

MARRIED IN HASTE.

BY

MRS. ANN S. STEPHENS.

AUTHOR OF "FASHION AND FAMINE," "WIVES AND WIDOWS,"
"CURSE OF GOLD," "MABEL'S MISTAKE," "REJECTED WIFE,"
"GOLD BRICK," "SILENT STRUGGLES," "THE HEIRESS,"
"RUBY GRAY'S STRATEGY," "THE WIFE'S SECRET,"
"MARY DERWENT," "THE OLD HOMESTEAD,"
"DOUBLY FALSE," "SOLDIER'S ORPHANS."

The ocean has its music, sweet and low,
Like a great heart in the rich overflow
Of noble thoughts, and scarce oppressed
By the stout keel that cleaves her mighty breast,
Breaks up her waves, and, tossing foam and spray,
Cheers the brave ship along her toilsome way.
Thus, ever thus, the waves of human life
Are thrilled with heavenly glory from above,
Amid rude toil—base falsehood—selfish strife—
One thing must live forever—Holy Love.

PHILADELPHIA:
T. B. PETERSON & BROTHERS;
306 CHESTNUT STREET.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1870, by

T. B. PETERSON & BROTHERS,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States, in and for the
Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

MRS. ANN S. STEPHENS' WORKS.

Each Work is complete in one large duodecimo volume.

MARRIED IN HASTE.

RUBY GRAY'S STRATEGY.

THE CURSE OF GOLD.

THE REJECTED WIFE.

WIVES AND WIDOWS; OR, THE BROKEN LIFE.

THE GOLD BRICK.

THE HEIRESS.

SILENT STRUGGLES.

FASHION AND FAMINE.

THE OLD HOMESTEAD.

MARY DERWENT.

THE SOLDIER'S ORPHANS.

THE WIFE'S SECRET.

MABEL'S MISTAKE.

DOUBLY FALSE.

Price of each, \$1.75 in Cloth; or \$1.50 in Paper Cover.

Above books are for sale by all Booksellers. Copies of any or
all of the above books will be sent to any one, to any place, post-
age pre-paid, on receipt of their price by the Publishers,

T. B. PETERSON & BROTHERS,

306 CHESTNUT STREET, PHILADELPHIA, PA.

CONTENTS.

Chapter	Page
I.—THE OLD ARM-CHAIR.....	23
II.—LITTLE RHODA.....	26
III.—RHODA AND HER BROTHER.....	31
IV.—THE TREASURE OF WILD FLOWERS.....	35
V.—A GENEROUS IDEA.....	38
VI.—THE REAL AND THE IDEAL.....	43
VII.—A BITTER DISAPPOINTMENT.....	46
VIII.—THE PRIVATE MARRIAGE.....	51
IX.—AFTER THOUGHTS.....	56
X.—THE FAINT HEART.....	60
XI.—THE UNEXPECTED REVELATION.....	64
XII.—"AMEN.".....	69
XIII.—THE FORCED VISIT.....	73
XIV.—HIS SIN HAD FOUND HIM OUT.....	78
XV.—THE SPIDER AND THE FLY.....	84
XVI.—DISCONTENT.....	90
XVII.—BRILLIANT PROSPECTS.....	92
XVIII.—OVERPOWERED.....	98
XIX.—THE FATHER AND DAUGHTER.....	104
XX.—BASKETS OF WILD FLOWERS.....	109
XXI.—ENTREATIES AND PERSUASIONS.....	114
XXII.—OPPRESSED WITH LONELINESS.....	120

Chapter	Page
XXIII.—LITTLE RHODA AS A BUSINESS WOMAN.....	127
XXIV.—CRUEL REPROACHES.....	131
XXV.—OLD HEIR-LOOMS.....	138
XXVI.—THE BLUE SILK DRESS.....	143
XXVII.—BETWEEN THE MOTHER AND THE WIFE.....	148
XXVIII.—FALSE AND FAIR.....	155
XXIX.—THE STARTLING PROPOSAL.....	157
XXX.—CONSTANCE COUNTS HER MONEY.....	161
XXXI.—THE PLACE OF REST.....	166
XXXII.—NIGHT WATCHES.....	172
XXXIII.—THE INDIA SHAWL.....	176
XXXIV.—DREAMS AND THEIR SAD INTERRUPTION.....	181
XXXV.—THE DRESS-MAKER AND HER CUSTOMER.....	186
XXXVI.—NEGOTIATING A SALE.....	193
XXXVII.—IN THE JAWS OF THE SERPENT.....	198
XXXVIII.—RHODA IS FILLED WITH ASTONISHMENT AND DELIGHT.....	205
XXXIX.—RHODA BRINGS GOOD NEWS TO HER FRIEND..	210
XL.—THAT THOUSAND DOLLARS.....	213
XLI.—BLACK AND SCARLET.....	218
XLII.—WOULD SHE PART WITH HIM.....	222
XLIII.—THE GOOD AND THE EVIL.....	227
XLIV.—CONSTANCE PARTS WITH HER HUSBAND.....	232
XLV.—CONSTANCE MAKES A SECOND VISIT TO HER DRESS-MAKER.....	237
XLVI.—PLANNING AN ESCAPE.....	240
XLVII.—CONSTANCE MAKES A CONFIDANT OF RHODA..	243
XLVIII.—THE FORCED CONSENT.....	247
XLIX.—THE DESPERATE BRIDAL.....	252
L.—OFF INTO DARKNESS.....	255

Chapter	Page
LI.—RHODA HIDES AWAY HER HOUSEHOLD SKELE- TON.....	258
LII.—MUSIC AMONG THE FLOWERS.....	262
LIII.—THE MOST BEAUTIFUL LADY IN WASHINGTON GIVES A DINNER PARTY.....	269
LIV.—MR. CRIST.....	272
LV.—THE UNOPENED LETTER.....	276
LVI.—CONSTANCE RETURNS HOME.....	281
LVII.—CONSTANCE TELLS HER WRONGS.....	287
LVIII.—THE ENGRAVED PLATE.....	295
LIX.—AT SWORDS' POINTS.....	299
LX.—THE UNDERGROUND VAULT AND THE SECRE- TARY'S RECEPTION.....	303
LXI.—DYING.....	308
LXII.—DEAD.....	314
LXIII.—THE HUSBAND'S RETURN.....	316
LXIV.—LUKE BECOMES DOWN-HEARTED.....	319
LXV.—ON THE PRAIRIE.....	325
LXVI.—THE LAST HOPE CRUSED.....	331
LXVII.—NEW ARRIVALS IN THE PRAIRIE.....	338
LXVIII.—PLEASANT VISITORS.....	343
LXIX.—A BOAT ON THE RIVER.....	346
LXX.—MUSIC ON THE RIVER.....	349
LXXI.—MOTHER AND SON.....	354
LXXII.—DYING MUSIC.....	360
LXXIII.—ON THE TRACK.....	365
LXXIV.—THE WIFE'S CONFESSION.....	370
LXXV.—CONCLUSION.....	377

TO
D. JOHNSON COOPER, ESQ.

THE
VALUED FRIEND OF MY ONLY SON,

AND
A GENTLEMAN for WHOSE CHARACTER and ATTAINMENTS I HAVE PROFOUND RESPECT,

THIS
VOLUME IS DEDICATED,

WITH MANY
PLEASANT MEMORIES OF THE PAST,

AND
A THOUSAND KIND WISHES FOR THE FUTURE.

ANN S. STEPHENS.

ST. CLOUD HOTEL, NEW YORK,
JULY 6TH, 1870.

MARRIED IN HASTE.

CHAPTER I.

THE OLD ARM-CHAIR.

THE door-bell rang one of those sharp, startling peals which makes the heart leap with a dread of painful news. This brought a large, indolent girl, whose supine indifference nothing could disturb, into the upper hall.

"Hist! Hist!"

The girl gave a glance over her shoulder, and saw a keen, anxious face looking down upon her from over the banisters—the face of a woman advanced in life, lined with care, if not something deeper than that, and sharpened with present apprehension.

"Hist! Hist! I am out, if it is for me. Have moved—gone into the country; and dead! Better that—better that! Oh! if it were but true!"

The girl did not hear the words, which died out in a faint wail; but she was evidently accustomed to these signals over the banister, and put a plump finger to her lips before she opened the door.

The woman up stairs had gone into her room with an impulse to shut herself in, and cower out of reach of the creditor she supposed to be hunting her down; but anx-

iety was keener than this miserable dread, and she went back to the banisters, holding her breath as she bent over them, listening.

The door was wide open now; a wagon stood before it, and its driver was bringing some heavy object up the steps.

"Tell him to bring it up—tell him to bring it up here," cried the woman, with a thrill of pleasure in her voice. "It is for me—surely it is for me!"

"Yes, marm, it is you he asked for," answered the girl. "Take hold here, you sir, and help me up with it."

The man took hold of the great arm-chair, which he had brought in from the wagon, and, laughing at the girl for her offered help, carried it up stairs; following the lady into a back chamber, to which she had slowly retreated. He sat the chair down, gave it a little push with his foot, and seemed to be waiting for something.

The lady, for she was a lady, notwithstanding some marks of hard usage received on the stage of life, hesitated a little; then, with a sudden effort, put a hand into her pocket and took out a worn porte-monnaie, which she opened, partly turning her back on the man.

"You have not been paid?" she questioned, in a faltering voice.

"Yes, I have, marm, for bringing it here; but they didn't take the stairs into account."

The lady drew a deep breath, and took something from her meagerly-filled porte-monnaie, which she handed to the man.

He looked at her, then at the money, with something like a sneer.

"I—I have no other small money about me—nothing less than a fifty-dollar bill," she said, flashing angrily, and dropping the porte-monnaie into her pocket.

The man muttered something under his breath, and went

down stairs, leaving a strong scent of tobacco behind him. The lady walked to the window and watched him drive away eagerly, as if she could not quite feel alone till he was out of sight. Then she ran to the door, locked it, and turning to the chair as if it had been a living thing, fell upon her knees in front of it, and, laying her cheek against the faded cushion, began to moan piteously, like a wounded animal that had dragged itself back to some thicket which he had never expected to reach again.

It was an old faded piece of furniture, after all. Large, roomy, and cushioned luxuriously; but the rich crimson silk, which had once rendered it a resplendent affair, was now frayed and faded into utter shabbiness. One castor was off, and it leaned sideways when the woman pressed her arms upon it, as if striving to edge away from her, as many of her old friends had done.

At last the woman lifted up her head, and looked at her old possession with something like a smile.

"This—this of all that I had has come to me; I never expected it, never hoped that the poor woman would find me out! Gratitude is not often so sharp. Had it been a dun now!"

The woman laughed a little bitter laugh at the thought, for she had been so harassed and hunted down of late with hungry creditors, that the chase had its interest even for its victim, as all the cunning and energy of a fox are put forth when the hounds press it close. She arose at last and began to examine the chair.

"Poor thing! it has had hard usage. I wish they had sent the castor. It seems like a poor cripple without that."

The lady went to a closet, took out a work-basket, and, seating herself on the floor, began to darn the frayed silk, smoothing it under her palm, and pressing it down tenderly every few minutes, as fond mothers caress the heads

of their children; while she worked, this wayward and harassed woman sung, in a low, gentle voice,

"I love it, I love it; and who shall dare
To chide me for loving that old arm-chair?"

While she was working and singing thus, the servant-girl had gone into the basement, where her mistress was busy darning a worn stair-carpet, which was about to be promoted from the second to the third floor, ending at last on the garret-stairs.

"Who was it, Martha?" she inquired, pausing to thread her needle.

"Only an express-man, marm, with a chair for Mrs. Holt."

"I wish some express-man would bring her money to pay her board with," said the woman, giving a vicious tug at her needle, and drawing out the coarse thread attached to it with a jerk. She's been paying me with fine words and promises long enough; and those are things the landlord don't take from me. There's somebody at the door, Martha; see who it is."

CHAPTER II.

LITTLE RHODA.

MARTHA opened the basement-door, and a little black-eyed girl, who did not appear to be more than ten years of age, came in, with a basketful of matches on her arm.

"We don't want none," said Martha, sharply.

"Oh, yes, you do! Where's the lady?"

In she came, preceding the servant, cheerful as a bird, and fearless as a hero; a sweet, plump little child, that talked and looked like a woman.

"I know you want matches by this time, Mrs. Wheeler. She said you didn't; but I know better. It's ten days since I was here. How many bunches?"

"Why, Rhoda," said the woman, "what a pushing little thing you are. "No, no! I'm sure Martha has plenty yet."

"But I shan't come again for ever so long. How many?"

Rhoda began to count the bundles of matches with much unconcern.

"There, I think half a dozen bunches will do for this time," she said, piling a little heap of matches on the table, and holding out a tiny hand for the money.

The woman looked at her in comical surprise, but the little rogue refused to understand it.

"Oh! you can have twice as many, if you like," she said, tumbling the matches over in her basket; "plenty of 'em left."

"I don't want any more, nor them either," said the woman, laughing; "but I'll take the matches, to get rid of you."

"Yes, I know; two cents more, please. What's that? Oh! I had forgotten, it belongs to the lady up stairs."

The object which caused this question was the brass castor of a chair, which lay in the bottom of Rhoda's basket.

"What lady up stairs, Rhoda?"

"Why, Mrs. Holt; a real, real lady, that was so good to my mother. I've told you about that, haven't I?"

"No."

"Well, then, I will. No, I won't; there's no good in chattering; but that lady is an angel, good as gold. You ought to be proud of having her in the house."

"But how did you know Mrs. Holt?"

"How? She came to our room when nobody else would. She sent that great, beautiful chair for my sick mother to

sit in, and never asked for it again, or told us where to send it. She gave father money to buy a violin with, a real Cremona, and got the manager to take him back after he'd— Well no matter about that. She——”

“But how did you know she lived here?”

“I went up stairs one day to ask if any of 'em had any old dresses, and saw her sitting there.”

“Yes, I dare say. No cat from the street ever took more liberties in a house than you do, Rhoda.”

“Yes, I make myself at home. Why not? You all know me. Everybody knows me. Who shuts a closet-door or hides away the silver when Rhoda comes in? When I find a door on the latch, in I go; the girls look out from the kitchen, see me, and go back to their work, saying to each other, ‘Oh! it's only that bright little imp, Rhoda. We don't want any of her matches; but she will come in, anyhow.’ They don't want my matches. Well, marm, they do want 'em, and buy 'em, too, as sure as you live. Think I ever mean to let 'em get out and buy at the groceries? Not as I know of.”

“But you don't want to sell matches to Mrs. Holt?”

“No. I'd like to give her fifty bunches. Yes, I would; but she won't take 'em from me. She's a lady, every inch of her.”

“Well, I wish she was lady enough to pay what she owes me,” said the housewife, darning vigorously at the carpet.

Rhoda sat down her basket and went close to Mrs. Wheeler, her keen, little face full of startled interest.

“How much does she owe you, marm? How much?”

“Why what's that to you? Fifty dollars, if you must know.”

Rhoda recoiled, took up her basket, and went toward the door; then came back suddenly and said, in a sort of panic,

“Fifty dollars? Did you mean that?”

“Yes, I mean it; and mean something else,” said the woman sharply.

“What is that?”

“To have my money.”

“Ye-e-s.”

“But where are you going now, child?”

“Up stairs to give this little brass wheel to the lady. It belongs to her chair.”

“Very well; but mind you say nothing of what we've been talking about.”

“What, me? Oh, Mrs. Wheeler!”

Mrs. Holt was bending over her chair, drawing her swift needle in and out of the broken silk, when little Rhoda came softly through the door and stood looking at her. She had taken the missing castor from her basket, and held it in one hand, hesitating, as if intrusion on a real lady, without knocking, had just struck her as a questionable proceeding. At last she advanced a pace, and held out the castor, saying, in a low, almost meek voice,

“Here is the little wheel, marm. It will make it stand up straighter.”

Mrs. Holt started, looked up, and the color came into her face.

“Ah! Rhoda Weeks, is it you?” she said. “How is your father? What have you got there? Something to sell?”

“Nothing that you want, lady,” said Rhoda, drawing a corner of her little shawl over the basket.

“Oh, yes! I must take something,” said Mrs. Holt, putting one hand into her pocket from simple habit and drawing out her porte-monnaie; but her face flushed crimson as she opened it and remembered, all at once, how empty it was. “Then you won't sell me anything? Well, next time I will not let your basket pass,” she said, bending her eyes beneath the keen anxious look with which Rhoda was regarding her.

"I hope—oh! I hope the chair was not quite spoiled for you," said the girl, dropping her eyes. "We tried hard to keep it nice; but she was so long sick, and loved to sit in it all the time. I can see her in it now, marm, with her white cheek leaning against the silk, just here."

There were tears in the child's eyes, and tears in that sweet, broken voice, when little Rhoda laid her hand upon the chair, and looked down into Mrs. Holt's face with such wistful gratitude.

"I am glad, very glad, if anything I did made your poor mother more comfortable," said Mrs. Holt, a good deal moved. "But it was very little."

"Very little, was it? Didn't you give her everything? Didn't you get my father's place back after the manager had turned him off, and give him money to buy the violin he loved so well, after it had gone clean out of his hands? Didn't you buy the greenest place for us to bury her in, and pay for it? Oh, marm! how I wish I could die for you just here! I would—I would."

Mrs. Holt looked upon the child at first in surprise; then a quiver of disturbed feeling came to her face.

"Don't cry, Rhoda. It makes me feel like a child when you make such a baby of yourself, about nothing, too."

"Please excuse me, marm," answered Rhoda, wiping her eyes with a corner of her apron. "I don't cry often; ask father if I do. Haven't made such a baby of myself since she died; and now I've gone and done it for you. Please, now, just let me wipe my eyes and forgive me."

Rhoda was wiping her eyes vigorously as she spoke; then she lifted the corner of her apron to Mrs. Holt's face, and brushed some tears away. This action touched the poor lady to the heart. She threw her arms across the bottom of the chair, and burst into a passion of tears that fairly frightened the little girl.

"Of all that I have helped, all that I have loved, this poor child alone remembers me with gratitude," she sobbed.

"No, no! there is father! He loves you; he is grateful!" pleaded the little girl.

Mrs. Holt looked up, and swept the tears from her face. "I know it! I know it all, Rhoda Weeks! You are good people, and I am wrong to think that there can be no more like you. Run home, now, and I will go on with my work; you shall see how nice the chair will look the next time you bring your basket this way. Stop a minute, I think we can find a ribbon for your hair. Yes; here is something scarlet. See! it looks like a flame among those jet-black waves. Wear it home, and see if your father will notice how well you look."

"Yes, yes, I will! He loves my hair; and I brush it ever so much for his sake."

Rhoda's eyes were dancing with happiness. Bits of finery did not often come in her way; and this was so brilliant and fresh, that it made her forgetful of everything else. As for Mrs. Holt, the gift had appeased the craving of her benevolence, and the child's joy soothed her as nothing else could have done; for she was borne down with cares and regrets such as made her very life a pain.

CHAPTER III.

RHODA AND HER BROTHER.

OUT from that room Rhoda Weeks went, almost singing with happiness; but she had scarcely reached the street, when a thought of care settled on her, and she became demure as a mouse. That queer old look came to her face, and she began to calculate gravely, like any miser, and, for the first time in months, went home with a few unsold matches in her basket.

That home was in an old tenement-house, standing up, bare and gaunt, among the small houses of a poor neighborhood, crowded, like a bee-hive, with the hard working and idle poverty of a great city. Rhoda Weeks lived at the very top of the house, and cared as little for the stair-cases as a bird does for the boughs that shelter its nest. Up she flitted like a sprite, the basket on one arm, her little hood swinging back by the strings, while the scarlet ribbon rippled in her hair, and fell down her back like quivers of flame whenever she passed a window, or was crossed by a gleam of sunshine in her flight upward.

Rhoda opened the door of a little room, so high and close to the roof, that it was flooded with sunshine, though all the neighborhood below lay in shadow. There was enough of squalid misery in that building, but it had not yet mounted to that little room which, in its neatness, could well brave all the sunlight poured into it from the glory of the west, when a warm day was bathing itself in a sea of crimson before it dropped into the unalterable past.

As Rhoda opened the door a boy sat in this rich light, with his arms folded on the window-sill, gazing out upon the sunset. He had evidently been at work, for a coil of coarse braid, woven from fresh wheat straw, lay around him upon the floor, and some of the loose straws had fallen from his hands.

"Luke!"

The boy turned quickly, and saw his sister, with the scarlet ribbon in her hair, challenging his admiration. His grey eyes lighted up, and a smile parted his lips.

"Oh! how pretty it is, and how fine we are!" he said, giving a little pull at the ribbon. "I was just thinking of you, sister, wishing that you and I——"

"And father," suggested Rhoda.

"Yes, and father, could just get into one of those fiery boats that plunge in and out of the golden clouds, and float off into the other world."

"Where we should find *her*," whispered Rhoda.

"Where we should find her. If we could all go together, Rhoda, in that way or across the golden bridge which fell from one cloud to another, as I looked only a minute ago, and leave all this behind."

The boy dropped his hand and pointed downward to the street, thus taking in the mass of poverty-stricken life moving beneath them.

"Now you are getting sad and strange again, brother Luke; and that troubles me when I come home at nights. I love to see beautiful things in the sky, but they make me glad, not solemn, as you are, Luke."

"But I see so much more than the gold and crimson, with green and purple shooting through them, or floating off in seas and lakes; to me all that glory is full of life. I can almost hear music coming from those burning worlds, and see crowds on crowds of people going in and out, enjoying all that you and I might search after forever and ever, and die without reaching."

"But there is no such thing, Luke. While you are thinking about it, those mountains of fire, and lakes of gold melt away, and leave nothing but a black sky behind."

"I know it! I know it!" answered the boy, sadly. "But every day God gives them to us; and we know that he has another and more beautiful world somewhere, where you and I may be happy like the rest. Rhoda, dear, the richest man on earth has nothing better than this."

"But it is gone, now; take yourself from the window, dear, and let us see how your work comes on. I am going to make up the hats this evening."

Luke turned his face lingeringly on the sky. It had deepened into a dark, violet hue, into which the warm rose-tints, and hot, golden-red merged themselves.

"Yes, it is getting dusk; all my bridges and castles are

burned down," he said. "Now I will talk with you, Rhoda."

"Well, about the work?"

"I don't like it, Rhoda. It is fit for women, and comes to so little, after all."

"True enough, Luke; if you were strong, and well, and saucy, like me, the money we could make would astonish folks. But you don't like running about, and I do."

Luke nodded his head, and the long lashes fell like shadows to his pale cheek.

"But now, about supper, Luke? Has father come in yet?"

"No; he's gone for a long walk over to the Jersey flats. But there's plenty of kindling wood, and I'll make the fire."

"No, you sit still; I'm not a bit tired. There's no need of your doing girl's work all the time. Ain't these capital matches? My customers get the worth of their money. See how the wood blazes up. Now help me pull out the table. Nothing but poor folks let it stand against the wall when they eat; and we are not poor folks—far from it. Now the table-cloth. I must wash it out to-night, and iron it before breakfast. Getting it crooked, am I; well, you can put it right. The kettle begins to steam up; and I've got such a nice, tender bit of beef-steak for you and father."

Directly the beef-steak was sending its savory smoke into the room, and a little earthen teapot shot out puffs of steam from its place on the stove-hearth, about which Rhoda flitted with a knife in her hand, as if she had made up her mind to defend as well as prepare her father's supper. Never was there such a bright, womanly little creature as this. The life within her seemed inexhaustible; after tramping the streets all day, she had come home, cheerful as a lark, to brighten up that little home, and prepare her father's supper.

"Now, all is ready," she said, taking off a little mite of an apron, and washing her tiny hands in a grave, old-fashioned way, that would have made you smile. "He may come now as soon as he likes."

CHAPTER IV.

THE TREASURE OF WILD FLOWERS.

THE father of that little household was coming. That moment Rhoda heard her father's step on the stairs, the door slowly opened, and a little man came in, carrying a quantity of field flowers in his arms, such as grow brightest in August and September—golden-rod, wild asters, and a feathery white flower, which clings to its stem in soft masses, like snow-flakes caught out of season; with these were some long pointed leaves of the sweet-flag, and a handful of water-rushes.

You need not have asked where the little maiden at the hearth got her activity, from, after seeing this man. The whole thing was evident in a minute. She was her father over again in miniature, with a certain practical commonplaceness added, which made her seem an old-fashioned copy disguised as a child.

"And so you have got my supper ready?" said the little man, cheerily, laying down his flowers on a chair with gentle caution. "Good girl! good girl! What a dear little grandmother it is! What should you and I do without her, Luke? The flowers are for you, boy. I have had a glorious tramp after them; come home tired as a hound, and bright as a lark. Now for the supper."

Rhoda sat down at the end of the little square table, and began to pour out the tea daintily, like some nice old

lady in a fairy tale. Mr. Weeks cut up the steak just as daintily, and was about to hand some of it to his son, when he discovered that Luke had not yet taken his place, but was carrying the flowers off in his arms, and placing them in a great pitcher which he had filled with water.

"Come, Luke," he called out; "now that you have fed the flowers, come and feed yourself."

Luke came to the table with his face in a glow. It was a lovely face, more feminine, almost, than the girl's. His eyes shone, and his lips smiled. The boy's sensitive soul had been, for a blissful moment, among the flowers.

"They are beautiful, father! What rich man gave them to you?"

"Rich man, my boy? Ha! you have never been in the country, or you would know. These are the flowers that God scatters wild along the roads, and in the hollows, for poor people to gather. I might have brought home loads, only there was no way of doing it."

"And you brought them to me? Thank you, father," answered the boy in his gentle gratitude. "For me and Rhoda, I mean?"

"No, no! not for me! I will take some of the beef, father, with a bit of pickle. Let Luke keep all the flowers, I haven't time for them."

"Poor fellow! how he loves them!" said the father; "and never saw them growing. That is hard; I will take him with me some day when I go on a tramp."

Rhoda looked anxious, and laid down her knife and fork with a determined gesture.

"Father, it would kill him to walk so far."

"No, no! I am well now—strong!" cried the boy. "Let me pick them for myself, father."

"So you shall. It is a shame that I have never thought of this before. I might have taken you out often enough."

"He could not leave mother, you know," said Rhoda; "she mourned when he was out of her sight."

Weeks got up hastily, and went into a little bed-room connected with that in which the table was spread. The boy lifted his large eyes, and dropped the lids again, under which Rhoda could see tears swelling. She did not protest, or offer comfort, but gave a little push at her chair, as if this quick sensitiveness in her twin brother troubled her. Then she settled herself again, and called out:

"The chair went to Mrs. Holt safe, father, and she was glad to get it—so glad, it would have done you good."

Weeks came out of the bed-room, with a flush about his eyes.

"And you saw her?"

"Yes, father; she gave me this ribbon, and asked about—about us all so kindly."

"Did she ask after me—particularly, I mean?"

"No, not particularly; that is, in that way."

"Luke," said the father, suddenly, "there is time for a lesson before I go to the theatre; get the violin."

Luke started from his chair, opened a closet, and brought out an old violin, blackened with time, and seasoned, as it were, with ages of music. The two sat down by the window, through which the cool evening wind came softly from the west, and in a few moments the room was full of such low, sweet music as living genius can alone give to any instrument.

Rhoda, who was washing the tea things, paused in her work to listen, and handled the cups daintily, as if afraid of making any noise that might clash with those sweet sounds. Weeks bent over his son, animated, swaying to and fro, with his hand in motion, as if it waved a baton. But the strain grew more plaintive, and so exquisitely sad that even Rhoda held her breath. Weeks let his hand drop, and leaning against the window, listened in mute silence

till the sweet wail ceased. Then he started up, took the violin from the boy's hand, almost roughly, and carried it into the next room.

"You'll soon get beyond my teaching," he said, fastening the instrument in its case. "Where in the world did you find that?"

"It came to me this afternoon, when you and Rhoda left me alone with the violin," answered the boy.

"Came to you! Came to you! Why, Luke, I never heard anything like it."

The boy smiled, and his eyes brightened.

"I think it came to me first in dreams," he said, "not altogether, but— Well, father, I cannot say how it is, but the violin seemed to draw the notes out from my heart, where they had been sleeping ever so long."

Weeks made no reply, but put on his hat, tucked the instrument-case lovingly under his arm, and went out humming over the new air to himself.

CHAPTER V.

A GENEROUS IDEA.

RHODA had finished her work, and sat down by Luke at the window. She gave him a little shake, for he seemed buried in recollections of the music that had charmed even her, and she wanted his entire attention.

"Luke, I have an idea."

The boy turned his large eyes upon her, and answered gently.

"You always have good ideas, Rhoda."

Rhoda nodded her head, thus quietly appropriating the honest praise awarded her.

"But this is a great idea, and may frighten you; that good Mrs. Holt is in trouble, Luke. She owes fifty dollars for board."

"Fifty dollars!" exclaimed the boy, dismayed by the sum; "that's a great deal of money."

"Yes, it seems a great deal to any one that isn't in trade as I am; but you know, Luke, some people consider it nothing at all."

"Do they? How very rich such people must be!"

"Not always; but this is my idea, Luke. Mrs. Holt spent lots of money on us, besides making a new man of father. Now I want to do something for her."

"You, Rhoda? What can you do?"

"I want to pay that fifty dollars to Mrs. Wheeler."

"Oh, Rhoda! Fifty dollars to Mrs. Wheeler!"

"Look here, brother; I've got a secret."

"A secret! You?"

"Yes, a magnificent secret! How long is it since I've been in trade, brother?"

"Why, ever since you were six years old. You began to go about when father——"

"Don't say anything about that just now. It makes me think of her mourning herself to death over again. Well, since we have been by ourselves, I have been looking out for a rainy day, Luke, laying up money like smoke."

"Laying up money? Why, every night you brought home the price of our matches for father."

"Of course I did—that belonged to him; but, Luke, don't be astonished, I've got money of my own; yes, I have lots of it, too. When I've been out selling matches—and I'm smart at it you may brag on that, if you want to."

"But I don't want to brag, sister."

"Of course, you don't. It's only me that's puffed up. Well, some folks like me, and perhaps some don't; but I

finds lots of people that are good to me and give me things."

The boy started up, and pushed Rhoda away from him, almost angrily.

"Oh, Rhoda Weeks! you don't beg? You haven't forgot our mother so far as that?"

"Beg! Luke, you are a mean fellow to think so!"

"But you take?"

"Take! Well, yes; but it's all in the way of trade. Let me tell you. One day a lady asked me to take a dress and sell it for her to a second-hand clothing-store. I did it and got a good deal more money than she expected. She gave me a dollar for doing it, and said she had made a good bargain at that. This gave me an idea. I went into ever so many houses, and always made friends of the girls in the basement. They all like me, brother; and so do the ladies. Well, I got the girls to tell their mistresses that I should like to trade in cast-off garments—not old clothes, that disgust people—and would buy all they had if they would only trust me a day or two. The girls knew I was honest, and said so. The ladies trusted me, and let me have the things low because I was so little. The man had to run up his prices when I came, or I'd have gone somewhere else, and he knew it. So I began to make money, you understand—and that was no begging, but honest trade."

"But what have you done with the money? Why didn't you give it to father? I should."

"So should I, Luke; only mother left you and father to my care—and I had it in on my mind. 'What,' says I, 'if father should break down, as he has twice before, and nothing laid by; where would brother Luke be? The darling boy isn't strong, and can't knock about among folks as you can, Rhoda Weeks. It isn't in him. *She* left that boy to you, just as rich men leave money and houses to their daughters—and he's a hundred thousand times more

precious! Then father's good as gold when he's all right, and kind as kind can be when he isn't; only he does make money fly, and hasn't the least idea of saving. He'd never be content with this room if he knew about my business; but hand out like sixty,'—you know he would do that Luke!"

"Yes, I'm afraid he would," said Luke, thoughtfully.

"Well, this is the way I went on thinking. 'Brother Luke isn't strong; he hasn't a bit of talent for trade. He loves to read; he loves that violin as if it were a live thing. Mother wanted him to have an education, and he shall have it!'"

"Oh, sister Rhoda! how I love you," cried the boy, throwing his arms about the girl's neck in a burst of fond gratitude.

"Of course, you do. Weren't we born to love one another? Wasn't that *her* last charge to us both? There, don't smother me, dear, I haven't come to the idea yet."

Luke unwound his arms from Rhoda's neck with a little sigh, and again composed himself to listen.

"You don't know anything about trade more than a baby, and perhaps have no idea that there is such an establishment as a Sixpenny Savings-Bank in New York?"

"No," answered Luke, humbly. "I haven't an idea about anything of the kind."

"And don't know what interest is?"

"No. What is it?"

"Did you ever see a snow-ball rolled up on the ground?"

"Yes, yes; the boys do it in some back yard every winter."

"Well, at first it is a little thing, and takes up so little snow as you roll it, that you can't tell exactly when and how it grows larger; but by-and-bye it rounds out bigger and bigger, till every turn swoops up whole drifts of snow.

That is interest, Luke; the man at the bank told me all about it."

"I can't quite make it out," said Luke, with a puzzled look.

"Of course not. Well, the little snow-ball that a boy makes in the round of his hands is the first money; he gives it one roll in the snow, and that is a year's interest. The next roll takes a wider sweep, the next wider yet; that is interest on interest. But you can't understand—I couldn't at first; but it is a wonderful thing, Luke, where money makes itself."

"How cute you are, sister! But what is the idea?"

Rhoda appropriated this truth with a nod of her little head, and answered the question at once.

"This is it. I have got almost fifty dollars in that bank,—all yours, Luke. May I give this to the lady who was so good to our mother—who saved *him*?"

"May you do that? And you ask me? Oh, Rhoda! don't make me ashamed," answered the boy, folding his arms on the window-sill, and hiding his face in them. "I never earned a cent of it."

"That's a fib, if ever one was told. If it hadn't been for you, dear, I never should have branched out so. Now, say, shall we do this? That poor lady hasn't a cent, I know that, and Mrs. Wheeler will be worrying her to death. I saw it in the way she screwed up her mouth, and punched that great needle through her stair carpet, as if it had been a dagger."

"Do it. Oh, sister! I wish it was mine to give."

"So it is, every cent of it; but we will get more. You shall have learning, and nice clothes, and everything. Never fear, I'm in the business, only keep our secret."

"But is it right to keep anything from father?" questioned Luke, whose tender conscience was easily troubled.

Rhoda answered promptly, and in a way that settled the question at once.

"It is for his own good. I have settled that long ago. He is to have the match business. In the other you and I are partners. When he needs money, there's time enough to astonish him. See how contented he is! After flowers in the day, and music at night."

"But I am doing nothing."

CHAPTER VI.

THE REAL AND THE IDEAL.

"NOBODY wants you to do anything, dear," said Rhoda persuasively, but I have another idea. Trade makes one think, I can tell you; those flowers that father brought home, they are lovely. Suppose we make something of them?"

"Make something? What?"

"Money, to be sure. Lots of flowers are sold every night in front of the theatre—roses and lilies, and all sorts; but I have never seen anything like these. They would take, I'll bet you."

Luke's face brightened; here was something for him to do. He started up with animation.

"I will bring them out and see."

He came back in an instant, carrying the great pitcher crowded full of flowers, which he sat down on the floor. Rhoda folded her arms, turned her head on one side and examined them.

"Baskets, I should say," was her first commentary; "baskets made out of the rushes, with handles, and a little rock-moss—that tells. I've seen it on the stands."

"Let me; I can do that!" exclaimed Luke, with animation; for all the artistic taste sleeping in that delicate na-

ture was aroused. "Pick out the rushes, if that is what you call the round grass. We will try one basket to-night."

Rhoda sat down on the floor happy as a bird. She sorted out the finest rushes, and began to braid them with her nimble fingers, and had full five inches done before her brother commenced. The creature chatted as she worked, and told Luke all that had happened to her in the morning in snatches, until he had a vivid idea of Mrs. Holt's anxious face, her proud poverty, and the danger that menaced her from Mrs. Wheeler, who stood, though they did not know it, in equal danger from her landlord and grocer. At last the green braid was deemed long enough, and was coiled into as pretty a basket as ever was concocted from rushes.

"Now, Luke, comes your turn. I haven't the least idea about mixing the flowers," said Rhoda, holding her basket out by the handle. "Let me see how you do it."

Luke held a quantity of the golden-rod in his hand, weaving the soft spray into what seemed a wreath of yellow snowflakes. This he laid around the edge of the basket, and directly brought the tremulous gold into more vivid life, by an inner wreath of wild asters of that rich purplish blue, which no cultivation can deepen or rival. Then came a tuft of tiny fern-leaves, holding in their centre a handful of flossy white flowers, so delicate that a breath seemed sufficient to blow them away.

"There!" exclaimed the boy, holding up his work in gleeful triumph. "What do you think of that for a beginning?"

"Oh, Luke! it is splendid; and you are so handy and handsome. Isn't work delightful when you really get at it?"

No wonder the girl said that, for the boy was a picture as he sat upon the floor with his legs gathered under him, his jacket off, and the snow-white shirt unbuttoned at the

throat, from whence it was partly dropping off one shoulder. In fact, the whole group was a living Murillo, for the tall, wild flowers in the pitcher loomed up a little behind the lad; and the girl, so small, so piquant and sparkling, stood near, with her head on one side, like a canary-bird, wondering if there was seed as well as flowers in the basket which the boy held up.

"It will do; that will take; twenty-five cents would be cheap for it," she said, triumphantly.

Luke lowered the basket to his lap, and a shadow came to his bright, young face. He was thinking how beautiful it was. She, with as good a heart, perhaps, counted the pennies it would bring. This practical common sense chilled the boy, and he turned from the basket with a sigh.

All at once Rhoda clasped her hands with a sudden gesture of dismay.

"Dear me! Who will sell them?" she exclaimed. "Father will never let me go to the theatre. *She* would not have liked it. It is only men who buy flowers there."

Luke turned white, and his eyes fell. "Did she expect him to go?"

"If you could; if you only could bring yourself to try, dear. Think how nice it would be to have us both putting money into the bank."

Luke got up from the floor, buttoned his shirt at the neck, and put on his jacket, but his face had lost all its animation.

"Don't! Don't look like that, dear! It's nothing when you once begin. Try this once; it's not too late; people are just going in. Only think! four baskets will bring in a dollar!"

Luke put on his cap and tried to smile, but the effort ended in a quiver of the lips, and tears swelled under his eyelids—the thing she asked was torture to the sensitive boy.

"Kiss me before I go," he said, gently.

Rhoda threw her arms around him, and felt that he was shaking from head to foot. This touched her, and she made an effort to draw him into the room again; but he resisted and would go. Was she, his twin sister, to undertake all the work, while he sat idle in the house dreaming of music, and watching the beautiful clouds? if she would not go up to his ideal with him he must help her here, for the needs of this hard working world was a heavy burden on her.

Rhoda went down stairs with him, chatting all the way, and telling him how easy it was to sell pretty things. Matches were different; people had to be watched, and taken in their necessity for them; but flowers struck the fancy at once. She kissed her brother at the door and answered.

"Of course you will," when he faltered out a promise to sell the basket before he came back. So the boy went down stairs, miserably heavy-hearted, and the girl resumed her work about the house, with a vague feeling of self-reproach, as if she had done a very cruel thing in urging the boy forth into the world from which he shrank so painfully.

CHAPTER VII.

A BITTER DISAPPOINTMENT.

A GIRL was walking up and down in the foggy light of an ill-trimmed lamp, which was the sole illumination of a little room directly under the attic in which the musician Weeks, kept his humble household. She was a strange-looking, beautiful creature, in spite of her common-place garments, and a certain free movement, which bespoke more impatience than she could well control. Every few min-

utes, she would go to the window and look out, then pause to listen, and with a stamp of the foot, begin to pace the room again.

Directly the door opened, and Weeks looked in with a sparkling smile on his good-natured face. Constance turned quickly and came toward him.

"I've got the order, Miss Constance; seats for two, just one row back from where you sat the other night."

"Oh, give them to me. Let me look. How good you are."

"Not at all—don't mention it," said Weeks, beaming satisfaction from his eyes, but deprecating her thanks with a modest wave of the hand; "good night, I must be off to the theatre."

The door closed, and Weeks ran down stairs, his light feet giving back a pleasant sound, as they pattered upon the steps.

Constance ran up stairs, and looked into the room where Rhoda was at work.

"Where is Luke; I want him," she said half out of breath.

"Luke hasn't come in yet," answered Rhoda.

"Oh mercy! what shall I do; here is an order for the theatre, and I want some one to go for Mr. Sterling."

"I—I'll go," said Rhoda with cheerful good nature, and she began to tie on her hood at once.

"That's a darling, good soul. I wouldn't let you take the trouble, Rhoda, but one does not get a chance to see a play often and your father has been so good."

"He always is as good as gold," said Rhoda. "There, I'm all ready. Got a note or anything, or shall I only say he's wanted?"

"That will be enough, Rhoda."

"I should think so!"

Away went Rhoda on her errand, and Constance Hud-

son returned to her little sitting-room, so anxious that she could not rest. In order to save time she went into a bedroom that opened upon that miserable apology for a parlor, and gave some really artistic touches to her hair, fastened a knot of blue ribbon to the bosom of her cheap delaine dress, and put on a jaunty little hat which made her dashing style of beauty really overpowering.

"There now, I am quite ready," she said, pouring some cheap perfume on a handkerchief edged with imitation lace. "Why don't he come?"

Constance began to pace the room again in her impatience; this was a great event for her, poor girl. It was not as she said, often that a chance to visit the theatre came in her way, and that was all the dissipation yet known to her. To understand her ardent longing, one must be young and isolated as she was, poor thing!

It seemed a full hour before Rhoda came back with word that she could not find Mr. Sterling, who had gone out, but she had left word that he was wanted.

Constance received this news with a passionate gesture, and her disappointment broke forth on little Rhoda, who was fortunately out of hearing, having run up stairs like a deer, eager to go on with her work.

The disappointment which fell upon Constance was really distressing. She flung off her hat and put it on again half a dozen times, walked the room, leaned out of the window, laid her hot cheeks against the stone cill, and resolved to be patient till some sound of his coming reached her, but in half a minute began her feverish walk again.

The hours wore on: it was getting almost too late for any hopes of going out, and Constance gave way entirely. She tossed her hat into a corner, flung herself into a chair, and burying her face in her perfumed handkerchief soon deluged its cheap lace with tears.

All at once she heard a step, and sprang to her feet

breathless; snatched up her hat and tried to look unconcerned as she settled it on her head; but the effort only made her agitation more apparent, for her face was flushed with weeping, and her lips had not ceased to tremble through the joyful smile that broke over them like sunshine on rosebuds.

"He is coming, he is coming," she cried out, as if her own voice would endorse the fact, and turning to look at a painted clock that stood on a high wooden mantle-piece, she saw, that it would not be so very late when they reached the theatre, after all. In the tumult of her happiness she had forgotten the step, but it sounded again nearer the door. The color left her face, her heart fell like lead in her bosom, and she sank into a chair.

"Oh, it is father—only that," she called, "and he will be glad that I am disappointed. I won't let him see it—I won't."

Again she took off her hat, tossed it through the bedroom door, and, moving her seat, pretended to be looking out of the window; though her bosom heaved with rage against her father, that his step should have deceived her so.

The door opened softly, and a tall man, meanly dressed, but neat and gentlemanly in spite of that, came into the room.

"What, alone, Constance!" he said.

"Alone," answered the girl pettishly; "why not. Who is there in this house to keep me company?"

"I thought, perhaps, little Rhoda."

"Little Rhoda, indeed; I am sick of her."

"Or Luke, with his music; you never tire of that, I am sure."

"Yes, I do; one must know something of music to enjoy it, and I know nothing of that—or anything else, how should I?"

Constance said this with bitter emphasis. She almost

hated her father just then, and was seized with a cruel wish to wound him.

He looked at her with trouble in his eyes, but said nothing. Then she broke out again—

“So you are ready to go out—out—out—out all night long, and I at home so lonesome that the very mice in the ceiling are company. I wonder what people have children for, if it is only to let them live in such a way as this; for my part, I wish I had never been born. So you *will* go out and leave me alone?”

It was wonderful, the patience with which the father of this girl submitted to these upbraidings. He answered her kindly, almost humbly:

“But I must go, Constance, I have promised.”

“You are always promising, father; always out when I most need you. It’s right down cruel to treat any child as I am treated.”

“Hush, Constance, do not blame me. I am trying to be kind—trying to act rightly.”

“Was it acting rightly to refuse me money enough to buy a feather for my hat, and put the last cent in your pocket as you did just now; you are always doing it, and not a shilling ever comes back.”

The man thus harshly reproached, turned his large gray eyes upon the girl with such mournful earnestness that she softened a little.

“Oh father, you would not blame me if you knew how I wanted the feather, and how I have been disappointed.”

The man took some fractional currency from his pocket, counted it over with a troubled look, but put it resolutely back again.

“I cannot give you the money to-night, Constance; wait a little and you shall have it.”

The girl burst into a passion of tears.

“There, it is always so. I suppose you will be out all

night, and come home without a cent. I declare I won’t stand it; it’s a burning shame for a man of your age to spend his nights as you do.”

“Constance!”

The pain expressed by that one word thrilled through and through the angry girl, and told her how cruel she had been; but while she was struggling with herself, the door softly closed and her father disappeared. Impulsive alike in her anger and in her repentance, Constance sprang up, snatched her hat, threw a veil over it and ran after him.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PRIVATE MARRIAGE.

CONSTANCE HUDSON saw her father moving along the pavement as she came into the street, and followed him quickly, eager to make atonement for the unfeeling words with which she had wounded him so cruelly, but he was walking faster than usual, and she had some difficulty in coming up with him. She had almost overtaken him, when a female came out from the shadow of a sunken doorway, and took hold of his arm.

Constance saw her father bend his head as if listening to something this strange person was saying, and instantly a whirl of jealous suspicions swept away all her good resolutions. Who was this person whom her father came into the street to meet?

At first Constance was tempted to rush up and confront the person who seemed on such familiar terms with her own father; but something arrested her as she came close up to them, and, while she hesitated, the two persons moved on. Constance followed them, breathless with hot indignation;

but they walked rapidly and turned down a cross street crowded with wretched buildings, and more wretched people, in which she lost sight of them. They had entered a low basement kitchen, and seemed to have dropped through the earth, while the excited girl was pursuing them. Constance became frightened then, for throngs of strange looking people were passing and repassing the place where she stood, groups of squalid women and miserable children sat on the door steps chatting, scolding and sometimes laughing with boisterous merriment. Compared to this place her own home was a paradise. Sickened, terrified and angry, the girl turned and attempted to find her way back, but she became bewildered in this strange neighborhood and went astray, wandering farther from home each moment.

At length, a coarse slatternly woman, around whom a brood of children were gathered, called out to her from an open door-way. Constance had no idea what she said, but her fright increased to absolute terror, and starting to a swift run, she fled down the street, turned corners at random, and at last came into a thoroughfare through which more respectable people seemed to be passing.

Constance did not heed this change, in her terror, but sped on at a swift pace, which drew the general attention upon her, and the passers-by paused, hesitated and turned to look after her in general astonishment.

No wonder! a more beautiful face than that which the filmy little bonnet revealed, seldom exhibited itself on any thoroughfare. With her cheeks ablaze with excitement, her eyes flashing like stars, and her superb hair floating back as she ran, the girl threaded the moving current of people with the swiftness and grace of a wild bird.

"Constance! Great Heavens! Constance Hudson, what has brought you here?"

The girl paused, caught her breath with a gasp, and reaching out both hands, burst into tears.

"Oh Mr. Sterling, Mr. Sterling! is it you—really, really you," take me home—do take me home. I have lost myself, I have been in such dreadful places."

The young man drew her trembling hand through his arm and held it tenderly as he strove to reassure her.

"Be quiet. Do strive to tranquilize yourself. It seems so strange to find you here; get your breath, girl, and tell me what it all means—put down your veil."

Constance lifted her hand and felt eagerly for her veil, but she found only the flossy hair, from which it had dropped in her fright.

"I have lost it, and these people stare so," she said in keen distress.

"Never mind, we shall soon be home. But tell me how it all happened," said the young man, whose presence was fast inspiring the girl with courage. "I cannot understand it."

"It was all his fault. He came into the room when I was so disappointed about going to the theatre. Mr. Weeks brought me an order and I sent for you; but Rhoda could not find you, then I hoped that he might go with me; but he did not offer, and we had hard words. He went off in the midst of them. I had the last of it, and was sorry he looked so grieved as he closed the door. I got my bonnet at once and ran after him, just in time to see him meet some woman in the street and start off. I followed them into such a terrible place, and lost them all at once; then in trying to find the way back I came on you."

"You saw this; there can be no mistake about your father?"

"Mistake, no. I heard him speak to her, I saw his face as he stooped down to look in hers. I never lost sight of them once till they seemed to drop into the earth, before my eyes."

The young man was greatly disturbed; his heart was

filled with profound sympathy for the girl, and burning indignation against the father.

"Does this thing happen often? Is he really so neglectful?"

"Often! he is never at home evenings, and sometimes stays away till late at night. If he takes out money, there is not a cent when he comes back. Sometimes I sit up till daylight waiting for him, afraid that some dreadful thing has happened. You have often asked me what made my eyes so heavy, and I would not tell you; but it is this! it is this."

"My poor girl!"

"I know that these wanderings do him harm," sobbed the girl, in her impetuous grief, "for he comes home so worn out and haggard, that my heart aches for him; but pleading, scolding or crying, does no good. Sick or well—rain or shine—he leaves me alone, thinking that I do not really care."

By this time, the young couple had reached the house in which Constance lived. Young Sterling went up stairs with her, filled with bitter indignation against a father who would neglect a creature so young and beautiful as Constance, at a time when she most needed counsel and protection. Never had he seen Constance so beautiful. The anger had died out from her face, leaving it pale as death; a mist of tears still floated in her eyes; fatigue and terror had made her sweetly feminine.

The heart of that young man turned traitor to his judgment; a wild, noble impulse seized upon him. He drew Constance toward him, held both her hands firmly in his, and bent his fine eyes to her face.

"Constance, do you love me?"

She looked at him in wild astonishment, then a glow of delight crept up to her face, and she bent her head murmuring:

"Yes."

"Come with me then, Constance."

"Where? what for?" faltered the girl.

"To a minister. I will make you my wife, Constance. It may be a rash step, but I cannot see you exposed to scenes like this; if your father cannot protect you, I will."

Constance turned white as death, but directly her eyes kindled.

"But just now you asked me if I loved you," she said.

"And you answered 'Yes,' like a brave, honest girl."

"What if I ask the same question, now. I am a poor girl, William, and lonesome enough at times, but you must not attempt to marry me from pity; I won't stand that."

"No honest man asks any girl to love him, if he has nothing to give in return, Constance. How could any man help loving you?"

Constance brightened like a rose.

"You mean this?"

"Yes, darling; now go smooth that hair a little, get another veil, and let us go."

The girl went into her little bed-room and came out again, half tearful, half smiling.

"I am ready," she said, throwing the veil over her little bonnet."

An hour after this, the young couple entered the room again, quietly and in silence. The hour of their destiny had passed, and they came into the solitude of the room, saddened and serious. The momentous step they had taken, silenced the wild excitement which had urged it on. Perhaps no two persons that ever lived, were less prepared to enter the hard struggle of life, than this newly married couple. Constance flung aside her veil, and took off her bonnet. The thoughtfulness of her bridegroom made her timid.

"I wonder what father will say," she whispered, drawing close to him as he stood by the window.

"We must not tell him yet," answered the young man, drawing her to his side and pressing his lips to hers. "It is due my mother that she should be the first informed."

"But what will she say?"

The young man stepped back a pace, and held the beautiful creature he had married at arm's length as he examined her blushing face with eyes full of tender admiration.

"She must say that you are beautiful, Constance, as for the rest——"

"Well, what of the rest, William?"

"It will go hard if you cannot make her love you; but for the present, Constance, you must keep our secret. Give me a little time for thought."

"But you love me, William?"

"Indeed I do."

"Then I do not care for the rest."

Thus these two young persons entered upon their secret and unsanctioned marriage.

CHAPTER IX.

AFTER THOUGHTS.

AN unsanctioned marriage! Yes it was that. William Sterling had only one person that he knew of on earth to whom he owed obedience, and towards whom his whole soul went forth in tender affection; that woman was his mother, Mrs. Holt, the neglected wife of a second husband, who was not Sterling's father.

Who was this woman, with her gentle manners and exquisite refinement?

William Sterling himself could not have told you more than that she was an English woman, of singular beauty,

when he first remembered anything; a proud, independent woman, soft in manners but resolute of purpose, who for many years had given up her entire life to his well being.

As a boy his education had been derived entirely from her own highly cultivated mind; and when that was insufficient for the requirements of his early manhood, she gave up a pretty cottage home in which their quiet lives had glided on together, and made her residence near the college, which gave him a higher range of education than she could impart.

This devotion in the mother was met by ardent affection in the son; but they were to a certain extent separated, and in an evil hour for her the isolated and lonely woman contracted a second marriage which, for a time, promised to bring some happiness into her dull life.

Holt, the man she married, was much younger than herself. Thrown into the society of this brilliant and beautiful woman, directly after a residence of two years in the tropics, her genius and proud beauty fascinated him. The woman was very lonely, and the ardent love of a man in the prime of his life, handsome, impetuous, and genial, won upon her prudence and awoke all the affections, without which the life of any woman is as nothing. It was almost the dawn of a new existence to this lady, when she entered the world again as the bride of Mason Holt. An atmosphere of wealth had become so completely a part of her life, that a return to it was almost Heaven to her. Besides, she loved the man, and that, after the monotony of her late life, was happiness in itself.

If Mrs. Sterling told the history of her life to the man she married, no one ever learned the fact from him; but one thing came to his knowledge about this time, that might have excited distrust in a less reckless man. Whatever means of support Mrs. Sterling had possessed before, had been utterly exhausted at the time of her marriage. With

the exception of a few hundred dollars, set apart for her son's education, she had scarcely money enough of her own to purchase her wedding garments. But Holt was liberal to a fault. The wealth that he had, was lavished without stint, for a few years; then came difficulties, wild speculations, bankruptcy, and at last a shabby boarding-house, in which the sensitive woman shrank and trembled with dread, as she heard the step of her landlady on the stairs.

For a time young Sterling shared the sudden prosperity of his mother, but as humiliation and poverty came upon her, she grew reticent with him, and would not admit the evil that was slowly creeping over her life. But the young man saw it vaguely, and knew that it was a trouble which must be prepared for in the future. So he flung aside the indomitable pride which had been ingrained into his nature, and casting away all hopes of a profession, followed the bent of his own genius, and earned a tolerable independence as an engraver.

In this pursuit, he met the ardent, and reckless girl who was to be his destiny, and his genius went out and seized upon hers with the vivid quickness of two powerful fires, meeting and rushing onward together.

These two young persons, both ardent and wonderfully gifted, had been for nearly a year thrown into the intimate companionship of teacher and pupil, opposed as they were in character and training. A feeling of intense interest sprang up between them, and while Hudson followed his mysterious life, leaving his daughter almost every night to the solitude of that dull room, so irksome to a person of her quick vitality and ardent imagination, young Sterling became almost an inmate of the little household, and, as time wore on, the confidant of this lonely girl.

Sterling understood more of the world than the young girl, whose life had been so miserably circumscribed, and drew conclusions regarding the father, that deepened his

sympathy for her. More than once he had seen this man enter places that would have cast suspicion upon an anchorite; low drinking saloons, and haunts of evil resort, which he believed would only be a resort of depraved morals and perverted taste. It was well for Constance Hudson that she was thrown into intimate association at this time with a person so much above her in character and education—so staunch in his honor. Sterling believed Hudson to be a man utterly unfit to control a girl so beautiful and impetuous, and to a certain extent had constituted himself her guardian.

It was a dangerous position for any young man—doubly perilous for a person of such quick sympathies and chivalric generosity. He saw this girl utterly unprotected, as he believed, rich in artistic genius and most dangerous beauty. Her loneliness touched him, her ambition and industry impressed him with admiration, amounting, at times, to absolute respect. What a glorious creature she might become, if once lifted out of the cruel isolation to which fate had condemned her.

These thoughts had grown and deepened in his mind until they possessed him entirely. He saw this girl, so rich in attractions, spending night after night in that dull parlor, or wandering from room to room without a single creature to speak with, whose association was not likely to drag her down, except the musician's family. He saw all this, and was ready to condemn her father for this abandonment night after night of a creature so rash, so impetuous, and rich in perilous beauty; and so far as he could, the young man took the father's place, resolved to protect her alike from herself and the evil example of a parent he deemed unworthy of so high a trust. The girl aided in this belief of her father's unworthiness; there was so much in his character and conduct which she could not understand, and this filled her with anger and distrust against him. These

feelings she imparted to the young man, who was ready to believe anything evil of the parent who would so neglect an only child. These feelings and the sudden terror which came upon him on seeing Constance Hudson fleeing like a wild animal through the streets at night, hurried the young man on to a marriage which, in less than twenty-four hours, he shrank from revealing to his own mother.

CHAPTER X.

THE FAINT HEART.

Yes, from the depths of his proud nature, William Sterling shrank from the plain duty which lay before him. But his mother must be informed of the mad act, which had made Constance Hudson his wife. Hard as the task was, he set forth to perform it.

The young man knew well, that he was preparing a cruel blow for that sensitive and proud woman. How could he present this unformed girl to her as a daughter-in-law, without a pang of bitter humiliation.

The blood burned hotly in his cheeks, as he felt the necessity of this step. He imagined his mother's look of amazement as the unformed, self-sufficient girl was brought before her, arrogant, ignorant, and so quick of resentment. How would they meet?

No princess of the blood royal had ever evinced more ambition for her son, than this poor lady. The idea of his marriage state had been one of great solicitude with her. It seemed as if some hope which appertained to her old life, had wound itself about the young man in a way that made his marriage a matter of life and death to her.

These thoughts, which pressed upon the bridegroom imme-

diately after his marriage, made a coward of him; but he was honest as the day, and the very thought of concealment oppressed him. While the solemn marriage vows were warm upon his lips, he went to his mother resolved to confess everything, and relieve his soul from all deception. But he found Mrs. Holt in tears. Sorrows that she would not speak of preyed upon her, and chilled the young man when he thought of the blow he had come to give.

"Do not mind me, William," she said, turning the sigh that rose to her lips into a sad smile. "So long as you love and give her your heart and your full confidence, there will always be hope for your mother."

"I have always given you my confidence," faltered Sterling, turning white and red under the secret he had come to divulge. "I—I—"

"Yes, I know; but William, there must be something more than mere confidence between us."

"Between us, mother! I do not ask to wound you, but is there nothing that has been kept back from me—nothing of the past that I ought to know?"

Mrs. Holt turned painfully white, and Sterling could see that her hands began to tremble.

"Nothing that you ought to know, William, unless you are prepared to leave your mother forever, and herd with her enemies."

"Enemies?—Oh, mother, can you, so gentle and so generous, ever have made enemies?"

"Yes, my son, bitter, implacable enemies, who would never be content until they had wrested from me the trust and love of my son."

"Mother, that can never be done."

"You say this now."

"And forever; this earth holds nothing so dear to William Sterling as his mother. I shall lose faith in the angels when she becomes less than that."

Mrs. Holt leaned forward, and kissed her son with tearful eyes and quivering lips.

"And you do not condemn me, as I am forever condemning myself," she said, lowering her face and weeping outright.

"Condemn you, mother, how should I? What have you done that I should give you anything but love?"

"I—I married Mr. Holt, took half my life from you, and gave it to him."

"But not your love,—no one has ever taken that from me. As for the rest, so long as this man makes you happy—I have nothing to say against him."

"William, I was hard beset. Mr. Holt was very kind to us both. I was lonely, and troubled with a kind of trouble that frightened me."

"Hush mother, hush! One would think these words meant an apology to your own son. I will not hear it, or allow the right of every human being to choose the happiness of love for his, or her own self, to be questioned." If you married Mr. Holt, loving him, it was your natural right if any other reason influenced you wholly or in part. I know well enough it was a sacrifice to your child, for which he should be grateful. It was not of Mr. Holt I was speaking."

Mrs. Holt looked up quickly, and wiped the tears from her eyes.

"Then we will speak of nothing else until God's good time, my son. Trust your mother in the future, as you have in the past, and in one thing give her more than trust. As you value the future—your own happiness and mine—form no attachments among the people with whom your life must for a time be spent. I have suffered much, William, but the blow that strikes me down will come when you bring a wife to me, such as—as—a lady cannot take to her bosom. Never think of that, William, unless you desire to see me

dead at your feet, or the most hopeless wretch that ever burdened the earth."

William Sterling checked the words that had risen to his lips, with a thrill of pain that left those lips bloodless as marble. There was such pathetic earnestness in her voice, such intense pleading in her eyes, that the secret he was about to speak, fell back on his heart, like the ashes of a quenched fire, bitter and burdensome.

"I say this now, my son, because you are of a nature and an age, when one rash act might mar your whole life; there is a path before you, dark as it seems now, that God will open in his own time, which must be entered upon without burdens and without regret. Above all things, keep free both in mind and heart."

Sterling took the two hands which Mrs. Holt held toward him, and clasped them closely.

"Mother, mother! I would give you my life," he faltered.

"Not your life—only let me guide the present, that a noble future may be secured. I ask nothing more than that."

Still the young man clasped her hands, and was about to say words that he knew would smite her to the heart, but that moment the door opened, and he arose quickly, like a prisoner reprieved.

After that interview, Sterling never found the courage to wound his mother with the truth. When William Sterling went back to his young wife, the mists of passions seemed to have fallen from his eyes, spite of his love which was half pity; he saw how impossible it was to introduce her to his mother, until study and refining influences had made her more worthy of that gentle, but proud lady's regards.

There was really no cowardice in this, but the young man could not bring himself to strike the blow which

might absolutely kill his mother. He saw that her nerves were greatly shattered, that she shrank from all discussions involving the present or the past, and that she had some unexplained hope in the future, which a knowledge of his marriage would blast forever. He literally dared not present Constance to her as his wife. No, the young man had not the courage to distress his mother with news like this. He would still keep the whole thing secret; would teach this bright girl to subdue all that was low and coarse in her nature. Love must aid him in this good work. An intellect like hers, bright, vivid, and receptive, must, in the end, be capable of any degree of refinement. He had only to wait, work diligently in her behalf, trust to her warm heart and quick intellect for the rest, and all would be well in the end.

Thus it was that the young man reasoned with his conscience.

CHAPTER XI.

THE UNEXPECTED REVELATION.

LUKE had not far to walk. People were going into the theatre in crowds. A feeling of sensitive shame seized upon him, the color fled from his lips, and they quivered when he held out his flowers, and attempted to speak. But he was brave, from a kind desire to prove himself of use, and moved into the thickest of the crowd, holding up his lovely merchandise. One or two gentlemen answered his timid appeal sharply, and told him to stand out of the way; at which he shrank back, with tears in his eyes, and longed to run home and never see a human face more.

As he stood leaning against the wall, forlorn and disheartened, a young man entered the building with a girl upon

his arm, dressed in a showy fashion, but with an underlaying of poverty in her garments, that she attempted to cover by a dashing and jaunty air, which seemed to defy criticism.

The girl, seeing that several ladies had bouquets in their hands as they passed into the theatre, was seized with a desire for flowers herself, and, seeing Luke standing by the wall, with his head bent over a basket of flowers hanging from his listless hand, turned that way. The boy stood in shadow, and she was only led to him by a gleam of white and gold in his basket.

"See, see, there are some—there are some!" she cried, addressing her companion, and dragging him rather roughly towards Luke. "Oh mercy! they are nothing but common things from the side of some road! What trash!"

Here Luke lifted his eyes suddenly, and the light fell upon his face.

"My gracious!" cried the girl, throwing up both hands and breaking into a laugh. "If it is not Luke—Luke Weeks; did you ever!"

Luke lifted his pleading eyes, and drew back into the shadows.

"Oh don't—oh don't!" he almost moaned.

"But how on earth came you here?"

"I—I thought they would not know me," pleaded the boy.

"But those ridiculous things are nothing but weeds that grow in the crooks of fences."

"But so fresh—so lovely! Oh, please don't say that. I know they are beautiful as you are."

"As I am!" answered the girl, tossing her head in arrogant consciousness of its loveliness, "the idea!"

"Come, come, as you do not care for the flowers, let us go," said the young man, who had been restless and evidently annoyed by the manner of his companion, "you

forget that the house is filling up and we have no secured seats."

"True enough," answered the girl, swinging herself back into the crowd and giving Luke a warning glance over her shoulder as she added for his benefit, "now go home, go home and tell Rhoda not to have any more of this nonsense. Ridiculous!"

"Don't speak quite so loud," whispered the young man, "you will break the child's heart; surely you did not mark the trouble in his eyes."

"Oh yes, I did. It isn't the first time I have brought it there, he's just one heap of poetry and nonsense. But did you ever see such eyes!"

"There is but one pair of eyes that I ever care to remember," answered the young man, bending his head low, and speaking in a tone that brought the bloom of a wild rose into the girl's cheek. So, forgetting the flowers and the poor boy that held them, in this sweet flattery, she moved on with the crowd, while Luke's heart sunk like lead in his bosom.

He grew weary and ashamed of holding out his basket, and dropping it partly behind him, was preparing to creep away, when a gentleman and lady stepped from a carriage, followed by a girl who was evidently the daughter. Her first glance fell upon Luke and his unlucky merchandise.

"Oh, papa! see how pretty! Stop! stop a minute, do!" she cried out eagerly.

"Do you want them, Dora?"

"Want them? Of course I do."

The gentleman smiled, and his wife laughed outright; and turning to Luke, asked the price of his flowers.

"I—I don't know; if the young lady likes them——"

The boy's face was one glow of blushes.

Dora took them, just as unmindful of the money as he was.

"Oh! thank you, ten thousand times! See, papa, how lovely they are!"

"But the price—how much, my boy?"

"I don't know—I'd rather not, if you please."

"Oh, papa! what do you ask for? Give him lots," whispered Dora.

But while the gentleman was taking out his porte-monnaie, Luke attempted to lose himself in the crowd. After looking in that bright young face, he was ashamed of taking money.

"Here! Here!" said the gentleman, following him up and thrusting some money into his hand. "Take that address, and bring a basket to my house twice a week."

"Three times," said Dora, three times, papa, please—and don't forget the address, little boy."

Luke took the money, and, hiding himself in the crowd, watched the lady and her daughter as they stood together, while the gentleman was at the ticket-office.

"There she goes," he thought, as the plume of her dainty little hat disappeared through the door; "and she'll always remember me as the boy who took her money for the flowers that God gives to all."

Luke almost ran home, leaped up stairs, in breathless haste, and flung the money, which he had not looked at, into his sister's lap.

"Why, Luke, it's a dollar—a whole dollar! Isn't this famous?" she said. "You precious, darling old boy!"

Rhoda looked up for an answer, and was astonished to see that Luke had fallen upon a seat by the table, and, with his face buried in his folded arms, was crying passionately.

Poor Luke had cried himself asleep long before Sterling and Constance came home from the theatre. The young man had become shy of spending so much time in that shabby parlor, for his marriage was yet unacknowledged, and the secret pressed heavily upon him.

Constance bade him good night with some reluctance. She had no conscientious scruples regarding the deception practised on her father, but had accepted the marriage without a thought of its consequences, and with as little consideration as she would have given to a morning walk. She loved the young artist with passionate vehemence. He was her only friend, her gentle and kind master, handsome, talented, earnest, and she felt the influence of these qualities without possessing the power to appreciate them. To her it was a grand step in life when she saw the golden ring of wedlock on her finger. The dignity of her own person was enhanced; she longed to dress herself in white, crown herself with orange blossoms and make wedding calls on all the tenants of the house, still she felt it no grievous wrong when Sterling suggested that she should wear the wedding ring about her neck, hid away in the folds of her dress, till his mother and her father should be informed of the step they had taken. One thing was certain, they were married, and all these triumphs must yet come to her.

"Remember," she said as Sterling held her hand a moment, at parting, "we must go again one night this week. I do so love the theatre."

"Yes," he answered gently, "I will be sure to get seats."

Sterling turned from the door, and walked toward home, somewhat depressed in spirits; for things had happened at the house that night, which wounded his sensitive pride. The rude arrogance with which Constance had treated that gentle boy, with his flowers, had shocked him as before that rash ceremony no act of hers could have done,—besides this, she had accepted the staring homage of more than one man, who leveled his audacious eyes upon her beauty, in a way that wounded and repulsed her husband. So he left her at the door, and wandered off, not thinking or caring what course he took.

After awhile, the young man found himself in that part of

the town, which is desolate as a wilderness after the stores are closed and business is withdrawn. It was late at night, and he had unconsciously sought the quiet streets in order to arrange the painful thoughts that crowded on him.

All at once he was aroused, almost startled by the sound of voices down a cross street, where groups of people were swarming in and out, with an appearance of unusual interest.

The young man turned listlessly, and went forward with the crowd. The sound of a voice in the interior of a house which opened on the street, sent the blood back upon his heart. He pushed forward, urged his way to the door, and looked in.

When Sterling left that crowd, and made his way into the street again, a marvellous change had fallen upon him. A revelation had been made, while standing in the shadow of that open door, which changed the whole aspect of his own conduct. He knew that the act, which he had deemed one of magnanimity, was violation of friendship, and a wrong which no power of his could atone for.

CHAPTER XII.

"AMEN."

BACK of the Old Brick Church, in Fulton street, a group of people had gathered, drawn there by a man's voice in earnest, almost agonised pleading, which came from the lecture-room, and fell upon the stillness of the night with a force and pathos that made every third man that passed, turn aside and listen.

After a little time, men came out of the cross streets and alleys, and crowded up to the church, like ghosts and shad-

ows, drawn from their hiding places by a voice that was indeed crying aloud in the wilderness of a great city.

The room behind that grim old church, had long been known as a place of midnight prayer, and it was no unusual thing for men, women and children, to gather under its shelter, some from sheer curiosity, some to mock and gibe, others to escape from the cellars and garrets of a tenement house, and a few hard-working men, came there reverently after a season of toil, for words of hope and consolation of which their daily life was so barren.

This night, the little knot of people grew into a crowd, —a dense, squalid mass of humanity, evidently gathered from the very dregs of the people; for after business hours, the neighborhood of the old church was haunted by the desolate and the dissolute, who wanted shelter, or craved even the excitement of a prayer-meeting, rather than remain in their own miserable homes.

But those who came from idle curiosity, or with a mocking spirit stayed, spell-bound by the touching eloquence of a tall spare man, who stood in one end of the lecture-room, pleading with the hardened souls gathered around him, as if each man had power over his own life.

A man was walking down the street evidently on his way to the ferry, when this strange voice, so full of passionate devotion, fell upon his ear. He stopped suddenly, turned his face towards the church, and listened with intense interest. The light of a street lamp lay full upon his face, which was lighted up with surprise at first, then settled into a look that it would be difficult to describe.

"By Heavens! it is his voice as I first heard it; with the old trumpet tone, the clear, ringing sentences. At last, at last I have found him. No two voices like that ever mocked Heaven."

The man had on a traveling cap, which he drew down over his face, then, buttoning the linen duster that he wore,

over a handsome suit of black, turned and made his way quietly through the crowd till he stood just within the lecture room, and commanded a view of all that was passing there.

He stood in the midst of a crowd of squalid men and women from the neighboring lanes and cross streets, newsboys ready for any lark after a hard day's toil, and boot-blacks with boxes and brushes slung to their backs, lured from their way home by the crowd and that strange ringing voice; added to these, washerwomen with their baskets of clothes on their arms, arrested on their way home with the week's wash, by these unusual signs of life about the old church, appeared here and there in the throng.

The man who had been so strangely arrested on his way to the ferry, kept his place resolutely by the door, to which the outside crowd huddled up like sheep, hesitating to leap over the bars of a strange pasture. After waiting a little, these groups broke up, and glided away into the shadowy corners, some hiding their faces, ashamed of the tears that attested to the humanity within them, others seating themselves on the benches, with their startled faces uplifted, and their wild eyes glowing beneath this fervent eloquence, which rang over them and thrilled the silence of the deserted streets.

There was something wild and almost sublime in the earnestness of this man. His dark gray eyes were black with excitement, his sensitive mouth curved and trembled under the torrent of burning words that shook them as they rushed forth to startle and thrill that motley crowd. The stranger at the door kept his place, and listened with a cynical smile on his lips, and a gleam of triumph in his eyes. The wonderful eloquence of the speaker, his wild, pathetic pleading, which thrilled its way even to the hardened souls around him, made no impression on this man. His face never changed its unpleasant smile, until the speaker alluded with

touching humility to his own unfitness as a teacher. Then his sinister look hardened into a wicked sneer, as the speaker dwelt on this subject with almost abject self-abasement, proclaiming that he did not assume to teach his hearers from a stand-point of superior christian excellence, but as a fellow-creature, given to grievous backsliding, weak and infirm of purpose, unfit even to plead with his fellow men, except by the grace of God.

That which the lecturer said of himself was true. The truth stirred every feature of his face, and suffused his eyes with unshed tears, as he spoke of himself as no better than those who listened to him, of sins which outmatched theirs, inasmuch as greater advantages had been given to him, and such powers as neglect or persuasion turned into curses.

This language was not unusual in these night meetings, but never before had it seemed so intensely real. There was no mock humility in those tones, no impudent attempt to win a miserable notoriety, by proclaiming imaginary sins, in order to find the level of his hearers. The pathos of his self-reproach, won his hearers into quick sympathy. There was little action in this man's delivery, no stormy sound, no studied rhetoric. I cannot tell you where his force lay, but it made those rough natures shake their sloth and aspire for the time, at least, toward that human goodness which seemed so beautiful, when his lips portrayed it.

He turned toward the crowd at the door, and reaching forth his arms, pleaded like a drowning man, that all should join with him, and struggle forth to the better life.

"Listen to one who has known the bitterness of sin, the misery of evil doing," he said, "and come forth into the pure light. If a knowledge of sin, and a loathing of it, can fit a fellow being to guide you in all humility, then may I entreat you to listen. There is not in all this crowd, man or woman, whose transgressions have been

more deeply dyed than those of the fellow mortal, who pleads with you this night."

"Amen!"

These words came ringing in from the door, loud and distinct; sharp, too, from the venom that cut through it. The burning eloquence died on those ashen lips. One word had struck the speaker dumb. His outstretched arms fell heavily; great drops started on his forehead, his limbs began to waver.

"Who is it that speaks?" he cried out, with agony in his voice.

There was no reply, but for an instant the stranger lifted his cap, and looked in through the door, smiling as his eyes met the wild orbs wandering over the crowd.

The speaker took a handkerchief from the desk before him, clutching it tightly in his hand, and made a feeble effort to wipe the drops from his forehead. Then his limbs gave way, and he sunk slowly to his knees, his face drooped forward, and for a moment the silence of death fell upon the startled crowd.

Directly that white face was uplifted, and the first words of an agonised prayer struggled through those quivering lips—louder and firmer it rose, till the very soul of the man cried out to God for help, with passionate vehemence. At last he stood upon his feet, and looked around the room, as if nerving himself to meet some enemy.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FORCED VISIT.

THE crowd of people who had witnessed this scene in the lecture room, were low, obtuse natures, on whom the

simple words which had almost paralysed the speaker before their eyes, made but a momentary impression. They only saw that he was exhausted and completely broken down. This eloquence had been their principal attraction, and when another speaker took the desk, half the crowd broke up in confusion. With the various groups that went out of the rooms and swept into the street, the man whose sublime eloquence had assembled them, disappeared. For a little time he lingered near the church, and creeping into its blackest shadows, laid his forehead against the rugged walls.

"Oh my God! my God, help me! help me! for this, mine enemy, has found me out."

His voice was broken, his breath came sharply; he rested his forehead against the cold stone, and, though fever was in his veins, shuddered with the chill. All at once a hand was laid on his shoulder, and a light laugh sounded in his ears.

"So, my friend, we have met once more," said a voice that made the man shrink; but he turned with some degree of courage, and answered rather sadly:

"Yes, I recognised your voice."

"And I yours. It has lost nothing of its power. No wonder the beggars swarm around you. They do not always get eloquence from so pure a source."

The speaker made no reply; he was evidently used to the jeers of this man, and endured them without resistance.

"Upon my word," said the traveler, "I should think the very sight of me had struck you dumb."

"It is only another curse come back," muttered the tortured man, as he moved away from the church.

"Come, Hudson, let us have a talk together, this is a cold meeting for old friends like us. You have no idea how long I have been searching for you."

The man addressed as Hudson, turned upon his persecutor with a look and gesture of pathetic appeal.

"Why is it that you search for me? The time has passed when we can meet with pleasure or profit. Leave me, Church; in mercy leave me to go on my path alone. It is dreary enough—how dreary, the God who will judge us both, only knows."

"Leave you, Hudson? Indeed I will do no such thing; we have been fast friends too long for that."

"Friends?" muttered the wretched man, bitterly, "I have no friends and deserve none."

"But what wretches we should be if no man got more than his deserts? You are far too modest, Hudson; upon my soul you are a wonderful creature. Why, half that crowd of beggars were crying like babies. Once or twice I felt the mist creeping into my own eyes."

"Then why did you linger, tears should speak of forbearance; why not go away and leave me in peace?"

"Because I mean yet to be of service to you."

"Of service to me."

"Yes, certainly, by the looks of your coat you do not seem to have a superabundance of prosperity. Tell me how you are getting on."

"I have liberty, a roof to shelter me, and generally enough to eat."

"But not a dollar laid by for a rainy day?"

"All days are rainy to me!"

"I understand; but your daughter. She was a bright little thing. What of her?"

"Constance is well, and getting very womanly."

"Does she live with you?"

"Yes."

"And have you no ambition for her?"

"Ambition! no, I only wish to keep her safe, and make her better than her father has been."

"Is she pretty?"

"I do not know."

"Clever?"

"Yes, there are few things my child cannot do when she puts her energies forth."

"Free of heart?"

"Constance is very young, and sees but few people."

"But where does she live?"

"With her father!"

"Then I can imagine that her home is not a sumptuous one."

"It is the best I can give her as yet."

"But how can you deal fairly by the girl, when your time is spent in such places as I found you in to-night?"

"Do not question or revile me, Church, I have duties to my fellow men, and atonements to make. It is only such people as you saw me with to-night, that I dare approach; even in a holy cause I cannot shut out three bitter years of my life, but while God gives me breath, I will do my best to atone for them."

"Unfortunately, these infernal laws of ours are vampires that accept no atonement," said Church, with emphasis.

A shudder crept over Hudson and he turned a white, appealing face on his tormentor, but made no answer, save in a deep sigh.

"Are you going home now," said Church, answering this pathetic look with a smile, full of subtle cruelty.

"I have no where else to go, at this time of night," answered Hudson, sadly.

"Then I will take a look at your home, and pay my respects to little Constance."

The instruments of torture were on Hudson, and he could only submit, but his heart turned to lead in his bosom, and his step grew heavy as he approached the tenement house, which was all the home he knew. Without a word of protest he turned into a cross street, and entered one of those old-fashioned brick houses that are still left in

the lower part of the city, waiting for the fast progress of business to sweep them away.

The two men entered a narrow hall, dark as Egypt, and mounted a flight of rickety stairs, which led to a dingy parlor and small bed room both furnished with ill matched articles, so shabby and faded that the utmost care could not have given it even a comfortable appearance.

A dull lamp burned upon the table, but this was only sufficient to reveal the general destitution of the place, which really shocked the man, Church, to whom poverty was far more hateful than sin.

"Your girl does not seem to be at home," said Church, with an accent of pity in his voice. "No wonder, I should say."

That moment a light step was heard on the stairs above, and the parlor door opened far enough to admit a little bright face.

"Mr. Hudson, is that you," said a childish voice. "Miss Constance told me to say that she has gone to Wallack's theatre with Mr. Sterling, if you got home before she did, but I did not expect you home so early."

The door closed, and Rhoda Weeks' bright face disappeared.

"Gone to the theatre, has she?" said Church, taking out his watch. "There is time yet, I will just drop in and see if I can make out your daughter among so many people. I think there can be no mistaking her eyes; perhaps I shall come home with her. You won't object to that, I suppose. She has an escort, of course, but she will find room on the pavement for her father's old friend, I dare say."

Church took off the linen duster from over a suit of handsome black, flung it across a sofa, and smoothed his hair with a pocket comb, before a paltry looking-glass upon the mantel-piece.

Hudson watched these movements with a look of baggard

misery in his eyes. When his forced guest went out, he fell upon his knees and sobbed like a child.

"Oh, my God, my God, help me to struggle, help me to resist, or let me die now, imploring mercy."

The door opened softly, and Rhoda Weeks crept in. Hudson had lifted his voice, and it was so full of anguish, that the girl had run down to comfort him.

"Don't, Mr. Hudson, don't take on so! She didn't think you would mind her going to the theatre. It's only Mr. Sterling has gone with her, you know."

Hudson lifted his face, and attempted to answer the girl's consolations with a smile, but the effort was so sad that she only cried out again:

"Oh, don't—don't. She hasn't done anything to make you feel like that."

CHAPTER XIV.

HIS SIN HAD FOUND HIM OUT.

THAT night young Sterling had redeemed his promise, and taken Constance to the theatre, where he soon found himself an object of annoying attention, from the remarkable beauty of his companion. No wonder. Her complexion was bright and pure as a morning rich with June roses. In color and form, she was splendid; yet there was something in her look, and the atmosphere that surrounded her, quite indescribable, which betrayed that she was not in all respects a gentlewoman.

This subtle influence, which made itself felt as surely as her personal loveliness, tinged the homage which her beauty might have inspired. She felt herself stared at, and knew that she was admired. This thought fired her vanity, and

made her restless. She looked about the audience, with an air that seemed to challenge observation.

As the play went on, a tall man, stooping forward in his walk, and clothed in black, came into the theatre, took an empty seat near the couple, and watched them keenly, but with apparent indifference, when he observed that any one was looking at him. Before the performance closed he left the theatre, and walked leisurely toward the tenement house in which he had only a short time before left the girl's father in an agony of apprehension.

He found that unhappy man trying to read, by the light of a kerosene lamp, which Rhoda had trimmed and brightened up for him; but no word of the book he held had reached his thoughts, which went painfully back to the man who had just left him.

Church flung his cap on the sofa where his linen duster lay, and sat down by the table.

"Well, Hudson, I have seen your girl, and she is simply splendid. The idea of keeping a creature like that in this place, is absurd. I cannot permit it."

"It is all the home I can give her," said Hudson, with some spirit; "but I think she will have something better before long."

"You mean the young fellow that is with her. He may have a weakness for your girl—who would not? But he is not weak in other respects; that handsome face of his has strong lines in it; and the mouth is iron. It would go hard with the girl, if he were her husband, and something we know of, were to come out. I do not think we had better encourage that sort of thing."

But I sometimes think—"

No you don't. No man can think safely ten minutes in advance. But tell me, who is that young fellow? how comes he to stand on such very intimate terms with your daughter?"

"He is an engraver of great genius; his name is Sterling, and I think he was born in England."

"A brief biography, but how came he on such terms here, that he dares take your daughter out, and you ignorant of the fact?"

"He is my daughter's teacher."

"In what, pray?"

"She has a wonderful genius for the art, and he has been her teacher in it during the last year."

"But why did you not teach her yourself?"

"I did, for awhile—but she soon got beyond me; as a little girl, I saw her talent and encouraged it."

"Are you sure that this young fellow is not teaching her a double lesson? You were always a modest man, Hudson, and a little over-confiding, as we can both remember. It will be difficult to convince me, that this young fellow can surpass you with the graver."

There was something in the man's look as he said this, which startled Hudson, and he faltered out:

"I am getting old; my sight is failing."

"Tush, man! your sight and your hand are sharp and steady enough for me; I have found no one to equal you. In fact, I have been in search of you. It was not the old friendship alone, that made my heart leap, when your voice swelled across my path to-night. The old enterprise was nothing to what we may accomplish now. My position in the Treasury—"

"Hold, hold!" cried Hudson, drawing his chair suddenly back, and throwing out both hands in desperate repulsion. "I expected this; I saw it in your face, but I will never do the thing you want, never!—So help me—"

"There, there! let us have no more, old friend; this is not a midnight mission, and calling upon God in high passion, can be dispensed with. You have grown nervous and timid; let us talk of something else."

Hudson drew his chair slowly towards the table again, but his limbs were quivering and his hand shook as he lifted it to his forehead.

"Tell me more about your girl," said Church, softly feeling his way back to the poor man's confidence. Did I understand that she really thinks of working for her own living?"

"She aspires to more than that, poor child, and talks of supporting her father when he gets too old for work."

"She must be a brave girl."

"She has borne many things bravely; privation of all those things a young girl loves best,—dress, accomplishments, society, for I have not always had work, and at times we have been very poor."

"But you knew where to find me, Hudson, and I wanted to hear about you so much. There was no occasion for poverty here."

"I know, I know," answered Hudson, rapidly; "but Constance had wonderful spirit, and put up with what I could give her without complaint. I was astonished."

"No wonder if a girl like that could content herself here, she must be either without taste, or an angel."

Hudson's face brightened; and he said with some emphasis:

"Constance is not an angel, but she is a brave, bright girl."

Church smiled blandly.

"I have seen your daughter, and can believe more than that from her face alone; but tell me more of the young man; of course the girl has made a slave of him by this time."

"No one will ever make a slave of him, he is far too proud and clever for that."

"But there is always a method by which a sharp girl can control such men, either through the head or heart. It is

your fool that is unmanageable. That young fellow, at any rate, is no fool."

"No, he is sharp as steel!"

"And you are certain about his talent?"

"No finer artist in the city; and, what is better, no one, at least very few, have any idea of it. He studied in England; and, being proud as Lucifer, takes in work on the sly through another artist-friend."

"And how did your daughter get acquainted with him?"

"I had been unable to work for a long time, for my eyes were overtaken, and inflamed. We were on the verge of absolute want."

"And you never thought of me—you did not even tell her of your old friend?"

Again Hudson turned deadly pale, and shrunk back, as Church laid what seemed like a friendly hand upon his knee.

"My girl has talent—genius I may assert, and that is a gift which always aspires to independent action. She resolved to exert all her energies, and absolutely against my protest, went to a first class engraver, for counsel and help. She was poor, she said; had talent enough to do something at engraving, but lacked tuition. Would he give it to her, and look for remuneration when she was able to work? The girl has a face that will make its way anywhere—but you have seen it. Well, the good-hearted young fellow gave way to it at once, and she set to work in earnest; not with the principal engraver, 'that was impossible,' he said, but he had a young friend who lived in close retirement, and who might not object to a pupil—that friend, Church, you saw to-night. He is a man of superior genius."

"Yes; but about the young lady?"

"She has talent and wonderful perseverance, I can tell you."

"The talent I do not doubt, but the perseverance—"

"Well, go on."

"The young people were brought together—my daughter took to her work with passionate ardor; her progress was something wonderful."

While Hudson was speaking thus of his daughter, inspired by love of his own art, Church fell into thought, and he did not answer. Hudson sat watching him with anxious face. At last he was asking himself if he had not been talking rashly, in such praises of his daughter's talent, and a vague fear came over him. It was evident from the next words of his visitor, that he had not misjudged the train of thoughts that possessed that crafty man.

"But an art like this requires time and patience," he said, really speaking to himself, "without that, genius is of little account."

"Of course," said Hudson, eagerly, "I spoke of crude genius and ardent desire in my child rather than perfection, she is a long way from that."

"I dare be sworn; as for the young man, I suppose he is little better—so we must fall back upon you, old fellow. It is decided. Show me some of your late works, if time and practice is anything, it should be perfect."

Hudson got up from his chair, and, opening a closet, brought forth a steel plate just in the progress of completion. It was an imperfect work and gave traces of the weak sight and tremulous hand of the artist.

Church examined it with a gathering frown.

"This is a falling off," he muttered, "not your best, surely?"

"My last and the best I can do," answered Hudson, with a look of relief.

Church saw the look, and a gleam of fire shot to his eyes.

"Let me look at something the girl has done."

Hudson turned deadly white, and cast a pitiful glance at his persecutor, who smiled blandly as he handed back the steel plate. With a slow step he went to the closet, and brought forth a half-finished piece of work.

"This is hers," he said, holding the plate out for inspection.

Church took it eagerly, carried it to the lamp, and pored over it, line by line; but the cloud gathered again on his forehead, and he handed the plate back with a disdainful gesture, only saying:

"As I expected."

Hudson put the plate away with such haste, that it excited the visitor's suspicion; a gleam of shrewd intelligence shot across his face. He said nothing of what was in his thoughts, but took out his watch.

"It is almost time for them to be here," he said, "as I have staid so late, suppose I trespass further."

"I—I shall be very glad," faltered poor Hudson. "Sit down."

"I will," answered Church, placing his hat on a rack in the hall, and sitting down for the first time in a comfortable position. "Suppose we order a little supper, and have it ready when the young folks come in? I should like to study them a little."

CHAPTER XV.

THE SPIDER AND THE FLY.

HUDSON arose, went to the foot of a flight of stairs, and called out to Rhoda Weeks.

"Yes, yes, I'll be there in a minute," cried out a fresh young voice. "Wait till I get my hood!"

Directly the patter of steps came down the stairs, and our little match-girl put her bright face through the door.

"What shall I tell them to bring, Mr. Hudson, please?" she said, tying the strings of her hood with nimble little fingers, and looking alert as a bird. "Oysters and things?"

"Yes, child; let it be oysters and things," said Church, turning on his chair, "with some cold chicken, and a bottle of champagne—do you hear? The best they have, which will be bad enough, I dare say; and—and— Well, that will do. No, stop! There, there, go along!"

Away went the girl, almost flying down stairs, out into the street, and down into a restaurant below the street, where everybody seemed to know her, and in a way recognize her right to be there. Directly she went forth, calling out,

"Don't forget, Mr. Ward! just about eleven. Father will stop for his glass of beer, and you will know by that when the theatre is over."

"All right," answered the man, laughing good-humoredly; for every one who saw that strange child was sure to feel kindly toward her.

A few minutes after, Rhoda's pleasant face looked in upon Hudson and Church again.

"It's all right; they will find a splendid supper when they come. Shall I set out the table?"

Hudson nodded, and the little girl came in. She saw that the room was in some confusion, and went to work at once arranging chairs, sweeping the hearth, and dusting things generally, as well as she could by the smoking lamp. Then she unscrewed the lamp-chimney, thrust her little hand into the glass, and polished off a stain of black smoke with wonderful vigor; cut the wick level, and gave double light to the room.

Hudson was used to all this; but Church watched the

girl with a sidelong glance full of amusement. She drew a table into the middle of the room, spread out its leaves, covered them with a tolerably white cloth. Then made the best display possible of some unequal china-plates, a Britannia-caster, a goblet of cut-glass, one long-necked champagne-glass, from which she emptied some stale wild-flowers, and two greenish tumblers, thrust as far as possible into the back-ground.

When all this was done, the child ran up stairs, and came down again, bearing a pitcher between her little hands, half concealed behind the mass of field-flowers that rose in blue and golden spray from it. This she planted in the centre of the table, and, folding both hands under her apron, stood with her head on one side complacently regarding her work.

"That will take her eye, sure enough," she said, walking backward to the door. "Now I'll go up stairs," she added, with a questioning glance.

"But you'll not go to bed—we may want you?" answered Hudson.

"I never go to bed till father comes home," was the grave reply. "Besides, this is washing-night, and I haven't quite got through."

"What a strange, old-fashioned thing it is," said Church as the girl ran up stairs. "What did she mean by 'washing-night?'"

"Wait a moment and you'll hear her about it. There, that is her wash-board! She is, indeed, a wonderful little housekeeper; and, as she says, does the family washing while her father is at the theatre. To-morrow evening you may hear the smothered noise of her flat-irons. I tell you, sir, that child is a wonder!"

"I should think as much; how honest and happy she looks."

"And is. I tell you what, Church, when I see that child

performing her duties so cheerfully, working with more energy than most women even now; absolutely buying and selling, always at a small profit, and yet keeping a comfortable home for her father and brother, it makes me ashamed of my own life. Oh, Church! it is a terrible thing to find out, so late, how noble existence might be made."

"But why allow yourself to find it out?" said Church.

"True," said Hudson. "Such things make one long to undo the past—an impossibility."

"Take things as they are," said Church; "that, after all, is the best wisdom. It is only the young who can afford to shape existence; but they will not do it any the more for all the experiences ever written—make yourself sure of that. Does any man ever profit by another's experience, I wonder?"

"Not one time in a thousand," answered Hudson. "Youth is impetuous, self-confident—anything but reasonable. Advice makes little impression on the inexperienced; they cannot comprehend its necessity. Besides, every soul shapes or accepts its own life; no two events ever happen in just the same way, as no two leaves are alike on the same tree. How, then, can any man really profit by the joys or misfortunes of another? No; these things live in the nature, not in the circumstances."

"Then you believe that every man shapes his own destiny?"

"No; I believe nothing of the kind; but I do believe that no destiny can make a good man do an absolutely wicked thing. The power of right and wrong rests in every human soul for itself. When we attempt to bring good from evil acts, we shape the destiny that falls upon us. A good mariner does not attempt to regulate the sea and the tempest that lashes it, but he stands firm and vigilant at the helm of his own vessel, taking care of that, while God regulates the waves. That is all any just man has the power of doing."

"Why, Hudson, I did not expect this from you and to me," said Church.

"No more than those who looked up to me once in love and trust would have expected what you know of me," was the sad answer.

Hudson shaded his eyes with one hand as he spoke, and Church observed not only that the hand shook, but that tears were dropping from under it. A gleam of half scornful pity came upon the hard man's face.

"Do you know," he said, at last, "you have been talking like a minister, and to me?"

"I was a minister," answered Hudson, sweeping the hand across his eyes, and dropping it over the arm of his chair with a heavy sigh.

"You, Hudson?"

"I was young, ardent, good, for the time, and felt myself sufficient, not only for my own safe guidance, but for the leadership of other men."

"Well, and they followed you. Where?"

There was something like a sneer in this speech, which Hudson felt keenly.

"But I forget myself and my audience," he said, rising and waving his hand almost fiercely.

There was a sort of desperate courage in Hudson's manner, which made Church smile.

"Why, bless you, old fellow!" he said, "I knew well enough what you had been and where all this moral wisdom came from. You are good enough, and bad enough, for me; but here comes the young people, or the supper, I don't know which. Ten to one, though, it is the supper—that tramp is too heavy for our lovers."

True enough, it was a man bearing a huge tray in his hands. Scarcely had he begun to arrange its contents on the table, when a light laugh and a confusion of careless steps came up the stairs, like the rush of a spring breeze.

"Well, papa, we are home at last. What, supper? How delightful! Isn't it splendid, William?"

The girl, whom we have seen entering the theatre, saw Church, paused, blushed a little, and advanced into the room, sweeping a rather long train of cheap silk after her. Hudson introduced his friend both to her and her companion, who came forward in a quiet, gentlemanly way, and shook hands.

"Now for something nice," said Constance Hudson, pulling off a pair of rather soiled gloves, and thrusting them into her pocket. "Let us sit down and take supper comfortably. What a nice little thing that girl is to do all this for me. Come, father; and you, sir. William, here. What! champagne? delicious!"

She patted the chair next her with an inviting smile, and the young man took it, flushing a little at her open preference, which, certainly, was calculated to embarrass any sensitive man.

The two other men took their places, and a very irregular but sociable meal commenced. Constance was full of vivacity and animation. She criticised the play, jested about the audience, and so aroused the admiration of her father's guest, that he became cheerful, and almost witty, stranger as he was.

The young man kept almost silent; but he, too, seemed to enjoy the merriment of the girl, and made himself useful in her service. At last Church drew the bottle of champagne toward him, and pressing out the cork with a filip of his thumb, sent it quickly from glass to glass, like so much topaz, molten and sparkling. Then the conversation became more brilliant; the young man joined in it with kindling animation, and while the young people drank freely, Church looked on, making observations with shrewd coolness.

Hudson scarcely tasted the wine; a cloud had fallen upon him that evening, and he looked anxiously at his daughter more than once, as if her merriment troubled him.

CHAPTER XVI.

DISCONTENT.

AFTER awhile the young man arose and took his leave, with a grave seriousness that made Constance thoughtful for a moment. When he had entered the hall, she started up and followed him, quite regardless of the smiles her movement excited.

"William," she said, laying a caressing hand on his arm. "Dear William, you are not going away so, without a word, without——"

She lifted herself on tip-toe, and made a perfect apple-blossom of her mouth, which might have tempted a very saint from the altar, it was so fresh and blooming.

He kissed her offered lips coldly, and turned away.

"What is the matter, William? What have I done?"

"Nothing, Constance—I scarcely know; but, all at once, this house seems strange to me. Who is that man?"

"A friend of father's, I suppose. You know as much as I do. He seems pleasant enough. I rather like him."

"Are you fond of foxes?"

"I never saw one, except in a cage."

"Or hawks?"

"Yes, when they swoop down upon the chickens. I saw a magnificent fellow do it once—and it was splendid. Oh, yes! I do like hawks."

"Good-night, Constance."

"Really! But when will you come again—to-morrow, early?"

"Perhaps. Yes, I will."

Once more the girl stood on tip-toe, and tempted him with her rosy mouth. Once more his kiss fell upon it cold as a drop of rain—and this time he went down stairs and out of

the house. She leaned over the balusters, and looked after him as if half-tempted to follow, but gave her head a little toss, and went back to the parlor.

"What is the matter with him?" questioned Hudson, a little anxiously.

"Oh! he's out of sorts—people looked at me so much in the theatre, and he did not like it. I wonder why he cannot enjoy their nonsense, and laugh at it, as I do."

"It isn't likely that he would," broke in Church, leaning both elbows on the table, and fixing his admiring eyes on the girl. "That is asking too much of infirm human nature, Miss Constance. I don't blame the audience either, for you are a wonderfully pretty girl."

"Church," said Hudson, "my daughter does not require this."

"Excuse me. When the sun shines, one naturally says it is a pleasant day. I meant no more than that."

"Oh! father is always angry if any one tells me that—that I am not a fright," said Constance with a pout, tossing her head. "Just as if I couldn't see!"

Church laughed, but shook his head, and glanced at Hudson, as if he, too, rather disapproved of this flippancy air.

"Six months will be needed to teach her more things than engraving," he said, in a low voice, as Constance entered a little bed-room, and was taking off her bonnet—a flashy little affair, which she had kept on till now.

Church made a slight motion with his hand towards the room where Constance was standing before a little mahogany-framed looking-glass, smoothing back the rich masses of her hair, and admiring herself with genuine satisfaction.

"I have not thought of the girl in that light," said Hudson.

"No, I can see; neglected, and allowed to run wild. That does well enough in the country, where the very

atmosphere gives something of refinement; but in the city— Well, you see what it does in the city. Now, I take it, there is not a sweeter face to be found within ten miles than that in yonder; but, without grace and gentle training, what will it amount to? The young fellow, infatuated as he evidently is, feels that there is something wanting. Now, to an artist, that dress would be a repulsion; but, to a man calculating her capabilities, it is full of promise, for it bespeaks ambition."

"You have been studying her keenly."

"Oh! this needs no study! The girl, as yet, is all on the surface; she never had an earnest thought in her life."

Constance came out of her room just then, arranging the long train of her dress, which rattled with a metallic sound under her hand, as some cheap silks will. She was, indeed, very beautiful, for now a neck, perfect in form, and white as the first opening leaf of a lily, was revealed by the neatly-fitting Pompadour bodice, adown which one long wreathing curl fell almost to the waist. She fairly brought light with her out of the shadow of that dim room.

The two men, who had been discussing her, looked at each other, one sadly the other smiling. Could too much be said of beauty like that. The creature had talent, as well as beauty, and a capacity for acquiring such knowledge as promised to develop it effectually.

CHAPTER XVII.

BRILLIANT PROSPECTS.

"It is a shame, Hudson," said Church, "that your daughter should be lost in these dull apartments. I tell you, sir, she is worthy of a palace."

"Yes; but how is the palace to be found?" said Constance, laughing. "You musn't abuse this parlor, sir; it seemed like paradise when we came into it from the other place—didn't it, father?"

"Unfortunately," said Hudson, "I have never been able to do more than this for my child or myself. If I have kept her from absolute toil, up to this time it has been at a sacrifice, which she was never permitted to understand. It was all I could do for the poor, motherless creature."

There was genuine feeling in the man's voice, that brought tears to his daughter's eyes.

"Oh! fortune does not frown forever," said Church; "and the daughter's luck may swallow up the father's misfortunes. The wheel is always turning, remember that!"

"Father is always gloomy and looking on the dark side of everything," said Constance, with a dash of petulance in her voice. "Why shouldn't we prove fortunate as well as other people?"

"Why, indeed?" answered Church. "In these times chances are constantly coming up for any one who has the talent and nerve to seize them."

"I wish one would come uppermost for me," laughed Constance. "Wouldn't I find the nerve to grasp it! Oh! how I do long to sit in one of those private boxes, with silks that rustle like silks, laying in waves around my feet, with ermine on my shoulders, and diamonds in my ears. Wouldn't I show them what a live girl could do; but that will never, never be!"

"Why not? Why not?" said Church, eagerly, for he was delighted with this spirit.

"Because he—because it never can!"

"Not if your father becomes rich?"

Constance brightened out of her momentary despondency, and her eyes flashed like sapphires.

"Oh, yes! Then—then!"

"And would you help him?"

"Help him? Yes, if he asked me to black my face and sweep the streets with a splint broom."

"But suppose he asked something more difficult, but every way pleasanter?"

"Why, of course, I would do it."

"Would you work very, very diligently at the art you are now learning?"

"Wouldn't I?"

"And make that young fellow, your teacher, very much in love with you?"

Constance blushed scarlet at this; then she laughed and asked if Mr. Church thought that would be difficult.

"But then you must not fall very much in love with him."

Again Constance felt a flood of scarlet rushing over her neck and face; Church saw it, and hastened to say,

"Because, the woman who loves is always a slave."

"Is she?" said Constance, in a low voice, as if questioning herself.

"When ambition merges itself in love, it loses all its power; when love aids ambition, it is invincible."

"I—I don't know about these things, sir," said Constance, seriously. "How should I? These rooms are my world."

"But they will not be so always, rest sure of that!" answered the crafty man. "All that your father wants to lift you above the women you think so happy, is money, or a good opportunity to make it. Money goes a great way toward making women happy in these days, let me tell you. Fortunes are now made in a day by men with half his ability. I like your father; he is an old friend of mine, and I mean to give him this chance."

"You will, sir! You will!"

Constance seized the half closed hand which Church rested on the table and pressed her lips upon it. Her father started from his seat, and a slow, hot color came into the other man's face.

"What an impulsive child it is," he said, gently, disengaging his hand. "This will never do, pretty Constance—so much feeling will be troublesome in the new life some good fortune may open for you."

Constance shook the hair back from her face, and answered laughing,

"Oh! it was only the surprise. Father knows I am not given to much feeling! Now tell me what I am expected to do. I'm ready."

Church leaned over the table, and spoke to Hudson rather than his daughter, for the old man was restless, and still walking up and down the floor.

"She is ready to exert herself in any way for you. Surely with such a child you cannot be hopeless."

Hudson turned suddenly and addressed his daughter:

"It is late, and you must get up early, Constance, besides, I and my—our guest, want a little time by ourselves."

Constance flushed angrily, and hesitated to obey the suggestion that she should withdraw. Church laughingly interposed.

"Come, come, Hudson," he said. "We have nothing to talk about that she may not hear. Take another glass of wine, and be sociable; I want Miss Constance to show me some of her work."

"I have already done that," answered Hudson, impatiently.

"What was it—what did you show him, papa?" questioned the girl, eagerly.

"Oh," said Church, "it was a pretty group of children."

"That!" exclaimed Constance, with the utmost disdain,

"I wonder at you, father. It was enough to disgust him with me forever. Wait a minute."

Before Hudson could step between her and the closet, which he attempted to do, Constance had flung the door open, and came forward with a plate in her hand.

"I wonder you did not think of this," she said, looking reproachfully at her father. "It was real cruel of you."

"I think so, too; this is really wonderful!" said Church, examining the plate. "How long has she been about it?"

"Only about a year, under Mr. Sterling's tuition," said Constance, delighted with his ardent admiration, "but ever so long in an uncertain way. In fact, ever since I was a little girl I used to dabble, now and then, in these things. Father helped me along, but it was not till lately that I thought of making it available as a profession. But I have some proofs in the closet, come and look at them please."

Constance went to a closet near the fire-place, and took out some proofs on filmy paper, and another plate which seemed about half finished.

The man to whom these were submitted, examined both the proofs and the plate with searching attention. He seemed greatly struck with them, and his face kindled with surprise.

"Have you done all this alone?"

"Yes, quite alone. I would not allow him to touch them."

Church took the proofs in his hand, and went up to Hudson, who stood pale as death, regarding these proceedings.

"Hudson, you are right; the girl has a love for it. Upon my soul, I think she can learn anything she sets her heart on."

"Yes," said Hudson, sadly. "She has talent enough to be a blessing or a curse."

"A curse, father? I never heard you talk in that way before, and I have been so anxious to learn, that we might be a little more like folks. I am tired of this life. Poverty does not suit me, I can tell you, Mr. Church."

Church looked around the dim room, and laughed lightly.

"You need not make what you call poverty so horribly dismal, at any rate," he said, looking at Hudson. "I do not see why a certain degree of elegance might not be entered upon, if it were only to please the girl. There is something I don't like in a pretty creature like her going to and fro in a neighborhood like this. It has a bad look. Now, as an old friend, suppose you accept a little money from me. It will not be long before my young lady here, will be able to pay me back. What do you say to it, Miss Constance?"

"I don't think he, that is father, would let me," said the girl, casting a wistful look on Hudson, who stood in the middle of the room, gazing in a sad, despairing way on her.

"No, no, we do not need anything. This room is comfortable enough."

"But your daughter needs a great deal. Hudson, all this is well enough for you, but remember a young lady requires something more than mere necessities."

Hudson turned his gloomy, almost despairing eyes on his child.

"Constance, Constance, you will not ask for these things. Do not, do not, the price will be terrible."

"I thought that in time I could earn money, and pay everything back, and there is so much that I want," pleaded the girl.

"But why, why—you were contented as we are, this morning."

"Because I had no hope. If your good, kind friend had

asked me what I most wanted then, it would have been all the same."

Hudson turned away with a groan. How could the girl feel for him, not knowing of the iron shackles that made that man his master. Church went close to him and whispered:

"Come with me into the hall."

Hudson obeyed like a child, and went through the door with his head bent and his hands clasped, like a criminal going to trial.

CHAPTER XVIII.

OVERPOWERED.

"HUDSON," said Church, when they were together in the dark hall, "you must not oppose me. I am sorry for the girl; this is a sad life for her, and I wish to make it brighter. The money I advance she can repay by degrees with the help of her art, and if not, you have served me in the past."

A faint groan broke from Hudson, but his tormentor did not seem to hear it. "Cannot—oh cannot you go away and leave us in peace," pleaded the unhappy man. My poverty was sweet, for I was just beginning to feel safe."

"Why, this is rank ingratitude! I come to you for help in a delicate matter, which you refuse, when I have but to lift my hand to ensure obedience, or——"

"Hush!" said Hudson sharply; the door is thin, she may hear."

"That which I never mean to tell her, or any other person; but you must let me be a little generous. There is no time to lose with the girl. I have given you some pain, let me atone by being of some use to her."

"And what return must we give?" asked Hudson.

"Nothing, I can get along without you. In fact, I cannot see of what use you could be in my affairs; so do not hesitate on that account. Come, man, act frankly, and accept the trifle I am ready to advance, in order that the girl in yonder may one day take the place her father's child should occupy."

"I cannot accept; but God help me, no power of refusal is left to me."

"Spoken like a man!" said Church, grasping the cold hand of his victim. "Now there must be no appeal to the girl, no explanation; she is to have her gleam of good fortune without alloy."

"I will say nothing to disturb her, but there is another who may."

"You mean young Sterling. By what right can he interfere?"

"If the young man loves her as I think he does, his heart will claim the right."

Church became thoughtful a moment, and seemed to be pondering over what Hudson had said. At last he spoke.

"If you took her out of town, could she go on with her work, think you?"

"What, without him?"

"Yes."

"She would not go."

"Why?"

"Because she loves her art, and she loves the man."

"Loves the man, hey! By Jove! turn where you will, and this eternal state of things is forever putting stumbling-blocks in one's way. The girl has brains enough to keep clear of love, I should think. You may be mistaken, Hudson."

"Try her, and see if she will give up her art, or give him up for any money you can offer; his will has greater power to lead her than my command or your wealth."

"Let him lead!" answered Hudson; "or think he does, which is the same thing. There is always a way of guiding such men, either through the heart or brain, and she is sure to find the way. Come, now let us go in and tell the girl that you have relented."

Church flung open the door as he spoke, and addressed Constance in a voice that contrasted painfully with the dejected tone of her father.

"My friend has decided that your life is to be made a little brighter, while you are by all means to go on with the art you love so well; he will give you opportunities of acquiring such accomplishments as will be essential to the new life your success will open to you. She must learn dancing, it is understood," he said, addressing Hudson, and music; you say she has a good voice."

"Yes," broke in the girl, eagerly. "The old man up stairs has been teaching me to sing; he says that I might join in choruses even now."

"And you play?"

"Yes, on the violin."

"The violin! That is a strange instrument for a lady."

"But it was all I had; the old man would make me try it."

"We must have a piano. Can your old man teach it?"

"Oh, yes! beautifully!"

"How is she educated otherwise?" asked Church, turning to Hudson.

"Better than most girls. I taught her myself," answered Hudson, a little proudly.

"That is excellent. She must know very little, indeed, if we cannot match her with the dolls that graduate from half our fashionable seminaries. A few ologies in school, and a raft of novels read on the sly, that is all it amounts to."

"Oh! I like the novels!" said Constance.

"And so do I," answered Church, with a cynical laugh; "they contain about all the knowledge our young ladies acquire now-a-days. Only don't spend too much of your time over them, you will want it for better things."

"Never fear! I can read them, or let them alone. Give me something else to think of, and I don't care. But all this will cost money; lots of it."

"Money, of course. Who ever expected to accomplish anything without that. Here, old friend, is the sinews of war."

Church took a package of crisp, new bills from his pocket, without a flaw or spot on their greenness, and handed them to Hudson, who recoiled as if he were called upon to touch a serpent.

"Fresh from the Treasury, you see," observed Church, with a significant smile.

"Yes, I see," answered Hudson, shuddering.

"What a suspicious fool you are, Hudson. Great generals never go into the heat of battle themselves; but stand aloof and guide other men to destruction for their own benefit. You and I know better than to go into the works. Take the money. It is good as gold. I saw it cut with my own eyes."

Still Hudson held back.

"Now, father, don't make such an awful goose of yourself!" exclaimed Constance, looking greedily at the money. "If you won't take it, I will. There!"

The girl held out her hand, blushing and half frightened at her own audacity, but as Church reached it forth, tempting her with his crafty smiles, Hudson snatched the money from his hand.

"No," he said fiercely, "if it must be taken, I will save her from the peril and the gratitude."

"Gratitude!" laughed Church; "how much of the old preacher life must cling around you, Hudson, when you

talk of that; but I am glad to see you a little more sensible; no matter who takes the money so long as our pretty daughter here gets the benefit."

Church put on his duster as he spoke, and held the traveling cap in his hand. Hudson watched each movement with vigilant suspicion. The presence of that man seemed to oppress him like a nightmare.

After swinging his cap awhile in a hesitating way, Church shook hands with Constance, and turned to Hudson:

"Step with me into the hall again, a moment."

Hudson went into the hall, closing the door after him. The moment they were in the dark, Church said with decision:

"I have been thinking this matter over since that young fellow went out. She must keep her influence over him, and absorb all he knows, but he must *not* win her. Do you understand?"

"I understand, but have neither the wish nor the power to control the matter."

Church broke out into something approaching an oath, and stamped his foot on the floor.

"Let us have an end to this cant. Carry it to your midnight missions, it is thrown away upon me. There is no limit to the good this girl may work out for you and herself if you keep her free."

"I want no good for her or myself, such as you hint at," said Hudson, with a passionate outbreak. "All that I do ask is that you go away and leave us. Nothing but evil can come out of this. While God permits me to be useful to his creatures, it is all that I ask for myself; as for the girl—God help us! she shall not be tempted as I was, not while I am here to protect her."

"Anger me—brave me as you are doing, and there will speedily come a time when you will not be here, to protect her, my friend!" It was dark in the hall, but the shivering

of Hudson's garments as he fell back against the door frame convinced the cruel man that his threat had fallen with all the power he expected.

"Good night," he said. "If I think of anything else, you shall hear."

"Good-night," answered Hudson, faintly. He listened till the footsteps of his unwelcome visitor were lost in the street; then turned back to the room where his daughter sat, flushed, excited, and eager to learn what all this meant.

"Father, father, who is this man?" she cried.

"An old acquaintance of mine, Constance."

"But how came he here—and what does all this mean?"

"He came here because I was once his friend."

"But what are his wishes, father?"

"You heard them, child; but go to bed now; I am tired, and want to think."

"And I—oh! I am delighted. Good-night, father."

She kissed him on the forehead, patted his shoulder lightly with both hands, and went away, singing like a bird, though it was now beyond midnight.

She had been in her room a few minutes, when Hudson opened the door, just enough to make his voice heard.

"Constance," he said, "do not forget to pray, before you go to bed."

"All right—I went."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

HUDSON still lingered by the door, while his daughter shook down her hair in front of the little mirror, and began to weave it in and out of her crimping pins; putting her head on one side now and then, while she admired her handsome face with childlike self-complacency.

The unhappy man witnessed these movements with alarm. His anxieties regarding the girl had been terribly aroused that night, and her flippant answer to his suggestion about her prayers, deepened the feeling. Pushing the door farther open, he went into the room.

Constance did not look around, but giving the tress of hair she was crimping a vigorous twist, said, carelessly:

"You there, father, I thought you had gone up to bed."

"No, Constance, I want to talk with you awhile. Sit down here and make me a little happier before I go."

"Dear! I am so tired. This crimping is awful hard work when one is sleepy. There now, I can go on while you talk."

The girl seated herself on the side of the bed, and, with those magnificent tresses falling over her shoulders, went on with her work, looking at her father now and then through the floating web of hair that veiled her eyes.

Hudson sat regarding her for some moments in anxious silence. She saw that he was agitated, and wondered at it in a careless way, for there was little real sympathy between that man and his child.

"Dear me, father, what does make you look so down in the mouth? I should think all this good luck might cheer you up."

"Constance, my poor child."

"There it is again, just as if I were dead and buried, and you mourning over my grave. I don't see how you ever expect me to be happy here. If it were not for Mr. Sterling, I might as well live in a vault."

"But this money, Constance, I cannot accept it. We must not use a dollar of it."

Constance lifted her magnificent hair, and flung it back from her face with both hands, staring at her father with those great blue eyes, to make sure that he was in earnest. She saw in his pale, set face, the stern sincerity of his words, and flinging herself forward on the pillow, burst into a vehement passion of tears.

"Constance, my child, listen to me."

The girl clapped both hands to her ears and sobbed more bitterly than ever.

The poor man clasped his hands, and lifted them toward Heaven with a look of touching humiliation.

"Oh, my God," he murmured, "is my punishment coming from her; try me—pierce me—beat me down in any other way."

Suddenly his hands fell down helpless, his face drooped, and tears gushed to his eyes.

"It is but meet," he sighed, "that out of my sin should leap this keen punishment. Forgive me, Lord, that I dared to question thy eternal justice."

"What are you talking about, father," exclaimed Constance, lifting her tear-stained face from the pillow, "if it's trying to persuade me not to spend that money, I tell you it's of no use. I won't be mortified and put down all my life, when there is no reason on earth for it."

"But my child, the money is not ours."

"Of course it is ours, for I will work morning and night to pay for it. Darling old father, do let me keep it, and learn to be a lady. I could—I could—it is in me, I know, and this is such a beautiful chance."

"What is it you wish so much, Constance?" asked the father so mournfully, that the girl paused a moment in her headlong selfishness, but directly began kissing him, and smoothing his hair with her soft palms.

"What is it I wish, you precious old darling, first music—no, first dancing—don't start, it is only to learn how to walk and move like the ladies, who seem to swim up and down the avenue. Of course I don't care for whirling about, and cutting my steps off like mince meat; but real ladies all learn to dance."

"What next?" questioned Hudson, in a voice so anxious and pained, that she kissed him again before answering.

"Then there is music! When one has such a voice, it is a sin to let it run wild as mine does."

"True, my child, if we had money of our own to pay for lessons."

"As for the rest, my own darling father has done more for me, than the highest of 'em get at their boarding-schools. I can read beautifully—who could help it, with such a dear patient master—and spell without missing, which is more than can be said of your boarding-school girls. After all, it is only music and dancing with just a few nice clothes. It isn't very much that one wants. I won't ask for better rooms, or more furniture—not a thing."

"Ah, my child, if you will only wait."

"Wait! wait! What have I been doing all my life but waiting?"

"True, true!" said the father.

"And now that I see a way to earning money and getting my own living in a fashion that no lady can find fault with or sneer at, my own father stands in the way, and won't let me prepare myself. It's hard, it's awful hard!"

The unhappy man so unjustly and yet justly reproached, sat still for some minutes, dumbly thinking over the fearful position in which he was placed, on every side painful, even

dangerous responsibilities fell upon him. He was not a strong man, and his nervous system had been fearfully shattered; he longed to be firm and to act rightly, but the power seemed to be wrested from him. With that young girl to whom he had never been able to render a parent's whole duty, a conscientious resolution would seem nothing less than cruelty. How could he make her comprehend the struggle that moment in his heart, the yearning wish to give her pleasure, and the fear which strangled the wish. He made one last effort to arouse the generosity of a creature, who could not be made to see how painfully he was placed without revealing that from which every nerve of his body shrank.

"Constance, if you were sure that it would make your father happy?"

"But you never were happy, father."

"True, true, but less miserable; would you not consent that I should send this money back, and wait till I can earn it for you with my own hands?"

"You can't, you can't! We but just get along as it is."

"I will give up my people, my poor people for a time, and work nights."

"As if I would let my own father do that," exclaimed Constance in high indignation. "Your eyes would give out in a week."

"God help me, I fear they would."

"Besides, if we could work nights, which I won't and you shan't, why not do it to repay the money, and save time?"

"Constance, you press me cruelly," exclaimed Hudson, with a sad trembling of the voice, which bespoke his pain and his weakness. "But I tell you that it is neither safe nor wise for us to be indebted to the man who came here to-night. Between us lie bitter things, which can never be forgotten."

"But you are a christian, father; at any rate, Sterling says you are, and teach others to forget and forgive. I am

sure this Mr. Church was kind as kind can be. While you were looking dark as a thunder storm, he sat smiling like—no, not exactly like an angel, but in a nice, gentlemanly way, as if malice never entered his thoughts. Now really, father, it seems as if you were the unforgiving one.”

Hudson took his daughter's hand. His own was cold and trembling.

“Constance, if you love me, if you can pity a man who carries a heavy burden through a world, that but for you and one other would be a wilderness, give up all the vain thoughts that have been put into your head to-night, and let us go on as we did, before this man broke up our peace. I cannot use his money without degradation—worse than that, worse than that—without terror. I am not strong, like most men, and seem over timid, perhaps; but my own child should never think that; she should have some compassion, and not let the gold of a stranger become dearer than an old man's peace.”

As Hudson spoke, Constance drew nearer and nearer to him, her passionate nature was touched; her bosom heaved under the first great effort of self-abnegation that she had ever experienced in her life. For the time she was inspired with noble impulses, such as would have made her a glorious woman, perhaps, had the surroundings of her life been different, as they had often done when she was a wayward romping child, her arms wound themselves around his neck, and her face wet with tears, was pressed to his.

“Never mind—never mind about it, father. We won't be hard on each other any more. I will do my very best to be good, and my own father won't ask me to give up quite everything, just as if it were a dream—and such a bright dream. Don't make me cry any more to-night. Oh! how I wish you had not set your heart against it. Now do go to bed, old darling, it is so very late.”

CHAPTER XX.

BASKETS OF WILD FLOWERS.

SHE was sitting by the window, embroidering a pretty trifle of floss-silk and beads, whose colors harmonised richly with her dark brown hair, and almost black eyes, just then half concealed by the droop of her long and curling lashes.

With the restlessness of girlhood, she dropped the work into her lap, and looked out of the window. All at once, her face brightened, and springing to her feet, she leaned over the sill.

A boy was coming up the steps with a basket of flowers in his hand; she heard the distant tinkle of a bell, timidly pulled, and without waiting to be summoned, ran downstairs.

“Ah, it is you, with the flowers. How pretty they are. I never saw anything more lovely.”

The boy stood before her as she admired the dainty arrangement of wild flowers, which had cost him so much thought. The dawning pleasure in her eyes sent its sparkling happiness over his face.

“I picked them all myself; father took me into the country on purpose that I might find the prettiest. It was so pleasant. We waded among them with the soft, bright sunshine all around us. Were you ever in the country, lady?”

The boy said this with childlike frankness; but a cold look or word from the beautiful girl would have instantly driven the light from that sensitive face.

Dora buried her face in the flowers, and drew in their pungent odors with a long, delicious breath.

“What a smell of the woods,” she said, “how I should like to gather them myself.”

"Would you—would you? we are going again this afternoon, and I know father will be so glad to take you with him. Some of them are so tall they sweep over my head. In places the ground is damp, especially where the rushes and cat-tails grow, but there is nothing like it. One would think all the colors in the sky had rained down among the tall grasses. Father loves it almost as much as I do."

Dora smiled at the boy's enthusiasm, and laughed outright when she looked down at her dainty slippers, and thought of wading with them through swamps and crooks of fences, with a man she had never seen, and that handsome boy, in search of wild flowers.

"I think you will have to get them for me—it would be a hard scramble."

"No—no! one is never tired, you find them everywhere."

"Still, you and your father shall gather them for me, as papa desires, I think."

"That will be next best—I will be sure to bring them; would you like more of the blue or white? I found one tuft of pink in a hollow by itself, here it is."

"Don't ask me about it; I never could make anything half so lovely."

The boy smiled, and a glow of delight swept over his face.

"While I was picking them, it seemed to me a little wrong," he said shyly continuing the conversation: "I couldn't feel quite sure that it did not hurt them, when I broke the stems. Rhoda,—she is my own sister—said it was all nonsense, but who knows? One tall golden-rod, as I bent and broke it, seemed to shriek with the pain. I sat down by it and almost cried. Foolish wasn't it? Rhoda says so, and I don't mean to think about it the next time, especially as you are so pleased with the basket: it never seemed so pretty till now."

"You think so?" said Dora, flattered by the admiration that shone in the boy's eyes.

"And no wonder! If I were a flower—"

Dora laughed outright, at the strange conceit.

"Well, if you were a flower, what then?"

"I should feel, as if the sunshine would never leave me."

"What a strange boy you are, I never heard anything like it. Supposing yourself one of these, which would it be?"

"The one your lips touched just now. It must be sweetest of all," answered the boy veiling his superb eyes with the dark lashes that fringed them, and shivering with strange thrills of delight under the half startled glance of Dora's eyes.

The girl blushed scarlet. She could feel all the vague poetry in this strange speech, but it troubled her, and might have deepened into offence but for the gentleness and tenderness of the boy.

"We have forgotten one thing," she said, after the blush had swept her face, leaving only a soft rosy shadow behind it. "I have not paid you, we must not forget that."

Luke lifted his eyes with a look of timid reproach.

"Don't, don't," he pleaded. "I cannot do that. Please never mention it again. Rhoda herself says I needn't do it for money."

"But you have spent time, and had ever so much trouble in getting them."

"Oh that was my happiness; please let me keep it."

"But we must reward you some way."

"If you only would!" faltered the boy, looking through the open door of a superb room, in which a grand piano stood open. "Give me music for my flowers."

"That I will, strange boy. It will be pleasant to have a listener. Come in here, since you will take nothing else."

Dora Foster had been well taught, and her love of music was a passion. She took her seat at the piano and dashed her hand over the keys in a bold prelude, thinking to charm

the uncultivated ear of this strange child with the stirring passages of a march. Turning to look upon his face after the first brilliant essay, she saw that it was clouded, and wondered at it.

"Is music sweet to you as the flowers?" she inquired.

"Oh sweeter, sweeter, a thousand times!" he said. "I think it must be the music of the winds and the whispering of water as it runs, which fills the flowers with such bright life. I hated to bring them away, for it seemed to me that those left behind stooped downward to listen, with fear that I had come to take the others. It was all fancy, as Rhoda said, but I suppose one cannot help fancies, they come upon one so."

"You love music, I can see that by your face," said Dora, a little crest-fallen that astonishment and admiration had not followed her efforts to amuse him. "Perhaps you have some one at home who plays?"

"Oh yes, my father is first violin at the theatre."

"Oh, indeed! that accounts for your going there; has he ever taught you?"

"Yes, I think he loves to teach me better than anything on earth."

"How strange, I should so like to hear you play; but we have no violin here, nothing but the harp and piano."

"I never touched a harp, but——"

"You can play the piano a little, is that it?"

"My father knows all the music dealers, and most of them like to have me play on their instruments," answered the boy modestly, "but I like the violin best."

Dora got up from her seat.

"Will you let me hear you?" she said, kindly; for so far as music was concerned, she felt safe in patronizing the lad.

Luke took his place on the stool, and began to turn over some sheets of music in a way that fairly took Dora's breath;

for he was searching among her most difficult pieces. Having satisfied himself, the lad dropped his delicate hands to the keys, with a touch that brought their first music out like a gush of air in the woods. With that bright face bending toward him in its great astonishment, he was timid and hesitating; but after a few moments the spirit within him asserted itself, and that lofty room resounded with such music as no man ever taught, and nothing but genius itself could have learned. There was no method in the boy; the very smile upon his lips breathed music, his eyes danced or saddened as the strain of his own creation grew fainter, or triumphant. Every line of his face and nerve of his body, changed and vibrated to the power of his own harmonies. After the first effort, he abandoned his notes, and gave himself up to the inspiration of a slow plaintive melody, which grew and thrilled under those childlike hands into something so sweet and wild, that it seemed scarcely an expression of mortal feeling.

Dora saw that the child was indeed inspired, and gazed upon him in silent wonder, for the beauty of his face grew heavenly and spiritual as the strains he created.

Rhoda, in the pride of her girlish motherhood, had insisted that her idol should wear a tunic of soft brown cloth and snow white under garments, that gave a picturesque effect to the slender form and perfect head. His hair, so bright and richly golden, glanced and rippled in the light as the heavenly face it shaded bent and swayed to the motion of his hands. Murillo never painted anything more beautiful than that boy in the hour of his love's first inspiration.

All at once the music ceased, and Luke came out of his dream. Startled and penitent for what he had done, he left the piano and taking up his cap, stood like a culprit before the girl his genius had charmed.

"Please forgive me; I forgot."

"Forgive you! one might as well attempt to forgive the

angels!" cried Dora, taking his beautiful head between her hands, and gazing into his face in an ecstasy of delight. The boy drew back from the touch of her hands, flushing crimson; his eyes sank, his head drooped, like a flower on its stalk when an August sun is at its noon. She could not understand the meaning of this change. Was it the exhaustion of genius overtaxing a most delicate organism, or had her enthusiasm shocked the boy?

"I will go home now, if you please," he said, in a sweet faint voice.

"But tell me first, what it is—where can I get the piece you have been playing?" said Dora, detaining him.

"Ask the flowers; it was their complaint. I knew that they suffered when my hand broke them down; but I brought them to you, and that is like giving things that must die up to the angels."

Luke bent his eyes to the floor as he spoke, and with sweet humility, stole out of the room.

Dora went up-stairs into a chamber where her mother was sitting.

"Who was it, Dora? I heard the music and knew that it could not be yours."

"Mamma, I do not know whether it was the boy of whom we bought flowers at the theatre, or the spirit of some child long since in Heaven. See what he has brought me, and the others scarcely faded; let me take them to my room."

CHAPTER XXI.

ENTREATIES AND PERSUASIONS.

A few days after the visit of Church to his old friend Hudson, young Sterling and Constance were seated in the room where that midnight supper had taken place.

Both were at work with their gravers, and both seemed completely occupied by the art they were practising; but a close observer might have seen that some excitement had gone before, for Constance had a flush of hot scarlet on either cheek, and the young man, pale, as if passion had exhausted itself to ashes with him.

At last he flung down his graver, and came to the chair in which Constance sat. She was working at random, and he could see that her hand quivered as he bent over her.

"That is not right—you are working wildly," he said, attempting to guide her hand; but she flung him off, and attempted to resume her aimless task.

"Constance, why is this? What evil demon has possessed you of late? Is it that you think me harsh in denying you what is a pain for me to grant?"

"You have no right to grant or deny it. I persist in that, and will. If my education has been neglected; if I have never had opportunities like other people, it was because my father could not afford it. Now that he has got money, outside of the little he can earn, and is willing to spend it on me, you start up and talk about impropriety. Let me ask you, sir, is it worse for me to learn to dance than other people."

"But your position, Constance. If it were private lessons, I would not so much object."

"I don't want private lessons. It is the room, and the company, and the chance of seeing how others do, that I want. You keep telling me that I am forward and unlady-like."

"No, no! I never did that!"

"I say you did; or, father said it when you were by, and submitted to it. What is worse, the whole thing is true. How am I to be like a lady, when I hardly ever saw a genuine one in my life, except at the theatre, or in Fifth Avenue, where they sweep by me, and look me down, as if I had no business to be in the same street with them?"

"Well, why do you go there, Constance?"

"Why do I go there? What takes a boy to the wall against which peaches are ripening? He knows they are out of reach, and that they are growing crimson for some one else; but the very thing fascinates him."

"Yes, child; but all time lost in vain longing is worse than sacrificed. Still, genius has its privileges, dear, and, when thoroughly developed, has a right to high place. Industry may, in the end, lift us both to positions more exalted than any held by the people you seem to envy; but this cannot be done in a day."

"Do hush! I don't want that sort of position which only comes with gray hairs! Who is interested in one then?"

"I shall always care for you, Constance."

There was something so tender and pathetic in his voice, that Constance looked up and half smiled.

"I know you would, dear old fellow, hateful as you are; but then how much more certain that would be if you would just let me have my own way, I'm sure I had trouble enough to get father willing, but he gave in at last that I should go to this dancing-school, and be at the receptions."

"But who will go with you? Remember, you are older than scholars usually are, and—and more remarkable."

"Father will go with me himself. Besides, William, I do know just a little about it; that dear old fellow, with the violin, once thought of getting me on the stage, when father was at his worst, you know; and he gave me lessons on the sly, so that I shan't seem so very awkward; besides, I'm small, and look younger than I am. With a short dress, and all that, it need not seem strange to anybody."

"But it seems very strange to me, Constance. What can have put this idea into your head so soon after——"

"Hush! not another word. Remember, you promised me faithfully. Father has got enough to bear without knowing that."

"But if you insist upon doing things I don't like."

"You will like them—it's all nonsense, William. You must like what I want; and, of all things in the world, I want to dance at one ball, dressed like other girls."

"Like other girls?"

"Well, like other ladies, then."

"But, Constance, I will not permit this. Why should you ask what you know to be unseemly and every way improper?"

"Because my father told me I might—and I will—there!"

"Not if I can prevent it."

"But you can't, without doing what no honorable man dare do."

"Will you, then, deliberately disobey me?"

"Will I? Yes——"

She looked up and checked herself, seeing how deadly white he was; and the hot color slowly left the half-frightened, half insolent beauty of her face.

With this she fell to crying, and muttered, "That she didn't mean quite so much as that—only he was so cruel and unreasonable. It was enough to make any woman say wrong things, and do them, too; but she didn't want to be obstinate, only to persuade him just that once."

The young man looked down into those beautiful eyes full of tears, and, with all his stern resolve, was a little softened. She saw it, and pursued her advantage.

"Father will always go with me, that is settled; and you can come after me—so it will be a double protection," she pleaded.

The young man was not convinced; still he loved that beautiful, selfish creature, and yielded, but so sternly, that his very consent frightened her.

"Constance," he said, taking her two hands in his, and wringing them hard, "if I give way in this, it is with a

conviction that the thing is, in itself, wrong, and will lead to evil for us both. But I will not forget how little of pleasure you have seen, and how keen is your relish for it. Go to this place; but understand me thoroughly, if through that, or any other means, you are led to forget what you are, and what I am, for a single moment, I will have no forbearance, no mercy."

"Oh William, don't say that, you frighten me," cried the girl with wild energy; but her hands were still clasped with force, and the young man went on.

"I may have done a wrong thing in marrying you, as I have done a foolish thing in keeping it secret; but as I have sowed, so must I reap. God help us both if the harvest should prove such as I fear, for no two human beings will ever have had such need of help."

Constance clasped her hands when the young man dropped them from his grasp, and began to cry; but a flush of pleasure came slowly to her face, and she looked at him, from time to time, with timid smiles, after he had returned to his work. By-and-by he felt a pair of soft white arms stealing around him, and a cheek like moist roses pressed to his.

"William," whispered a soft, rich voice, for there was real feeling in it, "William, I thank you so much. Indeed, indeed, I do. Can't you understand that I want to make myself a lady only for your sake? Father has got a little money now, and that gives me a hope to learn such things as I have never had a chance to know. Don't you see there is a piano in the room, and I am to have music lessons as well?"

The young man looked around, and observed the piano for the first time—a flimsy, second-hand affair, but still an instrument of music. There did seem to be some systematic effort to complete Constance's imperfect education. This relieved the anxiety that had been oppressing him all day, and he began to look upon the affair in a different light.

If old Mr. Hudson had, in fact, come in possession of means sufficient to complete, in some degree, his daughter's education—what cause of complaint was there? The poor girl had so little pleasure in her youth, that it seemed a cruelty to deprive her of any this new idea might afford. So, with a generous feeling of sacrifice, the man yielded his will against his judgment, as many a stronger mind has done before, under the persuasions of a loved object.

Now all was sunshine with Constance. She was not generous enough to consider the sacrifice this man had made to her; nor did the pain, still manifest in his countenance, detract in the least from the pleasure of her triumph. So she beamed smiles, and lavished caresses upon him, with an abandon which rather annoyed him; and thus, unconsciously, the two began to take separate paths, and have separate thoughts, which diverged more and more each day.

So Constance had her way. She went to the dancing-school, in a private and advanced class, for the young artist insisted on that, very foolishly, in fact; for there she met something above mere children. In this class she was thrown with young gentlemen and ladies of a position she had never mingled with before, richly dressed, full of pride, and well calculated to excite all the vanity and wild ambition of a young creature so utterly unregulated as she had been. This young girl was so sickened with poverty, that she had learned to look upon it as the only great evil of life, from which she was determined to escape on any terms.

Constance had not thought in this way so deeply until after the visit of Mr. Church, whose eloquence had impressed her wonderfully. Up to that time, the possibility of wealth, or of an equality with the people she was now associating with, had never presented itself, except as a wild dream. Indeed, she had looked upon the young artist as so far superior to her, or her belongings, that all the ambition of her nature was gratified in his commendation, and in

the love which had led him to the rash step of an unsanctioned marriage.

CHAPTER XXII.

OPPRESSED WITH LONELINESS.

MRS. HOLT spent much of her time alone in those days, very sadly. So completely had all the enjoyments of her former existence dropped from her, that she fell to loving the few inanimate things which had once been as nothing in her luxurious abundance, as if they were gifted with feelings and sympathies.

Thus it happened that the easy chair that had come back so unexpectedly, like drift-wood rescued from a flood, became inexpressibly dear to her. She hailed it as a sign that Providence had not quite forgotten her. At first she wept over it; and even this was a source of comfort, for usually tears lay heavily in her heart their fountain had been buried under so many troubles; and such bitter humiliation, that they came to her eyes singly, and with pain, wounding where they should have brought consolation. God help the man or woman whose tears are so buried and frozen over with a deadly weariness of life.

The return of this old armed chair came upon her so unexpectedly, that the very sight of it was like a dash of soft, warm rain upon ice,—it stirred some of the sweet emotions of former years in her bosom; and, as I have told you, she knelt down before it, feeling glad and thankful, like a little child; crying like a little child, too, as she had not done for years.

In her solitude—for the woman was left almost entirely to her own loneliness—she fell to loving this old chair, and added it to her little family of treasures, which nothing

ever should induce her to part with—no, not the very depths of poverty itself, or even *his* importunity. The chair was worn and shabby enough. In places the rich red had turned to a yellowish brown, and all its rare shading of tints had seemed to run into a confused maze of color; glimpses of the brown under-linen broke through the worn silk at the seams. In places the glorious old carving was broken hopelessly and the pieces lost. That could not be helped, but much remained that might be done to bring back something of its old splendor.

No matter how much time was needed, she would find it passing almost pleasantly while employed on the kindly work of rejuvenating that old household friend. During her whole life she had been an active woman, full of resources, gifted with a rare power of invention.

Indeed, it was in the exercise of her varied accomplishments that this lady found all the recreation she ever had. Seldom, perhaps, in this world had splendid endowments been so trampled down and wasted as you found them in the wreck of this brilliant woman. So with very little else to busy herself about, she was glad to seize upon this object as a means of distraction.

The very dilapidation of the old chair was a comfort to her. With her own hands she would build it up again, renew the faded colors, give plumpness and elasticity to the flattened cushion, darn in the damask flowers with such embroidery as she knew how to weave, stitch by stitch, as well as the best artist in Europe. So each day, through this mist of joy and pain, she examined the silken cushions and touched the frayed places with caressing fingers, sighing tenderly, as if an old friend had just returned to her needing care and help.

Sometimes the poor lady smiled as she worked; for now and then bright memories would crowd the shadows back from her heart, and throw gleams of sunshine through it,

spite of all the trouble that surrounded her. She had been a joyous, beautiful, and most favored woman in her time, the mistress of a magnificent home, which had been dashed into ruin for her, as it were by a single blow. Then she had started life again to see her property shrink, year by year, into nothingness, until the only vestiges left of her first home were a few worn articles of what had been a rich wardrobe. Of her second estate nothing now remained but that shabby easy-chair, and an old work-table, gleaming with mother-of-pearl, broken here and there in its delicate workmanship far beyond her mending, clever as she was but exquisite as a work of art, and oh! how dear to the poor lady in her loneliness.

It was no wonder that Mrs. Holt prolonged that task of love, and never would consider the old chair perfectly renovated; but each day found some new flaw in the damask, which must be mended, or some stain to be removed.

One morning, feeling very sad and disheartened, she began early at her work. She had been delayed more than once from want of materials, or the means to purchase them—for small sums are, to a proud person, often as difficult of attainment as large ones; and necessity had delayed her task when she was eager to go on, especially this morning, when she had not a shilling at command in the wide world.

But a sudden thought seized her. Perhaps the work-table might contain the material she wanted among the debris of some former prodigal supply. She opened the table with eager haste, and searched among the skeleton reels and empty spools for such tints of silk as she needed. She found some tangled fragments of floss, and began to assort them as well as she could through the dull mist that floated before her eyes.

Then she knelt before the chair, and began to work in earnest, weaving in the threads dexterously, as only a thoroughbred lady can use her needle. She was greatly

depressed that morning, and as she worked, a swarm of memories came, like ravens, croaking and flapping their wings around her—such memories as ask the soul why it did this rash thing, or that wild deed, and how it could evoke such bitter penalties as must hunt down the after life with ten thousand sorrows.

She remembered herself in the old country, young, beautiful, and lovely among the highest aristocracy of the land—a brilliant creature, for whom the best sunshine of the world seemed too dim and tame. Then she was on the Continent, with a father whom the statesmen of the land had selected to negotiate weighty matters of national interest; a motherless girl, impetuous from ill regulated genius, and wilful, either in the wrong or the right—so wilful, that the first step of her life was taken in defiance of that father, who understood the character of the man she married, and would gladly have saved her from the destiny she was madly shaping for herself.

Then came a few years of reckless extravagance; seasons at Baden, alternate poverty and prodigality; children that died for lack of care, one only that lived in spite of neglect; memories of a reckless life, over which she had lost all control. Then came her father's death—a grand funeral, picturesque in its solemn mournfulness; regrets deep and bitter, a sense of desolation, and a yearning desire to follow that kind, lost one even into eternity, claim forgiveness of him, and set her soul free from the remorse which, for a time, threatened her very life.

So far as he could, the wronged father had forgiven her. All that the next heir might not claim by entail he gave to his daughter, thus crowning her with coals of living fire, under which her wounded conscience writhed in mingled grief and pain. She would have given up every shilling gladly for one word of love from her father's lips. But he, her husband, had no such regrets; but ruthless in that, as

in all things else, gathered up his wife's gold, and having exhausted his career in Europe, brought her and their only child to America.

The United States Senate was then a glory to the nation. Clay, Webster, Calhoun, and many another great man, held the people's love and trust in their hands with a noble sense of its importance; social life had not been entirely merged in the love of gold; and intellect held a high place even against wealth in those days.

Among those people who had engrafted much of the high-breeding of the old world upon the vivid genius that thrives so lustily in free air, this woman came with her beauty, her genius, and that wealth which an unprincipled husband lavished freely on her, thinking himself generous because he restrained her in nothing—she who, with proper restraint, would have been a glorious woman.

As it was, for a time, she moved like a goddess among those truly great Americans. Her intellect found itself fairly matched; her beauty fascinated those who could not comprehend the brilliancy of her mind. This was the great scene of her triumphs, and the color mounted into her worn face, as she remembered them, even so many years after, while on her knees darning that old easy-chair.

Then the faint red died out of those shrunken cheeks, and a look of iron, cold and bitter, crept over the countenance. She was thinking of the disgrace and humiliation that man brought upon her, when her wealth was wasted; of the struggle she had made to secure her child, and prevent the power which had crushed her from controlling him. Then came death and partial release!

Had she used her freedom wisely? She dared not ask the question even of her own heart.

After this, her mind wandered over a series of such difficulties as few women, bred like her, could have found the power to conquer. Even then, such was the force of early

aristocratic education, she felt almost as much shame at the remembrance of these honest exertions for a livelihood, as burned in her heart when the panorama of her husband's baseness swept athwart her mind. But hers was a life of strange vicissitudes. In the midst of her honorable exertions, and after the bloom of her youth had faded out and was clouded over with harassing anxieties, prosperity came to her again through the almost idolatrous love of a man fifteen years younger than herself. Once more she had wealth; once more she became a star in social life—once more a leader. Yet this woman, with love and care heaped upon her, amid such luxuries as few women ever enjoy, felt a certain shame that her high birth had mated itself with a self-made man of the new world. The disgrace of her first husband had not more completely severed her from her aristocratic relatives, than the honorable marriage which had given a father to her son, and affluence back to herself. She had loved this man—she loved him yet; but trouble and humiliation had not exalted her nature. Besides, she had all those elements of self-torture and distrust, which growing age sometimes brings most bitterly into the life of a beautiful woman just upon her wane. At any rate, this mature wife was not altogether happy with her young husband, handsome and liberal though he was.

Did the woman wonder now why this had been so? Did she recognize in her own character those warring elements which had shipwrecked their happiness, and, perhaps, at last their worldly fortunes? Did she compare the middle-aged husband, still carrying under his dissipated life the vestiges of a gentleman, but whose harsh tones and bitter taunts, sometimes, made her tremble, with the splendid young man who had sworn to her a thousand times that she could never grow old to him; that the time could never come when she would not be in his sight the best and most beautiful of women?

How cruel he was to her now. Time and improvidence had swept all his possessions away; this marriage, by which love seemed to have defied time, wrecked the man both in character and fortune. I cannot tell how it was, perhaps in giving him everything else, this woman had failed in conferring that home content which is the soul of happiness. It was her doom to see everything that loved her sink into ruin. Why was it that she had dwarfed the moral natures of every man that had loved her?

Had Mrs. Holt asked these questions years before, the fate that lay so heavily upon her then might have been averted. But she had plunged into the whirling current of life, and, exhilarated by its excitement, made no effort to seek the deeper and purer waters, which should bear every woman forward toward the eternal life, where all true womanhood must seek perfection. It was too late, then—yes, too late for any hope of influence over that one man. His life was wrecked, and with it her old age went down utterly like the hull of a vessel, from which masts, rigging, boats, and bulwarks, have all been swept away. Mrs. Holt knew and felt all this. She thought it over with keen regret as her needle flew in and out of that old silk, weaving it together as the broken texture of her life never could be mended. As the lady worked, her mind slowly swerved round to the present, and a more gloomy prospect never presented itself to the mind of a weary-hearted woman. That morning her husband had gone forth to his business as he called it, taunting her for being an incumbrance to him, and reviling her because she had, in fear and trembling, given him a note from Mrs. Wheeler, which contained an urgent demand for the unpaid bill.

When things came to this pass with the unhappy pair, it frequently happened that Holt would not come home for weeks together, leaving the poor wife to the pain and dread that was sure to follow. She did not expect him now. It

might be that some caprice would keep him away forever, for with her there was nothing to lure him back. Her grief angered him; her age gave him a subject for cruel taunts. How could she wish him to return?

CHAPTER XXIII.

LITTLE RHODA AS A BUSINESS WOMAN.

As Mrs. Holt sat over her work, thinking these bitter thoughts, a soft step came up the stairs, and a timid knock made her start upright and listen.

"Come in," she said, at last, seating herself with dignity, and fixing her anxious eyes on the door; for she was dreading the face of her landlady, as only a proud woman can dread the person she owes money to. "Come in."

Faint as the words were, they reached Rhoda Weeks, who opened the door and crept through, timidly, looking around as if she dreaded that some third person might be present.

"Ah! you have come again," said Mrs. Holt, brightening out of the apprehension that had seized upon her. "What have you got to sell?"

"Nothing, marm; that is, nothing that I haven't promised to regular customers; but if you please, I—I want; that is, if you wouldn't think anything——"

"Why, Rhoda, what has come over you to blush and stammer in this way?" cried the lady, who had never seen a shade of embarrassment in the child before.

"Me? Oh, nothing! But I want you to do something for me, and—and don't know how to ask it."

"Want something of me?" faltered the lady, thinking of her empty purse. "If I can; but tell me what it is."

"Mrs. Holt, marm, what do you think about savings-banks?"

"Savings-banks, Rhoda?—what a question!"

"As for me," said Rhoda, dropping into her old business tone, "I ain't going to trust 'em. What if they were to break up and go to smash with one's money in their pockets?"

Mrs. Holt laughed a little. This financial conversation with little Rhoda surprised, and, for the moment, amused her.

"But you have no money in any bank, have you, little girl?"

"No, not now—nothing to speak of; that is because I drew it all out this morning—mean to put it in private hands, where it will do—— Mrs. Holt, will you just be good enough to keep this fifty dollars for me?"

"Fifty dollars for you, Rhoda? No, no! I will not touch it!"

The proud, and at heart honorable woman, drew back, and put the roll of bank-notes held toward her, back with her hand, almost shuddering under the temptation so suddenly presented before her.

"Don't say that, marm, because I've set my heart on it. You see it is money that I have saved for Luke's education, but it will be a long time before he wants it; and both he and I think that you could take it now, and do what you please with it, and—and pay us just as much back ever so many years from now. I tell you, marm, it's my belief that them banks aren't to be trusted. Only five per cent. interest, just think of it; for my part, I'd rather have nothing—it's just a tantilization. If you would be so kind now!"

Mrs. Holt was sorely tempted. The woman from below stairs had just been up under the influence of a sharp dun from her landlord, and demanded her money with that de-

cision which springs out of a sharp necessity. Mrs. Holt, poor thing! had temporized and promised, while her cheeks grew hot with shame, and her nerves quivering under the pressure of this eternally repeated humiliation; but she knew that the time and means of payment were, to say the least, uncertain, and shrunk from taking the money from that hard-working little creature, who seemed so anxious to be robbed of her small savings.

"No, Rhoda, I cannot take it. You are a dear, good girl, but I—I do not need—— That is, I will not deprive you of your money."

"Of course, you don't need it—who ever thought of such a thing?" said Rhoda, fixing her pleading eyes on the lady.

But it is I—I and Luke that want some one to take care of our money; and—and I think it real unkind—there, I do, after all you did for mother, to give us up, and say you won't help us."

Mrs. Holt walked to the window and looked out; but though the day was fine, everything seemed misty to her. She was making a great sacrifice when she refused Rhoda's money—for never was a poor woman in greater need of it than she was that very moment. A slight rustle of paper, and a noise at the door, made her turn. The room was empty, and lying among the ruined paraphernalia of her work-table, Mrs. Holt saw the roll of bills placed conspicuously.

Then she sat down in her easy-chair, rested her warm cheek against its cushion and began to cry. She had no tears to shed when trouble was upon her, but gratitude brought them out, bright and clear, like the crystal drops that come so easily in childhood. In all the world it seemed as if that little girl were her only friend.

Footsteps on the stairs, that made the nerves of that poor woman quiver, a knock at the door, and Mrs. Wheeler came in, looking half grieved, half angry; forcing herself to act

like a woman of iron, when she was, in fact, a kindly-hearted person, urged against her will, to be hard and cruel.

"Mrs. Holt," she said, sharply, as if out of patience with herself and every one else, "I cannot help it; the landlord is down upon me harder than ever. If you cannot pay me right away, I—I must have the room."

Mrs. Holt started up in her chair and turned a wild look on the roll of money she had resolved not to touch. She seemed afraid that the landlady would seize upon it, and half reached forth her hand.

Mrs. Wheeler followed that anxious look with her eyes, saw the money, and burst out in a volley of thanks so exuberant and full of joy that Mrs. Holt smiled in spite of herself.

"Oh! I am so glad! It will save me from a world of trouble. I'm so sorry. Did I say anything that was not pleasant, Mrs. Holt? It was not my wish; but sometimes that man drives me so."

Mrs. Holt arose with the dignity of a woman who had thousands at command, and taking up little Rhoda's money, gave it to the woman who reached out her hand, eager to receive it.

"I think that is the amount, Mrs. Wheeler. No, you said nothing very unpleasant, and I can make allowances; only pray be a little more patient the next time. I am not accustomed to these things."

Poor woman, how she strove to cover up the memory of those old wounds to her pride, which never would cease to pain her! Not accustomed to being dunned? God help her; for months and months she had known little else than the shrinking and distress which unpaid debts are sure to bring upon a person of sensitive honor. She had not intended to use that money. It seemed to her scarcely better than robbery to take it without some more certain means of repay-

ment than she possessed—but the thing was done. Rhoda's bank-notes were grasped in Mrs. Wheeler's hands with such eager gratitude that, for a moment, her debtor forgot how the money had been obtained.

After Mrs. Wheeler went out, profuse in thanks and glowing with delight, her lodger threw herself into the easy-chair, and, covering her face with both hands, moaned to herself, "This child, too—this poor child! Am I to ruin everything that comes near me?"

CHAPTER XXIV.

CRUEL REPROACHES.

"WELL, what is all this about?"

Mrs. Holt dropped the hands from her face, and looked toward the door, where a tall, well-formed man stood frowning, with a soft hat grasped hard in one hand, as if the sight of his wife's trouble had angered him.

"Is it you, Holt? I did not expect you so early," she said, making an effort to appear pleased.

He looked at her keenly, and spoke in a slight, questioning voice, "Crying again!"

"No, no, I have not shed a tear. That does not often happen to me now."

Holt gave her another sharp glance, flung his hat on a table, and sat down in the easy-chair that his wife had just left.

"So you have got at this old thing again," he said. "Confound it, here's a needle half run through my hand. What have you been about. Darning the ragged silk? Just like you. I have half a mind to pitch the old hencoop into the street."

The lady did not speak; but this rudeness seemed to shock her, for the muscles about her mouth were strained, and she walked nervously around the room, moving things backward and forward in a helpless way.

"Well, never mind the needle, though it was confoundedly careless. I'm glad you are not drooping and moaning after the old fashion just now, for I want you to help me again. Don't look white, and wince so—it is nothing very dreadful; but I want fifty—say a hundred dollars, and don't know where else to come for it. You can get it, if you will."

"A hundred dollars!" faltered the poor woman, with a shock of inward cold. "Mason, you know I have not got it."

"I know that you are a dear, kind old party, and that you always manage to help me out of my scrapes somehow. I can always trust in you when everybody else fails."

"But, Mason, I haven't got a dollar in the world."

"Well, what of that? You can borrow."

"Borrow? No, I cannot do that. Since we needed friends, they have all dropped away."

"But you must look them up. I tell you I'm awfully in for it—owe everybody, to say nothing of this old cat, Wheeler."

"But this hundred dollars, if I had it, would not pay half that you have told me of."

"Certainly not; but it would take me out of the crowd and give me a new start. The long and short of it is, I must go. There are chances out West, and I mean to take some of them. It's of no use staying here. You always could get along better without me, when the duns were upon us."

Mrs. Holt sat down in the nearest chair, simply because she had no strength to stand, her withered face turned white as parchment, her lips contracted painfully; she felt

as if the last blow fate had to give was falling upon her then.

"Are you going to leave me?"

"To leave you? One would think it a terrible misfortune. Why, you have told me a thousand times that——"

"Oh, don't! I cannot bear it now. If we are to part, let it be in peace," cried the poor wife out of the depths of her anguish. "Remember, it may be forever!"

"In the course of nature, that is very probable," answered the man, who had sworn a thousand times that the woman before him never could grow old. "Is there anything so very heart-breaking about my going, that it makes you sit choking and panting like a frog out of water. I can remember when you had more vim."

"Can you?" she questioned, drearily. "Yes, I dare say; but I am old now."

"Old! I like that. You own up to it at last. Old! Of course, you are, and infernally nagging, too, if things don't go to please you."

"I do not intend to be unkind or disagreeable, Mason, but you should make allowances sometimes. When one is very unhappy, it is hard always to appear cheerful. I—I am so miserable."

"You need not go over that old song; I've heard it croaked till it makes me sick. Do try and look less like a confounded mummy, and get the whine out of your throat. There, now, begin to shiver and grow moist about the eyes. Hang it, don't you know that you are an infernal sight too old for that dodge. It used to tell on me wonderfully when I was spooney, and you younger, but now——"

The man made a gesture of contempt with his hand, as if he wished to sweep away all her pretensions at once, and settle her down into the miserable old woman which he had made her, more certainly than time itself.

"Now about the money?" he added, in the tone of an

injured creditor. "I must have enough to carry me west of the Mississippi."

"But I have no money!" she answered him, in a burst of sharp impatience. "How am I to get it?"

Holt laughed, took a soiled handkerchief from his hat and wiped his flushed face.

"Come, come—no more lies, old lady! Where did you get the money to pay Mrs. Wheeler with? Not a cent this morning, and fifty dollars the next hour. I could hardly keep the widow from embracing me when I came up-stairs, spite of the brandy in my breath, as she calls it—hang her impudence! What does she know about a gentleman's tod. But I take such things gracefully. Didn't know what she was driving at for ten minutes; but accepted the situation, and swallowed all thanks for the fifty dollars I had left for her; told her not to say another word; was glad if my promptness had relieved her from any embarrassment, spread my hands once or twice in delicate refusal of so much gratitude, and come up here to find out just how flush you are."

"I have told you—I have told you," pleaded the woman.

"Stuff and nonsense! You have not left the house; and no human being but a miserable little match-girl has been here since I went out—you see I have taken a little pains to inform myself. Now just be up to the truth once, and tell me where the hoard is."

"I tell you, upon my honor, I have not a cent in the world," answered the harassed woman—"not one."

"On your honor! Now I like that."

"I will take an oath if you cannot believe me."

"But where did you get that money?"

"I—I borrowed it of the little match-girl."

Holt crushed his hat between both hands, and then flung it half way to the ceiling, distorting himself with a burst of laughter, so deep and genuine that his wife smiled in spite of all the anguish at her heart.

"Borrowed it of the match-girl? Mark Anthony, this is too much; and she wishes me to believe it. Ho! ho! ha! ha!"

"I know it seems strange and incredible, but Rhoda Weeks lent me that money as certainly as you and I live," she said, with a calm seriousness that almost took away his breath.

"And has she got any more, that is the principal thing now?" said Holt, catching his hat and crushing it impatiently, for he was too much in earnest for continued mirth. "I do not ask where the imp gets such sums of money—that's none of my business; but has she got any more stamps that you can get hold of?"

"I do not think that she has got another dollar in the world, Mason. In fact, I know that this was all she had."

Holt's laugh hardened down to a sneer now, for he was convinced that she spoke the truth; and his hopes of money faded rapidly—at any rate, from that quarter.

"And so you have taken to financiering among the match-girls and boot-blacks. Of course, the noble blood that we boast of does not fire up at the idea. Pride and poverty have given up fighting, ha!"

"I did not ask the child for her money, and would not have taken it if—"

"If you hadn't wanted it to throw away on that ugly dun down stairs. Why, woman, that money would have taken me out West."

"But where is it you wish to go, Mason?"

"On to the Pacific railroad—I don't much care which route. I have patches of land in both directions."

"You have land?"

"Yes, I have; ventures made in the old prosperous days, that may come into market now. Who knows, this black luck may not last forever. I should have sold it fifty times over if anybody would have bought it."

"And you are going West to stay, to live? Oh, Mason! take me with you!"

"Take you with me? Well, old girl, on one condition I will. Raise me money enough to go out, and I'll send for you."

"Send for me? No, no! I must not be left behind. It would kill me. Besides, how could I live? How could I live?"

The poor woman began to tremble, and writhe visibly before her husband's eyes. He was not naturally a hard-hearted man, and for the moment took compassion on her.

"Don't tremble so, old girl—why should you?" he said, with a gleam of loving kindness. "I'll go out, you know, and see how the land lies. If it promises well, what do you say to a log-cabin on the edge of some prairie, or at the foot of a hill, with a stream in sight? If we could get clear away from the world, that would be the very best thing we could do. I worked in the woods once a whole winter, and that, compared to raising corn on a prairie where the black soil is rich six feet deep, is mere baby's play."

"Oh! If I were but a few years younger," she said piteously, "then a log-house with you, and away from the whole world, would be heaven."

Holt laughed, and coming toward her, leaned upon her chair in an old, familiar attitude, which made her heart swell. He saw the crimson of an almost uncontrollable emotion sweep slowly up to her face, and began to play with a tiny curl that fell over her forehead. She started up, went to the window, and he could see by the motion of her head and shoulders that she was crying bitterly.

"Come, come," he said, "there is nothing to cry about. It is always wrath or tears when I am alone with you, though, I must say, tears have been scarce with you of late. Why, you are getting to be childish."

"The second childhood!" she answered, smiling bitterly through her tears.

"What nonsense; but let us talk seriously about the money. Can you get it for me?"

"God help me! I do not know how," she answered.

"Could you not get it from the young lord?"

"The young lord. You mean my son? Oh Mason! I have been such a burden to him already."

"But he would give it to you?"

"If he had it. Yes, I do not doubt that; but I would almost rather die than ask him."

"But you will do it for my sake?"

"For your sake, Mason, I would do anything."

She looked into his face, her own quivered all over; her eyes, blue as the heavens once, took back a gleam of youth. He stooped down and kissed her.

"Then, for my sake, ask him. I will turn over a new leaf in this far West. Don't remember the last few years—I have not been altogether myself. Come, help me this time. We will make a fresh start, then, and build up a real home for ourselves."

"Oh! that we could, on the prairie, in the wilderness—anywhere, so long as it was a home, and our own," she cried, reaching out her arms like a weary child. "In this life we are so far apart, Mason."

"I know it—I am sorry now."

"Are you, my husband?"

"Indeed, I am. Only help me out of this abominable nest of duns, and you will find the old nature coming back. Say, now, will you ask William about it?"

"I—I will get the money. Depend on me, I will!"

"I always could trust you to work out possibilities; and sometimes, it seems to me, impossibilities. After all, there are few women like you."

She smiled pleasantly in his face. His praise seemed to take off ten years from her life.

"Yes, you will do it, I see that," he said, smoothing her hair. "Who says you are growing old? Not I, for one."

"Then I shall go with you?" she questioned, anxiously.

"No, not *with* me. I will go first and prepare some sort of a home for you; then you shall come out, and we will settle down and grow into nice old people."

"But you *will* do this?"

"Indeed, I will. Only help me out of this heap of brown-stone and bricks, and you shall be the better for it all your life."

She threw her arms around his neck, and kissed him with pathetic tenderness.

"I will get it! Never fear, I will get it."

For a moment she was strained to his heart fervently, as in the first days of their marriage; then he snatched up his hat and went away, perhaps ashamed that so much good was left in him.

CHAPTER XXV.

OLD HEIR-LOOMS.

WHEN Mrs. Holt heard her husband's footsteps on the stairs she gave a sudden start and went after him eager to look upon his very shadow as it passed away from her. Then she went back into the room, sat down in the great easy-chair, and leaning her cheek against its cushions, closed her eyes with a sensation of heavenly thankfulness that beamed over her whole face.

"He loves me yet—he loves me yet; he does—he does! I am not so very old, if it were not for this pining. Great heavens! how beautiful life can be for us away from every one—away from the evils that tempt him here, with the fresh, bright things of God all around us. Had this been given me from the first, how different it might have been; but while there is life there is hope. Let me think—let me

dream; and, above all, let me thank the good God who forgives so much, and blesses us, in spite of our ingratitude."

She sighed heavily, casting off a load of pain with each breath; then a smile dawned on her lips, and her hands clasped each other gently, as young birds creep together in one nest. She was not asleep; but a full hour passed before she moved from that chair, the feeling of rest was so complete.

After a time the thought of what she had to do broke into her repose. She sat up, smiling and thoughtful, her intellect all alert, as if a stone had been rolled away from her brain, and a mountain of ice from her heart.

How should she get this money? Not from her son, that source had been taxed too heavily already. She could not again appeal to his generosity, knowing, as she did, how hard it was for him to earn, with his own hands, the honorable independence which it was his pride to maintain.

Of late she remembered, with some anxiety, that the young man had been straitened in his means, and that he came less frequently to her assistance; he grew pale and careworn, too, like a man who was preparing himself for some inevitable burden. No, let what would come, she must not go to her first husband's son, William Sterling, for help, not even to secure that home in the far West, in which Mason Holt was to become himself again.

This conclusion once arrived at, Mrs. Holt began to search about for some other means of obtaining money. There was one resource by which she might realize the sum she wanted.

Through all her poverty, and against every pressure, she had retained two or three valuable heir-looms, which had descended to her from the proud house in England, to which she undoubtedly belonged. For years she had not dared to look at these things, the very sight of them was so full of regretful pain. Sometimes the clamor of immediate need

had been so loud and strong, that she had dragged them forth as men commit murders and burglaries, determined to sell them, and free herself from the cry of money, money, which pursued her like the baying of blood-hounds; but something had always held her back. It seemed like tearing up that proud, ancestral tree by the roots, when she thought of parting with the articles that had been owned and worn by her mother.

Now a new motive, and a more holy purpose swept many of these feelings aside. She was about to begin a new life, to throw up a hopeless struggle, and the bitter experience of years, for the freedom of primitive existence. What had she in common with the pride and ambition, the pomp and splendor of which these fragmentary treasures were a part? Had she not long ago given up her own lofty birth-right, and held her son back from the privileges of his class because she wished to be forgotten by those who had known her in the glory of her youth, and the pride of a position now divided from her by so many years, that it seemed like a mocking dream? Now she was going away farther still, to the very centre of the new world, through which iron roads were already cleaving a passage from ocean to ocean. Why should she keep these relics? Who would appreciate them in the far-off home to which her best hopes turned? For once she would tear up her pride by the roots; the man she had married was a son of the new world—she had made sacrifices for him, why not add this one, the greatest and the last?

From under her bed, Mrs. Holt dragged a small camphor-wood trunk, clamped with brass, and fastened with a curious lock. From her work-table she took a key which fitted this lock, and opened the trunk with it. A strong aromatic smell of camphor, cedar-chips, and sandal-wood came up from the chest, almost stifling her. She turned white and struggled for breath, but did not close the lid, though it shook under her hands, and at first almost fell.

Layer after layer of paper and fine linen was unfolded; then the rich tints and heavy fabric of an India shawl gleamed up from the waves of tissue-paper that enfolded it. She took the shawl up with desperate courage, as if it had been the shroud of some dear friend, and flung it across her arm. Then she drew forth a web of old cardinal point-lace, the spoil from some monastic altar, into which a whole convent of nuns had worked all the bloom of their lives, and offered it back to God in a wonderful mechanism.

This lace had descended in her mother's family, from lady to lady, many a hundred years; and now she was about to sell it for so much gold. The thought made her faint. It seemed a terrible sacrilege, even in the state of generous exaltation to which she had lifted herself. She held up the marvelous web, yellow and rich with the golden hue which time leaves on all whiteness, and looked at the delicate pattern with longing, wistful eyes. The rich tracery gleamed like hoary frost-work between her and the window. It fell from her arm, yard after yard, a miraculous web, which nothing could replace. This lace had gleamed on her mother's bridal-dress and on her own. How could she sell it?

A hundred dollars! Surely the India shawl would bring more than that if she only knew where to sell it. She would put back the lace, at least for the present; it seemed impossible for her to part with that. Was it not woven into the very woof of her birth-right, with its rich yellow threads stretching back for centuries? The proud women of her house would stir in their graves if she sold that.

One thing more she had on which her trembling hand fell with reverence. It was a jewel-case of crimson morocco, worn and faded, which fell open in her clasp—for the spring was broken—and the beautiful eyes of a woman looked up to her, as if haughtily asking why she had been intruded upon. Then Mrs. Holt's mouth began to quiver, and her

eyes grew so dim that she could not see how those lovely eyes seemed to soften and look into hers, and how wonderfully beautiful the face was.

"Oh! mother, mother!" she cried out, "had you but lived, had you but lived!"

She turned the picture over in her hands. It was set in pure, heavy gold; and in the back was an oval-shaped crystal, in which two rich locks of hair lay in one silken coil, held together by a band of large diamonds. At first she had intended to remove these diamonds and sell them, but her hand faltered in its task. She literally could not so despoil her mother's picture. She clasped the case in her hand, thrust the miniature back to its place in the box, hurried the lace in, wave after wave, pressed it down with both her hands, and closed the lid. The shawl she might part with; but the dead in their coffins were not more sacred to her than the picture and the lace, which had been a portion of her mother's wedding-dress.

Other things of value were in that camphor-wood box; a huge Bible, every page of which was an illuminated manuscript, and noble orders, from which the jewels had been taken; but these the woman never touched. To unlock that box at all, was like opening a tomb; she was in haste to close it, and held her breath till the bolt was turned. Then she took up the shawl, and moving like a ghost toward that easy-chair, sat down with all its mingled colors gleaming in her lap. But she was cold and white, as if the thing she had taken were a shroud, and the place she had despoiled, a grave.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE BLUE SILK DRESS.

SHE came and bent over her husband as he was at work, stealing a white arm around his neck, and laying a cheek, all one flush of roses, close to his, as women will when a fit of over fondness is upon them, or when some object of doubtful result is to be attained.

"William, are you angry with me yet?"

"Angry? No; but very busy, Constance," was the rather brief reply, which seemed curt and strange after her caressing tones.

The young wife drew back a little, and a sense of rebuff sent a momentary pout to her lips.

"After all," she resumed, tightening her arm around his neck again, "after all, I haven't enjoyed it very much. The dancing is splendid; but what is the use of that when I cannot dress like other people, and look like other people when I am dressed?"

"I thought your dress pretty enough," Sterling answered, laying down his graver; for there was no use in attempting to work with that white hand so near his lips.

"Yes, just for once; but one cannot go on turning old silks forever, especially when there is but one to turn. Besides, William, I wish you could have seen the difference. Why, the other ladies swept along with the soft, low sound of a wave coming in when the sea is calm, their silks were so subtle and rich; but mine rattled like dead leaves every step I took. It almost made me cry to feel the difference, dear."

"I dare say that you were, in fact, prettier than any of them."

"Of course, I was; you may be sure the men thought so. One read that plain enough in their eyes."

"Constance!"

She started a little, for his tone was sharp with rebuke, but turned the subject with a mellow laugh, delightfully reassuring.

"How I do love to tease you, darling. Indeed, indeed, I did not look in the face of a single man in the class. Why should I, when that which is dearest and most beautiful to me in all the world was absent? But I could see those proud girls glance at each other and smile knowingly, as if I had no business to breathe the same air with them—the stuck-up things."

"The what, Constance?"

"Dear me, I am always putting my foot— There it is again. How tedious it all is."

"You see, my girl, that something more than a new dress is wanted before those proud girls you speak of will recognise you as an equal," said Sterling, with a gentle smile.

"But they shall—they shall! Oh! how I would like to ride over them and trample them down!"

A wild light came into her eyes; she clenched and unclenched her hand almost savagely.

Sterling looked at her, half amused, half wonderingly; a hot rose-color burned in her cheeks, and her red lips curved like a bent bow. She really looked as if it would give her pleasure to trample some one to the earth in making an upward path for her impetuous feet.

"But why do you wish it, Constance? These thoughts are unfit for a poor man's wife."

"A poor man's wife! But I shall not always be that."

"I hope not, dear; but there will be long waiting and much work before you can hope for anything else."

"Long waiting and much work," she repeated, impatiently. "I don't care for work; but waiting, that I will not undertake for—why, it would eat up half one's life."

"Still, Constance, the great secret of success is in knowing how to wait, and when to act."

"But I won't wait. Why should the youth of one poor girl be given up to impatient hopes, while others enjoy? I tell you, William, it is unfair."

"Have you no present? Is my love—the entire devotion of one true heart nothing?" questioned Sterling, speaking low, but with intense and most painful reproach in his voice. "Has it come to that between us so early, my wife?"

"Of course, I didn't mean that," she answered, and tears flashed up through the angry light in her eyes. "You are a dear good fellow, and I love you—oh! ever so much; but other people have lots of things besides love. Now don't they?"

"And, among other things, you want a new dress?"

"Yes, dear; and something else. Don't look cross now; but let me cover your eyes while I tell it."

She laid one of her pretty hands softly over his eyes, surprised his lips with a kiss, soft as the fall of a rose-leaf, and whispered hurriedly, "There is to be a grand ball, something wonderfully beautiful; and I want to see it so much."

"A ball—a public ball! Who on earth put that into your head, Constance?"

She pressed her hand closer to his eyes, though he attempted to shake it off, and stopped his speech with kisses warmer and more eager than the one by which she had prepared him for this audacious request.

"It isn't *very* public, you know; the tickets are so high that common people cannot get them."

"Then how are we to purchase them?" questioned the husband.

"Only this once; but I do want to see it awfully. Besides, I did not calculate on going with you. People might think that strange, not knowing the truth as we do, and—"

The girl was beginning to blush and stammer painfully, for by this time Sterling had forced her hand from his eyes, and was gazing, with a look of stern perplexity, into hers.

"What does all this mean, Constance?"

"Nothing, nothing at all, if you are going to be angry about it. Father has got a ticket, and would take me, if it were not for you. But you are cross as fire, and won't let me enjoy myself, even with my own father."

"Why, child, you did not even mention your father."

"But I do now."

"And he wishes you to go with him to this ball?"

"Yes, he does; and I can't tell him why it is impossible. Oh, dear! this having a husband and master in secret is a trial!"

"Yes, it must be a terrible trial, if you can feel it so."

"But I don't—only just a little now and then. Well, it is settled nicely about my going; but the dress—father will give me something toward it; but he hasn't the least idea how much a stunning silk will cost."

"Well, Constance, if you must go, I will work night and day before you shall want proper garments."

"Oh, you darling! you precious old boy! how I love you. What shall the color be—blue, cherry, amber, scarlet, with a long, long train sweeping back ever so far?"

Sterling smiled. The young creature's pleasure was so fresh and genuine that he could not help sharing it a little.

"I think it shall be blue."

"Light blue, then?"

"Yes; just the tint of the sky when you see a break in some storm-cloud."

"And scarlet flowers in my hair?"

"No; moss-roses of a delicate pink, or white if——"

"No, no. Let me have pink roses, if it is not to be scarlet—something a little stunning, you know; but you must

give me lots of money—father will never dream how much it costs."

"I will do my best, Constance."

"Hark! what is that? Some one by the door."

Constance ran to her seat, and fell to work with great vigor, calling out in a natural voice for the person who knocked, to come in.

The door opened gently, and Rhoda Weeks came in, with her basket, half emptied of its matches, on one arm, and a note in her disengaged hand.

"Here, Mr. Sterling, this is for you," she said, giving him the note. "I promised your mother—though I didn't know as she was your mother till now—promised to give it into your own hand, and here it is. She wants an answer right away."

Sterling took the note, which was in a very common envelope, but daintily sealed, with a crest stamped on a drop of pale green wax, and read it through without looking up; but his eyes grew troubled as they glanced from line to line; and at last he folded the note with slow hesitation, and cast an appealing look on Constance, who was regarding him with sidelong glances from beneath her drooping lashes as she pretended to work. She caught the look, and feeling that something was expected of her, arose and went close to her husband.

"What is it?" she said, in a low voice. "Any bad news?"

"It is from my mother," he said, gently.

"Oh! is that all?"

She spoke almost insolently; and the gesture with which she flung away from him would have been coarse in a less beautiful person.

Young Sterling loved his mother dearly, and this gesture stung him like a taunt upon the being he held most sacred. He turned suddenly upon his wife, pale to the lips, and answered her in a voice she was not likely soon to forget.

"No, it is not all. My mother is in great need of money, and I have none to send her, unless—"

"Well, unless what?"

"Unless you will release me from my promise, and give up the dress."

"Give up the dress? I, and the ball, too—for that goes with it. William Sterling, I would not do it to save her life."

The last vestige of blood left Sterling's face. She could see that his very hands were quivering with suppressed pain.

"But she needs this money. It is a matter almost of life and death with her."

Constance turned upon him angrily, but her eyes fell on Rhoda Weeks, and she curbed herself.

"Rhoda," she said, "you can go up stairs. Mr. Sterling will send the answer."

CHAPTER XXVII.

BETWEEN THE MOTHER AND THE WIFE.

RHODA went out; then Sterling advanced close to his wife.

"You were talking for effect; I did not remember that she was listening," he said, with a forced smile. "Of course, you will make this sacrifice for my mother?"

"And so give up the first bit of real pleasure that has ever come in my way? No, thank you, sir! Your mother is, doubtless, a nice old party—but what is that to me? I don't know her, and don't want to know her, especially if she's always going to be after you for money, coming between you and your lawful wife."

"But she does not know that you are my wife!" said Sterling, in a voice so deep and still that it almost frightened her.

"I know it, and you know it. What has she, or any one else but me in the wide world to do with your money?"

"Constance, you are trying me too far."

"And you are trying me too far."

"You force me, then, to refuse my mother's request."

"If she wants the money you have just promised to me? Yes. What right has any mother to be hunting down her married son for money?"

The young man took his hat and walked out of the house. Constance watched him askance with sharp anxiety at her heart; but the stern pallor of his face forbade her following him; and after a vain attempt to resume her work, she left it altogether.

On entering the parlor, she was surprised to find Mr. Church seated in the easiest chair to be found in the room, solacing his solitude with a segar, so nearly consumed that the waves of his steel-gray beard emitted smoke like smouldering brushwood. He started up when Constance appeared, and flung the end of his segar into the grate.

"Ha! my queen of roses, is it you at last? I have been waiting with the patience of twenty saints for this advent. Sit down and tell me at least, that my coming gives you a little pleasure."

"Pleasure? Indeed, it does, for I have had scarcely anything but torment since you left us that evening."

"Torment! Who dares torment an angel? But I will not ask. If torment makes you so beautiful, you should ask nothing better during the rest of your life."

"You—you think I have improved, then?" she said, uplifted by his broad flattery, as only a coarser nature could be.

"Improved? Why, child, you are perfect. My friend,

your father has acted on my hint, I see. Society has given you an air—something queenly; nothing like plenty of money to bring out the richness of female beauty. My dear child, have you any idea how captivating you really are? Why, you might marry a prince."

"Marry? I? Oh! no, no!"

Constance faltered and flushed guiltily as she spoke. The very name of marriage made her heart shrink; for she knew how impossible it was, even if the prince should come.

Church surveyed her from head to foot with a glance that kept the hot blood in her face; for, with a natural revolt she was made half angry, by his cool assumption.

"Marry! Why, girl, I am almost tempted—"

Constance broke into a light, mocking laugh.

"Tempted to overwhelm me with another dose of flattery—but I have become a little used to it since you were here, let me tell you that."

"I dare say—I dare say. But where is your father?"

"Gone out. I have not seen him since morning."

"So much the better—it will give us time for a little quiet chat."

"But some one else may come in."

"What, the handsome young fellow who was so bitter and so sweet the other night? Does he come so frequently, then?"

"He has just gone away."

"And you are grieving about it, that is what made your eyelashes so wet, ha? Never mind, he will come back again—such fellows always do."

"I almost wish he never would," said the girl, with a saucy lift of her head.

"Indeed?"

"Yes, indeed!"

"I'm sure I wish so from the bottom of my heart."

"Why, the young man is nothing to you?"

"But you are a great deal to me!"

The man spoke in a low voice, and very seriously. His face, full of thought and feeling, was bent toward her; his eyes met hers with a sort of evil fascination. She had a great deal of pure womanliness left in her yet, and felt how like a serpent he was, but fluttered nearer to him all the while.

"I—I don't understand, sir. How can I be anything to you? We have never seen each other but once."

"You mistake—I have seen you a good many times."

"Where, and how?" Constance asked, breathlessly.

"No matter about that. I have seen you often enough to love you dearly."

"Me, sir? You—you forget," Constance spoke proudly, remembering whose wife she was.

"Forget what? that you fancied yourself half in love with that young fellow? Nonsense! It isn't in him to win the heart of a woman like you."

"Sir, you go too far. What if I told you that I——"

"Love him already. Oh! I understand all that. But when you once know what love is, this fancy will make you laugh, as I do."

"It will not be a pleasant laugh, then, let me tell you that," she said, saucily.

"Witty, too! Did I not say how much you had improved? Why, girl, in a little while you will be distracting."

"If you go on at this rate, I shall certainly be distracted."

"Not altogether bad; but never make an effort to be witty."

"I shall never make an effort to be anything when you are by."

Constance was angry now, and became worse than savage, she was both rude and coarse; but I think this bad

man liked her the better for it. His intellect appreciated refinement, but his moral nature had sunk far below that years ago.

"Come, come, what are you and I about? Wasting all this precious time like two children. Let me hear a little of what you have been doing. How do the arts prosper?"

"There, now, I can talk with you without getting angry," she said, opening a closet. "Come and look for yourself."

Church took some proofs from her hand eagerly, and began to examine them. He did not speak, but his eyes kindled, and a slow, satisfied smile crept over his mouth.

"And you did this?" he said, at last.

"Every line of it!"

"And this young man—did he——"

"No, no; I never told him a word about it—my father forbade me talking about anything you said or did."

"Your father was wise, and you are a genius—that one thing richer and higher than beauty, let me tell you. I hope your father has not forgotten to give you a full share of the money I left with him."

Constance gave her shoulders a sudden lift, and a flood of angry crimson swept over her face.

"Did you tell him that a part of it was for me to use as I pleased?"

"Did I tell him? Of course, I did. If it had not been for you he never would have got a dollar of it."

"For me? Why?"

"Because—because. Well, I will let you know some day; but if the old fellow has not dealt generously with you, we must set it right between ourselves."

"But why? What claim——"

"Oh! it is an affair between me and your father. You have only to take the money and make yourself more beautiful with it."

He handed her a roll of bank-notes, fresh and green, like those he had given her father on the first evening she had met him. There was something in her acceptance of this money which brought a glow of shame into her face, and she was half angry with the man for daring to give it to her. Still her hand clenched the notes tightly, and an eager smile parted her lips, till the white teeth beneath them gleamed to the sight.

"If you owe this to my father, I suppose it is right," she said, deliberately cheating herself.

Church laughed, and thrust the porte-monnaie, from which he had taken the bills, deep into his pocket.

"Between us, you see, perhaps the less said to the old gentleman about this the better," he suggested.

"Not tell him? Why?"

"Because he might want to have the spending of it."

"Ah, indeed!"

Constance thrust the roll of notes into her bosom; and fastened her little double-breasted jacket of scarlet cloth tightly over it, with an emphatic twist of the fingers around each button.

Church nodded his head approvingly, and muttered, "You'll do—you'll do!" at which Constance laughed off her natural confusion, and acted as if she had received a compliment.

"Now, tell me, have you been studying hard, improving yourself, since I saw you?" questioned Church, seating himself by Constance on the shabby little sofa.

"Do I seem improved?"

"Marvelously! But the dancing, the music—has your father kept his word with me?"

"Can't you judge for yourself?"

"I see that he has done his duty so far; but how are we to bring these accomplishments into play, pretty Constance?"

"Oh! I am going to the great ball—a masquerade, I think they call it."

"Going to a masquerade-ball? When?"

"Next week. He has consented."

"Ha!"

Her face was scarlet again, and her eyes fell under his keen glance.

"My father, I mean!" she faltered.

"Indeed!"

The word was uttered like a sneer, and that brought her courage back—for the girl was recklessly brave, even to audacity.

"Yes, my father has promised. He is going with me!"

"Perhaps he will give me that pleasure if I press the matter?" said Church, with a strange smile. "He is usually very obliging."

"But I——"

"Oh! a good girl allows her father to direct; and you are charmingly good, Miss Constance."

"But he—I mean people—might think it strange."

"How are they to know? The disguise of a masquerade is generally sufficient."

"But he—my father, never will let me go without him; besides, I should be afraid."

"Not of me, I hope, your father's old friend?"

Church took her hand as he spoke, and held it with a firm, gentle pressure, which had something of quiet control in it.

"But we will arrange all that hereafter, for here comes your father."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

FALSE AND FAIR.

CONSTANCE started up in sudden affright, opened the door into the hall, and looked down the stair-case, where she saw, not her father, but the husband she had offended, mounting slowly toward the room where they usually worked together. His head was bent forward, and he looked dejected.

Constance stepped into the parlor, asked the man on the sofa to excuse her, and, as she spoke, stepped into the hall, closing the door.

"Oh! is it you, Constance?" said Sterling, wearily, as the fair young creature stood in his way, half frightened, half smiling. "So eager, too; never fear, you shall have the money. I have almost broken my mother's heart in refusing it to her; but you shall have the dress."

Constance threw both arms around his neck, and laughed lightly through the tears that sprang to her eyes at the sight of his depression.

"Never mind it, dear! Give the money to your mother, I will do without it."

"And stay at home from the ball? Will you do that for me, Constance?"

"Oh! that is asking too much; but father must give me money, or I will wear that old silk that rattles like dead grass, and be content, so that you look happy again."

"Will you, and willingly? Oh, Constance! how unjust I have been! What elements of nobility lie under all this childishness. You make me ashamed of my anger."

Sterling took her in his arms in a passion of tender remorse, and begged her to forgive him over and over again. Now Constance had the elements of a great actress in her composition, and accepted the situation as if her generosity

had been real; though she felt the notes rustle in her bosom close to his beating heart, and knew how false were all her claims to his gratitude—this idea of her self-sacrifice was not the less real to her. She blushed under it, and offered her mouth to his kisses, half bashfully, as if shrinking from too much display of her own goodness, exactly as an actress in the part might have done.

"And you have done all this for me?" whispered the young husband, gratefully.

"Who else could I do it for? Your mother, I have never seen her—not lady enough for that as yet, I suppose. But never mind, the time will come."

"Yes, child, the time will come when she will love you dearly, and know your worth as I do."

"Oh! I can wait!"

The girl could not resist that little toss of the head when Sterling's mother was spoken of; for, without knowing the poor lady, she had been mortified and angered by the young man's reluctance to make that mother the confidant of his marriage. It was a personal slight which she brooded over more than he thought possible.

"It shall not be for long," said Sterling, giving her a farewell kiss. "I am so proud of you, Constance, and love you so dearly, that we must soon become a united family. Let my poor mother get over her present troubles a little, and she shall know all."

Sterling took up his hat as if preparing to go out.

"What, are you leaving me so soon?" said Constance, with well simulated surprise.

"Yes, I must carry this good news to my mother. Her husband is going out West, and has no means, except such as I can give her, to defray the expenses of his journey. She was in great distress about it, for it seems that Holt has a fair prospect, if he can only get to some land he owns out yonder."

"And will she go with him?"

"Not yet—it is impossible. All the money I can raise will not do more than take him out to his land. She must remain behind."

"Poor lady, I pity her so much! You must go at once."

The voice and manner of this young woman was so kind, that no one could have blamed Sterling for coming back to smooth her rich hair with his hands, and whisper grateful blessings over her before he went to his mother.

Constance stood in the door and watched her husband, with what seemed the most loving interest, till he went down stairs. When he was out of sight, she went back to the parlor, and found Church waiting for her patiently, as if he had been an inmate of the family from her birth up. But just as she was about to renew her conversation with him, her father's step sounded distinctly on the stairs, and she withdrew into the working-chamber again, reluctant to meet him with that secret pressing against her bosom. But she had established a confidence, and shared a secret with that man, which might well have made her tremble, had fear been a passion known to her audacious nature.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE STARTLING PROPOSAL.

MR. HUDSON and Church met with some cordiality on the surface; but there was distrust, and many an element of discord between the two, which both were glad to suppress, for each feared the other. There was a great deal of talk in low voices, and occasionally a sharp, angry word leaped out of the monotony of sound, as if poisoned arrows were passing to and fro. At last these words knit themselves

into sentences, and broke out in force always in expostulation by Hudson, but the threats came hard and keen from Church, as if he were conscious of some power over the other man, which he did not wish to urge in force just then; but was compelled to use sparingly, as a good horseman admonishes a restive horse with the curb and spur.

"I tell you, sir, this is no idle fancy. I love the girl like an idiot, like a fool, if you please, but I love her all the same—and where could you find a better match? I am rich, five times as rich as you know of; stand high among those trusted by men in power; and am not so very old, if you count by feelings—younger than you are, at any rate. What more can you ask for this splendid creature, or can she ask for herself? Love! Why, Hudson, have you known me so long, and doubt that I can make any woman love me, especially a bold, talented, ambitious creature like that. She has a spice of the evil one in her nature, and would pine herself to death with a good man, I tell you. Give her to me! Give her to me, Hudson! I will place her in a position that you never dreamed of for a child of yours!"

"But I fear, I almost know, that she loves this young man!" said Hudson, timidly. "It is a pity, but the attachment was formed long before this idea of yours was thought of. At the time it was a good match for the girl."

"A good match? Why, man, she is the mate of an emperor. Let me but have control of her a year, and she may look down the highest and most beautiful woman in America. Give her to me, and I will make her envied among women, and you rich among men."

"And if I do, always supposing it possible, will that change or break up our past relations?"

"No; my marriage with the girl will consolidate our interests. As for your child, she will have everything the proudest woman in America can desire. I tell you, few men even in this Empire city can match gold with me."

"Then why run more risk?"

"Because I like the excitement, and the greed of gold is strong in me almost as love. Because the father of my wife must be rich, and stand high among men; my ambition demands it—her beauty demands it. After that, poverty shall be an unknown word to her."

Hudson looked up with keen wistfulness, searching the tempter's face with his eyes as a serpent regards his enemy.

"And you seriously mean all this?"

"Seriously. Do you consent?"

"And if I say no?"

"You will not; but even then I should marry her."

"Why ask consent, then, of a man you are so ready to defy?"

"Hudson, I want no quarrels. Personally I like you. As her father, I wish your advancement, which goes hand-in-hand with my own. Without me you can do nothing; against me comes certain ruin. Neither your safety nor your girl's ambition can be accomplished except through me. Is it a bargain then?"

"Have you spoken to Constance?"

"No."

"And you will not till I have talked with her?"

"Of course not. I am no boy to spoil my chances by too much haste. Talk to her as much as you please; but remember this—the girl is mine, or you——"

Hudson threw out both his hands, thus checking the words he dreaded upon those cruel lips.

"I will do my best to act for her good," he said.

"Then the whole affair is settled."

Church took his hat, lighted another cigar, and sauntered down the stairs, humming softly to himself, as a cat purrs when satisfied with the warm hearth it sleeps on.

Hudson sat down in the solitary room, and, holding his head between both hands, fell into a train of dreary

thought. However bad this man might have been, he loved his daughter, and shrunk from giving her to a person whom he knew to be cruel and depraved. But even this pure outgush of manly nature was strangled by the thought that one great sin had placed him in the power of this most ruthless being. Had Church asked a greater sacrifice than that of his daughter Constance, in marriage, the unhappy father felt that he would not have dared to resist it.

Hudson made a faint struggle in favor of a hope which had dawned in his heart regarding his daughter and young Sterling, for all the better portion of his nature rose up in revolt against plunging his child into the dark path which he found so full of thorns, so difficult to extricate himself from. But Hudson knew that such thoughts were hopeless now; and felt in all its bitterness, that no chains ever forged from strength and fire, were so strong as those which crime links about a human heart. The day had been when he considered Sterling as a means of salvation for his child.

A gentleman in education and habit, a man of genius, too, he was so far above the girl, and so likely to draw her to his own level, that a really pure ambition had turned the father's hopes that way. But it was all over now. The power of this strong, bad man was upon him and upon her. Turn as he would, there was no way by which the unhappy father could escape from this stern fact. He sat a long time in the room as Church had left him, with both hands locked and falling heavily between the knees on which his elbows rested, his face bowed down, and bitter tears, each drop wrung from struggling memories, filling his eyes as rain breaks through a dusky night. There was no hope in the man's face; no hope in his heart. Even this young girl, his own child, could not be rescued from the miserable destiny that pursued him. In giving her to Church, he

was certain that perdition lay at the end of all the brilliant prospects held out to him, for he knew the man.

"Not yet," he said, starting up desperately and pacing the floor to and fro. "He may change his mind; I will not speak yet. Oh, if I had the power to break away from him! My God! my God! help me to save her, for in myself I am helpless."

Hudson took his hat and went out, hurrying down the stairs in haste, as if some task-master were behind him.

CHAPTER XXX.

CONSTANCE COUNTS HER MONEY.

CONSTANCE had shut herself up in the little bed-room, which was all the means of privacy she possessed. When the door was locked and bolted, she crushed some paper into the keyhole, and, still with a feeling of unsafety, sat down on the bed, with one hand under her scarlet jacket, afraid to draw out the roll of money it clasped, lest some chink or crevice might still make observation possible. But all was still, and after a moment of breathless hesitation, she drew the roll forth and opened it, with a quick gasp of astonishment. The first bill she saw was one for fifty dollars, and her hand clenched ten of the same denomination.

"Five hundred dollars! Mercy, how rich he must be!"

With this exclamation she dropped the money into her lap, and gazed down upon it, shaken with fear and eager with delight.

"All for me—all for me! I was not to tell father, and I won't. He would take it himself and use it. I never saw

a cent of the last. I don't believe he used it to pay for my dancing lessons even."

She folded up the money, after counting it over again and again, each time with a keener sense of possession. Then she replaced it in her bosom, and folding both arms over it, seemed to be embracing herself in a spirit of intense congratulation.

"Five hundred dollars! Five hundred dollars! How can I spend it? How shall I dare to spend it? They will both be watching me. Father might be cheated into thinking anything I wished about dry goods, but William understands himself too well. I cannot wear a thread that he will not notice, and guess the price. Oh! if he would but let me alone. That's him coming in now. It can't be father, for I just heard him going out. Well, I have got to face him again, and may as well do it at once. But with five hundred dollars in my bosom; it seems like witchcraft. I wonder what he would say——"

"Constance! Constance!"

"Yes, William! I just came in here to wash my hands. How good you were to come back so soon."

"I was in haste to thank you again, Constance. My mother is so pleased; she wanted money so much to help Holt reach the West with. I am glad he is going, and never spent money more willingly; but she is broken-hearted at parting with him. It is painful to see any woman love a worthless man so devotedly."

"Why does she stay behind?" asked Constance, assuming deep interest in the subject. "If she loves him so much, a new country ought not to frighten her."

"But she is an old woman."

"What, then, if she loves her husband?"

Sterling's eyes brightened, a sudden flush came over his face, illuminating it with wonderful beauty.

"What, if I went there—would you go with me?" he

asked, laying a hand caressingly on each of her shoulders, and reading her face with his hopeful eyes.

"I—I? Yes, of course, when people know that I am your wife," she answered, coloring angrily at the trap she seemed to have laid for herself; "that is, if father would let me."

The young man's countenance fell.

"I see you would not like it," he said.

"How can one say that? I don't know what the West is."

"Well, well, child, we are not likely to try it for many a day, I fear; but sometimes I have my dreams of a pretty home on some prairie, with a yoke of oxen, a couple of cows, and the brightest woman in all the world cooking venison for my supper."

"That means me," said Constance, with a forced laugh.

"Well, go on."

"And my mother sitting at the window."

"Oh! your mother—always your mother."

"Of course. She is one of the great objects in my home-pictures, God bless her!"

"And how much would this home cost, William?"

"Very little. The price of a velvet cloak would almost build a comfortable log-house."

Constance thought of the five hundred dollars in her bosom, and wondered if that would be enough. For a moment, she was rather taken with this idea of a home on the prairie, and asked a good many questions about it; more, in fact, to keep up a conversation at variance with her thoughts that she wished to conceal, than from any settled interest in the matter.

Sterling seized upon the idea, and began to work it out in his mind with downright earnestness. With him it was the solution of a question that had troubled him for months. It would take Constance from the city, remove her from all

those influences that made her advancement so uncertain, and in the pure air and broad liberty of a new life, bring out all that was truly good and beautiful in her character. Then, indeed, he could present her to his mother and claim her before the whole world. Now his artist-life was a drudgery, his hopes of advancement so limited, that each day made his marriage seem a rash and almost wicked step. Besides all this, he began to see that wedlock had not increased his influence, which at one time had been supreme with Constance. On the contrary, it seemed to have aroused hopes and a species of ambition which startled him. Still she was very beautiful, and sometimes passionately loving, with wonderful capabilities of improvement, if the right influences could only be brought to bear upon her.

Besides all this, Constance had been generous and self-sacrificing in a frank, cordial way regarding his mother, which inspired him with fresh confidence. Yes, that life in the prairie would be a paradise, in which the fine, fresh capacities of that young creature might expand into the perfections of womanhood.

This idea brightened on the young man like an inspiration. But the five hundred dollars that lay close to the heart of his wife, built up a wall between his aspirations and hers. While he thought of a pure, bright home in the West, Constance was planning within herself how she could spend her money undiscovered. She grew impatient at last, said she was tired, had a headache, and besides, wanted some things for the house. There was no use in trying to work with that pain in her temples. She must have fresh air.

Sterling offered to go out with her, but she put him off, having so many places to call at, which would tire him to death. So Constance went out alone, and, for the first time in her life, tasted the pleasure of shopping with plenty of money in her pocket. One advantage she had undoubtedly

received from Sterling's companionship, which stood her in great stead now. Her quick intellect had seized upon his artistic taste, and, if a little brilliant in her choice of colors, she was saved from all possibility of a vulgar selection.

Constance went out alone; but on her way home she met Church. The whole thing seemed accidental—but few chance events ever fell into that man's life. He had foreseen that she would be in haste to spend her money, and so lay in wait for her, trusting to his own personal influence much more certainly than to her father's reluctant promises.

Did this man love the woman he was snaring with generous gifts and subtle flattery? I cannot answer. At the bottom even of a depraved heart there may be some pure outgush of feeling, which to us would seem impossible, just as water from a crystalline spring may run through a tangle of poisonous plants, and keep the bright sweetness with which it left the living rock; but it must be a keen searcher of human motives who can decide that the feelings of a man are untainted when his actions are evil continually.

For my part, I doubt if Church would ever have thought of this young creature if she had not been necessary to his grasping avarice; and if it had not been his invariable policy to hold all his instruments under some sort of personal control. On the other hand, her beauty, and a certain free grace of manner, which sometimes shocked Sterling, had a strong fascination for the man of hard, coarse fibre, to whom genuine refinement must have been a reproach. At any rate, Church met Constance in her walk home, and it was dark before she hurried up the stairs, afraid to meet her father while so many exciting thoughts were unfitting her for his scrutiny.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE PLACE OF REST.

CONSTANCE need not have been anxious—Hudson was from home. Seized with a sudden panic of remorse, he had wandered in the streets, and when tired out with walking, stopped in a remote street, not altogether unlike his own neighborhood, and entered a little two-story house, with which he seemed to be familiar, for he mounted the frail stairs at once, and knocked at the door of an upper room as if quite at home there.

A cry of surprise or delight reached him through the ill-fitting door. Directly it was opened, and a young girl stood on the threshold holding some needle-work in one hand, while she extended the other with a gesture of welcome, which might have warmed the heart of any man.

"Are you glad to see me, Constance?" he said, in a voice so sweet and gentle, that you would not have recognized him as the same man who had just parted from Church."

"When did you come here that I was not glad?" answered the girl, with a slow, sweet smile, full of tenderness. "Dear, dear uncle, what happiness can I know like that of having you with me?"

Hudson stooped down and kissed her with a tenderness his own child had never experienced. Then she made haste to welcome him. Her Boston rocking-chair, with a cushion in it made from pieces of gay silk, was drawn toward him; a single rose, that stood in an old-fashioned wine-glass on the table, was drawn into sight; two or three books were re-arranged, and then the girl sat down with a deep-drawn sigh, so full of delight, that Hudson recognised it with another sigh, so deep and painful, that hers ended in a faint sob.

"What is it that troubles you, uncle?" she said, moving a low stool close to his feet, and sitting down upon it as a little child might have done. "If it is anything I have done——"

"My poor child! Anything you have done? You who give me nothing but happiness, however badly I may deserve it. No, no! It is because I have made my own sorrows that they are so hard to endure."

"If I could only bear them for you. Indeed, indeed, I would, dear uncle!"

"I know it—I know it, poor child; but as we sow so shall we reap; and I have made a thorny harvest for myself. There, there, turn your eyes away, nothing very terrible has happened. Now tell me, child, how you get along?"

"Oh, nicely! Since you paid up the rent, and got in my stock of coal, there has been no room for trouble."

"But are you not lonesome, Constance?"

"Not much—one hasn't time for that. There is lots of company in hard work."

"I think you are cheating now," said Hudson, observing that a mist of tears stole over her eyes in spite of the smile she wore. "This must be a lonely life."

"Not if you could be here a little oftener."

"It may chance—it may happen that I can be with you altogether."

The girl sprung up with a burst of joy, and flung her arms about his neck.

"Oh, uncle."

"Will it make you happy, child?"

"Happy? Ah! so happy!"

"Well, child, God may so arrange it for us."

"I will pray for it every night of my life, and so must you, dear uncle."

"I—I pray? Sometimes in outer darkness it seems so

impossible that God should listen to me; but you—child—the prayers of children, you know, are most powerful.”

“How good you are!”

“Am I? Well, you must always be good. It is my great comfort that no evil has reached you.”

“How could it? She took such sweet care of me always; and now that I am left alone—that is, almost alone—she seems to be more with me than ever.”

Hudson shook his head, and bending his eyes sadly upon her, murmured something about wishing that he could think so; and the girl saw that his eyes filled with a gloomy moisture.”

“You might think so, if you could understand how safe and protected I feel,” she said, pressing his hand to her cheek and lips. “Sometimes I almost hear her voice again as she prayed for you.”

Hudson started and shrunk together in his chair, as if some one had struck him a sudden blow.

“You did not tell me of this,” he said.

“Didn’t I? Well, I suppose it was because you had more trouble than you could bear, when you came here and found the room so empty. But I do not think you ever knew how much she loved you.”

Hudson covered his face with his hands. His shoulders began to heave; and then he fell into a shaking fit, which frightened the girl till she entreated him to be still, and made a tender effort to soothe him.

“Don’t, don’t! It would make her feel so badly if she knew it. For her sake, try and bear up. I was so wrong to say a word about it.”

“No,” answered the man, conquering himself and speaking with infinite tenderness. “I am glad to know; if only—only—she had lived till I came.”

“I understand, I understand, and never will again. There, you are almost smiling. Shall I get you a nice cup

of tea, and anything you like best? Does that mean yes? Oh! how pleasant it is!”

She started up and would have filled the little tin tea-kettle, but Hudson stopped her, declaring that he could not drink a mouthful of anything, and must go in a few minutes, he had so many things to attend to.

“Are you going down yonder, uncle?” said the girl, taking her little bonnet from a nail on which it hung. “Of course you will want me, so many people are sick just now.”

“No, dear, you must not run such risks again; contagious diseases are creeping into the families you have been to see.”

“But some one must take care of them, uncle?”

“Yes, but it must not be my sister’s child. Sit down at my feet again, or rather you may get a cup of tea ready. It will make me stronger for my work.”

The girl untied her bonnet, and disappeared with a little tea-kettle in her hand, leaving Hudson for a time alone.

How sad and humble his face looked as he drew his chair up to the work-stand on which his niece had laid the garment she was toiling over when his step disturbed her. A large old bible lay on the stand. He opened it reverently at the leaves which had been filled in with a family record. There was the marriage of his father, John Hudson to Constance Barret, in a hand writing clear and firm as copper-plate printing, but old fashioned and faded in the ink, for his father had written it many years before that gloomy evening. Then came the birth of two children, a son and a daughter, himself and a lovely woman whose death he mourned even yet, with the tender bitterness of self reproachful love.

Another record. The marriage of this sister, and the birth of a child, named like herself, Constance, thus making three generations of the name, which in every case had brought wonderful beauty and womanly goodness with it.

Hudson closed the book with a sigh. There was no register of his marriage there, no mention of his child, and he was glad of it. The woman he had married, possessed no right to mingle even her name with the pure and gentle beings who had left an honorable record there. She was dead now, but all the evil that had fallen upon his life, had been trailed through it by her misdeeds and her fatal influence over himself.

A daughter had been born to him on the very year that gave the girl who had just left him to his sister. He remembered the mingled joy and bitterness of that hour, the almost holy reverence with which he had given his mother's name to the child, as if that could purify the evil nature which she must inherit from a parent at once beautiful, crafty, and wicked at heart.

A mournful smile crept over the lips of that poor man when he thought of the strange sympathy that had induced himself and his sister to give their children the name of their own mother almost simultaneously, each ignorant that the other had become a parent at all.

How differently those children had grown up in the world, strangers to each other, and so utterly unlike in character. But Hudson would have shrunk painfully from bringing them together, had not the solemn request made by his sister, in writing before she died, prohibited all intimacy between her child and the daughter of a woman who had broken up the life of her only brother.

It was a hard condition to make with him, a man whose child was very dear to him, but Hudson held this dying wish of his sister as a sacred command. Years after, when the father of his niece died insolvent, and she was cast upon the world, this man, harassed and broken down as he was, took charge of her and spared enough out of his own slender means to keep her in tolerable comfort.

This one good act gave a sort of haven of rest to the

unhappy man, for his own child held little sympathy with him as we have seen,—here nature herself seemed to join with fate in persecuting him. From the Hudsons she inherited all her great personal beauty, but the selfish, ambitious, reckless soul was that of the woman whose death had been to father and child a mercy and a relief.

Never, perhaps, had two persons more closely resembled each other than these cousins, who had never met. The same rare beauty of form and color, the same graceful movement, the voice sweet and caressing in its general tones, belonged to them alike. The expression, however, was utterly different. Through one face looked the soul of a high-toned, truthful, and highly poetic woman, full of tenderness, and courageous goodness. There is little need of describing the other. Character gives expression; hers changed, sparkled, grew sullen and stormy, as events brought forth its reckless qualities.

"Ah, I see what makes you so sad, uncle; I will not have the bible out if you are always searching that page. What, tears in your eyes. I thought you were always to be happy here. See, I have brought out my mother's china cup, which belonged to your mother once, and *such* tea. There there! isn't this snug?"

Constance Ellery cleared her workstand, covered it with a snow white napkin, and set the cup of delicate old-fashioned china before her uncle, while she filled a less costly one for herself.

"Now," she said, "you must forget everything else, and tell me about these poor people. O, uncle, when I think of the good you are doing among them, my own life seems so worthless. It is only when you take me with you, that I feel of any use in the world."

"Then you shall go with me to-night, child. Heaven forbid that I should deprive my sister's child of the happiness of helping her fellow-creatures."

"That is like my own dear uncle," said the girl, smiling upon her visitor as he drained the china cup she had given him. "I think our patients like it best when we come together."

"It would be strange if they did not," said Hudson, looking tenderly on the lovely face which was now all aglow with animation. "The very sight of your face, dear, seems to light up their miserable dens, and the sound of your voice is as sweet as a prayer to them."

"Then I will not forget to thank God for my face and the voice that gives them comfort. Now I am ready, uncle."

Constance Hudson had never felt half the pleasure in departing for her dancing classes, that this other Constance experienced while preparing to go forth on an errand of mercy into such haunts of poverty as an ordinary woman would have shrunk from.

With a cheap shawl covering her dress, and a thick veil thrown over her mite of a bonnet, the girl stood ready for one of the grandest errands that a brave, kind heart can undertake,—that of carrying counsel to the vicious, and help to the poor.

CHAPTER XXXII.

NIGHT WATCHES.

MRS. HOLT had been left alone for several weeks. Solitary, almost penniless, and weary of her very life, she pined away in that dull boarding-house, thinking of the past till her heart sickened beneath its memories, and turned like a weary animal for some place of rest. She had given the last dollar of young Sterling's money to her husband, who went

with it at once to the West, little heeding what became of her. Indeed, such was his faith in the talent and resources of his wife, that he rather depended on them in his own need, than thought of providing for her. The man, in his selfishness, forgot that most frequently a woman is sensitive to the same degree that she is talented; and the power to accomplish anything is often enforced at the sacrifice of pride, delicacy, and all the womanliness that often underlies great tact and energy. Still the man who could comprehend all this would put such traits of character to the test in extreme cases only. Holt could only understand the result, and had no mercy upon this poor woman. Thus he left her, penniless and alone, to battle for herself; never doubting that she would, to use his own words at parting, "Get along some way."

Poor, proud, unhappy woman! She smiled at this, kissed him with a cold return, and tried her best to think it a compliment. Thus he went away, leaving tears among the fine wrinkles on her cheek, and the saddest heart that ever beat in a woman's bosom. The dead existence which he had left to her became in a short time monotonous, and heavy as lead. For a week or two Mrs. Wheeler gave her rest from absolute dunning; then came hints, complaints of dull times, and touching accounts of a hard-hearted landlord; all of which the distressed lady understood, and shrank from, as proud women do shrink from humiliation of this kind.

Mrs. Holt loved her husband with that intense concentration of affection, which sometimes makes the love of advanced age more absorbing than the first passion of youth can ever be. When ambition, pleasure, all gay distractions fall away from the life of a woman, love remains firmer and deeper-rooted in the heart than ever. That is the one passion and grain of earthliness which her soul carries away, purified by death, into the eternal heavens, where all is love.

Thus it was that Mrs. Holt worshipped her selfish husband; the strongest and deepest passion of her lifetime came in its autumn, after all other sources of happiness had turned to ashes around her feet. In the arrogant ambition of her youth, love had been one of its passions. Now it was everything; and the man she loved had left her, sometimes she thought it might be purposely and forever.

When this idea first stung the woman, it was in the night, when pain becomes sharp as steel, and thought concentrates terribly in the mind. Was it possible? Had he, wearied by her unhappiness, sought a new existence where he could live apart from her? Was this a silent abandonment? She started up in her bed and wrung both hands in the darkness, as this question went through and through her heart like the point of a dagger. Was she so old as that? Had all her talent, and the fascinations that had once worked such marvels in society, shrunk into such weakness that they could not hold one man to his sworn faith?

The bed on which she sat moaning became unendurable. She left it, and paced up and down the floor, moving to and fro in the darkness, making it blacker by her movements, for there was no light by which the shimmer of her garments could be seen. Her footsteps were noiseless, for those bare feet made no sound on the old carpet; and you could only have told where she was by the low moans of pain that broke from her lips.

Sometimes she stood motionless in the black shadows, straining her hands together with a hard clasp of agony, and then her moans broke into speech, and the cry was,

"He has left me! He has left me!"

The daylight found her still wandering up and down that chamber, her small feet blue with cold, and her whole frame shivering. When the room was full of light, she crept into bed, cold, exhausted and crying like a child. In the night

she had not cried; but hope came with the morning—and tears are often more akin to hope than despair. After the tears came sleep and dreams, that made her face look gray on its pillow.

Days went by; no letter came from Holt; and those fears, born of the night, haunted her in every hour of the twenty-four till suspense became torture, and she resolved to follow her husband. But how? Where was the money coming from? Sterling had told her with what effort he had spared the last to her urgent solicitation, and she saw that, for some reason, he had no power to aid her farther. Still she must have money.

Once more the India shawl was taken from that tattered old trunk, not lingeringly as before, but in quick haste. There was no hesitation now. It had been the gift of an Eastern satrap to her father when, in the first bloom of her girlhood, she had accompanied him to the Orient to settle some treaty, and for that reason she had clung to it, hid it away, and refused it even to the clamors of poverty, fiercely as it had hunted her down.

There was no lingering over the costly fabric now. In her intense desire to be gone, it was of no more value than a handful of shavings, only as it might bring her the means by which she could join her husband.

As Mrs. Holt went down stairs, Mrs. Wheeler was standing in the door of her parlor. A look of deep injury came to her face when she saw that her lodger was wearing a rich shawl that she had never seen before, and she gave her head a little indignant toss, as if she intended to commence an attack. But the lady glided by her, with a gentle bow of the head, and went out; after which Mrs. Wheeler withdrew into her parlor, muttering her discontent that ladies who could afford to wear things like that Ingy shawl—she knew that it was Ingy by its mixed up colors, and because it looked so every which way—didn't even try to pay their bills.

After dusk that night, Mrs. Holt came back without the shawl, and shivering a little from the cold; but she let herself in and asked for a cup of tea in her room, so that Mrs. Wheeler was quite unconscious that the India shawl never came back again.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE INDIA SHAWL.

THERE was one person, however, who was so deeply interested in the shawl, that she did not sleep all night. This person was little Rhoda Weeks. That afternoon she had reached home after a hard day's work, and was preparing tea for her father and little brother, who had gone out on the promised tramp into the country, when a low knock brought her to the door. There stood Mrs. Holt, with anxiety in her face, hesitating and panting for breath, for the effort of mounting so many stairs had been too much for her strength, active as she still was.

"Oh, ma'am! Oh, lady! I—I am so glad to see you! Please walk in and sit down. I'm so sorry father is away, and Luke, too. It would be nuts and apples for them to see you here."

The active little thing dusted a chair, which was neat enough to require no such service, and placed it near the window.

Mrs. Holt looked around the nice little room with a faint smile on her lips. Spite of the anxiety which had brought her there, she could not but recognize, with a sensation of pleasure, the exquisite neatness which surrounded her. The table had not yet been drawn from the wall, and Rhoda, on a kneading-board, white as wood is ever scoured,

had been moulding a little mound of dough into tea-biscuits. There was flour on her hands when she lifted them in surprise at the coming of her visitor, and a ridge of whiteness across the linen apron that almost covered her tiny person. But she began to rub the flour from her hands, and untie her apron the moment her guest was seated, and was preparing herself to sit in prim hospitality during the remainder of Mrs. Holt's visit, but that lady bade her go on with her work and not heed her in the least. Rhoda hesitated a moment, rolled up her sleeves again, revealing two plump baby arms to the shoulder, and plunged into her work with fresh vigor.

"Isn't it pleasant sitting there at the window, with the sky so close, ma'am?" she said, cutting off a fragment of dough, and rolling it into a dainty ball between her small hands. "That is Luke's seat; the sunset is just coming on, and you'll see how grand it is, red,—and blue, and green."

Here Rhoda stopped talking long enough to put her biscuit on a row with half a dozen others, that rounded up from a tin pan on the table, and patted it down, with her head on one side, like a canary-bird examining its seed. When the biscuit entirely suited her, she ran on again.

"Isn't it lovely, I mean, to have any one enjoy things as Luke does? He sees bridges, and castles, and lakes up there, just as if such things could be built out of fire! Now I never could make out anything but the red, and purple, and yellow colors; but he——"

Rhoda paused, and looked around suddenly.

"Why, ma'am, it seems as if you were in trouble, or something. Wait till I get this pan into the stove, and then, mebbly, you'll tell me all about it."

She took the biscuit between her hands, opened the oven, thrust it in with haste, and fastened the door, twisting one corner of her apron over the hand she was using

to keep it from the hot iron. Then she crept up to the window and lifted her honest eyes to the woman.

"Now tell me, please? I—I hope it isn't any trouble about—about paying that——"

Mrs. Holt winced visibly, for that obligation had been the last thing in her mind.

"No," she said, and the color came into her face. "I hope you are not in want of it yet, Rhoda?"

"No, no!" was the earnest protest.

"And I am in great want of more money, little Rhoda."

Rhoda's eyes fell. There was very little of her money in the savings-bank now, and she did not know what to say.

"If I had it—if I only had it," she cried out, in absolute distress.

"Not from you. It is not your money that I want, poor child!" said Mrs. Holt, touched to the heart; "but if you would help me sell something."

"Won't I? Won't I?" cried the child, sparkling all over. "Just tell me what it is—that's all."

"Could you sell the shawl I have on, for me, Rhoda, without letting any one know about it?"

"Of course, I could," answered Rhoda, eyeing the shawl with wistful distrust; "but I'm afraid it wouldn't amount to much, 'tain't so bright as some I've seen, and—Well, I'll do my best; but you mustn't be disappointed if it doesn't bring more than five or ten dollars."

"Five or ten dollars? Why, child, it is worth two thousand!"

Rhoda fell back a step in dumb amazement, her mouth open, her eyes widening. Then she broke out,

"Two thousand dollars! Oh, jimmy! you are making fun of me. Just as if I could believe that."

"But I do expect you to believe it. This is a very valuable shawl, Rhoda, and well worth the money I mention."

Rhoda pursed her plump mouth into a rose-bud, and sent an unbelieving whistle slowly through it, which ended in,

"Oh! don't, don't! I wouldn't have believed it of you, Mrs. Holt."

"But it is the truth; I have no idea of joking. Come here, and I will tell you all about it. This is not woven in a loom like other shawls, Rhoda."

"Isn't it, marm," said Rhoda, who was beginning to feel a certain respect for the shawl.

"No, indeed; it is worked by hand, you see. It would take ever so many persons a whole year to make this one shawl."

"You don't say so!" cried Rhoda, now fully interested.

"And all these people have to be paid, you know?"

"Yes, of course."

"And it is this time and labor which makes up the price."

"Yes; a year's work is worth money, especially if a good many people are in it."

"This work supports whole families."

"Well, it's queer; but I should a thought all these people working together a whole year might a made something a little more scrumptious, shouldn't you now? According to my notion this isn't anything over particular in the way of beauty; but then the work."

"Well, child, now that I have told you this, can you sell it for me?"

"What, me? For two thousand dollars?"

"I said it was worth so much; but we must take less."

"I reckon so; a great deal less."

"I dare say some of the dealers with whom you trade will understand its value."

"Shouldn't wonder; they're mighty cute."

"If you could find the way to any rich lady now. There isn't another shawl equal to this in the country, I am sure. Do you know any one?"

"Not to think of this minute."

"But you will try?"

"Yes, I will. It's a big thing—but I'll do it."

"Then I will leave the shawl with you—take good care of it."

Mrs. Holt unwound the costly fabric from her shoulders, and laid it down in a rich heap on one of the chairs. For a moment the pressure of necessity was forgotten, and, casting a long, wistful look on this last remnant of her former splendor, she turned away, sighing heavily.

"Don't feel bad about it," said little Rhoda, huddling the gorgeous mass in her arms, and carrying it into her own little bed-room; "the money will be worth ever so much more. You can do anything with that."

"Yes," answered the lady, clasping her hands in an ecstasy of expectation, "it will carry me to *him*."

A person had met Mrs. Holt going up that long flight of stairs, and made way for her as a richly-dressed lady; but when she went down, the same person jostled her carelessly, for all the neat poverty of her dress was exposed, and the lady of half an hour before had disappeared, to that coarse nature. So Constance Hudson stood directly in Mrs. Holt's way as she went down stairs, and made an imperious motion that she should stand aside and let her pass.

Mrs. Holt looked in that handsome face an instant, reached forth her hand and put the girl gently aside; so gently and firmly, that the young creature blushed with unconscious shame, and shrunk back against the wall, muttering faint apologies.

But directly Constance felt her temper rise. She had been put down without really knowing how. What did it mean? Where had her spirit gone? Who was the woman with gray hair on her head, and worse clad than herself, who had struck her so suddenly with self-abasement?

Mrs. Holt looked back as she reached the foot of the stairs,

and gazed upon the girl, where she stood gathering up her subdued wrath, and stooping downward like an angry hawk poisoning itself. There was something in the physical beauty of the creature that fascinated her with a sort of fear rather than admiration. She could neither understand the feeling, or flee from it, for all day long the face of that girl haunted her with a sense of evil.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

DREAMS AND THEIR SAD INTERRUPTION.

THAT night Luke Weeks came home full of animation. His pale face had a glow of color in it; his eyes were bright as diamonds beneath their long lashes—bright, and yet full of tender mistiness, as if some great joy were reacting into melancholy.

During the past autumn Luke had been, for the first time in his life, a good deal in the open country. It was spring now, and in the hollows of the rocks he had found some early flowers, delicate as moonlight, which had withered in his hands long before he could bring them home; and this, perhaps, helped to cast that shade of thought on his sensitive face.

The sunset was past its brief gorgeousness when he returned home; so he sat down and thought of the gray rocks, and the oak branches, ruddy with the unfurling of tender red leaves, and maple tassels fringing whole trees with soft beauty, till the whole world seemed an enchanted place to him. He tried to give Rhoda some idea of the pictures which were coming and going in his brain; but she was busy washing the supper-dishes, and could not have comprehended all he felt, had it been ever so eloquently

expressed; for she was a brave, practical, industrious little soul, and had nothing in common with the boy but a return of his intense love.

After an hour or so spent in reverie, Luke got his violin from the next room, and began to play. All that he felt, all that he had failed to express in language, came forth now in such strains of music as made even Rhoda pause to listen—listen till tears, seldom found in those bright eyes, flooded them so fast that both hands were scarcely enough to wipe them away. At last she crept to his side, and took hold of his arm.

"Don't," she said, "it makes my heart ache."

Luke laid down his violin with a deep sigh.

"Oh, sister!" he said, "how I wish we could live in the country; one breathes so deep there."

"Do you like it so much, brother?"

"Like it? Like it? Rhoda, I have been in heaven to-day."

Rhoda was a little shocked; to her heaven was something far away, and most sacred, in which her mother was shrined like a saint; so she fell to washing her dishes again in grave silence, by which she intended to rebuke the boy for his irreverence. But he did not heed this. Those glowing pictures came back upon him and he was lost in them.

Rhoda looked on his beautiful face, so full of thought, so inspired by imagination, and wondered at it exceedingly. Why was it that the boy was often so far away from her, and yet within the reach of her hand? She marveled over this with some sadness, and went on with her work as if she were alone.

The boy was thoughtful, and the girl still busy when Weeks came home from the theatre. Rhoda heard his step on the stairs, and stopped her work to listen, with the breath checked on her lips, and a keen look in her eyes. Luke did not hear the step, but he started up with a faint cry as

Weeks came through the door, and instantly covered his face with both hands.

Rhoda called out sharply,

"Father!"

The little man looked at her dreamily, shook his head with a gesture of unutterable rebuke, and clung to the frame-work of the door as if the house had been a ship tossed by some storm.

"Rho—Rhoda; gir—girl, you've been loosening the planks in this floor. It—it—it'll be a mercy, a mer—mercy if they don't up, up, and h—hi—hit yer old pa—pat—pater—nal on the forehead. Then, then—where—where would you—you be, Rho—da?"

"Father!" said Rhoda, going close to him and taking the violin from his feet, where it had fallen. "Father, come in and let me shut the door. You are drunk, father, dear, and *she* knows it. Heaven is not so far off that she will not know it, and cry over it as she used to here."

Weeks looked at the little uplifted face, and waved his hand drearily as he released his hold on the door-frame, and steadied himself on her shoulder.

"Yes, Rhoda, shut the door—shut the door. She might look through and begin to cry again; fright about the loose boards, you—you know. She was al—always so timid. Shut the door, Rhoda. What—what is that? So close by, and crying. Dear me! dear me! You shut the door too late, Rhoda."

Weeks fell into a chair by the table, and saw Luke, as it were, sitting in a fog, with both hands to his face, sobbing piteously. Curving his arms upon the table, his head fell upon them, and he muttered,

"No, no! It isn't her! She has sent the boy—always does—always does send him."

That day a slight, lovely-faced boy, who reminded you of what Edwin Booth must have been as a lad, hovered timidly

about the leader's room at the theatre a full hour before he dared go in. At last he ventured forward, pale to the lips, and trembling from head to foot, thus drawing the leader's attention upon him, and a gently uttered question.

"He is sick—my father is sick; and, if you please, sir, I want to take his place just for a night or two?"

"Your father? What, little Weeks? Sick, is he? Sorry for that! What else was it? Some one to fill his place?"

"I, sir—I would so like to play his—That is, sir, I know a good deal about music, and could do it."

"You? Why, boy!"

"Let me try—only let me try!" pleaded Luke, trembling with eagerness, and looking wistfully at a violin that lay on the leader's table.

"Well, well, there can be no harm in that. Take hold, and let us see what you can do."

Luke took up the violin and began; but at first the bow quivered in his hand, and gave out such sweet, tremulous wails, that it seemed like a spirit complaining that some mortal had disturbed it; but genius will always rise strong and free under its master passion. Music made the boy courageous. Directly his frail arm grew firm; his eye brightened; his lips parted sweetly, as if the music came from them, and the leader beat time, unconsciously aroused into keen sympathy with powers greater than his own.

Luke slowly removed the instrument from his shoulder, and looked wistfully at the leader, who gazed at him in turn wonderingly.

"That will do—that will do. It is something wonderful! Strange that your father never mentioned this!"

"But may I come in his place till—till he is better?" asked the boy.

"Come? Of course you may; and I tell you what, my little man, you and I will have a few rehearsals together.

You are a long distance ahead of old Weeks' teaching. Come to my house, come to my house; I want to talk with you."

That night Luke occupied his father's stool, and those of the audience who loved music felt that sounds richer and more plaintive than they had ever heard beneath that dome before, had been added to the orchestra. Some of them traced these exquisite strains to the delicate boy whose head was just visible above the orchestra-railing, like one of those cherubs, with deep, spiritual eyes, with which Raphael guards the most celebrated of his Madonnas.

Music is grand, and full of exquisite power; but love is in advance of music, exactly as thought is the master of expression. That night Luke cast his eyes over the audience, in a rest of the music, and saw, occupying a seat not three yards from him, the beautiful young girl who had bought his basket of wild-flowers on the night which he still remembered with a feeling of humiliation. She was looking at him, too, with a bright, intelligent expression. Luke observed from beneath the thick lashes that instantly drooped to his burning cheeks that the girl whispered to her mother, and seemed to be pointing him out with a pleasant smile in her beautiful eyes, as the boy that brought her so many flowers.

During the pauses of the music, the boy had time enough to observe this young lady, whose rare girlish beauty might have fascinated experienced men. How fresh and bright she looked, with that little spring hat poised upon her graceful head, and that one rose, with two or three buds drooping to the dark-brown waves of her rich hair, kindling it up with a crimson glow. No wonder the boy thrilled so many hearts with the solo which the generous leader had given to him that evening, for in that sweet language the boy seemed to breathe out the love which thrilled his own childlike heart, and which would henceforth go hand-in-hand

with his genius, like twins intertwining life so completely that they must live or perish together.

That evening Luke never left his stool in the orchestra for a single moment, but sat there entranced, looking upon that bright young face, yet never seeming to look upon it, till the glow in his heart was like the sunshine which gives crimson to the side of a peach in a single day, being itself full of the ripeness and warmth out of which passionate love springs. When the performance was over, he went out with the crowd and followed Eudora at a distance, as she walked home in the soft, spring moonlight with her father and mother. She did not see Luke; and no one was aware of the darkness that fell upon his young heart when the door of her father's house closed upon him.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE DRESSMAKER AND HER CUSTOMER.

CONSTANCE HUDSON, for the marriage being a secret we must still call her by that name, wanted a dress-maker who could cut up the cerulean silk which lay concealed under her pillows into gores and trimmings, shapely and graceful, as the robes she had so coveted on the stylish girls who looked down upon her at the dancing-school. But she had no information by which to guide her search, and was sadly at loss. Her strangely-isolated existence had been barren of friends, even acquaintances; and there was no one with whom she could take counsel, except little Rhoda, who might have guided her out of this difficulty.

Constance was afraid to trust Rhoda. The inquisitive little thing might insist upon interfering, and, being an excellent judge of prices, would probably enlighten her father and excite unpleasant questions.

But the masquerade was approaching and something must be done. There was an old, worn-out dress-maker in the house, who kept herself from absolute starvation by altering dresses and fitting cheap garments for the poor people around her. She had made the rattling silk of which Constance complained so much, and considered it a miracle of elegance. Indeed, it had inspired the admiration of the whole neighborhood, but Constance had been among really well-dressed women since then, and entertained no idea of trusting her azure silk in the hands of widow Croft. Still, the old woman might be able to point out some more efficient person; and, in order that this might be done, Constance dropped into her little room one day and soon got the intelligence she wanted.

Widow Croft was lame, and had given up going out to day's work more than a year, but some of her old customers dropped in upon her, now and then, with something to alter or mend, and talked about other dress-makers quite confidentially. She had never seen the person, but there was a young dress-maker in P—— street, up stairs, who took in work, and was considered really stylish by very fashionable people. Mrs. Croft had the address somewhere, for a lady had left it with her, and thus Constance found her greatest difficulty removed.

The next day the girl we call Constance Ellery, found herself surrounded by a cloud of billowy silk and filmy white lace, measuring, cutting, sewing, and searching her brain for some novel idea of trimming which should establish her in the good opinion of the most dashing, reckless, and profitable customer that had ever entered that humble apartment. The silk was rich and heavy enough to give forth that soft, luxurious rustle about which her customer had been so eloquent to her husband; and the lace that lay entangled in its folds like the fleecy whiteness of a cloud, had a value of gold in it which startled the dress-maker when she thought of the responsibility it imposed on her.

The dress-maker who follows her calling from natural artistic taste, possesses more of genius than most persons are willing to admit. Labor performed under the inspiration of ideas ceases to be work, and exalts itself into the fine arts. Constance Ellery soon became interested in her task; the sloping gores resolved themselves into a sweeping train, long and flowing into rich waves of azure, softened by the whiteness of delicate lace, impalpable as if the frost of a single night had passed over it. Folds of satin were woven in and out of this exquisite fabric. Narrow lace lay upon the table ready for the corsage when that would come under consideration. Never was a young girl more richly surrounded, and never did one work more zealously.

Toward evening the skirt was finished, and laid daintily across the little bed in the corner, sweeping to the floor in rich, sumptuous folds that might have satisfied an empress. The corsage, shapely as the form to which it had been fitted, was well in hand, and each turn of those deft fingers gave it new grace. Constance Ellery had promised to have the dress finished in two days—and this was the second on which she had been working. Her hands flew up and down, in and out, like little snow-birds picking up seed. She had promised the dress, and it must be done; so each moment found her more and more diligent, till she fairly panted for breath in her anxiety.

Toward night she slackened this eager haste a little, and sewed on more leisurely; the sumptuous garment was almost finished now, and the pretty dress-maker was pleased with the effect. Nothing half so beautiful had ever passed under her hands before. She felt all the pride of creation in it, and broke out into scraps of song more than once as her task drew near its completion.

When it was quite dark, Constance Hudson came after her dress, flushed and excited as if she had walked fast, and was still followed by some apprehension. With a quick

glance she saw that the dress-maker had kept her promise, and the roses in her cheek grew vivid with pleasure.

"What a good girl you are," she said, throwing her bonnet on the bed, and seizing upon the dress so eagerly that it was dragged half across the floor. "Oh! I am crazy to try it on; but if it shouldn't fit? Mercy on me! what if it should not fit?"

"But it will," said the dress-maker, rescuing the dress from Constance. "It is sure to be all right."

Constance Hudson was too busy divesting herself of the dress that she wore, for any notice of this assurance. Lifting the skirt over her head, she dropped it carelessly around her feet, and held out both white arms for the new garment. As she made this gesture, Constance Ellery paused for a moment with the rich dress in her hands, lost in admiration of the beautiful woman before her. Untaught as she was in the arts, this girl felt the effect of such rare beauty in all her being—the rounded arms tapering downward in their smooth whiteness; the sloping shoulders, and exquisite bust just defined through the lace of her undergarments, pure and white as the whitest marble, were so perfect that even this untaught girl felt their loveliness as if it had been sculptured by an artist. In taking off her bonnet, a long, heavy curl coiled itself down her neck; and Constance Hudson had given it an impatient dash on one side, leaving it in a sumptuous wave on her left shoulder, which gleamed out from under it like lilies in the shade.

Down upon these white shoulders, overflowing them with brightness, came those waves of blue silk rustling, floating, and settling around her in soft, luxurious folds. Then the corsage was fitted to the slender waist; buttons of Roman pearl, pendant and pear-shaped, fastened it over the bust and gleamed out from the frost-like lace. A tangle of blue and lace, that seemed like floating mist, held the exquisite garment in place of a sleeve, scarcely concealing

that graceful curve where the shoulder melted into the snow of the arm.

"Let me look! Let me look!" exclaimed the impatient creature. "I feel like a queen—let me see if I am like one."

She pushed the dress-maker aside, and went up to a rather good-sized, old-fashioned glass in a tarnished frame, which was the only ornament the room boasted.

"Hold up the light—higher—higher. There! Oh isn't it stunning?"

"I thought you would like it," said the dress-maker, well pleased that her work was appreciated. See, this is a better light!"

Constance Ellery was standing a little on one side, yet behind her customer, holding up the lamp which shed its flickering radiance alike upon them both. All at once Constance Hudson dropped her hands from the lace she had been arranging over her bosom, and fastened her eyes, with a steady, fascinated gaze, on the mirror. Then she turned and faced the dress-maker angrily, even haughtily.

"What on earth does this mean?" she said. "There is something here that I do not understand."

The dress-maker colored painfully. She had no idea what the girl meant by that searching look and defiant tone.

"Is there anything wrong about the dress?" she questioned, faintly. "I—I thought it so beautiful."

"Pooh! I am only a fool! Don't mind me," was the brusque reply. "It is beautiful! One would think I had grown into it; but my arms need bracelets, half a dozen of them; and I must have a necklace."

"No, no!" protested Constance Ellery. "All this perfect outline would be destroyed. A moss rose-bud on the left shoulder, just a few in the hair, and you will be lovely."

"That is what *he* said," answered Constance. "Strange, isn't it, that you should settle on the same idea."

"Have I been agreeing with some gentleman?" said the dress-maker, blushing, as she fastened the last button. "Well, it is a mere chance, for I scarcely know a gentleman, except my uncle."

"Then you have an uncle?" asked Constance, carelessly, with her mind on her dress.

"Yes, the dearest and best that ever lived."

"I suppose every girl thinks that of her relations till she marries?" said Constance, still busying herself with the lace upon her bosom.

"Are you married, then?" asked the dress-maker.

"Married? Me? Oh, goodness! Do I look like a married woman?"

Constance Hudson broke into a peal of mocking laughter as she spoke, but her face and neck turned scarlet. She began to unbutton the dress with more energy than was needed, as if something had made her angry.

"I must hurry off the dress," she said, "or that uncle of yours may be coming in and catch me."

"No danger," said the dress-maker, with a sigh; "he is seldom here; business keeps him away so much."

"Just like my father; but he's a splendid old fellow, I can tell you."

The dress-maker busied herself in folding the dress which Constance Hudson flung to her as she took it off.

"Do it up just as small as you can," she said. "I want to carry it home under my shawl. You will want some money—how much?"

Constance Hudson thrust one hand into her bosom, and drew forth a roll of bills; "How much?" she repeated.

The dress-maker blushed a little. She always did color when receiving money, poor thing! and mentioned a moderate sum, which astonished and half-offended her customer. Constance had heard the young ladies of her class speak boastfully, regarding the enormous bills sent in by their

dress-makers, as if extravagance were a thing to be proud of, and Constance's moderation rather offended her. So she fluttered her crisp fifty-dollar notes over and over, in order to convince the humble girl that she was one of those who could afford to pay tremendous prices; then selecting just twice as much as Constance had charged, handed it to her carelessly.

"That is about the right thing, I should say. Don't blush! Don't look so flustered! I shan't touch a cent of change. The work is done beautifully. I am quite satisfied at any price; in fact, another five dollar bill might be thrown in. Here it is—no thanks! Gracious! how you blush! Good evening! I will call again some day—there is a thing I want to make out. Do you know there is something about you that puzzles me?"

"Is there?" said the dress-maker. "I cannot think what! But I have given you no receipt. Indeed, I do not know the name."

"Oh! you never mind that! Good-evening! I shall be sure to come again. This blue silk isn't the only dress I am going to have, by a long-shot. You'll see!"

Constance Hudson took the bundle in her arms, drew her shawl over it, and went out of the house so elated that she almost hugged the precious burden in self-gratulation.

"I hope father won't be at home; he might insist on seeing it. Well, after all, what if he did? The old fellow doesn't know one kind of silk from another—I needn't be afraid of him; but William, my gracious! what *would* he say?"

Just then the shadow of a man, who had been walking behind her, came out boldly on the pavement, and some one spoke her name almost in a whisper.

Constance Hudson jumped aside and gave a little scream.

"Why, Mr. Church, is it you? Goodness! how you scared me!"

"Yes, Constance, it is I. But what are you doing out alone at this late hour?"

"Late? Is it? I didn't know."

"With a huge bundle, too! Oh, Constance!"

"It is my dress—my ball-dress, you know. I could not trust any one to bring it home because of father."

"Oh! that is it! Well, we are near the house, run in, leave that enormous bundle, and come out again; I have something to say to you."

"Don't wait near the door, then," was her reply—and our readers will need no other proof that Sterling's wife had become used to meeting Mr. Church oftener than her father or husband dreamed of.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

NEGOTIATING A SALE.

"Not pretty?" said the little Rhoda Weeks, smoothing the camel's-hair shawl that lay upon the table with both her little hands, as if she had been a dry goods clerk of long practice. "The colors not bright, Miss Hudson? I—yes, I am astonished! Not bright? Why, just look how every thread gives its color to the next, how they sort of go into one another, and grow softer, and—and—— Well, if I can't tell just how it is in words, I know that this shawl is something stupendous,—a great deal more stupendous, understand, than them red-and-yellow things that glisten so, and cut such a splash, or them other shawls that have white snakes running over them—trumpery! Don't you see! this shawl is made out of little pieces, worked by ever so many people, and stitched into this wonderful pattern, when it's all put together like patch-work-quilt? That's the way it's

done off in the Inders. This was made for a fellow they call a Pacher, and he gave it to the father of a friend of mine, who has kept it in a camphor-wood trunk ever since, only putting it on now and then jest to show off with. It would take away your breath if I was to tell you half of what it is worth in solid gold."

Constance Hudson, who had been regarding Mrs. Holt's shawl with supercilious carelessness, really believing it deficient in that brilliancy which her crude taste demanded in everything, now gave her attention more earnestly to the beautiful fabric, very much impressed by Rhoda's evident reverence for it.

"Yes, yes, I see; on a second look one does see how rich it is, but a little knotty on the wrong side—don't you think so?"

"Knotty!" exclaimed Rhoda, tossing her little head. "Why that is the very thing; that's how we make sure it's the genuine Inder."

"Oh, yes! now I see," answered Constance, quite subdued by the child's superior knowledge. "How much did you say it cost?"

"Guess?"

"Well, a hundred dollars."

But for her shopping experience of the last month Constance would have said fifty; but this had enlightened her a little, and she named the larger sum, expecting to be cut down in her estimate.

"One hundred!" exclaimed Rhoda, with calm scorn. "One hundred! Miss Constance Hudson, this shawl cost three thousand dollars!"

Constance rounded her beautiful lips, and gave a low whistle. Her eyes, expanding with amazement, were turned upon Rhoda, who met her gaze with a conscious smile.

"Three thousand dollars—and left with you to sell? There, there, little Rhoda! It won't do—it won't do."

"That means you don't believe me," said Rhoda, sitting very upright in her chair, and turning her head on one side like a furious little Jenny Wren, ready to peck. "I'm much obliged to you; but this shawl cost three thousand dollars, and I've got it to sell. Shouldn't you like to buy it, now, Miss Hudson?"

"Well, perhaps I could, if I liked!" answered Constance, flushing scarlet with anger.

"Exactly," chimed in the little girl. "Perhaps we could, if we liked; three thousand dollars is nothing to us. Oh, no!"

Constance clenched her hand, and locked her white teeth in sudden rage. At which Rhoda lifted her tiny finger, and said in a grave, reproving manner worthy of her grandmother,

"Oh! now you are getting angry, Miss Constance. For shame!"

"Angry! angry! You provoking little tyke! What is it to you, I want to know, whether I've got three thousand dollars or not?"

"Oh, nothing! nothing in the world! Only I know you haven't."

"And you think I can't buy that shawl?"

"I *know* you can't. Who better? Now, just to prove it, I don't expect to get anything like the price this beautiful thing is worth."

"You don't?"

"No, I don't. Look at it; feel the knots. See how the colors run into each other like a humming-bird's neck. Now one thousand dollars will buy this shawl. It's got to be sold, and no one can be expected to pay what it's worth. One thousand cash down, and it is yours."

"And you think I can't raise so much?"

"I know you can't."

"We shall see!"

"Yes, we shall see."

I am afraid little Rhoda was rather aggravating with that pert shake of her head, and the knowing look of her eyes. At any rate, the girl's exorbitant vanity was aroused, and she felt herself insulted. The love of spending had grown strong upon her. There is no power more intoxicating than that of squandering money, to a person whose whole life has been one of privation.

"If the money would strangle you, I'd be sure and get it," she said, pushing the shawl in a heap to the floor; and with that Constance flung herself out of the room, muttering wrathfully in her hot anger.

"If she, or any one else could get it, I shouldn't much care if it did choke me a little," muttered Rhoda, lifting the shawl with both arms, thus half burying herself in its loose folds: "but so much money isn't to be found among my customers. What shall I do? What can I do? If I'd said it couldn't be managed, she would have given it right up. The first word I spoke that way made her turn white as a ghost. Poor lady! poor lady! if I only could help her! But nobody will believe it is worth so much money. I wouldn't have thought it myself, only she made it so clear how long it took to make one, and how far it came on camels' backs. I wonder why camels really are long necked and humpy! I take it from what she said—curious how much she knows. Oh, dear! what can I do about this?"

Rhoda dragged the shawl up to the table, and folding her arms upon it, laid her head upon them in utter despondency. How desperate the child must have become may be imagined; when she had appealed to Constance Hudson, asking in her extremity, if she knew of any person rich enough to purchase so precious a garment. The girl had mocked her by hinting at a wish to buy it herself, and this completed Rhoda's discouragement.

While the little creature sat despondent and almost crying, Constance came back to her room, flushed, panting, and with saucy triumph flashing out from her beautiful face.

"Here is the money—give me the shawl; but, remember, if it isn't worth the price, I'll take you up for swindling—I will, or my name isn't Constance Hudson. Get up, I say, and let me look at the article."

The girl held a roll of money in her hands, which she opened and fluttered tauntingly before the astonished eyes of Rhoda. Never before had those eyes been so large, or the honest little face so bewildered.

"Let me—let me look at them; are they real?" she gasped, reaching out her hand.

"No you don't, till I know how real the shawl is. That's the first question. Just get off it with your arms; I want some one who is a judge to tell me how much humbug there is in it."

Constance pulled the shawl from under Rhoda's arms, and was gathering it up in her own.

"Stop, stop!" said Rhoda, breathless with sudden fright. "Is it Mr. Sterling you are going to ask?"

For an instant Constance was taken aback. She partly dropped the shawl upon the table, and the color left her cheeks, but she recovered herself at once with a short laugh, and huddled it together again.

"Nonsense! it isn't him. What does he know of such things; and what is Sterling to me, I'd like you to tell?"

Rhoda was relieved, and loosened her grasp on the shawl. She knew well that Mrs. Holt would be terribly wounded if her son was made acquainted with the sacrifice she was making, and still hesitated.

"More than that," said Constance, exhibiting a degree of anxiety that satisfied Rhoda of her earnestness. "I don't want him, or anybody else, to know that I've bought the shawl, not my own father. If I take it, the whole thing is a secret between you and me."

Rhoda made no answer; but after Constance had left the room fell into thought, and sat for a long time with her elbows on the table, and her shrewd little face supported by a hand pressed against either cheek.

"Where did she get the money! Old Hudson hasn't got so much. Can she earn it cutting those pictures on stone and on steel? Maybe she does, I don't know; and, anyway, it's none of my business, so long as the money is good but it's awful strange."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

IN THE JAWS OF THE SERPENT.

CONSTANCE went into the room below, where she found Church smoking a segar, with his eyes half closed, and a soft, hazy vapor floating around his head. He was an ugly man, and gray hairs were plentiful in his beard and around his temples; but there was a conscious power about him that had its fascinations for a girl like Constance—and he knew it well.

"Here it is," she said, sitting down on the carpet, like a sultana at his feet, and throwing out the rich folds of the shawl till it floated around her. "Now tell me if she speaks the truth. Is this thing worth all the money she talks about? I don't believe it."

Church took a corner of the shawl between his hands and examined it closely. Then he threw it across a table, and leaning back, smoked luxuriously while he took the pattern, with its slender palm-leaves and delicate bordering, into his mind. Constance sat on the floor close by him, with one foot huddled under her, and both hands locked over the opposite knee—a position that was in great favor with her

when she dared to take it, and which the man was coarse enough to like.

"Well, what of it?" she inquired, after a little. "All a sham, I dare say."

"A sham! Why, girl, there isn't another shawl like that in America. It's worth all she says it cost, and more, too."

Constance suddenly loosened her hands and let her knee fall downward.

"You don't say so. Worth three thousand dollars—second-hand, too?"

"Every cent of it, and the more for its antiquity. It is of the purest and richest work; you can hardly find its equal in any market. None of your white serpents and inextricable tangles of color, such as are put together in Paris and pronounced the last style, but a garment which one might be proud to leave to one's grandchildren."

Church gave this opinion in a quiet way, puffing soft gushes of smoke forth with his words; but Constance was instantly thrown into a state of excitement. She had cared nothing about the beauty of the shawl. Its exquisite perfection made no impression upon her; but when its cost was assured, the desire to brave and astonish little Rhoda with a proof of her capacity to own it, was lost in an eager wish for a garment so expensive, which could be got at a third of its real value.

"Dear me, you don't say so; and she only asks a thousand dollars for it."

Church laughed pleasantly through the smoke that enclouded him.

"Only a thousand dollars!" he chuckled. "Why, one would think the creature had been bred in the heart of a gold mine."

"You needn't laugh at me," pouted Constance, rising up from the floor, and putting on an awkward air of dignity.

"I didn't ask you to buy it for me, thank goodness!"

"But I offered to buy it, Madam Peacock, and mean to keep my word, that is, providing you keep yours."

"Keep mine! What do you mean?"

"Why, to set a day when you and I are to be married."

"But I cannot do it—at least, not yet. Besides, I don't know as I want the shawl; it isn't anything so very stunning."

Constance gave her head a toss, and dashed the hand, which Church extended to draw her toward him, rudely aside. "At any rate, I don't want it enough to take any more money from you, Mr. Church!"

Church gave a prolonged whiff at his segar, took it from his mouth and folded a loose fragment of the tobacco daintily around it, before he made any answer. Then he seemed to have forgotten the direct subject of conversation, for he asked Constance, very abruptly, where young Sterling was just then.

Again Constance gave that beautiful head a toss, which made all the rich masses of her hair shimmer in the light, and answered that she did not know anything about it. "What was William Sterling to her?"

"Perhaps not much now; but he has been something more than I know of," said Church, still busy with his segar, but eyeing her with the sidelong look of a crafty lawyer.

Constance turned coldly white. She shrunk back from the man, and, for the moment, lost all courage. Then Church broke from his cool self-possession and sprang upon her like a tiger, seizing her by the wrist.

"Girl, is this thing true?"

"What—what thing?"

Her lips were white and quivering, and he felt the hand he held growing cold under his grasp.

"That you love that young dandy!"

"Love him? No!"

"Then why are you so pale?"

"You—you frighten me! How can I help it?"

"Have you ever loved him? The truth, girl—I will have the truth!"

She was growing bold, now, and the hot blood came rushing back to her face. He was furiously jealous—she could see that, and triumphed in it; but her secret was safe. She put her head on one side, and lifted a finger to her lips, as if making up her mind.

"Love him? No; I really do not think I ever did," she said, at last, with the apparent innocence of a child. "Like some other people I could mention, it was all on his side."

Church turned from her in genuine anger. The creature had fascinated him; and with such men fascination takes the semblance of love so completely, that it becomes a passion.

"Then you have never loved him, and you do not love me?"

"I said I had never loved him—but the other— Well, that is a subject for consideration. Don't you think so?"

"Constance, tell me."

"I haven't time now, little Rhoda will be getting impatient about the shawl."

"Tell me one thing, and you shall have the shawl."

"Well, what is it?"

"Why does that young man hang about this house so constantly?"

"Who told you that he did hang about the house?"

"I see him go in and out with my own eyes."

"Well, what then? He works here."

"And you are pleased—you like it?"

"No, I don't; sometimes I wish he was in Jericho."

"But your father likes it. He is constantly throwing you into this young man's society."

"Now don't begin to abuse my poor father. He has been good to me, and I won't hear it."

"Still I know that he would drive me from the house, if he dared, and marry you to this young fellow."

"But that he never will; it is beyond his power," answered the girl, while a singular smile crossed her lips.

"Constance, if it could be so arranged, would you be willing that this young man should be sent away?"

"Where to?" She spoke as if the idea gave her a sudden pang.

"West; Montana—the Pacific—the Sandwich Islands—anywhere, so it be far enough!"

Constance stood a moment in dead silence, turning cold and white under the evil gaze of that bad man. He saw that there was a struggle going on in her heart; that some hope which she had cherished was dying hard, for her neck seemed turned to marble, and her eyes were full of sorrowful pain.

"And he would never come back," she whispered to herself. "It would be giving him up forever."

"You cannot answer," said Church, bitterly. "You love the fellow, and have been cheating me."

Constance did not hear him. During those few moments her good angel stood within the door of that heart, and shut out his voice. The cry of a pure, holy love came out from the depths of her nature asking to be saved, striving to save her; but the evil influences soon overwhelmed it. The angel drew back, and the voice of the tempter stole through, poisoning as it went. Her eyes fell upon the shawl; she remembered the cerulean dress, with its cloud of lace which lay concealed in her closet up stairs. All the gorgeous future which had been so adroitly laid before her, day by day, if shared with that man, swept over and overwhelmed the good that was in her.

"Were you speaking to me? Did you ask me anything?" she said, arousing herself as from a dream.

"I asked you to choose between that man and me—his

life and that which I can give you. The time has come, Constance; I will be trifled with no longer."

"I have chosen long ago," she answered, laying one hand on his arm, and looking him firmly in the face. "But what are you going to do with him? He is nothing to me, you know; but father likes the young fellow, and I don't want to see him come to grief."

"I will see that he goes out West."

"What, to starve or dig?"

The girl was suspicious, and her voice trembled; but she looked bold as an eagle.

"No. He is a good artist, and understands surveying, I have found out. We must get him a position on the Pacific Railway, or give him an Indian Agency—something to wake up his ambition, or he would come back again."

Once more Constance lost her color and grew cold.

"An Indian Agency? But the savages are at war everywhere. He would be in danger."

"Perhaps; but brave men like that."

"And the frontier is full of ruffians—worse than the Indians. He would never come back alive—and you know it!"

She spoke furiously, and her eyes glittered. The spirit of opposition was strong in that young heart, not because of the goodness there, or the love she was strangling; but I really think, in the abstract, she hated the man before her. It was only when she saw in him the embodiment of a splendid future, out of which came a panorama of palaces, horses, carriages, superb dresses, and jewels, resplendent enough to dazzle her whole being, that she could even fancy herself loving him.

"He would never come back alive, and you know it!" she repeated, grasping the man's arm till he made an effort to shake her off.

"Well, what is that to us?" he answered, seizing her

hand with a force that wrenched it from his arm. "Above all, what is that to you?"

"Just this, Mr. Church. Young Sterling has been real good to me when I had no other friends, and I am no viper to sting him for his kindness. Send him off to some safe place where he can prosper, and I will not say a word against it; but I won't see him led into danger. You shan't murder him with your plotting and your hate. I tell you now, if any harm comes to him by your means, there will be thunder and lightning about your head, and no mistake!"

This dash of bravado rather pleased Church, who would have found a really refined woman terribly insipid.

"You are a glorious creature!" he exclaimed, and laid his hand on her shoulder in a sudden transport of coarse admiration. Her natural loathing of the man had been intensified by his evident desire to tempt young Sterling out of his life. In her rage she struck him a sharp blow on the cheek, uttering a little cry of fear the next instant.

For one moment the man stepped back and glared at her like a fiend; then he cast his arm around her again, drew her face close to his, and left a kiss upon her hot, red cheek—the first he had ever dared to offer her.

"Take that for your blow!" he said, as she pushed him fiercely away with both hands.

Constance threw herself into a chair, with both arms extended on the table, and burst into a storm of wrathful crying.

"Come, come!" pleaded Church, approaching her in abject penitence, "there is no harm done; or if there is, my cheek has suffered most. I feel the mark of your hand burning on it yet."

Constance looked up with the tears trembling on her cheeks like dew upon roses, saw the long crimson marks on his sallow face, and burst into a peal of laughter.

Then came a long conversation which we need not repeat; for, after the storm, these two natures came to a better understanding, and in the hush of exasperated feelings, they settled many things which will hereafter be unfolded. Then more bank-notes passed from his hand to hers, and Constance gathered up the India shawl, and cast it upon the bed in her sleeping-room, more carelessly than she would have dared to act if her father had been at home. Then Church took his leave, and Constance crept up stairs, pale and trembling like a guilty thing, with the price of Mrs. Holt's shawl clasped in her hand.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

RHODA IS FILLED WITH ASTONISHMENT AND DELIGHT.

SHE found Rhoda sitting by the table in great anxiety and tribulation, blaming herself severely for having allowed an article of such value to go out of her possession, and wondering how she could, for a moment, have thought Constance Hudson a possible customer. The little creature could scarcely restrain the cry of satisfaction that rose to her lips when Constance opened the door; but when she saw that the girl's arms were empty, her heart gave a sudden leap of fear.

"What—what have you done with the shawl?" she cried out, in a voice that told the girl all that had been passing in her mind.

"Well, I haven't stolen it, at any rate; don't trouble yourself to look so wild."

"But, what have you done with it? You know it doesn't belong to me one bit!"

"No, I should think not, you ungrateful little tyke. I've sold the shawl for you for a thousand dollars."

"A thousand do—dollars!" broke in Rhoda, aghast with surprise. "You sold it!"

"Yes; for five times as much as it is worth, I dare say; for you are an awful little cheat, anyhow, from a box of matches up—there's no trusting you."

"But the money—the money!" exclaimed Rhoda, too anxious for any recognition of the charge. "I wasn't to part with it on any terms without the cash down."

"Well, here is your cash down, you little snipe."

Constance opened her hand, dropped the roll of money into Rhoda's lap, and sat down by the table, enjoying the child's incredulous consternation with intense delight.

"Is it? Oh! tell me if it is genuine? Don't make fun of me! You wouldn't think of it if you only knew how anxious the poor lady—that is, how anxious I am to get the money, or—or the shawl, you know!"

"Just take the bills out and see if they are good; I can trust you, though you do seem to suspect me," said Constance, smiling.

"And may I? You won't be angry? I won't be gone a minute. Just sit here till I come back again."

Away the child flew, like a winged creature, down the stairs, which she cleared half a dozen steps at a leap, and into the street; entering the restaurant in which she was so well known, quite out of breath.

"Is that good money? Tell me quick, for I'm in a dreadful hurry!" she panted, flinging the roll of bills on the counter.

The man examined the bills, one by one, with great scrutiny, now and then looking over them at little Rhoda, who stood by the desk holding her very breath in suspense.

"Yes, the money is good; but——"

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, quite sure, Rhoda. But how on earth did you come by so much money? It frightens me."

"And me, too," answered the child, clasping her hands; "but I am so glad. You are certain there is no mistake."

"Yes, I am certain, child; but——"

"Just give me the cash, if you please; but say it again—the money is good."

The excited creature began huddling the bills between her two little hands, which fluttered among them like frightened birds.

"But where did you get them, Rhoda?"

"No matter! Never you mind—it is all in the way of business."

"But does your father know?"

"My father? Yes, he knows all about it."

"That is right. Now be careful of your money. What a smart little thing it is," said the man, looking after the child as she flitted up the steps, and away to her own home, which she entered with a burst of triumphant gratitude.

"Oh, Miss Constance! Miss Constance! I beg your pardon! There never was such a wicked, ungrateful, good-for-nothing little snapping-turtle as I am—suspicioning everybody, and wanting to be sure. The very rats in the wall ain't meaner than I am; and as for mice, they are ladies compared to me. I know it, I feel it, and I'm ashamed of myself, and as proud of you. I always thought you was handsome, but now you're beautiful, magnificent! Oh, dear! I do believe I shall get to laughing before this is done with."

Here Rhoda sat down, flung her little white apron over her head, and did absolutely end off her excitement, under its shelter, in a way that made the snowy fabric shiver, protesting all the time, in a broken, watery voice, that she was so ashamed, but sometimes she couldn't help laughing in the wrong place.

I think Constance forgot exactly how all this happiness had been brought about, and rather prided herself on being

the cause, as if there had been no disgrace in the method. At any rate, the quick tears came into her own eyes, and she patted Rhoda's head through the apron, telling her not to cry—a suggestion of weakness which Rhoda resented by drawing down her apron like a flag, and scattering her tears with a laugh, that sent them flying, as a burst of sunshine puts an April shower to rout.

"Now I must go—I must go right off. Where is my hood? Oh! hanging by the strings to my neck. And the match-basket? Thank you, Miss Constance. Now I'm all right. But tell me who it was bought the shawl? I didn't know there was so much money within a mile of here. Must tell me, now, who it was that bought it."

"Oh! a friend of mine—rich as rich can be."

"A friend of yours, and so awful rich?"

"Yes; he is awful rich! You need not look so surprised. He is——"

"You say he—was it a man? What did any man want with a shawl?"

"Men have relations—don't they, goosey?"

"Relations? Yes—and wives. Perhaps the gentleman bought it for his wife," persisted Rhoda, tying her hood on again.

As the child turned to take her basket from the table, she saw that a flood of scarlet was just dying away from Constance's face and neck, leaving a strange and disagreeable expression there.

"I hope you're not sorry for what you have done?" she said, anxiously.

"Sorry? No! Well, perhaps I am a little."

"Oh, dear! I hope not!" cried the child, clenching her tiny hand hard on the money.

"Get along! Get along! It is all the same to you. But you haven't told me who the shawl belonged to."

"Oh! I couldn't do that, you know."

"But why not?"

"It is a secret from every one, and she trusted me," said Rhoda, proudly—"only me!"

"Well, keep your secret; what do I care! Come back! Come back! There is some one coming up. Is it Sterling, or anybody you know—just look out?"

"It is Mr. Sterling."

"Oh!"

"Why, what is the matter? I thought you liked Mr. Sterling ever so much."

"But I don't! You have no right to think so! It's impertinent!"

The little girl was puzzled. She played with the matches in her basket a moment, and then lifted her eyes to Constance in honest doubt.

"You seemed to, Miss Constance; and I know he likes you better than anything."

Constance flung herself to the other side of the little room, impatiently rejecting this honest assertion; but her face was troubled, and Rhoda saw that she held her breath to listen till a door below opened and closed.

"Well, good-bye! It's time for me to be going—the money burns my hand. Good-bye! Shut the door when you come down, and put the key under the mat, where father can find it."

Away went Rhoda after this, leaving Constance in the room alone, listening, like a criminal, to be sure that she would not meet her young husband in going down. Bold as she was, the creature could not find courage for that.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

RHODA BRINGS GOOD NEWS TO HER FRIEND.

MEANTIME, Rhoda found her way into Mrs. Wheeler's basement, up stairs to Mrs. Holt's room. She found that lady in deep distress; a letter had just reached her from her husband, in which he wrote, with some degree of tender regret at their enforced separation. Nothing, he said, but want of means would have forced him to leave her behind.

Perhaps there was something real in this; distance, and that profound solitude which men born in cities feel in the great waste of the prairies, might have aroused memories and regrets enough to make what he wrote a truth. Certainly it had this effect upon the poor lady to whom the letter came. Her desire to be with this idol of her life grew almost into a frenzy. She walked the room, wringing her hands. Again and again she searched in her mind for some means by which she could follow him into the solitude that presented itself to her imagination as a paradise; but all her resources were exhausted. She had already strained the means of her son, and nothing but the shawl was left. The last hope that she could cling to, lay in the little girl who sold matches for a living—a creature who only a short time before had been the object of her own charity.

What real hope could fasten itself on this child, bright and energetic as she was? If she failed, how could Mrs. Holt dispose of the property, to whom could she offer it?

Depressed by these thoughts, and sick at heart with a yearning wish to join the husband she loved with such forlorn adoration as age feels for its last object of love, the poor lady had crept into her easy-chair, resolved to wait patiently. She was kind-hearted and generous; but I fear in all her troubles she seldom remembered to pray either for

mercies or fortitude. Instead of turning her disappointed and faint heart to God, who must, in his infinite goodness, have compassion on the creatures of his own making, sensitive, impulsive, full of faults, yet lovable from their very imperfections and their capacities for suffering, she took up her pride and her courage, and battled on with them. The world had buffeted her to the earth again and again, but she never quite gave way, though, at times, she longed with a terrible desire to lie down and be at rest forever.

Oh! if she could but get to him! The loneliness which had fallen upon her since he left had been so depressing, that she fretted under it like a sick child. Her health failed, her appetite fled; she grew pale and shadowy. Thus the woman sat, helpless, and still in that great easy-chair when Rhoda opened the door and stole in, so eager with the good news that she forgot to knock. Quick as a lapwing she crossed the room, and startled Mrs. Holt with her voice.

"I have got it—the shawl, you know!"

Mrs. Holt turned her wild face upon the child; it looked scared and unbelieving. Dying hopes will not revive in an old breast as they do among the blossoms of youth.

"Poor child! Poor, dear child! you have done your best, I know! Never mind, I did not expect it!"

But I have sold it."

"What!"

The word came from her lips like a cry of pain. She could not yet realize that the girl was not mocking her.

"I sold it for a thousand dollars," whispered Rhoda, almost disbelieving herself.

"A thousand dollars! Dear, dear! if it could only be true, that would open heaven for me—absolute heaven!"

"It's true as the gospel, lady! Yes, if you throw in both the old Bible and all the New Testament. I've got the money in my hand. See!"

Mrs. Holt reached forth her thin, white hand, unfolded

the notes, and counted them, one by one, but each moment her lips grew paler, and the broad lids settled slowly over her eyes, so slowly that it might have seemed as if she were falling asleep; but she had fainted into dead insensibility, while the loose notes fluttered down from her lap, and floated to her feet.

Rhoda neither screamed or ran, as another child might have done. She went to the bureau and searched among the toilet-bottles for hartshorn, camphor, or any of the common restoratives which she remembered to have been used about her mother. All the bottles were empty. It had been a long time since that poor lady had been able to indulge in dainty perfumes, or even restoratives. There was plenty of water, however, and the child dashed a glass full into that white face, and held another to the white lips, when they began to stir with a pang of returning life.

"Oh, dear! what have I done that you should go off so!" pleaded the child, shaking all over with affright. "I thought it would make you so happy!"

"Happy! What can make me happy? Only one thing! Only one thing!"

"Do tell me what it is. I wanted so much to make you happy, and have only done this," pleaded Rhoda, utterly despondent. If it isn't money you want, just say what it is. I didn't mean any harm; and now I've wet all your hair, and ever so much of your dress. The best thing I can do is to stick close to the matches; they are always to be depended on."

Mrs. Holt gathered herself up and made an effort to arrange her hair, which was, in truth, dripping wet, but her hands fell feebly away from the task, and she clasped them in her lap with a wan smile.

"But you were telling me something—what was it, little Rhoda?"

"Don't be angry and do that again, it frightens me

almost to death. I didn't mean any wrong, and thought you wanted me to do it, so I sold your shawl for a thousand dollars, and brought you the money. Don't! Don't turn so white! I'll do my very best to get it back."

"Get it back! You have really sold it, then? And the money, where is it? So long as there is enough to carry me out to him, I do not care. Where is it, dear?"

"Here, and here, and here," cried Rhoda, brightening instantaneously, and picking up the bank-notes, one by one. "All good as gold—I looked out for that. Oh! now you are happy; you look like it—you are smiling. No, no! don't do that!"

CHAPTER XL.

THAT THOUSAND DOLLARS.

No wonder that burst of tears half terrified little Rhoda, and set her to pleading against the repetition of a fainting fit, which seemed to her like death. She could not understand that joy ever took that form. As the lady trembled all over, and uttered her sense of relief in broken fragments of thanksgiving, the girl accepted them confusedly as reproaches, and drooped under them with touching humility.

"And you have done this for me," cried Mrs. Holt, laying her hand on Rhoda's shoulder, while the tears rained down her face.

"Yes, I own up. Nobody can be more sorry, but I meant it for right."

"Sorry, my child? Sorry that you have made me the happiest woman on earth?"

"And are you? Are you, indeed? Then I haven't gone and done anything to make you worse off."

"Oh! little Rhoda, if you could but know——"

"That's it! Now you look like yourself, lady; and a great deal more so. I never saw any one get so young all at once. Only to think that an Ingy shawl could do it."

"It seems to me like a miracle!" Mrs. Holt exclaimed, pressing the money between her hands, and kissing it with fervor; for, in fact, it was life and breath to her. "But you must take a part of it, little one. I had no idea that it would bring so much."

"Well, perhaps it wouldn't, only I'm used to the trade now, and tucked an extra thousand on to what you said it was worth. 'Three thousand dollars,' says I, bold as brass; 'three thousand is the worth of this Ingy shawl; and think what a bargain it'll be for one thousand,' says I. If it was a whopper, I'm sure it's according to the trade—and what's the difference to her?"

"To her? Then you sold it to a lady?"

"A lady! Well, no; not exactly."

"Did it go to a dealer, then?"

"No; not to a dealer—the price was too heavy for them."

"But it will not be put into the market and sold again, I hope?" said Mrs. Holt, a little anxiously.

"No, I rather think not. She has got heaps of money, somehow, and will keep the shawl just because it cost so much. I told her all about it, how it was made, and how fast the colors were; but it wasn't of any use till I said, 'that Ingy shawl is worth three thousand dollars!' then her eyes begun to sparkle, and she was eager as a hen-hawk. It was the price that did it. If it had been an Injun blanket she would have bought it all the same. If I did tell a bit of a whopper about the extra thousand, that whopper did the work, anyhow."

"But it was not a whopper, Rhoda; you can hardly over-estimate the value of a garment like that. It was the gift of a great man to my father, when I was a girl."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed Rhoda, opening her eyes wide. "If I'd known all about that, four thousand wouldn't have been too much."

"But you have got double the price I expected. In fact, I feel almost like a rich woman again. Come, now, let me pay my debts, and give you a share."

"Pay debts! Oh, Mrs. Holt! don't now."

"But I must put fifty dollars into the bank for you, and here is fifty more as your commission."

"My—my what?" said Rhoda, drawing back and looking ready to cry.

"Pay for your trouble—that is clearly your due."

"No, it ain't. I won't touch it—nary a cent. Oh, Mrs. Holt! I wouldn't a believed it of you!"

Rhoda was vexed, and tears leaped into her eyes. She picked up her basket of matches and made for the door.

"But, Rhoda," pleaded the lady.

"Nary a cent—I won't touch a red. It's of no use asking me, for I won't! There now!"

"Rhoda!"

The girl turned; there was something sweet and pleading in the tone of that voice, which subdued her anger in a moment.

"Did you speak to me?" said the little creature, meekly.

"Yes, Rhoda. I wanted to say that you are the only friend I have in the world."

"What, I? I? Oh, Mrs. Holt!"

Rhoda set her basket on the floor, and in a moment was leaning against the arm of Mrs. Holt's chair, smiling through her tears like an April morning.

"You won't say anything more about that?" she whispered.

"No, not if it troubles you; but you and I will put back the fifty dollars for Luke, now that we are so rich. It will

be drawing interest, you know, and always be ready for us if we want it."

"But will you take it if—if—"

"If I am very much in need, of course I will ask for it."

"Then I'll put it back."

The child held out her little hand, and took the fifty-dollar note offered to her, half ashamed, as if she had been stealing it.

"I hope the angels ain't looking at us all the time," she said, dejectedly, folding the note.

"And why, little one?"

"Because mother would think me mean."

"She would think you a grateful, good little girl, and love you dearly as I do."

"I'm afraid not."

Rhoda shook her head as she expressed herself thus despondingly; but still hung about Mrs. Holt's chair as if she were waiting for something.

"Oh! you have not told me yet who purchased the shawl?"

"No, not exactly; that is, please don't ask me—I promised not to tell."

"Then I will not ask you. Only, was it any one I know?"

"You know *her*, Mrs. Holt? Not a bit of it. She may set up for a lady with her fine clothes and her rolls of money; but you *are* a lady."

Mrs. Holt glanced down at her worn dress, and smiled a little sadly.

"Mrs. Holt, may I ask something?"

"Anything, child."

"Are you going far away?"

"Yes, dear!"

"And forever?"

"I—I cannot tell; that rests with God!"

"Mrs. Holt?"

"Well, child."

"Will you—wont you——"

"What is it, Rhoda? Don't look so distressed, I will do anything for you. What is it?"

"Will—will you kiss me before you go?"

"Will I? God bless you, child! God forever bless you!"

Mrs. Holt took that little, round face between both her hands, and kissed it upon the forehead and the trembling mouth over and over again.

"That is like my mother—that is like my mother!" cried out the child, with a great outburst of sorrowful tenderness.

Mrs. Holt kissed the little creature again, folding her close, and wiping the tears from her eyes with infinite tenderness.

"I'll go home, now," said the child, at last. "Good-bye. I'll go right home. It's no use trying to sell matches to-day—I couldn't do it."

Mrs. Holt followed the child to the door of her room, and looked after her with tears in her eyes. Rhoda went down stairs without turning back; but when the door closed, she sat down on the bottom step and began to sob. Thus Mrs. Wheeler found her some moments after.

"Dear me! what on earth! Is this you, Rhoda Weeks, crying like a baby? Well, I never!"

Rhoda started up, wiped her eyes with one hand, holding up her basket with the other.

"Did you say out of matches? Six papers in a bunch and splendid. Haven't sold enough to-day to buy salt."

Mrs. Wheeler took two bundles of the matches. Rhoda gave change with her usual sharpness, and went away rather comforted by this little dash of trade.

CHAPTER XLI.

BLACK AND SCARLET.

THERE was almost riotous enjoyment in the opera-house that evening. From dome to foundation the vast building was one blaze of light; banners and rich draperies of blue, white, and scarlet, waved everywhere, giving the vast scene a military and tent-like gorgeousness. Never in her life had Constance seen anything so overwhelmingly brilliant. The crowd itself was a wonder to her, moving, chatting, laughing, swaying together in masses, breaking up and scattering again; it was like an ocean heaving after a storm, with summer lightning playing over it. The grotesque costume, the queer effect of the masks, and strange voices, filled her with childlike glee. There was enchantment in everything around her.

The man, on whose arm she leaned was a little annoyed by her outspoken delight; for she bandied words with many a strange figure, and carried herself with a certain abandon which seemed to displease him seriously. More than once he attempted to draw her toward one of the boxes, but she resisted him laughingly, and answered his remonstrances by casting some keen jest after the first strange man who looked back upon her.

Constance did not wear her blue silk that night, it had been prohibited at once. The long trailing skirt and fluttering lace might answer for a drawing-room, Church said; but there must be something more piquant found for the masquerade.

"One of the Seven Sisters"—a short dress that exhibited the feet. Well, he could not say that she had not pretty feet, it was only that he couldn't bear others to know it; but she was bent on the short dress, black with scarlet

points, a double border, that would make her look like a flame.

Church had listened to all this, smiling in his cool, crafty way. She was, perhaps, right in her choice, the dash and spirit so natural to her, would give zest and piquancy to the character. So Constance went as one of the "Seven Sisters" in dead black, all aflame with burning scarlet. Ten minutes of astonishment, another ten minutes for observation, and the girl was perfectly at home in this motley crowd, where she fairly appalled her companion with the keen brilliancy of her wit and the sarcasm of her occasional dialogues. She danced, too; yes, in spite of his remonstrances, she danced with the grace of a goddess and the spirit of a French woman; laughing at her partners from under her mask, and flinging away from them whenever the caprice took her. The tall man whom she addressed as "father," with a light, mocking familiarity, kept near her all the time; but there was impatience in his gestures, and something like rage in the glitter of his eyes, through the mask, whenever she gave herself up with that reckless abandonment to the dance.

"Come," he said, at last, seizing her by the hand, "we have had enough of this. I am tired of keeping guard over your flirtations."

"Oh! don't be cross, father; this is no place to scold a poor girl in. Dear, how you pinch my hand!"

She was half angry, and he felt the mocking tones of her voice as an insult.

"Had I dreamed of this, you should never have come here," he muttered, under his breath.

She did not understand him, but heard the broken words and laughed.

"Well, well," she said, taking his arm, "let us go and look on, it will be something to see all these people jostling each other; but I would rather dance. Oh! how much I would rather dance!"

"Then I will dance with you," said the man, almost fiercely, and seizing her around the waist, he whirled her into the crowd, and took her breath away by this impetuous movement. But the girl liked it, and liked her partner the better that he flung aside all grace and danced like a savage. Her feet kept time to his, a glow of intense delight shone upon her face. As the black and scarlet of her dress flashed in and out among the dancers, she looked like a beautiful fiend; for the mask revealed enough of her forehead and exquisite mouth to provoke general curiosity; and nothing could conceal the laughing brilliancy of those eyes.

"Now," said the man, as she paused, panting for breath, but with her foot advanced for a fresh start; and before she could speak, he fairly hurled himself and her into the vortex of dancers, and absolutely tired her down with sheer physical exertion.

"Yes," she said, with a struggle for breath, as he led her out of the whirl, "I am ready to go home now; that was something like a dance. I am glad no one could guess that it was my father I claimed to be dancing with. Yes, I am ready—which way do we go?"

The man motioned with his hand toward the door, out of which he wished to pass—and the two left the opera-house arm-in-arm.

While standing on the pavement waiting for the carriage to come up, a young man, who stood near the entrance, looking anxiously at every person that came out, drew close behind them, then stepped back irresolutely. That moment Constance said something and broke into a laugh, soft and mellow, as if she had fragments of a ripe peach in her mouth. Then the young man stepped softly forward and whispered in her ear,

"Constance, I must speak with you. Do not go to bed till I come."

The girl started, and the laugh on her lips broke off in a faint gasp; but she whispered back,

"Yes, yes; but do go away!"

"What were you saying?" inquired her companion, who had been looking toward the line of carriages.

Constance turned her head to make sure that young Sterling was gone before she answered.

"Nothing, nothing. I was only wondering if the carriage would never come up. Oh! here it is!"

Her foot was on the step the next instant, and, gathering her cloak about her, she sat down in a corner of the carriage, quite in darkness; but looking keenly through the window at a tall form leaning against one of the lamp-posts. All at once a new idea seemed to strike her; for she leaned forward and called out to her attendant, who was speaking with the coachman,

"Father! father! what are you waiting for? I am cold!"

The gaslight lay full on the young man's face; she saw it change and brighten. With a slight wave of the hand he turned away and disappeared. That word "father" had satisfied some anxieties that had been harassing him all the evening.

"Tell the man to drive fast, I am so tired!" said Constance, nestling back into her corner.

"He will drive fast enough without telling. You may be sure he is quite as tired as we are," was the careless reply. "After all, these public balls are an awful bore."

"She did not care to answer this, being too anxious and weary for a contest of words. What could Sterling want to say to her at this time of night? Did he suspect who her companion was?"

"It is too late, quite too late," she said, imperiously, as the carriage stopped. "Father will have been in bed these three hours; you must not come up stairs. Good-night—good-night! But stop, first take off the mask and domino, I will keep them for you."

Church took off the garments she mentioned, and was about to throw them over his arm, but she snatched them from him laughing.

"No you don't. I have said good-night."

With these words the girl darted into the hall, using her latch-key, and shut the door behind her, leaving John Church, stripped of his disguise, standing on the pavement, rebuffed and outgeneraled.

"What nonsense," he muttered. "I know the old fellow is up and watching. How he did hate it when I insisted on taking her. We will give him something to sulk about before all this is over."

CHAPTER XLII.

WOULD SHE PART WITH HIM.

SCARCELY had the carriage, which bore John Church away, passed out of the neighborhood, when Sterling came swiftly up the side-walk, and let himself into the tenement-house with his own key. Constance knew that he was coming, and cast an anxious glance at her father, who sat near the hearth with his clasped hands drooping between his knees, and his face bent on his chest, to all appearance given up to utter despondency.

Constance went up to him in eager haste, and laid one hand on his shoulder.

"Go to your room, father, dear. You look so tired."

Hudson got up and turned his haggard face upon her.

"Is *he* coming up?"

"He? Who?"

"Church, that—that——"

"No, father. I sent him away."

"That's a good girl! Keep him at a distance—always keep him at a distance; though he kill me, I would have you do that. You understand, daughter? Now I will go to bed. I am glad you would not let him come up—it is an indecorous hour, but he is so persistent! Kiss me, Constance, and remember what I say."

She kissed him eagerly, and hurried him up to his sleeping-room above, waiting at the bottom of the stairs till his door closed. Then she went back to the parlor, flung the domino across his chair, the mask on the table, and sat down herself, breathless and pale, for Sterling was coming up from the door, and she was afraid to see him.

When the young man came into the room, she started up with a cry of surprise, his face was pale and locked, his eyes full of trouble. What could he know? These questions made the girl tremble. She arose and waited for him to speak.

He came toward her, reached out both arms and clasped her to his bosom, against which she felt the heart heave and struggle like some wounded thing!

"What is it? What have I done? Are you angry with me, William?"

"Angry with you? No, no!"

His voice shook, and he kissed her tenderly, as if each caress were a farewell.

"What is it, then?"

"Constance, are we to be parted? Or will you go with me to the house we were talking about, that log-house, you know, with a prairie farm?"

"What does this mean, William?"

"Just this, dear one. I have an appointment from Washington. It came to-day—I do not know how, or by whom obtained. Its duties will carry me unto the Pacific Railroad, to the Rocky Mountains, perhaps, and farther on as the road progresses. Will you go with me, Constance?"

"With you? Me? Me?" faltered the young wife. "What, out there among the Indians? Oh, William!"

"But there is no danger; I am not afraid for you or myself. Constance, take a little time to think of it. Of course, you will draw back at first, but remember, I shall be with you—my mother has already gone. We will let the whole world know of our marriage."

While he was speaking, the sharp wits of the girl had arranged themselves. The shock of this intelligence subsided. She saw at a glance how all this had come about, and was making a quick calculation of the results.

"When is it? When must you go?" she questioned, greatly disturbed, for she loved this man, so far as her imperfect nature could love, and the trial before her was a hard one.

"At once. I must go at once, or refuse the best chance of my life—the very best, if you will go with me."

"But my father—he has no one in the wide world but me."

"Let him go with us."

"He will not; he hates the country. But he might be persuaded while he knows nothing of our marriage—that would make him angry. Let us think of it, dear, and arrange what is best."

"I was in fear that your father would be up and prevent me talking with you alone. It was not till I saw a light in his room that I ventured in."

"Yes, he was completely tired out," answered Constance, taking the mask from the table, and tossing it into the chair with the domino. "After all, this masquerade was a disappointment to me and nothing but a torment to him."

"I am glad of it," answered the young man, glancing at her dress. "It certainly is a disappointment to me when I find my own wife in a dress like that."

"The gentlemen there seemed to think it just the thing, William; but you never were like other people."

"Never mind that; we will not quarrel about your dress or anything else to-night; after that there will, I hope, be little cause, for fashion does not penetrate to the prairies."

Constance thought of her blue dress, with all its garniture of filmy lace, and the prairies became more and more distasteful to her. Slowly but surely her heart was swaying back to its selfishness, out of which some generous impulses had aroused it for a few brief moments.

"Well, dear, we will think all this over and make up our minds, I am so tired and sleepy now."

She held up her lips sleepily for the kiss he pressed upon them, murmured good-night, and saw him depart reassured by the hope that she would accompany him.

When quite alone, the girl took up a lamp, and holding it before a looking-glass, fell to examining herself curiously, as if she had been a third person, and the lovely head before her a work of high art. The dress was not altogether a becoming one, for though her hair was dark-brown, and her eyes of a deep purplish-gray, the coloring of her garments was more suitable for a brunette than for a person of her brilliant complexion. But it was impossible that Constance should not look well in anything she chose to wear. Thus the head and bust thrown back from the mirror, shadowed by the blackness of her corsage, and brightened by the scarlet of her opera-cloak, produced an artistic effect which might have sickened any one of a life in the far west, where beauty itself is of little consequence, being confined to so few admirers.

"And I am to take this face and figure into a log-cabin for backwoodsmen and wild Indians to admire. Well, I hope he may get me there, that's all. But then he's so handsome, so good, so—— Dear me! why can't such people have the money? It's awfully unjust."

It was almost daylight when Constance went to bed. Even then she lay awake, thinking over the two lives offered

to her, drifting away from the right and forming excuses for the wrong, till the sun shone in upon her in all its brightness, and saw how heavy her eyes had become, and what shadows had crept around them during the first honorable contest she ever made with the good that was in her.

"I will not refuse him; why settle anything just now? Let the dear old fellow go. Ten chances to one I shan't be able to live without him. While he is gone I can see what this fashionable life means. It doesn't just come up to my idea so far; but then I haven't really dashed into it yet. By-and-by the log-cabin may come in, and I'll go out to him, ready to be useful, and loving, and humble, and of no account, just as he wants me to be. Not just yet, though; not just yet! Gracious! how that blue silk would look sweeping across the floors of a log-cabin!"

Here Constance, struck by the ludicrous idea, broke into a laugh that made the bed shake under her.

"Perhaps I should go out milking in it, or picking blackberries, with the lace full of burs, and—— Oh, dear! oh, dear! it is too funny!"

The end of all this was, that Constance resolved on half measures. She would neither break with her husband, nor go with him. Some good reason might be found, which would seem to justify her in remaining with her father. She would promise to follow Sterling after awhile, when he got settled and ready to claim her as his wife; in fact she did not believe that he would have money enough to bear her expenses. In that case, of course, the journey was impossible.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE GOOD AND THE EVIL.

MUCH to the surprise of Constance, Church did not make his appearance at their rooms that day or the next. So she was left unfettered, so far as that strange man was concerned. This seemed to bring great relief to Mr. Hudson, who was depressed and miserably restless whenever Church was in town.

Young Sterling came to his work the next morning. No, not to his work, for he was far too much excited for that; but he came with hope in his heart to persuade Constance into some liking for the new life offered them on the prairies, which, in his imagination, grew more and more beautiful each day.

Constance appeared to enter into his plans, and took a strange pleasure in going over the details of their western life; all the while knowing in her heart that her share in them was an illusion. It was arranged between them that all things should be put in preparation for their departure, but that nothing should as yet be said to Mr. Hudson.

"Father is very blue and low-spirited," she said, "and I know it will half kill him to part with me. Only think, I am all that he has in the wide world!"

Sterling was just then very ready to believe all this. His generous heart yearned to her with infinite tenderness. What a creature she might become under the pure influences of a genial country life! How he longed to fling off the secrecy that became each day more irksome, and pronounce this young creature his wife before the whole world. Even his high-bred and delicate mother would feel the want of female companionship in her new life so much, that this beautiful creature, unformed as she was, might become welcome as a daughter-in-law.

Constance seemed to share all his hopeful anticipations. Sometimes she did, indeed, half resolve to accompany him; and at night the inconsistent creature would lie awake and cry like a child, at the thought of parting with her husband, as if some force not her own kept her from his side.

Indeed, this was the truth; wild dreams, and such vain thoughts as an inexperienced, ambitious, and coarse-natured girl alone would have harbored for a moment, swept her out of herself, and made her almost irresponsible, so completely did they predominate in her life just then. If she could have divided her existence, the better half would have gone with him, the other would have worked out a dashing future, in which her pleasures must ever have been her foremost object. As it was, she seemed to vacillate, but never did. It was hard to give her husband up, but harder still to sacrifice the brilliant dreams that had perverted her whole being.

Some time, when all these delusions turned to ashes about her feet, the pure love might come forth from its burial-place in her heart; and haunt her into a miserable old age; for in a woman's life some period must come when the soul turns wearily, or in despair, to the pure and good, seeing their exquisite beauty, and feeling how terrible is their loss.

But Constance had not come to this by many a year. Indeed, she had no thought that the follies of life, as well as its crimes, have a sure retribution.

While Sterling was with her, she gave way to all the fond love that had led them on to an imprudent marriage. Caresses that had grown cold of late, were lavished upon him with what seemed inexhaustible tenderness. In this very extravagance of affection she sought to atone for the secret thoughts of future wrong which were just then crowded back into her heart.

At length there was but one day left to them, and that

found her really suffering; and if not ill, sufficiently so to leave her cheeks pale, and her eyes heavy beneath the purple shadows that gathered around them.

"I cannot—oh! I cannot leave my poor father!" she pleaded, as Sterling held her shivering hands in his and entreated her to go with him. "He is ill; he is troubled. If I go, it will break his heart. Let me have a little time, William. Do not speak to him yet; but go away, if you must, and after awhile send for me. Then I will tell him all, and come to you on the prairie, in a log-house—anywhere, only don't ask me to abandon my poor father."

At length the girl prevailed. She was so earnest and eager in her filial piety that it almost became real. Certainly he thought it so, and yielded his dearest wishes to this new and beautiful trait in the character of his wife.

"I will leave you, Constance," he said; "and keep our secret as you wish, but it must only be for a time. The moment I am settled, or can find a home, you will come to me and share it?"

"Indeed, I will."

The creature meant it for the moment, and looked into his eyes truthfully, while her own were blinded with tears.

It was hard to part with him. What did she care for all the gorgeous promises lately so potent with her? What did she care for any one compared to him—so graceful, so gentle and loving? How dared that man Church presume to speak of her husband so contemptuously? It sickened her to think of it. Of course, she would follow her husband. He might plant morning-glories around some log-cabin as soon as he liked. As for gold, there was plenty in the rocks and hills out yonder, and Sterling was as likely to find it as another. Still she would not go just then. Some time later, after she had enjoyed a little more of fashionable life, and prepared her father for the change, a western home would be pleasant, no doubt.

The day had arrived. In a few hours Sterling would be far from her, hurrying fast as the speed of a ruthless engine could take him toward the far, far west, which was indefinite and vast as eternity to her. All night long the girl lay awake sobbing piteously over her griefs. She relented then, and reproached herself bitterly that he was going without her. She felt how wicked and selfish she had been; thought of the dangers and toil upon which he was entering with absolute remorse. Once she sprang out of bed and began to pack her clothes, resolved to join Sterling the next morning and go with him.

With a shawl flung over her night-dress, and her bare feet upon the carpet, she moved from closet to bureau, packing up her belongings in eager haste. Now she folded a half soiled ribbon over her hand, smiling when she remembered who had given it to her. Then a crushed collar or a pair of sleeves was smoothed out on her lap, and laid in the corner of a battered old trunk that belonged to her father, and which she had dragged from under her bed. As she proceeded in her task, the young creature became more and more earnest. She seized upon the articles of her scant toilet, and crushed them into the trunk hurriedly, as if she feared the train destined to bear away her husband would leave her behind. She took from a corner of her bureau-drawer a little, old book, and opened it, where a marriage certificate had been lying for many weeks, hid away there because the sight of it, resting close to her heart, had been a sort of reproach. Now she put it back into the little silken case, which she had embroidered so tastefully when love was freshest in her life, and restored it to her bosom, which seemed to grow purer beneath its light touch.

That was not enough. In the ecstasy of her newly-aroused tenderness, the precious paper must lie close to her heart. She attempted to place it there, when her hand came in contact with an obstacle which made her start as if it

had touched an adder. It was a fold of bank-notes pinned to her garments just over the spot from which the marriage certificate had been removed.

With a gasp and a shudder she tore the notes from their fastening, and dashed them to the floor. The little silken package fell downward into their place; with both hands pressed to her heart she held it there, and, seated on the side of her bed, began to sob and cry as if her heart were breaking under that passionate pressure.

After a time she became more composed, and starting up went to her work again. The lowest drawer of her bureau was opened, and there lay the dress of azure silk, as yet unworn, close by the India shawl, which she had learned to prize at its full value.

The sight of these garments produced a sudden revulsion in that unstable nature. Constance sunk down upon the floor and contemplated the rich fabrics with longing intensity. All that Church had said and hinted swept back upon her with vivid force. Could she give these things up, with the hopes of triumph and display inspired by them? How beautiful she had looked in that dress, even in the dim light of a dress-maker's room! How softly its delicate blue gleamed upon her now through the vapory lace! And was she never to wear it? After so much deception and secret anxiety, was it to go for nothing?

She asked these questions of herself, sitting upon the floor, with both white feet huddled under her scarcely whiter garments, and her bare arms folded on the edge of the drawer. The half-trimmed lamp cast its gleams of smoky light upon her face, as thoughts kindred to these questions swept through her mind. Mechanically she took the folded garments and laid them among the shabby things in her shabby trunk. The contrast brought a gleam of scorn into those eyes which had been so beautiful and loving only a few moments before; and she drew the garments

back into her lap, as if thus separating one portion of her life from the other.

The package of money lay upon the floor as she had cast it down, where a gleam of lamplight fell upon it. She slowly reached forth her hand, grasped it stealthily, and was about to place it in her bosom; but some feeling rose up against that, and lifting herself from the floor, she thrust it under her pillow.

After this Constance threw off her shawl, huddled the things she had been packing back into the drawers of her bureau, and pushed the trunk to its old place under her bed. Then she blew out the light, and all was still in the chamber. Hours later the moon shone through a window close by her bed; and then might have been observed the glitter of two eyes, wakeful and bright, as if sleep never would visit them again.

CHAPTER XLIV.

CONSTANCE PARTS WITH HER HUSBAND.

THE next morning Constance went to the railroad station with her husband. She was very pale and still; sometimes a shiver ran through her frame as he tried to speak hopefully of the future. When he drew her toward him in the carriage and pressed his trembling lips to hers, the kiss she gave back was almost a sob. But even at the last moment she shed no tears, and her face kept its immovable whiteness. He left her in the carriage leaning against its cushions, her face contracted, her lips pressed together, and her hands clenched, as if a desire to cry out were torturing her.

"God bless you, darling!"

He strained her to his heart, left kisses on her forehead,

her lips, and the thick waves of her hair. One long curl fell upon her shoulder, and his lips wandered down to that

"Give it to me. Oh, Constance! let me have that much!"

She took a penknife from her pocket, cut the thick tress of hair from her head, and placed it in his outstretched hand, where it coiled in a soft and glittering ring, which his fingers could scarcely close over without crushing.

"Take it," she said, in a strange, deep voice, which seemed that of another person. "But some time—some time——"

"Constance, my poor darling! how white you are! How you shiver, and I cannot stay to comfort you. One look—one more kiss. Now God bless you! God bless you, my wife!"

He sprang out of the carriage, and rushed into the crowd that hurried by them to the office. She saw him enter, and come forth again. He looked that way; and then, as if his last glance had broken her heart, she sent a wild cry after him—so wild and broken, that it must have called him back, but for the rumble and roar of the engine, which seized upon and carried all other sounds into its own. Then the sharp clang of a bell, the slow movement of the train sweeping out of the depot, and Constance drew back from the window, out of which she had been wildly leaning, and fell into the seat moaning piteously.

"He is gone! He is gone! and I did love him! Oh! I did love him!"

The carriage bore her homeward, and still she cried out in her pain, reviling herself for a hard-hearted, cruel girl, who deserved no good, and who was sure to be punished for the cruel thing she had done. Hudson met her at the door. He, too, was much disturbed, and looked into her face compassionately as she passed him.

She did not notice his outstretched hand, or the look of

commiseration that accompanied it, but flew up the stairs like a lapwing, entered her own room, and locked the door.

Two weeks from that night Church again made his appearance. He had a long, and it would seem rather stormy talk with Hudson, from which that enslaved man came out apparently submissive. One thing he said just as Church was taking leave, which made that bad man less secure than usual.

"I will speak to her," these were the words, "speak to her honestly, and if possible learn what her feelings are. If she is willing—if she does not love the young fellow who has left us in such strange haste, I will not interpose. But she must do this of her own free will, and without undue persuasion even, or I never will permit her to become your wife—not if all the choice you leave me is that or a prison."

Church laughed, but closed the door softly that no one might hear; and for a long time his low, silky voice fell upon the atmosphere like the hum of drowsy bees. Then the door was opened again, and Mr. Hudson, looking white and anxious, called to Rhoda Weeks, who was sweeping the stairs.

"Oh, yes! I will call Constance," she said, resting her broom against the wall. "She's up in my room."

When Rhoda told Constance that Mr. Church was below and wanted to see her, the girl seemed struck with some shock of the nerves. The needle-work she was doing fell to her lap, and she looked about as if seeking some means of escape. But directly all this passed away. She took two or three resolute stitches, folded up her work with great deliberation, smoothed her hair before Rhoda's tiny looking-glass, and went down, stepping firmer and heavier than Rhoda had ever known her to do before.

Constance entered the room where Church was sitting with her father. He came to meet her with something like self-distrust in his manner. She received him calmly, and

with no visible repugnance, if she felt any. Hudson looked on with searching scrutiny. There was no soft flutter, no gentle embarrassment—nothing that bespoke affection or interest in her manner. Of the two, he was the most embarrassed.

Constance seated herself on the sofa, and seemed to be waiting.

"You sent for me, father?"

"Yes, Constance. Mr. Church—but, perhaps, you know what has brought Mr. Church here so often of late?"

"Yes, father, I think so. He has a fancy that you are tired of me, and is ready to take me off your hands."

"Then he has told you this?"

"Yes, father."

"And you permit it?"

"Why not? He is your friend. Any man may wish a thing, and say so."

"But tell me, Constance, do you love him?"

"Oh, father! I am ashamed of you. *He* had better ask that."

She did not change color, or even affect embarrassment. Her voice was clear and ringing, her air wonderfully self-possessed.

"But I have asked it," said Church, drawing close to her; "and have waited for the answer as condemned men wait for pardon."

Constance drew back, and replied in her usual tone, though he had spoken low and rapidly.

"When I know my own mind, Mr. Church, you shall be the first to hear it."

"Then you have not made up your mind, daughter? You have not authorized him to say what he has?" Hudson broke in, eagerly.

"What has he been saying, father?"

"That you are willing to marry him!"

"Well, he is a little fast there. I never said that."

"Never said that, Miss Hudson? Surely, you have forgotten."

Church had left his chair, and was pacing up and down the room. The cool composure of the girl irritated him. In asking this question he turned sharply upon her.

"Well, perhaps, one does not remember every light word or promise; but, no matter what I have said or forgotten, my father thinks you wish to marry me, and fears that I may be persuaded to marry you; the idea isn't pleasant to him, I can see that."

Church darted an angry look at Hudson, who turned pale, but still kept his eyes resolutely fixed on Constance.

"Father," said the girl, "why is it that you oppose Mr. Church?"

"You do not care for him?" was the confused answer.

"Oh! yes, I do!"

"Constance!"

"Indeed, I do, father! Just a little."

"What, love this man?"

"Love! Oh! as for that, the less said the better. He doesn't expect too much affection. Elderly people should be reasonable, you know."

"Constance, be serious."

"Father, I am."

"And you wish to marry this man?"

"I mean to marry him some day—that is, if he waits long enough."

"Are you content, my good friend?" demanded Church.

"Does this satisfy you that the young lady needs neither coercion or much persuasion? Surely she must be supposed to know her own mind."

"I have done," said Hudson, heaving a deep sigh.

"God knows I was ready to dare every thing rather than see her sacrificed; but if she wills it, I can make no farther opposition. God help the poor child!"

"This terrible emotion is hardly complimentary," said Church, seating himself by Constance. "Now, as the main question is settled, let us fix a time. I have been waiting very patiently, and should be rewarded."

Before Hudson could speak Constance broke in,

"As to that, Mr. Church, we must let you exercise one of the virtues a little longer, if it is only for the novelty. I do not intend to be married to any one just yet. My education is not completed, you know."

Church seized her hand.

"You will not insist on delay," he said. "Do not be so cruel."

She threw back his hand with a light laugh.

"My father is not prepared to do without me yet. Be content with what I have promised. I will not take another step at present, and will marry no man until he need not be ashamed of an uneducated wife."

"Oh! we will change all this," said Church, whispering in Hudson's ear. "You mean to baffle me with delay; but I will not bear it. Make the time brief, or you may be placed beyond the power of interference."

CHAPTER XLV.

CONSTANCE MAKES A SECOND VISIT TO HER DRESS-MAKER.

CHURCH took his hat after this, and went away, leaving the father alone with his child, who saw a look of sharp terror come over him.

"Father, what is this?" she said, coming up to him, changed completely in voice and manner. "Rhoda told me that this man was threatening you; and that you were

pleading with him so earnestly that she could not help hearing you as she swept the stairs. You looked frightened when I came in. You look frightened now, father. Tell me what the secret is?"

"But you will marry him, and that ends all."

"Father, I will not marry him. He wants it, I know; and I have let him say many things that ought to have been nonsense, or never spoken. Tell me the truth, and then I shall better know how to help you. I am weary of all this, sick of myself."

"That is a terrible sickness; one never recovers from it in this world," answered the father, drearily.

"Father, trust me, for I love you." She put her arms around his neck, and laid her cheek lovingly by his, so lovingly that it brought tears into his eyes. "Tell me what this man's power is?"

Constance knelt down before him, and leaning one arm on his knee, entreated him with her eyes, as she had done many times when a child.

Hudson shaded his eyes from her gaze; but she took down his hand, holding it between both hers lovingly—for at the moment she was good and affectionately resolved on helping her father.

"Father, tell me!"

"Tell you what, child?"

"Why is it that you are so troubled when Mr. Church comes here?"

"Because he tortures me; because he is an unsafe man."

"Then why let him visit us?"

"God forgive me, child! I cannot help myself."

"Father, look at me!"

"Well?"

"Have you done anything wrong, that——"

"Stop, Constance; I will not be questioned so."

Hudson arose abruptly, and seizing his hat, went out of

the house, leaving Constance alone, and greatly troubled. She stayed awhile, thinking over what had passed, and feeling the loneliness of her life very keenly; for, since Sterling's departure, she had bitterly repented the selfishness which had kept her from his side, and, at first sight, almost hated Church for being the cause of all this self-reproach. Sympathy for her father's evident unhappiness also enlisted her better feelings in his behalf, and she was ready to make any sacrifice that promised to bring him back to even comparative tranquillity. Some day she meant to persuade him to go with her out to the far west, where new and happy lives might be opened to them. For the time this, indeed, was her generous purpose. If she had seemed to encourage Church lately, it was from a suspicion that in some way her father was in his power. Indeed, that bad man had more than once cruelly hinted as much.

After thinking over all the perplexities of her position with more honesty of purpose than usually followed her reveries, she was seized with a sudden desire to go forth into the open air. Not long before she had left some garment to be altered at the dress-maker's, and turned her steps that way, indifferent where she went. When she came in sight of the house, Constance was surprised to see her father entering it without knocking, as if he were used to the place. Surprised and offended, hardly knowing why, she followed him into the hall, and up to the top of the house, hearing his footsteps above her, though he was out of sight. She found the door of the dress-maker's room ajar, and heard her father's voice within, gentle and sweet, as she had seldom listened to it at home.

Constance drew softly toward the door, looked through and saw her dress-maker with both arms folded on her own father's knee, and lifting her sweet face to his with a look of yearning fondness that made her seem beautiful as a saint.

Constance Hudson stood a moment in dumb astonishment,

then she turned and left the house as noiselessly as she had entered it.

CHAPTER XLVI.

PLANNING AN ESCAPE.

SHE stood in the middle of the floor, pale and angry, and so impatient that her limbs fairly shook under her, when she heard her father's step on the stairs. He came in, looking worn and sorrowful, placed his hat on the table, and sat down, without regarding the young creature, or her furious wrath.

"Father!"

Hudson started up, and turned his startled eyes on the girl.

"What—what is the matter, Constance?"

"I followed you—I saw you go into that house. Who is she?"

"Constance, my child, spare me. Do not speak a harsh word of this noble girl. She is the child of my sister, who is dead."

"Your niece, and I never heard of such a person—another secret! Then there is this man Church, who treats you as if you were his slave. What does all this mean? Father, I will know."

The man stood up, white and trembling, with both hands clasped before him, as if afraid to plead for mercy with his own child.

That face and attitude touched all that was good in the girl's nature. With a sudden revulsion of feeling she flung her arms around his neck.

"Father! father! poor, dear father! I am cruel—I am wicked! But tell me everything—I want to be good to you—I will be good. Don't be afraid of me!"

"Afraid, Constance!"

A wan smile flitted across his lips pitiful to look upon.

"When shall I be other than afraid?"

"I am never afraid!" said Constance. "Tell me."

"I will," answered the old man, wearily. "Sit down here—no, not in that way, with your eyes to mine. It is not well that a child should look on her father's shame."

Constance slid down to the floor, laid her head on her father's knee, and waited for that hesitating voice to begin.

Hudson spoke almost in a whisper at first. By degrees his voice grew deep and husky, then sharp with pain. The girl listened, sometimes with a shrinking heart, sometimes with the kindle and glow of keen anger, when a fiery word would break from her lips, or a sob shake her bosom; but she seldom interrupted him, except by a half whispered question. Nor did she once lift her face, though his sank lower and lower, till his gray locks mingled with the rich brown of hers, as if snow had suddenly fallen there.

"Is this all, father?"

Constance said this with terrible constraint.

"Yes, my child! Is it not enough?"

"Not for me—not for me!" cried the girl, turning upon her knees, and lifting her arms upward. "If you had been a thousand times as bad, I should only love you, and hate him the more. Oh! how I do hate him!"

The old man began to shake as he felt her arms around him; and out of his grateful agony tears came, large and mournful, almost blinding him.

Constance wiped away these tears with a flimsy little handkerchief bordered with sham lace, and kissed the cheeks on which they had trembled.

"We will go away, father, you and I, where he can never find us, the toad, the rattlesnake!"

He looked at her wistfully.

"Oh! if we could!"

"But we will. Let him sit like a hundred-legged spider in his wicked old web; the world is wide, and I am a match for him, anyway."

"I thought that myself once," said Hudson, mournfully; "but he seems gifted with a fiend's ability. Go where I will, he finds me out; and after every struggle I am more firmly his slave."

"But it shall end here, father."

Hudson shook his head.

"You do not know him, Constance."

"He does not know me. Now that I understand everything, he shall find his match. Don't look so wild, father—I won't fight him. But you and I can run away, and we will."

Hudson almost smiled, but he only muttered again,

"Oh! if we could—if we could!"

"We will, father, make sure of that! When we get settled this cousin of mine shall come to us. I see now why we looked so much alike. It startled me. There, there, dear old father! don't fret, we will escape this snake."

Hudson kissed the girl and left the room.

When Constance went out from the room, all the force of character that had sustained her so long seemed to die out. She was pale as death, and walked unsteadily, like one just recovering from a hard blow; for the first time in her life she felt the force and burden of a dangerous confidence. In a single hour she had changed places with her own father. Henceforth she must think for him, care for and protect him, as the little match-girl up stairs protected and cared for the musician.

There was something ennobling in this idea, which, for a time, lifted Constance out of herself. Then another care arose, which brought many a bitter reflection with it—a birth of love and repulsion toward a single object, which a day before had not been recognized in her existence. She

went up-stairs in search of little Rhoda, for it seemed impossible that she could live without some human sympathy.

Rhoda heard some one coming, and, jumping down from her chair, ran into the bed-room, where her father lay sleeping heavily.

"Father, dear! father, dear! do try and not breathe so loud; they will hear you. Some one is coming."

Weeks muttered something in his sleep, and turned in the bed, winding the blanket tightly around him.

"Dear me! what can I do—he's going off worse than ever!"

While these words were on her lips, she seized the coverlet and dragged it over the little man's face, thus smothering the sound she could not silence. Then she went out, closing the door softly behind her, and, blushing like a culprit, caught up Luke's tunic, which she had been mending, and stitched away dexterously, as if she thought that could drown the muffled sound which still came from the next room.

CHAPTER XLVII.

CONSTANCE MAKES A CONFIDANT OF RHODA.

"RHODA!"

The little girl started up, and the work dropped to the floor. There was something strange in Constance's voice, that startled her.

"Why—why—what is it? What makes you look so wild, Constance Hudson?" she cried.

"Me? Nothing much. Only—only— Oh! Rhoda, Rhoda! I am so wretched!"

Constance threw herself on a chair, flung her arm half across the table, and burst into a storm of hysterical sobs.

"Don't, don't!" pleaded little Rhoda, pulling at the arm which Constance had curved under her face. "Has he been drinking—your father, I mean? Oh! I hope not, for that is trouble."

Constance lifted her face, and wiped some tears away with her hand.

"No, no, Rhoda! it isn't that; but I am going away—that is, we are going away."

"Going away? How far?"

"Ever so far, Rhoda. Hundreds and hundreds of miles away."

"But where? You frighten me; you take away my breath."

"It is a secret, Rhoda; but I must tell you. We are going out west."

"Out west? Why, that is where she has gone!" cried Rhoda.

"She! Who?"

"My friend; the lady who was so good to my mother—Mrs. Holt."

"Well, Rhoda, we are going to her."

"Oh! if I was going—if I only could!" said Rhoda, clasping her plump little hands, as if she were about to fall on her knees and pray for this wild wish.

"I wish you might, Rhoda, for you are about all the friend I have got; but we are going right away, father and I; and I want you to help us."

"Help you! Of course, I will; know how to pack and fold as well as anybody. When you want me, I'm on hand."

"It isn't that, Rhoda. We haven't so very much to pack, anyway; but there is something I want of you, and that no one else can be trusted with."

"Very well," said Rhoda, smoothing her tiny apron with both hands; "let us know what it is."

"We are going away, to be gone a good while; but I don't want any one to know about it. Don't open your eyes so wide; we haven't done any wrong."

"Don't owe anybody, or nothing?" questioned Rhoda, to whom an unpaid debt was a great sin.

"Not a red cent."

Rhoda settled her apron with a jerk, and answered promptly,

"Then you may count on me."

"This is it," answered Constance. "We have taken our rooms for a whole year, and paid cash down in advance only a few weeks ago. We shall leave them in your hands, Rhoda; you may live in them, if you like, for we don't mean to move a thing of the furniture. Only I want people to think we are there yet, coming and going, you know, as father used to. If any one comes to inquire, you can say, 'Mr. Hudson isn't at home just now; or he's gone into the country for a few days, and Miss Constance is with him.' You well know how to do it."

Rhoda's black eyes sparkled.

"Oh, yes! I can manage it well enough," she said. "One learns lots of things keeping house, and going about. No one shall find out how long you are gone, or when you're coming back. You can depend on that."

"If you could only say, once in a while, they were here only last week, or you are just too late this time—anything to make them believe we made it our home still, it would be all I could ask," said Constance, anxiously.

"That would be rather going it—don't you think so?"

"But for a friend, Rhoda—it is so important."

"Well, as a general thing, I don't care to fib it much, but for a friend——"

"Yes; for a *dear* friend, Rhoda."

"When a little fibbing is all I can do for her——"

"Exactly!"

"And it isn't for harm to any one?"

"Quite the contrary, Rhoda. It will save us all from great harm."

"Then I'll do it. Reckon I could; but don't say a word to Luke. Wouldn't have him think I could do it for the whole world, and California to boot—nor father, either."

"That reminds me—where is your father?"

"Father? Oh! he isn't just about for the once."

"Well, I will see him when he comes in."

"No; I had better do the talking; he won't be astonished at me."

"Very well, Rhoda. I am so glad you will be my friend, for I need friends more than any poor girl ever did before."

"Don't! don't cry! You see I can't bear that, though it does make you look pretty as a pink when the tears come. Never fear me! I'll fib for you like blazes, if it's only about coming and going. But will you never come back?"

"I hope so."

"Dear, dear! How lonesome it will be!"

That moment a faint noise came from the next room, which brought the blood into Rhoda's face, and set her to work about the room, moving chairs, and rattling the stove with more bluster than was usual to her. Constance stood awhile near the door, apparently lost in thought; then she recovered herself with a start, and saying hastily, "We can depend on you, Rhoda?" went down stairs.

That night Church called at the house again. Hudson had just gone out, but Constance received him with more cordiality that he had ever experienced before; perhaps he observed that her cheerfulness was a little exaggerated, and her laughter somewhat hysterical; but she was so pleasant and full of fun that he seemed content and even entranced, with all she said and did. Once she went out of the room

for a moment, leaving him alone. Then he arose, walked on tip-toe to the bedroom-door, and opening it softly, looked in. A battered trunk stood in the middle of the floor, evidently packed close, and with a new strap buckled over it. He observed also that the bureau-drawers were half open, and quite empty; while all the little ornaments belonging to the room of a fanciful girl had disappeared. With something that sounded like a low chuckle, he closed the door, went back to his seat, and waited, with a slow smile creeping over his face.

Directly Constance came in, full of life and spirits, but so nervously restless that she was perpetually moving about the room, dashing a few notes from the piano, or snatching up her work to fling it away after a moment for some new object.

Church sat still, smiling quietly to himself; but there was a gleam in his eyes as he watched her, which few persons would have read clearly, the smile and the look so completely contradicted each other. At last he got up and prepared to go. Then Constance turned upon him, her eyes flashing, and her cheeks hot with excitement.

"Good-night!" she said, reaching forth her hand, which burned in his as he clasped it. "Do not call to-morrow, or next day—I shall not be at home."

He asked no questions, and did not seem to be surprised, but wrung her hand a little viciously, and went away still smiling.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE FORCED CONSENT.

THE next morning, at day-break, a porter left that tenement-house, carrying a trunk on his shoulder. Some few

minutes after a man and a woman followed the direction he had taken, the first carrying a heavy valise in his hand, the other bearing a well-filled satchel. The man who carried the trunk hailed a street-car going up town, and placed his burden in front, with the driver, while the two persons took a seat inside, and soon found themselves at the depot. Here Mr. Hudson bought some tickets, and was checking the valise and trunk, when a hand was laid gently on his arm.

"No so far as that, my dear friend," said Church, in the softest and sweetest voice imaginable. "It would grieve me to part with you so."

Hudson shrank away from the man's touch, and for an instant the look of a gladiator broke into his eyes.

"How dare you follow me in this way," he would have said, but the words died on his lips, for he saw another man just behind Church, watching him narrowly.

"Put that trunk upon the carriage, and take your own seat with the driver," he said, addressing the strange man. "Step in, Hudson; there is room for your valise inside. I will take charge of the young lady."

Hudson turned deadly white, cast a despairing look on his daughter, and stood motionless as a statue while Church moved slowly toward the reception-room. Constance refused to take his arm, or surrender her satchel; but her face turned ashen with sudden terror, and the fierce light in her eyes was like a smouldering fire.

Church gave no explanations, and asked none, but called aloud to Hudson that the carriage was waiting. When Constance was seated, he placed himself quietly by her side, took her hand in his, and kept it with gentle force, as if they had been the best friends on earth.

After awhile the carriage stopped. The stranger, who had affected Hudson so much, got down from his seat, and looked into the carriage, as if for orders. Church leaned

forward, and whispered a few words; the man nodded his head, went up the steps of a house, rang the bell, and entered it. Now, for the first time, Church spoke earnestly to his companions.

"Constance, you have promised to marry me."

"No, no!"

"But you have—your father sanctions it."

"He does not! He never will!" cried the girl, passionately.

"But he does sanction it. Ask him."

Constance cast a glance at her father, who sat white and shivering in a corner of the carriage. With that look came back all that he had told her, all the peril he was in—and she too began to shake with the fear that came over her.

"You force him to it; he never did consent of his own free will!"

"I fancy he has done very little of his own free will in many a day," was the cool reply. "That is nothing to me. I do not care for motives, facts are enough."

"But his promise does not bind me."

"Your own promise does."

"But I revoke it. I never gave you one in dead earnest; never in my heart meant to marry you. Is that enough?"

"Not quite. I came here to make you my wife, and mean to do it."

"But I can't and won't be your wife!"

"Nonsense, child! You are angry now; but this trifling is perilous to your father. He ought to teach you better."

"I know what you mean—my father has told me everything. For his sake I might, I would; but it is no longer possible."

"It is both possible and certain that you are my wife

before the sun sets, or your father a prisoner—choose which."

Constance looked at her father.

"Is there no one to help us?" she pleaded.

The old man turned his face away in gloomy silence.

"What shall I do? What can I do, father?"

Hudson was newly aroused by this cry; he sat up, and a gleam of color came into his face.

"Have you no mercy?" he said. "I have told you that the poor girl loves another, a worthy man, who would make her a happy and good woman."

"Loves him, does she? Well, I must say, circumstances have not warranted me in thinking so. But all this is of little consequence, the young fellow you speak of is out of my way, and out of the world. If you had read the papers faithfully, I need not have told you this."

"What do you mean?"

Constance seized him by the arm, her white face was close to his, her lips parted in wild terror.

"What do you mean?"

"Did you really care so much for the fellow, pretty Constance, after denying it so stoutly, too? Well, it almost pains me to give you the news; but the Indians have been making some ferocious raids on our railroad people of late, and young Sterling happened to be one of the victims."

Constance grasped his arm with such fierce strength that he winced under it.

"Is this thing true?"

He had no pity for the anguish in that locked face; no compassion for the strained nerves which, for the moment, seemed made of steel, but took a morning journal, some three days old, and a more recent telegram from his pocket.

"Read for yourself," he said, coldly. "You might not believe me."

Constance could not read, the paper shook in her hand;

the telegram seemed like a bit of blurred paper, for the letters all ran together.

"Father, can you see? Can you read?" she cried out in her anguish. "Is it true? Oh! is it true?"

Hudson took the paper and read a paragraph which had been sent to the public press, not aloud, he had no voice for that; but he made out the meaning, and told her that it was true. William Sterling had been killed only a few days after he reached the station appointed for his first duties, in a sudden raid of the Indians.

When the paragraph was completed, he dropped the paper and turned to Constance. She had given no sign of distress, not even a sob broke from those ashen lips; but white, and still as death itself, she fell forward into the old man's arms.

A face looked into the carriage-window—the same face that had so startled Hudson.

"He is at home, and ready, sir."

"Too late—the lady is ill!"

"Have you tortured us enough? Can I take this poor child home?" asked Hudson, sternly.

"It is not I that have tortured you, Hudson. As for the girl, you know well enough I would do anything to save her a moment's sorrow. Be reasonable. You were attempting to cheat me, and I outgeneraled you, that is all."

"No; it is not all—you have nearly killed her. More than that, I solemnly believe you have been the cause of that young man's death. No one who crosses your path ever escapes."

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE DESPERATE BRIDAL.

CHURCH laughed: it might have been in derision of the charge which Hudson had made against him, or that he accepted it as a triumphant fact.

The laugh sent a shiver through the young girl, who, till that moment, had rested like a dead creature on her father's bosom. The words of her father had aroused her to consciousness; that answering laugh kindled all her realized life into rage, silent and bitter as death. A hot, red color flashed in and out of her face, kindling it as with living fire one moment, and leaving it like ashes the next. The conviction that Church had conspired to murder her husband, fastened upon her from that moment.

"Are you better, Constance?" Church inquired, in his low, soft voice.

"Better? Oh, yes! I am much better, thank you," she answered, in a voice so hoarse and changed, that it disturbed him with momentary doubts.

"Then why not go in, as I had arranged? The minister is ready; your father is willing, I answer for that. You shall never repent it, Constance, for I love you dearly."

Hudson, whose arm was still around Constance, felt her shiver at these words as if a cold blast were sweeping by—but she did not speak.

"If I have any power over your father, such as he has told you of, it will end the moment you become my wife."

Again some cold blast seemed to pass over the girl. She leaned toward her father and whispered,

"Is this so? Would it save you from him?"

"He has the notes—let him give them up," was the faint reply.

Church heard it, and answered,

"Consent, Constance, and they shall be given up before we leave the carriage."

She looked steadily through the carriage-window and spoke like one in a trance.

"Give them to me here, and this moment! It is in me to break his chains now. In another hour—who knows how I may feel in another hour?"

Hudson held his breath; the next moment might set him free of an awful fear—but he thought of the cost and interfered.

"No, Constance."

"Father, I will!"

"But take a little time—this news has driven you mad."

"Then I am the more fit for this work. Yes, sir, I *am* mad! I thirst for something that will surely come to your cost if you marry me so. Have you the courage?"

"Have I the courage to marry you, Constance? Yes; if I had to pass through an army of demons to reach the altar."

"When you know that I do not love you; that I hate myself for ever having taken your gifts, or listened to you for one minute; that I look upon you as—as——"

"Only look upon me as your husband; as a man who adores you, and will *make* you love him. That will be enough!"

"But I warn you."

"Dear Constance, you are angry now—you think that I have been harsh with your father. It was you that made me so. When I saw you attempting to evade me, that was all the power I had to hold you back. I am his friend. When you are my wife, his interests will be mine—I will befriend him as no son-in-law ever did before."

Constance lifted her hand to check him.

"Give me those papers."

Church beckoned to the man who had gone back to the side-walk, and was pacing up and down in a slow, thoughtful way.

"Here," he said, reaching forth his hand, and dropping some money into the other's palm, "we shall not need you. Good-morning."

The man bowed and walked away, whistling softly to himself.

When the persons in the carriage were left to themselves, Church drew forth a small package from his pocket and handed it to Hudson, who shrank back at first; but on the second instant snatched at it eagerly, and began to look the papers over with trembling hands.

Constance watched him steadily, her features hard and white, her eyes glittering.

"They are right—they are all here; but, oh! my child, rather than see you so sacrificed, I would gladly go with that man."

"Hush, father!"

Constance drew the travelling shawl around her shoulders, and arose.

"Come, father, and see your chains drop away."

Church descended from the carriage and reached out his hand. She did not touch it, but stepped to the pavement without help, and walked firmly up the steps.

Hudson followed unsteadily, like a drunken man shivering and reeling in his walk, holding the forged notes tightly in his grasp, and looking at them every other moment, as if they had been serpents that could sting him.

Thus, filled with bitter antagonism, each soul in revolt against the other, these three persons entered the clergyman's dwelling.

CHAPTER L.

OFF INTO DARKNESS.

THAT night a train going southward bore Church and Constance away from the city. Hudson went with them to the depot, haggard and miserable in spite of the sudden freedom that had fallen upon him; Constance seemed to have grown hard and stern since the ceremony of that morning. She neither shed a tear, or uttered a moan; but this cold steadiness chilled him to the heart; it was so unlike anything he had seen in the girl before.

"Father, you will write to me?"

"Yes, daughter—and you?"

"Sometimes; but I shall come back soon!"

"Has he promised that?"

"I have."

There was a sneer on that beautiful lip. Truly, this man Church would not find the young girl he had tempted and distorted a facile tool, even in his adroit hands.

"Ah! here you are, large as life; saw your face at the carriage-window; knew the trunk, too; cut after it with all my might; hadn't been gone an hour before the post-man brought this."

Rhoda Weeks was all in a glow from hard running; the matches were tumbled about in her basket; her bonnet had blown back, and every article of dress around her seemed in commotion. She thrust a letter in Constance's hand, who put it mechanically into her pocket. Nothing seemed to have the power of arousing that poor bride from the iron stillness that had fallen upon her. In a moment she seemed to have forgotten Rhoda's presence, though the girl was looking wistfully into her face, expecting some thanks for the exertion she had made.

"Well, if you won't speak to me, I'll go," she said, at last, choking down a sob of disappointment.

Then Constance aroused herself and tried to smile.

"You here, little Rhoda? Come to bid us good-by—that is kind. I—I am so glad to see you again. How long it is since morning—don't you think so, little Rhoda? Don't look so miserable, child—even days like this have an end; the sun is setting now. Oh! how I wish it would never rise again!"

"Why, Constance, how you look. What's the matter?"

"Do I? Oh, nothing! Kiss me, little Rhoda, we have been good friends."

"Except a little spat now and then," said Rhoda, who was naturally a truthful creature.

"Oh! that is nothing, child, we are friends for all of that. You see I have so few friends—no one but you in the wide world."

Rhoda felt tears stealing into her eyes, and kneeling on the floor, began to assort her matches, hoping thus to conceal that she was crying. Lifting her head, she saw Mr. Church coming toward them, and starting up, prepared to be off.

"Oh, mercy! if there an't old Church, with his gray mustacher and shiny boots. Good-by! Good-by!"

Away the little creature darted, jerking her bonnet forward as she went. Constance looked after her with a wild, yearning wish to break away and follow her back to the old home, which seemed to her a paradise from which she was shut out forever.

"Come, darling, the ferry-boat is here."

With a start and a pang, which brought back all the present, she rejected the man's arm, but walked on board the boat.

Hudson followed her in mournful silence; all the joy of his freedom was broken up by the certainty that, to save

him, that poor girl was enslaved, and probably separated from him forevermore.

They stood upon the platform together. Church was in high spirits; the indomitable vanity of the man sustained him, as a consciousness of right would have given hope to a better person. He could not doubt that a few months of devotion and profuse liberality in all the sources of enjoyment at his command, would entice this beautiful young creature into his life so completely, that she would be as much his slave as the man had been who watched them with such despairing eyes. As for any lasting fancy for the young man, from whom he had so adroitly separated his bride, he smiled at the idea. Where was the youth or comeliness which could match his plotting brain and indomitable will? The girl was his, married solemnly by all the ties that can bind a woman at the altar—the rest was in his own power. What woman ever had, or could resist him? Not the half-formed, impulsive young creature, whom he had seized so ruthlessly and swept into his own life that morning.

The bell rang, the soft puffs of the engine grew louder and stronger, the train began to vibrate. Hudson took Constance in his arms, and would have blessed her, but the words died in his throat. She was cold as marble, but shook in every fibre, as marble never can.

"Come," said Church, gently, "the train will be moving."

Constance turned upon him quickly, her face white, her lips quivering; some bitter word trembled there, but it found no utterance. She stepped into the car, and he followed her, waving his hand lightly to the poor father.

The train moved, leaving Hudson on the platform, gazing wildly after it. He longed to see that face once more looking back upon him; but it did not appear, nor the hand waving a last adieu, which might have softened the keen sense of desolation and self reproach that fell upon him.

All was blank along that long line of windows. Then came a confused rattle of wheels, puffs of curling smoke followed the sweep of the train, which spread out into a broad curtain of vapory gray, and disappeared in a sombre mist, which seemed to wrap itself and settle all around him, filling the atmosphere with gloom.

CHAPTER LI.

RHODA HIDES AWAY HER HOUSEHOLD SKELETON.

LUKE came home from the theatre weary and saddened as no fatigue could have left him. His step was heavy as he came up stairs; his eyes dim with grief that was too proud for weeping. He flung his violin-case on the bed with a jar that made the instrument within send forth a faint wail. Then he lay down quietly by it, and covering his face with both hands, gave way to the grief that overwhelmed him. His mouth, so feminine in its sweetness, began to quiver, a flush of red glowed on such portions of his forehead as the hands did not conceal.

"She did not look toward me, not once—not once!" he complained, turning suddenly, and throwing his arm over the violin, as if that had some power to comfort him. "Not once, and I know that she is going away. Oh! that terrible West! it swallows up everything that we love—the good lady, pretty Constance, and now her——"

The door of the outer room opened softly, and Rhoda came in, leading her father by the hand, or, rather, dragging him along with all her little might, scolding him whenever she could get breath enough for speech.

"How could you do it, you wicked, wicked, old darling? How could you go down there and get yourself unsteady

again? Don't you know that the neighbors see it, and talk about it, and make fun? The next time I'll lock you in and put the key in my pocket. I will."

"No, you won't, little one—no you won't do any such thing, you pint of cider—you threatening your own father. I—I'm ashamed of you, Rhoda. I'm hu—humili—ated and dread—dreadfully dis—cou—couraged. Remember the scriptures, Bi—Bible, I—I mean. Hon—hon—or thy fa—fa—ther and th—thy mo——"

"Oh, father, father! don't say that! Don't mention her name when the drink is hot on your lips—I can't stand it," cried Rhoda, seizing the little, dry hand which was waving to and fro, with a motion feeble as his broken speech. "Don't, don't mention *her*."

"Why—why not? She was a—a splendid—a—a——"

"Father, father! I won't hear it. Stop now this minute. What do you want to hurt me so, for?"

Here Weeks was seized with a fit of maudlin tenderness, and throwing out his arms, half fell from his chair in attempting to embrace the child, who evaded him, for his hot breath made her faint.

She sat down a little way off in piteous distress. "Oh, dear! what can I do—what can I do?" she cried out, wringing her little hands. "He grows worse and worse. I can't keep him in the house, all I can do; the neighbors will find us out. Oh, father, dear! please, please don't go down to the corner again."

"No, not go—go to the cor—cor—ner. Who—who's b—been to—to—to the cor——"

Here poor little Weeks gave out, his head drooped on his breast, and his eyes closed, both hands fell heavily, he became quite oblivious of the poor child and everything else.

That moment Luke came out of the bedroom, his fine eyes heavy with sadness, and his lips tremulous. He stole

up to Rhoda and put an arm around her neck. She started and looked around.

"Oh! it is only you, Luke! I thought it might be some one else come to pity us, you know."

"Shall I help you get him into the bed-room, Rhoda?"

"Yes, yes; people are always coming in."

Rhoda shook her father, who opened his heavy eyes with a stare, and made him attempt to stand up.

"Wha—what is—is it? Fi—fire! N—no. It's only a doz—dozen candles ho—hop—ping about. Stop 'em—stop 'em."

"Come to bed, father, come. It's getting late, and you are not well," said Luke, allowing the little man to rest on him.

"Never—never bet—better in my life; but, as it's you, I'll go to bed cer—certainly. I—I will."

So Luke, staggering under the weight of his father's heavy pressure, led the old man away, and soon a deep, sonorous breathing proved that he had sunk into a profound sleep. Then Luke came into the room again, and sat down despondent enough, while Rhoda went up to his chair and leaned upon it, sighing wearily.

"What is the matter now, Luke? Something more than father, I can see."

The boy lifted his fine eyes to hers, and answered with frank mournfulness.

"Rhoda, she is going away!"

"Going away? Where?"

"Out west."

"How do you know, Luke?"

"This way. Last night I followed her home from the theatre. I always do that, Rhoda, and I think she knows it; for sometimes I slip a little bunch of flowers into her hand; sometimes I hold the carriage-door when she gets in, and then she thanks me, you know. To-night she stood in

the lobby while her father spoke to a gentleman, and I heard him say that the whole family were going west, to be gone he was not sure how long. He had interests in some town where the railroad is to be, and was going to live there. Oh, Rhoda! it seemed as if I would faint, the words came on me so suddenly. *She* turned and looked at me, smiling; but when she saw my face, the smile was gone; and reaching out her hand for the flowers I held, she said very softly, 'Good-bye. I shall miss your music and your flowers where we are going.'

"Rhoda, my hand trembled so it dropped the flowers. I fell on my knees to gather them up, and so kissed her foot under the hem of her dress, for the crowd was great, and no one could see how my poor heart was breaking.

"When I gave her the flowers, she shook my hand so kindly, and said she hoped to see me again some time. Oh, Rhoda! that word breaks my heart. When will it be? When can it be?"

"Don't fret, Luke. You have your music left," said Rhoda, sadly at a loss for some means of consolation; for her bright, practical nature found it difficult to comprehend the passion and sensitive refinement of his; "besides, I will be so good to you."

"You always are good to me," answered the lad, with a mist of tears in his large eyes.

Rhoda kissed his forehead and smoothed his hair like a little old woman; and then the tears began to drop large and fast, for the boy no longer tried to restrain them.

"No," said Rhoda, smitten with self-reproach, "I didn't sew the buttons on your tunic after last week's wash, and you had to fasten it with a pin. It shan't happen any more; but I was so tired that night, and he came home so—but never mind that, you needn't trouble about buttons, I promise you."

CHAPTER LII.

MUSIC AMONG THE FLOWERS.

LUKE hardly knew what his sister was saying, though he looked at her earnestly all the time before he made this mournful answer.

"Oh, Rhoda! shall I never see her again?"

"Do you love her so very much, brother Luke?"

"Love her? Do boys love angels or worship them?"

"Well, I don't know which; but you see, Luke, this is all poetry, and so on. Whoever heard of an angel with a bird's wing on its hat, and high-heeled Butler boots on its feet? It isn't to reason."

"Don't—don't talk in that way, Rhoda. It makes me shiver."

Rhoda got a little out of patience here, and began to set back the chairs with great energy.

"Do you want to see her again so very much, Luke?"

"Do I want to see her? Haven't I said so?"

"When are they going out west?"

"I don't know. She said nothing about the time."

"Oh, indeed! Then what are you fretting about? It may be months from this; you will see her fifty times. She will be at the theatre to-morrow night, I dare say."

Luke brightened out of his despondency and sat upright.

"Do you really think so, Rhoda?"

"Think so? Of course I do. Now go to bed, and——"

"No," said Luke, buttoning his tunic. "I—I will go out a little while."

"What, this time of night?"

"Oh! it isn't so very late. Never mind me."

Luke went into the bedchamber, and came out again

carrying his father's violin, which he made a vain effort to hide under his tunic. But Rhoda saw it, and called out,

"Father's Cremona! What are you going to do with that?"

Luke came close to her, and whispered eagerly,

"Rhoda, don't, don't make a noise. I've done it before; and she looked out of the window. It doesn't make her angry."

"Done—done what, Luke?"

"Why, played under her window. I have found a way through the garden of the corner house into theirs—a little place full of roses, white jasmines, and borders of heliotrope, with a balcony all overrun with honeysuckles. *Her* room is just above the balcony. You needn't look so, child, it has never made her angry. Indeed, I think she likes it."

"And you are going there to-night?"

"Yes, now that you have brought me back to life. I forgot that there was no time mentioned. Perhaps she will speak to me, Rhoda."

"Well, perhaps she will. I know that I would. If any boy was to bring even a jews'-harp and play it under my window, and there was a piece of pie or cake in the house, I'd drop it to him, sure."

"Kiss me, Rhoda—I'll be back soon. Just leave the door on the latch."

Luke went down stairs with a light step, carrying the Cremona under his arm; and after a brisk walk, and a hard scramble over some high yard-fences, stood in a little inclosure of flowers, that gave out their delicious odors to the night, and made respiration a pleasure as he passed through them. Climbing softly, he mounted to the balcony, forcing his way through the honeysuckles that rained a shower of fragrant dew on him in return; and directly the faintest and sweetest strains of music that ever thrilled a summer

night with harmony, came stealing out from that shelter of flowers.

A young girl lay sleeping sweetly in the room overhead. The moonlight stole in upon her through the volumes of white lace that floated over the window and the bed, silvering them with a delicate transparency, and etherealizing the lovely face that lay beneath; one soft cheek resting on her hand, as Murillo puts his cherubs to sleep among the clouds; dark hair of shadowy brown lay in waves on the pillow. An arm, not yet rounded to its full promise of beauty, lay in relief on the counterpane, looking still and white as marble, with the loose sleeves falling back from it and lying in a wave across the shoulder.

The girl stirred in her sleep, and a smile crept over her mouth—that music was sighing through her young heart even in its slumber. Louder and sweeter the strains swelled up to the chamber, and with them came a soft wind and the curtains stirred gently as clouds float in the heavens. Then the girl began to move amid the whiteness of her couch; both hands were lifted to her face, and fell away again, leaving the eyes wide open and full of pleasant wonder. She rose to her elbow, flung back the lace, and advancing her beautiful head into the moonlight, listened in a trance of delight.

"How sweet! how lovely! Oh! if papa were here to listen! I wonder if it will reach him! I will wake him. It seems wicked to enjoy this all to myself."

Dora started up, put on a loose dress, and with her pretty feet gleaming like marble on the rich colors of the carpet, stole to the door of her father's room.

"Papa, mamma, wake up and listen!" she said, looking into the darkened chamber; "that handsome boy from the theatre is hid away in the honeysuckles again playing like an angel. Listen! listen!"

Back Eudora went to her chamber, and leaning out of the window, gave herself up to the music, happy because she

knew that her delight was shared by the two beings she loved best, and with whom, up to this time, she had shared every thought of her soul.

Luke saw the girl from his covert among the honeysuckles, with the moonlight glorifying her young face, and those masses of shadowy hair throwing it out in exquisite relief. A love of the beautiful was strong in the boy's heart as his thirst for music; and with that came the sweet agony of a first love, such as no man ever felt, but which sometimes lifts a child to a level with the angels.

When he saw her leaning above him, a thrill, more subtle and exquisite than his own music, ran through his delicate frame, and gave a tremor to his fingers that made the notes beneath them shiver into a delicious silence.

Eudora leaned forward and listened eagerly—was he gone? Had she aroused her parents too late?

"Luke!"

She had never spoken his name before. How did she know it? Luke! How sweetly the one syllable dropped from her lips; he could see them move in the moonlight like rose-buds cleaving together.

She knew that he was there by the shadows gathering around him in the balcony, and called out again,

"Luke! Luke!"

The boy came out from his shelter and raised his face to look upon her.

"You are not angry with me?"

"Angry? No, no! It was like waking up in heaven. I never heard that air before."

"I have another. It came to me after I had seen you. Please don't move—don't look away."

The violin was lifted lovingly to his shoulder, and once more the music that sprang out of his own genius, clear and perfect as the fall of crystal water-drops on marble, made the flowers around him vibrate and drop their dew into the

moonlight lovingly, like a rain of happy tears. Eudora never moved, but bent over the window-sill entranced. She heard her father's window open, and called out,

"Oh, papa! isn't it lovely?"

The boy got frightened, now, and leaped over the balcony, afraid to look upward, and burning with sensitive shame.

But a kind voice called him back.

"Let us have more of your music," it said, "Do not go away just yet."

Luke moved under shelter of the balcony, and again filled the air with sweet sounds; but the zest and glory of his evening was gone. He dared not look up at Eudora's window as he had done before, and a discord now and then broke the harmony that had been so perfect a few minutes before.

Eudora felt no such restraint, but reached out her hand for a tiny bouquet of white jasmines and moss rose-buds, which stood in a champagne-glass on her toilet, and dropped it through the moonlight to the boy's feet. His music stopped instantly; he stooped, seized upon the flowers, and lifting his glowing face one moment to the window, darted toward the fence, and disappeared over it. Once on the other side, he fell upon his knees, pressing the flowers to his lips again and again, as if they had been living things that could give back his caresses. He heard the windows of the house he had left close; and struck all at once by the stillness of the night, went home holding the bouquet to his lips from time to time as he went.

"Is that you, Luke?" inquired Rhoda, arousing herself from the depths of her father's arm-chair, in which she had fallen sound asleep. "How long you have been!"

She was rubbing her little fists into her eyes, and stretching herself like a baby, when he came up and kissed her with a fervor that brought her eyes wide open on the instant.

"What is that? What is it you have got? My, how sweet it smells!"

"Don't! Don't touch it, Rhoda! She gave it to me!"

"She! What, the young lady?"

"Yes; and, Rhoda, I—I almost believe—well, I know that she touched it with her mouth before she dropped it.

"Oh, Luke! how can you?"

"But she did, and her father saw it; so did her mother, for I am sure they were behind the curtains—so there couldn't be harm in it."

"No," said Rhoda, "no harm in the world, but she might have flung down a half-dollar instead. What do we want with bouquets?"

"A half-dollar! Rhoda Weeks, I'm ashamed of you!" cried out the boy, flushed red with angry pain.

"Well," said Rhoda, fluttering around him like a frightened bird, "I'm sure I can't see why money isn't just as good as flowers; especially as it can buy 'em up like fun any day. But you know best, Luke; I don't want to make things disagreeable, only just now money is awful scarce with us. He uses a good deal, you know."

Rhoda gave her thumb a little jerk over her shoulder toward the bed-room, and went on again. "Why, Luke, he'll swallow up a whole bundle of matches at a single drink, and keep doing it over and over again till I'm discouraged; that is why money seems the first thing with me."

Luke listened to her in a bewildered way, and grew restless under her practical cares. Wholesome and honorable though they were, he felt them as a discord after the tender harmonies which were still haunting him.

"Good-night," he said, gently. "It is late, I think."

Rhoda watched him for a moment in silence, and when his door was shut, curled herself up in the great easy-chair, wondering why his eyes were so full of light, and why he had become so beautiful all at once.

Can a handsome girl, with feathers in her hat, and heels to her boots, do all that, I wonder, with a boy like our Luke? Now, I've worked and worked, and sewed buttons, and sold matches for him ever so long, and he don't seem to care for it all so much as he cares for that sneaky little bunch of flowers. Well, never mind, I'll push the old clothes business on, and get boots and heels for myself. It's them things that do it; and she shan't get my Luke away from me without a tussel. I ought to have been shut up on bread-and-water for sending him to the theatre with them little baskets—they did it. Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Here Rhoda let herself out of the chair, and was creeping to bed, feeling very lonely and disconsolate, when a knock at the door called her back.

It was Mr. Hudson, whom she had not seen since his daughter's marriage!

"I saw a light from under your door," he said, "and come up for some matches."

"Then you have come home. Dear, dear! I am so glad! Here are the matches, help yourself, and welcome. How is Miss Constance? When did you see her? Is she with you?"

"She is quite well, thank you, Rhoda," answered the man, in a voice that struck the child as more brisk and resolute than that she had been used to in the old times. "How is Weeks and my friend, Luke? Well, I hope."

"Oh, splendid! Anything else, Mr. Hudson?"

"Nothing, thank you."

Hudson stole down stairs, unlocked his parlor, and went into the darkness there for the first time since his daughter's wedding. After some moments he came out again, and called to Rhoda from the stairs, asking her if she would be kind enough to have the rooms aired and put in order, as he was coming back again for a time, and might bring some one with him.

Rhoda promised everything he desired, and all the next day was busy as a bird in the spring, putting everything to the best advantage in that dismal little parlor.

CHAPTER LIII.

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL LADY IN WASHINGTON GIVES A DINNER PARTY.

SHE stood before her mirror, preparing to descend into the magnificent drawing room below, in which the guests for a sumptuous dinner party would assemble in a few minutes,—stood and looked at herself with a glow of such proud satisfaction as perfect beauty might well bring to its possessor.

You would not have known this beautiful woman at the first glance, for she was a vision of loveliness so different and superior to anything you have seen in Constance Hudson, that her best friend might have hesitated to claim her as the girl who had passed under that name. She seemed taller, for the robust health of her first youth had softened into exquisite delicacy of outline; violet shadows lay under her eyes, and the thick curling lashes seemed to have grown longer; but this change was nothing to the brightness and glory that had fallen upon her hair; a golden hue kindled its deep soft brown into something radiant, changing the whole face so materially that the woman scarcely recognised herself.

"Madam can hardly recognise herself," lisped the French maid who stood behind her, smoothing down the loops of a sash in which she had mingled the gossamer lightness of a Brussels lace scarf, which flowed like a mist over the folds of her satin dress, and lost itself in the train as clouds melt into the blue of a summer sky, "It is superb. There will not be a toilet that can equal it."

Constance turned quickly. The fire that struck from the diamonds on her bosom, quivered like lightning athwart the glass, and completely dazzled her.

"You are right," she said, with a tone of sadness running through the triumph in her voice. "I should not know myself."

"Here is Madame's fan, and a tiny bouquet which Monsieur Church desires that you should wear for his sake."

A slight frown contracted that clear forehead, and the red lips curved.

"Put them away," she said. "I do not like the perfume. Besides, it is enough that I have accepted his diamonds. Give me my fan and my handkerchief. Now shake out the folds of my train. I am going down."

Standing just within the drawing-room door, and looking out into the broad hall, stood the master of the house, waiting for a first glance of the woman who had so grown into his heart, that his love for her had become almost abject worship. His heart leaped as he heard the soft rustle of her movement, and saw the silken-clad foot plant itself lightly on the first step of the broad staircase, adown which her dress swept in waves as she descended toward him in all her superb loveliness.

The man absolutely trembled as he reached forth his hand to welcome her. She did not touch it even in thankfulness for the jewels that blazed upon her bosom, but held up her dress with one hand, and occupied the other with her handkerchief, passing him by with a careless nod and more careless "thank you," as she entered the drawing-room.

"Ah, this is beautiful," she said, looking around for some object that made the air fragrant with odors, and advancing to a great vase overflowing with hot-house flowers, which took her by surprise. A card lay among the blossoms "From the President!" "How kind," she added, with a certain haughty carelessness, as if such gifts were common to her.

"Few ladies in Washington can boast of a compliment like that, Mrs. Church," said the master of the house, drawing close to Constance, and attempting to steal his arm around her waist, but she evaded him with a graceful sweep of the person, saying:

"Oh yes, I understand how pleasant such things would be, if they always came for the first time, and to no one else. Dear me, here comes another huge arrangement of flowers; bring them in Mr. Church, and let me know who they are from."

Church took a basket of flowers from the servant who was bringing them in, and carried them to his wife.

"From Senator —," she said, opening a note that came with the basket—"how tiresome the man is getting to be. Thinks they will be pretty for my table, does he? Well, let them be put somewhere, among the ornaments. This is a bribe for the privilege of leading me in—but it's no go. I—" Constance checked herself, and turned crimson, but cast a defiant look on her husband, as if daring him to say a word about this little outbreak of her old character.

"I only wish it were etiquette to lead you in myself," said the husband, "to own the truth, Constance, I almost hate the man who takes you from my side under any pretence."

"I dare say. You are awfully jealous, a mole might see that—for the life of me I cannot tell why; for these great men we hear so much about dwindle down to nothing when we get close to them. Here, John, take these and arrange them on the table—came from the public hot-house, I dare say," added the reckless woman, as the servant carried off her flowers. "The people taxed to pay for every blossom, or the men up yonder would not be half so liberal."

"Ah, Constance, the admiration of these men has spoiled you," said Church, rather pleased with her imperial disdain.

"Their admiration—no, no, Mr. Church, I am not child enough for that—but here comes a guest."

There had been no sound of a carriage, but the door opened, and Constance caught a glimpse of a rather tall and spare man in black, who bent forward in his swift walk up the hall, moving with a sort of plunge, as if he had some enemy ahead which he hoped to pounce upon.

"It is Crist," said Church, speaking under his breath, as if afraid that the name would not be received with favor by the haughty woman at his side.

"What, that wretch! How came he with an invitation, I sent him none?" Constance demanded, with prompt repudiation in her voice and manner.

"But I did, Mrs. Church, and it is important that you receive him with civility at least, if you have any regard for your husband's interest."

"But he is under the ban already. Charges are made before some committee against him, for conduct official and social, that make him an unfit associate for any honest man or respectable woman—one of our invited guests is chairman of that committee."

Church laughed and rubbed his gloved hands with infinite relish of the simplicity betrayed by this speech.

"What does all that amount to? They will meet like bosom friends; Crist has patronage which his judges will not like to disturb. You will see, you will see."

CHAPTER LIV.

MR. CRIST.

MR. CRIST came into the room, black from head to foot save for the snowy linen at his bosom and wrists, where it fell

over a pair of immaculately white gloves. Certainly the man had done his best to appear like a gentleman, and even held himself almost upright as he came in.

"Ah! Crist, you are welcome. I am glad you came early, it gives us a few minutes for conversation. My dear, it is Mr. Crist."

"Yes, I know," answered Constance, reaching out a reluctant hand. "One sees Mr. Crist so often that he hardly requires a presentation. But you have something to say to each other."

With a wave of her hand, Constance left the two men, and passing under a cloud of amber-hued silk that supplied the place of folding doors, entered the blue saloon beyond, where she sat down, flushed with indignation, angrily beating the carpet with her foot, and striking her fan against her knee with a force that shattered the delicate pearl handle all to pieces.

"I hate this man," she muttered, "they are too much alike—always some privacy between them. If I cared enough about either of them to ask, their secret, whatever it is, would not be one long. I was born to find such things out; but to have him here, when every invitation was to be select! I have half a mind to order him out of the house."

As Constance muttered these things to herself, a little confusion arose in front of the house, and Church came forward, looked through the curtains, and called to her,

"Constance—Constance, your guests are at the door."

Sure enough! a carriage drew up at the house; a gust of fresh air swept in through the front door, and with it came a rustle of silks, the gleam of white opera cloaks, and the fall of gliding feet as they went up to the dressing-room. Then another, and still another carriage, and a bevy of stately men and pretty women fluttered into the soft wax-light that flooded the drawing-room, in which the most

beautiful and popular woman in Washington waited to receive them.

The most trying position for any American lady is a dinner table in the national capital, where the best intellect and most brilliant wit of the country is sure to be met, and mere beauty goes to the wall, unless sustained by superior ability. But even here, Constance sustained herself well. With her, rare natural capacity took the place of elaborate accomplishments. From her first plunge into the fashionable life of the metropolis, she had measured her own quick wit and ready tact with others, and maintained her self-confidence so well, that no man or woman would have guessed that all these scenes were new to her.

That night, Constance was resplendent; no hostess ever received her guests with finer wit, or more cordial hospitality. In that broad, soft light, amid the glitter of crystal and gleam of silver, with the sweet breath of blooming flowers floating around her, the girl we have known in that faded and stifling tenement parlor, might have passed for a queen among her subjects—for the woman filled her station with the graceful talent of a practiced diplomat.

Church, who sat opposite his wife, watched her that night with a glow of genuine pride. Who among all that brilliant party could compare with his wife? Even the sumptuous wealth with which he surrounded her, seemed too little for a nature so fair, so witty, and so exquisitely genial. No wonder the man who sat next her seemed entranced by that clear sweet voice and sparkling conversation. But one thing annoyed him. Mr. Crist, by an arrangement of his own, had been placed at the left hand of the hostess, who resented the intrusion by scarcely noticing him. This made the fox-like face of her unwelcome guest lower ominously, and he cast sharp glances across the table, that pierced Church like arrows.

Other things had arisen to anger this man, who was noth-

ing more in fact than the head of an important bureau in the Treasury department, but who, by audacity and an adroit way of granting favors, had lifted himself into a sort of companionship with the statesmen who made him. But a disgraceful odium had been cast around the man of late; and the guests at that table recognized his presence with a coldness that disturbed both him and his host. So a strange, surly expression came over his face, as he sat by this brilliant woman, which made him look older and sterner than you would have thought him, if you judged him only from that iron gray beard and hair.

Constance cared nothing about his discontent, but turned her white shoulder more decidedly upon him, and went on sparkling and fascinating every one around her. When she arose from the table, and entered the drawing-room, Church managed to get near her, and she saw that fierce displeasure burned in his eyes.

"Woman, are you mad? Beware how you insult my friends in this fashion."

Constance heard this fierce whisper, gave her husband a haughty stare, and went on with her conversation, though she heard his breath come quick, and his teeth grind together in ominous fury.

When the party broke up that night, this man Crist remained behind; for Church had urged his stay, hoping that Constance would atone, by some graceful concession, for her dangerous rudeness. But, with the lofty disdain of a goddess she swept from the room, and went up stairs, passing out of their sight like some tropical bird, heedless of snares, and defying all danger.

CHAPTER LV.

THE UNOPENED LETTER.

It had been arranged before this dinner party was given, that Church was to take Constance back to visit her father, on the next day. She thought of this with a flutter of mingled delight and dread, as she left those two men together. Some preparations were to be made for the journey, and, up to this time, she had forgotten to give any orders regarding them.

Letters had frequently passed between Constance and her father, but they were all vague and unsatisfactory on both sides. That which lay deepest in the heart of each, could not be written about; so their correspondence was mere surface writing,—husks incapable of satisfying any hunger of the soul. Up to this time, the woman had shrank from meeting her father face to face, lest he should see all the feverish misery brought on her by the sacrifice she had made. She was brave enough to desire concealment of the vulture, whose beak was forever gnawing toward her heart. But about this time her robust health commenced to give way, and a longing came upon her to speak with the old man for whom she had suffered so much.

Church had consented, and in the morning they were to set forth. She thought of this with a thrill of expectation, while mounting the stairs, and then remembered another thing. That day was the anniversary of her marriage with Church. It was a year since then—a year since she had known herself a widow.

This thought had shot through her soul more than once that day, but she resolutely put it aside. Now it would not be evaded, but came back upon her with overwhelming force. The feverish excitement of the night was over, and she had

no power to resist the mournful truth. Notwithstanding her beauty, her wit, and the homage amounting almost to adoration that met her on every side, she was a miserable, miserable woman.

A pretty dressing room opened from the bed chamber which Constance occupied, and in it she spent most of her time. She entered this apartment, feeling weary and depressed; for amid all this splendor the young creature had no real enjoyment. In her highest social triumphs the heart in her bosom was constantly crying out in anguish for the love which had passed away from her forever. Go where she would, say what she would, that one form was eternally by her side, that one voice whispered in her ear.

This evening, the woman who had sparkled like a star in her drawing room, slunk with the feelings of a criminal into the privacy of her own chamber, and amid all its splendor fell into a state of utter desolation.

A fire was burning in the grate of glittering steel, soft lights fell through shades that seemed moulded out of pearls—a delicate gleam of silk and the snowy mist of lace floated before the windows—but Constance saw nothing of these things as she came in, sick of prosperity, hating the success she had once been so eager in seeking. Down into the silken depths of an easy chair the woman dropped, and clasping both hands over her knees, fell into a train of harrowing thoughts.

"Just a year," she murmured, "just a year! How long it seems! how long it seems! Oh my God, will all my poor life drag like this?"

The great tears came rolling down her cheeks and dropped away like diamonds, that you could have counted one by one as they fell and were crushed in the floating lace of her dress. She planted her feet upon the fender, and bowed her face down upon her knees, shuddering and moaning over that one year of her life. Twelve months a widow,

and all those twelve months a wife—the wife of a man she knew to be hard and vile enough to take her for a price.

After awhile the woman arose and prepared to undress herself. She stood before the glass all changed and sad, regarding her beauty with heavy eyes that seemed to reproach her from its icy surface. How resplendent she was, how strangely the golden hair gleamed back upon her; that hair which should have been hidden under a widow's cap. The very rustle of her dress brought a shudder with it. One by one she took off the ornaments which he had given her and cast them on the table. Then, drawing a deep, deep breath, she folded both arms over her bosom and sat down in the chair again, with such feelings of freedom as a slave knows when the chains are shaken from his limbs. Thus she sat a full hour until the fire burned low, and a chill of cold made her tremble.

"I am cold, I am cold!" she moaned, looking wearily around her. "Is it that he, my husband, my beloved, is near me, bringing the ice of the grave with him? Oh, William, William! do you hate, do you despise me, in that other world? I did it for my father—I did it for my father! have none of the angels you are among, told you that I look into my soul, dearest, and see how I loathe all this! Others would not believe it, but you will, you will!"

Chilled and suffering from the cold, the young woman looked around for some garment to wrap herself in; a heap of diamonds flashing on the white marble of the dressing-table, and a few scattered flowers, mocked her coldness. She turned from them with sick loathing. They were given by the man whose voice came droning to her from below.

But she must prepare for her journey. No vestige of all this unholy wealth should go with her.

All at once she thought of the little trunk which had been so hastily packed for her journey west, on her fatal

wedding-day. In that was a dress that Sterling had given her; the very garment which she had put on that morning, while her bosom swelled with tears, at the blessed thought of seeing him again. On reaching Washington, she had put the dress aside, for it seemed like sacrilege, to wear it in the presence of that man, and she held it sacred, as widows keep their mourning garments, long after they are faded out of use.

Constance started up, and, taking a wax light from her dressing-table, passed into a closet in the back part of the house, where the little battered trunk had been stored away.

Constance trembled violently, as she drew forth the trunk, and her face was white as snow when she opened it. The dove-colored dress with its modest blue trimmings, lay carefully folded on the top. Tears rushed into her eyes and blinded her, as she took it up and fled from the room, for she had no courage to look at anything else that trunk contained.

"Poor thing, poor thing! how natural it looks!" she moaned, unfolding the dress as if it had been a shroud. "How happy we were, my beloved, that day when you bought it for me. I will wear it home again; nothing this man has given me, shall cross the threshold of that dear old room. The dear old room! Oh how happy we were, you and I, darling! Now—Oh my God! my God! I am that man's wife!"

Constance fell down on her knees, and burying her face in the easy chair, sobbed in pitiful distress, while the voice of her husband came up from the lower rooms, where he still held a secret conference with his friend.

Passionate grief must exhaust itself, sooner or later. By degrees, the sobs that filled that little room, subsided, and Constance seated herself by the white ashes of the fire, and resolutely unfolded the dress in which she was

resolved to travel home, the next day. As she did so, a paper rustled under her hands. She drew it forth from the pocket, and leaning toward the light, saw that it was a letter directed to herself. She knew the hand-writing. All around her mouth came the white agony of an awful surprise. Had her young husband written her from the dead?

She arose trembling from her chair, and tottering like an old woman, went up to the light, read the letter through, and fell upon the floor.

It was the letter Rhoda Weeks had given her on the railroad platform just one year ago that day—a letter from her living husband, William Sterling, full of love, and beseeching her to come to him.

In her fall the hand of that miserable woman struck the steel fender, and the letter fell inside. A spark from the embers seized upon it, grew, brightened, and spread into a quick flame which left nothing but a scroll of black gossamer quivering among the gray ashes. The flame, as it blazed up for one moment, revealed a deadly white face contracted and locked as if death had fallen upon it suddenly in the crisis of some great agony.

When Church came up-stairs an hour later, he found his wife sitting upon the hearth rug, with both hands locked over her knees, gazing upon some fragments of burnt paper that fluttered in the ashes.

She lifted her head as he came in, saw who he was, and sprang to her feet with the leap of a panther.

CHAPTER LVI.

CONSTANCE RETURNS HOME.

* RHODA had done her work well, and Mr. Hudson's old apartments were in perfect order when he reached them the second day after his visit, but he entered them with a sort of shudder, for all the associations of the place were painful to him, and he looked dismally about the room as a prisoner may be supposed to investigate the dungeon in which he has suffered. He flung the sash open, for the air within was close, and Hudson felt suffocated by it. Directly a carriage drove slowly up to the door, a key turned in the latch, and then a rustle of silks, and rapid footsteps came up the stairs.

Hudson drew a white blind over the window, and hurried toward the door, his arms extended, his eyes full of yearning affection.

"Father!"

"My own, own child!"

She was lighter, more delicate, and altogether a different person from the girl he had parted with a year before at the railroad station. He held her at arms-length, and saw that at a glance her eyes were larger, and the lashes shadowed them more darkly. The rich bloom in her cheeks had softened and almost faded away. She breathed quickly, and with an unequal heave of the chest, arising from the simple exertion of mounting those stairs. Hudson remembered when she would bound up them like a fawn, and never draw a quicker breath.

"Constance, are you ill?"

"Ill? No, indeed! What makes you think so?"

"You are so changed, my child."

"Changed? Of course I am, but not ill—not seriously so, at any rate."

She coughed a little, but threw it off with a laugh.

"Is Church with you?"

"In the city? Yes, but not here—I came alone. Oh, father! I did so long to see you; besides, I must—I must——"

She flung off the black-lace shawl that half-covered her silk dress, threw the pretty cobweb of white lace and rose-buds, that answered as a bonnet, from her head, and flung her gloves after it with one of her old impatient gestures; then she pushed back her hair with both hands and sat down, breathing deeply.

"Father——"

"My child?"

"That man is a fiend!"

"Has he treated you ill? Has he dared——?"

"Hush, hush! don't get into a temper! Nothing of that! I wish he would—oh! I wish he would! Hate, blows—anything would be so much better than his love!"

Hudson glanced at her dress, and the diamonds which flashed on her hands.

"He seems generous, Constance."

"Generous? You mean these?" she cried, glancing at her hands. "Oh, yes! he pelts me with his diamonds and his money—he would make me wear them that you might see how he had kept his promise."

"You used to like such things."

"Did I? Yes, I suppose so; but they might as well be pebbles, now."

"But you have an elegant house; the papers speak of it as something superb."

"So it is—a palace; but I like this stuffy little room better."

"Would you come back here?"

"Would I? No, unless *he* were here, and I as—as I was then."

Her voice faltered, her face grew white to the lips. She looked around as if expecting to see young Sterling's ghost among the shadows.

Hudson took her hands in his.

"Did you love him so, Constance?"

"Love him so? Great heavens, father! you will never guess, never dream how—how——"

"How much you loved him—is that it, Constance?"

"Yes," she whispered.

"And this man Church is your husband?"

"Why do you say that? It stings me, it taunts me to death. Shut me up in the cage of a rattlesnake, and tell me it is forever—as if I didn't know it!"

"I did not intend to wound you, Constance."

"I know that; but I am so fractious. Don't mind it, poor, dear old father."

"And you married him for my sake," said Hudson, mournfully. "I hoped he would make you like him; he has pleasant ways with women generally, and I hoped——"

"So did I hope; but no matter, we do not quarrel."

"That is one comfort," muttered Hudson.

"Is it? I fancy he don't think so."

"But he loves you."

"Desperately!" she answered.

"Then there is some hope."

Constance started up and began to pace the floor. Then she paused before her father, and answered him in a low, hoarse voice, that made his heart sink.

"Father, you know what it is to be that man's slave."

"It was you who delivered me, Constance."

"Father, what would you do if I were threatened with a like fate?"

"Constance, you frighten me."

"Do I? I am frightened myself—wild with terror. Father, William Sterling is alive."

"Alive, and you loved him so. My poor girl!"

"Loved him so?" she repeated, with sharp impatience.

"Father, I was married to that man."

"Married!"

She did not heed the word or his appalled face.

"I had been his wife some months when he went away."

"Constance! Constance! Have mercy!"

"That was the cry I sent up to God when his letter convinced me of the awful fraud which separated us. It is true, father; William Sterling was my husband. This moment he is working like a slave to prepare a home for us both in the far west; it may not be long before he will be here inquiring for me."

"Oh, my God! my God! have compassion on us! He will demand his wife."

"What will you say to him?" she asked, sharply.

"What can I say?"

"This. The girl you married was unworthy of you,—a coarse, uneducated, selfish creature, who loved you after her kind, but hankered for other things—excitement, homage, fine clothes, jewels for her hands, gold powder for her hair; everything that goes to debase a woman whose heart can be so satisfied. Tell him that a man came here, a wicked, low man, who craved her beauty, and loved her more because she did not love him, than for any other reason. He had all the trumpery objects of her desire at command, and tempted her with them. She played with the fire, not meaning to burn herself, not meaning to wrong him; but she tasted of this man's gold, and tangled herself in a web of costly gifts, which drew her to the tempter in spite of her struggles; but love, respect, anything which ennoble a woman's heart, was wanting in this. The woman was coarse, and vain, selfish and grasping—but she was true to her love."

"My poor child, I cannot speak of you thus; he must know that you thought him dead."

"No, father, better not say that. He must never know that I thought him dead; that I did it in my desperation to save my father. He must never hear that, because it would spare me some portion of his contempt, and that would bring on a struggle—for he loved me, father, with a deep, beautiful love, which might have made a good woman of me if this man had not come between us."

"My poor, poor child!"

"Don't pity me, father; but tell me what can be done to escape poor, poor—to escape my husband; for he is my husband, and he loves me. He will come here and ask for me. If I could escape—oh, father! if he could only think me dead and in my grave."

Hudson shrank within himself.

"Do not speak of death in this way, Constance, it may be nearer us than you think."

"Father, it would kill me to see him."

Hudson aroused himself from the stunning effects of this strange confession. He knew that in her marriage Constance had become more the slave of Church than he had ever been; that in attempting to save him she had put the gyves on her own hands.

"Constance, have you told Church? Does he know?"

"Told him of my husband, my honorable, noble, young husband? No, I would die first."

"From fear?"

"No. Still he is a terrible man, father. This crime is not mine or yours. I believed the story he told us."

Hudson groaned.

"But the legal effect; the law is on his side. Guard your secret, Constance, or he will slay you with it. Where are your proofs?"

"Here, father."

She took a card-case of purple velvet from her pocket, and, tearing out the lining, showed him her certificate of marriage carefully concealed underneath.

"Who knows of this, Constance?"

"Ourselves."

"But the clergyman—the witnesses?"

The girl laughed. Even in her greatest distress she would sometimes break into fits of merriment, like a child.

"Oh! I met the clergyman in Washington face to face, only last week, and he did not know me from Adam. No wonder, for I was married in that rattling old brown silk dress, with my hair combed straight back like a Chinese; and when he saw me there was not a better-dressed lady in the rooms—sweeping train, lace flounces, low neck, and crimped hair besides," she added, with a sudden pathos in her voice. "I have grown so thin since then, and my color is all gone. I sometimes think William himself would not know me."

Constance broke off with a sob, lifted her hands, and strove to conceal the tears that followed so quickly on her outburst of laughter. All at once she dropped her hands and looked at her father.

"What have you done with it?"

"The certificate?"

"Yes, yes! I want it."

"But you had better leave it with me, Constance. It is a dangerous paper."

"It is all I have—give it to me."

"But you are so thoughtless."

"Am I?"

She spoke bitterly, and held out her hand for the certificate.

"Better destroy it," said the old man, resolutely, going toward the lamp.

She sprang upon him like a tigress, snatched the certificate, and pressed it to her lips with both hands, as if it had been a child rescued from the flames. Then she sat down and began to cry, rocking herself to and fro, entangling the

lace shawl around the back of her chair with every movement, and giving herself up to a passion of grief such as Hudson had never witnessed in her before.

CHAPTER LVII.

CONSTANCE TELLS HER WRONGS.

HUDSON came toward his daughter gently, but she clasped the paper to her bosom, and turning her face upon him, cried out,

"It is *all* I have. Let me keep it. Let me keep it!"

Then with her poor hands trembling and her breast heaving with tears, she put the paper back into the mutilated card-case, and hid it away in her bosom.

Hudson remonstrated earnestly, and told her of the great danger which lay in the possession of a document which might, any moment, place her at the mercy of a man like Church; but she answered him with a passion of tears that it was all she had left, and that alone kept her heart from breaking.

Then the unhappy father appeased his fears by impressing on the imprudent creature the peril she was in. He told her that her marriage with Church was a crime against the law; and innocent as she was, in fact, a man of his adroit and malignant character might easily prove that her concealment of the first marriage, had been from a criminal intent.

These arguments made an impression upon the girl. She listened earnestly, and seemed to comprehend all the peril of her position with great clearness; but this only sufficed to inspire all the combativeness of her nature. The young creature was courageous as a lion, and by no means defi-

cient in the quick intellect which sees a position, and the means by which it can be defended. While her father was talking she sat with her lips firmly compressed, and her eyes gathering slow fire. Sometimes she started, as if some sharp thought stung her; but she allowed her father to go on without material interruption, to the end. When he paused, she arose slowly and seemed preparing to go.

"Father, I have told you all, and you have enlightened me. Have no fear that I shall not be careful. He shall not get me under his heel; but, oh! what shall I do if William comes in search of me? Father, I could not live and know that he was here, without seeing him. He will find me out; he loved me so dearly—indeed, he did, and in spite of those miserable presents and that ball, I loved him better than my life, better than my own soul. God help me, I love him yet—so madly that I would give my life to see him but for one hour. But we are parted; through all the long, long life before me I shall never see him again."

"You never must see him again, Constance."

The poor woman uttered a moan, which went to her father's heart.

"I know it—I know it! This terrible man got me by a fraud, a foul, wicked lie! I was left to do it as a punishment for my lightness and horrible folly; but isn't it terrible that there can be no end—that I must live with this man, and yet hate him so?"

"The whole thing is terrible, Constance. Had you but told me—had you but told me at the time."

"Don't say that—don't reproach me! I am miserable enough without such words. I was crazy, worried out of myself with a wild wish to shine—see the world, and have it admire my beauty—for I am handsome, you know that. He told me beauty was a power; and that drove me on the rocks."

"Where I had been wrecked long before," said Hudson, gloomily.

"But you are saved; he cannot touch you; that deliverance, at least, is secured."

"Except as he strikes my child."

"But what can he do to me, father?"

"A great deal, if he finds out the secret you carry in your bosom."

"But what if he did? How would it harm me?"

"It might put you on trial for bigamy."

"Bigamy! What is that?"

"Marrying one person when you are legally bound to another."

"And is that the law? What will it do with me?"

"Send you to prison."

"Among common—that is, among wicked people?"

"The lowest and worst, Constance."

"And would they cut off my hair?—but you have not seen my hair. Come this way, where the light strikes it. Did you ever see any thing so strange? It was *his* idea.

He took me to the French woman and had it done. I almost liked him for it—everybody admired me so; that was the reason the clergyman did not remember me; the girl he married to—to poor William had brown hair. This is golden, look!"

Constance went close to the light, which sent gleams across her head, and kindled up a long, heavy curl, that fell across her bosom into a glow of golden beauty.

"Is it false?" Has he had your hair cut off?" inquired Hudson, amazed by the change.

"Cut off? No; this is my own hair. Something the woman put on it and gave me to use, turned it to this. He was delighted with it, because it made my face lovely, he said; and then people never could trace his wife back

to her poverty-stricken home—a place he wanted her to forget. I think that was his great motive.”

“I see. I think he had a deeper motive.”

“Oh, father! he has so many deep motives.”

“I know it. But now we must think only of your safety. What brought you here so unexpectedly? I got your letter, just as I was making arrangements to come back here for good. It made me very uneasy; I feared that some trouble had driven you back to me.”

“And so it did, a terrible trouble. Oh, father! it is only three days since I found out that William, my own, own husband, is alive; that the telegram and the paper were got up on purpose to deceive me. You remember little Rhoda came to the depot that day to bid me good-by? I was very miserable, and so near crazy that everything around me went in a whirl. She gave me a letter, I remember it now. I took it as people handle things in dreams, and put it in my pocket. The dress I had on that day was one he gave me—I mean William—I put it away thinking never to wear it again; but a yearning wish came upon me, to see my dear, old father, and I thought he would love me best, in some dress that I used to wear. I took it from the old trunk, and found that letter in the pocket, his hand-writing, his dear, familiar words, a place on the name where he had pressed kisses that my lips were to take off. Oh, father, father! the words killed me; I felt my brain reel. I trembled all over like that poor man who was struck by the sun while at work last summer. I wanted to leap from the window, and run about the street blindly. I hated myself—and oh, heavens! how I hated that man.”

“At first I was afraid of the letter, and held it away from me, shivering as if a rattlesnake had been curled up in my hand. Then it came upon me that William was alive, that he loved me yet, was longing for me out there in

his wild home, and the paper became a thousand times more precious than diamonds; with every kiss a sting of hate came to my heart for the man who had cheated me. The agony was too keen, father. I fainted away, the letter fell from my hands, and was burned up, while I was upon the floor. I came to, all alone, and saw scraps of my precious letter, flickering on the ashes. I gathered them up, crying all the time, but they fell away from my hands in black ashes.

“At first I went wild, and resolved to charge the fraud upon him, tell him all the loathing I felt, and leave him forever. Then I thought—oh, heaven, have mercy!—where can I go? Not to him. He would never, never take me again. Not to you, father, to bring back the burdens and the miserable old life. Where could I go? What could I do?

“I heard him coming, and hate drove me mad; that blackened letter filled me with such loathing of the man that there was no quelling the fire in my heart by fear or prudence. I thought of it, but the wrong was too terrible for restraints. He came in smiling—oh! how I hate that smile! and asked if I was intending to sit up all night. I turned upon him like a tigress, told him that I knew of his fraud, and had proofs that William Sterling, the man I had loved, and should love to my dying breath, was still living. Father, he laughed, and attempted to pat me on the head, as if I had been an angry child.

“‘I had been a pretty fool,’ he said, ‘to swallow his report so readily. In time I would learn to keep calm and investigate as he did.’ Of course, the whole thing was a lie; but he wanted me, and had got me, the sweetest creature that ever lived, and would tell ten thousand such falsehoods rather than lose me again.”

“This was the brazen answer he gave me. It silenced my rage, it turned my heart to iron in its slow, white heat.

I said to him calmly, as if no agony seethed beneath the surface,

"Did you love me so much, then?"

"Love you?" and the tears sprang into his hard eyes. "Yes, girl, better than my life—better than my soul—better, I almost think, than my gold!"

"I felt my eyes kindle with the terrible hate that rose up in my soul against him. He almost thought that he loved me better than his gold—knowing how he loved that, I could measure the power of his affection for me, and knew that it was great. Through that love I might torture him as he had crushed me.

"And you love me, I said?"

"Better than anything in the world."

"He took me in his arms. Sick with loathing, I fainted. When I came to, he was bending over me, greatly troubled.

"You are ill, keep quiet; our journey shall be put off," he said.

"I sat up and looked around for my traveling dress, but he had taken it away, perhaps he guessed who gave it to me; for I never saw it again.

"No, I wish to see my father," I said.

"He knelt by me, and kissed my hands—that fainting-fit had frightened him, for the man loved me, I knew that well enough.

"You are not very angry with me, Constance?"

"I smiled. Did he think my nature so shallow that a wrong like his could only make me angry?"

"Deep feeling made the man dumb. He could not find words in which to measure the distress that crowded upon him. I saw that, and rejoiced over it; by the depths of love he bore me I could measure my own capacities for revenge.

"You have won me by a fraud," I said, "and seem to glory in it; be it so, for henceforth I cease to recognise any tie between us."

"He started up.

"You will not leave me, Constance. It is not for that you wish to visit New York?"

"He was breathless and white; my words had terrified him.

"No," I said, "that is impossible. You and I are tied together by a cruel bond. I will not leave you, but I will not even try to love you. My company shall prove your torment. I may be your slave but am no longer your wife."

"He sat down, and I saw that his limbs trembled.

"And in all these months you have not cared for me."

"His look was pitiful. No wounded dog ever appealed to his master for help with such dumb pathos—but I have no compassion.

"No, I have never cared for you, never shall."

"And all on account of this young man."

"All on account of this young man, whom I love deeply, hopelessly, as you love me."

"He sprang to his feet, clenching and unclenching his hand, as if it held a knife.

"Be careful! be careful!" he said, "or the next report you get shall be true."

"I felt the blood leave my lips. The man is capable of fulfilling a threat like that, father."

"I know it—I know it!"

Hudson was sitting in the easy-chair, terrified by the scenes his daughter was describing, terrified by the feelings she expressed. The chains had fallen from his own limbs to be fastened on his child. He saw how they galled her, how she wrenched at them in vain. He understood the imminent peril she was in, and trembled under the knowledge.

"If he had attempted to kill me, I should not have cared," Constance resumed; "but this threat turned my very heart cold."

"No wonder!" muttered Hudson. "The poor young

fellow is in a lonely place, and the distance would be nothing to Church."

"But he shall not go; I will not leave him an hour," cried Constance, taking sudden alarm. "I thought myself so powerful, so sure; and in a moment he finds my weak place, and brings me to his feet again—for I know that William will come here in search of his wife. He will find me out, and terrible things may follow. Father! father! tell me what can be done to save him from all knowledge of the cruel step I have taken; that will be enough to kill him. I sometimes think if he could be kept away awhile, that this cough might grow worse, and carry me off. Then he need only know that his poor young wife was dead! I wish it were now; but people cannot die when they please; if they only could, I might go into my little bedroom there and lie down forever."

Hudson arose from his chair and took Constance by both her hands.

"My poor child," he said, very gently, "all this sorrow springs out of one great sin, perpetrated years ago by your unhappy father. Fool that I was! to think that the burden would fall on me alone."

"Don't talk this way, father. I do not complain; besides, it was not all that—only tell me what I can do."

"Give me time, Constance. I will think this matter over. Give me a little time, and I will find help for it in some way."

"I knew that my only course was to come here; the burden was too heavy, when I had no one to share it with. Good-night, father!"

"Good-night, my child! and God help you."

"Father, did my mother die of consumption?"

"Yes."

"Good-night, my dear old father!"

She threw her arms around him, kissed him with passionate energy, and ran down stairs.

Hudson stood till a carriage drove from the door, then he flung himself on his knees and cried out to God in the agony of his trouble.

CHAPTER LVIII.

THE ENGRAVED PLATE.

WHILE the old man was on his knees, the carriage dashed back to the door, and Constance came up the stairs again, pale and breathless from the excitement through which she had passed.

"Father," she said, as the old man arose, "I have forgotten one thing, can you tell me what it means? When I first reached Washington it was very quiet there, and Church did not wish me to go out or make acquaintances. I was glad of that, but time hung so heavily on me that I took to drawing and etching a little. He led me on, I think, suggesting this thing and that, besides supplying me with everything I could need. Only this—he insisted that I should keep my talent that way entirely private, and do all my work in an attic room to which I was desired to keep a key. He would not, for the world, have anyone, especially the servants, know that I had ever learned a trade or worked for my living. It would ruin me in society.

"I did not think this unreasonable, and obeyed him carefully. The work was a blessing; it took my mind from all that I had lost, and for a time I occupied myself in forming new designs, which carried me out of the world he lived in.

"One day, Church brought a friend up to my studio—a Mr. Crist from the Treasury Department, and they looked over my work together.

"'Indeed,' said the man Crist, who was hateful to me

from the first, 'you have not overpraised the lady's genius; but we have people employed for the department that she cannot reach, though as an amateur she is wonderful.'

"I felt my cheeks burn. The idea of calling me an amateur! Why, you know, father, that the best work of the city was given to my William, and the finest of that he left to me, toward the end.

"What do you think of that?' said Church, laughing. 'I fancy my friend here rather underrates your ability, Constance.'

"I know he does. Let him try me,' I said.

"But ours is peculiar work,' answered Crist.

"I do not fear to undertake it, let the work be what it will,' I replied.

"And I will bet five thousand dollars against a diamond necklace, that my wife succeeds in anything she undertakes,' said Church.

Crist cried out at once that it was done, and Church declared that the diamonds were as good as mine. He did not know what difficult task was to be given me, but this he did know, I had never failed yet."

The whole thing pleased me, father. I was dying for some object of interest. The old ambition awoke in me. I asked Crist for a sight of the high art that I could not equal.

The man took a note for a hundred dollars from his pocket-book.

"She may as well try that,' he said, laughing, 'I select it at random. It is only an experiment. If she fails, you are five thousand dollars poorer and no great harm done.'

"I looked at the note, and said with a glow of certainty,

"But I shall not fail.'

"Then I am five thousand dollars poorer, and you have a diamond necklace,' he answered.

"Make it ten thousand,' I urged, looking confidently at Crist. 'Twenty, if you like!'

"Done for ten,' he said.

"Done!'

"I liked this. It aroused the old ambition. There was something for me to accomplish. I went to work with spirit but very privately, for Church was very earnest about that.

"He even bought me an easel and paints, with a picture in progress, in order to deceive the servants who began to wonder at my long visits to the attic.

"It did not matter if they thought me an amateur artist,' he said, 'many ladies gloried in being that, but engraving was a trade.'

"I did not care; the work pleased me, and I found a triumph in winning a bet against my own ability. I think the period in which I was working on that plate, was the happiest that I have known since we parted, father."

"Go on," said Hudson, speaking with an effort, "tell me all about it."

"Well, I finished the plate, and on his own judgment, the man Crist declared that it was a success—I had fairly earned my diamonds."

"That week, Mr. Church brought me a splendid set of jewels, that Mr. Crist had given him for me. I think they made me happy a full day, father; then I grew sick of them."

"Church took the plate away, 'to be broken up,' he said. 'It had done its work, won me a magnificent set of jewels, and must now be destroyed. It was hardly worth while to have such things about.'

"I did not care what became of the thing I had created. It had given me a triumph, and that was enough; so Church took it away."

"Was that all?" demanded Hudson, in whose eyes a strange wild light was shining.

"Yes, except this—sometime after, I found this very

plate in the drawer of a desk, which no one but Mr. Church ever used. He had sent me there for a paper that he wanted, and I found the plate. Father, it had been used!"

"Used?"

The word broke from Hudson's lips almost with a cry of terror."

"Yes, I am sure of it. What could it mean?"

"It means the evil I dreaded from the first," said Hudson, excitedly. It means that these men have made you the instrument of a crime."

"A crime? I do not understand!"

"Nor I, altogether. There must be collusion between Church and some person in the Treasury. This accounts for the sudden wealth that renders him so arrogant."

"A crime," repeated Constance, with animation. Father, I can brave this man with courage now. Let him be cautious, or he shall curse the day I ever darkened his door. He threatened the life of William Sterling.

"Constance, I charge you be careful; do not again touch a graver. Search for that plate and destroy it."

"I will search for it, father."

The girl's face was resolute, her lips were pressed firmly together.

"My child, if this bad man tempts you again, leave him at once, and come to me."

"Oh! if I could!"

"You must, Constance. He has no power over me, I can protect you and will."

"But, William! who can protect him, while this wolf runs free."

Constance muttered the last words under her breath. Then stooping to kiss her father, said,

"Father, I think you have opened my way to the light. Thank you, thank you."

She pressed a kiss on his forehead and left the room.

CHAPTER LIX.

AT SWORDS' POINTS.

"CONSTANCE, come down a little while, I want you so much."

Constance started back, dropped her feet from the fender, and looked around, like one aroused from a dream. Church was standing before her. He had come up the stairs so softly that she did not know of his presence until he spoke.

"Who is below?" she questioned with a sort of dreary listlessness.

"Crist, no one else."

Constance turned to the fire again, and planting her feet on the fender, drooped forward, resting both elbows on her knees.

"I do not care about going down—"

"What is the reason, Constance, are you ill?"

"Would it be news, if I told you so?" answered the woman, breaking into a hard cough.

Church came close to the chair in which Constance sat, and laid his hand on her shoulder.

"Look up," he said harshly. "I want to see your eyes. Ever since we came from New York, you have been hacking and lowering over the fire, like a consumptive. I don't believe in it; you assume illness in order to avoid me."

A hot scarlet flashed over the haughty face which Constance turned fully upon, the man who called himself her husband.

"I need answer nothing," she said. "There can be no doubt that I wish to avoid you."

Church turned white with rage.

"Then if you are not pretending, what is it makes you crouch here from morning till night? The knowledge

that the young hound of an artist is alive? By Heavens, if I were sure of it."

"What would you do?" questioned the woman, with terror in her eyes.

"Do? Why, take a journey out West," said Church, with a bitter laugh. "After that, you will have no more cause for pining over the thought that he has turned up alive."

"That is, you would kill him."

"Kill him, no; that would be murder. But the man would surely disappear."

"And this thought is in your heart?"

"It will not leave my heart, girl, until you are your old sweet self again. I give you another week to think of it. In that time, if you come out of this room bright and cheerful, ready for the society which is pining for you, well and good. I ask no questions about what passed between you and the old man. If not—but I seldom threaten. Your father knows me; perhaps you will in time."

"But I am ill—do not threaten me—I am very ill," pleaded the poor woman, shivering in her chair, as he rested his hand on her shoulder. "I am cold."

"Cold as ice, I know that; but it is only when I am near. Come, come, darling, I do not mean to be harsh with you, but this eternal moping is beyond all endurance; come down, I have just ordered a delicious little supper for you."

"I have no appetite," answered the woman, sinking to her old position, and dropping her head between her hands.

"No appetite, no strength—my wife, and pine like this over a man that ought to have been dead, if he is not. When is this to end?"

"End! oh very soon, have a little patience. One does not get over a cough like mine in a minute."

"Then you will not come down?"

"Not to-night; another time, but just now I haven't strength enough."

"Well, to-night have your own way, I do not wish to be hard with you. But after this we must have no more nonsense. I have not forgotten yet that you threatened to leave me—leave me!"

"Oh, one says so many rash things," answered Constance faintly, "do not remind me of them to-night, I am so weary."

"There, there," said Church, softening toward her a little. "Rest now. To-morrow we will have some friends to dinner, and you must come among them beautiful as ever—promise me."

"I will promise anything; only let me rest now."

Church stooped down, and lifting that pale face between his hands, kissed it with passionate violence, and left the room.

When the door closed, Constance arose from her seat with a look of hot loathing on her face that burnt up all its pallor. She passed one hand across her mouth as if she would smite away his kisses with blows, but feeling them there still, she snatched a flask of cologne from a little sofa table, and dashed its contents over her handkerchief, rubbed her lips with it till they glowed out red as coral.

"The infamous wretch! how dared he! how dared he!"

The woman was so full of passionate wrath that she shook from head to foot, as these words rang out from her lips, like the hoarse cry of a bird.

"I will not bear this! I cannot bear it! I will send for my father; he baffles me, defies me, and I am so ill!"

The noise of a footstep, moving cautiously, hushed this transport of passion, and the woman held her breath. She listened to hear the outer door open, but the footsteps sounding clearer on the marble of the hall, evidently went another way.

"There, there! I have heard that every night. They are going into the basement, after that entrance is locked, too, and he does not come up to his room for hours. There

is something in this. It only happens when Crist is here. I will know what secret there is down yonder."

Constance opened the door of her room softly, and listened; the footsteps could still be heard, but they grew fainter, and she detected also, a faint murmur of voices. The carpet on both rooms and stair-case, in that house, were soft as wood-moss, and the slippers of quilted satin that Constance wore, sunk into them with the noiseless fall of snow, as she glided down the stairs to the basement. Below that was the cellar, where she had never been in her life; a current of air and the suppressed murmur of voices, led her to the door, and she went downward over another flight of stairs, into the darkness of a wine cellar. This cellar was lighted at one end by a lamp which Church held upward, while his companion was busy removing a rack, on which a few bottles lay, with their sealed corks visible.

Constance stood in the dark, and watched these proceedings with breathless interest. She saw the rack lifted aside from a strong wooden door sunk deep into the wall, which Crist opened with a key, and both men went through.

Constance followed noiselessly, keeping in the dark.

The house which Church occupied had grounds and shrubbery around it, stretching over half a block. Directly opposite the back entrance, on the farther side of the block, stood his stables—imposing buildings of brown stone—finished almost with the cost of a mansion.

Toward these stables ran the subterraneous passage which these two men traversed with their lamp, and along its whole length Constance followed them.

At last they disappeared through a door, and she was left in total darkness. But the passage was narrow and she kept along the wall, feeling with her hands for the entrance door.

At last both her outstretched palms struck upon wood-

work, and through it came a strange noise which she could not make out, but it emboldened her to search for some fastenings, and open the door far enough to look through.

CHAPTER LX.

THE UNDERGROUND VAULT AND THE SECRETARY'S RECEPTION.

THIS was what Constance saw—a large vault paved and walled with stone, to which there was but one entrance—the door at which she stood; a printing press, on which two men in their shirt sleeves were leaning, one with a mallet in his hand, the other holding a lamp low down.

"It is an ill wind which blows nobody good," she heard Crist say. This obstinate fit fortunately come over your wife after the best part of her work was done."

"Yes," answered Church, "but I would pitch her work overboard, forever, if that would bring her old self back again. I tell you what, Crist, I have no heart to work, when I think of her conduct toward me."

"Oh, give her time, give her jewels, and plenty of new dresses. If they don't bring her round, I know nothing of women."

"How should you know anything of such women as Constance? Superior creatures of her stamp do not often appear in the life of a man like you," answered Church, rudely enough. "Come now, are you ready for work?"

"Yes, we will make the best of our time, while madame keeps in her sulks," said Crist. "When she makes up with you, there is an end of work, unless I manage to get along alone. Upon my word, Church, I never expected to find you so completely the slave of any woman."

"It strikes me that in this affair, I have managed to make her my slave," answered Church, pointing to a plate which Crist had arranged for printing. "At any rate, there is no need of troubling yourself with my home affairs so long as I let them fill your pocket."

"Exactly," answered Crist, laying down his mallet, "I'm not complaining. In fact, I rather envy you. She is a deuced pretty woman, and I know of more than one fellow up yonder who is raving about her."

"Those fellows up yonder can save themselves the trouble," answered Church, sharply. "Constance is altogether too fond of me, for any one else to make sure of a glance from her."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, indeed! She's not demonstrative, of course, before such fellows as you are, but I'm satisfied."

"That is a good thing—now for it!"

The noise of a press worked by these two men, broke in upon their conversation. But Constance stood at her post, and, shrouded by the darkness, looked in upon them full twenty minutes. Then she stole back to her room, with her pulse beating at fever heat.

Her watch lay upon the dressing-table; she snatched it up, glanced at the time, and laid it down again.

"Only eleven; I shall find him there," she said, ringing the bell with a violence that brought two servants to the door at once.

"The carriage," she said to the man; "come dress me," to her maid.

Very different was this toilet to the last at which we have seen Constance. She literally did not seem to care what garments the maid brought forth, but snatched at them in eager haste, and put them on with her own hands, tearing the costly lace and wrenching at the silk quite unconscious, or careless of the mischief she was doing.

In half an hour the woman swept down those stairs and into her carriage, with strange light in her eyes, and a burning red on her cheeks. Any one looking upon her then, would never have dreamed that she was an invalid.

There was a reception at the house of a leading Secretary that night, and in a few minutes Constance found herself almost alone in a dressing-room, with a graceful mulatto girl smoothing the train of her dress.

"Get a message taken to the Secretary of the Treasury, he is sure to be in one of the drawing-rooms—say I wish to speak with him."

The girl went, and directly a gentleman came up to the door where Constance stood, beating one gloved hand with his fan, and expressed his happiness at being summoned to lead her down stairs.

There was a presentation—a slow, interrupted sweep through the rooms—bright looks, pleasant words; then the belle of the evening disappeared, and with her the Secretary of the Treasury.

For half an hour, that carriage moved up and down the streets, the coachman could hear a sound of voices from within, asking and answering questions, from which he could gather no meaning; for, though the words were eager and sometimes sharp, he could only catch one distinctly now and then.

At last the man was ordered to stop at the Secretary's residence. The gentleman, with a latch key in his hand, got out, and Constance gave orders to be driven home.

Church met her in the hall, looking tired and excited, as if he had just come from some sharp exercise.

"In the name of Heaven, where have you been?" he demanded.

"To the reception," she answered, smiling upon him as she had not done for weeks.

"To the reception, and alone?"

"Yes, I took a fancy to go out; you were not to be found."

Then I started alone, and sent for the Secretary of the Treasury to lead me in. It was very pleasant."

"But you complained so piteously of being ill."

"Yes, but it has done me good to go out, I feel better than you can imagine."

"This is very wild work, Constance, you should have waited till I came in. Crist and I only took a short walk."

"You must have walked fast. The evening is not very warm, but I can see drops glistening on your forehead."

Church took out his handkerchief and drew it hastily over his face.

"Yes," he said, "Crist always rushes on like a race horse, but I am glad to see you so much better."

"Thank you; I am sure to be better now." Then these two parted. Church went back to his accomplice in the subterranean vault, and Constance sat up all night in her room.

About dark the next day, a man might have been observed walking to and fro in the neighborhood of Mr. Church's dwelling, but no one took an interest in the matter except Constance. She saw him from her dressing-room window as she moved up and down the room like some caged animal, and a look of keen satisfaction shot into her heavy eyes.

Again Church came to her room, and urged her to come down. She refused, pleading weariness, and again the sound of Crist's voice and of retreating footsteps, reached her in the room where she sat.

About an hour after this, Constance heard a night-key turned in the lock, and a muffled sound in the hall as if more than one person had entered it.

"My night-key has done its work," she thought with a shiver. "How quietly they move!"

She was right. Everything was still as death in the house. Constance could hear the watch tick in her bosom,

and her own heart beat like a muffled drum. Directly there was a great scuffle in the basement; sharp, harsh voices, and a sound as if some one were being dragged upstairs.

"Let me speak to my wife! Give me ten minutes, I must see her before you take me away."

There seemed to be consent to this, for Church came heavily up the stairs, and stood before Constance, white as death and trembling in all his limbs.

"I am in trouble, Constance, terrible trouble, but do not be frightened, come to me in the morning. You can help me, and I know you will. It is not like you to abandon your own husband in his misfortunes."

Constance looked in the man's face so quietly that it took away his breath.

"It was I who informed against you," she said, "partly from a love of justice, but altogether because I could break the bonds which shackles us together in no other way. You threatened, I have acted!"

"Oh, my God! my God! is the blow from her! Woman, woman, you have ruined a man who loved you better than his own salvation."

"And you have ruined a woman for whom there is no salvation," cried Constance, wringing her hands in wild excitement.

"Come, sir, it is time."

The officer came forward from the top of the stairs, as he spoke, and touched Church on the arm.

"I am ready," said the wretched man. "Nothing that can be done, will harm me much now. Constance, say farewell, kiss me for the last time. I loved you so, I loved you so! Only for that!"

Constance stood paralyzed, looking at him, fully conscious, perhaps, for the first time, of what she had done. He took her in his arms, and she did not resist; he pressed his quivering lips to hers, and met drops of blood instead of kisses.

"You see," she said, drawing a hand across her mouth. "We are both punished."

They took Church away, unresisting. His head drooped, his shoulders bent; ten years seemed to have settled on him since the officer's arm had first touched his person. When he went out of the door, Constance lay prone across the threshold of her own room, struggling desperately for breath.

CHAPTER LXI.

DYING.

HUDSON did not, as he had intended, return to his rooms after that interview with his daughter, but some time after there came a letter in the old man's writing, directed to Rhoda Weeks.

Rhoda was brushing Luke's well-worn coat, and giving a last touch to his neck-tie, preparatory to his going out to rehearsal, when the unfortunate little maid of all work, who belonged to the woman down stairs, came in with the letter, which she handed to Rhoda.

"What on earth!" exclaimed the energetic young damsel. "What do you bring that here for?"

"'Cause it's for you," returned the little maid, with a snuffle habitual to her.

"Can't be for me," answered Rhoda, positively. "Never had a letter in my life, and 'tisn't likely I'm going to begin now."

She spoke as if she had attained the age of Methuselah, at least, and leveled the brush at the girl, as if warding off the missive which the creature extended in her much soiled hand.

"The old woman said it was for you," she persisted.

"I can't read myself; but if you can, why you'll soon find out whether it's for you, if you look at it."

"There is something in that," said Rhoda, not over pleased at this implied doubt of her skill in caligraphy. "Take the brush, Luke, and don't leave all that dust on your shoulder."

Rhoda snatched the letter and held it at arm's length, peering at it with one eye half closed, as though she thought there was something too suspicious in its appearance for her to trust it nearer.

"Well, if ever!" she exclaimed. "No, actually, I never did!"

"What is it?" Luke asked.

"Just what I want to know," she replied. "There it is, big as life and twice as natural—Miss Rhoda Weeks. I say, Luke, we're coming up in the world when folks take to writing me letters, and directing them in that way."

"Know'd it was for you," sniffled the little maid. "I guess I'm right, sometimes, as well as other folks."

Rhoda turned upon her with great majesty. In this important crisis of her life, when she held in her hand the first letter she had ever received, common manners and words were too much out of place for her to think of employing them.

"Cynthy," said she, "you mean well enough, but you had better go down stairs when people have business affairs on hand; the old lady's calling to you in a way that'll injure her throat, if it doesn't end in a fit."

Cynthia sniffled more desperately than ever, quite awed by the match-girl's dignity, and shied away toward the door.

"Cynthy!" called Rhoda, struck by a sudden thought. "Just say to Mrs. Dawson it's for me, and I dare say there'll more be coming—plenty of them; so tell her to take good care they are sent up at once."

"Who is it from?" Luke asked, as the girl disappeared.

"We shall know that by-and-by," said Rhoda, somewhat severely.

She looked at the superscription again—examined the postmark, and finally opened the envelope with great care, and began to read. Luke went on with his preparations for a walk, but presently he was startled by a loud exclamation from his sister.

"What is it?" he cried, eagerly. "What is the matter, Rhoda?"

"They're coming back—somebody is sick. Oh! the poor thing! And I'm to dust their rooms and get them all ready by to-morrow."

"The Hudsons? Is Miss Constance sick?"

"Yes! I suppose it is her. Oh! what will the poor old man do! Here, read the letter, Luke; I must get the keys and see that everything is straight. I've swept the rooms two or three times; but I'll brighten 'em up now, I'll bet. Oh! my poor Miss Constance—I'm so sorry."

Luke read the letter, but he had no time to do more than express his regret, for it was growing late; besides, good and gentle as he was, his mind was so completely occupied by its one engrossing thought, that he found it difficult to realize or comprehend anything outside of that beautiful dream.

Rhoda passed a grand gala day in setting the rooms to rights, polishing up the furniture, and making Constance's chamber look sunny and cheerful. She was disturbed only by the thought that the young lady, whom she had last seen so lovely and joyous, could be ill and suffering.

It was late in the afternoon of the next day, when a carriage drove up to the door, and Mr. Hudson got out, looking more worn and troubled than of old.

Rhoda happened to be down in Mrs. Dawson's room, and she ran out into the hall just as Mr. Hudson lifted a female

from her seat. The traveling-veil, which was thrown over her bonnet, was of barege; but Rhoda could dimly see the outlines of the beautiful face underneath, so changed and pale, save for the hectic spot burning visibly on either cheek, that she uttered a cry of dismay and grief, calling out involuntary, "Oh, my! Oh, my!"

Hudson made a warning gesture which silenced her, and carried his pale burden up the steps easily as if she had been a child.

"Shall I help you?" Rhoda whispered, awed by the man's strange manner.

He shook his head.

"Are the rooms ready?" he asked.

"Yes, sir. I've just come down—everything is done."

She ran up stairs before them, and opened the door of Constance's bedroom, pulling down the curtains to make a pleasant shadow in the chamber. She forced back the tears which rose to her eyes, as the suffering young creature entered the room and muttered,

"A body can cry when there is nothing else to do; this isn't the time to be spattering salt water about! Oh! the poor dear! She'll die—she'll die!"

Hudson helped the sick girl to her bed, folding her tenderly with his arm. Rhoda whispered to him asking if she should get her things off.

"Yes—undress her," he said. "I'll have the man bring her trunk up. I must go for the doctor."

Rhoda took off the thick veil, and looked at that poor, worn face in the dim, half light, so lovely still, but with the trace of death stamped on every lineament. The girl lay with her eyes closed, evidently conscious, but too weak and tired to make the least exertion.

Suddenly she opened her eyes, and glanced about in a half frightened way.

"Where is he? where am I?" she cried, feebly.

Hudson had reached the door, but at the sound of her voice he hurried back to the bed, and bent over her, whispering some words which seemed to calm her.

Like the sensible little woman she was, Rhoda did not attempt to speak to the sick girl, who had resumed her former passive attitude. She flew noiselessly about, got some fresh water in a basin, poured a little cologne in it, and began bathing the fevered head and wasted hands.

"That is cool and pleasant," murmured the girl, half opening her eyes. "How good you are."

It seemed to Rhoda that Constance's voice had never sounded so sweet; the old imperiousness had quite gone out of it; the face, too, had gained a gentleness and patience such as only suffering can bring—all this fairly wrung the little creature's heart.

"Oh! don't you know me?" she exclaimed, with one little sob. "I'm Rhoda Weeks—I mean to take care of you. I know you'll be better soon."

"Rhoda Weeks," the sick girl repeated, softly, "Yes, I know who it is. Will you take care of me? He said you would. I try to be patient; don't let him be troubled."

Just then Hudson returned, accompanied by a man carrying the trunk.

"I wish you would get fresh things out for her," he said to Rhoda; "I won't be gone long."

Rhoda attacked the trunk at once, while Mr. Hudson went up to the bed, and stood passing his hand softly over the invalid's hair, telling her that he would soon be back.

When he came into the sitting room again, Rhoda saw that his eyes were full of tears, and she longed, in some way, to show her sympathy for him.

"I'll do everything I can," she said, pulling diligently at the straps of the trunk. "I'm so sorry—it breaks my heart. Oh, dear! this key won't go in—yes, it's all right. Has she been sick long?"

"Yes," he answered, in a broken voice. "I am much obliged to you, Rhoda—you're a good girl."

"Nothing to brag of," said Rhoda; "but I ain't a heathen quite. I'm a pretty good nurse, too—I'll show you. She'll see."

"I know," he replied. "She is very weak, Rhoda, and can't bear being talked to—we must be very quiet."

"As mice," said Rhoda, with her head in the trunk.

"She has all sorts of odd fancies," continued Hudson, in a dry, painful tone; "sick people always do. You mustn't talk to her much—somehow it distresses her."

By this time Rhoda was quite speechless. Between grief and astonishment, she sniffled almost as dolefully as the poor little handmaiden below stairs.

Mr. Hudson went out, and Rhoda, having found the articles of clothing she required, returned to the chamber.

"I'm going to undress you," she said, softly; "you'll feel better when you get these heavy things off."

"I am so thirsty," pleaded the girl—"so thirsty."

"I'll make you some lemonade in a minute," said Rhoda; "I've got the lemons here."

She prepared the grateful beverage with the mingled speed and care which only a person who has a natural aptitude for nursing the sick can show. The girl drank it eagerly.

"Thank you," she said. "You are so good to me—so good!"

Rhoda could not trust her voice to answer; this gentleness in the woman she had known so haughty and imperious, touched her more than all the rest.

Before Hudson returned with the physician, Rhoda had her charge comfortably arrayed in a cool, fresh night-dress; and she lay there quiet and apparently free from pain.

The doctor left a prescription but said little—it was evident to his practiced eye what insidious disease had sapped her youth and strength so rapidly away. She was in the

last stages of consumption ; and he told Rhoda so when she crept out into the passage after him.

"She may live for weeks," he said ; "and a few days may end her. I do not think she has strength to last long."

"And she went away so bright and beautiful," murmured Rhoda, through her tears. "It's dreadful—oh ! it's dreadful !"

There was no comfort to offer, and the doctor was hurrying away ; but Hudson came out, and called him back while Rhoda returned to the sick-room.

CHAPTER LXII.

DEAD.

THERE was no hope, Hudson knew that from the first. The physician only confirmed this mournful conviction.

For three days and nights Mr. Hudson and Rhoda watched by the poor girl's bed, for she never sat up again. She did not suffer much pain, except when the regular paroxysms of coughing seized her ; and the powerful opiates which were administered caused her to lie quiet and half dreaming the greater portion of the time.

When they spoke to her, she would rouse herself for a brief space, trying to smile, thanking them for every little service they rendered her ; and sometimes Rhoda would hear her praying in broken whispers—always prayers of resignation and faith.

Mr. Hudson's distress was so poignant that more than once he was obliged to leave the room ; the girl perceived it, and, for a little, her composure would be so disturbed that agitation brought back the racking cough and sharp pain that were wearing her life so rapidly away.

"Don't let him grieve," she said, to Rhoda. "Tell him I'm very happy—very happy ; I only grieve at leaving him. Good Rhoda ! God will bless you, Rhoda !"

It was the close of the third day ; Rhoda was sitting by her patient, and Mr. Hudson had thrown himself on a sofa in the next room, quite broken down by trouble and long watching. The sick girl had been lying silent and motionless for long time ; Rhoda could see that she slept at intervals, and that a peaceful smile beamed over her face, as if, in her dreams, some kind angel brought a vision of the peace which awaited her.

She woke with a start, opened her eyes, glanced vaguely about. Her look fell upon Rhoda.

"Did you hear it ?" she whispered.

"What ?" Rhoda asked, gently.

"The music—such beautiful music ! Hark ! I hear it yet ! Listen !"

She lifted one hand ; the large eyes grew eager and wistful, brightening with a glory which was not of this world.

A great awe stole over Rhoda ; she knew what this change meant ; the girl was dying.

"Don't you hear ?" she repeated.

Rhoda could not answer, her voice was choked with tears. She knew that it was the low, sad strains from Luke's violin that the dying girl heard.

"I know !" the girl murmured, it is not that, but something beyond. I am dying ! Don't cry—I'm not afraid ! Call him, Rhoda. The music yet—the music !"

Rhoda bent over her and kissed her forehead, with tender awe. Those pale lips moved and she heard that voice, grown supernaturally low, repeating.

"The Lord is my shepherd ! He leadeth me in green pastures ! He maketh me to lie down beside the still waters !"

Rhoda stole softly out into the outer chamber, where

Hudson lay asleep, upon the lounge. She laid her hand on his shoulder; her touch roused him at once.

"Is she worse?" he cried, staggering to his feet.

Rhoda could not answer; one look in her face was enough—he knew that the end had come, and hurried into the chamber; Rhoda followed, and dropped on her knees at the foot of the bed.

"My darling! Oh, my darling!" Rhoda heard him exclaim.

The dying girl turned her eyes on his face, and she struggled hard for words. "Don't grieve—I'm going; take me in your arms."

He sat down on the side of the bed and lifted her to his bosom, while the couch shook under the violent emotion he could no longer repress.

"Don't cry, don't! Put your arms close around me! It's only for a little while—we shall meet yonder!"

The struggles of that sweet voice died away; there was a heavy breath, and her head fell upon his shoulder.

Rhoda rose from her knees and went up to the suffering man.

"Don't! oh, don't! Maybe she sees, and is troubled by it. The angels are taking care of her now. Mother will be among them, for she knows I'm here."

CHAPTER LXIII.

THE HUSBAND'S RETURN.

THAT evening Rhoda was alone in that silent death-chamber—very silent and mournfully white it was—the pale face of the dead, cold and beautiful as marble, was crowned with a wreath of white roses, which Luke had rev-

erently laid upon it. The window was open, and the cool night wind stirred the snowy whiteness of the curtain, and a strain of heavenly music stole through with it; music from Luke's violin. The boy could not rest with death in the house, and poured his grief out in sounds that seemed to be calling that spirit home with soft, plaintive cries.

Mr. Hudson had gone out. Duties awaited him among the famished souls gathering behind the old church, and he carried the burden of his sorrows down there, believing that the dead could hear him from that place, and know that he had not fainted at his post.

Rhoda was startled in her watch by a man's footstep on the stairs. Thinking that it was Mr. Hudson coming home, she opened the door that he might be guided by the gleam of her lamp. But, instead of Mr. Hudson, she stood face to face with William Sterling.

Rhoda started back in dumb astonishment, but Sterling seized her hand in both his and began to question her eagerly.

"Where is she. Oh, little Rhoda, tell me that she is well. Go in, child, and say that I am here."

Rhoda stood in dead silence a moment, then she stepped aside and pointed toward that calm marble face.

"Oh, Mr. Sterling! She is there! Dead! Dead!"

"Dead!" he groaned. "Oh, my God! Let me see her, at least! Stand out of the way—let me in!"

Rhoda put up her hands with an appealing gesture.

"Wait," she said, with a great effort; "there's nobody there, and you seem so strange."

Sterling pushed by her, saw the pale face under its crown of flowers, and uttered a cry of terrible despair.

"Dead? She can't be dead! Why wasn't I written to before? Why didn't you give me time to get here? Oh! it was cruel! cruel!"

He flung himself on his knees by the bed, and covered his face with his hands.

"I didn't write," Rhoda said; "how could I? I didn't know——"

"No one ever did write to me; and I grew terribly anxious. I've traveled night and day, and to find her dead! Oh, my darling! my darling!"

"Don't! don't! you frighten me!" said Rhoda, sobbing.

Sterling's hands fell to his side; he turned his haggard face upon the child:

"You loved her," he said, "I know that, but not as I did—but you stayed with her, while I kept away—and now she is dead, my own love, my beautiful Constance. Dead, and so changed; herself, and not herself. Ah, little Rhoda, I know you pity me, for you loved her."

"Yes, I loved her, poor thing, and so did Luke, but it is of no use now."

"And Mr. Hudson, where is he?"

"Gone away, I don't know where. He said nothing, but took his hat with a great, heavy sigh, and left me here alone."

"I had something to tell him, but it is all over now, my poor darling, all over."

Rhoda began to sob; the young man's grief nearly broke her heart.

"Don't, don't take on so," she said. "Crying won't bring her back."

"I know it, I know it. Nothing will bring her back. Tell me, child, had she care? did she lack for anything?"

"The best of care. I nursed her days, and he did nights. She was never left alone."

"Did she never speak of me, Rhoda?"

"Often and often, when you first went away, but after that she was too weak for talking."

"And she never spoke of me at the last?"

"No, not at the last, not once that I can think of."

"Rhoda, will you leave me alone with her. Let me watch this one night?"

"Yes, if you want to so much, I'll go."

Rhoda cast a sorrowing look at the bed and went out of the room; then the plaintive music of Luke's violin stole through the house, undisturbed by a human voice, and so the dead rested till daylight. Then Rhoda came down stairs again, and William Sterling left the house.

Two days after this, a humble funeral passed through the gates of Greenwood, and a small group of mourners stood by while a grave was filled. One was an old man whose hair seemed to have drifted into whiteness all at once. The others were a little, active man, who wept much, and two children, a boy and girl, who stood hand in hand, weeping as that coffin was lowered out of sight.

After they had gone, a young man came out from a group of trees where he had lingered, and all that night William Sterling remained by the newly-made grave.

CHAPTER LXIV.

LUKE BECOMES DOWN-HEARTED.

MR. HUDSON did not return to his home after the funeral, and William Sterling sought for him there in vain, before he started for the West. As for little Rhoda, she had no time for the indulgence of her grief, but with a quick, impressionable nature like hers, it was impossible that an experience like that through which she had passed so recently, should not have a strong and lasting effect.

Rhoda was as active and energetic as ever; but she seemed gentle, more capable of understanding Luke's wayward fancies, and better able to sympathize with his varying moods than she had ever been before.

She could see that the poor lad was greatly changed. He

was more restless and excitable—neither ate or slept; and all her importunities and efforts to prepare some dainty that could tempt his appetite, seemed only to distress him.

One day, Rhoda broke down completely. She had tried everything in her power, and her last resources had given way so entirely that she really had no refuge, except the feminine one of tears, and that was one which the girl struggled bravely against.

Only the night before, inspired by a happy thought, she had made a hop pillow for her brother's bed, having faith that it would produce some soporific effect; but Luke peevishly flung it on the floor, and asked her if she meant to suffocate him.

To be sure, a moment after, his natural goodness of heart made him repent, and he exclaimed,

"I didn't mean it, Rhoda—I'm sorry! There, go to bed, dear; I dare say I shall sleep."

But he did not sleep; hours after Rhoda could hear him moving about his little room, and every footfall seemed pressing directly on her anxious heart. She absolutely worked herself into a nervous headache for the first time in her life; then abused herself for being so helpless and miserable. Early in the morning she was up, regardless of the throbbing and beating in her temples as a Spartan could have been, and went about to prepare breakfast. She remembered a dish of eggs and bread-crumbs, prepared in some peculiar way, that Luke had always been fond of, and tried her hand at that. It looked so appetizing when she saw it on the dish, that her hopes began to rise.

It was all of no use, however. Luke thanked her, and tried to eat; but the first mouthful seemed choking him and he pushed the plate away.

"I can't," he said. "Don't mind me, Rhoda, I'll get better soon."

He went away, and Rhoda sat down with the breakfast

dishes unwashed, and had a grand cry all to herself, and felt the better for it, as anything feminine usually does after such an outburst.

It was late in the afternoon before Luke came in, and Rhoda had become so anxious that she was thinking of going round to the theatre in search of him, when he returned.

He looked so pale and worn out that a new pang seized her; but she had learned, with a woman's quickness, that a display of anxiety only vexed him; so she got up as much of a smile as she could manage, and said cheerfully,

"I began to think you were lost, Luke! I've got some hot water. Will you have a cup of tea?"

"I don't want it," he said, wearily; "let me lie down."

Luke stretched himself on his bed, and Rhoda sat down by him, her fingers busy with some knitting, for she could not afford to waste time, however great might be her trouble.

Luke lay there in silence, with one arm thrown half across his face; and Rhoda saw the great tears rolling slowly down his cheeks.

The girl could not bear this silent grief, but fell on her knees by the bed, and put her arms about him.

"What is it, Luke? Do tell me—I can't understand; it breaks my heart to see you take on so."

"You're too good, Rhoda," he answered, still keeping his face hidden. "I'm ashamed to be such a baby; but I can't help it. I'm so wretched—I'm so wretched."

"What has happened, Luke? I know it's about her—do tell me."

"She's gone, Rhoda: they've taken her away."

"Gone? Where?"

"Out West, to live."

"But they'll come back some time, Luke—their home is here."

"Oh, Rhoda! there's no comfort in that! I can't believe it—I feel as if I should never see her again. That is what ails me—I can't sleep or eat. You don't know, Rhoda—you don't know!"

"N—not from any p—personal experience," sobbed Rhoda; "but I love you so well I can understand."

Luke threw his arm about her neck and kissed her, as he went on with his revelations.

"To-day I went to the rehearsal, but I couldn't play—I got them to let me off. So I started for her house; I knew one of the servants, and the old woman let me in. Oh, Rhoda! she showed me all over it!—such a lovely place! Filled with pictures and flowers; and in her father's room there's a portrait of her—Rhoda, I went down on my knees before it."

He broke off for an instant; Rhoda soothed him and whispering,

"Poor boy! poor boy!" till he could control his voice sufficiently to go on.

"And her room—it's like a fairy's bower in the theatre, Rhoda! All pink silk and lace, her bird in its cage; the chair where she sits by the window, and Rhoda——"

"Yes, dear!"

"On the table there was a glove; when the woman wasn't looking, I slipped it into my vest. See!"

He pulled out a tiny primrose-colored glove, then hastily pushed it into its hiding-place again, as if it were too sacred even for Rhoda's eyes to behold.

He lay there, and told his sister the whole story—the poor, pathetic little story, that meant so much to that dreaming, imaginative soul.

"I feel as if I should die if she staid West," he said.

"When she is near, even if I don't see her, it seems to give me new life; but to know that she is so far away, makes me feel as if some chord in my heart was stretched

until it must break. I can feel it trembling to-night, Rhoda."

Rhoda did not attempt to argue with him. She listened patiently, soothed and caressed him, until at length he grew quiet, and fell asleep.

Rhoda's knitting was forgotten. She sat curled up in a little heap at the foot of the bed, her forehead puckered into a score of wrinkles in her effort to devise some means which should bring a little comfort and happiness to her poor Luke.

Suddenly her face brightened; she fairly clapped her hands in noiseless triumph, and crept away into the kitchen to keep the water hot for Luke's tea; sometimes muttering congratulations to herself, for she saw the light.

When Rhoda heard Luke stirring, she went back to his room.

"Don't get up yet," she said, "I've something to say first. Now, Luke, just listen to me. If you could see her would you promise to get well?"

"Indeed, I would!" he exclaimed. "But what's the good of talking that way—you know I can't."

"That's what we are to see about," said Rhoda, nodding her head sagely. "You said they were traveling from one city to another—Chicago, Columbus, St. Louis; and all the rest of those places that are just like Jonah's gourd for growing."

"Yes. Well, what of it, Rhoda?"

"I've been thinking, Luke—I don't believe in having a head for nothing—and I've been thinking——"

"Do go on, Rhoda!"

"You can play the violin like an angel—though it's harps, I believe, that they use! But no matter; you can play and sing—and father is a wonder, too, when I'm by to keep him straight——"

"Oh, Rhoda! when I'm so impatient!"

"I'm coming to it! I want you to start out and give concerts—There! We'll go to all the places where she is. They'll bring her to hear you; and you'll see her every evening, besides making such a lot of money that you'll be like a prince."

"And I shall grow famous," cried Luke, seizing her idea in a fullness and breadth which it had not possessed to her mind. "Oh, Rhoda! we can do it—I know we can!"

"We will," said Rhoda, stamping her foot, as if she defied fate itself to interfere with the plan.

"It's a heavenly thought," Luke went on, in raptures at once. "You're like an angel to me, Rhoda! We will get ready and start next week. Father will go—you can coax him."

"Of course he'll go! Just the traveling will be good for you, Luke."

"Oh! I'm well now!" he exclaimed, springing off the bed; "you've cured me, Rhoda."

"I'll believe that, if you'll come and eat some dinner," Rhoda answered, cheerfully, while a sharp pain smote her heart as she watched his flushed cheeks and burning eyes, lighted up into new beauty by this precious hope she had brought to him in his darkness, for she had not nursed the poor young woman that was gone without learning the sad significance of these symptoms.

"Yes, I can eat now," he said. "I must get strong—I must practice, too. I'll begin to-night. I wish father would come in; I want to hear what he thinks of it."

"Just leave that to me," returned Rhoda. "I'm going to be the agent and business manager of this concern—you've too much music in your head. I shall go and see Mr. Thurman, the leader of the orchestra, to-morrow; he'll tell us just what to do."

"I shall see her, Rhoda! She likes to hear me play—she'll be sure to come. And when they applaud she'll be

pleased. Perhaps she will feel I do it all for her. Oh, Rhoda! Rhoda! you have made me so happy—you have given me new life."

And Rhoda smiled on him, and listened to his fancies; but all the while the pain at her heart grew more intense as she noticed how the dark eyes brightened with unnatural lustre, and the fragile frame armed itself with a feverish strength which must freeze the very springs of life itself.

CHAPTER LXV.

ON THE PRAIRIE.

TIME swept on. The entire scene of our story changes from the city, with its crowds of active people, its whirl of gay life—its sorrows and its joys—to a broad, undulating prairie in the far West. It was not a vast ocean of waving grass, flat and monotonous, sweeping greenly to the horizon, but a succession of prairies, out of which ranges of heavily wooded hills lifted themselves in picturesque beauty, leaving plenty of space for the union of one beautiful sea of grass with another.

These hills gave life and change to the scene, which was an unspeakable relief to the traveler, who tires of an eternal stretch of verdure, as one wearies of an ocean in its perpetual calm. One of these prairies was almost entirely surrounded by a chain of broken hills. Along the side a river, of considerable depth and power, swept with a broad, graceful curve, adding the soft chime of waters to the rush and sigh of winds when they swayed the long grass to and fro, in such undulating waves as stir the ocean after a storm.

In the curve of this river a dozen log houses were clustered, and one or two dwellings of buff stone taken from a quarry

in the hills, had just been completed. Indeed, all the dwellings in the place were new—some of them so recent in their construction that tufts of green leaves might still be found clinging to the logs, and close by the stone houses the ground was choked up with a litter of broken stones and half-dried beds of mortar, bits of lath, and blocks of refuse timber, around which the thrifty grass was still growing, as if nothing could suppress its exuberance.

Spite of this newness and litter, nature was so munificent that the village looked rural and lovely as you approached it. The thrifty wild vine, trampled down by the workman, had started up again, and, creeping across the loose stones, seized upon the logs and were climbing toward the eaves of the cabins, scattering them with the sweetness of their blossoms as they grew.

Across the prairie, there was a broad opening in the hills, interlinking one sea of grass with another, and through this, bearing in a direct line for the Rocky Mountains, the Pacific Railway ran, having first crossed the plain, cleaving it in two with a belt of iron, and filling all the solitude with the hum of busy workmen.

Out of this railway, which now links two vast oceans together, chaining down mighty ranges of mountains in its progress, this village, or town, had sprung into existence, as many another thriving place had done, while the great works stretched themselves toward the mountains.

Some keen lover of nature had chosen the site of this coming town. The shadows of the hills almost swept over it. The river wound around it like a silver bow. It was uplifted above the level plain, and overlooked a sea of the tallest and most luxuriant grass that ever tangled itself into gorgeousness with the vivid coloring of wild flowers, abundant as itself, and bright as the tints of a coming sunset. At nightfall the scene was more than beautiful. Then the hills cast down their shadows upon the river, which sent up

sparkles of light here and there as the dying sun shed flashes of scarlet or gold upon it, and on the cabin windows with their clinging flowers, as if determined to light up the prairie with a double glory.

Indeed, at this hour, it was well that the village should be illuminated, for then the sweetest season of domestic life commenced. The owners of these cabins came home from their work, brought back from a distance on the road they were building, eager for a few hours of domestic comfort with the loved ones who had followed them into those western wilds, scarcely giving a thought to the sacrifice they were making.

This hour of rest had fallen upon the village. The trees over the topmost hills seemed set on fire by drifting flame-tints let loose by the setting sun. The river was partly in the shadow partly flashing with gleams of gold, but the inner curve was all one cool green shadow, in which a boat drifted downward with the current, forming a beautiful object in the stillness.

In this boat two persons were seated, a young girl, in the first bloom of life, and a man of twenty-five, or thereabout, whose handsome face bore an impress of matured thought not usual to that early age. He was a fine specimen of manhood, tall and athletic in person, intellectual in the expression of his face, and earnest in everything he said or did.

The girl, though scarcely yet in the perfection of the rare beauty which a year or two more would give to her tall person and sweet face, was wonderfully light and graceful as she sat in the little boat, trailing one hand in the water and listening, with downcast eyes, to that sweet story, which is full of witchery now as it was when Adam whispered it to his wife in the bowers of Paradise.

All at once the young man flung down his oars, and took the hand which lay supinely in the girl's lap, between both his.

"You are silent—you do not believe me, Dora."

She lifted her eyes from the shelter of their long lashes, gave him one look, and veiled them again; but over her face flashed a smile so sudden and brilliant that he uttered an exclamation of delight, and, lifting her hand to his lips, left it rosy with his kisses.

"Then you do love me, Dora?"

She looked up with pleasant mischief in her smile.

"William, who was the girl I saw you with that first night at the theatre?"

The young man started, and released her hand gently from his clasp. She looked at him in surprise. The color had left his face, and a thrill of pain seemed to pass through him.

"I am sorry you asked me just now, Dora, because an hour like this should be all joy; but I should have told you about this a little later, and will answer you now. That person was my wife."

"Your wife!"

A storm of crimson rushed over Dora's face. It seemed as if the word had passed through her heart like a bullet.

"It grieves me. I did not intend to be so abrupt. Forgive me," pleaded the young man, greatly troubled by her agitation.

"Your wife—and you loved her?" cried out that young girl, so new to pain that she thought it was killing her.

"Yes, Dora, I loved her. Forgive me, but I did."

"As you love me—better than you love me. How dare you, sir, talk as—as you have done? Take me home—take me home!"

"Not till you have listened to me—not till you have forgiven me for that which was no crime, at least against you."

"I—I cannot forgive you. It was a deception. I thought you so good—so honorable, so—so——"

Then Dora suddenly lifted both hands to her face, and burst into a passion of tears.

Sterling strove to imprison her hands and wipe away her tears, but she resisted him, and began to sob.

"Dora," he said, very gently, but with firmness, "you must not be angry with me for a state of things that happened long before I knew you. If you could but understand how unhappy these tears make me, I am sure you would not be so ungenerous."

"But you loved her—you married her."

"Dora, give me your hands—there, look in my face, and tell me if it is a deceitful one. Ah! you are almost smiling. Thank you, dear. How lovely you are with the tears on those long lashes. Do you think that I ever did or ever could love any one as I love you?"

"Are you sure? She was wonderfully pretty. Her eyes so tender, her neck so white—that girl your wife? Oh, William, I hate her."

Do not say that, Dora—she is dead."

Dora gave a little shiver, and began to cry again, but more quietly than before. At last she turned to him with a smile of heavenly forgiveness on her face and said, in a sweet, womanly fashion,

"Now tell me all about it."

Well, he told her the whole story—at least all that he knew of it; how his profession had thrown him in the way of Constance Hudson; how he had compassionated her loneliness, and admired her genius, untamed and rude as it was, helped her—pitied her—loved her, and, in the end, secretly married her. Then he told of the long journey he had taken in order to claim his wife openly, and the mournful news that had met him at her father's door. This was the reason of his secrecy. Death had put its seal upon his marriage, and he had shrunk from speaking of it to any one especially since his heart had gone out so entirely to another.

Dora heard all this with mingled curiosity and pain. But

she was, after all, a sensible girl. By degrees her tears abated, and I am not certain that she did not exalt the young man into something like a hero of romance in her mind. But the subject had brought too many sad memories upon Sterling, and the hour, which opened so brightly, closed in gentle sadness. He could not be entirely happy when the thoughts of beautiful, bright Constance Hudson had been so unexpectedly thrust upon him.

Eudora had unconsciously dashed the sweetest moments of her own life with painful shadows, when she mentioned the beautiful girl who had, at first, only excited her curiosity, and, of late, since she had learned to love William Sterling, a vague jealousy. With one careless question, she had brought out the young man's secret, and thus dashed her own joy, for a moment, to the ground. But we soon reconcile ourselves to the inevitable. Dora was too wise and right-hearted for more than a passing pang when she learned that her own pure, first love, must accept a second place in the life she had hoped to fill entirely. It wounded her self-love, and hurt her pride, at first; but that soon passed away. Sterling had, in fact, committed no wrong against any one, save by the secrecy which sprung out of intended kindness. After all, this married life of his amounted to scarcely more than a dream. How could she remain jealous of a woman in her grave? Yet Dora would far rather this marriage had never been.

If Sterling, also, felt unhappy, as his boat glided slowly adown the river, he only gave proof of it by a quiet sadness, which settled upon them both; and so these two lovers drifted on through the purple shadows almost in silence.

They came back, at last, and walked into the village just as the stars came out, and fire-flies were filling the prairies with diamond-sparks. They paused before one of the new stone houses. Dora turned her face to the starlight as she

hesitated to open the door. William held out his hand. His face was pale in that dim light, and he looked in her eyes entreatingly, as if he feared that some hard thought still lingered in her heart against him.

"Dora!"

"Good-night," she said, kindly, bending toward him; "good-night. We will never think of her again."

"God bless you, Dora! Good-night."

Sterling turned away, and walked past his mother's cabin, wanting solitude. Dora stood in the darkened hall of her father's house, and watched him tenderly, weeping a little, but more from happiness than pain.

CHAPTER LXVI.

THE LAST HOPE CRUSHED.

THE cabin door was open, and Mrs. Holt sat near it, looking out upon the river. A little time before she had seen the boat, containing her son and Dora, floating through the shadows, and the sight had set her to dreaming, as mothers will when the welfare of their children is at stake. Since this lady had taken up her life on the prairie, she had become better acquainted with the young girl than years of intimacy could have made her in the city. Thrown, as these two families were, into near neighborhood among the pioneers, surveyors, and workmen, who were busy on the railroad, the cohesion of natural refinement brought them into close relationship. Mrs. Holt saw the growing attachment of her son, and was made hopeful by it, for she loved Dora already with almost maternal fondness.

"Let them be happy," she said, with tears of gentle tenderness filling her eyes, as the boat floated off through

the purplish mist. "God forbid that their youth should be shipwrecked, as mine was. Oh! if we, who have learned how to suffer, could bear all the burdens of those we love, life would lose half its anxieties."

So the boat went out of sight, winding sleepily down the river; and that woman's mind, in like fashion, launched itself on the stream of her life, but her thoughts turned up the stream, and floating through the dim shadows of memory till they became anguish, and she started up in a desperate effort to fling off the past, and make that log cabin pleasant as the palace she had been thinking of.

At this moment, Sterling passed.

She spread a little table of black walnut, rudely fashioned by some of the railroad workmen, with a cloth of snow-white linen—one of her hoarded treasures; brought out bread, and fruit, and milk, with some delicate round cakes, and, at last, set a vase of wild flowers just beneath the lamp, which scattered delicate shadows all over the snowy whiteness of the table. Her mind had turned from the young persons who had first occupied it, and was dwelling, somewhat anxiously, on the husband whom she had followed, with such devotion, into the West.

Holt should have been home to his supper before sunset; and now it was getting quite dark, and, so far as she could discover, looking anxiously out toward the railway, no sign of his coming was visible. She walked out a little way into the wild grass, looking for him. In the distance was a group of shanties, where many of the workmen went for their meals, and where that eternal curse to civilization, whisky, was kept in abundance. Had he stopped there? Once again had his manhood given way? Were the hopes she had cherished so thankfully about to be trodden in the dust?

Poor woman! she had made her bed among thorns and thistles from the first. How they pierced and wounded her

now! At last she heard a rustling in the long grass, the low protest of a voice she knew, expostulating with the earth for rising up, swelling, and rolling so unevenly; and with the grass for tying up four pair of feet, that wanted to wade through, and could not.

The woman's heart died within her. She knew the sound too well. Many, and many a time had she heard that muffled voice, cursing the pavement and the stars for oscillating under his drunken progress, as he came home from some of his many haunts in the city. But the prairie life had seemed to regenerate him. His strength and manhood had come back in the bright, pure air of the plains. She had hoped so much for him, and, of late, trust had superseded hope. Now both were gone, and she stood, trembling and broken-hearted, almost ready to die, rather than see his degradation.

He came up, reeling and stumbling, through the thick grass. His hat was gone; his coat floated open at the bosom, and, in a fit of half-strangulation, he had torn off his neck-tie, leaving his throat bare to the chest.

This was what the poor woman saw, reeling toward her in the pure starlight of that summer night.

"What—what—is it you, old woman? It—it, it's my opinion, the prairies are—a—a—afire; sparks a—all round me, right—yes, right and left, every—every way. What do you—you keep moving back so for? Can't ye keep steady on yer—yer—feet, like a decent woman with—with—out dancing up and down—to—to, and fro, like a—a—like a woman, and a confounded old woman at that? Can't you hear? Stand still! It—it's indecent for a woman of your age, hop—hop—hopping about that way. Just wait till your feet get tangled in the grass, and if that don't trip—trip you up— There! didn't I tell you!"

Here the drunken man gave a lurch forward, and fell to the ground, where he lay, wallowing in the long grass

almost at his wife's feet, all the time rebuking her, and wondering at her unsteadiness. She helped him up from the earth with as heavy a heart as ever ached in a woman's bosom. While he leaned roughly on her shoulder, fairly bending down her delicate form under his weight, she led him towards home, weeping silently all the way.

What a neat, tasteful picture was that still cabin when they entered it. Curtains of cloud-white muslin floated at the little windows. The table, with its milk, its fruit and flowers, stood in the middle of the room, clearly revealed by the radiance of the lamp. Two or three easy chairs stood about; luxurious, and not ungraceful affairs, scooped out of flour-barrels, stuffed with fine hay, and covered with stout, white linen, altogether an invention which sprang out of necessity. That long packing-box was cushioned and draped into a pretty article of furniture, which might not have been out of place in a city parlor.

Mrs. Holt had, with great taste and industry, thus embellished her prairie-home, hoping and praying for the new life which would spring out of her husband's reformation. With her own hands she had covered the rough walls of her cabin with coarse cloth and concealed that under delicate paper, against which two or three fine engravings, hung in frames of fir-cones, acorn-cups, and vine-tendrils, that looked like ancient carving. If any home on earth could have won the heart of a wanderer to domestic ease, this would have done so, for here that woman had brought all the refinement and mechanical genius of a life-time. Love had made her an inventor, and her life on the prairies, instead of being a hardship, was like working out a poem.

Alas! alas! how did this woman, so delicate and sensitive, come back to her pretty home that night, bending beneath the weight of a drunken man; her dress drenched with dew, her feet so wet that they left tracks on the matting, tears upon her face, ice at her heart—hopeless, utterly

hopeless. The last prop had fallen away from her. The rest of her existence must be painful and humiliating endurance.

Mrs. Holt led her husband into the house, and closed the door, afraid that some one might see his disgrace.

"Sup—supper," muttered the inebriate, gathering his weight up from the shoulder of his wife, and staggering toward the table. "Told you I'd be home! but they set the prairies a-fire—snap, flash, lus, sparks here—sparks there; sp—sparks. Yes! got home to supper, in spite of 'em all. Come, set to, old Methuselah! What's that on your dress? Water? Been wading in the creek, ha! It's rainin' down your face, too, running down the wrinkles like gutters! What an old guy! Take care, you're in my way! I want to catch that chair when it comes round! Hello!—the table's getting into a whirl! Hold on!—hold on, I say! One, two, three, four baskets of berries! Pitchers of milk hopping about! Hold on!—hold on, I say!"

Here the man squared his feet, planted them heavily on the floor, and pressing both hands on the table, held on to it in dread earnest, calling out,

"Stop it!—stop it! By George! it whirls round like a cart-wheel! Steady!—steady!—steady!"

Here he dropped into the chair his wife had placed for him, still holding on to the table with one hand, while he poured a flood of milk over the table-cloth, in vainly trying to fill a bowl with it.

"My dear," said he at last, turning his heavy eye upon his wife, and speaking with a great effort at politeness, "oblige me by—by picking it up. It isn't just the thing to see good milk lying about loose! Pick it up, my love, and do it in a bowl! Run, my dear! pour out the bread, and I'll try and make a supper, my—my darling!"

The poor woman had no smiles for this ridiculous address, but she sat down by the table, wiped the milk up with a

napkin, filled the bowl, and crimsoned the white fluid with a rich supply of berries. These seemed to fill her husband with nothing but loathing, for he pushed the table away with a violent jar that shook everything upon it; got up, reeled toward the pretty white couch, and then threw himself heavily upon it. In a few moments he was asleep, and breathed like a man seized with apoplexy.

Then the woman sat down in her rustic easy-chair, and, dropping both hands into her lap, fell into a dull lethargy of despair. She looked ten years older than she had done that morning. All the bloom which reviving hopes and the fresh air of a wild country had given her, was swept away. The very heart in her bosom was heavy as marble.

Young Sterling came in, and found his mother sitting there, helpless and hopeless. He also saw the man, whom she loved so dearly, lying upon the whiteness of that pretty couch, degrading it with his besotted sleep. He paused a step from the door, and took in the scene with a glance full of pain and surprise. After months of blamelessness, had it come to this with the man?

Mrs. Holt saw the scorn and sorrow in her son's look, and shrunk away from it with a shiver. He saw it, and went up to her softly, and with the tenderness of great love in his voice,

"Do not let it trouble you so, mother. It may not happen again."

The poor woman gave him a look of piteous gratitude, and her tears began to flow like rain. The kindness of her son thawed the ice at her heart.

The young man let her cry in peace, and, going up to the couch, put a pillow under the sleeping man's head; seeing which the poor woman covered her face with her hands, and began to sob.

"There! he is made comfortable now; let him sleep it off as he is, dear mother. Come, come! it is not so very

bad. Let me help you into the other room. All will be right to-morrow."

She got up, wearily, and went into the little bed-room, sighing forth a faint good-night. Sterling went up the stairs, which led to a garret under the roof, and, finding his humble bed, lay upon it all night, watching the moon as it mounted higher and higher in the sky, and flooded the garret with a silvery radiance, beautiful as the joy which was keeping him in a state of celestial wakefulness. Had he ever loved before? Could any previous experience be compared to the glory and sublime blissfulness that pervaded his whole being that night? Had his love for Constance Hudson been anything like that? Was it not pity, and the ardent admiration of beauty—to which his art made him peculiarly susceptible—rather than the intense devotion that pervaded his whole being now? In his desire to respect the dead had he not given an idea of perfect love for his young wife which the facts did not entirely carry out? How beautiful Dora had looked in her first indignant surprise that so vital a secret should have existed between them. With what sweet assurances she had forgiven him! Not in words—for he had rather been permitted to read them in the uplifting of her eyes, and the cadence of her low voice—but in a hundred ways she had told him, that, in her, love was stronger than pride. Yet Dora craved entire love, as every woman must who gives it as she did.

No; Sterling could not say to himself there, in the still moonlight, that he had ever wholly loved any woman as he now loved this girl Dora. In the sweet companionship of their lives, a strong, pure feeling had rooted itself, which was unlike anything the young man had ever dreamed of before. That other passion had been of the earth; this had the holiness of eternity in it. He scarcely thought how rarely beautiful she was; for her very identity was swal-

lowed up in his own being, and she seemed a part of his very life.

In his sweet dreaming, the young man forgot the trouble that had fallen upon his own household; but when the daylight came, and through the thin flooring he heard the sobs of a woman, in such grief that she had not closed her eyes during the night, it went to his heart like a reproach. How could he dream of perfect happiness, while his mother was suffering so keenly?

When Sterling came down stairs, his mother was busy about her household work, looking worn and haggard, as if the man, outstretched upon the couch, were dead, rather than degraded. They sat down to breakfast together in silence, with the door closed, that their shame might be shut out from the neighbors, and thus they took the first really uncomfortable meal in that house.

CHAPTER LXVII.

NEW ARRIVALS IN THE PRAIRIE.

It was not often that mere travelers found their way along the construction trains on the railroad; but sometimes an individual, more enterprising than usual, would manage to get on board, and pass from settlement to settlement on his way to the Pacific. Still it was seldom that women or children were found traveling in this fashion; and when a little girl, with all the old-fashioned manners, and more than the sharpness of a woman, came into the settlement one night, avowedly on a trading speculation in second-hand clothes, it was the source of considerable excitement. This feeling was enhanced by the fact that the girl was accompanied by a little old man, who seemed

to look up to her as his superior, and a lad of such exquisite beauty, that even the rudest workman turned to look upon him with admiration as he moved through the shanties standing on what would, some day, be a railroad station.

The boy carried a violin-case under his arm, and this also awoke the interest of the workmen, who saw a prospective dance before them, at which this boy might be the presiding musician.

Rhoda Weeks was very busy getting some huge trunks removed from among the rails and timbers, which made up the freight of that particular train, to a shanty of more than ordinary pretension, which had been pointed out to her as a place where food and lodging could be obtained.

"Now you just go and tell 'em to get us some supper, while I see to the things," said Rhoda, with the decision of a brigadier. "A slice of venison, or a plump broiled quail for Luke, remember, and some berries after. Have them done nicely, or he won't be able to touch them, poor dear! Now go along, father, and take good care of him, you know!"

Mr. Weeks obeyed her like a child, and followed Luke, who was walking languidly toward the shanty.

"No quails, not a bird, and he looking so tired?" cried Rhoda, spreading her little hands in consternation when she had discussed the ways and means with the owner of the shanty far enough to make sure that no delicacy could be had for her brother. "I tell you he is sick—can't you see it? His poor cheeks are redder than red to-night, and he can hardly sit up. Get him something nice, please do! Never mind about father and me, anything is good enough for us."

"I can get him a splendid whisky smash," said the man, so earnestly addressed.

Rhoda made a wry face and flung her hand out impatiently. That moment Weeks came up with eager desire in his face.

"I—I will take the smash," he said, rubbing his hands together. "It will do the boy more good in that way."

"Father!" whispered Rhoda, "I'm ashamed of you."

"Well, well, no matter, I can do without it," said the little man, retreating, almost with tears in his eyes; "but it's hard—it's mighty hard!" he muttered, sitting down disconsolately.

Rhoda placed herself on a wooden bench on which Luke was lying, and took his head in her lap.

"Are you hungry, dear?" she whispered.

"No, not much—only *so* tired. Shall we never find them, Rhoda?"

"By-and-by—have a little patience, Luke."

"But it is so long—months and months."

"I know it, darling; but I think we are on the track now, and I'll keep it up, if we have to go clear to California."

"I shall never get there," whispered Luke, closing his eyes wearily. "Don't you see, Rhoda, how weak and good-for-nothing I am getting."

"Weak! Nonsense! Good-for-nothing!—how foolish! You are only tired and hungry. Oh! if I could only get you something——"

Here Rhoda broke off with an exclamation of delight, for that moment a young man entered the shanty with a bunch of birds in one hand and a gun in the other. She did not look at the man, but her eyes fastened greedily on the birds; and removing Luke's head from her lap, she got down from the bench and went up to the new-comer.

"Will you let me have one—just one? Oh, mercy! Father, father; Luke—why, it's him. It's Mr. Sterling himself. Oh! how glad I am; how—how——"

She paused here and struggled a little, for Sterling lifted her from the floor, in the midst of her exclamations, and kissed her tenderly.

"Dear me, you shouldn't do that; but, then, who cares? We've found you at last; but how you are tanned; how your beard has grown. Dear me, isn't this splendid? Luke! Luke! don't you see who it is?"

Luke did not move, something strange had come over the boy. He was shivering from head to foot, and closed the broad, white lids over his eyes as if to shut the young man from his sight. Something within him shrunk and recoiled from that handsome face.

"Luke! Luke! don't you see—don't you hear?" cried Rhoda, as Sterling set her on her feet again.

The boy arose to a sitting posture and made a sad effort to smile.

"I—I am not very well," he said, gently; "and that makes me feel strange; but I'm glad to see you, Mr. Sterling. Father will be glad, too."

"Father! father! sure enough—where is he?" said Rhoda, on the alert in an instant. She turned just in time to see the little man place an empty tumbler on the counter, which answered as a bar, and surreptitiously wipe his lips with the back of his hand.

"Oh, father! just because my back was turned!" she whispered, leading him forward. "Here he is, Mr. Sterling, looking splendid, isn't he? Tired out, and had to take a little of something, you know; always does when I insist on it—don't you, father?"

Weeks, in some confusion, held out his hand and shook that of Sterling three times in succession.

"Glad to see you, sir—seems like old times. My, how hearty you are looking. How do you think Luke is getting along?"

"He always was delicate," said Sterling, looking compassionately on the gentle boy. "I hope the air of the plains will do him good."

Luke smiled, and said he thought it was doing him good;

then he turned a wistful glance on Rhoda, who crept toward him and bent her face to his.

"Ask him about them?" he whispered.

Rhoda nodded her head, and turned to Sterling.

"I was so taken aback that everything went out of my head. Where can we find Mrs. Holt?"

"She is here, Rhoda; you can see her house on the bend of the river by stepping this way."

Rhoda clapped her hands and ran to the door, looking toward the distant village with eager eyes.

"Oh! if I had but wings," she said.

"You need not pray for them, little Rhoda," answered Sterling. "I have a horse and wagon here; get in, and we will have our birds for supper."

"But Luke?"

"Of course, Luke will come also; your father, too. I have no idea how we shall manage for beds; but the neighbors are very kind."

"If you had just as lief, Rhoda, I will stay here," said Weeks, casting a furtive look toward the bar. "You and Luke will be enough for one house; besides, I must be here to take care of the goods."

"Perhaps that is the best arrangement," said Sterling, thinking of his mother, who was in no state to assume extra burdens.

"Well," said Rhoda, hesitating between her father and brother, "If one must be left behind, father is best."

Luke got up eagerly from the bench and put on his cap.

"It looks beautiful out yonder," he said. "I am ready to go."

A strange inspiration seemed to have seized upon the lad. His eyes were like diamonds: his cheeks became vividly red; and no coral was ever brighter than the lips through which his breath panted hot and fast.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

PLEASANT VISITORS.

STERLING lifted Luke into his wagon, and Rhoda took her place beside him, laughing gleefully at the idea of meeting her best friend once more. They had a delightful ride across the prairie, and at last stopped before the log cabin. Rhoda sprang over the wheel, darted into the house, and threw herself at Mrs. Holt's feet.

"Oh, lady! have I found you—have I found you!"

The bright tears were on her face, her hands were uplifted—the young creature was wild with joy.

Mrs. Holt was greatly affected. She raised the girl in her arms and kissed her again and again.

"Rhoda! little Rhoda! it seems like a miracle to see you here."

"Oh! we have been searching for you so long, traveling everywhere in hopes of finding you. The West is so far off, so wide, so long, it stretches off and off. But we are here at last, Luke and I, to say nothing of father."

"And you are come to stay with me, little Rhoda?" said Mrs. Holt, kindly.

"Till Luke gets better, if you will let us. Luke is sick. I am afraid he is getting worse, for he grows so handsome that it makes my heart ache."

Here the lad, of whom they were speaking, came in. Mrs. Holt was so struck by the ethereal beauty of his face that she stood motionless, gazing upon him as if an angel had started up in her path. Rhoda took him by the hand in her brisk, protecting way, and led him to the lady.

"You don't know Luke yet; but he remembers you, and loves you. Don't you, brother?"

"Ah, yes! I do remember her so well—as well as I remember our mother."

Mrs. Holt took his hand, it was hot and dry.

"You are ill—what can I do for you?" she said, in a voice so sweet with compassion that it brightened the boy's face all over.

"No, lady, I am well now. It seems as if I had got home."

"And so it shall be your home so long as you like it," said the lady; "but you must be hungry."

"Yes, he is hungry," answered Rhoda, taking off her bonnet, and beginning to roll up her sleeves. "But we have got some birds out there, and I am going to cook them. Is that the kitchen I saw back of the house, with a cooking stove in it?"

Before any one could answer, Rhoda ran out to the wagon, took the birds from under the seat, and directly was picking off their feathers in that little summer kitchen as if she had lived there all her life. Sometimes she would pause in her work, and sit motionless, with a bird in one hand, and a handful of feathers in the other; then burst out into a mellow laugh, wipe her eyes with the sleeve of her dress, and fall to work with new vigor.

When her birds were ready for cooking, she proceeded to make a fire, found all the necessary utensils as if by magic; and before Mrs. Holt knew well what she was about, came smiling and bustling into the house, ready to set the table for the whole family.

This was rather pleasant to the lady, who had been husbanding her little means so carefully that she had considered any servant as an extravagance. Besides, the sudden downfall of her hopes had broken her energies, and the fatigue of domestic duties pressed heavily upon her of late. So it was a relief to see bright, active little Rhoda taking the lead, and fluttering about the house like a honey-bee among rose-thickets.

"There," said Rhoda, placing the last dish on the table,

and rolling down her sleeves with dainty precision, "the supper is ready. Come, Mrs. Holt, come, Mr. Sterling, and you, Luke. Dear me, how comfortable it is to feel at home again."

She placed one of the cozy chairs at the head of the table, and patronized Mrs. Holt with a gentle pat on the shoulder as she sat down in it. Then settled Luke in his place, and took her own seat, with a little flutter of delight, as a mother-bird sinks down in her nest after the young ones are properly fed.

The next day Luke felt better from the rest and quietude which an idea of home had given him, and wandered off toward the river, plucking the most delicate prairie-flowers from the wild grasses as he went. Over his shoulder, like a troubadour of old, his violin was slung in its case of green cloth. Thus, with the flowers his taste was always longing for, and the instrument which he loved best of any inanimate thing on earth, the boy strolled forth, breathing the brightness of the air with languid pleasure, and feeling almost well again.

On the brink of the river stood a clump of elm-trees, over which a wild grape-vine had tangled and trailed itself, lifted high in the sunshine, and sweeping downward in a bower of rich leafiness. At the foot of this tree, Luke seated himself, and taking out his violin, began to play. At first the wind, as it whispered and sighed along the grass, was not fainter than the strains he drew. The singing of the waters, and the hum of summer insects swelled into harmony with his music, which seemed natural, like the rest.

By degrees the strains swelled out louder and more sustained; the air was thrilled with its sweetness; and the very birds in the vine above him paused, with their heads on one side, to listen, till the inspiration seized upon them, and they began to sing in chorus, jubilant with enthusiasm.

Then the lad's face grew heavenly in its spiritual loveli-

ness; a smile, that seemed born of the music, parted his lips; his eyes were luminous with crowding harmonies; his hands, delicate and white as a child's, shook and quivered with eagerness as they fluttered over the strings. Sometimes he lifted those beautiful eyes to the birds, and mocked their sweetest notes with his genius.

Again the sounds came with a liquid flow from under his fingers, and some unseen brook seemed rippling into the river. Such fantasies occupied the very soul of the boy until the morning shadows were beginning to uplift themselves from the river, and the sun crept in upon him through the trailing grape-vines, making everything around still more beautiful.

Any exertion, save that which sprang out of his genius, would have taxed the boy's strength most painfully; but he had never yet wearied of the glorious strains of which that violin was capable. Like a creature inspired, he filled all the air with melodies, throwing out the genius within him in a wonderful outgush, all the more wild and sweet because no human being was near to disturb him.

CHAPTER LXIX.

A BOAT ON THE RIVER.

UP the river a little way, sheltered by some overhanging trees, a bark canoe was rocking on the water close by the shore. Its occupant, a young girl, stood up in it, gathering green grapes from a vine that crept over the shrubbery which formed a hedge-row just there, and fell like a torn curtain toward the water. As the first strains of that heavenly music reached her, Dora stood motionless with her hand on a cluster of fruit, and her head bent listening.

Then she dropped to her seat in the canoe, and taking up the oars, allowed them to drag with the current, which bore her gently down stream.

Dora made no noise, indeed scarcely breathed, for the music grew more distinct and clear as she approached the group of elm-trees; and she listened, entranced, wondering how the thrilling sounds were produced. The current at last swept her canoe close to the shore; the wind lifted the foliage for a moment, and she saw a young boy sitting upon the bank, beautiful as anything Raphael ever painted. His flushed cheek was resting against the violin, from which his delicate fingers was charming the music she had heard.

Dora seized a branch, which stretched over the water, and sprang ashore. She knew the lad, and her heart leaped with joy at the sight of him.

"Luke!—Luke! you dear, dear boy, how came you in this far-off place."

Luke Weeks dropped his Cremona to the ground, where it gave out a faint wail, as if the fall had wounded it. All the hot scarlet died out from his face, and he began to tremble from head to foot, as if an angel had just appeared before him. Then the breath came back to his lips; his eyes filled with tender joy, and, clasping his hands in an ecstasy of thanksgiving, he cried out,

"It is she!—it is she! I knew this was home!"

"Are you ill? How pale you look! I hope—I do hope it is nothing serious," said Dora, sitting down, and putting her hand on the lad's shoulder. "How you tremble! Did I frighten you like that?"

"Frighten me, sweet lady! Oh! no; if I tremble, it is because—because I am so thankful to the good God."

Dora picked up the violin from the grass.

"Have you broken it?" she questioned. "I hope not."

Luke took the instrument from her lap. Next to the young creature by his side, it was the dearest thing to him

in all the world. He swept his hand lightly over the strings, and smiled when they gave forth the usual sounds.

That smile, so light and tender, brought the dimples around Dora's mouth. She took the little hand from its loving caress of the instrument, and held in her own.

"Why, how frightened you must have been! This poor hand quivers like a bird. Or is it that you are so very ill?"

"Ah! I am well, now; well, and so happy."

Dora stole her arm around the shadowy form, and then drew him close to her. He seemed scarcely more than a child, to her; for sickness had given him back all the delicacy of infancy. He laid his head upon her shoulder, and the healthy bloom of her cheek touched the burning glow of his. The boy sighed sadly, and closed his eyes.

"Are you tired, Luke?"

He attempted to say "No," but the word died on his lips, in a smile of ineffable happiness.

"By-and-by," she said, very quietly "you will tell me how it happened that I found you here. It seems so strange!"

"Not strange to me!—not to me! God does these things, I do believe. He listens when we pray!"

Dora grew quiet, and almost solemn, as she listened. It seemed as if some angel had folded his wings, and nestled close to her, on his way to heaven.

"We have been traveling a long time," said the boy; "months and months, but could find no trace of any one we wanted. But we are here, at last—and this is rest."

"You were looking for Mrs. Holt. She used to talk of you so much," said Dora.

"Did she? Rhoda loves her so! She never was happy till we came in search of our best friends."

"You mean her son, Mr. Sterling," said Dora, blushing like a rose.

"Yes; he was always kind to us. How strong and well he looks."

"Ah! that is the fresh prairie breezes! You will soon get well under them, and be like the rest of us."

A faint expression of denial came to the boy's face, but he said nothing. After awhile he sat upright, and was astonished at the strength within him.

"How beautiful everything is," he said. "I did not mind it so much before! The sunlight, there, upon the water, is like a silver flame!"

CHAPTER LXX.

MUSIC ON THE RIVER.

DORA looked out upon the river, smiling pleasantly, as if she had heard what Luke was saying, and dreamed over it. At last she started and answered him.

"Would you like to see the river closer? I have a canoe here—it will hold us both."

"A canoe; that is a little boat used by the Indians. But I cannot row, my hands are not strong enough."

"But I can."

"You, row a boat?"

The boy laughed, and looked at her with his bright, large eyes, evidently amused.

"You may laugh; but I can. How else did I come here?"

"From heaven, it seemed to me. If it only were so, I should be glad to go there, too! But such things are only true in dreams."

"Well, Luke, if I cannot take you quite to Paradise, we may have a nice trip up or down the river. If you doubt it, come here."

Dora went down to the bank, and, parting the bushes with her arms, revealed her pretty canoe rocking on the water.

"Come!"

She sprang into the frail craft, holding out her arms for the boy, who was by her side in an instant. Dora took up her oars, and, telling Luke to sit down in the bow, pushed into the stream, laughing merrily.

"Now," she said, "I have got you and the Cremona all to myself; let us give the birds some music. You were playing a heavenly air when I came up and frightened you so—go on with it!"

"Oh! not that!" cried the boy, taking up his instrument, "it was too sad; this must be jubilant! My heart is brimful of it. You shall just touch the water with your oars, for an accompaniment, and I— Ah! if the Cremona had the power to speak out so much happiness; but nothing can do that!"

With this Luke took up his instrument, and, stooping gently forward, began to play; not as he had done a little time before, but with an outgush of joyousness that made the heart leap as it listened. Dora, in the glow of her enthusiasm—for she loved music with a passion—dipped her oars in and out, dropping diamonds in the sunshine as an accompaniment, and, tapping her little foot on the bottom of the canoe as if impatient for a triumphal march.

Thus these two young creatures floated down stream together; Dora feeling as if a beautiful child had been intrusted to her keeping; Luke wondering in his soul if the brightest places in Paradise could be equal to that river, and if the angels who haunt them were more lovely than the fair girl whose presence had filled him with a new life!

Meantime Rhoda had taken a fancy to explore a little, and came down to the river, wondering at everything she saw on the way. If a bird started up from her feet, thus

exposing its nest to full view, it all seemed like magic to her, and she would watch it, with widening eyes, circling and circling around her, then cast her eyes down upon the nest, touch the eggs cautiously, and laugh to herself that anything so pretty should be afraid of her. The green fruit, as it hung on vine or tree, was a marvel to her. She was constantly wondering if this or that was good to eat; for an honest idea of usefulness was as natural to little Rhoda as music and poetical fancies were to her brother.

At length Rhoda came upon the river's bank, and sitting down with her feet almost in the water, took a survey of the scenery. Just where she sat a fine old forest tree lifted the bank into a green knoll with its roots, which crept into the water, and gleamed through it like a knot of huge serpents. The trunk of this tree had been hollowed out and burnt in by some prairie fire, making a little cavern, from which a yard or two of rich turf sloped into the water.

"What a lovely place for washing," said thrifty Rhoda. "A fire just there, and a great brass kettle swung over it would be beautiful; plenty of water, and no end of drying room. What would some of the women in our yard say? There wouldn't be one of 'em that didn't take in washing. Oh, my! what's that?"

Up Rhoda jumped, and, shading her eyes with one hand, looked up the river, where she saw a pretty canoe cutting the water like an arrow, and in it her brother giving out the best music of his soul to the beautiful girl they had been searching for so long.

"Oh! he has found her! He has found her!" she cried, tying her bonnet eagerly, as if she must run off and tell the joyous news to some one. "Now we can stay; he will rest—he will get well. Yes, I think I will walk right across to the railroad and tell father."

But while she hesitated the canoe came opposite, curved with a graceful sweep, and drew close up to the bank.

Dora had seen the little stranger, asked who she was, and called out,

"Jump in! jump in, little girl! there is room enough for us all."

Rhoda tied the last knot in her bonnet-strings with a jerk, made a jump to the lower bank, and another from that, landing in the bottom of the canoe, where she settled down still and watchful as a mouse.

"What a queer little woman it is," thought Dora, smiling under the scrutiny of those keen eyes; "his sister, yet so very unlike him. She really does not seem to care for his exquisite music."

Not she! Such music with little Rhoda was only one source of the family living; she gave just as much importance to the sound of her own smoothing-irons, or the flash of her matches. Everything that brought in money and household comfort was music to that thrifty child. You might have known that by her action in the canoe.

After examining Dora from head to foot, astonished that she was really a young lady, she discovered a pile of green grapes in the bow of the canoe, and seizing upon a bunch, held it up, and broke out in the midst of a most pathetic passage of the music.

"What are they?"

Dora shook her head, and still listening with all her soul, whispered,

"Grapes."

"Good to eat?" persisted Rhoda, crushing all the sourness out of one between her little white teeth, and making a terribly wry face over the taste.

"They should be cooked," whispered Dora again, shaking her head and striving to listen.

"Oh! stewed with sugar; I know. Just set me ashore by that vine. I'll get some for Mrs. Holt—sweet and sour together makes tremendous preserves. She'll like 'em."

There! do set me ashore. I don't like this; it seems like being a baby and rocked in a cradle."

Dora was very glad to oblige the little thing, who had broken up half the charm of her brother's music. So, with a sweep of the oars, she shot her arrowy little craft to the bank, and Rhoda was soon half buried in the trailing foliage of a grape-vine, so laden with fruit that she uttered a gleeful shout on looking upward to a tree on which the vine had clambered. No wonder; a host of graceful clusters flung their delicate shadows between her and the sunshine, which came through and around them in gleams of silvery light.

"Oh! what a heap! Enough for preserves, and pies, and pickles, and everything. Father must come down and help me get at 'em. I'll just pick a few for tea, and come down again to-morrow."

Rhoda gathered a quantity of the fruit in the skirt of her dress, and scrambled out of the thicket, glorying in her prize; but she had scarcely walked a dozen yards when young Sterling came toward her, looking pale and excited. He paused a moment on seeing her, and asked quickly if she had seen Miss—— Then, remembering that Rhoda knew no one in that place, he checked himself before the name was uttered, and looked out upon the river.

"Oh, yes!" answered Rhoda, "I have just been a rocking with her; that is, canoeing in the river. Listen, and you can hear Luke's Cremona whispering to the leaves."

"She is with some one, then."

"Yes, sir; the young lady is with my own brother, and delighted with him—no wonder."

CHAPTER LXXI.

MOTHER AND SON.

STERLING turned back reluctantly. He was ill at ease, and in the heat of his disappointment had gone blindly in search of Dora. That morning he had asked her father's consent to their marriage, and had been refused, not rudely, but with that delicate firmness from which there was little hopes of appeal. When Sterling asked for the reasons, they were given. The young man had neither position, family, wealth, or any one of the requisites which would warrant him in proposing to the only daughter of a man who had earned all these things for himself. This was said kindly, but with sufficient force to kill all hope in the proud young man. Every word of these objections was true. Sterling was uncertain of his future as any man of six-and-twenty could be. A good education, active genius, and his present situation, were all he had to depend on. These he had offered with all due humility, and they were rejected.

In the first pang of his wounded pride he sought for Dora, but she was not alone; so he went back to the house, and betook himself to the next dearest creature to him on earth—his mother. Rhoda saw that something was wrong, and, with her usual shrewd tact, betook herself to the summer kitchen, where she fell to picking over her grapes, and sifting sugar with energy, now and then casting anxious glances through a back window of the cabin, where Sterling and his mother sat in earnest conversation.

This was what they were saying:

"And he said this."

Mrs. Holt spoke in a low voice; the color in her cheek grew warm and red. Sterling marked this; he saw, too,

that her hand trembled as she made an effort to continue the work she was doing.

"It was his chief objection. Had I possessed a family and connections, I think he would have been less positive; but I had only Mr. Holt, and he——"

Mrs. Holt shrunk within herself, and answered quickly,

"Yes, I know—I know!"

"Mother, you have never told me anything about myself."

Sterling looked at his mother, then, and saw that she was deadly pale.

"Is there nothing that ought to soften this man's prejudice, mother?"

She did not answer his question, but abruptly asked one herself.

"Do you love this girl so much, William?"

"Love her? Great heavens! can you ask this when I have gone, with all my disadvantages, and besought her proud father to let me have her? It was like death to do it, knowing how little I had to offer."

"Yes," Mrs. Holt answered, as if talking to herself; "I only wonder the proud blood could so force itself."

"Mother, you have not answered me!"

Again she evaded him with a question.

"And she loves you? This is no light passion—no fancy that will die out. Boy, boy, tell me, have you discovered, of a truth, what real love is?"

"Mother, it is enough, we love each other truly, deeply, in such earnest as admits of no doubt."

"But it is your first love, Sterling."

Then the young man grew white in all his features, and after the dead silence of a minute, told his mother everything; how he had been married—all, all that the reader knows. Mrs. Holt, remembering the young beauty she had seen on the stairs of that tenement-house, thanked God

that her son had broken the fetters which would have chained him down to earthliness forever. This entire confidence drew the mother and son close together, and she answered his question kindly, but not with the fullness he desired.

"We will talk this over again; you have taken me by surprise. I saw that it might come in time; but now it finds me unprepared."

Sterling kissed his mother and went out, comforted, without just reason, perhaps; but he had great faith both in the love and ability of his mother, who had always been a guardian and friend outside of the affection which all mothers are expected to feel for their offspring.

After he was gone, the effect of this interview became painfully visible in the lady. She sat for a long time, with her hands locked in her lap, gazing on the floor in deep thought. The exigencies of this case demanded some great sacrifice of her, which it was almost death to make—that appeared certain.

The battered old chest of camphor-wood, which was invariably her companion, let her go where she would, was now drawn out from under her bed, and from it the lady took a malachite-box, mounted and bound with bands of gold, somewhat dimmed by time, but an article of great beauty and value, such as the Czars of Russia give their favorite ambassadors when they wish to be generous. She unlocked this casket with some difficulty, for it was a long time since it had been opened, and took from it a quantity of papers, one or two of which were partly printed.

Mrs. Holt read these papers over with a sort of dumb shock, which left her face ashen, and her lips blue. It seemed to be the order from some court, for a seal was attached, on which the arms of England were stamped, and the document was written on vellum. You might have seen that it was killing the woman to read the words that stood

out from that vellum; but she went through them twice, the first time in shivering haste, then again slowly, but shrinking into colder whiteness, as if every word had been a poisoned arrow, killing her slowly.

This paper, with two others, which seemed to be marriage or baptismal certificates, perhaps both, with a sealed letter, she took from the box, and placed about her person, as if for use. After this she sat down by the window, and drearily watched little Rhoda as she went about her work in the back kitchen. This lasted, perhaps, ten minutes, but it seemed to her an hour. Then she started up and beckoned to Rhoda, who was looking that way. At heart Mrs. Holt was a courageous woman, and with such the impulse to meet any evil thing, face to face, when it becomes necessary to meet it at all, is sure to arise.

"Go, tell my son I wish to see him at once," she said, frightening little Rhoda by her abruptness and her pallor.

Rhoda went on the instant, and directly young Sterling returned from a sharp walk along the wagon-road which led to the village, and entered the cabin. Mrs. Holt was walking up and down the room trembling, but resolute. Sterling closed the door after him, and then observed that she had rolled down the paper blinds, and drawn the muslin curtains, leaving the room in dim twilight, in the midst of which she stood like a ghost.

"Come here," said the lady, seating herself on the couch. "Come here, Sterling, and kiss me once more with the old love, before I make you hate me forever."

Sterling went up to the couch, and dropping upon his knees, wound both arms around his mother, kissing her cold hands and white face with pathetic tenderness, for he loved her dearly, and saw that she was suffering.

She shivered under his caresses, and pushed him from her, then drew him closer, and kissed him passionately, crying out, "It is the last—the last! One hour more, and these lips will recoil from mine!"

"Mother, you are wild; you do not know how much I love you!"

"Not enough to overcome disgrace—infamy!" she said, in a hoarse, low voice, while her eyes, full of shrinking pain, searched his face.

"Enough to overcome everything, be it misfortune or be it crime. The one holy fact that you are my mother, will lift me above it all."

Then the woman burst into tears, and sobbed piteously.

"I would not tell you; I would never have done it, but that your own happiness was at stake. I am an old woman, Sterling, worn, broken, incapable of much beyond sorrow. You are young, ardent; with my shame I will purchase your happiness. Read it; my lips refuse to say the things you must know. I wrote it, thinking to die, in silence; hoping that, with the grave between us, you might not feel it so much. But God will not let this cup pass from me. I only pray that it may earn you happiness."

She laid a sealed letter in his hands, with the legal papers which she had taken with it from the malachite-box. He looked at the door as if thinking to go out, but she pointed to the window and said,

"No, read it there."

Sterling sat down, raised the blind a little, and took up the vellum with its seal. A stream of light fell directly upon his face, and along the paper he was reading, while Mrs. Holt sat almost in darkness, watching him as a criminal reads the features of his judge. The young man felt the searching wildness of those eyes, and gave little sign of agitation. Sometimes his face flushed and his eyes kindled, then she could see that his hand pressed the paper fiercely; but after he broke open the letter it relaxed, a look of tender commiseration stole into his eyes, and she felt that he was thinking of her as if already in her grave, as she had always hoped to be before her son read that narrative.

All this time, the dead silence of the room was terrible. The poor woman could hear her own heart beat out its pain audibly. When the paper rustled in her son's hand, a faint shriek died in her throat. She sat there like a poor hunted antelope, watching for the bullet which was sure to pierce its heart. Of all her hard, wretched life, this one hour was the most wounding in its still bitterness.

Sterling got up at length, grasping the papers in his hand. She saw that he moved unsteadily, and looked downward on the floor, as if afraid that his eyes might wound her. Feeling this, she shrunk back, breathless. The motion that she made, faint as it was, struck him with something like remorse. That instant he was kneeling by her; again his lips pressed hers with a tenderness unknown to them before.

"My mother! My poor, poor mother!"

Here his manhood gave way, and, with her withered cheek pressed against his, wept like a child.

"And all this misery you have suffered without a word to your own son," he said, smoothing her gray hair with the hand with which he had just wiped away her tears:

"My sorrow would have made you sad, my shame degraded you," she answered.

"Do not speak of shame like that. Such words are not for a son to hear, even from his own mother. If there was wrong, a lifetime of atonement is enough."

She interrupted him. "No, not enough. Atonement is not a thing of this world, Sterling. The time which God gives us is all his own; we cannot take one portion in which to redeem another. What human soul can atone for pain once given, or wrong done. Like a stone cast into the waters of a lake, the wrong has sent forth its circles which nothing can arrest. Repentance may be ours, and forgiveness; but atonement is seldom to be hoped for."

"How sadly you talk, mother."

"Because I feel sadly, but more at rest since this heavy secret has left me. Use it, Sterling, and be happy with this sweet girl. Her father will consent when he knows who my son is."

"No," answered the young man, firmly. "Let this rest between us two. I will not use it to win even Dora. Her father shall yet give her to me for what I am."

Mrs. Holt drew a deep breath; a stone seemed rolled away from her heart. She held out her hand.

"It will not be long, Sterling. I am, getting near the end now."

Sterling kissed the hand she held out, and went away greatly disturbed, but filled with compassion for the woman he left prostrate on that dainty couch, weak and weeping.

CHAPTER LXXII.

DYING MUSIC.

STERLING was right. It was not many days before the caresses of Dora, and a natural sense of justice, won a full consent to the young people's marriage; but the engagement was to last a year, and was not to be made a matter of general knowledge at all. Indeed, the secluded life the persons concerned were leading, rendered this easy; there really existed few persons on the prairie who would have been interested in the matter.

Meantime, Rhoda and her brother settled down in that prairie cabin perfectly at home, while old Mr. Weeks took the opportunity and spent his days at the shanty, helping the landlord serve out mint-julips, whiskey-smashes, and an assortment of drinks, whose mere names are beyond my limited knowledge, and the very fumes of which were enough to

keep any moderate man in a state of semi-intoxication. He sometimes came over and did a little gardening for Mrs. Holt, at which times he appeared prim and decorous enough to make Rhoda proud of him, and give her faith in the country air as a corrective of intemperance and idleness. But the poor girl had her troubles, which would not be put aside with delusion.

After the first few days Luke began to droop again. He was never at rest unless Dora was somewhere in sight, and would sit hours together at the window, watching the door of her home with such longing in those beautiful eyes, that Mrs. Holt, in very compassion, managed to keep the girl half the time by her side. When she was away, he never touched the Cremona; but sometimes, when he caught a sight of her in the garden, or by the river, he would take up the instrument, and with its plaintive strains call her to him clearly, almost as if he had spoken in words.

Dora pitied the boy, and was fascinated by his music—so all this was no constraint upon her. Besides, she was very happy in those days, and it became a pleasure to give the radiance of her own joy to everything less fortunate than herself. She did not realize that the lad was dying, and that her presence, as he approached "the valley and shadow," was like that of an angel; for youth is unreasoningly hopeful, and puts aside the very idea of death; but she knew that he grew thinner and whiter each day; that unearthly harmonies seemed most natural to his violin; and the beauty of his face was like that of a seraph pining for companionship. So that bright girl would sit for hours and hours listening to him, holding his hand in hers, soothing his brow with her sweet, sisterly kisses, and talking of the time when he would give concerts in the city, and she would bring half the world to listen.

There had been a time when Luke talked freely of dying to his sister, and found angelic pleasure therein; but now

he would speak of nothing but life—some bright, heavenly life, in which Dora would always be first and foremost. It was a sweet dream, full of visionary happiness, in which the boy floated slowly to his grave.

One day, in the restlessness of disease, he went down to the river, and rested himself in the very place he had occupied on the morning he first saw Dora coming toward him in her canoe. The grape-vines, which had seized upon the branches of the elms, weaving themselves insidiously up them, had grown thick and heavy since then, trailing to the earth in places, and even escaping along the grass, yielded a cool, green shelter, which protected him from the sun, and, in some directions, entirely from sight.

Luke had left his violin behind him, being too weak and weary even for so light a burden. But he carried a soft, low melody in his mind, and it came in sighs to his lips, brightening them with a beauty only known to creative genius. As he lay thus, inspired but quiet, the sound of footsteps, sweeping through the grass, disturbed him a little, for he wanted to be alone. Directly he heard a voice that made his heart leap. It was speaking with sweet earnestness to some one who seemed delighted to listen.

"No, William, let us be patient," it said, "father has been very kind to yield so much; for if he was ambitious for anything on earth, it is in behalf of his child. The idea of wealth and immediate position he has given up; but something we must do in return. His interests in this railroad are enormous. All that he has now is vested in these wild lands; help him to carry out his plans, convince him that you have the will and ability which makes prosperous business men, that will be all he desires. A year is but little, William, when we think of it."

"But, Dora, one year is an eternity when it keeps you from me. Time, I do believe, is the natural enemy of true love."

"I think it is the sunshine which ripens a blossom into most delicious fruit. Why, each day, William, this love of ours grows deeper and sweeter from thinking of that eternal companionship which is to come."

"Ah, Dora! you have been talking with my mother."

"Talking with her? Of course, I have. Almost everything I think or feel, that has good in it, comes from her. Is she not your mother? I cannot tell you everything; but with her I feel like a little child."

"I am glad you love my mother, Dora."

"Love her! Why, isn't she a part of your own self? Sometimes, when I love you so much that it seems wicked, I go to her and grow myself again."

"Is this true, Dora? Am I so very dear to you?"

"Dear! And you can ask that? Why, William Sterling, there is not on this earth any one being that I love one quarter so much."

They were passing the elm-trees, and paused a moment in the earnestness of this conversation. The boy, lying under these sheltering vines, lifted himself to one elbow, and through the clustering leaves saw William Sterling, with both Dora's hands in his, reading her face with such smiles as love gives back to love. The two passed on after this brief pause. Luke fell slowly back to the earth, and lay there with his face buried in the grass, from which two gasping sobs came, minute after minute, leaving him still and quite motionless at last.

It must have been a full hour before the boy sat up and looked around him. Then his face was white as snow, and it seemed as if some violets, hidden in the grass, must have left their shadows on his lips, they were so blue and cold. No, no, it was not that, for on one cheek, near his mouth, was a red stain; and the bent grass, where his face had been lying, rose up slowly from the pressure which had held it down, and each spire was ensanguined with a drop of blood.

Luke turned his eyes mournfully upon the reddened grass, and, after one or two feeble efforts, arose to his feet. Slowly he crept along the footpath leading to the cabin. Once or twice he was compelled to sit down; but he reached home at last, and, finding the room empty, lay down on his couch, and remained there with his eyes closed.

A little while after this Rhoda came in from the kitchen. Thinking him asleep, she walked up to the couch on tip-toe and kissed his white forehead, lightly as the shadow falls from a flower. Sometimes little Rhoda would steal such kisses from the dying boy, and hoard them away as precious memories for the hereafter; for, with all its practicability, that heart of hers was brimful of affection, and she almost worshiped her brother. The good creature looked down upon his sleep, as she supposed, and saw a faint quiver of pain pass over his white face; then she crept away, fearing that her fondness had disturbed him. She had no courage to go back to her work in the kitchen, but sat near the window, still and watchful as a hospital nurse, waiting for him to recognize her presence.

At length the boy arose to a sitting posture, and called Rhoda by name. She went to him eagerly.

"The Cremona," she said, following the direction of his wild, bright eyes, and taking the violin from the wall. He reached out his arms for the instrument, but the smile upon his face almost broke Rhoda's heart.

Luke's hand trembled as it took the bow, and the first notes it drew forth were vague and quivering; but the spirit within that delicate form was stronger even than the death-angel. Once more that shadowy hand passed over the strings, and music, that seemed an expression of more than mortal anguish, went wailing through the cabin. It was the cry of a soul breaking up for eternity. The birds, that had been singing all day in the thickets, hushed themselves, and listened. A deer, going down to the river for

drink, paused on the bank and looked around wonderingly. Mrs. Holt, sitting alone in her bed-room, stole softly to the door, holding her breath. The two lovers, strolling homeward from a walk by the river, turned toward the cabin and paused near the door, not daring to enter. As Dora's foot touched the threshold-stone, the magnetism of her presence made itself felt even in the music. That cry of the soul softened; a mist of tears seemed passing through it, subduing its anguish into pathetic mournfulness. It was like a spirit at the gates of heaven, entreating the angels to let him in.

Dora was thrilled through and through with the music. It seemed calling to her with heavenly tenderness from the "dark valley." She felt that those bright, beautiful eyes were searching for her through the music; her shadow fell across the open door; her face, wet with unconscious tears, became visible to those eyes turned that way in mournful expectation.

As she crossed the room, moving slowly, as it were to the sadness of the music, a heavenly smile broke over the face of that gentle boy; the strings of the Cremona quivered under one wild inspiration of joy that never was fully uttered, and dropped from those lifeless fingers to the floor, with a wail that seemed almost human, for the instrument was broken with the young life it had inspired.

CHAPTER LXXIII.

ON THE TRACK.

A MONTH or more after they had laid that gentle boy among the prairie flowers, one of the construction trains brought two strangers to that cluster of shanties, who,

from their appearance, were quite as unlikely to find business along the Pacific line as any travelers that had ever appeared there.

One of these persons was a tall, spare man, with the dress and appearance of a clergyman; the other, a young woman, who must have been beautiful once, but was then a wreck, and nothing more. Pale, emaciated and feeble, she clung to the man's arm with the heavy, downward weight of entire weariness, as they proceeded to the rude building where Rhoda Weeks had first met young Sterling. This building had two apartments on the ground floor—one which answered as a bar-room, the other was for general family use. The female traveller was led into this latter apartment, where she sat down wearily on a stiff, wooden chair, and leaning back rested her head against the wall, moaning faintly as if in pain.

As the woman sat thus, with her face to the light, the door connecting with the bar-room opened, and the good-natured face of old Mr. Weeks looked in. He held a sugar-crusher in one hand, and a pitcher in the other, which he was intending to fill with water from a pail which stood just within the door; but the moment his eyes fell on this woman the pitcher fell, with a crash, to his feet, and grasping the sugar-crusher with both hands, he cried out,

"Goodness mercy! who is this? Who is this?"

The young woman opened her wild blue eyes, and brighter than they had ever been in health. When she saw little Weeks so stricken with amazement, holding on to the sugar-stick as if it were a pillar of strength, a look of comical amazement came over her thin features, and she laughed outright one of those hollow, unearthly laughs, that have no real cheerfulness in them.

"Why, little Weeks," she said, holding out her hand, "Is it really you? How your hair stands up! What on earth frightens you so?"

Weeks stared at her an instant with his mouth half open, then turned and fled into the bar-room, where he met young Sterling just coming in with a surveying party. Weeks seized him by the arm.

"Come in—come in here, and tell me if it is her or not!" exclaimed the little man, dragging Sterling forward. "Look there!"

Sterling did look, and saw Constance, his wife, sitting before him, pale and thin, the ghost of her former self. He did not speak; he did not move, but stood like a statue in the door-way, with all warmth and life stricken out of him.

As for the woman, she attempted to rise, struggled with herself wildly a moment, and fell back insensible.

Then Mr. Hudson came into the room, pushing the young man on one side in his anxiety and distress.

"Is she dead?"

The voice was so cold and hollow which asked this question, that it startled the old man. He looked up, terrified and recognized his daughter's husband.

"No, she is not dead. It is that which we came to tell you."

Sterling looked wildly from the old man to that face which appeared so like death. All at once the horror of his position came over him, and he cried out,

"Oh, my God! My God! what have I done to deserve this?"

"Hush, young man, she is coming to. Have patience, and find some compassion for her in your heart. If she has sinned, the God of heaven alone knows how she has suffered!"

Sterling did not answer, perhaps he did not hear, for his soul was absorbed by the shock of that woman's appearance. At last he spoke.

"She is alive—my wife, in this place, among all these people. See, they are looking through the door, wondering about us. There is a room up stairs. Come!"

Sterling took the insensible woman in his arms, and carried her up the ladder-like steps which led to the upper story. The rough frame-work of the stairs trembled under him, but he carried his burden firmly, and laid her on a bed neatly made up in the unplastered garret.

The pressure of those strong arms, brought the woman back to consciousness. When she saw her husband bending over her, a faint smile came across her face, and she lifted her arms toward him like a weary child in sight of its mother. A thought of Dora came upon the young man with such a pang of agony, that he shrunk back groaning. Those feeble arms dropped heavily, and an answering sob, dry and hard, broke from the woman. She was fully conscious now, stung into life by terrible pain.

"Forgive me. I forgot the gulf—the awful, black gulf that lies between you and me. Yet if you could have kissed me without knowing—only once without knowing."

She muttered this in a broken undertone, and to him the words lacked connection.

"Constance," he said, struggling manfully for calmness, "you are here and alive. I mourned for you—God only knows how I mourned for you!"

"Did you? Oh, Sterling! did you really mourn?"

Constance started up in bed, put back the still bright and glorious waves of hair from her temples, and searched his features eagerly for some vestige of the love and grief he spoke of. She saw only a hard, set face, cold as marble that covers the dead. All the ardent youthfulness seemed to have gone out from it forever. He was glad of an opportunity of turning away from those imploring eyes.

"I have a wagon here," he said, addressing Hudson, "and a home not far off. She is my wife; I will take her there." Then he thought of Dora, covered his face with both hands, and would have wept, had the pain at his heart been less.

"She will not go," said Hudson, shaking his head mournfully. "It was not for that we came in search of you."

"Let me speak with him—let me tell him," said Constance, sitting upright, with that sudden strength which springs from desperation. "Go away, father! let me be alone with him once more; this once, William, I will never ask it again. Sit down here. Will you take my hand? See how thin and wasted it is; yours is so healthy, yet it trembles. My coming terrified you; but take comfort, I am dying. Cannot you see that a very little while will end it all?"

Sterling did not answer, but his hand closed on the fragile thing in his, and held it firmly. After all, she had been his wife, and he had loved her.

"Sterling, they told me that you were dead, killed in a massacre by the Indians. I believed it, and married another man."

Sterling dropped her hand, and sat on the side of the bed, staring at her dumbly. He could not comprehend the thing she told him.

"You cannot believe it. No wonder—no wonder! Still it is the solemn truth; but for that falsehood my love would have saved me. I was coming to you. We tried to get away from him."

"Constance! Constance! What is this you are saying?" cried the young man, taking her hand again, and wringing it till she moaned under the pain. "Tell me clearly, and be brief, what all this means."

Constance clung to his hand. "Let it be—let it be! This clasp gives me strength. I want to tell you everything—that is what we came for; but give me a glass of wine, brandy; you will find it in that basket."

Sterling found a traveling-flask in the basket she pointed out, and, mixing some of the brandy it contained with water, gave it to her.

"Now sit by me," she said, holding out her hand, while a hot flush came into her cheeks, and her eyes shone like

stars. "Sit here; I am strong as a lion now, and I will tell you everything."

CHAPTER LXXIV.

THE WIFE'S CONFESSION.

CONSTANCE did reveal all to her husband, faithfully and clearly, as if she herself had been a third party, all of her history—her struggles, temptations, and inner wickedness, up to the time of that fatal marriage. Sometimes she wept, sometimes she besought him to give her a merciful judgment, and pleaded her own cause piteously. Even that marriage she extenuated, and could not yet see that, thinking her husband dead, it was not, in some sort, an act of heroism, a desperate effort to save her father.

"William, my father was once a good man, and might have been a great man," she said.

"He is good, now, but broken in all his hopes; but his wife, my mother—oh, she must have been selfish and vain as I was only a little time ago. He trusted her as you trusted me, but she led him downward. This man Church, in some way, attained a strong influence over her, and through her, my honest, confiding father, became as I did afterward, a tool and a victim. He was an engraver of wonderful skill, as you know. Church employed my father, reporting himself as the agent of a Banking House in New York; paid him in money struck off from his own forged plates; traced the money back and kept it in evidence against him, as a deliberate counterfeiter.

"My poor father had studied for the ministry, and only took up engraving from the force of his own genius, and as a means of earning a little more money than a country

clergyman could command. Church saw that he was not to be trusted to carry out a fraud, and led him into that cruel net, in order to make sure of his silence. It was in this way that my father became the slave of Church.

"The time came when my father suspected that some evil use was being made of his genius. Then this wretch owned the truth, and revealed the wicked plot by which he had been, unconsciously, made the participant of a great sin. Church had expected to bind him down to his interests, forever, by the power he held, but my father broke loose from him, gave up his parish, and fled to the covert of a great city, taking my mother and her child with him.

"In the midst of this trouble, my mother died. I was a little thing then, so young that I cannot remember her death, but I know what care he took of me, how he worked night and day, for my support, dressed me with his own hands, and prayed over me, before I went to sleep, at the close of each day. Oh William, it is not my father's fault, if it went wrong in the end.

"William, you saw him, one night, at his duties as a city missionary, and can believe that he never gave up the hopes of doing some good, as a minister, while I was doubting him, and thinking such evil things, because he left me alone; you know how he spent his nights, after many a hard day's work.

You remember when Church first came among us. I cannot go on—to think of that period kills me. He brought that old proof against my father. He seized upon me when we were flying to you, made me believe that you were dead, and in the insanity of my terror and grief made me his wife.

"From the very first, I disliked this man, William. From the time that he forced me to marry him, I hated him; when I had lived with him a year, and found how

worthless was everything he could give me, this feeling grew into absolute loathing. At this time, I found your letter, and learned that in our hideous marriage, he had added fraud to compulsion; that you, my husband—my own true husband, were alive.

"Oh William, if you had hated me, if you had loathed me, as I loathed him, the sight of my distress would have touched you with pity. I cannot tell you how I suffered; how I detested myself, and went mad with a wild, wild wish to come after you, throw myself at your feet and beg you to have compassion on my wretchedness, for I loved you, William! Oh, do not shrink away from me! I did! I did!"

William Sterling covered his face with both hands, and shook from head to foot.

"I broke down, then; during the whole year, I had been struggling for happiness, as drowning men beat the waters in a storm. It was all a wild, whirling stream, full of vanity, triumph, and unutterable desolation. I broke down utterly; the disease that is killing me, clutched upon my lungs like a vulture. That morning I awoke with blood upon my lips; it has been there often and often since."

Sterling uncovered his face and looked down upon the poor woman with tears in his eyes. It was hard to be angry with a creature so utterly broken, and prostrate.

"Thank you, oh William, I do thank you for that look," she said, beginning to cry, "bear with me while I tell you all, then try and pity me a little.

"I told that bad man, what I had discovered—told him how dearly I loved you, how bitterly I hated him, how determined I was never on this earth to be his wife, again, in anything but the hated name. I was very brave then, but he broke me down with threats against you. I think he would have followed on your track and killed you, had I left his house.

"I went home to my father, and told him the truth; that I had been married to you, was then your wife. But what could he do for me, my poor oppressed father. It was something that one other human being knew how wretched I was, even though he was powerless to help me.

"One thing I had not told Church, and that was the absolute fact of my marriage to you. That would have made me his slave, and I knew it. But I never forgot it; no, not for one moment. From that hour, heart and soul, I rejected him. His roof sheltered me; his wealth surrounded me with luxuries that I had learned to detest, but he knew well how abhorrent his very presence was to me. That I could tell him without endangering you, and it was a little satisfaction. William, out of that man's crimes I, at last, won my freedom. When he married me I thought it was from all absorbing love, for I was a vain, arrogant girl, and set a high value on my poor attractions.

"The man was so eager to win me, so fiercely resolute, that I could give him no other motive. But a time came when I knew that it was as much avarice as love. The man wanted a safe tool in his wife by which to grasp more evil wealth.

"One night I discovered with horror, followed by a fierce sense of triumph, that all the wealth which tempted me had been obtained by a fraud on the Government, and that he had craftily made me an accomplice. I had the proofs in my hand. I held him in my power. He threatened you, (the miserable wild beast,) and I had him caged in a prison. He is there yet, sentenced for fifteen years, and he knows that I put the shackles on his hands. When the whole world looks black before me, I think of that and rejoice.

"But oh, how I longed to flee from his house, then; but the excitement had made me worse; for a long time I was very, very ill. Besides, where could I go? to you? Oh,

how I pined for one look of your face, one word from your lips! But I dared not come. I dared not ask you to forgive me. Tell me, tell me, now, if I had crept to your feet, would you have spurned me from them?"

"Oh, Heaven, it is useless to ask such questions, now!" exclaimed Sterling; "all that time I was working for you, waiting, longing for you. Then I thought you dead. So help me, Heaven! I saw you lying dead, or believed so. Would to God it had been the truth!"

"Oh if it had, if it only had!" moaned the poor woman, wringing her shadowy hands.

"Was that also a fraud?" demanded Sterling, gloomily.

"No, no! as I hope for salvation, no! The poor girl you saw was my cousin, a better person than I ever was. Little Rhoda helped to deceive you, but she was deceived herself; my cousin was so like me. Rhoda knew nothing of my marriage, nothing of my cousin's existence. To this day, she believes that it was my sick bed that she watched, my grave that she stood by in Greenwood. You did not wait to see my father, and he alone could have told you. Rhoda deceived herself."

"When my father came to me at last, and took me back to the old place, the whole Weeks family had left it. He told me of my cousin's death, and all that he had learned from Rhoda, about your presence in the house, that night. Then I understood that you thought me dead, and knowing nothing of my sin, might mourn for me as the innocent wife, that I could never, never be again. I was getting weaker and weaker all the time, and thought how sweet it would be when my poor broken-hearted father laid me in the grave that you should always think kindly of me. It was hard to live and feel that I was eternally dead to you, but I was very ill and had not the courage to make you hate my memory."

"But your father?"

"My poor father could not find the heart to resist me when I pleaded with him for silence. Do not blame him, how could he deny me when he knew that a little time would end everything."

"But this cousin, who was she?"

"My father had an only sister, who was left a widow with a child of my own age, and so like me, always, my father says that we could hardly have been told apart.

"After her mother died, she learned a trade, and partly earned her own living, poor thing! I believe father was afraid to have me with her, or let her know anything about our set—and I don't much blame him. So he stayed with her a good deal after my aunt died, and made a home for me—you know where and how. In this way, father had two lives. One calm, and sweet, and holy, with her, and that which led to perdition, with me.

"I discovered this girl at last. I wanted some one to make up a dress for me—it was after we were married—the dress was for that masquerade ball. While trying it on, we stood before the glass together, and I saw at once the wonderful likeness that there was between us. It frightened me a little, and I began to dislike this Constance Ellery. One night I saw my father go up to her room. Oh! how glad she was to see him! I went home and sat in wait for him, determined to know what it all meant. He told me then, for the first time, that I had a cousin.

"It was this girl who died in our rooms, William. She was so like me that even Rhoda Weeks thought that sickness had made all the change she saw; there was little need of deception afterward. They believed that I was dead, and told you so; all but my poor, poor father, who afterward allowed you to be deceived in order to save me."

"Oh, my God, it was a terrible deception. Cruel, cruel! What ruin it might have brought, what sorrows it will occasion!"

"I know it," answered the sick woman, humbly. "Do not reproach me, it was for your sake; to me life had become a burden terrible to endure; but I thought that you might be spared any portion of my misery and a knowledge of my disgrace."

"Wretched, wretched woman! do you know—can you guess the cruel evil that has sprung from this concealment?" cried the young man, giving way in the midst of his anguish.

"Yes, I know, William, Rhoda Weeks sent a letter to my father, telling him how poor Luke had died. In that letter, also, came news that scarcely left me alive; but love gave me strength to come here and tell you all. I arose from a sick bed, after reading that letter, made strong by terrible excitement.

I went to my father, a broken down, patient old man, who was looking around for some good work that he could do, in atonement, before he died. A way had been graciously opened to him. Missionaries were wanted among the Indians. I was glad of that; I longed to get away from cities, where I had been so miserable, and die in the wilderness. I had but one hope on earth—to see you, tell the whole truth, and die. I knew that this was needful for your own salvation; that my coming would break up your life afresh, and bring sorrow to an innocent girl. It was a hard task—I almost prayed not to find you. Have patience, only a little patience. It will not be long—it will not be long!"

Constance closed her eyes in weariness, and Sterling could see great tears stealing through her long lashes, while the mouth, that had been so beautiful, quivered with inward pain.

"Leave her, now," said Mr. Hudson, in a low voice. "She is better alone with me."

Sterling wrung the old man's hand.

"To-morrow I will come and take you home; my mother will gladly receive her."

Sterling spoke kindly, but with deep mournfulness; he compassionated that poor creature, but her coming filled his soul with trouble.

Hudson made only this reply:

"You are very kind, and God will bless you for it. Now let her rest."

Sterling went home at once, and told Mrs. Holt of the new calamity that had fallen upon them. He had no courage to see Dora, but wandered off into the prairies all night, a weary, wretched man.

CHAPTER LXXV.

CONCLUSION.

THAT evening Dora was kneeling at Mrs Holt's feet, in the privacy of that lady's bed-room. She had evidently heard all, for sobs of passionate grief filled the room; and the poor girl cried out in the sudden anguish that had come upon her.

"Oh! tell me, tell me, what can I do? She will be here; have some mercy, and tell me how to bear all this?"

Mrs. Holt knew how futile any efforts of consolation would be just then, so she gently smoothed the young creature's hair, and only said, in her sweet way,

"Have patience, darling—a little patience."

Dora lifted her lovely face, all wet with tears.

"Does he love her? Will he ever love her again," she said.

"My dear, she is dying."

"Oh! God forgive me! How wicked I have been; but it was so sudden. Tell me, please—where is he now?"

"He wandered off alone at nightfall, darling, quite alone; the poor boy had no courage to meet any one."

"Poor fellow! poor fellow! Tell him, please, how sorry I am. No, you must not say that; tell him nothing, only that I will try to bear it."

Dora arose from the floor, and turned to go away, but she hesitated, and went back to Mrs. Holt's chair.

"Must I tell any one, Mrs. Holt?"

"Not yet, darling. My son must do that when it becomes needful."

"Oh! thank you! It would have been so hard for me! You will not forget to tell him how strong I am, and how well I—I— Oh, Mrs. Holt! I believe my heart is breaking!"

Again Mrs. Holt took the unhappy girl in her arms, and strove by gentle caresses to quiet her. At last Dora went home and stole up to her room, afraid that some one of the household should guess at her sorrow.

The next morning, Sterling, who had been wandering about the prairies all night, appeared at the shanty, prepared to take Constance home to his mother. But the travelers had gone. They had left the house before daylight; construction trains were passing each way continually, but no one could tell what direction they had taken. As Sterling was going out, old Mr. Weeks stole after him, mysteriously, and placed a note in his hand, whispering, "I saw them safe off."

"Where? Which way?"

"They told me not to tell, and I won't—so don't ask me."

Sterling opened the note.

"We have gone forward toward the mission, which God has awarded to me. Do not attempt to follow us, but leave my child alone to His infinite mercies. She goes

away peaceful though sad, knowing that you have forgiven her. When she is at rest you will hear from me again.

HUDSON."

Was this letter a relief? Did Sterling breathe more freely when he found that he might yet be silent, save where he was bound in honor to speak of the unhappy woman who had crossed his path only to disappear from it like the ghost she seemed? Be this as it may, he went within the week to another section of the road, only coming home once a fortnight, and never asking to see Dora.

One day, when he returned home, after an absence of two weeks, Mrs. Holt placed a letter in his hand, which had been left at the shanty by a traveler coming across the plains. The young man knew what it contained, and turned cold as marble when he broke the seal.

"She is gone," he said, handing the note to his mother. "My poor, poor wife!"

The next day Sterling returned to the distant station again, quiet and sad, but thankful for all that had been spared him.

The shock of Constance's appearance and death had broken into the happy tranquillity of those two families for a brief space, but no real evil sprung out of it—and with them the dead past was left to bury the past.

* * * * *

Months went by—tranquil, uneventful months, which brought Sterling home again, and renewed the intercourse of those two families in all its cordiality. The probation which was to test the young man's endurance and ability was drawing to a close. Energy, manhood, and industry had wrought out their usual work, and the proudest man among all those who carried their wealth and energies into that new region, would have welcomed Sterling into his family; for he had developed what was better than station

or wealth, an abundant power to create and seize upon both.

If there had been anything worthy of record in the papers Mrs. Holt had given him, it seemed to have passed from his mind, for he had only renewed all his exertions, and performed his promise of inducing Dora's father to accept him at his own worth.

Still the mother had been less patient. For herself ambition had failed long ago; but with women like her, it casts vigorous shoots for the next generation; and she was sometimes disturbed with a proud longing for something higher and grander than that prairie life for her son. Still it was a subject which she never spoke of to the young man, however much it might fill her own mind.

One day, some months before that appointed for his marriage, Sterling brought home a package of newspapers from the depot, which his mother, who was a craving reader seized upon with smiling avidity. All at once she uttered a sharp cry, and the young man, turning quickly, saw that she sat upright in her chair, white as snow, with the paper grasped tightly in a hand far too unsteady for reading.

Sterling gently forced the paper from her grasp, for she was holding it out to him, and his eyes fell upon this paragraph.

"Died at Nashton Castle, Lincolnshire, Nelson Sterling, eleventh Earl of Marsborough, in the sixty-eighth year of his age. Lord Marsborough has been a long time excluded from the world. Although one of the richest peers in England, it will be remembered that he was made the object of a social romance, some years ago, by a divorce from his wife, a beautiful and highly accomplished lady, whom many persons refuse to believe was ever really guilty of the wrong charged upon her. The scandal of that time has been painfully renewed by the earl's death, as it leaves a singular doubt in connection with the succession. Immedi-

ately after the divorce, the Countess of Marsborough disappeared, and with her the only child and heir, then a boy five years of age. It is supposed that she went to Australia or America, under a changed name; but from that day to this all efforts to find the lady or her child have been unavailing.

"At one time there was a rumor that the Countess had married again, and settled in New York; but years brought no confirmation of this, and it is now supposed that both mother and son are dead. In that case the title and estates will fall to a remote branch of the family."

Mrs. Holt sat in perfect silence while her son read the paragraph; then she held out her hand and made a sad effort to smile.

"You will go at once," she said; "the proofs are unbroken—there can be no impediment."

"And you, mother? The good fortune which comes to me will be nothing if you cannot share it."

Mrs. Holt shook her head. "No, my son, I shall never see old England again. Do not look upon me, William, as if you doubted it. You will not believe that shame keeps me back. No wife ever lived, more innocent of wrong to a husband than I was; yet I was driven forth from that court a branded woman. The memory of that undeserved shame makes me shudder even now. After loading me with infamy they would have robbed me of my child; but I would not allow them to wrong me so much. Before they could force you away from me I fled—one great blessing God has permitted to me; through it all, even in my errors, you have clung to me, William."

"To me, mother, you have no errors."

Mrs. Holt shook her head. "It is for these I must suffer; though divorced by the law, and free by the law, I wronged you, myself, and the unhappy man who is my Nemesis, by a second marriage. But I loved him; and, God forgive me! I had never loved before. Even now I

would rather stay here with him, than share all the great fortune that falls upon you."

"My dear mother, I do not ask you to forsake Mr. Holt. Heaven forbid. I cannot forget how kind he was to us both when we most needed kindness, or how liberal he was with his fortune. Come with me, and your husband. I never thought of any other arrangement. Nashton, surely, will be large enough for us all."

"No," said the lady, smiling in her gentle sadness, "the prairie is best for him, and pleasantest for me. Dora shall take my old place at Nashton. She will make a lovely Countess."

"But, mother!"

"No, no, you must not urge me, William. When I married Mr. Holt, the Countess of Marsborough died. Some day, you and your wife will come to us. Indeed, I think you are too thoroughly a frontiersman to be content even on that grand old estate. We shall have you with us half the time, I hope."

"Indeed you will—but now shall I tell Dora."

"Not yet."

"Well, well, but the time must be shortened now, for if you will not go, mother, I must take her with me. I would not leave her behind, for the best earldom in England."

"Say as much to her father, William, but only as a Sterling; when Dora becomes your wife she must not know that the ceremony puts a coronet on her head."

"Nor must the father; he has taken me at my own worth; after a while, we can throw in the old earldom as a sort of make weight, ha, mother!"

The young man took his hat, and went directly over to Mr. Foster's dwelling; in an hour he came back again, stepping lightly as a young Apollo.

"It is all settled, mother; a week from to-day we are to start on our wedding-trip, it is arranged that the ceremony

will be over by that time. Rather singular, isn't it, Mr. Foster wishes us to go over to England on some railroad business, and promises that the commissioners shall recommend me as a promising young fellow, well acquainted with the business of the road. It is a great step, he says. I wonder what he will think when we come back?"

Mrs. Holt smiled, wiped a few bright tears from her eyes, and called Little Rhoda from the kitchen, to tell her that William would be married that week, and was going to England for his wedding trip.

THE END.

T. B. PETERSON AND BROTHERS' PUBLICATIONS.

NEW BOOKS ISSUED EVERY WEEK.

Comprising the most entertaining and absorbing Works published, suitable for the Parlor, Library, Sitting Room, Railroad or Steamboat Reading, by the best writers in the world.

Orders solicited from Booksellers, Librarians, Canvassers, News Agents, and all others in want of good and fast selling books, which will be supplied at very Low Prices.

MRS. ANN S. STEPHENS' WORKS.

Ruby Gray's Strategy,.....	\$1 50	The Heiress,.....	\$1 50
Wives and Widows,.....	1 50	The Wife's Secret,.....	1 50
The Curse of Gold,.....	1 50	The Rejected Wife,.....	1 50
Mabel's Mistake,.....	1 50	Fashion and Famine,.....	1 50
Doubly False,.....	1 50	The Old Homestead,.....	1 50
The Soldiers' Orphans,.....	1 50	The Gold Brick,.....	1 50
Silent Struggles,.....	1 50	Mary Derwent,.....	1 50

The above are each in paper cover, or in cloth, price \$1.75 each.

MRS. EMMA D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH'S WORKS.

The Christmas Guest,.....	\$1 50	The Lost Heiress,.....	\$1 50
The Maiden Widow,.....	1 50	Lady of the Isle,.....	1 50
The Family Doom,.....	1 50	Vivia; or the Secret of Power,.....	1 50
The Changed Brides,.....	1 50	Love's Labor Won,.....	1 50
The Brides' Fate,.....	1 50	Deserted Wife,.....	1 50
Fair Play,.....	1 50	The Gipsy's Prophecy,.....	1 50
How He Won Her,.....	1 50	The Mother-in-Law,.....	1 50
Fallen Pride,.....	1 50	The Missing Bride,.....	1 50
The Prince of Darkness,.....	1 50	The Two Sisters,.....	1 50
The Widow's Son,.....	1 50	The Three Beauties,.....	1 50
The Bride of Llewellyn,.....	1 50	Wife's Victory,.....	1 50
The Fortune Seeker,.....	1 50	Retribution,.....	1 50
Allworth Abbey,.....	1 50	India; Pearl of Pearl River,.....	1 50
The Bridal Eve,.....	1 50	Curse of Clifton,.....	1 50
The Fatal Marriage,.....	1 50	Discarded Daughter,.....	1 50
Haunted Homestead,.....	1 50		

The above are each in paper cover, or in cloth, price \$1.75 each.

MRS. CAROLINE LEE HENTZ'S WORKS.

The Planter's Northern Bride,.....	\$1 50	Marcus Warland,.....	\$1 50
Linda; or, the Young Pilot of the Belle Creole,.....	1 50	Rena; or, the Snow Bird,.....	1 50
Robert Graham. The Sequel to "Linda,".....	1 50	The Lost Daughter,.....	1 50
Courtship and Marriage,.....	1 50	Love after Marriage,.....	1 50
Ernest Linwood,.....	1 50	Eoline; or, Magnolia Vale,.....	1 50
		The Banished Son,.....	1 50
		Helen and Arthur,.....	1 50

The above are each in paper cover, or a Green and Gold edition is issued in Morocco Cloth, at \$1.75 each; or \$21.00 a set, each set in a neat box.

FREDRIKA BREMER'S WORKS.

The Neighbors,.....	\$1 50	Father and Daughter,.....	\$1 50
The Home,.....	1 50	The Four Sisters,.....	1 50

The above are each in paper cover, or in cloth, price \$1.75 each.

Life in the Old World. In two volumes, cloth, price,..... \$3.50

Books sent, postage paid, on receipt of the Retail Price, by T. B. Peterson & Brothers, Philadelphia, Pa. (1)

2 T. B. PETERSON & BROTHERS' PUBLICATIONS.

BEST COOK BOOKS PUBLISHED.

The Young Wife's Cook Book,.....	Cloth, \$1 75
Miss Leslie's New Cookery Book,.....	Cloth, 1 75
Mrs. Hale's New Cook Book,.....	Cloth, 1 75
Mrs. Goodfellow's Cookery as it Should Be,.....	Cloth, 1 75
Petersons' New Cook Book,.....	Cloth, 1 75
Widdisfield's New Cook Book,.....	Cloth, 1 75
The National Cook Book. By a Practical Housewife,.....	Cloth, 1 75
Miss Leslie's New Receipts for Cooking,.....	Cloth, 1 75
Mrs. Hale's Receipts for the Million,.....	Cloth, 1 75
The Family Save-All. By author of "National Cook Book,".....	Cloth, 1 75
Francatelli's Celebrated French, Italian, German, and English Cook Book. The Modern Cook. With Sixty-two illustrations. Complete in six hundred large octavo pages,.....	Cloth, 5 00

WORKS BY THE VERY BEST AUTHORS.

The following books are each issued in one large duodecimo volume, in paper cover, at \$1.50 each, or each one is bound in cloth, at \$1.75 each.

The Initials. A Love Story. By Baroness Tautphœus,.....	\$1 50
Why Did He Marry Her? By Miss Eliza A. Dupuy,.....	1 50
The Macdermots of Ballycloran. By Anthony Trollope,.....	1 50
Lost Sir Massingberd. By the author of "Carlyon's Year,".....	1 50
The Planter's Daughter. By Miss Eliza A. Dupuy,.....	1 50
Dream Numbers. By T. Adolphus Trollope, author of "Gemma,".....	1 50
Leonora Casaloni; or, the Marriage Secret. By T. A. Trollope,.....	1 50
The Forsaken Daughter. A Companion to "Linda,".....	1 50
Love and Liberty. A Revolutionary Story. By Alexander Dumas,.....	1 50
Family Pride. By author of "Pique," "Family Secrets," etc.....	1 50
Self-Sacrifice. By author of "Margaret Maitland," etc.....	1 50
The Woman in Black. A Companion to the "Woman in White,".....	1 50
A Woman's Thoughts about Women. By Miss Muloch,.....	1 50
Flirtations in Fashionable Life. By Catharine Sinclair,.....	1 50
Rose Douglas. A Companion to "Family Pride," and "Self Sacrifice,".....	1 50
False Pride; or, Two Ways to Matrimony. A Charming Book,.....	1 50
Family Secrets. A Companion to "Family Pride," and "Pique,".....	1 50
The Morrisons. By Mrs. Margaret Hosmer,.....	1 50
Beppo; The Conscript. By T. A. Trollope, author of "Gemma,".....	1 50
Gemma. An Italian Story. By T. A. Trollope, author of "Beppo,".....	1 50
Marietta. By T. A. Trollope, author of "Gemma,".....	1 50
My Son's Wife. By author of "Caste," "Mr. Arle," etc.....	1 50
The Rich Husband. By author of "George Geith,".....	1 50
Harem Life in Egypt and Constantinople. By Emmeline Lott,.....	1 50
The Rector's Wife; or, the Valley of a Hundred Fires,.....	1 50
Woodburn Grange. A Novel. By William Howitt,.....	1 50
Country Quarters. By the Countess of Blessington,.....	1 50
Out of the Depths. The Story of a "Woman's Life,".....	1 50
The Coquette; or, the Life and Letters of Eliza Wharton,.....	1 50
The Pride of Life. A Story of the Heart. By Lady Jane Scott,.....	1 50
The Lost Beauty. By a Noted Lady of the Spanish Court,.....	1 50
Saratoga. An Indian Tale of Frontier Life. A true Story of 1787,.....	1 50
Married at Last. A Love Story. By Annie Thomas,.....	1 50
The Quaker Soldier. A Revolutionary Romance. By Judge Jones,.....	1 50
The Man of the World. An Autobiography. By William North,.....	1 50
The Queen's Favorite; or, The Price of a Crown. A Love Story,.....	1 50
Self Love; or, The Afternoon of Single and Married Life,.....	1 50

The above books are each in paper cover, or in cloth, price \$1.75 each.

Books sent, postage paid, on Receipt of the Retail Price, by T. B. Peterson & Brothers, Philadelphia, Pa.

T. B. PETERSON & BROTHERS' PUBLICATIONS. 3

WORKS BY THE VERY BEST AUTHORS.

The following books are each issued in one large duodecimo volume, in paper cover, at \$1.50 each, or each one is bound in cloth, at \$1.75 each.

The Dead Secret. By Wilkie Collins, author "The Crossed Path,".....	\$1 50
Memoirs of Vidocq, the French Detective. His Life and Adventures,.....	1 50
The Crossed Path; or Basil. By Wilkie Collins,.....	1 50
Indiana. A Love Story. By George Sand, author of "Consuelo,".....	1 50
The Belle of Washington. With her Portrait. By Mrs. N. P. Lasselle,.....	1 50
Cora Belmont; or, The Sincere Lover. A True Story of the Heart,.....	1 50
The Lover's Trials; or Days before 1776. By Mrs. Mary A. Denison,.....	1 50
High Life in Washington. A Life Picture. By Mrs. N. P. Lasselle,.....	1 50
The Beautiful Widow; or, Lodora. By Mrs. Percy B. Shelley,.....	1 50
Love and Money. By J. B. Jones, author of the "Rival Belles,".....	1 50
The Matchmaker. A Story of High Life. By Beatrice Reynolds,.....	1 50
The Brother's Secret; or, the Count De Mara. By William Godwin,.....	1 50
The Lost Love. By Mrs. Oliphant, author of "Margaret Maitland,".....	1 50
The Roman Traitor. By Henry William Herbert. A Roman Story,.....	1 50
The Bohemians of London. By Edward M. Whitty,.....	1 50
The Rival Belles; or, Life in Washington. By J. B. Jones,.....	1 50
The Devoted Bride. A Story of the Heart. By St. George Tucker,.....	1 50
Love and Duty. By Mrs. Hubback, author of "May and December,".....	1 50
Wild Sports and Adventures in Africa. By Major W. C. Harris,.....	1 50
Courtship and Matrimony. By Robert Morris. With a Portrait,.....	1 50
The Jealous Husband. By Annette Marie Maillard,.....	1 50
The Refugee. By Herman Melville, author of "Omoo," "Typee,".....	1 50
The Life, Writings, Lectures, and Marriages of Fanny Fern,.....	1 50
The Life and Lectures of Lola Montez, with her portrait, on steel,.....	1 50
Wild Southern Scenes. By author of "Wild Western Scenes,".....	1 50
Currer Lyle; or, the Autobiography of an Actress. By Louise Reeder,.....	1 50
Coal, Coal Oil, and all other Minerals in the Earth. By Eli Bowen,.....	1 50
The Cabin and Parlor. By J. Thornton Randolph. Illustrated,.....	1 50
Jealousy. By George Sand, author of "Consuelo," "Indiana," etc.....	1 50
The Little Beauty. A Love Story. By Mrs. Grey,.....	1 50
Secession, Coercion, and Civil War. By J. B. Jones,.....	1 50
The Count of Monte Cristo. By Alexander Dumas. Illustrated,.....	1 50
Camille; or, the Fate of a Coquette. By Alexander Dumas,.....	1 50
Six Nights with the Washingtonians. By T. S. Arthur,.....	1 50
Lizzie Glenn; or, the Trials of a Seamstress. By T. S. Arthur,.....	1 50
Lady Maud; or, the Wonder of Kingswood Chase. By Pierce Egan,.....	1 50
Wilfred Montessor; or, High Life in New York. Illustrated,.....	1 50
The Old Stone Mansion. By C. J. Peterson, author "Kate Aylesford,".....	1 50
Kate Aylesford. By Chas. J. Peterson, author "Old Stone Mansion,".....	1 50
Lorrimor Littlegood, by author "Hary Coverdale's Courtship,".....	1 50
The Red Court Farm. By Mrs. Henry Wood, author of "East Lynne,".....	1 50
Mildred Arkell. By Mrs. Henry Wood, author of "Red Court Farm,".....	1 50
The Earl's Secret. A Love Story. By Miss Pardoe,.....	1 50
The Adopted Heir. By Miss Pardoe, author of "The Earl's Secret,".....	1 50
Cousin Harry. By Mrs. Grey, author of "The Gambler's Wife," etc.....	1 50
The Conscript. A Tale of War. By Alexander Dumas,.....	1 50
The Tower of London. By W. Harrison Ainsworth. Illustrated,.....	1 50
French, German, Latin, Spanish, and Italian without a Master,.....	1 50
Shoulder Straps. By Henry Morford, author of "Days of Shoddy,".....	1 50
Days of Shoddy, and The Coward. By Henry Morford, each.....	1 50
The Cavalier, and Lord Montague's Page. By G. P. R. James, each.....	1 50
Rose Foster. By George W. M. Reynolds, Esq.,.....	1 50

The above books are each in paper cover, or in cloth, price \$1.75 each. Hans Breitmann's Ballads, complete and entire, with a full glossary, \$3 00

Books sent, postage paid, on receipt of the Retail Price, by T. B. Peterson & Brothers, Philadelphia, Pa.

WORKS BY THE VERY BEST AUTHORS.

The following books are each issued in one large octavo volume, in paper cover, at \$1.50 each, or each one is bound in cloth, at \$2.00 each.

The Wandering Jew. By Eugene Sue. Full of Illustrations,.....	\$1 50
Mysteries of Paris; and its Sequel, Gerolstein. By Eugene Sue,....	1 50
Martin, the Foundling. By Eugene Sue. Full of Illustrations,....	1 50
Ten Thousand a Year. By Samuel C. Warren. With Illustrations, 1	50
Washington and His Generals. By George Lippard,.....	1 50
The Quaker City; or, the Monks of Monk Hall. By George Lippard, 1	50
Blanche of Brandywine. By George Lippard,.....	1 50
Paul Ardenheim; the Monk of Wissabickon. By George Lippard, 1	50

The above books are each in paper cover, or in cloth, price \$2.00 each.

The following are each issued in one volume, bound in cloth, gilt back.

Charles O'Malley, the Irish Dragoon. By Charles Lever,.....	\$2 00
Harry Lorrequer. With his Confessions. By Charles Lever,.....	2 00
Jack Hinton, the Guardsman. By Charles Lever,.....	2 00
Davenport Dunn. A Man of Our Day. By Charles Lever,.....	2 00
Valentine Vox, the Ventriloquist. By Harry Cockton,.....	2 00

NEW AND GOOD BOOKS BY BEST AUTHORS.

The Last Athenian. From the Swedish of Victor Rydberg. Highly recommended by Fredrika Bremer. Paper \$1.50, or in cloth,.....	\$2 00
Comstock's Elocution and Reader. Enlarged. By Andrew Comstock and Philip Lawrence. With 236 Illustrations. Half morocco,.....	2 00
Comstock's Colored Chart. Every School should have a copy of it,....	5 00
Across the Atlantic. Letters from France, Switzerland, Germany, Italy, and England. By C. H. Haeseler, M.D. Bound in cloth,...	2 00
Colonel John W. Forney's Letters from Europe. Bound in cloth,...	1 75
The Ladies' Guide to True Politeness and Perfect Manners. By Miss Leslie. Every lady should have it. Cloth, full gilt back,...	1 75
The Ladies' Complete Guide to Needlework and Embroidery. With 113 illustrations. By Miss Lambert. Cloth, full gilt back,.....	1 75
The Ladies' Work Table Book. With 27 illustrations. Cloth, gilt, 1	50
The Story of Elizabeth. By Miss Thackeray, paper \$1.00, or cloth,...	1 50
Life and Adventures of Don Quixote and his Squire Sancho Panza, complete in one large volume, paper cover, for \$1.00, or in cloth,...	1 50
The Laws and Practice of Game of Euchre. By a Professor. Cloth, 1	00
Whitefriars; or, The Days of Charles the Second. Illustrated,.....	1 00

HUMOROUS ILLUSTRATED WORKS.

Each one full of Illustrations, by Felix O. C. Darley, and bound in Cloth.

Major Jones' Courtship and Travels. With 21 Illustrations,.....	\$1 75
Major Jones' Scenes in Georgia. With 16 Illustrations,.....	1 75
Simon Suggs' Adventures and Travels. With 17 Illustrations,....	1 75
Swamp Doctor's Adventures in the South-West. 14 Illustrations,...	1 75
Col. Thorpe's Scenes in Arkansas. With 16 Illustrations,.....	1 75
The Big Bear's Adventures and Travels. With 18 Illustrations,....	1 75
High Life in New York, by Jonathan Slick. With Illustrations,....	1 75
Judge Haliburton's Yankee Stories. Illustrated,.....	1 75
Harry Coverdale's Courtship and Marriage. Illustrated,.....	1 75
Piney Wood's Tavern; or, Sam Slick in Texas. Illustrated,.....	1 75
Sam Slick, the Clockmaker. By Judge Haliburton. Illustrated,...	1 75
Humors of Falconbridge. By J. F. Kelley. With Illustrations, ...	1 75
Modern Chivalry. By Judge Breckenridge. Two vols., each,.....	1 75
Neal's Charcoal Sketches. By Joseph C. Neal. 21 Illustrations,...	2 50

Books sent, postage paid, on Receipt of the Retail Price, by T. B. Peterson & Brothers, Philadelphia, Pa.

CHARLES DICKENS' WORKS.

GREAT REDUCTION IN THEIR PRICES.

PEOPLE'S DUODECIMO EDITION. ILLUSTRATED.

Reduced in price from \$2.50 to \$1.50 a volume.

This edition is printed on fine paper, from large, clear type, leaded, that all can read, containing One Hundred and Eighty Illustrations on tinted paper, and each book is complete in one large duodecimo volume.

Our Mutual Friend,.....Cloth, \$1.50	Little Dorrit,.....Cloth, \$1.50
Pickwick Papers,.....Cloth, 1.50	Dombey and Son,.....Cloth, 1.50
Nicholas Nickleby,.....Cloth, 1.50	Christmas Stories,.....Cloth, 1.50
Great Expectations,.....Cloth, 1.50	Sketches by "Boz,".....Cloth, 1.50
David Copperfield,.....Cloth, 1.50	Barnaby Rudge,.....Cloth, 1.50
Oliver Twist,.....Cloth, 1.50	Martin Chuzzlewit,.....Cloth, 1.50
Bleak House,.....Cloth, 1.50	Old Curiosity Shop,.....Cloth, 1.50
A Tale of Two Cities,.....Cloth, 1.50	Dickens' New Stories,.....Cloth, 1.50
American Notes; and The Uncommercial Traveler,.....	1.50
Hunted Down; and other Reprinted Pieces,.....	1.50
The Holly-Tree Inn; and other Stories,.....	1.50

Price of a set, in Black cloth, in nineteen volumes,.....	\$28.00
" " Full sheep, Library style,.....	38.00
" " Half calf, sprinkled edges,.....	47.00
" " Half calf, marbled edges,.....	53.00
" " Half calf, antique,.....	57.00
" " Half calf, full gilt backs, etc.,.....	57.00

ILLUSTRATED DUODECIMO EDITION.

Reduced in price from \$2.00 to \$1.50 a volume.

This edition is printed on the finest paper, from large, clear type, leaded, Long Primer in size, that all can read, the whole containing near Six Hundred full page Illustrations, printed on tinted paper, from designs by Cruikshank, Phiz, Browne, Machise, McLennan, and other artists. The following books are each contained in two volumes.

Our Mutual Friend,.....Cloth, \$3.00	Bleak House,.....Cloth, \$3.00
Pickwick Papers,.....Cloth, 3.00	Sketches by "Boz,".....Cloth, 3.00
Tale of Two Cities,.....Cloth, 3.00	Barnaby Rudge,.....Cloth, 3.00
Nicholas Nickleby,.....Cloth, 3.00	Martin Chuzzlewit,.....Cloth, 3.00
David Copperfield,.....Cloth, 3.00	Old Curiosity Shop,.....Cloth, 3.00
Oliver Twist,.....Cloth, 3.00	Little Dorrit,.....Cloth, 3.00
Christmas Stories,.....Cloth, 3.00	Dombey and Son,.....Cloth, 3.00

The following are each complete in one volume, and are reduced in price from \$2.50 to \$1.50 a volume.

Great Expectations,.....Cloth, \$1.50	Dickens' New Stories,.....Cloth, \$1.50
American Notes; and The Uncommercial Traveler,.....	1.50
Hunted Down; and other Reprinted Pieces,.....	1.50
The Holly-Tree Inn; and other Stories,.....	1.50
Price of a set, in thirty-three volumes, bound in cloth,.....	\$49.00
" " Full sheep, Library style,.....	66.00
" " Half calf, antique,.....	99.00
" " Half calf, full gilt backs, etc.,.....	99.00

Books sent, postage paid, on receipt of the Retail Price, by T. B. Peterson & Brothers, Philadelphia, Pa.

CHARLES DICKENS' WORKS.

ILLUSTRATED OCTAVO EDITION.

Reduced in price from \$2.50 to \$1.75 a volume.

This edition is printed from large type, double column, octavo page, each book being complete in one volume, the whole containing near Six Hundred Illustrations, by Cruikshank, Phiz, Browne, Maclise, and other artists.

Our Mutual Friend,.....Cloth, \$1.75	David Copperfield,.....Cloth, \$1.75
Pickwick Papers,.....Cloth, 1.75	Barnaby Rudge,.....Cloth, 1.75
Nicholas Nickleby,.....Cloth, 1.75	Martin Chuzzlewit,.....Cloth, 1.75
Great Expectations,.....Cloth, 1.75	Old Curiosity Shop,.....Cloth, 1.75
Lamplighter's Story,.....Cloth, 1.75	Christmas Stories,.....Cloth, 1.75
Oliver Twist,.....Cloth, 1.75	Dickens' New Stories,.....Cloth, 1.75
Bleak House,.....Cloth, 1.75	A Tale of Two Cities,.....Cloth, 1.75
Little Dorrit,.....Cloth, 1.75	American Notes and
Dombey and Son,.....Cloth, 1.75	Pic-Nic Papers,.....Cloth, 1.75
Sketches by "Boz,".....Cloth, 1.75	

Price of a set, in Black cloth, in eighteen volumes,.....	\$31.50
" " Full sheep, Library style,.....	40.00
" " Half calf, sprinkled edges,.....	48.00
" " Half calf, marbled edges,.....	54.00
" " Half calf, antique,.....	60.00
" " Half calf, full gilt backs, etc.,.....	60.00

"NEW NATIONAL EDITION" OF DICKENS' WORKS.

This is the cheapest complete edition of the works of Charles Dickens, "Boz," published in the world, being contained in *seven large octavo volumes*, with a portrait of Charles Dickens, and other illustrations, the whole making nearly *six thousand very large double columned pages*, in large, clear type, handsomely printed on fine white paper, and bound in the strongest and most substantial manner.

Price of a set, in Black cloth, in seven volumes,.....	\$20.00
" " Full sheep, Library style,.....	25.00
" " Half calf, antique,.....	30.00
" " Half calf, full gilt back, etc.,.....	30.00

CHEAP SALMON PAPER COVER EDITION.

Each book being complete in one large octavo volume.

Pickwick Papers,.....	35	Christmas Stories,.....	25
Nicholas Nickleby,.....	35	The Haunted House,.....	25
Dombey and Son,.....	35	Uncommercial Traveler,.....	25
David Copperfield,.....	25	A House to Let,.....	25
Martin Chuzzlewit,.....	35	Perils of English Prisoners,.....	25
Old Curiosity Shop,.....	25	Wreck of the Golden Mary,.....	25
Oliver Twist,.....	25	Tom Tiddler's Ground,.....	25
American Notes,.....	25	Our Mutual Friend,.....	35
Great Expectations,.....	25	Bleak House,.....	35
Hard Times,.....	25	Little Dorrit,.....	35
A Tale of Two Cities,.....	25	Joseph Grimaldi,.....	50
Somebody's Luggage,.....	25	The Pic-Nic Papers,.....	50
Message from the Sea,.....	25	No Thoroughfare,.....	10
Barnaby Rudge,.....	25	Hunted Down,.....	25
Sketches by "Boz,".....	25	The Holly-Tree Inn,.....	25
Mrs. Lirriper's Lodgings and Mrs. Lirriper's Legacy,.....	25		
Mugby Junction and Dr. Marigold's Prescriptions,.....	25		

Books sent, postage paid, on receipt of the Retail Price, by
T. B. Peterson & Brothers, Philadelphia, Pa.

CHARLES LEVER'S BEST WORKS.

Charles O'Malley,.....	75	Knight of Gwynne,.....	75
Harry Lorrequer,.....	75	Arthur O'Leary,.....	75
Jack Hinton, the Guardsman,...	75	Con Cregan,.....	75
Tom Burke of Ours,.....	75	Davenport Dunn,.....	75
Above are each in paper, or a finer edition in cloth, price \$2.00 each.			
Horace Templeton,.....	75	Kate O'Donoghue,.....	75

EMERSON BENNETT'S WORKS.

The Border Rover,.....	1 50	Bride of the Wilderness,.....	1 50
Clara Moreland,.....	1 50	Ellen Norbury,.....	1 50
Viola; or Adventures in the		The Forged Will,.....	1 50
Far South-West,.....	1 50	Kate Clarendon,.....	1 50
The above are each in paper cover, or in cloth, price \$1.75 each.			
The Heiress of Bellefonte, and		Pioneer's Daughter and the	
Walde-Warren,.....	75	Unknown Countess,.....	75

WILKIE COLLINS' BEST WORKS.

The Crossed Path, or Basil,....	1 50	The Dead Secret. 12mo.....	1 50
The above are each in paper cover, or in cloth, price \$1.75 each.			
Hide and Seek,.....	75	Sights a-Foot,.....	50
After Dark,.....	75	The Stolen Mask,.....	25
The Queen's Revenge,.....	75	The Yellow Mask,.....	25
Mad Monkton,.....	50	Sister Rose,.....	25

MISS PARDOE'S WORKS.

Confessions of a Pretty Woman, 75	The Rival Beauties,.....	75
The Wife's Trials,.....	Romance of the Harem,.....	75
The Jealous Wife,.....	50	
The five above books are also bound in one volume, cloth, for \$4.00.		
The Adopted Heir. One volume, paper, \$1.50; or in cloth,.....	\$1 75	
The Earl's Secret. One volume, paper, \$1.50; or in cloth,.....	1 75	

MRS. HENRY WOOD'S BOOKS.

George Canterbury's Will,.....	1 50	Oswald Cray,.....	1 50
Roland Yorke,.....	1 50	Verner's Pride,.....	1 50
The Channings,.....	1 50	Lord Oakburn's Daughters; or,	
Red Court Farm,.....	1 50	the Earl's Heirs,.....	1 50
Elster's Folly,.....	1 50	Squire Trevlyn's Heir; or,	
St. Martin's Eve,.....	1 50	Trevlyn Hold,.....	1 50
Mildred Arkell,.....	1 50	The Castle's Heir; or, Lady	
Shadow of Ashlydyat,.....	1 50	Adelaide's Oath,.....	1 50
Above are each in paper cover, or each one in cloth, for \$1.75 each.			
The Mystery,.....	75	A Life's Secret,.....	50
Above are each in paper cover, or each one in cloth, for \$1.60 each.			
Orville College,.....	50	The Lost Bank Note,.....	75
The Runaway Match,.....	50	Foggy Night at Offord,.....	25
The Lost Will,.....	50	William Allair,.....	25
The Haunted Tower,.....	50	A Light and a Dark Christmas,	25

MISS BRADDON'S WORKS.

Aurora Floyd,.....	75	The Lawyer's Secret,.....	25
For Better, For Worse,.....	75		

Books sent, postage paid, on receipt of the Retail Price, by
T. B. Peterson & Brothers, Philadelphia, Pa.

ALEXANDER DUMAS' WORKS.

Count of Monte Cristo,.....	1 50	Memoirs of a Physician,.....	1 00
The Iron Mask,.....	1 00	Queen's Necklace,.....	1 00
Louise La Valliere,.....	1 00	Six Years Later,.....	1 00
Adventures of a Marquis,.....	1 00	Countess of Charney,.....	1 00
Diana of Meridor,.....	1 00	Andree de Taverney,.....	1 00
The Three Guardsmen,.....	75	The Chevalier,.....	1 00
Twenty Years After,.....	75	Forty-five Guardsmen,.....	75
Bragelonne; the Son of Athos,.....	75	The Iron Hand,.....	75
The Conscript. A Tale of War,.....	1 50	Camille, "The Camelia Lady,".....	1 50
Love and Liberty. A Tale of the French Revolution of 1792,.....	1 50		

The above are each in paper cover, or in cloth, price \$1.75 each.

Edmond Dantes,.....	75	Man with Five Wives,.....	75
Felina de Chambure,.....	75	Twin Lieutenants,.....	75
The Horrors of Paris,.....	75	Annette, Lady of the Pearls,....	50
The Fallen Angel,.....	75	Mohicans of Paris,.....	50
Sketches in France,.....	75	The Marriage Verdict,.....	50
Isabel of Bavaria,.....	75	The Corsican Brothers,.....	50
Count of Moret,.....	50	George,.....	50
		Buried Alive,.....	25

GEORGE W. M. REYNOLDS' WORKS.

Mysteries of Court of London,...	1 00	Mary Price,.....	1 00
Rose Foster. Sequel to it,.....	1 50	Eustace Quentin,.....	1 00
Caroline of Brunswick,.....	1 00	Joseph Wilmot,.....	1 00
Venetia Trelawney,.....	1 00	Banker's Daughter,.....	1 00
Lord Saxondale,.....	1 00	Kenneth,.....	1 00
Count Christoval,.....	1 00	The Rye-House Plot,.....	1 00
Rosa Lambert,.....	1 00	The Necromancer,.....	1 00

The above are each in paper cover, or in cloth, price \$1.75 each.

The Opera Dancer,.....	75	The Soldier's Wife,.....	75
Child of Waterloo,.....	75	May Middleton,.....	75
Robert Bruce,.....	75	Duke of Marchmont,.....	75
Discarded Queen,.....	75	Massacre of Glencoe,.....	75
The Gipsy Chief,.....	75	Queen Joanna; Court Naples,.....	75
Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots,...	75	Pickwick Abroad,.....	75
Wallace, the Hero of Scotland,.....	1 00	Paricide,.....	75
Isabella Vincent,.....	75	The Ruined Gamester,.....	50
Vivian Bertram,.....	75	Ciprina; or, the Secrets of a.....	50
Countess of Lascelles,.....	75	Picture Gallery,.....	50
Loves of the Harem,.....	75	Life in Paris,.....	50
Ellen Percy,.....	75	Countess and the Page,.....	50
Agnes Evelyn,.....	75	Edgar Montrose,.....	50

EUGENE SUE'S GREAT WORKS.

Wandering Jew,.....	1 50	First Love,.....	50
Mysteries of Paris,.....	1 50	Woman's Love,.....	50
Martin, the Foundling,.....	1 50	Female Bluebeard,.....	50
Above in cloth at \$2.00 each.		Man-of-War's-Man,.....	50
Life and Adventures of Raoul De Surville,.....			25

MADAME GEORGE SAND'S WORKS.

Consuelo,.....	75	Fanchon, the Cricket, paper,...	1 00
Countess of Rudolstadt,.....	75	Do. do. cloth,...	1 50
First and True Love,.....	75	Indiana, a Love Story, paper,...	1 50
The Corsair,.....	50	Do. do. cloth,...	1 75
Jealousy, paper,.....	1 50	Consuelo and Rudolstadt, both.....	
Do. cloth,.....	1 75	in one volume, cloth,.....	2 00

Books sent, postage paid, on receipt of the Retail Price, by
T. B. Peterson & Brothers, Philadelphia, Pa.

HUMOROUS AMERICAN WORKS.

Beautifully illustrated by Felix O. C. Darley.

Major Jones' Courtship,.....	75	Drama in Pokerville,.....	75
Major Jones' Travels,.....	75	The Quorndon Hounds,.....	75
Simon Suggs' Adventures and Travels,.....	75	My Shooting Box,.....	75
Major Jones' Chronicles of Pineville,.....	75	Warwick Woodlands,.....	75
Polly Peablossom's Wedding,...	75	The Deer Stalkers,.....	75
Mysteries of the Backwoods,...	75	Peter Ploddy,.....	75
Widow Rugby's Husband,.....	75	Adventures of Captain Farrago,...	75
Big Bear of Arkansas,.....	75	Major O'Regan's Adventures,...	75
Western Scenes; or, Life on the Prairie,.....	75	Sol. Smith's Theatrical Apprenticeship,.....	75
Streaks of Squatter Life,.....	75	Sol. Smith's Theatrical Journey-Work,.....	75
Pickings from the Picayune,...	75	The Quarter Race in Kentucky,...	75
Stray Subjects, Arrested and Bound Over,.....	75	Aunt Patty's Scrap Bag,.....	75
Louisiana Swamp Doctor,.....	75	Percival Mayberry's Adventures and Travels,.....	75
Charcoal Sketches,.....	75	Sam Slick's Yankee Yarns and Yankee Letters,.....	75
Misfortunes of Peter Faber,...	75	Adventures of Fudge Fumble,...	75
Yankee among the Mermaids,...	75	American Joe Miller,.....	50
New Orleans Sketch Book,.....	75	Following the Drum,.....	50

D'ISRAELI'S WORKS.

Henrietta Temple,.....	50	Young Duke,.....	50
Vivian Grey,.....	75	Miriam Alroy,.....	50
Venetia,.....	50	Contarina Fleming,.....	50

FRANK FAIRLEIGH'S WORKS.

Frank Fairleigh,.....	75	Harry Racket Scapegrace,.....	75
Lewis Arundel,.....	75	Tom Racquet,.....	75

Finer editions of above are also issued in cloth, at \$1.75 each.

Harry Coverdale's Courtship,.....	1 50	Lorrimer Littlegood,.....	1 50
-----------------------------------	------	---------------------------	------

The above are each in paper cover, or in cloth, price \$1.75 each.

C. J. PETERSON'S WORKS.

The Old Stone Mansion,.....	1 50	Kate Aylesford,.....	1 50
-----------------------------	------	----------------------	------

The above are each in paper cover, or in cloth, price \$1.75 each.

Cruising in the Last War,.....	75	Grace Dudley; or, Arnold at Valley Farm,.....	25
		Saratoga,.....	50

JAMES A. MAITLAND'S WORKS.

The Old Patroon,.....	1 50	Diary of an Old Doctor,.....	1 50
The Watchman,.....	1 50	Sartaroe,.....	1 50
The Wanderer,.....	1 50	The Three Cousins,.....	1 50
The Lawyer's Story,.....	1 50		

The above are each in paper cover, or in cloth, price \$1.75 each.

WILLIAM H. MAXWELL'S WORKS.

Wild Sports of the West,.....	75	Brian O'Lynn,.....	75
Stories of Waterloo,.....	75		

Books sent, postage paid, on receipt of the Retail Price, by
T. B. Peterson & Brothers, Philadelphia, Pa.

10 T. B. PETERSON & BROTHERS' PUBLICATIONS.

WILLIAM HARRISON AINSWORTH'S WORKS.

Life of Jack Sheppard,.....	50	Tower of London,.....	1 50
Life of Guy Fawkes,.....	75	Miser's Daughter,.....	1 00
Above in 1 vol., cloth, \$1.75.			
Court of the Stuarts,.....	75	Life of Grace O'Malley,.....	50
Windsor Castle,.....	75	Life of Henry Thomas,.....	25
The Star Chamber,.....	75	Desperadoes of the New World,.....	50
Old St. Paul's,.....	75	Life of Ninon De L'Enclos,....	25
Court of Queen Anne,.....	50	Life of Arthur Spring,.....	25
Life of Dick Turpin,.....	50	Life of Mrs. Whipple and Jes-	
Life of Davy Crockett,.....	50	see Strang,.....	25

G. P. R. JAMES'S BEST BOOKS.

Lord Montague's Page,.....	1 50	The Cavalier,.....	1 50
The above are each in paper cover, or in cloth, price \$1.75 each.			
The Man in Black,.....	75	Arrah Neil,.....	75
Mary of Burgundy,.....	75	Eva St. Clair,.....	50

DOW'S PATENT SERMONS.

Dow's Patent Sermons, 1st		Dow's Patent Sermons, 3d	
Series, \$1.00; cloth,.....	1 50	Series, \$1.00; cloth,.....	1 50
Dow's Patent Sermons, 2d		Dow's Patent Sermons, 4th	
Series, \$1.00; cloth,.....	1 50	Series, \$1.00; cloth,.....	1 50

SAMUEL C. WARREN'S BEST BOOKS.

Ten Thousand a Year,....paper, 1 50	Diary of a Medical Student,....	75
Do. do. cloth, 2 00		

Q. K. PHILANDER DOESTICKS' WORKS.

Doesticks' Letters,.....	1 50	The Elephant Club,.....	1 50
Plu-Ri-Bus-Tah,.....	1 50	Witches of New York,.....	1 50

The above are each in paper cover, or in cloth, price \$1.75 each.

GREEN'S WORKS ON GAMBLING.

Gambling Exposed,.....	1 50	The Reformed Gambler,.....	1 50
The Gambler's Life,.....	1 50	Secret Band of Brothers,.....	1 50

Above are each in paper cover, or each one in cloth, for \$1.75 each.

MISS ELLEN PICKERING'S WORKS.

The Grumbler,.....	75	Who Shall be Heir?.....	38
Marrying for Money,.....	75	The Squire,.....	38
Poor Cousin,.....	50	Ellen Wareham,.....	38
Kate Walsingham,.....	50	Nan Darrel,.....	38
Orphan Niece,.....	50		

CAPTAIN MARRYATT'S WORKS.

Jacob Faithful,.....	50	Newton Forster,.....	50
Japhet in Search of a Father,...	50	King's Own,.....	50
Phantom Ship,.....	50	Pirate and Three Cutters,.....	50
Midshipman Easy,.....	50	Peter Simple,.....	50
Pacha of Many Tales,.....	50	Percival Keene,.....	50
Frank Mildmay, Naval Officer,	50	Poor Jack,.....	50
Snarleyow,.....	50	Sea King,.....	50

Books sent, postage paid, on receipt of the Retail Price, by
T. B. Peterson & Brothers, Philadelphia, Pa.

T. B. PETERSON & BROTHERS' PUBLICATIONS. 11

MRS. GREY'S CELEBRATED NOVELS.

Cousin Harry,.....	1 50	The Little Beauty,.....	1 50
The above are each in paper cover, or in cloth, price \$1.75 each.			
A Marriage in High Life,.....	50	The Baronet's Daughters,.....	50
Gipsy's Daughter,.....	50	Young Prima Donna,.....	50
Old Dower House,.....	50	Hyacinthe,.....	25
Belle of the Family,.....	50	Alice Seymour,.....	25
Duke and Cousin,.....	50	Mary Seaham,.....	75
The Little Wife,.....	50	Passion and Principle,.....	75
Lena Cameron,.....	50	The Flirt,.....	75
Sybil Lennard,.....	50	Good Society,.....	75
Manceuvring Mother,.....	50	Lion-Hearted,.....	75

J. F. SMITH'S WORKS.

The Usurer's Victim; or,		Adelaide Waldegrave; or, the	
Thomas Balscombe,.....	75	Trials of a Governess,.....	75

REVOLUTIONARY TALES.

The Brigand,.....	50	Old Put; or, Days of 1776,.....	50
Ralph Runnion,.....	50	Legends of Mexico,.....	50
Seven Brothers of Wyoming,...	50	Grace Dudley,.....	50
The Rebel Bride,.....	50	The Guerilla Chief,.....	75
The Flying Artillerist,.....	50	The Quaker Soldier, paper,....	1 50
Wau-nan-gee,.....	50	do. do. cloth,.....	1 75

T. S. ARTHUR'S HOUSEHOLD NOVELS.

The Lost Bride,.....	50	The Divorced Wife,.....	50
The Two Brides,.....	50	Pride and Prudence,.....	50
Love in a Cottage,.....	50	Agnes; or, the Possessed,.....	50
Love in High Life,.....	50	Lucy Sandford,.....	50
Year after Marriage,.....	50	The Banker's Wife,.....	50
The Lady at Home,.....	50	The Two Merchants,.....	50
Cecelia Howard,.....	50	Trial and Triumph,.....	50
Orphan Children,.....	50	The Iron Rule,.....	50
Debtor's Daughter,.....	50	Insubordination; or, the Shoe-	
Mary Moreton,.....	50	maker's Daughters,.....	50
Six Nights with the Washingtonians. With nine original Illustrations. By Cruikshank. One volume, cloth \$1.75; or in paper, \$1.50			
Lizzy Glenn; or, the Trials of a Seamstress. Cloth \$1.75; or paper, 1.50			

LIEBIG'S WORKS ON CHEMISTRY.

Agricultural Chemistry,.....	25	Liebig's celebrated Letters on	
Animal Chemistry,.....	25	the Potato Disease,.....	25
Liebig's Complete Works on Chemistry, is also issued in one large octavo volume, bound in cloth. Price Two Dollars.			

RIDDELL'S MODEL ARCHITECT.

Architectural Designs of Model Country Residences. By John Riddell, Practical Architect. Illustrated with twenty-two full page Front Elevations, colored, with forty-four Plates of Ground Plans, including the First and Second Stories, with plans of the stories, full specifications of all the articles used, and estimate of price. Price Fifteen Dollars a copy.

FRANK FORRESTER'S GREAT BOOK.

Frank Forrester's Sporting Scenes and Characters. By Henry William Herbert. With Illustrations by Darley. Two vols., cloth, \$4 00

Books sent, postage paid, on receipt of the Retail Price, by
T. B. Peterson & Brothers, Philadelphia, Pa.

12 T. B. PETERSON & BROTHERS' PUBLICATIONS.

EXCITING SEA TALES.

Adventures of Ben Brace,.....	75	Gallant Tom,.....	50
Jack Adams, the Mutineer,....	75	Harry Helm,.....	50
Jack Ariel's Adventures,.....	75	Harry Tempest,.....	50
Petrel; or, Life on the Ocean,...	75	Rebel and Rover,.....	50
Life of Paul Periwinkle,.....	75	Man-of-War's-Man,.....	50
Life of Tom Bowling,.....	75	Dark Shades of City Life,....	25
Percy Effingham,.....	75	The Rats of the Seine,.....	25
Cruising in the Last War,.....	75	Charles Ransford,.....	25
Red King,.....	50	The Iron Cross,.....	25
The Corsair,.....	50	The River Pirates,.....	25
The Doomed Ship,.....	50	The Pirate's Son,.....	25
The Three Pirates,.....	50	Jacob Faithful,.....	50
The Flying Dutchman,.....	50	Phantom Ship,.....	50
The Flying Yankee,.....	50	Midshipman Easy,.....	50
The Yankee Middy,.....	50	Pacha of Many Tales,.....	50
The Gold Seekers,.....	50	Naval Officer,.....	50
The King's Cruisers,.....	50	Snarleyow,.....	50
Life of Alexander Tardy,.....	50	Newton Forster,.....	50
Red Wing,.....	50	King's Own,.....	50
Yankee Jack,.....	50	Japhet,.....	50
Yankees in Japan,.....	50	Pirate and Three Cutters,....	50
Morgan, the Buccaneer,.....	50	Peter Simple,.....	50
Jack Junk,.....	50	Percival Keene,.....	50
Davis, the Pirate,.....	50	Poor Jack,.....	50
Valdez, the Pirate,.....	50	Sea King,.....	50

GEORGE LIPPARD'S GREAT BOOKS.

The Quaker City,.....	1 50	The Empire City,.....	75
Paul Ardenheim,.....	1 50	Memoirs of a Preacher,.....	75
Blanche of Brandywine,.....	1 50	The Nazarene,.....	75
Washington and his Generals; or, Legends of the American Revolution,.....	1 50	Washington and his Men,.....	75
Mysteries of Florence,.....	1 00	Legends of Mexico,.....	50
Above in cloth at \$2.00 each.		The Entranced,.....	25
		The Robbers,.....	25
		The Bank Director's Son,.....	25

MILITARY NOVELS. BY BEST AUTHORS.

With Illuminated Military Covers, in five Colors.

Charles O'Malley,.....	75	The Three Guardsmen,.....	75
Jack Hinton, the Guardsman,...	75	Twenty Years After,.....	75
The Knight of Gwynne,.....	75	Bragelonne, Son of Athos,....	75
Harry Lorrequer,.....	75	Forty-five Guardsmen,.....	75
Tom Burke of Ours,.....	75	Tom Bowling's Adventures,...	75
Arthur O'Leary,.....	75	Life of Robert Bruce,.....	75
Con Cregan,.....	75	The Gipsy Chief,.....	75
Kate O'Donoghue,.....	75	Massacre of Glencoe,.....	75
Horace Templeton,.....	75	Life of Guy Fawkes,.....	75
Davenport Dunn,.....	75	Child of Waterloo,.....	75
Jack Adams' Adventures,.....	75	Adventures of Ben Brace,.....	75
Valentine Vox,.....	75	Life of Jack Ariel,.....	75
Twin Lieutenants,.....	75	Wallace, the Hero of Scotland,...	1 00
Stories of Waterloo,.....	75	Following the Drum,.....	50
The Soldier's Wife,.....	75	The Conscript, a Tale of War.	
Guerilla Chief,.....	75	By Alexander Dumas,.....	1 50

Books sent, postage paid, on receipt of the Retail Price, by
T. B. Peterson & Brothers, Philadelphia, Pa.

T. B. PETERSON & BROTHERS' PUBLICATIONS. 13

GUSTAVE AIMARD'S WORKS.

The White Scalper,.....	50	Trapper's Daughter,.....	75
The Freebooters,.....	50	The Tiger Slayer,.....	75
The Prairie Flower,.....	75	The Gold Seekers,.....	75
The Indian Scout,.....	75	The Rebel Chief,.....	75
The Trail Hunter,.....	75	The Smuggler Chief,.....	75
The Indian Chief,.....	75	The Border Rifles,.....	75
The Red Track,.....	75	Pirates of the Prairies,.....	75

LANGUAGES WITHOUT A MASTER.

French without a Master,.....	40	German without a Master,.....	40
Spanish without a Master,.....	40	Italian without a Master,.....	40
Latin without a Master,.....	40		

The above five works on the French, German, Spanish, Latin, and Italian Languages, whereby any one or all of these Languages can be learned by any one without a Teacher, with the aid of this book, by A. H. Monteith, Esq., is also published in finer style, in one volume, bound, price, \$1.75.

HARRY COCKTON'S WORKS.

Sylvester Sound,.....	75	The Sisters,.....	75
Valentine Vox, in paper,.....	75	The Steward,.....	75
do. finer edition, cloth, 2 00		Percy Effingham,.....	75

WAR NOVELS. BY HENRY MORFORD.

Shoulder-Straps,.....	1 50	The Days of Shoddy. A His-	
The Coward,.....	1 50	tory of the late War,.....	1 50

Above are each in paper cover, or each one in cloth, for \$1.75 each.

LIVES OF HIGHWAYMEN.

Life of John A. Murrel,.....	50	Life of Davy Crockett,.....	50
Life of Joseph T. Hare,.....	50	Life of Sybil Grey,.....	50
Life of Col. Monroe Edwards,...	50	Life of Jonathan Wild,.....	25
Life of Jack Sheppard,.....	50	Life of Henry Thomas,.....	25
Life of Jack Rann,.....	50	Life of Arthur Spring,.....	25
Life of Dick Turpin,.....	50	Life of Jack Ketch,.....	25
Life of Helen Jewett,.....	50	Life of Ninon De L'Enclos,....	25
Desperadoes of the New World,...	50	Lives of the Felons,.....	25
Mysteries of New Orleans,.....	50	Life of Mrs. Whipple,.....	25
The Robber's Wife,.....	50	Life of Biddy Woodhull,.....	25
Obi; or, Three Fingered Jack,...	50	Life of Mother Brownrigg,....	25
Kit Clayton,.....	50	Dick Parker, the Pirate,.....	25
Life of Tom Waters,.....	50	Life of Mary Bateman,.....	25
Nat Blake,.....	50	Life of Captain Blood,.....	25
Bill Horton,.....	50	Capt. Blood and the Beagles,...	25
Galloping Gus,.....	50	Sixteen-Stringed Jack's Fight for Life,.....	25
Life & Trial of Antoine Probst,...	50	Highwayman's Avenger,.....	25
Ned Hastings,.....	50	Life of Raoul De Surville,....	25
Eveleen Wilson,.....	50	Life of Rody the Rover,.....	25
Diary of a Pawnbroker,.....	50	Life of Galloping Dick,.....	25
Silver and Pewter,.....	50	Life of Guy Fawkes,.....	75
Sweeney Todd,.....	50	Life and Adventures of Vidocq,...	1 50
Life of Grace O'Malley,.....	50		

MILITARY AND ARMY BOOKS.

Ellsworth's Zouave Drill,.....	25	U. S. Light Infantry Drill,....	25
U. S. Government Infantry & Rifle Tactics,.....	25	The Soldier's Companion,.....	25
		The Soldier's Guide,.....	25

Books sent, postage paid, on Receipt of the Retail Price, by
T. B. Peterson & Brothers, Philadelphia, Pa.

14 T. B. PETERSON & BROTHERS' PUBLICATIONS.

WORKS AT 75 CENTS. BY BEST AUTHORS.

Hans Breitnau's Party. With other Ballads. By Charles G. Leland,	75
Hans Breitmann In Church, with other Ballads. By C. G. Leland,	75
Hans Breitmann about Town, with other Ballads. By C. G. Leland,	75
Webster and Hayne's Speeches in Reply to Colonel Foote,	75
The Brigand; or, the Demon of the North. By Victor Hugo,	75
Roanoke; or, Where is Utopia? By C. H. Wiley. Illustrated,	75
The Banditti of the Prairie,...	75
Tom Racquet,	75
Red Indians of Newfoundland,	75
Salathiel, by Croly,	75
Corinne; or, Italy,	75
Ned Musgrave,	75
Aristocracy,	75
The Inquisition in Spain,	75
Elsie's Married Life,	75
Leyton Hall. By Mark Lemon,	75
Flirtations in America,	75
The Coquette,	75
Thackeray's Irish Sketch Book,	75
Whitehall,	75
The Beautiful Nun,	75
Mysteries of Three Cities,	75
Genevra. By Miss Fairfield,	75
New Hope; or, the Rescue,	75
Crock of Gold. By Tupper,	75
Twins and Heart. By Tupper,	75

WORKS AT 50 CENTS. BY BEST AUTHORS.

The Woman in Red. A Companion to the "Woman in Black,"	50
Twelve Months of Matrimony. By Emelie F. Carlen,	50
Leah; or the Forsaken,	50
The Greatest Plague of Life,	50
Clifford and the Actress,	50
The Two Lovers,	50
Ryan's Mysteries of Marriage,	50
The Orphans and Caleb Field,	50
Moreton Hall,	50
Bell Brandon,	50
Sybil Grey,	50
Female Life in New York,	50
Agnes Grey,	50
Diary of a Physician,	50
The Emigrant Squire,	50
The Monk, by Lewis,	50
The Beautiful French Girl,	50
Father Clement, paper,	50
do. cloth,	75
Miser's Heir, paper,	50
do. do. cloth,	75
The Admiral's Daughter,	50
The American Joe Miller,	50
Ella Stratford,	50
Josephine, by Grace Aguilar,	50
The Fortune Hunter,	50
The Orphan Sisters,	50
Robert Oaklands; or, the Out-	50
cast Orphan,	50
Abednego, the Money Lender,	50
Jenny Ambrose,	50
Father Tom and the Pope, in	50
cloth gilt, 75 cents, or paper,	50
The Romish Confessional,	50
Victims of Amusements,	50
Violet,	50
Alieford, a Family History,	50
General Scott's \$5 Portrait,	1 00
Henry Clay's \$5 Portrait,	1 00
Tangara, a Poem,	1 00

WORKS AT 25 CENTS. BY BEST AUTHORS.

Aunt Margaret's Trouble,	25
The Woman in Grey,	25
The Deformed,	25
Two Prima Donnas,	25
The Mysterious Marriage,	25
Jack Downing's Letters,	25
The Mysteries of a Convent,	25
Rose Warrington,	25
The Iron Cross,	25
Charles Ransford,	25
The Mysteries of Bedlam,	25
The Nobleman's Daughter,	25
Madison's Exposition of Odd	25
Fellowship,	25
Ghost Stories. Illustrated,	25
Ladies' Science of Etiquette,	25
The Abbey of Innismoyle,	25
Gliddon's Ancient Egypt,	25
Philip in Search of a Wife,	25
Rifle Shots,	25

THE SHAKSPEARE NOVELS.

Shakspeare and his Friends,	1 00
The Youth of Shakspeare,	1 00
The Secret Passion,	1 00

Above three Books are also in one volume, cloth. Price Four Dollars.

Books sent, postage paid, on receipt of the Retail Price, by
T. B. Peterson & Brothers, Philadelphia, Pa.

T. B. PETERSON & BROTHERS' PUBLICATIONS. 15

WAVERLEY NOVELS. BY SIR WALTER SCOTT.

Ivanhoe,	20
Rob Roy,	20
Guy Mannering,	20
The Antiquary,	20
Old Mortality,	20
Heart of Mid Lothian,	20
Bride of Lammermoor,	20
Waverley,	20
St. Ronan's Well,	20
Kenilworth,	20
The Pirate,	20
The Monastery,	20
The Abbot,	20
The Fortunes of Nigel,	20
The Betrothed,	20
Peveril of the Peak,	20
Quentin Durward,	20
Red Gauntlet,	20
The Talisman,	20
Woodstock,	20
Highland Widow, etc.,	20
The Fair Maid of Perth,	20
Anne of Geierstein,	20
Count Robert of Paris,	20
The Black Dwarf and Legend	20
of Montrose,	20
Castle Dangerous, and Sur-	20
geon's Daughter,	20

Above edition is the cheapest in the world, and is complete in twenty-six volumes, price Twenty cents each, or Five Dollars for the complete set.

A finer edition is also published of each of the above, complete in twenty-six volumes, price Fifty cents each, or Ten Dollars for the complete set.

Moredun. A Tale of 1210,	50
Tales of a Grandfather,	25
Scott's Poetical Works,	5 00
Life of Scott, cloth,	2 50

"NEW NATIONAL EDITION" OF "WAVERLEY NOVELS."

This edition of the Waverley Novels is contained in five large octavo volumes, with a portrait of Sir Walter Scott, making four thousand very large double columned pages, in good type, and handsomely printed on the finest of white paper, and bound in the strongest and most substantial manner.

Price of a set, in Black cloth, in five volumes, \$15 00

" " Full sheep, Library style, 17 50

" " Half calf, antique, or Half calf, gilt, 25 00

The Complete Prose and Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott, are also published in ten volumes, bound in half calf, for \$60.00

SIR E. L. BULWER'S NOVELS.

The Roue,	50
The Oxonians,	50
The Courtier,	25
Falkland,	25

PETERSONS' ILLUMINATED STORIES.

A Year After Marriage,	25
Love in High Life,	25
The Divorced Wife,	25
The Debtor's Daughter,	25
The Lady at Home,	25
Mary Moreton,	25
The Two Brides,	25
Dick Parker,	25
Jack Ketch,	25
Mother Brownrigg,	25
The Two Merchants,	25
Galloping Dick,	25
Life of Harry Thomas,	25
Mrs. Whipple & Jesse Strang's	25
Adventures,	25
Biddy Woodhull the Beautiful	25
Haymaker,	25
The Rats of the Seine,	25
Ghost Stories. Illustrated,	25
Arthur Spring,	25

DR. HOLLICK'S WORKS.

Dr. Hollick's great work on the Anatomy and Physiology of the	
Human Figure, with colored dissected plates of the Human Figure,	1 25
Dr. Hollick's Family Physician, a Pocket Guide for Everybody,	25

GEORGE FRANCIS TRAIN'S SPEECHES.

Union Speeches. In 2 vols., each	25
Speech to the Fenians,	25
Downfall of England,	10
Slavery and Emancipation,	10

Books sent, postage paid, on receipt of the Retail Price, by
T. B. Peterson & Brothers, Philadelphia, Pa.

16 T. B. PETERSON & BROTHERS' PUBLICATIONS.

USEFUL BOOKS FOR ALL.

Lady's and Gentleman's Science of Etiquette. By Count D'Orsay and Countess de Calabrella, with their portraits,.....	50
Lardner's One Thousand and Ten Things Worth Knowing,.....	50
Knowlson's Complete Farrier and Horse Doctor,.....	25
Knowlson's Complete Cow and Cattle Doctor,.....	25
The Complete Kitchen and Fruit Gardener,.....	25
The Complete Florist and Flower Gardener,.....	25
Arthur's Receipts for Preserving Fruits, etc.,.....	12

LIVES OF GENERALS AND OTHER NOTED MEN.

Moore's Life of Hon. Schuyler Colfax. By Rev. A. Y. Moore, of South Bend. With a Fine Steel Portrait. One vol. cloth. Price..	1	50
The Lives of Grant and Colfax. With life-like portraits of each, and other engravings. Cloth, \$1.00; or in paper cover,.....	75	
Illustrated Life, Speeches, Martyrdom and Funeral of President Abraham Lincoln. Cloth, \$1.75; or in paper cover,.....	1	50
Life and Services of General Sheridan. Cloth, \$1.00; or in paper,...	75	
Life, Battles, Reports, and Public Services of General George B. McClellan. Price in paper 50 cents, or in cloth.....	75	
Life and Services of General George G. Meade, Hero of Gettysburg,	25	
Life and Services of General B. F. Butler, Hero of New Orleans,.....	25	
Life of President Andrew Johnson. Cloth, \$1.00; or in paper.....	75	
The Impeachment and Trial of Andrew Johnson, cheap paper cover edition, price 50 cents, or a finer edition, bound in cloth, price	1	50
Trial of the Assassins and Conspirators for the murder of President Abraham Lincoln. Cloth, \$1.50; or cheap edition in paper cover,	50	
Lives of Seymour and Blair. Price 50 cents in paper, or in cloth,...	75	
Life of Archbishop Hughes, first Archbishop of New York,.....	25	

REV. CHAS. WADSWORTH'S SERMONS.

America's Mission,.....	25	A Thanksgiving Sermon,.....	15
Thankfulness and Character,...	25	Politics in Religion,.....	12
Henry Ward Beecher on War and Emancipation,.....	15		
Rev. William T. Brantley's Union Sermon,.....	15		

EXPOSITIONS OF SECRET ORDERS, ETC.

Odd Fellowship Exposed,.....	13	Dr. Berg's Answer to Arch-	
Sons of Malta Exposed,.....	13	bishop Hughes,.....	13
Life of Rev. John N. Maffit,...	13	Dr. Berg on the Jesuits,.....	13

GOOD BOOKS FOR EVERYBODY.


Southern Life; or, Inside Views of Slavery,.....	1	00
The Rich Men of Philadelphia, Income Tax List of Residents,.....	1	00
Childbirth. Its pains lessened and its perils obviated. Showing that the pains of childbirth may be mitigated, if not entirely prevented,	1	00
Peterson's Complete Coin Book, containing fac-similes of all the Coins in the World, with the U. S. Mint value of each coin,.....	1	00
Political Lyrics. New Hampshire and Nebraska. Illustrated.....	12	

CHRISTY & WHITE'S SONG BOOKS.

Christy & Wood's Song Book,...	10	Serenader's Song Book,.....	10
Melodeon Song Book,.....	10	Budworth's Songs,....	10
Plantation Melodies,.....	10	Christy and White's Complete	
Ethiopian Song Book,.....	10	Ethiopian Melodies. Cloth,	1 00

CURVED-POINT STEEL PENS.

Magnum Bonum Pen. Price per dozen, 75 cents, per gross,.....	\$8.00
--	--------

 Books sent, postage paid, on receipt of the Retail Price, by
T. B. Peterson & Brothers, Philadelphia, Pa.