

THE
REJECTED WIFE.

BY

MRS. ANN S. STEPHENS.

AUTHOR OF "FASHION AND FAMINE," "THE OLD HOMESTEAD,"
"MARY DERWENT," "THE HEIRESS," ETC., ETC.

Yes, woman's love, when left alone,
Around an evil heart may cling,
As ivy trails from stone to stone,
Creeping o'er many a ruined thing;
It gathers in its loving clasp
The thorns that pierce and flowers that bloom;
Nor perishes in death's cold grasp,
But dove-like flies beyond the tomb.

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TO

MRS. CORNELIUS VANDERBILT.

DEAR LADY:

THIS YEAR, WHICH CROWNS YOUR MARRIED LIFE
WITH A "GOLDEN WEDDING," MANY A TRIBUTE OF LOVE
WILL BE OFFERED FOR YOUR ACCEPTANCE, BOTH IN RECOG-
NITION OF YOUR FEMININE MERITS, AND OF THE NAME
YOU HAVE SO LONG HONORED IN BEARING. BUT NO
PROOF OF AFFECTION CAN BE RENDERED TO YOU THAT
WILL REPRESENT MORE SINCERE REGARD OR PROFOUND
RESPECT THAN THIS SIMPLE DEDICATION.

ANN S. STEPHENS.

OCTOBER 17TH, 1863.

York

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THE REJECTED WIFE.

CHAPTER I

THE FARM-HOUSE IN COMMOTION—EXPECTED GUESTS— PARLOR AND KITCHEN.

MORE than ninety years ago, what is now the city of Norwich was a thriving village scattered over one of the most picturesque hills in the world. Its wildness and its beauty forming a picture one might well go back a century or so to look at; for civilization is most lovely when it improves nature without enslaving and plundering it. Thus, the picturesque log-cabins, and the aspiring frame houses on their natural terraces overlooking each other,—some peeping out upon unreclaimed rocks, others embowered in trees, and all wildly irregular,—were a thousand times more attractive than the cultivation and stately wealth of the present city, which is even now among the most beautiful in our country.

There was not much inland navigation in those days; but now and then a sloop spread its white sails on the Thames below the village, while canoes and rude boats were abundant on the Yantic and the Shetucket. Along the rich valley which lies on the northwest, farms were scattered, and to a considerable extent the wilderness was

cut away. The dwellings, so far as the land permitted, were gathered in close neighborhood, out of which first a scattering village, and now a city has sprung. But the cove, which sets up to the mouth of the Yantic, was surrounded by one unbroken mass of trees. Here and there the blue smoke curled up from some newly-built cabin in a clearing of the forest. The Yantic River, which plunges its wild body of waters into the head of the cove, through rocks, over precipices, and down chasms, foaming and rioting with eager haste to overtake and outleap the Shetucket in a race for the sea, had been forced to yield some of its rioting waters for the use of a grist-mill, with its slow stones that moaned over their task of a few bushels each day. Below this a saw-mill sent its hoarse music into the dash of the waters, which leaped by, shouting back a mellow defiance, that rang through the old forest-trees day and night, as they sing and laugh at the present moment.

Two log-cabins stood back in the woods. Into one the miller took his toll at night: and the other was inhabited by the man that attended the saw-mill. In those days, when two log-cabins stood within sight of each other, they were likely to constitute a village and receive a name; but with a grist-mill and saw-mill within hearing, of course this was imperative; so the miller and his neighbor held a town-meeting between themselves and baptized the beautiful spot Yanticville.

Down among the farm-houses, on the plain, stands to this day a large frame house, with a broad, gabled roof and heavy chimneys. Two or three old trees droop around it, and a substantial fence, half stone, and completed with rails, encloses it from the highway. Even now the house possesses that air of substantial comfort

which is the characteristic of almost all Connecticut dwellings; but in the last century it was a very superior building indeed, and bespoke the growing prosperity which had followed the Norwich settlement from its foundation.

The ambition of every farmer in those days was to convert his log-cabin into a stable, and give evidence of thrift in a frame house. Sometimes it was years before this house received its entire finish, but stood, an imposing shell, with a network of lath on the walls waiting for plaster, while no room but the kitchen was thoroughly made comfortable.

This house was no exception to the general rule. The hoarded savings that had erected it gave out when the exterior was completed, and for years the good couple lived in a large kitchen and bed-room in winter, contenting themselves with a broader range of fine airy apartments from spring to autumn, when the unfinished state of their dwelling was rather an advantage than otherwise. They had a growing family, and so put off finishing the house till gray hairs came thick on their temples, and their only son had gone forth into the world to get his own living. There had for three months been great confusion in this house. The sound of hammers, the grating of trowels had made their harsh music; then the low, soft sweep of white-wash brushes, completed every thing. Almost thirty years after its foundations were laid, Mr. Arnold's house had received its finishing touches.

And why was all this haste after such patient waiting? Why was the good housewife so busy upon her knees, nailing down home-made carpets, or, with both arms uplifted, rolling up paper blinds at the windows? Why was that fair young girl, with meek, brown eyes, so earnest in her attendance on the mother, holding the little plate of

carpet-tacks, and helping with her pretty brown hands to stretch the stubborn fabric to its place?

Why, it was the day but one before Thanksgiving, when all those members of the family who had wandered beyond that valley were to meet again under the gable-roof and have a grand holiday. That only son, of whom the mother was so proud, and a guest or two of foreign blood, who, fond of adventure, had come to see the grandeur of that New World which was soon to claim a place among nations,—were expected at the homestead.

The carpet was down in the south room, and the green and red stripes shone out splendidly. Many a long month had Mrs. Arnold and her daughter toiled at the great wheel, the dye-tub, and the loom, before the admired fabric was completed, and they both felt all the sweet consciousness of creation to its full extent. Tall, wooden chairs, with backs bent inward like a bow, and divided longitudinally with small, round bars, and seats curved like a scroll, stood primly against the white wall. A looking-glass, with a fan-like ornament of carved mahogany on each end of the frame, and surmounted at the top with a gilt eagle, gleamed grandly between the two front windows. A long, mahogany table, bright as the mirror, stood under it, with each claw-foot grasping a ball, and long, deep leaves rounded down to the floor. Opposite this was a high "chest o' drawers," each drawer bulging out, and sinking in like a scroll, with picturesque brass handles shining brightly up and down the front. This elaborate piece of furniture reached from the floor to the ceiling, where it ended in a carved shell,—a wondrous work of art, for which, as a piece of worldly vanity, Mrs. Arnold wished to be forgiven in her prayers, but still regarded with complacency when she observed its effect on the best room.

"There now, I think every thing is in order here," said Mrs. Arnold, dropping the linsey-woolsey apron with which she had been polishing the table. "They might come to-day for any thing we should care. Dear me! here is a spot on the andirons," and down she went upon her knees, rubbing the tall, brass andiron with both hands till drops of perspiration hung on her forehead.

"No, no: that is a bruise,—it will never come out," said Hannah. "Don't you remember when brother made it throwing his hammer, one day when he hurt his fingers cracking walnuts?"

Mrs. Arnold stopped, gazed down a moment upon the dent with gentle thoughtfulness, and arose from her knees.

"Yes," she said, with a sigh; "I haven't forgotten it, Hannah. Your father and I have often made it a subject of prayer; and it has set on my conscience more than once that we ought to have punished him at that time as the Scriptures point out; but, somehow, whipping never seemed the thing for your brother. It always made him fierce and sullen; and I don't know as any punishment besides the rod is held proper for a child. One hardly knows what way to turn with a boy like that."

"He is so brave, so handsome, mother," said Hannah Arnold. "I don't wonder you couldn't find the heart to punish him. It seems like whipping a race-horse for wanting to run ahead. Won't he be delighted when he sees what we've been about here?"

Mrs. Arnold looked around with gentle complacency upon her pale, sweet face.

"It is real nice," she said. "The roses on the curtains make the room look bright as a flower-garden. Come, now, daughter, let's go and see to the beds. Bring down

the new coverlet, with blue and orange quarters, for the out-room, and then we'll go into the kitchen and see how Dan and Hagar are getting along. It'll be time for your father to kill the turkeys and chickens pretty soon. It won't do to have the noise about when the company comes. Get the coverlet, Hannah, and then go tell your pa, or they will catch us nicely."

Hannah ran up-stairs, opened a huge chest, full of home-spun linen and substantial bedding, from which she took the coverlet woven in orange quarters, and came down again.

"Mother," she said, making herself very busy spreading the coverlet under the snowy pillows, while her cheeks blushed like moss-roses, "mother, if it should snow to-morrow,—it looks like it, I think,—and the French gentleman, who is coming with brother, should fancy a sleigh-ride, what do you think of it?"

"A sleigh-ride on Thanksgiving-day!" exclaimed Mrs. Arnold, a little horrified.

The roses flushed deeper in Hannah Arnold's cheek, and she cast a little deprecating look at her mother that melted all the prejudices down in that gentle heart in an instant.

"Well, Hannah, I don't quite see my way clear about the sleigh-ride, if it should snow,—and it seems to me I saw flakes in the air a little while ago; but supposing you mention the matter to pa; if he doesn't take it too hard, I won't interfere. You can wear my muff and tippet."

"I didn't mean myself, mother; but the young French gentleman and his sister. You will want me to help about the dinner."

"Never mind about the dinner. I'm capable of managing that with Hagar. We can chop the stuffing and strain

the pumpkin-sauce over night, you know. There, now, I don't believe there's a bit of sage or summer savory in the house. What shall we do? These workmen turn every thing topsy-turvy!"

"Oh, yes there is, mother! I put up two bundles myself, and hung them on the rafters in the garret, out of the joiner's way. Shall I run and get it?"

"Well, if you'd just as lief as not."

Away went Hannah up into the garret, where any quantity of dried herbs hung in clusters and bundles along the naked rafters. The whole roof was ornamented with strings of fresh apples, nicely quartered, and hung up to dry side by side, with loops and rings of pumpkins, stretched along poles, and forming massive golden chains across the slope of the shingles. On a tow sheet, stretched along one end of the garret-floor, which was of loose boards, that rattled as she walked, lay a huge pile of butter-nuts. Three or four bushels of chestnuts lay in one corner, and a quantity of shag-barks was heaped away farther out of sight.

"There'll be enough for one Thanksgiving, anyway," thought Hannah, looking around, as she jumped down from the old chair on which she had mounted in order to reach the herbs. "Brother needn't be afraid of our starving his friends out, I reckon."

She ran down, with a bunch of herbs in each hand, flushed and pleased that she had remembered something which her mother deemed important.

By this time, Mrs. Arnold was in the kitchen, settling the programme of the coming supper and the next day's feast with Hagar, the household slave,—who was in reality rather more mistress of the kitchen than Mrs. Arnold herself.

"Now, Hagar, don't you think we can get along with out Hannah to-morrow?"

Hagar laid down the loaf of bread she was cutting, and seemed cloudily doubtful.

"Young folks will be young folks," said the mistress, persuasively.

"Sure enough; there's nature in that 'ar."

Here Hannah entered. Hagar's face brightened at the sight of the herbs. She received them with great complacency, observing that she had just been a-worrying the soul out of her body about sage, and there it came, just like a miracle, with an angel behind it.

"Hannah has been very thoughtful," said the mother.

"Yes and as you was a-saying, Miss Arnold, young folks will be young folks, and sleighing is sleighing; that's what I told Dan, not ten minutes ago. 'Dan,' says I, 'you jist go inter the barn, and dust out that 'ere two-horse sleigh, and the cutter as well; for if there isn't two foot of snow to-morrow morning, I ain't a cullered pusson to be 'pended on.' So in course, Dan went. Get along without Hannah! Who thought we couldn't, I'd like to know?"

"But what will Mr. Arnold say to all this?" inquired the mistress, doubtfully.

"He—he told me to ask you," said Hannah, with a demure little smile.

Mrs. Arnold did not smile in return; but a look of pleasure stole over her face.

"Well," she said, "we will think about it! Thanks-givin' isn't exactly like Sunday, being rather an institution of the government: so perhaps if we read a chapter, and have prayers at home, and especially if your father and I go to meeting with a sense of edification, a decorous

sleigh-ride would not be wrong. Hagar, I think Dan had better bring out the great bear-skin robes, and we must see about the foot-stoves."

"I've 'tended to that," said Hagar, with a sniff of her nose, which reminded you of a squirrel over its nut. "Master carried the robes out hisself, and has been a-dusting them agin the stun fence ever since."

"Now, that is all settled," said Mrs. Arnold, with a gentle sigh, for her delicate conscience was not quite at rest. "We'd better fix up a little, Hannah, for there's no knowing when the visitors may come. Hagar, tell Dan to build a fire in the out-room; there is plenty of pine-knots under the kitchen-stairs, and every thing handy."

"I'll 'tend to that," said Hagar, plunging her knife into the bread. "There's Dan coming now with the sleigh-bells in his hand. 'Spoze he wants me to scour 'em up for him. There ain't no end to his wants."

Sure enough, just as Mrs. Arnold and her daughter left the kitchen, Dan entered, dragging a huge black bear-skin robe in one hand, and with a string of bells jingling in the other.

Dan was rather more than six feet high; while Hagar stood just four feet ten in her highest-heeled shoes. Dan was large and portly, with a glossy black skin, and a little stoop in his shoulders; Hagar was straight as an arrow, and held her head back pertly, like a quail when it walks the spring turf. Dan had large feet, large hands, and was altogether a little ponderous; Hagar was quick, wiry, and, to use Dan's complimentary way of expressing it, "sharp as a steel trap."

Hagar suspected what her fellow-slave wanted, and kept on shaving off slices of bread from the loaf with great diligence.

"Hagar, here is a great, long slit in the bear-skin.

Master tore it agin the stun wall. S'posing you jes take a needle and sew 'em up, 'cause it's going to be wanted now, I tell you."

"I'se got more to 'tend to now than I'se likely to get along with," said Hagar, pushing aside the slices of bread, and sweeping the crumbs into one hand with the palm of the other. "Who's goin' to help me, I should like to know? There's the fire to build in the out-room, and oven-wood to get in, and pine-knots to split up. Who's goin' to help me, I say, with all the family goin' to meetin' and every-which-way?"

"I'll help you, Hagar. Who else has a right to that felicitation?" said Dan, bending grandly over the little woman. "Only get your needle and stitch up the little bit of a tear, jest to satisfy master, and see if I don't come up to the mark."

Hagar dusted the crumbs from her hands, took a wooden needle poppet from her bosom, which Dan recognized, with a broad smile, as his own gift, selected a coarse needle, threaded it, and then explored the depths of her pocket for a steel side-thimble. Thus equipped, she drew the bear-skin on her lap, and soon put it in order.

"Now," said Dan, coaxingly, "if you would jest touch up these 'ere bells a trifle with a little brick-dust."

"Touch 'em up yourself," said Hagar, with a toss of her little head. "Bells ain't my work, nohow."

"Yes," said Dan, benignly; "scouring belongs to the women folks. How often I've stood by to watch them 'ere hands of yourn a-sliding up and down the knives! It ed be a shame for any other pusson to touch scouring in this house. I've said so fifty times."

"Well, take away the bear-skin and give me the bells. Mighty good care you've taken on 'em."

"Hagar," said Dan, stooping low, and speaking in a bland, confidential voice, "it's beginning to snow. There's half-an-inch on the ground this minute."

"Well, that's no secret. I can see for myself."

"Yes, Hagar; but I was thinking what's sarse for the goose is sarse for——"

"Oh, git away, Dan, and don't talk poetry to me."

"Wal, then, Hagar, if the rest on 'em are goin' a-sleighing to-morrow, why shouldn't we?"

Hagar gave sure evidence that she was really smart as a steel trap. Her eyes began to sparkle, her little figure erected itself.

"You don't mean that 'ere, Dan!"

"Yes, I do. There's the cutter that I painted a beautiful yaller only last fall,—jest the dandy for us; then here's the bear-skin,—you'll sit under it, Hagar, as snug and warm as a biscuit; and then them bells,—ah! you've got to work at 'em—won't they glisten and jingle? I'll heat a brick, and do it up in flannel for your feet. It needn't be a large brick for them feet, Hagar."

"Oh, you git out with your soft soap," cried the delighted Hagar, giving her sable admirer a gentle push.

"Then," continued Dan, magnificently, "as for the driving, perhaps I don't know how to make old Jack go! "Gingle! crack! dash! here we go! Snow-balls flying from the horse's huffs, fences running away from us, a jumper every-which-while in the road, the cutter going slap bang over it. There, Hagar, that will do. They're bright as a new dollar,—every bell on 'em,—much obliged. Now, if you would just build that fire in the out-room, while I get the cutter in order. If pine-knots are wanted, you'll find an axe at the back-door, with a beautiful barked log to lay them agin. If master'll only let me

take the cutter and old Jack, we'll be sure to have that sleigh-ride."

With this, Dan gathered up the robe and bells, made a motion with his hand, threw an imaginary kiss high over Hagar's head, and disappeared, leaving the little negress in a state of hazy doubt whether Dan had been putting all his work on her or not.

"Now, in a fair battle of intellect or temper, Hagar was five times a match for her fellow-slave; but then Dan seldom got into a temper, and was sure to meet her acuteness with glozing flattery and that small cunning which is often available where good sense fails. The great, tall fellow absolutely believed that he was superior to the little steel trap, because he usually prevailed over her. So Hagar went down on her knees, and fanned the shovel full of live coals which lay in a heap of glowing red under the pile of hickory wood she had crossed over the tall, brass andirons. She pursed out her India-rubber cheeks into a pair of bellows, relieving them with her linsey-woolsey apron, which she held tight between her two hands. At last, a tongue of flame shot up the fine splinters, and licked the delicate moss from the wood, till the cloud of smoke turned into sheets of fire, which danced cheerily over the tall andirons and brightened all the room.

As Hagar stood on the hearth regarding her work, Mrs. Arnold and Hannah came in, looking quite picturesque and beautiful. You might travel a week anywhere and not find a more charming figure than Hannah exhibited when she entered the room, with her bottle-green skirt, and crimson short-gown trimmed with black gimp, and that fall of narrow ruffles meeting at the throat and leaving the shapely neck free in its motions, which were graceful as those of a canary-bird when it sings; calf-skin

shoes over black stockings, with long, crimson clocks at the ankles, completed a costume that Hagar pronounced quite enhancing.

"Isn't she nice, Hagar?" said Mrs. Arnold, smoothing the soft, brown hair that lay rich and bright on each side the young girl's head. "A nice obedient girl, I mean?" she continued, blushing at the motherly pride that broke forth in her words.

"Neat as a new pin," chimed in Hagar, folding her arms, and facing round to take a full survey. "If she don't catch a beau this time, I lose my guess."

Hannah blushed, and smiled, and looked slyly at her mother, while Hagar stood criticizing them both, with her head on one side, and both arms reposing on her little chest.

"Am I too fine, Hagar?" said Mrs. Arnold, flushing a little at the idea; "any thing wrong?"

"Wal, now, if the crown of that 'ere cap stood up a little higher behind, kinder like a fan, you know, and the ribbon that goes round the head was yallar, or blue, or red, instead of black, it ed be more scrumptious, according to my notion. Then, if you'd make the pleats of that 'ere muslin handkerchief fall open in front, jest enough to show the string of gold beads, with a little more of the neck,—for it's almost as white as our Hannah's arter all,—I shouldn't find much fault. The roll of that hair jest back from the forehead is handsome as a picter; and then that brown-silk dress has got any amount of rustle in it. Well, I can't say as there is much fault to find. Now, jest set down here, both on you, while I go and get the supper under way. Dan has got to help me to-night, or I'll know the reason why."

CHAPTER II.

GOING HOME—A SHOOTING-MATCH.

WHILE these preparations were going on in the old farm-house, a little cavalcade, consisting of two gentlemen and a lady, followed by a negro servant, was galloping through a sweep of woods half a score of miles south of Norwich.

They were a merry party, with their gay laughter and jests, as they spurred quickly on over the frozen road; for the day was cold, and it was evident that a gust of snow was fluttering up on the wind from the eastern hills.

The girl was in the first bloom of womanhood; a rich, dark brunette, with cheeks like the side of a September peach that has ripened next the sun, and eager, changing eyes that anticipated every smile upon her full lips, and gave to her face a piquant beauty quite indescribable. She sat her horse admirably, and her lithe form showed to advantage, in spite of the fur wrappings which the day demanded. With it all, there was something very un-English in her appearance, although she spoke the language with no perceptible accent.

The gentleman at her right hand bore sufficient resemblance to her to betray the relationship between them, but the brother's dark features had none of the brilliant color or expression which gave such life to her countenance. Although he joined in the conversation, and smiled frequently at his sister's lively sallies, he seemed naturally

a reserved, silent man; and there was something in the stern, black eyes, and about the firm mouth, which betokened a temper when once aroused.

Their companion was a man still young, twenty-seven perhaps, almost handsome at times, although the slightly Roman features looked somewhat cold and severe in repose. He was conversing gayly with the girl, and his eyes at times, fastened themselves up her face, with an expression which sent a riper color to her cheek, though a smile would tremble over her lips, in spite of every effort to prevent it.

"And you think I will like your sister?" she said, laughingly. "Really, if she is so sweet and charming as you say, I doubt if I am acting wisely in bringing Paul within her influence."

"My poor Hannah!" he replied, smiling and shaking his head. "She has no more idea of coquetry than a wood-pigeon."

"Oh, don't be too sure of that, sir," she interrupted. "Woman's nature is the same the world over, and I would wager my pet curl that, if the truth were known, you would find that even the most innocent and retired little pigeon has her own ideas about subjugating every pert young male within her reach."

"Is that the principle upon which Miss de Montreuil acts?" he asked, quickly.

"Oh, it is unjust to turn my argument against myself," she said, bravely, though the tell-tale color dyed her cheeks again. "It is only your quiet women that I distrust. I am never afraid of any other where Paul is concerned. Do you hear, brother?"

"Yes, yes," he replied, with a slight accent. "Haven't you learned, Arnold, that it is useless to contend with

Laura? When she finds herself worsted, she leaps clean beyond the argument, and brings up in a totally different quarter."

"It is beginning to snow!" exclaimed Miss de Montreuil, only noticing her brother's remark by a graceful shrug of the shoulders. "See there, Mr. Arnold, it is coming towards us quite rapidly."

"We are nearly through the woods now," he answered, "and there is a little town not far beyond, where we can rest if it snows too badly to go on."

"Better push ahead, massa," chimed in the old negro. "'Tain't gwine to be much snow; but afore mornin' dar'll be sleighin', or I misses my guess."

"Peter's lame arm is an unfailing barometer," said de Montreuil.

The old negro glanced down at the injured member with a puzzled look, as if doubtful what manner of thing that might be, saying, hesitatingly,—

"'Spect it are, Massa Paul; and it am achin' dolefull all this blessed mornin'. Dis barometer is mighty hard on a culled pusson when his wool b'gins to get white."

"Here we are out of the woods!" exclaimed Arnold, as they reached the brow of the hill, from whence the sloping fields betrayed considerable cultivation. "On a bright day, Miss de Montreuil, there is a fine view from this spot."

"But this is not exactly a June zephyr," said her brother.

"Oh, fie, Paul. You never did really appreciate the beautiful. I am sure that it must be very lovely."

"On a day like this it makes but little difference," persisted de Montreuil. "I can see no more pleasure in

freezing to death in the garden of Eden than in Nova Zembla."

"There is the tavern," said Arnold, pointing to a long log building at the foot of the descent.

"Is there a little hamlet there?"

"The customary blacksmith's shop and school-house. It would not be Connecticut, you know, without these."

"There is a crowd of men in the field back of the school-house," said de Montreuil. "Surely, they cannot be holding a patriotic meeting in this storm?"

"More likely a shooting-match. Remember, to-morrow will be Thanksgiving."

"Prime turkeys, I'se warrant," muttered old Peter, elevating himself in his stirrups. "Oh, golly! ain't it worth while?"

"I have heard so much of these matches," said Laura, "but have never had the good fortune to witness one."

"That comes of being shut up in a city all your life, Miss de Montreuil. See how sadly your education has been neglected!"

"I plead guilty, and lament my ignorance. Is there no way of remedying it now?"

"Oh, certainly. You can watch all the proceedings very comfortably from the tavern window. What do you say, de Montreuil? Shall we beg or hire a rifle and take a shot at the old gobbler?"

"Just as you please, *mon ami*. I should rather like to see the sport."

"I haven't tried my hand for years. I should be glad to know if I have lost my skill."

"After all," said Laura, "it seems rather cruel amusement."

Arnold's look expressed amused astonishment; then a

sneer, which she did not see, altered the lines of his mouth into an expression almost revolting,

"It may be," he replied; "but Connecticut youths are not trained to think so. Our fair saint will give us absolution if we follow the barbarous customs of those about us."

"Oh, I confess a desire to see the sport; but I don't half like it after all."

"Come on, then, where your curiosity can be gratified, and I'll warrant that you will forget your scruples."

A vigorous ride down the hill soon brought them to the little tavern, where they dismounted, and were ushered, with due ceremony, into the best room of which the house could boast.

The crowd in the field were not so busy with their preparations but that the strangers were duly remarked; and they proved themselves possessed of that laudable spirit of curiosity which has so fully developed itself in the descendants of our worthy Puritan fathers.

Old Peter went into the field to hire a rifle for his master, and a little group immediately gathered about him, plying the old servant with so many questions that he stood rolling his eyes about in open-mouthed and helpless amazement. But Peter's elocutionary powers were upon too grand a scale for him to be long crushed, even by overpowering numbers; and, recovering his speech, he poured forth such a voluble account of the glory of his master and all his family, past and present, that even Yankee curiosity could not well have craved any thing more satisfactory.

"And that 'ere's young Arnold with him?" asked a long, gaunt specimen, when the sable servitor paused for breath. "He used to live down to Norridge, and his folks is there yet, I reckon."

"And he and that French fellow want to try a hand at shootin' agin us, dew they?" asked another, bringing his rifle heavily upon the ground. "Wall, tell 'em to come on. I'll let 'em have my old soger cheap, though it ain't used to bein' hired out to furriners."

"And what dew they think of imports and taxations?" asked a stout old farmer. "The time's come when a man likes to know who he's a-neighborin' with."

"Oh, git out!" rejoined the first speaker. "Old Arnold's a riglar-true blue, and his son takes after him. I'll bet there hain't a drop o' tea wet their whistles since the last taxation."

"Arnold's got a darter, hain't he?" asked some one.

"Of course he has!" retorted the stout farmer. "Dew you think Jake Dennis would stand up for him so ef there wasn't a female in the case?"

"That's all yew know about it," grumbled the discomfited defender of Mr. Arnold's patriotism, when the laugh at his expense had ceased. "I guess you'd better finish your business, if you want any shootin' to-day, and leave me alone."

The hint was a timely one, and the crowd moved away from Peter and busied themselves about their concluding arrangements. The luckless fowls were taken out of the baskets, and flung, securely tied, upon the ground; and one fine old turkey gobbler, with his blood red crest quivering irefully, was selected as the first to be put up at the "mark."

Several men tried their skill, but proved unsuccessful, as it was only by hitting the turkey's head that the prize could be gained; and, as the indignant old gobbler was by no means inclined to keep his red crest erect and allow his enemies a fair shot, the task was by no means an easy one.

The discomfited men were greeted with shouts of laughter; for it is a peculiarity of human nature that we are more than usually delighted with other people's failures, when about running the same risk ourselves.

Jake Dennis proved the fortunate competitor, and then a variety of trials followed in quick succession. When the sport was at its height, Arnold and his friend came out of the tavern and crossed the field to the match-ground.

De Montreuil gazed about him with amused curiosity,—and to one unaccustomed to things of the sort, the scene was not devoid of interest. The animated looks of the crowd, the eagerness of the competitors, the ill-concealed chagrin of those defeated, and the self-complacency of the winners, were excessively amusing.

"Dew you want to try your hand?" asked the old farmer, of Arnold, after another fine turkey had been set up.

"If I may, certainly."

He took the rifle which the old man handed him, and lifting it with a sure aim, fired. The bird's head fell upon the snow several feet from the body. A shout of applause followed, for there had been no shot equal to it.

"There ain't no Tory blood in yew, I'll bet," said the old farmer. "Yew are the sort to be depended on."

Arnold looked at him keenly.

"You seem a true patriot," he said.

"I guess they'll find me one when the time comes."

Arnold placed in his hand the turkey he had won, and thanked him for the use of his rifle.

"Come, de Montreuil, as you won't try your skill, let us leave. Your sister will be tired of waiting. How it does snow. We shall be in the midst of a storm!"

"Where is Peter?" asked the Frenchman, when they had reached the tavern. "I declare the fool is going to take a shot, and he is as timid with a gun as an old woman."

The truth was, Peter had bragged and vaunted of his powers until he found himself in an unpleasant situation. Several slaves had followed their masters, armed with blunderbusses, shot-guns, horse-pistols, or any other species of fire-arms they could lay their hands upon, in the expectation of being allowed a share in the sport, towards the close. Now, one-bad tempered negro was an excellent marksman, and Peter had irritated him until it was decided that they must either fight it out, rough-and-tumble, or shoot against each other at a mark.

Affairs had reached a crisis. The belligerent negro threatened, and Peter showed the whites of his eyes in terror. His vaunting spirit had carried him farther than he intended. He looked about for his master,—who was too far off to protect him, nor did he show any disposition to interfere. He looked among the crowd: the matchers had ceased their sport to watch the coming fun.

"My massa wants me," stuttered Peter.

The tall negro extended a rifle in his left hand, and doubled up his ponderous right fist directly under Peter's rolling eyes.

"Yer kin take yer chise," he said, coolly. "Can't hev no city niggers a-flourishin' it over 'spectable culled pussons."

"Stand up to him, Jupe!" shouted the laughing crowd. "Don't let any strange darkies impose upon you."

"I ain't a strange darkey,—I ain't, no how; but was born and broughten up in these parts as well as the rest on yer,—now, who wants to 'pose upon him?" expostulated

Peter. "I'll meet him like a cullered purson ort ter meet anuder gemmen, but just now massa wants me."

"Can't help it," said Jupe, determinedly; "I wan't yer tew. Now, which is it to be, this blunderbuss, or a taste of this 'ere," and he brought his huge fist into dangerous proximity with his frightened opponent's nose, which was in all conscience flat enough by nature.

Peter trembled in his shoes. He glanced at the fist and at the rifle,—either was bad enough! He grabbed the rifle, shut his eyes, pulled the trigger, and fired. They had given him an unloaded gun, but it was all the same to Peter! He gave one bound, while the crowd were in convulsions of laughter, and started for the tavern, followed by a crowd of hooting boys.

So extreme was the poor fellow's terror that he dashed past his master, and flew into the room where Laura de Montreuil stood laughing as heartily as the others.

"Save me, missus," he screamed. "I'se killed a man, and now dey want ter hang me fur doin' on't."

With this pathetic appeal, Pete crowded himself under the settee, and it required half-an-hour's persuasion to get him out. Not till after he had been repeatedly assured that the crowd was dispersed and Jupe had gone home with his master, could he be induced to creep forth; and a pitiful-looking object he was when he came into the light. His portly carcass seemed really flattened, his snowy wool was specked with dust, and his neat riding-suit woefully soiled.

In pity to the poor darkey's terror they started as quickly as possible. Peter spoke never a word during a full hour; but when they came in sight of Norwich, his courage began to revive, and his vaunting spirit returned.

He rode close behind his master and whispered, confidentially.

"Massa Paul, 'spec that ar Jupe was wuss skeered than he made believe; but I'se glad I didn't kill him, anyhow."

The mirth with which this confidence was received excited Peter's displeasure. He snorted disdainfully, drew his horse back, and rode on in solemn silence, reserving all attempts at convincing himself and others of his bravery until a more auspicious period.

The hour in which one sits full-dressed to wait for company, is always a tedious one. Until that time, Mrs. Arnold had not really had time to feel of a certainty that her son was coming home. While there was any thing to embellish or arrange, she could ward off all impatience; but now the very rustle of her dress reminded her every instant that he was on the way to her. The heart in that gentle bosom beat and fluttered with yearning eagerness to behold him.

Hannah, too, was in a state of considerable excitement. She moved softly from seat to seat, smoothed her glossy hair before the looking-glass, and smiled to see how bright and blooming was the face reflected back upon her.

"I wonder if he will think me improved!" she thought. "The last time he came home, I remember he complained of my stooping. It was because we had just finished the the fall-weaving, and one gets a habit of stooping in the loom; but he won't find fault about that now. Hagar says I am as straight as an arrow. I wish my hands wasn't quite so brown and hard: he spoke about that, too; but then hard work will show itself, do what one will."

"Isn't that the sound of horses coming down the road, Hannah?" cried Mrs. Arnold, half rising.

"No, mother, I think not. It is father coming round the house in his heavy boots."

"No, no; I am sure,—I am sure he is coming."

How that motherly heart began to swell and beat! The glow of tenderness in her eye was beautiful to look upon.

"He is coming, Hannah. Hark!"

That moment the front-door opened, and a face, all tanned and weather-beaten with out-door work, looked in,—a strong earnest face, such as we seldom meet in these days. You would not have believed that such depth of affection could belong to the face; for, after all, it was but the ruins of great manly beauty that you looked upon.

"Wife! daughter! he is coming! Our son is in sight."

They started forward in a group, and, standing upon the door-stone, gazed eagerly along the road, regardless of the snow that fell softly around them, scattering their heads and garments with floating down.

A group of persons on horseback,—two men and a woman, with another dark figure lagging behind,—were coming, full-gallop, through the storm.

Yes, it was Arnold and his friends. They rode swiftly up to the gate. Both the young men dismounted, and Mrs. Arnold stood waiting, with heart in mouth, while her son deliberately lifted the young lady from her saddle. Then he came forward, looking pleased and happy. It was not in human nature to resist the love in that dear old face. Her arms were outstretched to receive him; glad tears flooded her meek eyes. She clung to his neck, lifted herself to a level with his face, and showered motherly kisses upon it, soft and loving as the snow-flakes

that fell around them. "Oh, Benedict! Benedict! my son!"

In uttering these words, full of ineffable tenderness, the little woman subsided into a soft rain of tears, and, turning her face to the strangers, begged pardon for loving her son so much. Then she looked encouragingly at her husband, who had shrunk away into the background, and stood there pale and troubled, as if afraid to show himself side-by-side with his wife.

The moment he was relieved from his mother's arms, Arnold cast a keen glance at his friends, anxious to see what effect her impulsiveness had made upon them.

Laura was smiling, but her eyes were full of tears, and a thrill of sympathy passed over her sensitive mouth as she met Arnold's glance. As for the brother, his handsome face was bright with feeling.

Hannah looked anxiously around on her father, but seeing that he hesitated, gave way to her glad impulse, and came forward, so bright and pretty that any brother might have been proud of her. Then the mist that had gathered over Paul's vision cleared away, a look of admiration beamed from his eyes, and when he saw Hannah's red lips upturned for her brother's kisses, it seemed to him that the careless fellow was gathering ripe fruit in the snow-storm, leaving him in the cold.

"Father! come, father!" pleaded Hannah, casting a yearning glance on the old man, who came forward very slowly, with a look of doubt and distress that filled the heart of his wife with pain.

Arnold held out his hand.

"Well, father, I am home again; but you do not seem well. You—you—"

The old man shook his son's hand in a hurried, ner-

vous way, and looked at his wife as if appealing for help.

"Your father has not been quite well. We are both growing old, you know," said the little woman, in a breathless, eager fashion, quite unusual to her. "Pray, invite your friends in. I am sure they are welcome."

For one instant a cloud lowered on Arnold's brow, but an effort swept it off, and with some cheerful words of welcome he led the way into the house.

CHAPTER III.

PREPARATIONS FOR THANKSGIVING.

THE family-supper was over, and the Arnolds were gathered about the wide fire-place in the best room, listening to the animated conversation of their son, and forming plans of amusement for his guests during the brief term of days which was to comprise their visit.

Hannah sat in her own little nook, beside her father, half retiring behind the shelter of his chair, divided between joy at her brother's return, and timidity at the sight of strangers. With all a woman's tact, Laura de Montreuil drew her into conversation, and, before she was conscious of the kind object, the young girl was chatting quite gayly, though she gave a little start and blushed every time Paul addressed her; for his foreign, deferential manner,—so different from the honest bluntness of the

young men who had occasionally visited at her father's house,—seemed quite princely.

Both Mr. Arnold and his wife were persons of much more than ordinary talent; and, in spite of the retired life which they had led for so many years, possessed a range of thought and habits of refinement beyond those of the neighbors about them. Both de Montreuil and his sister were struck with the simple dignity which characterized every act and remark. Hannah's loveliness and quaint originality atoned for any lack of worldly knowledge; and altogether young Arnold had no cause to fear that she would not do him full justice in the eyes of the visitors who had accompanied him home.

A sleigh-ride was decided upon for the next day, if the promise of snow held good; and altogether, after the first timidity wore off, Hannah decided that it was the pleasantest evening she had ever experienced, and went to bed with a happy flutter of the heart which left its flush on her cheek long after she fell into dreams.

While the evening passed on so cheerfully in the parlor, supper was under way in Hagar's domain; and a friendly interest in the new-comer there seemed to have proceeded even more rapidly than with the guests above stairs.

Peter was in his element,—relating marvellous stories of city-life, which quite took little Hagar's breath away, and startled even Dan's self-sufficiency.

But to-morrow would be Thanksgiving, and the important duties which devolved on Hagar soon aroused her from the pleasure of listening to the voluble Peter's ceaseless stories.

She rose briskly and left the supper-table, from which it was Dan's habit never to stir so long as any thing eat-

able remained upon it, and began bustling about, removing the dishes and putting things to rights generally.

"Gettin' late," said she, in her brisk way. "You Dan, thar's all them chickens to kill and pick, to say nothin' of the big gobbler, and that ar' suckin' pig what's waitin' impatient to have its throat cut."

Dan looked at her, rose from the table, and seated himself by the fire,—took from his pocket a short clay-pipe, a plug of tobacco, and his clasp-knife. This he opened with slow deliberation, and began gravely chipping up the fragrant weed and rolling it over and over in his palm, preparatory to settling himself for a quiet smoke.

Now, Hagar was one of the best of colored women, and took to Dan with all her soul; but the smartest housewives are not the most patient, and Dan's composure irritated little Hagar wonderfully.

"I say, you lazy nigger," she exclaimed, "you'd better not wait till ole missus comes out, afore you wring the necks of them ar' chickens,—'member, I tells ye."

"Hagar," said Dan, with a majestic wave of the hand which brandished the clasp-knife imposingly, "never re-trude domestic affairs upon company. That's a very 'portant rule that yer ort to follow."

"Miss Hagar has all the little derliceous whims of her charming sect," said Peter, determined not to be outdone in grandiloquence.

"Oh, laws!" said Hagar, tossing her head with a pleased giggle: "how you city gemmen does flatter!"

Dan was not pleased with the remark, and betrayed it by an excited sniff.

"It's nat'ral talent does it," said he: "it's not obligatory to have lived in a city. Your principal male asso-

ciations, Hagar, has always been of the most extinguished kind."

Hagar was tender-hearted. She felt the reproach in Dan's words and manner.

"I knows that," she replied; "and I ain't like Diany Perkins, that's ales cracked arter every new feller that comes to meetin'."

"It's the way of the fair sect," sighed Peter, with the air of a man who had thoroughly studied female nature in its different shades, from tawny cream-color to black,— "allers was, from Eve down to the fair Diany."

"Wal, I guess they ain't no wuss than the men," said Hagar, ready to do battle for her sex as any modern champion of female-rights could be.

"Man was made fust," said Dan, sententiously; "and consuquently he is more'n a notch above de fair sect: 'member, Hagar, woman was extricated from his rib."

"You needn't talk nonsense!" cried Hagar.

"Don't you believe what the minister preaches?" asked the horrified Dan.

"Don't want to hear no sich stuff," pursued Hagar, energetically. "Women was made on their own hook as much as the men. Don't tell me!"

"These are the objects for gemmen's adorableness," said Peter, blandly, remarking Dan's discomfiture.

"That's something like," cried Hagar.

"Didn't I allers say it?" asked Dan. "Isn't it my greatest felicitation to 'tend on you, Hagar? Hain't I watched the downfall of the snow with an anxious bussom, and rigged up the 'goose-net' a purpose?"

"Oh, dear!" said Hagar, in a flutter. "These men fustefy you so. Now, Dan, jest go at them chickens,—do!"

"In course," replied Dan: "your commands is mine. I make no doubt but Mr. Peter will be most felicitated to aid me in de 'quests of beauty."

Now, Peter would much have preferred his comfortable seat by the fire; but there was no resisting such an appeal, and he expressed his willingness in eloquent phrases.

"Set de big kettle over de fire, Hagar," said Dan, "and have de water bilin' to pick de chickens. I'll keep de pig till mornin', hung up 'gin de barn-door by a stick of kindling-wood run troo his hind-legs."

The two men went out to the barn to sacrifice the luckless fowls; and Hagar placed the kettle over the fire, half-full of water.

While she was awaiting the return of her fellow-servant and his companion, Hannah entered the kitchen, accompanied by Laura de Montreuil. Hagar received the stranger with her best little dot of a courtesy, and began an account of her preparations for the morrow, which was cut short by the frightened cacklings of the hens.

"They are killing those poor chickens," said Hannah. "I never can bear to hear their screams. Dear me! they are right in front of the window."

Laura de Montreuil went to the casement and looked out. Peter and Dan were standing in front of the barn-door, each holding a fluttering chicken. With a dexterous jerk of the hand the necks of the luckless fowls were dislocated in a breath, and they fell writhing and flapping their wings upon the snow, leaving red stains behind.

Hannah crouched back, and covered her face with both hands.

"You are nervous," said Miss de Montreuil.

"Oh, I never can look at them without a shudder! There they are bringing the poor turkey out to the log. See

how the light shines over it. I have fed and petted him till it seems almost as cruel as beheading a human being."

"It will not hurt him any the more because we are watching," said Laura, looking out of the window again.

It was a very clear night, the snow had ceased falling for a time, and she could watch their operations quite at her ease.

The unfortunate turkey was taken out of his coop, flapping his wings desperately, and gobbling with fright and rage. But Dan quite unconcernedly dragged him to the wood-pile, seized his scarlet crest, and held him down, while Peter, with a flourish of the axe, took his head clean off, and it rolled some distance from the domestic guillotine, bathing the snow with blood.

"What! actually pale!" said Laura, turning toward Hannah again. "You are not very courageous."

"I hate to see any thing killed. It seems as if the blow hurt me."

"What would you do if a war sprang up, and you saw men killed instead of chickens?"

"I couldn't. I should die. Could *you* see a man killed?—some one you had looked upon,—loved perhaps?"

"That would depend," replied Laura. "I can imagine circumstances when I could look on without a shudder. There are wrongs for which only death can atone, and for these a man ought to die. Such wrongs, sometimes, spring only from the man one has loved."

Her eyes flashed dangerously. She looked, for the moment, like a woman who would indeed, if necessary, take revenge into her hands, and follow it up relentlessly to the end.

Hannah was troubled by her words. Laura saw the effect they had produced, and added, with a gay laugh,

"It is not probable that either of us will be called upon to help in bloodshed. So pray don't shiver so."

"You could not do it," said Hannah; "I know you could not."

"Well, never mind! I was only jesting. You had some order to give your woman, I think."

Hannah repeated her mother's directions to Hagar, and they went into the parlor again; but the sight of the poor chickens had quite destroyed Hannah's light-heartedness.

However, the bright, clear morning which succeeded was enough to cheer the most heavily-burdened spirit, and Hannah was down in the kitchen at daylight, flying about as briskly as a humming-bird.

After breakfast was well out of the way, there were preparations to make for church. De Montreuil and his sister were both amused and interested by the extreme importance attached to the day, and the odd manner in which it was celebrated in those primitive times.

When Hannah came down arrayed in her new scarlet cloak and dark-green dress, it would have been difficult to find a prettier picture than she made. Laura nodded approval to the admiration which she saw sparkling in her brother's eyes, and greeted the lovely girl with a cordial compliment.

The church, or rather meeting-house, at which the principal congregation of Norwich worshiped in those days was a vast, wooden structure, almost square, with great barn-like doors on three sides, and a pulpit, composed of wood enough to build a modern cottage, looming up at the end. Over this pulpit a wooden canopy, or sounding-board, brooded like some mighty extinguisher; and beneath it, along the broad front, ran a long, bare pew, in which the deacons sat, grim and solemn, like a bench of judges.

The house was surrounded, except where the pulpit forbade it, by a long, lumbering gallery, and the body, cut into four sections by broad aisles, was crowded with square pews, so that a large portion of the congregation sat with its back to the pulpit.

Into this structure, the people of Norwich crowded on that cold thanksgiving-day. It was not altogether an ordinance of God, but an extra occasion, got up by the governor. So it was not considered indecorous to smile blandly on entering the sanctuary; and a few had ventured to kiss their wives and children, in a congratulatory way before starting, without dread of a fine.

A cheerful, happy people gathered in the meeting-house on that thanksgiving-morning, and among the gayest came young Arnold, with his dainty little mother leading the way, while he walked proudly side by side with the young French lady, whose sumptuous apparel and rich brunette beauty filled the waiting crowd with admiration. After her brother came Hannah, blushing consciously as she walked a little apart from Paul, whose quiet indifference to the crowd of curious eyes turned upon him filled her with amazement. This family group arranged themselves on the crimson cushions of a pew near the intersecting aisles, and, after a momentary flutter, the congregation settled into devotional quiet.

At last came the minister, pacing up the aisle with a slow, gentle tread, and looking benignly around upon the people who were in honest truth his spiritual children. He moved gravely up the pulpit-stairs, appeared for a moment standing high in air, swallowed, up to the shoulders, in the great pulpit, and then disappeared from view altogether. He was kneeling in meekness of heart back in the pulpit, asking aid of the God whose servant he was.

At last a thanksgiving-hymn rose and swelled through the building, followed by a long, long prayer and longer sermon with its divisions and sub-divisions, all grandly solemn and imposing.

All through the long discourse, de Montreuil's attention was more devoted to the charming girl opposite to him, than to the good pastor's sermon; but Arnold looked neither to the right nor the left, though there was that in his face which, to a keen observer, would have betrayed thoughts little in unison with the sacredness of the scene around.

Indeed, all the evening before, his manner had been singular, and Laura de Montreuil was almost irritated by the mixture of admiration and indifference which he exhibited. It did not seem studied, although if well acquainted with the nature of the woman with whom he had to deal, he could not have adopted a course more likely to interest her feelings; but it appeared rather as if he struggled with perplexing thoughts, from which he aroused himself with difficulty.

After the morning-service was over, there came one of the grand dinners for which Connecticut has attained a world-wide celebrity,—and Mrs. Arnold yielded the palm to no housekeeper within her parish. Upon that particular day, the presence of her son and strange guests naturally stimulated her to higher efforts than usual. The most fastidious epicure in the world would have been obliged to confess that the repast was the most perfect of its kind.

Hagar declared that no such turkey could be found within the neighborhood of Norwich; and as for the pig, "He was a reg'lar pictur with a lemon stuck in his mouth, and his tail curled up behind, and them dear little feet

huddled up under him as he lay in his bed of green parsley."

After dinner Mrs. Arnold went to meeting again, leaving the young people to their amusements.

The sleigh-ride had been determined upon, and by half-past one the double sleigh dashed up to the door, well filled with buffalo robes. The bells, shining from the effect of Hagar's scouring, ginged so merrily that they would have softened the heart of the sternest old Puritan that came over in the Mayflower.

"Oh, this is delightful!" exclaimed Laura. "I must sit by you, Mr. Arnold, for I am dying to drive. Paul can take care of Miss Hannah. Hurry, everybody! I am crazy to be off."

That was a sleigh-ride to be remembered! The day was wonderfully bright, the spirits of at least three of the party unusually high; and whatever anxiety disturbed Arnold he had completely concealed it, appearing almost reckless from contrast with his manner in the morning.

The bells rung out like a whole flock of summer birds; the snow flew like showers of seed pearls; the sun lit up the white wreaths that had lodged upon the forest-trees, and flashed on brooklets that seemed ensnared by a net-work of jewels. On the merry party flew, over hill and plain, finding pleasure in every thing about them, and ready to decide that it was altogether the pleasantest day they had ever spent.

"You see, Miss Laura," said Arnold, "that some pleasures are to be found in the country."

"A man is idiotic who lives anywhere else," cried de Montreuil, before his sister could answer. "I have seen more loveliness in our short stay here than in my whole life before," he added, with a glance at Hannah, that made

her cheeks glow till they rivaled the cherry trimmings of her hood.

There was no cloud to mar their enjoyment until they had nearly reached home. They had taken a long sweep of the snow-clad country, and came out near the Yantic Falls, which drifted and flashed through its embankments, covered with snow-laden trees like a rush of embodied sunlight. Miss de Montreuil pointed to a log-house which stood across the road from the saw-mill they were passing.

"That cabin looks very picturesque with the saw-mill opposite it," she said. "Who lives there?"

Arnold's hand grasped the whip more tightly, and his face turned away as he answered,

"A Mr. Leonard,—or did, at least."

"Oh, brother, I forgot to tell you," said Hannah. "Amy is not well. She looks so pale and thin,—I noticed her at meeting. She never goes out of the house hardly. I do believe she is going into the consumption."

Arnold made some trifling reply, but again there passed over his features the same anxious look, that settled at last into a hard, cruel expression that changed his whole face. But no one remarked it, save Hannah. She fell into thought and looked anxious during the rest of the ride.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DOUBLE SLEIGH AND THE GOOSE-NEST.

HAGAR's own private dreams of amusement are not to be forgotten, you may be assured. After the bells had been thoroughly scoured, the furs mended, and he had got all the work possible out of her, Dan never once referred to the promised sleigh-ride.

However, Hagar was not a woman to be trifled with after that fashion. She might bear a great deal, and be easily persuaded into doing half her companion's labor; but that sleigh-ride was a thing the little woman had set her heart upon, and have it she would.

The night before thanksgiving, she reminded Dan of his promise, but his attention was occupied with other things; and it was not until she repeated her interrogatories very sharply that he heard at all.

"I say, you Dan, is that ar' goose-nest ready?"

"In course it am, Hagar. This gemmen neber forgets his word."

"So much de better," said Hagar, sniffing.

"Mr. Peter, I 'spects we kin show you sleigh-ridin' dat'll be hard to beat, down in York, if cullered pussons do own their horses and sleighs, as ye tells me."

The gallant Peter answered that he knew of one lubly cullered pusson ob de fair sect as did not need to own a hoss and cutter to make her killinger dan all de York gals put

togedder. At which Hagar resolved to have that sleigh-ride out of Dan, or make him suffer for it.

The next morning she spoke of it again; and Peter, never having seen a "goose-nest," asked for a sight of it.

Dan winked and screwed up his face in vain. There was no getting rid of the request, and, like an able general, he put the boldest face possible upon the matter.

"Sartin, Mr. Peter; do yerself de trouble to step out back of de barn," he said, with a majestic wave of the hand, and flourished himself out of the room, quite ready to be surprised at the disappearance of a "goose-nest," which had not existed for the last three years.

In a few moments the pair returned to the kitchen, where Hagar was awaiting Peter's opinion of the nest. She was startled by a volley of exclamations from Dan, who entered like a man perfectly furious; and Peter followed, looking even more stupid than usual.

"De laws sake!" screamed Hagar. "Hev you seen a ghost thanksgiving mornin', Dan?"

"It's gone!" gasped he. "Quite gone!"

"What, de ghost? Oh, you didn't see one! 'Taint true! Oh! massy's sake, whar's my missus? Ketch hold of me, somebody, I'm a gwine to faint! Was it railly a ghost, Dan?"

"I say it's gone!" he exclaimed, with great emphasis.

"De ghost?"

"No, de 'goose-nest,' you fool. Who's a-talking 'bout a ghost?"

Hagar came out of her spasm of fright, but she went off in a convulsion of rage, the like of which Dan had several times witnessed, and never failed to tremble before.

"Gone!" she repeated, scornfully. "Gone! Don't tell me!

Oh, you lazy wampire, you ontruthful smut-ball!" changing rapidly to hoarse tones of indignation. "It never was thar, you awdasheous liar you! And if it is gone, you'd better go arter it; for I'll make dis ere kitchen too hot to hold ye, see if I don't!"

"Why, Hagar, Hagar!" expostulated Dan, retreating as fast as she advanced. "Don't be so corniptious! 'Taint my fault: somebody's stole it. I seed it thar back of de barn on de top of de hen-house wid my own eyes, afore I went to bed, and so did Mr. Peter. Didn't you?" he added, with an appealing look at that personage.

"Leastwise I heerd you remark that thar was its rest-in'-place," said Peter.

"Thar now, you see, Hagar! Don't be obstropolous! A gemmen can't help what ain't his fault," pleaded Dan.

"Don't tell me!" shouted the infuriated little woman. "I'll be even wid yer, yes I will! Wait till de dinner comes! How much of dat turkey do yer tink yer'll get? I know dat turkey's gwine to get lost 'tween de out-room and kitchen, jest like yer goose-nest did. You'll see,—only wait. Dis isn't gwine to end here,—you jest wait!"

Dan was touched upon his tenderest point. A beating even with Hagar's broomstick he might have endured, but the thought of losing his dinner was agony. It was certainly important that he should mollify Hagar, for he knew that she was quite capable of keeping her word.

"Do wait momentary," he said; "don't be kitin' at a pusson so, Hagar! Le's see. Dar's de sleigh. Dey's goin' out in dat! But dar's the cutter——"

"Wal?" asked Hagar, impatiently; "wal?"

"But massa lent dat to Miss Peasely dis blessed mornin'."

Hagar made a rush at him, but Dan retired behind Peter for protection.

"Don't, now don't?" he cried. "Oh, I kin fix it! Clar up, Hagar, clar up. I've got it! Thar's an old crockery crate up in the loft,—thar's plenty of straw. I'll cut a couple of poles for runners, and rig it up in no time."

"Do it now," said Hagar, "or yer'll git no dinner. 'Pend on dat."

"In course, Hagar, but yer'd ort to be more 'scrump-tious afore strangers. That ar' goose-nest was ready to receive yer lubly form,—it raily was."

Hagar showed symptoms of reawakening ire.

"Wal, wal, neber mind. I'se gwine to fix another,—thar, thar!"

Dan retreated, and for once really was compelled to work in earnest. He brought down the old crockery-crate, in which the hens had built their nests for a good twelve months, tore open bundles of rye-straw, and twisted it into ropes, which were interwoven, basket-wise, through the wood of the crate till the goose-nest began to take promising form. But when half through his work, Dan grew tired, and sat down on the edge to ruminate, dragging the straw rope loosely in his hands. "That is no use," he muttered. "Why can't a pusson hab him own fun widout workey, workey, workey foreber. How I'se jes tuckered out a-tryin' ter please that gal as ain't gwin ter be pleased, do what I will. I'se jis a good min' ter give it all up, I has, and cut over ter town. Golly, wouldn't she be mad. Ki! I'se a mind ter do it."

"Dan, I say yer Dan, am dat nest 'bout built." cried a sharp voice from the house.

Dan started to his work instantaneously

"Dar it am, yer,—golly, dar ain't no rest for dis nigger when she's 'bout. She takes a fellar right and lef, she does. Darn her."

A rustle in the straw, and Hagar's black head peered over.

"What am that you'se sayin'?"

"Oh, nothin', Hagar. I'se only throwin' in a little chunk of a prayer, wid de work and kinder askin' help 'bout dis ere goose-nest, dat it may be wordy ob its lubly burden when de fairest ob her sect gits inter it. Hope yer 'scuse me."

Hagar waded-knee deep through the straw and came out close by Dan. Her black face beamed all over when she saw the progress of his work.

"Why Dan, Dan, yer blessed nigger, yer. If it ain't enamost done. Here, chile. I'se been fryin' doughnuts and ab broughten yer some hot in my apron; 'sides dat, I'se got a mug ob ginger an cider by de fire, ready for de hot tongs de minit yer done."

"Oh, Hagar!"

"Dar, Dan. Work 'way! work 'way! I'll go in an git de tongs red hot. Won't de cider sizzle?"

Dan set to work with a will. The "goose-nest" was rigged, but, owing to his haste, by no means with the care requisite. The wisps of straw were not firmly tied, and the runners were put on in a very unworkmanlike style. Altogether, it was a deceptive thing, quite worthy of its originator. But, nevertheless, it was ready; and, towards the middle of the afternoon, they decided to start.

Dan brought out a broken string of bells from the loft, remarking that "thar was music in 'em yet." Mrs. Arnold furnished the colored party with quilts, and every thing was made as comfortable as circumstances permitted.

It was decided to drive round for Hagar's friend, Miss Dinah, and afterwards they were to take the road over the hill, as that promised the best sleighing

Hagar arrayed herself in her best cam-colored petticoat, and madder-red short-gown. The dark hood was lined with yellow, and her tresses were dexterously divided into innumerable little plaits, each tied with an end of red ribbon, and floating about her face in the most picturesque manner.

"As lubly as de mornin'," said Dan, when she appeared at the kitchen-door, ready to start, and Peter echoed the opinion.

Hagar was only a woman, after all, and these compliments quite restored her good humor. The two gallants assisted her over the side of the crate, and deposited her in the snugest corner of the improvised vehicle.

According to promise, Dan brought forth a hot brick, neatly folded in red flannel, which he placed at her feet, observing that "they were lubly as two chestnuts in a bur." Then, tucking the patch-work quilts around her, he waved his hand majestically for Peter to climb over the side, and followed him, holding whip and rein in one hand, while he clung to the nest desperately with the other. Settling down in front, he began to shake the reins, chirruping at the old horse, till he started off at a respectable trot, the broken string of bells sending forth asthmatic jingles, and snow-balls flying in all directions.

They reached the dwelling of Miss Dinah without the slightest misadventure. That sable damsel was at leisure for the rest of the day, and received their proposal with the utmost delight.

She soon came out, entirely ready; and then the question arose where she was to sit. The "goose-nest" was not over capacious, and it was quite a puzzle where this extra weight was to be deposited.

Now, Hagar and Dinah were the best possible friends,

—sharp speeches and backbiting counting for nothing just there. Indeed, they were very like other women, whatever their color may be,—but Dinah had various little flirting ways, of which her friend by no means approved, and never failed to check by any means in her power.

"And whar am I to seat myself?" asked Dinah, with vivacious elegance.

"Take my place, and I'll set in yer lap," said Hagar.

"Oh, my!" giggled Dinah, "why you'd quite quash me, Hagar! What funny little countryfied ways you hev! I'm sure dis city gemman isn't recustomed to dat way o' doin' tings."

"Oh, ob course not," said Peter. "De ladies must set in de gemmen's laps, on sech 'casions as dis. It am de berry last fashion."

"Thar!" said Dinah: "do you hear, Hagar? Come, Mr. Dan, are ye goin' to let a lady go a-beggin' for a seat?"

Her intention was quite too manifest, and Hagar would by no means submit to that sort of thing.

"Ef yer must set on a gemman's lap," she said, "take Mr. Peter's, for it'll be as much as Dan kin do to keep de ole hoss straight in de rode. Pete's rayther oldish, and good for nothin' else but holdin' critters that can't get along out ob somebody's lap. Thar!"

There was no appeal from Hagar's decision, and Dinah resigned herself to it with as much grace as possible.

"My arms is quite at de service of de fair," said Peter, gallantly extending the aforesaid members, into which Dinah sank with a deprecating grace that was quite wonderful, casting a glance at Dan from under her drooping eye-lashes, which that sable Romeo was too wise—arrant flirt though he was—to think of returning. Hagar's sharp

eyes were fixed upon him, and there was enough lustre left flashing up from her recent passion to make him extremely careful how he irritated her again that day.

They drove off quite merrily, for Hagar was, after all, the best little woman in the world, and Dinah was quite welcome to exert all her powers of fascination upon the stranger, so that she did not poach over Hagar's manor. They laughed and they chatted quite as gayly as their betters, and Hagar looked over towards Dan almost as lovingly as Dinah could have done, had she been free to act up to her most tender impulses.

But that insecure darkey was not easy in his soul, although he only betrayed it by an unusual number of grins, and it was more effectually concealed than many a philosopher could have managed to hide his anxieties. The truth was, soon after they started for the last time, that "goose-nest" began to wriggle about in the most unexampled manner, and sundry qualms, at least of fear, if not of conscience, seized Dan, as he remembered the hasty manner in which it had been thrown together. But the rest were buoyant with heartfelt gayety; and, as Dan only laughed the louder the more anxious he grew, their merriment was something comical to witness.

They passed the village with a dash, and glided along grandly for some distance; but, suddenly, Dan felt the "goose-nest" totter still more unsteadily upon its foundation. Hagar noticed it, for she was a true daughter of Eve,—always inquiring into things which were much better left alone.

"Dan," she exclaimed, "isn't der suthin' out of kilter 'bout dis 'ere 'goose-nest?'"

"The vehicule is as safe as the chariot of Potiphar,"

returned Dan. "Don't be a bit uneasy, Hagar, fur one yer can trust in holds de lines!"

Hagar was quieted for a few moments; but as they approached the foot of a hill, the old horse took it upon himself to start off in a sort of halting gallop, as lazy horses are apt to do at the beginning of a steep ascent, as if in desperation at the idea of being forced to mount it. The "goose-nest" twisted about more and more. Hagar was flung into Dinah's arms, and Dan precipitated, head-foremost, on the top of the whole party, his leg sticking up, like the crowning ornament to a pyramid. There was a united shriek of consternation; but the cutter was righted, each individual shook him or herself into place, and the general composure was in a measure restored.

Suddenly, the sound of bells attracted their attention: the sleigh containing the young Arnolds and their guests was coming down the hill on its road home.

"Dar's young massa," exclaimed Dan. "Now ye'll see how I'll parse by in fine style."

He shouted to the old horse. The willing animal gave a bound forward, the runners hit against a stump with a force which freed them completely from the crate, and away went the horse and poles at full speed up the hill. The "goose-nest" gave a lurch, upsetting Dan in the snow-bank, with his legs uppermost, like a dancing Dervish; then performed a series of gyrations down the hill, gradually depositing its occupants in the most unexpected postures behind.

Peter and Dinah clung fast together, and were thrown on to the top of a rail-fence, against which the snow had banked itself, and there they remained, like two rare Ethiopian birds set up for a mark. Hagar clung to the "goose-nest" with both hands, screaming hard at every

rebound. One of the sticks of the crate held fast to her dress, and away they went,—bump! clatter! bump! Now the crate was uppermost, now Hagar. The sticks rattled hoarsely against the stumps, and the little woman gave out hoarse yells in concert. Just as they reached the foot of the hill the crate gave a jump backwards, and falling over Hagar, pinned her fast to the earth. Her shrieks were alarming. Dinah chimed in with shrill screams, though Peter, the sly old fox, surreptitiously attempted to stop her mouth, which he accomplished only once; for Dinah fought gloriously, and grasping a handful of snow dashed it in his face, rubbing it in till a little water-spout meandered down his perfidious bosom. Hagar saw this extraordinary spectacle through the lattice-work of her prison, and shouted out:

“Gib it to ’im, Dinah! pummel him good,—pitch de snow down ’im throat. Larn dat city nigger de time o’ day! hi!”

Dan saw nothing of this. His head was so deep in the drift that he was nearing the unreported regions in the most unexpected manner, when Arnold stopped his horse, and, springing out of his sleigh, extricated him from his unfortunate plight.

Hagar was the next victim to be rescued; and they lifted the crockery-crate from off her and assisted her to rise.

Poor Hagar! she was a sorry sight! Her holiday attire was a perfect wreck,—her ribbon-tied wool fluttering about in the most disconsolate manner. But all this ruin was nothing in comparison to the state of feeling into which she had been thrown by the catastrophe.

She gave three separate shrieks of misery and affright; then contending emotions gave way in a burst of overpowering rage. She flew at Dan like a wild cat, but he

fortunately saw her in time. Still panting from his struggles in the snow, away he ran towards the horse, and Hagar after him, both yelling at every step with an energy which was truly appalling.

Dinah was at last induced to loose her hold of Peter’s wool, and the two came to their senses sufficiently to quit the fence, and trust themselves to earth again. They trotted on murmuringly after the sleigh, and all reached the gate in time to see Dan sink breathless on the kitchen steps.

“I’ll show yer! I’ll give yer ‘goose-nest!’ yer—yer ole smut-ball!” was bursting from Hagar’s irate lips; but when she saw the miserable humility of her Adonis, the kind heart in her bosom melted, and she passed him with a sniff, only muttering:

“Yer call yersef a gemman! Build anudder ‘goose-nest,’ now do.”

Dan made no answer, but imprisoned himself in the cellar-way for a little time; but finding that cold, he went off disconsolately to the barn and hid himself in the hay-mow.

Hannah prepared the tea, but as soon as it was over, and the merriment consequent upon the late adventure had subsided, young Arnold made a plea of urgent business, and left the house.

CHAPTER V.

ARNOLD'S VISIT TO LEONARD'S CABIN—THE SAW-MILL AT NIGHT—THE HEART-WOUND.

IN the woods upon the hill that rose some distance beyond Mr. Arnold's house, stood two log houses that we have before mentioned. One of them was built quite near the road cut through the forest; and in front of it, on the bank of the river, the rough saw-mill sent up its grating music day after day, chiming in with the roar of the waters as they leaped down over a precipice that formed a natural fall above.

But on thanksgiving, all was silent save the voice of the waves sending up their perpetual hymn in the depths of the grand old woods. Within the log house there had been the usual preparations for the holiday which no moral Connecticut family, however poor, could by any possibility neglect. Not that Joshua Leonard was any worse off in the world than many of his neighbors, although he still lived in the log cabin with two rooms which he had built when he first married; but the good man counted his savings with the utmost care. He wished for no "new-fangled fixings,"—not he. "Framed houses and boughten furniture" were objects of his supreme contempt; and though his wife had for years droned out her little complaints at the superior style in which many of their neighbors lived, she was too inert to combat her husband's close habits successfully.

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They had but one child,—a daughter just grown into early womanhood,—and as pretty a wild-wood blossom as could have been found in the whole neighborhood.

All that day, Amy Leonard had been in a state of unwonted excitement. While dressing for "meeting" that morning, it seemed as if the blue short-gown would never be arranged to her satisfaction; and she was so long in putting on her cloak, that the farmer threatened to drive off the ox-sled without her. During the minister's long discourse she was strangely inattentive, sitting with her eyes fixed upon the floor, or stealing glances towards the pew where Mr. Arnold's family were seated.

After they returned home she was even more quiet than usual, and several times during the dinner her father chided her for her silence. At such moments she would rouse herself into cheerfulness; but the instant she felt herself unnoticed, an anxious look crept over her face really pitiful to behold.

When the merry jingle of sleigh-bells attracted her attention, and she saw that gay, young party go dashing by, she stood watching them till they were out of sight; she then crept down by the kitchen fire, and sat for a long time looking into it with dreary thoughtfulness.

As evening came on, she started at every sound, like one in expectation of a summons. Every time a tree-bough creaked, she sat breathlessly listening, as if for a familiar step. Mr. Leonard was reading the Bible, and his wife dozing in her chair, so that, as usual, she was unheeded.

It was eight o'clock,—quite bedtime in those primitive days,—and the old gentleman began to make preparations for the night.

Suddenly, there came in truth a knock at the door, which

made Amy start to her feet, then crouch down again completely overcome with excitement, and sit still with her eyes upon the door.

"Who on airth is that?" exclaimed the old lady, startled out of her nap.

"I guess Amy knows," replied the farmer. "Come in," he added, in a louder voice. "'Taint worth while to stand for ceremony."

The door opened in obedience to his invitation, and young Arnold entered the room.

"Hello!" exclaimed Mr. Leonard. "I thought I saw you to meetin. How *do* you do? Why, mother, can't you wake up and see who has come?"

"Why, sakes alive, ef it ain't Mr. Arnold's Ben," said the old lady, rousing herself effectually from her nap as the young man shook her hand. "Joshua said he was sure he saw you to meetin; but I can't see an inch from my nose. Folks a-staying with you, too, I heerd,—do tell! Who be they now?—city friends o' yourn, I reckon! Amy, can't you get a chair for a body when they drop in?"

All these remarks were delivered without a pause for breath, and while Arnold had turned to greet the young girl. Amy was deadly pale when he took her hand. Her lips worked tremulously, and her eyes were raised to his face with a language more expressive than any words could have been.

She sank back into her chair, and Arnold seated himself with his face towards the old couple, purposely or by accident, screening her completely from their view.

"So you've come hum agin," pursued the old lady, who was rarely silent, and whose conversation was always delivered in a sleepy manner that admitted of no variation, and without the slightest regard for periods. "'Spose

you've got mighty stuck-up notions there in the city. Time Amy went to visit her cousin,—'twasn't only her second cousin, anyhow, maybe third, for that matter, but we've allers called her cousin, she 'twas, Sally Wetherby,—she came back with so many flamin' new idees that I raily thought the critter'd drive me out of my mind. It's jest the same with young folks everywhere: it's only by living that we larn. And so you've got a sight of company to your house! Guess your mother don't thank you fur bringin' her more work,—that's what she got her house fixed up fur, I reckon! Wal, I tell Joshua, it's queer how other folks can have things as they ort to be, and we keep on in the same old way,—not that I'm givin' to grumble, but a body likes to feel as good as other folks. But 'tain't no kind o' use to talk to Joshua,—never was, and never will be; and there's Amy as like him as two peas, unless 'tis that her chin is like my folkses, but I never was no hand at seein' likenesses, though a good many is——"

"Wal, there, mother," interrupted her husband, "do hold on a minit! She's jest like a clock: wind her up and she'll go till she runs down,—the same old two-and-six-pence."

"That's allers the way I'm treated in my own house," said the old lady, not plaintively, not even fretfully, but droning away as before. "I ain't nobody here, never was. Sich a difference in men folks! There's Mr. Arnold treats his wife like a born queen; but I'm no 'count' Joshua never held that I was, though a good many folks is different; but I ain't one to grumble as everybody knows; but I dew say Miss Arnold is the fortunatest woman,—and there's Hannah, fresh as an apple-blossom. But just look at our Amy. What ails *her* I don't know. Goin' to visit her cousin so much,—she 'twas, Sally Weth-

erby, as I told you, though you know'd it afore: many a time she's slapped you when you was a little feller, and she as high-tempered a critter as you'd find anywhere,—and goin' to see her hain't done Amy no good. She's a notion of readin', too; and that I never will believe in, anyhow!"

"Come, mother," said Mr. Leonard, "you and I'll go to-bed. I guess the young folks don't need us. There's more pine-knots in the corner, Arnold. Come along, Jimmy."

He lit a "dip" candle, fairly forced the old lady into the other apartment, which was used as their bed-room, and the youthful couple were left alone.

The girl was trembling all over from the agitation which she had struggled so hard to repress during the past half-hour.

"Amy," whispered Arnold, in a low voice, that went to the inmost depths of her heart, "Amy!"

He bent forward and drew her towards his chair. She half-knelt before him, and hid her face upon his shoulder with a flow of tears that could no longer be restrained.

"Crying!" he said, "how is this, Amy? Look up—there, there, what a nervous little thing!" He lifted her face and pressed his lips upon her forehead. "Don't cry any more, or I shall think that you are not glad to see me."

"The day has been so long—I thought you did not mean to come," she murmured, wiping the tears from her eyes, and forcing back the sob which rose to her lips. "I have waited three whole months for this meeting, and to-day has seemed longer than the whole time before."

"I could not come until this evening; you must remem-

ber. It is a year since I had seen my mother, and she will scarcely let me out of her sight now."

"She did let you go to-day, it seems!" exclaimed Amy, excitedly. "Oh, I saw you driving by without even a look towards the house; at church it was the same thing not a glance for me."

"Hush! hush!" he said. "Your father will hear you."

"Sometimes I don't care," she returned, with an energy foreign to her character. "I would like to die! There have been days when it seemed that I should go mad if I could not get out of these dreary woods and find you again."

"Come out and walk," whispered Arnold. "They are asleep in the other room, and we shall disturb them."

Amy threw a heavy cloak drearily about her, and followed Arnold cautious footsteps out-of-doors. She went passively, as she would have obeyed him had he bidden her go forth from that forest-home never to return.

It was a glorious night,—the moon at its full, and not a cloud in the sky. There was no wind, but the air was very cold, and the low shivering of the pine-trees above them sounded like distant voices talking of pain. The rush of the river was strangely distinct, and to Amy's fancy it sounded like a weird warning that she could not understand, but which made her tremble with a vague sense of approaching ill.

He drew her arm into his, and led her down the bank to the old saw-mill.

"We are sheltered from the wind here," he said, as they sat down upon the carriage on which the logs were placed.

"How strangely your voice sounds to-night, Arnold!"

"You are fanciful and nervous, Amy. I believe you

read too many story-books. I shall not send you any more."

"Who are those strangers at your house?" she asked, abruptly.

"Old friends of mine. I brought them here because the gentleman wishes to buy land, and my father has some to dispose of."

"And the lady?"

"She naturally accompanied her brother."

"Oh yes, I understand! I know very well who it is,—Miss Laura de Montreuil. I saw her driving by one day when I was in New Haven."

"She lives in New York."

"That makes no difference. She was pointed out to me as a great heiress."

"Are you sure of that?" Arnold asked, carelessly, but it was in truth a question which greatly interested him.

"Very sure! Oh, I see it all. She has money, and you, with all the world, will be at her feet! Oh, Arnold, Arnold," she added, with sudden passion, "is this keeping your word? Is this what you promised when you induced me to deceive my parents,—to take upon myself a load of deception that wears my life away?"

"Would you be freed from it?" he asked, almost brutally.

"Oh, any thing, to feel the light-hearted girl I was once."

"There is no reason why you should not."

"You mock me," she said, with sad reproach. "Perhaps I deserve it! But oh, Arnold, you do not know what I have suffered since we parted! The secret wedding,—that return to my old home to feel myself so changed,—unable to speak freely with any! It has been dreadful!"

"Why, Amy, are you resolved to keep up that silly farce, when we are alone too? Come, come: a jest is a jest."

"Jest!—a jest! What do you mean?"

"You have no real claim on me: you know what I mean well enough, child; and know, too, that I will admit of none."

She rose to her feet, and looked full in his face with a wild passion that was like insanity.

"God help me! I have been mad indeed!" She pressed her hands to her forehead like one trying to remember. "You," she cried, dashing aside her hands and confronting him firmly, "you have some end in view. We were married. When I went to New Haven you used to meet me everywhere: on my way to the school where my cousin sent me,—in the evening at her house. You told me that you loved me, and you did—oh, you did! You begged me to consent to that secret wedding that you might be sure I indeed belonged to you."

"It was no marriage, Amy."

"It was! It was! I am your wife."

There was an agony of entreaty in her voice that was heart-rending; but Arnold's resolution was taken, and an effigy of stone could not have been colder or more immovable.

"I tell you no, Amy. You have no claim on me,—none in the world."

She neither wept nor moaned. She stood before him, gazing in his face, without the power to turn away her eyes. His audacious composure fascinated her.

"And you do not love me?" she said, in a hollow voice.

"You came here to tell me that?"

"I do love you, Amy: indeed I do!"

"But you had some reason for coming with that false-

hood on your lips! Tell me at once that you do not love me. It is better. I shall struggle till you do that."

"I do, Amy! Circumstances may part us; but, believe me, you are very dear to me still,—very dear."

"Are you going away forever?" she gasped; "going——" Her voice broke, she seemed choking.

"I cannot tell. No man can tell what is to come."

"Are you going to leave me? Will you never claim me of my father?"

"You are not the person to question me so."

"I am! In the sight of heaven, I am! Are you going away? Answer me."

"Very soon. And it may be years before I return."

She uttered no word, but her strength suddenly gave way, and she slid to his feet and fell motionless upon the icy boards.

He raised her in his arms and bore her toward the house.

"It is better so," he muttered. "To-morrow I shall be away. Better so."

He made no effort to revive her, but carried her to the house, entered it gently, and placed her upon a chair near the fire. He stood a moment, looking down upon that sweet, pale face. It was quiet now. The large eyes, bright with pain a moment before, were closed under their cold lids, and she looked painfully death-like.

He stooped down as if to kiss her; but the attempt seemed sacrilegious even to him; and, leaving only a gust of sinful breath on her forehead, he turned away,—heavy hearted it may be, but resolute still.

How long Amy Leonard remained insensible she never knew. When consciousness came back she was alone in that darkened room. The fire had burned down, and the quivering embers only sent up transient gleams. The

sighing of the pine-trees and the rush of the waters were the only noises that reached her ear. And those were sounds of dreary desolation.

"Arnold!" she moaned. "Arnold!"

Only the low night-wind made reply; and Amy roused herself to the consciousness that he had left her,—and forever. She started from her seat, as if she would have gone in search of him; but her very limbs seemed paralyzed by the numbing weight upon her heart, and she fell back in the chair, utterly powerless.

She did not move again for hours. The moon swept up the sky, till its full light played in at the little casement and illuminated the room.

Still there she sat, gazing fixedly at the dying embers, shivering at intervals, but making no effort to rise. The wretched young creature scarcely comprehended what had befallen her; but, stunned and shaken in every nerve, it seemed as if she would never, never awake from that dull ache of the heart.

CHAPTER VI.

OPPOSING WILLS—CONFIDENCES BETWEEN MOTHER AND SON.

ON the day after thanksgiving, Arnold and his friends were to have returned to New Haven. Short as his visit had been, the young man was more than anxious to leave his home again; but in this matter he had a will, strong as his own, and a caprice far more uncertain, to contend

against. Laura de Montreuil would not quite confess herself overtaxed by the journey she had taken only three days before, but she found the old homestead so pleasant, the parlor so warm and cozy, when contrasted with the drifting snow and keen frost out-of-doors, that Mrs. Arnold's sweet persuasion to remain a little longer was met with acceptance. Arnold's protestations that business compelled him to go at once, urged with a dictatorial, half-insolent, air, had no effect upon Laura, though they made the good housewife shrink away, with a troubled expression of the eye painful to look upon.

Mademoiselle de Montreuil laughed when she saw this. "And so they are all afraid of you, my hero! I see how it is. You won't even be persuaded. Now there; go kiss your blessed little mamma, and tell her you won't go away for the next thousand years, at least."

She pointed her slender finger towards him an instant, then dropped her hand and took the feather fan from her lap, shading her laughing face as she saw his haughty frown lower over her.

"What! you are seriously determined to be rude to that angel, and inhospitable to us," she said, with a face dark as his own. "I beg your pardon. It is not my pleasure, nor that of Paul, I dare say, to leave this neighborhood for a day or two yet. There is some fine scenery about the Falls, and a picturesque cabin or two, perched on the banks, that I have a fancy to sketch; but we shall not force ourselves on your hospitality. There must be a public house somewhere in the hill-side town yonder."

Arnold's face had cleared off. An impatient curve of the lip remained, but that was directly softened into a smile. He did not heed the anxious face of his mother, but stole close to Laura's chair, and, bending over her with a grace

that was more than half command, soften it as he would, whispered a few words that sent the blood burning to her face.

"It was because I thought you were tired of my society," he said, fixing his glance upon her with a power that dazzled her eyes more completely than the fire had done.

"But I like your mother, and that little saintly sister, enough to put up with the rest," she said, with an attempt at audacious cheerfulness.

"And it is not for my sake?" he whispered.

"Hush! your mother."

"Oh, I had forgotten. Well, mother, it is determined, business or no business, we are to remain a day or two longer. Will that please you?"

Mrs. Arnold brightened pleasantly, but this agitation had left her rather pale; and as Arnold lifted his eyes to her face, he saw something there that made him thoughtful.

His look of eager solicitude brought the tears into her eyes, while the gentlest of all smiles hovered on his lips.

"Are you pleased, mother?"

Mademoiselle de Montreuil had left the room, or the good lady would never have given way to her tears; that kind of sensibility was not much in fashion with the New England mothers of her generation. They prayed more than they wept, and hard work left them little time for any thing more than an exhibition of honest family affection, now and then.

"What is it troubles you, mother?" said Arnold, pressing that pale face to his bosom, with the purest gleams of tenderness that existed in his nature. "Now that the excitement is off, I see that you look worn and feeble. Is any thing really the matter?"

The old lady sighed heavily; but his tenderness comforted her, and drawing herself away from his bosom, she wiped her eyes, trying hard to smile.

"Yes, I have something. Come with me a little. I want to talk to you. This idea of going away so soon frightens me. I didn't expect it, Benedict, and was putting every thing off to the last, like a poor coward that I am."

Again Arnold's face grew black. Half the time it past under the thunder-cloud of some passion. From his boyhood it had always been so; but the contrast of cheerful humor and persuasive gentleness had a wonderful fascination when they arose.

He followed his mother up-stairs into her bed-chamber, a square room in the southwest corner of the house, where the turbulent heart in his bosom had first begun to beat.

The room was close. Though it was now somewhat late in the morning, the green paper blinds were all rolled down, and, notwithstanding the clear, cold air without, a heavy, dead atmosphere filled the gloomy twilight,—an atmosphere that Arnold felt at once, and the color in his face deepened into fierce flushes.

"Is this *my* father?" he exclaimed, striding up to the bed, and forcing the counterpane down from where it was huddled over the old man's face.

Mrs. Arnold laid her hand on his arm, growing pale, and holding her breath. No fault could make her forget respect for the husband of her youth.

"Is this *my* father?" Arnold exclaimed again, shaking off her hold, and grasping the exposed shoulder with a violence which made the old man lurch heavily in his bed, and mutter to be left alone.

"It is my husband, Benedict, and your father. Never

forget that. Take your hand away; it was not for this I brought you here!"

Arnold slowly withdrew his hand, but looked fiercely back at the bed. As the gentle mother strove to draw him away, his fingers worked and clenched themselves, as if he would gladly have turned and strangled that old man in his inebriate slumber. The mother's face was full of sorrow; his, the only son, was black with rage.

"And how long has this been?" he said, when the door was closed behind them.

"Ever since you left us. I think he missed you, Benedict, and so went oftener to town. It was very lonesome here evenings, with nobody but Dan to order, and us to talk with, you know."

"Do you mean to find fault with me for going, mother? as if a son must stay at home forever, to keep his father from becoming a drunkard!"

"Hush! Benedict, nobody ever called him *that* in my hearing before."

"But I dare say he is called *that* all over town," answered the son, savagely; "and these French people, this splendid young lady will soon find it out."

"No, no, I will persuade him. You will help me,—he is so amiable and kind at all times. Last night, he saw a light in the out-room, and thinking your friends were up, wandered about till he was almost frozen. I was sitting up, you know, and at last saw him against the window, with his breath frozen white in his beard, and his hat off: he had lost it by the gate."

"And *she* might have seen this!"

"No, no; he would have frozen in the snow rather than make you blush, Benedict. He had memory enough for that. So don't think too hard of him."

"But what gave rise to this? He was as temperate a man as any in Norwich when I went to New Haven."

"I don't know. It has always been a mystery to me; but, since his store was burned down, and the insurance money paid, he's never been the same man,—always restless, always wanting to be in motion."

"Since his store was burned down!" faltered Arnold, and a dusky glow filled his eyes, and flushed his face all around them; "and the insurance money paid. Surely he does not grudge me that little start in life."

"No, no. Of course not!" cried the mother, eager to clear her husband. "I did not know that you had the money. He never speaks of the fire; but always goes away, and comes home as you see, if any one else mentions it. Sometimes people twit him about it, I'm afraid."

"Twit him about it! What is that you say, madam?"

"Madam! my son; madam to your mother!"

"Well, I beg your pardon; but you spoke of some one twitting my father. Who?" the voice in which Arnold asked this was terrible.

"Yes, he said it once," answered the little woman, beginning to tremble, she scarce knew why; "but he wasn't quite himself, you know; and—and—I don't like to ask questions at such times. When you came home, I thought perhaps you might be able to help me understand it!"

"Me? me?"

"It was one of my delusions, I dare say," answered Mrs. Arnold, shrinking from her son's glance.

"One of your delusions! Why, you didn't have these fancies formerly, mother. I thought if there was a woman on earth every way above them, you were that woman."

"Did you, Benedict? Was I really so smart as that?"

Well, well, as one gets old, and sees the sun of life going down, and the shadows coming on, it makes a difference; and then I'm used to sitting up late at nights now, and that weakens one so: but I am altered now, Benedict?"

There was something so earnest and touching in that sweet voice, that Arnold felt the tears stealing to his eyes. The strange moisture fairly startled him. He dropped the hand which he had half lifted to her head, and turned away, biting his lips angrily.

"Come, come, it isn't for me to torment you in this way, Benedict," said the kind mother. "Step this way. I want to show you something."

Arnold followed her into the next room, where a large oaken chest, clamped with brass, stood between the front windows. She opened the chest, and revealed a store of fine home-made linen, white as snow, delicately fine pillow-cases, fringed at the edge, and sheets, with broad hems, daintily stitched. "Hannah had her setting-out ready ever so long ago," said the good woman, looking over her shoulders as she knelt before the chest. "I began spinning and weaving for her when she was a baby; but this was done since you left us. Hagar wanted to help, but I was selfish and would do it all myself. So don't marry any one that'll be above using homespun, or what would all this be good for?"

Dear soul, how transparent her little artifice was. She had no courage to say how much too fine she thought the elegant French woman down-stairs, and so made this excuse to bring on the subject, believing herself the most crafty and wicked little woman in the world to attempt it, quite a demoralizing example for her own son.

Arnold was rather softened by the sight of the linen. It reminded him, painfully, of those quiet hours when he

had hung on his mother's chair, while her two hands were so busy at the distaff, and her little foot danced on the pedal of the flax-wheel, which was now unbanded in the garret above. He remembered so well how she would dip her fingers into the cocoanut shell hanging over the flyers, sprinkle the drops over her shoulders, and then kiss them from his face, when she saw him grow angry, as he was sure to do.

How pretty she looked in those days. Roses bloomed on her cheeks then, and no strawberry was ever of a sweeter crimson than her mouth. But there was a great change. He had not minded it so much at first; but now, with the full light shining over her from an uncurtained window, a host of fine wrinkles threaded that pure forehead, and the pallor of her face was unnatural. Surely his mother could not be well.

The worst man that I ever saw—one who confessed to having murdered sixty persons in a piratical career, without a single expression of repentance—began to speak to me of his mother, and wept like a little child. All those atrocious murders had failed to wash the holy image of a mother from his soul. Then, do not think it unnatural that Benedict Arnold, in his youth, should have loved the little woman kneeling at his feet, with a force of affection that a better man might not have possessed. With him all affections and all sentiments were passions; but the most sacred that ever dwelt in that ambitious heart, was his love, which made his haughty lip tremble, and his eyes dim, while she exhibited her treasures.

"Oh, Benedict, don't, or you'll make me cry too!" she said, quite heart-smitten by his look. "Don't feel hurt at what I said. Of course you can marry anybody on earth

that suits you,—why not? The brighter and handsomer all the better, of course: and if she's rich——"

"She must be rich," said Arnold, sharply. "I want no wife to drag me down."

"Oh, my son, what need——"

"The more need, mother, from what I have seen this morning. Tell me, is my father in debt?"

"I—I don't know. He never tells me any thing now"

"Well, that I can learn from him, as we stay' over awhile. I suppose he will manage to get sober before we go."

Mrs. Arnold shrunk, and the color came to her face. He saw it, and relented a little.

"But we will not talk of this any more. He must not be careless of your comforts, that is all. So now, mother, close the chest, and let us sit down on it a moment, while you tell me how this lady strikes you all at home. Something a little out of the usual run, I fancy?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Arnold, doubtfully; "very,—that is, we haven't any girl in Norwich in the least like her.

"Handsome, though. Isn't she, mother?"

"Oh, yes. A great deal handsomer than,—yes, I was going to say, than Amy Leonard,—not near so nice, though; but then fine ladies don't care about being nice, I dare say. This one is handsome as a bird, especially with those white ostrich-plumes in her bonnet all flying away with her curls. How the people did stare when you drove up to the meeting-house, thanksgiving-day, just at prayer time. It was as much as the minister could do to keep his eyes shut. I was sorry about the disturbance; but then, for the life of me, I couldn't help looking out."

"Then it made a little commotion among the natives? I thought so."

"Indeed, how could that be helped? The Norwich people haven't forgotten that your father was one of the richest merchants among 'em before that fire."

Arnold was looking at his mother, but his eyes fell as she mentioned the fire.

"Oh, I was wrong to name it again; but what could any one do? If you had stayed a moment longer in the store, who could have saved your life? and what was building or goods compared to that? I never thought of blaming you."

"And who has? I ask again," said Arnold, fiercely, "I was only a boy then. Did they expect me to put out a raging fire single-handed?"

"Indeed how could they? But we were speaking of the young lady down-stairs. Tell me more about her? Is she really from over the sea?"

"Originally, yes, mother; but for a year or two she has lived in Canada, where her brother inherited a great business from his father. Lately, they have been in New York, and traveling about. This young lady was educated in Paris, I am quite sure, for she has seen the court, and there is a title in the family."

Mrs. Arnold held her breath.

"Her grandfather had some place under the king; and she was educated in a convent."

"A convent! a Catholic!" cried Mrs. Arnold, clasping her hands in intense dismay. "Oh, my son!"

"Does that frighten you, mother?" said Arnold laughing carelessly. "Never mind, if she chooses to fall in love with me, I'll soon make her forget it. If I tell her to be sprinkled in the meeting-house, or dipped in the Falls at high-flood, she'll do it mother, or I'll know why."

"What, that high-spirited, handsome girl?" smiled the

old lady, flushed with the idea he so insolently brought forward. "How can you talk so, Benedict? One would think you'd been in Paris too. But don't talk any more nonsense about our visitor. She's as bright and beautiful as a bird: but what is that to old-fashioned people like us? You haven't asked a word about Amy Leonard yet,—and that puts me in mind to send Dan, with the cutter, after her this evening. She'll expect it, poor girl; she's not been very well this fall: stays away from meeting, and is getting a little unsocial, I'm afraid. I hope your coming will cheer her up,—such friends as you were once,—only these things never last with children.

"No, mother, they seldom last," said Arnold, rising from the chest. "So perhaps it'll be as well not to send for Amy. I've been to visit the family, and they won't expect any thing more."

Mrs. Arnold sighed. With every thread of the linen folded beneath her she had woven a motherly thought of Benedict and Amy Leonard; and now this French girl, with the feathers, must come dashing out from a foreign convent, and tear all her delicate cobwebs of fancy into shreds. The dear little woman wished to be hospitable, and there was something very grand and imposing about the idea of a daughter-in-law who had been educated in Paris,—who had seen the king,—possessed a title somewhere in the family, and no doubt owned heaps on heaps of property. But still the lovely face of Amy Leonard came closest to her heart, and she felt inexpressibly saddened by her son's triumphant manner.

Mrs. Arnold arose from the linen chest, and sighed, as she locked up her treasures.

"Then you think I'd better not send for Amy?" she

said, with a gleam of fresh courage. "She's lonesome up there, I know."

"She'd be more lonesome with Mademoiselle de Montreuil,—a wren and bird of Paradise together, dear mother. When I come to Norwich, it is to see you and the rest of 'em. Don't let me be tormented with girls."

With a careless wave of the hand, which Mrs. Arnold longed to construe into a permission to send for her favorite, Benedict moved towards the head of the stairs; for a cheerful voice was calling him from below.

It was Paul de Montreuil, in a laughing skirmish with his sister.

"Arnold! Arnold! Come settle this matter."

Benedict appeared at the head of the stairs, laughing through all his ill-humor.

"Well, what is it?"

"We have been managing a sleigh-ride. Peter and I have been in to town, and brought back a cutter that skims the snow like a hawk, with a whole nest of bear-skins. You never saw such a day, sharp and clear as diamonds: the snow is crusted like parian marble. I shall drive myself: it's no sleighing at all without that. Come and look at the cockle-shell."

"Nothing of the kind," cried Laura, laughing, and hurrying on her pelisse with its rich sable linings; while Hannah Arnold stood by, holding a white-beaver hat, from which a long feather floated. "You will spend no such idle time, Mr. Arnold. I have captured the cutter, put Peter in charge, and we are to have the first drive. Where is your greatcoat? Come, hurry, for the enemy is growing desperate."

"But I intended to have a long drive with Miss Hannah Arnold," said Paul.

"Plenty of time," cried his sister. "Why, Hannah isn't half ready. We can drive across the hills, and over to the Falls and back, while she braids her hair. Can't we, Hannah, dear?"

"Yes, indeed, I couldn't go quite yet," said Hannah, smothering a little sigh. "After they get home, perhaps, if mother should not want me."

"Of course your mother won't think of wanting you. She never does want anybody when it's inconvenient,—the darling soul! Come, Mr. Arnold, don't you hear that crash of bells. It makes my blood tingle from head to foot."

"Here I am at command, fair lady," cried Arnold, coming down-stairs with a dashing overcoat on, and a richly-mounted whip in his hand. "If we are to rob Mr. Paul of his ride, let us make an affair of it. Hannah, get your overshoes for Miss de Montreuil."

Hannah brought the oversocks, and Arnold bent to one knee while he buried the shapely little foot with its satin slipper in the fur lining.

"Now we are ready," she cried, settling her foot in its warm nest, and tying the broad, pink, strings of her hat. "Ah, this is like Canada, bright, frosty, and cold. Never fear, Paul: we won't be gone forever."

Away she went down the yard, and out of the front-gate, where Peter stood before a dashing cutter crowded richly with furs, holding a spirited little black horse that pawed the snow, and, tossing his saucy head, made the bells ring out with a wonderful clash every few moments; for the exuberant oxygen set him crazy to be in motion.

In sprang Laura de Montreuil, laughing a pretty defiance to her brother and Hannah, who stood rather ruefully on the door-step watching these proceedings.

Arnold followed her, drew her close to his side, with a pressure of the arm that made the breath tremble on her lip,—gathered the furs lovingly about her, and took up the reins.

A plunge, an exultant leap, that made the strings of bells upon the harness ring out *such* a peal, and away.

“He—he—ki-e-e!”

It was Hagar and Dan at the gate, yelling like mad. Arnold looked back. With a dexterous bend of his hand his horse was forced into a sweeping curve, and back came the cutter making a superb halt.

“What is it, Hagar?” cried the young man, holding his steed in with both hands. “What’s the trouble?”

“You went an’ forgot der foot-stove, Massa Benedict,” cried Hagar, rushing through the gate with the stove held up high in her hand, while she blew the embers within till her face looked like an India-rubber ball that never could collapse. “Jes yer put her feets on this ere, an’ they’ll be like two biscuits in de oven,—dey will now, I tell ye.”

Arnold gave his whip a crack that almost took Hagar’s kerchief from her head, touched his horse and away again, leaving Hagar so lost in astonishment that she had no power to unpurse her mouth till the cutter was dashing along the road again.

“Let ’em go,” said Hagar, looking all her indignation at Dan; “dem tings nebber come to no good. Go a sleighin’ widout a foot-stove,—dem’s company manners, am dey? Nebber mind. I’ll keep de coals hot for Miss Hannah, an’ her sleigh-ride’ll be just as ’spectable if de pink ribbins, and de white plumes, and de red shawls, ain’t a-flyin’ out berhind. Thar now, as I’ve ’pressed

my mind, jest carry dat stove inter de kitchen, and set it on de harth, Dan, if thar’s life enough in yer.”

Dan took the stove meekly enough; for as he had made up his mind to gossip a little with Peter before going in, the arrangement was rather comfortable than otherwise.

But this state of things did not last long. Hagar soon came pattering down to the gate and carried Dan away; while she insinuated to Peter that a back-log was wanted in the kitchen fire-place, and that it took two men—if neither of them were over smart—to roll one from the wood-pile to the nice bed of ashes that she’d just raked out for it.

Peter took the hint, and directly both negroes were discussing church-matters before a splendid fire, whose foundations had been properly laid by themselves, and whose superstructure Hagar was completing with pine-knots, which blazed up at once and filled the whole kitchen with yellow light.

The house was very quiet after this. Mrs. Arnold had crept up the back-stairs, carrying a plate of toast and cup of tea, with which she had disappeared into the chamber we have seen before to-day; and, Hannah, not knowing what else to do, entertained the young Frenchman in the out-room, who, after all, did not seem so very much disappointed about the sleigh-ride as one might have supposed.

What did they talk of there in that dim, old-fashioned room, into which the sunshine came so goldenly, playing over the tall andirons, and melting into the more ruddy glow of the hickory fire? Indeed, I cannot tell you! Something very pleasant at first, if you might judge by the soft warmth on that young cheek, and the smile that mellowed upon her lip like ripeness in a strawberry; but this was while Paul was talking so cheerfully, saying all

sorts of pretty things with one of the most musical voices in the world, trifling with his shy, little bird without ruffling its plumage.

But after a while, when solitude made him bold, he began to talk earnestly, passionately, as she had never heard him talk before. Then Hannah grew frightened, and yet fascinated. She longed to run away and find some one to protect her, but would not have gone for the world: nay, she trembled at the very idea of her mother's step on the stairs, yet was tempted to call aloud for her every instant. Then she began to grow very pale and solemn; her lips trembled as if some one had grieved her. It was altogether a curious study, that sweet face, as it glided away into the shadiest corner of the out-room, but never could be entirely alone, for another face followed her everywhere, and would, poor girl! forever and ever to the end of her life.

CHAPTER VII.

A HALF DECLARATION—PASSIONATE STRUGGLE.

"WHERE on earth are you driving to, Mr. Arnold?"

"Into the town. I wish to show you the view from some of those terraces; it is peculiarly fine."

"Town!" cried the lady, with a pretty scream, "town! when you know I detest the very sight of a house that isn't built of logs. No—no, I am dying to see the Falls, that we only got a glimpse of the other

day. It was for that I stole Paul's horse and kidnapped you."

Arnold tried to say something of the happiness of a captivity like that; but secret annoyance distorted the words on his lips, and he said, rather sharply,

"Indeed, mademoiselle, you will find the road rough, and the Falls frozen to marble."

"That is exactly what I want,—a good jolting,—jumpers all along the road, as you call those ridges, that shake one up so; and an overturn in the snow, if one does not plunge too deep. Now, don't talk of roads to me. I like obstacles and difficulties, or how should I ever endure you, the most cross-grained, obstinate person in the world, every one says.

"But I hope you will not say so, Laura."

"Laura!"

"Have I offended?"

"I don't know. Yes, of course."

She blushed scarlet under his glance, for she felt that her own headlong encouragement had kindled the audacity burning there.

"Oh, if I only had a right,—if every glance at that face was not a presumption."

She looked up, softened by the humility of his speech, but still dissatisfied by the tones of his voice.

"Why do you speak of presumption? It is no great crime to forget strict proprieties for once," she said, gently.

"The word,—yes, you might forgive that,—but the feelings, the burning imprudence here,—who will forgive that?"

He waited a moment expecting her to speak, but she was looking out up the glittering snow-crust, while her cheeks glowed like ripe peaches.

"You will not say one word to reassure me," he said, stooping his head to feast upon her blushes, as a rapacious child devours fruit.

She laughed, half nervously, half in pretty defiance of her own feelings.

"I should not fancy that you required reassuring, Arnold."

"No. Doubtless you scoff at the audacity of a farmer's son claiming a right to possess human feelings where so much wealth and beauty are concerned. I have exposed the bareness of my antecedents,—taken you into the bosom of my family. Do you scorn me for the plainness that seems like poverty to one like you?"

"You know that I do not scorn you for any thing,—least of all for what I have seen in your home," she said, with feeling.

"But you are rich, very rich, I dare say,—of gentle blood, too, and that means so much in foreign countries. Yours is an old name, a proud family: while I,—what on earth do I possess which can bring me on an equality in any one point with you?"

"It is not for me to point out your advantages, Mr. Arnold. But all the possessions you point out, are things in which I have no claim to merit. What is good blood but an accident, over which we have no control? Or wealth, which comes from the past without merit or exertion? All that relates to you as a man, or me as a woman, you have left out: thought, energy, feeling, all that makes up life and honor."

Laura was greatly agitated as she said this. The color flashed in and out of her face like gleams of lightning; her lips grew bright with the words that passed them. He could feel her form tremble amid the furs.

She had answered his question,—twice answered it,—and now he had no desire to press the conversation further: this was neither the time nor place. She was rich: she loved him,—this brilliant, stately creature. What could the ambition of man ask for more?

She was listening with parted lips. Her very soul was thirsty for the answer which her generosity should have brought; but he only said, very softly, and with a humility that charmed, while it disappointed her,

"Oh, if I dared,—if I only dared!"

The blood burned in her cheek now; the very snowflakes melted into tears of shame as they fell upon its hot crimson. Every word she had uttered stung her like a disgrace. Was he modestly retreating, now that she had gone so far? She clenched the restless hand in her lap till the grasp pained her; she bit her lips till they glowed like wounded coral; and at last dashed her little foot down into the bottom of the sleigh in a paroxysm of self-censure.

"What is the matter? Have I wearied you with my slow driving?" asked her companion, with tender deference.

"Yes,—yes,—no,—it is not that. You will persist in driving the wrong way. I wish to see the Falls. I will see the Falls."

"But—"

"I will not listen to a but. Here, give me the lines and the whip. I know how to drive. You won't. Oh, very well. If you do not turn toward the Falls, I will get out and walk there. Nothing can prevent that."

The young French girl said this with great satisfaction, for her spirit was all in revolt. She longed to do something hateful,—to perpetrate an act of despotism which

would convince him how very little her heart had been in the whole conversation. The coquetry of her impulsive nature came out in force then. She was glad that there was some one thing which he seemed reluctant to undertake. Her desire to see the Falls flamed into a passion. She would go. It was what had brought her from New Haven. Nothing else could have induced her to take so long a journey on the very edge of winter.

Arnold listened with a curve of the lip that might mean wounded pride, might be audacious self-confidence. But he turned his horse, and drove toward the Yantic Falls without a word.

"The youth is father to the man." Benedict Arnold was not a person to be taken unawares, even at that early age. Of all places in the world, he would have shunned the Yantic Falls and its neighborhood, had the choice been left to him; but the willful girl at his side had doomed him, and on toward that romantic pass they dashed, he too restless for silence, and she exactly in that state of mind when wit flashes like chain lightning from the heart of a woman wounded in her pride.

You never saw a more beautiful creature than that young French girl appeared, as they swept through the frosty air, along that line of shimmering snow, listening to the bells as if they had been bursts of martial music, her face all one glow of roses; her eyes bright as diamonds; and her heart swelling with a storm of angry shame. Arnold could hardly maintain his cautious reserve as he glanced toward her.

But he would not commit himself farther, at least in that dangerous neighborhood. If she would go to the Yantic Falls, it must be with a burning heart. His was cold enough, at any rate.

CHAPTER VIII.

A WEARY NIGHT—THE FAMILY BREAKFAST—PARENTAL ANXIETIES.

MEANTIME Amy Leonard had spent a night that she could never think of after without a pang of self-pity that made her thrill from head to foot. So young, so helpless, with no friend on earth to confide in, what could she do? There was a little loft in her father's cabin, over which the roof of heavy slabs shelved low and unevenly. Here her bed was made, and here she had slept through many a stormy night, defiant of the wind that whistled through the rudely jointed logs, and laughing in her sleep as the snow floated in light drifts over the healthy roses of her cheek.

Cold and shivering, pale as the snow that still clung to her dress, she awoke from the death of her trance. She heard her father and mother breathing in the deep, sweet sleep which springs from toil, in the next room; but the very tranquillity of their slumber made her heart ache with new pain. She felt like a thief who had crept there to plunder them of all wholesome rest in the hereafter.

It had seemed guilt enough to be Benedict Arnold's wife in secret, and without the sanction of his parents and hers; but now—now if what he told her was true—if he was indeed the villain he had so flippantly proclaimed himself—if she—that thought! The poor little quivering hands stole up to her face, the very remembrance of what

she might be seemed to brazen it with shame. Would she ever dare look any one in the eyes? Was the foul assertion true?

The poor child was maddened as she thought how many months she had waited and waited, not daring to write—too timid for a question—waited in anguish and in silence for the first news of his coming. He had been home. He had voluntarily sought her presence, and for what? There she was left, with all that cold pain gnawing at her heart—with all that hot infamy burning on her forehead. She climb up the step-ladder to her little loft, and, shivering through and through with cold, crept into bed.

When that was done, for one moment she felt safe, and a little hysterical laugh died away under the thick coverlets. But the very sound frightened her till she gasped painfully and drew down the clothes, struggling for breath. A dash of fine snow, which came with a gust of wind through a crevice overhead, revived her. But what was she to do? Where could she find a friend? Was it not better to die?

She remembered the look of the water between the logs, as she and Arnold went down into the saw-mill that night,—how cold and quiet it seemed, with gleams of moonlight stealing in here and there. Just before she fainted, a thought had seized her to take a single step and end it. The water was very deep under those timbers, her father had cautioned her about it many a time—so deep, that when the ice was thick on the streams below, a poor frozen body might float under the hard crystal for weeks, and no one guess that any thing but saw-dust or drift-wood had harbored there.

Amy rose up in bed. Why should she wait for the shame which was sure to come? If he loved her no

longer—if he really wanted to get rid of her, and had said those cruel, cruel things only to break her heart, why struggle for any thing more? She were far better dead than alive—safer, and oh, how much happier.

Ah me! it is one thing to wish for death, and another to find the courage to seek it in those dark, cruel places, where suicide skulks and lures the lost soul on. Cold as she was, terribly as her poor heart ached, Amy was afraid of the very dark, and grew pale as death when the loud rush of the river met her unmuffled ear. She could feel the waters creeping around her like a winding-sheet, curling in and out of her hair, cold and serpent-like. Not there, not thus, where her father won his daily bread with such hard toil, could she die. Her kind, good father, who loved her so—would he not rather keep her with him, shamed and broken-hearted as she was, than find her down yonder, dead and weltering among the saw-logs.

She was beginning to feel a little comforted by this thought, when above the sound of the Fall came the heavy roar of far-off winds in the forest, and the deep sough of the pine-trees nearer, answering each other mournfully; and they seemed to say, "No, no, never again—never again:" and to all this the cataract sent up an eternal chorus, that sounded afar off and inexpressibly solemn. It seemed as if a host of angels were wailing over her sin and pleading with her to be patient.

As Amy listened, her cold hands folded themselves over her bosom; with a gesture of unutterable helplessness she sunk back upon her pillow, quiet as despair. Thus, dumb and still, she was rocked into slumber, and the daylight found her cold and weary as when she crept up to bed.

Amy heard her father walking about the room below, but she had no courage to move. His heavy tread on the

floor, the vigorous energy with which he raked out the ashes and flung a heavy back-log into the fire-place, made her shrink and shiver like a frightened child. Then came the sound of her mother's voice,—soft, drowsy, and kind,—as she had heard it every morning of her life.

For the first time that drowsy softness frightened the young girl. A few hours had made that kind, commonplace mother something to be afraid of,—a judge before whose sleepy blue eyes hers must forever sink in shame. Amy began to cry,—very softly, for she was afraid to make the least sound, lest they should hear it through the loose boards and question her. As she lay holding her breath, her father's voice rose cheerily from the door.

"Now, mother, is there any thing else? I have filled the kettle and built you a rousing fire."

"Yes, Joshua: cut down a link or two of sassengers from the pole. I ain't tall enough to reach 'em. That's right, man. I'll slice-up the potatoes, and have breakfast on the table in no time. Just go to the ladder and call Amy."

"Oh, let the gal sleep. She don't have a beau every night. I couldn't say as much of her mother, when a young feller of my acquaintance used to be about: she was allers on hand."

"But she didn't let her old mother get the breakfast, though, or I reckon Josh Leonard would a-thought twice about it. But go along to the saw-mill. I'll hang a cloth out when breakfast's ready."

Amy heard her father close the door with some cheerful rejoinder; and, turning upon her pillow, began to weep afresh. It seemed as if her heart must break,—up there all alone. How could they talk so cheerfully,—and about her too,—as if nothing had happened?

Mrs. Leonard had spread her snowy bird's-eye table-cloth on the pine-table, and was busy superintending a half-dozen little mounds of embers raked out in front of the great hickory-wood fire, on which her meal was in a state of progress. On one glowing mound a coffee-pot, with a broad, conical lid, was emitting a rich, aromatic steam that penetrated the whole room; another was crowned by an iron skillet, from which came an appetizing smell of fried cabbage. In front of the fire, an iron spider stood upright, holding a golden cake of Indian corn, which was just beginning to brown deliciously, while Mrs. Leonard was busy with the sausages in her frying-pan, which she shook up and turned over and pressed on all sides with her knife, till their flavor was enough of itself to satisfy a tolerably-hungry man.

After all, Mrs. Leonard was rather a comely woman when seen in her natural element at the fireside. I wish you could have stood by her, that morning, in the blaze of that rousing fire, turning the sausages, stirring up the potatoes, letting a little steam off the cabbage, and lifting the lid of the coffee-pot with the flat blade of her knife, just to see if it was likely to boil over.

With all this she found time to arrange the plate of golden butter, fill a saucer with apple-sauce, and have the blue and white cups in order, as if she had possessed fifty hands instead of that hard-working pair, which never seemed as if they could be overtaxed.

Did I say she was a comely woman? Better than that, I hope. A good housewife and a kind mother cannot well be otherwise than comely, though her features were carved from an oak-knot; but Mrs. Leonard had a soft, racy sort of beauty about her, which was homelike and pleasant to look upon. Perhaps it had compensated with

Joshua for the want of more brilliant properties, and reconciled his sharp intellect to the slowness of hers. At any rate, they got along beautifully together, and no one, who saw Mrs. Leonard as she is before us now, ever thought to wonder at it. When she took the lead in conversation, it was another thing altogether. But Joshua seldom knew that she was talking at such times, any more than he remembered the perpetual rush of the falls above his saw-mill; for one said about as much in reality as the other.

You might have wondered how any one could be afraid of that nice housewife, in her tidy cap, her cam-colored short-gown and petticoat, with those calf-skin shoes laced so snugly over her blue-yarn stockings; for a more genial, kindly old body could not well be imagined. She looked up from the cloud of savory steam, and smiled like the sun in a mist, as Amy came down from her loft,—smiled down upon the simmering coffee-pot, and the brown Indian-cake, for she had a matronly sort of reserve toward her daughter, and would not for the world have met her with one broad look that morning. She remembered the days too well when she had to come down to the family-breakfast, after the stout man down at the saw-mill had been obliged to go home by starlight from her father's door.

It was well for Amy that her mother possessed these womanly feelings; for I am sure she must have grown quite dizzy and fainted, or burst into tears if the good mother had looked earnestly, when the pale face appeared, with its wild, shadowy eyes, and that wretched look.

"That's right, Amy, up bright and early without calling. Just put a towel out of the window for pa, and help me get the breakfast up. Bring a trencher for the corn-cake, and get the armed-chair for *him*. Snapping morning out

of-doors, I can tell you. Oh, here he comes, stomping the snow off on the door-stone. Take hold of the table, Amy,—not that end; there now, just a little nearer the fire. Here, take my place by the coffee-pot: it's warmer, and you look so shivery."

Amy took the seat which placed her back to the door just as her father came in, with his face as fresh and red as an April morning, from the washing he had just given it in the snow.

"There's a clean towel on the roller," cried Mrs. Leonard, pointing behind the door. "What a way you have of taking a wash in the snow, Joshua!" and she stood smiling by, while he buried his face in the voluminous crash, and rubbed his arms down with vigor, as if he had been currying the fore-legs of a pony.

"All right now, anyway," he said, rolling down the sleeves of his shirt and buttoning the wristbands. "Ha, Amy, up and waiting! That's right, gal. Now we can eat our breakfast comfortably."

Amy gave him one frightened look and busied herself with the coffee. Leonard caught the look, and his face changed.

"Darter," he said, lifting the hot corn-cake from its plate, and breaking it slowly between his hands, while a rich fog stole out from the golden clefts,—"*darter*, what's the matter with you since the day afore yesterday? Mother been cross, or any thing?"

"Mother been cross! Oh, Joshua," cried Mrs. Leonard, "Now did you ever! As if I——"

"Well, well; but Amy looks pale. Come, come, gal—oh! ha, I remember now, a lover's quarrel. Never mind, Amy, them things always come right,—don't they, old woman? But that young fellow mustn't carry his

nead too high in this neighborhood. I'm beginning to think it's time to be looking after you both. Why, how long is it, mother, since he began coming to the Falls? Nigh on two years, I reckon."

Mrs. Leonard saw by the disturbed face of her child that the conversation pained her, and, with unusual tact, put the subject aside.

"I declare, father, you're too bad. I wonder how you'd a-liked it. Just as if we wanted to get rid of our own child. I say now it's scandalous."

"But I tell you, mother, the gal is getting sickly. I've seen it ever since she came from New Haven," cried Leonard, earnestly.

"No, father, no. I am quite, quite well; but in the winter time it's a little lonesome up here."

"So it is, gal,—so it is. Mother, we should a-thought of that."

"Sartinly," said Mrs. Leonard. "The child hasn't been to an apple-cut, or a sleigh-ride, nor nothing in a hull year, I do believe."

"And there was Ben Arnold out sleigh-riding with a hull lot of 'em, yesterday. I say, Amy, what does that young feller mean by it?"

"Nothing,—nothing, father," cried Amy, breathlessly. "They are visitors, you know, of course. How could he help it?"

"And leave you here to cry them eyes out?"

"Oh, father, it's you that makes me cry."

"There, Joshua, you've done it, and I hope you'll be content. It's allers jest so. I really dew wish the men folks would mind their own business."

"Well, well, mother, break off short and I won't say another word; only get some yerbs and roots to make

bitters of, and give her something strong every morning. I won't see that peaked look in her face any longer."

After the breakfast things were cleared away, Amy sat down to her sewing by the window, while Mrs. Leonard took out her flax-wheel, and soon filled the cabin with its bee-like hum. There was little conversation between the two. The mother was troubled with a vague idea that something was going wrong with her child, but forbore to question her, from an instinct of womanliness far stronger than her reason; and Amy was buried in her own sad, sad thoughts.

The sound of the saw-mill, harsh and grating above the dash of the Falls, seemed a fit melody for her thoughts, where all was discord.

At last her mother spoke.

"Amy, supposing you make some warm ginger cider, and carry it down to pa in the mill. He must be orful cold with the wind whistling down-stream like that."

Amy started up with a faint cry, for the very sound of her mother's voice made her nervous. The cider was soon seething and casting up waves of yeasty foam over the brown earthen mug, in which she thrust the red-hot fire-irons.

Then she put on a scarlet cardinal belonging to her mother, drew the hood over her face, and went down to the mill, unconscious of her own picturesque beauty, as she picked her steps through the snow, holding the frothy cider in one hand, and lifting up her blue homemade skirt with the other.

Just as she had crossed the road and was gaining the embankment of the mill, the distant jingle of sleigh-bells made her start. She stood a moment, looking wildly along the road; then gave a leap down the bank, and ran

into the mill, where she stood, panting and breathless, till Joshua Leonard came and took the mug from her hand.

"Why, gal, you are shaking with the cold," he said, sitting down on the log through which a long upright saw was gnawing its sure way, and taking a deep draught of the cider. "Run home,—run back to the house, I tell you. It was a kind thought, and I'm mighty glad of the drink; but you are freezing, poor baby."

"No, father, it is only the fright,—only coming down the bank so fast, I meant to say. Let me just step behind this pile of boards out of the wind, and mother's cloak will keep me warm enough."

"Well, well, but take care of the loose floor: if a plank tips you'll never see your old father again,—only as he'd be after you sartinly, for what would the old chap be without his darter?"

As he spoke, the good man shook the now half-cold drink around in his mug and drained it off, with a deep, hearty breath, leaving a ridge of ginger on his upper lip, as he took the empty vessel away from his mouth.

"That's something worth while on a cold day," he muttered, wiping his mouth with his hand. "Lord a mercy, how much comfort there is in this world, arter all! No one that hasn't had a darter like Amy, now, can tell how much: the gal's worth her weight in gold."

At that instant, Amy was standing a little way off, with one hand pressed hard against her heart, and her pale lips slowly dividing, like a statue frozen before its position was attained. Her head was a little bent, and her wild eyes looked away down the highway. There was no motion in the girl's bosom. The very beating of her heart was hushed as she listened to the swelling discordance of sleigh-bells coming up the road.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MILL ON THE YANTIC—THE DEPTHS BELOW.

"Oh, how beautiful it is! It is like fairy-land. Look! look! that old saw-mill perched on the banks. Was ever any thing so picturesque?"

Notwithstanding the sound of the sleigh-bells, Laura's voice rang out sweet and clear on the frosty air. She half started to her feet among the furs, and, seizing the reins, swerved the horse on one side, with a suddenness that ended in a discordant crash of the bells, and left the horse prancing and stamping in the deep snow, while the breath congealed around his nostrils, and a cloud of steam rose from his panting sides.

Arnold clenched his teeth to force back the imprecation that sprang against them. But the young lady saw nothing of this, she still held tight to the reins, and, leaning over the side of the sleigh, gazed delightedly on the Falls.

Arnold forced her hand gently from the reins, and grasped it hard, while his eyes dwelt on her face.

How brightly the blood leaped to her cheeks! How those eyes sparkled! With what a gush of happiness those red lips parted amid their glow of happy smiles!

"Shall we go on?" he said, drawing her to his side with a triumphant curve of the lip.

She drew a quick breath, as he relinquished her hand, but still looked out upon the Falls.

"No, no. I must look at them nearer. Let us get out and find a view from the saw-mill."

"But it is dangerous. The wind comes howling through the rocks in a tempest. That old mill is the coldest and most disagreeable place I know of this side of Greenland."

"Oh, yes, but I am so warm. Nothing chills me except a cold heart. There, fling one of the robes over the horse and let us go. He will be glad enough, I dare say, for you have driven him like the wind."

Mademoiselle de Montreuil sprang out of the sleigh as she spoke, laughing as her feet sunk into the snow, and there she stood, while Arnold flung a robe over the now-shivering horse, burning, heart and soul, with suppressed rage, and prepared to follow her.

"Not that way! Not to the mill!" he said, following her as she ran along the road. "We can find a far better view from that clump of hemlocks that hangs over the ledge up yonder; the thick green of the trees will shelter you from the wind."

"But how are we to get there? The snow is so deep, and I can see no sign of a path," cried Laura, stamping her pretty feet up and down on the beaten road.

"The crust is firm,—you will glide over it like a fairy. I may break through now and then, but what of that? Just keep within this belt of trees, and take a sweep of that log cabin."

"But that seems a very roundabout way, Mr. Arnold."

"True; but, in the end, we shall find it the best one. So trust me as a guide this once."

There was a meaning in his voice that could not be gathered from his words,—that subtle meaning which penetrates to the heart like the perfume of flowers, but is

as intangible. She turned, with a blush, and, mounting the bank, followed him across the snow-crust.

They left the road some distance below the cabin, and made their way along a belt of trees that sheltered it. There was no window on that side of the dwelling, a circumstance which Laura did not observe, but which Arnold had taken into his calculations when he selected that route to the Falls.

"That must be a pretty little home in warm weather," said Laura, looking towards the house. "The rose-bush so full of red berries would cover half the cabin with flowers in the spring time. The net-work of brown stalks is a Virginia creeper, I suppose. Then that great elm drooping over the whole! What a superb tree it is! Really, I haven't seen so much taste since we left France. Pray, who lives in that cabin, Mr. Arnold?"

"The man who owns the saw-mill, I believe," answered Arnold, sharply.

"And has he so much taste? for really this is a rustic paradise."

"He is a hard-working, honest man, I suppose."

"Ah, but he has a wife, of course, and, it may be a daughter. All this looks like a woman's work. How I should like to get a peep inside that cabin! It must be charming. Can't we make some excuse, Mr. Arnold?"

"I should not be willing to invent one. Our New-England people are a little shy of strangers."

"Ah, well, then it seems I am to give up my little romance. How beautifully the snow lies among the hemlock branches. After all, winter is full of pleasant things."

Thus she rattled on, forgetting one object the moment another presented itself, and striving to cheat the indignant

feeling which was all the while burning in her heart against the man who, at times, seemed to be trifling with her. Thus, every gentle word, every look of passionate devotion,—for he was not sparing of looks,—created a revolt in her imperative nature. The doubt which he left her in was at once a delight and a torment.

At last they came out upon a ledge of rocks that overhung the foot of the Falls. A large white pine swayed and sighed above them, answering back the sweet voices of the water, as ghosts may be supposed to reply when called upon by earthly prayers. The Falls were in full sight, wild as they came from the Creator's hands, dashing over rocks, singing through chasms, and plunging downward with a force that made the trees on either bank tremble as if nature were stricken with fear, while contemplating its own wild works.

Before the late snow there had been a thaw in the Highlands, and the Yantic was full to overflowing. Thus the rush of its waters took a force and volume almost terrific,—a force that even the sharp frost could not chain, though it fringed each rock with jewels, and scattered beauty everywhere around.

In the summer time the Yantic cataract was beautiful; from the leafy luxuriance of its trees, the profusion of wild blossoms that drank life from its spray, and the rich fleeces of emerald moss that clothed its rocks. But, now that the elms, and oaks, and ash trees were naked from root to branch,—when the flowers were all dead, and the moss crusted with snow, or jeweled with ice, the power of winter had run riot in the affluence of its beauty.

Around the Falls every shrub and slender tree was drooping and alive with a fruitage of ice. Alder, spice-bushes, and long, brown ferns, seemed budding and

blossoming with diamonds instead of leaves. Wild grape-vines, heavy with stalactites that shone like prisms whenever a gleam of sunshine reached them, chained the cliffs together with ropes of crystal. All the broken rocks and sharp ledges through which the cataract hurled itself, were crested with fleeces of snow and drifts of hail, which the winds tossed from point to point, and scattered into new forms with every gust. Down these rocks, draping and crowning them, hung masses of delicate ice-work, forming ten thousand exquisite designs, which no art ever reached, and no pen can describe.

Through all this bright tumult the Yantic leaped, in great waves of foam and crystal, shooting up whirlwinds of spray with every plunge, which froze as it fell a wild storm of brilliants, rattling over the crusted snow, shooting through the evergreens, and clinging to each naked shrub, till a burst of sunshine shone up from the bed of the fall in faint rainbows and turned them into drops of flame.

This was the scene upon which Arnold and his companion came with a sudden surprise. It is seldom that the elements combine to give a picture so rare. The human being who sees one in a lifetime, may be sure that he has caught one glimpse of beauty which the hereafter can hardly surpass.

Both Arnold and his companion were struck dumb, and stood there with the pine-trees drooping under ten thousand snow-wreaths high above them, the hemlocks trembling under their bright load, and the wild voice of the waters, answered hoarsely by the saw-mill just in sight.

At first Laura grew pale; then the glow came back from her heart, and a singular beauty flashed over her face.

The scene around her was full of inspiration, and out from the depths of her being came an enthusiasm so deep that, for the instant, her soul rose grandly away from its earthliness.

She turned her eyes on Arnold, unconsciously claiming sympathy with these feelings. He was looking toward the saw-mill, with a hard, almost bitter expression of the eye that chilled her in an instant.

"Have you seen this so often?" she said, with a feeling of disappointment. "To me the sense of beauty here becomes almost painful. Use could never change this, I am sure."

"I," said Arnold, starting, "I was thinking how harshly that eternal saw grates through all the sweet noises of the water. If some flood would sweep the mill away, it might be doing good service."

"Ah! don't say that!" answered Laura. "It is a fine object from this point. One gets an idea of life and industry from it; otherwise this whole scene would seem unnaturally wild."

"It is a rude, unsightly thing, and I hate it," said Arnold, bitterly.

"The sound is not sweet, certainly, but it suggests many noble thoughts. All this vast water-power was intended for something more grand than beauty; yet, how perfectly the ideal is satisfied here, while the real toils for human good down yonder."

Arnold laughed, a low, sweet laugh, but still it did not melt harmoniously into the anthems thrown out by the cataract, and singing under the translucent ice-traceries. Laura felt the discord, for all her refined feelings were exceedingly acute for the time, while his heart was full of bitterness.

"I did not know that you were a philosopher, sweet lady," he said, at last.

There was a sneer in his voice that irritated her. She turned her back to the waterfall, disquieted and half angry.

"Have we no feeling, no thought, in common?" she murmured, in a sad undertone, "even in a spot so much like heaven as this."

His ear gathered up these whispers as they fell.

"Yes," he answered, in tones almost as low, *one feeling, one thought, else what would life be worth.*"

She turned quickly, with the roses all aglow in her face. But he checked himself on the instant, adding, "Friendship has many thoughts, and feelings in common."

She turned abruptly, and was about to leave the ledge on which they were standing. He checked her with a gentle touch of the hand.

"Why detain me?" she said, almost with tears in her eyes, "I am tired of all these rushing sounds."

"But I have not told you about this rock crowned by the great pine-tree that looms over us: it has a history which touches the imagination. It was from this rock the Mohegan Indians leaped into the boiling flood at our feet, rather than fall into the power of the victorious Narragansetts, when the Indian wars raged in this neighborhood. A brave race were the savages who once held these forests. That, after all, is life; to be the leader of daring men, in forest, or field, I would give up every thing else."

"What! every thing?" said Laura, flushing warmly.

"Yes, every thing, and almost everybody," replied Arnold, kindling with the fierce animal courage, that was the redeeming point of his character. "To subdue

opinions—to fight—to conquer—to enjoy triumph to the utmost—that is real existence.”

“I can understand this if great results are to follow strife—to struggle for outraged rights—for freedom, when it is withheld—to protect the weak and defend the good; this makes warfare glorious—but bloodshed for the sake of bloodshed is terrible.”

Laura spoke with power; her eye kindled and her lips curved grandly. There was sympathy between them at the moment, for both were courageous to a fault—she in her moral enthusiasm, he in physical daring.

“Any thing,” said Arnold, bitterly, “any thing but measuring tape at a counter, or salt on the deck of a vessel; such occupations outrage one’s manhood.”

“Does any thing outrage manhood which is not wrong?” said Laura, gently, but with a gleam of pride in her face, for Arnold looked a hero while he was speaking, and every woman loves a spirit of daring in the man she looks up to, even if wrongfully directed.

“That depends on the person—I have no talent for the drudgery of work or trade, but where is the chance for any thing else now-a-days? The Indians are all driven back, and there is no field of valor left to an American. If the country would rise up against our masters over sea, there might be hope; but we are too busy raising corn and importing slaves for that.”

“But the time may come, must, in the course of events,” said Laura; “this great land cannot always remain a colony to England.”

“Oh! if you should prove a prophetess, as well as the most charming woman on earth, worship would be too little for you.”

Laura laughed, drew her hand from his, and said, “It

was time to look after the horse and sleigh, the story of the Mohegans had made them both too romantic.”

By this coquettish movement the imprudent declaration, which seemed constantly on Arnold’s lip, was driven back again, and they began to retrace their step toward the road. As he came in sight of the sleigh, Arnold uttered a quick exclamation, and with a hurried request that Laura would wait for him, dashed down the road.

The horse had got tired of waiting in the cold, planted up to his knees in snow; he had been fastened to a slender sapling, which grew among the brushwood by the highway; the very frailty of his bondage, perhaps, tempted him; at any rate, after stamping the snow about with angry vehemence, and having shaken the buffalo robe completely off, he began to pull at the slender tree with a violence that splintered it in the middle, and left one half dangling to the halter.

Thus free, away went the spirited animal, sweeping the cutter after him into the road, down which he dashed, homeward bound, with a tumult of bells that made the cold air ring again.

Leonard heard the noise as he was setting his saw for its sixth journey down the great pine log it was converting into boards, and calling to Amy that he would be back in a minute if she would watch the mill, away he went, full run, after the horse.

Laura watched the chase a moment, laughing cheerily at the strife of speed between the horse and its master, then she began to feel the cutting wind, and looked around for shelter. The saw-mill stood temptingly near; she had been crazy to visit it from the first—a splendid view of the fall could be obtained from one end, which looked up the

stream. The moment was opportune, one glimpse at the cataract from a distance would satisfy her entirely.

She turned with the first thought, seized hold of a young spruce-tree, slid down the crusted bank with a merry laugh, and leaping across some loose rocks, landed in the saw-mill—landed face to face with Amy Leonard, who turned white as death, and shrunk back at the approach of this brilliant stranger. She knew the face—knew the flow of that white ostrich feather at once, and her whole being shrunk and quivered, with a feeling so much more keen than she had ever known before, that it was accompanied with a terrible dread.

"Pardon, *ma belle*—that is, I beg to be excused for this rude entrance, young lady. I did not know that any one was here."

Amy lifted her eyes to the bright face with a sort of terror. Her lips parted to speak, but no words came; then she turned, anxious to escape anywhere, or in any way.

Laura mistook this emotion, which held the poor girl a slave beneath her eyes, and said, with an air of graceful deprecation,

"Ah! I understand; you dislike my broken English, when I, vain thing, fancy it so perfect; or, perhaps, I frightened you by that wild leap. It was the spruce-tree springing back, that sent me off like an arrow. *Ah, ma chère petite*, don't be afraid of me, I'm so harmless, like a bird in the woods; and you see I must stay somewhere till Monsieur, I mean Mr. Arnold, brings back his horse."

"I'm not afraid—not in the least," said Amy, with a gentle lift of the head, which sprang from the pride within her.

"But you tremble so, *pauvre enfant*."

"It is with the cold, then."

"Ah, yes, the wind does rage down this hollow like a tiger,—and the falls, how plainly we can hear them roar! Can I see them from that opening in the boards?"

Amy bent her head: the mention of Arnold's name had taken away her speech once more.

Laura was vexed by this coldness, and with an impatient sweep of her person moved on. A single step brought her in contact with the saw, which was steadily eating its way through the pine log. She darted aside, gave a frightened leap, and landed on a loose plank, where she made a wild effort to recover herself; but with the next movement one end of the plank sprang upward, tearing a chasm in the floor, through which she was hurled with a shriek that rose sharp and loud above the rush of the cataract and the rasp of the saw.

A blow upon the heart had petrified Amy: a cry for help gave back all her powers. Her first effort was to stop the saw and the rush of water. She had seen her father do it a hundred times, but would her strength avail? Another cry, faint and smothered, gave her a power almost super-human. It was wonderful to see the great saw obeying the force of those small hands, give up its bite on the wood and sink into helplessness.

With almost supernatural strength she had chained the waters, but now the shrieks rose sharp and fast from the abyss beneath. She fell upon her knees by the chasm through which the stranger had fallen, and, clinging to the rough boards, looked down, searching the deep for some trace of the human life sinking and pleading there. The water rose high and dark under the mill, pouring with destructive force through the sluiceway, and crushing the blocks of ice between the huge logs that floated there.

Amy saw the strange girl clinging desperately to the end of a great sodden log, which swayed in the current, and sunk under her weight with terrible threats of death. Even in the dark, and through the blinding water, those wild eyes looked out pleading for life.

Amy stood up, uttered one cry for help, and, grasping the firm edge of a plank, flung herself down the abyss. With a lithe effort of the limbs she sprang to a cross-beam, wreathed one arm around it, and dropped to a log against that to which Laura clung. It knocked and jarred fearfully, threatening every instant to roll over in the water; but to this uncertain support the young girl swung herself. The sodden bark gave way beneath her feet and fell in black patches to the water. Besides this, ice had gathered over the log, and treacherously betrayed every effort to support herself. She flung herself upon her face, clinging to the log with one arm, and throwing the other blindly out, calling for Laura to seize upon it without fear. No answer came; nothing but a gurgle of the waters, and then a rushing plunge of the log to which the wretched girl had clung. Still Amy writhed her limbs about the log, and stretched farther and farther over the waters, striking out wildly, and shaking the blinding drops from her eyes. Something floated against her hand, she clutched it with a sob of joy. It was the ostrich-plume and the white bonnet, a wet mass that shrunk to nothing in her grasp. Then her hand became entangled in another substance, that weltered up from the blackness like seaweed in a tempest; she knew that it was human hair,—that the girl had sunk and was rising to the surface. A moment and she would be gone forever.

Amy half lifted herself from her support, wound her hands in the floating hair, and cried out for the young crea-

ture to seize upon her, and climb up the log: it was large, and might hold them both till help came.

Laura evidently heard, for a white arm started up from the water and wound itself around Amy's neck, clinging there with such mad frenzy that the noble girl was half dragged into the flood, where the other struggled for life. Higher and higher that white wild face was lifted from the water, till it rose close to the other, so close that Amy felt the icy rain from those tresses dripping over her in streams.

But blinded, weak and chilled as she was, the brave girl felt her strength giving way. Inch by inch she was dragged into the water, spite of her courage, spite of the desperation with which she clung to a support that began to dip and turn under its increased burden.

Laura made an agonized effort to save herself, the log gave a plunge, and rose with half its bark stripped off. Both girls were struggling in the deep, groping out for the loose bark, catching at the logs, and uttering choked screams that rose horribly through the gusts of wind wailing around the old mill. They sunk once and rose again, clinging together, both wild faces blinded by the long tresses of the French girl, freezing in each other's arms.

Again the current seized upon them, but a rush of footsteps shook the boards overhead, and down through the opening leaped a human form, which tore the French girl out from the water, and left Amy struggling alone.

She felt it, even in the agonies of death. The chill of that desertion struck to her heart colder than the ice that beat against it. Clinging to the splintered end of a log, against which she had drifted, consciousness grew keen within her. She knew that, somehow, Arnold, her husband, was climbing upward through the weltering timbers,

bearing her rival away to safety, while she was left behind, freezing to death. He wished her to die,—for that he had left her. She must sink there and be swept under the logs, through the whirling drift-wood,—away into eternal darkness, while they mounted to life and light. Be it so. Her freezing fingers lost their hold on the wood: her very soul grew cold. She felt a great rushing of waters over her head, and then, above all, a hoarse shout, “My child! my child! Amy! Amy!”

Down through the broken floor,—down to the ice-clad logs into the black waters,—Joshua Leonard plunged, dove, rose again, and made another swoop under the timbers, huddled together by the current, searching madly for his child,—the brave young creature that had been swept away before his eyes.

He was gone a long, long time,—an eternity if any loving heart had looked on, a minute in the silence of that lonely place. At length he came up between two huge logs, beating the water with one arm, and holding her to his breast with the other. He was a powerful man, and seizing on the slippery logs turned them into slaves, and, crowding them close together, strode over the uncertain bridge so quickly that there was no time for danger, till he reached some projecting timbers, and climbing up them came out in the upper mill.

No one was there; Arnold had carried Laura into the cabin, and Mrs. Leonard, all unconscious of her child's danger, was striving to unfasten the heavy garments that still clung around her. While she was stooping kindly over the helpless girl the cabin-door flew open, and Leonard came in, with Amy held tightly to his broad chest.

CHAPTER X.

AFTER THE RESCUE—ANTIPATHIES AND REPULSIONS— JOSHUA'S ANGUISH.

MRS. LEONARD started up, left Laura prostrate on the floor, with her head resting on Arnold's knee, and went to the help of her own child.

“Oh! Amy! Amy! how did this come about?” she cried, while the tears rained down her face. “You in danger in the water, and I staying here with her! Oh! Joshua, Joshua, I did not know it! I did not know it!”

“Get some blankets hot. Don't wait to cry!”

“But she is dead. Her face is cold as snow!”

“No, her heart beats against mine,—a weak flutter, but it is life!” said Leonard, while great tears of thankfulness stole down his face. “I felt it in the saw-mill,—it beats yet. Thank God she is alive!”

Arnold looked up harshly, as the old man thanked God for his child. Had he really wished her to die? One would think so from his face, and from the sharp bitterness with which he spoke.

“And must this poor lady be left to die because your daughter has got hurt?” he said.

Amy heard the words, and moaned on her father's bosom.

“God forgive me!” cried Mrs. Leonard, stricken in her conscience; “but blood is thicker than water, and she is our only child.”

“Yes, but, nevertheless, we should not forget the

stranger within our gates," said Joshua, looking compassionately on the insensible French girl; for the moaning voice of his child had reassured him, and his good heart was broad enough for more than her, now that his worst fears were over.

"Here, undress the poor lady, mother, while I heat some blankets to wrap them in."

"Give her to me," said the good housewife, busying herself about the French girl, but still casting anxious looks at her own child. "There now, father, bring out the warming-pan,—heap it with red-hot coals. Never mind scorching the sheets. Sprinkle a handful of brown sugar over the coals, and let Ben Arnold warm the bed in that room, while you heat the blankets to wrap them up in."

While the good woman spoke, she was taking off Laura's cloak and over-garments, wringing out the ice as it melted from her hair, and strove to force her heart into the work; though it would go where nature sent it, spite of her husband's commands. Nay, I fear that she surreptitiously left the stranger, when the two men were safely shut up in the bedroom, and took off Amy's wet garments first, bestowing a burst of tears and pitying kisses on her pale face and arms, as she rolled her in the hot blankets, and flung the warmest comforter over her.

Then, smitten with a sense of her own selfishness, she returned to the stranger, sufficiently reassured to take considerable interest in the gold chain which she removed from her neck, and to remark the embroidery with which the delicate linen was enriched, with a wonder that approached condemnation. But when she saw how cold and marble-like was the form beneath, her good heart rose again, and she wrapped the helpless girl up with motherly

tenderness, gentle as that bestowed on her own child, hoping, with tears in her eyes, that life might not be quite gone.

At last the bed was prepared, and those young creatures were laid within it, side by side, lovingly as if they had been sisters. Joshua Leonard heaped wood on the fire, muttering thankful prayers all the time; but Arnold grew restless when he saw the two girls lying there, so close together, and began pacing the floor with abrupt strides, as if there were bitterness somewhere in his heart that required motion.

"Has she moved yet? Has she opened her eyes?" he demanded, with a degree of impatience that amounted to imperiousness, as Mrs. Leonard came from the bed with a brighter face than she had worn yet.

"Yes, she opened her eyes, and—and whispered something. I am almost sure it was mother that she said."

Arnold turned away impatiently; then looked back, and, suppressing some word that had sprung to his lip, said,

"I was speaking of the young lady, Mrs. Leonard."

"And forgot to care whether Amy lived or died? I'm very much obliged, Mr. Arnold. If any body had told me this a year ago, I shouldn't a-believed it,—no, not if it had been the minister himself."

Arnold turned pale, and then flushed angrily.

"The young lady is under my care, Mrs. Leonard. I am responsible for her safety; though, heaven knows, I had no idea of her going down to that rickety old mill, and would have prevented it at any cost. But the chances and her own obstinacy have been against me, ever since we started from home. Then that infernal horse must break loose, and force me to leave her when

her imagination was all bewildered, and her pride aroused; but how she came into that water-trap, I cannot imagine, unless your precious daughter, who was evidently in the mill, enticed her.

The last part of this speech was muttered in an undertone, and after Mrs. Leonard had entered the bedroom, in answer to a low voice that called,

"Mother," said the voice, "she has moved a little. She is beginning to breathe. I have had her hand between both mine. See if it isn't growing warmer."

Mrs. Leonard put her hand under the bedclothes, and laid it on the French girl's heart. It fluttered against her palm, growing stronger with each beat.

"Yes, yes, Amy, she's getting warm, sure enough. There now, did you ever? her eyes are wide open, and she is trying to speak."

A low moan came from Amy's side of the bed, and, turning her face on the pillow, she began to cry, but so noiselessly, that no one heard her.

The French girl did not speak, but her eyes wandered around the room, as if searching for some person.

Arnold was in the next room, but his tread, as he moved up and down, could be plainly heard.

"Who is that?" she whispered, with a struggle.

"No one who will disturb you," said Mrs. Leonard, whose heart, from some mysterious cause, began to rise against the poor girl.

"But I know it is *his* step," murmured the dreaming girl, "I know it is his step," and, as if this certainty composed her, she dropped off into sleep, almost smiling.

Amy listened, and shrunk away farther and farther toward the verge of the bed. By-and-by Arnold's step approached the door, and paused there. Then the chill

came over that delicate frame once more, and she began to shiver; for the remembrance that she had been left to die in the water, fell sharply upon her, and she wondered why God had permitted her to be saved when life was such pain.

The step aroused Laura again. She put up her hand, pulled the blankets down from her face, and strove to lift her head, but life was not strong enough in her for that; she only made a feeble movement, which left a smile on her lips, for she felt that he was drawing near the bed.

Arnold addressed her, for the first time, in very broken and imperfect French,—so imperfect, that she would have smiled at another time; but now it was the sweetest sound on earth, and her fine eyes opened wide, expressing the satisfaction she had no strength to utter in words.

"Tell me—oh! tell me," he said, "that you are better—that no serious harm will come from this, or I shall grow frantic with self-reproach!"

"You saved me," murmured Laura, reaching forth her hand, from which the purple tint had almost faded. He took the hand in his, and a smile of ineffable happiness stole over her face.

"Every time I breathe it will be a joy, because life is now doubly blessed," she said, with a sweet burst of gratitude.

Amy could not understand the words, for they were spoken in French; but the pathos and sweetness of that voice penetrated to her heart like poison. She lay still, holding her breath, and trembling. Then Arnold spoke in English, and made a common-place inquiry about Amy's health, as if the peril had been only for Laura. But the French girl seemed now made aware, for the first time, that some one shared her bed, and with this knowledge came a clear memory of what had passed.

"Ah! yes, there was another,—a sweet girl. But for her I should not have lived till you came, Arnold. She threw herself into that frightful abyss of her own accord. It was her hand that held me up. I sunk, sunk, sunk, dragging her with me. But you saved her also. How good—how grand of you! Ah! never in my life shall I forget that little peasant-girl, with her modesty and her courage. If she asks my life I shall give it to her twice over, for she is brave and beautiful like an angel."

"She speaks of you, Amy Leonard?" said, or rather inquired, Arnold, looking down at the young creature. "She says that you saved her life."

Amy felt herself flush under these praises, cold as her heart was.

"I—I wanted to die," was the pathetic answer, given with a settled mournfulness that touched even him to whom she had become a burden and annoyance.

"You certainly were very near your wish," he said, turning his eyes away.

"And this is my benefactress," said Laura, in English, turning on her pillow with difficulty. "It was you that saved my life. What can I say to you? How can I ever thank you? Oh, if my heart could speak,—that heart which would be frozen under the water but for your brave help! Oh, how I will love you forever and ever! I have been twice saved: by you, and then by him. Poor child! how it trembles! So weak, and yet so strong! So timid, and still so brave! She is not the pretty girl I thought her, but an angel who held me up till you came."

Laura stole an arm over Amy as she spoke thus, from the depths of her grateful heart, and would have kissed her, but the poor girl turned away with a heavy sigh, and closed her eyes to conceal the tears that forced themselves

through the lashes. Then Laura, too, was exhausted, and fell back into silence.

Directly Mrs. Leonard came in from the fire, with a bowl of warm bread and milk in each hand. Seeing Arnold near the bed, her sense of decorum instantly took the alarm, and, setting the bowls upon a little table, she told him plumply that he had better go home and let his mother know, as there wasn't any sort of use in his staying there, just to keep the poor gals awake when they ought to be warm and asleep. That was her opinion, and she asked nothing for giving it, good as it was.

Arnold replied that he had not intended to go home without the young lady, as her brother would be greatly terrified. He thought, even then, that her clothes would be dry in a short time, and she might be well enough to return to his father's house before dark.

That Mrs. Leonard proclaimed impossible; and when he saw how completely Laura was exhausted by the conversation, which had seemed so slight to him, the young man was constrained to give way, and, much against his will, drove off, cursing the accident that had thrown those two females so close together.

When he was gone, Mrs. Leonard sat down by the bed with motherly kindness, which Laura felt to the core of her heart, and fed her with warm milk, as if she had been a child; while Amy turned away her face and pretended to sleep, for she felt sure that a word or motion would set the tears flowing beyond her control.

When Mrs. Leonard had attended to her guest, she went round to Amy, saw how the drops were swelling under those eyelids, and, with gentle fondness, attempted to soothe her.

"There now, daughter, take a spoonful of the warm

milk. Father has gone down to Norwich for the doctor; but, lor, ma is worth a dozen doctors any day, isn't she? Well, well, never mind! Just lay your head agin me, and cry it out if you feel like it," she whispered, caressing the head she had lifted to her bosom. "If it isn't enough to make any person histericky to be in the ice water under a saw-mill on a day like this, I don't know what is. I declare your par was almost froze with one dive, and trembled all over when I gave him his dry clothes. It was a mercy this trouble didn't come on Sunday, or his go-to-meeting suit would a been ruined teetotally. He's got it on to-day—no help for it any how, for the others was dripping. Then about this young lady's things, it really is dreadful. Such fine velvet and broadcloth as her cloak is made on, and her frock—silk as thick as a board—they're a-hanging before the fire, and sending up steam like a dozen tea-kettles. Now, Amy dear, don't you think you could just take a spoonful of the milk? This is wheaten bread in it, white as snow. Come, come, just swaller one mouthful."

Mrs. Leonard was not an artful woman, far from it, but her long speech had a sort of tender deception in it which soothed poor Amy—gave her time to choke back her tears, and wipe away those that would force themselves through her curling lashes. She was grateful, too, for all her mother's fondness, and made an effort to grow strong.

"Yes, mother, give me what you like. I want no better doctor than you are," she said, folding one arm over her mother's neck.

Mrs. Leonard gave the sweet face on her bosom half a dozen kisses without stopping; then she brought the bowl of milk, and Amy forced herself to eat a few mouthfuls,

which brought a glow of strength with them that delighted the mother beyond expression.

Amy turned her eyes on the stranger that so unexpectedly shared her bed, when, convinced that Laura was asleep, she drew her mother's head softly down to her mouth.

"Mother, are you sure that she is asleep?"

Mrs. Leonard, who kept her eyes fixed on the sleeping face, nodded, and whispered "Yes."

"Then let me go to my own bed before any one comes I cannot breathe here."

"Well, finish the bowl of milk and you shall."

Amy took the bowl between her two hands and drained it, leaving only a sediment of white bread in the bottom.

"That's a good girl. Now put one arm—no, both arms round mother's neck, and she'll soon get you up-stairs. Dear me, how like old times it seems, when you was a baby, Amy," she continued, lifting the slight form in her arms, and striving to appear as if the weight were nothing. "I've got a hull chest full of blankets heating before the fire, so I'll just pile them over you, for it's cold up there, and I wouldn't think of letting you get out of this warm nest, only it don't seem to agree with you; then you shall have a wineglass full of cherry bitters, that'll make you sleep like a top, and who cares whether the doctor comes or not? I'm sure I don't."

Thus talking half to amuse her daughter, half because she loved it, the good woman carried Amy across the next room, and, after mounting to the garret with some difficulty, laid her in her own bed, sitting down to rest herself after the effort; for, with all her kindly imagination, she could not lift the girl with so much ease as she had done nineteen years before.

"Mother," said Amy, "do you think—did you see them together? Do you think—he, he——"

The good woman kept her eyes turned resolutely towards the little window which lighted one gable of the cabin; for the world she would not have disturbed that young creature with a look. She did not understand all, kind soul, but enough to bring her native womanliness uppermost. Before the poor child could complete her faltering question she took it up.

"Do I think Ben Arnold cares for her? Not a bit; she's a bird with fine feathers, and he always was for show, but as for the rest, there's nothing in it. There's something wrong about him, Amy, but it isn't that."

"Oh, mother, you think this, and I was so near upbraiding her. When she came dashing down to the mill, with all that finery fluttering in the wind, it seemed as if she wanted to insult me."

"Pooh! nonsense, Amy! Why, with all her silks and ribbons, she isn't half as handsome as my own daughter, and without 'em, look at her now! Why, she lies there like a wet peacock."

"Oh, but, mother, with all that beautiful hair, and those eyes?"

"Just as if you hadn't beautiful hair, and eyes worth a dozen of hers. Don't talk to me!"

Amy was comforted spite of herself. Her mother's positive belief found a willing convert. Then she remembered what he had said to her only a few nights before,—how he had left her to perish in the water while this young stranger was saved.

"But, mother, he saved her, and I was left. I shall never forget it, never! never! to my dying day."

"Well, I never did see such an unreasonable girl; how

was he to pick and choose, up to his neck in water? just as if he wouldn't take the first that came, and off with her! besides, I dare say, she screamed ten times where you did once,—just one of the screechy sort, I'll be bound. Now what on earth are you thinking of; he couldn't drag out two at once, could he? Besides, I should like to see Joshua Leonard stand by while any one saved his child. I'm astonished at your unreasonableness, Amy, and if you wasn't sick, and out of sorts every way, I shouldn't know what to think about it."

Now there never was a creature so thankful to be scolded and rebuked for unreasonableness, as Amy Leonard proved on that occasion. All her mother's soothing had failed to cheer her half so much as this little outburst of maternal disapprobation; for it half persuaded her reason, while the heart remained quiescent in its fears. But for the secret which she was forbidden to confide to any one,—most of all, to either of her parents, she might have been tranquillized; as it was, the pain was still at her heart, but a vague hope seized upon her, that all might yet be right. If he did not love another, and of that Mrs. Leonard seemed entirely confident, all must be well. When he said those cruel things it was to try if, under all circumstances, she could be faithful to his secret. What if she had spoken to the French girl, and given voice to the wild appeal that burned in her when the girl appeared so suddenly in the saw-mill! That would have exasperated him beyond remedy. She thanked God that she had been saved from this temptation, more fervently than she had yet thanked him for her life.

Mrs. Leonard sat and watched the changes of her countenance, as the pain cleared from it, and the gentle tranquillity of weakness settled upon her. Still Amy

could not sink to sleep, for minor troubles came when the great idea was swept away.

"Mother, dear, did I treat her harshly?"

"Harshly? No! What on earth can you mean by such a question?"

"I turned my face away twice, and would not give her my hand when she reached for it."

"Well, what of that! Lips and hands belong to the owner, according to my idea. There was no harm in not kissing a person you had never seen but once in your life."

"Still, I am sorry, mother."

"Well, well, we can make it up to-morrow. Now, go to sleep, or at any rate lie still. The doctor will be here right-off now."

Amy started up in bed. "I don't want to see any doctor, mother. Don't send him up here, if you please. I'm not sick, you know,—only a little chilled and weak. I'll take the cherry bitters,—any thing you give me,—but don't let the doctor come near this room."

Mrs. Leonard looked about the garret with the keen scrutiny of a housewife whose reputation was in question.

"It seems to me that every thing is in its place, Amy; and the room looks as well as a cabin can be expected to. Yet, if you're ashamed of it, why then——"

"Oh, it isn't that, mother: only I hate medicine, and don't need any. So just promise that he shan't come up here to spoil all that you have done."

There was no resisting this subtle flattery. If Mrs. Leonard had a weakness beside that of promiscuous talking about nothing, it was that of believing herself a family physician of the first order. That this belief was not altogether unfounded, the general good health of her family testified; so she gave her daughter the required

promise without more contest, and went down-stairs after the cherry bitters, which was the crowning glory of her cupboard!

Laura was sound asleep when her hostess went down; but nothing could withhold Mrs. Leonard from tempting her also with the cordial. She made a tumult among the bottles and glasses that soon aroused the stranger from her slumbers; then, with a little extra bustle, and some consequential smiles, she came forward with a bottle in one hand, which she emptied very slowly into a tall, slender glass which she held in the other.

"Take this," she said, smiling blandly; "it will make you sleep like a top. I never knew it fail, when a person was worried out, in my whole life. I'm just a-carrying some up to Amy. She was afraid of crowding you, so I took her up-stairs. Come, just let me lift your head a little. There, now, take a good swaller: it'll make the blood tingle, I can tell you."

Laura drank the ruby liquid with docility, murmured that she hoped Amy was better, and sunk to rest again, yielding heavily to the exhaustion that oppressed her.

Amy only slept in snatches. A thought that the doctor might come up to her room when she was asleep, spite of her mother's promise, troubled her greatly. The sound of the waterfall, reminding her of the tumultuous rush of waves, in which she seemed again struggling, kept her restless. If she closed her eyes, it was to feel herself plunging down, down, into a gulf of waters, in which huge black logs were floating like monsters ready to devour her. Then she dreamed of Arnold,—a strange, weird dream, that made her moan and weep in the midst of her slumbers. She thought that he, instead of her mother, held the blood-red potion and tall wine-glass at

her bedside. She saw by his face and knew in her heart that there was poison in the liquid, and that he wished her to drink it and die. Still she was determined to drain the glass: when death came from his hands she would not reject it. But all at once a little child—an angel child—floated down from some invisible place in the room, and spread its wings, delicate as star-beams, over the glass. Reach forth her hand, or struggle as she would, there was the angel child, guarding the cup with his wings, and she could not drink,—even to please him.

From this dream she awoke with a wild start, for there was a sound of bells stopping suddenly before the house: and the tramp of feet on the doorstep made her tremble.

CHAPTER XI.

THE VILLAGE DOCTOR—HIS TWO PATIENTS.

It was the doctor from Norwich, who left his horse tied to the fence knee-deep in snow while he went up to the cabin with a pair of leathern saddle-bags swung over his arm and a riding-whip in his hand.

Mrs. Leonard met him at the door, ready with a broom to sweep the snow from his boots.

"Oh, bother: never mind the snow. What of my patients, ha?—drowned or froze to death,—which?"

"They are both alive and comfortable, I reckon," said Mrs. Leonard, with the air of one who felt conscious of deserving praise and meant to have it.

"What have you done for 'em, ha?"

"Rolled 'em in blankets before the fire at first; heated the bed with burnt sugar till it smoked again, and tucked 'em in."

"All right, as if I'd been here myself. Pure good sense,—good sense, Mrs. Leonard. Only what on earth did you send after me for?"

"It's best to be sure one is doing right, you know, doctor. Besides, the old man wouldn't a been contented without you. He thinks nobody don't know nothing that hasn't been to college: so just step in and let me shut the door. The young lady is in the next room,—Amy is upstairs."

"I'll go to her first, poor girl!" said the doctor. "I mustn't let her suffer, whatever comes of it. If your husband hadn't hurried on after young Arnold, I shouldn't have known that Amy was under the mill at all. The young chap only spoke of the French girl."

"Never mind about that jest now, doctor," said Mrs. Leonard, quickly, while she rattled the great iron tongs about the fire, that Amy might not hear; "but just go in and see the young lady. I'll make a mug of hot flip agin you come out."

The doctor took his saddle-bags from behind the door, where he had placed them, and went into the inner room, talking cheerfully.

Laura had been aroused from sleep by his entrance; for there was an outbreak of cheerfulness in his voice that carried an idea of warmth with it. She looked out from among the blankets as he came in, and her eyes shone with pleasant astonishment. The grand symmetrical head,—that voice, so full of genial intelligence,—the brusque benevolence of his address, gave a glow to the heart that had hitherto rested like ice in her bosom.

All unconsciously she smiled as the face beamed upon her.

"Well, my dear, and so you have had a ducking, eh! Wonder you ever got out of that bottomless pit under the saw-mill. Narrow chance,—narrow chance, I can tell you."

"I know it," said Laura, gratefully. "If the young lady—Miss Leonard, I mean—hadn't been courageous as a lion and good as an angel, I must have perished!"

"Then it was Amy, my pet of pets, that got you out? Just like her,—just like her! The goodness that is, but I'd no idea she had so much strength. So little Amy saved your life, my girl! Have you thanked God for that? Will you continue to thank him all the days of your life?"

"I have only remembered to thank her as yet," said Laura, a little disturbed. "The shock was so great, the chill so cutting, I have hardly felt the power to think till your voice awoke me."

"Well, well, with life gratitude should come, and I dare say it will, for you seem a sensible girl, and it would have been a pity to have lost you under the ice. Cold yet, ha? give me your wrist."

Laura drew her delicate hand out from its shelter in the blankets, and laid it in the doctor's broad palm.

"Soft as a silk-weed pod," he said, holding the hand in one palm while he smothered it down with the other tenderly, as if it had been a pet dove. "Never knew what it was to work, I dare say?"

"No," said Laura, smiling: "it is not necessary. I am only a useless, spoiled girl, doctor, with no one but my brother to love me very much."

"And, of course, no one to control you?" said the doctor.

"Control? oh no, I shouldn't like that," said the girl, with an impatient movement of the head.

The doctor pressed her hand in his, shook it with an anxious sort of sympathy, exclaimed once or twice, "Poor thing! poor thing!" and then began his professional part of the visit in good earnest.

"Cold yet?"

"Not exactly,—a shuddering sort of chill creeping through and through me, but not that horrible icy feel."

"Pain?"

"Not absolute pain, but—but vague aches, as if I had been bruised."

"Have, no doubt. Mrs. Leonard?"

"Well, doctor," cried the good woman, coming to the bedroom with a pair of red-hot tongs in her hand, which she had just drawn from the mug of hissing flip.

"Any wormwood in the house?"

"Wormwood? Whoever heard of a house without wormwood in it, not to say catnip, pennyroyal, and wild turnip? Of course I've got plenty of wormwood, doctor."

"Steep some in hot water then, and lay it all over this young lady's chest,—put something warm to her feet. And then, my dear, go to sleep again; for that is all I can do just now."

"But when shall I be well enough to get up, doctor?"

"Well enough? Why to-morrow, I dare say. One good ducking shouldn't keep you in bed longer than that."

Laura turned her cheek contentedly to the pillow and closed her eyes. The doctor laid her hand softly into the bed, as he would have returned a bird to its nest, and went out smiling benignly as he entered the outer room.

"Here," said Mrs. Leonard, lifting a brown earthen mug foaming over with the drink she had been brewing,

and bearing it towards him; "here's a mug of flip that'll do your heart good, doctor."

Dr. Blake took the brown mug from her hands, looked into its depths with a smiling countenance, lifted it to his mouth and drank. Slowly the bottom of the mug rose in sight, and then with a deep, deep sigh, mellow as the wind which sweeps over an orchard of ripe apples, he returned the mug to its level, and looked into Mrs. Leonard's face with a glance of sunny approval that went to her heart.

"Capital flip, Mrs. Leonard. There isn't another woman in Norwich that could offer one a treat like that!"

"Supposing you take another drink," said Mrs. Leonard, coloring with honest vanity. "I've got the tongs heating agin, and can have a fresh mug ready before the old man comes in."

"Supposing I do!" said the doctor, eyeing the drink with a side glance, and shaking it gently in the mug before he lifted it to his moist lips again. "There, Mrs. Leonard, I feel like another man. Don't forget to fill up for my friend Joshua, while I go to little Amy. A noble girl that, Mrs. Leonard,—one in a thousand,—gentle as a dove, and brave as a warrior. Some fine stuff in the young French girl yonder, but nothing to Amy! The ladder is quite safe, I suppose. Why didn't the child stay downstairs: there was room enough in the bed for two?"

"But Amy wanted to be alone. She didn't quite seem to take to her," said Mrs. Leonard, nodding her head towards the inner room.

"I understand," cried the doctor, looking over his shoulder as he mounted the rude steps; "natural enough too."

Amy was very ill, and shivered painfully when the doctor came to her bed. There was a sort of terror in her

eyes, which reminded him of a poor little rabbit that he had seen taken from a box-trap that morning, whose soft glance was turned imploringly on its captor. It seemed as if Amy were begging him to spare her, and he laughed at the idea; for the pretty little animal, whose only fault had been a love of sweet apples, seemed to him no more innocent than the young girl.

"And so, Amy, you have been in the mill-race, like a precious, darling little dunce, have you? Why, child, it's a miracle you ever came out. Do you know that I've a great mind to keep you in bed a week for it? How can you look me in the face after such work?"

"I—I couldn't help it, doctor. It all happened before I had time to be afraid. She was sinking, you know, and, and——"

"You jumped in, like a brave girl. I wouldn't have believed it of you, Amy Leonard."

"Oh, if you had seen her eyes,—those great, wild eyes pleading upward, and her poor hands slipping away from the log! Indeed, indeed, I could not help it."

"Couldn't help it? Of course you couldn't,—but come, come. Let's see if you have been hurt by this crazy leap: give me your hand."

Amy reached out her little brown hand, which the doctor took with far more tender reverence than had marked his conduct with Laura. He felt the pulse, exclaiming,

"Child, what is this? Your pulse beats like a trip-hammer. Is it fever or fright? Why, how this poor little hand shakes: don't snatch it away yet."

"Oh, I'm not sick; but sometimes my heart beats fast, and then, of course, the pulse rises. I only want a little sleep to be quite well, doctor. Say that to mother, or she'll be fretting about me."

"But you are not well. You tremble, and have fallen away: your eyes are growing large. Tell me, Amy, were you quite well before this happened?"

"Quite well; yes, I—I don't know!"

The doctor looked at her very gravely, and shook his head, at which she shrunk away, protesting that nothing was the matter.

"This will never do," cried the doctor. "You are worse off a great deal than the young woman down-stairs. Your mother should have kept you there."

"No, no, I could not stay. She is strange,—that young lady I mean. I could not breathe."

"Poor little fawn, how earnest you look! Well, well, the young lady will be able to go home in the morning, and then we will have you down-stairs, while I ransack the old saddle-bags for something that will make you strong."

"But I am strong."

"My fawn, you are no such thing. I must have a talk with your mother about it. You've been pining about something, girl-like."

"Oh, doctor, this is cruel!" cried the poor girl, turning more and more pallid, while her eyes filled with tears.

"Cruel, indeed! I only hope everybody will be as kind."

"But what do you wish to frighten mother for? I am well. How could I have held that young lady up in the water if I hadn't been strong?" pleaded the poor girl, piteously.

"That's very true," answered the doctor, with the tone and manner of a person who yields without conviction.

"To-morrow you will be down-stairs, as smart as ever."

"Yes—yes," she answered, eagerly.

"But I will drop in now and then as I ride by the falls, just to see how you get along."

"Yes." The word came very faintly from those pale lips.

"So now good-by," he said, pleasantly. "Keep your arms under the bedclothes, and drink what I shall send you without making faces. Do you hear?"

"Yes, doctor."

Dr. Blake went down the steps backward, and thus entered the room where Mrs. Leonard was waiting.

"Well, doctor, has she got over the fright?"

"Oh, she'll do well enough!" answered Dr. Blake, kneeling down by his saddle-bags, and preparing to open them. "Bring me a case-knife with a narrow point. That will answer. Now a scrap of paper. Not very strong lately, —the girl I mean?"

"What? My Amy?"

"Yes, Amy. Touch of the high-po, now and then, ha?"

"Why yes," said the kind mother, drawing close to the doctor, as he measured some powders on the point of her case-knife and folded them in tiny bits of paper. "Yes: she's been sort of down-hearted and good-for-nothing lately; yet nothing really seems to be the matter,—sort of feeble, that's all."

"Oh, ailing. A little restless, over and beyond any thing else, I dare say."

"Jes' so, doctor."

"Anxious and watching, as if she expected some one, or was afraid of something?"

"Yes, sort of fidgety."

"Starts when you speak to her suddenly?"

"Yes, that's jest it."

"Seems ready to burst out a-crying once in a while?"

"Yes, and does it, too."

"Especially if you speak very kindly to her?"

"That has puzzled me, doctor. She can't seem ter bear petting as she used ter."

"That will do," said the doctor, giving Mrs. Leonard the medicine, and buckling the straps of his saddle-bags.

"Fine young woman in there,—visiting at the Arnolds, I believe? Your daughter has been in New Haven: I suppose she saw young Arnold there?"

"Why I reckon so,—of course. Why not?"

"Why not! Indeed he's a smart chap,—too smart for these parts,—above visiting his old friends, I dare say."

"Nothing of the sort, doctor," cried Mrs. Leonard, blushing in her eagerness to defend the young man. "He was up here the second night after he came home. Jest as friendly as ever."

"To see you and Joshua?"

"Why yes—he came to see us all, I reckon."

Dr. Blake swung the saddle-bags over his arm, and went out rather abruptly, and with a cloud on his fine features. As he trotted off through the snow, the anxious expression grew deeper on his face.

"I wonder," he said, looking back upon the cabin, "I wonder if there has ever been a spot so remote that this one cause of heartache could not penetrate it. The child is too deep in love for any medicine of mine to bring her out, and jealous, too, poor thing. No wonder. The young scoundrel dragged out the showy French girl, and left the little one to help herself,—the hound!"

All unconsciously the doctor lashed out with his whip, which gave energy to his thought, and set his horse off into a floundering gallop that flung a storm of snow all around him. Just then he met Benedict Arnold coming back

in the little cutter at a rapid pace, with his mother muffled up in the furs by his side. The doctor's fingers tingled with their tight pressure on the whip-handle as the cutter dashed towards him.

"Stop! son, stop!" cried Mrs. Arnold, laying her hand on the reins, which her son handled with jockey-like ability. "Here is the doctor!"

Arnold drew his horse up with a sudden crash of the bells, and his mother called out, in her sweet, low voice,

"Doctor! doctor! How are they? Is there any danger?"

The doctor drew his horse close by the cutter, and without looking at Arnold addressed his mother.

"Not if they are left in peace, Mrs. Arnold; but you must not go up there now."

"But—but they will want care, and my son is so anxious. I could hardly persuade him to stay at home long enough to change his wet clothes."

"Anxious! what about?" cried the doctor, looking full at the young man. "Is it the French girl, with her frippery and her airs; or Amy Leonard, the poor girl whom he left to sink or swim as she could?"

"I am responsible to you neither for my actions nor my feelings, Dr. Blake," said Arnold, insolently.

"But you will be responsible to God for this day's work, young man, and for that of many another day that has gone before," said the doctor, with a sternness that was almost solemn.

Arnold did not speak at once, but quick rage flamed into his eyes, and left his quivering lips pale as the snow that lay around him. He lifted the long whip, as if to lash at the doctor, but curved his hand promptly, broke into a defiant laugh, and the blow fell with stinging vio-

lence on the spirited horse attached to the cutter. The horse gave a wild leap sideways: and then the ferocious courage of the young man broke forth with brutal violence. Drawing the reins tight with one hand, he stood up, and the long lash curled and quivered like a snake around the generous beast, who reared, plunged, and fought against the strain upon his mouth till his limbs shook, and drops of blood fell from his torn lips upon the snow. Still, such was the strength of anger in the young man, that he held the animal firmly, rave and tear as he would. Mrs. Arnold grew pale in the face of this brutal strife, and now and then cried out, in a plaintive way:

"Benedict! Oh! Benedict, don't!" which her son heeded no more than a tempest stops to hear the whispered complaint of a snow-drop.

At last the horse stood, tamed and trembling, in his tracks; then Arnold turned fiercely on the doctor, and demanded what he meant by attempting to stop them on the way.

Dr. Blake, who had been gravely watching the contest between the poor brute and the brutal man, simply replied that the strange young lady had good nursing, and was getting along well,—so well that he did not wish her disturbed, even by her friends, who could not fail to be in the way in a small house already overfull. The doctor looked at Mrs. Arnold as he spoke; and she, in her gentle way, which had a kind of sweet authority in it, said at once that it was best to return home. For the world she would not intrude herself into neighbor Leonard's house, unless she could be of use.

This decision, gently as it was given, Arnold was obliged to respect; for his mother had yet a strong influence over his wayward nature: so, wheeling the horse,

he drove sullenly back, without a word or bow for the doctor.

Mrs. Arnold looked back, and bowed two or three times, as if to atone for this rudeness,—at which the doctor muttered.

"Poor woman! unhappy mother! there is deeper sorrow for you yet."

With these words the good man turned into a cross-road which led to another patient, ruminating, as he trotted along, upon the cases he had left behind in the log cabin.

CHAPTER XII.

THE GUEST'S RETURN.

WHEN Mr. Arnold's double-sleigh drove up to the farmhouse the next morning, the whole family gathered at the front-door to receive the guest, now rendered doubly interesting from her recent peril. She was subdued and pale,—not so much from illness, it would seem, as from the chastening reflections that sprung out of the great peril she had been in, and a deeply grateful feeling toward those who had saved her from it. There was no light coquetry in her manner to Arnold now. With delicate and touching humility she had leaned upon his arm, and permitted him almost to carry her from the cabin, though Paul stood by, ready to perform this brotherly office. She smiled gratefully, as Arnold's hands gathered the furs around her and held them in place with his circling arm. She was so thankful for life,—so glad to flee from that

black, ravenous vortex of waters where death had seemed dragging her down and engulfing her in terrible darkness. An intense love of life, of her own personality, had seized upon her, with the first realization of what death was. She clasped her rosy palms together under the fur, with a sort of ecstasy, rejoicing in the warmth, and shuddering to think how cold and dark they might have been, weltering under those logs. Now and then she would lift one hand to her hair and smile to think that it was dry,—that the horrible dripping of those icy waters had ceased forever.

All the night long, while lying in Leonard's cabin, she had thought of herself only as dead, and sunken under the mill, with the black waters rippling through her hair, and her frozen limbs floating up and down in the dark eddies. The picture would not leave her; and the falls, which grew louder and louder after midnight, seemed to be rushing wildly that way to overwhelm her again.

But she was in the sunshine now. The clear, bracing air made her strong again. She was fleeing from all thoughts of death into the broad light of heaven. The winter's sun blessed her as it shimmered down upon the snow. The sleigh-bells sounded like a jubilee. Her heart was brimful of thankfulness; but alas! that warm heart turned in its gratitude rather to the man at her side than to the good God to whom the firstlings of every human soul are due.

When she reached the farm-house and saw the whole family coming forth to meet her, tears of gratitude swelled into Laura's eyes, and she stood upon the threshold-stone a moment, returning the soft kisses of the mother and of gentle Hannah Arnold, with a voice of thanksgiving whispering sweetly at her heart.

The family began to love her after this. With so much of her outward finery swept off in the mill-race, she was obliged to depend on Hannah, not only for her outer garments, but for the dainty little hat, turned up in front and behind, which looked coquettish on her, when it only proved modestly becoming to its owner.

These household garments, provided for her out of Hannah's little stock, brought the strange girl more completely into the bosom of the family; it seemed natural to love her when she appeared like one of themselves. Then Hannah had her own secret reasons for a generous access of affection. Was not Laura Paul's sister? and—and?—The young girl was alone when these thoughts came into her head; but she blushed crimson nevertheless, and looked shyly around, as if some one could hear her heart beating, and guess the cause.

Several days passed, and still these guests remained at the homestead, notwithstanding the restless impatience of Arnold, who was almost inhospitable in his haste to be off. Laura was well now, and rosy with happiness, but she would not leave the place while one of her preservers suffered; and Amy Leonard was very ill. The shock and cold had settled on her frail being. Dr. Blake gave no opinion, but his brow clouded darker and darker every time he rode away from the cabin.

All the Arnold family went to the Falls; but no one was admitted to Amy's room except Mrs. Arnold. She found Amy lying white and worn in the little outroom of the cabin. One thrill,—half fear, half love,—and a glance of yearning deprecation was given to the little woman as she came in. Then the violet eyes closed, and two bright tears forced themselves through the shadowy lashes and were broken like crushed diamonds on her

cheek. How that poor young face changed as those soft footsteps came close to the bed! You could see other tears swelling under the white lids, and the beautiful lip begin to quiver.

"Amy!"

The young creature grasped the coverlet convulsively with her hand, her eyes opened wildly, and she shrunk away toward the farther side of the bed.

"My dear child,—are you so very weak,—what is it that grieves you?—poor thing,—poor thing. Don't cry. Mother Arnold has come to cheer you up a little."

"Yes, yes. I know you are very kind."

"Kind,—oh, not at all! But tell me, dear, what is it frets you so. It isn't the shock of falling in the water: that wouldn't last so long, or make you look so wild. Tell me—what is it, Amy?"

Amy shrunk away nervously. "Oh don't,—don't. I can't bear it. Please say something harsh and cruel,—cruel as death. I can face that, but kind words break my heart. Mother gives them to me,—father gives them to me,—and now you come. If I could only die, that would be best,—that would be best."

"Why, Amy, are you growing sinful,—you, a church-member?"

Amy started up in bed. "Yes, yes: I am a church-member; but you need not twit me with it. Don't think I ever forget that I am a church-member."

"Twit you with it, poor lamb. I bless God with all my heart that you are in his fold."

"But what if I get out? What if I grow obstinate, and break loose; will you look at me with such kind eyes then?"

Amy clasped both hands, pressing them downward on

the bed, where she crouched like a pretty, wild rabbit prisoned in a trap.

"Will you be kind to me then?"

"How wildly you talk, darling child. Of course, I shall always be kind to you. Why not? Haven't you been to me like a daughter ever since you were born?"

Amy looked into that gentle face with a gush of yearning gratitude.

"How good, how beautiful you are!" she broke forth.

"Oh! if his heart were only like yours!"

"His heart!" repeated the little lady, in a low voice.

"Amy dear, do you speak of my son?"

"Your son,—no, no. How could I? What right have I to speak of him?" cried the poor girl, in sudden terror.

"Don't talk so, Amy. Of course you have a right."

"How—how? Do you think that?"

"Just as good a right as Hannah has, for you are almost as much his sister as she is."

The guilty color came into that innocent woman's face as she spoke, for she remembered Arnold's words in the homestead chamber, and drew back on the very verge of comforting the weary-hearted girl, sadly conscience-stricken. Amy looked into her half-averted eyes with wistful earnestness, then her little hand, whitened into delicacy by illness, stole out and touched that of Mrs. Arnold.

"You seem like a mother to me."

Her pretty face was full of love, yearning and tender.

Mrs. Arnold bent forward and kissed it, then the two clung together and began to cry.

"Tell me, Amy, is it because you love him?" whispered the gentle home-mother.

"Yes, I love him! Oh, I love him! No one will ever believe how dearly!"

Their arms interlaced closer, Mrs. Arnold pressed Amy's head to her bosom and kissed it, saying,

"But did he do this on purpose,—did he make you love him?"

"I—I think. No, no; of course it was my own fault. I am such a forward, bold girl,—it is there all the blame lies. He make me love him! It didn't need that. I can't tell when I didn't love him."

"How could you help it, Amy dear? He's so handsome and noble,—so true."

"Is he? Are you sure,—very, very sure?" cried Amy, with a flame of scarlet on either cheek.

"Who should be sure if his mother isn't?" answered the little lady, flushing also, but with a fainter red. "In some things, you know, I don't quite understand him. He is proud and shy, especially about his likings. Don't tell him, Amy, because I'm almost ashamed of it; but I laid the most artful little plot to find out if he really did care about,—about any one, you know."

"Did you,—did you, indeed. And what was his answer? He couldn't help but tell you the truth, I'm sure."

"Well, dear, I'm not so bright and penetrating as some women, and though I was very crafty, I think he found me out, and put me aside just to punish me for being so deep."

Amy drew a long breath, heavy with trouble.

"Did he speak of,—of any one in particular?"

"Oh, yes; he mentioned you and that stylish French girl that you saved from drowning; but that amounted to nothing. He wasn't to be taken in by his mother, not he."

"But you see him; you are by when they talk together; you—you—oh, Mrs. Arnold, Mrs. Arnold, tell me, does your son love this lady?"

Mrs. Arnold reflected a little, still holding Amy's head against her bosom. Feeling the shiver that ran through that delicate frame, she conquered the vague doubt in her own bosom, and smoothing down the golden tangles of Amy's hair with her hand, said, in her sweet, low way,

"No, dear; I don't think he loves her."

"But *she* loves him. I know that she loves him," cried the young girl, and a flame of passionate red came to her cheeks again.

"It wouldn't be nice to say that about one's own son, dear."

"But you think it; you see it. But how can she help it? With him all the time, how could she help loving him?"

"Well, my dear, we must not talk of that. The young lady is our guest, and it isn't for me to criticize her. Only cheer up and get well. I want you to come over to the homestead and make us a long visit."

"How good you are—how kind! Sometimes when you smile, it is so like him," cried Amy, clinging to her, comforted in spite of her doubts.

Mrs. Arnold smiled again. "Yes, I think he does look like me just a little about the mouth and eyes; but then what is only a little nice in a little old woman is grand in him. There is no real comparison."

Closer and closer the young girl crept to that motherly bosom.

"You wouldn't be angry with Benedict, even if he had done wrong: that is, just a little wrong,—not told you something that he ought, I mean?" she whispered.

"Angry with Benedict, the dear boy! No, no, I couldn't be that for a trifle. Young people will have their little secrets. You are very good to tell me yours. Be sure I'll keep it."

Amy kissed her soft cheek.

"And I'll pray God to turn his heart into home paths, little Amy, and lead his thoughts back to those good old times when he would trample down a path for you in the snow, as you went to school together. What a pretty couple you did make. I had my own thoughts early as that. You are smiling child; that is right, cheer up! Remember, I'm almost as old a friend as your mother, and I'll stand by you as if you were my own child. That's right, smile again. How warm and wet your cheeks are,—crying and laughing at the same time: that is a good sign. How a nice, comfortable chat warms one up. When I came in you were shivering with cold, but now——"

"Now," whispered Amy, "I feel as if roses were blossoming in my heart. Dear, dear Mrs. Arnold, how I love you!"

"That's right. Now, snuggle down to the pillow and drop to sleep. I'll come again."

"Mrs. Arnold."

"Well, child?"

"You are quite sure he does not care for her?"

"Yes, yes."

"And Mrs. Arnold."

"Well, again?"

"How soft the air is. I—I—am getting—getting very sleep—sleepy."

"I'm glad of it."

"Yes, yes. I feel like a little bird sinking down in a nest lined with thistle-down and silk-weed, and—and—Oh, I'm so happy—so happy!"

The young creature dropped away, with these words melting like ripe fruit on her lips.

Mrs. Arnold stood over her a moment, with the benign look of an angel in her glance.

How gently the young creature had sunk into that healthful sleep! Comfort and warmth lay all around her. The breath came up from her bosom like perfume from a waterlily.

Mrs. Arnold longed to kiss her, but that sleep was too sweet and precious: she would not disturb it, but glided softly from the room, holding up a warning finger to Mrs. Leonard, who drew close to her, anxious and weary.

"She is sound asleep."

Mrs. Leonard burst into tears. It was the first wholesome sleep Amy had known since that dark hour under the mill.

Without a word, but smiling encouragement as she moved, Mrs. Arnold left the cabin, resolving—the gentle Christian—to talk more earnestly to her son, and so far as womanly faith to the sex would permit, plead her young friend's cause.

CHAPTER XIII.

OLD FRIENDSHIP RENEWED—THE HOLY FORCE OF PRAYER.

MR. ARNOLD, the elder, had driven to the falls; and, while his wife was holding her motherly conference in the sick-room, he went down to the saw-mill and found Leonard busy among his timber-logs.

In former years there had been great intimacy between these two men; but of late Arnold had sought associates

more congenial to his habits, and they had become almost strangers. There was nothing of Arnold's former manner as he approached his old friend, who came gravely forward to meet him. Formerly, when he had been the richer and more prosperous man, his approach might have had something of patronage about it; but now he seemed shy and doubtful of a warm reception.

It was painful to see a man, really superior, with that down look,—a look that had sprung out of conscious self-degradation. He hesitated, cast anxious glances at the mill-tender, and once turned away, as if tempted to walk toward the falls. But Leonard's heart warmed toward his old friend, and he called him back.

"Ho, neighbor Arnold! Don't turn your back on old friends. Come in! Come in! It isn't often one gets a chat while the saw is going. After all, it's a lonesome place up here; so, while the women folks make a little visit, supposing we sit down and talk over old times."

Arnold's hand always trembled now, but it shook like a dead leaf as Leonard grasped it. He brushed the other hand across his face with a hasty movement, complaining that the cold brought the water to his eyes; and then Leonard's heart smote him that he had kept so completely away from a man who had been a member of the same church with him, and, in more than the Christian sense, almost like a brother. So all the former friendship came gushing in a glow over his honest face, and shaking the hand in his grasp most heartily, he broke out in the old way:

"How do you do, brother? I'm right glad to see you at the mill."

Arnold gave one grasp of the hand that shook his, struggled against something in his throat an instant, and

then, fairly turning his back, walked off towards that end of the mill which looked upon the falls. One or two great sobs broke from him, and then he went slowly back, trying to appear unconcerned.

"I haven't seen the falls since this mill was put up, it seems to me; but we had a grand raising that day, anyhow."

"Yes, and a prayer-meeting after it that none of us ought to forget."

"I never shall forget it," said Arnold, with a quick turn of the eye. "It was the last I ever went to,—the last time I ever made a prayer out loud."

"Yes, yes. I remember the prayer, brother. The Lord was with us that night," said Leonard, kindling up. "You asked him to bless the work our hands had done in the day, and he did bless it. That prayer-meeting was a glorious house-warming. It was like taking up one's abode in a sanctuary, when the old woman and little Amy went to bed in the cabin for the first time."

Arnold's face began to quiver; holy memories were unfolding, like bird-wings, in his bosom.

"They were pleasant times, Leonard. Our children were young and innocent: we had strength and faith in those days."

"And will they never come back, brother? The merciful God rules over us just the same as then."

Arnold shook his head; and, as if to escape the closeness of the subject, began to examine the timbers of the mill.

"They have stood the weather famously," he said; "for, after all, it is an old mill."

"Oh, not so very bad for that. It was raised within a few days of the time your store was burnt down. Don't you remember?"

Arnold gave a start, and the unhealthy red left his face. "Don't,—don't. I can't bear to think of that. It was—it was a——"

"A great trouble I know, brother Arnold; but you got the insurance-money, and that ought to have kept you a-going."

"Yes, I—we got the money, but I—I was worn out, you know, and it's hard to begin life agin arter a fire like that. Such things take all the courage out of a man, Leonard. You wouldn't blame me if—if——"

The poor man sat down on a log that lay ready for the saw, and wiped the great drops of perspiration that had begun to gather on his forehead the moment this subject of the fire came up.

"Why, brother, I didn't think you took that one piece of bad luck so much to heart."

"Oh, it's over now; but I come to say something about our children,—about Amy and Benedict."

Leonard's face darkened, and a look of distress came over it.

"The poor gal is sick," he said. "She was left in the cold water till the other could be dragged out. I was jest in time to save her dear life, brother, and no more. It's a'most too tough to see that foreign gal a-going about fresh as a rose, while Amy lies there moaning her life out."

"Is Amy as sick as that? Poor gal—poor gal! I remember her when she wasn't more'n so high. I've watched her growing up to the harnsome creature she is now. It's hard to know that she must have sickness and trouble like the rest of us, Leonard,—very hard; and I want to save her from more. That's why I'm here, old friend."

"What is all this about?" said Leonard, wondering at

the agitation which was evident in these rapid words. "What harm threatens Amy, more than has happened already?"

Arnold folded his trembling hands over each other again and again, looked to the right and left, as if tempted to run away and leave a painful task half done. At last he faltered out:

"Leonard, tell me: has my son, Benedict, been about the falls much of late years,—that is, since little Amy's been old enough to care about such things? I've been in a sort of dream,—a long, long dream,—and hadn't a chance to find out for myself; but you are careful, always at home,—you have kept your senses, Leonard. I don't like to ask anybody else; but you can tell me. Are the young folks fond of one another?"

"They ought to be,—and why not?" said the father, sternly; for he fancied that Arnold, with some of the old pride, was about to protest against his sweet daughter as a fit wife for his more prosperous son.

"Because," said Arnold, with an effort that made him shake from head to foot,—"because he mustn't have her!"

"You say that to me, bro—Mr. Arnold? If it wasn't for the fear of God I'd——"

"Don't,—don't take it in that way. It's all for her good I speak. She's too young,—too tender: a little spring lamb that ought to be fed with white clover, and nothing else. He mustn't have her!"

"What do you mean, old friend?" said Leonard, feeling that, however strange all this might be, no offence was intended to him or his child. "I hope, as a Christian—I hope you have not been—that is you—you are all right, Arnold."

The poor man shrunk into himself at this insinuation,

vague as it was. He swallowed once or twice as if sobs were swelling to his throat, and then he spoke in a voice so broken with sorrow that it went like a prayer to his brother's heart.

"It's a cruel thing to undertake,—it's unnatural; but I don't want to drag anybody else down with me, least of all you or yours. I don't know how far this thing has gone, Leonard; but don't let my son—he's my only son, you know, and that makes it worse—don't let him marry your darter. I charge you,—I warn you,—don't let him marry your child. I won't stand by and see it done, for it'd be a sinful thing."

"Why would it be sinful?" demanded Leonard, struck by the passion of distress with which all this was spoken.

"Because your child is innocent; and mine—oh, God help me!—mine is not."

The unhappy man fell back to the log from which he had risen, and, clasping his hands, began to cry piteously.

"Don't,—don't ask me any more. I've done my duty, and you see how I am. You haven't a drink of something in the mill, just to give me a little strength? I wouldn't take a drop this morning, but it came harder than I expected. When a thing has taken root down in the darkness of your soul, it makes one tremble to pull it up. It's to save you from trouble I did it, Leonard; so don't be hard on me."

"I know you are in earnest, and think there is good reason for this warning, Arnold. But what if the trouble is upon us?—what if she loves him as our wives loved us before we married them?"

"But she mustn't,—indeed she mustn't! Let him fall in love with that French girl, I shan't trouble myself to warn her; but little Amy,—I couldn't see Amy carried off

in that way. She's like my own darter. Now do remember that I warn you. Words that make a father's heart ache as mine does now, should be listened to, and minded. Mark that, minded!"

"I will listen to them. Without asking another question I will respect the warning. If he comes here again I will take this thing in hand."

"That's right,—that's right; but be firm. Don't let him find you wavering like his poor old father. Be firm!"

"I will!"

"As a rock?—as a rock?"

"I will lean upon the Rock of ages!" said Leonard, reverently.

"Oh, if I had something to lean on!" cried Arnold, clasping his hands; but the next minute they trembled apart again.

"You have, old friend," and Leonard took both the trembling hands in his. "The same God that answered us once will listen again. You asked for drink to give you strength just now; let us ask for something better than that, brother. Let us pray together."

"Me—me pray?" faltered the old man.

That instant the saw had traveled its course down the log and stopped. The sudden stillness fell upon the old man like a shock; he looked strangely around, muttering,

"Me,—me,—and here?"

"Come," said Leonard, taking him lovingly by the arm; "come, old friend, let us go away,—you and I together, as we have done a hundred times before. Let us go to the right place for strength and courage. This way,—this way. Never fear!"

They trod a little footpath together, the strong man leading the weak, till they found a shelf of rock overlook-

ing the falls; and, hedged in by evergreens on all sides but that which faced on the water, which sung an anthem around them that made the spot like a chapel, Leonard knelt down on the snow that crusted the rock. It was not his habit to kneel for prayer; but just then his soul was full of devotion, and, before he knew it, the good man bent himself to the earth, even as the Saviour bowed when the most terrible of all sorrows fell upon him.

Prayer was the great outburst for eloquence in those days. The best gifts that a man possessed were offered to his God. I do not know that Leonard had any great wealth of words or ideas; but his whole being was alive with one purpose, and faith turned every thought that sprang to his lips into eloquence. Up through the clear winter morning rose the voice of that prayer, above the anthem of the waves, above the winds that whispered continually in the evergreens, above the sobs of that feeble man, who kept his face bowed to the earth, and shrunk together with shame while the other prayed.

But there is mighty strength in a good heart really inspired! Never—to use Joshua Leonard's own words—had his soul taken such hold on the throne of God. He literally wrestled with the angels for that poor drooping life at his side.

The powerful words that burned on his lips at last kindled gleams of the old faith in Arnold. His head was slowly lifted, his shrunken shoulders grew broader, the crouching attitude changed; then his face was turned heavenward, and the bright sun fell like a glory upon it. The old nature was giving way. He had no words for prayer; but when a warm and more ardent rush of faith came from Leonard, a single "Amen" broke up all the ice at his heart, and a shower of warm tears rained over

his upturned face. Those pure, penitential tears! Angels might have crowned themselves with such drops, and still remain all heavenly.

CHAPTER XIV.

FATHER AND SON—REBELLION AND REPENTANCE.

AFTER the morning when Arnold became acquainted with his father's frailty, he had dared to despise the old man in his heart,—dared to let this unnatural contempt be manifest in his manner, if not in words, so that a new cause of separation had sprung up between them, which threatened to grow wider and wider.

The father had not felt this so keenly till after his visit to the saw-mill; for, when he suffered the pain of these things, there was the liquor-case to flee to, and that deadened sensibility if it could do no more.

But after that day all that was sensitive and refined in his nature took sharpness and force. With his system all deranged, and his nerves unstrung, he had taken a solemn resolution which was sure to shake his physical being to the centre. He was a broken-down man, and habits that had preyed upon him like wolves were sure to turn and rend him as he refused them food. A little kindness at this time, a word even of respectful sympathy from the son he could not help looking up to in many respects, would have aided him greatly in the terrible battle of appetite against principle that lay before him.

But Benedict Arnold was a man incapable of repent-

ance; a strong, hard character, who never had and never could believe himself in the wrong. His own iron will was the only law he recognized, and the greatest sin that any of his fellow-men could commit in his eyes was to oppose that will. Perhaps he was lifted above petty sins because they were not the best aids to selfish ambition. He was a man to commit crimes, not drop into foibles,—a man of iron, with nerves of steel that vibrated only to his ruling passion.

From this character, with all the fiery passions of youth inflaming his selfishness, what had the poor father to hope?

Two days after his visit to the mill, the old man went into the parlor, where Benedict was sitting with Laura De Montreuil,—who had been thoughtful and languid, but gentle as an infant since her accident. There was no more badinage, no coquetry in her intercourse with young Arnold now. The pride had been all broken from her heart in those cold waters, and a light word would have been sacrilege to her gratitude. It was her duty to worship him,—a sweet duty, to which she submitted herself without stint or protest.

Arnold kept half aloof, both from her gratitude and her love. He did not evade or tease her as formerly; but no engagement, not even a declaration, had passed his lips. Yet she was content from the very wealth of her own feeling, and she would whisper to herself again and again, "Surely I could not love him so entirely if he were indifferent. It is not in my nature."

This unexacting state of mind pleased the young man. There was no longer a necessity to be on the defensive,—no skirmish around a declaration which he was resolved not to make at that time, or in that place but which it had seemed almost impossible to avoid. It was pleasant to sit

by her side hour after hour and witness the utter subjection which love had made of her pride,—to hear it in the soft tones of her voice, and read it in the timid glances of her eyes; for an all absorbing vanity formed the leading trait in his ambitious character.

Laura had been more than usually gentle that morning, and Arnold's self-love was gratified to the full. It was a triumph to have so completely subdued this spirited young creature by an act of simple courage which cost him nothing; for many a time in his boyhood had he clung to the great water-wheel at the falls, and been dashed now into the waves, then lifted high into the sunshine, for the mischievous excitement of the exploit alone. Still, admiration was not the less acceptable to him because it was undeserved. Arnold had no sensitiveness of that sort to contend against during his whole life.

But the entrance of old Mr. Arnold was a shock to these complacent feelings. He had only come to seek Hannah, and, not finding her, was about to go away. The first terrible effects of total abstinence were gnawing at his vitals, and he staggered in his walk, glancing wildly around, disturbed by his son's look and voice when he rose from Laura's side and sharply demanded what was wanted, plainly showing the old man that he was considered an intruder in his own sitting-room.

This question and the unfilial gesture of the young man gave the poor father a shock under which he broke down altogether. A trembling fit seized him, and, holding out his hands as if to ward off a blow, he cried out,

"Don't! Oh, my son, don't!"

Laura started up. She was painfully surprised by the scene and the distress in the old man's face. The tears that gushed up to his eyes went to her heart. But before

she could speak, Arnold strode across the room, laid a heavy hand on his father's shoulder, and thrust him through the open door into the kitchen. As he closed the door and returned to the room it was easy to see the unfavorable impression this scene had left on the mind of his guest. She was very pale, and her eyes shone with indignation.

"How could you? *Mon Dieu!* how could you speak so harshly to the kind old man? It will break his heart," cried the brave girl.

"You don't understand. He had no right to appear before my guests in that state," said Arnold, impetuously. "I will allow no man, father or not, to degrade me in this way."

Laura moved a step forward with the old imperious air. Her eyes glittered with tears as she turned them on Arnold.

"I'm sorry, very sorry for your father, Mr. Arnold. He seems ill. If you refuse to go and comfort him, I must."

Arnold colored violently under this rebuke. He really believed his father to have been drinking; and wounded pride had stung him into the brutal act which the woman whom he looked upon as his worshiper a moment before had so pointedly condemned.

"You cannot understand, mademoiselle. Every house has its skeleton. You have unfortunately obtained a rude glimpse of ours."

Laura smiled painfully, and shook her head,—

"Go,—go out and beg his pardon, Arnold."

"What,—I?"

"Yes. You are brave: be generous,—be just. This scene disturbs my idea of your character, and I cannot bear that. Every thing about you seemed grand a moment ago."

Arnold's vanity was touched. He also could not bear that any thing should check the idolatry of her regard. He kissed her hand, whispered that she was an angel, and went out, not to apologize, but to upbraid the unhappy father, whose state of moral and physical depression was pitiable.

"Father, how dare you come in that room when you could not walk for staggering?" hissed the young man, through his shut teeth, bending close to the stooping figure that sat heavily by the fire, with great tears rolling down his face. "How dare you?"

The old man lifted his head, and looked sorrowfully into the flushed face bending over him.

"I—I didn't mean to mortify you, Ben."

"You have done nothing but mortify me since I came home," whispered his son, fiercely. "Couldn't you keep sober one week?"

The old man winced.

"I am sober, now, Ben, and that's what makes me seem as if I wasn't. It's three days since I've tasted a drop of any thing stronger than coffee."

"Then what makes you stagger in this way?"

"It's because of the craving want; because—oh, my God! my God! help me,—help me, for this is more than I can bear!"

"Hush!" commanded the son. "Do you wish to disturb our visitors?"

"No, no; I will disturb nobody, if I can help it. Let me alone, Benedict. It's hard to fight this out all by one's self. Don't make it worse, for God's sake! Have mercy on me. I am wretched enough! Do let me try and hold out! It's hard,—it's hard!"

"This is unbearable! Can't you be a man, sir?"

"A man! Well, yes; I—I am trying. Half the night I was on my knees, in the cold barn, praying God to help me be a man once more,—out in the barn, remember,—for I didn't want to disturb any one, and crept away alone. I dropped the key of the liquor-case into the well as I went along, for it seemed to hold me down like a chain. That key might have been ten thousand weight of iron dragging at me, but I flung it down, down, down!"

"This is delirium. You have reached the last stage of a drunkard's life, sir! Why, every nerve and muscle in your frame is quivering. What use can there be in talking to a man who doesn't know what he is saying?"

"My son—oh, Benedict, this is hard! Don't say it again! No wonder I tremble! The devil tempting me every step I take,—mocking at me when I try to pray,—taking all my strength when I walk,—tugging at my heart like a wolf, and crying out, drink! drink! when I sit down to rest. And now you come,—you, my only son, that I was so proud of once,—that I never refused any thing to in my whole life—you—you! Oh, Benedict, this is tough!"

"I tell you, sir, this raving will be heard! If you cannot command yourself I will leave the house this night, and forever."

"You, Ben, you? If you had never left it I had not come to this! But don't say that now; you don't understand how hard it is to stifle this craving. It makes me talk wildly; but it isn't drink that does it. That would make me quiet."

"Then, for heaven's sake, drink! Any thing is better than this state!"

The father shook the hand from his shoulder, and stood up, firm and strong, like a man.

"So Satan comes in the form of my own son with his temptations! This is horrible!"

He spoke loud and full; the force of his rebuking eye, wild as it was, startled the young man.

"Hush! father, hush! She will hear you!"

"Hear me denounce my own son? No human being shall ever hear that. Nothing but God and my own soul knows any thing about it."

"About what, sir?"

"How it was I began to—to drink. That is what I mean. How it was that I lost a hold on all that makes a man strong. There was cause, when a father's conscience goes against his heart,—when justice calls him one way and love another—when——"

"Once more, sir, what does this mean?" whispered Arnold, clenching his teeth again.

"Stoop down here, Benedict, close, close! You are sure Hagar is out?—no one within hearing?—you *will* know then?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Closer, closer! You remember that night—closer——"

The rest of the sentence was whispered close in Benedict Arnold's ear. He turned deadly pale; but clutched his hand on the old man's shoulder, whispering,

"Never breathe those words again to God or man!"

CHAPTER XV.

SECRET INTERVIEWS—REVIVALS AND REPENTANCE.

FROM some cause, Arnold had ceased to urge an immediate departure from his old home, and lingered day after day at the farm-house, till his guests began to wonder at a change which, nevertheless, gave them great satisfaction; for, as birds love to hover about the nest where the first brood of love has found shelter, these two ardent and excitable persons could not force themselves away from a house where the pure and deep sensations of a first love had found birth.

After an absence of some days, during which Amy had been at her worst, Arnold came to the falls again. His old, half-loving, half-imperious manner returned, and though his visits were always brief, they brought hope and health back to that young creature's heart. She began to smile, and even laugh, again blooming into health like a half-parched rose after an abundant fall of dew.

Laura was not surprised at these visits: for, with deep craft, Arnold always managed that she herself urged him to make these inquiries after Amy; and, as he seemed to go with reluctance, she only became the more urgent to express, through him, the deep gratitude that really filled her heart when she thought of the gentle creature who had saved her life. She would gladly have gone to the cabin herself; but Arnold only told the truth when he said that Amy shrunk from an interview with strangers, and sensi-

tively drew back from all expressions of gratitude for an act which was in itself only an impulse of common humanity.

This was all true. The very thought of meeting that bright, dashing creature again filled Amy's soul with a sort of terror. If the noise of sleigh-bells penetrated to the cabin, she would start and turn pale; if a strange foot sounded on the threshold-stone, she would look furtively toward some door, as if impelled to escape.

But when Arnold's step was heard on the snow-path, her cheeks would flush into one bloom of roses, and the smiles that had forsaken her mouth for weeks together came softly back. Her gentle soul was reassured again.

One night, when Leonard and his wife had gone to a prayer-meeting, Arnold found Amy alone. It was the first time they had been allowed an opportunity to converse together; for, against their usual practice, the old people had, from the time of the accident, invariably kept their places at the hearth, no matter how long the young man lingered there.

Now the two were alone, with nothing but the plunge of the falls within hearing,—with no more dangerous witnesses than the bright hickory-wood fire to bear testimony against them. The paper curtains were rolled down, the fire-light danced and shone on the pine ceiling, and the whole floor surrounding them, with a pleasant twilight.

Arnold sat in the great splint-bottomed chair, which Joshua Leonard usually occupied. Amy drew a little stool, covered with patchwork of red and blue cloth, to his feet, and settled down upon it, with a soft flutter of the breath, like a pretty pigeon when its nest is completed.

After all, Arnold loved this good child after a fashion, and might have loved her well but for the ambition which

clung around every good impulse of his nature, as parasites check the growth of young trees and at last wither them up.

That night his face was bright and genial. It was pleasant to feel how completely that young creature loved him,—to know that with a single word he could fill those blue eyes, looking so innocently into his, with tears, or, with a smile, deepen the loving sunshine that flooded them. Even the thirst of his ruling passion was slaked here. The wish for control, the right of will, had a submissive object in that gentle creature. He could trample on her and she would forgive,—forsake her, even, and she would not avenge. Here he was all supreme.

She looked into his eyes, and her hand nestled itself into his. One elbow was supported by his knee, and her chin rested in the palm of her other hand, which was curved into a cup for its reception. All at once a shadow crept over her face, and she shuddered perceptibly.

"What is it? What are you thinking of, Amy?" said Arnold, pressing the hand in his a little tighter.

"Of that day,—of the water. You left me alone, Benedict,—all alone to die."

He frowned upon her. "So this is your faith, Amy Leonard?"

"Amy Arnold!" said the young girl, turning white as the name passed her lips. "You must never call me any name but that when we are alone."

Arnold's face grew black; he lifted her hand, as if to toss it away, but ended in grasping it closer, while his wrath cleared away in a forced laugh.

"Well, Amy Arnold, for it shall be that some day. It sounds well, doesn't it, little wife?"

Amy gave a low cry. Her head fell forward on his

knee, and she began to sob, while deep, warm gusts of joy shook her frame.

"What are you crying for now, Amy?" he said, regarding her with a triumphant smile, while his hand wandered through her thick curls.

She only answered by raising herself softly to his bosom, and resting her head against his heart.

Again he buried his hand in her rich hair, pressing the face closer and closer to his bosom. For one moment his ruling passion was beaten back by the wings of Amy's love-angel.

"Yes, Amy, it is a sweet word—wife—my wife. Some day it shall be yours."

"And you will never,—never attempt to distress me so again?"

He did not answer, but kissed her forehead.

"But you did not mean it?"

"No, love, no; I did not mean it."

"You—you wanted to try me—to be certain I would keep our secret. That was all, Arnold,—tell me that was all. I am sure it was."

"Yes, yes. I wanted to try you."

"And you see—you are satisfied now; for when you said those cruel things I did not speak even to my mother. When you left me in the water to die——"

"Stop, child! Don't say that again. I—thought it was you that filled my arms. How could I tell in the dark? What could I do but seize the first form that rose? I was coming back. It was all a mistake, Amy."

"I know. I see it all now. How selfish,—how wicked I was to think it! Forgive me, Benedict, but I was so unhappy,—so jealous! I hope you will never know what it is to be heart-sick as I was then."

"Well, well, don't let us think of it. We will have no more of these scenes. You know that I did not mean any thing, and I am sure that you will keep our secret."

"See how I have kept it——"

"And always will. I can trust you now, Amy. You will never disobey me."

"No, no," murmured the happy creature; "for you are my husband,—my own, own husband."

She trembled blissfully as the precious word passed her lips for the first time, and stole glances at his face through her gathering blushes.

"You are my husband, and I must obey you. If mother owes duty to my father above all things next to God, I am a wife as well, and must obey every thing you tell me. Oh, I'm so glad mother got nothing out of me!"

"Did she ask? Did your father question you?" cried Arnold, sharply.

"No, no. How could they? But they were both so kind,—so anxious about me; and I suffered so with the thought of your leaving me to die, and—and with——"

"With what?"

"With—but you will be angry?"

"No, no; say all that is on your mind. It cannot be any thing very terrible if you have betrayed no secrets."

"Well, I was so miserable while that lady was in the house."

"Miserably jealous. Foolish child!"

"Yes; I suppose it was that."

"But it is over. You know better now."

"Yes; oh, yes! I hope so—but—but will she stay in this country long? When will she go back to Canada, or France? I should think she would be homesick."

Arnold laughed, and patted her cheek with his hand.

"Never mind her. Think of something pleasanter for us both, Amy."

"Yes, yes. I'm sure that isn't pleasant. But one can't always put disagreeable things out of the way, or I'd never think of her again."

Arnold smiled. This jealousy, while it threatened nothing, rather pleased him. It was an evidence of his power. The sound of sleigh-bells at a distance made Amy start from the arm which still held her.

"It is my father and mother," she said.

"Yes; but half a mile off yet. Don't be frightened. They shall not find me here."

"No, no. They would see in a minute how happy I am, and guess every thing,—father is so smart. You must go away now. But—but——"

"Well, what are you stammering about?"

"Nothing,—nothing; only there is a meeting to-morrow night."

"Well, I will come."

"There is a revival now, and our people go all the time; but then if you have company——"

"Never mind that. I'll manage to get here evenings. But remember, Amy, I must have no more distrust; and our secret must be kept. If a suspicion gets abroad, I will never forgive you,—never see you again."

"Indeed, I can promise now; for did I not keep my word through all that terrible trouble?" she said, cheerfully. "Oh, how near the bells are coming! Here is your greatcoat. When you are so kind, it breaks my heart to have you leave me; but oh, dear, they are turning the corner. Go out of the back-door. Good-by—good-by!"

Now, there was no earthly reason why Amy should

have been so frightened. Joshua Leonard had never uttered a word of objection to Arnold's visits. Indeed, he was rather indignant when, for a time, they became so rare; but some suspicion of the young man's good faith had seized upon him, and he became watchful where he had before trusted. In this lay all that Amy could have feared in her father. Still she flushed red, and trembled as her parents drove up to the door-yard fence, hurried across the room to put the foot-stool in its place, and took great pains to move the splint-bottomed easy-chair some distance from the fire.

When her mother came in, rosy from the frost, with a foot-stove in one hand, Amy busied herself at once in taking out the little, square pan, from which she emptied a quantity of dead embers into the fire; then she helped untie her mother's hood, and unfastened her cloak, from which she shook particles of snow with a lively zeal that charmed the good woman,—it was in such cheerful contrast with the lassitude which had possessed her daughterso long.

When Joshua Leonard came in from putting away his horse, he found a pitcher of hot flip creaming over on the hearth, and a tray of doughnuts toasting by its side; while his daughter stood before the fire, flushed and heated, shading her cheek with one hand, and looking more beautiful than he had ever seen her before.

"Ah, this is snug and comfortable," he said, drawing the splint-bottomed chair on to the hearth. "Trust our Amy for taking care of her father and mother. What, nobody been here? That's right. Had a good time all by yourself, Amy?"

Amy did not seem to hear, but thrust the heavy tongs among the hickory logs, which sent a storm of sparks up the chimney, and a glow over the whole room.

"It must be very cold out-of-doors," she said, turning into the next room to hang up her mother's cloak.

"Yes," answered Joshua, setting down the pitcher, which was now more than half empty. "Yes, darter, it is cold to the outer man, but we felt nothing of it in the meeting; for there the Lord was around and about us. Such a season of divine grace I have never witnessed,—never in my whole life."

"Yes," said Mrs. Leonard, taking the subject from her husband's lips. "It was a refreshing time, Amy. Such prayers, such gifts, and breaking out all at once, showed that the power of the Lord was over us. Six new converts ready to break out into hallelujahs, seven struck with conviction, and on the anxious-seat together,—and who do you think was among 'em, Amy?"

"I cannot guess, mother."

"You couldn't guess in a week of Sundays,—a-crying like a child, and looking so broken-down, shaking on the seat as if he couldn't believe that there was any hope for a backslider;—and it's my opinion that there isn't, though your father thinks otherwise, which is his right, you know;—but *such* a prayer as your father made after the new convert came, staggering right up to the throne of grace out of the depths of iniquity,—such a prayer! It laid right hold of the horns of the altar, and made every heart around tremble. Oh, Amy, your father has a gift of prayer that makes me think about the angels that come under one's roof unawares. What if we had been waiting on one all our lives, thinking it was only a common man tending a saw-mill?"

"My dear, dear father. Yes, I do know how good he is," said Amy, stealing behind Leonard's chair.

"You are right, Amy Leonard," chimed in the good

woman. "Look at him sitting up so straight in your grandfather's chair. You wouldn't believe it was in him; neither should I. But if ever there was a babe of grace,—there now, don't hold up both your hands, Joshua, as if it was to say that you ain't nothing particular, 'cause you are. Don't shake your head, for I won't stop, because here it's my privilege. If women folks must keep silent in meeting, which I don't see the reason of,—do you, Amy?—they ain't to be kept still in their own homes, by no manner of means; and if one has got a born angel all for her own property, why shouldn't she say so, and praise the Lord for it? I'd be glad if somebody would tell me. Don't talk in that way? Why not, indeed? I'm sure if the Lord has blessed you with such gifts, I should be a great sinner not to own up to it, and blind as a bat not to see it. Well, well, I'll stop if you say so; but as for the flip, if it wasn't for setting you an example, I wouldn't touch a drop, cold as it is. Creature comforts don't seem natural after a meeting like that, though it was thoughtful—as a child should be to such a father—for Amy to remember and have it ready. Now, Joshua, take off your boots, for the snow is melting on 'em, and give your feet a good toasting before the fire. Amy, bring the footstool for your pa, and now—what was I talking about?—dear me!"

"About the person who came up to the anxious-bench, mother? You haven't told me his name, yet," said Amy, gently, for she was too well accustomed to her mother's habit of conversation to get out of patience with it.

"No more I have; and you won't believe it when I tell you. Who would? Such a change! His beard all shaved smooth, his shirt-bosom and collar clean as your father's. I declare it made me a'most burst out a-crying,

just to see him, with his wild eyes and his thin hair, getting gray so fast. But your father's prayer helped him right on his feet; and when the brethren all said 'Amen,'—they couldn't help it, you know,—his face was lifted up to heaven, and it trembled all over, till at last he said 'Amen,' too, but it was in a whisper, and great big tears came rolling down his cheeks like drops after a thunder breaks. I only wish Mrs. Arnold had been there!"

"Oh, mother! what does this mean? What can Mrs. Arnold have to do with this?" cried Amy, going close to her mother, and speaking with great eagerness.

"Mrs. Arnold! Oh, yes! I forgot to tell you it was her husband—Benedict's father—who came to the anxious-bench. Didn't you understand that? I wish you could a-seen our deacon when the poor backslider came in. I wish young Ben had been there, instead of running about with that French girl, which I'm sure he does."

"No, mother, no. I am sure he does not care in the least for her, only as a visitor. I'll tell you something. The young French gentleman, her brother, you know, is paying attention to Hannah Arnold, and that's what keeps them all at the farm so long."

"How did you find that out?" demanded the mother, quickly.

"A little bird told me, mother," replied Amy, blushing, and casting a playful look into her mother's face.

"Oh!" ejaculated the mother, shaking her head at the fire, and casting a side glance at Leonard, who had fallen into thoughtfulness, and paid no attention to what was said; for when his wife started off with a rush of language, he generally took refuge in reflection, soothed by the soft patter of her words as if they had been rain-drops on a roof. "Who told you that, Amy?"

"He did, mother."

"Well, didn't I say so all the time? but you wouldn't believe me. No, no; just as if I couldn't see into a mill-stone just as far as anybody. Come now, pa, supposing we rake up the fire and go to bed? I wonder if Mrs. Arnold knows what her husband has been about? I declare, Amy, if a backslider ever can get into the fold, your father has lifted that poor sheep half over the wall. Don't you think so, Joshua?"

"What were you saying, wife?" replied Leonard, taking up the great fire-shovel.

"There now, did you ever!" cried the mother, appealing to Amy, with both her hands uplifted. "Why, pa, I was talking about neighbor Arnold."

"Yes, yes: God be with him!"

"And about your prayer."

"Don't speak of that. Prayers should not be talked about."

"And why not, as well as sermons?"

"Because, if good for any thing, they rise to God, and ought to be left there."

"See!" whispered the mother, leaning toward Amy.

"Look in his face, and remember what I said about angels unawares."

Amy did look in her father's face. Its rough features were in a glow of thankfulness; no lake ever received the sunshine more genially than that face reflected the pious ardor of his soul. Every look seemed to thank God that a human soul was on its way to salvation.

"Oh, father, is it possible? Will he have the strength to break off that terrible habit?" she said.

"Ask God to give him strength, my darter."

"I—I?" murmured Amy, shrinking back with a look

of affright, for she remembered how she had deceived her parents, and all the sinfulness of her conduct rushed upon her with a violence that made her faint.

Leonard was shoveling ashes over the fire, and the room grew dark. He did not remark her dismay, and she crept to her bed without a word, too happy for sorrow, and yet with a cloud upon her heart. Alas! this human love,—how it stands between the soul and its God!

CHAPTER XVI.

THE UNNATURAL ENCOUNTER.

ARNOLD was a self-sufficient egotist, and considered his own will, in every case, the higher law. He possessed intense pride, but of that rude sort which is distinguished by an entire absence of sensitiveness or delicacy. Nay, I have given his ruling passion the wrong term: it was arrogance, which takes its root in vanity, not that laudable pride which springs from self-esteem. This young man did not even desire to respect himself: his intellect was too sharp for that species of self-deception. It was enough for him that others recognized his pretensions, and yielded to the force of character which rushed headlong on the right or wrong with equal impetuosity. But one little grain of pure love can for a time soften the hardest nature; and, in a character like this, many fine traits are sure to be found, rendering the evil that predominates still more dangerous.

That evening Arnold's better nature had been upper-

most. He had put the young French girl and her unascertained wealth into the background, and Amy stole like an angel of light into his heart, calling forth every gentle feeling of which it was capable.

He had gone to the cabin with systematic caution, intending to conciliate the poor girl and re-establish his influence over her entirely; for he began to dread the result if her sensitive nature was outraged beyond its strength. So far his plans, and even wishes, were all afloat. Men can be fastidious without one particle of true delicacy; and even a refined nature may, and will, sometimes, recoil from the love which is too evident in a woman.

Had one doubt assailed Arnold of Laura's devotion to himself, he would have been restless and eager for a conquest so flattering to his vanity; but that warm and noble heart had betrayed itself too early for him to feel his triumph in all its zest. In fact, he had already made it a matter of calculation. How much power, how much wealth, how much of position could this love secure to him? These were the questions. He did not hesitate at the most cruel social treason that man is guilty of,—but the reward, that must be certain and substantial.

It was difficult to obtain an account of the true position which Paul and his sister occupied. The letters of introduction, with which they were abundantly furnished, spoke of them generally as persons occupying an honorable place in society, of good family, and possessed of wealth. But the exact amount, and how much belonged exclusively to the sister, was the doubt which kept him in suspense. But there was plenty of time. The girl loved him, and Arnold was a man who knew how to wait.

But it was necessary to conciliate and control Amy Leonard. She had been urged too far. If once satisfied

of his indifference, she might appeal to her father for help, notwithstanding her solemn promise of secrecy. While in doubt of Laura's attachment, he had been imprudently reckless regarding Amy; but now that his restless vanity was appeased in that quarter, this must be remedied. With this object he had visited Amy again; but the man was not all evil, and the love which had been a part of his boyhood rose through his selfish nature like incense in a prison. For the time he put all ambitious projects aside, it was both his policy and his pleasure to meet that affectionate nature half-way. Besides, there was something of mystery and daring in the affair, which seemed like an adventure.

As Arnold rode home, the sweet figure of Amy Leonard kept with him. Deep feeling had rendered her something more than the lovely child he had been weak enough to marry. That which was timidity once, had now mellowed down to deep and delicate tenderness. The gentle reticence of her character had a peculiar charm when contrasted with the energy and almost reckless frankness of Laura's. He was drawing these contrasts, and thinking over the scene through which he had just passed, on his way home.

The snow was thickly trampled along his way, and muffled the steps of his horse, so that the stillness made his reverie like a dream, and his horse took a wrong turn, leading him towards Norwich. All at once he became conscious of a figure walking before him in the darkness, and, checking his horse, he waited for it to come up; for he was not quite sure of his position.

"Halloo, friend!" he said. "Can you tell me which way I am going. My head is completely turned. Do these lights come from Norwich?"

"Benedict, is it you?" answered a kindly voice, "and asking that question? What! lost in the old town, my boy?"

"What, father!" exclaimed the young man, drawing in his horse sharply. "Coming home as usual?"

"No, not as usual, Benedict. I haven't been to the old place since that night. God forgive me that I ever went there. God forgive us all."

"But you have been out every night. I have hardly had a chance to speak a word with you since."

"Don't speak of it again, Benedict. I can't bear it. God help me, I'm trying to forget what you said; but such words burn into the brain. You might as well try to rub out a scar. It is God's mercy they didn't draw me back again."

"Back where?"

"To the tavern,—to the tavern!"

"And if you haven't been to the tavern, what takes you out so late at night, I should like to know?"

"I have been to meeting every night since then," answered the old man, meekly. "Every night."

"To prayer-meeting?" cried the young man, drawing up his horse with a jerk which made him run backward. "To prayer-meeting?"

"Every night,—every night. At first, I crept in when they were all on their knees, and hid in corners; but some of the brothers saw me, and would make me come in among the rest, so I did; and to-night——"

"Well, what folly did you commit to-night, sir?"

"To-night I knelt down before them all, and asked my old neighbors to pray for me."

"You did!"

"Yes; it was all I could do; for the Evil One had been

struggling with me all day. Up to the very meeting-house steps he followed me with that awful thirst. The tavern was in sight, with the bar-room door open. Every breath I drew was parched; but I shut my eyes close, and staggered into the meeting-house, and down upon my knees. Some one was praying, and, when the others joined in the 'Amen!' I held both hands on my mouth to stifle the cry for something to drink that rose up from my breast, choking back the Amen, as I have heard that snakes strangle little innocent birds when they are attempting to fly."

The old man's voice was broken, and full of tears. He shivered, and would have been struggling still, but for the exhaustion that had prostrated his strength. There was something so heart-broken and humble in his tones, that the hardest heart must have grown pitiful under them.

But Arnold had found in this painful confession a source of uneasiness far greater than lay in any degree of intemperance that his father could have reached. He knew well how near true brotherhood approaches to actual confession of sins and short-comings. Better a thousand times drunkenness than this dangerous repentance!

"And so you have changed folly for treason, old man," he said, with a degree of sternness that was almost savage. "In one way or another you are determined to ruin or disgrace the family!"

"No, no! Not the family!"

"Well, your son, then,—your only son. I suppose that these sanctified people will sweep out every thought of your life for them to pray over and denounce. They would consider it a duty to drag every foible or mistake of your family through the open church."

"No, no. I wouldn't do that. I will confess every thing to God; but, as for the rest, Benedict, I would rather die and be lost forever and ever than see a hair of your head harmed. I would, boy, just as sure as I live. So don't be afraid."

"Afraid!" repeated Arnold, with a sneer. "Did you ever see any thing like cowardice in your son, old man?"

"Dear, no! You were always brave as a lion. I've seen you strike at your mother when she wanted to put you in the cradle. We thought it very funny when your little fist wasn't bigger than a walnut; but now it's terrible to see it as you clenched it the other night!"

"And as I will again, old man, if that infernal subject ever comes up."

"It must, once more," said the old man, meekly.

"Never, sir, unless you wish me to forget that you are my father. I tell you it was the dream of a drunkard."

"No, Benedict, no! I did not drink then!"

"I tell you, sir, it was nothing else!" cried the young man, through his shut teeth. "Do not attempt to torture such nightmare visions into facts. For your own sake, for my mother's sake, I warn you."

"Oh, Benedict, how I wish you could make me believe this! but I can't,—I can't!"

"You had better, sir, or this new religious fit will end in mischief."

"No, Benedict, it will end in death. This thing has been gnawing at my heart ever since. It will only die when your father does."

"Drive it away then. I tell you it is all a lie."

"Oh, don't!—don't, my son. It makes me tremble to hear you. Remember, though you and I are all alone, God hears us, and he knows all."

"Then he knows you are crazy with drink, and have been for years."

The old man groaned heavily, and, drawing close to the horse, seemed about to press some other argument on his son; but Arnold backed his horse, wheeled him fiercely, and dashed away, leaving the heart-broken father standing in the snow. With his dull eyes, bloodshot with thirst rather than drink, following his wild flight towards home, the old man fell on his knees in the beaten snow.

"Oh, my God! my God! what can I do!" he sobbed, lifting his clasped hands to heaven, in a passion of entreaty. "Look upon me, O Lord! for I am a miserable old man,—broken down, helpless, trying to be good, and yet thirsting for my old sin. Help me! help me! or I shall go back, now, now; for where else is there a place for me on earth?"

He looked vaguely around, as if expecting some answer; but the far-off beat of those retreating hoofs was all the sound he heard. He looked upward. A single star would have given him light, and perhaps hope, but the sky was drifted over with clouds, and all was dark.

CHAPTER XVII.

OUT IN THE SNOW.

THE stricken man arose, wearily, and turned his face towards the town. How could he go home, with that fierce son ready to receive him with bitterness and reproach? How meet the wistful look of his wife, which

had questioned him so often but never upbraided him? These things had not troubled him much when his brain was misty with drink; but, now that his thoughts were unnaturally keen, and his conscience awake, he had no courage to go home. Nay, such had been the effect of his son's sneer, that he began to shrink from the impulses of religion which had led him to the meeting that night. True enough he was only an old broken down drunkard. What business had he to hope any thing from prayer? Had not the Almighty drawn a veil of clouds across the sky that he might know that his term of grace had passed away forever?

He stood, hopelessly thinking over these painful fancies, with his hands loosely locked and hanging down, like a child waiting to be led away. Then he lifted his face slowly, and looked towards the town. A single light shone from its terraces of snow,—a reddish, evil-looking light, that burned later than any other in Norwich. As a wild beast grows frantic at the sight of blood, the old man felt the influence of the fatal gleam. A fiercer thirst seized upon him. His brain began to burn with feverish desire; great drops of perspiration trembled on his forehead, notwithstanding a sharp wind turned them cold as they rose. Eager and famished, forgetting God and man, he turned upon the track that was leading him home. Keen desire gave him vigor: he walked heavily along the highway, muttering to himself like a lunatic that had escaped his keepers.

The light grew broader and more lurid. Like the eye of a fiend, it blinked and blazed, and lured him on. The frozen breath melted on the fever of his lips, and his chest heaved with wolfish appetite.

He had reached the slopes of the town. The tavern

stood on one of the numerous ridges of the hills, sheltered by an old willow-tree. The rusty hinges of a sign creaked on one of the lower branches, and the naked boughs whispered drearily, welcoming the old man back with dismal sighs.

A great fire blazed through the bar-room windows, and he already saw the shadows of his old friends moving against the glass.

"They will be glad to see me, at any rate," he said, rubbing his hands eagerly. "I wonder who will treat when they get me back from—from—oh, my God! from the meeting."

That instant a light hand was laid on his shoulder, and a low voice, full of kindness, made him turn. It was his wife, the home-angel, whom a pitying Saviour had sent to bring the old man back.

They stood together in the light which streamed from the bar-room windows. The riot of many voices came coarsely toward them. The sign shrieked overhead as if it were a fiend, to whom the presence of a creature so pure gave terrible pain. Her delicate face was bright with the frost, and softened with compassion. There was something of the old girlish look in her eyes, so earnest and full of love; something, too, in the dress; for she had wrapped herself in Hannah's scarlet cloak, and the hood looked richly warm around her forehead and against her cheek.

"Anna!" he said, tenderly, "Anna!"

"Yes, husband, I am here. Don't think it strange. But this is your birthday; so I sat up waiting. Hagar would make some coffee against you came home. It was so hot and nice I got impatient, and came out to meet you; for Hagar don't like her good things to go to waste."

"Poor Anna! And so you came all this way?"

"Oh, it's nothing, Ben. You have walked farther than this after me many a time, besides climbing the hills when you got here."

"Ah, that's when we were courting, Anna, and the road seemed short!"

"But the love which made it short hasn't changed, though we are getting old, Ben. Come, put your arm around me as you did in those old times, and let's go home. It is cold here. Ah, now I am warmer! This is comfortable. See how clear the road shines since the clouds went off. It looked likely to snow when I came out; now the stars are bright as diamonds, and the whole road shines like silver."

The old man lifted his eyes, and a thousand stars smiled down upon him, brighter and more pure by far than the red glare which had beckoned him through the tavern windows. His look fell slowly to the face of his wife. She had nestled close to his side, and, clinging to his arm, pointed down the path of snow as it wound off homeward under the smiling heavens.

"That is our way," she said, softly. "You must find it now, for I am tired of looking down."

Her cloak fluttered open with the wind. He folded it tenderly around her, and held it in place with his arm. Her heart swelled. She remembered the old times, when that was the fashion in which they had often walked together when alone under the stars.

After all, the power of good is stronger than that of evil,—and oh, how much more beautiful! This gentle woman, who possessed scarcely more than the strength of a child, had won her husband from a terrible temptation with a few loving words, uttered with tact as well as tenderness. The thirst of a tyrant habit, and the anguish of

a great trouble, were both forgotten under her sweet allurements.

"And do you know where I have been this evening?"

"No. I met Benedict; but he was riding fast and did not see who it was, I think."

"Oh, you met him,—our son?"

"Yes, husband, our first-born," she said, tenderly

"How we used to love the child! You remember, Anna?"

"Used to love him! How we *do* love him! Who could help it,—he is so brave and strong? I feel like a child by his side."

"And so you are, Anna."

"Like a child that has a little fear mixed with its love. Do you know, husband, I am always afraid of doing something that he does not like. And so is Hannah, I am sure. But then he is so perfect."

"Anna, would it kill you if he were not? If he had faults—if——"

"Ah, husband, we all have faults! What a terrible thing if we ceased to love one another because of that!"

"Yes, I know how good you are,—how much you can forgive. You need not tell me so. I feel it here."

"Oh, I didn't mean that; but then it is so pleasant to be walking with you in this way, and chatting about the children! Of course, Benedict has faults; but what of that. You and I mustn't see them, you know."

"Yes, it is possible to forgive faults, even such as mine have been, because, perhaps, you think it a duty."

The little woman shook her head, and muttered,

"No, no. She had nothing to forgive. He had come home with her pleasantly, and that was enough of happi-

ness for one night. Indeed, she loved him dearly, and always should, no matter what came or went."

But he clung to the first idea with a tenacity that surprised her. "Could she forgive a crime in one she loved,—a great crime, for instance, such as murder, or—or—well, there was no worse crime than that? Could she forgive murder in her husband or her son,—of course he meant nothing serious; but could she?"

"Yes; she could forgive even that, and—and——"

The husband drew a deep breath; but, noticing her hesitation, he questioned her again.

"And what, Anna?"

"And die!" she answered, in a solemn whisper.

His face clouded again, and they walked on some moments without speaking. Then he broke away from the subject altogether, and told her where he had been that evening, and of his interview with Leonard at "the falls."

He felt her arm steal around him from under her cloak as he went on, and when he looked down into her face the tears were falling over it.

"I knew it would come before the end," she said. "From the glow at my heart these few days back I felt that it was near."

When he told her of his great temptation, and of the weakness which had followed it, she began to sob and murmur words of meek thankfulness that she had gone forth as the wish arose. It was like an interposition of heaven, she said; and the reward was that long, happy walk, so unlike any thing they had known for years.

The husband sighed drearily. There was a heaviness at his heart which she must never know, or she might "forgive and die." He did not mention having met his

son that night; and she, sweet soul, was quite unconscious that bitter strife lay between them.

They reached home at length, and found Hagar sitting-up in the kitchen, with two old-fashioned china cups and saucers set out on a round stand, where a snow-white cloth had been spread. She had been impatiently snuffing the candle, and making herself uncomfortable for more than an hour, and was ready to give her master and mistress a piece of her mind which would mean something when they came in.

But when Mrs. Arnold appeared, muffled in her red cloak, from which she shook the frost with a smile, the house-slave relented, and, instead of expressing her mind, according to promise, she helped Mr. Arnold off with his great-coat, giving him an approving glance, as she hung it up; and, uncovering a dish in one corner of the fireplace, revealed the plump bosoms of a pair of quails that lay snugly nestled there. Then she took a coffee-pot, with a conical top, from the other corner, and began to pour the contents out,—“good and strong,” as she said, while the master and mistress sat down to enjoy a supper which the sharp air and a long walk had rendered doubly acceptable.

“Where is our son?” inquired Mrs. Arnold, as she drew her seat to the table, and began to carve the quails. “Go call him, Hagar. The girls are in bed long ago, but he must be up yet.”

Hagar drew herself up, looking very like a black bantam when its mate is disturbed, and observed, in her choicest language, that “Mr. Ben had turned up his nose at her invitation to wait till his parents came in, and went upstairs, stamping with his boots like a trooper, without so much as saying, ‘No, thank you,—a piece of business that

she was sartin Dan would a made a touse about, if he hadn't been in the barn shelling corn, and consecantly hadn't known nothing about it. She hadn't a doubt but young Mass' Arnold was a-bed and asleep, and she didn't want to disturb no gemman's depose,—not she."

"Never mind, I will go myself, Hagar," said Mrs. Arnold. "Just bring another cup and saucer."

With these words she stole away up-stairs, smiling back upon her husband,—whom she considered doubly her property since the night's rescue,—and hoping that Benedict would be in a condition to come down and share her happiness, not to speak of a little feminine triumph that broke up from the depths of her innocent heart at the conquest which she had achieved over the Evil One.

She stole softly into her son's room. His candle was out, but she could see by the starlight reflected over the snow that he was in bed, with his face turned to the wall. She bent over him, holding her breath; but, when he did not move, she pressed a kiss, light as a roseleaf, on his forehead, tucked up the blue and white counterpane with a sigh of content, and stole away.

She was followed by his glittering eyes; for he had turned his head to look after her with a touch of remorse. What if his father should confide in her? By what horrible mismanagement was the old man let into his secret? This was a source of continual anxiety which made him almost hate his father, and quite fear his mother; for he would have died rather than that good woman should know him as he was. When she left that kiss on his forehead, and tucked up his bed in the old-fashioned way, he felt the tears steal to his eyes, and murmured something which betrayed the tender regrets that her gentleness and loving faith awoke in his heart.

"Mother!" he said, calling her.

She came back and sat down on the side of the bed, glad to hear his voice. "Well, my son!"

"Did you wish to speak with me about any thing?"

"Yes, Benedict. I wanted to tell you how happy I am,—how good the Lord has been. Oh, my son, I shall never have the sorrow of seeing you condemn father again. He has come back to his old self, and this is his birthday."

"Mother!" said the young man, quickly, "did you ever know my father break a promise?"

"Break a promise? No, indeed. They could never kill his good principles so far as that."

"And you think he loves me?"

"Think he loves you,—you, his only son! What a question! Better than his life, I'm sure."

"I suppose it's a wild sort of question, but I have had little knowledge of him these late years."

"No. He has not been quite himself; but that is all over now. He is a changed man,—no, not a changed man, but his old self again. We shall live to be proud of him yet, Benedict. That is what I came up for. I want you to forget what you saw in that room when he was asleep there. I thought it was my duty to let you know every thing then: but, since, what I did has troubled me dreadfully. It was wrong to betray my husband's fault; my cheek grows hot when I think of it. I will beg his pardon before we go to sleep this night. If you hadn't been in bed I'd a done it before you both; but somehow I cannot forgive myself."

Arnold had not been listening to this womanly speech: deeper and darker thoughts occupied him. At last he said, very abruptly,

"Mother, send him up here before he goes to bed. My father, I mean."

"Yes, my son; but speak kindly to him,—of course you will, though."

"Yes, mother, I will. That is the best way, you think, to control,—to influence him?"

"Oh, yes,—only be respectful and good-natured. Now, I'll go down and pour out his coffee."

The mother hastened down-stairs and settled herself by the little table; while her husband, with childlike delight, drained the strong coffee in his cup, and talked pleasantly with Hagar, who, woman-like, gave out stray enticements for the praise which her fine cooking had so well deserved.

With the craving appetite and the weary soul both appeased, Mr. Arnold began to feel once more as the master of his own house. There was an atmosphere of respect about him which awoke all the dignity that had been so nearly dead in his nature.

When the supper was over, and Hagar began to mutter about raking up the fire, Mrs. Arnold told her husband that Benedict was awake, and wanted to see him before he went to bed.

The old man turned pale at this, and began to tremble; but he strode up-stairs, heavily, and went into his son's room.

From that night Arnold ceased to sneer at or revile his father; on the contrary, his demeanor became more than respectful. Not servile—that to his nature was impossible,—but he was at all times on the alert to help or defend his father. Yet there was a sort of reserve between them all the time. In this world, a secret which gives one man power over another always brings with it the curse of alienation.

A week after this Arnold and his guests were ready to go away. The visit had been both pleasant and eventful to the young people; but love, which is strong in most cases, cannot control time or circumstance: so, with many a regretful sigh, the party broke up.

That night Arnold managed to see Amy alone. She was very sad,—this unacknowledged wife,—and the young man was himself greatly depressed. They had been talking earnestly. The loving eloquence was still in her eyes, and her lips quivered like those of a grieved infant.

"Oh, if you would only let me tell my father and mother I wouldn't care!" she said, clinging to him, and pleading with her innocent eyes so earnestly that even he was moved to kiss away the tears that trembled in them.

"Be still, child. To no living soul shall you breathe a secret of mine. I must have obedience or nothing."

Amy drew a deep sob, and drooped into a submissive attitude. "Well," she said,—“well, it is my duty. You are my husband."

Arnold frowned and grew thoughtful.

"Are you offended with me, Benedict?" whispered the young wife, leaning her arm softly on his shoulder.

"No, Amy; but I feel unsafe. This promise is not enough. You mean to keep it, I know. But will you be strong enough?"

"I will,—I will! Don't look so black."

He looked up suddenly. "You would keep an oath, I know."

She blanched white, and began to tremble. "An oath, Benedict!"

"Yes. Come here,—put your two hands between mine. What on earth makes you so white? There, kneel down. Well, well, stand up; it makes no difference. Now swear

before the God, who is our only witness, never to tell any living mortal that you and I are man and wife till I give you permission."

"I—I——" She attempted to go on, but the words froze on her lips, and holding out her arms imploringly, she fainted.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WILD HOPES AND DEEP WISHES.

NEW HAVEN is one of the most beautiful places on earth, even at the present day, when the green mountains are shorn of their forest-crowns, and cultivation has taken the place of picturesque loveliness. But it was wilder, more broken, and altogether more romantic before the Revolution. Then a few pleasant houses, with church-spires and the college-buildings, were to be seen through a bower of trees only. The country that lay between the sound and the steep foot of the green mountains was wild as a forest. Here and there patches of cultivation gleamed out from the shadows, and rustic dwellings sent their smoke up through the pines and hemlocks; but the great features of the landscape were altogether at variance with the scene which now presents itself.

Two or three dwellings were nestled at the foot of East Rock, forming the germ of what was, in my first remembrance, called Holchkisstown, and the precipitous cliff which still overhangs that village, seemed far less bold and forbidding, from the undergrowth and great trees that clothed it half-way up, and crowned it on the top with a

noble forest that swayed and tossed to every passing wind.

In one glance of the eye was combined the most lovely arcadian scenery, guarded by rugged mountains, and almost circled by a zone of sparkling waters, over which the white sails flew like doves in the northward and southward passage.

A few rods down from the college-green, fronting on Chapel Street, stood a large, wooden building, with double verandahs and low, oaken doors. A huge elm swept the roof with its foliage, and from one of its great branches swung a weather-beaten sign, on which the British lion had raved and pawed his way upward for more than twenty years.

In this house young Arnold made his home. The bird-like ships we have spoken of, brought the merchandise which was fast enriching him from the West Indies; and, far down on the "long-wharf," he had erected a stone warehouse of considerable pretension. In fact, of all the traders settled in that town, he was among the most daring and the most energetic.

Beyond these evident proofs of prosperity, vague rumors had gone abroad of events that might cast into his power, at a single grasp, greater wealth and position than he could hope to obtain, even by a lifetime of the most successful enterprise. It was said that the bold, handsome person of this young man had won a heart which would bring almost fabulous wealth into his control.

The beautiful young French girl, who had turned even wise heads with her grace and fascinations,—who had driven half the students of Yale College crazy with admiration of her black eyes and superb toilet,—had fallen under willing subjection to Benedict Arnold. During the

winter she had generally been seen in his sleigh, enjoying long drives along the coast, or by his side in the promenade, when her subdued and almost timid air of happiness gave force to the current rumor.

If she went to a party, the joyous sparkle of her eyes was clouded till he appeared. In truth, though a proud and sensitive girl, she took no pains to conceal her love,—nay, her adoration,—for it amounted to that, which filled her being in his presence; nay, she rather gloried in her devotion, and not only forgave his display of it, but seemed pleased that he should so openly claim her.

Thus the winter passed. Paul had made one or two trips to Norwich, where his quiet and almost disregarded suit prospered with gentle Hannah Arnold. So he was in no haste to move farther from her presence, and rested content within reach of her home.

Paul was a sensitive and over-refined man,—so delicate in his mental organization that he shrunk from interfering in the love affairs of his sister, and was, in truth, less informed of her real position than many a stranger who had made the lovers objects of attention. Thus he never spoke of this evident attachment to Hannah Arnold, and she, sensitive and shy as himself, asked no questions. In fact it came about, no one knew how, that the whole subject was a forbidden one. Arnold had managed to convey this feeling so completely, without committing himself by words, that it was an idea rather than an understanding between himself and the lady.

And were these two persons engaged? Not in the usual acceptance of the term. From the time that Arnold left his home, the irresolution and amazing variability of spirit that had marked his conduct there, changed. In his attentions he was frank and ardent: imperious cer-

tainly,—that was in his nature. Even self-interest could not change any thing in this respect; but, as far as manner went, he was every thing that ardent and devoted young creature could desire. What was the need of words where two persons understood each other so well?

Up to the spring, Paul and his sister had lived at the same public house with Arnold,—that which fronted on Chapel Street, and was sheltered by the great elm-tree, with its sheltering foliage and creaking sign. But when the violets came out under the East Rock, and the hemlock-buds put forth their soft, golden green all along the mountains, Laura began to grow a little restive. The winter months had flown, and there she was, engaged in spirit, but not in word, exactly as she had been at the Christmas time. Even her generous faith began to waver a little now; and when Paul, one day, suggested a desire to know something of her plans, that he might regulate his own by them, she flew into a girlish passion and burst into tears, protesting that she had no plans. How could she have and he not know them?

Paul heard this with a glow of indignation, for he believed that Laura was trifling with him; but when he saw that she was in earnest, and that no actual engagement existed between his sister and Arnold, all the iron in his nature rose to the surface; and, taking his hat, he went down to the wharf, for the first time in his life, and entered Arnold's place of business.

What passed between the two young men is of no moment here, save that the interview left Arnold in clear possession of all the information he had been constantly searching for regarding the amount of wealth with which Laura would be endowed on the day of her marriage, while Paul became more and more thoughtful as the con-

versation proceeded; for, with the keen intuition which is the blessing and curse of refined natures like his, he felt the selfishness of Arnold's character, but was altogether too good for condemnation, where no positive proof existed. Perhaps his own heart was a little at fault. In his love for the gentle sister, Paul was willing to believe himself unjust when a thought against one of her blood rose in his heart.

All that afternoon Laura was in tears, with the quick transition so natural to an impulsive character. She had passed from a state of confidence to one of deep, deep depression. No, she was sure of it. Arnold had been amusing himself with her; his vanity had been interested, nothing more. Paul was right. She had read this opinion clearly in his face. Arnold did not love her. She had been deceiving herself all the time. Paul knew it,—the whole world would know it. The very thought drove her wild. She walked to and fro in the room, restless and wretched.

She flung herself on the high-backed sofa, and, shutting her eyes, tried to think steadily, while she listened for some footstep which would bring her news. The security in which she had been dwelling made her present state of turbulent doubt all the more painful.

At last Paul came home, grave and sad. He said nothing of his interview with Arnold, and Laura only questioned him with her great, eager eyes, that grew heavy with dread when she saw no cheerfulness in his glance.

"Paul, brother Paul," she said at last, holding out her hands. "Have you nothing to tell me?"

Paul was touched by her pleading humility. He knelt down by the sofa, as a lover might have done, and took

her head between his hands, laying his cheek against the heavy braids of her hair.

"Have patience, my sister,—only a little patience. In another day all this shall be settled."

"Ah! does he want time?" faltered Laura, turning pale. "Have you made a claim on his honor? Oh, Paul!"

"I have to deal with his honor and ours," said the young man, with decision.

"His honor! And has it come to that? His honor!"

Her face began to burn like fire, and hot flushes ran down her hands and arms.

"Hush! be quiet, Laura. There is nothing as yet to distress yourself about. He was not so frank as I could wish; but that may be from embarrassment. The peculiar nature of our interview was enough to unsettle any man."

"Embarrassment!" said Laura, brightening a little; for her imagination had run so far ahead of the facts that Paul's words gave an immediate sense of relief. "Embarrassment! No, no; he is never embarrassed. Nothing ever takes him unawares. His self-possession is regal. It is for this I—there, there, don't look at me so anxiously—how foolish we have been—nothing has happened, after all. You have been to him with that darling, grave face, like a grand signor, and asked him serious questions, which are always awkward between men. He is proud as an emperor,—my Arnold,—and would not be forced into answers that ought only be whispered, you know. I blush for our delicacy, Paul. It makes me shiver in all my nerves that you should have spoken to him,—offered your sister on compulsion, as it were."

"No; I have not done that. Your delicacy is safe in my hands, Laura. I have made the way clear, if he loves you, that is all."

"If he loves me, Paul! And have you a doubt?" cried the poor girl, turning white.

"God forbid!" faltered the young man, growing more and more distressed as he marked these evidences of the deep passion that possessed her. "To-morrow, I hope, you will be satisfied that I need have no distrust on that point. There is no reason why he should not speak out now. Before this he may have hesitated to offer his small prosperity against your wealth, for he is very proud."

"Oh, yes; as he should be,—for who is his equal!"

"But that is all done away with. I have even sacrificed a little proper reserve to save this pride. Don't look reproachful. I know how to protect your delicacy, sister."

"Ah, if I knew how to protect my own pride!" said Laura, turning her face impatiently on the sofa pillow. "But with him it melts away like snow. Don't trust me, Paul. I have no dignity left."

Paul shook his head, and regarded her with an anxious smile, muttering to himself,

"Will any one ever love me so?"

Laura did not heed him; for a clock which stood in a corner of the room rang out the hour from its heavy oaken case, and she was startled to find how late it was. Rising from the sofa, she glanced at her morning-dress of fine chintz, and, blushing like a naughty child, cried out,

"He will be here in a few minutes. See how I look! Good-by, Paul, for a little time. To-morrow we will be happier."

"Yes," muttered Paul, in a low voice; "happier or away from this place." But his heart sank as he reflected how completely his own fate was involved in that of his sister. Henceforth he must be closely connected with Arnold, or his enemy. The enemy of Hannah's brother!

He shrunk from the idea, and hoped, almost as passionately as Laura herself, that this, a position so painful every way, might be spared to him.

Burdened with these thoughts, he had scarcely removed from his seat when Laura returned, with her red-heeled shoes pattering on the floor, and her dress of brocaded silk looped up with knots of green ribbon, over a quilted skirt of rose-colored satin, which was short enough to exhibit the embroidered clocks on each side her symmetrical ankles. Fine old yellow lace floated around her arms and on her bosom. All the folds of her dress rustled as she moved, giving an idea of sumptuousness to her presence which accorded well with the taste of her lover.

Paul smiled as the idea presented itself. Laura blushed under his gaze, and strove to throw off all embarrassment by a conscious laugh, which gave a charm to her singular beauty touchingly childlike. She seemed half ashamed of her rich toilet,—more than ashamed of the impulse that had induced her to put it on: all of which her brother read at a glance. He held out his hand. She came close to his side, flushing like a tea-rose.

"Am I very ugly, my brother?" she said, pressing a pair of lips that glowed like ripe cherries on his forehead.

He looked up to her face with a glance of tender admiration.

"You are too lovely,—too good for——"

She stopped his mouth with her hand, and looked seriously down into his eyes.

"Not that. Oh, don't say that, Paul! He is not gentle and good as you are. But who is worthy of him? Think how brave, how lordly and full of ambition he is. Then remember, brother Paul, that he saved my life."

Still Paul looked grave. All her charming blandish-

ments could not win the suspicion from his heart. Laura saw this, and the impatient blood rushed to her forehead.

"At any rate he has one merit," she said, with malicious playfulness.

"What is that, lady bird?"

"He is Hannah Arnold's brother."

She had her revenge; the thrill that passed through his whole frame was proof enough of that. So her mouth curved and trembled with smiles as she triumphed over his confusion.

"Ah! have I found you out, brother? The love folly does not lie entirely on the female side of our house. Look up! look up! I cannot see your eyes for those long, black lashes; besides, you are blushing,—upon my word and honor you are blushing like a girl."

"It is at your folly, then."

"Well, well, it is all in the family, you know; so don't be hard on Benedict, or I will retaliate and point out the faults of *la petite sœur*."

"Her faults! She has none, the angel!"

"Oh! ha! So it has gone so far as that. Angel indeed! The demure little mouse, with her smooth hair and soft step. A fine example of deceit you have been placing before an innocent sister, Monsieur Paul. I blush for your duplicity."

"Hush, Laura! This is not a subject for jesting."

"Jesting! Upon my word I am delightfully in earnest. What a charming family party we shall make. Does Arnold know of it?"

"There is nothing for him to know,—nothing but what your wild imagination invents."

"Oh, brother!"

"You look incredulous; but it is true."

"Then Hannah Arnold is nothing! There is no love-history between you! I don't believe it."

"I did not say so,—only that there was nothing to tell. When you speak of love and that sweet girl it should be with reverence and in a low voice, as we whisper our prayers. I have scarcely dared to breathe the word in her presence, and yet I worship her."

"Ah, Paul, my dear, dear brother, then you can feel for me and have charity for him! Perhaps, with all his bravery, he trembles at the thought of speaking out such feelings in language. It is like shaking the bright dew from one's violets in the gathering. Don't you think so, Paul?"

The young man looked at her glowing face, and his eyes filled with loving admiration. He felt all the beauty of her bright sayings. How true this one was to his inward thought! What a clear, delicate mind the girl had, with all her waywardness and passion! Surely the mate for a creature like that should be full of strength and honor. Was Arnold that man?

Again his heart misgave him, and, to conceal the depression that came on with each vague doubt, he arose and left the room.

Laura was glad to see him go. Every moment she expected to hear Arnold's step on the stairs. She knew that a crisis in her fate was approaching, and wished to be alone. The dreamy happiness in which she had been reposing was broken up forever; and she felt like a bird let loose in some dreary wilderness, doubtful of any place where its nest could be built.

Laura grew impatient as the dusk stole on. Arnold's hour for visiting her little parlor had passed, and the oaken clock went ticking on with harassing steadiness into the next hour. She walked to the window softly, as if there

existed some sin in the movement, and peered through the crimson curtains. The street was empty, or if any one passed it was some stranger, whom she hated for being the wrong person. Then she strove to walk off her impatience, and paced up and down the room, passing and repassing a little mirror, out of which her face gleamed back and forth like that of a sybil, waiting, pale and trembling, for the inspiration for which she has watched and prayed.

A hundred times that evening the young girl stopped to listen, holding her breath and turning white with keen expectation. Some noise at the door,—some foot-fall in the street,—had arrested her; but the sound invariably passed away, leaving her like a statue: as cold, and almost as lifeless.

Then the strife of hope recommenced, and the pain of renewed expectation smote her with fresh poignancy. Up and down before the mirror; hating the clock for its methodical ticking, as a soulless thing that cruelly measured her way to fresh disappointment; listening with a double sense, and with the cold tears standing on her cheek, she wandered through that lonesome evening, waiting for him in vain.

When hope had almost left her, and she was chilled through with a feeling of desertion, the outside door opened, and she heard footsteps on the stairs. Again each breath came like a frightened thing from her heart, the heavy lustre of her eye kindled, and through her frame went the thrill of revived hope. It was his step; surely it *was* his step. No, no. The imperious resonance was wanting. It was,—alas, it was Paul, coming to find her there alone, heart-broken, humbled to the dust!

She could not bear that; but, with a wild sob, burst

from the room and hid herself, like a frightened deer, under the covert of drapery that fell over a couch where she was to find nothing but pain and unrest. No matter, she had secured darkness in which to hide herself,—profound silence which would receive her sobs without mocking them. That moment her humiliation seemed complete.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN THE DEPTHS OF DARKNESS.

WHERE was Benedict Arnold all this time? Was he indeed the recreant this sudden desertion seemed to proclaim him?

Far in the depths of the forest that clothed the foot of East Rock and spread up to the verge of the town he had wandered; not for solitude, nor in search of that quiet which leads to the enjoyment of happy feelings, but in search of a place where the evil thought which had for months been engendering in his heart could be worked out in safety.

A narrow footpath ran along what is now a broad highway, and curved down into the very heart of the forest, where a thick grove of pines made a pleasant twilight, even of the noonday sun. The path wandered on through entangled elms, beeches, and maples, up to the very summit of the mountain, and fitful gleams of moonlight fell upon it through the branches; while dogwood, wild honeysuckles, and budding grape-vines, perfumed the

night air, and streamed over the path, like banners, through all its windings.

Still Arnold sought the black heart of the forest, and stood under its densest pines, before he spoke a word of the thoughts that were consuming him to the companion who had accompanied him from the town.

Rapidly, and in silence, he had threaded the narrow footpath, trampling down the soft woodmosses, and crushing the violets under his feet, as if a sense of destruction satisfied the fierce excitement that possessed him. Sometimes he would push aside the flowering branches that fell across his path, with a burst of muttered wrath, dashing the lovely blossoms over the man who walked behind him, in a storm of unheeded sweetness.

The recoiling branch struck this man in the face more than once, but he made no complaint, and only answered the half-sneering apology offered by Arnold with a vague smile, which gleamed like trouble on his face as a ray of moonlight fell athwart it through the trembling leaves.

Thus, with but brief snatches of speech, the two men penetrated the woods, till they stood on a swelling undulation of land, which afforded a dreamy view of the country around. In this spot some of the trees had been cut away, preparatory to a clearing. The undergrowth in full blossom, and trailing vines, tangled themselves overhead without obstructing the view. The moonlight was full and bright, weaving its silver with the mists of the forest, and giving the clear, black outlines of the East and West Rocks with minute distinctness. The Sound lay below them, like a lake of sleeping mist. As they looked toward the mountains, the town lay to the right, far out of view or hearing, save that here and there a slender steeple shot into the sky against a background of burning stars.

After standing for a moment on this swell of land, bathed in the moonlight,—the two men looking away from each other all the time;—they descended the slope which led into the deep forest, and walked very rapidly down to the centre of the pine woods, where the darkness was dense as midnight, and a thick carpet of dead leaves muffled their footsteps, as if they were treading on velvet.

When the darkness was so thick that the very outlines of their persons were lost, Arnold paused, leaned against a tree for an instant, and then slid noiselessly down to the carpet of pine leaves, which were heavy and wet with rain that had fallen the day before, and in that deep shade had scarcely begun to exhale. Arnold pressed his hands down hard upon the mass of leaves, as if the moisture and coolness were pleasant to him.

"Sit down," he said to the young man who stood in the darkness. "Sit down, for I have a good deal to talk about, and you will get tired standing there like the steeple to a ruined church."

"No; the ground is wet; I can feel the chill through my boots already. You had better stand up yourself, for it strikes me the air has made you hoarse. A cold may be serious at this time of the year."

"I am not at all delicate," said Arnold, sweeping a moist hand over his forehead, and dropping it to the earth again. "Besides, the air is close and hot here; my forehead is burning."

"And yet, as I have said, there is a hoarseness in your voice I never heard there before. It seems unnatural, and chills me through and through."

"You are sensitive,—as sensitive as ever," answered Arnold, with a sneer; "but that is a part of your profession."

The young man shuddered under this sneer.

"Come out of this darkness," he said; "I do not like it."

"I do," was the rude reply; "but if you are afraid of the dark I will indulge you for once; but remember, my dear Osborne, that whatever I desire to do, that do I. Spare me further argument or advice about any thing I may say or propose."

The minister's pale cheek flushed a little at the insolent tone, but he made no reply: and the darkness concealed his agitation.

"I want to talk with you," said Arnold. "Sit down, if you please. I hate to see a man look so deucedly uncomfortable."

"There is really no safe place to sit," he answered.

"Oh, nonsense! There's a log lying in that gleam of moonlight. I don't think that you will be injured."

Osborne seated himself upon the log, yielding, like all who came in contact with that singular man, to a will always exercised in the least as in the greatest things.

"What do you wish to say?" asked the minister.

Arnold did not answer. He lay gloomily watching the moonlight flicker through the branches, and listening to the solemn music of the pines, as if the sound troubled him.

"This is a pretty scene," he said, laughing hoarsely. "If either you or I were a poet, friend Osborne, we should find ample material here for a dozen sonnets."

The clergyman smiled, but with an effort. He knew Arnold well enough to suspect that there was something hidden beneath his forced playfulness, and he felt a deeper sense of anxiety than the uneasiness which that man's presence usually brought upon him.

"A few minutes ago," continued Arnold, "I saw the spire of your church. Did you remark it?"

The minister shaded his eyes with his hand, and looked uneasily at his friend.

"I did not look for it," he said, in a troubled voice; "the distance is so great."

"My eyes are stronger than yours," returned Arnold, with an unpleasant laugh. "It is a very pretty church. I have heard you preach many a fine sermon there."

The clergyman turned abruptly away: his hands twisted themselves round his walking-stick, and he felt a deathly pallor creeping over his face.

"You are a great favorite with your congregation," pursued his tormentor.

"I—I have tried to do my duty by them, at least," he answered, with a strong effort.

"I have no doubt of it. And how the pretty girls do gather there! I say, Osborne, what a quantity of lambs there are in your flock. Old Hurlburt has nothing but a lot of ugly sheep in his fold. What is the secret of your success?"

"Mr. Arnold," replied the minister, with considerable firmness, "you have chosen a sorry subject for a jest! Whatever my own faults have been, I have endeavored to preach God's word to my hearers! I scarcely dare pray to him for myself. But never towards one of my people have I been guilty of a wrong."

"Really, you are very eloquent," said Arnold. "My dear fellow, what a strange person you are! Don't go off in heroics. I was only laughing at you. There is no reason for being angry."

"I am not angry, Arnold."

"That is well. I believe you consider me your friend,—do you not? I hope so, at any rate, for I am about to test you."

The clergyman stepped hastily back.

"Heaven help me!" he exclaimed. "I don't know,—I can't tell!"

"Upon my word," returned Arnold, apparently more amused than offended by his companion's words and manner, "that is a charming remark! You are more frank than usual."

"You have helped me," said the clergyman. "Yes, you have done me a great kindness; but was it not by you that I was led into the error that made this obligation necessary."

"Have done, Osborne!" replied Arnold, coldly. "Never blame another person for your own weakness. Have the courage to carry your sins upon your own shoulders, however burdensome the load may be. I, at least, am brave enough for that."

"I will,—I will! I do not mean to exculpate myself,—I know that I am a weak, sinful wretch——"

"There you go again! My dear friend, you are really too nervous and excitable."

"I am indeed,—I know it!"

"Listen to me, Osborne."

"What is it?" he asked, drearily.

"I want you to do me a favor."

"Any thing that lies in my power you know I will do to serve you," he replied, in the same dreary, pained tone.

"I think so. That is the reason I have made up my mind to ask it. You know I do not like refusals."

"You are not likely to get one from me."

"I think not," he said, musingly, yet with a sort of threat like an undertone pervading his speech: "I think not."

Osborne shivered. His hands shook so violently that

his stick fell to the ground; but he never moved his eyes from Arnold's face,—it appeared impossible for him to do so, although it was evident that he suffered from the very effort of forcing his eyes to meet the piercing orbs that seemed to glare at him through the broken light.

"You are cold," said Arnold. "You are shivering."

"Only a little,—very little."

"You students are so tender. You ought to all live in hot-houses."

"But what did you wish to ask of me, Arnold?" he inquired, with an anxiety that he tried in vain to conceal.

"Nothing of much consequence,—a mere trifle, in fact, according to my way of thinking."

"Then it will not be difficult?"

"No, no. Don't be afraid that I am going to make any great demand upon your friendship."

"You know I did not mean that, Arnold,—you know I did not!"

"I am sure I can't tell what you do mean."

"I meant that I would gladly serve you," said the poor man, shivering more violently; "but don't,—don't ask me to do any thing wrong. I can't do that!"

"Yours is a very tender conscience!" exclaimed Arnold, rising to his feet with a quick flash of passion, which the least breath of opposition always excited in him. "I suppose you think it is enough to have your own shortcomings to reflect upon——"

"Have mercy, Arnold!" pleaded the clergyman. "Don't talk to me in that tone. I have suffered enough,—surely I have."

"Then reserve your preaching for your pulpit. I wish none of it. Remember that, Osborne."

The clergyman made an appealing gesture, as if implor-

ing the tyrannical man to spare him further insult. There was so much weakness in it that another would have had pity; but Arnold did not even know the meaning of the word.

"You are coming to your senses," he said. "I am glad of it."

"I don't know," replied Osborne, shaking his head sadly. "Sometimes it seems to me that I am losing them. It would be no wonder if I did,—no wonder."

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Arnold, with a sharp laugh. "To hear the fellow talk, one would think that he was Cain, the first murderer! Are you certain that you are not the Wandering Jew?"

"Don't make a jest of me, Benedict. Have a little mercy!"

"There, there!" said Arnold, carelessly, as one might quiet a pet grayhound. "Be quiet now,—be quiet!"

"Yes, yes! And what did you wish, Ben? The name sounds like old times, doesn't it?"

It seemed as if the clergyman was trying to soften the stern man before him. He wished, perhaps, to call up some memory of their youth to restrain the wicked counsel which he felt to be in his heart. But there was nothing holy to Benedict Arnold,—no memory that he held sacred. To a man like that, what appeal was possible?

"Do you remember that foolish business of mine about a year ago,—more perhaps?"

"What do you mean?"

"Why, the time I came to you with that pretty girl,—you know there was some sort of a form——"

"Why, Arnold, I married you to that girl,—solemnly married you before the most high God. She was a sweet creature, and should have had a holy influence over you."

Arnold sprang toward him, clutched his arm in a fierce grasp, whispering:

"Repeat those words again, and before to-morrow noon you shall be an outcast,—not a roof to shelter,—not a friend to aid you."

Harvey Osborne sank back upon the log and groaned aloud. The depth of degradation to which he had fallen was terrible indeed.

"What do you mean?" he gasped. "You try me too far, Arnold!"

"No matter! That is what I mean. You did *not* marry me to that girl!"

"The ceremony was sacred as any I ever performed!" exclaimed Osborne, firmly. "Before God and man, you are husband and wife."

"Fool! Do you wish to ruin yourself?"

"I do not care! Oh, I am tired of this load of sin,—this weight of concealment! Betray me,—tell the whole world what a wretch I am. I don't care,—I don't care!"

"Bah! If it came to the point you would see that it was not so pleasant. But I'll do it, Osborne,—I will, by——"

"Stop!" said the minister. "You shall not take God's name sacrilegiously before me, unworthy as I am."

"Nonsense! But will you come to your senses and let me explain?"

"Yes, yes. Explain,—do!"

"I don't ask any thing very terrible! I have reasons for not wishing the circumstances known about that little affair——"

"But, Arnold, it was a marriage,—a real marriage! Her name was Amy—yes, Amy Leonard. It is, now,

Arnold.—It could not be broken or evaded. I am an ordained minister of the gospel.”

“A pretty one, truly!” cried Arnold, roused to tiger-like fury. “A fine minister of the gospel are you,—a drunkard,—a scoundrel,—a gambler!”

“Spare me, Ben, spare me!”

“Don’t hope it! The whole world shall know your real character. I will denounce you in your own church. A pretty scandal it will make. Why, they’ll drive you out of the town. Ha, my young minister, what do you say now?”

“Oh, my God!” groaned the wretched man, “my God, have mercy on me; for this man will show me none.”

“None!” repeated Arnold. “I shall tell your flock what a pastor they have. You went to a gambling-house in New York, in my company, remember. True, you had taken too much at supper before that,—a double crime.”

“But it was not my fault,” Osborne cried, goaded into self-defence. “I did not know that it was liquor you gave me. It drove me mad for the time, and you did what you chose with me.”

“No doubt, oh, no doubt; but make people believe it, will you? Only try, that’s all. See here, Osborne. I have been a good friend,—I shall make a bitter-enemy. You don’t know how I can hate. Avenge myself I will! A little will not satisfy me. I shall follow you. Wherever you hide yourself I shall find you out. I will tell this story, blast your whole life, and make you the wretchedest criminal that ever trod the earth.”

A groan was the only response he received. His agonized listener had no power to speak.

“More than that: I will put you in prison. I hold

your note for the money I advanced to settle your gaming debt. You can’t pay it. Nobody will do it for you. I will put you in the debtor’s jail before to-morrow night. Now, then, what do you say?”

“Nothing will soften you? nothing will change your fiendish purposes?”

“Yes, it is easily done. Only forget that marriage, as you call it——”

“I cannot lie——”

“What else is your whole life, you miserable fool?”

“True, true! Oh, surely I have suffered enough. Do not torture me further. Do not push me lower into this pit of infamy and guilt!”

“Why, you talk like a play-actor. Promise what I ask, and I will return you the note. You will be safe then.”

The minister was silent. A great struggle was going on in his soul, and he was weak.

“It does no one any harm,” continued Arnold. “The girl is safe enough. Some time I shall acknowledge her, but I cannot now. Promise, promise!”

“What! tell me what?”

“Never to reveal this marriage. Swear it!”

“But if she comes to me herself?”

“Tell her she is mistaken——”

“And destroy my own soul?”

“Let your soul take care of itself. Once more,—will you help me?”

“I cannot tell a lie,—I will not.”

“But are you willing to assist me?”

“I must,—you know I must.”

“Then go away from here. Your health is poor,—you need change. A ship will soon sail for the West Indies.

If you will go in her, I will pay your passage and give you plenty of money besides. Your people will spare you for a little time if you plead to them with that pale face."

"But what will become of this poor girl?"

"I tell you she is safe enough. Think of yourself. I offer you safety or disgrace. Choose!"

"Oh, this is a temptation of the demon!"

"Think of it. Before to-morrow night you will be hooted at as you walk the streets,—mobbed,—insulted by the very boys you have taught."

"You will drive me mad, Arnold!"

"Will you go away? Do you promise?"

"I do—I do!"

He fell upon the ground, wringing his hands, and weeping like a child; while Arnold stood over him with a fiendish smile.

"Promise by your hope of salvation that you will go."

"I do! God have mercy upon me, I promise!"

He fell forward again, and after another terrible groan there was long silence, more fearful than the agony which had gone before.

CHAPTER XX.

WAITING AND WATCHING.

ALL night long, Laura lay upon her bed, counting the hours with feverish impatience, gazing drearily out upon the moonlight, and weeping, at times, till the curtains

overhead trembled with the violence of her sobs. All the pretty wiles, that had seemed but a harmless means of securing Arnold's love, now rose before her tortured imagination as coarse and unwomanly artifice, which had only repulsed him. Her beauty, of which she had been so proud, was, in that hour of humiliation, a source of annoyance. What was it worth, if the only heart she cared to own in the wide world turned from that beauty with indifference. Nay, was she indeed beautiful? Not in the style which he had been taught to admire,—not like the fair blonde who had rescued her from death. Compared to her that creamy complexion, and hair as black and brighter than the neck of a raven, was, in her strained imagination, overrich to coarseness. And her eyes, so large and bright—how could any man admire them who had once looked on the soft, violet orbs of Amy Leonard? Yes, that was beauty. What right had she to expect homage to charms so unlike and even so inferior?

Thus the proud girl—proud in the excess of her humility—spent the long, harassing night. The moonbeams of the evening made her weep and turn away from their brightness. The storm, which broke and dashed over the town towards morning, appealed more directly to her passionate sorrow. When she heard the first howl of the tempest, her courage rose, and she was filled with a bitter wish to go out and battle with it. The fever in her blood was so hot, the thirst for action so pressing, that she could endure the quiet of her bed no longer.

Laura threw back the curtains and stepped forth into the darkness. Her dress had been loosened, but not taken off, and the tap of her high-heeled shoes was lost in the

beating of the rain as she walked up and down the chamber, angry now, and flushed with resentment for the wrong that had fallen on her,—that wrong which no law can reach, and of which a haughty woman dies, calling it by any name the doctors in their wisdom may choose.

The chamber was large, but in her fever the air seemed close and insufficient. She flung open the sash, gasping for breath. In rushed the wind, dashing coldly over her face and bosom. She received it with a sense of relief. Her hot cheeks grew cooler as the rain beat against them. Her excitement rose with keen sympathy, and met the storm half-way. What did she care that the rich braids that crowned her head were getting heavy with moisture, or that the knots of ribbon, that had fluttered so gayly on her dress a few hours before, were dangling like wilted flowers on the wet silk of her skirt? The storm in her soul was replied to by the storm without. She felt like a wild bird drifting madly with the tempest,—a poor white gull, that had been lured far, far out to sea, and must now brave the elements alone.

The old elm-tree seemed maddened like herself: its branches raved and tossed themselves up and down, to and fro, playing with the lightning, and flinging great masses of leaves upon the wind as it rushed by. To Laura the old tree seemed human, and suffering with pain as she was.

How bravely the forest monarch bore itself! With what lofty grandeur it shook off the lightning and the rain! How fiercely its branches thrashed the roof and knocked against the verandahs, scattering torn leaves upon the floor, where the rain beat them down, as the world deals with fallen humanity.

The creaking of the sign on its rusty hinges struck her

like a cry of anguish,—the very cry that she in her pride was strangling in the depths of her bosom.

The window where Laura stood opened on the upper verandah, which was now a blaze of lightning, now enveloped with darkness. The casement was broad and deep; she flung the sash wide open and sprang out on the wet floor. Here was room to breathe,—here the wind raved and rioted as pride and sorrow battled in her own soul.

She walked up and down the long gallery, sobbing faint echoes to the deeper sough of the storm. Sometimes low cries broke from her lips,—those cries which she had stifled in her room from fear of being heard. But as these expressions of grief left her heart the wind tossed them out into the storm, shouting over them as coarse humanity might have done had it been able to seize upon her sorrow and drag it into the public knowledge.

Laura thought of this, and triumphed over her powers of concealment. She would have no confidant but the storm; not even her brother should guess how her pride had been crushed, how her poor heart bled. As for Arnold, he must never know of her humiliation. She would meet him again on the morrow with a pride that should more than match his indifference. Yes; she would stay some weeks in the town, receiving graciously the homage of those admirers who had been so recklessly cast aside during her infatuation. He should see how men could adore her and be grateful for one of the smiles which he had not cared to gather. Certainly she would stay a few weeks, gather a harvest of admiration, and then go away. Go away! Where? and how?

The blank that followed this question fell like a pall on her heart. Without love where can a woman go and not find a desert? She ceased to walk as the desolating idea

crept over her, and stood leaning against a pillar of the verandah, pale, drenched and hopeless. Body and soul she was chilled through and through.

"Laura!"

A cry died in her throat; her heavy eyes filled with wild brilliancy; for the lightning playing among the branches of the elm revealed Benedict Arnold. He stood directly before her, against the yawning space of an open window, through which he had just passed, having seen her standing there alone amidst the gleams of light.

"Laura, my beloved, why are you out in a night like this? You are tempting death."

She looked at him with her wild eyes; her lips trembled apart, but she could not utter a word: speech seemed chained down in her bosom.

"What is the matter?" he said, more gently than she had ever heard him speak before. "I went to your parlor late in the evening and found it empty. The landlady told me you had gone to bed ill. The thought was enough to keep me awake; and the storm brought me to the window, where I saw you thus."

Laura wound her arms around the pillar, for the thrill that ran through every fibre of her frame made her faint.

"And you sought me? You came to my room! You——"

"Yes, I went there," he said, gently unwinding her arm from its clasp around the pillar, and drawing her suddenly into his embrace. "And this was what I was panting to say,—Laura, Laura de Montreuil, will you be my wife?"

CHAPTER XXI.

THE MORTGAGED FARM.

THERE had been a revival in the leading congregations at Norwich. This religious sentiment commenced with the return of old Mr. Arnold to brotherhood with his former associates. The excitement caused by this reformation gave more active spirituality to the church, which, after a time, grew into one of those periods of absorbing devotion that pass through Christian communities from time to time, as thunder-storms break through the atmosphere, leaving it purer from the tumult.

During the winter this intense interest was kept up in the church, and towards spring it began to consolidate into a fixed reformation. Many new members had joined the society, old ones had become earnest, and that year the foundations of new religious communities were laid which exist to this day in the City of Terraces.

All this wholesome excitement had sprung, as I have said, from the sudden appearance of the elder Arnold in his former place of worship. His contrition, his humility, and the sweet thankfulness that glowed on the face of his wife when she came with him to meeting, arm-in-arm, as in the olden times, woke up the whole congregation. I do not think Mr. Leonard even congratulated himself on the fact or was aware of it. But he was surely the father of this revival,—always, as he would have said,

baring his head reverently at the thought, always under God's providence.

It was the few words in season that Leonard had uttered in the saw-mill that cold winter's day, and the prayer, so thrilling in its rude eloquence, offered amid the thunders of the falls, that had touched the old man's heart as with a gleam of living fire, and spreading from soul to soul with the holy magnetism of truth, turned the general thought heavenward.

Leonard claimed no credit for this,—indeed, was quite unaware that any could be awarded to him; but he threw himself heart and mind into the revival, holding it above all things most important. Sometimes the saw-mill would remain silent all day long. If a soul was in trouble, or a sinner became thoughtful, the great log was left, half eaten through, with the motionless steel prisoned in its heart, while the master strode off among the fields, searching for that troubled conscience which the truth that burned within him might cleave as effectually as his saw cut through the forest-trunks when the water rushed most abundantly from the hills.

Mrs. Leonard was a good sort of woman,—a church-member and all that. She took a lively interest in the revival. In a decorous, motherly way, she had gone out to tea more than usual, always dropping a great many words in season over the short-cake, and giving promiscuous little exhortations to the young folks while her Young Hyson was drawing. But the good wife mingled a deal of temporal thrift with her heavenly-mindedness, and it rather annoyed her to see how many logs came to the mill and how few boards went away during the heat of this excitement.

Leonard was a resolute man, in his own way, and had

the happy faculty of not hearing his wife's hints about "beginning with one's own household," and other Scriptural ideas, which, being lost in a flood of words, swept by him like the waters that turned his mill. So he went on his way doing good, and taking no heed to the consequences.

Amy Leonard retired from the publicity of these anxious meetings and prayer-circles. From her childhood she had been a church-member. Her interest in sacred things was high and pure; but she shrunk away from this enthusiasm with something like affright. Once or twice she had gone with her parents to the evening prayer-meetings, but the effort seemed too much for her. She took no share in the religious proceedings, while other girls were ardent in their efforts, but sat apart, growing pale and weak, as if the enthusiasm which fired others to devotion were consuming her. Sometimes, when this excitement broke into ecstasy and all the faces around glowed with joy, her great blue eyes would seem to take fright, and search wistfully around for some means of escape from a scene that gave her nothing but pain. Frequently, those eyes would fill with tears, and turn upon her old friends pleadingly, as if some help were needed which she doubted they would withhold.

At last she gathered courage, and besought her parents to leave her at home. She was not strong, and somehow night air and exertion made her worse.

This was her timid plea, and surely that white face and the shadowy circle under her eyes gave sufficient force to the appeal.

In an excitement like that which possessed the society, there was little room for keen observation. Mrs. Leonard knew that Amy was far from well; but as she seldom

complained, and went steadily about her duties, her poor unhappy face escaped the scrutiny which less occupied minds might have given it.

Mrs. Leonard, it is true, found plenty of time at the sewing-circles and after prayer-meeting to talk over her daughter's health, and express a great deal of anxiety regarding it. She never came home without some new recipe for drinks or powders which Amy was to try. Sometimes it would be pounded peach-pits which Mrs. So-and-So had informed her was infallible in almost any disease; then a drink of bruised clover-leaves, or a powder of burnt alder must be tried, all of which Amy took with wan submission which would have made your heart ache.

All at once this great anxiety regarding Amy Leonard died out. The good house-mothers inquired after her, it is true, but with constrained voices, and looking another way. They grew exceedingly kind to the mother, and seemed rather disposed to urge the cooling drinks on her, as if she had become the person who most urgently required strengthening.

Mrs. Leonard laughed at this attempt to discredit the roses on her buxom cheek, and wondered what it was that made the sisters pray for her so often, and so earnestly, as if she were not in full communion and grace. It rather annoyed her to be held up as an object of special solicitude.

Leonard, too, might have seen a change in his brethren's looks of earnest sympathy,—a studied deference to his opinions and wishes that would have struck him as remarkable at another time; but now he was busy calling sinners to the altar of God, and only thought of these things long enough to be grateful for them without investigating their sources.

In Mr. Arnold's family a great change had also taken

place. From a dilatory, careless man, confused by excess and shrinking from notice, he had taken up his farming duties with energy. The colored men, who had loitered half their time around the kitchen, were now put to hard work, repairing fences, planting fields, and laying stone walls on the farm, and a few months gave the neglected place an aspect of thrift and comfort that it had not known for years.

But, strange enough, with this prosperity came a thirst for money, and habits of penurious saving, that curtailed the comforts of the household beyond any thing known in the family before. Arnold seemed to count every grain of rye, or ear of corn consumed in-doors as an extravagance to be condemned. His cattle were all sold off except those necessary to working the place,—every superfluity disappeared, and yet no money seemed to replace the property that was sold.

When the young Frenchman came up from New Haven,—as he did once or twice during the season,—this strict economy was a little relaxed; but the moment he was gone, every thing beyond bare necessities was denied again. Mrs. Arnold wondered at this change, but she did not complain. Any thing was better than the thriftless waste of former years. She was too thankful for the blessed return of her husband to care how he managed the property, which, after all, belonged to him.

One day, about this time, Mr. Arnold sought Dr. Blake in his office, which consisted of a little one-story wing attached to a dwelling-house of some considerable pretension in the edge of the town. Dr. Blake was a man of means, and for this reason his old neighbor came.

The doctor had just returned from his circuit, which kept him two-thirds of the time on horseback. His horse,

with the marks of a saddle on his sides, was cropping the white clover in front of the house, and his saddle-bags, worn perfectly smooth, stood behind the door, strapped for use. The good man was seated in a capacious splint-bottomed chair, which, with his homespun clothes, gave a rustic look to his appearance. He was busy writing down an account of his visits when Arnold came in.

On the first symptoms of Arnold's reformation, Dr. Blake had been one of the first to extend the right hand of fellowship to the struggling man; and now his fine face expanded with a glow of welcome as his old neighbor came in. He flung down the pen, and arose, offering the great splint-chair to his guest.

"I'm glad to see you,—rare glad at all times. You know that, neighbor, without telling. Come, sit down, and make yourself at home."

No. Mr. Arnold would not take the doctor's chair. Another would answer just as well for him. He had come to talk over a little business.

"Business! Oh, well, of course. But just now I would like to talk of something else. It's on my mind, Arnold, and I must get it off or it'll choke me,—your son, Arnold. I want to have a plain talk about that young scam-fellow."

Arnold became nervous in an instant, and put up both hands, as if to ward off a blow.

"Not about him. At any rate, not yet, doctor. Wait till you hear what I came for. Give me time and I will talk about Benedict. Just now there is no subject on earth that I dread so much."

"Well, well, I don't want to bother you. After all, talking often does more good than harm. But your son, Arnold,—your son—"

"Don't, don't!" said Arnold, lifting both hands again. "I'm doing my best, pinching and saving every way. The women folks complain about it, and I don't blame 'em; but it must be done. It is that which brought me here."

"What is it? You talk at random, neighbor. You can't help the young—well, well, the young man—by pinching and saving at home. It is a case beyond that."

"I know, saving by little and little might drag through one's whole life, and then leave the thing undone. You have plenty of money out at interest. Can't you draw some in? I want to mortgage the farm."

"Mortgage your farm, Arnold?"

"Yes; just come and ride over it,—see the crops, fences, and barns. We've worked hard this spring, and repaired every thing; besides, I've sold off a good deal of stock."

"And you really want to hire money on the farm?"

"I can't get along without it, doctor."

"But you have no debts,—nothing to speak of; or I should have heard about it."

"No, not a debt. I paid all those things off at once. They didn't amount to much; my wife always took care of that."

"And now you want money. How much?"

Arnold mentioned the sum. The doctor looked astonished.

"Why, man alive, that'll almost cover the whole value of your place."

"I know it. I know it. But every year we'll make the farm worth more and more."

The doctor looked at his earnest face. How it had changed! There was force and intellect in it now,—something that commanded respect in the serious purpose that evidently possessed him.

"One question before I say yes or no about this money," said the doctor, leaning back in his chair. "Are you borrowing it for any speculation of your son's? If that is the case I won't let you have a farthing."

Arnold turned white as this question came bluntly forth, and he answered slowly, thinking over each word with conscientious truthfulness.

"No, it's not a speculation. I want to pay the money. It'll never come back again. I must pay off the mortgage by degrees."

"Ah, neighbor, you'll find that hard work."

"I know it; but it might have been done before this if I hadn't given up like a coward. If God spares my life it shall be paid up, every shilling of it. Don't be afraid, doctor. The farm is a good one, and my wife and I, with the hands, can live on a little. I've cyphered it all out, over and over again."

"But tell me what you want of this large sum of money, Arnold?"

"I cannot. It is a duty—something that I must pay, or go to the grave bowed down with a burden that no one can take up for me."

The old man's voice was sad; the perspiration started to his forehead in drops. He wiped it off with his handkerchief, and tried to smile.

"You'll let me have the money, doctor? It'll make a new man of me."

"Yes, Arnold, I'll let you have it; but, remember, I don't want your farm. If it falls into my hands at last, I shall always condemn myself for this day's work."

"When—when can I have it?" inquired Arnold, eagerly.

"Why? Is there so much haste?"

"Oh, yes. I shall not be a man till it is done."

"Well, I will call in the money at once."

"Within a week?"

"Perhaps."

"Surely. I trust surely. The time will seem long my way."

"Well, well, I'll not be over—a week."

"Thank you. I don't know how to thank you in the right way, doctor."

"Well, never mind. Come, take a glass of cider-brandy."

"I, doctor?"

"Oh, brother, I forgot. Well, then, a cup of tea; the old woman'll have one ready about this time. I've got something to talk over with you."

Arnold shrunk within himself.

"Not to-night. I don't think that I could bear any thing more just at present. Some other time."

"Well, well, remember me to the women folks. I tell you what, Arnold, that wife of yours is an angel."

"She's all the world to me, doctor. No one can guess what she has done for her husband; and the girl is her mother over again."

As he spoke, Arnold took up his hat and prepared to go out. The doctor seemed ready to speak again, but some kind feeling checked him, and, with a cordial grip of the hand, he saw the heavily-burdened man depart.

When quite alone, he sat some time with his arms folded on the desk before him, pondering over the conversation which had just passed. He was anxious and tired; but his heart went out in compassionate sympathy, not only for the man who had left him, but for one to whom he must carry still more bitter sorrow.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE MOTHER AND DAUGHTER.

A RELIGIOUS excitement, wherever it arises, is sure to wake a thousand virtues into action, which, in ordinary times, sleep supinely in human nature. Besides the prayer-meetings, anxious circles and lectures, spinning-bees and quiltings presented themselves to the congregation. "The servant is worthy of his hire," was the generous opinion; and the minister, who averaged two or three lectures or sermons a day, must not be forgotten in his worldly stores. So blocks of patchwork were distributed throughout each household connected with the society, from which a sumptuous quilt was set in progress for the minister, and no housewife set her flax-wheel aside that season without adding a few runs of yarn for the spinning-bee which was to come off in behalf of that good man.

If Leonard was most active in spiritual matters, his bustling wife took up those temporal results of the revival with no inferior amount of energy. In fact she was the heart and soul of these undertakings. Early and late the hum of her wheel might be heard setting up a small opposition to the rush of the falls, and her steel-sided thimble grew brighter and brighter while constantly forcing the glittering needle through gorgeous bits of calico, which were industriously cut into diamonds, squares, or stars, and as industriously stitched together again.

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Amy Leonard did her share of the work,—more than her share, poor thing,—considering how pale and ill she looked. But sometimes when her mother's back was turned, the tears would swell into her eyes and blind them, till the flyers flashed before her in broken sparkles or her needle disappeared in the mist.

All the time she never spoke of Arnold; and her mother, with unusual reticence, avoided the young man's name. His visits to the cabin had taken place during her absence to evening meetings, and she looked upon the attachment which had evidently once existed between him and her daughter, as a feeling that had died out on the young man's part, and which a little time would set right with Amy. The whole subject was a matter of self-reproach to the good woman; for she had encouraged the intimacy between the young people with all her match-making skill, partly because the Arnolds were a respectable old family, still rich enough to hold their heads high, and partly because her kind, womanly instincts told her how deeply the best feelings of her child had become involved.

But with all Mrs. Leonard's worldly foresight, she was of the old Puritan stock, and had neither charity nor countenance for sin in any form in which it could present itself. Nay, even the suspicion of sin, vaguely as it came, was enough to turn her heart against the young man.

Joshua Leonard had told his wife of the warning which the elder Arnold had given with regard to his son. The anguish with which this warning had been uttered struck conviction to Leonard's soul. He knew how hard it must be for a kind parent to condemn his own child; and, incoherent as the words had been, they left a fearful impression of truth.

Leonard was a strong, powerful man; but he shrunk from any thing that threatened to give pain to his daughter; and, with that delicacy which makes great strength beautiful, spoke of Arnold's warning only to his wife. She, self-sufficient in all domestic affairs, placed herself on the watch; and, instead of retreating as of old when the young man came to spend the evening at her cabin, kept her place at the fireside, diminishing in nothing her usual hospitality, but watching vigilantly every word or glance which passed between the young people.

Then came the revival, which swept all home thoughts from her mind. Young Arnold seemed to have dropped out of her life. She heard with satisfaction his name connected with the French girl; and, rejoicing that her season of vigilance was at an end, allowed herself to be swept off in the absorbing turmoil of a revival.

All that time Benedict Arnold spent his evenings at the hearth-stone which the father and mother had deserted, beguiling that fair young creature into a deception which was weighing her soul to the earth.

At last he went away, and, to escape the mournful loneliness that fell upon her, Amy sometimes attended evening meetings with her parents. Leonard and his wife both noticed that she was generally excited and flushed before she started to these gatherings, but came back oppressed with a heavy sadness that nothing could mitigate or explain. They did not observe that on several occasions she had disappeared from the meetings for a few minutes, and, hurrying with breathless haste to the post-office, would ask, with shrinking eyes and a voice that could scarcely be heard, if there was no letter yet?

The answer was always a half-rebuking, half-compassionate shake of the head, at which she would creep away

and glide back into the congregation like a ghost; but when once upon her knees, the sobs that broke through those little hands clasped over her face were enough to melt a heart of granite.

Then week after week went by, and Amy would go to meeting no more. The noise confused her, she said. It was far better to stay at home and spin yarn for the minister's spinning-bee: it would save her mother from so much extra work. Mrs. Leonard repeated this at the sewing-circles, when the blocks of patch-work were brought in and sewed together in general conclave. At first these reasons were received with expressions of sympathy for sweet Amy Leonard's ill-health; but, after a time, covert glances were cast from eye to eye, and Mrs. Leonard's maternal egotism was received in grave silence.

This was the state of things, as I have before hinted, when the spring time broke upon beautiful Norwich. The spinning season was well nigh over, and the result of all those wheels, that had been hissing and humming in nearly every dwelling within five miles of Norwich, was to exhibit itself in a grand quilting and spinning-bee, which the minister was notified would take place at his own dwelling on one of the loveliest June days that ever gladdened a human heart.

The women's share of the entertainment was complete, with the exception of an extra baking in every household, which was to save the minister's wife from all demands of hospitality for the self-invited guests. They had nothing more to accomplish. They would assemble in the afternoon to finish the quilt, which a committee of four was appointed to fit into the frames and mark out in a border of double herring-bone and a centre of shell-work.

Another committee would take charge of the table set

out in the long, back kitchen which opened into an apple-orchard; and a third was to receive the hanks of linen, tow, and woollen yarn, for which pegs were provided all around the best chamber up-stairs. These were all feminine arrangements, and sure to be well done, as the minister knew of old. But the brethren of the church were not to be entirely excluded. Their contributions, it is true, came in less ostentatiously, but in a form quite as substantial. Many a bag of potatoes had found its way to the minister's cellar during the winter; to say nothing of firkins of shad salted down on the banks of the river where they were caught; and sacks of grain, enough to keep the ministerial family in breadstuff till the harvest came on.

For these benevolent and scattering donations the brethren were permitted to join in the yarn festival after the quilt was taken off, when there was to be a grand tea-drinking, to wind up with extemporaneous singing under the apple-trees and a short season of prayer.

Of course, there was great excitement all over Norwich; for a festival equal to this, either in numbers or amount of contributions, had never been heard of in the good town before. Over thirty new converts had been added to the congregation, and their contributions seemed a tangible proof of stability in the holy service of the Lord. Over these new converts there was nothing but thanksgiving and praise, which gave the idea of a religious jubilee to the whole occasion.

But from all this rejoicing the two families in which we are most deeply interested seemed strangely excluded. The Leonards had been invited, it is true; but it was somewhat remarkable that Amy's name was left out in the invitation; and Mrs. Leonard, instead of being appointed

to some prominent place in the arrangement, had hardly been consulted. She was a guest, at liberty to bring in her mite, of course, but that was not the position which she had just reason to expect. The generous woman was a good deal astonished, and seriously hurt by this slight. She, who had been a pillar in the church so long,—who had worked night and day that the value of her contribution should be second to none, to be put aside without right or reason she could not understand it.

Leonard was so much accustomed to his wife's bustle and clatter on occasions of this kind, that he scarcely heeded her complaints, and contented himself by advising her to do her duty, and not trouble him about the way it was done, or how others performed theirs.

With this wholesome admonition he cast the subject from his mind. But with Amy the case was far different. She was constantly searching her mother's face with those large eyes, as if there was something in this slight from which she shrunk tremblingly away. Sometimes, when her mother would break into the subject suddenly, the poor girl would start and almost cry out with a pain that struck her to the heart.

Still, Mrs. Leonard was too much a woman of spirit to retreat or flag in her purpose. She wasn't to be driven from her duty,—not she. If the sisters did not want her help or advice, very well: they could do without it. Of one thing she was certain: the quilt would be a botch if she wasn't there to mark and roll up. As for the yarn, why that which Amy had spun would be like cobwebs to a cable compared to any thing they would have. Really it seemed as if the girl was spinning it out of her own sighs, for every thread was drawn with a deep breath. When that yarn was brought in the sisters would blush

at their ingratitude, if any blush was left in 'em. Then as for cake, she would like to see a woman of them all who could round off a plum-cake like her; and as for doughnuts,—oh, nonsense! they couldn't one of 'em catch up with her there, in a week of Sundays! Well, as Joshua said, she would do her duty and not care about others. It was hard, but she hadn't been a church-member so long without knowing how to forgive.

"Mother," said Amy, with a quiver in her voice, "perhaps it's me."

"You! What can this mean, Amy? You! Why no little bird in its nest was ever so harmless as you have been, sitting here lonesome as a whip-poor-will while your father and I have done nothing but exhort, and pray, and run after converts; and this is what we get for it. But the Lord knows which is right."

Amy went close up to her mother. Every fibre of her body quivered and a look of death was on her face. She reached out her hand and attempted to lay it on her mother's shoulder, but Mrs. Leonard brushed it off as if a rose-leaf annoyed her.

"There, there; don't talk. I know my duty as a Christian, and won't be preached to by my own child. Just go into the next room and see if the sponge is rising nicely. I wouldn't have them doughnuts beat to-morrow for any thing: that would be a cross I couldn't take up."

Amy turned away with a gasping breath. When her mother went into the next room, impatient to see how her cake was rising, she found Amy sitting on the floor by the wooden bread-bowl, with both hands clasped in her lap, gazing hard at the opposite window.

"Why, Amy, you are getting too shiftless. Why on earth couldn't you lift that cloth and tell me how the dough

is working? I used them new turnpike emptins that nobody else has got, and the cakes ought to yeast over the bowl by this time.

But Amy sat motionless, gazing at the window. Her mother's voice sent a shiver over her, but it failed to unlock the agony that held her faculties.

"Amy, why don't you speak?"

"Mother, I can't. I have been trying, but the words choke me."

She spoke in a dreamy way, waving her head to and fro,—to and fro, as if the sound of her own words was a pain which she could not shake off.

Mrs. Leonard took Amy by the arm and lifted her to her feet.

"Are you crazy, Amy Leonard?" she said, half-angrily, for the slight she had received had rasped the good woman's temper more than she liked to acknowledge.

"No, mother."

"Then what is the matter?"

"Nothing."

"I don't believe it. You are either a bad-tempered, provoking girl, determined to torment your poor mother's life out, or you're down sick and ought to have a doctor right off."

"No, no: I'm well," almost shrieked Amy; "well and strong. See; I can lift this big bowl like nothing."

She stooped down and lifted the bread-bowl as if it had been a handful of feathers; and, carrying it into the next room, set it on the table and raised the cloth of snowy linen.

"Look, mother, look," she cried, with a hysterical laugh; "the turnpike emptins are working famously! See: the dough is all honeycombed and swelling up like foam! It's

time to get your pan of lard over the fire. Where is the flour-dredge and rolling pin? I'll cut the cakes out while you fry them."

Mrs. Leonard looked at her daughter a moment in blank astonishment and then broke into an uneasy laugh.

"Dear me, Amy, you are a strange girl. I never saw your like: one minute moaning in the cellar, the next singing in the garret. But no wonder you laugh; that dough beats all I ever did see. So bustle about and roll the cakes into shape while I get the big fork and pan. I've saved some lard a-purpose, sweet as a nut and white as snow. That's right, tie on your checked apron and roll up your sleeves. Why, Amy, how thin your arms are getting! Dear me, there, lay down the rolling-pin! I can handle it best. You can round the cakes after I cut them out,—that's work for a baby. There, now you are beginning to tremble again! Never mind; I don't want any help to fry a batch of doughnuts. Well, if you must do something, just beat up the white of half a dozen eggs, and make some frosting for the pound-cake. I want it to look like snow-crust and taste like honey. They shan't beat us, Amy, in any thing. I'll show 'em."

Amy took the work allotted to her, and directly the contents of her bowl were creaming over with pearly foam, beaten up by a hand that trembled like an aspen leaf; while her mother wielded her rolling-pin and shook her dredging-box fiercely, as she remembered the slight that had been put upon her.

The melted lard had simmered itself into silence, only hissing out a spiteful protest as the limp bits of dough fell into it, swelling and browning into cakes that were to excite the envy of all Norwich. Still the good woman had continued her indignant complaints against neighbors

that could treat her so. But as the fire grew hot, and the brown nuts rose to a mountain in the bright tin milk-pan placed on the hearth for their reception, a certainty of triumphant success mollified her, and a rain of Christian charity pattered through the torrent of her resentment, as we sometimes see the brightest rain-drops dimpling the turbid surface of a pool.

"After all, Amy, I'll set them an example,—see if I don't,—one that they'll never forget so long as the meeting-house stands. I'll make two big pound-cakes instead of one. The best cheese in the milk-house shall go, if we have to scrimp ourselves a month. As for dried beef and them doughnuts, I won't stop to weigh or count. When I do heap coals of fire on the sisters' heads they shall burn lively, now I tell you. To-night your father shall get a load of white pine tops, hemlock and prince's pine to dress the supper-room with. Nobody else'll think of that, I reckon. Then you shall go over to the swamp and get an armfull of wild roses. The hemlock-buds is sprouting out lovely, and—yes, I've a'most a mind to send that string of robins' eggs over the looking-glass. That would touch their feelings, for they all know how I prized them eggs. Then, after I've shown them what a true Christian spirit is, I'll say, 'Sisters, what is the reason you put this slight on me and my daughter? To say nothing of myself,—that ain't of much account, perhaps,—she's the salt of the earth, as good and pious as the oldest church-member amongst you,—never told even a fib in her life, or kept the least thing from her mother. She's—dear me, Amy, what is the matter? You'll let that bowl slide off your lap! Goodness, what a face! Why, child, are you dying?'"

"No, mother, no. I'm—the heat—that fire. Oh, mother, mother!"

The cry that broke through these gasping words thrilled through and through the good woman, for it was sharp with pain.

Mrs. Leonard flung the door open with sudden affright; and, gathering up the corners of her apron, tightened the edge and commenced fanning that pale face with all her might.

"Are you better? Does it do any good? Wait a minute till I get the turkey's wing."

"No, mother, don't,—don't! I wan't to go out,—just a minute."

"Well, go. The air will bring you to. Dear me, I wish your father would stay about more; these fainting fits scare me a'most to death!"

Amy tried to reassure her mother by a smile; but the attempt was more painful to look upon than tears would have been. Mrs. Leonard brought a sun-bonnet from its nail in the next room, and tied it over the poor quivering face, with tears in her own sunny eyes.

"Go down by the falls, Amy: the air will be cool there. Don't mind helping me; I shall get through nicely. This fire is awful hot; but, law, I don't mind it no more than nothing."

The kind woman would have kissed the face which the bonnet protected; but Amy turned away her head, as if dismayed by those plump lips. But when she saw the color rush to her mother's temples she put up her pale mouth and met the caress; but the touch was like marble.

She went to the falls, that pale, broken-hearted girl, and sat down on the shelf of rock which had been consecrated by her father's prayer months ago. There she fell into a state of apathy,—that dead stillness of the mind which comes when no source for action presents itself. Her eyes

were fixed on the waters. The dizzy whirl of their foam made her brain reel. She shrunk back into the shade of a great hemlock branch that stretched over her like a banner; and, covering her eyes with both hands, rocked to and fro in desolate silence, while the leaves whispered over her, and the sunshine strove to penetrate the thick leaves and look on her sorrow in vain.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A TUMULT IN THE HOUSEHOLD—SIGNING THE MORTGAGE.

ANOTHER house in Norwich was the scene of trouble that day. The Arnold Mansion, so full of life and bustle when we first saw it, was greatly changed since the master had forsaken his old, negligent ways. Notwithstanding those unworthy habits, he had kept from impairing his property to any great extent; and there was always enough and to spare for his family and the guests that came beneath his roof. But now this plenty had, by degrees, diminished, till strict parsimony reigned on the farm, a state of things which neither Mrs. Arnold nor Hannah could understand. As for Hagar, the rebellion of her spirit broke out furiously; and she never set a dish upon the table, or kneaded a scant baking of bread, without muttering her discontent.

Mrs. Arnold, singular to say, had, like her neighbor at the falls, been quite overlooked when the committees were formed to carry out the minister's spinning-bee. Why was this? the gentle woman questioned in her mind.

Why should she meet with neglect now, when her husband had returned to his Christian duties, which had never been visited on her during his moral debasement? Had she committed some fault that her sisters passed her by so unkindly? or, was she getting old, and did this seeming slight spring from a wish to spare her the anxiety and fatigue of active co-operation?

The gentle woman asked these questions over and over to herself, and at last mentioned them to Hannah, who, in her sweet way, gave the most pleasant construction to what seemed, even to her unsuspecting nature, strange, to say the least.

"It is because you haven't been very well lately, mother," said the young girl, striving to believe her own words. "You know there was a general invitation given out to all the members."

"Yes, but was that ever done before when any responsibility was to be taken, Hannah? I must have offended some of the sisters, or perhaps the minister himself."

"Offended them! You, dear mother! That is impossible."

"I don't know. Sometimes I think no one ever was so careless about other people's feelings as I am. Only yesterday I forgot to have biscuit baked for Hagar and the men folks, and they're always used to it."

"But, mother, we had none on the table for ourselves. How could you?"

"Well, Hannah, that's true; but the hands work so hard. Of course we can get along without nice things better than they. I really think Hagar felt the want of it."

"No, marm. Hagar didn't feel de want of dem 'ere biscuit, nor nothin' else, let me tell you!" cried the sable

handmaid, pushing open the door which stood ajar. "She jest wants ter keep up de 'spectability ob de family, and dat's all 'bout it. Bran bread's good 'nuff for her and dem 'ere he culled pussons as belong ter de house. She'd jest like to catch one on 'em complainin'; but dere isn't no reason, as she can see on, why tings can't be as dey used ter was, when an oben full of bread, and biscuit, and ginger-cake, ter say nothin' ob baked beans and Injin puddin', was put in tree times a week. De family isn't no smaller, as she eber heerd; and as for de farm, it's jist bringing in as much agin as it eber did, only ebery arthly ting is sold off afore it has a chance to git ripe. Missus Arnold, if you'll jist gib any 'spectable reason for dese carryings on I'll guv up; but, till den, don't nedar ob you 'spect ter see a smilin' countenance 'bout de kitchen; for dere's one pusson in dem premises dat can't stand it, and won't."

Poor Mrs. Arnold was taken quite aback by this harangue. Hagar had expressed her discontent in muttered words and black looks often enough, but never before had she given it the force of her peculiar eloquence. The worst of it was, the gentle woman, had she wished it, could have given no good reason for her husband's parsimony, and to lay any blame on him was beyond her nature. It was all very strange, but surely the head of a house had a right to dispose of his own property unquestioned.

As these thoughts ran through her mind, the mistress stood embarrassed and blushing before her handmaid. At last she said, with gentle decision,

"It is Mr. Arnold's will that we should live more saving, Hagar. That is enough for me."

"Humph!" ejaculated Hagar, sniffing the air till her

broad nostrils vibrated with the disdain that swelled them. "If eber dis 'ere pusson should condescend ter unite herself wid a man ob de opposite sect, she'd jist like ter see him scrimpin' and savin' 'bout her cookin'. Meachin business, mighty meachin business, Miss Arnold!"

Hannah Arnold laughed a little in spite of her annoyance.

"Well, Hagar," she said, quite cheerfully; "of course father knows best. With a cook like you a little is quite sufficient. He trusts more to your skill than ever, that's all."

Hagar bridled, and the inflation of her nostrils subsided with a gradual collapse.

"Now I know just what yer a-tinking 'bout, Hannah. It's dem eggs as I beat up wid greens, and fried in a thick cake for dat French beau of yourn. He thought I couldn't do it, but catch dis chile not understandin' any ting she's eber seen done; dat harnsome gal wid de feathers, cum inter de kitchen to cook an—an—omnibus."

"Omelet," suggested Hannah, all in a glow of roses.

"Yes, an onionete for our Ben. I kep' a sharp lookout, and 'membered ebery ting dat she put in, greens and all,—dat's how it was 'complished. Lord a massy, didn't he 'joy dat breakfast all 'lone wid you in de spare-room?"

Out came the roses over Hannah's face all in full bloom again. Mrs. Arnold, too, felt the shadow of a blush pass over her cheek, from sympathy with the sweet confusion into which her child was thrown.

"Hagar," she said, smiling softly, "I'm afraid there's something on fire in the kitchen. Hadn't you better go see?"

"More likely dere's someting a-fire here," said Hagar,

casting a sidelong glance at Hannah's burning face; "but I didn't mean ter decompose nobody, 'cause dem as has been troo de mill know how de stones grind. If der is any ting unpleasant for a 'septible pusson, it is ter feel yerself a-blushing when yer can't help it. I know ov a gemman as says, he wouldn't make de fair sect blush for nothin'; when a pusson I could mention, but won't, was a-feelin' as if a fire was blazing out in her cheeks all de time."

"But I'm sure there's something going wrong in the kitchen, Hagar," said Hannah, laughing in spite of herself.

"No doubt, miss,—no doubt; but I've got someting more 'portant to 'tend to jest now. What 'bout de cooking for dis minister's bee? Not a word's been said or done 'bout dat yet."

"I don't know," said Mrs. Arnold, with embarrassment. "Perhaps we shan't go."

"Shan't go, Miss Arnold! Am dis family going to 'struction, or am it not, dat's what I want ter find out afore I step out ob dese tracks?"

"Well, Hagar, I can't tell just yet. Mr. Arnold will be home soon, and I'll speak to him about it. Perhaps we shall go after all. The sisters might think us offended, Hannah. Oh, there he comes! Run into the kitchen, Hagar. I will come to you in a little while, and then, perhaps, we shall be busy enough."

Hagar would probably have kept her ground, but she was deserted on the instant, as Mrs. Arnold and Hannah went to the front-door, waiting there for Mr. Arnold to dismount and come in.

A stranger was with Arnold,—or rather a person who came unexpectedly. It was Dr. Blake, riding his chestnut horse, but without the professional saddle-bags.

The two men dismounted and came in together, talking earnestly as they approached the door.

"Think of it well, my friend," the doctor was saying, as he came up the yard. "It is an easy thing to saddle a farm with things of this kind; but not one man in ten ever gets his property clear again."

"I know," said Arnold, firmly. "But there is no choice. *I must have the money!*"

Mrs. Arnold heard this, and for a moment her heart beat fast; but she looked in her husband's face and grew calm again. There was something firm, almost grand in the expression, that gave her confidence. He had not looked so noble since the days of his youth.

"But stop a moment; your wife may not like it; I can do nothing against her consent," said the doctor, who had not yet seen Mrs. Arnold and Hannah.

"There she is. Ask her if she can trust her husband now."

Mrs. Arnold stepped forward, smiling.

"What is it you want, husband?"

"He wants you to sign a mortgage on this place," said the doctor, bluntly; "one that he must work like a slave to pay off; and which will leave you a poor widow if he fails to do it, for it would ruin me to lose so much money."

"Is it necessary?" questioned the wife, looking into her husband's face with her tender eyes. "Is it best, husband?"

"It is right, my poor wife. I can never breathe freely till it is done."

"Come in," she said, still smiling. "There is a pen and ink in the out-room. Come, doctor, tell me where to put my name. Hannah, do you know what we are doing?"

"Yes, mother!"

"Well, come look on. It may leave us poor, daughter, but your father says it is right. Shall I sign here, Dr. Blake?"

The doctor placed his finger on the spot she was to sign, and she placed her name more boldly than it had ever been written before.

"No," said the doctor, taking up the mortgage, "nothing can make you a poor man, Arnold, while these two women live. Nothing!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE MINISTER'S SPINNING-BEE.

THE minister's spinning-bee created a world of wholesome excitement in Norwich; every household was awake and in action. Men and women who had half grudgingly laid out a portion of their goods in the beginning, grew more and more liberal as the general enthusiasm increased, and doubled their gifts cheerfully when the time for decision came.

Up to the last day, and late at night, spinning-wheels were in full run, and the buzz of spindles and whirr of flyers, filled the calm stillness long after the neighborhood was usually in bed.

There was something refreshing and genial in all this stir of benevolence, which we of the nineteenth century can never know; for that excitement which springs from good hearts, and looks to heaven for its fruition, has sunk

into a dull leaden sort of duty in these days. Men would smile were we to speak of them in connection with recreation and amusement. But in the old times when going out to tea, once a month, was considered relaxation enough for a respectable family, and a quilting frolic partook of dissipation, this church-gathering had the zest of a great festival,—a festival in which all shared as guests, and all figured as hosts and hostesses.

In a neighborhood where respectable people went to bed, with religious punctuality, at nine o'clock, and children were invariably housed at sunset, a festival of this importance must commence in the afternoon; for it was an unusual approach toward bad habits when the solemn hilarity extended into the dark hours.

Thus, directly after the general twelve-o'clock dinner, preparations commenced in each household for the minister's gathering. Wagons, wheeled from under their sheds, were filled with splint-bottomed chairs for the elders, and milking-stools for the little folks. In some instances plain boards were passed from one side of the conveyance to the other, forming rude benches, on which whole families were to be crowded in rows and jolted cosily to town.

In-doors there was a general commotion,—a rushing to and fro for Sunday clothes. Combs and brushes flew from hand to hand; there was a continual splash of water in the back porches; while two or three laid claim to each wash-bowl at once; and every crash towel in the neighborhood made constant evolutions on their rollers behind the door, as newly-washed claimants seized upon them. Children forgot to cry when the tangles were combed out of their elf locks; and pretty girls plumed themselves like birds before the tiny looking-glasses, gar-

landed with birds' eggs, which hung in the out-room, or best corner of every dwelling.

An hour later, and you could scarcely see a wreath of smoke from any chimney within sight of Norwich. Ashes were raked over the embers of every hearth: the latch-string was drawn in at the cabin doors: and the hush of still life hung around each farm and homestead.

But there was bustle and clatter enough along the roads leading townward. Cheerful voices, free ringing mirth, and sometimes shouts of laughter, resounded from wagon to wagon as one passed another, or struggled to keep up. This innocent riot came from the rear of each wagon, where the youngsters were located. Sometimes it was sternly checked by the head of the concern, who could not help being impressed by this rare holiday as if it had been the Sabbath; but the mirth was sure to break out again in titters and gurgling bursts of laughter, at which the grim father would half-smile as it gradually dawned upon him that merriment, on this occasion, was seemly, and, in due bounds, to be forgiven.

Thus the bright day was cheerful with rattling wheels, tramping horses, and human joyousness, as the church-members gathered around their clergyman. For that one day the minister could hardly be considered as the master of his own house, but rather as an honored guest, in whom each member held a certain amount of very precious property. His wife, a fair and faded woman, who revered her husband as a saint, and loved her children with more of devotion than her strict ideas of worship should have permitted, for this one day shared his glory without stint. The throng of active, listening women that filled her house, persisted in lifting her on the same pedestal with her helpmate, there to be caressed and waited upon.

For one day that dwelling was in the hands of the Church. The walls of each room were draped with evergreens and blossoming branches; the white curtains were garlanded back from the windows; the heavy beams that ran across each ceiling became massive wreaths glowing with flowers. Back of the house, a fine apple-orchard covered one of those natural terraces which make the city of Norwich so beautiful. Here the birds were singing vigorously, and hopping from limb to limb in a state of melodious excitement. They seemed to understand that a scene of that kind was not to be witnessed every day of the year, and resolved to make the most of it.

Wagon after wagon was unloaded before the minister's dwelling for an hour or so after the female committee had taken possession. First, the women and children descended, or were lifted to the ground; then baskets were dragged out from under the seats and handed carefully to the deacons, who muttered deep thanksgiving for each gift as it came. It was wonderful, the variety of offerings presented at that door: masses of broadside pork, dripping with the brine from which they had been taken; sacks of potatoes, pots of butter and fine round cheeses; jars of preserves, rich with a taste of maple sugar, appeared. Then came chickens, with their legs tied together and struggling to be free; sucking pigs shackled in like manner, but taking their thralldom philosophically, rooting in the bottom of the wagon when let alone, and only giving out a shrill squeal or two when pressed under the deacon's arm, in a state of active transmigration to the minister's pig-pen.

Before sunset the minister was indeed blessed "in his basket and his store." His cellar was teeming with provisions; quantities of yarn lay heaped in the garret;

strange hens cackled around the house, calling for mates that remained in the distant barn-yards; a roll of new rag carpet stood in the passage. Indeed, the kind generosity of his brethren was visible everywhere.

Among the last that drove up that day was Leonard and his family. Two milk-pails, covered with homespun napkins white as snow, were lifted from the wagon; then came a little bundle of yarn, such as the delicate fingers of Amy alone could spin; and at last appeared from under the front seat a bright, new milk-pan, from which the contents rounded up like an Indian mound, but could only be guessed at from under the glossy linen pinned smoothly over it.

When all these valuables were lifted to the ground, Mrs. Leonard shook out the skirt of her chintz dress, and cast a look of righteous defiance around as she followed her husband into the house. She had seen the pails carried in, and stood waiting till the milk-pan was circled by his arms: then she took her line of march into the room in which the supper-table was laid out.

The women, who composed the committee of arrangements, were busy about the table, arranging the various dishes and scattering glassesfull of flowers among them. There was a slight bustle when Mrs. Leonard came in, with her face in a glow, and her vigilant eyes searching the glances that invariably recoiled from hers.

"Here," she said, unpinning the napkin, and lifting it between her thumb and finger, while an enormous chicken-pie was revealed swelling up from the pan,— "here is a little of something for the table, sisters. Perhaps I expected that some of you might have given me an idea of what would be wanted most. You may have a dozen nicer pies than this; but it ain't my fault, anyhow."

As she spoke, Mrs. Leonard gave a triumphant glance over the table. Two or three pies were certainly there, but none with that faultless curve of crust, or the delicate bordering of keywork on the edge. In their flat foundations they looked mean and commonplace by the side of her portly offering.

"It isn't any thing to boast of, I own that," she said, glowing all over with her triumph; "but perhaps they'll manage to worry it down if they get right hungry. Then you'll find some doughnuts and what not in the pails; but that's of no consequence," she added, giving her plump hand a magnificent wave towards the milk-pails. "When one isn't consulted about things it's difficult knowing what to fix up. When we had a bee in this house before, I reckon folks knew what was wanted without being left to guess at it."

The sisters of the committee looked askance at the mammoth pie and at each other. There was evidently something wrong about Mrs. Leonard or her contribution, which they did not feel quite capable of managing. Her own self-praise took them by surprise.

Finally, a gentle-voiced woman came forward and removed the pie to the head of the table, where the minister was to preside. Then, with a quiet glance at the sisters, she gathered up the glasses and broken mugs filled with flowers and placed them around it, forming a pavilion of flowers under which the mammoth pastry swelled up with luscious richness.

This took Mrs. Leonard by surprise; the color mounted to her forehead, and her plump lips began to quiver.

"Amy has a little present, too," she said, striving to hide the hysterical emotion that was sending tears to her eyes. "There may be finer yarn than she has spun

for the minister brought in; but I can't quite believe it without seeing. You'll find the bundle marked A. L. in the entry-way. But, Amy, daughter Amy, jest bring the diaper in here. Won't you, Amy?"

She waited a little with her eyes on the door; but it was some minutes before Amy Leonard came in, with a parcel in her hand.

"Here," said Mrs. Leonard; "here is something that I defy anybody to say isn't worth while. If I was on the committee, as I was years and years before this, my opinion'd be worth something, maybe; but as it is, I reckon you'll find it tough work to match this ere piece of diaper in all Norwich, to say nothing of the hull State of Connecticut. Look-a-here now, if you please, every inch of it spun, and wove, and hetcheled, and carded by Amy's own hands. There!"

Mrs. Leonard had broken off now and then, to bite at the string which held the parcel that she took eagerly from her daughter, and began to unfold. When the last emphatic word left her lips, a square of pure linen fluttered out from her two hands and fell over the back of a chair, white and glossy as crusted snow.

"Yes, ladies, look: it'll bear examining; the pattern is 'doors and winders;' the linen,—but then you have eyes and can see what that is for yourselves. The flax was raised in our home-lot at the back-door. When it was all in bloom, Amy used to look out and watch it a-bending under the wind, while the blue flowers went twinkle, twinkle, twinkle, in the sunshine, and the long, green stalks bent altogether in waves just as the water sweeps over a mill-dam. You never did see such flax! some of it was a full yard and a-quarter long; and so thick. Well, that sort of put the idea in my head; the blue flowers

always brought up Amy's eyes when she said her prayers at my knee; they looked up to heaven in the same innocent way. The poor girl has been a good deal out of sorts since then. I took an idea that she should weave some of that flax for the service of the Lord; she shirked up when I mentioned it; and when Leonard got in the flax, the choice handfuls were laid aside for Amy. I raly think the child hasn't smiled right heartily since last fall, except when she was doing this work. And now, that it's all spread out afore you, ain't this a cloth that will set out the table on communion days with edification to the members?"

Mrs. Leonard had capped the climax of her triumph here, and stood holding up a corner of the cloth daintily between her thumb and finger, challenging the whole society with her eyes to produce any thing like that. Amy had shrunk back, blushing painfully as the ladies of the committee turned their eyes from her mother to her, uncertain how to act or what to say. But at last the housewifely love of good linen overcame all other feelings. They gathered around the table-cloth, examined its texture, its whiteness, and its fringed edges, headed with triple rows of hemstitch, which made it the most perfect specimen of "home-made" that they had ever seen.

"It's a lovely piece of work, Mrs. Leonard, no wonder you are proud of it," said the gentle sister, who had taken such generous charge of the pie.

"Proud! me, proud! Oh, nothing like it!" cried Mrs. Leonard, smoothing down her dress, as if it had been plumage on which too much sunshine was falling. "It's only a humble offering, with good wishes wove in like a pattern, and whitened with dew, which, as the minister said, 'falls like charity, and works, you can't see how, but

like a blessing in the end.' When that 'ere cloth is spread out on the communion-table, sisters, and the unleavened bread is set out on it, with pure wine in the silver tankard, then, sisters, perhaps you'll be called on to remember one as has stood amongst you breast to breast, and worked hand to hand in every committee till this, when she's forgotten and left out; not knowing why, and—and——"

Here the good woman broke down, for her eyes and voice were so full of tears that she could not utter another word.

The women who were examining the communion-cloth looked at each other perplexed, and a little conscience-stricken; while Amy drew close to her mother, and stood with one hand slightly grasping the skirt of her dress as if wishing to draw her away. Without looking directly at her, the women knew that she was pale, and that her hand trembled like a leaf in its hold on the dress.

"Mother, oh, mother!" whispered the poor girl.

"Never mind," cried Mrs. Leonard, winking the tears away with a quick motion of the eyelids, and lifting her head with a prompt resumption of dignity,—“never mind, daughter, it isn't no shame to have feelings,—quite the contrary; but those as hasn't any to be troubled with mayn't understand 'em: so you're right. Perhaps the committee will tell us if your humble present'll be acceptable?"

The women laid down the table cloth at this, and looked at one another without speaking a word.

Then the same gentle Christian who had twice before shed her grace upon the scene, came forward, and, taking the cloth, began to fold it.

"It is a free gift to the Lord," she said, looking upon her sisters with sweet gravity: "pure and beautiful, as

sister Leonard says. It reminds us of old ties, and that all our acts should be done mercifully and in charity to each other. Amy Leonard, we thank you for this proof that you have not forsaken the society."

"I!" gasped Amy, "I! No, no."

She was so white, and the look in her eyes so appealing, that a sentiment of womanly compassion arose in the hearts of the committee. Then they murmured the thanks that had been withheld so long for what was certainly the most beautiful gift brought to the gathering that day.

Amy heard them with a crimson cheek and drooping eyes; while Mrs. Leonard, ashamed of that outbreak of tears which had revealed the mortification at her heart, turned away, and went in search of some one whom she knew outside of the committee, whose demeanor was, on second thought, both strange and unsatisfactory to her frank nature. The looks they had cast at rather than upon, Amy; the sort of compassionate way in which her gifts had been received, had a meaning which she could not fathom. She felt like an alien in the society of which she had been a leading member for years.

Amy followed her mother in silence. Not a vestige of color was left on her face; and she looked drearily around upon her old playmates and friends, as if afraid of them.

The house being small, most of the minister's guests made their way into the orchard, where a carpet of the freshest grass lay invitingly beneath the tent-like trees. It was a lovely sight, the thick, green foliage, through which glimpses of the sky broke in gleams of azure and sunshine; the fruit, just out of blossom, studding the leaves; and the riot of bird-songs trembling up through the branches made it enchanting. Through all this the guests wandered pleasantly, carrying their innocent en-

joyment everywhere, as the sons of Adam might have thronged Eden had no sin driven them forth to work and suffer. Here and there whole families were grouped beneath the branches: the women, in their scarlet short cloaks and gorgeous dresses, forming pictures all unconsciously from the natural positions into which they fell, and from a strong contrast of colors: the men filling up each idea with their picturesque strength.

As Mrs. Leonard and her daughter descended into the orchard, they saw nothing but old friends and neighbors passing them, or grouped under the trees; yet no one came near them; and, instead of the eager gestures by which others were invited to join this party or another, they were permitted to walk down the footpath to its termination without being addressed by more than a distant inquiry after their health.

"I wonder," said Mrs. Leonard, leaning against the rail-fence as they reached the foot of the orchard,—"*I wonder where Mrs. Arnold can be? Have you seen Hannah anywhere about, Amy?*"

"No, mother," answered Amy, in a very low voice.

"Nor any of the Arnolds? That's strange. I wish we could find some of the old friends. Oh, here comes Hagar!"

Amy lifted her heavy eyes and saw Hagar in the next field, coming toward the orchard, with a heavy basket on her arm. She saw Mrs. Leonard and Amy by the fence, and made toward them.

"So heah you is, Miss Leonard, 'joying yerself like de rest on 'em. Sakes alive! what a heap of people! Well, how do ye do to hum?"

Hagar made these inquiries while she lifted a basket,

which she had carried on her arm, to the fence, where she balanced it before attempting to mount the rails.

"Now," she said, descending on the other side, and setting her basket on the grass, "I'm just tired out a-worrying along with this basket all the way from hum. If it hadn't been for the credit of the family I wouldn't a come, nohow."

"But isn't Miss Arnold a-coming?" questioned Mrs. Leonard.

Hagar drew close to her, and answered, in a low, confidential voice:

"I know you're a friend to de family, Miss Leonard, and so I can speak out, for once. Miss Arnold, nor Hannah, nor de old man, nor nobody, is comin' here 'cept myself; and I got away superstitiously. Dar dey are, working 'way for dear life, just as if nothin' was goin' on. Don't say a word 'bout it, Miss Leonard, but de goin's-on at de farm is enough to break yer heart, and nobody seems ter mind it but me. Not a hank of yarn nor a yard of cloth went out of dat house for de minister's bee. No butter, no nothin'. Gracious knows what hab come over de folks. Everyting sold dat can be raked and scraped. Scrimping here, scrimping dar, and all comin' on at once. It's no use. I can't understand it."

"Then Mrs. Arnold isn't coming, Hagar?"

"No. She's settin' thar in de house, meek as Moses, allowin' de hull family to be disgraced, as it would be but for me; but all 'long I've kinder 'spected what ed come, and took steps agin it. So when the eggs came in from de barn, and de butter was put 'way to sell, I've kinder took a little and hid away for dis 'casion.

Last night I sot up and had a bakin' all to myself, and

de culled pusson as tinks it a pribilege to help me 'stain the character of de family. So here's a few biscuit and a crock of butter, wid a dozen eggs, and a little jar of peach preserves, which de committee will just take in and sabe us from 'tarnal disgrace. I didn't say nothin' 'bout it to Miss Arnold, only axed to come ober and see how tings went on. But she 'spected, I reckon; for sez she, 'Yes, Hagar; and gib de minister's family my best lub, and tell 'em dat our hearts are wid de society if we ain't dere in pusson.' Den Hannah, she run upstairs, and come down wid some yarn socks as she'd been a-knitting, wid dese ere piller-cases, and tow'ls, and sez she, 'Hagar,' sez she, 'dese is mine, and dere can't be no harm in givin' 'em to de minister: it seems hard not to send any ting.' Den I jest lifted de kiver from dis 'ere basket and gib her a peep, at which she shook her head, blushing up; and, sez she, 'Oh, Hagar!' and says I, 'Trust one pusson to take care of de repertation of dis old homestead. It ain't a-goin' to sink no lower now, I tell yer.'"

"But what is it all about?" inquired Mrs. Leonard, surprised by this insight into the management of her neighbor's household. "What has happened? Mr. Arnold is well to do in the world. Why shouldn't he——"

"Oh, don't ax nothin' of me!" cried Hagar, breaking in with a wave of the hand. "My 'pinyun is, dat when you choke off one wickedness, somepin' mean and sneak-in' is sartin to creep inter its place. I say nothin'; but if a man must drink or scrimp, let him drink,—let him drink."

"But you have done pretty well, Hagar," said Amy, putting in her gentle voice, and lifting her sweet eyes to the face of her old friend. "Nobody can complain that

you have not brought enough, especially with dear Hannah's linen."

"Yes, young missus, dar it is. But why should dat chile be 'bliged to gib up dem beautiful piller-cases as was sot aside for her settin' out, only 'cause every ting is sold out of de house afore it comes in? Miss Arnold was raally cut up 'bout it, and sez she, 'Hannah, dat linen has been in de family so long, hadn't you better tink it over a little?' I raally felt sorry for de missus when she said dis, she seemed so down-hearted; but, Hannah, she blushed like a rosy, and sez she,

"'Never mind, mudder, it won't be of much consekence, you know. Any settin' out I can hab isn't likely to count wid him.'

"I 'clare, Miss Leonard, you neber seen a face so red as hers was when she gib her mudder dis answer; a holly-hock's nothin' to it."

"But who did she mean, Hagar? Who could she mean by *he*?" cried Mrs. Leonard, eagerly, plunging with all her soul into the gossip with which the slave was ripe.

"Who! why goodness gracious! Who but he dat is ridin' along de road yonder as independent as a wood-sawyer. Did you eber! Speak ob de debble, and he's sartin to come,—dat's a Scriptor sayin', and de truf, if truf eber was preached. Yes, dar he turns up de road to de homestead,—yes, yes; he's 'ginning to canter now, in a mighty hurry to get dar; and she wid nothin' but her ruffled shortgown and blue petticoat on. Oh, massy, what a fuss dar will be!"

As Mrs. Leonard and Amy turned their eyes down the road where a horseman was riding, full gallop, towards the Arnold farm, Hagar gathered up her basket and marched off towards the house, muttering,

"What a fix dey will be in! nothin' ready, and Hagar gone. Well, I'll just 'deem de character ob de family as I 'longs to, and go hum. Sure 'nuff, she looks purty as a pink in dat white shortgown; and mebbly she'll see him a-comin' time enough to slick up in her best: but when dis chile is 'way from hum, dar's no calkerlating what may turn up."

"Who is it?" inquired Mrs. Leonard, looking after the horseman. "Who can it be? Not Benedict!"

A scream almost broke from Amy's lips. She clung to the fence, holding herself up by both hands, and searching the road with her great, wild eyes.

"No!" she said, dropping down to the grass again with a sigh that was half a moan. "It—it is the French gentleman."

"Now," exclaimed Mrs. Leonard, glowing proudly with a new discovery,—“now I'll bet two cookies, that I understand the whole thing. The Frenchman is arter Hannah Arnold, and that's what kept him and his sister so long at the farm last winter. I knew from the fust there was nothing between him and the gal, or her feathers. What fools we have been not to think of this long ago!"

"Do you think so, mother?" said Amy, with a wild light in her eyes.

"Do I think so! Why, isn't it as clear as crystal? The Frenchman is rich as all out-doors, and that would be enough for Ben, who loves money better than his life. Besides, that accounts for all the pinching and saving that Hagar tells about. The Arnolds want to give their only daughter a setting-out worth while, and I like 'em for it. These French people shouldn't have all the glory on their side."

"Mother, this man will have seen Benedict. He—he can tell us something," said Amy, grasping nervously at her mother's dress. "We shall hear,—we shall be sure to hear."

"Yes, yes; we'll ride round that way and have a chat with the Arnolds."

"You and father,—yes, that will be best. But I will walk towards home."

"No. What would be the use? You that can't walk a rod without getting out of breath."

"But, mother, I cannot go to the farm!"

"Well, well, your father will manage it in the morning for us. There's no hurry."

Amy gasped for breath, evidently unable to utter the wishes that struggled in her bosom.

"Come, come. Don't look so down-hearted," said the mother, cheerfully. "Perhaps we'll all go over to tea while he's here."

A low moan broke from Amy's lips, but she did not speak again; and her mother moved on quite unconscious of the agitation that shook that young frame and blanched her face till it was sad to look upon.

CHAPTER XXV.

NEWS AT LAST.

MRS. LEONARD and her daughter went into the house again, where the minister met them with his grave and pleasant welcome. Mrs. Leonard was not gifted with that

keen sensibility which would have discovered something unusual in his manner; and Amy was too much occupied with the wild thoughts crowding upon her to heed any thing that required close observation.

While her mother was talking with the minister, and giving side thrusts at the committee after her prompt fashion, Amy stole away and searched the thronging company till she found herself in the kitchen, to which Hagar had betaken herself.

Several of the committee were busy in this wing of the house; and Hagar, after depositing her donation, was engaged in explaining why no other member of the Arnold family was present.

"Yer see, our folks has been 'specting company ebber so long, and dere's been no end ter de baking, and scrubbin' and sich like as has been undertook on dat account. De little offerin' as I has de pleasure to descent is jest what we could pick up in a hurry from de 'bundance ob de 'casion. As for de piller-cases and sich like, my young missus jest sent 'em to satisfy de sisters dat dey wasn't forgot, and never would be in any grand fortune dat might fall ter her; but circumstances ob a delicate natur, which nobody was to speak ob on no 'count, had kep' her away from de spinnin'-wheel and loom, so she only sent what was handy in order to 'spress her good will."

Those who listened to Hagar had no idea that her grandiloquence was assumed in order to cover what she keenly felt to be the poverty of her donation. And they were a good deal impressed by the hints of present abundance and coming greatness, which she threw out on the strength of her own vague conjectures alone. But all this gave Amy a gleam of comfort, as it went to prove the truth of her mother's belief regarding the young Frenchman and

Hannah Arnold. She stole timidly behind Hagar, and, whispering that she wished to speak with her in the orchard, went away and waited by the path till her humble friend should come out. She had no inclination to join any of the young people who were roaming under the trees, but walked along the outskirts of the orchard, peering anxiously through the branches for fear that Hagar might pass without seeing her.

After a little she saw the slave with her empty basket coming through the back-door of the house and descending the footpath. With a quickened breath the young creature glided along by the fence, and stood in the path just where it crossed into a neighboring lot.

"Hagar!"

"Wal, what am it, young missus? Jest speak out, for I'se in a hurry to get hum."

"Hagar!"

"Wal, agin; what am it?"

This time Hagar spoke a little impatiently, and cast eager glances at the fence, as if she longed to be over.

"Nothing, Hagar. Don't be impatient. Only I,—I should like to hear from the people in New Haven."

"What, yer cousin?"

"No; she is well enough. But this French gentleman,—is he really going to marry Hannah? You can trust me, Hagar; I won't breathe it to a mortal soul."

"Why, how arnest you seem 'bout it. Yes; 'member I don't speak from a dead sartinty, but it's my bleef dat it'll be a match, and dat 'fore long, too. Why dis is four time he's been here since Christmas."

"The fourth time! Ah, me, and I never knew it,—never dreamed that there was any chance of hearing from him!" murmured Amy, with suppressed tears.

"Hearin' from *him*! What does yer mean by *him*?"

"Benedict, you know, Hagar. I haven't heard a syllable about him for months; and,—and we used to go to school together. Don't you remember it, Hagar,—Benedict, and Hannah, and I?"

"Yes," said Hagar, looking hard at the fence, and pressing her thick lips together, "yes; I 'member 'bout it sure 'nuff."

"Ah, I knew you would, good Hagar! And how we all went blackberrying together, ever so long ago; you went to take care of us."

"Yes; I 'member 'bout dat, too. And how when Ben had eat up his berries,—he was an orful greedy critter, our Ben,—you'd go and pour de blackberries out of yer own basket and fill his'n up to de brim. Many a scoldin' you've got for comin' hum short, when dat big boy got credit for yer work. Yes, yes; I 'member more'n people tink, p'r'aps."

"Then you remember that I always loved you, Hagar?"

"Yes, yes; I don't deny nuthin' ob dat," answered the slave, casting tender glances at the agitated girl.

"And how I flung a big stone at the snake that wanted to bite you?" pleaded Amy.

"Wal, it allers kinder seemed ter me as if dat snake would a-made for our Ben if he'd been let 'lone; but de way yer went at him was clear grit, anyhow. Yes, yes; one don't forget a ting like dat in a hurry."

"Well, then, Hagar, you know one never forgets an old schoolfellow. And I've a great favor to ask, Hagar; you won't refuse it, promise that?" persisted the poor young girl, all in a shiver of excitement.

"Wal, now, I don't know 'bout dat; jest gib an idee ob

what it is," said Hagar, pursing up her mouth and turning her head on one side.

Amy grew desperate. She clasped her hands hard together under her short cloak, and spoke out rapidly, as one talks in a fever,

"I want to hear from him, my old school-fellow, Benedict Arnold, and nobody tells me a word. This young Frenchman has seen him, I am sure. Perhaps he brings a letter, or something. He would think it strange if I asked; but you can find out what I want to know,—all about him, Hagar,—if he is well,—what he is doing,—if he ever talks of his old friends in Norwich. And ask, dear, dear Hagar, if he—that is, if this young French gentleman's sister is in New Haven yet? Perhaps she's gone, and married to some nobleman by this time. I hope so. Don't you, Hagar? Nothing but a grand, rich man would be a match for her, you know. Will you ask these questions now, just as if you wanted to know about him for your own self? I wouldn't ask it, but I haven't another friend in the wide, wide world that can help me. Only you, Hagar,—only you."

There was something so pathetic in the girl's voice, and in the pleading of her look, that Hagar began to sniff the air and wink her eyelids violently,—a sure sign that she would have liked to cry, but had resolved to maintain herself against every attack of weakness.

"You'll do this for me, Hagar?"

"Why, ob course I will. What's de use of making sich a touze all 'bout nothin'! I tort you was a-going ter ask me to take some trouble. Wal, now, don't go to cry-in'. Next time I come across you, see if I don't tell all 'bout dem New Haven folks."

He had now scarce

"Oh, not till then? Ask the moment you get home. Come back here and tell me,—I cannot wait."

"What, here? Me come back? What on arth has got inter de gal?"

"Oh, Hagar! I am so anxious,—my heart aches so. Dear soul, go,—go quick! Who knows what good news you will bring? Don't look at me in that way,—but have a little pity!"

"But I can't do it,—thar! The tea's to be got."

"Ah, now you are cross, Hagar. You are like all the rest, and want to put me away."

"No, I don't!"

"But you see how anxious I am, and won't come back to help me. Look here, old friend, I've got four silver shillings in this purse. Only find out what I want and come right back; you shall take them now. I can trust you."

"No, I won't! Put the puss back into yer busom, Amy. I ain't so white as some folks, but—wal, neber mind,—good-by! 'Fore sunset you'll find me here in de crook of dis fence as large as life."

Amy smiled one of her old, sunny smiles, that gave back the lost beauty to her face. As Hagar was mounting the fence, she seized her by the dress.

"Oh, Hagar, you are so kind! Perhaps it will be good news that you bring. If Hannah is married soon, *he* may come to the wedding. If he does,—if they tell you that, Hagar, I'll give you the gold ear-rings grandmother left me,—all pure gold, and as large and round as a crown piece. Don't shake your head. Oh, I shall be so glad to give them to you. But do hurry back."

"Well, well, let me go then. I'll be back soon enough. Not for the ear-rings, but—but——"

Amy did not hear the rest, for the negress walked off

with long strides till the trees hid her from sight. Twice she looked back, but only to see those wild, mournful eyes following her,—oh, so anxiously.

After she got out of sight, Hagar began to walk more heavily. Then she stood still, as if struck by some overpowering thought, staggered with the pain of it for a moment, and sat down on a stump by the wayside, where she burst into a hearty cry. At last she got up, wiped her face with a corner of her cotton shawl, and went towards home.

"Yes," she muttered. "I'll stand by her troo tick and tin, and so shall ebbry cullered pusson as wants de honor ob my 'quaintance. Let de white folks peck her to death if dey've a mind to; but as for me,—wall, it's wicked to cuss anybody; but de blood riles right up from de bottom ob my berry heart when I tink dat young feller was broughten up under de same roof wid a 'spectable pusson like me, nussed at his mudder's bussum like any udder baby."

Thus muttering to herself, Hagar went on her way home. Amy watched by the fence so long as a glimpse could be caught of her gorgeous calico dress. Then she went back to the house with something of animation in her face. For two hours she could not expect Hagar back again. Meantime she must hide herself in the orchard, or join with the crowd. The voice of her mother calling her decided the question. She went into the house with a faint glow on her cheek; for, at her age, hope is quick to revive, trample its bright blossoms down as you will.

"Yes, yes. He has been waiting for this to happen. At his sister's wedding all will be well." Thus she half-murmured, half-thought, on her way up the orchard.

Under one of the vast tent-like trees nearest the house, a rustic table was being spread for the young folks. Here a bevy of fair girls was busy, darting in and out under the branches and through the back-door, eagerly spreading the feast. One of the girls called to Amy as she went up the footpath.

"Amy! Amy Leonard! You lazy thing! Come and help set the table. What on earth are you about?"

A quick thrill ran through that young heart. She was not avoided. That was all a fancy. The girls loved her as well as ever. Amy turned, with the glow of these thoughts on her face, and joined the innocent revelers.

"I am sorry. True enough: why should one play and the rest work? Thank you, Nancy Clark. Now, what shall I set about first?"

"Go and coax your mother to send out some of her nice things for us. It isn't fair for them to take every thing for the minister's table."

"Yes, yes; I'll do it," cried Amy, grateful for this cheering notice.

"Hunt up a pitcher, Amy, and hook some of their roses, if you get a chance. We'll have a flower-pot that'll take theirs down, mind that."

"I left some hemlock-tops and lots of flowers in the wagon," said Amy, running off.

Directly she came back with her arms full of evergreens and branches of forest flowers, with garlands of ground pine trailing on the grass as she walked. The young girls set up a shout as she appeared half-buried in masses of green foliage.

"Oh, come on!" cried Nancy Clark, flinging the branches Amy had cast at her feet right and left. "Here's oceans of flowers. We'll have a border all around the

table-cloth, and flower-pots at both ends. Work away! work away!"

There was instant and joyous obedience to this behest. Every hand was at work twining flowers among the green spray, and weaving garlands that, united together, soon formed a sumptuous wreath around the white drapery of the table.

"Now," cried Nancy Clark, crowding masses of flowers into a great stone pitcher half sunk in the grass, "some one come help me lift this to its place, and then we shall pull an even yoke with the best of 'em."

A dozen hands were ready to aid her, and directly a glowing bower of wild blossoms marked one end of the festal board.

"Now, who is to ask a blessing? The minister says we may choose any one we like. Which shall it be,—Dr. Blake or Amy Leonard's father?"

"Oh, Mr. Leonard! Mr. Leonard! Amy's father. Didn't she bring the flowers?"

The tears sprang to Amy's eyes. It was sweet to be called out of her terrible depression by this warm-hearted clamor.

"Why, look at Amy! Only think, she's crying!" said one of the girls.

"No, I'm not. It was because this kindness came so suddenly. Then there's Dr. Blake."

"Well, well," cried Nancy Clark, who was a charming leader in every thing, "Mr. Leonard shall ask the blessing, and Dr. Blake can return thanks."

"Yes, yes. Nancy's hit the mark this time. Now hurry up, hurry up, or the old folks'll get ahead of us!" was the general cry.

It was one of the prettiest sights in the world,—that

crowd of blooming girls, hurrying to and fro in eager haste to keep up with their elders. Now and then a grave matron would step to the door-stone and take a survey of the scene, affecting a little jealousy, and venturing on a demure rebuke of so much mirth; but this only checked the laughter for a moment, and the noise went on again.

"There now, the young fellers are beginning to come!" cried Nancy, all in a flutter, and speaking below her breath. "I saw a hull wagon-load get out as I stopped in the entry-way. How they are all fixed up! Tim Johnson's got a red ribbon to his cue, and such bright buckles in his shoes. Oh, goodness!"

"Hush, hush! they're coming!" whispered half a dozen voices at once, and there was a general flutter of expectation, by which the birds overhead were entirely distanced.

It was some minutes before the young men ventured to mingle freely with the girls; but their shyness soon wore off, and it was rather difficult to suppress them into decorous silence, when Mr. Leonard and Dr. Blake came forward to preside at their portion of the festival. While Leonard, with his fine, frank face beaming with tranquil happiness, was uttering his rather lengthy blessing in the orchard, the minister was equally sententious over the great pie in the best room within. Directly there was such a hum and clatter all around the minister's dwelling, such passing of dainties and interchange of smiles, that the birds gave up and stopped singing for the day, feeling themselves quite lost and overpowered in the general hilarity.

In the midst of this charming riot, Amy, who was thrown back into her anxiety the moment she had nothing to work at, began to cast furtive glances down the foot-

path. It was scarcely time for Hagar to come, but the sickness of suspense grew strong upon her, and at last she stole from the table and made her way down the orchard.

When she reached the fence, Hagar was in sight, walking at a great pace. The kind slave checked her pace at the sight of Amy, and came heavily towards her.

"Oh, Hagar!"

It was all her white lips could utter. Hagar saw the anguish of expectation in her face, and looked away.

"Have you nothing to tell me, Hagar?"

Oh, the heart-broken tone! It cut Hagar to the soul.

"No, miss. Yer see I hadn't much chance to ax 'bout any ting. Miss Hannah and her beau started right off, and I kinder walked 'long."

"Hannah and her beau? Are they here?"

"Yes. Dey came on ahead."

"And you have nothing to tell me?"

"No, I—I—in course Miss Hannah will hab de news, so it wasn't worth while for me to wait."

"And I must ask for it there, among all those people! Oh, what can I do? How can I speak?"

She was looking in terror toward the house, afraid to go there, but unable to wait. A moment of keen struggle, and she started away, clenching her hands and pressing her lips harder at each step.

"Amy! Miss Amy! come back! I'm a sneakin' coward to let you go and hear it 'mongst 'em all. Amy Leonard, come back, I say!"

But Amy was too far off. Hagar's voice mingled with the noises that filled the orchard, and the poor child entered the house, wild and panting.

The supper-room was crowded. Mrs. Leonard sat

near the minister, who had twice warmed her heart by praises of the chicken-pie. Hannah Arnold stood near, looking flushed and anxious, like one who had just tasted something of bitterness dashed into a cup of joy while at her lips. She had looked around for Amy, on her first entrance to the room, and, with a sense of relief at finding her absent, was now talking in a low voice to the minister's wife. Amy struggled up to where they were standing; but they had drawn close to the table, and she only found a place between them and the wall. Thus they remained unconscious of her presence.

"Is not this unexpected news about your brother?" the minister's wife was half whispering. "We had no idea that he was paying serious attentions to the young lady. Indeed, we thought——"

Hannah broke in upon the words before they were uttered. She could not endure to hear what was the general expectation. It was a wound to her delicate friendship for Amy to have her name mentioned in the conversation.

"Yes, it was sudden; but perhaps we ought not to be surprised at it. She is a very lovely person."

"When will the wedding come off?"

The minister's wife spoke in a low voice, and Hannah answered still more subduedly.

"Next week. We are all going to New Haven, and you must not be surprised if I,—that is, if it is a double wedding. *He* insists upon it."

"What! her brother? Oh! I understand."

That instant Hannah felt a hand grasp her arm,—a hand so cold that it chilled her; and a whisper that made her breath come quick, seemed to pass into her heart.

"Hannah, is it Benedict who is going to marry some one?"

For a moment Hannah's lips refused to move. Then she bent her head to the pale face looking over her shoulder, and answered.

"Yes, dear Amy."

A moment, and the cold hand clutched her arm like a vice; then a heavy weight fell against her, and, turning quickly, she caught Amy in her arms.

Help me to get her out," she said, in a hoarse whisper, addressing the minister's wife. "Oh, what can I do?"

The good woman passed her arm around the sinking girl, and the two, without noise or outcry, bore Amy into the passage; but the movement could not be altogether concealed. Some one who saw the white face drooping on Hannah's shoulder called out.

"Doctor! Ho! Dr. Blake."

The sound ran through those chill veins like fire. Amy lifted her head, gave one wild look around, and sprang away.

A dusky sunset filled the orchard; but the young people enjoying themselves under the trees, saw a pale creature flitting through them so swiftly that no one, at first, recognized her; then a careless voice observed.

"It is Amy Leonard. How strangely she acts to-day!" and she was forgotten again.

As Hagar stood by the fence, this white face came towards her, veered on one side, and, with a desperate scramble, crossed the fence.

"Amy! Amy Leonard, it is only me, yer friend, yer best friend till death. Come to Hagar! Come to Hagar."

But the figure darted on, faster and faster, and the darkness fell around it.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE DESOLATE HOME.

WHILE the assembly within the minister's house was in that wild state which follows an event which no one thoroughly understands, Joshua Leonard came in from the orchard, where he had been superintending a swing on which some of the little folks had been amusing themselves; till the twinkle of a star or two between the apple-tree boughs warned them that night was coming on.

As the strong man came in anxious glances were cast upon him, and the whispers that had been running from group to group were hushed.

"Ah," he said, all in a glow of cheerfulness, won from his kindly exercise among the children, "it takes us young folks to enjoy ourselves! How can you all mope here?"

No one answered, but the guests looked at each other with significant glances, and broke up into pairs, gliding away from his path.

"Where is Amy and the old woman?" he inquired, without much heeding this constraint among his friends. "It's getting nigh on time to go home, I reckon."

No one answered him. But that moment Dr. Blake came out of the little room which everybody knew as the minister's study, and, laying his hand on Leonard's arm, drew him in and closed the door.

The minister was sitting by a little table, from which

many a score of sermons, with innumerable heads, had been given to the people. A single candle shed its light on his face, which was more than grave, and he looked towards the door with a troubled eye as Leonard entered.

"What is this?" said the mill owner, somewhat bewildered by the gloom which filled the little apartment. "Oh, you wish a reckoning of accounts. Very good. We have all given in our contributions, and here is a list set down with a pencil. Short reckonings make long friends; it won't take more than half an hour, anyway."

The minister looked at Blake imploringly. He had no courage to execute the task imposed on him; the unconsciousness, the easy confidence of Leonard's manner went to his heart. It was like dealing a death-blow between the eyes of a Newfoundland dog while looking trustfully in your face.

"Be it so," said Dr. Blake, in answer to this mute appeal; and in after days he spoke of this as the greatest trial of his life. "Be it so. I will speak to brother Leonard, and may the Lord of Hosts be with him and bear him up."

"Amen!" whispered the minister, shading his eyes with a hand that shook in the candle-light.

"What is this?" cried Leonard, becoming alarmed. "What has befallen? Any thing to our Amy? any thing to her mother?"

"Sit down," answered the minister, softly; "sit down, brother."

Leonard sat down as he was requested, looking first at his friend, then at the minister, in a stern, questioning way, for he began to feel that there was something terribly wrong.

The doctor sat down also, but it was some moments be-

fore he could speak. At last, with all his manhood, he was able to utter a single word only.

"Brother!"

Leonard turned his honest, questioning eyes on his friend.

"Brother, I begin to wish we had spoken of this before. It is hard to bring trouble on an old friend."

"If there is trouble for me, doctor, speak out. I hope I can bear it with patience. God has been merciful to me hitherto. Shall I not take his crosses as well as his blessings. So long as the woman and her child are not smitten, I can bear any thing."

"But it is through your child that this trouble comes. God help and forgive her!"

"Forgive her,—my child,—our Amy! What has she done? Oh, brother, tell me, what has she done?"

Dr. Blake shrunk away from the wild questioning of those eyes. The minister shaded his face with one pale hand, while he reached forth the other and grasped that of Leonard, which lay half clenched upon the table.

"Speak to me,—speak to me! I can bear this no longer," cried the poor father.

The minister bent down his head, grasped the hand which began to struggle and shake, with both his, and began to speak in a low, rapid voice, like one who fears to stop lest his breath or courage should fail.

It was terrible to watch that strong man as the story of his daughter's disgrace was unfolded to him: the whiteness of death crept slowly over his noble face; his hand grew cold as ice; drops of anguish stole out on his broad forehead and stood there like globules of ice. But he listened in silence. That which the society had known long he heard at last,—how Arnold had been at his house even-

ing after evening, alone with his daughter while he was at lectures and prayer-meetings,—how, but why go into the harrowing details of his disgrace, of her terrible downfall?

“And now,” said the minister, with tears in his eyes, “now we can delay no longer. We had hoped that something might have prevented the painful steps we are now compelled to take.”

Leonard did not speak, but a terrible anguish smouldered in his eyes.

“She is a member of our society. Without confession and atonement no sinner can remain in communion with God’s people.”

The shudder that crept through that strong frame made the table on which the unhappy father leaned tremble visibly: a low groan broke from his lips.

“We have been forbearing,—we have prayed for you, wept for you, brother Leonard; nay, against such evidence have been resolutely unbelieving in the poor child’s actual guilt. We were fain to believe that a secret marriage had taken place somewhere; but now certain news comes that the young man is about to wed another person.”

Leonard started and looked up with a sharp, burning glance. The minister understood it, and answered sadly,

“Yes, news came to-night that Benedict Arnold is about to marry the young French woman who spent last Thanksgiving at his father’s house.”

Here Leonard started to his feet, dashed the minister’s hand from him, and turned his white face upon Dr. Blake. Then the agony that tore him broke forth.

“Is this thing true?”

“I have feared it long, known it of a surety during the last two weeks,” answered the doctor.

Leonard strode towards the door, then came suddenly back, and, leaning hard on the table with both hands, spoke to the minister.

“Wait,—have a little patience before you bring the young critter that was my child into the broad aisle for public scorn. She will not stand there alone. I call on you both to witness that I, Joshua Leonard, have been a God-fearing man since the beard was black on my chin; but if this young man crosses my path I must kill him!”

“Brother!” almost shrieked the minister, trembling in all his limbs at the whirlwind of human passion that rushed by him.

“Joshua Leonard,” cried the doctor, in a voice of stern rebuke, seizing the hand that Leonard lifted heavily from the table as he ceased speaking, “have you forgotten that vengeance belongeth to God?”

He might as well have grasped an iron gauntlet, for any response that hand gave to his, or have argued with a whirlwind when it tears an oak up by the roots. The bosom tempter that had dwelt with that man, almost unsuspected from his birth up, had been his pride,—the strong, inborn pride that had its growth in a vigorous, independent nature. Now they were tearing it up root and branch, and rebuked him that he struggled against the tempest that was to make his heart a desert. After a time “the still small voice” would whisper through all this whirl of passion, but it was not yet.

Again he strode to the door and opened it. There, upon the other side, he found his wife, her cheeks crimson and wet with tears that she was trying to wipe dry with a gorgeous silk handkerchief, while she indignantly refused the consolation which half a dozen of the sisters were offering.

"Come, Joshua, come home. This isn't the place for you and I. There's neither charity, nor truth, nor the milk of human kindness anywhere for us and ours. No, sisters, don't speak; I know what I'm a-saying, and stand by it. You're slanderers, unbelievers, blasphemers! Do you hear? Yes, you are; for she, my Amy,—our Amy, Joshua,—is innocent and good as a little child, and of such is the kingdom of heaven—there! Come, Joshua, come, husband. It's high time to be a-going when human beings can say what these sisters have been trying to make me believe."

Leonard did not seem to know that she was speaking, but suffered her to put her arm through his and walked on, without heeding the crowd that drew respectfully back, or the glances of Christian sympathy that followed him. But she called out with hysterical force, "Yes, it's my duty,—I forgive you one and all; but don't ask me to forget, for I can't do it."

Leonard literally did not hear this. His faculties were locked up. He walked forth like an iron man.

The couple got into their one-horse wagon, and drove home. Leonard was hard and silent all the way; while the good wife sat folded in her shawl, crying bitterly, but with a hushed grief; for, now that she had no one to struggle against, her high spirit broke down, and many thoughts came to her mind that left her completely heart-broken.

"What if it were all true?"

It would force itself upon her; first as a doubt; then a dread; then—God help the poor mother!—almost as a certainty. How many little things came crowding to her mind, each bringing its bitter proof of what she dreaded to believe, resented against herself, and yet could not drive out of her heart!

When these feelings had fastened themselves upon her, she felt the yearning want of contradiction with which the soul strives to fling off a painful belief.

Had he heard it? Did his heart prove traitor to his wishes, as hers was doing? She longed to know, but felt an unaccountable dread of disturbing the silence into which he had fallen. At last she reached forth her hand, touching his arm with a strange feeling of awe.

"Joshua, you don't believe it? Oh, do speak and say just that."

He attempted to answer, but the words of shame grew husky in his throat and died there.

"Won't you speak to me, husband?"

"Yes, mother. No, not that; you ain't a mother now, only a poor, childless woman, who will never lift up her head again."

"And you turn agin her, too! Oh, Joshua, who will stand by her if we believe that?"

He did not answer, but a low, hoarse moan told that an effort had been made.

"Oh, father! does your heart ache like that?" cried the wife, piteously.

"It will never stop aching," he said, heavily.

She had nothing more to say. The conviction of Amy's guilt closed more and more darkly around her. What could she say?

Meantime Amy had fled homeward with wild speed. She did not seek the highway, for there would be wagons and groups of old neighbors going home from the donation party. They would ask her to ride, might question her of the reason why she was on foot and alone. No, she would avoid all living things.

The fields were wet and misty with dew, but she took

no heed of that, nor cared for the stone walls and rail fences that blocked her passage across them. Once or twice she stopped and looked vaguely around, like a deer seeking some covert. Then she would spring forward, and struggle through the moist grass till her garments were wet through and through. There was fever in her blood, and the dampness did her good. More than once she stooped down to the red clover tufts and white daisies, that seemed to have closed themselves against her, and, sweeping up handfuls of dew, bathed her lips and her burning forehead. But nothing would appease the fire within except sharp motion. So away she rushed through the sweeping grass, while the bent, but scarcely trampled meadow flowers, startled back as if affrighted from her tread; and the pure stars looked down upon her in heavenly sorrow, that any thing they and the angels knew to be innocent should take that guilty seeming.

Amy went homeward, not with any definite intent, but because she had no other place in which to hide herself. Indeed she had no formed wish or plan, but, like a wounded bird, fled onward to escape the great pain aching at her heart.

At last she came within hearing of the falls,—within sight of the mill, and of her father's cabin. Every thing was dark there. The rushing waters made her stop and think. What if she turned that way,—not towards the saw-mill, the thought of those dark logs made her nerves creep; but higher up in the rush of the whirlpool, where the starlight could fall upon her as she died?

As this thought held her in thrall, a whip-poor-will, hid in some tree back of her father's house, began to wail forth his protest; and, strange to say, there was something in his song that won her back from the evil temptation

that was drawing her fascinated towards the falls. It seemed like some friend, who had known trouble, calling her away home.

The cabin was dark and still. No light but the stars,—no sound but the whip-poor-will, who seemed plaintively bewailing her sorrow. There was little occasion for bolts in those days; a latch-string drawn in was sufficient indication that no one was at home. Amy felt for the knot to this leathern thong, and let herself in. A few gleams of starlight stole after her, so that she was not left in utter darkness. But, now that the poor child had reached home, what could she do? In a few moments her parents might be there. She must meet them,—must look in her father's face. The thought drove her mad; she turned and prepared to flee again. Ah, if her mother would but come alone! But that kind, stern father,—she could not meet him.

But where could she go? Who would receive her? Where, in the wide, wide world was there a roof to shelter her, save that which now seemed to frown her away? As these dreary questions sunk into her heart, she heard a sharp rattle of wheels coming up the road. It was her father and mother.

Amy started, and attempted to rise, but her limbs gave way; the breath seemed to struggle in her throat, and, before she had power to move, the wagon stopped, and she heard her parents coming. Desperation gave her strength, and she stood up; but the corner into which she had shrunk was dark, and the room seemed empty to the two persons who darkened the door.

"She is not here! Oh, Joshua, she has not reached home! Where can my child be gone?" cried the good woman, calling out piteously, and beating the air with

her hands. "They have driven her wild! They have hunted her to death! She is lost,—dead!"

"Hush!" commanded the stern-voiced man. "It would be a mercy if what you say is true!"

"Oh, Joshua! Joshua! she is our child,—our only child!"

"No; not our child. She was the apple of this eye, but I pluck her out."

A sharp, low wail broke out from the darkness of the room; then, with the fleetness of a bird and the stillness of a ghost, Amy passed by her father and away. He saw her a moment, flitting through the starlight which fell across the road; then she was suddenly engulfed in the black shadows of the saw-mill.

"Oh, Joshua! Joshua Leonard! what have you done? It was our own poor angel child,—for she is an angel! Cover her with sin and iniquity like a garment, heap ashes on her head, and she would come out white as snow compared to them that make charges against her! What have you done, Joshua Leonard, but turned, like a pelican of the wilderness, agin your own flesh and blood! Why don't you speak? Why don't you move? Can't you call out and bring her back, as the prodigal father called for his son? Amy! Amy!"

Poor woman! her voice was so choked with the passion of her grief, that what she meant for a shout scarcely rose above a hoarse whisper.

"Oh, mercy! mercy! God has taken away my voice! Shout! you hard-hearted man. Scream till the woods ring! My child shall not be turned out-of-doors!"

Her voice broke forth now. She struggled past her husband, pushing him aside with force, and ran wildly up the road, calling with frantic grief for her child.

"Come back, Amy—my own, own Amy! Come back and take poor mother along. Since he turns agin us, and believes us guilty, and wishes us dead, we'll leave him all that there is, and go off into the cold, wide world all alone. Amy! Oh, Amy! do speak to your mother! She loves you just as well as ever! She'll stand by you, right or wrong! She'll die for you—starve for you—work for you! She'll go down on her two knees to that committee and beg 'em to let you off! If they won't do that, she'll stand up by your side in the broad aisle of the meeting-house, afore the hull world, and tell 'em all that it was her own fault,—that she did it all by her miserable way of bringing you up! Come back, Amy darling! come back to your mother!"

But there was no answer to this pathetic cry. It rang through the darkness of the saw-mill, and sobbed itself to death among the rushing waters; but, though she paused to listen, holding in her grief, no reply reached her, save that of the whip-poor-will, that sounded harsh and cruel, mocking her anguish, as if the strange voice joined with her daughter's enemies and clamored for punishment.

Then a horrible fear came to her heart. Had Amy plunged into the watery grave from which God had once saved her? Was she then floating, stark and cold, among the logs under her feet? The pangs of her anguish came sharp with the thought. She bent over the black abyss, shrieking forth the unhappy girl's name in heart-rending cries.

CHAPTER XXVII.

SEARCHING IN THE DEPTHS.

JOSHUA LEONARD heard these cries, and they smote through his iron frame as lightning strikes an oak. He had been dumb till now. The sight of his child flitting by him like a ghost, with that pale face turned away from his in terror, had killed the anger in his heart. He had not heard the reproaches of his wife; for the moment every faculty of his being was locked. But the cries of that poor mother brought him to life again. It was terrible to hear them cleaving through the darkness. He started towards the mill; but, as he left the threshold stone, the mother came across the road and passed him. Her face was ghastly in the starlight, and her teeth chattered as with cold. She had no reproaches for her husband then; but, seized with pity, threw her arms around him.

"Oh, Joshua, she is dead! We,—no, no,—I have killed her!"

In the very depths of her sorrow the poor mother was generous: for her life she would not have upbraided him then.

"Did you see her?—hear any thing?"

"No, it was all over. Every thing was still."

He broke from her arms, entered the house, and, seizing the tinder-box, fell upon his knees, and began to strike out great sparks of fire from a flint and steel.

"Bring the lantern. She may have hid herself from fear of her father. God forgive me! Bring the lantern!"

Mrs. Leonard opened a door, and took the lantern from its nail in the cellar-way; but she was obliged to kneel down on the hearth and take hold of the candle with both hands while her husband lighted it; and then the flame quivered, as if a high wind were passing by, from the irrepressible trembling of her limbs.

When the candle was locked into its tin prison, the miserable pair went down to the saw-mill together. Pale and shivering, they wandered around the heaped-up boards and logs, calling Amy softly by her name, in dread of frightening her by loud tones; but they found nothing to indicate her presence, living or dead.

Leonard held his lantern down through the floor till the black waters reddened in its glare. His wife leaned over his shoulder, casting appalled glances into the abyss, but turning every instant to cover her eyes, overcome with dread of finding the terrible thing she sought. Leonard's face brightened a little when he saw that the logs, which lay in the water like great monsters asleep, were dry on the upper surface. Surely, if she had plunged to her death in this spot, there would have been some motion left in the timbers she must have touched,—some marks of water dashed over the bark.

Leonard rose from his knees and stood upright, with a glow of hope in his eyes.

"Our God is merciful; she is not here," he said, with tears streaming down his rough cheeks.

His wife gave a sob and flung herself into his arms, crying like a little child.

He kissed her tenderly, wiped the tears from her face, and pressed it against his bosom.

"Ah," he said, with humility, "how much better you are, wife, than I am,—how much better in the sight of God!"

"Dear me! No, no, Leonard, don't say that!"

"You had the grace to forgive at once. It was I, the strong one, who drove her away, our poor, weak child!"

"Don't, Leonard, you break my heart. If she could but see you now, the very look of your eyes would bring her back."

Leonard took up his lantern, and, passing one strong arm around his wife, who began to look hopefully up to his brightening face, went out of the mill. He held the lantern low as he reached the firm ground, searching for tracks in the grass. He found none, however; but in the dust of the road, rendered moist by a heavy dew, small footprints appeared, which he knew to be Amy's.

"She is alive,—she is alive; we shall catch up with her in a little while," cried the glad mother. "Won't we be good to her and comfort her, and stand up against the whole world for her, Leonard?"

"With God's help, my wife!"

"Oh, of course; I meant that only it seems so easy to forgive one's child without help, you know."

Thus talking together, these not entirely unhappy parents,—for true goodness is never quite miserable,—traced the footsteps of their erring child along the dust of the highway, till they disappeared in the hoof-prints and wagon-tracks of a cross-road that led from the festival at Norwich.

"She has gone back to the minister's," said the father, pausing in his walk.

"Yes," answered the mother, with a thrill of yearning tenderness, "it is up yonder she has gone. Her own

mother would not comfort her, so she went to our best friend."

"Sit down here, and we will wait till she comes back," answered the father, with a deep swell of the heart; "poor child! how tired and broken-hearted she must be."

They sat down together on the trunk of a newly-fallen tree, which lay upon the sward on one side of the road; and thus with their arms around each other, heavy-hearted, but comforted in the best of all human love, that which springs from time, they watched and waited for the coming of their child. Few words passed between them, but sometimes, when the night air chilled his wife, he would gather her in his arms and console her against his heart.

It was long after midnight when these two stricken people arose, wearily, and returned home, saying to each other.

"Never mind; our child will come back to-morrow: then she will know how much we love her."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

WANDERING IN THE NIGHT.

AMY had left the house from fright alone. The sound of her father's voice in stern denunciation fell like iron on her heart. She was out-doors, and fleeing along the shadowy side of the road before a thought of where she was going entered her mind. She was tired now,—a little rest made her feel how tired,—and she longed to lie down on the turf in some corner of the fence and die. But she

dared not pause or sleep. Some one might pass by and, seeing her there, guess that she had been driven forth by her father,—her dear, good father, whom she loved so fondly, and yet had offended beyond hope of pardon.

The delicate reticence of her nature shrunk from this exposure; so she wandered on till the very tree on which her parents afterward watched so many hours tempted her to sit down. Here a feeling of utter dreariness fell upon her. Homeless, friendless, disgraced, ill, what could she do? where could she go? Back to her parents? Alas, she had no courage for that! Who on the wide earth would give her shelter now? She thought over all her meagre list of friends. Was there one who would not pull in the latch-string when she was seen to approach in the desolation of her disgrace? She could not hope that there was.

Then Amy thought of her lover with a sort of dreamy pain. He had left her to all this,—betrayed her into something worse than death. She wondered if he guessed at her present distress, and if the knowledge would give him a moment's uneasiness. Then she fell into a sort of apathy, and would believe nothing, not even what Hannah Arnold had said, nor the stern words of her own father. Her feet were wet; her limbs were chilled; but there was strange heat in her forehead. Altogether, it was insanity that possessed her, else why was she there so cold, and at night? Why did she think such wicked things of him? Why did she so long to creep away and hide herself 'forever and ever?

I think Amy fell asleep a moment, but a wagon coming down a distant hill aroused her: she must not stay there.

But, alas, her limbs were so heavy, her poor frame so terribly chilled, that she could hardly move, and fell back

from the stone wall that she attempted to climb, trembling with weakness.

Then what could she find on the other side but long, wet grass, and stones harder than the hearts that had condemned her? A friend,—had she one on earth?

It might have been some pitying angel that reminded her that moment of Hagar and her last words in the orchard. She forgot that the negro woman belonged to *his* father; or, if she remembered, the idea brought vague comfort with it. Yes, she would go to Hagar, whose words had been so full of pity.

The wagon was close by now, or she might have dropped off into lethargy again. As it was, she started up and walked steadily forward till she came in sight of the Arnold mansion. A light burned in the front room after the fashion of those times. Hannah was sitting up with her betrothed husband, and their happy, low voices, as they conversed by the open window, floated out on the air, mocking the poor wanderer, who stood leaning upon the gate looking at them through her blinding tears. It was now late at night: so Hannah arose, with a happy blush on her cheek, and bade Paul good-night, placing her hand in his with the sweet confidence which follows a full avowal of mutual affection.

Hannah had left the minister's directly after Amy's departure, and thus escaped the whispers and half-spoken scandal that followed the poor girl's flight, else there would have been tears instead of roses on that young cheek: for she loved Amy Leonard with her whole heart, and grieved silently at the change which promised her another sister-in-law.

Amy saw Hannah stand up, drooping toward Paul like a flower on its stalk, till her lips met his in the first kiss

of their betrothal. How tenderly he laid his hand upon her head! with what gentle respect he conducted her to the door, and whispered good-night!"

Amy saw it all, and the bitterness of her own fate pressed upon her with cruel force. She could bear the scene no longer, but opened the gate and stole round the house, hushing her breath as she went.

Hagar slept in a little bedroom off the kitchen,—a room which Amy had played in scores of times when she and Hannah were children together. The kind soul was wakeful that night, for she knew something of the sorrow Arnold's engagement to the French girl would bring to Amy Leonard. A sense of wrong oppressed her honest heart; she could not get the pale face of that young creature out of her mind; it haunted her like a ghost, as she said afterward.

While she was lying in this half-wakeful state, she heard footsteps coming round the house, and the rustle of garments brushing through the plantain leaves with a heavy sound. Then two hands, beating with their open palms against the window, aroused her completely, and she sat up in bed, her wool half-uncurling with fear and her great eyes riveted on the window.

"Who's dar?—who's dar, I say?" she cried out. "If it's a live pusson, speak out; if it's a ghost de Lord a massy on us, for I'm 'lone in dis part ob de dwellin'!"

"Hagar! Oh, Hagar, let me in! You told me to come if I wanted a friend. Let me in, Hagar. I am shivering with cold,—I am ready to drop."

Hagar knew the voice and sprang up.

"Hush, Miss! I knows yer voice, and opens to it to once. Jes' go roun' to de kitchen door, an' I'll be dar in no time."

The face went away from the window; and Hagar, huddling on a skirt and short-gown, opened the kitchen-door.

"Come in,—come in, poor little honey-bird!" she said, drawing the shivering girl in with both hands. "Don't be afeared. Yer welcom' as greens in spring time! Dar, dar sit down on de hearth,—it's kinder warm yet,—whilst I rake open de ashes and blow up de embers."

Amy fell into a great armed-chair that stood near the hearth, and, leaning her head back, sighed heavily. Hagar was busy attempting to kindle up the fire, which ignited slowly; but a few splinters of pine knots soon shot up in a flame, and then Hagar rose from her knees prepared to say some comforting words to her guest; but she was startled to see the white face falling forward on her bosom with the stillness of death. Amy had fainted.

Quick as thought the negress ran to a cupboard, and, seeing a camphor bottle, poured some of its contents into the palm of her hand, with which she bathed Amy's forehead and temples.

"Come to,—come right to, I tell ye! It's a friend as you're wid,—one as'll stan' by ye so long as she's got two feet to stomp wid. Come to, I sez! Open yer blue eyes an' see who it is, my chippen-bird! Lor, dat camphor's strong; but 'taint no more good dan water! Hi, hi! she shivers,—she's comin' to, poor honey!"

Amy breathed again and feebly lifted her head. Hagar ran for a pillow.

"Dar, dar; jes' res' yer sweet head 'gin dat, an' take a few drops more ob dis 'ere camphor. It'll take de chill right off from yer heart. Dear, dear; how wet yer feet are, and yer go-to-meetin' frock!"

Down upon her knees Hagar fell, and, taking off the wet shoes, began to rub the white feet they had chilled with

great tenderness, buzzing and purring over them like a cat comforting her kittens.

"Yes, yes; yer got one friend yet, anyhow; and, while Hagar libs, to say nuffin' of tudder pusson as is revoted to her, nobody shall hurt yer. Dar, dar, don't yer feel 'em gettin' warm and rosy as a little baby's feet when its mudder kisses 'em? Now, try to open yer eyes wide; and if yer could jest smile a little, it'd seem ter encourage me while I go up-stairs and call missus."

"No—no, don't call any one!" pleaded Amy, struggling to sit up. I can't think how I came here; but your kind words ran in my head all the way; and I forgot that it was at his home you lived. I will drink a few drops of the camphor, Hagar; then give me my shoes and stockings, and I will go away!"

"Go away! No you won't. Dar!"

"Yes, Hagar, I must; this is no place for me. I was not quite myself, or you would not have seen me here."

"But whar will yer go to?"

"I don't know!"

"What will yer do?"

"I don't know!"

"What sent yer away from hum so late o' night?"

Amy turned her head with a moan of pain, but answered nothing.

"Der yer want ter go back?"

Two great tears rolled down those pale cheeks, and Amy whispered sadly,

"I cannot go there, Hagar. It is not my home any more!"

"Den dar's only one ting ter be said 'bout it,—here yer is, and here yer'll stay till mornin', sure. I'll jist hang ober de tea-kittle and make a hot cup o' tea, which you

shall drink in comfort, while I rub yer feet till dey burn agin. Arter dat, per'aps yer'll tell me someting else dat'll do yer good. Hark! I hear somebody a-comin' down-stairs. Wasn't dat a creak?"

Amy started up, and, regardless of her naked feet, prepared to escape; but Hagar forced her kindly into the chair again, striving to pacify her fright.

"Dar—dar now, honey bird! don't be skeered,—yer haven't nothin' but friends under dis roof, anyhow. Nobody kin come as isn't glad ter see yer. So jest sit still and stop shakin'! It'll do no good,—and what don't do no good, is wastin' de Lord's precious time."

The poor, weak girl suffered herself to be controlled, though her eyes, now wide open and burning with affright, were turned upon one of the doors like those of a chained gazelle.

The door opened a little, and a sweet voice called out, "Hagar."

"Well, missus," answered the handmaiden, "what am wantin'?"

"Nothing, Hagar. Only I heard a noise in the kitchen, and, as everybody was in bed, fancied that something might have happened."

"Somethin' has happened! Look here,—look at dis poor lamb. Stand by her, missus, or her death'll be on our heads as sure de Lord knows what's what. Come here, missus; kneel down by de side ob Hagar, and pray Almighty God to forgib dem as has brought her to dis. It'll be prayin' for yer own son!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE REVELATION.

MRS. ARNOLD came into the room at this appeal; her white bed-dress sweeping the floor, and her sweet, old face shaded by the borders of her night-cap. The face was anxious; the eyes full of tender compassion. She stooped over Amy, and looked into her averted face, as the angels look when they pity us most.

"Amy, my poor child, has this news troubled you so much?" she said, stealing one arm across the young girl's shoulders, and resting the head on her own motherly bosom.

Amy's eyes were closed; but a gush of hot tears rained over her cheeks.

"I am sorry,—you can't think how sorry. Indeed, Amy, we all had hoped otherwise; we loved you, and will always love you dearly. No stranger ever can seem so much like a daughter to me."

Amy could only answer with convulsive sobs; but she lifted her arms and clung to Mrs. Arnold.

"Ah, this is terrible! I feared something, but not this entire heart-break," said the gentle lady. "What can we do, Hagar? Is there no way of comforting her?"

Hagar stood looking at her mistress as if she wondered at the question. Then she took Amy from the arms that enfolded her, and laying her head on the pillow, beckoned Mrs. Arnold to follow her into the bedroom.

Amy was worn out with weeping, but her frightened eyes followed them wildly. She made a struggle to get up, but fell back again, and lay helpless, listening to the sound of Hagar's voice in the next room, for terror had hushed the storm of her grief.

When Mrs. Arnold came forth again, her mild face had changed so that you would hardly have known it. She seemed like a criminal who had just listened to a sentence of death.

Hagar stayed in the bedroom muttering to herself, and denouncing the author of all this woe, in order to relieve her own feelings, while she smothered her words that they might not wound her mistress.

Mrs. Arnold went up to Amy, who saw by her face that another was made wretched as herself. Sorrow, commiseration, and horror struggled over those delicate features. She knelt down softly before the young girl and took her two hands.

"What can I do for you, Amy?" she said, in a heart-broken way. "I am but a weak woman, and he is my only son; but, God helping me, this marriage shall never take place!"

Amy gasped for breath. The first hope came suddenly like an arrow, and was sharp as pain.

"Bend down your head, my poor child. Tell me every thing, for, from this hour, I am your mother."

Amy bent her head, but she had little to say. Arnold had judged well when he bound that delicate conscience with an oath. To have saved her own life, she would not have rendered him more criminal in the eyes of that gentle mother. So the unhappy lady rose up with a conviction that it was the old story—alas! so often told since; but in those days one from which the moral nature recoiled

with a sort of terror. This vague feeling Mrs. Arnold could not altogether conquer. She did not caress Amy again. Something in the depths of her pure soul prevented that, but she was even humble in her kindness.

"I am his mother," she said, mournfully; "and should have some influence with him. Little as my authority has ever availed, I will go as he has invited me, not to witness this marriage, but to prevent it."

"Can you? Oh, can you?" cried Amy, with renewed life.

"God will help me, for I am doing right; so we will hope. Now, go with me up-stairs; we shall find a bed in the next chamber to mine. No one shall disturb you. Sleep quietly; for, after this, if you wish it, this house shall be your home so long as it is mine."

Amy bent down her lips and timidly kissed the little hands that held her own. So the two went up-stairs together, Hagar delicately keeping out of the way. But all night long the sound of her discontent broke out in muttered denunciations of men in general, and of all French people, male or female, who traveled about, as she muttered even in her sleep, like roarin' lions, seekin' whom dey might devour wid der claws.

Mrs. Arnold did not leave Amy's chamber till the poor girl sank into that dead, heavy sleep which follows great exhaustion. Then, as the night candle revealed the grief which had eaten all the bloom from that young face, her womanly soul began to yearn tenderly towards the helpless creature, spite of her faults, spite of the degradation which seemed inevitable, and in which her own household must share. Really good women are always charitable, always ready to seek for the good which lies under weakness and error, especially among sister women. She has no

pleasure in dragging forth evil, and only stoops to it that she may ameliorate and reform it. Deprived of this heavenly privilege, she casts the vail of her own pure thoughts over the deformity of error, as God himself hides the nakedness of winter under robes of white snow and jewels of ice.

So it was with Mrs. Arnold. A less heavenly woman might have sought some excuse for her own child at the expense of this poor girl; but her heart was filled with but one wish, that of saving both from future sorrow. When Amy was quite unconscious, the mother kissed her forgivingly on her lips, that trembled even in sleep, and, with her heart full of compassion, went back to her own room.

She did not close her eyes till morning; but instead of dwelling bitterly on the evil that had befallen her house, lay devising means of extrication, hoping for the best; and, under all, was a sweet, yearning tenderness, vague, but inexpressibly delicate, which brought back memories of that year when her first-born son brought with him the heaven of her own maternal life. So when she thought of that son, in his arrogance and selfishness, it was as our Saviour regarded the downfall of Peter, with forgiveness and that increased love which the good are apt to bestow upon the weak. Weak! yes, that was the word! Mrs. Arnold could not bestow the term *wicked* on the son whom she would now only think of as a noble infant smiling on her bosom. It was only Hagar who dealt with the young man according to his own plain, unvarnished iniquity; and even she would permit no other person to breathe a word to his discredit.

When Mr. Arnold awoke in the morning, he found his wife ready dressed and sitting on one side of the bed. It

seemed to him that something like the flutter of rose-leaves across his lips had disturbed his slumbers, and he opened his eyes with a smile. He could smile then,—that long-suffering man,—for all the signs of his long degradation had passed away from his face, and from his life. He was, soul and body, a new creature, an earnest, honest man who, once resolved to act rightly, had grown strong and good.

Unlike some reformed inebriates, who are constantly parading past sins, as if there were something in them to gloat over and boast of, Arnold sought to ignore that portion of his life in which his manhood was so cruelly swamped, as if it had not been. He had sinned, repented, and been forgiven, both of God and man. There was something sublime in this, which a reckless parade of his past faults would have destroyed utterly. It is a coarse, morbid vanity, more than a wish to benefit others, that leads men to hold up even past follies to the world.

But the elder Arnold was not a man of this stamp. The story of his reformation was told plainly in the clear brightness of his eyes,—in those firm, compact features, and in a softness of tread which had self-respect and power in it. In all her life Mrs. Arnold had never been so proud of her husband. While he looked upon her in the morning with those dear loving eyes, she could not be altogether unhappy. But now, that she was about to bring new sorrow upon him, her eyes fell, and she was at a loss for words.

"What is it, wife? Something has gone wrong, I see by your face; troubled yet about your share of the donation? Is that it, foolish little woman?"

Poor lady! she had forgotten all about the donation-

party, which had been a trial; and now it seemed so far back, that she wondered how he could remember such a trifle. She shook her head, and a quiver came to her lips.

Arnold took the alarm. There was one point about which his fears always hovered.

"Benedict! Is it any thing about him?"

She could not answer him at once, but bent down and kissed his forehead, striving to tranquillize him beforehand with her gentle woman's tact.

"Don't, wife," said the husband, with sharp apprehension in his voice; "where he is concerned, anxiety kills me. You look pale; your eyes are heavy. Speak out. If any thing is wrong I can bear it!"

"It is about him; but do not look so distressed. It is a great wrong; but there is time—there must be time—to set it right."

"Speak out!"

"I cannot in a word even to you. It is hard to blaken one's own son."

"I know it. God help me, do I not understand that?"

"And a parent, especially a mother, should screen her child from the consequences, even if he has done wrong!"

"You think so? Well, I am glad of it. Your words take a load from my conscience; but you pain me. What is it?"

With a trembling voice and flushed cheek she told him all. When she had done, he was sitting up in bed stern as a rock. "As there is a God to aid me in a just act, this shall be set right," he said, and the husband and wife parted.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE UNION OF SORROW.

AT early dawn Joshua Leonard and his wife were astir. Neither of them had slept during the night, still no words had passed between them, save when the low voice of the wife rose in the darkness asking her husband if he slept. A deep sigh was sometimes the sole answer, but once or twice he said, "Yes, wife; I am awake," and that was all.

When the daylight came, and the two could see each other face to face, Mrs. Leonard began to cry; the pale and locked features upon the pillow near her seemed so strange that she was almost afraid.

Joshua said, "Hush, hush!" very mournfully, and, getting up, built a fire and went out to the well with the tea-kettle in his hand; but, for the first time in his life, he walked like an old man, and the well-pail slipped from his hold twice as he attempted to lower the bucket down to the water.

When he came in, his wife sat on the hearth shivering. She watched him as he swung the kettle to its trammel, and left it enveloped in clouds of smoke, through which little streaks of flame shot and curled like vipers.

"It's no use," she said, drearily; "I can't get breakfast this morning; and as for eating, the first mouthful would choke me."

Joshua was standing, with his eyes on the struggling fire. His hands were locked, and falling loosely before

him. The plaintive misery in his wife's voice penetrated to his heart.

"I was thinking of you," he said, tenderly. "It seems as if I should never eat again."

The housemother grew strong when she saw his weakness, and rising, she said, with some energy,

"Come, Joshua: we must neither eat nor rest till Amy is found."

He took his hat from its nail, and she put on her bonnet; so the two went heavily forth in search of the lost one.

It was a misty, raw morning: clouds of fog lay heavily on the meadows, the grass was sodden with moisture, and the trees shed storms of cold rain from the branches when the wind swept them. Once more they searched in the saw-mill and around the falls for some signs of her presence. Every thing was still and dreary, but they found no trace of her progress in that direction. This gave them hope; for the earth was moist, and tracks must have been left had she passed that way. The fear that some trace which the darkness had concealed would present itself had haunted the man with dread all night; now his courage rose, for he felt sure that Amy was alive.

"Come," he said, taking his wife by the hand; "we will not stop till she is found."

So, leaving the cabin behind them, they walked down the road, looking to the right and left, as they had done the night before, half-expecting to find Amy in the shelter of some stone wall, or crouching in some crook of the fence.

After a while they saw a man coming along the highway, toiling heavily onward, as if he, too, carried a burden of age or care which sunk his feet in the moist clay of the road.

Leonard stopped suddenly and stood still, with his feet planted sternly in the road and his face growing hard as iron.

It was the elder Arnold.

"Maybe he's found our Amy," said Mrs. Leonard, softly. "Don't look that way, Joshua; he isn't to blame."

Her words awoke a memory in Joshua's heart. He recollected the day when the old man coming along the road had warned and advised him against the visits of his son. No, his wife said truly, the poor, unhappy father was not to blame; but it was terrible to meet him nevertheless.

Slowly and steadily the two fathers approached one another. Both were pale, the eyes of both were full of stern sorrow. Arnold made a motion as if to hold out his hand, but drew it back, shrinking within himself. There was a struggle in Leonard's bosom, but at last he tore away from the evil feelings that bound him, and reached forth his hand.

The features of Arnold began to quiver; two great tears rolled down his cheeks as he met the proffered grasp.

"She's safe. Your child is safe."

Leonard wrung the hand in his grasp, and, looking at his wife, tried to smile.

"Where,—where is she?" cried Mr. Leonard.

"At my house,—with my wife. She came in the night, worn out and wet through; poor, poor child!"

"At your house!" said Leonard, sternly, withdrawing his hand.

"Yes, brother; and that is the right place for my son's wife; for, as the Lord liveth, no other woman shall bear his name or darken my door!"

Here Mrs. Leonard began to cry, and sobbed out a crowd of disjointed ejaculations, that were pathetic only from the deep feeling they betrayed.

"Brother," said Leonard, "God has smitten us both in the heart of our pride. I know how to feel for you now. I am humbled, God help me!"

"Let's go, Joshua,—let's go. I want to see my child. Is she coming home? Does she pine to see us? Has she cried her heart out? What did she say? How does she look? Why don't you tell me something about my daughter, Brother Arnold?"

Mrs. Leonard's impatience was not to be restrained. She waited for no answer to her inquiries, but hurried on; and the two men followed her, conversing gravely and sadly on the way.

Amy, exhausted and worn out, slept heavily that morning. As the chill went out from her system, a sense of protection and comfort stole over her. The great burden of her secret had dropped away. The very worst had come upon her, and after that every human soul knows something of repose. So Amy fell into a long, deep slumber, dreamless and still as death. Mrs. Arnold's gentle words had given her infinite consolation. She was, at all times, a dependent and clinging creature, more ready to endure and suffer than to act; and the mere physical comfort of a warm, soft bed under his father's roof had been enough to hush her sufferings into repose, for the time at least.

Thus, when Mrs. Leonard stole on tip-toe into that large chamber, and moved softly towards the bed, Amy did not awake; but this new presence disturbed her, and, turning on the pillow, she began to cry in her sleep, till the gush of her own sobs grew so violent that she awoke.

"Amy!"

"Mother, is it you? What ails me? I have been dreaming such miserable dreams. It's time to get up and

help about breakfast, I suppose? Has father gone to the saw-mill?"

"Amy, my own child!"

"Why, you've been crying, too. How strange you look with a bonnet on, and—and—oh, mother! I remember it all now."

The poor girl cowered down in the bed with her frightened eyes turned on her mother, and seemed to hold her breath.

Mrs. Leonard bent over her and rained soft kisses on her face.

"Chirk up, my dear, chirk up. Nobody shall hurt you, or put you down while I live, and while your father lives, for he's a host in Israel. Don't cry, darling—don't cry, or you'll set me a-going, and I can't bear any more on it. There, there!"

"You have left father to come and find me. Go back, mother; he has no one but you now."

"No, dear!"

"He wished me dead,—I heard it; but it is the hardest thing on earth to die when one wishes it. You can't get rid of the life that is in you without doing such horrid things; then the darkness beyond is so fearful. Tell him I tried to die, but hadn't the courage to do what would stop my heart-beatings. Tell him I'd give the world to see him, but now I'm weak and couldn't bear it. If he will only wait a little and not curse me, perhaps God will be merciful and take me out of his sight; I won't even pray to live, only for comfort to him and you, dear mother. Tell him this, and oh, ask him to forgive me after I'm dead. I won't plead for it now: but he might then."

"Be still, Amy, or you'll break my heart. It was a

wicked word, and over in a minute. We searched for you nearly all night,—your father and I,—up and down, till it seemed as if we should drop in our tracks."

"What! he,—my father!—my father!" murmured Amy, melting into a flood of tears, her very soul given up to tender regrets. "Oh, mother! has he forgiven me? Will he—will you have a little faith, a little forbearance with me? I have done wrong, very, very wrong; have deceived you, been disobedient. But oh, if I could tell you all,—if you would believe me without telling. Just forgive, and trust, and wait."

"We have forgiven on trust, or without trust, no matter, Amy, what has happened. So long as God forgives his children we must stand by ours. It's nature, and it's religion. God doesn't lay little darling babies into our arms to have them turned out-of-doors for the first sin. Them's my sentiments, and they're your father's, too; we agreed on that last night in the saw-mill,—he and I."

"And you were searching for me there? Oh, if I had but known it!" sobbed Amy.

"Perhaps it was all for the best, dear. If you hadn't come to this house, maybe the old man and your father mightn't have made up. As it is, I must say Mr. Arnold has behaved beautifully. He says that no other woman shall ever have his son's name, or darken his door."

"Did Mr. Arnold say that, mother?" cried the young girl, seizing her mother's arm with both hands.

"Yes; and Miss Arnold says it too. And as for Hagar, she near about upset us with kindness. She's got some toast and tea afore the fire waiting for you to wake up."

"I thought, last night, that Hagar was the only friend I had in the wide, wide world. Oh, mother, you are very good to forgive me."

"There, there. Kiss me once more, then try to get up and dress. I didn't tell you, but father's down-stairs."

Instead of being elated, Amy shrunk down into her bed again. There was something in the idea of meeting her father that made her tremble.

"Don't take on so. He won't give you a cross look, to say nothing of hard words," said the mother, marking the change with the quick sympathy of her sex.

"I know that; but his kindness, I can't bear it while he believes—— Oh, mother! what can I do?"

With broken conversation like this, the mother and child spent a few more minutes together, before they went down to the room in which Joshua Leonard sat waiting for them.

Few words passed between the father and daughter. Strange to say, the nervous timidity which had marked Amy's demeanor during the last few weeks, had, to a certain extent, disappeared. She was very weary, it is true, and the saddened whiteness of her face was touching to behold, but her look was clear and truthful. There was nothing of shame in the depths of those eyes; on the contrary, every thing about her seemed pure as a lily; no shadow of guilt or shame could be found on her white forehead. She was grieved, heart-broken, but what seemed a consciousness of innocence gave gentle dignity to her movements.

With so much proof against her, and before a word of denial had passed her lips, the father took comfort from her appearance. She came up to him and knelt softly at his feet.

"Father," she said, folding her hands meekly before her.

Leonard laid one hand on her head. With all his strength, he could not help blessing her whom he had

intended only to forgive. His own honest heart bore witness in her favor, the idea of guilt connected with his child lost its force the moment she appeared. It was a moral conviction altogether independent of knowledge or reason. He *felt* that something pure and true lay at the bottom of this trouble.

"Father, may I go home with you and mother?"

"God forgive me the bitterness which drove you away, my child. I, who was so harsh against your fault, have prayed God, and still pray that he will forgive my own. Yes, come with us, Amy."

"Father, let me look in your eyes."

"Well, child!"

"You look into mine and almost smile. People accuse me—they believe in my fault—it is great, but not as they think, father; I would not go home, I could not live if all they suspect were true. You believe me, father. Something tells you this, or the old look would not come back to your face?"

He kissed her upon the forehead.

Then she stood up with more strength than had been witnessed in her demeanor for weeks and weeks.

Leonard was half-relieved. The innocent face of his child had its benign effect, but there was a delicate reticence in her nature which checked the questions that rose to his lips; for, with all his rude strength, this man shrunk from the interrogatories that might, he believed, have won her entire confidence.

While his wife had been in Amy's chamber, Arnold and Leonard had conversed together, about the best means of bringing something of good out of the shame that had fallen so suddenly upon them. At first Leonard sternly expressed his determination to seek the young

man, and force an honorable atonement for the shame he had wrought; but Arnold knew his son better, and implored the wronged father to remain at home and leave the matter to him. Leonard yielded at last, but only with a reservation, if the father, with his lawful authority, failed, then the wronged man would take the matter in his own hands. Thus it was settled, and the Arnolds entered upon their preparations for what was, in those days, an important journey.

When Amy heard this, the flush and tremor of excitement came back. She stood a moment disturbed with stormy thought, and then with quick resolve spoke:

"Father, I must go with Mr. Arnold."

"You, my poor child!"

"It is right,—it is my duty. I must see him, though it kills me, I must go."

"She is right," said Mrs. Arnold, who had opened a door unnoticed, and stood on the threshold as Amy spoke.

"She is no longer a helpless child, brother Leonard! See how strong the thought has made her. The day after tomorrow a sloop leaves the river; in that we take passage. Amy goes too. You will trust us, Leonard, and with God's help all shall be well."

Leonard looked irresolute. Amy saw it.

"Father, I pray you let me go."

Leonard's face cleared up. "Yes," he said, "but not without us—your mother and I—the sloop is large enough for us all."

Mrs. Arnold came close to Leonard as he spoke. "Brother," she said, gently laying a hand on his shoulder, "trust Amy with me, your old friend; I know Benedict well: no power can coerce him. He would defy heaven itself. But there are many generous qualities in his heart:

leave them with his mother. The boy loves me, and I solemnly believe loves her. If sterner power is needed, Arnold will use it, have no fear; but as we will in all things do our utmost to protect your child, I beseech you put no unnecessary humiliation on ours."

"You are right, sister," said Leonard, touched to the heart by her motherly appeal. "God forgive me if any lurking vengeance made me wish to confront the young man! It is a hard thing to keep down a rebellious spirit."

"For my sake, for hers," pleaded the gentle matron. "You cannot strike him without breaking a poor mother's heart."

"I will stay at home: do with our child according to your will: the mother and I can only wait and pray."

Thus it was settled, and with calmer hearts than they had ever expected to know again, the Leonards returned home and reinstated Amy on the hearth-stone, from which she had been driven in the first storm of their sorrow.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A FAMILY JOURNEY.

IN these days of long journeys, when a trip to Europe is decided on one hour, and undertaken the next, a voyage to New Haven from Norwich is scarcely more than a morning's drive; but in the time of our story it was altogether a different affair. When a sloop sailed down the river, people gathered on the wharf to see it off; passen-

gers took leave of their friends with tears in their eyes; and handkerchiefs of gorgeously printed cotton fluttered in the air, till the important craft was out of sight. Science has changed time and space, but human love and sympathy are the same forever and ever; and the people who gathered on the little wharf in those days, were actuated by exactly the same feelings which throng our vast piers when a mammoth steamer goes out crowded with hundreds.

The preparation in Mr. Arnold's house was creating no little commotion. True, there was no great wardrobe to prepare. A huge chest, clamped with brass, which stood in the upper hall, was unlocked, and two or three dresses taken forth; a dainty silver-gray silk, gored in the skirt and ruffled at the elbows, was refolded and placed in a small hair-trunk; cap-ribbons were smoothed out; and Hagar ran about the kitchen all one morning clapping bits of lace and muslin between her hands, which were white and crusted with flakes of starch to the finger nails.

Hannah Arnold, very grave and thoughtful, worked upon the kerchiefs and caps which were to shade the still pretty neck and brow of her mother. Her lover had returned home on the morning after Amy came to the house, in ignorance of the change which that event might make in his sister's destiny. The reticence of social life was severe in those days; and Hannah herself only knew that her friend Amy had taken the engagement of her brother with Laura more painfully than she had expected, and that trouble was impending between the two families,—that her parents threatened to interfere against the marriage, and thus darken her own lot.

If the young girl felt this to be a little hard, who can wonder? She had wronged no one. Paul had come to

her with a free heart. Why was her brother's faithlessness, if such it was, to break up all her own sweet hopes? She felt too surely that any interference of her parents sufficiently potent to break up the marriage would place her brother in perpetual feud with the family of his betrothed. Then what would be her own fate? All this made Hannah very gloomy and dispirited. She knew that Amy was in the house, but some sensitive feeling kept her from asking any explanation of the fact till the Leonards carried their daughter away again. Then she learned that Amy was to go with the family to New Haven, and this filled her heart with new anxieties.

Mrs. Arnold was also very much occupied. Her whole heart was so taken up with the great evil that had befallen them, that she had not given the position of her daughter the consideration it deserved. A great wrong had been done, and her pure, honest nature was exercised in all its capacities to redeem that wrong. She thought no further than this, and it was well for her object that she did not. The idea that her daughter also must be sacrificed might have overwhelmed her strength.

Thus it happened that the mother and daughter were, to a certain extent, put asunder during those few days. The thoughts occupying Mrs. Arnold's mind were not such as she could discuss freely with a young girl, brought up after the fashion of those times, and her confidence was rather bestowed on Hagar, who, in right of her own benefactions, looked on the whole affair as peculiarly belonging to her department.

On the evening before the sloop sailed, Mrs. Arnold and Hagar, after taking out the silver-gray dress, and two or three garments of rich chintz, which were at once neatly packed for the journey, loitered over the open

chest, as if there was something more to be said, which neither of them knew exactly how to begin.

Twice Mrs. Arnold put her hand into the chest and drew it forth again, with a flush on her cheek, at which Hagar, who sat on one corner of the chest before which her mistress knelt, turned her eyes decorously away. In the end, this sweet dame drew forth a little bundle from a corner of the chest, and, with the blush deepening on her cheek, began to untie it.

"Hagar!" she said.

"Well, missus, what am it?"

"Here are a few things that I want you to whiten and do up while we are gone, if it won't be putting too much work on you."

"Too much work,—what am you tinkin' 'bout? 'Cept de men folks, I shan't have nothin' to 'tend to. Jest tell me what you want, and I'll do it sure!"

Mrs. Arnold's lip began to quiver, and a mist came into her eyes as she opened the little bundle, and took out first one tiny garment and then another.

"It don't seem possible that he ever wore these," she said, looking at Hagar through her tears, as she thrust two slender fingers into a tiny sleeve, edged with a cob-web of lace. "He was a noble baby, Hagar; don't you remember?"

"Yes, I can't 'spute dat, but it seems ter me discreditable dat he ever wore dem ere frocks and tings, and Miss Hannah arter him. Gracious me, how babies does alter in course of time, doesn't they?"

"He was my first child, you know, Hagar," said the gentle matron, flushing with the remembrance of that heaven of her young life, when a little rosy hand was laid for the

first time on her bosom; "and now to think that he is a grown man! I can't realize it."

She sighed heavily, and the tears, which had stood in her eyes, began to rain down, dropping upon the little yellow garments in her lap.

"Nor I neither. De Lord ob hebbin forgib him!" answered Hagar, wiping her eyes with one corner of her linsey-woolsey apron.

"And now," said Mrs. Arnold, between the faint sobs that began to gather in her bosom, "he is a man, while I am getting feeble and old. What if he refuses to listen? What if he should deal harshly with me and with her?"

"Don't tink ob no sich ting, missus. De bressed Lord sends yer, and it's yer duty ter go right straight forred wedder or no. Don't be skeered 'bout not'in'. Human natur' ain't bad' nuff to stand up agin yer, 'specially yer own son. De minnit he looks in yer eyes he'll wilt rite down and gib up, nebber fear."

"But if he should not,—if Mr. Arnold were to fail, and cast him off,—then, Hagar, this poor girl must be taken care of. We shall adopt her in his place, and deal tenderly with her, as if she were our own child."

"Ob course yer would," answered Hagar, gathering up a handful of her rough apron and holding it to her eyes with a hard pressure; "but 'twont ebber 'mount to dat. He'll come too."

"I hope so," said the mother, mournfully; "but it's a painful duty to undertake, and I'm not used to such things."

Hagar gazed on the poor lady despondingly a moment; then her face brightened all over, and, lifting her chin in the air, she broke out, all at once,

"S'posin' I go wid yer, missus. He knows me ob old

Let him only jes' say his soul's his own, an' I'll maul de right ting out ob him!"

Mrs. Arnold laughed faintly amid her tears, at which Hagar flung her apron down and smoothed it over her knees in a huff, until the lady, seeing this, began in her tender way to expostulate.

"Don't, Hagar,—don't be hurt about it. What would the house come to without a head? Besides, I want some one that we love and trust to be here and welcome us when we come back. Who knows that it will not be a wedding-party, all among ourselves, of course?"

Hagar brightened propitiously, and, taking up her apron again, began to plait the edge between her fingers, holding her head on one side, as you sometimes see a hen eyeing its food.

"Missus, in de co'rse ob natur' one weddin' breeds an-udder; an' if all tings turns out 'cordin' to our wishes, p'r'aps you'll hear ob two cullerd pussons ob yer 'quaintance as may want to toe de same mark in yer kitchen."

Mrs. Arnold looked up and smiled pleasantly.

"Well, Hagar, no one will object. I only hope it may come to that."

"Then we has yer consent; and if yer sees dat tall nigger as cum wid de gemman las' winter, jes' gib'm a hint ob what's goin' on in de undercrust ob dis 'stablishment. P'r'aps he'll wish he'd sent some word or cum back, as he promised to, when he knows dat dis member ob de fair sect he used ter tink so much on is lost ter him for good an' all."

Mrs. Arnold promised to remember. At another time she might have been amused at Hagar's transparent coquetry; but now her heart was too heavy even for a smile.

"Now," said Hagar, rising from her seat on the chest,

"jes' gib me dem tings and I'll hab 'em white as de drifted snow 'fore yer cum back."

"Not yet," answered the matron, gathering the bundle together. "No one ever did them up but myself, before this. I should like to wash them out once more, if you have no objection, Hagar."

Hagar was getting her chin into the air again; but the last few words modified her rising discontent, and she observed, in an indifferent way,

"Oh, well, missus, if you take a notion to wash 'em out wid yer own hands, I'll heat de water an' set out de soap-dish. It's not my way to 'trude work on nobody, 'specially in de fust wash; but when it comes to starchin' an' ironin', and sich like, I reckon Hagar'll be wanted."

Mrs. Arnold gathered up her treasure of little garments with a sigh, and stole down the back stairs into the kitchen, where Hagar, as good as her word, got the smallest tub in order, and, putting handful after handful of soap in the water, stirred up a snowy foam of suds in no time with a few dashes of her hand.

Then, with tears in her eyes, the gentle housemother bent over her delicate work, as she had done years and years before in the first glow of her married life.

This was the last household work that Mrs. Arnold performed before her journey; and many a sadly tender thought filled her heart as those small hands accomplished their task. Yet if any one entered the room she grew frightened, and, burying the article she held in her hand deep in the suds, would continue her task under water, regarding the person who approached her with shy and anxious glances.

When her task of love was done, the mistress had a long talk with Hagar about the housework, and those multifari-

ous cares that were to devolve on the faithful kitchen slave. After that she was ready for rest; but when did rest come to a poor mother's heart burdened like hers with a certainty of unworthiness in the first-born of her life!

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE SUMMONS TO CONFESSION.

Now that Amy Leonard was at home once more, with her conscience free of its cruel secret, and the forgiveness of her parents assured, a certain degree of tranquillity came back to her heart. Rest, profound rest, seemed the sweetest boon that could be given her. For a little time she had cast off the thorny crown of her sorrow; and the very fact of having a home with its little comforts, one from which there was no fear of being driven, was in itself a great blessing.

There was hope, too, in Amy's heart. If her father, with his stern pride and blameless nature, could forget and forgive,—if the loquacious mother could grow delicate and tender in the refining strength of her compassion,—surely *he* could not persist in the great sin which, for a moment, he might have meditated! Human nature could not be so bad as that. Led away by ambition and the love of wealth, his strong ruling passion, he might have gone farther than was honorable in his admiration of the young French girl; but to marry another and she alive, that could never be.

Besides this vague faith in human nature and in the

honor of her husband, Amy knew that the elder Arnold and her own father had united in a determination to protect her. Oh, if she could have told them all,—if she could have said to those sorrowing men, who still went forth to the open air with heavy shoulders and heads bowed down from a belief in the shame of their children,—the truth, and the whole truth, how boldly and bravely they might have gone about their just work!

But, above all things human, Amy loved Benedict Arnold: never in her life had she disobeyed his most imperious wishes. The very tyranny of his character made her look up to him with worshiping awe. His bold self-reliance was so far above the possibility of her own attainment that it seemed grand and noble to her. But the charge of secrecy, the vow which he had forced upon her, galled her delicate nature and dragged it down like guilt itself.

All this Amy did not feel so acutely now as she had a day or two before; for the most harrassing pain will grow stolid after a wild storm of passion, and it takes a little time to gather venom and strength to gnaw and rend the soul into fresh torment.

The one strong wish of Amy's heart was to see Arnold, to plead with him on her knees to give back her oath and her honor, that she might stand in her calm innocence a wife before the world. She was gentle, but not altogether weak. If he refused this,—if he still persisted in branding her forehead with shame,—then she would be just to herself. If her womanly protest went for nothing, she would claim freedom from that cruel vow, and, asking it back of Heaven, prove to her father and his father that her greatest sin had been disobedience and secrecy.

True, Amy had no record or certificate to prove this:

both had been given to Arnold ; but the clergyman was to be found. But why think of all these rebellious things ? When Arnold knew of her sorrow,—when he heard of that terrible scene at the minister's donation party,—he would cast aside every thing and protect her from his own proud sense of honor.

Thus Amy reasoned with herself, filling her life with fresh delusions, but finding comfort in them even in the saddest plight that ever a young creature was driven to.

Leonard had not yet told his wife or daughter of the arrangement by which Amy was to be given up for a time to the Arnolds ; so the poor child wearied herself with plans, and grew sick with a wild desire to find her way to Benedict's presence and there claim her place at his side. He should not use her weak, wicked oath to the cruel end of separating them. She was young, helpless, and forbidden to ask advice ; but he could not look in her eyes and persist in doing the wrong they talked of.

In the midst of these reflections Leonard told her of his promise to Benedict's father, and with sad kindness bade her prepare to set forth on the morrow.

Amy received the news as a feverish patient listens to the rush of cool waters. She clasped her hands and fairly wrung them in her extreme joy ; her lips grew red ; her eyes danced with light : she seemed really alive for the first time in months.

And now her small preparations were entered upon with something of former cheerfulness. A sweet joy broke up from the bottom of her heart, all springing from one thought. She would see him again in a few days : he might tell her with his own lips that some cruel mistake had arisen, out of which the agony through which she had passed had sprung.

The little party did not start so early as they had intended. A high wind blew strongly up the river and kept the sloop at her wharf twenty-four hours beyond her appointed time.

These twenty-four hours were bitter ones to Amy Leonard. For, on the morning when she should have sailed, three men, deacons and trustees of the church, came with the slow, solemn dignity of a grave occasion, and, fastening their horses by the door-yard fence, walked down to the saw-mill where Leonard was at work.

The unhappy man must have had some idea of the object, for his face flushed and grew pale as they approached, while he stood still, trembling like a culprit. He had not slept a calm hour since the minister's donation party, and his nerves, which till then had seemed made of steel, were shaken.

He stood upright, as I have said, waiting for the potentates of the society to approach. The Christians of those days possessed many ideas of religion which the advancement of mind has softened and refined ; now, a stern sense of duty, such as they understood it, filled every heart. The idea of consideration or gentle pity for an offender was regarded with distrust, as a snare and a weakness. If any such feeling ever clamored at their naturally kind hearts, they were ready to fall upon the earth and pray God to relieve them from a grave temptation. Indeed, indeed it was a stern type of religion which sent our forefathers into the great western wilderness.

When the functionaries of the society came before Leonard, he, knowing their business by intuition, stood still to receive them, without saying a word or attempting to reach forth his hand. His eyes filled with troubled light,

and he looked upon his visitors with deprecating humility, that had, nevertheless, something strong and noble in it.

"Brother Leonard," said the foremost of the deputation, an old man, whose locks, white as snow, fell down his back wound and tied by a rusty black ribbon, "Brother Leonard, we have come, unwilling, and in the name of the Lord."

"I know,—I know it all. My child—the poor, helpless white rabbit up yonder—you'll not leave her in the form to nurse her wounds and hide herself? Oh, Brother Downs, couldn't you wait a little before you bring her to open shame? Just give us breathing time till God will hear our prayers. We can only wail and bemoan ourselves now. The gift of words has forsook us, even before the Lord. We can only bow down with our faces to the earth. Leave us alone, brethren,—leave us alone! In a little while we can bear this better."

"Nay, brother," said the old man, lifting his eyes slowly from the earth, where they had been riveted while Leonard spoke; "the laws of our society are strict, and change not. When a member of the fold backslides, prompt correction must be applied. We have waited long and patiently, hoping to be spared this grave duty; but the house of our Master must be rescued from contamination. The girl has sinned grievously, and must atone with penitence and abasement that our skirts may be cleansed."

"She is penitent; no human soul ever grieved as she does,—my poor, lost child!" cried Leonard, with a quiver of his massive chin.

The old man answered,

"Truly it rejoices us to hear this; but penitence, to be of sweet savor before the Lord, must be open, and the humiliation of sin complete. This is set down clearly in

the platform of our faith. No form of regeneration to the culprit must be wanting,—no degree of atonement omitted which our fathers have deemed essential to salvation."

"And what would you with the child?" faltered the unhappy father.

The unflinching reply was,

"It is the law that one offending like her shall confess her sins openly before the assembled society, and, standing with her head uncovered in the broad aisle of the meeting-house, ask pardon of God and the brethren for the reproach which has been brought upon both."

"And you ask my Amy to stand thus? Are you so hard with the poor lambkins of the flock? Must a sacrifice of shame be offered, before my child can kneel in the house of God again?" cried Leonard, with bitter anguish in his look and voice.

"Brother Downs," he added, "you have a grandchild, think of her, and have a little patience. Our wounds are fresh now; they ache and bleed at the first touch. Give us a little time, only a little time."

The old man shook his head. "Nay, Brother Leonard, the work of the Lord cannot be put off. That which the platform layeth down must be accomplished. The girl you speak of is dear as the apple of my eye; but if she had offended like your daughter, I would not, for one moment, ask a suspension of the just laws which purify our society from sin."

The old man said truly. In the moral force of his religion he was a Brutus, and like him would have acted. But Leonard was, in truth, what the old man thought himself to be,—a devout Christian,—and, with such, mercy and tenderness stand side by side with justice.

He could not protest against the laws to which both he and his daughter had subscribed when they were enrolled into the brotherhood of the church; but their significance had never seemed so terrible before. The thought of his child suffering all this humiliation lowered his strong soul to the dust.

And yet still some vague hope, springing out of Amy's still more vague words, prompted him to plead for a little time. To ask more than this he knew well would be in vain. Turning to the younger members of the committee, he urged this point upon them with an eloquence that at last prevailed. Some understrata of human kindness lay beneath their iron sense of duty; and, with many a word of hopeful consolation, they promised,—should they find the girl penitent, as her father reported,—to put off the day of her inevitable humiliation to the most distant period possible.

Here the conference in the saw-mill ended, and, in a body, the deputation moved towards the house, Leonard going first, to prepare his wife and child for the cruel interview which was to follow.

Like mourners gathering for a funeral, these stern men seated themselves around the kitchen, each gazing fixedly on the floor at his feet; for, with all their stoicism, it was a painful duty they had come upon; and, even to the white-headed old man, the occasion was a mournful one.

The door which led to the inner room was closed, and a faint stir of garments could be heard within, but no word or whisper penetrated it from the group within. If they had expected to hear sobs and moans, nothing of the kind met them, but the stillness was far more distressing.

After a little the door opened, and Amy came forth, a

little in advance of her parents. The frightened look, which so many had remarked before her secret was made public, had given place to a sweet, deprecating expression, which no mortal man could have met without throbs of compassion. She was pale, but it was the still, firm paleness of concentrated feeling, not the livid white that springs from fear.

"You wish to speak with me?"

Her tones were low, and gentle as a human voice could utter; full of humility, but blended with something of self-respect.

The men who had come to judge her, saw that fair young creature standing before them in her meek dignity, and had nothing to say. Was this the aspect of guilt? Was that mild face, with no ideas save the acute shadows about the eyes, one that guilty passions had swept?

"Sit down," said the old man, clasping his hands on one knee, and clearing his voice, which, spite of himself, was a little husky.

Amy moved towards one of the splint-bottomed chairs that furnished the kitchen, and sat down. Then her mother came through the inner door, and placed herself close to Amy. She had been weeping bitterly, and her face was flushed; but the silence and imposing gravity of the committee held her in thrall. At last she spoke, but in a subdued voice.

"If she's done wrong, it's me that led her to it,—me, and me alone, bro—gentlemen." When an old bird leaves her nest, over and over agin, afore the young ones know how to fly rightly, it isn't the poor little critter that should be punished, but the parent-bird that didn't do its duty and keep watch. If you've got any thing cruel to say, or hard, that you want done, I sit here now ready to

bear it all, and do it all. If you want somebody to stand up in the broad aisle and confess that she's wicked as Satan, and wickeder too, I'll do it next Sunday; and Joshua'll stand up and testify that it's all true, and my fault from beginning to end. Don't shake your heads and look strange, bro—gentlemen. I'll do it! You may set that hull committee of sisters on a row in the deacon's seat to look at me, and I won't flinch. See if I do."

Tears, great bright tears, started into Joshua Leonard's eyes, as stars break through a stormy cloud. He had never known how much real greatness lay in the heart of his rosy, common-place wife: so, out of all this pain sprang the blessing of a true companionship. He could never think of her but with reverence, from that day forever; for, beneath the foam and driftwood of her nature he knew that pure water always slept, ready to sparkle forth when self-sacrifice was wanted.

Leonard drew near his wife, and laid one hand tenderly on her shoulder. She looked at the committee with a glance of triumph.

"You see Joshua stands to what I say. He'll bear me out when I tell you that all the wrong that has been done in this house belongs to me."

"Mother," said a sweet, low voice, "let me speak. The committee think that I have done wrong."

"Think!" exclaimed the old man severely, planting his cane on the floor, and folding both hands over it. "Brother Leonard, is this the penitence you promised?"

Leonard was about to speak, but Amy anticipated him.

"My father promises nothing that I will not perform. I am sorry, oh! you will never believe how sorry, for all that has brought trouble on my parents, and reproach upon myself! But you are Christians, and kind men;

you cannot wish to condemn me more than I deserve. I am so young,—so much in your power! Those who loved me once have turned against me now, and I have no friends to stand up for me,—none but my father and mother, who, being good and blameless, might expect some mercy for their child."

The pathos of her voice and manner had its effect, where the words alone might, perhaps, have failed.

Even the old man's fingers began to quiver on the top of his cane, and the rest of the committee looked upon her with gleams of compassion, forgetting how guilty she was supposed to be.

"Do you ask a trial before the society? Is that what you want?" said the old man, in a softer voice than he had yet used.

"A trial!" she said, quickly. "A trial! with the right to bring evidence and speak for myself! Yes, yes, I will ask that. Give me four weeks,—one little month. It is all I want. Then if you still condemn me, I will beg pardon of the brethren on my knees anywhere you shall point out; but have mercy on me just a little while, for my father's sake."

"Brother Leonard," said the old man, standing up, with the cane planted before him, on which he leaned with both hands, "the four weeks which this unfortunate girl asks shall be given. What do you say, brothers? Shall we refuse time meet for repentance? For the sake of one good man God put off his vengeance on an iniquitous city; for our brother's sake we will wait also."

Joshua Leonard turned his face away. He could not endure that his friends should see how deeply their kindness touched him. The mother caught a glimpse of his emotion, and began to cry; but Amy looked into the old

man's face with a faint smile, which made him lift one hand from the cane; for he forgot her crime in that innocent look, and was about to say good-by, in the usual way. But a thought of his position checked the impulse, and he frowned heavily on her, that she might not guess his weakness; and so the committee went away, happier, it may be, from the gentle sympathies that had conquered their iron convictions of duty.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE TYRANT AND HIS VICTIM.

BEFORE Paul de Montreuil started for Norwich, and while the intended marriage of his sister was kept a secret in New Haven, the unhappy young man whose interview with Arnold in the pine woods we have already described, sat alone; and, oh, how wretched in the little room which had been a happy retreat to him before the painful events that put him in that bad man's power! Perhaps upon the face of the earth there could not have been found a man on whom the burden of a secret could have fallen with more painful force; but, a sin,—a fraud,—an absolute wrong,—the very idea that he had been a party to sins like these crushed him to the earth.

The young man was thinner, paler, and far more feeble than he appeared that dim night under the pine-trees. A look of wild apprehension burned in his eyes, and on either cheek glowed the vivid scarlet of a restless spirit, if not of absolute disease. Many a hard struggle had

this man endured in working his way through the college whose shadow lay almost around him up to the pulpit which he now filled; and, after all the privation and toil of his young life, what had it come to? The work of a single night, of which he was almost unconscious, had shipwrecked him on the very strand from which he was setting sail on his voyage of usefulness.

Intellectually, this man was strong. In order to gratify the craving of a hungry brain he had struggled through a world of difficulty; but in all other things he was depressed by that nervous weakness which clothes threatened evil with double power. In his conscience he was so sensitive that the least dereliction from duty was followed at once by bitter self-reproach, which might eat his very life out while he brooded silently over it.

He sat alone, as I have said, in a stiff, high-backed chair, whose wooden seat a kind landlady had covered with a patchwork cushion of red and blue cloth, cut in a small-diamond pattern. Shelves were on the walls, on which a few straggling old books leaned against each other, as if all the strength had been read out of them. A little spider-legged table stood before him, on which lay some sheets of paper and a pile of manuscript,—the first half of his farewell-sermon.

A deathly gloom filled the young man's eyes as they fell upon this little heap of written paper; great drops hung on his forehead; and more than once he clasped his hands and wrung them together in passionate sorrow. "Why should I do this," he thought, looking despairingly around the room "Must a single wrong drive me from my home,—from the people who love me. I—I am sure they do love me," he broke out, in a passion of grief; and

falling forward, with his face on the table, he wept aloud. He arose after a while and seized his hat.

"No, no," he said. "I will not submit to this without a struggle. The man has a heart. He is young, and youth should be generous. I will appeal to him again. Why should he wish to ruin me? What good will it do him to bury me, body and soul, in a mission to those tropic islands. I have no heart for it,—no strength for it. If I go, long before the voyage is over they will leave me in mid-ocean, with an eternal booming of waters for my death-knell. I feel the waves curdling over me now. Oh, God forgive me,—God forgive me that I have brought myself to this,—I who so long held myself free from guile, and above reproach,—I who love one of the most pure and good of thy creatures; but, because of my sin, must carry this as another sorrow down into the deep waters."

He sat down again; for in this outburst of passionate grief, all the strength left him, and he fell into his chair, trembling like a frightened child.

A door below opened, and the tread of a foot upon the stairs checked his breath. He listened, watching, as if he expected that some one would break in upon him.

The minister was not far from right. A quick step came close to the door. A knock, a sharp motion of the latch, and Arnold came in, the very picture of robust health.

The minister shuddered and shrunk back in his chair. The lamp shone on his forehead, and Arnold saw great drops glistening on its surface. For one instant a thrill of pity crept through his heart; but it was thrust away at once by rising contempt for a weakness he was not good enough to understand.

"What, all alone and gloomy as ever! Come, come, man, what is the use of fretting yourself into a skeleton? The doctors can get one at a cheaper rate."

Arnold's voice was rude and his manner almost insulting. He seemed to enjoy the anguish of his victim.

"I am not quite alone," answered the minister, lifting a pale hand to his forehead and sweeping the moisture away. "The merciful God, who knows how I suffer and repent, hears us, Benedict Arnold, even in this poor room."

"Be it so. While he permits the hawk to swoop on his prey in the face of Heaven, and the shark to fill his maw with helpless little fish, our interview will not be likely to draw his lightning from heaven; and, if it did, I can stand more than that."

"Blasphemer!" broke from the white lips of the minister.

"Do you think so? I did not mean to be irreverent,—only truthful. Has it never struck you, however, how all through life the strong prey upon the weak? Man and beast, both are alike in this."

"You talk of nature in its savage state. Christianity is given to subdue and refine nature. A good man, following the example of Christ, protects the weaker brother, works for him, bears with him,—sometimes is ready to die for him."

The minister spoke with trembling energy. He sat upright in his stiff chair, and the lamplight fell upon his face, purifying it.

Arnold drew a seat to the table, and sat down upon it, saying, carelessly,

"Well, well, you shall be the Christian, and I will play the shark. While there are plenty of little fish in this great sea of life, I am content with that role."

The minister shuddered, and covered his eyes with one hand, sighing heavily. When his hand dropped, Arnold had drawn the manuscript sermon across the table, and was reading it. With a sensitive thrill, as if the man were searching his heart, the minister reached forth his hand with a sharp effort to rescue his thoughts so sacred, as an emanation of his own life, from the desecration of those mocking eyes.

"No; let me read it," said Arnold, grasping the loose leaves tightly with one hand while he gently repulsed the minister's effort with the other. "If it is the farewell-sermon, of course I should hear it with the rest,—so what's the difference?"

What was the difference? I wonder if common men ever dream of the shrinking reluctance with which a being who writes sees his warm thoughts, just as they come fresh from the brain, given over to criticism, perhaps unfriendly criticism, before his face. It is like playing with the strings of one's heart while they are vibrating.

Those who feel this will know how to pity that sensitive man; when he saw the pages over which he had wept and prayed, under the eye and in the grasp of his enemy.

"For mercy's sake give them back. You are torturing me," he pleaded.

This pathetic cry of a soul that felt itself robbed had no effect upon the hard man.

"Directly, directly," he said, keeping one hand heavily on the papers. "There is genius in this, absolute, downright genius! Why, man, go down on your knees, and thank me for giving you occasion for a sermon like this. You never would have produced any thing like it in a whole lifetime without my help."

"Without your help!" repeated the minister, drearily. "Without your help!"

"Why, yes, if, as you say, I have made you suffer. Bruise a flower, if you want its perfect fragrance."

The minister groaned aloud, muttering drearily, "But it kills the flower! It kills the flower!"

"Sometimes," answered Arnold, fastening his eyes again on the sermon. "Sometimes."

He read on, while the very soul of his victim writhed and quivered under this coarseness.

"That will be a powerful sermon. I did not know that you had so much in you," said Arnold, at length, giving the manuscript a push toward its author. "But when will you preach it? Next Sunday, I hope, for to own the truth I am very anxious to have you get off."

"What is the reason of this haste," inquired the minister, with some energy, "so long as I remain silent? Why wish me away?"

"It is safer and pleasanter," answered Arnold, dryly.

The poor man, thus ruthlessly driven from his home and the people he loved, sat for a moment mute and pale. Then clasping his thin hands in pathetic anguish, he flung them clenched together upon the table.

"What have I done to you, Arnold, that you should persecute me so? Have some mercy on me. I love my people: I have worked some good among them, unworthy as I am to serve my God in any thing. I have tried so hard to atone for that one wrong,—a wrong I scarcely remember, and would not believe but for the proof you hold. I do not even know why that wretched note was given. All that I do know of a certainty is, that a day of oblivion left me in your power,—left me with a shameful debt, as I was told, acknowledged under my own hand.

If this oblivion came, as you persist it did, from the wine-cup,—if this debt was made at a gambling-table,—then, for one unholy day and night, I, God's sworn servant, was a drunkard and a gambler."

"If!" said Arnold, "'if!' I was not the only witness."

"Where is the other man? Bring him face to face with me before I am bound hand and foot and given up to death!"

There was something in the wretched man's face that startled Arnold. The anguish in his voice thrilled even his stony heart. There was more strength and resistance here than he had supposed possible. But while this thought was striking him with terror, the minister changed, the energy in his face died out, tears leaped to his eyes, filling them with liquid anguish. His hands, that had been lifted from the table, fell down, clasped imploringly, and his voice was one wail of pain.

"But if it is so, Arnold, you are a man, and I once thought you my friend. Have mercy upon me, and let this poor soul work out its own redemption before the Lord. He knows how I have repented, how I have wept, how I have implored forgiveness on my knees for this great fault. Why should you, a man like myself, be less merciful than God? He has forgiven me. I know it,—I feel it in the depths of my soul. Why, then, are you so cruel?"

Arnold was disturbed. This pathetic address would have softened hate itself. The minister saw it, and went on with more touching energy.

"I will tell you another thing, Arnold,—a secret that has never passed my lips, but which has been the very life of my life for many a day. As you loved the sweet

girl who came with you that night, I love a creature, good and pure as she is."

"Is!" cried Arnold, savagely. "'Is!' Why the girl is dead! You must know that!"

The falsehood was a sudden impulse. Could he make the minister believe it, half the peril that encompassed him was conquered.

"Dead!" cried the unhappy man. "Dead, and so young! Then, in the grief of this bereavement, you will find some compassion for one who gave her to you at the expense of his conscience. If you loved her, think of another quite as worthy. Week after week I have watched her soft eyes lifted to mine; these hands have given the holy bread and wine to her lips; she smiles upon me as I pass her window in the calm twilight. We love each other, Arnold. I feel that truth in every pulse of my heart. For her sake let me remain in peace. Your young wife being dead, makes secrecy innocent. I will never mention the marriage, if you wish it kept secret. She is now beyond the reach of all harm. I was only afraid of committing a new sin when I opposed your wishes,—afraid of wronging that poor trusting girl. Now that she is with God, you will let me rest, for her sake."

Arnold turned impatiently from this appeal. Spite of himself it wrung his hard heart, but he was too far committed for retreat. A few weeks of delay, and this man pleading so forcibly for a respite from ruin might change places with him. Because his own heart was relenting he goaded it into more cutting cruelty.

"You doubt my word!" he said; "doubt your own handwriting! ask for an interview with the person whom from delicacy I have kept from your presence! But you shall see him,—talk with him,—receive the blast-

ing assurance from his own lips. But remember, he did not know the worst. I kept him in ignorance that you were one of God's holy ministers. When that is revealed to him he will not outrage his conscience, as I have done, by keeping your great transgression a secret. Besides, he is a ruthless man, and without pity, especially for weaknesses among the clergy. There is great danger that he may discover your identity with the holy professor by accident. At any time he may enter your church and find the man he believes to be so degraded dispensing God's sacred word from the pulpit. Up to this time I have managed to keep him away; but last week he sent me a letter, saying that I might expect him in a few days."

The minister bent his head to the table and moaned aloud. Arnold went round to his chair, and laid a hand, with seeming kindness, on his shoulder.

"If I have seemed unkind, it was for your own good," he said. "I hated to say all this in plain terms; but cannot you see that it is best you should leave this place, for a time at least? It need not be forever. Let the congregation vote you leave of absence. In a few months this unhappy affair can be settled. The day you sail I will give up the note. Just keep out of the way while the person we dread comes and goes, then we shall have nothing to fear."

The minister lifted a hand to his forehead, and arose from his chair.

"Yes; I will go," he said. "If that poor girl is in her grave, it is neither leaving her to suffer, or taking sin upon my own soul. I have thought you harsh, Arnold, and suspected you of things that I begin to think never entered your mind. Let us forgive each other before we part."

Arnold wrung his hand out of that honest grasp. It was like touching fire. He went down-stairs muttering to himself,—

"There is no help for it. The fellow will come back again, if he lives so long; but I shall be out of the country long before that. Besides, how is he to find out whether a girl, whose home is so distant, is living or dead? Thank heaven his cousin has moved away."

The minister sat down pale and exhausted. His doom seemed less dreary than it had an hour before. The idea that he was aiding in a concealment which might bring shame or sorrow on the fair girl whom he had united to the man whose steps rang in his ear, had lifted a burden from his conscience. He would trust himself to the sea now that no fresh wrong went with him.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

HAGAR'S LOVE-LETTER.

THE Arnolds had sailed, taking Amy with them. Hagar was left entire mistress of the farm-house, an honor which she undoubtedly made the most of. There is no describing the comfortable meals that she took *tete-a-tete* with her sable lover before the kitchen-fire. Whether it was that the absence and consent of her mistress had made Hagar unusually confiding, or that Dan became more courageous with the house all to themselves, it is difficult to say; but certain it was, that in less than three days after the family left home, Hagar and Dan were an

engaged couple, and fell into those pleasant confidence that make the month before marriage a pleasant forerunner of the veritable honeymoon.

Still, there was some little mystery about Hagar's movements that Dan could not help observing. A sly way of putting things out of sight when he came in suddenly, and of turning her back towards him when at work, which was rather depressing to a newly-engaged man, who thirsted for mutual confidence; thorough appreciation, and all that sort of thing.

This state of affairs lasted only one day in the kitchen; but the effect remained behind, for Dan was of a susceptible temperament and tormented with these exquisite sensibilities that vulgar persons denominate jealousy. Just now, of course, all these feelings were ready to start into full-grown life with the first provocation. The very day after Dan had been blessed with a promise of Hagar's fair hand, as he denominated the hard-working member which washed Mrs. Arnold's dishes three times a day, he went to Norwich, and was hailed, while passing the post-office, with news that a letter had just arrived, directed to Miss Hagar Dun, to the care of Mr. B. Arnold.

Dan took the letter with studied indifference, but his heart had given one leap at first, and then fell in his bosom like a lump of granite. Who but the black gemman, Peter, could write to Hagar,—his Hagar? Perhaps the dandy negro had proposed in that very letter. What if Hagar should repent and look back with longing after a person who could offer her freedom, with all the glory of a city life added to that blessing.

Dan ruminated in this fashion all the way home. Every ten steps he took out the letter, bent it into a tube, and examined the writing, not one word of which could the

poor fellow have read, even with the help of a broken seal. Of course this process inflamed his imagination till every crudely formed letter, as he afterward poetically expressed it, was like a copperhead sent by that unprincipled negro to sting him in his happiness.

What should he do? Give the letter to Hagar, and thus immolate himself on the altar of a noble integrity? "Well," as Dan said, putting on his crownless hat with a dash, "he wasn't quite up to that, nohow. Hagar was his'n, and his'n she should be in spite of a tarnal heap of crooked marks done up in that way just to tanterlize him."

So, with this indecorous, and, I grieve to say, immoral conclusion, Dan crushed the letter in his hand, and the hand deep in his trousers pocket, where he held on, as if determined to strangle every word it contained before the paper saw daylight again.

When Dan appeared before his betrothed, he was still crushing her letter deep down into his pocket, and there he stood, gazing upon her with a sort of mournful ferocity which set his eyes in a glare, and made his face blacker than ever.

Hagar observed this, and came towards him, rubbing a teacup hard with her crash towel, in a way that Dan took for defiance.

"Oh, Hagar! Hagar!" he cried, with a burst of indignant tenderness that made his thick lips quiver and his white teeth gleam.

"Why, Dan, what am it as 'stresses yer? Hearn anything 'bout our folks? Oh, my, der sloop is sunk? Dey have all gone plump to de bottom, ebry one on 'em. Gor Amighty hab mercy on us all, for we're poor niggers wid-

out no master, no missus, nor nobody else ter tell us what ter do!"

This outbreak in the wrong direction astonished Dan so completely that he stood more rigid than ever, with his usually sleepy eyes wide open, and his lips falling heavily apart.

"Where was it? When was it? Oh, Dan! Dan! Lub me now a'most ter death, for I hain't got nobody else ter 'spress 'fection for me."

Hagar dashed the towel down from her eyes, and, making a plunge at her lover, threw both arms around his neck, so full of genuine grief that she really was quite unconscious of her own tender demonstration.

The granite of Dan's heart melted within him; but as he attempted to withdraw his hand to return her embrace, that fatal letter rattled in his pocket and he was rock again.

"Miss Dun, will yer jest please ter rise from dis bus-som? Yer fergets der blushing 'priety as is so 'facer-natin' in de fair sect."

"Dan," cried Hagar, aghast, and blushing till she grew black as midnight in the face, "scuse me, I wasn't contentious of what I was a-doing; dem deaths come so sudden I——"

"Dare ain't no deaths as I knows on, Miss Dun, on'y dare may be," said Dan, settling himself in his clothes, which had been slightly deranged by Hagar's embrace.

"No death! Den the sloop ain't sunk?"

"Not as I knows on."

"No, no; den what has happened?"

"Nothin'!"

"Nothin'! And yer did this jest ter cheat me out ob a tender embrace. Oh, Dan!"

Hagar's eyes began to sparkle, and, taking the dish-towel which had just been doing duty at her eyes between both hands, she commenced to wring and twist it ominously.

"No, I didn't needer," said Dan, eyeing the towel askance. "It was you as offered; not I as asked."

"Dan!"

Hagar gave the towel an extra twist, and gathered both ends in her hand.

"Don't," said Dan, lifting his disengaged hand. "Hagar Dun, don't yer 'tempt ter obliterate de majesty ob de man yer goin' to marry."

This was magnificently said, and Hagar's hand fell, dropping one end of the crash, which began slowly to untwist and resolve itself into a towel again.

"Dan," she said, rendered almost breathless by his imposing look, "Dan, what does all dis 'mount to?"

"Nothin'," said Dan, towering with the grandeur of his conquest.

"Nothin'! Den what made yer look so?"

"I didn't look, nohow."

"Dan, yer did."

"Yer mistook."

"No, I ain't. It's on yer face yet."

"Den its 'cause I'se 'stonished at dese unproper 'ceedings 'bout nothin'."

Hagar drew back quite crestfallen, and went to the kitchen table, where her dish-towel was put to its legitimate use again.

Dan saw her dejected air, and relented.

"Hagar," he said, drawing towards her.

"What am it, Dan?" was her meek reply.

"Dew yer lub me, Hagar?"

"Yer knows I duz."

"And nobody 'sides me?"

"Oh, Dan, how could I?"

"True 'nuff," said Dan, drawing himself up; "but does yer?"

"Oh, Dan, if yer could but read dis bussum you'd see nothin' but yer own image and 'scription dar."

"But Peter?"

"Peter! I don't care dat for him," cried Hagar, lifting her wet hand from the dish-pan, and snapping her fingers till a little shower of drops flashed over her lover.

"You doesn't, Hagar? Say dat 'ere again, jest once."

"Not dat!" cried the excited damsel, making her fingers crack again. "He's mean as pusley, dat ar nigger, Pete, and meaner too. Mind I say it."

"And if he was here now, don't say yer wouldn't speak to him," said Dan, artfully.

"Yes, I does say it."

"Fair and square?"

"Fair and square. Try me if I don't toe de mark, dat's all."

"And if he was ter write yer a letter all crinkle-crankled over like a bush-fence, would yer read it?" inquired the arch rogue.

"Read it! What, I? No, I radder tink you'd find out," she said, with emphasis, as if reading had been one of her lightest accomplishments.

"But yer 'd kinder want to know what was in it, now wouldn't yer?"

"Not a word! If dat 'ere imperent nigger should dare ter sen' a letter ter me, I'd chuck it right inter de fire, see if I wouldn't."

"Now, would yer?" said the sly scamp, hitching up

his shoulders and striking a position, as if he were going to break into a double-shuffle, while the hand crept about eagerly in his pocket.

"Yes, I would! Dar."

"Den chuck dis 'ere varmint goes! Dar!"

The hand was jerked out of his pocket, Pete's letter flew into the midst of a bright blaze and flashed up the chimney, a black scroll fringed with scintillations of fire.

"Why, Dan, what am you 'bout?" cried Hagar, with her mouth and eyes wide open.

"Jest ter save yer de trouble of doin' it yerself, I've sent Pete's letter sky-high—he! he! he!—oh, golly, I'se so happy! Jest come to dis bussom, lublied ob de fair sext. Yer Dan ain't gwine to derject yer from dat seat ob happiness agin nohow. Lubly Hagar, don't look so skeered. I knows yer lub me,—dat ar letter am de proof,—and I'se happy as a rabbit in snow-time wid a chunk of sweet apple under his nose. Oh, Hagar!"

While Dan was uttering this speech, and approaching Hagar with the most insinuating tenderness, that remarkable female had been making up her mind and twisting the towel at the same moment. When he stooped gallantly to gather the sable roses from her hot cheek, her arm flew back, and crash came the twisted towel on his head, with a force and precision that made Dan dash into a breakdown at once. Hagar, half crying, and yet shrieking with delight, prepared herself for another onset, but Dan, seeing her design, bolted through the out-door and fled for the barn.

That night, I am grieved to say, Dan went supperless to bed, on the highest haymow that he could reach by desperate climbing, and Hagar, in her lonely room, had time to reflect that "a bird in the hand is worth two in

the bush," and that, after all, she could not have read Peter's letter if it had reached her ever so safely. Then there was something that touched Hagar in the boldness of the burning, and the skill by which she had been led to almost authorize it. For the first time, our sable damsel began to feel a dawning of pride about her lover. Then thrills of fear set in, lest she had gone too far, and driven him quite away with her hempen flail.

All night long she listened for some sound of his return, but a dead stillness settled around her, and the heart in her honest bosom grew heavy and heavier, till she fell asleep with tears swelling under her black eyelids. In the morning Hagar arose penitent and subdued. No fire in the kitchen—no Dan to fill her tea-kettle and grind the rye-coffee, while she prepared the substantial dishes and spread the table. This was very lonely after the devotion and tender courtship of the days that had gone before. Still Hagar hoped and watched; at every sound her heart gave a leap and fell back again, like a trout in its brook, but no Dan presented himself. However, like a sensible woman, Hagar went on with her work; she cut the rosiest slices of ham for his eating, made the coffee as strong again as usual, and brought out a lump of the richest maple-sugar to sweeten it with. Still no Dan.

Every thing was ready,—the hot Johnny-cake, the ham, with its delicious flavor sending up its steam through a brace of fried eggs, that lay crisp and golden on each ruddy slice.

Hagar had no heart to eat her breakfast alone; so she covered the dishes, placed them in a warm corner of the hearth, and went forth in search of the lost one. A forlorn hope led her to the barn. If he had not found shelter there what could she do? Perhaps her cruelty had

driven him to desperation, and he had taken to drink, and fallen into total depravity. It seemed an age since she had driven the poor fellow forth,—quite long enough for a desperate man to work out his ruin, and break her heart with the knowledge of it.

With these penitent feelings Hagar entered the barn and looked sorrowfully around. Every thing was still. A group of chickens picking up oats from the floor was all the sign of life she could discover. But in a desperate hope she lifted up her voice, and called out hoarsely,—

"Dan! ho, Dan!"

No answer,—nothing but a faint rustle of the hay far overhead. It might be a chicken building its nest, but the sound was not exactly like that.

"Dan, oh, speak! Am yer thar?"

A more decided rustle, and out from the hay a dusky head, looking down upon her from a loft far up in the top of the barn.

"Oh, Dan! come down,—come down,—I'se so sorry. 'Pend on't I'll neber do it agin."

"Oh, Hagar! how could yer?"

"Come," said Hagar, rebuked by the tender reproach, and lifting her eyes imploringly upwards. "Come and see what I'se got for yer."

"Dat crash towel," muttered Dan, rubbing his wool dolorously.

"Oh, Dan! I'se 'pented ob dat in dust and ashes,—I has. So don't fling it in my face no more. I'se cut one ob de new hams, and cooked dem eggs yer brought in last ting afore yer went ter town,—and sich a Johnny-cake! Do come afore it's cold."

Dan waited for no more, but came scrambling down from the upper loft, his wool bristling with hay, and his

face shining with smiles. At the second mow he made a halt, overtaken by a sober second thought.

"Hagar," he said, looking down upon her with benign fascination, "if I comes when yer calls me, and yer should trow dem fair arms round dis neck, I should 'preciate it dis time, and no mistake."

Hagar waved her hand with great dignity.

"Don't yer mention it, Dan. I blushes all ober at de 'membrance ob my indiscreetness. Smudder dat tought in yer bussom, and come down ter breakfast. It's getting cold."

Dan slid down the hay and lighted on the floor with a rebound. Then the two breakfasted lovingly together.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE MINISTER'S FAREWELL.

A SABBATH DAY in New England. Who can describe it?—the sublime stillness, the hush which falls on every living thing, filling the very atmosphere with a spirit of prayer. The trees seem to wave their branches as if they were palms, ready to be thrown along the pathway to church, rendering it more holy. The birds, calmed by the profound quiet, float through the air dreamily and without fear. So completely does the spirit of God pervade the earth and sky, that whispered thanksgiving seems the only language which would not break the charm of profound holiness.

A morning like this dawned on the streets of New

Haven, lighting them half with sunshine, wrapping them half in shadows. Every house was still, every footstep fell restrainedly on the sidewalk. The college-grounds were deserted, and lay spread out beneath the stooping elm-trees one carpet of mossy greenness. Through this sacred calm, first one bell and then another rung out a clear summons to church. Then the streets filled with neatly-dressed people, family groups, couples walking close together, and children excited by the bells into quicker steps than their parents thought decorous.

A grave, subdued look was remarkable in all these people. Friends scarcely ventured to smile a recognition as they met. The little girls cast shy glances at each other's bonnets, and looked down again demure and conscience-stricken by their own wicked curiosity. Thus, the streets that intersect Yale-College grounds were threaded with a kind of life that seemed like absolute stillness.

Into the various churches these devout people diverged, and directly after the bells ceased ringing, the streets were empty again.

One place of worship, a small, new church, that had consolidated the worshipers of a home-mission station, was more than usually full that Sabbath. The young minister, a man so beloved and revered in his congregation that a glow of blessings followed him wherever he moved, was that day to take leave of his people. "It might be for years, and it might be forever." After building up the church and converting a handful of inquirers into a thriving brotherhood, his health had gradually broken down, and a long sea-voyage was deemed the only hope left to him.

It was not remarkable that the good people who entered the church should pass up the aisles with sad countenances

and lingering steps, or that many a loving eye should grow misty as it turned on the minister, when he appeared in the dim twilight around the altar more like a ghost than a human being. With his eyes bent upon the ground, he saw no one, though such yearning looks were fastened on him, but moved up to the sacred desk and sunk to his knees, it would seem as much from weakness as devotion.

All the ceremonies of that morning were doubly impressive from the sadness that lay on the congregation. But when the clergyman spoke,—when his altering tones were gathered up and poured forth upon the audience,—one deep throb of sympathy beat from heart to heart, filling the whole church with sorrow.

The discourse was a strange one. The pastor who had done so much for them, whose lips had been so exemplary that he was considered “little less than the angels,” seemed pleading with his people for forgiveness of some great transgression,—for shortcomings and backslidings of which no one believed him capable. As he warmed and grew more earnest, his startling eloquence swelled over them like cries of loving anguish. His voice thrilled with the pathos of unshed tears. There was no argument in his sermons,—scarcely an attempt at method;—but every sentence went trembling from soul to soul with solemnity and power.

When the sermon was over,—when the last farewell was taken and the minister lifted his shaking hands in benediction,—the suppressed grief broke out; sobs rose from various parts of the house, and tearful eyes looked into each other claiming sympathy. Long after other worshippers had left their sanctuaries, the congregation remained together, hovering around the church, or standing sadly in the pews, waiting for the pastor to come forth.

He tried to avoid these simple, loving people, whose wealth of affection oppressed him, and there, in the dim vestry sat, motionless, with the sacred vestments still shrouding his person, and the heart under them ready to break.

He arose at last, slowly and sadly divested himself of gown and band, cast one look around the little room, twice sacred to him, and went drearily forth. The church was yet full. He recoiled a moment, trembling with a new shock, then walked down the aisle with a mournful smile on his lip, saying farewell, and hearing nothing but blessings till he came to the door. There a sorrowing crowd gathered around him, swelling the tide of anguish till speech forsook him, and, with a pathetic gesture, he passed from among them. The pastor went home slowly, with his head bent down, and his sorrowful eyes too weary for uplifting. A white garment fluttered before him, footsteps lingered on the grass by the unpaved street he was treading. At first he took no heed, but after a little a subtle thrill stirred his heart, and he looked up. A fair young girl was before him gliding over the grass with sorrowful slowness. She paused an instant,—hesitated and turned as if to go back. Then he saw her face clearly,—its troubled paleness and the look of suppressed tears that left deep bluish shadows around the eyes, and a flush upon the drooping lids.

They stood thus, face to face, looking at each other, with yearning sorrow. The girl must have stepped forward first; for he stood motionless. During one instant their hands clasped, neither spoke,—a look—oh, how much more pathetic than words!—passed between them, and they parted in painful quietness.

He stood mute and still a little time after she passed

from his sight, not in reflection, but dumb, as if his guardian angel had just looked upon him and fled, after seeing what manner of man he was. Then he turned suddenly, resolved to speak out the love that had so long slept, a mute blessing in his innermost heart; but in the anguish of that farewell she had walked rapidly, and the flutter of her cloud-like garments among the shrubbery around a cottage-house which was her home, sent back a shadowy farewell. Then the usual fiend that tortured him came in, goading that sensitive conscience with its sharp memories.

"Who am I, and what am I, that this hand should thrill so after her clasp,—or these lips dare to syllable her name," he muttered, despondently. "God forgive me this wild thought. Ah me! Hereafter, I must lead a lonely life, and ask nothing of my Lord but mercy and forgiveness."

He lifted his eyes to heaven, and God's light that fell from thence, revealed how sad they were.

"It was only for a moment," he murmured; "only for one little moment. I do not struggle, Lord. I do not complain. Was not the divine Jesus lonely as a man,—was not his holy nature tortured while in thralldom with humanity? Is it hard, then, that I, so frail, so wicked, with sin burning red on my forehead, should pass through life a lonely being,—an exile whose hopes all lie in the hereafter?"

He looked back once more through the misty sorrow that veiled his eyes. One of the cottage windows was open, and through it appeared a white figure leaning out, as if eager to lessen the space that lay between her and the unhappy object she was gazing on. She saw that he was regarding her, but gave no signal that would have

seemed sacrilegious on the holy day; but, unconsciously, she stretched forth her arms, the wind caught in her loose sleeves and they fluttered out like wings that quivered with desire to flee towards him.

Then, with a deep sigh, the minister moved homeward, comforted, and smitten with holy tenderness. It seemed to him as if for one little moment an angel of God's own sending had hovered over him.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

DOUBLE TIES.

WHEN the marriage of Laura de Montreuil was settled upon, her brother, always kind and over-indulgent, purchased one of those fine, old mansions that are now almost swept away from the shades of New Haven, and fitted it up for her future home. With the quick tact which accompanies refinement like his, he saw that the future bridegroom would be best pleased by a broad display of that wealth and elegance which it had always been his ambition to obtain. So he gave way to Laura's rather sumptuous taste, and out of the fine old mansion, with its grounds stiffly ornamented with box borders, tall poplars, and groups of old-fashioned shrubbery, she wrought for herself and lover a sort of fairy palace. Silken and snowy draperies floated over the windows. Thick carpets yielded, like wood-moss, to the tread. Chairs, sofas, and cabinets that might have graced the room of a court lady, gave imposing grandeur to the low-ceiled rooms and

heavy mantlepices; andirons of bronze and glittering brass stood guard in each broad fire-place, and upon the upper leaf of the massive hall-door, a ponderous brass knocker reverberated the announcement of each visitor as he entered the house.

The house was cheery and sumptuous, consequently the more fit for that brilliant and queenly girl who seemed born for a palace, and to be the sovereign of any hall she trod.

Laura, like many another loving and noble girl, could have made herself content in any place with the husband of her choice; but she was not the less in love, or the less charming, because the power of gathering objects of beauty around her existed to an almost unlimited extent. She had been accustomed to beautiful surroundings all her life, and in her own nature was luxurious. But, deep beneath all this, lay a character so grand and strong that she could have flung all these outside belongings from her life without a sigh, had the real good of a beloved object required it.

But the luxuries which wealth gives are pleasant things, and love nestled in velvet is not the less love, if the spirit of self-sacrifice broods there even with folded wings.

With Laura, life was full of superb happiness. Proud of her lover, glorying in his fine person and strong character, she worshiped where a weaker woman would only have loved. She exulted in the power of bestowing upon the princely man—for such he was to her—opulence that a monarch might have been content with. If she could have gathered the rosy clouds of morning, and looped them above his couch with stars from heaven, she would have left the skies so much darker for his sake. His step,

as it fell on the oaken floor of the hall, thrilled her like music; his smile made her happiness more perfect; her cheek bloomed and her lips parted redder beneath it. The white eyelids grew tremulous as they drooped to shade the exquisite joy that sparkled beneath them. At such times love made her very, very beautiful.

Arnold was happy, too, after a fashion. Indeed, it may be considered doubtful if men like him, wax in principle and iron in self-love, can ever experience those keen regrets which wing every wrong with a pang to those of more sensitive natures. With his strong, hard, fervid character, to will was to be right, and every effort of conscience to reach his heart, fell away unheeded as rain drips from the plumage of a bird, only touching the outer surface. Strange as it may seem, the young man was cheerful; for, with the arrogance of a powerful organization, he looked with contempt upon the efforts of those less boldly gifted, and had cast all fear of consequences from his mind. Was that weak, pretty girl by the saw-mill at Yantic Falls to break up his magnificent fortunes,—she who still blushed with pleasure if he but looked upon her? As for “the old folks at home,” were they not chained to his wishes by their own exceeding love for himself? Besides, if they attempted any annoyance, was he not equal to the occasion?

Arnold was a traitor, but never a coward! His sins were all strong and audacious. Money, pomp, and power were his ruling passion. To the shrine of ambition he was ready to lay down every honest affection, every honorable feeling. The glitter of life won his idolatry: its solid gold he trampled under foot, without feeling its value or regretting its loss.

Thus Arnold was happy—if the best moments of such

men can be called happiness—even in committing an act of domestic treason more cruel than that which has left his name black on the lips of posterity. His intellect was powerful, its perversion complete; while the feeble conscience, that sometimes fluttered through his better moments, was like a helpless bird beating its way through a storm.

Another man would have asked for a quiet, if not secret marriage; but to Arnold half his ideas of happiness lay in the eclat of a splendid festival. So, with his usual reckless daring, he sent out boldly and proclaimed his coming grandeur, by scattering invitations far and near. With him success was nothing, if the world were not challenged to admire and envy.

When Paul de Montreuil returned from Norwich, bringing word that the whole Arnold family would come to the wedding, Arnold asked a few careless questions about his visits, and, among others, if he had seen any thing of the Leonards.

Yes,—Paul remembered seeing Joshua Leonard swinging some children in the minister's orchard, and having admired the pretty Amy as she came in from a supper-table under the apple-trees, where she had been busy as a bee, her companions told him.

Arnold listened attentively, and a cloud came to his forehead. Did he wish to hear that Amy was pining herself to death? Could his clamorous self-love be appeased with nothing less than that?

After this conversation Paul relapsed into uneasy silence. The color—a strange thing—came and went in his face. Laura, who came in just then, saw his embarrassment, and vaguely guessed its cause. She drew close to her brother and laid a hand on his shoulder.

“And Hannah, Benedict's sister,—you say nothing of her, Paul?”

The young man was grateful for this gentle interposition, and, turning his head, smiled upon her.

“Oh, yes!” he answered. “I saw Hannah. Indeed, it was for that purpose I went to Norwich.”

Arnold was walking towards the window. He turned suddenly, and his face flushed with eager satisfaction.

Paul saw the look, and was reassured.

“Of course,” he said, addressing Laura, but keeping a furtive glance on Arnold, “of course, you must have suspected that some little private interests of my own made me so amiable. One does not take journeys of that length more than once just to leave his sister's wedding-invitations.”

“Brother, oh, brother! are you in earnest,—real, solemn earnest? Did love of Hannah Arnold take you there? Is it all settled? Does she care about you? Dear old fellow, how I love you! Don't answer. When a De Montreuil blushes it means love,—successful love. We turn pale when things go against us. Don't we, Paul?—grow white, and creep away chilled all over. Now that I have got my breath, tell me all about it, you precious old darling.”

Laura sat down on a cushioned stool that chanced to be near the easy-chair in which Paul was sitting, and, leaning both elbows on his knee, dropped her chin into the palm of one hand, composing herself to listen.

“Now, *chere*, tell me all about it. I'm quite ready to listen.”

“Tell you all about what, fair lady?” said Paul, with a teasing smile.

“Why, how you managed to make the demure little

angel come to terms; what the dear old people said; and, better than all, how Hagar and Dan took the news. Oh, I would give the world to see Hagar strutting about in the glory of two weddings."

"Well, dear, as you will have all the particulars, let me sum them up in a few words. I have proposed for Miss Arnold, and would tell you how, only that I don't quite remember exactly myself,—being deucedly frightened, spite of the impudence you give me credit for."

"Proposed! of course you proposed; but did she accept, poor, little, modest puss? and if she did, where on earth could she find words to express it in?"

"Really, sister, you are too much for me. Have not I told you that I was half frightened to death myself? Think what it must have been with her," answered Paul, smiling happily on the beautiful face uplifted to his with such eager delight. "All I know is, that she accepted me."

"The darling,—the sweet dove-eyed angel! How I love her," cried Laura, snatching Paul's hand to her lips and kissing it. "Come here, Arnold. Are you listening to all this? he is to be your brother twice over. Was ever any thing so charming?"

Arnold came forward with his hand extended. Real pleasure beamed in his face.

"De Montreuil, I congratulate you, and a thousand times over congratulate myself. She is a good, lovely girl, this sister of mine. You cannot fail to be happy."

Arnold's face was grand then; indeed, when holy feelings rose uppermost in his heart a wonderful power of beauty broke over his face. Laura saw the pure look and her eyes filled with tears.

"Oh, brother, Arnold, what have we done to deserve such happiness!" she said.

Paul bent down and kissed her forehead. His dark eyes were full of heart-dew, his finely cut lips quivered with intense feeling.

"We must try to deserve it and be grateful for it," he said. And putting her gently aside, Paul left the room.

Laura went up to Arnold in the excess of her joy, and stealing an arm around his neck, crept close to his bosom. "Tell me, love, isn't this happiness?" she said. "The bonds that unite us will be so strong."

Arnold strained her to his heart. The ruling passion of his life was so near its gratification that this affectionate demonstration was a genuine impulse.

"Ah me!" murmured Laura, drawing a deep breath as he released her. "Can this happiness last? Will God always permit so much of heaven to his creatures here?"

A shade came over Arnold's face. He turned away abruptly, and Laura went out with tears of supreme bliss trembling in her eyes.

Arnold watched her with anxiety. Her happiness did, indeed, seem too much. It was almost wearisome to be loved so entirely. What if she found him out? What if this new tie between the families should lead Paul to uncontrolled intimacy with the people of Norwich? Amy and his sister were fast friends. Would that wronged young creature keep her secret and her promise? Well, if she did not, was he unprepared? How could she prove a ceremony of which only one witness existed, and that one upon the ocean, which was sure to be the case, long before poor little Amy could cry out under her wrongs.

But would she make an effort to stem the evils of her destiny, bound as she was by a solemn promise? "No!" he answered to his thought, in a voice firm with conviction. "No, no. She is true as steel. True as steel."

After this exclamation, which sprang out of his faith in the woman he had wronged, Arnold cast the whole harassing subject from his mind. Was he not twice safe—safe in the pledge of secrecy planted in that young heart—safe in her utter helplessness and lack of proof? The face of the hard man cleared up radiantly. What, a double marriage! would all the vast wealth of the De Montreuil pass into his own family? He had accomplished all this, and how? By sweeping aside scruples over which common men stumbled or stood still. How the man gloried over his own hardihood!

Laura was happy as a bird of paradise. Hannah, whom she loved so, should be twice her sister. Bound to her and her idol by new ties, she could hardly believe in her own happiness: it seemed fabulous. Paul was content, and Arnold, assured of the power to carry out his purpose, gave himself up to bright hopes, while each day the wedding drew nearer.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE GREEN-EYED MONSTER IN A BLACK HEART.

YES, the two household-servants at Arnold's farm breakfasted lovingly together, there is no doubt of that. But when the green-eyed monster once gets possession of a man, it is not to be drawn out with a few soft words and a comfortable breakfast. These things may hold the fiend at abeyance, but he is sure to be found couchant

somewhere in the soul, ready for a spring on the first provocation.

So it was with Dan. No sooner had he accepted Hagar's submission than thoughts of Peter's letter came back with bitter force. What right had that city-negro to correspond with the betrothed of his own sable bosom? What did that letter contain? If Hagar had allowed the city exquisite to commit himself in writing, what tender words, what perfidious encouragement must have preceded it? Oh, if he had not burned the letter, but carried it in his trowsers-pocket till some kind white man might have been found to read it for him!

Thus reflected poor Othello, and the thought burned darkly within him while he wandered around the farm, or sat on a broken cart whittling an eyelet-pin for Hagar, which he in the end threw away. Dismounting from the cart he wandered moodily across the yard, picking up corn-cobs and jerking them right and left as he moved along. For once jealousy made the lazy negro almost energetic. A fence was broken back of the house, and in his desperation he resolved to mend it. With his ponderous step a little quickened, he moved across the garden through a side-gate into a pasture-lot blooming thickly with white clover. His great feet crushed down the fragrant blossoms, leaving clouds of perfume behind them. He heeded nothing of this, but lumbered on, swinging his long arms and frowning gloomily.

All at once Dan paused, for in a corner of the lot, sheltered by an angle of the stone-wall, something whiter than the clover attracted his attention,—something that looked like little patches and handfuls of snow, left to melt in the grass.

Dan was a curious negro, and at any time would have

paused to satisfy himself about this unusual appearance. He wheeled about, took a cross-cut, wading ankle-deep through the tangled grass and blossoms, till he came out close by the white mystery. Here he paused, his great eyes rolling fearfully, and his thick lips parted. He took off his hat by the torn brim, and after bending his head in deep reflection a moment, grasped one hand into his wool, and gave it a fierce tug that brought the water into his eyes.

Dan's emotions were beyond his strength to bear. He looked wildly around for some place of rest, made a fierce dive at the stone-wall, and scrambled up it. Once on the top, he sat down, with both great feet swinging loose and both long arms folded despondingly on his breast. The little garments which Hagar had spread out to whiten among the pure clover-tops lay an accusing evidence at his feet.

What he saw was enough. The whole force of human desolation fell upon him. Here lay the hideous secret. This was why he had been driven from the kitchen so persistently on one particular washing-day. Here, in this snug corner, thinking that the masses of white clover would conceal the iniquitous secret, Hagar had spread the evidence of her faithlessness. No doubt she was married to that infamous Peter. His Hagar—the fair hand which had worked corn-bread for him and broken it, too, that very morning—was given to another.

Dan's head reeled and his heart ached. In the desperation of his anguish, he flung up both arms, lost his balance, and rolled down into the clover, grinding his teeth as he went. He made no effort to gather himself up, but lay prone upon the earth, grasping out with his hands. In their writhing his long fingers clutched what seemed to

be a cobweb. He lifted the object up between his eyes and the sun. A mite of a cap, frosted with fairy-like work, trembled like foam in his black clutch. Dan clenched the bit of lace in his fist and shook the fist fiercely at the sky in general: then in a paroxysm of jealous rage he dashed at the filmy morsel like a hungry cur, and began to tear it with his white teeth. In the midst of this savage onset he flung the fragments away, and turning upon his face began to cry.

"Oh, Hagar, Hagar, how could you serbe a poor feller so! Did not yer know how I lubed yer? Oh, golly, golly, I only wish I could die right off, I'se so miserable, I is. Lord a massy, what has I done, what has I done dat de gal I lubed should sarve me so?"

After this tender outburst Dan spread himself dolefully on the grass and subsided into a tropical gust of tears.

As he lay with his face downwards and his broad shoulders heaving with sobs, Hagar came across the field, with a wooden pail in one hand and a square of hard soap in the other. Dan lay within the shadow of the wall, and she did not see him at first, but set her pail down, dropped the piece of soap into the water it contained, and began at once to splash up a foam of suds that soon creamed over its sides.

As the commotion of the water reached Dan's ears, he held his breath and glanced cautiously up. How innocent Hagar looked at her genial work! A smile stirred her thick lips, her sharp black eyes danced pleasantly as she watched the foaming suds. Then a fragment of song broke forth:

"Can't yer heel that, can't yer toe that,
The deck a dora can't you step that?"

Stirred to the depths of his soul, Dan sat upright. Hagar saw him; flashed her hands out of the suds and shook a rain of drops into the sunshine.

"Why, Dan! Dan, am dat you, or am it yer ghost? I 'care to man, yer scares me a'most ter death. What am de matter? what 'stresses yer now? Den, agin, how comes yer here in de crook of dis farm, where you hasn't no business to be no how? Dan, I say what am dé meanin' ob dis ourdacous freaking, I wants ter know now right off?"

Dan's face still bore evidence of his grief; tears rolled down his cheeks like drops of water on a seal's back; his wool stood out torn and fleecy as his frenzied fingers had left it. His eyes were turned upon Hagar, full of reproachful misery.

"Oh, Hagar, Hagar, how could yer? How could yer?"

Hagar gave him a long glance, gathered up a handful of the little garments and thrust them into the pail with warning emphasis. Then dripping the suds from her arms, first with one hand then with the other, she stood upright confronting him.

"Now look a-here, Dan, these ere tantrums is beginnin' to rile me up, and I won't stand 'em. What on yearth are yer doin'? How comed yer here? What has yer been boo-hooing 'bout thar in the grass?—found a hen's nest with the eggs spiled, or what?"

"Hagar," answered Dan, shaking his head and wiping the tears from his face with a sweep of his shirt sleeve, but shrinking within himself all the time. "Oh, Hagar!"

"Well, what am it?"

"Oh, Hagar, how can yer look in dis face wid dem perfiderous eyes,—how can yer?"

Hagar put a hand on each side her trim waist and made one step forward.

Dan commenced shrinking into himself like a turtle drawing itself into its shell.

"What am it yer drivin' at? Why shouldn't I look at yer face jist as much as I likes? dat am de question for us two at dis time, so speak up. What's der trouble,—am yer under convection, Dan? Hab der 'vival caught yer black heart at last? Yer looks like it, kinder skeered and kinder I don't know what."

Dan gathered himself up from the ground and supported his heavy body by the wall, looking as if he would have drawn back through the stones had that been possible.

"No, Hagar," he said, "I isn't under 'viction. Der 'vival hasn't caught dis chile, but yit I'se on der anxious seat; and it's yerself, Hagar, as has put me thar."

"What, I, I! Dan, didn't we make up dis berry mornin'? Didn't yer leave yer Hagar as happy as a bumble-bee on a thistle? Now du tell me what am it as sets heavy on dat heart."

"I will," said Dan, pointing to the grass with tragic dignity. "Hagar, it am them."

Hagar made a sweep at the little garments and huddled them into the pail. Her cheeks grew blacker, her teeth gleamed. What did Dan mean? How dared he?

"Dan," she said, "yer am der audaceousest nigger dat ever did live."

"No wonder yer scrouge 'em inter dat pail—no wonder yer eyes doesn't look straight inter mine. Oh, Hagar! Hagar! own up to once, and let dis heart bust."

"It ed sarve it right if it war busted now," answered Hagar, indignantly. "Jest say what I'm ter own up to, dat's all."

"Jest say out, fair an square, 'I lub Peter.'"

"Pete," exclaimed Hagar, "I'd jest a leave say it as not, if it was only to torment yer. But it aint true, and so I won't."

"Say dat yer married to him," cried Dan, wringing his hands at the thought.

"I won't, Dan, 'cause I isn't. Thar."

"You ain't?"

"No, I isn't."

"Oh, Hagar!"

"Oh, Dan, how could yer tink sech a ting 'bout me?"

"Say it agin, Hagar. Say as you isn't married to him, and neber was, and ain't a-goin' to be, foreber and eber."

"Wal, Dan, I says dat."

"Yer duz?"

"Yes, I duz, ober and ober again."

"Come ter my bussum,—no, no, I darsn't mean it,—dat is jest now, fore dat 'spicious minute arrives. I jest want ter know de meaning ob dis camp-meeting ob tings. Am dey yours?"

"What! dese, Dan? Duz yer mean ter 'sult me?"

"'Sult yer? No; but if de tings ain't yours, whose am dey?"

"Daniel," cried Hagar, going close to the wall and touching the jealous negro with her hand, "Daniel, am yer a gemman?"

"Wal, I reckon I is."

"Den don't ax me any more questions."

"I won't, Hagar. Only tell me one ting."

"Well, say 'em quick."

"If yer ain't goin' ter marry nobody else, and if yer lub dis chil' as yer ought ter, jest set de happy day, Hagar"

You and I is bound ter set a sample ob lovable ferlicity ter dis household."

"No," said Hagar, gathering herself up with dignity, "not so long as you can 'spect de 'tegrity ob dis individual."

"Hagar, I doesn't 'spect yer."

"But yer will."

"Neber, neber, lubly one."

"But you'll ask questions."

"Jest try me, dat's all."

"Well, Dan, take up dat pail and bring it inter de kitchen."

Dan took up the pail with touching humility, and Hagar walked triumphantly by his side, with her head uplifted, and her active feet scarcely bending the clover tops in her path. This time the reconciliation was complete.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

FOLLOWING AFTER.

THE cabin on the Yantic was a sad, sad home after Amy left it. Since the minister's festival it had been a house of sorrow, but now, that she was gone,—utterly gone,—a sense of desolation settled there which seemed almost worse than death. It must be a terrible calamity which prevents a New England woman from doing her household work in season. Mrs. Leonard was faithful as ever in this respect; but the method,—that was all changed. Her steps grew heavy, as if old age had suddenly fallen

upon her. She went about her duties in a dull mechanical way, never smiling, and never stopping to scold. The cat might have curled itself to sleep on the layers of white cloth that covered the yeasting bread, and she would scarcely have boxed its ears. The poor woman was so still and mournfully quiet that her cabin seemed like a tomb.

It was scarcely better with the strong man, Leonard. He had no heart for work, and yet ~~labored~~ diligently. The saw never stopped in its course without arousing him from a deep revery. He would stand, with folded arms, and watch its glittering teeth eat through the heart of an oak log, as unconscious of its progress as the boards that lay around him. He had fallen away greatly in his person and the clothes that had been a close fit in the winter now hung loosely around his reduced figure. With the farmers, who brought logs to the mill, he was reserved, and they thought sullen. If any of them began to talk of his daughter, which was often the case, even with his kindest-hearted neighbors, he would listen gravely, and make such brief reply, that they ventured no farther.

Sometimes, Leonard would leave the mill for hours, and stray away along the margin of the falls to the ledge of rocks, on which he and the elder Arnold had met in prayer on that cold winter day. The ledge was pleasanter now: cushions of velvet moss covered it with a rich greenness that was kept bright as emeralds by the spray. Great hemlock and pine branches bent their darker tints over it. The waters were all unchained, and rioted gloriously under the warm sunshine. But all this gave Leonard no comfort. He would have preferred bleak winds, and cold, drifting snow. There the good man would kneel down, sorrowful, humbly, and covering his

face with both hands, wait for God to have compassion on him. He did not pray aloud; there was no power of eloquence on his lips then. God had smitten him in his love and in his pride, so he fell upon his face, in meek faith, and hushed his aching heart into patience.

One day,—it was the third, I think, after Amy left him,—he had been sitting alone upon the ledge, thinking of her, when a flood of yearning tenderness came to his heart, so suddenly, that he burst into tears and sobbed aloud. His child seemed close to him, drawing him with an impalpable touch of her hands to follow after her. There was something so real in the impression, that he stood up, and wiping the tears from his face, almost smiled.

"Yes, darling, I *will* come," he said aloud. "How did I ever find the heart to let you go without me?" A bird, perched upon the hemlock behind him, burst into song, as he spoke, and its ecstasy of music confirmed the pathetic pleading of his heart. He looked up at the bird, thankfully. His soul was full of poetic faith. Had not God once vouchsafed to make an innocent bird his messenger?

With a lighter step than he had used for weeks, Leonard left the rocks and went home. His wife had been spinning near the door. He saw her through the opening; but there was no whirr of the flyers, no flutter of her active fingers around the flax. He moved nearer and saw that her hands were clasped on the edge of the motionless wheel. Her face had fallen upon them, and by the motion of her shoulders he saw that she was crying. He drew nearer and spoke.

"Wife."

She lifted her head, and tried to put back a lock of wet,

gray hair that had strayed from under her cap. But her hands trembled piteously, and she let them fall upon the wheel again. Leonard put the hair back tenderly, and kissed her forehead; for he saw that the last few weeks had left but little of the original brown for her cap to conceal.

"Oh, Joshua! if I could only follow her! My heart is breaking to see Amy."

Leonard kept his hard hand on her head,—his face lighted up as he bent over her.

"How could we find the heart to let her go without us!" cried the poor mother, lifting both her hands, and clasping them over his. "She was our only child, Joshua."

"Get up, wife. Put away your wheel, and make ready. We will follow our child."

"Joshua! oh, Joshua! are you in earnest?"

"Yes; we will go."

"How? how?—on foot? Oh, I can walk! You are a strong man, and I haven't been so well lately, but you shall not outwalk me. How many days will it take? No matter. I feel young again. Can we start right off? Perhaps,—perhaps we might take the wagon."

"We could not walk, wife. Providence has provided a better way for us than the wagon."

"Oh, husband, how thankful I am to Providence!"

"We have need. Another sloop will sail down the river to-night. Get every thing ready, and we will go in it."

Mrs. Leonard started up, and seizing her fly-wheel carried it off to the garret, where she forgot to unload it. Then she came down-stairs again with a pillow-case in her hand, which she carried to a corner cupboard and

began to fill promiscuously with biscuit, dried beef, dough-nuts, and a quarter section of cheese.

"Where are you going, Joshua?" she called out, as her husband took his hat. "Where are you going?" She had no time to look after him, but tied one end of the pillow-case in a huge knot, and set it down to the floor as she spoke.

"I must go over to town and get some money. There isn't enough in the house, I'm afraid," he answered.

"Come back, Joshua, come back. I can't bear to trust you out of my sight; it wouldn't seem like a reality if I did. As for the money,—look here!" She went to the clock, opened the narrow door in its case, and thrusting her arm into the opening, drew forth a shot-bag half full of coin, her accumulated savings for twenty years.

"I don't know what it will cost," she said, seating herself, and pouring the money into her lap; "but here must be enough and to spare. I saved every sixpence of it for her 'setting-out,' but you shall have it all. I ought to have been ashamed to hoard it up away from you, though it was for her. Here,—just put it back into the bag; my hands shake so, I can't. But it's with joy,—don't think it's with any thing but joy, husband."

I am afraid that Leonard's hands were not quite steady as he gathered the money from his wife's lap and put it in the shot-bag again. He was thinking how much in his superior intellect he had underrated that genuine womanly nature. Now that affection had refined and elevated her he could see how good she was.

In a house like that there was little need of elaborate preparation. A second pillow-case was soon filled with the last articles of Mrs. Leonard's wardrobe, and a pair of saddle bags proved sufficient for Leonard's Sunday clothes

and a change or two of linen. When these were placed in the one-horse wagon, Leonard went down to the mill and posted a written notice of his absence in a conspicuous place, while his wife drew in the leathern latch-string and crept out of the window, with full assurance that their property would be safe till their return.

The reader must understand that a journey, or rather voyage, from Norwich to New Haven was a momentous undertaking in those times, and on ordinary occasions produced no little excitement. But though the bustle of preparation lifted this good couple out of their sorrow for a time, it had no power to make them forget how painful was the errand which took them from home. Sudden as her departure had been, Mrs. Leonard bethought herself of Hagar, who might have some message to send to her mistress, and asked her husband to drive round by the homestead on his way to the sloop.

They found Hagar in a state of benign happiness. Her reconciliation with Dan had been followed by so many loving protestations, and their future store of bliss had been so completely discussed, that Hagar took upon herself the dignity of a married woman at once, though she held poor Dan at a tremendous distance in fact; and kept him in a state of probation that tested his constancy to the utmost. Never in his whole life had Dan, in a given time, rolled so many back-logs, split so much oven-wood, or shelled so many baskets of corn, or had proved his desire to please Hagar, since the family went away.

When the Leonards drove up, Hagar was standing at the front door, shading her eyes with one hand, at a loss to make out who her visitors were. But the moment she recognized them, the hand fell, and she hurried out to the gate, rejoiced to see the good couple abroad again.

"Why, Miss Arnold, am dat you? Well, if yer don't both look jest as nat'ral as can be, only a leetle more so. If I wasn't a-tellin' our Daniel dis 'ere mornin',—sez I, Dan, I'd give all my old shoes, and yourn to boot, jest ter see neighbor Leonard and his wife a-comin' ober here ter take tea wid our folks, jest as dey were usen ter; and sez he, 'Hagar,' sez he, 'it ed make my ferlicity too extra arter what you and I knows on.' But come in. Gracious me, yer don't say as yer won't get out! What, goin' 'way from hum! Goin' in de sloop ter New Haven! See our folks! Why, yer eenamost skare the breath out ob dis body. Well, anyhow, yer must come in, if it's only ter tell 'em how yer found things a-goin' on. I never should git ober it if yer didn't."

"Well," said Mrs. Leonard, always ready to make others happy in her homely way,—“very well, Hagar. We'll just step into the kitchen and take a drink of milk. We come away in such a hurry that both of us forgot about dinner."

"Yer welcome ter ebery ting in de house, and I reckon yer won't find any ting a-going wrong ter tell our folks about."

Hagar marched into the house, and led the way from room to room, insisting that Mrs. Leonard should satisfy herself of the good condition, and report accordingly, till they at length landed in the kitchen.

"Now," said Hagar, "you jest set down and kinder rest a minute, while Mr. Leonard gibs a peek inter de barn. I reckon he'll find Mr. Daniel hard at work. Now, I tell yer, Mr. Leonard, that inderwidual is awful smart, awful."

With her black face all in a quiver of delight, Hagar flung the barn-door wide open, and revealed Dan sitting

astride a shovel, which was placed with the handle on a log of wood, and the iron part resting on the edge of a huge corn-basket, which he should have been filling with kernels. His arms were folded loosely, and his black face fell on his bosom. He was fast asleep. Hagar started forward, leaving Leonard in the background.

"Dan, yer lazy nigger," she cried, stung with mortification, "am dis der way yer shells corn?"

Dan started up, blinked his eyes like an owl, and making a dive at the pile of ears heaped near him, dashed one against the edge of the shovel, and sent the corn flying like golden rain into the basket.

Hagar, a little mollified, went close to him.

"Oh, Dan! Dan! how could yer?—afore folks, too!"

Dan held his ear of corn motionless against the edge of the shovel, and lifted his eyes to Hagar.

"Yer didn't think as dis chile was 'sleep, now, did yer, Hagar? Not a bit on it. I was only a remuneratin' ober der sea ob ferlicity dat dis cullud pusson is a-sailin' in. I'se so happy, Hagar, dat now and den I must stop work ter take a dive."

Hagar folded her arms, and looking severely down on her lover shook her head.

"Oh, Dan, Dan, 'tain't ob no use ter play possum wid me. I knows ye."

"In course yer dus. Who has got a right ter know me if yer hasn't?" answered Dan, benignly. "I'd like ter see any udder woman dar;" whereupon Dan fell diligently to his work, and Hagar followed Mr. Leonard, who had returned to the house and was helping his wife into the wagon.

Hagar came up, out of breath.

"Now Mrs. Leonard, you jes' gib our bes' love to de

folks, and tell 'em ebbery ting is going on splendid at der farm. Yer kin say as Mr. Daniel works so hard, night an' day, dat he gets clar tuckered out, and eenamost falls 'sleep ober der corn-basket. Yer might a-seen him yer-self."

"I will tell them that every thing is going on right," said Leonard, kindly.

"And 'bout Miss Amy," said Hagar, leaning over the wagon-wheel, and speaking in a low voice,—“tell her as I tinks 'bout her a sight, and if she's got a frien' on earth, it's Hagar. Don't fergit ter say dat."

Mrs. Leonard reached forth her hand, and shook that which Hagar held forth.

"Good-by, Hagar, good-by. I shall never forget your kindness to my poor girl,—be sure of that, Hagar. Good-by."

The wagon was on its way, and Mrs. Leonard sent back the last words like a benediction. That night the good woman sat in the little close cabin of the sloop, a good deal saddened after the excitement of getting off. With every sound on deck she would start, look eagerly at her hnsband, and say,—

"Joshua, are we sailing? Has she left the shore?"

At last there was a great tumult over head; the loud tramp of feet, the rushing of cable, and a loud voice giving orders; then a continued vibration, a long, swinging motion, and the sloop was on her course.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE SHIPWRECK.

Two vessels,—one steering eastward toward the ocean, one bearing west,—passed each other on the Long Island Sound. That going toward the ocean was a staunch brig, thoroughly prepared for a long sea-voyage. The other was one of those small coasters that ran up and down the Connecticut shore at stated intervals. It was a beautiful little craft, but altogether unfitted for the rough weather and sweeping storms that the brig was likely to encounter.

The morning had been a pleasant one, and the little coaster had ventured nearer the middle of the sound than was usual to its cautious commander. Just then he was getting a little anxious, for a sudden and rather fierce breeze had sprung up, dead against him. The strong wind that baffled him swelled the sails of the brig, and drove it forward at a dashing rate. It plunged on, ploughing up reefs of silver from the deep and flinging them back to the sunshine, which broke in fitful gleams from a pile of gray clouds that were rolling and heaving in the depths of the sky.

As the two vessels met,—the larger one careering proudly through the waters that had already began to lash themselves into a tumult, the little craft struggling like a half-drowned bird in the teeth of the wind,—two figures appeared almost opposite each other on the separate decks. That on the brig was a tall man, whose hair,

taken by the wind and scattered back from the forehead, revealed a face that seen once could never be forgotten. It was the man whose sermon cast a whole audience into tears, in that little church in New Haven.

The other figure was crowded close to the bulwarks of the coaster, and held to them with both hands, while her eyes were bent on the brig. The wind had lifted her hood, and, seizing upon her beautiful hair, swept it back from her face, which was kindled with wild enthusiasm. The two vessels rushed close together,—so close that there was great danger of collision. The man at the helm of the coaster strove to veer his craft, but the wind and the billows heaved against it too fearfully for that. It struggled and pitched violently in the water, and must have been swept away had the brig turned a dozen feet from its course. As it was, the two vessels passed each other so closely that spray from the rushing prow of the brig fell in showers over the coaster's deck, and dashed the streaming hair of Amy Leonard in wet masses to her shoulders.

That moment the man upon the brig saw her and uttered a faint cry, as if a ghost had just drifted up to his feet from the waves. He knew the face instantly; never could he mistake those eyes; the same frightened look was in them now that he had seen when she took that solemn oath to Arnold. It was she,—the woman whose death had been so coarsely proclaimed to him only a week before,—there, and alone.

But the minister had scarcely time to utter a single cry and fling out his arm, insanely challenging the coaster to stop, when his vessel made a plunge and rushed away, leaving the coaster struggling in the teeth of the wind. The poor little vessel at last fought its way to the main

shore, and folded its sails safely in one of the numerous coves that such crafts are apt to fly to in a tempest.

But the brig went boldly out to sea with her sails set,—as it were defying the tempest that was looming in its path. Still, the minister stayed upon deck, walking up and down, in a sort of frenzy. The ship plunged and reeled, and threatened to cast him headlong, as he walked; but that mattered nothing. He did not heed the storm, or care that it threatened him with danger. The thought that he had been betrayed into another sin,—that an innocent human creature might suffer by it, while he was locked up in that reeling prison, drove him wild. He looked at the clouds—lead-colored and heavy, that broke, and formed, and mustered again, making the very sky tumultuous—in dreary dismay.

He was willing to be buffeted by the waves, tossed against rocks, hurled from breaker to breaker, if one would cast him ashore at last, with just enough of life to right the wrong he had done,—and die.

Osborne knew, well enough, that all this was madness, that nothing could release him from those hated planks till they had borne him to the tropics: then it would be too late; still the impossibility did not seem real. He was in sight of land. The waters which tossed him onward were buffeting the oceanward shores of Long Island. The sea was not so rough but that a boat might live to reach the nearest point.

Osborne went to the captain, who was a kind man in his way, and asked with eagerness that a boat might be lowered to set him on shore. He did not care in what place, only that his feet might touch the dry land again. The captain laughed, and told him that ministers were always cowards,—that the sight of a black cloud in the

sky was sure to drive them into a panic. As for a boat, nothing of the kind that he had on board would live half an hour in a sea like that. He being a minister and never having sailed before, did not understand the meaning of those great blue-black clouds mustering up from the northeast, or the foam that rose ominously on each wave, like an upheaving of snow from the angry waters. A boat! Why he, Captain Hale, was beginning to question if his good ship would weather the tempest that threatened. It had arisen already far beyond all thoughts of a boat; besides, every hand would be wanted to work the ship.

The minister saw how mad his project was, and abandoned it in despair; but the heart in his bosom was heavy as granite. He was being dragged off, without power of resistance, that some great crime might be perpetrated in his absence. He began to suspect what that issue was. Once he had seen Arnold and the young French lady together. He had not thought much of it at the time, but now he remembered vividly the happy look of her face.

Osborne was a singularly good man. The reader must not judge of him by Arnold's words, or by the weakness he had exhibited in leaving the country. But he carried about in his confused memory a vague consciousness that he had done the great wrong which Arnold accused him of; but this seemed of minor importance to him now. If the consequence of his own misdeeds could by any possibility injure an innocent person, he stood ready to bring condemnation on himself, rather than ruin on another. But how could this be accomplished? The ship rushed on, inexorable as fate. No power of man could have stopped it; for even then it was tempest-driven, and

rushed through the waves with a force that filled every one on board with dread.

Osborne was brave enough then. He was not afraid to die. Death had never been the evil, above all others, from which he would have shrunk. To a nature like his, any thing that destroyed his usefulness, and took away his people's love, was ten thousand times worse than a transit, however painful, from one life to another. But, when he reflected that his safety might be the salvation of others, he, too, watched the mustering storm with keen anxiety. If the wind and waves would only go down, the captain might be persuaded to set him on shore. He had money, and that he was ready to give,—leaving himself penniless,—if it would only accomplish his deliverance. But, while his soul was torn with impatience, the tempest threatened them more and more fiercely. So far as it was possible, the sails had been taken in; but one, streaming in fragments overhead, was rent off piece by piece, and given in rags to the wind. But for this the brig would have been scudding under bare poles. The wind had changed, and set in shorewards, where a line of breakers sent the turbulent whiteness upwards in masses, and hurled this scudding foam into the deep gray of the horizon.

At sunset the whole force of the tempest was upon them. The waves rose and swelled in black, heaving grandeur, crowned with great drifts of foam, sweeping the ship as if its hull, masts, and the cordage that thrilled and quivered like human nerves strained to breaking, were but a handful of driftwood, over which they leaped with scarcely a break, and dashed themselves into a whirlwind of foam among the breakers.

When the sun set, a wonderful change came upon the

sky. The great dome, which bent like solid lead above the ocean, broke up into tumultuous black clouds, which rolled through the troubled atmosphere, and piled themselves along the west in huge mountains, black and gray, through which lakes of lurid crimson came out like seas of blood, buried deep down among the barren rocks of a desert.

These pools of red light gave a little hope to the anxious souls on board that brig. They might be a signal that the wind was about to change again, or be checked in its violence.

The captain said this, turning his rugged face in white terror from the breakers, whose thunder boomed nearer and nearer, to cast a look of terrible anxiety upon the west.

"If not, the God of heaven only knows what will become of us," he muttered in hoarse anguish, addressing Osborne, who stood near him at the helm.

Osborne lifted his forehead to the sky, and his lips moved. The expression of that face gave the captain courage. With one hand grasping the almost useless helm, he seized upon the minister's garments with the other.

"You have no fear," he said. "You believe that we shall be saved?"

"Yes. I believe."

As he spoke, the wind, which had lulled for a moment, came raving over them again. The waves, fierce, shorter, and ravenous as wild animals, seized upon the brig, and heaved it shorewards; leaped over it, wrenched at its quaking timbers, hurled it down into black watery chasms, spurned it upwards to the ridge of an outheaving wave; tore its masts up, and hurled them overboard, dragging the tortured craft down with a new burden; and then a

great swell of the sea sent her quivering like a human soul on the verge of the breakers. Another looming rush sent her forward with a long sweep, and clinched her between the jaws of two rocks, which showed themselves awfully through the hissing whiteness of the foam.

A desperate lurch, a horrible crushing sound, as if the brig were a living thing in its death throes, and the great waves left it quivering in those rocky jaws, and retreated, gathering strength for a new onset.

The captain had kept faithful to his helm. It was useless, still he could not forsake his post. But now, with the timbers grinding to atoms under his feet, and the boiling whiteness of the breakers all around him, the stout man gave way, and would have fallen on his knees in despair; but Osborne held him up by the great moral force which the close presence of death had awakened in his own soul.

"Arouse yourself," he said; "so long as one timber is bolted to another, all is not lost. These rocks, that seemed our worst enemies, will hold the ship together a few minutes longer. Thank God, there are neither women nor little ones on board."

The crew gathered around him. His sacred character was a forlorn hope, to which they clung like children. They expected only prayers; but while his heart rose to God, his lips urged the men to action.

"Before another wave is upon us, and the planks are torn away from under our feet, seize upon such fragments of the wreck as may help you in the water."

The men gave a forlorn cheer, and went to work gathering up wet ropes, and securing themselves to broken fragments of the masts and yards.

"And you," said the captain, stretching out his brawny

arms to Osborne: "minister, I am strong; I can swim; hold fast to me. If we sink, I will go first."

"Yes," answered Osborne, with a wan smile. "I am needed: my life must not be lost. God will give us both strength, my friend. The danger is terrible, but we shall not die."

The awful blackness of an outheaving wave was upon them. The captain flung one iron arm around the minister; the other he held firmly to the splintered stump of his mainmast.

It came on, a huge column of waters, arching grimly black in the red light, which was almost quenched in the west. Huge windrows and curtains of spray foamed over it like banners from a battlement. It plunged upon them with a terrific shock, driving the wreck half-a-ship's length further into the breakers, with its open ribs crushed, and the sea boiling through its hold. When the wave surged back not a living soul was upon the wreck; but many dark objects were battling for life with the breakers. One or two, wounded by the rocks, were overwhelmed; but when the rest were about to sink, another watery monster gathered them up like straws and hurled them upon the shore.

Among these was the minister. The sailors, hardy and powerful men, knew that not to struggle was to die, and dragged themselves beyond the retreating wave. With the breath beaten from his body, Osborne seized upon a tuft of salt grass with blind instinct, and clung to it desperately. The suction of the water dragged at him like a pack of wolves, straining his limbs, and half-uprooting the grass. Another wave would have found him helpless, but as it is looming upon the beach a pair of great strong arms seized upon the minister and dragged him into safety.

CHAPTER XL

COMING INTO PORT.

THE vessel which was to bring the Arnold family to New Haven had been watched and waited for only as a craft freighted with love ever is watched. When she first rose on the horizon, like a white sea-gull with its wings outspread, Paul de Montreuil stood on the wharf with a telescope in his hand, searching the luminous fog through and through, as if his own heart had been lost there and could only be recovered with great vigilance.

All at once, while he was looking to the left, the little vessel came fluttering out of the silvery distance, and hovered between the blue line of water and the soft white clouds in the sky, as if it belonged as much to heaven as earth. Paul's heart leaped in his bosom as he saw the sails dip and bathe themselves, as it were, in the rosy light; for, though it was not sunset, opal tints rippled the water as if reefs of pink coral and ridges of amber lay just beneath the surface, and gave their riches to every wave. His heart told him what ship it was long and long before his telescope discovered the truth; still that heart was in a flutter of doubt up to the last moment. Hope had mounted so high in his soul that he dreaded disappointment like a coward.

She came near, catching the sunset on her sails, till he could see figures upon the deck,—men and women, all looking towards the shore. Then his glass took them

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in with certainty: it gave back face after face to his search, but not *hers*. The glass shook in his hand: he was about to dash it down, when a female figure came clearly out from the group, and stood leaning over the bulwarks. It was Hannah.

Paul grew wild with delight, now; he snatched up the glass and reassured himself. Then he paced up and down the dock, still looking seaward, as if he feared the little vessel might fly away and disappoint him yet. Again he would sit down upon a pile of lumber that lay there ready for shipment, and strive to wait with patience. The sunset was splendid that night, and the vessel came forward in a blaze of gorgeous colors. The white sails seemed tipped with flame. She ploughed her way through liquid topaz and melted rubies.

Paul loved all that was beautiful and grand in nature. This scene made his nerves thrill. It was like visible music to him.

"So it should be," was his wild lover-like thought. "My pearl, my gentle one, every thing beautiful should wait upon her. The winds that bring her to me should come whispering music and laden with perfume. She is so good, so true, so modest. Ah, shall I ever be worthy of her? Can she imagine how I love her?" And she, looking out from the deck of that little craft, saw a dark spot upon the distant wharf. How her eyes lightened! Her lips parted in sweet expectation. Under the concealment of her mantle she clasped two little hands, and a deep sigh thrilled up from her surcharged bosom, changing upon her lips into smiles.

"It is Paul! it is Paul!" she said in her heart. "He could not wait. He is on the watch. Oh, how he loves

me! How I love him! I wonder if it is a sin to worship any one so much?"

Amy Leonard crept close up to Hannah. She was shivering as with cold, though the evening was drawing on bland and warm. Her pale, sharpened features presented a mournful contrast to the happiness which made Hannah so lovely. "We are in sight of the town," she said, in a voice that seemed to shiver with the heart-chill which had seized upon her.

Hannah was so absorbed by her own happiness that she did not hear the low speech or feel the presence of this miserable young creature. "I wonder," she whispered to herself, "if this sweet feeling can be a sin? Oh no, no, it is something that the angels understand and share with us! They must love one another, or heaven would be nothing to them."

Amy saw the glow on her friend's face, and sunk down to a seat close by her, mute and cold. No words of explanation had ever passed between these two school-mates; for in those days girls did not chatter, like magpies, of feelings that are always too sacred for light speech, and household secrets were seldom given carelessly to the children of a family. Hannah knew that something was terribly wrong between her family and that of the cabin on the Yantic; but having no person to consult with, and being naturally discreet in asking questions, she had no real idea of the trouble that threatened them, nor dreamed that it would interfere with the blissful destiny that lay before her. So, with hope brightening her serene face, she gazed landward, knowing that he was there waiting.

While Hannah looked afar off in her innocent joy, Amy sat drooping by her side unnoticed and desolate. Every gust of wind that urged her towards the shore, wrung un-

uttered moans from her soul. Each wave that lifted the vessel forward was answered by a pulse of agony from her bosom. What had she to expect in that beautiful spot to which the winds were drifting her? How would he meet her? Was it possible for her to act in antagonism to his wishes? Oh, if she might but die then and there! Had her sin of disobedience been so terrible that this great misery must spring out of it? The same bland air that made Hannah smile so joyously chilled poor Amy through and through. Her limbs shook and her very teeth chattered. The great shawl which she had worn during the whole passage seemed insufficient to give her warmth, muffle it around her as she would. She had been watching Hannah's face, and following those eager eyes, with a wild, frightened look. She saw the figure of a man waiting on the wharf. Was it he, her most bitter enemy, yet the dearest being upon earth? Was it he? The doubt wrung a broken moan from her lips. Hannah heard the sound, and turning suddenly saw the gentle sufferer crouching at her feet. The gray anguish in that young face frightened all the happiness out of hers.

"Dear Amy, I am glad you have come on deck at last. How ill you must have been, poor child! The sickness has left you so pale, so deathly, I should hardly know you."

"Yes," answered Amy, wearily, "I am changed,—oh, how changed! By and by, Hannah, you, perhaps, will not want to know me."

"There, now," answered Hannah, "isn't this a strange thing to say. What on earth can ever make me love you less? I am ashamed of you, Amy Leonard."

Amy lifted her yearning gaze to the face bending over her so full of sweet gravity. There was something in

her look that drove all the joy from Hannah's thoughts. She sat down, and passed her arm caressingly over the poor girl's shoulder.

"What makes you so pale, dear? I cannot bear to see you unhappy now, of all times in the world. Tell me all about it."

Amy shrunk away from her arm, shuddering.

"How strangely you act, Amy. What have I done?"

"You, you. Nothing."

"Then why creep away from me, as if I were something hateful to you?"

"I did not—oh, I did not. Hannah! Hannah! if you only—only——"

She broke off, and covering her face with both hands, sat motionless, evidently striving to gather strength. Then she arose with a pitiful smile and said,

"Don't mind me, Hannah. It's a shame to dash your happiness with my low spirits. I will go down."

"Not yet," said Hannah, detaining her with gentle force. "Tell me, dear, why you are so sad. Is it—is it because of this wedding? Don't look so wild, dear. You have been so down-hearted ever since we heard of it, that I cannot help thinking so."

"Let me go down! Let me go down!"

The words broke from lips pale as snow. The poor creature did, indeed, look wild and white.

Hannah dropped her hand from the shawl by which she had been detaining her.

"Oh, Amy, I did not mean to hurt you!"

Amy came back with a quiver on her lips, and in shrinking penitence held them up to be kissed.

"Amy, at any rate, I love you like a sister."

Tears sprang into Amy's eyes. "I know it—I know it," she said. "You have all been good to me."

"And we always shall be."

Amy went down to the little cabin, and there, wringing her hands in bitter sorrow, wailed out:

"Oh, if I could but suffer alone! If I could but submit without sin! God help me, God help me, what misery I may bring upon *her* too!"

Meantime the vessel went careering on its way, the wind kissing its sails and the waves breaking in showers of foam from its prow. The sunset was deepening into golden purple, and close by lay the city bathed in its dusky light. Down the little craft swooped toward the wharf, folded her wings, and lay still upon the water, ready to be dragged into mooring, as a bird gives itself up to the snarer.

Before she touched the wharf Paul leaped on board, clearing a broad space of water with one bound.

"Come," he said, gathering Hannah's little hand under his arm, "let us walk to the hotel. Your mother and the rest can ride."

Hannah could not refuse; her whole heart went with the request. She did not even attempt to withdraw her hand from the clasp which still held it, but, with a light leap sprang with him on shore.

"Are you glad, are you happy, as I am, darling? Do you love me yet, dear, dear girl?"

"Do I love you? The strange question. Do I love myself?"

"God bless you, darling! Come, let us go. See what a splendid evening it is. For one half hour I will have you all to myself."

They walked up the wharf and were gone. One half hour of happiness, at least was theirs.

The Maria Jane from Norwich was pulled close up to the long wharf, and its passengers made their way to the hotel, which was scarcely more than a nominal home to the young Arnold. A sad and dejected party it was which presented itself before the good landlady. They looked more—as she afterward expressed herself—like people going to a funeral than a wedding, with such faces! all the lights she could put in her best room failed to render it cheerful. Then the young man was away, as usual, and she felt herself quite put about to entertain them.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE BRIDAL TOILET.

ARNOLD was with Laura that evening, and a more perfect contrast between the dim room where the Arnold family sat, and the exquisite boudoir in which the young man was lounging away the last few hours that was to intervene before his marriage, could not well be imagined.

Laura stood before him in her wedding-garments. The crimson curtains, sweeping over the windows, served that lovely picture as a background,—the lights of a gilded candelabrum fell athwart her robe of thick, white silk, and made the silver bouquets with which it was brocaded, glit with frost-like brightness. Diamond drops fell

like dew among the white roses that crowned the sweep of her beautiful hair, and lighted up her stomacher in clusters of rainbow flame. The sleeves, which fitted close down to her elbow, terminated in a mist of lace, like that which left a scarcely perceptible shadow on her bosom.

From the rustling folds of her robe her little feet peeped out, clad in dainty satin shoes, balanced on heels that seemed cut from coral, with rubies lying like frozen flame in the heart of each white rosette.

With his usual haste for gratification, the bridegroom had urged her to don this dress, that he might know how beautiful she would be when the wedding evening came. Why should he wait till then and share her presence with so many others?

He had been praising her: you could have told it by the peachy bloom on her cheeks, the shy gladness that broke through those curling lashes. Yes, she was beautiful, and he had told her so. The fever of half-sated admiration glowed in his eyes; the triumph of his "ruling passion" was so vivid that she could not help thinking it love.

"Now," she said, blushing and shrinking like an overdressed child; "may I go and put these things away before the gloss is brushed off? or have you some defect to point out?"

"Defect!" exclaimed Arnold with ardor. "Who shall presume to question any thing you wear or say? Not I! To the depths of my heart I feel how beautiful you are. Not the natives here! When have they seen any thing approaching this? Such magnificence will astonish them!"

"I hope so, if that pleases you," she said, blushing

happily, as she swept past him and tried to make her escape.

He caught her hand and kissed it ardently. She laughed and struggled till the dimples came to her cheeks; then, with a half-tender, half-coquettish protest, obeyed his gesture, and sunk to an ottoman which stood by his chair. Thus, with those rich garments settling around her like crusted snow, she formed another picture, at which he gazed in greedy triumph.

There is seldom perfect equality in marriage, because from depth of affection or circumstance the balance of love usually preponderates on one side, thus rendering one party the monarch, and the other a subject. That man or woman is generous, indeed, if he or she never presume upon the power which is obtained through excess of love in another. Arnold was not of this class. He delighted in testing the extent of his authority over that queenly nature, and kept her at his feet, as we trifle with a child.

"So you like the dress?" she said, looking down upon it. "But I was very foolish to indulge you. It will seem old and familiar on our wedding-day."

"Perhaps so," he said carelessly: "but I am always brushing the down from my fruit. Never mind, it is pretty enough for a second examination, and one never tires of these things: there is power as well as show in them."

He touched the cluster of jewels on her bosom with a gleam in his eyes that made her shrink. Did he, indeed, care for those things so much, not because they were hers, but from the value that they represented?

She felt this question in her heart without putting it clearly before her intellect, but, for the moment, it made her thoughtful. He saw it, and touched her cheek.

"Do you love me?" he said, in a voice that was in its very tones a caress.

She blushed, like a flower when the sun rises, but only answered with a brilliant flash of the eyes and a smile that fell upon him like a glow of light.

He leaned back in his chair, toying with the rings upon her fingers, and smiling in the fullness of his content.

That instant a heavy knock sounded from the front door, and directly after a servant passed in from the hall, announcing an old gentleman who was in search of Mr. Arnold.

Laura started up, blushing crimson beneath the admiring eyes of her servant, which were fixed on her singular costume. She stood a moment irresolute, then fled through a side door, while Arnold followed her with an earnest glance. He saw the white folds of her dress fluttering through the darkness beyond, and, half-tempted to follow her, moved a step toward the door.

"Go, go," cried a laughing voice. "It will take me a good hour to get into a civilized dress again. But come in the morning early perhaps they will have arrived; but any way don't fail to come. *Au revoir!*"

She glided back a few steps, kissed her hand, and darted off, calling out, "*Au revoir! au revoir!*"

Arnold turned away, and followed the servant, who stood outside the door.

An old man was in the hall waiting.

"Ah, is it you, sir?" said Arnold, holding out his hand with some constraint. "I did not expect you quite so soon."

The old man took the hand reached out to him; but Arnold noticed that the hard fingers which closed on his were cold as ice.

"They have all come, I suppose," said Arnold, dropping the hand, as he turned to search for his hat. "I will go with you at once. You must have had a good wind?"

"Yes; I think so; but didn't notice about it," answered the father, absently; and they went out together, falling into dead silence as they threaded the dark streets,—not arm in arm, but walking a little apart, as if some invisible bar kept them from that close proximity which persons who love each other without stint are sure to seek.

While the elder Arnold had been standing in the hall of de Montreuil's dwelling, a female figure, which had followed him all the way from the hotel, lingered in the shadows that lay heavily on the street, waiting for him to come forth. She had not watched long when the two men whom she most wished yet dreaded to see appeared in the open door, revealed clearly by a tall light which the servant held in the background.

She saw that the old man's face was pale and strangely stern, while a black frown lowered on the forehead of his son. She shrank against the palings of a vast garden, whose fragrance swept across her like a mockery, as the two men passed so near that an outstretched hand might have touched them. Her heart beat so thick and fast that she grew faint in the atmosphere of his presence; but when he was gone, and she heard only the sound of his retreating footsteps, she staggered forward with a moan upon her lips, as if to follow.

The servant stood in the doorway, holding up his candle that the two guests might find their way more surely into the street. He was retreating, and about to close the door, when Amy came rapidly up the steps and asked for the lady.

It was still early in the evening, and the man naturally

mistook her for one of the sewing-women who had been constantly going in and out of the house, almost at will, for the last ten days. So, merely observing that mademoiselle was in her own apartment no doubt, he turned into a side-room, and left her alone in the hall.

A broad, oaken staircase, with carved balustrades, ascended from the hall. At the first landing stood a bronze statue, holding a torch with one hand, while it pointed upward with the other. To her excited imagination this image seemed directing her to her destination; so she mounted the stairs, and glided away into the chambers above.

There was no light in the upper hall save that which came from the landing below, but that proved enough to reveal something of the chamber which she entered through a door which stood ajar. It was a spacious apartment, with a vast white bed standing in the centre, like a snow-heap, for floods of drapery brooded over and fell around it, looking grandly spectral in the dim gleams that shot up from the statue. The wind, as it stole through the window, brought with it a rustle of the silken curtains, and some delicate perfume penetrated the atmosphere, as if flowers were breathing somewhere in the darkness. Beyond the bed, an arrow of light shot half across the room from a door that stood on the latch.

Amy crossed the carpet without a sound, for it was thick and heavy as velvet moss. A moment's hesitation, a quick breath, and she knocked at the door.

There was a sweeping rustle of silks within—a slight jingle, as if some ornament had been hastily flung down, and then a clear voice called out:

"Come in!"

Amy opened the door and stood on the threshold,

struck dumb by the scene which presented itself. Before a dressing-table, draped with white lace, and surmounted by a mirror so broad and bright that it flung back a dozen beautiful objects, stood Laura de Montreuil, in full bridal dress, as if she had just come from the altar. Like a white swan, that admires its own graceful image in a lake, she surveyed herself with a sort of pleasant wonder that any thing could be so beautiful. Her round arms were uplifted, and she was bending her head slightly sideways, trying to undo the wreath of white roses that crowned it.

"Why don't you come and help me?" she cried, dropping her hands wearily.

Amy stepped forward and took the crown from her head, absolutely unconscious of the action.

Laura's face was bent downward, and she had no idea that it was any one but her maid who offered the service till she resumed her position and saw Amy Leonard standing before her with the bridal crown in her hands. A pang of astonishment seized upon her; she reached forth her hand, took the roses, and laid them slowly on the table, keeping her fascinated eyes on that pale face.

"Amy Leonard!"

"Yes, lady, it is I," said Amy, in so sad a voice that Laura's heart fell to the sound.

They stood in silence, looking at each other until both grew white with intuitive dread.

"You wish to talk with me,—you have something to say," faltered Laura at last, trembling in all her limbs.

"Yes," answered Amy. "I came on purpose, and found my way here. How, I can hardly tell, for it seems to me as if I were walking in a dream."

"Well," said Laura, faintly, "we are together: you have a right to say any thing to me, no matter how cruel the thing is. You saved my life, Amy Leonard, and it belongs to you. What you want may be death, you know, but speak: I am only a coward in one thing."

"And I in every thing," said Amy.

"No, no, Amy Leonard, you are an angel! I only wish I were one bit like you. Coward! Great heavens! and those logs rolling and dipping you down, down, into the black waters. Still you held on. I feel your grip in my hair now. I hear the waters gurgle, and see the black streams pouring over that poor face. May God forsake me if I ever forget that fearful time, Amy."

"That was nothing. We must not think of it, for it looks like a claim. I couldn't help doing what I did, you know, and didn't consider what I was about. There was no merit, not a bit. If I hung on tight to you, or the log, it was just the cowardice that was in me. So forget that. You must. I can't have it remembered in any way."

Laura shook her head, smiling sadly enough.

"I cannot forget any thing, Amy, and should hate myself if that one hour of our two lives could ever leave my heart."

Amy heard this impatiently, and put out her hands, as if to force back the gratitude that oppressed her.

"Stop!" she said, with a wild glitter of the eye. "That dress—that room—the roses with which I have decrowned you—what do they mean? Are you already married to my—to Benedict Arnold?"

Laura blushed like a crimson sunset, and gathering both hands over the jewels on her bosom, strove to hide them in the shame of her detected vanity.

"Are you married?" said Amy, with cold stillness.

"No. It was a piece of folly. He wanted to see how it would look, so I put the dress on; for oh, Amy, I can deny him no one thing that he asks. Don't think worse of me than I deserve. Indeed I don't care myself. It isn't vanity or pride, only he wished it."

Amy saw nothing of the dusky blush—heard nothing of this breathless excuse, except the first words: *She was not married.*

There was no brightening of the face, only a look of infinite relief, as if the tension of some painful doubt had broken away.

Amy cast down her eyes and trembled. How was she to begin? What could she say, being just to the truth and yet keeping faith with him?

Laura looked at her visitor with anxiety, not unmingled with impatience; but Amy dropped her head upon her bosom, till the features were almost hidden; and then a strange terror came upon Laura, her eyes shone brilliantly, her lips parted and grew white. She recoiled to the dressing-table, and pressed one hand hard upon it for support.

Amy looked up, and the white faces of those two miserable young creatures read each other. Laura spoke first, but her voice, usually mellow and joyous, was so hoarse that a look of terror broke into Amy's face, and she advanced a step, prompted to offer help.

Laura pushed her back with both hands, desperately, loathingly. Where was her gratitude then? What did she care for the life which would henceforth pray upon her soul like poison? Why was it given back to her? She fell upon her knees by the table, its filmy drapery trembled beneath the shiver of her frame. The jewels she had

just taken off flung a rainbow of mocking light athwart her forehead. She crushed the white roses under the weight of her arm, and thus the glittering mirror reflected her.

A long, dead silence followed, and then Laura lifted her face. It was white, and locked.

"Is this thing true?"

Amy bent her head. She could not speak.

Laura struggled slowly to her feet. She did not look like the same being who had stood at the mirror only a few minutes before.

"Tell me all," she said shivering.

"Ask him!"

"Him! Ask him! The traitor! The double-dyed traitor!" she cried, clenching her hand, while the hot life flamed back to her marble cheeks. "And you—you. Shameless!"

"No, not that," said Amy, in a low voice. "I have done wrong, but not to him or you."

"Not to me! his betrothed! his bride! his wife! Not to me!"

"No, lady, not to you. He loved me—or, God help me! I thought so—long before your face ever darkened our lives."

"He loved you!"

"Yes, he loved me——"

"And I—I——"

The unhappy young creature seemed sinking in the whirlwind of her own passion.

"Be appeased," said Amy, sadly. "He does not love me now, or why should you wear those garments?"

"He does not love you now—no, no. How could he?"

She wrung her hands; she clasped them fiercely above

her head, and walked the room to and fro like a panther bounding to its jungle. All at once she stopped before Amy, who was following her with affrighted eyes. She gazed at her till the fiery rage in her glance burned down.

"You saved my life—you saved my life—you, Amy Leonard. Oh! if you could take it now. If I could tear it out and fling it at your feet!"

"It was not my fault," pleaded Amy. "I couldn't help it any more than I could help him loving you."

"Loving me! Do you believe that?"

"Yes, I believe it."

"You believed this and did not die?"

"Oh, me! who could help it? Neither death nor love will come for the asking, or I should not be here to torture you."

"But you are soft and gentle—such people can change. See here, Amy, I am rich, very rich! Oh! heavens! what is this? Am I so mean?—so lost?"

Again that noble girl bent to the whirlwind of her great sorrow. Surely the outrage that man had put upon her justified even that tempest of scorn and anguish. At last she was quieter, a mournful calmness came on, through which her grand nature began to reveal itself. She went into the next room and fell upon her knees before the white bed, wrestling with herself like one who would soon learn to "suffer and grow strong."

Amy knelt down also. Poor girl! that moment she would have given him up, could the sacrifice have been made without sin. Nay, so gentle and so true was her pure heart that she would—for such things may be and sometimes are among women—she would have gone away with her innocent shame to suffer life alone, so great

was her gentle compassion for the unhappy girl in the next room.

While she was still on her knees Laura came in. A large cloak was flung over the whiteness of her robe, and the hood lined with crimson silk made the pallor of her face more impressive. She touched Amy on the shoulder.

"Come!"

"Where?"

"To the hotel where he has gone."

Amy stood up, wondering at the calmness that had fallen upon that noble face.

Without another word of explanation they went out together.

CHAPTER XLII.

UNDER THE ELMS.

MRS. ARNOLD was in her chamber waiting with a heavy heart for the return of her husband, and for the first sight of her son.

But the two men did not return so promptly as she expected. Under one of the noble elms which shaded the college grounds they had paused in deep conversation. Both were agitated, and the voice of the old man was stern and deep, almost as if it had been uttering a malediction.

"Benedict," he was saying, "before this girl shall be left to her ruin, I will tell that which shall destroy you."

"What, the thing you hinted at when I was home! as if I gave it a thought."

"Yes, Benedict, it is of your crime I speak."

"'Crime,' sir!"

"The first great crime which brought distraction upon me,—hardness of heart on you."

"Speak out, sir, you exasperate me with half-sayings. Of what crime am I guilty?"

"It is hard to speak of it. I have never uttered the awful words before, but you will have them. I speak of ARSON AND FRAUD."

The old man spoke so sternly, and the words came out so like a denunciation, that Benedict staggered back and hid his face in the shadows. Conscience, after all, made a coward of him. His voice shook when he spoke.

"You charge these things on me. This suspicion, sir, is enough to separate father and son forever."

"Suspicion! Benedict, I saw the act."

"You!—you!"

"As God shall judge us, my son, I saw you."

"Ha!"

"It was a stormy night. Do you remember it? Can you ever forget it? A wild, stormy night—not with rain or snow, but the wind blew awfully and the lightning flashed in and out through the clouds,—dry lightning, such as makes the air hot around you? I went home. Do you remember leaving the shutters open? You were to bar them and sleep in the store. It was a common thing, and when you asked it I had nothing to oppose. People say that when great evils threaten you, some presentiment warns you against them. It was not so with me. I went out very happy. We had done a good day's business, and I was going home to a contented wife and pleasant fireside. It was not a presentiment that brought me back."

"It must have been some infernal fiend," hissed the young man through his clinched teeth.

"It did the work of a fiend for me and mine," was the rejoinder. "The wind rose, and swelled, and rioted that night as I have never seen it before nor since. There was a long stretch of woods between the town and our homestead. The gale tore through the trees like a tornado. I could hear the great limbs crack and go crashing through the branches underneath, tearing them away to work new havoc. Just as I entered this wood, a great hemlock, hollow at the trunk, was lifted up by the roots and hurled across the road not twenty feet from where I stood. The crash frightened me. Any one of the great limbs, that were twisted off like straws, would have killed me in falling. I turned when the hemlock fell and ran out of the woods. It was surely unsafe to go home, so I made up my mind to hurry back and sleep with my son in the store."

"An infernal piece of folly," muttered the son.

"I reached the store and was going in, but one leaf of the shutters was open, and, thinking the wind had torn out the bolt, I stopped to fasten it—and looked in."

"Well, sir, and you saw, what?"

"I saw my own son standing over a mass of burning shavings, on which he was heaping pine-knots and pouring oil. The smoke already filled the store; flames leaped from the burning mass, and licked the ceiling. I strove to call out, but the sight struck me dumb. The words struggled in my throat like a death-rattle. I beat against the shutters with my hands. I tried the door. It was bolted inside. Then I shouted; agony unchained my voice as terror had chained it: but the wind swept the cries from my lips. Nothing could be heard that night above its fierce howls. Then the door was burst open and great

waves of flame broke through. With them came a human form. Yours, yours, Benedict Arnold. I saw it clearly by the vivid light of the fire. I saw it leaping through the darkness and away into the woods I had not dared to pass. Ten thousand devils seemed howling a welcome to their fellow-sinner as you entered the shadows. I ran after you. I shouted furiously that you should turn back and help me put out the fire; but it was useless. You had plunged into the black chasms of the wood, and were gone. Then I went back to the store, panting for breath, bathed in sweat, faint and sick. The fire had broken out from every crevice; flames were leaping through the windows; and, curling upwards from the door, they lapped the shingled roof madly, as wolves drink blood. I was too late, too late."

The old man took out his handkerchief and dashed it across his forehead, wiping great drops of agony away. The moonbeams fell on his head, and against the crimson folds of his handkerchief those rugged features were ghastly white.

Arnold was the first to speak. While this terrible narrative was poured forth, more like a last appeal than an accusation, his iron heart had resumed its hardness. The first shock of a conscience not quite dead had left him dumb. But when the old man stopped, trembling and exhausted, his audacious spirit came back.

"Old man, were you crazy then, or are you crazy now?"

"Almost, almost, I fear!" panted the unhappy parent.

"I should think so; to hunt an only son down with charges like this—why they are worthy of a romance."

"How true they are, you and the God who shall hereafter judge us both know well," was the solemn reply.

"I should think," answered the son, still keeping in the shadow, however, for he could not face the old man even then, "I should think this wild scene sprang from a wish to frighten me into your measures, but that my own father cannot believe me quite a coward."

"A coward! No. It is I that have been the coward."

"In not having courage enough to denounce me, perhaps. A tender father to regret that!"

"I knew that the penalty was death."

"And is still, father."

The old man groaned. Arnold took courage.

"You saw this and did not inform. It is too late now: the insurance has been paid and spent long ago. I thought my own father knew me better than to suppose I would be frightened into any thing, especially with threats about a dead matter like this. You allowed the insurance to be paid without speaking."

"True, true. I was a coward, and had no strength from that hour till the good God saw fit to call me back to his fold. I tried to drown it all out of my brain. But since then I have become a man, an honest man, for that debt of sin has been paid, every farthing."

"Paid! What, the insurance?"

"Yes, Benedict, your sin has made me a poor man, but, thank God, I am free of that sin."

"You have played the fool to this extent, and how?"

"I have mortgaged the farm. Your mother and I are working and saving every way to keep the old roof over our heads; but your debt is paid so far as man is concerned."

"So you have given away the home from over my mother's head, and now follow me with reproaches! It is

doubtless the part of a good Christian to first disinherit and then pursue an only son with threats of ruin."

"I do no such thing, Benedict. So far as the power lay in me I have atoned for your crime."

"'Crime,' again!"

"'Crime,' I said; but another I will never see go unpunished. This girl, the daughter of my old friend—while it is time, she must be saved."

"But I am pledged, openly pledged to marry another. You know that, yet come to me with this sort of preaching, as if faithlessness to one woman were not the same as desertion of another. I cannot marry both, that you must allow."

"I will not argue this matter," said the elder Arnold, "but my pledge is given to Joshua Leonard. It shall be fulfilled."

"Not by me, sir. I am not to be coerced. If the girl has pursued me here, take her back again before she attempts mischief, or it'll prove the worse for her. Tell her this."

"No, I will not."

"Then I will, and in words that shall make themselves felt in every nerve of her body. How dare she pursue me in this way!"

Arnold came out from the shadow of the elm, as he ceased speaking, and walked angrily across the green. The starlight shone on his face, and it was that of a demon.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE BRIDE AND THE WIFE.

ARNOLD entered the hotel with an imperious step, and a storm in his eyes. With these feelings he had no wish to meet his mother, and received Hannah's affectionate greeting almost with a rebuff. He was annoyed at Paul's presence, and, drawing Hannah aside, whispered in rude haste,

"Where is she? Where is Amy Leonard? I must see her alone."

"I don't know, Ben,—she went out I fancy. But what is the matter,—you look so strange, and father too? Dear father, you are pale."

Before the old man could answer, there was a quick sound of feet in the passage, and Laura de Montreuil entered, leading Amy by the hand. When the proud girl saw her brother, she stopped short and drew a sharp breath, but directly her eyes fell upon Benedict with a clear, stern light that pierced through his audacious assurance.

"Sir," she said, with grand self-possession, "look upon this fair creature, and then, if you can, refuse the redress I have come to demand."

Arnold cast a withering glance at Amy, but she bore it meekly. He went up to her, seized the hand which Laura held, and drew her aside. "Is this the way you keep an oath, traitoress?" he hissed through his clenched teeth.

Amy drew back, briefly saying, "It is kept. Arnold, I have told nothing."

He gained a little courage at this, and, approaching Laura, would have taken her hand, but she stepped back, rebuking him like a queen.

"Let me speak with you one moment alone," he pleaded.

"When this lady is your wife,—never till then."

"Laura; do you, can you cast me off, because a jealous girl pursues me with accusations that are false?"

"She false! Look at her,—is that a face to doubt?"

"You never loved me, Laura, or this person would have no power to change you so."

She silenced him with an imperious gesture.

"Remember," he said, drawing so close that his breath swept her cheek, "the ceremony of to-morrow night. Nothing can prevent it. Why expose your delicacy by this public scene?"

His breath made Laura faint, she turned away dizzy and pale.

"Go home and let me settle this," he urged, triumphing in her emotion. "Paul, Paul de Montreuil, take your sister home; she is excited; I have been cruelly maligned to her. Dear Laura, I intreat you, go home. In the morning I will explain."

Laura called back her strength, the noble pride flashed into her cheeks again. She turned to her brother, who came up greatly agitated. The scene had taken him completely by surprise.

"Paul, Paul, let us go away." This man—oh! Paul—this man—

She could not finish the sentence. All the anguish and pride of her nature rose up and overpowered her words.

"What is this? Give me some explanation," said Paul, with dignity. "Is it that you have refused to marry this gentleman?"

"Yes, brother, I refuse."

"Beware, Laura, or I may take you at your word," whispered Arnold.

She regarded him for a moment with lofty pride, then turned to her brother.

"Yes, Paul, I do most solemnly refuse to marry this bad man."

"And you mean this?" whispered Arnold.

She did not answer him, but looked at her brother.

"There will be a marriage to-morrow night, and at your house, Paul; but the bride is changed. See, I have dragged my wedding-dress through the streets in dust and dew. Hers shall be pure and white as snow. She gave me life, I give her—oh! Paul, Paul, take me home."

She moved toward the door and attempted to lift the latch. Arnold started forward and seized her hand.

"One word more. Do you, Laura de Montreuil, break our engagement here and forever?"

"Now and forever!" she answered, solemnly.

"And you wish me to marry this girl, Amy Leonard, at your brother's house to-morrow night?"

"I do!"

She was pale as marble, and her voice seemed passing over ice.

"Laura, reflect—take a little time. I have struggled and dared a great deal for you. Be brave—be yourself—and defy those who would separate us. I tell you this girl can bring forward no proofs of a claim against me!"

Laura stood looking at him wildly. His voice, pas-

sionately tender, had stirred her heart into revolt against its own generosity.

"Wait till to-morrow, dearest!"

He bent toward her and said this in a whisper which no one heard but herself. She did not answer him, but a look of yearning regret swept her face while her hand unconsciously answered his pressure with a faint clasp. His heart gave a triumphant bound, and anxious that she should go before any new appeal could be made to her gratitude, he opened the door that she might pass through.

Laura was about to advance into the passage, but started aside, for, close by the door, as if about to enter it, stood a person whose presence drove her back. It was a clergyman, whom she had often seen in his pulpit, and once or twice in the street, but so pale, so travel-worn, and disturbed in his appearance, that she recognized him with dismay. This man saw her bridal robes, and staggered back against the wall of the passage ghastly white. Arnold saw her recoil from the threshold and stepped forward again, looking past her into the dim passage, to learn the cause of her retreat. Osborne had recovered himself and stood before him, pale as ever, but stern with a solemn resolve.

For that one moment in his life Arnold lost all self-possession; but it was only for a moment. Quick as lightning his intellect resumed its vigor. He saw the peril of that man's presence, the certainty of defeat. All his plans had been laid on the assurance that this one man, the sole witness of his marriage, and the only person who could establish it as a fact, was safe on the ocean. The peril once seen, his decision was made. He retreated into the

centre of the room and called out, "Lady, come back one moment, I have yet another word to say."

Laura turned upon him, wild with new apprehension. There was not room to pass her in the doorway; but Osborne was visible close behind her in the passage.

Arnold turned his bold eyes steadily upon this man, and even made a gesture that he should keep silent. "As for the wedding," he said, throwing his arm around Amy, "I cannot, with propriety, indulge you, as Amy Leonard and I have been married considerably over a year: look up, little wife, and tell this good company if I speak the truth."

Amy did not answer. Her cold lips would have refused utterance had she attempted it.

"I am married to this pretty little soul, and consequently must decline acting at any other ceremony. My good father has been greatly exercised about my matrimonial plans of late. I hope he is satisfied now."

The elder Arnold looked sorrowfully on his son.

"You seem to doubt me. The tidings have struck you all dumb," continued the young man, looking around with a fierce, mocking laugh. "My proof is close at hand. It was the Rev. Jared Osborne who married us; and, providentially, he is in the house, eager, I dare say, to bear testimony to the fact."

Laura had staggered away from the door. Osborne stood in the opening. A beautiful smile lighted up his face, which had been haggard as death the moment before. He had proceeded directly to the hotel in his storm-beaten and travel-stained garments, resolved at all hazards to arrest the crime he dreaded. When he saw a woman come forth from Arnold's room in dazzling white, all strength forsook him and he felt ready to die. Arnold brought him to life again. Without his interposition the marriage was pro-

claimed. The good man comprehended nothing of what had gone before. He only knew that a terrible weight had been lifted from his soul and his pale face glowed with the new joy.

"Yes," he said, in a sweet, grateful voice, advancing towards the strangely united couple, "it was I who called down God's benediction on this young couple. Inasmuch as I did wrong in uniting them in secret, I ask forgiveness of God and of all who may have suffered by it."

His words were received in dead silence; not a breath seemed drawn. Arnold alone gave evidence of real vitality. The rest were like statues. Arnold turned to his father: "Now, sir, let us end this scene forever. This young person is my legally married wife. I acknowledge her as such before the whole world,—the more willingly because I know it will torture this haughty lady. Tell your deacons and our good neighbors in Norwich that they must carry their church discipline somewhere else. *My wife* is no subject for it. As for the old folks at the saw-mill, let them know that in forcing a wife upon me before I was ready to claim her, they have lost a daughter."

The father thus addressed turned sorrowfully away.

Then Paul de Montreuil started from the window against which he had leaned, and stood up stern and tall before the man who had offered this outrage to his sister,—his proud, beautiful sister, whose faculties were all locked up in mute astonishment. The insult hurled upon her was so stupendous that his pride refused to understand it.

"To-morrow," he whispered, with deadly scorn in his voice, "to-morrow I shall demand an explanation."

"It is here," answered Arnold, laughing hoarsely. "And a fair one you must admit. Why, man, it is of no

use to look daggers. A fellow with one pretty wife cannot marry another,—fond and willing as ladies sometimes are. Is not this explanation enough?"

Paul looked at him steadily. These mocking words made him quiver from head to foot.

"Are you coward and villain both?"

The words dropped from the young Frenchman's lips like leaden bullets. His eyes, lurid with rage, lighted up the pale features with deathly meaning.

Arnold was brave as a wild beast, and felt it in every drop of the hot blood that boiled in his veins. He almost shouted back the answer.

"Coward! You know better. Name your time and place."

His arm had been girding Amy's waist till then, but as this frenzy of passion seized upon him, he pushed her away, and she fell like a dead creature at his feet. This mournful sight restored Paul to his better self.

"This is no time nor place," he said. "But to-morrow."

"To-morrow be it then," cried Arnold, lifting his wife from the floor, and carrying her into another room. "Mother! mother! Come here. They have killed her among them."

Paul turned towards the window. Hannah was sitting on the high-backed couch, with her white face pressed against the crimson cushions. She was seized with a shivering fit as he drew near her.

"Hannah," he said, "must this part us?"

The answer came from her lips in broken gasps: "I—I don't know."

The minister interposed: "Young man, dare you ask that question with murder in your heart? Are you not even now planning the death of her brother?"

"Sir!" answered Paul, in haughty anger. "When the

honor of a family is outraged we do not go to the church for council."

Hannah leaned forward in her seat, and looked wildly from Paul to the minister.

"Is it death that he means?" she questioned in a hoarse whisper.

No one answered. Her face, locked and cold a moment before, began to quiver. The hands, that lay like dead things in her lap, clasped each other and were uplifted.

"Oh, Paul, Paul! He is my brother!"

"And she is my sister,—my insulted, wronged sister," he answered, pointing to Laura, who stood transfixed, her white face fearfully contracted, and her eyes burning like fire.

She turned her head, and came up to Paul.

"What is that you are saying?"

Paul threw his arm around her.

"Do not let us talk here, Laura."

"I thought some one spoke of killing him," she said. Then, with a sudden blaze of intelligence, and a firmer grasp of the hand, she cried out: "Do it, Paul! do it, or I will."

Hannah arose to her feet, but her strength gave way, and she fell back, holding out her arms and crying piteously:

"Paul! Paul!"

The young man was overwhelmed by the terrible passion of his sister, and could only turn his face towards her in answer to that pathetic cry.

All at once Laura changed. She sat down by Hannah with a dreary gesture of desolation.

"Did I frighten you, Hannah?" she said. "Don't be terrified; nothing shall harm you. My wrongs must rest

with myself. Paul, forget what I have been saying. It was wild, wicked, unwomanly. I charge you now,—most solemnly charge you,—not to harm this man."

"Laura," said Paul, in a voice that was stern, though compassionate; "the men of a house take care of its honor. Hannah, my beloved, trust me. I will do nothing that a just man should avoid. Have faith in me even in this painful trial."

He bent down with mournful grace and kissed Hannah upon the forehead, passing his hand over her hair with a mental blessing. Then he led his sister from the room.

CHAPTER XLIV.

CONFESSIONS OF DECEPTION.

WHEN Hannah Arnold found herself alone with Osborne, she arose, went towards him, and laid her hand on his arm.

"I think they mean to kill each other. You are one of God's holy ministers. I beseech you, I charge you to prevent it. This man is my betrothed husband; Benedict is my brother. The very thought of a conflict between them is awful."

"My poor young lady, I will do my best; but no person has influence over Arnold, I less than any one living. But I will not shrink from the duty."

Hannah pressed his arm gratefully with her trembling hand.

"Hush!" she whispered. "It is his step."

She had heard aright. Arnold opened the door and looked into the room.

"Hannah, go help my mother. Amy has just come out of her fainting-fit. Go: we must not have the servants called up, or this miserable affair will be all over town before morning."

Hannah left the room. Arnold addressed the clergyman:

"She has been frightfully ill, poor thing, and I now see that if this other affair had come off it would have killed her. I told her not to write, and did not know all. Whatever it was that sent you back, I am grateful for the accident. But for that, I might have gone on. After I saw you, the thing was impossible, and I am glad of it, for I never have and never shall love another woman."

"Poor thing! how she must have suffered!" said Osborne.

"It is over now. I will be kind to her, Osborne. Only help me to get her home again without scandal. I think the other party will be as anxious for that as I am. Go after them, Osborne. If the affair can be kept quiet among ourselves, I will make it worth your while."

"How!" exclaimed Osborne, sharply, and his forehead flushed crimson. "This to me, Arnold?"

"Well, well, whether you will aid me or not, I must tell you a truth which you will thank me for. The remembrance of that night in New York has made you unhappy."

"Unhappy!" exclaimed Osborne, turning pale again.

"It has made me weary of life."

"But there was nothing in it. I wonder you ever believed what we told you."

"But I remember——"

"Yes, being in a gambling-hell. Certainly that much is true; but it happened innocently enough. You remember going out into a hot August sun with us, after drinking moderately of wine at dinner, and being seized with a vertigo. We took you to the hotel, poured some brandy down your throat, and afterwards administered a rather heavy dose of laudanum,—congratulating each other that you were so easily disposed of, having made an engagement to meet some of our friends at the hall, and try our luck at cards. Your clerical character was in the way, and we did not know how to get rid of you. The sudden fit of illness was a godsend to us; but in our inexperience we gave just enough laudanum to excite instead of stupefying you.

"For a little time you were quiet, and seemed dropping off to sleep. We thought ourselves safe then, and stole away. Just as we entered the hall, my companion turned and saw that you were following us. The door was already open, and several card-tables revealed. It was too late then,—so we made no resistance, and you walked in with us. The moment the blaze of the chandelier fell on your face, I saw that the opiate had made you delirious. You looked around bewildered, spoke to no one, but walking wearily to a sofa, lay down, not to sleep, but in restless wakefulness. There you lay, hour after hour through the night, watching us as we lost and won at the card-table. Once or twice you got up and leaned over my chair, taking a sort of dazed interest in my game.

"Towards morning, the effects of the opiate left you. I never saw a look of wilder astonishment than came over your face. The anxiety with which you inquired how we

came there first gave us the idea of hoaxing you. The rest I need not relate. You believed us,—believed that the wine we drank at dinner had unsettled your brain, and a night of ill-luck at card-playing had followed. We were a little taken aback when you asked us where the money had come from; but my companion answered that you had borrowed it of me. Pray remember that you offered the note. I took it in order to carry out the deception, but never intended to use it against you in any way. Indeed, I would have told you the truth at once; but in this community gambling is considered a horrible offence, and while you thought yourself my participant, I was sure of secrecy."

Osborne sat with an elbow resting on his knee, shading his face with one hand: after one earnest glance at Arnold he had fallen into that position. As the end drew near, he began to tremble with thrills of intense gratitude: great tears came raining down from under his quivering fingers; and he listened as if every word drained the agony from his heart.

When Arnold paused, his great joy broke forth; and lifting his face—where every delicate feature quivered with thankfulness—heavenward, he cried out:

"Thank God! Oh, Father of mercies, I thank thee!"

Not a shade of bitterness rested in his heart against the man who had deceived him so. He forgot the wrong in this sudden redemption from self-reproach, and turning to Arnold wrung his hand gratefully.

"You have taken the burden from my shoulders,—that cruel sense of guilt from my soul. I cannot remember the wrong sufficiently for reproaches. Thank God the service you demanded of me was not an absolute crime."

"I used the note to coerce you into that secret marriage-

service, and to force you out of the country; but, upon my honor, I never thought of claiming the money," said Arnold, touched, in spite of himself, by this generous forgiveness. "At first I never thought of using it at all."

"Let that pass, Arnold. It was well, perhaps, that I should be tried in the furnace. We must not be unforgiving to the instruments our Divine Master uses in humbling us. I have nothing but thankfulness to offer,—nothing but joy to express. But there was something that you asked of me. Ah, I remember. Yes, I will do that for the sake of your young wife."

"I shall be greatly obliged if you will, Osborne."

"But there was something else,—threats, harsh words,—between you and that young Frenchman. Let me implore you, offer him no violence."

Arnold's face flushed and his lip curved.

"Osborne, that man called me a coward!"

"That was in his justifiable rage."

"Well, well, we will talk of that to-morrow. Just now I want you to serve me in the matter I spoke of. As yet, no one except yourself, beyond those who are interested, knows any thing of the scene which passed here this evening. See that it does not spread. The De Montreuil pride will second you in this."

"I will go at once," was the prompt reply; and Osborne, weary as he was, hastened away on his kind mission.

But when he reached Paul De Montreuil's door the servant refused him admission.

Arnold had smothered his wrath in the presence of the clergyman, but it burned fiercely yet. The word coward, applied to him, still rang in his ear. Indeed, few men ever lived who deserved it less. He had been humiliated,

defied, and this thought kept the iron of his temper at a white heat. About an hour after Osborne left, he took his hat and went out, bending his steps to the house he had left early in the evening.

"Is De Montreuil in?" he inquired of the servant at the door.

"You, Mr. Arnold, or any messenger from you, I was to admit," answered the man. "He is in the library."

Arnold strode through the hall and passed into the library. Paul received him standing. Notwithstanding the rage that burned within them, these young men were pale, and seemed cold as ice.

"You have called me a villain, sir. Let that pass. I have come to prove that I am no coward. This quarrel is private; let it remain so. We shall gain nothing by challenging scandal; therefore let us have no seconds. You have a servant who can be faithful and silent. He shall load our pistols and measure the ground. I require no one. Does this please you, Paul De Montreuil?"

"And the place?"

This was De Montreuil's sole answer.

"Between the cedar grove and the shore on the way to East Haven. The hour must be sunrise, or we may be interrupted."

"And the arms?"

"Pistols, if that pleases you."

De Montreuil bowed and turned away. Arnold left the house.

"Francis," said De Montreuil, looking into the hall, "go to some stable and have a carriage ready before day-break."

The servant went out in haste, for it was getting late.

Just before dawn the next morning, a hackney carriage drove from Paul De Montreuil's door, moving cautiously at first, but driving off, as it left the town, at a rapid speed. Another carriage left the Elm Tree tavern at the same hour.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE DUEL AND THE WEDDING.

In the first gray of the morning, a female ran up the steps of Paul De Montreuil's dwelling, and seizing on the knocker sent one loud, prolonged reverberation through the building. The servant who had let Paul out was in the passage, and hurried to open the door, fearing that another summons might awake his young mistress, who had gone to her room ill, the night before.

Amy looked wistfully into his face, but asked no questions, though her lips moved. She passed him before he could stop her, ran up the stairs, and, guided by the bronze statue in its niche, entered the chamber to which she had carried such bitter sorrow the night before. The light was dim, but she saw the toilet in its drifts of lace, the glitter of jewels cast upon it, and on the carpet a wreath of white roses that had been cast down and trampled upon. In the centre of the sumptuous white bed Laura De Montreuil was lying, pale, exhausted, and in a troubled sleep. She had taken off her wedding-dress, which was trailing partly around one of the bed-posts, partly on the floor. The rest of the superb costume which she had tried on in such triumph was still on her person; for she had thrown herself

down half-clad, with her face upon the pillows, and there sobbed and moaned herself into a slumber, which left her beautiful face contracted with pain, and great purple shadows around her eyes.

Amy flung aside the curtains and put back the hair from Laura's face, revealing all the anguish that had settled there during the night.

"Laura, Laura De Montreuil, hear me! You must not sleep. They have gone to kill each other,—kill each other, I say!"

Laura started up, saw who it was that stood over her, and pushed the young wife away.

"You here!" she said, with intense bitterness. "How dare you break in upon me!"

"Oh do not stay to hate me, or death will come of it!" cried Amy, wringing her hands. "They have gone to fight."

"They, who?"

"Your brother and my——and Benedict. I was ill, and could not sleep. He left the house softly, but I heard it."

Laura leaped to the floor and rang the bell violently. The servant came hurrying up-stairs.

"Your master—where is he?"

"Gone twenty minutes ago."

"Where?"

"I heard him order the driver to take the East Haven road, and something about the shore and a cedar grove."

"Have the horses harnessed, quickly. Before I am dressed the carriage must be ready."

The servant partook of her panic and went out in haste.

Laura gathered up her long hair and twisted it into a

knot back of her head, thus leaving the misery in her face exposed. She looked around for a dress, lifted the mass of glittering silk and frostlike lace that she had worn the night before, and flung it away in disgust. She opened a wardrobe, found some darker garment and a black-silk cloak, which she put on. The white shoes and ruby buckles alone remained of her bridal costume, but she had no time to cast them off.

"Come," she said, turning to Amy, as a carriage stopped at the door. "First let us find your husband's father." She went down-stairs, saying this, and stepped into the carriage. Amy followed her, breathless and trembling.

The cedar grove ran parallel with the beach, which lay a narrow strip of white sand between it and the sound. Sometimes the shadows of its tallest trees stretched almost to the water. It was so thick with an undergrowth of barberries and juniper-trees that a person standing on the beach could only be seen by any chance fisherman that might be early upon the water.

The sun was cresting every tiny wave that rippled the sound, with rose tints, and dew-drops lay like diamonds among the thick purple berries on the juniper-bushes. The morning was so lovely that the two men who had come to the beach, burning with wrathful passions, paused one moment to wonder at themselves. But this feeling passed with the moment. They came to the sands by different directions, and were forced to walk some distance in order to meet each other; and the hate that had sprung up in their hearts—not less with the wronger than the wronged—burned fiercely before they stood face to face. There was no mockery of forms between these two men, who, twenty-four hours earlier, had been as brothers. Each lifted his hat haughtily, and that was all.

De Montreuil's French servant proceeded at once to measure off the ground, having first assured himself that no one was in sight, either on the water or the land. This man had seen duels before and acted his part well. Not a word was spoken while he loaded the pistols, and, obeying a signal from his master, gave Arnold the first choice. Then they retreated, each to his position, and stood ready. Both these men were brave, and one had been fearfully wronged, but there was solemnity rather than hate in their white faces, as they turned upon each other.

They stood within the shadow of the cedars. There was no advantage on either side. The stillness of death was around them, save that the birds sung, and the waters rippled. Slowly, steadily, and with deadly intent the pistols were raised. One terrible instant, and their sharp reverberation rang over the waters. When the smoke cleared away both men were standing. Paul had missed his aim by a hair's breadth, but Arnold had fired in the air. He would have advanced to Paul, but the young man tossed his pistol on the ground and ordered the man to load it again.

"Take your place, sir," he said, addressing Arnold. "I will not be insulted by forbearance. If you fire in the air again I will shoot you down like a dog."

Arnold's forehead flamed scarlet; his eyes blazed; he was not likely to fling away his fire after that. Again they retreated to their places with terrible purpose on both sides. They had not heard the sound of wheels behind the cedar grove, for the roads were sandy and gave forth little noise; but two females were wildly forcing a passage through the thick undergrowth, and with them came an old man, from whose face drops of anguish

were falling like rain. Out upon the beach they rushed, dumb with terror. The combatants saw them, and enraged at the intrusion lifted their weapons with a fierce instinct of murder. But, with a cry that rang over the waters like the scream of a wounded eagle, the old man bounded across the sands and stood between them,—his gray head thrown back, his chest heaving.

"In the name of the living God, I charge ye, do no murder!"

That old face was eloquent with solemn power. His voice swelled upon the air like the vibrations of a trumpet. The grandeur of his courage struck the combatants mute; for he had rushed between the uplifted weapons while their fingers were on the triggers. It was a miracle that his body had not been pierced by two bullets.

The pistols dropped. The young men rushed forward in terror: they could not believe the old man safe. But in his progress Arnold was stopped by his wife, who fell upon her knees in the sand, and with her poor white face uplifted piteously to his, besought him to have compassion on her, and heap no more guilt on his soul.

Laura advanced to her brother.

"Paul," she said, "I and that poor woman alone have been wronged by this man. It is my pleasure that he should live. Would you, a De Montreuil, satisfy our honor with the small revenge of his life? I give it to him with all my soul, as I would have bestowed this hand three days ago, knowing that there is a God in heaven who shall avenge us both, if vengeance is just."

Paul made a gesture of angry impatience, but the noble girl clung to his arm.

"Look at the old man. Think of his daughter, your betrothed wife. See that poor creature groveling at his

feet. Are we barbarians to sacrifice four innocent persons that one guilty one may be punished?"

She stooped to the sand, took up her brother's pistol which was half buried there, and hurled it into the sea.

Paul made no resistance: her sublime forgiveness silenced the storm of passion which had led him almost to murder.

"Laura," he said, "you have the true De Montreuil courage,—that of a sublime forgiveness. I am but a pretender."

They went up to the old man, who had sunk to the earth with his white head bowed upon his two hands. He was sobbing like a child, and every nerve in his stout frame quivered, like rushes swept by the wind.

Arnold saw his father thus stricken to the earth, and would have gone to him but for Amy, who was seized with a fit of trembling. Laura turned her eyes upon him for the first time. She saw that the features she had once thought so noble were quivering and that tears were rushing to his eyes. She went forward and raised Amy from the ground and supported her with her arm.

"Go," she said, in the grandeur of her forgiveness. "You can comfort him. We have not the power."

Arnold thanked her with a look, and going forward, bent over the old man.

"Father, I will obey you. As God is my judge, I did not wish to harm him,—only to prove that I was not the coward he thought. My pistol was fired in the air."

The old man lifted his face with a glance of yearning thankfulness that smote his son to the soul; for all that was kindly in his nature rose uppermost then.

"I would give half my life that all this had not hap-

pened to wound you so," he said, careless that Paul was standing by to hear his confession.

The old man grasped the hand his son held out between both his.

"Is God giving back my son?" he said. "Let us go home now. Your mother will be frightened."

Arnold supported his father to the carriage, for the almost supernatural strength which had brought the old man to the ground utterly failed now. Then he turned to lift Amy in, but she clung to Laura.

"No, no, he needs you most. It is better that you should be alone with him," she said. "I shall feel the joy of this reunion just as much."

Amy had spoken with courage and cheerfulness, but Laura saw that it was forced, for the poor young creature quivered like a frightened bird under her clasping arm.

"May I go in?" faltered Amy, as the carriage stopped at De Montreuil's door. "It—it is only the fright; but I tremble so."

Paul, who had driven home more rapidly than his sister, stood on the steps ready to help her to descend, but she put him gently aside as Amy was getting out, and went up-stairs with her.

Another day and night brought the Leonards to New Haven; and the three families that had been a fate each to the other were assembled at Paul de Montreuil's dwelling; for in its bridal chamber Amy Arnold lay dying. The storm of sorrow and passion that had disturbed the group now gathered around her bed, only a few hours before, was hushed and silent. That gentle creature had sunk under her suffering, and a harsh thought would have been sacrilege there.

The white bed had been drawn into the centre of the

room, and its curtains, gathered up in a cloud, brooded whitely over her as she lay with her eyes wide open, and her golden hair heavy and wet with the death dew that rained from her face. She was dying of exhaustion,—continual anguish had broken up her life.

The toilet, still covered with lace that draped it like falling snow, was cleared of its rich litter. Jewels and white roses had been swept away, and in their place stood a small coffin covered with black velvet, and studded with silver nails. The lid was unscrewed, and through the crevices came the pure, sweet scent of tuberose, cape jessamines, and heliotrope, that pervaded the whole room.

When she first heard that her daughter was very ill, the grief of Mrs. Leonard had been terrible, but now, bravely hushing her sobs, she knelt by her husband in waiting silence.

No one charged Arnold with being the cause of that young creature's death, but he felt the bitter truth, and his strong heart ached under it.

The clergyman, Osborne, was there. He had just administered the sacrament to the dying woman, and she had whispered him to wait till the last.

Amy had just strength enough to move her hand, which sought that of her husband.

"Father," she said, "have you forgiven my husband?"

"As I pray God to forgive me," was the solemn answer.

"And you, mother?"

Mrs. Leonard burst into a hysterical fit of weeping.

"I can't say. I hope so. But it's hard, oh, it is hard!"

"Father, mother, listen: I am dying. You will not refuse me what I ask."

"No, no," sobbed the mother. "Oh, if God would only let me die for you, Amy!"

"It is of Benedict I speak. I consented to marry him in secret. That threw him into temptation. He saw another,—the true mate for him. He loved her."

"No, no, Amy," Arnold broke forth. "I never loved any woman but you."

Amy's cold fingers clung closer to his a moment, and fell away again.

"It was my disobedience, father, that led him into that terrible temptation, but his enemies will not see that. When they know that he was about to marry another it will be imputed to him as a crime."

"It was a crime," Arnold broke forth. "Do not waste one precious breath on me, Amy."

She turned her eyes upon him full of yearning love, —then spoke to her father again.

"Father, our marriage was a secret to all the world outside this room. Let it rest a secret still. Those invited to his wedding must never know that he had a wife."

Leonard rose from his knees.

"Amy, my child, remember our neighbors,—the church."

"They will forgive when I am dead. Father, where I go, all things are known."

"But, my child——"

She moved her head on the pillow wearily.

"Let it be so, father; I am dying. Had it lived," she murmured, struggling to rise up and look on the coffin, "I would not have asked it; but now, but now——"

She paused, and the lids fell softly over her eyes,—not in sleep, but restfully.

Arnold fell upon his knees on one side of the bed, utterly subdued.

"Oh, Amy, my poor, martyred wife, ask nothing for me! Let the world do its worst. I deserve it, I deserve it!"

"Hush!" she whispered. "Hush! it troubles me. Father, did you promise?"

"Yes, my Amy, I promise."

"And do they all promise—never to tell, never to let any one know that we were man and wife?"

A low solemn murmur went up around the bed. A smile trembled across her lips as moonlight glimmers on a lily. She rested peacefully a few moments. Then she spoke again:

"Hannah, my sister."

Hannah came close to her pillow. Amy's shadowy hand struggled out to meet hers.

"Paul De Montreuil."

The young Frenchman arose and left the chair on which he had been sitting.

"You love each other," she whispered. "After I am dead the old pride may come back and separate you. Let me see you married before I die."

No one spoke. This strange request struck them all with profound astonishment. Laura came up to her brother and took his hand.

"Paul, let this be as Amy wishes. Our guardian angels are here now. Do not let us wait till they sleep again."

"She desires to save us from an eternal separation. Hannah, in spite of all, do you love me well enough for this?"

Hannah Arnold lifted her eyes to his face, and he was answered.

Upon the toilet where the coffin stood lay a prayer-book, from which the minister had just been reading the prayers for the dying. He opened the volume again, and his deep, solemn voice filled the room while Paul De Montreuil and Hannah Arnold stood side by side in the shadow of that death-couch, and pledged eternal faith to each other.

When the august ceremony was over, and all had been silent for some time, Amy opened her eyes wide, and looked from Arnold to Laura.

"When I am gone," she was saying, but Laura turned deathly pale and put up both her hands, shuddering visibly. Amy saw it, and her eyes turned upon Arnold. He too was shrinking in pain from the idea which spoke in Amy's dying eyes.

"Is it so?" she murmured, "then it was not love—not love. That was mine—mine—all mine."

"Oh Amy, Amy, my beloved wife, hear and believe me! I did love you and you only! Great heavens, if you could only understand it!"

"I do—I—Arnold—husband—love!"

She started up from the pillows, reached up her arms, drew herself up to his bosom, and died there with the word love freezing on her lips.

On the day that Laura De Montreuil was to have been married the wedding invitations had all been cancelled, and a funeral went forth from her home instead. Accepting this mournful reason for the delay, it occasioned no unpleasant comment; and not long after Paul left the country to travel in Europe with his wife and sister.

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