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# TEMPLE HOUSE.

A Novel.

BY ELIZABETH STODDARD,

AUTHOR OF

"THE MORGESONS," "TWO MEN," ETC.



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To  
S. R. G.

ARTIST.

To me, imprisoned, by the hand of art  
You bring the clouded mountains, my desire,  
The tranquil river, and the unquiet sea,  
The far, vast morning, and the crimson eve,  
And silent days, that brood among thick leaves,  
When, in the afternoon, the summer sun  
Is sleeping in the hazy, yellow west ;  
And my soul's atmosphere grows like the scene.  
For though acquainted still with misery,  
I dream that all the boundaries of my days  
Contain the unknown, veiled happiness.  
Therefore, my friend, to show my gratitude,  
I offer you these pictures, drawn from thought,  
With all the art I have—in black and white.

NEW YORK, May 5th, 1867.

E. D. B. S.

THE sunset is original every evening, though for thousands of years it has built out of the same light and vapor its visionary cities with domes and pinacles, and its delectable mountains, which night shall utterly abase and destroy.—J. R. LOWELL.

Nevertheless, I feel most sensibly the infinite distance between Life and Reasoning.—SCHILLER.

Philosophy must first be seized as feeling, else is it empty straw which men are threshing.—BETTINE VON ARNIM.

It is this formless idea of something at hand that keeps men and women striving to tear from the bosom of the world the secret of their own hopes.—IBID.

The dust of many strange desires  
Lies deep between us.—A. C. SWINBURNE.

Naturalists more frequently get their knowledge by separation and division than by union and combination—more through death than life.—GOETHE.

Mind cannot create—it can only perceive.—LEIGH HUNT.

The only two books of paramount authority with me are the Book of Nature, and the heart of its reader.—LEIGH HUNT.

## TEMPLE HOUSE.

### CHAPTER I.

EARLY one autumn morning, on his forty-first birthday, Argus Gates walked down the old turfy lawn, and felt immortal in his human powers. The elms above him dropped warning leaves, the silver cobwebs in the grass vanished beneath his tread, and the sere grass rose not again; but Aurora was in the sky. The stalwart, willing earth dipped beneath her chariot wheels, to lave in the rays flooding from those eyes fixed in

“The ever silent spaces of the East,”

and Argus was one with the earth.

The balm of the fading leaves distilled in the globed dew, the soft, moveless shadows of every object round him, the verdure tinged with the hues of autumn, the red light spreading over him, played upon his sensibilities, which were those of a fine and well-endowed animal; but his imagination was not touched, nor his heart elevated. He was supposed to be devoid of both. He went down the steps planted in

the front of the bank, and looked over the gate into the road some feet below. At that moment a man was passing, who, happening to raise his eyes, met those of Argus; he halted, and pushing back his tarpaulin, said, in a cheerful voice,

"Mornin' air agrees with you, Capen."

Argus made no reply, and continued to swing his cane over the railing.

"Harbor's smooth as a pike pond, but you don't venture on't, no right to—shut off from a sight on't, walled in, and fenced in, and treed in. Did the town gully down the end of the street to please you? Why don't it pull down old Freeman's warehouse between you and the quay, and you pull down that mess of mortar against it? Your folks might like a sight of the salt water, and they'd get it by—going up stairs."

"Keep the salt water for yourself, Mat," answered the Captain at last, "and go down the gully as the town directs, unless you had rather climb King's Hill, and roll over the plantain beds, to get to your stevedoring."

"I've got a chance on the Lucindy. What do you think of that ere craft? Arter she's caulked, I think I'll retire too." But Argus had disappeared, and Mat's eyes could not follow him an inch beyond the gate, even from the masts of the Lucinda, which lay alongside the quay, a few rods from the house; the roof and the tree tops were all he could see.

Argus paused beneath one of the elms, and peered into its branches; the birds whose departure he was watching had gone; no twitter escaped from the rough nests adorned with ribbons of seaweed. Slightly

musings on the probability of the return of the same family in spring, he slowly mounted the porch steps. As he went into the house the goddess of the morning disappeared, amidst the clatter of the small demons which preside over domestic affairs, and like the chameleon take the hue of those who compel their service. Simultaneously with opening the door of the kitchen,—a barn-like apartment—Roxalana, his sister-in-law, drawled in a clear, singularly unimpassioned voice:

"I am about out of the suds, Argus. Your coffee waits by the fire, clear as crystal, but my Johnny-cake is burnt. It is impossible for me to say where Tempe is. She pretended that our clock was wrong, and said she would find the right time. With this excuse, she managed to get out by six o'clock. Wash day has no particular charm for her."

"Nor for you, I judge," he replied, seating himself at a small table between the windows. She swung round slowly, and lifted her head,—a strange one, ringed with a mass of dense black hair,—passed her hands up and down her bare, well shaped arms, shook the skirt of her ragged gown, and said:

"Naturally, I am lazy; but necessity drives me to industry."

Taking the coffee from the fire, she poured a cup which she handed to Argus, who took it with his left hand, for he still held his cane with the right.

"Tempe is romping, you remarked, Roxalana. She is a proper jade. But it is better out of doors, consequently she is where it is better."



Roxalana laughed a noiseless laugh, which in no wise lighted up her heavy face.

"She will have several races before sundown," she said, taking a chair at the table; "but her romping days will soon be over. Do you realize that her birthdays are counting up as well as ours?"

"Why don't you marry her, and tie her runaway feet? Matrimony puts an end to the antics of your sex, and begins ours with us."

"Hush, Argus, she is on the stairs; keep your doctrines for me, not for her."

Tempe fluttered in with the air of a blackbird. Her hair was black, like her mother's, as ruffled, but less abundant, and more beautiful; her face was pale, and delicate; her eyes were large, black, and constantly darting sharp inquisitive glances.

"What am I now?" she asked; "a child, a jade, a witch, or a hussy?"

Argus threw his cane at her, which she caught adroitly, and put in a corner.

"If you have not quite run yourself out of breath, Tempe," her mother interposed, "I advise you to take your breakfast."

"Yes, mother, give me my coffee; they have better breakfasts at Mat Sutcliffe's every day than this. Uncle, is your fare pleasant?"

"Silence!" he answered; "don't call me uncle," mimicking her voice, "because I am this woman's brother-in-law."

As this was merely his way, the sally passed unnoticed, and breakfast was dispatched. Argus spent

the forenoon in the house, looking from the windows, smoking, kicking the wood on the fire, and watching Roxalana, who finished the week's wash with composure and ease, regardless of his presence. Tempe flitted in and out, slammed doors in all parts of the house, moved a piece of furniture now and then, and finally settled herself to stringing beads on horse-hair. At midday a plain dinner was served at the same table, at which Roxalana presided with parboiled hands and the dignity of a Zenobia. In the afternoon Argus went up the street into town, and Tempe went also. Roxalana rested from her labors. She sat so motionless in a straight-backed chair that a mouse stole out and ran across her foot. At dark she combed her thick hair, and changed her ragged dress for one of some dark material, made in a fashion she had worn for years. Lighting a pair of candles, she carried them across the wide hall into a large room with four windows, two facing the town, and two the garden and the warehouse towering beyond it. The walls were hung with green velvet paper, somewhat frayed and discolored; heavy, dark sofas with claws and scrolls stood between the windows; and a heavy dark mahogany table stood in the centre of the room. Upon this table Roxalana set the candles. She then unlocked a glass cabinet in the wall, took out some fragile china, a spindle-legged silver tea set, and arranged them carefully for supper. An array of sweetmeats, sweetcakes, and delicate biscuit was added, which she viewed with a solemn satisfaction.

When Argus and Tempe came home, she made tea at the table with a ceremony which contrasted strongly with the work and behavior of the day. They sat at the table a long time, and this was an invariable custom,—the sweetmeats, the sweet cakes, the ceremony being an absolute law and bond between these three persons who lived in Temple House.

## CHAPTER II.

THE house of Argus Gates stood at the end of an almost unused street, in the populous town of Kent, once a great seaport. In the old Province records there is a volume of actions in which Kent Bay and Kent Bar figure; their storms and disasters are the memorial treasures of the present time. The old laws so arbitrarily provided for the encroachments, changes, accidents of the sea, its shoals, sands, and rocks, that the inhabitants of Kent have ever since rested upon their provisions, and look for no geographical change. Meantime Commerce has gone elsewhere. Mariners found the White Flat dangerous, the harbor not navigable, the coast to be avoided. A hundred younger towns on the Atlantic coast now surpass Kent; her sails are passing sails, her hulls wrecked hulls rotting in the sand. The old piers have tumbled in, and fallen apart; the black seaweeds are rooted in their own decayed beds on the foundations; and patches of sorrel grow in the gravelly tops. The ware-houses are empty along the water-side; their derricks rattle and swing in the wind, like empty gibbets. The aristocracy of Kent, as well as its crowd of laborers, has vanished, leaving its noble names to monuments, streets, and hills. The old estates are worse than obliterated; straggling

lanes, crumbling tenements, and pasture tracts represent an ancient *régime*, which boasted of the exiled names of Raleigh, Halifax, and Brooks. From King's Hill, opposite Temple House, to Apsley River, where Cyrus Brande's forge stood, Kent was in no wise the proud, dictatorial, prosperous Kent of former times. Still the business of ordinary life flourished; there was buying and selling; the land was tilled, the sea harvested. Religion, the Supreme Court, the newspapers, marriage, birth and death, were all established in the old town.

Kent was not the birth-place of Argus. Temple House had come to him when a young man, by the unexpected will of a distant relative, whom he had never heard of till he heard the tidings of his possession as an elder son. Being about to sail on his first voyage as captain, he sent his wife, whom he had not been married to long, to take possession of the house, and departed with the determination to settle in Kent, and seek further fortune from that port. His wife was dismayed at the size and splendor of the house. It was full of antique furniture, comfortless rubbish, in her estimation. Some of it she sold, some she broke up and and burned, the remainder she packed in the garret with the portrait of Madame Temple, the donor of the house, and several other umber-colored pictures. Argus was a poor man, and his wages, which were those of a captain of a merchantman, only furnished the necessities of life; consequently she could not replace the old furniture with new, and Temple House was never, in the common ac-

ception of the term, furnished. She only used the great kitchen, and the green room before spoken of, which she made habitable with the articles belonging to her simple wedding outfit. Considering the sea the natural grave of her family, she could not endure the sight of it, and was thankful for the long espalier, the stone-mortared wall behind it, and the high warehouse which screened the quay, and almost shut out every glimpse of the bay. She loved the old summer-house best, and strayed with the old, old Provence and Damask roses, herself as sweet and wild a rose. A beautiful lawn stretched to the edge of the bank at the back of which the house was built, so she saw nothing of the life in the street below; it was pleasanter for that. When not in the garden that first long summer, she was in the green room watching the elms on the lawn. So she lived, waiting for the return of Argus.

In due time he came, and looked at his property with amazement. It was the broken and depreciated estate of the last member of a "first family." This was attested by the town records, which he looked into for the purpose of discovering the antecedents of Madame Temple. Her portrait was brought out, and he made a study of it to see what was buried in her face, and if there was any affinity between them. It proved a sphinx in both particulars, but Argus hung it in its old place in the hall. When his wife told him what she had done with the belongings of the house he turned red, as if some of the Temple blood tingled in his veins after all, but he only laughed and

chucked her under the chin. Musing upon the matter, he concluded not to discuss the subject; the house must remain a ruin, and he would not ask her to be happy in it. He felt a blind compunction towards her, but his resolve never changed. Nor did he speak of the absolute presentiment which clung to him, that in this ruin, whatever the vicissitudes of the coming years, he should end his life.

One day, just before he went to sea again, when the garden paths were full of rustling leaves, and only the thorns grew on the rose trees, they walked to the summer-house, and having a brighter, happier feeling towards the place, she kissed him, and told him she loved the garden, and would think the summer-house her own domain. She could not love the old desolate haunted house, however; it was not fit for poor, young people like themselves. An echo of grandeur could not make up for its want of comfort; but she would not complain. Argus kissed her, but was silent. No, she repeated, she would never complain; not if he chose to hang the umber-colored pictures in the very room where she slept.

"Let us get the lay of the land, now that we are out," he said abruptly. "I believe I do not understand the premises thoroughly."

They crossed the garden, went round the grounds, and looked at the outside bounds. Argus described and named every spot, as though he was making a chart. On the town side they were shut in by an alley, along which stood a row of mean houses, whose sheds and yards came up to the empty stables and

out-buildings inside the wall. A door, padlocked in it, communicated with the alley at the upper end. Beyond the premises at the rear, where poplar and button-wood trees grew, wild, grassy pastures stretched, marshy towards the high shores of the bay, and hilly towards the town. On all sides they were shut in from the bay, the town, and the common business of life. Argus was so well satisfied with his survey, that he was on the point of expressing his satisfaction, but seeing that his wife's eyes were fixed on the high dormer windows, higher than King's Hill even, he forbore. They wandered back to the garden, and sat in the summer-house again, and once more kissed each other with those kisses which for the moment disenthral mortals from the burden and influence of the universe.

The yellow twilight creeping round them, the flame edged clouds rolling down with sunset, the inarticulate noise of tree and bush, the sound of the drowsy sea pushing on Kent beach a mile away, were always remembered by Mrs. Gates; perhaps Argus also treasured the hour in his memory. At last they went into the house, and their mood naturally slipped away. She busied herself with supper, while Argus stood in the embrasure of the green-room window, and continued his mental inventory of his property.

It is possible that the ownership of Temple House influenced the temporal affairs of Argus more than he supposed. A vessel was offered him, within a year from this time, and a venture in the cargo, which he accepted, and made money by. Meantime his wife

had departed. Swiftly and silently her brief, short life ended. He found her grave in the high hill yard where the Temple ancestry slept—her closed eyes and deaf ears insensible to the sight and sound of shore and sea, to obtain which the living often sought the hill. From the day that Argus went there, he hated the scene which broke upon his vision. The raging white surf breaking on the white beach, that darted like a tongue from the headland below the town; the sand-stained ripples of the one, and the beating waves of the other; the glittering capes, stretching into the circle of the sea; the restless clouds spreading and sinking in the horizon, borrowed his grief, and mirrored it in his mind again. It was a moment when nature seemed only capable of leading the soul to death.

He remained a month or two alone in Temple House, brooding over his past, or, it may be, planning his future, no one really knew which. Cyrus Brande, the only man who was intrusted with his affairs, pretended ignorance when questioned concerning them. When Argus had been gone a week Mr. Brande circulated a report that the house would be closed for some time, and for information concerning Captain Gates application must be made at the office of Brande's Forge. Nobody ever applied, and no information was obtained at the office; the clumsy key of the front door at Temple House hung on a nail for years. Meantime the velvet moss thickened on the roof; the rose-trees and shrubs mixed their leaves with the black mould in the garden paths;

the mortar powdered in the crevices of the walls, and ran down like the sand in an hour-glass; and the edges of the bank crumbled and slid into the street, threatening to wear the lawn to its level before Argus returned.

But he did return, taking the key of his house from Mr. Brande's office as quietly as he had brought it there. He found the town at work on his premises, walling the bank from the quay below them to the corner of the alley above. His lawn gate now opened into the gully, which was so deep opposite—the other side being the walled portion of King's Hill—that only a strip of sky could be seen over it. To make his house more suitable for solitary confinement, he repaired his garden wall, replaced the old brick coping, and mended the roof with slate stones.

### CHAPTER III.

NOTWITHSTANDING his isolation, Argus soon became a somewhat noted man in Kent; his character, habits, and manners were observed constantly, and considered exceptional. The mere mention of him among his acquaintances created a fresh and original impression in their minds. There was something irresistible in these self-creating impressions which impelled them to reflect upon the nature of a man who appeared entirely unsympathetic with all their relations. They confided to him the weakness and vileness of their motives and acts; they invented a history of his past life, which tallied with the ideal of what they would themselves have been, provided the opportunity and the courage had been given them. The tranquil tolerance, or the terrible coarseness, which he offered them in turn, presented no solution to the enigma of his character. But Argus knew himself; having gone through with certain experiences, he had arrived at an understanding of the traits which induced them, and stifled them. The life that he now chose to live was at variance with the opinions which his organism continually caused others to form of him. The conditions of feeling which he shunned, the agitations which make one hour crowded, the next vacant, he had the

power of exciting still. For himself, he was capable of enjoying his own atmosphere—that of a well-constituted man, whose perceptions, never attaining the beautiful, perhaps, dwell with content upon positive, narrow, sensuous facts. Argus, in the world, was very discerning, cautious, and, in spite of his coarseness and indifference, had a vein of courtesy which gained him at least an outward respect. He hated cant, and had a way of taking hold of the roots of a matter which made people afraid of their hypocrisy. For the most part, no one ever questioned him about his affairs; but one day, a man whom he had long known asked him if he was aware how near he was to his brother George Gates, a younger brother, from whom he had been separated for years. Argus for an instant felt his cane oscillate in his hand with the temptation to strike his informant; but turning with a sharp laugh, he said,

"He is so near me, is he? The handsome dog!"

"To tell you the truth, Captain, I saw him. Our brig ran into harbor not two hundred miles from this, and a party of us skippers went ashore. We hired a team and drove up the country for a lark, till we came to a place called Eastdale; the first man I clapped eyes on was George Gates. By the Lord, sir, he was in full feather; sleek as a porpus. I felt riled, for he owes me five hundred dollars. Ten years ago we met in the West Indies, you know, and I followed him up. His father-in law"—

Argus started, and broke the sentence in two—"has

not been dead long; he sold tobacco, snuff and spice. You've seen those speckled lizards in India? There was a row of them in bottles of spirit in his window."

"I know them; but what of his she-lizard, the one out of the bottle?"

"I did not introduce myself to George; you recollect he had a way, at times, that a man would not like to venture on. I reckon, however, that the old man's death has unsettled him; he'll be off again to parts unknown before long, or I am much at fault."

A bitter smile ran over the face of Argus at the thought that George, vagabond as he was, could still keep his friend and creditor, Smith, at bay.

"I thought I would tell you," Smith continued. "I bore in mind the goings on of my brother, Bill, and tried to do as I would be done by."

"Hasn't the devil seized Bill for good, yet?"

"You see, I have not talked it over with anybody."

"Did your wife tell you her dream this morning? Did you throw the pillow at her for guessing your thoughts? Off a voyage, a man is transparent for a week or so, to his wife, excepting one or two items. But I am indebted to you, Smith."

Smith laughed a horse-laugh, and turned away.

Argus absently noted the way of the wind, as he leisurely walked towards home, stopping once to toss over a paper that fluttered in his path which looked like a handbill. He found Mrs. Bayley, a woman from the alley, who came every day to prepare his meals, and put the room he used in order, busy in the kitchen.

"I shall not need you for several days, Mrs. Bayley," he said. "I am off on a journey. Take the keys, and open the house again on Friday."

"Yes sir. Would you wish any preparation made; any other beds made up, or rooms put to rights?"

"You alley-strollers have hold of it then. Do your best to spread it, and add something worth your tongues."

"I've got hold of mighty little, I do beg leave to inform you, Captain Gates. I fetch and carry nothing."

"The invisible air is clogged with the droppings of women's fancies. Balls of gossip stick together like burrs, and catch on Truth's stuffy gown as she passes by."

"Mary Sutcliffe said"—

He interrupted her with a few icy, cutting words, spoken in the smoothest of voices, which drove her from the room. He started immediately without any plan, expecting with every mile that the feeling which possessed him would explain itself; but it evaded him. Had he really a desire to meet the only member of his family alive, except himself? Was the voice of the Temple blood, thin as it might be, crying out in behalf of this reprobate brother, as handsome as Romeo, as dissolute as Antony, for whom in former times he had made many sacrifices? Suppose George should propose the same again: suppose that he might choose to avail himself of the habitation which Temple House would offer, with the family that Smith hinted at?



Could such a thing be endured? And Argus fell into a dream about the occupation of the house by some child growing up, and watching him, while going out of it for good, to the place where there were different mansions.

At the Eastdale tavern he met George. He was smoking a cigar, (which Argus instinctively felt was a first-rate one,) in a black velvet cut-away coat and a white felt hat; from his crown to the toe of his well-fitting boot an atmosphere of resolved laziness emanated, which armed Argus against him, especially as he could not withhold a sentiment of admiration with it. In the face of George was fierceness, weakness, and an expectant hungry look, in spite of his air of ease.

"Why, Arg, is that you below there? Come up," and he smiled, but at the same time bit through his cigar, with the surprise the sight of Argus occasioned. "What sent you?"

"The love of you," Argus answered, "and an invitation from Marm Temple's bones to come to her house. Have you done with your pranks? Could you amuse yourself in Kent?"

"Pranks!" George exclaimed; "my time has been passed in a serious manner. Do you share the vulgar judgment, that absence is the cloak for a man's iniquity? Cannot the vagrant member of the family have a purpose? I'll come to Kent to be wicked openly."

Argus laughed.

"The hells and brothels never touch on the prodi-

gal son, and the husk business, do they? Have they changed since my green and salad days?"

George touched his smooth, handsome forehead, extended his fair hand, opened and shut the fingers.

"The husk business is entirely extinct," he answered.

Argus took a chair inside the veranda railing, and politely asked George for a light. It was politely given, and the two smoked in silence, looking towards the horizon.

"Say, Arg," exclaimed George, turning suddenly, "what's come to your hair?"

"Pooh! something went; what could come to *me*? Your plays and novels allot nothing to middle aged people. A life accessory to the illusions of others at most—the gray background to their reds and greens. I don't urge, with Shylock, that if we are pricked, we bleed, if we are poisoned, we die."

"I am past thirty, and would be as drunk with life as ever, if I could but reach the draught."

He let his hand fall lightly on Argus's shoulder, and Argus made a slight movement by which it slid off.

"How is that abode of the Temple ghosts," George continued, "the tabernacle on a hill?" By the way, I am married; there's a little girl, too. I named her Temple, ridiculous name—but I honored the gods. Did you know this?"

"All Kent knows it; from your friend Moll Sutcliffe, to your ancient chum, Smith. This must be the reason I came; I know no other."



"All Kent," repeated George, rising, and indicating to Argus to follow. "I never loved that good old town. I ate dirt there, and shook what was left from my flesh. I have rolled round the world since, and gathered a certain mossiness, and, as one must bring up somewhere, brought up at Eastdale. Why not, Argus? I found my wife here; she grew into that estate from a typhoid fever, which caught and held me in the port below. And this is where we live. Enter the long lost brother."

Argus's first thought, when he saw Roxalana was, that she was the last woman George would have chosen; but when he heard her clear voice, and correct accent, he forgave himself for having met her. She received him with perfect self-possession, and pushing little Temple towards him, said,

"Kiss your uncle Argus, Temple; he has come a long way to visit you."

The child was beautiful, like George, with black eyes, close curls of splendid black hair, a mass of ebony rings, and the same attenuated subtle features, but with a different head and carriage.

"She may run away, also," Argus commented; "but she won't run so far, and she will marry without the typhoid fever trap." He asked her to sit on his knee, and took her hand, which was so exactly shaped like his own, that he could not help smiling over it.

"What is going on, Rox?" George asked, with a suppressed yawn, and roving eyes. Argus was induced to believe that they had not met before that day.

"We are engaged as usual," she replied.

"I think I'll dine Argus at the tavern; I noticed Jones had some fine ducks."

She made no reply.

"Have we had ducks, Rox?" he asked, his voice loudening with a shade of irritation.

"Not this season, certainly, George; it is early. I am sure you will find the ducks at Jones's good eating."

"I have dined," said Argus, "on brandy and water, and biscuit—my old sea fare—and a cigar."

"I'll shortly furnish you with hospitality," replied George, leaving the room.

"Roxalana," said Argus, abruptly, "has the time come for George to leave Eastdale?"

"I have not a doubt of it; I have always expected that time sooner or later."

"What do you think of changing your quarters? Will the old house answer for the little girl?"

"I shall be pleased to go. Having no ties here, I can leave without regret. When I met your brother I was almost alone. You are aware, of course, that he has not made a worldly-wise match?"

"I am aware that *you* have not made a remarkably advantageous one."

She fixed her dense, cold eyes upon him, and continued:

"I am a fatalist. Having done badly for himself, not *me*, I choose that he should select his own happiness first, so far as he can. My happiness, at any

rate, is not like the happiness of others. I have long been convinced so."

Argus was astonished; he believed that he had found the woman whose personalities would not prove a nuisance in family life. He began to weigh her merits and the exactions he knew George would make, and the merits prevailed. When George came in again, Argus was scrupulously considerate with him, and it was finally settled, that at least, the experiment of a three months' visit should be tried. The night that Argus returned to Temple House, he went on an enigmatical excursion over the house and grounds, knocking on the doors with his cane, scaling the walls with his eyes, and stepping off the measure of paths and walls, like an auctioneer.

"Once here," he said, "she will never go away. As for George,"—and he whistled.

## CHAPTER IV.

"I'd sell this mouldy cupboard, if it belonged to me," said George to his wife, upon his first survey of Temple House; "Argus sticks to it. What possessed him to believe that he could foist the rattle-trap upon us? Do you like it?"

"Very much, George; I think it agreeable here. I have room enough."

"Make it as agreeable as you can for me. Rox,—I have no money to speak of now. The sum I married you on is exhausted. Let's see how old is Tempe? I recollect that on the day she was born I looked into my situation, and I must say I thought of the Spanish Main—and of Argus. But you have spent nothing."

"I never spent money, George—I cannot be wasteful; to save is my ambition."

"Rox, you are a miser. You dress yourself and Tempe upon what? The poor little beggar is always a thing of shreds and patches."

Roxalana made no effort to combat his opinion.

"I tell you I must have money, Rox."

There was nothing for her to say on this point.

"I must and will have it. Where shall I obtain it?"

Intently regarding him, without a particle of emotion in her face, she answered :

"You must and will have it; and you will obtain it from Argus."

"So! well—for just now, day, day, Rox."

He left her in a composure that would have driven a lover frantic; but George was not her lover,—he scarcely knew why he had become her husband. Nothing in her nature knit itself into the temperament, which compassed and ruined him. He knew, though, that she would throw her soul into the flames of hell as coolly as if it were an old glove, for his sake; and that, good woman as she was, she would lie for him with calm lips and unblenched eyes, to hide his slightest fault.

With her, it was as Argus predicted; she grew to the place as moss grows to the stone. Its space and substantiality suited her silence-loving soul. Tempe, having discovered the weak spot of the domain—the door into the alley—made herself happy with constant visits and rompings among the children there, and was too much absorbed with its hearty, vulgar life to miss any loving care at home.

Gradually and unobtrusively, Roxalana assumed the control of the housekeeping; her method was as rigid and exact as the laws of a monastery. Its basis was an economy which George called parsimony, and Argus prudence. Though she would have gone to the world's end with George, had he desired it, no prayer nor threat could induce her to allow him two eggs for his breakfast: and when Tempe cried with

rage and disgust at her schoolmate's discovery that she wore petticoats of duck, made from the fragments of worn sails, Roxalana even shared her tears, but said the petticoats answered the same purpose as finer ones, and that she esteemed it a fortunate circumstance to be so near the junk store on the quay, for there were a number of articles in it at half price that no one but herself would think of turning to account. Argus was amused with her management. He understood it after a little, when he understood the rapacity of George; it accorded with his wishes, that she would employ no servant, nor any outside help. At home he must drop everything that entangled his personality. The more limited and defined the exterior of his life, the greater his enjoyment of that strange internal liberty, which men of intellect who have experienced much possess, and do not desire to show. Roxalana herself, always sedate, always at ease, keeping good faith with the veritable, silent regarding the unsubstantial and visionary, came singularly up to his requirements. Not so with George, who existed in mental slavery to some hope, or desire, which bore no relation to his present possessions. To obtain his wishes he needed a lawless liberty. Sharp and selfish as Argus was, cold and cynical, it is certain that he allowed George to impoverish him. In regard to this fact, Roxalana, who knew it, made herself magnanimous for Argus. On his side he concealed his losses from her. They never knew what George did with the money. Every day he declared his intention of leaving Kent, and every

evening deferred his departure. He soon exhausted the town; its high life was merely respectable, and its low life devoid of vim. His most worthy performance was in clearing the old garden paths, resetting the roses, and patching with vines and lattice-work the summer-house. Roxalana knew nothing of flowers, but in the time of roses, she like to pull one to nibble at, and stare over. And she had a strange fancy for tulips which George took pains to raise for her; and when she first saw them blooming at Temple House, her dark face borrowed their tint for a moment, and her grave, solid eyes smiled as she thanked him.

"You are a kind of dusky, solemn tulip yourself, Rox," he said.

Argus, looking at George while he was leisurely making these repairs, acquired the habit of smoking in the garden, and in this way they dropped into each other's society, exchanged cigars, and scattered their ashes in company. If they ventured on speech it was to note the weather, to argue on trivial points, banter each other, and to laugh; but they never touched on any vital topic. Had they done so, there might have been a root of bitterness revealed. Inside the house they rarely met, except at supper in the green room—that ceremony being religiously observed still. Roxalana, George, and Tempe alike yielded to the influence of Argus there.

"Where is my father?" Tempe sometimes asked, missing him suddenly.

"He is in the place he chooses to be," her mother

generally replied. "Where is your patchwork? Do I see a rent in your frock? What is the matter with your shoes?" And Tempe was diverted from a subject which Roxalana preferred not to dwell on herself. But when George was the most irregular, her regularity was the most noticeable; never was the house-keeping so nicely adjusted as when he was absent.

The day came when he left Kent. There was no mystery concerning his going—no opposition, and no conclusion. As he crossed the threshold Roxalana went to her chamber window, and watched him going down the lawn with a calm, heavy countenance. Argus stood under the elms, his hat pitched over his eyes, and Tempe was beside her father, holding his hand. They reached the gate, where neither Argus nor Roxalana's eyes could follow them. George stopped and turned his head towards the house.

"God! what ails me?" he cried.

Struck by a profound and painful emotion, for a moment he stood like the stabbed Iago, bleeding, but not killed. He took Tempe in his arms, and gazed at her wistfully.

"Tempe, you are a beauty," he murmured; "don't forget that you look like your father."

His fine eyes filled with tears; beaded sweat burst out on his forehead.

"I am a wretch, Tempe," he said bitterly; "don't forget that, either. Be sure that you can live without the cursed fillip my nerves require. I cannot define and settle my wants as the souls behind us do. Well, the world—mine oyster—is no harder to

open, than ever. But what is the use of my trying it again."

He had kissed her a dozen times while speaking, kissed her with sighs and trembling lips. She was dumb, but observing a sound of wheels coming down the street checked him; it was the coach which had come for him. As it drew up at the gate, his expression changed, those empty, foolish hopes with which the unknown deludes, charged in upon him, dissipating his doubt and misery like smoke in the air.

"Kiss papa," he begged. "Good girl; see what a beautiful day it is for me. Ask mamma to count the tulips this year. Tell her that I remember Roxalana's goodness to me; she has been good, Tempe. Mind this also; be always polite to your uncle Argus."

He sprang from the gate, and went down the steps without a sound.

Tempe heard the loud morning song of the birds flying round the elms. She watched them. These winged creatures, afterwards embodied the remembrance of her father, unapproachable, beautiful, direct in their instincts—free as the ether that sustained them, and faithless as the winds that steered them hither and thither.

Returning, she missed Argus, and searched the house in vain for her mother. She flew to the alley, and played from house to house, dining with her favorite, Mat Sutcliff, till nightfall. Then with a new feeling of lawlessness, she boldly burst into the

green room, expecting to find confusion and dismay; to her surprise, she found her mother snuffing the same candles, and making tea in the old fashion. The supper was laid with the usual care, accompanied with no pungent, mournful sauce. Argus read the *Kent Chronicle* as he did every evening. From a diffidence which she could not have explained, she avoided looking directly in her mother's face, but kept on the alert for any sudden groan or cry. But Roxalana wore the evening through in the old fashion, except that she continually brushed her lips with her handkerchief, as if they were feverish. When they were alone, and Tempe perceived that her mother intended to go to bed in silence, she burst out with her father's message:

"He said, I was to tell you that he had spoken of your goodness to him; and that you must count the tulips. And, oh—won't he come back?"

"I never was half good enough to him, Tempe."

"What shall I do?" asked Tempe, the tears streaming from her eyes.

"We will count the tulips together. Now get into bed, and dream of him, as I shall."

No change appeared in Roxalana's manner, but from the day of George's departure, she never went beyond the limits of the house. The fashion of her dress remained the same, and she never looked into a newspaper.

For many a January and July the percentage of Argus's diminished capital dropped into his purse with the thought, that there might come a demand

for it from George. None came. The happy earth moved eastward with its expectant lovers, but it never rolled Roxalana's love in sight again. Tempe shot up within the shadow of those dark walls, as the lovely star-flower comes up from the dark ground in spring among the dead boughs and needles of the pines. Finally, Argus and Roxalana knew that George was dead. They read it, perhaps, in each others eyes; perhaps the air was weighted with his passing soul, which burdened them.

They announced his death to Tempe, for once in speech working together, offering the courtesy to the last mortal Cause which should be the warrant for the same towards themselves on a like occasion. There were no tears, nor lamentations, but Roxalana stared as fixedly at Tempe as if the lids of her eyes had lost the power of closing over them; and Argus was pale and downcast; his hands moved about in search of something to adjust. Tempe looked from one to the other, and with some embarrassment asked if she should wear black. Roxalana shook her head, and a faint, sarcastic smile played over Argus's lips, and his hands ceased to be nervous. When Tempe looked in the glass that night, and let down her hair, she remembered the injunction of her father, that she must not forget the likeness between them, and sat motionless, watching her image, her mind dwelling on their parting interview at the gate. Picturing, as she did, the defacement of the dead, and shrinking from the dull power of the unknown grave, which had quelled her counterpart, she could

not resist the contrast which the sight of her own beautiful vitality gave her, and so her father's self faded away. From this period the routine of life with Argus and Roxalana lost its dash of bitter flavor; a dramatic possibility had disappeared. The elasticity of Argus's breath-loving temperament stretched without strain or snap; time stood equably with him. His face looked firm and smooth; his eyes were latent in their energy, and his bearing was full of idle strength. Roxalana, heavy, incurious, with slight self-love, perfectly well balanced in mind and body, excepting a dark, crooked desert, which was only revealed, as the mirage is revealed, when the desert is travelled upon, settled into a placid content which did not look beyond itself. Tempe lived as a child lives—in an unthinking flow of high spirits, which turned each day into a series of absorbing events.

The lapse of years sometimes kindly purls along even with the sophisticated; when God, and the Universe, and their own passions do not trouble them; when their enjoyments and afflictions do not range higher than those of the savage. It was so at Temple House. It was a natural worship which Argus gave to himself at the shrine of Aurora on this September day. The day's labor of Roxalana was a sufficient and reasonable one, and it was not necessary that Tempe, by any thunderbolt, should be startled from her happiness and vacuity.



## CHAPTER V.

THERE were but two families holding relations with Temple House; that of Cyrus Brande, the owner of Brande's Forge, on Apsley River, a wild, secluded spot, two miles, by the pastures, from Temple House; and that of Mat Sutcliffe, wharfinger, stevedore, and retired sailor, whose house in the alley was against the door in the garden walk, and the nearest to the pasture path leading to the Forge. For the most part of his sea-faring life, Mat accompanied Argus as his second mate. When Argus left the sea, so did Mat; but their intercourse continued: Argus valued Mat, and Mat was devoted to Argus. The alley inhabitants called the Sutcliffe family disreputable. Mat slept all day on Sunday, or prowled the fields with his boys and dogs, and Mary, his wife, instead of going to church with her neighbors, staid at home to do her week's ironing. Mary's habits were somewhat cat-like; it was easy for her to purr and play, and as easy to scratch and snarl. She wheedled, coaxed, and bullied Mat, for she was afraid of him; and Mat was rough with her. He sometimes drank hard; swore a good deal at inanimate things; had periods of skulking in the chimney corner, and about the docks and wharves, doing and

saying nothing. He pretended in his talkative moods that all women were vicious, and all men dishonest; but his conduct belied his opinions. He watched over Tempe Gates as if he were her guardian angel. If a man had breathed a word against Argus, Mat would have knocked that man down and beaten him. He never, however, made any profession of attachment to either Argus or Tempe; sentiment would not have looked well coming from him. He was a short thick-set man, with small deep-set eyes, and burnt-looking hair. He had in his mouth generally a short pipe, and in his leisure moments carried an end of rope in his hand. His jacket was apt to be tarry, and he was fond of wearing large canvas slippers which he made himself. Occasionally he played the stern father, and thrashed his boys for stealing brushwood and old iron; but oftener winked at the depredations, as they were articles without owners. He sometimes exerted his marital authority over Mary, but generally ended his attempts by telling her she wasn't half as bad as he was. Tempe abused and patronized him, and considered him part of the property of Temple House. What was the gate made in the wall for, if he wasn't? And Mat assured her it was true; and if ever the house came to be sold, he should be sold with it. The bustle and confusion of his hut, Mary's gipsy-like ways in her housework, the careless, gay spirits of the whole family, were highly attractive to Tempe. Roxalana sometimes told her she frequented Mat's too often, but was herself

too much a child of Nature to have a thought that the society of the Sutcliffes was beneath her. Argus was quite satisfied to have her in so safe a place as under Mat's eye. The natural separation would come soon enough.

The acquaintance with the Brandes began with the former business relations between Argus and Cyrus, and continued between Tempe and the only child of the Brandes—Virginia. Excepting the two girls, the families seldom met; their spheres were different, as Mrs. Brande, commonly called Rhoda Cyrus, frequently observed, when Virginia's fondness for Temple House was commented on,—as different as pound cake was to molasses gingerbread. The charm that drew Virginia to Temple House, no one comprehended; year by year it deepened, and became a part, or rather the whole of an interior life, apart from her home and parents. She constantly received a double education, one contrasting widely with the other. The sensible, unworldly sincerity of Roxalana; the conduct of Argus, which absolutely denied the influence of opinion, and yet was so calm, orderly, and cheerful without it; his indifference to money; his idleness through which he was led to note with critical exactness those matters usually escaping the attention of men; his moods, urbane, candid, jeering, bitter; the wildness of Tempe; her freedom from all control, her loneliness; all made up a different world, and Rhoda Cyrus was so far correct. The fashion of the poverty at Temple House was more imposing to Virginia than the ever-working

effect of her father's wealth; its worry and fuss, and glare persuaded all Kent, outside Temple House, but within, its effect was lost.

Cyrus Brande lived between two masks, one faced the world, and the other faced—himself. He appeared austere, pious, and reserved behind the former; before the latter he felt still pious, but genial, sensual, and cowardly; rarely, if ever, were these masks removed for him to appear a violent, passionate, inconsistent man. He was a great financier, was a powerful man in his church, and, with reason, bore an irreproachable character.

He despised books, pictures, and sentiment, but loved personal ornament, and above all things beauty in women, though he never took off his private mask to speculate on it. Rhoda Cyrus, his proverbial echo abroad, was his pest at home, and the burden of Virginia's life; she was indolent, whining, uneasy, and endeavored by drugs and stimulants, to deaden herself against the torments of her position. Cyrus was patient with her, but excused her from none of the religious and secular duties which he had imposed upon himself, as a portion of the life he thought necessary to lead. To avoid these impositions she practised much cunning, and hence Virginia's martyrdom.

Rhoda Cyrus hated prayers, parties, and to ride in town with the best span. It was a nuisance to her, the wearing of her gold watch and jewelry. It was tedious for her to follow the observance of the attentions and charities expected of her, from the position



of Cyrus, in regard to the church and the body of his workmen. To the public the machinery which regulated the affairs of the Brandes was perfect. The Forge was quite a settlement: there were shops, sheds, a row of workmen's houses, and the large house where the family lived. Apsley River, bending below the Forge, widened before the house, and swept round again above it. On the other side, opposite the house, the land rose gradually, and limited the view: nothing was to be seen on this side but a short, dull-colored grass, and an occasional boulder. The landscape in other directions was no pleasanter. The house was large, well built, with every modern improvement, and furnished as the houses of rich business men usually are. The best of everything was in it, in the way of curtains, carpets, and furniture. The landscape and the house were a clue to Virginia's obvious history. Strictly speaking her father had compelled her to take the advantages of money. She had been educated at schools of note, and had travelled. She had not taken kindly to education, and was indifferent to foreign scenery. At twenty her acquirements were poor, so far as music, drawing, and the languages went; but nature had given her a gracious soul, and experience was enriching, and deepening her whole traits. Her faults were not numerous, but sufficiently strong, marring many of her acts, and often destroying her resolves; Tempe, younger by several years, selfishly clung to her, and, like the rest of her friends, trampled upon her yielding individuality.

To most people Virginia was as lovely as a star, and as distant. Thanks to the will of her father again, she claimed a degree of attention from those who could go no further, from the style of her dress, which varied so that her beauty could never be decided upon by them. She was a brunette, because her hair was black and red became her complexion; a blonde, because she was pale and had the deepest blue eyes, which contrasted well with yellow. Her forehead was low, her nose straight, consequently her face was Grecian, and the true way of wearing her hair was the Greek fashion, which she sometimes adopted. Her cheeks were full, her chin and jaw wide and firm; therefore, when her hair was worn in smooth bands, a likeness to her grandfather, who was accused of being an Irishman, was plainly to be seen. As she was uniformly reserved, her popularity in the first circles of Kent could only be accounted for by the original and constant change of her wardrobe.

## CHAPTER VI

"WHAT sign is the sun entering that makes you so rampant?" asked Argus, as Tempe dashed in one day, her cheeks dyed a hot crimson, her eyes flashing and humid.

"I never will have my hair cut again, mother," she cried vehemently. "Never, don't ask it."

"What shall I have then to wipe my hands on," Argus inquired, "if your hair isn't short? Come," and he approached her with extended hands, threatening her.

Tempe bound her handkerchief over her head quickly, and hid her hair.

"Tell me the difficulty," Roxalana said.

"I was over to Caroline Drake's, and she told me that John said he never heard of such a thing as keeping a young woman's hair short to make her look like a boy."

Roxalana looked at Argus, and felt herself detected. She had kept Tempe's hair short, because thereby she looked so much the more like George. No way of wearing it could have made her look prettier; the jetty mass clasping her head, suited her face,—as yet soulless, like a cameo Diana; rings of it dropped round her forehead, the tips of her ears, round her neck, short and fine, like the young tendrils of a blossoming grape vine.

"If you wish to gain the approbation of John Drake," replied her mother, "I will give you permission to tie up your hair at once. You will soon make it ugly and straight enough to stick a comb in."

"I don't care for John Drake, mother; but who wishes to look like a boy, when one is not a boy?"

"Tempe," said Argus, "you are the worst kind of boy—tomboy."

"Uncle Argus, why is my hair not like yours, wiry, shiny, obstinate?"

"Because you are my dear little niece, and not like me in any particular."

"Gracious!" she exclaimed, reflectively, her mind roving in search of a bit of ribbon to do up her hair with, according to Caroline Drake's advice. "I wish, for once, that I could have some money."

"What would you do with it?" asked Argus.

"As other girls do. Look at Virginia Brande—look at Caroline Drake—and now look at me. Those girls carry pocket-books; they buy anything they like—even give it away if they choose. Who ever gave away any money in this house, I should be pleased to know? Carry Drake has four silk dresses: Virginia has a closet full, and I have this"—she shook out a scanty, nondescript skirt with bitter contempt—"a dress that was made for mother in the year one; a blue, a green, a yellow piece of distress; and I live in the biggest house in Kent, bigger than the jail, and as pleasant; and my name is older than the hills,—Temple Gates; for the Lord's sake tell me who gave me such a name?"

"There, Tempe," said Roxalana, quietly; "that will do for this time."

"Let her rail," ordered Argus, as quietly.

Tempe tore the handkerchief from her head, and threw it on the floor. Roxalana with ludicrous solemnity settled herself into a serious listening attitude. Tempe went on:

"I should like to know why I cannot have money, and when I am going to have it! I am tired of my shabby, mean life."

Three lines darted down Argus's stony forehead, between his eyebrows, and rested there. Roxalana saw them, and made a movement to pick up the handkerchief, for a warning to Tempe to stop, but was prevented from taking it by the setting of Tempe's foot upon it.

"Uncle Argus."

He rose suddenly, and felt in his pockets.

"Roxalana," he said, "I miss my desk key; have you had it?"

"I thought I left it in a drawer, after I put some flower seeds there. Do you wish for it now?"

He nodded, and she went out, with an eye on Tempe; but Tempe was beyond heeding its dictation.

"Uncle Argus,"—she began again, but he interrupted her.

"I will tell you why you cannot have money: Your father robbed me of so much, that I shall never be able to be generous to his daughter."

"It is a lie!"

"And I will tell you a way to get money. Marry it."

"My father did not rob you."

"Not with his hand on my throat, or thrust into my pocket, but genteelly—he asked for it. Your mother knows it, and does not know it from me. Now do not speak so before her again. Pick up your handkerchief."

It was in her hand, and she stood like a statue when Roxalana returned with the key.

Argus had no idea of the chord he was striking when he said, "marry money;" but John Drake, the young man who objected to her boyish appearance, was in love with Tempe, and she had concluded to marry him. She felt elated and irritable at this sudden admiration—curious, excited, and proud; but her heart was not touched,—not an atom of it. This stormy scene was owing to her uncertainty as to the best way in which the affair should be conducted.

Roxalana resumed her seat, as if the discussion was to have an everlasting continuance; but Tempe raised her eyes to Argus, gave him a significant nod, and walked softly away.

"She requires no money, Argus," said Roxalana.

"What is the matter with the young one?" Do you mean to keep her out of woman's estate? or is she too empty-headed to inherit it?"

"She is but a child, surely?"

"Half of you are never anything more; but make her an older child, I advise."

"Why should I?"

"On account of these growing tantrums; not because it is necessary she should have much sense."

She is very pretty; I was not aware till just now how fast beauty had come upon her—the little rascal."

Roxalana gave one of her internal, joyful laughs.

"I never pretended that I could manage anybody," she said. "It is useless—the attempt to govern children, just as useless as the attempt is—to govern men and women. I never thought that the Lord intended us for weather-cocks, to be veered by the judgment of each other. Nothing changes my opinion or wishes, after I once know them."

"I believe you; yet whose acts were ever more governed than yours?"

"By fatality."

"Somehow Tempe's comb will be cut then?"

"Probably."

Argus had heard that day a rumor, to the effect that the Drake family were trying to persuade John Drake to go to Europe, and break off the affair with Temple Gates.

## CHAPTER VII.

"SHE is not."

"She is."

"Well, if *you* think much of this ere peat fire, I don't." And Mat Sutcliffe, stamped on the black mass smouldering in the fireplace, to show his contempt for Moll's experiment in the way of fuel, and to conceal his surprise.

"What makes you think so?" he asked, after ruminating a space. "Tempe wears pantalets yet; she is too young to marry."

"I should know that something next to heaven and earth coming together was going to happen in the family, for Roxalana Gates has given up doing the washing."

"Who said so?"

"Mrs. Bayley, who is going to take it home for so much a month."

"And you and she have been washing dirty linen besides; that woman is the dry rot of the alley, and you love her. What else did she say?"

"Dry rot wouldn't say anything to 'tract you, of course."

"Tell me what she said, and without fooling, too."

"She said the Drake family was as mad as fire

about it; that they called John an idiot, Tempe a baby, Roxalana cracked, and Argus a pauper."

"That's reglar dictionary talk," said Mat contemptuously. Then he swore at the Drakes, root and branch. Didn't all Kent know, he demanded, that old Jack Drake, the grandfather of John, was a pirate? And that William Drake, John's father, had been so long under the old man's thumb, that nobody could tell which from t'other. Pirating was out of date, but the land-shark was in fashion—same thing—one was wet and the other dry. But,"—and Mat turned upon Mary,—“he should like to know whether anybody had aught to say against the young feller, John Drake?"

"Nobody but yourself," Mary replied; "you are saying that the Drakes are pretty much of a muchness. I guess John is his father's son, and I guess, too, that he'll find what's trumps when he is spliced to Temple Gates."

"You have been telling me a pack of lies. And now, Marm, if you will allow me, I'll take a spell of the open air."

"Take anything you like for all me, Mr. Sutcliffe."

He went out, and took a seat on the top of the wall nearest the path to the Forge, carefully filled his pipe, and put it into his mouth without lighting it.

"I'll wait," he thought. "Maybe I'll smell musk before long. Virginia Brande has it about her lately; it ought to come up on the wind that blows from the Forge; a reglar sou-easter's breeding. She

will know whether they are going to let that child marry. Curse Argus!—he has played maroon so long in his rotten wreck of a place, that he has forgotten his relation to human beings. I should like to split open the twirls of his heart with a marline-spike."

He watched the turns of the path which glimmered in the dusk and disappeared in the darkness; no one appeared; neither Virginia, whom he expected, nor any workman on his way to town. He lighted his pipe, and changed his watch from the path to the sky. Dun-colored clouds rolled in threatening masses towards the bay, whose dull roar broke and gathered again along the dreary coast below the dreary pastures. His thoughts crept out seaward,—rose and fell over the waves of an adventurous past, which knew the life that rounds the deep.

"Dirty weather, Mat," some one said close to him. He looked round and saw Argus wrapped in his old camlet cloak.

"Is it the same at home that you are out on the wall, with the salt driving up the wind? Moll mad to-night?"

"Beats me, to find you in the same spot, without a Moll at home to torment you, Captain," Mat replied, "I was just thinking of the time"—

"When"—Argus interrupted—"we were

"Oh no; that particular time, I mean, when your foot happened to be stung by a scorpion. Haven't you got a scar?"

"Not a scar, anywhere, outside nor in," Argus answered, furling his cloak, and placing himself beside Mat on the wall.

"I believe you."

"What of that time? We were off Antonio, were we?"

"We were on shore."

"Just as we are now."

Mat laughed, knocked the ashes from his pipe, and put it in his pocket. That they were well matched, each knew. Their thoughts travelled together in silence; it was well enough for them just at that moment to be next each other without speaking. The roar of the wind and sea increased; the air was pungent in the mouth, wild in its flavor, and exciting; the darkness settled round them like a substance. The influence of eyesight between them being impossible, Mat was suddenly emboldened.

"You've hated the salt water long, Captain. I see you everywhere, but in sight on't. You can't help feeling, though, that the world is made to tremble by the almighty ocean. There's no more shake in your life, hey? What's the reason? Why not go out again?"

"Let me find the reason," said Argus, tugging at one of his boot-tops which had slipped down. "Could it have been the scorpion that first sowed dissension between me and the sea? Or"—he

stopped, lost in some reflection, and Mat hastily resumed:

"There's no kind of a track of your sea-life upon you. Every other sailor shows the strain of the plank between him and hell. I do for one, I know. I'd like to walk it now and then; but you,—are you afraid?"

"That plank between me and eternity I kicked away some years ago, for my soul to slip in at any moment, and lose, or find itself, in the yawning chasm it dreams of so stupidly now. As you say, I have no love for the sea. Have you observed love for anything in me? Love, they say, is terrible and beautiful, like the sea you brag on: I have cut away from terror and beauty. Peace and laziness are the words to describe my days,—days without desire. As for hope, you ass, that lives where sky and sea meet. Why should I set my eyes there? Because I am *afraid*?"

Mat jumped from the wall.

"How happens it that you are on the way to the Forge to-night?" he exclaimed.

"I am on my way to nowhere, but am trying to oblige you in the matter of being catechized. So go on. I was married once"—

"Don't go on,—I've had enough. I was looking out for Virginia Brande."

"Do you call her Virginia?" asked Argus, with a slight surprise in his voice.

"Don't I say Tempe, also?"

"There's a difference."

Mat concluded that Argus was ignorant of the rumor concerning Tempe: there was no need of saying anything to him on the subject.

"I reckon I'll put down the lane," he said.

"Why were you looking for Virginia Brande?"

"I often see her, on her way to your house. I rather like to keep an eye out for her, on dark nights; she wears musk, and her silk gowns rustle; it's easy telling her."

"Musk! all perfume to your tarred sense is musk, is it?"

No more was said. Mat accompanied Argus through the alley, saw him inside his door, and then walked to the other side of the town, and inspected the house where the Drakes lived. A light was visible in an upper window, although it was past midnight. He stared at it awhile, and then turned away, thinking, "Well, what of it? suppose it is so,—what is it to me?" Too thoroughly roused to go home, however, he prowled round the town till daylight, and then returned, to find Mary on the hearth in her stockings, busy frying fish for his breakfast. Before noon that day he passed Argus in the street, and they looked at each other without a nod.

There was a storm in the Drake family when John announced his intention of marrying Tempe. His father protested against it, his mother wept, and his sisters declared it was a shame. But John simply said, "I want her, and I am of age." He had the power to carry out his plan, for he was

his father's partner; the articles had just been signed between them, and there was no danger of John's being cut off with a shilling;—his income was a sure one.

"I wouldn't have that little Temple Gates," his sister Caroline cried, "for her weight in diamonds."

"I'd have her," her brother replied, "for her own weight; and I have got her. She is mine. Ain't she pretty?"

After he had begged Tempe to marry him, and obtained her consent, he wrote a polite letter to Argus, which contained the customary phrases, and the request that Tempe should be made ready for the ceremony in two weeks from its date. Argus gave the letter to Roxalana, who read it, and asked what he was going to do.

"Nothing," he replied; "let her marry him. Keep her in the house, however, till I have seen him."

The letter remaining unanswered, and Tempe shut within doors, John was compelled to pay Argus a visit. There was little said on either side. Argus made no comment on the manner in which the affair had been conducted; remarked that John's impatience was quite natural; invited him to come to the house daily: and decided that there should be no wedding, but that they should be married some morning without any display. Roxalana shook hands with her future son-in-law timidly and respectfully, and then mutely looked at him, expecting something, she hardly knew what, in the way

of explanation. He had seen her before, but it was the first time they had been brought in contact, and he was amazed at the difference between her and Tempe.

"I hope," she said at last, "that your family are pleased with my daughter. I have heard her mention her acquaintance with your sisters."

"She will not marry my family, madam," John answered. "They have made some trifling objection on the score of age; that was the only one I noticed. I am very glad to take her as I can get her."

"Are you?" said Argus sharply, "and so your family objected to the match? Where do you intend she shall live?"

"With us, at home, for the present."

"No; she shall remain with me, till you can provide a house for her."

"There's room enough for both of you here," said Roxalana, mildly. "It is proper that she should stay here; she is too young to manage house-keeping. I shall call her, and tell her so."

Tempe was called. She pouted at John, and said she never had the least idea of leaving home. When they met alone he stormed about it, but she was firm. She knew the opposition of the family, and she never would go near them. For an unexplained reason the Drakes veered round in Tempe's favor when they heard of this; kissed her in public; drove down to the door of Temple House often, and had interviews with her on the lawn;

bowed with ceremony to Argus, and sent polite messages to Roxalana. "The little beauty John is going to marry," they said, when talking about her. Mr. Drake wished that if the marriage was to take place quietly in the morning at Argus's house, that there should be a gay wedding party at his house in the evening. He gave Tempe some beautiful dresses and a box of ornaments, called her his pretty dear, and tried to take her on his knee.

"I hate him," said Tempe,— "he makes me sick; but I like his presents, and will take all he chooses to give. Just think, mother, of his giving me a crimson silk! How came he to know enough for that? Caroline must have hinted at it for me."

"I think the dress is a terrible one," Roxalana replied, "and the ornaments are not to be described; don't let me see you wear them yet awhile. I suppose Mr. Drake must have his way about the party for you. I hope I may be excused from going."

"Oh yes," Tempe answered carelessly, "you need not go."

"You must go," said Argus, "and bring Tempe home with you. I shall go in my coat with brass buttons,—made before Tempe was born, which I wore when I dined with that Commissioner."



## CHAPTER IX.

TEMPE was married on an October day. The green room was not comfortably warm that morning; Argus looked icy, also, and Roxalana was more dense than usual. A vermilion spot glowed on Tempe's cheek, and her eyes shone with a lustre borrowed from the occasion. The Drakes were present, and Virginia Brande. Mat Sutcliffe sat in the hall during the ceremony, in a new pair of duck trousers, cut and stitched by himself, and Mary waited upon the company in a blue and yellow dress, bought for the purpose. A pale Episcopal priest made John and Tempe man and wife; he rounded off the periods of the service beautifully, but when he said, "Whom God hath joined, let man not put asunder," Mat laughed, and said to himself, "curious stuff, that, for a couple of children."

"What do you think of that chap?" meaning the minister, he asked of Argus a few moments afterwards.

"He seems to be a mild, cheerful prisoner and victim."

"What a beautiful ceremony!" said Caroline Drake to Roxalana.

"It is sad to me," Roxalana answered; "something

pronounced over dust,—just like your funeral service."

"My dear children," said Mrs. Drake, her face in her lace bordered handkerchief, "it is for better and for worse,—remember. Can't we get away soon?" she whispered, turning from her embrace of Tempe, and dropping a weak kiss on her chin.

"The ring pinches my finger, John," Tempe said under her breath.

"I know better," he answered softly. "Will you drink some wine with me?"

She assented, and he brought her a glass.

"Look at me," he demanded.

Her eyes met his; the pang he deserved, lawful as his seizure of her had been, cut his heart; nothing in her face answered the expression of his own. The glory and hope of the hour she did not share. In that misty pleasure garden, which one can enter but once and search for the enchanted fruit, he was alone. Bright, restless, void, Tempe stood beside him in another sphere,—unmindful of the paradise whose portals opened within her reach. Near, yet far from him, rose its terraces of flowers, one above the other, in masses of sweet beauty, whose forms and colors could bewilder the senses. Its crystal fountains played against the pure zenith, and filled the air with a murmur whose mystery famishes and then feeds the soul. On the verge of two worlds for a moment, he saw both no longer; the selfishness of a man came to his aid then, and shut out all that was not real.

"Hem!" exclaimed Mr. Drake. "This is most excellent wine, Captain Gates; I am quite astonished at it."

"Are you?" Argus replied, "I brought it over myself"

"Now, really, did you, indeed?"

The flavor of the wine so much increased his respect for Argus, that he conversed with him till a move was made for departure.

"There is no set dinner anywhere to-day I believe," he remarked, in his pragmatic way; "won't you all adjourn to my house, and be on hand for the entertainment?"

John looked at his watch.

"Temple and myself," he said, "are to dine at the Grove House. The horses should be here. I ordered them, as I ordered the dinner,—two weeks ago."

Mr. Drake looked admiringly at his son for this proof of forethought and method in his madness.

Presently they were gone. Roxalana was not in her usual seat, but sat near the window, staring at the murky sky, and holding her handkerchief over her mouth. Argus was gratefully smoking, and drumming an original air on the back of his chair with his fingers.

"As this business has nothing to do with our purpose in living, I am glad it is over," he remarked.

"We might as well have philosophy now as at any other time, Argus."

"Roxalana,—you see how we hurry over the ac-

cidents, like birth, marriage, and death, and dwell in the slow mornings and long evenings which bring us nothing."

"I don't like this dark sky," she said abruptly.

"The sunrise was no better."

"Did you observe Mat Sutcliffe's extraordinary appearance?" and Roxalana heaved a strong sigh, in token that she was about to throw off her melancholy. "I am thinking that he went home petrified."

"I gave him a bottle of wine to put under his jacket. The old fellow never has been able to separate himself from an honest interest in my affairs."

"It should be so; there is something about him that I esteem."

"The Drakes would appreciate that sentiment,—don't you think?"

"I despise those Drakes."

Argus laughed, and in an instant Roxalana joined with him. So they chatted,—a most unusual circumstance—till the dusk ended the autumn day, which had been a long one.

"I invite you to give me an extra candle at supper, Roxalana, and some of that fine tea."

"The last box has not been opened," said Roxalana, feeling an agreeable solicitude concerning it.

"And the Don's sweetmeats, also."

"Which Tempe likes so well!"

Several hours later they were in Mr. Drake's crowded house as guests, as much apart from the spirit of the scene as Banquo's ghost at Macbeth's

supper. Roxalana was immediately and adroitly shelved by Caroline Drake, in an easy-chair in a shaded corner, which partially obscured the effect of a black silk dress with straight, tight sleeves, and a large muslin collar, yellow with age. Her hair was twisted as usual, in one heavy mass, and two scarlet spots burnt in her dark cheeks. She watched Tempe with calm, unwinking eyes, and kept her hands folded.

"I am coming to sit beside you soon," said Virginia Brande to her, turning her head aside from a young man who carried her fan and some beautiful flowers. "You and I are to make an agreement."

"Is that the witch of Endor?" the young man asked. "I shall be fond of seeing you sit next her, the contrast will be so fine."

"Shall you? look at me now then." He was despoiled of fan and flowers so suddenly that his hands remained suspended in the air, while his eyes followed her as she sank like a fleecy cloud upon a low seat close to Roxalana.

"She is beautiful to-night,—don't you think so?" asked Roxalana, turning benign regards upon Virginia. "And you,—you must enjoy yourself, you are so well fitted to shine in such a place."

"Oh, Roxalana, how much I like *you*; you are dear enough to me. I am so happy to have faith in you at all times. I am seldom satisfied with the feelings I have towards people, duty and obligation being so mixed with them. There's no duty between you and me, no obligation,—is there, Roxalana?"

"Let me smell your flowers?" Roxalana begged, stretching out her hand. Her clear, slow voice had a caressing tone which was new to Virginia.

"You shall have them. Let me fasten a rose on your dress,—your hideous dress, Roxalana, is it not?"

Roxalana asked her if she was aware of its durable quality. It promised to last a life-time, and what more could be expected of a dress?

"Roxalana, are you watching Tempe with the hope that somebody will step on that stupid veil? It is out of place over those close curls and slender, childlike arms."

"The Drakes brought it to her; I did not approve of it."

"I am sure you said nothing to that effect."

"Why should I object? I think Tempe wished to do all that was customary. I observe that John is anxious to indulge her. Don't you think he is an agreeable young man?"

Virginia did not think so, but avoided the question, and looked about her.

"Here comes my mother," she exclaimed, "whom you scarcely know. I will give her my seat, and hope you will speak with her."

Roxalana put out her hand with an air of respect to Mrs. Brande, and said, "I hope your health is good."

Mrs. Brande shook her head and her white feather fan, and groaned. Then she chided Virginia for being so long out of sight; complained of the crowded rooms, the negligence of the waiters, and the absence

of Mr. Brande; and sat down, eying Roxalana's dress and hair with a stiff surprise which brought the color to the pale face of Virginia, who turned her back, not wishing to see Roxalana's confusion; but the latter was not to be dismayed by criticism. How could Mrs. Gates have allowed Tempe to marry while but a child, was Mrs. Brande's first question; and Virginia, not waiting for its reply, moved away and joined Tempe, who happened to be standing alone at that moment. John's particular friends, she said, had gone into the supper-room, to drink his health with him. Did Virginia know that she was to start on a journey the next day? They were going to the best hotels, and she supposed she should see more dress than Kent had dreamed of. John had promised to take her to the theatre. He was going to buy at the first jeweller's shop a set of garnet and gold; but she must first have her ears bored. What age was Virginia when she put in earrings? And how becoming the turquoise she wore to night!—a mass of fine blue pebbles round her neck, arms, and in her comb!

Virginia replied quietly, but somehow felt out of patience with her all at once; it seemed as if she had fallen apart from Temple House,—dropping what she had probably borrowed in its atmosphere—something of its vigorous simplicity, and assumed the character of a parasite upon the Drakes. Virginia was not able to judge her fairly then, nor afterwards; for unless women are strongly bound in love and sympathy their different experiences only serve to blind their

comprehension of each other. Virginia made up her mind at that moment that Tempe must be added to that list of the weak and erratic to whom she owed duty and endurance.

"How do I look?" exclaimed Tempe at last, having received no comment on her appearance; "like a fright, I suppose. I wish the people would go; my feet ache with standing to receive their foolish compliments. I have had rivers of them to night."

"You are very pretty; but I do not like the veil."

"I do." And Tempe tossed her little head, and wreathed her slender arms. "Don't I look like the Bride of Abydos? What is your mother covering up my mother with her dove-colored silk skirt for. Tsch!—here comes the old fuss, my papa Drake, to introduce another booby. Do find John for me, Virginia."

Virginia, tall and stately as a lily, swaying like one as she yielded to the pressure of the crowd, drifted into the centre of a noisy, familiar group, and found herself brushing against some person taller than herself, who was also surrounded by talkers. Half turning, her eyes followed the outlines of a dark figure, whose handsome, well-gloved hand was thrust behind him, and whose handsome, well-booted foot was crushing her flounces. An extraordinary push caused by the waiters and their trays made them face each other with an apology. It was Argus, and Virginia blushed at her own surprise to see him a gentleman, in ordinary evening costume. His cool smile flashed round his mouth, although he, too, felt a vague

surprise at her aspect, she looked so perfectly a woman of the world.

"Help me away from this beautiful lady I have been talking with," he solicited. "Take my arm, and drag me on, so that I can regain composure."

They passed into a smaller room where there were seats.

"You are used to these matters," he continued; "I was not remembering till now that it was some time since you left school." His eyes rested on the bands of her beautiful, blue-black hair, and the perfect outline of her face.

"You confound me with Tempe," she answered, her shyness melting away with the atmosphere to which he professed to be a stranger.

"By no means. I saw Brande, your father, a day after you were born; he cashed a note for me. Is he here?"

"Certainly."

"With the elders, who are drinking the heavy port, which is the least like wine, and the most like medicine, or matching pins with Drake, his brother millionaire."

"Shall we look for him?"

"I am quite comfortable with his daughter, who will entertain me better."

"Tempe is going on a journey, she says. You will miss her."

"I have just been speaking with that blonde puppy, her husband, about it. I have no idea that I shall suffer in her absence. How do you think he

will enjoy himself in my society? They are to be with us, you know."

"I am almost sorry to hear that."

"Why are you sorry?"

"I like the house as it is; the intrusion of a stranger may change its aspect."

"This is one of your whims. You remind me of those French women who retire to a convent for a week or two of prayer and bread and water. When they return to the world their lovers' oaths have a new charm, and their wine a fresh sparkle."

"Don't hurt me."

Argus looked at her, and his eyes blazed with a quick mischievous fire. It was impossible for her, with all her sense of conventionality, not to show that she felt his glances.

"I like to hurt you," he said.

John Drake appealed to them, and smilingly nodded to Virginia. His bright silken hair spread wildly round his head; his delicate face was deeply flushed, his mouth was half open, and as he approached, his gait was uncertain.

"Damn you," said Argus, "you are drunk."

Virginia rose, and drew John's arm towards her.

"Come," she said, "I want to see your mother's celebrated cactus plants. I know where they are; will you show them to me?"

"To death's door. They are out on the piazza, will you go there, delicate creature?"

"Yes, yes, I need fresh air."

She placed her hand in his arm and steered him into the portico, with a regret for the loss of Argus.

## CHAPTER X.

MR. DRAKE was polite enough to send a note to Argus, when Tempe had been gone two weeks, which stated that John, for business reasons, would extend his tour considerably; the young couple in consequence would have an opportunity to see the rapid growth of some of the Mighty Cities of the West. A month, most likely, would elapse before their return. Shortly after the note was received, a letter came from Tempe,—her first to her mother.

"DEAR MOTHER: You never saw such work; we lost the small trunk, which was not marked. Have you seen Virginia? Her society will make amends for my absence. I wish I was at home, but I like travelling. I saw somebody yesterday that looked exactly like Mary Sutcliffe. I had half a mind to ask her if the cat's kittens had yellow patches, or if they were black and white: Mary said the cat would have kittens by the time I got back. You can't think how fish seems to be prized at these hotels, while we care nothing for it. - We stopped in Boston, and John bought me an Indian scarf. In New York he bought me a dark blue silk; he is very attentive, but he has a cold. I had it made, and it is trimmed with black lace. Mother, the lace was three dollars a yard. We are in Chicago now. The air has a flat taste to me; it is different from Kent air. *Of course*, Uncle Argus has worried about me; oh yes, I think he is *pining* away. There are no good preserves at any hotel; the noise at these great houses, would drive you wild, mother; you would never again wink your eyes at my slamming doors, could you stay in one awhile. Have those Drakes been to see you? I do not care for them; do you,

mother? I shall visit them but very little. John asked me if I would go to housekeeping in warm weather. I said, "Er, em, em," which ment "yes" to him; to me, "nary housekeeping." Why should I wash dishes for him, and dust furniture, and learn *not* to suit him in cooking—let me see, four times a day. He is too particular about his food. Mother, I had rather eat your dry bread; I hate to see people imagining they would like to have this, and that, to eat. I shall be gone some weeks yet. I'll help you knit when I return. John has snatched this from the table, and I am mad, for he laughs loud at it, and says—"Give me a kiss?" but I won't. It is eleven o'clock; there is no lamp burning in Temple House; you are asleep.

Your affectionate child,

TEMPLE GATES."

"That's a great letter," said Argus; "so full of observation."

"I like it vastly," said Roxalana, with her infrequent smile. "It is Tempe herself."

"So it is, Roxalana, you are right; especially in forgetting her name."

The next news Mr. Drake presented in person. He came hurriedly one evening, while Roxalana and Argus were at tea, with a white, scared face, bringing an open letter, at the top of which was an engraving of a hotel.

"Well, sir," said Argus, rising and pushing a chair towards him.

"There is an accident, sir," replied Mr. Drake, "a dreadful one."

Roxalana's eyes turned to stone, and she could not speak.

"Temple is all right," he said, addressing her; "it is my son that is injured."

A bright smile burst over Roxalana's face, and even the iron countenance of Argus lightened.

"I say," cried Mr. Drake, in a loud, angry, tearless voice, for he noticed the effect of his words, "to me it is dreadful! What shall I do? I cannot leave my business, and John's case is hopeless." He looked down at the letter; and his voice failed him. Argus took it, and read that a collision had occurred on some Western Railroad; that John was one of the victims; that he had been taken to a way town, and was now in the hotel, which the letter pictured; and that his friends must lose no time in reaching him, for his injuries were fatal.

"You must go, Argus," said Roxalana; "no preparation is necessary. Will that suit you, Mr. Drake?"

"Bring him home, sir, bring him home," said Mr. Drake, his tears falling. "My wife fell down in a fit, for she opened the letter. You could not take her; my girls would be simply an encumbrance. If you go, it must be alone. I thank you for the favor, sir. What can I do to forward the journey?"

"Nothing; I shall leave at once. Mat Sutcliffe will drive me to Wing's Station, and I can catch the down train."

Roxalana felt it impossible to make any condoling speech to Mr. Drake; she perceived his trouble, but could not sympathize with it, her relief at Tempe's escape was so great. Moreover, while hearing of John's disaster, she discovered that she felt no real interest in him, and was too sincere to express any

grief. Neither had she any thought of the influence this event might have upon Tempe; the dear illusions of sentiment, the hopes or desires which continually ascend from the depths of the soul when it must live in solitude, found no resting-place in Roxalana. Neither did Argus make any moral or philosophical remarks upon the disaster; with a silent, natural respect he opened the doors for Mr. Drake to pass out, and accompanied him to the gate, holding his own hat in his hands. Had it been any man besides Argus, Mr. Drake would have attempted some utterance concerning the mysterious ways of Providence; as it was, he concluded the interview with a request concerning his son, and parted from Argus with the same appearance of firmness and composure.

Within an hour, Argus and Mat Sutcliffe were riding along a road which crossed Apsley River just below the Forge.

"Talk about the treachery of the sea!" exclaimed Mat, in a triumphant tone, "what is't compared to the continual accidents on shore? If the sea mauls and maims us, 'tisn't above board; we are not strewed along the ground to excite the pity and horror of folks, but we are dragged under, out of sight, where the affair is between ourselves."

"The bones of the drowned do not always lie in the caverns of the deep."

"I know they get into coves, and sometimes drift in along shore, but they don't make spectacles for a multitude. So all that fol-de-rol I saw the other day



has come to nothing in less than two months. Well, shall I be waiting for you and Tempe at Wing's? I'll go along, and help you shoulder up the young feller, if you say so."

"He is dead, now, Mat."

"The poor little gal!"

"Death must wake us up now and then."

"They are fired up at the Forge, I see."

"Brande is ~~casting~~ anchors." *forging*

As they passed from the darkness into the wake of light gleaming from a furnace door, Virginia came into the mind of Argus, looking as she did on the night of Tempe's wedding, in her cloud-like dress,—tall, fair, self-collected with soft, radiant, umber-colored eyes, tinted like a summer-brook,—  
"the leopard rill," when it flows from beneath the alders and oaks, which bend over and conceal its course. He looked at the house, which loomed up beyond the Forge.

"I'll let her know, right off," said Mat.

"Have you been to the house?"

"No; but they know me on the premises. I'll speak to the foreman."

"Stop at the house on your way back, and ask Mrs. Brande, with my respects, to allow Miss Brande to go to Mrs. Gates."

"Just so."

"And look in every day, will you?"

"Exactly so."

Mat flourished his whip, proud to be commissioned by Argus, and venting his feelings by putting the

horse at top speed. At the station he grew melancholy, and followed the locomotive till it screamed itself out of sight. On the way home he wished for his dogs, his boys, his wife, he was so uncommonly downhearted. Knocking at Mr. Brande's back door, his thoughts were diverted, by a disagreeable expectation that Mr. or Mrs. Brande might open the door, but Chloe, a colored member of the family, came.

"Lord, save me, what kind of a time o'night is this for bizness?" she asked.

"I have an errand to Mrs. Brande, your marm."

"Nothing would make Missis Brande get up at this time in the evening, I assure you. Better speak to Miss Virginia; she's tuing round somewhere. Come in, and say what you want to say."

"Can I take a bite of fire meanwhile? It's coolish, to-night."

"I look for a frost. Address yourself to the heat, though the fire is most down."

When he had delivered his message, Virginia for a moment was strongly tempted to go with him at once; but it could not be.

"I shall have to stay with mother till she falls asleep; and *when* will she fall asleep?"

"I could a-tole the man the same," muttered Chloe, "but he wouldn't a-gone if I had."

"Mrs. Gates is alone," said Mat, doggedly, "and I expect choke full of trouble."

He knew better, and could not help raising his eyes to Virginia; they exchanged faint smiles.

"Mercy on us!" Chloe commented; "they larf together,—and he is back-door folks."

"Chloe," said Virginia, in an under tone, and handing her a key, "bring me some wine."

"I can't a-bear wine," said Mat, quickly.

"What then?"

"Brandy."

"Bring that, Chloe."

Mat had scarcely set his glass down when Mr. Brande came suddenly into the kitchen, with a lamp in his hand; he had heard Mat's gruff voice in the room where he was reading.

"What is the matter, Virginia?"

She told him the tidings. Mr. Brande advanced so near with his lamp to Mat's whiskers that the latter exclaimed, "You'll know me next time."

"I do not know much good of you at any time, my man," Mr. Brande replied, meekly.

"He was sent here, father, with the request that I should go down to Mrs. Gates."

"Who sent for you?"

"Captain Argus Gates," answered Mat.

"To-morrow she may be permitted to go, if her mother's health is good."

Mat retreated, with a glance at Virginia, which signified that whatever he thought of her father, it was all right between *them*.

"Virginia," said Mr. Brande, "you are at Temple House often."

"Not o'nights, certain," interposed Chloe. "I'm a

sinner if she ain't a-waitin' too much on the missis for many visits."

"Sho, sho! Chloe, you astonish me," answered Mr. Brande, retreating.

"Your father has not been astonished this twenty years, missey. Can't ye get to bed, honey? Why can't missis let my old bones crackle about for her, instead of wearing the soft peth of yours?"

But Virginia, who was not heeding her, sighed, and walked across the room with her head bent.

"Perhaps," she said, "I should have offered to go to Tempe; who else could? Had I power beyond these little things I could define noble duties. As it is."—She was gone.

"I'se most tired of this world, especially when I see men and women as I have this last five minutes. It's no use, though," continued Chloe, "Missey Virginia will have to help missis out of the grave when Gabriel blows the trump, I'll bet, while Mr. Brande is walking, 'spectable like, in long cloths, all by his self, to judgment."

## CHAPTER XL

ARGUS found Tempe alone. Her pretty looks looked dull and dry, and her great eyes were heavy with watching and weeping. For the first time within her recollection Argus kissed her; then she crept into his arms, laid her head against his breast and fell into a sound sleep. He sat like a statue, noting the faint regularity of her breath, wondering how much of a ripple so frail a being could raise on the sea of life, when she woke and exclaimed:

"Will Mr. Drake come afterwards, to take the—the—John, I mean, and bury him in the family burying place?"

"He sent me for that purpose, Tempe; you must finish the journey, as you began it—with a difference." Then she wept afresh, dreading to go, in such an awful way, for—

"There's plaited linen round his head  
While foremost go his feet,  
His feet that cannot carry him."

He wiped her eyes with his handkerchief, beginning to feel a little impatience, which she perceived, and was restored to herself as if by electricity. She told Argus all that had happened in a few words,

and repeated John's wishes. He would have made a will had it been possible, for he felt more anxious about making provision for her, than to prepare for his last moments. He was nearer to God, he said, than she was, and would soon be entirely cared for, while she,—who could give her money? Continual wandering of mind and fainting turns had prevented him from making even the slightest arrangement; and, concluded Tempe, "He was dead, after all my watching, before I knew it."

"I am to have you again entirely," said Argus; "there is no help for it. You are returned to me with the addition of 'Drake,' to your name."

"Remarkably short experiment, my wedded life, Uncle Argus."

"What induced your little, bran-stuffed brains to marry? Do you remember a picture in your school book of a Serene Monster, behind whom rose a dreary, flat, lifeless desert, whose horizon receded as the eye sought it? Did you know that the desert was matrimony? And the monster pretended the riddle of it could be propounded?"

"I did not want any other girl to have him, and it pleased me to take him from his mother and sisters. I suppose they think I am punished."

The old provocation came across Argus to throw his cane at her.

"You stand next to your father in nature, who let the jaws of chance crack him as if he had been a filbert. Let me tell you once and for all, that you are

foolhardy enough only to commit and sacrifice those you are connected with."

"If you have come all the way from Kent to scold at me, let us sit, Uncle Argus, and have it out; other matters may take their course."

She sat down composedly, and fixed her eyes on him in a way that made him laugh.

"I am a poor deputy; your mother or Virginia should have come for you, with salve and balsam. Are you prepared to leave at once?"

"Yes, Uncle Argus, I am ready."

A public funeral was in preparation at home; Tempe went to Mr. Drake's, and soon felt the restrictions of her position. The dramatic grief, bustle, and solicitude of the family concerning the event swallowed up Tempe's personal concern in it: her curiosity and attention were so absorbed that the few hours passed there afterwards seemed days to her.

Argus shut himself up at home with Roxalana, and both declined a place in the Drake procession. Virginia Brande alone went to see Tempe, and was received with the impassiveness belonging to her as Miss Brande.

"I haven't cried a bit since I came," said Tempe to her, when they were left together for a moment. "Mrs. Drake cries into her cups of tea, which are being brought her all the time, and the girls sob and groan, and stare into their handkerchiefs, and then run up stairs to see how the three dressmakers are getting on."

Virginia's eyes were fixed on Tempe; she ear-

nestly desired to find some index to guide her into a way of speech which should prove a solace and help.

"Dear child," she began, but Tempe interrupted her.

"Uncle Argus fled from this scene,—do you wonder? I don't. Did you ever see anything more foolish than the Drakes? It all seems like a show to me."

"Oh, Tempe, can't you see anything behind this effect? I am sure there is heart in it."

"Where?"

"Don't you believe that the *son* and the *brother* will survive all this poor pomp and worry? Hereafter, some pleasant image will come and dwell with the mother and sisters,—a shape that will sit in sweet and solemn quiet with them, when apart from their worldly selves. Be wise and patient, Tempe; consider how different people are. The mental picture every outward act presents differs in every mind—unless—as seems to be the case with you, we act without interior motive. You never have referred these matters to the judgment of the one Solitary Spectator, have you?"

Tempe slightly shrugged her shoulders, and Virginia blushed painfully, as if she had inflicted a blow upon herself, but continued:

"To one half the world your mother would be very inarticulate; but you know that all her nature is waiting for the moment of your return."

Even Virginia, in her way, was driven to preach

to Tempe, as Argus had been in his, but one sermon made as much impression as the other. Tempe was musing as she ceased speaking, and then absently exclaimed:

"In doing all in his power to please me, he was pleased and happy; there's a fact. There they are on the stairs,—those creatures. Do you know, Virginia, they speak to me, and of me, as a pronoun?"

## CHAPTER XII.

On the third day after Tempe's return to Kent, Mr. Drake's coachman drove her home.

"We shall see you soon," said the Drake family at parting.

"I shall see you often, of course," Tempe replied; but, her face set homeward, the conviction that a final separation had taken place between them, settled in her mind without a regret. As she walked up the path, she queried whether it was her heavy mourning dress, or the atmosphere which was freighted with a storm, that made her feel as if she were taking a wearisome burden along. She pushed open the door of the green room, and, burden or no burden, saw Argus and her mother in the old place and attitude. Like a wounded child, her lips quivered, but resolutely beating back the rush of tears that burnt her eyelids, she ended the struggle with a smile, and cried:

"This is an agreeable world, mother. I have been journeying in it, and here I am again."

Roxalana rose stiffly from her seat; shook Tempe's hand vehemently; stared at her with strange, sad eyes, and resumed her seat without speaking.

Argus eyed Tempe's crape with disgust.

"Take off those badges now," he said; "the disconsolate is not becoming."

"Do," begged her mother, "leave off those weeds with us; I detest them, and you will find them as irksome as convalescence. It is a poor custom to have the dead brood in black garments; and when one takes them off, escaping into bright colors, the dead escape too. I think our friends should be perceived in all the ordinary affairs of life; nothing should be set apart for them."

"Nonsense," said Argus, throwing his half-smoked cigar into the fire. "What would become of the ancient and respectable institution of monuments and epitaphs,—those final and selfish compliments,—if we followed your fancies?"

"Mother," said Tempe, "I shall wear black all my days; I am sure it is the least I can do."

She caught the inquiring, sarcastic smile with which Argus regarded her, and sat down, pulling off her gloves, and bonnet. The reception she received, so cool, and undemonstrative, as if nothing had happened, set her thoughts upon the wonderful talent of self-ownership which belonged to Argus and Roxalana. She comprehended now why they seemed superior to the persons she had lately been intimate with; their outside possessions weighed nothing in comparison to that instinct of self-possession, when well developed!

"Argus," said Roxalana, "attend to the fire; Tempe may be taking cold."

"The fire is a rousing one, and does not need a splinter even."

While the evening was passing as usual Tempe stole off to bed. There were women, who, having borne what she had, upon re-entering that chamber would have felt their sharpest misery; who would have been tormented with baffled desire,—a remorse at not having improved the moments of sympathy and endearment which only yesterday was possible, to-day, impossible. Women yet alive in every fibre, crushed with the belief of an eternal separation from love, who would have grovelled in an ecstasy of despair, washed out the vivid colors of the past with floods of tears, and battled away the memory of their joys behind the shield of resignation; who would have propped the ruined present with prayers and vows, beseeching God to hold the loosened tendrils of their useless affections. Not so with Tempe. She stepped across the threshold without dread or agitation, but a sudden howl of the wind at the loose, old casements made her turn her eyes towards the blank, curtainless windows, and shiver. Placing the lamp near the glass, she shrank from catching a sight of herself, and moved away with wandering eyes, which at last fell on the stuffed red and green macaw, fastened to a mahogany perch against the wall. Her thoughts travelled back to the time when she tried to pull out some of its feathers, years ago, and the interval did not seem much longer than her marriage day.

"*Married!*" she whispered, with a feeling of con-

sternation, and holding her left hand up to see the ring. With nervous haste she dropped it in a drawer, hoping she had prevented the danger of bad dreams. Roxalana found her sound asleep, with her head on the edge of the drawer.

"Come, Tempe, creep into bed beside me, I have missed you, lately. There is your night-gown; let me unfasten your dress."

Tempe submitted with a yawn, and then woke up enough to ask a hundred questions concerning the past six weeks. It was midnight before the two widows slept.

## CHAPTER XIII

THE severity of the weather rather than the state of her mind kept Tempe within doors for several weeks. Outside the snow, consolidated by repeated storms, settled round the foundations of the house, and spread a thick, icy sheet over the grounds, binding all things under its white silence. Inside, the silence was almost as absolute: Tempe more than once observed, "You might cut it with a knife." Her occupation was confined to keeping herself warm, and the stripping of carpet rags for Roxalana's rugs. Virginia Brande could no longer come by the Forge path, but rode through town to visit them: Mrs. Brande occasionally dispensed with her attentions, and allowed her to stay several hours. After these visits, despite the monotonous winter landscape, locked in frost, it seemed to Virginia as if she travelled home on a rainbow, which, flushing Argus's door, faded when she reached her own. Could the green room, and the limited scope of Argus, Roxalana and Tempe,—contracted beings, whose existence appeared as monotonous as the gray, wintry sky—have suggested it?

"Missey," asked Chloe, one day, upon her return from Temple House, "How does they contrive to keep that old barn warm enough to live in?"



"Chloe, I am surprised at you," she answered, in an injured tone. "It is warmer than our house, and the heat is more pleasant."

"I have surprised missey," said Chloe, laughing loud, "but she knows that no man, woman, or child can keep warm in Argus Gates's house. Why, he is an icicle himself."

Virginia observing Chloe, as she adjusted the polished fire-irons of the polished handsome grate, contrasted it with the fireside of Temple House; she pictured Argus thrusting the embers against the brass dogs in the deep jambs of the chimney, and Roxalana watching the fitful blaze, while Tempe, wrapped in a shawl, pretended to be suffocated with the smoke, which the wind, roaring down the chimney, sent into the room in little puffs.

"I like the smell of a wood fire," she exclaimed.

"Ashes is beautiful, to litter up a nice hearth, and smoke is wholesome for—ham."

Of late, when the days were cold, and she had visited Temple House, Argus had asked for coffee, and brought it to her in the egg-shell china cups she thought so beautiful; the last time he handed one he spilt the coffee on her dress.

"I wish I had my wine-colored cashmere on to-day, Chloe!"

"I wonder at that; the dress is a month old. Missis even moved these yer vases, while nobody was here; I wish she wouldn't move every piece of furniture about, when she is left alone."

"I wish there were coffee cups instead."

"The closet is ram jam full of coffee cups; don't follow Missis, now, and put a row up here. Massy! if she hasn't put the books in upside down!"

Virginia glanced at a stately book-case, filled with religious memoirs and commentaries.

"I would rather have a British Classic than these solid pounds of mind."

"So would I, indeed," Chloe replied, taken with the title; "how big be they?"

Virginia smiled absently, and said, "He often has one in his hand."

"Missey, you are coming down with a cold, sure. Were you up last night much? Scuttle to your room now you have a chance; I'll hold up the house."

"Thank you, Chloe, but it rests me to stay with you. Do you mind my dropping to pieces for a few minutes? Tell me, Chloë, why am I more free with you, poor soul,—than with anybody else?"

While she spoke Chloe moved a hearth-brush to and fro, as if she heard music.

"I hope the Lord knows," she replied, "I don't; I know nothing at all,—never did,—hope I never shall!"

"Hear me breathe, Chloe."

And Virginia sighed from the bottom of her heart. Then she walked rapidly across the room, with parted lips and hands knit together; her warm, brown eyes were full of sweet feeling, her attitude was beseeching.

"I dare the Brandes to come in now," muttered

Chloe; "they must see she belongs to the world's people, after all." And her ears were on the alert for the slightest sound without.

"What?" said Virginia sharply, her manner changing. "I must go to mother. I have not forgot how long I have left her."

Chloe groaned.

"My mother was a Gay Head Indian," she said, "I am half Indian too; that's what makes my hair straight. Please excuse my bad blood, and let me advise you, Miss Virginny,—don't take on so about your dam worthless mother."

Virginia put her hand over Chloe's mouth and passed out.

No other visitor disturbed Tempe's monotony for a long time, except Mr. Drake, who made one nervous call to inquire about her health, and present her with a dozen oranges. She also received several notes from Caroline, which she endeavored to answer with the spirit they were written in, but falling short of it, she sent no replies. When one's atmosphere is monotonous the scythe of time seems stationary; even the hours stand still against its edge: cloudless summer days, with their unsparing sunshine, starless shadows, and soundless airs, at last grow to be wearisome. So with the present ice-bound season, which Tempe fancied held her in thrall. Even Argus and Roxalana began to mention spring. Virginia alone would have prolonged the period, which, according to her belief, she thought providential in her behalf.

Mat Sutcliffe announced to Argus one morning that spring had come. The ice on the shores and inside the bay was giving way. And he asked Argus if gales were not to be looked for? They compared notes about the weather, and concluded to look for southerly storms.

The weather softened so that very day that Tempe threw aside her shawl, and Roxalana made the tour of all the rooms, and by way of a walk went up to the attic to look over the fields and bay. She remarked to Argus, on coming down, that she had never seen the White Flat so plainly; it appeared to be stretching across the harbor's mouth.

"The ice made it look so, probably," he replied.

The snow around the house began to melt, and in the stillness they heard the water trickling everywhere.

"Soon," said Roxalana, "the buds will begin to swell."

At sunset the day looked spongy and rotten. Masses of vapor rolled up from the south, and extinguished a pale, brassy band of light in the west: and a strange wind rose in the upper air, and closed with night.

Early in the evening Argus shook the iron bars of the shutters on the harbor side, and fastened them; he foresaw the storm, and would have shut out its fury for Roxalana's sake, who appeared perturbed and melancholy as if disasters at sea were threatened.

"The wind must be rising," she said, holding up her hand; "I feel streams of air from everywhere. The candles flare: but I don't hear the surf."

"You will hear it presently," he replied.

"I don't care if it blows half the town down," said Tempe.

"Don't spare the other half: let the whole go, and be damned!"

A tremendous hiss passed through the crevices of the outer doors, which was met by a roar in the chimney. As irruption of white, flaky ashes occurred and covered the hearth. Next, the roof and walls of the house were taken as a coign of vantage, by the shrinking wind to hang out its viewless banners, which shivered, flapped, and tore to tatters in raging impotence.

"We must put out this fire, Argus," said Roxalana, "or we shall be on fire inside the house."

"Better put yourselves in bed; I will take care of the fire."

Acting upon this suggestion, they left him alone. A short time afterwards he went out on the lawn. The dull thunder of the surf now broke so furiously on the bar that the ground beneath his feet reverberated.

"The bay is champing its jaws on that devilish White Flat, and any sail coming this way is lost."

Looking overhead he discovered in the milky darkness of the obscured moon deep vague rifts in the sky, like the chasm in Orion. The frenzied, overdriven spirits of the storm took refuge in the piling tumbling folds of the clouds, which seemed to be falling into the abyss. While he stood there, the elms bowed from bole to topmost bough, brushed

his face as if they paid him homage. No sound came from the town side; he could not see a single light. Opposite the lawn King's Hill reared its black summit; from thence, if he clomb, he could obtain a view of the wailing, howling bay, and,—perchance of some vessel seeking harbor. He preferred to go back and shut himself up in the house.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

THOUGH the storm raged the next morning, as storm had not raged for years, Argus remained in the green room, and pored over the book of plays, so well remembered by Virginia. About noon Mat Sutcliffe burst in, with his tarpaulin jammed over his head, and carrying an immense spy-glass in a canvas case. His tidings did not astonish Argus. A vessel putting into the bay the night before had dragged her anchors and struck on the White Flat; her flag was flying from the rigging, and there were men there; it being low water when she struck, her quarter deck might afford temporary safety, provided the cold did not increase and freeze the crew to death.

"What is the town doing, Mat?" asked Roxalana.

"A great many people are out doing nothing. They are on the wharves, on the top of King's Hill, the hair blowing off their heads, and, I believe, there's a gang along shore somewhere," he replied.

"No boat can live if put out," said Argus. "How low down the bar did the vessel drive on?"

"As near to Bass Headland as can be. If the

wind would chop round, somebody might get out there."

"So the sailors must drown," cried Tempe, notwithstanding she had put her fingers in her ears, not to hear. "I'll shut myself up in the cellar till it is all over."

"I thought," continued Mat, looking hard at Argus, "it might be best to look at the shingle below here; the ice is about gone there. If we could start under the lee of Bass Headland a boat might slant—"

Argus gave such a shrug and grimace that Mat suddenly stopped, and without another word abruptly left the room.

"Argus," said Roxalana, with great composure, "I shall not get you a mouthful of dinner to-day."

"I trust you will consent to do your share in disposing of the poor corpses," added Tempe sharply.

For reply, Argus rose, book in hand, opened the shutter of the window towards the quay, sat down by it, and went on with his comedy.

Tempe telegraphed to her mother her opinion, that he was a beast of an uncle, and even Roxalana was moved to eye him with a mild, doubting severity.

But he was on the alert. When he heard drops of rain ~~plash~~ on the window ledge, he shut his fingers in his book, and looked into the fire. A shower came down, which was neither hail, nor snow, but warm rain. He started up, stretched his arms, like one who had long been cramped and weary, and

sat down again with an indifferent air, and opened his book.

Roxalana came in from the kitchen, and said that the vane on the summer-house had veered slightly, and there was less noise from the wind.

"The gale is moderating, luckily."

Something in his tone struck her. She raised her eyes to his, and he smiled ironically; it made her feel like asking his pardon.

"Can I have any dinner?" he asked.

"I think so; what shall it be?"

"Brandy and cigars."

She disappeared.

Mat came in late in the afternoon, with as little ceremony as before, and said roughly to Argus, "You are wanted."

"I won't go."

"Captain, if we don't get across within twelve hours, every soul on board that vessel now will be in hell."

"I supposed so."

"She's bilged, and the White Flat begins to hug her. It's flood tide, and the waves must be washing the main deck; a few hours of that work will settle their hash."

"What's doing with the life-boat?"

"The loons have tried to launch her, but there's something wrong, and they are trying to tinker her up. The will of folks is good enough, but they can't get out there,—that's the long and short on't. Bill Bayley swore he'd go out alone; his cock-boat

swamped, first thing, and they had to throw him a rope. He swore at the man who threw it,—at the boat,—at the bay,—the wreck,—and the Almighty, and then he cried. I never liked Bill so well."

Mat spit into the fire furiously, and stumped round the room, a shoe on one foot and a boot on the other, his trousers settling over the hips in spite of his tight leather belt. He was growing frantic with excitement.

Argus laughed.

Mat made an energetic, beseeching motion towards the door; he would have put up his soul for sale for the sake of seeing Argus move with the intention he wished to inspire him with. Argus turned back his sleeves, baring a snow white wrist, and abstractedly felt his pulse and the muscles of his arms.

"Push ahead," he said.

"Aye, aye, sir," Mat shouted, turning very pale, and lurching towards the door.

"Stop; where is Roxalana?"

"Roxalana!" Mat shouted.

"What is it, Mat?" she answered, coming with a bottle.

"Yes; give us a dram, old girl," continued Mat, utterly oblivious of the proprieties.

Argus laughed again, and asked for his Mackintosh.

"Now then," said Mat, having swallowed nearly a tumbler of brandy. Argus drank a little, and poured the rest of the bottle into a flask which he buttoned inside his coat. Tempe ran down to the

door as they passed out, and Argus looking back called out,—

"Where is your crape veil, Tempe?"

"Where the courage of Kent is,—shut up in a band-box," she answered.

Roxalana, after gazing at her a moment, took her by the arm, and dragged her into the green room.

"I believe," she said, in a breathless undertone, "that you are possessed sometimes. Do you know that your uncle Argus may have gone for his shroud?"

"Was that why he inquired for the veil?"

"Could you choose no other moment to express your insensibility? Are you never to be anything but a child?"

"Mother, you must be crazy. You don't mean to say, that you are going to protest against the Gates character,—as *I* represent it?"

Roxalana said no more, but went her way, feeling a painful excitement. She replenished the fires, hung kettles of water over them, collected blankets, cordials, and liquors, and then went to the kitchen to bake bread.

Twilight brought Mary Sutcliffe and her youngest boys. Dumping them in a corner of the kitchen as if they were sacks, and threatening them with a whipping if they moved, she rolled up her sleeves, and said that she thought the fathers of families had better stay at home, instead of risking themselves to save nobody knew who. Another boat had started since Mat had got under way, and she guessed the

wreck would turn out to be a great cry and little wool; she did not think there would be much drowning this time. She wondered if the good folks in Kent had stirred themselves,—your religious Drakes, and your pious Brandes, and the rest of the church.

"Hold your tongue, Mary Sutcliffe," ordered Tempe.

Then Mary whimpered, sobbed, and shrieked, declaring she had known all along she should never set eyes on Mat Sutcliffe again, who was well enough, considering what he was. And who else would have done what he was doing? and she gloried in his spunk. Drying her eyes with her fat hands, and shaking out her apron, she begged Roxalana to let her make the bread, and put the house to rights,—in case there were bodies coming in.

"Do, Mrs. Gates," she pleaded, "I feel as strong as a giant to-night; I can wrestle with any amount of work."

"If you will stop whining, Mary, I will accept your services; for, to tell the truth, my head is not very clear just now, I am afraid I may spoil something."

"Likely as not," replied Mary; "go right into your sitting-room, sit down in your own chair, and you'll come to. It won't do for you, of all persons, to be upset, Mrs. Gates."

Roxalana was quite ready to act upon Mary's suggestion. Death was near, and she felt it. After dark Mary began to walk about,—to the alley, and into the garden, and report what she saw and heard.

She ran down to the quay once, but came back scared and subdued at the sight of the angry solitude of the hoarse, black sea, though she shook her impotent fist at it with indignation.

Roxalana felt a relief when Virginia Brande came down from the Forge, enveloped in a plaid cloak. She had ventured at last to come by the path, the moment she heard that Captain Gates was making an attempt to get to the wreck. Her mother was so frightened and ill about it, that Chloe and herself were obliged to make representations of the necessity for help in Kent from every hand and heart, before she consented to spare her. The Forge was deserted; her father had gone into town with the intention of offering a reward to the man who should first reach the wreck. Mary Sutcliffe, hearing this cried:

"And I suppose old Drake has offered as much again,—hasn't he? Wouldn't I like to see Mr. Mat Sutcliffe Esquire handling that reward? I wish somebody would pay me for doing my duty. I'd put the money right into the contribution box at Mr. Brande's church. Oh yes, don't I see myself doing it."

"Mary," said Virginia, "you are talking nonsense. Please find some hair pins; mine must have dropped along the path."

She removed the cloakhood, and her hair tumbled in a mass down her shoulders; she could have hid herself in it.

"Goodness me!" cried Mary, "what splendid hair

you've got; I never thought of it before. It is as black as the sky was just now on the quay."

"Have you been to the quay, Mary?" asked Roxalana. "Do content yourself within doors. Where is Tempe?"

"I saw her kiting up stairs just now. If she does not take care she'll keel over. It is as true as the gospel, that she has got a look in her face as new as a drop of cream would be to my cat."

"Go and tell her that Virginia Brande is here, and she will come back."

"I have always thought," Mary replied, sticking a pin between her teeth, and allowing her eyes to take a reflective cast, "that it was as much as my life was worth to interfere with the way of a Gates; but I may change my mind. I'll go right after Tempe. Oh Lord-a-mercy, where do you think the two creatures are by this time? Sho: I know they will be along soon; it is not likely that Captain Argus Gates is going to be lost at sea, after he has given up going to sea; and,—it would be foolish to suppose Mat Sutcliffe will venture more than getting his boots soaked through."

"Hair pins, please," said Virginia.

"Go, immediately," added Roxalana. "Where is Tempe? Tell her that Virginia Brande is here."

Tempe fell into a fit of weeping and laughing the moment she saw Virginia, which was ended by a dead faint.

At last the boat was launched. Argus and Mat were afloat; so much was gained, and Argus thought



the danger was preferable to the labor they had undergone in getting ready to risk their lives. The gloomy twilight, spreading from the east, dropped along the shore, while they were dragging, pushing, and lifting the boat over the shingle, slush, and into the opposing sea.

"Hell bent be it!" said Mat, apostrophizing the waves, "if you say so. You are not alone, my friends."

Mat seemed a part of the storm; his spirits were in a wild commotion, his clothes were torn and soggy with brine, and his hands were gashed and bloody. Argus had lost his cap, and broken his oar; he bound his head with Mat's woolen comforter, jammed his shoulder against the gunwale, and used the shortened oar with much composure. They did not make much headway; the boat appeared to be riding in all directions in the roar and foam of the sea; darkness pressed upon them, and shut them between the low-hanging sky and the shaking plain of water. In the midst of his silent, measured, energetic action the thoughts of Argus drifted idly back to the trifling events of his life; a new and surprising charm was added to them; they were as bright, quiet, and warm as the golden dust of a summer sunset which touches everything as it vanishes.

Mat swore at the top of his voice, that the wind was more nor'rard, and it would be an even chance about beating back—or not. Argus looked up, and saw a circular break in the clouds, but said nothing.

"By the crucifix," cried Mat, throwing himself

forward, "I heard a yell. Where away are we? We are shoaling!"

Argus plunged his hands into the water from the stern sheets; it felt like the wrinkled, hideous flesh of a monster, trying to creep away.

"We are under lee, or there is a lull, for the water don't break," he said.

"If the moon was out we should see the White Flat. I reckon we are on the tongue of the bar, and the vessel has struck below. Her hull must be sunk ten feet by this time, and her shrouds and spars are washed off, that yell will not be heard again."

"Damn em," said Mat savagely, "if they have drowned afore ever we could reach 'em, I'll take 'em dead, carry every mother's son of 'em to Kent, and bury 'em against their wills."

The endless, steady-going rockers which slid under them from the bay outside tossed the boat no longer; the wind ceased to smite their faces, but tore overhead and ripped the clouds apart. The moon rolled out, and to the right they saw the ghastly, narrow crest of the White Flat. A mass of spume on their left which hissed madly proved what Argus had said, that they were close to the end of the bar. Within the limits of the moonlight they saw nothing. In the bewildering, darkling illumination of the shattering water around them they were alone.

"If she's parted," continued Mat, "something might wash this way; her gear at least. I'd like to catch a cabin door, or an article to that effect, it might come handy."

Argus did not hear him, for he was overboard. Missing him, Mat gave way for a moment; he felt the keel shove resisting sand, and remained passive, merely muttering, "I'm blasted, but she may drive."

Argus had seen, or thought he had, to the right of the boat, some object dipping in and out of the water and making towards them. He met it coming sideways, where the water was just below his breast: missed a hold of it, struggled for it, the shifting bottom impeding his footway, and the water battling against his head and arms, till rearing itself up and stranding on the beach, he stumbled and fell beside it exhausted.

Raising himself on his hands and knees, he brought his face close to two persons, a man and a woman, fastened together by the embrace of death. The woman's face was upturned; its white oval, wet and glistening, shed a horrid light; the repeated blows of the murderous waves had tangled and spread her long hair over her. Tears of rage rushed into Argus's eyes when he saw that it had been half torn from its roots. Her arms were round the man's head; her hands clutched his temples, his face was so tightly pressed into her bosom that Argus instinctively believed he was still alive in a stifled swoon. *She was dead.* Take her lover away from that breast of stone, Argus, let him not see those open lips—no longer the crimson gates to the fiery hours of his enjoyment, nor let him feel those poor bruised fingers clenching his brain; those delicate stems of the will are powerless to creep round his heart! May Satan

of the remorseless deep alone be destined to know and remember the last hour of this woman's passion, despair, and sacrifice!

Argus rose to his feet, wondering why he saw so clearly, and possessed with an idea which was a mad one, perhaps, but which allied him, in greatness of soul, to the woman before him. He was still confused, and had forgotten where Mat and the boat were, but Mat had seen his dark figure rising against the sky, and was ploughing through the sand with the intention of remonstrating with Argus, on the impossibility of ever getting it off again. But when he came up behind him, there was something in his attitude—a familiar one,—which imposed his respectful attention. Mat bent over the bodies silently, and touched them with his foot.

"She is dead?" interrogated Argus.

"Never will be more so."

"This man is alive. Lift his head. I am out of breath. The wind is going down, and we can run him back easy."

"It may raly be called pleasant. *There now I have got you, safe enough from her.* God! She put on shirt and trousers to jump overboard with him, swapping deaths, and getting nothing to boot. He is limber; give me the brandy and let's warm up the boy."

"Here," said Argus, in a suppressed voice, "pour it down, quick. Have you a lashing? I should like to put her out of his sight; one of the ballast

stones will do. Help me to carry her to the other side of the bar; the deep water will cover her."

Mat pretended to be too busy to hear.

"Crazier than ever," he muttered. "I might have known his damned crankiness would bile out somewhere."

Argus wrapped the poor girl in his Mackintosh, and staggered towards the boat carrying her; there was no help against it, and Mat rose to his assistance. In a moment or two she was buried in the grave she had so terribly resisted.

The gale was nearly spent, and Mat ventured to hoist the sail. Argus tumbled the still insensible man into the boat by the head and heels, and they ran across the harbor, landing at the quay below the house. Mary was there before the boat was tied to a spile.

"How are you off for elbow grease?" cried Mat. "Put the lantern down, and jump in; here's a bundle for you to take up to the house. Capen and I are clean gone, I tell you. I've lost the rims of my ears, and expect to leave a few toes in these ere boots when I pull 'em off. Come, quick."

Without a word she lifted the man from the bottom of the boat, and, with Mat's help, clambered up the wharf, and took him into the house. Tempe ran shrieking when she saw him stretched on the floor before the fire, in the green-room. Roxalana sat rigid, nailed to her chair, incapable of motion at the sight; Virginia and Mary were collected. Mat adroitly peeled off a portion of his wet clothes, and

told Mary to rub him like damnation. It was a long time before he gave sign of life. At the first choking breath Mat poured some brandy over his face and neck; he rose galvanically to a sitting posture, and fell back again, to all appearance dead. But Mat declared he was all right, and went out to change his own wet clothes for dry ones. Virginia looked up at Argus, convinced herself that the man was saved.

"Take care of me, if you please," he said. "I want two bottles of brandy, and a dry shirt. How are you, Roxalana?"

At the sound of his voice she turned in her chair. Mat returned with his arms full of clothes for Argus, and asked her if she would be good enough to step out with Virginia, and go to bed. There wasn't any use in praying now, for they were back. Not one of them thought of the unhappy crew, all lost, except one who laid before them.

"That 'ere Virginia," said Mat, when she and Roxalana had gone, and he was watching the man's eyelids, "is as mealy a gal as I ever saw in my life. She's cool, and smooth, and soft. She beat Moll in rubbing. Hullo! his eyes are open. Look here, Spaniard, you belong to us. Drink this, my lad, and let me hold you up. So—all right, young un. Shut up, Gates, you are drunk, and have reason to be. I reckon you are black and blue from the bruises you got. I've had a pint of swipes myself, and feel inwardly correct. Hark ye—he's off in a reglar, natural sleep, aint he?"

# CHAPTER XV.

A LITTLE after daybreak Chloe knocked at the door, and was let in by Mat, who had dozed, and drank, and watched with Argus all night, waiting for the even chance to be decided with the one they had rescued. It was decided in his favor, if life could be called a favor. He came to himself at last, battered, sore, and amazed—not able to speak much, nor quite up to analyzing his situation.

"How's the Lord your way, Mrs. Ebony Cuff," asked Mat, as Chloe passed in; "I don't mean him exactly, but his right hand man, Mr. Brande."

"I forgets the Lord whenever I comes across you, pizen thing that you are. I want Missey, right off. There's no need of stirring anybody. I know where she is, and I am going up these stairs, rotten as they are, like the folks that come here."

"Better take a handful of ashes to scatter along your way, if you are going to look for your Missey in this ere venerable structure."

"Put the ashes on your own head, 'cause you are bad all over; but I guess there's not much ashes in this house. Go, long with you; don't watch me."

She crept into the chamber where Virginia was, and softly roused her.

"Better come home, Missey," she whispered, "your

father has not asked for you. Your mother is dead asleep; didn't I let her take the laudleum drops after you went last night! 'Tis almost sunrise; the day will be as light as if the poor souls didn't all go down. Mr. Brande never came home till two o'clock, and he says, says he to me—'Chloe, they are in eternity; such was God's will. Is there any hot water?' Did he 'spect I had hot water for *him*? I had some for *you* waiting; I thought you would not dare to stay all night. For marsy's sake come on now. It isn't in the book for you to be seen tramping backwards and forwards between here and the Forge of nights. Let little Tempe alone; don't wake up the kitten. Marsy on me, where's Argus Gates been? Out of the house all the time? Musn't stay in Argus Gates's house."

She assisted Virginia to dress as she whispered, with nervous haste. There was no reason for it, but a mist, faint and chilly, settled round Virginia's brain; there could be nothing impending at home,—nothing had happened to sadden her, beyond the catastrophe of which she knew nothing; what then was the matter, that obliged her to agree with Chloe in thinking it best to return as soon as possible? She silently made herself ready.

"The man is doing well," said Mat, in reply to her salutation, when she came down. "We had several tussles with him in the course of the night, when he seemed to be slipping out of our hands; but he is a sure card now. We don't know his name yet, nor what business he is in; but I guess he is a likely sort of man."

"What do you mean?" asked Chloe, eagerly.

"Picked a man out of the water," he answered; "he was most pickled."

"Is one saved? Did you find him alone?"

"All living alone. There wasn't a cuss in sight besides him anywheres. Beats me where they did go to. Enough's good as a feast, though."

Chloe was much inclined to hear further particulars, but Virginia beckoned her along. The yearning, dispirited glance which Virginia threw back at the house as she left it, was not lost upon the sharp-sighted Mat. As she and Chloe entered the path beyond the alley, the fan-like rays of the rising sun struck into the sky, and coldly shone over the wild bay; no lucid blue nor shifting green colored its surface; it was a leaden-hued, turbulent, hurrying mass. Virginia found no solace in the pale light as it spread over the pastures and leafless shrubs; the mystery in the atmosphere which sometimes tracks one's feelings had vanished. With the turn in the path near the Forge the scene changed. Here Apsley River was bordered with a grove of pine trees whose green pinnacles crowned the air, and whose gray shafts columned the ground with melancholy state. The sea was no longer visible and the town sank behind a range of grassy, shapeless hills. Some fancy concerning the grove arrested her; its depths she had not visited for years. She recalled the time when she played upon its red beds, under its feathery canopy, and pulled up the spotted moss, or broke the yellow plate-like tops of the fungus,

which pushed through the sand and thatched itself with needles; the silence and the sighing of the pines suited her present mood. When she came within the precincts of the Forge, and saw the high house glittering with windows, she left her sighs and love for solitude in the shrine of the grove. The men about the stable were the only evidence that the house was astir. Virginia went up to her room, and despised herself for thinking it comfortable after her weary, absorbing night, and compared it with the apartment she had slept in for an hour or two—a vast, barn-like place, containing more draughts than furniture; whose walls represented a hunting scene, where the hunters and their game were equally torn, where the bosage, arcades, and sylvan fountains had faded to a pale brown; whose floor was gray, and shiny, and cold as ice. Roxalana's feather bed was like a dromedary's back, and her counterpane a calico biography; Tempe's first dress was in it, and the last Indian pillow-case of Argus. It all seemed preferable to Virginia, for freedom was there. When the breakfast bell rang, she went down, attired in the morning dress her father's taste dictated at present, and with the manners he always expected her to serve him with. Still there was an air of self-command about her which must have convinced him there was the capacity for opposition. He was standing at the back of his chair, rubbing his sleek, shaven chin, his sharp, impassive eyes, seeming to observe nothing, observed everything. He noted Virginia's paleness,—that Mrs. Brande's

hand shook more than usual, and a cracked china cup at the same moment,—but spoke of neither. The large diamond pin in his shirt front, the large white perfumed cambric handkerchief which he flourished, looked no clearer, plainer, nor fairer than he did, in manner and countenance, as he sat at the head of his table, tasting of every dish, even drinking both tea and coffee, but eating only morsels after all. Chloe continually appeared with hot cakes, hot eggs, or hot tea, and in the intervals stood at Mrs. Brande's elbow. It was one of Mr. Brande's requirements, also, that his wife, in whatever condition of nervousness, lethargy, or feebleness, should appear at breakfast; and this morning she occupied her usual seat before the tray, whose silver array she was almost incapable of managing. Her puffy eyes, and lax mouth, her hoarse sighs, the handsome lace cap awry on her head, the mixed finery of her dress, presented a contrast to his and Virginia's appearance, which irritated his inmost soul. Even with his wife, however, he found his limits. He could compel her to rise to sit at the table,—but he could not force her to eat, nor prevent the occasional fall of a cup, or the spilling of coffee by her trembling hand. He was obliged to wink at Chloe's officiousness in taking the duties of the meal from her, adroitly and quietly, to be sure; but for so doing he would have been pleased to reward her services by dismissing her.

"Your kind heart, Virginia, and some curiosity, induced you to stay all night with Mrs. Gates," he

said, sliding his chair back, after breakfast. "I heard that Argus Gates went out, while I was down town; several bets were made, I am sorry to say, against his getting back. Of course he did come back."

"Yes, father," she replied; "very late, however."

"Did you find anybody requiring more care than your mother, at his house?"

Mrs. Brande commenced shaking her head with intense sympathy at the remarks of her husband, and having begun could not stop.

"I went to see Roxalana, who was much disturbed. She was gratified to have me with her. I also went from an interest in the occasion. When they,—Captain Gates and Mat,—returned with the man they rescued—"

"Did Gates really go to the trouble of saving a soul from death?" he interrupted; "well, I am glad to hear it."

"Then I busied myself in various ways to restore him, and succeeded. Mother knows that your question is answered, I hope."

"It is not likely that Gates would row a dead man into his house; it was not necessary, perhaps, for you to bestow your labors upon him. I remark that I do not like it. Did you assist in undressing him? Were you about his person much? Do you think the matter was quite delicate?"

Virginia made no answer. Chloe, who remained in the room, fixed her eyes on the mild-voiced man, the paternal inquisitor, with an expression she de-



rived from some Indian ancestor, who was in the habit of skulking behind trees with his tomahawk. She understood Mr. Brande no better than others did; but she disliked him, and thought him as hateful as she believed he was sincere.

"From whom do you take this erratic disposition?" he continued. "What morbid appetite have you which leads you to seek a kind of society utterly aside from the sphere you are destined for? Gates is a man without God in the world. Do you not think so? Answer me, Virginia. Is he not a heathen to all intents?"

"I think he is."

"Is Mrs. Gates any better,—his grotesque sister-in-law?"

"No better."

"And the little one, that Drake was unfortunate enough to marry,—what of her?"

"She seems as pagan also."

"And such are your friends!"

Chloe, unable to contain herself any longer burst into the conversation.

"I 'spect Missey will come down with newralagy 'fore the night comes, Mr. Brande. She has exposed herself for her fellow creatures; don't you see that, sar?" It is in my Bible that a human being is a human being when he suffers, as well as a pagan heathen."

Mr. Brande smiled benevolently on the ignorant Chloe, and asked her why she was not as quick in clearing the breakfast things away as she was with

her tongue? He hoped no unusual feeling hindered her in the performance of her duties. Mrs. Brande transferred her indignation from Virginia to Chloe, and ordered her in a cross tone to shake the sofa pillow up, and arrange her footstool, as she had had quite confusion enough at breakfast, and would be glad of a little rest. But it was Virginia who complied with her demands, assisted her to the sofa, adjusted her cap, and placed a handkerchief in the inert, useless hands. Mr. Brande sat quietly before the table still, chewing a stick, and, forgetting all that he had said, was speculating on the appearance and condition of his wife. The day before he had received advice from England respecting some railroad iron, and it occurred to him then that an opportunity was offered him for escape from the thralldom of home; he could profitably go to England on business. Being absent—what then! A hundred dreams swarmed in his mind, like stinging bees, laden with honey. The doubts of a coward, however, stole in with them; away from the restraints of family, society, and the church—something in himself would hold him back from the indulgence, the desire for which gnawed into his life like a worm! Virginia mistook his silence for a meditation upon the subject of Temple House.

"Do you wish me to discontinue my visits to the Gates family?" she asked. "My friendship never can be broken."

"Indeed! I have known Gates for years. At one time he promised to be a man of energy. His



brother George was a rascal, but he *seemed* to enjoy life; he spent Argus's money—I believe Argus is pennyless almost. Perhaps the example of cheerfulness may be an advantage. I don't know that it is needful to be cheerful always, though. No; do not end your *acquaintance* there; as for *friendship*—pshaw, Virginia!"

"Poverty is beautiful!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, to only daughters, whose fathers are rich enough to allow them to contemplate it at a distance as far as Temple House, say. Absurd thing, it is, to stick a title on a poor man's house! Chloe, I'll thank you for my hat. I must, by the way, inquire about the man picked up last night; possibly he needs help. Good morning."

"Aint he the most sensible man ever made?" asked Chloe. "He does know what to do,—fact,—when other people are all up side down, as it were."

"What am I to do under my correct guardianship?" thought Virginia.

"Virginia," called Mrs. Brande, brightening with the departure of her husband, "as you were at Temple House this morning, and I didn't dream you were going to stay, why didn't you wait for me to send a carriage for you? I wanted to try Huber's Balsam to-day. You know well that Chloe cannot walk so far, and your father is not willing for me to send one of the men on such errands. Now, tell me if you can, how I am to get a—*Bot-tle of Hu-ber's Bal-sam*? It is very unpleasant, cold, damp and unhealthy to-day, but *I* am going for it. Ask Moses

to put one of the horses in the chaise. No, I'll ask myself."

Even the daughter of a hundred earls sometimes finds that grooms, horses, and carriages, are not entirely at her disposal. It was so with Mrs. Brande now. Moses declared that the "chay hoss," must have a shoe; and there was nary horse in the stable for her, except Mr. Brande's sulky horse. Would she try the crittur?

The result was that Virginia walked into town, and procured a bottle of the desired drug. The apothecaries of Kent were familiar with Mrs. Brande's ailments, and the remedies she most preferred; the knowledge of this was a portion of Virginia's hateful trouble which had gone on for years. With the apothecaries, also, Mr. Brande's habitual self-denial came in play; he would have liked to forbid their selling to, or trusting, his wife, under the penalty of the law,—but instead, he paid her long bills with an excellent grace.

That day Virginia walked six miles. In the evening, while waiting for her father and mother's return from a prayer-meeting, which had been appointed on account of the late dreadful event, in the hope of averting the further anger of the Almighty in regard to other shipwrecks in the immediate neighborhood of Kent, she quilted on the silk lining of a pair of slippers which Mrs. Brande was fretting for.

## CHAPTER XVI

MAT SUTCLIFFE went home soon after Virginia's departure and asked Mary to pinch him, for he wanted to be sure he wasn't in a dream. If he was awake he would go to bed, if not, he might as well stay up, and take it out a-dreaming, though he couldn't say that he found the nightmare refreshing. Mary pinched him till he roared.

"Look here, Moll," he said, "I found this handkerchief squeezed in his waistband; the name marked on it is *Sebastian Ford*. That's the man's name. I'll bet you, he never put the handkerchief where I found it."

"Who did then?"

"Never you mind, old woman."

Argus was alone at his post. He had stretched himself on the floor, and lay as silent and motionless as the figure upon the cot near him. A sigh diverted his attention from the ceiling, and he raised himself on his elbow to find that he was observed by a pair of eyes with speculation in them.

"Well," said Argus, "have you made up your mind to live? You couldn't be drowned now, if you tried, you know."

"Was it you, who did this?" a faint voice asked.

Argus nodded.

"What a debt I have incurred!"

"I think so," Argus replied absently, his thoughts reverting to the last scene on the White Flat.

"How did you find me?" asked the voice, this time in a sharper accent, with a vague horror coming into the dark eyes.

"Alone," answered Argus promptly.

"No vestige of the ship near me?"

"None whatever."

"That is a lie, I think."

"You must have more brandy, for you mustn't think." And Argus compelled him to swallow several spoonfuls.

"Sir," asked the voice once more. "Was there *anything* by my person—clinging to me—round my neck—I entreat you to tell me."

"Nothing."

"By God there was something—it strangles me now—she,—you"—

"Don't accuse me of inhospitality," said Argus, feeling strongly drawn towards the agitated young man. "The collar of my shirt which you have on would not do so unhandsome a thing as to choke you."

"Have the goodness to sit beside me, sir. My name is Sebastian Ford. I am as naked as Adam was, I suppose."

"I am Argus Gates, your friend, if you say so. Some one, Mat Sutcliffe, shared with me in restoring to you the gift of life. I hope you will make some-

thing out of it. I have taken a fancy to you; it is natural under the circumstances you know. Don't do the other natural thing, though,—turn round and give me a kick, as soon as there is power in your foot."

"Warm the viper, and see," Sebastian answered with a smile which changed his weary face into beauty.

Argus struck his breast in astonishment at the thrill which passed through it; a new light passed over his cold, sarcastic face, and Sebastian felt it. Destiny was kind to him in a measure he could not yet comprehend; he was on the threshold of an unknown world; to save himself from the past he must enter it. He held out his hand to Argus, with a mournful, affectionate glance; Argus took it.

"Argus," he said presently, "look out, I am going to faint."

Roxalana was called, he remained in a dead faint so long, one fit succeeding another, that it was afternoon before he rallied. Argus sent Roxalana away; he was in no mood to have her beside him, and only allowed her to come to the door for his orders. Messages from people in the town were left during the day which he would not hear. Tempe came to him once with Mr. Drake's offer of help. Sebastian caught a glimpse of her.

"What made me imagine no woman was here?" he asked, "though last night a crowd of them seemed to be flitting round me."

"There are two widows living under my roof,"

Argus replied curtly; "one is my niece, the other my sister-in-law."

"Ah."

"Do you think you can sit up?"

"Yes, if you will be good enough to send for the other Savior; I want to see him."

Argus propped him up with pillows, and sent for Mat, who came from home immediately. Though his eyes were bloodshot, his hair ragged and salt-looking, still Sebastian recognized a certain likeness to Argus in him, or imitation perhaps. Neither of them were the sort of men he had been familiar with; they were not polished and conventional, nor did they appear like easy desperadoes. He could not rate them.

"Mat," said Argus sharply, "you look like a jail bird. Hasn't Mary any comb? A three-legged stool I know she uses sometimes."

Mat made no answer, but gazed intently at nothing.

"Come here, please," said Sebastian, in a weak voice. Mat stepped forward, on his toes, and Sebastian offered his hand.

"Thanks," he said.

The color streaked over Mat's cheek and forehead.

"'Twas nothing," he answered; "I am used to paddling a boat in rough weather. You are round again, hey?"

"I am aware what a thing it is to be saved by such men. Of the mere facts I know but little," said Sebastian, looking at Mat earnestly.

"The Captian here fetched you off the bar while

I was manning the boat. Blarst me, if 'taint a question, since you went to so much trouble to get on it, and being on it with all your sensibility drove out, whether you ought not to have been left there. When a man is so far gone out of his misery, what's the use of tormenting him with breath again?"

"How do you account for finding me alone?" Sebastian asked abruptly. He made a wild involuntary gesture with his head, and the horror came into his eyes again.

Mat hesitated, and there was a dead silence in the room. Sebastian fell back on the pillows, and closed his eyes. Argus exchanged a glance with Mat, and shook his head. In a moment Sebastian started up as if listening.

"*Sebastian!*" he called, in the imploring, dying voice of a woman; "*your lips are consecrated, and I lose them forever.*"

Mat felt strangely heart-sick, but seeing that Sebastian did not seem aware that he was speaking, he began in a loud voice:

"When the book is written which will contain the freaks of what I call the she-part of nature, the Sea,—you will be able to account for our finding you as we did. Moreover, sir, the White Flat is mostly a quicksand; it sucks down all that goes on't. Also, sir, the wind changed after your craft bilged, and the crew were washed off the deep water side. If ever they round the bar for harbor, there will be skeletons in port."

Mat did not add that seven of the crew had already been picked up, and buried that afternoon.

"Take a cigar, Mat," said Argus suddenly.

"Aye, sir."

As Mat approached for a light, he felt rewarded for his deceit when he met Argus's eyes,—no longer, cold and hard, but vivid and sympathetic. He discovered then that Argus was thoroughly drunk.

"Capen, I'll take my turn to watch this ere invalid; you are about up to your notch. How much have you had, a quart?"

Argus smiled, and held up two fingers.

"Falling off, somewhere," continued Mat. "I've known you to hold up three, and a quart *was* a quart in them days."

As silently as before, Argus directed his attention to Sebastian, who had opened his melancholy eyes.

"Why won't Argus go?" he said. "Stay by me, and perhaps he may be persuaded to rest."

"He calls him *Argus*," said Mat to himself. "It will be pretty thick with these two."

"Be off," said Argus presently, now holding up three fingers, "and come back hereafter."

Mat, saying he had a little business outside, one that wasn't necessary to the gentlemen present, retired as far as the other side of the green room door, sat down on the floor, keeping his hat on, and patiently embracing his knees.

To be drunk with Argus, meant a revivification of his faculties, usually in a state of neglect or suspension. To say that one occasionally puts the noble

and generous enemy, wine, into the mouth, means more philosophically than it does morally. At present anything that would go to fill up the cup of sensation Argus would have drained, and added to the fine life of the moment; he was determined to attain a certain desirable condition, when a medicine of oblivion interposes between the vital present and one's past and future.

Sebastian, aware of the physical strain he had gone through, was amazed at his increasing brightness, and deep refreshment.

"How do you do it, Argus?" he exclaimed.

"I don't do it. Do you suppose there will be such a storm again?"

"You are a strange man."

"Because I observe you through a number of glasses? It is my telescopic way. I am a marine, you know—one of the shelved monsters of the deep. Have you a fancy to start a museum?"

"Yes,—and begin with that curiosity between men—our friendship."

"I said, 'your friend.' I am not inclined to twist my mouth with repeating a phrase I have not used for forty-one years."

"Heavens! how old are you?"

"Forty-one."

Sebastian pulled his moustache with the air of solving a problem, and Argus walked up and down the room as if there was no problem left him to solve. Each observed the other furtively, and both felt a sentiment new to them.

"I have provoked Nature into a conspiracy," said Argus at length. "I experience something akin to the *Ideal*. I have refused to learn it from ordinary circumstances,—she has thrown you towards me."

"And I," replied Sebastian, "find something in the Real, which I have struggled against. I'll try a few steps on the floor, too."

He slipped from the cot, and stood dizzy and reeling.

"Steady," said Argus, approaching him; "you still have on your sea legs."

Sebastian flung his arms round the neck of Argus, and kissed his cheek. Argus strained Sebastian to his breast, and while they were in this attitude, Mat softly entered in a pair of canvass slippers.

"Blarsted," he said, almost aloud, "if I haven't eaten something that's hurt me. I see double—specks in my eyes—appears to me as if a play was going on—twenty-five years are supposed to elapse in the Isle of France, and home comes that ere long lost vagabond. Raly, they might be brothers now—in the dark."

He sat down on the edge of a chair, moved in spite of the contempt he tried to show, and said in a gruff voice:

"Past midnight, gentlemen; time for old folks to be in bed."

"Get a light then," said Argus, "and show me the way to bed."

"Mrs. Gates would be glad to know," continued Mat, cautiously pulling a blanket over Sebastian as

he dropped on the cot again, "just how comfortable the person is."

Sebastian laughed.

"How do I look?" he asked.

"Like a fine young fellow," replied Mat, warming into sudden enthusiasm.

"Get a light then," repeated Argus, "and show me the way to that bed you spoke of. I don't know where it is."

Mat hurried after a candle, and they started for the stairs.

"I hope," said Argus politely, "that you will allow me to retire in my clothes. I prefer to do so."

"All right," answered Mat, "only be sure to undress in the morning."

Argus stretched himself on the bed, and closed his eyes.

"Stop!" he called, as Mat was about to go out, "What do you think of him?"

"There's a pair of you."

"A pair! His face paired?"

"I aint a judge of beauty, Capen. What makes his eyebrows meet? He has got a long, green face. His eyes are too near together."

"Is he handsome?"

Argus sat up to make the pillow up to throw at Mat, in case his reply did not suit him.

"I say, *yes*: dead and alive, I never looked upon a handsomer boy."

"Now go watch him."

## CHAPTER XVII.

SEBASTIAN FORD was the son of an English trader who lived in Carthagena many years, and died there in the time of the political troubles which convulsed that portion of South America; his mother was a rich Spanish woman, whose beauty he inherited. After his father's death Sebastian came into possession of the business, which he soon closed, and found himself thereby the owner of twenty thousand pounds. In the latitude of his birth the two chief ways of spending money were in glory and gaming. He cared for neither. With youth, health, and fortune, he went to England, and, carefully avoiding all introduction to persons with the name of Ford, lived both in London and Paris, as Creoles proverbially live; spent a large share of his money; grew fatigued; and returned home to tropical luxury, which is cheap, and at one's door. He met in his mother's house a Catholic priest of his own age, who was domiciled there, and in her affections. He made no effort to oust the priest, nor, like Hamlet, did he discourse with his mother on the merits of his father, but silently destroyed all memorial of him—even ravaged her jewel box, from which he took an ivory painted miniature, and a

locket containing a lock of auburn hair, which he well remembered. In like manner he made farewell preparations for a second departure, which he intended should be final, and one day stood before his handsome, violent, brainless mother, in an attitude which made the blood flow to her dusky face.

"My Sebastian!" she said, casting her rolling eyes over him.

He pointed, without a word, to the sea; beyond the window, within her sight, the spars of a vessel swayed back and forth. She understood his intention, and, after the manner of Spaniards, poured out a volume of words without a single gesticulation, then stopped and stretched out her beautiful bare arms to him.

"That for the padre!" he said, giving them a blow with his hat, turned on his heel, and left her. He set sail for a country where vice and religion are not to be seen hand in hand. Whether some spark of his mother's fire burned in his blood still; whether the sentiment which attaches the soul to the earth where and from which the body is moulded; whether the formal selfishness, the conventional barbarities of his adopted life, or the sombre melancholy of an empty heart, sent him to his native land again, no one knew. But for several years some secluded spot there held him fast. Then he fell into the hands and life of Argus Gates. So much of his history, connected with business merely, he related to Argus. He was a passenger in the

wrecked vessel, and on his way from a West Indian port, to a port in the Southern United States. He had credit at a foreign banking house, not unknown to Argus, and must, of course, wait for funds, since he had lost all he brought with him. He confessed he had no especial aim for the future; there was still enough of his early fortune to enable him to live in idleness anywhere. So long as a man's age keeps him in abeyance, one place, he affirmed, is as good as another for existence. Argus shook his head at the idea; he, who created motive power from the circumstances the present offered, and subordinated them to the completion of an enjoyment limited to their limits, could not be expected to sympathize in such a theory. Argus waited for no inheritance, reversing the fable; he kept his eyes on the shadows of sensation, and avoided their substance,—except in the case of Sebastian himself. In all the relations which affect men, however, Argus and Sebastian were worthy of each other. They were both morally deficient; alike sincere, incapable of trifling; devoid of puerility; gifted with the faculty of making forcible and dignified all their acts, which in others might appear grotesque or weak; and capable of enduring solitude. They differed also. Where Sebastian was old, Argus was young; his sharp, clear, positive nature fell into the depths of a colossal character, which was generally victorious, because of its ever accumulating reserved forces.

For a long time Sebastian was in eclipse. An illness followed his shipwreck, which lasted for



weeks; when he recovered it was certain that his mind was under a cloud. Whether he was haunted by some recollection, or occupied with anxiety concerning the future, Argus could not judge. At times he was possessed by an abstraction which affected him, as if his sight and hearing were destroyed; for days he either sat like a statue, in marble sadness, or walked about the house like a somnambulist or an automaton. Tempe considered him ingeniously arranged for a machine, but thought it a pity he had been gifted with the power of locomotion, since it caused the danger of his running against one. But Roxalana, with Argus, felt strangely attached to him; some secret association bestowed upon her slow understanding the ability to comprehend his condition. She thought him in the despair of exhaustion, and wished that the next ten years of his life were past, so that the struggle of change might be over, and the settlement of his affairs be resolved to the conclusion of his being one of the family forever. The room intended for Tempe after her marriage was plainly furnished, and given to him. He expressed himself satisfied that the prospect from its four windows revealed no more of the world than the elms on the lawn, the garden, and the warehouse above the quay. When the vine spread its leaves over the summer-house, and the rose trees budded; when the elms softly brushed their green, graceful boughs against the window panes, his mood changed. He said one day

to Argus, that he must go down stairs, and ask a favor of Roxalana.

"Try it," urged Argus, "fearful she-dragon as she is, she may grant it. She will be so astonished to learn that you want one."

"Dear," said Sebastian, kissing Roxalana's hand, "I am awake. I ask something of you."

"It is granted; Sebastian."

"Not yet, possibly; will you have me here without obtaining any knowledge of me? I would have you accept me as if I were born on that night in March, instead of having been threatened with death. I am as much in earnest, as if it were not possible that my wish comes from a whim."

"Stay," she said.

"It must be fondness that prompts me. Is it the strange old house standing in primal twilight,—the cold, melancholy, intangible landscape in which it is set? Is it you, the passionless soul, the central brooding heart, or *Argus*, the type of man, neither existing in Utopia, nor the world of ordinary men, that gives me these feelings?"

"Whatever reason you may put forward in your own mind for staying, stay."

"What I can do for you, Roxalana, will only prove in the end that my selfishness overpowered you."

"I will supply myself then from that selfishness. Our world is a lonely one, Sebastian; I do not want society, but at times material for fresh employment. You would not think it so,—would you? I shall

come to you, and take what it pleases me to take, as one dips a draught of water from a full vessel."

"Oh," he muttered, "I have been badly drained before this, too. I am not so cunning as to keep this calm woman-friend from a taint of the old inspiration."

Roxalana changed the direction of her eyes, but not their expression, as Argus entered the room.

"He has thought it necessary," she said, "to make some appeal to me about staying here. My faith is shaken now; I supposed, of course, that he would remain. Can he not be as happy, Argus, as you are?"

"You are sublime in your conceit," he answered.

"Finding, I mean, that when the ways of happiness are impossible, life is better without. I am sure you would not dare a change now."

"You are a solitary, ignorant soul. I have dared to expect a friend in Sebastian—and have I not dared changes before? What day was it that I left this house in pursuit of a man no better than a Dead Sea apple? Sebastian, what do you hope for in me?"

"More than I have had, even."

"The garden will be beautiful soon," said Roxalana. "Tempe and Virginia are walking there now."

"Virginia?" said Sebastian inquiringly.

"Our friend, whom you have seen."

"Where?"

"Have you not seen Virginia Brande?" asked Argus.

"No."

"You had better have your eyes couched."

"I recollect," said Sebastian,—“You,—Roxalana Mat Sutcliffe, and the child—Tempe. Has any other figure appeared to me?”

"This one,—just outside the door."

Virginia came in, with a white jonquil in her hand, followed by Tempe. Sebastian rose, bowed deeply, and thought of the Queen of Heaven.

"See, this is finer than your tulips, Roxalana," said Virginia, advancing, and offering her the flower.

"I do not think so," she answered. "Give it to Sebastian; I was just speaking of the beauty of our garden."

Quietly handing him the flower, which he as quietly took, Virginia turned to Argus, but her voice was drowned in Tempe's exclamation:

"Don't believe that the garden is fine; it is an old concern which carries on the production of toadstools. It was laid out in the year one, by my crazy relative, whose name I have the honor to bear,—giving me a Sampson-like air. She thought gooseberry bushes and fat rose trees meant shrubbery."

"And this?" said Sebastian with a smile, holding out the flower.

Tempe twisted her mouth, and made no answer.

He fixed his eyes on the flower, and suddenly, passionately inhaled its peculiar, rich sweetness, as strong as wine, and threw it away.

Virginia picked it up with an odd smile, and

caressed its crushed leaves with a pitiful motion.

"Needn't have given it to him," said Tempe crossly.

"Little Miss," said Sebastian, "have I provoked you? The odor stung me."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

No episodes marked the long days of the following summer at Temple House. The inner self of its inmates was wrapped in the necessary and wholesome security which comes from the reciprocal surrender and interchange of the habits of our outward life. Carelessly speaking, no change was apparent, but it was certain that Tempe was less a teasing, restless presence than formerly; there was little of the old, hasty flitting in and out of doors, and the sharp encounters between herself and Argus had ceased. Roxalana, also, seemed differently disposed; her treasured odds and ends had lost their interest to her economical mind. About the time of Sebastian's recovery, Argus began to disappear regularly between eight and twelve A. M. For some reason he did not mention, he sought and obtained employment in a Marine Insurance Company. His income was added to, and in due time the household comforts were added to besides. It was several weeks before Roxalana's mind was brought to bear on the fact of his daily absence. An unexpected irregularity occurred in regard to breakfast one morning, at which Argus expressed some impatience; in short, he swore,

"Why, Argus," said Roxalana, "one would think it necessary for you to have your breakfast at a set time."

"Yes, unless the person, like yourself, should happen to be blind and deaf."

She dropped into her chair and laughed; but when he had gone, she said, with the air of imparting a secret, "Tempe, do you know that your uncle Argus goes out every morning, and has done so for two months?"

"What if he does? I am willing for the furniture to go out, too, if it chooses, and the house, or anything else here; and I don't object to their staying out, either."

The gentle ministration of the season coincided with Sebastian's mood; its temperate sunshine and breezes; the uniform grass on hill and field, decked everywhere with straight-stemmed flowers, yellow, blue, and white; the even beds of harmless shrubs which here and there covered the flat coast; and the blue creeks lapping into brown marshes, or smooth pale sand, were new. The ordinary inequalities of time seemed to him to have no lodging place; there was no point for a purpose; night met day in a bow of indefinite shades. At present, his vitality flowed in the current of the friendship between himself and Argus,—a friendship of feeling, not of ideas,—and not yet to be analysed. Sebastian, under its moral influence, approached a repose which was better than an occupation; and Argus, strongly moved by it, felt an activity by which his mask of coldness, and his

selfish habits were lost. Still, Sebastian was sometimes restless. Some old wound bled afresh; his face grew passionate again, his handsome eyes, singular and intense because they were too near together, wore a tormenting expression. One could not meet his glance then, without being possessed with the desire to rend from him the secret of his power. He muttered Spanish between his teeth, and hummed wild, monotonous airs. Tempe heard these, for he was, or appeared to be, unmindful of her presence. She told him one day, that she had named two cats that were in training at Mat Sutcliffe's, "Colado" and "Tizona." He stared at her, and asked her if she knew Spanish literature.

"I only know your unhappy fits," she replied. "As for literature,—this looks like a place for that, does it not?"

"They are old songs."

"Your fits?"

"Did somebody say you were a child?"

"Yes,—when I was born."

"I have not seen such a fire-fly, for many days. Shall I remember you henceforth, or forget you? I'll forget you. Here's another old ballad"—

"Oh, I know it!" and she began between her teeth, "En el nombre del Criador"—

"I don't like to hear you."

"Why?"

"It reminds me of the time before I was found dead,—when women's lips opened with your accent;

they sang different things, though. Promise me, little Tempe, not to imitate me again."

He looked at her attentively, and saw that in her face which gave him a shudder of repulsion and regret. "The innocents," he said to himself.

"I promise you," she said quickly, her blood dyeing the roots of her hair like a flash of flame. But from that time he was as silent, when moody, as before Argus and Roxalana.

Argus, too, occasionally returned to his dreamy ways, passing hours under the elms, with a cigar in his mouth, which nothing could induce him to remove. But whatever his mood, Kent was barred from his doors; its diurnal babble, sad or gay, rolled into Eternity,—which was no more blind or deaf to it than the family at Temple House. Many people, however, knew, and were interested in Sebastian; whenever he appeared in public, he was pointed at as "*The Passenger*."

## CHAPTER XIX.

VIRGINIA had better have carried a sprig of rosemary to Temple House, than the jonquil, when she made her last visit, which was not repeated for weeks. The rosemary is vigorous; its stiff branching stalks covered with minute, pale blossoms, would have survived Sebastian's crushing hand. Mrs. Brande fell into a strange condition, which increased her cunning selfishness, and deprived her of reason. Mr. Brande ordained that she should appear at home and abroad, and be treated as usual. It was terrible, however, to see the espial of Virginia and her father over the forlorn woman. The misery in Virginia's eyes; the sense they expressed of her double sacrifice to her parents; the fixed alertness in Mr. Brande's countenance, his confidence in being able to steer his wife through his sphere, according to the laws of God and man, as he understood them,—must have shaken the tactics of those beings who are said to watch over us, and are named our guardian angels. Summer was in her bower. The happy, idle, full-fed days gathered round her knees, and laid upon her breast; if stirred, it was by the scent of flowers, the taste of fruit, the silver sound of the creeping seas, the trickling cadence of the brooks,

the tree tops wafting through the air, the sight of clouds, purple and white, rolling along the shining horizon, the orange "sunset waning slow," beneath the islands of the sky. Virginia, too, should have felt the summer-heart; but her days were tedious, her nights hateful. There was nothing sweet, sensuous, lovely, about her; there was nothing pure, peaceful, holy, in the atmosphere which surrounded her. Duty with her was a constitutional idea, to be performed because it was placed in her hands; and once there, she was incited to its most honest and able performance. The subjugating contest which most women undergo when they perceive the necessity of martyrdom,—that crucifixion of personality, that mysterious hypocrisy which dictates the habit of self-denial,—was not possible to her; the powers of happiness and pleasure were in readiness for their natural spring when the compression forced upon them should be removed. Yet she believed that every event was ordered as a preparation for the Eternity she was approaching, but in which she did not yet exist; her senses must first become valueless. In her opinion, all the mystery of life lay outside of it, in the doctrines her father taught her. How could it be otherwise? It is a common notion that substance is no medium for anything but sin.

"The summer is nearly over, mother," she said one day; "you will feel better when autumn comes."

"Ta, ta, Virginia! Why open the door for strange people? Shut it, or I'll yell. Keep out

that long streamer of wind that's trying to come in tail foremost. I won't smell the grapevines; you mean to have me Miss Pride and Prim. Get the scissors, and some yellow paper, and cut me out a row of gentlemen and ladies who don't have to wind their watches, and wear clothes. Hush, I don't want them now; Cyrus is coming. My dear, did you tell me it was a grape year? Mr. Brande, how easy grapes slip down the throat! Pray, Cyrus; I always liked your prayers of a summer evening when the moths would light on your nose. It is because you never would take Hu-ber's Bal-sam. Pray, Cyrus. Do I please you?"

"We have had morning prayers, Mrs. Brande. I must go to the office. We are casting anchors to-day."

"I am casting anchors, too. Our good daughter is my anchor. Virginia, take away this mess of yellow paper."

"I don't see any paper," said Mr. Brande, making for the door.

"Cyrus, she hides it. Cyrus, won't you send Chloe away? Cyrus-Rhoda, Virginia-Cyrus, let us send Chloe away, and the bar she drove through my head the night you made that beautiful exhortation in the conference meeting, will drop out. Come here, husband."

He was compelled to obey her.

"Put your ear down, Cyrus. Virginia mustn't hear everything, you know."

Unwillingly bending towards her, he waited for

her to speak. She was fumbling for something about the bed-clothes.

"There!" she screamed, "take that for not sending Chloe away, and casting your anchors." And she drove the scissors through his cheek. For a moment, with the pain and the surprise, he lost his temper, and caught hold of a straggling tress of her hair, and wrenched it with fury.

"I like it, Cyrus," she cried; "it does my head good."

Virginia turned so dizzy and sick, that for an instant she was paralyzed; then she sprang forward, and shook off his violent hand.

"Oh," he groaned, staggering backwards; "there is no deliverance for the manner of man I am. Virginia, what are we to do?"

"Go, father, I will amuse her. Mamma, deary mamma, I found something for you just now."

"Give it to me this very minute."

"I am going for it. Will you stay still one little instant? it is in the garden."

"Yes, yes," replied Mrs. Brande, composing herself.

Shortly afterwards, Mr. Brande sent a note to Virginia, requesting her to talk with Chloe on the subject of taking service in another family. The scene, he wrote, they had witnessed that morning must have been occasioned by an antipathy to her; and it was possible that a great amendment might follow, if she were sent away. Virginia made a

resolution to combat him in this matter, but could not resist asking Chloe immediately how she would feel if she were obliged to leave. Chloe promptly replied that wild horses couldn't tear her away from the place whose crosses she had carried so long. No new place, new miseries, shames and disgraces, for her, if she knew her Indian self. Did Missey think that Chloe would leave her own girl in the present nasty lurch? The thought made her sick at the stomach!

The thought also made her cry. She ran away by herself, bound up her head in a red handkerchief, put on a clean starched apron, and sat down, clasping her slender, coppery fingers, to indulge in the tears of civilization. Virginia, discovering her, was dismayed at her strange expression of grief: not a feature moved, not a sigh escaped, but globe-like tears chased each other down her cheeks, and dropped on her hands. Virginia kissed her, and said, "I love you dearly, Chloe—"

"I know I am going," said Chloe, solemnly.

"I guess not."

"You were three years old, Missey, when I came here, twenty years ago. My baby had just died."

"I never knew you were married!"

"Never was married; what was the good of one of the Masapee tribe's marrying? My mother was a Masapee, you know. Now, if I should have a good offer, of course, I'd marry. I repented as soon as I came to live with Mr. Brande."

A shriek from Mrs. Brande startled them. They flew to her room, and found her gleeful over the act



which she wished them to observe. Mr. Brande's pulling her hair had suggested the plan of pulling it herself; she held a handful of her silky, pretty hair in each hand. A demoniacal intelligence flashed into her eyes when they came in.

"You have been telling secrets to each other," she cried. "I'll tell Mr. Brande. Chloe, what did you promise me?"

"Missis, I've performed more than I promised, always. I will stay by you, if you want me to promise that, till the last drop of laudleum is gone."

"Chloe!" said Virginia, reprovingly.

"What does the copper convert mean," asked Mrs. Brande, "with her laudleums?"

"She means the best, mother."

"I am quite ready to permit the woman's stay," Mrs. Brande continued, in a dignified voice; "but why will she walk round and round me every night of my life, with something called an infant sprawling round her neck?"

"There, Missis, you've spoke it yourself!" exclaimed Chloe.

"Hush, Virginia will hear you, Chloe. Now sit down, and we will select our evening text."

When Mr. Brande came home in the evening, he found Virginia asleep on the floor, beside her mother's bed. Her exhausted attitude struck him painfully; he bent down to raise her head, and Mrs. Brande gave a shrill laugh, which shook his nerves, and made Virginia open her eyes to see that the

skirt of her dress was ingeniously sewed to the carpet. As she tried to rise, Mrs. Brande threw herself upon Virginia, screaming that her life depended upon remaining there. Before the affair was settled, every soul in the house was in the room in Virginia's behalf, and Mrs. Brande was at last quieted. Virginia, more dead than alive, seated herself at the supper table, and poured tea for her father. Neither of them ate a mouthful. Mr. Brande's eyes, however, devoured his plate; the sweat dripped from his forehead, and his ostentatious handkerchief came in play.

"Father," said Virginia, at last, in a low, steady voice, "do you not wish mother *dead*? I do. Death makes life sacred and beautiful, and her life at present is horrible."

For the second time that day, Mr. Brande lost his self-command. Decorum refused to support him. He struck the table with his clenched hand, rose, leaned over it, and stared into her eyes, still radiant, but swimming in tears.

"When people talk so," he said, "they have a narrow escape if the character of *assassin* is not given them. You belie my teaching, and my example."

"I hope so," she answered, stung into irreverence. "If I followed your example, what thoughts could I indulge in, what dreams could inspire me, from what source would my wishes rise?"

He turned so pale, closing his eyes, too, that she thought that he would fall face downwards on the

table, and stepped towards him, but he raised his head quickly, and ordered her back to her seat.

"What of Chloë?" he asked.

"I cannot give my consent to her going from me, —me, father. I need her."

"She is useful, I grant. Well, we will see. Should Mrs. Brande's feelings change towards her, she shall stay. I inform you, Virginia, that I too have my charge concerning your mother; for a month past she has passed half the night in crying out against Chloë. I do not pretend to know her reason for so doing; but do you not agree with me in thinking it best to do all that may possibly tend to the restoration of a health important to our well-being? Ahem."

"Yes, yes, she must leave us."

"Now go to bed, my daughter. You are exhausted; the circles round your eyes proclaim it. Must not fade, my child. Ta, ta, good-night." And Mr. Brande was able to flourish her out of the room with his old air.

She was gone, and he stood as if petrified, his hand still extended; but his eyes moved over everything within reach, and they were full of the mocking hatred he dared express to no animate thing. Being his daughter, and having spoken of dreams and wishes, what could it mean? Was Virginia, whose apparent character was all loveliness, accursed with his secret bane? If it were so, could she know herself, as he knew himself? And now to contemplate her eternally with this suspicion!

Suppose *two* suspicions should sometime meet, and in their lurid lightnings father and daughter stand revealed to each other! Then he laughed, because he saw that he could not fail to respect her for self-command. He pushed his black coat from his shoulders, thrust his hands in his pockets, and paced the room, looking into his Janus faces, an able, proud, acute, resolute, miserable man, counting one more immolation to his creed,—Virginia,—a creed powerful enough to shape his actions, but not mighty enough to control a single sensation. Chloë, impatient at the long delay over the tea-table, came in. The silence oppressed her. The candle flames were not stirred by any air; the moths pushed their feathery wings through the blaze, and dropped round it like bits of wool. The shrubbery in the window frames had fallen asleep in the dew, and the moon was gliding by wrapped in mist.

"How do you find yourself, this oppressive evening, Chloë?"

"I am a cinder myself, what with this and that, sir. There's so many candles burning. You do like so much 'lumination, sir.'"

"A room with crimson paper swallows much lamplight. It is different in a room papered as Miss Virginia's is,—dove-color and silver. Is she in her room?"

"No, sir."

"Ah, to-morrow is her birthday."

"I know you remember it, Mr. Brande."

He drew from his vest pocket a beautiful little

enamelled watch, with *V. B.* in diamonds and a circle of diamonds round it.

"Glory!" exclaimed Chloe, "it beats her other watch out and out."

"Pretty little toy," he said, making the diamonds flash; "but of no more importance than these moths. Brush them out, Chloe, they are annoying."

Replacing the watch in his pocket, and gently withdrawing, he crept softly to his wife's door, and listened there for a long time. It was as still within as without, and he hoped that her composure would last till morning, at least. But the demon who accompanied her that day was not yet satisfied. Before midnight Mr. Brande called Virginia up, for Mrs. Brande had disappeared. After looking through every room in the house, they found her rolled up like a ball under Chloe's bed. Her excuse for being there was, that she was determined to forestall Chloe for once, and beat her on her own ground.

In the morning Mr. Brande gave Virginia the watch, and expressed a hope that on her next birthday she would be able to recount as many good hours, as, he was sure, she could for the past year. She thanked him gracefully, held the watch in her hand without looking at it, and asked him to grant her one more favor. With a ray of impatience in his eyes, he asked what its nature was. "Could she take Chloe to Roxalana Gates that evening?"

He reflected a moment, and gave her permission to do so, and added that he would send a carriage

into Kent, as soon as he came home. She begged him to allow her to walk there by the path, and to be sent for late in the evening. He again gave way, but called it a foolish and unbecoming whim. From the moment Virginia told her mother that Chloe was going, a lamb-like behavior ensued. She asked for her knitting, and kept Virginia near her all the morning to pick up the stitches which she constantly dropped; this employment was varied with the ringing of a hand-bell for Chloe, and, asking her if she was gone. Chloe answered the bell, but she would not reply; her mood was an ugly one. She stopped praying and crying. A stern comprehension of Virginia's future suffering filled her thoughts; as she said afterwards, nothing would have tempted her to believe in the Lord, or the Brandes, that day.

"Attend the meetings, Chloe," said Mr. Brande, when he saw them ready to go. "My interest in you will not cease. As for money,—when you want it, it is yours."

Chloe made a dignified bow, and moved away in silence.

"Why, Missey," she said, as they struck down the path, "'twas March when we last walked from Temple House. I never see anything pass like the time! How is Mrs. Gates, and little Mrs. Drake? And what are you going to take me there for? Who wants me? And I won't do a thing when I get there."

"Don't torment me, Chloe, please."

"No, Missey; but why hasn't Marm Roxalana

offered us help in this distracting time? Why hasn't Tempe run in and out, in her old fashion? Couldn't have Capen Argus himself been polite in our affliction?"

"I asked Tempe to keep away, and affliction requires no politeness."

Nothing more passed. Virginia entered the house noiselessly, and opened the green room door. There was no person in the room with Argus and Roxalana; Argus was reading a newspaper at the table, and Roxalana was employed in resting. Virginia, followed by Chloe, reached the centre of the room before they perceived her.

"I think it is Virginia," Roxalana uttered, without stirring.

"Ah, yes," said Argus, dropping his newspaper, and advancing towards her; but he stopped when he saw her expression.

"Roxalana," said Virginia, "I have brought you Chloe; will you keep her for me? She will assist you. There is no place for her at our house."

Roxalana's head became thick at once with the idea; she could make no reply, but stared at Virginia with a deep gravity.

"I'm kinder turned away from Mr. Brande's house," added Chloe. "My salt don't suit his bread just now. I can't say as I see anything about me this minute that would make my services 'ceptable. I don't know as my services are worth anything. At the same time I think they are, 'specially with dust webs," and she pointed to one hanging from the ceiling. Roxalana's eyes mechanically lifted to it, and remained there.

"Keep Chloe?" said Argus, "certainly; thank you for bringing her. Roxalana will come to herself in a moment; her tender nerves can bear no surprise, you know."

Roxalana shook with one of her sudden laughs, and pleasantly observing Chloe, said:

"Sit down, then, and make yourself easy"

"Roxalana," said Virginia, kneeling by her, and speaking in the sweetest tones; "I have seen no friend for weeks; have you thought of me? I suffer, Roxalana; the bleeding at my heart has stopped the flow of tears—till now."

She hid her face in Roxalana's bosom to stifle the sobs that strangled and convulsed her.

"Only love may save me," she murmured,—  
"dear, deep, human love; not God's now,—so far away."

"My poor girl—" said Argus, bending over her.

She raised her face and listened, as one hearing music that floats through the air of a serene night,—distant, broken, yet advancing.

"She has a heavenly face," said Roxalana, as if speaking of a remote object. "Argus, do you see?"

"I see," he answered sharply,—the fool, the red devil; and shall see a rainbow, I hope, presently."

"It is sometime since you astonished me, Argus," Roxalana remarked; "but don't begin now"

"Do you enjoy that emotion, now?"

"He wishes to check me," said Virginia; "but I must deny him the rainbow. Where is Tempe?"

"She is languid from the heat," Roxalana replied, "and I am sure has gone to bed."

"And your new friend?"

"Sebastian goes on a journey to-morrow," Argus answered.

"But he will return,—not to leave us again," added Roxalana.

"Will he live here?" asked Virginia, in surprise.

"Why not?" said Argus.

"I cannot say why not," she answered, smiling; "I hardly know why I asked you. It is not strange to me that anybody should choose to live here."

"His being here makes your loan or gift of Chloe very welcome. We must have our little domestic asperities smoothed in his behalf. I fancy he is a luxurious dog,—all the West Indians are."

"Marsy," exclaimed Chloe, "you haven't got an Indian in this family, Capen Gates? It's as bad as having Missis——"

She stopped abruptly. Argus replied to her hastily that the Indian he spoke of was a tropical bird.

While they were speaking the thickness left Roxalana's head, and a sudden inspiration entered her mind. She recognized that Virginia loved Argus, and that Argus did not love Virginia. Here was a situation to chain her to her chair for a year! She said to herself, her features resisting all expression, her eyes impervious,—*"I love them as one. My affection goes between the two,—from one to the other, and lies between them."*

"Your father will send a carriage for you, Virginia?" she asked.

"By and by, I begged him to let us walk by the path."

"Mat Sutcliffe saw you, I'll be bound," said Argus; "he constitutes himself the Guardian of the Path. Is that not like one of Tempe's novels? Tempe must come in. Can Chloe go for her? Try your first errand, Chloe."

Sebastian opened the door and came in as she passed him, with letters in his hand. Seeing Virginia, he adroitly stuffed them in his pocket, approached her with a deep bow, and stood as if he were waiting for her to speak to him.

"Where is my jonquil?" she asked, with a bright look.

"Pardon me; it is so long since. Did you present one to me?"

"Man's memory is like his love, I am afraid,—'a thing apart.'"

"Hush, Virginia, he knows nothing of that rake; it surprises me to hear *you* parody him," exclaimed Argus.

"She is *not* the Queen of Heaven," thought Sebastian, "but a noble looking creature of the earth. And she is moved."

She carelessly seated herself in the recess of a window upon a high bench. A cloud of brilliant white muslin rose about her; her beautiful foot, sandalled with black ribbon, tossed under it; her slender white hand, on which diamonds shone, was half hid in its folds; a lovely flush had come into her usually pale face; little silky bands of black hair

parted on her forehead, and strayed down her cheek; her full lips were apart, as if she could not breathe otherwise; and the blue knot of ribbon on her breast beat rapidly. Sebastian as carelessly seated himself on the bench beside her.

"And so you are to return?" she said, in a low voice. "If I were you, I should not go away."

"I am sent for. But why would *you* stay?"

"I love them all,—their lives enchant me. Won't you solve the enigma for me? I have no doubt of your being a wizard."

"I do not love them all. I love Argus."

Their faces were turned now to the window, which was open; Virginia pulled off a twig from a bush beneath it, and made no reply.

"I tell you," he repeated, "that I love Argus."

"I am glad you do. I know no person requiring love more. But, is this the way with men of the world?" He frowned slightly; she thought she never saw eyes with so strange a lustre, nor eyebrows so intimidating.

"Don't make me convict myself of sentiment," he begged. "How is it an enigma with you, since you too say 'I love them.'"

Tempe burst into the room, crying, "What has brought Brande's Chloe here? I saw her prowling about, and ran. Oh, Virginia, have you come at last? Let me sit beside her, Sebastian."

She pulled him by the sleeve, and crept into his place, and nestled close to Virginia.

"You look mighty cool and gauzy, Virginia," she

said. "This black muslin of mine makes me sick,—mean, smutty stuff! If you haven't got a new watch! Let me see it."

"It is my birthday gift," said Virginia, slipping it from her belt.

The glittering diamonds caught Sebastian's eyes.

"When have I seen diamonds?" he murmured absently. "I detest them. I thought they were drowned."

"So I should suppose," said Tempe. "They grow in the ground where you lived; with us they are like stars."

She held the watch against her cheek, which looked a little sunken, and fixed a sideways glance on him, with immense, haggard eyes, that nearly covered her face. He smiled.

"How old are you, Virginia?" asked Roxalana.

"Twenty-three."

Argus sauntered up to her from the opposite side of the dimly lighted room.

"Take care," he said to her. "I see lines in your forehead. Are you hurrying to overtake the wrinkles in mine?"

"Uncle Argus,—don't be foolish," said Tempe. "You are a dreadfully old man, while Virginia is a fresh beauty. I am glad to see it."

"The old men are immortal," said Sebastian, "when Aurora loves them."

"I hear wheels," cried Virginia, "and now I must leave you. When,—when shall I see you again?"

"Let us trust soon," answered Argus gravely. "It is impossible for us to offer you any service,—that we know. Come, I'll walk down to the gate with you. Chloe will be there, and I will shut off her hysterics."

"Stop," said Tempe; "I am going home with you."

"No," said her mother, "I do not wish you to go; neither does Virginia wish it."

"I shall go, mother."

"Nonsense!" called out Argus from the door. "Stay where you are, you have seen the new watch."

Tempe's eyes filled with rage.

"What can prevent my going?"

"Let her go, Roxalana," said Sebastian. "It is best."

"To-morrow, mother, you will see me." And Tempe ran down the lawn, past Argus and Virginia, and sprang into the carriage.

"The brat is going, after all," said Argus; "but you will take care of her."

"She shall go," replied Virginia; "but you know that I cannot take care of her."

"It takes all your powers to preserve the fine balance we admire in you."

"Oh, Argus,—the courtly Sebastian makes you false."

"I am verging on my second childhood,—that is all."

"It does not please me to see you soften so; it threatens one."

"Seriously, I find that I am weaker. I thought my fibres as tough as those of your father, my ancient ally. He is a consistent man. Admire him, Virginia."

"Now are you ready?" called Tempe. "Ask Moses to drive along Bank street. Good night, my lovely uncle."

"Good night, little one in weeds."

"Why do you wish to go by Bank street?" asked Virginia.

"At the end of Bank street" answered Tempe sharply, but shuddering at the same time,—*"do we not come upon Burying Hill? Shant we see every white stone on its summit shining in the moonlight? I wish to take a look at them. You may view the bay on the other side of the street. Water and moonshine represent that which pleases you; the vague and the mysterious. The high, solid mound of earth, filled with lesser mounds, numbered with blocks of marble, represents that which I am in search of. Here we are already, at the end of the street."*

"A desert opens."

Tempe leaned out of the carriage, and was silent. Virginia, struck with the symptom of imagination in her, and with the scene, was silent also. Moses, as if in sympathy with the occasion, checked his horses, and they walked at a funeral pace down the street along which ran the wide base of the grave-



yard hill. The wheels grazed the edge of the bank on the opposite side, and below it stretched the bay. No sound came from the grassy beds of the dead; the air passed over them without a sigh. The bay was almost as quiet; along the sandy shore its volume gravely, gently pressed, and rolled in illumination; its surface, as far as the horizon suddenly rounded the bay,—a dim dark coil,—was one mass of swaying moon-rays,—the bed of “silvery gods.” Virginia’s senses fluttered as they came in contact with the spirit of the night; her thoughts brought Argus there. When he walked beside her just now, under the drooping elms, in a sacred darkness, and she felt the leaves softly brushing against them,—why was she not permitted the inspiration given her this moment? The air of night, filled with bright, piercing sweetness, touched her lips with a fire which should be kindled on his lips also. Icy, stern, unyielding as they looked, they could but melt and weld with hers in that first, and alas, only kiss born of virgin passion,—which expires when it is born, and whose beautiful ghost haunts men’s minds forever, tempting them to chase it through every path which diverges from every faculty.

Her hands reached up into the air imploringly; they fell back on Tempe—Tempe contemplating the grave!

“Yes, yes,” she cried, “in a moment, Virginia. Tell him to drive fast now; we shall soon be out of sight of it.”

The carriage wound round the hill, and struck on

the lonely road leading to the Forge. Turning to Virginia, Tempe said:

“That was for good. I found the sermon whose text has been running in my mind lately. I know now, that I never loved him. I don’t care that,” (snapping her fingers) “for his memory; the sight of his monument did not move me one whit. I don’t believe I have been wicked. What are we to do, if a positive feeling keeps contradicting a conscience bought and paid for?”

“Hush, Tempe; how wild you are!”

“You can feel my pulse. I am as cool as yourself; and am about to put myself under your training.”

To prove the truth of her remarks, she broke into violent weeping, and Virginia, obliged to forego her mood,—all her entrancing speculations,—soothed her, instead of telling her how cruel and unmindful she was. Tempe held her hands, and laid on her shoulder, till, irritated beyond endurance, Virginia began humming between her teeth, and Tempe, remembering that sign of impatience, grew gentle and wheedling.

“Let out your voice,” she coaxed. “Come, are you not sentimental? I know so. Sentimental folks sing, and make verses,—especially late at night.”

“If I sing for you, will you let me take you home?”

“No: Sebastian must be gone first. In the morn-

ing I shall go back, and find myself minus any number of bows from his grandeeship."

Tempe was suddenly quenched by Virginia's voice, which smote the air with the passion of a nightingale:

"Hark! like the swell of the ocean,  
The blood throbs through my heart,  
At a flitting, shapeless fancy  
That to-morrow—you depart.

Hark to the speech of the ocean!  
Our last words have been said—  
And the wings of my flitting fancy  
To-morrow will fan me—dead!"

## CHAPTER XX.

THE lines which Argus avowed were on Virginia's forehead, really appeared between her dark eyebrows,—the bar-sinister in her history. Her father observed the shadow in her face and misinterpreted it; to some beholders it would have seemed as sweet and sombre as a summer landscape in the shadows of a setting sun, when its rays slowly change the appearance of wood and meadow without disturbing their character. The vision of *possession* impossible to be obtained had passed across Virginia's mind, and left a trace in her face, more beautiful now than before. Dreary days followed her visit to Temple House. Outside was the arid flush of August; the grass was dry and brown, the shrubs white with dust, and overrun with insects; the sky was like blue enamel, beneath which white boiling vapors spread and vanished. Inside was the wretched spectacle which Mrs. Brande continually presented. It seemed to Virginia that she was a mechanical force, merely set in motion by her mother's necessities, or her father's demands. It is certain that he was not touched by the ordinary punishments of life. Other men at this time would have shown anger or dejection, or would have absented themselves for

business or diversion; but he applied a nicer regularity to his and Virginia's habits. Many troubles fell on him. His business unexpectedly went wrong; an outside connection failed him, and he lost money. Even the Forge was threatened; should its fires go down, two hundred men, a large share of whom were improvident and intemperate, would be thrown out of employment;—and a force be thrown into the town the consequences of which he might have to answer for. There were no other iron works within a hundred miles, and none in the county besides manufactured an engine for which he had imported many of these English and Scotch workmen. A mad wife sat at his board and slept in his bed. The effect of the crimson and green, the yellow and blue of the walls, decorations, and furniture of his house, was imprisonment. Virginia was a caged bird. Financial ruin perched over the ledgers in his office. The church, with its clinging, personal government, pressed upon him, and Kent, with a hundred sapless social interests, curbed and fretted even the freedom of his perplexity. Through it all, however, he carried high his smooth-shaven, long chin; flourished his fine cambric handkerchief,—a furled flag over his knee, or a waving banner in his hand; and kept the pupils of his eyes within their limits. In every situation his mind strove for the inspiration which must come to declare safety and success. It flashed into his mind one evening at a conference meeting, while he was giving a short exhortation from the text, "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit,

neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit," and he laid hold of the high mahogany railing in front of him as if it were the lever by which he was raising destiny to his level. When the brethren at the close of the meeting exchanged customary salutations, they remarked upon brother Brande's fervor; rich as he was in worldly favor, it appeared to them only a mirror which reflected his piety. That night, the old tortoise-shell cat who lived in the premises of his office purred beside him, dozed, and blinked her green eyes in the pleasant silence of his motionless figure, as he sat absorbed in thought. He trifled and toyed with the plan; let it run from him; bit it, cuffed it, and finally closed upon it, with a sharp, smiling energy, and mastered it. He did not leave his office till breakfast time,—six o'clock,—on a fair, dewy, summer morning, when the St. John's wort blossomed everywhere, even on the borders of the blackened path across which he walked. Meeting Virginia on her way from her mother's room, he followed her into her own chamber, and adjusting a picture which hung awry, asked her how she had passed the night.

"As usual," was the reply.

He took a chair, and Virginia sat down also.

"You have not remained with your mother any whole night till now, if I rightly recollect. Do you think her incurably insane?"

At this question her experience compelled an intuitive preparation for some inevitable change which

she must agree to, and its necessity sharpened her ever-rising opposition.

"She is incurably insane," he continued, having obtained no answer; "but she may live for years. I propose taking her to Dr. Tell's asylum, for I dare not leave her with you;—she may grow violent again while I am on my journey. I am going to see my old friend Carfield, on business."

"Wherever she is, sir, the burden will be the same to me. I must still be a dutiful daughter. I rebel against my service, though; it hurts, and stains, and tears me. I am only *saying* this, you know; the family tie so binds my feet that I cannot advance one step in the path where my soul should take its pride and pleasure."

"You venture to deduct your personality from the relatives with which Providence surrounds you! My daughter, we may not do this. Mankind is a grovelling herd, beneath the pressure of a mighty hand; let no one raise his forehead above the mass, with the excuse of '*me*' written on it. You astonish me"—He paused an instant, with the thought that she did not astonish him, except in speaking so recklessly of treasures never to be spent. "Let me ask you," he resumed, "since you are so fearless with speculations you have no business with as a well trained girl,—to suppose one,—a man powerful enough to dictate himself any course in life,—what limit would there be to his subtle crimes? I say, they would be as incessant as his breath."

"I do suppose such a man," she cried, with kindling eyes, "but one incapable of crime."

"He does not exist, except in the fancy of brainless women. Virginia, comprehend yourself, if you have the ability, but let your knowledge in no wise be tampered with by a specious will. We are in this world for other reasons than to live, and move, and have our being. Ta,—your shoe-lace is unfastened."

He moved towards the door, but suddenly turned towards her again, and said:

"Will you be ready to accompany Mrs. Brande to Dr. Tell's by the close of the week? Attend carefully to her dress. The letters which may arrive for me while I am absent, must be first looked at by yourself; if they contain no claims upon me return them to the head clerk for answer. Please order a new set of lace curtains for the west chamber, as you know your mother has amused herself with embroidering the old ones with twine. It is possible that young Carfield may return with me."

"I shall attend to your request."

"Get Chloe back?"

"No."

"Ah; come down and give me my breakfast. Did you ask me about my business embarrassments? They will amount to nothing; you are not to read my letters, except with your eyes. Certainly, my daughter, my affairs have caused the change you and I have decided upon. Is that a new color,—the stripe in your dress? You are too tall to wear stripes,—broad ones, especially. I remark that I

dislike that stripe exceedingly. Why do you wear the dress?"

"Shall I change it, sir?"

"Yes; I will wait for my breakfast a short time, of course; but it will be waiting."

He descended the stairs leisurely, whisking the balusters with his handkerchief, and sharply listening for a sound from his wife's room. Before he reached the foot of the stairs, she opened her door, and hung over the railing from above; he looked up and stopped. There was a light in her face which had been there before, but so long ago that he remembered he was only twenty years old when he married her. There was something bright and, pleading in her poor eyes, something sad and quivering about her poor lips,—yet he could have cursed her for blasting so many years since then, though he had carried them bravely.

"Cyrus," she said, in a low voice, "are you going to bury me in Sodom or Gomorrah? My feet and legs are already dead. Leave my head above the ground, sweet Cyrus, for you know I am Rhoda-Cyrus. To tell you the truth, now, and oh, how many times I have lied to you, my godly boy! my head wont die; it's full of ram shackle;—see how it goes."

Her head nodded from side to side, but he scarcely noticed it, he was so full of the hope that *she might be dying*, and it made his heart beat. He stretched out his hand, and mildly said:

"Come down, Mrs. Brande, for breakfast is late.

Come; I would like to have you see Virginia's new dress."

"Yes, yes," she answered, limping along. "You'll forget what I said about the vine-clad Noah; I never meant it."

Offering her his arm, he looked into her face earnestly.

"It was the sun shining through those green shades," he said aloud, "nothing better."

Just before his departure, Argus surprised him by calling at his office,—a place they had not met in since their business transactions were closed when George Gates was mysteriously discovered—dead. Mr. Brande passed the palm of his hand softly along the green cloth of his desk as Argus approached him at an easy pace, and a fear touched him; was it possible that the cold-headed Gates had learned he was in danger of foundering?

"I suppose," said Argus, slipping into a chair, and twisting his long legs together, "that some cursed association has sent me here. I am in want of money,—damnably so; not so damned damnably as before, however, for it is for a friend this time,—Sebastian Ford, not George Gates, my brother. How do you suppose his spirit contrives to exist, Brande, unless he can sponge on the saints?"

"Ta. Do you expect to get back any cash that you may advance to your friend?"

"You will. He has drawn on me for a thousand dollars. I have not got much over a thousand cents."

Mr. Brande tore a check out of an attractive looking folio, filled in the required sum, and handed it to Argus, saying, "I am glad to be able to oblige you." Argus perceived the ring of truth in his accent, and asked him if he really placed no value on a thousand dollars.

"If I were a hypocrite, I should answer that I only value money for the advantage it gives me in aiding others; as I am not, I own I appreciate the fact that every age has been governed by what money it could produce,—iron, brass, or gold. Why don't you improve Temple House, and sell it? The brink of ruin would not suggest that idea, though. *The brink of ruin!*"

"What the devil ails you, Brande? Has the yearly drinking of your sanctimonious sherry split the tendons? Change your tipple."

"So you come to *me* for money to-day, Gates?"

"I feel sure that this is the evidence of my so doing." And Argus looked at the check.

Cyrus smiled faintly. Argus rose to go.

"I do not yet know," he said, "when Sebastian will return; when he does, the color of the thousand will re-appear in this very spot."

"Very well," answered Cyrus absently.

"I hope Mrs. Brande is better," Argus said, with a courteous gesture.

"Hope her dead, Gates, for God's sake!" cried Cyrus, astonishing himself with a burst of nature.

"For Virginia's sake," Argus answered gravely.

"I am going to take my wife to a mad-house to-

morrow, and keep her there; she is a beast, and a frantic idiot, and has made my soul sick."

"Virginia!" said Argus again.

"Let Virginia alone, and pity me." The tears were streaming from his eyes like rain, and he had rolled his handkerchief into a ball, which he held tightly. Argus backed gently to the door. It seemed to him that the fabric of Cyrus's life was dropping to pieces, all at once; he wished to get away before it fell to utter ruin. The coldness in Argus's face stopped the flow of tears from Cyrus, as ice stops the flow of blood from a wound.

"I am astonished," he said presently; "astonished that I should be left to such wandering. The sight of you, Gates, has done this. Be off, my dear sir; I must compose my mind."

"It is necessary, Brande, dropping all cant, for us to arrange our condition with a view to composure. We are tricked, however, now and then—our opponent gets the odds; I consider you an uncommon victim. It will blow over, though."

"Good day, Gates."

The office door closed, and Cyrus felt that it enclosed a smaller man than it did when Argus entered. He ground his teeth with hatred of the tears which had so suddenly fallen; "Gates," he thought, "is what I call an *adversary*."

"Brande and I are growing old," was the comment of Argus. "Pshaw, why hasn't he killed that wretch before there was a chance of his crying over her."

## CHAPTER XXI.

WIDE vistas of sunshine opened from the doors and windows,—spaces left bright and tranquil by the absence of the Brandes. Neither at door nor window, nor in any avenue, except that which leads to the dark gate whose latch clicks in the ears of mortality but once,—was Rhoda-Cyrus seen again. The merciless combination, deserved in her case, which is sometimes unaccountably made against individuals to punish weakness, error and crime, no more distinguished than those our experience continually discovers, crushed her.

Mr. Brande staid away weeks instead of days, as he had anticipated, and in consequence work was suspended at the Forge,—to be resumed, he wrote, upon his return. A loneliness which grew into a revelation to Virginia prevailed in her domain. She heard the ripples of Apsley river, as they gently swept upon the little sand flats left bare by the summer drouth, and inhaled the odors which silence expresses in woods and flowery thickets. Her wretched cares were gone; the influence of that propinquity which governed and belittled her, shred itself like a husk from the nature capable of being great in solitude. Sitting in the doorways as she

loved to do, before the river, or facing the empty Forge, the tract of seared ground about it, and beyond the feathery tops of the pine grove, with eyes watchful of all within and without, she felt that the atmosphere was imbuing her with a new intelligence, sad, subtle and sweet, which she might enjoy, but not define. The halcyon day broods alone on the placid ocean of time, and this day, covering many mornings and evenings, ended naturally and inevitably. Wandering to the grove one day, she met Tempe, who sat at the foot of a tree, contemplating a handful of cones.

"Our lady of the manor," she said snappishly, without raising her eyes.

Virginia held out her hand, with the feeling that a forgotten existence was re-beginning, but Tempe did not take it; she dropped the cones one by one, speaking: "She loves me a little—not much—none at all!"

"How long have you been playing in the grove, Tempe?"

"Not as long as you have been playing solitude at home. Mother has been looking for you at every window in the house for a long time. We knew you were at liberty. You couldn't even send for me; however, I shall visit you every day from this out. I am extravagantly fond of exercise. I intend to ruin my constitution with walking. I will walk. What are you looking at me for, with cucumber eyes? I am tired to death with your coolness. Oh,



Virginia, can you help me? You must do something for me. I feel as if I were about to die."

"Come home with me then," said Virginia impatiently; "but I will not have you so flighty. Suppose Roxalana did watch for me,—she knew a little solitude should be spared me. Well, I have had it, it is over; I am quite ready to attend to you."

"Attend! I conclude you are the administrator of the estate!"

"How is Chloe?"

"She has imported her Brande customs. Mother allows her to stand behind her chair at the table; she keeps an Indian silence, though, before uncle Argus."

The picture of the past unrolled in Virginia's mind like a dun cloud, in which the striving forms of her mother, Chloe, and her father, were gigantically visible. She looked about her for the spirits of the air, but nature had withdrawn her new friends.

"Something should be done for me, Tempe."

"The idea! As if you ever needed being done for! I hear of your troubles, but can't see them. You keep healthy, well-dressed, and your glacial air. What would you have?"

"I would be turned into an old, benevolent, crooked fairy, for the sake of conferring upon you the power of dropping pearls and diamonds through your speech."

"Much obliged," Tempe replied, with a blush; "wouldn't it be more in your line to change rats, mice, and pumpkins, into horses and coach, with

which I might go in search of the young prince? In that case I should be happy to offer you a seat in my carriage. Come, I am ready."

They started arm in arm, Tempe either pushing forward, or lagging backwards, and spasmodically voluble in fault-finding.

"Tell me news," begged Virginia. "How is Argus? When does the friend, Mr. Ford, return?"

"Argus sits out of doors now, under the elms. His chin has got an upward cant from investigating the air for mysterious tidings of that Sebastian Ford; but at present uncle Hunks is mild. He says 'yea,' and 'nay,' without showing teeth or claws; isn't he a miser, though? Yesterday Mat Sutcliffe caught him. 'Cuss me to dregs, marm,' he said to mother, 'if Capen Gates isn't in the summer-house trying to sew a patch on his shoe. But he can't do it; God has not given his otherwise able constitution the cobbling gift.'"

"What did Roxalana answer, Tempe?"

"She answered '*Sebastian*;' and Mat sat down, put his hat under the chair, and cursed him till mother ordered him to leave."

"Is Sebastian coming back?" Virginia asked drearily.

"Probably."

"Argus sacrifices himself to that man."

"Say, rather," cried Tempe vehemently, "that he returns thanks, and makes offerings to himself, for being occupied with an emotion worthy of and in harmony with, his character. I feel a little strange

upon the strength of this theory; the air is full of moving black specks."

Her head dropped heavily on Virginia's shoulder, and her arms fell limp and helpless.

"Keep up, Tempe, you are faint only. We are nearly home; I see Moses now,—Moses!"

Moses hurried out of the yard at her call, and together they carried Tempe into the house.

"Of course," said Martha, the cook, from behind her, where she was endeavoring to unfasten her dress, while Virginia was wetting her face with cologne-water, "you know the circumstances this young woman is in."

"I should think so,—a fainting-fit is evident enough."

"It won't be long," continued Martha, in a tone of contempt, "before this vale of tears will be burdened with another crying soul in swaddling bands; though I don't know that it will be allowed the bands, for Miss Hopkins, the best nurse in Kent, says the faculties don't approve of 'em."

Virginia rose up in mute astonishment, and mechanically applied the cologne-water to her own forehead.

"Tisn't so," gasped Tempe, opening her eyes upon Martha. "There isn't a word of truth in what you have said. I'll die first." And she struggled to her feet, eyeing Virginia defiantly. "I never was better; and I have come to take tea with you, Martha."

Virginia immediately ordered Moses to harness one of the horses, and be in readiness to drive Mrs.

Drake home; and Tempe, in spite of her protestations to the contrary, soon found herself there.

"It has turned out," said Roxalana, after reading a note which Moses had delivered, "as I expected,—that you would be sent home suddenly from somewhere; and now I demand that you remain near me."

"Mother Roxalana Gates, you ought to be the last person to insult me. I say, I shall go out of doors daily."

"It is the most absurd thing I ever heard,—going out at present."

Tempe stamped her foot violently, and Roxalana, from a momentary terror, winked her usually impassive eyelids; then, recovering herself, she lifted Tempe, and carried her up stairs as if she had been a feather.

"Cruel old Egyptian woman!" said Tempe, out of breath. "I am happy to say that I do not love you, nor any woman. I hated Virginia to-day, and I'll tell her so to-morrow."

Roxalana watched her in silence; and at last Tempe kicked her shoes off, and tugged at the fastenings of her clothes.

"You've had no supper," said Roxalana abruptly.

"I'll taste nothing to-night, nor to-morrow, nor the next day. Should you happen to leave the room, I might go to sleep, however."

Roxalana, seeing that she was in earnest, left her with the excuse of attending to supper, but immediately sent Chloe after Mary Sutcliffe.

Before morning a son was born to Tempe. At its first cry on being compelled to breathe the air of an alien world, Roxalana took it, and said in a voice which sounded like the ringing bells of an under world:

"I name this child *George Gates*."

Two great tears rolled from her eyes, and baptized the babe in sorrow, remembrance, and hope. Then she held the treasure up to Tempe, and Tempe resolutely shut her eyes against it.

When Mary Sutcliffe emerged from the outside door at daybreak, Mat, who was lounging on the steps, caught her and swept her along; then he brought her to a stand still, stopped, and asked: "Why the devil can't you tell me the news?"

"Poor thing!" answered Mary, with a groan, determined to scare and punish him for his foolish fondness for Tempe.

"Hold your jaw," he said, planting his feet apart to keep himself steady, being seized with a giddiness.

"She's all right, I tell you!" screamed Mary, frightened at the effect of her trick. "Roxalana named it George."

Somehow Mat was not able to curse her as she expected; he was still a moment, and then spoke, as if to himself:

"Named it George, has she? I shall have to give in, and own up to women's souls. 'Tis so, or she'd never hand down that rascal's name. How is little Tempe?"

"Tempe is a devil-cat,—same as ever. You'd

better go back, and wake up Argus; I don't think he will be much pleased, either. Somehow or rather I shall get word to the Drakes to-day."

"It is old Drake's grandson, that's a fact; I had forgotten all about that ere family."

"I am in hopes they'll send something worth while to it, though the Gates family have behaved shamefully to the Drake family."

"How's that, Moll?"

"They've let 'em alone so entirely."

Mat laughed, and continued good natured all that day, being secretly happy over the fact of what he called the Gates Continuation; there was no other chance for the family survivorship, and, for his part he wanted to leave a Gates above ground, when he took his final dip. Mary, also, was secretly proud of the baby, and took pains, as she had promised, to have the Drakes informed concerning it. Mrs. Drake hurried out for appearances' sake, and bought a basket arranged for the unhappiness of infants,—filled it with cambric robes, and sent it with her love. Mr. Drake sent a heavy silver cup, and congratulations. Tempe measured the depth of the embroidery on the robes with her languid fingers, and swung the cup by its handle. When the baby was a week old, Virginia called upon it with a box of toys, and looked at the little creature with awe and amazement.

"Did you ever see so fine a child?" asked Roxalana.

"Did you know before," asked Tempe, "that the

human young was uglier than anythnig on the earth?"

"See its perfect hand," continued Roxalana, "its soft brown hair. And it knows a great deal already."

"What does Argus say?" Virginia asked, somewhat embarrassed at Roxalana's enthusiasm.

"He says that the world is overpeopled," Tempe replied.

Roxalana looked up at Virginia, with a sad, dumb smile.

"He says what he should say," continued Tempe. "I had no idea till now, how much Uncle Argus and myself are alike."

"Oh, Tempe!" cried Virginia, indignantly, but was prevented from going on by Roxalana's placing the baby in a large arm chair, its present cradle, and motioning her to go out.

"Have you had new dresses lately?" asked Tempe, as Virginia rose hastily, and adjusted her mantilla. "I believe you can wear every color. A corn-colored barege is the last thing I should have chosen, but it becomes you. Come here, and let me examine the trimming."

Virginia approached, and felt a degree of remorse at the touch of Tempe's hot, fragile hand, as it passed over the rosettes of her showy dress. "I might as well," Tempe continued, "expect to sit upon a cloud with gayzy angels, as expect a dress so rich, peculiar, and attractive as this. Do you, can you, imagine the state I am in—a chronic shuffle between shabby black and a night-gown? Stop! Don't dare to offer *me* a present. I offer you my

thoughts and opinions freely, and do not wish for the return I can guess you would like to make; but I won't be shut up. I know you are generous. There, go, I am tired. Give me the box of toys first, I want to see what you have brought Old Bunch."

"My dear," said Roxalana, accompanying Virginia down stairs, "it is certain Tempe's behavior is outrageous. She is the same under all circumstances. She resembles Argus in nothing; I should be sorry to have you influenced a moment by her rash opinions."

The expression of sincerity in Roxalana's face, and the transparency of her diplomacy, were overpowering. Virginia could only kiss her on each cheek without uttering a word.

"I don't think it quite safe," Roxalana went on "to leave Tempe; I am not sure that in some freak she will not hide the baby from me. I believe she is deficient in what is called natural affection; how can it be helped? To tell the truth, I have little faith in it; it is a habit, a tradition,—irksome, terrible, destroying sometimes, as I have seen; so we will not condemn Tempe."

Her hard, rude speech smote Virginia like a salt breeze, wholesome because so utterly sincere; but it toppled down not only her theory but her practice.

"Yes," said Roxalana, a dark red rising in her swarthy face, a steely illumination breaking through her eyes, "I am convinced by my years that friendship, love, the singular emotion which rises like a

wall of rock, or fire, or ice, and hides, protects, and separates two souls, man and woman, from all other men and women, have little to do with our circumstances, acts, and duties; they come from the nameless Spirit in our Consciousness, whose face we never see, and whose will we never understand."

She paused with her heavy lips apart, as if she had been obedient merely to the Spirit she had named, and as if she were ignorant whether its large utterance would continue. Virginia felt a great envy before this simple, unselfish woman, so incapable of being swerved from her narrow bounds; then she grew proud because she loved her.

"By the way," said Roxalana, "I am indebted to you for Chloe. I should hardly know how to manage without her. I don't think there is much waste about her. I hope you intend that she shall remain?"

"Now, Roxalana, will you let me breathe? You are welcome to her. I am glad I can do that much. Go back to Tempe; I will see Chloe, and then walk home by the path. The shrubs, Roxalana, are turning already before the frost. But what a long year! It seems ten years since I last picked the umber-streaked smilax and the yellow sassafras, going home from my happy visits."

"Oh, yes, Sebastian has doubled the year! You will find Chloe in the kitchen. Farewell, Virginia."

"Farewell, Roxalana."

"I knowed you were here, Missey," called Chloe, from the half-opened kitchen door, before Roxalana

had disappeared from the upper hall. "I've longing for the Forge since sunrise. There's no smell of coal in this God-forsaken house. But I aint plagued here, by no one. *He's* out in the garden now, a-thinking these three hours. What people have to think of when there is no religion in them, is past my finding out. Missey, how be you, my dear child? You have nothing good to say; keep your mouth shut. My knees know more than my tongue can speak. Sit down, if you will; do you think it looks clean? Shu! Mrs. Roxalana's kitchen work pizened me. She isn't more than half facultied, between you and me; but the Captain is tidy, and sharp,—nobody can say more than this in his favor; 'taint to *be* said. I suppose I was sent to labor in this field; there is a reason besides why I should stay. Can you guess it?"

"No."

"They are Indians,—now they be, in spite of white skins and learning. You needn't look so incalculous!"

"Nonsense," Virginia answered absently, stepping to the window and looking down the garden. "I should like a sprig of box, Chloe. How cool and bright the dark borders look."

"Help yourself, Missey."

She had vanished, and was already hovering over the mounds of antique box,—a fanciful reminder of those slow-moving, brilliant autumnal butterflies, whose silent, varying flight suggests that they search for a mystery which the crooked vales of air, and

the uneven surface of verdure, hides. Her heart went forward to the summer-house, dictating her feet to follow. It was the bold, trembling, inspired moment which occasionally seizes one, and leads on to a crisis, which becomes astounding, when it has passed. Argus was seated on a low settee of boughs and wattles, his arm resting on a little table of the same material; his hand hung over its edge. He had given over thinking, to fall into a quiet slumber which had removed his sarcastic frown, his contemptuous smile. Pale, yellow bars, and patches shaped like leaves, played on the wall behind him, dropped on his grizzled chestnut hair, across his breast and arms, like impalpable, swift lizards. Virginia felt rather than saw that his eyes were closed as she approached and stood before him. The blood thundered so at her heart that she must wait for her breath to come and go more quietly! She watched the light playing over his cold steadfast face; his bowed head and long drooping hands, so fixed and motionless in their pale hue, reminding her of the pictures in illuminated missals. Stooping towards him, she softly put her hands in his, and was caught in an iron grasp. Argus stood up, wide awake, and drew her close to him; their eyes met, and instantly he disengaged his hands.

"Why, my girl, Virginia," he whispered, turning his face away; but she struck him slightly, and said:

"Look again, Argus, and read me something."

He was obliged to meet her eyes again, and as he did so a faint streak of color passed over his face. It seemed to him that he was recalling something that had happened long ago,—events, or incidents, which perplexed him when passing, although he did not know it till now. He shook his head involuntarily. Virginia started backwards as if frightened, and her hat fell off, dropping between them. Argus frowned at it, and said,—“Damnation!” then picked it up. As she took it from his hand she moved towards the door of the summer-house, still facing him; she looked so sweet, and sincere, and so indescribably dignified withal, that he felt a pang of regret to have her go, and said, “Damnation!” again.

“Only oaths, Argus?”

Her face looked set now, and there were hurt smiles in her beautiful eyes. He sprang to her.

“You would have me confess, Virginia, that I am a man, after all, and that I know I am touched by the flame burning in *you*. Does it please you to hear me? As for oaths,—come here,—put your head over my heart,—it swears by what it must reject.”

“It moves, Argus, does it?”

“Yes, physically.”

She shuddered violently.

“Don’t take me back,” he cried.

It appeared as if she could not speak. She was strangely pale, and languidly allowed her head to rest against the door which she had reached by slow

degrees, retreating from him; but she opened her hands as if she were shaking something from them. He laughed slightly, and, as pale as herself, said:

"I wish that one of us could escape."

"I shall go," she answered, after a moment's silence, during which Argus felt that he was about to pull the summer-house down, and cover a caress which could have no hereafter.

"But let me say," she spoke now in a clear voice, "as I go, how rare this interview seems to me."

"Rare!"

"The combination never came to *me* before,—when emotion suited the circumstances, and the time and place fitting, too; I have missed them hitherto."

She was gone, and Argus, in spite of an astonished disappointment at her bearing at departure, was glad of it; his first wish was to regain composure, the second to forget that it had been disturbed. He left the summer-house, whose atmosphere was stifling, and went to the lawn, where he staid till he saw the evening star burn in the radiant twilight, and sink behind the elms into the crystal sea, and a wan crescent moon appear in the emerald-tinted sky. Roxalana was waiting at the tea-table when he went in. Chloe had told her of his meeting with Virginia, and she discreetly managed to be alone.

"Take your tea, Argus."

"Certainly, give me tea. This cup is cracked."

"They are all cracked; we have nothing whole."

"The devil! And do you like it so?"

"I am sure it suits us."

"The whole concern is a ruin!"

"True."

"How could anybody ever be possessed with an idea which separates me, as part and parcel, from this decay."

"It is remarkably strange, I confess,—such an idea."

"Did you, Roxalana, accuse me of being a dolt, an idiot, in your thoughts, when you knew that Virginia Brande was flitting about me this afternoon?"

"Virginia Brande is a saint."

"That was the news my veins conveyed to me; but I'll have nothing to do with saints. I do not love them."

"Argus, I desire you not to speak so."

"I never will again. I am sorry, Roxalana, that this cup is not perfect, because I am going to break it. Don't go yet."

She snuffed the candles, took one, and held it up to his face, surveying him with an impenetrable stare.

"I think," she said, putting it down, "that you are the most detestable man I ever met."

"Have you forgotten George?"

"He, at least —"

"I am not anxious to hear of the 'at least.' I said I loved neither saints nor women; but I love and



respect life. After having made a pretty job of it in mending sundry fissures, do you think I am going to allow anybody to drop the frail article in pieces before me? Don't you go out of your natural straightforwardness to think otherwise. Mix me a glass of brandy and water: keep out those lumps of sugar; I shall be as drunk without."

She sat beside him while he sipped from his glass.

"Had I better send for Mat?" she asked.

"Send?"

"Yes, by Chloe."

"Oh, Chloe is here, is she? Virginia's Chloe! No, I will not have her disturbed. Go you to bed, and I'll send the bottle after you. Look you, Roxalana, this is my last glass; I shall never empty another bottle. The occasion has come and gone forever,—as it came and went with Sebastian. The rulers shall share no cups from the brim of their will with me. The rack was stupid in comparison with the fine assaults made on a man, which bare his system. Have you seen a rope-dancer walk from the roof of a theatre to the footlights, on a single cord, when the audience had but one breath? Or do I mean that crowd of shining angels climbing up and down Jacob's ladder, every round a nerve? Hold on, Jacob, or wake up."

"I always felt," replied Roxalana, perfectly unmoved by his remarks, "that the time would come when you would cease to ask me for brandy."

"Now you may go. I like you, but have seen enough for the present of the woman for whom—"

he threw the bottle against the door just as she closed it.

At sunrise the next morning he was under the elms tranquilly smoking. Its golden light was shut out of Virginia's chamber. She lay in her bed with breath rising and falling in the mute, gray air, sleeping as one sleeps after suffering pain,—in deathly oblivion; strands of her splendid hair half covered her face, and a braided mass of it half wrapped her white throat. Her hands, nervously alive, were twisted above her head, and the outlines of her tall figure, from her compressed lips to her crossed feet, betrayed the anguish which slumber is merciful to. The sprig of box lay on her Bible near her bed, her hat was on the floor; but the dress which she had worn was carefully folded to be put away. No one ever saw her wear again the becoming dress, with its velvet rosettes, which Tempe had been so envious of.

## CHAPTER XXII.

THE natal day was of so little importance to Argus, that it would have passed unobserved, had not Roxalana's tenacious memory proclaimed the fact he was now forty-two. The autumn, as in other years, bestowed its tranquil, penetrating influence upon him; its spirit, dwelling in purple and silver vapor, the golden shafts of sunrise and sunset, the scented, moderate wind, and the subtle, transforming leaf, imparted the old sense of material perfection. But the feathered arrows of change hurtled in his atmosphere, and the passions which invest life, as closely as lichen spreads over the incapable rock and impassive tree trunk, began to assert their existence in his. Between all the relations which surrounded him,—from the absent Sebastian to baby George; Roxalana, whose affections were mastered by the child, and through whom vivid rays of happiness passed to her heart; Tempe, whose manifestations were new; Virginia, banished, and again overwhelmed by fresh demands at home; and Mat Sutcliffe, who had retired from the Captain, in his devotion, apparently, and fallen into a strange idolatry for "G. Gates," as he had called the baby from the beginning;—it was certain that Argus was for the present left solitary. His dominion was shaken, and the habits which his inflexible taste had

ordained for the household were breaking under a facile hand, whose pressure he could not control. If in these changes different moods possessed his habitual silence; if, a vague chaos threatening his horizon, those deep, wingless desires which sometimes lodge themselves in the depths of one who is deserted at the flood tide of his abilities, came,—and and expressed their presence in his face or mien; if restless, or quiet, if he ate, slept less; whatever he did, it was unnoticed. Obviously he was the same man; sensitive to insensible objects; indifferent to vital ones; cheerful, composed, hard, disdainful, and regardful as a miser of the outgoing of every cent from his pocket,—a strange fact, since he never cared to save, or earn, a dollar. The child he never spoke of; when Roxalana approached him with it, and made an attempt to attract his notice, he threatened to drop cigar ashes on the little hand, or snapped his fingers at it, with, "Here, you sir, stew boy." He made no remark to Mat about it, not even when, with a clumsy tenderness touching to behold, Mat was taking his "G. Gates" round the garden, and allowing him to put out his eyesight, and pull his whiskers up by the roots. Argus was pleased, however, to worry Mary, who was jealous of Mat's devotion; she was warned concerning the birthright of her own boys, and was so moved thereat, that she tormented Mat till he flew into a rage, which induced him to pack his oldest boys off to sea, and apprentice his oldest girl to a tailor.

"Put that in your pipe and smoke it," he said to

her; "my next move will be wuss. I'll set you to picking ~~akum~~. Where's your pride, and where's your memory, and where's your calculation? The time comes to such folks as the Gates's, when they all tumble into some gaping hole, and nothing ever rises up but a little cloud of dust dry as yellow snuff. Who can take G. Gates by the hand then? Who will be left to do it, but *me*? An old, drunken, ignorant vagabones can do it; and blarst me if ever *he* grows up, old, ignorant, and a drunkard."

"Them Drakes can do it; and it is their right to do it; and they ought to do it; and you've no business to poke your nose into what isn't your own concern; and my gal's pricking her fingers in Philip Dyer's stinking shop,—all ~~because~~ of your tantrums, Mat Sutcliffe."

"The Drakes! Never while Roxalana Gates and I are above ground will they get that boy. So shut up, and clear up. Ain't it a dull time of year, I'd like to know? I have got too much time on my hands, just as you've got too much tongue."

"I'll let people know how things stand, see if I don't," said Mary finally. But Mat knew she would venture no further than rating him to the best of her ability. Meantime the child grew bright and winning. Mat went to Temple House every day before he went to his work in the morning, or on returning from it at night, and sat in conclave with Roxalana, exchanging notes of admiration, and predictions concerning him. When the teething period arrived, the times he was passed from one to the other, and ex-

periments made upon his gums, could not be counted.

"Let's see if he'll eat," was Mat's prevailing request. And "Do you think he gains in weight?" was Roxalana's incessant question.

For the most of the time Tempe hovered in their neighborhood silent, and with haggard looks; her eyes were larger, and more shining. She was tame now, but still unloving; if her child cried, she moved farther from it, if it laughed, she turned her head away. No one ever saw her kiss it.

"Argus," said Roxalana, one day, "I believe that Temple absolutely hates that child."

"Damnation!—what did you expect of her?—that she would sit in a blue mantle, like the Virgin Mary, and smilingly offer it to an adoring world."

For a moment the obdurate heartlessness of Tempe, and the heartless coarseness of Argus, gave her the thought that she was not quite a happy woman; but it only brought the dark flush to her cheek, and faded with it. Argus observed it.

"Pooh,—Roxalana, I am too old a fellow to make a woman blush. Didn't you tell me the other day that I was forty-two?"

"If you can tell me what age has to do with the regular beating of the heart, perhaps I can explain why the blood shows in my face against my will."

"Against your will! The perpetual faculty of a flush is given your sex; it is your rose of expectancy. There is something cunning in you all. Is your mind ever off the idea of assault, insult, re-

sult? I notice the red flag unfurls at the slightest contrary breath from a man's mouth."

Roxalana laughed, and pressed her plump hands together, as if they were a pin cushion, from which she was trying to extract concealed pins.

"I am not to be driven away just now, Argus, by any language; Georgey is asleep, and I am entirely at leisure. I don't object to being badgered, as you know."

"Chloe will answer better for badgering; she stands it well."

Roxalana laughed again, and said that she thought Chloe was invaluable; she blessed the chance which sent her to them.

"So you do. The madness of Brande's wife, and the loss of Virginia's nurse from babyhood, were your gain."

"Having made up my mind that it is impossible for me to see God's justice in this world, I have also made up my mind not to be affected by that which I have no power over."

"God's justice," he repeated reflectively,—"how could you make up a mind about that? I have the fancy that you do not believe in a Divine Being."

"I choose to have no belief. One way or the other, Belief is a frightful thing; it assassinates everything except itself. If I *know*, or *feel*, I am content; when these facts become impossible with me, of what use can Belief be?"

"You are curious—for a woman. What do you

think about Death—that Jack-in-a-box? A grim, fantastic toy, but we must spring its lid."

"I abhor Death and the Dead,—cruel, treacherous falsifiers to all we pretend to be. How dare you name a subject so terrible? I never dwell upon it."

"It is a very indifferent subject to me, Roxalana; when I die, my love for life will be gone, of course. Underground will suit my six feet prone, as well as the air suits my upright six feet now. Where is your snuff box? I think I will adopt your habit."

Roxalana gravely offered him her tortoise shell box, remarking as she did so that snuff was her only vice, and wondering whether all people of a certain age did not drop into some comfortable weakness. So the conversation started by her remark concerning Tempe ended, and was not renewed. The inspiration of words comes oddly and unexpectedly, especially with those who do not study their feelings; it has little to do with chance, and the environment of circumstance is nothing to it. Words so spoken may reveal, decide, and make important that which has hitherto been unknown; sentiment may be originated, and relations established, by the speakers who remain ignorant till utterance has passed their lips. Little George asleep, the accidental appearance of Roxalana in the spot where Argus happened to be, the few words that passed between them, brought about the opinion with Argus that no temptation should ever separate him from Roxalana, and fixed one with her, that life without Argus would be worse to endure than the pangs of hated

death; and that she would rather die first, and be supported by his strength and courage, which she knew equal to face all mortal terrors.

These ideas, extending the bond between them to the confines of existence, had in no wise any outward effect; they were put away for future use, and were not even to be mentally referred to, without occasion. Could Chloe's acuteness have discerned all this, she might not have felt the necessity of approaching Argus as a missionary. She perceived that Roxalana's attention was drawn from him, and that Mat only had eyes for "G. Gates," and argued that though he was no Christian, and would be eternally damned, he ought to be considered an authority in his family, because he provided for it, and because there was something about him that made the natural supply of well-ironed shirts and carefully cooked food imperative. Who could do this but herself? She gradually assumed the power of ministering to his wants, and they grew accustomed to each other in a characteristic way that would have astonished Virginia, but which was scarcely observed by Roxalana and Tempe. Her first advance was made and accepted upon the slight occasion of Mat Sutcliffe's putting his head in one day at the green room door, while she happened to be there putting some dishes away in the glass cabinet beside the chimney. Argus was there, also, drumming on the table she had cleared a slow march with his fingers. Mat stared round the room without speaking.

"Taint here," she said sharply; "its a-waiting up stairs with its grandma, to be cuddled and palavered with. I hope you don't smell of tar more than usual,—it lasts so long arter you are gone! 'Tis most as good as having your company the whole time. I'm feared if folks come in, they'll spect the whole family have got the itch."

Mat withdrew his head, and slammed the door so hard that Argus stopped drumming, and said:

"What are you so savage with Mat for, you hussey? Don't he like your color?"

"As the times is as they is, and I conclude they be, I don't expect to insist your treating me in a sarseful manner, sir. Any time that suits you, will suit me, I think I can stand it. A man who dangles his legs easy over the steep where the swine rushed can be no trouble to me, as long as I do my duty, and keep him clean and comfortable. I wash my hands of everything else. Can't say, though, but that I like being here; can't help myself, it's the Indian in me that loves the God-forsaken independence in this house."

"If you do wash your hands, I submit to having your fingers in my pie, though they do resemble adders. How is it that Brande's wife never felt your fangs? You are a fine woman, Chloe, and belong to a past generation of females possessing hips. How is your ankle? I don't know that I object to the turning of the world which brings me Africa, and the lost tribes."

"Sarse," said Chloe, triumphantly.

"You must have been the salt, up there at the Forge. How did you lose your flavor?"

"Missey had to part with me, she sent me,—no, *he* sent me from one fool to—Mrs. Gates."

"I was sorry." And then Argus appeared to forget Chloe's presence; he turned his hand over and over, scanning it as if it were an object foreign to himself. She watched him, and wondered if ever so impudent, self-contained a man ever lost his balance.

"Yon are fond of ashes, are you?" she asked sharply. "You are always on the hearth, either here, or in the kitchen; or do you think you will scare me from burning out the wood? I thought every gentleman in Kent owned woodland, and that they never begrudged waste. What may be the worth of a few sticks of oak, hickory, or yellow pine?"

"That was an excellent dish you served us with at dinner," he said, rising, looking into the cabinet, and changing the position of the china she had placed there; "it reminded me of one I tasted years ago,—flavored with the Barbadoes cherry. It was before she was born."

"Mrs. Brande is about your age, Captain Gates."

"Confound you, what are you talking about? I own nothing. What is the ownership of a shell,—named when men and women built it together, and made themselves its kernel—Temple House? The ties of property,—mutual interests,—those relations which slip into each other like the scales in a coat

of mail, and which compose the armor worn to keep us erect before God, and crooked with the Devil,—are not for me."

Chloe began to twirl her thumbs, and look vacant, as she did at conference meeting when the speaker was dull, though she was mindful that his language was at variance with his quiet utterance.

"Mind you, though," he continued, "every stick you burn, every loaf you bake for me, I can be as cold and as hungry as any of my neighbor-atoms, and I love food and warmth, as well as the rapt disciples did."

"It was no new dish I made," she answered. "I never did see such folks in all my days; don't know what's what. Miss Tempe shook her head at it, and said she hated hash; and why did I put myself out to make our poverty unendurable, says she?"

Argus made a motion to her, to attend to the business she was engaged in, and not to disturb him. She obeyed, quite contented with the feeling she had that number two was gained over, and that she could devote herself to Argus as she had devoted herself to Virginia, without the hope of any reward, and, in his case, without the hope of appreciation.



## CHAPTER XXIII.

THE anniversary of Tempe's marriage, with its vision of a snow-storm and a bridal veil, and that of her widowhood, passed. The Drakes, conventionally mindful of both occasions, but disliking Tempe's immobility, and indifferent towards Argus and Roxalana, sent black-edged cards to the family, and presents to Georgey, instead of paying visits. The events were apparently forgotten by Tempe, who was no more silent than usual, no paler, and betrayed no emotion. No remembrance or hope drew her towards the boy,—sole tie between herself and the Dead,—to move her to say, "Sweet, my child, I live for thee." That enduring, sacred passion, the love no desire can buy, which a mother alone knows; that buds, blossoms, and bears at once like an orange grove; is felt in the kisses which drop like rose leaves in hands that bend and cling like tendrils; in imperious feet that choose to trample upon her; in the sobs like smiles, and laughter full of tears; in the rapid beating of the child-heart which acknowledges one necessity—existence with hers; this Tempe never felt. Happily, perhaps; for would not the time arrive when the single aim of her son's existence might be a woman who had not attained the state of motherhood? When all his episodes con-

nected with material life might fall as void in his memory as a morning mist falls void in the rays of the sun? When the years of maternal sacrifice, the immolations of all other relations, the decay of all individuality not bearing on the maternal interest,—might be remembered as a dream, dead and done with the actualities of the present?

Without dwelling on the speculations of reason, or analyzing the instincts, Roxalana celebrated these anniversaries; unconsciously she blended the wedding and the funeral, and regarded them as one. The aspect of the latter day she studied as an outlet for certain questions which dimly rose in her mind, and distracted for the moment her attention from Georgey. Never leaving the house on any pretext, the relief which one finds in the open air did not occur to her; a look from the windows, and going from room to room, were the limits of any unwonted restlessness. A pale sun glimmered over the lawn like a hollow shell; black, bitter dust whirled round the house, and struck the panes; the grey air and the grey ground held the roar of heavy wheels and hoofs, the melancholy, reluctant creak of boughs, and the wail of crowded, wandering winds. The atmosphere within was dismal and vacant; human business, and human interest seemed to have gone forever; the incapable hands and feet of those whose efforts so long ago consecrated the now unused apartments, were waiting for the resurrection to make them plain again. They could not now care for the trifles which lent inspiration to the beings endowed



with the obligations of being. The events of thought and feeling occupy little time and space; they may be so invisible in the ordinary drama of the day, that the decree which decides the future is made, and the bystanders only observe that a man is twisting his moustache, or a woman adjusting her ribbons. These mental experiences, while happening, do not appear remarkable till afterwards, when they take the possessions of facts in the mind, and the power which belongs to acts is attached to them. Roxalana's spirit contracted a shadow at that time, which hid itself till ready to spring out in full and terrible growth. Wrapped in a dark shawl, moving through the dismantled rooms, on that side of the house no one ever had occasion to enter, slowly and heavily, she looked like one of those quiet, expectant, colossal statues, whose knees are buried in the drifting sand, whose faces are forever darkening in the desert air. When Georgey, a few months afterwards, was carried to one of these rooms dead,—she remembered herself,—moving slowly, heavily, and understood her sadness. Long before sunset, it grew so dark in the green room and the kitchen, that she thought a gale must be rising, and climbed to the attic to get a view of its progress over the bay. At the sight, she recalled Sebastian, and her heart lifted like a wave at the thought of his escape from the sea. The shores bristled with layers of frozen brine, with jagged edges; dull, soiled sheets of ice gaped over the tide line. The bay bore no sail; no winter fowl skimmed its surface; the dark waves rolled and burst without

glassy bubble or white foam; the coldly blue mass travelled its bounds, within headland, cape, and bar, and returned upon itself, baffled by the power of frost. Though she shivered at the dreary prospect, its wide extent and immensity of motion stirred her sluggish mind.

"Sebastian should have returned before now," she said. "He must not tempt the winter sea a second time. And yet, I wish he would come."

"Missis Gates," called Chloe on the passage, "I've looking for you, cause I can't find anything else."

"I came up to look at the weather."

"Marsy on me, Missis, there's plenty weather below." And Chloe entered the room. "Is it likely that I may find a cullender here?"

"Do you believe in ghosts, Chloe?"

"Why, Missis?"

"Those blasts, all over the room, that do not come from anywhere, appear to me to be the breath of ghosts."

"I think they come from holes in the roof. What may be in this closet?"

"I never noticed there was a closet till now."

Chloe opened the door and examined the shelves.

"There's something queer," she said presently.

"Anything useful?" asked Roxalana, the tide of sombre feelings turning into that of curious ones.

"I wish it was a cullender,—and it ain't," Chloe answered, handing the something to Roxalana.

"It is a yak's tail," said Roxalana. "My father

had one; a friend brought it to him from India. It is used there to brush flies away. This is set in an ivory handle; I am glad to have it for Georgey."

"Who put it there, Missis Gates?"

"The former owners of this house, probably. What else is there?"

"Only the ghost's breath, that's all." And Chloe, shutting the door, advised a retreat from the cold.

"The devil!" said Argus, when he saw the yak's tail. "Where have you been?—where am I?"

"Have you not been oppressed to-day, Argus? There seemed to me a storm brewing, and I went up stairs to look down the bay, and while I was there Chloe came up and discovered this in the closet."

"Chloe had better keep out of my closet."

Chloe, being present, threw up her head contemptuously.

"Light the candles, Chloe," said Roxalana. "It is a relief to have the day over. I do not observe land-marks generally, but I could not help recalling past circumstances connected with Tempe."

"Did you recall them? There's no prospect of a storm. You have felt lazy to-day. Why not hibernate entirely, since you are squeamish about weather and it happens to be the storm season? I should not be surprised if Hell was bad weather merely. Should you wish to slumber through the winter, I judge it safe to entrust Chloe with the lictorship. Get your axe, Chloe."

Chloe looked offended, and said that she was no cat; and believed herself as neat as the next person.

"If you still insist on remaining awake, Roxalana," he continued, "you will be obliged to endure the fact that at last the future will be but the past. The present sifts the future through the mind, grain by grain, fine as dust; crag and bank, coast and continent, crumble and slide into a shoal abyss, which is yet wide enough to dissolve them. Chloe, when were you at the Forge?"

He was remembering the wedding night, and saw Virginia beside Roxalana in a cloud of tulle; her beaming, gracious eyes spanned the distance between them like a bridge, her brilliant black hair shone so in the light of his candelabra under which she sat that his eyes were dazzled. He would have turned away had he not discovered that he was waiting Chloe's reply, and cursed himself for asking a question which did not concern him.

"A few days ago, sir, I was at the Forge. They are hammering tremenjus now a-days; the fires are so hot that the snow has melted in a ring round the buildings, and the ground is as black as your hat. The house is full of company. Missey is losing herself like, and growing worldly; Martha says she has to do up Mr. Brande's white vests oftener than ever. There's a young man in the house—Martha thinks he is a fixture. He plays cards, and Missey sits by glum and attentive. He smokes, and drinks wine for his dinner; and says she to me,—Sarah, the girl that waits,—says that Mr. Brande sets down the light decanter and the dark decanter as easy as if they were vegetables. Missey, I know, winks hard at

these things. Haven't I seen her shut her eyes before now?"

"Brande plays a good game. It is the right news to hear, Roxalana,—that young man is his partner. It is proper that Virginia should be worldly."

"It is bad news, Argus."

"You are as wise as a bell-wether. Does Tempe mope more than usual? I scarcely see her, and do not know whether she broods over something gone—her playthings, or whether she is simply impish according to her constitution. Little women are mostly diabolic; I am grateful to you, Roxalana, for being somewhat overgrown."

"I am the better for that, so far as the labor which I perform goes. You owe me nothing."

"You are mistaken; to your life and character I owe an ease which mother, sister, wife, could not give me. How shall I reward you,—by fervently remembering that you are a respectable granite boulder?"

"Maintain any doctrine, Argus, you like; I am entirely accustomed to you. With Tempe you must exercise patience."

"I'll continue to exercise indifference; patience implies the hope, or expectation, of a change of opinion. I shall have but one opinion. A glittering scale occupies the place in her breast, where, by the courtesy your sex demands, we locate the heart. Let the girl alone; neither to you nor me is she accountable."

"Mother, he is crying in his bed," said Tempe, coming in, and languidly walking to the window.

"He is crying!" echoed Roxalana: "I presume you have listened to him for some time."

There was no accent of reproach in her voice. Tempe shook her head.

"I had rather," continued Roxalana, with her hand on the door-latch, "hear the most hateful sound you can conceive of, than hear the least whimper from that child. There should be a rigorous law passed that children should never be suffered to shed a tear."

She closed the door, and Tempe looked down the lawn as silent as before. Argus watched her with a bitter smile.

"The Drake child is nearly six months old, isn't he?" he asked presently.

She flashed round upon him, and twisted her mouth for a reply.

"Hasn't the lawful time arrived for you to slip out of this black state? Put yourself and the baby into short clothes, and let us see if you cannot attain a better air."

"Give me some money, then." And she held out her little hand, with an exquisitely impertinent expression.

"I haven't a dollar; Sebastian took every cent. I borrowed some for him, besides; he is spending it somewhere, I suppose, in a manner refreshing to himself."

Her face turned to flame.

"Chameleon," chuckled Argus, "what's the matter with you?"

"I think Sebastian is a man," she cried, "who has everything; he can beat you to death, at any point. He has always taken to himself whatever is sweet and good, I know he has; he is a bad man, and I would like to see him killed. And if he is a Spaniard, why hasn't the Inquisition crushed him before now, the cool, abundant, gorged creature? And I should think, Uncle Argus, you would hate him, for he is not like you at all; he just stands alone, and no man nor woman can pull him down. He can browse on the clouds, if he chooses; and be insolent on the top of the walls of heaven, if it pleases him to walk out on the ramparts."

"Had he walked in at my door like an ordinary comer," said Argus gravely, "I might feel indifferent to him; but I saved his life, at some strange cost to myself. I have been strained ever since, there's no denying it. Hoh, by God,—I feel cordial towards him!"

Argus jumped from his chair, and lunged backwards and forwards, his eyes alight, like coals, touched by a sudden drought.

"Didn't I say so?" said Tempe; "I call you horrid to praise him."

"I don't praise him."

"I call it praise."

"Away with you, puss; better not quite forget that it is possible for you to make life somewhat agreeable to yourself."

## CHAPTER XXIV.

VIRGINIA, so it appeared, forgot that she was playing with the new partner, Mr. Carfield, the innocent and ancient game of backgammon. She held the dice box suspended over the board, and did not shake it. Mr. Carfield's eyes were indifferently fixed on the blazing rings which adorned her motionless hands. He was a brave, savage looking man, and any energetic reminder from him that the game was at a stand still, would not have surprised the spectator, had there been one; but they were alone. The folding doors of the best parlors were apart; the chandeliers were lighted, the chairs stood in groups, the open piano was littered with sheets of music, and gilded books of engravings lay open on the tables, but the guests were gone. Mr. Brande, formerly ubiquitous in his house, so long as there was anything to be transacted, or anybody moving, had surreptitiously gone to bed, and there was no person up except themselves, and Sarah, the waiter, who sat yawning in the dining room, impatiently waiting to hear Mr. Carfield's boots going up stairs, on their way to be placed outside his bedroom door.

when stripped from his impudent legs. Late as it was, she was destined to remain in her place some little time yet, which gave her the opportunity, and she improved it, of inventing new opprobrious names for him. The house was pleasant still with light and warmth, and filled with that silence so attractive at night, when all the paraphernalia of living is perfectly adjusted without the accessories of life. The fires were burning, the lamplight was steady, the walls, doors, and furniture shone darkly, and the colors, glaring red and blue by day, were now soft and sombre. With every hour of quiet, the plants in Virginia's conservatory leading from the upper hall lived in deeper dalliance, and sent their perfume through the air in shocks of delicious sweetness. A rain-storm had suddenly begun, and though the shutters were closed it trickled through the slats, and modestly streamed down the panes, as befitted its entrance into Mr. Brande's house; a murmur came from the roof, also, and the well-built doors were obliged to thud in their frames occasionally. It might have been that Virginia was listening to these faint sounds, which prevented her from throwing the dice. Abruptly and passionately he burst out with,

"What day of the month is this?"

Mr. Carfield, not to be surprised, bowed slightly, and answered:

"The twenty-first of March."

"So I have just thought, and the time is nearly past! Oh, my blind, stupid, animal memory, that needs the blow of the wind and rain to wake it."

She pushed away the table that stood between them; the faint frown, now habitual with her, concentrated into dark lines, and altered her sweet face to that of a woman's acquainted with trouble. Dropping her face in her hands, she appeared to have forgotten Mr. Carfield, as well as the game. He threw himself back in his chair, his short, amber-colored hair showing well against the red velvet cover, and his wide head looking still wider in its relief; his lids narrowed as he contemplated her, till his eyes were mere lines, but the lines expressed a meaning seldom allowed there.

"Association? Reminiscence?" he asked.

She rose as if she saw a vision, pointed her finger at him, and replied:

"Terrible ones."

"How tall you are!" he involuntarily exclaimed.

"Argus saved Sebastian—"

"There are *two* then?" he inquired, with a smile.

"Two strong, beautiful men."

"And I," said Mr. Carfield, leaving his chair to stand beside her, "am I not strong and beautiful?" He caught her hand, and interlaced his fingers with hers. "Have I not waited long enough, Virginia?"

"For what?"

"For you. Say *now* that you will be my wife."

"*Me*—who stand here as your hostess? well, perhaps something nearer,—your friend, since she allows you to bruise her fingers. Release my hand."

He stepped backwards, and faced her; their eyes

were exactly level, whether the lids were up or down, pupil matched pupil.

"It may be absurd, but do you know that I expect to marry you? When your father came to see my father, his old friend, worth—let me see how much,—say three hundred thousand dollars,—I heard him describe his daughter and his Forge, one as handsome, talented, free, the other as an ugly fixture, restricted, encumbered. I believed him; so did my father, a clever sharp old man. He said, "Go to Kent." I came, and am not sorry for coming. There is a hundred thousand dollars of my money here; every day of my stay has cost me hundreds. I gamble with the Forge for your speech, your gestures, your attentions, your presence,—for *you*. I love you. Do you know what that means? Do you understand men, my Princess? We are procreators, providers, protectors, but we are lustful, acute, selfish for you women; the best, wisest, most tender hero is also what I say. What would be the form of society if were not so? When our functions cease, let us be children again, and gentle, fulfilling the charities, and bridge our way to heaven. Be my wife, give me children; divide with me the goods of this world; change the look which is in your eyes sometimes,—an expectation of the thin, airy goods of the next world, and meet mine with that hope which allures weak men to madness and death, and incites strong men to pluck the jewels from the crown of life, and wear them as kings."

"You are quite right and just," replied Virginia, "in your views; so much so that I almost wonder that my heart does not leap forward, and fall upon you in gratitude and humility, and accept you. Yet it does not. I refuse to take my lot with you; my ambition does not lie in the direction of the king's lair."

She spoke with coolness, but her heart throbbed, and a faintness swept across her; she did not dare venture crossing the room, and resumed her seat. It was Mr. Brande, asleep in his bed, that caused her faintness, not the young man near her, who also resumed his seat. The portrait of her father, and his intention regarding her, which she contemplated in the light of this interview, was not flattering; it terrified her. A regiment of Carfields, enclosing her in a hollow square, could not strike her a coward; but that placidly slumbering man upstairs made her wild with apprehension. Her respect and submission prevented her from blaming him; it was reasonable and natural in him to suppose and expect such a marriage possible and probable. Why not? She raised her eyes to Mr. Carfield, and he understood instantly that she stood at bay with him. To her, in spite of his sincere vehemence, in spite of his beauty, sense, and fitness, he was merely the representative of a hundred thousand dollars. Had Temple Drake been present, with the same aggravation, and wearing a stiletto, he would have been stabbed, rolled into a corner, and defiantly stood over, till some one should come to threaten her with



a punishment that would only make her laugh. But Virginia, pious and timid in character, although like her father indomitable in her passions, was not moved to desperation; her thoughts weakly wandered hither and thither. How she despised the signs of wealth about her,—and none of it hers! If she could but invent some plan that would make everything smooth and pleasant, and keep from the sacrifice her father expected! She tried to recollect where her purse was, and whether there were fifteen or twenty dollars in it, and how she had spent the last sum received from him, when she was arrested by a sudden knocking, like that at the gate in Macbeth, on the hall door. Mr. Carfield looked at his watch, and remarked that it was nearly midnight. Sarah opened the parlor door, and, to his surprise, ushered in a man who wore an old camel cloak, and a seal-skin cap, the better for the weather, for the rain made it sleek and shiny.

"Argus!" cried Virginia, strength coming in the tumult which the sight of him gave her.

"And where is *Sebastian*?" asked Mr. Carfield, in a voice intended for her only, but the quick ear of Argus caught the name. "Sebastian," he said, bowing, "arrived several hours since. His arrival is the occasion of my being here. Where is Brande, Virginia? I wish to see him."

"Who is this sprightly Diogenes, so desirous of throwing his lantern upon your father?" whispered Mr. Carfield, rising, and passing Virginia, to address Argus. "Sir," he said, "Mr. Brande has been in bed

an hour or more. The rain, though it falls on the just and the unjust, can only reach him through you; possibly you had better not take up your dampness at present. Any message you may choose to leave I will faithfully deliver in the morning."

"Mr. Carfield, you do not understand," said Virginia. "Argus, give me your cloak. You know where to find father."

"The qualities of my cloak are not understood," said Argus; "it resembles the phenomenon naturalists love to mention—a duck's back; my cap is more friendly to the elements." And he shook the water from it.

"Your dress, Miss Brande, is in danger," said Mr. Carfield.

She made a dash and rustle with her crimson silk, which signified no distaste of the danger.

"There was more water where you were a year ago to-night, Argus," she said.

"Exactly, and much colder," he replied. "Come, show me how to go. How should I know where your father piously slumbers?"

She rose instantly, and led the way. On the stairs, Argus asked if that was the new partner he had just met. It was, she answered.

"He is a Jackanapes."

Virginia touched his arm, and motioned him into the conservatory.

"Oh, Argus," she cried, "I am expected to marry him."

The unhappy girl was inspired with the wild belief



that Argus had been sent to her by Providence. How could so strange an event as his appearance at that hour be otherwise accounted for? She must give herself to him—now, *now!* He should stand between her and her father; the time had come—by the convulsion of her heart, the powerful determination of her will—she knew it! Argus grew a shade paler standing before her. He raised his hand, and broke a sprig from a plant that trailed from a hanging basket above them; lightly drawing it across her lips he said, with a strange smile:

"He is a fine fellow, I know,—after your father's heart. What other arrangement could be made? Its propriety is most evident. It is the best thing you can do, my girl; you know it as well as I do. My opinion of your sense is not a false one, I am assured. If you do not agree with me now, it is because I am such an old fellow, and you are still capable of the youthful follies we shall both laugh at ten years from now."

He turned aside, as if he would have the subject ended.

"What *are* you here for?" she asked, wringing her hands. He crushed and rolled the leaves in his hand before he answered.

"To pay back money which I borrowed months ago of your father. I was an idiot, of course, to come up at this time of night; but I could not think of sleep. You know I no longer drink brandy, having broken my bottle. Roxalana engaged Sebastian just now, and, thinking the air would be good for me,

and freedom from debt better, I left for these parts. Sebastian knew me well enough to give me the means for making my visit here at once."

She pointed to her father's door, and he turned away, wishing himself on the way to the White Flat, rather than traversing Brande house, like the blockhead he was. Looking up at the hanging basket with a wild smile, Virginia seized its tendrils, and tore it down: she never forgot the bitter scent of the earthy roots and stalks as the plant fell over her hands. Confused and uncertain, she went slowly down stairs, where Mr. Carfield, with his elbows on the baluster, was watching for her.

"How primitive your ways are in this town! He called you *Virginia*—that rusty person! What is your opinion,—is he the style of man I can knock down for not knowing his place? Or is he hedged about with your Methodistical divinity?"

She brushed past him into the parlor, and walked up and down before the open door, keeping her eyes on the door. He followed her, and braced himself against the wall.

"It may be worth your doing," she said presently without removing her eyes; "though, if you should kill him, even, it would make no difference, so far as his existence is concerned with mine."

"Ah! that being a fact, I'll watch with you, and observe him more closely."

They looked at each other now. His eyes were full of insolence and defiance, and she felt nerved to desperation. She looked so beautiful suddenly, as

she returned his glance, so bright and strong, that he swore inwardly he would obtain her at all hazards; her hatred could not mar the pleasure possession would give him. It was with a start, almost, that they heard the voice of Argus again.

"Apologize for me, Virginia," he said, "in case your father complains of my disturbing him."

She nodded, and stepped toward him, with an air of determination.

"And you, sir," addressing Mr. Carfield, "I trust you will rally from the annoyance my unseasonable entrance gave you; it was unpleasant, no doubt."

Mr. Carfield shrugged his shoulders, and Argus bowed politely, waved his hand to Virginia, and disappeared. Mr. Carfield went half way through the hall, as if to assure himself that an obnoxious object was really removed.

"Damn you!" he thought, "for the face you are taking with you,—too icy and unfeeling to combat with; too knowing to insult with any hope of advantage. I have seen your like."

With a bitter jest on his tongue, he returned to find Virginia gone. She had taken the opportunity, he concluded, to escape, and had, of course, gone to her own room. He did not feel composed enough to go to bed, and, thrusting his hands in his pockets, he began to pace the floor. At each end of the rooms were tall mirrors which reflected his figure as he passed back and forth; he stopped an instant at every turn, and examined himself critically. The Carfields were all alike, he commented; they were

all famous, as he knew, and had heard, for compassing their ends in business, and in pleasure. He resembled them, and was master of his brain and fibres; the men and women necessary to his purposes should bend to him, as they had bent before to the Carfields! He was satisfied with his aspect, and, perhaps, weary of the monotony of his view front and his view back, turned down the lights,—except one on the mantel-piece, poked the coal in the grate to a blaze, and stretched himself on the rug before it. Virginia, leaving the parlor by a door which led into the dining room, passed the sleeping Sarah, who dreamed a crimson cloud flashed by her, and rushed from the house, coming upon Argus as he was opening the front gate. It slipped from his hand and closed again when he saw her flying figure.

"Take me to Temple House, Argus," she gasped, her white arms gleaming before his eyes; "take me from my dreadful position, else I shall die. My soul is dying, oh, so fast, Argus, perishing, perishing, cold, starved."

The shock of the rain on her bare head and shoulders, which were only covered with lace, her rapid movement, or something besides, caused her to drop on the ground senseless, and the gate was between them. He tried to open it, but the iron latch had sprung in the catch, and it would not yield; his impassive heart began to beat with terror, and his strength was shaken. He was as defenceless, and as much at the mercy of Virginia in a dead faint, as an old tree is in a tempest when the lightning is sure to

strike it. Had he followed the guide of his self-possessed moments he would have stepped over her, or at least alarmed some one at the house, and then pursued his way home. But the moment was not self-possessed; one had come to be ruled by a mysterious sentiment which men deny, deride, and obey; Argus, in spite of himself, was about to appear like an honorable, loyal man, worthy a woman's possession. He stood motionless an instant.

"The Furies are at me," he said; "they have tracked me to the river, but why have they shut the gate? My strength against theirs then, and Brande's iron."

He wrenched off the fastenings of the gate, which fell back with a clang that Mr. Carfield heard, and started to his feet to listen with a magnetic perception of an approaching person or event; then he rolled his cloak round Virginia, took her up, and carried her to the door, at which he knocked with his foot, supposing from the light he saw in the parlor still, that Mr. Carfield would open it. With her dead oppressive weight in his arms, there came a smooth and delicate vision to his mind of his untrammelled life at Temple House. Even its rains and gales were full of repose! And there could never a storm arise among them there, to incur a single distressing obligation!

Mr. Carfield opened the door; the sight of Virginia muffled in the arms of Argus, enraged him.

"Stand back with your bundle," he said; "keep her out there. Who wants her now?"

He held the door, but Argus thrust him away and went past him.

"Don't touch me just now," said Argus. "Get some water, you yellow hound, and make no noise. Brande has said his evening prayers, and won't bear disturbing; he might get wet too."

He placed Virginia on a sofa, faint and trembling with the exertion he had made. Mr. Carfield trod closely behind, his hands in his pockets again, and with the determination to afford no assistance, and say nothing that was not insulting. But he fell into a deeper rage, and could not contain himself, when Argus confronted him, collected and masterful.

"She loves you," said Mr. Carfield, "you! God—you."

"I deny it," answered Argus; "it is the contrary."

And he dropped on his knees beside her, bending over her hand with a feigned kiss, and a feigned devotion: "*Are you coming round, Virginia, my dear?*"

"She said as much not half an hour since."

"If you repeat that I will kill you." And he rose looked over the tables, and found a bottle of cologne-water. "With this bottle,—it is big enough, unless you prefer a neater way." Then pouring its contents on his handkerchief, he bathed her face and hands. The cloak fell from her, and the lace over her bosom was displaced, and its marble outlines were revealed to them; it did not rise and fall with her breath. The face had fallen back, and her beautiful scarlet lips were slightly apart; no breath issued from them, apparently. All the scant pity in the soul

of Argus was moved at the sight, so sweet, so helpless! But the lust which men tutor themselves to feel before revealed beauty, at the sight of this supine beauty burst through Mr. Carfield's veins, and flashed into his eyes, tinging their blue enamel with red sparks; his nostrils sharpened, an indescribable sound came from his lips which drove Argus mad. He let fall the handkerchief, and sprang towards Mr. Carfield, who said with a sneer, and a loud voice,—“I am inclined to think that as her lover, you would like to brag. Can you?”

A few seconds intervened, and Argus discovered that he was turning the key of the door, Mr. Carfield having been put outside of it—for the present Argus was conqueror.

“I heard the river,” said Virginia, suddenly sitting up.

“Nonsense,” replied Argus. “You didn't; it was the rain you heard.”

“How I have troubled you. Forgive me; and I shall not obtain your forgiveness,” she said, hiding her face in his cloak.

“My love, you are making my cloak too valuable for an heirloom, even: you will compel me to wear it perpetually.” He kneeled beside her again, and took her hand. “My God, Virginia what a beautiful woman you are! Where were you all these years? Spare me. I must rest; do you understand that I am exhausted?” He was bewildered—deadly pale,—and his lips quivered with each word. “I confess myself lost; if you have found me, take care

of me. Get me some wine, my love, I cannot stir. Sit by me awhile, and then rouse some of your people. to drive me home. By my soul, I never can walk.”

Virginia, completely humbled, and now anxious to annihilate herself, if he desired it, brought him wine. As he put the glass to his mouth, he shuddered; tears actually came into his iron eyes. She looked at them with the feeling a child has when an unexpected, longed for treasure comes into its possession, and timidly kissed his eyelids. He returned the kiss—the first meeting of their lips put a strange seal upon them; it was the boundary between the undefinable genius of his character, and the narrow, direct, common forces of her own. This was not the moment to learn the fact; afterwards the understanding between them was tacit, clear and full.

Argus kissed her again. Her face crimsoned.

“Where is Mr. Carfield?” she asked hastily.

“There was Paradise, and the Devil, and the flaming swords. I rather think the flaming swords may be out on the door-mat,” answered Argus, making a significant motion towards the hall.

“What happened?”

“He went out. Let the dog wait; you will dine with him to-morrow.”

“Yes, and the next day,” she answered bitterly.

“Hush! To-night is only to-night; let me come nearer to you. So; some better man should have the right to keep his lips here—not me, Argus, the—no matter. And you always liked Temple House?”

"Yes, Argus, and all of you. So Sebastian has returned."

"What o'clock can it be, my girl? Will that gimcrack on the mantel yonder tell? What folly to call those French articles time-pieces."

"It runs to-night fast enough, for it points to three. Don't go."

"I am not going. Unless I go, however, how can I come again?"

"Will you come?"

"It is so fine here that to make merely an ordinary visit would not please me. No, I shall not come. I'll not meet Brande, and know that your heart palpitates between us. You will find me at Temple House, as in years past, in the green room, under the elms, out in the summer-house, maybe."

"Not in the summer-house again."

"Yes; again, I say. It was fairer than this, on a night I recall,—an orange-colored dusk, as I remember it. The darkness was illuminated. I sent you away in it, being dazed, and I see now that I have never recovered from the surprise you gave me. You were very sweet; did I tell you so?"

"Argus, there's cruelty in you."

"And you love it. Presently it will be impossible for you to speak of your hopes and desires. And Hereafter yawns so devilishly we cannot say what it may enclose of us; and as women will practice sutteeism, I ask you to show me the pile you have ready. Out with your speech, and don't stutter."

He rose from his place beside her, and walked up

and down before the sofa, making sudden and discomposing turns opposite its arms, and keeping his eyes away from her.

"All that might have been said, was acted, Argus. I have thwarted my education at every point, and have kept out of sight the moral and social principles instilled into my mind from childhood, for the sake of preserving the only genuine, happy emotion I ever felt. You have resisted my childish inclination, ignored my girlish affection, crushed, baffled, and repelled my womanly passion. Argus! you are not great. You are a narrow, limited man; you are not handsome. You have no youth—that dream which lingers with us, the 'song that is never sung,'—through bitter years, lasting beyond the fretwork and frostwork of wrinkles and grey hair,—perhaps you *never* had it. You are a poor man;—so poverty-stricken by habit and taste that no fortune could change it. Those choosing to share your lot, cannot venture the offer of changing it. You are like granite, which, accidentally thrust up the soil, or washed bare by the inroads of the sea, or even hammered and transported, still remains a plain, hard rock. Yet I, believing that there was a core in your nature of molten fire which I might strike into, gave you all my hopes, with patience and desire. I am not capable of owning that I have failed. You will not come to me, nor allow me to go to you; but I shall never give up my love. My soul shall take up the thread of the unfinished web which it has so faith-

fully woven here, and continue it wherever my soul goes."

The description of her feelings gave rise to a self-pity which made her appearance very touching. Something abstract came into her face also, which divested her of excitement, and made her statue-like. The sweat ran down Argus's forehead; he wiped his face, and notched in his memory all the turns in the path between the Forge and Temple House, and wondered how he should feel if he were half way home.

"It is very late," Virginia resumed. "Shall I see now about your returning? I must rouse Moses."

"Thank you, if you please. I—I am but a man, as I said once before. I yield. If I dared,—I would ask you to marry me. I don't dare."

"Let us say no more now; I will leave you. As soon as Moses is ready, he will call you. Good-by, Argus." She extended her hand at arm's length from him.

"Are you going to leave me this way?" he muttered.

"Good-by; farewell."

He tried in vain to detain her, but could as easily have grasped a rolling cloud as her suddenly retreating, gliding figure.

Moses left him at the gate of Temple House, and before he was half way up the walk Sebastian met him.

"I slept in my chair for you, Argus. How you have prowled this night! Roxalana said much, and

then went to her little charge. I believe it to be your breakfast hour, nearly."

"Come in, quick, the air is raw," answered Argus, springing up the steps. "I hope it is as late as you say; we are so much the nearer to dinner, that being the case. What do you say to a cigar? On the whole, though, I'll not smoke, I'll go to bed. Where is my bed, I wonder? Give me your hand, Sebastian."

They shook hands a long time.

"I hope the male saints know how glad I am to see you," said Sebastian; "the female saints could never understand it."

## CHAPTER XXV.

THE white water-violet lifted its slender stem above the marshy sod of the pastures; star-shaped tufts, spires of nameless weeds, spread along the margin of sunken brooks; and red and purple stalky grass sprouted thinly over dry, sandy patches. The crows flew constantly between their nests in the woods of Apsley river, and the shores of the bay. Sebastian Ford gathered the violets, and watched the crows; the fields were sodden and barren, the damp sea wind roared round him continually, and the weak sunshine, pouring through a dull, cold sky, shed a dismal light; but the gathering of the flowers gave him a singular delight; and the crows peopled the solitude for him. A human creature, walking by the water's edge,—as they did, with contemplative gravity, or grotesquely hopping in the fields,—and joining other human creatures in a slow, noisy procession from one stone wall to another, would have destroyed the effect of the scene. Any flower besides the sweet violet, which, although trembling in the wind, and dashed with rain and fog, kept its colors full and fresh, and its delicious odor, he would have passed unheeded. He asked Argus what was the secret that made them so frail, yet so vigorous; the crows

so gay and so solemn; himself so happy, yet so expectant?

"The truth is," he replied, "that having worn out all traditionary romance, you are now trying to extract nourishment from some nameless ideality, and to interpret it by these facts. It is pretty much like a bear's sucking his own claws; the roots of your present happiness are in yourself. The time will come, probably, for you to rush out of these recesses,—famished, savage; and, like other men, demand your natural prey."

"Though I search for nothing at present, neither within nor without, I recognize a power which may saturate my fibres, as a spring saturates the sand it hides under. You do not say that all thirst may not be slaked?"

"I am not thirsty; and so I say nothing. I was merely thinking of your age, and how faithfully it reflects whatever is presented to it."

"And what does yours reflect? Argus, you are changed."

"You are making me a philosopher."

"How goes the heart of a philosopher?"

Sebastian laid his hand against the heart of Argus, and softly kissed his cheek.

"It stands still," said Argus.

"This is the rock I came ashore on; perhaps it should remain immovable, for the performance of another great deed."

"If my heart could be moved, surely it should



be moved now, under your hand, Sebastian; it has become an easy thing to feel an affection for you."

The strange contraction of Sebastian's intense eyes suddenly became visible, and Argus felt searched in every nerve.

"Keep off your eyes, for God's sake," he cried. "I may have lost the old bearings, but am not troubled; if you choose to be speculative, you rascal, I must, too."

But Sebastian did not feel satisfied with the impression he had received from Argus. Did he suffer from that inevitable *ennui* which alike visits solitude and society; enters the fairest structures of the soul; and dwells with their wreck? Were the limited, rigid, self-denying practices of the resolute man at last corrosive to him? Had he recalled the beatitudes of the senses which young men play fast and loose with, and old men consider a despairing dream; or as the ripples which rise, break, and disappear on the surface of that ocean of the soul, whose depths nothing mortal ever stirs? Was it that smooth, unenergetic, indescribable sadness which accepts life and immortality, "and all I was, in ashes?" Was it something less,—poverty, debt, ill health, fretting obligations? He pondered long over the subject, and then endeavored to bring about a change, which should relieve Argus.

"Give me half of Temple House," he begged, "and share your money with me."

"You are to be trusted with neither. I should soon hear the walls opening, after the manner of your

Spanish earthquakes, and my money would vanish in your little Spanish games."

"I have nothing Spanish about me now,—my games are all played. I have no other country than the spot you give me, and, absolutely, no other tie outside of it."

"So much the better for you. Avoid ties."

"I have a little money over there."

"Well."

"I would like to have it over here."

"Is it in bags? Come, Sebastian, what are you at?"

The statement of Sebastian's wishes and explanations finally induced Argus to leave his employment in Kent, and resume his idle habits. The liberty of the elms at sunrise or sunset was his once more; the old comedies came out from their retreat, and his tongue regained its ancient bitterness,—which fact made Mat Sutcliffe come to the conclusion that all was as it should be with the Capen. Mary Sutcliffe, taking the advantage of meal time one day, made a representation to Mat, of the "goings on" at Temple House in this period; although inartistic, she was quite able to seize Sebastian's individuality and describe his influence.

"Your Mr. Ford," she said, "is a vagabones. His dark blood is too thick for work, but thin enough for deviltry. The Sea turned him into the Gates family, and he could, if he willed to do so, turn the Gates family into the sea. As for that ship being his,—it wasn't,—the cargo wasn't. What was the cargo, I

should like to know? Rum? Slaves? Opium? But the sea did not swallow all,—it left something which he carried in his face;—better for some folks if it had swallowed it. I tell you he can wind women round his little finger; he draws them out of themselves with his narrow eyes, that cut like a knife. I feel 'em, when he looks at me, at the back of my head; it seems as if I must part his eyebrows and look into them for something he knows is a treasure. Up at the house, it is go here, and go there, as polite as pie. 'Chloe, where is my flower-glass?' 'Roxalana, sit here.' 'Tempe, will you have a chair?' 'Argus, here, oh, Argus, do!' Now, who who is your Mr. Ford, that he should drum the Gates family up and down with his tongue? I say he'll turn out to be the wuss kind of a vagabones."

"Georgey likes him," replied Mat seriously.

"And Argus?"

"Yes."

"And Roxalana?"

"Yes."

"And Chloe?"

"Yes."

"And how about Tempe?"

"She doesn't like him."

"I say she does."

"I say she does not." And Mat struck his plate smartly with his knife, jumped to his feet, planted his hands on the table, and eyed Mary angrily. She poured herself a cup of tea from a battered teapot at her elbow, with an affectation of calmness.

"You know she couldn't like a swarthy foreigner," he continued. "It's impossible. She shan't."

"Cat's foot! he aint a foreigner, he is a man,—and as handsome as ever he can live; handsomest creature I ever laid eyes on; beats that English buster, Carfield, up at the Forge, and going to marry Virginia Brande, to rags; beats everybody in wits. Roxalana Gates will crawl on her hands and knees for him; Capen Gates would sell his soul and body for him; Tempe would lie her eyes out, and cheat the devil to catch him. And you, I couldn't say what you wouldn't demean yourself in, to please that ugly, dark, cross-looking gypsy."

"Slack your jaw, or I'll choke you. It is through his means that the Capen can do as he likes now; that reglar work used him up nigh. Gates is web-footed, he can only paddle ashore; he aint fit for business, and you know it; that's the reason he's a miser, you fool. Maybe,—but I haven't thought of it before,—that's the reason he won't—but things are going on right up at the house, and you'd better keep a civil tongue in your head."

"If you've settled it, I hope you'll sit down again, and go on with your beef and pork. Lord knows it was long enough biling."

"If it fails to go down it won't be for want of sarse. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Moll; you are going on for fifty, and yet you keep being a damned tartar."

"I am three years younger than you are."

"'Pears to me now, I had no excuse at all for tak-

ing you alongside; I didn't put in for wrinkles, or a red nose, or a bald spot on the top of your head."

Mary's fortitude gave way and she began to cry, and bite her apron.

"Go to your Fords," she said, "and your Georges, and stay. I can't get a stick of wood chopped, nor a handful of shavings brought in to kindle my fire with, by you. I might as well call on the town now, as any time."

"There, there,—it's all right, dry up; aint I coming home to supper? This ere beef is first rate. I'll tell you something. Mr. Ford has offered me wages to keep the garden and lawn clean; and I think he wants me to contrive to do the Capen's errands, and be a kind of a right hand man for Mrs. Roxalana, in matters she has had to do with respecting odds and ends, you know."

"I always knew that Mr. Ford would do what was right. How much did he offer?"

"I'll let you know when I come back. Don't say that again about the little gal,—will you?—Tempe?"

"I did not mean it."

"I knew you were in fun."

But after he had gone, she said to herself, "Only I *did* mean it. That man will marry Tempe. The weight of Roxalana Gates's will is enough for that; I know her slow brass. Sho, they are lumps of putty in her hands. Down she goes on her hams, and every soul of them gets crooked in the knee. Smooth as pie-crust, sluggish as an eel in the mud,

but sensible as death—she knows what she is about. There comes Sally Bayley with a bowl in one hand, to borrow something, and my dishes are not washed."

Virginia also learned Sebastian's influence. Since her interview with Argus she had given up her familiar visits to Temple House, and went no more by the path from the Forge. She now came through the town, in her carriage generally, and in full dress as if she were on a round of formal calls, which included the Gates family. Arriving late one afternoon on foot, with card-case, lace parasol, and enveloped in a cashmere shawl, she dropped into a chair with an expression in her face which Roxalana liked.

"I am tired out, Roxalana," she exclaimed. "I am sick of Mrs. Ring and Wing, and King. Their front doors and tongues are alike; their religion, flounces, and card-baskets are the same; their scandal list and subscription list run neck and neck. Tell me something different. Oh, how nice you are Roxalana; pleasant old gown, and careless, twisted hair, how I love you."

"Do stay, Virginia; I have not seen you for weeks. It is pleasant when you are here. Chloe has brought me snatches and fragments of you, and that is all I get. I feel as if an inquiry respecting the Forge now would be an intrusion. I should be very glad to have you speak of your affairs at home, should you choose to do so."

"Lowly, shabby, cigar-flavored room," said Virginia, "how delightful you are! cracked panes, sunken

hearthstone, mappy ceiling,—you are delicious! Where did that flower-glass come from? A wild flower in it,—who brings them here?”

“Sebastian.”

“No; I cannot stay, it is impossible.”

She tossed her card-case and parasol upon the table, however, and unfastened her shawl.

“What a beautiful shawl!” said Roxalana, pinching its texture.

“I wish you would take it for a rug; I see yours on the hearth is full of holes.”

Roxalana laughed, and put out her foot to designate the newest one, and Virginia saw that her shoes had holes also.

“Let us put our feet on the shawl this minute, Roxalana.” And Virginia threw it on the floor, and trampled it.

“What a beautiful dress,” said Roxalana. “I am fond of this soft, heavy, black silk, and I prefer velvet trimming, too.”

“Does my fine dress please you, dear?”

“It is an agreeable change for my eyes. You know we are not strong on finery in any respect.”

“Where is Mr. Ford? I have not met him since his return.”

“I am surprised. He is on his usual ramble. Why,—when did you see Argus last?”

“The very night of his return,—Mr. Ford,—I mean to Temple House.”

“Where was he?”

“At our house; he came to see father.”

“Argus is an inscrutable man; I do not approve of him at all. Did you see him?”

Virginia clasped her hands nervously, but looked steadily at Roxalana and answered, “I saw him nearly all night.”

The dark red fire slowly kindled in Roxalana's cheek.

“Where is that man?” she said, rolling her eyes, “I want him. Who knew that you saw him?”

“Mr. Carfield.”

“Was he present throughout the interview?”

“I am sure that Argus put him out of the parlor: but I do not know.”

Roxalana gave one of her shaking, short laughs, which made Virginia smile in spite of her agitation.

“It is certain he fought for you, Virginia; but why don't you know what he did?”

“Because, Roxalana, I had thrown myself at the feet of Argus, and fell as senseless a heap as this shawl is. I did so in the hope of escaping from Mr. Carfield. I am a slave, Roxalana; I have the blood and spirit of a slave, and cannot, dare not follow even the imperious dictates of my passion. No; for all I was desperate enough to toss my heart to Argus, it was for defence. I am afraid of my father. What shall I do?”

“Take off your gloves,” said Roxalana, in a stern voice. “You must spend the remainder of the afternoon with me. The time has past, certainly, for fathers to compel their children into unwilling marriages.”

"But my own principles interfere with my wishes. I cannot help believing just as he believes, about the direction of my life. How can I disunite myself from his well-knit, reasonable plans?"

"I do not see what a profound love has to do with principle, or reason. If love was not a separate power, impregnable to conscience, human nature would be a feebly sustained thing. It should exist for itself, and by itself, and then, through it, we poor creatures may be exalted in spite of vice and crime. Don't you think so? Would you like to live for Argus?"

"Roxalana, you are the last person to aid me; in my way, my father's way, I mean. Let me go now, happy at least in having seen you."

"Would you like to live for Argus?"

"Live for him! Do I not? Must I speak to you, also, of the secret which makes me infinite? The remembrance of his embrace, and the hope of it, give immortality to my past and future. My interior life rises and rolls like a flood over the thick and purposeless darkness of my outward life. My interior life consists of my love for Argus; my real being is there, Roxalana. Its fine tissues vibrate and sparkle under its sway, as running waters under a moonlight sky. I acknowledge it strange, but I believe that in me *Love* has completed his divine circle. Argus belongs to my happiness,—in soul and body. To live *with* him would be to renounce the terrors, pain, and evil of my odious and enforced existence. It would prove so seductive and binding

an alliance that conscience would vaguely accuse me of falling into the depths of a great temptation, from which I should never beseech God to deliver me. You have known this, Roxalana, have you not, my sister?"

Roxalana fell back on the density which always aided her when people passed beyond her limits. Faithful as she was to the ideal of love, she was incapable of approaching the meaning of Virginia's passion, and wandered at once from the intensity of the scene, with the happy sense which made her so invaluable a relief to those attached to her.

"I couldn't leave him, you may be quite sure; life would be somewhat valueless, if absent from him. As I said, I do not in many respects approve of him. He has cold, hard manners, but he is sincere and proud; these traits have made his habits simple; simple habits, if practiced a long time, will have a good effect upon the character. Our life is meagre enough, as you have doubtless observed. For years we have had to manage on small means; we are acquainted with all sorts of economies. Could you endure the change? Would you not grow rather sick of 'pleasant old gowns,' if you were compelled to wear them?"

It struck Virginia she would not look as well in them as Roxalana did; and a sad feeling stole over her at the thought of the impossibility of ever making herself a harmonious portion of Temple House.

"I would not invade your premises, unless I came

to learn of you," she answered. "And as I have learned so much on compulsion, it would not be difficult to learn a little more."

"I think I would not like to have you come with money; it might unsettle us terribly. I am sure Argus dislikes the cares of property. Sebastian has none, or very little,—enough barely to cover his small expenses with us, and it makes his being here appear so much the more an admirable arrangement. You are aware how entirely he suits Argus."

"Argus came to our house to pay back borrowed money."

"Did he? I knew nothing of it."

"It was borrowed for Mr. Ford's use, I know; he never would have borrowed it for his own."

"Yet you must recollect that Argus had business transactions with your father years ago."

"He put his hand on my head once, when I was a little girl, and looking up I saw his face for the first time, and I liked him then. And now I will go."

She began drawing on her gloves, leisurely. Roxalana stepped to the door and called in Chloe.

"Your Missey will stay till evening, provided I send you home with her. I am greatly inclined to have her see us at our tea-table. Look up Tempe, Chloe, and I will bring down Georgey. You must have a sight of my boy, Virginia; he is the most intelligent child you ever saw,—wise beyond his months, and more beautiful than any picture."

"If I must stay, I must," replied Virginia. "There

is no help for you, Chloe; to tell the truth I am glad to have my scruples overcome."

"The gentlemen will be expecting you back, Missey," said Chloe, shaking Virginia's shawl, and folding it. "Spec' the Forge fires will die down dead, and Mr. Brande will take hisself to his bed, Mr. Carfield will betake hisself to all out doors if you don't show yourself behind our china tea cups at seven o'clock precisely. 'Pears to me I am a-going to walk home with you, and so slow to-night; and that after I get there I shall play Indian. Mis' Gates, have you seen any Indian in me for ever so long? Haven't I been regular in life's warfare?"

"Your conduct is acceptable, Chloe," said Roxalana. "Perhaps you had better pass the night at Mr. Brande's."

"Do you know that I never go and come by the path now?" asked Virginia.

"Missey, you are welcome to any whim you can indulge yourself with. The Lord knows your chances are few enough."

Virginia, seated at the table soon after, slowly drinking tea from the old frail china, and tasting Roxalana's most famous sweetmeats, drifted entirely from the Brande world, and was wafted like a feather in the currents of the surrounding atmosphere, which filled her with a serene pleasure.

Her voice and manner, confiding, winning, submissive, struck even Tempe and Chloe; the noble movement of her head, her dewy, lustrous eyes, and full, eager lips, her beautiful jewelled hands, and the ex-

quisite art of her sombre dress, made Sebastian recoil, as if his memory had received an unexpected blow. The isolation of Argus, which had wrapped him in a cool, colorless cloud, seemed about to part and leave him as he was before. For the time Argus could not resist a subtle arrogance, which Virginia's love gave him. His domineering eyes and tongue flashed upon her, and withdrew; Sebastian was reminded of the revolving lights he had seen on the lonely northern coast, and wondered if the solitary Argus was aware of his brilliancy. Roxalana's quiet, solid, animal spirit enjoyed the scene. It was, in her estimation, a reasonable entertainment, which could have no reaction. No extra candles were burning, and there was not too much tea in the teapot. Chloe's management was both safe and agreeable throughout, and there was no cause for worryment; moreover, the assembly consisted of all the persons she loved and admired. She ate little or nothing,—for that was her habit; sat almost silent; and her face was dark and heavy, as at all times, and her voice drawling and meaningless in accent. Yet she was felt as an object of genuine force.

"Is this like the old time, Virginia," inquired Tempe; "when you were in the way of running down from the Forge alone? It is not to me."

"It is different," Virginia replied.

Chloe caught the glance, as it passed between Argus and Virginia, which revealed their secret. She instantly, though offering cake, made a mental prayer, entreating God not to prevent the match; for there

was conversion and money in it for Argus, peace, freedom and indulgence for Virginia. She also prayed that Mr. Carfield might be removed.

"Miss Brande," said Sebastian, "I collect your cold, lonely wild flowers, they surprise me so! Where may I not, in this strange soil, find the most beautiful blossom? I recall a poet who said—'the love which speaks, sings, wails in one part of creation, reveals itself in the other half under the form of flowers.' The counterpart of these pale, perfect, frail flowers—what can it be?"

A brilliant color flew into Tempe's face, and she exclaimed, "The flowers you bring home, Sebastian last six weeks only, and then even their stalks and leaves die down to the ground."

"It is only a common love they designate after all, you see," said Argus. "Are you also developing a botanical taste, Tempe?"

"I despise flowers, and those who love them," she answered.

"Tempe," said Roxalana, "why do you choose to be contrary just at this moment, on the infrequent occasion of Virginia's visit? You like my tulips very well."

"The sight of them makes me sick."

"She is a little cactus," Sebastian said, in a low tone to Virginia.

"Our conservatory is in beautiful order, Tempe," said Virginia, with a smile to Sebastian; "I am sure you would like those queer foreign plants."

"I like little that is foreign,—neither cactus, nor



aloes, nor pine-apples, centipedes, scorpions, parrots."

"I shall yet fetch you a pink cockatoo, prettier than yourself, Miss Tempe," said Sebastian.

"And Chloe must fetch me from this," said Virginia, looking at her watch, "since you decree, Roxalana, that I am to be escorted."

"I think," said Argus quietly, "I heard your carriage at the gate just now."

Roxalana looked sternly at Virginia, and said, "If that Mr. Carfield has come for you, as I presume he has, in his capacity as your jailor, I hope he will break his neck in coming up the steps. Argus, if I were you—"

"Don't Argus me," interrupted Argus roughly, "Moses is walking up the path. Mr. Carfield will not enter our doors."

But he was mistaken. Chloe let in Mr. Carfield, with a crushed hat in one hand, and a twisted glove in the other; he was perfectly unconcerned, and his lips were parted by a gay smile as he made a low bow to Roxalana, who immediately folded her hands rigidly, and stared at him. His glance caught up the countenances of every person present; in the face of Argus he read an entire understanding of the insolence which had brought him hither. Virginia mechanically introduced him, and made a hasty sign to Tempe, who refused to recognize it.

"It became cloudy suddenly, Miss Brande," said Mr. Carfield, "and your father mentioning your dress as unfit to encounter a shower, thought best to send

for you. I drove over in the wagon, accordingly."

"Thank you," she replied; "I did not dream of a storm, it has been so bright and pleasant here."

"I imagined it," he returned. "Mrs. Gates is the soul of hospitality, I have been told. Temple House is a refuge,—catholic, tranquil, refined."

"You are right, sir," Sebastian remarked. "What happy circumstance gave you this penetration, since unlike myself, you were not allowed to reach this haven?"

"Your accuracy is remarkable," added Roxalana.

"There will be no storm, Virginia," interrupted Argus, who had been at the window to scan the sky; "if you prefer walking home, I will go with you."

"Cannot I go also?" asked Sebastian.

Virginia, who stood shawled and gloved, with her eyes on the floor, hesitated; the idea of her way between Temple House and the Forge being attended by the three men was an oppressive one. She dreaded, also, lest a second devastating scene should occur with Argus and Mr. Carfield, if the same chance was offered them. Argus was weaker now, she knew,—his heart was opening for her, and Mr. Carfield was a devil. Yet the idea of the two mile drive with him, in the dark, behind his rushing black stallion, between whom and himself was a feud of kicks, snorts, curses and blows, was still worse. There was an instant of silence; Tempe glided round the table, and under the pretence of pulling out Virginia's bonnet strings, whispered:

"I would not go with you, for you wanted to make

me a cat's paw ; I understand. I won't make speeches to your beau, for the sake of having you keep your mouth shut. And now Sebastian wants to be a cat's paw. Pretty doings, I should think."

"Tempe, you weary me," Virginia whispered harshly. "Heaven help me, you think there are no limits to my patience."

Tempe, with a shrug, turned from her and met Mr. Carfield's eyes ; an electricity passed from one to the other, and revealed an evil affinity. He saw that her sharp, passionate, ethereal face was suited to the tortures which self-will, hatred, and suspicion can inflict ; and she felt by intuition that he possessed the force given by such traits, and that it could be excited without scruple.

"Did you drive Black Tom down?" asked Virginia suddenly, looking up at Mr. Carfield. "You know how much I am afraid of him."

He replied that he came with another horse, though at that time Black Tom was knocking his jaws against the stone underpinning of the gully wall, and lolling his tongue with the pain of his bit. Without a word Virginia kissed Roxalana and swept out of the room ; Mr. Carfield, waving his glove by way of a parting salute, stepped quickly after her, and was followed by Argus and Sebastian. They found Chloe down by the gate with a lantern. She held it over the palings as Virginia descended the steps, and saw by its light that Mr. Carfield had lied to her ; he was untying Black Tom's rein from the ring in the wall. There was no retreat for her ; she must

go with him now, and turning to Argus, she thrust him back, and said :

"Don't come any further, Argus ; good night. My heart is broken, and hope that my neck may be."

He took her hand, and kissed it, and let her go ; Sebastian, catching a glimpse of the act, hastily swung over the palings with Chloe.

"Why, damn this gentleman," he said coolly ; "it strikes me that this is the Black Tom she is afraid of."

Virginia, already in the wagon, raised her face at the sound of his voice, and the sad, sweet, pale vision, framed in the darkness, and plunging through it, out of sight, to the thundering sound of the madly beating iron feet, made his brain dizzy, and his heart throb—the waves surged over him again,—singing, sparkling, multitudinous, boundless !

"Roll over me, then," he muttered, "and leave me dead, or free forever. To die, and come to life in convulsion ; to open weary eyes in the blaze and triumph of other eyes ; to speak the extorted words, lips to lips ; to drag, lift, wing my soul through that maze whose winding ways but come back to their mysterious beginning, and start again soul by soul—no !"

"Have marsey," said Chloe, rattling her lantern ; "I knew it. If I hadn't been afraid, while you were all bowing and scraping inside, I'd ha' poured scalding water down on that horse ; I could ha' done it, the kettle was full, hissing on the fire ; but I should have been turned out of meeting. I should never hear the last of it from Mr. Brande ; with his hand-

kerchief he'd ha' waved me into perdition; and so I said, 'Go away, Indian, come again, Christian,' lighted my lantern, and walked down here 'spectable."

"You are all afraid here, Chloe,—except Roxalana,—she is a great soul, living largely in little things."

"When we want to commit a deadly sin, the most of us aint a mite afraid; but in the 'how-are-you's,' and 'do come agains,' we are much afraid."

They heard Argus scratching a match on the steps.

"No matter whether he sees his way into the house or not," she said angrily.

"Certainly not. Go in yourself; I shall stay out and smoke. The moon is rising."

As she disappeared up the path, Argus came up the steps and offered Sebastian a cigar.

"I thought so," he said.

Sebastian, having politely accepted the cigar, smoked, said nothing, and fixed his eyes on the moon just tossing up the crest of King's Hill, in a mass of pearly spume, and throwing a spectral light against the house and lawn.

"I thought so, from his lying face," continued Argus. "It did not surprise me to see the brute he loves to drive and beat."

"Indeed!" said Sebastian at last, with an effort to obtain a better view of the moon, which averted his head from Argus. "And you did not break the jaws of the two beasts?"

Argus chuckled, swore, drew a fiery star at the

end of his cigar, threw it over the fence, and said:

"Are you cold, Sebastian?"

"On the contrary."

"On fire, then?"

"Is not the first touch of ice like fire?"

"I shall tell you something. Can you stay out in the air till I have done? I would have you."

"Very well, Argus, go on."

Argus related his experience with Mr. Carfield, and in spite of himself betrayed the part Virginia played in their interview at Brande's house. The moon, swelling over the crowding vapor, hung in the clear sky above their heads, and illuminated the spot where the dark figures with pale faces stood. To Sebastian's mind it appeared to be the illumination, cold, distant, glittering, which showed him Virginia's form wrapped in the camlet cloak as Argus described her.

"You and the Englishman are rivals then," he said.

"No."

"How shall I understand you?"

"The devil! what do you wish to understand? Have I not this moment explained the reason of my not falling upon Carfield. I do not fancy the business of avenger."

"Take care; love for an imbroglio is in my blood. My terrible bath in your bay, which I hear now shivering like a hound, did not wash it out. Argus, do you love that girl? Why not?"

"Pooh, what are you talking about? I am fine

for a lover,—don't you think? Come; we have been out here long enough."

"And she flew from her father's house to escape that man,—flew to you for protection."

"Which I did not give her," said Argus, savagely. "Still, did you not see her happy to-night? Oh, she belongs in her place, and I in mine."

"She is beautiful."

"Do you think so?"

"I have a mind to stroll along the shore; will you come, Argus, with another cigar?"

"No, Sebastian, I never go now where the horizon extends itself. The bay looks well to-night, by the position of the moon, limitless to the south. You will like it. I'll turn into my chamber."

## CHAPTER XXVI.

THE months which followed this evening seemed to hang over the heads of Argus and Sebastian changeless, like the light of the midnight sun. For the most part, in passing, existence is badly constructed; people find it impossible to make their life-drama a unity. Jove does not thunder at the right moment; the chorus have fallen asleep; the toga has not come home from the tailor's; the train was delayed at Pottsville. The mind has no power over to-day. It may reflect upon the past, and watch the future, but it cannot see nor understand the combinations of the present; how one event opposes another; how one holds the rest in solution; how they all fail to bring about the result, which the soul in its hopes, or its despairs, waits for. There is no intervention between the passions of men and Olympus, in the Greek tragedy; its tormenting flame ascends to the deities who cannot control its devastation; they may hear and see with the ears and eyes of gods, but they are helpless in the presence of those emotions whose being is in the senses, and is as powerful as themselves. In our time the tragedy is as mournful, but different; it is dull, complex,

prolonged; it is environed by moral necessities, and the analysis of opinion; it is apt to exist without beauty or dignity, but it still exists, because the principle of tragedy is an immortal heritage.

More than a year, with the memories of the days to be observed, as the causes of an inroad upon the peaceful life of Argus, passed: the hours of little Georgey swiftly traversed this neutral ground, and he entered upon his second year. His summer birthday was brilliant, and chirping like himself. The lazy sea was more quiet than the tanned waste of fields beyond Temple House, whole hosts of crickets and strong-winged grasshoppers crawled and flew, and sang day and night. The sun, so hot in the bare blue sky, tinged the sandy shores with yellow hues, burnt the mats of seaweed to an ugly black, and stained the vines and shrubs along the walls in red and umber. It blazed upon Apsley River, now pale and shallow, receding day by day, and fell in a solid mass of blinding brightness on the tree-like shrubs along its borders;—shrubs, covered with balls, and spiral blossoms,—brown, amber, and white, stuffed with clusters of berries, bitter, milky, acrid, colored purple, red, and green. It scorched the roofs and pavements in the town, and suppressed the hum of business; people sat in darkened rooms, and mopped their foreheads, and fanned themselves with great palm-leaf fans. On that day, Roxalana, in a flowered silk shawl and antiquated bonnet, went into town to make a purchase. A faint opposition rose from Tempe and Chloe when it came home, for

it was a high chair of basket-work in which she intended to install Georgey, and keep him beside her at meal time. Argus whistled slightly when he saw him perched up at the table in a quaint, white frock, and his dead-gold hair clinging in rings round his head; but Sebastian, telling Roxalana that he perceived she had had one of her inspirations, took him, chair and all, and carried him to the place next his own, for he loved the child. The agitations whose approach he had begun to feel and dread, had been shut out by the love which had so unexpectedly come to him;—"the love which reveals itself in flowers," of which he had spoken to Virginia, blossomed from the soul of the lovely child, and spread like a vine over the surface of his nature,—that nature so simple, sweet and patient, yet sometimes so lost in ungovernable depths, sometimes so fallen, exhausted, apathetic.

Georgey's first word was *Bastian*.

"I am blarsted," said Mat Sutcliffe to Roxalana, when he first observed the frolicsome, exacting, tender intimacy between Sebastian and the child, "if my Moll isn't about right in regard to this ere Ford. Actilly my little G. Gates loves him, and gives me the go-by altogether."

"Why Mat," she replied apologetically, "Sebastian's being here all the time, while you are here only at night and morning, accounts for it. You may depend, though, that we shall all have enough to do to manage that peculiar child."

"It will be a different day from this when I see a

member of the Gates family managed; 'taint in 'em to be managed. As for his peculiarity, I don't agree with you; he is the most reasonable creetur in the world; he likes to go the way folks don't want him to go in."

Roxalana laughed, for at that moment they heard Georgey crying out on the lawn against Sebastian's opposition to having grass put into his mouth and ears.

Tempe's strange indifference towards her child continued, though since he and Sebastian made themselves so busy together in playing, and talking in that jargon which is bestowed upon those who love children by their good fairies, she had followed him from place to place, and watched them. Her strange behavior finally hurt Sebastian, and he spoke of it to Argus.

"Have you had no faith in the maternal passion?" he asked.

"I think I met with it in the jungle, and not since," Argus answered.

"I never saw Tempe kiss her boy."

Argus shrugged his shoulders. "I never saw her kiss anybody."

"When I was young," said Sebastian, ripples of light breaking into his eyes, "my mother loved me. God knows that she could never make me forget it, though afterwards, rather than the enfolding of her arms, I would have had a serpent's coil round my heart."

"Why, Sebastian, you are coming out with obitu-

aries. Better let the brambles and weeds grow over your monuments, and hide them."

"No, no, I will remember my mother, in my love for Georgey. His maternal memory will be—Roxalana."

"You do not mean to blame the poor woman, of course. She has a great love for the child; and, to refer to monuments again, *her* memory associates him with her husband, my brother George, who was a great scamp."

"And where was Tempe's husband, when the child was named? dead in fact, I know,—but where in feeling?"

"If her affair with that boy, Drake, which lasted a few weeks only, lasted long enough to impress upon her the character of a widow, she deserves great credit for being a heartless hussey."

"Your women are all strange."

"They are as like to the women you have known as pea pods are; possibly the peas inside may be a little less or more full, but, given the same circumstances, you have the same female. Stick to your affection for Georgey; adopt him, for I feel little interest in him. I don't like the blood on either side."

Poor Georgey! Even at that time there were signs of failure in his face; Sebastian was the first to observe them. They struck him a coward; he felt like making a desperate, selfish effort to escape from the calamity which he believed must fall. He watched all who came in contact with Georgey for a corroboration, and a denial of his fears. Would that he

could carry Georgey to the gates of heaven, and leave him there with all his beauty, to enter without a trace of suffering!

The time soon arrived when the days and nights were as one to Georgey; when his hot, tremulous hands remained where they were placed; when his marble feet were inert; and those who were with him could not say whether a smile or a pang drew his lips apart. And Roxalana had not spoken a word concerning his danger. One evening Sebastian took him from his little bed, and thrust through and through with anguish, held him against his breast.

"He is going to die, Roxalana."

"Nonsense," she answered angrily, but avoiding his eyes, "it is the season that makes Georgey so languid. Children of his age are often as sick. The summer is over, nearly, and he will revive; this morning he liked his warm milk, and he looked up at me with so intelligent an expression—" Something choked her bell-like voice, but she swallowed it. "You are not accustomed to children. Georgey has a good constitution; he never has had to take medicine. I say he has an excellent constitution."

Sebastian said no more, and all mention of the child was avoided after this; no one liked to question her, the misery of her face was so dreadful.

"Argus, don't you see how that boy's life is wasting?" asked Sebastian, a day or two afterwards.

"I know it, but nothing can be done."

"I weep for him. To have that sweetness vanish,—to perceive the coming of that hour when I shall

no longer love him vitally, oh, it crushes the meaning out of the world."

"Remember that your former suffering has passed away. You have suffered—"

"From all things in love and death, except these poignant, tender, pitying pangs."

Argus was surprised at the hold Georgey had upon Sebastian's affections, and for his sake he was desirous that he should live; Roxalana's silent, inflexible grief troubled him also; but he could give neither comfort, for in his soul he was as indifferent as if he were the spectator of a game not exactly to his taste. The last day was coming; and what was the difference between to-day and to-morrow or anybody? Mat Sutcliffe, at the house daily, attending to all sorts of duty, faithful, quiet, and cheerful, stoutly stood in his opinion that Georgey would recover; but at last he was compelled to admit there was no hope.

"I should like to know," he said to his wife, "how it is that none of our children have died. Not one of 'em has had the least chance of it; they have toughed it out, and are grown up, and are good for nothing, while that little snow wreath of a creetur is melting off our hands as fast as God will let him; and he is worth more to that woman, Roxalana, than a thousand men and women, and worth something to me. Mary, he is going to die at the rate of nine knots. I can't abide the ways of the Providence there's so much said about. The doctor isn't good for anything. Hand us out that big rummer."



"Rum is pizen," answered Mary, the tears running down her face, "and death is pizen; and I don't care who knows it. It is a sin and a shame for that good, beautiful child to be sick, even, let alone dying. Something should be done right away; not a minute's time should be lost. I am going over to the house. Have they given him warm baths? I am going to step into Mrs. Goodwin's, round the corner, who knows so much about sickness, and ask her if she can't think of something that hasn't been tried."

Mat shook his head.

"You had better go, and leave Mrs. Goodwin alone; he is past medicine. Do up all your crying now. Blarsted if I ain't full myself; there's been nothing like it for twenty year. I thought my eyes had got horny."

On a silent, windless morning in September Georgey died. Sebastian, who had been beside him through the night, about daybreak yielded to a drowsy inclination, though he heard strange sighs from Georgey, whose eyes were closed, and fell asleep in his chair. As in a dream he was startled by the clear, loud call of "*Bastian*," and leaning over the bed he saw that a terrible struggle had begun. As he left the room to summon Roxalana, he heard "*Bastian*" again. It was a cry for protection,—the cry of a forsaken life,—Georgey's farewell.

Sebastian opened Roxalana's door and made a hurried sign to her to follow him.

"No," she said, "I shall never see him again. I will send Chloe. Go back, Sebastian."

Bewildered and maddened at the solitude thrust upon him, distracted at the cry that pierced his heart, he ran back, and kneeling by the bed put his hand upon Georgey's head, then threw himself upon the floor and hid his face.

Presently Roxalana tottered out of her room like an old woman, and meeting Chloe stopped, and stared at her without speaking; her eyes appeared sightless.

"I know it," said Chloe, "but I can't find Tempe; she isn't in her bed."

Roxalana shook her head.

"Have you called my husband?" she asked.

"Marsy on me," cried Chloe, "her mind is gone. And after all this looking and waiting for death, nobody's ready; and there is not a soul in sight. Where is Capen Gates and Mat Sutcliffe?"

"Here *I* am," answered Mat from below. "No use waking up Gates; it's no new thing to him, this business. It is over, is it? I'm glad of it. This way, marm,—careful,—I see a nail sticking out of the boards, you may stumble on't; let me help you."

When Chloe went into that chamber she found only one alive there,—the other lay in an attitude of terror, struck out of life by the tyrant of one kingdom, and not yet ready for any other. Chloe's religion and philosophy were not proof against the sight; she ran from the room, and did not stop running till she came to Mary Sutcliffe's.

Sebastian remained alone. An hour, or many hours, might have passed when he felt something touching his feet,—something grovelling there; he

raised his face from the floor and discovered Tempe.

"It is you at last," he said fiercely. She crept toward him and tried to take his hand, but he sprang from the floor, and then she fell against his knees.

"Come and embrace your child!" he cried, compelling her to stand up. "Here, look upon him,—for this cruelty were you born? You love the cruel and the bitter alone. Oh base, poltroon heart, mother without sex."

His every word shattered her with the force of blows. Her eyes were wildly fixed upon the child, and the sight broke her heart!"

"Hush, Sebastian," and Argus stood behind them. "You should not be here. Roxalana needs you." Tempe threw out her arms convulsively, and with her lips strained apart, shrieked: "Cruel and bitter as I am, Sebastian"——

Argus caught her so quickly, that her utterance was stifled.

"I'll take you out of this," he said. "You must obey me. Not another scene like this; remember."

## CHAPTER XXVII.

THE shadow over Temple House, which otherwise might have flitted with the autumnal clouds, staid motionless with Roxalana; she repelled every interest which might aid her to drive it away, and no longer ruled the house,—its contented and comfort-dispensing spirit. Chloe declared that her heavy, even tread in the passage between her chair in the green room and her bedside, was wearing the floor away, as chained prisoners wore the floor of their prisons. She was not only dumb, but she pretended deafness, that it might not be expected of her to attend to conversation going on in her presence. Her conduct prevented sympathy or consolation from reaching her by any means; even Virginia, who sought her in the hope of breaking down the barrier which shut her up with grief, obtained a reply that disappointed the hope effectually.

"What do you do in an eclipse," she asked, "except to look at it through a piece of smoked glass? Did you ever dream of interfering with the laws which created the bodies to be eclipsed? Why should you interfere with a mental eclipse? One is as inevitable as the other. It is not necessary now

for you to penetrate the darkness which I am in; wait till it surrounds you, then you will learn the wisdom I practice. I have no fancy at all for looking at any subject in your light; I have lost regard for life."

Neither would Tempe permit the friendly advances which Virginia made. The perverse creature behaved as if determined to quit the world, also; all her fire seemed to have burned down, her sharp spirit evaporated. Nothing was alive in her but languor; too restless with its consuming influence, she could neither lie down, nor sit up for any length of time, but drooped over the chairs and settees, and covered her face from the light with her arms. She avoided solitude, was afraid of being left alone, though she did not wish to be spoken to. She cried in her sleep, but shed no tears when awake; made mouths at her food; and tormented Chloe by long, unwinking fits of staring, mute revery. While she remained in this condition it was Chloe's business to scold, expostulate, and coax, for there was nobody else to do it; a healthful disturbance was thereby kept up between them, though it cost Chloe tears of vexation, and Tempe unwilling smiles.

"I am going to die," she said once, when Chloe made a dash at her, and cried out to her to speak. "Wouldn't you like to see me in a white dress?"

"If you die," Chloe replied, "I'll never do anything for you as long as I live."

Roxalana, who was present, gave an abrupt laugh, so unexpected by Chloe, but which rejoiced her so

that she went into the kitchen, and sedately skipped over the floor in acknowledgment of her approval of this natural sign. It was during this period, while Roxalana was wrapped in the cloud of her grief, that Tempe approached her with symptoms of an affection never manifested before. Roxalana made no response; if she had, perhaps Tempe's pride and aversion to the expression of sentiment would have suppressed it. When Sebastian saw her on the floor, resting her head against Roxalana's knees, still and self-absorbed, he stopped as if before a picture, and observed Tempe closely for the first time in his life. He discovered in her an extraordinary capacity for beauty; how was it possible to develop it, and not really develop *her* into one of those angels who make man's paradise murky and lurid as the air of hell? Her brilliant, silky hair was very long now; it spread low down on her neck and brow in irregular lines, framing her colorless complexion in dense black. She was all black and white, except her well-cut lips, which clung together like the double scarlet blossoms which grow on the twigs of slender, dark-stemmed shrubs. He turned on his heel abruptly, and sought Chloe.

"Is the little miss thinking of making *her* will?" he asked.

"Marsy, Mr. Sebastian, she hasn't a mite of property. Nobody will be the better off for her dying, and only *she* will be the worse. I hope she won't go till she has met with a change."

"She may be on that road. What does it mean

that at this moment she is holding her dusky head against her mother's knees?"

"If you expect me to account for anything that happens here, I shall have to disappoint you. 'Pears to me, if this family can't be droll one way they will another. I have noticed lately that Missis Tempe has got the kink into her head of hanging round her mother, but it seems to make no difference to her. What are we coming to, if that woman is going to sit in the shadow of darkness forever and 'ternally?"

Sebastian's head drooped; he sighed and muttered:

"Roxalana's feelings are immortal; mine are—for the future; the past recedes like a mirage when I endeavor to reach it. Even now, that child-angel fades in the zenith,—a silver, impalpable shadow, like the crescent moon vanishing in sunrise. Bah! Chloe, it grows into your chilly season so fast; the wild red leaves are blowing from the trees again, and the air bites me,—but sweetly."

"Bites? Mr. Sebastian, try a hair of the same dog that bites the Gates folks; then you'll never be chilly, nor hungry, and you won't ask any more questions."

"I have become so solitary since," he continued, looking into himself, and forgetful of Chloe, "that Roxalana and Tempe together, in some incomprehensible communion, make my sensations chime like a bell, one against another. Do beings die to change life for others? Does Death open avenues for one

to start from? Saints! and especially the hermit saints! My solitude grows reverberating! The sand which rolls and slides, grain by grain, at last chokes the channel, and the tide boils in fury over. And the dead wedge when driven into the live tree divides, and crushes it. I think life here already differs, even with the unchanging Argus, yet what can *he* do? For the matter of that, what can I? What if I try once more the old scenery? Bah! the lights are out, the ballet has taken off its spangles; besides, I cannot leave. No, I am bound,—twice, thrice bound to this spot."

He struck the floor with his boot, looked out of his intense pupils at Chloe, who had indifferently resumed her occupation, and whirled round to hasten into Roxalana's presence again.

"My soul," thought Chloe, "when his eyes are fixed so, like coals lighted, he is the image of Judas in Mr. Brande's picture of the Lord's Supper, which an agent brought round. I must say, Judas was a very handsome apostle. I remember that Mr. Brande said at the time, that he had bought the picture to head the list in Kent, but that it was an impious thing to attempt the portrait of Jesus Christ; it was not for sinful man to imagine him looking like a man. And Virginia said,—well, I don't remember what she did say, but he lectured her half an hour. Plague on this little spider-legged pitcher, the silver is so thin and worn I could prick it through and through with a pin."

"Roxalana," cried Sebastian, standing before her,

"I want you. Come from that dark under-world. I have lost hold of the anchors of Temple House; where are they?"

"Well, Sebastian," she answered, raising her heavy eyes, "I am here, what will you have?"

"You do not attend to what I say. I want you, my friend; give me my tranquility, which is leaving me."

"I asked what you would have. Get up, Tempe."

Tempe obeyed, and sank upon a seat by the window. Sebastian took her place.

"I perceive," he whispered, "that she clings to you. Is it any temptation for you to love life again?"

Roxalana looked round at Tempe reflectively, and a shade of surprise came into her face.

"Nothing tempts me," she replied. "I do not wish to be tempted."

"Neither do I, yet I shall be; when the necessity of being tempted exists in one, temptation approaches."

"Resistance then is in vain," she said, interested in spite of herself.

"With me it is. The senses are plumed for flight; when the breeze fans them they must ascend."

"Resist temptation and it will flee from you," she quoted, looking absent again. "I have not looked into the Bible much since I lived with Papa."

"Is there a Bible in this house?" said Tempe, with closed eyes, as if she were speaking in a dream. "Grandpa used to quote that when I cried for his lizards, and sea-horses, and plums."

Roxalana's face flushed deeply and painfully; she

had never heard Tempe refer to those early days, so long buried in her own mind that they were never recalled. Was Tempe teaching her?

"And so you remember those things, Tempe?"

"Yes, and more. I could have had them all, you know, but I never did yield to but one temptation, mother—my evil disposition,—one of that fine flock of the senses Sebastian speaks of. I suppose there may have been one more temptation which I gave in to, but I shall not mention it."

There was defiance in her tone.

"Open your eyes, Tempe, for God's sake!" exclaimed Sebastian. "I do not like statues with voices."

"Poor statues! But statues are eyeless; I can't open my eyes; they see nothing when they uncloze."

Roxalana looked pitifully at him, as if she would have him excuse Tempe.

"Don't resist me," he begged. "Roxalana, it was your calm, cheerful philosophy, as well as the friendship of Argus, that gave the bloom to my life again, which more than the waves of Kent bay had washed off. See, I am only thirty years old; am I to have no reward for adding my years to the years under this roof? Have you thought how strong and skillful must be the wall which a man like me must build between himself and the storms of the passions. Before you and Argus they must not break in. Look at me."

She obeyed him, and laid her hand gently on his shoulder, for he was kneeling beside her like a child.

Tempe shuddered as if she were in an ague;—

they had forgotten her! Why should she *ever* open her eyes? Why not fall out of the high window, and disappear with other miserable atoms of dust beneath it?

"Look into my face," continued Sebastian, "what is coming? Do you believe me as incredibly simple as yourself? And yet you must, for you accept the strange beings round you for just what they appear. Let me ask, though, once more, if I may not be yours? '*The blow*,' you say. I know that, but the *other* blows,—can you stand against those?"

She gave him her hand, but there was no light in her countenance.

"Begin, dear," he went on, "to hide the bruise in your heart. Alas, we must have refuge, and be healed. Now Argus—"

"Argus," she interrupted reproachfully,—"*how* is Argus? I shall never know till I ask him, and then he will make merry."

"Argus is well," exclaimed Tempe, "he is on the lawn, knocking the ashes from the end of his cigar, with the same equanimity that he formerly knocked sailors overboard. Don't trouble yourself about Argus, mother; the air and a loaf of bread, his cigar and the bench under the elms, suffice the wants of that lofty iceberg. Why he ever drifted into this temperate climate is as much of a mystery as some other driftings are."

But Roxalana did look troubled; she went to the window and looked at Argus steadfastly. He was the picture of indifference and laziness; his legs were

crossed, his shoulders slouched, and he puffed his cigar slowly, as if it were one of the last efforts he might be expected to make.

"That man," she said with some animation, "is dressed in a nankin suit, and it is October—does he know it?" She sighed, and turned back. "What were you about to say, Sebastian? I can guess, though, but I believe you may be mistaken."

"Would he speak to you as I have spoken?"

"He never demands anything."

"It is only a Spanish fashion to demand," Tempe remarked; "the Gates family neither demand, nor require, anything."

Sebastian made an abrupt movement towards her and retreated. "The little puss stretches out her claws once more," he said.

"Tempe, can't you hold your tongue?" asked her mother.

"I can," she answered, "but have no idea of doing so."

"I meant at first to say, Roxalana," continued Sebastian, "that Argus ignores what we call the inner voice; consequently he is able to notice no correspondence between that and the voices from the life around him; he chooses to suffer, and enjoy, on another basis."

She shook her head, and doubtfully twisted her hands.

"The *inner voice*," she repeated, "what is it? If there were no pressure from the external, should we ever hear it? I never do, in any event. I hope



you understand Argus. He is a peculiar man—entirely different from you, Sebastian; I am glad of it, for you. Go out to him; he has been alone some time.”

Sebastian instantly left her. As soon as he shut the door Tempe opened it again, and followed him to the lawn, and Roxalana was alone. In a few minutes she went to the window, and contemplated the group under the elms. Tempe, her arms hid under a shawl, sat at the end of a bench, meditating on the tree tops, or watching the atmosphere, for her head was cast upwards, and her eyes roved. Sebastian was smoking beside Argus, who remained in the same position as when she looked at him before.

The afternoon sun, dipping over the lawn, tinged the fading grass, and the brown leaves scattered over it, with a yellow light; the pale, blue sky was cloudless, and the motionless elms stood against it, still green, though their leaves fell constantly, shattered at heart by the poison of decay. A distant bell, from some belfry in the town, was ringing. It was as if a moment had arrived when it was necessary to rouse the mind from a natural reflection mirrored there by the Spirit of Autumn, that man and his belongings are eternally vanishing,—sinking behind a dark horizon,—the mysterious boundary of his mind, beyond which lie visions—nothing more.

A flood swelled up from Roxalana's breast, and broke into tears which blistered her eyelids; sobs sounding like the growl of an animal at bay, stifled and stopped her breath. Still she kept her eyes wide open upon the scene before the window,—half think-

ing out her struggle, half allowing it to work out by its own law. It had come to her that day, and Sebastian's appearance and words had strengthened the idea,—that the capacity of choosing her old life must now be made possible. To do so, however, the chain of memory and association which bound her must be broken; the dead, an everlasting curse and reproach to her springs of being, could not exist with the living, and her faith and enjoyment in them. Which should she choose? Take up life, and live resolutely, with freedom? Or should she fear and despise it, keeping her heart at the gates of loss and annihilation?

It appeared as if the group on the lawn were waiting for her pending decision, they remained so fixed and silent. The sun sank below the garden wall; the sky changed; red and purple vapor, rough like surf, and peaked like a mountain chain, rose round it; a swift wind swept over the bay, bringing the noise of the tide into the elms, whose boughs were suddenly and wildly shaken. Some autumn birds, joyous in the great scene above, below, the hemisphere of fiery, heaping, driving cloud and rushing air, and the hemisphere of swaying forests, the dark rolling bay, town, hill, and fields—flew overhead with a loud twitter. Tempe followed their flight, and Roxalana, still watching, involuntarily raised her head also. With that strange superstition which belongs to naturally faithless natures, she instantly believed that the birds were bearing her troubles away. The struggle was over. Pale, and with an uncertain gait, she went out to



join those with whom she had taken lot again, to do, or say—she knew not what. Sebastian rose in astonishment when he saw her coming down the steps, bareheaded and smiling; but Argus, who knew her so well, only half turned his face towards her.

"I noticed those birds," she said; "have they not colonized in the poplars?"

"No," answered Argus; "they were a belated party, and do not belong here."

"Which way is the wind?"

"As if you didn't know, mother," said Tempe, looking at her with curiosity.

"Can't you let your mother ask whatever question she pleases?" said Argus. "The wind shall be which way you please, Roxalana, but it will blow to-night, and I doubt whether we have many leaves to sit under after this."

She looked up into the elms, and an expression of the old content came into her voice.

"How beautiful they still are!" she said.

The tone of her fine voice struck Argus with a regret; how should *he* pass back, and live over the days when that tone was habitual with her?

Sebastian took her hand, and drew her down the path.

"When have you looked over the gate?" he said thanking her with his eyes.

"Mother," called Tempe, "you are bareheaded and beyond the trees; you will feel the wind."

Roxalana put her hand to her head.

"So I am, Sebastian."

"Oh, my poor Roxalana, I see now that your hair is gray."

"But yours is not."

"Give me your shawl, Tempe," said Argus; "I will take it to her. Now run into the house; let me see two miracles to-day."

"What do you mean?"

"Water turned to wine."

"Nonsense, uncle Argus. But how funny,—this is the second time I have heard something from the Bible to-day."

"Trollop, you ought to keep one under your pillow, and read it every night. What did you hear?"

"'Resist temptation, and it will flee from you.' Do you read the Bible in your bedroom?"

"Who is tempted?"

"Nobody now, but somebody will be."

"The child begins to feel the pangs of experience! Run into the house; your hair will blow away."

"I wish it would blow through my head, a current of cool air, uncle Argus, intersecting it, would be an advantage; but I suppose I may not expect anything to penetrate it."

He gave her a curious look.

"How would you like a surprise, Tempe?"

"Oh, I *am* surprised."

"At what?"

With a timid gesture, she pointed at Sebastian. Argus meditated a moment, and then said sharply, "There is nothing to surprise in him, I assure you."

"I know better; he is full of those instincts you know nothing about."

"Gracious Peter!"

"You may give one of your round-the-world aughes, or sneers, it will be still the same with me. I feel an energy from him to-day, I am in a savago sympathy with him, and I should like to pain him too."

"Go in."

"So I will, when I get ready."

"There's malaria somewhere round us; we are getting upside down. It is the style of his face makes you think so; the Spaniard inevitably suggests love and revenge, but there is nothing of the sort in Sebastian. I wish you would let me alone," replied Argus, a little confused.

"The man shall love me," said Tempe haughtily, rising, and moving towards the house; and Argus went to the gate with an anger he had never felt for Tempe till now.

"When you have viewed this rocky, romantic pass," he said, "you had better go back; Chloe will be waiting with tea."

"Who cares?" replied Roxalana.

Argus laughed, and exchanged a glance with Sebastian, who nodded gravely, and made a gesture which signified gratitude for the change in her.

"The kitchen chimney smokes," said Argus mischievously.

"It does not," she replied; "it never did. Come, let us go in and see how much fire there is,—that will decide."

## CHAPTER XXVIII

MAT SUTCLIFFE, while busy in the garden, digging round the old rose-trees, and clearing out the rubbish in the thicket, saw Argus, with his trousers in his boots, and wearing the seal-skin cap, advancing along the path which led to the summer-house; he carried a cane, and stopped occasionally to turn up the leafy moss, and tap the tree trunks, as if he was seeking some hidden thing. Instead of going into the summer-house, however, he walked several times round it, and carefully beat off the few shaking leaves on the grape-vine. Mat, without any reason for so doing, slipped to the back of the thicket to conceal himself. When Argus had finished his exercise with the cane, he threw it into the summer-house, folded his arms, and, as it appeared to Mat, earnestly studied the weather-vane, which creaked slightly. He stood so long there that Mat made up his mind that he had better attend to his business, and was about to confront Argus, but did not, for he suddenly went through the poplars, climbed the wall behind them, and disappeared. The day was damp and chilly; a dull wind crept like a serpent over the ground, as if crowded down by the low, heavy sky;

the grey grass shook under it, and the tall weeds, full of dry seeds, rasped against the stone walls to a dismal tune; the water along the shore tumbled and roared beside it, without breaking into wave or surf. "A beautiful morning," Mat thought, "to be caning about the country." And he fell to work again, but overcome by an inclination for reflection, he sat down on his wheelbarrow and lighted his pipe.

"What can be in the wind with Gates?" he queried. "He goes from post to pillar, as if he remembered something he had forgot, and from pillar to post, as if he couldn't find it. He passes all my calculations, the Capen does, now-a-days, blarsted if he don't. That ere iron constitution of his can't be breaking up, can it, and he won't own it? You see in former times his life *was* different, it raly was; and 'tis said, but I know it to be a lie,—that murder will out. It is my opinion that Gates never had anything he wanted,—nor ever did anything he wanted to do,—except draw his breath, and keep cool; and that even in those days he gambled, and drank, and what not, because he was in Gambleland. I guess I'll speak to my old woman about this ere matter. I actilly don't know what to make out. Who's in it? Not Mr. Ford. Is it Roxalana Gates's dreadful dumps? Poor, feeble Tempe? 'Taint Miss Virginia Brande! Damn me if I didn't see that Carfield in the street yesterday! He has come back."

He started up with the intention of going home, but on reaching the alley door changed his mind, and went back to work.

It was true, as Roxalana had said, that Argus made no demands; but it was also true that she was the prop of his obvious life, and that her lethargic, obdurate grief had destroyed it. The glacier at last rolls into the valley, and reveals the skeleton it has held together so many years. This chosen life he had conducted as intact and unalienable in the atmosphere of Temple House, it was breaking up and melting away; the change in Roxalana had revealed the shifting possibilities of every circumstance about him. Knowing in his consciousness what would best suit him, had he a choice in the future—to be alone in his own domain, and without intimate connection with any human being—he yet deliberately set to work upon those problems he had hitherto set aside, in the faith that they must work out themselves. He grew harder, colder, quieter during the process; but men may come and men may go through the mazes of perplexity a long time, and the commonplace still flow round them. If Sebastian perceived any difference in him, he ascribed it to the general difference which had touched them all. It was several weeks before the acute Mat decided that there really was something doubtful about the Capen.

Argus contemplated Sebastian's friendship, Virginia's love, Tempe's difficult future, and Roxalana's sad, dull old age. Should he sell the estate, and with the money settle Roxalana in a new, and perhaps, so far as Tempe was concerned, a wise position? Persuade Sebastian to leave the country, go with him, and

never return? Should he defy Brande and Carfield, and take Virginia? The former could trouble him but little; but how about the latter? Her love would be a glittering net over him, and let him turn or twist in any direction, he should feel the meshes. He set aside her beauty, sweetness, power, and wishes; he set aside, for he was adamant, the instincts which made him a man; shut his eyes upon that selfishness which might calculate upon her as the companion and friend of his lonely age, and pondered over one characteristic,—that which made him remarkable—his secretive, impassive individuality,—whether he had better keep it and live on it, as his substance? or whether he would share it with Virginia, to her advantage?

But on the morning when he came under Mat Sutcliffe's observation, he decided that he would marry her—and immediately. The next day, while somewhat possessed with his plans, and smoking on the lawn, in the warmth and stillness of that beautiful October afternoon, Roxalana went out to him, having passed through the valley of the shadow of death to resume her sway. He was not the man, however, to change a purpose. That very evening he looked up Mat Sutcliffe, and asked him to take a note to the Forge.

"Is anybody sick at your house?" Mat inquired, jamming down his tarpaulin.

"Yes, I am, deadly sick—love-sick."

"Oh, indeed, to be sure you are now. What am I going arter, nails?"

"You are going after my wife."

"Now don't bust me! Bah, as I think on't, Martha, the housekeeper, is just about your age."

"Get out, you dog. I'll be on the path in an hour for my answer."

Mat put the note in his pocket, some tobacco in his mouth, and started, saying that he was mortally afeard of Brande's bull-dog.

"Kill him," said Argus, "and any other beast that interferes with you."

"Just so, now I know you are in earnest; but hadn't you better go below, Capen?"

Argus laughed, and bade him go on.

The note contained these words:

"If you are ready, my girl, shall we now be married? If you are not, when shall I confer with your father? If you have not changed—recollect how little we have seen each other of late—I love you; if you have changed, I love you. My flames will not burn as yours, so prettily, so lambent—that you know; still I am on fire, and fire under ice is terrible to the one burned between them. I am at your service; make it a long expiation of desire and duty. Come and live with me, Virginia; please, my dear.

ARGUS, YOUR HUSBAND."

Mat was clever enough to insist upon handing the note himself to Virginia, and stupid enough to follow Sarah into the parlor with it. It is certain he blushed, and got very much entangled in his ideas, when he saw not only Virginia, but her father, and Mr. Carfield in the parlor. He sat down without being asked to do so, put his hat under his chair,

and twisted his thumbs desperately, and said nothing.

"Well, Mat," said Virginia, somewhat disappointed in his bearing, for he was a favorite with her, "you have brought me a message?"

"A billet, Miss Brande," he answered, his coolness, true Yankee that he was, instantly returning. "I accommodated a friend by bringing it. An answer is expected."

"Is anything amiss your way?" asked Mr. Brande.

"Not that I know of."

"Temple House not tumbled down yet?" asked Mr. Carfield, with his eye on Virginia.

"I left the family all right, sir, with their best foot foremost. That ere house is equal to some of the palaces I saw up the Thames a number of years ago. What is the name of that plant that has yaller flowers, growing out of the cracks in the walls?"

Mr. Carfield did not deign to answer him, but Mat was quite indifferent about a reply; he meant to distract attention from Virginia, whose countenance was changing to extreme paleness.

"Do your beams and timbers get the dry-rot," he went on, loudening his voice, "as ours do? I suppose I could shake out a bushel of powder from the stanchions in the garret at Temple House,—a bushel to say the least, a bushel!"

He raised his voice so high with the last word, that Mr. Brande, who was reading, turned in surprise, and following the direction of his eyes, saw Virginia's agitation.

"What is the matter, daughter?" he said, rising and going to her.

"Mat," said Virginia hastily, "I will not trouble you to wait, I will send an answer to-morrow."

Mat remembered that Argus would be waiting for him, and expecting something more positive. What could he invent to bring it about? He had not been in contact with the dog, but he was sure he was in presence of the beast Argus hinted at.

"She aint expected to live Miss Tempe," he said, desperately, "and I am sure that Mrs. Gates won't like to wait till to-morrow. I'll stay till you've made up your mind to write." Mr. Carfield laughed unpleasantly.

"I saw your friend, Miss Tempe, this morning," he said, "and I thought there was quite a bloom on her cheek."

The blood rose to the roots of Mat's hair. Where could that man have seen Tempe? Not many hours should pass, he vowed, before he would see Roxalana Gates, and tell her she was a criminal for keeping her eyes shut to the going on of those in whom she should have an anxious concern.

"She may be the worse for that," he answered hotly.

"No, Mat," said Virginia, "I prefer that you should not wait. I shall send a note to Temple House early in the morning."

"Just as you say, Miss," he replied, picking up his hat.

She made a half attempt, in her kindness, to go towards him, meaning, possibly, to exchange a word

or a significant look with him from behind the bars of her cage; but she was prevented, for Mr. Carfield walked across the floor, eyeing the door, and Mat in a rage went out.

"She is afraid," he said to himself outside. "I wouldn't be in that woman's shoes for one hundred dollars,—no, nor two."

He met Argus half way up the path.

"You have been gone a devil of a time."

"I might have staid longer, just as well one way as another; there's no answer for you this night, Capen."

"No? Why not?"

"She has no will of her own. Mr. Brande and piety was together, and that ere Carfield might be considered as thrown in."

"You gave my note to her before those gentlemen, did you?"

"Exactly so, and put my foot in it handsome."

"They have both read it before this."

Argus stopped, and looked back towards the Forge.

"Take the advice of a booby, and keep right along the path with me; the poor girl was flustered enough for to-night a-reading your billet; didn't know you could do such a thing. You'll *never* get her away by fair means. Carfield is a trump—for having his own way—they say this time he will fetch it, and marry her."

Argus's step grew irresolute again. "I'll go back and take her to-night."

"Come on, Capen, it is darker behind you than it

is before you. Brande is cunning, and the other chap is bold; you aint a match for them."

"I only wish to be a match for Miss Brande."

"Well, now do you want me to tell you how it can be done?"

"Go on."

"Run away with her."

"Pooh!"

"When I say run, I mean ask her to have you unbeknown."

Argus was struck with the idea. Much trouble might be avoided by such a measure, and he meekly asked how such a thing could be done.

"With ten dollars, and old Squire Perkins."

"I will think of it," said Argus, after a long pause. "Curse me, if I do not already think I am growing brainless. I begin to be afraid. I dread meeting with familiar things, and am miserable in looking for the unknown."

"Capen, if it could only bring Mis Roxalana round,—this ere event of yours, it will pay, and she is fond of Miss Virginia. Go right in, Capen, and smoke over it. Here's to ye."

Argus went home without another word, and Mat, in his excitement, sat up with the big rummer and his pipe till Mary's snoring assured him he should keep from telling her, that night, at least.

"What is the matter?" repeated Mr. Brande. Virginia was at her wits' end for a reply. Would nothing come to her aid, and save Argus from shame?

"Have I returned to find more melo-drama?" said Mr. Carfield harshly.

"Melo-drama in a Christian woman!" said Mr. Brande. "Give me the note."

Virginia crushed it in her hand, and retained it.

"I repeat," he said, shaking his handkerchief as if it were a net, "give me the note, or answer my question, daughter."

She looked at him beseechingly. A shade of annoyance passed over his shining face; that she should be embarrassed before Mr. Carfield stung his pride.

"Girls will be girls," he said, looking at Mr. Carfield; "that preposterous Temple Drake has sent some nonsensical message. The name of Gates I despise, except, perhaps, in the case of Argus."

"And why not him?" asked Mr. Carfield. "I think him an out-of-the-way ass. He intends at last to marry Virginia. Her face says so."

"I,—I do not believe you," she said, turning paler. "How can my face express what I do not know?"

"Impossible!" said Mr. Brande.

"Before your father, then, once more, Virginia, I ask you to accept me for a husband," cried Mr. Carfield.

"Virginia," said her father gravely, "you are compromised. You are as well aware of the fact as I am that all Kent knows that Mr. Carfield has lived in my house with the intention of marrying you. I have given our friends reason to believe that he is

agreeable to you. I desire you to accept Mr. Carfield. The voice of nature demands it of you to do so;—the ties of property, our business, my welfare. Don't bring any disgrace on me, daughter."

She thrust the note inside her bodice, with a strange look at Mr. Carfield.

"Take it away from there, the cursed thing," he said fiercely, "I won't have it so."

"Give me a little time, father," she said, putting her hand against her breast, with a gesture which made Mr. Carfield bite his lips; "and if you will excuse me now, I will consider your wishes."

Mr. Brande waved his consent to her leaving the room; he was reading his partner like a book, and thought it time for her to go.

"Now," he mused, "why am I not like this man? I envy him, and I believe he is a frank scoundrel."

He turned very suddenly and quietly, and looked Mr. Carfield directly in the eyes; and then as quietly rubbed his smooth jaws, and looked into the fire.

Mr. Carfield smiled, and thought that he could account for Virginia's timidity.

"Brande," he said, "I do want her; but how far do you think a fellow may descend in such a pursuit?"

"How far have you gone?"

"I am trying to *compel* her to marry me, when I feel almost certain that Argus Gates stands in my way. For more than a year I have been playing this interesting game, and all I have gained is her



irresolution. Did you ever lose anything you were terribly in earnest to get, Brande?"

"I think I have generally gained my objects, but I have never been so very much in earnest. As for my daughter, I know, of course, her strong attachment for that Gates family; I can only believe that Argus is but a part of it. I think she is an obedient girl, and that her nature is a pliable one. I expect her to marry you; she will be happy in so doing. What more can she ask for than to continue her placid, prosperous life?"

"She asks for all that her sensuous beauty demands, and she should have it; and it is the purpose of my life to make her own that I can give it to her."

"You must be infatuated," stammered Mr. Brande, "to speak to me so. I—I should like to reprove you: it would not become me, perhaps, to do so, but I think it would be right."

"What was the price of your daughter? Did I pay it for the Forge—for my friendship with you? I bought *her*. She knows it."

"She knows that I want her to marry you, and that is enough. If it pleases your taste to call it a matter of selfish business, do so, but let the affair be conducted decently, for heaven's sake, Carfield. Your youthful rashness is unpardonable."

"*Me* a 'rash youth,' Brande? I am sure that you know the Devil must make a horrible grimace when you are offered him to swallow. Surely, you are man enough to admit that the Devil may have a

choice among his pious tit-bits, as it was the choice of Christ to allow the publicans to enter heaven before the Pharisees."

"My dear boy, I admit everything; but isn't it rather late? Recollect, we have to ride thirty miles to-morrow."

"True—about those shares; don't sit up then. I have still a little reading to do. By the way, I'll overlook your wish—to reprove me, you know."

Mr. Brande smiled faintly, and said it was difficult for him to forget his old-fashioned prejudices. But, on his way to his bedroom, he asked himself how it was that the circumstances of Virginia's life should have brought so bold and passionate a man as Carfield to her feet, while he, in all his years, had never been tempted with one whose power might have shaken the resolves which ruled him.

When Virginia sat down before her dressing-table in her chamber, she read the note Argus had written; then she was foolish enough to kiss it, and put it under her pillow. Letting down her hair, she thought that she would think, while undressing, of the course best to pursue with Argus, her father, and Mr. Carfield; but the operation was over and her hair carefully braided in heavy bands, and she had not thought of anything,—except the happiness she should feel if Argus were with her at that moment, watching her with that gentle coldness, which was a mystery and fascination to her. She concluded that her mind would better collect itself in bed and the dark, for, of course, something must be planned, and

accordingly put out her light, and went to bed. But the darkness proved oppressive; besides, she wanted to read the note once more; therefore, she rose, relighted her lamp, put on a dressing-gown, and sat down in a severe manner to reflect. It was dreary to begin her theme with duty, and the sacrifice of inclination, but she did. The night grew colder, as if divesting itself of the heat and perturbation of all human error. Its deepening solitude toned her mind to a lofty key; thought and feeling hand in hand, like innocent and affectionate spirits ascended to the throne, where, as she believed, the Ruler of the Universe was waiting to hear the petitions of reluctant souls against those inevitable fiats, which the soul itself issues in favor of the subtle martyrdoms which decorate life with its crown and thorns. With the abnegation inherent in her character, and its narrowness, which prevented her from looking at final effects, she decided upon giving up Argus, although she felt acutely that many acts had laid bare to him her purpose of bringing him to the point, which, at last, his note declared. To the end would she live with her father; their house should not be divided because of her conduct. With a loud, wild, farewell sigh for Argus, she pulled aside the curtain to look into the wide air, and feel the mercy of darkness. A band of stars rode high and clear above a company of moving clouds, spreading in the reflection of the moon, thin and white, like flakes of snow. Earth, a black tranquil monster, now passive beneath the beautiful illusions of

night, bristled with the life which by day forever enacted scenes of pain. Yet she must not call it pain, nor evil—this passing drama, but necessary discipline, and inscrutable wisdom. The sword that stabbed was rubbed with healing balm: the disappointment that seemed to blight contained the germ of development. Filled with the calm which she felt was that of another world, she drew the curtain, and was about to advance into the room, when a slight sound at the door arrested her; she saw the handle turning slowly and noiselessly. The door opened, and Mr. Carfield glided through, shut it, and locked it.

As he did not expect, he saw the lamp burning, and Virginia standing before him, rigid, white, silent, her hair braided like a child's behind her ears, and enveloped from head to foot in a dressing gown!

"Why are you still up?" he asked mechanically.

A revulsion of feeling took place in her at the sound of his voice, which undid all the process and result she had just completed; the cause of her father fell in ruins, so far as the implication of Mr. Carfield stood. The blood roared in her heart, which just now beat so evenly with victorious spiritual peace; he saw it rise to cheek and brow, till her eyes, the dark, perfect eyes he doted on, were filled with fiery sparks. She did not speak, but calculated the distance between herself and the door behind her, beyond which was Sarah's room, and wondered if she could fly there before he could intercept; but her moral cowardice was great; the idea of the servants' knowing his shameful behavior was one she

could not endure. She was sure that in twenty-four hours, were they to know it, it would be known in Kent. Mr. Carfield divined her first thought.

"There can be no communication between you and Sarah just yet," he said. "What do you think I am in your chamber for?"

She shrugged her shoulders with an ineffable scorn.

"How many times do you suppose I have waited outside your door, believing that some fate would send you to open it and find me,—lying across the threshold?"

Oh, what a life was hers! Better the old days of dread and watching, than a prison like this!

"Your father must have seen me there."

"No, no,—you shall not lie."

He sprang towards her, pinioned her in his arms, and fell down at her feet in a terrible agitation.

"I have come," he said, in a broken voice, "to say that you must no longer resist me; the approach of that man must be prevented. Have I no power over you, at this moment, Virginia—*this* moment?"

She tried in vain to retreat from him, but could not move, for he was kneeling on the border of her dress.

"An impulse brings me to you," he continued, "which you do not know, yet which you shall understand. Virginia, I must be yours; give me—"

He raised his face, and she looked down at him. His mad, beseeching eyes, his open lips and violent breath, carried to her sad soul the conviction that it

was her destiny to be the witness of, and a party in, scenes, the knowledge of which must be a condemning barrier between her and the women who peopled the world, without beauty, talent, and passion, and who governed it. She would have escaped from him upon his entrance into the room, but it had not occurred to her to be afraid of him; and now it did not occur to her that at her feet was a handsome, passionate lover, the man, too, chosen for her husband by everybody, excepting herself and Argus. Meeting her eyes, he could not help being touched by the cold, silent misery in her face; then he grew exasperated.

"I will injure you beyond all repair," he said, rising suddenly.

"I am afraid so."

"Since you spoke to me of Argus Gates, I believed till now that you felt for him a caprice, base in its aims; I know better from this. You are simply like other women. So, you are not afraid of me?"

"Afraid! No, of what should I be afraid?"

"The newspapers have names for it, invented mostly by your sex."

Virginia shuddered, and spoke passionately.

"Even acquaintance with you shall end; my father must at once decide which of us shall leave his house. Will you go, or need I tell him this cruel interview?"

"He will not decide as you wish, even if you tell him the story of to-night; *that* is not ended."

"Are you ever going out of my room? You are as tiresome as you are brutal. Go out, Mr. Carfield."

He could have struck her and kissed her till she bled, so blended were his hate and admiration. Snatching a knot of ribbon from her, he turned and left the room.

She felt that she should go mad if she did not sleep, and threw herself on her bed, where Sarah found her at breakfast time.

"Miss Virginia," said Sarah, significantly, "you look beat out, tired to death."

"Do I?" she answered, starting up, and looking at the girl intently.

The secret of last night was not confined to herself and Mr. Carfield! The battle was opened. "Oh, for my Chloe!" she thought. The note under her pillow, which she had forgotten so long, came to her,—a flash of joy.

"I shall be down presently, Sarah; you need not wait."

"The gentlemen rode away two hours ago. They left their love for you."

Sarah gone, she looked for the note; that was gone also.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

VIRGINIA decided upon going into town immediately, and conferring with Mat Sutcliffe about meeting Argus privately, but was prevented from doing so by the arrival of Temple Drake, who said that the imperative wish of her Uncle Argus had sent her; but that having reached the house she should probably never be able to leave it. Producing a second note, she asked Virginia if she would not have it framed, as it must be the first he had ever written to a lady. Virginia blushed, and looked so conscious when she took it, that Tempe exclaimed:

"You don't mean to say that Uncle Socrates is in the habit of inditing notes to you?"

"I mean to say nothing about it," answered Virginia, with vexation, and reading with an assumption of carelessness the note. "I only wait to know," wrote Argus, "your wishes; but, if I were you, I should send by Tempe the following message, 'Everything shall be according to your wishes.'" This was all. She said at once to Tempe: "You may tell Captain Gates, Tempe, that everything shall be as he wishes."

"That will be nothing new for him; but as I told you, I am going to spend the day here. I feel stronger for coming. Virginia, I am really glad to see you."

"Are you, my dear? Do stay then. How is Roxalana?"

"She is like her old self; this morning she spoke to us all; but I am not like my old self."

"You are prettier," said Virginia, smiling.

"And I am more gentle."

"I hope so."

"Don't dream, Virginia; talk to me."

"Yes—what did you say?"

"Why, here's Sarah with another note; it looks bed-ridden, though."

"I found this, Miss Virginia," said Sarah, "on the floor, at the head of your bed."

"Thank you," said Virginia, with another conscious look at Tempe. "I am glad we shall be alone to day, Tempe," she exclaimed, when Sarah was gone. "Father and Mr. Carfield are away on business."

"Do you know that I have not been to the Forge since you wrote me about your mother's death?"

"I know it, Tempe."

"What made you shut yourself up for so many weeks? And why didn't you put on mourning? Chloe said no one out of the house saw you for the whole summer, and that she heard at meeting that it was Mr. Brande's wish, having made it a matter of prayer, that you should not wear black. Is this

true? I have had my own troubles, you know, or I should not venture to speak so plainly."

"It is all true, Tempe. Many months flew away in sad nothingness with me. I cannot account for the time now. I am sure I shall never have such days again; they began, do you remember, from the very night I took tea at your house, when Mr. Carfield came for me. He went away immediately afterwards; now that I think of it, his coming and going were the dates of that period, especially with father; and so we glided along."

"His coming and going—Mr. Carfield, I mean—delayed your marriage, I suppose."

"I—I don't know," said Virginia, taken by surprise, "I shall not marry him."

"Not when he has lived here nearly two years, and travelled about everywhere with the behavior of an engaged man? I am afraid you are a coquette, or that you don't know your own mind. Perhaps it will suffice, though, if *he* knows his mind."

"Oh, Tempe, don't be bitter with me."

"Me! There is not bitterness enough in me to make a quinine pill. But you have a right to coquette, and to dally. You are rich, and your own mistress."

"Stupid, blind friend, I am neither."

"Don't cry, Virginia, I am growing bright every day. You mustn't be surprised at bursts of knowledge in me at any time; I feel them coming, I do, I assure you. *I am being taught at last what life is,—*

when one ceases to be an infant. For Heaven's sake tell me what this torrent of tears means. I never saw you cry; have you so much soul then?—placid, fair, beautiful Virginia, need I no longer envy you?"

"Bad girl, I have the influenza, you may depend; let us look in 'Watson's Practice' for a remedy."

"Bosh; but if you do not wish to talk with me, don't drown me. Do you think it will be too cold for us to walk down to the pines this afternoon?"

"On your way home?"

"But I like to come back. Can you not send me home by Moses and a vehicle? If Mr. Carfield were only here to drive me home with that remarkable steed."

"Would you go with him? It might flatter him deeply."

"Do you think so?" Tempe flushed at the question. "Would I not like to move so handsome a man, and so indifferent, too? He looks to me as if made of porphyry, with a crystal here and there."

"It is a pleasant idea,—our going to the woods,—the air is dry and clear,—just the day, one of the last of the season, probably. Are you strong enough to ramble, Tempe?"

"What did I tell you? I got well at three o'clock in the afternoon of a Thursday, ten days ago. Can you and I dine early? By the way, how do you like Sarah in Chloe's place?"

"Not as well. Will you give me back Chloe again?"

"When you are married."

Virginia looked conscious again, but Tempe did not seem to notice it.

Dinner over, at which they got good humored and commonplace, and at which Sarah, with considerable toss in her manners, waited, they were ready for the pines. Sarah asked Virginia's permission to go into town to do some shopping, which was granted, and she left the house with them.

Virginia began:

"If thou hast learned a truth which needs  
No school of long experience, that the world  
Is full of grief and misery, and hast seen  
Enough of all its sorrows, crimes and cares,  
To tire thee of it, enter this wild-wood—"

"Yes," replied Tempe, her eyes intently fixed upon the shafts of a deep, straight vista of trees:

"—Thou wilt find *something* here  
Of all that pained thee in the haunts of men,  
And made thee loathe thy life—"

"I see Sebastian, Virginia.

"Oh, Mr. Ford, what shall we do now?"

"Sit down within this little circle of stumps, or upon the moss; he sees nothing. Let him come, and stumble over us; he will not recognize us as differing from the stumps or moss."

He was coming directly towards them, and he pulled off his hat, making bows, till he reached the spot where they were.

"How is it that you are here, Tempe?" he said, "I am beating up the country for you, alarmed."

"I walked here."

"But what sent you? tell me your caprice."

"I wished to be with a friend."

"Well, you have two beside you."

"More than I need, then."

He looked at Virginia and smiled, and then threw himself down beside Tempe.

"Curious old ballad in these trees! Miss Brande, lend me your handkerchief, the moss scratches my face. Hark, now, to that enchanting cadence, rising from,—heaven knows where, to die an airy death against our faces."

Virginia was about passing her handkerchief, when Tempe caught it, and said an affair of lace would not serve, and that moss was a suitable cushion, especially the red-eyed moss, such as Sebastian was crushing with his elbows. Catholics, she believed, ought to be fond of discomforts.

"What if I should grow to be fond of one of the discomforts of my daily life?" he answered.

"And that would be?" Virginia asked.

"This little girl."

"Sebastian has caught the trick of sarcasm from Uncle Argus," said Tempe, "but he is not so clever at it."

"No," he answered; "my everlasting melancholy steps in, and softens the blows; Argus, being pitiless, cuts and comes again."

"Is it not strange that he should not be infected with the gaiety at our house?" asked Tempe,— "that palace of mirth, wit, and pleasure. You know something about it, Virginia."

"I have had happy moments there, at all events."

"I, too," said Sebastian, "free, blessed moments; they are gone. But, Tempe, you did not tell me the reason you left home so early this morning."

"I left on a subject connected, possibly, with the happy moments Virginia speaks of. Did you miss me?"

"I lost you," he said vehemently, "and then I discovered that I was capable of being alarmed about you. Neither Roxalana nor Chloe knew where you were, and Argus is in town. Strange, that I should feel some weight clinging to me, dragging me on again! What dream is it? Will my powers be given away once more?"

Virginia thought him an enigma. Tempe scarcely heard his last words. An indescribable expression of pleased pride changed her pale, listless face; she pushed her hair from it, as if she felt the change, and bent towards him.

"Little one," he said, rising quickly, "your errand done, will you come home with me?"

"On the contrary, Mr. Ford," interposed Virginia, "go with us; for Tempe has declared an intention of finishing the day with me."

"I will visit you here, Miss Brande, if you will permit. Do you not like to receive in these beautiful, still woods?"

"I shall not go back with you, Sebastian," said Tempe, "unless you choose to accept Virginia's invitation."

"Let us walk towards the river," he said, "and then I will take my leave of you."



"I am too tired to move about," said Tempe, provoked at his refusal to go back with them; but, curious to get an opinion of him from Virginia, she urged them to walk on, while she gathered cones from the trees around her. A moment, and they were out of sight; which vexed her so much that she bit a cone to pieces, and decided that they should not find her when they returned to the spot. Accordingly she went back to the house, and met Mr. Carfield, who had just arrived from his journey, he said, and left Mr. Brande at the Forge.

For a time Sebastian and Virginia were silent. The paths through which they wound were narrow and dusky; no sound followed their steps in the soft, deep bed of needles, shed by the trees whose green tops kept the secret from the air, which now hung over them like a silvery web. The strange occasion brought the impulse which seized her to confide her fears and hopes to the one beside her.

"I should like to speak to you," she exclaimed.

"Should you, to *me*, as an individual? Recollect that you never have so spoken."

"Have I not?" she answered, surprised at his accent.

"But—I am all attention; please go on."

Feeling somewhat confused, and not quite so ready as she supposed with her subject, she said; "Do you not find Tempe changed? Is she not interesting?"

"I do find her changed, and interesting; is it of her you would speak?"

"No, no, of myself; perhaps I shall bore you, though, Mr. Ford."

"Once more, I am listening."

"We must soon go back to Tempe, I suppose; another time may answer."

He took his watch from his pocket and showed it to her.

"Whenever you say so, of course we will return."

She stopped, glowing, trembling with excitement. A tree jutted into the path behind Sebastian; he stopped also, resting his shoulders against it; the grey and green shade over and around them brought out their faces in exquisite relief. For all her pre-occupation, she was struck by the strange, winning beauty of the eyes fastened upon her,—the sensibility and power of the lips which seemed shut with the seal of an impenetrable sadness. He felt her breath coming and going, she stood so near him; that everlasting melody, wilder and sweeter ~~than~~ the cadence in the pines, rising, falling, dying in their ever-green tops at the will of the embracing wind, swept over him. So near Virginia, in this ancient, sombre solitude, apart in its character from any association, or touch of human will and interest, he was divided from his experiences and knowledge, and penetrated with a new truth. In her existed what he had found in no woman before. She ended the tumults, speculations, and vague beliefs, which had sent him hither and thither.

For an instant his powers of endurance were tested. He would have taken her in his arms, to mingle the

current of his breath, blood, soul, life with hers; then all would be understood, and this interview be but the beginning of a fair life, promising happiness from the text of youth, beauty, and equal powers.

He assumed, however, a still more careless attitude, looked into the sky and said: "Time shall not pass till you have chosen to honor me with what you intended to say."

His black eyelashes fell together, and his face expressed a concentrated repose. "Heaven!" he muttered, "the puppet system seems still to be neatly carried on. Tricked by an opportunity again! I mean, Miss Brande, that a man appears like driftweed merely. And here I am standing meekly against a tree, waiting for your confidence."

"I heard you say *puppets*; if I could settle my affairs puppet-wise, as so many men do, fearing neither God nor man, I should have no confidences to tax you with."

"Let us walk on," he said abruptly. "Do not reproach me with idle phrases."

They came in sight presently of a bend in the river, and passed an opening through which they caught a glimpse of Mr. Brande's house. At that moment, as they slowly disappeared in the depths of the woods again, Mr. Carfield, sitting beside Tempe in the gay, comfortable parlor, was in the act of raising her little hand to his lips, and exchanging a glance whose rays darted from that extensive dominion the devil always shines upon. Virginia's agitation rose again, and she began to speak of Mr. Car-

field, his relation with her father, and with herself. Sebastian's nostrils dilated occasionally, otherwise he made no demonstration, but he observed that she passed over the affair which Argus had spoken of, concerning Mr. Carfield. Whether she intended to tell Sebastian of the last night's scene, she hardly knew, but his silence and impassiveness led her on. She omitted no particular of it.

When she said, "He fell at my feet," Sebastian caught her by the arm and pushed her backwards, clicked his fingers, and cried,—*"Christ, where is my pistol?"*

"Your eyes are too terrible; I am sorry I have told you, but I want your advice," she said.

"Is there any more?"

"And then this morning," she continued, "when I could not find the note, I felt assailed by some unknown misfortune."

"What note?"

She paused, turned red, and pale again.

"The one from Argus. Do you know nothing of it? Why Tempe, to whom he intrusts nothing, brought me a second to-day."

"And of the second one I know as little."

"Tell me, Mr. Ford, how I can compel Mr. Carfield to forego the insane pursuit of myself?"

He saw that she had not approached the matter she most wished to speak of.

"Ask Argus, Miss Brande."

"Don't you think it is quite late?"

"Nearly sunset."

"Shall you always live in Kent?"

"It is my wish."

"Have you no mother, or sister, or, or—love?"

"I have no family, but I do love a very beautiful sincere woman. I shall never marry her, though, and we may consider that subject disposed of."

"Sebastian, if you mean to live at Temple House, be my brother. And now may I own that I love a beautiful and sincere man."

"Argus?"

"Yes."

"I will be no woman's brother, not even Roxalana's. Shall I promise that, and live with you, Virginia? Do you know that I am that man, who, if you were the wife of Argus, and I eating his bread, under his roof, also,—the terrible moment, and the terrible need, might come to both of us—to love."

"Then," said Virginia sadly, "I must be the means of Argus losing his dear friend."

"Does Argus love you?" he asked sharply. How could she answer the question, when she dared not ask herself?

"I do not know—yes. Should he not?" she replied.

"You contemplate marriage with Argus. I believe you will find a pure and tranquil happiness with him."

"If he loves me. Does he love me?"

"Take him at his word, I entreat you. Now I am sure that you have come to the point. I am entirely at your service—with one warning. If you ask me to leave Temple House, I will not promise to."

"Mr. Ford, will you return home with me."

"If you insist."

"Tempe will remain all night, possibly, I cannot count on her taking a message to Argus. How shall I arrange to meet him? How shall I keep him and Mr. Carfield apart? How shall I escape my father's will? I am afraid, terribly afraid. Who is that in the Forge path?"

"The figure of a woman, hurrying on."

"It is not Tempe?"

"No."

They hastened across the path, into the wood is on the other side, and finding no Tempe, returned in time to overtake Sarah, the one they saw in the path. She was belated, she said, in her shopping, but tea should be ready, as usual.

"So you changed your mind, Sebastian," said Tempe, as Virginia entered the parlor with him. "Or were you afraid of the woods, Virginia? What possessed you to keep out so late?"

"It is too late, I acknowledge," Sebastian answered, "but we yielded to an influence, which you resisted it seems. Why did you not wait?"

"I got tired of the crickets, and having uprooted a whole tribe of toadstools, I thought I had better come back. I found Mr. Carfield."

"Where is he?" asked Virginia.

"Gone to the office."

Sebastian looked at Tempe sternly; it displeased him to hear her speak so familiarly of the man he had reason to detest.

"Come," he said, "let me take you home at once."

"You are absurd. I feel merry here. We shall have a banquet presently from dishes that are not cracked, and on a table-cloth that is not darned. Can't you endure a momentary pang of luxury, Sebastian? I am another being outside the walls of our common jail. Can you not indulge me a little, and graciously smile at the change? You think me morbid, irritable, feeble, beside our stately mother and friend, Roxalana. Notice me, I say, here."

"Poor wretch! what would you have?"

"Everything that you have had,—the first and final pleasure and pain of every awakened feeling. I would even like to be drowned, Sebastian."

His olive-tinted face burned with an angry flush.

"You are mischievous out of your cage, Tempe. It is not safe to let you escape for a moment."

Without heeding him, she went on:

"To begin with, I must have one, two, three worshippers."

"Fire-worshippers don't come into this part of the world; nor incense-burners. I shall take care of the one, two, three worshippers you may select. Tempe, I had better marry you, and keep you in charge. I shall do so."

She sprang up as if struck a violent blow.

"Not unless I love you,—unless you love me," she cried.

"It should happen—our marriage, without love on either side; I have loved, and you are incapable of loving,—see, what a match it will be! How interest-

ing its problem! *You and me bound!* I like the idea. Do you?"

He took her hands and made her stand up, close to him.

"Do you?" he repeated.

"If we can go in the traces—tandem, sir. I would as lief marry you and break your heart, as not. But how much heart did you bring to Kent?"

"Enough, my child, to match yours. Am I accepted, Tempe?"

"Hush, you strange man," said Virginia, "they are coming. And at this moment, Mr. Brande and Mr. Carfield entered."

"Ah, Mrs. Drake," said Mr. Brande, advancing with outstretched hands, "how long it is since you have been seen in my poor house."

Sebastian stared at Tempe, he had never heard her called by her married name before. Virginia hastened to introduce him to her father.

"I am happy to welcome you here, sir," he said. "If I am correct, sir, I believe few people in Kent are honored with your visits, I understand that you are a recluse, sir."

"I indulge myself with much out-of-doors life, and I enter no hours," Sebastian replied, in so strong a foreign accent that both Tempe and Virginia looked at him in surprise. Mr. Carfield having made him a slight bow, which was returned by one quite as foreign as the accent, remarked that it had taken quite a quantity of out-of-doors life that afternoon to enable him to reach the house at all."

"I take great pleasure in the fine environs of this spot, Mr. Carfield. I have penetrated their concealed depths this day," he replied. "Do you find no attraction outside, or do you depend upon life within walls, for your pleasure? I know little of the domestic drama; but I conclude that the most isolated equable, and ~~lust-demeaned~~ in-door-life contains much worth one's study—at all hours."

In spite of his self-control, there was a menace in his eyes which Mr. Carfield saw, and set down to the influence of Argus; for it could never come into his thoughts that Virginia would betray him. She felt uncomfortable at Sebastian's behavior—perplexed and haunted by a new fear.

"Why this delay, daughter," asked Mr. Brande, "about tea?"

"Sarah has been in town all the afternoon," answered Virginia.

"Gadding and gossiping."

"I dare say," she answered, rising to leave the room.

"Let me go with you, Virginia," begged Tempe. "I would like to look into the closets with you."

"Come, then."

As soon as they were in the dining room, Tempe seized hold of Virginia.

"Did you ever meet so strange a creature as Sebastian Ford. He so coolly thinks he can drive Providence."

"I like him very much."

"I hate him; I wish to torment his life out."

"If you try, I shall have no doubt of your success. Now please be quiet; I am both busy and weary. I never knew Sarah so behind time."

"One minute more, Virginia," begged Tempe, hugging her tightly. "You never had the least faith in me, but have been patient, and I love you. I do, dear, I am sorry I haven't been a better friend, but I will be better—with you, though I cannot be good, goodness isn't agreeable to me. Kiss me, and look straight into my face."

Virginia laughed and struggled; Tempe's gaze was direct, hard and questioning.

"There is something senseless about you, Tempe, but I have always taken it for granted that we were to keep together through life. Let me go."

"Do—you—want—Sebastian to love you?"

"No."

"Are—you—going—to marry Mr. Carfield, or be compelled to marry him?"

"Never."

"Then attend to your supper. I have looked into the closet!"

As supper was announced, Mr. Brande, in a slight fit of absent-mindedness, was observing to Mr. Carfield that he perceived a great change in that young woman, the niece of Gates; she had grown five years older since he had last seen her. Mr. Carfield said she was doosed handsome, though rather slight in build, and rather skittish in manners. It was a relief to Sebastian to be called out. How was it possible for Virginia to exist in the atmosphere of her father's

house? he thought. And that she should have been drawn to Temple House, and on to loving Argus did not seem so strange to him now. He could not resist the double dream of to-day, while quietly courteous to Mr. Brande. The melody begun among the trees floated through his thoughts. Had there been no Argus, to-day would not have lost him Virginia, and gained him Tempe. Then an unwonted picture rose before him;—a different air, the mass and blaze of tropical foliage spreading along alluvial shores, filling deep, sinuous valleys, creeping up volcanic slopes; a basin-like sea; a range of iron-edged mountains; a dull, dark town, with low towers and balconies; and everywhere himself, the moving figure in the landscape—kneeling before a woman, reclining beside her, holding her in his arms, giving her flowers and fruits and jewels, and the ardent heart of a boy.

Mr. Brande, somewhat to his self-concern, continued to observe Tempe. She attracted him, and why she did at this moment, and had never before, was beyond his understanding. His eyes followed her movements; when Sebastian, hat in hand, declared that he must go, and again asked her if she were ready, they went up and down the black and white stripes of her dress, in and out the deep waves of her hair, down her ivory cheek, dropped on her little ears, her pearls of teeth, her slender hands, and it seemed to him that he was looking upon a kind of creature perfectly new to him.

"You may have me, Sebastian," she said, as she

approached him to whisper in his ear the message Virginia had given her for Argus.

He stood before Virginia, not only to bid her good night, but to decide if he were able to give an eternal farewell to the emotions she had created. What was this idea of the future he had so suddenly and ingeniously devised? Whatever it might be—his act should now, for he was capable of it, be—sacrifice!

If Virginia had been gifted with that power of insight which some women have, she might have been agitated at the spectacle of a heroic soul in the act of self-abnegation, and a heart denying it by its passionate struggle; but she was not gifted with it, and, felt merely, when she looked into his handsome eyes, a regret at losing a tie between herself and Argus. Sebastian bent over her hand, and adroitly pressed his lips upon it. Virginia never received so much in a caress, and never would again—unless he should repeat it.

The evening was wearing away rapidly to Mr. Brande, but Virginia fell into an impatience she could hardly control. When and how should she hear from Argus? She could not live through another day of suspense; if she did, something might come and thwart her purpose of leaving her father. She held some knitting in her hand, as an excuse for silence and inattention; suddenly, and to her annoyance, Tempe affirmed that after all she must go home that evening, and claimed Virginia's promise that Moses should drive her home.

"Oh, no, not by any means," said Mr. Brande. "If you must go—"

"I will drive you down in my light wagon," interrupted Mr. Carfield.

Tempe, developed into a coquette by the espionage of these men, as rapidly as a weed develops in the sun and showers of April, looked from one to the other.

"I shall be most happy to accompany you home," continued Mr. Brande; "either to walk, or take you in my chaise."

Virginia was lost in astonishment at her father's proffer; but was recalled from it by the low voice of Mr. Carfield, who had come near her, and taken away her knitting. He laughed wickedly as he said: "You see perfectly, Virginia, how potent and all-surprising is the effect of beauty. Your father is quite dazed, isn't he? Quite natural, I am sure; he is in the prime of life, and is violating nature's intention as he is. Nature will revenge herself, and force at last the merest worm of a man to assert his rights. You agree with me?"

"How long, how long, my God," she whispered, "is this man to be my humiliation and disgrace?"

"Which shall it be?" he said, turning to Tempe. "Your humble servant, or our polite host?"

He looked so gay and unconcerned, so handsomely bold, so different from the sarcastic Argus, the immovable Sebastian, that Tempe admired him, but could not feel a shadow of respect for him. Mr. Brande she was afraid of, and consequently felt gratified at the attention he paid her.

"Tempe," Virginia called, "I insist upon your staying; it is childish to think of returning, when Mr. Ford has just gone with your message."

"Daughter, Mrs. Drake must not be urged to stay against her will; she knows best, certainly."

"I will stay, Virginia, if you wish it so much," Tempe said, after a little reflection. "I am quite happy here, of course."

She took a seat on a low stool at Virginia's feet, and looked affectionately at her. Mr. Brande thought the picture enticing; his mouth relaxed in contemplating it. There was something richly soothing in the idea,—the two handsome girls together; he would like to keep them so, as his,—one his faithful, sensible, correct daughter, the other, his playful piquant, pliant, toy-wife. All the while he looked at them he wondered at himself; what he had dreamed of so many years, was after all approaching him in a legitimate way. But—why should he be so blest? Providence was playing into his hands so freely, and unmistakably, that he was almost inclined to think that a belief in that power was not so much a moral necessity for the sake of training the soul for a hereafter life, as it was an agreeable dependence on its aid to bring things about according to one's desires in this world. Virginia being neither moralist, just now, nor heroine, would gladly have shaken Tempe and reproached her for affectation and silliness. As she could not do this, she coldly took up her knitting, and maintained an obstinate silence. Mr. Carfield, an acute observer, laughed again jovially from the



depths of his full chest, and said, "Harlequin now signifies to the statue, that its pasteboard arm must descend on the intruder who attempts to pass the portals, where the true lovers have entered."

## CHAPTER XXX.

SEBASTIAN determined, on the way home, to find Argus at once, and open the subject pending between him and Virginia. For that purpose he went over the house in search of him. Though there was a haze of cigar smoke in the green room, and the glimmer of a candle under his bedroom door, he was not to be seen. Roxalana said that she had been left in the dark concerning the general dispersion of the family, that day, and supposed if anything was to happen therefrom she should hear of it in good time. She was glad to know of Tempe's visit to Virginia, and surprised that Sebastian should have gone to Mr. Brande's. What did he think of the house?"

"I felt it to be a bad place."

"Did you comprehend Virginia's position? There is something mysterious and doubtful going on with her; I have felt so for some time."

"I think her life will be happier shortly. Roxalana you are attached to her?"

"Very much; she is a noble girl."

"How is she noble?"

"You know she has been brought up by her father's strict and narrow religious ideas, yet she is not self-righteous; her father is also rich, yet her taste is simple, and the capacity for self-denial is not dead-

ened in the least. Indeed, Sebastian, considering that she is conventionally pious, rich and handsome, you must agree with me, and think it remarkable that she should possess traits which have nothing to do with these facts, and which please those who are also devoid of them; like me, for instance. That you who sometimes feel strangely filled with reverence,—are handsome, though your nose is a trifle too large,—and, at least, have been rich, should not feel a sympathy for her, or liking, is not strange.”

“Oh, my Roxalana, I have had such a day!”

“What have you been in pursuit of?”

“I was pursued, caught, and am extricating myself.”

“When you said, a short time since that you needed me, I feared you had become unhappy. It is not to be expected that you should find happiness in this dull house, and with us plain, old people. But I had the impression, when you came here, that you had suffered so deeply from the causes which men believe happiness springs from, you would not seek them again; in short, I reckoned that like Argus and myself, you had used up a portion of life,—one lung say, and were contented to breathe through the other. You are a young man, and I have made a senseless mistake; grandmothers will err in their judgment of men, because their memories are short. You may be frank with me, tell me *anything* you choose. I am as silent as a sponge, and as absorbing; when you are ready to wring out all you have confided,—I shall still be the same.”

He reflected whether he should deny himself the

sad pleasure of confession; whether they could not together keep a secret, which should remain in their minds, like a sword, the fall of which would cut asunder the destinies of the whole family,—with Virginia added! No. He would not add a burden to the mind, so passive, yet so unreasonable in suffering. After a short pause, during which she regarded him affectionately, he clasped her hand, and said:

“Did I say that I went for Tempe?”

“No; if you did go, I thank you.”

“Her absence tormented me.”

“Do you say so, Sebastian? Then the time has come for me to interfere with her; I shall not permit her to disquiet you in the least. It is enough for me to be the witness of her vagaries. And yet, of late, I have been somewhat encouraged in regard to Tempe, her temper has seemed milder, her feelings better. It is a sad thing to say, but my only child has never given me the means of a day's happiness, since she grew up.”

“But she will do so.”

“I should be thankful to be so convinced.”

“So I went after her, and found her, and then, the something which has pursued me in the most stealthy manner for quite a period, as I now recognize, arrived at my very heart. I am agitated,—in conflict; no, not in conflict—in a profound exaltation, and I must give it a form in absolute, irremediable acts.”

She did not understand him, and said so, telling

him to go on until she could, and remarking, mentally, that it would be a great relief to him, to be rid of his puzzling thoughts. He continued:

"Could I ever do anything better than to take Tempe, if she will be so good, for my wife?"

Her eyes seemed turning to marble, they fixed upon him so immovably. He smiled, drew back, and said;

"Answer."

Drawling, and hesitating, but making her words most distinct, she replied:

"Sebastian, you astound me. Your mind is astray. It will be impossible for me to comprehend this idea."

"What of that? I do not comprehend one hour of my life. I am assailed, vanquished, changed, inspired, and directed, by sensations as vital and necessary as the Creator is; if they are blind, like chance, what have I to do with that?"

"She is a child, and—a widow."

"A child no longer and the widowhood"—Sebastian snapped his fingers. Roxalana laughed till her marble eyes glittered with tears; the best thing she could do under the circumstances, for she was not prepared to decide on a question which she felt must be against the happiness of one or the other, whether she said 'Yes,' or 'No.' Tempe could not make Sebastian happy. Sebastian was perhaps necessary to the wilful creature!

"Why in the world," she said, "have you not conversed with Tempe on this subject? It is not

the fashion here, for parents to marry their children. We marry ourselves in this country, and so the idea of *family* is disintegrated, like all our institutions."

"How can you say this, Roxalana, when you have the example of Miss Brande before you? She has not dared to banish the man her father desires her to marry. I still doubt whether she will marry—" he stopped.

"I should like to know what kind of man Cyrus Brande is? He is a pest to that girl. Why don't she run away from him? I should be glad to inform him of my opinion concerning his behavior to her."

"And you would protect her if she came to you? But we are running wide of our discussion. Have I your permission? By the way, I believe I have money enough to serve us all, after our present way of living."

"Give me a little time to think over the matter; probably I shall come to a reasonable conclusion."

"My dear Roxalana, it is settled. Have no uneasiness; it is good for me to be un—to have a purpose, I mean. Now, I will wait for Argus."

## CHAPTER XXXI

"ARGUS," said Sebastian, at the breakfast table the next morning, "I must speak with you seriously."

"The devil! Have you thought it necessary hitherto to approach me with a joke?"

Roxalana, supposing Tempe was to be discussed, slipped out, and joined Chloe in the kitchen.

"Marsy, Missis Gates," said Chloe, "what is the matter, that should make you gum your eyes on that crack in the wall? Is it growing bigger? What ails you, Missis Gates?"

"Hush, Chloe, not a word. I have lost my pocket-handkerchief. I hardly know where I am."

"I hope you haven't lost anything else," Chloe muttered. "And as for not knowing where you are, that's no new idee; you never did know, once out of your chair. I hope and trust," speaking louder, "that you are not going to sign any deed; I am against women's signing deeds."

"Chloe, you are idiotic this morning."

"May be; but the Lord made me."

This skirmish ended, Chloe went to work furiously, remarking that she was going to work off a dreadful dream she had had. Before night came she said

that she had not dreamed for nothing, and that she knew it all along.

Sebastian looked thoughtfully at Argus, and said he did not know how to venture with him.

"Serious, serious—mind," Argus replied, with a cool smile. "What if I begin the talk at the bottom instead of the top, and tell you the prowl I had last night? I went to see Squire Perkins."

"What is that?"

"An old gentleman who lives at Boyd's Hill; he is a Justice of Peace, and can marry people. To-day, provided I send him word, he is to stick up the banns at Black's Four Corners,—a small settlement, fifteen miles distant, consisting of a meeting-house, a grog shop, and a saw mill. By banns, I mean a proclamation of marriage."

"Yes," replied Sebastian, with surprise, but adopting the lead, "I intended to open with Miss Brande's message, though I see it is not necessary. But why banns? they may bring you into trouble."

"Because of the law, and I expect a tempest thereby. What was her message?"

Sebastian repeated it, and mentioned his visit to Mr. Brande's.

"I was prepared for it; but whether she will have nerve enough to violate her own ideas of duty and propriety remains to be seen. Several days ago, Sebastian, after a considerable debate, I offered myself to Virginia, and her message I take as acceptance."

"You can act then, after all?"

"My pace has been slow towards this event; partly for her sake, more for my own. It has been naturally retarded by my idiosyncracies, as you must know."

"How will you dispose of them in the face of this change?"

"You may help me to manage them, and divert them from her observation."

"Do you advise me to remain on that account?"

"Remain for me, and make me happier."

"So I shall, and I shall marry Tempe."

"What for?"

"The various reasons which induce men to experiment with themselves. How else could I bear to contemplate Virginia as your wife? She is too lovely for me, a man more properly her mate, than you are,—to live under the same roof, an objectless, isolated being."

Argus winced.

"For more than three years, my boy, by precept and example, have I not inculcated the fact of age, poverty, and general unfitness?"

"I see it all," said Sebastian hotly, "it is a case of infatuation. She is one of those intricate women, who make love an immolation, and a spiritual ecstasy."

"I can't explain it; but be polite to me, or I'll not warn you about Tempe. Yet why should I warn you, since you live in her presence?"

"It was for me to warn you, my friend, and I have done so."

"Having done so then, stay, Sebastian. Are you not a regular Spanish Don? I understand your *punctilio*, and can trust to it, for in you it is *principle*. In my late conclusions I have settled it that she should be surrounded by *friendship*. She is beautiful, and I can no longer resist her,—especially since the ground which I thought steadfast has rolled from under me. I can bestow happiness on no woman; ought I not then to allow the existence of all other sentiments?"

"Fallacious idea, even stupid! Do you imagine a woman will content herself with the shelter of a cool, shady tree, when she has chosen that a vine should entwine her? It is your damnable coolness, your iron-bound nature, that dares you to venture on this step; not because you understand women."

"Shall I silence you with my experiences, at your age? Or shall I laugh with that patience men feel, when those experiences are impossible?"

"You are a terrible man; but if you are past loving, you are about to commit a crime."

Argus smiled bitterly.

"Who will heed it? Since you know women so well, tell me, have you asked them if the world is peopled by love?"

He rose and walked round the room, lifting here and there one of the chairs with a thumb and finger, and dropping it like a ball.

"I loved my wife with a different strength," he continued, resuming his seat, "because I was a boy. I lost her when I was a boy; and if she is an

immortal, as my moods sometimes intimate, I indulge the idea that I may be a boy again,—when we meet."

"This is very sad," said Sebastian mournfully.

"Sad! Everything looks sad, when we go to the portcullis which hangs over the gateway between us and the problem of existence, to get a glimpse into the labyrinth! Happily, we cannot penetrate it, and so turn back to be comfortable in our mean and narrow ways. I thought there was nothing better for me than the life you found me in, and was passively grateful for it; I cumbered the ground for no one, allowing none to approach me with service, and, consequently burdening none with obligation. Sebastian, it passed away the night I sprained my shoulder on the White Flat, and laid you under an eternal obligation. There must have been witches abroad that night."

Sebastian shuddered,, sprang up, and averted his face.

"The spell was broken then," continued Argus, "for both of us. My life has not been the same, and I regret that I did not sooner adapt myself to new circumstances."

Sebastian turned, and caught Argus under his elbows, and held him firmly, drawing his face close to his own furious, glittering eyes.

"I knew it," he cried, "and you denied! it Was she dead round my neck?"

Argus nodded.

"She is out there on the White Flat."

"I buried her. And now you would marry my niece. Well, I wish to marry Virginia, with whom you offer me—what?"

"The same, if you could promise us that we should be left in everlasting rest together."

Argus turned deadly pale, and said, "It will not profit us to talk farther. I am, in fact, carried beyond myself."

Sebastian extended his hand to Argus in extreme agitation, and Argus taking it, continued: "Something beyond me, as I said, urges me on with you. Once more, Sebastian, I love you, and the thought of parting with you is not to be borne."

"Things must be as I proposed then, Argus. By my soul I love you, also. Yes, by my faithless, lost soul, with or without the millstone round my neck, or any purpose or desire in my heart, I love you, and recognize you as my master."

"Not so bad as that," said Argus, gently. "But let me hope I have conquered."

## CHAPTER XXXII.

MAT SUTCLIFFE, going up the alley, towards home, saw a woman flitting from his door, and Mary standing by it, apparently wrenching the handle off.

"Oh Mat," she cried, when he stepped across the threshold, "did you ever?"

"Who is in fits now? Let the door alone, and don't be jiggery."

"Did you see Mrs. Bailey?"

"I saw petticoats scudding."

"Well, says she to me, as I was sitting by the table darning stockings—your blue ones, and every mite of color is going to wash out of them, for the rinsing water was as blue as anything—coming in out of breath, says she, '*Have* you heard the story that's going round like wildfire, Mrs. Sutcliffe?' 'No,' says I, 'I'm attending to my own business.' 'So you be,' says she, 'but I'm bound to tell it to you, 'cause I know you have friends interested, and 'cause I want to know whether you believe it.' It is the worst thing I ever heard in my life, Mat."

"Has Clark's sow eat up her pigs again? Hold on a bit, I want to light my pipe. Let me know when you get to the middle of next week, and I'll clap on my ears."

"She said, they said, that Mr. Brande's Sarah, the gal that hands the vittles, said yesterday at Mrs. Paulding's, the milliner's, that she was getting most tired of the state of affairs up at the Forge: that the very night before, Virginia Brande's beau, Mr. Carfield, was in her very bedroom over an hour; and she, Sarah knew, was in her night-clothes; and that wasn't all she could tell: and that Argus Gates couldn't be aware what he was after."

Mat's pipe fell on the floor, and he stamped it into powder.

"Toad, adder, skunk, bitch!" he yelled. "Why didn't some of the Christians there choke her, and throw her into the well?"

"You mean, Sarah. Mrs. Bailey said they all believed the story; that they had been expecting it. If something wasn't wrong, why hadn't Mr. Carfield married her before? She was no chicken; and they guessed she had been ready some time. Says she, Mrs. Baily, "There wasn't a store on Main Street, that hadn't the whole particulars by six o'clock yesterday afternoon; they do say, too, that the church will have to look into it.' I know there is not a word of truth in it; and I said so to Mrs. Bailey."

"There is something in it, half on't may be true; if that hound did get into Miss Brande's room, you may be sure he went out with a yelp. But blarsted if I can puzzle out how she has found anything about Argus Gates."

"What is there to know?"

"I guess I'll go right up to the Capen, and tell him this."



"Why—why should you tell *him*?"

"If you knew, you'd be returning Mrs. Bailey's kindness in ten minntes."

"I can guess."

"Guess."

"Argus Gates has a notion of courting Virginia Brande; *she* has courted him long enough. But I am for it, Mat, and I wish I could help her. She has always demeaned herself to me beautiful, and made me feel that I was as good as anybody."

"That's so; and you have guessed it. I carried a billet to her for the Capen, and I am afraid I kinder acted like a noodle, by giving it to her afore folks, and so brought on a crisis, as they call it. Keep dark now; it will all come out soon,—right side up, with care, glass. What would you do, if you was me?"

"If I was you, after what *you* have told me, I'd tend strictly to the business of picking oakum. You can make good, straight rope-yarn, but you get everything else you undertake into knots."

"Hang it, I do kinder feel as if my tail was between my legs."

"Go right off, and tell the whole thing to Gates I'll look out of the window, and out of doors; besides, I am going up to Cuff and Smith's after pear-lash, I may see how the wind blows towards the Forge. It will be a flaw in Argus if he marries her after this. A girl never gets rid of such a smut on her: the little children now growing up, and hearing this story, will remember it whenever they see her, if she

lives to be a hundred years old, and behaves like an angel. If *she* should have children, the story will always be mentioned, when they are mentioned."

"Damned, brutal, stinking hole of a Kent!" yelled Mat again, "I wish I had the tying of a stone round your neck, I'd sink ye a hundred fathoms in hell!"

"Some other town would come up in its place, just like it. Didn't that missionary say, who preached in the hall, for ten cents a ticket, that human nature in the Burmese Empire was much like the human nature of our own enlightened New England."

"Then I guess the missionaries had better stay to home; for, 'pears to me, human nature's too much for 'em."

And Mat turned on his heels, and went after Argus. Going in at the kitchen door, he found a man waiting from the Forge, and talking with Chloe. Tempe had written a note, to inform her mother that she meant to stay a day or two longer, and requested that some articles of dress should be sent her. When Mat heard this, he felt still more uneasy; it seemed to him that he must follow the man to Mr. Brande's house, drag out Mr. Carfield, pound him to death, and bring away Tempe, and Virginia, too. If it wasn't a States Prison offence, he'd certainly cripple Brande by burning his house, and the Forge buildings. He wished Kent was in Mr. Ford's country—South America, where there were chances of an earthquake, and the cunning control and power of the

priest. If he could only buy a priest, then things could be managed. "Chloe," he said, solemnly and reproachfully, "in the Lord's name, why did you ever leave your missey?"

"'Twas in the Lord's name that I did leave, I suppose," she answered crossly. "What did you come for?"

"To see the Capen; where is he?"

"Up stairs with missis; they are looking at the old, empty, south rooms."

"Be they? Well, they must stop. Have *you* heard anything to-day?"

"There, there—didn't I say so? I have felt it in my bones."

"Your bones are in a bad way, then."

He ran from the door to the fireplace, half doubling his body, spit furiously into the fire, and whispered fiercely:

"There's a vile, beastly, rotten lie spread all over town, about your missey. I wouldn't tell ye, if I didn't know that some fool would surprise ye worse, and make ye show off against your will."

Her dry mouth opened and shut a dozen times before she could speak, then she seized him, and shook him.

"Who dares?" she said. "Does *she* know it is out? Get Tempe home. Do you want the Capen to know it? I say you must go for Tempe, or there will be two of them."

She fell back into a chair, and wrung her hands silently; her face was wrinkled and knit with pain. Mat looked at her in astonishment and disgust.

"Blarsted if this ere sister don't *believe it against her missey.*"

"How did it get out?" she asked, in a faint voice.

"Get out," he repeated, indignantly, "what do you mean by that face? Put on a different one. Would you insult one of the best girls alive? This comes from your idees of total depravity. Or is it something worse? Never was so disappointed in anybody as I am in you."

"What do you mean by coming here to scare me half to death with a lot of nonsense?"

"You'll find no nonsense here."

In a few words he told her the story, and then sent her up stairs for Argus.

When Mat had finished his relation, Argus immediately repeated it to Roxalana; they were both entirely unmoved by it. If it were true,—and Argus, from his knowledge of Mr. Carfield, thought there might be foundation for the report, it was only a reason more for haste in their marriage. Virginia must be removed from that house. He told Roxalana his own story now, and she listened to it with calm approval, and understood him thoroughly.

"Between us all," she said, "I believe she will be happy. A new happiness in this house, Argus, I never again expected."

"It is to come, Roxalana, from the cloud you wrapped us all in. The chill wind from it, and its threatening darkness, drove me from my position."

"Must I learn at this late period, that good comes from evil? But, Argus, no time must be lost. I

advise you to send for Virginia at once. She shall stay under my wing; no legal power can take her away."

"Is she not infirm of will?"

"Through her love and duty only. But she must be made to understand that she has a right to individual happiness. However, she has firmly loved you for years."

"How sly you women are—all alike! Why did you not teach her that I was worthless? You know that I can only shine as your companion! Have you ever had the mercy and compassion to view me imaginatively, as the husband of Virginia Brande?"

"I never was gifted with imagination, Argus. Upon what a bed of thorns should I have lived, had it been the case. Do not delay any longer. Shall I send Chloe? and Tempe is there. Keep this story from Sebastian at present."

"Ah, Sebastian, Tempe,—yes. What do you think of his plan, for you know it."

"I do not think, and do not intend to think, an avenue is opened there which I shall close my eyes upon,—both now and hereafter."

Argus chuckled, and accused her of the endeavor to wash her hands of a bad business. It was evident that he was in better spirits.

An hour or so, and Chloe had reached the Forge. It was dusk when she came in sight of the walls of the house—as clean and white as those of a sepulchre. She shook her fist at them.

"The Indian has got here first this time," she

muttered; "but I suppose Chloe will be along, if I wait a few minutes for her."

She went into the premises by a gate in the wall at the back of the stables, and put her head in one of the doors partly open.

"Oh Moses," she said carelessly, "I thought I should find you milking. That's Mossy, ain't it? S'pose she knows me? Koh, Mossy, do you remember? She shakes her horns; she has forgotten me. *Chloe* is coming! Koh, Koh! there, Moses, she does know me. How much milk does she give?"

"Nigh on to four quarts. You are quite a stranger, *Chloe*."

"So dreadful busy doing nothing, is the reason. How's the family? Going on the same?"

"I don't know but they be, and I don't know as they be; me and Sarah have quit."

"Marsy, I haven't heard a word about it."

"There's plenty of news flying in the air; but it is none of my business, and nothing to me."

"I hope there's no bad news, Moses."

"Go in, *Chloe*, may be you will find out from Martha what's to do; I can't make head nor tail on it. Somebody has been lying, or the world is so bad I wish I hadn't been born."

"The Lord reigns, Moses."

"I pray accordingly. But it seems to me sometimes, that if I turned my prayers the other way, hind side afore, as it were, I should get more attention."

Chloe proceeded up the yard, looking furtively at

the windows, and hoping to get into the house without meeting Sarah, or Martha. From what Moses had said, it was evident enough that the scandal had widely spread; was known to the servants and all the workmen at the Forge; known to everybody, except the actors, and Mr. Brande. No one saw her enter the house. She passed the dining-room door and heard the rattle of dishes, (Sarah was there arranging the tea-table probably,) and passed the parlor doors intently listening. Mr. Carfield was inside, and with him Tempe. She heard Tempe's gay laugh, and Mr. Carfield's rapid utterance. Like a cat she sped up stairs, and entered Virginia's chamber without knocking. Virginia was at the glass adjusting her dress.

"Oh, Chloe," she cried, "you have brought me good news, I am sure!"

"I got up here without anybody's seeing me," Chloe answered, searching her countenance.

"That's right."

"Is it?"

"Were you not sent directly to me?"

"Yes; but I think I has brought you no news to please you concisely; but something bad for you to hear."

Virginia dropped into a chair, extended her hand, and Chloe handed her the note Argus had written. She drew a breath of relief as she read, for there was no hint of Chloe's mystery; he simply asked her to return with Chloe as far as the pines, and meet him there. She raised her eyes to Chloe, and saw she was closely examined.

"Well, Chloe," she asked, with impatience, "there is no time to lose."

"So Missis Gates said."

"You seem to understand present affairs. Who told you?"

"I *had* to be told."

"There must be just so many confidants, I suppose, when things get to such a pass as this, or what would become of the romance?"

"Tempe is wanted, too."

"Now,—to go with us?"

"This is no place for the like of her."

"Come, old Chloe,—haven't you teased me enough with your oracleship?"

"Missey, Sarah made a world of mischief in Kent the other day. I must say she did her work so well, I almost think she was hired to do it; else, she has a grudge against some of you."

Virginia, struck with a true apprehension of the case, turned away from Chloe, caught at a corner of the dressing table for something to steady herself by, and signed to Chloe to go on.

"Don't you think she peeked through the keyhole? I do; 'cause she mentioned particulars she must have seen, when that rascal was in *here*, an hour or more, that night, and you undressed."

"Is it because of this, that Roxalana sent me word there must be no delay?"

"Yes, indeed; they do feel a storm brewing. It is all over the town, and many of your friends believe it. Some pity you."

Virginia laughed wildly, and clenched her hand upon the note.

"They sent you to me, thinking I must be taken away?"

"Yes, Missey. Had you better go? Isn't one place as good as another, now?"

Chloe, still possessed by her Indian demon, probably, looked severe and spoke coldly.

"Best Argus!" exclaimed Virginia, kissing the crumpled paper, so much devotion shining in her pale face, so much tenderness filling her eyes, that Chloe was pierced as with a sword. "And Roxalana, generous friend, strong soul! So will I at last be generous and strong. Help me, Lord!"

Shutting the note in both her hands, she raised them towards heaven, and Chloe was again transfixed.

"Oh Missey," she cried, "I do see that it is all right with you. I—"

She was struck dumb by Virginia's slow uprising from her chair; she looked so tall and terrible that it seemed to Chloe that she would touch the ceiling, and spread all over it like an avenging spirit.

"Say no more, Chloe. I will write a line to Captain Gates, and you may take it at once. Do not come to me again."

"Dear Argus," she scribbled, "the story is partly true; but I doubt whether I should *ever* have told it to you. We must wait, now, till it clears itself up for us, *without your interference*. Tell Roxalana I am quite ready to live in her service. Keep Mr. Ford

from the knowledge that the rumor is abroad, and send for Tempe, to-morrow."

Folding the note, she gave it, unsealed, to Chloe, and pointed to the door: and Chloe did not dare to disobey. She stopped on the door-mat an instant, while putting it in her pocket, and whispered to herself that she had found the best chance she ever had in her life to despise *Chloe*; and she reckoned she would make the most of it. She also paused before the dining-room door, and it opened; she and Sarah found themselves face to face. A swift impulse seized Chloe; she pushed Sarah back into the room, kicked the door to behind them, and with wiry hands set her into the depths of one of the stuffed chairs, and stood over her.

"I shan't box your ears yet," she hissed to the amazed, helpless girl, "but I *shall*, and maybe cut out your tongue. I can do it, for the knives are sharp here. What devil possessed you to bring this dreadful trouble on Missey? And Moses is decent man enough to give you the sack, is he? Glory for that."

After shaking the breath out of her, Chloe asked her why she didn't answer.

"I had a mind to do it, you black, evil thing; I guess I've come up with them. That Mr. Carfield always put me down; he called me a servant over and over again. As for Miss Virginia, we shall see if my lady, with her ten silk dresses, and her ten breastpins, will flaunt it quite so high. Let me alone; let me get up. He *was* in her bedroom, —I saw him go in, and come out; and he staid in

there. He was begging like a dog for something, and—"

Chloe would not allow her to go on, but fell upon her with fury, striking her in the face with all the strength she had.

"You may kill me," gasped Sarah, "but I won't take back a word; and I'll have you taken up for this."

Mr. Brande opened the door as Chloe's rage had exhausted itself, and Sarah was half insensible with the stinging blows she had received. He stood amazed at the sight, but even then his ear caught the sound of laughter and conversation going on still between Tempe and Mr. Carfield, and it disturbed him.

"Why, Chloe," he said presently, "what in the world does this mean? Can't you come on a visit, even, to your old home, without bringing a surplus of the old Adam."

"It means, sir, that the old Adam is too much for me, when I meet him in your premises."

Sarah tried to get out of the chair, with loud "Ohs."

"Stay where you are," said Chloe, "or I'll pound your legs to jelly."

In spite of himself, Mr. Brande could hardly help a smile at Sarah's plight and Chloe's victorious attitude.

"You have got to own," continued Chloe, "before you get out of that chair, what you have said about Missey Brande!"

"I've said the truth," she answered sullenly.

"Chloe," said Mr. Brande hastily, "I request you to let Sarah go. She is hardly presentable just now; the supper hour is at hand, and we are entirely unaccustomed to such disturbance."

"*Such* disturbance! Yes. Very well, sir. Go, Sarah, I can give the particulars to Mr. Brande."

Sarah rushed, not only from the room but the house, and did not return.

Within a month she married a Scotch workman, one of the Forge hands, whom, for politic reasons Mr. Brande did not discharge afterwards. She sent an invitation to Moses to come to her wedding, written on a card ornamented with yellow doves, and blue roses. Moses wrapped it in a piece of newspaper, and put it away as an eternal remembrance of the deceitfulness of females.

Mr. Brande, instead of being angry when Chloe related what Sarah had done, fell into a fit of deep musing. She waited to hear something from him; not a word came. His usually restless hands and slippery eyes were motionless. She never saw his head hang so before; his eyes seemed to be fixed upon something within his breast, and his chin rested upon it. The French clock on the mantel-piece ticked, and ran down. Once, she recollected, the pendulum would not have had a minute's rest; now he did not notice its silence. The fire was disarranged, and embers fell with charred ends against the fender, and he did not rise with the old formal alacrity to replace them over the dogs. An indescribable change had taken place in that house, since she had been there;

there was some subtle disorder prevailing which she could not reason upon, but wondered whether it was owing to him. At last remembering the necessity of returning, she said: "I believe my duty is done, Mr. Brande."

"Yes," he replied absently, "you can go. I will attend to it. And, Chloe,—you had better come back, hadn't you? don't *she* like you?"

"I am afraid, Sir, I have made Missey angry."

"Missey! I meant—Oh,—ah; yes, you can go."

And he waved her out after the old fashion.

Argus saw her speeding along the path alone, and said, when she came up to him: "It is not lucky for me,—the Forge path; I have half a mind to send you back."

"Not to-night, Captain. I have an answer, and I know Missey so well that I promise you she wishes to hear a word from nobody this night."

"Now for my personal venture," he muttered as they went back to Temple House.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE source of Mr. Brande's revery was an astonished admiration for Mr. Carfield, which Chloe's revelation had excited. The boldness, resolution, and satanic ingenuity of his plan, which Mr. Brande decided was a meditated one, and that Sarah had merely acted up to her instructions, gave him a pang of envy, for he felt that in the capacity for such conduct there must be also the capacity for a bold, free, profound, conscienceless enjoyment,—the very kind of enjoyment *he* could best appreciate, and was too cowardly to attain. He thought that if he had been present then he should have turned Mr. Carfield out of doors, but he had no impulse to do so now, even with the tones of his forcible voice in hearing. As for the story, it must be explained at the right moment. So far as Kent was concerned, it should be put down in some high-handed way; he would throw it in the teeth of the society which he represented, or ride over their necks with it. With Virginia two ways were open; one was to consider her irretrievably committed, the other was to break the engagement publicly, which had never existed except between himself and Mr. Carfield. In the latter case a hundred thousand dollars would vanish from his grasp, and a certain exposure take place, as mysteriously brought about as this miserable business had



been. Tempe's gay laugh rose again over his cogitations. Well, he would wait a little; he was quite used to waiting in an uncertain, threatening atmosphere. An inexplicable thought, reason, or sensation sent him creeping up stairs to stand before Virginia's door, and examine the panels and the lock like a detective; he even laid his hand on the knob, but hearing a movement within he turned away and went back into the dining-room again. He found Martha there, who had come to tell him that Sarah had gone, leaving word that it was for good. He replied with his usual suavity, that her behavior carried its punishment, and gave instructions concerning another servant whom Martha had in the kitchen. He said that he should consider himself indebted to her if she could arrange domestic affairs, so that no change should be apparent. Martha was overcome by his confidential condescension, and promised to do her best.

"It will all blow over," she commented, bustling back to her work; "it's stuff and nonsense to make a rumpus about a mess of talk. Why, come murder, arson even, we have to get three meals a day for them that does it, and them that doesn't."

All the long evening, and they sat up late, as if some secret bond held them together, Mr. Brande was divided in his mental scrutiny. He tried to guess the state of Virginia's mind,—whether she remembered the insult continually, either in sorrow, or anger; whether it had broken the barriers of conventionality between her and Mr. Carfield, for hate, or

love and forgiveness. He watched Tempe's careless flirtation with Mr. Carfield, and speculated upon her probable conduct under the same circumstances with—himself. His head reeled at this thought. What possessed him?

"Virginia," he called, putting down a book he had not read, "would it not be pleasant for you to drive about town to-morrow, with Mrs. Drake in the new barouche?"

She looked up from her inseparable knitting, and met his eye. He frowned involuntarily in the direction of Mr. Carfield; an emotion of regret and sympathy suddenly flitted into his face, and she understood that he knew all about it; and how like her calm, reasonable father it was—to remain so quietly in the room with that wretch!

Her face was sad and fatigued; its expression made him resolve vaguely to look over his accounts the next day, and think about kicking Carfield out.

"Why not?" cried Mr. Carfield; "I should like to go, too."

"To-morrow I must go home," Tempe interposed.

"To-morrow Tempe must go home," echoed Virginia.

"But," said Tempe, "I do not wish to go. I like this house immensely; it is delightful. For two days I have ceased to think there is an ugly, decayed old town a couple of miles distant."

Mr. Brande felt hot about the heart; he started, and went over to Tempe, seating himself beside her, and looked at her with a goat-like fondness.

"I thought so," said Mr. Carfield mischievously. "I feel flattered for my portion in your good opinion."

Mr. Brande leaned towards Tempe, and said in a low tone, "Won't you stay another day,—even at the risk of flattering *me*,—and perhaps spoiling me for a man of business?"

Virginia felt painfully confused, and held her head down.

"Yes," continued Mr. Carfield gaily, "this is a pleasant home, Mrs. Drake; I intend to remain here forever."

How Mr. Brande desired to make an answer that would be a lesson, an intimation, and explanation, which would include them all! Lacking subtlety, however, he could only avail himself of the commonplace.

"Mrs. Drake knows that I should be proud to have her good opinion of anything in my possession. I think, however, another charm might be added to this spot."

"If anything agreeable could be added,—when Mr. Carfield is here," she said, looking at Virginia. "How came you to have so grand and stately a daughter, Mr. Brande?"

"Don't you like the grand and stately?"

The accent of his voice made her look round at him; her eyes opened wildly at the declaration in his.

"Don't you, my dear?"—he whispered, growing violently red, his blood tingling like needles all over him.

She was struck dumb, and remained so motionless with her fixed eyes, that he concluded she was purely receptive. He must own this little pet, sooner or later, and he would indulge her as no wife had ever been indulged; but she must—However, this was not the moment, or the place to make arrangements; he would wait.

"You are fond of reading, I think?" he asked, taking up a book and fluttering the leaves. She sighed with sheer surprise, and looking round to rouse herself, saw Mr. Carfield at the back of Virginia's chair, but did not hear what he was saying. She set her face towards Mr. Brande again, and said abruptly, "I am fond of nothing."

He ventured to pinch her cheek with his cold pointed fingers, and the touch of the velvet flesh gave him a terrible shock; but he managed to offer a superior smile, and whisper, "I knew you would say all those petulant things, but I like them."

"Virginia," said Mr. Carfield, "do you see what an ass your father is making himself with that imp?"

Her head fell still lower over her work, but she made no reply.

"Do you hear me? This weak nonsense must be stopped before she utterly bewitches him. It is a frightful joke, isn't it?"

She raised her hunted, despairing eyes, and said, "Have you not yet learned that he always gains his wishes? Why are *you* still here?"

"Stuff."

"If he decides to, he will marry her. The bril-

liant, flame-loving, foolish little moth, will yield to the temptations of the position I despise, and cannot escape from."

He shrugged his shoulders, and bent still nearer; she felt his breath against her face. Her hands shook so that the stitches dropped from her needles; drops of sweat burst out of her forehead, her lips parted, her teeth were set together, and she was ghastly white.

"I am afraid," was her mental cry, "there is no God. I hate my life."

Mr. Carfield watched her closely.

Suddenly she rose, and stood for an instant in a listening attitude.

"*Yes there is!*" she cried in a loud voice.

They heard a murmur outside in the hall; the outer door was closed with a crash, the inner door flew open, and Sebastian Ford came in.

"I have found what I missed in the pines," he said significantly, addressing Virginia, and touching his waistband. It was impossible for her to reply; a slight hysterical noise came through her lips, and she could not advance towards him a step. Her arms were like leaden weights to her; only by fixing her steadfast gaze upon his face could she keep her footing. There was that in his bearing which prevented ordinary salutation. Upon his entrance Mr. Brande and Tempe rose involuntarily, and the former would perhaps have come to his fatuous speech, if Tempe had not laid a silence-compelling pressure upon his arm. Mr. Carfield turned his hardest, haughtiest face towards him.

"We have been favored, Mr. Ford, with no specimen of the Spanish melo-drama till now. It is much of an exotic; still we thank you for this fine tableau,—a la brigand—"

"It suits the occasion, and *our* necessity. I have been down in Kent to-day, hearing in the most public places, among the most common men, of your vile intrusion, at midnight, into the room of Miss Brande—who is about to become the wife of my friend, Argus Gates. Sir, you must now make an explanation with your pen, which I shall in these places, and among these men, make public. Sir, will you do so?"

"Your threat is—what, a pistol?"

"I will kill you—but not here."

"The principal declines, does he,—and his second offers to do the work?"

Sebastian smiled in so ugly a manner that Tempe clasped her hands and said, "Oh!" and Mr. Brande let his book fall.

"Argus is one with his race here. I *have* killed a man. Moreover, he is ignorant of my wish, and of my intention."

"*Sebastian,*" murmured Virginia, in a faint, delicious, cooing voice, a heavenly smile softening her anguished face.

At its sound Mr. Carfield grew savage.

"She is to be my wife," he said.

Mr. Brande was foolish enough to give a slight nod at Sebastian, for which Tempe struck his mouth with the back of her hand; he made no further demon-

stration, though Mr. Carfield immediately appealed to him to say whether the length of the engagement which Virginia had tactily permitted, did not warrant the sacredness of his claim.

"You must lose her, sir," said Sebastian.

"A duel, of course, will lose her to me. And are you so blind to our customs as to think that my refusing to fight you, will brand me as cowardly?" asked Mr. Carfield.

"You are not a coward, except with women; but if you will not fight me, I will assassinate you. My life is at the service of my friend. Come, sir, I will wait no longer. This parlor is no duelling ground, but murder may be committed anywhere."

His coolness, his assurance was terrible; the menace in his voice, the deadly expression in his eye, left Mr. Carfield in no doubt. But how was it possible to yield Virginia to the demand of this devil? Absolutely speaking, he was not afraid of Sebastian, excepting that he was sure there was a pistol concealed about him, and he did not desire to be shot. To shoot *him* in a fair fight was impossible; fists were not to be mentioned; but the thought of being dogged by that implacable, sentimental boy was both possible, and carefully to be considered.

"I'll reflect a moment, Mr. Ford," he said.

There was a dead silence in the room while he walked up and down. He stopped presently before Tempe, and deliberately scanned her: she did her best to banish all vestige of expression from her face, and succeeded tolerably well. Mr. Brande looked upon him with anger.

"I am looking at you," said Mr. Carfield, "to learn what my taste and fancy may do for me with a different type of woman from the one I have lost so much time with, and—Brande, excuse me,—so much money."

He crossed the room, and came face to face with Virginia, and it startled him to see in her face an expression as determined and as fatal as Sebastian's. The support she required had come.

"Well," he said, "how the matter came out I cannot say; circumstances have proved stronger than the mad impulse that sent me to you that night. By the God that made me, Virginia, I would only have forestalled the clergyman's benediction. The benediction your good father demanded, and which your pious soul would have entreated for *afterwards*."

Sebastian shuddered; an awful echo went through his spirit.

"Mr. Ford, what do you demand?" he asked wheeling round.

"Write for me the words you have just spoken."

Virginia pointed to a little moroco case on a stand, and Mr. Carfield drew out some paper, upon which he wrote a clear and concise explanation, sparing himself nowhere; for he thought there must be a settlement with Brande, and the plainer his apology, the clearer the public would see that a business separation must take place, and he might get his money again.

"Now," he said, handing the paper to Sebastian, "can the curtain drop on this little farce? At an-

other time, to-morrow, perhaps, if the same audience comes together, we may enact the same, with spectacular improvements. Allow me, sir, to see you to the door."

Sebastian, tucking the note in his waistband, smiled again.

"Receive my thanks for the honor you have done me. Accept my excuses for the duty thrust upon me."

They both bowed.

Sebastian looked with an expression of entreaty at Virginia, which she comprehended.

"It is very late, Mr. Ford. May I ask you to spend the remainder of the night with us?"

He turned to Mr. Brande, who, not possessing any taste for the dramatic, was unequal to the occasion, and merely mumbled a word or two, seconding her invitation. Mr. Carfield left the room.

"A moment," begged Sebastian, darting out, and opening the outer door.

"Mat," he whispered, "here it is. Take the paper to the Captain. I won't trust the hound here to-night."

"Ay, ay, sir. Has he come to the scratch?"

"I think so," replied Sebastian; "but he is not scratched, I assure you."

Mat laughed, dashed into the darkness, and ran all the way to Temple House.

Argus was still up, and read the note in astonishment.

"It was all a contrived plan between him and me,"

said Mat triumphantly. "Blarsted if Mr. Ford ain't as good an earthquake and a priest put together."

"Damn him," said Argus sharply, "he has paid his debt to me."

"Now you will be married?"

"Now I shall be married," Argus replied rather dreamily.

"Now we shall be able to carry on Temple House?" added Mat, with an anxious accent.

"Now," Argus answered, with an utterly abstracted voice, "we shall carry on Temple House."

THE END.