gown, and sat down to drink her chocolate.

"Now, honey, you know when ole madam sends up *her* fixed-up breakfas' for you you can just let her know, quiet like, as you have been beforehand with her."

"Yes, Ailie. Oh, how long is this state of things to last? How long must I eat and drink, and even sleep, in the constant fear of treachery?"

"Lord knows, honey, for I don't. I gwine to ax for a holiday this precious Christmas day as ever was, and I gwine over to Standwell to see if there is any letters for you in the pos'-office."

"Thank you, Ailie. Oh, do, do; this suspense is horrible."

"Think I don't know that? But don't fret more'n you can help, honey; it don't do no good. Eat your wittles and live in hopes of hearing good news."

"I will try to do so, Ailie. You need not wait. You may leave these things here. They will prove to Mrs. Jay that I have forstalled her."

"Very well, honey. Ring when you want me ag'in," said Ailie, as she left the room.

Not long after Mrs. Llewellyn entered the room. She was beautifully dressed in a lavender-colored moire-antique, with a black lace mantel. She was followed by her own maid bearing a well-covered tray.

"Good morning, my dear. I hope you rested well last night. Here is your breakfast. Set it down, Maria."

"I thank you, Aunt Jay; but I have breakfasted already. See there," said Gladys, pointing to the litter of her meal.

"Ailie is too officious. What did she bring you here? Chocolate! that is very improper in your delicate state of health! much too heavy! Here! Maria, take all these things away, and then come back and help to dress your young lady," said Mrs. Llewellyn, in a tone of vexation.

The girl did as she was bid; and after removing both breakfast services, and laying out all the bridal finery, she stood waiting further orders.

"Come, Gladys, it is time to dress yourself, my love."

"Well Aunt Jay, I will dress. I will do any thing you wish me to do—except one."

"You will do all that is right, my dear. But you look pale. I must bring you a glass of wine to give you some strength before you begin," said Mrs. Llewellyn, leaving the room for the expressed purpose.

Gladys looked after her with a bitter smile, and then walked slowly up to the fireplace and leaned her elbow on the mantle-shelf. There was a design in the attitude that Gladys took.

Presently Mrs. Llewellyn came, bringing a large glass of port wine, which she put into the hands of her ward, saying:

"Drink it my dear, it will revive you."

"Wine often does revive me when I am faint. What a fine bouquet this has," said Gladys, receiving the glass, putting it to her nose, and inhaling the aroma with apparent satisfaction.

Mrs. Llewellyn, little suspecting the purpose of Gladys, turned away to arrange some of the bridal finery.

Gladys continued to sniff at the wine, (which of course she knew to be drugged,) and to watch the motions of Mrs. Llewellyn as they were reflected in the mantle glass. Presently she saw Mrs. Llewellyn turn her back and stoop over the bridal dress to do something to it. Then in an instant, Gladys poured the contents of the wineglass into the ashes under the grate, and raised the empty glass to

her lips and pretended to drain it just as Mrs. Llewellyn turned again.

"Come dear, are you ready?"

"Yes, Aunt Jay."

Now commenced a skilful piece of acting. Gladys seated herself in her dressing-chair, and became perfectly quiescent while they tortured her straight black hair into ripples and plaits, and while they pearl-powdered and rouged her pure pale face. And when they told her to stand up and have her dress put on, she obeyed like an automaton. The vail and wreath were added; the gloves slipped on; the bouquet placed in her hand; and she was pronounced to be ready.

"And now, my darling girl, you will go down to be married—will you not?" whispered Mrs. Jay.

"Oh yes, Aunt Jay, I will go down to be married," replied Gladys, heavily. "But I will not be married after I get down, for all that," she added mentally.

"It is all right. The drug works. She will now do all that she is told to do," said Mrs. Llewellyn to herself.

Maria opened the door and held it open.

Mrs. Llewellyn led Gladys forth.

Mr. Stukely was waiting in the passage to receive her.

"Take her on your arm, James, and lead her down stairs," said Mrs. Llewellyn.

Mr. Stukely advanced and drew Gladys' arm within his own, saying, as he did so:

"Cousin, I don't quite know as a fellow is doing right in marrying a girl when he don't even know whether a girl likes a fellow or not."

"Never mind!" said Gladys, sleepily.

"Well, if *you* don't mind, I am sure I needn't."

"All right."

"Oh, if it is all right, enough said. Come along!"

And Mr. Stukely drew the arm of Gladys within his own and led her down stairs

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE MARRIAGE SCENE.

*If you oblige me suddenly to choose,
My choice is made—and I must you refuse.—Dryden*

THE lower hall was lined with the servants of the family, all in their holiday clothes, assembled to witness the marriage. They were drawn up on either side, leaving a way free for the bride and bridegroom to pass. There was not one smiling face among them. All were grave; some were tearful. Ailie stood near the drawing-room door, where she could see all that was going on.

Stukely led Gladys through this array of domestics on into the drawing-room.

There was no one in the room except the Reverend Mr. Kellogg, who stood immediately before the marble table that had been arrayed and decorated as an altar.

Stukely led Gladys up before the minister.

Mrs. Llewellyn followed, and stood behind them.

The doors had been left open that the servants might witness the marriage.

The minister was a tall, finely-formed, most reverend-looking patriarch, whose mild blue eyes beamed with benevolence, whose fair, noble features were seamed with many wrinkles, and whose long white hair, parted over his forehead, rolled down each side in flowing silvery locks upon his black cassock. He smiled the feeble smile of age upon the young couple before him, and murmured to himself, as if thinking aloud:

"Why, I married her grandmother; and I married her mother; and now to think that I should live to marry her!"

"Extraordinary!" muttered the bridegroom in reply, although nobody had spoken to him.

"Be so good as to commence the ceremony, if you please, sir. My ward is not well, and may not be able to bear the fatigue of standing long," said Mrs. Llewellyn.

The old minister bowed gravely in reply—and then opened the book, and in an impressive voice began to read the preliminary exordium.

Gladys allowed him to proceed until he arrived at these words:

"If any person here present can show just cause why this man and this woman may not lawfully be joined together, let them now declare it, or else forever after hold their peace."

During the short pause that followed, Gladys turned and looked steadfastly into the face of Mrs. Llewellyn; but the eyes of that lady were gravely bent upon the ground.

The minister proceeded with the ceremony. Addressing now the young pair before him, he uttered the solemn adjuration of the ritual:

"I require and charge you both, as ye shall answer at the dreadful Day of Judgment, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, that if either of you know any impediment why ye may not be lawfully joined together in matrimony, ye do now confess it."

"I WILL!" said Gladys, suddenly tearing off her bridal veil and wreath and casting them from her.

The old minister dropped his book and stared with astonishment. Though he had distinctly challenged this interruption, he had not expected it.

The bridegroom muttered, "Extraordinary!"

The servants pressed in from the hall to see what was the matter.

Mrs. Llewellyn laid her hand heavily upon the shoulder of the bride, and in a deep, low, stern voice whispered:

"Gladys! what are you about? Be silent until you are told to speak, and then speak as you are told."

Then turning to the minister, she said aloud:

"Proceed with the ceremony, sir. My ward is only eccentric and capricious; surely you knew that before! It is useless to pay any attention to what she says. Proceed."

"I married her grandmother, I married her mother, and I have lived long enough to marry her, yet never did I experience such an interruption before!" said the old man, appealing generally to the room and furniture.

"Extraordinary!" said the bridegroom.

"Go on with the service, if you please, sir," said Mrs. Llewellyn, who had a confident and commanding way that usually compelled obedience from most persons with whom she had to deal.

The old minister mechanically took up the book to recommence.

"Stop," said Gladys.

And quick as at a military command he stopped.

"Go on, sir!" said Mrs. Llewellyn.

The old man looked helplessly from one speaker to the other.

"Listen to me," said Gladys.

"Proceed with the ceremony," commanded Mrs. Llewellyn.

"But I cannot until I hear what the young lady has to say," pleaded the old man.

Gladys lifted up her head. Excitement had brought back light to her eyes and color to her cheeks and lips. She looked strong, spirited, and beautiful as she spoke.

"You just now, in the words of the ritual, charged us both as we should answer at the dreadful Day of Judgment, if either of us knew any cause why we could not lawfully be united, now to confess it. I will! I have waited long for the opportunity to speak. I gladly embrace it."

"She is mad—perfectly mad! Pray, sir, pay no attention to her ravings, but proceed with the ceremony," said Mrs. Llewellyn.

"But, my good lady, if the young girl is mad, she is incompetent to marry," objected the minister, closing his book and laying it on the table.

"Oh, sir, hear me at least before you judge me. You say you were the friend of my mother and even of my grandmother. Oh! sir, if you were really so, pity and save their orphan child!" pleaded Gladys.

"My dear, you may trust me. I desire nothing more than to do you good," said the old man, mildly. "Though why you should come before me to be married and then suddenly object to the proceedings, of course I cannot imagine.

"Who can imagine the why and wherefore of a lunatic's actions," sneered Mrs. Llewellyn.

"My good madam, if the young lady is a lunatic, you should never have permitted her to place herself in this position."

"Sir, I am no lunatic. You expressed some surprise just now that I should have come before you to be married and then should have objected to the proceedings. Oh, sir, when you have heard the story that I have to tell, you will understand that in doing as I have done lay my only chance of deliverance from persecution and danger. I consented to be dressed in bridal array and led before you as a bride elect, only that I might have this opportunity of disclosing my real situation to one whose very cloth obliges him to be just and merciful. Sir, that lady there, who would force or betray me into a felonious marriage, knows that I am already a wife."

"A wife! She is a raving maniac!" cried Mrs. Llewellyn.

"My good lady, if she is indeed a raving maniac, she is as incompetent to enter into this marriage as if she were already a wedded wife. But let me hear what she has to say. Explain yourself, my child."

Thus encouraged, Gladys commenced, and poured forth to attentive ears the history of her marriage. And so long

as she spoke of the events that had preceded the mysterious disappearance of her husband, and her consequent severe illness at Ceres Cottage, her story was clear, concise, and perfectly consistent, and evidently impressed the old minister with its fidelity and truthfulness. But when she came to talk of her voyage down the Chesapeake in search of her husband: her adventures at Norfolk; her meeting with Mrs. Llewellyn; her journey back into Virginia; and her sufferings at Kader Idris under the influence of drugs administered by Mrs. Llewellyn, her narrative grew obscure, rambling, and often contradictory, so that the old minister was shaken in his faith.

There were many good reasons for this difference in the style of the poor girl's narration. The events that had preceded the disappearance of her husband had all transpired while she was yet sound in mind and body. The events that followed had all happened while she was ill, imperfectly convalescent, or under the influence of stupefying drugs. Therefore, her remembrance of the first epoch was perfectly distinct, while her recollection of the second was very obscure. Another difficulty in the second part of her narrative was this—that while speaking of the drugs that had been administered to her, she felt in honor bound to refrain from exposing the agency of Ailie in discovering the teachery.

But the old minister, not having the key to the mystery, simply thought that Gladys *was* a little touched in the brain.

"Well, sir," said Mrs. Llewellyn, as soon as Gladys had finished her narrative, "and what do you think of that?"

"I do not know what to think, madam, except this, that the young lady is not a proper subject for matrimony, and that, therefore, I must decline to perform the ceremony," said the minister, gravely.

"As you please, sir. But now, as you have lent a very attentive ear to this girl's insane imaginings, I require you

to listen to my explanation of them," said Mrs. Llewellyn, haughtily.

"That is but just, madam," answered the minister.

"Oh, I say, look here! If there is to be another long story, let's all sit down. Standing so long is very wearisome, and cousin Gladys is ready to drop," said Mr Stukely.

This proposition was too reasonable to be opposed.

The old minister immediately took the hand of Gladys, and with the stately courtesy of the olden time, led her to an easy-chair, and placed her in it. And all seated themselves.

Mrs. Llewellyn commenced her defence.

It was a cruel story that she told of Gladys and Arthur. She represented Gladys as a wilful and imprudent girl, who had always given her parents the greatest anxiety and distress. And she spoke of Arthur as an idle and unprincipled fortune-hunter, who had basely betrayed the hospitality of General Llewellyn by winning the affection of his daughter. She spoke of their marriage as a disgraceful elopement which had ended in the dishonor of her ward. She said that she had followed Gladys to rescue her if possible from a life of infamy; that she had found the miserable girl living among low people—deserted, ill, and nearly dying. She related that, upon subsequent investigation, she had discovered that the shameless villain who had eloped with Gladys had abandoned her, flying, it was supposed, from a threatened prosecution for bigamy by the friends of his real wife, for he was already a married man; that she herself had seen and conversed with his wife. She said that after a great deal of trouble she had succeeded in getting Gladys safely home again. But that her sorrows had so shaken her nervous system as to threaten, if not to involve her reason; that she, Mrs. Llewellyn, was not willing to expose family secrets of so painful a nature by calling in a physician; but that she had "ministered to the mind dis-

eased" as her experience best taught her to do; and that this gave rise to the story of the drugs. She said further that at length she had confidently consulted a physician upon the case of her unfortunate ward, and that the physician had advised a speedy marriage for the girl. And also that Gladys, previous to her elopement, had been the promised bride of her son, James Stukely; that this union had been a favorite project with both the girl's deceased parents; and that as neither herself—Mrs. Llewellyn—nor her son, Mr. Stukely, had considered Gladys criminal in the matter of the false marriage into which she had been betrayed, they had decided to pardon the past and proceed with the present marriage; that the girl had agreed to the proposal; and that it could be only from the caprice of an insanity much more serious than she had ever suspected, that Gladys so suddenly, at the very last moment changed her mind.

"And now, sir," said Mrs. Llewellyn, in conclusion, "I hope that I have sufficiently refuted the insane charges of my misguided ward."

"I do not know what to think of all this, madam. I must take time to reflect. But of one thing I am sure, that the young lady is no fit subject for matrimony, and that therefore I have no further business here," said the feeble old man, rising and preparing to depart.

"Oh, sir!" exclaimed Gladys, starting up and clasping her hands in agony. "Do not quite desert my cause! It was not for this that I came before you! It was to appeal to you for help, for deliverance! There must be some power, somewhere, that is able to free me from the control of a false guardian! There is an Orphans' Court, is there not? Oh, sir, only try to procure for me a hearing from the Orphans' Court, and I will thank and bless you forever."

"My good child," said the old man, doubtfully, "I married your grandmother, and I married your mother, and I

almost married you. And I would do any thing in reason for you; for I pity you very much. But in this case, I really do not know how to proceed. On the one hand, it seems only just that an orphan girl should have a hearing before the Orphans' Court if she should desire it, for that court was established for her benefit. But then, on the other hand, it seems insulting to this lady to appeal from her authority; for she is a lady of the highest standing in character and position, and she is the guardian selected for you by the will of your late lamented parents. And as such you are bound to obey her. I think, my dear child, that you had better submit yourself to her guidance; for she really seems to have your interests very much at heart—yes, even to the extent of taking you for her daughter-in-law, notwithstanding misfortunes that might have precluded any less just and generous woman from doing so. Be patient, my child. It is all for your good."

"For my good? For my good to be separated from my own true husband! for my good to be drugged until my heart and brain are both so softened that I have neither will nor intellect enough to save me from crime and ruin! For my good to be forced or betrayed into a felonious marriage with a half idiot! If you consider these things for my good, Mr. Kellogg, you may go away and forget me; but otherwise, in the name of Heaven and by the love you bore my parents, I adjure you, I implore you, intervene to save me! procure me a hearing before the Orphans' Court," exclaimed Gladys, dropping on her knees and seizing the hands of the minister in an agony of supplication.

"You distress me beyond measure, my dear child. These are but sickly fancies of yours. Your guardian is your friend. The medicines she gives you are to soothe your mind and heal your body. The marriage she proposes for you is to repair the wrongs done you by another. Your mother, your guardian-angel, could do no more for you than this excellent aunt is doing. Submit yourself to her,"

said the old man, trying to raise the unhappy girl to her feet.

"Oh, Father Almighty! is there no help in earth or heaven!" cried Gladys, sinking down overwhelmed by despair.

"Sir," said Mrs. Llewellyn, "this must be a very painful scene to you. And as your presence only serves to excite my poor ward, perhaps you had better withdraw and leave her with me."

"Gladly, madam. Poor girl! Poor girl!"

"Of one thing I must beg to caution you, sir. It is, not to say any thing of the mad story told you by this unhappy girl; nor even of the true story related to you in confidence by myself. In fact, I beg that you will not mention any thing that has transpired here to-day. For it is very painful to have family affairs canvassed by the gossips of the neighborhood," said Mrs. Llewellyn.

"I understand you, madam, and I will be discreet. Poor girl! Poor girl! I married her grandmother, and I married her mother, and I had nearly married her! And to think it has come to this!"

And mauldering on in this way, the doting old parson departed, leaving Gladys once more in Mrs. Llewellyn's sole power.

CHAPTER XXIV.

RELENTLESS PERSECUTION.

You may as well go stand upon the beach,
And bid the main flood bate his usual tide;
You may as well use question with the wolf,
Why he hath made the ewe bleat for her lamb;
You may as well bid the mountain pines
To wave their high tops and to make no noise
When they are fretted with the gusts of Heaven,
You may as well do any thing most hard,
As seek to soften that (than which what's harder?)
"A selfish woman's heart."—*Shakspeare.*

GLADYS was down on the floor, with her arms thrown over the seat of a chair, her face bowed upon them, and her long black hair, escaped from its comb, floating over her white dress. She was moaning and weeping piteously.

The mortified bridegroom was seated on a corner of the sofa, leaning back, pulling fretfully at his scanty yellow moustache and muttering to himself:

"Extraordinary!"

Mrs. Llewellyn was walking up and down the floor, with contracted brows, fixed eyes and compressed lips, in moody silence.

This state of affairs continued for some minutes, when at length Mrs. Llewellyn caught sight of the crowd of servants still lingering with open eyes and ears to see and hear all that should be done and said. She strode toward them haughtily, saying:

"Leave the hall, every one of you, and go about your business. There is a spy and traitor among you; but I will find out who it is, and punish the culprit severely."

The abashed servants all withdrew, except Ailie, whom keen anxiety for her young mistress's safety kept still loitering near the door. But Mrs. Llewellyn clapped the door in her face and turned the key.

The affronted bridegroom was the next to move and speak

"As I'm not wanted, I had better go, too," he said, rising and yawning and stretching his limbs.

"Go where?" curtly demanded Mrs. Llewellyn, turning upon him.

"Out for a ride. To the village. Anywhere."

"I should think you would not care to be seen in public after your repulse of to-day," sneered Mrs. Llewellyn.

"Ah, indeed!" observed Mr. Stukely.

"I should think not."

"Well, then, I will go and see the horses and the hounds."

"You will please to stay where you are, James Stukely. I wish to consult with you."

"Ah, indeed," said Mr. Stukely, resuming his seat and the occupation of pulling his moustachios. "Extraordinary."

"But first help me to lift this helpless bundle of weakness and folly and carry her to her room."

"Better call a servant," suggested Mr. Stukely.

"No! Henceforth I shall be the only servant to wait on her!"

"Extraordinary!"

"Come! take one of her arms while I take the other."

Between them they lifted Gladys to her feet. But she no sooner stood up and met the baleful green eyes of Mrs. Llewellyn than some powerful reaction from despair gave her strength and she pushed the evil woman violently from her, exclaiming:

"Devil! don't dare to lay a finger on me, lest I fly at you and strangle you with these hands of mine! Poisoner! there shall come an awful day of reckoning between us yet! Felon! you have broken every law of God and man! But be sure, the retribution will overtake you which shall consign you to a prison—to the scaffold!"

The strength lent by excitement to the feeble is short-lived. Almost immediately after this outburst, the tran-

sient flush faded from the cheeks of Gladys, the flashing fire died out of her eyes, and pale and faint she leaned upon the shoulders of Mr. Stukely, breathing rather than speaking the words:

"James Stukely, help me to my room. You are the more honest of the two."

Mr. Stukely, who had stood with his mouth wide open, too astonished to exclaim "Extraordinary," obeyed with a jump.

Mrs. Llewellyn opened the door for them to pass through and then followed them as they went up stairs.

"Cousin Gladys," said Mr. Stukely, "it was not my fault. I didn't know that you didn't want to marry me. I thought all girls wanted to marry."

Gladys made no reply.

"I wouldn't have married you against your will. I wouldn't marry the Queen of Morocco against her will—no, not if she wanted me to ever so."

As Gladys made no comment on this contradictory statement, Mr. Stukely began again:

"And so you need not have mortified me so before folks—leading me on to come before the parson with you, and then throwing me off and calling me an idiot and such! I think that treatment was—extraordinary."

"I did what I did, hoping to expose villainy and to save myself. I failed in both objects; and I am sorry if you suffered any mortification in the affair," said Gladys, in a faint voice, as, leaning on the arm of the silly youth, and holding by the balustrades, she contrived to creep up stairs.

"Oh, well, then, we will say no more about it. Only don't bully my mother any more before me, Cousin Gladys; because I shall never know what to do when *you* bully her. If it had been a man that had done so I should have thrashed him, but what can one do in such a case with a lady? But here we are at your door. Shall I take you in?"

"No, thank you. I can get on alone now. Good morn-

ing," said Gladys, withdrawing herself from his support and passing into her room, where she fell upon her bed in the collapse of despair.

Mrs. Llewellyn slipped swiftly up to the door, withdrew the key from the inside, and locked up the room.

Then she beckoned her son to follow her, and she led him back to the drawing-room, the scene of the late commotions.

The first object that attracted their attention was the torn bridal veil and wreath lying upon the floor.

James Stukely took them up tenderly and laid them, with the prayerbook and the bouquet, on the table that had served as an altar. Mrs. Llewellyn noticed the manner in which this was done, and artfully said:

"You feel for your cousin's unhappy condition, my dear James?"

"Yes; but I was angry with her for pitching into you as she did."

"I was not."

"Ah, indeed!"

"Certainly not. Where would be the sense of getting angry at any thing she should say or do? We may be annoyed, but scarcely offended; for, in fact, she *is* not and *ought* not to be held responsible for her words or actions."

"Extraordinary."

"She is partially deranged, as the minister himself perceived."

"Yes; but the minister was inclined to blame us for letting a girl that was partially deranged stand up to be married."

"That was because the minister was a clergyman and not a physician. The most experienced physicians that I have consulted have assured me that the madness of our poor girl has its origin in hysteria, and that marriage will cure her if once she can be persuaded to marry. And you must acknowledge, James, that she has had enough to break down her nerves and make her hysterical: first, the death

of her mother; then the death of her father; then her misplaced attachment to that fortune-hunting villain, Arthur Powis, ending as it did in an elopement, a false marriage, and desertion."

"That's so."

"This hysteria breaks out unexpectedly, as it has done twice to-day—first in her capricious rejection of you at the last moment; secondly, in her extravagant abuse of me. But we must not judge her harshly from these morbid manifestations. We must be patient with her, though she provokes us sometimes. And the first thing that we do must be to remove her far from these scenes that continually remind her of her sorrows. And then we must wait for a few months to elapse; when, at some distance of place and time, the memory of her sorrows will grow fainter, and she will turn from the past to the future. She will forget her first misplaced love, and be ready to be comforted by a second and better based affection. Then you may claim her hand, and with it receive the estates of Kader Idris, which are worth waiting for."

"Yes; but I will never marry Cousin Gladys without her full and free consent, given to me personally. I won't be made such a fool of again."

"You shall have her full and free consent, as you call it."

"And then there's another thing."

"What is that?"

"I must be sure that she was perfectly blameless in that matter of the false marriage. I wouldn't marry a light girl if she was forty times my cousin, with forty thousand Kader Idrises."

"Of course you would not; nor would I sanction such a marriage. But Gladys is blameless of every thing, except disobedience. She still believes herself to have been married."

"And then there's another thing yet."

"What now?"

"I must be certain sure that other fellow won't turn up."

"You may rest assured that he never will."

"Then Gladys is as good as a widow?"

"Yes; you need have no more hesitation in marrying her than you would in marrying some lovely young widow you might fall in love with."

"Then I suppose it is all right, and I have only got to be patient."

"Yes. But we must get her away from this place."

"Where can we take her to?"

"I am thinking of taking her to your old forsaken manor-house."

"What! Forest Lodge?"

"Yes."

"I don't believe there's a habitable room in it."

"We could soon make it sufficiently habitable for our purpose."

"Extraordinary."

"And I must try to effect the removal before your return to college, as I shall require your assistance."

"That's so."

"And now, if you are still desirous of paying a visit to your dogs and horses, you may do so," said Mrs. Llewellyn, rising to break up the conference.

Meanwhile poor Ailie was busily engaged in Gladys' service.

"It is no use axing no favors of the ole madam to-day, 'cause we won't get none. So I just means to give myself a holiday and take my foot in my hand and walk to Standwell to see if there's any letter for my young missus," said Ailie, as she left the drawing-room door after it had been slammed in her face. So she hastened away and caught up her bonnet and cloak and set out on her walk to Standwell before Mrs. Llewellyn had finished her conversation with Mr. Stukely.

The snow was deep on the ground, and no track had been

beaten on the road, so that at every step Ailie's feet sank half a yard down. And this so impeded her progress that it was late in the afternoon before she reached the village, and then, to her excessive disappointment, the day being a high holiday, the post-office was closed. She was told, however, that it would be opened for an hour in the evening, and if she should be disposed to wait she might get her letters, if there were any in the office for her.

Ailie groaned in the spirit, but resolved to wait.

"I shall run the risk of my life going home in the dark, and I shall catch a blowing up when I get there!" she said, as she turned her steps in the direction of the house of an acquaintance, where she intended to remain until the post-office should be opened.

Her perseverance was rewarded. She received two letters, postmarked Washington, and directed to Mrs. Arthur Powis. They had been waiting there two days. If they had been directed to Miss Llewellyn, they would inevitably have been sent to Kader Idris by the regular mail messenger, and would have fallen into the hands of Mrs. Llewellyn. But being directed to "Mrs. Arthur Powis, Post-office, till called for," they remained there snugly waiting the demand of Ailie. And Ailie, having received them safely, set off joyfully on her return home.

A little frightened she was at the long, dark, wintry road; a little troubled also at the reception she expected from her mistress; but her delight in having the letters to carry to Gladys overcame all other emotions, and she jogged merrily on through the snow until she reached Kader Idris. It was very late.

The house was shut up, and the family had gone to bed. Of all the servants only Lem stopped up to let the truant in. She went around to the kitchen door, where she saw a light burning, and rapped.

Lem opened the door.

"Oh! wont you catch it neither, Aunt Ailie. The ole

madam is mad as hop. She's been 'quiring for you all over the house," said Lem, grinning.

"So I 'spected. Well, thank goodness gracious alive, she can't kill me! And any thing short of killing I have airned this day. But I say, Lem! can't you climb up to the pantry window, and get through it, and open the front door to let me in that way, 'cause I has got two letters for Miss Gladys, which I wish to 'liver to her to-night, not only to 'lieve her s'pense, but to insure her getting of them; 'cause you see, chile, the old madam might 'vent me from going up-stairs to-morrow."

"Well, you know it is burglary; but I'll do it for Miss Gladys, or you either, Aunt Ailie."

"How can it be burglary, when it is Miss Gladys' own house, and you are a-getting into it to 'liver Miss Gladys' own letters, you stupid donkey, you!"

"Well, I said I'd do it, so you needn't bully me, Aunt Ailie," grumbled Lem, as he unlocked the pantry door, of which, as butler, he kept the key, and climbed through a back window communicating with the dining-room, and so entered the front of the house, and opened the hall door to admit Ailie.

Gladys, since entering her chamber that morning, lay upon the bed, half stupefied by grief and despair. At the regular meal times Mrs. Llewellyn appeared, attended by the deaf mute, bringing her meals. But Gladys refused food and drink, and declined to speak to or even look at her persecutor.

"It is only a question of time. You will come to your appetite sooner or later, my dear," said Mrs. Llewellyn, as she left the room for the last time that night.

After the departure of her tormentor Gladys arose, undressed herself and went to bed, and lay there, weeping, until a late hour of the night, when she was aroused by the sound of a light rapping at her door.

"Who is there?" she demanded.

"Hush! Miss Gladys; for the Lords's sake, honey, don't speak so loud. I am frightened of my life for fear the ole madam should be a-prowling about and hear us," whispered the voice of Ailie.

Gladys arose softly, went to the door, and inquired:

"What is it, Ailie? Why haven't you been up here to see me before?"

"Honey, I done been to the post-office——"

"Oh! have you got any letters?"

"Yes, honey—two. I went to the post-office 'mediately after the madam slammed the door in my face——"

"Oh, Ailie, give me the letters!"

"Yes, honey; but let me tell you all, how and about it, first. When I got to the post-office it was shet up 'cause it was Christmas, and it wouldn't be open till evening; so I had to wait—which I reckon the ole madam will break my neck for staying out so long. Howsoever, I got the letters, and that was all I cared about."

"Ah, Ailie, Ailie, dear, give them to me!" said Gladys, breathlessly.

"Yes, honey; but you must open the door first. How I gwine give 'em to you through the shut up door!"

"Ah, Ailie, the door is locked on the other side! Mrs. Jay has made a prisoner of me again!"

"What! agin? Well, if I don't hope to the Lord as how *she'll* be made a prisoner in the penitentiary for life in this world, and in purgatory for all eternity in the next! And that's all the harm I wish her. Now, how the debbil—axing your pardon, Miss Gladys—is I gwine to get these letters to you?"

"Ailie, try to slip them under the bottom of the door. I think you can do that."

"Why, so I can. There, then; there they are, honey," said Ailie, easily pushing the thin letters under the door.

Gladys snatched them up and tore them open.

Alas! alas! they contained nothing but disappointment.

Neither at the Navy Department nor at the navy yard had any intelligence been received of Arthur Powis. Both letters informed her of this fact, and also that his name had been stricken from the navy list.

Gladys dropped the letters, covered her face with her hands, sank back in her chair, and prayed for death.

"Any good' news, Miss Gladys?" whispered Ailie, through the keyhole

"Ah, no, no, no, Ailie! no good news," moaned the miserable young wife.

"Oh, don't break your heart about it so, Miss Gladys! The good news will come at last."

"Oh, Ailie, Ailie, this suspense is killing me!"

"Try to bear it, honey. You may hear good news to-morrow."

"Oh, oh, I fear I shall never hear any more!" groaned Gladys.

"What do the letters say?"

"Oh, that no intelligence has been received of him, and that his name has been stricken from the navy list!"

"That is bad—very bad! But Lord, child, while there's life there's hope!"

"Oh, Ailie, yes—while there is life! But who shall assure me that there is life for him?"

"But if he was dead, honey, his body would have been found by this time."

"We do not know that. It might have been sunk in the river. Oh, Heaven, Ailie, such a thought is enough to drive me mad in earnest!" cried Gladys, in a voice full of anguish.

"Don't let it, honey! Whatever you do, keep your wits about you. And 'sider as he is living until you has better reason to think he is dead!"

"But if he is living, Ailie, *where* is he? *what* has become of him?"

"Maybe, honey, a press-gang has taken him away. I have he'rd tel of such things."

"There are no press-gangs now, Ailie! And even if there were, they would never impress a naval officer, you know."

"Well then, honey, I'm dead-stalled! I can't make head nor tail of his absence! But I say to you as I said afore—don't break your heart nor lose your wits, if you can help it! You will 'quire of a stout heart and a clear head to deal long o' Mrs. Jay. And that I tell you good!"

"Oh, Arthur! Arthur! where in the wide world are you this miserable night? On earth, or in heaven? Oh, Arthur! Arthur! Hear me! answer me! answer me!" cried Gladys, wildly yielding to the violence of her grief and anxiety.

"Miss Gladys, don't go on so, honey! Try to 'troll yourself, and don't give way to crazy thoughts! don't now, if you know what's good for you. Marse Arthur can't hear you, nor likewise answer you, so don't keep calling on him in that wild way, 'cause it will only make you worse! Call on your Heavenly Father, Miss Gladys; he only can help you," said Ailie.

But the sound of the violent sobbing of the poor young wife drowned the voice of the comforter. And so, through many hours of the night, Gladys grieved as one without hope, while Ailie sought in vain to soothe her. At length, toward morning, Gladys cried herself to sleep on her bed in her chamber, and Ailie fell into a profound slumber on the mat outside the door. And thus both remained until a late hour of the morning, when Mrs. Llewellyn, coming out of her room, stumbled over the prostrate form of the woman curled up on the mat.

"What are you doing here, you beast?" angrily demanded the lady, giving the woman a very unlady-like kick.

Ailie, startled out of her sleep, picked herself up and stared stupidly about her.

"What are you doing here, I ask you?" sharply repeated Mrs. Llewellyn, giving the woman a push.

It struck the truth out of Ailie, who, taken unawares before she could make up a lie, answered truly:

"I brought some letters from the post-office for Miss Gladys, and I got Lem to let me in to give them to her."

"Very well! I shall settle with you and Lemuel for that! Now take yourself off down stairs, and do not let me find you up stairs again at your peril!"

Ailie was almost superstitiously afraid of Mrs. Llewellyn, and she obeyed promptly.

Poor Gladys! from that day she saw no more of her faithful attendant and only friend. Mrs. Llewellyn, accompanied by her horrible deaf mute, brought her all her meals; and Mrs. Llewellyn's confidential maid kept her room in order. And Gladys, afraid of being drugged, at first refused all food and drink; but she was too young and healthy to starve herself in the sight of food; the cravings of nature were imperative and forced her to eat, even at the risk of injury.

Meanwhile, preparations were commenced for their journey. Mrs. Llewellyn spread a report in the neighborhood to the effect that she was obliged to remove her ward from a scene so fraught with gloomy associations as Kader Idris was, and to take her on a tour through the large cities, in the hope that total change of scene and society might effect a cure of her mental malady. But Mrs. Llewellyn had no idea of taking her victim to any city.

The mansion-house of Kader Idris was shut up. The estate was put into the hands of a sharp manager. And early in January, Mrs. Llewellyn, accompanied by her son, James Stukely, and her deaf mute Jude, conveyed Gladys, more dead than alive, from the old home of her forefathers.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE OLD HOUSE IN THE WOOD.

Unhinged the iron gate half open hung,
Jarred by the gusty gales of many winters;
That from its crumbled pedestal had flung,
One marble globe in splinters.

With shattered panes the grassy court was starred;
The time-worn copping-stone had tumbled after,
And through the rugged roof the sky shone, barred
With naked beam and rafter.—*Thomas Hood.*

If you look upon the map of the United States, you will see a queerly shaped peninsula, lying between the Chesapeake bay and the Atlantic ocean, and comprising the two counties of Worcester, in Maryland, and Accomac, in Virginia. Nothing but the boundary line between the two counties separate the two States.

It was in Worcester county, in Maryland, on the Chesapeake, that the little sea-side village, once called Rogues' Harbor, but now bearing another name, was situated.

And it was but a few miles distant across the boundary line, in Accomac county, Virginia, that the old dilapidated mansion-house that went by the name of Forest Lodge was located. It belonged to the impoverished family of Brant Stukely, of whom James Stukely was now the sole representative. This deserted and forgotten dwelling stood in the midst of a few acres of neglected ground—a ruin in a wilderness. No public road passed near it; and the neighborhood around it was so sparsely settled that few human beings ever approached it; its very existence was ignored, or unknown.

To this desolated home Mrs. Llewellyn, who loved luxury, sent first of all some very comfortable furniture. She sent this by steamboat, in charge of her deaf mute, Jude, who landed it on an obscure part of the Virginia

shore, and conveyed it thence quietly by wagons to the old mansion.

And a week after this Mrs. Llewellyn herself arrived, accompanied by her son, James Stukely, and her confidential maid, Ennis, and having in charge the unhappy young wife of Arthur Powis.

It may seem strange and incredible that any young married woman should submit to such oppressions and outrages as Gladys endured at the hands of Mrs. Llewellyn. But—youthful, friendless, inexperienced, separated from her husband, bowed down by sorrow, and, further, subdued by sedative drugs—what could poor Gladys do?

It was a dreary December night when they arrived at the Forest Lodge. And Gladys entered the doors of the old house as hopelessly, as submissively, as ever condemned criminal passed through the gloomy portals of a prison. For to her there seemed—"No light in earth or heaven."

As soon as they were settled in their new home, Mr. James Stukely departed for the University of Virginia, at Charlottesville. And life at Forest Lodge subsided into the most dreary of all monotonous routines.

The small establishment consisted only of Mrs. Llewellyn, her unhappy ward, and the two servants, Ennis and Jude. The winter proved a very severe one. Early in January a deep snow fell, and a severe frost set in, and the roads were blocked up and travel impeded for many weeks. Nothing could be drearier than the life to which Gladys was condemned. It was rising without hope; eating without appetite; sitting without rest; wandering about the gloomy house without interest or amusement; going to bed without comfort, and sleeping without refreshment; and so dull day succeeded dull day with a horrible sameness; and Gladys was really at length in danger of going melancholy mad. Silently the deaf mute served the meals in the dining-room; sullenly the maid-

servant performed her duties in the bedrooms; surlily Mrs. Llewellyn and Gladys met and parted at the table or the fireside. Not one event worth recording transpired; not a conversation worth repeating happened. And thus the weeks of the great frost passed slowly away.

But if Gladys, depressed by monotony, saddened by bereavement, and tortured by anxiety, did not go mad, it was because she became gradually conscious of a circumstance that filled her heart with a vague delight and invested her life with a deep interest. In a word, she discovered that she was destined to become a mother. And from the time that she became certain of this fact her spirits revived, her appetite returned, and, despite the unpropitious circumstances, she grew almost happy and healthy. For Nature is a tender mother and skilful nurse, and she was doing her best for Gladys.

When, however, Mrs. Llewellyn discovered the condition of the young wife, her own evil mind was stricken with dismay. She thought that all her plans were now frustrated. She dared no longer tamper with her victim by the administration of drugs that under present conditions might endanger life. And the life of Gladys was of all things the most carefully to be cherished until she should be safely married to James Stukely. So the use of the drugs must be discontinued. But then, on the other hand, without the stupefying agency of the drugs Gladys could never be induced to marry James Stukely; or, even if *she* could be brought to consent, Stukely himself, who, with all his weakness of intellect, had still some sense of honor, could never, under the new circumstances, be persuaded to marry her.

For several days after making this important discovery Mrs. Llewellyn was almost in despair. But she was not a woman to be overcome by obstacles. She soon arranged the plan of her new campaign in her war with destiny. She first of all resolved to confine Gladys closely to the premises of Forest Lodge, and to carefully cherish her health;

then to keep Mr. James Stukely at a safe distance, so as to conceal from him a state of affairs with which she was determined he should never be acquainted; then, should Gladys become the mother of a living child, to conceal the fact and make away with the babe as best she could; and then to recommence drugging her victim until she should become stupefied and embruted to a state low enough to admit of her being fooled into a marriage with James Stukely. It was a base plot; but what will not a wicked woman do when instigated by avarice, the basest of passions?

Mrs. Llewellyn carried out nearly all her plans. She wrote to her son, telling him that he must not come home at Easter, because Gladys was still very nervous and excitable, and that the presence of a visitor would disturb her and injure her health. She abandoned the use of drugs upon her patient, and was in all external observances as kind to the poor young creature as it was possible to be.

But Gladys was not again to be deceived by Mrs. Llewellyn. She estimated her new kindness at its real value and thanked her in proportion. The health and spirits of the young wife, however, continued to improve. She dreamed of her coming baby and hoped for her absent husband.

And thus the latest winter days passed away and the spring opened. Gladys amused herself by making pretty little caps and dresses for the expected little stranger. And Mrs. Llewellyn quietly informed herself respecting the physicians of the country, one of whom it might become necessary to call in, in emergency. By means of Jude, the deaf mute, she was made acquainted with the fact that a certain doctor, a very skilful physician from New York, had recently settled at a place called Rogues' Harbor, a few miles distant across the line and on the Chesapeake Bay. Rogues' Harbor was in Maryland, and that Mrs. Llewellyn thought an advantage where secrecy was to be desired. So she resolved, in the event that medical aid should be needed, to call in Doctor W. and fee him liberally and swear him to secrecy.

It was in the midst of a midnight tempest of thunder, lightning and rain that the child of Gladys Powis was born. The young mother had been very ill; and it was only in the latest hour, when her life was in the greatest danger, that the deaf mute was sent through "night and storm and darkness" to bring the doctor to her assistance. Doctor W. arrived in good time. To his superior skill and experience alone under Divine Providence the mother and child owed the preservation of their lives.

Doctor W. divined the character of Mrs. Llewellyn and detected her designs upon the life of the babe; and he was earnestly entreated by the alarmed and unhappy mother to take charge of her child; and tenderly he carried the little creature home and committed it to the care of his wife.

When, two or three days had passed, and Gladys had become impatient for a visit from her kind physician and anxious for news of her absent child, she forced herself to do that which was of all things the most repugnant to her—namely, to question Mrs. Llewellyn.

"Why does not the doctor come and see me?" she inquired.

"He was here this morning while you were asleep. He came up and looked at you; but would not allow you to be waked up, as he said that sleep would do you more good than any thing else. He left you very soon as he had a patient in extremity to visit," replied Mrs. Llewellyn, lying without an instant's hesitation.

"Did he say how my baby was?"

"Yes; it is thriving well. He has procured a healthy wet-nurse for the imp."

"I am very glad!" said the young mother—"Or I should be, if I could place confidence in what you tell me, Mrs. Jay," she mentally added.

But the next day and the day after that passed, and Gladys grew more and more impatient to see the doctor and hear from her child.

"Why does not Doctor—Doctor—I forget his name, or rather I believe I never knew it. Why does he not come to see me?" she asked on the fourth day.

"He was here again this morning while you were asleep. It seems he cannot come at any other hour, but he looked at you and would not permit you to be awakened."

"Oh, dear me, how provoking! Did he speak of my child?"

"Yes; he said it was growing finely."

"Thank Heaven! But now, when he comes next, if I should be asleep, I wish to be waked up, so that I may ask him about my child, and hear from his own lips how she is."

"My dear, he says that he shall not come again; that you are getting along so well as to render his further attendance unnecessary."

"How aggravating that is! Well, I must write to him and ask him to tell me all about my child—where she is, and who has got her; and what sort of a house she lives in, and what sort of a woman the nurse is; and if there are any other children; and a number of particulars that I must be made acquainted with," said the young mother, firmly.

"Well, my dear, you shall write at once," replied the artful woman, who immediately propped Gladys up in the bed, and placed a writing-case before her.

"Stay—what is that doctor's name?—Doctor—Doctor——"

"Doctor Thomas Frorthingham, my dear."

Gladys wrote her letter, filled it with the anxious questionings of an earnest young mother, folded and sealed it, and then, panting, directed and gave it into the hands of Mrs. Llewellyn, to send to the nearest post-office, saying to herself, with a sigh:

"I have no alternative but to trust her, since I have no one else to trust. Oh, I hope she will be honest about this letter, especially as there seems to be no inducement for her to be otherwise."

The next evening Gladys received the forged answer. And this was it:

MY DEAR LADY:—Your note was placed in my hands at the very moment that I had sat down to write to you, to communicate a sorrowful piece of intelligence, which gives me as much pain to write as it will give you to read. Your little babe is no more. It was suddenly seized with convulsions this morning, which, in the course of a few hours, notwithstanding that the utmost skill of medical science was exerted to save it, proved fatal. We attribute its sudden illness and death to some original organic imperfection; though whether the brain, the lungs, or the heart was the most deficient in vital power, nothing short of an actual autopsy could demonstrate. Let me hope that as a Christian woman, you will resign yourself to the will of Divine Providence, and not sorrow "as one without hope" after a little creature, whose early death has saved it from all the temptations, sins and dangers of this world, and ensured to it the purity, bliss and safety of heaven.

I have the honor to be, dear lady;

Your obedient servant,

THOMAS FRORTHINGHAM, M. D.

Gladys dropped the letter, sank back on her pillow, and covered her face with her hands. And soon the tears were seen trickling slowly between her fingers.

Mrs. Llewellyn picked up the letter to read it.

Gladys made no outcry over the death of the babe that she now believed had only been lent her for a few days. After some moments given to silent weeping, she merely looked up and patiently inquired:

"Do you think my baby suffered much?"

"Oh, no, my dear; such little creatures never do. One half of suffering is in the mind, you know. And such have none to speak of."

"But—they cry."

"That is to expand their lungs; nothing else. They are never conscious of suffering."

"I suppose the Lord is too good to let them, then?"

"Yes."

There was silence for a few moments, and then Gladys inquired:

"Do you think they have buried my baby?"

"Oh, no, my dear; they would not venture to do it without letting us know."

"Oh, then, I will go and see it myself."

"My love, that will never do! You are not strong enough to rise from your bed! How could you ever undertake a journey of ten miles over one of the worst roads that ever was seen?"

"Oh, but it seems so cruel! so cruel, not to go!"

"My dear, I will go and see that every thing is done decently and in order. And when you are quite well, you shall go and see the little grave."

With a low, half-suppressed sob, the bereaved young mother sank back again upon her pillow, covered her eyes and wept silently. She had neither the strength of mind or of body any longer to oppose Mrs. Llewellyn.

CHAPTER XXVI.

STARTLING APPARITION.

The marshal and myself had cast
To stop him as he outward past,
But lighter than the whirlwind's blast
He vanished from our eyes,
Like sunbeam on the billow fast
That glances but and dies.—*Scott.*

WHEN Mrs. Llewellyn departed so suddenly from Forest Lodge, she took her unhappy victim directly to New

York in the hope that the wilderness of the city would afford a more secure hiding-place than the wilderness of the woods had done.

She took a furnished house in one of the most crowded streets in central Gotham. And there she secluded her ward in a solitude even more retired than that of Forest Lodge, or of Kager Idris had been.

Here Gladys was consigned to a front chamber on the fourth floor, away up near the top of the house. And as the lower sashes of the windows were guarded like those of a child's nursery, she could not put her head out, or look down into the street below. She could only glance through the upper sashes, at the sky above, or at the tops of the houses over the way.

But yet Gladys did not seem to miss her liberty, or even wish for a more extended prospect. By the continual administration of powerful sedatives she had been reduced to a state of physical and mental feebleness resembling second childhood.

The room to which she was restricted was, however, furnished with every thing that could contribute to the comfort and amusement of a child and an imbecile. In the first place, it was of ample size, well ventilated, and connected with a spacious dressing closet.

Next, in addition to the usual set of sumptuous chamber furniture, it was provided with a fine piano-forte, a harp, a guitar, and even an accordeon. The walls were decorated with bright pictures, and the mantel-shelf was adorned with Dresden china images of beaux and belles, and shepherds and shepherdesses.

But beside these there was one toy which seemed a bitter mockery of the poor bereaved young mother. This was a large, lifed-sized wax-doll baby—one of those productions of French mechanical art that, "by some devilish cantrip strange," was made to shut its eyes when laid down, open them when raised up, and to utter a low cry when squeezed.

This doll was dressed in every particular as a young living infant, and laid in a pretty "berceaunette," or decorated basket cradle.

And although poor Gladys had still reason enough left to know that this doll was not her own living child, yet she was so strangely silly as to lavish upon it a wealth of tenderness and care, as if she imagined that it could benefit by her attention, or suffer by her neglect.

Every morning she dressed it in fine clothes, and sent it out by Ennis for an airing. And every night she undressed it, pressed it to her comfortless bosom, and spent hours in rocking it in a low nursing-chair and singing to it a soft lullaby.

By this time, too, she had been persuaded to believe in her husband's death, and had been familiarized with, if not reconciled to, the idea of her marriage with James Stukely. For on one occasion, when Ennis, who had begun to pity and to love her wronged and helpless charge, said to her:

"Oh, Miss Gladys, how can you kiss and hug an unsensible wax doll as if it was a Christian baby, and could love you for your care?"—the poor young mother answered with the ringing laughter of her earlier girlhood:

"Why, Ennis, if I am to have a wooden head for a husband, why not a wax head for a baby? It is all right, my good Ennis, believe me."

Next to the occupation she found in the care of her "baby," she derived her greatest solace from music. She often sang her favorite songs, accompanying herself on the piano-forte, harp or guitar, as the case required. And often the passengers of the street below would pause to listen to the sublime strains of divine harmony, that seemed the echo of the angels' anthems in heaven, or to the simple trills of delicious melody that seemed showered down from the gladness of some song-bird soaring high in the empyrean.

The stately old-fashioned mansion on the opposite side

of the way was owned and inhabited by a wealthy maiden lady somewhat passed her youth, Miss Wendover. And often she threw open her own windows, and sat within the soft shadows of their lace curtains listening to the plaintive voice of the invisible singer—"the caged bird," as some people called her from her barred windows, and beautiful voice—the "mad lady," as others less poetical suspected and asserted her to be.

But among all—neighbors or passengers—who listened to her music, there was not one who seemed so much spell-bound by her voice as a poor workman who was engaged with many others in building a large hotel on the same street, and who passed under her windows about four times every day on his way to his work and to his meals. Many were the half days' wages this poor fellow was docked of for wasting his employer's time in listening to the invisible, sweet singer; for no matter whether he was on his way to work, or to meat, or how great the pressure of business or of hunger might be, the sound of her voice was enough to arrest his hurrying footsteps and to keep him standing before the house, gaping and staring up into her windows.

On one of these occasions, Mrs. Llewellyn, sitting at her drawing-room windows, within the shadow of the crimson curtains, unseen herself, but seeing every thing that passed, noticed this strange, music-mad laborer, standing on the sidewalk with the hod on his shoulder, gazing up toward her captive's windows.

Something in his air attracted her attention and fixed her regards scrutinizingly upon his figure; but when he raised his old hat from his head, and turned his face a little more toward the light, she uttered a low cry, and sank back in her seat, pale and faint.

A minute after she reached out her hand and touched the bell that brought her maid to her presence.

"Ennis, come here. Stand just here behind the curtain, and look at that man," she said.

"Yes, madam. Which man?"

"The one in the fustian blouse, with the hod on his shoulders, who is standing by the curbstone, looking up at the house. Do you see him?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Ennis, of whom does he remind you?"

"Lord bless us and save us, ma'am!" exclaimed the girl, shrinking back in dismay.

"Look again. Of whom does he remind you, I say?"

"Heaven between us and harm!"

"Ennis, I ask you who that man looks like, and I'll trouble you to answer me."

"Gracious goodness me alive! I beg your pardon, ma'am, but—he looks like the ghost of Master Arthur!"

"Ghost—stuff! But you are right; the likeness is a very striking one. Ennis, go around to the alley-gate and watch that man. When he leaves the spot slip after him and follow him; find out his name, and occupation, and place of abode; and come back and tell me."

"Yes, madam, if—if I can," said the girl, obediently, leaving the room.

"Strange—strange! I never saw such a likeness—no, never in my life. At first I thought that it was the creation of my own imagination; that, like the weak Macbeth, I was growing brain-sick, and seeing 'air-drawn' daggers, and gibbering ghosts! But Ennis saw it, too; and Ennis has no more imagination than a pig. And the way in which he listened to her songs and stared up at her windows! Strange, and passing strange! Can that desperate fool have played me false? Can Arthur Powis be living? But no, no, no; I am mad to think it. For if he were living, he would not leave his wife in my hands for a single hour," murmured Mrs. Llewellyn, as she paced uneasily up and down her sumptuous drawing-room.

At length she stole up to the window again, and peeped through the blinds.

Yes, there he stood, gazing entranced up at the windows of Gladys, and listening, although her singing had ceased. His face was very pale, his cheeks hollow, his eyes sunken, and his forehead was drawn into a deep, dark furrow between the eyebrows, as by intense suffering or profound thought.

While Mrs. Llewellyn gazed, he suddenly started as if from a dream, sighed, shook his head, shifted his hod upon the other shoulder, and dropping his chin upon his breast with an air of dejection, walked on.

Ennis came out of her hiding-place and dogged his footsteps.

Mrs. Llewellyn went away from the window and recommenced her troubled walk up and down the room. And so she continued to pace the floor for nearly an hour, and until the return of Ennis.

"Well, girl?" she then demanded, throwing herself into a chair.

"Well, ma'am, he is a poor, simple, innocent fellow. His name is Billy Simmons, and he is a stonemason's laborer, at work on Miss Wendover's great hotel at the corner of the street," said Ennis, catching her breath.

"Miss—who?"

"Miss Wendover—the rich old maid, ma'am, as lives in the great house opposite of us. She is just been investing of a sight of money in building of a new hotel on the European plan——"

"You exasperating blockhead, what do you suppose I care for Miss Wendover and her investments? Tell me about that strange man."

"Yes, ma'am; I did tell you. I followed him all the way to the hotel, where the men were all at work; and I heard the foreman say to him, 'You're behind time again, Billy; mind, I shall dock you a quarter of a day's wages.' And the man said, 'All right, sir.' And he went to fill his hod with mortar. And then, ma'am, I went up to the fore-

man and said, says I: 'Who is that fellow, sir, as has been annoying of us by standing before the house a-staring up into our front windows?' And says the foreman, says he: 'Oh, you mustn't mind any thing he does; he is a poor, half-witted creature, who means no harm, and hasn't an idea beyond carrying of a hod. But I'll look after him, and prevent him from troubling you again.' Then, 'What is his name, sir?' I asked. 'Oh—Billy Simmons; he's soft, you know, my girl; you must not mind him. But, any way, he shall not trouble you again.' And then, ma'am, I thanked the foreman and came away."

"Very well. You have done very well, indeed, Ennis. Now, I wish you to watch until that man goes by again in returning from his work, and I wish you to watch him home, and find out where he lives."

"Very well, ma'am."

"And Ennis——"

"Yes, ma'am."

"You may take that black silk dress of mine, with the huckle trimmings, and make it over for yourself."

"Thank you very much, indeed, ma'am."

"You may go now."

Ennis courtesied and left the room.

That evening, when Ennis was missed, her mistress only knew where she was gone. At six o'clock, when she saw the builders going home from their work, she sat herself to watch at the alley gate for the strange workman to pass.

Mrs. Llewellyn also placed herself on the watch behind the front window-curtains.

Presently, lingering behind all the rest, came the man she looked for. He paused in front of the house, looked up at the upper windows, slowly shook his head, and passed on. Ennis came out and followed him.

Two hours passed before Ennis returned. She found her mistress still in the drawing-room waiting for her.

"Well, Ennis, have you run your man to earth?"

"Yes, ma'am; and a fine chase I had. He lives away up on Catherine street at an old washwoman's. I followed him all the way. At one time I feared as he would get into a 'bus; but I made up my mind if he did I would also; but he didn't, and I followed him all the way to Catherine street on foot. And when I saw him go in at a house where there was a laundress sign a-hanging out, I made so free as to go in on pretence of wanting some washing done. And while I was talking to the laundress—which she was quite a ole 'oman—she says, says she, to the man—'Billy, your supper's on the kitchen-table. Go eat it.' And the man says, says he—'All right, ma'am,' and he goes. 'Is that handsome young man your son, ma'am?' says I. 'Who! Billy? Law, no,' says she; 'but I thinks as much on him as if he was. He's a boarder, he is.' 'And how long have you known him, ma'am?' says I. 'A many months,' says she. 'But what makes you ax questions. Is you in love with our Billy, young 'oman?' 'No, I thank you, ma'am,' says I. 'And as we can't agree about the price of the washing, I think I had better go away.' And so I come away and got on to a omnibus, and here I am, ma'am."

"You have done extremely well. So it seems that we have been deceived by one of those strange likenesses we sometimes see in this world. I had a faint hope that this singular man might chance to be the long missing Arthur Powis. It has proved otherwise. Let the whole affair be forgotten," she said, hypocritically.

When Ennis left the presence of her mistress it was to go immediately up stairs to the room of her charge.

She found the wife of Arthur Powis, with the wax doll baby pressed to her bosom, pacing the floor and singing in a touching voice the lullaby chorus of "Allan Percy's child."

"You stayed away so long, Ennis, that I undressed the baby without your help. You may go away now, and if I want you I can ring," said poor Gladys. And then she recommenced her pathetic refrain, "Lullaby, lul 'a-by-e——"

"Well, this is enough to break one's heart," muttered Ennis to herself as she left the room. "But, after all, fourteen dollars a month and all the left off silk gowns and shawls is a great consolation!"

Mrs. Llewellyn, for her own part, as soon as she found herself alone, struck the bell that brought the deaf mute to her presence.

"I have been waiting for you all the afternoon and evening. Where have you been?" was the question she rapidly spelled upon her fingers.

He answered by the same means:

"Madam, you remember you gave me half a holiday. I took it and went to Harlem."

"I had forgotten. Now attend——"

The mute nodded.

"Is Arthur Powis dead?"

The mute nodded.

"Are you *sure*?"

He raised his fingers and spelt the word:

"Sure."

"I wish that I could feel sure."

"When I killed the young lion I brought you his skin in proof of his death," answered the mute, slowly spelling the words on his fingers.

"You brought me the crushed cap and the blood-stained uniform of the lieutenant; constructive proof, but not conclusive proof, of his death."

"How could I have got the clothes off his living body?"

"You might have stunned him and he might afterward have recovered."

"If he had recovered, would he not have raised the alarm? would he not have returned to his wife?"

"One would think so; but—his body was never found. That in itself is strange."

"His body sank at once to the bottom of the Anacostia river. The fishes have eaten his body, and the gluttons

have eaten the fishes. By and by worms will have eaten the gluttons."

"You horrible creature, stop that! I suppose the lieutenant is really dead. But there is an individual in this city who so strongly resembles Arthur Powis that the circumstance gives me much uneasiness. Have you ever chanced to see such a person?"

The mute slowly and emphatically shook his head.

"He is a laborer, at work on the new hotel at the corner. He carries a hod, and passes here three or four times a day. Watch for him."

The mute nodded his head low in token of obedience.

"Now go; I have letters to write."

Jude bowed very humbly and withdrew.

"I feel half the time as if that fellow was deceiving me and was ready at an instant's provocation to betray me. Yet I must not allow him to suspect that I either doubt or fear him. Ah! what a world this is, where one cannot even trust—their confidantes. And then this extraordinary likeness this strange man bears to Arthur Powis. Yet it is only an accidental resemblance of course. It could be nothing else. It would be absurd, preposterous, insane, to believe that Arthur Powis lives and that this man is he," said Mrs. Llewellyn to herself. But though she said this over and over again, she could not at once conjure to rest the anxiety that troubled her heart.

At length she drew her writing-desk near her, opened it, and commenced the following letter to her promising son, who was still at the University of Virginia:

NEW YORK, October —, 18—.

MY DEAREST JAMES:—The year that you stipulated should elapse between the death of Arthur Powis and your marriage with his young widow, has now passed. Arthur Powis has now been dead rather more than twelve months; and Gladys has got over her grief and left off her weeds.

She loves you, my son. She always loved you, and you might have married her two years ago, only you were so backward in courting her. Three months ago she begged me for a lock of your hair. I gave it to her. And she has worn it ever since in her bosom, next her heart. You would doubt this fact if it were told you by any other person except your own mother. But you will believe it when it is told you by me, who never in my life, under any circumstances, varied from the strict line of truth. Now that I have assured you of all these facts, so that you must feel convinced that you have won the guileless heart of your young cousin, I hope you will see that every principle of honor requires you to come immediately to New York and make her your wife. I will take care to have every thing in readiness for the wedding, so that it may take place on the day after your arrival. Your affectionate mother,

JANE J. LLEWELLYN.

JAMES STUKELY, Esq.

Having sealed and despatched this letter to the post, Mrs. Llewellyn retired to rest, and slept the sleep of the righteous, undisturbed by the memory of crime, the stings of remorse, or the fear of detection. The day of retribution for her had not yet arrived.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE CAPTIVE MOTHER.

And I'll deem thee Allan Percy's son,
Lullaby—Lullaby.—Anon.

SEVERAL days passed; but although a strict watch was kept by Mrs. Llewellyn and her maid and man, no more was seen of the mysterious workman. And, strangely

enough, his absence began to give Mrs. Llewellyn more uneasiness than his presence had done. Where could the missing man be? What could he be about? None but a guilty mind would have troubled itself to ask these questions, because of a supposed resemblance between the living and the dead.

At length, when several days had passed away, she summoned to her presence her confidential maid; who, by the way, was only half in her confidence.

"Ennis, as nearly a week has passed since we have seen that strange hod-carrier, I begin to fear that something may have happened to the poor creature. He may be ill and suffering want; or he may be dead. I wish you would go up to the building and inquire about him," she said, hypocritically.

Ennis, not in the least degree deceived by her mistress's pretension to a benevolent interest in the poor workman, courtesied and left the room, to go on the errand.

When she reached the half-finished hotel, and inquired of the master-mason for the missing laborer, the man broke out into a good-humored laugh, as he exclaimed:

"I say, young woman, this is the second time this week that you have been here inquiring about Billy! The first time you wanted to know who he was; and you complained about his staring up at your windows. Now I suspect it was *you* he was staring at, and that you were not half as much offended about it as you pretended to be! For now you miss him, you come asking where he is? Now, my dear, what is Billy to you, or you to Billy? Have you fallen in love with the handsome fellow, eh, my girl, that you run after him so?"

"I thank you, sir," said Ennis, tossing her head. "I'm a respectable young lady of color, and don't demean myself with running after white men; or colored men either, for that matter. I come here by the orders of my missus, to ask after a poor, friendless workman, as she is afraid he may be sick and suffering."

"Very well, then, my respectable young lady of color, you may tell your missus that I have not seen a sight of Billy since last Saturday evening, when he was paid off. I have been expecting him to return every day this week; but you see, he hasn't made his appearance. And, moreover, I don't know where he lodges, and don't know where to send for him."

With this answer, Ennis returned to her mistress.

"It is wonderful, wonderful, how the thought of that strange man worries me. He is a nightmare!—a man of a dream! And he received his week's pay, and *then* disappeared. Where has he gone? What is he about? Mischief? Stuff! I believe I am going mad! What is he to me, that I should torment myself about him?" thought Mrs. Llewellyn, as she ruminated over the news that Ennis had brought her. In a few minutes she spoke aloud:

"Ennis!"

"Madam?"

"Go to the man's lodgings, and inquire what has become of him."

"Yes, ma'am; but——"

"Well?"

"I beg your pardon, madam, but does it look well for a young woman to be going about asking after a young man?"

"It looks well for a young woman to obey her mistress's orders promptly and without question," said Mrs. Llewellyn, severely.

Ennis raised just the suspicion of a pout as she turned to leave the room, which happily her mistress did not see as she called her back.

"Ennis!"

"Yes, madam?"

"Unless you are a fool, you need not compromise yourself in any way. The man's landlady is a laundress, I believe. Well, go to her again, on pretence of getting her to wash for you; and use your eyes and your tact, and you

may find out all I wish to know about the man, without once asking a question."

"I'll try, ma'am," replied the girl, as she left the room.

Ennis took an omnibus and went directly to Catherine street, and to the house of the laundress. She found Mrs. Sloss in the suds and in the sulks.

"I have come about the washing again, ma'am," said Ennis, dropping, uninvited, into the nearest seat; "and I want to know how much a dozen you will——"

"I won't do it for any thing a dozen, there! I have more to do now than I can turn my hands to!" snapped the laundress, giving the wet shirt in her hands a vicious wring that cracked half the stitches in "sleeve, gusset, and band."

Thus, slapped in the mouth, as it were, by this reply, Ennis remained silent for a little while, and cautiously looked around the room for some sign of the workman; but saw nothing, not a hat, coat, shoe, or any other article of a "gentleman's belonging."

"I has more work to do, and gets less pay for it, nor any nigger slave in the whole earth!" said the woman, slapping the shirt down on a pile of wrung-out clothes, and dashing into the tub after another garment.

"But *we* would pay you *well*," suggested Ennis.

"Don't know whether you would or not! and don't care, nyther. Shant take no more washing from nobody! I wish, I does, as the ladies and gemmen had to wash themselves, and then may be they'd be more reasonable!" exclaimed the laundress, savagely wringing a skirt until the strings broke.

"Have you got the toothache, ma'am?" mischievously inquired Ennis.

"No! it's the *earache*," snapped the woman, dashing both arms into the water, as if she would have raised a tempest in a tub.

"I am very sorry your ear aches," said Ennis.

"If you are, then why don't you stop talking? My ears wouldn't ache if it wa'n't for your tongue—always a-boring—boring—boring—into 'em, like a gimlet! What are you waiting for, any way?" sharply demanded the shrew, stopping in her work, to stare Ennis out of countenance.

That, however, was not so easily to be done. Ennis returned her broad stare with a look of modest assurance, and answered:

"I am waiting to rest a little while, if you have no objection, and then I will go away."

The laundress returned fiercely to her washing and worked away as if she was bent on the annihilation of every thing under her hands.

In the present humor of her hostess, Ennis could not venture to make any inquiries about her boarder. So she sat on in silence waiting for a favorable opening, and hoping for the possible arrival of the workman.

At length the laundress, lifting the tub of dirty suds in both hands and looking as though upon a very slight provocation, she would douche the whole over Ennis's nice new bonnet and black silk dress (the very one that her mistress had recently bestowed on her), demanded curtly:

"Well! are you there yet? Aint you rested by this time?"

"Thank you, yes; I will go now," said Ennis rising.

"I think it's about time to go."

Ennis felt as if it was "about time" to perform her errand, if she was to do so at all, so she risked the question:

"Does that young man board with you yet?"

"That *which*?" asked the laundress, jerking the question out.

"The young laboring-man; does he board with you yet?"

"There! I knowed as you'd come arter no good! running arter men! You ought to be ashamed o' yourself. Go 'way."

"My missus sent me," replied Ennis, indignantly.

"A likely story, ind ed! Go 'way, I tell you."

"My missus *did* send me! She missed the poor young fellow and thought he might be ill and in want, and sent me to inquire after him."

"I don't believe you! and I don't believe as you've got any missus; and I don't believe she sent you; and I don't believe as you are any better'n you ought to be!"

"Few of us are!" laughed Ennis.

"I am, if you please, Miss Imperence, so none of your insinuations. Go 'way!" exclaimed the exasperated laundress.

"Tell me first if the young man still boards here and why he hasn't been to work?"

"I shan't tell you nothing at all about it! What's that to you? Go 'way!" cried the woman, advancing threateningly upon Ennis with the tub of soapsuds.

The girl made a precipitate retreat, and finding it utterly useless to pursue her investigations further, got into the omnibus and returned home.

Ennis knew perfectly well that if she made a true report of her visit, her mistress would blame her for her want of success, so she told falsehoods instead.

"I went to Mrs. Sloss's, ma'am; but he has left there ever since Saturday night; and she doesn't know where he has gone"—was the story she told.

"He *is* in mischief, somewhere! But—nonsense, how can his mischief affect me? That man's resemblance to the dead man, certainly unsettles my judgment! I must try to forget the whole matter," said the lady to herself.

At that moment a letter was brought in by Jude and placed in her hands.

"You may both leave me," she said, addressing her maid and man who still lingered as if waiting her commands.

When they had retired she opened her letter. It was from her son in reply to her own, in which she had summoned him to New York. Mr. Stukely informed his

mother that he should follow his letter so quickly as to arrive a very few days after it.

Mrs. Llewellyn immediately left the room to set on foot preparations for his reception.

Then she went up stairs to see Gladys. She found that poor victim of slow poison, sitting in the low rocking-chair, with her wax baby pressed to her heart, rocking it slowly to and fro, and crooning to it the refrain of "Allan Percy's child." Her face was pale as death, and her dark hair floated loose and long over her white wrapper.

"Lullaby—lul-la-b-y-e," she sang.

"You may stop that song now, Gladys. Allan Percy is coming," said Mrs. Llewellyn, speaking to her in the soothing manner she would have used toward an ailing child.

"Ay? Is Allan Percy coming? I thought he was only in the song?" said Gladys, archly; but still with the questionable archness of a child or an imbecile.

"Your Allan is coming at any rate."

"My Allan is in the grave, where I his widow soon shall be," said Gladys with a sudden change of manner.

"Nonsense, you are too young to die! There are other Allans left in the world."

"Yes, 'as good fish in the sea as ever was caught out of it,' aint there?" she demanded with another fitful change.

"Why, certainly! There is your cousin James Stukely. He will soon be here. You will treat him better when he comes this time than you did the last time, will you not?"

"What last time?" asked Gladys.

"Good Heaven! Is her memory actually failing?" thought Mrs. Llewellyn, in dismay. Then speaking aloud, she said:

"Never mind what time; you will treat him well now, will you not?"

"Oh yes! what do I care!"

"And you will marry him?"

Oh yes! of course!"

"Life is all a wariorum,
And I care not *how* it goes!"

said Gladys breaking out into the chorus of a vulgar comic song that her ears had picked up heaven knows where; probably from some night reveller staggering home past her own chamber windows.

"Very well, now, my dear; remember it is all for your own happiness," said Mrs. Llewellyn.

"Just so," admitted Gladys.

"You know, as soon as ever you are married, you will go with your husband on a pleasant bridal tour, and see many distant places and interesting objects, and have a delightful time altogether."

"Yes, I know."

"And then you will return to Kader Idris and be Lady Paramount there."

"All right!"

"And now think of what I have told you, Gladys. And good-night," said the lady, turning to leave the room.

"Good-night," said Gladys—

"And I will dream thou art Allan Percy's child,
Lullaby—lul-la-by——"

she sang, recurring to her employment of rocking the wax baby to sleep.

Three days after this, just at nightfall, Mr. Stukely arrived.

"Now, you are sure it is all right this time, and no mistake, mother?" he asked, as soon as they were seated tête-à-tête at the tea-table.

"Quite sure, my son. Gladys is still a little odd in her ways; but she is no longer violent."

"But—I wish she wasn't odd, either," complained Mr. Stukely.

"Don't be unreasonable, James. You cannot have every thing you wish in this world. Here in Gladys you have youth, beauty, accomplishments, amiability, rank, and

wealth; what more can any reasonable man expect? If she is a little odd in her manners just at first, you must put up with it; it will wear off in time."

"And does she *really* wear my hair in her bosom?"

"Yes; next her heart."

"Extraordinary!"

"I have seen her kiss it passionately."

"Oh-h-h! And to-morrow she can kiss me if she likes! But, mother, I must, indeed, really must see her *alone*, before we stand up to be married again! For, mother, I must have her promise to marry me personally before I risk being made such a fool of as I was before."

"Is not her promise to *me* sufficient?" coldly demanded the lady.

"No, *ma'am*! She promised *you* before! and broke the promise to *me*," said Mr. Stukely, firmly.

Perceiving that her usually manageable son was in an unusually unmanageable fit of obstinacy, Mrs. Llewellyn promised that he should see Gladys alone the next day.

Accordingly, early in the morning, Mrs. Llewellyn went up stairs to the chamber of Gladys to prepare her for the visit. First she gave her in a cup of coffee an extra dose of the well-paralyzing drug. Then she said:

"Gladys, my love, your cousin is coming up here to ask you to marry him. Now what are you going to answer him?"

"What ought I to answer him?"

"Why tell him yes, of course."

"Yes, of course," repeated Gladys, like a child learning a lesson by rote.

"And perhaps he may ask you if you are going to marry him of your own free will. If he does, you must say—certainly."

"Certainly," repeated Gladys.

"And mind! if you *don't* marry him, you will never leave this room! But if you *do* marry him, you will leave it immediately to travel all over the world, if you like."

"Oh, I'll marry him! never you fear! Lord bless your soul, I don't care! I'd just as lief do one thing as another!"

"Very well, then, do as I tell you, and you will be happy."

"All right," said Gladys.

"Mrs. Llewellyn then went in search of her son, whom she found and brought to the door of Gladys' room, saying:

"Now, unbeliever, go in and ask her for yourself! But mind! she is a young and delicate woman, and she will naturally be slow to acknowledge any very ardent attachment to yourself. You must take her love for granted, when she consents to marry you."

"Ah, indeed!"

"Certainly. The greatest proof she can give you of her love is to give you her hand."

"Extraordinary!"

"Stuff! what is there extraordinary about it?"

"Why, that she should consent to marry me without owning that she loves me!"

"You simpleton! Do you expect *her* to do the woin'?"

"Don't know; I've seen 'em do it."

"Seen whom?"

"The girls to be sure."

"You never did."

"Oh! haven't I though."

"Forward minxes! Gladys is not one of those. Now go in and speak to her," said Mrs. Llewellyn, opening the chamber door to let him pass, and then closing it and placing her ear to the keyhole.

When James Stukely entered the room, Gladys was sitting before the piano, intent upon practising a new piece of music, for which task, indeed, she seemed scarcely to have sufficient power of application, for she continued to go over and over a few notes, like a parrot that could not learn its lesson.

Mr. Stukely felt his throat choked, and his face heated, as he softly walked toward Gladys and faltered:

"How do you do, Cousin Gladys?"

"Oh! I am well, thank you; and you?" she said, wheeling around on her seat so as to face him.

"All the better for seeing you, cousin," said Mr. Stukely, plucking up a little spirit, and looking around for a chair.

There was none near him, however; nor did Gladys invite him to sit down; but, on the contrary, she sat and looked at him with calm, questioning eyes, as though expecting him to declare his business and then go.

Mr. Stukely stood twisting his thumbs and losing his spirits for a little while, and then, not having the courage to fetch a chair and seat himself uninvited, he went to the corner of the piano, leaned his arm upon it, and stammered out his errand:

"Cousin Gladys, I see you are busy, so I won't stay long. I only came to—to ask—to ask you—if—if you—if you would—if you would please to marry me?"

"Of course," replied Gladys, in the words that had been put into her mouth.

"Oh! I'm glad. I didn't know you would. I—I was afraid. I thought—in short—— Cousin Gladys, is it of your own free will?"

"Certainly," answered Gladys, as she had been taught.

"Well, Cousin Gladys, all that I can say is that—that I thank you kindly. And that—that I love you dearly. And that—that I'll always do whatever you tell me to do, Cousin Gladys. I—I—goodness knows I will."

Now, Gladys having said her lesson by rote, seemed to think that her duty was done; for she coolly wheeled herself around again to the piano and recommenced practising her new piece of music.

James Stukely remained leaning on the piano watching her and muttering to himself:

"Extraordinary."

But she seemed perfectly oblivious of his presence.

At length he could bear his position no longer, and he stammered forth:

"Cousin Gladys—as you are busy—I think I will go away—and try to compose myself after this—this—this very agitating interview."

"Very well," said Gladys, without lifting her eyes or stopping her fingers.

"And—and you and mother, you know—can do all the rest," said Mr. Stukely.

As Gladys did not reply to this remark, but continued to strum, Mr. Stukely considered himself at liberty to leave her presence, and so stole on tiptoe from the room.

"Well?" inquired Mrs. Llewellyn, who was waiting for him in the passage.

"Well, she says she'll marry me; and of her own free will, too."

"I told you so. I hope you will take my word for the next thing I may happen to tell you."

"Yes, mother. But——"

"What now?"

"Gladys seems to me to be weak-minded. I do wish she had a little more mind."

"Never worry about that, my dear. She has every thing else!—youth, beauty, amiability, rank, wealth and accomplishments. And as to *mind*, my dear, why *you* have enough for both," said the lady, patting him on the shoulder.

"That's so," said Mr. Stukely, complacently, and happily unconscious of the covert irony in his mother's words.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A SHOCK.

It is the same! Oh, God! that I should dread
To look upon the same!—Answer me!
Speak to me, my beloved, speak to me!
I have so much endured, so much endure!
Look on me! The grave hath not changed thee more
Than I am changed for thee. Thou lovedst me.—*Byron.*

"AND now, James Stukely, that you have the consent of Gladys, given to yourself personally, as you insisted it should be given, there exists no longer the least cause for delaying your marriage. I am quite tired of this place, where, quietly as we live, we are beginning to attract more attention than I like," said Mrs. Llewellyn, when she and her son were once more alone in the drawing-room.

"Ah, indeed! But why do you dislike attention, mother?"

"Because I do."

"Extraordinary!"

"Therefore, all things considered, I think you had better go this morning and take out a special license, and speak to some clergyman, and have the marriage ceremony performed quietly here at eight o'clock this evening. And at ten we can take the night train for Washington, *en route* for Kader Idris."

"No, mother! No, no, no! I object to that!" said Mr. Stukely.

"Object to *what*, you provoking fellow? What now? I thought it was all right, now that Gladys freely consents," exclaimed Mrs. Llewellyn, impatiently.

"Well, so it is all right so far; but——"

"But *what*?"

"I wont have my marriage ceremony performed in a back parlor, in the middle of the night, as if I was smuggling a wife, and ashamed of what I was doing. I wont, I wont, I wont! There, mother. I don't want to be disrespectful,

but I will be married in the clear daylight, in the open church, or—not—at—all!" said Mr. Stukely, bringing his fist down upon the marble table with an emphatic thump.

If ever there was a moment in which Mrs. Llewellyn felt thoroughly exasperated with her son, or strongly tempted to throw up her enterprise, it was now.

"Oh, patience!" she exclaimed. "I would not mind having an unmanageable son, if he had only mind enough to manage for himself! Nor would I mind having a foolish son, if he would only allow me to manage for him. But I say a son, who is at once foolish and unmanageable, is the worst of all trials, as a stubborn idiot is the worst of all idiots."

Mr. Stukely made no sort of defence against this attack, but remained in sulky silence.

Mrs. Llewellyn broke out afresh:

"Pray, sir, do you consider your cousin Gladys in a proper state of health, either in mind or body, to stand up in a public church and be married?"

"If she is well enough to be married *at all*, she is well enough to be married in church," obstinately replied Mr. Stukely.

"Well, well, let it be so then. You can be married to-morrow morning at ten o'clock, and we can leave town by the twelve o'clock train. Will that answer your purpose, sir?" demanded Mrs. Llewellyn.

"Oh, yes, mother. I only ask that every thing shall be done openly and honestly—fair and above board, you know. And if I have said any thing rude, I am sure I beg your pardon, mother," said Mr. Stukely, clearing up his cloudy brow.

"It is granted. But I would rather you should follow my advice than beg my pardon."

"I would in all that is right, mother."

"Would I advise you to any thing wrong—I, your mother?" inquired Mrs. Llewellyn, reproachfully.

"See here, mother: *you* may think it right for me and

Gladys to be married privately at night in the back parlor; and if you do, you are right to advise me accordingly. But I think, that for me to smuggle my marriage up in a corner in that way looks as if I was stealing a wife, and fearing to be found out in it. And since I *do* think so, it would be wrong for me to consent to it. For 'to him that *thinketh* it sin, it *is* sin,' you know, mother," explained Mr. Stukely, with more than his usual exercise of the reasoning faculties.

"Well, well—let it be as you please. I will argue with you no longer; it would be useless to do so. Go now and make those few preparations that lie within your own province; and I will do my part in mine," said Mrs. Llewellyn, rising to break up the conference.

When, however, Mr. Stukely had left her she paced up and down the floor uneasily, muttering to herself:

"What an obstinate brute is my son when he pleases to be. To insist upon taking Gladys to church to be married! I hope there will be no risk in it. I believe there will be none. I do not see how there can be any. She will not do as she did before. She has no spy and confederate now near her, to watch me and assist her. She has no stimulant at hand to counteract the effect of the sedative I give her. She is not playing a part now; she is really subdued to my will. Therefore there can be no risk even in taking her to church to be married. But yet——"

But yet Mrs. Llewellyn was not satisfied in her own mind as she slowly sauntered from the drawing-room.

By nightfall every preparation for the marriage was completed.

The next day dawned clear, frosty and brilliant.

Early in the morning, Mrs. Llewellyn, attended by Ennis, bearing the breakfast tray, went to the chamber of her victim.

She found poor Gladys already up, carelessly clad in a white wrapper she usually wore, sitting in a low nursing-chair and engaged in dressing her wax baby.

"See!" she exclaimed, holding up the doll for inspection; "Ennis brought her a new lace robe yesterday; see how nice she looks in it."

"Yes; but lay the doll down now, Gladys, and eat your breakfast. Do you know what day this is?" inquired Mrs. Llewellyn.

"No; what day is it?"

"It is your wedding-day, Gladys."

"Law! is it?"

"Why, certainly. Did you not know that you were to be married to-day?"

"Law, no!"

"Yes. So now lay the doll down, and come and eat your breakfast."

Gladys obediently placed the wax baby in the berceau-nette, and then drew up to the little table, and drank the drugged coffee, and ate the buttered rolls.

"Now, then, I am ready to go," she said, rising, and wiping her mouth.

"But you must be dressed before you go, you know," said the lady.

"Oh, yes, sure enough!" said the poor creature, catching up a black shawl and throwing it over her white wrapper, and then running to the wardrobe to get her bonnet.

"Stop, stop, Gladys! Would you go to church in a nightgown? Nonsense! You don't know what you are about."

"I don't believe I do," laughed Gladys.

"Sit down there in that seat before your toilet-table, and let Ennis dress you."

Gladys laughed and obeyed, unloosening her black hair, and flinging it abroad over her white shoulders, as she sat there.

Ennis very gravely commenced combing out that long hair, for Ennis was beginning to have doubts of the propriety of her own conduct in aiding the plans of her mistress.

The bridal toilet of Gladys was soon completed.

On this occasion, however, instead of the wreath of orange blossoms and the long veil, she wore a white bonnet and white mantle over her white silk dress. As soon as her gloves were drawn on and the prayerbook was placed in her hands, she was led down stairs to the front door, where the bridegroom, in a "wedding garment," awaited her.

"I hope it is all right, now, Cousin Gladys?" he said, as he drew her white gloved hand within his arm.

"All right, now," she answered.

"And mind, now, if you feel like backing out again, you had better do it here and now, than wait until you get before the parson, and then mortify me by flinging me off," he continued.

"Oh, she will not do that," hastily put in Mrs. Llewellyn.

"Oh, no; she will not do that," parrot-like repeated Gladys.

"Very well, then, come on," said Mr. Stukely, leading his bride-elect to the carriage that stood waiting before the door.

Mrs. Llewellyn followed, for she was to ride with them. And while Mr. Stukely was putting Gladys into her seat, Mrs. Llewellyn looked up and down the street, in a vague uneasiness lest the strange hod-bearer should make his appearance, and in some way or another interfere with the proceedings of the day. But he was nowhere visible. She therefore followed her party into the carriage, which was immediately driven off.

The church that had been selected by Mrs. Llewellyn and her son, in council, for the performance of the marriage ceremony, was at the west end of the town, two good miles from their residence. This was a precaution adopted by the lady to prevent the bridal party from being followed by all the idlers in the street, as it certainly would have been had they gone to any church in the immediate neighborhood.

As the carriage was driven at a good speed, they soon reached their destination

How is it that news flies? Who can tell?

The news that a wedding was to come off at St. Asaph's Church that morning had in some manner preceded them. Perhaps the sexton, who had received instructions to open and air the church, had dropped a hint to the first and second grave-diggers, who had spread the intelligence. Or perhaps the people simply guessed the truth from the fact of the church being open on a week-day morning that was neither a fast nor a festival.

Be that as it may, a crowd had collected about the church; news-boys, match-girls, boot-blacks, idlers, vagrants and beggars made quite a mob to wait for the bridal party to arrive.

And even the mechanics and laborers that were at work on a block of new buildings that were in course of erection on the opposite side of the street "knocked off" for a few minutes to see the wedding.

The carriage drew up at the church door. The bridegroom alighted and assisted his bride to alight. She was so closely veiled that the crowd could not see her face as she was led through it into the church.

Mrs. Llewellyn got out with the help of her footman, and, as she followed the youthful pair, she threw her eyes superciliously over the "rabble rout" that had gathered to receive her; and in doing so she encountered—the eyes of the strange workman!

He stood there, hod on shoulder, gazing upon her with a sort of idiotic consternation depicted in his blank stare and open mouth.

An icy bolt of terror shot through her heart, and, shivering as with an ague fit, she hurried into the church.

Quite a considerable number of respectable-looking people occupied the back-seats and side-pews. These were uninvited wedding guests, or, at best, guests only invited by the sexton.

Mrs. Llewellyn, angered by the crowd outside, terrified

by the strange hod-carrier, and annoyed by the people inside, found an opportunity, in coming up behind her son, to whisper fiercely in his ear the questions:

"How is this? Where do all these people come from? Who gave them leave to gather here?"

"Well, mother, I believe when the church doors are open the people that are pew-holders have a right to come in and participate in any thing that is going forward. And I, for my part, have no objection. Have you, Cousin Gladys?" inquired the bridegroom.

"Law no," replied the bride.

"There now you see, mother, Gladys has no objection no more than I have. And besides—a marriage should be a public ceremony, not a private one. Let the folks come and see mine, if it does them any good. I told the sexton so."

"Always a fool!" muttered Mrs. Llewellyn to herself.

By this time they had reached the space in front of the altar, at which stood the officiating clergyman book in hand.

The little party soon arranged itself.

The clergyman opened the book and commenced the ceremony.

The bride was as calm and as cold as the "Snow maiden." The bridegroom was a little fidgety, as though troubled by reminiscences of the former marriage ceremony.

Mrs. Llewellyn stood a little in the rear of the party, outwardly composed but inwardly agitated, and all the while watching through the corner of her eye the crowd that had pushed its way into the aisles of the church, as if she dreaded an interruption from some of them. When the minister reached that critical part of the ceremony which had proved so fatal to her plans on a former occasion, and as he read again the passage: "If any man can show just cause why they may not be joined together, let

him now speak, or else hereafter forever hold his peace," and while he made the usual pause, she held her breath in a guilty dread.

The pause was not interrupted, however. The adjuration was not answered. No one present seemed to know any just cause why the ceremony should not proceed. So the danger, real or imaginary, was safely passed. Safely passed, even though, to Mrs. Llewellyn's unspeakable horror and amazement, in lifting her head she saw the mysterious workman, hod on shoulder, standing with the crowd in the middle aisle, and staring with open eyes and mouth at the actors in the solemn farce before him.

But by this time the minister had turned to the young couple before him, and was in the act of charging *them*, under the most awful pains and penalties, that if either of *them* knew any impediment why they might not be joined together—to then and there confess it.

Again Mrs. Llewellyn held her breath suspended. And even Mr. Stukely joined in her terrors during the short pause that ensued; for he remembered that it was just at this point of the proceedings, on a former occasion, that Gladys had torn off her bridal wreath and veil, and uttered her agonized protestation against the forced marriage. Now, however, Gladys remained quietly enough, with her eyes fixed upon the ground, unconscious of or indifferent to what was passing around her.

And the crisis passed safely. The bridegroom and his lady mother breathed freely. And the ceremony proceeded prosperously toward its close.

When, however, the right moment came for the bridegroom to place the ring upon the finger of the bride, that transaction required some little shifting of position. And thus it was that, in turning half around to present her ungloved left hand to the bridegroom, the bride stood suddenly face to face with—the hod-carrier!

Magnetized by what he gazed upon, he had unconsciously

elbowed his way through the crowd toward the scene of action, and now he stood obtrusively near the actors and face to face with the bride!

As one struck with sudden madness by the sight of the dead raised from the grave, for one supreme moment Gladys stood with ashen cheeks and parted lips and dilated eyes staring at the apparition; and then, with one wild, agonized, unearthly shriek, she cried, "Arthur!" threw up her arms, and fell forward in a deadly swoon.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A ROUT.

Why stand ye thus amazed? Methinks your eyes
Are stretched in consternation; and all here
Seem like so many senseless statues;
As if your souls had suffered an eclipse,
Betwixt your judgments and affections.

"So help me Bob, if I didn't know it! I said that fellow would turn up at last!" cried Mr. Stukely, breaking out into school-boyish expletives more expressive of vexation than alarm as he dived to the floor to lift the fallen bride.

At the same instant the "fellow" to which Mr. Stukely had alluded slunk away, as if frightened by the effect his presence had produced, and made his escape through the crowd.

By this time all was confusion.

The bridegroom, the minister, and the lady, were all kneeling upon the floor around the swooning bride.

People were leaving their pews and hurrying to the spot, with anxious inquiries of the cause of trouble, and earnest proffers of assistance.

The crowd in the aisles were also pressing forward.

"Air! air! good people; stand back and give her air!"

implored the minister, as he raised the head of the insensible girl and fanned her with his broad-brimmed hat.

"What is the matter?" asked a half a dozen voices in the rear.

"The bride is in hysterics!" "The bride has fainted!" "The bride is dead!" answered half a dozen others at the front.

"What was the cause of it?" inquired the outsiders

"She was frightened by a drunken man," answered an insider.

"No, it was by a crazy man," said another.

"Hush, you are all wrong; she saw her old sweetheart," whispered a third. And the whisper went around.

"Air, air, good friends! For the love of mercy, let her have air!" again implored the minister.

But the good people seemed to imagine that air meant pressure, for they pressed forward more and more, with expressions of sympathy and offers of aid.

"Poor thing!—take my smelling salts and put it to her nose, sir," said one lady, reaching a small cut-glass vial over the heads of all the rest.

"How deathly white she looks! Here, sir, take the bottle of cologne water and bathe her temples," said another lady, reaching over with another restorative.

"Why, the breath has gone out of her body. Look here, sir! Here is a pocket-flask of brandy! Take it and try to force a few drops between her lips! It will act like magic," said a gentleman, stretching a long arm over the heads of the crowd, to put a "pocket-pistol" into the hands of the minister, who was still most assiduous in his efforts to restore the fainting woman.

The minister took every thing that was offered and tried every thing that was recommended; but did not cease to fan his charge and to implore the people to fall back.

But the people read his order backward, and reversed it, and pressed around the swooning bride and shielded her from the draft.

"Madam," said the minister, at last, "allow me to suggest that the young lady be conveyed into the vestry-room. There, at least, she can have air."

"I thank you very much, sir! With your permission we will take her there for the present," answered Mrs. Llewellyn.

"So help me, Bob, I knew how it was going to be!" said the bridegroom, as he stooped and lifted his twice-lost bride in his arms.

Led on by the sexton, who opened the doors and showed the way, he easily carried her into the vestry-room, where he laid her on the sofa.

Mrs. Llewellyn and the minister followed, and the crowd pressed after them.

But the minister would on no account allow them to pass the threshold of the vestry-room, the door of which he closed upon them.

And so there was no one left in the room with Gladys but her own immediate party.

Mrs. Llewellyn stood at the head of the sofa, bathing the face of the charge with eau-de-cologne. When the minister approached, she said to him:

"You must have been very much astonished, sir, by the scene you have just witnessed."

"I was, madam," he answered.

"It was—extraordinary!" exclaimed Mr. Stukely.

"It was, sir!" agreed the minister.

"Hold your tongue, James Stukely!" said his mother, in a fierce whisper. Then turning to the minister, she said aloud:

"Now that we are alone, sir, I may inform you that my young friend here has suffered very severe bereavements in the loss of her father, her mother, and a young companion, who was as dear to her as a brother. These losses have so affected her mind as to leave her in a very nervous and hysterical condition. This morning, the accidental

resemblance of an individual present in the crowd, that pressed into the church, to witness the marriage, to a deceased young friend of her own, who died under peculiarly distressing circumstances, excited and overwhelmed her, and occasioned this swoon."

The minister bowed and bowed to every thing the lady said. But the more she explained, the less he understood.

The bridegroom meanwhile stood at the feet of his bride, making himself as passively useful as a table, or a stand might do, by holding bottles, glasses, pocket-handkerchiefs, fans and every thing else that was thrust into his hands, and muttering to himself:

"Extraordinary!"

And then inconsistently enough, breaking out in childish style:

"Blest if I didn't know how it was going to be all the time!"

Sometimes Mrs. Llewellyn caught his eye, and in common parlance "gave him a look" which would silence him for a few seconds.

At length as all their efforts to restore Gladys to consciousness proved unavailing, Mrs. Llewellyn looked up from her task and said:

"I think, sir, that I had better take her home, where she can be put to bed and receive medical attendance."

"I think, perhaps, madam, that you are right, if, in her present condition, she can be removed with safety," said the minister, politely and sympathetically.

"Oh, certainly, she can! It will only be necessary to place her in an easy position and to drive very slowly. Is there any one you can be so good as to send, sir, to see if our carriage is waiting?"

"Certainly, madam," said the minister, leaving the room.

In a few minutes he returned, saying:

"The carriage is waiting; but as there is a curious crowd collected around + to wait and see the result of this affair,

I thought it best to send the sexton to tell the coachman to drive away and come in on the back street and draw up at the vestry back door, which is close at hand, and which will enable you to take the young lady away privately, without your being annoyed by the crowd."

"I thank you very much, indeed, sir! We will take our unfortunate charge at once to the carriage then—James Stukely lend me your assistance."

Once more the luckless bridegroom lifted his bride in his arms. The obliging minister walked before and opened the doors; and thus Gladys was borne carefully out of the church and placed tenderly on the cushions of the carriage.

Mrs. Llewellyn thanked the minister for his services, and allowed him to add another item by putting her into her seat.

Mr. Stukely followed his mother, bowed his adieu to the minister and gave the order to the coachman to drive home.

CHAPTER XXX.

ANGER.

Of all the horrid, hideous notes of woe,
Sadder than owl-songs on the midnight blast,
Is that portentous phrase, "I told you so,"
Uttered by friends, those prophets of the past,
Who 'stead of saying what you now should do,
Own they foresaw that you would fall at last;
And solace your slight lapse 'gainst *bonos mores*
With a long memorandum of old stories.—*Byron*.

As soon as they found themselves alone with the unconscious girl, the mother and the son fell into bitter recriminations.

"So much, sir, for your mulish stubbornness in insisting that the marriage ceremony should be performed in a church! Such a disgraceful scene as we have just wit

nessed could not have taken place at home!" said Mrs. Llewellyn, savagely.

"Blest if I'm not glad for that very reason that we *were* in church! So help me Bob, I knew that fellow was going to turn up sooner or later! And if so, it was better that he should have turned up now and here, than at any later period somewhere else—than for instance at Kader Idris after we had been married and settled there for a month."

Mrs. Llewellyn looked at him in a furious silence. But he continued;

"Bless me if I am not thankful that Providence did intervene and save us. I am not a villain! I didn't want another man's wife or sweetheart either, by my side; nor a heinous sin on my conscience; no, nor by George, I didn't want a bowie-knife in my heart, nor a bullet in my brain either!"

"Have you done, idiot, at last? Can I get in a word edgeways now? What nonsense is this you have been talking? What 'fellow' do you allude to in your elegant phrase of 'turning up?'" fiercely demanded the lady.

"Arthur Powis to be sure! I saw him the instant that Gladys screamed! And I knew him the instant I saw him!" though he was very much changed, and wore the dress of a workman."

"Arthur Powis! Are you then such a fatuitous, egregious, incorrigible fool as to mistake that brutal hod-bearer for Arthur Powis, an officer and a gentleman?"

"I have seen a good actor play many parts in my life. I have seen a tragedian, who was an accomplished gentleman in private life, play an old king, a young prince, a peasant, a robber, a negro, and an Indian, all in one week! It may suit Arthur Powis to play the part of a hod-bearer on this occasion."

"It may. But for what end?"

"Ah! that I can't tell. I see strange facts! but I cannot give explanations of them. And I know that man was Arthur Powis as surely as I am myself!"

"I grant you there was a likeness—a strong likeness; a striking one if you please; it struck me; it struck me as much as a fortnight ago, when I first saw the man——"

"Oh, you have seen him before! and still you let me go——"

"LISTEN!—And don't interrupt me, sir!" said his mother, stamping. "I saw the man pass our house, on his way to his work, about a fortnight ago. I confess the likeness to Arthur Powis affected me so, that I had the curiosity to make inquiries as to who and what he might be. Well—I found out that his name is William Simmons, and that he is a stone mason's laborer, and has lived in New York all his life."

"Is—that—so?" slowly inquired Mr. Stukely.

"Yes. But if you want further proof, recall the man's face when Gladys screamed."

"Oh, I can recall it well enough! I can see it now!"

"Yes, in its likeness to that of Arthur Powis! But pray did you observe the *expression* of that man's face?"

"N-n-o. Y-ye-s! I believe I did. But I didn't think of it at the time. I thought only of the likeness."

"Of course; but think of the *expression* now. Was it the expression of astonishment, wonder, and indignation, that a man like Arthur Powis—that *any* man—would feel on seeing his own wife in the act of being married to another?"

"N-no, that it wasn't!"

"Was it not, on the contrary, a look of stupid curiosity, that changed at once into foolish fright as Gladys screamed?"

"Yes, certainly."

"And his actions. Were *they* the actions of a man who saw his wife about to be married to another?"

"N-n-o, they were not."

"Why, he *stared* at the performance with his mouth and eyes wide open, until Gladys saw him and screamed, and

then he took fright and escaped, as if he had expected to be held accountable for the interruption, as indeed he ought to have been."

"That's so," admitted Mr. Stukely; "but then, after all, he might have been Arthur Powis in disguise, and playing a part for a purpose."

"James Stukely! be rational! If that man had been Arthur Powis, attempting to disguise himself, would he not have done it so effectually as to leave *no* likeness to his former self, and *no* room for suspicion? Would he not have stained his fair skin, cut off his auburn whiskers, and hidden his auburn hair under a black wig? And would he have had self-control enough to play the part you suspect him of playing at the marriage of his own wife? And then, for what conceivable purpose should he have done so?"

"I—can't say, mother."

"No, James Stukely! There was no attempt to disguise, no playing of a part! There was a simple hod-carrier, with an accidental likeness to a gentleman; and frightened out of his wits by the effects it produced. Besides, you forget! the man has been known in this city for years as William Simmons, stonemason's laborer."

"Of course that settles the question, or ought to. But, mother, after all, the greatest argument against that man's not being Arthur Powis has just come into my head."

"What is that?" inquired Mrs. Llewellyn, with suspicious anxiety.

"Why, mother, it is this—that if that man had been Arthur Powis, he would not have kept off from Gladys for an instant! he would have rushed to her and raised her from the floor, and supported her in his arms, and carried her off from us if all earth and all the other place had been there to prevent him! What! when she called upon his name so piteously, and stretched out her arms to him and droppe^d fainting at his feet, would he have slunk away and

left her? *No, ma'am!* I, for one, should have had a knife in my stomach, first thing. And I thank Heaven I haven't!"

"Yes, yes; true, true," said Mrs. Llewellyn, as if she derived as much satisfaction from the contemplation of this argument as Mr. Stukely himself did.

"But now, mother, look at Gladys. I think she is reviving. I don't want her to be neglected, even if she is *not* to be my wife."

"Not to be your wife? What do you mean, you foolish boy?" said the lady, as she raised the head of Gladys to a more comfortable position and held the smelling salts to her nose.

"Why, mother, you don't suppose I am going to try it a *third* time, do you?"

"Yes I do! The more I fail, the more determined I am to succeed!" said Mrs. Llewellyn, with a firmness worthy of the most heroic cause.

"Then, mother, you will have to succeed without *me!* for I swear by all my hopes of heaven, I will have nothing further to do with marrying Cousin Gladys!" said Mr. Stukely. And his mother saw that he had fallen into one of his "mulish" fits, from which it was in vain to hope that either threats, persuasions, or arguments would ever move him.

"Oh, well," said the lady to herself, with a grim smile, "the only difference is that I shall have *two* to drug instead of one. And I can do it just as well as not while my hand is in! It would have become necessary sooner or later, in any case. James Stukely's intellect is certainly developing more than is quite convenient to me. For *I* must continue to have as long as I live the uncontrolled administration of the Kader Idris estates! And neither a weak son nor a silly daughter-in-law shall interfere with me or control them."

While the selfish, ruthless, and ambitious woman was turning over these thoughts in her mind, the carriage drew up before her own door.

Gladys was lifted out and carried up stairs and laid on her bed, before the wondering eyes of Ennis, who happened to be in the room, engaged in packing up her young mistress's wardrobe for the journey.

"Oh, dear! has she fainted?" inquired the girl, with more sympathy than she had ever betrayed in the presence of her mistress.

"Yes! there was a rabble rout around the church! Among them some laborers from a block of half-finished buildings opposite. Among the latter, that hod-carrier, who actually, by some oversight, was allowed to push his way into the aisle. Of course you know what followed. Your young lady saw him, and fainted. Now assist me to undress her."

Ennis would gladly have asked whether the marriage ceremony had been concluded, but she did not dare to do so.

"James Stukely, you can leave the room," said Mrs. Llewellyn.

And Mr. Stukely left.

"Oh, if he is obliged to leave the room, that is a sign that they are not married yet. And I am sure I am very glad and thank Heaven," thought Ennis, as she tenderly helped to relieve Gladys of her cumbersome bridal finery.

CHAPTER XXXI.

RESOLUTION.

Despair gives resolution to the weak;
Entice the sun from his elliptic line;
He shall obey your beck and wander from
His sphere, as soon as I from my resolve!—*Baron.*

WHEN Gladys was relieved of her tight-fitting dress and laid at ease back on her pillow, she drew a deep, fluttering breath, opened her eyes and gazed around.

Mrs. Llewellyn, who was anxiously waiting in the room, drew near the bed, stooped over her, and whispered:

"How do you feel, love?"

But the question had scarcely left her false lips ere she shrank back appalled at the awful meaning that shone from those newly opened eyes.

The thunderbolt that had fallen upon the head of Gladys in the church had scattered the fatal lethargy that held her faculties captive, and had flashed into her soul the light of a full intelligence. And in the steady look she fixed upon the face of Mrs. Llewellyn there was terrible accusation, defiance, and danger.

And that bold, bad woman drew back in momentary consternation. She soon rallied her self-command, however, and again approached and bent over her victim, saying, with forced calmness:

"I hope you feel better, my love?"

"Begone!" exclaimed Gladys, in a deep, low, indignant voice.

Mrs. Llewellyn withdrew from the bedside to a little stand near the windows, where she poured out a glass of port wine, which she brought to her charge, saying, honeyly:

"You are excited, my poor child. Drink this; it will do you good."

Gladys stretched out her hand, took the wine glass, and fixing her eyes, now burning black, with half suppressed fury upon the face of the traitress, she answered, sternly:

"Oh, wretch! wretch! lost to every feeling of humanity! to every principle of honor! Look you! *this* is the way in which I drink your wine and toast your health! To the destruction of both!" And, so saying, she deliberately turned the glass upside down, and poured its contents upon the carpet.

"Gladys! what do you mean by that? You have ruined this beautiful Brussels! and you have wasted the good

wine!" exclaimed Mrs. Llewellyn, in an agitated voice, and vailing her excessive anxiety under a pretence of housewifely care.

"Whether is it better to waste wine, or to waste human life? To ruin a gaudy woollen rag or a human soul? What do I mean by it? I mean something like *this*!" exclaimed Gladys, tossing the empty glass into the fireplace. "I mean, madam, to take no more of your secretly administered slow poisons. And in order to avoid doing so, I will henceforth take nothing from your hands."

"Gladys, you are mad! And really, if you go on in this violent and destructive manner you must be subjected to a stricter restraint than ever!" said Mrs. Llewellyn, in a voice of rage and fear, to which she in vain attempted to give a tone of calm expostulation.

"No, Mrs. Jay; I am neither mad nor violent, though I have good grounds for being both! Oh, I know *now*! I know *all*! I have been shamefully deceived and drugged into temporary imbecility, if not into absolute idiocy! I have been brought to the very verge of guilt and dishonor! Another hour, and I should have been plunged into crime and ruin!—*I*, a Llewellyn! But I saw my husband. I saw him in good time. He looked like a workman; and he gazed at me strangely; but I knew him, and I was saved!"

"Gladys, what phrenzy is this? Arthur Powis has been dead a year. Can the dead rise?"

"I know not; but in the flesh, or in the spirit, I saw my husband at the church. And I was saved."

"Nonsense! You have been shocked and terrified by the striking likeness of a living man to a dead one. We all know who the fellow was that frightened you so in the church, where he never should have been permitted to come, at least on such an occasion as that of this morning. He is one William Simmons, a stonemason's laborer, who used to work on this very street, and pass the house several times a day."

"He was Arthur Powis. Do you think that the disguise of a workman's dress and a hod could deceive *me*?"

"Gladys, not the disguise, but the likeness has deceived you. But, if he had been Mr. Powis, why should he have worn the disguise?"

"I know not. I only know he was my husband!"

"If so, why did he not forbid your marriage with my son? Why did he not claim you, even at the altar?"

"I know not. I only know he was my husband," persisted Gladys.

"But is not the fact, that he did not claim you, sufficient proof, even if there were no other proof, that he was not the person you suppose him to be?" argued Mrs. Llewellyn.

"No—it is not! for he might not have thought me worth claiming! He might have thought me false and fallen! Oh!" she suddenly cried, in a voice of anguish, "Heaven knows it must have looked like it to his eyes, to see me standing up there to be married to another man. Or he might not have believed his own eyes and ears; or he might have been stunned into momentary inactivity; or, finally, he might have been seized by the bystanders and forced away from me too promptly. A thousand things might have happened to prevent his interfering. I cannot tell what hindered him from claiming me. I fainted too suddenly to see for myself. But what I *do* know is, that that man, who stood face-to-face with me at church, dressed as a workman, and carrying a hod, was Arthur Powis!"

"Gladys, I will have that man sought for and brought to your presence, to convince you that he is William Simmons, a stonemason's laborer, who has lived and worked in New York for years!" said Mrs. Llewellyn.

"I take you at your word!" cried Gladys, eagerly. "I accept the challenge! Bring him here! Bring him quickly! That I may tell him all, and vindicate myself before him—and go for 'h with him!"

"Very well, my dear, I will certainly do so. And now, Gladys, love, be reasonable, and take a glass of wine to revive your strength. See, dear, I will bring you the decanter and a clean glass, and you shall pour the wine out for yourself; and so your injurious suspicions may not deprive you of a necessary stimulant," said the lady, as she went to bring the little tray upon which the decanter and glasses stood.

"What!" said Gladys, "at your old tricks again so soon, Mrs. Jay?"

"Gladys! for shame! help yourself to the wine!" said the lady, recoiling, and then offering the tray.

"No, no, Mrs. Jay! I cannot trust you, Mrs. Jay! You may have drugged the whole decanter, for aught that I know! I cannot trust you, Mrs. Jay! I should be an idiot to do so!"

"Gladys! beware! how *dare* you speak so to me?"

"Madam! do *you* beware! how *dare* you ask me such a question, and brave the answer that I can make! Why do I speak to you thus? *Why?* Because, from the very first moment you entered my father's house at Kader Idris, an honored guest and a cherished relative, to this moment that you stand here over the wreck of his only daughter, wrecked by your contrivance, you have been guilty of the blackest treachery toward him, your benefactor—toward me, your ward! From the moment you entered that house you resolved to become its mistress. You threw your devilish spells over my father's mind and heart, and over my own. The old man and the young girl were equally unsuspecting of guile! First, no doubt, you designed to become my father's second wife, and rule him and me and our estate from that position! But my father's fidelity to the memory of my dear mother was too strong even for your fascinations to undermine!"

"Gladys! be silent! I command you!" interrupted the enraged woman.

"I will not! I am a Llewellyn! and do not understand commands, except those I issue! Finding you could not be my father's wife, you insinuated yourself into his confidence, and became his trusted friend! He could not marry you; but he gave you the greatest proof of confidence a man could give a woman—he made you the sole guardian of his orphan daughter, the sole trustee of her estate! How did you repay his confidence? How did you discharge your duties? First, as soon as my father had made his will, investing you with all this irresponsible power——"

"A power that I still hold," hissed the woman, in a low, deep, threatening voice.

"A power that you still *assume*, and criminally abuse; but that you no longer legally hold, madam! for whether, now, I am a wife or widow, since I was married I have ceased to be your ward."

"We shall see that."

"We shall—but you interrupt me, Mrs. Jay. I was about to tell you *why* I spoke to you in the way you found so objectionable. I say, from the time my dear father made that fatal will, giving you all this power—he *sickened with a strange disease*. Oh, Heaven of heavens! My dear, lost father. I dare not dwell upon the manner of his death! Mrs. Jay, *what was the disease my father died of?*"

"Gladys, cease this insane raving, I say!" gasped the woman, turning white as death.

"The doctors, with all their skill, could not discover its nature nor alleviate its pangs. He died. Mrs. Jay, *what did he die of?*"

"Gladys! cease, cease, I say!" exclaimed the woman, stamping.

"I will not. You asked me for a 'why.' I will give you one, and a 'wherefore' at the back of it. My father died. You best know how. No sooner was he under the sod than you began your machinations against my peace and honor. You intercepted all the letters between me

and my betrothed, and subjected me to a cruel anxiety and suspense that preyed upon my health and spirits for many months. When, in spite of all you could do or say to shake my faith in my dear Arthur, I still trusted him, you produced forged letters purporting to be my father's written commands—dying commands to his child to break off her engagement with Mr. Powis and to wed—whom?—your idiotic son, James Stukely. When, in spite of all this, my betrothed returned to me, and we rejected the forged letters and their false counsel, you, by an act of arbitrary power, made me a prisoner in my own room. When, favored by fortune, I made my escape and gave my hand in marriage to Arthur, you followed us! like some foul and prowling beast of prey you crept secretly on our track. I saw you on one day. On the next I saw *not* my husband. *What became of him, Mrs. Jay?*

"Girl! I will not be outraged in my own house!"

"You will be outraged in a more public place, madam, before the play is over. What became of Arthur Powis, I ask you? You told me *then* that he had been assigned to the command of a store-ship at the Portsmouth navy yard. You deceived those dear old ladies, too, who had me under their protection. I *know* you did, or they never would have consented to my leaving them under the circumstances. You beguiled me from their protection—beguiled me by the basest falsehood——"

"Ungrateful girl! I drew you gently from a life of dishonor and misery, to one of honor and safety under my own protection!" exclaimed Mrs. Llewellyn.

Without heeding her interruption, Gladys continued:

"You sent me, ill, weak, and alone, to a strange seaport, in search of a man who had never been there, and a ship that had no existence. You followed me where you had first sent me. You found me in the condition that you had worked to produce. Deceived, baffled, and half distracted, I was wandering about the Portsmouth navy yard in search

of the husband you had sent me to seek, when you arrested me as your mad ward!"

"You *were* mad!"

"No! never! weakened, subdued, palsied as I have been, I have never for an instant been mad!—To resume, madam! for you shall hear all the 'why!' You could not have taken me away from those kindly old ladies except by fraud; but you could seize me in the streets of Portsmouth by *force*—that was what you worked for! You did so! You got me in your power; you dosed, drugged, slowly poisoned me; you took me to Kader Idris; shut me out from all my kind; degraded me to your infamous will; and you would have consummated your criminal purpose in marrying me to your imbecile son, but for the intervention of an humble agent—my poor lost mother's maid and my own nurse, who discovered your nefarious practices and warned me—yes! and saved me *then*. But you suspected her, and consequently—*she disappeared!* as all disappear who are in your way, Mrs. Jay. I missed her one morning, and never saw her more! *What became of Ailie, Mrs. Jay?*"

Again the pallor of death spread over the face of Mrs. Llewellyn; but she soon rallied her flying courage, and answered haughtily:

"You insolent girl, how dare you ask me? When a servant offends me I get rid of her."

"I know you do, Mrs. Jay. But—will you get rid of retributive justice as easily? Well! my only remaining, humble friend removed from me, I made but a feeble stand against your devilish power. My situation, too, made me an easy prey. I became a mother, and had to send my child away to save her from your fell plots. Alas! *did I save her?* Heaven knows! Again you dosed, drugged, slowly poisoned me. Again you degraded me to your own infamous will. And this time certainly you would have effected your felonious purpose and married me to your

foolish son, but for the intervention of Providence. I saw my husband in the church and I was saved!"

"Base, shameless, thankless girl! I rescued you from a life of dishonor; for the adventurer I have permitted you to call your husband never was so in reality. All that I did for you was legally as well as humanely done; for not being a wife, but a minor, you were still my ward, owing me obedience. I had still the authority of a guardian over you—an authority that I used only for your best interests. I would have married you to my only son, a youth of spotless moral character, and thus restored you to honor and peace, but that you were frightened by a chance resemblance of a living man to a dead one. And now, when I would soothe your agitation and support your weakness, you turn on me like a tigress, upbraid me with crimes that have no existence but in your own injurious suspicions. But, Gladys! for the love I bear the memory of your dear parents, I will bear with you yet," said the woman, with a fair show of moderation.

"Oh, hypocrite!" said Gladys, giving her a withering look.

"Take care, young lady! Remember that you are still a minor and my ward. Still under my authority, and in my power!" said the lady.

"I am not afraid of you, Mrs. Jay! You have done the very worst to me that you can do! Yes; you can do no worse, even though you were to kill me. By your infamous practices upon my nervous system you deprived me of my moral and intellectual free agency and drew me to the brink of crime and ruin. Can you do more to me than that? No! for if you were to kill me, you could only destroy the life of my body; whereas, by your late horrible treatment, you essayed the destruction of my intellect and will, which are parts of the soul! Can you ever do as much as that to me again? No; for hear me, Mrs. Jay, you will never have the opportunity! For from your hand

I will never take any thing whatever to eat or drink! And while I stay in your house I will never take any thing to eat or to drink that may by any means be made the vehicle of your soul-destroying drugs. Sooner than do so I will starve myself to death. Yes, Mrs. Jay, I have the spirit to dare death, even the slow and painful death of starvation! but I have not the will to become again the passive, senseless, degraded tool of crime that you would have made me! Perhaps Providence may send me deliverance. I shall pray for it. In the meantime, *my* part is to preserve the purity of my intellect and will, even, if necessary, at the cost of suffering and death. And so, while I stay with you, neither food nor drink, that can possibly be made the medium of poison, shall pass my lips, though I famish!" said Gladys, closing those pallid lips with the sad firmness of a young martyr.

"You will find that it requires more than courage to starve yourself to death. It requires fortitude!" said the lady, vindictively.

But Gladys had "said her say," and made no reply.

"I suppose I must bear with you in your present mood. But do not carry your madness too far, my girl! Remember, there are such things as asylums, where the phrensy of lunatics is restrained, and where the world seldom troubles itself to inquire about them," said Mrs. Llewellyn, turning away.

In doing so her glances fell upon Ennis; who had been forgotten until this moment. Ennis, who had remained in the room through the whole interview, and though only half in the confidence of Mrs. Llewellyn, had stood apart with open eyes and ears, watching the speakers and drinking in every word of the conversation.

"Why are you loitering here?" curtly demanded her mistress.

"If you please, n a'am, you never told me to go," said the girl.

"I tell you now, then!" exclaimed the lady.
And Ennis left the room.
Mrs. Llewellyn soon followed, locking the door after her.

CHAPTER XXXII.

MR. STUKELY ASSERTS HIMSELF.

Shall I, wasting in despair,
Die, because a woman's fair?
If she undervalues me
What care I how fair she be?—*Raleigh.*

PASSING down to the next floor Mrs. Llewellyn saw Mr. Stukely in his room, busily engaged in packing his traveling-trunk.

"What now?" inquired his mother, looking in.

"I am going back to the University. I am not going to stay here to be made a laughing-stock of!"

"What! will you forsake Gladys in her present state of health?" demanded the lady.

"Oh bosh! about her state of health! *She's* well enough. *She's* only *a-doing* of me, that's all! And she sha'nt make a fool of me again! not if *I* know it! Nor call me an idiot a third time neither," said Mr. Stukely, cramming his wedding coat into the middle of his trunk.

"James Stukely, what *do* you mean?"

"I mean to go back to college, and I mean to start by the night train. Law, mother, I'm not so anxious to marry Cousin Gladys! It was only to please you and her that I ever consented. Catch me consenting again, that's all! But I thought as long as she was dying in love with me, and you was anxious for it, I'd do the handsome thing, and I did it! But Lord, as for me, I don't think Cousin Gladys can hold a candle to Nelly Blythe."

"*To whom?*" cried Mrs. Llewellyn in alarm.

"To Nelly Blythe, the young lady that makes my shirts at college. If you could only once see *her*, mother, you would—My goodness! what's the matter?" cried Mr. Stukely, for Mrs. Llewellyn, before she had heard his sentence half out, had dropped breathless into the nearest chair.

"James Stukely, do you mean to kill me?" she cried, almost hysterically.

"No! what made you think so? I wouldn't hurt a hair of your head, nor let anybody else do it! I was going to tell you something that I thought would please you."

"What was it, then?" inquired the lady in a faint voice, with some feeling of relief and some of curiosity.

"Why, seeing you want me married so badly, I was just going to tell you what a nice girl Nelly Blythe was, and how I could go down there and marry her to-morrow, if I like, and—*Now!* what's the matter?" he broke off and exclaimed in consternation, for Mrs. Llewellyn, with a cry between a howl and a shriek, had clapped her hands to her head.

"I shall go mad!" she exclaimed.

"Extraordinary! What for? What have I done? There's no pleasing you, mother!" said Mr. Stukely, dropping himself down in a corresponding chair.

"Mrs. Llewellyn groaned in real anguish of spirit.

Mr. Stukely sat staring at her, pulling his yellow moustache and sighing:

"Extraordinary!"

Suddenly she started up, rushed at him, seized his arm, and shrieked in his ear:

"James Stukely! If you *do* make a low marriage, I shall—hang myself!" and so saying she flung off his arm.

Mr. Stukely's chin fell, his eyebrows rose, his eyes started, and his cheeks blanched with horror.

"Extraordinary!—extraordinary!—extraordinary!" he

exclaimed as fast as he could speak. Then finding more definite words he stammered :

"I—I—I wont do it, mother, if you don't like it! It was all—all—all to please you! I thought you wanted me married and settled; and if Cousin Gladys wouldn't have me I knew the young lady that made my shirts, Miss Nelly Blythe——"

"Don't name her, lest I do something desperate!" cried Mrs. Llewellyn, stamping.

"Well I wont! I wont! I wont! Only, for goodness gracious sake, mother, don't talk about doing any thing desperate, especially hanging, the very idea of which gives me a sort of choking in the throat and fullness in the head! But tell me what *will* please you, mother, and I'll do it."

"James Stukely unpack that trunk and remain quietly where you are, until I settle where we shall go next. Will you do this?" she sharply demanded.

"Yes, yes, yes, mother, I'll do any thing. Goodness knows it was all to please you! I'd do any thing to please you except it was something I considered very wrong, like marrying a girl on the sly, or taking another man's sweetheart, or something," said Mr. Stukely, beginning to unpack as fast as he could.

With this little victory, which she knew might be turned into defeat in another hour, Mrs. Llewellyn was forced to be contented.

Gladys kept her word. As her fainting fit involved no consequent illness, she soon left her bed. But she did not resume her recent childish amusements. She never now noticed the bright pictures on the walls, nor the Dresden china images, nor the stuffed birds. She never even looked at the life-like wax doll baby. And even when Ennis brought it to her and asked her if she would not take it, she blushed faintly, shook her head, and said :

"All that is past now, Ennis; I have come to myself; take the poor toy away."

When her dinner was brought, she turned away her head and utterly refused it.

"Very well," said Mrs. Llewellyn, when she heard of it —"very well! after she has fasted a few hours she will return to her food."

But Mrs. Llewellyn miscalculated the strength of will possessed by Gladys. At tea-time she refused her tea and toast.

"Exactly," said Mrs. Llewellyn. "She may be able to dispense with her dinner and tea, but she will not be able to resist breakfast to-morrow morning."

The morning came, however, and Gladys sent away her coffee and rolls untasted. Twenty-four hours' fast already affected her health and strength, and she looked pale and moved languidly. The second day of abstinence passed. On the morning of the third Gladys looked quite haggard; but still she rejected the fragrant coffee, and delicate rolls, and luscious broiled partridge that were placed before her, to tempt her famished appetite.

"Leave it in the room until dinner-time," said Mrs. Llewellyn.

And her orders were obeyed; but without effect; for the breakfast stood upon the little table untouched until it was replaced by the dinner; which also remained untouched until it was replaced by the supper; and so passed the third day of this black fast with the captive, who chose to famish in the sight of food rather than risk being drugged to her ruin.

On the morning of the fifth day Gladys could not rise from her bed unassisted. And when once she had slipped on her morning-wrapper and sank into her easy-chair, it seemed as if she would never be able to leave it again.

Ennis went and reported the condition of her charge to Mrs. Llewellyn, who came to see her, and gazed piteously and even angrily upon her wasted face, and hollow cheeks, and sunken eyes

"So, this is starvation," said Mrs. Llewellyn, with cold cruelty. "It is an interesting case. I never saw one of any sort before. And I never heard of a case of voluntary starvation; though I believe there have been instances of compulsory famishing."

Gladys neither replied nor looked up at her tormentor. She remained reclining back in her chair, with her thin hands hanging down, and her blue, pale eyelids drooping.

Mrs. Llewellyn stooped, and examined her more closely, saying:

"There are dark circles around the eyes; and shadowy hollows in the temples and cheeks; and the lips are blue and dry and drawn away from the teeth. Interesting process this of starvation, especially when it is entirely voluntary on the part of the subject!"

To these cruel taunts still Gladys vouchsafed no reply.

Then Mrs. Llewellyn spoke more to the purpose:

"See here, Gladys! I have given you time to get over your folly—as much time as was safe—more perhaps—and now, if you do not take food, I shall force it upon you. Will you take it?"

"No," said the victim, without raising her eyes or moving a muscle.

"Ennis, bring me that cup of coffee, and stand ready to help me."

Ennis obeyed; and Mrs. Llewellyn arose and went close to Gladys.

But Gladys raised one of her wan hands, and in a faint voice said:

"Keep off, madam, and listen to me: You think that you can force food upon me as you could force physic upon a child. But you forget that when a child is gagged, and physic forced into its mouth, it swallows only to avoid suffocation. Now gag me, and force food into my mouth, if you dare; and I will suffocate sooner than swallow. Try it. It will be for me only a quicker and easier death than that of

starvation; and for *you*—only one more murder added to your list of crimes."

"You are the devil!" said the woman, drawing back.

"I am a Llewellyn!" said Gladys, proudly; "and I know how to suffer and to die, too, in a good cause."

"You are a lunatic! But I must find some means of making you take food. You shall not commit suicide, either slowly or suddenly, while you are under my care."

"Mrs. Llewellyn, you know that my object is not to destroy life, but to save honor. I do not refuse food, but I refuse the drugs that are administered through it. While you sit here, let Ennis go out and bring me some *oysters in the shell*, and bring them here, and open them in my presence, and I will eat them *from the shell*, free from the suspicion of drugs. If you really wish to save my life, and I think you do—not from motives of humanity, but from those of self-interest, since my death at this time could bring you nothing but disappointment—you will do as I suggest," said Gladys, calmly.

Now, of course, Mrs. Llewellyn *did* wish to preserve the life of her ward, since that ward was her only hold upon the rich manor and rent-roll of Kader Idris. So she turned to her attendant and said:

"Ennis, your young lady is insane of course. But it is sometimes judicious, as well as merciful, to humor the fancies of insane people. Go, therefore, and bring the oysters, as she requests. Take this purse."

"Thank goodness, she will eat something at last!" muttered Ennis, whose sympathies were more easily aroused by a famishing stomach than by a breaking heart. And she hurried gladly away upon her errand.

"If it were not that I know your own self-interest is the best guardian of my feeble life, I should dislike being left alone with you, Mrs. Jay," said Gladys.

"You will repent these insults some day," replied the woman.

And these were the only words that passed between the jailor and her prisoner until the return of Ennis.

"Mr. Stukely is down stairs inquiring for you, ma'am," said the girl, as she entered with a covered basket.

Mrs. Llewellyn immediately arose, and left the room.

Ennis almost rushed to the hearth, dropped on her knees, wrenched open an oyster, cut it loose, and handed it up to Gladys.

As the poor famished girl seized and swallowed the grateful morsel, Ennis drew from the basket a bottle of wine, a corkscrew, and a glass, saying:

"I don't know as I did right, Miss Gladys, but here is a bottle of old port, as I made bold to buy. Now look at it, please, ma'am, and see for yourself it is all right, before I draw the cork, so that you may know as nothing has been put into this. See, ma'am, here is the seal unbroken, and the cobwebs and dust over it all right, as it came from the rest'rant, where I got the oysters."

"Thank you, thank you, oh, thank you, Ennis! This is all the more pleasing to me from being an unexpected kindness. And some day I will reward you for it," said poor Gladys, fervently.

"I don't know as I want any reward. Only don't tell missus," said Ennis, as she drew the cork and poured out a little wine.

When she had given this, she opened another oyster. And then she took from the basket some hard biscuits, which she pressed upon Gladys with assurances that they were all right, having passed from the hands of the vendor into her own.

Again Gladys thanked her new-found friend, as she received the biscuits.

Gladys made a very, very moderate meal, for her stomach, weakened by her severe fast, would not bear much. But as the food was, perhaps, the very best that could be selected for one in her condition, it did her the greatest good.

And after eating she reclined back in her chair, and sank into a healthful sleep.

Ennis hid the wine and biscuits, cleared away the oyster-shells, and restored every thing to order before Mrs. Llewellyn's return to the room.

Gladys slept long and well, and awakened quite refreshed.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

AN HUMBLE FRIEND AT NEED.

I am not of that harsh and morose temper
As some proud ones are taxed with; who suppose
They part from the respect due to their honors
If they use not such as follow them
Without distinction of their hearts, as slaves.—*Massinger*.

From this time Gladys ceased to fast; but she restricted herself to a very severe regimen—hard biscuits bought from the baker; oysters eaten from the shell; eggs boiled in the shell; apples; oranges; nuts; and pure water drawn from the spout over her own wash-stand. Ennis waited on her, bringing her all these things.

Mrs. Llewellyn did not interfere with this arrangement. She bided her time, waiting for a more favorable opportunity of once more getting the will as well as the person of her captive in her power.

Ennis was a great help to her young mistress just at this time.

And Gladys fully appreciated the girl's services.

Holy Writ informs us that there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance. And our daily experience assures us that the smallest favor from a supposed enemy makes a deeper impression upon the receiver

than does the greatest service from a known friend. In the one case it is a matter of course and does not surprise us. In the other it is an unexpected event and astonishes us. Thus Gladys felt more grateful to her jailer, Ennis, for slight favors rendered during a temporary fit of compunction, than she had ever felt to her faithful servant Ailie for the devotion of a life.

And this gratitude she continually expressed in every look and tone when communicating with her attendant.

Perhaps one of the best elements in a good action is its reproductiveness. Thus Ennis having rendered one good service to her young mistress, felt disposed to follow it up with a second. So one morning, while helping the young lady to dress, she said:

"Miss Gladys, if there is any thing in the world that you want done, and that I can do, without making missus angry and losing my place, I am willing to do it for you."

"Thank you, Ennis, there is one thing to begin with, that I wish you to do—to cease calling me Miss Gladys. I am not Miss Gladys, but Mrs. Arthur Powis. I have been a wife and mother, and I require to be addressed by my married name and title," she answered, gently.

Ennis stared a little, but answered:

"Yes, ma'am, I will remember. Now, ma'am, is there any thing else?"

"No."

"I was thinking, ma'am, as how, as long as you've been used to having of your tea and coffee reg'lar all your life, it might hurt your health to keep on doing without them. And so, ma'am, if you would please to trust me, I could make coffee or tea and bring it to you myself, so as you may be sure as there'll not be any of that physic in it as you are so 'fraid of. Shall I?"

"No, Ennis, no, I thank you," she replied.

"I hope you don't suspicion *me*, ma'am?" inquired the girl, with a troubled look

"No, I do not. But a cup of coffee or tea might be drugged in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, while your back was turned. You couldn't keep your eyes always upon it, even if you had eyes like Argus all around your head. No, Ennis, I must practice a little self-denial to save my integrity," said Gladys, firmly.

"Oh, ma'am, do you rarely and truly think as my missus would do any thing like that?" inquired the girl, who, as I have often said, was only partly in the confidence of her employer, and who never could decide for herself whether the fears of Gladys were or were not well-founded.

"I would rather not speak of this," said the young lady. And the conversation then ceased.

In proportion as Gladys recovered from the effects of the drugs that had been administered to her, she grew more keenly intelligent upon the subject of her situation and more painfully sensitive to its sufferings.

From the morning upon which she had seen that mysterious workman in the church she cherished a hope that he would re-appear and prove to be Arthur Powis. But as day followed day without bringing to pass any such event, her suspense became agonizing.

Mrs. Llewellyn did not keep her promise of finding out that workman and bringing him to the presence of Gladys to convince her of her mistake; nor did she seek to account for the non-fulfilment of that promise. At this period she evaded inquiry by avoiding the presence of her captive.

When Gladys could bear the agony of uncertainty no longer, she called Ennis to her presence and said:

"Ennis, you offered me your services a few days ago. I accept them now. Oh, Ennis! tell me if you have ever seen that man who bears so strong a resemblance to my husband—so strong a resemblance, Ennis, that I cannot help believing him to be Lieutenant Powis himself—although Mrs. Jay declares him to be only a workman. Say, have you seen him, Ennis?"

"Yes, ma'am, but not lately; not for more than a fortnight; but I have seen him close, and *know* he is only a workman and not Master Arthur," replied the girl, confidently.

"You *know* this, Ennis? How *should* you know it?" inquired Gladys, with surprise and distrust.

"Because, ma'am, I found out all about him. For when missus first saw him pass the house and noticed of him, *she* was troubled by his likeness to Master Arthur, too."

"Oh! she was?"

"Yes, ma'am; and she sent me to ask about him on the sly; and I found out every thing."

"What did you find out?"

"I had better begin and tell you all about it, straight through," said the girl.

"Do so, Ennis," answered the young lady.

And Ennis told the whole story of her researches into the life of William Simmons, the stonemason's laborer. At the end of the narrative Gladys said:

"I think you have told me the truth, as far as you know it; but, Ennis, I am less convinced and more dissatisfied than ever. You have lost all traces of him, you say?"

"Yes, ma'am—ever since that Saturday night."

"Well then, Ennis, I wish you to do something for me, if you can do it without getting yourself into trouble."

"What is it, ma'am?"

"I wish you to go to that street where we went on Tuesday, and to a block of half-finished buildings opposite the church where I was to have been married, and inquire among the workmen there for the man named William Simmons. And, if possible, get speech of the man. You will then find out for a certainty whether he is really whom I suspect him to be. If he *is*, give him this letter, Ennis, and it will bring him to my side in an hour. And, Ennis, you shall be rewarded for this good service beyond your utmost hopes. Can you do this?"

"Yes, ma'am, for I have got to go up in that very part of the town on a message for my missus."

In an hour from this time the girl went on her double errand.

Gladys passed the interval of her absence in the most intolerable suspense.

It was near sunset when Ennis returned to the house; and it was quite sunset before she got leisure to come to Gladys' room.

"Well! well!" breathlessly gasped Gladys, as the girl opened the door.

"Well, ma'am, here is your letter," answered Ennis, very gravely.

"You did not see him—or—you found him to be not whom I hoped?"

"I did not see him; he—he——"

"What? what?"

"Well, he wasn't master Arthur Powis, ma'am; so I hope you won't be very much shocked when you hear it; but—but——"

"But—oh, what? Speak, Ennis, for Heaven's sake!" exclaimed Gladys, extremely alarmed by the manner of the girl.

"Well, ma'am, indeed, it is nothing to disturb you, seeing he wasn't Mr. Arthur Powis, although it do seem very dreadful to happen to any one——"

"Oh, Ennis! can't you tell me what it is that has happened?" cried Gladys, clasping her hands.

"Well, ma'am—but, please, don't take on, because, indeed, he was truly nothing but a workman. Well, so, when I went there and asked about him, the other men all looked troubled, and looked at one another, and didn't answer."

The girl paused.

Gladys said not a word, but her clasped hands and imploring eyes were more eloquent than words, in entreaty for her attendant to go on.

"Then," continued Ennis, "the loss came and asked me

if I was any thing to the young man. And I told him no, nothing at all, only we had used to see him go by, and hadn't seen him lately. Oh, then he looked more confident, and he told me—he told me that—oh, ma'am don't be shocked——”

“Ennis, Ennis, go on!”

“He told me that the very same day of the marriage that was to be, on last Tuesday afternoon, Billy Simmons——”

“Yes, yes!” The clasped hands began to writhe and twist, and the imploring eyes to start and dilate.

“Oh, ma'am! don't look that-a-way, or I shall never dare to tell you.”

“Tell me, or you will kill me!”

“Billy Simmons was at work on a scaffolding up before the third story, and he made a misstep and—oh! remember he wasn't Master Arthur, indeed he wasn't—he fell to the ground and was instantly killed!”

“Oh, Ennis!”

And Gladys sunk back in her chair and covered her face with her hands.

“He was't any body but Billy Simmons, indeed he wasn't, Miss Glad—I mean, Mrs. Powis.”

Gladys did not reply, nor remove her hands.

“I found that out to a dead certainty; because when I asked where they had buried him, they told me that he was took home to his mother, who was a widow woman, and buried from her house; but they didn't know where. And no more didn't they know where he lived. But, Miss Gladys, it all proves that he couldn't have been Master Arthur, as he was so well known to be what he was.”

“I suppose you are right,” said Gladys, shuddering. “And, oh! I must try not to go crazy with all this. Ennis, when things of this kind occur they are put in the daily papers. Go out to the nearest newspaper agency, and bring me all the papers of last Wednesday,” said Gladys, trying very hard to compose her agitated nerves.

Ennis went out and soon returned with the *Times* being the only paper of that date she could procure.

Gladys seized it, and after a diligent search, she found the item she was looking for—a small paragraph of a few lines:

“SHOCKING ACCIDENT.—A laborer, named William Simmons, while at work upon the new block of buildings in progress opposite St. Asaph's Church, fell from the scaffolding on the third story, and was instantly killed. His body was taken home to his mother, a poor widow, residing in the neighborhood.”

That was all.

Gladys read the item and laid the paper down with a sigh of mingled pity and relief, as she said:

“Poor man and poor mother! Well, Ennis, I suppose you were right. Indeed I know you were right; for, if this poor man was killed, it proves to me that he could not have been Lieutenant Powis. I feel so sure that my husband still lives! So sure!”

Gladys was half right and half wrong, and so was Ennis, and so were the workmen on the building, and the reporters of the newspapers.

Could Gladys have seen a short paragraph in the next morning's—Thursday morning's paper. It was this:

“ERRATUM.—The laborer, William Simmons, stated in our issue of yesterday to have met his death by a fall from a scaffolding near the top of a block of buildings opposite St. Asaph's Church, was not really killed, as reported, but stunned and very badly injured. He is lying in the Bellevue Hospital at the point of death.”

Gladys never saw this paragraph. But more of this in future.

Gladys kept to her regimen of oysters, fruits, nuts, etc. And her health did not suffer from the deprivation of her

usual beverages. On the contrary, as soon as she was relieved from suspense on the subject of the unfortunate workman, her youth and good constitution asserted themselves in her daily improving health. With her returning health of mind and body came thoughts of escape from the thralldom of her guardian. She knew, when she thought it all over, that she could not openly defy Mrs. Llewellyn's authority. She was still a minor, and that lady was her guardian. She was a wife, it is true; but she had no means of proving her wifedom while in a state of bondage. To prove her marriage, she must first regain her liberty. To regain her liberty she must make her escape before the family removed to Kader Idris. Day after day Gladys pondered over the ways and means of effecting her purpose. She had a plenty of ready money, for Mrs. Llewellyn made a great virtue of paying her regularly every quarter the liberal sum that her father had allowed her for pocket money during her minority, or her single life. And she had much valuable jewelry, all very portable and easily convertible into cash. Altogether, she had enough to escape upon, and to live decently upon for a few months.

She determined to try to purchase the help of Ennis. One night, when Ennis had assisted her to undress, she broached the subject.

"Ennis, how much does Mrs. Jay give you a month for guarding and waiting on me?"

"Fourteen dollars, and many handsome presents of shawls, and dresses, and such."

"Whom do you really consider your mistress, Mrs. Jay or myself?"

"Well, ma'am, she pays me my wages; but my business is to wait on you. So I can't tell."

"Ennis, the only claim you think Mrs. Jay has on you, then, is the wages she pays you?"

"Yes, ma'am; I suppose that is about it."

"But suppose you are paid out of *my* money?"

"Then, ma'am, if paid out of *your* money for serving *you*, I must be *your* servant and not missus's."

"I should think so, Ennis," said the young lady, falling into thought. Soon she broke the silence again. And it was to make a confidante of Ennis.

It was the misfortune of this poor young lady that in her bitter extremity, sequestered as she was from intercourse with all other human creatures, and exposed to the basest machinations against her sanity, honor, and peace, to be obliged to confide her plans to, and beg assistance from, this humble instrument.

So she commenced and related the oft-repeated history of her wrongs and sorrows—her parents' death; her lover's absence; her guardian's treachery; and then her imprisonment, her escape, her marriage, and her recapture.

"You know all the rest, Ennis," she said; "for when I was taken to Kader Idris I found you there."

"Yes, ma'am."

"Now, Ennis, the question is, Will you help me to escape from this cruel captivity, in which I am exposed to such constant danger? I do not wish to bribe you, Ennis. Heaven knows I would not willingly bribe any one's servant, even in my extremity. But I do not consider you Mrs. Llewellyn's servant, but mine. I know that what I wish you to do is right. But I also know, that by doing it you will risk or lose Mrs. Llewellyn's favor. Therefore, Ennis, I tell you, not in bribery, but in justice, that I will well remunerate your services—so well, that you shall never regret Mrs. Llewellyn."

Poor Gladys looked pleadingly up to the face of her keeper, who cast *her* eyes thoughtfully on the floor.

"Will you assist me to escape, Ennis?"

"Tell me right out what you want me to do, ma'am. And then, if I can't do it, at least I can hold my tongue and not tell Mrs. Llewellyn," said Ennis.

Gladys sighed, and then said:

"I wish you to do simply this. In the dead of night—say this night, or to-morrow night, or any other that we may fix upon—I wish you just to open the doors and let me out!"

"Oh, ma'am, you would be insulted, or robbed, or murdered, or something, in this wicked city."

"No, for you must have a cab waiting for me around the corner."

"Where would you go, ma'am?"

"Straight to the Washington Railway Station, and sit in the cab until the office should be opened, and then I would take a ticket for the early train South, and be half way to Washington before my cruel enemy should have discovered my absence. Will you do this for me, Ennis?"

"Oh ma'am, if I was, and if my missus was to find it out, she would turn me out of doors neck and heels!" said the girl, with a half willing and half frightened look.

"I know she would Ennis, and therefore I propose to pay you liberally. Ennis I have saved up fifteen hundred dollars from my allowance of pocket money; because, in truth, for the last year I have had few opportunities of spending money. I will give you five hundred dollars as a guarantee against any loss you may suffer through serving me!"

The eyes of Ennis expanded with surprise and brightened with pleasure.

Gladys saw this and went on to say:

"Nor is that all Ennis, nor a tithe of what I will do to reward you for helping me to regain my liberty. In very little more than a year from this I shall be of age. I shall then be the mistress of Kader Idris and all its vast dependencies with one of the largest private revenues in the whole country. I will then take you into my service at double your present wages, or I will pay you down a thousand dollars as a marriage dower if you wish to marry, or capital to begin business upon if you wish to keep a shop. Will you assist me, Ennis?"

"Yes ma'am, I will; but I dar'n't stop back here and face missus after all's done. She'd murder me. Can't you take me along with you, ma'am?"

"Oh, yes indeed, Ennis, gladly!" exclaimed her young mistress, catching eagerly at the idea.

"I have got to go down and get my supper now, ma'am, if you please, because missus is awful particular about hours in the kitchen."

"I know she is. Very well, Ennis! After supper come up again and we will talk further of this."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE ESCAPE OF GLADYS.

Out of this nettle danger
I will pluck the flower safety.—*Shakspeare.*

THAT night when all the rest of the household were gone to bed, Gladys and her attendant sat arranging their plans for flight. Ennis begged to stipulate for a day or two to smuggle her own wardrobe out of the house and into the care of an acquaintance she had picked up in the neighborhood. And Gladys unwillingly consented to the delay. For herself, she had but little to take away as far as bulk was concerned; her money and jewels; a comb and brush; and a single change of clothes were all that she required for her journey. These were easily packed in a small leather bag, that she herself could carry in her hand. The escape was arranged to take place on the Friday night following—thus allowing Ennis three whole days to prepare. Having settled this, Ennis arose and courtesied, and bade her mistress a respectful good-night.

So intent had Gladys been upon the one point of her escape from the house, that she had not cast a glance at any thing beyond that. She had at once resolved to go to Washington, because she knew Washington better than any other place, and also because she had vague hopes that her friends, the three old maiden sisters, would protect her, and perhaps help her to prove her marriage and secure her liberty; and that they might even possibly be able to give her some information about Arthur. She resolved then on going to Washington, to go at once to "Ceres Cottage," or as the poor old ladies called it, "Serious Cottage," and throw herself upon their protection. She did not deem it necessary, however, to confide this part of her plan to her servant.

The interval between this day, Monday and the day of flight, Friday, was passed by Gladys in the usual dull routine of her restricted life.

Even her preparations for the journey afforded but little variety; for they occupied less than half an hour.

Friday came—a splendid autumn day, a very herald of freedom and happiness. But it seemed very, very long to Gladys.

In the evening Mrs. Llewellyn surprised her with a visit, the first visit that lady had deigned to pay her ward for more than a week.

"Well," said Gladys, mockingly, "have you come to keep your promise and to bring me news of that strange workman, whom you assured me that you would seek out and bring to my presence?"

"Yes," replied Mrs. Llewellyn, much to the surprise of Gladys. "I have come to bring you news of that man and to set your heart at rest forever, on the subject, I hope."

And she drew from her pocket the very identical copy of the *Times* that Ennis had purchased for Gladys more than a week before, and that had accidentally fallen into

the hands of Mrs. Llewellyn. Gladys knew it by a particular stain of ink on the corner.

"Yes," continued the lady, "by the merest chance I picked up this paper, which is more than a week old, and my eyes were caught by this notice——" And here she handed the paper to Gladys and pointed out the paragraph falsely relating the death of William Simmons.

Gladys read it quietly as if she had never seen it before; and then she laid the paper aside.

"You are satisfied now I hope?" said Mrs. Llewellyn.

"Quite," replied Gladys.

"I am glad of it. But I did not come here, *only* to tell you of that troublesome fellow's fate. I came to say that we are to start for Kader Idris on Monday."

"Very well," said Gladys.

"Shall you be ready?"

"To go to Kader Idris? I will see."

"Well whether you are ready or not, I start for Kader Idris on Monday, and you accompany me. Good-night," said Mrs. Llewellyn.

"Good-night," returned Gladys.

In going out Mrs. Llewellyn met Ennis coming in.

"Ennis, you are to have Miss Gladys' wardrobe packed up to go to Kader Idris on Monday morning; do you hear?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Mind you do it."

"Yes, ma'am."

Mrs. Llewellyn was gone and Ennis stood in her place.

"I hope and trust that was the very last I shall ever see of that evil woman," said Gladys, speaking more to herself than to her attendant.

"Now, ma'am," whispered Ennis, approaching her young lady, "every thing is ready fixed. All my clothes is out of the house. And the cab will be at the corner at two o'clock after midnight. I thought that was just about the dearest hour of the night."

"Yes, I think so, too."

"And now, ma'am, if you will take my advice, you will just go to bed and try to sleep. It is now nine o'clock, and you can get four clear hours of sleep, for I needn't to wake you up before one."

"Sleep! Oh, Ennis, do you think it would be possible for me to sleep on the eve of my escape!" exclaimed Gladys, excitedly.

"I do suppose not; but then anyways you had better undress and go to bed. It will refresh you to lay there at your ease, and it will 'vent missus from suspicioning any thing in case she should take it into her head to make you another visit this evening."

"True," said Gladys, and she immediately followed this advice.

Of course, sleep was out of the question; but she lay there resting and listening to the household pacing about on their last rounds before retiring to sleep.

Ennis came up from her supper at ten o'clock, lowered the gas, and seated herself beside her mistress, to watch out the long hours before two o'clock.

"Do try to go to sleep, ma'am, and I will keep awake and wake you up at one o'clock," urged Ennis.

"Impossible," replied her mistress. And Gladys remained lying there wide awake, listening to the last muffled sounds of the retiring household, while her attendant nodded in her chair, and repeated at intervals:

"Do try to go to sleep, ma'am, and I will keep awake and wake you up at two o'clock."

But as hour after hour passed by, Ennis sank into deeper and deeper slumbers; starting at longer and longer intervals with the spasmodic exclamation that became shorter and shorter, until at length it was nothing more than:

"Do try—two o'clock!" And at last Ennis fell fast asleep, with her head thrown back and her mouth wide open for a fly-trap, had there been flies to catch. Ennis

must have dreamed that her advice was taken; for when the clock struck "one," and Gladys, who had watched out all the hours with unwinking eyes, arose and shook the sleeper, telling her to wake up, for it was time to get ready to go, Ennis yawned, stretched her arms, and exclaimed:

"Well, ma'am, *you* have had a real good refreshing sleep, and I am glad of it. For *my* part, I feel rather tired with keeping awake so long, but I dare say the night air will freshen me up!"

"No doubt of it," said Gladys, laughing, for the prospect of liberty had greatly raised her spirits.

They were soon ready, and at precisely a quarter to two they turned off the gas, stole from the room, locked the door, taking the key with them, and glided softly down the stairs.

These stairs that never had been heard to creak before, creaked loudly now beneath their stealthy tread. Patient Gladys was almost ready to call down maledictions upon them, as they went "crack, crack, crack," under her feet.

And, oh, what ill luck! presently a door opened, a dim light gleamed through the opening, and a voice, half in fright and half in defiance, called out:

"Who's that?"

No one replied. Gladys sank almost fainting into the darkest angle of the staircase.

"Who's that?" again called out the voice.

Gladys uttered a half-suppressed cry.

"For goodness' sake, ma'am, be quiet, and leave it all to me," whispered Ennis.

"Who's that, I say? Now if you don't answer, whoever you are, I'll fire right into you!" a third time called the voice.

"Hush, Master James! It's only me," said Ennis, pushing Gladys deeper into the dark nook and standing before her.

"Well, what are you doing out of your bed this time of night? I thought to be sure it was burglars!"

"I came down to get a piece of ice to cool a glass of water for Miss Gladys—that is all," said the ready-witted Ennis.

"Oh, well, another time answer sooner or you may get into danger. Is Cousin Gladys ill?"

"No, she is feverish and thirsty; that is all."

Now another door opened and another voice spoke:

"What is the matter, James?"

It was Mrs. Llewellyn's voice.

"Nothing, mother, only Ennis coming down to get some ice for Cousin Gladys," said Mr. Stukely.

"Ennis!" called out Mrs. Llewellyn.

"Yes, ma'am," said Ennis.

"What is the matter with Miss Gladys?"

"If you please, ma'am, she is only a little restless and feverish and thirsty. I have been sitting with her all night, and now I am going down stairs to get her a piece of ice to cool her glass of water."

"Very well, I will see her myself in the morning. Be careful of your light, Ennis."

"If you please, ma'am, I haven't got any light."

"That is well. That is safest. Go on," said Mrs. Llewellyn, closing her door.

Mr. Stukely followed suit and closed his.

A few minutes Gladys remained panting in the dark corner, until she had got over her fright and recovered her breath, and then she glided noiselessly down the stairs, followed as noiselessly by Ennis.

They gained the street door, passed it safely and locked it after them, taking the key with them, as Ennis said:

"It wont do for us to leave the house open, for if it should be robbed to-night, they would be sure to think it was me as robbed it, seeing I have run away."

Gladys agreed with her.

They walked briskly on to the corner of the street where the cab was waiting.

The driver jumped down and opened the door.

Ennis respectfully helped her young mistress to enter, and then followed her in and took the front seat before her.

The driver received his orders, and the cab started at a brisk rate for the Washington railway station.

It was three o'clock when they arrived there. They got out, and Ennis paid and dismissed the cab, and conducted her mistress into the waiting room.

The ticket office was not open, and they had two good hours to wait in the deserted room before it would be open. These hours were passed by Ennis in nodding over the rusty stove; and by her mistress in watching the sleepy porters and in waiting for the office to open.

It was open at five o'clock. Ennis at once took tickets, got the baggage checked, and then "convoyed" her young mistress on board the ferry boat.

At six o'clock they were seated in the cars flying southward. And the rising sun found them far on their way toward Philadelphia.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE FUGITIVE'S SHELTER.

Long months have seen thee roaming
A sad and weary way,
Like traveller tired at gloaming
Of a sultry summer's day.

But soon a home shall greet thee,
Though low its portals be,
And ready kindness meet thee,
And peace—Ah! will it flee?—*Percival.*

GLADYS arrived in Washington at an early hour of the afternoon. She took a hack at once and, accompanied by Ennis, drove out to Ceres Cottage. The sun was setting as the carriage drew up at the rustic gate.

How welcome, how peaceful, how pleasant the old house looked! Yes, even pleasant, although it stood among its bare trees, whose fallen leaves strewed all the garden paths.

Gladys alighted at the gate and paid and dismissed the carriage, and, followed by Ennis, walked up the straight, leave-strewn garden path that led to the door. A ruddy, leaping and glimmering light, like that emitted by the blazing of a wood-fire, shone through the windows of the sitting-room on the right-hand side of the front door, and added cheerfulness to the aspect of the scene.

Gladys knocked—with her fist, for you remember that there was neither knocker nor bell at this rustic entrance; and while she paused for a response she distinctly heard Miss Polly exclaim, in a scared whisper:

"Lor! who is that? Go to the door, Harriet, but be sure to ask who is there before you unlock it."

And the next moment Gladys heard the woman cautiously approach, and demand:

"Who dar?"

"It is I, Harriet."

"Who I?"

"Why, Harriet, don't you know my voice? I am Mrs. Powis, who used to lodge here about a year ago."

"Lor, Mrs. Powers, ma'am!" And down went the bar, and back went the bolt; and the key was turned in a trice, and there in the open door stood Harriet, glowing with welcome!

"Lor, chile! Come in out'n de cold, honey! When did you arrive? Who dat wid you? Your waiting maid? Come in, gal!—Lor, Miss Polly, if here aint Mrs. Powers! Come in, chillun!" exclaimed Harriet, hustling her questions and ejaculations one upon the back of another, as she closed the door and bustled Gladys and her maid into the bright old sitting-room.

The three old ladies who were sitting around the fire arose in a body, exclaiming simultaneously:

"Lor! Mrs. Colonel Pollard, my dear, to think of seeing you here!"

"I hope you are as glad to see me as I am to come," said Gladys, faintly smiling.

"Oh, yes indeed," replied the three old ladies together, as Miss Polly placed a chair, and made the visitor set down; and Miss Milly untied and removed her bonnet; and Miss Jenny stirred the fire into a blaze.

But Gladys saw that they were all three "dying" of curiosity to know what brought her; how far she had come, and how long she meant to stay.

"Harriet, bring a candle in here directly—two candles, Harriet! and then put the kettle on and fry that chicken, and make some nice rice waffles—Mrs. Colonel Pollard always relished rice waffles;—and then come and set the table for tea. You'll stay to tea, my dear, I hope?" said Miss Polly.

"Yes, dear Miss Polly, I will stay to tea, and I will stay to sleep, too, if you will let me," replied Gladys.

"To sleep! Here, Harriet! stop a minute. Now, listen—the very first thing you do before you put the kettle on, you go and make a good fire in Mrs. Colonel Pollard's room, to air it well. And then go and do the rest I told you," said Miss Polly, anxiously.

When Harriet had left the room, the three sisters turned kindly, questioning glances upon Gladys.

"Dear Miss Polly, and dear good friends! I want to stay with you altogether, if you will let me! You *will* let me, will you not?" inquired the poor hunted child, in a pleading, tearful, tone.

The three old ladies did not reply—not from unwillingness to grant her request, but from amazement that it should have been made.

"You will let me stay, will you not?—I shall not be a trouble or an expense to you. I will wait on myself, indeed I will! And I should say that I am able to pay you

well—as I certainly will do if I stay; only I know that would be the very last consideration with you. Will you let me stay?" pleaded Gladys, anxiously, earnestly, tearfully.

"Why laws, yes, to be sure we will, honey," said Miss Polly. And both her sisters chimed in and agreed with her.

"Surely, you are as welcome as flowers in May. It wasn't no doubt about nothing of that sort as was on our minds, only we was a wondering why—why——"

"Why I wished to stop at all?" smiled Gladys. And oh! how faint and sad her smile was!

"Yes, honey, not to deceive you, we was."

"Well, my dear Miss Polly, I will tell you all about it to-morrow. It is such a long, dark, sinful story! And I am so tired to-night," pleaded Gladys.

"Well, honey, you shan't be bothered to-night. And so you shan't. Soon as ever your room is aired and you get your tea, you shall go to bed. Is this young 'oman your maid-servant?"

"Yes."

"Is—she—white or black?" inquired Miss Polly, in a whisper, as she peered from the corner of her eye at the pretty Ennis.

"She is a quadroon, which I believe is three quarters white and one black," answered Gladys in a low tone.

"Slave or free?" whispered Miss Polly.

"Free."

"Is she to stay with you?"

"If you can accommodate her, she will remain with me until she can procure another service."

"Oh, she can stay as long as you like, for that matter, Mrs. Colonel Pollard."

While Miss Polly and Gladys were still talking, Harriet came in and set the table for tea, which was soon served.

After tea Miss Polly took up a candle to show Gladys to her room

"But, honey, where is your luggage?" she inquired, as they passed through the front passage, and she looked about her in the expectation of seeing boxes and trunks.

"We have all that we require *there*," said Gladys, pointing to two well-stuffed carpet-bags that Ennis was bringing after them.

Gladys found a cheerful wood-fire in the open fireplace and a clean, well-aired bed waiting to receive her. And there was a neat and comfortable pallet prepared for Ennis in a warm corner.

Miss Polly bade her young guest a loving good-night and left her to repose.

Left alone, Gladys knelt down and thanked Heaven for bringing her safely through her perilous flight to this home of peace. And then she went to bed and fell asleep. And Ennis followed her example.

The next morning, after breakfast, when Gladys was sitting alone with the three sisters beside their bright fire and well-swept hearth, she told them the oft-repeated story of her wrongs.

The sisters listened, and wept, and wondered.

"Well, my heart always did misgive me that she was a bad one," said Miss Polly, beginning to snivel.

And then, notwithstanding the nods, and winks, and head-shakings of her two sisters, who did not seem to approve of the confession, she made a clean breast of it, and told Gladys of the wicked part that *she*, Miss Crane, had been beguiled into playing, when she aided and abetted Mrs. Jay in her abduction of the young wife of Arthur Powis.

"But oh, my dear, she was such a fair-spoken woman, and she persuaded me as it was all for your good! But for all that, I do believe in the bottom of my heart I always did misdoubt her—only I had no *reasons* to go upon! and so I didn't dare to say nothing agin her. But, anyway, it a'most killed me! After you went away I was *that* uneasy

about you you can't think! I writ, and writ, and writ to Mrs. James Lewis to ask after you, and I directed the letters so particular to Katy Idyls, and I waited, and waited, and waited; but I never got no answer to none of them. And oh! to think all that time that she was treating you so! And now, honey, what are you going to do?"

"I am going to put advertisements in all the papers calling on Arthur Powis to answer; and offering rewards to any one who can give authentic intelligence of him. That is all that I can do at present. For unless I find Arthur, I cannot shake Mrs. Llewellyn in her position as my guardian before the expiration of my minority."

"Yes, honey, I think that is very prudent. And if I can help you anyways I'll do it. But that wasn't exactly what I meant when I axed you what you was a-going to do. I meant what you was a-going to do about *me*. Was you a-going to forgive me, or what?" whimpered Miss Polly.

"Forgive you! Dear, dearest old friend—what a word to come from your venerable lips! Forgive you! Why, I know that you love me, and that you did every thing for the very best."

"Well, then, and so you do forgive me?" whimpered Miss Polly.

"Forgive you! Why, dearest, best old friend, I thank you—I thank you for all your loving kindness, from first to last, to a poor, motherless and fatherless girl," said Gladys, holding out her hand.

Miss Polly seized it, and covered it with kisses and tears, as she sobbed out the words:

"If this aint a-heaping of co-coals of fif-fire on my head, I don't know what is."

Gladys kissed her, and went up stairs to put on her bonnet and shawl. She was going out to begin that very day the work of finding Arthur.

When she was quite ready to start, she looked into her purse to see whether she had money enough to pay for the

advertisements. She found but five dollars in change. Thinking this sum insufficient, she went to the carpet-bag in which she had deposited the roll of bank-notes which formed the bulk of her available funds. She slipped her hand to the bottom of the bag, but failed to find the parcel of which she was in search. She then took out all the contents of the bag, but the parcel was not among them. Next she searched the other carpet-bag, but with no better success. Then she looked about the room, but in vain. Still she felt no misgivings on the subject. The parcel was somewhere in the room, she thought. So she rang for Ennis.

The girl came running up the stairs.

"Ennis," said her mistress, "what have you done with that roll of bank-notes that was in the bottom of this carpet-bag?"

"I haven't done any thing with it, ma'am," replied the girl.

"What! didn't you unpack it from the bag and put it away somewhere?"

"No, indeed, ma'am. I never opened *that* bag. Every thing that we wanted for the night was in the other bag."

"I know that; but you *must* have put away that money somewhere and forgotten all about it. Try to remember."

Ennis assumed a cogitating expression of countenance, and seemed to "try to remember," not, however, with the faintest hope of recollecting any thing to the purpose, but in deference to the directions of her mistress. Nothing came of it, however; so, after a few moments, Ennis lifted her head, and looking her questioner honestly in the face, she answered:

"It is no use, ma'am; I can't remember what I never did, for indeed and indeed I never touched that roll of money."

Gladys looked in her eyes, and saw that she spoke the truth. And for the first time since missing the money Gladys became seriously uneasy.

"Help me to look for it, then, Ennis. It *must* be about here, somewhere, you know."

They commenced the search. They looked through both carpet-bags again. They shook out all the clothes. Then they looked into the bureau-drawers, on the dressing-table, in the wardrobe, about the bed; in short, they looked into every probable, possible, and impossible place; and all to no purpose—the money could not be found.

Finally they looked into each other's faces in the utmost dismay.

"Has anybody been in the room besides yourself, Ennis?" inquired Gladys.

"Yes, ma'am; Harriet, the housewoman, has been here to help me make the bed."

"Call her."

Ennis went down stairs to summon Harriet, and returned not only with Harriet, but with the three Miss Cranes, who, having heard of the missing money, came up full of consternation.

Harriet, being questioned, declared that she had not touched the carpet-bags, nor seen the money. And the truth and honesty of Harriet was beyond dispute.

"I must have lost the money on the train, then; though how I could have done so passes my comprehension," said Gladys.

"How much was it, honey?" inquired Miss Polly sympathetically.

"Fifteen hundred dollars!" said Gladys, with a sigh.

Miss Polly started as if she had been shot, reeled backward, and dropped into the nearest chair, gasping breathlessly:

"Fifteen hundred dollars!" It was an inconceivable sum! The loss of it must break half a dozen banks, and cause a panic in the money market! Miss Polly had her own small savings stored up in the "American Bank." "I wonder if it will hold out, or whether I hadn't better draw

my money," she said. And then she covered her head with her apron, and burst into tears, sobbing: "Fif—teen hundred dol—lars!"

"Don't cry, Miss Polly," said Gladys, totally missing the point of her grief. "Don't cry. After all, the loss of this money is only a temporary inconvenience to me. In little more than a year, which will soon pass away, I shall come into the possession of Kader Idris and its vast revenues, when the question of a thousand dollars more or less will be a mere trifle. Believe me, I shall not let it trouble me. The only difference will be that, instead of leading an idle life this year, I shall have to do something to support myself—that is all."

And so saying she drew on her gloves, and set out on her long walk to the newspaper offices.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

FREEDOM AND HOPE.

Oh, Liberty! thou goddess, heavenly bright
Profuse of bliss and teeming with delight!
Supernal pleasures in thy presence reign,
And smiling Plenty leads thy laughing train.—*Addison*.

Like the gloom of night retiring,
When in splendor beams the day,
Hope again my heart inspiring,
Doubt and fear shall chase away.—*Anon*.

RELEASED from the paralyzing influence of Mrs. Llewellyn's treatment, the mind of Gladys recovered all that natural strength and elasticity that misfortune had no power to crush and destroy. She saw what was before her; she knew what she ought to do; and she acted with promptitude. She went first to the office of the principal morning paper, and inserted two advertisements. The first ran thus:

"LIEUTENANT ARTHUR POWIS.—If these lines should reach your eyes, you may hear good news by addressing a note to G. P., Post-office, till called for."

The second advertisement set forth that:

"A LADY, well qualified to teach the common and higher branches of an English education, with the French and German languages, vocal and instrumental music, and drawing and painting, would be happy to meet with an engagement as governess in a private family, or as assistant teacher in a school. A letter addressed to G. P., Post-office, till called for, will meet with prompt attention."

Gladys would have liked to have added—"References given and required." But, far away from all her old family friends and acquaintances—a stranger in the metropolis, a widow in fate and not in fact, and lying under the ban of Mrs. Llewellyn's calumnies—to whom could poor Gladys possibly refer?

She would have liked, also, to have put in a third advertisement, offering a reward for any information concerning Lieutenant Arthur Powis; and to have inserted all three of these advertisements in many other papers, to have given them a much wider circulation, and a much greater prospect of success. But her funds had given out, or nearly so, since she had but two dollars left; and she felt that she could not even spend half a dollar to pay a carriage to take her back to Ceres Cottage.

However, these limitations to her power did not depress her spirits, which, indeed, had taken a vast rebound from the crushing weight of Mrs. Llewellyn's presence and oppressions. To a sensitive being like Gladys the very atmosphere of a base and wicked person has a depressing and killing power. And the escape from it is like the change from death to life.

No joyous, wild wood bird, let loose from its cage, to fly,

singing, toward the sun, was ever gladder to be free than Gladys, as she gayly tripped along, that glorious autumn morning, toward her suburban home.

True, she had no clue to Arthur; but she felt from the bottom of her heart so sure that he was still living; and she hoped every thing, for she was now out in the world, and FREE to seek him!

True, also, she had just lost fifteen hundred dollars; all her available funds; but what of that? She was young, elastic, and FREE to work for her living, and she could do so until she should come into her estate or find Arthur; and one, or both these events *must* happen in little more than a year, and *might* happen sooner. And who could not struggle on for one or two years with such a goal in view?—and being FREE to do so?

"Oh," said Gladys to herself, drawing a deep breath of the exhilarating air as she walked through the morning sunshine; "oh, what a delicious thing it is simply to be free! to go where I please and do what I like, with no one to restrain and oppress me. Ah! from my own short experience of an 'honorable' bondage that was so very bitter to my soul, I have learned the worth of freedom! how it is the best thing on earth and even in heaven! the most glorious gift of God to man! Even the Lord seems to tolerate sin rather than destroy man's free agency. Oh, I understand now how bloody fields have been fought; how whole holocausts of human beings have been offered up; how heroes have struggled and martyrs died for that one idea of Freedom! Once it was only a word, or an abstraction to me; now it is the greatest good in the world! worth all the treasures of blood and tears that have ever been poured out to gain it, or ever may be poured forth to retain it! And it was worth my twelve months' bitter bondage only to learn this practical lesson in the value of freedom! For which thank God forever and ever!" exclaimed Gladys, in the exultation of her recovered liberty,

as she walked briskly through the brown, sunlit fields that lay between the populous part of the city and her chosen temporary home.

It was high noon when she opened the old green gate and passed up the leaf-strewn path that led to the cottage porch. Miss Polly saw her coming and hastened to open the door for her, saying:

"Come right in our settin'-room, honey; there's a good fire and a nice luncheon all waiting for you. We got all ready for you because we knowed you'd be cold and hungry after your long walk. Now, come right in," she repeated, taking Gladys by the arm and drawing her into the sitting, or "settin'" room, as Miss Polly called it.

There was the bright wood-fire blazing merrily; and the little round table covered with a white cloth and adorned with the best china; and there was the bright tin coffee-pot, and something covered up in a tureen on the hearth; and there was the old arm-chair drawn up on one side of the table and between it and the chimney-corner; and last, not least, there was Miss Polly and her two sisters ready to welcome the young wanderer with all the love of a mother and two maiden aunts.

Miss Milly made her sit down in the chair, and relieved her of her bonnet and her shawl.

Miss Jenny poked up the blazing fire to a still brighter blaze.

And Miss Polly set the coffee-pot and tureen on the table, saying:

"It's only coffee and stewed oysters, honey; but it will do you good after your walk. It was so fort'nate the oysterman come by this way this mornin'. And now what are you a-crying about? Has any one hurt your feelings, honey?" inquired Miss Polly, setting down the tureen and staring in astonishment at her guest, whose eyes were filling with tears.

"Oh, no, no," said Gladys, smiling brightly through

those tears—"oh, no; but it has been so long since I have had such kindness shown me! such true, tender, genuine kindness as yours! and it makes me think of my poor mo—mother," she added, with a sob. "But—she is in heaven, and she watches over me, I know." She ended by dashing the tears from her eyes and smiling again.

"Yes, honey, *that* she do watch over you! You may take your Bible to that! And who knows but it is *her* spirit a-whispering in our hearts always to be good to her child," said Miss Polly, whose faith was very strong.

"And don't you fret yourself about losing that money, though it ralely was a stunnin' blow; nor likewise about how you're a-gwine to get along; for as long as we've got a roof to kiver our own old heads—which by the mercy of the Lord we hope to have all the days of our lives—you's welkim to your own share of it, my child, freely welkim," said Miss Milly, affectionately.

"And as long as we've got a loaf o' bread, or a cent of money, we is willin' to divide it with you, honey," added Miss Jenny, who felt called upon to bear *her* testimony to her good-will for the desolate girl.

"I know it! Oh, I know it so well! And I thank you! Oh, I thank you from the very depths of my heart! Oh, dear old friends, take care of yourselves, and try to live through a long and green old age; so that when my own prosperous days come again, I may prove myself as good a daughter to you as you have proved yourselves mothers to me," said Gladys, with deep emotion.

And she felt an accession of impatience to come into the possession of her property that she might prove her gratitude and love to these kind old ladies in some useful and substantial manner.

The next morning Gladys walked out again. Oh, what a privilege and what a pleasure she felt it to be, to be able to walk out every day, unhindered in this glorious autumnal weather. She went to the office to get a copy of the

morning's paper, to see if her advertisements were in all right.

Yes! there they were, but by some strange chance placed one under the other.

"They ought to have put the one about Arthur in the 'Personal' column, and the one about the situation in the 'Educational' column. Instead of which they have put them both under the head of 'Wanted.' I am sorry: for any one reading them one after the other, would know they came from the same person, because the initials are the same, and they might think there was something very wrong about the governess who was advertising for a young man, especially as she says nothing about references! Heigh-ho! I wish I had used different initials in the governess advertisement. But it is too late now! And anyway I won't, I *won't* be downcast. I am FREE, thank Heaven!" exclaimed Gladys. And she hurried blithely on down the gay avenue, and through the Capitol grounds, and through the burnished fields, until she reached the "Cottage of Peace," as she mentally named the quiet home that had opened its kindly doors to shelter her storm-tossed body and soul.

There the same kindly welcome, the same bright fire, and the same little luncheon-table, awaited her.

"Only it's a cup o' tea and a broiled red herring to-day, honey. The oysterman didn't come round," said Miss Polly.

"And if he had, we wouldn't a p'isoned you out with one thing over and over. People likes a change of dishes," observed Miss Milly.

"And the herring is of our own curing," said Miss Jenny.

When Gladys had delighted the old ladies' kind hearts by doing full justice to the refecton they had placed before her, she took out the newspaper and showed them the advertisements.

Miss Polly put on her spectacles and read them aloud, in a solemn voice, for the edification of her sisters.

And they listened with folded hands and downcast eyes and demure faces, as if they had been hearing prayers or exhortations read from their missal.

"Lor! you don't mean as *you* put these in, do you, honey?" said Miss Polly, when she had got through.

"Yes," said Gladys.

"And did you make it all up?" inquired Miss Milly, setting her spectacles up over her cap, and looking at Gladys.

"Of course."

"All, out'n your own head?" questioned Miss Jenny, doubtfully, stopping with her knitting.

"Why, certainly," smiled Gladys.

Whereupon, the three simple sisters, each in turn, took the newspaper and stared at the two advertisements, and then all stared at Gladys, as if both she and her productions were something wonderful.

Meanwhile Harriet came in to clear off the luncheon-table.

"Oh, I say, Harriet, look here! what do you think? Mrs. Colonel Pollard has writ something for the paper, and it is printed! It is, indeed!" said Miss Polly.

"I always knowed she had a head," said Miss Milly.

"Read it for Harriet, Polly," put in Miss Jenny.

Harriet posed herself with her arms crossed and her head bent down to listen becomingly.

"But, oh! see here," said Miss Polly, hesitating; "we ought to call Ennis in. It is a pity to make a bridge over her nose, and slight her, even if she is a quad—quad—quadruple——"

"*Quadroon*, Miss Polly," whispered Gladys, softly.

"Thank y', honey!—if she is a quadruped!"

Ennis was solemnly summoned and stood by the side of Harriet to listen to something very good.

And Miss Polly adjusted her spectacles, and in a cracked

and chanting voice *intoned* the two advertisements, rather than read them.

"Now, what do you think of that?" demanded Miss Polly, triumphantly.

"It's beautiful!" exclaimed Harriet.

Ennis said nothing.

"And she writ it herself; and made it all up out'n her own head, too; and what do you think of that?"

"It's astonishing!" said Harriet.

"It is," said Miss Polly, solemnly folding up the paper and taking off her spectacles.

Gladys went every day to the post-office to inquire for letters addressed to G. P. She was full of hope, and she enjoyed those morning walks, through the brilliant sunshine and exhilarating air, as only a freed captive could enjoy them. Several days passed without her getting any response to her advertisements. At last it became a little depressing to hear at the post-office window, in answer to her daily inquiry:

"Any letters for the initials G. P.?"

Always the same chilling—

"No, miss."

For the youthful and even childish style of her beauty naturally led all strangers, who were obliged to speak to her, to call Gladys by this girlish title.

But every morning Gladys started out with the same buoyant hope; and though that hope was daily doomed to disappointment, yet every noon in returning home, she met the same cordial welcome, the same bright fire, and the same tempting luncheon. And above all, the same ready sympathy.

"Any letters to-day, honey?" would be Miss Polly's very first question on meeting her.

And when day after day she answered:

"No,"

Miss Polly lost patience, and indignantly exclaimed:

"Well, all I can say is, if people don't answer *them* beautiful things, people's a fool, and I aint got no pity for no such!"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

ENTRAPPED.

Oh! what a change comes over that young heart,
Where all was joyous, light and free from care!
All thoughts of peace do for a time depart,
And yield to rage and anguish and despair.—*Watson*.

Thus doth the ever changing course of things
Run a perpetual circle, ever turning,
And that same day that highest glory brings,
Brings us unto the point of back returning.—*Daniel*.

At last on the Saturday of the second week, Gladys started for the post-office with her lately ecstatic hopes somewhat reduced by continual disappointment; yet consoling herself withal, by the reflection that come weal come woe she was FREE!

When she got to the post-office, and asked the usual question, however, the smiling clerk, who had grown familiar with the pretty, eager, childish face of the daily visitor—put three letters into her hands! All had come at once! It never rains but it pours, you know!

Gladys hastily seized them! She could not wait until she had got home, or even until she had left the post-office. She hurried up into a corner of the entrance hall; and she tore open the letters one after the other and hastily glanced over them;—her first thought, her first hope being that they might contain news of Arthur.

No, but they did not! They were all answers to the governess advertisement. And Gladys with a sigh of disappointment, thrust them all into her pocket and hurried home, that she might read them there at her leisure.

When she entered the cottage, Miss Polly met her as usual.

"Come in, honey. It's chocolate and br'iled chicken this time! I wout vex you by asking you if you's got any letters; because I know it aint no use," said the old lady, drawing her guest into the cosy room.

"Oh! but I've got the letters at last, Miss Polly!" said Gladys, as all glowing red from the frosty air without, she sat down before the fire, and began to draw off her gloves; while Miss Milly took off her bonnet.

These poor childless old ladies lavished all their unclaimed maternal love upon this bright young creature, who had sought their protection.

"Letters, honey!" exclaimed the three sisters simultaneously and eagerly, as if the cause had been their own.

"Yes, indeed," said Gladys; gayly, "three letters! all offering me situations."

"Ah—ha! people's coming to their senses, is they?" said Miss Polly, exultingly.

"Well now take your chocolate and chicken, honey, and then you may read them to us," said Miss Milly, considerately.

Gladys obeyed them as she almost always did, with a sort of filial affection and reverence. And when she had eaten and was satisfied, she took the three letters from her pocket and put them on the table, and then she took up the first that came to hand and opened and read it.

It proved to be a letter from a South Carolinian planter, who described himself as a widower aged thirty-five, with one little daughter aged four years; and who wished a personal interview with the advertiser, and promised—should that interview prove to be mutually agreeable—the most liberal salary, on condition that the lady would take charge of his house, and of the education of his little daughter. He required no references and gave none.

Gladys paused with the letter in her hand, and her eyes fixed upon it as in perplexed thought. At last she looked up and said:

"It appears to me that this is an improper offer. Of course I cannot take the situation of governess in the family of a widower, where there is no other lady—at least he mentions none! and only a little girl four years of age."

"In course you can't, my dear! Keep house for a single gentleman indeed! It is like his impudence to ask it! And his little girl only four year old! That's rubbish! What do *she* want with a gov'ness to teach her the English branchers, and French on the harp and that?—It's all a fetch! She only wants a nuss to keep her hair combed and her nose wiped. I wouldn't even answer his letter, honey! Set him up with it, indeed! I'd treat *that* with silent corn-tempt!" said Miss Polly, emphatically.

"Let us pass on to the second letter," said Gladys with a deep blush.

The second letter was of later date, and had come a shorter distance. It proved to be from a maiden lady in Maryland, who had three orphan nieces left to her guardianship, and who wished to procure for them an accomplished teacher, to whom she would be willing to pay a very large salary. But she required the most unquestionable testimonials as to the character and ability of the advertiser.

"There now! I think that would suit you to a tee, my dear," said Miss Polly, briskly.

"Yes—but—you see, this lady requires testimonials," sighed Gladys.

"Testy—what's them, honey?"

"References, Miss Polly."

"Deferences? Well, I reckon you'll give her all the deferences she deserves! Give and take, you know. If she pays you respects, you'll pay her respects! I would not let *that* stand in my way!"

"It is not *that*, Miss Polly, dear! The lady wants me to bring letters of recommendation."

"Letters of recommendation? What, from the likes of *you*? Just as if you was a gull going about to hire your-

self out at so much a month, and warranted not to steal the tea and sugar! Set her up with it, indeed! Who's *she*, I wonder? Can't be very 'spectable herself to be so s'picious of other people! Fling the impudent letter inter the fire, honey, and let's hear what's in the third one! There's always luck in number three, you know," said Miss Polly.

And her sisters were by no means backward in their sympathy, though they were silent listeners.

Gladys opened the third letter. This one proved to be from Dranesville, a village within a few miles of Washington, on the south side of the Potomac; and it was dated only on the preceding day.

"It is singular," said Gladys, as she read the date, "that these three letters, each coming from a different point, and bearing a different date, should have reached me all at once. But such things will happen so sometimes, I know."

"Read it, honey," said Miss Polly.

Gladys complied.

The letter purported to be from a wealthy widow lady living on a plantation in the neighborhood of Dranesville, and having four little girls, between the ages of seven and twelve years, whom she wished to educate at home, and for whom she was anxious to engage a competent governess. As the advertiser appeared to meet her views, she would be pleased to conclude an engagement with her. She would offer her three hundred dollars a year, for the first year's salary, and increase the sum as her daughters advanced toward the higher branches of their education. If these terms should suit the advertiser, the latter would please to direct a letter to the respondent, saying at what time it would suit her to come to Dranesville, so that the respondent might send a carriage to the village to meet the advertiser and bring her to her destination. The letter was written upon deep black-bordered paper, and signed Elizabeth Fairbridge.

Gladys pondered over this letter, holding it in her hand.

"Lor', child! you needn't think twice about *that*! That's the place for *you*," said Miss Polly.

"I was only thinking," said Gladys, slowly, "that I almost wished the lady *had* said something about testimonials."

"Lor', why?"

"It would have looked better for her own respectability! But I believe that I am very unreasonable, since, certainly if she had required them I could not have furnished them. I wonder who she is?"

"Lor', child, why of course she must be one of the Fairbridges of Fairbridge, in that neighborhood."

"You know them?"

"I know of them. They are among the first families—— Now what are you laughing at?" demanded Miss Polly, breaking off half in dudgeon, as she met the quizzical smile of Gladys.

"Not at *you*, Miss Polly, dear; I could not afford to do that! But at the F. F. V's. I am very glad, however, that you know this Mrs. Fairbridge, and can vouch for her respectability! Ah! who will vouch for mine? I think that I will answer this letter and accept the situation," said Gladys.

"If you are set to go out teaching, honey, I don't know as you could do better than go *there*," said Miss Polly.

Gladys answered the letter that same day, saying that she was willing to accept the terms, and was ready to enter upon her duties at any time.

On Tuesday she received an answer to that letter, thanking her for her promptitude, and saying that the carriage of the writer would be at Dranesville on the next Saturday afternoon from three o'clock, to meet Mrs. Powis and convey her to Fairbridge.

"There! you see, it is one of the Fairbridges of Fairbridge!" said Miss Polly, exultingly.

Gladys wrote one more letter, saying that she would be punctual to the appointed hour.

And she spent the remainder of the week in making preparations for her departure.

She still haunted the post-office every day. But no other answer came to her governess's advertisement; and none at all came with any news of Arthur Powis.

"You will go to the post-office and inquire, Miss Polly. And if any letters *should* come, you will put them in these envelopes and send them, will you not?" asked Gladys, putting into the old lady's hands half a dozen envelopes, already directed and stamped.

"Oh, yes, honey! I will do any thing in the world you want me to do," said Miss Polly.

Gladys had been fortunate in finding a place at service for Ennis, who was to enter upon her duties on Thanksgiving morning.

So, when Saturday came, Gladys had nothing to do but to take leave of her loving friends.

She would gladly have forced upon their acceptance some presents from her slender stock of clothes; but they would upon no account receive them. They blessed Gladys, and wept over her, as she embraced them each in turn, before entering the hired carriage that was to convey her to the Alexandria boat.

Gladys went down the river in the nine o'clock boat; reached Alexandria at about ten; and soon after took her seat in the stage-coach that was about to start for Dranesville. There were two or three farmers and their wives who occupied the inside with her, but they were only way passengers, and were set down at various points on the road. So that when the stage-coach rolled into the village of Dranesville, Gladys was its sole occupant.

The coach stopped at the village inn, and Gladys looked around but saw no carriage waiting. There were plenty of waiters, hostlers, and loafers, however. And Gladys

blushed deeply, and drew her veil over her face as she made her way through these and entered the inn. A civil servant-woman showed her at once into the parlor, and asked her if she would please to have a room, and if she would please to have tea?

"No;" Gladys said she was only waiting for a lady whom she expected every moment to meet her.

The civil servant went away. Gladys glanced at the clock. It was not yet three, so there was nothing to complain of.

But Gladys had had no dinner, and she would have been very glad indeed to have had some tea; but ah! she had no money to pay for it. She, the undisputed heiress of millions! She had spent her last dollar to pay her passage to Dranesville.

But the kind old ladies had not left her utterly unprovided. So she opened her little travelling-bag, and took from it some bread and butter and cold chicken, and made a tolerable luncheon, with the help of a glass of water from the sideboard that stood in the room. She had scarcely put aside the debris of her meal, and wet her finger ends, when the servant-woman appeared, inquiring:

"Are you Mrs. Powis, ma'am?"

"Yes," replied Gladys.

"Then there's a lady in a carriage outside as has come to meet you."

"Quite right," said Gladys, rising.

"And if you please, m'm, she says, will you excuse her from 'lighting, as she is in a great hurry to get home; and will you come out to the carriage at once, if you are ready."

"Certainly," said Gladys, rising to follow her conductor.

A handsome dark-green close carriage, drawn by two fine-looking gray horses, stood before the house.

The landlord himself held the door open, and let down the steps as the young lady approached. With a deep bow, he handed Gladys into the carriage, put up the steps and closed the door. And the carriage started—started

so suddenly as to throw Gladys forward into the arms of a dark-veiled lady, who was seated opposite, and who calmly put her back in her proper seat.

"I beg your pardon, madam," said Gladys, in some confusion, as she adjusted her disordered dress; "it was the suddenness of the start! Have the horses run away? They are going at a tremendous rate."

No answer from the veiled lady.

Gladys suddenly looked across at her. Swift and fatal as the thunder-bolt fell a terrible fear on Gladys! Acting on it—acting in desperation, she darted at the woman and snatched the veil from her bonnet, revealing—the face of Mrs. Llewellyn!

The screams of Gladys rent the air, as she dashed her hand through the glass side windows of the carriage, in the mad hope of escape. But the carriage-doors were locked fast; besides they were in a narrow country road in a thick wood some distance from the village, and still driving at a tremendous pace.

A low, mocking laugh met her ears. And the next moment a strong woman's arm was thrown around her shoulders and she was forced back into her seat, and a handkerchief saturated with chloroform was held over her mouth and nose.

Gladys struggled desperately; but all in vain. She tried hard to avoid breathing the deadly aroma; but its subtle fumes penetrated to her brain.

It is said that the eye of the cat who has a poor little mouse in her claws, grows and dilates into a vast, horrible green firmament, filling all the vision of the victim—all that it sees in life—the last that it sees in death. I know not if this be so.

But the last things that poor Gladys was conscious of, as her senses reeled away from her, to the music of a thousand bells, were—the dreadful eyes of *her* mortal foe, glaring down upon her with diabolical malignity and triumph.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE HOD-BEARER.

But yet he lived—and all too soon
Recovered from that death-like swoon,
But scarce to reason—every sense
Had been o'erstrung by pangs intense,
And each frail fibre of his brain,
(As bow-strings when relaxed by rain
The erring arrows launch aside,
Sent forth his thoughts all wild and wide—
The past a blank—the future black
With glimpses of a dreary track,
Like lightning on the desert path
When midnight storms are mustering wrath,
He feared, he felt that something ill
Lay on his heart so deep and chill.
All was confused and undefined
To his all-jarred and wandering mind,
And madly still in each extreme
He strove with that convulsive dream,
For so on him it seemed to break—
Oh! must he vainly strive to wake?—Byron.

WE must return to the morning of Mr. Stukely's interrupted nuptials, and take up the story of that troublesome hod-bearer, whose improper intrusion into the church had sent the bride into a swoon, stopped the progress of the marriage ceremony, and thrown the whole company into the utmost consternation and disorder.

At the instant that Gladys screamed and fell, he shrunk back, shocked at the effect his appearance had produced. And while the spectators were gathering around the fallen bride, he made his way through the crowd out of the church, and across the street to the building where he and his fellow-laborers were employed, and to which they were all now fast gathering to their afternoon work.

But here his manner, always strange, was now so very strange, as to excite the wonder of his companions. Instead of loading his hod, and taking it up the ladder to the top of the unfinished wall, where the masons were laying bricks, he stood with that hod on his shoulder, and

with his eyes fixed on the ground, like one struck with catalepsy.

"Mortar!" sung out a voice from the highest scaffolding.

But the hod-bearer, whose duty it was to supply the article, did not move.

"Mortar!" repeated the bricklayer, impatiently, from above.

The hod-bearer stood still.

"MOR-TAR!" again vociferated the mason, angrily, and with all the strength of his lungs.

But the hod-bearer stood like a statue.

"Simmons, don't you hear? What the mischief's the matter with you? Are you 'sleep or drunk?" crossly demanded his fellow-workman, giving him a rough shake.

The hod-bearer started like one suddenly awakened from a deep dream.

"Don't you hear? They want more mortar up there," said his comrade.

But Simmons, as they called him, only raised his head, gazed at the speaker, and passed his hand slowly over his forehead.

"I do believe you're drunk! I tell you they are waiting for more mortar up there—mortar! mortar! MORTAR!"—shouted the man.

The face of Simmons revealed a gleam of intelligence, and he nodded and went to fill his hod. Slowly and dreamily he filled it, and then as slowly and as dreamily carried it up the ladder to the highest scaffolding, two lofty stories from the ground.

"Why didn't you bring it up before? I'll get you discharged for your negligence," said the bricklayer, angrily.

Simmons did not reply, or even seem to hear; he had relapsed into his dream, and stood stock still, staring at his feet.

"Come, hurry up with another load!" ordered the mason.

Simmons started mechanically, took up his empty hod, and—

A cry of horror rose from the men below.

The master-mason turned quickly around. Simmons was gone. A single misstep had thrown him over the wall!

And on the street below a crowd was gathered around his shattered and insensible form.

Some men raised him in their arms; some threw water on his face; some forced liquor into his mouth; but all was done in vain.

"Run for a doctor," said one.

"No use; he's as dead as a door nail," said another.

"Go for the coroner," suggested a third.

"Who's his friends? They ought to be sent for," said a fourth.

"I know who his mother is: she's Missus Simmons, as keeps the 'ole clo'' shop, number five Tilden's alley," put in a newsboy, who had come into the crowd.

"She ought to be sent for."

"And so ought the coroner."

"And so ought the doctor; for, after all, it is the doctor that will have to say whether he is dead or not."

Three or four speakers had all spoken at once; nevertheless they were all heard and understood by some one or other; for three or four men all started, each in a different direction, to seek the persons whose presence seemed to be required.

"What is the matter here, my friends?" inquired a gentleman, pushing his way through the crowd, and up to the side of the apparently dead man.

"Why, sir, it is one of the workmen, who has just been killed by a fall from the scaffolding," replied half a dozen voices, all speaking at once, in the same or the like words.

"Lord bless my soul alive, what a fall! He must have been instantly killed!" exclaimed the gentleman, gazing, first up to the scaffolding above, and then down at the shattered form below.

He was, sir; he never moved, nor even so much as drew

his breath, after he struck the pavement," said one of the men, putting himself forward.

"Bless my soul and body! You saw him fall?"

"Yes, sir."

"What was his name?" inquired the gentleman, drawing a note-book and pencil from his pocket.

"William Simmons, sir."

"Wife and family?" laconically asked the gentleman, who was writing in his note-book as fast as he could.

"No, sir; only widowed mother, 'round in Tilden's alley. We're a-going to carry him there as soon as the cart comes."

"Coroner been sent for?"

"Yes, sir; we're expecting him every minute."

The inquisitive gentleman made a few more inquiries and then went off, for he seemed to be in a great hurry.

He was in fact, the "local" of one of the morning papers; he was out in search of "items," when he happened to pass that way and find one; and so he inserted the paragraph in the "*Times*," which had been shown to Gladys to convince her that William Simmons was not Arthur Powis and that William Simmons was dead.

The reporter had scarcely left the scene when the messenger that had been sent for the coroner appeared upon it, attended by several policemen.

The coroner, he said, was holding an inquest at the other end of the city, and could not come just yet.

And then, after a short consultation with the police, it was determined that the body of the unfortunate man should immediately be carried home to his mother.

It was accordingly lifted up and placed in a cart, and driven to No. 5 Tilden's alley—a little shop whose doors and windows were decorated by dangling dresses and every other sort of left-off finery.

The men who brought the body lifted it out of the cart, and passing through a grove of drapery, bore it into the house

The little woman behind the counter screamed with terror at the sight of the body, and sharply demanded to know why they brought "a dead corpe" into her house to frighten her to death.

"It's your son, mum," said the policeman who came with the party, and who now spoke with more abruptness than consideration.

"My son! I aint got any *here*, you big brute! And if I had, was that the way to bring him home to me, without a minute's warning, you monster? It's bad enough seeing he's only a stranger, you hard-hearted wretch you! You've give me a turn as I sha'nt get over in a month of Sundays!" scolded the woman, coming around the counter.

The men laid the body gently down upon the floor.

"Laud sake! why it's Billy Simmons!" exclaimed the woman, as she looked on.

"Well, and isn't *your* name Mrs. Simmons?" asked the policeman, who was too well used to abuse from her class to mind the hard names bestowed upon him by this woman.

"Yes! Poor, poor, dear fellow! How did it happen?" said the widow, compassionately.

"He fell off the scaffolding he was at work on. But see here! You say his name is Billy Simmons and your name is Mrs. Simmons, and yet he is not you son?"

"No more he aint! he's only a boarder. Oh, poor, poor, dear fellow, what a pity! And he is such a handsome young man! And to be cut off so suddenly!" sighed the widow, kneeling down beside the body.

"Not your son! Now how do you make that out, Mrs. Simmons?" persisted the policeman.

"I don't make it out at all; I tell the truth. He is not; he is only a boarder. And I never saw his living face before he came here to board with me about a month ago. And I don't even know whose son he is, or if he is anybody's son—there now! Do you think if he was mine I could stand here and take this so easy, you big old fool

you? Poor, poor, dear fellow! belike as you havn't got a living soul as belongs to you though to drop a tear for your death," said the shop woman, alternately snapping at the policeman and crooning over the body.

"We are glad the poor young man was not your son, indeed," said one of the workmen, coming forward and speaking kindly to the excited woman. "Very glad that he is not; but we were told that he *was*."

"Yes, sir," replied Mrs. Simmons, somewhat soothed, "that's likely enough. A many people do take him to be mine, 'cause he do board here and do go by the very same identical name. But my son is in Washington city, a-working on the government works and a-getting of the best of wages, which I expect him home on a visit at Christmas. But this poor young fellow, sir! why he is no more kin to me than the man in the moon! Poor, poor, dear fellow! how dreadful! And he such a good young fellow! never fell out with his victuals, never once, while here he was a-boarding, even on washing-day! No, you never did, you dear, good boy!" said the woman, stooping over the body.

Suddenly she started up, half in delight and half in terror, exclaiming:

"Oh, I say, sir! He aint dead! he aint, indeed! He's a-breathing! he is, ralely!"

"What!"

"Indeed!"

"Is that so?"

"Are you sure?" said the men, all speaking at once, as they will do when in a state of excitement, as they again gathered around the body.

The widow had spoken truly; the man was breathing, though still insensible.

"He certainly *is*, sure enough, though I'll take my affidavit that there wasn't a breath left in his body when he struck the ground!" said the workman who had seen Simmons fall.

"No more there warn't; but maybe it was only knocked out of him for the time," suggested another.

"I guess he was stunned," observed a third.

"Any way he is very badly injured, and I am afraid his death is only a question of a few hours or minutes. It is impossible a man could have fallen from that height and not be killed," said the policeman positively.

"Oh, but there is one thing in his favor. He fell smash into the mortar, which was soft and must have eased his fall," said the first speaker.

"Yes, and all this time you stand there gabbling like a passell of ganders and letting the man die for the want of a doctor! One of you go right straight off and fetch one. And the rest of you lift the poor fellow up and bring him up stairs and lay him on his bed! And I'll follow as soon as I get Lucy up stairs to mind the shop. Lucy! Lucy! I say, come here."

A young girl ran up from the basement.

"Lucy, you stop here until I come back. And all the rest of you do as I tell you at once, unless you want that poor young man's death on your consciences."

The widow's orders were all obeyed.

As soon as Simmons was laid upon his bed, his injuries were more closely examined. He was horribly mangled, but his principal injury was a fracture of the skull of the forehead, just where phrenologists place the organ of "eventuality."

"Poor, dear fellow! He had been hurt in that same place before. He had a bad old scar right there, where the cut is now, only the way he combed his hair over it hid it. How odd it is! I always notice when one has had *one* injury, if they ever have *another*, it is sure to be in the same place! Look, gentlemen!" said Mrs. Simmons, lifting up the bright auburn hair and revealing the fracture and the old scar.

Simmons lay there breathing faintly, but giving no sign of consciousness.

Presently the doctor came, examined the man's injuries; made many inquiries; heard the whole story; and then said:

"This man must be removed to the hospital; he has no claim on this poor woman, nor can he here receive proper attention."

This decision gave much satisfaction to the workmen, who now dispersed, leaving one of their number to watch by the sufferer until he should be taken away from the house.

Late in the same afternoon William Simmons was removed to a hospital under the care of the sisters of charity. He was placed in the ward devoted to casualties, and laid upon a white bed, in a pure atmosphere, and attended by a skilful surgeon, and by a careful nurse. But little would the poor man appreciate all the kindness bestowed on him. He lay there quite insensible to all that was passing around, and babbling of other times, places, and persons that seemed as if they must have been very far removed from his personal experience.

Hospital nurses are too well used to the ravings of delirium to take much interest in the words of a delirious patient; but there was such "strange matter" in the rambling talk of William Simmons, as could not fail to rivet the attention of the most hackneyed nurse. His words, wild as they were, were those of a gentleman; his themes, disjointed as they were, were the incidents of a gentleman's life.

In his delirium, he was at college again, spouting Latin and Greek, and solving mathematical problems. Then he was on a visit to a country-house, babbling of blue mountains and broad rivers; of horses and hounds; of the chase and the game; or, he walked with some fair companion, to whom he quoted poetry, and discoursed of love; or, he pressed his suit with some crusty, but kindly old gentleman.

Anon, the scene of his mad imaginings changed. He was aboard a ship on the ocean, in a storm, and issuing orders with the tone and manner of a naval-officer high in command.

Again the scene changed. He was flying with his beloved—he was married to her—he was with her in some home of peace and safety.

And yet again the scene shifted. He was on the banks of a dark-flowing, night-shaded river, engaged in a mortal struggle with a murderous foe! And whenever his wandering mind arrived at this horrible point, he always fell into insensibility for a space.

In all his ramblings he never for an instant approached any of the incidents of his workman's life. They seemed to have passed forever from his memory. But he lived over and over again, in fancy, the scenes described above.

The good sisters watched and listened in wonder.

One morning, while the visiting physician was standing with one of them by the bedside of this patient, listening to his wild wanderings, she said:

"Doctor, are you quite sure there has been no mistake in the identity of this patient? He cannot be a common laboring man."

"Yes he is, Sister Domitia! I visited him at his own home, among his own companions; and I saw to his removal here. There is no mistake," replied the physician.

"But a poor ignorant workman could *never* talk as this man does. Listen to him now! He is actually speaking Spanish, and quoting Camöens. He *cannot* be a common laborer—he must be an accomplished gentleman," said Sister Domitia, who was herself a most accomplished gentlewoman, who had left a high social position for this humble sphere of usefulness."

The doctor smiled and shrugged his shoulders, as he answered:

"You are sufficiently well read sister Domitia to be

aware that in these cerebral cases, there are sometimes phenomena that utterly baffle medical science and skill. We are not perfect masters of physiology; but psychology completely eludes us. We shall see that this man when he recovers, if he ever *does* recover, will return to his normal style of conversation."

"I will never believe," said the sister, "that brain fever and delirium can so inform an illiterate man, as to enable him to quote Béranger, Camões, and Goethe in their original French, Spanish, and German."

"He may have been the servant of some student or professor, and heard those authors quoted; and now he may remember and repeat them, parrot-like, without understanding one word of their meaning."

"Doctor, that is very far-fetched!"

"Not at all. I have known things quite as strange as that to happen in brain fever. But now I must 'move on,' as the policemen say. Continue the treatment as before, Sister Domitia. I will see the patient again this afternoon. Good-morning."

The doctor passed on to his other patients.

But Sister Domitia was not satisfied. The more she thought about it, the surer she felt that William Simmons was no common workman. The interest and curiosity she felt about him induced her to set on foot the most diligent inquiries into his antecedents. And her position as a sister of charity and a hospital nurse, and her extensive acquaintance among the working and suffering classes, enabled her to do this with every prospect of success. But the most thorough investigation brought her but this result:

That William Simmons was really a stonemason's laborer, who had been known about New York, for at least a year past; and that he was not only a very ignorant, but a very stupid man.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE DEAD ALIVE.

And scenes long past of joy and pain
Come wildering through his waking brain.—*Scott.*

ANOTHER change came over the patient. He no longer drew brilliant pictures of the scenes in a past or an imaginary life. He ceased to speak, and he fell into a deep trance-coma that lasted several days. During these days life was sustained in him by the administration of wine-whey in teaspoonfuls, which he swallowed instinctively and unconsciously, without ever opening his eyes. But that in this deep trance a recuperative process was silently going on, soon became apparent.

One quiet night, when the visiting physician had made his rounds and departed, and the few patients were all asleep, and the ward was in perfect order and stillness, the hod-bearer calmly opened his eyes and turned them right and left upon the long line of little white beds, of which his own was one. Some few minutes he looked thus about him, as with serene interest, and then, in a soft voice, murmured:

"This looks like an hospital ward or a school dormitory. I wonder how I came here?"

Sister Domitia, who was sitting by his bed, bent over him, but did not speak.

"Where am I, ma'am, and how came I here?" he inquired, in a weak voice.

"You are in St. Asaph's Hospital, and you were brought here by the direction of the board," answered the sister, gently. Silence ensued for a little while, and then the man inquired:

"Why was I brought here? What had happened? I don't quite recollect."

"You had a bad fall and was seriously injured."

The man said no more at the time, but fell into deep thought. Presently he exclaimed:

"Oh, yes; I know now! Was the man arrested?"

"What man, my friend?"

"The deaf and dumb negro. It was he who felled me."

"I do not know any thing about this," said the sister.

"Wandering again," she muttered to herself, as she poured out some liquid in a glass and placed it to the lips of the man.

He drank and fell asleep.

The nurse who was to relieve Sister Domitia came; but the latter said:

"You can go to rest. I prefer to watch by this patient the whole night."

So the nurse went away and Sister Domitia kept her place.

About midnight she heard her patient move and sigh. She stooped over him.

"Has my wife been sent for?" he inquired.

Sister Domitia hesitated. In truth, she knew not how to answer, since, if all was true that had been told her of him, he certainly had never had a wife. But as the eyes of the sick man still continued the question that his lips had spoken, she answered:

"No."

"It was well not to send for her. It would have shocked her too severely. But now I should think she might come."

"I will speak to the doctor about it," answered the sister, as she administered another draught.

He drank it and fell into another sleep.

It was dawn when he awoke again. The patient sister still sitting by his side heard him stir, and leaned over him, and softly inquired:

"How do you feel?"

"Well enough, except for this weakness and tremulousness I suppose I was stunned by the blow?"

"Yes."

"And quite insensible when brought here?"

"Quite."

"Let me see—how many hours have I been here?—I know it had struck four bells just before I left the ship yesterday—"

"Oh, dear!" murmured the sister to herself. "The doctor was right; the man's brain is permanently injured."

"And it was nearly dark when I was passing along where Bennett's bridge crosses the Anacostia. It must have been six o'clock when I was struck down by that assassin. What o'clock is it now, ma'am?"

"It is about five."

"Then I have been here eleven hours. Have I not, sister?"

"More than that," evasively replied the sister.

"And my wife was not informed? I am glad of that; yet how anxious she must have been at my not returning all night; but perhaps not. I dare say she supposed me to be on duty on my ship. But she must be sent for this morning, nurse."

"I will speak to the doctor about it," said the sister, who was a much too experienced nurse to contradict what she supposed to be the harmless illusions of a sick brain. She was almost worn out with watching, yet she determined to keep her place until the doctor should come.

The patient also seemed wearied with the few words he had spoken, and he subsided into silence.

Day brightened, and the watchers of the night gave place to the attendants of the morning. The patients and the beds were made tidy, and the ward was put into perfect order by the time for the doctors' round. They came in due time. And the physician who had special charge of this case came up to the bedside.

"How is Sirmons this morning?" he asked.

"He has recovered his consciousness, but he still rambles a great deal in his talk," replied the sister.

"Ah!—I will speak to him. How are you this morning, Simmons?" inquired the doctor, in a hearty voice, as he bent over the hod-bearer.

"Better, I think; thank you, sir. But you mistake. My name is not Simmons," replied the man.

"Is it not so? Well, no matter, you will tell me what it is," said the doctor, good-humoredly.

"It is Powis. I am Lieutenant Arthur Powis, of the frigate Neptune, stationed at the navy yard."

"Just so. Well, we will soon get you up again, ready for duty."

"Doctor," said the sick man, "I am very anxious to be taken home. Can I be removed to-day?"

"Why, no, not with safety to yourself."

"How soon, then, do you think?"

"Oh, in the course of a few days, or a week."

"Not before?"

"Scarcely. You must be patient, you know."

"I will endeavor to be. But, as I must stay here so long, I wish my wife sent for at once."

"Ah!—then you have a wife?" said the doctor, in some little surprise; for he had believed the man to be quite alone in the world.

"Ah, yes; I have a wife. And I fear she is suffering the utmost anxiety. Last night was the first night I ever passed away from her," said the sick man, with a deep sigh.

"Last night—was the first night—you ever passed away from her," repeated the doctor, with a puzzled look.

But Sister Domitia caught his eye and shook her head at him, as much as to say, "you must remember that he is not in his right senses yet."

"Yes, doctor, the very first and only one. And she is but a young creature. I wish some discreet messenger sent to her, who will not alarm her, but will gently break

to her the news of my injury. Let the messenger take a carriage and bring her back in it. I will pay for it, of course, as well as for all the trouble I have caused," said the man.

The doctor, more puzzled than before, looked up into the face of Sister Domitia for an explanation of this rigma-role. But the sister only shook her head at him, and the doctor was not very quick in interpreting pantomime.

"I will give you the address of my wife, if you will be so good as to take it down: Mrs. Arthur Powis, at Miss Crane's, Ceres Cottage, Capitol Hill."

"Capitol Hill! Where is that?" slowly inquired the perplexed physician.

"Now, is it possible you do not know where Capitol Hill is? I thought there was not a creature in this city that didn't know that! The messenger will, at least."

Again the doctor looked up at the sister for an explanation. And as the sick man turned his face to the wall, she whispered:

"Doctor, he thinks that he is in Washington City. He is talking of the Capitol Hill there."

"Oh! aye, certainly! I know where the Capitol Hill is! And so your wife is there?" said the doctor, cheerfully addressing his patient.

"Yes; will you please take the address down and send the messenger?"

"Certainly," said the doctor, taking out a blank card and a pencil from his pocket, and making a pretence of writing.

"You will send it at once, I hope?" said the man, impatiently.

"Oh, of course!" replied the physician, heartily, as he returned the card to his pocket. Then he drew out another slip of paper, wrote a prescription, and put it in the hands of the sister, saying:

"Give him one of these powders every two hours until I

see him again. Keep the ice to his head and hot bricks to his feet." And he passed on to his other patients.

The sick man followed the doctor with his eyes until he had left the room, and then turning those sad eyes on the sister, he inquired:

"Do you really think he will remember to send for my wife at once?"

"He will do the very best he can, no doubt," replied the nurse.

The man sighed deeply and turned his face to the wall, and seemed to fall into perplexing thought.

The sister gave him his medicine, and then left him in charge of another nurse, while she retired to take her so much needed rest.

The man lay quietly for about an hour. And then he said:

"If the doctor kept his promise it is high time for my wife to be here."

"Did the doctor promise to send for your wife?" inquired Sister Paula, the second nurse.

"Yes, he did."

"Then make yourself easy. He will do it," said the sister, who really knew nothing of the matter.

The man was quieted for a little time; but to make himself easy for another hour seemed impossible. With the impatience of illness, he harassed his nurse all that day with inquiries of whether his wife had really been sent for. Toward evening, however, he yielded to the influence of the composing powders that had been regularly administered to him through the day, and he fell into a deep sleep that lasted all night.

Early the next morning, before he awoke, Sister Domitia resumed her watch beside him. He found her there when he opened his eyes.

"Sister, has my wife come?" was his first inquiry, given in the most anxious tone.

"Not yet" she gently answered.

"Oh! why is this? What has happened?" he demanded.

"Nothing; really nothing, that we know of. The doctor will be here presently; and I hope he will be able to give you some satisfaction," said the sister, in a soothing voice.

And in fact at that very moment the doctor entered the ward.

The poor man watched him with eagerness as he passed slowly up the long line of little beds, stopping at every one that was occupied. He could scarcely restrain his impatience until the doctor came up to his own bedside.

"Well, Simmons, how do you find yourself this morning?" he cordially inquired.

The man stared and frowned, and then answered:

"I told you, doctor, that my name is not Simmons. It is Arthur Powis."

"Oh! haven't you got that out of your head yet?" said the physician, smilingly, as he laid his hand on the patient's forehead.

"Did you send for my wife, doctor?" anxiously inquired the man.

"What! not got *that* out of your head, either? Come, come, you must try to get rid of these fancies," said the physician, kindly.

The man frowned more darkly than before, as he said:

"Doctor, it is *you* who have some erroneous fancies that I must request you to get rid of. You mistake me for somebody else. I suspected as much yesterday. Now I know it. I do not know how the mistake originated. Perhaps there were other casualty cases beside mine, brought in night before last, and in the confusion I have been misnamed."

"My dear good fellow, there is never any confusion in the reception of patients," smiled the doctor.

"I don't know how that may be, but I do know that you have made a great mistake in *my* case. My name is not Simmons. And neither do I know any one of that name.

My name is Arthur Powis. I am a lieutenant in the navy and attached to the ship Neptune, now lying at the navy yard. Night before last, as I was returning from my ship to my home, along that lonely road by the river, I discovered that I was dogged by an ill-looking man. I turned to confront the fellow, and had just time to recognize a deaf and dumb negro monster, belonging to my wife's guardian, when I was struck down by a loaded bludgeon held in his hand. A crushing blow, a general illumination, and then darkness and nothingness. That is all I remember. I knew no more until I came to myself here. But I have a wife living, as I told you, on the Capitol Hill, about a mile from here. She is no doubt suffering great anxiety, for I have now been absent from her for two days and nights. She ought to have been sent for yesterday. She really must be sent for to-day."

The doctor stared and wondered. Was it possible that there had been any mistake? No; for he himself had seen this man whom everybody called Bill Simmons when he was first hurt, and he had not lost sight of him since. No; there was no mistake on *his* part. This was only a new, singular, and very interesting phase of insanity, he thought. And he would study it, he resolved. With this purpose he inquired:

"Simmons, where do you suppose yourself to be now?"

"Oh! I know very well where I am. I am in the Washington Hospital, near the City Hall. And my wife is about a mile from this place. She can be brought in half an hour."

"Simmons, what month is this that we are in?"

"You still think me out of my head? How strange! Well, I will convince you that I am not. I will give you the day of the week, the month and the year, although it is but two days since I had my head broken. It was on Sunday, the fifteenth of October, that I had that murderous attack made on me. And this is Tuesday, the seventeenth

of October, in the year eighteen hundred and ——" here he named the preceding year.

"Now, Simmons," said the doctor, very gravely, "look at me. Do I look like a man who would cruelly deceive a patient?"

"No, doctor, you do not."

"Then listen to me: All that you have told me exists but in your own imagination. Your name is William Simmons. You were a hod-man before you were injured. You received that injury by a fall while you were at work on the top of a house opposite St. Asaph's Church. And this place is the city of New York. And the time is November, eighteen hundred and ——" the doctor named the current year.

The sick man looked and listened with the most acute and painful attention. And as the doctor finished his statement a look of agony passed over the brow of the patient, who threw his hands up to his face and burst into tears, exclaiming:

"Then I am MAD!"

And he turned his face to the wall and wept in the strong anguish of a man's despair; but he spoke no more.

The doctor gave the nurse a few whispered directions, and passed on to his other charges.

What was the mystery of this man's life?

CHAPTER XL.

THE MYSTERY OF A LOST IDENTITY.

My pulse as yours doth temperately keep time,
And make as healthful music. It is not madness
That I have uttered: bring me to the test,
And I the matter will reword, which madness
Would gambol from.—*Shakspeare.*

"TAKE comfort," said the Sister Domitia, gently bending over the suffering man; "do take comfort; you are

already much better than you have been; and you will soon be well in mind as well as in body."

"Don't speak to me. Pray don't speak to me. You are very good, and I thank you very much. Only do not speak to me just yet. Let me try to grope my way through this mental obscurity if I can," said the sick man, pressing his hands to his temples, and drawing his brows together as with a painful effort to collect his thoughts.

The sister straightened his quilt, smoothed his pillow, and then, with a deep sigh of compassion, turned away to attend upon some of her other charges.

She was gone more than two hours; yet when she returned she found the man lying in precisely the same attitude, with his hands clasping his head, and his forehead drawn into a frown as with intense study. The sister stooped over him anxiously and inquired:

"Will you let me speak to you now, Simmons, and ask you how you feel?"

"Thank you, my kind nurse. I have been trying to see my way out of this dense darkness, and I think I shall do it," answered the man, gravely.

"There is no doubt that you will. There is a much calmer and clearer expression in your eyes now, Simmons."

"Is there? But dear sister, pray do not call me Simmons. That really is not my name. And neither am I the maniac, nor the *mono-maniac*, that you and the doctor suppose me to be."

"Never mind about that now. Don't excite yourself over it."

"Yes, but I must mind about it. And get you and the doctor to mind, too. I have been thinking very intently. And I know what I am about to say to be the truth, strange as it may appear to you; yet not more strange to you than what *you* state appears to me. I am not Simmons, the God-bearer, but Arthur Powis, an officer in the navy."

"Well, well, let it be so; only do not talk about it and trouble yourself over it," said the sister, soothingly.

"I tell you I *must*, sister; and you must listen; for you must be convinced. I am Lieutenant Powis. I have the clearest memory of all the persons, places, scenes, and events of my life, from my earliest childhood, on through boyhood, youth and manhood, up to that dark night when I was struck down by the negro—that fifteenth of October which you say passed more than twelve months ago. Since that night I remember nothing, until I find myself in this hospital. If what you tell me is true, which I suppose it to be, then there is a whole year totally obliterated from my memory—utterly lost out of my life. There is the great mystery. Sister, help me to solve it by telling me all that you know concerning me during the past year—the lost year of my life."

"Poor fellow, I will tell you, in the hope that what I say will do you some good. But pray, pray do not agitate yourself over it," said the nurse, gently.

"Take hold of my wrist and keep your finger on my pulse while you speak. And then you will know for yourself how quiet I will be."

The sister did in all things as the man requested. First of all, with her hand upon his pulse and her eyes watching his countenance, she told how strangely through his fever and his delirium he had raved of a life that did not seem ever to have been his. And how these strange ravings so stimulated her curiosity and excited her interest in him that she had caused diligent inquiry to be made into his antecedents; but that she had been able to trace his life back no further than one year, or something less; that during that period he had been employed as a stonemason's laborer under one contractor; but that he had lodged with various poor people, always changing his lodging-house so as to follow and be near the scene of his daily labor; and that he had last lived at the house of a Widow Simmons, an old clothes vender in Tilden's Alley.

While the sister spoke the man listened attentively with corrugated brows and eager eyes, yet with a tolerably calm pulse. When she made the last statement he said:

"And that was the reason, I suppose, why they called me William Simmons?"

"No; you had been known by that name many months, before;—in fact, ever since you had lived in New York," said the sister. And then she fell into silence, as if she either could not or would not tell him any more.

"Go on, dear nurse! What were my habits during that time?"

"Industrious, temperate, regular—in fact, almost irreproachable," replied the sister, slowly. Then she added, suddenly, as if spurred by a conscientious regard for truth—"except——" And then she paused again.

"'Except' *what*, dear nurse?"

"Why, a singular habit that you had of stopping before a certain brown stone palace, and standing there with the hod on your shoulders and staring up into the windows of a young lady's chamber. This habit, harmless in itself, appears to have given great annoyance to the highly respectable family that occupied the house, as well as to your employer, who often deducted a half-day's wages from you on account of lost time; and to your landlady, who would let your meals grow cold to punish you for keeping them waiting; for, you see, you *always* stopped, in going to and from your work or your meals, to stare at those windows."

As the sister continued to speak the man's face assumed an expression of intense and almost agonized study. As she ended, he suddenly started, snatched his hand from her hold, and, with a wild light shining in his eyes, exclaimed:

"I stood before that house to listen—to listen to a—a sweet, invisible songstress! Was it not so?"

"Yes, yes; you remember so much, then? I am so glad! You are certainly on the way to recovery," replied the sister, joyfully.

The strange man slowly raised his hands to his forehead and clasped it tightly, while he sadly shook his head and answered:

"No, no; it has gone! quite gone! Only while you spoke the vision passed before me, like the reflection of something felt, or seen, or done, in a dream."

"What vision so passed, brother?"

"The vision of myself, dressed as a poor laborer, with a hod on my shoulders, standing before a grand house, gazing up into high windows, and listening to a voice that sounded like hers;—or, rather, *dreaming* that I did all this, and trying vainly to call out or to wake—but there! It has gone again!" sighed the man, in despair.

"You had better rest now, and not talk any more just yet," said Sister Domitia, gently.

"I will obey you, kind nurse; I will not talk since you wish me to be silent. But—I must listen! Tell me something more of this strange hodman, who seems to have been my transformed or dreaming self, sister."

"I will, if you continue quiet; but otherwise I must be silent. Well, on the morning of the day upon which you received the injury that brought you here, you met with a strange adventure——" The sister paused.

"Yes, well? I am quiet, you see!" impatiently exclaimed the man, trying to conceal his agitation.

"Well, there was a wedding at St. Asaph's church, opposite the block of buildings upon which you were at work. It was noon, I believe; or, at any rate, the workmen ceased their work to cross the street and gather around the church to see the wedding-party pass. But it appears that *you*, led on by some strange attraction, actually pushed your way into the church; and—just as you were, in your workman's dress, with your hod on your shoulder—you positively forced your way through all the company, up the middle aisle, and to the very presence of the bride, who, on seeing you, screamed, and fell into a fainting-fit—which, of course, stopped the marriage."

"Oh, Heaven of heavens! I see it now! I see it all now!" cried the man, in a voice of extreme anguish.

"What! what?" inquired the sister.

"The vision! the dream! the *nightmare*! in which I seemed to be a poor workman, in coarse clothing, with the weight of a heavy hod on my shoulders, standing in a church with a fashionable company witnessing *her* marriage—and trying in vain to awake, or to cry out!"

"That was not a dream; that was a reality!"

"But to *me* it seems to have been a nightmare—an hour of unreal pain and danger; for I cannot connect it by any regular links of memory with any of my past life! Those two visions, or nightmares—before the brown stone mansion, and within the church! They stand separate from all my past life. I can remember nothing immediately before or after either. Sister, tell me, if you know—what followed?"

"It seems that, when the lady fainted at the sight of you, and the marriage stopped, you were frightened by the effect your presence had produced, and you withdrew from the church and went back to work on the building; but that you seemed as one in a trance, until being on a high scaffolding, you made a misstep and fell to the ground, and was picked up insensible, and afterward brought here. That is all I can tell you of yourself."

"Yes, of *myself*! but of the young lady whom I frightened, sister, what of her?"

"I do not know."

"Not even her name, or her abode?"

"No, I know nothing whatever about her, except that her marriage was stopped at the time she fainted. I do not even know whether it has since been concluded."

"Heaven forbid!"

"Why do you say that?"

"Oh, sister! it is too long a story to tell you! Nor do I know whether I could tell it; it is so full of agony!

nor even if I could, whether you would believe it; it is so full of mystery!—Sister!"

"Well, my friend?"

"Do you still believe me to be a maniac?"

"No, I do not."

"Nor even a monomaniac, perhaps?"

"No—not *now*!"

"Not *now*? What do you mean, sister? Do you think that I have *ever* been either the one or the other?"

"I do not know! possibly! but let that pass now. You were about to say something else to me. What was it?"

"Do you believe me to speak 'the words of truth and soberness,' when I declare myself to be Arthur Powis?"

"Yes, I do."

"Notwithstanding William Simmons, the half-witted hod-bearer, of the last twelve months?"

"Yes, notwithstanding all that?"

"Can you reconcile the two opposites?"

"Yes, Simmons; I beg your pardon, Mr. Powis, I think I can."

"Oh, then, give me your ideas on this subject! For it is one of more than life and death to me! it is one of happiness, or misery! of reason, or madness!" said the young man, eagerly.

"I have been a hospital nurse for twenty years. For fifteen of these years I had the care of a ward in a lunatic asylum. While there I had many opportunities of studying the various phases of insanity by the brightest lights of science. I studied many interesting cases of partial and transient mania, and among them a case that somewhat resembled your own."

"Good Heaven! then you really think that I have been *insane*?" cried the young man in a tone of consternation.

"Yes, I do; how else can I account for the discrepancies in your life and conduct? I think that you have been *insane*—not from any chronic or organic derangement of the

brain, but from a transient functional disturbance, caused by a blow on the head; a sort of insanity that need cause you no alarm, since it may be easily cured, is not likely to return, and cannot become hereditary. While we have been talking together for the last hour, I have been studying your case by the light of my long experience in the lunatic asylum."

"And what do you make of it? Help me to understand it, sister; for I am yet too weak in mind and body to do it alone," said the young man, in a mournful manner.

"I think this, then: I think that you really are Mr. Arthur Powis, as you have stated yourself to be. And I think all else you have told me to be perfectly true. I think that when the negro felled you by that terrible blow he inflicted a great injury upon your brain; and that when you returned to consciousness, you did not return with the full possession of your mental faculties; your memory and your understanding were both impaired; you were, in fact, partially insane—from some accidental circumstance or other—for there is always some directing cause for the wildest fancies of the insane; you imagined yourself to be the man that you have passed off for during the past year. It was a case of monomania, that might even have lasted longer, but that it was cut short by another accident. Your fall; the concussion of the brain, and the fever that followed, has providentially resulted in the restoration of your reason. A blow on the head caused your insanity, and a fall has cured it."

"*'Similia similibus curantur.'* But it is wonderful!" used Arthur Powis.

"No, not more wonderful than many other matters connected with our human life. Physiology and psychology are full of such mysteries, that the sciences are every day solving. For instance—inflammation of the lungs, that sometimes originates consumption, has also been known to arrest its progress. And the causes and cures of insanity are very often the same. The case that I spoke of as some-

what resembling yours—inasmuch as it was a case of mania, involving a lost identity and caused and cured by the same agency—was this:—An old and wealthy bachelor had a brain fever, of which he recovered; but with a strange monomania—one of the strangest, indeed, that I ever heard of," said the sister, with a smile, and with some hesitation.

"What was it?" inquired the young man, with interest.

"Why *he*, a wealthy old bachelor, imagined himself to be a needy widow, with ten fatherless children. He dressed himself in woman's clothes; dandled a pillow for a baby, and begged work, or help, for his orphans, of every one that would listen to him.* At last his friends sent him to our asylum; where he had the very best treatment that the last discoveries of science enabled us to give him; but in vain; for at the end of three years he was pronounced incurable; and as he was perfectly harmless he was removed by his friends. But observe. The very day after his removal he was seized with a brain fever, similar to the first, and which happily resulted in the perfect restoration of his reason. The only reminiscence of his mania that troubled him was this: that he had had such a miserable dream of being a poor widow with ten hungry children!"

"That was, indeed, a strange case; and somewhat similar to mine, though I hope you will admit that it was more ridiculous than any of my fancies," said Arthur Powis, with something between a smile and a sigh.

"Yes, certainly. I might mention other cases, in other departments of medicine, wherein the cause and the cure were similar—for instance, I knew a poor old negro man who lost his eyesight through receiving a violent blow on the head, that paralyzed the optic nerves. He groped about in stone-blindness for years; and then happening in his darkness to miss his footing and fall down the area stairs and strike his head upon the stones below, he recovered his sight.†

* A fact.

† Another fact.

The sister paused and the sick man mused.

"I tell you all these things," resumed the Sister Domitia, "not to fatigue or excite your mind, but to teach you—or rather, to *remind* you, for your own reading must have already taught you—that these mysteries of physiology and psychology do really exist and often baffle the utmost skill of science. And also to assure you that your own case is neither incurable, recurrent, or hereditary, and therefore need not give you any uneasiness about your future."

"I thank you, sister. I thank you more than I can express for all your kindness. But—it is not of myself that I am thinking now. But of my young wife, who has not been absent from my mind for one moment since I recovered my consciousness. Oh! where is she? and how did I wander away and become lost to her and to myself?" said the young man, in a tone of the deepest grief.

"That we cannot know at once. But we can write to her, or to her friends, and make all necessary inquiries. Do not distress yourself. Thank God, rather, for your recovered reason."

"Oh! I do, I do. But you will write at once, sister; will you not?"

"Yes, I will. To whom shall I direct the letter?"

"Stop! let me think: I have been lost to her for more than a year. She will probably have left Ceres Cottage long ago; and Heaven knows that it may have been herself whom I heard singing in the attic in the brown stone palace. It may have been herself whom I saw standing up to be married in the church—and honestly believing herself to be a widow! And yet I do not think so, either. I do not think that Gladys would have forgotten me so soon. So it could not have been Gladys. And yet—and yet—that bride fainted when she saw me! Why should a bride faint on seeing a strange man?"

"Mr. Powis," said the sister, gently interrupting him.

"Well, Sister Domitia."

"Do not let your mind fall into these perplexing speculations. Remember that you are not well yet. Dictate your letter, and let me send it. Doing practical duties is a healthy occupation for the mind."

"You are right, sister, and I thank you. I will dictate to you now. But I will not write directly to my wife; for I do not know exactly where to address her. I will write to her late landladies, the Misses Crane, of Ceres Cottage, near the Capitol Hill, Washington. Take that address, if you please."

The sister drew a little writing-case from her ample pocket—a convenient little case, often used in the service of the sick—and she prepared herself to indite a letter, at the dictation of the patient. It was a short, simple letter, not troubling the aged ladies with any account of the writer's temporary insanity and recovery, but simply asking of them the information whether Mrs. Arthur Powis was still their lodger, or, if she was not, when she had left and where she had gone; and, above all, where she could now be found, and what were her present circumstances.

When the sister had finished and sealed this letter, her patient said:

"You are very kind to me, Sister Domitia, and I feel earnestly grateful to you. But—I have another favor to ask you."

"Yes—well, what is it? I like to do favors?" replied the sister, cheerfully, as she closed and returned her writing-case to her pocket.

"I wish you to find out the name and residence of that young bride who fainted at the sight of me at the church. I really do not believe that she was any thing to me, much less that she was my Gladys, for that would be too horrible to contemplate! No, I do not believe that she was my wife. But—I wish to be assured that she was not. Can you, without much trouble, find out who she is, and where she lives, sister?"

"I dare say that I can. I will send and inquire of the sexton of St. Asaph's church. No doubt he will be able to furnish us with correct information. I will see to it at once," said Sister Domitia, rising, with the letter in her hand.

"And send *that* also by the first mail, if you please," said the patient, pointing to the letter.

"I certainly will."

"Oh, this doubt! this doubt!" groaned Arthur Powis.

"Now, my young friend, you really must exercise some self-control. You know as well as I do how much depends upon your maintaining a tranquil state of mind," urged his nurse, as she smoothed his pillows, and straightened his quilt, and then left him to go upon her benevolent mission.

"Oh, yes, I know—I know! I know how much depends upon my seeming calm and self-possessed. But can I really *be* so? Insane!—have I really been insane for the last lost year of my life?" groaned the young man, tightly clasping his temples, as was his frequent custom now. "I suppose I shall never have, of myself, any very clear recollection of the events of this lost year. Only the salient points, like the invisible singer in the brown stone mansion, and the fainting bride in the church, will stand out like the disjointed scenes in a delirious dream. Was it really Gladys whom I saw in the church? Was it—was it? How can I tell? If so, who was with her? I do not know. All is still confused—a distracting crowd of strange faces gathered around one familiar one that seemed to be Gladys and yet could not have been! And she fainted on seeing me, as Gladys would have done under the same circumstances."

He paused in his mental monologue, and strove to recall the scene, but strove in vain; and then he resumed his silent soliloquy.

"Would Gladys have forgotten me so soon! Ah, no. But then again, after missing me so long, and believing me

to be lost, or dead perhaps, she must have left those kind old ladies, and she must have finally fallen into the hands of that ruthless woman, her guardian; and, helpless and hopeless, she may have been driven or deceived into a guilty re-marriage. But with whom? With that idiotic Stukely, most likely. If so, I will kill that fool wherever I find him!" exclaimed the young man, with a clenched hand, set teeth, and flashing eyes, and an expression of ferocity and determination in his whole manner and countenance, that fully justified Mr. Stukely's pre-visions of what was to be his own fate should Arthur Powis ever "turn up."

"But oh! Gladys! Gladys!" exclaimed the young man, with a sudden and pathetic change of tone. "Oh, my love! my wife! where is she now? What has she not suffered? I dare not think! That way, indeed, 'madness lies!' And I—have need of all my reason! For I have a work to do! I must, with the aid of others, trace back every step of my career, through this last lost year of my life, and pick up every dropped link, that the chain of events may be restored, completed, to my memory! That kind sister told me much, but not all; since she could not even tell me how I was picked up, after being felled by the bludgeon of that murderous negro; nor yet how I came from Washington to New York! But I must seek all this information by tracing back my steps."

In the midst of his reflections the young man was interrupted by the return of Sister Domitia with a bowl of savory broth and a plate of dry toast on a waiter in her hands.

"I have mailed your letter, and sent a messenger for the sexton of St. Asaph's, who will be here this evening. And now you must take this broth, and then compose yourself to rest. Otherwise you will be in a fever, and the doctor will find fault. Besides, you know yourself, how injurious to all your hopes and plans a relapse would be," said the

sister, as she sat the water down on a tiny stand near by, and raised the patient to a sitting position, that he might eat more comfortably.

The young man obeyed the nun in all her directions, and after eating the broth laid down again, turned his face to the wall, and honestly tried to go to sleep. And after a while he succeeded.

There must have been a strong reaction from excitement to exhaustion, for the patient slept an unbroken sleep of several hours.

When he awoke the sexton was waiting to see him.

The sister was careful to bring the patient's tea and make him drink it before she brought the sexton to his bedside.

The sexton had but little to say in answer to the young man's eager, anxious inquiries; but what he did say was terribly in point.

"Yes," he said, "he knew the names of the parties. The bridegroom's name was Mr. James Stukely. And the bride's name was Gladys—something or other; but, indeed, he had forgotten what. But the name of the elder lady was Mrs. Jay Llewellyn."

It was true, then! It was his own Gladys who was to have been married! And it was James Stukely to whom she was to have been sacrificed! And it was Mrs. Jay Llewellyn who was the arch mover of the whole matter! thought Arthur Powis, as, with white lips, he ventured the question:

"Do you know whether that interrupted marriage was ever resumed and completed?"

"It was not, sir—at least while the family stayed in New York."

"They have gone then?"

"Yes, sir. You see we sextons don't often see such things in the church as that broken-off ceremony was; so I had the curiosity to keep the parties in sight, and keep the

run of them, as it were. And I found out where they lived. It was in a brown stone mansion in — street. But they stayed there only three weeks after the interrupted wedding. They all went back to Virginia, where they belong."

"All?—the would-be bridegroom, the reluctant bride, and all?" breathlessly demanded the young man.

"All, sir; every one of them, I believe; for so I was told by the agent that lets the house. And I saw the house shut up with my own eyes."

That was all the sexton had to tell. But from it Arthur Powis learned for a certainty that the sweet invisible singer in the brown stone palace and the unwilling bride at St. Asaph's church were one and the same with his own Gladys.

CHAPTER XLI.

LOST LINKS IN A LIFE.

Oh, sir, I conjure thee, as thou believ'st
There is another comfort than this world,
That thou neglect me not, with that opinion,
That I am touched with madness.—*Shakespeare.*

ARTHUR POWIS, of whose identity there was now no longer any question, thanked the sexton for his information and dismissed him. And then he turned his face to the wall to think over all that he had heard. With a great deal of truth, the sexton had mixed a little error in his statement. Mrs. Llewellyn and her family had gone South; but they had not taken Gladys with them. *She* had escaped to Washington and *they* were in pursuit of her.

But on the mind of Arthur Powis there was no longer any doubt; Gladys had fallen into the hands of her treacherous guardian, and had been forced or deceived

into consenting to a marriage with her imbecile son; when his own unexpected appearance in the church providentially interrupted the proceedings. And *she* had recognized him, even in his disguise and degradation; and that recognition had thrown her into a swoon.

Not for one moment did Arthur Powis blame his poor young wife; but his heart burned with indignation against the false guardian and the weak bridegroom, against both of whom he mentally recorded vows of vengeance.

They had gone back to Virginia; and according to the sexton's statement, they had taken Gladys with them; and she was still in their power, and, though the felonious marriage had been interrupted, they would still persist in their purpose and compel or beguile her into consummating it. Therefore he resolved, ill as he was, to set out for Virginia; rescue Gladys from the power of her tormentors; and appeal to the law to set aside the betrayed guardianship of Mrs. Llewellyn, and to restore the estates of Kader Idris to the legal heiress and to her husband. To investigate that affair of the murderous attack that had been made upon him thirteen months before, and that had inflicted upon him more than a year of insanity and loss of identity, and to bring the criminals to justice, was quite an after consideration. But to do any thing effectually he must immediately begin to trace back the events of this last lost year of his life and pick up the dropped links of memory's chain.

It was now, however, late at night; the attendants had all gone; no one but a night-watcher was in charge of the ward; even Sister Domitia had gone to bed, since there was no one ill enough to require her constant vigilance. Nothing, therefore, could be done until the morning; and Arthur Powis was obliged to resign himself to circumstances. He was still so weak that sleep gently overcame him, in the midst of his anxieties, and wrapped him in forgetfulness.

So great was the reaction from his previous excitement that he slept very late into the next morning: he slept until the ward was put into perfect order for the day, and the doctor paid his morning visit.

The doctor came up to the bedside. Sister Domitia was standing there. Sister Domitia herself had been busy with picking up lost links. She had searched the navy lists of the current and the past years; and she had found the name of Arthur Powis on all the lists she had looked at except that for the current year. Then she had procured files of the Washington papers for October of the preceding year, and had found many paragraphs, headed "MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE OF A NAVAL OFFICER;" "SUPPOSED MURDER OF LIEUTENANT ARTHUR POWIS;" and also advertisements offering rewards for any intelligence respecting his fate. And she had copied all these paragraphs and advertisements and put them in her pocket to show to the doctor.

The doctor was now standing by the patient's bedside, and inquiring, cheerfully:

"How is Simmons this morning?"

"Lieutenant Powis is better," replied the sister.

"Eh! what! has he infected *you* with his madness?" smilingly demanded the doctor.

"It is no madness—at least not now. There *has been* madness, or rather monomania; but that was when our patient supposed himself to be William Simmons."

The doctor stared.

"Oh, sir, surely, in the course of your practice, this cannot be the first case you have met with of this sort," said the sister, a little impatiently.

"Just give me to understand your reasons for saying what you do," requested the doctor.

The sister told him all that had passed between herself and the patient; and between the patient and the sexton; and then she showed him her abstracts from the navy list, and from the papers of the preceding year.

"Humph! this looks as if the young man was Arthur Powis, sure enough," said the doctor, who seemed unwilling to commit himself by giving a decided opinion.

In the midst of the discussion the patient opened his eyes. Then the doctor betrayed his real sentiments, when he inquired:

"How do you feel this morning, Mr. Powis?"

"Very much better, thank you, Doctor Howard. Thank you, also, for recognizing me at last as Arthur Powis," said the young man, gravely.

"Why, I hope you do not think there was any *wilfulness* in my refusing to do so before?" smiled the doctor.

"I do not; but now I wish you to tell me whether I can go on to Washington to-day?"

"Whe-ew!"

"That is no answer, doctor."

"Then, my dear fellow, no! It is utterly impossible. You could not stand on your feet for a single minute. You could not sit up in bed for two minutes. You are much weaker than you imagine; although, mind, you are doing extremely well, and recovering as fast as possible."

The young man did not sigh. He closed his lips firmly, and looked very grim, when he heard this sentence. After a little while he opened them again, and inquired:

"Doctor, are there no powerful tonics, or stimulants, or both combined, in pharmacopœia, that might give me a transient strength, that would enable me—enable me to perform the journey?"

"And drop down and have a relapse of the brain fever in the middle of it? No."

"It is of such vital importance that I should go to Washington immediately."

"Would not a letter answer?"

"No; for it would never reach its destination."

"Could you not send a messenger on your business?"

"No; for a messenger would not be permitted the opportunity to deliver my message."

"Why, how is this? What mystery is this?" inquired the doctor, doubtfully, as though he still suspected the perfect sanity of his patient.

"Oh, sir, it is a long, sad story. But if you have time this morning, I would like to tell it to you, and have your advice upon it."

"I have other patients to visit, that will occupy me about two hours. After that I shall be at leisure for about half an hour, and will put myself at your service."

"Thank you, doctor. And now I wish you to tell me, if I am very self-controlled, and very careful to co-operate with you for my rapid restoration to health, how soon, at the earliest, may I be able to travel?"

The doctor hesitated, and then, looking into the anxious, questioning eyes of his patient, answered:

"Within a week, and sooner, perhaps, if you can get any friend to travel with you."

"Friend! I wonder where I could find one now? They must all believe me dead a twelvemonth!" said Arthur Powis, rubbing his scarred forehead.

But the doctor had already passed on to his other patients.

"Sister Domitia!" said the young man.

"Well, Mr. Powis."

"If I am to lay here several days more, I may just as well begin my work from this bed, and do it as well as I can."

"What work, friend?"

"Picking up dropped stitches! And as I must begin at the present time, and trace back step by step, I wish you to send for that landlady; at whose house you said I lived last; and let me question her. Will you do this?"

"Certainly, I will do it at once," said the sister, going off immediately to comply with his request. She soon returned and informed Arthur that a messenger had been despatched to fetch Mrs. Simmons.

At the expiration of the two hours, the doctor came back from his round of visits, and sat down by the side of his patient to hear his story.

In as few words as he could clearly relate the circumstances, Arthur Powis told Doctor Howard every thing.

The doctor listened with the most interested attention.

The patient concluded his narrative by saying:

"I know that Mrs. Llewellyn instigated the assassin to that murderous attack upon my life; I know that she believed the attempt to have been successful; and that she sought to force or to deceive my supposed widow into a marriage with her imbecile son, that he might become the nominal master of Kader Idris, while *she*, his mother, would really wield all the power, and appropriate all the revenues of the manor."

"From what you have narrated, I think your opinions of her designs are well founded," said the doctor.

"I know they are," agreed Mr. Powis. "But now listen again! I told you, on the authority of others—for to me it is still like a nightmare—the scene that took place in church. Think, what would have been the consequences had not that ceremony been providentially interrupted! We have the sexton's word that they have returned to Virginia, taking my wife with them. She is in their power; and the iniquitous ceremony that was interrupted in the church may be resumed and concluded elsewhere! And now judge what reason I have for wishing to hasten to Virginia."

"But your wife would never consent! Having seen and recognized you in the church, as you say she did, she will never be so criminal as to consent to such a marriage."

"Oh! she is but a young and timid girl; and she is in the power of a wretch possessed of all the wickedness and guile of Satan."

"Then write to her at once. Tell her your whereabouts; and tell her that you will be at her side before the week is out."

"The letter would never be permitted to reach her. It would be intercepted by Mrs. Llewellyn."

"Then send a trusty messenger. I will advance you what money you may want."

"No, thank you very much. But no messenger would be permitted to see her. She is, in all human probability, a prisoner in her own room at Kader Idris."

"What an infernal business it is altogether!" broke forth the doctor; but instantly recollecting that he had spoken too abruptly to a convalescent man, he softened down his tone and muttered, "Well, well, you keep cool and quiet as you can for a few days, and then you will be able to go down there yourself. And nothing of the sort you fear is at all likely to happen very soon."

"No, I think not! I think it will take months for them to get over the shock they all received in the church."

While the doctor and his patient conversed, a visitor was announced to the latter. It was Mrs. Simmons. And so the doctor took his leave, and gave his place to the new comer.

But Mrs. Simmons was not alone. A fine looking young man, who seemed to be a laborer, in his Sunday clothes, accompanied her.

"Being as it were a sick man, let alone my own boarder laid up in a hospital, as sent for me, I felt bound to come; for all that Billy here—meaning my own Billy, and not my boarder—had just that minute arrove from Washington, all unexpected; which I didn't look for him until Christmas; and as I wouldn't abide to let my eyes offen him for a single minute, I just brought him along, hoping no offence to the sisters," said Mrs. Simmons, panting for breath, as she sank down into a chair beside Arthur's bed.

"Oh, no offence at all," answered Sister Domitia, smiling.

"Well, and Billy, how are you, and did you want me for any thing particular?—meaning not my own Billy, but you there in the bed."

"I am rapidly recovering, thank you. What I wish to know of you is—when and under what circumstances I came to your house to lodge," said Arthur Powis, fixing his earnest eyes upon the woman's face.

Mrs. Simmons stared. This was not the look or the manner, or even the words and tones of the hod-bearer; *his* look was wandering, his manner distracted, his words few, and his tones gruff; *this* man's was the reverse of all that; and his late landlady stared until she found her tongue, and then she exclaimed:

"Hoity-toity! You're a putting on of airs, aint you? Whoever heerd tell of your talking dictionary to *me*?"

The young patient's eyes kindled ominously. But Sister Domitia shook her finger at him, smiled, and stooping, whispered:

"I must take her aside and explain, if I can."

Then she drew Mrs. Simmons away from the bed-side, and in a few plain words stated the case.

The old clothes vender stared more than ever, and at last answered:

"Well, there! I always thought there was something out'n the way about Billy, poor, dear fellow! And so he imagined himself to be a navial officer. Lor!"

"No, no, no, Mrs. Simmons; he really *was* a naval officer; only after he received that blow on the head which injured his brain, he somehow or other got the impression that his name was William Simmons, and he labored under that delusion for more than a year," said the sister.

"Yes, poor fellow, he labored hard enough at that hod-toting, I wont deny that! And never failed to pay his board reg'lar like a honest man, and never grumbled at his wittels like a Christian," said the bewildered landlady.

CHAPTER XLII.

A NEW COMER.

Let me speak to the yet unknowing world;
How these things came about; so shall you hear
Of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts;
Of accidental judgments, casual slaughters;
Of deaths put on by cunning, and forced cause
And in this upshot, purposes mistook
Fallen on the inventors' heads.—*Shakspeare.*

WHILE the sister was trying to make the case clear to Mrs. Simmons, and the latter was trying to understand it, the real "Simon Pure" was standing staring down at the face of Arthur Powis, until at last he exclaimed:

"Oh, I say! look here! I've seen *you* before!"

"Where?" anxiously demanded Arthur, in the hope that in the answer he might pick up a lost link or two.

"Why down to Washington, to be sure!"

"When and under what circumstances?"

"Good gracious me! why that night when you went a-bathing and like to have gone to the other world!"

"Went a-bathing!" breathlessly repeated Arthur Powis.

"Yes! at least, we all thought you did."

"For Heaven's sake tell me all about it; for I have no recollection whatever of the circumstance."

"Very like you haven't; for the breath was clean knocked out of your body, and the senses out of your brains, by that everlasting plunge you made."

"Plunge I made?"

"Yes. You took a flying leap from the bridge into the water, and of course you struck one of the timbers that prop the old foundation."

"Friend, I know nothing whatever of all this! Pray tell me the story, as you would tell it to a perfect stranger. I am intensely interested in hearing it," said Arthur Powis, eagerly.

"Well, I haven't got any objection, though it does seem strange to tell a man his own story. And I'm afraid I shall have to begin at the beginning and talk about myself; eh, sir?"

"Any thing that brings me information."

"Well then, you must know, sir, when we first went to Washington, me and John Howe, we wasn't engaged on the government works, but had to take any thing we could get to do to bring us wages; so we shipped aboard of a oyster vessel running up and down the Potomac and the Anacostia—you see?"

"Yes."

"Well, one Sunday, when we had sold out all our cargo of oysters at the wharf, us men we had nothing to do, so we took the row boat and we rowed up the eastern branch as far as Bennett's swamp, which is a famous place to shoot ortolan, and reed birds, and partridges, you know?"

"Yes."

"Well, we couldn't push the boat up into the swamp very well—though I have seen the niggers do that for gentlemen; so we rowed up as far as the causeway at the end of Bennett's bridge, and we drawed in our oars and sat there, considering how we should get at the birds, and whether it wasn't too late altogether to get at them at all; for you see there wasn't one of us as knew any thing about killing birds—we was better at catching oysters, you know?"

"Of course."

"So there we sat like fools, knowing no more than the two dogs—which was nyther p'inters nor setters, but just mongrel curs—what to do. At last, while we was staring up at the bridge, which was just then getting to be rather shadowy in the twilight, we saw a man drop over it into the water with a great splash.

"'There,' says my mate, 'that's a man trying to commit suicide by drowning of himself.'

"'No,' says I; 'more likely he is going to take a bath.'

"Any ways, sir, we rowed to the spot to see what the matter was; and there we saw the man tangled half in and half out of the water, being caught in the under pinnings of the bridge. That man was you, sir!"

"I know—I know!" said Arthur Powis, eagerly. "But for Heaven's sake go on."

"Well, sir, we lifted you into the boat and one of the men threw a pea-jacket over you, for you was undressed, sir. And then we struck a light and commenced to examine you. You had a awful gash that laid open your forehead, where you must have struck in falling. At first we couldn't tell whether you were dead or not. My mate, John Howe, thought *not*; for he says, says he:

"'If that man meant to commit suicide, he's made a mess of it; for he has mangled himself and only half done the job.'

"'You fool,' says I, 'do men take the trouble to undress before they commit suicide?'

"'Oh! I didn't think of that,' says he.

"'He was going to take a bath only, as he jumped off he struck the under-pinnings of the bridge, and here he is.' Wasn't I right, sir?" inquired Mrs. Simmons' son.

"No, my friend. Neither you nor your mate hit upon the real cause of my injury. But let that pass for the present. You saved my life. I will not thank you for doing so, as I should thank you for handing me a newspaper, or lending me an umbrella; no! but henceforth, William Simmons, you are my brother!" said Arthur Powis, fervently, holding out his hand.

The young man was rather overpowered by this excessive demonstration of gratitude, and he blushed like a girl as Arthur Powis wrung his hand.

"I'm sure, sir, I did no more than my duty. Why a heathen infidel would not stand by and see a drowning man drown, let alone a Christian!"

"What next? I want to know what followed, and how I came to be called by your name," said Arthur.

"Well, I will tell you, sir. Well, you see, there you lay in the bottom of the boat, cold as ice, and growing colder every minute, with nothing but the pea-jacket thrown over you. Fortunately I had brought a extry pair of trousers with me, because I was told I should get soaking wet wading leg deep in the swamp after the birds. And though a waterman needn't always be particular about *water*, yet you see, sir, I had had the 'flambetary rheumatism *once* and I didn't want to have it again. So I had took the extry pair of trousers. And now they come right into use, for we put them on to you. And then we put the pea-jacket on you, right; and when we had made you decent we rowed down the river to get clear of the swamp and find a good landing-place. And there we landed and went to find some help to move you. It was the most lonesomest place to be so near the Capitol at Washington. Hardly a house to be seen. Well, we found a little hut at last; but the man that owned it couldn't take you in; but he told us that the poor house was not far off, and we had better take you there. And he lent us the loan of his door, which he took it offen the hinges; and we took it down to the boat and laid you on it and carried you to the poor house. You were breathing when we got you there. And the master and the matron came out and looked at you and asked us about eleven thousand questions:—Who were you? Where were you hurt? How did it happen? And all that! And we answered—That you were out bathing, and, in jumping from the bridge to make your plunge, you struck your head against the under-pinnings of the bridge and stunned yourself. And though you say, sir, as that wasn't the way it happened, we certainly *thought* it was, and we told the governor so and he believed it. Well, after a little objecting and so on, they took you in there. And there we left you, oeing obliged to get back to the oyster wessel as fast as

ever we could. And I never saw you again, sir, until I see you here; for we sailed down the river next morning and was gone for three weeks.

"You saved my life, and henceforth you are my brother!" said Arthur Powis, with emotion. "But you haven't yet told me how it was that I happened to be called by your name?"

"Haven't I? I thought that I had? It was all along of the trousers!"

"The trousers?"

"Yes; you see—but I better tell you all about it! At the end of our three weeks' voyage down the river, we come back to Washington with a load of oysters, and the first thing I thought of after we had sold out, was the man who had broken his head by jumping off Bennett's bridge. So I just went to the poor house to ask what had become of you, and whether you had got over it, and so on."

"Oh, you mean William Simmons, who had that dreadful fracture in the forehead from striking his head in jumping from a bridge?" said the matron.

"The same," said I—"only his name is not Simmons; Simmons is *my* name."

"Yes, it is," said the matron.

"How do you know *that*?" said I, rather mad to see her so positive.

"Why, because Simmons was the name on the pocket handkerchief in his trousers' pocket. And Simmons was the name writ on the back of a letter in the pocket of his pea-jacket. And when he come to himself we called him Simmons, and he never denied his name. And, moreover, when the clerk who was making out the report asked him if his name was William Simmons, he said he reckoned it was; and whether his friends lived in New York, he said he reckoned they did. But he seemed to be either a half-witted fellow naturally, or to have been seriously injured in the brain by the blow he received," says the matron.

"Well, sir, I saw how it was in a minute. I saw, as they didn't know your own name, it was very natural they should suppose it to be the name found on the letter and the pocket handkerchief about you. Don't you think so?"

"Yes," said Arthur Powis; "and in the weakened state of my brain at the time of my restoration to consciousness it was equally natural, I suppose, that it should very readily receive any impression made upon it. And so when they called me William Simmons, I, being half insane at the time, believed that to be my name. But go on!"

"Well, sir, I asked to see you; but the matron told me that you were not there; that you had left the asylum three days before, with a young man of the name of Slosh, to set out and walk with him to New York in search of work. Then, sir, I left. And that is all I ever heard of you until I saw you here."

William Simmons had finished his story.

Arthur Powis lay, with his hands pressed upon his forehead, in deep and silent thought. Presently, however, he stretched out his arm, took the hand of Simmons in his own and holding it closely clasped, he said:

"You have done me an invaluable service—not only in the preservation of my life, but in the restoration to me of the lost links in my memory's chain. For, while you spoke to me, I began to remember, as a dream, the incidents you related. In time I hope to recover the whole of my broken life. I have said that you shall henceforth be my brother. You shall. When I rise from this bed, one of my first cares shall be to acknowledge, in a more substantial manner, the great debt that I owe you. Let me see you again to-morrow. Good-by."

Mrs. Simmons, who had been waiting impatiently for this interview to close, now came forward to take leave.

"Good-by, Mr. Arthur Simmons—sho! I meant Mr. William Powis. I hope you'll get up soon. I aint a bit

surprised. I knowed a gentleman once, in a brain fever, as imagined his own blessed legs to be glass tubes, and was dreadful 'fraid the nurse might break them every time she straightened the kiver; and a lady who imagined her head to be a hot loaf, and was 'fraid to go to sleep for fear the cook would slice it for tea. But they got over it, and so will you, and so good-by."

"Good-by," said Arthur, smiling.

When his visitors had left him, Arthur beckoned Sister Domitia to his bedside.

"Sister, if I am not taxing you patience too much, I should like to ask another favor of you."

"Name it, Mr. Powis. I am glad to be of service to you."

"Well, then—when you were telling me all you knew of my history, you spoke of a Mrs. Slosh among my landladies."

"Yes; she is a washerwoman, and lives in Catherine street."

"Well, Simmons tells me that I came to New York in company with a man named Slosh, who must have been of the same family, I think. Now, I want that man found."

"I will go myself this afternoon—I have business in Catherine street—and I will inquire of the woman."

"Thank you, sister. Ah! it seems to me that it requires all my breath to return proper thanks for all the kindness that is shown me"

That afternoon Sister Domitia went on her errand. At about sunset she returned. And this was the sum of the information she had obtained from the laundress: That her husband, John Slosh, was a roving, unthrifty sort of a man, and that in the last year he had gone to Washington, and while there had been taken up for vagrancy and committed to the work house, where he took a great fancy to a good-natured sort of youth, who was in the adjoining almshouse recovering from a broken head. And that, when his term

of imprisonment was out, he persuaded this youth, Simmons, to accompany him in his tramp back to New York. And they arrived together at the city, and lived for several months at Mrs. Slosch's house.

"The chain of memory is now complete," said Arthur Powis. "It is strange that I could not remember any incidents of this past year until they were related to me, and that then I remembered them as a dream! But all is growing clearer to me day by day."

Several days passed, and Arthur Powis grew stronger and stronger. But no answer came to his letter to the Misses Crane. It was, however, now of little consequence, since, from the statement of the sexton, he firmly believed that Gladys was not with them, but in the hands of her terrible enemy, Mrs. Jay Llewellyn. Arthur grew more and more impatient to be gone.

One morning William Simmons came to him and said:

"This is the last visit I shall pay you, Mr. Powis. I am come to say good-bye. I am going back to Washington by the night train."

"Going back to Washington!" exclaimed Arthur Powis, with his eyes lighting up.

"Yes; I can't get any work here to pay me as high wages as I can get there; so I have made up my mind to go back."

"Simmons!" said Arthur, eagerly, "is it necessary that you should go to-night?"

"N-no, but I feel as I'm losing time and money every day I stay here."

"Oh, then, my good fellow, do me a favor, and I will make up to you all loss of time and money."

"Any favor in the world, Mr. Powis!" exclaimed the young man, with equal cordiality and disinterestedness, for one grows very fond of a person whose life he has saved.

"Put off your journey till to-morrow morning, then: and I will go with you!"

"You, Mr. Powis!" exclaimed Simmons, in astonishment.

"Yes! the doctor says that I can go before the week of probation is out, provided I can get any one to go with me."

"Oh, then, I'll stop and go, of course! I'd stop two or three days for you, sir."

"Thank you, Simmons, I will speak to the doctor. Come around and see me this evening, and I will tell you what he says."

"I'll do so, sir. Good-by, sir." And Simmons went away.

When Doctor Howard made his afternoon visit, Arthur Powis broached the subject. But the doctor would not consent for his patient to start so soon on so long a journey, even in the care of an attendant. But in three days' time he should go.

When young Simmons came in the evening, Arthur told him what the doctor had said.

"Very well," replied the good-natured young fellow; "I can wait. Lord bless you, sir, there's no such hurry, if one has got a good reason for stopping."

Arthur pressed the rough hand of the workman.

"What a good fellow you are, Simmons; I really love you."

"So do I you, sir, I'm sure."

After this mutual declaration of attachment, the friends parted.

Arthur Powis announced to Sister Domitia his approaching departure; and she cheered him with good wishes and bright hopes.

The doctor kindly advanced money for the expenses of the journey. And on the appointed day, a bright, frosty Saturday, Arthur Powis, attended by William Simmons, took the early train for Washington city.

The journey was a propitious one. Hope buoyed up the spirits of Arthur Powis, and enabled him to endure the fatigue very well.

They ran into Washington about ten o'clock at night. The first thing that Arthur did on reaching the station was to inquire what time the Pocahontas steamer left for the points of landing down the river; for he wished to continue his journey straight through to Kader Idris. He was told that the steamer had sailed that evening at seven o'clock; but that the *Metamora* would leave Washington for the same points at seven o'clock the next morning.

So, late as it was, Arthur Powis—unable or unwilling to bear the suspense and anxiety of another night, which seemed likely to prove the last feather that breaks the camel's back, the last drop that overflows the cup—Arthur Powis, I say, resolved to go at once to his old lodgings at Ceres Cottage, knock up the old ladies, if they had gone to bed, and gain from them all the news of Gladys that they might be able to give.

William Simmons volunteered to go with his friend, and see him safely housed before leaving him. And so, they hailed a carriage, got into it, and drove toward Ceres Cottage.

CHAPTER XLIII.

A NIGHT OF ALARM.

Grim reader! did you ever see a ghost?

No; but you have heard—I understand—be dumb;

And don't regret the time you may have lost,

For you have yet that pleasure still to come.—*Byron.*

ON the same night that saw Gladys again entrapped into the power of her dangerous enemy, the three ancient sisters of Ceres Cottage sat together at their old-fashioned fireside.

Now that Gladys, with her bright smile and cheerful voice and loving ways, had left the house, they felt that they were very lonely, and their hearth was very dreary.

For one thing, the fire would not burn well. It was made of green oak wood, and instead of blazing cheerily, as it ought to have done, it just soughed and sputtered, and smoked and smouldered, and oozed moisture from the ends of the logs in the most disheartening manner.

And then the one "dip" candle that stood upon the mantle-shelf to light the room, instead of burning brightly, from some defect in the tallow or the wick, sulkily consumed itself with a dim and lurid yellow flame.

And worse than all, the night outside was gloomy to the last degree of gloom. Since the sun had set, the sky had darkened with the double darkness of night and clouds—heavy, inky, wind clouds, that moved athwart the sky like avalanches of blackness. And the wind was up; not blowing at a brisk, hearty rate, like a healthy, inspiring gale; but rising and howling in long drawn wails around the world, like some wandering ghost seeking rest; and then dying dolefully away in silence, like the same ghost sinking back in despair to its grave.

The three old sisters drew their chairs closer together around the dull fire, and put their slippered feet upon the fender, and bent their spectacled eyes over their work, and knitted away at those eternal gray woollen stockings, the manufacture of which was always their evening occupation.

"Ah, deary me; what a dismal night it is! And the wind do harry my nerves so, with its solemnly coming and going," said Miss Polly, drawing her needle and sighing. "There it is again! It rarely do make me think of churchyards and shrouded ghosts!—oh, lor! *what was that?*" she suddenly exclaimed, breaking off in her discourse and seizing hold of Miss Milly, as a startling noise in the room frightened her.

"It's only the cat after a mouse in the cupboard, Miss Polly, ma'am. 'Scat, you huzzy you!" cried Harriet, who was busy reeling off yarn in an obscure corner at a respectful distance from her mistresses.

"Every noise do scare me so to-night," said Miss Polly, apologetically. "But it is because I feel so low-spirited now she's gone. To think she had been with us such a little while, and yet we should get so used to her winning ways as to miss her as much as we do! 'Pears to me I wonder how we ever *did* do without her before she come, or how we will ever get along without her now. And what's the worse to bear, it seems to me I can't help listening, and watching for her every minute, and expecting to hear her step at the door, and see her come in with her pretty smiles and say, 'Miss Polly—' or something or other. And then I remember as she's gone, and I can't see her face nor hear her voice any more—never no more maybe—why the silence just falls on my heart like clods upon a coffin. And then ag'in the fire do act so corntrairy, and so do the candle. I know it's because she's away! If she was here she'd make the fire blaze and the candle burn bright; and then she would sit down and take hold of some fine needle-work for us, sich as cap-frills and the like, as our old eyes couldn't see to do, and she would sew at it and tell us some pretty story out of the books she had read, and oh! she would make the winter evening pass as happy as the summer's day. And we wouldn't mind the wind then."

"I wonder if she is out in it yet, or if she has got to her journey's end?" murmured Miss Milly.

"I hope she has; I do hope she has, poor thing," said Miss Jenny; "and also that Mrs.—Mrs. Fair—Fairfield, Fairfax, whatever it is——"

"Fairbridge, ma'am," put in Harriet, from her corner.

"Yes—Fairbricks! I hope Mrs. Fairbricks will be good to her and not forget to give her some hot mulled cider when she goes to bed, to keep her from catching cold; for she is only a delicky poor thing! But I dare say the lady'll never think of it."

"You may take your Bible to that. Who ever heard of a

proud lady troubling herself about a poor thing? She'll not do it. And the poor thing will get the dreadfulest cold as never was; and get the newmoney in her chest a'gin; and this time it will kill her; and her death will be on our consciences to the latest hour we live! and we will have to answer for it at the Judgment Day! And, oh! what *did* we let her go for? what *did* we for? When here she might have been this identical night, a-brightening and a-cheering up of every thing; and all would have been different. The fire wouldn't behave so ugly; and no more would the candle! Oh! what *did* we let her go for? What *did* we?" whimpered Miss Polly.

"Why, we couldn't help of it, Polly. How could we? She would go," said Miss Jenny.

"We could a-helped it! We could a-helped it!" said Miss Polly, excitedly. "We could a-helped it, if we had *tried*! She'd a-stopped long of us, if we had begged her hard enough! But we didn't. We let her go out in the wide world alone to get her living among strangers. And it was all along of our mean, dirty, miserly stinginess and selfishness and heartlessness! There's where it was! We thought as we wasn't able to feed her! Don't tell *me* nothing more about pirates on the high seas! We aint a bit better than they is! And it's my belief if we had the power we'd be just as bad! yes, and a great deal worse! for I never heered tell of a pirate on the high seas *yet* as ever turned a poor, motherless gall out of doors in the dead of winter time, too!"

"Lor', Polly," said Miss Jenny, "how you *do* go on at us! We never turned her out of doors, and no more aint it the dead of winter time."

"It's all the same! What's the use of our reading in our Bible—if you have two coats, give to him that hath none?—when we've got a roof over our own heads and let her go out in the wide world without a roof over hers? Tell me that! And all on account of the little bit she'd eat and drink, poor dear!"

"Lor', Polly," said Miss Milly, "it wasn't that! For though the times *is* so sca'ce, she was welkim to her share of every thing."

"Times *is* so sca'ce!" mocked Miss Polly. "Well, and what if they *is* so sca'ce? We needn't a-bought one bit more provisions on her account. We needn't a-put a bit more tea in the teapot! But we could a-put more water and drawed it longer! And same with the soup; we needn't a-got a bit bigger piece of meat, only put more water in and boiled it up more! And same with every thing else. We could a-contrived to a-kept her comfortable, if we had wanted to. Where there's a will, there's a way! But we didn't want to; and that's a fact!"

"Indeed, Polly," said Miss Jenny, "I am as sorry she has gone as ever you can be. But I don't think as any thing in the world we could a-said to her would a-kept her here."

"We might a-tried. We might a-showed our good-will by trying; but we wouldn't. We was too 'fraid she'd agree!" said Miss Polly, with the nearest approach to a sneer of which her kindly nature was capable.

"But ralely and truly now, Polly," said Miss Milly, "you *know* as how she was *bent* on going out and making money, not only to support herself, but to pay for keeping in of them advertisements for her husband," said Miss Milly.

"And oh!" sighed Miss Jenny, "it were enough to break one's heart to hear her speak so confident, now she was free to search, of finding him, who, everybody knows, must a been murdered more'n a year ago, and is now, at this identical time, a-laying, as you may say, a-mouldering away, uncoffined, in a unblest, lonely grave, where nobody'll never find him no more!"

"Ah!" screamed Miss Polly, with a shiver—"stop talking about mouldering corpses and unblest graves! This horrid wind do harry my nerves and torment me so—a-moaning and a-sobbing 'round the house, for all the world

like a dead and gone human creetur a-trying to get back again, till I almost believe it is *his* onquiet sperrit a-trying to get in and tell us who killed him and where he lays buried! And here you are making matters worse, talking about murdered men and bloody graves, till it is enough to bring his ghost bodily before us!—Glory be to all the saints, *what was that?*"

"It is nothing at all, Miss Polly, but the dry branches of the elm tree a-scraping against the side of the house as the wind blows it," said Harriet, from her corner.

"Lord bless us and save us alive, if it didn't sound for all the world like skeleton fingers, as it might be *his* fingers a-scratching at the windy-shetters! But it's all Jenny's fault, a-bringing of his name up sich a night as this!"

"My goodness, Polly, I didn't say no harm. But you're so scarey."

"I aint scarey a bit—not a bit—Lor' Gemini, *what's that?*"

"It's only the nut-trees rattling against the roof, Miss Polly," said Harriet.

"Lord preserve us, it was just like the rattling of dry bones, as it might be *his* bones, a-shaking near us! But it's all owing to *her* a-putting of him into my head at such a time."

"Gracious me, Polly, I didn't say nothing out'n the way, I'm sure! It's you that aint yourself to-night."

"I *am* myself. If I'm not myself, I'd be glad to know *who* I am. That's all! I never was more myself than I am now—Ah-h-h!" screamed Miss Polly, grasping her sister Milly—"there! you all heard *that*! Now, what was that!"

"It's *me*, Miss Polly. I only yawned and fetched a gape like, to keep myself awake," said Harriet.

"Yawned and fetched a gape like! Yowling out in that onearthly manner in the dead hour of the night! It sounded for all the world as if something had groaned a

most horrid groan, as it might be *his* onhappy sperrit, close to my ears! But it all comes of *you*," said Miss Polly, turning and nodding her head at her offending sister, "a-talking about your murdered men, and un-coffined corpses, and bloody graves, until I can almost see gory ghosts a-stalking past!"

"Lors, Polly, you're a-saying of a great deal more horridder things than ever I imaged to say!" said Miss Jenny, with an injured air.

"I just wish, for my part, you'd *both* hold your tongues, sisters. I aint scarey, but I can't abear such talk, specially in the dead hour of night. It makes one sort o' 'fraid to look over their shoulder. And it's downright dangerous, too. For I *have* heerd tell how, if you keep on thinking about and talking about a murdered corp', you'll magnify" (Miss Milly probably meant magnetize) "its sperrit and draw it to you till it stands bodily before you. And what would you think, to see *him* standing right there in this room!"

"Oh, Milly! don't, please! Don't say sich dreadful things! Let's all say our prayers and go to bed. It's getting very late—nigh upon eleven o'clock, I should think. And who ever heerd tell of our being up so late as that! Come, Harriet—put away your reel and bring your prayer-books!" said Miss Polly, as she rolled up her knitting; and her sisters followed her example.

Harriet lifted her reel into its corner, got down the four prayerbooks from the shelf, and was in the act of bringing them to her mistress, when the whole circle was startled by a resounding rap at the door.

"RAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT!" it came as if intended to rouse the sleeping.

"Glory to all the saints! who is it?" gasped Miss Polly, in terror.

"Or *what* is it, if it aint nothing human?" shivered Miss Milly.

"They do say as how *sperrits* rap now like any other visitor," whispered Miss Jenny in an expiring voice.

"RAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT!" came the raps again.

"I'm a-gwine to see who it is," said the matter-of-fact Harriet, taking the poker, and leaving the room.

"Harriet, Harriet, ask who it is before you open the door!" whispered Miss Polly, running after her to give her this caution.

"Don't you be feared. I dessay it's *only* somebody's mistook this house for some other, or something," said the woman, in a confident voice.

"RAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT!" came the impatient, not to say peremptory, raps again.

"Will you come in *now*, or will you wait till I open the door?" inquired Harriet, sarcastically, as she went slowly down the passage.

Miss Polly scuttled back to the sitting-room as fast as she could go, and the three sisters waited in affright, listening and watching to see what would come next.

They heard the door open, and then a few words spoken by the new-comer, and then a low exclamation from Harriet.

And the next moment the door of the parlor was thrown open, and Arthur Powis, ghastly pale and thin from recent injuries and illness, and looking indeed like one arisen from the grave, entered the room and stood before them.

With a simultaneous and terrible shriek, the three sisters rushed back to one corner of the chimney, and, clinging together as if for mutual support, glared at the visitant with distended eyes and open mouths and ashen cheeks.

"I knew you'd ra-ra-raise it with your talk," stammered Miss Polly, in deadly terror.

"It's ma-ma-magnified and drawed to us by our thinking of it," gasped Miss Milly.

"How gashly pa-pa-pale it looks," chattered Miss Jenny.

"Spe-spe-speak to it, Milly. You know about speritable creeturs" said the eldest sister.

"I dar-darn't," shuddered the second.

"Ma-make Harriet. She spoke to it a'ready and aint hurt," shivered the third.

At another time Arthur Powis would have smiled at the absurd terrors of these old women; but his life was too serious now; so he said very gravely as he advanced toward them:

"I beg your pardon for having startled you."

But still clinging together as closely as they could, the three sisters stretched out their right hands, with their palms toward the intruder, to keep him off.

"Ha-Ha-Harriet don't know the words," said Miss Polly.

"What is the wo-wo-words to speak to a ghost with?" inquired Miss Milly.

"Polly knows 'em," said Miss Jenny.

"I'll try—try—try," stammered Miss Polly. Then composing her countenance to an expression of awful solemnity, she intoned the words of the abjuration—"In the name *off* the blessed angels, and *off* the holy saints, and *off* the sacred martyrs, if so be your soul is white, I conjure you to speak and answer me."

"I am afraid I have frightened you very seriously," said Arthur Powis.

"Nun—nun—nun—not much," answered Miss Polly, with chattering jaws; "but in the name of them I said—*What would you please to want?* Help me to speak to it, sisters. It's dreadful to talk, all alone with a ghost. And see how gashly it looks. Oh, I wish it would disappear."

"In the name of them sainted ones as she said—*What do you please to want?* Is it for the burying service to be read over you?" asked Miss Milly, coming to the rescue.

"Or is it to have your bones dug up and laid in consecrated, holy ground?" inquired Miss Jenny, lending her aid.

"Or is it to have your murderer brought to justice and hung upon a gallows?" inquired Miss Polly.

"If so, you must tell us who killed you, and where your body was hid, and where you want to be buried," said Miss Milly.

"And the saints give us strength to hear the gashly story told by ghostly lips," said Miss Jenny, solemnly.

"Why, my dear friends," replied Arthur, smiling to reassure them, "here is some great mistake. You take me for a ghost? Well, I don't wonder much, considering that I have been supposed to be dead for twelve months, and that I must look rather ghostly now with my cadaverous countenance; but I am your old friend Arthur Powis, or Colonel Pollard, as you preferred to call me, and no ghost, but real flesh and blood. Shake hands with me and feel for yourselves," he added, approaching them and holding out his hands.

But with a simultaneous cry the sisters fell back into the corner, and extended their hands to keep him off.

"This is too absurd. But I will wait and see what comes of it," said Arthur Powis. And he threw himself into a chair before the fire, took up the poker and stirred the now well dried logs into a blaze, and stretched out his feet to enjoy the warmth.

"Milly," said Miss Polly, doubtfully, "did you ever hear tell of a sperit poking the fire?"

"No; but I'm told they can tip over tables."

"And do a good many other things equally strange," said Miss Jenny.

Arthur made himself at home; and when he had well warmed his feet and hands, he got up and went to a side table and poured out a tumbler of water and drank it.

"Milly," said the eldest sister, "did ever you hear tell of a sperit drinking water?"

"Never in all my born days."

"No more did I," added Miss Jenny.

The three sisters peered over their spectacles at the object of their curiosity, and began to doubt if he was a ghost after all.

Arthur saw that, and leaning with one elbow on the table, he turned his head toward them and said:

"No; a spirit cannot drink water as I have done; or eat bread, as I shall do, if it is set before me; for I am very hungry, friends."

They looked at him doubtfully a little while longer, and then Miss Polly ventured to inquire:

"Are you really and truly Colonel Pollard and no mistake?"

"I am really and truly myself and no mistake!"

"In the body?"

"In the body."

"And wasn't you never killed?" inquired Miss Milly.

"Never."

"Nor buried without a coffin in a lonesome grave?" questioned Miss Jenny.

"No, indeed."

"Sisters," said Miss Polly, hesitatingly, "I think we might venture to shake hands with him. What do you think?"

"I don't know. He *says* he aint a ghost; but he do look wonderful like one, and that's the sacred truth. And then ag'in, if he hasn't been in his grave all this time, *where* has he been? That's what I want to know," insisted Miss Milly.

"And then if we was to go to shake hands with him, and our hands was to go right through his like so much air! Oh! my good gracious me, it would be the death of me!" said Miss Jenny.

"Tell you what!" suggested Miss Polly, "we'll make Harriet feel him! she's not afeared! Harriet! you take hold of his arm and feel it good and see if it's solid."

Arthur, with a smile, stretched out his arm to the woman, who half laughing, came and took it in her two hands and squeezed it well.

"It's solid, Miss Polly—which I meant to say, solid

bone. Not much flesh and blood here, the dear knows! But it's no ghost, which I knowed it wasn't at first; because I knowed Master Arthur the minute I seed him; and 'sides there was another person with him which went away again in the same carriage he came in—which you know ghosts don't travel in four-wheeled carriages! And I could a told you so at first, only I knowed it was no use," said Harriet, dropping the arms she had been examining.

"And so it is you to a dead certainty, Colonel Pollard, is it?" inquired Miss Polly, coming out of her corner.

"It is I to a *living* certainty, Miss Polly," replied Arthur, smiling.

"And was it the advertisement that fetched you back?" inquired Miss Milly, coming cautiously toward him.

"What advertisement?" asked Arthur.

"Why what *she* put in, poor, dear heart; for you see she never *would* allow as you was dead!"

"You speak of my dear wife! And it is of her that I am dying to hear. When did you see her last? Where is she? How is she? I heard that she was at Kader Idris with her guardian! Is it true?" eagerly inquired Arthur Powis, hurrying question upon question in a manner rather bewildering to the slow intellects of the old ladies.

"Yes; no; I don't know;—stop a bit; let me think; she went away from here this morning," said Miss Polly.

"This morning? Has she been with you ever since I left?" inquired Arthur in astonishment.

"Lord, no; she's been with her gardeen, who beguiled her away from us. But she came back some few days ago, and now she's gone again."

"Where?"

"Gone for a teacher to Mrs. Fairbrickses, at Dranesville, 'tother side of the river! But where have *you* been these twelve months and more, Colonel Pollard? That's what I want to know! And if her advertisement didn't fetch you back, to-night, wha' *did*, I should like to be informed?"

"My good friend, that is too long a story to enter upon to-night. Sometime I will tell it to you, but not now! Now I wish to hear about my dear wife. How did her guardian entice her from your protection? And how did she escape from the thralldom and get back to you? And why has she gone out as a governess?"

"My good friend," said Miss Polly, pointedly, "'that is entirely too long a story to enter upon to-night.' It's getting well on to twelve o'clock. And just now you said you was hungry. And so we must get you something to eat and drink and put off the stories until to-morrow! One thing though I'll tell you to stay your stomach—she's well; and the place she has gone to is just an easy day's ride from the city. There now! let that do for to-night!—And now, Harriet, you put the kettle on. We'll give you some chocolate, Colonel Pollard, instead of tea or coffee, which would keep you broad awake all night. Milly, my dear, you scrape down the chocolate—and Jenny set the table and put the cold chicken-pie and the cold ham on it! You see we had them to-day for *her*," said Miss Polly, rising to lend her aid.

As soon as it was possible to prepare it, a good supper was placed upon the table; and Arthur sat down and did ample justice to it.

When it was over, he bade his kind hostess good-night and followed his leader, Harriet, up to the room that had so lately been occupied by Gladys.

"Her room," murmured Arthur to himself. "Ah! if I had come one day sooner!"

Although it was long after midnight before the three "wierd sisters," finally got rid of their alarming nocturnal visitor, so far at least as to get him off to his own room, yet they themselves did not feel quite like retiring to bed; so they gathered closer around their dying fire.

The truth is, that although the old ladies had seen their guest eat with appetite a full quarter of a large chicken-pie

and drink with relish four or five cups of chocolate, and that they rather believed that such was not the habit of disembodied spirits, who were generally supposed neither to require food nor drink; yet, for all that, they could not at once get rid of the deep ghostly impression that had been made upon their imaginations.

"No wonder as we was scared nearly to death! The Hero of Watermelon himself would a-been scared under sich circumstances," said the eldest sister.

"Yes; we was a-settin' here alone in the dead o' night with the wind a-howlin' and the trees a-rattlin' and the house a-creakin'; and a-talkin' about ghosts—especially about his onquiet ghost, as we naterally thought must be a-wanderin';—when lo! and behold! in walks him, as we had give up for murdered more'n a year ago! Tell you, it was 'nough to scare any body!" said the second sister.

"And did any body in this world ever see a living man with such a livid face? He did look just as if he had broke out of a vault," added the third sister.

"I sha'n't get over the scare for a month."

"No more shall I."

"Nor I."

"But to think of his coming the very day she went off, poor thing," said Miss Polly.

"Serves him right for not coming before," said Miss Milly.

"Oh, he'll be after her fast enough to-morrow morning," added Miss Jenny, nodding her head knowingly.

"I wonder where on yeth he's been all this time?" pondered Miss Polly.

"Aye! that's it! where?" solemnly demanded Miss Milly, setting her spectacles up.

"He has promised to tell us all about that to-morrow," explained Miss Jenny.

"Lor! wont he be mad, neither, when he hears how they treated *her*?" said Miss Polly.

"Aye! indeed! I wouldn't like to be in Mr. Stu—Stupor—Stewpan—Stupid's place," said Miss Milly.

"No, indeed; for they do say as these milinary and navial officers don't mind shooting a villain down dead, more'n I do killing of a spider," said Miss Jenny.

"And serve him right, too, for wanting to marry another man's wife. Set him up with it, indeed! What's the world coming to, I wonder," sniffed Miss Polly.

"I say, young ladies," said Harriet, who had now finished clearing away the table and making the room tidy, "it's nigh upon one o'clock! Shall I fetch more wood and make the fire burn for you to watch all night, or shall I kiver up the fire, and let you go to bed?"

"Oh, Harriet, cover up the fire, of course; we will go to bed," answered Miss Milly.

"I had no idea it was so late," sighed Miss Jenny.

And the three sisters went up stairs together, and all slept in the same bed for fear of ghosts.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE NEXT MORNING'S NEWS.

And with the morn he sought and found,
In many a tale from those around,
The proof of all he feared to know,
Their fearful guilt; *her* bitter woe;
All circumstance that may compel
Full credence to the tale they tell;
And now his tortured heart and ear
Have nothing more to feel or hear.—Byron.

THE next morning everybody in that house overslept themselves.

It was after nine o'clock when Miss Polly awoke, and it was nearly ten before she quite collected her thoughts and remembered what had happened, and who was her guest. Then she started up and shook her companions, crying out;

"Milly! Jenny! wake up! My good gracious me alive, it must be all hours of the day! It is ever so late! And Colonel Pollard on a visit here, too; and how will he get his breakfast in time; and what will he think of us?"

The other two sisters slowly waked up, and crept out of bed, and tottered to their feet, and sleepily began their plain morning toilets.

Miss Polly did not wait for them. She dressed herself in a great hurry, and went down stairs where she found fires already lighted in the sitting-room and in the kitchen, and Harriet busy over the preparation of the breakfast.

"Lor, Harriet! how I did oversleep myself, to be sure! How long has you been up?" inquired her mistress, almost apologetically.

"This two hour. I never oversleeps *myself*. Only young ladies as sees ghosts are privileged to do that," replied the woman, gruffly.

"Well, I couldn't help of it, Harriet. But as you was up so airly, why upon the yeth didn't you give Colonel Pollard his breakfast, and not keep him waiting all this while? You know very well how it is with men, both gentle and simple. They can't one on 'em abide to wait a single minute for their wittles. And when they has got to wait they growls to themselves like bears with bruised heads. And even if they don't *say* 'dam,' they always thinks it. You know they do. You know how it is with brother Peter when he stops long of us, although he is a priest. And even suppose Colonel Pollard is a rale gentleman as wouldn't *say* any thing, or *look* any thing, to hurt any body's feelings, still he may *think* a great deal, and so you ought to have given him his breakfast."

"Well, if you'd let me get in a word edgeways," grumbled Harriet, "I could tell you as how I couldn't give him his breakfast, for two or three good reasons. In the first place, *you* had the keys."

"Lor, had I? Well, here they are," said Miss Polly, fumbling in her pocket and producing them.

"And so I couldn't get at the coffee and sugar. And, in the second place, Colonel Pollard aint out'n his bed, yet, any more'n the rest of you."

"Lor! aint he? I'm so glad! I was afraid he was up and hungry. Well, we wont have him called until breakfast is almost ready," said Miss Polly, eagerly, as she began to assist in preparing the morning meal.

The other sisters soon came down.

And by the time the coffee, hot rolls and beefsteak were ready to go on the table, Arthur Powis, without giving any one the trouble of calling him, quietly walked into the parlor.

"Well, I shall not appall you this fine morning, my good friends, I hope? You will not need to resort to any of the formulas of ecclesiastical exorcism, will you?" inquired Arthur, smilingly.

"No," said Miss Polly, who did not understand half of this address, and took the word "appall" to mean apologize. "No; but you do look quite as gashly this morning as you did last night. You have been ill?"

"Very ill," replied Arthur.

"Harriet, bring in the breakfast right away," ordered Miss Polly, who had a firm faith in "wittles" being the grand panacea for all "the ills that *men*, at least, are heir to."

The morning meal was soon set smoking hot upon the table. And the sisters and their guest sat down to enjoy it.

Arthur Powis had a great deal on his mind—a large amount of work planned to be done as soon as it should be possible for him to do it. He had to go to the Secretary of the Navy and prove, with the aid of such witnesses and certificates as he could bring, that he was the long-missing Lieutenant Arthur Powis, and that his long absence from duty was in no way his own fault. And then he must seek Gladys, and, lastly, he must begin proceedings against Mrs. Llewellyn—not for her criminal practices against his

own life, but for her abuse of the trust that had been given her in making her the guardian of Miss Llewellyn.

All these things weighed heavily upon the mind of Arthur Powis as he sat down to the breakfast-table and while he discussed the meal.

If he had not heard from the old ladies that Gladys, in the humble but respectable position of a governess, was safely sheltered in a home of peace; if he had supposed that she was at Kader Idris, exposed to the ruthless machinations of Mrs. Llewellyn, he would have made her immediate deliverance the first business of his life. But as she was represented to be in a place of safety and repose, he deemed it his first duty to set himself right with the Navy Department. But even this duty could not be done to-day, since none of the public departments were ever open on the Sabbath. He would be obliged to wait until the next day, Monday, before he could present himself to the Secretary of the Navy. And such being the case, he might, perhaps, try to see Gladys to-day. True, it was not exactly etiquette for a stranger to intrude himself upon the Sabbath seclusion of a private family; but surely in his case the circumstances would justify the act, he thought. A man violently separated from his wife for more than a year had a right to seek her when and where he could find her, he decided. And so he resolved to go to Dranesville to seek Gladys that very day.

Of course he was very silent while turning these subjects over in his mind—so silent that Miss Polly grew uneasy, and asked him if any thing in particular ailed him.

"No, my good friend; I was only thinking whether—Sunday as it is—I could not go to see Gladys to-day. How does one travel to Dranesville?"

"Why, you take the boat to Alexandria, and then the stage-coach to Dranesville. But there don't no stage run on Sundays."

"That doesn't matter; I could get a horse at Alexandria."

"Then, if you're gwine to ride, you'd better get a horse at Washington, and ride the whole way; it will save time, and chopping and changing about with cabs and boats."

"You are quite right, Miss Polly. I will attend to it at once," said Arthur Powis, rising from the table.

"Now where are you off to?" demanded his hostess.

"To a livery-table to get a horse."

"Now you stay where you are, Colonel Pollard! There aint no livery-stable in a mile of this place; but if you will be quiet, I will send Harriet over to Brother Peter, and he'll lend you the loan of his white cob as will carry you beautiful, which he will be delighted to do it, for her sake! And while Harriet is gone, you know, you can tell us the story of where you have been all this time, as we all thought you was dead." Miss Polly uttered this last clause in so imploring a tone that Arthur Powis could not but comply with her request.

As he seated himself, she went out and despatched Harriet on her errand. And then she came back, and with the help of her sisters she hastily cleared up the breakfast-table and swept up the hearth.

And then she sat down in the chimney-corner, put up her spectacles over her cap, composed herself to listen to a good gossiping story, and said:

"Now then, begin, Colonel Pollard."

Her sisters came and softly seated themselves on the opposite side of the chimney-corner, and waited eagerly for the story.

And Arthur Powis, occupying the seat of honor in the arm-chair, immediately in front of the fireplace, commenced and related the history of the last year of his life.

There had been a little struggle in his mind about it. In telling them the truth, he had been tempted *not* to tell them the whole truth. He had no desire to exhibit himself to these old ladies in the character of a crazy hod-bearer. But when he looked in their simple, sincere, earnest faces,

he felt that he could not withhold from them any part of his tragic story.

And oh! with what attentive countenances, with what uplifted hands and eyes they listened to the narrative! They occasionally nodded, or otherwise telegraphed their impressions to each other; but they did not, even by word, or an exclamation, interrupt him. He made his story just as short as possible. And when he had finished it, Miss Polly drew a deep breath and exclaimed:

"And so *it ralely was you* just as she first thought it was when she seen you in the church; though afterward they almost proved to her as it could not a been you, but was a rale hod-bearer; which besides all that, fell offen the top of a house and was killed on the spot!"

"Did they make my wife believe that?"

"In course they did; and I think, from what she told me, as they must a believed it theirselves."

"She told you all that had happened to her while she was in the power of that infamous woman, did she not?"

"In course she did—every word on it."

"Tell it to me! and especially tell me by what means she was forced or betrayed into consenting to that horrible marriage," said Arthur Powis, eagerly.

"Why, by them drugs, to be sure. They gave her stupefying drugs to take away her senses, so as they could do as they pleased with her, and so — Oh! oh! oh! Colonel Pollard, what is the matter with you, sir?" Miss Polly suddenly broke off and exclaimed, as Arthur Powis sprang up and began to pace the floor with wild strides, exclaiming:

"They shall pay the full penalty of their crimes! That man shall die! and that woman shall languish in prison for all the remaining years of her infamous life!"

"Well, so they *shall*, my dear; and go to purgatory afterward! only don't go on so, that's a dear. You do harry my nerves awful. And you see I aint as young as I used to be," said Miss Polly, coaxingly, as if she had been speaking to a child.

Arthur Powis returned to his seat.

"Tell me, my good friend," he said—"tell me, straight through, the whole story of Gladys' wrongs and sufferings, from the time she missed me to this present time."

"Well, I will, if you will listen quietly," said Miss Polly.

But for Miss Polly to tell a story straight through was an utter impossibility. She had no faculty for narration, no idea of time, place, and unity; and she jumbled up summer, winter, autumn and spring—Forest Lodge, New York, Kader Idris and Norfolk—in the most distracting manner. And at the least sign of impatience from Arthur Powis she became so perplexed as to be utterly unintelligible.

It was only by the most patient and careful cross-examination that Arthur Powis was enabled to arrive at any thing like the truth of Gladys' story.

"You say, dear Miss Polly, that my poor Gladys became the mother of a little girl while staying in that house in New York?" he asked, at one point in her confused narrative.

"No, no, I didn't. It was a wax doll, and she used to sing Porsy All-u-m's son to it; that was when she was stupefied with them drugs."

"Perdition! oh!"

"Now don't, Colonel Pollard—don't! that's a dear. It do harry my nerves so."

"Where was the babe born, then, Miss Polly?"

"It wasn't born nowhere, dear; it was a wax doll, I keep a telling you."

"But," said Arthur, putting a strong constraint upon himself, and speaking very mildly, "you told me that my dear Gladys had a child."

"Oh, yes! but that was before that."

"Where was her child born, and under what circumstances?"

"Stop—let me see. It was in the country somewhere,

at a place called—wait a minute—I'll tell you—called Rout—Gout—Trout—yes, that's it!—Trout's Point. And the doctor as waited on her took the child to put it out to nuss—"

"And the doctor's name; what was that?"

"Wait a bit! The doctor's name? It had something to do with kindfolks, I know. Doctor Mother—Brother—Brotherwell? No—it ended with a 'ton.' Mother—Motherton—that was it! Dr. Motherton took the child to put to nuss, and they all went to New York to that house where she was shut up in the fourth story, and used to amuse herself singing Porsy Allum's son."

"And," inquired Arthur, in breathless anxiety, "the child—did I understand you to say that the child died?"

"Lor, no! How could it die when it was a wax doll? No; when she got over the drugs, she was so misgusted with her own foolishness, as she called it, and the dangers as it had led her into, that she went and flung the doll away, which was a sort of pity, too, seeing as the poor, onsensible immidge *had* been a kind of comfort to her."

"Oh, Miss Polly! Miss Polly! I am not asking after any wax doll! I am asking after my wife's own dear child, that you tell me was born at Prout's Point."

"But goodness me, Colonel Pollard! I am talking of what happened in New York! I can't help it if you can't understand! I do suppose your head is *weak*, all along of being knocked about so much!" answered Miss Polly, a little impatiently, in her turn.

"No, you cannot help it," said Arthur Powis, gently and sadly. "You cannot help it! I must get the whole story from my dear, wronged love, as soon as I see her, which, please Heaven, shall be before this day's sun sets!"

And, as the horse that had been sent for his use had been standing for about ten minutes before the door, Mr. Powis arose to prepare for his departure.

"You will please to give me directions how to proceed after arriving at Dranesville?" said Arthur.

"I don't know as we can; but you might find out by looking at the letters as Mrs. Fairbricks writ to her, for *her* guidance! She left them all here, in her bureau drawer, and here is the key," said Miss Polly, taking a small key from a basket and handing it to Arthur.

The young man took it with a smile of thanks, and immediately went up stairs to his room, and went to the bureau and unlocked Gladys' drawer.

There lay all her letters neatly tied together. With a loving reverence he took these letters, untied them and began to look over them, one after another. The first three were from Mrs. Elizabeth Fairbridge, and were dated *from* Fairbridge, near Dranesville. But they contained no further directions how to reach her house.

"Well! I suppose I must go to Dranesville, and then inquire the road to Fairbridge!" said Arthur, to himself.

Then he mechanically took up a fourth letter, and looked at it with the curiosity and interest he felt in every thing great and small that concerned Gladys.

But the moment his eye fell upon the postmark he started; for it was "Prout's Point." The letter was in fact that forged letter, purporting to be from Dr. Thomas Brotherton, and pretending to describe the death of Gladys' child; and which the poor girl had ever since preserved with a religious carefulness.

"Ah! *this* will tell me something of my dear wife's child!" said Arthur, to himself, as he eagerly opened it.

Three thin old bank-notes dropped out; but Arthur slightly brushed them aside, as his eyes devoured the contents of the letter.

"So her babe died! She had that trial, too, to bear alone, poor darling! Heaven's will be done! But from this time I hope, with Heaven's favor, to comfort her for all past trials, and shield her from all future ones!" said Arthur Powis, as he folded up the letter and placed it in his bosom. He was about to close the drawer, when his

eyes fell upon the three thin old bank-notes, and he carelessly picked them up, supposing them to be of small value; but when he looked at them his countenance changed and lighted up!

Each note was a five hundred dollar one.

"Fifteen hundred dollars!" exclaimed Arthur Powis, in astonishment. Then, after a moment's reflection, he added: "This must be the money my dear love supposed that she had lost, and of which the old ladies told me! But how ever could it have got here?" He reflected a little longer, and then exclaimed:

"Oh! I see! My poor love, doubtless, put it here herself for better security; but did it in a fit of absence of mind, and afterward, in the terrors of her position and the hurry of her flight, she forgot that she had changed its hiding-place. And even when the money was missed, and when they were all looking for it, they might have turned this letter over a dozen times without ever suspecting what it contained—these thin notes take up so little room in the folds; and they certainly never could have found it unless she had chanced to recollect where she had put it. With this solution of the mystery, which was probably the right solution, Arthur Powis put the three notes in his pocketbook, and replaced the letters and locked the drawer and ran down stairs to tell the three old ladies of this piece of good fortune.

"Well, I never *did*!" exclaimed Miss Polly. "Who ever would have thought of looking inside of a little letter for so much money as all that comes to? I looked about for a roll of bank-notes as thick as your arm, Colonel Powis! and *this* little bit the fifteen hundred dollars as was lost! Why it don't look to me to be more'n three dollars!"

Arthur Powis showed her the figures on each note and then replaced them in his pocketbook.

And then he took his great coat, that Miss Polly had

hung upon the back of a chair before the fire to warm; put it on; drew on his gloves; took his hat; bade an affectionate good-by to each of his hostesses, mounted his horse and rode off in search of his lost lady-love.

CHAPTER XLV.

A RIDE IN SEARCH OF A LOST LOVE.

Let winter come! Let polar spirits sweep
The darkening world and tempest-troubled deep,
Though boundless snows the withered heath deform,
And the dim sun scarce wanders through the storm;
Yet shall the smile of constant love repay
With beaming light the melancholy day!
And when its short and sullen noon is o'er
The ice-bound waters slumbering on the shore,
How bright the fagots in the little hall
Blaze on the hearth and warm the pictured wall.—*Campbell.*

THE steed upon which Arthur Powis went forth to his adventure was certainly not a very handsome horse; it was a stout, short-bodied white cob, better built for service and safety than for elegance and display. And, upon the whole, it was a very good horse for the forty miles of rough road and hard riding that lay before it.

As the young man rode away from the gate of Ceres Cottage he looked up anxiously at the sky.

The day that had dawned so brightly, was now darkened with clouds that threatened snow.

And by the time he reached the Long Bridge that crosses the Potomac river, the snow was beginning to sift downward in that fine, white downy dust that promises a long continued fall, and two or three feet of depth.

This gave him some uneasiness; but still he hoped to reach the point of his destination before the roads should become impassible. And he fully resolved, be the weather

or his *health* what they might, he would go on to Dranesville and see Gladys that night.

So, as soon as he was across the bridge he put whip to his horse and started at a good pace for Alexandria, which was the first stage of his journey.

By the time he reached the sleepy old town, the ground and the roofs of the houses were well covered with snow. He did not pause, but rode directly through the slumberous streets and took the road to Dranesville.

The greater part of his way now lay through a thick forest, whose closely entangled boughs and twigs were now covered with snow instead of leaves—clothed in virgin white instead of fairy green.

As he rode onward through the wintry woods, he also, with his steed, became thickly covered with snow: so that both together looked not unlike the figure of Death on the Pale Horse.

It was quite late in the afternoon when—cold, tired, and hungry—he reached the little village called Fairfax Court House, which was the second stage of his journey.

He rode through the deep snow up to the inn, where a number of weather-bound travellers were already taking shelter from the thickening storm.

"Have your horse put up, sir?" inquired the negro hostler, who took the reins from his hands as he sprang from the saddle.

"No," replied Mr. Powis, shaking the snow from his clothing; "but take him under shelter somewhere; take the saddle off him, rub him down, and give him a good feed of corn."

And as the man led the horse away, the rider walked into the parlor of the inn, where a number of half-frozen travellers, in riding-coats and top-boots, were standing around a huge hickory wood fire and discussing the inclemency of the weather and other subjects.

A waiter entered to take the orders of the new comer.

"A room, sir?" he inquired, with a bow.

"No: but you may bring me a cup of strong coffee and a plate of beefsteak immediately."

The waiter went out to fill this order, and Mr. Powis walked up to the fire to dry his coat.

The other travellers, who had arrived before him, and had been around the hearth for some time, were now so well warmed and dried that they were beginning to be roasted. So with one accord they fell back to make room for the new comer, and dropped into arm-chairs in groups about the room.

Arthur Powis stood alone on the rug, with his back to the fire. Wrapt in his own thoughts, he paid no attention to the conversation that was going on around him, until the words of one of the speakers suddenly roused his attention, and set his every sense upon the alert.

"I am *sure* it was the same young lady that came alone in the Alexandria coach to Dranesville yesterday afternoon. Because I was there taking a drink and giving my horse a feed when the coach drove up, and she alighted and went into the house—quite alone. And I noticed then what a pale, pretty creature she was. And in a little while there was a handsome green close carriage drove up to the house—a carriage that I know didn't belong to our neighborhood—for I think I know every carriage in it—four-wheeled and two-wheeled. And no one got out of this one. But a lady, thickly veiled, put her head out of the door and spoke to the landlord, who, you see, had gone out himself to meet an arrival which came in such a handsome travelling-carriage. And the landlord called a waiter and sent a message into the house. And presently the solitary young lady came out, and the landlord handed her into the carriage and shut the door, and—Well! I never saw horses start off at such a gait in *my* life! I thought they had run away with the carriage. But it appears they hadn't; but I suppose they were blood horses, and that was their way. When I asked old Briggs who

these female swells was, he said he didn't know; that the young lady had come up from Washington to meet the old lady, he believed; but that they were both total strangers to him, as neither of them belonged to this part of the country. And indeed I knew of myself that they didn't; but I thought old Briggs knew the names of his own guests. That is all I *know* about it; but I feel morally certain that it is the same party you speak of."

"Yes, I think there is no doubt of it," said another farmer.

"Excuse me, sir, if you please, but—what party are you speaking of?" said Arthur Powis, approaching the group of talkers.

"Why, sir, a strange party and a strange circumstance as ever you heard of," said a third traveller—a stout man in a gray surtout coat and top boots—"if this weren't a respectable part of the country, and if these weren't peaceable times, I should say—looking back on it, that it was a case of kidnapping or highway robbery, or murder, or something."

"For Heaven's sake, go on! What was it?" demanded Arthur Powis, thrilled with a vague alarm.

"Well, you see, sir," said a stout traveller in gray, "I belong to Centreville. And having business down in Washington, I left home yesterday morning and had ridden to within about a half a mile of Dranesville, when, in the road there that goes through the old woods, I suddenly, at the same time, heard dreadful, heart-rending screams, and saw a dark green carriage dashing along the road that I was riding on. I thought of course that the horses had run away with the carriage. And I jumped off my horse to run and seize the leader's head and stop them. And while I was running toward the horses and the horses toward me, I caught a glimpse of a young, pale, scared-looking face, thrust, screaming, out of the window one minute and snatched back the next. Well, I thought, naturally enough,

that she was frightened at the running horses, and was trying to jump out to save herself, and very imprudently, too; because she might have been killed in the attempt. And I thought some one inside more self-possessed than herself had pulled her in again. Anyway, all these thoughts passed through my mind like lightning as I made a dash forward and seized the leader and stopped the running horses——"

"You stopped them?" breathlessly demanded Arthur Powis.

"Yes, and now mind what followed! The minute I laid my hand on the leader's bit and the horses reared, the driver, instead of holding them in, just raised himself in his seat and hit me a clip over the head with the butt end of his whip, and then lashed his horses into a run again. And I just had time to reel back to save myself from being thrown down and trampled to death when——"

"They got off?" demanded Arthur.

"They whirled up the road like a tornado, leaving me standing there confounded! I am sorry now that I had not had the presence of mind to mount my horse and gallop after the carriage to see what came of it. But there! I had *not*, and that's the truth! So after I had recovered myself a little, I mounted my horse and pursued my journey. I did not put up at Dranesville, last night, or I might have heard more about that party, but I put up at a friend's house. And now, all I have got to say is this: if ever I do meet with that brute of a coachman again, and fail to thrash him into better manners, I hope he'll finish me the next time he assaults me, that's all!" And the man in the gray surtout took his pipe from his pocket and filled it, and went to the fireplace to light it.

"And I am sure, sir," said the first traveller who had spoken, "quite sure that it was the same party that left Dranesville about the same time."

"Yes, I think that is reduced to a certainty," answered

Arthur Powis. And then he added mentally—"and to an equal certainty that my dearest love has been again entrapped into the power of that ruthless woman."

At this moment the waiter entered to say that the gentleman's lunch was ready in the dining-room, and Arthur Powis left the parlor and went thither.

"Have my horse brought around immediately," he said, as he seated himself at the table.

The waiter left the room to give the proper directions. And Arthur Powis tried to benefit by the meal that had been placed before him.

In vain! Appetite was entirely destroyed by excessive anxiety. He drank the coffee as a duty. And then he got up and buttoned his surtout closely, drew on his gloves, and took his hat and hurried to the front door to see if his horse was ready.

The unlucky beast, whose evil fate it was to be compelled to carry his rider over eighteen, twenty, or more miles of a rough road, through a tempestuous night, on an adventure in which he felt not the slightest personal interest, stood ready-saddled at the horse-rack, and testifying his impatience not to be *off*, but to be *in*.

The landlord, the waiter, the hostler, and several of the guests of the house, were waiting in the hall for a look at the traveller who was mad enough to take the road on such a night as that.

The weather outside was, in fact, appalling. It was not yet dark—scarcely twilight, in fact—but the snow lay so thick upon the ground that it was half way up to the tops of the fences, and it was still falling fast.

"You will surely think better of it, sir, and not venture out," said the landlord.

"I am obliged to go," was Arthur's straight-forward reply.

"How far do you travel, sir?" inquired a sympathetic neighbor.

"To Dranesville," answered Arthur.

"To DRANESVILLE!" echoed the whole company in consternation.

"It is a good twenty mile from here," said the traveller in the gray surtout.

"You'll never see Dranesville to-night, sir," said the landlord.

"I will make the attempt, at any rate, friends. Good-night to you!" exclaimed Arthur Powis, as he vaulted into his saddle and rode off, flinging up clouds of snow-dust behind his horse's heels.

"He's after that party! that's my opinion," said the stout traveller in gray.

"If he is, he wont fall in with them to-night," said another.

"I'll tell you what! You'll hear of a man being found frozen to death in the snow!" said the landlord, as he and his guests returned to the house.

Meanwhile, Arthur Powis pushed on in a cloud of snow—snow lying thickly on the ground under him; snow falling fast around him; and snow flung up in whirls by his horse's hoofs. Himself and his horse were soon covered with snow, and moved onward an equestrian snow-ball through the storm of snow.

Snow, snow, snow, everywhere; above, around, and beneath; nothing but snow!

It was as if heaven and earth were resolving themselves into snow!

Not a soul did Arthur meet in that solitary ride, through the snow-laden forest! not a soul in the world seemed desperate enough to venture out on such a night as that.

Not a living creature did he see except an occasional squirrel limping half frozen into its hole in the hollow of some tree—or a poor little belated bird flitting across his path and hastening to its home.

Night deepened; and it soon grew so dark that he could

not even see the snow, but only feel it falling fast upon his face and sifting into every opening of his garments;—so dark that he had to trust to the instinct of his horse to keep the middle of the dangerous road.

Still Arthur pressed onward.

The remainder of his night's journey was perfectly indescribable in its danger, horror, and difficulty. It was one persistent pressure onward through darkness, tempest and peril.

It was ten o'clock when both rider and horse, more dead than alive, entered the village of Dranesville and stopped at the inn.

There were lights shining from the windows of the parlor and of the bar-room; but there was not a creature visible outside the house.

Arthur dismounted, so stiff that he could scarcely stand or walk, and fumbled about until he found a place to fasten his horse, and then he went up to the house and entered the bar-room.

There was the barkeeper at his post, and there were a few customers sitting around the open wood fire. And all these turned in astonishment to stare at the "Snow Man" that had walked in bodily before them—looking as if he were an incarnation of winter or storm.

"Will you send somebody to look after my horse," said Arthur, stepping up to the bar.

The half-stupefied barkeeper rang his bell for the hostler, who presently made his appearance.

"Take my horse to the stable; rub him down dry with straw; give him a warm mash, and cover him with a blanket. Hang the saddle where it will dry before morning," said Arthur.

The hostler nodded rather ill-humoredly at being unexpectedly called upon to do his duty at so late an hour, on such a tempestuous night.

Arthur Powis turned again to the barkeeper.

"I want supper in a private sitting-room. And I wish to see the landlord immediately on business."

"Yes, sir," said the barkeeper, ringing for the waiter, who immediately entered.

"Show this gentleman into Number Three, and take his orders for supper. Then go and see if Mr. Briggs is still out of bed. And if he is, tell him that a gentleman in Number Three is waiting to see him on business."

The waiter lighted a candle and led the way into a small sitting-room, where there was a fire nearly burnt out.

"What would you please to have for supper, sir?"

"Any thing at all that is ready. I want to see the landlord, first of all."

The waiter replenished the fire from a box of wood that was near at hand, and then went out to perform his errands.

Arthur Powis took off his wet overcoat and hung it up, and then drew a chair to the fire to dry his feet, while he waited for the landlord.

"Old Briggs," as he was generally called, soon afterward entered.

"You wanted to see me, sir?" he said, addressing his new guest.

"Yes; I wished to talk with you for a few minutes. Sit down."

The landlord drew a chair opposite to that of his guest; seated himself; placed his hands on his knees; and looked attentive and interested.

"There was a young lady arrived here last night by the Alexandria coach?"

"There was, sir!" said the landlord, solemnly, as though he had been answering a question propounded by the bench in open court, that might have concerned a murder.

"Do you know the name of that young lady?"

"I do not, sir," replied the landlord, looking equally full of solemnity and curiosity; as though he expected some strange revelation from this singular guest.

"She came here to meet a lady by appointment," continued Arthur.

"She did, sir," responded the witness.

"Do you know who that lady was?"

"I do not, sir."

"Do you suspect her to have been any one in particular?"

"I do not, sir."

"Did you hold any conversation with either of the ladies?"

"Only with the elder one, sir; and very little with her."

"What was the purport of that conversation?"

"Only this, sir: when I went to the carriage door—she came in a handsome, close carriage—a dark green one, drawn by two fine, spirited, gray horses—and seeing such a distinguished-looking arrival, I went out myself to receive it—and, as I said, when I went to the carriage door, she put her head out and asked me:

"Is there a young lady here who came by the Alexandria coach, waiting for another lady to meet her?"

"I said: 'There is, madam.'

"I am that lady. Go and tell her that I am here, but in too great a hurry to alight. And ask her to be good enough to excuse me, and to come out to the carriage.'

"Well, sir, I sent that message in by a waiter; and presently the young lady came out, and I handed her into the carriage myself. And it immediately started off at full speed, as if it were running away."

"And that is all you know?" inquired Arthur Powis.

"All I know of *my own* knowledge, sir," answered the landlord.

"What description of young lady was she who came by the Alexandria coach?"

"Well, she was of middle height and slender, with a fair, thin face, and fine, soft features, and very black hair, eyes, and eyebrows. And her voice was very low, and her manners were very gentle."

"Gladys! Gladys!" said Arthur to himself. Then speaking up, he inquired:

"What sort of person was the elder lady?"

"Well, she was very tall and rather thin; and she was dressed in black, and so thickly veiled that I could not see her face distinctly. But I judge from what I did see that she was dark."

"Mrs. Jay!" exclaimed Arthur, to himself. Then he said aloud: "The elder lady who came to meet the young lady signed herself Elizabeth Fairbridge—and called herself a widow. Do you know any one of that name in this neighborhood?"

"Fairbridge? Lots of them!" answered the landlord, who, as he grew more familiar with his questioner, gradually changed his witness-box style of delivery for his ordinary tone of conversation; "Lots of them, sir; though not one that looks like *this* lady, if you mean *that*. For *this* lady was tall and thin, and as far as I could judge, dark-complexioned—whereas, every one of the Fairbridges are short and stout and red-haired and fair; which all comes of their marrying in and in so much, to keep the property in the same family."

"Do you know any widow Elizabeth Fairbridge, who signs herself 'of Fairbridge'?"

"No, *sir*; but I know there is no such widow in the whole clan; and neither is there any one who has the right to sign themselves 'of Fairbridge'—(which is the old family seat, where the heads of the family live)—except Colonel John Fairbridge and Mrs. Colonel John. If that lady called herself a Fairbridge of Fairbridge, she was an impostor, sir; you may rely upon it."

"I have every reason to believe that she was," said Arthur Powis, very gravely.

"The whole affair had a very queer look, sir, and set folks here to talking about it, I tell you."

"What road did the carriage take?"

"Straight on, sir, toward Centreville."

"The very road that *she* would have taken in going by a

private conveyance to Kader Idris," murmured Arthur to himself; then speaking out, he said:

"Landlord, you say that this affair set people to talking. Pray, have you heard any thing of that party since the carriage left?"

"Well, sir, yes. I told you, if you remember, that I had given you all the information I possessed of my own knowledge. But I heard something from some others that makes me think that all was not right."

"What! What?" questioned Arthur, eagerly.

"First, sir, tell me—are you in the *detective* line of business?"

Arthur smiled as he murmured to himself:

"What next? I have been mistaken for a hod-bearer, a ghost, and now a detective! What next, I wonder!" Then aloud he replied: "No, my friend, I am not in the detective line; but I have the deepest personal interest in the young lady, who has been carried off——"

"Carried off! There, I *said* she had been carried off! I told Tom Hodge so, when he told me what he heard," exclaimed the landlord.

"What, what, did he hear?" eagerly demanded Arthur.

"Well, Tom Hodge was driving his team along the old meadow road that crosses the turnpike, when, just before he got to the crossing, he sees a carriage come tearing along, as if the horses had run away, and a young lady with her head out of the window screaming as if she was in fits. And he sees a gentleman coming along the opposite way on horseback, jump off his horse and seize the heads of the carriage horses to stop them; and at the same minute he sees the nigger driver strike the gentleman away from before the horses, and lash the horses into a faster gallop, and somebody pull the young lady back in the carriage, and shut down the window. And then he sees the carriage itself whirl away in a cloud of dust and the gentleman that had tried to stop the horses get into his saddle

and ride on, cussing every step he went; all this Tom Hodge sees as he rides up to the cross-roads. When he goes there the carriage was out of sight in one direction and the horseman in the other."

"I heard something like this from a traveller I met at Fairfax Court-House this afternoon."

"At Fairfax Court-House this afternoon, sir! Surely you have not ridden through all this storm from *that* point?" said the landlord, in astonishment.

"Yes; but never mind me and my stormy ride! Tell me of *that* carriage and its occupants. Did you hear any thing more of them?"

"Yes, sir! A gentleman from Unionville—which is on the same road—who passed this way this noon, hearing us talk of the strange party, said it must be the same party he had noticed at the wayside inn, where he had got his horse fed. And he described it—a dark green carriage; gray horses; a very silent negro coachman; a tall, thin, dark lady, dressed in black, and a young lady. But what particularly attracted his attention was the fact, that the whole party looked as if they had been on the road all night; and that the young lady was lifted out of the carriage, perfectly insensible, being in a swoon, or a trance, or something of that sort. They went immediately to a private room; but only staid long enough to get some breakfast and change the horses, after which they set out again; the young lady being lifted back into the carriage, still in the same dead swoon or trance! And they took the Warrenton road."

"Oh, Gladys! Gladys! Ah, my dear love! My lamb in the she-wolf's jaws! How you must have suffered! But—oh! how *that* she-devil shall pay for it all!" exclaimed Arthur Powis, breathing short and hard, as he jumped up and paced the room. Presently coming back, he said:

"What else?"

"Nothing, sir; that was all the traveller could tell us; and I have heard nothing more since."

Arthur walked up and down the room in troubled silence a few moments longer. Presently he paused, and inquired:

"How far is Fairbridge from this place?"

"About five miles, sir. But still harping on the Fairbridges, sir? Bless you, sir, they are innocent of this job!"

"I suppose so! nay, I know so! But I will not leave the neighborhood without making some inquiries at Fairbridge. The woman's use of the name was in itself a very singular circumstance. And by inquiring there, I may obtain some useful information! Is the road from this place to Fairbridge a good one?"

"Well, sir, if you was to ask me to name you, as a curiosity, the very worst road that ever I knew in all my traveling, I should tell you it was the labyrinth of cross-country roads, leading in and out, through hills and holes, thickets and swamps, between this and Fairbridge."

"Nevertheless, if it is at all practicable, I would like to reach there to-night."

"To-night! Lord, sir—to-night! Why, sir, if you wasn't a reasonable looking young gentleman, I should think you had lost your reason altogether! To-night! through this storm! with this much snow lying on the ground, and more falling thick to blind you! Why, sir, it was difficult enough to ride from Fairfax Court House to this place, as you must have found it."

"It certainly was almost impossible."

"Well, sir; still it was *not* impossible, seeing that you *did* get through. But I tell you, sir, that road from Fairfax Court House to this place is one of the best roads in the country; whereas the road from this to Fairbridge is one of the worst. And so it is many degrees beyond impossible for you to get there to-night. No, sir; you will have to wait till broad daylight; and even then it will be very dangerous to try it, until the snow has melted away;

for now, with every thing two feet under the snow, you may ride into one of them holes I spoke of, unawares, and get your neck broke! nothing more likely, even by to-morrow's light; but in *to-night's* darkness nothing would be more certain."

"I fear you are right," said Arthur Powis, drawing out his watch and looking at the time; "I fear you are right. Besides, it is now eleven o'clock. It would take me an hour, at the least, to reach Fairbridge, even supposing I should get there in safety, and that would bring midnight—too late an hour at which to disturb a strange family upon my own especial business. But, landlord, I wish to be called as early as six o'clock in the morning."

"Very well, sir; you shall be called."

"And now, in order to be quite fresh for my early journey, I think I will retire at once."

"Very well, sir; but did you not order supper?"

"Ah, yes—I had forgotten. Let it be sent in immediately, if you please."

The landlord went out; and his exit was shortly followed by the entrance of the waiter with a broiled beefsteak, fried potatoes, and the accompaniments.

Because he knew that he must take care of his strength in order to deliver Gladys, Arthur Powis forced himself to eat. And as soon as he had finished a moderate meal, he retired to the room that was made ready for him, and tried his best to sleep.

Nature did more for him than all his own efforts. Nature threw him into the deep sleep of fatigue.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE RIDE ENDED.

*Tis done! Dread Winter spreads his deepest gloom
And reigns triumphant o'er the invested year.—Thomson.*

ARTHUR POWIS slept well until six o'clock, when he was awakened by the voice of the waiter who had been directed to call him at that hour.

Arthur Powis sprang out of bed, and, first of all, went to the window, threw open the shutters, and looked out.

It was snowing still! Scarcely the dawn of day, and snowing still! the ground all heavy-shaded white—the sky all darkness—and the intermediate space filled up with the fine, white, cold, moist powder of sifting snow.

However, discouraging as was the aspect of the weather, Arthur resolved to proceed on his journey.

He dressed quickly, and went down stairs to the parlor, where a good breakfast was already awaiting him.

"Have my horse fed and brought around immediately," was the order he gave as he sat down to breakfast.

By the time he had finished his meal, his order had been obeyed, in so far as his horse had also been supplied with the materials of a good breakfast. But as the horse was neither in love nor in a hurry, he naturally took more time over his meal than his master had done.

And so it was seven o'clock when Arthur Powis at length found himself in his saddle, and about to commence his journey, in defiance of the gravest cautions from the landlord and all his satellites.

Of that journey I cannot write in detail. Who can describe the indescribable?

As for the sky, the sun was up, certainly; but it might as well have been below the horizon for any efficient light it gave

And as for the earth, there was solid ground, of course, somewhere, but it was difficult to be found under the soft, deep, engulfing snow.

And then, as for the journey, it was through a thick, fast sifting shower of cold, moist, white powder, and over steep hills, and into deep holes, and, in short, was such a desperate one as has never been undertaken by mortal man since the days of Tam O'Shanter. It took Arthur Powis nearly three hours to get through with it, so that it was close upon ten o'clock when he reached Fairbridge, a fine, old-time manor, situated in the bottom of a wooded valley, that was now nothing but an abyss of snow and of bare forest-trees, in the midst of which stood the red sandstone mansion.

A gray-haired footman answered his knock at the door, and took in his card, upon which, in addition to his name, he had written the words, "*On business of vital importance.*"

The gray-haired footman returned in a very short time, and invited the visitor to enter the well-furnished library, where he was soon joined by a short, stout red-haired old gentleman, who walking briskly into the room, inquired, pleasantly:

"Well, sir! you wished to see me on business; what is it? But, be seated sir; pray be seated," he added, waving his hand, as he dropped into one arm-chair and nodded to his companion to take another.

Arthur Powis sat down and explained his business—so far as to say that he came to inquire whether Colonel Fairbridge could give him any information concerning a person calling herself the Widow Elizabeth Fairbridge, who had within the last day or two engaged as a private governess for her children a young lady friend of the inquirer.

"The Widow Elizabeth Fairbridge?" I do not know such a person; but I do know there is no individual of that name connected with our family or belonging to our neighborhood," said the colonel.

"Yet she writes herself 'of Fairbridge,'" said Arthur.

"Oh! she does!" exclaimed the colonel, with a touch of jealous pride; "then clearly she is an impostor, since there is no one who has the right to call themselves 'of Fairbridge' except myself and wife and our children."

"Your answer is just what I expected, sir. I felt certain that the name had been falsely assumed by the person in question; but still I wished to hear my conviction confirmed by your lips. And, now, sir, another question, if you please," said Arthur, with a courteous and half apologetic smile.

"As many as you please, Mr. Powis," replied the old gentleman, waving his hand politely.

"Did you ever chance to know a woman by the name of Jane Jay Llewellyn?"

A curious smile came over the face of the colonel as he heard this question, and answered:

"I knew such a woman once. Excuse me, why do you ask?"

"Because I feel morally certain that she is the person who, for nefarious purposes of her own, has falsely assumed your name."

"Ah, ha! has she so? Well it will not be the first time that she has aspired to bear the name! But for what possible purpose can she have assumed it now?"

"To decoy into her power the person of a young heiress, whom she is anxious to force or to beguile into a marriage with her son."

"It would be just like her to make such an attempt; but how can she hope to succeed?"

"By the most unscrupulous means, of course. But the story of her evil deeds is too long a one to tell you, sir, and besides I have not the time. I am engaged now in hunting this woman down," said Arthur, rising to depart.

"Do not go, I beg you, sir. The weather is quite dreadful and the roads very dangerous," urged the colonel.

"I thank you, Colonel Fairbridge, but my business will admit of no delay," replied Arthur, buttoning up his overcoat.

With many expressions of regret that he should expose himself to such terrible weather, the old gentleman accompanied his visitor to the door.

And Arthur Powis mounted his horse and rode forth again into the storm.

He resolved to go to Kader Idris, for he felt persuaded that thither his stolen wife had been conveyed. But to go to Kader Idris, on horseback, across the country, along such roads and through such a storm as he was now struggling against, was simply impossible. Even his adventurous spirit acknowledged that. So he resolved to go back to Washington as fast as he could, and to take the Norfolk steamer and make the greater part of the journey by water. He urged his patient horse to as fast a gait as the circumstances of the bad weather and worse roads permitted; but often, in the covered hollows, for instance, that gait was a series of plunging, slipping and wallowing, that made it very difficult for the rider to keep his seat, and nearly impossible for the horse to get along. Often he must have missed his road, but for the fact that, up hill or down hill, it lay all the way through a thick forest, where the trees on each side fenced him in.

It was nearly two o'clock when at length he reached Dranesville.

And there he found it absolutely necessary that his exhausted horse should rest. But no rest would the young man allow himself. Finding, upon inquiry, that he could procure a fresh horse at the hotel, he determined to continue his journey. While the fresh horse was being prepared for his use, he took a hasty dinner. And then he mounted and rode forth again, leaving Brother Peter's white cob to be forwarded to him at Washington the next day.

As he rode out of the inn-yard he noticed that the snow had ceased to fall, and that the clouds were breaking away before a brisk north-west wind. The weather was growing colder and the ground beginning to freeze. Very soon it would be possible to ride over the frozen surface of the snow, and he would be able to get on faster, especially as his horse's hoofs had been rough-shod for the purpose. With the fresh horse and the improved roads, he made such good progress as to reach Fairfax Court House in three hours. He only stopped long enough to give his horse a drink, and then he rode on toward Washington.

It was nine o'clock when he drew rein at the door of Ceres Cottage.

The old ladies were all up and keeping the supper waiting for him.

All three arose to meet him as he walked into the sitting-room.

"Oh, Colonel Pollard, sir! what a time you must have had in the snow-storm! And where is Mrs. Colonel Pollard, sir? We thought you would bring her back with you; but of course she couldn't venture out in such weather," said Miss Polly, officiously taking his hat and gloves, while Miss Jenny awkwardly helped him off with his overcoat and Miss Milly drew the large stuffed arm-chair to the warmest corner of the fireplace for his comfort.

"Thank you, my kind friends; but how is it that you are ready with this warm welcome for me? Did you confidently expect me?" inquired Arthur.

"Why, of course we did! We knowed you couldn't get back yesterday through the snow any way, even if the distance had been shorter. But to-night we thought you'd be sure to come, and to fetch Mrs. Colonel Pollard, too. So we made up our minds to keep the fire up and the supper waiting until ten o'clock at least," said Miss Polly.

Arthur sank exhausted into the arm-chair; while the sisters, without troubling Harriet, who was performing the

office of groom for Arthur's horse, busied themselves with putting the supper on the table.

"And how did you find her, the darling?" inquired Miss Milly.

"I have not found her at all," replied Arthur.

"Not found her at all!" echoed Miss Milly, pausing with the coffee-pot in her hand.

"Not found her at all," repeated Arthur.

"Oh! then you didn't go as far as Dranesville? The storm stopped you somewheres this side, I suppose?" inquired Miss Milly, while her sisters anxiously awaited the answer.

"Yes, I went through the storm straight on to Dranesville, and even to Fairbridge; but—I should have had to go further on the road to Kader Idris to find her," replied Arthur.

"What! you don't say!" exclaimed all the sisters in a breath.

"Yes, my friends; she has been again entrapped into the power of that infamous woman. Yes, my friends; the person signing herself Mrs. Elizabeth Fairbridge, of Fairbridge, was no other than that felon—Mrs. Jay Llewellyn."

The three sisters lifted their hands in horror.

"No! you don't mean it!" they at length exclaimed.

"Yes, but I do!" replied Arthur.

"And what are you going to do about it?" inquired Miss Polly.

"I am going on to Kader Idris early to-morrow morning!" replied Arthur.

"Well, here! take a cup of coffee, and then tell us all how, and about it," said Miss Polly, seating herself at the table and beginning to pour out the coffee.

And over the good supper Arthur told the friendly old ladies all the incidents of his journey, and all that he had heard concerning the abduction of his wife.

The poor old ladies heard the story with great wonder and distress and self-reproach

"We ought not to a-let her gone! We ought not to a-let her gone!" they one and all repeated over and over again.

"Knowing what I do of the circumstances of the case and of the character of my wife, I feel sure that you could not have prevented her, and therefore you have nothing whatever to blame yourselves for," said Arthur, soothingly.

But it was a long time before he could restore them to any thing like peace of conscience.

Then he told them that a messenger from Dranesville would bring down Brother Peter's cob the next day and take away the horse that he himself had ridden, and that was now in the stable.

And then he bade them an affectionate good-night, and retired to rest.

Early the next morning Arthur Powis bade adieu to his kind hostesses, and, followed by their prayers and benedictions, set out to walk to the steamboat wharf, where he arrived just in time to secure his passage on the Pocahontas, that was advertised to sail that morning from Washington to Norfolk, touching at all the intermediate points.

It was late in the afternoon when the boat reached Shrimpton, the little sea-side hamlet that was most convenient for the landing of any traveller bound for Kader Idris.

Here Arthur got off the boat, and, after some little difficulty, succeeded in hiring a horse to go to Standwell that night.

Arthur rode the whole night through and a part of the next morning.

It was eleven o'clock when he reached Standwell.

He put his horse up at the "Peaks," took a single cup of coffee, and then set out to look up a magistrate.

He found Squire Browning, an old friend of the Llewellyns and the Powises, in his office and at leisure.

Arthur solicited and obtained a private interview, and then he told the story of Mrs. Llewellyn's crimes and Gladys' wrongs.

After some demur, Squire Browning issued a warrant for the arrest of Jane Jay Llewellyn upon the charge of abduction and poisoning; a second warrant for the arrest of James Stukely, for aiding and abetting the said Jane Jay Llewellyn; and a third warrant for the arrest of the negro Judas, upon the charge of highway robbery and attempted murder.

And armed with these warrants, and accompanied by three mounted constables, Arthur Powis set out again for Kader Idris.

All these arrangements had occupied so much of the day that it was quite late in the afternoon when the party rode out of Standwell; and it was quite dark when they reached Kader Idris.

As they drew near the house, Arthur noticed with surprise that the whole front of the mansion was lighted up as for some scene of festivity.

CHAPTER XLVII.

UTTER DESPAIR.

From short, unnatural and disturbed repose
She woke; how happy had she woke no more
Yet that were vain, in dreams invade the grave,
She woke, emerging from a sea of dreams
Tumultuous! where her wrecked, desponding thought
From wave to wave of bitterest misery
At random drove, her helm of reason lost.
Though now restored, 'tis only change of pain,
A bitter change, severer, for severe.
The day too short for her distress; the night,
Even in the zenith of her dark domain,
Is sunshine to the color of her fate!—*Young's Night Thoughts.*

WHEN Gladys awoke from the swoon produced by the chloroform, the first object that met her opening eyes was the same that ten minutes before they had closed upon in apparent death—the paleful, green, glaring eyes of her

mortal enemy! And the first feeling of which she became conscious, if indeed it could be called a feeling, was that of utter despair.

Despair, not only of her own power, but of God's providence. Despair that saw no light in earth or heaven. Despair such as the hunted negro feels when run to the earth at last by bloodhounds, he is dragged back to chains, to stripes and to slavery. Despair such as the fugitive criminal feels when, after a taste of liberty, he is overtaken by the avenger of blood and returned to the condemned cell, to await the gallows. But despair such as no child of God should indulge for a single instant, even in the darkest trials of life. Gladys, however, was very young, very far from perfect, and had been very bitterly wronged. And, besides, I doubt if the best of us, placed in her circumstances, would have proved better Christians than she did.

Mrs. Llewellyn's cat-like eyes, brimful of malignity and triumph, were fixed upon her. Those of Gladys met them unflinchingly, not in defiance, but, as I said, in despair.

"Well, my pretty ward! I have caught you at last! A fine time I have, taking care of you during your minority! But I have got you safe once more! And you shall not escape me again!" said Mrs Llewellyn, hissing forth the words between her set teeth.

"I do not care! I do not care!" screamed Gladys. "You will die sooner or later! Perhaps I shall kill you! I won't if I keep my senses; but you *may* drive me mad; and then, spite of all you can do, I *shall* kill you! For the mad are very cunning, you know, and they find out means of deceiving and destroying that would never occur to the sane!"

"You will not go mad; your Llewellyn brain is too strong. It may become eccentric from its very strength, but never insane," coolly replied the woman.

"Very well! I don't care! If I do not go mad and kill you, at least you must, of course, die some time or

other; or, at all events, it is certain that the world will some day come to an end; and then, Mrs. Jay, then you will go to burning flames! And I shall glory in your torment and your despair! yes, I shall. Oh! I never believed in hell before; but I do now. I never believed that the good Father in Heaven ever created or permitted a place of eternal torture for any of his creatures; but *now* I do. Now I see how necessary it is for just such devils as you are, Mrs. Jay! Now I believe in it! now I desire it! now I pray for it! Oh! I should not be perfectly happy in highest heaven unless I knew that you were in deepest hell, without one hope of ever, in all eternity, getting out!"

These and more wild and wicked words poor Gladys uttered in the phrensy of her despair. Who was accountable for their exceeding sinfulness? Not Gladys, perhaps, but the wretched woman through whom the "offence" came.

While Gladys was still raving, and the carriage still going at full speed, she caught a glimpse of a horseman riding toward them from the opposite direction. In an instant the hope of escape once more presented itself to her, and she dashed open the window and screamed:

"Help! help! for Heaven's dear sake, help!"

But just as she saw the horseman throw himself from his horse and seize the head of the leader—just as she hoped for rescue—she herself was caught back by her captor, held fast, and suffocated by a handkerchief saturated with chloroform.

When once more she recovered from the effects of this powerful agent, she found herself whirled rapidly along the forest road, that was now momentarily growing darker under the advancing shadows of night.

She spoke no more, but in the anguish of her soul she reproached heaven and earth.

It was Mrs. Llewellyn who had the "floor," and did all the speaking. And bitterly she taunted her victim with her utter helplessness and hopelessness.

But through all that dark night journey Gladys spoke no more.

As day dawned, they passed out of the forest into the more open country, and by the first beams of the rising sun they saw before them the village of Unionville.

As they entered the village, Mrs. Llewellyn again chloroformed her patient. So that when they drove up to the village tavern, Gladys, in a state of complete insensibility, was lifted from the carriage, and conveyed to a private room, and laid upon a sofa.

Here Mrs. Llewellyn ordered her own breakfast to be brought, and while it was being prepared she sat beside her victim, and upon the slightest sign of return of sensibility, she administered her horrible drug.

When the servant brought in the breakfast and respectfully asked if he could do any thing for the sick young lady, she answered him in the negative, and dismissed him from the room.

She took her breakfast alone, and when it was finished, the horses, refreshed by a good feed, were put to the carriage, and Gladys, still in deep, death-like swoon, was carried back to her wheeled prison.

When Gladys awoke again, they were whirling along a road that wound through certain old fields, and the snow was falling thickly around them. But she did not notice it. Sunshine or tempest was nothing to her.

She was faint from fatigue, and hunger, and despair. But she did not care. Life or death mattered little to her.

All day long they drove through the snow-storm. Late in the afternoon they reached the little mountain village of Upperville. As they drove into the principal street, Mrs. Llewellyn again seized and chloroformed her victim, now quite incapable of resistance. They drove up to the best hotel, where Gladys was again lifted from the carriage and conveyed to a private room, where she lay insensible upon the sofa, while Mrs. Llewellyn got her own supper, and fresh horses were put to the carriage.

It was no part of this woman's design that her victim should perish of hunger; so she filled a bottle with coffee and rolled up a parcel of sandwiches, and took them with her into the carriage.

Upon this occasion the swoon of Gladys continued so long as to excite serious apprehensions in the mind of the woman who had so vilely practised upon her health and reason. But at length, when, in the midst of that terrible fall of snow, they were slowly winding through a defile of the Blue Ridge, Gladys once more opened her eyes—how large and hungry and despairing they looked!

"You are famished," said her tormentor.

"Yes," sighed Gladys.

"Eat, then," said the other, placing the coffee and the sandwiches before her.

"No; I will die," answered Gladys, wearily.

"As you please; but you will not die until you have served my purpose!" hissed the woman.

Then both relapsed into silence. And the carriage drove on through night and storm for an hour or two longer.

Suddenly it stopped.

"What is the matter?" called Mrs. Llewellyn from the window. Then suddenly recollecting that her coachman could not hear, she rapped upon the front pannel of the carriage until she produced a vibration that could be felt.

In another moment the deaf and dumb negro was at the window.

"What is the matter?" she spelt rapidly upon her fingers by the light of the carriage lamp.

"If you please, ma'am, the road has become almost impassable. But we are at Snicker's Gap. Had we not better put up at the tavern here for the night?" he spelt.

"Yes," she answered briefly on her fingers.

Again poor Gladys was chloroformed and taken into a private room of the rustic hotel, and this time she was undressed and put to bed.

Mrs. Llewellyn had a comfortable supper; so had the coachman; and so also the horses; but not Gladys; she, poor girl, remained in her artificially produced swoon for the greater portion of the night.

Mrs. Llewellyn sat beside her bed and watched her. She feared that she had gone too far, in practicing upon this poor girl's nerves and brains; but she feared still more with a horrible and guilty dread to call necessary assistance, lest it should lead to a discovery of her evil deeds. So she watched the pallid face of her victim with the utmost anxiety.

And when, at length, Gladys drew a faint fluttering breath and opened her eyes, Mrs. Llewellyn hastened to fill a feeding cup with wine, and put the spout of it between the victim's lips and compel her to swallow a little, before she should be sufficiently recovered to know what she was doing. Drugged wine it was, for as soon as Gladys had swallowed it she turned over and fell into a deep sleep, that was more natural than the swoon had been.

In the morning, as soon as it was light enough to see the road, Gladys was muffled up and conveyed to the carriage that was in readiness before the door. And Mrs. Llewellyn resumed her journey.

The second day's travel was so much like the first, that it need not be described. They stopped only twice, when it was absolutely necessary to change horses and to take refreshments. Gladys was always chloroformed before being taken from the carriage. And to sympathizing inquiries concerning the health of "the poor young lady," Mrs. Llewellyn answered that her young charge had only fainted from fatigue.

Always Mrs. Llewellyn, her coachman and her horses got comfortable meals. And life was sustained in Gladys only by the administration of a few drops of wine at the point of time when she would be recovering from the effects of chloroform, and just capable of swallowing without being conscious of the act.

They rode through all the next night; passed through Standwell at the break of day, and reached Kader Idris about ten o'clock on Tuesday morning.

Gladys, no longer unconscious, but too weak to resist or to talk, and almost to breathe, was lifted out of the carriage, and conveyed to her own apartment and laid upon her bed, just as she had been more than a year before. Only upon this occasion her deliverer and avenger was close in pursuit.

The darkest hour, you know, is always just before the dawn of day.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

A PROPER TOOL FOR VILLAINY.

I am one, my liege,
Whom the vile blows and buffets of the world
Have so incensed, that I am reckless what
I do to spite the world.

And I another,
So weary with disasters, tugged with fortune,
That I would set my life on any chance
To mend it, or be rid on't.—*Shakespeare.*

I WISH the good had half the energy possessed by the wicked. If they had, I am sure that the victory of the right over the wrong would more frequently be won.

As soon as Mrs. Llewellyn had seen Gladys safely locked in her room, she went to her own chambers, changed her travelling habit for a home dress, and then, without allowing herself one hour's repose after her harassing journey, she passed at once down stairs to push forward the criminal purpose she had in view.

First she went into the small parlor that was the common family sitting-room.

On opening the door, she involuntarily started and shrunk back in surprise and alarm at a piece of her own work that was staring her in the face!

It was Mr. James Stukely—who was seated bolt-upright upon the sofa, with his hands hanging down by his sides, his mouth open, his chin fallen, his eyes gazing into vacancy, his face pale as death, and his expression idiotic.

It was perfectly clear that he had been put through a course of Mrs. Llewellyn's sedatives, and that the treatment had gone unusually hard with him.

Mrs. Llewellyn looked at him for a minute, during which he never noticed her presence or moved a muscle of his face or form.

"How do you do, James?" said his mother, at length, approaching him very cautiously.

"Extra——" began Mr. Stukely; but he did not finish the word or change his position.

"James," said his mother, very emphatically, in order to arrest his attention, "James, I have had a very dangerous journey; but I have got home safe at last, and I have brought Gladys with me."

"Ah, in——" began Mr. Stukely; but he thought better of it, and stopped in the middle of the phrase.

"Oh, this fellow Nugent has gone beyond my orders! He has really poisoned the boy! He should have known that *his* poor brain could not bear much!" said Mrs. Llewellyn, indignantly, as she swept out of the parlor and passed into the library, where, after sharply ringing the bell, she threw herself into an easy-chair.

A servant soon answered the summons.

"Is Mr. Nugent in his room?"

"Yes, madam, he got in from Standwell a few minutes ago."

"Let him know that I have returned home and would like to see him here."

The servant bowed and went to obey the order.

Before introducing this gentleman into the library, I must tell who and what he was; and where and wherefore Mrs. Llewellyn had made his acquaintance, and invited him to her house.

About the time that Gladys fled from New York there was a tremendous parochial and newspaper excitement over the case of a certain unworthy preacher, who for gross impropriety of conduct had been discharged by his congregation, and was awaiting the meeting of the proper authorities to investigate his case, and with every probability of being finally ungowned and dismissed from the pulpit. The public were divided in opinion as to his guilt or innocence; but not equally; by far the greater portion believed him guilty. Most of my readers will remember the case to which I allude. I dislike very much to write of this man; because he was a sorrow and a reproach to the holy profession for which we all must ever feel the deepest veneration. But I cannot help it. There was, you know, a Judas among the chosen twelve apostles of our Saviour. There was an Arnold among the heroic soldiers of the Revolution. And there has been within late years a Philip Townly Nugent among the devoted preachers of a pure gospel. Mrs. Llewellyn had read all the paragraphs pro and con. And *she* believed the accused preacher to be guilty of the charges preferred against him. Perhaps being of a kindred spirit, she understood him better than others did. She saw in him the very tool she needed to work out her designs against Gladys.

She wrote to him a letter, in which she declared her full belief that he was an innocent and injured man; and she invited and pressed him to call and see her that she might express to him personally her sympathy and respect.

Refreshingly as rain upon the parched heath fell the words of this letter upon the desolate heart of the preacher, who, whether guilty or not guilty, most deeply felt the blasting ban breathed over him by society at large.

He lost no time in calling on Mrs. Llewellyn, who received him with all the tenderness of a loving mother, and all the veneration of a believing disciple. She reiterated in his presence her earnest belief in his innocence, and promised all her social influence in his favor.

But be it noted that the social influence of Mrs. Llewellyn in New York amounted to nothing, since she had sedulously avoided society, and had made no acquaintances whatever in the city. And she invited him to dine with her the next day. Delighted with his reception, he readily accepted the invitation, and the next day duly presented himself at the dinner hour. Nor was that the last time he dined with his lady patroness. Mrs. Llewellyn, not doubting but that she should be able to recapture Gladys in due time, delayed her departure from New York in order to cultivate Mr. Nugent. He dined with her a second and a third time.

And then, still treating him with an affectation of sympathy and respect, she informed him of her intention soon to leave New York.

He expressed the deepest regret at her intended departure.

She then remarked that New York could not, at the present time, be a very agreeable residence for himself.

He assured her that it was not; and that it would be much less so, when she, his respected friend and beloved sister, should have departed. And he spoke with an air as though he suspected the middle-aged widow had fallen in love with him and was trying to draw him on to make a proposal, even if she did not intend to go further and make one herself. But Mr. Nugent resolved to proceed cautiously. He was a needy preacher out of employment and in disgrace; but for all that he would not sacrifice himself to a middle-aged widow unless he should be well assured that she was rich. Vanity was not among the least of Mr. Nugent's natural endowments. But no such thoughts were in the mind of the proud lady, far too proud, even if she had been younger, to have taken any man's yoke upon her; and especially this man's, upon whom she looked down with a private scorn and contempt, which could he have felt and known, must have humbled his self-conceit to the dust.

She smothered her feelings of disgust, and speaking to him, as an honorable woman to an honorable man, she invited him to accompany her to Virginia as her escort on her journey and as her guest for the winter.

With a secret smile of gratified vanity and with many outward expressions of thankfulness, he accepted this invitation.

And the next day the whole party set out for Virginia. And in three days, they arrived at Kader Idris.

In a day or two after their arrival, the guest began to employ himself by trying to find out the financial circumstances of his hostess, and especially whether she was really the owner of the vast estate of Kader Idris. If so, he resolved to lose not an hour in proposing to the widow and securing a life interest in the property, when of course he could snap his fingers at the "convention." Some little remnant of delicacy prevented him from making inquiries of her son. But on his first visit to the post-office at Standwell, he did not scruple to ask the postmaster. And then and there he received the information that Mrs. Llewellyn resided at Kader Idris, only as the guardian of the heiress; and that in her own right she did not possess a dollar.

Nugent ground his teeth with disappointment and rage—rage at his hostess especially, whom in his heart he accused of trying to entrap him, by a show of wealth, into a marriage with herself. And he resolved to "pay her off," as he expressed it, by continuing to accept her hospitality and patronage and enjoying all the comforts and luxuries of Kader Idris just as long and as fully as he possibly could, and then, when the crisis should come, by going off and breaking her heart.

Ruminating over these worthy projects he rode slowly on until he reached Kader Idris.

But that very day he was destined to be undeceived as to his false suspicions and posted up as to the true state of the case.

That day Mrs. Llewellyn had determined that on the next morning she would set out for Washington in search of Gladys, whom she felt certain she should find hiding at Ceres Cottage. But even while she was making preparations for her departure, she received the morning mail, containing, among other parcels, the Washington papers. Glancing over these latter, her eyes happened to fall on the two advertisements, one under the other in the same column, that had been put in by poor Gladys.

Her face lighted up with fiendish triumph as she read them; for, of course, she recognized at once, in the advertiser her deeply-wronged fugitive ward. No other but Gladys would have advertised for Lieutenant Arthur Powis. And, besides, the advertisement was signed by Gladys' own initials. And the next advertisement for the situation of a governess, was written in the same style and signed by the same initials; and therefore, of course, must have been put in by the same person, and that person was Gladys Powis.

Here then was a trap unconsciously set by the poor girl herself. All that Mrs. Llewellyn would have to do, would be to put on the bait and pull the string, and the game would be secured. In other words, she only need answer the advertisement for the situation of governess, by offering more liberal terms than it was possible any one else should offer;—by forbearing to ask for references, as it was certain any one else would do;—and by signing the letter with a fictitious name and appointing a place of meeting on the soil of Virginia, where Gladys, unable to prove her marriage in time, would drop legally into her guardian's power.

This plan she knew would save a world of scheming, that she would have had to have gone through, had Gladys remained with the old ladies at Ceres Cottage, under the protection of the laws of Maryland.

And before the day was out, she imparted enough of her

plans to Mr. Nugent as would enable him to become her intelligent confederate.

She did not, however, admit him into her full confidence; for to do so would have been to confess herself to be an unprincipled wretch, and by inference to declare her belief that he himself was no better. And refined villains do not go to work in that way. It is only your rude, unsophisticated, comparatively innocent rascals, those that plan the robbing of a bank or the murder of a traveller, who are perfectly honest with each other and call things by their right names, and apply to acts their true motives. Your refined and accomplished villains, on the contrary, keep up a thin show of honor and mutual respect, and pretend to deceive themselves and each other.

Thus Mrs. Llewellyn, knowing in her deepest consciousness that Nugent was an abominable wretch, who had deservedly been turned out of his parish by his congregation, and would soon be ungowned by his clerical brethren in council, still treated him as if she believed him to be an honorable man; yes, treated him so, even when telling him a story and making him a proposal that any intelligent man must immediately see through, and any honest man repudiate in disgust.

She told him that her ward, Miss Llewellyn, had been betrothed by her parents to her son, Mr. Stukely; but that she was, alas! weak-minded almost to fatuity; that she had run off with a fortune-hunter, who had deserted her, and who had afterwards met his death by an accident; and that now she wished the marriage ceremony between her ward and her son to be very privately performed, as soon as she could get possession of the person of the unhappy girl, who was now, she said, staying at a cheap, disreputable boarding-house in Washington, from which she was going the next day to bring her. She further declared that her sole object was now the salvation of that wretched girl. But that the very nature of the circumstances rendered it

necessary that some clergyman who was a confidential friend of the family should officiate. Finally, she hinted that the fee given to the officiating clergyman on the occasion of the marriage of an heir of the house of Llewellyn, was never less than one thousand dollars. And that—though she knew Mr. Nugent was entirely above such mercenary considerations, yet she begged his permission to state that on the marriage of its sole heiress the fee would be doubled.

At this the eyes of the false minister shone with a lurid lustre.

He knew in his heart that the woman who spoke to him was a devil, past the possibility of pardon, yet he answered her as though he considered her an angel of light.

He said that of course he knew she could only have the best welfare of her unhappy ward at heart; that he hoped the young lady, weak-minded as she might be, might still have sense enough to appreciate such devotion on the part of her guardian; that, for himself, he could not sufficiently admire such generosity and disinterestedness as he had the happiness to witness in his fair and honored hostess and friend, who was thus willing to sacrifice the widow's only treasure, her sole son, to reclaim this erring girl. Finally, he assured her that he should feel bound by every tie of honor, admiration, and gratitude, to hold himself at her orders. And he misquoted Milton:

"What thou command'st,
Unargued I obey."

Mrs. Llewellyn warmly thanked him, and they parted.

When Mrs. Llewellyn was alone she smiled to herself as she thought: He understands the whole thing. But I do not care, since he does not dare to *show* that he understands 't; and, more than all, that he does not hesitate to sell me his aid; he does not, in fact, hesitate at any thing which he thinks will bring a remunerative return.

When Mr. Nugent found *himself* alone, he thought:

That woman is an unscrupulous wretch, who means to betray her helpless ward into a marriage with her imbecile son, so that *she, herself*, may enjoy the wealth of Kader Idris, and manage its vast revenues for the term of her natural life! for, of course, these two miserable young people, if the girl is as feeble-minded as the young man, will be but as babies in her hands. They will not even have a dollar of pocket-money that she will not dole out to them. And she wishes to use *me* as her tool to accomplish all this. Well, so long as she does not presume to unmask her villainy to me; so long as she treats me as an honest man, and puts all her actions upon honorable grounds; and, above all, so long as she pays me well, I will serve her turn! And *afterward*, she shall serve *my* turn! For if there should be any thing the least irregular in this marriage—as I am sure there will be, or she would never go to the trouble and expense of bringing me into the affair—I shall know that its legality is very questionable indeed. And I shall thus have a hold upon Mrs. Llewellyn, and the revenues of the Kader Idris estate, that even *she* will not dare to deny.

Late that same evening, Mrs. Llewellyn had another interview with her confederate. She told him that she wished to leave her house and household in his care during her necessary absence in Washington. And she put a parcel of twelve small powders in his hands, and told him that they were the prescriptions of a celebrated physician of New York for her son, who was in a precarious state of health; but that the young man was so unreasonably opposed to taking wholesome medicine, that she was obliged to drop one of these powders into his first cup of coffee in the morning, and into his first cup of tea in the evening. She further requested him to manage to be the first at the breakfast and at the tea-table, and to put one of these powders into her son's cup, and cover it with a little milk and sugar to hide it, so that he might take his wholesome physic without knowing it.

Nugent, though convinced that some deep villainy lay concealed under the secret administration of these powders, yet promised all she wished.

The next day Mrs. Llewellyn set out, not for Washington, but for Alexandria, which she intended to make her headquarters during her infamous campaign.

From Alexandria she went by stage to Dranesville, to post that lying letter which had decoyed poor Gladys into her power.

And on the appointed day she went in her new carriage and pair to meet her and entrap her as we have seen.

She had now again her victim in her possession. And her plans were all once more arranged for action. And she was sitting in the library awaiting the entrance of that willing tool who was to ensure her success.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE FORTUNATE THIRD TRIAL.

Never give up! it is wiser and better
 Always to hope than once to despair,
 Fling off the load of doubt's heavy fetter
 And break the dark spell of tyrannical care.
 Never give up! or the burden may sink you,
 Providence wisely has mingled the cup;
 And in all trials and troubles bethink you,
 The watchword of life should be—Never give up!—*M. F. Tupper.*

It is certain that if a bad man were always labelled "villain" by physiognomy his career in crime would speedily be cut short, or, perhaps, it would never even be begun. But, unfortunately, this is not generally so. At some former period in the history of the human race characters and countenances may have been in harmony; but not now. It is likely a man may inherit his features from one ancestor and his disposition from another; and

these two may have been as opposite in their nature as light and darkness.

One of the most kindly, happy and charming-looking portraits we ever saw was that of a "gentleman" who had been convicted and executed for poisoning several of his dearest friends and nearest relatives.

And one of the most diabolical-looking physiognomies that ever chilled the blood in the veins of the beholder was that of an antique bust on exhibition at the Crystal Palace in London, and labelled—Tiberius the Good!

After that we ceased to judge of character by countenances.

There was certainly nothing to repel confidence, or to arouse suspicion, in the fair face and blue eyes of the graceful young man who answered Mrs. Llewellyn's summons to the library.

"Sit down, Mr. Nugent," said the lady.

The young man bowed and complied.

"You expected me home to-day?"

"I scarcely knew whether to expect you. I feared that you would be detained by the snow-storm."

"But you see I have not been. And I hope there has been no delay in your part."

"Oh, no, madam; every thing that has been left to my charge is quite ready."

"You have the license?"

The young man took the document from his pocket and put it in her hands.

"Quite right. I hope you remembered to invite the tenantry on the estate?"

"Yes, madam."

"I consider it necessary that they should attend; for though I see that you have taken care to get out a *special* license for this marriage, still I choose that it shall be solemnized as publicly as it can be done in a private house, lest any carper should in future take exceptions to the ceremony as having been too privately performed."

Mr. Nugent bowed his acquiescence to the prudence of these measures.

"And now about my son, the bridegroom elect. What have you been doing to him to reduce him to the state in which I find him?" asked the lady, very gravely.

"I have simply given him the powders according to your direction."

"What! have you given him no more than two a day?"

"No more than that, madam. And if you will recollect how many powders you gave me, and how many days you have been absent, you will see that I could not have given him more."

"True. It was I who miscalculated his strength. And now, Mr. Nugent, I believe that is all I have to say to you at present. In future I will reward your zeal," said the lady, terminating the interview.

At a very early hour of the evening the tenants and dependants of the Llewellyn estate, dressed in their holiday attire, began to assemble at Kader Idris. Full of wonder were they at the honor that had been done them, and full of conjecture as to the reason why the marriage had been fixed, by special license, to take place at such an unusual hour. But so that they saw the show in the drawing-room, and partook of the feast that had been prepared for them in the dining-room, they troubled themselves but little about the motives and actions of their betters.

When all was ready below stairs—when every room was brilliantly lighted up, and every window dazzlingly illuminated, when the humble wedding-guests were crowded, not sitting but standing along the walls of the drawing-room, leaving a way clear for the entrance of the wedding party—then Mrs. Llewellyn went up into the chamber where Gladys still lay like a beautiful automaton on her bed.

Unassisted, the woman lifted the light, flexible form of the helpless girl and placed her on a chair, and then proceeded to dress her, for the third time in wedding clothes.

Rather awkwardly and clumsily she did this; but then Mrs. Llewellyn cared very little whether her pale and almost lifeless young victim were well or ill dressed so that she was safely married.

When she had finished this miserable toilet, to the last acts of putting the crushed wreath on the head and arranging the crumpled veil over the form of Gladys, Mrs. Llewellyn laid her back in her chair, and went to look for her son.

She found Mr. Stukely seated where he had remained ever since dinner—in an easy-chair, before the fire, in his own room.

He had forgotten all about his toilet!

And it was now too late to make any considerable change in it. Something, however, must be done.

"James Stukely," shouted his mother in his ear, as she shook him roughly, and put his dress coat in his hand, "get up and put on this!"

"Extraordi——" began the young gentleman, as he mechanically arose and obeyed.

"And now put on these."

"Ah, ind——" commenced Mr. Stukely, drawing on the white kid gloves that she gave him.

"And now come with me," she said, taking his arm.

"All ri——" began Mr. Stukely, but he forgot to finish his sentence.

Mrs. Llewellyn led him to the room where Gladys, with her benumbed senses, still sat reclining in her chair.

"Come here, take one of your cousin's arms, and help me to lead her down stairs."

"Just s——" began Mr. Stukely; but he seemed fated never to finish even one of his own short sentences.

And Gladys, with her face entirely concealed by the bridal veil that had been drawn over it, was lifted to her feet by the united efforts of Mrs. Llewellyn and Mr. Stukely, and led and guided between them down the stairs, and through the hall, and into the lighted and crowded drawing-room,

where all the humble wedding guests stood around against the walls in eager expectation, and where the officiating clergyman stood in the centre of the room in readiness.

On the entrance of the bridal party a buzz of comment went through the assembly.

"Good gracious, how weak she seems! more dead than alive!" was, in better or worse language, the burden of these comments; until at length Mr. Nugent lifted his hand, in a peremptory manner, as a signal for silence, and the murmuring ceased, while Gladys, supported between Mr. Stukely and Mrs. Llewellyn, was led up and stood before the minister.

In the midst of a breathless silence, that was only occasionally interrupted by the entrance of a late guest, the ceremony commenced.

First was read the solemn preliminary exhortation, to which Mr. Stukely began to respond;

"Extrr——" but, as usual, broke down before he finished the word.

This response, however, seemed to be considered quite regular by the obliging minister, who immediately passed on to the important question, addressed to the bridegroom:

"James—Wilt thou take this woman to be thy wedded wife, to live together after God's ordinance, in the holy estate of matrimony?"

To this Mr. Stukely promptly answered:

"Ah, ind——" and then stopped and stared in dumb dismay at the door, through which some new guests seemed to be entering.

But this fragmentary answer also seemed quite satisfactory to the complaisant clergyman, who was proceeding to put a similar question to the bride, when suddenly the book was sent flying from his paralyzed hand, the bridegroom was hurled spinning into the midst of the astounded crowd, and Gladys was caught fainting to the sheltering bosom of Arthur Powis, who, like an avenging spirit, stood among them!

CHAPTER L.

VENGEANCE.

When purposed vengeance I forego,
Term me a wretch, nor deem me foe,
And when this insult I forgive,
Brand me as a slave and live!—*Scott.*

MR. STUKELY, hurled through the crowd, by the strong arm of Arthur Powis, struck the opposite wall where he stood erect, with rigid form, stiffened limbs, pallid face, and starting eyes, gasping and chattering:

"Ex—ex—ex—ex—ex—ex—traordinary!"

The spectators cautiously drew near and gathered around the bridal party, and stood gazing at them in amazement.

Arthur Powis firmly supported the drooping form of Gladys, and softly whispered re-assuring words into her ears.

The Reverend Mr. Nugent remained passive, with his eyes demurely fixed upon the floor, probably understanding the whole case, and considering whether he had not better save himself by turning state's evidence.

Mrs. Jay Llewellyn, still strong in her evil will, was the first to recover her self-possession and powers of speech. Though really appalled by deadly terror and dismay, she turned upon the intruder a front of haughty defiance, and fiercely demanded:

"What means this violent outrage, sir?"

"What means it, madam?" retorted Arthur Powis, sternly. "It means that the day of dire retribution has overtaken you, in the midst of your crimes! And that neither your sex nor your rank shall save you from the felon's dock, or the convict's cell, that certainly await you." Then turning to the constable, and pointing to the woman,

he added: "Officer, there stands your prisoner. Do your duty."

"Jane Jay Llewellyn," said Constable McRay, advancing and laying his hand upon her shoulder—"you are my prisoner!"

"PRISONER!" indignantly exclaimed the woman, dashing off the profaning hand and recoiling from the offensive presence of the constable; "prisoner! How dare you, fellow!"

"I arrest you upon the charge of abduction and attempted murder!" persisted McRay, following her up and taking a firm grip of her shoulder.

"Murder!" echoed the crowd, in consternation.

"Hands off, you villain!" shrieked Mrs. Llewellyn, violently shaking herself free once more.

"Madam, I should be sorry to be forced to resort to extreme measures, but the charge is a serious one," said the constable, very gravely, as he put his hand in his great coat pocket, and drew forth a pair of ornaments more remarkable for strength than elegance of workmanship, and of the use of which Mrs. Llewellyn had not the slightest idea.

Some one else had, however. In the twinkling of an eye Mr. Stukely dashed through the crowd and struck the handcuffs from the hold of the constable.

Poor boy! In all his weakness and folly he possessed one redeeming quality—it was his love for his most unworthy parent. And her personal danger had done what no other circumstance in the case had been able to do: it had stimulated his half palsied faculties to action. And now he came forward, her sole defender; not a very powerful or eloquent one, as you will soon see, but the best that was to be had.

"Oh, I say, look here, you know! none of that now; I won't have it, you know! 'Taint fair, so many on one woman, you know! She's my mother, and so help me Bob! I won't have her bullied, you know," he said, elbow-

ing his way between the surprised constable and the prisoner, and rolling up his sleeves, and preparing to show fight.

"Stand out of the way, fellow!" said the constable, collaring him and flinging him on one side.

"He is the other prisoner named in the warrant—arrest him," said Arthur Powis, gravely.

"Oh, he is, is he?" said the other constable, picking up the handcuffs and catching hold of Mr. Stukely. "Well, we'll make short work of *him*."

And in a trice the fetters were snapped upon the young gentleman's wrists.

Mr. Stukely raised his hands and gazed at the bracelets with a stupefied expression on his blank face, and then lifting his eyes to his captor, naively inquired:

"What's that for?"

"For resisting a warrant," replied the officer.

"For resisting a warrant? I didn't resist a warrant!" said Mr. Stukely, gazing in dismay first upon the constable's face and then upon his own handcuffed wrists.

"You resisted the warrant for the arrest of this prisoner," said the constable, placing his hand on the shoulder of Mrs. Llewellyn, who again angrily dashed it off.

"Oh! I did, did I? And so you have taken *me* instead of *her*! All right! I'm agreed! I would rather these things be on my wrists than hers a thousand times! For, you see, it wasn't *she* anyway who was going to marry another woman's husband—I mean another man's wife. How could she marry Cousin Gladys? It isn't likely. What would have been the use? It would have been impossible, you know."

"End this scene, for Heaven's sake! Officers, take away your prisoners and clear the room! My dear wife is suffering extremely through all this, and needs rest and attention," said Arthur Powis.

"Oh, I say now! Look here! let her go, will you!" exclaimed Mr. Stukely anxiously, seeing that the constable

had again advanced toward Mrs. Llewellyn. "Oh, dear, Arthur, look here now! make them let her go, will you? It was not *she*, it was *I* that wanted to marry Cousin Gladys! It was indeed! But I didn't get her, so what's the odds? who's hurt?" he added, appealing pathetically to the prosecutor.

"What's the odds? Who's hurt? You scoundrel! do you dare to ask? Look at my wife! Look at your own and your mother's work! Officers, in the name of Heaven, do your duty, unflinchingly!" thundered Arthur Powis.

"Oh, now see here! look here now! I did not know what I was doing when I was standing up here to be married to Cousin Gladys! I didn't indeed, gentlemen. I must have been walking in my sleep! I am sure I must! I know if I had been wide awake I wouldn't have done it. I know I wouldn't; because if it had been left to *me*, and I wide awake, I had a great deal rather married Nelly Blythe, the young lady that makes my shirts at college! But Lord help me, it seems to me as if ever since mother took me home from college the world has always been turning round and round with me; and I have been always marrying Cousin Gladys in a dream; and somebody's been always interrupting the proceedings, and making a muss; and I have been always getting more kicks than half-pence in it all; and, yes! so help me, Bob! in some shape or another, that fellow has always been turning up! And I hope he has turned up for *good* this time!"

"I hope I have!" said Arthur Powis, grimly. Then turning to the constable, he sternly inquired, while a dangerous light flashed in his eyes—"Officers *will* you or will you *not* execute the warrants that you bear?"

"We *will* execute them, sir," said Constable McRay, deprecatingly. "Ours is a most unpleasant duty, especially as it relates to the arrest of a lady; but we must do it."

Then going up to Mrs. Llewellyn, he once more laid his hand upon her shrinking shoulder, while he said:

"Madam, I have *already* executed my warrant for your arrest. You *already* are my prisoner, and have been so for the last ten minutes. Now, dear madam, I wish to be as polite and as reasonable as possible, if you will be the same. Just ring and order your carriage, if you please, and you shall ride to town in it, and I will attend you as obsequiously as if I was your hired groom," said Constable McRay, persuasively, though withal a little ironically."

"And if I do *not*, fellow, what then?" haughtily demanded the lady.

"If you do not, madam— Well, you know the little old saying about the bird that *can* sing and *wont* sing; how it must be *made* to sing, don't you?"

"What do you mean by that, fellow?"

"Why, if you *wont* go with us willingly, or at least quietly, we must take you as we can, that is all," said the constable, grimly.

"No, you *wont* though! not if *I* know it!" cried Mr. Stukely, striving desperately to free himself from his handcuffs.

Mrs. Llewellyn looked from her vainly-struggling son to the greatly wondering crowd around her. And suddenly, as by an inspiration of the devil, she appealed to them. Stretching forth her hands, she said:

"Friends! if I have any friends present, hear me! I appeal to you, not on my own behalf; because I am but a comparative stranger among you, having lived on this estate but a few years! I appeal to you on behalf of its heir-ess, the daughter of your late landlord, General Llewellyn, and the lady of this manor, upon which you have all lived so long and so prosperously."

She paused, and the rude men around her began to look fierce and to handle their walking-sticks.

"You are a score of honest men against less than half-a-dozen ruffians who have forced themselves into this

house; no doubt, whatever their *pretended* motives may be, with the *real* motives of robbery and violence! You must see and know that! And, therefore, I feel sure that you will protect us against them!" continued the lady.

"We will! we will!" exclaimed the men, brandishing their walking-sticks, and closing around Mrs. Llewellyn and her son with the intention of rescuing them.

"Hold!" exclaimed Arthur Powis, in a voice of thunder, at which the rude crowd immediately recoiled.

"Are you men? *sane* men? *honest* men? And do you know what you do? Pause and listen while I tell you!" he continued, advancing and confronting them, while he supported Gladys' drooping head upon his left shoulder, and pointed to her with his right hand.

"That woman has appealed to you on behalf of this young lady, the daughter of your late beloved landlord, and the mistress of this manor! Look at this young creature, all of you, and know that to this state she has been reduced by the poisonous drugs administered to her by that woman. And attend, while these persons, who are not thieves and ruffians as she has falsely represented them to be, but who are officers of the law, sent to arrest her upon the charge of abduction and attempted murder, read their warrant for her apprehension!—Constable McRay, advance, if you please, and read, for the instruction of these men, your warrant for the arrest of Jane Jay Llewellyn and others!"

Arthur fell back to give place to the officer. McRay came forward, and opened his warrant, and began to read it. The men grounded their walking-sticks, scratched their heads, and listened.

The charges were for abduction, poisoning, and instigating an assassination.

"Abduction—what's that?" asked one countryman.

"Kidnapping," replied one.

"No, it aint; it's child-stealing," said another.

"No such thing; it's coaxing niggers to run away," said a third.

"Poisoning—oh, Lord!" exclaimed a fourth—"any thing but poisoning!"

"And assassina—— Why, that's highway robbery and murder!" whispered a fifth.

"Can you not see that all this is a miserable calumny and forgery? Is it likely that *I* would be guilty of such crimes? or that any magistrate would believe it, and issue a warrant for *my* arrest upon such charges?" demanded Mrs. Llewellyn, with consummate effrontery.

"No, indeed!" answered several voices.

"And you will not, I am sure, allow that false document to be executed upon me!"

"No!" vociferated the countrymen, flourishing their sticks.

"My men!" said Arthur Powis, sternly confronting them once more, "you know not what you do when you violently resist the execution of a warrant. You are free men now; and your force is five times as great as that of the officers of the law here present, and you can, perhaps, easily overcome them by the power of superior numbers——"

"Aye! that you can! And by the weight of a better cause!" put in Mrs. Llewellyn.

"But mind," continued Arthur, "if you *do* resist the execution of this warrant, you who are free men to-night will to-morrow find yourselves prisoners between four walls, with the prospect of lying in gaol through the whole winter, until the spring term of the court opens, and then with the certainty of a further term of imprisonment in the State penitentiary. How would you like that? Do you think it would pay?"

Nobody answered at once; but there seemed to be a divided opinion. Some subsided into non-resistance, and others growled words to the effect that they were not to be frightened by threats, and that they were willing to risk life and liberty in defence of a lady any time.

"No doubt of it," said Arthur Powis, heartily; "but let it be in the defence of the innocent and injured lady, not of the guilty and tyrannical one. Let it be in defence of your rightful liege lady, and not of the usurper who tried to rob her of her property, her liberty, and even of her life."

While Arthur spoke earnestly, and the men listened attentively, a new ally advanced to his aid—the Reverend Mr. Nugent, the late confederate of Mrs. Jay Llewellyn. You know, reader, that we all agreed long ago that we did not believe in the often-quoted "honor among thieves." And, therefore, we need not be surprised that the astute Mr. Nugent, since the reading of the warrant, saw immediately the most prudent course for himself to pursue, and determined to pursue it. In other words, he resolved to desert his companion in crime, and to come over to her prosecutor, which he did in the following manner: Taking his place beside Arthur Powis, and stretching out both hands toward the excited crowd as though he were about to pronounce a benediction, or to offer up a prayer, he began to speak to them:

"My Christian brethren, I am a minister of the gospel—and as such, I beg you will grant me a hearing, and follow my advice. My young friend here, who, I am given to understand, is Lieutenant Arthur Powis—of the navy—the friend of the late General Llewellyn, and the husband of his only daughter, is quite right in all that he says and does in these premises. And, my brethren, alas! I must, with great pain, admit that this misguided, guilty, and lost woman, is always and altogether wrong in all that she says and does——"

"Oh, wretch!" hissed Mrs. Llewellyn, with a glare of hatred.

"My friends," continued Nugent, solemnly, "I do not regard the vituperative abuse of this unhappy woman. My sole concern is for you, lest you be drawn down into

the depths of her destruction. My brethren, there is a warrant out against this ruined woman, to arrest her upon the gravest charges that could be brought against any human being! charges for no less dark crimes than poisoning and assassination! For you to resist this warrant would be to criminate yourselves as aiders and abettors of *her* crimes, and as accessories after the fact to all her poisonings and assassinations—and thus to render yourselves liable to pains and penalties of the law which I should dread to think of!”

This address produced a terrible effect upon the unlettered crowd, who had certainly no desire to be in any degree implicated in capital crimes.

McRay, taking advantage of their momentary panic, stepped forward and said:

“And I, James McRay, constable, in the name of the commonwealth, call on all good and true men, to aid me in the execution of these warrants and in the putting down of all resistance to them.”

There was a momentary falling back and a low-toned conversation among the crowd, but no one offered to interfere either on one side or the other.

Then Mrs. Llewellyn with a proud and scornful smile, advanced and said:

“You shall not need to summon a *posse comitatus* to arrest one frail woman, brave men! Give me but time to put on my bonnet and shawl and order my carriage and I will go with you. But for *you*, base, crawling worm!” she hissed, looking with supreme contempt upon her late coadjutor and tool—for you, know that I did not take you into my confidence, before getting you into my power. I paid the detectives in New York to secretly investigate your history! And I am in possession of facts and of proofs, which forwarded to the convention of your church, will crush you to atoms, will grind you to dust, reptile!—And as for *you*, presumptuous fool! wretch! devil!” she ex-

claimed, fiercely turning and glaring with intolerable scorn and hatred upon Arthur Powis—“as for you, look to yourself! my revenge is complete! And look to your bride! She carries certain death within her bosom!”

And so saying, Mrs. Llewellyn turned to go to her room.

“Follow her, McRay! Do not lose sight of her for one moment! She is cunning enough to make her escape! And more than that she is reckless enough to destroy her own life! And I would—I would neither have the ends of justice defeated, nor her own soul finally lost,” added Arthur Powis, as the officer, who was quite as vigilant as would be desired, attended Mrs. Llewellyn to her chamber, to keep her in sight.

“Oh I say Arthur, look here, now, you know! You won’t be hard on her, will you?” Mr. Stukely began to plead.

“I am sorry for you, Stukely; but the matter has passed out of my control into that of the law, and so must take its course,” replied Arthur Powis, as he lifted Gladys in his arms, carried her to a sofa, laid her down and knelt beside her, and gazed anxiously and tenderly upon her wan, white face.

She was living, breathing, and looking upon him, but with a strange expression, which was rather that of lethargy than of unconsciousness.

“Gladys,” he said gently, “do you know me, darling?”

“Yes; I know you, Arthur: and I shall live,” she murmured with a sweet smile as her eyes closed as in perfect rest. All this calmness was no doubt the lingering effects of the drugs that had been given her.

While Arthur knelt besides his recovered young wife, he heard the constables passing through the hall, carrying away their prisoners.

“The examination is fixed for ten o’clock to-morrow, sir,” said one of the constables who led out Mr. Stukely.

“I will be there,” answered Arthur.

Meanwhile, Mr. Nugent had been officiously engaged in

clearing the house of the wedding guests, with the last of whom he himself departed. So Arthur and Gladys were left alone in perfect peace.

CHAPTER LI.

PERFECT PEACE.

Come dove of peace, benignant guest,
Return and make thy downy nest
Once more in this sad heart.
Nor riches I, nor power pursue,
Nor hold forbidden joys in view,
We therefore need not part.—*English Reader.*

ALL night long Arthur Powis sat by the couch of Gladys to watch his recovered treasure. The malignant words of that most malignant woman—"Look to your wife, for she carries certain death in her bosom,"—rang in his ears, so that he dared not take his eyes from the fair, wan, lovely face of Gladys.

All night long, in the hall below, a groom waited up, while in the stables a fast horse stood ready saddled for him to start at a moment's notice, should it become necessary to send in haste for a physician to come to Gladys.

But these precautions proved to be needless.

Gladys, with her hand clasped in that of Arthur's, sweetly dropped asleep. And she slept well through the night. Only once she started from a dream, tightened her clasp upon the hand of Arthur and then feeling sure of his presence, sank to rest again.

It was late in the morning and the winter's sun was shining brightly in the chamber, when she opened her eyes. Their first glances were raised to the face of Arthur, who was still seated in the resting chair beside her bed. And such a smile lighted up her face, as had not been seen there since she had lost him.

"It is no dream then! you are here? You are really here!" she whispered.

"I am here—never, while we both live, never to leave you again!" murmured Arthur, bending over her and tenderly caressing her.

But she, as if she then for the first time, fully realized the fact of his presence, suddenly threw herself upon his bosom in a passion of sobs and tears that nearly shook her fragile frame to dissolution, gasping:

"Oh, Arthur! this is too—too much! too much joy to bear!"

The most loving words, the most gentle caresses, answered her and soothed her emotion in quietness again.

"It is you, it is really and truly you," she murmured, looking at him wistfully. "It is indeed you; but, oh, Arthur! how ill you look! how very ill! And you have watched beside me all night! I know you have! Why did you do it, dearest? why didn't you go to sleep?"

"My own loved Gladys, do you think that sleep could have rested and refreshed me half so much as the constant sight of your face—your dear face that has been so long absent from my view—your dear face that my eyes have so long hungered to behold."

"But it was so selfish in me to drop asleep then! I ought to have kept awake with you!"

"You could not help falling asleep, my own darling, any more than you could have helped sinking if you had been dropped into the sea."

"No; I don't know that I could. Oh, Arthur, it seems to me that since I lost you one half of my days have been passed in dreamless sleep and the other half in sleepless dreams—that is to say, in unconsciousness or in reverie."

"I know it, my love. I know it all. You have been drugged nearly to destruction. Nothing but your youth and strength saved you from insanity or death. But it is all over now, my own dear Gladys! it is over forever!"

"You knew all this! How did you know it? And how did you find out where I was?" inquired Gladys, eagerly.

"Partly from the old ladies at the cottage, and partly by accident," smiled Arthur.

"And not at all through my advertisement?"

"Ah, my poor darling! your innocent advertisement served no other purpose than to give that ruthless woman a clue to your residence, at the same time that it afforded her the means to entrap you."

"I know that," said Gladys, with a sigh.

It was noticeable through all this interview that neither the young husband nor the young wife either felt or expressed the least distrust of each other; although there was in the circumstance much that must have created distrust had their faith in each other been less perfect. Arthur never for a moment doubted the constancy of Gladys, even though he had seen her standing up before a clergyman to be married to another. And Gladys never suspected the fidelity of Arthur, even though he had been unaccountably absent from her for a whole year.

"You saved me in the crisis of my fate, dear Arthur. It must have been another attempt at a false marriage that you interrupted," said Gladys.

"It was," replied Arthur, gravely.

"I thought so," exclaimed Gladys, with a shudder. "But you will believe me, dear Arthur, when I tell you that I had no idea what was passing around me. I knew nothing but confusion until I found myself clasped to your heart. And then I seemed to awake. Oh! it was horrible! It was like being roused from sleep-walking on the edge of a precipice!" cried Gladys, with a shudder.

"But you were roused by the hand that snatched you from the precipice. Let that thought calm you; but do not let your mind dwell long upon that horrible danger. It is past, my beloved. It is past forever, and you are safe."

"And you never doubted me, Arthur?"

"No, never, my own wife. Have I not known you from your childhood! How could I have doubted you? But you, Gladys. What do you think of my long, unexplained absence?" inquired Arthur, with a smile.

"Ah! I do not know what to think, except that it was caused by the machinations of our common enemy."

"And you never, even in your heart blamed me?"

"Never, Arthur! I can give you back your own words—'Have I not known you from your childhood? How could I have doubted you?'"

"Some day, dear Gladys, when you are stronger, I have a strange story to tell you; until then you must trust me."

"As always," returned Gladys.

Just then there was a rap at the door.

Arthur went and opened it.

"If you please, sir, the carriage you ordered to be at the door at eight o'clock, has been waiting some time," said the voice of a man-servant without.

"Quite right; let it wait a few moments longer," replied Arthur Powis, closing the door.

"My dearest love," he said, as he returned to the bedside of his wife, "the examination of Mrs. Llewellyn and her accomplices is to come off at ten o'clock this morning, before Squire Browning at Standwell. As I am the prosecutor, I must attend. Now—you are very weak—very unfit to bear either fatigue or anxiety. I know, my own Gladys, exactly how it is with you now. After all that you have suffered in mind and body, you will scarcely be able either to endure the short journey to Standwell, or the short separation from me. But one or the other you must make up your mind to bear. I will leave it to you. Will you ride with me to Standwell, or will you remain here alone until I return this evening?"

"Oh, I will go with you, dear Arthur. Oh, I should not feel safe to keep my senses if I were to be left alone here

all day. I should expect to wake up and find all my happiness to have been—a dream! Or I should dread to have that woman spring upon me suddenly, with a sponge full of chloroform, and overwhelm my consciousness, and spirit me away. Oh, I know such fancies and such fears are very foolish and weak; but they would come upon me and conquer me, I know. Bear with me a little while, dear Arthur, until I feel stronger and safer. I will not try your patience very long.”

“I will bear with you forever, my Gladys. It shall be as you wish. I will go down and hurry the preparations for our departure. And you will ring for your maid, dear, and have a cup of coffee brought up to you at once.”

“I do not know that I have a maid. I have been here but a day—a day which has passed as a terrible dream—in which I seem to have been attended by a demon in the shape of Mrs. Jay,” smiled Gladys.

“I will go down and send some woman to you then. And remember, my gentle Gladys, that you are now sole mistress of this mansion. Your guardian has forfeited all her rights and is in the hands of the law. Why even I, your husband, have no power here that is not derived from you. The terms of your father’s will secure every thing to his daughter, as is right.”

“Oh, Arthur! Arthur! don’t speak so! Do you think that I want any power that does not come directly from you? Oh, dear Arthur, if you think so you do not know my heart! You do not know any true woman’s heart,” said Gladys, earnestly.

“I do not think so, my own love; you mistake me, Gladys. I only wished to remind you of your position and your privileges. You have been so long and so bitterly oppressed, my darling, that you seem to have forgotten them.”

“I wish it had been the other way!”

“How, dearest?”

“I wish *you* had been the heir of Kader Idris and I had been some poor girl. I know you would have loved me all the same——”

“Heaven knows I would——”

“And you would have been so glad to have given me every thing; and I should have been so happy to have received it from you!”

Arthur laughed and stooped and kissed her, saying:

“You discontented little creature. It does not matter one bit who owns the title deeds of this estate, you or I, so that we have each other.”

“Well, if it doesn’t matter to you, I am sure it needn’t to me,” replied Gladys, in the same spirit.

Arthur left the room, and his departure was almost instantly followed by the entrance of one at the sight of whom Gladys sprang up, exclaiming:

“Oh, Ailie!”

“Oh, Miss Gladys!” cried the woman, running to the bed.

And the heiress of Kader Idris clasped her arms about the neck of the poor servant woman, and wept with joy.

“I feared that you were dead, Ailie.”

“So did I you, Miss Gladys.”

“I am so glad to see you.”

“So am I you, Miss Gladys.”

“Oh! I am so happy to-day.”

“And aint I den neider! Aint I a happy ’oman dis day? I’s willin’ to die—no, I aint dough. I mean as I has seen de desire ob my eyes, and ought to be willin’ to die. Fust *dar* she is, layin’ in goal. Oh ho! put *me* dar, did she, on a false witness? Now she got put dar herse’f, on a true witness. Oh ho! I hopes dey’ll keep her dar, and it will do her good.”

“Did Mrs. Jay put you in prison, Ailie?” said Gladys, compassionately.

“Didn’t she dough, neider, Miss Gladys?”

“How was that?”

"Why, dat day—I mean dat night, you know, as I fotch you de letters from de pos'-office, and foun' you lock' up in your room, and couldn't get out!"

"I remember."

"Well, you know, I couldn't get in neider."

"No."

"So, you know, miss, I just slipped the letters under-neaf de door?"

"Yes."

"And dey had bad news, dat made you so unhappy as I couldn't bear to go away from de door; so I laid down on de mat at de outside like a dog."

"Poor Ailie!"

"And I was so tired, sleep got the better of me; and so the madam found me lying there the next morning. And dat same day she had me 'rested up before a magister for stealin', which she falsely accused me of doing it."

"Oh! Ailie, my poor woman, how you have suffered for me."

"Hav'n't I, dough? And aint I willin' to suffer ag'in, if it could do you any good?"

"And—what next, Ailie?"

"Why, de magister 'mitted me. And dar I laid in de goal more'n two mont's till de court sot. And den dey hadn't proof 'nough 'g'in me to send to de penitence; so dey let me off."

"My poor woman! What did you do, then, Ailie?"

"Come back to de ole place, ob course, and libbed 'long o' my daddy, in de cabin down by de mill. But de poor old man's heart was a'most broken wid de shame and de scandal, and he hardly eber held up his head since."

"He shall now, Ailie. I will take him as well as yourself into the house service, and every one shall know how much I regard and trust you both."

The conversation was interrupted by the entrance of another woman, with a tray of breakfast for Gladys.

And she immediately arose, and with the help of Ailie, dressed herself, and sat down to the meal.

When she had finished breakfast, and put on her shawl and bonnet, Arthur came to take her down to the carriage.

The fast horses had been put to it, and they were quite fresh; the roads were also in a good condition; so that they soon accomplished the distance that lay between Kader Idris and Standwell.

They drove directly to the magistrate's office.

They were late—nearly an hour behind time.

Arthur entered, with Gladys leaning upon his arm, and walked up to the magistrate's bench, which he was sorry to see surrounded by a miscellaneous crowd of officers and prisoners.

"I have to apologize for keeping the case waiting; but the distance is great, and the lady by my side not well," said Arthur, addressing the presiding magistrate, and looking around for the Llewellyn party, who were nowhere visible.

"No apology is necessary, Mr. Powis. You have not kept the case waiting. The case will not come on to-day," said Squire Browning.

"The case will not come on to-day?" repeated Arthur Powis, in astonishment.

"No; the prisoners made their escape from the station-house last night."

"Made their escape from the station-house last night! How was that? It could only have occurred through the most culpable negligence on the part of the officers who had them in charge!" said Arthur, indignantly.

"I have always said that our constabulary arrangements were very inefficient," replied the magistrate.

"But how did they make their escape, sir?" demanded Arthur.

"It seems that they were the only occupants of the lock-up house last night. That the lady occupied alone a small

inner apartment; and the gentleman and servant the outer one; the door being closed, but not locked, between them. In the outer room one constable guarded the prisoners. The outer door was locked and barred, and the constable had the keys buttoned up safely in his breast pocket. But in the middle of the night the woman came forth from the inner cell and made a signal to the negro, who instantly threw himself upon the constable and choked him before the latter could resist or cry out. And the woman came and suffocated him to complete insensibility with chloroform. After which they robbed him of his keys; took the handcuffs off Stukely's wrists, and fastened them upon the constable's; stuffed a pocket-handkerchief into his mouth; and then quietly unlocked the door and walked out; locked it again on the outside, leaving the constable there a prisoner; and then went off. This morning the only prisoner found in the lock-up house was the constable, who was gagged and handcuffed."

"But it was unpardonable carelessness in the authorities to leave three prisoners in the station-house, guarded by but one man!" angrily exclaimed Arthur.

"It would seem so; but I suppose the guard was deemed sufficient, as he was within easy call of other help, which would have been summoned but for the suddenness of the attack and the use of chloroform. However, it must be acknowledged that our country arrangements for the care of prisoners are not just exactly what they ought to be," admitted Mr. Browning.

"The constables are in pursuit of the parties, I hope," said Arthur.

"They are doing what they can. There is as yet no clue to the directions the fugitives have taken."

"There never was any thing so utterly lazy, stupid and useless as our whole squad of county law officers!" broke forth Arthur Powis, indignantly. "Well, I must give them something to quicken their wits. I will offer a thou-

sand dollars reward for the apprehension of those fugitives. Will you be so good as to furnish me with paper and ink, Mr. Browning," said Arthur, taking out his pocket-pen, and going up to an unoccupied window-sill.

But a gentle hand was laid upon his arm, and a gentle voice murmured in his ear:

"Pause, dear Arthur. Do nothing just now. Let us go home.

"What, Gladys! And meanwhile they will get clear off!" exclaimed Arthur, pausing, pen in hand.

"Never mind, dear; let them. Take me home, now, please."

"But, Gladys, time is precious; every minute is worth a year when we are in pursuit of fugitives from justice. I will soon get through, love, and then I will take you home."

"Take me home, *now*, Arthur. I am very tired," persisted Gladys.

"Well, well, little tyrant, I will obey your commands," said Arthur, shutting up his pen and returning it to his pocket. "You do look very tired, poor darling," he added, as he wrapped her shawl more carefully about her and led her back to the carriage.

"Oh! I'm so glad!" exclaimed Gladys, with a sigh of relief, as she sank back among her cushions.

"Glad! glad, dear! glad of their escape!" exclaimed Arthur, in surprise.

"Oh, yes, indeed! so very glad!"

"Gladys, you astound me, love!"

"Oh, dear Arthur, let them go!" she broke forth, eagerly. "Don't pursue them! don't prosecute them! leave them to Divine Providence!"

"Gladys, you amaze me. After your unspeakable wrongs and sufferings at the hands of that guilty and ruthless woman, how *can* you say one word in her behalf?"

"Oh, I don't know, Arthur, unless it is because I am so

happy myself that I cannot bear to inflict pain on any one. A few days ago I felt as you do now. I told that woman I would never forgive her; that I hoped the Lord would never forgive her; for that I could not be happy even in the highest heaven unless I knew that she was burning in the deepest gulf of hell. Yes, Arthur, I said that, and I thought it. But, then, I was perfectly wild with anguish and despair at that time——"

"Yes, from her criminal treatment of you; and yet now you wish her to go free!"

"Yes, I do, Arthur; I am not wild with despair now; I am happy, and my feelings are all changed. Oh-h-h!" she murmured, with a prolonged sigh of delight, as she dropped her head upon his breast and looked up smilingly to his face—"I am so happy, so blessed and grateful to have you back again safe with me, that I cannot bear to make any body else miserable. Let the guilty woman and the foolish boy and that wretched negro go, Arthur!"

"How can I let them go unpunished?" earnestly inquired Arthur.

"They will not go unpunished, dearest! How can they? You know the law of retribution better than I do, and should know that they cannot escape punishment. They *have* sinned; wherefore they *must* suffer. But *we* need have nothing to do with it! Let us enjoy our pleasant earth, Arthur! Why should we look back into hell?—think how happy we are, and what large means we have of making others happy! Let us reward our friends, dear Arthur. It is much pleasanter work than that of punishing our enemies. Ah! I long to get at *that* work!"

"My dear little angel, for you *are* a little angel, Gladys, I will do whatever you ask me, even to the relinquishing of this prosecution, though it goes sorely against my will."

She thanked him with caresses.

"Besides," she whispered, "would you have the name of Llewellyn, my family name, resound through the country in the very unpleasant association or a criminal trial?"

"I confess, Gladys, that consideration presented itself to my mind from the very first, but it was conquered by my desire to punish that demon for her treatment of you. Even now, it is the strongest argument you could use. No; I would not like such a stigma to attach, however remotely, to the old name."

"Then we will leave the guilty to the justice of God."

"Since you desire it, my dear, we will do so," said Arthur, sealing his promise with a kiss.

CHAPTER LII.

MAGNANIMITY.

Though with their high wrongs I am struck to the quick,
Yet with my nobler reason 'gainst my fury
Do I take part: the rarer action is
In virtue than in vengeance.—*Shakspeare.*

THEY drove rapidly back toward home. As the carriage rolled along the avenue leading up to the house a pleasant sight greeted them.

All the negroes on the estate, with their wives and children, dressed in their holiday attire, were ranged up and down each side of the way to pay their respects to their new master and young mistress.

Arthur Powis had always been a great favorite among them, and Gladys of course had been their idol.

Arthur removed his hat, and bare-headed drove through the lines, bowing and smiling in reply to their cordial greetings and hearty good wishes.

As to Gladys, the tears filled her eyes, as she kissed her hand again and again to the faithful, affectionate creatures.

When they reached the house, alighted from the carriage and entered the hall, they found the house servants

drawn up on each side of the entrance to greet them with similar demonstrations of respect and attachment.

Several were there who for their fidelity to Gladys had been long banished from the house, but who now returned, in joy, to welcome her. Bessy, Gladys' first little maid, was there; and Ailie and Ailie's father, old Richard; and Lemuel foremost among them all.

Arthur shook hands with each as he gently drew his weeping and smiling Gladys through the crowd and up the stairs to her own quiet room.

Ailie followed to assist her mistress at the toilet.

"Ailie," said Gladys, "I heard something about a great feast having been prepared in the large dining-room for our people yesterday. What has become of it?"

"Dear ma'am, it is there yet; no one has touched it."

"Call all the field negroes and their wives and children in, then, and let them have it. Give them as much as they can possibly consume and carry away with them," said Gladys.

"But, my darling, consider the disorder and the noise that will be made by that impulsive, untrained crowd, if they are let into the house. They will make you ill!" expostulated Arthur.

"Oh, no, they wont, dear! I shall not mind it. I am so happy—oh, so heavenly happy, dear Arthur—that I want to do something to please others who are not so happy as I am! Besides, it is the *proper* thing to do, sir," said Gladys, with a little authoritative nod of her head; "quite the proper thing to do. And besides *that*, if they don't eat up all those boiled hams, and legs of mutton, and rounds of beef—and roasted pigs, and turkeys, and geese—and pies, and puddings, and dumplings—who is to eat them? Go and do as I tell you, Ailie." And Gladys stopped her young husband's further objections with a kiss.

And Ailie went to do her errand. And when she got down stairs, and gave the order to her father, as the most proper person to execute it, she added:

"I tell you what, daddy, I think our Miss Gladys is gwine to wear the—the—the—you know! I mean the lower part of a gentleman's dress!"

"You mean she's a-gwine to be masser and missus bofe! He-he-he!" laughed the old man, with a little low childish giggle; "he-he-he, honey! She's one ob de Llewellyns, she is, and dey allas rules de roost—dey does!"

But both father and daughter were mistaken. Gladys' little playful affectation of authority and self-will was but the sparkling up of her effervescent spirits, so long—so long—kept down.

That evening Arthur and Gladys dined quietly together in the cozy little crimson parlor.

Occasionally the sound of revelry from the negroes in the dining-room reached their ears; but it was not disorderly enough to disturb their quiet.

Later on the same evening, when their humble friends had gone, and the house was restored to order, the young husband and wife sat together on the coziest sofa, in the warmest corner of the hearth. With their hands clasped together, they had a mutual explanation:

Each told the other his or her history of the past year of trial. And Gladys wept over the misfortunes of Arthur. And Arthur raged over the wrongs of Gladys. And then they comforted each other, and found in their present happiness compensation for all their past misery.

And then they left the past and talked of their future. And all their plans had reference rather to the welfare of others than of themselves. They talked of the faithful discarded servants they would restore to service and promote to higher positions and better wages. And of the generous friends they would repay.

"All those are gladsome duties, dear Arthur; but we have one sad one to perform," said Gladys, seriously.

"And what is that, love?" inquired Arthur, tenderly.

"It is to visit the grave of our poor little baby. No!

I'm not going to cry, dear Arthur! I am too happy with you here to do that. Only it does seem such a pity that her poor little life——" And Gladys suddenly burst into a passion of tears, and was caught sobbing to the bosom of Arthur, who soothed her with the tenderest words of love.

Yet her tears flowed rather from pity for the "poor little life" that she supposed had perished in its opening, than from attachment to the babe she had seen but for an hour. When she had sobbed herself into calmness she raised her head, smiled in his face, and said:

"There! I will not cry any more, dear Arthur! It is very ungrateful to do so when I am so happy with you! very impious, too, when I know she is a little angel in heaven! No, I will not cry any more. But we will go and visit her little grave. Not to disturb it. I do not think it is right to disturb a grave. But to see it; and to have it inclosed; and flowers planted over it."

"Yes, my darling, as soon as this frost is over, and your strength is recruited, we will go," replied Arthur.

And thus closed the first day of their reunited lives.

In a few days the health of the young couple visibly improved. Youth, good constitutions, and, above all, happiness, were found to be great restoratives.

They were not selfish in their joy. They made all their humble friends and dependants happier in their own accession to wealth and power.

Ailie was elevated to the position of housekeeper. Little Bessy was restored to her place as lady's-maid. Old Richard was made head dining-room servant, and Lemuel waiter under him.

Then Gladys thought of her poor friends at Ceres Cottage.

"Are they *very* poor, Gladys, dear, do you know?" inquired Arthur.

"I fear they are. I believe they have nothing in the world but that house and garden. And I think they live by the sale of fruit and vegetables and butter and milk

during the summer. And in winter I think they eke out their little income by knitting woollen stockings for sale. Oh, by the way, they have a little sum of money in the bank, a very little sum, which they will not touch for fear of coming to want."

"We must find some way to increase their income," said Arthur, thoughtfully.

"We must. And in the meantime, as the Christmas holidays are at hand, we must make them up a Christmas-box and send them. That will please them better than any thing else. Ah, Arthur, how fortunate! I know what I will do!" exclaimed Gladys, eagerly.

"What, dear?"

"Why, first—you know how old-fashioned they are?"

"Yes."

"And how antiquated their dress?"

"Yes."

"Well, you see, they *won't* dress in any modern style. You couldn't get them to do it. And oh, their clothes are so worn, poor things! and so darned and patched and stayed! and all so neatly you would never guess it; for they have a good deal of personal vanity, those dear old souls; and if their dress is antiquated, they like to have it neat. And oh! wouldn't they like to have it rich, too, if they could?"

"Well, my dear childish Gladys, I suppose your plan is to renovate the old ladies' wardrobe from the best shops in Standwell," said Arthur, smiling at her eagerness.

"From the best shops in Standwell, indeed!" said Gladys, with a pretty toss of her head. "What could I get there but flimsy silks and flaunting muslin-de-laines? No, indeed! but from the cedar chests and sandal-wood boxes of Kadir Idris. From the wardrobes of the ancient ladies of the house of Llewellyn! Oh, Arthur!" she exclaimed with glee, "such dresses! such rich and heavy silks and satins, and poplins and brocades! all stout and

stiff enough to stand alone! and all made in the antiquated style these old ladies love! and all of no manner of use except to send to them, to lift them up to the very seventh heaven of delight! I will pack them all up and send them by the wagon, so that they will reach the old ladies by Christmas-eve."

And eager as a child for a new play, Gladys called Bessie and Ailie to attend her, and hurried up stairs to make a raid upon the stores of rich clothing that had laid for half a century or more in the bureaus and wardrobes of Kader Idris.

She emptied one of the largest cedar chests of its contents so as to re-pack it for the old ladies.

And then she opened the long closed depositories, where the antique finery, carefully folded up with sweet gums and dried herbs, was preserved free from moth and mice, and was found as good as new.

And such gowns and petticoats and pelisses and mantles of the richest satin and velvet and poplin and brocade, and such caps and handkerchiefs and ruffs and tuckers of the finest lace, and such shawls and scarfs and capes and pelerines of the softest merino and cashmere, surely were seldom seen before! All these, and also a great quantity of the best underclothing, Gladys packed into the cedar chest.

She was eager, impulsive, and almost extravagant in her benevolent desire to enrich her old friends.

When she had closed and fastened the chest, and tacked a card bearing the name and address of the old ladies for whom it was intended, Gladys did not stop there. She hurried down into the library, where she found Arthur.

"What are you doing, dear?" she inquired.

"Writing to the Navy Department," he answered.

"Oh! you are not going back into the navy, I hope, Arthur. Oh! I had quite forgotten all about it until you spoke. You are not going back?"

"No, dearest. I will never leave you again, Gladys. I

can find quite employment enough in looking after this long neglected estate. Did you wish to consult me, dear?"

"Yes! about the old ladies!"

Arthur smiled at her vehemence, as he inquired:

"What about them, dear?"

"Well, then, as there is no other way of sending the box of clothing, we will have to send it by our own wagon; and while we are sending the wagon so long a way, we might as well send it full!"

"Full of what, love?"

"Provisions, to be sure; provisions from our own place; a pig, and a sheep, and some turkeys, and geese, and ducks; and some hams, and tongue, and hung beef; and, in short, every thing we can think of."

Arthur looked at her quizzically.

"Oh! I know it sounds excessive, Arthur," she said, deprecatingly; "but it really is not so. Only think—we have *so much*, and they *so little*!" she added, coaxingly.

"Dearest, dearest Gladys, do as you please with your own, my love! I do not think your generosity excessive at all. I would not have you spare your hand in any thing whatever; least of all in liberality to these poor old women, who were so kind to you in your distress," said Arthur, earnestly.

"Well, then, finish your letter, and I will go and see to the packing of those other things," said Gladys, with a smile, as she danced off to do her pleasure with her "own."

That same day the wagon was packed with every thing that Gladys could think of for the comfort and delight of her old friends.

That evening Arthur and Gladys wrote a joint letter to the old ladies, and intrusted its delivery to Lemuel, who was appointed to drive the wagon.

And early the next morning a pair of stout draught horses were put to the well laden wagon; and Lemuel,

great-coated and shawled, and mounted upon the driver's seat, and having received his last instructions from his master and mistress, touched his hat, gathered up his lines, and drove off amid the cheers of his fellow servants.

The next day Arthur was very busy in the library. Gladys found him so when she came in with her needle-work, to sit with him. She sat down very quietly near the table where he was writing, and, without speaking a word, began to sew.

But Arthur, as soon as he saw her, closed the account-book that lay open before him, and wheeled his chair around toward her.

"Have I interrupted you, Arthur?" she inquired, looking up, deprecatingly.

"No, my darling—how could you? I was only looking over the accounts of your estate during the time it was managed by Mrs. Jay Llewellyn," he answered.

"Mrs. Jay! Oh! Arthur, I have been thinking about her. Now that she has run away I don't know what in the world she will do. She had not a dollar of her own, you know. I am afraid she will starve——" began Gladys; but she was shortly interrupted by Arthur:

"Afraid she will starve! Gladys, are you not very sorry for Satan? Don't your heart bleed for Lucifer? Wouldn't you like to ameliorate the sufferings of the Devil?"

Gladys lifted up to him her large, gentle, dark eyes, full of wonder, and then seeing his meaning, her mood suddenly changed, and, with half saucy, half serious defiance, she answered:

"Yes, I *am* sorry for that sad, despairing spirit; and I believe the Lord is too. So, there now! Put *that* into your pipe and smoke it, Mr. Arthur."

"Well, you need suffer no anxiety upon Mrs. Jay Llewellyn's account. She has—to us a common phrase—'feathered her nest' well! She has 'made hay while the sun shone.' In a word, Gladys, I have been looking over the

books, and I find that she has robbed you of several thousand dollars! What do you say to that?"

"She was welcome to it, Arthur. We shall not miss it. I am glad she has some money."

"But, Gladys, darling, this is weakness."

"Oh, no, it isn't! It is happiness. Oh! Arthur, dear, it is because my heart is so full of love and joy that it has not one bit of room for resentment," exclaimed the young wife, fervently.

He looked at her in admiring wonder.

Was this womanly weakness, or was it angelic goodness? Arthur could not decide just then. But in either case would he have wished her one whit less loving and less forgiving? Ah, no! As he gazed on her, he thanked Heaven earnestly for having bestowed upon him such a crowning blessing as this sweet young creature's love.

A very happy Christmas they spent together at Kader Idris. And their enjoyment was increased by the consciousness that they had ministered so largely to other people's happiness.

CHAPTER LIII.

PRESENTS.

Lawns as white as driven snow,
Satin black as e'er was crow.
Gloves as sweet as damask roses,
Vails for faces and for noses.
Bugle bracelets, necklace amber,
Perfumes for a lady's chamber,
Pins and poking sticks of steel—
All they lack from head to heel.—*Shakespeare.*

On Christmas-eve the three sisters arose early in the morning to make their humble preparations for Christmas.

And after their hasty and frugal breakfast they went to

work in earnest. Miss Polly helped—or, rather, hindered—Harriet in the kitchen. And Miss Milly and Miss Jenny brightened up the cottage by giving it a thorough sweeping and cleaning. And then all three gathered cedar, spruce, and holly from the garden, and brought it in and adorned their sitting room; putting a bunch of evergreen and scarlet berries over every picture on the walls, and into the two old fashioned vases on the mantle-shelf.

The sun that had been overclouded all the morning, now suddenly shone out, and smiled into the windows as if in benediction on the poor old sisters' work.

"We shall have a fine day and a bright Christmas after all," said Miss Polly.

"Yes! and the room do look right down cheerful, don't it now?" inquired Miss Milly.

"Ay, that it ralely do," admitted Miss Jenny.

"If we only had a turkey for to-morrow's dinner, Milly. This is the first Christmas as I ever remember not being able to buy a turkey. But times is so sca'ce! It do seem to me as they are getting sca'cer and sca'cer. For one thing, so many people is a-raising fruit for the market now as is so much better'n ourn. For ourn—I mean our trees—is gettin' old like ourselves, and don't bear as full and as good as they used to. And for another thing, them there manifactors will be the ruin of our knitting; for they can make socks for twenty-five cents a pair. And here we have to pay twenty cents for yarn enough to knit one pair of socks, and it takes us two days to knit them; and then, unless we sell 'em as low as the manifactored ones, we can't sell 'em at all," sighed Miss Polly.

"Well, you know, Miss Polly, as for me, I don't think it pays to knit them at all," said Miss Milly.

"But, sisters, we must be a-doing of something, and we migh as well be doing of that as any thing else," observed Miss Jenny.

"I think," suggested Miss Polly, whose mouth watered

for roast turkey—"I ralely *do* think for this once we might draw five dollars out'n the Savings' Bank and make ourselves comfortable this Christmas!"

"Five dollars! What! break the whole hundred dollars as we've got laid up in the bank against a rainy day, and take out five, all to make ourselves comfortable a Christmas. It would be a mortal sin!" exclaimed Miss Milly.

"And 'wilful waste makes woeful want,' you know, sisters," said Miss Jenny.

"But I *do* want a rost turkey for Christmas so bad! And we all want new caps and new gowns and new shoes desperate," whimpered Miss Polly.

"Well, but five dollars aint a-gwine to buy all them things, and so we might as well stop thinking about them," said Miss Milly.

"No, and I'm sure there's a-many worse off than *we* are; so we ought to be contented," said the youngest sister.

"I *am* contented. If I am not of a contented mind, I'd like to know who *is*! Only things do always go so wrong end foremost. They always does. Here we aint got no rost turkey for Christmas——"

"Some poor folk aint got so much as roast mutton," suggested Milly.

"Nor even bread," added Jenny.

"Hold your tongue, sisters, when your elder is a-speaking. I wouldn't mind so much about the turkey, though I *do* want it so bad. Still, I *wouldn't* mind about it if I could only hear from that poor dear young creetur. I do wonder Colonel Pollard hasn't writ, as he said he would!"

"Oh, I dessay he *has* writ. You know the letter-carrier don't come out this way. And we aint none of us been to the post-office."

"No, to be sure. Sisters, I'll go myself directly after dinner; and then, if I *should* fetch a letter home, what a satisfaction."

"Ah, wouldn't it though! it would be as good as a turkey."

"Or even as a five-dollar note."

"It would be a deal better'n either."

"Hush your gabble, sisters, will you. I hear cart-wheels. Some of them there impudent hucksters is a-trying to take a short cut through our field on their way to market again, I suppose. I'll order 'em off if they do," exclaimed Miss Polly, rising in wrath against the supposed trespassers.

"Lor', Polly, it aint no huckster's cart. It's a great big heavy wagon from up country some wheres. And the nigger as is driving of it has got about five-and-twenty capes to his overcoat, as far as I can see from here," said Miss Milly, who happened to be looking out of the window.

"Yes, and it aint a-going through the field; it is a-making right for the house," said Miss Jenny, who had come up behind her, and was looking over her shoulder.

But by this time Miss Polly had gone to the front door to see to the intruder. Miss Milly and Miss Jenny soon left their window and joined their sister at the door.

The heavy wagon came lumbering onward.

"It must be some mistake," said Miss Polly.

The heavy wagon came lumbering up and stopped.

The big driver got slowly down from his seat, came up to the old ladies, took off his hat, and respectfully inquired:

"Is this Sariosus Cottage?"

"Yes; this is Serious Cottage," answered Miss Polly.

"And, if you please, are you the Miss Craneses?"

"Yes, we are the Miss Craneses."

"Then, ma'am, this letter is for you, ladies," said the man, drawing from his breast-pocket a letter which he handed to the sisters.

"It's from him!"

"It's from her!"

"It's from them!"

Simultaneously cried the three sisters, as they stretched for h their hands to seize the letter, and nearly tore it in pieces between them.

"Let me have it, I'm the oldest!" cried Miss Polly, with her eyes snapping.

"Read it, then," said Miss Milly, as she and Miss Jenny relinquished their hold.

Miss Polly with trembling fingers opened the letter, and was about to begin reading aloud when Miss Jenny suddenly interposed:

"Let us go into the parlor to read it. And let this man go into the kitchen to warm himself."

"I thank you, ladies; but I will stand here, if you please, until I have received my orders, which you will please to give me when you have done read the letter."

"Come, then, sisters!" said Miss Polly, hurrying into the parlor, followed by the two others.

She dropped down into one chair, and they drew two others and sat as close as they could get to her—while, with hands and voice trembling with agitation, she held the letter up and read it aloud:

KADER IDRIS, December 20th.

OUR DEAREST OLD FRIENDS:—We wrote you a joint letter a few days ago, in which we told you all that happened from our sudden, joyful meeting to our secure and happy establishment in this our beautiful home——"

"There!" interrupted Miss Milly; "I said as they'd writ to us. And so you see they have."

"Oh, go on—go on with the letter, Polly!" breathlessly entreated Miss Jenny.

Miss Polly resumed the reading:

"Therefore, it would be needless to repeat the narrative. We write these few lines only to wish you a merry Christmas and a happy New-Year, and many of them!——"

"The dear loves! To think of us these Christmas times!" said Miss Milly.

"When they have got so much else to think of, too," added Miss Jenny.

"I wish you would let me finis: the letter; there isn't

much of it," snapped Miss Polly, who once more resumed the reading:

"We write you these few lines only to wish you a merry Christmas and a happy New-Year, and many of them; and, also, to beg your acceptance of the presents we send as testimonials of the love, esteem, and gratitude of your affectionate young friends, ARTHUR AND GLADYS."

"Presents! Oh, the darlings! I *do* love to get presents. But I don't believe I ever had a half a dozen in the whole course of my life!" exclaimed Miss Polly.

"Oh, how good they are to us! I wonder where the presents are, and what they are!" said Miss Milly.

"I'll bet you any thing as how they are nice needle-books and thread-cases as she has made with her own dear hands," said Miss Jenny.

"And I reckon the man has got them in his pocket—let us go and see!" advised Miss Polly, tucking the letter away in her bosom, and starting for the door, followed by her two sisters.

"Where are the things your mistress has sent to us, my good man?" she asked.

"They are in the wagon, ma'am. Shall I take them out?" asked Lemuel.

"Yes."

"In the wagon! Lor, did you ever! What can it be?" mused Miss Milly.

"Maybe it's a turkey," said Miss Jenny.

It was a turkey; or rather a pair of them; for Lemuel, who had put his head and half his body in at the back of the wagon, presently emerged with a huge turkey in each hand.

"Oh, my good gracious alive, did you ever!" cried Miss Polly, raising both her hands.

"Are they both for us?" doubtfully inquired Miss Jenny.

"Bofe, ma'am!" replied the driver, who laid down the turkeys on the bench at the side of the porch and flew off

again to the wagon, from which he again emerged, bringing a young roasting pig in each hand.

"*Did* you ever, in all your life!" cried Miss Polly.

"Are these for us, also?" inquired Miss Milly.

"Every thing as is in that wagon is for you ladies, every singly thing," replied the man, laying down the pigs behind the turkeys, and running off again to the wagon.

"Harriet! Harriet!" cried Miss Jenny, running into the house—"come here directly and help to take these things in."

Harriet came running to answer the call, and stood wondering at the scene before her.

"Lor, Miss Polly," she said, "is you a-gwine to set up a market-shop?"

"No, you fool! Mrs. Colonel Pollard, which has come into her own, has sent us a Christmas-gift," answered Miss Milly.

"What on airth is he a-bringing of now?" inquired Miss Milly.

It was a sheep already quartered; and he was bringing two quarters over each shoulder.

"Oh, dear me! It ralely do overjoy me and frighten me at the same time to see so much wittles. We aint deserving of it. And it is too much for us. And how shall we ever eat it all?" said Miss Jenny, with dilated eyes.

"Don't be afraid, ma'am. It will keep a long time this freezing weather; and get better every day!" said Lemuel, laying down the mutton and returning to the wagon, from which he once more emerged, bringing four hams, two in each hand.

"*They* wont spoil at any rate," he said, laying them down and flying off again.

Meanwhile, Harriet was carrying the things to the kitchen and storeroom as fast as she could.

Lemuel was longer than usual at the wagon. He seemed to be removing a great weight. Presently a large cask about half the size of a barrel made its appearance. He lifted it up and lugged it forward.

"What on airth is *that*, my good man?" inquired Miss Polly.

"It is salt beef! prime, too, ma'am," he said, setting the cask up before them, and going back to the wagon; from which he presently returned, lugging a similar cask.

"Salt pork, ma'am!" he explained.

"Now I shall never be astonished at any thing again as long as ever I live!" said Miss Polly.

"I never expected to have such a piece of good fortin' befall us this side of the grave!" said Miss Milly.

"Why, we've got enough provisions to last us the whole year!" added Miss Jenny.

Meanwhile, Lemuel brought from the wagon two large dark masses, one in each hand.

"Hung beef!" he said, dropping them.

Then in successive trips back and forth, he brought a barrel of flour; a barrel of corn-meal; a bag of hominy; a bag of coffee; a box of tea; and a large box of sugar.

The sisters said no more! their astonishment and rapture had gone past expression, and they simply stood with wide open eyes and mouths, letting the tide of wealth flow in.

"There!" said the negro, as he placed at their feet the last article—a hind quarter of venison—"that is all the eatables, ma'am!"

"I should think it might be. Seems to me, as it has been raining of wittels!" said Miss Polly.

"And now, ma'am, if you please, I will help your woman to store those heavy articles away."

"Thank'y, kindly, my man! for I don't think as our Harriet could lift them casks and barrels!"

"No, I think not," said Lemuel, laughing, as he shouldered a heavy cask, and followed Harriet, who was carrying a bag of coffee to the storeroom.

"Harriet! Harriet! be prudent; *he's a man!* don't let him come too nigh you!" whispered Miss Polly, hurrying after her maid to insinuate this caution into her ear.

"I aint afeard of 'um!" gruffly, replied Harriet.

It took a good hour to store away all the provisions, and then Harriet invited her mistress to go to the storeroom and contemplate their wealth.

"Oh, deary me, I'm almost afraid it is a dream! I have often and often when I was hungry, dreamt just sich unlikely dreams as this," said Miss Polly.

"Well, for *my* part. I am afraid, as it is a sin to have so much wittels in the house," said Miss Milly.

"But oh, sisters! now we can do something for the poor!" suggested Miss Jenny.

"Oh, yes! there's that poor widow Pike with her five children! We'll send her a leg o'mutton, and some potatoes and turnips for their Christmas dinner."

"And poor old Daddy Brown, who lives all alone by himself! We'll send him as nice a piece of corn-beef, and some potatoes and carrots."

"Yes! and don't forget Miss Molly Bobins, poor desolate thing! I declare, we'll send her half of one of the roasting pigs, and plenty of sage and onions."

"Yes, and there's a lot of other poor folks we can send to."

"To be sure! And we sha'n't loose any thing by it."

"It will keep the fresh things from spoiling on our hands."

"Yes, and besides, it will bring a blessing; so that we shall not be afraid of enjoying what is left behind," said Miss Polly as she locked the storeroom door, and the sisters returned to their sitting-room.

Lemuel was waiting for them in the hall.

"Come in, my good man! come in; we want to talk to you!" said Miss Polly.

Lemuel entered and stood hat in hand.

"We are very thankful to you also my good man, for bringing us the things your master and mistress were so kind as to send. How long do you stay in Washington?"

"Well, ma'am, I am got leave to spend Christmas Day with a friend of mine as is living here. But I departs for Kader Idris on the day after."

"Yes;—well my good man, we haven't got no stables; but if you will find a livery-stable to put up your horses in and then come back here to get your dinner and supper, and bed, we should be glad to accommodate you."

"Thank you, ma'am, but if you please I promised to stay 'long of my friend."

"You did! Very well, then. But at least you will go into the kitchen and take something to eat and drink?"

"Thank you, ma'am; I would rather not! 'Taint three hours since I had my breakfast; coming through Alexander."

"Very well, then. But at least you will come and see us before you go back, for we have a letter of thanks to send to your master and mistress."

"In course, ma'am, I shall come to pay my respects. But if you please, ma'am, there is something else to come out of the wagon."

"Something else! Oh, Milly! It is more wittels!" exclaimed Miss Polly, in a state of mind between delight and consternation.

"No, ma'am; I don't think as it's any more wittels this time. I'll see."

And Lemuel went out and soon re-entered the room, bending under the weight of a large cedar-wood chest, which he sat down upon the carpet before the wondering women.

"And here's the key of it, ma'am," said the man, producing a key from his pocket and handing it to Miss Polly.

"Lor, Milly! It is just sich a handsome chist as Mrs. Washington used to keep her best things in when I was a young 'oman, and used to go and see her housekeeper," said Miss Polly, as she took the key and knelt down to unlock the chest.

"I do wonder what is in it!" muttered Miss Milly.

"Wait and see!" said Miss Jenny.

Miss Polly lifted the lid.

All three heads eagerly bent over it.

First there was a quantity of tissue paper, which Miss Polly removed.

Then she lifted out one after the other, four stout brown satin dresses; all as good as new, though very old fashioned.

"Oh! my blessed eyes! did they ever behold any thing so rich and beautiful?" exclaimed Miss Polly, gazing with satisfaction and desire upon the dresses.

"Four on 'em! one for each of us, and one to spare," cried Miss Milly, clasping her hands in ecstasy.

"There is one apiece for us? We *are* each to have one, aint we? Me and Milly can have one apiece, and you can have the other two, you know, Polly," said Miss Jenny, coaxingly.

"Don't you be afeard Jenny my dear, you shall have your share. Else how could I ever look Mrs. Colonel Pollard in the face again!"

"What are these?" said Miss Milly, plunging her hands in and drawing forth a large parcel of something gray.

They proved to be three stout gray brocade dresses, almost perfectly fresh.

"Oh, deary, deary me! it is *certainly* a dream!" exclaimed Miss Polly, half in rapture and half in terror between the sight of her treasures, and the doubt lest they should fade away like the visions of the night.

"Three! just exactly one apiece for us! And what beauties!" said Miss Milly.

"There is to be one apiece for us, isn't there, Polly? Milly and me is to ha e one as well as you, aint we?" coaxed Miss Jenny.

"Why of course you is, my dear. Do you think as I would rob you?"

"No, I did not think that. But I was afeard because you was the oldest you would take the most."

"No, my dear," said Miss Polly, whom good fortune had put into a most gracious mood—"No, my dear Jenny, I'd never be so mean; though, as you say, being the oldest, I might have a right to the biggest share. Oh, my goodness gracious me! what beautiful black figured silks," she suddenly broke off and exclaimed, as she drew from the chest two rich dresses of the material she named.

"Two! then there's one for you and one for Milly," said Miss Jenny.

"And oh! here is a beautiful black watered silk—*That* will do for me, and you and Milly can have the figured ones," said Miss Polly.

Then they drew forth, one after another, crimson poplins, and purple camlets, and brown merinos; and admired and divided them.

And then followed the shawls, mantles, and cloaks, which they also examined, wondered at and divided.

Then came the fine lace, lawn and linen, caps, handkerchiefs, and under-clothing, which they also equally divided among themselves.

Among other things came a large parcel marked for "*Harriet.*"

"Oh! call her up," said Miss Polly.

And Miss Milly ran to summon her.

"Look'e there, Harriet! See what Mrs. Colonel Pollard has sent us!" exclaimed Miss Jenny, pointing to the mountain of rich clothing piled up on the floor.

"Well I ralely do think—Well I never!—I do declare to my goodness!" said Harriet, gazing in intense admiration at the wealth.

"And this here bundle is for you, Harriet," said Miss Polly, handing over the parcel.

"For me?—Hush, honey?—Tell you what!—aint I set up though!" exclaimed the woman, with more delight than clearness.

"Open it, Harriet, and let us see what is in it?" said Miss Milly.

"Harriet, nothing loth unfastened the bundle, which was found to contain a stout, green merino dress, a gay plaid shawl, a soft black silk hood, and half a dozen each of white aprons, neck-handkerchiefs and head-handkerchiefs.

"Hush, honey!—I never expected to be so rich in all my life," cried Harriet in delight.

There was something else still, folded up in a white paper at the bottom of the chest. On taking it out Miss Polly read the inscription:

"To make a suit of clothes for Brother Peter."

"Only think of the darling remembering Brother Peter!" exclaimed Miss Milly, while Miss Jenny seized and opened the parcel, which was found to contain a beautiful piece of clerical black cloth.

And under all, at the very botom of the chest was seen a large white envelope with some writing on it.

Miss Polly lifted this and read the inscription:

"To dear Miss Polly, Milly and Jenny, from their loving child."

"Our child! the darling!" said Miss Polly.

"I wish to the goodness alive, as she *was* our child," sighed Miss Milly.

"Well, and so she *is*. I always considered her as sich. Can't we have a child of our affections, I wonder," said Miss Jenny.

While they spoke, the elder sister opened the envelope, and uttered a loud cry.

"What is it, Polly?"

"Oh dear, what is the matter?" simultaneously exclaimed the two younger ones.

"Oh! hoo! hoo! hoo!" whimpered Miss Polly, beginning to weep.

"Oh dear, deary me, what is it?"

"Lors-a-mercy, can't you speak?" said both the other sisters together.

"It's—it's too much!—It's overwalloping!" blubbered Miss Polly.

"What is?" demanded the two sisters.

"*This* is. Look! look!" exclaimed Miss Polly, drawing from the envelope three notes, each for one hundred dollars, and laying them out on the table.

"Oh, my goodness! Why that is three times as much as we have been able to save all our lives," said Miss Milly.

"And there is one note for each of us, ain't there? You'll divide equal, wont you Polly?" asked Miss Jenny, coaxingly.

"Why in course, Jenny, my dear."

"And I think as we had better put it in the Saving's bank."

"And there wont be any fear of our ever coming to want again!"

"And now, Harriet," said Polly, "you must take all these things up stairs."

"Yes," put in Miss Milly, "and we'll go up and try some of the dresses on, and see if they will fit, and how they will look."

"Yes, indeed! And I hope they *will* fit; I *should* like for us to wear them brown satins to church to-morrow," sighed Miss Jenny.

Meanwhile Harriet loaded herself with as many dresses as she could carry, and took them up stairs. In three or four trips she contrived to remove all the finery.

"You must get the man to help you up with the chist," said Miss Polly.

"Dear me! where is the man?" inquired her sister Milly.

"Why, laws-a-massy, me! He went away while we was a-looking at the clothes," said Miss Jenny.

"Now did he, then? How odd! Never mind! You can just draw the cedar chist into one of the corners, and leave it there until he comes again, and then he will help you up with it," said Miss Polly.

The three sisters went up stairs to try on their dresses. They tried them all on one after the other, but nearly all of them were too long, and required a little taking up in the skirt—all of them, in fact, except the brown satins, which proved to be perfect fits.

"We will wear these to church to-morrow; and wont the people be astonished!" exclaimed Miss Polly.

"Yes, and we will wear the three black velvet mantles with them also, and that will astonish folks more," added Miss Milly.

"Come, sisters! if we are going to send any thing to the poor folks around us as a thank-offering to the Lord for his bounty to us, it is about time we did it," suggested Miss Jenny. And the three sisters went down stairs to fill baskets of provisions for those who were still poorer than themselves.

A very merry Christmas had these old ladies. They went to church in the morning, wearing their new finery. And they brought their brother Peter home to dine with them. And they had a sumptuous Christmas dinner. And after dinner they satisfied the curiosity of Brother Peter, which had been greatly excited about their rich dresses. They told him all about the arrival of the wagon, and of its contents. And then they showed him the piece of cloth that had been sent to *him*; at the sight of which his eyes brightened wonderfully: for in truth the poor priest was not utterly indifferent to his personal appearance, and his present habiliments were considerably the worse for wear.

Late that afternoon they had another surprise.

The wagon drove up once more. And from it alighted—not only Lemuel, but Ennis. Lemuel was grinning. Ennis was hanging her head.

"Why, Ennis! Is this *you*? What is the meaning of it all?" inquired Miss Polly.

"Well, if you please, ma'am me and Ennis was engaged

a long time ago. And Miss Gladys—I mean Mrs. Powis, she told me where Ennis was, and she give her consent; so we was married this morning,” said Lemuel, answering for his bride.

“And—you are going to take her with you to Kader Idris?”

“Yes, ma’am; which Mrs. Powis is going to take her into her service as seamstress, which, seeing as I am waiter in the house, is a great kindness to us.”

“And—when are you going?”

“Well, ma’am we concluded to start this evening, and get as far as Alexandria, and take a fresh start from there airily in the morning. So, if the letter is ready, ma’am, we’ll take it.”

The letter was all ready. Brother Peter, at the desire of his sisters, had written it. And now it was delivered to Lemuel, who, with Ennis, departed amid the good wishes of the family.

And the three sisters had the merriest Christmas and the happiest New-Year they had ever seen in all their lives. The bounty of Gladys not only cheered their own hearts, but inspired them to dispense to their still poorer neighbors much of aid, comfort and happiness.

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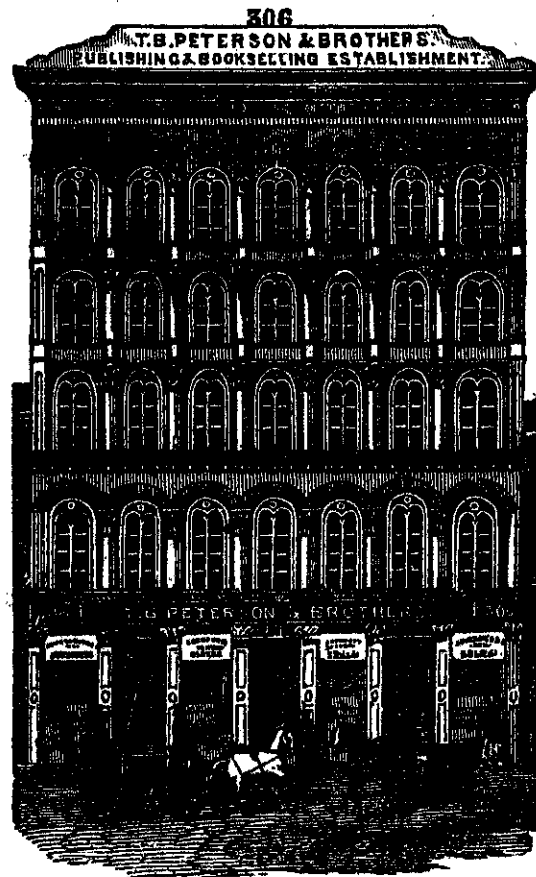
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