

LORD HOPE'S CHOICE.

BY

MRS. ANN S. STEPHENS.

AUTHOR OF "THE OLD COUNTESS," "THE REIGNING BELLE," "MARRIED IN HASTE,"
"MABEL'S MISTAKE," "DOUBLY FALSE," "WIVES AND WIDOWS," "MARY DERWENT,"
"THE REJECTED WIFE," "THE SOLDIER'S ORPHANS," "THE OLD HOMESTEAD,"
"FASHION AND FAMINE," "THE HEIRESS," "RUBY GRAY'S STRATEGY,"
"THE CURSE OF GOLD," "SILENT STRUGGLES," "THE WIFE'S SECRET,"
"PALACES AND PRISONS," "THE GOLD BRICK," "A NOBLE WOMAN."

"Oh, dark is the stream—this stream of blood,
That flows from here red and wide.
Still, still I hear, so sharp and clear,
In the horrible, horrible silence outside—
The clock that stands in the empty hall,
And talks to my soul of that awful time,
With a face like a face at a funeral,
Telling a tale too sad for rhyme.
I hear a terrible silence inside,
Where a house has fallen and some one has died."

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LORD HOPE'S CHOICE.

THE REIGNING BELLE.

A NOBLE WOMAN.

MARRIED IN HASTE.

WIVES AND WIDOWS; OR, THE BROKEN LIFE.
THE REJECTED WIFE.

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TO

MRS. JAMES BROOKS,

OF NEW YORK.

DEAR LADY:

IF TRIED FRIENDSHIP, AND PERFECT ESTEEM FOR YOU AND THE NAME YOU BEAR—A NAME HONORED IN LITERATURE, IN STATESMANSHIP, AND IN SOCIAL LIFE—CAN MAKE THIS DEDICATION VALUABLE, IT WILL NOT BE DEEMED ALTOGETHER UNWORTHY OF YOUR ACCEPTANCE.

ANN S. STEPHENS.

ST. CLOUD HOTEL,
NEW YORK, *March*, 1873.

CONTENTS.

Chapter	PAGE
I.—CONSULTATIONS.....	23
II.—THE SLEEPING CHILD.....	31
III.—THE LOST CHILD.....	38
IV.—THE MIDNIGHT VISIT.....	46
V.—THE CHAMBER OF DEATH.....	56
VI.—OLD MRS. YATES AND HER SON.....	62
VII.—RACHAEL CLOSS IN HER ROOM.....	76
VIII.—THE TENEMENT HOUSE IN FLAMES.....	84
IX.—A NEW HOME.....	90
X.—A STORM IN THE BASEMENT.....	94
XI.—OUT IN THE STREET.....	102
XII.—SEARCHING FOR NEWS.....	109
XIII.—THE FIRST NIGHT IN PRISON.....	117
XIV.—REACTION.....	125
XV.—RACHAEL CLOSS AND THE CHILD.....	133
XVI.—THE TWO ROOMS.....	142
XVII.—MRS. YATES BRINGS TROUBLE TO HER SON'S WIFE.....	152
XVIII.—BROTHER AND SISTER.....	161
XIX.—THE PRISONER AND HIS WIFE.....	167

Chapter	PAGE
XX.—MATTHEW STACY EXPLAINS THE LAW TO HARRIET.....	175
XXI.—HEPWORTH AND RACHAEL HAVE A CONTEST...	184
XXII.—THE CIVIL WEDDING.....	188
XXIII.—MRS. YATES HEARS ASTOUNDING NEWS.....	198
XXIV.—ELIZABETH YATES VISITS A LAWYER.....	208
XXV.—OPENING OF THE TRIAL.....	214
XXVI.—OLD MRS. YATES VISITS HER LAWYER.....	219
XXVII.—THE OLD WOMAN AND THE CHILD.....	223
XXVIII.—THE SECOND DAY OF THE TRIAL.....	231
XXIX.—SENTENCED FOR LIFE.....	238
XXX.—OLYMPIA, THE PRIMA DONNA.....	245
XXXI.—TWO FUNERALS.....	257
XXXII.—AN INVITATION TO THE THEATRE.....	264
XXXIII.—THE ACTRESS-MOTHER.....	269
XXXIV.—OLYMPIA AND BROWN DISCUSS THE FUTURE.....	278
XXXV.—THE COTTAGE AT SING-SING.....	284
XXXVI.—THE PARK GALA AT OAKHURST.....	291
XXXVII.—FOURTEEN YEARS AFTER.....	302

LORD HOPE'S CHOICE.

CHAPTER I.

CONSULTATIONS.

A LADY sat by her breakfast table in one of the quietest hotels of the city, where she had been staying some weeks. She was somewhat under thirty, dark almost as a gipsy, with quantities of bright blue-black hair, drawn away from a low broad forehead, full of power and mobile with expression; large almond-shaped eyes, slumbrous in repose, but full of fiery spirit, when anything disturbed their tranquillity, lighted up the face into something more impressive than mere beauty. At such times there was the rich coloring of a peach in those dusky cheeks, brightness and wonderful fascination in that slow burning smile, an influence subtle as deceit and winning as a bird-song in the varied tones of her voice. You would imagine the Queen of Sheba such a woman as that, when she came to match her intellect and beauty against the whole array of fascinations by which Solomon was held in thrall. You could not tell where the chief power of her attractions lay—the beauty of her face was rare in itself, but its most glorious power lay in an ever varying expression, sometimes gentle as a child's, sometimes fiery as an Arab's, again soft and passive as the face

of Evangeline. All that was bright and triumphant in her character broke over that face as she laid down the daily journal, which a waiter had brought in answer to her impatient demand, after reading a single paragraph. "No, I thought—as I hoped," she exclaimed, excitedly, leaving her untouched breakfast, and moving with quick animation about the room, tossing books and papers in and out of place. Sitting down to write a note, and throwing aside the pen, quite unable to control her hand. "It is sudden, but perhaps all the better for that."

Then she started up and rang the bell; the door opened on the instant, and the man she wished to send for stood before her. A young man, dark like herself, and evidently with as dusky blood in his veins, and as quick thoughts in his brain.

"You were about to send for me. I saw the list of passengers, and came at once. Quick work, isn't it? That cable helps one to perform wonders."

"Are you sure this is the name you proposed?"

"Exactly to the middle initial. There is no doubt on that point."

"And he knows that I am here? Tell me frankly, was it that which brought him?"

"Undoubtedly. I wrote him long ago that she was discovered; but he lingered irresolute. My opinion is that he was searching for you over there, for the moment I telegraphed: 'Rachael Closs is in this city,' back comes a message telling me to expect him, and in ten days here he is."

"Will he not be disappointed when he finds that so little progress has been made in attaining her consent to a divorce?"

"Perhaps; but I cannot help it. She is not to be persuaded by anything, I can say, though, in all things else she trusts me entirely. On this subject she has religious scruples; besides, I am sure she still loves her husband too

well for any hope that she will fling aside all chance of reconciliation. The very silence she has kept with regard to her friends proves that. I have tried to believe that she fled his house from repugnance, but it was from the pride of affection which she believed to have been wronged. At any rate the lady positively rejects any ideas of an American divorce."

"That is not strange," said Rachael Closs, in a low, thoughtful tone. "What would be the value of an American divorce in the British courts?"

"He seems to think it would be sufficient, and may prevail upon her to grant it. Heaven knows I have tried hard enough without success. But we cannot discuss this now. He is here, and I must meet him. What am I to say about your presence in New York?"

"Say that having no friends to protect me and no home, I came here to claim both from my only brother, and that you gave it to me."

"That is truth, and easily told; but if he asks to see you?"

"Tell him where I am, but say that he had better come without asking, as you are sure I should refuse him. You understand, he must take me by surprise."

"I understand."

"Say that I have suffered enough through him and his—suffered innocently, and have fled from my native land to avoid him, and the undeserved censure, which was sure to fall on me, if I remained under his roof after she left it."

"I will make him understand this."

"Hepworth!"

"Well, Rachael?"

"Tell me, is there no danger in this visit? He loved her once; will it bring back old memories, awake new affections?"

"No! no! it is useless to ask the question; have no fear of your hold on him. The man loves you, Rachael."

Her face brightened—her lips parted with a faint sigh.

"Ah! yes—he has followed me here," she murmured.

"I think we understand each other now," said the young man. "He knows that you are here; thinks you came to escape him and join me—a wronged and insulted girl, driven from her country for his sake and by his wife's means. This will touch all the chivalry of his character, and fire him with fresh indignation against her. He is a man of terrible force when offended, and may so wound or terrify her that a divorce will follow. Then it will be your own fault, Rachael, if you do not go back to Oakhurst, its mistress. She, too, may marry again; they do such things easily in the free lands."

Rachael's face darkened, as it always did when that young man spoke of a divorce. She sat for some time looking vaguely into the street; then a clock struck, and she started up, looked hastily into a mirror, and saw that her dress was incomplete. She fastened its white muslin folds over her bosom with a head of Ceres cut in massive coral, twisted a band of coral around the back braids of her hair, and clasped her wrists with bracelets to match. Then she stood awhile before the looking-glass, asking herself if in anything her beauty had diminished. A footstep in the passage, a sharp knock, and before she could move or speak, the man she was thinking of stood before her.

These two persons stood looking at each other, white and trembling with disturbed passions. They called themselves innocent, yet could not look bravely and fairly in each other's faces. Somehow, their hands met and clasped each other. Then they sat down together and spoke a word or two of welcome; then low, confidential whispers crept to their lips, and for the time Rachael Closs forgot her craft, and everything else, save that the man she loved was by her

side. When she had seemed to escape him, he had found her—had crossed the seas, and forced her to receive him again. Thus taken by surprise, how could she help it?

"How did you find me?" Rachael inquired, at last remembering her lesson. "Why did you seek me?"

She could not look in his face and ask this false question; but he bent down to gaze in her downcast eyes, and saw a sparkle of delight through their dark lashes. "Because I couldn't help it, Rachael, any more than you can help being glad that I have come."

"Ah!" she said. "I hoped—I thought it was all over. That, in coming across the ocean, I had removed the only obstacles to your wife's return to her home. Are you here to say that this is so?"

"I am here to say that I love you!—that I never will again live with that other woman, whose jealousy has driven you forth, alone and helpless, into a strange land."

"Ah, it was hard!" said Rachael, lifting her eyes to his face, and he saw that they were heavy with tears. "You know that I never wronged her in a single act of my life. Was it my fault that she overheard the mad language with which you overwhelmed me that night?"

"I do not regret it, Rachael. My heart chafed under its restraints. She had become hateful to me, and I said so. To live under the same roof with her and you was terrible. The very earth you trod upon had become dear to me—the sound of your voice made my heart leap! She saw it, felt it, and at last heard it in words. Another woman might have loaded me with reproaches and heaped ignominy upon her rival. Innocent or guilty, it would have made no difference; but she fled without a word. The old Carset pride would not permit of reproaches. She made no scandal, but fled out of my life."

"She had no right to make scandal. I had done her no wrong," said Rachael, with kindling spirit. "If you loved

me, how was I to help it? After you spoke out so rashly—so madly—I should have left the house, had she given me time. That night I went to my room and packed up everything. If I wept—if my heart was broken—no one was the wiser. When I came down in the morning, ready to go without knowing where, she had fled from your home with her child, leaving that fearful letter behind. Did I remain an hour after that? No! Silently as she had gone, I departed, leaving no trace, asking nothing, hoping nothing but concealment and oblivion."

"Hoping only impossibilities! I searched half over England—not for her, but for you. In this pursuit I chanced to meet your brother. He either did not know or would not tell me where you could be found, but thought it possible you had left the country. I made him my friend. She had gone to America under an assumed name. My agents learned that much, though her own mother did not know that we had parted, but believed us to be travelling together. Then I remembered the facility and secrecy with which divorces can be got in this country, and resolved to free myself from a tie that kept me chained down from all happiness like a dog. The youth is sharp, capable, and superbly handsome—in short, your brother, Rachael. He undertook this matter; got recommended to my wife's trustees, who knew nothing of her changed name or our separation. She had desired them to send out a capable person who would take charge of her affairs, and they sent him. It was not long before he gained her entire confidence, and began to talk with her of a divorce."

"A divorce! How is that possible? I do not understand."

"Oh, it is the easiest thing in the world in some of the States. You have but to make a residence, pay liberally to some easy-conscienced lawyer, and the marriage ties drop away like burnt pods."

"And is a second marriage legal?"

"In this country, yes. With us there might be a question; but all places are alike to those who love. If this can be arranged, you will no longer shun me, Rachael?"

She lifted those eyes to his face one instant, then the lashes slowly drooped over their brightness, but half-veiling it.

"But she will never consent to it. How can she?—how can she? I would perish first."

"You are right. She refuses; but I have a way of reaching her—the child! I will take it from her. She shall give that up, or give me up."

"You would not be so cruel. Think how she loves the child!"

"So much the better. That love will insure success. The child once in my possession, she will make any sacrifice to get her back."

"But are you willing to be separated from your little daughter?"

"I would separate from everything on earth, Rachael, to be sure that you love me, and will be mine forever. Besides, the best interests of the child will be secured by having her with her mother, who will be an heiress, with a great property at her disposal. You know what a proud old family she came from, and how little need she has of anything from me."

"This is a strong reason why you should conciliate the matter," said Rachael, sadly. "Oh! Norton, would it not be far better that I should go away again and hide myself? A few months of separation, and this feeling, which you think so strong, will change, perhaps; and oh! what can I say? What shall I do?"

Her words were broken with sobs; the slender fingers clasped over her eyes were wet with tears. He took her two hands in his, and wrung them passionately.

"I would rather risk my own soul than trust you away from me again," he said. "No—no! All I ask is an assurance—a certainty that you will become my wife the hour that I am free from this woman—that you will love me—not as I love you, that is impossible, and I would not see your sweet nature so maddened;—but you must give me more than woman's love—more than common trust."

Rachael drew her hands away from his passionate clasp. "When you are free—when you can ask these things honorably—I will answer," she said, gently; "but you have a difficult task, and may never be able to claim the promise you seek."

"This very night I will demand the child—then it will be her turn to negotiate. Hepworth has gone to her now. She does not know of my presence here. If she refuses him, I will take her by surprise, and force her to a favorable conclusion. You will remain here, Rachael, until my freedom is accomplished."

"That is impossible. I must not stay here another week. Whatever her course is, mine must be above reproach."

"But a week. You will give me this one week?"

"I would give you my life, but not the good name which is dearer to me than life."

"Oh, Rachael! what a grand creature you are!"

"Grand, Norton? Oh, if you could comprehend how weak I am—how much I suffer—how my heart yearns for the privilege of resting!"

"As it shall rest, my noble girl, when you are all in all to me!"

"Hush! not yet. You must not speak in this way to me while another woman can call you husband. Remember, if she is proud, so am I."

"And with good reasons; for where is there a woman to match you?"

"Hush—hush! Was not that a knock?"

Rachael arose and opened the door as she spoke. Young Hepworth stood on the outside.

"I hardly expected to find this gentleman here," he said, addressing Rachael, and bowing to Norton; "in fact, was on my way to his hotel."

Norton—for so the man had registered himself on the steamer-list and at the hotels, though a much higher name sometimes trembled on the lips of Rachael Closs—came forward at once.

"Have you seen her?" he questioned eagerly.

"She refuses—absolutely refuses—to see you. I never saw a creature so terrified in my life; but I have made arrangements for admitting you when she will be quite alone. The child is there. I heard it laughing in the next room. There is the latch-key. The servants are disposed of; but hush! Rachael is listening. Shall we go to your hotel?"

The person they called Norton took his hat, and the two went out together.

CHAPTER II.

THE SLEEPING CHILD.

"WOMAN, where is my child?"

A shriek broke from the poor lady on whom these words fell. She started up, white and trembling, flung out her arms as if to repulse some object that threatened her, and sank back in her chair, gasping for breath.

A tall and rather powerful man, haughty and stern in his strength, was bending over her, almost smiling at the terror with which she quivered and shrank away from him. The

poor creature caught a gleam of his white teeth through the curving waves of his thick beard, and uttered another cry, for she knew how hard and relentless was the feeling from which that smile sprang. She could not move her eyes from the man's face; but as they met the cruel look in his, they filled with wild terror, and her pallid lips fell ajar in deathly helplessness, as if they never would close again. She was trying to speak, but could not.

"Woman, I say, where is my child?"

Still she could not speak; a shiver ran through her at each attempt, and she looked piteously into that stern face, imploring compassion with those frightened eyes.

But there was no pity in the man; his gray eyes darkened with rage, a curse trembled unspoken on his lips—the very hairs of his soft, amber-hued beard curved and shook under the excitement that possessed him. He laid his hand upon her shoulder with a force that made her wince.

"Tell me where she is, or I will search for myself."

"No, no! She is not here. I cannot tell. For mercy's sake—for mercy's sake, leave me—leave me!"

The wild voice broke; she clasped her hands, and held them up imploringly; but he pressed that strong white hand more sternly upon her shoulder, and under it she cowered lower and lower in her chair, till the clasped hands fell supinely in her lap, and she began to moan like a dumb animal in pain.

"Do not lift your hands to me, nor dare to look in my face," cried the man, stooping his tall figure menacingly over her; "for with you there shall be neither mercy nor forbearance till that child is given up."

"There never was — there never was! From the first you had neither love nor mercy for me."

"More than you deserved—a thousand times more than you had a right to expect. But I did not come here to bandy words. Will you speak out, and tell me where I can find my child?"

"What do you want of her? Will you be content only to see her?"

"No! I shall be content only when I have made certain that you can never see her again."

A wild terror came into the woman's eyes; they grew dark as midnight, and she began to struggle under that powerful hand.

"But you shall not have her! I will die first—yes, die ten thousand deaths! She is my child as well as yours!"

The voice rang sharply through the room. Anguish had given the poor mother strength to resist, but he answered her in the same stern resolve:

"It is useless. I have hunted you down, searched you out. Now comes the issue. Give her up peaceably, and I will leave you in quiet. Resist—"

"But I will resist. So long as I have a breath to draw, I will resist!"

The woman broke from his hold and struggled out of her chair as she spoke. He stepped back and stood aloof watching her. Two doors opened from the room—one, through which the man had entered, another, leading into an adjoining chamber, that had access to the outer hall. He saw her eyes turn anxiously on that door, and pushing by her, flung it open.

A child lay upon a bed, which stood in the middle of the room. A pillow around which a quantity of delicate lace fluttered as the draft swept over it, had been removed from its usual place to the centre of the bed, where the child lay upon it, like a cherub pillowed among the clouds of Heaven; for high over it were silken gleams of delicate blue, such as brighten the skies after a thunder-storm, from which curtains of transparent whiteness floated mistily, as if they had just drifted in through a snow-storm. It was after ten o'clock; but gas was turned down, as if for the night, under

a large alabaster shade, and the chamber was softly flooded, as with the radiance of a harvest moon.

Thus, the sleeping child was spiritualized, and that man who rushed through the door like a fiend, stood upon the threshold rebuked by its innocent beauty. While he thus paused, the woman sprang before him, and threw herself toward the bed. This action aroused the demon in the man; he sprang upon her, seized her by the waist, and pinioned her to his side with one strong arm, while he flung back the curtains with a violence that wrenched them down, and buried the child in a flood of whiteness.

All at once two plump white arms were flung sleepily upward, and a pair of rosy little feet and dimpled legs cleared their way out of those waves of foam-like lace—then the child sat up and looked about with a bewildered look of sudden wakefulness in her great violet eyes, and a tremor of the mouth which threatened an outburst of tears. For an instant the man seemed fascinated out of his evil purpose by the earnest look of the child. The next he darted toward her, but the woman caught his arms, and with all her frail strength attempted to fling him back from his prey.

"She is mine! she is mine! you shall not touch her!" He seized her by the two arms, and attempted to hurl her from between him and the bed; but she clung to him with insane force, girded his neck with her arms, and pressing herself against him, still cried out—"She is mine—she is mine—you shall kill me before you reach her!"

But the poor woman's strength was nothing when opposed to the vast force of the man. He wrenched her arms from his neck, and lifting her from his bosom, hurled her from him fiercely and loathingly, as if she had been some hideous reptile.

She did not fall, but staggered against a console table on which the alabaster lamp was burning. It went over with

a crash, scattering the carpet with fragments; and now the room had no illumination save the moonbeams that fell through the windows, for she had turned off the gas.

"Yes," she cried out, in bitterness and fear, "you shall kill me first! I am not afraid to die."

"But I wish you to live—you have not suffered half enough yet. To kill you would be meagre satisfaction," answered the man, with cutting sneers in his voice and in his face, as the moonlight struck it.

He did not observe it, but while he spoke the lady had cautiously glided toward the bureau, and was opening a small upper drawer. She was in shadow, and noiseless as a ghost; but he stood, as it were, on a flag of silver, cast through the window by the moonlight, which also sent its rays on the bed. She saw that he had the child in his arms, and became frantic.

"Come no nearer. She is mine now," he said, in a stern, threatening voice that sounded terribly through the stillness. "Until your death you shall never set eyes on her again."

"Then let death come now. Better that than see her taken from me—better in her grave with me than living with you."

The still intensity of passion was in her voice. She sprang upon him with sudden vehemence, snatched the child from his grasp, wrenched the curtains of the window free from the silken cords that held them back, and in an instant the room was enveloped in midnight blackness. This was followed by a confusion of sounds, fearful whispers and curses hissing through clenched teeth, the rush and rustle of drapery, and low cries of terror. Then, out from the hushed tumult and the darkness, crept a little child with tears on her face, but too much frightened for loud crying. She let herself down the broad staircase by her hands and feet, creeping through the darkness like a

cherub escaping from purgatory, and led by the gleam of a street lamp, which flung an arrow of light through the door that evil man had left ajar, the little creature pressed her tiny figure into the opening, and directly stood upright, with her naked little feet upon the cold stones of the pavement, and her night-gown of snowy linen falling away from her dimpled shoulders and sweeping the stones with its whiteness. She stood a moment, looking up and down the street in her innocent bewilderment. Then some sound from the house frightened her, and she scampered away, with her little arms in quick motion, and her lovely head thrown back, looking altogether like a lily drifting through the moonlight.

Meantime the front door had closed with a jar that thrilled through the silence which had fallen on the house—for all was darkness above. A hand of some one mad with affright had turned off the last jet of gas left burning in the second story, and a white figure fluttered like a ghost from room to room, now in darkness, now in gleams of moonlight, and anon down the dusky stairs, where a light was dimly shining.

She paused here in deathly terror, looked up and down the passage, then, hearing a footstep moving overhead, leaped upward like a deer, turned off the burning core of flame from a painted lantern that swung there, and stood under it with bated breath, whispering:

"Clara, Clara, Clara!"

Nothing answered, nothing stirred.

"She has gone below," thought the woman, with a gleam of joy at her trembling heart; "I will find her and flee into the street."

That moment she felt that a dark figure was leaning over the banisters listening for some sound to guide him. She could hear the hot rush of breath as it escaped his lips, and knew that she had only won a moment upon her enemy.

Stealthily as a cat, noiseless as night-frost, she crept down the passage into the basement.

A few moments the man listened, then his fierce tread shook the stairs. Out from the lighted basement came the woman, shutting herself into the darkness. When the man attempted to grope his way downward, she stood in the passage a gleam of whiteness which he might have passed by but for the shivering of her garments, and the heavy breath which throbbed up from her bosom.

Not a word was spoken, not a shriek escaped her when his hand clenched her wrist like a manacle, and he turned her forcibly toward the stairs.

She went unresistingly; there was no need of the force with which he half-dragged, half-carried her back to the rooms she had left. In the clear radiance of a moonlit window he paused, still holding those hands firmly, and looking all the evil passions of his soul down into her eyes.

"Woman, what have you done with the child?"

"I do not know where she is. I could not find her."

"Fool! I heard you talking with her."

"No, no. I spoke to the servant."

The man laughed, and tightened his hold on her wrist.

"Every servant had left the house before I entered it."

"Oh, why did you enter it? We were at rest. We were getting to be so content."

That moment the noise of a door closing made the man start, and sent a wild smile over the pale face he looked upon. In his surprise he loosened his grasp on her hand. Quick as lightning she freed herself, darted through the chamber door, and bolted it against him.

This was an awful moment to the poor woman; she stood inside the room, with her hand upon the bolt, and her face resting against the door, holding her breath, and cold as stone from head to foot.

What would he do next? How avenge himself upon her?

Every moment she expected the door to be beaten in, but nothing came. Then the stillness itself became horrible. It would have been some relief could she have heard the man's curses through the bolted door.

What was that? Smothered footsteps in the next room. Great heavens! that door was unbolted! For a moment the thought froze her to ice, but desperation made her bold. If she could but reach the door—the bolt was inside. She crept through the darkness with both hands extended, feeling for the door. Not a breath passed her lips. The very heart in her bosom stood still. Another step, and two powerful arms were flung around her—a shriek, only one, and an awful hush fell upon the darkness.

CHAPTER III.

THE LOST CHILD.

THROUGH the door which had closed so suddenly, a man had passed who now stood within the railings waiting for an opportunity to pass into the street.

After waiting in this situation awhile, the man ventured out upon the sidewalk, and looking cautiously around, moved swiftly away as if in haste to leave the mansion.

A policeman who stood in the shadows opposite, watched the man with some professional curiosity, and got a full view of his face as the moonlight lay for the duration of half a minute full upon it.

This thing he observed particularly :

The man carried some small object under his arm, a box or a parcel, he was not sure which, but it was carried with unusual carefulness, and the policeman thought with an effort at concealment.

When he reached the corner, this man hesitated and looked up and down the cross street, as if uncertain what direction to take. This thoroughly aroused the suspicion of the policeman, who moved in the same direction, still keeping on the shady side of the street.

Much to his surprise, the object of his vigilance turned back, and walked up and down the block, looking anxiously about as if he expected some one, or had lost something. He stood a moment or two opposite the house he had left, and seemed to go away reluctantly. Just as he was turning the corner a second time the policeman was relieved, but instead of going home kept on his way, holding the man well in sight, until he entered what seemed to be a tenement house in a narrow cross street near the water.

Not very long after this, another man of imposing presence, also opened the front door of the deserted dwelling, and walked leisurely down the steps, and went away, taking the direction in which the little girl had disappeared.

It was not yet so late in the night that any chance visitor might not be seeking his home, yet few persons were passing just then, and there was none to observe that no light streamed from vestibule or window of the mansion.

The new policeman was at the other end of the block, and it chanced that this tall stranger passed out of the house and the street quite unobserved.

But the first policeman who followed that suspicious character, who carried a package under his arm, observed that the man looked about all the time, as if he was in search of something. Whenever he turned a corner, it was to stand awhile and look up and down the block, then move on slowly.

Once or twice he walked back, peering into an alley way or down a cross street; but all the time he progressed toward the tenement house, which the policeman had seen

him enter. Satisfied that the man had been traced to his lair, the patrolman went home, and took no further interest in the matter that night; but he had scarcely gone, when the man came forth again, and began his slow search a second time. He walked back almost to the house he had left, lingered about it awhile, and returned down another street, searching every shadow and corner as he went. He carried no parcel with him this time, but seemed terribly anxious to find something or some person that was lost. But after awhile he returned to his home, and was seen no more in the street that night.

About half an hour after the man disappeared an old woman came into the street he had left, who seemed in haste to reach home, for it was getting late, and beyond the hour when any woman should have been in the streets alone.

She was somewhat tall and neatly dressed, though evidently of the poorer classes. The face which was clearly seen from under her black silk hood had a look of past beauty in it, which, softened by the moonlight took the semblance of an old picture.

In truth there was something of exultation in it, as if some pleasant, if not eager thought were straying across those old features, and she walked with the upright, vigorous motion of a much younger person. All at once the woman stopped and looked around, as if some one had called to her.

Several persons were in sight, but all were occupied about their own business, and had not heeded her. She stopped perfectly still, and listened in utter bewilderment.

"Gamma!"

Where had that voice come from? That piteous, pleading voice, soft as the coo of a dove, but with a sob of childish grief in it.

"Gamma!"

The old woman drew close to an iron railing, which hedged in the area of a basement, and looked down. There, sitting upon the cold bricks, in one corner, sat a little child, with its white feet huddled under a linen nightgown, and its little hands held up in pathetic pleading.

The old woman leaned over the railing, to make sure that both eyes and ears did not deceive her. Then, with an exclamation, she forced open the iron gate, and, in an instant, stood within the enclosure, holding the child in her arms.

"My precious—my own, own darling—how came you here? Who?—who? Oh, mercy! what is the meaning of this?"

The old lady began to cry; for the little creature trembled in her arms like a chilled lamb, and began to pat her cheeks with its mite of a hand, while dying sobs of grief shook its little frame, as gusts of rain make a lily tremble on its stalk.

"Gamma!—gamma!" she sobbed, creeping under the shawl that the old woman folded lovingly around her; "Tara cold."

"Dear little creature, I know it; but how came you here? Who on earth could have been so cruel? Did you run away, darling?"

The child sat up on the old woman's arm, and held the shawl like a tent over her head with both hands, as she nodded her head, and gave out a lisping "Yes," plainly as her imperfect speech and grieving mouth would permit.

"And will little Clara go back again?"

The child nodded, and made a little struggle, as if she wished to get down and walk.

"No, no, pretty dear. Grandma is strong enough to carry you that far. Bless me! how cold its little feet are. Who could have let her out?"

Thus holding the shivering child in her arms, the old

woman made her way toward the house from which she had escaped, wondering in her heart how the dear little soul had chanced to be crouching in that damp area.

She found the house closed and perfectly dark. The vestibule was still open, but not a gleam of light came through the plate glass over its door, nor was there a sign of life in the building. The old woman mounted the steps, and with a thrill of something like horror, rang the bell. Why her hand should have trembled so, she could not have told. It was not fear from the lateness of the hour, for Mrs. Yates was a poor woman, and knew that old age, in garments that provoked no man's cupidity, was always safe. Besides, the moonlight made the streets luminous almost as day. There was nothing to fear; but the old woman trembled from head to foot under the burden of that little child, and her hand fell away from the silver knob at first, without pulling it, for all strength seemed to have left her.

She conquered the strange emotion at last, and rang the bell. Its sharp tinkle reached her ear in the stillness, but no one came. The house was four stories from the ground, and she reflected, while waiting there, that servants in the upper story would be lifted far above the reach of any sound she could make.

Still she rang the bell more and more vigorously; for the fair little face peeping out from under her shawl seemed to plead with her for shelter.

Nothing came of it, however. The bell sounded gloomily through the basement and up the halls, but it failed to arouse the lady in the second story, or the servants under the French roof; and after waiting minutes that seemed hours, the old woman went down the steps again, and folding the child still more closely under her shawl, made the best of her way home.

Daniel Yates was up, and sitting by the window when his mother came, toiling up a double flight of stairs, and

entered one of the apartments in that tenement house which he occupied.

His wife sat by the table, on which a lamp shed its imperfect light, sewing on some coarse garments which she had taken from the shops. She looked up when the mother came in, and dropped the work into her lap, lost in astonishment, and arose.

"Oh, the darling! the darling! Thank God, they have sent her back; but what is this, mother—her feet bare, nothing but a nightgown on? In the name of mercy, what does this mean?"

The child reached forth her arms, and called out in the sweetest and most caressing voice that ever left a baby's lips:

"It's Tara—take Tara!"

The young matron snatched the child to her bosom, and gathered the broken words from her sweet lips.

"She has been crying, mother. Her face is wet with tears."

"Poor thing, I know it. No wonder—no wonder, Elizabeth. Where do you think I found her?"

"Where?" demanded Daniel Yates, standing up in visible excitement. "Where did you find her?"

"Huddled up, like a drift of snow, in the corner of a damp area, crying softly to herself like a lost angel that she is."

"Hush," said the man, looking keenly around; "not so loud, mother—the very walls have ears."

"Well, what then?" said his wife. "Mother is only telling the truth—what if they do hear?"

"They must not know that the child was even taken away. No matter why—there is a reason," answered the man, almost in a whisper. "I have been searching for it, up and down, up and down. How came you to find it, mother?"

"Chance. Oh! yes, God does sometimes make such chances. She called to me. The night was still, and her little voice made the heart leap into my mouth. Then I saw her face uplifted, like a lily in the moonlight, and her little hands moving to and fro, as she attempted to help herself up from the bricks. How she came there is beyond my knowing, but she is here again, God bless her."

The young mother tightened her arms, and drew the little creature to her bosom with a sigh of infinite tenderness. The child clung to her lovingly, laid her head upon the motherly bosom, and, after a few soft murmurs, dropped asleep.

"Shall I put her into bed with the other?" asked the grandame, reaching forth her arms for the child.

"No, let her sleep with us," interposed Yates, who had been walking up and down the floor. "It is better so. She must not be left out of our sight. Remember that."

Mrs. Yates arose, and carrying the child into an adjoining room, laid it on her own neat bed, leaving a kiss upon the smiling mouth, as she prepared to lay down by its side.

Another bed-room opened through an opposite door, in which old Mrs. Yates slept. In this was a fanciful little bedstead, large enough for two children, but quite out of keeping with the furniture of the apartment, for a canopy of lace looped back with rose-colored ribbons fell over it, and a silken quilt, rich in brilliant colors, but somewhat soiled, gleamed under it like a trampled flower-bed, in which a child had fallen asleep. This child was about the same age as little Clara, but her form was more robust, her features coarser, her hair of a deeper color; but to a casual observer, the two children were not unlike.

A low cot-bed in one corner of the room should, at this hour, have been occupied by the old lady; but she only looked into the room, and closed the door a little cautiously,

as if she did not wish the wife to hear. Then she sat down by her son, and asked what it was that troubled him.

Yates answered in a low voice. Then she asked a series of brief, sharp questions, which he answered under his breath, casting his eyes anxiously at the bed-room door, as if fearful of being overheard. After some minutes of this suppressed conversation, Yates went into the hall, opened a side closet there, and brought in a malachite box, which the old woman locked in the drawer of a bureau that stood in the room, and of which she always kept the key.

After this, mother and son went to their rooms, oppressed with anxiety.

One thing had happened that night which no one had observed. Just after old Mrs. Yates took up little Clara, a tall man came slowly round the corner, looking up and down as if in search of something. When he saw the old woman coming up from a neighboring area, with a child in white garments clinging to her neck, he uttered a sharp exclamation, and started forward as if to intercept her; but a second thought seized upon him, and he stood a moment as if to consider, then withdrew into the shadows and walked after the woman, always keeping her at a distance, but still in sight, exactly as the policeman had dogged the steps of Daniel Yates.

When Mrs. Yates entered the tenement house, this man followed her closely, and crossing the street, he went up to the door, and was evidently searching for the number.

The woman, he observed, had used no latch-key, and he judged, that, like many other tenements of the kind, the outer door was left unlocked. He tried the latch, opened the door softly, and picked his way up two flights of stairs, just in time to see what apartment the old woman entered. Then he went softly down stairs, and disappeared.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MIDNIGHT VISIT.

BETWEEN eleven and twelve o'clock that night Rachael Closs was alone in her room.

Early in the evening young Hepworth had been there, and conversed with her in a hurried way about the man in whom they both took so much interest.

"He is determined he will not leave her without some written agreement for a divorce or the child. It is Saturday evening. I know the habits of her household. The servants are sure to go out. He will have a clear field. The mother and child will be entirely in his power, and she is afraid of him. I know that from the shudder of dread that crept over her when I first spoke of the possibility that he might cross the ocean. She is a timid woman with all her pride, and turned white as death when I gave his message."

"Is it possible that she loves him yet?" inquired Rachael, in a low, thoughtful voice, as if asking the question of her own thoughts.

"I do not know. It is difficult judging of these quiet, proud women; but the persistence with which she refuses to accede to a divorce seems to point that way. Don't you think so?"

"Think so—think what?" demanded Rachael, starting out of her reverie.

"Oh! you are thousands of miles away—there is no use in talking when no one listens."

"But I do listen—what were you saying?"

"That it was just possible that beautiful lady was in love with her husband yet."

"You think so—you deem it likely?"

"Well, yes; where women are concerned, I think all sorts of contradictions likely. She certainly listens with strange eagerness when I speak of him."

"She thinks you his friend."

"I am simply the business agent recommended by her trustees to transact her business, and communicate with her friends abroad under her directions. She knows me only in that capacity. But she has been led to trust me a little, and in a friendly way I have suggested this idea of a divorce. At first she received it angrily. I never saw a lively color in her face before, but this time it flamed up hotly enough."

"But she listened, you say?"

"Very impatiently; for awhile she seemed suspicious that by some means the proposition came from him, but I convinced her that it was only a passing idea, and her husband probably was ignorant that a divorce was possible."

"Did she ever speak of me?"

"No; I think the name would blister her tongue."

A dark smile swept over Rachael's face.

"I think she hated me from the first," she said.

"Probably," answered Hepworth; "women like you are not generally popular with their own sex."

"That is, perhaps, because we do not seek popularity in that direction," answered Rachael, and a flash of humor shot over her dark face; "women are not generally kind or merciful to each other. I think this lady would not grieve if she heard that Rachael Closs were dead."

Hepworth Closs—for that was his full name—looked unusually serious.

"I sometimes wish we had never meddled with this matter, Rachael. It must be wrong, when his name makes a creature so good and gentle turn deathly white as she did, when I mentioned it. I think if you were out of her way she would draw a free breath for the first time since she left

England. Poor lady! I do pity her, so young, so beautiful, and alone!"

Rachael answered nothing to this, but fell into thought again, while Hepworth amused himself with a lot of ivory counters which he arranged in piles, and assorted over and over before his companion exhibited a wish to converse.

All at once she looked up and spoke:

"Then you think there will be no danger in this interview, though, as you said just now, she is a beautiful woman."

"Danger—no! As for beauty, that is a thing which has little influence when a man once gets familiar with it; besides, the interview will be a stormy one—she will not give up readily."

"But there may come up old memories—she may be gentle and forgiving."

"All in vain I tell you; these two persons are separated forever! The man who has once loved Rachael Closs well enough to put away his wife in the wild hope of attaining her, will never look back again."

"You really think this, Hepworth?"

"Think! Why, how can you ask? In my whole life I have never met a woman so gifted with the subtle power which holds men prisoners. Can you fear that this one will be stronger than the rest?"

"Yes, Hepworth, I *do* fear."

"And why?"

"Because I love him."

"Rachael, are you so weak? Are you really jealous of this poor, deserted lady?"

"Yes; I tremble at the thought that she can be permitted to speak with him again; for, after all, he must have loved her once. She is the mother of his child."

Hepworth took up his hat angrily.

"Norton told me that he intended to call here some time

before midnight," he said: "but I advise you to let him see nothing of this folly. He is your slave now. Keep him so."

She did not seem to hear him, or know when he left the apartment. Hours and hours after that she sat alone, waiting, not in a reverie, but anxious and alert. Her face was pallid under its waves of black hair, her eyes were restless, her lips in constant motion, though they uttered no sound.

Now and then she would lean forward and listen. At last she heard the footsteps she had been waiting for; but it was far down the staircase, and, for the first time, she seemed to become conscious that her room was in some disorder. A striped camel's-hair shawl, such as ladies of the better classes sometimes use when travelling, lay on a sofa, and, near it, a pretty straw bonnet, with long strings that trailed to the floor.

She took these articles up, opened a travelling trunk, and crammed them in recklessly, as if used to such rude packing.

Then she picked up a book and some papers from the floor, smoothed her hair in front of the mantel glass, and, casting a quick glance around the room to make herself sure that everything was in order, sat down under the centre gas-light, and took a newspaper in her hand, which she seemed to be reading. Still her head was bent sideways. She was, in fact, listening for the footsteps that had never failed to bring the blood, in irregular beats, from her heart—sometimes in joy, sometimes in fear, but always tumultuously, for she loved the man who was coming, with a passion intense as it was dangerous.

The door opened, and the man called Norton, entered. She restrained the impulse to start up and meet him, but laid down the paper quietly, and seemed waiting for him to speak. But he remained silent, lifting his hat from his head with a heavy sigh. Then she looked up, and their

eyes met. Hers were heavy with an expression which he had never seen before. It was shrinking, apprehensive, as if she dreaded the news he might bring her. He was pale and terribly excited. With a precaution, which seemed to thrill her with fear, he turned back and tried the door.

"Well," she questioned, rising slowly from her chair, and laying a hand upon his shoulder, "have you nothing to tell me?"

He pushed her hand from his shoulder, and turned away.

"Nothing that can give you pleasure."

"But you have seen her; I know it by your face."

"Yes, I have seen her."

"And the child?"

"I saw that too, as far as the half-light would let me."

"And you secured it—you brought it away?"

The woman spoke eagerly, and her eyes began to kindle.

"No," he answered; "she baffled me there. The child escaped."

Rachael made an impatient gesture with her hand.

"Escaped you, Norton? I will not believe it."

"Still it is true. She escaped, or was hidden from me—I cannot tell which. When I saw her, she was undressed, and sound asleep."

"Upon her bed?"

"Yes, upon her bed. I had the child in my arms."

"Who was strong enough to take her from you?"

The man took out his handkerchief, wiped some heavy drops from his forehead, and laughed till the edges of his white teeth shone through the golden curve of his moustache as he answered:

"She was strong enough. At any rate, she did it."

"But not without a struggle, I should think."

"No; we had a struggle—in the dark, too, for she put out the lights, and thus baffled me."

"And you were alone with her. I wonder—"

"Well, what do you wonder? That I did not kill her?"

"Kill her!" repeated the woman, with a shudder.

"What put that idea into your head?"

"What put this whole infernal scheme into my head? Can you tell me that? This woman was the mother of my child. She loved me once, or I thought she did, and I—"

Rachael uttered a sharp cry. You would have thought the word he hesitated to speak had been a blow, she shrank from it so piteously.

"Oh, Norton, do not say that!"

"What did I say? Nothing, except that the child has escaped me."

"I thought nothing could escape you," answered the woman, bitterly, for through all her love she felt the sting of that unuttered word, and the insult of his defiant manner.

The man laughed, and began to pull his silken moustache fiercely, as if she had angered him.

She sat down by the table again, and took up the paper, grasping the edge hard, as if she were making a strong effort to keep her hand steady.

"So you intend to leave the child with her," she said, after awhile, looking up from the paper, as if she had been reading.

"Who says that I intend any such thing? I tell you what, Rachael Closs, I would not go through another scene like that I have come from to-night for all the fortunes in England. I did not think it would have been so hard, but when I felt her hands clinging to mine, and heard the old, pleading voice, imploring me not to—not to—why, Rachael, how strangely you look at me! how white you are! Surely you did not expect me to force the only child from a mother's arms without a struggle, and without such pleading as would break a common man's heart?"

Rachael Closs did not answer at once. She was looking

at him steadily, but with a far-off expression of the eyes, as if she observed some painful object in the distance, with which he had nothing to do.

"She was hard to persuade. She pleaded, she clung to you, with her arms around your neck, perhaps," she said, dreamily.

"Yes, her arms were around me more than once, poor thing! poor, wronged woman," answered the man, leaning his elbow on the mantelpiece, and covering his eyes with one hand.

Rachael broke up her abstracted gaze at once, and a strange, wild flash shot from her eyes.

"And yet you did not cast her from you?"

"No matter what I did," answered the man, dropping his arm from the mantelpiece. "Have you any brandy in the room?"

She brought a flask from her travelling-basket, and he poured some of its contents into a glass; but his hand shook so nervously that the dark liquid was spilled over it.

Rachael attempted to pour some water into the brandy, but he pushed her back with one hand, and lifting the glass to his mouth with the other, drained it eagerly.

"Now," he said, turning upon her, as the hot potation mounted to his brain, and burned in his eyes, "let us have this question settled. You needn't look so disappointed. I mean to have the child, let what will follow, and have her quietly, too. She is not in that house, and I know where to find her. My wife will never have a chance to thwart me again."

"What do you mean? Why?"

The woman asked these questions under her breath.

"What do I mean!" answered the man, imitating the low huskiness of her voice, while a mocking smile stirred his mouth. "Why, this: The child is safely housed where I can find her. Children are swarming like bees in the

building they carried her to. One, more or less, will never be missed. Had I known as much yesterday as I do now, this disturbance might have been avoided."

"But you have seen her?" said the woman, with feline gentleness.

"Yes. I have seen her scared face; I have felt her poor, trembling arms clinging around me; I can hear her voice now, pleading, begging, moaning, as animals do when their young are torn from them. I tell you, Rachael Closs, if I could live a thousand years, that voice would haunt me to the end."

The woman stood motionless gazing on his face. What did his speech mean? What secret reason had he for knowing that his memory would be so haunted? She dared not ask the terrible question that looked dumbly through the smouldering blackness of her eyes; but, unspoken, they seemed to disturb him, for he flung impatiently away from her, and began to pace the room, up and down, up and down, like an unchained maniac. She watched him awhile very anxiously, but waited till he paused a moment close to her, when she laid her hand on his arm and attempted to soothe him.

"Do not walk so heavily, my friend. It may arouse persons in the adjoining room, and the hour is late."

"Late? Yes; I dare say! It seems an eternity since the sun went down."

"Yes," answered the woman, wearily; "it has been a bitter night for more than yourself. Waiting is worse than action."

The man took her hands between his and pressed them hard.

"You are not disappointed, Rachel; I can see that. I have not secured the child, and have failed to persuade her into the other arrangement. But I had no time. She was terrified at first, and the whole interview was so stormy

that talking of a divorce was out of the question. I went prepared to offer terms—to explain how easily such things are done in this country; but she gave me no chance. After a parting like ours, it was not to be expected.”

“I did not expect that she would ever consent to a divorce. How could she, being your wife? And if she had, there would still be an impediment to the other marriage, which you at one time seemed so anxious for.”

“At one time, Rachael? Always—always! Since I first dreamed it possible that you could love me, this marriage has been the one wish of my heart. When you fled here to avoid me, I resolved that nothing could keep us apart—that no tie should prove strong enough to keep me from your presence.”

“But a tie does exist, Norton, which even you can never break or put aside, and which must forever keep us apart. No divorce that could be obtained in this country would sanction any woman in assuming the place of your wife. Remember the haughty and powerful family to which she could appeal!”

“I forget nothing. But all the difficulties you point out only make me more resolute—more determined. But why talk this over again? Men who have the courage to work out their own destinies, do it without counsel or help, cruel or not.”

“Cruel—cruel—” Rachael checked herself, and put one hand to her forehead, as if to collect her thoughts. “What did you mean by that, Norton?”

“No matter. I am tired, and harsh things have happened to-night that make me savage. Forgive me, Rachael, if I have said anything wrong. What with excitement and a little too much of the brandy, I am not myself.”

Norton wiped away some heavy drops that stood on his forehead. Certainly the excitement must have been terrible which brought the moisture back, almost instantly, where it stood, like rain, as he spoke.

“I will go away now, Rachael, for you look tired, and I am no company for a delicate female, who ought to love me in spite of my rudeness. To-morrow I shall see you again, and we will begin this battle afresh, for it promises to be a hard one. Good-night. You forgive me?”

“Yes.”

Rachael made an effort to smile, but he had frightened her too thoroughly for that. She laid her hand in his, and he felt that it was cold as ice.

“My poor girl! how my rough words have hurt you! Say once more that you forgive them!”

“I cannot! I cannot!” she cried out, with a burst of passion.

“Cannot forgive me, Rachael?”

“I did not mean that, I do forgive; but my throat pains me, and words come through it like sharp things that cut their way. I am nervous—sick.”

“Disappointed,” said Norton, humbly.

“Disappointed? Yes; I may as well own it—but not much. I shall be well to-morrow.”

“Good-night, then. Go and and get some rest. We both need it. Good-night.”

“Good-night,” she said, watching him with heavy eyes as he went away.

Then she fell into a chair, flung out her arms on the table, and sat there, drearily, till the clock had struck twice.

CHAPTER V.

THE CHAMBER OF DEATH.

THE soft, warm light of a summer's morning broke through the falling draperies of that shrouded window, and filled the room with an atmosphere of serene quiet. But what should have been the delicate resting-place of a sleeping woman, was one scene of wild disorder. The bureau drawer was half open, and its contents tossed toward one end. Toilet bottles were overturned, and their contents stained the white marble; one of the delicate satin chairs was knocked down and broken.

The carpet was strewn with the broken pieces of an alabaster lamp, and scattered over with torn fragments of lace.

In the midst of this still picture thrown across the darkened whiteness of the bed, a beautiful woman lay prone and cold, her violet eyes open, her lips apart, and one hand grasping the muslin of her dress, where it lay in folds upon her bosom, as if she had died struggling for breath. Billows of lace fell over and around her; but close to her person they were stiffened and red with blood. The hair, bright and glossy, had broken loose over her shoulders as it fell around them, the only lifelike thing in that ghastly room.

Just where a gleam of sunshine shot like an arrow between the parted folds of the curtain something bright glittered upon the carpet. It was a small poniard, the handle fretted with enamel, the blade sharp as a serpent's tongue on which venom burned redly.

As the morning wore on, a knock came softly from the chamber-door, then the latch was softly turned and a ruddy Irish face looked in. A shriek—a wild rush down the stairs, cries of distress, and in ten minutes a crowd was before the

house, a policeman at the door, and the terrible mystery of that death-chamber was given to the world. The servants, huddled together in the front basement, gave out what little intelligence they possessed in fragments of broken speech; terror was on every countenance. Wild conjectures took the place of facts. Who was this lady, so young, so beautiful, but without associations; almost unknown even to her very servants?

It soon came out that she had lived in the house nearly a year, and for a time seemed to find great interest in furnishing it. But this accomplished, her life had settled down into perfect seclusion and quietness. She had a fine library, and read much, exercised rare talent as an artist in a little studio in the top of the house, and sometimes spent days together occupied with needle-work. The light carriage was often seen in the park, but she always rode in it alone. Sometimes she took long walks, such as few Americans ever indulge in, and altogether her habits were those of a highly bred English lady. But she sought no companionship and never spoke of her antecedents to any human being, except one, and he was as little known as herself. This was all that a searching examination by the reporters could elicit. By examining the passenger list of an European steamer, they found that a lady registered as Mrs. J. Hurst arrived in the country about the time the house was taken. At the hotel where she had stopped a few days, there was only a vague remembrance that she had appeared to be in great trouble; but beyond this, no information could be added to that already made public.

Of the death itself less evidence could be obtained. The servants by their own account had all been out that evening, and must have been absent at the time it occurred. They were all intensely excited, and talked so completely at random, that nothing but the roughest rumors reached the public press.

That afternoon the coroner's jury met, and in the dainty chamber where the beautiful form still lay, untouched and lost in shadows that were solemn as the grave, held an inquest.

The servants were closely examined, but they had little information to give. No person had visited the house that day except old Mrs. Yates, who brought little Clara, her grandchild, to see Mrs. Hurst. The lady had been in the habit of sending for this child, and seemed very fond of it—especially when she thought that no one was observing her. Indeed she had been generous as a fairy to the little creature in the way of clothing and trinkets, and delighted to give her pleasure.

That evening old Mrs. Yates neglected to come for the child, and the chamber-maid offered to take it home; but Clara crept into Mrs. Hurst's lap, clung to her neck with both arms, and protested, with all her might, against returning home; at which, the lady, who seemed in trouble, declared that she should stay and sleep with her, and at once began to undress her. After this, Maggie went into the chamber to prepare the bed, and through the open door saw Mrs. Hurst embracing the child, kissing her white shoulders and dimpled feet, as they were exposed in the undressing, and laying her own cheek lovingly against that of the child. When Maggie last saw the lady, she had unclasped a coral necklace, her own gift, from Clara's neck, and held it out of reach, while the little creature struggled for it, half-laughing, half-crying, and uttered a crow of sleepy triumph when the lady gave it up with another embrace and a rain of passionate kisses. The fact was, Maggie said she did not like the idea of taking up poor children and spoiling them so, just because they were handsome as angels and had sweet voices—so she just left Mrs. Hurst to put the child to bed herself. Yes, one more person came in that evening, Daniel Yates; his mother had gone out, so he came after

the child himself. "I went up stairs," said Maggie, "and told the madam, only half opening the door, and without looking in. She answered that little Clara was sound asleep, and Daniel Yates would have to go home without her."

"And did he go?" asked one of the jury.

"He got up to go," answered Maggie; "but I wanted to take a little run around the corner, and asked him to stay till I came back. He promised that he would; but when I came back he was gone, and Matthew Stacy was here with the cook, drinking mint juleps as if madam's basement parlor was a bar-room. I say nothing, but such carryings-on is shameful."

The other two servants, when questioned, knew absolutely nothing. Their duties had not called them upstairs that afternoon, and they had not seen Mrs. Hurst at all since her dinner hour. The house was in order as usual when they returned home, except that the hall lights were put out, which occasioned no surprise, as Mrs. Hurst had been known to turn off the gas with her own hands more than once when the servants had neglected it.

When all three of the servants had been examined and cross-examined, the jury were about to bring in a verdict of suicide, when a policeman came in and changed the complexion of the case entirely.

Was anything missing from the house? Had a small box, loaded with some bright metal, disappeared?

The servants were recalled, and answered promptly.

"Yes; madam had a box of some green substance, with gilded bands about it. That box was kept in the basement where the parlor safe stood. Madam put the box into the safe with her own hands, and kept the key up stairs. If it was gone, some one must have stolen the key."

"What did the box contain?"

Maggie had never found it open but once, and then she

saw folded papers, jewel cases, some loose gold, and a chain of bright stones, possibly diamonds (she was no judge), with other things which she could not distinctly remember. One thing was certain, the box opened with a small golden key, that Mrs. Hurst always wore attached to her watch chain. Had any one looked for the watch?

The coroner arose and bent over the dead woman. No chain was about her neck, and the watch was gone.

Here arose suspicious motives for crime. Some one had evidently robbed the house and murdered the lady. Who was the person?

The story of Maggie Casey was confirmed by some loose garments lying in a chair near the door—a pretty white dress and tiny kid boots, all of exquisite quality, and far too expensive for a poor man's child. But other garments were found of coarser material, and less elaborately ornamented—garments that had been worn, and evidently exchanged for those in the chair. It seemed as if the lady had amused herself with dressing the poor man's child like a little princess while she remained in the same house with her.

A necklace and sleevelets of twisted coral—delicate pink coral, such as travellers bring from Naples—were also found trampled into the carpet, the clasps broken, and some of the beads scattered, as if a heavy foot had trod on them.

Some of these beads had rolled into a little pool of blood that lay just under the edge of the bed, and had coagulated around them. Maggie had seen this coral in the hands of the child just before she went to sleep, and recognized it with a shudder.

Where was the child? Had that been murdered like her benefactress? Who was the old woman—the grandmother? Possibly she could throw some light upon this mystery.

Maggie had retreated to one of the windows, and was looking out upon the dense crowd of people, who fairly

choked up the street. Among them she saw an old woman, tall, slim, and neat in her apparel, striving to force a passage to the front door.

"There she is!" the girl cried, pointing her finger at the woman. "There she is, looking as white as a sheet; she sees me at the window, and throws up her arms, begging some one to help her through the crowd. Shall I open the door, sir, and tell the policeman to let her in? I dare say she is searching for the little girl this very minute."

The coroner gave a whispered order, and directly old Mrs. Yates came into the death-chamber, trembling like an aspen and white as a ghost. She looked wildly about the room, but in the dim light saw nothing but shadowy confusion; then her vision cleared—that pale, beautiful woman upon the bed seemed to move among the matted lace. The poor old woman cast a piteous look on the faces that surrounded her.

"Is that her? Is she dead?"

The question dropped in syllables from her white lips. She shrank back toward the door, trembling and terror-stricken, casting a frightened look behind her, as if searching for some means of escape.

The jury watched her keenly. The reporters whispered together, and fell to taking notes of the poor woman's appearance. She saw nothing of that, but turning all at once, sprang forward with a cry of intense anguish, and threw herself upon the bed, with both arms around that lifeless body.

"Oh, my child, my darling, have they killed her? have they killed her?"

The agonized throes of that old heart shook the bed—moans of pain grew fainter and fainter on those lips, and after a little time she lay by the side of the dead, motionless as death itself. The contrast between that fair, young face, which was now almost smiling in its changed expres-

sion, and the haggard features of the gray-headed woman, locked and rigid as stone, was something terrible to look upon. Simultaneously the coroner, the jury, and the witnesses rose to their feet, and crowded around the couch on which death seemed to have cast another human soul.

CHAPTER VI.

OLD MRS. YATES AND HER SON.

As a cloudy morning breaks through the gray mists that enveil it, that old woman came slowly to her senses, and stood upon her feet in a wild maze of bewilderment. She placed a hand upon her temple and swept the white hair away as if its weight hurt her brain. She looked down upon the dead, heavy-eyed and in painful abstraction. The woman was not herself. She saw the court without heeding it, and looked dumbly into the face of the coroner when he spoke, as if his words had no meaning for her. At length, an expression of gathering intelligence came into her large gray eyes. She turned toward the murdered lady, lifted the white hand which had fallen down one side of the bed, and laid it tenderly on the marble bosom. Then she gathered up the scattered folds of the lace curtains, and dropped them, like a cloud, over the beautiful form, while the slow, painful tears, which come so reluctantly to old age, gathered in her eyes.

"Some one called me from the street," she said, turning her face toward the jury. "What did they want?"

"Tell us," said the coroner, "what you know of this lady's death."

"Of her death? Nothing," answered the woman, drearily.

"Well, of her life, then."

"Of her life? Who knows anything about that? She was a kind, gentle lady, always doing good."

"Yes, we know; she was kind to your grandchild?"

"What, little Clara? Yes, very kind."

Again great tears of pain rose slowly to her eyes.

"You brought the child here yesterday—was it?"

"Yes, I brought her here yesterday."

"And took her home again?"

The old woman paused, put the hair back from her temples, as she had done before, and answered, dreamily:

"Yes, I took her home again."

The coroner started. This answer contradicted all the previous evidence.

"Then you came here in the evening after your grandchild?"

"No, I was not here in the evening."

"Not here! Then how could you have taken the child home?"

"She called to me and I heard her."

"Called to you! What—from the house?"

"From the area of a strange house."

The jury looked at each other. Was the woman crazy?

"From the area of a strange house! How came she there?"

"I do not know. How should I?"

"How was the child dressed?"

"In a nightgown, prettier than anything we could afford—all of fine linen and lace; but it was so thin that she shivered with cold. It was a long time before I could get warmth into her."

"Well, you took her up, and what then?"

"What then? Oh, I wrapped her in my shawl and took her home."

"What time was this?"

"After ten—oh, more than that, nearer eleven."

"Late for an old woman to be out, wasn't it?"

"Yes, it was late."

"Where had you been?"

A flash of hot red came into those withered cheeks and dried up the tears in her eyes.

"I had been out on a little business."

"What business?"

The old woman did not answer, but closed her lips and fastened her eyes on the floor as if reflecting.

"You have not answered my question. Was your business anything relating to the lady here?"

"No. I went to see another person, but did not find her."

"But you knew her—you came here often with the child?"

"Yes, with the child. She asked me to bring her."

"Why did she care to see this child so much more than another?"

"What! little Clara? Because she was so pretty and so bright."

"Had she ever slept in this house?"

"Yes, more than once; the lady *would* keep her, you know."

"Did you know that she would stay here last night?"

"I did not expect it. My son promised to come after her before I went out."

"Did he come?"

"Yes; but the servant told him that she was asleep."

"Where was your son when you took the child home?"

"In the house-room sitting by his wife."

"Why were you so overcome when we first called you to the room?"

The old woman turned deathly white, as if she were about to faint again; her curved chin began to quiver, and

she plucked sharply at her dress, as if to appease the nervous twitching of her fingers.

"I loved the lady. She had been so kind to me and little Clara. She lay there dead, and the shock of it almost killed me. No wonder—no wonder!"

The jury looked at each other, wondering what questions to ask next. The coroner was puzzled. She had answered all his questions promptly enough, but her replies did not satisfy him. The intense agitation into which she had twice fallen was disproportioned to any interest she confessed to in the mournful investigation. He had noticed at times gleams of apprehension flash through the gray anxiety of her face, and this prompted him to further scrutiny.

"How old is your grandchild?" he asked, suddenly.

"What! little Clara? Going on four years."

"Can she talk?"

"Yes, a little. I don't know—that is, you might not understand her."

"Let us try. A child of four years—"

"Almost," interrupted the old woman.

"Well, of almost four years, ought to know something. Officer, let this good woman tell you where to go, find the place, and bring the child here—quietly you understand."

"Let me go with him," pleaded Mrs. Yates. "A stranger might frighten her—she is such a little thing."

"No," answered the coroner, "the officer will go alone. If the child is timid, you will be here to encourage her."

The old woman sat down in one of the satin easy chairs, folding her hands with a stern effort at patience.

The officer went out, forced his way through the crowd, and disappeared, leaving wonder, and the wildest conjecture behind him.

A quick walk brought him to the tenement-house, to which Mrs. Yates had given a brief direction. He mounted

the stairs, knocked with his club upon the door, and entered before any one could speak.

The man had intruded into a neat little sitting-room, carpeted with matting, and ornamented with two or three choice engravings. A young woman sat in a rocking-chair near an open window, sewing industriously. Her dress was delicately clean, and her head, as it bent before the lighted window, gave back the profile of a Madonna.

A child sat on the matting in one corner of the room, busy with a tangle of gorgeously-colored worsted, which had been given her to play with—a bright, golden-haired little creature, whose blue eyes opened wide with astonishment when she saw the policeman enter. She saw that the strange man fixed his eyes particularly upon her, and with sudden affright scrambled up from the floor, hugging the worsted to her bosom, and glided along the wall toward the young woman.

The policeman was a curt, honest man, who had little idea of the softer amenities of life. He had come on a special errand, and lost no time in performing it.

"Put on the child's things," he said. "She is wanted."

The woman turned pale, and her eyes widened, either with terror or astonishment.

"Why is she wanted? What has she done that a policeman should come here to demand her? She is but a baby."

The man that moment remembered that he was ordered to give no alarm to the family, but to bring away the child as quietly as possible.

"Her grandmother wants her; that is all. She shall return to you in less than an hour. It is nothing. The old woman was a little tired, and sent me. Just put on her things, and it will be all right."

"Where is mother?" asked the young matron, anxiously.

The policeman gave the number and street in which Mrs. Hurst's house stood, with so much composure that the woman's apprehensions were appeased.

"I wonder she sent for her," was all she said, while tying a little bonnet and putting on the child's sacque. "Had I not better go along?"

"Not at all," answered the man, reaching out his hand for the child, who shrank back, and put a finger to her mouth.

"Come, come, little pet. They've got sugar-plums where I am going, and oranges. You shall have an armful of 'em."

The child made a dart at her tangled worsted that had fallen to the floor, and huddling it in her arms, made a bold effort to follow her tempter.

"Oh! leave that trash behind. Grandma will give you something twice as pretty," said the man, lifting the child in his arms, and drawing her attention to his shield. "There now, shall we be goin'?"

The child nodded, and turning, flung a kiss, over the policeman's shoulder, to the young matron, who stood by the window, doubtful and bewildered, and only reconciled to the whole proceeding by the sanction of her mother-in-law's name.

There was a fresh excitement in the crowd, which grew denser and broader in front of that house already doomed to a gloomy notoriety. When the policeman returned, bearing a pretty child in his arms, one man particularly—a tall, elegant personage, dressed in garments of foreign make—struggled through the crowd, close up to the man, who made but slow progress with the child, and keenly examined her face and dress. The child caught his eye, and clung closer to the policeman. There was something in the man's look that terrified her. He saw that her chin began to quiver, and drew back. Directly he was making his quiet way

along the outskirts of the crowd, pausing now and then to listen, when some comment was made, but always carrying with him an appearance of careless indifference.

In a crowd like that, few persons were likely to observe an individual who made no comment, and scarcely exhibited curiosity; so he passed into another street, unheeded, while the policeman bore his charge up into that death-chamber.

Old Mrs. Yates sat motionless upon her chair, growing more and more rigid as a full realization of the horror that surrounded her fastened itself upon her mind.

No one had questioned her, and she scarcely lifted her eyes from the carpet, until the murmurs of a child made her start. She looked up sharply, and an expression which no one could understand shot across her face. It seemed like a sense of relief unlocking her features.

The child saw her, called out "Grandma!" and began to struggle out of the policeman's arms with considerable vigor.

The old lady held out her arms, and the little girl ran into them the moment that the policeman let her free.

There was no broad light in the room, and the servants, who had been examined, were standing at a distance, but Maggie looked around at Harriet and whispered:

"Fine feathers make fine birds. She don't look like the same creature, without the muslin dress, her kid boots, and the corals. What a little goose madam did make of her!"

"Well, well. She's seen the last of such finery, poor thing," answered Harriet, glancing at the humble garments of the child. "Like the rest of us, she'll miss a great many things. You and I, a good home, and the kindest mistress that ever lived."

Maggie turned away and looked out of the window, but she saw the crowd, through a rush of blinding tears, and attempted no answer.

"Come here, little girl," said the coroner, reaching forth his hand.

The child went up to him, and lifting her innocent eyes to his face, seemed to wonder what he wanted of her.

"What is its name?" he asked, gently drawing her to his knee.

The old woman looked up as the question reached her, and seemed about to speak; but the coroner lifted his hand, and repeated his caressing inquiry:

"What is the little lady's name?"

A look of sharp anxiety came into the old woman's eyes; but when the child answered, "Cara," she drew a deep breath, and settled back into her old position.

"Cara—I suppose that means Clara?" observed the coroner; "but if all her words are so imperfect, I am afraid she will make a poor witness."

"Has Clara got a mother?"

The child nodded her head, and pointing to the old woman, added, "And grandma."

A suspicion, which had fastened on the coroner's mind, was fast fading out. To him, there had seemed something remarkable in the strange fancy taken by an elegant and proud woman for the child of persons so far removed from her own position. Unconsciously he had imagined some romantic connection between the child and the lady, which, as yet, had found no confirmation.

The little girl seemed by no means familiar with the room. She gave no recognition to the servants, and looked around in natural amazement at the beautiful objects that surrounded her.

A thought struck the coroner. If the lady had been so intimate with the child as the evidence suggested, surely she would recognize the remains. He arose, with the little one in his arms, and reverently held back the lace with which Mrs. Yates had shrouded the dead.

"Is that Clara's mamma?" he whispered.

The face upon which the child looked down was tranquil

and lovely as the sleep of angels; a smile was on the lips; the blue of those violet eyes tinted the white lids the old woman had so gently closed.

There was nothing on that couch to frighten a child, who had no idea of death. On the contrary, had any mysterious link of love existed, the first impulse of the little creature would have been a caress.

But there was nothing of the kind. Those eyes looked down upon the beauty of death, wonderingly. There was no recognition in her manner, no spring of delight in those lithe limbs, and when the coroner whispered, "Is that mamma?" the child shook her head, pointed to the old woman, and only answered, "Gamma."

Surely, there was no tie between the dead woman and the child. The vague suspicion that had haunted the coroner's brain, was at once swept away. Admiration and compassion for the child had probably aroused some interest in the lady, who had, perhaps, occasionally amused her solitude with the little creature. That she had been in the house the night before, was evident, but how she had left it, still continued a mystery. That, and that alone, could have any connection with the murder.

He took the little one upon his knee and questioned it closely; his words, his tone, and the gentle caress of his manner, won a great many broken words from the sweet lips, but they had no connection with the events of the night before.

If the child had any share in them, they had left but a faint impression upon her.

The servants had no information that could explain her imperfect language. They knew that the child had visited the house, but they had seldom seen her, except as she was borne in and out in her grandmother's arms. None of them ever remembered to have been called into the room when she was with the mistress, or to have rendered her any ser-

vice. Mrs. Hurst, in fact, never summoned them to her presence when the child was there, but seemed particularly to guard her from observation.

That was all they knew about it.

The coroner was puzzled. Every step he took led him into deeper bewilderment. All that he had yet discovered opened no positive fact. He decided to dismiss the old woman and her child; but there was yet another person who could not be found. This person was Daniel Yates, the man who was, for a time, left alone in the house.

If he failed to throw some light upon the murder, all must remain in impenetrable mystery. The coroner motioned to a policeman, who had just come in, looking hot and tired, as if he had been walking fast.

In the quick, low words that passed between the two men, Mrs. Yates heard the name of her son. A thrill of terror shook her frame. Why, the poor old woman could hardly have told, only there was a secret, deep down in her life, which the young man shared. Would these persons have the power to wrest it from him?

The child was carried out and taken home by the policeman. Mrs. Yates refused to follow. A terrible apprehension had seized upon her, and she resolved to stay and receive any blow which might fall, there, in the death chamber.

Directly a fresh disturbance arose in the crowd. A policeman forced his way through, followed by another man in citizen's clothes, evidently one of the better class of working men. He was well dressed for a person in that sphere of life, and had an open, frank face, full of courage and human sympathy.

This man seemed agitated. His face was pale, and his bright, clear eyes had a look of dread in them. He took no notice of the crowd, but followed close upon the policeman, towering above him somewhat, for he was a tall and power-

ful man, whose presence would have been remarked in any crowd. As it was, the people at once identified him, either as a witness or a party to the murder, and he became an object of general curiosity.

The man did not heed this, for his heart was full of horror, his brain ached. He strode up the steps, through the hall, and into the presence of the coroner, white, and fearfully agitated, but looking honest as the sun.

The first object that struck the man on entering the room, was the pale face of that dead lady, with the holiest smile that ever shone out of heaven, beaming over it. He made a stride toward the bed, but the mother's gray eyes caught his, and checked the impulse.

He sat down, shrouding his face and evidently making a strong effort to control the agitation which told so strongly against him. When the coroner spoke, Daniel Yates stood up, but the jury observed that he shrank away from the bed, and did not once look at the deathly figure upon it.

His story, when he told it, was simple and earnest. He had come to the house late in the evening, intending to take his little girl home. But one servant was in the basement, Maggie Casey, who went out directly after, promising to return soon.

He waited patiently, expecting her to come back, until a clock on the mantelpiece struck ten, not intending to take the child home, for he had been told that she was asleep, but feeling reluctant to leave the house when all the servants were away.

About this time, Daniel Yates said that he heard footsteps ascend the front steps, and a latch-key turn in the lock.

The steps were quick and light, but from the marble of the hall sounded like those of a man, yet the heavy shoes of a woman servant would have made as much noise. They ascended the stairs quickly, and he heard a door close.

Ten or fifteen minutes after he heard a crash, as if some glass or china object had fallen in the second story, then a sound of feet moving, and of voices mingling confusedly. All this did not surprise him much, for he thought that Maggie had come home through the front door, and in her haste to obey some command of the mistress, had overturned a vase and broken it.

It was impossible for him to hear more distinctly than that, down two flights of stairs. After a few minutes a door opened, and he heard the swift footsteps of a woman coming down the stairs.

They paused in the hall, and again came indistinctly from the drawing-room.

Then he heard them, flying, as it were, toward the basement. The door opened sharply, and the face of Mrs. Hurst looked through. It was a scared, white face; the eyes burning with terror, the lips parted by the force of her panting breath.

She shut the door; threw the long chain of a watch over her head, and forced it upon him. Then she ran to the safe, opened it with a key which she carried in her hand, took out a box, and gave it to him, telling him, in breathless haste, to take it home and keep it till she came or sent, but to give it to no one else. The child had gone home, she said, and bade him follow it at once, or harm might come.

The man said, continuing his evidence, "I was about to ask further directions, but she held up her hands, warning me to be still, as she stole into the hall and listened. I heard footsteps moving above. She heard them also, and darted away, only pausing to whisper:

"Go! go at once! Look for the child, but not here. She has gone!"

"I saw that the hall was darkened then, though it had been light when I came in. The swift steps mounting upward, the soft rustle of her garments, ceased after a minute, and the house was still again.

"I stood in the lower passage full ten minutes, listening. Once it seemed to me that I heard muffled voices, but I was not sure, for directly all was still as death; and, after going half-way up the basement stairs, I came down again, feeling that I had no right to intrude.

"It was now more than half-past ten. I had waited a long time for the lady to come down, to see if she had any directions to give, and hearing nothing, went home, carrying the watch and the box with me."

"What did the box contain?" asked the coroner.

"That I do not know."

"You did not open it, then?"

"No."

"And the watch?"

"It is here," answered Yates, drawing the tiny watch, all a-glitter with diamonds, from his pocket.

"But there is no key here?"

"No; I took it off."

"In order to unlock the box?"

"Yes, if it became needful."

"Where is the box?"

"That I will not tell. It was entrusted to me, and I will keep it."

"We shall perhaps teach you better," answered the coroner, and he whispered some words to a policeman, then went on questioning the witness, while the man departed to search for the box in Yates' residence.

"You seem to be an Englishman?"

"Yes, I am an Englishman."

"What is your business?"

"I am an upholsterer."

Other questions were asked and answered, but nothing more was obtained from the man. Still, his story was so strange as to arouse suspicion, in defiance of his honest bearing. The fact that he had the watch in his possession

was strong proof against him. The stranger fact, that he refused to surrender the box, was more suspicious still.

"May I go home? Have you done with me?"

"On one condition, yes," answered the coroner; "let an officer go with you; direct him where to find the box, and you are free to go for it."

Yates shook his head.

"Let me advise you as a friend," said the coroner, who really was interested in the man. "We may find something in the box, which will clear the matter up."

Yates cast a look of yearning pity on the bed. His eyes, for the first time, dwelt clearly upon the murdered woman.

In an instant they were full of tears.

"She trusted me with the box. Can I betray the trust, now that she is dead?"

"But she was almost a stranger to you. Why feel under such obligations?"

"The lady was kind to me."

"Then you positively refuse."

Daniel Yates felt the peril he was in, and turned to speak to his mother, the only human being in the room who could understand his situation, and the trust imposed so fatally upon him. But Mrs. Yates had left the house. No one could tell the exact time when she disappeared, but Maggie had seen her stoop forward, thrust her hand softly under a mass of lace that had swept to the floor when she veiled the dead lady, and draw something forth with a gliding motion of her hand.

Maggie saw this, but said nothing, because she liked the old woman, and had no idea of adding to her troubles by a single word.

After this Maggie's attention was taken up in another direction, and she did not miss the old lady, until Daniel looked around for her in the strait to which they had drawn him, but she must have gone out, just after the coroner began to press him so hard with questions about the box.

"Then you positively refuse," said the coroner, repeating his question.

Before Yates could answer, an officer came in and spoke in a low voice to the coroner. Another man had been seen to leave the house, some time after Daniel Yates came from the basement with the box under his arm. It was just possible his story might be true. This man passed out of the front door, and walked leisurely down the street alone. In figure he was about the height of Yates, but the man is positive that he was another person, and that he left the house after him.

The coroner listened, made a motion that Yates should stand aside, and gave notice to the reporters that the interests of justice demanded that further investigation of the case should be held in private.

CHAPTER VII.

RACHAEL CLOSS IN HER ROOM.

ON the morning when Mrs. Hurst was found dead in her room, Rachael Closs arose early, for she had not slept a moment all the night long, while the woman she hated lay so still and cold in a sleep that would be eternal. The agitation of the man she called so familiarly by the name of Norton, his curt, dark words, sentences half-finished, and, above all, the drops of agony that she saw from time to time glistening on his forehead, had filled her mind with powerful distrust. What did he mean—what fatal knowledge, as yet unexpressed, preyed upon his mind? She asked herself these questions over and over again in the stillness of the night—a stillness that had become awful to her. Surely some danger must spring out of his violent action against a

suffering and helpless woman—danger which might fall upon him in a strange land with fatal effect. In his passionate vehemence, he might fail to protect himself by the laws, and, in seizing the child, lay himself open to exposure before some of the local courts, a thing to be dreaded above all others.

These and many other harassing apprehensions lay so heavily upon Rachael's mind, that she was glad to leave her bed and sit by the window, while the first gleam of the dawn brightened into the morning of a day that she feared would bring heavy trouble upon her.

"Oh, if I could see him!" she thought, "If I only knew that he would expose himself to no further danger—that he would not seek to possess himself of that miserable child; but he will—he will! All that I said, like a heedless fool, will drive him to it. Hepworth might prevent it, if he could be made to understand all I fear; but how tell him—how find him in fact. Well, all I can do is this: Wait—wait—wait! Heavens! I did not know that the very fear of evil could cramp one's heart so. What can I do?—what can I do?"

Rachael arose from her seat at the window, and turned to a mirror that hung near. How gray and haggard her face looked! The anxious shrinking in her eyes made them strange to her. Was it possible that she had suffered so much in a single night!

She did not sit down by the window again, but flung out the raven masses of her hair, and began to brush them with a heavy action of the hand, which seemed ready to drop away from its task every moment. This gave her no relief. She flung down the brush with a violence that broke the delicate ivory carving on the back, and, with the long hair floating over her like a mourning veil, poured out a quantity of cold water and laved her face, her neck, and her arms with it till her flesh was chilled to the whiteness of

marble. This relieved her a little, and, with more composure, she began to braid and roll up her hair in a picturesque fashion all her own, which gave the outline of a helmet to her exquisitely-formed head.

When the morning brightened, and the sun broke out warm and brilliant, half the gloomy apprehensions that had driven the sleep from her pillow disappeared. The broad, bold sunshine gave her courage. If all that she dreaded should really happen, she felt brave enough to meet the evil and combat it to the utmost. Still her breath came heavily. She was brave, truly, but why? What, in fact, had she to fight against? There was little danger that she would be brought into any contest. There lay the trouble. She was ready to do anything but sit still and wait, yet that was the only thing left for her. If she only knew what had happened, or was likely to happen! Had that man told her all! Was he in some known peril, which he dared not speak of even to her?

All this made her feel most keenly the miserable helplessness of her position. What was the use of bravery and quick intellect, if neither were to be put into operation? For his sake, she was, in simple truth, ready to die, for she loved him; but in what way would her death avail him, if the trouble her mind shadowed forth should fall? It is seldom that the life of any human being is needed for the safety of another; but it is life which a loving heart is most likely to offer, because human generosity can reach to nothing beyond that.

Rachael breathed more freely while she was completing her toilet. She hurried through it in haste, as if she feared being too late for some journey, which was unreal as her fears might prove.

The streets began to be filled with noises now, and she sat down by the window again, looking out wearily; a cry in the street made her start from her chair.

A newsboy with daily papers under his arm was passing the hotel; she had thought of this way of appeasing her impatience more than once since daybreak, but shrank from sending to the office for a paper so early in the morning. This cry from the newsboy, with its sudden appeal, brought her hopes of speedy intelligence. Surely, if anything very terrible had happened it would be in the morning papers. She leaned out of the window, made a quick sign to the boy, ran down to the private entrance, and came back with a paper in her hand.

Notwithstanding her eagerness in obtaining the paper she seemed in no haste to read it, but sat down, this time at a distance from the window. When she opened the journal, nothing that she dreaded to see was there. Her lover was safe; all her suspicions of some evil kept back from her had been unfounded. She breathed freely again, and though by no means at perfect rest, partook of her breakfast when it came up with some degree of appetite.

About eleven o'clock Hepworth came in. He had left their mutual friend, he said, in a good deal of anxiety. He was still determined to get the child into his possession, and insisted on the personal help which Hepworth was unwilling to give. There was no such terrible haste in the matter that he could understand, and the abduction of a child from its parents or guardians was an offense against the law which he had no idea of venturing on rashly.

Rachael did not seem to enter into this question with much zeal, but she besought Hepworth to keep his patron out of all danger, and by no means to encourage any new attempt at violence with the lady. His mad impetuosity had so terrified her that she would rather give the whole thing up than have him plunge deeper into trouble on her account.

She was now willing to accept the alternative of a divorce, if it could be obtained without open scandal. Hep-

worth might tell his patron what she said. Perhaps her objections to the divorce had urged on harsher measures than were kind or prudent. Their friend had been terribly excited the night before, and so frightened her with his vehemence that she had not slept a moment since.

Hepworth seemed at a loss to gather the true meaning of Rachael's rather incoherent speech, but he saw that she was greatly disturbed, and began to partake of her anxiety.

"You have driven him wild with your legal quibbling, Rachael," he said impatiently. "I tell you, girl, there is danger of straining your influence too far. There is no wisdom in driving a man like that to desperation. Remember, he must have loved her once, and I have never been able to make out what changed him; not your superior beauty, Rachael, for she was far prettier, and a thousand times sweeter, than you will ever be. True, there is fire, spirit, genius, in a certain way, on your side, but even that is not omnipotent. Just lose your dashing spirit once, get to moping, be heavy and oppressive, like some women, and your reign is over. The woman who hopes to keep our friend steady in the traces must have but one thing on her mind, and that one thing must be to interest him."

Rachael looked up suddenly, and shook her head.

"But one thing, Hepworth? How can that be, with any human being? Life is not so eventless or so pleasant to Bohemians like you and me that we have nothing to remember."

"A wise person, Rachael, forgets everything that ought not to be remembered."

"Ah! if one could—if one only could!"

Rachael spoke this with passionate vehemence which surprised Hepworth.

"What is that you are so anxious to forget?" he said.

"What? You ask me who have never loved any one in your life!"

"How are you to judge?" answered Hepworth; and Rachael saw that a swarthy wave of color swept over his face, leaving it pale and agitated. "Am I not a man? Is the blood in my veins colder than yours?"

"But who? but who?" cried Rachael, approaching him eagerly.

Hepworth waved her off. "It is useless to ask or guess. Think only of yourself. What is this thing you wish so much to forget?"

"Oh, if it were possible not to know that Norton ever loved another woman—most of all, that he married her."

Hepworth muttered something between his teeth. He seemed almost as much agitated as the girl.

"But this is impossible," he said, after a brief silence. "Do not think of it. Memories that make us wretched should be cast aside."

"I cannot talk. Your philosophy wearies me. Between your words I seem to hear his step on the stairs. Some other time you shall reason with me, Hepworth; but not now."

She did indeed seem weary; her eyes were heavy, her voice languid; her hands, too, shook visibly, as they were clasped in her lap—a sign of nervousness the youth had never observed in her before.

"Tell me, Hepworth, have you seen him to-day?" she inquired, after a minute of silence.

"Yes; I went into his room before he was up."

"Well?"

"He had not slept."

"Oh!"

"And seemed restless, very. The meeting last night had evidently given him a shock."

"But—but—he said nothing—told you nothing?"

"Not a word; only that he had acted like a brute."

"He said that?"

"Yes, he said that; and I will be sworn it was true. When he can admit so much, there must have been harsh doings with the poor woman up yonder, for the man is a brute."

"But he admitted—he hinted at nothing more?"

"No; except that he proclaimed himself generally brutal. I got no particulars."

"Hepworth, can you tell, will he be here to-day?"

"I should think not, Rachael. He is occupied about the child, and swore, as I would not help him, to get her himself. He knows the house to which she was taken, and will, I have no doubt, manage to get her; then, if you trouble us with no more squeamishness about a divorce, all will be plain sailing. The lady is sure to give way—poor thing!"

"Hepworth, I will not say another word against anything that will legally set him free—tell him this—go to him at once, and beseech him to be very, very cautious about the child."

"I will go, Rachael, this message may persuade him to greater prudence. I shall tell him that you are fretting yourself sick with fear that he will act rashly—that you pity the poor lady, and entreat him to deal gently with her."

"Yes; tell him all that, Hepworth, and say that I wish to see him; that his excitement last night terrified me."

"I will do my best," answered the youth, taking his hat; "remember, I have always advised conciliatory measures. This violence is unwomanly."

The young man went away congratulating himself that Rachael had at last become more reasonable, while she remained in her room alone, restless and longing for action, but with nothing tangible to accomplish.

She drew forth her desk and attempted to write, but for minutes together the pen was held motionless in her hand; when she did write, it was broken scraps of poetry, with

imperfect rhythm and half-finished sentiments. At last she tore the scraps of poems into pieces, and flung them from the window, pushed the desk away, and throwing herself on a sofa, slept awhile.

Rachael Closs was aroused from her sleep by a sharp voice that came from the street, as a like cry had reached her in the morning.

The evening papers were out, and a newsboy was shouting forth the intelligence he carried:

"Shocking murder in Forty-third street—a lady killed in her own bedchamber—the police upon the track of the murderer!"

Rachael Closs sat perfectly still on the couch, from which she had just risen to a sitting posture. After the first start, she neither moved nor turned her eyes from the opposite wall. Was this blow all? Would nothing follow? Had any arrests been made? Did the police know that Norton had been in the house that night? Had any one but herself seen that wild, white face, and marked the drops of terror or agony glisten upon his forehead? Oh! if she were only sure that he was safe, that no eyes but her own had marked the terrible agitation of his manner that night! A steamer sailed in the morning—if he could only be persuaded to go on board, and at once return to his native land, all might yet be well. If she had only known this when Hepworth was with her; but with only haunting terrors and vague knowledge, how could she act! One thing was certain; she must either see Norton that day or die; suspense like that was too awful for endurance.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TENEMENT HOUSE IN FLAMES.

FIRE! fire!! fire!!!

This awful cry rose and swelled through the tenement building while the officers were searching it for the box which Daniel Yates had refused to give up.

The two men, who were examining an old sea-worn chest, started back aghast, and looked at each other in sudden apprehension.

The old woman, who had been sitting in a high-backed chair, still and silent, sprang up and looked wildly around for the little girl, who, a moment before, had been playing at her feet. The child was not there, and she ran into one of the bedrooms, calling for it, in a voice so agitated, that what she deemed a loud cry was nothing but a husky whisper which no one heard.

"They are here," called the younger woman, looking out from the other bedroom.

Fire! fire!! fire!!!

The two men were in the third story of a tenement building, crowded full of human beings, who would on the instant be struggling madly for life.

The chest-lid dropped; they never thought of those two helpless women, or the children that clung to them, but fled down the staircase, leaped across the gathering flames, and struggled through a cloud of smoke into the street, shouting:

"Fire! fire! fire!"

Inside and out that cry rang fearfully. It started the crowd, already gathering in the street. It shrieked through the building, hot and quick as the flames themselves; down through the basement, up to the shattered scuttle in the

roof, the cry of death penetrated. To make up its appalling force, the old men gave their piping voices, women poured out the frightened strength of their lungs in wild yells, little children huddled together in an agony of childish pleading. Terror, courage, despair, all united in hurling that terrible cry upon the night.

The fire had been in progress for hours. In a basement room of the building a poor woman had left three little children, while she went in search of the next day's work which was to give them bread.

In its untaught innocence, one of these little creatures proposed to "play fire." So the match-box was dragged down to the floor, and each child struck out a flash of blue flame, and tossed it upward, shouting to the others that her own match burned brightest. In this rivalry the children grew wild, scraped half a dozen matches at once on the bricks of the hearth, and tossed them about in handfuls. Some dry kindling wood and shavings lay in a corner of the room, and there the children tossed the burning matches, dropping flashes of blue flame upon it, till the whole mass kindled slowly and concentrated into a red flame. The front shutters were closed, but a back window opened into the yard, and through that came air enough to keep the wood aglow.

The children were crazy with delight. How beautifully the slender tongues of fire leaped up from the wood and played around the wash-board, till all the corner of the room was lighted up with bright, quivering colors—red, golden, blue—with slender wreaths of smoke that curled up to the ceiling and floated there beautifully!

How those mischievous children clapped their hands, danced and tossed their arms about, as these glowing tints broke into a hot fire, crept up those window-frames, and threaded themselves like jewels, along the sashes, turning the imprisoned glass to gold, and the whole room to a splendid palace!

But the children grew frightened at length. The heat drove them back, the smoke began to stifle them; they huddled toward the open window. One crept through, then another, and another, until they stood in a frightened group outside, still fascinated by the illumination, which entranced, while it terrified them.

"See! see!" they whispered, "how the windows blaze, how it runs and creeps up and down the door! Hear how it cracks! Oh, my! Oh, my!"

That moment the flames burst through the net-work of cracks. They had eaten through the door, and leaped into the passage, hissing their way to the staircase, and coiling themselves in a tangle of fiery serpents up the frail banisters.

The policemen had hardly escaped too soon. A few wild creatures followed them, but more lingered in their rooms, defying death itself, rather than leave their worldly possessions behind. All were poor. Each one had some precious thing to save, and, in the mad hope that time might be given, worked on, until escape through the door became impossible.

The fire burned hottest along the high, narrow hall. Low down the flames were raging in red billows, casting a weird illumination through great fleeces of smoke, that rolled upward from staircase to staircase, till the passage was one dense cloud of blackness, shot through with a storm of surging sparks and pierced by a thousand arrows of flame. Thus room after room was blocked up with fiery smoke, through which desperate cries for help penetrated to the street.

They were answered with cheering force by the vast crowd gathered below, through which the first engine thundered up, followed by a hook-and-ladder company, which came swinging upon the scene.

Directly more than one engine blocked up the street, and

a host of firemen broke through the crowd, kindled their furnaces, swept out the massive coils of the hose, and the noble machines went to work, and like great, munificent monsters, poured a storm of water on the doomed building.

But the fire had gained a mighty power of destruction, and roared back defiance at the panting engines and the brave men, until the boldest fireman in the lot dared not force an entrance through the halls, for there the conflagration raged hottest.

It was no longer a building to be saved, but human souls—women and children, helpless old men and little babes—pent up in those stifling rooms, and pleading madly for help.

Windows were choked up with pallid faces; the hot air was beaten by desperate arms and imploring hands; but even in this terrible state, men were pushed aside that bundles might be thrust through the windows, and articles of furniture dashed down to the pavement.

The engines had done their best, but were so crowded in the street that they had hardly room to work. When great cataracts of water had been poured upon the building in vain, the crowd became wild with excitement; the engines had hardly room to work, for men leaped madly over the great serpentine hose that swelled and coiled like a living thing along the street, eager to save, but being, in fact, a hindrance.

As the flames rose and swelled, those agonized cries from the windows became heart-rending; a thousand faces were uplifted, a thousand voices promised succor. How the poor creatures crowded together and jostled each other in a mad effort to be saved! At one window a little girl crept up to the sill, and would have thrown herself out, but a woman's hand drew her back, and she sank from sight with the fire striking redly through her golden hair. A wild groan rang up from the crowd, then a shout rent the murky air. The

hook-and-ladder companies were coming into action. Quick as thought the long, slender ladders were lifted up the building upon which streams of water still hissed and fell downward in hot rain.

As the iron grapplings seized upon the stone sills, men and women tore out the sashes and swung themselves through the openings. Mad with terror, eager with hope, they crowded, jostled and threw each other down, wrangling for safety and for life like savage animals.

Ladder after ladder was uplifted. Amid torrents of scalding water and hot flames, the firemen rushed up them, coming down with women and helpless children in their arms. The crowd was excited, and scarcely took heed who went up or down.

Sometimes a citizen was seen mounting the ladders with those strong, red-coated firemen.

One man almost leaped through an upper window with a child in his arms, let himself swiftly down one of the ladders, amid the shouts of those who looked on, dropped to the earth, and made his way through the people who gathered in his path, carrying the little girl with him.

It was the same child that had been so near falling from the window only a few minutes before.

When some one in the crowd remarked this a shout rose from the street and followed the man; but he went off with the little girl he had saved without appearing to heed it. Then came fresh bursts of horror. Plainly revealed by a background of flame an old woman, with a child in her arms, and a bundle on her back, stood at an opening in the third story. Behind her, with her marble face clearly defined against a curling outburst of fire, stood a younger woman, so stricken with terror, that she looked dumbly out, making no gesture or plea for life.

The old woman clambered out upon the ladder, holding the child to her bosom with one arm, and clinging to the rounds of the ladder with her other hand.

The crowd ceased to shout now; the peril of that brave old woman held them silent; every moment it was expected that the withered hand would give way, the child fall from that clinging arm, or both be dragged downward by the weight of the bundle. A fireman rushed up to meet her, but she raised her old gray face upward to the younger woman standing there in the fiery opening, and entreated help for her. The fireman swung himself under the ladder, lifted his body upward by the arms, and thus passed the brave old woman on his errand of mercy, while she came slowly downward, burdened by the frightened child, and with the bundle fastened to her back. A dozen hands were outstretched to help her as she neared the pavement. She took no heed, but clung to the child until her foot left the last round of the ladder. Then her arms relaxed and the little creature dropped to her feet, and stood looking up in mute terror piteous to behold, while the old woman clasped her hands and held them up to Heaven in dumb agony, praying that the other woman, her son's wife, might be saved.

She was saved. Even as the struggle and the heat overcame her, that stalwart fireman drew her out from the opening just as a huge volume of flame leaped after them, and bore her down the ladder amid the wild shouts of those who watched them from below.

These two women were the last human beings saved by the ladders. Some had been fiercely driven upward by the flames, and escaped over the roof; some fell back in the struggle, and perished in the flames.

At one window a little girl appeared, and attempted to climb over the hot sill; but, frightened by the heaving crowd, drew back. The next instant a storm of fire swept over her, and she sank out of sight.

A wild groan went up from the crowd, then a hoarse shout:

"Stand from under! stand from under!"

The front walls of that tall tenement-house bulged outward, and from great chasms rent in the bricks came the roar and awful rush of a mighty fire in its hottest rage. Now the heavens were black with surging smoke; the front of the house crumbled away into red chasms and hollow caves of fire; great columns of flame shot their terrible brilliancy through the billows of smoke, and sheets of glowing red curled in and out of its awful blackness, scattering fire to the very heavens.

Steadily, fiercely, that terrible conflagration burned itself out; one by one the crowd went away, carrying the poor, homeless people into their own dwelling-places; for the poor are always good to the poor, and the best hospitality known to mankind is sure to be found with them.

CHAPTER IX.

A NEW HOME.

If there is charity to be found in the world, it is where the poor take compassion on those less fortunate than themselves.

It was not many hours before those unhappy sufferers, burnt out by the fire, found shelter among their pitying friends.

Families, already crowded into such narrow space that comfort was impossible, drew closer together in their generous sympathy, and made hospitable room for their neighbors. Children that had played together in the street easily assimilated in one household, and the women joined together in doing the double housework, for the time in pleasant sisterhood.

It is true this might not last after the enthusiastic kindness of the hour wore off; but it gave a kindly start to those who had to gather their humble household goods over again, and spoke well for humanity in a class of social life that is not always understood by those who deem themselves its superiors.

Old Mrs. Yates had excited a great deal of sympathy, and no little admiration, by her brave action in the fire. More than one door was kindly opened for her! but she refused all offers of hospitality with thankfulness, accepting only a few hours shelter, while she sought for a room elsewhere.

Those who observed the old woman at all saw that she carried her bundle with her wherever she went, and seemed even more anxious about that than the child, which was left behind with its mother.

The young woman was in great distress about her husband, and the child that had disappeared so mysteriously.

Where had the little creature gone?

Had she crept through the door into the seething flames of the hall, and so perished unseen, or had some kind person snatched her from their midst, and carried her to a place of safety? The doubt filled this poor young woman with terrible apprehensions.

She loved the child dearly, and shrank from knowing that its fate had been the terrible one she dreaded. But she was also deeply anxious about her husband.

Surely he must have seen the fire, when it raged so fiercely within a few blocks of his workshop. What could have prevented him coming to the relief of his family?

Why was he absent, even now, when they were in such distress, and utterly without homes?

No wonder the poor young wife clung to the little girl still spared to her with such watchful tenderness, and looked terrified if any one attempted to touch her.

The little darling had been terribly frightened, and refused to be set down or to leave the pillowing shelter of that loving bosom for a moment; but when the old woman appeared, she became animated, and reaching forth her arms, cried out, with sudden delight:

"Gramma! gramma!"

"Yes, darling, I have found a home for you! Come away, my daughter."

The old lady took the child in her arms as she spoke, and patted it lovingly on the shoulders. She had left her bundle behind somewhere, and now devoted herself entirely to the little one, who patted her old cheeks with its tiny hand in an ecstasy of rejoicing.

The old woman thanked the woman who had so kindly offered her a home, with the gracious manner of a highly-bred lady, and left a blessing behind her which was warm and thrilling with gratitude. Then she waited till her daughter-in-law's sweet voice had acknowledged the kindness of their entertainment, and prepared to go.

"Come, my daughter, we have a good way to walk, but it is easily done, for the fire has left us nothing to carry but this little one."

Tears came into the younger woman's eyes. She was thinking of the child that was lost.

"What can we do? How shall we find our poor little girl?" she said. "No place will seem like home without her."

"God only knows. If she is alive, He will send her back to us; if dead, then Heaven has another angel, and a human soul is saved from sorrow, and, it may be, shame."

The old woman spoke solemnly. She did not seem so anxious about the child as her daughter was, for she really did expect that it would be brought back to them, if still alive; and she had lived long enough to know that death, even by fire, is not the worst thing that can happen to a human being who has known no sin.

The two women went into the street, carrying the child with them, and passed entirely out of the neighborhood that had known them before the fire.

The rooms were comfortable and pleasant which the old lady had provided for her weary daughter-in-law. She had found them ready furnished, in an humble fashion. Among other things, all strange to her, the young woman found a large, stuffed, cosy chair, which, by some marvel had been rescued from the flames. True, the upholstery was torn and soiled with smoke, but notwithstanding this, the old thing had a home look which cheered the woman like the grasp of a friendly hand.

Mrs. Yates wiped the dust and smoke from this chair, and bade her daughter sit down in it and try to content herself; but the young wife only threw herself down and burst into a passion of crying.

"Oh! mother, mother! what has become of my husband? Why is it that he is not with us?"

The old woman drew a chair close to her daughter, and took her hand very gently, but with a firm pressure.

"My child, be patient! Daniel will come to you; but he is occupied about other things just now, and may not be back for hours."

"Hours, mother? What can keep my husband away from us? Is it something for her?"

"For her? Yes, child, it is entirely on her account he has gone; nothing else could have taken him away from us. But he will come back, and then all will be right."

"But the little girl—how can we tell him about her?" questioned the daughter, comforted by the explanation given of her husband's absence; and turning back to her other grievance, "It will be a terrible blow to him."

"Yes," answered the old woman, "if she is not found. But we shall hear of her before he comes home. Think how many children were in the building. She has been

swept off with some other family. To-morrow we will go and inquire; but now we can do nothing but rest. You look so tired. Take good care of the little one, while I go out and get something to eat. No wonder you are worn out! Not a mouthful since morning."

"But, mother, you have worked twice as hard as I have, and are so much older. I never saw you look so pale. Your voice sounds strange, as if it were hard to draw your breath. Sit down yourself. I am certainly more able to go out than you are."

"You!" answered the old woman, with a hoarse laugh. "Why, they would think you had escaped from some hospital, with that white face and shaky voice. No—no! It is my nature to be moving, you know. Take good care of the child."

With these words, the old woman tied on her bonnet and was gone.

CHAPTER X.

A STORM IN THE BASEMENT.

MRS. YATES did not go to any restaurant or grocery, but made her way as fast as possible to the house where the murder had been committed. There she found two officers still left on guard, and the servants huddled together in the kitchen, talking the matter over with a sort of hushed curiosity.

"Oh! here she comes—that horrid old woman; hush, hush! not a word against him, or we shall have her in an awful tantrum," said Harriet, the cook, addressing her lover as if he were the only person to be protected. At which Maggie fired up with great spirit, and protested that she did not, for one, believe one word of the charges made

against Daniel Yates—a better man did not live than Dan—who wasn't the only person in the house after she left it that night, by a great deal, male and female, any one of 'em quite as likely to have killed the dear, good, beautiful woman, who lay so cold and still up stairs, as that poor man Daniel Yates. Men who would break their word and sell themselves to fatness and agedness on a bank book, to say nothing of wine and mint-juleps taken on the sly, and nice cuts put aside on surreptitious plates couldn't be said as too good for almost anything. Only murder was a thing that wanted courage, and them as was cowards enough to cheat and deceive a young, fair and trusting female, mightn't have enough of that. She said nothing; but just as sure as sure could be, Daniel Yates didn't kill her mistress, and somebody else did. She hadn't said out all her mind at the coroner's inquisition, because she didn't want to be spiteful, never having harmed a toad or a flea in her life; no, nor a spider, always sweeping down the webs with care not to hurt the poor creatures; but her thoughts were her own, and the present company was welcome to them. That was all.

Here Mrs. Yates opened the basement door and looked in. The face was so hard and set that it drew Matthew Stacy's attention from the insult he had received, and Maggie for the time escaped the bitter reply intended for her.

"Can you tell me where they have taken him? my son, I mean," inquired the old woman, turning her heavy gray eyes from one to another. "Did they set him free?"

"Free? Well, I don't know about that," answered Matthew Stacy, drawing himself up with a pompous swell of the person. "It wasn't quite settled, I believe, when he went out from here, but if he don't come home up to time you may safely calculate that he is enjoying of hisself in a cell down at the Tombs."

"He hasn't come home yet," said the old woman in a voice so choked with anguish that they could hardly hear

it; "but then his home is burned to the ground, and he may not know where to find us."

"I should rather think not," said Stacy, glancing at the cook for approval. "Didn't seem to me as if he was going into a happy domestic circle, such as I calculate on one of these days, you understand."

The old woman turned to Maggie, who was looking at her with compassion.

"Can you tell me anything," she said.

"I don't know anything certain, as yet, Mrs. Yates, because the coroner forbid any one knowing—said the course of justice demanded secrecy just now. But there ain't a soul that knows your Daniel, who thinks he did it. For my part, I know he didn't, and that will yet be found out, to the confusion of them that did."

The old woman strode forward and took the girl's hand in her own.

"Thank you."

It was all she could say. Matthew Stacy's pompous insult had not moved her a whit, but this touch of sympathy brought the tears into her eyes.

Without another word she left the basement, at which Maggie sat down and looked around on her companions in stormy indignation.

Matthew fortified himself with a drink of clear brandy, for he had constituted himself master of the occasion, and after some search found the keys of the wine cellar, after which his ambition subsided and lost itself in a sense of luxurious indulgence.

"Miss Maggie," he said, waving his hand toward the cook, "in behalf of this interesting, and, yes I may say fair female, and in defense of my own high—and permit me to imply, unimpeached and unimpeachable characteristics—Miss Maggie, I—that is I deny, despise, and altogether condemn the insinuations contained in your contam-

inating—that is in what you have had the impudence to address to me, and to implicate regarding the fairest, the highest, the adorablest of her sex."

Maggie was delighted by the storm she had raised, for Harriet, the cook, had drawn a chair close to that of her lover, and leaning gently toward him, watched the contest with deep, deep interest, such as she was in the habit of feeling when some new sauce was in process of completion over her kitchen range.

"Mr. Stacy, I haven't the least idea of troubling you with my opinion about Miss Harriet," said Maggie; "not being a judge of fat cattle, I don't pretend to any. As for yourself—"

Here Maggie's irony was brought to an abrupt close, for Harriet threw herself forward on Mr. Stacy's bosom, and besought him to protect her from the audaciousness of that horrible creature's tongue. Whereupon Stacy threw up his arms and made a desperate effort to save himself, for the chair on which he sat, being heavily burdened before, gave a warning creak, and then came down with a crash, throwing the whole scene into ignominious confusion.

The two policemen at the door leaned over the stone balustrade of the steps, and peering into the basement windows, called out hoarsely:

"What's the row down yonder?"

At which Maggie looked out, innocent as a whole flock of lambs, and observed that it was nothing, only Mr. Stacy had got mad, and either he'd knocked the cook down, or the cook had floored him, she wasn't quite certain which.

Then one of the policemen came stamping down the steps, after having taken a ferocious grip on his club, and looking through the window, said he should just like to know what all the muss was about. Such things were scandalous, and right in the face and eyes of the law.

Mr. Stacy had by this time planted Harriet on her feet

again, and pointing toward Maggie, who had fallen into a chair and was laughing till the tears ran down her cheeks, demanded that she should be taken into custody at once for slander, arson, libel, and all sorts of audaciousness. But all these counts were too many for the policeman, and hoping to get at something a little more definite, he demanded of Harriet the cause of all this uproar.

Harriet, who had been more frightened than hurt by her sudden downfall, looked down to blush and looked up to sigh, before her voice found utterance. Then she drew close to the window, and told the policeman, in strict confidence, that it had all arisen out of jealousy, because of Mr. Stacy, whose conduct had been strictly honorable in all respects, which had given great offense to some parties, whose name she scorned to take between her lips, and always should, never having been brought up to the like, but it was her opinion that the chair on which Mr. Stacy sat had been undermined, and the underpinnings torn away, just out of spite, because he preferred some folks to other folks—not to praise one's self, which she despised and wasn't capable of, especially as Mr. Stacy had said as much, right before that creature's face, and if anybody was to be taken up, it couldn't in all reason be her or Mr. Stacy, but some one who—

Here Harriet, the cook, broke off suddenly and stood with her mouth half open and her hands uplifted, astonished to find herself alone, with no one but the policeman to listen.

"If that creature hasn't up and gone," she cried, coloring violently, "And my—that is—Mr. Stacy, too. What does it mean?"

This is just what it did mean. Maggie, feeling how wrong it was for her to be laughing so immoderately, in that house of death, wiped the tears from her face, smoothed down her apron, and stole out of the room, really ashamed to meet the eyes of the policeman.

Mr. Stacy, queer to say, went immediately after the irate damsel, and overtaking her just as she passed into the kitchen, called out in a hushed voice:

"Maggie! Maggie! how can you be so awfully cruel to a fellow, that hasn't never ceased to love you, and never will. Can't you understand a joke, my girl?"

Maggie stepped back and bent her head a little, as if she were listening with some complacency to this half-whispered pleading of her false lover.

"You didn't believe your Matthew in earnest, my dear. You are too smart not to feel the difference. It's leading her along, I am, just to see how far she will follow a fellow, just for the whistling. That's a darlint—I knew that you'd come to, the minute I could get a chance to tell you that it was all bother with the cook."

Matthew drew closer and closer to the girl as he spoke, partly because it was a pleasant thing in itself, and partly because he was afraid of being overheard. Maggie seemed perfectly willing. She stood with her eyes cast down demurely, as a kitten waiting to be fed, until the man bent his face so near to hers that she felt his breath on her cheek, then she drew back, her eyes flashing, her hand uplifted.

"Take that, and that, and that!"

Swiftly as the words were uttered, her hand fell, first on one cheek, then the other smarted and flamed red under her palm. She liked the recreation; it rejoiced her to see the scarlet marks of her fingers striping each cheek, the astonishment in his eyes filled her with intense delight.

"You wretch! You—you—"

That moment Harriet came into the kitchen, more than curious. She saw the marks on that recreant face, and understood from them that he was suffering new outrages in her behalf. Wheeling around right royally, she placed herself by his side, but Maggie was content with what she had

done, and marched out of the room, with her head erect, and a laugh of scorn on her lips.

When she was gone, Matthew turned his face toward the cook.

"For my sake," she said, plaintively.

"For your sake I have born these stripes," he answered, pressing one hand to his tingling cheek.

"Oh! Matthew, my beloved! how shall I ever repay you?"

"Is he gone, Harriet—is the policeman gone back to his place on the steps?"

"Yes, Matthew, he is gone."

"And that girl. She may be waiting in the hall for another dash at me—wild cat as she is."

"She had better not!" cried Harriet, unclenching her own hand, which had formed itself into a formidable fist the moment she saw marks of contest on her lover's face; "she had better not!"

Matthew smiled. He knew that a light girl like Maggie would stand no chance against a formidable force like that, but even he felt a little ashamed of being defended by a woman.

"You know, my dear, that being a man and a Christian, I cannot strike back. If she chooses to persecute me for loving you, I have only to submit. Heaven forbid that Matthew Stacy should ever lift his hand to a woman!"

"Noble! generous! No wonder the girl grieves over the man that she has lost; but I am here—the struggle is between us two—let her try it, I say."

"Heroic creature! But, Harriet—"

"Well, Mr. Stacy."

"Supposing you just look out into the hall; it would be a great pity to have any disturbance, you know, with that poor lady a lying up stairs."

Harriet looked through the door and saw no one in the hall.

"All clear?" whispered Matthew.

"She's gone," answered the cook, opening the door with decision.

"Harriet."

"Well, what is it, Mr. Stacy."

"Just step out and bring me a drop of brandy before I make a dive. I'm almost sure the creature is waiting for another chance at my face."

"Let her, that's all!" was the heroic answer.

"Still, my angel, I think we will try a drop of the brandy, if you are not afraid to go after it."

"Afraid!" repeated the cook, with ineffable disdain, and she gave force to the word by marching into the basement and bringing back a goblet half full of brandy, for by this time she had learned how to estimate the "drop" her lover had spoken of.

Matthew tossed off half the contents of the goblet, and instantly became a braver man from the slight potation.

"Now, I am ready," he said, wiping the ruddy drops from his lips; "if it were only a man, wouldn't I handle him without gloves; but a girl, and one that really seems to care for me, I must respect her disappointment, even when it does mark itself like this."

Here Matthew touched the smarting redness in his cheek, and went out, following Harriet with more appearance of trepidation than was becoming to a man of such undoubted valor.

When they reached the basement, Matthew looked out of the window, having some misgiving about the policeman, but he found that worthy functionary leaning over the stone scroll work of the steps, chatting earnestly to Maggie, whose pretty face was pleasantly uplifted to his.

"Confound the girl, she's enough to torment the soul out of a fellow's body," he muttered, discontentedly; "just to see them eyes and that pretty head, is enough to make one

sick of bank-books, and toss 'em into the gutter; but there's no coaxing her back now. What was I saying, Harriet? Nothing—only if you've no objection, I'll just take another swallow of the brandy."

CHAPTER XI.

OUT IN THE STREET.

OLD Mrs. Yates stood in silent misery on a corner of the street, after she left that house of death. The first impulse was to go at once to the Tombs and comfort her son, but she had left the poor wife in a strange place, in want of food, and already oppressed with anxiety about her husband. These considerations sent the old lady into a baker's shop and a grocery, where she procured some provisions and carried them home. With the heart aching in her bosom, she prepared some warm bread and milk for the child, and set food before her weary daughter-in-law, who, as yet, knew nothing of the tragedy which had brought such ruin upon their humble household, and allowed herself to be petted and pitied, never dreaming of the terrible anguish smothered and kept down in the old woman's bosom.

When the two women sat down to their humble meal, the younger one observed that her mother scarcely tasted the food her own hands had prepared, and that she was constantly looking from the window with apparent anxiety, as if she dreaded the going down of the sun.

"Why, mother, you eat nothing."

"It is because I am busy feeding the little one," answered the old woman, attempting to swallow a spoonful of the child's milk, which was met by a short spasm of the throat.

The child who sat in her lap watched the effort, and taking up the spoon, attempted to feed the old woman herself; but when she saw those large gray eyes bent upon her, filling with slow, painful tears, she took the bowl between her little hands, and insisted that "Gramma" should eat the whole of it, after which vain effort she wound her arms around the bending neck, and pressed her innocent kisses on the old face, murmuring:

"Gramma, gramma, don't ki—don't ki."

The old woman arose quickly and placed the child on the floor.

"I must go out again," she said, turning her back on the table, and brushing one hand across her eyes.

"Are you going to see her? I am glad of it. She will be frightened about the fire. I hope you will be the first to tell her."

The old woman turned suddenly around, and stared at her daughter-in-law. For the instant she forgot that the gentle matron was ignorant of all that had happened, and her speech sounded strange. "Going to her?" The poor old woman would have prayed that it might be so but for the children, who were so sure to need her help. She made no direct reply, but tied on her bonnet, folded a shawl about her, which had been saved from the fire, and stooped down to kiss the child, who clung to her with her little hands, and wanted to go out walking. The old lady kissed her softly, drew the shawl from her baby grasp, and went out of the room, with so little noise that the younger woman knew nothing of it until the child began to cry, and went to her for sympathy.

With the quick, eager step of a person whose heart was in her task, the old woman moved through the streets which lay between the rooms she had taken and the prison to which her son had been conveyed. She breathed more freely, now that no one was watching her, and strove to

look the perils that surrounded her in the face with decision. Her benefactress was dead, and out of that cruel bereavement had sprung a horrible charge against her only child for murder. He was in prison. She remembered the place well—a heavy pile of stone, moulded into Egyptian dreariness, forbidding anything like hope at the first glance. Innocent or guilty, she knew that the very fact of breathing in that air would be fearfully against him. She tried to connect all the features of the case, and decide how far they might operate to his injury. What had he really done that suspicion should lodge against him? She had heard the evidence at the time; it seemed against him, especially when he refused to give up the box. But the whole scene at the coroner's inquest was like an ugly dream on her mind. How could she listen calmly, with that young creature lying dead before her? Even the peril of her own son seemed unreal compared to that positive horror.

All these harassing thoughts crowded upon the woman as she threaded the streets that lay between her and the prison. If her apprehensions and memories went beyond the tragedy, which seemed to have happened a year before, so many events had crowded into that short space of time, they only revealed, with a darker shade, the danger that threatened her. But she was a woman of strong nerves and wonderfully keen intellect. When a battle was to be fought, she was not likely to shrink from the contest; but there was a weight of years upon her which made even self-defence a wearisome task. Then a recollection of that helpless woman she had just left, and the little child, with its sweet, innocent ways, softened her heart, and clasping both hands under her shawl, she more than once prayed God that the bitter cup which she already felt at her lips might pass from her.

At last she reached the Tombs, and saw that ponderous den of horrors under a new and more terrible aspect. The

great stone pillars, soiled at the base, as if even cleanliness were sin, frowned upon her from the inner corridor, across which they flung gigantic shadows more gloomy than themselves. She shuddered in crossing these shadows, for the gloom seemed to engulf her. Doors were visible on either hand, but the hour was late, and those which were not locked opened into dim, empty rooms. The poor woman lost herself in that labyrinth of gloom.

At last a policeman appeared, coming through some passage which led into the stony masses of the prison itself. He saw the old woman, and asked her, curtly, what she was doing there, wandering around the court-room? Did she want to find a judge? There was none on the bench that hour of the day.

"No," Mrs. Yates answered. She only wanted to go into the prison a few minutes; a friend, a relative of hers, had just been taken there, and she could not sleep till—

The policeman had heard this so often from heart-broken mothers, wives, and sisters, that he had no patience, and would not wait for her to go on.

The same old story. He was tired of it. Wicked men were sure to be followed up by suffering women, more troublesome by far than the criminals. He only wished they could be kept away altogether. True, it was a long time since such things had been able to harrow up his feelings; but the very sight of a poor woman wandering about there, with tears on her cheeks, was troublesome.

It was of no sort of use, he said. The prison had been closed for hours. She might go round to the Franklin street entrance. That was the proper place to apply; but they wouldn't let her in.

Mrs. Yates thanked him, gently. Her trouble was so great that she hardly noticed his curt unkindness, but went down the steps into Centre Street, and found her way to the other entrance.

Here two or three persons were in the outer office, but the grated door which led into the prison-yard was locked for the night, and the persons in charge refused to let her through before the usual hour in the morning.

Sorely disheartened, the old woman turned her back on the gloomy pile, and was walking wearily up Centre Street, when she saw a couple of officers, followed by a crowd of idle men and boys, moving down the opposite side of the street. Smitten with sudden sympathy for the unhappy man who was being led away to prison through that eager crowd, she stopped and looked toward him. He was a tall man—she could see that—and walked with upright firmness, as if a position so humiliating were new to him. Something in the height of the man checked the breath on that old woman's lip. She turned and crossed the street, striving for a view of the prisoner's face. But the crowd gathered close around him, and she found herself hustled back at every attempt at a nearer approach. Still she followed on, and was led back to the prison whose stone jaws were always ready to swallow up an accused man or woman, however reluctant to admit the innocent and sympathetic.

At the prison-door the poor woman found herself driven back by the crowd which choked up the entrance, and would not give way, though she pleaded piteously that she might be permitted one glance at the prisoner's face. At last a rough youth, who seemed to have just descended from a butcher's cart, heard the voice, and cast a look at her over his shoulder.

"Anything to you, old gal?" he inquired.

"I fear, I think."

That moment the prisoner moved across the room, but the crowd went with him, and still she could not see his face, and she cried out, piteously:

"Oh, Daniel! Daniel! look this way—this way—if it is you."

The prisoner did not turn his head—perhaps he had not heard. The boy threw out his arms, swept the people back, and made room for her; but it was too late. The prisoner had passed through the door, which fell into its place with a clang, and shut the poor mother out in her miserable suspense.

"Was it my son? Did you see his face, boy? Why didn't he give one look this way?" she moaned, more wretched than ever.

"I didn't see more than a glimpse of his face; but it wasn't a bit like yourn—and if it should be, what's the odds, so long as he's innocent? Look here, old gal, don't take on about it," said the boy, whose rough kindness had touched her heart. "Come down to-morrow morning, and he'll be all right, I daresay. That's it! Keep a stiff upper lip. Never say die while there's life in a feller. Never been here before, I haint no doubt. That's what makes it so tough; but it's nothing to speak of after all. Got a hundred or so to give some scamp for going bail; judge conformable. Why not? Didn't the men he tries help to elect him? Sheriff cosy, shares about, you know, and the whole thing ends in fog, smoke, puff. It seems dreadful now, I dare say; but a little money, and you'll find it all bosh. If you don't know no lawyer that understands the ropes, I'll hunt up one for you afore morning."

"Thank you," said the old lady, "you are very kind."

"Not a bit of it—don't know how soon I may be under the harrer myself—just grazed it yesterday—ran over a little shaver in the street; but while it was yelling whipped up like blazes, got around the corner and out of reach. I tell you now if I hadn't looked sharp, my old marm might a-been hanging round here like you are. It's all luck, I tell you—only them as don't know the ropes is afeard of the Tombs."

"It is a sad, dreary place," said the old woman, lifting her heavy eyes to the walls; "my poor, poor boy."

"Gosh, don't do that, my merry old damsel, or you'll have a feller crying right here in the street. Now, just take my arm, and I'll walk home with you—hang me, if I won't."

"Thank you, but I'm better alone."

"Just as like as not. Well, I'll be off. Oh! don't hang about here too long, you'll catch cold or something, and them that's at home'll miss you. Good-by—now take a friend's advice, and go straight home."

With these parting words, the youngster lifted his shabby wide-awake an inch from his head, which was more than he would have done for the Queen of England, and left the old woman to the solitude of that gloomy street. She watched him depart with a gleam of thoughtfulness in her heavy eyes; but that died wearily out, and she moved forward, but not on her way home.

By this time the night had come on dark and heavy with clouds, which settled down over that vast building slowly and sadly, as if the miserable inmates had been praying to Heaven for some veil to hide them from the gaze of men, and God had mercifully answered the prayer; but through the gathering gloom, and under the denser blackness cast downward by the walls, that old woman made her sorrowful rounds. She could not tear herself from the place where they had carried her son, but walked mournfully in its shadow up and down, up and down, until every light in the neighborhood was put out, and the awful solitude chilled her through and through.

CHAPTER XII.

SEARCHING FOR NEWS.

RACHAEL CLOSS waited for the man who had declared himself to be her lover, to make his appearance, until night-fall; but he did not come, nor had she seen Hepworth since he left her in the morning.

Oh! the heavy, terrible hours that woman spent alone with her conscience, no pen of mine has power to describe.

The love she had tried to believe innocent had come to this. A happy household had been broken up for her, a woman driven from the shelter of her husband's roof, a child sent forth among strangers, and at last a human life had passed into eternity, carrying with it a burden of wrongs, which might fill even the bosoms of angels with just indignation.

Rachael did not attempt to deceive herself now. No face like that looked, white and desperately miserable, ever carried an innocent heart. She looked in the glass and shrank away from her own eyes; they seemed to threaten her. One thought more wicked than all the rest would come uppermost in her mind. That man was free. Would he dare ask her to marry him? Would she dare to become his wife?

"Yes, yes," she said, with a wild outburst of desperate love, "he will ask me, and I will marry him, though a thousand murdered wives thrust their ghostly hands between him and me. Only let him escape suspicion, it is all I ask. Three days—I only ask three days of safety—and this land shall never see us again. But is he safe? Oh! that he would come! My heart will never be unlocked from this hard agony, till I have seen him. But what if he would not come? What if the death of this woman, the act itself,

separates us? He loved her once, and I have heard that it sometimes happens when men have steeped themselves in dishonor to get rid of an unloved wife, death brings the old affection back more vividly than ever, and haunts the heart so constantly that no other love can enter. It is dark, the sun is going down, but he does not come. Cruel, cruel, cruel, more cruel to me than death was to her—for what death could be equal to this agony of doubt? He does not come—I must seek for him; this room suffocates me.”

Rachael opened her trunk, took out a hat, which she tied on, and drew a mask-veil across it, shading and almost concealing her face. Then she folded a shawl about her, and went into the street.

Rachael was a stranger in New York, and had seldom been in its streets alone; but she had no fear, anxiety carried her far beyond that. In some way she would find the hotel where her lover had put up, though she had but a vague remembrance of its name, and knew less of its location.

She walked on hurriedly, the very swiftness of her movement was a relief. It seemed as if she were doing something for him in tiring herself. At last her eager strength gave out, and she inquired of a policeman for the hotel, whose name she could but just remember. He directed her clearly, but she had wandered quite in another direction, and had a long walk before her, which seemed heavy and depressing now.

She found the hotel at last, and inquired for the person she wanted by the false name registered in the passenger list. He was out, had not been at his rooms since morning—would the lady leave her name?

“No; she had a little business with the gentleman; but it was of no consequence. She would call again.”

The servant who had answered her questions, observed that the young lady seemed bewildered, and that the rich

color that rapid walking had brought to her face, died suddenly out: but he was very busy and went away to his duties, leaving her standing, white and paralyzed, in the reception-room.

What could this mean?—not at home since morning! Where was he? What misfortune had overtaken him? She was almost tempted to go to that house where the murdered woman was lying, and gather some intelligence for herself. Her heart shrank from this means of relieving its pain; but Rachael was brave to rashness when her passions were astir, and she walked resolutely toward that fatal spot, resolved to learn something of the truth, though compelled to seek it in the very chamber of death.

A crowd still blocked up the street, thinned and scattering, but still dense enough to mark the scene of some great public excitement. Folding herself more completely in her shawl, and screened by her lace mask, she penetrated the various groups that lingered near the house, and listened breathlessly to what they said. The inquest was over—a man had been arrested.

“The name, madam; did you ask the name?”

Yes, Rachael had asked the name of this unhappy man, but in a voice so husky, that only one person heard her.

“The name had not transpired yet; the coroner desired it kept secret for a while,” this person said; “but it was some man who had been alone in the house with the poor lady, while the servants were all out on the night before.”

Had he seen this man?

Yes, as the officer took him through the crowd.

Tall? Yes, he was tall and fair, certainly not dark; but the crowd was so great it was impossible to say correctly how he did look. Gentlemanly, he thought. There was something about a child, too—in fact, a pretty little creature had been brought up as a witness: but it would probably be all in the papers by morning.

Rachael Closs thanked the man who had seemed to stab her heart with every word he had uttered, and prepared to move away; but she turned back long enough to ask him if this accused man had been sent to prison and where.

"It was impossible to say just yet," the man answered; "but he was sure to come up at the Tombs when the preliminaries had done with him—probably was there now."

Rachael's mask concealed the deadly whiteness that stole over her face; but the man saw that her lips turned coldly blue, and strained against the white teeth as if she breathed and spoke with difficulty.

"Are you ill, madam?" he inquired.

"No, no; only a little tired and shocked. Who could help it?" was her forced answer.

"No wonder," rejoined the man; "It was a terrible affair. The lady was so young and beautiful: looked like a sleeping angel, they said, lying on her white bed. The murderer must have been worse than a demon, whoever he was."

When the man lifted his eyes after waiting a moment for some answer, he was surprised to find that the lady had disappeared; but he had hardly time to wonder at this, when the clangor of a great bell sounded from a neighboring tower, and a loud cry of fire rang up from a part of the district nearest the water, which soon drew what was left of the crowd in that direction.

Rachael also heard a sudden crash of the fire bells, and it nearly drove her mad.

Where should she go? What could she do?

Her whole being seemed on fire with pain. The awful sin of that night had overtaken the person dearest to her on earth, and she standing there in the open street, powerless to help him, all her limbs numb, and her brain a chaos.

As Rachael stood motionless on the sidewalk, an engine thundered by her, and a long line of scarlet-coated firemen

ran after it, meandering down the street like a sharp ripple of flame. She followed them with her eyes, muttering to herself:

"Have the devils begun to rejoice over him already?"

She stood thus watching the advent of a new company until the rush of the crowd nearly knocked her down. Then an unconscious instinct of self-preservation forced her to move on, and she walked away without knowing where.

In prison—in prison! Yes, there was but one place for her, that where he was lying.

The Tombs! She would find her way there, look in his face, and after that, some clear thought might come back to her brain, some strength to her limbs.

A street car was passing her. She beckoned it, and stepped in at hazard, telling the conductor to set her down at some street nearest the Tombs; then she settled herself in a corner, leaned her head against a panel, and closed her aching eyes until the conductor touched her arm.

Then she arose and found herself in front of a vast stone building, low-browed, and gloomy beyond anything she had ever seen.

She asked a little boy, who was passing, if he could tell her where she could find an entrance to the prison. He turned, retraced his steps round a corner, and pointed out a door, deep set in the outer wall, now wide open, and leading to an office, or guard-room. Rachael entered the room quietly, and, seeing a man near a desk at the farther end, spoke to him in a low voice, striving to smile and look unconcerned.

The effort was quite unnecessary. This man saw too many pallid faces and sorrow-laden eyes in the course of a week to have much curiosity about them.

He answered, without lifting his head, that no such person had come there yet.

Indeed, in case of a committal, her friend would not be likely to reach the prison for an hour or two.

Rachael murmured faintly that she would wait; but the man told her that it was now after three o'clock, and no visitor would be admitted under any circumstances before morning. She had better go home, get a good night's rest, and come back again at the opening hour.

Get a good night's rest! When would she ever know a good night's rest again? Was the man mocking her? Why, it seemed a year since she had closed her eyes.

Rachael went back to her hotel. Where else could she go? The whole world had turned to blackness and ashes since she went out. Oh! if she could only sleep a little! She closed the shutters of her room, and lay down on the couch from which she had arisen to go forth on that miserable walk. She did not hope to sleep, but perfect exhaustion made rest imperative.

In the dark she might have power to collect her thoughts and form some plan of action. But this was impossible; her brain refused to fling off the heavy numbness that had fallen upon it.

Her wearied limbs settled down helplessly; her eyes that had been strained wide open, watching a quiver of sunshine that fell through a chink in the shutters, at last fell together, and the woman slept heavily.

It was sunset when Rachael awoke. For a moment she was bewildered by the darkness her own hands had created, and thought the hour midnight; but a glimmer of red light came between the shutters, and when she threw them open, a flood of radiance filled the room, almost blinding her; for the moment it seemed as if all the angels of Heaven were flinging down light upon her that the whole world might know how supremely wretched she was.

She would not stay there to have that hot light close in upon her misery, but wear herself out again with another

long walk in the streets. Again Rachael put on her hat and wrapped the shawl about her, for what purpose she did not herself know, but nothing could be worse than staying alone in that room.

A sudden thought struck her. They would not let her into the prison, that she knew well enough; but if she was in the neighborhood, within sight of the door, they could not prevent her seeing him, if he had not already passed through the office. If too late, why, it would be some comfort to look on the huge building which imprisoned him. Yes, she would go to the Tombs. The atmosphere of misery which surrounded that place would not mock her as the golden brightness of that setting sun did.

Half an hour after these thoughts passed through her mind, Rachael was wandering around that one huge block of granite, which incloses, perhaps, more suffering than any space in the known world.

She felt almost at rest now, for intense fatigue had done a little of its quieting work, and the very sight of the building held forth one miserable hope for the morrow.

Then she would see him. Then he would know that all the contumely they could heap on him would only intensify her love.

Rachael was afraid to keep close to the prison all the time, so she walked up and down Franklin street, in a slow, dreary way, keeping the distant entrance in sight, and watching it diligently; but in the upper end of the block she was obliged to walk a while with her back to the prison. When she turned, a crowd had gathered about the entrance; some prisoner was being taken in. She saw this, and walked swiftly down the street, penetrated the crowd, and forced her way up to the threshold just in time to see the grated door swing open, and a group of men looking through at a tall figure, whose arm was held by an officer. She only caught one glimpse of the prisoner, and that but indis-

tinctly, for a mist swam before her eyes, and she was obliged to cling to the frame-work of the door for support. A name broke from her lips as the man disappeared, and though she was unconscious of speaking, those near her heard a voice, thrilling with passionate misery, cry out :

"Oh! Norton, Norton—I am here!"

The door was closed; a crowd swept past her, leaving the office vacant. She had no strength to move, but stood gazing through on the inner door with a sick longing to break through and comfort the man it had just shut in. Then she became aware that an old woman and a boy were standing near her, talking, and her heart yearned pityingly toward the woman, who looked pale and grief-stricken, as she was. The boy was talking kindly, she thought, making rough attempts at consoling the old woman; but she took no heed of the exact words he used—in fact, did not understand him, for his phrases and method of speech were strange to her, but his voice was kind, and that drew her attention. After a while the lad went away, and the old lady was left alone. She stood some minutes gazing at the building, as if it held something she loved and grieved for; then moved slowly away, with her head down and her shoulders stooping, as if some sudden and heavy weight had been forced upon them.

Partly from curiosity, and partly because she had nothing else to do, Rachael followed this woman at a distance, until she had walked round and round the prison a dozen times, always stopping to look up at one point, as if it held an interest for her far above the rest of the pile.

Was this the portion of that awful building in which new prisoners were kept? Was he there? Had the old woman guided her almost to his presence?

At last weariness overcame Rachael. She went home, and spent the night in her own room. The shutters were fastened close, and she lay in darkness, half sunk in dreary sleep, till the clock struck ten in the morning.

Ten o'clock! From that hour she might be admitted to the prison! In less than fifteen minutes she was in the street.

"You are the second that has come this morning," said the superintendent, signing her pass. "That door—"

She did not hear him, but moved swiftly to the door, and passed through.

"The man that was committed here last night on a charge of murder, this way," said a keeper mounting a flight of stairs and threading a narrow corridor. "You can speak to him through that grating."

Rachael approached a hole cut in the iron of a cell-door, looked through, uttered a faint cry, and would have fallen from the corridor had not an officer caught her in his arms.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FIRST NIGHT IN PRISON.

UPON the face of this earth there is not a more gloomy building than the Tombs prison. The imposing features of its architecture, so massive, so sombre, and so terribly ponderous, contain the very embodiment of sorrow. In all that square of ground, guarded from the public gaze by walls of solid granite, and doors of clanging iron, there is not a cheerful nook upon which even the imagination can rest. The very atmosphere of a place like that is enough to wring hope from the stoutest heart.

Daniel Yates turned deathly white when his foot touched the entrance step of this terrible prison; a sickening sense of degradation took all the strength from his limbs. Though a poor man he was very proud—proud of his honesty, of his good name, of the gentle woman whose life would be

stricken in its holiest part by any evil that fell upon him. Like many of the better order of English working people Yates possessed a tolerable education, and had read more than most professional men. He had lived very much by himself since his residence in this country, and thus maintained a certain degree of self-respect unknown to the working man who gives all his leisure time to the gossip of street corners and porter houses.

In truth, there was something like gentlemanly intelligence in this man, which won even upon the sympathy of the policeman who had him in charge.

"Come, cheer up, cheer up," he said, in rough kindness, as the prisoner turned a white and pleading face upon him in passing the threshold; "I haven't the least idea that you did it. Something will turn up to-morrow and bring the whole thing to light. The watch was an awkward feature, true enough, but I dare say she gave it to you; get a sharp lawyer and fight it out. That is the only way. Law, like everything else, is to be bought in this city. Now, don't look at me like that—I'll keep an eye on you."

"If you would do me a kindness."

"Well, who said I wouldn't?"

"Go and see my—my family. Tell her that the place is not so very gloomy, and that—"

"Yes, yes; I understand—it shall be done some time to-morrow. Now, come along; the man has made his entry; at any rate, I will see that you have a cell to yourself. It would be a burning shame to put you in with any of them fellows."

"Thank you."

There was a sound of choking tears in the utterance of those two words that touched the officer with fresh sympathy; but he only said, in an airy way:

"There, there—keep a stiff upper lip. I'll go and see your wife, and that staunch old woman, your mother—

bricks, if ever a woman was bricks—the first moment I can get off."

They had entered the court and were walking toward the men's prison. No cheerful thing was in sight save a little plat of stunted grass that seemed growing within those walls against its will; but even this seemed like a mockery to the man, who, that morning, had never dreamed that he could become the inmate of a place so miserably desolate, so saturated with ideas of dishonor.

He entered the prison, mounted the uneven steps, and came out on one of the narrow iron corridors, following the turnkey, who walked leisurely, and, with what seemed to the prisoner, appalling indifference.

"There it is," said the man; "just whitewashed, and sweet as a nut; couldn't do better for you if it was a hotel. Step in, step in."

Daniel Yates did step in, bending his tall form as he passed through the iron door, and standing up in the midst of that narrow cell with the face of a man surveying his own tomb. How clear and cold it looked in its dreary cleanliness. The great iron pipe that ran across one end of the cell, resting, as it seemed to him, like some torpid monster under the narrow window, sunk deep in the stone, might have crept there through a snowbank, it lay so white against the whiter wall. A stain upon the surface, a pencil mark even, would have taken off that weird monotony. As it was, Daniel Yates felt a thrill of terrible pain when the iron door fell into place with a clang, and the heavy key turned upon him. He sat down upon the narrow bed, and with his eyes fixed on the wall, strove to realize the position into which he had so suddenly fallen. That morning he had gone to his work, a little anxious, it is true—for he had taken a dangerous responsibility on himself—but as free from apprehension of the fate which had befallen him as the child he had caressed before going out. Had he,

indeed, committed a crime at all? Would God so judge him?

All night long he sat upon his bed, pondering this question over in his mind. Having received a solemn trust, could he for any reason, even the saving of his own life, be excused for betraying it? If he did betray it, what then? Would anything he had to reveal change the force of the charges made against him?

Would they point out the murderer, or the cause of the murder? His judgment told him no. All the information he could give related to things so remote from the actual crime, that it could only excite curiosity, and lead to investigations, that the poor lady, who was dead, would have perished twice over, rather than have given to an unsympathizing public. She had trusted him entirely, and though death were the penalty, he would prove faithful to that trust.

Having come to this brave conclusion, Yates stretched himself upon the bed, pulled the coarse gray blanket over him, and fell asleep. He was aroused in the morning by the clangor of iron, and the rattle of a tin can set down heavily on the corridor before his cell.

He started, and swung his feet over the bed in time to see a tin cup, two-thirds full of coffee, black in itself, but made darker still with molasses, thrust over the sill of the door, which, with a piece of bread, was to compose his breakfast.

Then the door was drawn to with a crash, and he heard the can set down at the next cell. Yates, though a working man, had been accustomed to neat housekeeping and wholesome food. The very sight of this coffee, upon which a chip from the molasses was floating, filled him with disgust. He put it out of sight, and sat awhile holding the bread in his hand and crumpling it with his fingers. It seemed to him that he could never eat again.

Thus hours wore away, and sounds of that dull, heavy life, which prisons know in its weariness, began to break up the oppressive weight of silence that had made the night so terrible. In spite of himself he expected something. Every footstep that passed the corridor brought the heart into his mouth. If he heard a voice it seemed as if it were talking about him, and telling the whole world that he was a prisoner in the Tombs, and that the charge against him was murder. Murder of whom? Every nerve in the unhappy man's body thrilled with horror as he asked this question.

This man could not altogether realize the horrors of his position. For moments a strange incredulity seized upon him, and he would start up as if to walk away; but one stride brought him to the iron door, where he stood, bewildered, till all the dreary details of his cell were once more stamped upon his brain.

At last the lock of his door grated. The mass of iron swung outward, and a voice said:

"Step in, step in, old woman — you will find him all right."

Old Mrs. Yates bent her head, and entered the cell. She was looking very grave and stern, almost haggard; but there was no sign of weakness about her. If the turnkey, who lingered near the door with some curiosity, expected to find tears in those large gray eyes, he was mistaken.

Yates stood up to receive his mother, who laid one hand on his shoulder, as she bent forward and kissed him with such tenderness as a weak woman never dreamed of. He felt the quiver of her lips, and, knowing her well, pitied her suffering more than his own.

"Well, mother!" he said, with an effort at cheerfulness, "you see where they have brought me. How will it end — have you any idea?"

The old woman was looking earnestly in his face. She

did not seem to hear him; then he observed that her left hand was bound up with a piece of linen, and saw that her thick gray hair seemed scattered over with rust, where fire had singed it.

"Mother, you have been hurt," he cried out in alarm.

"No, Daniel, it was only the fire—last night we were burned out of house and home."

"Burned out! My wife, the children?"

"She is safe, and one of the children."

"Which was it?"

"Our own little gal—the other is gone. We can find her nowhere. I have been searching for her among those who were saved, but she is not to be found."

The man drew a deep breath, thankful that the horror did not come nearer to his own hearth.

"She may yet be found," he said: "surely some one must have saved her. When did you see her last?"

"Just before the ladder was placed at our window, she had crept into the farthest corner of the room, and sat there crying. Just then, the hook let into the stone sill; some men leaped into the room, but a fresh burst of smoke blinded me. When it rolled away the child was gone."

"Some of those men must have saved her, then," answered Yates; "she could have disappeared in no other way."

The old woman gave him no answer. She was lost in thought. At last she seemed to wrench her mind away from some painful subject.

"Daniel, through the smoke and the fire, I saw that man's face." The voice was low and hoarse. She spoke with hesitation, as if doubting her own words.

"His face, mother! then he killed her. It was his step I heard, his rage that she was trying to escape."

"It was his face that I saw through the smoke," answered the old woman, more resolutely; "how he went or

came I do not know—but the face I saw was his. Elizabeth did not see him, but I did."

"And I am to perish for this man's crime," said Daniel, shaking his head, sadly; "It is hard—it is hard."

"No," answered the mother, drawing herself up and looking, as she sat upon that mean bed, resolute as Queen Elizabeth, after she had grown gray upon her throne—"no, my boy, God will never permit a crime like that."

"But, my wife—does she know where I am?"

"Not yet. I had not the heart to tell her what I feared, and the two officers who came to search us had no time to speak of her death, if they wished to be so cruel."

"They did search, then?"

"Not thoroughly. While they were opening the old English chest, the fire broke out, and they were the first to run."

"They found nothing, then?" asked Yates, anxiously.

"Nothing!"

"And the box is lost, burned up with the rest. Oh, mother, was there no way of saving it?"

"The box is saved! In the box where we hid it were some of the children's clothes and other things. I wrapped them around it, tied the whole in a shawl, and slung the bundle to my back; then I snatched up the child, and went down the ladder. Oh, my boy, it is wonderful what burdens a human being can bear when the soul is on fire, and those it loves in peril. I stole home before the policeman to save that box, and God permitted me to do it."

"Thank God!"

Daniel Yates covered his face with both hands as he uttered this thanksgiving; his shoulders heaved, his breath came rapidly, the tears his own trouble had failed to bring forth, filled his eyes now. All at once he threw his arms around the old woman.

"Oh, mother! you are a brave woman, a good, noble woman, God will bless you for that one act."

The old woman met his enthusiasm with a grave smile. She had lived long enough to know that the reward of a just or brave act is sometimes long in coming.

"But for this, all would have been lost," said the son, striving to comfort her.

"True, true; but sin is swift, and justice slow. She, the sweetest and most noble being that ever breathed, has been hunted to her death. That man escapes all consequences of his crime—and you are here. Out of this great wrong justice may yet come; but it must be worked for, struggled for, and won at last, as men rescue iron from the blasts of a furnace. In the meanwhile great injustice may be done, terrible sorrows endured."

A weaker woman might have held forth vague hopes of something that might happen for her son's relief; but the old mother was far too honest for unfounded consolation. She knew that the very life of the young man was in danger, that in his case justice was almost impossible. He was friendless and without money. How, then, was he to be saved? She had asked this question of herself a hundred times that night, praying God to help her answer it; but no enlightenment came; a blacker future never yet dawned upon a human soul, than had appeared to her at day-dawn that morning. Still, as the mother had just said, justice might yet be wrenched from the courts as iron is won from a furnace; and if ever a person lived capable of the struggle, it was the gray-headed old woman who sat by her son that day in his prison-cell—not comforting him with idle words, but with a solemn resolution in her soul that he should live and not die.

She arose at last and drew the shawl close around her shoulders.

"Now I will go and tell her."

The pain in her voice revealed to him how much her heart recoiled from its task. He knew all the tenderness

of that kind heart, all the willing self-sacrifice of which it was capable; but he also knew that in proportion to this tenderness, the agony of carrying sorrow to others would be great, and in his regret that she must always suffer for him and his, he cried out:

"Oh! mother, why is it that our sorrows always fall upon you?"

She stooped down and kissed him. A sob shook her bosom, tears crept to her eyes.

"Because we that are old have learned how to suffer and how to endure. To youth these things are intolerable. I only wish this blow could fall on my head alone."

Daniel bowed his head. When he looked up the old woman was gone.

"Oh! my poor wife, my poor wife!" he cried out; "she must learn all this, and I shut up here, unable to comfort her."

The outer door of his cell had been left open, and his eyes fell upon the small grating through which a current of air was procured. A face was at the grating, the face of a wonderfully handsome woman, whose eyes lighted up wildly as they looked in upon his misery.

Yates sprang to his feet and darted toward the door, but the face had disappeared; he could discover nothing within the narrow range of vision permitted to him.

CHAPTER XIV.

REACTION.

A CARRIAGE took Rachael Closs to her hotel from the Tombs. No bird ever flew from its cage with more alacrity than she left the gloom of that prison.

The carriage door was hardly closed on her, when she pulled the curtains, flung herself upon her knees, and burying her face on the cushions, burst into a wild passion of tears, that seemed to thaw away all the ice that had frozen so heavily on her heart, and let the sunshine in.

She did not pray; she did not thank God, but she clasped her hands over her eyes and sobbed out:

"Oh! my darling, my darling! Could you guess how I have suffered; but you never, never will. Who can imagine a pain like that? Great Heavens! another night would kill me! But he is safe, safe, safe, and I can sleep to-night. It seems as if some angel had loosened the iron band from my heart. How it girded and galled me! There, there, I am so much better. How pleasant it is to draw a full breath!"

She got up from her knees and sat down, with her head bowing against the cushions, and drawing long, sweet sighs, so full of relief that the very heaving of her breath was an exquisite satisfaction. Then, after the first supreme burst of joy was over, she began to think of the old woman she had seen the night before, making her slow, miserable round of the prison; and wondered if she, too, had been so blessed. She had never seen this woman's face, for they had both moved to and fro in darkness; but her thoughts strayed back to her; and in the fullness of her own relief, she would gladly have lifted the sister woman out of her sorrows.

When Rachael reached the hotel she ran lightly up-stairs to her own apartments, flung off her hat and went to the glass, longing to know herself again. What a different creature she was. The locked hardness had gone out from her face, the frightened dimples had come back again, bringing color and warmth with them. Her eyes still held a look of past trouble in their depths, but that only gave a shade of gentle softness, which made them unusually beau-

tiful. No flower over which a storm has swept ever came out fairer and brighter than she looked, now that the shock had passed over her.

"I am hungry," she said, looking at the table neatly spread for her breakfast, but appearing cold and barren in its glittering silver and snow white linen. "Last night I did not think ever to eat again. If he were only with me now—but why does he not come? What can keep him but his own wishes? Oh! no. It is not all over yet, but he will come. I have let myself be carried into horrible torment once, all because of my cowardly fears; this thing I will not anticipate. Strange how weak and faint I am from want of food."

Rachael rang the bell and ordered her breakfast in dainty profusion. She had not relished food for days. Now she meant to pamper her appetite to the utmost, a thing she was fond of doing when nothing greatly disturbed her.

While her breakfast was preparing she changed her dress for a morning robe of sheer white muslin, with scarlet ribbons at the neck and wrists. While in the carriage she had observed some crimson carnations on a flower stand near the hotel. She rang the bell a second time and bade the waiter bring these flowers to her.

Evidently this strange creature had resolved to make a gala day of it now that her pain was gone.

With the carnations sending up their strong odor from her bosom, and the scarlet ribbons throwing red shadows on her neck, Rachael sat down to her breakfast, but she had hardly tasted her first cup of chocolate when Hepworth came in and seated himself opposite her in moody silence.

She looked across the table at him and smiled. Nothing could make her very unhappy, not even his sombre face.

"Do you know what has happened, Rachael?" he said, at length.

"Yes; I have seen the papers and know that *she* is dead, Hepworth."

"And is that the reason of your fresh toilet and blooming looks? I expected to find you, at least, shocked."

"And so I was, Hepworth; the first news nearly killed me. You would not have made these reproaches had you seen me last night or early this morning. The very remembrance of what I suffered is horrible."

"But you have got over it. You do not seem to suffer now."

"No; why should I? The lady was our bitter enemy. Had she lived, I never could have been happy, never safe."

"And you expect to be happy now?"

"Yes, why not? It is terrible to think of; but not an event for us to mourn over."

Hepworth only answered by asking her to fill a cup of strong coffee, and hand it over to him. This he drank off, black, and set the empty cup down. She saw by his manner that something troubled him, and became anxious again.

"Hepworth, have you seen Norton since this happened?"

"But for a moment."

"And then?"

"He was fearfully agitated—terror-stricken, I should say. No wonder."

"No wonder that he should be agitated; but why terror-stricken?"

"Because men guilty of heinous crimes usually are. I tell you, Rachael, if I had dreamed that our enterprise would have ended in a tragedy like this, I for one would have held no part in it. A divorce was the utmost wrong I ever intended that poor lady."

"A divorce!"

Hepworth felt the sneer in her voice, and took her up sharply enough.

"It is that voice and your insolent rejection of the only safe way by which you could ever reach the position you

aspired to, that have set Norton on to this horrible alternative. I tell you what, Rachael, you are as much that woman's murderer as he is."

Hepworth looked on the face opposite his sternly, as he spoke; but the ashen pallor that came over it, startled even him.

"Do you mean to say that Norton was the murderer?" she questioned, almost in a whisper, for all her old terror was coming back.

"Who else could have done it, Rachael? What other person had the motive or the opportunity?"

"But there is a man in prison for that very crime. I saw him this morning with my own eyes."

"You saw him; you, Rachael Closs?"

"Yes, Hepworth, I did. Suspicions, such as ought to shame you, took me down to that horrible place, both last night and to-day. I could not rest from a fear that my words had indeed driven him to this terrible act, but instead of the sight I so dreaded to meet, another man looked at me through that fearful grating."

"Did you know this man, Rachael?"

"Know him! Why, Hepworth, the first glimpse blinded me. I saw that it was not *his* face, and the sudden joy that followed, left me faint, blind, lifeless. But for the keeper, who stood near, I should have fallen headlong from that iron gallery, so suddenly did all strength leave me. What did I care whose face looked through that grating, so long as it was not his."

"Yet the man saved your life once."

"Mine! my life! You do not mean—you do not mean—"

"Yes; I do mean that the man who is falsely accused of another man's crime is Daniel Yates."

"Daniel Yates! Hepworth, Hepworth! You cannot mean this!"

"But I do mean it. They have arrested that brave man.

Understand me, I speak of the person who plunged into the boiling surf and dragged you out, though he fell lifeless by your side, so fierce had been his struggle, when you reached the sands."

Rachael was pale enough now. She pushed aside her plate and shaded her face with one hand. At last she looked up, and made an effort to recover herself.

"I am grieved, shocked—terribly shocked to hear this, Hepworth. But how is it to be remedied? Surely, they must have found strong evidence against Yates, before he could have been committed."

"I neither know nor care what evidence has been trumped up, but this I do know. Daniel Yates is an innocent man."

"It may be. Heaven forbid that I should think otherwise; but I am just as certain that Norton had no part in his wife's death. My belief is, that the woman killed herself."

"I would give half my life to think so," answered Hepworth, shaking his head; "but I know something of this man's fearful temper. He never committed the act in cold blood. I do not accuse him of any such demoniac forethought; but he was in her house that night; quarrelled with her, struggled with her, by his own confession. In hot passion a blow is easily struck, and repented of the next moment. I think he does repent, for a wilder, whiter face than he wears to-day, never met my observation."

"Does he look so ill, then?"

"Yes; he was in his room, sitting almost in the dark, with that child on his knee, crying over her till the drops fell like rain on her hair."

"Did you see that? Was the man crying over his child—her child?"

"More than that. He seemed absolutely to grieve over the fate of his wife, as if she had been the dearest creature to him on earth."

"Hepworth—be still! You are saying this to torture me. What for? Have I not suffered enough?"

Rachael's voice was high, and sharp with pain. She knew that her rival was lying dead, and as yet unburied, but could not subdue the thrill of jealousy aroused by his words.

"I tell you the truth, in order to enlighten, not torture you."

"But it does torture me, and you know it. This is the reason he does not come near me. I understand it all. What if his heart goes back to her, now that she is dead, and I become nothing to him. Hepworth, tell me that it is impossible, or the very idea will drive me mad."

"If he is guilty of her death, you ought to pray that all this may come to pass."

"But he is not guilty; and if he were, having done the crime for my sake, can you think I would abandon him, or love him one whit the less? No; I tell you. No, a thousand times. The crime that springs out of a mighty love—"

"Hush, Rachael Closs; I will listen to no more blasphemy like this. It reproaches me. It fills me with keenest apprehension. I have been ready to sacrifice myself and wrong my own conscience, that your ambition may be gratified, and through yours my own. I wished to see you this man's wife, that you might enjoy the station and wealth to which we have a right, by birth, at least. Had he loved his wife, I should have had more scruples; but he did not, and I thought it no great thing to so bend circumstances, that they would result in a divorce; but murder—oh! my God can bear witness I never thought of that."

"Nor I—nor I, Hepworth. But there has been no murder, I tell you; the woman killed herself."

"But Daniel Yates. How is it that they suspect him?"

"It may be," said Rachael, slowly, and turning very

pale as she spoke, "it may be that he did it; stranger things have happened. He carried away all her jewels and a great deal of money, which was possibly kept in the house."

"Hush, Rachael, I will not hear one word of this from your lips. If there is a man on earth that I would serve, it is Yates—not only because he saved your life, but for other reasons. Not all the gold and jewels of the earth could have won him to the commission of a crime like this."

Rachael put a hand to her forehead, wearily. All the pain she had shaken off seemed coming upon her with double force.

"Oh! Hepworth, do not you forsake me!" she pleaded; "to think hardly of him is to forsake me, for I love him with my entire being. If he grows cold to me now, I shall die. Think of the struggles I have had in life! How little of affection I have been permitted to know! Until I saw this man, you were the only being I ever cared for in the least."

"I know that, Rachael. There is nothing you can say that can make the picture of your life more desolate than that I remember, and I did hope to lift you above all this; but the horrors of the last night sicken me with deception. I almost feel as if my own hand were reddened by that poor lady's blood. The first duty left to me is the discovery of her murderer."

Rachael arose from the table, and began to walk up and down the room. She was afraid of Hepworth, and felt his presence irksome. Why should he condemn the man she loved, so readily? Would others do the same thing? Did real danger hover over him yet? Worse than all, why did he keep away from her?

These thoughts made her suspicious of Hepworth, who sat watching her with a pained look. In his better mood it grieved him to find how much feeling she had staked in

an enterprise that had brought those fearful consequences in its progress.

Rachael stopped walking. A new thought took possession of her mind.

"Hepworth, you spoke of the child. Is she with him?"

"Yes; I saw her on his knee this morning."

"Does—does she look like *her*?"

"I remember no very great likeness—a plump, rosy little girl, that is all."

"I am glad of that; but she must have his features—one or the other, surely."

"No; she is like all children—not particularly like any one."

Rachael smiled, for the first time in days. It brightened that miserable hour to know that the child resembled neither the man she loved nor the woman she had hated.

"I may perhaps endure it, then," she muttered. "Still he was weeping over it. You said that, Hepworth?"

"Said what?"

"That Norton shed tears over the child."

"It might have been over the child, or from memory of his murdered wife," answered Hepworth, sternly; and taking his hat, he left the room.

CHAPTER XV.

RACHAEL CLOSS AND THE CHILD.

A SLOW, heavy step came up the stairs. No servant announced the man; but he opened the door of Rachael Closs' room, and came in without knocking.

Rachael turned suddenly, and saw the man who filled her thoughts—for whose presence she was pining—with a

child in his arms, forming a sad, gloomy picture in the doorway.

"Norton, Norton! I am so glad you have come. This child, is it—?"

Rachael could not complete the question, the crowding words choked in her throat.

Norton set the little girl on her feet, and looked down upon her gloomily, but made no answer to the half-uttered question.

Rachael approached the child, and sank down to the floor in a slow, graceful fashion, that was natural to her; for this woman had warm tropical blood in her veins, and oriental habits suited her.

She reached out her hand, which looked white and cold; but the child shrank away from it, and refused to kiss the strange face bent toward her.

Rachael lifted her face to the man, who was looking on.

"She would not kiss me, either, though I saved her from a horrible death," he said, in a low unsteady voice.

"You saved her; but who threatened her poor life?"

"The fire, which consumed everything. When I went to look for her, altogether ignorant of what had befallen her mother, the house was burning from basement to roof. I saw her at the window, with the flames leaping all around her, sprang for one of the ladders, and brought her down. My God! my God! There is no one to contest my right to her now!"

The man sat down on the nearest chair, and covered his face with both hands.

Rachael dared not approach or attempt a word of comfort; but stood apart, looking gloomily at him and the child. Would they never dare to look in each other's faces again? Was this to be their punishment for driving that helpless woman to her death?

"Norton!"

The man looked up wearily.

"Did you speak to me, Rachael?"

She turned away without answering; his voice was so sorrowful, that all the words she would have uttered, died in a futile murmur on her lip.

The child sat down on the floor and began to cry; the very atmosphere of the room was enough to sadden her little heart.

Rachael took the knot of scarlet ribbon from her neck, and gave it to her, thinking that she would smile; but the attempt only frightened the little creature, who felt the strangeness of everything about her, and was not to be comforted.

Perhaps the knot of ribbon reminded her of the flames which she had escaped, for she refused to touch it, and crept away backward, eyeing it with distrust.

"She is afraid of us both," said Norton; "but of no one else. I never saw a braver child."

Rachael took up the knot of ribbon and fastened it to her throat again; the red reflection, as she stood in the sunlight of the window, stained the whiteness of her neck, and made her general pallor more striking. The man remarked this, and his heart softened. Had she too suffered? Did she really grieve over the death which had set him free? or, was this the pallor of distrust?

Rachael sat down, shrouding her face with one hand. How much she had to say! Yet the power of speech seemed denied to her. Why was it that they met in such gloomy silence, scarcely daring to look at each other? Did he fancy that her suspicions reached to him? She arose, crept around to his chair, and leaning softly downward, left a kiss upon his forehead, the first she had ever given him. He started.

She saw great drops gathering slowly where her lips had been, and directly his whole forehead was cold with icy moisture.

"You, also—you, also!" she said, in a low, pathetic voice. "What have I done that you should shrink from me so?"

"Nothing," he said, with an effort. "The sin is all mine—all mine!"

Now the child came up and looked from her face to his, with such still earnestness that those two grown persons turned away from each other, afraid of her great solemn eyes.

"I will go now," said the man, wearily, taking his hat from a table, and without pausing for answer or adieu, he went out of the room, leaving the child with Rachael, who sat down, regarding the little creature wistfully, while the child seemed both repulsed and fascinated by her steady gaze.

"Come here," she said, at length, holding out her hand; "from this hour, you and I must love or hate each other. Which is it to be?"

Of course the little thing did not understand her. Rachael knew that well enough; but out of the feverish unrest which troubled her the words had been spoken.

The child walked slowly backward till the wall stopped her progress. Then she stood upright, and met the strange woman's gaze more bravely.

"Come to me, darling. I wish to be good to you."

Rachael's voice was soft and caressing now, sorrowful, too, and this appealed most effectively to the little one.

Rachael saw the pretty face change, and her heart leaped. She wished the little stranger to love her, knowing well how strong a link such love would prove between herself and the father.

"Come to me, pretty one."

Few people ever resisted Rachael Closs when she spoke in that caressing tone, or looked the tenderness that softened her eyes now. The child left her place by the wall,

and came forward, but irresolutely, looking back, as if she still meditated a return to her old position.

Rachael loosened the watch from her side and held it out. The little girl ran toward her, seized the watch, and holding it up between her hands, ran off to a window, where it pleased her to examine her prize.

A strange smile came across Rachael's face.

"Must everything be bought?" she muttered, eyeing the child with cynical criticism. "I wonder if she really ever will care for me?"

The little girl became tired of her new plaything, after attempting to open the case in vain, and leaving the window tossed it roughly into Rachael's lap.

"Don't want it," she said, quite plainly, and away she marched, with one white shoulder lifted so disdainfully out of her frock, that all its dimples became visible.

Rachael rather liked this display of naughtiness. It was those sullen eyes that she dreaded to encounter.

"I wonder what will tempt her most?" she thought, bringing forth her box of ornaments, and lifting a rope of coral beads from the modest store. This the child fancied at once. With a single leap she bounded into Rachael's lap, and clung to her braided hair, while she leaped and clamored for the coral, which was held out of her reach, with tantalizing nearness.

Rachael laughed; it was strange, but she could laugh even with that child in her arms, whose mother was scarcely yet resting in her grave.

"Will you be good—will you love me?"

"I ov ou—I ov ou—give it, give it!" cried the child, flinging up her dimpled arm.

"Then, kiss me."

Half-a-dozen warm kisses fell upon her face, while the tiny hand clutched itself more firmly in Rachael's hair.

The coral was given up, and down went the child with a

jump to the carpet, where she gave a vigorous tug at the string which threaded the beads, and set them rattling all over the room.

"Pit em up—pit em up," she commanded, stamping her tiny foot with impatience, "Cora wants 'em."

Rachael swept down to the floor in her graceful fashion, and soon gathered up the scattered beads, and sat still like a Turkish sultana, while she threaded them into a necklace again. Sometimes the child watched her fingers in their swift movement wonderingly.

Again she would make a dash at the loose coral, and scatter it over the floor with gleeful shouts, triumphing in her own naughtiness, and taking possession of her home, with the audacity of a little Bohemian.

In less than half-an-hour, Rachael's scantily filled jewel-box was in a state of the wildest disorder; but she took no heed of that. The little stranger was well satisfied, and made herself quite at home with the trinkets, which really seemed to have won something like affection for the owner; for when she would have risen from the carpet, both those plump, white arms held her down, and she was bribed to stillness by kisses, that came with willing prodigality, from the sweetest little rosebud of a mouth in the world.

Thus it was that Hepworth found the lady and child; when he came in both were laughing, the child most riotously, for the first time since she had been so frightened by the fire.

"Poor little orphan! Who brought her here?" inquired Hepworth.

"He did, and left her with me."

"I am glad of that, Rachael—be good to her; in that way some atonement may be wrought out."

"Atonement! Why do you speak that way to me?" questioned Rachael, with angry bitterness.

"Not more to you, than myself."

"But you have done nothing?"

"Not that terrible thing, certainly; but some one has been guilty. Would to Heaven I could think our influence had done nothing toward bringing about the death of that poor child's mother."

"You are tormenting yourself for nothing, Hepworth," was the answer. "Our influence—and it is little enough, Heaven knows—has only extended to one person, and he is guiltless. I know it, and give you the solemn assurance of his innocence."

"Ah, if I could only think so."

"You may—I cannot be deceived. No words have passed between us; but I know it, feel it in every nerve of my body. Oh, Hepworth, cast this awful idea from your mind."

"If I can—at any rate be kind to the child."

"Indeed, indeed I will!"

From the depths of her heart Rachael meant to keep her promise.

When Rachael found herself alone with the child again, she began to feel its presence oppressive; its clear, innocent eyes seemed to rebuke her, wherever she went.

Was it to be thus forever?

Would the child be an eternal burden upon her conscience? Then she remembered her only as a hostage for the good faith of the man who had brought her there.

Would he have done this with the memory of an awful crime on his soul?

Surely, Hepworth must see her presence there in this light. Was it not a proof of his innocence that he could bring the murdered woman's child there in his own arms?

Rachael could not bear that the young man should have the terrible suspicions that seemed to haunt him. Great trouble and danger might spring out of the idea, if it once got fixed in his mind. He was so changed, so stern, and

felt the death of that woman, her enemy, so keenly, that almost any rash step might be expected of him.

The arrest of Daniel Yates also complicated these difficulties. Knowing what he did, Hepworth might feel it a duty to come forward in his behalf, and give such evidence as would turn suspicion on Norton. Then all the secrecy that had been maintained with such care among them would be swept away, and the history of that poor lady made the scandal of both hemispheres.

"Better that we had died in her place," cried the wretched girl, wringing her hands. "What is it that has come over Hepworth? Can nothing convince him? I know well enough that no evidence can be brought—but there might—lawyers are so adroit. Oh, I will call him back! On my knees I will entreat him to be quiet. Hepworth! Hepworth!"

She had heard the young man's voice on the stairs, and opened the door.

He looked up, saw her anxious face, and came back again.

Rachael closed the door, snatched a valuable book of engravings from the table and tossed it to the child, whose wide-open eyes were fixed upon them as if she could comprehend all they were doing.

"Hepworth, will nothing drive the idea of Norton's guilt from your mind? It distresses, it wounds me to the soul."

The young man shook his head.

"Facts are not to be put aside by an effort of the will, Rachael?"

"But we have no facts—nothing but his presence in the house that fatal night."

"Which would be enough, with all that we know."

"We know nothing, absolutely nothing. He never threatened her with anything worse than taking away the child. He never meant to harm her—never did harm her. Oh, Hepworth, do believe this!"

"All these passionate assertions are not proofs, Rachael Closs. I wish they were. I wish it were possible to prove that we had not blindly urged on this fiendish work."

"How foolishly you talk, Hepworth. Do you wish to fasten this conviction on yourself, and thus poison both our lives?"

"No; I wish, if possible to sweep it away; to lift this burden of remorse from my soul."

"I tell you, Hepworth, the woman committed suicide."

"Convince me of that, and her death is fastened upon us forever, for we drove her to it; but I will know—I will know!"

"How, Hepworth?—what will satisfy you? In what way is a certainty to be obtained? By setting the law-hounds on Norton's track—you will not do that."

"I will do anything to reach the truth, Rachael Closs."

"But not that—not that."

"Not if I can help it; but an innocent man lies in the prison down yonder. Am I to stand by and see him murdered also?"

"But he may have done it. The evidence against him is strong; he had her watch and a box of—"

"Hush, Rachael. I will not hear this from your lips. You know the story that man told was true—every word of it."

"Oh! Hepworth, why are you so hard, so bitterly cruel? To prove *him* guilty is to kill your sister!"

Rachael sank upon her knees, and clung to Hepworth, in piteous agony.

"Oh! Hepworth, I love him so—I love him so! Why are you, my own, own brother, so ready to pursue him?"

Hepworth stooped down his head, and spoke in a low, earnest voice:

"Because he has killed the best, the sweetest, the most—oh, Rachael! because he has murdered a woman that in my secret soul I loved as you loved him."

"Hepworth!"

"She never knew it. I hardly knew it myself. Oh! God forgive me! God forgive me!"

The young man threw himself upon a chair, covered his face with both hands, and burst into a wild passion of tears, the first Rachael had seen him shed since his boyhood.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE TWO ROOMS.

HEPWORTH left the house, for it was impossible for him to remain in one place any length of time that day.

He had wandered by the Tombs, spent a few moments at the hotel with Norton, and been twice with Rachael Closs, as we have seen, and all without a definite purpose.

This youth spoke truly. He had never intended to instigate a tragedy, or act any part, however remote, in one.

There was nothing cruel in his nature, but much that was wild, ardent and unformed; for he was but a youth, under twenty, quick, impulsive, and impassioned, but not altogether bad.

He had ardently desired the divorce, which would set the woman he dared to love, free, and exalt a sister, who had long been the dearest being to him on earth, to a lofty position among a class of aristocrats whose unconscious scorn had so galled her haughty self-esteem.

It was her influence which at first led him into the deception which he had so adroitly carried out, but even that could not have carried him a step toward the more fearful crime so fatally consummated. Hepworth had dared to love the unhappy lady he was deceiving.

In her loneliness she had trusted him as her agent, en-

couraged him as a friend. Her sweetness, her beauty, and that subtle influence which no human mind can explain, aroused a new sentiment in the bosom of the youth.

In the divorce he was struggling to bring about he had wild hopes for himself—secret, unbreathed, and so deep down in his soul that he was hardly conscious of them; but they were not less passionate than those that filled the very being of his sister, to whom he had at last confessed them.

These feelings took him to the house which still contained all that the assassin's knife had left of Mrs. Hurst.

Maggie, the chambermaid, was on the steps talking to the policeman as he came up, and she recognized him as a friend of the poor lady who was gone.

She passed with him into the house, and began to cry at once; for the sight of a familiar face brought back a fresh remembrance of grief that had fallen upon the house.

"Tell me, my good girl—tell me, is she gone?"

He touched her with his hand as he spoke, and to the girl it felt like ice.

"Gone? Not yet. It will be in the morning, I suppose: but there is no one to say about anything. Madam had no friends but you and old Mrs. Yates, for poor Daniel is in prison, though I am sure as sure can be that he never done it."

"Maggie!"

"Well, Mr. Hepworth, what is it?"

"Would it be possible for me to go up?"

"Well, I shouldn't think it any harm myself. Old Mrs. Yates went up two or three hours ago, and hasn't come down yet. There can't be no harm, anyway, without that cretur Harriet tries to make something out of it. She's always backbiting somebody, but who minds her? I don't, for one. Walk up this way."

Hepworth followed the girl up stairs, and passed through a door she held reverently open. It was gently closed after

him, and the young man thought himself alone with the dead.

The chamber had been neatly arranged since the inquest. The bed was white as a crusted snow-drift; fine lace fell lightly around the pillows, softening their marble-like purity, and fresh curtains hung like a cloud where the torn draperies had been. A sweet scent of flowers floated through the chamber, as if an atmosphere of Heaven had already swept down and enveloped the beautiful form that lay upon the bed, covered by the counterpane as a living person would have been. Waves of soft white muslin were gathered over the marble bosom by a cluster of flowers. The hair fell in ripples back from that calm, beautiful face, and the white arms were folded within the loose muslin sleeves, as if she had been praying, and fallen asleep with God's blessing warm at her heart. There was nothing of death apparent in the room but its awful stillness.

Hepworth stood within the dim chamber, almost afraid; he longed to look upon that face once more, but could only see vague, shadowy outlines. With a hushed tread he moved across the carpet, and drew one of the curtains aside. A gleam of dull radiance fell through, and he saw the death-couch in all its pure whiteness, with that wan, sweet face smiling coldly on its pillow.

The sight was too much for him. The sunshine that he had let into the room, seemed like a sacrilege. He dropped the curtain gently, and a faint shudder crept through him as its silken rustle stirred the solemn quiet.

Now he was by the couch again. His eyes had become accustomed to the dimness, and he saw that lovely face, with a soft haze of shadows trembling about it. All unconscious of the action, he fell upon his knees, and sobs heavy and deep shook the silence of the room.

Then came murmured words, so indistinct that Heaven alone would ever keep the record, and another agony of sobs.

Then the figure of a woman arose, came out from the shelter of the curtains, and laid its hand on the young man's shoulder, softly, as if an angel's wing had brushed it. Instantly his grief changed into awe, and his pale, troubled face was uplifted to that of an old woman who bent over him.

"Hush!" she said. "I know that sounds of grief or joy can never reach her again; but she is given up to eternal quiet—so let her rest."

Hepworth arose slowly from his knees, and followed the old woman into a boudoir, which led from the chamber—that in which Mrs. Hurst had been so fatally disturbed the last night of her life. It had not been touched since then. The very book she was reading lay upon the carpet, by her easy chair, as it had fallen from her hand.

The print of her foot was still on the cushion of an ottoman, where it had rested when that voice first startled her.

Upon the amber damask of a couch which stood across one corner of the room some embroidery she had been working upon glowed out in a tangle of rich colors.

In the window stood a miniature garden, in which ferns, ivy, and gorgeously-tinted leaves were growing. Curtains of amber silk, lined with pearl color, fell over the windows, and on one side swept around a tall Hebe vase of oriental alabaster, forming artistic draperies around the base. At another window half the curtains were held back by a marble dancing girl, who seemed to be peeping out of her hiding-place in search of a partner. The other half fell loosely to the floor, and floated like waves of pale gold over the clustering flowers of the carpet. Everything in this room was full of life and beauty.

The frightened servants had forgotten to close the shutters, and the whole apartment was flooded with a soft rich light, which fell with startling distinctness on the two per-

sons that entered, pale and sad, from the cold whiteness of that death chamber.

To these persons the contrast was heart-rending. It was like coming out of a marble tomb into the bland warmth of summer. The mirrors that reflected them showed two ghosts driven into the sunshine. More heart-rending a thousand times was all this glow and beauty than the hushed and shrouded room they had left. In there, it had seemed a year since the great misery had fallen upon them; but here, the very flowers that breathed a dying perfume from the vases reminded them how short the time was since that poor woman had arranged the blossoms with her own hands.

They did not sit down, but stood together in the centre of the room, looking mutely at each other.

"Have I seen your face before?" questioned the woman, with brevity.

"No; I think not. It is possible; but I do not remember yours."

"But you were her friend."

"Her friend—her friend—I dare not say. Yet I would gladly have died to save her life."

"I have just dressed her, brushed her hair, composed her limbs, folded the whiteness of an angel about her. No one wanted to prevent me—others were afraid—but I had dressed her a hundred times, when she was a little baby. It was my pride and joy to kiss the dimples in her feet and arms, then. Now my lips touched ice. But they let me have her to myself. For the cradle and for the grave, these poor hands put on her garments. No wonder they are cold."

"Were you so near to her—did you know her so well?"

The old woman touched Hepworth's arm with her hand.

"I was determined to say nothing about it; but your sobs have opened my heart, and I will. She was my foster-

child. I loved her better than myself—better than my own child, the innocent man, whom they have cast into prison for murdering her. You see how impossible that is. Why, they sat on my knee together, like twins, and he loved her, not like a brother (because brothers know nothing of such devotion as he gave her), but with the homage of a devotee to his saint. It was to us she came in her trouble. Why not? Who ever loved her so well?"

"Then you know who she was?"

"Yes. Who should, if not the woman that nursed her? Did you?"

"No. She never told me. I was her agent in some money matters, and her friend, but never her confidant."

"Then you must have been her friend. No one else would have been admitted to her. She is dead now, but *he* is in danger—my son! I mean—my only son! Help me to find the person who did it."

"If the lady was in trouble, did she not kill herself?"

Hepworth asked the question with hesitation and pain. The certainty that the poor lady had put away her own life would have been utter despair to him.

"That thought, too, came across me, but it was not so. She was a Christian woman, very cruelly tried; a loving woman, harshly dealt by, and threatened with deeper wrong, but incapable of the wicked act you think of as the angels are."

Hepworth sighed heavily—a sense of relief lightened the gloom of his countenance.

"You ask my help, and I will give it," he said. "When you laid your hand on my shoulder, an oath was almost on my lips to search out the man who committed this foul deed, and bring him to justice."

"I am glad you did not take it. God asks no blind promises from His creatures, nor does He need our help to work out His justice. I, too, have almost made a vow—a

terrible vow; but not yet—not yet. Nor is there vengeance in it. All I ask is that you should help my son. He is innocent, and in deadly peril. Were she living, I know that this is what she would say: 'Save the innocent! Leave the guilty with God.'

"I think she would have said it," answered Hepworth, thoughtfully; "but I cannot feel in this way. There should be no escape for a murderer."

"There will be no escape. Do you think a tightened rope or the blow of an axe is the worst punishment that can follow a crime like this? Is not life sometimes more terrible than death?"

Hepworth waved his hand slightly, as if her words failed to convince him; but he did not oppose them. His thoughts reverted back to the idea of suicide. He knew well that Mrs. Hurst's husband was in the city, and had positive proof that the voice and steps Daniel Yates had heard were his; but he shrank more and more from believing the man guilty. His object was to obtain the child. There had been no thought of personal injury to the mother; and, if his hand had struck her, it must have been when a moment of supreme passion had driven him insane.

Of deliberate murder, Hepworth did not accuse him, in so much as a thought.

"You tell me that you are certain this lady did not strike the blow herself, but give me no proof; surely, it was possible," he said.

"No, it was impossible. She could not have done it. The coroner decided that, because she was stabbed to the heart by some sharp instrument, and nothing that could have done it was found. He was right. She was stabbed by a sharp instrument, and it was left in the room. I saw it while they were examining my son. The evidence was fearfully against him. The thing I saw might add to it. It was within reach of my hand. I drew the skirt of my

dress over the lace that half hid it, and when they were all watching my poor boy, carried it off. It looked like a thing I had seen before in his possession."

"But she may have used this instrument with her own hand."

"If it could have been so, I might have felt glad for my poor boy's sake, but it was not possible. She had fallen across the bed, or was thrown there upon her side. The blade struck her heart. If the dagger had dropped from her hand, it would have fallen on the side of the bed where she was lying. I found it on the other side, where no feeble hand could have thrown it; but for this, I would have given it to the coroner. It might have saved my son."

"May I see this weapon," asked Hepworth.

The old woman drew a stiletto from her pocket, unwound a handkerchief from its glittering blade, and held it toward him. The handle was of platina, with embossments of gold running over it; the blade slender, long and keen; a stain of blood ran half way up, which reddened it like the tongue of a viper.

The young man shrank from it at first, and lifted both hands in horror to his face. Then he dropped them slowly, took the dagger in his hand, and was examining it, when it dropped from his hold, and he fell back senseless; the sight of her blood had made him faint.

After coming out of that deep fainting fit, Hepworth sat upon the couch, which he had found strength enough to reach, in dead silence. His heavy eyes were once or twice lifted to Mrs. Yates, as if he longed to thank her for the care she was taking of him, but he did not speak, nor had he a desire to move. Though the poniard had disappeared, he did not ask to look upon it again. Indeed, it was evident that the bare sight of it had struck him with deathly sickness, as many a brave man has grown pale at the sight of blood, who would meet death without flinching.

It is a physical weakness, which has nothing to do with real courage. The old lady remembered this, and mercifully put the weapon out of the way. The sight of it made even her firm heart shrink.

"Is that terrible thing all that will hereafter remind me of her?" he said, with a shudder. "I wish it had been kept from my sight. Oh! my God! I wish it had!"

"He must have been her faithful friend," thought the old woman, looking at him with profound compassion. "I should love him for the great sorrow that makes him weaker than a woman."

She put a hand in her bosom, and unfolding some tissue paper, divided a heavy curl of chestnut-brown hair with reverent touch, and held it toward him.

"The grave will not miss it," she said; "and in this strange land she had so few friends."

Hepworth took the curl in his open hand, but the touch made him shrink, and as he closed his fingers upon it, a shudder passed over him.

"Take it back," he said, in a heart-broken voice. "I have no right to keep it. I dare not keep it!"

Was he thinking of the treachery with which he had acted toward that poor, wronged woman? If so, there was some good in the man, for that bright curl of hair filled his soul with such bitter reproach, that its silken touch unmanned him a second time.

"She would have given it to any one who had been kind to her, I am sure," said the old woman, dropping the precious curl into the paper with a sigh. "Ah, me! how soon this will be all that we have."

Hepworth looked at her wistfully, as she put the curl into her bosom again.

"Some time I will ask you for it," he said; "when I have proved myself more worthy. Now I cannot, I cannot."

After this he went away, so weary and sad, that he could hardly walk.

Then old Mrs. Yates went into the next room, and sat down in the solemn twilight, with her sad eyes fixed on the serene loveliness of that dead face. She had suffered terribly within the last two days, and now a sort of apathetic stillness came over her. Even there she found a sort of rest, simply because it is not in human nature to suffer beyond a certain point. Everything has its reaction, even the sorrows for which the reason can find no remedy. She had thought it a bitter trouble when this beautiful woman, who had been her foster child and most tender friend, came from across the ocean with her child, a fugitive from one of the proudest homes in England, broken-hearted, wounded in her pride, robbed of the love she prized above everything on earth; the poor wife had fled so silently, that no one, except the husband she had left, and the female whose treachery had driven her to desperation, knew of the course she had resolved upon.

At this time Mrs. Yates disapproved of the step her foster-child had taken.

The old woman, in her hard good sense, would not believe that this high-born woman was separated from home, country and husband, forever; that her child would be kept in hiding under a false name, beyond a few months; so she humored the timid fugitive, whose great terror was, that by some means her child would be taken from her—and carried the little thing home, with the same tenderness that twenty-three years before had been lavished upon the mother. In order to give greater security, she persuaded Elizabeth Yates to give the child her own name, and thus protected it from all chances of molestation, while the mother was free to have as much of its society as she thought safe.

In all things the old foster-mother and Daniel Yates had proved true in their devotion; but how had it turned out?

Who was the terrible enemy that had left her lying there? Had her coming brought ruin down upon them all, with death to herself?

It was a sad, sad hour that Mrs. Yates spent after Hepworth left her in the death-chamber.

CHAPTER XVII.

MRS. YATES BRINGS TROUBLE TO HER SON'S WIFE.

ELIZABETH YATES had none of her mother-in-law's strength of character, or power of self sacrifice. She was an affectionate, loving little woman, ready to perform her share of the labor, and take more than half the trouble that might fall upon her married life; but was the last person in the world to whom that staunch old woman would have gone for counsel or for help. Indeed, it was the most difficult part of her own hard trial, that she must tell the poor wife of the misfortune that had fallen upon her husband.

Up to this time silence had not been difficult. The women were unknown in the building to which they had moved, and no paper had been permitted to reach the young matron, who had no idea that a greater trouble than her husband's temporary absence, and the losses they had sustained by the fire, threatened her.

She was still very anxious about the little girl they had lost. The fear that she had perished in the flames, kept her in a state of nervous depression.

What would Daniel say when he knew of its loss? How could she ever convince him that she had done her duty in saving one child, and in leaving another to perish, for neither of the children were in fact hers.

Elizabeth was conscious that no choice had been made.

Before leaving the burning house, both she and her mother had imperilled their own lives in searching for both the children. No mother could have done more. These facts were repeated to her over and over again by the old lady, and while she was talking they had some effect; but they only pacified the young wife for a time. Nothing but the assurance of her husband could reconcile her entirely to herself.

Why was he away when she needed him so much? Why was she so completely left alone in that strange place, with so much trouble upon her?

As the young matron was asking these questions of herself, old Mrs. Yates came in.

She had just come from her duties in that death-chamber, and her face was so sorrowful that a single glance awoke apprehension in the younger woman.

"Oh, mother! what has happened? You look heart-broken. Where is my husband? Tell me! tell me! if any harm has come to him?"

Mrs. Yates sat down by her daughter-in-law, took the little girl that was left to them in her lap, and laid her cheek against its head.

Elizabeth looked earnestly at her mother, and saw that great tears were dropping on its golden curls. She reached forth her hand, resting it on the old woman's knee.

"Mother, tell me what has happened."

The old lady did not speak at first; her lips, usually so firm, trembled, and she turned away her head, hoping to conceal the tears that Elizabeth had already discovered.

"Mother, tell me, what are you crying about?"

"Am I crying, Elizabeth? It was because of the child, I suppose. No—I must not say that. There is a trouble so heavy on my mind, Elizabeth, that I have hardly thought of her. I tried to spare you the worst, my dear, but it must be told. On the night before the fire, Mrs. Hurst was murdered in her room."

"Mother!"

"Hush, dear; that is not all—Daniel, my poor son, was in the house that night, and they believe he did it."

"He did it! My husband! Mother! mother!"

"Be calm; do not cry out or look so wild, Elizabeth."

"But—but—how can I help it? You know how good he is, how kind. Oh! mother, tell me this is not true."

"It was very hard to tell you this, Elizabeth. If I could have borne the trouble all by myself, you never should have heard of it."

"I know how kind you are. How could you be otherwise, being his mother!"

The old woman bent over and kissed her daughter-in-law, with mournful tenderness.

"Elizabeth, I have not told you the very worst."

The young woman drew back startled.

"How can anything be worse than that? He was so upright, so proud, and thought so much of his good name. If they wound that by their suspicions, it will break his heart."

"But there is something worse than suspicion, worse than slander."

"What can be worse than that, for a man like our Daniel?"

"You know nothing about the law, Elizabeth."

"Oh! yes, I do. The law is for bad people, who commit crimes; but he never committed a crime in his life. What is the law to him?"

"But I, his old mother, am afraid of it."

"You, his mother, who know all about him. It seems to me you are getting very timid. What harm can the law do to an innocent man? What I wonder at is, that he stays away from us. That is strange."

"But, Elizabeth, he cannot help it."

"Not help it! but why?"

The old woman hesitated, and sat for a moment with her eyes cast to the floor.

"They have put him in prison, Elizabeth."

The young matron arose slowly to her feet. Every vestige of color died out from her delicate face. Her eyes were strained open.

"Is this true, mother?"

"They took him there while the fire was burning up our home. I feared it then."

"But how can they? He is innocent—innocent as I am. Are prisons made for such men?"

"I hope we can prove it, my poor child."

"But we know it! What need of proof, when we know a thing?"

"He was in her house that night."

"Of course he was—I sent him. When you did not come back in time, I asked him to go over and bring little Clara. Was there anything in that?"

"Oh! I wish he had not gone. If it had only been me!" said Mrs. Yates, sadly.

"Was it wrong for him to go? If it was, I sent him, and they should punish me. I meant no harm; but it was me who did it."

"Elizabeth, I understand this no more than you can; but Daniel was in the house that night, and saw the lady. She gave him some things to keep, and seemed to be afraid of something that was going on up stairs. He told the coroner all about it."

"And after that they sent him to prison?"

"Yes, after that."

"Who is the coroner? What kind of a man? Why didn't he believe my husband, who never told a lie in his life? Never—I will swear to it."

"There was a jury, Elizabeth."

"And what is that? Something by which they mean to oppress my poor husband—a part of the law, I suppose?"

"No; it is more than one man. Several persons are called in from among the people, who listen to all the evidence, and then decide upon it."

"And all these men united in sending my husband to prison?"

"Yes, Elizabeth, the facts seemed so hard against him."

"The facts! the facts! Why mother, you—you—"

A sad smile crept over the mother's face, for she interpreted Elizabeth's thoughts before they were spoken.

"No; I do not believe one word of it, nor would those men, if they knew, with us, how impossible it is that he could have done it."

"My husband hurt a woman! I wonder they did not blush at the thought of it," broke forth the wife, with a gleam of scorn in her eyes.

"But they did not know our Daniel. To them he was like any other man surrounded by suspicious circumstances," answered Mrs. Yates.

"But they shall know all about it. You and I will find where these jurymen live, and tell them how good a man they have taken from his home and locked up in a prison. They will believe—as everybody does believe you—and they will give us a paper or something which will let him out."

The old lady shook her head, but Elizabeth would not be discouraged.

"Only go with me. Remember how often you have said that Truth was mighty. If it is mighty alone, how much more likely it will be to prevail when it comes from a man's own mother and wife. How could they help believing us?"

"My dear, dear child, it would be useless. These men have no power to release him, now. He must wait."

"What! in prison?"

"I fear so, Elizabeth."

"But it will kill him! Oh! mother, you are so strong, so wise, so good! Do something. You can! you can!"

Somebody must have the power to let him out. If that person is human, he will listen to us, and believe us. I'm sure I would believe you, only from looking into your face, and I ought to look honest. Besides, I shouldn't be afraid to speak when it was for him."

Again the old woman shook her head. The affectionate ignorance of that young wife almost broke her heart.

"They wouldn't! Oh! mother, what can we do? Won't you help him?"

"Won't I, Elizabeth? Need you ask that question of his old mother?"

"But now, now; don't cry, mother. I didn't mean to hurt your feelings; but I do so want him home with us again. Only get him out, and you shall have him all to yourself. I'll never, never be jealous about his loving you so very, very much again; but I'll sit over on the other side of the room, and not ask to be hardly noticed, at first—for, of course, he'll owe it all to you. I don't know how to go about anything like that, but I love him. Oh! mother, mother, my heart will break, if you do not get him out of that prison."

"Elizabeth, my poor, poor child, wait a little—wait a little. I know it is hard, but he bears it better than we do."

Elizabeth looked up eagerly.

"Have you seen him, mother?"

"Yes, my child."

"In there?"

"Yes; I went to the prison."

"And they let you in? They do let women go in?"

"At certain hours."

"Mothers, I suppose; but no one else," said Elizabeth, sadly—"no one else."

She looked wistfully in that downcast face, then stole both arms around the old woman's neck.

"Would you like to go where he is, Elizabeth?"

"Would I! would I! Oh! mother!"

"Then you shall go."

The wife started up, took down her little straw bonnet and the shawl which her mother had saved from the flames, and before the old woman knew what she was about, stood ready for the street.

"Come, mother—I am ready."

"I did not mean to disappoint you, dear; but it is impossible to see him before morning. The prison is closed long before this time."

"Oh, mother!"

The poor woman took off her bonnet and put her shawl away. Tears were rolling from her cheeks now, and she sat down in her bitter disappointment, sobbing piteously.

"Oh, mother, it seems so long till morning," she sobbed out, half in sorrow, half in unreasonable reproach.

Mrs. Yates put aside her own grief for awhile, and taxed her intellect for some means of consoling her son's wife. She was not a woman to offer vain suggestions, or design futile promises, in order to gain an hour or two of peace; but she knew that action was the best antidote to impatience, and in her strong good sense suggested it.

"Daniel would be glad to see us at any time, I know," she said; "but it would be almost unkind to go there without something to soften the hardships they put upon him."

Elizabeth held back her sobs, and listened, while her mother-in-law went on.

"He is always delicate in his appetite, you know, my dear."

"But they will not regard that, I suppose—won't even ask him what he likes. It's unreasonable to expect that, isn't it? and he so very particular about his coffee; and wanting hot muffins for breakfast almost every morning. Oh! if I could only be there to cook things for him. The prison wouldn't frighten me much, I'm sure; but it cannot

be. They wouldn't let me, I'm afraid, if I were to go down on my knees."

The poor woman began to sob once more, for every moment opened some new misfortune to her. At first she only regarded the close darkness of the prison, the humiliation and disgrace; that it must have broken her husband's heart already; but now came a cause of anxiety that she could clearly understand and feel.

It had been her pride to cook little delicacies and invent savory dishes that would tempt her husband's appetite before or after his day's work, and she could not bear, even in his own home, that any hand but hers should minister to him in this respect. Now, he must do without her care, and accept what might be placed before him. They might not make his coffee perfectly clear, and were more than likely, because he was a mechanic, to expect him to use brown sugar in it—a thing she had never allowed.

Mrs. Yates had acted wisely in turning the little house-keeper's thoughts in that direction. It opened an idea of usefulness that comforted her greatly, and she began at once to make her calculations.

"Mother, did you see what they gave him to eat?"

"Yes, Elizabeth; his breakfast stood upon the floor of his cell. He had not tasted a mouthful of it."

"No wonder. A night away from us would have taken away his appetite any way, but in that place—is it so very, very gloomy, Mother Yates?"

"His cell is very small and very close, but clean."

"I am glad of that; but you have not told me what they gave him to eat."

"A lump of bread, wholesome enough, I should think, and a tin cup full of coffee."

"A tin cup? Poor fellow! he would never drink out of that; but the coffee. Was it clear? Did they insist on brown sugar?"

"There was no sugar; only molasses."

"Molasses for him! Oh, mother! what can we do? Such living will break him down in a week! Isn't it possible to persuade them to let me stay there and wait upon him?"

"I was thinking of that, Elizabeth—I asked the question. We can carry anything we like to him at certain hours."

"In the morning? Can we do it then?"

"Yes, and it will be so pleasant to carry him something nice of your own cooking."

Elizabeth was tying on her bonnet in eager haste, the tears stood without dropping on her cheeks. She had found something that she could do.

"Mother, will you stay with the child, and, if you are not very tired, make up a fire in the stove? I will be back very soon. How glad I am you told me about that miserable coffee. Isn't it fortunate that we have saved up some money, and that you thought to put it in your bosom when the fire broke out. I do think there never was such a thoughtful woman born."

Mrs. Yates watched her as she left the room, and turned away with a dull, heavy sigh when she disappeared. She was glad to see that anything could break up the terrible tidings she was compelled to bring; but the idea of giving her son more comfortable food was not enough to brighten the gloom that surrounded her.

It was almost dark when Elizabeth came back, with a new basket on her arm, from which she drew forth a plump chicken, some cake, a pound of coffee that scented the whole room, fresh biscuits, and some fruit.

"I wouldn't stint myself, you see. While we have a dollar it belongs to him. They have put him in a prison, but you and I will feed him as if it were a palace. Oh, you have got the oven heated. How kind of you! Now, while

you grind the coffee, I will stuff the chicken. He will not mind its being cold. Here is a little jar of pickles, and a glass of currant jelly."

Elizabeth hung up her shawl as she was speaking, rolled the sleeves from her delicate white arms, and was soon hard at work filling the bosom of the chicken, to more than its original plumpness, with handfuls of savory dressing.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BROTHER AND SISTER.

"RACHAEL, I say, once again, that you cannot marry that man!"

Hepworth Closs, for such was the young man's name, though, as I have said, he was registered at the hotel and in the passenger list, as J. Hepburn only, had seen but little of his sister of late; for he had been earnest in his efforts to assist Daniel Yates, and had kept aloof from her and the man against whom his suspicion had been so tenaciously fastened; but this day he had called upon her, and some words she dropped brought forth the stern interdict.

"And why, Hepworth? Surely, since all this evidence has come out against Daniel Yates, you can have no lingering suspicion of Norton, who has no idea that you can think so ill of him?"

"I have expressed no suspicion of any one; but speak only to one point. Let what will come, you must not think of him. But he will not ask you—the shock has been too great."

A strange smile flashed across Rachael's face. She bent down and began to play with the little girl who was sitting on the floor.

"You smile, Rachael."

"Why not?" she answered, gently. "If a pleasant thought comes across me, now and then, you should not grudge it, Hepworth. I do not have so many."

The child broke away from Rachael and stood apart, looking at him with her large, wide-open eyes. Was it a resemblance to the poor lady, or the horrors of her mother's death which had impressed him with that feeling of nervous dread when he looked upon the little creature, or was it that he could not see his sister connected by any tie with that man without a sensation of revolt?

"Rachael," he said turning away from those troublesome eyes, "why is it that this poor orphan remains with you? Her presence here troubles me; I cannot bear the sight of her in your arms."

"He desires it. He insists that I shall take charge of her."

"But I insist that you shall not."

"That is unreasonable, brother. How long is it since you imposed this duty on me as an atonement for the trouble we have brought upon her mother?"

Hepworth looked at her without speaking. He evidently argued his side of the question at a disadvantage. With her quicker and more subtle intellect she had always influenced him, and he felt her power yet.

"Rachael, I have been in that house. I have seen that poor wronged lady lying in her deathly sleep. On my knees, and with the icy chill of her presence upon me, I had an oath upon my lips."

Rachael looked at him wildly, and as wildly questioned him.

"What oath?"

"Never to rest till her murderer was brought to justice."

"An oath—you in that house! What carried you there? Have you no fear of the danger?"

"I did not think of that, nor shall I. When my eyes fell upon her, lying in that room, so like life, yet with the awful stillness of death on her, I had but one thought, that of avenging her and of saving an innocent man."

Rachael came close to him now. There was anger as well as consternation in her look.

"Hepworth, you have come to hate Norton. He has been your friend, your benefactor and mine. If I have a hope of happiness on earth, it rests with him; if your ambition is ever to be gratified, it must be through him. Why, then, turn your back upon the good which is held out to you? If a crime has been committed, it is not your fault. You neither did it nor imagined the doing of it. Why, then, look so pale and talk so strangely? Why attempt to hunt down your best friend, whose innocence in this matter has gone hand and hand with yours?"

Hepworth did not answer her, but bent his head as if he expected her to go on.

"Then if you attempted to hunt him down, how could it be done? In what way can you prove that he was in the house that night? Who saw him? What human being could swear to his presence? I could not, though he said as much; but men often boast of things they have never done. And if it comes to that, Hepworth, if you insist on raking this terrible thing to the bottom, where will the evidence fall heaviest? On yourself! You are the only man who has visited her house, or that seemed to take an interest in her. You acted as her agent in money matters, knew all about her property, have even deposited large sums of her money in your own name."

"But it was at her own request," cried the young man, stricken with amazement as Rachael made out her case against him.

"No matter about that. Who knows it? How would you account for your presence here? You will say that

her trustees in England sent you here to arrange about her remittances, and see to her comfort. She believed it; but a court of justice will be apt to ask questions. A message over the cable will soon bring back an answer, that her trustees are acquainted with no such person as J. Hepburn, only that they have sent money to him from time to time in her behalf, and by her direction."

"But I never defrauded her of a shilling—never thought of it. She desired me to deposit the money in my own name, that her presence in the city might not be traced through her bankers. It was no proposition of mine."

"I know that, Hepworth; but you are bent upon accusing Norton, and I wish to show you that the attempt would but recoil on yourself. Well, this matter of the money is against you, and cannot be explained. Then comes other evidence. Norton desired an interview with his wife. It was unwise to obtain it in the usual way, as it was important that his presence here should be kept secret. A key was taken from the house, and missed within an hour after you left it. Do not start! that is not all. One of the servants was sure to be out that night; but there were two others to be disposed of. One, a thick-headed Irishman, was inclined to take the prettiest of the maids for a sweetheart."

"Who was it that suggested to him that the elder and uglier one had money in the bank, and might be considered as a sort of heiress? When this man's cupidity took fire at this, who was it that suggested a long walk to the market, an offer to carry home the market basket, and, in order to make the thing sure, observed that Mrs. Hurst was very particular about the fruit for her table, and could trust no man to select it but himself? That bait carried two of the servants away, but another was left. It was necessary to get her out of the house. A note was written—in a disguised hand, truly, but experts make clean work of that—

hinting that her sweetheart was false, and she could obtain a proof of it by following him to the market that night, where he was going with Harriet, the cook. Thus all the servants in the house were sent away, as it is possible to prove, by your direct personal agency. What for?"

"Go on, go on!" said Hepworth, to whom this phase of the question was both new and startling.

"Well, by this means the house was cleared of witnesses, and all would have been perfectly arranged, but for the accidental coming of Daniel Yates. Up to this time no human being appeared in the affair but yourself. After all this preparation, what happens? A man comes up the steps at a moderately late hour of the evening. He enters with a key obtained by yourself; hard words follow; the lady protests; the child escapes; a woman is killed. Who was this man? The coroner's jury say that it was Daniel Yates. Clear him; help him to prove that another person was in the house, and used violence, both in words and actions, with the woman, as he represents, and the natural sequence is, that this other man was the murderer, because he had prepared the way, because he was connected in some sort with the lady, and had a strong motive for putting her out of life, as her money was all in his name, and there was no one who would question his ownership, but herself. Let Daniel Yates be believed; clear him—and the evidence all recoils back on yourself."

"There is not one thing that can implicate any other person. We know that Norton was there. So far Yates was correct; but who else knows it? And even our evidence would not be proof, for neither of us saw him go or come. Now tell me, Hepworth Closs, if it would not be the folly of a madman, were you found acting in this matter?"

The young man sat down and buried his face in his hands. Did he indeed stand in such peril? Was not the evidence, in fact, stronger by far against him, than it could

be made to appear against Norton? Every step he had taken to aid that man in obtaining his child, and thus urging a divorce, might be brought to bear on the murder.

There was another point against him, which Rachael had not mentioned, but which filled his heart with a deeper dismay than all the accumulation of details her eloquence had heaped upon him, but of this he said nothing. It was locked too deeply in his heart for any chance of speech.

"You see how it is," said Rachael summing up her case like a lawyer. "The evidence fastened itself on Yates at first. No other man was seen to enter or leave the house with anything like certainty. There was a rumor, at first, that two men were seen, but that came to nothing. But for the box and watch, which Yates carried away, there would have been no evidence against him. Now the question is, did she give him those things, or did he take her life in order to obtain them?"

Rachael had talked herself into a fever of excitement; a rich color flushed into her face; every nerve seemed to vibrate to the intensity of her feelings. She walked to and fro as she spoke, but at times stood still, enforcing her words by a quick gesture of the hand.

"Another thing," she said, "another link in the chain of evidence, which would prove you, an innocent man, guilty of this murder. The jury questioned old Mrs. Yates about being out that night, and she did not answer. Why? This is the truth. She did not care to say that a message had reached her from one of the theatres, sent by an actress, who had entrusted an infant to her care—for she is, in reality, grandmother to neither of the children who call her so. One was taken because the family were in sad want of money. The other sits yonder, and is Norton's child. You sent that message. The actress was not even in the city, had not been for more than a year. Thus you provided that no one should interfere when Norton went for his child.

You feared that she might come after it, and thus secured her absence."

"No, it was not my doing, Rachael Closs, but yours. All these things were of your suggestion."

"But you alone appeared in them, Hepworth."

Hepworth arose and took his hat.

"You will let this drop," said Rachael, placing her hand on his arm.

Closs did not answer, but shook her hand from his arm and left the room.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE PRISONER AND HIS WIFE.

As early in the morning as it was possible to gain access to the Tombs, Mrs. Yates went there with her daughter-in-law, who had worked hard till ten o'clock at night, preparing the little feast she intended for her husband, and completed it in the morning, after a sleepless night, such as she had never spent before in her life. At half past nine she was ready, with a pretty new basket on her arm, covered with a damask napkin, which she had bought the night before, and washed with her own hands.

People might think ill of her husband, and charge him with dreadful crimes, but they should find that he had a decent home, and a wife that knew what the comforts and proprieties of life meant.

If no one else honored him, they should find the wife of his bosom remiss in nothing. These thoughts sustained her wonderfully, until she came within sight of the prison; then the heart sank in her bosom. The gloom of that ponderous mass of stone, crushed all courage out of it, and left her weak as a child.

"Oh! mother, is it there they have put him? Will he ever, ever get out of that awful place?"

"Do not be frightened, Elizabeth. It isn't so very dreadful after you get a little used to it. We must be brave and cheerful, or it will discourage him, you know."

"Yes, yes, I will not forget," answered the poor woman, gasping for breath; "but are you certain they will let us in?"

"Come this way, and I will ask."

"It seems like entering a cellar," Elizabeth thought, as she waited by the door, while Mrs. Yates went in and spoke to the officer in attendance. This man seemed to take some interest in the case, for he came forward and kindly told Elizabeth that she might pass through with her mother. In a gentlemanly, quiet way, he lifted a corner of the napkin from her basket, to satisfy himself that it contained nothing contraband, and directed the man at the door to let her go through into the enclosure beyond.

Elizabeth followed Mrs. Yates, trembling in every limb, and looking wildly around, as if she were in a den of wild beasts, and expected some ferocious animal to leap upon her at every turn.

She breathed a little more freely when a patch of green turf met her eye. Surely God had not entirely forsaken the place, so long as he permitted fresh grass to spring out of it, and sent down sufficient sunshine to give it life.

But directly she came into a court paved with blocks of stone, and hedged in everywhere by prison buildings, dark and gloomy as the grave. It seemed as if she never would find strength to pass this hard, barren spot, from which doors on every side opened into the heart of the prison. On one side she caught the gleam of some coarse garden flowers, pallid and unhealthy, as if they had come to perish in prison, and so find an end to their short lives. There was nothing enlivening even in the sight of these flowers,

and the poor woman grew sick with apprehension. In this state she entered that grim stone hall which is known as the "Men's Prison," and stood in a narrow, open court, lighted from the roof, threaded over, on the sides and both ends, with narrow iron galleries, into which innumerable iron doors opened, tier after tier, to the ceiling.

"Come," said Mrs. Yates, tenderly, for she saw how the woman suffered; "come, it will seem better in his cell."

Mrs. Yates led the way up a winding flight of steps, and along one of the galleries. Elizabeth followed her, knowing by the heavy tread that an officer was behind. The ascent of the stairs took away her breath; the narrow iron foot-path, lifted high above the court, made her dizzy; each instant it seemed as if she must jump over and end it all.

The keeper behind her stopped, made a grating noise with his key, and a black mass of iron swung almost against her. Mrs. Yates stepped into the cell first, laid a bundle of clean clothes that she had provided for her son on the bed, and whispering him that Elizabeth had come, stole out again.

Descending to the yard, she sat down in a shady place and waited; for this woman, whom some men would have pronounced unfeminine, simply obeyed the intuitive delicacy of a strong, but most delicate nature. She knew that even a mother would be out of place in that cell, when the husband and wife held their first meeting after a great calamity had fallen upon them. Though the man up yonder was her only son, the dearest human being known to her on earth, she recognized the supreme right of his wife to be first with him, even in his trouble, and went off alone, leaving them together.

She was very sorrowful and lonely, this brave old woman, but in all her thoughts that day she gave this fact no place. It was of her son she was thinking, and of the foster-child whose death had left him in such peril.

The old lady had judged rightly. Her son hardly gave her a thought when he heard that his wife stood outside the cell-door.

When Elizabeth came in, pale as a ghost, and trembling in all her limbs, he forgot even that he was in prison, but took her in his arms in a fit of blind tenderness, thanking God for her presence, as if she had been away from him for years.

"Elizabeth, my poor girl, this place does not seem like a prison to me now."

She was clinging to him fondly. Sick and dizzy as she was, his very touch made her well, his voice thrilled through her, and she shook with sobs that had more joy than pain in them.

"Oh, Daniel! I am so glad, so miserable! Did you want me? Did you think I would come?"

"I wanted you, darling, and I was sure that you would come the moment my mother told you. Did my being away from home make you very unhappy?"

She lifted her eyes to his face and shook her head.

"I did not understand it, Daniel. Your mother told me that you were called away on business for the lady, and that was a thing I never could fathom."

"But you were grieved by her death?"

"Yes, I was grieved, because you liked her so much, and she was so good to us; but now it makes me faint to think of her, for she has brought you here."

"No, no; she was an angel! You must always think of her in that way, let what will happen. In her whole life she has done me nothing but good. If I know more, am better educated, and blessed with prosperity which few mechanics ever reach to, it all came from her. She was everything to me."

"But you never loved her, Daniel?"

"Loved her? Yes, I did—better than my own life."

"Better than you love me?" said the little woman, withdrawing herself from his arms with a touch of pride; "better than you love me, Daniel?"

"Better? No, no! nor in the same way. You are my wife—my own kind, good wife, whom it was happiness to love; but she was so different—more to me, and less. I never lifted my eyes to her with such love. Heaven forbid!"

"But it may be that you will die for her?"

"No, Elizabeth; you need not fear that. Innocent men do not often come to death in this country or any other. I may suffer in many ways, it is true, but we need not fear anything so terrible as death."

"Is this so, or are you saying it only to comfort me?"

"Did I ever say that which was not true, Elizabeth?"

"No, no; but I have been dreadfully frightened. So is your mother. I can see that, though she tries to hide it, and I thought you might pity me so much as to—"

"No, no, my darling! I will not do that. I am in serious trouble, certainly, but we shall find a passage out. My poor mother suffers, I know, but you must not allow that to depress you."

"How can I help it, when you are here, Daniel?"

"By taking courage, as a brave woman should. See how strong and firm my mother is!"

"But she is so wise, Daniel. I can never, never be like her."

"But you are more cheerful already, Elizabeth. The cell looks almost bright now that you are in it."

Elizabeth almost smiled. She remembered the basket of dainties, and taking it up from the floor, placed it on her lap, as she lifted the napkin.

"See, dear, I have brought you some breakfast. Where will you eat it? There is no table."

Yates smoothed the bed-clothes, and laid the napkin over them.

"This will have to do, Elizabeth. I had no appetite half an hour ago. The very sight of this food here drove it away; but you have come, and I am hungry."

"I cooked them all myself," said Elizabeth, proudly. "Ah, I am glad mother put in plates and a cup."

She took the roasted chicken by its locked legs and laid it on the plate, looking into her husband's face in hopes that he would reward her with a smile.

"Plump, isn't it?" she said, flushing a little, setting the plate on her lap and carving the chicken, which she laid in delicate slices from the breast on another plate.

He took it eagerly from her hand, for the very sight of it sharpened his appetite.

"Not yet, not yet," she protested, cutting the rounded breast, and thrusting a spoon in. "I made the stuffing myself. There, now, help yourself to some jelly, and let me make sure that you really have an appetite."

The pretty housewife uncovered a jar of currant jelly, and looked almost happy as her husband took out a spoonful and laid it, bright and red as molten rubies, on his plate. It was a joy to see him eat the dainty things her love had selected and her hands had cooked.

"You like it, Daniel?" she questioned, while soft, warm tears came to her eyes, she was so thankful to see him eat her little feast with a relish.

"Like it, dear! Why, it almost makes me feel at home. A meal like this, with you sitting by, takes half the gloom from a prison."

Elizabeth crept around to the end of the bed and stole her arm caressingly around his neck while he was eating. She thought how hungry he must have been, and would not disturb him; but more than once he felt her soft kisses falling like rose-leaves upon his hair.

"Have you done with the chicken?" Elizabeth inquired, as Yates laid down his knife and fork. "Shall I carve you another bit?"

"No; I think not. We will save the rest for to-morrow. I have had a splendid meal."

"Not at all! It isn't over yet by a good deal," said the proud little wife, sitting down by the basket again. "See here! A cup of coffee. I don't think it is cold yet—and these, and these!"

The triumphant little woman held up a couple of peaches, red on one side, golden on the other, and ripely mellow, with a noble cluster of hot-house grapes, whose purple bloom was more tempting even than the peaches.

"I remembered how you loved them," she said.

The young husband smiled outright now. That good little wife had turned his cell into a nook of paradise. He almost forgot that he was a prisoner, or that poor lady dead.

"But you must eat these with me, Elizabeth; they will taste sweeter so—a great deal sweeter."

He held a grape to her lips as she spoke. She bent forward and took it like a bird. Then he divided a peach, and would not touch a mouthful till he had seen her white teeth buried in one-half of it.

"This is having a dear little wife about one," he said, as she took the peach from her mouth and offered him a kiss.

Tears stood in the eyes of both, but gleams of happiness sparkled through them.

After the meal was finished, Elizabeth folded the napkin over the fragments, and removing a Testament from its bracket near the door, laid the little bundle of food upon it, putting the jelly glass and pickle jar behind, thus giving a little rich coloring to the dead whiteness of the wall. Then she stowed away the dishes, knives and forks in her basket, and put them aside.

"Now," she said, sitting down by his side, "we have nothing to do but talk. Oh, yes, I forgot! Mother brought you some clean clothes. There they are, on the mite of a pillow. I wish so much—"

"Well, Elizabeth, what is it you wish? that I were safe home again?"

"Oh! that above all things; but, if it cannot be, wouldn't they let me stay here with you?"

Yates smiled a little sadly, and shook his head.

"You can be here a great deal of the day, I think, but not altogether. It would be a dreary place for you in the night. See how little air can come in."

Elizabeth looked up at the long, deep slit cut through the depths of the wall, sadly enough.

"But you must stay here," she said, mournfully, for all the horrors of the prison were coming back upon her.

"We will not talk of that now, but try to make the best of everything. Where is mother? I thought she came with you. Surely I heard her voice, and saw her for a moment."

"She has gone somewhere, meaning to leave us alone, I suppose. Oh, Daniel, what should I do without her?"

"What should either of us do? It is her energy that keeps me up."

"But I am of a little good, Daniel?" pleaded the wife, with a tinge of jealousy.

The prisoner put his arm around her waist, drew her close to his side, and kissed her.

"You are my dear, dear wife, and such a comfort!"

Meantime the old lady had been sitting in her shady place in the prison-yard, quite patiently, and willing that her son should be comforted without her help.

She knew that all relations of life have their privileges, and never thought of grieving because the young wife was, in one sense, nearer the prisoner's heart than herself. Nay, she loved Elizabeth all the better, because she had a power of comforting her son beyond anything she possessed. So she sat there, quietly, knowing that she was forgotten for the time, and content that it should be so. She was ready,

in the broadest sense, to suffer and die for her son; but it is not always those who are willing to make great sacrifices that are the best loved.

It is in human nature that Yates should have felt quite as warmly toward the wife, who had given him a good dinner and brightened his cell with the sweet comforts of home, as for the mother who toiled for him, in action and thought, every hour of her life—whose whole being was given up to his welfare.

The time which passed so quickly with those two persons in the cell, dragged like lead with her; but she would not allow herself to disturb them until two dull hours had dragged by. Then she left the yard.

CHAPTER XX.

MATTHEW STACY EXPLAINS THE LAW TO HARRIET.

THE funeral was over. A hearse and one gloomy carriage, with the curtains down, had crept away from that house, through a little crowd of persons that gathered about the door-step, and moved slowly along the streets toward the nearest ferry.

An old woman and a young man were in the carriage, cold, silent and tearless, but more grievously sad than noisy sorrow ever is.

These two stood beside the grave and saw the last square of turf laid over that hapless woman. Then they turned away silently and parted. She rode in solitary mournfulness back to her home; but the young man wandered through that wilderness of graves all night long.

During those hours of watching, a change came upon him that marked his character for life. There had been some

show of sorrow in that doomed house, as its mistress was carried out of it.

Maggie Casey shut herself up in her own room and wept passionately. Her grief was sincere, her heart nearly broken. She had, in truth, lost her best friend.

Harriet stood in the basement entrance holding a white napkin in her hand, with which she wiped her eyes now and then, giving out little sniffy sobs, which seemed to challenge Matthew to come out and comfort her, a duty he was not slow to perform.

"Come in, come in," he said, with mellow Hibernian tenderness, passing his arm as far as possible around her waist. "It's only Matthew Stacy as has a right to wipe these tears away. Give me the napkin. There, there, there. It's all over now, poor soul. It's no time at all, worth mentioning, that she'll have to stay in purgatory, never fear."

Matthew had given the napkin a gentle rub against each of Harriet's lead-colored eyes, in these delicate efforts at consolation, and swept it lovingly across the lower part of her face, where some moisture had gathered. Harriet liked the attention so well, that she seemed disposed to encourage it with a new supply of tears, but he gave her a little shake with his arm.

"Hut-tut, my dear, is it breaking yer heart, ye are, and for a woman too? Faix, but ye couldn't do more, if it was myself that was being carried off wid black horses afore me, and illigant bunches of feathers atop of me. It's a most jealous, I am, Harriet astore."

"Oh, Matthew!"

"Whist, whist now!"

"How—how can you be so dread—dreadfully cruel. You in a hearse with black feathers and—and all the rest of it—and I looking on, all alone in the world—a poor, lone widdy that has never been married. Oh! Matthew, the very thought of it just breaks the heart in my bosom. Ye can feel it bating now like a thrip-hammer."

Matthew did not exactly know where a woman's heart ought to bestir itself, but following the action of Harriet's hand, he laid his own where her system seemed most turbulent.

"The dear heart, how it bates, and all for its Matthew," said the lover.

"All yours—all yours," whimpered the cook.

"Oh! the tenderness of it!" said Matthew.

"For you, Matthew, it has the tenderness and heat of—of a spring chicken, briled."

Matthew gave an unctuous smack with his lips.

"I can taste the richness of it now," he said.

A sudden knock at the basement door, made Harriet free herself, with a jump, from that caressing arm. She took a moment to compose her features, and then turned the latch, looking out demurely at the policeman, who stood waiting for her.

"I have no orders to remain here longer," he said: "but if anything happens, you will find me on my beat."

Harriet shook her head mournfully, thanked the man for being so kind, and closed the door again.

"Is he gone entirely?" inquired Matthew, under his breath.

"Yes, he turned up street from the gate."

"Let me see. It's best to make sure."

Matthew went up to the front door, opened it softly and looked after the policeman, who was walking leisurely away.

"It's all right, he's gone," said Matthew, coming back to the basement on tip-toe, and speaking in a mysterious whisper.

"I know that," answered Harriet, opening her eyes as wide as their rather heavy setting would permit; "but what of it?"

"Why—ain't we monarchs of—of— It's poetry, my dear,

but I haven't just got the swing of it; but the meaning is, that you and I are master and mistress in these premises."

"How is that?"

"Do you understand law, Harriet?"

"Not a bit of it—only that coroners and policemen belong to it."

"But you know that a dead person must have heirs, or else all that belongs to em' will go to rack and ruin."

"Well, I suppose so," answered Harriet, rather bewildered.

"The poor creathur they have just took away hadn't no children."

"Not as we know of."

"Nor brothers, nor sisters, nor yet father or mother."

"I never heard of any such."

"Then, who is her heirs?"

"I'm sure I don't know, Matthew."

"In course, not. What has a delicate female to do with the law? She's expected to be soft and loving and conformable like you; but the law, Harriet, that's above the feminine mind. It takes a man to grapple with it. Women must always come to us for their law. Now, I am a man as studies deep."

Harriet looked a little awestruck at this announcement.

"Deep, and with continuations at night. I was once in a lawyer's office."

"What! You, Matthew?"

"A tip-top lawyer, who gave out knowledge like a steam engine. The papers that I carried here and there was full of law, and I caught it, as little boys do the measles."

"You are making game of me. I don't believe in the catchingness of the law," said Harriet, a good deal puzzled.

"Ask the policemen, if you don't believe me. They know how catching it is."

"Oh! come, now, talk sense," said Harriet. "You was saying something about her as is gone."

"What a memory you've got, Harriet! Well, I was saying that every dead person must have heirs—first comes children, then brothers and sisters, then uncles, aunts, cousins, and so on, till it tapers down to acquaintances. Now, the lady that is gone had none of these, and we come at a dive to acquaintances. Who are they? Which among them have a right to what is left, say in this house?"

"I'm sure I don't know."

"Why, her servants, to be sure. Who has so good a right as the persons who waited on her? When the law comes down to acquaintances, it stops there first: Who are the heirs? You and me, and that owdacious girl up stairs; only she don't know her rights, and I, for one, am not going to tell her what they amount to."

"I hope not, for she's the most audaciouset cretur that over lived. It is enough to make one sick only to see her tess up her head. But are you sure that the law is just what you say, Matthew?"

"Sure! and you ask that question after I have once said it? Oh! Harriet, I never expected this of you!"

"But I didn't mean no harm," cried Harriet, much distressed.

"Harm! Have ye's no reverence for my judgment, and me almost yer own husband, barring the priest?"

"You know I have," cried the cook, in alarm.

"But ye's refuse to take yer law from my own lips."

"No, I don't. I'd take anything in life from yer lips, Matthew."

"Then take that—and have done with all this botheration."

Harriet gave her lover a push, and said it was a shame. She hadn't expected such unbecomingness of him.

"But arn't we engaged?" said Matthew, wiping his lips with the cuff of his coat.

"Not to the extent of more than one decoratious kiss at a time," answered Harriet, bridling, "and that must be respectfully asked for."

"Well, then, I'll al'es remember to ask—but about the property here. It's luck for us both, I can tell ye's. There's sheets and pillow-cases and table-cloths, to say nothing of blankets as soft as down, and chena for yer housekeeping, Harriet, besides her clothes, and such things as are easy to pack."

"But have we a right, Matthew?"

"A right? Ye ask that same question ov me again. Haven't I told you the law? Then, there is the loose silver spoons by the dozen, forks, and—everything."

Harriet's dull eyes began to glow.

"But we must pack them up on the sly, or that cretur up yonder'll be wanting her share."

"She's going to stay wid her sister as has a situation in some hotel. I heard her tell the perliceman so just before she went up stairs, after the funeral drove off," said Harriet.

"That's out-and-out luck for us."

"Hush! I hear her on the stairs."

Matthew sat down by the table, and moved his hat, on which was a broad fold of crape, conspicuously in sight.

Harriet took up her napkin again, and stood with it in her hand, looking disconsolately out of the window.

Maggie Casey found them in this position when she came into the room, with her bonnet and shawl on. Her eyes were red with weeping, and the moment she attempted to speak her lips began to quiver.

"I am going away, now," she said, humble and kind in her grief. "We haven't been good friends lately, Harriet, and I'm sorry for it, because it was wicked to harbor bad feelings, with her lying in the house. I never shall forgive myself for having words, and she there."

"I didn't want to have words," answered Harriet, "and

I don't blame you neither, if you couldn't give him up without feeling of it as an aggravation."

Spite of her contrition and her gentleness, Maggie could not prevent a little disdainful curl of the lip as she glanced toward the lugubrious face of her treacherous lover; but she answered the cook quite mildly:

"I am sure you are welcome to him, and I haven't come here to say one word against anybody, only to part friends. Shake hands, and no hard feelings on either side."

She reached forth her hand to Harriet, with tears in her eyes. Poor girl! her grief was genuine. Then she turned to Matthew, who stood up, taking his hat in one hand in order to express sympathy with her grief in the most touching manner.

"Miss Maggie," he said, shading his face with the hat, as if he had been standing by a grave, "the mournfulness of this occasion must bind hearts that have been separated by—by unfortunate—"

"Oh! oh!"

Matthew dropped the little brown hand from his, and the mourning hat was gently lowered to the table, as his eyes fell on Harriet, who had flung the napkin over her head, and pressing it with both hands to her face, was sobbing desperately.

"Why, Harriet, what is the matter?" said Maggie, while Matthew looked at the young girl, with a significant shake of the head, but "spoke never a word."

"Oh, I knew—I knew how it would end. She has come in between us, with her smiles and her new bonnets. I knew—I knew!"

"Good-by, Harriet. I have nothing more to say to either of you, and I want to say that without a fuss, if you'll let me. Good-by."

The basement-door opened, closed again, and Maggie was gone.

Matthew stepped up to the window on tip-toe, and took the napkin from Harriet's head.

"Does she care so much for her, Harriet?" he whispered, resting his chin on one of her high shoulders, with the playfulness of an elephant.

"You—you don't love me," she whimpered. "You said I was unfortunate—which I never was, being respectable."

"I never said nothing of the kind, Harriet Long. If you hadn't boo-hooed out so soon, and cut me off, you'd a known it was unfortunate circumstances I was talking of."

"Was it?" said Harriet, dropping her hands, and thus unveiling the redness of her face. "And I thought so different. Is—is she gone?"

"For good and all. Now, Harriet, we must turn to business in earnest. You and I are here alone. Where are the keys?"

"Up in her room. I saw them in a corner of her bureau drawer."

"Get them, my dear."

"If you would go up with me. I don't like—"

"Ah, yes—I know. Well—but first let us close the front blinds. Now, come—you and I are not afraid of ghosts."

In a few moments the coarse, heavy feet of these two persons were tramping through the stillness of that death-chamber. Harriet opened one of the bureau-drawers, and drew out a tiny key-basket, which Matthew seized upon. In a few moments all the drawers were taken out and piled on the bed, where those rude hands turned over their dainty contents.

"Cobwebs!" sneered the man, grasping a quantity of Brussels point in his coarse hands. "What do we want of such stuff? What's this? A handkercher? Did you say a handkercher, Harriet? Foam and white sawdust! Oh! here is something like linen, fine but strong, with a little of them cobwebs about the edges, but not enough to do any harm."

"Go away, Matthew, and I will look over these things by myself. That was lace you just flung down."

"Lace! Well, well, please yourself."

Harriet obeyed him. Sitting on that snow-white bed, she gathered up quantities of old cardinal point, Brussels flounces, and rare Mechlin, such as only the wealthy and great of any country can possess.

To these she added delicate garments of fine linen, silken hose, slippers that Harriet could scarcely thrust her fingers in, but longed to possess—shawls glowing with the richest colors of India, dresses of silk and velvet, such as a countess wears when she is presented to the queen, and India-muslin dresses, frosted with exquisite embroidery—articles so rich and rare that a high-born lady would have hesitated to use them, except on extraordinary occasions, this voracious Irish cook seized upon for her own loose handling. Utterly ignorant of their value, she gloated over them with swelling consequence.

"They must be grand and stylish," she said, "because they had belonged to such a splendid lady."

All that day and during half the night those two persons were busy assorting out their plunder—Harriet, honest in her belief that she had a right to the things she took; Matthew, well-satisfied that no person would be likely to inquire into his action in the matter.

When the bureaus, wardrobes and linen-closets had been ransacked, the safe was opened and the plate-chest plundered of all the articles which could conveniently be carried away. In the safe they found some articles of jewelry, such as a lady wears at her daily toilet, which Harriet insisted on taking, though Matthew hesitated, for he felt that there was danger in it.

When all the wealth of the upper rooms had been explored, Matthew took the keys of the wine-cellar, and made a thorough investigation of its contents. He came up triumphant.

"Wine fifty years old, brandy ditto—the cellar of a nobleman. Where *did* she get it all? Harriet, this settles the question. We will open a first-class saloon. There is riches in that cellar—riches"—the man fairly danced about the room in his exultation—"but we must keep close mouth, and get things off quietly," he said, with sudden fear of Harriet's discretion, "or that girl will be down upon us for her share."

"Never," answered the cook, clasping her hands over the jewelry—"never!"

CHAPTER XXI.

HEPWORTH AND RACHAEL HAVE A CONTEST.

"RACHAEL, have you determined to go?"

"Yes, Hepworth, I must. The child has been entrusted to my care. It is impossible that she should be kept here; he will not consent to it."

"But you will go with him?"

"I have thought of that. You need have no fear. I am not likely to be indiscreet now. It is not my nature—you ought to know that."

"But you are to sail in the same vessel?"

"What then? We do not know each other. No one will see us together, or hear us speak as friends; that might provoke comment. I am utterly unknown; besides, I will not leave my stateroom. It is for this poor child's sake that I go. Who will take care of her if I do not?"

The little girl sat upon the floor playing with some scraps of gorgeous-colored ribbons and bits of lace, which she bit and mangled with her teeth. She had a craving fancy for bright colors, but always fell to destroying them when her caprice was satisfied.

"She is more like me than her," said Rachael, watching the child.

Hepworth shuddered. Had this woman no soul that she could speak so lightly of the woman who was dead?

"You think not because of her blue eyes. I do not say that there is any resemblance in the face, but in everything else. Why, yesterday she struck me, because I would not kiss her."

The child understood this, tumbled her scraps of silk to the floor, and made a dash at Hepworth, where she stood, beating her dress with both hands, and biting it with her teeth. This she had learned within the short time that she had been under the care of Rachael Closs. With old Mrs. Yates she was playful and gentle as a bird.

Hepworth put her from him very softly, for he was thinking of the beautiful mother as she lay so cold and still in the twilight of that chamber."

"I wish you had never seen the child, or her father, Rachael."

The girl turned upon him angrily; her eyes flashed, her teeth were, for one instant, clenched fiercely.

"You put me out of patience, Hepworth Closs—"

"Rachael?"

"Well, what? I am tired of this. If you are unstable as water, I am firm as rock."

"Then you have resolved to marry this man? Be warned in time, Rachael; I will not permit it."

"You will not permit it!"

"If it costs me my life you shall not commit this sin! I have forborne to act up to this time, believing that your own heart would recoil from this union; but if it does not—if you are resolved, so am I."

The girl stood aghast, gazing straight into her brother's eyes. She was choking with terror, but gave no sign of it, unless a cold quivering of the voice betrayed her.

"What is it you have resolved upon, brother?"

"Do not ask me, Rachael. Every hour seems to separate us more completely from each other. I never knew what it was to be alone before."

"I do not understand you, Hepworth."

"It is better that you should not. You might think that I threatened either you or him."

"But all this is a threat."

"No, no—I did not mean it. I implore—I entreat."

"What is it you implore and entreat?"

Spite of her terror the woman could not keep back a sneer, that cut sharply through her speech.

"I implore you, Rachael Closs, to let this sin rest here. We have all had a fatal part in it, and a deeper tragedy may yet follow. I will only consent to rest silent on condition that you allow this man to go back to England, and remain here with me."

"Oh, Hepworth! this is cruel, bitterly cruel! Why should you ask me to expatriate myself? I could not live here; I should smother in this city. Oh! if you dreamed how I hate it!"

"Then let us go somewhere else—to California—the West Indies—anywhere, so that you are separated from this man."

Rachael did not answer for some time, but stood looking upon the carpet, thinking rapidly.

"I cannot stay with you now, Hepworth; first let me go over to Europe and leave her child in safety. That is a task I have imposed on myself, and must accomplish."

Closs was surprised by the submission with which she spoke. She eyed him no longer with defiant glances, but wistfully.

"You will not, from hatred to him, refuse me this poor privilege, I think, Hepworth?"

"Rachael, are you dealing honestly by me?"

"The question is unkind, brother; but then you are very,

very unkind to me now. That woman, living or dead, seems to come between me and the beings I love. No matter what you had done or neglected to do, I should never have turned against my only brother."

Tears stood in her eyes. She reached out her hand and took his.

"Ah, brother, why are you so cold and cruel with me? Is it because you loved this woman?"

Hepworth wrung his hand from her hold, not angrily, but with involuntary force.

"Do not ask such questions. The past for me is buried deep in the horror of her death."

"And you bury my future with it. In your own unhappiness you have no compassion for me."

"For you, as my sister, yes; but, as that man's intended wife, no!—a thousand times no! I would rather see you dead!"

"Oh, Hepworth! you wrong him. Do one thing for me, go and talk with him; look into his face as you search his heart, and see if a guilty conscience is there. The other day I told you how impossible it was to judge by appearances. You seemed to be convinced; but now you come upon me like a madman, and threaten the man I love if I do not give him up forever. No one but you suspects him. Why should you of all others? Go and talk with him."

"It is useless, Rachael; nothing that he can say or do will change me. If you persist in a determination to marry the man, I will no longer hesitate to bring the murderer of this poor lady to justice. Have I that promise?"

"Come to me in the morning; I must have time to think. I would almost give my life to please you; but this is more than my life."

"Still I must have the promise."

"Not to-night. Give me a little time; think how hard a thing it is that you ask of me."

"Poor girl! poor girl! If pity could do good I can give you that. I will wait, and pray Heaven that you come to a right decision."

Rachael watched her brother heavily as he took his hat and went slowly from the room. Then she fell to walking up and down the floor till the incessant motion wore herself out. More than once she took out her watch and thrust it back again; the pointers did not seem to move.

She seemed to have expected some one, and, at last, the hour came. She was dressed as usual in white, which floated about her fresh and soft as sea-foam. Excitement had left the bloom of ripe peaches on her cheek. There never had been a time when Rachel Closs looked more beautiful.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE CIVIL WEDDING.

THE man Rachael Closs waited for, came in before she had time to answer his knock. There was no excitement in his manner, but a look of nervous depression.

She went up to him instantly, and he saw, by the wild beauty of her face, that she had just come out of some contest.

"My brother has been here," she said, quickly, "and he forbids me to go away from this hateful country."

"But you will. He has no power to stop you."

As the girl had expected, this threat of opposition aroused Norton from his gloomy lethargy. His eyes kindled, his finely-cut nostrils dilated.

"But I dare not."

"Why?"

"I will tell you. I must. He believes that you killed her."

For a moment the man stood like a thing of marble; but for the brightness of his eyes, and the parting of his lips, he would indeed have looked like a statue. When he spoke, it was very slowly, as if his words had frozen on their way to his lips, and dropped from them like hail.

"Your brother suspects me?"

"Worse than that, Norton; he threatens you."

"Your brother, Hepworth, threatens me!"

"Do not look at me so, Norton; it is not my fault."

"Perhaps you share his suspicions."

"What? I—I—great heavens!"

"Otherwise, how dare he say such things in your presence?"

"It was a threat intended to wound and intimidate me."

"Intimidate you! Why?"

"That I might give him a promise."

"A promise. What promise?"

"You insist—I would rather not; but you *will* know everything, and it is perhaps best that you should."

"Why hesitate, Rachael? Have you and your brother secrets that I am not to share?"

"It is not that; but my answer might be misunderstood."

"Trust me!"

"I will. Norton, my brother wished me to promise that I would never—"

"Well?"

"Never become your wife."

"My wife! Did he know that she is but just laid in her grave?"

Rachael winced, and shrank away from him. She had not expected an answer like this.

"He spoke for all time. I was to promise never to see you again."

"Did you give the promise?"

"Can you ask? But if I had, it would have been to save you."

"Save me from what?"

"The humiliation of an arrest."

"An arrest for me, and through your brother!"

"Listen to me, Norton. I have been threatened with something of the kind ever since that horrible day. Heworth has got in with that man who is under arrest at the Tombs, and with the old woman who was foster-mother to your wife. He believes the man innocent, and knowing you to have been in the house that night, thinks that if this important truth were known, and your identity established, it would save Yates, and fasten the guilt on you."

"But his motive—his motive?"

"Norton, I really believe he thinks you guilty. Why else should he wish to separate us? Only a little while ago it was his dearest wish that all obstacles to our union should be removed."

"And he would make this sure by casting his benefactor into prison, and giving his name to utter disgrace. Why, girl, if my guilt had been black as Hades, it would not be for your brother to turn against me."

"I know it, I know it. But what argument can avail with a man who will listen to no reason? Do not be angry with me, Norton; but I can see no way to save you from a terrible annoyance but to give this promise."

There was fire and passion enough in the man's face now. She saw the kindling wrath in his eyes, and took courage.

"And when does he come for this promise?"

"To-morrow—I could put him off no longer."

"The hound!"

Up and down the man walked, with his head erect, while one hand was thrust inside his vest, and clenched there, as if feeling for some weapon. At last he stopped before the

chair on which Rachael was sitting. The angry glow was still on his face; but through it all came a gleam of mocking audacity.

"Put on your things, Rachael; we will teach this brother of yours how much his threat daunts us."

"What do you mean, Norton?"

"I mean this, Rachael—nothing more, and nothing less—within this hour you shall be my wife!"

The proposition of Norton, that Rachael should immediately marry him, was what she had wanted, what all her conversation had been tending toward; but when this abrupt proposal came, it struck her faint as death.

He saw how white she was, and broke into a passion.

"Are you afraid of him—or is this because you share his belief?"

She arose instantly.

"I am not afraid; and you know that I do not share his belief? What is that you wish of me?"

"Put on your bonnet, and something large enough to cover that dress—in fifteen minutes I will have a carriage at the door. Ring for one of the chambermaids, and take the child's nurse with you; we shall want them for witnesses."

"Witnesses! But, Norton, we have no license."

The man laughed.

"License! my child, they have no such drawbacks as that to a man's happiness in this free country. Marriage is as easy as divorce. Do as I tell you and leave the rest to me."

The next moment Rachael found herself alone with the child, who sat upon the floor with her eyes wide open, wondering what those two people were so angry about.

She rang the bell, and bade the nurse carry the child to her own room, and send a chambermaid to her. The girl came promptly, and Rachael placed a couple of sovereigns in her hand.

"Have you a sister or any relative in the house?"

"Yes, marm, there be two of us, me and a sister of mine, that has just called to see me."

"Get leave of absence for an hour. I wish you to go out with me a short distance. Be quick, and say nothing."

The girl nodded her head, and went out.

Rachael went to the glass—her color was bright enough then, for she was fearfully excited.

She unwound the scarlet ribbon from her hair, and untied a broad sash of the same glowing color from her waist.

"Take these," she said, tossing them in a crushed mass to the chamber maid, when she came back; "I will never wear red again—the color haunts me."

She muttered the last words to herself, while drawing some white ribbons through her hair, and girding her waist with a creamy white sash.

The girl received the sash with a burst of Hibernian blessings, and held it up triumphantly, when her companion came in.

"Did ye ever see the likes of this?" she cried; "isn't it like a whole field of poppies, with the sunshine on 'em?"

Rachael turned from the glass impatiently.

"Take the thing away—I hate the sight of it."

"In course I will, if it dislikes ye's so," answered the girl, doing up the sash in folds, stooping now and then to admire the rich, waving lines that watered it. "Here, Maggie, just run up to me room and put it in me drawer. Here is the red tie for your own neck. It'll be something refreshen like after the trouble you've been in."

"No;" said Maggie Casey, shaking her head, "I have no heart for anything that isn't black, now. Keep it yourself."

"Well, then, just take the whole of it to me room. Her ladyship may want me, ye know."

Again Rachael turned her flashing eyes, fairly surprising

the girl, who began to think she had carried her broad flattery too far.

"What did you say?"

"Nothing, marm, that isn't on account of the ribbon ye gave me. I'm used to gentility and nobility, and the likes of that, and know as well as the best, when I see a lady out and out. That is why I made a mistake, marm, if it is a mistake."

"It was nothing," said Rachael, regretting her hasty question; "but get yourself ready at once—we have no time to spare."

The chambermaid went up to her room at once, where she found more persons than had any right to its shelter."

"She asked me to come in here and bring the child," said the nurse, pointing at Maggie, who had taken the little girl in her arms, and was examining her by the meagre gaslight permitted to servants' rooms in that hotel. "My door was open, and she took a fancy to its pretty face, and no wonder, for she is a beauty."

"Whose child is this?" inquired Maggie, whose face had changed wonderfully, while she was looking so keenly at the little girl!

"That is more than I can tell," answered the chambermaid, opening a drawer, in order to put away her ribbons. "She was brought here promiscuous, as one may say. The lady had been here weeks on weeks, and not the least sign of a child in the world, when one morning I came up to tidy things in the room, and there was the pretty crethur a crowing to her herself in the bed, wid both feet up, and one toe deep in her mouth."

"What day was that, sister?" inquired Maggie; "I should like to know exactly."

"What is it to you, Maggie?"

"Nothing much, only I should like to know."

"Well, there isn't a taste of harm in telling as I knows

of, and seeing as the crethur came on my own birthday, I remember all about it."

"Your birthday! I know well enough when that was."

Maggie made a quick calculation on her fingers, and found that her sister's birthday happened on the day after the fire in that tenement house.

"Well, what are ye's about, Maggie, counting yer fingers and eyeing the little one as if ye meant to eat her."

"Nothing, only I thought I recognized her. She looks astonishingly like a child I used to know."

"Recognized her! how ilegant ye's have grown, Maggie, wid sich long words at yer tongue's end."

"That is because I have been living so long with a lady who didn't like the brogue, and taught me her own self how to speak," answered Maggie, with tears in her eyes. "I love the words she taught me, and will always use them for her sake."

The nurse was about to ask some questions, but Maggie went into the passage to hide the sobs that came swelling after her tears. The chambermaid shook her head solemnly at the nurse, and said:

"Whist now, whist. There is throuble in it—let her alone, let her alone."

Maggie did not come back, but joined her sister in the hall, and they went down into the lady's room together.

Rachael had by this time completed her simple toilet, and was throwing a long, black circular cloak over it, with a hood which she drew over her head. There was crape upon the hood, and heavy folds of the same gloomy material around the cloak. In searching for something large and dark enough to cover the whiteness of her dress, she had, without heeding it, selected a mourning garment, that had been accidentally left in her trunk.

"It is me sister, marm," said the chambermaid, present-

ing Maggie, with great pride; "and would feel it an honor to go wid ye's to the end of the world, and never ask a haporth about it, without regard to the sovereign, that I've just put in her own hand."

"But I neither wish her to ask questions nor give information about what she may see to-night. Here is more gold. Is it enough to buy your silence for a week or two?"

"Not if there is murder or crime in it," said Maggie, starting back from the gold, seized with sudden alarm, for the gloomy scenes she had just passed through were so fresh in her mind that she looked with fear and distrust on everything.

"What—what does this mean?" gasped Rachael; and the face under that black hood seemed turning to marble.

"Nothing, marm, let me speak, Maggie—nothing in life; only she's been reading the newspapers, and that frightens her, being timidsome by nature, which I never was. We are both ready, and will be silent as two tombstones wid moss on 'em."

That moment a carriage drove up to the private entrance of the hotel, and a gentleman came hastily up the stairs—a tall handsome gentleman, whom Maggie was certain she had never seen before. He seemed in great haste, and spoke abruptly.

"Ready, and all in black, too. So much the better. Are these the witnesses? Come, then."

He gave to Rachael his arm, without waiting for any reply, and they all went down to the carriage.

Not a word was spoken during the ride. The Mayor of New York was not likely to be found at his office so long after the usual hour, so they drove to his residence on one of the avenues, and entered the house in silence, as they had driven to it. Some person had evidently been sent before, to prepare the chief magistrate, for the gas was lighted in a reception-room on one side of the entrance-hall

and the mayor came in by one door as the party entered by another. The ceremony was brief and impressive, without the solemnity which might have attended it in a church.

The mayor was too thorough a gentleman for anything like levity on a subject which was not divested of its sacred character, in his estimation, because a civil magistrate witnessed the most solemn vows that a man or woman can make to his God.

Indeed, had he been disposed to lighter thoughts, the deathly whiteness of those two faces, and the far-off sound of their voices, as they swore fealty to each other, would have turned the feeling into something like awe.

The husband and wife stood together some moments after the rites which united them were pronounced. Each cold hand was locked in the clasp of the other; but the husband did not attempt to kiss his bride, and she never lifted her eyes to his face, but seemed to be looking at some object afar off through the darkness of an opposite window.

The mayor had seated himself at a table, and was writing.

"You will sign here," he said, addressing the witnesses.

The two girls came forward, and wrote their names with tolerable clearness.

Maggie took a longer time than her sister, and seemed to be troubled with her pen.

She was reading the marriage certificate, and fixing the two names in her memory.

The certificate was completed, at length, and a register of the marriage taken.

The mayor said a few kind words to Rachael as he gave her the paper, and observed how magnificently those oriental eyes kindled up as she took it.

Certainly, the bride was a singularly beautiful woman, and one to be remembered with curiosity among the remarkable persons who had from time to time come before him.

It was strange, though, to see persons evidently used to society in its best form, so pale and frightened by a simple ceremony.

While Rachael was putting on her cloak the mayor went up to the bridegroom, and congratulated him. There was no smile in return for this, but a grave and gentlemanly acknowledgment bespoke the high breeding of the man whose fate he had just sealed. Rachael, too, had recovered her voice a little, and gave him her hand in token of farewell.

As the carriage took the party back to the hotel, a few whispered words passed between the husband and wife; but no one spoke aloud, and it seemed like a carriage of mourners coming home from a funeral.

At the door of Rachael's room her husband reached forth his hand. She gave him hers, looking wistfully in his face.

Had he no kind word for her? Of course they must part, but would he leave her without a word?

No. All at once he seemed to remember something, and stepped into the room, closing the door after him.

"Rachael," he said, "when your brother comes for your promise to-morrow, tell him that you are my wife."

Before Rachael could answer him he was gone. With a hand against her bosom, and her head bent, she listened to his steps as he passed down the stairs, and was astonished at the stillness of her own heart.

He was her husband; the one great desire and ambition of her life was accomplished; but where was the overwhelming joy she had expected to feel? No such tumult arose in her bosom, but pain, absolute pain. How coldly he had left her! It seemed as if he wished her to know that he had submitted to a marriage out of defiance to her brother's threats.

She took off the black cloak, and for the first time remarked the crape upon it.

Had everything conspired to make that day one of gloom? Was there never to be a happy memory connected with it?

Rachael walked the room, asking herself these questions, till long after midnight.

Then she lay down on a couch in the parlor, shrinking from the loneliness of her bedroom, and slept heavily till morning, like a dead woman in her shroud.

It was late in the morning when Rachael awoke. She was aroused by a man's voice, and opening her eyes, saw that Hepworth stood over her.

"How is this?" he said. "Are you ill? It is not often that I find you asleep so early in the day."

"Is it so very late? I was dreaming such weary, weary dreams! I wonder they let me rest."

Rachael sat up on the couch, looking wofully forlorn. Her white ribbons were all crushed, and the cloud-like purity of her dress gone. Hepworth sat down beside her.

"Rachael, you have been more fortunate than your brother. There was no sleep for him last night. Our conversation oppressed me. I dreaded coming here this morning; but you will give me that promise now?"

"No!"

"You will not?"

"I cannot give it, for I am his wife. Strike him, and you kill me!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

MRS. YATES HEARS ASTOUNDING NEWS.

AFTER Elizabeth Yates' first visit to her husband, his cell at the Tombs became more cheerful than the place in

which his mother and wife had made their home, for the young woman spent every hour of the day with him which the prison rules would permit, and occupied all the rest of her time in preparing for his comfort. She had become almost cheerful now, for Daniel's faith in the safety which his own innocence must secure to him had thoroughly impressed her, and she had brought herself to look forward to the trial as a sort of triumph, when all the world would be compelled to bear testimony to her husband's worth, as she did. Perhaps, of all the persons interested in this terrible tragedy, the prisoner himself, and the woman whose life was bound up in his, felt the most secure.

But old Mrs. Yates was borne down by a weight of knowledge that they did not possess. She knew that her son was in a terrible position, and that the one great fact of his innocence would be of little avail, with the evidence so clearly against him. She knew, also, that money would be wanted; and her son's little savings were already fast melting away under the loving extravagance of his wife, and under any circumstances would have been insufficient for the retainer of an efficient lawyer. Where and how was this money to be obtained? The old woman could think of but one source, and from that she shrank with a keen sense of honor.

One day when Elizabeth had gone out, and the child lay asleep, Mrs. Yates took the malachite box from its hiding-place and unlocked it with a tiny gold key, which hung to her neck by a thread of black braid. It was the first time she had opened the box, and a thrill of awe ran through her as she raised the lid. A little portfolio of embroidered velvet lay on the top, in which were some papers neatly folded, and a letter directed to herself, enclosing one for the child, on which was a seal stamped with a crest.

Mrs. Yates put on her spectacles and unfolded the first letter. She neither trembled nor wept, for a strong will

held her nerves steady while she read half way down the letter. Then her bosom began to heave slowly, and great tears rolled down from under her spectacles, dimming the glasses till she could read no more.

She took off her spectacles then, and rubbed them dry with a corner of her apron, holding them in her hand while the tears were permitted to drop down her cheeks, one by one, with painful slowness. It was half-an-hour before the letter was read through.

In a pocket of the portfolio she found a small miniature, at which she gave one glance, and turned the beautiful face downward; but this was almost as heart-rending, for coiled under a crystal, and held in place by a knot of oriental pearls, was a twist of soft chestnut-brown hair, such as lay in her bosom that moment, just as it was taken from the head of that murdered lady.

The portfolio contained some loose papers and several letters, which she read with less agitation, and replaced carefully, without disturbing the arrangement of anything.

The next object her hands touched was a broad shallow casket, covered with crimson velvet, which fitted closely into the outer box of malachite. She lifted this, and found that beneath it the box was filled with English sovereigns, with one or two notes on the Bank of England.

The sight of this money brought the deadened light back to those gray eyes.

Mrs. Yates put aside the portfolio and the casket, emptied the gold into her lap, and began to count it eagerly; but her hands trembled so that the pieces rattled down to their fellows in her lap, and she could only guess that there was enough to save her son, if money could do it.

Then a chilling thought came upon her. Could she honestly use this gold, even to save her son's life. The thought struck her like a blow. She opened the portfolio and read the letter, addressed to herself, more carefully.

She could see clearly now, for anxiety had dried up her tears.

Yes, the directions were clear. She was to use the money as her own judgment might dictate, always keeping one object before her. Yes, there was hope now; with money, what cause could be considered desperate.

She gathered up the gold in handfuls, and poured it back into the box. Never had money seemed so precious to her. In every piece of that gold she saw salvation for her son.

When the money was back in its place, she opened the casket, and a blaze of diamonds broke up from the satin lining; great translucent stones, that she had seen many a time quivering out rich tints of the rainbow over the white neck and forehead now cold in the grave. Their very brightness made her eyes ache. She closed the casket and thrust it down into the box, out of sight. Why torture herself farther by looking upon these things; their very touch was a second death to her.

The old lady sat a long time with the malachite box weighing down her lap, and its key hanging loosely about her neck.

What a terrible bequest it had been; what unknown responsibilities it might yet bring upon her. But for that box her son might have been sitting by her side; half the blackness that brooded over her life had sprung out of its possession.

With a weary sigh she put the fatal thing away, and sat down to deliberate what was best to be done under the new aspect of affairs, which its examination had revealed to her. A burden of new apprehensions was added to the overwhelming anxiety that arose from the peril of her son.

The foster-child, whom she had loved almost as she loved him, had called upon her from the grave, and she must listen. Life to her must hereafter be one continued responsibility.

Mrs. Yates was so lost in thought that she did not hear the soft, cooing voice of the only child she had left, as the little creature opened her eyes and sat up in bed, all warm and rosy from a long, sweet sleep; but a slight pull at her dress and a lisping voice, which said, "Gamma," aroused her. She took the child in her arms, and smoothed the flossy gold of her hair, the more tenderly, because she was thinking of the one that was lost.

"Is my little darling lonesome?" she said, kissing the flushed cheek nearest her.

The little creature did not comprehend; but she saw something in those sad eyes that made her sorry; so she took that grand old face between both her tiny hands, and kissed it again and again, as a bird snatches at fruit, while she murmured the sweetest words known to her lips:

"Gamma! Gamma!"

The old woman could not bear this, for the one that was gone had a look as fond, and a voice as sweet; sometimes there had been rivalry between the two which should call her Gramma the oftenest, and there came little bursts of baby jealousy, if she happened to take one up first. That was all over now. She shuddered to think how those two little ones had been parted, and could almost feel the hot flames curling and hissing over the delicate form her arms had folded so often. Alas! at every turn this old woman fell into an abyss of thought, that might have threatened the reason of a weaker person.

"Sit down, my darling, sit down," she said, attempting to place the child on the floor, "Grandma is tired."

"No—no! here, here!"

She looked over her shoulder, saw the malachite box in her grandmother's lap, and sat down upon it, throwing out her feet in a burst of baby triumph.

The old woman took her by the shoulders and set her down upon the floor, with so stern a look that the child

began to cry. Without heeding this, the old woman put away the box, and began to pace the floor with slow, measured strides, which the child watched with wonder. What had she done that grandma was so cross with her?

Cross? It is thus the grown infants of the world sometimes read the heaviest and sternest struggles to which great hearts are subjected. They cannot understand that the sorrow of each human soul will find its own expression, and that sharp words are sometimes the cries of a noble nature in its agony. This little girl thought her grandmother harsh, when she was only human.

Mrs. Yates had taken the child in her lap, and was trying to comfort her, when a light knock came to the door, and Maggie Casey came in.

"Don't get up, Mrs. Yates," she said, drawing a chair close to the old lady. "It is very lonesome over at the house, and I do not stay there much now. In fact, I would go away at once, if it was not for having those two people in it, with no one to watch them. But I've got something a little particular to say, Mrs. Yates, and it's about her little girl, if it was hers, as I believe from the bottom of my heart."

"The little girl! Oh, Maggie, we have heard nothing from her yet—not one word. I am afraid she was burned to death. That fear has been very heavy on my mind among all my other troubles."

"Mrs. Yates," said Maggie, leaning close to the old woman, "I saw that little girl last night."

"You—you saw her! Where?"

"In a hotel up town. She is in the care of a lady, and was taken to her, no one can tell how, the very day after the fire."

"Did you see this lady?"

"Yes. I was in the room with her. I had the little girl in my arms. She was dressed beautifully, as our lady used to dress her, and looked like a little princess."

"Tell me how the lady looked."

"Not at all like our lady, but prouder. She was fiercer."

"Dark or light?"

"Dark; that is brown, with a color."

"And the eyes?"

"Black and large when they are wide open—long and soft when the lashes are down. Strange eyes."

"Her hair?"

"Oh, that is black, with light on it, like ripe blue-berries."

Mrs. Yates became excited. She questioned Maggie still more closely.

"Was there a small parting between the two front teeth?"

"Yes, Maggie had noticed it.

"Her walk?"

The girl had seen a leopard moving about in its cage once at a circus, and she thought of that leopard when the lady walked up and down the room, the few minutes that she was waiting for the gentleman.

"The gentleman!" Mrs. Yates removed the child from her lap with nervous haste. "The gentleman, did you say?"

"Yes, Mrs. Yates. That is the strangest part of it. The lady was married last night. I went with her; so did my sister. We signed the marriage lines, both of us."

"Tell me how this gentleman looked. Was he tall, broad-shouldered, slender at the waist? Had he blue eyes, and a soft beard?"

"That is the man, Mrs. Yates. I know it is, but you needn't ask any more. I have got his name, and hers, too. I wrote them on a bit of paper while the mayor was talking to them. Here it is."

Mrs. Yates took the paper, and read the two names upon it, without her glasses.

"Are they persons that you know, Mrs. Yates?" inquired Maggie, startled by the varied expressions that chased each other over her companion's face. "Are they anything to you?"

"Yes, yes. I thank you, Maggie. You have convinced me of that which seemed impossible."

"And will it help you any?"

"I cannot tell, this moment; my brain is dazed."

"Because there is something more. These people may have taken their passage in some steamer, and may sail any day. My sister found this out through the child's nurse being unwilling, and wanting me to take her place. They mean to take the child with them. I don't think they intended to go last night. The nurse never heard a syllable of it till this morning. But a gentleman, dark like herself, called on her about ten o'clock, and there was hard words. After he went away the nurse went in, and found her white as a sheet, and trembling all over—trembling so that she tried to write a note but could not steady the pen. She did get off a few words at last, and sent them to another hotel. The man with light hair got them—her husband, I mean—and sent back word for her to get ready at once. One of the waiters took the note, and told us what word he sent back. In less than an hour she was packing—that is, if pitching her clothes into a trunk and stamping them down with your feet is packing. Then it was that she sent for the nurse, and wanted to make a bargain for her to go to Europe with them. I heard this, and came straight off to let you know."

"Thank you—thank you very much, Maggie; but your news frightens me. I do not know what way to turn. What power have I to take the child from them—or, in fact, to molest them at all?"

"Can I help you in any way, Mrs. Yates?" inquired Maggie, who seemed to understand that there was a great deal to be done, and that the old lady was losing time.

"Yes, Maggie; the moment Elizabeth comes to stay with the child, I will go and see these people. They shall not carry the little one away, if I can help it. But can I? can I? Let me think, Maggie. Are you sure they are going?"

"Certain sure; for when the nurse wouldn't engage to go over sea, having relations here, the lady came right to my sister's room, and wanted me to take her place."

"Maggie, do go! Why not? You will be nearer the old home, and sometimes you can write and let me know."

"I did half agree to it, but thought I'd come and talk it over with you," said Maggie. "Then you think I had better?"

"Yes, yes. God sent you to that hotel, my good girl."

"Well, I will go straight back, and say yes."

"Do, Maggie, and if possible, let me know just when they mean to sail."

"They offer me any wages I ask; so I may as well take the place, even if you didn't want me to."

"I do want it. I beg it of you. Go. I will soon follow you."

"Well, then, good-morning."

Margaret had been gone perhaps two hours, when Elizabeth came home. At the same time a little boy was wandering over the house in search of Mrs. Yates, with a scrap of paper in his hand. He found her room after some trouble, and stood by staring, while she read the few lines he had brought.

"DEAR MRS. YATES:

"They are going on board at once. I am engaged to go with them. If you wish to see the little girl, there is no time to lose. I am sure it is the same. MAGGIE."

Mrs. Yates thrust some money into the boy's hand, took

down her bonnet and tied it on; but her nerves were so shaken that she could hardly knot the ribbon. Then she spoke a few words to Elizabeth, who looked upon her agitation with a sort of terror.

"Stay with the child awhile, dear. I will be back soon. It is nothing about Daniel, so don't be frightened."

The old lady was half way down stairs when she finished the sentence. She had no time for any system of action, but went out, blindly, resolved on nothing definite, only to look on the child she had mourned as lost, and rescue it from that man, if possible.

Never in her life had Mrs. Yates walked the streets of New York with such strong, eager strides. But she reached the hotel too late. A baggage-wagon was just driving away. The hotel coach and several carriages had been gone some ten or fifteen minutes, she was told. The old lady beckoned a coach, and ordered it to the wharf. She promised double fare, if he reached the steamer before it sailed. The man did his best, but a blockade of carts and omnibuses stopped him in one place; and, when he came to the wharf, the throng of vehicles rendered a passage up the wharf quite impossible.

"Open the door! I will walk," the old lady cried out, working hard to let herself out.

Her feet were on the wharf at last. She took no heed of the locked wagons and loaded trucks, but glided between them and under the necks of the horses, reckless of all danger.

In the midst of her struggles, the roar of a steam-pipe swept over her. Then came the sharp clamor of a bell, and the powerful voice of a man, shouting, "All ashore!"

The old lady stood still a moment, holding her breath. Then she made a desperate rush through the crowd of people that came pouring down from the steamer, and would have forced a passage up the bridge—for, leaning over the

railing, she saw the man for whom she was in search standing at a little distance, with Maggie Casey holding the child she had supposed dead, by the hand.

Her foot had left the wharf, when a voice called on her to desist. That instant the bridge was drawn away, a heavy rope swept curving through the water, and the steamer moved out of her berth with a quiet motion that scarcely stirred the waves. Mrs. Yates reached forth her hands, and the words "Stop! stop!" almost broke from her lips. She saw those two persons distinctly. It seemed as if the very earth were gliding from under her feet—as if the precious life of her own son was beaten and dashed downward by each revolution of those ponderous wheels.

She began to see these persons indistinctly; a hazy cloud floated before her eyes, out of which came white signals, like foam on an ocean at midnight; then a flash of flame through billows of white smoke, and the vessel herself moved out of sight.

With a slow, heavy step the old woman went down the wharf and along the streets. It seemed to her, then, as if the doom of her son was sealed. One drop of comfort did come to her as she tried to realize all that had happened that day—the child she loved so tenderly had not perished in the flames.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ELIZABETH YATES VISITS A LAWYER.

"I BELIEVE this man to be innocent of the crime charged against him; yet you tell me that his conviction is not improbable—that the evidence as laid before you is almost conclusive. How is he, then, to be saved?"

The man who spoke was Hepworth Closs—the person he addressed, one of the most eminent lawyers of the city, to whom he had come for advice regarding Daniel Yates, whose day of trial was approaching.

"But is there no way of saving him? If money can do it, name the amount, and it shall be met," he said, with such intense anxiety in his voice and manner that the lawyer was surprised, and observed, doubtfully:

"I think you told me this man Yates was not a relative of yours?"

"Yes, I said so. But he once saved the life of a person very dear to me, and I would gladly do something for him."

"I will take the case, though it is a little out of my line of practice," answered the lawyer, won as much by the earnestness of his visitor as by the large sum offered for his services. "You speak very positively of his innocence, but how can you know?"

"It is a conviction. He is a good, honest, honorable man. Such persons do not commit murders."

"That depends," answered the lawyer, doubtfully; "the killing of a man is sometimes the work of a moment—the kindling up of a fierce passion; and such passions are sometimes all the stronger for being under general control."

"But this could have been nothing of the kind. The motive itself, if anything, is shown to be plunder. The fact that Yates had this poor lady's watch and other valuables was the original cause of his arrest."

"Ah! if we could get rid of that point—if it were possible to account for his possession of those articles—there would be a chance for him."

"There must be a chance for him any way. It cannot be that your laws are made to sacrifice innocent men."

"We need not discuss the laws, my friend. They are as we find them. If you have or can obtain any evidence

in this poor fellow's favor, let me have it. That is the best way of saving him."

Closs turned very pale, and a look of terrible distress came over his features.

"You see," continued the lawyer, "his own voluntary confession is against him. Why was he fool enough to make the extraordinary statement he did? But for that we might have gotten up an *alibi*, with some hope of success."

"I believe his statement was true."

"Perhaps so. But this belief should have some strong foundation in facts. Can you bring them forward?"

Again that dull pallor came over the young man's face. Was he thinking of the array of evidence, which Rachael had so forcibly laid before him, as against himself? In truth it required a brave man to shift the burden of such proofs on his own shoulders. Let his motive be what it might, Closs had not courage enough to place himself in such peril.

"I can do nothing but supply all the money needful to his case," he answered. "Evidence I have none."

"Then our prospect is not encouraging. I tell you this fairly."

"Then heaven help the poor man—for I can do no more."

Scarcely had Hepworth Closs gone away when a young woman came into the office. She moved softly through the rooms, and sat down on the edge of a chair, looking with timid hesitation into the lawyer's face.

"Is there anything I can do for you?" inquired the lawyer, kindly; "I suppose it is me you want?"

"Yes, sir; I was—that is—I heard that you were a great lawyer, and could do anything. My husband is in a little trouble; it does not amount to much, you know; but lawyers are a great help, they tell me, and he had better have one. I haven't said a word to him about it; being innocent as innocent can be, you know, he might have resented it,

and fancied that I believed—no, no! I don't think he would have that idea; but sometimes I get a little timid about him, and feel wild to help him, and—and—"

"What is your husband's name?" inquired the lawyer, finding that he must speak, if any clear statement of her case reached him.

"Yates—Daniel Yates."

"Why, that is the man I was just talking about. A grave charge, isn't it?"

"Murder. Would you believe it, sir, and he so kind? The people must have been terribly wicked to think of such a thing. Of course it won't amount to anything in earnest; but I really think it best to have a good lawyer; so I've brought this, if—if you would be so kind."

The little woman took out a port-monnaie, which looked as if it had been half worn out in going to market, and counted out twenty-five dollars, with an appearance of no little pride in the amount.

"It is my own, every cent. I've been ever so long saving it up from the house money, thinking to get him something splendid for a Christmas present; but if I pay it away for him, he will be pleased all the same. Take it, please, and don't think about the change. I don't want to count costs where my husband is concerned; he wouldn't do it for me, I know that."

The gentle wife had tears in her eyes when she said this, and her simplicity almost touched that hard man of the law into something like kindred softness. It was sad to hear how confident she was of her husband's acquittal; but the lawyer had no heart to enlighten her as he had the man who had just left him.

"Take back your money," he said, pushing the bills toward her; "I will, to the best of my ability, defend your husband, but not at your cost. God grant that you may yet buy him that Christmas present!"

"You do not think that they will keep him so long as that, sir?" she questioned, with alarm. "Indeed, indeed, sir, I would rather you took this!"

"But I have already received a sum of money which will pay for my services."

"You have! Who, who?"

"Some friend of your husband's. I do not think I am at liberty to mention his name."

"I haven't the least idea—everybody loved Daniel; but as for a friend like that, I didn't know that he had one in the whole world."

"Well, I am glad to know that he is more fortunate than most people."

"May I tell him about it, sir?"

"Undoubtedly; it may cheer him up a little in the prison."

"Oh, he doesn't get very down-hearted; I am with him so much, it has got to be almost like home to us both. He says there will be a great deal that's pleasant for us to talk about when he comes out, and I'm sure there will. One never knows what true love is till sorrow comes. I thought I loved Daniel before, and I did, but now I would just lay down at his feet, and die for him, if anybody would let me; only, sir, the world would never seem the same to him if I was out of it."

The lawyer arose and looked out of the window, but there was a soft mistiness in his eyes that made the people moving in the street so indistinct, that he took out his handkerchief, rubbed it over a piece of glass, and ended in passing it over his face, in a dashing sort of way, as if the heat oppressed him. Then he came back again and told the little woman that he would go to the prison and see her husband, and would work, night and day, to bring him out safe; at which she smiled, and said she hadn't a doubt of that. Of course an innocent man could not really suffer;

such things happened in novels, sometimes, but never in reality.

It wasn't that she was afraid; only she didn't like to leave anything undone for fear people might think they did not care for him as they ought. If there was any way on earth by which he could be taken out before the trial, she hoped the lawyer would do it; after all he had better take the money. Here Elizabeth made another shy attempt to force the money into the hand which was held out so kindly for leave-taking; but it was of no use—the lawyer would not rob her of her little savings, and sent her away in great hopefulness, much against his conscience.

It is hard, he thought, seating himself, and pushing some loose papers about on the table; but who could have told her? It seemed like killing a lamb with the mother's milk on its lips. At any rate, I could not do it. Now, I dare say, the fellow is as great a scoundrel as ever lived; no doubt he killed the poor lady for her box of jewelry. Such men, nineteen cases out of twenty, have these innocent, trusting little women clinging to them for life and death. I wonder why? It would not be half as distressing if the wicked always mated together—but they won't; the blackest man seems to have a craving for the beauty of goodness in one form or another, and takes what little of Heaven he can get on earth, in the form of a wife like that.

While these thoughts were wandering through his mind, the man of law unwound the red tape from a parcel of papers, and gradually forced himself into an examination of their contents; but his mind would go astray from its work. The meek eyes of Elizabeth Yates would look up to him from the paper, and he seemed to hear her child-like voice still telling him of her husband's goodness and innocence.

At last the man gathered up his papers, tied the red tape about them, and, taking his hat, went out of his office, thinking, with a sort of self-scorn, what a fool he was to be-

come so interested in a desperate case. "The poor little wife, with her twenty-five dollars, and the pretty air of triumph with which she counted it out—I haven't seen anything so touching in years. I wish to Heaven it were possible to save her scamp of a husband! one rascal more or less does not signify in a great world like this. At any rate, I will redeem my promise, and hear what he has to say for himself. Ah, here are the Tombs."

CHAPTER XXV.

OPENING OF THE TRIAL.

THE court room was crowded on the day of Daniel Yates' trial. A mystery attended the case, which no one had as yet been able to fathom. No positive clue could be found to the identity of the lady for whose murder the young man was put in peril of his life. No human being that had known her beyond a twelvemonth was able to speak of her actions or her history. If the prisoner or his mother were better informed than the rest, they uttered no word in confirmation of the fact, but seemed resolved to keep silence on the subject; but the press had been unusually busy with the case, and public curiosity was deeply excited—something, surely, must come out at the trial. If this lady had friends in the rank of life to which she evidently belonged, they must appear now; for the fact of her murder had spread all over the civilized world, so far as multitudinous journals could carry it. There certainly was a romance here, which the public mind was bent on fathoming.

But the day of trial came, and the case was opened before an additional ray of light could be cast on the tragedy. A thousand vague and improbable stories were put

in circulation, but not one of them could be sustained by a word of evidence. Still they had the effect of exciting the public mind and filling the court room to suffocation.

A finer-looking young man than Daniel Yates never entered the criminal dock of any court. His frank, open countenance, to which harshness or guile seemed impossible, won sympathy from the crowd at the first glance. There was neither the craven look nor the bravado of hardened guilt in that face; but a flush of honest shame spread over it, and the eyelids drooped above the burning fever in his eyes which a sense of outraged innocence kindled there.

No man ever felt the ignominy of his position more keenly than he did. Yet a few persons present were ignorant enough to whisper that the man had a downcast look, which always bespoke guilt. They would whisper this almost in the prisoner's hearing; for that curiosity, which takes the multitude into a scene like that, is usually too hard and coarse for much delicate regard for the rights and feelings of an accused man. Quietly and with his fine person a little bent, with a keen sense of his position, Yates moved through the crowd and entered the criminal dock. After he had been there a moment, with that horrible battery of human eyes turned upon him, a little sweet-faced woman came into the crowd, with the wild timidity of a fawn, and tried to follow him to his ignominious seat. The crowd gave way for her the moment that it was whispered that she was his wife. Elizabeth was grateful for this courtesy, and lifting her heavy eyes first to one face then to another, whispered her thanks as she went along, carrying all the devotion of a wife and the helpless love of a child with her.

She was not ashamed; there was no occasion for that, when everybody must see at a glance how innocent her husband was; but the sight of that black crowd made her tremble, and a smile of exquisite satisfaction came to her

face, as she crept into the seat and stole her hand into that of the prisoner. What had she to fear then? No queen on her throne had a right to feel more safe.

Daniel Yates saw the smile and felt the little hand clinging to his. Then an expression swept across his face which brought a murmur of sympathy from the crowd, and brought trouble to her.

"Is it that you are afraid of anything?" she whispered.

"Afraid? I don't know, Elizabeth. Where is my mother?"

"She went to see Mr. Steel, the lawyer, you know, early this morn'g. There she is coming now."

Yates looked toward the door and saw his mother passing into the crowd. She turned a glance toward him, and seeing Elizabeth, tried to smile, but the stern, sorrowful lines of her face refused to express the falsehood of hope, and she only gave him a look of yearning tenderness that came from her eyes alone.

Elizabeth was greatly disturbed by that look. She had seen it so often of late that it made her almost afraid of her mother-in-law; but directly she saw Mr. Steel, her husband's counsel, come in, brisk, smiling, and pleasantly important. The very sight of his face reassured that little woman in an instant.

Mrs. Yates made no demonstration of great interest in her son, but went up among the witnesses and watched the proceedings with the vigilance of a lawyer. During the preliminaries she scarcely moved; but when the district attorney arose to open his case, she leaned forward to listen with such keen interest, that the eyes of the crowd concentrated upon her more than once. It was seldom that a face like that appeared in any assemblage. That old woman appeared far more guilty than her son. The settled, stern look it wore had something tragic in it which no one understood.

The district attorney was a keen, relentless and subtle man, in whom professional ambition conquered all human sympathy. An accused man, to him, was always guilty—nothing more or less than a stepping-stone to his own preferment. If an unfortunate within his grasp chanced to prove innocent, he felt wronged and humiliated. No hound ever hunted down wolf or deer with more exultation than this man convicted a fellow creature. He opened his case ably, gave a clear statement of his case and the facts he intended to prove.

From the first, he managed, with great adroitness, to arouse a general feeling of sympathy for the murdered lady, around whose history he wove a network of romance that exalted her to an angel, and, consequently, operated against the prisoner.

This man had, in reality, no evidence which had not appeared at the coroner's inquest, but he arranged it with great ability, and sat down well satisfied with the effect of his morning's work.

In examining the evidence, only one or two things were remarkable.

When Matthew Stacy was called, a pompous, florid and perfectly well-satisfied person came forward, dressed like the leading alderman of some lucrative ring. He wore a heavy gold chain over his vest, and made elaborate use of a delicate handkerchief, while waiting to be questioned. When asked his age and business, he stated the first as forty, and for business, kept a first-class saloon in the seventh ward.

"Nothing could be more respectable," he said; "a prince might take his wine there, and think it came from his own cellar."

Matthew drew a dashing gold watch from his vest-pocket, and wound it up deliberately in the face of the whole court, as he came down from the witness stand.

The next witness called was Harriet Long, who came for-

ward with the ponderous consciousness that a host of admiring eyes were upon the magnificent India shawl, which draped her broad shoulders, and the tiny bonnet, a graceful composition of delicate lace and yellow roses, which was perched on the top of her clumsy head. A superb pair of ear-rings, in which real jewels were gleaming, twinkled through the ribbon and lace that formed a drapery over her shoulders and bosom; and when she lifted her arm to be sworn, heavy gold bracelets were visible just above the fastening of her flame-colored gloves, but her wrists strained hard on the clasps, and she wore them uncomfortably, as if they had been manacles.

Harriet wished to set a little matter right before she was sworn. Her name was Long when she first gave evidence, but since then, she had changed her condition, and shouldn't like to swear under any name but that of Mrs. Matthew Stacy; they would find it exact on her visiting card. Here Harriet took out a card-case of exquisite Florentine gold, carved with the delicacy of lace, and presented a highly enamelled card between her thumb and finger. This act, to her dismay, revealed a slit in her overstrained gloves, which she instantly concealed under her shawl, and folding that, toga-fashion, over her broad bosom, waited to be questioned.

The evidence was not important, for it only corroborated that of Matthew. Neither of them had seen the prisoner go in or out of the house that night; but they swore to finding the safe unlocked, and the disappearance of the malachite box, which Yates confessed to have taken away.

A young man, who sat far back in the court, but who had attracted considerable attention from the singular beauty of a face, which was far more anxious than that of the prisoner, leaned forward as Harriet was giving her evidence, and recognized the garments she wore. Was it possible! Had the lady been murdered and plundered by her own servants?

The youth fell slowly back, even as the question crossed his mind. Could those garments explain all he had seen? Would their presence on that woman serve to change one feature of the case now in progress? Nay, if he pointed her out and denounced her, it would only draw all eyes upon himself, and bring him forward as a witness. Then all the train of evils his sister had so vividly warned him of, would follow, and, without having the power to help Yates, he might ruin himself.

No, he would watch the proceedings closely, and if there was a chance of saving this innocent man by telling all he knew, in the end, he would speak, but not yet, not yet. The very thought chilled him like ice.

The district attorney had, in his opening, laid great stress upon the disappearance of the malachite box, and urged it as a conclusive argument of the prisoner's guilt, that he persistently refused to give up the box, or now, that it was burned in the tenement-house fire, to tell what it contained. The fact that he had confessed to the taking of the box, was now proven, and after that the prosecution rested, not caring, as the attorney said, to force the evidence of a mother against her son. He had been accused of over zeal in his practice, but he had never yet been cruel enough for a thing like that.

CHAPTER XXVI.

OLD MRS. YATES VISITS HER LAWYER.

THAT night Mr. Steel was seated in his study at home, thinking over the case he had taken, and bending all the force of his intellect to discover some evidence or argument by which this young man could be saved from the terrible fate that threatened him. It was hard work, for Yates had

injured his own case by the confession he had made; but for that, the evidence could not have been brought home to him so fatally.

"A woman wishes to see you, sir. I told her you were busy, and could see no one, but she would come in. She is the young man's mother, she says."

"Let her come—let her come."

The servant went out, and opened the study-door a few minutes after for the old lady, whose face bore the same strange expression that had marked it during the trial. She drew a chair to the table, and leaning her arm upon it, sat perfectly silent for a minute or two. At last she spoke, but it was with a great effort, for it seemed as if the muscles of her throat were turning to iron.

"I have come to ask a question. It is a hard one, and, I feel, almost useless. Will my son be convicted?"

The lawyer hesitated. He was a kind man, and there was something in that face bending closer and closer to him which made his heart ache more than it had done in years. He longed to give her some hope, but dared not trifle with such feelings as spoke in those deep, searching eyes.

"I wish it were possible to say no, but as the case stands—"

"I thought so. It is hard, terribly hard. Is there nothing that can save him?"

"Nothing but evidence against the person who actually committed this crime."

"What would be evidence?"

"You see what appears to be sufficient here."

"Yes; I was watching the jury, and knew the thoughts of every one there. It was like reading your own death-warrant."

"I find it impossible to take a hopeful view of the case myself, yet no man ever had a cause in which he took more interest."

"You believe my boy to be innocent?"

"Innocent as I am. I do not hesitate to say this, if it can give you the least comfort. I had not talked with him ten minutes before I came to that conclusion. He was, perhaps, unwisely reticent about the contents of that box, and some other things that might have helped me on a little; but of his innocence I have no doubt."

"I am glad of that," said the old lady, for the first time showing a little animation; "but he told you the truth. Daniel did not know what was in the box."

"You know?" said the lawyer, quickly.

"Yes; I opened it since he was taken away. Had there been anything that could have helped establish his innocence, I would have given it to you at once; but there was nothing that would not have done him harm."

"Do you object to telling me what you found?"

"No. Money—some thousands of dollars—I do not know how many. Diamonds, such as a queen might wear, and some papers that belong to another matter."

"All that would hang him, with a vengeance," exclaimed the lawyer, with animation. "Money, jewels, and a watch of great value! It is fortunate they think the box burned up. Nothing could tell against him more effectually; but how do you intend to dispose of it?"

"As she directed. More than once she spoke to me about the box, and told me what use to make of it. I ought to have brought it away before."

"It is a strange case. I should like to understand it better."

"If it would be of any benefit to my son, you should; but others might be harmed, while it is impossible for anything I could tell to help him."

"Mrs. Yates, have you no idea who committed this murder? You see, even in my thoughts, I exonerate your son; but you must have some suspicion."

"I know."

"You know?"

"Beyond a doubt; but there is no proof—not a shadow."

"But if the crime was done by another person, there must be proof, which you and I between us could get at," said the lawyer.

The old lady gave her head a slight, impatient wave, but said nothing for some minutes. Then she spoke out, abruptly:

"Would the confession of the person who did it be enough?"

"Certainly: but how are we likely to obtain that? No man is likely to come forward and hang himself to save another. Murderers, so far as my observation goes, have no such magnanimity."

"Conscience sometimes does strange things."

"But we must not expect miracles. You are far too sensible a woman for that."

"It all comes to the same thing. You have no hope to give me. Ah, sir, do you understand what an awful thing this is? I am his mother. You see what he is—brave, noble, honest—but they will hang him, as if he were a dog. I love that boy, for he will always be a boy to me—always. Oh, Father of Heaven, how much of life will they give him? and he so full of it. I love that boy better than my own life—better than my own soul—" She stopped suddenly, as if the word struck her as sacrilegious, then repeated it slowly, "better than my own soul."

She was strangely excited now. Her eyes shone, and her cheeks burned. Her hand was reached out to the lawyer. He took it kindly, remarking how dry and hot it was.

"Yes," she said, "it is an inward fever, always burning, burning. I will go home now to his wife. She is beginning to be frightened. She does not eat—poor little Elizabeth! She said to me, just before I came away, with her eyes full

of tears—she can cry, but the old woman has no tears left—'Mother,' she said, 'Daniel is in danger. I am afraid of those men, but *you* can save him. You can do anything!' Then I kissed the tears from her eyes, and promised her. She will be asleep when I go back, for the child has faith in her husband's mother, and will not understand impossibilities. She will wake up, smile that mournful, sweet smile, and say, 'Mother, you have promised—I know Daniel is safe,' and go to sleep again."

"Poor thing! I hardly know which to pity most—such bravery or such trust. Like yourself, it seems to me that something must happen to save him. You will be there?"

"Yes, I shall be there. Is there a mother on earth who would not?"

"Watch the jury closely when I address them. If there is any hope you will find it in their faces."

"Ah, you need not ask me to do that; but I will go to Elizabeth now. It is kind of you to tell me there is no hope; it turns the heart to lead, but then lead is hard and quiet. Remember, I am very thankful that you tell me the truth. Sometimes I am a coward, and put it away, for after all I am but a miserable old woman. Good-night."

"Good night, and God bless you."

She started suddenly, and crying out, "He won't! He won't—I do not expect it!" left the house.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE OLD WOMAN AND THE CHILD.

MRS. YATES went home, and as she had predicted, found her daughter-in-law in a troubled sleep. The young woman awoke and sat up in bed, when the old lady came in.

"I have been sleeping," she said; "they frightened me so. I thought there would be no more sleep for me. Come to bed, mother, I shall feel so much safer with your arms around me."

Mrs. Yates lay down outside the bed, and stole her arm over the young wife.

In a few minutes she was asleep again, breathing like an infant. The old lady stole away, and went into another room. She could not sleep, and dared not think. She was an expert needle-woman, and in their worst days, had been in the habit of doing some of the light work connected with her son's trade. His tools had been sent from the shop after his arrest, and she took some of them out, preparing for work. An easy chair, which had been saved from the fire when it first broke out, stood in the room. It had been a present from Mrs. Hurst, who had always been mindful of her foster-mother's comfort, and for that reason, it had been the first article cared for when the fire broke out. It had been injured by water and blackened by smoke; but up to this time, the old lady had found no time to repair it. Certainly this was a strange hour to begin, when that awful pain was gnawing at her heart, and the palms of her hands seemed to have been handling hot coals. Some remnants of crimson rep were rolled up in the box with Daniel's tools. She took it out, measured the chair, and fashioned the cover with a dexterous hand. Then she tore away the soiled brocade, and came to the springs, leaving but the skeleton of a chair. With the rep on one side of the stool on which she sat, and a pile of curled hair on the other, she went to work, fastening the springs, and strengthening the frame.

Then she arose, brought forth the malachite box, and took from it the portfolio, and the casket of diamonds. She wrapped a quantity of the hair about these, folded them carefully in some fragments of the old silk, and bedded them down among the springs with the hair, which was to

form a cushion. Then her work went on, till the piece of furniture was complete again. Hard work brought drops of perspiration to her forehead, and reduced the fever that was preying on her. It was long after midnight, but she looked around for something else to do. It was impossible for her to sit still; as for sleep, the very thought of lying down by that young woman in her tranquil slumber, made her shrink.

She looked around drearily. A child's dress of white *pique*, with a pretty border in black braid commenced upon it, lay on a table. It was severe work for her eyes, but she cared nothing for that. Occupation was all she asked for. The lamp, which stood on her table, shed a circle of pale light all around her; but the room was half in obscurity, and down upon the dimly-revealed floor a grotesque shadow lay all night long, throwing its arms in and out in still mockery, as if it were sewing some black drapery together, and heaping it up in the dark corner.

Sometimes the old lady would pause in her work, and measure the stretch of embroidery with a wistful, tender look; then she would ply her needle again, while slow, cruel tears were dropping from under her spectacles, for she was thinking of the little girl who lay sleeping in her bed, so near by that if the old woman stopped the noise of her thread she could hear her breathe.

The cold, gray light of the morning found that old woman still at work. It seemed as if nothing could tire her out; but when the sun shone in upon her, she folded up the dress, wiped the moisture from her eyes with its hard folds, and made a fire in the stove, preparatory to getting breakfast. The noise awoke Elizabeth, who got up at once, and insisted on preparing the meal herself.

A little shout and the noise of tiny feet, pattering across the floor in the next room, took the old woman in that direction.

"Now 'top, gramma."

The old lady loosened her hold and sat the child on the floor, while she filled her bath. Then she took off her night-gown, exposing the rosy whiteness of her chest, and the round, dimpled limbs. With her head on one side, and mischief in her eyes, the little rogue watched grandmother, while she made a snowy suds in the water, then gave a shout, and tumbled in without help, throwing the water about her in showers, while she struggled to her feet, and began to dance in it.

The joyousness fell with a new pain on the grandmother, whose hand, gentle always when it touched the child, trembled as it wandered over her little form, and finally dropped away in pathetic helplessness.

The child saw that something was wrong, and stood still, while little ridges of foam, left by the perfumed soap, melted and dropped away from her. Then she reached out her arms:

"Now, gamma."

The little thing was trying to be good, and though her limbs quivered with their longing to dance, she kept quiet while her clothes were put on, and her damp hair was twisted around those shaking old fingers.

Then, for the first time, she lifted her face, all rosy and fresh from the bath, up to her grandmother's. How gray and haggard that face looked! The child shrank away from it, frightened; but she discovered something in the eyes that brought her back, and in her sweet baby compassion, she put up her lips to be kissed, and faltered out:

"Gramma, tiss ou, gramma."

A pitiful, dry sob, broke from the old woman. She reached forth her arms, and gathered the little one into her lap, where it nestled lovingly; but those gray eyes dwelt upon her still, with such yearning sadness, that the pretty creature took up the hem of her white frock and attempted to wipe them.

"Don't ki, gamma, don't ki."

Oh, how mournfully that sweet voice fell upon the woman! That moment she would have given worlds for a single tear; but the sorrow was too deep, the aching heart dry and hot as a desert. Not a drop of moisture wetted the hem of that baby's frock when it dropped from those little hands. What was the matter with grandma that she would neither speak nor play?

The little creature turned upon her knees in the old woman's lap, and patted her cheeks with both hands; but this only made the sadness deeper, and the lips quiver. Then she pulled down the gray hair from the bowed head, and buried her hands in it, with a half-frightened crow of triumph, turning her little head with a mischievous underglance, to see if grandma was not smiling yet.

Alas, no smile would ever again illuminate that grand old face. The lips might quiver as they did now, chilling the kisses that wounded her like thorns, as they came from that innocent mouth, but with laughter and playfulness she had done forever.

"Mother, will you come to breakfast?"

Elizabeth sat down by the table, and poured out a cup of strong coffee for the old mother, who drank it in silence, but no mouthful of food passed her lips. She fed the child upon her knee with infinite tenderness, and answered the few words that Elizabeth addressed to her more gently than she was in the habit of speaking.

She got up from the table at last, and sat the child on the floor.

"Mother, you have eaten nothing."

"I have no appetite, Elizabeth."

"Do eat something. You look like death! Your face frightens me. Is it that you think they will find him guilty? Oh, mother, tell me!"

The old woman answered, with the gentleness of a child:

"Be tranquil, Elizabeth: I have no fear."

"Oh! God bless you, mother—for you have been like an angel to me!"

"An angel? Do not call me that—I cannot bear it."

Mrs. Yates went into the inner room now. She came out neatly dressed, and with the thick gray hair combed smoothly back from her forehead. She had been absent some time, while Elizabeth, in her gentle piety, remained perfectly still, thinking that the mother was praying for her son. When she came out, the anxious little woman crept up, and stole one arm about her.

"You have been praying for him, mother."

Elizabeth felt a shiver pass through the form her arm partly embraced.

"No, Elizabeth, I have not prayed—I cannot pray."

Never to her dying hour did Elizabeth Yates forget the look that old woman turned upon her face.

Mrs. Yates stood some time in the room, looking around at everything it contained, as if she were going a long, long journey, and wanted to carry a picture of home with her. Then she went suddenly up to the child, lifted her from the floor, and kissed her forehead, her eyes, and her lips with startling vehemence.

The little girl had been brooding over grandma's crossness, and resented it now by wiping the kisses away.

"Bad grammar," she said, shaking her tiny finger; "bad grammar."

Was that a groan? Elizabeth turned to see, but the old woman had dropped the child slowly to the floor, and stood gazing on her with the fixed and mournful look a dying mother sometimes gives the children she is leaving forever.

When Mrs. Yates saw that Elizabeth was looking at her, she gathered up her shawl and went away. Then the child began to cry, and called after her, piteously; but its voice was too feeble, and had no power to call the old woman back.

Call her back! There was no power, good or evil, short of death that could have turned that old woman from the course she had determined upon.

There was no rash impulse in her action, no romance to be repented of the moment it became an irksome reality.

She went at once to the house of Lawyer Steel, and waited in the hall for him to come out from the breakfast-room.

"I have come to say one thing more," she commenced, the moment he appeared. "They tell me you can speak twice. Once, when you put in the evidence in his favor: again, when it is closed. Do not wait for the last chance, but say all at once."

"I am not sure that you are wrong," answered the lawyer; "but, remember, under any circumstances the prosecution has the last argument."

"I know it," answered the old lady, "but still ask you to throw all your powers into the first speech. We have no evidence to offer, except that of an honest, blameless character. About the transactions of that night, nothing else can be said or done."

"I fear not—I greatly fear not."

"But you will make the most of that? Oh, if you could—if you could make that jury believe! But they never will."

"My dear madam, I will do my best. No man was ever more anxious. Be sure of one thing—there is great power in a thorough conviction that the cause you urge is a just one. I haven't a doubt of the young man's innocence."

"But they will find him guilty." She said this slowly, and with a terrible conviction of the fact.

"We will hope for the best, Mrs. Yates."

She shook her head.

"Do not put off what you have till the last. I came on purpose to ask this. Defend him—declare his innocence—do everything to save his good name!"

"I will do everything in my power to save his life."

"His life? Yes, I know it is in danger! But you will remember what I have said. Speak the first moment they will let you. Do not wait for the last chance, but say everything as if his life was in each word. If you cannot save him in that way, there is no hope."

The lawyer was not used to having his course of action laid out for him, especially by a woman; but this was an exceptional case—almost a desperate one—and he had some faith in the keen intelligence and clear, common sense of the old woman before him.

"I am not sure, Mrs. Yates, that your idea is not a good one. The evidence we can bring is so meagre, that we must cover up all deficiency with eloquence, and look sharply after the rulings of the court. I will contest the thing inch by inch. They shall not—not sacrifice the young fellow without hard fighting."

For a moment the old lady's face lighted up. She was a woman to contest with energy where her rights or affections were menaced; but the momentary spirit died out before it was fairly expressed. She turned to go, sighing heavily.

"He will want to see me. I am going to him now."

"Tell him to keep up his courage; and as for you, my dear madam, pray that God may support him and help me."

She answered him, as she had replied to her son's wife, but with more pathetic sadness:

"I cannot pray—I must not pray."

She stood upon the door-step a minute, and then stepped down into the street. She walked a few paces, and then turned back again in a confused, wild way.

"You believe him innocent. Throw all the force of that belief into your first speech. I come back to repeat that—so much depends upon it—so much! So much!"

Now the old lady turned away from the door-step for good, repeating these words, without taking leave of the

lawyer, who shook his head sadly as she went down the street.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE SECOND DAY OF THE TRIAL.

MR. STEEL stood up in that crowded court and performed his promise nobly. He obeyed the old lady's request, and instead of a dry opening, plunged heart and soul into his case. With all his being, he had faith in the young man, and believed in his innocence. But it was an appeal rather than an argument.

If eloquence and generous warmth could have saved a man, Daniel Yates would have been acquitted, for this man's impassioned appeal carried the jury with him for a time, and the whole court brightened with sympathy. But little was said about the evidence. There, Mr. Steel knew himself weak, and after a time, the jury felt that he was so. You could see by their faces, the gradual change by which reason conquered sympathy. The lawyer discovered it, and sought to overcome the reaction, by putting forth still greater powers; but there is a point from which all excitement recedes, and spite of his splendid genius, Lawyer Steel found it hard to sweep away evidence that seemed so conclusive, by eloquence alone.

The old lady, who sat in a remote place in the court, listening to every word, and watching those twelve faces with keen scrutiny, brightened in all her features for the first half hour; then the gray pallor crept over her face again, and she settled back in her seat, regarding the jury with a dull, heavy gaze.

But the prisoner seemed inspired. He sat upright in his seat, bright, animated, confident. Who, in that crowd,

would believe him guilty, against the truth and against that thrilling defense?

The young wife by his side was beaming with hope, and trembling with exquisite sympathy for the man she loved, for herself, and the dear old mother, who looked so cold and desolate there in the corner. Elizabeth wondered how she could be so hopeless with that man's voice ringing in her ears. It was almost ingratitude. True, she was crying herself; but that was only because of the kind, beautiful things he was saying of her husband, who deserved them so well.

At last the lawyer sat down—human effort could do no more—wiping the drops from his massive forehead, he looked toward the jury, and saw that they were disturbed, but not convinced. His heart fell; he leaned his elbow on the table, and rested wearily on his hand, not caring to encounter the grateful look of that doomed man. Then he remembered a promise made to old Mrs. Yates, and went to her. She lifted her eyes to his, but did not speak.

"Have you watched their faces?"

She bent her head slowly.

"And have lost all hope?"

"All—I knew that it would be so."

"I—I have done my best!"

"I know it—I thank you; no human being could do more. You have convinced some of his innocence."

The old woman then took hold of the lawyer's arm, and drew him down so close to her face, that she could whisper in his ear, for plenty of curious persons were listening.

He seemed surprised by what she said, but made no objection. Merely repeating what had probably been her own words—"The last—yes, I will remember."

Mr. Steel went back to his seat, and called several witnesses for the defense.

The man in whose employ Daniel Yates worked, the peo-

ple with whom he dealt, and such persons as had known him since he came to the country. No better character was ever proven for any man; but what did that avail?

At last, Mr. Steel, with some appearance of hesitation, called Mrs. Hannah Yates, the mother of the prisoner.

There was a commotion in the court when this name was pronounced. The crowd swayed restlessly, and men leaned over each other with renewed curiosity, while the few women present whispered together, and sent glances of sympathy after the poor mother, as she moved slowly toward the witness stand.

How fearfully white and still she looked while the oath was being administered. The hand she reached forth, struck the book like marble. How trivial the questions seemed that they were asking? Her name, her place of residence? Did she know the prisoner at the bar?

Know him! She lifted her face, and turned it full upon the prisoner. Instantly an indescribable radiance broke up its pallor, and over her mouth, eyes and forehead, came a quiver of pathetic tenderness, which brought tears into the eyes of the very judge.

"Do I know him? He is my own son."

For the first time during that trial Daniel covered his face with both hands, and those who looked on could see, by the heaving of his shoulders, that he was choking back sobs that shook him from head to foot.

"Mrs. Yates!"

The old lady turned away from her son, and did not once look at him again. The cold, gray tints came back to her face, and she stood motionless, waiting to be questioned.

"Mrs. Yates, do you know anything of your son's movements on the evening of the 21st of June?"

"No. I went out before he came home to supper, and did not see him that evening till after ten o'clock."

"Where did you go?"

"I went down to one of the theatres to see a person who had sent me a message to come ; but I did not find her."

"What theatre?"

Mrs. Yates named the theatre.

"But you did not find the person you went to see. What was her name?"

"Her name was Brown."

"An actress?"

"Yes."

"Where did you go after that?"

"I went directly to Mrs. Hurst's house, in Forty-third street."

"Well, who did you see there?"

"Mrs. Hurst."

"Where was she?"

"In her bed-chamber, *where I killed her with my own hands.*"

Lawyer Steel dropped to his seat as if he had been shot through the heart.

In another part of the court, a young man started to his feet, reeled, fell backward, and fainted dead away. A few persons in that neighborhood turned a glance at the whiteness of his face, made more deadly by contrast with his jet black moustache and the masses of raven hair falling away from his forehead ; but a far greater portion of the crowd looked only at the old woman, and allowed the young man to be carried out almost unheeded. Not a breath was drawn. A host of eager eyes seemed to devour the very expression of her face.

Mrs. Yates, unconscious of the sharp curiosity and the solemn hush of the crowd, stood quietly looking straight before her, resolute and still.

Then the voice of Daniel Yates broke out in a cry of anguish that made even the judge start upon his seat.

"Mother! mother! for God's sake—for your own soul's

sake—stop! This is not true! She hopes to save me, and so accuses herself, gentlemen. It is not true! She never could have done it! A kinder-hearted woman never lived than my mother!"

Daniel Yates had sprung to his feet, with both hands extended, imploring his mother not to speak, and the court not to believe her.

The old woman lifted her hand, but did not turn her eyes upon that eager face.

"He does not know. I was not likely to trust my own son ; but it was I, Hannah Yates, and I alone—"

Before the old woman could finish the sentence, or repeat the self accusation that had so astonished the whole court, Lawyer Steel arose, fairly trembling with excitement. He had not expected this, and, for a moment, surprise stunned him.

"Not yet—not till I have warned her that no man has a right to enforce confessions of guilt or demand a reply to questions that criminate a witness. Having thus clearly warned her, I submit the witness."

The district attorney bowed. Having, as he thought, fixed the guilt on another party, he was rather annoyed by the course things were taking, and spoke sharply to the old woman.

"How did you enter the house that night?"

"Through the front door."

"Did you ring the bell?"

"No ; the door was partly open."

"Did any one see or hear you?"

"I think not. The hall was dark, and I do not step heavily."

"What took you to the house?"

"I had left word for Daniel to go after the child ; but thinking, perhaps, something might prevent him, I called to see if little Clara had gone home."

"And finding the door ajar, went in without ringing?"

"Yes."

"Well, what next?"

Again Lawyer Steel sprang to his feet, but Mrs. Yates lifted her hand as she had when her son offered his passionate protest, and he saw that she had resolved to speak out.

"I killed the lady, not with malice—but it was I who killed her. No one helped me, or knew of it but myself."

"But why did you kill her?" asked the prosecuting attorney, who had put his questions with wary quietness, as boys who snare birds lie still in the grass, thinking to lead her into a detailed confession.

"That I will not answer."

"Was any other person in the house then?"

"I do not know of a certainty."

"Was your son there, or have you reason to think so?"

"To my knowledge, he was not there."

"Did you know of his being in that house at all on the 21st of June?"

"I had no knowledge of his being there at all. So far as I know and believe, I was alone with Mrs. Hurst when her life was taken."

"Can you tell me, Mrs. Yates, anything about the box that your son confesses to have taken from that house on the evening in question?"

"Yes, I knew of the box. Mrs. Hurst spoke of it to me several days before her death. She wanted me to take charge of it, and told me that night, before I—before her death, that she had given it to Daniel to carry home."

"What did the box contain?"

"Things of value, that she wished me to return to their rightful owner. This was what she told me."

"Did your son deliver the box to you?"

"He did, that night, when I carried the little girl home."

"Did he know what was in it?"

"Only as I told him. When the fire broke out it had not been opened, and he was under arrest."

"Then you solemnly swear that he only brought the box from this murdered lady to you, never touching its contents?"

"Yes, I swear it. Before Almighty God, in that, as in everything else relating to that lady's death, my son is innocent. I alone am guilty."

"You can step down, Mrs. Yates."

The old woman stepped down from the witness-stand, but did not move away.

She was expecting some one to arrest her, and waited for him, with her hands folded over each other, and her eyes cast down.

The counsel whispered together, drew back to their seats, and, with scarcely more than a sign, submitted the case.

The jury retired, and were absent perhaps ten minutes, during which that old woman stood immovable, looking vaguely at the door through which those twelve men had passed.

The door opened, and one after another the jury filed into court again.

NOT GUILTY.

The old woman heard other words, but they floated by her like murmurs of the ocean; but these two rushed through her whole being like fiery arrows. That wan face lighted up; those hands clasped themselves.

She cast one look on her son, but dared not meet the awful agony in those eyes a second time.

NOT GUILTY.

The crowd in the court-room repeated these words to those who waited outside. Then a wild shout rang up from those who had sympathized with that fine young fellow from the very first, and were glad to believe him innocent.

Those who came out of the court did not join in this.

The guilt of that stately old woman depressed them. They could not shout over the release of the son, knowing that an old mother, hitherto blameless in her life, must suffer in his stead.

More than one pitying look was turned upon her as the people went out, leaving her standing there alone. Daniel Yates received the congratulations of friends and strangers like one in a dream. He answered them vaguely, without once turning his eyes from the mother he had loved, and still loved so dearly. She did not approach him, but stood with her hands knotted loosely together, looking on the floor.

When that shout came from the street she started, lifted her head, and a smile quivered across her old face.

Daniel Yates left his wife, down whose face the tears ran like rain, and drawing toward his mother, fell upon her neck, and wept.

"Oh, mother! mother!"

While his arms were around her, and his voice was in her ear, a strange hand was laid upon her shoulder.

"Come with me, Mrs. Yates."

CHAPTER XXIX.

SENTENCED FOR LIFE.

DANIEL YATES followed his mother to the very entrance of the Tombs, entreating her to reconsider the thing she had done.

Never, in his whole life had he known her to utter an untruth; but though she had sworn to the crime, he did not believe her guilty of it. All the world might condemn her, but he never would—no, not even from words out of

her own mouth. He believed that she had not only given up her own life, but outraged a most tender conscience, in order to save him. The thought wounded him worse than a violent death could have done.

Mrs. Yates had little time for conversation, as she was hurried from the court-room to the prison; but Daniel kept by her side, imploring her.

She answered him firmly, but with infinite tenderness:

"Be quiet, my son. Go home, and be happy. What does it matter how a worn-out old woman goes to her grave, or by what humble gate she enters eternity? You have youth, health, a wife that loves you. Go home, and never mind by what path your old mother wanders away. They can only deal death upon her—only death."

Mrs. Yates said this coming out of the police-court, where she had pleaded guilty.

Then he saw the gates of the prison close upon her, and went home with his wife, who wept bitterly all the way, but could not help flashes of gladness breaking through her grief when she felt the strong arm of her husband supporting her. Never in this world did an acquitted prisoner enter his home with so sad a heart.

But the old woman slept soundly that night. Her struggles were over—the thing she had resolved upon was done. She really did not much care what the law did with her. She had, in truth, committed a crime, and was ready to endure any punishment on earth if God would only forgive her in eternity. Never, since that gloomy mass of stones was heaped in the heart of the city, had a grander head than that rested on a convict's pillow. It was a study for Michael Angelo, with those masses of gray hair rolling back from the broad forehead, and the firm mouth slightly relaxed by sleep.

The morning light shone in upon it gloomily, and the cold, lime-washed walls flung it out in sublime relief from

the dull gray of the prison blankets. You could not have looked upon that face and believed the old woman guilty of murder.

She awoke gently and patiently to her prison life; all that they gave her she took with thanks; all that her friends said, she listened to humbly—but nothing moved her purpose. She entered into no explanation, reiterated nothing, but said, with sad humility:

"I am a guilty woman. Leave me to the penalty of my crime."

Lawyer Steel came to her, offering any professional assistance; but she declined it with pathetic gratitude.

"There would be no need of counsel," she said; "the trial would only occupy a few minutes."

He expostulated with her. There was a way out of this, he said, even though she had confessed. It would not be impossible to convince the court that trouble, on account of her son, had driven her insane for the time. She must plead not guilty, putting herself upon trial, and leave the rest to him.

At first she received this proposition with silent thoughtfulness; perhaps the idea of life was sweet to her for the moment.

"But, my son," she said, fixing her eyes, which grew larger and larger every day, "what would they do with him?"

"Nothing. In this country no person can be put twice in jeopardy of his life for the same crime."

"Yes, I know; but the world would condemn him—that cruel weight of evidence would fall back and crush him. In the eyes of all honest men he would be a felon. That would kill us both. It is enough that he is compelled to bear the shame of his old mother's guilt—guilt that he will not believe in—my noble boy!"

"Nor do I believe in it, Mrs. Yates," said Steel, impressively.

She looked up at him quickly, and almost smiled, but said nothing more regarding herself.

"A strange woman," mused the lawyer, as he passed out of the Tombs; "a grand old woman! Guilty? Yes; but how?"

Daniel Yates was still more earnest with his mother. Liberty and life had become hateful to him, purchased at a cost so terrible. He absolutely longed to creep back into his cell and die there rather than see her a prisoner, menaced with a violent death. But even his anguish did not move her. She had chosen her part, and clung to it patiently, meekly, but with the firmness of a martyr.

Then Elizabeth Yates came with gentle caresses and sweet, womanly pleading. Her husband was so unhappy, she said, and their home so lonely; even the little girl was pining for a sight of her grandmother; every morning she awoke, lisping the sweet word, and all day long she was searching the rooms for her, or standing on the top of the stairs, wondering when grandma would come home again.

Then a soft moisture came into those gray eyes, and the old woman kissed her daughter-in-law on the forehead, blessing the child through her. After this she fell into a conversation with the young matron about the child, and gave her pure womanly counsel regarding her; but when Elizabeth looked up through her blinding tears, and said, "Mother, shall I bring her to you?" she answered, "No, my child, not here. She must not see her old grandmother in prison. Better far that she should never hear of her again!" Then Elizabeth fell to crying with deeper grief, for there was such mournful pathos in the old woman's speech, that her heart was fairly broken.

All efforts, all arguments were in vain. That stout heart never wavered for an instant, right or wrong; the woman was grand in her steadfast strength—but all this stubborn resolve was planted in pure womanliness. She got up no

tragedy, used no arts to entrap men's sympathy, but sat upon her bed, all those gloomy days, with balls of delicate worsted in her lap, knitting little garments for the child she never hoped to set eyes on again.

There was something very touching in the efforts of taste this poor woman made while her fingers were at work on those garments. Delicate tints of blue and rose color bloomed in the borders, such as an exquisite flower or a sweet woman-child might adopt and grow brighter for the wearing.

Could the poor old soul have woven her heart-strings into the fabric the child was to wear, I think she would have done it.

Thus time wore on, and the day of trial came. It took scarcely half an hour for the court to organize, and less than a minute for that old woman to say the one word, "guilty," on which her life hung. The indictment was for murder. They had not changed the form when suspicions of guilt fell from the son to the mother. So she pleaded "guilty," to that, and was remanded back for sentence.

Daniel Yates was by far the most wretched of the two, when the mother and son went forth from that court-room, side by side, with a policeman guarding her. People who had seen this man on the day of his own trial, scarcely recognized him now, for the flesh had melted from his limbs, and there was a hollow-eyed agony in his face, that no danger of his own could ever have brought there.

Three days from that the judge passed sentence of death on Hannah Yates. His voice faltered when he uttered the fatal words. While they were on his lips, he would have given much for the power to pardon, rather than sentence the woman. But law is inexorable. She had confessed her guilt, and must atone for it with her life.

Many persons in the court-room wept when they looked upon that calm face, which only received a shade of extra

whiteness from those awful words. There was something pathetic in its very stillness, that made even hard hearts yearn toward her with thrills of pity. She seemed to feel this a little, and besought the officer, in a trembling voice, to take her away before her son came. At her own request she had been brought forth for sentence without notice to any one. The thing she dreaded most was a sight of her son's anguish. It was that fear which made her eyes burn, and her limbs shake under her.

The next day Daniel did not appear at the prison. Perhaps the poor mother wondered at this, for sometimes she would drop her knitting and listen, if a step passed the gallery; but she asked no question, and gave no sign of impatience. Another day passed, and still her son did not come. Toward night she asked a question of the keeper.

Daniel Yates had been to the prison the day she was sentenced, but it was a few minutes after the time for closing. He seemed greatly distressed, and the morning papers said that he and lawyer Steel had gone to Albany, hoping to get a pardon from the governor.

Some love of life must have lingered about the old woman yet, for her sad, heavy eyes kindled, and the worsted flew across her fingers swiftly, as she listened.

Did she hope? Did she really desire to live? Up to this time the thoughts of death had seemed almost sweet to her.

It was true. Elizabeth came down to the prison that afternoon with a little basket of delicacies, and confirmed all that the keeper had said. Daniel had started for Albany, the moment he heard of the sentence, and lawyer Steel had gone with him. Elizabeth was sure they would bring a pardon. What man on earth could be so cruel as to harm her?

The little woman was very hopeful, but the prisoner said nothing, though a nervous tremor was visible in her hands,

and her feet now and then trod the floor, as if an impulse for walking had seized upon her, which she could not entirely suppress.

That very hour Lawyer Steel and Daniel Yates were with the governor, pleading for the old woman as only those who throw heart and soul into a subject can plead. Both these men believed the condemned woman innocent of the crime to which she had confessed. This thought drove the son frantic. He pleaded for her as a drowning man cries for help, so earnestly, so manfully, that the governor believed in his innocence, and almost doubted if the mother were really guilty.

He commuted her sentence to imprisonment for life.

Three days after this a steamboat crept up to the wharf at Sing Sing, discharging its miserable load in the shadow of the prison. The most heart-rending sight that life presents to human pity, is a group like that one which stood upon the wharf, pale, dejected, helpless, with all the desolation of those dreary walls looming over them.

Standing a little apart from the rest, was an old woman, a young man, and a sorrowing little matron, whose blue eyes were so flooded with tears, that the grim old prison seemed floating in mist, as she turned them upon it, with a look of pitiful curiosity.

The old woman had no irons at her wrists, and her simple garments were devoid of any mark which could distinguish her as a convict; but her face, so firm, so still, so inexpressibly sad, told the cruel story.

Henceforth that rough building in the midst of ragged quarries, cut through by an iron railroad, and crowded close to the river, on the bleakest spot to be found on its shores, was to be her home. Her home till death.

The officer in charge came up to her where she stood, and even he seemed to feel some pity for her age and her helplessness, and had left her standing there to the last.

"It is hard," he said, "but you must go with the rest, old as you are."

A quiver of pain passed over her face. She reached forth her hand.

"Daniel!"

The agony at his heart was too great. He could not touch that trembling old hand, but turned away covering his face, that no one might see how bitterly a strong man could weep. When he looked up again his mother was gone.

CHAPTER XXX.

OLYMPIA, THE PRIMA DONNA.

THE furore of spectacular exhibitions was dying out in New York, but their gorgeousness was still introduced in the most popular operas, where graceful dancers and sweet-voiced singers were sometimes united in the same persons. At the close of one of these performances, a beautiful woman came out from the gorgeous background of tinted fire and quivering tinsel, and stood gracefully before her audience, waiting for its applause.

Olympia was honestly and fairly a beautiful blonde. No acids had ever taken the gloss or color from her abundant hair. No enamel was needed for that exquisite complexion. The rouge that she wore profusely enough in her profession concealed no defect, but only served to render that coarse which, in itself, was delicate and harmonious.

In fact, the woman was no longer in the bloom of her youth; but she still retained a rich fullness of beauty which, in her, seemed to have mellowed into perfection, as life approached its meridian.

She came out from that group of beautiful women, like

Aurora escaping from her nymphs of the morning, and bent, in smiling grace, under the storm of applause that broke over her.

Again and again came those wild bursts of enthusiasm. In the grace of her movements, and in the exquisite power of her voice, she had taken a New York audience by surprise.

Just from Europe, heralded by a broad transatlantic reputation, she was a novelty, and from that night would be "the rage."

Three times the curtain went down, and three times it rolled back again, at the tumultuous command of an audience thrilled with delight by her beauty, by her voice, her air, and a dance, in which she introduced steps peculiarly her own, graceful, voluptuous, fascinating, which carried the refined portion of her audience off with the rest, so fascinated that they would not reflect.

When the curtain fell for the third time, leaving the woman ankle deep in flowers, she spurned them from her with a careless lift of the foot, and moved across the stage like a leopardess in its jungle, her gauzy draperies of pale sea-green seemed to scintillate sparks of fire, her long hair streaming in waves and ripples of pale gold down her back, and a garland of water-lilies trailing down with it; for it was a peculiarity of this woman to wear her ornaments as if they were dropping from her. Not a single flower did she take from the great mass that lay around her; even the bouquets in her hands, which she had gathered up at first, were tossed, in contemptuous silence, to her less fortunate companions.

Her first appearance in New York. Yes—all the play-bills blazing on the street corners, all the journals, morning and evening, had been announcing that fact for weeks; but the woman herself knew better. When a young girl, she had acted subordinate parts in that very theatre—parts that

the humblest actress, to whom she had so contemptuously tossed her flowers, would have scorned to accept. Nay, from that low condition she had only been rescued by a leader of the orchestra, so much above her in position that her good fortune seemed a marvel to herself when she became his wife.

That marriage was now so far back in her existence that she had scarcely thought of it for years. But this night something had brought it sharply to her memory. As the shouts went up, and a storm of flowers beat against her, she saw a face uplifted to hers from the orchestra. A pair of wild gray eyes fixed upon her in sudden recognition; lips just parted, as if a cry had left them open, and colorless.

This one look had the power to sweep away all her triumphs, and leave her angry and trembling, while she stood there bending with subtle grace, and throwing kisses to the audience.

It is no wonder she spurned her flowers, and was frightened at her own success, when the curtain went down.

Olympia had hardly crossed the stage, and turned toward her dressing-room, when the man who had been her husband stood in her way. The scene-shifters were still about, and she really took no heed of him at first, but turned to one of the principal actors, and listened to his congratulations with impatient delight; for that face in the orchestra had poisoned her triumph so bitterly that she could hardly think it real, and this one success in America had been for years the crowning ambition of her life.

She thanked the actor lightly, as if no fear could touch her heart, turned and saw the man, who had followed her.

The gas was generally turned off now, and the stage, that had only a few minutes before been a conflagration of gorgeous lights, was now so dark that she had difficulty in seeing the man's face.

"Olive!"

She knew the voice, and flung herself away from it in haughty surprise.

"Olive, I must speak with you."

"With me! for what? It is years since you and I have had anything in common."

"I know it, Olive."

"Olive! Do not call me by that name. It is of the past, and sickens me. Olympia—the Olympia—is what I am called now."

"Olive, or Olympia, it is all the same. You are not the less a woman who was once my wife, and the mother of my child."

"Hush, sir! It is false—or, at any rate, a thing to be forgotten. The courts gave us a divorce. The child, since you will mention her, was awarded to me."

"But for her I should not have spoken."

"Well, what of her? I wish to be rid of this subject. The very sight of you, after so long, brings back that hateful year or two that you stole out of my life, and makes me nervous. You had something to say about the child, poor little thing! Well, why don't you say it?"

"Olive, do you know where our child is?"

"Yes and no. Of course, I did the best I could for her. If it hadn't been for your unnatural opposition about the divorce, you might have had her, and welcome. I was poor as a church mouse then, and should have been glad to let her go; but you wanted her, and I would have seen her starve first. Poor little thing! I hope she hasn't quite come to that; but how could I be expected to look after her, unless I travelled with her on my back, as the Indian women do with their little redskins. I got her a kind nurse, and took good care that she should be a pretty one. What else could you or any one else ask?"

"Did you pay this nurse?"

"Pay her? Yes—six weeks in advance. It is easy to

remember that, for I pawned a lovely locket for the money. I forgot who gave it to me, but it had a spiteful little snake coiled around it, with sharp ruby eyes, and was diamond-striped down the back. It broke my heart to let the locket go; but I determined to do my duty, and that is how the nurse got six weeks' pay in advance."

"For six weeks. Was that all?"

"All! What do you want? Could I be expected to pawn another locket when I hadn't one to my neck?"

"But you never saw the child after that?"

"How could I, when I was in Germany and France, trying to make something out of myself, working night and day, going through traps and up into flies; that was my fate for a good while after I got rid of my miserable married life. After that—"

Here the woman gave her head a magnificent toss, and shook out her sea-green draperies, which settled back dim and lustreless, now that there was no light to bring the sheen and sparks out.

"After that I had something else to think of. A good time isn't to be got by pining about children one has lost sight of. The nurse was a good little thing, and I dare say she got along well enough with the child, if it didn't go off teething, or with the measles, or scarlet fever. Of course I hope it didn't. One would not be a good mother to want such things to happen; but then, if they did, you know it is one's duty to be resigned."

The man sighed heavily.

"The child is not dead, Olive. I am a poor fellow, I know, but I couldn't quite give up my own child, if you did."

"Why, you did not dare to disturb her after the court gave her to me?"

"No, I did not do that, but I found out where she was, and got a sight of her now and then; sometimes I sent the people that had her a little money."

"And how could you find that out? Who told you to send money?"

"You told me once, when I pleaded with you to let me know something about her, that she was with a woman who had lost her own child, and would take this in its place. Her husband's name was Daniel Yates, you said, and there was an old woman in the house, his mother, who would do anything for it."

"But I did not tell you where these people lived."

"No, and I never should have found out, but for a thing that happened. This Daniel Yates was arrested for murder."

"That man! He never committed murder, never!"

"They arrested him, but he was acquitted. The old woman you had spoken of as so kind and good, confessed the crime, and was sent to State's prison for it."

"The old wretch! but she couldn't take my little girl with her."

"No; but the child was brought forward, some way, in evidence, and this is how I got a clue. Day after day I hung about the house where Yates lived, and at last got a sight of my poor child."

"Poor! You say poor! Was she sickly then, or ugly? I am sure no child of mine could be that."

"She looked well, and—"

"Was she pretty—beautiful? Tell me that!"

"As a little angel. The nurse you speak of was holding her by the hand. Daniel Yates walked with them. It was after his mother went to prison. He looked like death."

"Pretty, bright, an angelic child. Brown, I think I should like to see that child. Wait a minute."

Olympia gathered up her draperies, ran across to the stage, snatched a basket of flowers from among her trophies, then hurried to the green-room, and came back with some glittering bon-bon boxes, which she brought huddled in the skirt of her dress.

"Take these to her, dear little pet! say that her mamma is coming to see her with lots of playthings, and will take her out to ride in her pony carriage. Tell me again, Brown, is she so very pretty?"

"The prettiest creature that I ever saw."

"I will buy her a superb French doll, the first thing in the morning, wardrobe and all."

"A doll," said the man, almost smiling. "Olive, have you forgotten how long it is since you left me?"

The woman caught her breath and looked at him earnestly.

"How many years is it?"

"Fourteen, and our child was over two years old then."

"Great Heavens! so it is—fourteen and two—my child is a young woman. Mercy! am I so old as that! Do I look so old as that, Brown?"

She stepped beneath a jet of gas which still burned at one of the wings, that he might see her face clearly. This man had loved the woman before him, when the affections of his nature were in their keenest force. Perhaps he loved her yet, for his eyes flashed as he looked upon her. She had been his evil fate, and he knew it, but a glow of the old tenderness was in his eyes.

"Ah, Olive," he said, "what a woman you might have been! How beautiful you are yet!"

"Then I do not look like the mother of a girl sixteen years old?"

He answered her with a burst of passionate sorrow.

"You do not look like a mother at all. God forgive you!"

She stepped away from the light with an impatient gesture.

"Do control yourself better, Brown. This comes of sticking like moss to one place. When an old love is dead, why can't you bury it decently out of the way? What's

the use of keeping the ashes? Now, I would rather be friendly with you, while I remain here. No one will guess that you and I have ever met before. Why should they? It would only make awkward paragraphs for the newspapers, and draw you into more notice than would be pleasant, with a person of your habits."

"My habits?"

"Yes, of course; I see it all in your face."

"You drove me to it," said the man, trembling with excitement."

"I dare say," she answered carelessly; "weak men always accuse some woman of being the cause of their sins. It is very stupid, though, and usually false. But about this girl—our child—how strange it seems that you and I ever loved each other, but I really think we did. How can I manage it to see her?"

"It is easy. Daniel Yates is dead."

"Poor fellow! I remember him well. How that little doll of a woman adored him."

"He never looked the same man after his mother went to Sing Sing. It was a hard, hard case. He built a little house near by the prison, and worked at his trade there, going to see her constantly as the rules would permit, but he never was strong or cheerful. It took years to crush down that iron constitution, but his heart broke at last."

"And his wife—is she there yet?"

"She followed him in less than three months."

"And the child?"

"Was left alone."

"How did you know about this?"

"I taught her music. It was so managed that I should be recommended as a teacher. During the last four years she has been my pupil."

"Knowing who you are?"

"No, no. I dared not tell her."

"Did those Yates people pay for all this?"

"I—I took their money, but put every cent of it aside for her. It was impossible to refuse it, without a reason."

"I don't understand. Did they really educate this girl?"

"As if she had been their own, and they rich."

"I am sorry these people are dead. It would have been so easy to pay them; but one can't send money into eternity, you know. Beautiful, is she?"

"Very beautiful."

"Like me?"

"No; she is not like you."

"Then how can she be beautiful?"

Brown did not smile at the sublime egotism of the woman, but answered, gravely:

"I cannot describe the difference, but you will feel it."

"Brown you have forgotten to be agreeable. What other man would dare address the Olympia in this fashion?"

"You asked a question; I have answered it. Surely your greed for flattery is not so keen that you would accept it from me? Even common praise would be satire from my lips. I will not insult you with it."

The woman, coarse-grained and reckless of all human rights as she actually was, winced at this. She gathered up the draperies of her dress, and was about to leave him in the silent disdain with which she sometimes crushed her admirers; but as he neither followed nor attempted to keep her, she came back, and said, abruptly:

"What was your object in seeking me here?"

"I came to make sure that you were not utterly devoid of the sweet motherhood which makes the glory of most women. Our child is now cast upon the world. Whatever means Yates had, died with him. She came to me last week, asking me to aid her in getting into the choir of some

church, and to recommend her for pupils. She is poor, utterly unacquainted with the world, and has nothing on earth but the roof that shelters her, no friend but myself."

"And you?"

"I am no fit guardian for an angel like her. Besides, I am but a poor, worn-out fellow, living from hand to mouth. My place in the orchestra here is but temporary. I do not keep any position long."

The woman looked at him an instant with something like regret. She remembered what a brilliant, hopeful man he had been when she seized upon his ambition and tore it up by the roots; but her compunction only lasted a moment.

"Well, Brown, I have money enough, at any rate, to keep her from peddling out her voice to the church; but I wish to see her first. To-morrow night bring her to the theatre. Give me a pencil and a scrap of paper. That will do. There is an order for my own box; take her there."

Brown took the paper, but stood, with it in his hand, hesitating.

"Well, what's the matter now?"

"I was thinking, Olive. That girl has never been to a theatre in her life. I would not quite like her to see you in this piece."

"Why not? The music is delicious, and I haven't handsomer dresses in anything. Besides, the dance and the scenery will take her off her feet."

Brown sighed. It was useless to reason with this woman—she could not understand him. Deficient in many of the finer feelings of a high nature as he undoubtedly was, she could not reach even his level.

"But you need not trouble yourself. This opera will be put aside for awhile after to-night. You can see that by looking at the posters as you go out," she said, carelessly.

"One thing I wish to say before you see the girl, Olive. I think she still believes herself the daughter of Daniel

Yates. It is certain that she knows nothing about that trial, or that the old woman is in prison. Do not say a word about it, for she is a sensitive child, and it may do great harm."

"Do you mean that I am not to tell her that she is my own child, Brown, if I wish it? Well, there is no use in asking that, because I shall do just as I please about it. As for all that trash about the trial, I shall not say anything about it, because I don't care a fig one way or the other. But one thing I can tell you—if the child isn't good-looking, don't expect me to own her, for I won't."

Brown had turned away while she was speaking, and seemed anxious to be gone; but she called him back.

"You will certainly bring her?"

"Yes; if it is possible."

"But say nothing. I will not commit myself, remember, till I have seen the creature. Just bring her to the theatre—nothing more."

Brown promised again, and went away heavy-hearted, as a man might well be who had found the woman he once loved so coarsely selfish.

Olympia went to her dressing-room, carrying back the basket of flowers and boxes of bon-bons in her arms. There she found her dressing-maid waiting patiently, with a large basket covered with oiled-cloth at her feet, and implements for a theatrical toilet lying confusedly on a table near her. Directly in front of the poor, worn-out creature was a great swinging mirror, in which her elongated and sleepy features lay, like a drowned person in a pool of limpid water. She started up as the great prima donna came in, and stood ready to undress her.

Olympia dropped her basket of flowers to the floor, gave it a kick across the room as she came in, scattering the blossoms all about, and lending a pure element to the overwrought perfume that rose from the dressing-table. Then

she pitched the glittering bon-bon packages after it, and sat down before the mirror, beating the floor with her satin-clad foot and casting furtive glances into the mirror. The face she saw there was sullen and a little doubtful. The duties of that night had been arduous, and her features looked haggard through their rouge. She started up.

"Pour out some pure water."

The maid lifted a ewer, half-emptied it into the cracked bowl, and stood aside, while her mistress buried her face in the water till it was wet to the hair. Then she reached out her hand for a napkin, rubbed every vestige of false color from her face, and puffed the frizzed gold of her hair with a light touch of her hand before she sat down in front of her mirror again. Then she examined the face she had washed with eager scrutiny, and turned to the maid with an appeal that was almost imploring:

"Well! *do* I look old enough to have a girl of sixteen for a child?"

"I am sure, madam, you look scarcely older than that yourself."

This flattery, was not, in fact, so absurd or coarse as it may seem. No deep feeling had ever brought lines to that beautiful face. A soft, sensuously selfish woman keeps the good looks that harmonize with her character. The face in the glass smiled back to its original, and the head gave a little exultant toss. Then she leaned forward, and talked inly with the image that bent toward her.

"Just now—yes; but there must be a break before long, my beautiful friend; thirty-four isn't young, if it looks so. When I lay down the power of loveliness, some one will take it up. Better my own child than another's. But wait till we see her—wait till we see her!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

TWO FUNERALS.

THERE are rocks, dust and desolation on every hand where the State's prison at Sing Sing is located; but back in the village, and near by in the adjacent country are many pleasant nooks and pretty residences, which give an idea of thrift and refinement to the whole neighborhood.

Away from the village, perhaps half a mile inland, stands a small, stone cottage, built low upon the ground, with a light verandah of unhewn cedar-posts running down two sides, and an oriel window in one end. These pillars were so festooned with roses, honey-suckles and passion-flowers, that no person would have thought it the home of a common mechanic, but so it was.

A working man had built the cottage years ago, almost with his own hands; he had planted the paper-mulberry that overshadowed one end of the house, the half-grown elm that dropped its superb branches in front, and the honeysuckles, that wound themselves in and out of those rugged cedar pillars.

You could tell how old the house was by the growth of those trees, for Daniel Yates had built the cottage, and planted both mulberry and elm on the year his mother was shut up in a gloomy cell of the prison. Then, and during all the succeeding years in which he lived in that cottage, Yates was a sad and disheartened man, retiring, reticent, and shy of company; though not by nature unsocial, he lived by himself, finding all the solace and joy of a broken life in his own family.

Yates could not be idle, even if circumstances had offered no incentive to labor. He was naturally an active energetic man, and the old habit of usefulness clung to him long after

he had much care for the result. He established a moderate business as an upholsterer, in the village, and from that won a fair livelihood, though the expenditures lavished upon the fair girl, who made the most cheerful light of his home, must have been drawn from other sources.

Yates told no one the reason of his coming to that place; but he visited the prison constantly, whenever the rules permitted, and through the influence of the chaplain, who was his only intimate friend, took a Sunday class among the convicts, which was never neglected a single Sabbath, not even after the decline, which stole upon him slowly year after year, had wasted his stalwart frame and bowed it down, till it walked the earth like a shadow.

Elizabeth Yates, too, had her Sunday class among the women. She read them chapters in the Bible with her sweet voice, and said kind things to these poor outcasts, that touched and softened them far more than solemn harangues would have done, had she been capable of them, which, dear little woman, she was not. In her class was an old woman, gray-haired and gentle, as is becoming to old age, who would sit by, as Elizabeth read, with her eyes closed, and a soft, shadowy smile, hovering about her mouth, as if the very sound of that voice were music to her.

When Elizabeth closed her Testament and prepared to go, the eyes of these two women would meet with a glance of sad yearning affection, and for a whole minute their hands would clasp lovingly, when, perhaps, a whispered question and answer would pass between them.

"Is the child well?"

"Yes; well, and so good, so lovely."

Then the old woman would draw a deep breath, and go away to her solitary cell with a look of grave, sweet calm, that made even her fellow-prisoners long to do something, that she might know how much they pitied her.

Thus it was that the years crept away, scattering the

ashes of age more thickly on that old woman's head, and slowly breaking down the strength of the young man.

Daniel Yates came home from the prison one evening so weak and feeble, that he could hardly walk. He had been permitted to see his mother in the chapel that day, and much low-voiced conversation had passed between them, sometimes earnest and eager, again sorrowful beyond expression. Yates was miserably ill, and he had reached the prison with great difficulty. The hot red in his cheeks, and the fever in his hands, filled the old convict with alarm. She took both his hands in hers, and kissed them as she had done a thousand times, when they were tiny things, with the faint pink of a shell in their palms.

"Don't, mother," he said, mournfully; "it only makes me feel worse, for I know how much you will miss me."

The slow, hard tears of age had been creeping up to her eyes, but she put them back and bent her head, that he might read nothing of the anguish in her face. Then she talked, as I have said, of those things which interested them most, and with a mind that seemed clear and cold as crystal, decided for him such points as troubled him with a doubt. A person looking on would have said that the mother and son parted coldly, almost without feeling; but a sudden chill had come upon him, his lips turned coldly blue. She heard the faint chatter of his teeth, and restrained herself to a silent farewell that seemed cold, but was a terrible agony.

When the convict went out from the chapel, she besought the matron to let her go alone into her cell, which was so like the stillness of a grave, and the matron seeing the change in her face, said, "Yes," and added a few words of sympathy that the old woman did not hear, in her yearning to be alone.

The keepers each time as they passed her cell that day looked into the aperture through which she got a little air,

and always found her on her knees with her face from the light. Her soul was following Daniel Yates back to his home. Did she think of her own guilt then? Was she penitent? Alas! I only know this poor old woman was very unhappy; the rest lay between herself and her God. She had been many years in her prison cell, doing some good even there, for she was often detailed as a nurse in the hospital, and those who suffered, had felt her kindness and benefited by her clear, good sense. To these unhappy convicts, that old woman was almost an angel. No man or woman in that prison had ever heard her utter a complaint.

Daniel Yates went home that day with death at his heart and blood upon his lips. Then his wife knew that his time had come, and moving around him, like a ghost, tried to be quiet and appear hopeful, while the heart lay dead in her bosom.

Yates fell upon a couch, which had been much used of late, and panted out one word:

"Caroline!"

The girl came at once, terrified, with her hair afloat and blue eyes gleaming with affright.

"Oh, father, father, are you so ill?"

She knelt down by his couch, and laid her cheek against his hand.

Yates looked at his wife, and she withdrew, closing the door after her. Then he put one arm fully around the girl, and begged her not to sob so bitterly, for he had something that she must hear, for it might not be long that he could speak.

She held her breath, awe-stricken, and listened.

"Caroline, there is a thing which you must learn, sooner or later, and no one here can tell it you but myself. Do not tremble so, or it will take all my breath away."

"What is it? what is it? Not that this turn is so very, very bad! Oh, not that!"

"That rests with God only, my child. No; Caroline, you are not my child."

"Not your child! Oh, father!"

"This is what I desire to tell you. The day will come when you will be made to know it, less kindly than it comes from me."

"Oh, father! my father!"

"Be quiet, dear. No father will ever love you better. Tell me now, while I can hear, have I not always been kind to you?"

"Oh, father! Kind! No girl ever had such a father."

"Still I am not that, but have tried to do all that a father could. When I am gone—"

"Oh, father, father, do not say that!"

With all his apparent calmness, the sick man had been greatly excited. It seemed as if a band of iron were girding his chest closer and closer. With every breath he struggled against it, but only to find the next more difficult. A sharp pain cut through his speech, a faint sickness crept over him. He closed his eyes, and lay upon the pillow, panting feebly for breath.

The girl was terrified. All thoughts of the painful truth he had told her fled from her mind. She ran to the door, and Elizabeth Yates came in. No powers of conversation were left to the man after that. He made an effort once or twice, but could not speak a loud word. At last he made a faint sign. Caroline knelt close by his pillow, and laid her face to his.

"When you are twenty-one, go to N. Steel, No — Nassau street. He will tell you, but not till you are twenty-one."

The sentence exhausted him. He lay back upon the pillow, motionless, scarcely breathing.

She pressed her face closer to his, sobbing piteously. Then he made another effort.

"My easy-chair—keep it. I give it to you. Never let it go out of your possession. Promise me."

"I do promise, father."

"Let *me* come now!"

It was the meek, pleading voice of Elizabeth Yates. She could not bear to see even that beloved girl listening to the last words of her husband, and she standing by.

Caroline arose, and gave place to the wretched wife. She sat down drearily in the chair which that dying man had given her, and watched the couch, in a dull, dreamy way, while he grew worse and worse. In mercy to her youth, she did not understand or know that death was creeping slowly up from the ice-cold feet to the honest heart; but all at once she saw his tall form stretch itself. A spasm swept over the face, the locked hands fell slowly apart, and Daniel Yates was dead!

The people of the village came out in numbers to assist in the burial of this man, who left no enemies behind him.

Among them was an old woman dressed in faded black, which must have been made years before. She seemed very poor, and the materials of her dress were incongruous, but still it was an attempt at mourning, and the twist of rusty bombazine about her old bonnet was far more pathetic than clouds of heavy crape could have been.

She stood by the grave while the burial service was being read, with her eyes cast downward to the coffin, still and tearless as a ghost, and almost as white. It was noticed that she never lifted her eyes from the coffin or turned them from the grave, until the last sod was laid upon it. Then she looked up and found herself alone with the grave-diggers and a man whom they recognized as a keeper from the prison. She walked wearily up to this man, and said:

"I am ready to go now."

The man seemed to take no notice, but walked away, following her at a little distance.

These two entered the female prison, and the old woman went directly to her cell, where she lay down upon the nar-

row bed, and, closing her eyes, allowed the slow, salt tears, every one the birth of a pain, to flow through her closed lashes drop by drop, till the straw pillow was wet with them.

As the keeper went out he met the matron, who addressed him, anxiously:

"You have got back without trouble, I hope. Did any one notice her?"

"Not particularly, I think. I kept away from her, and she made no noise. Poor old woman! We may get into trouble for it with the commissioners, but I would do the same thing over again, right or wrong."

"It is useless arguing the question. I could not help it," answered the matron. "The very sight of her eyes, imploring me for one last look at the dead, was heart-rending. If it costs my place, I cannot be sorry that I let her go."

"She kept her word, and spoke to no one. Nor did she look even at the widow, who, poor thing, is but a shadow. I never saw a creature so broken down, white as a sheet, and so heavy about the eyes. You would not have known her."

"Don't tell me about it. My heart had all it could bear with the old woman. To see her mending that moth-eaten alpaca dress, and twisting that wisp of rusty black about her bonnet, with the tears rolling down from under her iron spectacles, was too much for me. It is not often one gives way in this place, but I didn't get over it without a good cry."

"Well, well, I hope we shall not get hauled up about it, that's all," said the keeper, "and I hope she won't think of asking us again, when that poor widow goes, which won't be long, I can tell you."

The keeper was right. Just two months after Daniel Yates was laid in his grave, his wife Elizabeth was by his side.

She had passed away like a snow wreath, almost without making a sign of the grief that killed her.

When the girl Caroline returned home from the funeral she was utterly alone in the world, for she had been kept in profound ignorance of the old woman in the prison, and had no claim on a human soul, except it might be a middle-aged woman who had been hired as a servant after Elizabeth became too feeble for household labor. In this solitude and loneliness the girl spent a year. Then her means were exhausted, and she went to her music-master for counsel and help.

CHAPTER XXXII.

AN INVITATION TO THE THEATRE.

It was autumn now, the saddest time of all the year; doubly sad for this young girl in her loneliness and distress, for she had been so delicately cared for, and kept so isolated from every one but her teachers, that an effort at making her own way in the world seemed almost impossible. But the money Daniel Yates had left, so far as she knew about it, was dwindling away with a swiftness that frightened her. There had been a will, and some one in the village had, under its directions, disposed of the business, and settled up the humble estate.

There is no doubt that Daniel Yates had left property enough to support the girl, whom he carefully mentioned in his will as "My adopted daughter, residing with me, and known as Caroline Yates, who was made sole legatee after the death of his wife. But widows and orphans are the natural prey of unprincipled men.

Elizabeth knew so little of business that she never questioned the validity of a settlement which left only the roof

that sheltered her and scarcely a year's support beyond that. Caroline was still more helpless, and this autumn she found the wolf at the door of that pretty cottage, and was stricken with terror at the sight.

Then it was that Caroline, with much trembling and hesitation, appealed to her music teacher, who came twice a week from the city to give her lessons, as he had done for several years before the death of Daniel Yates, persisting in an assertion that he had received pay in advance. This man promised to recommend pupils—in fact, to assist her in every possible way; and, believing him, she took hope again.

One morning Caroline sat in the oriel window, watching for her friend; for Brown was, in truth, the only friend this young creature could count upon in the whole world—but for him, her loneliness would have been complete.

She had been counting her resources, and found them so completely exhausted, both in substance and actual money, that a failure on the part of her teacher would leave her and the faithful woman, who was her companion and house-keeper, utterly destitute.

Thus it happened that Caroline sat in the oriel window of her cottage, and watched for her teacher with such anxious looks.

Brown came at last, walking swiftly, with a roll of music in his hand.

He was a tall, spare man, slightly round-shouldered, but active, and not yet forty years of age, though he appeared full that at all ordinary times.

But now his face was unusually lighted up. There was something strange and almost wild in his eyes that made Caroline doubtful, for the moment, if it really was her teacher who paused at the gate and stood looking at her so earnestly through the oriel window.

No wonder the man stood awhile and lost himself utterly.

The girl was leaning on a small table, just large enough to hold a vase of late autumn flowers and a book. This she had pushed aside in order that her folded arms might rest upon it, while she gazed out of the window with wistful longing, which turned to the gladness of a delighted child when she recognized the man at the gate.

The brown gold of that thick hair, waving back from the face, and dropping a long, heavy ringlet on either shoulder with the brightness of sunshine quivering through and through it; the soft, dove-colored dress; the snow-like folds of that zephyr shawl, floating in and out with the fleeciness of a cloud; the eager bending of that lovely head, was a picture so exquisite, that he had no heart to break it up by an outward movement.

Behind her was the dim background of a pretty parlor; in front a Virginia creeper, frost-bitten, with a vivid comingling of green and red, covered one entire end of the house, and was piled in masses of gorgeous foliage around the window, adown which it fell in wreaths and tendrils framing her in.

A few moments he saw this picture clearly, then it fell into tumult. The girl sprang from her seat, ran across the room, and came out to meet him.

"Oh! Mr. Brown! I am so glad! I was so anxious! I thought you would never come!"

Brown took the hands she held out, and locked them close in his.

"Are you really so glad to see me?"

"Glad! I have been watching ever since breakfast! Don't you feel how cold my hands are?"

"Poor little hands! how they shiver!" said Brown, tenderly. "But, why do you let them get so cold?"

"Why?" answered Caroline, nodding toward the window, "We can't watch the road from anywhere else; and—and Eliza thinks—that is—we don't have a fire in the parlor this year."

"Poor child! poor little girl! Is that it?"

Caroline blushed, and made an effort to release her hands. Like all sensitive persons she was ashamed of her poverty.

"Oh, it's nothing. I—I like it, you know; practising keeps one so warm; and I am at the piano night and day, now that I am to earn money by it. Besides, I like to sit with Eliza; she's such good company, and so kind since my poor mother died."

"Your mother!"

There was something in the teacher's voice that made Caroline look up quickly, and an expression in his face that held her gaze enthralled.

"Who told you of it?" she inquired, breathlessly.

"Let us go in, my child. The wind is keen this morning."

They entered the parlor, a pretty little room, with no costly ornaments in it, but neat and exquisitely arranged.

Still the empty grate with all its brightness, made the room seem more uncomfortable than it was.

Brown folded the soft zephyr shawl tenderly around Caroline, as she sat down by his side—so tenderly that she thought of her father, and tears came into her eyes.

He patted her hand but took no other notice of the tears which only broke in mists on her drooping lashes.

"Caroline, what do you think I came for this morning?"

"To give me a good, long lesson, and—and tell me some good news."

"About the lesson, I think you are a little mistaken, for I don't mean to give you one at all. If you think having found any pupils good news, I haven't got one as yet. We will think of that by-and-by."

Caroline's countenance fell. She remembered how little money was left, and her heart grew heavy with disappointment.

"Still you must not be disheartened, my dear girl. I come on purpose to give you a little pleasure."

She looked at him, wondering, as a child would, what the pleasure was that he half promised her.

"Have you ever been to the theatre, Caroline?"

"To the theatre? Yes—no, it was a concert; there was singing."

"Would you like to go? It is time you should see something of the world. Would you like to go to a theatre?"

"Oh, yes, yes! But when?"

"This very night, if you like it."

"If I like it? Oh, how can I tell you how much I wish to go!"

"Then get ready, and we will start by the return train."

"Now? right away? Is it really, really true?"

"Get ready. That is the best way of finding out."

Caroline ran to the door, held the knob in her hand a moment, and came slowly back again.

"But Eliza. She would like it. Must I leave her behind?"

The teacher fell into thought a moment; then answered, as if talking to himself:

"It is better so. She may need her. Who knows?"

"Can she go too?" inquired the girl, clasping her hands.

"Oh, if she could, if she could!"

"Go ask her if she would like it."

The next instant Caroline was in the kitchen, with both arms around the neck of a woman, who was busy at a table, ironing.

"Eliza, dear, dear old woman, I have something splendid for you! We are going to the theatre, you and I and Mr. Brown, this very night!"

Eliza put aside those clinging arms, set her cold iron on the clay furnace that stood on the hearth, lifted a hot one with her holder, and spat upon the black surface. When

the drop of moisture had leaped across it with a sharp hiss or two, she spread a napkin on the table, and went to work upon it. Then, and not till then, did she speak.

"What is it about the theatre?"

"Mr. Brown is going to take us both, you and I. Oh, Eliza! do put that iron on the hearth and talk about it. What do people wear at a theatre?"

"Anything that they want to, I reckon," answered the woman, bending to her work.

Caroline grew impatient. She could scarcely stand still upon the floor. How could Eliza take the great news so coldly? It was too aggravating.

"But you mean to go, Eliza?"

"If you go, I shall. It isn't likely I shall let you go alone."

"Then get ready, Eliza. We haven't a bit too much time. Do tell me what to wear."

Eliza folded her napkin, pressed the iron upon it with both hands, laid it in the clothes-basket, and took off her ironing-blanket. Then she untied her apron, and said:

"Come along with me upstairs, if you want to go so bad."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE ACTRESS-MOTHER.

THE theatre was crowded. A reaction from degrading sensuality, which had driven refined and intelligent people from places of public amusement, had set in, and the new opera promised, in many respects, to redeem a degraded past.

It was a graceful, dashing performance, rich in exquisite snatches of music, bright with scenic effects, and in every

way a novelty. Those who had shrunk from seeing Olympia in her coarser performances were glad to hear the surpassing richness of her voice in a part which called forth praise rather than blushes; and she was equally at home in grave or comic parts, for her powers of graceful adaptation were wonderful.

She came to them as a foreigner, but gave no special country as her fatherland, and the name she bore might belong to any.

She spoke several languages with equal purity; her beauty was something wonderful; her easy, subtle movements fascinated far more than they ever repulsed; her whole life and character was an enigma.

In such things excitement finds its daily food. So Olympia, in the new piece, drew a splendid audience, and came out transcendent.

A burst of applause heralded the actress as she swept across the stage, singing as she went. Again and again they gave her welcome. The sweetest notes in her voice were drowned in the uproar, as crystal brooks are swallowed up by the ocean; but the marvellous grace of her movements was music in itself, and that made itself felt in spite of those thundering bravos.

A young girl, in one of the private boxes, started up in alarm. The swell and rush of so many voices frightened her. She thought some fearful harm was threatened the beautiful creature, who seemed floating in a sea of light just beneath her. In her terror she leaned far over the railing, and looked out upon the innumerable heads moving so tumultuously beneath and all around her. She saw nothing but smiles, fluttering handkerchiefs, waving fans, and a flash of jewels from bended necks and arms in graceful motion.

"What did it all mean?"

A man, who should have been in the orchestra, but had

been excused by the influence of that woman on the stage, leaned forward and touched the girl's arm.

"Sit down, child; there is nothing wrong."

Caroline looked around, and shrank back to her seat, trembling.

"Will they hurt her? will they hurt her? What has she done?"

"Nothing. Wait a minute. See!"

Olympia swept forward, the folds of her satin train rolling after her, like snow with a golden sunshine on it. She smiled, and fluttered kisses from her hand.

"Oh, how beautiful she is! How they must love her!"

Again the girl leaned forward and rested her arms on the crimson cushion. She did not mind the noise now, for it was dying out, and the most heavenly music she had ever heard came trembling through, and all at once swelled above it, like a nightingale soaring as he sang.

The girl clasped her hands on the crimson velvet, her eyes took fire in all their blue depths, her lips curved, her cheeks glowed like damask roses. She was an embodiment of joyous enthusiasm—a Hebe whose cup overflowed. She never turned her eyes from the woman who entranced her, but drank in each note that fled from her lips, as honey-birds drink dew. She had no idea that any one was looking at her, yet half the audience turned that way, forgetting the music in admiration of her bright loveliness. She did not accept this homage, but gave her own like a prodigal, smiling down upon the actress, and absolutely yearning for a glance of those eyes.

They were uplifted. They looked earnestly into hers, taking away her breath. She regained it with a sigh of delight. In the very inspiration of her music, that beautiful woman had singled her out from the whole crowd as an object of regard. It was the great pleasurable excitement of her life. No wonder the girl went wild.

When Olympia left the stage, Caroline leaned back and spoke to Brown.

"You say my voice is sweet and powerful. Shall I ever sing like that? Tell me, shall I ever sing like that?"

"Yes, child; you have a finer voice, and can sing better than this woman, if you are willing to work hard as she has done."

"Work! I would almost die to be like her!"

A faint groan broke from the man. Caroline did not hear it, for that moment a door of the box opened, and the woman she had seen upon the stage stood in the dim light of a passage beyond. A black lace shawl had been flung over her head, and covered half her dress, through which the jewels in her hair and on her bosom flashed fitfully, as rays of light shot to them from the gas.

"Let the girl come with me. I wish to speak with her," she said, reaching out her arm from under the lace.

Caroline uttered a joyful little cry, and started up.

"May I? Oh! may I?"

Then it was that the man's heart recoiled from the destiny to which he had possibly led that young creature.

But it was too late. Her hand was already in that of the actress. But this moment the servant Eliza came from the corner back of the box, and laid her hand on Caroline.

"Where do you want to take her?" she said, addressing the woman. "She never goes anywhere without me."

"Only to my room," answered Olympia, in haste, for she had but little time before the next act would be on, and though her call was late in that, a feeling of nervous expectation was constantly upon her.

"She shall come back soon after the curtain rises. You will remain here, Brown, and you, my good woman."

Before Eliza could answer she saw her charge drawn through the door, which opened only on the outside, and found herself alone with the music-teacher, whom she addressed sharply.

"What does the woman mean?"

"No harm to the girl. They will be back in a few minutes."

"She had better," said Eliza, planting her chair by the door, that had a mysterious look to her, and which she resolved to guard. "She had better!"

Down a flight of steps, through a dimly-lighted passage, up to which the scenery crowded in a dull mockery of trees, Olympia led her charge, who took fright at the strangeness of everything about her, and began to tremble a little.

"Don't be afraid, child," said Olympia, throwing one arm around her, and pushing a door, that stood ajar, open with her foot. "Come in here—it is light enough."

It was a small room, frescoed a little coarsely, with cupids and dancing-girls chasing each other through clustering flowers of such gorgeousness as never bloomed under the sun. But the gaslight softened them into something like nature, and to that young girl, after coming in from the gloom and darkness behind the scenes, everything was resplendent.

One or two articles of furniture were enriched by garments of satin and velvet, intended for the last act, and laid out ready for use, and a dazzling radiance shone out from the dressing-table, where a crown, blazing with translucent stones, stood upon a cushion of purple velvet, and a girdle of stage emeralds trailed half way to the floor.

To a young girl like Caroline, simply brought up, and new to the world, this room was something wonderful.

The flash of the mock jewels, and the sheen of the dresses, fairly bewildered her. It seemed like a glimpse of fairy-land.

Olympia saw this with satisfaction. She tossed a heap of finery from the *tete-a-tete* sofa to the floor, and seated herself, drawing Caroline down with her. They sat directly before the great swinging glass, which framed

them both in like a picture. Olympia looked earnestly in the glass—first at her own face, then at the pure features of the girl, so bright with innocent surprise, so fresh in the first bloom of youth. The picture pleased her. She leaned toward the girl and kissed her on the forehead and on the lips, which was like the meeting of dewy roses.

"This is a pleasant life. Don't you think so?" she said.

"Oh! beautiful," answered the girl. "I never saw anything like it—never!"

"You saw how they received me?"

Caroline looked puzzled.

"How they stamped, waved handkerchiefs, and called me forward three times?" Olympia explained.

"Oh, was that pleasant?"

"Pleasant! I should think so."

"But—but—I thought it was something they had against you. The noise frightened me dreadfully. I did not know whether it was a riot, such as you read of in the papers, the theatre catching fire, or that they wanted to kill you!"

Olympia threw up her white arms and laughed.

"Why, child, it was applause—that which makes fame for us. My enemies would give the world to silence it, but they can't—they can't do it. Let them try!"

"Enemies, lady! Oh! who could be *your* enemy?"

"All the unsuccessful women, half the men, who fail to get introductions, for one cannot know every body. My dear little girl, I have enemies everywhere. Without that, I should think very little of myself."

"Ah! but so many friends."

"Oh, yes; such as the cherry tree has when its fruit is red."

"I—I do not understand."

"Why should you? But tell me, how would you like this life?"

"How would I like it? I—oh, lady!"

"You haven't seen half of it. The flowers, the little suppers, the rides, the presents, the lovely dresses."

Caroline's eyes sparkled.

"Travelling all over the world, with emperors and kings and princes worshipping you."

"Emperors and kings! Have you ever seen one?"

"Half a dozen. See—a crown prince gave me this bracelet."

Olympia touched a bracelet, which flashed like sunshine as she moved her arm.

"And you talk with all these people?"

"Talk with them? I should rather think so! When we meet, it is to change places. A beautiful woman and successful actress is *the* sovereign."

Caroline drew a deep breath, and cast a timid glance into the mirror. A smile and a blush stole over her face, for she saw that the other woman was reading her thoughts with mischievous satisfaction.

"Would you like to be like me?"

"Like you! Oh, how could I?"

"Easy enough, with that face and—"

Caroline covered the blushing face with both her hands.

"Don't! don't! You are laughing at me!"

"Laughing at you, foolish child? Why, you pretty goose, I am already half-jealous! Have you a voice?"

"I—I sing a little, and Mr. Brown says—"

"Well, what does Mr. Brown say?"

"Only that—that—. But please ask him. It's only nonsense, I dare say; but he does praise my voice, and I practise hard."

"Has Brown been your only teacher?"

"Yes, except in the beginning. But he praises me so much."

"Brown is a good judge, and a faithful teacher. After this, I will take you in hand myself."

"You! You, madame?"

"Why, how its eyes open—how astonished it looks! Upon my word, such a darling I had no idea of. Kiss me."

Olympia threw both arms around the astonished girl, and kissed her with warmth again and again, till Caroline made a faint struggle to get out of her embrace.

"What do you struggle for? Is it that you don't like me?"

"Not like you? No! no! But it was so sudden, it took away my breath."

"Took away your breath, did it? How strange! A mother's kisses should not do that. Don't look so frightened, for it is the solemn truth, I am your mother."

"You—you my mother?"

"Your own lawful mother."

"He said that just before he died—he said it, but did not tell me who. So did she, my sweet, good little mother, Elizabeth Yates. But no one ever gave me the least idea of this."

"Of course not. They wanted you all to themselves."

"But they are dead. He was dying when he told me. Besides, Daniel Yates was not a selfish man."

Olympia saw the warm color coming up to the girl's cheek, and heard a tone of self-assertion in her voice which she did not care to recognize at the moment.

"A selfish man? I would never forgive any one who said that. Daniel Yates did his duty well. I am satisfied, at any rate; though he might have told you more about myself."

"Oh, do not think hard of him! He was taken so suddenly at the last, and his voice went first."

Caroline's eyes were full of tears now. The remembrance of Daniel Yates' death-bed saddened her, even with that brilliant woman by her side. Would she ever dare to call her mother?

Olympia sprang to her feet.

"That is the call-boy. Come with me. I will show you the way back. Wait in the box till I come for you. There, there, don't cry! Remember, I am your mother."

A minute after this hurried speech, Olympia was on the stage, entrancing her audience with the most brilliant gem of the opera, and Caroline sat by her teacher, pale, trembling, and tearful, thinking of Daniel Yates and his sweet wife in their graves, rather than of the brilliant scene before her.

Brown looked at the girl anxiously once or twice, but said nothing, while Eliza kept her post in the background, protesting in her heart that this was the last time her charge should ever visit a theatre while she had the power to prevent it.

But it was impossible to be gloomy for any length of time with that superb voice swelling through the house. After a while Caroline drew nearer and nearer to the front of the box; then she leaned over in breathless admiration of the woman whose kisses were still warm upon her face. Her mother! Was it a dream? Had she inherited any of the rich gifts that made the beautiful actress an idol in that brilliant crowd? What were they doing now, tossing flowers, going wild, stamping, shouting, clapping hands, rending the very dome with boisterous adulation?

This was worship! This was fame! How glorious it must be!

Was the woman who stood before that curtain, ankle-deep in flowers, with a superb basket running over with heliotropes, jessamines and roses in her hand, blushing, smiling, bending low before that storm of adulation—was that woman her mother?

CHAPTER XXXIV.

OLYMPIA AND BROWN DISCUSS THE FUTURE.

"No, BROWN; the thing you ask is impossible. I cannot submit to share anything with you at this time of our lives."

"But I have rights; I am her father."

"Unfortunately, yes. But you are not now my husband, and the law gives you no authority over the girl."

"As for the law, Olive, neither of us can expect much help there. Caroline has a right to choose her own guardian in spite of us, and she is a girl to take the step, if she thoroughly understands her position."

Olympia wheeled sharply round on her piano stool, as her former husband said this, making a violent crash with her hand upon the keys of her instrument, in token of her angry dismay.

"Is this true, Brown?"

"Undoubtedly."

"And you have told her this?"

"I have told her nothing."

"That is so like you, Brown. Talk about honor; why, there isn't a man that I know of who keeps his word as you do—sometimes I almost love you for it; I do indeed. Now it would be so easy to put this girl up to some nonsense about her legal rights; but, from the first, I said to myself—I can trust the fellow; he loved me dearly once, and gave me up like a man when I got tired of him—just let me prove anything I pleased, and never said no; helped me on, in fact—I don't forget these things, Brown. Remember that, when you are tempted to come in between me and my child."

"I did not wish to interfere, but I am a lone man, with

nothing on earth to love or look forward to. It is a hard lot, a very hard lot, Olive. While I could see her every week, and know that she was learning day by day to love me more than any one in the wide world, it made a better man of me. I have not drank half so much, since she asked me, one day, what made my hands tremble so. If I could only live near her and be of use sometimes, people would have no right to call me a drunkard. I wasn't that, Olive, when you began to hate me so."

"Hate you! Dear me, what strong words can be worked into the most simple thing in the world. One cannot be violently in love forever, you know—at any rate, with the same man—it is out of all reason; but as for hating you, Brown, if you hadn't been my husband, I do really think I should have adored you up to this very hour; for, after all, you were my first love, or I shouldn't have done as I did. Don't you think so, Brown?"

"Let us talk of the business that brought me here, Olive. It was that past which you speak of so lightly, which has driven me to drink. I cannot speak of it without shivering. It broke me down, it broke me down."

Olympia looked at his pale and quivering features aghast.

"There, there, Brown! Don't begin that—how you shake. I wish I hadn't mentioned the window, and all the rest. Take a glass of brandy, that's a good fellow. It will set you up—such brandy! old as the hills."

Olympia was pouring out some brandy as she spoke, and sipped a mouthful of it, as she crossed the room.

Brown snatched at it eagerly, and drained the glass without stopping for breath, while Olympia stood by, smiling blandly.

The brandy, as she said, was old and strong; it gave the man courage. He looked Olympia steadily in the face now, and spoke with some confidence.

"Olive, you must not attempt to take this girl entirely away from me—I cannot bear it, I will not!"

"What else can I do? I must travel, she must travel. You are right; her voice is superb; she has something more than that—grace, beauty, talent. What an actress she will make! Most people are forced to retire with the first wrinkle. I shall live again in her. I began too late for a complete success, and have not made half the money people give me credit for. She will supply the deficiency. There need be no limit to her success—she may yet marry a duke."

"Olive, the girl shall not leave this country unless I go with her."

"Shall not! Well, I like that! How will you help it, Brown?"

"I will tell her the truth, and tell the whole world who her mother is."

"You will?"

"I will say, 'the woman who claims you, is indeed your mother; but in what did she ever do a mother's part? She left you with strangers, never thought of you, never inquired about you, kept all knowledge regarding you from the father who would have given his life for you, and would never have owned you at all, but for the beauty which will soon leave her, and the talents by which she hopes to heap up a fortune. This is the woman who asks you to leave every human being you ever loved, and cleave unto her.' This is what I will assuredly say to our child, Olive; judge, then, if she will leave me for you."

"So you have decided on this, Brown," said Olympia, who had resumed her music-stool, and was carelessly sweeping the keys.

"Yes; I will neither give up the child, nor trust her entirely with you. What I tell her, she will believe."

"Brown!"

Here Olympia made a sudden dash at the keys, and brought forth some wild, broken music, while she reflected a little; then she wheeled round upon her stool, and spoke promptly enough.

"Brown, my travelling agents have all been great scamps."

"Well, I suppose so."

"They have swindled me awfully, right and left."

"Very likely—women are easily swindled. But what has that to do with Caroline?"

"Everything, Brown. I mean to offer you the situation of my travelling agent. You won't cheat me. You won't get jealous and make a fool of yourself as some discarded husbands might. You will keep silent about the past to that girl and everybody else. In this way you can be with her just as much as I am. That is my proposition, Brown. How do you like it?"

For one moment a flash of fire shot into the man's eyes. There had been a time when he would have leaped even at this humiliating position for the miserable pleasure of being near that woman. But he was a different man now; for her sake alone he might not have been won to so degrade himself; but he thought of the young girl whom he had hesitated to claim, though Olympia had felt no scruple of the kind. This arrangement would, in fact, give him a sort of guardianship over her. This one link which bound him to the world and was drawing him gently upward, need not be violently broken. He felt the degradation of acting as the subordinate of a woman who had been his wife, but accepted it because of his child.

Brown was silent so long that the woman grew restless.

"You shall have liberal pay, travel first-class, as we do, and, in fact, be treated, in all respects, as a gentleman."

"I understand," said Brown, with a bitter smile. "It is not exactly a servant you are hiring."

"Of course not," answered Olympia, quite unconscious of the feelings she had aroused; "I never could quite consider you that. Besides, an agent is very different. One is not expected to consider him as an equal; but then you are an artist as well, and might be very useful in the choruses, and, most of all, in perfecting Caroline. When out of the reach of great professors I quite approve of your method with her."

"You are kind," answered the man, with a sour smile. "I will think of it."

"But there is something to be done on your part. My daughter is not to know that there is any relationship between her and yourself; nor is any one else."

"Well?"

"Nor is a word to be said about her to any one, or, by some means or another, the reporters will get at the whole story, and I shall wish the girl at the north pole, and you with her."

"I have no wish to drag this child into publicity of any kind, you may be sure of that," answered Brown, with deep feeling. "Heaven knows I would save her from that or any other evil with my life!"

Olympia looked at him with evident surprise.

"Why, Brown, do you really care so much for the child?"

"Do you think I would submit to consider the offer you make, one moment, if I did not?"

"Look here, Brown, I don't want too much of this, you know. I engage you as my agent, not as the girl's father—remember that!"

"Neither you nor I can destroy a fact. Humiliating as it may be to her mother, I am the girl's father, and have no power to forget it."

Brown spoke with some dignity. That woman was outraging all the good in his nature, and he made her feel it to some extent.

"Dear me! I did not mean to forbid natural feelings, if you will insist on having them. It is your actions and speech that I am particular about."

"For her sake I shall be prudent there," answered Brown; "that is, if I do not reject your proposal altogether."

"And if you do, what then?" asked Olympia, a little startled.

"That will be an after consideration."

"Dear me! what is the use of a quarrel between two people who neither love nor hate each other. Of course you will see that my plan is best. But there is another thing—"

"Well, what is it?"

"Brown, you *must* give up drinking."

Brown's face flashed hotly. This was a point on which he felt with painful abasement.

"Anything else?" he said, speaking between his teeth, with bitter irony.

"Not that I remember," she answered, simulating the unconsciousness she did not feel, for the quivering anger in his voice had reached her.

"Then, with that condition you need not insult me again. If I am or have been a drunkard, who made me so?"

Olympia wheeled round to her piano and touched it lightly; then she looked over her shoulder, and said, with a forced laugh:

"I'm sure you can't say it was me."

The man's face quivered with passion. It seemed, for a moment, while she fixed those tantalizing eyes on him, that he would have struck her; but he turned away, only uttering the two brief words: "Beautiful fiend!"

Then she laughed, for the paroxysm of his anger had passed, and she was, in fact, a beautiful fiend, who loved to play on the souls of men, so long as there was no personal danger in it.

"There, now, Brown, this is too bad, calling names and snarling like a hyena, when I am good-natured as a kitten. Come, come, let us make up, and be friends."

She reached out her hand, but Brown did not touch it.

"Dear me! what malice! I never saw anything like it," she said, beginning to play again; "but you always were quick. Think this all over, and come to me in the morning when you are better tempered. I must go to rehearsal now."

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE COTTAGE AT SING-SING.

BROWN was in no state for serious deliberation when he left the woman who had once been his wife, and still retained power enough to move him as no other creature on earth could have done. He began bitterly to repent the course he had taken in bringing the mother and child together, and had gone to Olympia, hoping that, with her usual capriciousness, she would be willing to leave the girl in her present safe obscurity.

Being summarily dismissed, he went at once to the cars, and the next hour was in the little cottage at Sing-Sing.

He saw Caroline in the oriel window—not seated tranquilly, as he had been in the habit of finding her, but flitting in and out from the room, restless, excited, and watching for some great change. She was but a young girl, and her first dash into life had all the glow and excitement of a romance.

The man's heart misgave him. Had he done right in breaking up the tranquillity of her sweet girlhood? Would not poverty have been better than the vortex of excitement he had prepared for her?

She met him at the door, flushed and eager for news.

"Ah, I am so glad you have come, Mr. Brown! What long, long days these have been!—only two, but they seem twenty! I did not know that time would drag so. I opened the door myself, for Eliza is so cross."

Brown took the hand she held out to him with such cordial welcome, and led her into the parlor.

"I have been trying to practice, but my lessons seem all broken up," she said, as he glanced at some sheets of music scattered over the piano. "This is what she gave me—my mother, you know. Isn't it wonderful how she sings it? I have been trying and trying. Would you listen? I—I think it is not so very unlike."

Caroline sat down at her instrument, in a flutter of nervous excitement; but her fingers quivered and her voice shook.

"Let me play the accompaniment," said Brown, kindly. "There, now."

A pale glow came into her face, her lips parted, her chest swelled slowly. Her hands were cold, but her voice came out pure, clear and rich, as Brown had never heard it before. Then he felt that ambition inspired her; genius had all at once swelled into a power. Her performance thrilled him.

"Have I done well?" she said, leaning upon the piano, with a glow of roses on her face. "Would she think that I have done well?"

The teacher shuddered when she asked this innocent question. Had *he* done well?

There was trouble in his eyes as he listened to her, so young, so lovely, and already looking up to that woman as her ideal. How was he to remedy the evil he had done? Only by accepting the position offered to him. That moment he resolved to go and protect the girl with his life, if need be—that poor, broken life which had been so worthless to him and every one else. Now it might be put to some purpose.

"You are not satisfied with the way I sing it?" said Caroline, sadly.

"Yes, child; I am more than satisfied. But was thinking of other things that trouble me. Your mother—"

"My mother—my sweet, beautiful mother! You cannot be troubled about her. There never was such a woman. It does not seem possible that I could have been her daughter—does it, now?"

"No, it does not," answered Brown, with bitter emphasis.

"But I am, I am. She showed me letters from my—that is, from good Daniel Yates—when I was a little baby, saying how I came to him, and how pleased his wife was to have me. You know all about it, too, she tells me—how I came near being burned in a fire once, and about some trouble that fell upon poor Mr. Yates, and how he could well afford to spend so much money on me, because it was all hers."

"What?"

Brown spoke sharply, for he was fired with indignation by Olympia's falsehood.

"Oh! she told me all about it. How she had employed you to look after me, and get to be my teacher, and what an old, kind friend you had been to her. Indeed she did; and I was so pleased, for I think everything of you, and told her so."

"How would you like to have me always with you, Caroline?"

"Oh, Mr. Brown! Don't mention it, if it is not to be. I should feel so disappointed!"

"But I am in earnest. It was settled between us this morning."

"Settled? Why, she told me I was to travel with her all over the world."

There was a shade of disappointment in her face. Was

all that to be given up? She liked Mr. Brown more than he dreamed of; but then it would be hard to resign the glories promised her, even for the certainty of having him with her.

"But I am going with you everywhere."

"Dear, dear Mr. Brown!"

In her delight Caroline threw both arms about her teacher's neck, and kissed him with the rapturous thankfulness of a child. When she remembered how indecorous it was, and drew back abashed, tears stood in the poor man's eyes. The next instant both hands went up to his face, and she saw great drops trickling down from beneath them.

"Oh, Mr. Brown! What have I done to make you feel so bad?" she pleaded, ready to cry also.

"Done? Nothing, nothing. I am only a poor, weak fool! Don't mind me, or care what I do."

Brown got up from the piano, and went to the window, ashamed to look that anxious young creature in the face. Caroline looked timidly after him for a moment, then stole to his side, and laid her hand on his arm.

"Are you sorry to go with us?"

Brown wiped his eyes hastily.

"Sorry? No, no! This is the first pure joy I have had for years."

Caroline drew a relieved breath.

"I thought you would be glad to learn how good she has been. See, here, what she sent me this morning."

Caroline ran into the passage, and opened a champagne basket just left by the express, from which she took a superb basket of flowers, a little withered; two bottles of green seal; a jar of pomade and a box of gloves; with half a dozen packages tied with narrow pink and blue ribbon, which Caroline tore open, and soon found her lap half full of candy, perfume bottles, and pastille boxes—articles that her teacher recognized as the overplus of Olympia's theatrical offerings.

"What are they all about?" questioned the girl, with her white teeth in a sugar apricot. "Of course, I know about the flowers and the candy; but these, and these, and these?"

"Oh! you will soon learn their uses," said the teacher, with a sad smile, "for instance, that is wine."

"What? these bottles with silver on their necks? but I never drink wine; perhaps Eliza will, though."

Caroline shook her dress, down went the lapful of candy, rolling back into the basket, and away went the girl, with a bottle of champagne in each hand, eager to propitiate her crusty house-companion. She came back in a minute, crestfallen, and dragging the bottles along with her.

"Eliza won't touch them," she said, with angry tears in her eyes; "she says we may tell *her* that we don't mean to set up a bar-room in the village. Isn't it cruel?"

"Never mind, but go in now. I want to talk seriously with your housekeeper."

Caroline went into the parlor, and wandered about there, full of anxiety, until Mr. Brown came back, bringing Eliza with him. Caroline saw that the poor woman's eyes were red, as if she had been crying, and went up to her at once.

"They are going to take you away from me. He has just told me so!"

For the first time Caroline realized that her anticipated pleasure might bring separation from this faithful friend. The thought was a pang such as she had never felt before. All the color left her face. She drew close to Eliza and laid a caressing hand on her shoulder.

"Mr. Brown, if I go away, Eliza must be with me. She has been my friend so long."

"But will she go? It is journey after journey, without settled home; up late at night, and early in the morning; duties here, duties there."

Caroline leaned forward and looked wistfully into her old

friend's face, which grew stern and hard with some fixed resolve.

"Will you—can you?"

"Of course I'm going."

"There! You can tell my—my mother how this old friend loves me. Of course, she will be glad as I am."

The teacher was not quite so certain of this, but he had no wish to disturb the confidence that Caroline felt in her mother.

"I am to have a maid all to myself. She told me so. Eliza won't mind being called that; will you, Eliza?" said Caroline.

"They may call me anything they like, so long as they treat you well."

"As if my mother could think of anything else," said Caroline, with a sweet burst of merriment. "But, you see, Eliza has never spoken a word to her, or set eyes on her, except from that box at the theatre. Of course, she can't be expected to understand her as we do, so it is best to make allowance."

Caroline ended this speech in a little confidential half-whisper, and nodded her head wisely at her teacher, as she wound the subject up.

"When are we to get ready?" demanded Eliza, bluntly enough.

"Within a fortnight."

"Short notice—but it can be done. I must go and have a talk about the cottage, with that man they call a trustee."

"And I," said Caroline, "must do no end of practising. See what a roll of music came up in the box. Come, now that everything is settled, let us think of the lesson."

During the next half hour that cottage seemed to contain a very festival of music, for never had that girl found such a voice as swelled from her throat that day; but if any one had been looking in through that window, around

which the blood-red Virginia creeper hung like torn battle-flags, he would have been struck by the contrast between those two faces: that of the girl, all bright and rosy with inspiration, while the worn countenance of her teacher bent over her, troubled and anxious, as if his soul travelled far away from the music, to which, in fact, he did not listen.

That night Brown was waiting for Olympia, when she came back from the theatre. He had come prepared to give a final answer to the offer she had made with such cool indifference to their former relations. She was very tired, and a little out of temper. The theatrical wardrobe basket had been deficient in some ribbon or scarf which she had fancied important to her costume, and the audience had only called her before the curtain twice, a thing she was disposed to resent, and bring against her poor dressing-maid, as the sequence of that forgotten ribbon, all of which the poor worn-out little woman bore patiently, having lost all powers of resistance years before.

Brown came into the hall just as this poor creature was following after the long basket, with its black oiled cloth cover, like some lone mourner at a funeral, and saw by her face that the atmosphere about Olympia could not be altogether serene, so he went into her parlor, doubtful of his reception.

Olympia, the beautiful idol of the town, was that moment holding a goblet, into which a hotel-waiter was pouring some very lively beer from a stone bottle, which he lifted up and down as the froth rose and mantled so whitely in the goblet that only a tinge of the brown liquid could be seen at the bottom. At last the foam crept over the glass and deluged the white hand that held it; then down came that little foot with angry stamp upon the carpet, and all the temper not already exhausted on the dressing-maid, fell with overpowering force on the terrified waiter, whose hand shook till the frothy beer flew over her like a snow storm.

In the midst of her anger, Olympia drank off the beer, stopped to taste its quality, which was excellent, drained the glass, and was appeased.

"Now, Brown, if you have anything to say, I am listening. Will you go with us, or will you not?"

"I will go, Olive."

"Waiter, fill my glass again—one for the gentleman. Open that other bottle! That will do—you may go now. Well, Brown, I am glad it is settled. Another glass? No! Well, come to-morrow, before rehearsal; we'll settle everything then. I'm awful sleepy. Good-night!"

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE PARK GALA AT OAKHURST.

THE park at Oakhurst might have been cut out of an American forest, the trees were so grandly beautiful, the ground it covered so royally expansive. Old oaks, chestnuts and beeches, worthy of roothold in the Alleghany Mountains, had spread their branches far and wide hundreds of years before their present owner was born, and one part of that noble old building was a castellated tower when the wars of the Roses first broke out between York and Lancaster.

True, a portion of the mansion was of more recent date. The halls, the grand staircase, the state drawing-rooms and chambers, with a noble picture-gallery, were purely Elizabethan; and one smaller wing, built expressly to gratify some noble bride of the family, was of still more modern date.

But various architects had managed to group in that grim old keep, with its arrow slits and battlements, from

which the great banner floated out from its flagstaff when the head of the family was present, exactly as it had met the breeze in those old feudal times. Then there was a drawbridge to pass, and three blasts of the horn chained to the portal must be given, before any man could even ask speech of Lord Hope.

The present lord of that noble mansion, and of the estate that stretched far out of sight everywhere around it, was more accessible.

There was little of old feudal times about the place now. Save that grim old tower, of which the whole country was proud, everything had disappeared. The moat had been filled up centuries ago, and a magnificent cedar of Lebanon spread its feathery branches where the portcullis had fallen.

Deer were as plentiful in the park as they had been when bluff King Hal had ridden a-hunting with a Lord Hope of his time, but their wildness was all gone. They clustered in herds, like sheep, on the sunny slopes of the park, and eyed the sportsmen lazily, without an attempt to escape.

Two miles from the house, as a bird flies, a pair of crouching lions guarded the massive stone posts between which a broad iron gate swung open with most liberal hospitality. Sometimes the crusty old man at the lodge was a little tardy in his movements when a foot passenger presented himself, but few persons were absolutely denied—for the present lord was a popular man with the people, and the old fellow understood his interests too well for any flagrant violation of orders, reluctant as he was at times to come out of his easy chair in the lodge.

The low door, half buried in ivy, opened suddenly. Badger had heard the quick rattle of wheels, and flung both leaves of the gate open in breathless haste, for he knew one was at hand who would brook no delay.

Badger had hardly flung the gate open, when a pair of white ponies, with their manes and tails floating to the

wind, swept down the highway and dashed between those crouching lions, at a speed that would have threatened mischief to a less skillful driver. The girl within the basket carriage nodded her head at old Badger as she rushed by, and tossed him a shilling from the pocket of her white astrachan sacque, which was thrown open at the throat, with a collar like a sailor's jacket, revealing a loosely knotted necktie of blue silk, with an anchor embroidered in the ends.

"Who is that? I mean the lady who just drove by in that basket carriage."

Badger was closing the gate, but he stopped to stare at the person who asked this question, disposed to answer curtly, or not at all; but something in the man's face checked the impulse, and he answered, civilly:

"That lady is the daughter of Lord Hope, and will some day be Countess of Carset."

The gentleman seemed to hear nothing of this sentence but the last words.

"Countess of Carset! So young, too! They told me at the station that the first large place I came to would be Lord Hope's."

"Well," said Badger, partly opening the gate again, "they told you right. This avenue leads to Oakhurst, and that is Lord Hope's place."

"Indeed! But the lady? She seemed at home here."

"I should think so. She is Lord Hope's only daughter."

"But I understood you that she was Countess of Carset?"

"And so she will be, in right of her mother, who died in foreign parts long before the title was likely to fall in. So our young lady will inherit from her grandmother, who is a very old woman."

"Inherit from her grandmother? I do not understand."

"Likely enough. It puzzles a good many people; but

the old lady is a peeress in her own right. There isn't more than two or three such in England. She is one of them, and Lady Clara is next heir to the title. That is how she will some day come out a British peeress. There is no knowing about the estates, for none of them, worth mentioning, are entailed; and though the old countess is one of the richest women in England, she has terrible prejudices against Lord Hope and his second wife, and being awful cranky in her disposition, isn't likely to give more than she can help to our young lady, who loves the very ground her step-mother walks on, and stands by her through thick and thin. So it is but natural that the proud old countess will not make herself agreeable, and keeps her head high. In fact, she hasn't been on good terms up yonder since Lord Hope brought his second wife home. She was dreadfully cut up by the loss of her own daughter, the first Lady Hope, who died young, somewhere in America. But I am running on at a merry rate, and you a stranger."

"Never mind that, my good friend. I am interested, having been in America."

"What! you? Maybe you know something about it, then? But I forgot, the first Lady Hope died fourteen years ago. You must have been youngish then?"

"Rather," said the stranger, smiling.

"Not over thirty-two or thirty-three, now, I should say."

"Not much over that."

"In fact, I should knock off a year or two from that," said Badger, taking a second close glance at the elegant person, glossy beard, and finely cut features of the person before him.

"You are a close observer," said the stranger; "but tell me about the old lady. Why did she quarrel with Lord Hope about his second marriage?"

"Well, for more reasons than I should think it safe to talk about. In the first place, her present ladyship was almost one of us."

"One of you—how?"

"She came here first as companion to the first Lady Hope, or, as some said, nursery-governess to the little girl; but that was all nonsense, for Lady Clara was nothing but a baby. When the family broke up all of a sudden, and went off on their travels to that wild Indian country, America, she went, too. It seems the whole thing happened without the old countess knowing anything about it. The first thing she heard, was a letter from her daughter, dated in New York, that she and the child were well, but never mentioning her husband, or the governess. So I think the old lady got an idea in her head that Lord Hope was not treating her daughter fairly. Then she got news of her death from Lord Hope himself, and after that Lord Hope came back married to the governess. That was a thing the old lady never could forgive, for she had awful prejudices against Rachael Closs from the first, and it drove her wild to see her here in her own daughter's place. She refused to have anything to do with her, and tried to get the little grandchild out of her keeping. The two ladies had a sharp fight over that, for it *was* a fight, though our lady here was quiet and still, and only put my lord forward to keep the child away from her grandmother, till the old lady should come round and own *her*, which the old countess never would and never did, you may be sure."

"Was Lady Hope wise in keeping the old lady from her grandchild?" asked the stranger.

"Wise or not, she did just that; but she might as well have expected to move the stone lions there. There was another thing that kept them apart—the old countess had sent a good many of the Carset diamonds to her daughter, and finer jewels are not to be found in England outside of her majesty's Tower. You should have seen Lady Hope when she wore them at the first drawing-room, one of the prettiest brides, I will be bound, that the queen ever gave

her hand to. Why her bosom, her hair and arms and shoulders blazed with them. The old Countess would have it so, for next to her child, she worshipped the old Carset diamonds. Well, after Lady Hope's death, the old countess demanded these jewels of the earl, for they had only been lent to the daughter, and always went down from Carset to Carset. She was enraged at the thought that they might be worn by the companion. But the jewels were never forthcoming, and Lady Carset did not hesitate to say, loudly enough, that Rachael Closs, the present Lady Hope, had got them in her possession, and some day might be wearing them. Everybody expected that Lord Hope would resent the charge and challenge the proof, but he never did. In fact, my lord kept as much as possible out of the dispute. I mistrust he had an idea that it would end in his daughter's being cut out of the old lady's will, and left with nothing but an empty title."

"Are you certain he was not wise in that?"

"At any rate he did not act openly against the old lady; but only put her off, when she asked him to let the child come to her by herself, you know—which wasn't so exasperating as a downright no. Things went on in this way till Lady Clara got old enough to have her say about it. Would she go to her grandmother, who wouldn't have the second Lady Hope in her house at any price, or not? That was the question put to her, and she wasn't long in answering. 'Lady Hope has been more than a mother to me, tender, kind, too kind, people say. If she is not allowed to take me to my grandmother, I don't care to go.' This was Lady Clara's answer. She knew well enough that the old lady would cut her off with a shilling for giving it, but that made no difference."

"A brave, generous girl," said the stranger, pleasantly. "Now, my good old friend, if you have a match convenient, I will light a cigar, and find my way to the Hall. I sup-

pose there will be time enough to smoke it out before I get there."

"Time enough," repeated Badger, with a grim smile; "Why, you could smoke four of 'em from end to end and half a mile of the park to spare; but I doubt if you'll find my lord at home."

"Never mind, I'll take the chance."

As he spoke, the stranger bent down to rub his match on the threshold-stone of the lodge, and Badger got a clear view of his profile, a sight that took half the color from his face.

"I say—that is—might I be so bold—"

The stranger lifted his slender figure from its stooping position, and turned a smiling glance on old Badger.

"Yes, my friend, you may be as bold as you like. What is it?"

"I—I begin to think I have rather put my foot in it. Surely you aint in no wise akin to our lady?"

The stranger drew three or four satisfactory whiffs of his cigar, and then took it daintily from his mouth.

"Why should you think so?" he said, parting his lips again for the cigar, and drawing it with mild enjoyment.

"It was your—your face, sir."

"Oh, my face, is it?" answered the man, smoothing his beard with one hand; is not the idea of the resemblance of any man with this crop of hair on his face and a lady, rather ridiculous? Besides, relatives are not usually so curious, as your narrative has made me. What was it that sent this noble family all at once so far out of the world?"

"That is more than I can answer. It was a very sudden thing. Not a soul was notified of it, and none of the old servants were taken from the place. The first idea that I had was this: Early one morning Lady Hope and the child came driving down the avenue in her park phaeton, through the gray mist—for it was before sunrise—on their

way to the station. She was very pale, and there seemed to me a swollen look around her eyes, as if she had been crying.

"I opened the gate for her, and when she reached forth her hand to drop a shilling into mine, as she often did, sweet soul, the little hand shook so that the money fell to the ground. (A shilling did I say? This was gold—a sovereign. I have it now—I have it now!) For as she turned to look back, the sight of her weary face was the last I ever had of her.

"The very next day, Racheal Closs, my lady that is, went off too, just as her mistress had, in the gray of the morning, and I never saw her again till she came back Lord Hope's second wife.

"By the very next train, my lord left Oakhurst quite alone, without taking even his own servant with him, and the next time I saw him was when he came back, with Rachael Closs by his side, and little Lady Clara in the front seat, driving through that gate."

"And since that time there has been a feud between the family here and the Lady Carset you speak of?" inquired the stranger.

"Well, yes; and it isn't to be wondered at—for a good portion of our first lady's fortune went to clear the Oakhurst estate; and the old countess had been very liberal with her daughter, which all went for the benefit of Rachael Closs, you know, and that was hard.

"Then the settlement fell back to my lord, which was another aggravation. But the old lady had her revenge. All the great families in this part of the country followed her example in regard to Rachael Closs. With all Lord Hope's popularity, he has never been able to open their doors to his wife, and he feels it—he feels it; for a prouder man than my master since his return does not live, and this slight to his wife galls him. If old Lady Carset would

only invite her once to the castle, all this would be changed; but she never will."

The stranger tossed his cigar into the grass.

"Thank you," he said, a little abruptly.

Again Badger saw a startling resemblance to Lady Hope.

"If you really are a relative," he said, "pray, excuse the boldness; I meant no harm."

"Never mind about that, my good—. By-the-way, what is your name?"

"Badger, sir—John Badger."

"Well, Badger, don't disturb yourself. You have not done anything very terrible; and if you had, I can keep counsel. Good morning, Badger. We shall meet again, I dare say."

The gate-keeper sat down on the threshold of his door, and watched the slight figure of his visitor as he walked up the chestnut avenue. Living much alone, Badger had formed the habit of speaking very familiarly with himself, and sometimes to a pointer dog, which that moment lay asleep on the hearth.

"Now, John Badger," he said, "if that handsome chap doesn't behave like a gentleman, you may as well pack up at once and look out for a new home, for my lady isn't going to overlook what you've been saying, if he tells of it. Lady Hope doesn't want the history of Rachael Closs to be remembered by any one, much less by the old servants. Well, old fellow, it serves you right. How often have I told you to see everything, and say nothing, you old fool—you miserable cub! Will nothing bridle that tongue of yours? Eternally gossiping at the gate, as if Jules wasn't enough for any man to talk to! She listens, and says nothing.

"I tell you what, John Badger, that dog can teach you a lesson, if she is a female. I've a good mind to go after the fellow and tell him what a row it'll make if he says any-

thing. No, I won't; he seems like a kind-hearted gentleman, and I'll trust him; but that's more than I will do for you, John Badger. For this scrape that you've got me into, old boy, I'll cut off your tobacco three whole days! Not a pipeful shall you have. Don't ask me, or argue about its hardness, you miserable chatterer! Here, Jules! Jules!"

A fine pointer, spotted like a leopard and graceful as an Italian hound, lifted herself from the hearth and came indolently forward.

"What do I want of you, Jules? Well, just this: If I was you, old girl, I wouldn't associate with a fellow that couldn't keep a safe tongue between his teeth. Don't lick my hand—don't lay your jaw agin mine—it's too loving for a fellow as don't know how to take care of himself.

"But I want you to understand this, old girl, there isn't to be one thimbleful of tobacco for John Badger the next three days. Let him beg—let him yearn after it, and pray for it on his bended jint; but remember, Jules, he's not to have it on no account. You must see to that, old girl. Good old girl!"

Jules listened like a human being, wagged her tail mildly, and lifting her fore-paws, placed them on his shoulders, while her soft, brown eyes looked into his with an earnestness that was reproofing, and yet with a tender softness that almost consoled Badger for the loss of his tobacco.

"That will do," said Badger, kissing a spot on the pointer's forehead; "I knew that you would feel it. Get my pipe? No, Jules; it's very kind of you to want me to, and very forgivin', but it mustn't be; but, Jules, there's beer to fall back upon, with a Welsh rabbit for me, and a nice bit of fried liver for you. That's right; it does me good to see you lick your chops that lively. If he does tell of us, we'll enjoy life while it's in us to do it. Why, Jules, I do believe you're going off to sleep again, and I in trouble!"

Jules opened her eyes, gathered herself up, and laid her head lovingly on his knee, at which Badger broke forth again.

"All right, old girl; I didn't really mean it. Don't look so reproachful like! Of course I know that a faithfuller friend no one ever had; so don't let what I said hurt your feelings."

Here Jules gave a good-natured yelp and sprang through the door.

Badger gathered himself up quickly, and followed her. A well-mounted groom was coming down the road, leading a blood horse with a saddle and bridle on. Jules ran out to meet him, barking joyously and leaping at his bridle. At last a playful lash of the groom's whip sent her trotting back with an ignominious drooping of the ears.

"Sarved ye right, old girl, sarved ye right! What business have you galivanting about with grooms and the like? Jules, you have no more sense this minute than your master. It's in your sex, Jules, to come when you're not called, and put your blessed self into danger for them that don't thank you for it. If it had been my lord himself instead of the black hunter and his empty saddle, you couldn't have demeaned your breeding more; but a groom! I wouldn't have believed it of you. Go in! go in!"

By this time the groom had ridden up, and checked his horse inside the gate, disposed to a little conversation.

"No accident, I hope?" said Badger, nodding his head toward the empty saddle. "If my lord has been thrown, it is the first time."

The groom burst into a jovial laugh.

"Lord Hope thrown! That is an exquisite joke, exquisite! What imagination you must have, Badger!"

"Come, come, none of these London airs, my good fellow. They do well enough for footmen, but the stables should

know better. Just tell me, if you are not too fine, what is the meaning of this empty saddle."

"Why, it means just this, Badger: After the hunt broke up, my lord took a sudden fancy to go off to Scotland for a little shooting; so he sends me back with the hunter, and a note to my lady, who will order his portmanteau packed, and in about an hour I shall be back, ready to follow my lord by the next train. Good day, Badger."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

FOURTEEN YEARS AFTER.

THAT wing of Oakhurst, which we have spoken of as modern, had, since its foundation, been considered as sacred to the lady of the house; more especially a small parlor in one angle which commanded the finest views in the park.

It was now fourteen years since the present Lord Hope had embellished this room, for his second wife, with a degree of magnificence almost oriental, and at an expenditure so lavish, that it became a subject both of admiration and scornful censure. No such miracles of taste had marked the advent of the first lady, it was said, and she came from one of the proudest families in old England; while this person had certainly been a governess or companion in that very house. A beautiful woman, rich in talent, no doubt, but who was she? How did she become mistress of those sumptuous apartments? All this was said when the present Lady Hope came to Oakhurst, a bride, fresh from her travels beyond seas, where the first lady had found a grave.

There must have been some reason for this criticism. For that apartment, certainly, had been resplendent, when

those mirrors, sunk in frames of gilded flagree, like pools of translucent water frozen there, first reflected back its superb appointments. But that day had gone by, both with the lady and her bower room.

The ceiling so exquisitely frescoed that it seemed possible that blooming flowers might drop from it every day of the year, shone dimly through a foggy haze that time had cast upon it. Couches of crimson satin, with all the brightness worn from their luxurious cushions; easy chairs, inviting to repose in all their soft curves and hollows, faded and threadbare at the arms; silken hangings upon the wall, with tints that had given richness and warmth to the whole room, half faded away; a carpet, on which clusters of brilliant flowers were trodden down in confused masses; this was the picture those mirrors presented now.

A sad waning off to the brilliant scene they had reflected, on the day Lord Hope led his second bride into that room, and looked into her eyes for sweet approval of its splendor.

Some articles had evidently been brought to this room since it had been fitted up as a boudoir. An ebony bookcase, full of richly bound but strangely selected volumes, stood on one side. A grand piano was opposite, and an easel stood near the broad Elizabethan window, on which was a half-finished picture—a weird idea, imperfectly developed, even in the underglow of flame that kindled through a cloudy background.

These objects, one and all, spoke of solitude, to be endured or fought against—perhaps of deeper things. A happy woman would have chosen other books, and less sad or passionate music. The picture was never designed by a wife in her home-content.

This room was empty now, but through the broad window, which was only obscured by lace curtains that fell across the plate glass like frostwork on water, a woman might be seen, walking up and down the broad stone ter-

race, upon whose balustrades a magnificent peacock was pluming himself in the glow of a warm sunset. Now and then the gorgeous creature gave a low, unearthly croak as the lady passed him, and once she paused long enough to smooth his long, drooping feathers with her hand, as if his hoarse salute were not altogether disagreeable to her.

Up and down the terrace this woman pursued her walk, not with the passionate haste of a woman who suffers much or who expects something, but slowly, sadly, with her head bent and her arms folded.

At last the woman moved toward the window and came through it slowly, sweeping back the lace with her hand; and there, in the opening, stood Rachael Closs, now Lady Hope, with the burning sunset streaming through a far off group of trees for a background, and a golden shower of light falling upon her long, flowing dress of crimson silk, and a shawl of black lace thrown over her head and shoulders.

She paused, with her foot raised to the threshold of the window, and bent her head, listening. She had heard some sound that interested her—the far-off beat of hoofs upon the avenue, perhaps; for her face lighted up, and she allowed the lace to fall away from her head, as if she might have no further use for it.

When her head and neck were both exposed you could have marked all the change fourteen years had made in Rachael Closs.

A few silver threads were in her hair, darker shadows lay around her eyes, her person appeared a shade thinner—that was all the difference my pen can describe; but there was a change infinitely more subtle, and, to a keen observer, more impressive—a change of the soul, of the fire in her eyes, and the smile on her lip—of the very atmosphere which surrounded her. She seemed a fitting inmate of that worn and past-haunted room; the very person who might

have designed that picture, and fifty more of the same lurid cast, without the power of completing them.

As she listened, the sound came nearer. It was a noise of wheels on the gravel of the road. A cloud came over the lady's face.

"Oh! it is only she!"

A faint sigh followed this exclamation. She lifted herself wearily through the window, and sat down on one of the couches, with her face turned from the light; for two hours of weary waiting had met no reward.

Her husband had been gone since morning; and, in his absence, let the time be brief or long, she was always desolate; for, in her, love was still a passion full of unrest.

A footstep on the terrace. Who could it be? That terrace skirted her own apartment. No one but the man she waited for had a right to be there. Many a long hour had passed since she had heard his footsteps near her window. Could he be coming now?

Lady Hope held her breath. Surely it was a man's step, walking quickly, too. She leaned forward, with something of the old animation in her face; a piteous smile almost parted her lips—piteous, because her heart trembled with a dread of disappointment.

The steps drew nearer—the shadow of a man fell across the stone pavement, then he stood before her, framed in by the broad window, as she had been but a few minutes before, with the dying sunset behind him. It was her brother, Hepworth Closs. She knew him, yet doubted; he was so changed, so manly.

"Rachael!"

She came toward him, white as death, but glad beyond all the shock of her first surprise.

"Hepworth! Hepworth! have you come at last!"

"At last, my dear, dear sister! Why how cold you are; how your arms shake! Is it because you are not well, Rachael?" 19

"It is the surprise, Hepworth; besides, I was feeling so lonely. Sometimes I think a great house like this is the most solitary place in the world."

"Solitary, now that you are Lady Hope?"

Rachael shook her head, and tears swelled into her eyes.

"What is the matter, Rachael?"

"Nothing—nothing. Only your coming has startled me so. I thought—I hoped that it was him."

"And was the disappointment enough to make you cry? One would think a husband's footsteps would hardly be a novelty, near his wife's room."

"Hepworth, you do not understand."

"Indeed, and why not? Is anything growing wrong between you and Hope?"

"Wrong? No. Why should there be; but you are here now, my own, own brother, and I have such plans for you, plans that will keep you near me all your life. Did you get my letters?"

"Not one. In fact, I have not been, of late years, where letters could reach me easily."

"I know," said Rachael; "since my good fortune, as we used to think it would be, you have been a wanderer. I heard from you in California, in Japan, in Australia, but very seldom twice from the same place. But you are here now, and I do not intend that you shall leave me again."

"Ah, we shall see about that. When one gets a habit of roving, it is difficult to settle down. I have no plans."

"But I have," said Rachael with a gleam of her old spirit.

Hepworth looked grave a moment, and shook his head. He saw, by the shrinking in Rachael's eyes, that she knew the thoughts in his mind, and hastened to break away from them.

That moment a clear, young voice came from the next

room, the door of Lady Hope's apartment was flung open, and the young girl Hepworth Closs had seen in the avenue came dashing in.

She stopped suddenly, blushed to the temples on seeing a stranger, and took off a little white sailor's hat, around which a scarf of blue gauze was tied, with long ends floating out behind.

"I—I beg pardon—hadn't the least idea—pray excuse me."

She was going away, still crimson with blushes, when Lady Hope held forth her hand.

"Don't go, Clara. This is a gentleman that I have long wished to present to you. My brother, Mr. Hepworth Closs."

Clara dropped a dashing little salute, which was half accomplished by a swing of her hat, then laughed, put the hat behind her, and held out her hand.

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Closs; but do tell me where you come from, and how you got here. The last time mamma Rachael heard about you, it was from the other side of the world."

The girl looked very bright and beautiful as she spoke; but for a moment Closs looked upon her wildly, as if a ghost had broke in upon him. He was comparing her with the mother, whose picture, as she lay upon that white and clouded death couch, had never left him. His face was so pale and troubled that she noticed it, and drew back half timidly.

"I hope—I fear. Is it any trouble, sir, that you bring us?"

"Trouble! I beg ten thousand pardons if my face tells so false a story! I bring nothing more threatening than my own society, and that you can be rid of at any moment, by a single unwelcome look."

Clara laughed one of the lightest, sweetest and mellowest laughs that had ever fallen upon Hepworth's ear.

"Oh," she said, "if that is all, you will be coming and going eternally, for I shall be giving you welcome and unwelcome looks fifty times each day. Just now I have half a mind—"

She drew a little glittering watch from under her jacket and thrust it back again.

"It wants more than two hours to dinner yet, and I came home early, in hopes that mamma Rachael would go out with me and the ponies. But here she is dressed for dinner. Of course I can't take her out so; besides, she looks a little shaken, and as if she'd like being left to herself. Now, if you don't mind—please don't look astonished, mamma Rachael, I am only trying to ask Mr. Closs to drive round the park with me, while you sit here and wait for papa. There, you don't mind. We'll be home in plenty of time to dress. Mr. Closs, have I made you understand that I am dying to show off my new ponies? Papa would not buy them, they were too fancy, he said; but mamma Rachael paid for them out of her own money. Oh, she spoils me so! Now, come and see how well I can manage 'em; they are wild as hawks, though, and may break your neck—who knows?"

Closs glanced at his sister, who seemed a little bewildered, then turned to the young lady, smiling almost as frankly as she did, and accepted her invitation.

"I know something of horses," he said; "and as for the rest, should hardly shrink from so pleasant a death."

Clara tossed the sailor's hat to her head, brushed a little of the dust from her jacket with a loose glove she had taken from one hand, then held up two rosy lips for Rachael to kiss, and ran out of the room, followed by the youngish and remarkably handsome man, whom she had known just ten minutes.

The white ponies stood before the broad entrance steps, tossing their heads, and making a playful pretence of biting each other, which kept their snowy manes afloat, and their graceful heads in motion, until Lady Clara sprang into the carriage, seated herself on its cushions of crimson leather, and gathered up her skirts, that Closs might take the seat beside her.

"Now for it! Don't forget to mark their paces," she said, gathering up the reins and planting her little foot firmly. "I call them Snow-Bird and Sea-Foam. Can you think of anything prettier? No? Well I'm glad of it. You shall name my very next horse yourself. I know where we could find two darlings; not ponies, you know, but saddle-horses; one for me and the other for mamma Rachael—Lady Hope, I mean. I am going to ask papa to surprise her with it. We haven't time, now, or you should give me your opinion. One is a chestnut, with three white feet, and such lithe, slender limbs; the other a bay. That is for her."

"You seem to love Lady Hope."

"Love her? I should think so! What should I have been without her? Do you know she never let me go to school, and would not have a governess in the house, but taught me everything herself, even when I was a little, little girl; but then she is so accomplished. That is why the old dowagers about here took to hating her so bitterly at first, and never would forget that she has not always been a born lady, as if that made any difference."

"I never could feel quite like a born lady myself; but, for all that, I may be higher than any of them that loved to abuse her, for they tell me that a countess in her own right is equal to an earl, and can vote or something in the House of Lords, by proxy, if she wants to, but I don't; besides having church livings to give, which is dreadful for a girl that wants to act rightly, and hasn't the least idea

about the exact goodness that a clergyman ought to have. But then there are awful nice things about it, such as magnificent hunters, and plenty of money, and having every one say that what you say and wear is beautiful, lovely, and so on.

"Now, if I hadn't a right to the title, and put this little round hat on, what a time there would have been! But now every girl in the neighborhood is getting one. I'll confess to you that it did seem rather stunning to me at first, though I wouldn't own it, you know; and when I saw you, the first thought I had was to hide it behind me. I did try, but the blue scarf would stream out. Tell me, now, *did* you think me fast?"

"I dare not tell you exactly what I thought."

"Then you did!"

Clara spoke with childish mournfulness, and looked up in his face, entreating him not to think ill of her, with two earnest blue eyes that no man on earth could have resisted.

"No, indeed. I was thinking of nothing that could give you pain. In fact, I like the little hat."

Clara smiled, and nodded her head.

"Nobby, isn't it?"

"But I am not sure that I should like it on any one else."

"On any one else? I hope not! I tell you, this thing don't come natural to most of the girls, who never saw the deep, deep sea, while I was rocked on it, and take to the whole thing as the gulls do. I'm so glad you like it, though!"

Closs laughed. There was no affectation in this girl's bright simplicity. Of course, she saw that all this childish talk was fascinating the man. What child does not understand that when it entices you by its pretty wiles? But she put on nothing and checked herself in nothing. This man was her stepmother's only relative. He was wonder-

fully handsome, in a way quite uncommon in England. It was very pleasant to be with him, and to feel that he was admiring her.

Once or twice, when she lifted her face to his, a cloud of blushes came rushing over it, for she had never looked into eyes so full of admiring tenderness in her life.

In and out, through the avenues of the park, Clara drove her white ponies, now permitting them to walk, then boldly letting out their utmost speed, and again holding them in with all her might, but so abruptly that they grew restless, and allowed her the triumph of conquering them.

At last she remembered the dinner hour, and dashed up to the house, giving herself just twenty minutes for a fresh toilet.

Lady Hope stood in the front entrance as the carriage drove up, looking wistfully down the avenue.

"She is watching for papa," said Clara, and a tone of girlish commiseration came into her voice. "You have no idea how wretched she is if he is away only a few hours. It is quite pitiful to see her disappointment when he does not come."

Closs observed his sister as he came up the steps, and saw that she was very anxious, but he said nothing.

Clara was late, and in haste, so she ran up-stairs, resolving in her mind that a dress of pale blue, gauzy and silken in its texture, which had just come down from London, should make its first appearance that day.

You would not have blamed the girl for this sudden resolve had you seen her when she came down to the drawing-room, with the dress floating around her like a cloud, and a blush rose holding back the rich chestnut-brown hair, as it swept away from her temples, and rolled in two or three wavy curls to her shoulders. As she made her appearance, a man came into the room with a note. Closs saw that his sister turned pale as she took it from the salver.

"It is from papa," whispered Clara. I am afraid he has gone somewhere. It is his way to go off and then write."

Lady Hope folded up her note, gave some orders to the man, then turned to her brother, with a heavy sigh.

"We need not wait," she said. "Lord Hope has gone to Scotland, and it is impossible to say when he will come back."

The very sound of her voice threw a chill of sadness upon the two persons who had just come in, so fresh and cheerful. Thus the first dinner Closs took in his sister's house was almost a silent one.

Lord Hope's further adventures will be found related in the sequel to this work, just published, under the title of "THE OLD COUNTESS; OR, THE TWO PROPOSALS."

THE END.



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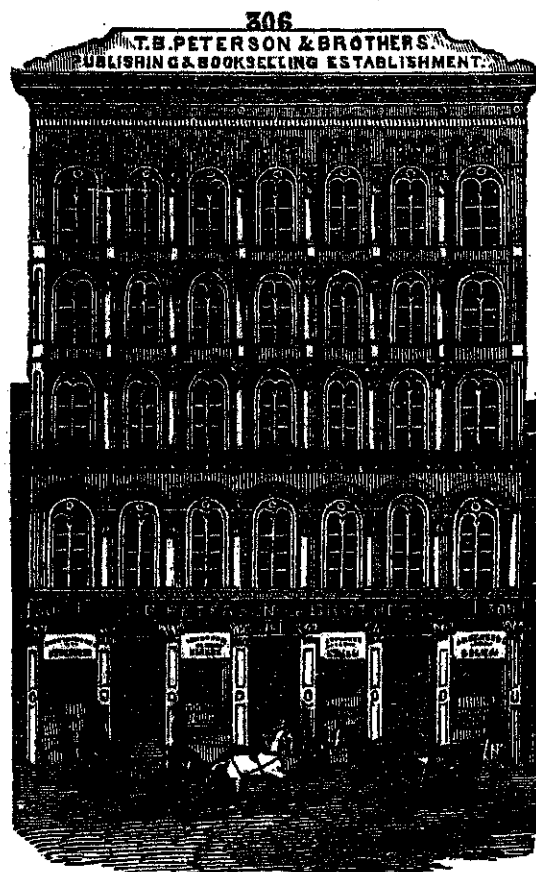
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