

LIFE'S LESSON.

A Tale.

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MY MOTHER,

MY EARLIEST AND BEST FRIEND, TO YOU THIS BOOK

Is affectionately Dedicated.

LIFE'S LESSON.

CHAPTER I.

It was on a cold autumn evening, late in the year 18—, that a quiet passer-by of a house in — street, attracted by the group within, paused for a moment to glance at the picture presented through the window ; then drawing his cloak closer about him, with a keener relish for his own fireside, passed on.

Unlike that home-bent traveler, we, reader, with "the wind that for no creature careth," will cross the threshold and take a peep within—for "thereby hangs our tale." It was a quiet parlor, and had a home look about it, a look, too, which told of better days—a substantial and yet a worn look. The floor was covered with a carpet which might have cost some hundreds—now a little worn and faded ; the furniture was of carved and solid mahogany, after the fashion of our grandmothers ; the prim chairs being of themselves a commentary on good behavior ; while the many ornaments about the room and the elaborately-carved picture-frames told that Time was treading on the relics of other days. The curtains were but half drawn, and the fire which blazed brightly on the hearth, gave to view a group of five persons. One, the youngest of the group, was a fair-haired and brown-eyed girl, of some nineteen summers, with a bright complex-

ion, glowing eye, mouth shrined in dimples, and a nose somewhat inclined to be *retroussé*, which gave to her face a piquancy that was irresistible. The other lady sat a little in the shade; but we could see she had a bright face and a dark eye lit up with an expression of intense pleasure. The third in the group was a gentleman, tall in figure, with black eyes and hair, and having the bearing of a man familiar with the world and its ways. The fourth was a dignified old gentleman of fourscore, with his white locks resting on his shoulders; and the lady near him is his wife.

"Really, George, it makes me feel young to have you with us again, and looking so well too."

"Never was better, sir; you have no idea how chasing the buffalo over those prairies, makes the blood course through your veins. Life and health are mine again. You are looking much better than I expected to see you, and the girls are blooming. Nannie is more bewitching than ever; I expected to find her a sober matron, loving and beloved."

"Indeed, my gallant sir, can not one be loving and beloved, without being a sober matron? I would have you know, I have thrown my banner to the breeze—and, like that of our fathers, of Revolutionary memory, its motto is, 'Liberty and Independence.'"

"I always knew you for an audacious little rebel, but like all those who hold out to the last, you will one day make an unconditional surrender; but what says Ellen to these demonstrations?"

"She is content to grace my triumphs. But come tell us how many hearts you have broken in the wilderness?"

"Their name is Legion; you have no idea what an Adonis I was in my war-paint; my hair and beard were the admiration of the squaws. I have brought home any quantity of delicate attentions, in the shape of wampum, moccasins, bows, arrows, &c."

"You stooped to conquer, did you? I thought that was only allowable in our sex; but you, it seems, had to practice all the arts of civilized life for the subjugation of the savage maidens. Well, there is the tea-bell; come, a cup will be refreshing after such an exhibition of the vanity of man."

The family of Judge Mason was old and respectable; born and brought up in Virginia, he had inherited a small patrimony, which, together with the practice of the law, had yielded him a comfortable maintenance for many years. Kind-hearted and easy, he had indorsed for a friend, who, becoming involved, involved him also; the payment of the debt thus incurred required the sacrifice of his home and many years of labor—both of which had been cheerfully accorded; and he had now been for some years in the enjoyment of an annuity, left to him by an uncle in England. These pecuniary difficulties had come upon Judge Mason at a time when his three daughters were just stepping into womanhood, and he felt them acutely; but with the characteristic honesty and energy of his character, he labored hard to pay that for which he had become responsible, and succeeded, although it had left him "in his old age naked to his enemies," poverty and bad health. His situation in life, and his abilities always drew to his house the most refined and cultivated society, of which his daughters were the ornaments; and, although he went not much into public, or to public entertainments, his Virginian pride not permitting him to partake of hospitalities he could not return; yet they were the centre of their own circle. His eldest daughter had married unhappily, and died, leaving an only daughter, an infant, to her father's care; his other two daughters are still with him; and when we first see them, are welcoming home their father's ward, George Watson, who has been absent for several years with an exploring party to the far West, induced to take the journey for the benefit of his health, which had

never recovered from a severe attack of fever that had prostrated his whole system.

The next morning there was but little done in the before quiet household. There was much talking over the table—many stories told—many questions asked—many plans discussed. The minutes rolled into hours, while poor Mrs. Mason, a notable housekeeper, was sadly distressed that the servants could not get their breakfast; and “ten o’clock, she knew, would find the table still on the floor. She did not know why they could not talk sitting around the parlor fire, as well as around the table.” To increase her vexation, Ellen, in her eagerness talking or listening, had made divers little pyramids of bread and butter on the cloth, which were scattered to the no small detriment of the carpet; and George, in playing with his cup and spoon, had upset its contents on the snowy damask. It was a great relief to see them move for the parlor, and then, the eagerness with which the best cloth was snatched from the table, and the unsightly spot subjected to a process of soap and water, can only be conceived by those who, like good Mrs. Mason, are notable housekeepers.

The day wore away, the gentlemen went out, and the ladies, seated around the fire, discussed the late arrival.

The evening found George and Ellen seated by the parlor fire; Nannie had gone out to fulfill a previous engagement. They were near the same age, had been brought up together, and had many sympathies in common.

“Every thing looks strange to me, Ellen, save the old furniture and pictures; I shall never become accustomed to seeing you all here. It must have been a great trial to leave the homestead.”

“Indeed it was; but the lease was out, and father felt that Colonel Dixon wanted it. You know he bought it under the hammer, and leased it to father because of his great attachment to it. He never even hinted he would like to have it,

but we felt he did, and therefore gave it up. Father could not bear to live in daily sight of what had been in the family for so long a time, yet was no longer his; so he removed here.”

“You do not know how often I have thought of the old place in the last few years. When deep in some old woods, or watching the stars from some boundless prairie, my heart has wandered back to the little pebbly brook, where we waded for minnows and craw-fish; or to the old grape-vine swing, which hung from the top of the chestnut.”

“Yes, I remember them all, and it almost gives me the heartache to spend the day there. Colonel Dixon has altered the house, and improved it to my eye, but not to my heart. The old oak is still standing, and the chestnut avenue as you left it, but the negro houses have been removed. The old arbor, where we used to have our tea parties, and you spouted Demosthenes, with pebbles in your mouth, has given place to a modern temple.”

“I wish your father could have retained it; every foot of the place was dear to me. I so well remember the first time I saw it. I could not have been more than eight years old. My father was about to leave for the West Indies, and took me to the ‘Grove,’ to put me under your father’s care (you know they were connections by marriage, and had grown up together). It was a bright summer evening. My father, after confiding me to Judge Mason’s protection, rode away, without a word, or once looking back. My little heart was occupied with delight at the place—admiration for my new clothes—and regret, that I could not ride back on the horse. Suddenly a hot drop fell on my face; another—and, looking up, I was wonder-struck at seeing the tears fall from your father’s eyes. He drew me toward him, and pressed me in his arms, saying, ‘God bless you, my boy, I will be a father to you!’ and nobly has he kept that promise. But what has

become of all our old playmates, Ellen? Charlie Grant was at college when I left; where is he now?"

"Gone to China: those mandarins are a present from him."

"Aha! do you remember his admiration of a simple white dress, with a rose in the hair; and how you used to rob old aunt Dinah's garden that his taste might be gratified? Mary Nelson, my old flame, where is she?"

"She married, and is dead."

"Married! dead! Whom did she marry?"

"Your old friend, Harry Leathers. Poor girl! she sleeps well. You know Major Leathers married again, when Harry was about sixteen. His second wife was a Miss Leatt, from an adjoining county, and much younger than himself. Harry's mother had property, which at her death was settled upon Harry and his sister Mary; but the old gentleman had the control of it, and he having little of his own, and the lady he married nothing, she did not like the idea of her children, who were growing up, being unprovided for, while Harry and Mary would have a handsome settlement. This made ill-feeling; the old man was not prompt in giving Harry funds, and when his marriage with Mary Nelson was talked of, it was violently opposed, as she had neither plantation nor negroes. Mr. Nelson, as proud as Lucifer, fired at the idea of his daughter being objected to, and forbade Harry the house. Mary and I spent the summer together at the Ridge, and I soon saw that, either with or without the consent of the higher contracting parties, it would be a match; as, notwithstanding the prohibition, he came often to see her. Harry at last threw off his habitual deference to his father—stormed, threatened, and spoke boldly. This resulted in concessions to Mr. Nelson. The marriage took place, and they went to reside at Major Leathers', a bad move, every one said, from the first. I soon saw Mary was not happy, and in about six months Harry went into business in the city, and they removed there. The summer after she

was married, Mary, with her infant daughter, spent some weeks with us, and I thought she had never looked so lovely. She returned to town, and I saw but little of her afterward. The week before Christmas she sent me word she was going home to spend the holidays. I went over to see her, and thought she looked paler and thinner than usual, but supposed it was caused by the care of her child, who was ill. A few days after this, the startling intelligence reached us from town, that Harry had been engaged in some dishonest transaction, had been discovered, and had fled the country. I went to see Mary. She did not speak of him, but I saw the worm was in the tree. Not long after, her child died; and the first spring flowers bloomed on Mary's grave. The world said she died of rapid consumption—it was hopeless brokenness of heart. Harry has not been heard from since."

"Poor Mary! and this was her end. I have often thought of her; how beautiful and amiable she was. But, Ellen, it was not like Harry to so heartlessly desert her."

"You forget he was always weak in character, easily led astray, dreadfully afraid of his tyrannical old father, and passionately fond of show. He had neither moral nor physical courage to face the wife he had injured, and must escape the law. Conscience made a coward of Harry, as it does of us all."

"Had he embezzled money?"

"I do not know. The old gentleman was much blamed; but the affair was hushed up, and the particulars were never made public."

"Where is Mary Leathers?"

"At home. She is to be married in a few weeks to a West India planter, and goes to Cuba to live."

"Indeed! I must ride out there and see her before she goes, for 'auld lang syne.' Poor Mary! how well she and Harry sung together. I can hear her now, and see her too, sitting in the

moonlight, singing—'Oft in the stilly night;' she sung it for me the night I left; do you remember? I had said good-by to all save yourself and her, and had to ride to town to be ready for the boat in the morning, yet still I lingered, and led my horse while you both walked down the avenue with me. When we reached the gate, she jumped upon the broad rail, and, at my request, sang it again, the full-moon shining full upon her. She was then so joyous and full of life; I little thought she would be missing at my coming."

"I remember it; she was staying with me when you left."

"Do you ever sing now? Have you ever heard 'The Irish Emigrant's Lament?'"

"Often, and try to sing it sometimes; is it not beautiful?"

"Very. I only heard it once, but shall never forget it. We had been following the course of the Yellow Stone, or what we supposed to be the Yellow Stone, all day, and pushing for a strip of timber-land in the distance, which, tired and travel-worn, we reached after night. The moon was full, and riding high in the heavens—a pale pilgrim, but not in a troubled sky; it gave to view the vast prairie, stretching far away to the west, and the little strip of timber-land imbosomed in it like an island in mid-ocean. Weary and sleepy, we had thrown ourselves down to rest, when suddenly a clear voice broke the stillness, and the beautiful words of the Lament pealed forth. I shall never forget my sensations. Every man started to his feet, or leaned in breathless silence on his elbow. Not a word was spoken. I can give you no idea of the pathos with which it was sung. When he sang the words—

'And often in those grand old woods,
I'll sit and shut my eyes;
And my heart will travel back again,
To the place where Mary lies;'

I could see the big tears forcing their way through his closed eyelids."

"Who was he?"

"A young Irishman belonging to our party, who had joined it as man of all work; he was faithful and steady, but had so little to say, that he was called 'Silent Dan.' He was not at all like others of his countrymen, and this was the only impulsive thing I ever knew him to do. I suppose the beauty of the scene and the hour sent his heart traveling back to the Emerald Isle. I know it put mine on homeward paths. I thought of our parting—the moonlight—Mary's song—and your hand resting in mine. Weary as I was I could not sleep, but lay for hours thinking, with the rich tones of that man's voice ringing in my ears. It was a beautiful picture, to see him as he stood leaning against a tree, his hands clasped on the muzzle of his gun, the full moonlight falling on his figure, and his whole face eloquent with emotion; while around him, in their half-startled attitudes, lay grouped the forms of the men who had been roused by his voice from their home dreams. We none of us knew he could sing, and although he sang for us often afterward, his voice never affected me again as it did that evening."

"What became of him?"

"He was one of the three who staid out there, making their homes in the untrodden wilderness. I have no doubt he will often sing that song in the dim woods, when thoughts of his far home come upon him. I felt a great interest in him after this."

"There must have been some history connected with the song."

"Like all women you are ready for a romance, I see; but all your ideality could scarce make a hero of Mr. Leary; not a name for a novel, is it? There was nothing remarkable about him; he had a fine open face, and a robust figure—

had evidently always belonged to the laboring class, was reserved, but had strong good sense. I have no doubt he had left some loved one behind him; and the softness of the hour called forth tender recollections, with which this song was connected; this was the general impression; for when his evident reluctance to sing this particular song for us was observed, he was not urged to do so."

"I have romantic recollections connected with the 'Lament' myself, and shall inquire of all travelers from the region of the setting sun of your hero's whereabouts and welfare."

"You have not told me any thing of Sallie Ross. She and George Thornton had entered into an engagement to become bone of one bone when I left."

"They are like 'Cliffs that have been rent asunder.' She married that, as we thought, confirmed old bachelor, Mr. Hamilton; lives in a palace of a house, and rides out in her elegant carriage, spattering the mud from its wheels upon us unfortunate pedestrians, with royal unconcern."

"And George—has he turned Benedict?"

"No; he is *the* beau about town—the most improved man you ever saw. I sometimes think Sallie regrets; but you know she always had an eye for the gilding and carving of life."

"And Lizzie Gordon is dead?"

"Yes; I wrote you of that; her sister Mary has grown up, and has just come out."

"When did you see Jane Lawton?"

"About six months since; she is quite a belle."

"Has she grown pretty?"

"No; but is most agreeable."

"That is a homely woman's privilege; but what has become of Charlie Steele—'Prince Charlie,' as we used to call him, because of his passion for being waited on?"

"This passion has not decreased; he is in Europe, but expected home in a few months."

"A traveled gentleman. What changes a few years make. I feel sad to-night; old Time has been busy with those I love, in my absence. I can not get Mary and Harry out of my mind; they were among my favorites. But here is Nannie."

CHAPTER II.

THE winter was unusually cold, but it passed pleasantly away. Judge Mason having heard of the death of a near and only surviving relative, the family went into no gayety, but passed their evenings either at home or in neighborhood-visiting; although generally there was a large circle gathered about their own fireside, of which George Watson was the life. Of a cultivated mind and fond of reading, he had many ways of making himself agreeable; these, together with his stories of the wild wood, his descriptions of the country through which he had passed—wound up as they always were with a rhapsody on some beautiful Indian, seen in some romantic place—added to the charm of his conversation; the latter episode, Nannie insisted, was for the especial benefit of the ladies, to excite in them pleasant feelings of envy and discontent, while the whole circle would often accuse him of Munchausening. Be this as it may, he always had a highly interested auditory; and, did there happen to be an unlucky ring at the bell announcing a visitor, who, it was feared, would not enter into the spirit of the hour, not a few "pshaws" and "provokings" were uttered. All this added not a little to the self-appreciation of a gentleman who already had a proper estimate of his own powers; and, as vanity is a gentlemanly as well as ladylike *vice*, he preferred remaining at home and reigning over the little circle there to visiting abroad, although he was a marked and welcome visitor in all the society of the city.

Among the constant visitors at Judge Mason's was Mr.

Peyton, the son of one of the judge's old friends, who had come to the city to attend to his law studies; he was looked upon as Nannie's admirer. Mr. Peyton was altogether Southern in feeling and character, ardent, impetuous, and full of that versatility of talent, which so often characterizes the Southerner; handsome in face and agreeable in manner, his conversation lent another charm to their evenings.

This to Ellen was a most agreeable winter; time passed, and she forgot what of late had hung heavy upon her spirit, her father's declining health, and the necessity there would some day be of exertion to support the family. Judge Mason's annuity ended with his life; and, although it now afforded them a comfortable maintenance, it did nothing more, and was their only resource. Judge Mason, with mistaken pride, would not hear of his daughter's making any exertion to add to their income or provide for a future day; notwithstanding his great energy and strength of character, this was one of the things he could not meet with equanimity; he was willing to exert all his own powers, but could not think of his daughters doing so. Mrs. Mason was a most devoted mother, entirely taken up with the care of her grandchild, her house, and her church; and, although this state of affairs would sometimes intrude upon her, and cloud her kind face for a moment, she dismissed the subject when Ellen would allude to it, with a sigh, and "My dear child, sufficient unto the day is the evil."

Ellen had spoken to George of her abiding wish to put her talents and education to the service of the family; and, although he acknowledged the necessity there would one day be of making some exertion, he put the evil day off, for he had imbibed many of Judge Mason's ideas; he considered the wish highly honorable and proper in itself, and would have been among the first to commend it in another; but the thought that those dear to him should be obliged to make

this exertion touched his personal pride, and this was the great foible of his character.

Nannie was willing to take part in any thing Ellen would suggest; but then Ellen must lead, and she saw that the time had not yet come; the subject was, therefore, dismissed for the present. In the mean time, Ellen performed her part of the household duties, read, sang, played, and improved herself in many ways—while Nannie coquetted, and George talked.

One evening Mr. Clayton, an intimate, stepped in to spend the evening, and chat. Ellen and George, aside, were playing chess; while Nannie entertained the others with the news she had gathered in the course of her afternoon visits.

"Sallie Graham and Captain Frost are to be married in a few days, and in a fortnight he sails on a three years' cruise to the Mediterranean—a pleasant prospect for a bride, is it not? Ellen, Fanny Gilman is to marry Mr. Slidell next week, and you know he is an Infidel."

"You must be mistaken, Nannie; the Gilmans are Presbyterians, after the strictest sect."

"I had it from Mary Gordon, who is to be bridesmaid."

"Would you object to a man whose character stood as fair as Mr. Slidell's, Miss Ellen, because he happened to be so unfortunate in his convictions?"

"I most certainly should, Mr. Clayton."

"Check." George pushed his chair back, thrust aside the board, and appeared about to speak. "I knew he could not resist a chance to talk," whispered Nannie.

"I flatter myself I know womankind, Ellen—" "What boy does not who can raise a beard?" interrupted Nannie. He smiled, and went on: "and I would not trust you. You begin by trying to convert. There is something to rouse your interest, to pique your curiosity, to gratify your vanity (and these are great auxiliaries to love), in the thought of winning him, through love of you, to love heaven; the romance and poetry make it irresistible."

"Thank you for your estimate of the religious principle of the sex; it savors of that

'Sarcastic levity of tongue,
The stinging of a heart,'

Not the world, but a woman hath stung."

"Yes, Fanny Gilman was an old flame," said Nannie.

"I am scathless there; but Miss Fanny runs a great risk, as does any woman who marries a professed Infidel. She will find that, imperceptibly, she adopts the opinions of the one loved; loses sight of the sin in her regard for the sinner; and nothing to a refined man is so revolting as an irreligious woman. Men like to look upward in their love; the superiority of the object is some excuse for the weakness of the feeling (as far as affection and religion are concerned.) Superiority of intellect in a wife or dependent a man never forgives. Just in proportion as we know ourselves to be sinners, do we desire our lady-loves to be saints. It is seldom that a vicious man loves a vicious woman; he winds his hopes about something purer than himself. We see this in Mr. Slidell, a man of high standing, though an avowed Infidel, yet who has selected as a companion for life a woman brought up in the most rigid observance of the very tenets he rejects."

"Slidell is a contradiction," said Mr. Clayton; "I never knew a beggar leave him unrelieved. His is not mere money-giving charity, but the charity which giveth heart while it helpeth; which assisteth a failing credit and props a falling name, and stoppeth, when in haste, to speak a kind word to the outcast and the miserable."

"Some men," remarked Ellen, "wishing to assert their independence of thought, are Infidels in speech, and Christians in heart and practice. I hope Mr. Slidell belongs to this class."

"Who was that sat in your pew last Sunday, Mr. Clayton?" asked Nannie.

"I do not know: why do you ask?"

"Because he stared at me during the whole service."

"There is no vanity in that, Nannie. Pray, where were you looking the while?"

"Not at him, George, I can assure you, for it would puzzle me to describe him. I met his eye as I entered the pew, and after I was seated, I *felt* he was gazing at me. We each sat at the head of our respective pews, with only the division-board between us. I moved away from this, but still was conscious those eyes were upon me. The feeling became intolerable; and I turned suddenly, to assure myself it was not imagination, and, sure enough, those unmeaning eyes were fixed upon me, in any other than an admiring gaze. He made me feel uncomfortable all church time."

"He was mesmerizing you, Nannie, depend upon it. But here comes Peyton. He is a believer in mesmerism, and I doubt not would like to have you for a subject. Good-evening, Peyton; we are discussing mesmerism, and Nannie is desirous of being put to sleep."

"Good-evening, ladies! I shall be most happy to oblige Miss Nannie, but I am fearful I shall have to exclaim with the poet—

'My wreck of mind, and all my woes,
And all my ills that day arose;
When on the fair Nannie's eyes,
Like stars that shine,
At first with hopeless, fond surprise,
I gazed with mine.
When my glance met her searching glance,
A shivering o'er my body burst,
As light leaves in the greenwood dance,
When winter breezes stir them first.'

"I might feel flattered had you condescended to dedicate your own verses to me, Mr. Peyton, but as it is, I 'go begging

at a beggar's door.' But, jesting aside, are you a believer in mesmerism?"

"I believe in spiritual affinity—a certain sympathy. Some persons call it animal magnetism, some call it mesmerism, some *love*."

"Do you believe that love and animal magnetism have aught in common?" asked George.

"Certainly; poets call love an ethereal essence—a sympathy of soul—a divine spark—a—"

"But in earnest, Peyton?"

"Well, in sober earnest, then, I know little about it, but suppose it is a kind of spiritual affinity, partaking of the nature of mind over mind, without being exactly that either. I can understand and feel what I mean, but the idea is not clear to me, and therefore I can not impart it to you."

"Then it is very different from love, Peyton; for you not only feel that, but manage to give another a very correct idea of what it is."

"Very true, George. I am only giving you my idea of it, and do not know that the mesmerites would accept of my definition. When we love, we need no words to tell of our affection; it has a power which speaks of itself. I defy a man who does not feel to make another feel. I have heard my father say that he believed Burr's power over men lay in his eye; that it was impossible, in his best days, to be thrown with him and not feel it; it seemed to search you; but, that with his want of rectitude of thought this power left him, for when he saw him on trial at Richmond, he had not the eagle glance of old."

"Then you think mesmerism speaks through the eye?"

"My kind of mesmerism does. Suppose you were to try to make a woman love you for whom you had not a particle of affection, think you the counterfeit would deceive her? No. You might gratify her vanity, might touch her imagin-

ation—she might even marry you, but what hold would you have on her heart? The hold of habit and endurance, which often usurp the place of love. If a man feels, he makes those near him feel; if he is ardent and enthusiastic, you catch the fire; if he is sluggish, he puts you to sleep. This is what I mean by *animal magnetism*, and the follower of Mesmer professes to have no more power over his disciple than the votary of love over its object."

"Do you remember that story of Zschokke's I read to you the other day, Ellen? The heroine is a mesmeric subject, and while under the influence of mesmerism passionately loves a man whom she will not permit to approach her in her natural state. Also that account of Zschokke's which gives him, not the Scotch gift of second-sight, but something superior to it—a spiritual intelligence concerning events in the lives of others, so that when he saw certain people, he knew their inner life up to that time?"

"Yes; it struck me forcibly, for it seemed to chime with a vague idea which had always floated through my own mind. But did mesmerism originate with the Germans, George?"

"No, I believe not. It has always been floating through the world in some shape or other. I have read somewhere that Mesmer was an Italian adventurer, who made his appearance at Paris about the time Franklin first went there. He succeeded in exciting public curiosity concerning his pretensions, and had a suite of rooms elegantly fitted up with all the paraphernalia of fashion, and to these rooms he had the tact to draw the *beau monde* of Paris, attracting the attention of even Franklin and Lavoisier. In the centre of a saloon he had a kind of obelisk erected, from which numberless wires radiated to the circumference of a large circle, also formed of wire. Here the most celebrated belles of the time assembled and promenaded by the hour, holding to this wire. Often they would become so excited as to fall into convulsions, when

Mesmer would make his appearance among them, clothed in a long flowing robe, and holding a white wand, the waving of which calmed those troubled souls. From palace to café, all Paris rung with his name; the footman and the lord, the prince and the priest, the grisette and the lady, alike visited him."

"This was, indeed, *animal magnetism*—we would call it hysterics in these days; I suppose the wire was a trick of the trade to have something tangible," remarked Peyton. "But did you ever have a person whom you disliked, or between whom and yourself there was no affinity, exercise an influence over you?"

"No, never."

"I have: there was an old gentleman who lived near my father's (and a disagreeable old gentleman he was, too; I would go a half-mile out of my way any time to avoid him); this man exercised great influence over me. I coveted, yet feared, his good-will. I never could analyze the feeling I had toward him."

"I have had that same feeling toward persons; also the feeling Nannie describes having to the gentleman in church: therefore, if this is mesmerism, it seems to me, it must be both positive and negative."

"I do not pretend to say that the feeling I describe is mesmerism, Miss Ellen, I merely speak of its existence."

"I think I shall write a treatise on it," said George, "advocate that it is a species of electricity, governed by the laws which govern the poles of a battery—this will account for the attraction and repulsion. I think I can make some proselytes."

"Opposition, particularly of temperaments, is a necessary quality in attractions of any kind; it takes an acid and an alkali to make a salt," said Mr. Clayton.

"As a reward for your skepticism, and to illustrate what I

mean by spiritual affinity, I will tell you a story I heard at Governor Brown's table last winter; it was told by a plain Yankee, of undoubted veracity, as having happened to himself. He stated that he was born and brought up in Connecticut, his father was a farmer, and near him resided another farmer, whose family and his were on intimate terms; that he had become attached to one of the daughters of this gentleman and they were to have been married, when a family difference arose upon the subject of religion, which ended in a complete rupture and separation of the young people. Sometime after this he went to the city to live, and months after, removed to the West. He had been settled but a few weeks in his new home when he was suddenly, without any apparent cause, attacked by great depression of spirits, so great that it almost amounted to a disease, and materially interfered with the transaction of his business, while his thoughts, without taking any particular shape, would recur again and again to his absent lady-love, of whom, prior to this, he had almost ceased to think. The feeling becoming intolerable, he concluded it must be home sickness, so left for home, finding, when he did so, instant relief; he reproached himself for his weakness, but persevered in going on, determined to see his absent Dulcinea and have an explanation. Before he reached home this depression increased; and what was his distress, on his arrival, to hear, in answer to his inquiries, that she was dead. On inquiry, he found she was taken ill the very night he first experienced this depression, and had expressed to his sister, the families having become reconciled, her great anxiety to see him. Now this is what I call spiritual influence or mesmerism."

"It is not what I understand by it; I should call this presentiment only."

"Call it as you will, Miss Ellen, you would have thought it a mighty power if you could have seen the man, one whom

ordinary influences could not reach, and not a believer in any persuasions but those of the senses; he said he could not account for his acting upon the feeling, except that it was too powerful for him to resist."

"In matters pertaining to the little god," said Nannie, "Mr. Peyton thinks, to use George's favorite quotation,

'All thoughts, all passions, all delights,
Whatever stirs this mortal frame,
All, are but ministers of love;
And feed his sacred flame.'"

"I am most happy," said Mr. Peyton, bowing, "to have my ideas understood and expressed so well."

Nannie blushed and was silent.

"Have you faith in spiritual influence after death?" asked Ellen.

Peyton repeated low to Nannie—

"It is a beautiful belief,
That ever round our head,
Are hovering on noiseless wing,
The spirit of the dead."

"There is both beauty and poetry in that," said Ellen. "I often wish I was a Catholic, and believed in the efficacy of prayers addressed to the Virgin Mary; but I can not believe."

"She who once moved in her still beauty through an earthly home," Mrs. Hemans says, does she not? You remember the old fable, Ellen, that certain angels, good and bad, are appointed to watch over us at our birth, and as good or ill predominates, these go or stay, a struggle is continually going on between these angels for the dominion of our hearts; the good scattering the seeds of virtues, the evil of bad passions."

"Yes, and I fear the good angel is tempted to leave us often, but still he tarries, sometimes near, again afar off."

George repeated—

"All over does this outer earth,
Our inner earth in fold,
And sounds may reach us of its mirth,
Over its pales of gold.
There spirits live, unwedded all,
From the shades and shapes they wore,
But still their printless footsteps fall,
By the hearths they loved before.
We see them not, nor hear the sound,
They make in treading all around,
Their office sweet and nightly prayer,
Floats without echo on the ear.
But oft in unfrequented places—
Soft sorrow's twilight vales—
We see them, with uncovered faces,
Outside the golden pales ;—
But dim as they must always be,
Like ships far off and out at sea,
With the sun upon their sails."

There was a pause, which Nannie broke by saying,

"I hope you wise folks have talked nonsense enough for one night, you were becoming so mystical I shuddered, thinking I felt the cold wings of a cherub on my shoulder."

"We are searching for the grain of truth, which lies at the bottom of this chaff, Miss Nannie," said Peyton.

"Take care, your investigations may bury you in rubbish."

"Good-night, ladies, I have trespassed on your hour for repose. Mr. Clayton has left, I see, may all good angels guard you."

"Good-night, Mr. Peyton."

"What a stupid evening," pettishly remarked Nannie, as she lit her chamber lamp. "George, I do wish you would quit stroking your beard so complacently, and making quotations."

He smiled a knowing smile, but answered not.

CHAPTER III.

MR. CASEY was one of those peculiarly unfortunate men, who, meaning to do all things in the most polite and gentlemanly manner possible, and thinking that they exercise that rare talent, tact, to perfection, often manage to make you feel for them, and make themselves ludicrous. He was a man of most excellent feeling, had one of the kindest hearts living, yet, it was impossible to repress a smile at his mode of manifesting it. He was a middle-sized man, with a round, healthy face, a little, cunning, twinkling blue eye, a pug nose, the expression of which, in connection with a head almost bald, and always shining, gave a peculiarly ludicrous look to his physiognomy. He was always dressed particularly nice and clean, invariably wearing a brown coat, which induced Nannie to give him the sobriquet of the "brown paper parcel." On the sunny side of thirty-five, rich, respectable, and highly connected ; notwithstanding his peculiarities he was a great gallant ; for being a gentleman of leisure he was always at the command of the ladies ; his carriage, his horses, and himself were never more happy than when engaged in their service. In truth, he was one of those few men who, having at heart a profound respect for women, had no tact in his intercourse with them, was fated always to appear disadvantageously in their society ; while with men and in business matters, he was keen and shrewd.

Mr. Casey was also a sentimental, domestic man ; one, who had he a wife, would love her to adoration, obey her

wishes with the docility of a spaniel; thinking himself all the while the happiest man alive, with the tears starting to his eyes, and his face twitching with emotion, at the bare idea of being near the loved object.

When particularly happy Mr. Casey could not keep still, but would rub his hands together in the most heartfelt manner, and say, "This is nice."

Now "friend Casey," as George called him, had taken it into his wise head to be a great admirer of Ellen; the secret of which admiration was, that she had been a patient listener—for, "friend Casey" had once been in love, but the lady proving faithless, to console himself for her want of truth and appreciation, he brought his returned letters and read them to Ellen. Good letters they were, too; for be it known to you, Mr. Casey was a man of some mind, had traveled in Europe, could express himself well on paper, had much delicacy of feeling, and could he but have lost that dreadful consciousness which always beset him in a woman's presence, he would have been an entertaining and agreeable companion.

Ellen respected him for his many virtues, and the kindness he had shown her father when in adverse circumstances, assisting him in pecuniary matters; yet in her secret heart, she suspected this kindness sprung from a tender feeling toward herself, and a woman is always lenient to one she feels loves her; be this as it may, he was content to spend two-thirds of his time at Judge Mason's, always dining there on Sunday, and stepping into tea whenever it pleased him so to do; this had been his habit for years; and Nannie said, she looked upon him as a necessary part of the parlor furniture. No one, save Ellen, was at any trouble to entertain him, and Nannie (to whom he was a bore, as far as being entertained by him was concerned) wondered how she could be agreeable for so many hours together; but Mr. Casey seemed perfectly

satisfied to sit by Ellen and keep the spools of her work-box in order; he would search for the scissors, or tinker at any little broken trinket by the hour, with a patience old Job himself might have envied; then, too, he was an excellent reel for winding silk on—he never fidgeted, no matter how tangled the skein.

Nothing delighted him so much as to do you a favor; you felt you were conferring happiness by asking, for his face bore a satisfied glow for hours after.

Jane Lorton, an intimate friend of Ellen's, from a neighboring city, had now arrived on a visit to them. Jane was not pretty; but she was a very animated girl, and people would often say she looked sweetly, for she dressed well and to suit her style; she talked well, was a great admirer of talent, and was very fond of gentlemen's society. Being blessed with great self-government, when she chose to exercise it, she was almost always an agreeable companion, and having an intuitive knowledge of the world, was too wise to let it know too much of her; withal, she was kind-hearted, sincere, and independent in her views and feelings. Ellen and herself had been schoolmates, and were much attached to each other; the company she met at Judge Mason's suiting her, and she being a favorite there, she often visited them.

On one of those bright days in winter, which sometimes cheat us with a semblance of spring, Mr. Casey made his appearance at Judge Mason's door—his horses and himself in their best trim for a ride, Ellen having promised to accompany him. He gloried in the possession of the handsomest pair of horses in town, and as Ellen rode beautifully and was passionately fond of the exercise, she sometimes rode with him; on which occasions Mr. Casey looked as though the world had nothing more to offer him.

Ellen entered the parlor fully equipped for her ride, when Miss Lorton exclaimed—

"Ellen, you never looked half so handsome before, that cap is so becoming."

As her looking-glass had already conveyed this information, she went out to mount her horse with the full conviction that she was looking her best. She had mounted; and Mr. Casey was fussing about her habit, and making sure she was firmly seated, when, happening to glance up to the window, she saw the girls and George looking at her: George was standing behind them, holding up the curtain; as she caught the expression of his face, it was a singular expression, and the smile which struggled through it, spoke of some peculiar feeling; there was something in it which made her hastily exclaim, "I am all right, Mr. Casey;" whip her horse, and ride on.

This was not a pleasant ride to Ellen, for the first time in her life she wished she had not been riding with Mr. Casey. She tried to talk, but would catch herself thinking over George's smile, and wondering at the meaning of it. It was a little thing—but the expression of one human face—yet it had the power to quiet Ellen's spirits, and quell even that natural vanity which every woman feels when she knows she is looking particularly attractive, and give her, in its stead, an uneasy, startled feeling.

They reached home in the twilight, quiet and thoughtful; Ellen, despite her uncomfortable feelings had talked on to Mr. Casey, until she had talked out, and they were enjoying the best part of the ride, the quiet trot home in the dusk of the evening.

They reached the door, and Mr. Casey was helping her from the horse, when just as she gave the spring, she instinctively looked up at the window where she had left George, missed her footing upon the curb, slipped, and sprained her ankle; nothing could equal Mr. Casey's distress, he insisted upon taking her in his arms, but this she resisted, and leaning on him limped to the door, where

George made his appearance, and carried her into the parlor. A Doctor was sent for, who pronounced it a bad sprain, which, if she was not careful, might confine her for a month; she was obliged to keep her room entirely, so her chamber soon became the sitting room of the family, Jane Lorton, Nannie, and George, spending most of their time there. George had always some gossip to tell, some remarkable adventure to recount, or entertaining book to read to them.

One evening, tired of reading, he threw the book aside, saying—

"Miss Jane, I had no idea you would make so agreeable a woman."

"Thank you, nor did I dream you would make so *presentable* a man; I used to think you an insufferable coxcomb."

"Ha, ha, ha, why when was that? you were a little miss in bib and red stockings when I left."

"Not at all sir; *you* were a young gentleman just escaped from your *Alma Mater*, and sported long locks and a cane; while I was stepping upon the threshold of sweet sixteen, and dreaming of the heart I was to conquer."

"Ah! yes, at the bread-and-butter age, as Byron calls it; well, I suppose you have laid waste *juro divino*. I give you fair warning, that you are not to number me among your victims; my heart is in the mountains."

"Thank you for your kindly caution, it is a fair gage of battle, but 'I disdain a captive's captive to remain,' so give your body permission to hasten after your heart."

"You girls amuse me with the airs you take upon yourselves, because you are a few years older, as though I had not known you from your youth up. There is our little vixen, who, when I went away, rejoiced in the homely name of Nancy, has had the vanity to victimize it into Nannie—'Woman alas! vain woman still.'"

"A woman's vanity is nothing in comparison with a man's;

vanity is natural to a woman, and, a certain portion of it, graceful and necessary, it gives her self-reliance—self-respect—we do not expect it in a man, and are disappointed when we see it."

"Yes," observed Ellen, "a man's glory should be to conquer all these little weaknesses—a woman's prayer, to be delivered from the necessity of conquering."

"Then you acknowledge the supremacy of our sex—quite a concession for you, Ellen."

Ellen laughed. "Yes, just as we recognize the supremacy of the lion or the tiger; the humming-bird questions not their right as lords of the forest."

"No, the humming-bird would be content to bask in the sunshine, or roam from flower to flower in admiration of itself and its plumage; you have chosen a fair type for your sex, frail, fickle, and fond of dress; I do believe your highest aspirations are to be admired and well dressed."

"I candidly confess," said Jane, "that one of my aspirations is always to be well dressed, for I do not know of a worse feeling than that of being badly attired. Much of a woman's attractive power depends upon her being pleased with herself, and at ease, and she can not be so when she knows she is ill-dressed; it does not matter so much with a man, although he should always be PRESENTABLE, for foppery of dress takes from the dignity of manhood. Now, do not look so shocked Ellen, as though I was advocating treason, in putting so much stress upon dress, for I assure you I am in earnest. Like all homely women, I am fond of dress; and I assure you, that if I had had Solomon's opportunity, I should not have made his wise choice."

"Why you certainly would not have chosen robes and jewels, instead of wisdom, Miss Jane?"

"Ha, ha—no, not quite so bad as that either, but I should have taken beauty—money—love, I am afraid."

"I desire very much to be beautiful, but it would not be my first wish," said Ellen.

"You are very beautiful at times, Ellen," said George.

Ellen started and colored, but the tone of the speaker was so cold, his manner so commonplace, that instantly the flush of gratification faded from her face.

"You have put love the third and last in your category, Miss Jane; is this the value ladies usually put upon it?"

"I hope not, but you know we generally value that the most, which seems the most unattainable; and, as there is no prospect, that by any miracle I can be converted into a beauty, I give that the preference par excellence, whereas, I know I can be loved without beauty or money; love comes last, as it is already within my reach."

"Did you ever see a beautiful woman whom you would have changed places with?"

"I do not know that I ever have, but I have seen many whose personal appearance I have envied. We covet beauty not so much for its own sake, as for the estimate your sex put upon it; they have taught us its value."

"You flatter us; but beautiful women are often the least attractive, Miss Jane."

"This is rank heresy—all history is against you—from the king on his throne to the peasant at his plow, all men are moved by beauty. Look at Joan of Arc? think you she would have led the armies of France had she been an ugly woman? no, they would have scourged her as a sinner instead of canonizing her as a saint. Think of Mary of Scotland; would the best blood of the land have flowed for her like water, had she been an ugly woman? Go back to Zenobia and Cleopatra, if you will, and acknowledge the homage paid by your sex to beauty?"

"Who lost Marc Antony the world?"

A beautiful woman ; and the world is the same as in the days of Egypt's queen, nor have men changed either."

"I acknowledge the beauty of all you have named ; but what would Joan of Arc have been without her enthusiasm ? to the excitable French this was her great charm ;—or Mary, without her winning ways, to soothe a Bothwell or decoy a Douglas ;—or Cleopatra, without her address ? think you she would have lorded it over the heart of the world's lord ?—and Zenobia, conquering even her conquerors. I acknowledge the supremacy of beauty, Miss Jane ; but it must be beauty and tact and talent united ; without these, beauty of form is a cheat, and with them 'angels of light walk not the sapphire walls of heaven so dazzlingly.'"

"Hush, or I shall die of envy ; beauty and intellect combined is a great power—but you should have too much taste to talk thus of beauty to an ugly woman. Take care of Ellen until my return—good-by."

"Jane is a charming woman, but it is a pity she is not prettier," George remarked, as she closed the door.

Ellen smiled.

"How characteristic of a man that comment is ; she has taste, tact, talent, all the requisites, save beauty, to charm, yet you falter in your admiration, and pity her, because she possesses not the very quality you have been depreciating."

"Well, I acknowledge the seeming inconsistency, but if she had personal appearance what a sensation she would make."

"Yes, you would value her the more because others admired her ; your jewel must have a brilliant setting that it may flatter the eyes of your friends."

He made no reply to this save to ask, "Has Jane gone out to tea ?"

"No, she had an engagement at five, but will return before dark."

"My friend, Mr. Levering, takes tea with us. I wish you would let me carry you below to the parlor, you could be quite comfortable on the sofa, and I wish you to see him."

"Thank you, but it would be impossible to perform my part gracefully, so I must decline."

"Then we shall have to send friend Casey up to keep you company ; he is inconsolable at not seeing you ; poor man ! he looks miserable since your accident."

"I shall have to console him when I recover ; but he was not half so much to blame for the mishap to my ankle as yourself."

"Why, you are dreaming, Ellen, I had nothing to do with it."

"You are mistaken ; but first explain the meaning of that smile upon your lip when I mounted my horse."

"Did I smile ?"

"Yes, and a very peculiar, mocking smile it was."

"Then it must have been excited at seeing Mr. Casey's extreme care of you ; or, perhaps, it was a smile of admiration—I never saw you look better."

"That was not it, George."

"Define it for me, then, will you not ?"

"I can not, unless you tell me what you were thinking of ; it was a most annoying smile, and marred the pleasure of my ride."

"I regret it extremely ; the only feelings I was conscious of, was one of admiration at your appearance, amusement at the exhibition of Mr. Casey's happiness, and envy that I was not to share it ; but I can not imagine what this had to do with your spraining your ankle."

"Much ; the expression of your face annoyed me during my ride, and when we reached home I glanced up at the window to see if you were still there, and in so doing missed my footing."

He turned his chair quickly, and looked full at her.

"Do you mean what you say, Ellen?"

"Assuredly I do; it is the first time I have seen you wear that expression since your return, it was like one familiar in our childhood; then, I often observed it when you were annoyed, but now it has a different character, and sets me to thinking—it is so ambiguous."

"I did not know my face was such a babblers, I shall have to school it in future. I have been so long with nature that I have given open expression to my thoughts. I must return to the arts of civilized life."

He walked to the window, and played tatoo on the glass. Ellen wished to see the expression of his face, but could not, for the twilight had deepened as they conversed; she was puzzled, and could not account for his manner. Just as she was about speaking, Nannie entered and said tea was ready, and Mr. Levering had made his appearance.

"I suppose you have driven Jane away, George? I saw you had put yourself in your talking attitude, so made my escape from the infliction."

"Yes, you prefer a discourse from the text, 'Love one another,' with yourself for the only auditor. Will Peyton stay to tea?"

"I was not sufficiently interested to inquire; but expect he will give you the desired information, if you ask for it."

George laughed at her assumption of dignity.

"I wish Jane would come; what shall I do with four men to tea? and Mr. Casey sighs so constantly, he makes me nervous."

"Is Casey down stairs?" asked George.

"Yes, do go down and talk to them, while I smooth my hair a little."

George went without another word, while Nannie walked to the glass.

"I regret you can not come down Ellen, but you could

neither look agreeable nor be so, with your limb stretched out in that fashion. I am determined you are to make a conquest of Mr. Levering."

"Then I had better remain, for if I look as awkward as I feel, the impression would be any thing but a favorable one."

"There is Jane now," and Nannie put down the brush and left the room.

A half hour after, a servant entered with Ellen's tea, and a book "Master George had sent;" she was not disposed to read, but sat with the book upon her lap unopened, in a reverie. George had altered, but she could not make out in what the alteration consisted; she thought much of the manner in which he had said "You are beautiful at times, Ellen," but could make nothing of it; the cold and almost sarcastic way in which it was spoken took from it the force of a compliment. She also pondered over their conversation about the look, and saw there was a parrying off, a want of frankness, quite unusual to him in his intercourse with her.

She was, as George had said, at times a beautiful woman, although she was not generally called so; she was one of those persons, so constituted, that the state of the mind affected her looks directly; every shadow upon her heart told upon her face, and gave her a haggard and faded appearance; when animated and happy, she often looked beautifully, but it was the beauty of an ephemeral flower.

She sat for hours in the dim light thinking o'er the past, and shaping out the future, in a nervous, dreamy sort of state. Jane Lorton's voice reached her from the parlor singing Burns' "Highland Mary;" this had been a favorite song with her dead sister, and brought sad recollections of her fate. The stream of life looked troubled and dark to her, and she wept bitterly; it was one of those seasons when the pall of the future seems to fall upon us, and all the desolation of life's crushed hopes and darkened aspirations are felt in

a few hours; tears are then a luxury which may not be denied.

About midnight George, as he passed the door, called out, "good-night;" and Nannie and Jane, came in to talk, previous to going to their own room. They were delighted with Mr. Levering, who had said "he had quite a curiosity to see Miss Mason, he had heard so much of her, and hoped he would have that pleasure soon." "Upon which, Mr. Casey sighed," said Nannie.

"Who entertained Mr. Levering?"

"Jane, when she could get an opportunity; but Father had started upon old times, when Virginia was a colony, and Mr. Levering listened and asked questions, while George filled up the pauses with quoting poetry to Jane."

"Quoting poetry to Jane." Ellen awoke in the night with these words ringing in her ears.

CHAPTER IV.

SPRING was approaching, and Ellen had so far recovered from her sprain as to walk about the house, although she still limped a little. George had put out his shingle as a lawyer, but visits from clients, proving almost as rare as those from angels, he had little to do but devote his time to the ladies, of whose society he was very fond. Being the possessor of a few thousands, sufficient, with economy, to keep him like a gentleman, he had not necessity to spur him to exertion, while, as yet, he had not settled down into the regular routine of a city existence.

Jane Lorton was still with them, and had one attraction which Ellen almost envied her—it was her singing; her father being a rich merchant, she had had an excellent musical education, and having great taste she sang beautifully, with soul and feeling. When singing she looked pretty, that is, as pretty as she could look, but you would often wish those pale blue eyes had more expression; she had never to be persuaded to sing—it was her greatest charm, and she knew it.

Often in the twilight, she would leave the fireside circle, and stepping to the piano sing one of those old, beautiful ballads, which are so sad, yet so soothing; it was a luxury to hear her then, and you thought of the angels. Ellen was passionately fond of music, an able performer, but she did not sing much, her voice was low and weak.

What an attraction beautiful singing is in a woman, per-

sonal appearance may touch your outward sense, but this speaks to your spirit, wakes your soul.

George and Jane were excellent friends, he seemed to take particular pleasure in getting her into an argument; they sparred incessantly.

About this time he received a letter from an old friend, Mr. Kirk, whom he had traveled with, asking him to join with him, another expedition about starting for the West; to this he replied.

March 19th, 18—.

DEAR KIRK—Off again to the wilderness; why what has taken possession of you? has your tailor sued you? your lady love married? or the spirit of unrest left meaner mortals to take up their abode in your breast? that you must again "lose yourself in the continuous woods where rolls the Oregon."

I sometimes feel half inclined to accept your invitation, pack up and be off, but find civilization has not lost all charm for me, and then, "I too, have been in Arcadia." I do not wonder at the love the trappers have for their forest life, there is assuredly something fascinating in it—the excitement of the chase, and the after deep repose with nature. I certainly felt purer and holier while in those grand old woods, than I ever felt before.

I have hung out my shingle. "George Watson, Attorney at Law," stares the passer-by in the face with a newness which speaks of verdancy. As yet, none of the worshipers of law and order, in the shape of clients, have crossed my threshold, save one old gent, from the "far countrie," who had got into trouble about his tobacco hogsheads, and stumbled on me by accident; verily he escaped quickly, having come upon a parcel of us just after dinner, engaged in a smoke; I have no doubt he thought we had committed a felony on his goods and chattels, and left in haste to look after them.

I am at Judge Mason's, of course, as I know no other home; you know the old gentleman and my father were second cousins, and very much attached to each other. He has been more than a father to me, and having no sons, has indulged me more than I now wish he had.

His daughters, Ellen and Nannie, are to me sisters; Nannie is a bright bewitching little creature, with a natural dash of coquetry about her, which is destined to give some poor fellow the heartache, unless she is tamed down by a real passion; at present she looks upon the sunny side of every thing, and performs every thing she undertakes with an air that is irresistible.

Ellen is to me a favorite sister, very different from Nannie in character; she is more subdued, but there is an unknown depth under that quiet surface, yet I can not describe her to you; she has altered in my long absence, and some of the phases of her character I can not read; she was the playmate of my childhood, and the recipient of all my cares and joys.

An intimate, and visitor in the house, is Miss Jane Lorton, a lady I feel half inclined to have some tender passages with, that is, always provided she is willing. She has not one particle of beauty, and has those tame blue eyes which are my aversion; but there is a charm about her manner and conversation, an abandon, in the perfect frankness with which she discusses her want of personal appearance, which is, of itself, a great attraction. Her face, in its expression, is rather agreeable, and she sings. I wish you could hear her sing; I declare to you, I have enjoyed few pleasures in life equal to that of hearing her ballad-singing.

I can not make out her character, although I knew her as a child—she changes with the hour; she confesses to a proper appreciation of our sex, and is certainly a great favorite with them. Some complimented her upon her good temper and

originality, and she replied, "she was obliged to cultivate all her good qualities to make people forget her deficiencies of form and face—a beautiful woman might sometimes be disagreeable,

'For if some errors to her lot did fall,
Look in her face, and you forget them all;'

but with her it would be *lese mageste*." I have heard a rumor that she is engaged to some absent wight who is in search of a fortune, and it may be, that in his absence she deems it no sin to permit—

—— "Some happier man
To kiss her hand, or flirt her fan."

Be this as it may, she certainly has not the bearing of a lady whose heart is on any one's way but her own. I like her much, but do not be supposing I am deep in the slough, for "Richard loves Richard" too well, to resign his keeping to one who has so much of the uncertain glory about her; she piques my curiosity, that is her charm.

Judge Mason has always been my type of a gentleman, and it makes me sad to see the rapid strides he is making to the grave. There is a thoughtfulness and settled seriousness about him which convinces me he feels the great change to be near, and is preparing for it, but he makes no allusion to it before his family.

"The soul's dark cottage, battered and decayed,
Lets in new light through chinks that time has made.
Stronger by weakness, wiser men become,
As they draw near to their eternal home;
Leaving the old, both worlds at once they view,
Who stand upon the threshold of the new."

My own prospects are less settled than when I was twenty-one. I have a suspicion that I shall never make any thing at the law—the pursuit is not congenial to me. Were I obliged to labor for my daily bread, I might possibly drudge

myself into a good practice; but, as it is, the habit of self-indulgence has grown upon me from living in a slave State, and my late roving way of life has not corrected it.

I sometimes think, that, in this life, I shall just miss making a figure—so be it, then; any thing but being a little great man, dodging in and out of public notice. I would rather dwell in nothingness for ever. I have no ties in life but those I impose upon myself, and I sometimes think I am too free; but I must be content for some years to worship at a distance, for I am not a marrying man.

Since you will be a rover, I wish you success wherever you pitch your tent, and health in heart and limb. Whenever this wilderness of brick and mortar becomes dull to me, civilization loses her charm, or my lady-love looks cross, I will take up my pilgrim-staff and follow your track, forswearing civilized for savage life; but until then adieu.

GEORGE.

Ellen, to Nannie's great satisfaction, was at last introduced to Mr. Levering, and to her equal dissatisfaction, did not appear to admire him. The truth was, that each had heard so much of the other, from mutual friends, that they were mutually disappointed; and Mr. Levering, always a little stiff upon being first introduced, was more so when presented to Ellen, than usual. "I can not understand it," said Nannie to Mr. Peyton, "she has such an appreciation of a man of sense, and he is so agreeable."

Nannie had many admirers, but affairs between herself and Mr. Peyton were plainly verging toward matrimony; the gentleman being evidently kept at a distance by the lady's disposition to coquet; but, like the moth around the candle, he could not keep far from the light which allured him, and his destiny was to be lost in the blaze. Nannie felt and exulted in her power, exerting a sort of petty tyranny; but she

did not dare to go very far, for she understood Peyton's character. One day he would think the prize almost won, when the next she would appear with such polite, but perfectly-acted indifference, that it puzzled him; but her knowledge of how far she might go with impunity kept her in check, for she had no idea of losing him.

Ellen's spirits appeared to have suffered from her long confinement with her ankle, for she was not so bright as she had been in the early part of the winter. About this time her little niece was taken ill with the scarlet fever, and she, to relieve her mother, whose attention was required by the state of her father's health, took the entire charge of her; as none of the others had had the disease, they were not allowed to enter the child's room. Consequently, she saw but little of the family circle, and it was two weeks before she took her place among them in the parlor; then she saw, or fancied she saw, that she had not been missed as much as usual, so many inquiries had not been made for her, and she took her seat, feeling almost like an intruder.

It is true, Nannie stopped her conversation with Peyton to say, "Ellen, dear, I am glad to see you here once more." Peyton shook her heartily by the hand, and Jane kissed her; but George did not rise from his seat beside Jane, as had always been his custom, to greet and give her one; he only drew nearer, and motioned her to take the seat he had vacated, while he finished some remark he was making as she entered. Ellen was sensitive; and she had so often, while in that dim sick room soothing the fretfulness of a spoilt child, wished she was below enjoying their conversation, that now, the feeling that her presence added nothing to their enjoyment, was a bitter one, and could she have departed without the appearance of caprice, she would willingly have gone to her own room. In a few moments, George turned toward her with his usual manner, and gradually her uneasy feelings

wore away, but they came and came again in the course of the evening. Unknown to George and Ellen, there was springing up between them that sensitiveness of feeling, that observing of manner in trifles, that coldness from some supposed neglect or indifference, which almost always characterizes the first stages of deep interest between persons who are unconscious of, or have not yet acknowledged it to themselves.

When Jane went to sing, George no longer sat quietly and listened, but bent over the piano and turned the leaves of the book; it was to Jane his conversation was addressed—to her he turned for confirmation of what he was saying. To Ellen his manner was none the less kind and considerate; it was the absence of *little* attentions she felt—things which others did not observe. Ellen saw, for what will not the quick eye of a woman see, that Jane's manner was less careless than usual; there was the least shadow of reserve in it when talking to George, which she had not, when addressing Peyton and others.

George had a voice, which was so well modulated, that to the ear he wished, he could make impressive the most careless saying; Ellen had often felt herself the object of this trickery, which now she saw exercised toward Jane with any thing but a pleasant feeling: it is painful to any of us to know that the place we have long occupied is given to another, and doubly so, if that place be one we covet. Ellen tried, and succeeded, in banishing all appearance of uncomfortable feeling from face and manner.

In the course of the evening Mr. Casey came in; great was his delight at seeing Ellen; he took a seat close beside her, and rubbed his poor, red hands one over the other in a most unctuous manner. "She was looking so badly though, so thin and pale, she really must take another ride with him; he would promise no accident should happen the next time"

She stole a glance at George at this speech, but he did not hear, he was reading something to Jane. Mr. Casey entered into a long harangue about his hopes and fears, and the anxiety he had suffered on her account, &c. Then he drew his chair nearer, lowered his voice to a whisper, and wished to know "if she did not think there was a natural liking between Miss Jane and George? he really thought they were very much taken with each other; he had heard several persons remark it, and he thought it would be an excellent match; he liked people he was intimate with to marry together." It was a great relief to Ellen, when the conversation again became general; she managed, by changing her seat to one nearer Nannie, that they should not be so decidedly coupled off, as to make a tête-à-tête almost absolutely necessary. When she was again alone, she upbraided herself for her bad feelings, and reasoned that it was natural, that in her absence, George should turn to Jane for companionship; she was so brilliant and agreeable, that it was also natural he should not miss her; all this was natural, but none the less painful for being so. She had been accustomed to be first with George, always to receive from him all those little nameless attentions which it is so pleasant to receive from those we are attached to, and she was not aware that to be deprived of them, would give her so much pain. George, when saying good-night that evening on his way to his own room, had remarked, "you must go out more now, Ellen, you must take rides and walks with me; I hope things will once more get in their old course." And she hoped so too.

CHAPTER V.

THE spring proved unusually damp and cold, and Judge Mason's health becoming each day more frail, his physician recommended a visit to Charleston.

He was loth to undertake the journey, but at last yielded to the entreaties of those about him. Mrs. Mason and an old servant, who had been brought up in the family, accompanied him, leaving the house and little Mary, to Ellen's care.

The child, a fair, frail, little mortal, sickly from its birth, and petted by its grand-parents, was no light charge. It was arranged that Jane Lorton should remain with them during the Judge and Mrs. Mason's absence.

Ellen's time and thoughts were now fully occupied; she felt that her father would never recover his long-continued ill health, and his advanced age forbade her to hope. Now was her time for action; she consulted with the family physician, an old and dear friend of her father's, and he gave her his warm approval and heartiest co-operation. She made known to her friends that she wished to receive pupils to instruct in music, and, as she was known to be an able performer, she had hopes of soon having a good class. George acquiesced in, and expressed his approbation of all she did, when necessary, but spoke of it as little as possible; while Jane was warm in her expressions of admiration, and indefatigable in her exertions to serve.

Weeks rolled on, and pupil followed pupil, until she had a respectable class; these, with her other duties, fully occu-

pied her time, so, except in the evening, she was but little with the family. Roused by Mr. Casey's remarks, she observed George and Jane closely, and felt certain there was a mutual feeling of interest, and, perhaps an attachment between them. The want of out-door exercise and the unusual exertion she was making, was telling on Ellen, for she daily became thinner and paler.

One day when riding out with George, the conversation turned upon Jane; Ellen told him she thought him interested in her; he appeared not to like the remark, and said,

"Jane is not pretty, and it would be impossible for me to love a woman who had not *some* personal appearance."

"She has no beauty, certainly; but she has a most agreeable face, and few women possess her fascination of manner. I can not believe her want of beauty could be a serious objection to one who knew her."

"I am afraid it would to me, Ellen; I have a constitutional love of the beautiful; those peculiar eyes and that light hair are among my antipathies. I do not admire a decided blonde. Miss Jane is very attractive; but I never converse with her without wishing she were prettier."

"You will end by thinking her so."

"No, no; the face that mirrors my happiness must be a different one from that; yet, perhaps, I may end by thinking her so, but it is one of the things hidden in the uncertain future. I promise you, however, to give you notice when that future becomes present, premising, that nothing short of a miracle or one of love's metamorphoses will effect it."

Here the subject dropped; Ellen did not like his manner, and made no further remarks.

In the afternoon of a dull rainy day, not long after this, Jane took her work and went up to Ellen's sitting-room, where she gave her music lessons, to sit and chat. After they had discoursed for sometime, Nannie came in with Ivanhoe,

and offered to read to them; soon she was called away, and as they sat discussing the characters, George tapped at the door and entered.

"Are you planning the invasion of some poor wight's heart, that you keep so to yourselves this afternoon? I have kept myself company until I am as dull as the weather. What have you been doing?"

"Reading *Ivanhoe*," answered Jane.

"And are in ecstasies with Rebecca, of course."

"I am, but Ellen is not; her sympathies are with Rowena."

"O! she was born at the north, and you remember what is said of the cold in clime; brighter skies beamed on our birth.

——— 'We are of that land,
Where the poet's lip and the painter's hand
Are most divine.'"

"Yes," said Ellen, "I am unsunned snow."

"Not unsunned, only refusing to melt in the ray."

"That is the sun's fault; it lacks warmth."

Jane looked musingly from one to the other.

"Who does not admire Rebecca, so feminine, yet so brave, with all the weakness of a woman, yet the courage of a warrior. I never could love one who held herself haughtily aloof; she must show some preference, slight indeed, but womanly; something which I only could perceive, or she arms my self-love against her."

"In other words, she must invite your admiration ere you yield it; that is characteristic. I never knew an appeal to a man's vanity fail yet," said Jane.

"I plead no exemption from these *small vices*, and I put it to yourself, Miss Jane, on your conscience, do you often know a more pleasurable feeling than the gratification of this same vanity?"

"I acknowledge it; but still it is a *little feeling*."

"True; but the pleasures of life are made up of these same little feelings, a constant succession of strong emotions would exhaust us; these little gratifications are the genialties of life—they make us love ourselves and our kind."

"There is something grating to me in your theories, Mr. Watson, you do not exalt human nature, but find excuses for its weaknesses in the fact, that they are its belongings. I do not like to think myself so assailable, I would glory in a magnanimous character, free from jealousy, heart-burnings, and the long train of evil passions which spring up in the breast, and choke the better growth of the heart."

"We may all have the glory of struggling and conquering," he coldly replied. "What do you say of character, Ellen? you are very silent."

"I have great admiration for real, true, honest character, no matter how evinced; we almost always see strong, good points of character counterbalanced by equally strong tendencies to evil. There is Mr. B——, for instance, few men have his good feeling, quickness, agreeability, and capability; but he has strong passions and little control over them; he does good deeds, often makes great impressions, but somehow, in the struggle between the good and ill of his nature, the evil often gets the master."

"Indeed it does; but for another example of character, take Mary Clayton, a sweet, amiable woman, you never hear of her outraging propriety in any way, she is affectionate, and every one loves her; she is not brilliant, but has intellect enough for a wife."

"For *your* wife, perhaps she has," quickly replied Jane, "for you wish no rival in your bosom's lord. Mary is, indeed, all that you say—her kind, affectionate, even, well balanced temperament, is seldom tempted from its equilibrium, the proprieties of life are her boundaries."

George uttered a smothered exclamation, and starting from his chair, stood rocking it with his foot, as he stood before it.

"I would rather be hated with intensity, than regarded with the lukewarm affection of a nature like that; it would kill me by inches to be linked to one of your even, affectionate natures, for ever effervescing in kisses and embraces. I should feel that the constant bubbling was the froth, which, when sipped, left the heart flat and stale beneath—Xantippe would be a luxury in comparison."

There was an awkward silence, he turned the chair, and re-seated himself, saying,

"So you were reading *Ivanhoe*, a great book, but *Ivanhoe* knew Rebecca loved him, despite her dignity and self-respect; the school-boy will pass by the fruit at his feet, to climb for that which is out of his reach on the topmost bough; and a man is but a grown school-boy after all, that which comes unsought is valueless to most of us."

"That is just the contrary of what you said some few moments since," remarked Ellen.

"No, it is not, Ellen; a woman may show a preference, but it must be *after* she has been sought, a *willingness* to be won, but a *determination* to be wooed."

Here a servant called him, he was wanted.

"Do you not think," said Jane, after he had departed, "that a man may be aware a woman loves him, she conscious he is aware of it, yet able to maintain toward him her dignity and self-appreciation?"

"Her dignity, yes; her self-appreciation, no; for she has parted with that, she has been bought without a price—there has been no value received."

"I have often tried to realize how I should act if placed in circumstances where I should be obliged to yield one dear to me; I should like to be a heroine, but am afraid I might prove all a woman."

"I have no faith in the existence of an unrequited passion, Jane, any more than I have in the existence of fire without fuel; give them time and both burn out."

"Yes, after the one has exhausted the heart, and the other destroyed all with which it came in contact; but, I believe, love in some natures grows most when most trampled on; however, I hope I may never be tried, for I have no fancy to make a Waterloo of my breast with my passions, like the Allies, arrayed against me, and win a victory, which, after all, perhaps, had better be a defeat."

"The bitterness of a disappointment of that kind to me would not be so much the lack of a return, as it would be the terrible struggle with the dark passions which it conjures up. I would not give much for the love which breeds no jealousy, *perfect* love casteth out fear, but our love, like all pertaining to us, partakes of the sin of Adam. The weakest of us can, in times of excitement, perform the most daring acts of heroism; but true heroism is something more than a mere ebullition of feeling, it is to bear with fortitude the slow torture of years. Hence is my admiration for the character of Rowena, through that heart sickness, hope deferred, she bore the petty tyranny so hard to endure—the expostulations of Cedric, the pretensions of Athelstone—all this, too, while in uncertainty of the fate of one who had been her playmate from her youth, and was her first love."

"That may be; but the one strikes me as warm, noble, a heroine—the other as natural, cold, a fireside woman; but hopelessness sometimes gives us strength, the malefactor meets death with fortitude when he knows it to be inevitable; but here is Mr. Watson, let us talk of something else; I have a horror of discussing love with a gentleman."

"I have just had a message from the hotel," said George, entering, "some of my old friends from the far West are there."

"Are you going down?" asked Ellen.

"After tea."

"Did you not tire of your wilderness life?"

"Not at all, Miss Jane; you have no idea of its enjoyment and excitement. I shall not soon forget the sense of suffocation I had the first night I slept under a roof."

"Is there really any thing noble about the Indian?"

"Yes, much, where he is not tainted by civilization, and you see him on his own soil, 'Lord of the fowl and the brute.' But the half-breeds are the most vicious people living; while the Arropahoes, and some of the tribes further west, are but little better than untamed wolves. With plenty of books, and some one to love, we might choose a spot and have our Eden. Ellen, what say you to a lodge in the wilderness?"

"Delightful in summer; but the winters, the long, desolate winters of the Rocky Mountains, with the wolf howling at your cabin door, and bears springing at you from bush and brake—there would be none of the poetry of life in that to a woman, George."

"You have no romance. The trappers live in the fastnesses of the mountains, shut up for months, watching for the first spring thaw, with no companions but their dogs and guns, and I offer you books and some one to love."

"These would be inducements, certainly; but did you never hear the story of a couple who left society and Paris, to spend their honeymoon in the country? The lady had a hardly-perceptible mole on her nose, which had not been observed during courtship; the gentleman had also a cast in one eye, which had been equally unnoticed. At the end of a month, the lady's mole had grown to be a wart to the gentleman's vision requiring the surgeon's knife; while, to the lady, the gentleman was positively cross-eyed. Disputes arose between them as to the removal of these blemishes, but, on application to an eminent operator, he decided nothing more

was necessary than a return to Paris. Now this might be our case. Having none of the foils of society around us, our imperfections would be in bold relief; you might even think my hair red, which you have often assured me was a golden brown."

"Pshaw!" was his impatient exclamation. "What do you think of it, Miss Jane? You remember, in *The Arctic Lover* to his Mistress, he tells her that

'The white fox by her couch shall play.'

I will tempt you in the same manner; while

——— 'Down the slope,
The silvery-footed antelope
As gracefully and gayly springs,
As in the marble courts of kings.'

There too for *you*, shall

'The acacia wave her yellow hair,
Lonely and sweet, nor loved the less
For flowering in the wilderness.'

Can I not tempt you with a cabin on the banks of the Sweet Water, having a vision of roses from the door, such as not even Cashmere can produce; or we may cross the mountains, and enter the buffalo country, where nightly I will lay my trophies at your feet."

"Meantime, my scalp may grace the nearest wigwam. Verily, I prefer a local habitation among men; my taste lies not that way."

"You are a calculating set, you women all. Here, amid brick and mortar, you live according to rule, and he reigns who is richest in houses and lands; while even the savages barter their affections to him who has the most skins, the gayest piece of calico, or the largest quantity of beads."

"Here is Nannie," remarked Jane. "What will she say to it?"

"I say you are a lazy-looking set, and might sit for the frontispiece of the *Castle of Indolence*. Mr. Casey and Mr. Levering are below-stairs. Come to tea, I suppose; and 'wish to see the ladies.' Judith awoke me from a bright dream giving the information, for which I feel duly grateful. Do go down, Ellen."

CHAPTER VI.

It was a bright, beautiful morning; the girls and George had tarried longer than usual at the breakfast table, in a particularly joyous mood, settling the preliminaries of a picnic, which was to take place that day. It was finally concluded that Jane and Nannie should go out in the morning in Mr. Casey's carriage, with Mrs. Walker, while the gentlemen went on horseback, as the ground selected was several miles from town. George was to drive Ellen out in the afternoon. After much laughing and talking and bustling putting in order and putting out of order, they separated—George, as usual, to go first to the post-office, and the girls to make their toilets. By ten o'clock they were ready, and off; and Ellen was left to the full enjoyment of quiet, in the deserted house.

They had not been gone a half hour when George returned, looking hurried and agitated. He had to ring to get in, and the first question he put to the negro who opened the door, was—

"Have the ladies gone?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where is Miss Ellen?"

"In her room."

"Tell her I wish to see her in the parlor."

The servant was gone some minutes, and returned with the answer—"Miss Ellen was giving a lesson, but would be at leisure in fifteen minutes."

George walked the floor impatiently; listened to the strum, strum, strum, of the piano, as one passage of the music was repeated over and over, to get it correctly played, with his face twitching with the effort to keep composed, and be patient.

At length the piano stopped; there was quiet above; he heard the door open, and Ellen and her charge talking as they came down stairs together. A moment more, her hand was upon the knob; she paused an instant, to reply to the little girl, then turned it, and entered. He sprang toward her.

"What is the matter, George?"

"I have bad news for you. Your father is ill—very ill—dying."

Ellen tottered, and would have fallen, but George seated her upon the sofa, and after a moment she wept profusely. He struggled hard for self-control, but his manhood gave way, and his tears fell with hers; then starting up, as though ashamed, and brushing them away, he said:

"I start for Charleston at three o'clock."

"And I go with you."

"You can not, Ellen—the girls and little Mary. I had hoped to reach here before they left."

"I must see father once again, George; and mother will need me."

"Ellen, he is dead!"

This was terrible. She could imagine his illness; realize even that he was dying; but, dead—for this she was not prepared—of this she had never dreamed. As often as she had thought of the prospect of his death, it had never occurred to her that he would die away from home; that his children would be without his blessing and his last words; that strange associations would be about him in his last hour; it seemed more than she could bear.

She wept so long and bitterly that George was alarmed. He had thought her in part prepared for it; he had never

before seen her give way to her feelings, and did not expect to see her so agitated. He begged her to be calm.

"I have lost a father, George."

"And I, more than a father—a friend, an adviser; the only being on whose judgment, wisdom, affection, I could always rely. He was the protector of my youth, when I had no other; the righter of my infant wrongs, the indulgent Mentor of my boyhood, and the example of my riper years. My loss is greater than yours, Ellen. You have other friends, other ties, many to love you. I fear me much I was not to him what I should have been, and often wrung his kind heart."

"He had no child he loved more than he did you, George."

"I know it, and it is both a comfort and an affliction to me now."

George made no attempt at consolation, he saw her grief must have its way, the shock was too great for self control; he knew that after the first burst, she would feel better and be calmer. He talked of her father, as we like to hear our loved dead talked of, spoke of his many virtues, of the respect always paid him, and of his good deeds. He sympathized with her truly, and while he did so, she felt she had her father's memory to live for, and that was much. She would hear him spoken of as one on whose character there was no blot or stain; with each tear she became more subdued, more quiet; the very greatness of the loss was a consolation, for it assured her of the sympathy of her fellow-creatures.

With these feelings she retired to her own room, for she felt the necessity of being alone for a time with her thoughts.

After the absence of an hour she again returned to the parlor, to make arrangements for George's departure. It was settled between them, that she should send some plausible excuse to Nannie for not making her appearance at the pic-

nic, as they knew the truth would break up the party, and they did not think it advisable to communicate the tidings to her, while she was absent from home. The hour of George's departure came, and bitter indeed was it to them both; Ellen felt desolate, utterly bereaved, and alone she clung to him again and again, and could not say, Go: at length he withdrew his arm from her grasp, and without a word left her, he could not trust himself to speak.

Ellen had observed his struggle for composure, had seen the unhidden tears come to be forced back, she had been comforted by his presence, had relied on him and had been strengthened by his sympathy, and now she felt the need of his support.

He was gone, and she was alone; alone, in the broad sunlight of that beautiful day; alone, with the thoughts of her dead father. She pictured to herself how he had looked when she last saw him, she treasured every look—she thought over every charge he had left her, for now, they were those precious things—last words; she fancied she saw him seated in his accustomed place, and her eyes lingered long on the furniture of the room familiar with his presence. Worn out with emotion she could no longer bear the light, and darkening the room, sat down to think, calmly, if possible, of the best plan of breaking it to Nannie, for she dreaded the violence of her grief. The hours passed; early twilight brought with it the sound of carriages at the door, and merry voices in the hall; they all appeared in high spirits. Nannie asked for Ellen, and in a moment more was in the room.

"What is the matter, Ellen? Judith tells me George has gone away, and you are ill with a nervous headache."

"George has gone to Charleston—father is very ill."

"Ill; when did you hear? Why did you not go with him?"

"George received a letter from Mr. Morrison this morning,

and I did not go because I feared all would be over ere I got there."

Nannie caught Ellen's hand, and looked steadily in her face for a moment, then screamed—

"He is dead—I know he is dead, or you would have gone."

Her screams brought Jane, Mr. Peyton, and Mr. Casey above stairs; great was their consternation and grief, as well as that of the servants—from whom Ellen had kept the knowledge—to hear of Judge Mason's death. Nannie wrung her hands and screamed like one deranged; all their efforts to pacify her were unavailing; she must have her way, until at length exhausted, she threw herself upon the bed, and sobbed like an infant.

It was now they felt the value of Jane Lorton's friendship; she was indefatigable in her endeavors to serve them, insisted upon giving the children their regular music lessons, until Ellen felt equal to the exertion; for, although Ellen was not one to fold her hands and repine, she felt in that unsettled, uncertain state, which made it impossible to pay proper attention to music; she must wait, at least, a letter from George. The letter at last came, and a long kind letter it was. The day previous to that on which Judge Mason had died, he appeared better than usual, and took a long walk; in the night he was attacked with a violent pain in the side, attended with difficulty of breathing and chills; every remedy had been applied in vain—he grew rapidly worse. Conscious that his end was near, he took leave of them all; left messages for his children, and died peacefully, as the morning dawned. Mrs. Mason was calmer than he expected to find her, for Judge Mason had talked much to her of late of his death, which he felt certain was approaching, and she was in a measure prepared for the blow; they would leave Charleston in a few days with the remains, as he had re-

quested to be buried by his mother's side at the old place. "Now Ellen," said he in conclusion, "let me beg of you to bear up, be as cheerful as you can, you know how many depend upon you for strength. I feel satisfied your father has long anticipated this, but deferred speaking of it, knowing the sorrow it would cause; he has left us to the guidance of a Power who does all things well."

The weeks passed wearily away; it was impossible to settle quietly to any thing, for there was the restless looking forward to their mother's coming and the funeral, before which, they could not feel that all was over.

It is not until we know the damp earth to be upon the coffin lid, and our dead are hid from us in the place appointed for all the living; it is only then, that we begin to realize the hopelessness of our grief, and slowly the feeling of resignation creeps over us.

Their mother came at length, looking pale, weary, dispirited, but resigned; she had learned to say "the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away." For nearly half a century had Judge Mason and his wife trod the world together, and now, when deprived of the voice which had always greeted her in kindness, the arm on which she had leaned for so many years, and the eye which had always turned so lovingly upon her; she could look to the end of her pilgrimage as not far off, and turn in faith to Him, who had said "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

At length it was over; they had stood in the little graveyard, surrounded by forest trees and curtained by the wild grape, while the faithful pastor had read the service, which gave "dust to dust." Heedless of the quiet sleeper beneath, the wild bird may warble above his head, as it builds its nest in the branches which shelter his last home; the bee may gather its sweets from the flowers which grow from the

sod of his last resting place, or linger lovingly above them; the frosts of autumn and the snows of winter, may rest coldly on the unconscious form beneath; summer and winter, seed time and harvest may pass over it unheeded; there it will lay for unnumbered ages, until the sound of the last trumpet shall startle it from its cerements, and it bounds forth to the words, "I am the resurrection and the life."

George was to examine into their affairs, and arrange any business Judge Mason might have left. The house they were in had been leased for ten years, and the lease paid in advance, with the fee simple of some unimproved lands, which Judge Mason had owned at a distance; half of this lease had not, as yet, expired, so that, for some years they would have a home, the rest they must make by their own exertions.

George had been putting things in order, when, one day, he appeared with the welcome intelligence, that he had discovered there was a sum invested in the funds by Judge Mason, some years previous to his death, which brought in three hundred dollars annually. Mrs. Mason could scarce believe this, but upon examination of papers, found it to be so; grateful, yet bitter tears, did they shed over the thoughtfulness which prompted this provision, which he had never mentioned. This sum, together with Ellen's receipts for her scholars, must support them; they had no rent to pay, and George was still to board with them; indeed no other arrangement was thought of.

Things being brought to order, George seemed to have made up his mind to settle to business, if business was to be had; he no longer lay abed until breakfast was on the table and then loitered down town, to talk or find amusement as he could, but seemed to have some end and aim, and that end and aim was to get business.

One evening, after the family had retired, he required

some paper to write letters to his friends and those of Judge Mason at a distance, to inform them of his whereabouts and wishes. Finding no paper in the parlor, and knowing from the footsteps overhead that Ellen had not retired, he tapped at her door, and asked her for some. She gave him a portfolio containing paper; and, upon the first sheet which presented itself, he commenced writing—when, happening to turn it over, he saw and read these lines:

MY FATHER.

We are thinking of thee now, father,
Of thy cold damp grave,
Where with bursting hearts we laid thee,
When powerless to stay.
You sleep the dreamless sleep, father,
The patriarch of the band
Has left his earthly home, father,
For the silent, silent land.

Thou hadst run the race of man, father,
Thou wert old and full of years,
We think upon thy silver locks,
While faster flow our tears.
Life's troubles touched thy heart, father
Ere disease had felled thy form,
The oak that stood the mountain's blast,
Has yielded to the storm.

The great "Home;" "Home" to thee, father,
Has opened on thy sight,
And the valley's darkened shadow
Has given place to light.
Yet we long for thy pale face, father,
And thy children miss thy love,
Which like blessings hushed and low,
Surrounds them from above.

Our mother looks so sad, father,
She has traveled with thee long,

LIFE'S LESSON.

Now alone she bears the burden,
 Of this restless, pushing throng.
 Both had born the load of life, father,
 And had grown gray together,
 As yet she's on the stormy shore,
 While you've reached sunny weather.

Death could not bow thy soul, father,
 Though his wing flapped o'er thy head,
 For many a weary day and night
 Has he hovered round thy bed.
 Oft his hand was at thy heart, father,
 But we prayed him still to stay,
 But now he's taken a firmer hold,
 And thou art called away.

'Tis done—we give thee up, father,
 One last good-by we take
 To that brave, true, honest heart, father,
 Which trouble could not shake.
 And viewing still thy silent room—
 Thy bed, thy empty chair,
 We feel, though absent, still to us,
 Thy spirit's every where.

George did not write his letters that evening; but sat long with the paper before him, musing; the expression of his face would have puzzled one observing him.

CHAPTER VII.

IN their troubles the Masons had no friend more considerate and kind than Mr. Casey; he seemed never weary of doing kind offices for them. Was there business to transact, or any disagreeable thing to be gotten through with, Mr. Casey volunteered for the occasion, always performing the part assigned to him to the satisfaction of those concerned. He was most particularly indefatigable in his endeavors to get Ellen pupils. She was constantly hearing of some eulogium he had pronounced upon her.

Now Mr. Casey happened to have a sister, who was a widow; and this sister had come from a distant city to visit him. He was full of happiness at having a sister so near to be attended to and gallanted about. Indeed, this was a very happy season for our friend Mr. Casey—he had so much to do for others; he was so fussy, so full of business; just imagine him rubbing his hands and introducing her—"My sister, ladies; my sister, Mrs. Walker, come to visit me." This sister, Mrs. Walker, was, as we have said, a widow—a tall, fine-looking woman, of some thirty years of age; but her blushing honors, in the way of years, sat so lightly upon her, that she always passed for twenty-six; she had married, when young, an officer in the navy—a man of some property; having no children, and spending her time during his absence, in a large city, she had not lost relish for that admiration to which her attractions entitled her.

She had been left with a comfortable income, but not one

to warrant any extravagance ; and having just put off her widow's weeds, thought of varying the scene, and coming out in a strange community—where a new face, like new goods, attracts customers—and takes to itself the name and character which is most alluring.

She was much admired in our gay city—found the society exceedingly attractive, and looked about to see how she could become a permanent inhabitant, not that she wished to make way with herself for better or for worse at present, this was not what she schemed for, her anxieties were only for a house, furniture, and appurtenances. She boarded with Mr. Casey at one of the most fashionable hotels in the city, but our widow had a decided taste for style. If she had only a handsome house, what fine entertainments she could give—what a sensation she could create. A house she was determined to have, but having already lived up to the extent of her income, she could not set up an establishment ; she must gain her end some other way.

She commenced by taking every opportunity to bewail her brother's "bachelor condition," she thought it dreadful for a man of his years to live at a hotel, he should have some permanent home ; this Mr. Casey, in the simplicity of his heart, assented to, and replied he had for a long time been thinking of matrimony, he would like to be settled, &c. This was not the ground his fair sister wished him to take ; she therefore replied, matrimony required great consideration, that it was not necessary for him to break in upon all his old habits, why not keep bachelor's hall ? he could be most comfortable thus, and have bachelor parties at his own house, gathering his friends about him ; for her part, if she could afford to keep house in the style she ought to, she would not board another hour ; how happy it would make her to live with him and minister to his comfort. "Why could he not have a house and she live with him ?" and Mr. Casey, struck with his

idea, insisted that his sister should consent to be the mistress of his mansion, to which, after much persuasion, she assented.

It being thus settled, the house was procured, carpeted and furnished, to Mrs. Walker's entire satisfaction. Mr. Casey was the fussy, hospitable, delighted host ; she, the quiet and well-bred hostess. He, always kind and liberal, could not do too much for the sister, who had sacrificed her home and friends to keep house for him, every half uttered wish of hers was immediately attended to, and these wishes were not few in number. Mr. Casey's horse and carriage were removed from the livery-stable to his own premises, and she installed as mistress of the whole. The widow, in turn, scrupulously attended to her brother's wants, gathered pleasant company about him, made his fireside agreeable to himself and his friends, acquitting herself in all things to his satisfaction.

Mrs. Walker, through her brother, became intimate with the Masons, and was very kind to them in their troubles, often calling to see them, sending the carriage for them to ride, and paying them numberless little attentions. She was now daily with them, being a near neighbor, and in high favor with all, save and except Jane Lorton, who seemed to have taken an antipathy to her—that kind of natural aversion which the dog has to the cat.

"The reason why I can not tell,
But this I know full well,
I do not like you, Dr. Fell."

The fair widow, though clever, was no match for Jane in conversation, and many polite thrusts passed between them, in which she most always came off second best, for there was a cool sarcasm about Jane which told. The widow relied upon her personal appearance to attract—Jane upon her manners and conversation ; they were both in the same circle, where Jane had made herself a great favorite, when

Mrs. Walker's arrival deprived her of some of her admirers, for, being a new face, they were attracted by it and went over to the enemy.

They had arrayed themselves as opponents from the beginning, and, when they met of an evening, it was curious to see the cool, scrutinizing look with which, for a moment, they would regard each other.

The widow was naturally a manœuverer—one of those persons who love intrigue for the sake of it, take the by-path in preference to the open road, always having some affair of the heart, by way of excitement. George and the lady were excellent friends, he admired her exceedingly, and often told her so, to which telling she had not the least objection. Thoroughly understanding the feeling between Jane and herself, he delighted to put them in opposition; to him she was a study—he watched the hardly-repressed, yet never acknowledged, feeling of rivalry between them, with ill-suppressed enjoyment, and behaved accordingly, often dividing his attentions with a nicety which was of itself, a quiet provocation. The charm of Jane's singing and conversation was to him an unwearying attraction, only broken by the widow's graces of person.

Ellen and Nannie not going into society, did not interfere in these rivalries of the fair dame, who liked not to be unattended; did she ride, walk, pay a call, or purchase a ribbon, she thought it but half accomplished if some idler was not at her elbow to whom she could dispense her agreeable nothings. George was often her gallant, carried her music and flowers (for books she cared not) was her *cavalier servant*, which office the lady seemed to think he filled particularly well. She had the idea in her mischievous brain, that in appropriating his attentions she annoyed Jane so, whenever opportunity offered; she did it with an air that was partly matter of course, partly defiant.

CHAPTER VIII.

THOSE bright-eyed forget-me-nots, the stars, were paling in the broad light of a June moon which shone upon a pleasant party assembled on the piazza at Mrs. Mason's. It was Jane Lorton's last evening with them previous to her return home. The sudden dying away of the conversation to a dead pause showed that a regret was heavy at their hearts, and it's as sudden resumption—the trying to chase that regret away in the enjoyment of the present hour.

The trees before the doors stood like giants in the moonlight, guarding the dwelling, and casting their shadows far down the street, which was very quiet, save when the silence was broken by the step of some loiterer home, who sang the fragment of a tune, or whistled a merry air for a moment, then relapsed into silence.

Now and then, a couple would promenade past, their whispered words, as they troubled the air, breaking, but not disturbing the repose of the scene. I am never merry in the moonlight; there is always something sad to me in the pale and silent moonlight night—the shadows fall upon my heart as surely and heavily as upon the earth, and always leave their impress. At that time I am better and wiser—more subdued and more impressible—think more of the future and repent the past—a yearning for something better comes over me—a glimpse of the future existence seems to dawn upon me from the moonlight sky; I can almost fancy I see disembodied spirits passing from star to star, in search

of the loved and lost of earth ; and with all this, the dreams of the past and the hopes of the future mingle and blend, like the light and shade in a picture.

If you have ever lost a friend, and will sit alone in the quiet of a summer night with the moon above and nature around you, the memory of that friend will come to your heart, as surely as death will one day come, and with almost as much bitterness. Oh ! how your sins of omission will rise up against you—how you will yearn for the forgiveness of them all—how heavily each careless word will press upon your spirits, adding to its gloom—how penitent and subdued is now your rebellious being, a child might lead you to the living water ; but, with the busy morn, all this passes away—the hum and stir, and strife, of earnest life is about you, the God of day in his brightness is above you, all things speak of active life, while the feelings of the night appear as a dream, which has troubled your spirit, and not as it was, a looking into the inner sanctuary.

Mrs. Walker Peyton and Mr. Levering had joined the party on the piazza, the widow was in excellent spirits, and rallied the others on their gloom. Jane had been singing some old Scotch songs for them, and turning to her, she said—

“ You have made us feel sentimental with the doleful ditties you have sung us, Miss Lorton. Will you not give us something gayer ? ”

“ I feel doleful,” she replied. “ You know

‘ Meeting is a pleasure, parting is a grief.’ ”

“ You have forgotten the pithy part of it, Miss Lorton—

‘ An inconstant lover is worse than a thief.’ ”

“ I had no occasion to make the application ; *my* lovers being like the Grecian heroes described by the poet—

‘ True as the steel of their tried blades,
Heroes in heart and hand.’ ”

“ Ah ! how do you manage to keep them so ? do impart the secret ; we *lesser* lights sometimes fail, for men are both false and fickle ; suppose you give us lessons, Miss Lorton ? ”

“ I am afraid you would not profit by them ; my mode of proceeding would be so at variance with your inclinations, it would be too severe a penance.”

“ Be merciful to us, Miss Jane, and withhold the information ; Mrs. Walker is already invulnerable, and she wished to be cased in triple steel,” chimed in George.

“ I must confess my curiosity is somewhat roused,” said Peyton.

“ Come,” insisted Mrs. Walker, “ do give the talisman and gratify us.”

“ Well, then, it is merely to be natural, not to affect, and never to manœuvre,” calmly and coolly replied Jane.

Mrs. Walker colored perceptibly, even in the moonlight ; Peyton forgot himself and laughed aloud, Mr. Levering coughed, but the widow only drew in her lip for a moment, then said, mockingly—

“ This is your talisman, is it, Miss Lorton ? I understand the secret of your success now, being but a novice in the ways you mention, you are like a child lisping a language, interesting from your imperfect efforts. I advise you never to become a proficient.”

“ Thank you, I do not intend to, being perfectly satisfied with my present success.”

This was said in a meaning tone, as she stepped to the open window and walked to the piano. George followed her, and running her hand over the keys, as he stood beside her, she sang “ Auld Lang Syne.” When she had finished, he pressed her to sing something more, so striking the accompaniment, she began—

“ Thou canst not forget me.”

She always sang it beautifully, but this evening she excelled

herself. George stood with one hand on the piano and the other on the back of her chair, when she reached the lines—

"Thou may'st turn to another and seek to forget,
But the wish will not bring thee repose."

She gave so much expression to it, brought it out so thrillingly and pleadingly, that all felt it, and Mr. Levering, who leaned with his brow on his hand, raised his head and looked up surprised, while the widow fanned vigorously.

The song was barely through, when, starting up, she said in a manner which was evidence of her temper, "Mr. Watson, if you are through there, I will trouble you to see me home." Then, drawing her scarf tight about her, and with her arms crossed over it, bending low in mock respect,

"I wish you a pleasant journey, Miss Lorton."

"Thank you, I doubt not I shall enjoy it; Mr. Watson has promised to be very agreeable, and I shall put in requisition all my attractions to be pleasant to him."

"If he accompanies you, I have no doubt of your enjoyment; but do not be too fascinating Miss Lorton, spare him, I beg. I shall be uneasy until his return," with a laugh of temper.

"I promise you there will be cause for uneasiness—a stage journey taxes one's powers, you know, and I have some faith in my own attractions, although not blessed with the peculiar fascinations which are fabled to belong to ladies occupying your position."

All this was said in a perfectly suave, polite manner that delighted George, for Mrs. Walker was *touchy* on the subject of widows. He interrupted,

"Really ladies, I am somewhat in the predicament of Mohammed's coffin, midway between bliss and bliss."

"Midway between the heavenly and the earthly hour; make him define his position, Miss Jane," said Peyton.

"I will relieve him by taking one of his temptations from

him; that is, if Mrs. Walker will permit me to escort her home?" said Mr. Levering.

"Thank you, but Mr. Watson deserves the punishment for making any comparison between himself and the prophet, for whom I have a very great respect."

"My dear lady, my presumption went no further than comparing myself to the prophet's coffin, and as for the other, your punishment is such sweet pain, that it is but a solicitation to sin."

"Now, Watson," said Mr. Levering, "your flatteries are not to deprive me of the pleasure of escorting Mrs. Walker."

"Indeed, they shall not," she replied. "I am afraid you will find him hard to manage, Miss Lorton; however, I leave him to your tender mercies," and with a troubled smile she bowed herself out, trying hard to hide her chagrin under a profusion of bows, courtesies and compliments. She felt foiled, and wished Mr. Levering a long distance off, for she had fully calculated on a moonlight walk with George; however, she made the best of it, and submitted with a tolerable grace.

For some time after she left, George and Jane stood on the piazza talking; then George went down the street with Peyton and Nannie, and Jane went up stairs. Ellen was sitting in the parlor, writing a letter; when George returned he came to the light, lit his cigar and went out on the piazza to smoke; his cigar was exhausted, but still Ellen wrote, as he stood beside her to light his chamber-lamp, he said—

"Still writing, Ellen; I hope you are not tinctured with a literary mania; I hate literary women."

She laughed confusedly, closed the desk, and arose from her seat.

Ellen went to her room that evening, acknowledging, for the first time to herself, that she loved George more than a brother; it was a love which had grown with her growth,

and she had no thought of struggling against it; he had never testified toward her any love but the quiet love of brother for sister, yet his attentions to another distressed her. She could not satisfy herself he loved her, nor could she believe he loved another. One moment she doubted and suspected, another believed and trusted.

She was that paradox—a woman in love; a woman in that state of warfare, compared to which all others is perfect peace; a warfare of the affections when uncertain of a return.

You, who are mourning over this world's crushed hopes, think not that you have suffered, if you have not felt this yearning—wasting—ever thirsting—never satisfying want of the affections. You, who preach patience and endurance, happy are you, if you are spared these nervous anxious days, with patience without end, and endurance without hope, happy are you. But Ellen doubted and hoped, expected and at times believed, and therefore was not unhappy.

The next day she rifled her writing-desk and burned its contents.

CHAPTER IX.

It was a beautiful afternoon when Peyton and George, after a hard drive through the city and along the turnpike, turned into a quiet country road winding by the river side, and as their horses drew them smoothly along, talked of—what unmarried men almost always talk of in their moments of relaxation—women. Married men have reached the goal, and the wear of years has rubbed the gilding from the chain or made it brighter; they talk of the rise and fall in the stocks and the news by the last steamer; then, perhaps, of their homes and children, and later, when years increase and the sap dries up in the tree, of this young man's prospects, of the amount one has in the funds, each with reference to their eligibility as matches for their daughters.

"Well, Peyton, have Nannie and you concluded to take each other for better and worse? it strikes me things have been tending that way for some time."

"To tell the truth, she has bewitched me, and I may write myself in love with much the same feeling a man may be supposed to have in finding himself in a well, knowing he has to get out or drown; she has so many beaux they bother me a little."

"Many drink the waters clear
Who drown *not* in the well."

So do not fear *them*, and do not let her suspect you are jealous, man, it is the very worst thing you can do, she knows her power, then, and will exercise it, it is the interest she

exacts for her love ; keep her in doubt so long as you can—there lies *your* power.”

“ That is your philosophy, is it ? ”

“ Yes ; do you remember the Prophet Ezekiel's description of jealousy ? the form which guided him was of ‘ fire from the loins up, fire from the loins down,’ and he saw, ‘ what each man doeth in the chamber of his imagery.’ Many of us see the new ideal worshiped between ‘ the porch and the altar,’ and are thereby ‘ filled with violence and provoked to wrath ;’ this idol may be fame, worldly position, money, or a woman—each or all—may be engraved on our heart, and before them we may swing our censer and send up incense in a cloud ; but—

‘ There is no anguish like the hour,
Whatever else befall us,
When *that* the heart has raised to power,
Exerts it but to gall us.’

So take my advice, and never give to human being a weapon which can be turned against yourself ; for the love of power is the most insinuating and the most difficult to resist of all our temptations.”

“ But jealousy is a mean passion, George.”

“ No, no ; envy, her step-sister, is mean ; jealousy is natural and true. Ezekiel gives us a description of a God jealous of His attributes ; there is wrath and retribution, but no meanness there ; and can we, who are lower than the angels, profess to be free from weaknesses, which come with the spirit and go with the breath ? ”

“ Perhaps not ; but I have been realizing what the Catholics mean by purgatory for some time past, and mean to put an end to it the first opportunity.”

“ Success to you. When I place my hopes on a woman, I shall try her well, read her thoroughly ere I put my happiness in her keeping ; no shade shall cross her face, the why

of which I can not read in her heart. I always had a passion to be loved supremely.”

“ That is egotism, George ; downright egotism and selfishness.”

“ From which none of us are free ; but, if I conquered and controlled myself, that I might subdue her—if I loved her supremely and in silence, that I might win her to love me thus—would this be egotism, selfishness ? I would woo no woman with much speaking, but with the lack of it—with reserve ; the story of my love would not be an oft-told tale, nor lose strength in the telling.”

“ Ha ! ha ! Now, George, do you really think you could lay down rules and manage a woman thus and so ? Wait until you are interested ; the humor of her mind will then be to you like a shattered mirror, in each fragment of which she is reflected different, yet the same.”

“ Our paths to an object are as diverging as our natures ; one man rushes a-head, seizes it, and is satisfied ; another dallies, lingers lovingly about it, ere he stretches forth his hand to place it in his bosom. My nature is exacting ; there would be more pleasure to me in the pursuit than in possession.”

“ More excitement, perhaps ; but excitement is not happiness, and at best it is but a fitful pleasure ; the realization of my present dreams will to me be but the beginning of happiness.”

“ So you think now ; but wait until your hopes are realities, and the certainty has brought what it will bring—indifference—satiety, and you are settled down to the calm stagnation of domestic life, you will then see the wisdom of this doubt, this alloy of life, to remove which many neglected graces and attractions are called into play, as fuel for the slumbering affection.”

“ You are cynical this afternoon ; I am content to take

the future on trust and the present on seeming. We can not stereotype our hearts if we would."

"And if we did we should weary of the impression; there is many an ignis fatuus in this life. Do you think if Fame was a form visible and tangible to our senses, which we could put forth our hands and hold, it would be half as alluring to us as it is, with the shadowy uncertainty which now veils it? Like love, it beckons us; we approach, it recedes, we follow; presently we put forth our arms to clasp it, and lo! we have but a shadow."

"I am afraid, George, Miss Jane has said 'no' to you."

"Not she; I should be very certain of my ground ere I gave a woman an opportunity of doing that."

"Certain that she did not mean to do it, and you have your doubts with regard to Miss Jane; her manner is pretty much the same to all. I think Levering has designs there."

George, who was driving, struck the horses with his whip so sharply, that from their sudden bound forward the occupants of the vehicle were nearly thrown out. Peyton passed his hand over his face to hide a smile. Presently George said—

"Levering has a very solemn way of looking on life; to him it is a tragedy, while to most of us it is a comedy, and to some a farce."

"He is earnest and true. Casey inquired, the other day, if I did not think there was a strong interest between you and Ellen?"

George met Peyton's eye full and laughed aloud. "That is so like Casey," he presently said, with an accent of contempt, "to think, because he is enamored of a woman, all who approach her are."

"Yes; your attentions are too quiet for a lover's."

George tickled the horse with his whip.

"Casey and she would make a good match."

"Nonsense! she is in every thing his superior. I do not

think she will ever marry; she strikes me as a woman born to wrestle with life—to make sacrifices—she has more depth than most women, seems to understand her own nature better; she has intellect, too."

"Very true; but I do not admire much intellect in a woman; it takes from the softness and reserve of the womanly character, and, if she become a writer, her name is bandied from mouth to mouth—her thoughts, feelings, habits of life, personal appearance, are public property. I have much of the old feeling with regard to her—think she should be a saint placed in a niche, avoiding as much as possible, all contact with the outer world."

"Yes; but your saint at best looks down on much sin and sorrow, and is the recipient of many woes; nor is she always safe from the idle jest or the rude blow. I am afraid I am also behind the age, in partaking of this feeling of yours; we have been accustomed to regard ourselves as the noble structure, of which woman was the ornament—the column—having her for the capital."

"We desire to regard her as something different and better than ourselves. Would you put Mrs. Walker in this category of saintly women? She might demur."

"Indeed, I would not; she is beautiful, and will have admirers every where; but, if I mistake not, vanity and love of admiration are her besetting sins; she is good-hearted and clever enough, when not interfered with; but cut her vanity and she will plot and counterplot."

"One of the common run of men might visit her for a life time, and she would listen to his flatteries and reply with smiles, *when the world was not by*, and this would be all he would get, unless he were distinguished or could confer distinction; but let him become interested in some other woman, or some woman become interested in him; then, if he should be blind of one eye, have humps on both shoulders,

and a hitch in his gait, she would level all her battery of charms to attract him."

"Ha! ha! ha! the scales are dropping from your eyes, are they?"

"No; I have always known this of her, but I like her—she has some excellent traits of character."

"I like a *little* coquetry in a woman; it is spice to the dish; but if she attempt to play me off, I make my bow. I have witnessed nothing so amusing for a long time, as the rivalry between Miss Jane and the widow; by-the-by, Miss Jane's manner struck me as very marked, when she sang for you the other evening."

"It was capital, but it was not intended to affect me—only a ruse to annoy Mrs. Walker; in a few whispered words, she informed me of her design, and requested my co-operation. It was so like a woman, to put herself in a false position in the eyes of others, that she might have the gratification of a momentary triumph over a rival; but

What is lighter than a feather?

The dust that flies in windy weather.

What's lighter than the dust, I pray?

The wind that wafts that dust away.

What's lighter than the wind?

The lightness of a woman's mind.

What's lighter than the last?

There my friend you have me fast.'

There is spirit in that kind of tricking, and I do not object to it, provided it is not carried too far; think how wearisome the world would be, if we were all plain, straight-forward, matter-of-fact personages; I have no idea of squaring people by rule."

"Nor I; in the boundless variety lies the charm of human nature. I believe in Fichte's philosophy, that each wears a vesture, and that under it, hid by superficialities and mannerism, lies the reality—the divine idea."

"I am no Transcendentalist, George, but I admire originality."

"Miss Jane is original, and a true woman too; should she have a disappointment of the heart, she will make the good things of this life, in a measure, compensate her for the loss; she is that Phenix, a woman of the world, but *not* a worldly woman; strong and independent in her feelings, she will keep no hacknied path, but follow wheresoe'er her head leads."

"There is Casey's carriage with the ladies in it, they are going to Mrs. Hall's for strawberries; see, they wave their handkerchiefs. Miss Nannie is there; let us join them. George, if I can persuade her to ride home with me, I shall leave you in the lurch."

"If!" what dampers these little monosyllables are to our hopes; "however, make your arrangements independent of me, I should like a ride with the widow."

While George fastened the horses, Peyton proceeded to join the ladies, and his thought as he did so, was, "George is the most idle theorist I ever heard talk."

CHAPTER X.

"I calmed her fears, and she was calm,
And told her love with virgin pride;
And so I won my Genevieve,
My bright and beauteous bride."

COLERIDGE.

MRS. HALL was a widow, who lived on a small farm, and in summer, added to her means, by selling strawberries and cream to the ladies and gentlemen of the city, who made her house their resort—it being a pleasant ride from the suburbs, and situated on a beautiful road.

She had been long known to the Masons, having supplied them with butter, eggs, and garden vegetables for years. Judge Mason, in her eye, had been a "marvelously proper man," he having assisted her husband through a law suit, which threatened to deprive him of his little property, and refused all compensation for so doing; a visit from any of his family was, therefore, particularly prized by the old lady, and it was for them she reserved her finest fruits.

Her husband was an Englishman, and had laid out his little garden and planted it in the old-fashioned stiff English style, with prim walks and uniform borders, with box wood trees and evergreens, cut into all imaginable shapes; this garden was the old lady's delight, and it was here she served her customers with her luscious fruit.

Mrs. Hall's was, therefore, the goal to which Mr. Casey's carriage was bound, and where George now drew up. One

or two vehicles fastened here and there to the trees, showed they had been anticipated by some of the good folks of the city.

A merry party had met in the old garden, and were lounging through the walks, or sitting on the rustic seats, eating fruit and enjoying the breeze from the river. It was a busy day with the old lady; her two black women, with their snowy white aprons and rainbow-lined head handkerchiefs, looked almost wild with delight, as they ran about waiting upon the guests and casting knowing glances at each other, as a complimentary speech met their ears, while whispered words and glances of admiration were noted, and afterward commented upon at the kitchen table.

They had cheated Old Time of a pleasant hour, and were thinking of departure, when Mrs. Hall made her appearance, with many courtesies, and rolling her apron over her hands all the while, begged they would honor her by staying to tea. "She had fresh milk, cream, and butter—had made some of those cream-cakes, of which Miss Ellen was so fond, and would have the table set under the vines on the piazza." After some demur as to the lateness of the hour, they concluded to stay until the moon arose. One by one, the other vehicles departed, until those of our little party alone remained. Mrs. Hall's tea had been tasted and commended, her cream-cakes pronounced excellent, and while she sat her house in order, they strolled through the garden.

The moon was just peeping through the tree tops, and its silver light dallied with the waves of the river beneath, that murmured as they sparkled in its beam; there was silence in the air, and quiet around. Nannie, as she rested on Peyton's arm, looked beautifully; her black dress, aided by the moonlight, set off her complexion and gave her a softened and interesting look, which did not usually characterize her beauty.

The hour and the scene had also their influence, and these, together with a certain consciousness of her own feelings, which had crept over her, gave her manner a timidity that was irresistibly attractive, in contrast to her usually bright and coquettish mood.

"What a beautiful night, Miss Nannie!"

"What an original remark, Mr. Peyton!" with a laugh.

She felt nervous, confused, timid, and tried to recover her self-possession and laugh naturally, but the trembling of her voice, showed she was ill at ease; she leaned her hand lightly upon his arm, and drew away from him; for there was something about him different from his usual self—a suppression of voice, a depth of manner, which alarmed her womanly instinct.

"Solomon says, 'there is nothing new under the sun,' Miss Nannie; and I much doubt there being any thing original; how many thousands this night will *feel* what a beautiful night! how many re-echo it, and with what different feelings! Some, on the broad ocean, may be watching that 'pale pilgrim,' and while memory is at their hearts and home before them, they murmur, 'What a beautiful night!' 'Mid sin and misery, love and anguish, despair and hope, goes up the ejaculation, 'What a beautiful night!' Fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, and loved ones are responding to each other in spirit and speech, with 'What a beautiful night!' thus praising God and his works. The beggar, homeless, hopeless, almost heartless, as he wanders beneath the broad arch, or seeks repose on his wretched straw, will thank God in the exclamation, 'What a beautiful night!' The soldier on the battle-field, the sick man on his couch, the watcher by his bed, the ruined and the prosperous, the young and old, the stricken and dying, send up their adoration with 'What a beautiful night!' And they who love—to them this night the world will be an Eden; and that moon, the full eye

of God, looking down upon them as it looked down upon our first parents. Nannie, I love! will you make this night also beautiful to me?"

They had reached the water's edge, and paused; she had dropped his arm—and he stood before her, his face flushed, and his eye glowing with excited, yet suppressed feeling. He stood still for a moment and looked upon her: she neither spoke nor looked up, but traced with her foot, upon the gravel of the walk; he stepped one step nearer, and laid his hand upon her shoulder; he felt that she trembled as she moved from under it.

"Will you not answer me, Nannie? say, will you not try to love me?"

He took her hand, and bending over her, looked up in her face; her eyes answered not to his; the eyelids drooped over them.

"Nannie!"

She quickly withdrew her hand, and covering up her face, burst into a hysterical laugh.

"Nannie!"

The laugh had changed to sobbing.

His arms were about her; for one moment she struggled, and the next was weeping upon his shoulder. It was the struggle between the artificial and the real—the coquette with the woman; and the woman was true to her nature.

Her first impulse had been to answer his appeal by a laughing allusion to some object near them; to appear not to understand or take the depth of his meaning; but there was something so earnest and truthful in his bearing—so much of confidence, yet tenderness and deference in his manner, that it awed the woman's heart within her. She made an effort to speak, but could not control her voice. Provoked that she could not command herself; subdued, yet feeling almost too easily won; not wishing to yield at the first word,

she mingled laughter and tears—and, as was her wont, when moved, sobbed out joy and woe.

It was a beautiful night to both.

What a holy spot to her hereafter will be Mrs. Hall's little garden, and that walk by the river side; no moonlight will ever be so beautiful; vividly will the objects there be impressed upon her memory—not the slightest sound will be forgotten; in her journey through life her heart will make many pilgrimages to it, and the memory of that eve will call a smile to her lip when withered by age, and brighten the eye long-dimmed by decay's defacing finger.

In a quiet, subdued manner, and with a trembling confidence, Nannie took Peyton's arm to rejoin the others, in obedience to George's summons, who gave one quick glance at them as he told Peyton they waited, then took a by-path to the house, leaving them to return alone and at leisure.

George had already seated himself in Nannie's place in the carriage, when they came up; so there was no alternative for her but to return with Peyton, which she did; and in almost unbroken silence they rode home, each too subdued and happy to talk.

Ellen was in bed when Nannie sought her, and seating herself beside her, on the edge of the bed, told her tale; many whispered words passed between them ere they slept; and that moon which she had seen rise in its beauty, was paling again ere sleep crept over her; and in dreams she "lived o'er again" that happy hour.

CHAPTER XI.

ELLEN was reading "Picciola," when interrupted by a ring at the bell, which was followed by Mr. Levering.

He was a man whom you might pass a dozen times without particular notice, merely remarking him as a gentleman; yet, on a nearer approach, the fine, open expression of his face would strike you, and the latent fire of that gray eye excite your curiosity.

He was generally quiet in his manner—grave, and, when conversing, looked full at you, with a glance you could not evade; his voice was low and deep—deep as if from a cavern—and its thrilling bass swelled up and acted upon you like a spell, and you wondered if he was aware of the trick of it; but then, the covert fire of that eye would tell you something smouldered beneath. He was highly esteemed among men, and was a great favorite in society; his manner, to the old, had much of marked deference in it; while to those younger, he was a little, a very little stiff, formal; and the very young stood somewhat in awe of him.

Ellen had not particularly liked him on first acquaintance; she had heard so much of him she was disappointed; but now there were few things she enjoyed more than one of his visits.

She laid the book down, and put out her hand cordially as he came in, with—

"I am glad to see you."

"Thank you, Miss Ellen."

He seated himself, taking up the book as he did so: "I feel your words are indeed a compliment, when I interrupt the reading of so fine a book."

"You admire it, then?"

"Exceedingly."

"But do you not think his love for the flower exaggerated—overdrawn?"

"No, I do not; and pardon me, I think it a singular question for a lady to ask; it struck me as particularly natural."

"Why a singular question for a lady?"

"A woman's education, feelings, and position, enable her to seize upon and appreciate these things, sooner than a man's. In Charney it was the intense desire imbedded in all hearts, and in woman's heart peculiarly, to have something to love, something for which to exercise the energies, something to which to devote the charities of our nature; the frailer the object, the greater the call it makes upon the sympathies—the dearer it is."

"But this flower-love was a mania; we seldom see persons so consecrate their affections."

"We seldom see persons in such situations; isolation and imprisonment are not calculated to diffuse our sympathies. I can easily imagine a soul, deprived of the legitimate objects upon which to lavish these sympathies, throwing the full current of those feelings, which have been nursed until they have become a passion, about the first object which presented itself, particularly if that object makes a call upon the sympathies; here, in isolation, the frail flower was the object, but when opportunity offered, the current changed to the true woman. Hence it is that Catholic women who become nuns, are so devout—cut off from the natural affections, heaven is the only object attainable; the wounds, blood, and suffering of the Saviour call for all their sympathy; they

compassionate, they love, they reverence, they adore; stimulated by the mystery and uncertainty veiling the world to come, they have but one wish, to reach it; but one hope, to share it; but one thought, to immolate the mortal here for the enjoyment of immortality hereafter. In Charney it was the desire of a heart intense in all its emotions, a soul that had not learned to lean upon God, and had not prayer for the outlet of its knowing affections. Do you know, Miss Ellen, I think your sex should be much better than they are."

"So do I; but physician, heal thyself."

"The fault lies not with us, it lies with you; if you were better women we should be *compelled* to be better men."

"And *vice versa*; you make us the angels who are to trouble the waters, that you may be healed. Have you abandoned your theory of the will?"

"Not I; it is truth Miss Ellen, and must stand."

"It is one of the theories of this age, I know, but one I lack faith in; surely all of us wish to be great, happy, beloved, and how few of us are so."

"All have the power to become so; not great perhaps, but certainly happy and beloved, for all may not have the ability to be great. When I speak of the will, I do not mean the effervescence of a moment, the resolution made to-day that I will act, and to-morrow comes and that resolution has taken the wings of the wind; I mean the fixed purpose of a life, the seeing a goal in the distance, and hour by hour, day by day, year by year, battling toward it. In the spirit in which I use it, the cowherd and the king may alike possess it, yet the one live a cowherd, the other a king. It is the will to be a man—a true man, and the effect is felt in heart and works, and the verdict goeth forth even in this world, to cowherd as to king—'he is a true man,' 'a just man,' 'a righteous man,' sayeth the world."

"Yes, but circumstances have more to do with it than our

own wills. I have heard you advocate, that by the mere force of the will, a man might occupy any position he wished. Is not that going too far?"

"No, Miss Ellen; man or woman can be any thing they wish, provided they overrate not their powers; every man can not be a Washington or a Napoleon, nor every woman a Mrs. Hemans. If our ambition o'erleap itself, we fail; but if, understanding our own nature and the powers of our minds, we weigh them well and pursue the path to our object with an unfaltering will, we grasp it, if death o'ertakes us not by the wayside. You remember Sixtus the fifth, the poor hog-herd of Ancona, who lived a Cardinal, died a Pope, and made kings tremble; he had the mighty will, the power within; circumstances aided him, and in old age he gained the throne to which he had looked with an unfaltering eye and unwavering spirit since boyhood. True, he used unworthy instruments, he played with men's passions, dissimulated, was hypocritical, but he was successful by the strong power of the will."

"Yes, but men are not always so successful; we often see them wasting their energies in the pursuit of an object, and when it is almost within their reach, worn, weary, disappointed, they sink to rest—Death has o'ertaken them."

"I said *if*, Miss Ellen; and we know not that these energies are wasted, or what the spirit can accomplish when free from its sensuous tenement; this rests with a mightier than ourselves."

"I can not have faith in your theory, for what profit is it to us to spend our lives in the pursuit of an object, to have it elude us at last? What comfort, except in the future, can the retrospect from a death-bed bring, which looks back upon a life that has not realized one hope?"

"You have the profit in the discipline it hath been to yourself, in the knowledge that you have fought the good

fight—that your energies have been well spent—your life a lesson."

"You teach in a hard school, Mr. Levering; we are soft, warm, pliant human nature, and not stocks and stones; the discipline of the spirit is often another phrase for the crushing of the heart; who of us wish to suffer that another may learn a lesson of fortitude by looking on?"

"None, Miss Ellen, none; but we who have crossed the trackless desert, can drop hints of our experience to those about to start; this belief in the indomitable will is a part of my faith, and I would almost as soon resign the tenets of our holy religion. I give you no theory beautiful in the abstract, but truth—*tried* truth. I, myself, have suffered and conquered; I have warred—not with others—with myself; not with the body—not with physical suffering—but with the spirit; silently and bitterly did the work of regeneration go on; the battle-ground was within—here—here—(striking his head) and it has left its mark in these furrows. He who sees and judges, knew the strength of the struggle. What to it would have been the bitterness of death? and, Miss Ellen"—he arose and stood before her—"I should have been a cast-away, but for the power of this will and the help vouchsafed me from above."

He was very excited, and walked the length of the room once or twice. Ellen looked on him with admiration, and would not speak, for she wished him to continue. Never before had she seen him so moved; his manner more than his words, was eloquent. She would like to have known the cause of his suffering, but forbore to question. He reseated himself by her side but did not speak, although his face had resumed its usual tranquil expression; at length she said:

"With men it may be as you say—they have a sterner warfare; but with women it is different; much of our life is the life of home and its affections."

"It is with these very affections you are often called to war; they pave your way through life, it is with them you most need the strong power of the will. He who conquers a people is mighty; she who subdues a human soul is mightiest. I consider that woman, who has had the necessity of conquering her affections put before her, and has conquered, and yielded to that necessity, as nearer God than most of her sex, for she has been tempted and has resisted; struggling with the powers within—tenderness, weakness, and selfishness—she has mourned, and has the promise that she shall be comforted. I once, Miss Ellen, tried to gain the love of a man who did not love me—tried, as I have never yet tried to gain the love of a woman—and I succeeded; his was not a loving nature, but I had opportunity and a strong will, and I firmly believe, with the same opportunity and will, I could gain the love of any human being. I hope I have not wearied you, Miss Ellen, I have not been so excited in conversation for years; you will excuse me, will you not?"

"Excuse you! you have done me good, but I feel I shall never have this strong will, and my consolation is, that being a woman, I need it not."

"That is your mistake; you will have it, you *must* have it, or be a reed bowing here or bending there, as the current of the world pleaseth—be that weakest of all weak things, a weak woman. I know there are many things in this world which lead us astray, but it is a popular fallacy that women are more tempted than men: we are all alike tempted, each with that which appeals most to his or her peculiar nature. To me there is no more miserable spectacle than a woman frail of purpose, a worldly and a fashionable woman, a miserable slave where she should be a dictator. I say to you again, your sex should be better than they are, and must become so by the power of the will."

He arose. Hat in hand, he leaned on the back of a chair, when George entered, who looked from one to the other with curiosity, for they seemed *distract*. Mr. Levering spoke:

"Miss Mason and I have been having quite an interesting conversation, George. I have been endeavoring to make her a convert to my views, but with indifferent success. I leave the cause in your hands, hoping you may prove a more fortunate advocate. Good-morning."

The door closed after him. George stood slapping his glove on his hand.

"Well, Ellen," he presently said, throwing himself on the sofa in an assumed careless attitude, and speaking with indifference of manner, "you must enlighten me; for Levering has departed in such haste, he stopped not to inform me of the subject of his eloquence."

She recapitulated the conversation, he keeping time with his glove.

"What is Mr. Levering's history? What great trouble has he had?"

He walked to the fire-place, and stood with his hands behind his back, his favorite attitude.

"The greatest of all troubles. Well may he say he was schooled through the mortifications of the spirit. He had an intemperate wife."

"Wife, George! has Mr. Levering been married?"

"Yes, he has two children. You know it, surely—Nannie knows it."

"I never heard it before; do tell me all about him."

"He was married, when very young, to a woman older than himself, a widow, but beautiful, accomplished, and a belle. Before she was first married, she had suffered from a painful disease, the only alleviation of which was procured by taking opium. The disease was removed, but the habit remained, until she became really intemperate. Levering was

wild in his youth, and his friends thought this marriage would steady him. Soon after he was married his father died, who left him a very pretty fortune, for he was his only child. Then he traveled; took her to Europe, in hopes of weaning her from this vice; but she was weak, excessively fond of society, and would go out when she was not in a proper state to appear. He loved her, and she was much attached to him, but could not give up this indulgence. There were scenes between them; he would expostulate, implore, threaten; she would weep, promise not, and sin again the first opportunity. He could not trust her at dinner-party or ball, but watched her eye with feverish anxiety. At length, after dragging him through four or five years of endless mortification, she died, leaving him two daughters; and he, who had left home the most impulsive, enthusiastic, violent man in temper, returned the calm, quiet, subdued person that you see him. It was a stern school, and he was well taught; but the experiences of his own life have made him severe on the weaknesses of others."

"I do not think him severe, George. I can understand his character now, and know why he dwells so much upon the influence of our sex; he has suffered from their weakness."

"Never, in the whole course of my acquaintance, have I seen as much roused feeling in his face as was there when I came in. I have never heard him speak of his wife."

"It is singular I should not have known he was a widower."

George thought, "Levering is mistaken if he thinks she lacks will; he does not know her as I do." Ellen had some curiosity to see Mr. Levering again; but when she next saw him he had the same manner, and was the quiet, collected, dignified personage she had always seen him, and she could scarce believe he was the person who had made her thrill as she listened.

CHAPTER XII.

MR. CASEY—the good, bustling, hospitable Mr. Casey—gave a grand party—a party that put the belles in a flutter for a week previous, tried the patience of all the clerks in town, and ruined the temper of half a dozen milliners.

It was Mr. Casey's first party, and he was determined it should be *the party* of the season; therefore he spared no pains and no expense to effect his object. Upholsterers, carpenters, and painters were running about the house, putting up partitions here and pulling down there, draping this with curtains and that with flowers, to produce the effect desired, while Mr. Casey looked on in a glow of delight.

Many hopes hung on this party; what pains, toils, anxiety, for one evening's entertainment, perhaps to end in disappointment, perhaps in pleasure! Many dressed for that party high with hope, brilliant with expectation; and returned weary, worn, dejected, dispirited; having found by experience that the end of all mirth was heaviness. Many a belle, who,

"Each art had varied to retain
A varying heart, and all in vain,"

looked back to this party with a feeling of bitterness, which the compliments paid to her personal appearance could not alleviate.

Mrs. Walker was in her element. Dressed in velvet, ornamented with jewels, she did the honors to the satisfaction of all, as she stood at the head of those elegant rooms, with a composed manner, and quiet grace, receiving her guests;

while Mr. Casey, in a flashy waistcoat, red, flurried, and excited, stood beside her.

It was late when George and Peyton, after having spent the evening at Mrs. Mason's, entered the house, and, making their bows to the hostess, separated to make a tour of the rooms. It was a fairy scene; room, opening into room, formed a vista, ending with the conservatory, beautifully lit, and decorated with pictures, busts, draperies, and flowers, arranged in all imaginable ways; while the company, in their gay dresses, appeared as so many birds of gay plumage, giving life to the whole. Slowly George made his way through the throng—bowing to one, bandying light compliments with another, or stopping to make some remark to a third. Here were a group gathered about a table covered with costly *bijouterie*, making conversation by admiring each and every thing; near by, was a knot around the belle of the evening, who—while she laughed, talked, and paid back compliment for compliment—picked her bouquet to pieces, glancing from under her drooping lids the while, to see the effect on the company; gathering that admiration which, to her, was as valuable as the breath of life. Near this again was a group of gentlemen, collected about the fire-place, talking politics. Against the folding-doors, and partly hidden by an immense orange-tree, sat a lady and gentleman in earnest conversation; opposite them, on a sofa, was another couple, who seemed to have no interest but in themselves. From an inner room came the sound of music and dancing, almost drowned by the confused hum of voices in the reception-rooms, where couples edged their way through the crowd, or promenaded the hall for air, while the merry strains of the music filled up the pauses in the conversation, or were accompaniments to the thoughts of the lookers-on. Seated close to the walls, about the rooms, were the elderly married ladies, who having given up dancing and flirting, had come as lookers-on, to enjoy the

party—and enjoy it they did. Not a whispered word, a blush, or a look escaped them; each flirtation was detected in the germ, and commented upon; all passed the ordeal: this one's dress was criticised, that one's manners, the other's beauty; this gentleman's attentions were "wondered" at, that one's pronounced serious, as they passed in review, careless or indifferent to the tribunal that sat in judgment upon them.

All these things George noticed with a quick and observing eye, as he made his way through the hot and stifling air of the rooms to the open conservatory beyond, and seating himself behind some tall plants, looked on, with a moody unquiet expression of face. "Fools!" he muttered, as a party of well-dressed beaux passed, following a lady whose bouquet they had designs upon, and who were clamorous in their entreaties for "just one flower;" "fools!" Yet had he been in the mood, no one would have pursued more eagerly for it than himself, with this difference, perhaps, that he would have become the possessor, for he was vain of his success with Eve's daughters, and not inclined to be daunted in the pursuit of trifles that gratified his vanity.

Certainly something had ruffled the even tenor of his humor, for his brow was drawn and lowering, his mouth set, and he beat time to the music with a determined, jerking motion of both head and foot.

He had been for some time engaged with his own thoughts when, suddenly, Mr. Levering came into the conservatory.

"Why, George, is this you? the last place I should have expected to see you, unless you had a lady by your side. Why are you not dancing?"

"There is more amusement in watching these people. Take a seat; it is delightfully cool here."

"Have you seen little Miss Restell? General Cast is very attentive to her; and really, the frosts of sixty winters sit so

lightly upon him, I should not be surprised if he was successful."

"Nor I; for he has money, position, and a uniform; and she has that cold look of the eye which tells that the pulses beat evenly. She will count the chances closely. The report is, that father and son are rivals for her regard."

"Indeed. Have you seen Steele?"

"Prince Charley, no; has he returned?"

"Yes; he is here to-night. I had a letter from Kirk yesterday."

"Has he started? I wish now I had accompanied him."

"It is very well you did not; that roving way of life unfits you for every thing, and brings bad habits; you should take to yourself a wife."

"I am not a marrying man."

"Why not?"

George stripped a geranium of its leaves, as he answered—

"I am not sufficiently interested in any woman to wear a chain for her sake, in the first place; and secondly, I have not the means to marry."

"You might have in a short time; your practice, if properly attended to, together with what you already have, would soon bring you in a pretty income. Gamage tells me you think of connecting yourself with him. You should give yourself an incentive; depend upon it, George, you will never succeed until you do. Were you interested in some woman you would have a motive for exertion; now you have not, and make it or not, as it suits your mood; then, every stroke would tell, as bringing you nearer your object; the law is a sober matron, and must be wooed soberly; you have let your energies run to waste lately."

"I believe I have; but I have now the necessity upon me, for I speculated with one-half my little capital, and have lost it."

"I regret to hear it; but it may prove fortunate for you, if it makes you go to work; remember, in pecuniary, as well as other matters, I am always at your service."

"Thank you; but this arrangement with Gamage is a liberal one, and just suits me; he has a steady practice, and much of it at a distance in the county courts: this I am to attend to."

"I am glad you have made so agreeable an arrangement. Peyton looks very happy this evening. I hear he and Miss Nannie are engaged; is it so?"

"Yes, I believe so; he has not the appearance of a man about to be imprisoned for life, has he? He will wear his chain bravely."

"You had better follow in his footsteps and forge one for yourself; we can not have too many anchors in this life, George, and you appear to me to be without helm or compass, with breakers a-head."

"Why do *you* not marry, you are so great an advocate for it?"

"I should have married long since had I consulted my happiness alone, but I have children."

"True, I had forgotten."

There was a pause. George seemed more moody and gazed, at the dancers with a look which said, as plainly as look could say any thing, that he was determined to make no more remarks. Mr. Levering did not seem disposed to break the silence, and after sitting a few moments longer, he plucked a flower and joined the throng within. George watched him with a curious look. He talked with the belle of the evening, Miss Restell. The flower changed hands again; she was on the floor dancing with him, the flower in her dress, and she was looking up into his face as they danced, as only she could look. She was bent on fascinating, and could not make much of that cool, gentlemanly, self-possessed face, whose

glance met her own. The dance was over; with an air of protection, he had resigned her to another partner, and now, with his arm about Peyton's shoulder, promenaded the hall, already thinned by the departure of some of the guests. George caught a glimpse of Peyton's face, and it told him the subject of their conversation; now, he lost sight of him, and when next he came within his view, he stood leaning against the mantle, gazing with an abstracted eye at the dancers. A half-hour passed away, George still sat in the same place, when Levering returned and seated himself beside him. He evidently had something to say, but hesitated to commence, so sat still and played with his watch-chain. This manner, so different from the usually self-possessed, straightforward Mr. Levering, attracted George's attention; he saw he had something to communicate, but determined, whatever the dilemma, he should extricate himself as best he could without aid from him; so kept obstinately silent.

"I have been congratulating Peyton; he tells me the wedding takes place in a couple of months."

"Ah!"

A long pause.

"George?"

George turned his head toward him in reply.

"Are you particularly interested in Miss Mason? I have a desire to win her for myself, if I would not be interfering with you."

"Not at all; I am not more interested in Ellen than I have always been, and say God speed you, with all my heart, if she is willing. You will be a lucky man, Levering, if you get her."

"So I think; I shall try my fortune there, at all events; there is not another woman of my acquaintance whom I would ask to become Mrs. Levering."

"That was what he wished to say, was it?" thought George, as Mr. Levering left. "I wonder how he will speed in his

wooing? does she love him? will she marry him? She admires him, I know, and he is a widower and rich—I verily believe a widower can get any one. Why did not Levering put that question to me in his usual straightforward manner? I would not have believed he could have behaved so consciously about any thing. He loves her, in his peculiar way, and is himself a lovable man; half the women in town are pulling caps for him; he could select from that room, without the danger of refusal. I saw this long since, although Peyton thought him interested in Jane. Ellen, as Mrs. Levering! She loves him, I am afraid; how she dwelt upon his conversation the other evening; and his face, so full of soul and excitement when I entered the room, he never appeared to more advantage. She is the woman to appreciate him; she must have encouraged him. He must think himself almost secure, or he would not have made that inquiry of me; a mere matter of form, I suppose, as I stand in somewhat the position of a brother, but a form he might have dispensed with—it was bad taste—he does things in such a precise manner; he is an interesting man, though, to women. Well, I will marry and bury a wife, then I shall have some chance in wooing."

Here he was roused by the company sweeping off to another room; he arose and shook himself, like a man freed from a load, then followed the crowd. They pushed on to an inner room, where they suddenly halted; nothing could be seen and little heard save the exclamations of the crowd in front. In answer to his inquiries, some one said, "Tableaux from Shakspeare;" but he could see nothing. He was talking to those about him when the exclamations, "Beautiful! beautiful!" roused his curiosity.

"What is beautiful?"

"Mrs. Walker, as Cleopatra."

He was wedged up against a window, and could not move

forward; determined to see if possible, he stepped into the window-sill, and looked over the heads of those below him. The folding-doors of the room had been removed, and were replaced with a curtain, which was drawn up, and presented the tableau. It was the meeting of Antony and Cleopatra, when he tells her of Fulvia's death, and his departure to join the army. It was the moment when she says—

"I prithee turn aside and weep for her,
Then bid adieu to me, and say, the tears
Belong to Egypt. Good now, play one scene
Of excellent dissembling; and let it look
Like perfect honor."

It was beautifully done; Mrs. Walker, as Cleopatra, was the worrying, witching, taunting woman; and Mr. Steele, the chafed Antony. The curtain dropped, amid the murmured admiration of the crowd. Again it arose, exhibiting the scene after the battle, when she is led in, tottering, by her maids, and sues for pardon; her attitude, her manner, the beseeching yet alluring expression of her face, all were perfect. When the curtain dropped, George made his way through the moving throng to the side of the beautiful actress; she bowed as he came up, and turning from the compliments of others, said—

"Were you also pleased?"

"'Pleased?'—enchanted—you took us all by surprise. I never saw any thing more beautifully done. Oh! to have been Antony!"

"Mr. Steele looked it well, did he not?"

"I had no eyes for any thing but Cleopatra, the exquisite Queen of Egypt."

"It seems not: for you have merely made your bow to Mrs. Walker this evening. I have now descended from my pedestal, and, with your permission, will take your arm to the refreshment-room, for I am exhausted."

George was Mrs. Walker's shadow for the rest of the evening—dancing and waltzing with her, or holding her bouquet and fan while she danced with others. The night was wearing late, the company set by set departed, until at length, as the first hour of morning struck, the few who remained stood up for a reel previous to saying good-night.

Mrs. Walker was engaged to some one else; and George threw himself on a tête-à-tête, with his back to the dancers, to wait until it was over. He was roused by the stopping of the music; and looking up, saw the last couple bow themselves out; but he followed not; minute by minute, half-hour by half-hour passed, and still the large mirror reflected back the figures of George and Mrs. Walker, as they sat upon the tête-à-tête. They talked in a low tone; his manner was excited; but there was still that contraction of the brow; the lady had a half-conscious, half-coy look, and her hand was not always in her own keeping. Presently, Mr. Casey came in with some guests, who had been finishing the oysters; and the clock startled and admonished them, by striking three. George bade a hasty good-night, and wended his way homeward; on turning the corner, he ran against Peyton, who exclaimed:

"Why, where have you been, man? you surely have not just left Caseys?"

"I surely have. Why?"

"Then you have been making love to the widow; she looked regal this evening."

"Indeed, she did. Did you ever see any thing more beautiful than Cleopatra?"

"Admirably acted. But I do not admire her selection of characters; however, it suits the style of her beauty. I should not like a lady-love of mine to play Cleopatra to another's Antony."

"Not even to your own."

"Not even to my own, in public."

"But a widow has more license than a single woman."

"Takes more license, you mean. I have been talking to Prince Charley these two hours; he is as lazy as ever."

"I must call and see him to-morrow,"

Peyton whistled, as he walked, and struck his cane against his boot. Directly he said—

"It strikes me, Watson, you are uncommonly dull to-night; you usually come from a party in high spirits."

"I believe I am dull; the fact is, I am in a state of civil warfare, at present; and when a man has declared hostilities with himself, he is not apt to be on good terms with the rest of the world."

"I hope it is not a war in which the heart is engaged; for, if it is, you will be obliged to capitulate. Make the best terms you can; but take my advice, and let the widow alone. Good-night."

Peyton went up the street, humming a merry tune, while George paced slowly homeward; and going up to his room, lit a cigar, threw himself in a chair, with his feet resting against the mantle, and smoked; not the quiet, lazily, curling smoke of a man ruminating upon pleasant things, but the puff and jerk, which told of unquiet thoughts.

CHAPTER XII.

"ELLEN," said George, as they talked of the party over the breakfast-table next morning, "Mrs. Walker told me last evening that she had heard Mr. Lorton had failed; have you heard any thing of it?"

"No, I have not; and most sincerely hope it is not so; he has a large family of young children. I have not heard from Jane for several weeks."

"Perhaps that is the reason she has not written; Mrs. Walker stated it as a fact. Suppose you write to Jane to-day. I feel a great sympathy for her."

"But I must first find out how true this report is before I write; it may be only a rumor."

"I am going down town to see Charley Steele, and will stop at Casey's and inquire."

George returned at dinner with the information which he had gathered from Mr. Casey; the report was true—Mr. Casey having received a letter to that effect.

Ellen immediately wrote a long letter to Jane, which George, after adding a postscript, conveyed to the post-office.

In the evening, on returning home, he found Mr. Levering in the parlor; they discussed the party. Mr. Levering's descriptions of persons and things were characteristic, cool, decided; yet with the slightest possible touch of sarcasm he spoke of Miss Restell, admired Mrs. Walker, and dwelt upon Mr. Casey's good qualities; condemning the ladies for not appreciating him.

After his departure, Ellen took up a piece of work she wished to finish, and requested George to read to her. He opened a book, arranged the light, and settling himself comfortably, commenced reading; he read a half-dozen pages, then slowly closed it, keeping his thumb and forefinger between the leaves.

"Ellen, how long had Mr. Levering been here when I came in?"

"All the evening; he came in directly after tea."

"Is Nannie out?"

"Yes, she intends staying with Mary Gordon to-night, who has returned from Philadelphia, and sent for her this afternoon."

The lamp on the table stood between them; he edged back his chair a little, shaded his face with his hand, and looked steadily at her. She was occupied with getting the gathers even in the ruffle she was putting on; presently she looked up, about to inquire why he did not continue to read, when she met his look; she colored and became confused.

"What were you thinking of, Ellen?"

"Of my work."

"Was it your work which made you blush?"

"No, it was your stare—for it was a stare, George—if I did blush?"

"If you did! you know you did—what did my look say?"

"Come, George, you are not to be my confessor; your looks say often what your tongue refuses to utter."

"Have you made no confessions to-night?"

"None, and do not intend to make any."

He threw the book down and seated himself upon the end of the sofa; she occupied the other end with the table drawn up before her; she steadily pursued her work, while he half lolled, shading his eyes with his hand, and occasionally making a remark.

"Levering was quite attentive to Miss Restell last evening."

"Was he—did she look pretty?"

"Very; I think he wants to marry."

"I never knew a widower who did not."

He was strongly tempted to tell her of their conversation at Mr. Casey's, but restrained himself, and thought, "Ellen is very self-possessed to-night; and he had such a cool manner, I could gather nothing from it." They went on chatting about him, and she praised him highly; said she would rather hear him converse than any one she knew—he always gave her new ideas.

In this way they kept up a desultory conversation, he regarding her attentively all the while; but his look did not flurry her as it often did, for this evening she had a consciousness of power about her; a feeling—which comes over us sometimes, we know not why or wherefore, but it is always a true one—that we have, for that time at least, the rule.

"You are looking paler and thinner than when I came home, Ellen."

She smiled.

"You have forgotten the poet's description of Fanny,

'Younger once than she is now,
And prettier, of course.'"

"Nonsense, it is the way you wear your hair—you cover up your face too much."

With this he moved nearer to her, and put her hair back over her ear.

"There, that is much more becoming."

He sat very near her, and had dropped his hand upon her shoulder, where it rested.

She sat still a moment, her feeling of power was gone; she gave a slight shiver, and with "It is very cold to-night,"

arose and stirred the fire, reseating herself in an arm-chair, on the opposite side of the table from which he sat.

He resumed his book, but read to himself, while she sewed without talking.

Weeks wore away, and Ellen received a letter from Jane; she wrote in low spirits; the failure was too true; her father was prostrate with the blow, had given up every thing to his creditors, and since his interview with them had not left him room; he was prostrate in mind and body, and they feared for his intellect. The furniture, silver, every thing had been surrendered; they were to remove into a small house, and her young brothers were to be recalled from college. "I know not what is to become of us," she wrote, "for we have no resources."

In another letter, which Ellen received a week after the first, she stated that her father had had paralysis, had lost the use of his right arm and side, and was helpless. She continued—"Ellen, what I am about to say will startle you, I know. I intend becoming a public singer. Here is a large family of helpless children to be brought up and educated: my mother has now more than she can attend to, and she is broken in spirit; my father can do nothing; my young brothers must be brought home from school, apprenticed to trades, or put in stores, to drag out their young lives, day by day, in trying to get something to eke out our maintenance; my little sisters will have the spectacle of hopeless poverty and disease constantly before them; while I wear out my life in being one hour a domestic drudge, and the next giving lessons in music to the few pupils my kind friends might send me. This is one side of the picture. On the other hand, I have been offered a good salary as a public singer. Mr. Carson, the manager of the theatre here, and a capitalist, having been once in difficulties, out of which my father assisted him, is interested for us, and has offered to bring me

out; by this means I can keep my brothers at school, educate my sisters, and put my father and mother in comfortable circumstances. Should I hesitate? But I have hesitated.—A public singer! Yes, I have at last made up my mind to be a public singer; to appear upon the boards before hundreds, to be hissed or applauded as it shall suit their humor. To have the very crowd, with whom I have so often mingled, and for whose amusement and my own pleasure I have so often sung, pay so much a head to see me on the boards and hear me sing. You know not what this determination has cost me, but I feel it to be a duty; a hard word is that word, duty.

"I shall never forget a remark I once heard a gentleman make at a crowded party. 'Miss Lorton has a splendid voice,' said he, 'it is a pity it does not belong to some poor woman who could earn her bread by it. It would be a fortune to her, and Miss Lorton does not need it.'

"I fear me much, Ellen, that my feeling is more one of bitterness that I am compelled to use my talent, than one of thankfulness that I possess it. What I most dread, is the superciliousness with which people will pity 'poor Jane Lorton,' and the effrontery and impertinence with which every coxcomb will think he is at liberty to approach me, because, forsooth, I am a public singer, and stand before the public nightly, not for my own bread—I would die first—but for bread for those who are dearer to me than life. It is a relief, Ellen, to pour out to you all these feelings which I have heretofore kept to myself. I have been urged to this step as the best—in fact, the only one to be taken, and they can never know the struggle it cost me to consent. The whole matter is arranged. I am to feel now the advantage of my musical education, and can return, and put to the use of the family, the large sums which my father's pride expended on

me. In a few weeks I make my appearance before the public on the stage of a theatre; it is a six months' engagement, and the salary a handsome one, to be increased if I am successful, which they prophesy I shall be. Do you not think I shall draw? The novelty, if nothing else, will attract; just imagine 'Jane Lorton' in large letters on the play bills. What a pity I am not handsome; they then might make a romance of it; but a homely heroine was never dreamed of, and then, a homely woman has no sensibility, you know.

"Write me soon a long letter; tell me concerning Nannie and Peyton; when are they to be married?"

Ellen was indeed startled on the receipt of this letter. For a moment she could scarce believe it possible; she shrank from the idea; then came the thought of nine children thrown upon the world, and a paralytic old father. She knew the struggle this must have cost Jane, whose education was calculated to make her particularly averse to any thing of this kind; she had to combat the idea herself, so opposed was it to those with which she had grown up. To Mr. Lorton's pride this must be a degradation, and to Jane almost a falling from her high estate. She hesitated about telling it to the family, for she knew the comments it would elicit, and she did not wish to hear them. She talked it over with Nannie and her mother before tea; they received it so much more quietly than she expected, that she felt somewhat impatient to hear what George would say. He was not at home to tea, and the long evening was likely to pass without any one to communicate the news to, for not even Peyton had made his appearance, at which Nannie was beginning to be fidgety, when a ring at the bell announced visitors, and George, Mr. Levering, and Mr. Peyton came in together, having supped with a friend.

"Just the three people, of all the world, I most wished to see!" exclaimed Nannie. "News! news! news of Jane Lorton!—guess!"

"She is married," exclaimed George.

"She has been left a fortune," said Peyton.

"Guess, guess! Mr. Levering."

"Unless she is married, or is about to be, or some one has left her a fortune, I can not, Miss Nannie. To judge from Miss Ellen's face, it is neither of these. She does not look as though the news was very pleasant."

"She is going on the stage."

"Going on the stage! Impossible!" echoed George and Peyton in a breath.

"It is so; Ellen has just heard from her."

George turned an inquiring look upon Ellen.

"It is true," she said, in reply to it.

"Jane Lorton an actress! well, I would not have believed it, had another told me."

"Not an actress—a singer."

"What is her motive, Miss Ellen?" asked Mr. Levering.

"To support her family; to educate her brothers and her young sisters."

"Can not this be prevented?" said Peyton. "Could we not assist her brothers to get into business?"

"I will read you what she says;" and Ellen read part of the letter.

Mr. Levering was silent and thoughtful.

"It is too great a sacrifice; it is dreadful for a woman of refinement," said George. "Why not give concerts, any thing, in preference to going upon the stage, with all the green-room associations about her?"

"I suppose she goes to the theatre because she has there

an offer and an opening ; and it makes very little difference, really, so long as she sings in public at all."

"I think it makes a great deal. We have many associations connected with the theatre which do not belong to the concert-room ; and I must confess it will give me much pain to see Miss Lorton before the footlights."

"But," said Mr. Levering, "we must look to the motive, not to the means. The purpose is a holy one, and should make these footlights appear to our eyes like altar-fires ; for surely upon them is laid the offering of self-sacrifice."

"I never knew before to-night that you were blest with such an imagination," said George, in an impatient tone.

Mr. Levering made no reply.

"You may depend upon it Jane has weighed it well," said Ellen ; "and it is more repugnant to her, if possible, than to us."

"It proves my theory of the power of the will, which you are so skeptical about," said Mr. Levering. "Here is Miss Jane, a weak woman, yet powerful in her weakness, and not shrinking from a trial which would daunt ninety-nine men out of a hundred, resolutely about to pursue a path beset with humiliations, temptations, and—"

"Temptations ! Mr. Levering," exclaimed Nannie.

"Yes, temptations, Miss Nannie ; she will often be obliged to remember the caution—'Listen not to the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely.' The voice of the tempter will reach her in its most alluring guise—praise, adulation, flattery—and should she pursue this calling long, she will find her sensitiveness to appearing in public wear away ; that by-and-by, the faces of the crowd will appear to her as the faces of familiar friends, whose approbation is the reward of her exertions. I consider Miss Jane a very superior woman, and think it best, under the circumstances, that she should

take just the path she has taken. We might assist her brothers, but she would feel under obligations, and she is a spirit to chafe at that ; while now, she will feel indebted to no one, and the sense of independence will be some palliation for the bitterness of the task. And then, too, Miss Nannie," and he smiled, "it will be a good school. Miss Jane has a spirit which needs discipline, tempering, calming down."

"I wish I had your philosophy, Levering," said George.

"You would find it put to the test sometimes, as yours is, I assure you ; but, understanding your *peculiar* interest in the subject, I could not pardon you if you were not restive under this."

"Nonsense. Ellen, when does Jane say this engagement begins ?"

"In six weeks."

"Will she come here ?"

"Yes," said Peyton ; "if she is engaged with Carson she will, for the advertisement says his company open the theatre here about the commencement of the winter."

Jane, her prospects and success, was the topic for the rest of the evening. They could not familiarize themselves with the idea of Jane upon the stage.

"The most nervous part of it, to me," said Ellen, "is hearing people talk it over, and being obliged to listen to the 'Oh's!' and 'Ah's!' and 'Wonder's!' as to why she did not do this, that, or the other."

A talk it did make, to be sure. She fell in the estimation of some ; with others she lost caste. The ladies, particularly, were against her ; but the old married men, and not a few of the young ones, were her stanch defenders and supporters. After the tornado of words which the news called forth had somewhat subsided, even the most violent began to consider the feasibility of leaving their cards, as it would not "look

well" to drop her. How many right things, proper things, things which would be otherwise neglected, do these few words—"Would not look well," compel us to do. It is a tribute which ill-nature pays, and is compelled to pay, constantly, to those whom it dares not neglect, because "it will not look well;" therefore we play the hypocrite, and assume a virtue when we have it not, that *we* may look well to the world.

CHAPTER XIII.

NANNIE's and Peyton's love had flowed on in a smooth, unbroken current. Peyton was naturally of a happy and joyous disposition, never took offense, save when he was almost certain the offense was intended, then resented it on the instant. He was already looked upon as one of the Mason family; but the wedding, which was to have taken place at a much earlier date, was postponed, by Mrs. Mason's request, until spring. For the first few weeks of Nannie's engagement she was very quiet; she seemed to feel the weight of the new tie she had formed for herself; but as the novelty wore off, and she became accustomed to her position, her usual half saucy manner returned, and the old love of coquetry by degrees stole over her. She felt so secure, so certain of Peyton's affection, that she had no fear of losing it, now that she was not tormented by doubts and fears of its possession; but she had no wish that he should feel this certainty with regard to herself.

Several times, lately, she had exhibited her power over him, at which he had only laughed; and once George had said, "Take care, Nannie, you are going too far;" but she only tossed her head at his warning, and danced out of the room.

One evening Mr. Brice, a young doctor, and his sister, who were neighbors, came in to spend the evening. In the course of conversation, Peyton told a story of a friend of his, who for many years loved a lady, but delayed addressing her, merely because it was not convenient for him to marry, and he felt

sure of getting her when he did propose. At last, a rival appeared in the lists, and, aroused to the danger of losing her, he addressed her, and they were engaged. Years passed on while this state of things existed, for he still delayed asking for the wedding-day to be appointed. After a time, the lady went to a neighboring city on a visit, and while there, believing he had become careless and indifferent, and actuated by pride and pique, broke off her engagement with him, and married another. This marriage was far from being a happy one, "and the gentleman she discarded," continued Peyton, "never truly valued her until she was beyond his reach. Then he took the matter so to heart that he has not married to this day; another proof, Miss Nannie," he said, turning to her, "that things are most valuable to us when we are most uncertain of their possession."

Nannie listened to this story and did not like it; she had always felt a half-consciousness about her own courtship, fearful that she had permitted Peyton to see too plainly how much she loved him. "He had only to ask," she said to herself, "to receive a 'yes.' Why had I not more self-control? why did I not put him off?" And she felt she must be cold and distant *now*, that he might not think her too willing. The tempter was busy at her heart, and whispered she had been easily won.

After the company left in the evening, and they were alone, Peyton, who was to be absent the next day on business, and would not see her in the evening as usual, claimed a kiss at parting, which she refused; he insisted, and she said petulantly,

"How can you expect it, Mr. Peyton, with your warning still ringing in my ears, that 'things we get easily lose their value?' I shall expect you to cease to value me soon."

He felt a little hurt at her refusal, as it would be the first day he had spent away since their engagement. Generally

very quick, he did not now take the spirit of her remark, for he had been kept in such an unenviable state by his own hopes and fears, during the time of his attention to her, that he thought her any thing but easily won. Having much pride of affection as well as of character, he made no further attempt, but said,

"Well, good-night; God bless you; do not forget our engagement on Wednesday evening."

They had been invited to go to Mrs. Brice's on that evening to examine a box of rare things which had been sent to Miss Brice, by her brother, from the Levant. No sooner had Peyton left, than Nannie reproached herself for her conduct, but went to bed with the idea that he did not want the kiss much, or he would not have taken the refusal so coolly—half-angry with herself for refusing it, and more angry with him for not persisting in having it.

The next evening appeared very dull to her, and she went to bed early; the following day, when George came in to dinner, he spoke of Peyton.

"Has he returned?" inquired Ellen.

"Yes; and he bade me tell you not to forget your engagement for to-night, Nannie."

In the afternoon she declined going out with Ellen, thinking Peyton would come up, but he did not. She entered the parlor after tea, shawl in hand, ready for him when he came, and in her wish to see him losing all thoughts of her unpleasant feeling; he did not come early, as she expected he would, and as the evening wore on she felt for the first time what it was to

"Listen for his step in vain,
To start at every tread."

It was nine o'clock when some one entered, she went toward the door to receive him; it was Dr. Brice. "His sister had sent him to know if she was not coming over."

"Yes, she had intended doing so; but—"

"Ah! I see. Waiting for Mr. Peyton; why, he is but a laggard in love."

"Mr. Peyton went to the country on business; I think his being here to-night very doubtful; we had better go."

"Mr. Peyton has returned; I saw him this morning. Suppose we wait for him?"

She could have cried with vexation; she had wished to convey the idea that Mr. Peyton was still absent, and was completely foiled.

Dr. Brice was an old admirer, and perhaps there was a little malice in his remark; however, she persisted in not waiting longer. As they crossed the street—Mrs. Brice lived on the next square—she cast a long, lingering look down it, but saw not Peyton in the distance. They had been gone but a very little while, when he made his appearance; Judith opened the door and told him of Nannie's absence; he did not see Ellen, for she was above stairs, and with a disappointed feeling followed Nannie.

When he entered the parlor at Mrs. Brice's she stood on the floor, and the doctor was in the act of throwing an elegant Cashmere on her shoulders; she stepped aside when she saw him, and making a mock courtesy, she said,

"Good-evening, Mr. Peyton."

He replied by coming forward and presenting her a handsome bouquet, saying, his sister had sent it to him—the flowers were from his mother's garden. She glanced at them carelessly, and laying them down, continued to turn out and admire the things in the box. Peyton's manner was just as usual, although he addressed less of his conversation to her than to the others. After the things had been duly admired and put away, Miss Brice challenged him to a game of backgammon, and they were soon interested in the throws. Nannie had the old lady and the doctor to entertain her, and for a

time seemed to be entertained and amused; but as the game progressed she appeared to lose interest in the doctor's conversation, and without thought, or rather from excess of it, sat pulling her bouquet to pieces; presently part of it fell upon the floor, which the doctor perceived, picked up, and put in his button-hole; the centre of it was a white lily, which she had entirely destroyed, her dress being covered with its leaves. When the game ended, Peyton, taking his attention from the board, saw the fate of the flowers he had presented. However annoyed he might have been, he was too well-bred to show it; there was a slight coldness in his manner of pronouncing her name, as he picked up the handkerchief from the floor and restored it, with, "Your handkerchief, Miss Nannie;" but it was only observable to her. They staid some half-hour longer, when she arose to go, and Peyton prepared to accompany her, saying,

"Doctor, if you will resign your charge to me, precious as it is, I will deposit it in safety."

"I do not know that Miss Nannie would be willing, Mr. Peyton. She insisted upon my escorting her this evening, and not waiting for you," said the doctor, mischievously.

"Oh! very well, I never interfere with a lady's arrangements; Miss Nannie must decide."

"Shall I be very magnanimous, Miss Nannie, and decline in Mr. Peyton's favor?" said the doctor, with a twinkle in his eye.

"Mr. Peyton is not very urgent, and I always thought it the duty of a gentleman who had escorted a lady out to see her safe home again; did not you, Mrs. Brice?"

"That was the rule in my day," the old lady replied

The doctor offered her his arm, which Nannie took, and they said good-night, Nannie catching the first cold look she had ever received from Peyton's eye, as the door closed.

She went home, certain that he would follow, but he did

not; she sat in the parlor troubled, agitated, wondering how all this would end, when she heard his step approaching; she gathered herself up, prepared to receive him with all her dignity; the step neared, reached the door, and without hesitating, passed on. She could hardly believe her senses. Frightened, she ran to the door to call him, but he had passed some distance, and she was fearful of being heard. Returning to the parlor, she found relief for all her troubled feelings in a hearty flood of tears; then went up to bed, thankful that neither Ellen nor George had been present when she came home.

The next morning at breakfast, her answers to Ellen's queries concerning the night previous, were short and not satisfactory, so the subject was soon dropped. She dressed herself early with great care, and, taking her work, seated herself in the parlor, certain that Mr. Peyton would make his appearance, and anxious that the little coldness between them should escape the observation of the family. Dinner time came without his calling, and she was almost startled out of her composure by George saying to her,

"Why, Nannie, you did not tell us Peyton was going home."

"Has he gone?"

"Yes; I saw him, accidentally, early this morning, getting into the stage; his uncle was with him."

Nannie left the room, and George threw himself on a chair; with a half-envious feeling, and in a manner partaking of contempt and bitterness, muttered:

"Humph! she can scarce keep back her tears at the idea of his absence but for a day or two."

"Well, girls, I do not know what you are to do for the next four or five days; Peyton has gone, and I must go to —, to court, to-morrow," he said, in the evening.

"Where has Mr. Peyton gone?" asked Ellen.

"Home; did not Nannie tell you? but I suppose she can not trust herself to speak of it. Come, Nannie, I vote you and he are married *instantly*; that will cure you."

But Nannie had made good her escape, and neither heard the remark nor the testy, irritated tone, it was delivered in. Ellen was surprised at his manner, but supposed it arose from unwillingness to go himself. The truth was, that George was always jealous of any weakness of affection a woman showed toward another man, from the very fact that he was so desirous of, and would have so treasured this weakness, had he been the object of it. His personal appreciation was touched, too; for he was going, and there would be none of this at his departure.

It seemed impossible to Nannie that Peyton could have gone home without a word to her, without saying good-by; it was very plain he did not care for her, but wanted an opportunity to break the engagement. She reproached herself for her conduct to him—what must he think of her? that tedious Dr. Brice too, had given him the idea that she had not waited for him, but would go without him; if she had only come home with him, that would have set things right. She passed a wearisome night, alternately blaming him and herself; accusing him of want of affection, and herself of all the sins in the calendar, with regard to him. Right glad the next morning was she to find George had left; and so dispirited and really ill did she look, that Ellen followed her to her room, after breakfast, to question her concerning Peyton; and she, no longer able to keep it in her own breast, told the tale of their parting. Ellen comforted her as well as she was able, although she was troubled; for, she knew Peyton was hurt, or he would not have left thus.

"I think it was very natural. I should have gone to Mrs. Brice's just as you did, for that could have been explained afterward; but you should have come home with him; and

then the careless way in which you treated the flowers, his sister's gift, must have wounded him, deeply; he, of course, thought those Dr. Brice had, you had given him."

"Yes, yes; but, indeed, Ellen, I did not intend to hurt the bouquet—did not know I was doing it. I was thinking so much of him, I had no thought for the flowers; and Louis ought to know me better, than to suppose I would give another his gift, in his very presence, too."

"But, Nannie, under the circumstance, he must certainly have thought so."

"I wish I had never seen Dr. Brice," was Nannie's sobbing reply.

"Ellen knew of nothing to be done but to wait patiently for Peyton's return, then have an explanation; this appeared to be almost a forlorn hope to Nannie; but here the matter had to rest for the present; she was only thankful that George was absent, for her dejected looks would have called forth all his raillery. The next two or three days were dull enough. Nannie was mopish, and there was no one to enliven their meals, and no pleasant chats in the evening; so that when George did return, after a few days' absence, he felt quite willing to go again, provided so pleasant and cordial a greeting awaited his coming.

His first question, after getting sight of Nannie, was, if Peyton had returned; and the next, if Levering had been there.

He seemed pleased when he heard of Mr. Levering's absence, but asked,

"Has not Peyton been heard from?" glancing at Nannie.

"No."

"Humph!"

When they were alone, Ellen told him how matters stood between the lovers

"This will never do," was his reply; "she looks really ill;

what contradictions you women are; she has been flirting with Dr. Brice; I foresaw it all. Peyton is not one to be trifled with; I will write to him to-night."

"But, George, he must not think that Nannie is—"

"Do not be afraid, Ellen; I shall be as careful of Nannie's womanly dignity as though she were my wife."

George commenced his letter to Peyton about some indifferent matter; then said—

"My true motive for writing to you this evening, my dear fellow, is to set matters straight between you and Nannie; for I know there is something wrong; you parted in some pique or quarrel; perhaps she has been exercising her woman's prerogative—flirting. If that is her offense, man, forgive her on the spot; for she has heartily repented it; so do not punish yourself longer, for the pleasure of punishing her.

"You know exactly how I feel toward her; and if I thought this advance, on my part, compromised her woman's dignity a tittle, I would whistle you down the wind, before I would make it. But knowing you both, I feel confident a breeze is only wanted to blow away this vapor which has obscured your sky."

This, in a day or two, brought an answer from Peyton; inclosed in which was a letter for Nannie. The matter was there explained. He had been detained from calling for Nannie that evening by the arrival of his uncle, who had brought him a message from his father, requiring his immediate presence; he was much disappointed at finding Nannie gone; and more so, and much hurt at her after conduct. He expected to explain all to her on their way home, but her refusal to let him accompany her, prevented his doing this; and hurt at her whole proceeding, he determined to go, without a word.

He would have written, and wished to write, but made no opening; thinking a little reflection might do them both good.

Peyton soon followed his letter; and Nannie, as usual, withholding nothing, told him the origin of the whole matter: how she felt the night he told the story of his friend. He entered so into her feelings—was so touched—that he even justified her to herself. And truly, the last days of their love were brighter than the first.

CHAPTER XIV.

ONE stormy night when the weather was in that delightful state, between rain and snow, called sleet, George wrapped his cloak about him, and prepared to encounter the elements. In answer to Peyton's inquiry,

"Do you intend to venture out?"

He replied he was going to see Mrs. Walker.

He looked up at the sky as he stepped out of the door, and said to himself, "I shall find her alone to-night," puffed at his cigar and walked slowly to Mr. Casey's. He had not been *tête-à-tête* with the widow since the night of the party, and was somewhat curious to know how she would receive him, for he was conscious of having said many tender things to her that evening, which she had not repelled, and which he had not confirmed by his subsequent manner. "Well," he said to himself, as if in excuse for that evening's flirtation, "she certainly looked very beautiful, and I felt in a mood for doing any thing—the more extravagant the act, the more to my taste—besides, I can not resist flirting with a handsome woman; she is accustomed to these things and knows how to take them; she is vain—very vain, but what handsome woman is not? I like her with all her weaknesses. I hope she will be alone to-night, I wish to talk to her concerning Jane. Ellen tells me she does not express herself on very friendly terms toward her. This is the result of their rivalry last winter—she must be managed. I must try and win the widow out of this, for she has it in her power to make a

strong party against her; injure her she can not, nor does she wish to do so, but only to gratify a woman's little spite, and at this juncture Jane will be particularly sensitive to any neglect. Casey lauds her every opportunity, but he can not influence the widow one straw, except where she chooses to be influenced, or it suits her so to be. If she is disposed to coquette a little, I shall not withdraw, but if she please,

'I'll leave her with a kiss at twelve,
A serenade at two.'

But she must look to the end,

'For who that ever flirted thus,
Could dream of being true.'

Whistling the stanza he reached Mr. Casey's door.

Mrs. Walker was in the parlor and alone; there was an emprossement in her "good evening," a sudden rising and falling of the eye, a put on timidity, and that same half-conscious, half-coy manner that he had seen her wear before, and which caused a smile to flit for an instant about his mouth as he uttered his

"Good-evening! are you alone this evening?"

He looked at her scrutinizingly for a moment; then, with one of those contradictory revulsions of feeling, common to our common nature, determined that he would *not* carry on the flirtation commenced the other evening, merely because she seemed to expect he would. The lady was en deshabille, wrapped in a large and most becoming mantle, whose scarlet lining peeped out here and there with pretty effect, with a black lace veil tied loosely over her head, permitting one or two graceful and wiry curls to stray upon her cheek; she seemed languid and complained of cold, while she lounged upon the sofa, stealing occasional glances at the immense mirror before her, arranging her dress and changing her attitude, obedient to its telling.

Almost her first inquiry, after that orthodox subject the weather was discussed, was,

"Have you heard any thing of Miss Lorton lately?"

"Nothing new; Ellen had a letter from her lately; she is well, and expects soon to pay us a visit."

"Does she still adhere to her resolution of singing on the stage?"

"Yes, I believe it is a settled thing."

"I thought, perhaps, her friends might prevail upon her to change her mind—it is so degrading."

"Her friends, under the circumstances, admire her for it; and Miss Lorton is incapable of doing any thing degrading."

"Well, it appears to me, *a lady* never would have entertained for a moment, the idea of singing before a vulgar crowd; she could support herself more quietly and with less display. I am surprised that some of her old admirers do not step forward to her rescue. You used to hang over her enamored; now is the time to prove your chivalry to beauty in distress."

There was a tone of pique and ill-nature in these words, and the manner of saying them, which she had never betrayed before in his presence, and of which he had not believed her capable. He understood her exactly, and saw she had expected a different manner from him, and was fearful she had betrayed this expectation; her vanity was cut, and the old rivalry, not lessened by his defense of Jane, was alive in all its force; then too she was puzzled, for she could not understand his interest in a woman so devoid of personal appearance, when she knew him to be so great an admirer of it.

"I am not *in* love with Miss Jane, and even if I were, I doubt very much her acceptance of such rescue; she is a woman of character, and not to be judged by the rules which govern you every-day women."

"*You every-day women!* really, Mr. Watson, you ap-

pear disposed to exalt Miss Lorton at the expense of her sex in general, and myself in particular; you strangely forget your courtesy in your zeal—you every-day women indeed!"

The lady moved and fidgeted upon her chair, arranging her mantle all the while she was speaking.

"It is the plain truth, and I am aware, Mrs. Walker, that plain truths are always disagreeable."

"Then you should never make use of them, sir. Come, as you have put Miss Lorton on a pedestal, do give us a list of her perfections; you will commence with beauty, of course."

She settled herself in the attitude of a listener.

"No; not even my imagination could convert her into a beauty, for unfortunately she is a very homely woman; few women are blessed with your personal attractions;" and his admiring gaze dwelt upon her.

The lady seemed somewhat mollified at this, and glanced at the mirror; there was a pause of some moments; at length she said,

"Whom were you thinking of; of Miss Lorton, or (with a kind of half-girlish laugh) of me?"

"I was thinking of both; why is it you speak with so much asperity of Miss Jane? Confess that you feel uncharitable to-night."

"No I do not, but it provokes me to hear a particular set make such a martyr of her; we have heard nothing for the last month but praises of Miss Lorton's self-sacrifice, and I am tired of it."

"Well, it is more pleasant to listen to our own praises, than to be compelled to hear those of others; but I must confess to feeling disappointed in *you*; I felt certain you would take a different view of it; but you women are false to us, and fickle to your own sex—not to be trusted."

He arose and buttoned up his coat, as if preparing for departure. Mrs. Walker began to fear she had lost ground, aware she had exhibited no very amiable traits of character; anxious to do away any bad impression she might have made, as well as satisfy herself he really had no interest but that he professed in Jane, she said,

"Confess now, Mr. Watson, that in appearing as Miss Jane's champion, you are actuated by tenderer feelings than those of friendship?"

"That is an idle question, Mrs. Walker, *you* know that I am not." She gave him one quick glance, then her eye fell beneath his; he continued, "but let me ask you are your motives friendly ones?"

"I never professed any friendship for Miss Lorton, but am far from wishing to do her injury. She—"

"You have professed some for me; I shall put it to the trial. You are annoyed with all this talk, and do not know, perhaps, that a clique of ladies, envious of Miss Jane, but to all of whom she is every way superior, have determined, through jealousy and jealousy alone, to neglect her—the very circle who most coveted her when she sang to amuse their idle hours and her own. Now, I have heard you classed among these. I know that you are not with them—and, in truth, Mrs. Walker, you are a great favorite of mine; I like you, and I wish you to go with us in this matter."

This was said in a frank tone, as he drew his chair up and dropped into it.

The lady hesitated, and colored—for there came over her the memory of exhibitions of feeling which were any thing but amicable ones; presently she said:

"I do not know what good I could possibly do Miss Lorton."

"Excuse me! you can give her your womanly sympathy—a debt each woman owes to the other. You can, by look,

manner, example, stop a set of cavilers who are disposed to slight her, and make them ashamed: you can do all this, and much more, which your woman's tact teaches you; and all this you will do, or I have not read you right."

"I had no idea of neglecting Miss Lorton, or omitting any of the courtesies I had been accustomed to extend to her; but, really, your almost womanly regard for her looks very lover-like."

"I thought you understood me better: had I loved the lady, pride would have kept me silent. I must confess, however, my interest was a selfish one, and I have paid the penalty in my disappointment in you."

This was said in a hurt tone, as he again, apparently, prepared to take his departure.

"Come, come! do not look so dreadfully dignified, or I shall really fear we are to quarrel about Miss Lorton—and that would put her cause in worse odor with me than it has ever been; a truce with the subject; and if you will promise to be very agreeable this evening, I will promise to wage war, in the future, upon all who dare to hint at her imperfections."

"That is like yourself—what I expected." And the truce was sealed by a kiss upon the fair hand extended, which the lady received in all charity.

He was perfectly willing to let matters rest where they were, confident she would keep her word—though it was laughingly given. Pleased with himself, and consequently with her, the evening passed pleasantly, without other allusion to the vexed question; he felt some sympathy with the widow's annoyance at the talk about it, for he had been irritated himself, but his irritation sprang from a feeling of interest. George was of a disposition to make the most of things that were inevitable; he would storm first, and apply

the remedy afterward—not thinking that he might have been remedying while he was storming.

His reflections, as he left Mr. Casey's that evening, were to the effect that there was more good in the human heart than it had credit for—particularly in woman's heart; the fault was in the management thereof; and thereupon followed congratulations as to his tact and success.

CHAPTER XV.

THE evening that George paid his visit to the widow, Peyton said, after his departure :

"Watson is a queer fellow. I used to think him attached to Miss Lorton ; but now he appears to be paying court to Mrs. Walker."

"Why do you think so?" questioned Nannie

"The night of the party there I was the very last who left, except Watson. After walking down street with Steele, and spending an hour at the club, talking, as I was returning to my room, whom should I meet but the gentleman in question ; he had just left Mr. Casey's ; he had been all that time discoursing with Mrs. Walker, for I left them *tête-à-tête* when I made my bow."

"Why, Ellen, that would be capital ! George thinks you and Mr. Casey would make a good match ; and himself and Mrs. Walker ; or we could arrange it nicely. Imagine Mr. Casey, as a bridegroom, in his flashy waistcoat ; how supremely happy he would be !"

"Very ; but, Nanny, when did George inform you that he thought Mr. Casey and I would make a good match?"

"He did not inform me at all ; he had too much respect for his ears, which, in all probability, would have felt the weight of my hand had he volunteered such information : it was to the gentleman at my side that he talked such treason."

"I am obliged to them," said Ellen, with much temper ;

"and pray, Mr. Peyton, did you also think that Mr. Casey and I would make a good match?" she colored and spoke quickly.

"Indeed, I did not ; there is no one I know to whom I would like to see you married, unless it is George himself."

Ellen was looking for something in her work-box, and, at this moment, it turned over on the floor ; as she stooped to pick up tapes and needles, assisted by Peyton, Nannie said, "Jane, Mrs. Walker, Ellen ; why not make a Grand Turk of him at once, and include me in his harem?"

Ellen left the room ; Peyton mused a moment, and then said, "George and Ellen would make an excellent match. Do you think there is any love between them?"

"No ; not a particle of love matrimonial ; he is to us only a brother. I believe she is destined to be an old maid ; but do you know Mr. Levering is very much in love with her?"

"Indeed ! it is strange I never thought of it before, but now you speak of it I believe it is so."

"Certainly it is ; men never see any thing unless it is so plain it can not be mistaken ; but a woman is never so engrossed with her own love that she can not see that of others."

"Do you think she would marry him?"

"No, I know she would not, and it provokes me ; he is rich, gentlemanly, and agreeable ; but I really think she would as soon live an old maid as be married," said Nannie, petulantly.

"Ha ! ha ! I once told George I believed there was an attachment between him and Ellen."

"What did he say?"

"He laughed at the thought."

"I do not wonder that he did."

"I know not why, but this idea often comes into my head,

without reason, I believe. Does George suspect Levering's attachment to her?"

"Yes, I think he does; and I do not think he likes it either. I have noticed him watching them."

"And you think she will refuse him if he addresses her?"

"I am sure of it; but he will take it coolly, and reason himself out of it just as he reasoned himself in."

"Well, time will show; but do not speak of my surmises to Ellen—she might not like it."

Ellen was sitting in her room sewing when Nannie came up. She was very anxious to know if any thing more had been said concerning herself, and tried to turn the conversation which followed to that point; but in vain, for Nannie was either too conscientious, or too much taken up with her own feelings, to notice the drift of Ellen's remarks.

She was hurt and indignant, for she had often heard George say that he considered Mr. Casey, with all his excellences, an antidote to love. How Ellen struggled with herself that evening! hard was the battle between pride, vexation, wounded affection, and the galling idea that Peyton, and perhaps George himself, suspected the nature of her affection for him. It was of no use, she could not control—she could not conquer; there must be some vent to the pent waters; she gave way, and wept, as she had not wept since childhood. Then came reason and resolution—plans for future conduct were laid down to be followed unerringly. She was to be less familiar with George—less alone with him; she was no longer to call upon him to render her the many little offices which, each day, she was accustomed to do. Mixed with all this was a feeling which Ellen would hardly acknowledge to herself, and this was jealousy of Jane. She knew George and Jane corresponded, for she had often observed him read over her letters, once, and again, and again; she had watched the interest he took in her proceedings with

a pang of which she had deemed herself incapable. She felt that now the struggle was coming, deeper and darker than any she had before known; she tried to turn from it—tried to put it off and persuade herself that Jane's arrival would give her pleasure, but it was of no avail; she was startled at the bitterness of the feeling that arose in her heart, when she thought of it. From this feeling she made an effort to shake herself free, and one moment it was gone. And the next it was back again with the fierceness of a dark demon tugging at her heart-strings. So it was, and her glass told her she pale and thin, and the tempter whispered they would say it was from pining.

Ellen kept her resolution of being colder in her manner to George; but she did not feel calm enough, the first day or two, to temper it—it was freezing; she was aware of this—felt it would be absurd, and knew it would be set down to capriciousness or temper; but the very consciousness made the matter worse; she could not, but by practice, become cold and careless. George was not slow to notice this, but he made no remark, proffered no service, when he saw his proffers were evaded; but occasionally, when in conversation, she would catch his eye resting upon her with a steady glance, and slowly withdrawn as it met hers, but with no question or expression in it.

The household had set Mr. Levering down as a decided beaux of Ellen's, and there was a quiet smile of satisfaction on Mrs. Mason's benevolent face, whenever he was announced, which had not escaped George's quick eye, and Mr. Levering was now almost a daily visitor.

Thus the winter was passing rapidly away, and the season for opening the theatre had arrived. Ellen, at Mrs. Mason's suggestion, had written to Jane, to make her house her home when she came to fulfill her engagement; she had talked it over with all, and with many pangs and forebodings the long,

kind letter was sent ; for Ellen had determined to struggle bravely with these dark thoughts and not let erring humanity rule. As the time approached for expecting her, she awaited it with a mixed feeling of pain and pleasure ; now was acknowledged the difference between precept and practice—between knowing what should be done and doing it. She felt like flying away from it, if she could only avoid the first meeting with Jane ; but no—it must be met.

It was Sunday morning ; she felt particularly dull, and although it rained hard, determined to go to church. Duly equipped, in cloak and overshoes, she was looking for an umbrella, when George entered the hall.

"You are not going out, Ellen?"

"Yes. Do you know where the umbrellas are?"

"Here is mine ; but you will certainly take cold and be ill."

"No ; I am well protected."

"If you insist upon going, take my arm ; I will hold the umbrella over you."

"I would rather go alone."

He stepped out the door, hoisted the umbrella and handed it to her without a word ; she took it and passed quickly on to church. On turning the corner she glanced back : he was still standing in the door. A regret came in her mind that she had been so ungenerous, but she stifled that in a moment, with one thought of his remark concerning Mr. Casey and herself. She sat in the corner of the pew with her vail over her face, soothed by the sound of the organ and touched by the prayers and responses, although she took no part in the service. Just as the sermon was about to commence the pew-door opened, and George, entering, seated himself without a glance at her.

When church was out, he leisurely walked down the aisle and out the door as if unconscious of her presence. Mrs.

Walker, approaching, insisted upon taking her home in the carriage ; but she declined, notwithstanding Mr. Levering, who was going to Mr. Casey's to dine, "begged she would not think of walking." She had made but a few steps from the church door when the umbrella was taken from her hand, and, "Take my arm, Ellen, *do*," greeted her. She did not decline his escort this time, and they walked home in silence.

When near there he saw a baggage-car at the door, to which he called her attention, saying it must contain Jane's baggage. What Ellen felt, or what battles she fought in that short and silent walk he never knew, for her meeting with Jane was as cordial and affectionate as it had ever been. She stood in her damp clothes, asking and answering questions, despite George's remonstrances ; but at length Mrs. Mason insisting, she left the room to change them.

After tea it still rained, and Nannie was congratulating herself that the weather would keep people at home, and they would have Jane to themselves the first evening, when, as though in defiance of her wishes, Mr. Levering came in. After the usual greetings with Jane, and expressions of surprise at seeing her, he turned to Ellen and remarked,

"I merely called to see if you had taken cold."

"None at all, thank you."

"What stately tenderness in his manner," whispered Nannie to Peyton.

Mr. Levering left when the church bells rang, telling Jane he should take an early opportunity of calling upon her.

"Jane, my dear," said Mrs. Mason, "it really gives me great pleasure to have you here again."

"Not half so much as it gives me to be here ; it is the reward I have looked to for a long time, twelve months ; even in that little space Time's fingers have been busy with us. You, my dear Madam, look better than when I left, Ellen is

paler, and thinner, Nannie quiet and satisfied. Mr. Peyton—shall I tell the change in Mr. Peyton, Nannie?"

"Yes, do; any change would be for the better; one wearies of monotony."

"He has very much the appearance of a man who has caught a bird, and at first held it tight, while it quivered and struggled for liberty; but he soothes and caresses, till at last, in love with its bondage, it nestles for life, weary of being ever on the wing."

"You have described it exactly, Miss Jane," said Peyton. Nannie tossed her head saucily.

"And how do I look, Miss Jane?" asked George.

"I can hardly tell; there is a change, but it is one difficult to define—I should not judge it was loss of self-appreciation however. Come, tell me in what I differ?"

"In nothing," said George.

"You have lost your penetration, for I have become exceedingly worldly, and worship mammon."

"This change is not visible in your physiognomy, is perhaps the reason his penetration was at fault," said Peyton.

"I always prophesied a disappointment of the affections would make a worldly woman of you."

"Thank you, Mr. Watson; and you think this being the case is a sufficient explanation of my worldliness?" She looked full and steadily at him.

"Not at all; I see no change, but am only supposing a case, founded upon your own assertion that you have become worldly—and I doubt that assertion very much."

"Very gallant, indeed, to doubt a lady's word; it is true, nevertheless; I may mourn over it, but I can not but acknowledge it; wait until you see me in public."

"How did you get through your first night?" asked Ellen.

"With more composure than I ever played or sang at a

party; I seemed turned to stone. I would not have had you present for any amount."

"We heard that the house was crowded."

"So it was; a mass of human beings whom curiosity or pity had brought. I looked over that crowd and felt steeled, for I met not one sympathizing glance; had I caught one kind look I believe I should have fainted; but before me was a field of faces, upon which curiosity and inquiry were plainly written; they were anxious to know how I would bear myself."

"Were none of your friends present?"

"Yes, but they purposely sat back, fearing the effect upon me; after I became a little accustomed to the scene, I recognized many of my best friends. Had they greeted me as they usually greet a new debutante, I believe I should have fainted; my friends prevented this, for which I was truly grateful."

"Was not the anticipation of how you would feel, worse than the reality?" asked Peyton.

"No; the reality was much worse. I had no idea what an effect human faces gazing upon me could produce; I was appalled, and it was only because I was stunned that I was calm. I had no thought of pity or ridicule, and all the pent feeling within me went forth in my song. I never sang better. I must confess I dread my first appearance here."

"Why?" questioned George.

"Well, it is one of those feelings which you can hardly describe. I was courteously treated by all a year since, when visiting, and made many friends. I am anxious not to be disappointed in them, and not to disappoint them, so I feel rather nervous about it."

"We are certain we shall not be disappointed in you,

Jane," said Ellen, "and all those you value are prepared to receive you just as you wish to be received."

The conversation in the parlor was carried on to a late hour, even after the others had retired; Ellen and Jane had much to say to each other.

The next morning Mr. Levering called upon Jane, accompanying Mrs. Walker, to whom the evening previous he had imparted the knowledge of her arrival. Mrs. Walker seemed disposed to forget all past rivalries; she was exceedingly courteous in her manner, while Jane was quiet, perfectly polite and perfectly cool. During the week which followed, almost all Jane's former acquaintances called to see her, and Mr. Casey gave a small party in her honor. She very much regretted his doing this, as she wished to receive no more courtesies than possible from Mrs. Walker, of whose manner she could not complain, for it was all that it should be; indeed, she sometimes wished there was something to complain of, for then she could have had some excuse to herself, for her own want of friendly feeling toward the widow. At this party Ellen and Nannie appeared for the first time since their mourning. Just before they left Mrs. Mason's for Mr. Casey's, Jane turned to Peyton and said,

"I hope you will ask me to sing this evening; I perceive the good people are rather shy of so doing since I have appeared on the stage. I appreciate their delicacy, but as my singing is my greatest attraction, I prefer to sing for my friends, and you know I can not unless I am asked."

This was a very pleasant evening; all enjoyed it, and even Nannie's remark, as she neared Ellen, and pointed to Mr. Casey, saying "Imagine yourself Madame Casey," had no power to mar Ellen's pleasure.

"I have just introduced Jane to Judge Blake," said George to Ellen in the course of the evening, "and he has offered

to lead her upon the stage to-morrow evening; her father and he were friends."

"I am very glad; quite a compliment to be introduced by a man of his standing."

"Yes, and it will impress a *certain set* more than any thing else; for in family, position, character, he is sans reproche."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE theatre had been newly fitted up, and presented a brilliant appearance, filled, as it was, with the beauty and fashion of the city. The dress circle was crowded with ladies, both in the front and second tiers, who, besides their own charms, were radiant with jewels, flowers, and nodding plumes. The crowd was immense, and to the eye of one looking from below, appeared wedged together. The pit, with its sea of black coats acting as a foil to the boxes, added to the effect of the scene.

Every one seemed impatient, and all were in a flutter of excitement, as though waiting the announcement of some great event, or the denouement of a tragedy. The ladies could scarce attend to their cavaliers for watching the curtain, and the gentlemen in the lobbies, at the least stir in the house caused by a late arrival, would lean forward with eager interest. At length the Masons were seen entering a private box at the right of the stage, escorted by Mr. Levering and Mr. Peyton. Glances and whispered words passed from one to the other around the house, while every eye was directed toward them; but the general curiosity did not appear to be satisfied, for Nannie and Ellen sat in the back of the box, while the gentlemen occupied the front seat. George and Mr. Casey, slowly and with some difficulty, made their way to the stage lights and were looking around upon the crowd, whose silence almost awed them. Suddenly the musicians composing the orchestra commenced tuning their

instruments; the flutter of fans ceased, the half-spoken sentences were cut short, and the whole audience faced the stage in an attitude of attention. Slowly the curtain commenced rising, the stage appeared in view, and Jane Lorton stepped forward, led by the venerable Judge Blake. Ere she could make her bow to the audience, quietly but simultaneously the pit arose to their feet to greet her, and stood hat in hand. She bowed low—lower; they seated themselves, the Judge retired, and she commenced singing. The first two lines could not be heard above the music; then her voice rose, swelled, and faltered again—it seemed under no control; at the end of the first verse, the before hushed crowd looked and whispered to each other of their disappointment—a sort of rustling went through the house, as of a rising wind. Jane stood quietly with her arms folded, waiting for the accompaniment. Her dress was of rich light silk, and she wore an embroidered cape; she looked the personification of a lady in her quiet dignity. In her manner to her audience there was no appealing for forbearance, for she appeared unconscious of their presence, and perfectly self-sustained. The prelude was through, and she again chimed in, but with a voice as clear as a clarion's, and so touching in its pathos, that it seemed like two voices beautifully blended into one.

When she had finished the second verse, there was scarce a movement made, or an eye turned from the stage. She sang the ballad through amid silence, then made her bow, and retired with thundering applause; again she came on, and again sang for them, to be again called back; the third time she declined returning. The manager stepped forward and said, that Miss Lorton was exhausted, and would not sing again until the end of the comedy they were about performing.

The crowd seemed restless during the performance, for

they had come there with one great object—to see and hear the new singer, whose name and story had collected so many persons together.

To those most interested, the Mason family, and the gentlemen accompanying them, it appeared to take up a wearisome time. Jane had particularly requested them not to come behind the scenes during the evening, and mindful of this, they kept their places, yet in their interest and engrossment in her, felt it impossible to be interested in any thing else; they were so very anxious every thing should go off well. Mr. Levering had purchased one hundred tickets, George had spent the whole week going about town among his acquaintances arranging and re-arranging how they should receive her; it was his idea that they should rise. This had been previously settled, and when the persons interested took their seats in the pit, they whispered it to others there, and this caused the simultaneous rising which both astonished and gratified them, for they only expected a certain set to pay her this compliment.

At length the comedy was over; Jane made her appearance and was rapturously received, and sang even better than before; she was perfectly self-possessed and was again recalled. She recommenced her song; the stillness was profound; when suddenly, the spectators in front were arrested in their attention to the songstress, by a slight haze, which seemed slowly but palpably to envelop the back part of the stage; directly something appeared to be curling upward like smoke, and a confused whispering and tearing away of things was heard behind the scenes. The men in the front row of the pit were observed to rub their eyes, look at each other, and hold their breath; suddenly a bright flame shot up, lighting every part of the stage, and men rushed in tearing away the scenery; the cry of "Fire, fire!" like the sound of the last trumpet, rang through that living mass and startled them to

their feet. O! who can forget the cry that went up from that mass of human life, that long lingering cry of agony, in which were mingled the voices of men, women, and children, in terror.

George, who stood directly in front of the stage lights, near the orchestra, had observed the confusion behind the scenes. His first impulse had been to spring forward and see what was the matter, but the fear of alarming the multitude stayed him. When the cry of "fire" burst forth, he looked toward the box where sat Ellen and Nannie, and made one step to reach it, then turned and jumped upon the stage, throwing his arm about Jane, who entirely alone and unsupported, was almost fainting with terror. The flames were burning bright, but the scenery was almost hid from the rest of the house by the dense black smoke which slowly rolled over the building.

Now was heard the crash made by the breaking of the foot lights, as the men in the pit sprang upon the stage; the noise but added to the terror of the panic-struck people, who were rushing toward the doors, crowding and piling on each other in their frantic efforts to escape, or get as far from the stage as possible. The smoke had become almost stifling, and the cry of "the windows! the windows!" was unheeded; for those wedged near them could not get space to move, their arms being pinioned to their sides by the pressure of the living wall around and about them. Shrieks, sobs, groans, and prayers mingled in the agonizing sound which went up on the air. Some were quiet, benumbed with terror—some sobbed without intermission—some wrung their hands and prayed silently—some uttered shriek upon shriek, sharp and startling—while others tore their hair and supplicated for deliverance and mercy. Suddenly there came another appalling cry, the doors opened inwardly, and were closed with the pressure of the crowd. Now came frantic efforts of strong men and weak women, to free themselves; people were

thrown down and trodden on; arms were tossed wildly in the air—blows struck, as each, with the instinct of self-preservation, battled for life—life which they felt passing with their passing breath.

George, still supporting Jane, who by a strong effort retained consciousness, was looking about for some way to escape, when he observed the deserted box in which Ellen and Nannie had been seated, and it flashed upon him, that there was a private staircase and entrance near it. He sprang from the stage into the pit, carrying Jane, and clambered over the first tier of boxes; this part of the house was entirely deserted, for the people had rushed into the lobbies. He gained the box where he had last seen Ellen, and found the private staircase; he was hurrying on, when he was suddenly run against and thrown down by some men with buckets of water; he recovered himself in a moment, and soon stood in the open air, where he met Mr. Levering.

"Is it you George; is Miss Jane safe?"

"Yes; and Ellen?"

"They are in the carriage at the corner of the street, take Miss Jane there; hark! do you hear that cry?"

"They can not get the doors open, but many might escape by the way we came, did they know it."

"I will go back; leave the ladies with Peyton, and follow me."

When Mr. Levering reached the inside of the theatre, he found the manager upon the stage begging the people to come back; that there was now no danger; the scenery had been on fire and some of it was burned, but it had been put out, and if they would but move back, that the doors might be opened and the windows put up, they would all get out in safety. They heeded not, for they saw the smoke still rolling through the house almost stifling them, and were slow to believe. Mr. Levering, seeing that what the manager

said was true, stood by his side and urged them to return. Slowly and cautiously they did so; then the windows were put up, and as the smoke disappeared and they were able to see what remained of the burnt and scorched scenery, they realized from what a dreadful death they had been delivered. The reaction was almost equal to the terror; many who had been calm before, now burst into sobs and tears; ladies who had borne up in the crowd, now fainted; some were hurt and some missing, having been separated. George had returned to aid Mr. Levering in rendering all the assistance possible to the frightened crowd; they were joined by Peyton as soon as he had placed the ladies in safety, and seen that Jane was not much hurt. Families had been separated, and frantic at losing sight of each other, had to be reassured, and the missing ones looked for; those who had been hurt in the pressure, were cared for and sent away; the theatre was examined, to see that all was safe, a watch set, and then it was left to darkness.

Peyton walked to Mrs. Mason's with George, as the girls had said they would sit up until their return. Ellen met them at the door. She was assured the fire was out, and no lives lost. George inquired for Jane.

"I am afraid she is hurt; she seems in much pain about the shoulder."

"Have you sent for a doctor?"

"No; she insists upon not having one to-night. Mother has rubbed it, and desired us to leave her room, as she must be quiet. I promised to let her know as soon as you came. She is dreadfully excited and fearful that some were killed."

"Tell her she had better permit me to go for the doctor."

Ellen went, and returned with Jane's thanks; she was better, and positively declined having a physician.

"She has been almost wild," said Nannie.

"It was that unlucky fall of mine," said George. "I was run against and knocked over; I thought she was hurt, for I was stunned."

"I do not think it is any thing serious," said Peyton; "of course she is dreadfully agitated and distressed."

Ellen shuddered.

"That shriek of the multitude—it will haunt me. I had no power to speak when I saw the fire; I could only seize Mr. Levering's arm and point to it."

"It was horrible. You both look worn out, and had better go to bed. Good-night! I shall walk down the street with Peyton."

CHAPTER XVII.

A PHYSICIAN had to be sent for the next morning to see Jane; her shoulder was sprained and bruised, and she had a nervous fever. They were beset with inquiries about Miss Lorton; notes were sent, cards left, and many kind wishes expressed for her. Mr. Levering came in, in the morning, to see how Jane was, and talk it over. He assured them he had made every inquiry, and although many were hurt, he hoped none were dangerously so; terror had been the cause of it all. He had never seen so great a number within those walls before; all were delighted with Miss Lorton's singing. "Indeed," he remarked, "had it not been for this unfortunate calamity it would have been a great triumph."

"Her singing was masterly," said George. "I saw the tear in her eye when she commenced, and was afraid she would fail; but, in the second verse, she forced the drop back; but it seemed to me I could feel it in her voice, the pathos of it actually gave me pain; I wanted something to break the stillness. I did not hear the instruments, but the tear in her voice gave me the heart-ache."

"I know not if it was the circumstances or not, but I never heard singing so full of soul," said Mr. Levering.

Ellen appeared to have suffered from the fright, for she looked pale and ill; but she devoted herself to Jane.

In the afternoon of this day Mrs. Mason insisted that Ellen should go to her own room and lie down. She did so, for she was glad to be alone. George's tenderness and care for

Jane had given her feelings with which she had struggled all day—feelings which made her know there was no plague like the plague of the heart, and she wished to talk to herself, to clear up her own mind. She had struggled with herself, feeling by feeling, and was gaining some sort of control over the chaos within, when a tap at the door roused her. She was silent, hoping whoever it was would believe her sleeping, and go away, but the tap was repeated and her own name uttered; she said, "Come in," and George stepped to her side.

"I think, Ellen, you need a physician as much as Jane," he remarked, as he seated himself. "You look really ill."

Ellen covered her face with her hands and sobbed. He looked grieved, and, dropping into a seat beside her, gently took her hands from her face.

"Come, Ellen, do not give way; you are nervous from last night's fright. I came to talk to you and get comfort myself, for I fear Miss Jane will suffer from my awkward overthrow."

Ellen roused herself and tried to be composed. He offered to go for a glass of wine for her, and she permitted him to do so, as she wished to be alone for a moment. When he returned, she was quite composed, and declined the wine.

There was a moment or two of silence.

"Mr. Levering has been here since dinner and left his compliments, as has also Mr. Casey."

Ellen made no reply.

"Poor Casey! in the midst of my anxiety about you all last night, I caught a glimpse of him. He had been forced back by the crowd to the centre of the pit, and was there wedged in. You should have seen his struggles to free himself; he must have been upon the back of a bench, for his

arms and head were above the rest of the people; his face was as red as possible, his eyes appeared actually popping out of his head, while his arms, in his efforts to extricate himself, made all sorts of gyrations in the air. It was but a glimpse that I had of him, and it was brought to my mind by seeing him, when it was all over, lustily wiping the perspiration from his forehead.

George sat with Ellen all the afternoon; she exerted herself to talk, but very little was said of the night previous; he spoke of Jane in a frank, free, easy manner, which struck her. By tea time she had talked away most of her uneasy feelings, and stifled, if not conquered others. Ellen acted as Jane's nurse; in a week she was able to go below stairs, although her arm and shoulder were both lame.

One day, George brought her a note from Mr. Carson, the manager, in which he told her that owing to the casualty on the night of her first appearance, the public had become so terrified that they would not visit the theatre, and he had not had a respectable house since, although he had great attractions in the way of stars; that it was a losing concern, and he was going to abandon it for this winter; "he did not believe that even she could draw another crowd there."

Jane handed the note to George; he read it and remarked,

"Levering told me to-day, that there were not fifty persons in the house last night. The celebrated Mr. — is here preaching; latterly he has taken up the subject of public amusements. His animosity to the theatre prevents many going, and then, I never saw a community so awe-struck as this, at the escape of the other night."

"I am sure I shall never get over it," said Jane; "that shriek—it will haunt me for ever; and their faces—they seemed to upbraid me."

"The fright must have been dreadful."

"It was not fright, Ellen; I never thought of myself; I believe it was remorse. I should never have felt like myself more, if one life had been lost. As it is, I shall never tread the stage of a theatre again."

"I am glad to hear you say so, Jane," said Mrs. Mason.

"And I too," said Ellen.

There was silence; every one seemed busy with their own thoughts; it was broken by Mrs. Mason.

"What have you determined to do?"

"Give concerts—teach singing—any thing but sing upon the stage; the idea has always been most repugnant to me. I thought in time I should become accustomed to it, but each trial makes it worse. I can make no arrangement until I see Mr. Carson, but my determination is fixed—it has become a matter of conscience. If the people of the theatre will give Mr. Carson a benefit, I will sing at it. I shall offer to do this, and compel myself to it, but it will be my last appearance. I regret his losses, for he has always been most kind and gentlemanly in his manner to me."

"You are not to blame, Jane, for any thing that happened that evening."

"I know it, my dear Madam, but from the beginning I have had an uneasy feeling about appearing upon the stage; the advantage of it alone reconciled me to the idea, and now I can act against my convictions no longer. I have a horror of it, and always have had, but after I had consented, it would have been weak and ungenerous to trouble my friends with my doubts and hesitations; therefore I was silent."

"When I found fault with you, Miss Jane, for your choice of the stage, Ellen defended you," said George.

"I can trust myself with Ellen always; she knew me and trusted me without explanation; she has faith."

Ellen colored.

"I do not think it was faith, Jane, but questions might

have given pain, and I would not question through idle curiosity."

"It was like you. I thought of you when I stepped on the stage the other evening, but avoided looking at you."

"I thought you were going to fail," said George.

"I thought so too; the reception I got from the gentlemen in the pit touched me. I was choked—felt smothering; then the house was so still in the beginning; but while the prelude was being played to the second verse they were no longer still; I saw their disappointment, and the idea of being pitied and sneered at, roused me; I collected all my energies and sang—the house was still again."

"They paid you a very great compliment; I never saw persons at a public place so quiet and attentive," said Ellen.

"I felt it I assure you; my audience treated me with the respect due a lady."

"Mr. Levering, who considers himself a judge, and is critical about such things, was charmed with your singing. You should have heard him talk to the people that evening; he first ascertained for himself that all was safe—would not take the manager's word—and when satisfied, stood at the stage lights and bade them come back, and they obeyed him."

"I have a great admiration for him," said Jane, "yet he always appeared to me to be stern in his judgment of others."

"He is not, Jenny dear," said Nannie, who had just come in; "he is prudish, decidedly prudish, is our pattern man, Mr. Levering, as I have but lately discovered."

"That discovery, like some others, has come too late to benefit any of us, Nannie," said George, and he glanced at Ellen, and Ellen blushed.

Jane saw Mr. Carson, and was freed from the remainder

of her engagement; he was much gratified at her offer to sing for his benefit, but declined it; his engagements elsewhere prevented his accepting. She was urged to give a concert, which she did; it was crowded, and she realized several hundred dollars.

CHAPTER XIX.

"ELLEN," said Jane, who was to leave the next morning for home, "I wish you would room with me to-night, I shall not see you again for a very long time, and I want to talk to you."

To this Ellen readily assented, and they sat over the fire and talked until late in the night—discussed Mr. Levering and George—spoke of Nannie's prospects and Peyton's character.

The light was out, they were both a-bed, and had been silent for some moments, when Jane abruptly said,

"Ellen, you think George loves me; but he does not; it is to you he is attached."

Ellen made no reply.

"When I was here last, I was quite interested in Mr. Watson; he was very agreeable, talked well, was always courteous, and appeared to like my society. I liked to hear him talk, and he enjoyed my singing; we were much together. If this state of things had continued, and he shown any preference, I should have become attached to him; but I soon discovered his admiration for beauty in a woman, and I had not a personal attraction. I knew he did not admire blondes, and unfortunately I was one. So you see, Ellen, my preference was at an end; but as I could not make a lover of him, I determined to make a friend, for, fortunately, hair and complexion do not interfere with friendship, and ugliness is rather an incentive, for it breeds no jealousy, and is an

agreeable foil. Well, we are fast friends: as lovers we should have quarrelled, as friends we never do. I am indebted to him for many kindnesses, and have a warm feeling for him in my heart; but he is attached to you, Ellen."

"Why do you think so?"

"A thousand things have convinced me of it. You know I pique myself upon my penetration, and in this I am not mistaken. When I was here last it was very plain to me; this time it has been plainer still. I have seen him try to make you jealous, do many little things to satisfy himself you had an interest in him, but he is uncertain of any attachment on your part, and that is the difficulty. He is a quick observer and an acute thinker; but nothing leads us so much astray in these matters as our own feelings. But you do love him, Ellen, that also is very plain to me."

Ellen did not reply for some moments.

"He has never given me any reason to think he regarded me other than a sister," presently she said.

"You *will* not see, Ellen; a brother's love is careless, almost always untender. The difficulty is in your reserve; you engender this feeling in him, for he is not naturally so. George has his own portion of vanity, not too much of it, I think, for I like self-appreciation; but he is vain enough. To a man of his temperament, the most exacting in some things, there is no feeling so exquisite as the knowledge he has of the jealousy of the woman he loves—it gratifies his self-appreciation; he would not have another see it, he only wishes to *feel* that it is so. This gratification you certainly have never given him, although you have been jealous of me."

"Oh! Jane!"

"I have seen it all, and had I loved George as you do, I could not have behaved as well to you as you have done to me; this has greatly strengthened my affection for you. You

have suffered from that greatest of torments—jealousy; and to me, whom you considered your rival, have never exhibited it in look or manner."

"Ellen felt as a detected criminal. "You give me more credit than I deserve; Jane. I believe we often feel bitter to others when the bitterness is in our own hearts, not caused by their conduct."

"I know that from experience, Ellen; I have *felt* more of life in the last year than I should have, in ordinary times, had I lived to be three-score and ten. As the daughter of one of the richest and most prosperous merchants in the country, I had much pride of position. Where is it now? Who would look for it in a public singer? Reverses, such as ours, with their consequent struggles and mortifications, always leave a scar, which has healed over a wound made for good or ill. My mother's property will pay all my father's liabilities but a few thousands, and these few thousands shall be paid if God grants me health and strength. So, Ellen, I too have had my bitteresses, and know that they come from within. But I want to talk of you, not of myself; it does me no good to tell my troubles. Under the most trying circumstances, to me, you have stood by me with the love, and defended me with the zeal, of a sister—me, whom you considered your rival—have invited me to your house and lavished affection and kindness upon me. Ellen, I can never forget it. Did you never think George was attached to you?"

"I have sometimes thought so, but only momentarily."

"He is, take my word for it; in conversation he has often led me to talk of you, and I could see his drift. His manner is entirely different to you from that he has to Nannie. He may be provoked with you, angry; but he never loses his interest in any thing which relates to you. Now something, I know not what, was wrong between you the day

I arrived ; but he was uneasy until you changed your damp clothes ; when you would not heed his warnings, he appealed to your mother. These are little things, but 'straws,' you know."

"Well, but suppose this were true, Jane ; there can be no reason why he should not tell me so."

"You, yourself, are one great cause, and there may be others. George Watson is not a man to risk saying, 'I love you,' to a woman, to get a 'no.' Do you remember our conversation about Ivanhoe?"

"Perfectly ; I have often thought of it."

"So have I ; he was thinking of you then, and of what you were *not* to him, when he spoke of Rebecca."

"He often wounds me with his remarks of that kind, there is no affection in that."

"But there is human nature, and man's nature, aye, and woman's too, for I should do just such things ; and men, Ellen, are very different in character from women ; if you expect that delicacy of affection from a man which characterizes most educated women, you are laying up for yourself unhappiness for the future—you can not spin silk from flax. You complain of the coldness of his remarks to you ; can not you tax your memory with others made to him ? in this very bitterness of speech the wise ones detect our regard."

"Do not throw affection away from you in this world, Ellen, for we need all the flowers we can pluck to adorn our path, to some of us likely to prove a thorny path, indeed. Did you know he corresponded with me?"

"Yes, he told me so."

"He did not write much of you, while he was elaborate concerning Mrs. Walker, Nannie, and others of our acquaintance ; the little he did say of you was so coolly expressed that I easily saw it was so done to hide warmth ; and the

letters in which I spoke most of you were those earliest replied to."

"You think I am attached to him ; do you think others think so?"

"No, I do not ; it was my own preference for him that made me clear-sighted with regard to you ; there is a distantness in your manner now, calculated to mislead those who do not know you ; it proceeds from a feeling I fully comprehend and sympathize with. You might, Ellen, if you chose, have George, exacting as he is, at your feet in a week, depend upon it ; lovers, like husbands, require management."

"I despise management, Jane ; if he loves me he shall say so because he *does*, and not through any management of mine. I should not value an affection of which I had to extort a confession ; it must come voluntarily or not at all."

"My dear girl, you do not understand me ; the management you speak of *he* would be the first to detect and despise. Yet it is a bad thing for a woman to seem *too* indifferent. I know we often appear to be under the influence of one feeling that we may better disguise another and a truer one ; but the counterfeit meets the fate of all base coin—it is condemned. Too much indifference cuts a man's vanity and lowers him in his own esteem ; and nothing conquers affection so soon as this. I see you are determined to bide your time, and a weary time, I am afraid you will have of it. You expect too much. I do not believe that woman lives who can put her hand upon her heart and say, in perfect faith, that she is altogether satisfied with the love with which she is regarded. This unsatisfied longing is the strongest possible proof, to me, of something better hereafter, and I shall try, by schooling and endeavor here, to win hope of the reward there."

"You are philosophic, Jane."

"Trying to become so, if that coldness of heart and numbness of feeling, which comes over us on trying occasions, be philosophy. I have made up my mind to extract all the good I can from the world, and from selfishness, if from no higher consideration, to keep my conscience clear. Good-night!"

CHAPTER XIX.

THE bustle, excitement, and strain of the past few weeks was over, and all was once more quiet in the Masons' little household. It was that repose which comes after over-excitement, and appears so dull by contrast with it; when you can not pursue any occupation steadily, books are bores, and sewing but gives you leisure to have the heartache. This state of feeling is most wearisome—one must have time to recruit one's energies. In despite of her occupations, Ellen often felt thus after Jane's departure. Nannie was entirely taken up with Peyton, and when not with him bodily, was so spiritually, for of late she had fallen into the habit of talking very little. Ellen walked much, now that spring was coming on, and the effect of this was visible in her improved appearance. George was very little at home, and Mr. Levering was looked upon as almost as regular an evening visitor as Peyton.

If there was a lecture to attend, a sight to see, a popular preacher to hear, it generally fell to Mr. Levering to escort Ellen; for George was out of the way now, and not, as formerly, always ready. One evening, at the tea-table, Peyton proposed that they should all go to see a panorama of Italy, which was being exhibited.

"I am obliged to go to the office," said George; "but I will send Levering up to escort Ellen."

"You are very kind," said Ellen, with temper; "but I decline troubling Mr. Levering. I have been obliged to be

indebted to his courtesy so often of late, that I fear he will weary of it."

"You are considerate for Mr. Levering," said Peyton; "I do not think he will complain of your calling upon him."

"Perhaps not, but the time *was* when George was unwilling that we should be escorted by others; now he is ready to put upon any one the no longer pleasant service."

Ellen spoke with spirit, for she was very angry with him for his cool way of declining to accompany her. Peyton was surprised, but made no remark. Mrs. Mason was so startled, that she put milk into the sugar-bowl instead of the tea-cups, while Nannie secretly rejoiced. George looked steadily at her for a moment, then said, in a tone of mingled reproach and anger, "Ellen!"

She met his eye full and steadily—there was indignation flashing in hers; he said nothing more, and Peyton and she continued talking during the meal. They went to the parlor, and she seated herself to sew. Nothing more was said of the panorama. A half hour later, George came in with a carefully-made toilet; he fidgeted about, and not seeing any preparation for going out, said,

"I thought we were going to the panorama?"

"I had no intention of going," was Ellen's reply.

George stood with his back to the fire. Nannie left the room. After a moment, he said,

"Ellen, I wish very much to go with you; will you not go?"

"No; I had no idea of going when it was proposed."

"Why did you not say so at the table?"

"Because, in your anxiety to decline escorting me, you gave me no opportunity."

"There is more of anger and pique in *your* declining now than want of inclination."

"I have no wish to go, and could not if I had, for I have an engagement with Mr. Levering."

"Ah!" He went whistling out of the room.

Her instinct told her this would give pain, and all the woman within rejoiced at the opportunity of saying it.

He returned about nine o'clock, to find Mr. Levering reading aloud to her, who raised his head from the book as the door opened, saying, "Is that you, George?" and went on with his reading. George remained a few moments listening to his deep, rich voice, and then went out. In these conflicts the days passed. Ellen, with a steady determination, pursued the business of life, and none knew the troubled spirit she sometimes bore within. We get no credit for well performing commonplace, every-day duties; these we are expected to do well; if we do *not*, it is a great fault; and if we *do*, it is no virtue, but a mere matter of course. Yet how often are these duties drudgeries, galling chains, to escape from which any change would be excitement, any labor light!

Ellen had thought much over her conversation with Jane, but in some particulars she understood George's character better than Jane did. She knew he respected pride of character in a woman, and that reserve would win him where frankness failed.

Mr. Steele now became an occasional visitor at Mrs. Mason's: they had known him previous to his European tour, from which he had but just returned. He was a man of means and leisure, said to be brilliant in intellect, but of so little energy that casual observers supposed him less than mediocrity. He lounged into a room with an easy, careless gait; dropped into the most comfortable chair, yet paid his compliments with the grace of a cavalier; then talked or not as it suited his humor; generally, he played with his watch-chain while he leaned upon one elbow, his favorite attitude. He would sit thus a whole evening, his eyes hidden by the eyelids, only occasionally raising them when a remark struck him.

He was a great favorite with the gentlemen, who, in his boyhood, had named him "Prince Charley," because of his love of ease and generosity of character. This name he still retained among his intimates, of whom Peyton was one.

Mrs. Walker was often with them; she would bring her work and spend the evening, on which occasions George would abandon his habit of going out directly after tea, and spend the evening at home, a thing which had become rare with him of late; but this never gave Ellen any uneasiness; she knew his feelings toward Mrs. Walker perfectly, and she sometimes thought she detected a slight change in the widow's manner to herself.

So Time glided on with them as it will always glide; be ye foolish or wise, rich or poor, merry or sad, Time is no sympathizer with your griefs or joys, but keeps on his way, unheeding your wailing or rejoicing. The sound of the marriage bell or the funeral knell whiles him not one moment from his pace; remorselessly he sweeps over all—lays his heavy hand upon them, and they shrink and shrivel at his touch.

As we have said, Mr. Levering's visits to Mrs. Mason's were now of daily occurrence. He rode or walked out with Ellen, and read to her at home; his views were plain to others; and to Ellen, who, engrossed with thoughts of another, did not think of him in the light of a lover, they now began to be apparent. She had often, while he was reading to her, sat by his side, her thoughts running upon George—some character in the book or some subject discussed, reminding her of conversations held with, or opinions expressed by him; then she would journey back in memory, forgetful of Mr. Levering's presence. She did not like him to read poetry aloud, for George had read so much to her that he was associated in her mind with all her favorite authors.

Peyton had been teasing her one evening concerning Mr.

Levering and his attentions, when she heard his step in the hall, and he, with a jesting remark, left the room by one door as Mr. Levering entered by another.

She was painfully confused, and after a few questions and replies, there was silence. She, anxious to keep up the conversation, and eager to prevent the declaration which she now felt certain he intended making, only hastened it by her embarrassed manner, whose confusion he construed to his own advantage. The declaration was made with great dignity, and he left the house rejected.

She felt that she had misled him, that there was some reparation due, and, after a confused struggle, told him she was interested in another; that, pleased with his society, she had only just been convinced to what his intentions were tending, and this had caused her confusion on his entrance.

"Indeed, Mr. Levering," she said, "had I been sensible sooner of the great compliment you intended paying me, I would have spared you the pain of this; had I not been pre-occupied, I could not have been insensible to your great worth; nor am I; and what adds to my distress at this moment is the fear that in resigning your love, I may be compelled to resign your friendship also."

He understood her; a change passed over his face; his lip quivered slightly for an instant, and his brow flushed; then he got up, and, taking her hand, said, in his usual manner,

"Miss Ellen, I might accuse you of having been willfully deceived and of having deceived me, but after the explanation you have given, I know it is not so, and—although I did flatter myself this was to have a different termination, and it has given me much pain, yet, believe me, I do not give my friendship lightly, and you may always number me among your true friends. God bless you, Miss Ellen; may you be as happy as I wish you to be!"

He was gone.

Ellen sat long gazing into the fire. She felt sad, a regretful feeling came over her; she felt as though she had never before done justice to the nobleness of his heart—she had permitted that little stiffness in his manner to overshadow so much that was good; and now she reproached herself with it.

He left town the next day, and was absent a week or more. She bore all their raillery pleasantly, but when he returned, and several days passed without his calling, Mrs. Mason began to look grave, and Peyton, in surprise, questioned Nannie concerning it. George said nothing, but he frequently put his head into the parlor of an evening, to see who was there, and then closed the door again without coming in. When Mr. Levering did call, they were more puzzled than before, for it so happened that Ellen saw him alone; and if there was any consciousness on the part of either, they had recovered their self-possession before the others entered, and to all appearance had their usual manner.

After one of his visits, Peyton said,

"Nannie, what do you think now of this affair?"

"Think! why she has refused him, just what I knew she would do; and she has done what very few women can do, converted a lover into a friend."

"He has some credit in that also, Nannie; I did not believe any woman to whom he paid court could be insensible to his attractions; she must love some one else."

"Not she; you do not know her. She has determined to be an old maid."

"Now tell me seriously, do you believe any woman, while youth was still with her, and before the world had deserted her, ever deliberately made up her mind to be an old maid?"

"Yes, I do; remember I am not a wife yet, and there is a chance of my making up my mind to be one."

"Not while I can keep you in love's bondage bound," he said, throwing his arm about her.

Ellen was one whom persons never questioned; and as they were now engrossed with preparations for Nannie's wedding, the decrease in the number of Mr. Levering's visits soon ceased to be remarked.

CHAPTER XX.

It was stormy March, and in two weeks Nannie's wedding was to take place. Ellen was alone, for Nannie had gone with Peyton to visit his parents at their urgent request. Peyton's parents, though not wealthy, were rich, and prided themselves particularly upon their family, which had emigrated during the troubles in Europe. The old gentleman was much pleased with this match; he had great respect for Judge Mason, both on account of his pedigree and his own bearing as a gentleman. He had often said he would rather his son would marry the daughter of a gentleman to the manor born, than the greatest heiress in the land, who was not to the manor bred. He was bitter in his prejudices, and had great contempt for those who, as he expressed it, had sprung up as mushrooms in a night; yet no one more appreciated the thorough gentleman than he. They lived in a certain kind of old-fashioned state, and associated the idea of a gentleman with this style of living. This feeling it seemed almost impossible for him to divest himself of, it having been fostered by his English education.

Peyton had a farm and several negroes, that had been given him by his father when he came of age; also, three hundred a year, which had been left him by a maiden aunt. The old gentleman had furnished the house very prettily for them, and presented Nannie with a set of silver, saying to his son, "Now, Louis, I have done all I intend to do for you; I

have your brother to provide for, and you have your profession, which I hope one day to see you at the head of."

Nannie had always been a great favorite with the old gentleman, but stood a little in awe of him, more so since her engagement to his son; she could hardly be prevailed upon to pay this visit; his manner, however, when he helped her from the carriage, and kissing her, claimed her as his daughter, reassured her, and before she had been there three days, she laughed, and told the old gentleman what a bugbear she had made of him.

Mr. Steele was to be one of Peyton's groomsmen, while Mary Gordon, an old schoolmate of Nannie's, just returned from Philadelphia, where she had spent a year, was to be bridesmaid; Ellen and George were also to officiate.

The arrangements for the wedding brought them much together. Mary Gordon was a handsome brunette, with much color, and a bright, black eye, very quick and intelligent, and attractive in her manners. As she was to officiate with Mr. Steele, of course he escorted on all occasions, when they were invited to Mrs. Mason's or elsewhere. Old Mr. Peyton had written to Mrs. Mason that he wished all the bridal company to spend a few days with them; as his wife's frail health would prevent their being at the wedding, he wished to see them at his home. It was arranged that Steele and Mary, George and Ellen, should go to the old gentleman's and spend a couple of days, then return with Peyton and Nannie.

A day or two previous to their going, one afternoon the weather seemed to be taking a regular frolic; snow, and rain, and hail prevailed, according to the mood of the moment. George walked to the window after dinner, and, looking out on the dismal street, said, as he turned again to the fire,

"I ought to go down to the office, but do not feel like braving this storm; there is something I should do." Ellen made no comment.

He walked to the window again, and stood drumming upon the glass, then turned and said,

"Ellen, do ask me to stay; then I shall have an excuse to my conscience for not going; but you do not look as though you wished me to."

"You said you ought to go; and I can not make myself an excuse for your leaving undone those things you should do."

"Pshaw! You are more pitiless than the storm, and marvelously proper of late; do get into a temper, that I may have the pleasure of seeing you wrong once again. Why not at once say, you would rather I would go."

"Because I would much rather you would remain."

"That was spoken like the Ellen of old. To satisfy you, I shall go down to the office, and, to gratify myself, shall come back as soon as possible."

Accordingly he went. When he returned, he changed his boots, which were wet through, for slippers, put on a loose coat, and seated himself comfortably by the sitting-room fire in an arm-chair; while Ellen, who was making a dress for little Mary, sat opposite with her work. The room looked a picture of comfort in contrast with the weather without.

I know not what thoughts passed through George's busy brain as he sat quietly there. Perhaps he imagined this was his home, and Ellen was his wife; perhaps he only wished it was so. He seemed for some time to enjoy his thoughts, whatever their color.

"Well, George, your staying at home will not benefit me much, unless you talk more."

"I was thinking of you, Ellen."

"What is the result of your thoughts?"

"I could arrive at none. I was wondering why you refused Levering."

"You speak as though I had had the opportunity."

"Yes; I know you have had. He told me he intended to

address you, and, from observation since, I know he has done it."

"Did you think I would marry him?"

"I feared so."

"I did not love him, although he is a most agreeable man."

"Did you ever love any one, Ellen?"

"Yes," she said, with a forced laugh; "what girl out of her teens has not?"

"But seriously, Ellen?"

"But seriously, do you expect me to tell you the truth? A woman is privileged to fib as much as she pleases about such matters."

"I certainly do expect *you* to tell the truth. Why not? I should, were you to question me. Suppose you do."

But she did not.

"I think you flirted a little with Levering; for I certainly thought, from your manner, you intended to make him happy:

"Rejected, and just when he hoped to be blessed."

"Mr. Levering could do me justice, George, although he was disappointed; *he* never accused me of flirting with him." The tears stood in her eyes, she was so hurt, but she kept them back.

"Pardon me, Ellen, I am unjust and ungenerous. I know not why it is you and I have not been so happy together of late as we used to be at the 'Grove.' You will believe I had no intention of wounding you, will you not?" He went up to her and held out his hand. She took it, and a tear dropped upon it. He stooped over her, and kissed her upon her forehead.

"Ellen, you will be to me what you have always been, will you not? We are friends?"

She did not answer, but bent her head lower over her

work. He had not kissed her since he was a college boy, and the consciousness of that kiss was upon her all the evening. She could not meet his look steadily.

He seemed satisfied with her silence, for, reseating himself, he looked thoughtfully in the fire for a few moments, then commenced reading aloud. She felt she had passed a crisis, and dwelt on it with a mixture of regret and joy.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE visit at old Mr. Peyton's was paid, and a delightful visit it was too. Mary Gordon was the life of the party, and roused even Mr. Steele by her lively sallies, fairly taking old Mr. Peyton's heart by storm; for Nannie was unusually quiet, and Ellen could not shake off the feelings of sadness which came over her when compelled to think of their separation. Their visit over, they returned to town to prepare for the wedding, which was to take place in a few days. Despite her pleasure in the marriage, Mrs. Mason would sigh as she pictured the house without Nannie; and Ellen, although she went resolutely to work preparing and packing, would find a tear falling upon the wedding dresses that she knelt beside the trunk to pack. She was peculiarly attached to Nannie, who was always cheerful and gay, one of those whose step

"Had music in it"
As it came up the stairs."

Mrs. Mason as she grew older lost her taste for society, and kept almost always in her own room, where she received the old ladies of her acquaintance, who often came in to sit an evening with her; here she cuddled over her grandchild, little Mary, who, as frail as she was fair, was fast filling the place occupied by the daughters, who now no longer needed her cherishing care. All the affection, and sympathy, and yearning regret she had felt for the fate of her last daughter was garnered up and poured upon this child. So it was that, having an object constantly to occupy her, she would

miss Nannie less than Ellen, to whom the empty sleeping-room and the vacant parlor would constantly repeat the tale.

Nannie was very quiet; she seemed to wish to be as much as possible with her mother and Ellen, and would frequently leave Peyton and join them, saying, in reply to his remonstrance, "This will be my home only a few days longer, and I knew not how much I loved it, until now that I am to leave it."

The wedding was to be a private one, and to take place in the morning; a few friends, and those old ones, were to be invited to the ceremony; after which, they were to leave for the elder Mr. Peyton's, there to stay a few days previous to going to their own home, which was already prepared for their reception. All the bridal party were to accompany them save Ellen, who could not be prevailed upon to leave her mother.

Now had arrived the night previous to the wedding; the packing was done, the house set in order, and Nannie's dress laid out for the ceremony; there was nothing to do but think, until the next morning brought its bustle.

There was but little talking; Peyton sat in the front parlor with Nannie, while in the back were Mary Gordon, Ellen, Mr. Steele, and George. Mrs. Mason could not keep still, she never could when anxious, and so went back and forth. Mr. Steele did not talk at all, but sat listening to the conversation between Miss Gordon and George, occasionally raising his head and looking at them. Ellen made no attempt at conversation. Nannie soon sent Peyton off. George went down street with him, while Mr. Steele gallanted Mary home. The sound of their footsteps had scarce died from the threshold when Nannie threw herself into Ellen's arms, weeping aloud. Ellen wept too.

"Nannie," said Ellen at length, "you will make yourself look so ill for to-morrow. What would Peyton say if he were to see you?"

Nannie smiled through her tears, and they went up to Mrs. Mason's room. The old lady was waiting for them; long they talked together; she assured Nannie of her perfect satisfaction in her marriage—she had no fears for her future. "Such troubles as our God in his good providence sends, you will have, my child, but none from which your husband can shield you. Your father, in his life, saw with great satisfaction Peyton's attentions to you, and, were he here in the flesh as he is in the spirit, would bless you, as I do."

She held her in her arms for some moments, then kissing her, bade her go to bed. After she had left the room, the old lady called her back, and whispered,

"Do not forget your prayers to-night, your last prayers as Nannie Mason in her childhood's home." And she did not.

Now Ellen and Nannie took a last look to see that nothing was forgotten. Nannie stood a moment, and looked at her trunks, corded and ready, with the address, "Mrs. Louis Peyton," which Peyton had written, and George *would* tack on, although she thought it would be time enough on the morrow; and then, how she had blushed under his eye as she read it there.

Long after the household slept, she and Ellen talked; they went over their lives together up to the present time; and the future, which was all bright to Nannie in prospect, how would it be in reality? These dreams time must realize or destroy, but now bright plans of that future were sketched in her mind. There had been long silence; Nannie turned.

"Are you sleeping, Ellen?"

"No, I am not."

"I must talk, I can not sleep to-night." And they talked.

When you hear or have heard of divorces and separations, bickerings and quarrels between married people, do you never

go back to the first days of their love, their marriage-day, and wonder if they have come to this? Have you not asked yourself if they ever thought of those days, and if *then* the picture of their future had been presented to them, they would not have shuddered, and turned away in mockery and unbelief at the sight of so much lost faith—lost love, and so many broken promises; and yet, of the hundreds who are yearly separated by the law and their own wills, what one of them ever stood up and plighted his faith in the sight of God and man, in their love and youth, with the idea that God saw and man would know that this faith would be broken, and this love scattered to the winds? Not one.

This is why we would look into the uncertain future, why we think of those just married as upon a new path, where we hope, by leaning each upon the other, they may walk upright, although many have stumbled and fallen.

Nannie's wedding-day was, as she had so much wished, warm and bright, more like May than March. This day she put aside her mourning, and was dressed in simple but elegant white, and wore a set of pearl, Peyton's gift. Her veil was one given her by Mrs. Peyton; an heir-loom in the family, it had covered herself and her mother when they were married, and was of the most costly lace; it almost enveloped Nannie, and gave her a shrinking and timid appearance eminently becoming. There was a proud, happy, glowing, yet subdued expression on Peyton's face as he entered the room with Nannie on his arm, followed by Ellen and George, Mary Gordon and Mr. Steele. The minister who married them was the same who had baptized Nannie in her infancy, and buried her father in his old age. He looked upon her as a daughter, and married her as solemnly as if she had been one. He prayed "That they might so tread the path of life together, that at the grave they would look back to this day but as the beginning of a pleasant journey;" and

spreading his hands above their bowed heads, he said, "In blessing, may He bless you, and keep evil afar off."

The ceremony is over:

"Sweet cake, sweet wine, sweet kisses,
Now the deed is done—
Then for life's woes and blisses,
The wedded two are one."

Nannie submitted to the good old fashion of being kissed, congratulated, and called Mrs. Peyton.

Mr. Levering walked up to Ellen, and said, "I never saw a more interesting bride."

"Her manner is beautiful," said George; "so touchingly dependent."

George had been trying to persuade Ellen to go with them, but his entreaties were of no avail; she would not leave her mother, for she knew how she would feel Nannie's loss.

"O! Ellen, if you were only going with me!" said Nannie, as she stepped up; but a word from Ellen sent her to her mother's side, and it was dropped.

An hour passed in drinking the bride's health, distributing cake and paying compliments, during which Mr. Steele, who seemed to be all spirit in honor of the occasion, amused himself with calling Nannie Mrs. Peyton as often as possible, for the purpose of seeing her start and blush.

The time had come for her to change her wedding garment for a traveling-dress, and she retired so to do. When she returned to the parlor, she saw George writing, and suspecting what it was, went up, and, looking over his shoulder, saw the announcement of her marriage: "Mr. Peyton to Miss Nancy Mason." "Do not write it Nancy, George; people will not know it is I. I am never called any thing but Nannie."

"I had it Nannie, but your mother insisted upon its being Nancy."

"Mother does not care—do you, mother?" appealing to her.

"Yes, I do; you were named Nancy after your father's only sister, and a better woman never lived. As Nancy you were baptized, as Nancy it was registered in the Bible, as Nancy you were married, and as Nancy it must go to the world." She laid her hand upon her head caressingly.

"Nancy, will you take this man to be your wedded husband?" said Mr. Steele, imitating the parson.

Then it flashed upon Nannie that, amid her flutter of feeling, she had thought she heard the odious name. She said nothing more, but Peyton stepped up. "Put it Nancy Mason, spinster, George," he said, in his happiest tone.

They had to wait for the carriages, and, as most of the company had left, were in danger of becoming dull, when George, who saw the ready tears in Nannie's eyes, proposed a dance, and, going up to Nannie, after putting Ellen at the piano, led off in a spirited country dance.

The relief at this was felt by all. The dance was but half over when the carriages were announced; and Nannie was hurried off, having scarce time to think, amid the confusion of putting in trunks and band-boxes, and cries of "haste," from George, when there was no haste at all, but he dreaded scenes, save those of his own making. The good-by was said and over, but Nannie came back to throw herself again into their arms, and again, at length, Peyton led her to the carriage, and they were gone.

Mr. Levering remained for a few moments after they drove off, talking cheerfully to Ellen.

"I never saw Steele so animated, and Mary Gordon looked beautifully."

She assented to this, and he, seeing she was not inclined to converse, left her.

She was gone. She had left that home, to which she never again would feel the same right to return. She was married, and having now the right to another name and hearth, it would seem as though she lost her hold upon that which had sheltered her from infancy—she had raised for herself other household gods, and henceforth hers would be a divided worship. She would never again enter that house with the freedom of her girlhood; it was "home" to her henceforth only by the ties of association.

Strange that it should be so; but, a married woman never does feel the same right to her father's house that his single daughters do, and his single daughters never feel that she has the same right they have.

Perhaps it is that she has chosen for herself another protector, and another path in life than that which she has followed from her infancy, and having voluntarily resigned her place as daughter, and taken that of wife, she has separated her interest, and so her affections. As the vine, which, when young, clung to the tree, and from it obtained support, will, if removed, ere long clasp another with its tendrils as tightly, leaving the old, perhaps in its sere leaf, neglected and bare, so youth, in its love of youth, turns from age and home, and creates for itself new temples and a new worship, but unlike the parasite vine, unforgetting, it enshrines the old forever deep in its heart, and through life hallows and blesses it with the name of HOME.

PART SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

NANNIE'S marriage seemed to have made a great change in the society at Mrs. Mason's. Mary Gordon, with whom Ellen never had been intimate, was now much there, as was also Mr. Steele; having been thrown into such close contact by the wedding and the previous visit to Mr. Peyton's, they had become more intimate in a few months than they otherwise would have done in years. Mr. Levering visited them much less frequently than formerly, Mr. Casey as usual; while George either spent the evenings at home or out with Ellen.

People now began to talk of a marriage between Mary Gordon and Mr. Steele, as he was very attentive to her, and more animated when in her society than at any other time. Mary was an only child, her sister Lizzie having died just as she reached womanhood; her father was a plain, easy man, who had contrived to get along in the world, and liked to see people happy in their own way, so he never interfered with Mary, but permitted her to choose her own society. Mrs. Gordon was just the wife for him; unambitious and good, she accomplished the daily routine of her duties, and never went out of a certain circle. Mary visited very differently from them, and they were very proud of her; for, although highly respectable in all their connections, their tastes led them not among the same people that hers did, her intimacies having been formed while at school.

Nannie was married early in March, and it was still winter; for, although now and then a day would be warm as midsummer, there were as yet no signs of vegetation. One evening they had met at Mr. Casey's, and the conversation turned upon Mr. —, a popular preacher, who was holding a protracted meeting in the city.

"I hear," said George, "that he has made good his threat of closing the theatre; it has not been much attended since the fire there, and he has preached a regular crusade against it. He boasted, when he first came, that he would compel them to close doors for want of audiences, and he has made good his threat. Those who were accustomed to flock there have deserted, to crowd — chapel, which is nightly filled almost to suffocation."

"Does he preach every evening?" asked Ellen.

"Yes; and on last Wednesday evening there was a performance given at the theatre for the benefit of the poor. Mr. — announced from the pulpit, in opposition, that he would preach on the same evening, and take up a collection for the same purpose. He had the chapel crowded to excess, while the sum collected exceeded that realized at the theatre."

"Have you heard him?" asked Mr. Steele.

"No, I have not, but purpose going. Young Blake is engaged to the beautiful Miss Cost, and she has joined the Church under Mr. —'s ministry. He has been giving me some personalities concerning him which have roused my curiosity. They meet daily at the barber-shop, and Blake is a keen observer."

"Suppose we go to hear him to-morrow morning? What say you, Miss Ellen?" asked Mr. Levering.

"I should like to, very much."

"And you, ladies?" to Mrs. Walker and Mary.

All expressed a desire to go, and it was arranged that they

should do so. The gentlemen warned the ladies to be ready by ten o'clock, if they wished to get seats, and then took their leave.

On the following morning, after hurried toilets, they all met at Mr. Casey's in good time, and proceeded to the chapel. As they neared it they met a continuous stream, indeed it appeared to be almost a procession of persons proceeding toward the church, so great was the rush to procure seats, although it yet wanted half an hour to the usual time for the bells to ring.

The chapel was a very large but plain structure, without ornament. With some difficulty George piloted the party through the crowd, and having procured seats for the ladies about midway of the church, he, with the other gentlemen, seated themselves on the opposite side of the aisle, as near them as possible. The people crowded eagerly in, the ladies going to the head of the building and peering into every pew, in their anxiety to get near the speaker's place. George could but smile at the self-complacent expression of those who had been more fortunate, as the disappointed seat-seekers turned to go further back. Still they came. The galleries were crowded; benches were brought in and placed in front of the pulpit and along the aisles; they were filled, and the aisles themselves thronged with men. Here and there a woman was seen standing, but it was only for a moment. The men near felt uncomfortable until she was provided for, although each might wait for the other, loth to lose the chance of hearing the orator, comfortably seated. She was sure, sooner or later, to have more than one place offered her acceptance, a fact of which she was perfectly aware.

Now every nook had its occupant, the window seats being divided between hats and children; but still the pulpit was vacant. The congregation began to grow restless and to look around, while some kept their eyes fixed on the door. The

old men in the altar struck up a hymn, and the people were beginning to join in, when a slight rustle passed through the assembly, and all eyes were turned toward the western aisle. George raised himself on the back of a pew, and looked eagerly forward, anxious for a view of the preacher; but he could not distinguish him from others until he reached the less crowded space in front of the altar, and with a "nipperty tipperty" as Andrew Fairservice would say, step ascended the pulpit, kneeling there a few moments in prayer. His prayer over, he seated himself, and, taking out a snowy handkerchief, passed it lightly over his face, brushing up first one side of his hair, then the other carefully with his hand, arranged his collar with a delicate touch, and then bending forward, took up the hymn-book.

All George's attention was upon the man before him. He was rather below the middle height, and might have been forty or forty-five years of age, with black hair and eyes, a high, square forehead, from which the hair, which was cut short, was brushed back with precision. His face was rather square than otherwise, and there was a defect in one lip, which gave his mouth a peculiar and not pleasant expression. His dress, which was of the finest material and latest fashion, was put on with great care, and he had that broad look at the shoulders, and tapering to the waist, which we see in the shop models. His hands were white and small. For one moment after he arose, he stood silent before the congregation, his eye running over the house, then it fell upon the book he held, and he gave out the first stanza of the hymn, but his voice was scarcely audible. It was sung, and he gave out another; now his voice was clear and distinct. The hymn and prayer being over, he announced his text. Again he announced it; still his words were inaudible, while his eye all the while measured the congregation. He commenced his discourse. The people leaned forward to catch his

words, for the first few sentences were scarce louder than a whisper; then his voice was raised, and sounded clear and distinct over the whole assembly. His enunciation was peculiar, every syllable was distinctly pronounced. His subject was the "Life and Death of the Righteous," and he exhausted beautiful similes and poetical language in his descriptions.

When the services were over, and they were free from the crowd outside of the church, George said, "Well, what think you of the preacher?"

"I propose," said Mr. Levering, "that we hear the conclusion of his subject this evening, 'The Life and Death of the Sinner,' and suspend the expression of our opinion until then. It is said his best sermons are preached in the evening."

The going in the evening was assented to; but still his dress, manner, and appearance were discussed. At an early hour, the same party proceeded again to the chapel, and, passing up the broad aisle, obtained seats near the pulpit, the ladies on one side of the aisle, and the gentlemen on the other, as was the custom in this church. Gradually the church filled, until the congregation seemed more dense, if possible, than in the morning. The preacher appeared, as before, just as the people were restless with expectation. This evening he wore a cloak, which he laid aside, and, descending the steps of the pulpit, held a whispered conference with one of the old men sitting in the altar, who accompanied him back, and took a seat beside him. He did not read or pray; he was husbanding his strength. During the singing, he sat with his head bowed upon his hands, occasionally rubbing up his hair.

Now he is before them again; he turns and speaks to the minister seated behind him in the pulpit, who rises and requests the sexton to put up the windows in the gallery. He commenced speaking in the same low tone. Fifteen minutes elapse; he begins to warm—his voice is raised, his eye bright-

ens—he is excited. He describes the life of the sinner, feverish—anxious—restless—without repose, and his death-bed a bed of agony; a looking back with anguish, and forward with despair. One moment he sees the pit of the damned; he leans over the pulpit, his dark complexion appears darker, he grinds his teeth, stretches forth his arms; the words come hissing through his closed lips, and you think beneath his gaze the pit opens, and you hear the laugh of the fiends: another, he is with the stars, and the birds, and the crystal streams; the zephyrs float around him, and celestial music greets his ear.

The Bible is closed, his hands are clasped, and his head bowed over it. His voice is modulated to a low and thrilling tone; he appears almost exhausted, but is persuading them to come into the church. He is describing the young man in his dissipation, and telling him the end of his mirth; he is speaking to the belle of the ball-room, and warning her that rosy lips, and bright eyes, and fairy forms are not perpetual, and that the end of this is heaviness. He stops—wipes his brow—clasps his hands again upon the Bible, and, with his eyes raised, sings—sings alone,

"The Lamb, the bleeding Lamb
The Lamb on Calvary."

The stillness of death is over the church; his voice is like the voice of an angel. It ceases; he invites them to come forward to the altar; a persuasive smile is on his lip as he strikes up a cheering hymn—it is like the charge to an army in the hour of battle; the congregation join in; he goes down the pulpit stairs singing—the old men in the altar rise; he shakes hands, singing and passing from one to the other; he stands at the open space in the altar, and sings one moment and exhorts the next. Some one prays, and he seems restless even in prayer; he does not kneel quietly, he changes his position, wipes his face, and rubs his hands through his hair. He is

up again, inviting them to come to the altar to be prayed for. One and another go forward; he holds out his hands to each with some ejaculation. Now a few words are said, the benediction given, and those of the assembly who choose to go are dismissed. Many leave; there is a closer crowding to the upper part of the church, and alternate singing and prayer at the altar. The minister has mounted the pulpit, and is reconnoitering his congregation as a general his army; his clear voice sings out, and he commands *all* to kneel; the command is obeyed by many in the forward part of the audience; but back and in the galleries they are too eager looking on to heed. Again he shakes his finger, and commands them *all* to kneel, with but little effect; the people in the galleries have crowded to the front, and are looking down on the scene below. A knot of gayly dressed girls in the corner, near the pulpit, are conspicuous; he looks steadily at them for a moment, shakes his finger, and says, "You gay butterflies up there, down on your knees!" and they disappear like birds shot on the wing. The congregation begins to thin, the minister commences another hymn, and while that beautiful strain continues, he goes out among the congregation, shakes hands with one, speaks a few words to another, and so passes on.

George's attention was riveted upon him. He neared the spot where Ellen, Mary Gordon, and Mrs. Walker sat; he put out his hand and shook hands with Ellen, then with Mrs. Walker, who appeared rather anxious to attract his attention; but when he leaned forward and sought to shake Mary Gordon's hand, she looked steadily before her and appeared not to see him. He passed on, and, seeing the gentlemen, his quick eye took in a moment that they all belonged to one party; he hesitated a second, and then, approaching George, said, "Are you a member?"

"I am not;" and George shook the proffered hand.

"Nor you?" to Mr. Levering.

"No, sir;" and Mr. Levering's scrutinizing glance dwelt upon him as he returned the civil shake. He seemed to feel the scrutiny, for he said, in a reproachful tone,

"I am sorry, and shall pray for you all."

It was getting late, and as the meeting seemed still in progress, George proposed returning home. Mr. Levering was rather inclined to stay, but the ladies wished to go.

"Well, what think you of the preacher now?" said George to Ellen.

"Why, I admired him and I did not admire him. Do you understand?"

"Not exactly, it is rather paradoxical. What did you think of him, Levering?"

"I liked him. I know not when I have been so interested."

"He was very eloquent," said Mrs. Walker; "and how beautifully he was dressed, in the height of the fashion. Boyle must make his clothes."

"And you, Miss Mary, you are silent?"

"I did not like him at all."

"Oh! Mary," said Mrs. Walker, "he brought the tears to my eyes despite my efforts to keep them back, and I could scarce keep my seat when he sung and invited them to go forward to the altar; but I thought you did not like him, for you would not take his proffered hand: he looked disconcerted as he turned away."

"How did you like him, George?" said Ellen.

"Like him? Why, I do not know; I feel yet surfeited with sweets. He has a teeming fancy, the fancy of a voluptuary—power of language, and a cultivated intonation of voice—is a man of strength in these things, but beyond them he can not go; he has no argument and no method in his discourse. What is your opinion of him, Charley?"

"Well, there is a good deal of *puppyism* about him, and he is vain, but he says some pretty things; he is in earnest,

too, for the time—and that voice of his is beautiful ; but he is restless, watches the crowd, and thinks more of making an impression than doing his Master's work. Take him altogether, he is a remarkable man."

"Could he hear our comments this evening," said Mr. Levering, "he would have a tolerably correct idea of the world's estimate of him. No two of us agree."

"I do not think he would be indifferent to that estimate either," said George. "I must confess, I like Truth in a plain-garb than he puts her in ; he decks her like a fine lady in gorgeous apparel, but the apparel is so *very* gorgeous, that the woman looks plain from contrast."

"Well," thought George, when he was alone, "I had a tolerably correct idea of what all that party would think of the preacher, save Levering, and he liked him ; I was certain he would call him a humbug. I can not understand how he could so impress a cool-headed thinker like Levering. Mary Gordon did not like him because of his foppery and apparent familiarity ; it encroached upon her self-love. I understand Ellen's feeling, she did not have confidence in him, but he sometimes touched her ; and Steele—But I must be looking after 'Prince Charley ;' he is waking up, is less careless in his dress. Mary Gordon's bright eyes have something to do with that."

CHAPTER II.

GEORGE WATSON was to lecture before the Lyceum. The subject was, "Man and Woman."

Lectures were fashionable this winter, partly because one or two had been delivered by eminent men ; partly because the hall of the Lyceum was new and elegantly fitted up, but principally because the many failures and great pressure in the money market prevented all party-giving ; so the fashionable world per force became literary, and went to the Lyceum.

The evening for the lecture came, and the hall was crowded—the men going from curiosity, the women from interest. George had before stood in the presence of the grave and reverend seigniors of the court-room, but this was his first appearance as an aspirant for the favor of the ladies.

Ellen went early with Mrs. Walker and Mr. Casey ; they had full time, before George made his appearance, to mark the dress, personal appearance, and escort of all near them, and be remarked upon in return. At length there was a movement and a whispering among the younger part of the audience, and the president, with the lecturer, stepped upon the platform. The ladies now arranged and rearranged their garments, and seated themselves in attitudes of attention, while the president introduced the speaker. A moment, and George stood before them.

In a calm, low, but distinct voice, he greeted his audience. As he proceeded, his manner warmed ; he became enthusi-

astic; he felt the spell—the excitement of those listening faces—he spoke to them as to an individual. Yet if, in the midst of his earnestness, a man changed his position, or a woman's eye wandered, he saw and felt it; their interest was his excitement, and when they flagged, he faltered—so necessary is sympathy between speaker and hearer; but to-night they listened to him with great attention; and when he paused, the rustling, which passed like a wind over the assembly, told he had made an impression.

Ellen, Mrs. Walker, Mary Gordon, and others, stood in a group, waiting for the crowd to pass out; George came down from the rostrum, and stood among them. Mrs. Walker was profuse in her congratulations, Ellen was silent; Mr. Casey, with his face glowing with delight, rubbed his hands, and repeated, "Fine, Watson, fine!" Mr. Steele touched him on the arm with,

"You have done yourself honor, George."

And Mary Gordon added,

"We have to thank Mr. Watson for properly appreciating us, and telling us the truth."

"I was afraid," said Mr. Levering, you would flatter to please; it was the absence of compliment which made your lecture so beautiful; the truth was sufficient of itself, and every woman felt it so."

"I thank you," said Mary Gordon, "in the name of the sex. Mr. Watson could not have surpassed that, if he had tried."

Mr. Levering smiled one of his sober smiles, and passed on.

"Well," said Mr. Steele, as he drew Mary Gordon's arm within his, "I was surprised, agreeably surprised, with Watson's lecture. The tone of it was different from what I expected. I thought he would speak of women as he talked to them; but he was discriminating and philosophic. He spoke prettily of the women of the Revolution: 'They who shared the danger and the death, but not the meed of the warrior, and

to whom Fame's clarion voice spoke not, yet who sacrificed home, affection, love, the pride of place, and the vanity of personal adornment upon the altar of their country.' This is indeed womanlike.

"And more's the pity—he acknowledged that man's incentive to heroism was fame—woman's law of action, feeling. It is necessary to man's heroism that he have a stage and an applauding crowd. A woman is a heroine in her own home, with no trumpet-tongue to tell of her, no page in history, and perhaps the clarion voice which cheers another ringing in her ears. What would have been Mr. Watson's lecture to-night without the crowd, the applause, the excitement? Many men who are cowards at heart, do great deeds with the world's eye on them. Would you change with us, and be a man?"

"Sometimes I would."

"Why?"

"That I might perform deeds of heroism too."

"Then you have no taste for that quiet home heroism. I am afraid that same clarion voice is wooing you."

"No, no, I do not wish for fame for myself; I might desire it for another. The glory I should be covetous of, would be a reflected glory—the moonlight of fame, not the sunlight."

"And what is more beautiful than to see a woman glorying in this glory, radiant with the light reflected from another? She may not stand in the broad beam herself, may have none of the fervid heat, the scorching glare, the withering blight which exhausts the soul of Fame's votary, but she may bask in his renown as the earth basks in the first mild beam of the moon after the wearing heat of the day. She is beautified by it—ennobled; she catches its first ray joyfully, and watches it with a rapt eye as it rises higher, and higher, and higher toward the zenith, and when it has reached mid-heaven, with a full heart of satisfaction she rests in its broad

glare. This is woman's true glory—woman as George pictured her to-night."

She turned her head away as she replied, but there was a jarring tone in her voice, and though she laughed, he saw the quivering of her lip.

"Yes, a man wants no rival near the throne; he permits a woman to share his honors when she takes his name, and she must bear both meekly."

"Would you seek honors in the court, camp, or battlefield?"

"No!" Her voice had now an earnest and honest tone. "I believe I am wayward to-night and you seem determined to misunderstand me; feeling as I sometimes do, to-night, for instance, I wish that I had been born a man, that I might plunge into the arena and force my way. Another day, tomorrow, perhaps, may find me in a very different mood, when I would not be a man for the world. Being a woman, I have no desire for fame in my own person; as a wife, I should be covetous of power, place, popularity for a husband."

"You are ambitious, then?"

"If this is ambition, I am."

"And romantic?"

"What the world calls romantic; but every thing is romantic in the world's eye that is not sordid or mean."

He was thoughtful for a moment.

"I should not wonder if you became a writer."

Again he observed her lip quiver, and noticed that peculiar jar in her voice.

"I told you I was not ambitious for myself, and you know Mr. Watson said to-night, that 'when a woman's heart was satisfied her head seldom troubled her; that it was often to fill the vacancy of the heart that she resorted to the head.' Now, fortunately, my heart is in a very healthy condition."

"But I hold one can be both happy and renowned, can

gratify ambition and affection, and satisfy head and heart at the same time."

"That is the way all men argue and act, but heart and ambition seldom go together, the one extinguishes the other. Ambition is a jealous and exacting master, often requiring the sacrifice of the heart."

He thought she looked very handsome as she stood in the full light of the fire, with the brilliant colors of her winter dress glowing about her, for they had reached home during this conversation.

"What were you reading this afternoon? I rode past and you sat at the window, but so intent upon your book that I was unheeded."

She shook her head.

"I can not tell you."

"Why not?"

"It was a love story, and men have a rough way of handling such things; they brush the down from the peach, and then, when they have lost it, they wish it back, and all their art can not restore it."

"But the down is only beautiful to the eye; it is rough to the palate."

"Do not analyze, for gracious sake, do not analyze every thing; you go through life as through a chemical experiment; it is test—test. Do take something upon trust."

"To trust is a woman's weakness; to test, a man's strength. We seldom put to sea in an unsound vessel, while she often wants both helm and rudder."

"That may be; but while he, from want of faith, cries 'Save me, I perish!' we walk the water."

There was a pause; he arose and stood with his back to the fire, pulling on his gloves.

"Miss Mason has much of the faith you speak of," he presently remarked.

"Yes, she is just the character to have blind faith."

"Do you speak of faith in the Supreme, or faith in humanity?"

"Both, with reference to her."

"Such faith is very beautiful, but men seldom possess it."

"And women waste it on—men."

Again there was a long pause, his thoughts evidently were not on their conversation; she believed him to be thinking of George and Ellen. Presently he repeated, *sotto voce*,

"He either fears his fate too much,
Or his deserts are small,
Who dares not put it to the touch,
To gain or lose it all."

She gave him a quick glance; he had reseated himself, and his face had a very *silent* expression: the lines he had quoted appeared to be apropos to his thoughts. He took a book from the table, opened it at random, and closed it again without looking at the page.

In an abrupt tone and with an irritated manner, she said,

"I suppose you are searching for a perfect woman?" and she laughed a mocking, scornful laugh, in which he could detect temper.

He gave *her* a quick glance now; she met it for a moment, then, finding herself becoming confused, walked to the piano and ran her hands rapidly over the keys. When she turned toward him again, he stood leaning against the mantle.

"Perfection! Preserve me from a perfect woman; I would rather she would be half demon than all angel. Your perfect women are too cool, calculating, correct; their perfection haunts one as a reproving shadow. No, no, a woman, to be a *perfect* woman, must be a *faulty* one."

Again he kept time with his glove as he repeated,

"Let her be young but not a child
Whose light and inexperienced mirth

Is all too winged and too wild
For sober earth;
Too rainbow-like such mirth appears,
And fades away in misty tears.

"Let youth's first rose still gently bloom
Upon her smooth and downy cheek,
Yet let a shadow, not of gloom,
But soft and meek,
Tell that *some* sorrow she hath known,
Though not a sorrow of her own.

"And let her eyes be of the gray,
The soft gray of the brooding dove;
Full of the sweet and tender ray
Of modest love;
For fonder glows that dreamy hue
Than lustrous black or heavenly blue.

"Let her be full of quiet grace;
No sparkling wit, with sudden glow,
Brightening the purely chiseled face
And polished brow;
Not radiant to the stranger's eye,
A creature easily passed by;

"But who, once seen, with untold power,
Forever haunts the yearning heart!
Raised from the crowd that self-same hour
To dwell apart,
All sainted and enshrined, to be
The idol of our memory.

"And oh! let Mary be her name;
It hath a sweet and gentle sound,
At which no glories dear to fame
Come crowding round;
But which the dreaming heart beguiles
With holy thoughts and household smiles.

"With peaceful meetings welcomes kind,
And lose the same in joy and tears,
And gushing interchange of mind
Through faithful years;

Oh! dream of something half divine,
Be real, be mortal, and be mine!"

He bowed low: "Good evening, Miss Mary." He was gone.

Mary sat long in deep thought on the spot where he had left her. She revolved over and over in her mind all he had said; she puzzled over his manner, his words, the recitation of those lines; she smiled as she applied them, as he evidently intended they should be applied; but with it all there was an uneasy feeling at heart.

She admired Mr. Steele, and believed he both admired and loved her; she felt certain he intended to address her, and had made up her mind, if he did so, to become Mrs. Steele. She had been for some time expecting this declaration, and always, after he had been with her and departed, did she have this same uneasy feeling at heart.

Mary did not love him, and her conscience often told her that she was capable of better things. She knew she was not true to herself; but the temptation was a strong one, and stronger people than Mary have fallen when so beset. Mr. Steele was young, handsome; had talent, money, position; was very attentive to her; and was it a marvel she should dress her hair as he liked it, wear the colors he thought most becoming, be most agreeable in his presence, and all this too without love?

Young people—at least young girls—often mistake gratified vanity for love; but Mary had not fallen into this error. She never for a moment tried to cozen herself with the idea she loved him. She was gratified with attention from him, of which any girl in town would have been proud. She saw they gave her consequence; for, since he had been devoted to her, she had been twice the belle in society she had previously been. She liked society, felt she was capable of making something of a figure in it, with opportunity, and here the op-

portunity offered. Then, too, she believed as his wife she should love him; she felt she could rouse his energies, and urge him upon a different career. Thus spoke ambition to her; but between the pauses of its promptings there came a low whisper, speaking of a truer life, and woman, as represented by George in the lecture, haunted her. She also felt a something dormant within herself, of which the world knew not; and she often fretted and chafed, when she heard of the success of others in society, and said to herself, "I could have done that!"

She felt, in Mr. Steele's presence, that she was appreciated, and this same appreciation has much to do with our power of pleasing. She expressed her thoughts as they came, and, daring to speak just as she thought, was often fanciful and original. He had much in his character which sympathized with her; although she had the energy he wanted, her conversation always put him to his mettle. With all this, Mary Gordon was not a worldly woman; she felt she had abilities, and she was ambitious. She was mingling much with a society which was fashionable and wealthy, and circumstances and associations were moulding her character as they mould us all.

Latterly there had been a touch of temper in her manner toward Mr. Steele—why, she could hardly have explained. Perhaps she thought he was dallying; perhaps she was provoked with herself. It might have been either of these feelings—it might have been both; at all events, she was annoyed, disappointed. She forgot, what every woman should remember, that never yet was woman courted at the moment she expected to be; the very expectation baffles the realization.

Now this evening she sat by the smouldering fire, with many feelings at conflict within. Pride, self-abasement, ambition, scorn, and a yearning for something better, made a state of feeling hard to define.

It was late; the clock struck midnight; the small hours had commenced. She arose and took up her candle; a stick of wood, which had been slowly burning, parted in the middle, blazed up brightly for a moment ere it separated, then, dark and silent, fell into the ashes. "That is like life," she thought, "my life. I shall smoulder for a time, then perhaps blaze up, to fall again and die." Again she leaned against the mantle, lost in thought. The clock struck two ere she moved; the fire was almost out, only one or two glimmering coals remained; with a cold shudder, and shivering in every limb, she trod softly up to bed. The wind whistled mournfully around the corner of the house, and kept her awake, her heart feeling as though the cold hand of death had been laid upon it.

And what thought Charles Steele as he wrapped his cloak about him and faced the north wind on his way homeward? "She is handsome, and she has sense," he said to himself. "I came near making a declaration to her outright this evening; yet I do not love her. She has talent though, and she is not tame. I hate a tame woman; she would rouse a man; she would not let her husband rust. George spoke well to-night. The women will think of nothing else, and talk of nothing else for a week to come, but this lecture. I have a great mind to lecture myself; believe I could do it quite as well as Watson did; but, pshaw! it is too much trouble. Ellen Mason looked really beautiful; she is one of the tame, quiet kind; it was Watson's lecture that animated her. But Mary Gordon—really I could hardly keep from expressing my admiration outright to her in set terms. Wonder if she would have me?" A smile flitted across his face in the darkness as the thought came, "She would not be hard to win. She certainly talks better than any woman I know; she has temper too. She would gratify a man's pride, and spend his money for him. All the women in town were

at the Lyceum. It must be an exciting thing to stand up before a battery of eyes, all leveled at you, and speak out your thoughts; and then hear the women's garments rustle their admiration occasionally, as they did to-night. It reminded me of the fluttering of a flock of pigeons when a chance shot has lodged amid them.

"Mary said little concerning the lecture, but she paid great attention to it—never once turned her head. I wish I had put my fortune to the test with her; but never mind, another day will do. She had an odd manner at times this evening; I think she likes me."

To nothing but his own heart, would Charles Steele have made this admission in society, and to his friends he never let the vanity of the man interfere with the conduct of the gentleman.

And so it was because of her very willingness that Mary Gordon was not wooed and won.

Ellen went home with Mrs. Walker after the lecture. The young men had a supper down town, and she was to remain at Mr. Casey's until George called for her. She felt very proud of George, she saw he had made a most favorable impression. His manner had been very good, and his personal presence fine, as he stood on the rostrum dressed in a full suit of black. Never having heard him speak before, she had no idea of his manner, and was struck with his very easy air. Watching him closely throughout, she lost not a word, and several times felt he was speaking directly to herself. There is nothing so attracts a woman as the power of public speaking; it has a fascination to her which she can not resist, and, should she be at all interested in the speaker, she gives him all the virtues of which he discourses. She sees and feels the power he has over men—strong men, carrying them whither he will; governing them for the time. She sees the homage paid to oratorical power, and acknowledges the glory of being

paramount with one who speaks to the passions of men, and they obey him. It is this very talent which makes unmarried ministers so sought after in society. In a community where there is a preacher having power of speech, he is generally the greatest beau, sought after by the women and watched by the men.

Mrs. Walker was in raptures with George, his appearance, and his lecture; she talked of nothing else, having, in Ellen, a contented and pleased listener.

Eleven o'clock brought the hero of the brief hour, Mr. Levering, and Mr. Casey, all in high spirits; and shortly after, they took their leave.

"You have not said one word to me of my effort," said George, as they walked homeward.

"I liked it very much, I had no idea you could speak so well."

"I thought you were pleased. I have been much gratified with the general satisfaction it appears to have given."

"Mr. Levering told me several persons spoke highly of your manner to him."

They sat long talking. He was telling her of the supper.

"We got there late, and Levering was called upon for a toast, which he prefaced by some beautiful remarks. After this was responded to, Casey was called for. He toasted the ladies quite prettily, and was going on to make some remarks, when he became confused, turned red, as he always does on such occasions, rubbed his hands, and wiped his forehead lustily; but it was of no avail, the words would not come. To relieve him, they struck up 'Ladies eyes around!' and cheered him unmercifully, but all for naught—he had to sit down. He always makes a ninny of himself among women, but it is the first time I ever knew him to fail among men. I think he must have taken a little too much wine, or perhaps the theme overpowered him. You know his admiration for your

sex is his weak point. He stands high among men, he has so much hard business sense."

Mr. Levering had said much more to Ellen than she had repeated, speaking highly of George's talent. She was herself surprised at his lecture; there was a depth and thought in it which she did not expect. In one thing she did not know him so well as she thought she did; under the froth of his conversation there was hid a soundness of judgment for which people did not give him credit. A thing which he was to do openly, under the eye of the public, must be well done—his pride and his ambition would not permit him to fail, and he valued too much the estimate which would be put upon his abilities to mar it by the frivolity of flattery and compliment. All these were cast aside, and his friends were astonished at his beautiful, truthful, and philosophical views of the subject.

Ellen went to bed with proud and happy thoughts, while Mary Gordon sought her pillow, feeling lowered in her own esteem, irritated, annoyed.

CHAPTER III.

ELLEN often heard from Nannie, who had repeatedly written, requesting a visit from either Ellen or her mother; but Mrs. Mason had peculiar ideas—she thought “Young people had better be by themselves—they have much to learn concerning themselves and each other; for, say what you will, every married woman’s experience will tell you that the first year of wedded life is not always the happiest: things have to be learned and unlearned—habits, tempers, dispositions made to fit in. New machinery, when put in motion first, is apt to stop. This screw is wrong—that wheel is not exactly right—the other is out of place; but when it has been tried and retried, altered and fitted, all goes on smoothly like clock-work, and the wonder is that it ever was out of order at all. Thus it is with newly married people; their characters must fit in; that which seemed a little rough at first, will, after a time, wear off; tempers will be softened, habits understood, until eventually they go through life side by side, as though one soul animated their two bodies.”

Peyton, in his letters, always called Nannie “Miss Nancy;” and she, in her confidential communications with Ellen, wrote: “It was too provoking, Ellen, I declare. I hardly took pleasure in reading my marriage in the paper, when ‘Miss Nancy’ greeted my eye. I shall never get rid of it; for George made quite a story of it to old Mr. Peyton, and now he always speaks to and of me as ‘Miss Nancy,’ and even my lord and master uses it when he wishes to be particularly teasing.”

Ellen had promised to visit Nannie late in autumn, and looked forward to it with much pleasure, as Jane expected to accompany her. She often heard from Jane, who wrote very cheerfully, and was getting along much better than she expected, having as many pupils as she could possibly attend to, and occasionally giving a sort of private concert. She never spoke of George in connection with Ellen, in her letters to the latter.

Since Nannie’s marriage Ellen had gone much more into society, partly from a feeling of loneliness, and partly from necessity; for now she had all the visiting to do. She was always admired, and had a steady set of beaux—not stupid or dull ones; for she was noted for the class of her admirers, they being men of intellect. If, in the circle in which they moved, there appeared one gentleman distinguished above the others for talent, George or Mr. Levering were sure to introduce him; thus, without ever being a belle, she always received much attention.

About this time, Mr. Levering called upon her one day, and asked her for a letter to Jane. He was going to the city where she lived, should call upon her, and would like to be the bearer of a letter. The letter was written, and he departed, promising to call as soon as he returned, and bring Ellen news of her friends.

One day Mrs. Mason received a letter from an old friend, a sort of connection, from whom she had not heard for a long time, and supposed must be dead. Mrs. Royton—for that was the old lady’s name—proposed to visit them, Mrs. Mason being the only connection she had in the world, and they having been schoolmates together. Directly upon the reception of this epistle, a most cordial and affectionate letter was dispatched to the old lady, requesting her to come immediately and pay them a long visit.

Mrs. Royton had arrived, and a pleasant sight it was to see

those two together. They would sit by the hour and talk of the companions of their early days—whom this one had married—how many children she had—how they had turned out. Then another would come upon the tapis, her prospects in early life be discussed—how well she might have done, and how she did not do. And the beaux of their youth were brought forward—there were none like them now. The dress of their times was contrasted with the modern fashions; while the costume of some particular night—remembered from some compliment received, or some conquest made—would be elaborately described. Thus would they talk the scenes of their youth over and over, until they almost fancied themselves the fair, graceful forms they were half a century before, decked out in their ball-dresses, the stars of some festive scene; while the warm blood of youth would for a moment course in their veins—it was but for a moment—the delusion vanished, and deep was the sigh which followed.

Ellen seldom spoke to Nannie in her letters of how much she missed her, but she felt her loss heavily. Accustomed as she had always been to the bustle of a large family, the time after dinner, when her mother took her nap, was very dull, unless George stayed in for an hour. Nannie was one of those persons whose presence is felt even when they are most quiet; so, now that Mrs. Royton was with her mother, Ellen waited, with the eagerness of a child, for the time to come which had been fixed for her visit to her.

One afternoon Ellen was out, and George, having cut his finger, went to her work-box, which stood upon the table in the parlor, to get something to tie it up with. In his haste and impatience, he threw the box over upon the floor, and, stooping to pick it up, the lower part, which was a writing-desk, and which Ellen generally kept locked, slipped out, and its contents lay scattered about. With an inward male-

diction upon it, for the blood was dropping from his finger, and he was impatient to get it bound up, he huddled the articles together in most admirable disorder, and was pushing them hastily away, when something caught his eye which drove the irritable expression from his face in a moment.

It was a small pocket-book with an elastic steel clasp which had belonged to him in his boyhood. His initials were engraved upon the silver plate upon the outside, and within, upon some blank leaves, were written some doggerel lines, his first effusion, dated some twelve years back. Upon one of the leaves was the date of his birth in Ellen's hand, and under it, from time to time, a notice of the day as it came round, and the changes she had noted in his character. He looked at it, turned it over and over in his hand, glanced at the date—"Twelve years!" What changes had occurred in those twelve years! From an innocent boy he had grown to be a calculating man; his impatience was gone. He wrapped his hand in his handkerchief, replaced the things in the box in as good order as he knew how, put the pocket-book in its place, and seated himself to await Ellen's return.

He perfectly remembered giving this little pocket-book to her. It had been presented to him by a class-mate. She had admired it, and, when he left for college again, he had written her name within it, and left it in her room. He had many little keepsakes that had been gifts from her in his young years, but there was something in the sight of this, and in the notice of his birth-days, which inexpressibly touched him; he felt and thought

"That every time the year went round,
Less and less white the mark appeared."

His thoughts wandered back over all his young years. Judge Mason's kindness to him came fresh to his memory. How he remembered his boyish longing for a horse—a horse of his own; and the judge, when he discovered this ambition,

giving the handsomest colt on the plain to a black man famous for breaking these animals, with strict orders that George was not to mount it until it was thoroughly broken. He could see now the whole family, as they stood on the portico to see him ride down the lane on Lightfoot for the first time; and Ellen, clinging to her father's arm, and asking over and over if Lightfoot would throw him. He remembered well his delight when told it was his own horse, and he might sell it if he liked. The saddle and whip, which were sent to town for, how proud he was of them. He questioned whether he had been so happy since, and he gave a long sigh for the days of his boyhood.

He recalled his teaching Ellen to ride. At first he was to lead Lightfoot in a slow walk over the lawn; then she became braver, and took the rein herself, while he walked at the horse's head; so they crossed the space, the negroes looking on, and showing their white teeth at Ellen's blunders and fears. He recalled the first trot she had, while he ran beside her—Mrs. Mason looking anxious, and the judge calling out, "Hold on!" while "Aunt Minty" stopped her washing, and Joe his hoeing in the garden, and shaded his eyes with his hand to look. What a feat it was, and how half frightened, yet triumphant, Ellen looked as he lifted her to the ground! This was a most pleasant retrospect to him, as he sat and watched the fantastic shapes the clouds assumed as the spring wind drove them across the sky; and he thought the joys of the boy were keener than those of the man.

Ellen came in, and he told her of the mishap to his hand, and that he waited to have it bound up. When he took off the handkerchief she saw it was a bad cut, and with a woman's usual nervousness at the sight of a little blood, when perhaps she could bear the sight of much, in an emergency, better than a man, she quickly disarranged the contents of her work-box in her eagerness to get at the things needed, and

he saw there was no danger of her discovering he had been at it.

The tea-bell startled them. Ellen ran up stairs to put away her things, and George passed through the hall in time to offer his arm to Mrs. Royton, and they were soon in a merry chat. Mrs. Royton, from experience, knew the world thoroughly, but was not worldly, for she was a true Christian. She had outlived all her children, but not all her sympathies, and this made her a pleasant companion for the young. The sap was yet green in the old tree. She shared their joys and sorrows, entered into their feelings, always making allowances, although she often sighed over them from the depths of a loving heart.

CHAPTER IV.

Our friend, Mr. Casey, had shown symptoms of late which gave Mrs. Walker no little uneasiness. He decidedly had the fever matrimonial upon him, and she was fearful, despite all her endeavors to the contrary, he would one day slip his head into the noose. Now she had a decided objection to this, for she did not wish to abdicate just at present. She, therefore, set her active brain to work to remove the symptoms before they assumed a violent form, knowing as she did that Mr. Casey clung to an idea when it had once possessed him with the tenacity of life.

The truth was, that Mr. Casey stood somewhat in awe of his handsome sister. She made his home most comfortable for him, surrounded him with bachelor luxuries, welcomed his friends warmly, was always the hospitable and kind hostess; and they thought Casey the luckiest man in the world to possess such a menage, and have such a sister to preside over it; and when they congratulated him upon his good fortune in this respect, he rubbed his hands and looked very happy.

But Mrs. Walker was not merciful to his peculiarities. He seldom talked in her presence without first consulting her eye, and sometimes its light fell so coldly upon him, that it froze the words as they were uttered, and confused him in a painful manner. Ever since Nannie's marriage, when he had accompanied Peyton home, he had had a sentimental manner about matrimony. The bantering of George, and the

advice of Mr. Levering to get married as soon as possible, made a deep impression upon him. He had become restless and unquiet of late, hinted at the necessity of every man's marrying, &c. So Mrs. Walker took counsel of herself concerning it. On her first arrival, she had observed his evident penchant for Ellen, and smiled at it; but now it began to give her some uneasiness—not that she really thought Ellen would marry him—but she had dwelt so much upon it, and worked herself up to such a state, that she looked suspiciously upon every girl he was attentive to. Then she reasoned that Mr. Casey was richly endowed with this world's goods, good-natured, kind-hearted, and liberal to a fault. She knew that he was courted by mothers and daughters looking out for establishments, who considered him an eligible match; but here she had no fears—he never was pleased with that kind of women—it was a woman's home virtues that enticed him. Very fond of show in all that pertained to his house—proud of his sister—yet was he never attentive to a reigning belle or beauty, but it was always a superior woman whom he admired. Mrs. Walker understood his character, but she did not appreciate it. She saw that with the right kind of woman—one gentle and not superior to him, or, if superior, disposed to draw him out—he would appear well. She had often been astonished at the sense and information he showed in his quiet, aside talks with Ellen, who always led him to talk of things familiar to him, then sat and listened pleasantly and interestedly. Mrs. Walker reasoned, that Ellen Mason was poor, and that she might bring herself to think that Mr. Casey's house, carriage, and appointments would compensate for some want of love on her part; and then, after all, she thought, it is no unpleasant thing to be worshiped as he would worship her. Quick and perceptive as she was in general, she was blind to the state of feeling between Ellen and George. To herself George was demonstrative, to Ellen quiet

in his manner, and precisely because it was before her eyes she did not see it.

She sat and thought over her new-born fancies concerning Mr. Casey, until she almost worried herself into a fever. She knew him to be particularly alive to ridicule; he could not parry it, and it abashed him in an instant; she therefore determined to use this weapon against him, but with caution, and, if possible, to get the idea into his head that he was too old to marry, that he must consider himself a settled old bachelor, whose marriage, were he to think of it, would cause infinite merriment to younger men.

She had, with a contradiction often met with in such natures, a strong penchant for George. Although he had no establishment at his disposal, she admired his manners, thought him good-looking, knew he had talent and was agreeable, and *the beau*, wherever he chose to be. They had been for some time carrying on quite a flirtation, and some tender passages had passed between them. He was a great admirer of the lady's beauty, and liked her, notwithstanding her many weaknesses, and her prevailing foible of personal vanity—perhaps the more for this, as it was an amusement to watch her under its different phases. She was perfectly aware that their intercourse was nothing more than a flirtation, and it often annoyed her, for she would have had no objection to its going further on *his* part. As a lover, she would have liked George well; but his want of means rendered him ineligible as a husband. *He* understood all this, and had toward her that unmistakable gallantry of manner which gives evidence that courtesy, not heart, prompts the act. This oftentimes piqued her, and put her out of humor; but he rather liked to see her thus, for it was a trial of power to wreath that face in smiles, which, but a moment since, was sullen; she had a consciousness of this too, and was half angry with herself for being so soothed, but could not resist it.

Of late she had become a little jealous of Ellen. Since Nannie's marriage, and the putting off of her mourning, Ellen had been much in society, and in this way they had come in contact; for Ellen was a great favorite among the gentlemen, and often received attentions she would like to have appropriated.

About this time some business called Mr. Gamage to New Orleans. He was loth to leave his family, and proposed to George to undertake the journey in his stead. This George readily consented to do, for his roving disposition inclined him to be always on the move, and his absence would only be for a few weeks. He startled Ellen, at dinner, with the announcement of his departure the next morning, and, on Mrs. Mason handing him an invitation out, said,

"Are you going, Ellen?"

"No, I am not!"

"Then I shall spend the evening at home."

He went to the office directly after dinner, and Ellen spent the afternoon in assisting her mother to look over his clothes, and having them put in his room ready for his return, to pack them.

This being finished, she left the two old ladies gossiping by the fire, and went down to the parlor to sit and think alone. She had been there but a few minutes, when the door-bell rang. The latch was down, and, supposing it was George, she opened it. It proved to be Mrs. Walker, come to spend the evening. Never before was she unwelcome: it took all Ellen's self-command not to show her chagrin.

But when George did come, and she announced to him, as she opened the door, that Mrs. Walker was within, and had come to spend the evening, his chagrin equaled hers. She was gratified to see how much he was annoyed.

"I must congratulate myself," said the widow, when she heard of his departure, "that my good genius sent me up here this evening, otherwise I might not have seen you."

"What! do you imagine I would have gone without a parting word? I stopped in to say good-by as I came up, and, not seeing you, left P. P. C. within, not knowing my star had been so propitious to me as to send you up here."

After some little chat, he left the room to pack, saying,

"I must get ready before tea, as I leave at four in the morning. I warned Ellen that I intended spending the evening at home."

This was not a pleasant remark to the widow, for it showed plainly he had no intention of spending the evening with her. A sort of vague suspicion flashed upon her mind for a moment, and she threw one of her quick looks upon Ellen, but she was quietly trimming the lamp, and did not appear to have heeded it. George's absence at this time was particularly annoying to Mrs. Walker, and discomposed all her plans. She knew the spring was to be a gay one, and she had determined upon having George for her gallant during the season; and, besides this, she did not wish to dispense with his attentions for so long a time, they being very agreeable to her. She said to herself, "I must take him home with me to-night, if fate will only keep that brother of mine from coming for me," and she felt nervous at the idea of seeing Mr. Casey enter.

"So Mary Gordon and Mr. Steele are engaged, Ellen?" she presently remarked.

"Engaged! I did not know it."

"Who told you?" asked George.

"The lady herself; he has not been there much of late, and I know she refused to accompany him on our last riding party; but now they are engaged. I wonder how Miss Stamford will take it?"

"Was he attentive to her?"

"Yes, and I thought at one time they would have made a match. Heigho! We must exert ourselves, Ellen: all the desirable men are slipping through our nets."

"Mary is just the woman Steele needs to rouse him," said George; "his lot should have been cast differently; he ought to have been born in one of our Northern States, and raised without a cent—forced to push his way in the world. That fortune of his is going to spoil him."

As the evening wore on the conversation lagged. George was unusually silent, and at length it amounted merely to a few questions and answers on the part of Ellen and her guest. It was not ten o'clock when Mrs. Walker put up her knitting (it was a purse for George), and said, "I regret to trouble you, but that brother of mine has gone to the Chamber of Commerce this evening, and may not get through until late, so I am compelled to trespass."

George bowed, hat in hand.

"We would, indeed, be sinners all, if our trespasses were as easily forgiven."

It was a beautiful spring night, and when they reached the door, he turned and said,

"Suppose you get your bonnet and shawl, and walk down with us, Ellen; it is not late, and it is a long time since we have had a stroll in the moonlight."

"Do not do any such thing, Ellen," hastily interrupted Mrs. Walker. "You have been complaining of a headache; the air is damp, and the fog rising. Mr. Watson, you have no thought; it will make her ill."

Ellen was in the act of starting for her bonnet; she stopped at this. Had it been another than George, she would have gone; but here the fear of seeming to wish to go kept her back. George did not urge it, for the fog was making itself visible. Just then Mr. Casey came up; they chatted at the door for a moment, but the widow did not relinquish George's arm; she only said, "Well, brother, we will not wait for you," and moved on.

Ellen shivered as though she felt cold, and asked Mr. Casey

to walk in, in hopes he would go ; but no, he came in—and she was obliged to listen and answer, while her thoughts were with two people going down street, and she was wondering when one of them would come back. Meantime these two people walked slowly on, at first silently, then the lady was the talker ; but before they halted, the gentleman had taken up the strain, and the moon witnessed a very tender parting.

Mr. Casey having sympathized with Ellen's headache, and prescribed many remedies, at length said good-night ! leaving her alone. This interminable evening, with all its vexations, was at last over, and she shut up the house and seated herself to wait for George. One half hour passed—another ; he did not come. I will wait no longer, she thought, for he is dallying with Mrs. Walker ; but still she loitered, fixed the little fire they had had, for it was cold in the house, put back the chairs, and arranged the books upon the centre-table, and at last, just as the clock struck twelve, went to her own room. As she blew out her light she heard him enter, and regretted she had not waited a few minutes longer. As he passed up stairs, he paused a moment at her door ; she thought she heard her name, and as she sat up in bed to listen, he passed on.

She lay long awake, and could hear him overhead as he passed to and fro, but at last fell asleep with the determination to wake early and pour out his coffee before he left. She had told Judith to prepare coffee for him. Alas ! when Ellen awoke the sun was streaming in at the window, and she knew he had been gone many hours. Feeling sad, dull, heavy, she got up to darken the room, meaning to lie down again ; as she did so, a note just under the door caught her eye ; she picked it up and read :

“DEAR ELLEN,—I was sadly disappointed at not finding you up when I returned last night. After leaving Mrs. Walker

at her door, I had to go to the office to get something I had forgotten. There I saw Gamage, who detained me giving directions. The pleasant evening I had anticipated at home was entirely broken in upon, and I can hardly reconcile it to myself to go without saying good-by, but suppose I must, for I have been several times to your door, and have not heard you stirring. God bless you. GEORGE.”

Ellen pulled in the shutters and went to bed again, and the breakfast-bell rang twice ere she was ready to go down. At length Judith came to see why she did not make her appearance.

She inquired if George had had his coffee before leaving.

“Yes, miss, but he only took one cup, and I made it my best ; he seemed uneasy-like, and kept going up stairs. I don't think Master George wanted to go this time, though he is always ready.”

Very listless did Ellen feel that day. She sat and rocked herself, work in hand, without putting in her needle ; and when she was obliged to give her music lessons, caught herself letting the children go wrong, without making an effort to correct them. At dinner, Mrs. Mason lamented George's absence, and hoped he would not get cold, he was so careless about himself. In the afternoon, Mrs. Walker and Mr. Casey called for her to take a ride with them. They had a very pleasant ride ; but on Mr. Casey making some remark about Nannie and Peyton, Ellen said she intended visiting them in the summer.

“I hope you will not come home, Ellen, as much in love with matrimony as brother was at the mere sight of their felicity. Why, I can hardly keep him now from saying pretty things to every lady who chances to speak pleasantly to him.”

Ellen laughed, and replied,

"You know it has always been prophesied that I would be an old maid!"

Mr. Casey murmured something about her making too good a wife for that.

"You hear that, Ellen? I declare to you I believe if I were not present, he would make downright love to you. He is crazy on the subject."

Mr. Casey looked very red at this, and Ellen was slightly confused, which did not escape Mrs. Walker's eye.

"Take care, my dear; you had better catch a tartar than an old bachelor—so fussy and particular, he would tease the life out of you. And then, I know nothing more ridiculous than an old bachelor in love, nursing up his passion."

She thought she had said enough.

"I know not what I shall do without Mr. Watson. Do you not miss him?"

"Yes, the house is very dull."

Thus talking, they reached home. Ellen resisted all Mrs. Walker's entreaties to stop at Mr. Casey's to tea. She found Mr. Levering's card in the parlor, and a letter from Jane. He had called in her absence, and left it. She sat down with her bonnet on to read the letter. It grew darker and darker. The twilight deepened into night, but still she sat thinking, with her head resting on her hand, and the letter in her lap.

CHAPTER V.

ELLEN was occupied so constantly, that she was surprised to find the days pass without so much of that sense of weariness and lassitude which she had dreaded. It is true, "her thoughts were wanderers o'er the waters dim;" and she often wished she had no music lessons to give, that she might sit in that fascinating and forgetful reverie, which is so pleasant to those occupied in mind and heart. You often hear people say, when speaking of one who has suddenly become quiet, and thoughtful, and thin, "She must be in love!" and laugh at the idea. Why is this? Does not experience teach us that every engrossing idea which takes possession of us by day, and haunts us by night, wearying the spirit, wearies also the body?

Look at the man who bends all his energies to making money—goes to bed late, gets up early, has but one idea—money. He dreams of stocks and stock-brokers; and in his prayers, if he puts up any, lets his mind stray to interest and per centage. He goes down street with a hurried gait and a hanging head, counting the chances of some speculation. He hears of revolutions with a shudder, for he thinks of the effect upon stock; and the failure of a speculation draws from him a groan, which the sufferings of his fellow-men never could elicit. Is this man fat and sleek, and easy with the world? No; for he has the idea of money, of getting and keeping, corroding at his heart, wearing out flesh and strength.

Look at the student—he who studies early and late—

watches the stars out, filled with the idea of being great—of making a name. Is he portly and healthy? Does the blood run lightly through his veins? No; the one idea is there sapping the strength of others. But these are the cares of men; what has a woman to do with these? And has she not her cares too, her one idea? Sometimes it is ambition; sometimes fashion; sometimes wealth; but oftener it is love, engrossing her, and making her the most humble, but the most willing of all slaves.

It is the fashion in this age to scoff at love—to speak of the holiest and most beautiful of humanity's belongings with a sneer. "She is in love with him!" will create a laugh, and call up a look of scorn in any circle; and the laugh is at the expense of love, the most honorable and exalted feeling of our nature—that feeling which has paled the cheek and bowed the form of many a woman whom time has not touched.

Despite the many little annoyances which had seemed to beset her of late, Ellen was looking better and prettier than she had for years.

This week brought her a letter from George, written in excellent spirits, giving her a most amusing and graphic account of some *originals* he had met with, and begging her for a letter from "home."

The next time Mrs. Walker called to see them, Ellen was out, and Mrs. Mason, in the fullness of her heart, told her more of the contents of the letter than Ellen wished she had. Mrs. Walker asked many questions, and seemed much interested and amused at the old lady's remarks.

During George's absence, Mary Gordon spent an evening with Ellen, and Mrs. Walker, Mr. Casey, Mr. Steele, and Mr. Levering came in after tea. It was true that Mary was engaged to Mr. Steele. She told Ellen this evening of her engagement. Since the night of the lecture she had avoided him, declined his invitations whenever she could, and been

reserved in her manner. He saw this at first with a smile; it was something new to him not to be courted. He found his attentions declined—was piqued, really warmed in the pursuit. She was as courteous as ever in her manner, but there was a reserve which he felt. He asked an explanation. She had none to give; and the result of this coyness on her part and warmth on his ended in a declaration and engagement.

Mary's avoidance of him sprang from wounded pride and self-accusation, but had she planned her conduct she could not have succeeded better; and when he declared himself a lover, the gratification and temptation was too great to be resisted. He was accepted; and as a compromise with her conscience, she vowed then, and often after, to make him a good wife.

This evening, while Mary and Ellen sewed, and the widow played with her rings, Mr. Steele half lolled on the sofa in his usual way, while Mr. Levering tried to entertain them. He looked over the evening papers, and read them articles of news, upon which they commented, but he never gossiped. During the evening, he told an anecdote of Mr. Steele, called forth by a paragraph in the paper, which made Mary's eyes glisten with gratified pride.

"One night," said he, "a party of us had gone to a negro husking out of town. We were returning late in the night, when Steele, who was ahead of us on horseback, came suddenly upon a mob, who were dragging a poor fellow into the woods to Lynch him. They had caught him in some nefarious act, and gagged him, that he might not rouse the neighborhood with his cries. There were about fifty of them, and Steele rode into their midst, demanding what was the matter. They kept tight hold of their prisoner while they told their tale. He tried to reason with them: they would not listen—talked of law and order: they hooted, and a club whistled

past his head. He expostulated and implored. It was of no use: they only tightened their hold on their victim and vowed vengeance. He spurred his horse into their midst, hurled one of the keepers aside, seized the poor, frightened, cowering wretch by the shoulder, and declared, if they took one they should take both. The mob paused, just as the hurricane pauses when gathering its strength; then they howled a simultaneous howl, and were rushing forward, when we reached the spot. The sound of the carriage wheels and our shouts stayed them, thinking us a police force from the city. The timid fled, but the more resolute stood at bay. While we parleyed in the darkness, Steele put the quaking culprit on his horse, turned his head from the city, and applied the whip. At the sound of the horse's hoofs the rabble turned, to find their victim beyond their reach. With imprecations and threats of revenge they separated, while Steele mounted the coach-box with the driver and rode home with us.

"I shall never forget the expression of that man's face as the carriage-lights fell upon it—such abject terror; the lines about his mouth were like cords; his face was livid in color, and I believe fear had deprived him of his voice; for, even after Steele had torn the gag from his mouth, he spoke not; there was a sort of quaking motion in his breast, but his eyes said all that was needed. I never saw any thing so living as the beseeching expression in them."

"I am afraid justice was robbed that night," said Mr. Casey; "for it was the last Steele ever heard of man or horse."

A day or two after this, Mrs. Mason complained of not feeling well, and went early to bed. The next morning she did not come down to breakfast, and Mrs. Royton said she had had a bad night. Ellen went directly up to her mother's room, and insisted upon sending for a doctor; but Mrs. Mason would not listen to it; she thought she had only a

cold; and she kept her bed until late in the evening, when she got up, and seemed as bright as usual; but the next morning, again, she was not so well. This continued for some days, until, Ellen still insisting, the doctor was sent for. He came, pronounced her disease fever, and said she must keep her bed. Ellen now sent Mary to her room, with Judith, to care for her, and took her place in her mother's room. The old lady got no better and no worse for a week, suffered but little pain, but complained of increasing weakness. At the end of the week the doctor told Ellen he considered her mother in a very critical condition, and advised her to have a consultation. Mrs. Mason was informed of the physician's opinion, and although not expecting such a result, received it with composure. The issue of the consultation was a doubt of her recovery.

Ellen's every feeling was now merged in the one of her mother's danger. She never left her room, but night and day was there, a tireless watcher. Nannie was sent for, as it was perceived she sank daily. One evening after her arrival, Mrs. Mason beckoned Ellen to her bedside, and said,

"Do leave me to-night; you are looking very ill, and I shall feel much easier if I know you are taking some rest. Nannie will stay with me."

Reluctantly Ellen went, fearful of making her worse by staying. She was walking up and down her own room weeping, when Mrs. Royton came in.

"Do try and take some rest, Ellen. Lie down; you will make yourself ill."

"Do you think there is any hope, Mrs. Royton?"

The old lady shook her head, and sighed heavily, while the tears ran down her cheeks. "I am afraid not—I am afraid not, my dear child! But we must trust in God; He is mighty."

"Oh! it can not be, it can not be, Mrs. Royton, that I

shall lose my mother—my mother—my mother! Let me have any affliction but this!" Ellen's sobs choked her.

"Oh! Ellen, my dear child, this is heavy, hard to bear—heavy, heavy!" And as they together leaned their faces on the bed, she prayed, "Lord! strengthen her, keep her, comfort her!" and growing fervent with faith strong in her heart, she prayed on feelingly and beautifully.

Then, as if comforted, she arose, and, putting her arm about Ellen, drew her to a seat and talked with her—sympathized and consoled.

"I can not look upon it with resignation; any thing but the loss of my mother! I shall be alone—all alone. Nannie has other ties, and another home; but I—I have only my mother."

"It would not be natural for you to feel resigned now. I remember well when my mother died, and they talked to me of resignation. I thought them cruel; but since then, Ellen, I have lost father, husband, children—all, and I know that the absence of hope does bring calmness. Do not be violent; be more like yourself. I am old, and have not long to tarry, but you will always have a mother's love while I live. I know what it is; it is bitter—bitter—"

Thus, with going occasionally to Mrs. Mason's door to listen, the night passed. Toward morning Ellen fell into a heavy slumber. Heavy were the sighs which heaved Mrs. Royton's breast as she sat there, for the troubles of her life were arrayed before her.

Well might Ellen weep, for who will ever be to her as a mother? Not only now, but on through life, in many a weary hour, will she weep for her mother—that mother who has wept for her so oft, who has spent days and nights over her cradled infancy—who has felt for all the joys of her young years, and the triumph of her riper ones—whose love has never faltered, but grown stronger, and deeper, and more en-

during to the last, loving through all things. Well might she weep; for who can measure to her the height and depth of a mother's love—constant through obloquy, scorn, and despair, clinging but the closer as others recede? Perhaps in after years she may be a mother herself; then, oh! how often will she think of *her* mother—repeat to her child the stories of her childhood, and sing the songs taught her at that mother's knee. The ways of her childhood's home will be the best of all ways; the prayer first lisped there the holiest of all prayers, and be that first taught to the prattler at her knee, because it is sanctified by associations of her childhood, and the love of her mother.

The next day Mrs. Mason was in the same state, and continued so for several days, when she fell into a quiet sleep, from which she did not rouse. So life passed away.

Mrs. Walker, really kind-hearted in affliction, stayed with them, when necessary; but Mrs. Royton did all that was needful for the family. Ellen was more composed than they expected, while Nannie was incapable of doing any thing, and could scarcely be prevailed upon to leave her mother's room. Ellen was surprised, the morning after her mother's death, by the arrival of Jane. Peyton had written, and told her of Mrs. Mason's illness, adding, he wished she was with Ellen. On this hint Jane acted, but only reached there in time for the funeral. Her presence was most welcome to Ellen at this particular time, when she needed a friend of her own age.

Mrs. Royton was every thing to them—soothed, comforted, sympathized with all. The Masons were Episcopalians, and she was a Methodist, and they thought, an enthusiast; but when she came with her saving faith in the hour of trial—her simple, unobtrusive, genuine piety—they admired as well as loved. The evening after Mrs. Mason's death, while she still lay unburied in the house, they were called together

for family prayer, which Mrs. Mason had always had in her own room. They had assembled, Peyton and Jane being the last to enter. There was a moment's pause, when Mrs. Royton said, pointing to the Bible, which lay upon the table, with that quiet dignity so characteristic of her,

"Mr. Peyton, if you will read, I will pray."

He took the book and read; she prayed, and many tears attested it was a heartfelt petition. When they arose from their knees, she left the room. Peyton looked at her for a moment as she passed out, and said, with an earnestness which left no doubt of his sincerity, "She is a good woman."

Mrs. Mason was buried beside her husband, and Ellen returned from the funeral really ill, so ill that she was compelled to go to bed. Jane stayed some four or five days, and then prepared to leave.

"Poor people, Ellen," she said, "can not obey the dictates of their hearts, or I would not leave you. I promised my pupils not to be absent longer than a week, and necessity compels me to go back." Ellen knew this, and did not urge her to stay, although she wished much to have her. Mr. Levering insisted upon accompanying her home, as Peyton could not leave. Mary Gordon was present when they took their departure, and gave a quick, searching glance at both.

After a few days, when Ellen was well enough, a family council was held, to conclude upon their future way of living. Peyton, taking it for granted that Ellen was to reside with them, invited Mrs. Royton also to make their house her home, when, to his astonishment, she informed him she had promised Ellen to live with her, and Ellen announced her determination of remaining as she was. Mrs. Royton would reside with her, Mary would have a home, and she something to occupy and interest her.

Peyton and his wife tried in vain to combat her resolution. She was firm.

"You know how truly I love you both, but it will be better for all that we remain just as we are. I shall be much happier, and I feel sure this arrangement would meet mother's approbation, were she here."

Peyton was hurt, and, putting his own construction upon her wish to remain in town, prepared to go home without again asking her to accompany him. Just at this time, however, old Mr. Peyton came to town, and after hearing both sides of the question, and having had a long talk with Ellen, he expressed his decided approbation of her plan. This reconciled Peyton to it in a measure, for he had a great opinion of his father's judgment.

When things were settled, Peyton and Nannie started home, with the understanding that Ellen, Mrs. Royton, and Mary were to follow in a few weeks. "Little Mary" was looking badly, and, Ellen thought, wanted change of air. How desolate now was Ellen's home to her! Many times in the day did she think she heard her mother's voice, and start to welcome her, when she was staid by the knowledge of the sad reality.

During all this time they had had no word from George. Peyton had written and informed him of Mrs. Mason's illness, then of her death, and no answers had been received. Once Mrs. Walker had said, "I heard from Mr. Watson yesterday; he informs me of the marriage of two of my friends in New Orleans." Ellen thought this very strange, but she asked no questions, and nothing more was said.

CHAPTER VI.

It was the latter part of summer, and that "shadowy splendor which haunts the gray twilight" was stealing over the dimmed city, throwing a mantle of gray over every object. Ellen had been singing nursery hymns to amuse Mary, and the child had fallen asleep on her lap, but still she sat by the open window watching the shadowy sky; very sad she felt, for it was a sad hour, and many memories were busy at her heart.

Tears, bitter tears she shed—tears for the lost, for the absent, for herself. The picture of her home as it was and her home as it had been was before her, while the visions of the future paled before the sad reality of the present. While she was sitting thus, a servant came in and told her a gentleman was below and wished to see her. She sent word she was engaged; then thinking it could only be Mr. Levering or friend Casey, she laid Mary down, smoothed her hair, and prepared to go below, calling the girl back as she did so to ask if she knew who it was. She did not; she was a servant of Mrs. Royton's, and had lately come there. "I will be there in a moment," she said, and followed the girl to the parlor.

On opening the door, she saw the figure of a man leaning against the mantle, but did not recognize it, for the twilight had gathered and the room was dark. She stepped one step back into the hall, and said to the girl, who still loitered there,

"Bring a light, Lucy," and went in.

The person had turned round, and, as she entered, stepped forward and held out his hand.

"Ellen!"

"George!"

His arms were about her, and she sobbed aloud upon his shoulder. It was many minutes ere either of them spoke. At length he said,

"Ellen, we never part again—do we?"

And she sobbed "Never!"

The girl brought in the light, and, with an inquisitive stare and lingering tread, left the room. George raised Ellen up and looked at her, gazing first in her face, then upon her dress; then, putting the light aside, he seated himself and drew her close to him. For a long time they sat in this silence, audible and eloquent to both; for if a rustle of her gown but betrayed a movement on Ellen's part, he tightened his arm about her, as if fearful she was going to leave.

She spoke of her mother.

"I know it all, Ellen—all. I received Peyton's letter, but I could not write—words were too formal. I preferred coming; and left my business at the risk of having to go back again. Mrs. Royton and Mary?"

"They are both well."

They talked but little, but seemed to understand one another's feelings intuitively; each was the subject of the other's thoughts. The tea-bell rang once more. George drew her tightly to him, put the hair back from her face, and kissed her. As they passed through the hall, she saw George's hat upon the table: it had a broad band of crape about it. She felt touched, and nearer to him than before. Mrs. Royton, who was at the table, was surprised to see him, but gave him a quiet and cordial welcome. Judith came in to attend to something. He put out his hand with "Well, Judith?" and

she took it, without a word, and wrung it hard. There was a tear in his eye, and her apron was at her face when she left the room. John, Judith's son, also made some errand an excuse to say, "How do you do?" to "Massa George."

There was little spoken and less eaten. After answering some inquiries of Mrs. Royton's, George was silent, and Ellen did not talk at all. After tea, Mrs. Royton went to her own room, and George and Ellen to the parlor.

They sat together, occasionally talking.

"Ellen," he said, "from my boyhood up to this hour I have loved you. You have been every thing to me—the ark of all my hopes. When a boy at college, inditing verses or writing themes, you were the inspiration—vague, shadowy, undefined in the depths of my being—but still there. When a man, wandering over the plains and mountains of the Far West, often, as night came on, have I dropped rein upon the neck of my horse, and in delicious revery thought of you amid the purifying influences of nature, as the dim shadow stole over wood and water. And at night, when, gathered about the camp fire, others talked of their far homes and their lost loves, and sang songs of the affections, why was it that the sounds, and sights, and feelings of my boyhood crept over me? that the dim distance was passed, and I stood once more at breezy morn beside you, guiding my kite through fields of trackless air; or at eve, wandered in the wild wood searching for nuts or flowers? Often, Ellen, often have I drawn my blanket about my head, to shut out the sights and sounds around me, that the picture my imagination had painted might not be marred; and then, when the words of some passionate love-song has burst from the lips of some one of those weary ones, you were the embodied spirit of that song to me, unacknowledged save as connected with hope and home. When I returned and saw you, after years of absence, it was very plain to me why you had so haunted me; and I needed no

book to tell me this was love. You have lost father and mother. I will be to you father, mother, husband—all. But oh! Ellen, you will have much to bear with here. I am wayward and weak sometimes, and temptation meets me in a form you dream not of. * * * I can not connect your image with a city; it always comes to me in visions of the old place, when we were children, or as I left you, but just a woman."

She listened, drinking in every word, but made no comment; her tears fell upon his shoulder as she leaned against it.

They spoke of Mrs. Mason, and Ellen recounted her illness and death. They went back to her father's death and their young years. They lingered long over them, and it was midnight ere they separated with a fond good-night.

Ellen almost reproached herself, when she reached her room, for having been so happy, although it was a subdued and quiet happiness—subdued with the thought of how much she had lost, but that loss lightened by George's presence and sympathy. She thought over all that interview, and wondered that with so few words they had seen into each other's hearts; but most she wondered that this had never happened before—that the time could ever have been when she thought he did not love her; and morning still found her pondering over these things. When "Little Mary" found that "Uncle George" had come, she insisted upon being dressed and going up to him. Ellen dressed her, and when she heard him stirring, let her go. She could hear her talking to him of grandma, who had gone to God.

Ellen did not tell Mrs. Royton of the new position in which she stood. She did not realize it yet, and there was something delightful to her in quietly sitting and thinking it over, with no one to comment outwardly or mentally upon her preoccupation. Mrs. Royton was one of those persons whom

you did not feel compelled to give confidence to. She was perfectly willing to appear not to see.

Now all were to go to Nannie's to spend some time. Little Mary was very feeble, and Ellen needed change. George accompanied them, and they reached Peyton's late in the evening, tired with their long ride. Mrs. Royton took Mary and went to bed, while Nannie and Ellen sat up far in the night, talking.

In the afternoon of the next day, Ellen and George, who had been walking in the garden, came in, and found Nannie and Peyton sitting on the piazza. Some laughing remark was made as they stepped toward them, when George, taking Ellen's hand, went up to Nannie, and said,

"Nannie, do you know I am to be your brother in verity and truth? Ellen has said that I may."

Nannie was so astonished that she could not speak for a moment; then she shook his hand warmly, George giving her a hearty kiss, which example Peyton followed with Ellen.

"Certainly," said Peyton, "nothing has given me more pleasure since that little woman whispered yes to me."

Ellen soon made her escape, and Nannie followed. If the gentlemen did have to wait for tea, they did not complain. Mrs. Royton smiled pleasantly when officially informed how matters stood, but expressed no surprise.

When Nannie and Peyton were alone in their own room, she gave vent to her amazement.

"I always had a suspicion of their attachment," said Peyton; "you see I had some observation, Miss Nancy, although I am not a woman."

Without noticing the offensive cognomen, she said,

"It seems very strange to me, and I was half offended when you suggested it. This is the secret of her indifference to Mr. Levering. I have been very blind."

"Blind as a beetle, my dear. 'You men never see any

thing that is not directly before your eyes, but we women are never so taken up with our own loves as not to see those of others.' Ha—ha—ha!" laughed Peyton. "Do you remember your sage remarks?"

In matrimonial confidence, how they talked the matter over! Peyton was altogether pleased with the engagement, but Nannie would rather Ellen had married Mr. Levering. George was too much like a brother to be Ellen's husband.

"Suppose, Nannie," said Peyton, "we have family prayers while Mrs. Royton is here, and ask her to officiate. I have a very great respect for her, and you are accustomed to having them at home."

Nannie assented, and the next morning he said,

"Mrs. Royton, if you please, we will have family prayers. I will always read in the morning, if you will pray." And family prayers they had.

CHAPTER VII.

IN the morning Nannie was generally engaged about her house ; for, like all housekeepers newly settled, the arrangement of parlor and kitchen was her hobby. Peyton was absent on business ; so George and Ellen were left to themselves for amusement, and seemed to have no lack of it. Summer was rapidly passing away, and Ellen, wishing to enjoy it as much as possible, spent most of her time out of doors.

George, one-morning, persuaded her to go with him to some distance from the house, to an old wood, where, placing her shawl for her to sit on, at the foot of an old oak, whose trunk served for a resting-place for her back, he laid himself at her feet.

"Listen, Ellen, to the sound of the water, 'the willowy brook that turns a mill.' Is it not strange that a sound, produced by motion, should give us a feeling of rest—quiet. How lulling that is ! one could soon be wrapped in forgetfulness by nature's restorer. Do you remember the 'branch' at the grove ?"

"Indeed I do ; and the alders, and willows, and grapevines that hung over it. It was the scene of many a childish frolic."

"Those were happy days, but those to come may be happier. I wish you could see the forests of the West, and the prairies ; you would realize all you ever dreamed of beauty in nature. The prairies ! for which 'the speech of England has no name.'"

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"Lo ! they stretch
In airy undulations far away,
As if the ocean in its gentlest swell
Stood still, with all its rounded billows fixed,
And motionless forever. Motionless !
No ! they are all unchain'd again. The clouds
Sweep over with their shadows, and beneath
The surface rolls and fluctuates to the eye ;
Dark hollows seem to glide along, and chase
The sunny ridges.

Breezes of the South !
Who toss the gold and flame-like flowers,
And pass the prairie hawk, that, poised on high,
Flaps his broad wing, yet moves not ! Ye have passed
Among the palms of Mexico and vines
Of Texas, and have crisped the limpid brooks
That from the fountains of Sonora glide
Into the calm Pacific ! Have you found
A nobler or a lovelier scene than this ?

* * * * *
The hand that built the firmament hath heaved
And smoothed these verdant swells, and sown their slopes
With herbage ; planted them with island groves,
And hedged them round with forests. Fitting floor
For the magnificent temple of the sky,
With flowers whose glory and whose multitude
Rival the constellations ! The great heavens
Seem to stoop down upon the scene in love ;
A nearer vault, and of a tenderer blue
Than that which bends above the eastern hills.

"That is one of the most beautiful descriptions of one of nature's greatest beauties. You must see these 'airy undulations' to appreciate them, Ellen."

"I should like exceedingly to see them ; but is not the stillness oppressive ? In the woods we have the murmur of the leaves, the twittering of the birds, the fall of the bough, and the rustling of the wind through the branches, to give life to the scene."

"No; it would strike you as the stillness of quiet—not of busy life. The wind, as it passes over the long grass, causes it to bend, and wave, and rise again, giving an appearance of life; and the bright flowers nodding to the breeze, so gracefully evading the hand you have thrust out to pluck them as the wind sweeps by, relieves what might otherwise be the monotony of the scene. Then there is the hum of insect life, the startled cry of the prairie-fowl you have frightened from her nest, the howl of the prairie-wolf, and perchance, from afar off, the heavy tread of the buffalo.

"I have often thought the prairies 'must once have been sandy deserts, which God, in pity for their desolation, smiled on, and literally made to blossom like the rose. I have turned to 'Thaunatopsis,' the embodiment of poetry, and this is just the place to read it in."

"Do read it; I so admire Bryant."

"To him who, in the love of Nature, holds
Communion with her visible forms, she speaks
A various language; for his gayer hours
She hath a voice of gladness, and a smile
And eloquence of beauty; and she glides
Into his darker musings with a mild
And healing sympathy, that steals away
Their sharpness ere he is aware."

"How true that is! I have often, in my boyhood and later, started from home feeling angry, irritable, moody—switching every thing in my way, bending saplings and tearing up flowers, for the mere pleasure of inflicting upon something the irritation I felt myself, and have returned home, after a walk in the woods, quiet, subdued.

"This, Ellen, I have seen.

"The hills,
Racked, ribbed, and ancient as the sun; the vales,
Stretching in pensive quietness between;

The venerable woods—rivers that move
In majesty, and the complaining brooks,
That make the meadows green, and poured round all
Old Ocean's gray and melancholy waste,
Are but the solemn decorations all
Of the great tomb of man."

Amid these to live, Ellen—amid these to lie buried and resign your breath:

"Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams."

"You can not appreciate this until you have felt your pulses stilled by the influence of these dim, old woods. Suppose one of these days, at a time you and I wot of, instead of going in the usual humdrum way regularly to house keeping, we start, like freed birds, for the wilderness?"

Ellen blushed as she replied,

"I am afraid we should soon sigh for our cage again."

"Not I, Ellen—not I! I would build myself a nest in the wild wood, where the music of nature would serenade me nightly; but you, would you be willing to leave all and follow me?"

He looked up in her face anxiously.

"You forget Mary, George."

"Yes; but Mary out of the question, could you be happy without society—with me alone?"

"I could be very happy."

He took a spool of cotton from her basket and busied himself winding and unwinding it, then—as though he had conquered a feeling—laid it down and turned over the leaves of his book, seemingly to read; but presently he took up the spool and began winding again—the temptation was too strong for him.

"Ellen, I should like to know how many lovers you have had?"

She had all her life been accustomed to read the changes of his mind in his face, and now was watching him, and it needed but this question to tell her his thought.

"Oh! a great many—father, mother, Nannie, Mrs. Royton, yourself, Peyton, and—"

"Nonsense!" You understand me, Ellen; but why do you smile?"

"At the egotism of the question; a man must always suppose he is the alpha and omega of a woman's heart!"

"Does not a woman believe she is first and last in his?"

"No; she may sometimes *hope* she is the first, and desire to be the last, but she never really believes she has been the only one. Look there!"—she pointed to a butterfly sporting from flower to flower—"as well might the flower fancy itself the first love of the butterfly, as I believe I was yours."

"But suppose I was to tell you that you were, you would believe me, would you not?"

"I should believe you thought so."

He smiled. "You are a true woman, Ellen; but now let me assure you," and he laid both hands upon hers, "with me you have always been the first, last, and only one." He paused a moment. "Now, Ellen, will you not answer my question?"

She hesitated; she did not even then—no woman ever does—like to put these feelings in words; but looking up, she caught the expression of his face. She put her other hand on his, dropped her playful tone, and said,

"I have never loved any one but you, George."

He felt rebuked at her simple and truthful answer, and not a little ashamed of the vanity and self-love which prompted the question, incited by a lingering jealousy of, he knew not who; so he made no reply, save to detain the hand she had given. As they thus sat silently together, he smiled to himself when he thought of the womanly manner in which she

had first obtained the acknowledgment from him, even then pausing ere she spoke; but he had an appreciation of these things, and it pleased him.

"Read something from Scott, George."

"Well, here is the description of Fitz James when he first meets your namesake. * * * There, does not that put you in love with hill, dale, and valley? We might, far in the golden West, realize even that vision—the meeting between Fitz James and Roderic on 'that lone hillside.' I can almost see the spot."

"It is all beautiful. Did not Scott say Byron excelled him, and he would write no more?"

"So it is said; but we admire them at different periods of life. At eighteen and twenty, with a high pulse, and our visions of life *couleur de rose*, we dote—to use a school-girl phrase—on Moore. I never knew a college boy who had not a copy of Moore. Later, Byron becomes the lord of our imaginations, and, as the sober calm of middle age comes on, and our tastes become purified, we love Scott more, although we give due homage to the genius of the others. I consider the description of Lady Heron one of the finest passages in Scott—she who had come as hostage for her lord. You remember it:

"The queen sits low in Lithgow's pile."

"Is not the attitude, the address, the whole manner beautifully touched? How inimitably the king's manner is described; and her glance at Marmion:

"Familiar was the look, and told

Marmion and she were friends of old."

Have you not seen such looks?"

"Yes, I have some one in my mind's eye now who can give them."

"Mrs. Walker! Never shake your head; I know it is she;

but she has too much vanity, and not enough tact to quite equal this description.

"Here is something from your favorite, Wordsworth:

"And I have felt
A presence, that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thought; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky; and in the mind of man
A motion, and a spirit that impels
All thinking objects, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things."

Have you ever felt that, Ellen?"

"Often!"

"Here is something to remember:

"Therefore, let the moon
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk,
And let the misty mountain winds be free
To blow against thee; and in after years,
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
Into a sober pleasure; when thy mind
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
For all sweet sounds and harmonies—O! then,
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,
Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,
And these my exhortations! Nor, perchance,
If I should be where I no more can hear
Thy voice, nor catch from thy mild eyes these gleams
Of past existence—wilt thou then forget
That on the banks of this delightful stream
We stood together; and that I, so long
A worshiper of Nature, hither came
Unwearied in that service; rather say,

With warmer love—oh! with far deeper zeal
Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget
That, after many wanderings, many years
Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,
And this green pastoral landscape, were to me
More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake."

That, Ellen, expresses exactly what I feel, more beautifully than I could possibly do it."

Just at this moment Mary came in sight, closely followed by the little negress in whose custody she was. Her bonnet had fallen from her head, and was held to her neck by the strings. Her long, fair hair fell in ringlets about a face animated and beautiful with the excitement of running, and eagerness to show the treasures she had collected in the shape of flowers, pebbles, shells, and acorns.

Ellen caught his arm.

"Look how bright and happy she is!"

She ran eagerly forward, gasping for breath, and pulled out one by one her store of precious things, exclaiming, "See! see!" After they had been duly admired, and she had exhausted herself talking, the little negress found place to say,

"Missus says dinner's waiting."

George reluctantly gathered up his books, and with Mary by the hand and Ellen by his side, strolled homeward.

"O, you romantic creatures!" exclaimed Peyton, who stood upon the piazza looking for them. "Have you no compassion, to keep a poor fellow who has had a hard ride of ten miles, waiting for his dinner? When you shall have been married six months, you will get over this poetizing, and become rational creatures. I would as soon think of reading in a cellar as taking a book to the green-wood now, to come back covered with ants, and all other kinds of insects. Matrimony will cure you of these follies."

"Do not believe a word of it, Ellen," said Nannie, coming

forward. "It was only last week he invited me to the orchard, where he had to overlook the men who were putting up a fence, when he lay upon the grass, and read to me all the afternoon, and was quite provoked that I would come in to give orders for tea. He was sulky for half an hour about it."

CHAPTER VIII.

THESE two weeks sped rapidly away—so rapidly, that at their close all agreed to lengthen them to three; and it was almost with reluctance that Ellen prepared to return home. She had been so quietly happy while making one of Nannie's household, and it brought so vividly before her the days of her youth, that she dreaded a return to the temptations and cares of city life. Here she had wandered the woods and fields by George's side, and felt that most heartfelt of all happiness—a happiness touched with sadness, and mingled with fear—fear lest it should shrink and shrivel from her touch.

Intelligent people—people who have any society amid themselves—are never happier than when in the country. There are a thousand little petty cares and influences which creep about our hearts in a city, and warp them. The sins and vices of life are brought more immediately in contact with us, and we become accustomed to sights and sounds of misery. Then, too, there are no softening influences abroad—no trees, with their waving branches, to whisper lessons of love—no green banks on which to lie and listen to the many murmuring voices of the earth, while watching the clouds as they float above, or tracking some bird lost in the bosom of the sky—no lulling voices to soothe ruffled moods: nothing but the stern and anxious faces of men meet us, busy with the business of bustling life.

George urged Ellen to marry him directly, but she would fix no time until a year of mourning had expired. So they returned home, the engagement known only to the family.

The first week after they left Nannie's, George spent every evening at home, and seemed annoyed when a visitor was announced. Ellen thought over it, and determined that this state of things should not continue; for, as their engagement was to be private for the time, she did not wish remark drawn upon herself, which would be the case if George absented himself from society. They saw much of each other during the day, lingering long over the breakfast-table; and after dinner, if she was not busy, or did not send him away, the middle of the afternoon would be reached ere he left for the office.

One evening, when he had been absent a little longer than usual, she remarked to Mrs. Royton, "Where can George be?"

The old lady replied: "Take care, Ellen, your engagement has not the fate of some newly married. At first it is a long kiss and a lingering embrace at their daily parting, then the hasty kiss without the embrace at all, until at length the husband comes and goes unheeded."

This led Ellen to think she understood his character, and felt it would be much better for the strength and durability of their attachment to have some restraint put upon their intercourse, situated as they were. She never doubted his love; it was because she wished him to love her always with the same eagerness that he did now, that she compelled herself to restrain their intercourse. Mrs. Royton was a quick, shrewd observer, and knew a man's love soon wearied; the love which would carry him through every obstacle and grow stronger as difficulties increased, soon cloyed in a smooth current. He required something to rouse him, something to keep up his interest, or he becomes languid, passive.

Ellen called to mind a remark she had once heard him make to Peyton, "That the reason often, why the maiden was more loved than the wife, was because she was more coy." It would kill me, she thought, to have him come to

meet me with that listless air I have seen him have; and it will be so if this lasts. I am not situated as other women, who can deny themselves at pleasure; but here we are, in the same house, and in the familiar intercourse of engaged people. O! if he should tire, or begin to take less pleasure in my society! and she shuddered at the phantom she had conjured up: in view of all these circumstances, she had resolution enough to deprive herself of his society for the present, that she might secure the engagement of it hereafter.

Now, therefore, of an evening, he always found Mrs. Royton in the parlor with her sewing—a fixture, and he had not half the opportunities he formerly had of seeing Ellen alone.

One evening, when she had been urging him to leave her and go to Mr. Casey's, where there was a little sociable, he said, peevishly,

"It is strange, Ellen, that you should so constantly insist upon my leaving you, when I have no inclination to do so. I have not spent an evening at home for a week."

"I thought our engagement was to be a family secret for the present, George: it will not be if you spend so much of your time at home. Your already having done so has made me the subject of observation and remark, and your absence from Mr. Casey's this evening will be commented upon."

While she spoke, he sat thoughtful and annoyed, looking at the carpet and tracing the figure with his cane. Suddenly raising his head, he said, "Do you feel the loss of my society, Ellen? Is my going a deprivation to you?"

"You know it is, George."

"Yes, yes, I do; but it gratifies me to get the assurance from your own lips. I should go—you are right; you were always better and stronger than I—stronger in the right, and have kept me straight often when my impulses would have taken me a shorter way. Good-night! I may stay in to-morrow, may I not? I am off to flirt with Mrs. Walker, bandy

compliments with one and all; but every now and then, in that great parlor of Casey's, will come across me a vision of this snug room, the easy-chair, that table and work-basket, with you sitting beside it. Good-night!"

Ellen laid down her work as he stepped off the step, and drawing her chair close to the fire, sat for a long time looking at the burning coals, then went up to bed.

George, always scrupulous with regard to circumstances touching a woman's position, was particularly careful, after this, to neither say nor do any thing to call forth remarks.

He never spent more than one evening in the week at home; and, if they took tea at Mr. Casey's, was marked in his attentions to Mrs. Walker, who believed herself entirely mistaken with regard to these two. Again, it was Mrs. Royton to whom he offered his arm when returning from church. This course of conduct on his part delivered Ellen from the thousand envious eyes which otherwise would have been constantly upon her. Mr. Levering was the only one it did not deceive: he understood it perfectly.

Ellen, being in deep mourning, saw no company but the intimates of the family. With Mrs. Walker they were in daily intercourse; and it was a source of great amusement, both to Ellen and George, to see the anxiety with which she watched Mr. Casey's attentions to the former. The lady had not herself abated one particle in her admiration for George; on the contrary, she appropriated his attentions, whenever she had the opportunity, with an air which seemed to say she had a right to them. Ellen had told George of Mrs. Walker's saying she had heard from him; "he had told her of the marriage of two of her friends." He laughed heartily, and explained, that he sent her the paper with the announcement in it. George, delighted to mystify her, and the better to disguise his true position, flirted with her broadly on all occasions, until it became a subject of remark wherever they met.

It was a perfectly understood thing that he was to extol her in public, and pay her all sorts of attentions in private.

There is a sort of tacit agreement between two people who are carrying on a flirtation, that the current coin of compliment and flattery is to be taken at its true value, and nothing more; it is a counterfeit, passed from hand to hand, to be marked and admired for its workmanship, but which, in the serious business of life, is cast aside as worthless. Mrs. Walker, being a true woman of the world, and a widow, was *au fait* to all these things, and was never guilty of mistaking the counterfeit for the real—either satisfied the craving of her vanity, although she would often gladly have exchanged the open compliment of the lip for the more silent and sincere one of the eye.

Ellen did not, for no woman ever does, like to see the attentions of the man she loves lavished upon another. No matter how idly it is done, or how well she understands the motive, these attentions are coveted, precious things. Yet she had too much self-respect to permit a feeling which only caused her a momentary pang to reveal itself. George always had great gallantry of manner to all ladies; and now, in high spirits, and sure of her affection, was more gallant than ever, and often thought her careless of his attentions; for the vanity of the man, and the exacting affection of the lover, would have been gratified by some slight remonstrances, which Ellen, in her perfect faith, never thought of making.

They had not heard from Jane for some time, except through Mr. Levering, whose business had called him several times to the city where she lived. She was to have accompanied Ellen to Nannie's, but wrote to say it was inconvenient to leave home just then; and Ellen coveted George's society too much at that time to feel it a deprivation. Ellen had not informed her of the state of affairs between herself

and George. Whenever she attempted it, the memory of that last conversation with Jane came over her, and she paused.

"Little Mary" was quite ill since the weather had become cool. To use Judith's expression, "She was wilting away." George was very fond of her, because, as Ellen used to tell him, she was pretty. He would play with her by the hour. She always ran to meet him, and when in her place on his knee, would prattle of every thing that had occurred in his absence, often telling things Ellen had much rather not have had told.

Kind Mr. Casey had given the young people of his acquaintance a party, which was gotten up in a very beautiful and fanciful manner under Mrs. Walker's superintendence. This fête Mary had attended, and the excitement was too great for one of her delicate and quiet temperament. The physician had pronounced her in a decline, and Ellen was entirely occupied with the care of her.

CHAPTER IX.

A LETTER from Jane. Ellen opened it eagerly, for it had been a long time since she had heard from her :

"My conscience reproaches me, Ellen," she began, "and the spirit moves me ; so what say you to a letter—a commonplace, prose, and perhaps prosy epistle, in answer to the pretty poetical ones you have sometimes honored me with ? You will wonder what sin you have committed that you should be so sorely visited ; but if it is greater than you can bear, even cry out against it.

"Only hear the rain ! I wonder if ' the angels ever bright and fair,' are not shedding tears over us frail ones below. If so, weep on, while we are hoping the grateful showers may have the same effect upon our troubled and prisoned hearts that they have on the quiet and free earth—cleansing, purifying, reproducing. Oh ! oh ! oh ! if I only had the lamp of Aladin, I would take the wings of the morning and fly—where ?—that is the question. I feel in a strange, *upsettish* sort of a mood this evening—half gay, half sad, half good, half bad, half wise, and half an idiot. I am about to commit—what do you think, Ellen ? Not murder, but matrimony ! And who do you think is to have part and parcel in this double misery ? Mr. Levering. I can imagine your start of astonishment at the idea that I am to be Mrs. Levering, but it is so, nevertheless ; and I expect to be a very happy woman. It is needless for me to speak to you of him, who know him so

much better than I do, and appreciate him as he should be appreciated. It is to you I am indebted for his acquaintance. When the day of doom arrives, I shall call upon you to officiate. In the mean time, should you be inclined to follow my example, I will waive my right, and do for you what, this not being the case, I shall expect you to do for me.

"Mr. Levering tells me you have returned from Nannie's. You now know the secret of my refusing to accompany you. I almost envy you the pleasure of having witnessed their happiness—that is, I should do so if I was not taken up with mine own. Mr. Levering also informed me of Mr. Watson's return. I think my gentleman has cultivated a strange love of home for one of his roving disposition. Write soon, a good long letter. I hear you still have that good old lady, Mrs. Royton, with you, and persist in housekeeping. I like that arrangement vastly; although I hear the wise ones shake their heads at it. Believe me there is nothing like feeling perfectly independent of this world and its ways; it is the greatest luxury this life can offer in the way of creature comforts. Write soon, *very* soon."

Ellen handed the letter to George.

"Jane Levering!" was his first exclamation; "it will be a capital match; but she does not love him."

"I think they will suit admirably, George."

"Indeed they will; but you can not think she loves him?"

"No, not love him; she admires and respects him, and he is what the world calls an excellent match."

"Yet you refused him?" She did not notice this.

"Ah! the heyday of passion is over with Levering; reason has the rein. He admired Jane's character; and the manner with which she bore herself concerning that singing on the stage exalted her in his estimation. His notions are peculiar. Then he wants a good mother for his children—he

told me as much—and a companionable wife. I know Jane well; she does not love him; but it will be a good, and I should think a happy match, for she will love him in time—he is a high-minded, honorable gentleman. She thinks 'there is nothing like feeling perfectly independent.' You women are deceivers all. I have no doubt but that he believes her attached to him."

"Nor I that she thinks him attached to her."

"Then you think it is a mutual deception?"

"If a deception at all, I do."

"Then it will serve the place of an attachment. He will be deferential and tender to his wife; she will have the demeanor of an attached person. The semblance of the feeling will beget the reality after a time. Many a happy marriage has taken place with no more of the divine spark in it than this."

"I do not like your philosophy, George."

"Philosophy for our friends, Ellen—feeling for ourselves; but it is true, you may depend upon it. Jane must have had some attachment which did not realize her first dreams. She is not a woman to marry for worldly motives, unless disappointed in other things. Poverty would never have led her to become Mrs. Levering; but poverty and disappointment might."

"I never heard of any affair of hers except that of Mr. Moss, and that he had gone away to get the wherewithal to support her. But she told me this was not true."

"Here is a broad insinuation respecting my love of home. Does she suspect our attachment?"

Ellen was very confused—so confused that George, who had been walking up and down the room, stopped, looked at her, then seated himself beside her on the sofa. She wished very much he had not asked the question. He took her hand, saying,

"What is the matter, Ellen?"

She conquered her confusion, then briefly related the substance of their conversation the last evening she saw Jane, withholding nothing relating to herself. He did not interrupt her.

"How engrossed with self I was; and you really loved me then, Ellen, while I was tormenting myself with jealous fears of Levering! It is true I wrote to Jane, only to hear what she would say of you. I did not know she had so much penetration. It was the hope that you loved me, Ellen, that kept me from many excesses. You understand me better than any other woman living, know my weaknesses, and manage me. I am not deceived. I know all the time that you are playing with the strings of my heart cunningly; but I am satisfied, for of this playing cometh good. Ellen, do you think Jane was interested in me?"

He looked full in her eye.

"Yes, I think she was interested, but that is all. I think she could have loved you, had she felt that you admired her personally."

"Did you think I loved her?"

"At one time I did."

"Never! What strange beings we are! We flirt, follow, compliment by the hour; but when we come to marry, it is not the woman we flattered at the ball that we associate with thoughts of love and home. Jane is a fascinating, in many respects a noble woman—a woman to dignify any station; but she would have made me miserable, and I her. There was too much antagonism between us; we should have quarreled in public, and been cool and sarcastic in private. She and Levering will suit exactly; I feel satisfied it will be a good match. She is capable of making great sacrifices."

"Few women have her nobleness of character, George."

She would much rather this conversation had not taken place. She did not like the idea of George's knowing another

er had suspected her regard for him, when his regard for her was unacknowledged.

That evening George walked down to Mr. Casey's merely to have the pleasure of telling Mrs. Walker the news, and enjoying her chagrin; for Mr. Levering was a reported admirer of hers. The widow did not like it; but happening, at this particular time, to have some one else on hand, she bore it better than he expected, thereby depriving him of half his gratification in telling it. He went home early, but Ellen being engaged with Mary, he did not see her. He lingered in the parlor, his thoughts wandering to their afternoon's conversation, and lulled by her voice, which reached him from above, as she sang to Mary. With almost the imagination of a woman did he build airy fabrics, and dream bright dreams to be realized in the far future. Now he was in some far city with Ellen, the cynosure of all eyes; then he was in a quiet home, with books and all the luxuries of life; again he was in the far forest, with her at his side, and his household gods about him. How he dwelt upon this picture, and fancied her watching for the first glimpse of him from afar, and going to meet him!

In a few days Ellen answered Jane's letter, saying of Mr. Levering all that she knew would please her; and there were few of whom she could say so much. Soon Mr. Levering himself appeared, and in set terms spoke of the happiness which awaited him. They talked long of Jane. He told her that at first he only saw in Jane an agreeable, sprightly woman. "Your remark concerning her led me to look deeper into her character when she came here to sing. I was pleased with her, and went to C—— purposely to visit her; there my admiration grew into a warmer feeling."

She felt rather strange to have a man, who, not very long since, had made professions of attachment to herself, make her the confidant of his regard for another; but he seemed

to have entirely forgotten the past, and there was nothing in her manner to recall it to his memory.

Mrs. Walker soon came down to talk it over, and informed her that Mr. Levering's house was undergoing a thorough repair, adding, "He has bought an elegant carriage!"

Ellen was glad he had; his means would more than warrant his keeping one.

"Certainly; but it will look strange to see the woman, to hear whom sing we have given so much per night, have the first position and finest establishment in town!"

"Not at all. When you heard her sing thus, circumstances had placed her in a false position; now she has regained her true one."

Mrs. Walker was a little envious, and a little afraid of rivalry. She liked not the idea of being eclipsed.

"I suppose it will be high treason to ask *Mrs. Levering* to sing?"

Mr. Casey thought she was more likely to sing than before, he was so fond of music.

"Nonsense! What do you know about such things? Who ever sings for a husband, except to get him? Mr. Watson, you had better be in haste—these widowers are leaving you behind in the race."

"I wait your pleasure, madam, remembering the hare and tortoise. Casey, I think you should enter the lists."

A sigh, as deep as if from Vesuvius, heaved Mr. Casey's chest as he answered,

"I am thinking of it."

Mrs. Walker shot a quick glance at Ellen, and laughed.

"Ellen, do you hear that sigh, the first symptom of the old bachelor in love?"

"There is that pretty Miss Brice, Casey; I think she is inclined toward you. You had better make up there—you would feel ten years younger if you were married. I intend

to wear the noose myself"—here he caught Mrs. Walker's dark look—"as soon as I can persuade Mrs. Walker to say yes."

She was but half propitiated. Mr. Casey did not know what to make of it. Ellen gave him a beseeching look, and he stopped his teasing the widow to flirt with her over a game of backgammon, while Mr. Casey placed himself beside Ellen and kept up a battery of suppressed sighs.

George was in a good business now; but he had no great love for it, looking upon it as drudgery which gave him no pleasure.

While all this was going on, Ellen and Mrs. Royton both felt that Mary was slowly dying.

CHAPTER X

MARY GORDON and Mr. Steele had spent the evening with Ellen Mason, and had had a silent walk home. Now he stood, with his arms resting on the corner of the low mantle, watching her as she put some flowers in water. The flowers were arranged, and she turned and met his gaze. It neither faltered nor changed its character. There was inquiry in it. She encountered it steadily for a moment, then said, with a strange expression,

"Well?"

"You do not love me, Mary?"

She drew her breath once quickly, then said, in a low, constrained tone,

"It is true. I do not!"

He neither altered his position nor removed his gaze.

"Did you ever love me?"

"No!"

She bore that look a moment longer, then crossed the room, seated herself upon the sofa, and plucked at the flowers. Her hand trembled. There was unbroken silence for five minutes, when he passed over and seated himself beside her.

She was very agitated.

"I have not loved you, Mary."

"I know that also."

Again they were silent.

"Mr. Steele," presently she said, turning to him and speaking vehemently, "you must listen to me—must hear all

I have to say. I care not what you think, you must hear me. When I first met you, I saw you admired, and, after a time, thought you loved me. I loved no one else, and believed I might learn to love you, so made up my mind to marry you should you address me. Hear it all!" She stood up before him. "Your position and your wealth tempted me. But mark me—I did admire, and *thought* I might love." She put her hands before her face.

He started up and stood beside her, his eyes flashing and his face glowing with indignation. He was about to speak, but she confronted and prevented him.

"You came to see me often; people talked of us—our names were coupled together—friends teased me. You came here one evening—your manner was cold and distant. I thought you divined my feelings. After this, I was cold and reserved to you. You sought me again and again—we became engaged. Latterly the thralldom of this engagement has been intolerable to both: I have felt you did not love me. Now, now, you know the whole; but"—she raised her finger and shook it slowly at him—"you can not judge me, Charles Steele, for you have not always been true to yourself. If you have never been tempted—never swerved from the right, then throw the first stone."

He did not speak, but the expression of his face was calmer, his manner more composed.

"I have seen this coming—felt it, and am glad it is over. I have done this night what few women would do—have performed a penance greater than ever priest inflicted upon erring devotee. I have told you I did not care for your good opinion. I do care for it, and I *will* have it, for I deserve it now more than I have ever deserved it since I have known you, for I am truer to myself. * * * Now I call upon the better part of your nature, I bid you look to yourself and say if I have been alone in the wrong. If you have never

been lured by your own passions, if you have always combated and conquered vanity and pride, then, indeed, have you a right to judge me."

She paused from exhaustion and sat down, leaning her head upon the table.

"Mary!" he presently said in a low tone, "Mary, we have both made a great mistake; when you first spoke I felt bitter and indignant—bitter at the thought of having been duped, indignant that you should have weighed my money and position. I repeat, we have made a great mistake. I thought you loved me; your manner the evening we went to the lecture, and subsequently, confirmed me in this impression."

He paused; he saw that this statement galled, and the wounded vanity of the man must have vent.

"I admired, and at times *almost* loved you. It was these feelings, together with the conviction that you were not indifferent to me, which led me to speak, and resulted in our engagement."

"And pray"—she raised her head proudly and looked at him, for at this moment she would rather he had assigned any motive, however base, for her conduct than preference—"what was there in my manner to lead you to this conclusion?"

"Its unevenness only; at one time you were cordial, at another cold. I have never admired you more than on the night you refer to. It was the effort to restrain this admiration which made me appear distant."

"And you, with a cold heart and cooler head, could watch my manner, calculate upon it, and come to me with professions which were from the lips only. I thank you for it, Charles Steele; you have taught me a lesson I shall remember my life-long. I thank you!"

He was stung by the mocking sarcasm of her manner.

"And have I nothing to thank *you* for, lady? Methinks, in your heat, you forget the delusions which may beset a man who believes himself beloved by a woman like yourself; he may even *imagine* he loves again."

"Man, man!" she said, starting up, her whole frame quivering, "I never loved you—never—and you *felt* it!"

"Yet I was your promised husband."

"It would never have come to that—never! I know it never would."

"I," he said—and he arose and stood facing her—"have also to thank you for a lesson: hereafter, when I meet with love, and faith, and *disinterested* affection, I will embody it, and call it—Mary."

He turned to go. Mortified, self-abased as she was, she yet felt that she had galled him more by saying she had been tempted by his position and fortune. She could not let him leave with the idea that these alone had influenced her—it was too humiliating. She knew not how to address him, for he stood confronting her with a look of cool scorn upon his face, which roused and inflamed her almost beyond self-control. For one instant she paused, drew a deep breath, and choked back the passion that was almost stifling her; then, with a quick tread, she lessened the distance between them, and laid her hand lightly on his arm to stay him.

He bowed low, so low that it was almost a mockery, as he felt her touch. She drew back, folded her arms, and met his eye steadily: his expression changed not.

"Do not look at me in that way, Charles Steele; you do not feel what that look expresses, and it can not touch me. You know that in your heart you acquit me of the baseness that look is meant to condemn. You know that you believe my statement, and that if I had not thought I could have loved you, your wealth and position would have been nothing in my sight—yes, you know this, for you know *me*. It was

your knowledge of me which taught you I did not love you, not my words."

He neither altered his look nor his position. She was galled almost beyond endurance.

"And what have I done"—she stamped her foot impatiently upon the floor and drew herself up haughtily—"that I should quail before you? Who is there to judge between us? I, believing I was loved, tempted by worldliness, was untrue to my woman's nature; but you—you—what temptation had you to resist? What apology have you to offer for coming to me with deceit in your heart and guile upon your lip? Is there honor—is there truth—is there manliness in this? If so, gather up your garments and pass on." She waved her hand toward the door, but he stood still.

"You feel there is not, and while your eye condemns me, your own heart tells you that you have been false—false to yourself, and untrue to me; false, and for what? what was the tempting bribe that lured Charles Steele from his honor? His vanity. To gratify this, he cast aside what most men hold most dear, and became the weakest of the weak!"

She had spoken so rapidly, she had to pause, exhausted.

"Now I call upon you, and expect you to answer, not as man to woman, but as one honorable gentleman would answer another—do you believe me?"

"I do."

"Well"—she choked down her excited feelings, and tried to drive the blood back from her face and make her tone calm—"we part now to meet again as strangers. Good-night, sir! it is late."

She made an attempt to pass out, but he stepped between her and the door.

"We must not part thus, Mary. You must listen to me now. You accuse me of what no man can hear coldly. You say that, actuated by vanity, I came to you with deceit in my

heart, and guile on my lip. This is not so. Under an impulse of admiration, feeling grateful to you for the affection with which I believed you regarded me, I proposed, and was accepted."

Her face flushed, and she tried to speak.

"Pardon me," he continued. "I do not wish to say any thing offensive. I only state the simple truth, wishing you to understand why I did that which you have so stigmatized, but which I have never regretted, and shall never regret, for you could have made me love you, Mary!"

He paused. His tone was measured and cold; but she had learned this was always the case when he struggled for self-control; and she knew he was under strong emotion.

"You have mortified me, Mary. I feel out—you have wounded my self-love. Yet this night I admire you more than I have ever admired you; for you have dared, at the risk of doing this, to tell me the truth, and have sustained yourself in so doing. I thank you—from my heart, I thank you. You say truly, you have done what few women would do."

Again he paused.

"Now"—he held out his hand to her—"in view of all these things, Mary; with every word you have spoken fixed in my memory—with my admiration for you tenfold increased, I again offer you my hand and heart!"

She had expected harsh words—recrimination. She was subdued—overcome; and sinking down on the sofa, burst into a passion of tears.

He sat down beside her, and with a manner and tone more excited than she had ever known his to be, repeated again and again, his words.

"Go, go!" she said; "leave me. You wished to humble me, and you have succeeded. Go!"

She shook off the hand he had laid on hers, and covering up her face, sobbed with shame and passion.

"This is mean, Charles Steele—mean—unworthy. To-night, at least, I have been true with you. I did not tell you, as another in my place might have done, that I had been deceived—that I had thought I loved you; for I was not deceived—I never thought I loved you; I only *hoped* I might. And now—now you insult me with a proffer doubly false, and which you know, and I feel, is false, as you make it. I have not deserved this, sir, at your hands; you shall at least treat me with the respect which I know you feel."

Once more she tried to leave the room, but again he stopped her.

"You say true. I respect you more this night than I ever respected mortal woman; and Mary, if there is faith in man and trust in woman, I mean what I say. You can not doubt me."

She did not doubt him—she had not doubted him; but so humbled was she by his proffer and his manner—so keenly did she feel that he was acting the better part, that a something in her nature bade her turn upon him—a wish to make him feel somewhat of the unworthiness she felt herself, mingled with a half regret that perhaps she had lost what she never might regain, actuated her. Certainly, he had never had the hold upon her that he had in this hour, when it was to be altogether lost.

For one moment she sat still, and did not reply to him. Her vanity and self-love bade her accept his proffered regard, and triumph, even while her bitter words rang in his ears, and he had heard that she had taken him for his wealth and position. The temptation was a strong one thus to prove her power. But she was touched by his manner. She saw she had gained where she thought she had lost most; and she felt that, however they might deceive themselves in the ex-

citement of this interview, all confidence for the future was destroyed. He could not now love her, nor she him; for when the passion and the illusion of wrought feeling had passed away, the bitter truths spoken would come back and remain rankling forever. Now they would part, and possibly she might make it a lasting regret to him that they had parted. This thought brought with it so great a balm for her wounded pride and self-love, that she determined to act upon it.

Collecting herself, she arose and put out her hand.

"I thank you, Charles, for what you have just said; if I ever forgive myself for the past, you have helped me to do so. Your generosity has almost reconciled me to myself; but you must feel that it is impossible *now* for there to be aught between us. Yet you, this night, have made me regret there can not be."

"Mary!"

"Good-night! I understand and appreciate your conduct. Wayward I may be—faulty I am—but mean I am not. Go—go!"

"Mary, Mary, the meanness is mine! You can not trust, or you would not reject me."

"I do trust; I have more faith in you than I ever had, but I reject your proffer. Go, go! I beg you to go."

Her forced composure was giving way; she felt she could no longer keep up even the semblance of calmness.

"I will see you again, Mary. I can not take this as your final answer."

"But you must, Mr. Steele. Good-night! Do not speak to me of it again."

"I am bound to abide by your decision," he said in a cold tone. "Good-night, Miss Gordon!"

He had reached the hall-door when he heard her sob. He turned and went back. She sat with her head buried in the sofa-cushions, sobbing violently.

"Mary!" He seated himself beside her, and threw his arm about her. She sprang up as though she felt the touch of a scorpion, and, starting back, shook herself free from him.

"Man—man!" she said, "do you mean to insult me? Have you come back to mock me? Did I not tell you to go?" and she stamped on the floor.

"Mary, it was my own heart brought me back. I go or stay at your bidding."

"Go, then," she said; "finally, lastly, and forever—go!"

"Be it so."

He was gone; and Mary Gordon was struggling with such a tempest of feeling as she had never felt before. Pride, anger, mortification, lost self-esteem, were battling within, one with the other. She walked the floor; she wrung her hands and cried; she tried to sit down, but she could not keep still; she tried to think, but the chaos within prevented all thought. There was a sense of humiliation that was deep and bitter.

Mary had for a long time, as she told Mr. Steele, felt the thralldom of this engagement. At times the thought would come over her, "He does not love me!" but it was only for a moment. His admiration for her was so evident, his attentions so constant, and had become so a matter of habit, that he even ceased to question himself about it. This evening she had been very gay, and he sat listlessly by, not entering into the conversation, but listening in his usual half-absorbed way. Mary had learned the trick of his humor, and knew that this manner argued any thing but want of interest or attention; and therefore, perhaps, with the feeling natural to a woman, she was more agreeable to others and less noticing to himself. He had been very silent all the way home, and resisted all her efforts at conversation. When they had reached there, and he charged her with not loving him, she thought at once—this is the result of his strange mood and

manner; he feels this chain, and wishes to be free; I had better tell him, and have it over; and with a sort of desperation she rushed into it. Then, when he told her he had never loved her, the conviction flashed upon her that it was true—he never had: all the pride of the woman was roused: she determined to avenge herself upon herself and him by telling the truth. It was a kind of reparation, too, which she compelled her pride to make to her better nature.

Mr. Steele walked down street with a slow tread and bent head, until he came opposite George's office. There was a light burning there, and he crossed over and went in. George sat with his feet resting upon the table, reading and smoking. He raised his eyes from his book as Steele entered, but, without removing his cigar from his mouth, said,

"Just left Mary?"

"Yes. Have you another cigar?"

George leaned forward, opened a drawer, and taking from it a box of Havanas, pushed them toward him.

Mr. Steele took one, bit it, and, throwing himself full length upon the settee, smoked steadily. Neither of them spoke for half an hour.

"It is too warm to read!" and George threw down his book and wiped his brow. "Come, let us take a stroll." He put on his coat.

Steele threw away what was left of his cigar, took another, and they sallied out.

"The moon is just rising," remarked George. "It is late, and every body is abed—just the time I like to stroll through the city. Throw away your cigar, and let's chat. If you have any complaints to make, I will listen to them; it is much better complaining to a friend than to the moon. A friend may listen to you and sympathize, while the moon but looks coldly on you at best."

But Mr. Steele smoked on.

They passed Ellen's, and George watched the light which gleamed from her window as long as it was in sight, humming a low tune the while.

"Mary and I are off, George." He threw the cigar away.

"Off! why you amaze me. It is not three hours since I saw you together."

Mr. Steele repeated in substance what had passed between them.

"Did you really think she did not love you?"

"No, I had been watching her, and thinking of her all the evening. She had been particularly bright, and a something, I know not what exactly, urged me to make the charge. It was not jealousy, but she had appeared so well, and others so interested in her, that I half resented her careless manner to myself. I wanted to get up a little scene with her, to provoke her, that I might have the pleasure of hearing her defend herself. I had no idea of this result."

"But what possessed you to offer yourself after all this?"

"A sense of honor; for she taunted me with having been misled by my vanity. This cut me; then, too, I wished to save her wounded self-love!"

"She had not hesitated to outrage yours."

"True; but then she was galled, and there was a certain nobleness, despite her own confession, in her conduct which I liked. She made me do what I have never done before—wince at a woman's words."

"Yet she told you she had been influenced by your fortune and position."

"She did. But I can forgive that; for I had told her in the beginning that I had not loved her, and this was but the natural revenge of a woman so outraged. And again, it was her due; for, while smarting under her words, I had said that gratitude for her supposed preference had actuated me—the most galling thing I could have said to a woman of

her spirit; and therefore, in view of all the circumstances, I made all the reparation I could; and when I saw the spirit in which it was declined, regretted it was not accepted."

"You are Quixotic in your notions of honor! What if she had accepted you?"

"I should have spent my life in trying to make her happy, and, in so doing, would have been happy myself."

"This is all very well as a theory, Steel; but this is a common-sense age, and these theories can not be put into practice."

"You should have seen her as she stood before me, and charged me with a want of truth and honor. She never touched me until that moment. I had admired her spirit, but felt a deep resentment at her words; but here I was vulnerable, and for the first time quailed. She certainly talks better when under excitement than any woman I know. She is not tame—that hot blood of her's may lead her into errors, but the head and the heart will correct them. I can forgive a woman much who has such points about her. Now what do you think of it?"

"I think it fortunate for both of you that it has happened. You would never have loved her. You admired and respected, but had no warmth of passion. Believe me, these must all be mingled to make love. There is such a thing as having too much respect."

"I thought you had quit theorizing. Watson, do give me the plain common sense you boasted of just now; I am not in a mood for any thing else."

"You, to talk of common sense, who, upon a false notion of honor, have done the wildest thing man could do! But, seriously, Mary Gordon is a woman of noble purposes, and I think her statement to you was a perfectly correct one; she felt there was some redemption in telling you the truth—she felt so self-abased though, that she will be very jealous of

doing any thing which could lower her in her own esteem and yours. I think you had better drop it here."

Steele was not satisfied with George's reasoning, and wrote to Mary next day. His answer was a kind but decided refusal to renew their acquaintance on the terms it had been. "Yet," she said, "I regret it, for I feel now how much I might have loved you."

George could not understand Steele's course of conduct. An acknowledgment on the part of a woman that she had been actuated by any feeling but attachment to himself, would have so outraged his self love, as to leave no room for thought or consideration of her—he would not have spared her one pang. Steele thought of a remark of Mary's concerning him.

"He is brilliant, fascinating," she said, one evening; "but there is a want within!"

CHAPTER XI.

MARY was dead! She gradually sank away to her last sleep. Ellen wept for her, but her grief seemed scarcely to exceed that of George; he had been strongly attached to the child, and seemed sadly to miss her presence and prattle. The second day after her death brought Peyton and Nannie to town. After the funeral, before returning home, a family council was held, at which it was decided that, as soon as Ellen could arrange matters, she was to break up and go to Peyton's to reside. Ellen reluctantly consented to this. Her ostensible motive for keeping house hitherto had been the wish to have a home for Mary; but now that Mary was no more, this would not avail, and she felt it would be almost unmaidenly, as a single woman, to keep up the establishment now, when she could have a pleasant home with Nannie. She had sufficient to support her independent of any exertion on her part—the three hundred dollars brought in by her father's investment and the three hundred the house would rent for. "I see no propriety in your continuing to keep house, Ellen," said Peyton; "if you are not happy with us, you are independent of us, and can go elsewhere, where you can be happy." She saw they would be grievously hurt at her refusal to take up her abode with them, and she was herself convinced it was the most proper arrangement. Mrs. Royton had a most pressing invitation from Peyton to spend the winter with them. He saw she hesitated to accept, and told her he should consider her so doing a particular favor. When

this was arranged to the satisfaction of all, Peyton and Nannie departed, laughingly telling George that when Ellen was their inmate they expected to see him every Saturday night. Ellen directly set about making preparations for the move. George had silently acquiesced in their arrangements; but when he saw them really preparing for departure, he tried hard to break her resolution, and even spoke to Mrs. Royton on the subject of their being married immediately.

"I can see nothing to be gained by putting it off Ellen. What matters it, except to our happiness, whether it take place now or a year hence. I believe it would be better to keep together. I shall feel homeless."

Ellen was firm, for Peyton had foreseen this, and made her promise to be married at his house; so his entreaties availed not, save to shorten the period of waiting to six months.

She had many temptations—many struggles with herself during the brief period of packing. She had a nervously foolish fear of his disapprobation, and knowing he paid due respect unto the world and what the world said, persevered in going. If she could have decided to have been married immediately, she would have remained; but old Mrs. Mason had been a great stickler for propriety, and had put off Nannie's wedding, not permitting it to take place during the period of her mourning for her father, because she thought it was not paying proper respect to his memory. Ellen, having been educated to think of these things, could not now throw off their influence. She had a horror of showing to George a too great desire for his society; there was no prudery about her, but he had a habit of observing, scoffing at, and pronouncing judgment on others in these respects, and it was his opinion he prized, and the knowledge of it nerved her against his solicitations and the entreaties of her own heart. She did not understand the feeling which made him so observant of others to be, as it was, a compound of half envy, half regret

At length all was ready, and, accompanied by George, they left for Peyton's. Ellen tried hard not to weep as she stepped over the threshold, but it was impossible, the tears would not be forced back. That evening found them safe at their new home, and, after lingering a day or two, George left. It took them some time to get settled. Mrs. Royton seemed to feel more at home than Ellen, going about with her usual cheerful manner.

Almost the first thing Ellen did, after getting somewhat of a home feeling, was to write to Jane a long and unreserved letter, in answer to which Jane said, "If you could prevail upon Nannie to give me an invitation to her house for a few days or a week, I think I could be prevailed upon to accept." Ellen read this to the married pair, which produced a letter from Peyton on the instant, insisting upon her coming, and appointing a certain day to meet her at a neighboring town. The next week, accordingly, brought Jane, for a stay of a few days only, as she was preparing for her wedding. She and Ellen talked incessantly. She unfolded all her plans, and spoke of Mr. Levering, saying,

"Do you know, Ellen, I never was as surprised in my life as when he addressed me."

Jane had lost much of the bitterness of tone which she had sometimes had in speaking, and in her conversations about her marriage spoke always in a cheerful and hopeful manner. She did not talk of loving Mr. Levering, made no reference to her feelings toward him, but, even to Ellen, had the manner of "of course you think I love him, as I am to be his wife!" although she felt Ellen understood her. She had no suspicion of Mr. Levering's having addressed Ellen, and Ellen did not intend she should.

"Ellen," she laughingly said one day, "what do the good folks say of my marriage?"

"It took us all so much by surprise, that we expressed nothing but our astonishment."

"It had the usual run of the world, I suppose—some laughed, some sneered, and all envied."

"Many did envy, I have no doubt; for Mr. Levering was thought the best catch—the beau, par excellence—of our circle."

"But you were not among the number, my dearie; you were too happy to envy any one. But come, do tell me how you contrived each

"To spell

The thoughts the loved one would not tell."

The end of the week brought George and Mr. Levering, who had come to escort Jane home. There was a cordial meeting between George and Jane, yet a little confusion in her manner as he whispered his congratulations, adding, he considered himself indebted to her for no small share of his own happiness.

That night, as they were going to bed—for Ellen and Jane roomed together—Jane, just before she blew out the light, leaned her elbow on the dressing-table, and her face on her hand, as she said,

"Ellen, have you been telling George tales of me?"

"No! Why?"

"Nothing, only he said something about being indebted to me for happiness, and I thought it possible you had mentioned the conversation which passed between us the last night I spent with you."

"So I did, that part which related to myself, and that only. You know not the good that conversation did me."

Jane looked relieved, blew out the light, and went to bed. The subject was never referred to again. The next day Jane left, attended by Mr. Levering, and George returned to town.

The winter had now fairly set in. There was no walking, except for exercise; but Ellen, who was very fond of

riding on horseback, frequently rode to the neighboring towns with Peyton, who liked her companionship, as it shortened the tedium of the way. They had but few neighbors, yet these, in pleasant weather, when they could get together, formed a very agreeable society—the gentlemen frequently paying visits of a day and a night, or two days. Nannie visited but little, but Mrs. Royton generally accompanied Ellen on all visiting occasions, and was a great favorite with both young and old.

The time was passing much more rapidly than Ellen supposed it could, for now she had constantly something to look forward to on the arrival of the regular Wednesday and Saturday's mail, which always brought her papers, magazines, or pamphlets, with a letter from George, and often one from Mrs. Walker, with sometimes a few lines from good Mr. Casey, telling how much she was missed. George's letters were budgets containing any and every thing he thought would amuse; while Mrs. Walker's, always gossiping, had often some notice of his movements, and were therefore doubly welcome. Once a month George came in person, and stayed from Friday until Monday.

One Saturday afternoon, as Ellen sat at the window, thinking it almost time for the mail to come, she saw the boy who had Peyton's orders to go for it start on the path toward the village. Throwing up the window, she called to him to know if that was his errand. On his answering it was, she bade him come back, and said she would go, as she wished to walk.

The snow lay several inches deep on the ground, but as she had not been out for some days, she felt like taking the walk; and as Peyton would not be home until evening, there was no haste for the papers, and she could lengthen it if she chose; besides this, she was impatient for her letter—she wished to read it as she returned. The village at which the

post-office was situated lay about a mile and a half distant, and the path to it wound down a hillside to the valley beneath. She did not follow the road, but took a narrow sheep-track, which wound through the woods. The scene had a dreary aspect. The leafless trees sighed in the wind, as though they mourned their summer covering, and the wind lifted the snow, which had drifted against fences and in hollows, scattering it in her face as it whirled by. She had pleasant thoughts, and the scene, dreary as it was, affected her pleasantly. She was well wrapped up, and there was a sense of comfort about her—a feeling of content.

George had left the Monday before. She had heard from him on Wednesday. This was Saturday, and she knew there would be a letter for her.

As she left the woods, she stopped at the school-house to shake off the snow, ere she passed out upon the open road, and saw, upon the opposite hilltop, a horseman, riding rapidly forward, whose figure was in bold relief against the gloomy sky. She thought, as she saw his cloak blown straight out by the wind, how cold he must be; then, wrapping her boa once again about her neck, and settling her muff, with a pleasant feeling of warmth, she stepped into the traveled road.

Walking rapidly forward, she soon reached the little store where the post-office was kept. In answer to her inquiries for letters, one was handed her for Nannie; a couple, with some newspapers, for Peyton; but nothing for herself.

"Is that all?"

"Yes, all."

"I think there must be some mistake; will you be kind enough to look again?"

He looked, but there was not any thing. Disappointed and troubled, she left the store, and slowly pursued her way home. George must be ill. She quickly looked at the letters she held to see the post-mark; they were not from him. As she

turned out of the road, she heard the clatter of a horse's hoofs behind her; but it made no impression, and she did not turn her head. She was engrossed thinking why George had not written. The clatter continued, still she heeded it not; but in a moment more was startled by the heavy spring of the horseman to the ground, and turning, with a startled exclamation, found herself in George's arms.

"Where have you been?"

"To the post-office."

"And had no letter!" In a moment he understood her absorbed manner. "You are so strangely dressed, I did not know you. Is that Mrs. Royton's old cloak you have on? How oddly you look. But you have not asked why I am here; have you no curiosity?"

So talking, he drew her arm through his, and led his horse by the bridle.

"I am glad I met you, Ellen. I want a long talk with you. But are you not cold?" Again he laughed at her odd appearance.

"No, I am very comfortable."

"But you have not inquired what brought me."

"Some business with Peyton, I suppose; but what did bring you?"

"Do you remember, when I was here last summer, our conversation about the wilderness, and my asking you if you could be happy there with me alone?"

"Yes, perfectly."

"Mary is dead, and I have come to test you. I received a letter yesterday from my friend Kirk. He tells me that some commissioners are going out among the Indians, and wish some one to accompany them who has been there before, and offers me the place at their request. It will suit me exactly; and I am tired of this, and have been for a long time; but you have detained me here. If Mary were living, I

could not ask this of you; but she is no more, and I have your assurance that you could be happy with me alone. Leading this kind of life, with you as my wife, I could be most happy. But you must decide: it rests with you alone. If you go not, I remain. Stop, Ellen; do not answer me now. Think of it; do not make a sacrifice which you might, some time hence, repent. If we go, we must start in six weeks, for in two months the company rendezvous at St. Louis.

"I do not ask you to take upon yourself the privations of border life. You will have every luxury which can be procured in the forts—not many, nor such as you are accustomed to have—but just such as a woman like yourself could be content with. Judith will accompany us. What shall I say for myself, Ellen, except that I will be to you all that I ever hoped to be? Think of it—think if you can cut yourself loose from society, except the chance society of such officers' wives as we may happen to meet there, and depend upon me and upon books for companionship."

He paused; Ellen stopped, and put her hand in his.

"I will go, George!"

"No, you must not decide now; you must take it into consideration, and if there is a particle of reluctance in your heart to the project, we remain." It may be, perhaps it is, selfishness which prompts me to ask this of you; but it is with the conviction, that we shall be much happier—much nearer each other than we are now."

They talked thus until they reached the house, when George gave his horse in charge to a little negro, who was soon off on its back, while together they entered the parlor. Ellen left him with Peyton, while she went in search of Nannie, first going to her own room to take off her things. As she caught a reflection of herself in the glass, she wished she had not worn Mrs. Royton's cloak, it was such an old-fash-

ioned, Methodistical garment; but then the color in her cheek reconciled her to her outer appearance; and now she had no time to think of any thing but George, and what brought him. She did not fully realize what he had said about going to the West; so, stirring the fire, seated herself for a few minutes' calm thought, previous to encountering Nannie's violent opposition.

A few minutes later, Nannie tapped at the door and came in. When Ellen first told her that George had come—that he wished to go to the West, and take her as his wife, it did not seem to occur to her that it was possible for Ellen to go; but when told she had determined to accompany him, her amazement was boundless. At that time what is now the "Queen City" was looked upon as just within the pale of civilization, and "The West" was used as an indefinite term for a vast wilderness untrodden by the foot of man. Thus Nannie could not imagine Ellen was sane in her wish to go. At first she laughed at the idea; then, finding she was really in earnest, expostulated and wept. Peyton was scarcely less moved, and soon sought her to talk it over.

After tea, he followed Ellen as she left the room, and they had a long talk together. He represented to her the injury he thought it would be to George's prospects.

"He is now in a good business, which in a few years will yield him a handsome income in a profession which brings him before the public, and requires the exercise of all his energies and talents. He loses all this by going West—throws himself out of practice. His inert habits will grow upon him, fostered as they will be by that kind of life; and you will return, after years spent there, to begin the world with nothing; for you can not expect to pass the remainder of your life there. In two years your income will be reduced to one half, for the lease of the house will then be out. His is already reduced, for he told me before my marriage that he had

lost the half of what little he possessed in some unprofitable speculation."

"But Louis—"

"Nay, listen to me, Ellen; you have great influence over him. I consider his future prospects rest entirely upon you, for he will not go if you refuse to accompany him, and it is no place for you, living as you always have among a refined society. Decide to remain; believe me, it will be better for you both. At his time of life, George should be settled in purpose, and this is undoing all that the past few years has done. Decide to remain, and he will soon be reconciled to your decision. Believe me, Ellen, my dear sister, I am thinking only of your interest."

"I know it, Louis—I feel it; but should I do as you wish, I should not be content. Ever since his return, he has had the abiding wish to go back, and I have been the bond which kept him: in all our conversations, he has continually referred to the time when he should again be in the forest. During the first days of our engagement, he delighted to draw pictures of Western life, and often expressed his pleasure at the idea of one day showing me the beauties of its scenery. Should we remain here, I could not be content with the knowledge that he had this unsatisfied longing still at his heart, and I the bar to its realization; and the time *might* come when, his affection weakened by my selfishness, he would desire to go alone. I am anxious to go, and have no regrets save in leaving Nannie and yourself." She went up to him and laid her hand upon his arm; tears glistened in her eyes.

"Do not feel hurt with me—do not think I love you less because I love him more; but, indeed, I must go!"

"Well, Ellen, well"—and he kissed her cheek—"you must know what is best for your own happiness. You are about to separate from us; but remember, whatever happens to you in life, I am your brother, and you have always a warm place in my heart and at my hearth."

He said no more, for he felt it was useless.

It was some time before he could talk Nannie into looking at it calmly: "She had no patience," she said, "with George's selfishness."

"We are all selfish in seeking happiness," he replied; "and since he is so strongly inclined to go, I think it is better they should do so. He has certainly realized one of his life's dreams in being loved supremely, and he loves her little less."

That evening and the next day, although George and Ellen were much together, he made no allusion to the subject. In the afternoon there was preaching in the village, and he asked her to go. She was soon ready: they walked on, little being said until they entered the wood. She understood his silence to spring from a wish not to influence her in her decision.

"We shall often think of this woodland next year, George, when we see the forests on a nobler and grander scale."

"Then you are willing to go, Ellen?"

"Did I not tell you so yesterday? I am more than willing; I wish to go."

"Without any regrets?"

"Without any, save those which spring from leaving Nannie and Peyton: they are happy, and I am not necessary to their happiness, while you tell me I am to yours."

"But, Ellen, do you know I shall be absent from you for days, even weeks sometimes? You will be in a fort, well protected; but I shall be obliged occasionally to leave you, for we must go upon expeditions upon which you can not accompany us."

"I am not to be intimidated; I have thought over it all, and am anxious to go."

So it was settled. They reached the church—the school-house, and seated themselves to hear a dull sermon; but it did not seem long to either: their thoughts were not with the

preacher, who, proud of the attention of the *quality* in front of him, wearied his audience with a repetition of his first tame remarks. Oh vanity! thou hast thy uses and abuses. These two attentive hearers were abroad with the wind, their hearts tuned to the harmony of Nature, the deep and silent bass of his heart to the low, sweet, trembling treble of hers.

Thou dreamest not, poor, simple-minded preacher, that before thee are two souls who have entered upon a new life, drinking from a never-failing fountain—a fountain whose waters may be mixed, perverted, turned from their course, yet which will everlastingly spring up anew, nurturing and watering the plants of faith, forbearance, and self-sacrifice.

Ellen, as she had told Peyton, had often observed how tenaciously George's thoughts clung to the associations formed in the West; therefore she was not so much surprised as the others at this communication. He would of course give up his profession, but the emolument he would receive for his services would more than support them; he had, as Peyton told her, lost one half of his six hundred a year, so carefully husbanded for him by Colonel Mason. He had scarcely hoped she would so willingly acquiesce, and she was not herself aware how much the simple phrase "I have come to test you, Ellen!" had influenced her.

Mrs. Royton said but little concerning it, and to all Nannie's complaints answered, "I do not see things as Ellen does now; but when I was of her age, I should have done what she is about doing."

George left, with the understanding that Ellen was to be in town in the course of the next week, to make arrangements and do her shopping.

She was alone once more: she thought of the change, and almost believed herself in a dream, so quickly had it all been determined upon.

CHAPTER XII.

MRS. WALKER's astonishment could not be equalled when George, at Ellen's request, informed her of the state of affairs between them. The idea of their marriage, which at any other time would have excited many feelings, was lost in the astounding one of their going to the West—the West, which in her mind was on a parallel with Botany Bay; to which, had she the choice, she would have much sooner gone. She was so amazed that she forgot her usual tact, and, from the fullness of her heart, exclaimed, "She must be crazy!"

His smile, bow, and "Thank you!" recalled her to herself. She was a woman who could not directly recover—it required time and schooling; for, upon feeling she made a mistake of the kind, she lost her temper.

George had communicated this intelligence in such a cool, easy, matter-of-course sort of a way—as though she was *au fait* to it all, and he was merely giving it officially—that she could have caught the cue and had the same manner; and would have done so; but when he said, "We are going directly to the Far West!" her astonishment overcame her prudence, and his smile told her she was understood. She was disconcerted, and did not quite recover herself during this visit. However, the next time he came—which was to inform her Ellen would be with her in a few days—she had her usual manner. She had a great desire to see Ellen since she had heard of this engagement. She looked upon her with much the same feeling with which we would gaze upon a

harmless lunatic, not being able to satisfy ourselves of his sanity or insanity. Mr. Casey could scarce understand it at all—it seemed to him the world had turned upside down. Here was the breaking up of all the association of years. He sighed heavily, and congratulated George with tears in his eyes, but he could not trust himself to speak to Ellen about it.

Ellen's shopping expeditions were another source of wonder to Mrs. Walker. She could not disconnect the idea of a wedding with wedding finery—white satin, blonde, and laces; and when she saw Ellen purchase for herself quantities of just such clothing as was suitable to the place where she was going, and none of the paraphernalia usually purchased upon such occasions, she lost her interest in the preparations, and felt a sort of contempt for the whole concern—pitied her from the bottom of her heart, while she marveled at her infatuation.

The day before she left town, Ellen received a note from Mr. Levering, accompanied by a beautiful writing-desk, "A jewel of a thing!" as Mrs. Walker expressed it, who always had an eye to the expensive. Mr. Levering said in the note, "I can not tell you the esteem I have for you; but if you will sometimes write me a line upon this desk, it will serve to show me you have still an appreciation of my regard."

"Do you think Jane would altogether like this, Ellen?" said George, as he paused over the phraseology of the note.

"Yes, I know it would gratify her that he thought of it."

"Of the desk, yes; but it is the wording of the note I am thinking of. This is really a beautiful little thing—so complete; every thing in it, from crow quill to gilt edge."

George had written to his friend Kirk, who, in answer, said, "I knew by your own telling that you were no longer single of purpose, although you took so much pains to say nay to it in your letters. It was still 'woman, dear woman.' With or without an invite, Watson, I am coming to the wedding,

for I am anxious to see the flower that is so willing to be transplanted to the wilderness to bloom unseen."

Ellen stayed two weeks in town with Mrs. Walker, who assisted her greatly in her shopping, driving her about in all directions; but who yet looked curiously upon the pair when she saw them together, not altogether able to disguise a feeling of half pity. George now heard decidedly from the commissioners, and it was settled; so Ellen returned with Peyton, who had come to town on business for his father. After arranging every thing, George was to follow in three weeks, when the wedding was to take place. Ellen told Judith of her plans, and asked if she was willing to accompany her.

"I hope, Miss Ellen, you didn't think of going without me. I was born in master's family, and hope to die in it."

"But you certainly do not wish to leave me, Judith?" said Nannie.

"You see how it is, Miss Nannie; you married out of the family, like. Master George and Miss Ellen are somehow like my own childer—as nigh me as my own flesh and blood. I've whipped him many a time when he was little."

"You certainly have a right to go with them, Judith," said Peyton, "and a more faithful follower they could not have."

Judith was of that class of servants you often meet with in slave states. Born in the family of Judge Mason's father, she had been the playmate of the younger children, and was given to the judge by his father when he married and went to housekeeping, she being then a young woman. She had nursed Mary, Ellen, and Nannie in their babyhood—had been with them as they grew up, and, feeling embodied with the fortunes of the family, felt it almost as much her right to be informed when any important event happened to them as their mother did, and would talk it over as freely with them as they would themselves. She was a woman of strong

good sense, honest, and religious, and just as proud of and as attached to the Masons as though they had been her own children, and would have made as many sacrifices for them. She was noted for her plain speaking, and had often, when Nannie was a young lady, offended her grievously by reproving her sharply. Nannie, thinking she had outgrown this, once complained before her father of the liberties taken by Judith, when he said,

"Tut! child; she has a right: what care did she not take of you in your childhood. I have a great respect for Judith, and will answer for it, she never chides you when you do not deserve it."

She had always clung to Ellen, was with her through all her housekeeping, had followed her to Nannie's; for she had been long free, having been given to Judge Mason for a term of years, which had expired. She loved George almost as much as she loved Ellen, for he had always a pleasant word for her; and on going away or returning, shook hands with her as regularly as with the other members of the household. She, therefore, thought it as much a matter of course that she was to go with them on their marriage, as that they were to go together. This marriage was a great triumph to her; she had always prophesied it would take place; and with the shrewdness common to persons of her condition, when sewing in Ellen's room, and seeing she was low-spirited, would make some remark concerning "Master George," which would lead Ellen to talk of him; then she would tell stories of his childhood, and laugh at the tricks he had played her. George had asked her one day if she would be willing to accompany them; and as the matter was not then decided, she was greatly flattered, and prepared with alacrity to leave her little world and follow their fortunes.

Peyton had at last talked Nannie into making the best of the matter, although she could not feel cordially toward

George as Ellen's husband—she thought Ellen wasted upon him. Ellen and she now spent all their time together sewing, talking, and planning. She had anticipated so much from Ellen's residence with her, that this wedding was a great disappointment. She, however, tried to look upon the bright side of it, and entered with a warm heart into all her plans, seeing every thing that was in her power done for her comfort. Many sad, yet pleasant talks did they have together of their father, mother, and the days that were gone; they seemed to feel instinctively that this would be the last opportunity they would have to revive old memories, and bring them nearer together ere other cares and interests stepped between. "Do you remember this? or have you forgotten that?" was constantly recurring, as some reminiscence of other days came back to them.

It was the beginning of the last week which she was to spend with them, and old Mrs. Peyton sent the carriage, with a request that Ellen would go over and spend a day and a night. She would have declined, for Nannie was not well, but Peyton wished her to go.

"So, Ellen, I hear you are going out to fight the Indians!" was Mr. Peyton's first salutation. "Well, you are a brave girl; but if you were my daughter, you should not go."

"But suppose you could not help it?"

"Then I would give you a kiss and a God-speed." And he suited the action to the word.

"Tell me about 'Miss Nancy' and Louis; how do they get along together? Have they quarreled yet?"

"No, I believe not. It would be a difficult matter to get Nannie to find fault with her husband."

"That is right. I used to think I never should be able to make any thing of Louis—that he would lose himself in a city, and not settle down a regular country gentleman, as his father and grandfather had done before him; but from the

time he was thrown with 'Miss Nancy,' it was all fixed. There is nothing like marrying men young, Ellen—nothing like it—it keeps them out of mischief!"

Ellen spent the time quite pleasantly, for they were very agreeable old people, and returned home the second day after leaving. She had a pleasant ride, and Peyton met her at the hall-door, all smiles.

"Come up stairs, Ellen, and see my little daughter?"

"Nannie! how is she?"

"Getting along well."

She was quickly by the bedside of the pale, but happy mother, and received the child from Peyton's arms, who said, as he laid it upon her lap,

"We shall call her Mary!"

Nannie did not talk, but followed with her eyes every movement of Ellen's, as she uncovered the babe. Directly Ellen said,

"Here, take it, nurse; Nannie really looks anxious, as if she thought it would be hurt in the handling."

Nannie smiled, and turned to the child as it was laid beside her. Ellen kissed her, and left her to the rest she needed.

As she sat in Nannie's room day by day, she saw that the new feelings awakened by the birth of her child were occupying the mother, and lessening, in a great degree, the sorrow she felt at parting with herself. Ellen was glad of this; for, as the time drew near when she expected George, she began to feel in all its force the bitterness of parting. They were the only ones left, and her sisterly affection seemed to gather new strength as the time came for their separation. Often was she obliged to lay down her work and turn from Nannie to hide the tears she could not keep back. Strange that one feeling in the human heart should o'ermaster and control so many, like the strong torrent sweeping the little streams before it.

George was expected on the morrow, which would be Saturday, and on Tuesday morning they were to be married. His arrangements were all made, and she commenced her packing. Mr. Levering and Jane, Mr. Casey and Mrs. Walker, were coming out to see the ceremony performed, after which they were to go to town, and the married pair would stay a couple of days with Mrs. Walker, then take their departure for St. Louis, to be ready for the first opening the spring presented, to prosecute their journey.

That day Peyton and Ellen had a long talk. He told her he had arranged it with Mrs. Royton to make his house her permanent home.

"I like the old lady exceedingly, Ellen; and Nannie is so inexperienced, that she will be of infinite benefit to her, adding to her comfort, while I have no doubt she will be happier here than in living by herself. She will have in Nannie and her child, what we all need, and the old especially, something to care for and overlook, while she is perfectly independent to go and come when she pleases."

The remainder of this day Ellen spent in packing, assisted by Judith, for she was anxious to have it done before George came; when late in the evening, she seated herself by Nannie's bedside. Nannie turned and looked at her with a most sad expression of face, as she said,

"Have you finished?"

"Almost, dear; Judith can do the rest."

She asked Ellen to get a little box out of a drawer which stood near by; and, on Ellen's putting it in her hand, she opened it, and gave it to her, saying, "It is my wedding present to you."

It was a miniature of their mother, beautifully painted, which she had given to Judge Mason before their marriage, and which subsequently, at his wife's request, he had given

his sister, who had presented it to Nannie, who had her name, and was her god-daughter.

Ellen received it in silence, but a tear fell upon the pale cheek beside her as she kissed it; and there seated, with Nannie's hand in hers, she passed many hours.

She wished to write to Jane and Mrs. Walker not to come, for she feared the bustle might have a bad effect upon Nannie; but Peyton insisted that she should not, as he would not permit any one to see his wife, and she could be kept perfectly quiet.

On Saturday George came, and on Sunday Peyton led him to Nannie's room, to see the baby and congratulate the mother.

CHAPTER XIII.

TUESDAY morning, the 15th of February, broke cold but clear; the snow lay several inches deep upon the ground, the sun seeming to make no impression upon its surface. It was the morning of her wedding-day; and Ellen arose early, feeling so restless and excited that she could not sleep, or even lie still. She dressed herself before breakfast, in her traveling dress, that she might have all the time between that and ten o'clock, the hour appointed for the ceremony, to be with Nannie. Peyton had requested there might be no leave-taking, that they might not see each other after the ceremony, as he feared the effects of the agitation and excitement upon his wife. Ellen sat in Nannie's room and heard the sleighs drive up, which she knew contained her friends from town. A few moments after, Peyton entered, and whispered that the minister had come. Exerting all her self-command, she kissed Nannie; and, taking a last look at the babe, left the room, followed by Peyton. George met her at the door, but, turning from him, she threw her arms about Peyton's neck, and with "Louis! Louis!" wept aloud.

He was not unmoved; but presently, unloosing her hold, said,

"Fy! Ellen, I thought you were braver. See how miserable you have made George look."

She dried her tears, and went to her own room to put some last touches to her toilet. In a few moments George tapped at her door; he looked at her anxiously as she came forward.

"Do you repent, Ellen?"

Her smile reassured him ; and, taking his arm, they went down stairs to the parlor, where, standing up before the minister, who had been her friend her life-long, she was pronounced George Watson's wife.

Jane was the least composed of all ; she wept, and kissed Ellen over and over again. The whole party started immediately for Mr. Casey's, Peyton whispering to Ellen as she bade adieu that he would see her again before she left. Ellen gave message after message to Mrs. Royton for Nannie. At length she was handed into the sleigh, and they drove merrily off, she giving many a lingering look through her tears to Nannie's chamber window ere a turn in the road shut it from her sight.

"Well !" said Mrs. Walker, as she seated herself comfortably in the sleigh—after wrapping the buffalo round her and fixing the foot-stone to her satisfaction—"well ! this has been the most doleful wedding I ever attended—it has given me the blues ! I should not like to have commenced my married life under such auspices."

"Indeed," said Mr. Levering, "I do not know when I have attended a wedding that impressed me so much, not with sad, but pleasant feelings. There was so much heart in it, and the absence of all display ; and there, too, was woman's eye,

"Lit with her deep love's truth."

That line came into my mind during the ceremony. Depend upon it, the world has no cares for them to-day."

"I never saw Mr. Watson look better," said Jane. "I liked his bearing, and Ellen's also, it was so womanly."

"I do not doubt their happiness ; but, I must confess, I like a bustle and stir at a wedding : it never would do for me to marry like a thief in the night !" And Mrs. Walker drew her vail down, and settled herself to think of how she would like her marriage to go off.

George and Ellen—as they glided along over that wintery road—what thought they ? Mr. Levering said truly that this world had few cares for them ; he had reached the goal of all his hopes ; and she felt as though she almost possessed that happiness which was perfect peace. After shedding a few natural tears, Ellen dried her eyes—for she saw that it troubled George to see her weeping—and listened to him as he painted the future, bright and happy before them, and believed it would all be so. The weather had clouded, and it was dark and snowy without ; but within that sleigh were happy hearts and pleasant faces, for the light of love was there. As she jumped out at the little roadside inn, where they had ordered dinner to be ready, and shook the snow from her cloak, Mrs. Walker exclaimed,

"Why, Ellen, what a color you have, and how bright your eyes are !"

Mr. Levering said, aside, to Jane, "Does she not look beautiful ?"

"I think this air has brightened all our cheeks and eyes," Ellen replied, her color deepening at every word she spoke.

George looked very satisfied and happy, as he drew her arm within his and piloted the way to the parlor.

Mr. Casey said little this day, but when seated at dinner, the sight of the good cheer warmed his heart and opened his lips. He filled his glass, and proposed the health of "Mr. and Mrs. Watson."

Late that evening they arrived at Mr. Casey's hospitable mansion, where an elegant supper was prepared and waiting them, and Mary Gordon met them at the door. Mary was looking thin, but there was a quiet feeling about her face and manner, when she greeted them, which went to the heart. Mrs. Walker had wished to give a large party, and introduce "the bride !" but this Ellen insisted upon her not doing. A little later, Mr. Steele arrived, and curious eyes watched his

meeting with Mary. It was hurried and confused, but they recovered themselves in a few moments. A very pleasant party they had. Jane sang for them, Mrs. Walker flirted with Mr. Steele, George and Mary talked together, while Mr. Casey played the good host in better style than he ever had before. He seemed subdued.

Ellen and Mr. Levering had a quiet talk during the evening, while promenading the rooms. Mary Gordon played for them to dance, and as she did so Mr. Steele stood by the piano, occasionally making a remark. Jane resisted all Mrs. Walker's entreaties, backed by Mr. Casey, to stay all night, and went home with Mary Gordon.

In the afternoon of the next day, Jane and George, Ellen and Mr. Levering, Mr. Steele and Mrs. Walker, Mary and Mr. Casey, rode out to Mrs. Hall's—Mr. Casey, in the morning, having sent out all the necessary condiments for a good supper, and informed her they were coming. The good lady was delighted to see them, gave them a plentiful repast, then bid them good-by with many expressions of good-will, and the present of a dozen home-knit yarn hose for George's wear in the West. When they again reached Mr. Casey's, Ellen found Judith waiting with her baggage, and a note from Nannie. She was better, she wrote, but complained bitterly of her disappointment at not again seeing Ellen, but supposed Louis was right in not permitting it. Peyton wrote, "I shall see you to-morrow, Ellen. I shall ride in to say good-by. As the nights are fine, and I can not leave Nannie long, I shall ride in at night, and spend an hour or two of the morning with you before I leave for home."

About nine o'clock next morning Peyton came, and spent a couple of hours with them, making Ellen some valuable presents; then, bidding them an affectionate good-by, he left for home. In the afternoon she called, with George, upon some old friends, and found herself next morning, after many

affectionate adieus, seated beside her husband in the stage, on her first day's journey toward her new home. It was a dreary season to travel, yet the scene was new to her, and she enjoyed it. The first half day they were almost alone; for the only other passenger besides themselves seemed to have taken upon himself a vow of silence, but not one of abstinence, for he kept up a continual eating from a brown paper parcel he carried. At noon they had an accession of passengers—and an agreeable one it was—in the shape of two gentlemen of conversation and talent, on their way home from Washington—one of them going to Ohio. They soon got into very agreeable converse, which continued until they reached Wheeling, some days after. At Wheeling they took a small boat for Cincinnati, Mr. Macon, the gentleman going to Ohio, joining them. Now, for the first time, Ellen saw the beautiful river, of which she had heard so much. The weather having moderated, it was high and almost free from ice; so she spent most of her time on deck, promenading back and forth to keep warm, and listening to or joining in the conversation between Mr. Macon and George. Mr. Macon was a man of talent, clever, and open. From a charity boy at a Yankee school, he had, by his own exertions, become the representative of one of the most important districts in Ohio. He was fond of a joke, and told a tale admirably, greatly amusing Ellen with his anecdotes of Western life.

"Mrs. Watson," he said to her one day—and she started at the sound of her name, yet new to her—"you will have to get rid of the fastidiousness of civilized life out here as soon as possible; for you will get some hard rubs before you get to your journey's end, if you go by land." Here he gave a short, dry laugh, and continued: "I never was more amused in my life than one night last summer, at two young ladies who had come out from the Bay State, fresh from whitewashed cottages, thriving farm-houses, and homely luxuries, to visit their

brother, a well-to-do farmer in the southern part of Indiana, who had been home to visit his parents. They got off of a boat at the river, and getting into a wagon, proceeded onward. The second day of their journey, night overtook them a long distance from their brother's home. You are not, perhaps, aware that there are few taverns in Indiana, or indeed in any of the newly settled States. Any house you stop at is an inn, and the owner accommodates you the best he can. They stopped at a house on the roadside, with the owner of which their brother was well acquainted, and it so happened that I and some others stopped there also. The house consisted of a room and kitchen, with a rough porch below stairs, and one large room above, the stairs running from the lower room to the upper. It was harvest-time, and the farmer had hired many hands to help him get his crop in. When we sat down to supper, I saw our misses looking askance at the men, and must confess they were a rough, dirty-looking set. Supper over, we went out on the porch to smoke and talk politics, and the young ladies, being tired, proposed going to bed. On application to the mistress of the house, one of her daughters took a candle, and led them to the room above, which contained four beds. They were preparing to make themselves as comfortable as possible, when the girl of the house told them to put out the light when they had done, as their brother and the other men could come to bed in the dark; and to their horror they found the men below were to occupy the beds at the other end of the room.

"All idea of resting there was abandoned; their brother was sent for, but nothing better could be got. I really pitied them. At length the two daughters of the family, who slept below in the same room with their father and mother, proposed giving up their bed, and going above themselves. This proposal was accepted, and the young ladies went to their rest, not a very quiet or inviting one either, for the old farm-

er kept them awake below as he did me above, talking over his plans with his better half. To add to their distress, every man, on going above or returning, had to pass directly by where they were lying. The girls looked woe-begone at breakfast; and when next I saw their brother, and inquired for them, they had returned home—would not live in Indiana."

"How would you like this, Ellen?" George asked.

She shook her head, and laughed incredulously, evidently not believing Mr. Macon's story.

"It is the truth, Mrs. Watson, and the new settlers become accustomed to it. It is a feature of border life; but, traveling as you will, there will be no such associations."

Judith, who was present at this conversation, took the first opportunity to ask Ellen if they were going to a free place, she having a great horror of free states.

At twilight the next evening, Ellen, being cold and tired of walking the deck, retired to the cabin to get warm. She had scarcely seated herself by the stove, when George came down, telling her to wrap up and come above, for Blennerhassett's Island was in sight.

"Ah!" said Mr. Macon, as he put out his hand to assist her on deck, "I thought the island, with its associations, would bring you up, cold as you were. There is nothing like a touch of romance to interest you ladies. I found that out in my electioneering campaigns."

"I could not resist the inclination to see the spot where she wandered alone, mingling her tears with the torrents, that froze as they fell."

"I am sorry you will not have a better view of it, although there is not much to see. It is late, and if we stop to take in that wayside passenger over there, who I see is waving a white flag, it will be night before we reach it. Take a seat behind the pilot-house; it will protect you from the wind. I see Mr. Watson is bringing his cloak."

"Where is Mrs. Blennerhassett? Is she living?"

"She is living, I believe, and at Quebec. At least I have heard so. Do you know any thing of her, Mr. Watson?"

"No, I do not. I hear she has a son living in one of the Western cities. I always had a great curiosity to see Blennerhassett; there was much to interest in him and his history. I knew a gentleman who was intimate with him—had visited him when on the island. He spoke of it as a paradise, and of her as one who might have sat for Scott's Ellen, in the 'Lady of the Lake.' His history is a romance: a man of letters coming out here, and settling in this wild country; shaking himself free from civilization, yet surrounding himself with its products, and making the wilderness smile."

"I once saw a letter written by him, and was struck with the writing. See, Mrs. Watson, we do stop for that passenger, and I am afraid you will be disappointed. It will be night before we reach the island."

"Will you go below, Ellen? You may get cold."

"No, I am not at all cold, and prefer staying."

"Did you ever see Burr, Mr. Macon?" George asked.

"No, I never did, although I traveled up the North River sixty miles on the same boat with him once; but I had no intimation he was aboard until after he had left, and so did not even catch a glimpse of him. He had a dreadful retribution. Think of the last days of his life—he who was once the observed of observers, passing up and down Broadway, New York, and catching in that motley crowd but the eye of curiosity or scorn."

"I always thought him as much sinned against as sinning," said Ellen.

"He was always a favorite with your sex, Mrs. Watson; but I believe him to have been an arch-traitor!"

"I do not," said George. "He reminded me of a stag

hunted by the hounds. The death of Hamilton was his great sin. To escape the odium and execrations heaped upon him, he retired to Blennerhassett's Island, where—"

"He filled the head of a visionary man with ideas of empire, ruined a happy family, made wretched a loving wife, desolated the wilderness which had smiled. Can you, a wife, forgive him this, Mrs. Watson?"

"If you could prove it, I am afraid not; but 'every heart knoweth its own bitterness,' and his later life was certainly some atonement."

"True; but here is the island, like Burr's page in history, a blot upon the waters. How the darkness has increased!"

"There!" said George, "it is past—gone; so have Burr, Blennerhassett, and their fortunes."

Drawing Ellen's arm in his, they went below to the cabin.

CHAPTER XIV.

It was Saturday evening when they arrived at Cincinnati, and were astonished at the size of the place; here they were to lose their pleasant companion, Mr. Macon. They parted after many kind wishes on both sides, he insisting, if they ever came to Ohio again, they should pay him a visit.

The next morning they started for a walk over the city. After wandering about for some time, they followed a number of persons who seemed to be wending their way churchward, for the bells were ringing, and soon found themselves at the entrance of a low stone meeting-house. They went in; it was a Methodist church, and Ellen felt a little strange at first, when she found herself in a seat among strangers, and George not near her; but looking round, she saw him not far off, sitting with the men. The old lady next her seemed to know she was a stranger, and was polite and attentive in finding the hymn, and pointing out the place. They heard a good, plain sermon, then returned to their hotel, and the next day were on a boat bound for St. Louis.

The boat was a miserable one; they had but few passengers, and none to interest them. Glad were they to reach the mouth. The stormy wind of March was giving the waves white caps, as Ellen stood upon the upper deck to see the meeting of the waters.

The dark, turbulent, and angry Mississippi came dashing onward to meet the Ohio, which, like a pale bride, glided to

its bosom, and, mingling, they rolled into one. They were in the stream; they rounded the point; the Ohio was left behind; and before them was the broad Mississippi, sweeping on to the ocean with its mighty waters.

On, on, they went, the puffing of the steam being the only sound which broke the stillness. Along the shore, as far as the eye could reach, the scene presented but a leafless forest of cotton-trees, with now and then, at long distances, the smoke of some cabin curling upward. Ellen could almost imagine she saw the canoes of the Indians shooting from the shore, or darting here and there among the innumerable little islands in the river. Once, when the sound of an ax smote her ear, she started, and clung closer to her husband's arm, expecting the whoop of the Indian.

As she stood thus, she heard the man at the wheel call to one below,

"There has been a thaw above; the ice is coming!"

In a moment the captain and some others were on deck, looking anxiously up the river.

Directly the captain called out,

"Put in to the wood-yard ahead—it is on us; the river is too high to be venturesome, and," to himself, "the boat is not strong."

The boat accordingly tacked for the wood-yard, and in a few minutes after they reached it large masses of ice swept by. As they were sitting at supper, something struck the boat with a dull, heavy, grating sound, then went sawing onward. The passengers, one and all, sprang from their seats and ran upon deck. George seized Ellen round the waist, for the boat trembled, and with "Don't be frightened!" waited the report of those who had gone above, as he would not leave her. In a few minutes they came down; a large cake of ice had struck the boat, but there was no danger. The next morning, as the cakes of ice came smaller and thinner, the

captain proceeded on, and by evening there was scarcely any ice to be seen.

The boat was an old and slow one, and the captain a cautious man; so they made but little progress. Ellen, however spent the time pleasantly; when the weather was too inclement for them to be upon deck, George read to her while she sewed, and when they were out, his conversation, and the sight of things so new to her, was sufficient enjoyment. At length St. Louis was seen in the distance, and they stood upon the deck and watched the boat near what, for a few weeks at least, was to be their home.

Ellen thought it a strange, foreign-looking place, with its narrow streets, and many French inhabitants; and odd, to her, looked the queer little carts, filled with wood or vegetables, going to and from market, and driven by dirty little Frenchmen from Garandolet. George had brought several letters of introduction, which he delivered the day after he arrived, as they were to men of families, and he was anxious Ellen should have some society. The commissioners had not reached there. They spent the next day in walking over the town—entering a quaint and dark-looking Catholic church, which, with its two or three altars lit up (it being some festival), and its old pictures, made them think of being in France or Spain. The next morning, as Ellen sat writing to Nannie, and George, with a book hanging listlessly from his hand, the pages of which he turned not, sat watching her face, a servant entered and said,

"There is a gentleman below in the parlor, who wishes to see Mr. Watson."

He went down, and in a few moments returned.

"Ellen, my friend Kirk is here; you must come down and see him."

Ellen had great curiosity to see Mr. Kirk, she had heard George talk so much of him. When she went into the room,

she saw a little healthy, ordinary looking man, with a quick, restless gray eye that never stood still, light hair, and a complexion bronzed by exposure to the elements. She was surprised and disappointed. George had never described him to her, and she had imagined him tall and fine-looking. He stepped forward as she came in, saying,

"We need no introduction, Mrs. Watson; I have known you for a long time, and flatter myself I am also known to you." They shook hands warmly.

George then informed Ellen that Mr. Kirk was going with them.

"Yes, I thought of staying home and going quietly to farming, but felt so lonely I could not stand it, so packed up and followed on Watson's trail. Nothing but this determination prevented my making one at your wedding."

All the time since she entered the room, Ellen felt she was undergoing a scrutiny from those far-seeing eyes—they seemed to glide over her and into her—seizing, in their unquiet glance, her person and her motives. Presently he seemed satisfied, and settling himself in the corner of the sofa, let her feel at her ease.

"The rest of the party will be here to-morrow night," he said; "and if this weather lasts, we will be off by the first of April. I expect to bring you to confess, when you see our preparations, Mrs. Watson, that you are heartily tired of the whole thing, and wish yourself safe at home by your easy fireside."

"You forget, Mr. Kirk," she said, "that I am at home; and I expect to bring you all to confess I am the most contented one of the party."

Again his eyes sought hers.

"The leaven which leavens the lump—perhaps so; but I doubt it." And he shook his head, pointed to her dress, and then to his own. "You have too much of the haunts of men about you for the wilderness!"

"I have good news for you, however, Watson. Captain Adams is ordered from here to the northwest frontier with a detachment of troops, and starts *en route* next week. I suspect we go under their escort. His lady, who is a famous horse-woman, and as good a soldier as her husband, always accompanies him. It will be just the thing. And Mrs. Watson will have the society of a lady, which will be far preferable to being thrown altogether with us men. You ride on horseback, Mrs. Watson?"

"O yes! and am very fond of it. What sort of a woman is Mrs. Adams?"

"I could perhaps better describe the qualities of a bear or a beaver than those of a lady, having little knowledge of your sex. Mrs. Adams is a plain, respectable, motherly woman, of near forty years of age. She has lived in camp or fort all her life, having been a soldier's daughter before she was a soldier's wife; has been stationed all over the country, from Michigan to Florida, and understands this sort of life exactly. She will be a very valuable acquaintance to you, and expressed much pleasure at the acquisition of your society."

"This is most fortunate, Ellen, and a great relief to me; for I was fearful you would feel the want of female society."

"She told me, moreover," said Kirk, "that she intended calling to see you to-day; so you may expect her." After some further conversation, Mr. Kirk took his leave.

"So, Ellen, you were disappointed in my friend," said George, when he had got fairly out of hearing.

"Yes, I was so. I had imagined him better-looking—handsome. He is ordinary; and his manner—how shall I express it? it is what the French would call *brusque*."

"I know it; but I promise you you will like him so much in a month, that I shall be half jealous."

In the afternoon, Mrs. Adams and her husband, accom-

panied by Mr. Kirk, called. Mrs. Adams was a plain, kind-hearted woman, who, from her habits of moving about and seeing to her own comfort, had a confident, but not unlady-like manner.

Ellen liked her, and she seemed to take equally as great a liking to Ellen. She paid quite a long visit; and, on going, pressed Ellen to return it soon; while Captain Adams, who had been talking with the gentlemen, told her he considered her his peculiar charge.

Mr. Kirk took tea, and spent the evening with them at the hotel. George and he were discussing plans and talking of routes, Ellen joining but little in the conversation; yet, whenever she raised her eyes from the work she was doing to look into her husband's face, she encountered Mr. Kirk's glance.

The next day the commissioners arrived, and announced that they were to take their departure with the troops. Ellen was now thrown a great deal with Mrs. Adams, and rejoiced that circumstances had brought them together; for, inexperienced as she was, Mrs. Adams' advice was of great value. Mr. Kirk made arrangements, and seemed to have foresight for every thing, doing all for Ellen's comfort; for which she would have been much more grateful had he not kept up that incessant watch upon her. But he really sometimes annoyed her, and made her feel ill at ease. The day for the departure came, and, filing off, they commenced their journey toward the northwest. The scene was new to Ellen—so new and strange, that, instead of exciting her spirits, as it did Mrs. Adams', it had a quieting influence. The first day's travel was slow, and devoid of interest, the road being much worse than they supposed. At night the idea of camping out—of resting in a tent—seemed so strange—surrounded too by soldiers. It recalled to her mind all the stories she had read of wars and sieges; she would almost imagine herself in

the midst of an army prepared for battle as she saw the soldiers treading to and fro, or seated at the camp-fires cooking their evening meals. Tired and weary, she, however, soon fell asleep, and slept as soundly as though encompassed by brick walls.

The next morning they commenced their journey early, and thus from day to day moved onward. For the first few days the fatigue seemed overpowering to Ellen, but after that she became accustomed to the long travel, and did not feel it half so much. Mr. Kirk was always by her side, to give her advice and see that she was comfortable. Here it was that she first saw a prairie, not as she would see them weeks later, but a prairie with the young grass just shooting above the surface, and looking like an immense carpet of green velvet. And the Indians they met, with what interest, and yet half terror, she gazed upon them, edging closer to George's side as they came nearer, to get a look at the white squaw. Every thing was novel, and had interest. George never wearied of pointing out to her objects on the road, or watching to see if she was tiring of her journey. They had some days of bad weather, which Mrs. Adams grumbled at; but wrapped in a cloak, and protected as much as possible by buffalo robes, Ellen complained not. Once or twice, when she would have expressed some impatience at the duration of the rain, George's face, from which he could not keep the anxiety which beset him on her account, checked her, and she smothered back the half uttered wish for sunshine.

The haven of all their hopes, the fort, was reached at last, and right glad were they to get beneath its shelter, for the country over which they had passed for the last few days had been wild and dreary—made doubly so by the gloom of the weather.

Now they could sleep, without their nightly serenaders, the

wolves, seeming quite so near them. A house seemed indeed something human.

Ellen found she had a severe cold, which Mrs. Adams, as soon as she saw her comfortably settled in her quarters, prescribed for, and prescribed so well too, that a few days found her patient entirely recovered.

The gentlemen had all let their beards grow since they left St. Louis, which gave them quite a martial look. The morning after they reached the fort, George made his appearance shaved, and with some of the stains of travel removed from his dress. Captain Adams called to him, "Halloo! Watson, are you going to the city?"

Mr. Kirk, who stood beside Ellen, as he came out, pointed to him, and said,

"Did I not tell you you had too much of the haunts of men about you for the wilderness?"

"You are mistaken. I had nothing to do with it. I did not know he was shaved until I saw him just now. You have proved a false prophet in more cases than this, Mr. Kirk. You prophesied my grumbling at the journey."

"I acknowledge no one could have borne it better than you did; but perhaps my prophecy had something to do with your doing so."

"Now at all. Had I felt like complaining, the fear of making George uncomfortable would have kept me silent."

He made no reply, but walked away.

Now Ellen had full time to realize that she was in the midst of the Indian country, surrounded by prairie and forest. She could stand for hours and look out upon the vast domain, which every day grew greener beneath her eye, without a regret, and with no wishes save the one to see Nannie.

She became familiar with the presence of the Indians, who were constantly going to and from the fort, and only longed for settled weather to visit some of the hills in the distance.

She unpacked her things, arranged her books and little articles, to give the humble room a home look; placed George's flute upon the table; got out her work-basket and her knitting, and seated herself with a feeling of satisfaction to await his coming in. As the weather grew warmer, she walked out, and frequently rode, accompanied by George, Mr. Kirk, and Mrs. Adams. These excursions she enjoyed exceedingly; the invigorating spring air being of itself an excitement, and brought with it a feeling of enjoyment she had never had before.

Thus a month glided away, bringing the middle of May upon them.

"Mrs. Watson," said Mr. Kirk to her one morning, "do you feel like taking a long ride to-day? The weather is beautiful, and I think you will enjoy it."

"You know I never can resist the temptation of a canter," she replied.

"Then get ready quickly," said George, "while we get the horses. Perhaps Mrs. Adams will go also."

Mrs. Adams declined, and, mounting, they kept the track by the river for a mile or two, then branched out over the plain. Soon they were saluted with the sharp yelping of innumerable prairie-dogs, and Ellen for the first time had a sight of their burrows. They rode on at a sharp canter, when, as they came out of a straggling copse, a prairie, in all the glory of early summer, broke upon their sight. Many were Ellen's exclamations of delight as George pointed out to her, one by one, the flowers that looked like home. But the roses—the wild roses—clustering there by thousands, and filling the air with their fragrance, how like they looked to those which covered the arbor in Nannie's little garden, where she had spent so many happy hours the past summer. She longed for Mr. Kirk's absence, that she might call them, with their associations, to her husband's remembrance.

What a home-flower the rose is, and how connected with all its associations! We may see other flowers blooming afar off, but they do not bring to us such thoughts as the rose does. It is hallowed in its remembrances, and we always feel the desire to pluck and appropriate. It is often connected with our loves and hopes, and there is scarce a human being to whom it will not bring some memories associated with the affections.

As they rode on, the prairie presented new beauties at every step. Ellen would have sprung from her horse to gather the flowers, but was stayed by Mr. Kirk with the idea of snakes, of which she had a horror.

George, riding on one side, collected a large bunch of roses, which he handed her, saying,

"I wonder if these

"Were born of that race of funeral flowers,
Which garlanded in long gone hours
A templar's knightly tomb."

"If so, they have had a weary journey, George, and have been 'by the far winds sown' from the wilds of Northumberland to the prairies of the Far West. They are most welcome—they look like home."

"Look, Mrs. Watson, there is the serpent of our Eden!" and he pointed to a large snake which lay directly before them. Ellen shuddered, and drew her horse back; but Mr. Kirk cutting at it with his whip, it glided away among the flowers.

They rode on and on. Ellen never wearied, until warned by George that it was growing late, and they had to return. They then struck out toward the river, taking the path home by its banks, frightening the prairie fowl, and once startling a deer, which halted and gazed at them for a moment, then bounded forward with the fleetness of the wind.

CHAPTER XV.

It was now beautiful weather, and the commissioners were going to a council of the Indians, held some distance above. George was to accompany them, and Ellen parted with him as cheerfully as she could. This was the first trial of her married life. She went to her own room as soon as she lost sight of him, as Mrs. Adams said, "to have her cry out;" and then occupied herself with something Judith was doing.

"I think you are cheerfuller here, Miss Ellen," Judith said; "and you are looking a world better. I heard Mr. Kirk say he never saw your likes."

"You did? but how do you like it?"

"Oh! it's well enough for the woods, but 'taint old Virginy, no how. The Ingens nearly scared me to death at first with their yelping and whooping, but now I'm getting used to them. If we only had a good meeting, Miss Ellen, I don't think I'd mind it; but it's dreadful to live among Ingens and have no preaching."

Judith was a Methodist, and did not consider the service, which was read every Sunday, and which she regularly attended, any meeting at all. She amused Mr. Kirk beyond expression one day, by breaking in the conversation, when he was speaking of the beauty of the prayers to George.

"Lord love us! Master George, 'taint nothing to be compared to old Ben; his prayers cut like a knife, and you can't keep still; it wouldn't hurt me to hear that book full of them prayers read!"

Old Ben was a worthy old negro, her class-leader, and considered peculiarly gifted in the way of prayer.

She was one of those persons who greatly enjoyed their meetings; and to her rude and fervent spirit the Episcopal service was particularly cold. Ellen, hearing her sigh one day after the reading, comforted her with the assurance that she would see a preacher soon, for Captain Adams had said a missionary was on his way there to preach to the Indians.

"The Lord knows they need it," she said, devoutly; "to my mind, they're the devils the Bible tells of." The information evidently made her happy, for she went about singing

"'Tis built of Gospel timber,
Halleluiah!"

The two weeks of George's absence had passed into three before they returned. At the end of the two weeks Ellen began to feel heart-sick, anxious; but a messenger, dispatched by him, informed her of the impossibility of their reaching the fort at the appointed time. Captain Adams gave her much of his society—read the stale newspapers from St. Louis to her, advertisements and all—invited her to ride with him, and teased her often when she would rather have been let alone.

The day he expected them he hobbled to her chamber—for he had the rheumatism—calling out, "Mrs. Watson, what will you give for my news?" Ellen, thinking he had come with his newspaper again, replied, she would not give any thing.

"Well, I see you do not value news from the other camp; so I shall not bargain with you."

Off he went, turning a deaf ear to all her entreaties. But at dinner, seeing she looked troubled and anxious, he said,

"Suppose we ride out to meet them, Mrs. Watson; I think this leg of mine will be the better for an airing."

"Meet whom? Is George coming?"

"Aha! you can talk to the purpose now; but I must have pay for my news, after being treated so cavalierly." Then, having compassion on her anxiety, he said, "I will order the horses saddled, and, if you choose, we will ride out to the bend in the river and meet them; they will be home this evening."

Ellen accepted the proposition, and off they went.

They had not yet reached the proposed point, when, galloping over the intervening space, they saw two horsemen; she knew one was George, and rode on, leaving Captain Adams behind. Directly, one of the horsemen, putting spurs to the animal, met her, and once more she was at her husband's side. Mr. Kirk lingered behind, and Captain Adams remained where she had left him. When they came up, he said,

"That is the way you treat your captain, is it, after he has lauded your bravery? Why, I will have you shot for desertion!"

She laughed, and told him to consider the temptation. Mr. Kirk coming up, a general shaking of hands followed, when they turned back toward the fort, the remainder of the party being some miles behind. They had not accomplished their object, and returned altogether disappointed. Mr. Kirk greatly amused Ellen with descriptions of the maneuvers on both sides; the discomfiture of the commissioners, and the stolid bearing of the Indians, which was the more galling, as they could not but show their chagrin at their want of success.

There was an old hunter at the fort, who had taken quite a fancy to Ellen, and presented her with some pretty skins; in return for which, she gave him a purse she was knitting, as he happened to admire it. He was a fine-looking man, of some forty-five years of age, and had spent most of his life amid the wilds; his name was Chanton, and he was born in Canada. One day he was standing outside the fort cleaning

his rifle, and expressed a wish for some raw cotton. Ellen went to get him some, and when she handed it to him, he said,

"You shall have the first game she kills, even though my squaw should want a dinner."

"Your squaw! Why, I did not know you were married!"

"Why, you see," he said, fidgeting a little, "in this wild country we are not as particular as you who live in the settlements, and sometimes take a squaw without God's blessing. My squaw is an Ingen, and a good faithful creter as ever lived."

"Where is she?" asked Kirk.

"She's with her tribe, a day's journey to the West. They are going to the Black Hills on a hunt, and I came down to git powder and hear news from the settlements, and now I feel like staying till the 'big talk' is over. Somehow, I've had a home feeling on me lately. I believe its seeing you, Mrs. Watson, has made me think so much of my mother of nights."

Mr. Kirk laughed heartily at the idea of Ellen making the old hunter think of his mother.

"You needn't laugh. It is the first time I ever saw the face of a young white squaw in these parts, and I've been about here for the matter of fifteen years. Some few tough ones, like madam there, came out, but they're scarce. You see it brought back the old home to me, and the time I said my first prayer. I should not wonder if it set me to making tracks for the towns, just to see the old 'oman once more."

"How long is it since you saw her?" asked Ellen.

"A matter of ten years; but I heard from her four winters ago. She was well and hearty. I gave Reynard, the half-breed trader, who comes about here to cheat the Ingens, a lot of the prettiest skins you ever saw to take a letter to

St. Louis for me. I was a dreadful time writing it, for you see my fingers are not so used to the pen as to the trigger; but I misdoubt much the rascal's taking it at all."

"Where does your mother live?"

"In Varmont. They lived in Canady; but, you see, they moved over the border."

"Well, if you really wish to write to her, and will give me the letter, I will send it for you. I have a friend living in Vermont, and he will see she gets it safe."

"Thank you, Mr. Kirk! I'll think it over; but I'd almost as soon go to the settlements myself as write—it's about as hard work."

Thus the summer was passing away. George was frequently absent—sometimes for several days, sometimes longer. Ellen was as happy as happy could be, for she saw he was so. Once Mr. Kirk went to St. Louis, and, at George's request, brought Ellen as many books, to add to her comfort, as could be procured there. He was absent more than a month, and she had no hesitation in acknowledging how much she missed his society. When he did come, he made himself thrice welcome, for he brought them letters. Nannie, Mrs. Royton, Peyton—all had written; there was also one from Jane, now Mrs. Levering; and even Mrs. Walker had not forgotten them. Nannie's was filled with the baby and how it grew, Jane's wedding, and anxiety for Ellen. Peyton wrote of his wife and child, the farm, and business. Mrs. Royton gave good advice, and counseled in spiritual things. Jane's, written after she had been three weeks a wife, was, as her letters always were; while Mrs. Walker gave them all the particulars of Mrs. Levering's house, furniture, and appointments, together with all the gossip of the world they had left.

These letters took them home again. They could see Nannie with her infant, as she tended and watched it, or sat and

sung it a lullaby, with Peyton seated beside her in the evening, looking the picture of content. Jane, too, was before them, as she stood in her stately mansion and received her guests; nor was Mrs. Walker forgotten, with her supervision of the whole. George watched Ellen as she read and commented upon her letters, and great was his gratification to see no shade of regret upon her face. He would not change the life he was leading for a palace and its adornments; and if she was content, he had all he desired.

October in all its glory was upon them, changing leaf and flower. Beautiful were the woods at this season, after the first frost had touched them, and many were the rides Ellen took. How sorry she was to see the prairies, which, a week or two before, had blazed in all the splendor of rich fall flowers, fade and wither as winter laid her chill hand upon them. Now the cold autumn rain often kept them within doors, and Mr. Kirk, who was an excellent German scholar, proposed their studying the language. George—who wearied of playing the flute, reading, and theorizing—was ready for any thing new; so the books were unpacked from among Mr. Kirk's effects, and the beginning made.

Day after day, when the weather was wet, or gloomy, or cold, would they sit over their blazing fires in the fort surrounded by books. But the German proceeded slowly; for generally they strayed into a talk about men or things, poets and poetry, Mr. Kirk often reading and translating for them.

Mr. Kirk was a very unpoetical-looking man, and yet a poetical dreamer. In general he talked but little, though sometimes it would appear as though his tongue was unloosed; he would get interested in conversation, and astonish you with the fancies which seemed to possess his brain. At first Ellen had a dread of his eye—an unpleasant feeling that she was watched; but this had worn entirely away; his eye rested on her with a different expression, and he was con-

stantly doing her some little act of kindness, and was one of that kind of characters that impresses you and keeps up a steady interest in your mind.

They had been kept in the house a week by almost uninterrupted rain. George, Mr. Kirk and Capt. Adams had gone below to find amusement among the soldiers, and Ellen had been for some time alone, when Mr. Kirk loitered up, and leaning in a listless attitude against the door-post, seemed not to know what to do with himself.

"Where is George?" Ellen asked, for something to say.

"Below, talking to old Chanton, who has come in for medicine for one of his children that is ill."

"I like him very much," she said; "he appears honest."

"He is honest, and has many fine traits under that rough outside. He traveled all day yesterday, and lay out last night in the storm, his object being to get medicine for this child. May I come in, Mrs. Watson?"

"I wish you would." She disencumbered a chair for him, which she had occupied with her work-basket. He took it, and taking up the scissors as he did so, proceeded to cut up some of her waste pieces into scraps. He worked industriously at this for a few moments, then, throwing himself back in his chair and clasping his hands above his head, he said,

"If this weather lasts much longer, I shall be off to the hills despite of it. I am intolerably weary."

"I did not know you intended leaving the fort."

"Yes; the hunters are waiting for drier weather to start upon their Fall hunting expedition. I shall accompany them. I have led a sad, idle life for a backwoodsman this summer."

"I believe you are tired of your bachelor life. George is quite distressed that you do not marry."

"Is he? Does he think there is another woman in the world, besides yourself, who would be willing to live out here?"

"I have no doubt there are many. But why live here? This is but a whim which will wear off. You do not expect to become a regular Indian?"

"No! but you have left home, friends, and country to follow your husband's whim!"

"Yes! but still look forward to the time when he shall abandon it."

"With hope?"

"No! for I am content; yet I know, as he grows older, he will tire of this, and I suppose I shall also."

"You think as we grow older we become wiser. I do not know. I am half way home—thirty-five—and every step now takes me down hill. I have not half the purpose in life I had at first starting. See!"—he brushed his hair back, showing a few scattered gray ones on his temples—"the white frost is gathering—mine enemies are on my track!"

"I had no idea you were over thirty—you do not look thirty-five!"

"I feel fifty! * * * Do you know you have been a study to me? I had no faith in the disinterested affection of woman, and when I heard you were coming, marveled—when I saw you, marveled more. You have redeemed the whole sex in my opinion!"

"Thank you; but why had you so little faith in us?"

She saw he wished to talk, and questioned to draw him out.

"Because I had been tricked—deceived—miserably fooled by a woman!"

He brought his chair to the ground with a loud sound, and taking a turn across the room, stood before her.

"I had been engaged for years to a woman who was beautiful, and whom I loved as women are not often loved, when, one day, I received a letter from her, in which she told me, without why or wherefore, that her views had changed. She

wished to be free, and requested the return of her letters. Her last letter had been a more affectionate one than she usually wrote. I returned her epistles per mail, without word or comment, and in three days sailed for Jamaica. Six months after she was a wife, and when next I saw her, she leaned upon her husband's arm as she passed me in the lobby of a theatre at New Orleans. She turned back, as she recognized me, and tapping my arm with her fan, said, 'Mr. Kirk, is it you?' and, introducing her husband, 'Do come and see me. I live in Chartres Street.' I smiled as I bowed and answered, but I cursed her in my heart."

"Did you go?"

"No! I ought to have gone. I could have had my revenge. I understood her character so perfectly now, that I could have had her in my power—could have gratified my wounded self-love, and gained an advantage; but some feeling—I know not what—some foolish tenderness prevented me."

"Did you see her again?"

"Never!"

"What do you suppose caused her conduct?"

"Worldliness. I understood it all when I saw her husband—a tall, handsome man of about fifty, who, upon inquiry, I found was rich—rich—had plantations and negroes, and she was a leader of the ton. The temptation was too great for the daughter of a poor New England farmer. Yet she was young, but sold—sold for money!"

"And you can still regret her?"

"Not her—not her! This happened years ago, when I was young. It gave me a feeling of contempt for myself, that I had been made the object of such a miserable cheat—a feeling of bitter mortification, the remembrance of which stirs my blood even now."

Again he walked the room. Ellen knew not what to say.

"I can conceive your feelings. Such treachery is revolting, particularly in a woman; but you should not dwell upon it. Supply yourself with another object."

"Do you not remember the lines your husband quoted to you yesterday, when speaking of the second marriage of one of your friends?"

"The second green leaf, which *may* shoot in November,
Is but a pale mockery of what was so fair."

This is my November, and the leaf has not even budded."

She felt great sympathy for him—great interest, perhaps, because she was astonished at the exhibition of feelings she never dreamed of his having; and then a woman naturally feels interested in a love affair. She was glad he had spoken so to her.

He sat down, and soon was as composed as usual, but seemed to feel uncomfortable, as a man always does after he has made a confidant, or given expression to a pent feeling. It seems a betrayal of weakness, and he feels it so when he has recovered himself.

"I have shown the white feather!" he presently said, "and the Indians would call me a squaw; but you seem to me like a dear sister to whom I must talk. Will you forgive the trespass?"

"Yes, on condition that you often repeat it. Have you sisters?"

"One—she married years ago, and is now almost an old woman. My mother had but two children."

"And your parents?"

"The green sod is over them both! My mother was a patient, gentle, religious woman, who thought all things were well. She is connected in my mind with a darkened chamber, shawls, and an easy-chair; for she was always an invalid. A West Indian by birth, the climate did not suit her. My father was a Boston merchant, and carried on consider-

able trade with the West Indies. He was for many years a widower, my sister keeping house for him; but at length she married and went further north to live, and my father, weary of his lonely estate, married also. His wife was an excellent woman, but he lived not long to enjoy her society. He died within a year, leaving her well provided for, and myself his share of the business. I was not intended for a merchant—can not settle myself to ledgers and account-books—so soon sold out. The voyages I had made back and forth, from Cuba and Jamaica, for my father's interest, had given me a wish to see other countries, and I went to South America, where I spent a few years; then, coming home, joined the expedition coming out here."

"Why did you not go to Europe?"

"The South American States were creating an excitement about that time, and the spirit of adventure within me was roused."

"I fear this spirit is insatiable," she said, with a smile; "some spirits must be tamed as we tame wild animals, by wearing them out—exhausting them, and yours is one. Some day you will be tame enough to be led about by a keeper, and that keeper will take the name of wife. Have you no desire to go to Europe?"

"No, none to go in the regular sight-seeing way. I may, and often think I shall, some of these days, make a pilgrimage to the Old World; but it would be on foot, with knapsack on my back and staff in hand. I care nothing for the sight-seeing; it is the people and the country I wish to observe."

"You would linger by valley and stream; see the grain spring, and talk to the husbandman of his increase, while I should take Childe Harold's path—be a pilgrim to shrines that had been visited."

"A woman naturally prefers a beaten track. Most of your

sex remind me of children who have not yet learned to walk alone—dependent on their nurses."

"Would you have it otherwise? What is so revolting to you as an amazon of a woman, or so distasteful to us as an effeminate man? You love us because we lean upon you, and it is your province to feel that you afford protection."

"That is very true; for here is Mrs. Adams, an excellent woman—but I never think of offering her the service which I naturally tender you; and the Indian women—I may pass them twenty times a day staggering under burdens, yet I never offer to assist them, and they would scarce know what to make of it if I did, while it would be an involuntary impulse to assist another so situated. Yet both are loved after their fashion."

"Yes, but their ways are not our ways. We naturally love those things, animate and inanimate, which depend upon us—the flowers we have planted and watered, the bird we have fed, or the heart which depends on us for happiness."

"Do you not think that men love with more strength than women?"

"Indeed I do not. A woman may share a man's heart with no one, but she will share his time and attention with a great many things." Her color arose as she talked. "When a woman marries, her home is a little world to her, of which her husband is the centre—around him every thing revolves. She sets her house in order, and some thought of him mingles with each trifling act. She sits alone and sews—her thoughts revert to him. She is in constant exercise of her affections while he

"Goes straight from her chamber
Into life's jostle;
Meets at the very gate,
Business and bustle;"

occupies his hours with ledgers, lawbooks, and accounts, and

only throws them aside when the dinner hour draws near, and he betakes himself homeward."

"And do you think you occupy so little of your husband's time and thoughts?"

She laughed confusedly.

"You know we always have a reservation in our hearts concerning our own case, but I think it a regulation of the Deity, and intended that women should be dependent on and love more than men."

"I think in most cases women are better judges of the characters of their sex than men are, and where they are not blinded by jealousy or envy, form correct estimates of each other; but they seldom arrive at correct opinions of us. Here they use imagination instead of reason, and fancy us much better or much worse than we are."

"This same imagination is a blessed thing, Mr. Kirk. It colors the painter's fancy, and peoples the poet's brain; and makes me, even me, sometimes convert this humble room into a palace, over which I reign a very queen."

This was, as George would say, one of her beautiful hours; so Mr. Kirk thought, as he saw her enthusiasm.

"Ah! but you have been little more than six months married. Wait until six years have passed; then see if—when the cares of life have gathered about you, and the wear of the lengthened chain has galled and fretted your spirit; when years have increased, and the elasticity of youth is going—you can speak of a love which almost idolizes a husband, while it adorns his home, and dwell upon the pleasures of the imagination exercised in a scene like this."

"You can not destroy my faith in human love, the only spark of the Divine nature which man inherits. There are many shoals and quicksands in this life, I grant you, and my little bark may not escape the breakers, but it shall have love for a pilot and a true heart at the helm!"

He got up with an agitated face, and was about speaking, when George entered, and said,

"Chanton is below, Ellen, and has brought you, as he promised, the first game shot with his rifle. It proves a fine buck. You must go below, and thank him." So she went.

CHAPTER XVI

THE rain had ceased, and the party were making preparations for their hunt. Ellen, thinking she detected in George's manner a desire to accompany them, and believing him deterred from expressing it by an unwillingness to leave her, as she could but be lonely in his absence, proposed his going. After some demur he yielded, for he had not sufficient self-denial to see them start without him, and saw that she read his wishes, and would really much rather he would go, since he wished it.

He had been for several days looking for some papers, which he wished particularly to see, but as yet had not been able to find. The morning he left, he requested her to search for them in his absence.

"I know they are in some of the boxes, Ellen, and you are blessed with more patience than I."

She looked upon their preparations for departure with many and mixed feelings; she had proposed, and even urged, his going; yet she thought, "Could I be persuaded, for mere personal enjoyment, to absent myself from him for a week, or perhaps two, and he alone?" For the first time since her marriage she felt neglected, and could scarce keep her tears back as she leaned against a tree and saw one by one mount, arrange his trappings, and file off. She barely managed to answer the jesting remarks of Chanton with composure. All were off but George and Mr. Kirk; George, after tightening his girths and seeing all was right, said good-by. As he sprang

to his seat her tears had sway; he looked back, waving his hand, but, seeing her weeping, sprang to the ground.

"Ride on, Kirk, I shall not go. Ellen, it was very selfish in me to think of leaving you. Why did you urge me to go?"

"I am very foolish, and deserve to be laughed at," she said, drying her tears; but it was some time before she could persuade him to leave; she had never before shed tears in his presence at parting, and now he really wished to give it up and remain.

At length she prevailed upon him to go, and he dashed off to join the rest of the party, now out of sight; but *this* time she smiled, and waved her handkerchief until he reached Mr. Kirk, who waited in the distance, and perhaps applied the conversation of a few days previous.

Slowly she returned within doors after losing sight of him, and, taking her work, made her way to Mrs. Adams' room—not that she particularly desired the good lady's society at the present time, but she had promised George to seek it, for he feared she would sit alone too much, and so become low-spirited in his absence.

She listened, and answered all the good dame's queries; for she was a great questioner, and subjected her visitors always to a rigid cross-examination, whenever they honored her with their presence. Dinner-time broke in on this amusement, and directly after dinner Ellen went to her own room, and calling Judith to move the boxes, began the search for the missing papers among the books and miscellanies they had brought with them. She tied and untied various bundles, but could see nothing of the document she wanted; she found, tied up in a parcel, all the letters she had written to George—some when he was at college, some when he was in the woods, and a few later ones. She became engrossed in reading them—they took her back to home and her girlhood: now she was smiling over an account of Lightfoot's sprain—how minutely

every thing done for her was described, while many were the lamentations over the accident! At the bottom of the page were a few lines in Judge Mason's hand, assuring George it was but a slight injury, and in a week or two his favorite would be as well as ever. Again, there was a visit to Aunt Dinah's described—the white roses and the rabbits dwelt upon: how she remembered them now!

The afternoon wore away. The shadow of the Sycamore falling on the paper, obliged her to move nearer the window, from which she stirred not until summoned to tea; then, hastily huddling the papers together, she tardily obeyed the summons.

The next day the expression of her face was very pleasant; as she sat in a wicker rocking-chair, made for her by one of the soldiers, she hummed in a low tone snatches of merry songs, and occasionally a smile would flit over her face as she stopped the otherwise almost ceaseless rocking, to fix her sewing, pulling at it, examining it, turning it over and smoothing it upon her knee, as ladies are wont to do when occupied with pleasant thought; then, again taking it up, she would hum more heartily, and sew and rock brisker than before.

Judith entered the room and asked several questions, but was answered curtly, without a turn of the head—so impatient was she of interruption to her thoughts.

In the afternoon she again returned to the boxes, and had almost given over the search, when her eye caught some papers she had not examined: she opened them quickly. Among them was a receipt for money deposited in the funds, bringing in three hundred annually. The receipt was made out to George Watson, and the money deposited for the benefit of Judge Mason's widow, the date being several days after her father's funeral. For a moment she was bewildered; then the truth flashed upon her. George, finding they would be almost penniless, had, when settling her father's affairs, ap-

propriated this sum to their use; it was just half his means, and done in such wise that it had never before even been suspected, and but for this search, would never, in all probability, have been known to her, his wife.

This accounted for the losses he said he had sustained, and the insinuations of others that they were by other means than speculation; how delicately it had been done, and how, on their marriage, he had insisted that Peyton should take charge of this fund for her! There she sat with the papers in her hand, and the tears streaming down her face—tears of joy, of pride, of affection, and somewhat of remorse, that she, who had been his companion day by day—had lain near his heart night after night, should not have done him justice; that within the past few days she had caviled at the affection which would permit him to seek his pleasures abroad while she was alone, and yet, what a sacrifice had not that affection made for her! for she felt it was for *her*. She could appreciate the extent of it; it was not given from his abundance, but from his all. To give this he had to sacrifice *self*, his love of ease; for his whole income was barely sufficient to support him. Here was the motive of his application to the law, his connection with Gamage. If she loved her husband before, she idolized him now, longed for his return, that she might tell him of her ingratitude, for she had magnified her natural feelings upon his leaving, into almost a sin.

As she lay thinking that night, the thought came upon her that she would see her husband no more; and thus, perhaps, be punished for not loving him better. Oh! the horror that crept over her at the idea of losing George! She sprang from the bed, and going to the window, put aside the curtain. All things without lay calm and still in the moonlight. The calm of nature stole into her heart and gave her ease. She went to bed and slept.

At length the morning of the day came when she expected

him. She knew he would be at home in the evening; and as she set her room in order, she smiled as she thought of her fears and terrors of the night before. She had arranged it nicely, and had just seated herself, when a step on the stairs startled her; another moment, and she was sobbing in George's arms.

"Why, Ellen, what is the matter?"

"I am so glad you have come!"

"I will never leave you again unless compelled to do so."

"No, no—it is not that!" and she smiled as she pressed the hand she held, and leaned closer against him.

"Mrs. Adams tells me you have not been well."

"I fretted a little; for I was afraid something would happen to you."

"There must have been spirits in the air; for uneasiness on your account brought me home. The party have gone on."

In the afternoon he felt weary, and laid down. Ellen read to him until he fell asleep; then, drawing her chair to the window, she went on reading to herself. She had been occupied in this way for some time, when her attention was attracted by the Indians and soldiers without, who were practicing leaping and jumping together; the book dropped in her lap as she watched them at their sport; but soon her thoughts wandered from them. She had been sitting thus for some time, when George spoke.

"Are you sleeping, Ellen?"

"No, I am not."

"What have you been thinking of? You have not moved for half an hour."

"I was thinking of you." She came forward and seated herself on the edge of the bed.

"You know you asked me to look for those papers?"

"Did you find them?"

"No; but I found another."

"What was it?"

"An acknowledgment of money placed in the funds by George Watson, for the benefit of the widow of Roger Mason."

"Well, you knew of this before."

"Yes; but this acknowledgment was dated some weeks after father's death."

"So you have discovered it. I am very sorry. I thought the receipt destroyed." He looked vexed. * * * "Ellen, I can not tell you how much I regret this. I had hoped it would never have come to your knowledge—that Ellen Watson might never feel that Ellen Mason had been under obligation to me; for as such I knew you would consider it. For I do not wish gratitude to mingle in your love for me. I would rather you loved me less. After your father's funeral, on looking into his affairs, I found there was absolutely nothing left—you were penniless. I knew that you would only accept temporary assistance from me; and although you called me 'brother,' you would not accept from me the aid you would accept from a brother by blood—nor did I wish you to do so, feeling that you were dearer to me than a sister; and hoping you might one day be nearer, it would have troubled me to have had you knowingly accept this kind of benefit from me; for, when I called you 'wife,' the suspicion *might* arise that gratitude had awakened your love, and this would have been too galling. Feeling thus, I invested one half my income in your mother's name, and would have invested it all thus, but this I knew would bring discovery. It was a mere act of justice, Ellen. Your father, in order to hoard my little patrimony, paid my college bills, and when, arriving at age, I wished to settle with him for my maintenance, he, who had sheltered me from childhood under his roof without drawing upon my means, indignantly refused, asking if I intended to insult him. Yet his widow

and daughter would not have depended upon me for one hour."

He was stopped by Ellen throwing her arms about his neck and weeping upon his shoulder. After a few moments she told him how she felt the morning he left, and her pleasure in reading the old letters.

"You fancied yourself neglected—I thought so—and, to conquer the feeling, insisted I should go. I read it plainly, and should have remained, but knew *then* you would have upbraided yourself with keeping me. Never fancy I do not love you, Ellen—never fancy you have not the strongest hold on me human being could have. A man's way of testifying love is different from a woman's. I love you much more than when we were married; for, as the love of the wife is holier than that of the maiden, so is the love of the husband higher than that of the lover. Had you made me the doating and caressing wife some women make their husbands, I should have despised myself, and been weaned from you. Man was intended to be the caresser, not the caressed; and I love you for this very self-control, for in it I recognize another proof of your affection for me. To me you have been all woman should be—companion, friend, wife!"

She raised her head and gently drew away as he spoke thus; but he drew her back, and detained her with his arm.

"Did you ever think me inclined to be dissipated—wild—Ellen?"

"No; but I was troubled by hearing it insinuated."

"Levering hinted to me as much once. At one time I was in a wayward, restless, reckless state of mind—had no employment, and felt I was wasting my energies; it was the time Levering visited you so frequently. There is within me a natural love of excitement—it is *down*, devil, *down*! all the time. At New Orleans I was carried away by it; but your mother's death recalled me: here it has food, and I am

happy, having no desire for any other life. I used to be jealous of Levering's power of interesting you, of engaging your attention, of giving you pleasant thoughts; but this passed away long since. I know that you read me, Ellen, like a familiar book—loved, put aside, but returned to again—and I am willing you should. My regard for you may not be as delicate nor as engrossing, perhaps, as yours for me—a man's love never is—but it is as deep and fervent. Never again believe yourself neglected, or beset yourself with fancies concerning my love; for, believe me, I can always read in your face what troubles your heart."

She was at his side, listened, and was quiet; it was the first time he had talked to her thus, and she knew it was from his heart; yet this conversation left a vague, uneasy feeling. She had often observed in his character this restlessness and love of excitement he had spoken of; she traced it in his boyhood—in the want of purpose of his manhood—in his life; now

"The rapture of pardon was mingled with fears,
And the cup of thanksgiving with penitent tears."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE winter, with its days of brightness and dullness, had passed away. The German proceeded but slowly; the long winter evenings being passed in talking of their distant homes, listening to the hunter's stories, or reading and speculating beside their blazing fires, while the howl of the wolf came upon the wintry blast that swept by them. The soldiers had constructed a rude sleigh; and, well wrapped up in buffalo-skins, Ellen, Mr. Kirk, and George would speed over the prairie, viewing wood and stream under the drear dominion of winter—the prairie a huge sea of snow; while afar off, keeping watch like some weird thing, stood some huge tree. One evening, on returning from one of these rides, they found "Old Chanton" seated by the fire, in the lower room, talking to Mrs. Adams, who seldom accompanied them on their drives, preferring the warmth within.

"Why, Chanton," said Kirk, "I thought you had gone to the hills with the tribe?"

"No; my squaw and the childer are sick, and I wanted to stay behind. I misdoubt me much they be on mischief."

"Why, you do not shrink from an Indian, do you, Chanton?"

"Not a bit; but then I've no grudge agin 'em, and a man can't answer for himself when he gits in a fight and his blood's up; best keep away. I shouldn't like to send an Ingen to his 'count, 'cept in self-defense; 'twouldn't be a comfortable idee. I'd rather kill a white man by half."

"Why, Chanton?"

"Because, you see, they're only half human any how, and would stand no chance in tother world. Sometimes I think, with Virginy there, that they're devils any how (he always called Judith Virginy). I couldn't stay in the woods of nights if I'd killed 'an Ingen unprovoked."

"I think you had better make tracks for the settlements, Chanton."

"I've had a yearning that way for some time; but not yet—my hand's still steady, and I can see game as far as the best. But I don't want to be put in the ground by the Ingens; I want a prayer said over me when I go. I feel somehow that 'twould help me up thare."

"Why, you never pray, do you?"

"Not often, Mr. Kirk; but sometimes, when I'm in the woods, I think and feel things that, somehow, I've a notion goes upward—they make me feel better, anyhow."

The old hunter paused for a moment, then went on.

"Once, three summers ago, I had a shot at a deer, and he staggered and disappeared afore I could git to him. I went ahead to see what had become of him, and the first thing I knew I had stepped off the arth and was going over a precipice. It was but one second that I saw the blue sky and the sunshiny arth above me, and the jagged rocks below, but all the wrong things of my life were afore me like a picture; and I prayed, Mr. Kirk, right thare, 'twixt heaven and arth—it was a silent, inward prayer; but it saved me. The next minute I was holding by a stout sapling that grew out of the rocks; and close by me, betwixt the rocks and the sapling, had lodged the deer I had shot; it made a sort of trembling movement, and threw its eyes on me as I drew myself up near it. I never shall forget that look, it was so human-like. I felt afeard, though the Ingens call me brave too. I thought at first I'd have to die thare, for I saw no way to get back,

and there was no help nigh. The deer died, and I believe I'd have starved afore I'd have touched him; howsomever, I managed to get to arth agin; but I've never shot a deer since without a queer feeling."

"I do not think your bravery will be doubted if you never kill deer again, Chanton," said Kirk, as the old hunter proceeded to get his supper.

Glad were they to hail the first spring thaw. To Ellen it brought more than gladness—it brought joy unutterable, for it found her the mother of a boy. She looked upon George's proud and happy face as he bent over the babe, and felt that here was her world; and she was brighter, and happier, and younger each day.

A great event was the birth of this child in the wilderness. Mrs. Adams was never tired of coddling over it. She fussed and worried about Ellen during her illness with all the earnestness of a mother, recommending this, that, and the other, and greatly interfering with Judith, who prided herself particularly upon her nursing, and her experience regarding children; and it touched her in a tender point to have Mrs. Adams call in question her treatment of the little one.

"She, who ne'er had ary child of her own, to lay down the law to me, who have nursed since I could walk, and had half a dozen of my own!"

The child was some weeks old, and Ellen sat by the fire with it upon her lap watching it sleeping, when suddenly she looked up in her husband's face and said,

"We must call him Louis, George—Louis Peyton."

"No, no, Ellen"—he leaned forward over her chair and gazed on the babe's face—"it must be Roger—Roger Mason. I always determined the first boy I was blessed with should be called after your father, and his daughter's child has a double claim. I only hope he will be like him—I ask nothing more."

She looked up and smiled gratefully; then, with a mother's fondness for a pretty name for her darling, said,

"We will call him Mason—Mason Watson. That is prettier than Roger."

"As you please, Ellen; but to me he will be Roger, and all the dearer for bearing that name." From that hour he was called Roger.

The child grew finely, and was in a fair way to become the spoiled child that the first child of a family generally is. He was a handsome boy, with his father's eyes and hair, and his mother's complexion. Judith had no trouble nursing, for he was the pet and plaything of the fort. There were always many hands ready to take him. The soldiers would nurse him by the hour—make playthings for him as he got older, and watch him chirping and crowing in his mother's or Judith's arms with almost as much pride and fondness as they did.

"Every body loves that baby!" said an old soldier to Ellen, one day.

"Yes; I wonder why it is, Jackson?"

"Why, you see, madam, the face of a babe is blessed to us at any time; but out here, where we only see the papposes, the white babe has a touch of home about it, and makes the boys think of their homes and little ones. Then they are so innocent-like, and we have seen so much badness in the army, that the little thing is like something fresh from heaven. I never was stationed where there was a baby that the men did not try to outdo each other in doing it kind turns."

One evening Judith's heart was lightened by the arrival of the long-expected Methodist minister, and the announcement that he would preach the following day. He was a commonplace looking man, and bore the character of being eminently pious. He had labored among the Indians before, and impressed them with the absence of all pretension and

cant in his conversation. Ellen had a reverent feeling about baptism, and greatly desired to have Roger baptized. They mentioned it to the minister, and the morrow was appointed for the ceremony.

The next day was a warm and beautiful one, and the meeting was held in the open air, under the large trees growing outside the fort, the thick foliage keeping out the rays of the sun, and tempering the light. It was a motley scene. Against the trunk of a sycamore was the rude platform upon which the speaker was to stand, while directly in front of it were placed chairs for the ladies and Judith, who sat next Ellen, and held Roger on her lap. Behind these were some rude seats, hastily thrown up for the officers, which bent beneath their weight. Seated here and there, upon logs, stumps, or the roots of trees, were the soldiers, while standing about or lying upon the bare earth, were the Indians and a few squaws. The picture this presented attracted George's attention as he walked forward with Mr. Kirk, and, after seeing Ellen comfortably seated, and giving Judith a shawl for the babe, he stepped on one side, and seated himself where he could hear, and at the same time command a view of the scene.

There was Chanton, sitting upright against the trunk of a huge tree, his hair wet, and combed smooth and straight upon his forehead, his face shining, and his hunting-shirt showing evident marks of attention to its arrangement in its would-be tidiness of look. Between his knees stood a half Indian boy of some six years of age, and beside the boy, as though sharing equally his affections, was his rifle.

The soldiers, dressed in their best, looked clean and orderly; while the Indians, with their immovable faces, were a study.

"Look, Kirk," said George, "at that group; the most civilized are the most restless—pay the least attention." He pointed to the officers. "Now see old Chanton and that boy,

the gravity, almost solemnity of his face—and those Indians—you can not detect a restless movement."

The hymn was given out, and loudest among the loud rang Judith's voice. George smiled, and exchanged looks with Ellen at her earnest and entire devotion of manner. It was a plain sermon on our duties; as George said, "What we all knew before." When it was over, he stepped forward, and taking Roger from Judith's arms, he and Ellen stood before the minister. The babe slept, and Ellen earnestly hoped he would behave well. The minister took him from his father's arms, and as he held him up and the water fell in a shower upon his face, the child awoke with a start and pouted his lip; but as the good man laid his hand upon his head, and pronounced God's blessing upon little children, the boy's eyes opened wide, and he looked upon him fearlessly. His mother received him proudly back, wiping the drops from his face, and as they knelt in prayer his occasional crowing could be distinctly heard.

"Why, your boy behaved like a hero, Mrs. Watson," was Mr. Kirk's salutation.

"God bless him!" said Chanton; "he'll make a brave one. I had a mind to have a Christian made of this heathen of mine here, but was afeard he'd fall foul of the minister when he felt the water on his face. It's good to have God's blessing on a child—it kind o' clings to him in trouble, and helps him often in life."

Very, very happy was Ellen in her forest home. Her husband and her child were all to her. Nannie and Peyton earnestly urged their return; but George was still content, and they thought not of change. Mr. Kirk would occasionally rally her upon her rusticity, and George describe a fancied meeting with Mrs. Walker in the streets of the metropolis—the manner with which she would look askance at their unfashionable garments, and wish devoutly she had not met

them there. Ellen yearned to see Nannie, and to show her boy; but this was the only ungratified wish she had.

Her greatest delight was to see George playing with their child. He would sit for hours, as the boy grew older, making toys or inventing things to amuse him.

One evening, when Roger had quietly fallen asleep on his lap, George looked at him a few moments, and then said,

"I shall be glad when he is old enough to wear jacket and trowsers. He reminds me of myself. You won my boyish heart, Ellen, by your admiration of my new clothes, on my first visit to the grove. Do you remember my showing you the depth of the pockets, and pointing out the fan-tail behind? I have that suit, with its bright buttons, in my mind's eye now."

"I do not remember that, but I *do* remember the first long-tailed coat you had, years after. In climbing a fence in coming from meeting, you were caught by the tail upon the top rail, and hung dangling there until rescued by black Jim!"

"Ha! ha! I remember that too. How badly I wanted to thrash Jim for laughing! Well, Ellen, some of these days Roger may be sitting by his fireside telling of his young years, when we are old, my Ellen—when we are old!" With his hand upon her head, he repeated,

"Each tottering form
That limps along in life's decline,
Once bore a heart as young and warm,
As full of idle thoughts as mine."

"All the forms that were so fair,
Hereafter only come to this."

"Yes!" and she threw her arm about his shoulder. "But it is together, George—together we grow old, and at length

"We sleep *together* at the foot,
John Anderson my Jo!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

ROGER was now nearly three years old, a beautiful boy, who won the hearts of all. The commissioners, with whom they came out, had long since gone home, and nothing had been said of accompanying them. George was living without end or aim but for the present. He read—improved his mind; had made some progress in German, by Mr. Kirk's assistance and that of some of the soldiers, who were German by birth. Still he had no end in view—no preparation for the future.

Ellen sometimes thought this state of things ought not, and could not last; but she was herself so content, and saw that George was; so proposed no change. Her character was a strange mixture of weakness and strength—weak in all that concerned her affections—no, not weak, but womanly; sacrificing, and yet not sacrificing either; for she felt a gratification, and not a deprivation, in shaping her desires to those she loved.

She was a woman to become strong in adversity. Under the pressure of misfortune she could suffer and be still—a woman so strong in her weakness, that she could bear, without bending, that which would crush others to the earth. But to be enabled to do this, she must have the knowledge that she was loved as she loved.

His equal in intellect, she had not the knowledge of it herself. She talked less with him than with others. His conversation had a charm for her, and she listened as to the

words of an oracle. She never interfered with his arrangements when he proposed a thing; she would often make a suggestion, which he always followed. Passionately attached to him, there was pride and affection, but no fondness in her manner. She never used an endearing epithet in speaking to him—it was simply "George!" She never caressed him when they were alone, although she sometimes, particularly latterly, as her affection for him strengthened and deepened, could scarce refrain from outward expression of it—her eye, her step, her voice, her manner, her whole life told of it; and he would as soon have doubted the existence of the Deity as doubted her love for himself. Thus it was that she not only kept alive his affection for her, but she added to it daily. There was no tricking in Ellen toward him; she influenced him from her thorough knowledge of his character, without knowing that she did so herself. She would caress her babe by the hour, yet often resisted the natural and womanly feeling to caress him, because of the respect she had for his opinions, many of which she had imbibed; and she had often heard him, in her girlhood, criticise such exhibitions of fondness in a wife, and speak of the effect they would have on himself. These things had never been forgotten, and when he said to her, "If you had made me the doting and caressing wife some women make their husbands, I should have despised myself, and been weaned from you," she felt she had the reward of her forbearance.

Yet he was a vain man; but it was not personal vanity. Ellen's love ministered to his pride as well as his affection, and through these to his vanity. He talked to her concerning himself, and things connected with himself, with almost the minuteness with which they came in his mind; yet he seldom spoke to her of herself, or of the love he bore her. He seemed to have a pride in keeping it hidden in the depths of his heart.

Yes, Roger was three years old; but Ellen could scarce realize she had been so long afar from civilization. She felt not a day older, and was looking younger. She looked at her beautiful boy, the happiest of happy children, running about in his glee from morning until evening, petted and spoiled by all, yet appearing to have one of those dispositions indulgence could not mar; and she thought with what pride she would one day show him to Nannie and Peyton. Thus she sat thinking one evening, when Roger came into the room, and in his eager voice called out,

"Ma—ma! may I ride on Mr. Kirk's horse?"

She snatched him up and covered him with kisses, while he tried to free himself, reiterating,

"Say, say, ma! may I?"

"Do let him, Mrs. Watson," said Mr. Kirk, entering. "I promised him a ride, with your permission."

Ellen consented, and, throwing on a shawl, went below with them. George was standing in the yard, and great was his delight at the fearless bearing of the boy as he sat before Mr. Kirk on the horse holding the reins. Mr. Kirk rode about a mile with him, and then returned. They were still in the yard, and Roger in high glee. He insisted on sitting the horse alone, and Mr. Kirk put him in the saddle; then he wished to ride by himself. Ellen insisted he should not; but George said, "Nonsense, Ellen, he is perfectly safe!" So he took a turn slowly across the yard, Mr. Kirk leading and holding him on the saddle. Again he wished to ride; but Ellen, afraid his father would permit it, and really feeling terrified—for the horse was one of mettle—took him from the saddle quickly, and giving him to Judith, he was taken within. Turning to Mr. Kirk, she said,

"Excuse me, but indeed I am afraid of that horse, and I do not really think Roger is well."

They both laughed good-humoredly, and all went in.

The next day it rained, and Roger was kept within, Ellen and George noticing several times that he did not play with his usual spirit. In the afternoon, he asked his mother to nurse him. He had never been ill for an hour, and Ellen, becoming very much alarmed, sent for the doctor who was stationed with them. He came, said the child had a fever, gave him some medicine, and advised her to put him to bed. All that night, and for several nights after, were George and Ellen kept awake by his tossing and turning. He was really ill. In a few days the disease declared itself scarlet fever. Ellen had always had a horror of this disease, and she clasped her hands tightly as she looked at George, remembering he had never had it. The days wore wearily away now as she watched by his side with George. Day and night she watched over him, resisting all George's entreaties that she would take rest; but there was no rest for her. Sometimes, indeed, she would throw herself beside him on the bed, but at his first movement she was up ministering unto him. Thus a week passed. Roger was ill—very ill.

The doctor had visited him, and left the room, George following. He did not return for some time, and when he did come, Ellen sat with their boy upon her lap. George stood a moment and looked at him, then threw himself across the foot of the bed. He lay there for some time, and Ellen, thinking he slept through weariness, as she approached to lay Roger down, threw a shawl over him. As she did so, he raised his head: his face was red and his eyes swollen, as though he had been weeping.

"George, George!" was all she said.

"He is dying, Ellen—dying!" and, with a strong effort, he mastered himself and approached her.

For a brief space she stood still, then taking hold of his arm, she said, in a voice the sound of which startled him,

"Is there no hope, George? Tell me there is hope!"

"None, Ellen, none! The doctor says that he is dying now!"

He caught her round the waist, for she seemed about to fall. She sat down in a chair like one stupefied, then slowly the big tears rolled from under her lids, as though she had lost the power to control them. She made no noise, nor did she seem to hear George's words as he spoke to her. Mrs. Adams came into the room, and her words of sympathy seemed to rouse her. She got up and walked to the bed. Roger stirred; she gave him drink, fixed the bandage about his neck, then seated herself where she could see his face and hold his hand in hers. All the remainder of that day and night she stayed there, a tireless watcher. The child seemed unconscious; he slept as though in a stupor, occasionally muttering and tossing; then she would bathe his face and give him drink. Toward morning, she took him up and sat with him on her lap. The first light of day had entered the room, when he struggled and put out his hands as though catching at something.

"George!"

He was at her side in an instant, and for a brief moment their eyes met full, the inquiry in her's answered by a glance at his.

George knelt beside her, but neither spoke. Still Roger struggled, once almost raising himself from her arms; then his hands relaxed, his head fell back—the expression of pain passed from his features—Roger was dead!

They bowed their heads together, and wept over their child.

After some moments George got up, and, taking the lifeless form from her lap, laid it upon the bed. She neither moved nor spoke.

"Ellen, Ellen! Roger is dead, but we are still left to each other."

She threw herself into his arms. Tight, tighter she clasped his neck, sobbing, "My boy! my boy! Roger!"

Together they threw themselves beside the lifeless form, together wept.

When Mrs. Adams entered the room an hour after, she found them thus, with Ellen's arm about Roger.

They buried him in the yard of the fort. Not a dry eye was present as the words of the service were falteringly read, and the damp earth fell upon what had been so lovely!

That evening George and Ellen sat in their desolate room, and wept in silence. Every object reminded them of Roger, but Roger was not there! Ellen seemed utterly prostrate. Day by day wore away, but she did not rouse. George had the listless, nerveless, dejected air of a man hopelessly bereaved. Mr. Kirk tried to talk to her—tried to get her to talk, but she seemed incapable of the effort. "It makes my heart ache to see her," he said; "she has the look of one stricken!" He had tried to interest her one day, and she had only answered in monosyllables. At length he said,

"I think you should try and rouse George, Mrs. Watson; he is looking very badly, and I am fearful he may be ill; the state of his mind at present will be no aid to him should he have an attack."

He had touched the right chord. Alarmed for her husband, she exerted herself to comfort him, and that afternoon proposed a ride.

George was really looking ill. A few days after found him confined to his bed, with the same fever with which Roger died, and Ellen watching the night out by his side. He was very ill for some weeks. Her alarm and intense anxiety diverted her mind from her loss, and when he was able to sit up they talked much of their boy—they mutually comforted each other.

"We must go home, Ellen; I can not bear this longer.

Change will do you good—you are looking badly. Every thing is tame to you now—every object brings with it some memory of our boy to keep alive the bitterness of your regret. But, tell me, do you reproach yourself with coming out here with me? Would you do it again were it to be done?"

"It has been the happiest part of my life, George;" and her tears fell fast, stifling her.

Ellen did not wish to leave her present home. She had many memories now to attach her to it, but she saw that George was weary, palled. The time had come, which she always had foreseen, when he no longer had pleasure in the wilderness. He seemed to wish to fly the spot which constantly reminded him of the death of Roger. She felt sick at heart—sad forebodings came over her. She thought of the long, bright days of peace and joy that had been passed here—days, of the memory of which even this bitter bereavement could not deprive her. The season spent here had been the sunshine of life; here she had her altar and her household gods. True, one of them had fallen low in the dust, but it was yet *home*, and the most cherished was still with her. The abiding principle never to interfere in his arrangements—never in any way to be a bar to his movements, kept her from expressing even a wish to stay. She thought he ought to go and enter into active life. Great was the trial to leave the green mound where lay the dust of him she might not look upon again; yet she prepared to make ready, in the hope that the change might bring George back to something like his former self, for he was much wasted by his illness.

Judith was delighted with the idea of seeing "Old Virginy" once more, for her occupation was literally gone; so she busied herself to make ready for their return, which was to take place as soon as George was strong enough to travel. Mr. Kirk, on hearing their resolution, said,

"I shall feel almost lost, Mrs. Watson—cut adrift again;

the last four years have sped rapidly with me. I can not say I rejoice at your going, I am too selfish for that; but I feel that you have, perhaps, been too long here, and it is best for you to leave. When we part, I shall bury myself in the woods—yours and Watson's society has been the charm that detained me."

In a little time all was ready. George, eager to depart, could scarce wait patiently for the company with whom they were to travel to St. Louis; but at length they came. Ellen visited Roger's grave for the last time, and then took a tearful adieu of all about her. Sorry, indeed, were they to see her go. Old Chanton, who had come to bid them good-by, brought her a large package of furs as a parting present, brushing his hand over his eyes as he bade "God bless her!" Mrs. Adams wept outright. Captain Adams looked uncommonly sober, Judith said; while Mr. Kirk fixed about their baggage, seeing that all things were in order, but said little. Now Ellen was mounted by her husband's side, and once more her face was turned homeward; but until the fort was out of sight she turned again and again to look at it, making no attempt to suppress her tears. Mr. Kirk rode on silently beside them for several hours, then, shaking George's hand, he turned to Ellen, and said,

"That little mound there," pointing in the direction of the fort, "will be very dear to me, Mrs. Watson. I shall plant it with roses and wild vines myself, and see that it is protected!"

Ellen answered not but by wringing the hand he held out, and he rode off at full speed. They turned to look after him—he was far in the distance; the last link which bound them to their forest home was broken! They traveled by easy stages, and having pleasant weather, soon reached St. Louis. Here George and Ellen both wrote to Nannie and Peyton, telling them of their return, and Roger's death; and here Ellen procured mourning for herself, at George's request.

They proceeded by steam-boat to Cincinnati, thence to Wheeling, thence home. It was nightfall when they entered the city, and proceeded directly to a hotel, intending to go out to Peyton's the next day. George procured Ellen a comfortable room, got her a cup of tea, and saw her lie down to rest; then, without saying any thing of his intention, started to see Mr. Casey and Mr. Levering. He inquired at the bar, and being informed where Mr. Levering lived, went there first. On inquiry he was told they were in, and was ushered into the parlor, where he found Jane and Levering sitting with a visitor. As the door opened, Jane turned and saw who it was. She sprang forward with

"Mr. Watson!"

Mr. Levering turned over a chair in his eagerness to shake hands.

"Why, Watson, I am delighted to see—" Jane interrupted with, "Where is Ellen?"

"I left her at the hotel; she was lying down. She did not know I intended coming to see you."

Putting out his hand, Mr. Levering rang the bell, and when a servant entered, ordered the carriage, Jane adding, "Tell John to make a fire in the front bed-room." Turning to the gentleman present, she begged he would excuse her, as Mrs. Watson was her most intimate friend, and she had not seen her for years. He immediately withdrew.

"I will get my things," she said, as she left the room.

She was speedily bonneted and shawled, and while they waited for the carriage to come round, many questions were asked and answered. Warm was their sympathy when George informed them of Roger's death.

"I must stop at Casey's," said George, as they got into the carriage.

"They have gone to a party," replied Jane; "but we will leave word at the door that you are with us."

When they reached the hotel Ellen was sleeping, and George sent Jane directly up to her room. Ellen had her face turned from her as she entered, and Jane leaned over her, kissing her on the cheek. "George!" she murmured, then opening her eyes, started back at the sight of Jane; but in a moment more her arms were around her, and thus they sat upon the edge of the bed, talking, and forgetting every thing, until George appeared to tell them Mr. Levering wished to see Ellen, and the carriage was waiting.

"Quick! dear, get your things," said Jane; "I have been so selfish, I forgot all about Mr. Levering's being below stairs."

Ellen hesitated a moment about accompanying them home, as her baggage would be troublesome; but this was overruled, and she soon found herself seated in a most comfortable chair at Mr. Levering's, with Jane by her side.

They talked until midnight, and even then, leaving the two gentlemen below stairs, adjourned above to chat alone.

"I see, Ellen, you are as much in love with your husband as when you married!" said Jane.

Ellen laughed and blushed.

"I think him very much improved, he looks so handsome. What a happy time you must have had in the wilderness!" Jane gave something like a sigh. "Yes, it was indeed happy; but you should have seen my boy, Jane!" With all a mother's fondness Ellen described Roger to her.

Thus they talked, until George insisted Ellen should go to bed, as the weariness and excitement would make her ill. The next morning Mr. Casey and Mrs. Walker came round to breakfast, Mrs. Levering having written to say that Ellen left early for Nannie's: a pleasant breakfast party they had. Now Ellen saw Jane's children, a bright-eyed little girl of some three years of age, and a boy yet in arms, together with Mr. Levering's two children by a former marriage, both bright and pretty girls.

At eight o'clock Mr. Levering's carriage was at the door to take them to Nannie's, and after giving and receiving kind messages, and Ellen promising Jane to visit her soon, they departed over the same road that Ellen had passed better than four years before, a bride!

"Well, Ellen," said George, when they were once more alone, "do you not regret you are not Mrs. Levering? Are you not a little envious of her house and carriage?"

Ellen shook her head; she did not look very troubled; her memory was busy with the last time she had traveled that road. She was thinking of all that had been said, recalling the schemes of happiness that had been planned, many of which had been realized; she felt that she ought to be very thankful; George had been all that he promised. She had had no trouble save that which had been brought upon her by an inscrutable Providence, and although she sighed as she thought how hard this was to bear, she felt more resigned than she ever had.

"Levering is what most people would call a model husband; but if Jane could have chosen from the world, she would not have been Mrs. Levering, although a nobler heart she could not have leaned on."

"I think she is happy, George; we had a long talk, and I think Jane very happy. She fully appreciates her husband, and it is a quiet happiness, with not, perhaps, as much enthusiasm in it as she could have felt years ago; for Jane is older, and views life more soberly. Mr. Levering looks the picture of content."

"Yes, he told me all his dreams had been realized in this, his second marriage; his children seem fond of her—hang about her. They are well matched."

Ellen sighed as he spoke of the children. In such conversation the day passed.

CHAPTER XIX.

NANNIE laughed and cried almost in the same breath at sight of them, seeming scarce to realize that Ellen was again with her. Mrs. Royton wept outright, and even Peyton's eyes glistened. Nannie had three beautiful children—one, the youngest, named after Ellen. She had grown very fleshy, and, Ellen thought, rather coarse; but George said she never looked better.

Peyton was just the same—a little more careless in his dress perhaps, but that was all; while Mary, that they had left an infant, was a prattling girl in her fifth year.

The first few days were spent entirely in talking, the ladies being left to themselves—Ellen being the heroine of the parlor, Judith of the kitchen. Ellen talked over all her life for the past four years; Nannie also had her little histories to tell; while George and Peyton were abroad, either walking about the farm or riding to the neighboring villages. After a week or two, when curiosity and novelty were exhausted, and questions ceased to be asked and answered, George began to talk about looking for something to do. The annuity which had accumulated in Peyton's hands, together with the rent of the house, amounted to about fifteen hundred dollars, and George, besides, had his own little means. About this time George heard of a situation, which he thought he could procure, at Washington, as it was connected with the public lands West, and his knowledge of the country qualified him for the office. Mr. Levering interested himself, and George went to

Washington to try and get it, for he had abandoned the idea of returning to the law. Ellen accompanied him to town, as she had some shopping to do, and thought this a favorable opportunity to make her promised visit to Jane.

They were very glad to see her, and many were the pleasant chats they had about years past.

"You express yourself very warmly about your Western home, Mrs. Watson," said Mr. Levering one day; "I suspect you were content—not positively happy."

"It was keen happiness, Mr. Levering; and if I remember right, you used to preach happiness was content—content happiness."

"Did I; but I was not married then, and"—with a bow to Jane—"did not enjoy the happiness I do now."

"And I was happier than I ever was before."

"Indeed! How did you like our friend Kirk?"

"I became much attached to him; he is so kind-hearted and agreeable—fascinating almost, but he is very ordinary in appearance."

"Very! How he has thrown himself away!"

"Why how, Mr. Levering?" inquired Jane.

"By living the life he does—wasting his education, his intellect, himself, among the savages! He is growing old in discontent—all for a mere chimera. He was intended for something better, but has no control over the tropical impulses he inherited from his mother. Did he speak of returning?"

"No; he said he should plunge into the woods."

"I will write to him; perhaps I can persuade him to come back. What strength of will you exercise, Mrs. Watson!"

"I do not think so," said Jane; "she loses her will in others."

"That is her power, Jane. The most difficult thing in

the world is to yield our desires to others. There lies the strength of Mrs. Watson's will."

"You make a machine of me, Mr. Levering, and are as constant to your theories as we women are said to be to our loves. As I will not be an enlightened, you make me a blind follower of your creed."

"The time will come, Mrs. Watson, when you will feel and recognize the strength of your own will."

They left the breakfast-table during this conversation.

"Can I do any thing for you down town?"

"Nothing, thank you."

He left, and Jane busied herself arranging the flowers and putting the little ornaments in order. Presently she stepped to where Ellen sat reading the morning paper.

"I can scarce realize," she said, "that you have been almost five years married. Do you feel older?"

"No; on the contrary, I feel younger. Until very lately, there have been seasons in my married life when I have felt as light-hearted and devoid of care as when a child."

"I envy you the feeling. My lightness of heart has departed; contact with the world withered it. Having been thrown upon my own resources was both a fortune and a misfortune to me. In some wise it was a well-timed providence, for it raised my faith in human nature, and gave me something engrossing to do; but how it saddened and sobered me; I have not felt fresh or young since. To struggle with the troubles of life may teach us what is false—what is real; but it is not always a blessing, for it takes from us a something it can not replace. Better, if it must come, come later in life; then youth is an oasis to look back upon."

"No, Jane, no! Of all states, the most miserable is a troubled, anxious old age. Let it come in youth, when the spirit is elastic. I believe we all enjoy a certain amount of happiness in this world. It may have no outward seeming—

be but the enjoyment of thought or imagination—but still positive happiness. I have had much time to think of late, and, with some lasting regrets, yet look upon the world in a very reconciled spirit."

"You always did. The path of duty to you was ever a pleasant one; to me the very word has a stern, cold, exacting, but safe sound. Lured by inclination, my path in life had been more tortuous and attractive, until I took the broad highway; and yet sometimes I doubt if the choice flowers gathered in the open road are as precious as the chance ones plucked by the hedge side."

"Ah! but Jane, the road-side flowers have no fragrance—they are wild. Those blooming on the highway leave their fragrance behind them long after they have faded; so the memory of duties performed is more pleasant than the duties themselves."

"True, and these regretful longings are but a perversity of my nature. It is better as it is; for, had I continued prosperous, my impulses would have been my only guides through life; but I have been forced to check and repress these, to give myself some principle of action, and make my happiness consist in ministering to that of others; and I succeeded too, for I am seldom in a murmuring mood. I wish you would remain here."

"So do I!"

"Then why go?"

"Because George wishes it. The capital, with the excitement and change of society, will suit him, and, except the deprivation of yours and Nannie's society, I shall have little to regret."

A servant here brought in Jane's youngest child. She took him from her arms, and said,

"One should be ashamed of not always being perfectly happy with such a boy as this;" then checking herself, as she thought of Ellen's loss,

"Is not Lorton like his father, Ellen?"

"Very much; he is a handsome boy!"

"Yes, and if he resembles him as much in mind and spirit, I shall be content. I often wish Mr. Levering had not such grave notions of life. He instills those same notions in his children's minds. * * * You do not know how much he has done for my family, Ellen. He has George at college now—he is to be ordained in the spring. He set Harry up in business, who now is able to support mother comfortably; and has insisted upon educating my two younger sisters. They are away at school."

"I always knew he was good and noble. He seems much happier."

"Yes, I have been very fortunate. I was not of a temperament to drag through life, as I see many of the women about me do. Marriage was to make me better or worse, and I feel it has improved me. Time has calmed a little this spirit of mine, which was wont to be so rebellious. But come, we are wasting the morning, and have both visiting and shopping to accomplish to-day."

Ellen was leaning against the mantle, watching Lorton as he played on the floor. A shade was on her face, and tears glistened in her eyes. Jane knew of what she was thinking, and, throwing her arm caressingly about her, repeated,

"Little children! not alone
On this wide earth are ye known,
'Mid its labors and its cares,
'Mid its suffering and its snares!
Free from sorrow, free from strife,
In the world of joy and life,
Where no sinful thing hath trod,
In the presence of our God!
Spotless, blameless, purified,
Little children, ye abide."

"Come, Ellen, come, Mrs. Walker will think we neglect her if we fail to call there to-day."

This visit of Ellen's passed most pleasantly. She enjoyed the society of her friends, but that of Jane most of all. She was often at Mr. Casey's, who was still a bachelor, guarded and disregarded by Mrs. Walker. He was looking older, was quite gray, but just the same in character—sighing, if any thing, oftener than before, as particular as ever in his dress, and as devoted to the ladies, evidently having quite a liking for Miss Brice, of which liking the lady seemed quite conscious. Mrs. Walker scarce looked a day older, and you would not judge she was so, but by the extra pains she took with her toilet and her avoidance of cross-lights.

Ellen had often seen Miss Brice at Jane's of late, and remarked Mr. Casey's tenderness for her. She spoke of it to Jane.

"O yes! They would have made a match long since, but Mrs. Walker is determined he shall not marry until she has provided for herself."

"Are they engaged?"

"No, I do not think he has ever spoken to her about it; but you know," and Jane smiled, "with friend Casey words are not necessary. He can not keep the avowal from face and manner, and I think Maggie is pretty sure she will one day be Mrs. Casey, and is content to wait."

"Has Mrs. Walker any particular admirer?"

"She flirts indiscriminately with all who approach her; but, report says, she is going to marry old General Cost!"

"Impossible! Why, he is seventy!"

"Near it, but then he is a general, my dear—is immensely rich—has a magnificent house, servants, carriage, liveries, and all that sort of thing; besides, he is a gentleman, and has been a very elegant man. His daughters are afraid it is to be. Mr. Levering told me the other night that Mr. Morris, whose wife was a Miss Cost, spoke of it as a match. Mrs. Walker and I, you know, never liked each other much,

and are not intimate. I have a great regard for Mr. Casey, and he visits us often ; but I think Maggie is the attraction, for she is much with me."

" Well, if Mrs. Walker intends becoming Mrs. Cost, I wish she would have the knot tied, for I do not like to hear friend Casey sigh so, nor do I like his getting so gray. * * * And so Mr. Steele is married ! What kind of a wife has he ?"

" She is a pretty little woman, but still as a mouse. Charlie's will is her law. She is not the kind of woman I thought he would marry."

" You have told me nothing of Mary Gordon."

" She is visiting at Philadelphia. Her father is dead, and she and her mother live alone. She has quite a reputation as a writer, but goes but little into society. She is faded and thin—has lost the sparkle and brilliancy she used to have."

" Does she ever speak of Mr. Steele ?"

" Never to me. He treats her with marked respect and attention when they meet. She did not call on his wife. I was surprised at that."

" Why, yes ; it seems to me I should have done so ; but I do not know, either. Of course, she does not wish to be thrown with him, and would not do it for mere appearance."

" Charlie has altered very much—has much influence. He was in the Legislature last year."

" It is a pity he and Mary did not marry !"

" Yes, but I suppose it was not to be."

Here Mr. Levering came in with a letter from George. He had been successful in his application, and Washington was to be their future home.

CHAPTER XX.

IN a fortnight from this Ellen found herself a denizen of the capital. The city was crowded, for the election of a new president had drawn hither an immense number of people, actuated either by interest or curiosity, each man jostling his neighbor and looking curiously into his face, to see if he could discover the motives which brought him there. The most selfish of all selfish society, each using or abusing the other, according to the purpose of the moment ; each following his own ends, and scanning all new-comers with distrust and suspicion. They boarded, and Ellen made many new acquaintances. It was here that she admired her husband more than she had ever done before. George always dressed well ; he had that air about him, which is inherent in some persons, of wearing their clothes well ; his dress always looked easy, never new. Fond of talking, and calculated to shine in society, his talents were here called forth, and he really appeared to great advantage. She was constantly hearing him quoted at the hotel in which they boarded. Ellen wore mourning, and therefore did not go much into society ; but they were frequently invited out, for, neglectful of nothing that could add to his reception in society, George had excellent letters to prominent people. Now she felt the difference in their mode of life, and keenly came to her the death of Roger—for she was necessarily much alone—he being absent during office hours, and in the evening society took him from her ;

for now he occasionally went out without her. George never referred to Roger; like most men about death, he appeared to wish to forget it. To her the change was great indeed. She had led so very different a life from most married women; had, during the past four years, been so dependent upon her husband for society, that now she felt that deprivation keenly; but she knew this to be unavoidable, and however much she might have repined over it in secret, she had too much good sense to annoy him with her murmurings. Her married life had hitherto been passed like a dream, an episode—now she was entering upon the dull, cold reality.

One morning George said to her,

"Ellen, I wish you would accompany me to Mrs. Barrett's to-night, I want to introduce you to Secretary —; he is an old friend of your father's, and always inquires for you. I know you would like him." George had brought letters to him.

She looked down at her dress; he, seeing this, and understanding the feeling, said,

"You can moderate your dress a little. Come, you will go, will you not? My conscience always reproaches me when I go out and leave you alone, and I do not enjoy it, for I know where your thoughts are wandering. As we are to reside here, I wish to make all the friends and the interest I can, and have determined not to go out again without you. I have said nothing about this until now, because I thought it might not be pleasant to you. I am anxious you should go more into society, you are too much alone."

And Ellen went. She was admired, and received much attention, which added not a little to her husband's enjoyment. After this she always accompanied him, and found much in the society they frequented to amuse and interest her. Here she saw in familiar intercourse the great men of the nation, those whom she had been accustomed to look at

as almost belonging to a different order; to whose speeches she had listened with such admiration when read by George or Mr. Kirk.

She had heard their characters discussed, personal anecdotes related of them, and now she was face to face, seeing with her own eyes, hearing with her own ears, and she realized how much distance and the imagination could do.

About this time Ellen wrote to Jane, and said,

"You will be astonished, I know, to hear of me in all this gayety, but George wishes me to go. We were at a party last evening at Secretary —'s; he was an old friend of my father's. I like both himself and family very much; they have been very attentive to us. George, you must know, has become very particular about my dress; he does not say any thing, but he scrutinizes it closely, with a look that I have learned to read, and last evening paid me the first compliment on my appearance he has paid me since our marriage. The rooms were crowded, and I had the pleasure of being introduced to the great Mr. —, of Kentucky, by the Secretary himself. We had some conversation together, and he inquired particularly after old Mr. Peyton. Knowing George, and finding I had been West with him, he asked many questions, and I became so interested in his descriptions and the stories he told, that, before I knew it, I found myself the centre of a little knot gathered to listen. This gratified George, while my admiration of the great man increased two-fold.

"Who do you think is boarding opposite us? Our old friend, Mr. Clayton, and his fashionable little wife. He has married a nice little lady some fifteen years younger than himself, a very pretty and amiable woman, but having lived all her life in Washington, fashion is her standard of worth. We are much together, and I like her; she is my guide through the labyrinth of this society. I often wish you were here; you

would, with your quick perception, enjoy the sight of so many strange people.

"I was looking back the other day, Jane, to just one year since; what a contrast my life now presents to my life then. I feel about it as the Israelites must have felt, in after years, about their sojourn in the wilderness; a longing to be again by the pleasant waters, to see once more the graves of their kindred, and rejoice in the immediate presence and protection of God.

"I never saw George looking better or seeming happier; I pulled three gray hairs out of his head yesterday morning, and, I must confess, it gave me the heartache. I think this a very dissipated place, there are so many hangers on."

Mr. Clayton, who had been an admirer of Ellen's, called with his wife to see her, as soon as he knew of her arrival in Washington, and they directly became intimate friends—Ellen's time, in George's absence, being mostly spent with Mrs. Clayton, who introduced her to her father's family, and from that time she ceased to feel altogether a stranger.

She went more into society than she ever had, even in her girlhood. It seemed that her life, which had hitherto been so quiet, was now all bustle. The calm current she had been floating on had suddenly borne her to the rapids.

She enjoyed it. Her father, while presiding as judge, had made many friends, who remembered his daughter. Her manners were quiet and refined, and her really sparkling intellect, which she had repressed rather than cultivated, in deference to George's opinions, called forth by the society in which she moved, had full play; while George, in more brilliant spirits than she had ever seen him, took much pride in the display of her power of mind. He was vain of it, as something belonging to self. So they seldom spoke of their far away home. If she sometimes sighed for that quiet room, and the long shadow cast by the sycamore at eventide against the

casement—if she did sometimes hear the merry prattle of childhood, and long to clasp the young form that came not to her yearning heart, she spoke not of it. Deep within the heart of the mother these memories lay, to be called up in the twilight, to float in her dreams and mingle in her prayers; but the wife suffered them not to come between herself and husband. She permitted not the shadow that would rest upon her heart to cloud his brow.

It was the presidential levee, and a crowded one. Ellen stood leaning on George's arm, watching the various groups as they entered, paid their respects, and passed on. Mr. Clayton was near, pointing out the celebrities.

"There, Mrs. Watson, to the right, is the representative from our new territory, a man of talent, but not *au fait* to Washington yet. His clothes, which are of the best materials and latest style, hang upon him. He is all angles. The broadcloth, frightened at such rough contact, has refused to come to terms."

"He has a fine face—true and independent, and there is quiet humor about him. See that smile!"

"Yes, the rough edges will soon be polished. Men, such as he, who come here just from the plow, with fresh thought, talent, and independence, are soon marked; their presence is felt and feared; all find their level. That very man, after a session or two, will wear his clothes as carelessly, and move about as easily, as though accustomed to the scene from his birth."

"Who is that lady, Mr. Clayton, on the arm of that gentleman in military dress?"

"Why, that is our famous belle, Miss ——. She was educated at Paris, and is both accomplished and beautiful."

"I should like to see her face."

"Take Mr. Clayton's arm, then," said George; "yonder is a gentleman I wish to speak to."

She did so, and had a full view of the person she had been admiring. George did not return immediately, and she stepped on one side to await him, as he was engaged in conversation. In a few moments he returned, when she asked, "Who is that you just spoke to—the one going out the door, with the broad, high forehead, and deep, solemn-looking eyes?"

"That is Mr. W——, of Massachusetts."

"Strange I did not recognize him! I saw him in the Senate chamber."

"There, standing by the window, is a gentleman I have been watching for the last five minutes, there is something I admire so much in his face—the tall one, I mean."

"Is it possible you do not know who that is? You have heard your father speak of him often—Mr. ——, of South Carolina."

"Move further on, George; I wish to see him nearer."

In this way Ellen's life passed for months. Once, accompanied by George, she went upon a short visit to Peyton's, but as he could only stay a few days, she would not stay longer.

One evening, about nine o'clock, he said to her, "Ellen, I am going to an oyster-supper this evening. Hilton is to call for me at ten. As it is given by a set of bloods, I expect we shall keep it up pretty late; so do not sit up for me."

She promised she would not. So he sat with her until his friend called, when he left. She sat reading for some time after, then, feeling wearied, went to bed, leaving the door unlocked. She heard the clock strike one, and fell asleep. When she awoke she found George had not come in, and lay listening and waiting for him. Presently again the clock struck—it was three! She began to feel restless. One or two hacks drove by, and she heard persons talking on the pavement. Presently a hack drove up to the hotel door, and some one got out and came up stairs. There was a fumbling at her door. She was frightened, for she had left in un-

fastened. Directly it was opened, seemingly by another hand; for after she saw the light, she could still hear the groping. She sat up in bed. George entered, leaving the door open behind him. Some one outside shut it, and their footsteps retreated along the hall.

Her first impulse was to spring out of her bed and ask what was the matter; her next, to fall back and suppress a cry, for she saw he tottered as he walked, and his eye was vacant and staring. She lay quietly, and scarce breathed as he swung about the floor, but felt thankful that, in accordance with her usual custom, she had put all the chairs in their places. He spoke not—seemed unconscious. Her heart throbbed audibly as he fell heavily beside her.

As she lay there, she heard, from time to time, heavy footsteps in the hall or above stairs. Once some one went up with great effort, and directly there was a heavy fall upon the floor above. This room she knew was occupied by Mr. Hilton. She could lie there no longer. George, with his face buried in the bed-clothes, slept; and his heavy breathing sounded with painful distinctness through the room. She arose and went to the window, but hesitated to raise it and let in the air, fearing to awake him. She sat down and looked into the street—it had grown wonderfully quiet. There was a heavy load upon her heart, and she would have thought she had been dreaming but for the loud breathing of the sleeper, which sounded through the room. Five o'clock struck—she was still there. Once or twice she stepped to the bedside and looked upon him; but he slept on, and she sat and prayed—yes, prayed—no uttered or connected aspiration, but the prayer of the Spirit, the most sincere of all prayers. The fear of this evil had come upon her lately, but had been driven away as too monstrous to think of. She now recalled every word of his conversation at the fort, when he spoke of his natural love of excitement, and hinted at excesses at New

Orleans. She remembered Peyton's words to her before her marriage, about his want of fixed habits, and she almost reproached herself with going with him to the wilderness.

There, in the quiet of the night, she thought it all over, and as it grew darker just before the approach of dawn, she formed her resolution, and sat waiting for the light. The east grew bright—brighter; footsteps and voices were heard in the streets. A drowsy negro over the way came out and opened the shutters, then, leaning lazily against the door-post, gazed down the broad street. Presently another appears on this side, broom in hand, to sweep the pavement; and now a colloquy goes on between the two, the last-comer standing on the curb-stone and leaning, with his arms folded, on the top of his broom. Yonder the housemaid has opened the parlor shutters, and, resting on her elbows, is gazing up street, watching the boot-black as he slowly limps along, his basket on one arm and his three-legged stool on the other. She is good friends with him; for, see, she has brought him the master's boots. He plants his stool upon the pavement, seats himself, and rubs, rolling his head from side to side, and talking the while to his up-street neighbor, who leans in the door-way. Hark! here comes the stage, rattling over the uneven pavement and waking the peaceful citizens from their dreams of office; hear the horn, as it turns the corner and draws up with a heavy pull at the hotel door.

To Ellen all other sights and sounds had been unheeded, but she turned nervously at this, and glanced at George; he slept on. Many feet were in the hall, many bells rang; half awake passengers hurried out and in, while laughter and joke passed between the driver and bar-keeper. There was calling for baggage, a settling into seats, a blast upon the horn, and the stage drove off.

Ellen raised the window and proceeded to dress, then seated herself again with a book in her hand.

A long time elapsed, then George turned, and, rousing himself, said,

"Are you up, Ellen; what time is it?"

"I expect the first bell to ring every moment."

"I was afraid you would sit up for me last night. It was late when we broke up."

"Yes, I did not sleep at all till after one, and you had not come in then."

He appeared satisfied with her reply, and walking up to the window, rested his head against the glass and complained of headache; his eyes were swollen and bloodshot. She wished to bathe his head, but he declined. She asked some questions concerning the supper, which he answered hurriedly, and said he had eaten too many oysters.

Many covert remarks were made at the breakfast-table concerning the previous night, and one or two gentlemen asked George, very pointedly, how he was. He said little, ate nothing, but drank some coffee. After breakfast she went to her room, he to the office. She saw he wished her to be ignorant, or appear so if she was not, of his state the night before, for to speak of it to him she knew would lower him in his own esteem; therefore she was silent, although it was a great effort to school her face and manner, while all the time she longed to throw herself into his arms, comfort, and talk to him.

She had often observed of late that his manner was excited, but this departed, and again she saw him as he usually was. But as she sat alone now, a feeling of terror crept over her.

At noon he still complained of headache, and appeared depressed. She went directly to her room after dinner, but he stopped below in the parlor to talk to the ladies. Presently he followed her, and throwing himself into a chair, said,

"Do bathe my head, Ellen, it distracts me."

She procured some cologne, and moistening his forehead,

blew upon it. He made some remark concerning their fellow-boarders, to which she replied, when he said,

"Your voice sounds sadly to-day; are you ill?"

"I have been thinking of Roger."

He started up, and putting his hands upon the back of the chair, leaned upon them and groaned.

A moment after, with a tap at the door, Mrs. Clayton entered.

"I have brought my work, Mrs. Watson, that you might show me the stitch you spoke of." She put her basket on the nearest chair.

"What is the matter, Mr. Watson?"

"I have a headache."

"Paying for your sins last night. I heard of your supper, and was wise enough to keep my husband at home. I know that set—a headache is always their wages!"

George forced a confused laugh and looked at Ellen; she had walked to the window to examine the worsteds, and did not turn. He took his hat to go out; she looked around when she heard the door, and their eyes met.

Some weeks passed, and she recovered in a measure from her uneasiness, but was extremely anxious to leave the hotel and go to housekeeping; for George would not board in a private family, and objected to housekeeping, as he could not afford to live in the style he wished. She did not care how plain their arrangements were, so they were free from the bustle, publicity, and temptation of a hotel. She also wished to have Mrs. Royton with her, and could not invite her to a hotel. She knew he would do as she wished if she insisted, but hitherto she had forborne to do so.

Now again she observed his excited manner; he gesticulated, talked loudly—boisterously, which he did not habitually do; he was also more irritable in temper, and she saw Judith cast furtive, inquiring glances at him as he came in.

He now frequently spent hours, and even whole evenings, below on the pavement or in the bar-room, talking and smoking with those congregated there. One afternoon she had been riding with Mrs. Clayton, and as she was taking off her things heard him in the street below. Stepping to the window, she looked out; he was leaning, or rather hanging, on a gentleman's arm, and talking vehemently. There was something in the gentleman's manner which struck her, and in a tremor she sat down and waited for George to come up. He did not come, but Judith did, and, with an unusual manner, fidgeted about and then left the room again. At length George entered, and threw himself on a chair in a reckless kind of way. His face was flushed, his dress disordered; he looked as though he had been sleeping. In a moment he turned toward her, and in a dogged way said,

"Ellen, I have been drinking!"

She made no answer, except to step near where he sat. The tears were rolling down her cheeks.

"There, do not cry. I must leave this—must go from this place. Will you go with me?"

"Yes, George, any where. Come," and she put out her arm to support him, "you had better lie down."

He did as she wished; but after a moment raised himself, and said,

"Ellen, what would your father say if he could see me now?"

She could not answer. Soon he slept.

The next day she told him of her wish to leave the hotel and go to housekeeping.

"I shall feel much happier, George, out of this place."

"Just as you please. I will look for a house to-day. I think I know one that will suit us. You wish to get me from temptation; but I have indulged more or less ever since we left the woods."

"George, George! how can you tell me this?"

"Surely it is better to talk to you of this weakness than hide it from you."

And she felt it was.

He stepped up to her, his face stormy with emotion. "I know your loathing of the vice, Ellen, and will try to overcome it. Have patience with me. O! this yearning for excitement."

"Let us leave Washington, George. We can go to a more quiet place."

"No, no—that would never do. The idea that I was not strong enough to resist would be my ruin. Our life west palled upon me; I felt the need of new scenes. The same restless feeling has beset me here, and urges me on."

They talked long together. Ellen spoke to him with firmness of the weaknesses of his character, and the necessity there was to resist the tendencies of his nature, with a force and yet a tenderness she did not believe she could use to George. Not calmly did she speak—she could not do that—for at times her emotions almost choked her. He was remorseful, and upraided himself; and she hoped and sought to reconcile him to himself and win back his lost self-esteem; and she felt better for him since he had spoken—had not so much fear of the future.

CHAPTER XXI.

THEY were soon settled at housekeeping, in a pretty little dwelling prettily furnished. The money left in Peyton's hands did this for them. They had been some two months away from the hotel, and her hopes concerning her husband had not all been realized; yet she hoped on, more thankful each day that they were in their own house.

She knew that consideration for her kept George often at home when he would otherwise have gone out; and although once she would have recoiled at the idea of being a tax upon him, she now clung to any thing that would keep him in. Never had she made such efforts to be agreeable to him; not even in her girlhood had she taken so much pains with her dress or been so uniformly cheerful. When he was absent she had no quiet, and at his coming, before she greeted him, she scanned his face.

One day he said to her,

"I thought you intended to have Mrs. Royton with you, Ellen, when you got to housekeeping?"

"So I did," was the reply; "but I put it off from week to week."

"I think you had better do so; she may feel hurt at your delay."

"I will write to-day."

She had intended sending for Mrs. Royton when she first went to housekeeping, but could not bear she should see the change in George. She sat long after he left in thought, then

arose and wrote the letter, thinking that her presence in the house might have a good effect upon him, she was so agreeable an old lady; and he spent so much of his time from home, she almost lost confidence in her power to interest him. They had few visitors, and no intimates except Mrs. Clayton, who was out of town; the city was dull, and Mrs. Royton's cheerful presence would be more welcome now than ever, for she longed for some one to talk of "lang syne" with.

A few days found Mrs. Royton comfortably fixed with them. The house seemed brighter; George staid in, and was very attentive to the old lady, driving her out and taking her to see the public buildings. This did not last long, however; and she soon saw that Mrs. Royton's presence was an excuse for leaving.

"Ellen, I have an engagement to-night; and, as Mrs. Royton is with you, I will fulfill it." Or, "Ellen, I believe I will go down town; you will not be alone."

Mrs. Royton observed all this in silence, but never directly commented upon it, although she would often make a palliative remark, calculated to reconcile Ellen as much as possible to the state of things. Often, when alone with her, she would talk of the adversities and misfortunes of her early life, and philosophize upon them, giving her views of religion, and luring Ellen from the troubles of her lot by showing her those of others.

"I think you have more faith than most persons," Ellen said to her one day.

"I do not know that I have, my dear child; but I do know that I have a fixed faith that all things work together for good."

"You surely do not think that misfortunes and troubles are purposely sent to do us good?"

"I do not know that they are sent at all. They come to us in the natural course of events, from the breakage of some

law; but I do believe, they are the seed of good, which afterward bring forth fruit. Prosperous people—those who have always been prosperous, I mean—are never humble people, seldom religious, and seldom happy. They look upon peace and plenty as their birth-right, and murmur and repine if deprived of it. They think there is no necessity to thank God for his goodness to them, for he has always been good to them without their thanks; they can not feel for the wants of others, for they have no ungratified wants of their own. When troubles and misfortunes come upon such people, they do not bear them like Christians—they are not Christians. But those who have had to look further and higher for aid in their checkered career—who have seen their earthly props disappear and slip from them one by one, will tell you that they have learned to be humble, subdued, trusting. They have gained faith."

"They have faith in the far future, but what faith can they have here?"

"They have faith in humanity—in each other; they forbear, have kindness, are long-suffering; they learn to bear as they hope to be borne with, and, depend upon it, they have their reward!"

These conversations did Ellen good. She never upbraided George. It was not in her nature to do this, nor was he of a temper to bear it. She never so trifled with her power over him.

Mrs. Royton had been with her for three months, and it had become habitual with George to spend his evenings out. He had become careless in his dress, and in the morning looked haggard and worn. Thus they lived.

It was between nine and ten at night, and raining. Mrs. Royton and Ellen sat in the parlor—Mrs. Royton knitting, Ellen reading to her. The front door opened, there was a staggering tread in the hall, and George reeled into the room.

The book dropped from Ellen's hand. Mrs. Royton gave her one look, then getting up, took George's arm and led him to the sofa, for he leaned against the door for support.

He spoke to Ellen, said some few incoherent words, dropped his head, and slept.

Mrs. Royton left the room, and Ellen, with her arms upon the table and her head upon her arms, wept unrestrainedly. Many days passed before he was again himself. He would go out and return in the same excited state.

Judith saw all this, and having the interest and taking the privilege of an old servant, she would speak of it to Mrs. Royton. She was always careful, even in her manner, to save Ellen. There was scarce any inducement strong enough to lead her to speak of it to "Miss Ellen;" but toward him she had not this feeling. One morning she went into the parlor, to take him something he needed. He was leaning with his head against the mantle-piece.

"The Lord forgive you, Master George!" she said; "for, indeed, indeed, you are committing a great sin. You will break Miss Ellen's heart."

George turned round quickly and looked at her, then taking the articles he wanted from her hand, said, in a tone that brought the tears to the old woman's eyes, and made her hastily leave the room,

"Thank you, Judith!"

Ellen wished now very much to be alone with her husband. She believed, if entirely thrown upon him, consideration for her would often keep him in, and besides, she could not bear that another should see his constant degradation. She saw that Mrs. Royton had no idea of leaving her; and, as the desire to be alone increased, she turned over and over in her mind how she could broach the subject to Mrs. Royton without speaking of George, for this she had determined in no wise to do.

She received a letter from Nannie at this time lamenting Mrs. Royton's absence, as the children were sick and Peyton away. Ellen entered her room with the letter in her hand.

"Here is a doleful account from Nannie," handing it to her. The old lady read it, and dropping it on her knee, said,

"Nannie is so inexperienced—timid—where her husband and children are concerned."

She continued talking, and Ellen saw she did not propose, as she had hoped she would, to go to Nannie. The truth was, the old lady was more attached to Ellen, and thought her presence more required here—that she could be of more benefit sustaining and encouraging her, than in nursing Nannie's children.

Ellen hesitated for some time, then making a great effort, said,

"Do you not think you would like to pay Nannie a short visit?"

Mrs. Royton seemed amazed, dropped her work on her lap, her face flushed, and she looked inquiringly and searchingly at Ellen, who felt almost as though she had committed a criminal act; and nothing but George—but the slight hope that was in her heart that she might, by entire dependence upon him, win him back—gave her strength to go on, it seemed so ungrateful.

"Pardon me, Mrs. Royton—do not feel hurt. You have been a mother to me, but indeed—indeed, it is better that we part for a little while—better that you visit Nannie!"

Ellen threw herself upon her friend's neck and wept.

"There, Ellen—there, do not agitate yourself, my dear child. I think with you; it is much better I should visit Nannie. I can be of service to her. You know how frightened she gets when there is sickness in the house. It will not be long, I know, before I am with you again."

Mrs. Royton went. Again was Ellen alone with George. Day after day brought no change in him. Sometimes he was better, sometimes worse. It had become habitual with him to stay from home—habitual with him to drink.

Ellen always sat up for him; did he come in late or early, she was always waiting his return. She would not expose him more than possible to the servants. Her acquaintances "wondered Mrs. Watson did not leave him and go to her friends," but this never moved her. During the day, George kept himself sober—it was in the evening he indulged. By the next morning he was comparatively himself—worn, haggard, nerveless, yet not excited.

He was never unkind to Ellen, never spoke roughly to her, but would often lament over himself, and mourn his weakness and vice.

At times his remorse was painful to witness. Thus day by day, month by month, year by year passed. Peyton, who had heard of George's excesses, wrote to Ellen concerning him, as did also Nannie. She answered the letter, but made no mention of George. They wrote again. She replied, if they wrote to her in that way concerning her husband, she would not answer their letters.

Not being satisfied with this, Peyton went to Washington; there, seeing George, and being informed of his habits, he begged Ellen to leave him. To this she replied,

"It is useless to urge me, Louis—useless. He has never spoken an unkind word to me since I have been his wife. He may be captious, cross, irritable to others; he is never so to me, and I will not leave him. I have no children to be hurt by his example; I have no one to render an account to but God; and I have sworn to cling to him through evil and through good. There is still hope! Men worse than he have reformed themselves, and never, never will I leave him. Do not urge me, Louis. I ask you, as a favor,

never to speak to me about it. I feel this to be the straight path of my duty."

With a heavy weight upon his heart Peyton left her, and although after this Ellen often wrote to them, she never mentioned George save when she could say something in his favor.

One evening, many months after this, Ellen waited for George. He had not been home to tea. It was early, and she was presently surprised at his coming in apparently himself.

He sat down, and for some moments looked steadily at the floor.

"Will you have a cup of tea, George?"

He shook his head.

"Ellen," he presently said, "did not Peyton wish you to leave me?"

"Yes!"

"Why did you not go? Why stay here to be pointed at, and dragged down—down? Has Roger Mason's daughter come to this, and through me?"

"George, you did not wish me to go?"

"I told Peyton he had better persuade you to it."

"I can go to-morrow—to-day, if you wish it!"

The tears which had gathered in her eyes dried, and she raised her head proudly.

"I do wish it, Ellen! Do you know you are pointed at and pitied—yes, pitied!—as a drunkard's wife? It was an evil hour when you married me! I should have less on my conscience if you were with Peyton. Go, Ellen, go! and if you hear of my becoming more degraded—the vilest of the vile—think of what you have done for me, and that I should have been an outcast long since had you not been at my side! Now, now, disgrace is added to it; I can not ask you to share that too."

"What has happened to you, George?"

Ellen seated herself close beside him, and took his hand in hers.

"I have been turned out of the office—turned out on account of my habits—'borne with long,' the Secretary informed me, 'out of consideration for my wife!' I am not excited, Ellen. I was when he told me; but his words made me myself in a moment. I have tried since to drown—to forget them—but I can not. That I should ever come to this! Turned ignominiously out of office! Now, Ellen, you know all. Leave me! Why do you not go?"

His hot tears fell upon her hand.

"Never, George, never!" She threw her arms about his neck, his head rested upon her shoulder. "Let us go away; let us leave here. We have enough to live quietly upon until you can get something to do. You will recover yourself, and we shall be so happy."

He would have answered, but could not. His head sunk upon her shoulder, lower—lower! His whole weight rested upon her! She looked up at him; he was insensible! She conveyed him to bed, and sent for a physician. Excitement and a pent-up passion had done its work. For weeks she watched beside him, and was almost happy, for, for the first time, she lavished upon him all the tenderness of her nature, and saw him rise again the shadow of his former self—worn, old, his black locks tinged with gray—but subdued, humbled, chastened!

* * * * *

One year after this, Mrs. Levering sat on a summer evening hushing her infant to sleep. Suddenly her husband entered, with a newspaper in his hand.

"I have news that will pain you, Jane: George Watson is dead!"

She gave a low cry

"Dead, Mr. Levering?"

"Yes, dead! Here is the announcement."

"Poor Ellen! I must go to her."

She looked up in his face through her tears for assent.

"Certainly. I ordered the carriage; the boat leaves at five. Can you be ready? I sent John out to Peyton's with a note, saying in it I supposed you would go immediately."

"Peyton can not leave, I know; for Mrs. Walker has been here since dinner, and told me that Nannie's child was dangerously ill. They have sent express to the Ridge for Mrs. Royton.

"Have you heard any thing from Ellen?"

"Nothing. A friend, of whom I was making inquiries concerning George a few days since, told me that he was much altered in character, and looked emaciated and wan. You know he was never strong."

"It will kill Ellen, Mr. Levering—it will kill her!"

"No, Jane, I think not. This is a great sorrow; but she will find consolation in religion."

He left the room to make preparation for their departure. She leaned against the mantle and wept.

"This is the end of the man who was the first dream of my youth," she said; "this, this is the end! But a few years, and he in a drunkard's grave! she, broken in heart and spirit, a widow! Oh! Ellen! Ellen! I could not have borne as you have done. You have clung to him when all others turned aside. Alone you would watch over him! alone you are left with your dead! You are better than I—better—much better. Your portion of peace has been small indeed; and what a future is before you! And George! George! He who could have stood so well in the world's eye—who could have been any thing—to waste life thus! He loved her well, though—he loved her well. O God! it is well we are not permitted to follow the desires of our

own hearts. I should have goaded him to destruction, and Ellen has saved a soul! I am thankful—thankful for a brighter destiny.”

She put her arm in her husband's, when he came in to lead her to the carriage, with a feeling of love and trust such as she had never had before, and which never afterward left her.

CHAPTER XXII

It was a luxurious, much used, but well kept parlor; every thing in it was of the richest and best. A quiet, pretty, serene-looking woman sat in an elegant chair sewing, while upon the floor at her feet, crouded an infant over a work-box, the contents of which he was busily scattering about the carpet. A bright fire glowed in the grate, and altogether the room presented a beautiful and inviting picture of ease and comfort.

Presently the outer door opened, a quick step was heard in the hall, and into the room came Charles Steele. His wife looked up with pleased surprise.

“You are early this evening, Charles!”

“Yes, I felt tired, and wished to get home.”

He put a parcel he had brought in on the table, and shook the damp from his over-coat, saying as he did so,

“Will you ring the bell, Lucy? I am wet, and want my dressing-gown and slippers.”

The bell was rung, the articles brought in and put on; then he proceeded to untie the package, which proved to be books. He took up a paper-cutter from the table, and had seated himself to read, when his wife said, in a reproachful tone,

“You have not spoken a word to the baby!”

“Have I not? God bless him!” He took him in his arms and swung him in the air two or three times, the child laughing and crowing all the while; then, putting him down,

he kissed his wife, took up the book, and, dropping into an easy-chair, soon appeared forgetful of their presence in the intense interest with which he perused the pages before him.

Presently the child, quitting the work-box, crawled to where his father sat, and seizing the leg of his chair with both hands, drew himself upright on his feet, and so standing beside his knee and supporting himself with one hand, he plucked at the book with the other. Steele smiled—a preoccupied smile—and removing the book to the other hand, to put it beyond his reach, without raising his eyes from the page, patted him on the head. Not satisfied with this, the little one tottered round to the other side, and continued reaching for what had attracted his attention. At length Steele laid the book upon his knee, and raising the child up, kissed and played with him for a few moments, then drawing the work-box near, seated him again at his playthings, and resumed his reading. But the child was not to be put off; he thrust aside the spools with his feet and hands, struggled again to an upright position, and again attacked his father, who now wheeled his chair to some distance to get out of his reach; but hands, and feet, and knees were put in requisition to reach him, until Steele, impatient of the interruption, said in a petulant tone, as he led the boy to his mother,

“Do take him, Lucy; he annoys me so I can not read!”

She took him, but he struggled and cried. Steele heeded it not, but with a contraction of the brow drew his chair nearer the window, and was again absorbed in his book. Lucy carried the screaming child out of the the room.

The tea-bell rang several times, but he did not move, or notice it, until at length his wife approached, and, putting her hand upon his shoulder, said,

“What are you reading, Charles, that makes you so forgetful of every thing? You have snubbed Charlie, and, al-

though I have twice told you tea was ready, you have made no answer!”

He arose and put the book in his pocket, and with a forced manner and thoughtful brow accompanied his wife to the tea-table. Meeting the nurse with Charlie in the hall, he took him from her and passed on, throwing him up before him as he went—the child laughing, and Lucy screaming at the height he was thrown.

It was a silent meal. Steele seemed lost in thought, and Lucy was troubled because she thought he was so. She had never seen him so absorbed and neglectful of their child, for he was dotingly fond of him.

After tea he returned again to his book, and she to her sewing. The sleet and wind sounded drearily against the window, but the fire blazed brightly and the lamp burned clear. There was a glow within; and Lucy, as she sat under the lamp in her pretty house dress, with her work-basket and sewing, made a very quiet, but very lovely part of the picture. But her husband noted it not. Occasionally he would drop the volume and gaze steadily into the fire; again, with arms folded, and the book held between finger and thumb, he would walk the floor, abstracted—gloomy. She looked up at him from time to time, but spoke not.

The clock struck eleven. She arose, folded up her work, wound up her spools, arranged the books upon the table, and put things in their places, doing all those numberless little things which orderly women do before going to their beds.

Her husband sat still and absorbed. Now she stood by the fire-place tapping upon the marble with her finger; still he read on. She raised the ash-pan with the tip of her foot, as women are apt to do, that the ashes may fall into the receiver, and let it drop with a loud noise. He looked up, annoyed.

“Are you going up stairs?”

R

"Yes—it is past eleven!"

"Very well—I will follow presently."

She lingered a moment, arranged several things which needed no arrangement, took up her basket, and left.

As the door closed, he threw the book down and paced the floor rapidly for some time, then drawing both chair and table nearer the fire, he rested his feet on an ottoman and read on.

Charles Steele is very much older than when we last saw him. There are gray hairs mingled with his darker locks, and you see wrinkles about the mouth and eyes. His dress, too, is more careless—of the best materials, but thrown upon him.

The world has gone prosperously with him. He has improved; he is in business, and men speak highly of him. He has lost much of that listless manner he had of old, and has a position for intellect. He has been a husband for many years; his wife is a loving, trusting, gentle woman, whose whole soul is centred in her husband and child. She has no brilliancy; and her reading goes not beyond Bible and Prayer-book.

An hour has passed, but he is still there. The lamp is drawn closer. The half hours glide on—and now he has finished. Again he walks the floor.

Why is it that this book has so the power to beguile him from the present? It was written by Mary Gordon, and he could trace her in every line. It had come out anonymously—made a talk; but he had not read it. This day he had been told she was the writer, and he had procured it.

It would be difficult to define the thoughts and feelings which beset him on reading this book. The memories of other days crowded upon him, and his last conversation with Mary was vivid in his mind; but admiration, regret, dissatisfaction were paramount. Of all worldly distinction, he most

coveted that won by the success of an effort like that he had been reading. He dwelt upon his acquaintance with Mary, their converse, their engagement. What might he not have been had he married her! She had roused him to exertion, and to her he owed all he was now. He had not loved her, but he admired, and her mind influenced his. She would have filled his eye, gratified his pride, roused his intellect, commanded his respect; and he regretted—yes, regretted—she was not his wife.

It was of no avail; he could not shake off her influence. He never saw her but he felt it for days after. He had been happy—very happy in his wedded life; but Lucy was in every respect the opposite of Mary Gordon. She entered not into his pursuits, shared not in his aspirations or his ambition; but she sympathized in his pains, and was joyous when he was pleased. She urged him not to the strife; but when worn and jaded, she soothed his jarring nerves and calmed his ruffled spirit, coming, like the rainbow after the tempest, with a promise, to the storm-tossed, of peace. And now, as his roused faculties struggled within him, he questioned if Mary Gordon, as wife and mother, might not have been all this, and more?

Charles Steele felt within himself a capability of greater things. Had circumstances thrown him into the arena in a time of excitement, he would have made for himself a name in history; and he felt that what circumstances had not done for him a spirit like Mary Gordon's could do. Now he was too content to be great—not happy, for he was not happy tonight. That subtle engine, the intellect, was aroused, and the heart was not heard.

He turned to particular passages in the volume, and pondered upon them with a feeling of half envy, half regret. "There is depth, and strength, and tenderness in this," he thought; "and this woman might have learned to love me!"

He strode the floor in restless impatience at the thought of how much he had lost.

Stumbling over something, he stooped to pick it up. It was a tiny shoe, and brought thoughts of his boy and the mother. Could Mary Gordon have been to him what that mother was? He felt she could not; and there came to him a vision of Lucy's quiet, wife-like beauty, and Mary's restless energy. He sighed a long sigh, and dropped into a chair. He sighed that Mary Gordon was not more like Lucy, or Lucy more like Mary Gordon. Head and heart were not both satisfied.

He sat there long in a revery; then rising, put the book away. He did not wish Lucy to know why it had so interested him, for he knew it would give her pain; and, although she shared not the thoughts of his brain, she ruled the affections of his heart. He passed his boy's cradle on his way to bed, and stooping, kissed him as he slept. Lucy was awake and watching; she smiled when she saw it, for she knew the cloud had passed from Charles's brow.

Yet again, next day, he felt the influence of this spirit upon him. A committee waited upon him to know if he would accept the nomination for representative in Congress. The answer was to be given on the morrow. Again that night he took up Mary Gordon's book, and lost himself in its pages. There was a struggle between his love of ease and something stirring within. He walked, and read, and communed with himself. Her spirit prevailed; he accepted.

Thus honored and beloved, he passed through life, seeming to be attended by two spirits—one of love, another of power; and, as his wife watched his brilliant career in almost worshipping admiration, and checked the proud tears that *would* come when she heard men praise him, she little thought that another spirit than her own whispered him; that this praise was sweeter, because it was re-echoed to the ear of one who

had roused and piqued when she might have soothed and lulled.

Many, very many of us, like Charles Steele, have two attending spirits, and, like him, have other influences than those hourly about us, to sway the life within. Happy are we if they are but those of love and power—head and heart!

Mary Gordon—she is called an old maid; and does she never look to the past? Had she no regrets? See her as she sits now; the warm color that once beautified her cheek has faded, but her eye is not the less bright, although it is a steadier brightness; and the lip that once quivered in restless beauty is quiet—still!

Her book, her first lengthy effort, is out—published; the excitement and the interest of writing is over. She has flung it upon the world and read the first criticism upon it; and is she satisfied? No. She has been praised—flattered, but it falls short of her idea—is imperfect and meagre—but a poor embodiment of the spirit she wished to shadow forth.

She thinks of how she came to write that book, and recalls her conversation with Mr. Steele long years before, and his remark,

“I should not be surprised if you became a writer!”

This was the first shaping in words of an idea that had long possessed her, and which came to her often afterward, and at length produced this book. Had he read it? what did he think of it? were queries she often put to herself. She pondered over his career—over her own. She took from her desk his last speech, and read it with a feeling of pride and half regret—natural regret; but there was no bitterness mingled with it—no heart-burning.

If there did come upon her brain the vision of a home as

she would have enjoyed it—a home where she could have fulfilled the highest duties of life as wife and mother—if she did dwell upon this picture with fondness, and dismiss it with a sigh, it made her neither morose nor gloomy; for there were other duties in life, less sacred perhaps, but not the less binding, and in these and in the cultivation of her powers did she find her happiness.

CHAPTER XXIII.

It was a cold evening in the middle of February that a traveler, who looked wayworn and weary, arrived at one of the principal hotels of a large city, and asked for a room. He was immediately shown one. The supper-bell ringing a few moments after, he went down to table and took his seat with the crowd. He was a short man, of apparently fifty-five years of age, with gray hair and a weather-beaten face. He took his seat at the table quietly, and proceeded to help himself, eating rapidly, at the same time glancing a gray eye, that seemed to take in every thing at one look, over the company.

He ate his supper, then leaving the room, repaired to his chamber. There was a bright fire blazing in the grate, and thrusting the window up, he seated himself at it, looking out into the street. He sat there some time, then getting up, he put on his hat and went below. There was snow upon the ground, but he walked rapidly on, seeming regardless of the weather. He moved briskly forward for a long distance in deep thought, neither turning to the right or left. At length he seemed to rouse himself, and muttering, "I shall lose my trail!" retraced his footsteps for some distance, then turned into another street. He went on changing from one thoroughfare to the next, until at length, in going down a street, he passed a church lit up. The congregation within were singing. He observed, as he passed, that the door was

shut, and a man stood leaning against it. He walked slowly by, for the singing pleased him. When he reached the next corner, he paused a moment, then turned slowly back, and again passed the church. The singing still continued. He walked but a short distance past, then retraced his steps, halting in front of the building. Still they sang, and beautifully the words fell upon the quiet air.

He went listlessly up the steps, and was about opening the door, when the man standing there, whom he had supposed a listener like himself, put out his hand, saying,

"Your ticket, sir!"

"I beg your pardon; I thought this was a church," was the reply.

"It is a Methodist church, and this is a 'love-feast meeting.' All persons wishing to attend must have tickets from the pastor."

"I was not aware of your custom. I am a stranger, and was attracted by the singing."

"We always admit strangers, sir; follow me, and I will show you a seat."

The stranger was conducted to the upper end of the church, and seated within two pews of the altar. When seated, he looked around him. It was an old-fashioned edifice, with galleries and a tall pulpit; but some attempt had been made to modernize it, and showed as plainly as new patches on an old garment. It was brilliantly lit with gas, and the body of it filled with people. There was no minister in the pulpit, but two sat in the altar; both arrested his attention. The one upon the right was a tall, full-set, handsome man, who, from his air and bearing, would have commanded attention any where, and you would have pronounced him a gentleman. His features were almost regular, his mouth beautiful, and the constant smile which hovered about it was defined by the eye, speaking charity and good-will to all. He

was dressed carelessly, but gentlemanly. He seemed to give air to his clothes—not his clothes to him. He sat on one side of the table which was in the altar, on a chair which leaned back, so that his head touched the pulpit, and occasionally, as Mr. Kirk watched him, he fancied a tear glistened in his eye. On his left sat an old gentleman with white hair. He appeared to be about seventy. He leaned with his hands clasped upon the top of his cane, and his chin resting on them. He kept his foot moving, keeping time to the singing, and occasionally would say "Amen!" and "Glory!" most devoutly.

A gentleman now came in, and, walking up the aisle, took his seat in the altar with the other ministers.

On the left of the table sat the other minister, who had so attracted his attention, and who, the person next him told him, was the "Presiding Elder." He was a perfect foil to the first we have described; he leaned back in his chair, and kept it in a sort of tilting motion, while he sung in a loud tone. His face was strongly marked and weather-beaten, but there was sense in it. He was rough—the outer man had not the look of polished ease which the other wore, like a common garment, but honest feeling was written upon every line of that face, which twitched and worked as you gazed upon it. Occasionally he would rub his hands as he sung, while his eyes were kept shut so tightly that the lids appeared all drawn up, giving the upper part of his face a singular, and it might have been, ludicrous appearance, had you not seen the feeling struggling in every feature of that toil-worn visage.

As Mr. Kirk made these observations the singing stopped, and the gentleman who last entered the altar was called on to pray. As he turned toward the congregation, Mr. Kirk was struck with the fine expression of his face; he prayed beautifully, as one who felt the common failings and tempta-

tions of our nature and wished strength to resist them—a true petition which went home to each heart.

The prayer over, the "Elder" arose, and, after clearing his throat once or twice, addressed the meeting. There was something very singular in both his manner and his enunciation; his words were strangely put together—his sentiments oddly expressed; his thoughts seemed struggling through chaos. He sat down, and bread and water were handed to the congregation, each partaking. There was a solemn silence for a few moments, while they partook of these symbols of brotherly love; then that beautiful singing recommenced with two voices, a male and a female. No one joined in; they seemed content to listen. The "Elder" said, "Sing, sisters, sing!" but they did not: these two voices, like the wail of penitence and mercy, floated up together.

The singing over, the preacher he had so much admired arose and stepped forward; it was then that he was struck with the peculiar ease, almost amounting to grace, of his manner. He spoke of the Methodist Church and its privileges, of Methodism and his experience of it; described his first religious feelings—his course through life to the present hour, and his hope for the future.

It was a plain tale. There was nothing particularly striking in what he said; but his language, his personal appearance, the persuasiveness of his manner, all had a grace, and affected his auditors, leaving a most pleasing impression. He seated himself, and again the congregation sang, after which, he invited one and all to speak.

There was a few minutes' silence, when from the far corner of the church came the shrill, small voice of an old man speaking of his "experience;" another and another followed—the singing breaking in at every pause. Now there arose an old woman, who, with bowed form and quivering accents, told the history of her inner life, the "Elder," every now and

then, apostrophizing her with "That's a fact. Praise God, sisters!"

This man reminded Mr. Kirk of characters he had met in the woods, strong-minded but uneducated men, who, gathering their thoughts and illustrations from the objects around them, throw them out at random. He sat studying him, watching the expressions of his face, forgetful of every thing else.

He was roused by the ejaculation, "God bless sister Watson!" from the elder, as she clapped her hands together. Mr. Kirk turned at a name so familiar, and a faint voice struck his ear, but he could not distinguish the import of the words. There was something in the voice, attitude, personal presence of the speaker, which made him turn on his seat, and riveted his attention. He gazed steadily, leaned forward eagerly, with his eyes upon her. She turned as he did so; her voice became more distinct—it was Ellen Watson!

He leaned more earnestly forward, and drew in the words as they fell from her lips. She spoke of her youth—of how often Death had visited her home—of her later life—of the loss of her husband and child, and the bitterness of these bereavements, and the new hopes that had dawned upon her. "I can not say," he heard, "that I have served my God from my youth up without faltering; I can not say I have never been led by temptation or wiled by my own heart; but I can say my faith is in the God who loved Mary, wept for Lazarus, and whose bosom was a resting-place for John."

Yes, it was Ellen Watson. He looked upon that face, wan and faded, yet bright with a beauty he had never before seen there. He looked, and wondered, and wept; he could not help it. How came she there? There was an elevation in the expression of her face, an enthusiasm in her whole manner, very different from that of the Ellen Watson he had last seen. There were wrinkles upon her brow, which told of

trouble, marks of devastation like those left by the hurricane; but the light of an enthusiastic faith was in her eye. Her voice, which every moment had become more broken, failed; she sat down, and they sung a sort of chorus, the refrain of which was, "They are coming home!"

He leaned forward in the pew, and, covering up his face, church, scene, lights, and speaker vanished. He was in the fort, talking to George and Ellen; he was riding with her, or recounting the story of his youth. Again he played with her boy, while she looked on, catching her breath, yet enjoying the child's delight; how full she was of life, and hope, and happiness, and now * * *

The loneliness of feeling which had been about his heart all the evening had voice, and he wept, while still the words of the hymn floated around him, "They are coming home!"

His youth, his manhood, the love of his first years, and the remembrance of his mother—all swept over him. He had trod the world for more than half a century. Who was the better, the happier that he had lived? What was it to him now? Gray-haired, lone, and old, he was "coming home." Strange influences were around him in that little church; and as he raised his head and looked once more at Ellen, he wondered what they had lived for.

The meeting was almost over; they stood up to sing. The minister went round shaking hands with those nearest the pulpit, and put out his hand to Mr. Kirk in passing, who shook it warmly, for, he knew not why, he felt very kindly toward him. As he dropped the hand held out, the minister glanced back, and observing the traces of emotion in his face, inquired "If he enjoyed the meeting?"

"Very much."

"Are you a member of any church?"

"No, I am not."

Then taking Mr. Kirk's hand in his, and leaning with his

face close to him as to a brother's, how did the persuasive words of that pastor fall upon his ear,

"Join us, come with us; we will do you good. We are all going home!"

He talked with him long. He lingered about him as though loth to give him up. He went further down the aisle, then returning, that hand again sought his. Again that beautiful smile touched him; again he felt the charm of that manner, almost irresistible, yet never intrusive. At last he wrung his hand and slowly withdrew, with the benison "God bless you!" as he brushed away a tear.

The "Elder" gave the benediction, and slowly they moved out of the church. Mr. Kirk stood still and watched for Ellen. She was talking and shaking hands with those about her, so he had full time to observe her. The form was as erect as ever, but the face was sallow, the eye sunken, the hair touched with gray. She stepped from the pew and offered her arm to an old lady in the aisle; he listened for her voice.

"We have had a delightful meeting, Mrs. Royton."

He understood it all now. This was her second mother—the Mrs. Royton of whom he had heard so much.

He kept behind her until she had reached the church steps, watched her assist the old lady down, and saw them join a little group homeward-bound; then turning to a gentleman who stood near, he inquired the way to his hotel and departed. He longed to make himself known to Ellen, but hesitated, and concluded not to; for the recognition would bring with it the memory of brighter days, and might be bitter. There was a calm in that face now—the calm of suffering subdued and overcome. He thought of the expression of her face, and asked himself, Was she happier then or now?

Again and again the words of the hymn came to him, "They're coming home!" and he marveled at their plaintive

melody. He paced the quiet streets, with nothing but his own footsteps on the crackling snow to disturb the stillness, and these words troubled his heart.

He reached his hotel. The fire had burned out; the window was as he had left it. He sat down by it, and resting his head upon the sill, pondered the evening o'er. Had life with him come to this? Was this the end of the aspirations of his youth—the hopes of his manhood? this hecatomb of wasted years—lost energies; this aimless, hopeless, thankless manhood! And for what? Because God in his wild youth had denied him the realization of one of his dreams, the fulfillment of which he more than doubted would have proved a blessing. For this he had thrown away his best years, had worn his spirit, and, it might be, stained his soul. The cold night wind had lifted his hair from his brow as it passed through the open window, and it was grateful to him. It grew late—later, but still he was there. He was roused once by a stage rattling up to the door, and the noise made by the new arrivals as they sought their chambers; but soon it rattled away again, and all was still. Half an hour passed; he raised his head and looked out. Now it was some midnight revelers returning with song and wine to the hotel. That died away, and when again he looked up the streets bore the stillness of death. All lights were out save one in a boat on the river, and far in the distance another glimmered from a solitary window.

He closed the window and went to bed, from that night a happier and better man. His sleep was troubled; and, as he tossed to and fro on his dream-haunted pillow, a strain of music stole upon his ear, and the words which reached him were, "*They are coming home!*"

THE END.