

Richards.

DARRYLL GAP;

OR,

WHETHER IT PAID.

BY

VIRGINIA F. TOWNSEND.

But who can so forecast the years,
Or seek with gain his loss to match,
Or reach a hand through time to catch
The far-off interest of tears?

TENNYSON.

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WILLIAM V. SPENCER,

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TO

L. C. B.,

MY BOOK, AND WITH IT ALL OUR MEMORIES
OF TWO SUMMERS AT THE
MOUNTAINS.

V. F. T.

DARRYLL GAP;

OR,

WHETHER IT PAID.

CHAPTER I.

"AND so we are now really rich folks! Just to think of it!" said the first voice, a young, eager, feminine one, pendulous betwixt wonder and exultation.

"I tell you, though, boys, won't it be fun to spread ourselves on lunches at the Astor and Delmonico's?" said the second voice, with a certain gruffness all through it, and a chuckle through the gruffness.

"Yes, father," subjoined Mrs. Darryll, more from that habit of admonition which is apt to manifest itself in the mother of a large household, than from any lack of appreciation of the good fortune which had fallen so suddenly into the lap of her family. "You'll have to keep a sharp lookout, or your boys and girls'll make the money fly faster than you can bring it in. It's my opinion that they'd use up a mint in a short time, if they were free to get at it."

Mrs. Darryll's voice, about on a level with its sentiments and general style of expression, was a fair interpretation of the woman herself, a well-meaning, tolerably kind-hearted one, bound up in a good many prejudices, with no great force of character, a narrow range of living and feeling, and a good deal of unconscious selfishness.

Whatsoever virtues she possessed flourished in her domestic atmosphere, for she was a devoted wife and mother; but she had not sympathies of heart or intellect wide enough to grasp much outside of her family.

"I've no doubt," said Tom, whose years divided equally the interval betwixt his second sister and third brother, "*she'll* keep the old bag of coppers in a corner of the cupboard, and expect we'll go to her regularly on training days for our allowance of three cents to invest in gingerbread, molasses candy, and peanuts."

There was a chorus of laughter among the boys, showing that Tom's wit, at his mother's expense, was highly appreciated.

Andrew, the eldest of the brothers, slapped the other approvingly on the back, and said, "That's jolly!" which adjective expressed with him a high sense of satisfaction; and then Tom was universally regarded as the wit of the family.

"Boys! boys!" said the head of the household, standing with his back to the fire, and his hands behind him. He was in such an immensely good humor to-night, that it was impossible for him to put anything more than a mild flavor of objugation in these monosyllables.

There he stood, in his small back parlor, a well enough looking man, somewhat stout, but alert withal, good strong features, and gray eyes, in which there was a shrewd twinkle, and dark hair glazed with gray, for the owner was a little this side or the other of his half century.

Ella, the second daughter, and first speaker, had expressed in those words, "To think we are really rich people!" the feeling that was uppermost in the mind of John Darryll and each member of his family. It carried with it an entirely new sensation. No wonder they were a little dizzy and dazzled.

"It seems, somehow, too sudden and strange to be true, just like a beautiful dream that one loses sight of the first moment one wakes in the morning, or like those old, foolish, delightful 'Arabian Nights,' with Aladdin's lamp shining through them all. I used to draw a long breath, squatted down with my

book on my knees, before the fireplace in the old house, and rub my eyes hard, and the beautiful visions would all vanish, and there was nothing but the great black chimney, and the crane with the hooks on it. Won't this grand fortune of ours do the same, pa?"

I think if "one who was born blind," or any keen interpreter of the meaning and spirit of voices, had listened to each of the family's, he would have chosen this as the one that suited him best. A young voice, like the first speaker's, and with some general likeness of tone betwixt them, clear, animated, but with a certain steadiness and sweetness, which gave it an individuality of its own amongst the others.

"I fancy not, my daughter." This expression was the tenderest in which Mr. Darryll ever indulged, the highest development in speech, at least, of his paternal feeling. "I should be likely to see that there was something more solid than the lamp of a—what-you-call-'em, at the bottom of my enterprises!" rubbing his hands with a pleasant accession of self-importance, and a very imperfect comprehension of his daughter's allusion.

"But Aladdin's lamp wasn't so much out of the way, after all, for your enterprises have a decidedly 'oily' foundation, father!" interposed here the wit of the family.

There was a laugh now, in which every one joined, for they were all in a humor to enjoy any jest on the one topic of interest, and were not disposed to be very critical respecting the quality of the wit.

As these people are all assembled in family conclave, and with that freedom of speech and manner which best reveals one's individuality, there is no better time than the present to introduce them to you.

Mr. John Darryll is the generic success of the nineteenth century. He began life as a common chore boy on a farm, coming of poor, but honest, homely stock. His ambition never took kindly to farm work, though he owed to that his stubbornly healthful constitution. He married his wife, a fresh,

comely country girl, with no more fortune than himself; but both were industrious and prudent, and John Darryll managed with the toil of his hands to make a little home of his own, and here his six boys and girls were born to him with one or two years ranging betwixt their ages.

After a while he sold his small farm, invested his little fortune in a dry goods and grocery store in a neighboring town, and the next ten or twelve years he had a sharp struggle to meet the requirements of his growing family, and gradually enlarge his stock of goods.

At last he grew sick of such a "one horse concern," as he inelegantly termed his business, sold out, and came to the city to try his fortunes. It was a dangerous experiment for a man in his forties, and with so many young mouths depending upon him for bread. He tried several sorts of business, agencies, clerkships, and the like, and could only, as Mrs. Darryll was forever assuring her children, "keep his head above water."

In the luckiest hour of his life, however, as he at least regarded it, he was induced to close up a bargain for a tract of land in Pennsylvania, which a business acquaintance let him have "for a mere song," as the former was anxious to go west. The whole property covered a narrow valley, choked in between two high, rugged hills, and was known thenceforward by the name of "Darryll Gap." When, however, several years more went by, and nobody took the acres, Mr. John Darryll thought that he had made a poor investment, even at the low price at which he obtained them, and fretted over the two or three hundred dollars that were buried in the Gap.

But one day petroleum oil was discovered on a creek in the very heart of the acres. That discovery sent up the land in a few days a thousand fold. Experiments proved it fine boring territory. A company was organized immediately. The wind of fortune shifted at last, and sent favoring gales towards John Darryll. In less than three weeks after the petroleum was discovered on Darryll Gap, he disposed of it for two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. That was several years ago, and the oil

speculation had not yet reached its climacteric. If he had waited a couple later, he would probably have realized half a million from the sale of his "piece of land," as he had begun rather contemptuously to term it. And so on the evening of the day in which the sale had transpired, Mr. Darryll, a good deal excited and dizzy with his sudden elevation, stood in the midst of the family, who had been informed, from the beginning, of the successive steps of his good fortune. His wife, a blooming matron, sat near him with her knitting lying in her lap, quite too much excited this evening for even such play-work as finishing off a mitten. Her features still retained something of the comely freshness which attracted her husband in the days when he drove the cows every night to her father's barn-yard; and her dark abundant hair, which was the vanity of her girlhood, did not necessitate a cap yet, though it was slightly sanded with gray.

The boys and girls muster in equal force, half a dozen in all; the former in different periods of adolescence — hearty, healthy, with heads that promise well under the right sort of development, but with a coarseness of speech and manner, a kind of "Young America" assertion, which, disagreeable as it was, would, one charitably hoped, be outgrown with completed manhood. There was no doubt that all these were bright and capable youths, and each one promised to share in the general good looks of the family.

Agnes, the youngest of the girls, was just outside her fifteenth birthday. Jerusha, the eldest, was almost twenty-two; and Ella was nineteen, with her brother Andrew a year her senior, as Guy was of his sister Agnes, while Thomas was late in his teens; and the whole family from the father downward had a tendency to look younger than its years.

Ella was supposed to be rather the beauty of the family. She had more bloom than either the eldest or the youngest sister, with her mother's features and brilliant eyes. She had a good deal of outward brightness and swift perception, and a certain peremptoriness of manner which always demanded as a right something which others conceded to it.

Agnes, in some sense the pet of the family, was pretty much her mother over again, with larger opportunities, both social and educational, and with somewhat more emphasis of character.

Jerusha, the eldest girl, had been named in memory of her grandmother; but partly because the first syllable gave it so old-fashioned a sound, and partly because of indolence, it had been elided, and she was universally known in the family, and out of it, as "Rusha," the name at least having the merit of not being common. She had a clear, pale complexion, dark brownish eyes, wonderful at times for their beauty, and the mouth would have been too large had it not been for its vivid color. This girl was not like any of her brothers and sisters. Faults and weaknesses she had, like all the others, and the atmosphere of her home, the daily tone and spirit of the household, was not one to stimulate her finest and best possibilities. But she had deeper enthusiasms, loftier appreciations and ideals, than any of the rest. Her intellect was of a finer, higher order than any other member of the family's, the eldest daughter being regarded as a little of a "blue stocking," or a little romantic, or both.

"And now, pa," said Ella, in her bright, peremptory way, "what are you going to do with all this money?"

"O, I presume that I shall find ways to employ it," trying to appear dignified, and succeeding in being important and pompous.

"But people will expect something of us now, you know, pa, very different from what we have been."

"Of course they will, pa," chimed in Agnes, who was swaying backwards and forwards in her low rocking-chair. "We must make a show with it!"

"That's it; put the thing pat," interposed Guy, the youngest of the brothers.

"What sort of a show, then?" asked Mr. Darryll, looking round pleasant and patronizing upon his assembled household.

Ella undertook to explain. "Agnes is right, pa. It won't do for us to live in this miserable hand-to-mouth way any longer."

And the speaker looked around the family sitting-room, with

its neat and comfortable, but by no means elegant furniture, with eyes that the new fortune had greatly enlightened as to its shabbiness.

"We must have a new house up town, or on Fifth Avenue, and it must be furnished in the latest style, with velvet carpets, and tall mirrors, and rosewood furniture, and all that sort of thing. In short," waxing energetic as she proceeded, "everybody will hear that you have suddenly become a nabob, and I think we'd better cut a dash at the beginning — don't you, Rusha?"

"Ye-es," answered the eldest sister, her imagination revealing, after the fashion of youth, in a dazzling perspective of splendor and luxury, and yet not quite enjoying the way in which Ella had "put" their transition from one life to another.

"And I'll cut old Holmes and his counter from this hour," stoutly asseverated Guy, who was errand boy in a grocery store, and he rose up and strutted about the room with a great accession of importance, beginning to realize the fact that he was now a rich man's son.

"And pictures, and a library, and a conservatory — O, pa, will it not be our Aladdin's palace after all!" It was Rusha who spoke again, the young, eager, delighted soul, just as much rapt up in the dazzling visions that this wealth conjured as any of the others, only seeking its chief enjoyment on somewhat higher levels than they.

"The sooner we are out of this life the better," continued Ella. "How I shall enjoy seeing some of our neighbors stare! only, of course, we must drop our old associates. It will never do to carry them into the best society, which, of course, will open its doors to us now."

"But must I give up Gracie Thorpe too, sister?" interposed Agnes, with a faint little note of regret in her voice, as though this sacrifice of her friendship to her fortunes was a side of the picture that she had not before contemplated.

"No, indeed," said Rusha, fervently; "be loyal to your one friendship, even if your father has made a fortune."

"Ella will be the one that'll put on airs. Won't she spread it on thick, though, boys?" laughed Andrew.

His sister was quite equal to defending herself, and begged him to remember that whatever he had been, he was to turn over a new leaf now.

"And do let a fellow come in for his share," said Guy, the youngest of the brothers. "I move that we keep horses, not merely for the girls to go shopping and making calls with, but to let us fellows show you what horseback riding is!"

"I expect," said his father, who enjoyed his children's "nonsense," as he called it to them, because it served in some sense to give tangibility to his wealth, "that Guy will be the fast young man of the family!"

Tom insisted that he was going to see something of the world. Everything in New York had got to be an old story to him.

"Perhaps we'll go to Europe one of these days—O, Tom!" exclaimed Rusha, with that indrawn breath of hers that was her strongest exclamation point of enjoyment; "what must it be to feast one's self on those treasures of art, to see Mont Blanc, and sail down the Mediterranean, and wander among the ruins of old Rome, and enrich one's whole soul with a sight of that old world that would be new to us."

"And then," interposed Ella, "it's extremely fashionable to go abroad. 'When I was in Paris,' has a distinguished sound;" and she poised that pretty head of hers in a way that would have been amusing if it had not been sad also.

"There, boys, didn't I tell you so? Just see the airs now!" said Andrew, with a chuckle, hitting his brother Tom under the ribs.

Ella turned on him this time with a good deal of vehemence, and she did not confine her expostulations to himself, but made them include the trio of brothers.

"I do hope you'll remember, all of you boys, to make some improvement in your manners, and leave your vulgar slang phrases behind you with your poverty. Do, if it's possible, try and be gentlemen."

"I intend to be my own master," replied Tom, "gentleman or no gentleman. It'll be fun not to have old Jerome scolding and cussing because I haven't got the office fire going in time. Nothing to do now."

"Boys," said Rusha, "your education has been neglected, you know. Now I think you'd better go to work the first thing and improve yourselves—prepare for college, for instance."

"Time enough to think about that next year," added Andrew. "After a fellow's been a slave all his life, he likes to have a little taste of laziness and fun."

"That's so!" fervently indorsed Tom.

"And, pa," piped up Agnes, "shall we really have a carriage and horses to ride up to Stewart's and out to Central Park, and a driver too, with a black band round his hat, and one of those odd cloaks with the funny little capes like deep ruffles?"

"Of course we shall," said Ella, without waiting for the paternal affirmative. "And, pa, now you've got the money, the sooner you get out of this place the better," with a gesture expressive of unutterable contempt at the room and its appointments. "I really want to know what it will be to live in a grand house, and keep a carriage, and have servants to wait upon one, and plenty of money to spend."

"So do I, quite as much as you, Ella," said the elder sister's voice, with a little natural quaver of gravity in it. Rusha was always in earnest about whatever she said. "Only I want we should take our new life upon us with grace and dignity, and not have people to whom riches is no novelty quietly sneer about us as 'mushroom aristocracy.' Don't let us make ourselves ridiculous in any way."

"Of course not, Rusha. But I've no doubt that there will be plenty of 'sour grapes' talk about us. However, I think I can stand my ground," looking defiant and self-assertive.

"But," interposed Mrs. Darryll at last, for the juvenile portion of the family had monopolized all the talk during the last hour, while the elders had listened in a kind of half-pleased,

half-bewildered acquiescence to the plans and visions of the future, — “but you know I haven’t been used to this sort of style that you talk about, and I shouldn’t know how to preside at dinner parties, and give *swarees* — don’t you call them, Rusha? I should make a balk of it.”

“O, ma, those things will come in naturally enough — don’t be alarmed,” said Ella, comforting and patronizing.

“I saw a book on etiquette down town at a stand; I’ll bring it home for the edification of the family; and we’ll all take turns studying it,” laughed Andrew, getting up and stretching his limbs.

“I say, boys, who’ll be the lady of the family?” This question was from Guy, surveying his trio of sisters critically.

“Our Ella will carry it off with a high hand. Won’t she sail round, though, under diamonds, and feathers, and a rustle of silk? — whew!” added Andrew, this closing monosyllable giving tenfold emphasis to what went before.

“But,” said Tom, with whom his eldest sister was a favorite, “after all, Rusha’ll be the real, genuine article, boys. She won’t have so many airs and flourishes, maybe; but somehow the big house, and the carriage, and all those things’ll seem to come natural to her, just as if she’d been used to ’em all her life — see, now, if I ain’t right!”

Tom had his reward, although it did not come with any words; but Rusha turned and smiled on him, with such a grateful appreciation of a compliment, whose flattering delicacy he himself only half comprehended, that Tom felt doubly fortified in his opinion.

Ella looked the least bit aggrieved. “See if I don’t do credit to my new home when I get there!” she said.

And in a certain and outward sense, she would. There was a great deal of adaptation about the girl, and she had that quick perception and self-reliance which would avail her vastly in her new position and circumstances.

“When we get there,” duplicated Andrew — “that’s the rub; the governor hasn’t promised to buy the big house yet.”

“O, but you will, pa! you won’t disgrace your family by keeping us in this horrible hole any longer, now you’ve got the money to put us in a decent one?”

“Why, you said that it was a really charming house when we moved up here last spring from the old place,” answered Mr. Darryll, without any definite intention of denying his daughter’s request, but only because it gave him a pleasant sense of power, to be appealed to on so large a scale.

“But we were poor folks then. Don’t you see the difference, pa?”

“I should think he ought to, after the way his boys and girls have gone on to-night,” interposed Mrs. Darryll.

“O, well, mother, let ’em alone. You and I were young folks once, and built our castles, too,” rubbing his hands briskly together, as John Darryll never did, except when he was in a mood of extreme good-nature.

“But, pa, we must have the house, you know; our hearts are all set upon that.” It was Rusha speaking here.

“Well, I’ll see, if I have time, about hunting up some real estate broker to-morrow. One of your big houses up town will make a hole in the money, and your father isn’t worth a mint.”

“Yes, but he is worth two hundred and fifty thousand. Just think of it!”

Ella’s figures sounded very large and extremely pleasant in the ears of all her family, and her father evidently considered them a convincing argument, for he made no reply, and they all knew that the “house up town” was gained.

Mrs. Darryll drew a long sigh. “I must say, one thing’ll seem good to me,” she said, in a tone of mild self-gratulation — “I shan’t have to spend all my Saturdays darnin’ stockings. I’ve dreaded for years to see ’em come in from the wash. Growin’ boys are so hard on heels and toes!”

There was a chorus of shouts. “If I was in Japan, now,” said Ella, “I should know that speech came from ma! That’s her greatest source of delight in our new fortune.”

“And do you remember, ma,” said Rusha, “the old silk you

had turned and dyed for me when I was sixteen? It was your wedding-dress; and how proud I was of it, for it was my first silk! If we could only have looked forward to this time! But I wonder if I shall ever be prouder and happier, in the new elegant dresses I expect to have, than I was in that old one!"

It was Rusha's words and sentiments which always struck the highest or tenderest chords in the family heart. A little tremulousness went over the mother's face at this allusion; then the tears came. "Ah, John!" she said, with a sort of long sob betwixt all the words — "do you remember that night we were married, and how my father surprised and overjoyed us both by putting a purse in my hand with a hundred dollars in it, to set us up in housekeeping; — and with what you had to add to it, it made the little home down there by the green look real snug? We had happy times then. I wonder if they'll be better in the big house we're to have!"

They were all touched, more or less, by the mother's words. A new expression came over the father's hard, shrewd face. "Well, Lydia," he said softly and kindly, "we've had a good many years of hard pulling, and we've weathered some pretty tough squalls together; it's only fair you and I should have a little comfort at last."

I think any wise, true soul, who estimated life and the things that belong to it at their real value, would have been unspeakably saddened at the spirit in which this household received the riches which had so suddenly fallen into its possession — a thing to take delight in, to rejoice over, most certainly, but also to make one grateful and humble as before God.

But here there was no thought of Him in all the new joy and exultation — no sense of vastly increased responsibilities — of talents given, to be required again — no entering into the solemn depths and meaning of those words, "Mine own, with usury!"

The spirit in which this household received its new gift was utterly of the earth, earthy. The living in a fine house, the "making a show," the new importance which it should give

them among men and women, was their chief thought and delight, which was weak and vulgar enough at the best, and at the worst was selfishness and sin.

Alas for those boys, coming up into manhood — alas for those girls, in the blossoming of girl and womanhood, with the new power and the new influences for good thrown suddenly into their unused hands, and with no thought beyond the pleasures, and luxuries, and idlenesses in which it should indulge them!

If John Darryll, the "oil speculator," the man whom they said on "'Change" had done a "big thing," had gathered his family about him that night, and thanked God for this new wealth, how different it would all have been!

But amid the general rejoicing there was no thought of a thank-offering to the Giver — no purpose of doing good with the new power and influence as each "found opportunity." And seeing of how low, and coarse, and material a sort was the spirit in which the Darrylls took their wealth, and the use they intended to make of it, one could not but wonder whether the money would prove a blessing or a curse to them.

Rusha presented the brightest feature in the picture. In almost every speech of hers that evening was manifested a finer and loftier spirit than in the others. But perhaps she would never find any greater enjoyment in this wealth than in the new conditions of art, the new forms of intellectual and æsthetic cultivation, in which she could now indulge.

This was vastly more commendable than the mere sensuous gratifications and petty ambitions in which her brothers and sisters took delight. But would Rusha's influence end there? Had she, with all her finer feelings and deeper enthusiasms, convictions strong enough to withstand the general influences of her family, and of the social atmosphere about her? She was young, impulsive, full of faults and weaknesses, and her early training had never stimulated or braced the highest qualities of the girl. Was it not probable that, in the pride and glamour of the new life, she too would become a weak, selfish,

fashionable woman? And for those boys, — one trembled for them. It was at just the most dangerous time of their lives that the money had fallen to them; temptation and allurements of every sort would now open to their youth, and there was in their father's house no safeguard of prayer, no God in all their thoughts.

And yet John Darryll secretly believed himself full as good, or a little better than most men. In a general way, and after the fashion of the world, he was honest in all his dealings, and meant to do right; and alas! how many of those successful oil speculators, who have reaped harvests of fortunes during the last years, were better or wiser than this man or his household?

CHAPTER II.

"We have had new neighbors during your absence, Fletcher," said the young lady, passing her brother his second cup of coffee, just replenished from a costly but old-fashioned service — so much of the latter as to give it a certain sacredness of family tradition and association.

"Neighbors, Angeline! What a flavor of the country, and of homely, primitive ways and times that word has! I thought it had grown obsolete here in New York."

"I believe you are right; I used the word for want of a better."

"And in which house are these new 'neighbors' of ours domiciled?"

"In the brown stone one, almost directly opposite."

"Who and what are they?"

"Mushroom aristocracy," answered the other lady, who sat at the table, and who was both sensible and satirical.

The lady behind the coffee-urn smiled. "It's true, Fletcher, as Sicily's severest irony always is. The head of the family has made a fortune in some lucky oil speculation, and it's quite apparent from various indications that the first article of their faith in money is to make a display with it. These people do on all occasions. They keep a carriage, and a groom, and a butler, and all that sort of thing; but all this sets on them with an air of freshness."

"You and Sicily must have observed them narrowly!"

"How can one help it," said the last-named sister, "when one lives opposite? And then it's sort of refreshing to see these people, and how they carry the new fortune."

"It must take away one's breath a little, this stepping at

once into riches ; but after all, one can bear it well enough, if the head be sound, and above all, if the heart be good."

"I'm afraid," said Sicily, without any irony this time, "that there's a little weakness in both, in the case of the people opposite. The mother, a good-looking matron on the whole, but a little dowdy and overdressed, gets into her carriage every morning with an air of self-consciousness that would not be possible with a lady who had kept a carriage and a groom all her life. The father is a stout man, a little beyond his prime, with a shrewd, business sort of a face, and a little pompousness of gait, that I fancy is an accessory of his fortune. Then there are several boys, that smoke cigars and swing ornamental canes with a flourish, and I think bid fair to become fast young men."

"The right sort of experience will take all that out of them. However, it's the most dangerous period of their lives to tide them over," answered the young man, speaking more to himself than to his sisters.

"In a different way, it is hardly less so for the girls, I think," replied the lady who had last spoken.

"There are girls, then?"

"Yes ; young, blooming, pretty ; I've made out three of them, who usually go out with mamma. The youngest is a little girl still, with a face after her mother's pattern, adding somewhat more of force and refinement, and the others are in the early blossom of womanhood, neither out of their teens, I should think—pretty, showy girls, who doubtless will spend papa's money, and be the finest illustration in dress and manners of his new wealth."

"Fletcher," said the elder sister, with a little smile, "doesn't this breakfast-talk of ours sound very much like gossip?"

"I was about to remark again that you must have established a very persistent espionage from your chamber windows, to be so well enlightened with regard to the characters and habits of your neighbors."

"Now, Fletcher, who is ironical?" said the younger sister, with a little pout which sat prettily on the red bloom of her lips.

"Was it I, or the truth, that made the irony, Sicily? But

an interest in others may have its rise in some of the kindest feelings of our nature, and whether this talk of ours be gossip, depends upon several things—the spirit in which it goes on, and to whom it is addressed."

"And then, how can one live opposite people for five months, as we have, and have daily glimpses of them, without reaching some conclusions regarding their breeding, characters, and so on?"

"Quite true, Sicily ; and people who have made fortunes of a sudden, and ascended from comparative poverty into riches, are interesting. One likes to watch the individualities crop out, to observe how they carry their wealth, and in what ways and to what extent their fortunes improve them. And with our peculiar national development, and the new avenues of enterprise laid open here to all men, our American people are on every hand jumping into fortunes. How will these men who have made their 'pile'—how will their wives, and sons and daughters, use this new power placed in their hands, is a question which has vast meanings and relations. Will they, as a class, do any good with their wealth? Will they make a thank-offering to God of any portion of it? Will it make them stronger, nobler, better men and women because their spheres of influence are so much enlarged—because they touch life on so many sides? Or will the voice of their soul be the old one—'I will pull down my barns and build greater'?" He murmured over the last words to himself, as he pushed back his chair from the table.

These three comprised, with a couple of domestics, the family of Fletcher Rochford. He was at this time, at least, thirty-three years old, a physician, a man of fine talents, of wide and varied cultivation, for he had had large opportunities of study and travel. His father, engaged in commerce, had been regarded as a rich man in his day, although he could hardly have been so in the present one ; but he was a liberal and intelligent man, and spared no expense in the cultivation of his sons and daughters.

Mrs. Rochford was a woman of unusual graces of mind and heart ; but she died before her son had graduated, although she

lived long enough to impart the lasting influences of her fine and forcible character to all her children, and each one would have been different without just such a mother.

After he had studied his profession, the young physician went abroad, and was summoned home the third year by the sudden death of his father.

And from that time Fletcher Rochford had, in some sense, taken the place of his parent to his sisters. There had always existed among the members of this family a singularly deep and beautiful tenderness, and as they could not endure the prospect of separation, and as the brother's profession made it almost a necessity that he should not locate in the old county town of his birth, the young people removed to New York.

Dr. Rochford was ardently attached to his profession, especially to certain branches of surgery, and his skill in these afforded him a practice almost unparalleled in the case of so young a man. At the close of his fifth year in New York, he again visited Europe, and was absent somewhat less than a year, engaged in investigations and discoveries more or less intimately connected with his profession, and the talk at the breakfast-table transpired on the third morning after Dr. Rochford's return.

His sisters Angeline and Sicily had only a faint family likeness to each other. Angeline was seven and Sicily nine years their brother's junior. Both had the fine family features, with the bright eyes and delicate bloom of the lips. Angeline's eyes were, however, like her brother's, of a gray, luminous brown, and Sicily had her father's keen blue ones.

The sisters differed, too, in character. Nobody would be likely to know either well without loving her. Angeline's was a strong, sweet, womanly nature; Sicily was bright, impulsive, with a natural gift for satire that her kindly heart tried to discipline, and that played usually harmless as heat lightning about her talk.

Both of the sisters were eminently fitted to adorn society, for to their cultivation and varied accomplishments they united social gifts of no ordinary kind. But they both had, too, their

mother's home tastes, and found beneath their own roof their highest satisfaction. Books and art in various forms absorbed much of their time. And then they were the dispensers of a large amount of unobtrusive charities — charity of that sort which requires personal cognizance of its beneficiaries, and which therefore goes the farthest and is the most helpful.

So, to a large degree, both of the young ladies abjured fashionable society, but they had an inner circle of friends of the best sort — men and women earnest, cultivated, of real worth of heart and mind.

I have not left Fletcher Rochford to the last because I regarded him as the least important member of the family. Neither inside of it, where his word was law, nor in the world where he moved in varied relations among men and women, was he so estimated. As for his sisters, they both regarded him with a sort of idolatrous affection; indeed, few brothers have been what this one had in care and tenderness since the day of their father's death.

In person he was rather tall, slender-limbed, with a strong, manly face, but very far from a handsome one. Near-sighted, he was in the habit of wearing spectacles, through which one only caught occasionally the flash of those gray, dark eyes. The general habit of Fletcher Rochford's face was grave; but his smile, if it once came, entered your heart like sunlight. Naturally of a fiery temper, and, he said, of a domineering and exacting spirit, these qualities had been modified and sweetened by deep Christian convictions and life.

Fletcher Rochford had certainly some peculiar temptations to intellectual pride and inordinate self-esteem, but his faith, and the daily life he lived "as unto God," kept him in great measure from what would probably otherwise have been his "besetting sins."

Have I made him clear to you — this man of strong, keen, cultivated mind, of broad and generous sympathies, all that was in him harmonized by his simple, vital Christianity?

In their style of living, the Rochfords were extremely unostentatious. The tastes of the whole family were of that simple,

quiet sort which avoids all display. So far as was possible in a city, they conserved old home habits and style of living; but there was a fine harmony in the appointments of every room which would have pleased the eyes of an artist. Pictures, bronzes, statuettes, made color and grace everywhere. There was a small conservatory, where birds sang, and which made a bit of summer through every winter, and pretty brackets in corners, and baskets over which vines and mosses trailed, and paintings, gems of color and bloom, feeding the eye and educating the taste into a finer and deeper enjoyment of all the beauty which its Maker's hand has scattered broadcast upon the world.

"O, Fletcher! you don't know, you dear old fellow, half how good it seems to get you back here again!" exclaimed Sicily Rochford, in her pretty, impulsive fashion, as her brother rose up from the table, and turned to the mantel to examine a small box of geological specimens, which he had disinterred from one of his trunks the night before.

"Does it, my dear girl?" bending down and kissing both cheeks. "I bear you witness that there has not been a morning nor evening in the whole three hundred and sixty-five in which I have been absent from you, that I have not, in spirit, sat down at this table with you and Angeline."

"And during any one of those three hundred and sixty-five mornings and evenings, if you had walked suddenly in, you would have found plate and napkin laid for you in your old seat as they were this morning," said the elder sister. "We kept that back, though, in all our letters, to tell you on your return."

The doctor had removed his spectacles, and there was a sudden flash and melting of his eyes.

"O, Angeline!" There was a little pause here. "If you had written me that, girls, added to all you did say, and my inexpressible longing to see you, I doubt whether I should not have taken the next steamer for home."

"And missed your sail on the Nile and your sight of the Pyramids!" interposed Sicily.

"Even so, for a sight of your dear faces," drawing both of these close together, and holding them within his two palms

until the girls cried out that he was pinching their cheeks unmercifully.

"But," said Angeline, "you will never be quite Fletcher again until you get rid of some of that tan which makes you look like an East Indian—and O, Sicily, here is a gray hair!" running up her soft fingers among the thick brown locks.

"It is not the first one, O, Angeline. You know we come of a race whose locks grow white early."

"Yes, and I read in Godey's Lady's Book the other day that gray hairs were ornamental," said Sicily.

"Then I shall cherish mine. Well, girls, what are your plans for this morning?"

"They are briefly told. You are to have the easy chair by the grate-fire in the sitting-room, and Sicily and I are to sit by you, and hear the rest of your adventures in Rome and your ascent of Mount Vesuvius."

"And do you know," interpolated Sicily, with her little bright twinkle of a laugh, "that it struck me this morning at breakfast as absurd enough to find, after a whole year's absence, and with so much to hear and tell both on Fletcher's side and on ours, that we could find nothing better to talk of than the people who live opposite, with whom we have never exchanged a syllable—whose names even we do not know!"

"The fact might suggest some interesting discussion in mental philosophy, but we will not enter that field this morning."

"I hope not," said Sicily, making a wry face out of her fair one. "I want you to carry us into physical, not metaphysical, scenery for the present."

He laughed, pinched her cheek, and sat down, running his fingers through his hair, as was a habit of his, and recalling his journey through Italy.

Just then Angeline brought her father's Bible, and laid it on her brother's knee.

"We have a double reason to read and give thanks now," she said, her hand dwelling a moment fondly on his shoulder. And he knew that it was for his sake she said it.

CHAPTER III.

As a general thing, people ascend very smoothly and naturally into good fortunes. It is much harder and slower to learn how to bear and use poverty than it is wealth.

The Darrylls formed no exception to this rule; and in a very little while that sense of novelty in contemplating their wealth, which incarnated itself in Ella's "To think we are rich people now!" had quite worn off. Riches seemed indeed, the natural element of these people, in which they could disport themselves as smoothly as fish in waters, and the memory of the old days of anxiety and comparative poverty grew to each member of the family very much "like a dream when one awaketh."

Paterfamilias had invested a considerable slice of his fortune in a five-story brown stone palace, on one of the most fashionable streets up town. The upholstering was of the very latest style — damask and velvet, gilt and rosewood — a little too showy, perhaps, for people who liked quiet tones, but in very good taste after all — everything of this sort being referred to the decision of the elder sisters, and the whole appointments forming a kind of compromise betwixt the tastes of the two — Rusha's inclining always to dark, plain tones in everything, and Ella's to higher and more salient ones.

For the rest, they kept their fine carriage, their blood horses, their liveried coachman. They had servants, and silver, and whatsoever else they regarded as indispensable to illustrate their new wealth and importance. Mrs. Darryll rustled in brocades and point lace. These seemed to justify the air which she felt it incumbent on her to cultivate in the new home, whose honors she always did with a little inward trepidation.

It was an easy matter, of course, for the whole family to

obtain the "entrée" of the best society, as they termed the fashionable people who called in carriages and left cards for soirées.

Ella affiliated at once with all the gayeties and excitements of fashionable life. She fairly radiated at balls, operas, and grand parties, and always proved herself equal to the occasion. She was of just the material of which belles are made — dashing, showy, vivacious. Her dresses gave promise of equalling in number and style Queen Elizabeth's traditional wardrobe, and were always, from bonnet-string to shoe-tie, of the latest and most expensive sort.

With the elder sister it was somewhat different. That she enjoyed to the full, as was natural to her age and circumstances, this new life of elegance and luxury, could not be for a moment disputed. Who would not? The riches that enable one to touch life on so many new sides, that open to it so many new avenues of beauty and enjoyment, are pleasant and to be desired. Jerusha Darryll had her diamonds, her fine laces, her multiform and costly dresses, like her sister. She joined more or less in the gayeties of the season, and the circle amid which she was thrown; but after all, there was a difference. Ella was always "raving," as her brother Andrew, somewhat contemptuously, termed her chatter, about the opera. Rusha's highest enjoyment was in pictures and sculpture, above all in the little alcove library, with its dark-grained cases of books, and its pearly-tinted walls hung with little gems of color and fine engravings, where she passed with her books several hours of every day.

Ella dabbled in French because it was fashionable. Rusha had several masters, and devoted herself to varied forms of study, simply for the love of it.

Agnes aspired to "come out" as soon as they were established in their new home; but this was overruled by her sisters, and the eldest daughter represented to her parents in such forcible terms the importance to their youngest daughter of strict devotion to study during the next three or four years, that her father resolutely placed Agnes at a day-school, and her mother insisted on a prompt attendance.

The best thing about the girl was, that she was loyal, through all their change of fortunes, to the favorite playfellow of humbler days, fortified in this devotion by her elder sister, although Ella more than once insinuated that it was best now to ignore all past and vulgar associations.

But with the utterance of this sentiment Rusha always came bravely to the rescue.

"How can you, Ella, put such false notions into the child's head?" with that little indignant throb along her tones that they all knew so well. "Agnes' friend is a sweet, ladylike little girl, in every way as worthy of her friendship as she was before our father made his fortune."

"I don't dispute that, Rusha; neither need you fire up so; but, of course, one must drop old friends and associations with new habits and styles of living. I fancy even you, with all your high-flown sentiment, would find it rather disagreeable to introduce some of our former acquaintances into our present set."

"That may be; but I would not forsake a friend that I had loved and trusted above all others, solely because my father had made a fortune, and hers had not."

And Agnes, with that perplexed, girlish face of hers, alternating from one sister to the other, would catch the contagion of the higher sentiment of her elder sister, and say, fervently, —

"I know you're right, Rusha, and I won't give up dear little Gracie because I'm rich, anyhow."

And whatsoever salt of right feeling and true purpose was to be found in this family, it was hidden in the soul of Jerusha Darryll. But was it sufficient to save her or them — or among such counteracting influences would it too, "lose its savor"?

As for John Darryll, the mania of speculation had taken possession of him, body and soul. He found ways and means enough to dispose of the two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, which at first seemed so vast and inexhaustible to him. Indeed, that sum had dwindled in his thought to greatly smaller proportions since the night on which he declared himself its possessor

to his family. He had embarked in various speculations since that time, in most of which he had been successful; but, if the truth must be told, his temper had not improved with his fortunes. He had really fewer genial moods in his family than when he was a poor man; he was nervous, irritable, abstracted, and his mind seemed constantly to revolve about "stocks," "shares," and "dividends." He was forever complaining of the expenses and extravagance of his family, but for all this he never absolutely restricted them, and entertained an unacknowledged conviction that his present style of living was the necessary concomitant of his fortunes.

He had, of course, very little oversight of his sons, although he had included them all in his business; but the duties of the young men at the office were merely nominal, and their time was pretty much at their own disposal.

The dangers that inhered in this new wealth was greatest for them. Andrew aspired to be a "fast young man." He smoked the finest Havanas, rode fast horses, joined a club, was out late at suppers and theatres, affected the slang phrases of his "set," and afforded a mischievous example to his brothers, who were both at the most flexible and imitative age.

Indeed, Tom and Guy attempted a certain style of "rowdyism" in their talk and manners which made their mother shake her head sometimes, and wonder "what her boys *was* coming to;" but she had a vague impression that no serious moral mischief could ever befall any of *her* children; and their father was now so much engrossed with business that she shrank from calling his attention to any delinquencies of his sons; so, much that was wrong went unrebuked, for Mrs. Darryll's oburgations lacked character and force, and had a strange facility of "going in at one ear and out at the other." There was therefore very little home restraint upon the young men, who followed pretty much the devices of their own hearts and the desires of their own eyes, regarding themselves as amenable to neither God nor man.

"Guy," exclaimed Andrew to his youngest brother one even-

ing, as the family rose from the dinner-table, and walked into the drawing-room, "I want your night-key, for I shan't be in before two o'clock — off on a bust to-night."

"What have you done with your own?" asked the youth, evidently in some doubt about granting this request.

"Lost it last night at the club-supper — capital time we fellows had there!"

"By jingo!" interpolated Tom, "I mean to join that club next month; jolly fellows they!" and he fingered the mustache which he had been assiduously cultivating, and which made now a faint yellow line about his upper lip.

"You'd better believe that. Sow their wild oats with a vengeance, sir!" added the elder brother, taking out a cigar, and lighting a taper at the grate.

"Well, Andrew, let's make it a bargain. You shall have the night-key if you'll take me to the club some evening?" proposed Guy, who was still in the clumsiness and awkwardness of the transition period from boyhood to youth.

Andrew surveyed his brother patronizingly. He had himself emerged somewhat suddenly from his chrysalis into a certain sort of dandyism. He had a trim figure, which his fashionable tailor invested with the finest of broadcloth, and the slight swagger which he affected in his gait pervaded more or less his manners and talk; but there had been, as each of his family could testify, a great deal of kiddliness in Andrew's nature at the beginning. He had no lack of smartness and intelligence, either; the great danger lay for him in his father's wealth.

"You're a little too fresh for the club yet," he said. "When you're slightly ripier, I'll take you out;" and with this promise Guy had to be content, and handed over the key.

The large drawing-room, with its handsome appointments, its velvet carpets and lounging chairs, its gilt, and marble, and damask, was a wonderful contrast to the quiet little sitting-room, in which, less than a year before, the family of the Darrylls had discussed their new fortunes.

The father sat in the corner he and his chair had appropriated from the beginning, absorbed in the papers which were scattered about him. His wife, fatigued with her day's shopping, was starting up at intervals out of little dozes that appeared likely to concentrate themselves into a nap. The trio of brothers had settled themselves about the table. Rusha had comfortably bestowed herself on a corner of the lounge, and was absorbed in her book. Ella sat a little apart, contemplating a new set of ebony inlaid with pearl, which she had purchased that very day, and Agnes was leaning over her sister's chair, in admiring and slightly covetous contemplation.

"See here," exclaimed Ella, looking up with sudden animation, "it is high time that we gave a party; I mean a real crush — something that will create a sensation. Society has claims upon us now, and we've been invited out so frequently, that it won't do to let the matter slide any longer. Do you hear what I say, Rusha?"

"Ye-es," answered that young lady, looking up from her book with a pre-occupied manner.

"Well, you're as much interested in the matter as I am; I want the thing to go off in grand style."

"A — Number One," interjected Tom.

"Precisely; I'm *au fait* in these things now. We needn't have any trouble with the entertainment, for the confectioner will see to all that. The only thing will be to get up cards of invitation and our dresses, and play host and hostess as though we had given parties all our lives."

"She'll make the governor's money fly — won't she, though!" exclaimed Andrew, shaking the ashes from his cigar.

"Well, what's the money good for, except to spend?" retorted his sister.

"That's it; go in for a bender when you get a chance!" pursued Tom.

"But, Rusha, about the party — you know it will all fall on your shoulders and mine, and I want you to wake up to the importance of it."

"I suppose I must," closing her book this time with a sort of bored air.

"Must! why, I thought you liked parties, and would enter into one of your own with spirit?"

"I grew tired of them, to tell the truth, before the season was half over. They're all glitter, display, vapidness; still, as we are in society, I suppose there's no help for it; we must fulfil the duties it imposes."

"I think it's too bad," interposed Agnes, who occasionally waxed restive under school-discipline, "that you all can have a good time, and be in society, and do just as you like, and I have to be bound down to my books and lessons, and can't have a bit of fun."

"Never mind; your turn's coming, and you'll spread yourself like the rest of them one of these days," answered Tom.

"Now stop your talk and come back to the party," said Ella, with that peremptoriness which it required some effort to resist. "When shall it come off, Rusha?"

"Whenever you like, only I think the sooner it is over the better."

"You *are* funny, Rusha. One would expect, now, you'd enter into the thing with your whole heart. For my part, I expect to enjoy it vastly," getting up and sweeping the carpet with the trail of her purple silk.

The next half hour was passed in discussion, animated, at least on one sister's part, and in which the other gradually became interested, on the time, numbers, and general details of the anticipated party.

At last, when these had been in a measure settled, Ella turned to her father, having learned from experience that an unexpected and importunate attack on his purse was the surest method of carrying her point, —

"Do you hear, pa? We are going to have a grand reception, Wednesday night, week after next, and you must let us prepare for it."

"A regular squelcher — fuss and feathers!" added the eldest son of the family.

"O, Andrew," said Rusha, with a flash of annoyance in her face, "I do wish you'd be gentleman enough to drop those slang phrases, at least in the presence of your mother and sisters."

"If you are so very squeamish, you can put your fingers in your ears, I s'pose. What's the use of catching a fellow up every time he opens his mouth?" retorted Andrew, in a surly tone.

"Tut, tut, no quarrelling here!" This was from Mr. Darryll, who had just roused himself from a contemplation of the rise at the Stock Board that day, and on whom the last remarks had made some vague impression. "What's this you're saying about grand parties, Ella?"

The question somehow penetrated the "nap" into which Mrs. Darryll's intermittent dozes had confirmed themselves. She started up from the depths of her luxurious chair, rubbed her eyes, and looked in a sort of vague perplexity from her husband to her daughter; but the look settled at last into one of intense interest.

Ella answered her father's question by going straight to the point, amplifying somewhat on the imperative necessity of the party, and concluding with a general description of the way in which the whole must be carried out, as though it was a thing already settled beyond contravention.

"Piece of extravagant nonsense! The fact is, my family have got it into their heads that I'm made of money."

"No use for the governor to storm; he'll have to shell out!" muttered Andrew to his brothers, eliciting from both a laugh and a "That's so! Ella comes right down on him like a thousand of brick!"

"Pa!" John Darryll's second daughter infused into that correlative an emphasis whose meaning was perfectly apparent to those who heard it. "Would you have your family relinquish society altogether? Or have it said that while you allowed your wife and daughters to go to parties you were too stingy to give one in turn?"

This was turning a view of the case towards the successful

speculator which he had never contemplated. He changed his argument, and somewhat mollified his tone.

"Awful bore," he muttered. "Rush and jam. Always set my face against them."

It was now Rusha's turn to speak.

"But, pa, you know, as Ella says, we owe something to society. I am sure, for my own part, I heartily wish the thing was over; but the only way is to get through with it."

"And a pretty bill of expense you'll make of it among you, before that," added Mr. Darryll.

"But it will be our only party this season, pa, and we'll have all our friends, and do the thing up at once," said Ella, by way of reducing her father to complacency.

Here Mrs. Darryll interposed in a voice faintly querulous. "I s'pose the care will all come on me—for you girls will have your heads full of nothing but dress, and fol-de-rol, and I never shall be able to get through it in the world."

"O, ma, now don't go to fretting," expostulated Ella, in not the most respectful tone in the world, but that was probably less the daughter's than the mother's fault. "The whole thing will be managed without giving you any further trouble than to receive your guests,"—and she went on for the next half hour, proving how admirably her active observation and perceptive faculties had served her, and how entirely she was at home in all the details of a fashionable party.

At the end of this time, Andrew, having despatched his second cigar, rose up, evidently with the intention of going out. He was arrested near the door by his father's inquiry,—

"Off again to-night, Andrew? Where do you spend your evenings?"

The young man looked a little surprised, and not over-much pleased, at this instance of paternal solicitude, but he answered,—

"I was going over to the club to see some of the fellows."

"Well, I hope you'll look out sharp what sort of company you keep. I didn't relish the actions of some of those young

cronies of yours, who dropped into the office to-day. It was evident that they had more wine than wit aboard."

"They're a jolly crew, and had just come in from a horse-race on the Bloomingdale road, and their side had won the bets," replied Andrew, half standing on the defensive, half apologetic for his friends, and he went out.

"Andrew laid a two hundred dollar wager in that race. I overheard them talking it over," muttered Guy to his brother.

"Hush," said Tom; "the governor will hear you, and then there will be a storm. But Andrew was a lucky dog, for he won the bet."

"Yes, and sunk most of it in a treat the same night. It takes him to put things through with a vengeance, and he has a way of making the governor fork over, as none of the rest of us can."

Rusha had closed her book, for she was naturally of a restless habit, never occupying one place or attitude for any length of time, and she walked up to the mirror on one side of the room, and stood a moment in front of it.

A vast mirror it was, occupying with its heavy gilding the place of honor betwixt twin fleeces of lace curtains, and repeating to the life the large room and the figures that occupied it. Her father and mother on either side of the mantel, her sisters making a pretty tableau at a side table, the fine, showy figure in contrast with that light, girlish one beside it, while Ella was busily occupied in pencilling down a list of invitations for the projected party. And near where she stood, at another and larger table, were her brothers, in those loose, self-assertive attitudes, which harmonized with their general style of talk.

Of all these things Rusha had a vague, half-conscious impression, as she stood close to the mirror, and of the face looking at hers, with a sudden surprise and fear in the bright, dark eyes, that did not end there, but somehow invested every feature, even to the lips, which were slightly dropped apart, as one's are apt to be when intently listening.

Nobody saw this face in the mirror, or the one outside of it. The brothers went on talking, in a low, chuckling sort of tone, quite unconscious indeed that Rusha had changed her position. In a moment, however, Tom rose, throwing a glance in the direction of his father, who was once more deep in the Stock Board, and left the room.

He was drawing on his overcoat, when a soft hand was laid on his arm, and turning he encountered Rusha, with something in her face—he could not tell what, until her words made it clear.

“O, Tom, that was not true what you said about Andrew, just now?”

“What business had you to overhear it anyhow?” he answered, considerably annoyed.

“I stood by the glass, and I couldn’t help it. But, Tom, this is terrible! If Andrew is spending his father’s money in betting and drinking, surely you ought to tell him!”

“I think I see myself doing it!” his annoyance working into high displeasure. “A pretty storm we should have about our ears. Girls better mind their own affairs, and not poke themselves into their brothers’ business.”

She would not be rebuffed even by such harshness as this.

“It is my business, Tom,” she said, with a little quiver in her voice, “if any of the brothers that I love are in danger of temptation, or of falling into any habits which I know are wrong, and sin.”

“O, bosh!” with a petulant movement of the arm on which her hand lay.

“Tom!”

“Well,” half angry, half ashamed of himself, and his answer combining defence of himself and accusation of his sister, “I say now, what is a fellow to do when a girl comes round him with the pious and pathetic in this style! Of course Andrew must sow his wild oats, and have his little spreeds like the rest of his set. They’re all young fellows in high life.”

“What do you mean by ‘spreeds,’ Tom?”

“You must be green, Rusha, to ask that question.”

“Perhaps so, but I asked it.”

“Well, then, getting tight more or less, on champagne and claret.”

“Tom,” the gravity of her face deepening into a shocked expression, “you do not mean to say that our Andrew—gets drunk?”

“That’s putting it like a girl. I mean only to say, that he does just the very things that the rest of his set do, whether it’s betting on fast horses, playing cards, or drinking champagne. Where’s the harm of it?”

“O, Tom, has it come to this, and his father and mother not suspecting a word of it!”

“Rusha Darryll, you are just making a fool of yourself. Do you think your brothers—at least Andrew and I—are going to ask their marm every time they go out, or have you following, and whining about in this fashion, as though a glass of champagne, or a fast horse, was the highway to ruin? I say, I won’t stand it,” pushing away her hand with considerable roughness, and settling himself in his overcoat with a good deal of demonstration.

“O, Tom, this from you!” said Rusha, with a little grieved, underdrawn breath; to which her brother made no reply, drawing on his gloves, and taking his hat and his cane, and going out, not speaking another word.

Just as he turned to close the door, however, the young man darted a glance back, and saw his sister standing there, at the foot of the wide flight of stairs, her head leaning against the balustrade, and the tears shining in her eyes.

The front door swung sharply to, she heard his feet ring down the front steps, and still she stood there, just as Tom had seen her last, and as his thought carried her down the street, with the troubled, grieved look in her face, which he could not put away. She was standing there still, two or three minutes later, when the key was turned again in the lock, and Tom entered, and found her just as he had left her.

"Rusha," he said, "I s'pose I was a kind of brute to answer you just as I did, but you know how it is — we fellows can't bear to have girls come round, sticking their fingers in our affairs. It springs us right off. But, come now, you mustn't mind my talk."

Rusha knew that with his quick temper it had cost Tom something to return and make this concession, and that he was at least two thirds ashamed of an act that did credit to his better nature. She yielded to her first impulse of forgiveness and affection, and reached up and kissed him.

"O get out!" but the words did not go into his tone, and her ground was safe now.

"You will not be angry with me again for loving you too well, Tom? If any grief should come to you, or Andrew, or Guy, it would break my heart!"

"There it goes again; fretting yourself over a glass of champagne; silly girl!"

But she knew now that her words had touched the tender place in the boy's nature, hidden under many foibles and boyish weaknesses, but when it was found, kindly, loyal, true.

"Then if you think I am foolish, remember that it is my love for you that makes me so; but I know, Tom, perhaps better than you think, some of the dangers that lie in wait on every side to destroy young men, body and soul. O, Tom, I must be earnest now. You will not go near them — you will fly from them as you would from pestilence, or fire, or death!"

In her fervor she had clasped both hands on his shoulder. No danger of his shaking them off now.

"Rusha," said Thomas Darryll, deeply moved in spite of himself, "there is nothing in the whole world that would save me from going wrong so quick as the thought of you!"

Her whole face trembled in a smile that was not less bright because one saw that it lay close to tears.

"Well, Tom, that shall be our bond; whenever these friends of yours tempt you to do anything wrong — to follow them

into any path where you know lurks danger, or sin — you will think of me?"

"Yes, I promise;" he bent down and kissed her — a most unusual demonstration on his part, for Tom had the dislike to family caressing which is natural to the transition period.

That night, somewhere among the small hours, Andrew Darryll returned home, so intoxicated that he could not find his own chamber, and stumbled up another flight of stairs into the butler's, who had to assist him to bed, and whom he bribed not to tell his father. So the skeleton hid itself in the closet of John Darryll's magnificent home, and one day it might come to light, in all its hideousness and terror!

CHAPTER IV.

IN due time the party transpired. This one did not differ widely from those of its class; at least it had no strong features of individuality, which would have struck any one who viewed it superficially. People who deal in inflated adjectives (and the feminine portion of the guests were largely of this class) called it a "magnificent affair," "a perfect rush."

There was, of course, the usual amount of glitter and display. The head of the family had borne, with what equanimity he could, the constant drain on his purse which the party involved; not, however, without frequent objurgations, and signs sometimes of absolute rebellion; but his wife and daughters managed to impress him, more or less, with the fact that the expense was one of the necessities of their position, to which he submitted — not with a good grace. So the party was as fine and brilliant as money could make it. There was the crowd of ladies, perfumy, radiant in diamonds, rustling in silks, dainty in fine laces, and with that "company expression" which so painfully supersedes all naturalness.

The rooms were fragrant at midwinter with the sweet, passionate perfumes of tropical summers; the music was, at least, of the costliest sort, and the supper was the crowning glory of the entertainment.

The tables were radiant with cut glass and silver, and it seemed as though every country in the world brought some tributary to the board, either in game, or fruit, or choice confections, or wines that held the glow of rubies, and the glitter of gold.

As for the family, Mrs. Darryll had rehearsed her part so frequently, that she got through with it to-night with ample

credit to herself; her girls were, each in her own way, fully equal to the occasion, and there were few who outshone, in bloom and grace, the daughters of the host that night. The latter was bland and social, enjoying to a considerable degree these material evidences of his wealth and importance, and his youngest sons circulated among the guests and liked the "show," as Tom expressed it, "immensely."

The eldest brother was absent. His mother was the first to discover this, late in the evening, and commented on it to her husband when she had an opportunity, with some anxiety. Andrew had evinced as much interest in the preparations for the party as the rest of the family, joking about the whole thing in his slang fashion, and ordering an entire new suit for the occasion.

The disquietude which Mrs. Darryll expressed at her son's absence was, however, allayed by her husband's —

"O, well, give yourself no concern. He'll be along, sooner or later. Taken up with some affair at the club, I suppose!" and he turned to address a broker, whose acquaintance he had recently formed at the stock board, a broad-shouldered, rubicund-faced man, with a little, thin-visaged, dark-complexioned, over-dressed woman hanging on his arm.

The dancing formed, of course, the principal feature of the evening, and through every set, the graceful figure of Ella Darryll floated light as a fairy. Rusha, who was never intoxicated with this amusement, joined in it for a while, and then managed to have some excuse for declining all invitations for the rest of the evening. It was a singular fact in this girl's character that an unaccountable sadness was sure to steal over her in a gay crowd. It had come over her spirits to-night, like some faint mists driven of the winds to these bright coasts of her life, and Rusha Darryll stood by one of the side tables, and looked over the dazzling scene before her, with thought and feeling in strange, sharp contrast with it. She had, after the first reluctance, thrown herself heart and soul into the preparations for this evening; she had looked forward to it with the eager antici-

pations of youth and hope, for it was a necessity of this girl's nature to do whatsoever she did, heartily, vitally. But now, half as in a dream, she heard the hum of the voices, as one hears the moan of the sea; she saw the long train of dancers swing to and fro before her. "What did it all mean — what was it all worth?" she asked herself.

"Whither were all those men and women going? What were they living for? Had they found out any true worth and meaning in life?" How like a masquerade, or a mere farce, the whole thing seemed to her as she gazed! How unreal, how hollow! How everything associated with all this display and splendor seemed, for the moment, pitiful and barren to this girl's thought! For such things as these, did she and the people about her live? And what would the end of all this be? And how in the strange, vast, mysterious eternity that lay a little way beyond for all of them, and that held such close and vital relations with this life, would look interests, purposes, pleasure like these?

She drew a sigh — the hungry, lonely, soul of this girl, articulating instinctively its want and bewilderment, its half-born aspirations and needs. There was nothing in her life or associations, nothing in either the domestic or social atmosphere around her, to stimulate the best and noblest part of her. Everything here was material, earthly, in a sense, coarse. And so her soul, baffled, perplexed, wearied, drew into itself and sighed.

"Rusha, what are you thinking of?" Ella Darryll fluttered to her sister's side, flushed with her last dance, her face radiant with excitement, as she waved her fan to and fro.

"I don't know;" feeling that this was quite the truth, and that, in any case, it would be hopeless to attempt to put her thoughts into words. "How are you enjoying it?"

"O, splendidly! Everything is going off in first rate style."

At this moment a group of gentlemen and ladies approached the sisters, and they were soon absorbed in light talk and badinage.

Among this group was one gentleman who seemed to eclipse the others in various ways. He had an easy, indolent, graceful air, which women of a certain style greatly admired. He had a dark, somewhat thin face, which was called handsome by those who did not penetrate its expression. There was an air of self-assertion, an offensive superciliousness about this man, repugnant to all fine and matured souls of men and women; and yet, with young, inexperienced, fashionable girls, and sometimes with their mammas, he was a great favorite. They called his person and style "*distingué*;" they repeated the pretty nothings which he was such an adept in making on all occasions.

The man affected, too, a sort of indifference, a half contemptuous indolence in speech and manner, which, to use his own phrase, "he found took immensely with the women." He came of an old family, prided himself largely on his blood and breeding; but I think the soul of no good man or woman ever sounded that of Derrick Howe without finding the hollowness and selfishness which lay beneath, — a man who had no faith in God nor himself, in man nor woman, whose dominant purpose in life was his own comfort and ease. He had an intellect sharp but shallow, luxurious tastes, but indolent and somewhat dissolute habits. And with the last vestige of his fortune drifting away from him, it had of late entered into this man's thought to take to wife some young and pretty woman, who could replenish his exhausted fortunes with her dowry.

Derrick Howe was in his most brilliant vein to-night, as the perpetual giggle of the gayly-dressed group of young ladies around the table testified for the next fifteen minutes. At the end of that time supper was announced, and Mr. Howe conducted Ella Darryll to the table, and that young lady was in consequence the object of the secret envy of several of her fashionable friends.

"Isn't he delightful?" whispered Ella to her sister, when her cavalier had gone off a moment in quest of some jelly for the younger lady.

"Who?" the speaker's attention divided betwixt her cream and her sister's question.

"You are the funniest girl in the world, Rusha! As if I could mean anybody but Mr. Howe!"

"O, yes, I understand now. I don't like him, Ella," with a good deal of emphasis.

"Why, Rusha Darryll! He's perfectly splendid — the most gentlemanly and agreeable man that is present to-night."

"That may be, if equal constituents of vanity and coxcombry can make one this!"

Rusha could be both satirical and disagreeable when anything offended her, which, with her strong feelings and keen intuitions of one sort and another, was frequently the case.

Ella deigned no reply to this satire, except a glance, which expressed a good deal of suppressed indignation; but at that moment Mr. Howe presented himself with a quaking stratum of jelly, and she received this with a smile which must certainly have amply rewarded the gentleman for all the trouble which he had taken, and during the remainder of the evening they danced frequently together.

It was long after midnight before the party broke up, and the tired family had concentrated itself in one of the large parlors to discuss the events of the evening.

They were all in good humor, for on the whole the party had been a success; so there was a general congratulatory and half-complimentary tone in this summing up of the whole affair.

"I thought I got along with my part pretty well, father, considering it was a new thing to me," said Mrs. Darryll, addressing herself to her husband, but in reality looking for her indorsement from her daughters.

"O, ma, you did splendidly!" answered Ella. "The whole thing went off capitally, and did us all immense credit."

"Well, I must say I'm glad it's over with," added Rusha, unclasping the bracelets from her small wrists.

"I wish we were going to have another to-morrow night," subjoined Agnes.

"Come, come," interposed Mr. Darryll, "it's almost morning now, and high time these lights were out. Get to bed, every one of you, and leave the talking until to-morrow."

Mrs. Darryll rose up to set an example of obedience to her children, when Tom suddenly spoke up —

"I say, where's Andrew? He hasn't been in to-night."

"Sure enough. What does it mean?" Mrs. Darryll's maternal solicitude suddenly active. "I was asking your father about it."

At that moment the front-door bell rang violently. Most of those who heard it were not people of particularly fine imagination or sensibilities; but somehow that late midnight summons, following so soon on the scenes of splendor and hilarity in which they had all been partakers, seemed to come now with a sound of doom to all their ears. Each one leaned forward and listened breathlessly, while into the silence came the sharp click of silver and china from the dining-room beyond, where the servants were despoiling the tables.

They heard the front door open, and then a quick exclamation of surprise and terror, followed by the heavy tread of several feet in the hall. I am sure every face was pale that the servant confronted when he opened the parlor door.

"Mr. Darryll," he said, "your son has met with an accident."

"What is it — what is it — O, my boy!"

It was the mother's sharp cry that broke out first, and with one impulse they all followed her as she rushed into the hall, and there, bruised, bleeding, unconscious, they found Andrew Darryll in the arms of two men.

The white face, the limp figure, as it met their gaze, looked like death. There was a sharp cry of pain from half a dozen voices, and the next two or three minutes held a scene one would not like to witness again in a lifetime.

"Perhaps he is not dead yet — somebody run for the nearest doctor!"

They were all standing, a pale-faced, horror-stricken group, around the prostrate form of Andrew Darryll, their elegant

dresses in strange contrast with their attitudes, when Mr. Darryll spoke these words. And then there flashed across Rusha Darryll's thought the plate which she must have unconsciously observed sometime on the door of the house opposite.

She did not wait for another word, and nobody observed her as she rushed out of the front door, and down the steps, and across the street, and pulled the bell as one would on a summons for life or death.

Dr. Rochford sat in his library, although it was long after midnight. He had returned from a visit to some distant patients, and not feeling sleepy, had concluded to read for half an hour before retiring, and from reading he had relapsed into a sort of reverie, out of which the loud peal of the bell sharply roused him.

He hurried to the door, and when he opened it, he saw standing there in the flood of gaslight, which poured down from the street lamp, a vision which Fletcher Rochford will never forget to the latest hour of his life.

I do not think that Rusha Darryll was beautiful either as girl or woman, after the fashion that most people call beauty; but somehow, as she stood there in the gaslight, in her dress of white moire-antique, the snowy surf of soft laces around her half-bared arms, the brown hair which had fallen loose around her white face, as she looked up at Fletcher Rochford — somehow, I think she made at that moment a picture such as perhaps she never had before and never might again.

"Is Dr. Rochford in?" she gasped.

"I am he."

His words few and straight to the point, as he saw her stress, whatever that might be, required.

"My brother is dead or dying; come over and try to save him!" with a quick gesture of head and arm which designated the opposite house.

"Wait one moment!" and with professional instinct the young physician started for a little case of instruments and specifics, which, under God, had saved more than one human

life, in some sudden peril, when a few minutes' delay was certain death.

But Rusha, not comprehending his movement, sprang forward and caught his hand — the soft, cold fingers clutching over his — "O, sir, do not wait — Andrew may be dying! Come with me!"

"My child, I go for something that may save his life;" and he seated her down in a chair which stood in the hall, and hurried into his library. He could not pause to comfort her now.

When he returned a moment later, she rose up to meet him with something in her face that it pained him to see; but she did not speak; she simply rushed on before him across the street, his rapid strides following behind, and so Fletcher Rochford entered the house, about whose inmates he and his sister had had their pleasant gossip at the breakfast-table several months before.

The shivering group, gathered around Andrew Darryll in the parlor, which so lately had been such a scene of life and gayety, awaited in silence the young doctor's verdict whether "for life or death."

It did not take the skilful surgeon long to reach the facts of the case. Andrew Darryll had broken two of his ribs, and had received some internal injuries of a more or less serious nature; but he was alive. "O, my boy! — my pretty boy!" — moaned the mother, forgetful in her tenderness, and grief, and joy, that the young man before her was anything but the first-born son she had fondled so often in her lap; and John Darryll, although he was not naturally a demonstrative man, in his relief, wrung Dr. Rochford's hand, as though with him had rested the power of life or death.

In a few moments the young man was restored to partial consciousness. Meanwhile Mr. Darryll had penetrated, by a close investigation of the men who brought his son home, the disgraceful causes which had resulted in the latter's present condition.

Andrew had made an engagement at his club, and gone round

early in the evening to the rooms, intending to return home in time for the party. The young man had recently joined a society of what he called "good fellows, though a little fast," the first article of whose constitution, and the last one, for that matter, was "to eat, drink, and take the world easily."

Some members of a rival club happened to be present on this evening, and a proposition that both sides should "stand treat for a supper" was eagerly accepted by all parties. They adjourned to a fashionable restaurant, ordered whatever edibles their appetites suggested, the most prominent demand being "champagne and claret," and passed by natural gradations from conviviality to boisterousness, thence to irascibility, and from this last to brutality.

Both sides, having their natural feeling of rivalry fired by liquor, closed in a fight so fierce that it would certainly have been deadly if weapons of that sort had been at hand. As it was, they pummelled and disfigured each other cruelly, and some of the soberest of the party, with the proprietor of the restaurant, were obliged to summon the police to interfere.

Andrew was perhaps the severest sufferer of all, though several young men, belonging to the "first families," had been borne away disfigured and unconscious.

Some of young Darryll's friends had taken him in charge, thus shielding him from the disgrace of being publicly involved in the riot, had hired a carriage and bribed two of the waiters to accompany him home.

And this was the closing scene of the night of the Darrylls' grand party!

CHAPTER V.

FAMILY affection struck its roots deep in all the race of the Darrylls. It did not manifest itself in the every-day home atmosphere in its finest and highest development—in gentle, thoughtful courtesies of speech and deed; but the old family love showed itself faithful and strong when any stress of grief or need brought it to the surface.

Dr. Rochford certainly saw the family on its best side for the next month. He had shown at the beginning so clear a comprehension of the patient's case, and his skill had been substantiated in such high quarters, that Mr. Darryll had been very glad to secure the young doctor's services in the case of his eldest son.

There was, at first, room for keen solicitude on the part of Andrew Darryll's family. The ribs, although badly fractured, would be restored with skill and time, and the internal strains and bruises did not prove themselves of so vital a nature as was at first apprehended. But the danger lay in the fever, which set in fiercely before the youth's entire return to consciousness.

In that sick chamber, where the eldest son lay in a struggle for life or death, the family put off all the weaknesses and affectations, which, under other circumstances, would certainly have provoked the pitying contempt of Fletcher Rochford. For there was in this man, naturally, a keen sense of the ridiculous, and a kind of vehement impatience of all sophistries and superficialities. He could not affiliate with them. He liked earnest, downright people, to get at the core of things, and one of his dangers lay, at some periods of his life, in a tendency to self-will and domination.

But the man who could see down with such an unerring aim

into the faults and weaknesses of others, had been candid with himself. He knew his own dangers and temptations. He had laid them bare before God, as man never can to the tenderest human love, and in his sore strife with these he had learned slowly a new humility, a new charity for others, a charity that, as his years ripened, grew more all-embracing in scope and depth. He remembered always that it was for just such sinners as these, that the Master whom he served put aside all the glory of heaven and came into the world to save.

John Darryll's face smoothed out of its hard lines, when he entered the sick room every morning with the doctor, and his wife forgot that she had the part of mistress of her elegant house to sustain, and was only the absorbed, anxious, self-sacrificing mother, that, let come what would, of good or evil, of prosperity or adversity, lay at the bottom of this woman's nature, as strong as life itself.

Ella, too, put aside the larger half of her airiness and peremptoriness, and was at Andrew's bedside, at least, the serious, kindly sister; and Agnes and her brothers, after their own fashion, indicated the fear and hope, which for the time superseded all others, and drew the whole family together in one close bond of sympathy.

But there was one face which, in the eyes of Dr. Rochford, wore always an intenser strain of anxiety and tenderness than any of the others. Perhaps it did not to nurse or watcher, but for him, he could not dissociate it from that fair, white face, with the awful, appealing terror which held possession of it on that midnight, when he opened the door and it first lifted itself to him out of the darkness. And for this face, half unconsciously to himself, Dr. Rochford looked oftenest, and to it he most frequently addressed himself during those long days, when death hung darkly over the splendid home of the Darrylls, just as it hangs, sooner or later, alike over palace and hovel.

But the strong youth of Andrew Darryll fought the battle bravely, and came out at last victorious. Dr. Rochford knew

this before he had seen his patient, when Rusha came out suddenly one morning from the sick chamber, and met him on the landing.

There was a bright, warm agitation over all her face. "O, doctor!" she said, springing towards him, in her irrepressible gladness — "he slept three hours last night, and woke up and knew us all! He will get well now?"

"I believe so — God willing!"

The tears spun into her eyes. He saw her try to shut them back quickly, but they baffled her, dripping through her eyelids, and making a sudden dew on her cheek. She turned away with a little apologetic gesture, but without uttering a single word, and he wondered, as his glance followed her to her own chamber, whether this girl would forget to carry her new joy to the God who had given back to them her brother's life. But somehow he did not wonder this of any of the others, although John Darryll met him at the chamber threshold with that sharp, business look, half superseded by some other feeling which just now possessed the uppermost room in his heart and thought, and he grasped the young doctor's hand, and said, with fervent gratitude, "There is no mistaking that he is better. Sir, you have saved my boy's life!"

And the weak, anxious mother, who had never left the post by her son's bedside, looked up and waited in a tumult of hope and fear for the doctor's verdict.

He did not even touch the invalid's pulse; he just glanced at the pale face, with the soft, warm glow of slumber all over it, and he said, "The crisis is past, now; you must go at once to your own room, Mrs. Darryll, and get the rest that you need."

Mrs. Darryll tottered to the nearest chair; the sudden relief from the awful fear which had held her for days was too much for the weak nerves that had borne themselves bravely through the crisis. She sank into hysterics.

Before the next week was over Andrew Darryll had made rapid marches on the way to recovery, and the household, which had intermitted for a little while its life of ambitions and affectations, was settling back into the old grooves again.

Ella was the first to react. As soon as the pressure of immediate danger was over, the glamour of that world which made her life resumed its old domination over her.

Andrew's room became, for several hours of each day, a sort of centre of attraction to the whole household, and as his convalescence advanced, animated discussions on all domestic topics ensued about his bedside, with the mother's ever-recurring parenthesis — "Hush, there, children! You shall every one leave the room, if you make such a noise. How can the poor boy ever get well, with such a set of magpies around him?"

As for Andrew, this illness brought out the best side of the young man. Whatever lesson this misfortune might have for him, he was obliged to apply it himself, for even his father, who was not usually backward in attributing blame where he fancied it deserved, could not regard Andrew as anything but the victim of others' cruelty, not perceiving, as he would if his son had not met with so summary a punishment, that the young man was equally involved in fault with his companions.

Mrs. Darryll would have regarded it as barbarous cruelty to charge Andrew with the slightest blame, "after all the poor boy had suffered;" and, if this was the sentiment of the older members of the family, the younger ones would not be likely to get in advance of it.

But it was to be hoped that the young man's conscience — and Andrew had one, under all his faults and selfishnesses — would make itself heard as he lay in the grasp of that weakness and suffering which his own sin had brought down on himself.

One morning, less than a week after the crisis had passed, Ella came into the chamber, hardly able to restrain her eagerness sufficiently to close the door softly, as the sufferer's head required. "We've had invitations to a dinner-party at the Leavitts' for to-morrow night; how I wish we could go — don't you, Rusha!"

"No, I never want to go to another party, seems to me, when I remember our last one."

Rusha, with her impatient impulses, always spoke on first

thought. Did some twinge of the broken ribs make Andrew wince, or did the swift shadow which crossed his face have its rise in that association of his sister's, for which he could not but hold himself responsible?

Nobody noticed it at the moment, and Ella continued, half apologetic, half on the defensive: "But you see, Rusha, this isn't a real party; only a little dinner company of a dozen or so, and two or three tables of euchre for the evening. I can't see what harm there is in going now. Andrew's getting well; but of course I'm ready to stay at home if it will be of the slightest use."

"Not a bit of it; you've been kept in the house long enough for me, and it must be an awful bore. Go, and have a good time, girls," here interposed Andrew Darryll, with the authority of convalescence.

"I'd rather stay at home," said Rusha, with that sort of impatient decisiveness which indicates a sensitive and forcible nature, whether for good or evil. "Dinner parties are to me always intolerable bores; and I hate euchre!" with a little series of shudders, as the name suggested some insufferably stupid evenings.

"Rusha, you are the oddest girl, now! The Leavitts are among the first people in our set. One is sure to meet the best folks there, and their attention is really very flattering to us."

"Well, I'll cheerfully make over my share in it to you, and I'll stay at home with Andrew," voice and face softening out of their coldness as she glanced in the direction of the couch.

"Had you really rather, Rusha?" It was an auspicious feature of Andrew's illness that he now displayed an interest in his sister's wishes which he never had in health.

"Really, I'd rather, Andrew," and she went over to the bedside now, and laid her little soft, cool hand on his forehead. She never had ventured such a caress but once before.

Ella, unmindful of this, stood absorbed in thought, drumming softly on the window pane. She turned round at last —

"I shall wear my blue moire-antique, with my point lace set

and the new pearls. The whole will look splendid in the evening," and she hurried out of the room, intent on some minor arrangements for her toilet.

"It was too bad — too bad!" murmured Andrew, as the door closed on his sister, and he thought Rusha had followed her.

"What is too bad, Andrew?" sitting down now in the wide easy-chair by his bedside.

"I didn't know that you were here, Rusha."

"No matter — tell me, Andrew."

"That I spoiled the party for you all the other night."

She put down her soft warm cheek to his on the bed —

"Dear Andrew, we never thought of that — only that your life was spared to us."

"But that does not make it any better for me, you know. I was a great rascal, Rusha."

"You are a great big darling now, any way!"

He laughed at this speech, which gave such inherent evidence of coming from a woman's lips. But suddenly her face grew serious.

"O, Andrew, you will promise me one thing; promise me for all the life to come!" and she clung to him, as he lay there on the sick bed.

"What is it?"

"That you will never gamble, never drink at the club again, so long as you live, no matter what temptations beset you, no matter how your friends entreat you, or how they try to break down your promise by argument and ridicule!"

The tears entered Andrew Darryll's eyes.

"Yes, I promise you, Rusha. There's no safety for a fellow, only to stand up stiff, and stick to his word through thick and thin," half to himself.

"Put your hands in mine, and promise me then, solemnly, that let come what will, you cannot be moved — you will never drink — never gamble again!"

He laid his hand on hers, and repeated the promise, strong in his own strength, not knowing that that would be like flax before

devouring flames. What an easy matter it seemed to make this promise, lying there in the shadowy sick chamber, with all the high, fierce spirit of his youth put to sleep by his long illness! How small a thing it looked to both brother and sister to keep to the right then! Ah, how little they either of them guessed through what fire of temptations, through what awful stress and strain of body and soul, he must hold fast, as for life or death, to the pledge he had made! The noisy, greedy world stood outside, waiting its time, and neither of these young souls had learned by experience, that the only safe anchorage for them, when the trial came down mightily, was the grace of Him who has said, "Ye shall not be tempted above that ye are able to bear."

CHAPTER VI.

It was a pleasant thing to see the Darryll family on that noon, three weeks later, when Andrew came down stairs, by the doctor's permission, to dine. Every one partook of the general joy of seeing him resume his old seat, although the sharp, pale face, and the dark rings around the eyes, presented a sad contrast to the strong, healthy countenance in its opening manhood, which sat there a month and a half before.

"Old hoss, it's jolly to see you down here again," said Tom, giving his brother so hearty a slap on the shoulder that it sent a twinge through him; but Andrew was in too pleased and softened a mood to "growl" now, as, in his well days he had, over smaller annoyances.

"Bless his heart—so it is!" said Mrs. Darryll, the face under her elaborate cap in a glow of tenderness, and she looked as though she were half inclined to spring right up from the table, rush round to her son, and give him a real motherly hug.

But the presence of the waiter, and a lurking feeling that there might be something that savored of low breeding in any strong display of emotion, prevented the maternal demonstration.

"Have a little of the turkey, Andrew?" asked Mr. Darryll, who was rapidly dismembering a fowl, over whose preparation a scientific cook had presided. "You know the doctor says you may indulge temperately now, in whatever your appetite craves."

"I'll take some of the breast," said Andrew. "Capital fellow, that doctor," he continued. "You don't know, Rusha, what you missed this morning when you were out riding with mamma, for he told Ella and me about his first visit to Pompeii."

"I don't believe she'd have given up 'Central Park,' though, for any story. You ought to have seen the ecstasies she went into over it," remarked Mrs. Darryll.

"O, it was beautiful!" said Rusha, with that indrawn breath which, with her, always expressed her highest sense of enjoyment. "I seemed all the time to be riding through some enchanted land, and I really began to wonder whether there were such things as sorrow, pain, misery, in the world. There were the trees all astir with the new spring life in them, and the little birds singing everywhere for joy, and the sweet, fresh smell of the sprouting grasses, that carried me back to the old field beyond the house at Mystic, and the warm, bright spring sunshine over everything, and the charming pictures one came upon at every new curve of the road. I wanted to stay there forever. Wasn't it enchanting, mamma?"

"Well, yes, I must say it was pretty. Take a little of the cranberry sauce, Andrew?"

Ella burst into a merry laugh. She had a quick sense of the ridiculous.

"Mother never will sympathize with your enthusiasms, Rusha. She's hopelessly practical. And for my part I must own that I think Central Park is a sort of bore when you've been over it a few times. I enjoy it, though, on Saturday afternoons, when the drive is full of elegant turnouts, and the music—O, that is ravishing!"

"To me, that is the least agreeable season to visit the Park."

"O, well, that's because you are funny, Rusha."

"Funny," and "odd," were the two very inadequate adjectives in which Ella habitually concentrated her sense of her elder sister's strong individuality.

"But I should like to hear what the doctor said about Pompeii. Can't you repeat it?" asked Rusha, too familiar with Ella's ambiguous expressions respecting her character and conduct to bestow a second thought on them.

"O, it would spoil it all, Rusha, to give the story second-hand. You must get him to repeat it. Dr. Rochford is splen-

did — only somehow I never feel quite at my ease with him."

"I never thought of that, Ella," said Rusha. "There is more thought, sense, cultivation in what he says in five minutes, than there is in a whole evening's chatter with the silly-brained, daintily-gloved puppets one meets at parties. How insufferable they are!"

"Why, Rusha, how severe *you* are!" exclaimed Ella, in a tone which seemed to resent this remark, almost as a personal affront. "I don't think, with all Dr. Rochford's superiority, that he is as agreeable as some gentlemen we have met in society — but perhaps that is because he is not my style."

"Who is one of those gentlemen, then?" asked Rusha, in a tone which indicated her profound belief that her sister must now beat an ignominious retreat.

"Well, for instance, Mr. Derrick Howe."

If a slight reluctance preceded the name, she brought it out full and decisive at last.

"Derrick Howe!" repeated Rusha Darryll, settling her knife and fork on her plate, and herself back in her chair. "You don't mean to say that you would compare such a man as Dr. Rochford with Derrick Howe! The very idea is preposterous! Why, he isn't to be mentioned in the same day with him!" her remarks growing in exaggeration as they increased in number, after, I am sorry to say, the tendency of her sex.

"That is because he doesn't happen to be after your style, Rusha," coming to the defence with considerable vehemence. "Mr. Howe is a most accomplished gentleman, I am sure, and is considered a great ornament to society, and any lady may regard herself honored on whom he chooses to bestow his attentions."

"That's a matter of opinion," with a tone whose meaning was unmistakable.

"Who's that — who's that, girls?" interposed Mr. Darryll, who had leisure now to attend to his daughters' talk, while the waiter was busily putting the table in order for dessert.

"We were talking about Mr. Derrick Howe — you remember, pa, the gentleman that the ladies admired so much at our party?"

The successful speculator was on the whole a tolerably shrewd judge of men. He had a certain acquired sharpness in gauging their depths, which was the natural result of being constantly thrown amongst them in a variety of business relations.

"Confounded lazy dog," speaking in his rapid, decided way. "A mere lady's man — just fit to dandle round silly girls, make smooth speeches, and pick up their handkerchiefs. No solidity, no depth to him. Miserable spendthrift too — takes on airs — run through what was left of his father's property, and lives now on his old name."

Ella's color had brightened perceptibly during this very sweeping analysis of the young man's character, and she had played with her napkin ring in a manner that would have indicated to a close observer both disturbance and displeasure; but she contented herself with muttering in an undertone to Agnes, who happened to sit next her —

"Papa generally does people injustice whom he does not understand."

"I say," said Tom, during the process of amalgamating the sauce with his pudding, "I saw a real lady last night. No airs nor fol-de-rol, but the genuine article — Simon pure."

"Where did you come across her — at Barnum's Museum?" asked Ella, something having ruffled her humor, which, in justice to her, was generally a good one.

"Barnum's Museum!" repeated Tom, indignantly. "If you meant that for a joke, it's a failure. I saw her in her own house — and that happened to be just across the street — when I called about that last prescription for Andrew. The lady was the doctor's sister; I knew that as soon as I set my eyes on her, though, you come to search for it close, the family likeness isn't striking."

"O, do tell me about her, Tom. What did she say?" asked Rusha, in a voice that betrayed keen interest.

"There isn't much to tell. We didn't talk more than three minutes before the doctor came in. It was all in the tone, movement, manner; and that spoke for itself. There are plenty of gentlemen and ladies got up for occasions. On the street, in a call, or at a party, they're all right; but this one you'd know somehow would be a lady just the same down in the kitchen, with her washerwoman, with her seamstress, or on the loneliest island in the world. It's in her — a part of herself as much as the color of her eyes. And that's the kind I like — not those that are off and on — help me out with it, Rusha."

"Intermittent ladies is, I suspect, what you mean."

"That's it. You always do scent out the right word for a fellow, just as a cat will go straight to the hole where the mouse is."

"That's a pretty compliment, Tom, only you might have put it in prettier words."

"O, bother! A fellow can't be always mincing after his speech like a pedagogue. So he gets the meaning out, that's the chief thing."

Here Guy spoke up. "O, father, I saw your name in the paper this morning as one of the directors of the new 'American Eagle Petroleum Company.' I didn't know as you'd gone in there."

"They've got my name in!" dipping a corner of his napkin in the finger-glass. "I didn't know anything about it either, until two or three days ago, when a couple of the stockholders called to see me and said they would like to have my name, and would put me down for a thousand shares."

"What did that mean, husband?" asked Mrs. Darryll, and the sons and daughters listened attentively. Anything that concerned "pa's" credit or importance was interesting to the whole family.

So John Darryll sat at the head of his table, with a pleasant sense of increased weight in both his social and financial relations.

"O, men don't do such things for nothing. I saw through

the wire-pulling at once. I've got up a name now for success in 'striking ile,' and the men who are getting up the new company thought it would go down better if 'John Darryll, Esquire,' showed in capitals amongst them; and the thousand shares was simply a complimentary way of buying the use of it. It's all a fair bargain in business."

"But do you know whether this new company is likely to succeed — they say the market's glutted with bogus ones?" inquired Tom.

"That's true enough. This is as likely to turn out a rotten concern as any of the others; but that's not my business; I didn't offer to sell my name, but I let them have it when they asked for it, and they gave me what they thought it was worth."

"Somebody'll be pretty certain to get their fingers scorched," remarked Guy, oracularly.

"Somebody's pretty certain to every day," added his father. "The way a large proportion of these petroleum companies is managed is a warning to a man to look sharp on all sides before he goes in, or he will be singed as sure as he's alive. A few men, who understand the ropes, will buy a piece of land somewhere among the oil regions for a mere song, set the people wild about the fortunes it promises to yield — the knowing ones are up to that sort of thing — crowd the stock into the market, get a few strong names, and blow the trumpets in the newspapers; and so the green ones go in, expecting to reap tremendous fortunes in an incredibly short space of time, and ten to one get woefully bit." Proving by his concluding sentence, which was, in his own estimation, the sum of all the others, that, however sound John Darryll might be in petroleum, he was "shaky" in some of the root principles of grammar.

"What a dishonorable piece of business! No decent man would have anything to do with it!" exclaimed Rusha, in a heat of indignation.

"Plenty of men who call themselves decent do," answered her father, emphatically. "In war all's fair. And it's pretty

much so in business. If a man won't look out for himself, nobody is going to trouble himself to do it for him. This world is pretty largely made up of two sorts — those that know how to feather their nest and those that allow themselves to be plucked; and the latter's the larger by a vast odds."

With which philosophical view of life, Mr. Darryll helped himself to some nuts, complacently reflecting that he belonged to the fortunate minority of his classification.

"But, pa," continued Rusha, "you don't suppose that this 'American Eagle Petroleum Company,' which has your name, is one of these abominable impositions you've been talking about?"

"I don't suppose anything about it. It's not my concern. The stockholders must look out for that. It's just what I said — likely to be a rotten thing as any of them."

"But as your name is there, it seems to me you're responsible for the honor of the company."

"Not at all; I didn't ask them to take my name. It was their own offer."

"Well, but you allowed the company to retain it, and it seems the managers fancied it would have influence in attracting others to invest."

"That's their look out, not mine, child. The concern may be a sound one for all I know, and if it isn't, I haven't the time to poke my head into its affairs; and the probability is, all would be fair outside, and if the thing was leaky at bottom, I shouldn't be able to discover it. These managers are shrewd folks."

Rusha was by no means convinced. That stubborn instinct of truth, that going right down to the core of things, which was perhaps her greatest virtue, made her sometimes an uncomfortable opponent in an argument, at the bottom of which lay any sophistry.

"But, pa," she continued, raising her voice a little, till its strong, clear earnestness held every ear at the table attentive, "a man's name, wherever he puts it, is his bond, his pledge of honor and integrity; and yours stands a witness for the sound-

ness of this Petroleum Company before the whole world; and as for that thousand shares, it's a mere bribe, so long as you know nothing about the thing. A mean business, any way it can be shown. If it was my name, I wouldn't have it stand there a single day."

"Rusha, you talk like a woman, or a foolish, romantic girl," answered her father, in a slightly irritated tone. "What do you know about business?"

"It won't do to carry girlish, high-flown notions into that any more than it will into a good many other things I've told you about," sagely, if not very luminously, remarked Mrs. Darryll, probing an English walnut with her nut-picker.

Rusha never deserted an argument half way. "But, pa, supposing now that some ill-informed, credulous persons — some widows or orphans, for instance — taking your word for just what it means, a witness for the integrity of this company, should invest their money — all, perhaps, they've got in the world — in these shares, and the whole thing should turn out bogus. These people would be ruined, and the influence of your name there would just do it!"

"Bravo!" exclaimed Tom, "Rusha's got the best of the argument now."

"Rusha just knows nothing at all about it," subjoined her father, in a voice tintured more strongly than before with annoyance. "It don't do for men in business to go to dealing with 'supposes' and 'perhappes.' All superfine notions of that sort must be left to people who don't have to make money, and can spend their time hunting up nice moral distinctions."

A free and easy style of conversation, which, if it lacked reverence, had its advantages, always obtained betwixt parents and children in the household of the Darrylls.

Rusha's face settled down now into that look of still inflexibility which they all understood so well, and which was so apt to terminate any family discussions.

"Well, there's one thing I do know if I do stay at home," she said, "and that is, if there be such a thing as right, honor, truth, they ought to enter into one's business as well as any

other duty or relation in life; and if my name stood where yours does, pa, my conscience would give me no rest until I'd had it struck off, and the company could take back their shares until I knew it was an honest one."

"But supposing it should be — and it's as likely as nine tenths of them — and the shares should yield me something handsome in the way of dividends — what then?" asked her father, a little triumphantly.

"I don't think she'd have any scruples about using the money in that case, pa," interposed Mrs. Darryll, who somehow felt it incumbent on her to take up the defence in behalf of her husband — more anxious that her children should think it would not be possible for their father to do anything which was not strictly just and right, than concerned about the thing itself. "She was teasing me this morning for an India shawl. Just try her with that, and I don't think she'll inquire very closely where the money came from!"

There was a loud chorus of laughter, in which all the young voices joined, Rusha's as heartily as any of the others. She could always bear having the laugh turned against her.

"She's got you this time, Rusha!" said Guy, nodding his head towards his elder sister.

"You've made a strong point against me, ma, but I'll be true to my principles; I'll give up the India shawl if pa will take his name from the 'American Eagle Petroleum Company.'"

"Good! Rusha'll die game!" said Tom, expressing with more emphasis than elegance his sense of his sister's adherence to her convictions of right.

"Pa," said Ella, "I don't happen to be troubled with any such high-flown notions. You just hold fast to the shares, and when the first dividends come in, let me have an India shawl, and I won't ask any questions."

The talk had grown playful now; and yet how much sober truth underlay it!

"Michael," said Mr. Darryll to the waiter, settling in this way the matter under discussion, "let's have up a couple of that new claret. We'll drink to Andrew's recovery this time."

CHAPTER VII.

"WELL, who is going to church this morning?" said Mr. Darryll, as the coachman presented himself at the door of the sitting-room one Sunday morning for orders.

There was a little stir amongst the assembled family. Mrs. Darryll rose up and walked to the window, from which the sky afforded a narrow limit for observations. Hers were not of the most promising kind. A thin gray curtain of haze covered over the sky, with here and there a little seam of azure. It was in early April now, and phases of the sky were not to be depended upon. "Do you think it's going to rain, pa?" asked the lady, unable to reach an independent conclusion.

Mr. Darryll roused himself from the Sunday Herald, in which he was again deeply buried, smoothed his whiskers, looked out of the window. "Doubtful," was his verdict; "wind isn't in the right direction."

"Well, then, we'll have the carriage up, and the whole family had better turn out; it looks respectable, and your father's rented one of the best pews."

"Mother advocates going to church on principles of economy," laughed Tom, who was walking up and down the room with his hands in his pockets. "She'd think the money was wasted if every seat in the pew wasn't filled!"

There was a laugh at mother's expense, which she bore with equanimity. And then Ella turned to her sisters and said, "Our new bonnets came last night. Don't you think we'd better go, girls?"

Rusha looked up from her book with a sort of yawn. "I don't think that motive would be strong enough to take me out of the house to-day," she said.

"Why, isn't that as good as any?" asked Guy, who, having passed his fifteenth birthday, had attained that period when boys hold their opinions with a little more positiveness than they do at any other period of their lives. "I thought girls and ladies never went to church for any better reason than to flourish their fine dresses and bonnets!"

Andrew laughed, and called Guy a "trump;" but Rusha said nothing, only she looked serious.

"Come, come, this isn't settling the matter about church," interposed Mrs. Darryll. "Pa, hadn't you better go, and take all your boys and girls?"

"Not this morning, I believe, mother," getting up with a yawn. "But the rest of you'd better muster in strong force. Get out the carriage, Rufus, at half past ten."

There ensued a quarter of an hour's animated discussion betwixt Ella and Agnes on the dresses they would wear that morning, and on the people who occupied the pews adjoining theirs, while Rusha walked up and down the room, as was a habit with her, her hands locked behind her, her face drooped forwards, with the thoughtful expression that always gave it a touch of sadness.

The boys had distributed themselves in various lounging attitudes. Tom and Guy were comparing bosom-pins, and Andrew, who was now able to accomplish daily the descent of the stairs, was listening to the talk, and laying plans for the next week, when he expected to get out for the first time.

"Pa," said Ella, suddenly breaking into and stopping the chatter of her brothers, "it's April already, and high time for us to make our plans for the summer. The Lorings were asking me about them yesterday. We shall shut up house, of course, at the commencement of the season, and take the watering-places and all those things in order — Newport, the White Mountains, Saratoga, and Niagara. We can do them all in one season, and we ought to begin to see about our wardrobes by the very next week."

"O, won't it be splendid — and I shall go too!" said Agnes, clapping her hands with girlish enthusiasm.

"Come, come, children — it's Sunday; I'm amazed that you'll talk about such matters to-day!" said Mrs. Darryll, who always had a traditional regard for religion — a feeling that it was something proper and necessary — without which, in short, no family could be respectable in this world or safe in the next. She had felt it her duty to insist upon all its outward observances with her young household, such as going to church, attending the Sunday-school, contributing to the missionary fund, subscribing for a religious paper, and was always ready with pecuniary and personal aid for all societies that had general confidence and patronage for good works.

She had faithfully inducted each one of her children into the catechism and commandments, and devoutly believed that this system, with an occasional interlarding of pious *talk*, would amply fortify them against all the temptations which the world, the flesh, and the devil could bring to bear.

As for her husband, he had, in a general way, abetted his wife's practice, believing that religion was a good thing for women and a growing family. It helped to promote general good order in society, as well as in households, and there was no doubt something in it; but just what or how much, no personal experience here had ever enlightened the soul of John Darryll.

"We must have the horses at the watering-places," continued Tom, all regard for his mother's reproof absorbed in the interest which he took in the topic under discussion. "Young Fordham was telling me about the crack horses they always have at the Springs, and the races they had there last year. Finest that ever came off. Zounds! it must be a capital sight, Andrew, to see such a show of horse-flesh!"

Before the elder of the brothers could indorse this sentiment, Ella broke in with — "Of course we shall go in the best style if we go at all. Our carriage, and a maid, and all that, will be quite indispensable."

"Boys and girls," interposed Mrs. Darryll, this time with decided authority, "I should like to know if you are a set of

heathen! What do you s'pose you're all coming to, talking about horse-races and such things Sunday morning?"

"Well, for my part, I don't see as it's any worse to talk about those things than it is about 'Gold, and Hudson, and Bank Stocks,' as pa does every Sunday, when he can get anybody to listen," answered Ella, with some acerbity, being placed so strongly on the defensive.

"I've just been wondering," said Rusha, pausing suddenly in her walk, and standing still by the table, "whether there is any such thing in the whole world as religion?"

"Why, Rusha!" exclaimed her mother, lifting up both hands — "how you do talk!"

"Nevertheless, it's the truth, mother," her voice growing solemn in its earnestness; "I don't mean a religion of traditions or respectabilities; nor one of forms; nor outside observances; but I mean a religion of the heart and soul; something that is stronger and more precious than life itself; something genuine to the core, known and lived every day; something that one can hold fast through all loss and change, through all joy and sorrow, and that one knows can be carried out from this world into the next."

For a moment nobody spoke. Mrs. Darryll looked a little solemn and perplexed. Perhaps just then each soul in that room had some vague consciousness of inward reproof and need.

"I s'pose that was the sort of religion the old martyrs had, when they lay down in dungeons and went to the stake — wasn't it, ma?" said Agnes.

"I s'pose it was, my child," answered the lady; but somehow she did not seem quite confident.

"They lived so long ago," continued Rusha, the gravity in her face touching her voice. "If I could only know one man or woman in the world who really lived, or actually tried to, the religion that so many profess! I know plenty of folks that are kind, well-meaning, good-hearted, and all that; but I mean something that goes deeper. I read about religion in books; I

hear the ministers preach it; and I sometimes long to say boldly to some of them, 'Do you really believe what you say up there in the pulpit? Do you carry it down with you into every-day life? Is it more to you than your salary, your position, your honors — dearer than life itself?'"

"Then there are the missionaries, you know," subjoined Agnes, somewhat timidly.

"Hypocrites and humbugs, half of 'em!" muttered Guy; "have a good time off there, converting the heathen, and making folks at home support 'em."

"Guy, don't speak in that way of good folks," said Mrs. Darryll, regarding it incumbent on her to interfere, and yet unable to bring the slightest argument against her son's wholesale accusations.

"Of course," continued Rusha, resuming her walk, "nobody doubts that there are good, honest people, who want to do just what is right; but how far these are in their beliefs and experiences the victims of false education and honest mistake, is a question beyond my depth. I wish I knew where truth was!" speaking half to herself now.

"The fact is, human nature's pretty much the same everywhere; I've found that out in my dealings with men," remarked Mr. Darryll. "Every one looks out sharp for himself. Religion sounds well in the pulpit and in books, and is all right enough in its way; but these fine-spun theories don't answer in the hard grip and tussle of life."

"In short, governor, your creed isn't founded on cant, but on hard dollars and cents," said Andrew, attempting to be humorous.

"Well, it's my opinion every man's is, in the long run, and get to the bottom of the matter," answered *paterfamilias*, rumpling his Herald.

"And when one looks abroad on the people one knows," continued Rusha, "they're no better than we, living on the same plane, influenced by just the same motives, pursuing the very same objects. I wish, as I said, I knew one man or woman in

the whole world in whose intelligent goodness I should have solid, unquestioning faith."

"I think, for my part, we're about as good as most folks," said Ella, a little annoyed at the way her sister disposed of her family in this regard. "I'm sure pa pays a tremendous rent for his pew, in the most fashionable church."

"Yes; but he pays that to the god of fashion, not to the God of the church."

"Well, I presume our motives are just as good as our neighbors'."

"That's just what I was saying," answered Rusha, dryly.

The mother interposed here. "Come, come, girls, you haven't a minute to spare. Go right up stairs and dress, or you won't be ready for church."

Poor Rusha — with her soul groping in the dark, uttering its long plaint for something which the world could not give it!

The family atmosphere was dense and material, and the society amidst which she moved was pretty much of the same quality. She had never been thrown into the company of high-minded Christian men and women, and though all that was aspiring and truest in her thrilled responsive when she heard of the excellence of goodness and the beauty of truth and self-sacrifice, she wondered whether this was ever brought down into the actual and real — whether these high-spun, rose-colored theories ever existed outside of sermons and books. Her soul wanted the eternal anchorage, to hide itself in the strong tower of the blessed promises of God. Unsettled and uncertain, it carried through the days the doubts that would not be silenced, the chill and darkness which only a living faith in Christ Jesus, with religious culture and its slow daily growth in the soul, could warm and illuminate.

The shallower natures of the others could, in some sense, satisfy themselves with the world and its prosperities; but for her, though her father had made his great fortune, though luxuries and splendors surrounded and persuaded her on every side, she was still — poor Rusha!

CHAPTER VIII.

"CONFOUND this Administration! Driving the country, neck and heels, straight into ruin!"

Having thus delivered himself, Mr. Darryll dashed down the paper and seized the poker, and commenced a vigorous onslaught on the lowest stratum of coals — this exercise proving a sort of safety valve through which his indignation could vent itself.

"Dear me, John, what is to pay now?" asked Mrs. Darryll, gathering up in her lap, in order to screen it from a shower of ash dust, a long turnpike of white ruffling, over which her needle was laboriously plodding.

"You better ask me what *isn't* to pay!" retorted the lady's spouse, in tones which indicated a strong tendency to use the poker on some more sentient object than the coals. "Block-heads and knaves at the head of our Government. Steered us, with their eyes open, right into this civil war, and all they care for now is to feather their own nests and run everybody straight into bankruptcy. Here they are talking about another draft, and taxing a man now every time he turns round. We can't stand this much longer. I thought when we commenced this thing we were going to put it through in nine months; and now, after a year of fighting, the end looks farther off than at the beginning!"

Mr. Darryll had commenced his diatribes on civil and military affairs with only his wife for auditor, she being, on this ground, one of the acquiescent and monosyllabic type, her opinions and sentiments on all public matters being a faithful reflex of her husband's.

This was not precisely the case with the sons and daughters, although there was no doubt that the home-talk colored more or less the political views of most of them.

And one after another the boys and girls had dropped in, and stood now grouped around in various attitudes of indolence or interest, listening to the conversation.

"But, pa," interposed Rusha, standing on the defensive, "you remember that Washington made a greater mistake than our Government did when he wrote to his wife, at the time of his taking command of the Continental army, that the war would probably be over by the following autumn. What a point the Tories must have made of that false prophecy through all the seven years that followed!"

Mr. Darryll cleared his throat in order to gain time. He had that reverence for Washington, and all the great actors of the Revolution, which is inborn with every American.

"That's another thing," he said, seizing hold of the first point that presented itself. "The questions at issue are entirely different. We haven't got any such men now as we had then."

"I should think not," added Ella, who had a constitutional dislike of radicalism, and a general impression that the "first society" did not indorse the present Administration. "Look at Abraham Lincoln!"

"What's the matter with him?" asked Rusha, tartly.

Her sister was, of course, ready with the stock objection.

"O, he isn't a gentleman. Such an awkward, inelegant man at the head of our nation! It's really dreadful!"

"I presume that your dancing-master would do the honors of the White House with a much better grace than our President, and that is, of course, much more important than sound wisdom or integrity of character, than strength of purpose or love of justice and righteousness, in the man who stands at the nation's helm, now that she is in this awful peril for life or for death!"

The voice of Rusha Darryll held now that lingering sarcasm which they all perfectly understood, and, if the truth must be told, secretly dreaded a little.

Ella was a good deal nettled. Of course her position was

totally indefensible, now that moral instead of physical qualities formed the grounds of the defence; but she had one shaft left, tipped with a little venom. She sent it home now.

"Are you an *abolitionist*, Rusha, I should like to know? One would imagine it by the way you talk."

That name had had, during their childhood, an exceedingly bad odor in the Darryll family. Perhaps it still retained some old power of association over Rusha's mind, for her answer hardly met it squarely; and then it was several years ago, and people have grown in the last three.

"I hardly know what you mean by abolitionist, Ella; but of one thing I am certain, that slavery, in any form, is a sin and a curse to a people, and against it, so long as I live, I will set my face, whatever you or anybody else may call me."

This was certainly throwing down the gauntlet in an atmosphere where it required some moral courage to do it; but during the latter part of Rusha's speech, Guy had entered, thus completing the family circle. The boy had happened during the last week to light on Uncle Tom's Cabin for the first time, he having hitherto religiously avoided it, hearing his father, who had never so much as read the title page, denounce the book as a "miserable incendiary work," this remark being plagiarized from an adverse newspaper criticism.

Of course with the first chapter Guy was committed to the end. And as a consequence of reading the book, he had accepted an invitation of a young friend, given half in sport, to go and hear Wendell Phillips lecture the preceding evening.

The transcendent power of the book had wrought strongly on the rough, boyish sympathies of Guy Darryll, and the eloquence of the lecturer completely brought him over. His family was quite ignorant of the sudden revolution which his political convictions had undergone, and each one was electrified to see him stand up boldly now, the ruddy, immature face glowing with the fervor of his sentiments as he delivered them —

"I say I'm an abolitionist to the core! Go in for the nigger strong. They've just as good rights as white folks; and so

long as they're human beings, we've no business to buy and sell 'em; and I'm ready to fight anybody who says we have!" growing belligerent as he proceeded.

Guy's avowal was received with shouts of merriment by his brothers, and with various interjections of surprise or dismay from the rest of the family, with the exception of Rusha, who patted her youngest brother on the shoulder, and said, encouragingly —

"Bravo, Guy! That's the sort of talk I like!"

"Well, it isn't what I do, by a long shot," said her father, vastly surprised and a good deal displeased at this defection of his youngest son. "Where in the world did you get such notions as those, Guy?"

The boy had an impression that his authorities would by no means enhance the value of his convictions in his father's estimation; so he wisely kept them to himself, only saying, with an air of profound sagacity, in amusing contrast with his boyish face —

"O, I've thought and read a good deal lately; and these are my opinions, and I shall hold them as long as I live, without fear or favor."

"Well, all I've got to say is, you'd better wait until you're a little older and wiser than you are now, before you put forth your sentiments in such a fashion," said his father.

Guy, secretly primed with Wendell Phillips and Harriet Beecher Stowe, turned suddenly a strong fire from his battery on his father —

"Do you approve of slavery, father? Do you think it's right to sell men and women on the auction block as though they were cattle? Do you think it's right to separate husbands and wives, and tear little children away from their fathers and mothers — to hang up women by the wrists and whip their bare backs till they're raw, and send blood-hounds to bring them down when they run away from their masters? Do you think it's right to do these things because one man has a white skin and the other a black one?"

John Darryll hemmed. His old, sound New England training, and at bottom the sturdy sense of right and justice, the common humanity which no political sophistries nor partisan feelings could overcome, rose up in stout condemnation of the facts that young boy of his had put so strongly.

"Of course I don't," he answered, very crossly, but still very positively. "None of my family ever heard me contend that slavery was right. I've always admitted the thing was a wrong and a shame; but as we'd got it, and the Constitution admits it, the best way was to let it all alone, and it would be its own remedy in time. You see what all this talk and agitation about the thing has brought the country to; I've said it would be so for years, and now we've got into a war with no end to it, and nobody to manage it."

"If slavery carries its own remedy in itself, why doesn't murder, or arson, or any other crime?" persisted Rusha.

"There, you see, pa, I told you so," said Ella, in a tone half deprecatory, half positive. "Your oldest daughter is an out-and-out abolitionist!"

"Well, I'm sure, John, she never got it from me," added Mrs. Darryll.

"No, ma," laughed Rusha, good naturedly — "whatever my opinions are, you shan't be responsible for them."

"But, Rusha," continued Ella, standing by the mantel, and looking at her sister with some perplexity, "I do think you have a tendency toward isms. You have, somehow — I can't just explain what I mean — the sort of character and enthusiasm that runs away with folks! I shouldn't wonder the least if under a certain set of influences you should turn Woman's Rights, or take to lecturing in public, or some such dreadful thing."

"You are complimentary, Ella. But give yourself no alarm, my dear. The consciousness of my own fatal lack of gifts will keep me always from the Rostrum."

"I'm not so sure about that," added Tom. "Rusha can talk, when she gets the steam on, better than a good many min-

isters; and then she always looks so well when she gets excited!"

"Tom, don't!" interposed Ella again, her imagination taking the alarm at even the playful suggestion of such a prospect. "If the day should ever come when my sister rises up in a public hall to speak, I shall want to hide my head the rest of my life for shame; I never could show my face in society after such a disgrace!"

"You'd better think of something that's likely to happen," suggested Mr. Darryll, who never gave himself much concern about improbabilities of this sort.

"I see we're going to have another draft, and it's as likely to fall on Tom or Andrew as anybody."

"O, pa!" This little interjection fell from Mrs. Darryll; but it said what the hearts of mothers with goodly sons had been saying for more than two years over all the land. Andrew's fractured ribs were now so far restored as to make an impending draft a source of alarm in his case.

"And substitutes cost a small fortune now-a-days," said the head of the family, returning to the old ground of offence.

"But, pa, you know you'd rather pay any amount of money, than have either of your boys go to the war and get shot, or fall into the hands of those dreadful Rebels," expostulated Mrs. Darryll. "We'd better make any sacrifices rather than have that happen."

"Yes; I wonder, if worse came to worse, how many gewgaws your girls would be willing to sacrifice at the watering-places, where they intend to figure this summer?" retorted Mr. Darryll, who was in the habit of visiting on domestic affairs the ill humor engendered by a contemplation of public ones.

"I'm sure we'd all be willing to make any sacrifice, rather than see our Andrew or Tom go to the war," answered Mrs. Darryll, meekly; and Ella, who had meditated a strong attack on her father's pockets that day — the summer's wardrobe being now in an advanced state of preparation — concluded to defer her appeal to a more favorable occasion.

One thing was certain. John Darryll was an habitual grumbler, and his threats always kept far ahead of his deeds, as was a fact well known and acted on at all times in the bosom of his own family.

And the same rule would, in a measure, apply to his habit of regarding all public affairs. The man was not without a feeling of patriotism. The echo, as it rolled over the land, of the first shot on that lonely fort by the sea, had roused the heart of John Darryll with the rest of his countrymen. For the time being, a new love of country, a burning desire to avenge her wrong and retrieve her honor, superseded every other feeling in the soul of the man. He averred himself ready to take his gun and go down South, and do his part in putting down the rebellion that had taken him by such surprise; for he, like the majority of Northern men, had believed in his heart that South Carolina, and the other seceded states, could not be really "in earnest."

But John Darryll was not a man of abiding faith in things invisible. He had not those strong moral convictions which make a man, no matter how dark and desperate a cause may seem, anchor his hope on the eternal foundations of truth and justice, on which that cause rests.

And so, when defeat and disaster overtook our armies; when mistakes, that the very nature of things rendered unavoidable, were committed on every hand, then John Darryll's faith waxed faint.

Certainly those long four years tried every man, and when the war, with its high prices and heavy taxes, began to touch the pockets of men like Mr. Darryll — that was their weak point — then they began to grumble at the blunders and tyrannies of the Government.

John Darryll had been brought up in a school of the old Jackson and Jefferson type. The names still possessed a strong traditional power over his mind!

That both these men were fervent patriots, however strongly partisan, nobody could attempt to deny. But John Darryll had

an impression, based on no intelligent insight into the course of events, and on very insufficient knowledge of the real character of the great men whose names were always on his lips, that if they had only managed affairs, things would have turned out smooth and satisfactory to all parties.

He had no wide moral outlooks, and present mistake or disaster was to him absolute proof of either incapacity or villany. And how many men were there, who felt and talked like this one through all the nation's long four years' baptism of fire and blood, and who only begin to see with clearer vision now that the cloud and fire of the battle are rolling away!

Blessed are those who, not seeing, yet have believed!

CHAPTER IX.

SICILY ROCHFORD had been absent in the country for most of the spring, visiting a sister of her father's. Two or three days after her return she said to her brother — "Well, Fletcher, I hear that you have made the acquaintance of the family across the street, under circumstances, too, which are apt to show people's characters in dishabille, as physicians oftenest see them. Tell me something about them."

The young doctor put down his paper and leaned his head back on his chair — a fine head, both artists and physiognomists had called it, surveying it, however, from somewhat different stand-points.

It was just at twilight, and the little family of three were gathered in the study, in that indolent, social mood which usually follows a day of bustling activities of one sort and another, and the Rochfords were, every one of them, from constitution, habit, and conscience, full of varied plans and industries, which never allowed time to hang heavy on their hands.

The day had been warm — for it was late in the May. A golden glow of twilight filled the room. All through it were afloat odors of hyacinths and roses, with the luscious sweetness of orange blossoms from a little conservatory, which opened like a green, flowery glade out from one side of the study.

"Fletcher looks tired, Sicily," said Angeline, as she noticed with the swiftness of intent affection the posture which the head took, half unconsciously.

"If I am, there is no rest so pleasant and entire as talking with you, girls. Now, what do you want to know about the people opposite, Sicily?"

"Well, whether our conjectures, when you first came home, about the sort of people they were, turned out to be true."

"You know the circumstances which first introduced them to me?"

"Yes; Angeline related them to me this morning. I think your meeting with the young lady would have been decidedly romantic had the occasion been less serious."

"It was serious to her then — a matter of life and death. Poor girl! there were no disguises there. That wild, white, frightened face, under its shadow of dark brown hair, contrasted awfully with the rich dress and the quiver of the jewels on her arms and neck. I never saw a sharper agony in any face. I can never get it out of hers, although I have seen it since very luminous with smiles and happiness."

"She is your favorite of the family, Angeline says."

Fletcher Rochford turned and smiled on the elder of his sisters. "How do you know that?" he said — "did I tell you?"

"As though I wasn't acute enough to find that out without your saying so!"

"What is her name?" asked Sicily.

Her brother smiled again — this time with a twinkle in his eyes. "Jerusha!" he said, pronouncing the name with immense unction.

Sicily screwed her face into an expression indescribable, unless her own solitary comment pronounced it — "Distressing!"

"I don't think it is to the owner thereof, Sicily; and then they call her 'Rusha,' which I like better than most of your new-fangled pet names."

"Rusha! Rusha! that is a decided improvement; it has really a pretty sound about it."

"But really, Sicily, I don't dislike Jerusha," interposed Angeline. "There is a hearty, honest sound to the name, that somehow I fancy."

"It is a matter of taste," replied her sister. "However, if one likes the owner of the name, it makes but little difference what the latter is."

"Yes," said her brother; and he said no more, only sat still, musing.

At last Sicily reminded him —

"What are you thinking of, Fletcher?"

"Of this girl, Rusha Darryll. I pitied her that night on which I first saw her, and I pity her still, although any one who knew — perhaps even she herself — would think the emotion wasted in her case."

"In what respect do you find that she needs it then?" This was Angeline's question.

"Because there is a fine, strong, most womanly nature in that girl, shut up and feeding on itself. One sees how it is. The tone of her home, the personal atmospheres of those around her, have all had, more or less, a coarse, materializing influence. The right kind of moral culture and stimulus would have made of that girl a high-souled, deep-hearted, under God, truly Christian woman. The fair, delicate face — it is that sort of delicacy which, without physical unsoundness, indicates an extremely sensitive nervous organization, — that face, even in its utmost brightness — and it has phases of such — is haunted to me always with some wistfulness and unrest. I can understand what it all means, too. There is an inward, half-conscious protest going on all the while against the sort of influences among which her life has unfolded. The whole spirit of the family is dense — gravitates earthward. And yet, as I said, there is the making of a noble woman in that girl, only there is a great deal against her at present."

"You must have studied her face closely, Fletcher," remarked Sicily, archly.

"Otherwise I should not be a good physician," answered the doctor, grave as any judge, though he caught the twinkle of a smile, and understood perfectly what it meant.

"Perhaps she will grope her way out into the light," answered Angeline.

"Perhaps — that is the best one can say. But the world, the flesh, and the devil are three strong forces, and in certain directions this new fortune will bring them to bear strongly on her."

"Is there nothing to be said of the rest of the family?"

"Of the father, not much. He is simply a successful speculator — a sharp, bustling man; and the mother is kindly, and fussy, and narrow; and the sons are of the Young America type, with great danger of making shipwreck on the new fortune; and of the daughters, one is pretty, showy, with a certain outward brilliancy, that has little depth, but tells in society; and the youngest daughter is a nice little school-girl — the mother's pattern, a good deal improved."

What reply the young ladies would have made to this rapid but discriminating analysis of the Darryll household, never transpired, for at that moment the housemaid presented herself at the door, saying — "There's an old woman and a young soldier down stairs, doctor. I told 'em it was out of your hours; but they said you'd see 'em, if I'd just say — 'Benjamin Stowell and his mother.'"

It had been the doctor's hospital day, a day always of exhausting work, both of mind and body. A look of weariness had hovered over his face, even in the restful home scenes and talk; but a sudden animation displaced all other expression, as he said — "Show them up here at once."

"Is it a private interview?" asked Sicily, for the name was new to both her and Angeline.

"No; stay, both of you, in that corner. It will be worth seeing, and it will not embarrass them if they do not observe you."

As he spoke, there entered the room a small, withered old woman, with a dark, thin face, all broken up now with some strong rush of feeling. She wore a new black silk dress and tidy shawl and bonnet. By her side was a sturdy, broad-shouldered, sun-browned youth, in army blue.

The doctor rose and held out his hand, with his best smile on his face, and his heartiest welcome in his tones. "I am glad to see you, my friends."

The little, withered old woman sprang forward, and gripped his hand in both of hers; her face quivered all over betwixt smiles and sobs. "Benjamin's going, doctor," she said, choking over the words.

"So I see; and you're making every man, woman, and child your debtor, by giving him to his country now, my dear friend."

The words did the poor old mother good. He could see, as he turned to shake hands with Benjamin, that she straightened herself up, the big tears a-twinkle on her cheeks, and the pride and tenderness together making an unutterable pathos in her face — "I couldn't let him go, doctor, without first coming round here to say good by to you. There isn't many a mother 'll give a finer-looking boy than that to fight for his country."

The young man's face flushed through its tan. "You won't mind what the old woman says, doctor, now I'm going off?" — apologetically.

"Ah, Ben, my boy, you'll mind it one of these days, when you get down there in the thick of the fight, and every word of love and praise will come back then, and be the sweetest memory your heart will carry," answered Dr. Rochford.

"He's your gift as much as mine, doctor," continued the old woman, entirely unobservant in her agitation of the two ladies in the shadow, who sat intently watching the scene — "I shouldn't have had my Ben to give to his country, if it hadn't been for you!"

"I shall have part and lot in one soldier, then. After your mother, remember me, Ben."

The private found his voice now. He grasped Dr. Rochford's hand —

"You needn't ask that, doctor. As if I could ever put you anywhere but next to her, when I remember that day you found me in the street, and carried me to the hospital, and nursed me through all that long sickness, and went after the poor old woman, and brought her down your own self to see her boy that didn't deserve it —"

"Don't say that now, Benny," put in the old woman, with the tears dripping down her withered cheeks. "He was a good boy, al'ays, doctor, and he'll go down to the fight with his poor old mother's blessin' on his head. It mayn't be much, but it's all she's got."

"I think it is more than honors or diadems," said the doctor. "May the old mother's blessing and prayer 'cover your head in the day of battle,' Benjamin!"

"Ah, doctor, you know jest how to find the right word to take the sore ache out of a body's heart. Mine had it at the thought of giving up my only boy, until I made up my mind to go with him."

"Going with him! Mrs. Stowell?" repeated the doctor, in amazement.

"Yes," a new resolution smoothing out the lines of the dark old face. "Benny's all I've got; and my post will be close to him, as long as we live. Other mothers have got boys down there that need tender nursing; and, though I'm an old woman, I've got strength left yet to bind up wounds, and carry cold water, and speak comfortin' words; and every single boy down in the army will sort of seem as if he was my own, now Benny's there, and taking care of them other mothers' boys will be kinder doin' it for him."

"That hospital work down there — I'm afraid it will be too much for you, Mrs. Stowell," said the doctor, doubtfully.

"It won't be half so hard as to stay away and think of what might be happenin' to him;" she reached up her hand and patted the thick, dark hair in a way that must have drawn tears from colder eyes than any of those who watched her. And the doctor saw that she was wiser than he.

There was no more time to spare. Benjamin's regiment was to leave the next day, but there was a touch of feminine vanity which drew smiles through the tears of both Angeline and Sicily Rochford, as the old woman drew aside her shawl and pointed to her black silk dress.

"You see, Benjamin wanted his old mother to look sort o' scrumptious, when he introduced her to the officers. He got all these new things with his bounty money," turning her back in order that he might inspect her new shawl, and the neat black bonnet, for each of which, the doctor, equally amused and touched, had just the appropriate word.

"Good by, Benjamin. Good by, Mrs. Stowell," wringing the hands of both, and kissing the old woman's cheek. "One of these days I may find you down there, for it seems to me that my work lies in the same direction as yours. And, Benjamin, remember your friend's last words. Be worthy of your God, your country, and your old mother."

The old woman straightened her bent figure as she took her stalwart son's arm, and so they went out — the old woman and the young man — to the war together.

For a while not one of those whom they left behind spoke a word. At last Sicily drew up to her brother, laid her hand on his shoulder, and said, —

"Tell us what that meant, Fletcher."

He did not seem in a hurry to do it then, and Angeline added, after a little, —

"We are waiting, Fletcher."

"In brief then, girls, some business took me one day last autumn down among the piers by the river. And near one of these I came across a young man in a sailor's garb, lying in a pool of blood. Either my pity or my professional instincts must have been arrested, for I leaned down and removed the tarpaulin which shaded his eyes. The face turned up to me was totally unconscious, and ghastly enough — a good, honest face, as I read at the first glance, although there was a strong odor of liquor about it.

"I saw the whole thing at once. A young sailor, just landed, had been decoyed into some of the dens that infest that part of the city, plied with strong drink, probably been robbed of his money, and thrust out in the end, to live or die, as might be. Some vehicle had evidently gone over him, for on examination I found his arm broken, his collar-bone fractured.

"To make the story short, I got help, and took the youth up to the hospital, and brought him back to life, though not to his wits for weeks afterwards.

"The injury and exposure produced inward inflammation, and when we got the better of that, the typhoid set in, and he

had a hard pull for life. I learned that my conjectures were correct. The lad was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow down in Maine. He had been smitten with a mania for the sea, but this his first voyage had cured him of it, and he was returning to his mother, with a resolution to go into farm work, as his father had before him, when he was decoyed into a miserable drinking hole, by some of the ship hands, and there was an end of his money, and, if I had not picked him up, of his life.

"The way that boy used to talk of his mother touched me. I knew she was looking for him night and day, now the vessel had got in, and I finally made up my mind, after getting her address, to go for her, as the son hung betwixt life and death, the chances for either seeming, to human vision, about equal.

"You see it was one of those cases where letters wouldn't do; besides, the old woman had never been fifty miles from home, and couldn't easily find her way to the city alone. I managed to take a couple of nights for the journey, and so didn't lose much time, brought her to her son, and for the end — what you have just seen relates it. My care has been rewarded a thousand fold."

"And you gave up two nights to find that old woman and bring her to her son, when no day ever allows you an hour for rest!" said Sicily.

"People have done greater things than that, without praise or reward," answered Fletcher Rochford.

"O, knightly heart and eloquent tongue!" said Angeline, fondly, slipping her arm around her brother's neck.

"Now stop, girls, stop just where you are," he said, positively. "If there is anything in the world that will spoil a fellow, that will make him vain and self-conceited, it's talk of that sort! The truth is, as Carlyle says, you women are natural worshippers, and it's your misfortune that your divinities are made of such dreadfully frail stuff."

The girls laughed merrily, and patted their brother on the

shoulder, as they stood on each side of him, but he kept on gravely for all that.

"I honestly believe that the females of my own household have done more to inflate my besetting sins, than all the rest of the world put together!"

"Why, Fletcher!" was the duet that now saluted his ears.

"It's the terrible fact. You and mother were always lauding me for things that deserved no praise, and if I hadn't guarded against these influences, I should have turned out a veritable coxcomb. I am not the stuff to stand such talk. I think very few of my sex are."

"I have never perceived any injurious effects, but as you insist on them so positively, Sicily and I will give you some doses of a different kind," laughed Angeline.

The doctor laughed too, pinching her cheek at this ambiguous threat; but then he said, —

"It is a serious matter, girls, and I believe this tendency of worship in your sex is one of the underlying causes of a great deal of marital unhappiness. You women make divinities of your husbands. Your worship inflates their self-love, their pride, and in the end develops them into tyrants.

"A woman when she marries a man ought not to merge her individuality wholly in his, but to strive with all the power of her affection to brace him where he is weak, to make of him, in short, a stronger, better, nobler man. That is her work and her duty, not to swallow all that he says and does, in a blind adoration, which in the end is wholesome for neither of them."

"I think," said Sicily, her bright face now as thoughtful as her brother's, "that you are right in the cases of many husbands and wives; but how can a woman's admiration harm one who, like yourself, always holds her so far above men?"

"It will take too long to go into the philosophy of the thing, my dear. The fact which I draw from my own experience is enough. However, I may have found my grain of leaven in that; for didn't I always know, in the midst of all your and our mother's praises of me, how far, come to the test, in char-

ity, in self-sacrifice, in quiet endurance, after the manner of your sex, you'd outshine any of my poor virtues? I always kept that thought before me. Look at that old woman, for instance, going down there to the hospitals, to give the remnant of her strength and her days to nursing the soldiers. There is something sublime in sacrifice of that sort. It makes me humble to think of it."

"And if it comes home to you, how much more to us?" answered Angeline. "I felt reproved and ashamed to see that withered old woman go out of the door so strong in her purpose of work and help, and I with my young strength staying behind, living from day to day my life of luxurious ease. My place is down there in the hospitals, too, Fletcher," turning her face anxiously to his.

"Not yet, my dear girl. There may be a time when I must let you go, if the war, whose end no man now can foresee, shall continue. But you are not wasting your life while you are helping and blessing so many others; and there is a chance of your breaking down in the hospitals during the heats of the summer, and the need there is not so imperative that you should run that risk."

"But you talked of going to the old woman, Fletcher. Surely, if ever a man's did, your work seems to lie at home."

"It is that thought only which has kept me from going before. But I am not certain about this. When one hears the stories of young, inexperienced, and ignorant surgeons, and the work they make of some of our brave fellows, one's blood goes up to boiling. I might save a few limbs from rough handling if I was down there."

The girls shuddered. The doctor saw that he had pursued this topic far enough. Before he started another, however, Sicily, who had remained silent during the last part of the conversation, came around to his chair, and leaning over it, said, —

"We must not be divided in our work. When you and Angeline go, I shall accompany you."

"It does not seem ready to our hand yet, so far as we can

see," he said. "When it is, I trust that none of us will shrink back." So the matter rested.

As they went out to tea, for Dr. Rochford never sacrificed health to custom, and would not patronize bed-time dinners even in New York, he said to his sisters, —

"I suppose it's time to think something about country quarters. Have you any plans for the summer?"

"Only in negations," answered Angeline. "I'm not going to any fashionable watering-places this season. If we leave the city at all, let us find some place where we can have freedom and quiet in our own way. Saratoga, for instance, and a civil war would be two vast inconsistencies."

"There is more harmony in the names than in the things just now," said her brother. "I know of a fine old place by the sea-shore, whose hostess is an aunt of a classmate of mine, where I think I might secure you snug quarters. Your toilets there will not be the supreme object of life, and you'll have delicious air, and glimpses, if you cultivate them, into the lives of the fishermen, both professional and domestic, for their homes are scattered along the shore; and you'll have, back among the hills, scenery of the wildest and most picturesque, and society, when you want it, of the best."

"O, Fletcher, that is the very place — let us go there!" cried both the girls; and Sicily added, "You will run up occasionally, and give us a sail, and help us gather seaweed?"

"You may depend on me whenever I can wrest out a day from my work."

And then the girls — they were young girls still, and of that sort whose youth is so deep that its springs will never fail utterly — went to weaving all sorts of pretty little projects for the summer. What bright little jests flashed and twinkled through the merry talk! What peals of laughter, what sparkles of repartee, in which each tried to get ahead of the other, and in which Fletcher usually formed the target for his sisters' jokes; although it must be admitted that the man was fully capable of defending himself.

This supper, at the close of the twilight was the happiest hour of the day. Here each showed its brightest self to the other, and whatever perplexed or disturbed was by mutual consent banished from the table.

Fletcher Rochford's profession necessarily entailed a great deal of care and labor on one who put into it so much of heart and soul as he did, and his patients included all classes, although his beneficiaries formed the largest of these, and the man used to feel, far oftener than he told his sisters, that if it were not for this home warmth, and rest, and brightness, he could hardly bear up under the varied pressure and the multiform duties of each day. With him, however, and with his sisters, in a large sense, the mirthfulness had a background of earnestness and gravity; perhaps the outward sparkle was all the brighter for the time on that very account.

And when at last the supper was over, and they had all adjourned to the small study again, he caught a gleam of moonlight on the carpet, and walked to the window. Standing there a moment, watching the stars in the May sky, Dr. Rochford saw a face at the opposite window — a finely outlined face, that, having seen once, held his memory always. It was looking up at the stars too. Perhaps it was the man's fancy, but it seemed to him that, even at that distance, he could detect something wistful in the gaze. Below there were brilliant lights, and people moving to and fro.

"What did that solitary watcher see there?" he wondered. "Had the stars yonder, and the moon, walking amid them in her white glory, any eloquent language of their Maker's power and strength — above all, and O, how much better than all, of His eternal love? Did the thought of the young girl, watching there, go up beyond all these, his visible signs set in the sky, to her Father's heart and home, towards which, or away from which, this softly-flowing night was carrying her, as it was all the world?"

All these questions, and some more, wandered through his mind as he stood there looking at the house opposite and the

face at the front chamber window. At last it went away; so did he, drawing the curtain.

"Sing something, girls," he said, resuming his easy chair.

"What shall it be, sacred or sentimental?" asked Angeline, turning over the music sheets.

"Sing one of our mother's favorites — that dear old —

"The spacious firmament on high."

Angeline's hands swept the keys, her voice took up the sweet old melody, haunted with tender associations to them, as wild flowers with sweet odors. Sicily joined her in a moment, and afterwards her brother's voice crept in, and the grand old words rolled down on a great wave of melody to the close.

CHAPTER X.

THAT John Darryll's fortune was likely to prove a bait to a certain class of suitors for his daughters, was a fact to which the shrewd speculator was sufficiently alive. Had he not been the possessor of a dollar in the world, each one of his girls had personal attractions sufficient to afford a reasonable prospect of eligible husbands, and, in some sense, their chances for future happiness might have been greater. It was certain that Mr. Darryll's acquaintance with men had not impressed him with a high sense of their disinterestedness, either in their social or business relations. Since the sudden acquisition of his riches, his opinion of the motives which dominated his fellow-beings seemed to have undergone an immense change for the worse, and he regarded it as a religious duty to impress his own convictions upon his family, especially upon his daughters, who needed, in his opinion, some safeguard against fortune-hunters.

You would have thought, to hear this man talk, that there was no such thing as real integrity, disinterestedness, magnanimity, to be found in the world—that all men in their business transactions, and in their daily living, followed selfishness, in its varied forms, as the governing law of their lives.

He did not wholly deny kindly impulses to his race; he even admitted the existence of occasional benevolent feelings in mankind; but come to the real impelling motives of every man's conduct, "get down," as he expressed it, "to the bottom of his life and acts, and you'd find one principle there, and that was self, whether the possessor was aware of it or not."

Rusha and her father often had warm verbal battles on this very topic, for she always stood on the defensive, for human nature at large, and maintained her side with a great deal of

zeal, inclining, indeed, rather too far to the romantic and utopian. Rusha and her father were always diverging in opinion, and yet his eldest daughter was rather the favorite with John Darryll.

This fact, indeed, was so far acted upon in the family that, if anything particularly disagreeable was to be revealed to him, if any domestic diplomacy was necessary to overcome his prejudices, or obtain his consent to some plan which would not be likely on first presentation to meet his approval, especially, if an unusual demand on his purse was required, Rusha was always deputed to accomplish the matter.

However her father might sneer about her "foolish, romantic, highfalutin notions," she had a way of putting home-facts and wants to him, which succeeded better than even that of her practical mother or less visionary sister.

Indeed he set a much higher value on his eldest daughter's abilities and information than he did on all Ella's showy accomplishments and brilliant superficialities. In all those things the latter excelled. She had a fine ear for music, and could sing and play better than most fashionable young ladies, so that her talents were always in requisition in a drawing-room. She could play euchre skilfully, she could dance charmingly, in all these social accomplishments fairly outshining her elder sister, who, in a certain way, was proud of and enjoyed Ella's gifts.

But Rusha was sure to be a favorite with everybody who knew her well. The fine, earnest face, the rare conversational gifts, the swift enthusiasm, always attracted the best men and women of the fashionable society whose doors John Darryll's wealth had swung open to his family, a society largely made up of what Carlyle calls the "Money-Bag Aristocracy," and whose gods were Wealth, Display, Position, and who worshipped this trinity of Divinities quite as devoutly as the ancient Romans did their whole Pantheon.

One morning, after a breakfast, during the progress of which her father had been particularly severe in his strictures on human nature, and Rusha had stood on the defence with a little more than her ordinary vehemence, she came up stairs to the

front chamber, which was a kind of general sitting-room, and stood by the mantel idly drumming her fingers on the marble, lost in some thought that made a dreary shadow on her face.

Ella was practising some new music at the piano, and for the space of half an hour no word was spoken betwixt the sisters. At last Ella laid aside her music, and rose up, turning towards her sister, —

“You know we are to go out this morning, Rusha. It’s high time to dress.”

“I suppose it is;” but there was no interest in her voice, and the shadow on her face had not cleared itself.

Ella turned and saw it.

“What put you out of sorts this morning, Rusha?” she asked, as though the fact was not an isolated one.

For a moment the elder sister did not answer. When she did, her remark hardly seemed to reply to Ella’s question.

“If I thought what papa said this morning was true, that all men were at the core mean, weak, selfish, that human nature was without exception the miserable stuff he makes it, I verily believe I shouldn’t want to live another day.”

“O, that’s the trouble, is it? I might have known one of your theories lay at the bottom of that dismal face. I thought you believed in the doctrine of total depravity, Rusha;” her smile just touched with a little not unkindly irony.

“In a sense I do; but not in the one pa does. You know how he reasons — that there is no such thing as real generosity, disinterestedness, integrity in the world; that all men, no matter what their professions may be, whether consciously or unconsciously, are alike governed by selfishness, and that this is the root-motive of all their actions. It always excites me to hear any man take such ground, and when that man is my father, it makes it a thousand times worse.”

“But why do you trouble yourself about it, one way or the other, Rusha?” asked Ella. “Do let pa hold his opinions, so long as it makes no sort of practical difference with any of us. These controversies always excite and make you unhappy. It’s so much better to let them alone.”

The mild, reasonable, half-expostulatory tone was of just that sort which would be likely to weigh most with the elder sister. She turned and looked at Ella with some regretful, half perplexed look, on her fair young face.

“But my opinions are a part of my life, Ella. I can’t hold them loosely, indifferently, nor have those whom I love best differ from me on points that are with me matters of life or death. I wasn’t made so.”

“Well, I’m thankful I was!” answered Ella, and there was something almost sympathetic in the way she looked at her sister. “It makes one so dreadfully uncomfortable to feel as you do. So long as people’s notions don’t come in contact with me, they may hold them, be they ever so absurd, for all I care. My philosophy is to take the world easy as I go along, and get all the pleasure out of it I can.”

There were times when talk of this sort had its influence over Rusha Darryll. How could it be otherwise! Its sentiment pervaded in some sense the moral atmosphere of her home; and although in another and higher phase of feeling she would have seen the essential narrowness and selfishness of Ella’s reasoning, — if indeed it could be called such, — it had force with her now. She was saddened and depressed with that talk with her father. There were moments when her highest convictions were swayed by the influences about her. This was one of them; and the troubled look held her face still, as she said, —

“Well, Ella, I think you’re right as to the comfortableness of the thing, at least. I sometimes wish I was like you.”

“Well, it’s easy enough to be,” considerably flattered by this concession from a sister for whose real intelligence and abilities, Ella, in common with the rest of her family, entertained a high regard. “What do you care whether mankind in the abstract are selfish, and all that talk of pa’s, or not? One can have, for all I see, just as good a time in the world.”

“But don’t you see that belief in the reality of goodness somewhere, is one of the great sheet-anchors of hope and faith? If all men are sordid and mean, or, at least, self-seeking at the

bottom, I don't see what is the use of any God, or any religion, or indeed, that there is any. The whole thing is a cheat and a lie."

"O, Rusha, you always use such strong terms!"

"Any weaker would not contain the truth. What I said was the only and legitimate deduction from pa's premises; and, Ella," her earnestness now chasing away the perplexity or half despondent apathy from voice and face, "one's opinions, beliefs, are the real touchstone of character. As a man thinks in his soul, so is he."

"Well, 'each man' will probably go on thinking and believing, for all you and I can do to prevent it," said Ella, with a good-humored laugh. "Fret not thyself over it, O, Rusha!"

Rusha smiled, but in this case you saw that the mirth did not go very deep.

"Your philosophy is, as I said, a very comfortable one, Ella."

"It has two merits, at least. It vexes nobody else, and lets one have a good time in the world." •

"But after all, Ella, such a philosophy never accomplished any good in the earth — never overcame a wrong, never righted an abuse under which humanity has groaned. It is a sort of philosophy which no high and noble souls of men or women would approve."

"Well, they needn't. So long as it satisfies me, that's enough. But come, Rusha, the carriage will be here before either of us are dressed; and these unprofitable arguments only consume one's time;" and she darted off, humming some lively notes of a song she was learning.

Ella Darryll's philosophy was, as she said, a very comfortable one, but it was of just that sort which has wrought mischief and misery, wrong and woe, through all the ages and generations of time.

CHAPTER XI.

THAT morning down town was a very busy one, for the next week the house was to be closed up for the season, the family exodus to Newport being arranged, not at all after the convenience of the household, but at precisely the time ordained by inexorable Fashion; so there was a great pressure of final shopping commissions, and all sorts of small business to be transacted.

Mrs. Darryll, with her own hands full, found it impossible to wait on her daughters' thousand and one little personal errands, and it was at last settled that the family should disintegrate, the mother and Agnes riding some distance farther up town to complete their list of purchases, while the elder girls, after finishing theirs, should join the carriage, this decision involving a walk up Broadway of something less than half a mile, at which Ella demurred at first, she having, of late, become too fine a lady for any pedestrian efforts; but Mrs. Darryll's limited time made her positive, and Ella was obliged to submit.

At last the multiform errands had been despatched, and the young ladies were hurrying down Broadway to rejoin their mother, when suddenly there came out from a dry goods store, a little ahead of them, a large, florid-faced, somewhat round-shouldered, elderly man, with a little, plainly-dressed, faded woman leaning on his arm, and behind them were two plump, rosy-faced country girls.

A single glance could take this people in, and fix their status, domestic and social. The man was a farmer; those brown hands of his had helped plough his own fields, and dig his own potatoes; that small, faded, kindly-faced woman on his arm was his wife, who would probably be much more at home in her dairy than in a drawing-room; and those buxom girls were

their daughters, whose faces certainly did not lack intelligence, if their manners did high social cultivation.

As Rusha's glance fell upon these people, she gave a little start and pause, another swift glance dived into each face, then she said, in a rapid, astonished tone, —

"Why, Ella, as true as I live, there are our old friends, the Bacons!"

It was Ella's turn now to start. She threw a solitary glance in the direction her sister indicated, a glance which took in the faces, figures, dresses of the whole four, —

"So it is, Rusha," in a low but excited tone. "Do make haste. I should die if they should recognize us."

There was little cause for apprehension on that score. The two elegantly dressed young ladies who swept past the country people, resembled in style and carriage so little the half-grown girls the Bacons remembered, that they could not be readily identified. Rusha quickened her pace mechanically, to equal her sister's. But it flagged in a moment.

"Hadn't we better go and speak to them, Ella? It seems mean to pass such good old friends in this way."

"Rusha, would you be seen on Broadway walking with those coarse, dowdy-looking people! At this hour, too, when everybody is out! The very thought makes me shiver!"

You must remember that Rusha had her social ambitions as well as her sister; that she had a large share of approbation which made her sensitive to the opinions of others; that, notwithstanding her loftier impulses, she was by no means above being influenced by appeals to her lower feelings of pride and vanity, and that she was at times desirous of ignoring family antecedents which an interview with these people would necessarily revive. So she kept on with her sister with some reluctance or irresolution in her face.

There was no question but all Ella said was true. The mutual recognition might involve a good many things, that, in their changed circumstances, would be awkward and disagreeable. Then the Bacons had not identified them, so no harm

could be done, and nobody's feelings hurt, by saying nothing and avoiding them. But then there flashed up before Rusha Darryll the old pictures of her childhood, the yellow, gambrel-roofed house at Mystic, that stood next to their own, and the smiling-faced little woman who used to come to the side window and reach down to her the small cake, warm from the little scalloped tin in which it had been baked for her.

She could remember just the flavor of that cake — none had ever been so sweet since; and she could fancy herself standing there by the side window again, her head just below the sill, and Mrs. Bacon's kind, motherly face smiling down on her, as she reached up her childish hands for the little brown scallop, and Rusha could see her own, little awkward fingers probing for the dried currants and caraway seed, that were certain to be deeply embedded inside. A simple picture enough, but somehow it brought the tears into Rusha's eyes.

And her old playmates, Lucy and Esther Bacon, the freckle-faced, frolicsome little girls with whom she used to go strawberrying down there in the fields that lay back of Mystic Pond. What a difference there was betwixt the fortunes of the old playmates now! Yet she knew by the bright, open faces, that the kindly hearts beat beneath them still, "a good deal better and truer than hers, though they did churn butter, and feed chickens, and milk cows."

And then there came a later time to the memory of Rusha Darryll, when a darkness that was like the shadow of death gathered over the little home at Mystic. Every child of the household had been attacked by virulent scarlet fever. Guy was an infant then, only a few weeks old, and his mother was feeble, and it was impossible to procure nurses, as the epidemic raged through all the country side. Then little Mrs. Bacon came forward and proved the stuff she was made of. Her own children, happily, escaped the infection, and she devoted herself day and night to her neighbors.

Rusha remembered how she had lain in that small crib wrestling with the awful fever and fiery thirst, when suddenly

a pair of strong, tender arms would lift her up, and she would nestle her poor little tired head down softly on Mrs. Bacon's shoulder, and be rocked to sleep there just as though it was her mother's.

The doctor said afterwards that "first-rate nursing did more than all his remedies to bring the little Darrylls safely through."

All this flashed across Rusha's thought in much less time than it must have taken you to read it. Then the girl's better nature rose up and scornfully rebuked her.

"Rusha Darryll," it said, "you know in your own soul that it will be ineffably mean and contemptible in you to ignore, simply because your father has made a fortune, those old friends of yours, who have proved themselves so faithful in your need. Don't talk about other people's weaknesses and snobbishness. You'll carry the consciousness down deep in your soul from this hour that you are weaker and meaner than anybody you despise. Sell your self-respect, will you, for fear that somebody may see you walking with honest, plainly-dressed people? That will be a pleasant remembrance to sting you all your life, won't it?"

Of a sudden, Rusha Darryll stood still. "I am going back to speak to the Bacons, Ella."

"Rusha Darryll, are you crazy, or a fool?"

"A little of both, perhaps; but I'm going. Tell ma I'll join her in a few minutes;" and she hurried off.

Ella sent after her an appealing — "Rusha, do come back — do be reasonable!" but she kept on.

"Mrs. Bacon, don't you know me?"

The farmer's wife looked up in startled amazement as the elegantly-dressed lady approached her with these words; but there was something in the eyes and the smile that seemed familiar.

"I can't recollect, but I'm sure I've seen your face before."

The four people stood still now watching her face with curious eagerness.

"If you have forgotten me, you haven't the name of Rusha Darryll."

"Rusha Darryll!" four voices, in an agitation of joyful surprise, shouted out the name. And right there in Broadway, each one — old father and all — took turns in giving her a real old-fashioned country hug.

"It don't seem possible you're the little girl I've held on my knee and told stories to," said Mrs. Bacon, looking at the girl with genuine tears springing in her eyes. "Ah, Rusha, what a fine lady you've grown to be!"

"We've heard all about the grand fortune your father's made down there at Darryll Gap, Rusha," here interposed Farmer Bacon, with his hand on the girl's shoulder, and a glow of pleasure all over his florid face.

"I wonder if it took you as much by surprise as it did us?" she answered, not knowing exactly what to say.

"I said to the girls when I heard it, 'The money won't spoil Rusha, I'm sure of that,'" added Mrs. Bacon.

Rusha was by no means certain that she deserved the faith of her old friend, but she was none the less grateful for it; and then she had a gantlet of questions to run, and not a few to ask herself, as the sight of the familiar faces revived a crowd of smouldering memories. But an interview on Broadway could not last forever.

"You'll come up and take dinner with us this evening?" she said, when she found that her friends' stay in town was a very brief one, compelling the occupation of almost every moment. "We shall all be so happy to have you."

Rusha Darryll caught her breath with the last word, thinking of Ella. She was conscientious enough to have put the general cordiality in a little different form had she given it a second thought.

But suspecting nothing of this, and a desire to meet their old neighbors combining with a very natural curiosity to see a style of living altogether beyond any experience of their own, the Bacons held a conference among themselves, revised some

of their plans, and ended by accepting Rusha's invitation to dinner, the utmost hospitality which their margin of time allowed them to receive.

When Rusha reached the appointed place, she found the carriage had disappeared. Perfectly certain that Ella was at the bottom of this, she took an omnibus up town, in no very amicable attitude of mind towards her sister. She reached home, and burst into the sitting-room, where she found her mother and Agnes, with their hats not yet removed. Her father was there too, having returned home by the middle of the afternoon.

"Well, I must say I think you treated me very handsomely to ride off and leave me to find my way home as I could!"

"Well," returned her mother, evidently mystified with the whole thing, "Ella said you wouldn't be along for some time, and that we were to drive on without you. I couldn't make head or tail to the matter, for Mr. Howe was along, and I saw by her look it was no time to ask questions."

"That young Derrick Howe?" inquired Mr. Darryll, who had opened his paper, but was evidently listening to the women's talk.

"Yes, father; he rode home with us, and is in the parlor now."

"Might be in better business," growled the head of the family.

"O, I see and understand it all now!" exclaimed Rusha, a good deal mollified towards her sister. "She must have met him after we saw the Bacons."

"The Bacons!"

"Why, yes, ma, didn't you know?—I came upon them all of a sudden in the street—father, mother, Lucy, and Esther!"

"Well, now, I am beat!" was Mrs. Darryll's rejoinder, as she resumed the chair from which she had risen.

Rusha was rapidly sketching the interview to her deeply interested audience when Ella came in.

"Well, Rusha, did you bring the whole family home with you?" a little sarcasm in her tones.

"No, but I made them promise to dine with us to-day. Your alarm was altogether unnecessary."

"Well, I expected they'd come along in force, and just after we parted I met Mr. Howe, and I should certainly have wanted the earth to open and swallow me up if he had come on us in the midst of that gawky country set. There wasn't the slightest need of your recognizing them."

The little altercation which ensued brought out the whole transaction.

"It would have been so contemptible to slight those kind old friends of ours, who have proved themselves such through so many troubles, that I should have felt mean all the rest of my life. I won't make a fool or a coward of myself because my father's made a fortune," was the sum of Rusha's defence.

"It would have been so mortifying to have had Mr. Howe, or any of our set, come upon us in company with that sort of people," was the pith of Ella's.

The latter found, on the whole, the sentiment of the family decidedly against her. John Darryll set quite as much value on his fortune as his daughter did, and was by no means indifferent to the increased social and business weight which it afforded him; but he had very little sympathy for Ella's absolute deference to the opinions of her set.

Mrs. Darryll, never quite certain of her own opinions and judgment in anything relating to the new sphere which she had been called so late in life to occupy, and uncomfortably conscious of her lack of early social culture, was easily influenced by her daughters on all questions of this sort. She would, no doubt, have been prevailed on to sacrifice a personal friendship to the new position which she somehow felt it a religious duty to sustain; but in this instance old memories were strong, and Rusha had put the whole thing in a light which strengthened one of the weaknesses of her mother's character, and that was lack of moral courage, and she came out strongly on Rusha's side.

"I shall be real glad to see Mrs. Bacon and the girls, and

talk old times over. I used to think more of her than any neighbor I ever had down there in Mystic."

"Well, I'm thankful that we're to have no other guests to dinner," said Ella, in a tone of resigned despair, as she unbuttoned her casaque. "I should certainly have invited Mr. Howe to remain had not I trembled at the thought of the company he might have to encounter."

"Look here, Ella," said her father, with unusual severity; "I wish you wouldn't quote that young man quite so often, or encourage his sticking round my house. As for his turning up his nose at the Bacons, all I've got to say is, they're a plaguy sight better than he is, with his airs and his laziness. The less you have to say to him, the better it will be for you, in more senses than one."

And this time, if John Darryll's words were ambiguous, the meaning of his tones was sufficiently apparent. A few minutes afterwards, as the girls were removing their hats, up stairs, Rusha caught a glimpse of her sister's face in the glass, looking gloomy enough. She at once surmised that her recognition of the Bacons was at the bottom of all this, and her remark was founded on the belief.

"Why, Ella, haven't you got over that yet? I didn't suppose you could be so absurd!"

"It isn't the Bacons so much; but it vexes me to hear pa come out as he did to-day on Mr. Howe. It's a shame; such a perfect gentleman, and so much admired everywhere!"

"Well, Ella, I must say that I sympathize with pa there. I could never imagine what you or anybody else found in the fellow to like. He's shallow and conceited; don't you see it?"

"No, I don't, Rusha Darryll," her voice almost as indignant as though her sister's speech were a personal affront — "I should think you'd be ashamed to slander him so. When one thinks, too, how his society is courted on every side, and that he could marry into the very first families in New York!"

A suspicion flashed suddenly across Rusha's thought. "Was her sister interested in this Derrick Howe? He had just those

qualities that would attract a girl of Ella's tastes, and there was no doubt that among the people whose opinions would be her sister's law, Derrick Howe was regarded as a "great matrimonial bargain."

Several small circumstances rose up to confirm Rusha's newly aroused suspicions. "The very idea of that man's being my brother-in-law!" thought Rusha; but she was discreet enough to keep her fear to herself. This was probably only a passing fancy on Ella's part, she reasoned, and it would be certain to vanish with the new conquests she would make this summer, for Ella was a good deal of a coquette — "I am thankful enough she will get out of his way before the matter grows serious," concluded Rusha, dismissing the subject from her thoughts.

The Bacons certainly had nothing to complain of in the reception which they met from their rich friends that afternoon.

Mr. Darryll, even, wrung the hand of his old neighbor with a genuine heartiness, and the meeting on the side of their wives was as demonstrative as it was sincere. There were tough fibres of old memories of joys and sorrows, running through a long highway of years, which drew the hearts of the women together, despite their changed fortunes.

I think that little informal dinner company was one of the happiest that had ever gathered around the table of John Darryll. It is true the guest on his right side used his fork for a nut-picker, and was evidently mystified by the finger-bowls.

But Mr. Bacon was a shrewd, sensible man, for all that, and had a sturdy independence that compelled respect; and his wife was such a kind-hearted, motherly little body, that it was impossible to criticise her; and the girls were bright, intelligent, and with a prompt tact that served them in place of experience. There was so much to talk of, too — old scenes to recount, new stories to hear and relate.

Even Ella gave herself up to the spirit of the occasion, and chatted and laughed merrily with her old schoolmates, whenever she could make herself heard betwixt Andrew and Tom, who kept up a side fire of jests with Lucy and Esther.

After dinner they all went over the house, with which the guests were fairly dazzled, except Mr. Bacon, who coolly inquired the names and uses of various pieces of furniture, into which Ella, without the shadow of a sneer, attempted to induct him.

After the survey was over, they all came back into the drawing-room, and Mrs. Bacon, establishing herself in one of the luxurious easy chairs, made her comments.

"Well, I declare, it almost takes my breath away; but yet, I don't know as I envy you, though I'm afraid it will put dreadful notions into my girls' heads," nodding and laughing towards her daughters. "Such a care as you must find it, Mrs. Darryll! It would be harder to me than my dairy at Berry Plains; but then I wasn't cut out for a fine lady."

"Berry Plains! Is that the name of the place where you now live?" asked Rusha. "How pretty it sounds!"

"I wish you'd come and see how pretty it looks, Rusha. It would do you a world of good to come out there and breathe the fresh sea air, and you should have a nice time, if it was under a plain old farm-house roof."

"Yes, do come, Rusha, dear, when the fruits are ripe," cried Lucy and Esther, simultaneously.

The country always had a charm for Rusha. "Perhaps I will," she added, "when we get through with the watering-places."

Then the girls went into an enthusiastic description of all the picturesque points in the vicinity of "Berry Plains," and made all sorts of pretty plans, if Rusha could only be induced to visit them.

"Mayn't I come too, girls?" interposed Tom, who had listened to the vivacious descriptions with a good deal of enjoyment.

"Tell him that depends on how he will behave himself," suggested Rusha, which advice was at once merrily acted on.

But Rusha gave two thirds of a promise to visit Berry Plains that summer, the invitation being afterwards enlarged to embrace the whole family.

"Well, one thing I must say," remarked little Mrs. Bacon, as she took her husband's arm after they had left the house — "there isn't a word of truth in all we've heard about the Darrylls being so set up over their fortune; they take the comfort of it, and who wouldn't? but it hasn't changed their hearts and feelings one mite."

"That's a fact, Jane."

"But O, pa — ma, wasn't it all splendid!" chimed in Lucy and Esther.

CHAPTER XII.

THE season had reached its climacteric when the Darrylls made their advent at Saratoga. Such a gay, bustling, rainbow-hued summer as they had had, full of changes, sights, and experiences, which had brought them new wisdom, mostly of this world.

They had led a giddy, butterfly sort of life at Newport, which the girls, especially Ella, had enjoyed vastly, and afterwards they went up to the White Mountains. Here there was a new revelation to Rusha. Brought face to face with the awful presence and glory of the mountains, everything else seemed to sink away from her thought and interest.

Her soul came up here to worship, and the eternal hills answered this girl. Their glory exalted, their calm strengthened her. The gay life at the hotels, in which Ella disported, could not persuade her away from the majesty and beauty outside. Up amongst the hollows that made dark-green gashes through the heart of the mountains—in the deep, cool silences of the wilderness—through all rough and rugged paths, searching for new passages and delights of scenery—where some mountain spring seemed to make a glittering trail of bloom over the stones—on the bank of some small lake that lay, like a great white pearl, in its emerald casket—under old, mighty trees, whose life had been one eternal wrestling with storms, wandered Rusha Darryll, her face gathering into it every day some new light and calm; for the God after whom her soul went groping blindly was nearer to her up here in the awful stillness of the mountains than He was down there in the giddy, feverish, crowded life of the hotels, where the rest of the family were absorbed in their varied aims of fashion and pleasure. Into

what paltry and insignificant proportions these used to sink when she looked down on them from her physical and moral heights! Mrs. Darryll was satisfied with the views from the hotel windows, and an occasional ride with a party of other ladies to the most popular resorts, while Ella was too much occupied with her toilet and flirtations to have time for anything beyond little party expeditions, where they all fluttered, and laughed, and sparkled in their gay dresses, and returned, bringing no sheaves with them. What had Nature to give such people as these?

With her brothers it was somewhat different. Young men are always fond of expeditions, and it was not difficult to impress one of these into Rusha's service for a morning's ramble, provided there was nothing of greater importance on hand.

The awful glory and burden of Niagara was Rusha's next vision. Perhaps the dissimilarity of their characters never discovered itself in sharper contrast than in the incidental remarks of the two sisters on that last night at the Falls.

"I am so glad that we have 'done' the White Mountains and Niagara, before we get to the Springs. We shall be able to *talk* about them now," remarked Ella, folding her laces complacently.

"I shan't," answered Rusha, curtly. "The Mountains and the Waters transcend all power of language in my thought."

So now the Darrylls were at the United States, and it was the second morning of their advent, and the family were gathered in the sitting-room after breakfast.

"Come, Ella," said Rusha, "let's go down and take a glass of Congress, and a stroll in the park. It's charming out there. The boys will go with us, too."

"This one can't," answered Andrew, twirling his cane, "for I've made an engagement to go over to the race-grounds to-day. Splendid show of horse-flesh there. Going along, Tom?"

"Can't, sir, this morning. I'm committed for a game of billiards."

"Go it while you're young, I say," interposed Guy, whose advice seemed on this occasion entirely superfluous.

"I should think you were going it," added Mrs. Darryll, with that slightly querulous tone which her improved fortunes had not vanquished. "The way we're making money fly here beats me. I'm actually afraid to meet your father when he comes up, with these bills — why, they're awful!"

"Of course," interposed Ella; "one can't come to the Springs for nothing. Pa may as well make up his mind to that first as last, and we haven't had a thing that we could possibly do without."

"I s'pose," continued the mother, adjusting the elaborate coiffure which became her matronly face, "that he might have stood all the rest, but having the horses at the Springs will make such a horrible bill of expense —"

"Now, see here, old lady," broke in Andrew; "there's no use in coming the economical dodge here. The governor must make up his mind to shell out on the horse-flesh, for we can't get along without it."

"That's so," added Guy. "Don't Rufus put our span through at a splendid rate, though! Ain't afraid to compare those horses with any on the ground, sir!"

"Ma," said Ella, with immense decision, "whatever else we give up, the horses aren't to be thought of. There's nothing *tells* at Saratoga like one's own private turnout."

"No, ma," subjoined Rusha, "there isn't, really; we must keep the horses as long as we stay."

Mrs. Darryll, who, in her own heart, felt a great deal of complacency over her elegant establishment, gave up the point; indeed, she had, all this time, no serious intention of relinquishing the carriage, although she thought the suggestion might possibly act as a wholesome restraint upon the tendencies to a very lavish use of money in both her sons and daughters.

"And now, Rusha, that matter is settled, what are we to wear at the ball this evening! You know it is to be the most splendid affair of the season, and we haven't so much as our hair-dressers engaged!"

Rusha sank down into a chair, with her old, annoyed look, which there was danger would perpetuate itself in her face.

"It's nothing but dress, dress, dress, from morning until night; I'm sick of the very name!"

"Well, what in the world does one come to Saratoga for, I should like to know, except to dress and make a show? You can't expect to go mooning round as you did at the Mountains; and you know, Rusha, you think just as much of looking pretty as any of the rest of us."

"Of course I do; only I wish the process, for securing such a result, wasn't quite so formidable a one."

"Well, for my part I think the trouble pays."

"Well, I'm not certain. There's the difference."

"Ella thinks it pays," said Guy, whose personal comments were often a source of annoyance to his second sister, "when there's some smart young men round to be taken down, and there'll be lots of them to-night, you may depend!"

"I wonder if they will be cut and dried after the same pattern as those we've met already. If they are, she's welcome to them," said the elder sister, in, it must be confessed, not a very amiable tone.

"Rusha, how disagreeable you are this morning! I wonder what sort of man would suit you!"

"One, Ella, that a woman could look up to with respect, honor, reverence, if there are any such men in the world, which I very much doubt."

"I think," said Ella, "that it would be just like our Rusha to fall in love in some romantic, absurd fashion, such as one reads of in a novel, but never expects to find outside of a book; to get smitten, for instance, with a wandering minstrel, whom she would fancy a grand hero, or something of that sort."

"If by wandering minstrel you mean a hand-organ player, I must say that I never felt particularly attracted towards those who have thus far crossed my experience," laughing in spite of herself.

"Well, I used that word merely for want of a better one. It

would certainly be in keeping with the whole tone and tendency of your ideas to marry some singular, visionary, romantic character."

"I know a man who would suit Rusha, and he is neither 'singular, visionary, nor romantic,'" added Tom, getting up, and lounging towards the door.

"Who is he, Tom?" asked Rusha, with interest.

"I'll tell you some other time;" and the boys went out together, one to the race-course, the other to the billiard-room, the third—to use his own expression—"in quest of any fun that turned up."

A most animated discussion ensued betwixt the trio of girls, for even Agnes was to attend the ball, and Rusha was soon as deeply absorbed as her sisters in laces and ribbons, and the varied paraphernalia which the evening festivities demanded.

In the course of the morning, however, a circumstance transpired which gave her a good deal of uneasiness. She was in her own room, searching among her trunks, when there was a tap at the door, and the girl entered.

"Here is a letter for you, Miss—"

Rusha lifted up her head.

"O, I thought it was Miss Ella," and the girl would have withdrawn, evidently somewhat disconcerted.

"She has only gone out to match some ribbons. Give me the letter, please, and I will see that she has it on her return."

The girl hesitated.

"But Miss Ella said I must be sure to give it into her own hands."

"I'll be responsible, if there's any blame. Let me have it."

The letter was mailed from New York. The handwriting was not familiar; but all at once it flashed across Rusha, with the force of conviction, that this letter was from Derrick Howe. It dropped from her hands on the table, as though it had burned her. Could it be that Ella was maintaining a surreptitious correspondence with this young man?

She recalled the suspicions which she had so easily laid to

rest before they left home, and since that time Ella had had some foolish flirtation constantly on hand, which made her sister fancy there was no danger of her concentrating her interest, for the present at least, on one individual.

Ella was extremely fond of admiration, and the showy, brilliant girl certainly had attentions enough from gentlemen to stimulate vanity less active than hers.

Neither had Rusha been wanting in these, for, in a very different way, she was quite as attractive as her sister; and she was quite as susceptible to admiration, too; only she was too earnest ever to be a successful coquette. If people interested her, whether men or women, she was certain to show it; if they did not, she was not good at disguises.

"But could it be," she asked herself, "that her proud, imperious sister was really attracted towards this Derrick Howe? What a storm there would be if her father suspected it! The man had seemed from the beginning to be one of his aversions, and Rusha thought that of all the silly, conceited coxcombs that followed in Ella's train, this man was to her the most disagreeable. Not that he was a fool certainly, but something in him repelled her. Still, other women did not think so—women of Ella's style. What should she do?"

While she was reflecting, Ella suddenly came in, and Rusha spoke—perhaps not very discreetly, but on the impulse of the moment—

"Ella, here is a letter which the girl brought in during your absence, and which I made her leave with me, quite reluctantly on her part. I see by the handwriting that it is from Derrick Howe. I am shocked to find that you will allow this when you know how it would vex pa."

"He asked me if he might write, and what could I tell him?" answered Ella, her face crimson, and annoyance and apology about equally distributed through her tones.

"I don't think it would be difficult for me to find an answer," replied her sister, with a great deal of severity.

"I suppose not; but *you* sympathize with pa's unjust dislike of Mr. Howe."

"Well, Ella, I would not have believed you would have done anything so underhand, for I know that this is not the first letter, and that you must have answered the others."

Ella did not deny it, as Rusha half hoped she would.

"O, Ella, Ella!"

There was dismay and grief in the elder sister's tone. It troubled or touched the younger.

"Now don't fret yourself, Rusha, about the matter. I'm not in love with Derrick Howe or any other man; and I've got plenty of strings to my bow, and mean to have, for some time to come. I'll promise that I'll stop the correspondence at once, if you'll agree to keep silent this time."

"You will promise solemnly? Otherwise, Ella, it would be my duty to let pa know."

That prospect was not agreeable. Whatever hold Derrick Howe had obtained on Ella, it was not strong enough, as Rusha saw, to defy her father's anger, and the latter fell back on the old fancy that, with Ella's nature, other interests would absorb this one.

So each sister gave her promise to the other. Whether Rusha had acted wisely, she lived to question; but that was when other events threw greater light upon this one.

CHAPTER XIII.

If you know what fashionable life is at Saratoga, you will understand what the next three weeks were to the Darrylls. It was their first season there, and each member of the family went, heart and soul, into the whirl of gayeties, dissipations, and amusements which the time and place inspired.

A large part of the former was necessarily consumed by elaborate toilets, and for the rest, what with late breakfasts, and daily drives, and promenades to the springs, and concerts, and balls, time never hung heavy on the hands of any of them. While this summer's experience had imparted the finishing touches, the Darrylls—at least the juvenile and feminine part of the family—were now fully fledged butterflies of fashion: each one had fairly profited by her opportunities and experience, and would no longer awaken any suspicion of having climbed suddenly up the social ladder to occupy an unaccustomed height.

The season was drawing to its close, and people began to talk of leaving, and Mrs. Darryll, on whose health the unceasing round of gayeties began to tell somewhat sooner than on her blooming young sons and daughters, said to them one morning when they had assembled in her room, as was customary, for a half hour's lounge and discussion after breakfast,—

"I must say I'm getting tired out with all this endless whirl, and shall be glad enough to get home again. I wrote to your father he might look for us back next week."

"I s'pose we've got to go, because one never could think of staying after the season closes," said Ella, with a yawn; "but really, if it wasn't for that, I should be in no hurry to get home."

"Nor I," piped in Agnes. "I think Saratoga perfectly splendid."

"Confounded place for bleeding a fellow, though. Haven't they all learned the ropes here?" rejoined Andrew, with an unction which proved he was speaking from personal experience.

"O, it's awful—perfectly awful to think of!" added Mrs. Darryll, in a tone that was partly pathetic, partly solemn.

"Now, Andrew, how could you start mother off on that track? You know what she is when she gets to going there," said Ella, in strong admonition. "Rusha," changing the subject with her prompt tact, "I must say your blue silk looked finely in the ball-room last evening."

"Don't speak of ball-rooms," was the impatient rejoinder. "I'm sick of the very thought of one."

"O, something gone wrong again?" asked Ella, as though it was the most natural thing in the world with her sister.

"Mother," asked Rusha, turning about suddenly, and speaking with that straightforward abruptness to which they were all accustomed, "do you believe there really is a Devil?"

"Why, child, what a question! Of course I do; the Bible says so."

There was an explosion of laughter on all sides, the bright, hearty mirth of the young voices sounding very pleasant, so much so that it persuaded Rusha to join in it; but her face was grave enough a moment later, when she said,—

"Well, if there is one, I think we must all be going straight to him!"

"Why, what have we done?" asked Agnes, her blue eyes wide open with amazement.

"That's just what I was going to ask," added Ella.

"I shouldn't suppose it would be necessary to inquire," was the unsatisfactory response.

"Yes it is; if you've found out we're booked to that individual, you ought to let a fellow know, so that he can turn about," added Tom, at which Agnes and Guy tittered, and his mother said, reprovingly,—

"Tom! Tom! don't make fun of serious things."

"What have we all done?" said Rusha, taking up her sister's

question. "Haven't we been, throughout this summer, living a life of selfish enjoyment, of every extravagance, and dissipation, and luxury? Haven't we consumed our days and nights with dress, and frivolity, and gayety of every sort, and all this time that awful darkness of civil war has been hanging over our land? A few hundred miles from here our brothers have been fighting, and bleeding, and dying for us. They have been starving in Southern prisons—they have been languishing in crowded hospitals—they have been sinking in long, dreary marches by night and day, to buy us liberty. O, how often in the ball-room, when the music and merriment were all at their very highest, have I seemed to see the haggard, reproachful faces of those sick and dying men, and heard their voices calling to me, 'Is it to buy liberty for such as you that we are laying down our lives?' I have envied the women who have left their homes and sacrificed every comfort and pleasure of life to go down as nurses in the hospitals, and day by day the voice of my own soul has said to me, 'You are unworthy, Rusha Darryll, of your sex or your country, to waste your time and thought in miserable ways like these, while your land is in her awful struggle of life or death. Brave men are dying, women are made widows, and little children fatherless, for such ungrateful things as you!' And I have felt so utterly mean and degraded that I have almost wished the earth would open and swallow me up, and wondered that God did not once more rain down fire, and sweep off from the face of the earth everybody who takes part in gayeties and revels in a time like this!"

The earnest voice had held every listener. The words she spoke now had been seething in Rusha Darryll's soul more or less ever since she had left home; and now, when they could be no longer repressed, they broke out strong and fervid as the nature in which they had so long dwelt. They could hardly fail to impress for the moment her audience. Whatsoever of right or generous instinct was there must respond more or less to the truth that young, eloquent voice put to each

so strongly. For a moment after she ceased there was silence; and Guy broke it, drawing a long breath, and expressing in his rough way the impression that his sister's speech had made on his boyish nature:—

"I tell you, though, Rusha's some pumpkins when she gets to talking. She makes one feel small, boys."

Ella was the first to rally. "Well, I always said this war was an awful thing, and I pity the men who have been dragged into it. But then what good will it do for us to sit at home in sackcloth and ashes, and not take a moment's comfort of our lives because the people are at war with each other? As for hospital nurses," and she gave a little shudder, "you know we could never come to that, Rusha."

"I'm not so certain, Ella. But granting that we have not the years and experience indispensable for these, we could give our time and means to our country, instead of expending them on ourselves and our dresses."

"Well, if you will set the example, perhaps I shall be stimulated to join you in good works, only," a little afraid that Rusha might take up her proposition, "you know that you and I do not agree as to the necessity of this war. I think, for my part, it's the duty of those who brought such a dreadful state of things upon the country to see us out of it, and in my opinion the only way to do that is to make terms with the South."

"And who are the men who, as you say, Ella, brought this war on us?"

"You know well enough—the Abolitionists and Agitators, with all that eternal harping on slavery."

Rusha opened her lips to speak, and Ella saw that she had imprudently thrown down the gauntlet to an antagonist who generally got the better of her in all discussions of this sort, when her mother came authoritatively to the rescue:—

"Now, girls, stop just where you are. You know to what this talk always leads, and you'll get straight into a wrangle about politics, which, in my opinion, the less women have to do with, the better."

"I haven't any opinions to-day," replied Ella, very willing to be let off so easily, and getting off the lounge with a yawn. "The truth is, I was out so late last night that I'm completely used up this morning."

"O, Rusha, I forgot, here's a letter for you," said Tom. "It came yesterday."

She seized it eagerly, as all young girls do letters, opened and read it, looking up at the close:—

"It's from Esther and Lucy Bacon—dear girls!—with a most pressing invitation for me to come on and pass a week or two with them before I return to New York. Such delightful rides and rambles and all sorts of good times as they prophesy! Now, how pleasant it would be to drop down there in that old farm-house, and have a little rest and careless freedom before one goes back to the city!"

"Shut up away off there in that old country farm-house," remarked Ella, "I should think it would be an intolerable bore," shrugging her shoulders.

"I'm sure I should enjoy it immensely, if one of you boys would only go with me."

"Excuse me," said Andrew, "I've other fish to fry."

"How long is the journey?" asked Tom, reflectively.

"Less than a day, Lucy says. O, Tom, if you would only go now. How delighted they would be!"

"And, Tom, I say, you could help those pretty country girls churn the butter and milk the cows—capital sport!" rallied Andrew, who now affected fashion and foppery in every form.

"Don't mind what he says, Tom;" and Rusha's hand dropped coaxingly on the shoulder of her favorite brother. "You know we could have a glorious time there;" and she went on, dilating in glowing terms on the varied delights which the prospect of a visit to Berry Plains afforded, until Tom was fairly won over into a promise of accompanying her.

"I'm not going to be bullied by Andrew," he said, stoutly enough, but with an inward consciousness that he would have

to stand a merciless fire of running jests from his brother about "blooming country milkmaids," and all that sort of thing. "If you go, Rusha, I will, hang me if I won't."

"O, ma, do say I may go, just for a week or two — it will do me so much good, and Mrs. Bacon will take nice care of me," appealed Rusha.

"Well, I'll see what your father says when he comes up Saturday night."

Rusha knew her point was gained then.

But on what very small hinges turn the great destinies of life! Rusha Darryll little suspected that interview on Broadway with the Bacons would in some sense shape and color all her future.

CHAPTER XIV.

"MRS. BACON — Lucy — Esther — we've come!"

The clear, glad tones rang like a bell through the stillness of the old farm-house, and there ensued a sudden rush of females from kitchen and dairy to the front hall, where the mysterious announcement disclosed itself in the shape of Rusha and Tom Darryll.

There was no doubt of the welcome that followed — noisy, hearty, gleeful, with old-fashioned hugs and shaking of hands that were pleasant to see, and in the midst of it Tom declared that he "must come in for his share," and was actually kissing Lucy and Esther on either cheek before they comprehended what he was about, when it was, of course, too late to prevent his audacity.

"Girls," laughed Rusha, "you know that he was to come only on condition that he behaved himself, and I assure you that he will have to be constantly reminded of his precarious foothold here."

"Yes, Tom, we shan't allow you to forget it, if you go on in this way," answered Lucy, glancing archly over her shoulder as she led the way into the pleasant, old-fashioned parlor, where her mother was already unclosing the blinds.

"Why didn't you write and let us know you were coming, in time, Rusha dear, so that pa could meet you at the depot?" asked Mrs. Bacon.

"Because Tom and I made a plot to take you quite by surprise; and such a jolting as we have had over the hills for the last hour in that lumbering old stage! I enjoyed it immensely, though, and whenever we came on a particularly rough section, I told Tom, for his consolation, that it was only a faint

reminder of the sort of travel our grandfathers and grandmothers had to undergo."

"Yes, girls," laughed Tom, "Rusha took it like a heroine, and the harder the jolt the better she seemed to like it; but I must say, without intending any disrespect to my grandfathers and grandmothers, that my bones were decidedly in favor of modern travel."

There was a general laugh here, and when Mrs. Bacon could be heard, she inquired about the health of the universal Darryll family.

"All well and flourishing, thank you, after the Saratoga siege, which isn't a light one. We disintegrated at the steamboat yesterday morning, Andrew and Guy undertaking to see ma and the girls comfortably down the Hudson, while Tom and I beat a retreat to you. Are we too late for the berries?"

"O, no, indeed," put in Lucy and Esther, simultaneously. "The berries are just in their prime, and the peaches and the pears —" Here one voice drowned the other, and in the midst of it all Mrs. Bacon bustled off to the dairy, on hospitable deeds intent, and left the young folks to make their plans for future picnics and exploits, which they did, chatting away like so many magpies, with peals of laughter at the droll remarks of Tom, who really outshone himself on this occasion.

And at last Mr. Bacon, who had no suspicion of all which had transpired, having been engaged since dawn in clearing out some woodland, returned home, and was despatched by his wife, without any previous enlightenment, to the parlor, which he entered in his shirt sleeves; and if his welcome to his guests was not quite as demonstrative as his wife's, it was equally hearty.

What a transition was this life at the farm-house, this hearty, rioting, careless home-life, to that gay, luxurious, artificial one out of which she had just passed! Rusha entered into it with an intense relish, which proved there was something sound at the core of her nature. She put those little, soft, white hands of hers into all sorts of dairy work, with that pretty, half child-

ish earnestness that was so characteristic of her. She was now energetically turning the cheese-press with Mrs. Bacon, and now she was assisting Lucy in the revolutions of the churn, and then, with her little sun-hat aslant on her hair, she was eagerly searching among the hay, with Tom and Esther, for freshly-laid eggs.

Saratoga set no such roses in her cheeks as those mornings among the hills — mornings whose dewy freshness was stung through with all fragrant wood-scents, and with the fine salt savor of the sea, for the old Bacon homestead stood only about three miles back from the shore, down near the southeastern curve of the Massachusetts coast.

Rusha's enthusiasm was of a contagious nature, and her companions were bright, merry, responsive, "with not quite so many airs," as Tom privately expressed it to his sister, "but every bit as intelligent as any of your Newport and Saratoga belles," to which Rusha heartily assented.

So the young folks passed most of their time out of doors in all sorts of berrying exploits, and improvised picnics, and searches for picturesque points, while Mrs. Daggett remained at home absorbed in the preparation of meals, whose sight would have tempted an epicure, and to which the tired and hungry party were certain to bring ample appetites at last.

Rusha's face came out now of all the weariness and dissatisfaction which it so frequently carried. Bright, fresh, eager, it had never looked so pretty as in these days, when there was nobody to admire it except farmer Bacon and his family.

It seemed as though everything conspired to make this visit complete. It was in the early September, and the days wore their garments of autumn sunshine, the air swung through its vast censer all sweet perfumes, and every hour seemed to have been let right down out of heaven, with the joy and glory lingering yet upon its face. And in this merry, simple, wholesome life, in this beauty and glory of the year, Rusha's soul came out of the doubts and bewilderments which made so much of her life a perplexity and a discord.

In a way that she knew not of, the human heart of His child drew nearer her Father as she went out day by day into the great tabernacle of nature which He had set as a witness for Himself in the earth. In a blind, uncertain way it is true, she went up to her worship, but mind and heart were both soothed, gladdened, strengthened, and somehow she found herself dreading a return to the world she had left behind her; and this feeling discovered itself in some plans they were laying, one evening after tea, for the next day's expedition.

"Lucy," said Esther, "we haven't taken Rusha and Tom over to the cave yet. It's a real natural curiosity, and, indeed, the chief attraction to strangers in this vicinity. Suppose we go over there to-morrow. The berries will keep until next day."

"Where is this cave, Esther?" inquired Tom.

"Not more than four miles from here, down among the rocks by the shore. The scenery is wild and interesting all the way, so much so that there are several private boarding-houses in the vicinity always filled with people from the city."

"Then that's all I want to know of the cave!" supplemented Rusha.

"What does all that mean?" asked Tom, for his sister had enforced her words by a grimace that drew a laugh from her friends.

"It means that I abhor and detest people from the city in all shapes and ways — that I'll run away from them as I would from snakes and bears. I've had enough of them this summer."

Lucy patted her friend on the shoulder, thinking this was another of Rusha's pretty whims, which the whole family was ready to indulge to any extent.

"There's very little probability of our meeting anybody on the rocks, and if we should chance to come upon a party it would not be difficult to avoid them."

"But what sort of a cave is it?" pursued Rusha. "Has it a history, or a witch with burning eyes and wild hair, or a tradition of a bear, or any pleasant savor of dark mystery and tragedy clinging to it?"

"Nothing of the kind," laughed Lucy. "It's the most innocent cave imaginable — just a little, dark, square room, made by the overhanging rocks; and at the entrance there is a magnificent view of the sea and the long line of coast, and you can see the fishermen's nets laid out to dry, and their little houses scattered all along among the rocks, and their wives netting seine in the doorways."

This picture attracted Rusha. "It would all be new to us, Tom," she said. "But the cave would be so much more interesting if it only had some dark mystery or tragedy associated with it."

"Let us go there and make one," said Tom; and so it was settled, half in jest, that they should visit the rocks next day.

The hearty, out-door life necessitated early bed-time, and such sound, sweet sleep as Rusha had been a stranger to since her childhood; but that night, before she reached her chamber, she turned back, rubbing her sleepy eyes wide open enough to find her way down stairs.

"Mrs. Bacon," she said, startling that energetic house-keeper as she was putting out the lights, "you know I am to be called up in time to take my first lesson in milking to-morrow morning."

"So she is — bless her heart!" said the warm-hearted little woman, as she turned round and caught a vision of a very fair face, in the wide old doorway, with the fingers rubbing the sleepy brown eyes, just like a tired little child's; and while she looked the vision was gone.

CHAPTER XV.

THE next day seemed another living glory and joy let down out of heaven. Only the autumn holds such. The earth was entranced with it. Such radiance of sunshine; such joy of winds in leaves and grasses; such sail of purple and silver mists along the heights of the mountains; such a vast praise and worship of sky and earth as is sometimes sent us as a witness and prophesy of the glory that shall be.

The little party started off after an early lunch, in farmer Bacon's country wagon, this having superseded, for the excursion, the family buggy, which, though more respectable, was less capacious. Tom managed to whisper his sister, as he handed her into the wagon, "What would Ella say to see us now? She and mother must be taking their airing down Broadway about this time."

A vision of the elegant "turnout," with its liveried coachman, rose before Rusha, and she glanced at the old wagon and ancient mare, which had done veteran service betwixt the farmhouse and the mill, and the contrast forced a laugh from her, in which Tom, guessing his sister's thought, joined heartily.

"Never mind, Tom; I think we're the happiest — at least I wouldn't exchange."

"That's so," said Tom, gathering up the reins.

Rusha stood there, all alone, looking out to sea, for while Tom had gone off with the girls to gather sea-weed among the rocks, she had returned, drawn by some irresistible spell to this point. Behind her was the dark, narrow entrance to the cave — around her the bare, gray headlands, and beyond, the long, brown curve of beach, and the green glitter of the waves, as they ran up the sands. The pleasant laughter of the others came up to

Rusha Darryll, as she stood there among the rocks, looking off at the wide, blue flooring of ocean, and thinking, with some new thrill of gladness and reverence, of Him who had laid those vast timbers of its waters, and shut the doors, and set the bars and bolts of the mighty sea that strove and wrestled vainly beneath her. Do you see her as she stands there against the bare, gray background of rocks, all aglow in the sunshine, her small hat drooping on one side of her head, her lips and cheeks full of a new, bright bloom, with a warm glitter of sunlight in her fine brown hair, and her dress, some soft fabric of delicate brown tints floating about her, making altogether a striking picture against the gray of the rocks?

Suddenly the wind brought round to her a most unwelcome sound of human voices close at hand — merry voices, one of which rose above the rest, with a kind of laughing impatience. "I wonder if there is anything to see worth such a rocky pilgrimage as this!"

"Look there, and tell us," answered another voice, and then — Rusha had no time to run away — several figures came around the sharp angle of the rocks — there was a sudden start and recoil on their part — she looked up, and met a brown-bearded face, without any suspicion of the singular impression she was making there, alone, in that attitude on the rocks — a pair of dark eyes searched her a moment through their glasses.

"Is it possible — have you dropped from the clouds, Miss Darryll?"

"Dr. Rochford?" surprise and pleasure just balancing themselves in her glance and smile, as he gave her his hand.

"Of all places in the world, this is the last one in which I should have expected to find you."

She evidently relished the young man's surprise so much that she was in no hurry to enlighten him, and in a moment he had sufficiently recovered to turn and present his sisters to her.

It was natural the ladies should regard each other with some curiosity. Rusha thought that the doctor's sisters fully sustained Tom's definition of what a real lady was, and they were

prepared to feel an interest in her derived from their brother's estimate of the girl.

"Now, Miss Rusha, am I to be illuminated or not, as to when and how you got here?" inquired the doctor, as soon as the presentations were over.

"Not quite yet," with a little playful defiance in her smile. "The ocean should have your first regard."

They were the sort of people to understand the fine appreciation of the scene before them, which this remark indicated, and for a few minutes that followed, there were no words spoken that went outside of the picture of sea, and sky, and line of coast, but standing still, and silent for the most part, each drank in the power and beauty of the view. Then at last Sicily turned, and with that bright playfulness which was, in its way, as attractive as the sweet gravity of her elder sister, she said, "I suspect our brother is consuming with curiosity, and I confess to sharing it, Miss Darryll."

"Then, dearly as I love a mystery, I will not keep mine any longer. Instead of dropping from the clouds, I came here in the most prosaic, old-fashioned country wagon."

The ladies glanced around them at the jagged headlands.

"O, I mean as far as the little grove of pines at your right. I scrambled up the rocks with the rest of our little party, and tried to go down with them when they set off on a search for shells and sea-weed, but the view here compelled me back again, and there it stands, my defence and apology."

Her hearers evidently regarded it as an ample one, but the doctor still pursued, —

"You are visiting in this vicinity, then?"

"O, yes — I beg pardon — my account must seem very incoherent. When the time came for our family to return to New York, after a summer crowded with all sorts of gayety and sight-seeing, I took a fancy to run off to Berry Plains, to which some old friends and former neighbors of ours had removed. I wanted a taste of real, old-fashioned, homely country life, which I was certain to find here, and I persuaded Tom into accompanying me."

"Thank you. I am sure Fletcher feels relieved now," added Sicily, archly.

"And now, won't you catechise me in turn, Miss Rusha, else I shall have an uncomfortable feeling of having been intrusive?"

"If you put it in that light, certainly; not admitting for a moment that I share your feeling of curiosity."

The doctor then proceeded briefly to inform Rusha that he had established his sisters for a month in a quiet boarding-house, less than two miles off, where they had found plenty of sea-bathing and country air, and quiet, they not taking kindly to fashionable haunts, or gayeties of any sort that summer, while he himself managed to run away to them every moment that he could spare, and a good many that he could not."

After these mutual explanations, a talk — informal on all sides — ensued. Under different circumstances the Rochfords and Rusha could not have become so well acquainted for months; but mere conventionalities were of course out of place, on those lonely headlands, with that vast illuminated missal of sky and earth spread out before them.

Talk it was of a sort that Rusha relished keenly, and that brought out the brightest mood of the girl; talk that played and sparkled mostly, and yet that every now and then was shaded with some seriousness, as is always the case with people who have thought and felt deeply and conscientiously, and that was full of pleasant allusion, association, suggestion.

At last there was a shout from voices below, and in a moment Tom and his companions panted up the rocks.

"Rusha Darryll, such a search as we have had after you! You are the most provoking — why — why, doctor!" as he caught sight of the physician, and the ladies beyond.

Great was Tom's amazement, shared by Lucy and Esther; but a few explanations despatched the whole matter, and the party thus reënforced made a descent to the beach, as hilarious a little company as you can imagine.

Two or three hours later, Rusha said, looking off at the west where the clouds burned like one vast mountain on fire, "O,

dear, to think there must come a sunset to the very brightest days of one's life!"

"And a sunrise to the darkest night!" added the doctor, who happened to be standing near her at the moment.

She turned upon him the brightness of her face. "O, thank you! I shall try and remember that some time—some time when I have need of it."

"I have been thinking," said Angeline Rochford, looking up from a little collection of shells and sea-plants which she had been assorting with Lucy and Esther Bacon, "that it was not possible you could ever have any need of that sort."

Some feeling slipped like a shadow over the light in the girl's face. "If you knew," she said, with a faint ring of sadness through her voice, "you would never think so again." Then she turned, with that bright, swift earnestness which always startled people until they came to know her well. "Are you always happy—content, Dr. Rochford?"

"I? O, no, certainly not."

"But in an hour like this, when one gets away from all the bewilderments and confusions—above all, the dreadful affectations, of life, and comes face to face with the peace of Nature, one cannot help wishing that such a day and such a mood would last forever. That is why I wished there could be no sunset to this one."

"But you remember what our poet says in that psalm of his, that it seems to me must ring down through all the ages, whatever other voices are lost—that enjoyment is not the great purpose and aim of life; and, certainly, if we go seeking that alone, we shall never find it."

"But *I* do," answered Rusha, turning and sending her gaze far out to the sea. "Yes, I am sure that is, get to the bottom of it, the real dominant purpose and aim of my life,—Enjoyment."

Here Tom, who happened to be standing near, broke in with—"What an odd little freak that is, Rusha, to be always slandering yourself! I don't think it looked very much like living

for 'enjoyment' when you gave us all such a lecture at Saratoga for having a good time generally this summer, while the country was in the midst of this war. You ought to have heard her, doctor; I haven't got the thunder out of my ears yet."

Dr. Rochford had a smile of rare and beautiful expressiveness. He bent it down now on Rusha's face, in a silent approval, that gratified her in the midst of her embarrassment.

"Tom, that talk was intended solely for family ears, which you ought to have remembered before alluding to it here."

"Well, it was a great shame that the world should lose the benefit of it, anyhow."

Here Tom was interrupted by a call from the ladies, who wanted his assistance in securing some aquatic plants that had drifted in with the tide close to the shore, and so the doctor and Rusha were left alone there on the sands, with the narrow white broidery of surf rolling up close to their feet.

After a moment the doctor spoke to his companion as he would not probably have spoken to many young women. "I thought I was familiar with the sea—with its language, its moods, its silences; but this summer it has some new voices and meaning for me; I think we shall read many things, even in Nature, clearer by the red glare of this civil war."

Her gaze went far out over the waters, until it touched the distant horizon. Her face wore that wistful, half-childish look, which was, perhaps, its sweetest. "I do not know," she said, half communing with herself, "that the war has brought me any new revelations; I have not come near enough to it, either myself or through any one that I love."

"But your country?" he said.

"O, yes; I forgot that. I remember, the day papa came home and told us how our flag had been fired on at Fort Sumter, that latent love of country which suddenly fired my whole soul was a new revelation to me."

"I suppose it was to all our countrymen and women worthy of the name. And then that time served to show us, too, what mysteries we are to ourselves and to one another."

"Everything is a mystery to me," with some doubt haunting her face and voice. "The longer I live, the less I find of that which I love most."

"What is that?" asked Dr. Rochford.

"Realities."

"I understand, Miss Darryll, because I have been in that same mood of doubt and unrest. It is a dreary one enough."

"And you are out of it now?"

"Yes; thank God — yes."

"In what way — by what means?" her questions going, as Rusha Darryll's always did, straight to the bottom of the thing.

"It would take a long while to tell you; only, there are a few grand, central truths, in which, if one's soul be thoroughly anchored, whatsoever else is dark, mysterious, vague in this world, ceases, in a great measure, to harass and perplex one. Do you believe this?"

She brought her gaze in from the sea. "I don't know what I believe, or whether I believe anything at all," she said, in a dry, hard tone, that might have deceived one who did not know what lay back of it. "I am all afloat in creed and faith, which are the deepest things of every human life."

"I have been through all that," said the doctor; "I wish I could help you."

She looked up at him, touched by the sympathy in his voice, with some doubt and beseeching pathos in her face, and the sunset threw down a sudden glory upon the delicate features and flushed lips, and upon the fine dark hair, in which the sea winds were at play; and something in the doctor's words, and in the scene where they stood, with the solemn pomp and glory of the sea, and land, and sunset, drew Rusha out, as in other circumstances would not have been possible.

"My belief, if I have any," she said, "depends upon my moods; and that is not the sort of religion I want, but something strong, steadfast, mightier than life — something that will abide with me in my happiest hours or my saddest — something that will strengthen and uphold me through every grief, and

loss, and change of life, and that will stay with me when life itself goes out."

"You are right there, Miss Darryll. Religion must be all that to each one of us, or nothing."

"But is there any such religion?" she asked, with a vehement earnestness which told how vital a thing the question was to her. "I hate cant, hypocrisy, superficiality; but above all things I loathe and abhor them most in religion, or what people call this, and here, it seems, more than anywhere else, I find them."

"But all the wrong, and weakness, and imperfection, does not affect the vital question of the reality — of truth, and of our need of it," he said.

Again she sent her wistful eyes far out to sea. "But it shakes my faith in it. It is easy and pleasant to believe to-day, with all the strong joy and grandeur of this scene about me, that there is a Father, all-wise, tender, and loving, watching over and caring for us every moment, and it seems easy and pleasant, too, to trust and love Him now. But I know from experience that this will not last — that there will come times when all faith and belief will forsake me; when doubts and fears will roll in upon me like cold, chilling mists, and I shall go drifting about in the dark, with no hope, no anchor for my soul."

She was repeating here so completely a phase of his own experience, that if Fletcher Rochford had been describing it himself, he would not have found need to alter a single word.

"You will perceive that I am better prepared to comprehend your feeling, Miss Darryll, when I tell you that it seems to me there is no chill and gloomy abyss of doubt and scepticism which I have not sounded. I know all the unutterable anguish of that plaint of the soul when it wanders through the thick darkness, asking — Is there a God, and where is He?"

She sent her startled look up into his face. She felt that in some sense his struggle had gone into depths where hers could not follow him.

"But these things of which you speak — what removed them?" she asked, softly.

"They passed away when I learned what His love was — what it meant. That is the one only sufficient answer to all our doubts and fears, to all wrong, mistake, and grief," his smile strong, joyful, beautiful.

There came a sweet solemnity over the face of Rusha Darryll, as she listened; then her voice broke out again, in a kind of passionateness — "But if He is this great, tender, discerning Love that you say, why does He not take pity upon all the wrong, and grief, and anguish, that go on under His eyes? At times the sense of it, and the pity I feel for others, almost drive me frantic. Think of the wickedness, the oppression, the suffering, and misery there are in the world! What does it mean? Why does He not help it, if He has the power and the will?"

"You are asking the questions which have tried sorest the faith, in all ages, of those who have believed in Him. We cannot fathom all the counsels of our God. But it will all be made right and clear at last. The clouds lie dark betwixt us and Him, but beyond, He will justify himself. And we need not doubt that the Love which has done and suffered so much for us, would save us from all unhappiness, if it might be. Into that sublime, central, precious truth, that He loved us and gave Himself for us, all doubts, questioning, fears must be absorbed."

Again Rusha Darryll's gaze went, mournfully, far out to sea. "I wish I had this religion," she murmured; "I wish I knew what it was. But I only see that it is the one great question of life — the only thing that gives it purpose or meaning, and without which it is at best a vague, empty shadow, at worst a burden and a misery." And looking at her, Dr. Rochford saw the tears aslant on her lashes. A feeling of ineffable pity for the struggling, thirsty, perplexed soul by his side, came over him, a great longing to help and comfort her; but after all, One only could do that perfectly.

"I think this longing and this knowledge of your need are the best prophecy that you shall find the truth; but it is likely

to be slowly, through frequent paths of mistake, and uncertainty, and fear. Life is a system of development, and you cannot expect in yourself or look to others for perfect individual illustrations of the power and beauty of religion. Cant, hypocrisy, inconsistency, that terrible trio of stumbling-blocks, you must always encounter. Neither can you look for complete results in a world where everything is so limited and fragmentary; but take broad outlooks; see what Christianity has accomplished for the world; see what it has wrought for the nations where it is more or less a living, vitalizing force, and what it has done for your own sex. And then I know that one soul enters far into the spacious roominess of one message in the Bible, and that another passes it by, entering at some other door, where are food and shelter; but there was a time when these words came to me with a wonderful force and depth of meaning — 'If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine.'"

He saw how she hung upon his words. No danger of her thinking this man was not sincere to the core — that he had not lived what he said.

At that moment voices among the rocks came down to them, the rest of the party having been absorbed in inspecting and assorting their varied plunder of land and sea. As they were making their way to the others, Rusha turned back with that child-like abruptness of hers, —

"What have I been saying to you, Dr. Rochford? I shall be frightened when I remember it."

"If you knew me better you would never have said that;" and again that smile of his, entering her eyes like light.

They found the party in a frolicsome mood, which, though a strong, was not a jarring contrast to their late talk.

"Fletcher," said Sicily, shaking her parasol at her brother as he approached, "we have entered into a plot against your liberties — so you may as well resign yourself to fate."

"At least let me know what that is to be?"

"You are not going home until next week."

"What will become of my patients?"

"What will become of you if you take neither rest nor recreation?" retorted Angeline. "You know you will break down if you go on at this rate. I put it to your conscience."

"When you have, as Sicily says, plotted to deprive that of all liberty in the premises. Ah, Angeline, such talk does not come with a good grace from you!"

The laugh was against her this time; but the young lady seemed to enjoy it quite as much as though it had been somebody else.

Further investigation developed various small aquatic and forest excursions, which had been projected by the ladies and gentlemen of the house where the Rochfords were stopping, and also an invitation from Lucy and Esther Bacon to Berry Plains, of that hearty, informal character which had pervaded the whole afternoon, and which, under other circumstances, would have been impossible on either side.

The doctor was fairly forced into acquiescence, insisting, however, that he had been deprived of the dearest right of an American citizen—his personal liberty—and that his sisters had, without due process of law, constituted themselves his keepers, an office which they merrily affirmed they were willing to hold the rest of their days.

The invitation to Berry Plains, backed by the Darrylls, was at last accepted, although other engagements precluded the specification of any afternoon for the visit; but Mrs. Bacon's active hospitality was never disconcerted by any advent of guests, either day or night.

When these things had been satisfactorily arranged, the fading light warned all parties that it was time to set about returning. That a mutually agreeable impression had been created, was proved by the comments of either party as it drove home.

"Well, Rusha," said Tom, urging along Farmer Bacon's placid old mare, "don't you think I was right about a real, genuine, through and through lady?"

"Yes, I do, Tom," with a great deal of unction. "She did credit to your perceptions."

"I think Dr. Rochford and his sisters are perfectly delightful people," added Lucy and Esther.

"Really, Miss Darryll is extremely interesting. I must admit that I was not prepared, even after what you said, Fletcher, to find so much in the girl—a lady, too, without a particle of 'mushroom' about her."

"Girls," said the doctor, thoughtfully, as their carriage entered the shadow of the wood, "I think here may be a providential indication to you. Certainly your society might be wholesome in many ways to Miss Darryll."

"What did you and she find to talk about so long, down there on the sands?" asked Angeline, a little archly.

"Nothing to jest about, girls. But, as I said, your society and influence is of the sort that she needs. She has reached a point now, when higher social and moral forces, when people who occupy a different plane, and are influenced by another set of motives than those which she sees habitually in the persons around her, will be likely to have a strong and lasting effect."

"Don't you think Fletcher takes an unusual interest in Miss Darryll?" whispered Sicily, putting her lips under her sister's hat.

"He always does, you know, in anybody that he thinks he can benefit."

"No, he doesn't, by any means, I'm sorry to say," leaning back until his head lay a moment in Angeline's lap.

After the laugh which followed, Sicily said, pulling his hair,—

"We might have known you would overhear us. You always had the ears of an Indian."

"They are the equivalent of my short-sightedness, I suppose," he answered, lifting himself up again.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE vicinity of Berry Plains to the transient home of the Rochfords afforded every facility to any missionary projects which they might entertain for the behoof of the Darrylls. It is hardly probable, however, notwithstanding Fletcher's suggestion, that benevolence was the controlling purpose in the minds of any of the party on the afternoon in which they rode over to the Bacon homestead.

As they drove into the wide lane that bounded the orchard and the rambling garden beyond, voices rang through the still summer air, young, eager, bright, with little gleeful interludes and shouts of laughter, which sounded so pleasant that they stopped and listened for a moment.

It was easy enough, even from that distance, to distinguish tones and words, and to define the general position of the speakers. They were evidently having a high frolic over some fruit gathering, one of the number being mounted in a tree, where he was bent on fun of some sort, regardless of the merry expostulations of the others. And amid all the rest they could hear one voice, one laugh, clear, full, and yet with a sweet under-gurgle in it, like a child's, or like some little brook, half of whose waters have tripped up among stones, and found their way out again — a laugh that told its own story of sweet, sunny deeps of nature, which nothing had soured and darkened yet; there might be other sides, not so fair nor lovely, but there was this one also.

The gentlemen and the ladies smiled, listening to the mirth. "I think," suggested Angeline, "it would be as well to drive on, Fletcher. It seems too bad to interfere with their frolic."

"We need not, my dear; only let them see that we know what fun is, too."

"For my part, I feel just like joining in it," added Sicily; and probably the doctor did, as he drove on.

There they were — Tom Darryll mounted in the highest branches of a gnarled old peach-tree, while on the grass beneath were scattered Rusha and the Bacon girls, gathering the fruit which that mischievous youth, who had them entirely at his mercy, evidently enjoyed dashing down at intervals in a way that was hardly agreeable to unprotected heads. A picturesque little trio — even Rusha had her sun-hat off, and the sleeves of her light muslin tucked up, so that wind and sun could do their best with her complexion, which in truth was considerably browned since her advent at Berry Plains; but this was more than compensated for, by the rich glow of cheek and lip, across which the fine brown hair was blown.

"There, Tom!" as another shower rattled down through the leaves — "I do believe it was your intention to break all our heads, when you proposed getting up into that tree!" laughed Rusha; and one of the hardest peaches thumped her forehead.

"When he comes down, Rusha, which he will have to do some time, we'll take our revenge," said Esther.

Rusha made a threatening pantomime, with her doubled fists, to the figure, rocking in provoking indifference up there among the branches, and then — caught sight of the carriage and its occupants.

Her position was certainly anything but dignified; but she seemed fated to come upon the Rochfords in unexpected ways — it was too late to hide herself — she must make the best of circumstances.

"Good afternoon, ladies!" saluted the doctor, as he removed his hat, and announced himself to the party.

Lucy and Esther were dismayed into a moment's silence, and so Rusha recovered herself first.

"Good afternoon!" brushing the hair away from her eyes; and before she could say more, their guest was amongst them, shaking hands with each in that cordial way which was sure to set them at their ease. "Hullo, Darryll! want any help up there?"

"I want some *down* there, for the girls have been threatening my life when I descend!" laughed Tom, as he hurried down the tree.

By this time Rusha had made her way to the carriage, a little confusion and apology in her face, which the ladies' greeting put to flight even before the others joined her.

"If you'll drive around to the house, we'll meet you by the time you reach the front door," proposed one of the girls.

To this the doctor would by no means consent. He affirmed that he should immediately return with his sisters, unless they were allowed to join in finishing the peaches and the fun, and the Misses Rochford made a point of it before they alighted.

Thus reënforced, the whole party returned, and the new guests entered thoroughly into the spirit of the occasion. If the Bacon girls were disposed to a little shyness at first, the manner of the Rochfords soon dispelled it, and the merriment suffered no abatement.

The doctor ascended the tree with Tom, and there was a double pelting of fruit, until the girls actually cried for mercy, and throughout all, lively jests, laughter, raillery, gave a new zest to the work and play.

"I haven't seen you turn boy like this for a long time, Fletcher," laughed Angeline, when the young men descended the tree, and they commenced a general assault on the great pile of peaches, whose ripe gold was streaked with the hot crimson, which the summer's long passion of kisses had left there.

"When a man forgets how to go back into his boyhood, beware of him, Angeline! You may be sure something hard, and dry, and selfish has crusted over his manhood," replied the doctor, selecting the choicest of the fruit, and distributing it among the ladies.

"And how is it with woman?" asked Sicily, in her bright, pert way.

"Of course, the rule works both ways. A woman that has forgotten her girlhood, with its freshness, its hopes, its dreams, its aspirations — it were better for that woman if she had died."

"And its romps!" laughed Sicily, and she darted off like a deer, sending back a little defiant laugh to her brother, for she had a family renown for fleetness.

The doctor could not fail to accept this challenge, and started after her. The race was very amusing to those who watched it with shouts and clapping of hands, for Sicily had so far the advantage at the start that she managed to elude her brother for some time, darting in and out among the apple-trees of the old orchard; but at last he caught and brought her back, flushed and panting.

After this, matters progressed swimmingly. The whole party was in an exceptional mood of hilarity, such as the day and the circumstances inspired; and when each was regaled to the full, they all had a ramble, with plenty of side issues of romps through the orchard, which wore its century of summers in a bounty of verdure and gnarled, mossy trunks, bounded by a little blue band of a stream, suggestive of rod and line to the young men. They discovered that they had one enthusiasm in common, and the talk converged in a mutual agreement on a fishing sail the next day.

Meanwhile, the Bacon sisters had slipped off to the house, to acquaint its hospitable hostess with the new reënforcement of guests; and so Rusha and the young ladies were thrown upon each other's society — an opportunity which all parties seemed inclined to improve. The natures of the three women were too earnest for a continual sparkle. The talk soon touched on books, art, and a variety of kindred topics.

How Rusha enjoyed it! They seemed to have many tastes in common here. And then she contrasted their fresh, earnest, suggestive thoughts with the silly gossip and barren chatter of the young girls who formed their set at home. It was Rusha's misfortune that she had not been thrown into the society of thoughtful, cultivated men and women; and the Rochfords were quite a new revelation to her. Their thoughts entered hers like light and perfume; she felt their finer atmosphere.

She fancied that this was the sort of life after which, through

all its mistakes and defeats, her soul was constantly reaching—the ideal of grace, culture, earnestness, which her nature in its best moments discerned.

At last the two young men, having settled piscatory themes and projects, joined them, and they went up to the homestead, where a beaming welcome awaited them from the hostess.

They would only give real pain by declining her cordial invitation to supper, and having the tact to perceive this, the Rochfords accepted the hospitality in the spirit in which it was offered.

The dark, old-fashioned parlor, with its cool curtains of clambering vines, brought a soberer mood to them all. Something suggested the war—a topic that always brought a shadow to Rusha's face.

"It seems to me," she said, "that I am haunted everywhere by the far-off echo of cannon, the rattle of musketry, and all the dreadful sounds of the battle-field, and if they are drowned, for a little while, in some mood of fun and frolic, they come back again and seem to reproach me."

"That is what I was telling you this morning, Fletcher," added Angeline.

"And I must tell Miss Darryll what I did you—that no battle-field ever reproaches us for the innocent enjoyment that makes us love our country more and serve her better when the time comes."

"Good!" exclaimed Tom. "I wish I'd thought of that when Rusha came down on us at Saratoga."

"But that was not 'innocent enjoyment,' but expensive dissipation, Tom," said his sister.

"And there lies the whole difference," added the doctor. "The poor fellows down there will not fight any the worse for their innocent songs, and jokes, and home stories in camp."

"Then you really think, doctor, that a man may laugh, or crack a joke occasionally, and be a Christian?"

This question, coming from Tom, surprised Rusha, for

though the tones were light, something in the manner showed that he was interested.

"Of course I do. I believe that religion is something that dwelling in a man's heart shall make it sing with gladness and gratitude. Why, the very winds play—the grass under our feet—the flowers that smile amongst it—the leaves of the trees—the streams that go singing to the sea—the stars overhead, shine, and bloom, and leap with the joy of life. And God's voice speaks to us by day and by night through these, His messengers, if we will only listen, understand, and believe."

"But," said Tom, surprising Rusha yet more as he pursued the subject, "you know what a dreary, doleful, long-faced affair most folks make of religion. The very name's enough to drive a fellow off."

"And it is a shameful libel on the thing, Tom. I do not deny, I most confidently assert, that as true religion must soften and ripen any character, so it must make one serious, earnest, thoughtful; but gloomy, stern, ascetic—never; and I cannot sufficiently deplore or condemn the custom which invests Love and Faith with such unattractive features. How many of the young this false doctrine drives into wrong ways of belief and practice, God only knows."

"I remember when I was a small chap, and went to the infant school, my teacher required me to learn, as a punishment for every little negligence or misdemeanor, certain texts from the Bible. To this day, and probably for all my life to come, I cannot entirely get over the old, repulsive sensation with which I used to sit on the low, hard bench, and try to hammer those verses into my memory."

"The old association wraps their beauty and tenderness partly away from me in a cloud. I shall never enter into their sweet meaning as I otherwise should. I have been defrauded of their wisdom and comfort by that mistake of the man who no doubt meant the very best thing."

Of an almost painfully susceptible temperament, Rusha had, from a child, been either terrified or depressed when her mother

talked of religion. Mrs. Darryll had, what Andrew very irreverently called a "pious face;" and she always assumed it when she talked "good" to her children — a face which there was no mistaking — a long-drawn, solemn, dreary countenance, which was certain to drive them from the room, if they could invent any excuse for getting away. But was not this other, the religion that Rusha wanted, she asked herself — something strengthening and sweetening life — something that could enter into its playfulness even, and give that a fairer innocence — something real and vital, imparting some deeper joy to her gladdest hours, touching her darkest ones with its illuminating beam — something constant, changeless, eternal, that should stand her through all loss, and bitterness, and grief — something that should give meaning and sanctity to the life that even now lay sometimes so heavy and weary a burden upon her youth — something that should touch with a beam of eternal glory all the duties and relations of life, and soothe, if it might not utterly banish, the dreary sickness of that feeling with which her soul often echoed the cry, wailing down through all the long centuries of human life, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity"?

Such thoughts as these thronged through Rusha's soul, and the doctor half divined them, as she sat there with her silent, absorbed face.

But at this moment, the entrance of Mrs. Bacon, flushed, from her kitchen, with her spouse arrayed for the occasion in his Sunday broadcloth, gave a new direction to the conversation.

The host at once fell into a talk with the doctor, which took the conversational highways, from the weather to the crops, and from that to the war, and the two men were deep in this when supper was announced.

The long table laid in the cool, old sitting-room, with its snowy linen and ancient blue china, certainly did credit to Mrs. Bacon's remarkable domestic faculty. On this occasion she had almost surpassed herself.

Such a bill of fare as that table presented! And the people

who gathered around it brought to light biscuit, and daintily browned chicken, to golden cake, to honey, and fruits, and cream, such appetites as mountain and sea air impart.

And when the pleasant, home-like meal was over at last, Sicily laughingly averred that her brother had set an example of breaking his own dietetic rules — a fact which the gentleman admitted, but laid the responsibility at Mrs. Bacon's door. And in this mood they returned to the parlor, and had what Rusha called an "evening without a flaw."

The doctor discussed politics for a portion of it with the farmer, and then gave the company some interesting passages from a month's voyage which he had once made on the Nile; and Angeline Rochford, who had unconsciously deepened the impression that their first interview had made upon Tom, chatted with that youth, and Sicily and Rusha had their own little quiet talk, in which the Bacon girls mingled, although it had a tendency to get beyond their depth.

Some time during the evening, Mr. Bacon, recalling some reminiscence of the past, turned suddenly to Rusha, saying, "That happened the year your father took that little grocery down by the pond, Rushy."

Tom's eyes met hers — a little amused smile flashed betwixt them. There were times when such an *exposé* of family antecedents would certainly have embarrassed Rusha, but this evening she was in her highest mood, and she was certain, moreover, that this disclosure would not weigh one feather with the people to whom it was made.

With a quiet simplicity, which had in it no shadow of disturbance, she turned now to Sicily Rochford, remarking, in explanation, "When we were children, papa kept a small grocery store in Mystic, and the Bacons were at that time our nearest neighbors and friends."

"Brought up as she had been," said Sicily, afterwards, in commenting on this circumstance to her brother and sister, "there was something morally sublime in that speech. I wanted to turn round and kiss her the moment after she made it!"

After the guests had departed that evening, Rusha and Tom sat alone a little while.

"Tom," said Rusha, breaking a little silence, "these people are not like those that make our society at home!"

"That's a fact. I told you so the first time I saw Miss Rochford. I know the real article when I meet it."

"Their whole life, thought, aims, are so different," pursued Rusha. "They are not absorbed in dress nor display, nor running after position, nor any of those petty things which are the idols of our set. It is refreshing to know such people. I have had a glimpse into a higher, truer life, and it makes me sick of mine."

Tom's silence was a kind of acquiescence. Men and boys do not analyze their feelings and sentiments as women do. Suddenly he broke into a laugh —

"What do you 'spose Ella would have done, Rusha, when the 'country grocery store' leaked out?"

Rusha joined in merrily.

"What *would* she, Tom! I can imagine her look of horror! But, somehow, I didn't mind the least — I might, though, under some circumstances."

"The Rochfords wouldn't think the less of us for anything of that sort," proving that Tom had read them wisely. "There are people of real good sense for you."

"Yes; but, Tom, it isn't their good sense, nor their breeding, nor their cultivation that makes them just the sort of people they are. It's something that underlies all these."

"It's what the doctor meant this afternoon when he called it Religion, I suppose, but I must say it's a different article from any I ever met with before under that name."

"I must say it is, Tom."

"Now, this kind of religion," continued the young man, "seems something that needn't make one sour, or gloomy, or wretched, but better and happier every way. I hate cant or superstition, but I believe these Rochfords have got the genuine stuff."

"Tom, you mustn't speak so irreverently."

"I don't mean to be irreverent. It's only a fellow's way of talking, you know."

There was again a little silence.

"But, Tom," resumed Rusha, "it is not a slight thing to attempt to improve one's character — one must be in earnest to the very death, and then won't succeed without God's help; but I think, after all, a genuine religion, as you call it, is the only thing worth living for."

A conversation of this nature had never before transpired betwixt the brother and sister.

If the Rochfords had at heart the moral welfare of the Darryll family, they surely had in Rusha and Tom its best and most susceptible elements brought at this time within their influence.

"I've been thinking," said Tom, after a little pause, "that a fellow of my years ought to have some object in life; but you know there's so much always going on in the city, and it's hard to swim against the tide."

"I know," certain from his manner that something was coming.

"But I've made up my mind that when I go back I'll cut loose somehow, and set about preparing for college in downright earnest."

"O, Tom, that is glorious! I am so glad to hear you say it," suiting the words with a kiss, which, though not returned, was evidently acceptable.

And this decision to which the youth had come, though owing in a large sense to Rusha, might still be traced more or less to the indirect influence of the Rochfords, although Tom was quite unconscious of this.

The conversation was terminated here by the entrance of some of the Bacon family.

During the remainder of Rusha's stay at Berry Plains, she only met the Rochfords briefly; once at a little out-of-the-way meeting-house, where she had insisted on going because

there was a stone wall that intervened, and she had said to Tom, with her usual enthusiasm — "O, it will be so delightful, Tom, to climb a stone wall in going to church!" a remark which elicited peals of mirth from Lucy and Esther Bacon.

Tom and the doctor had their sail together, which, so far as the fishing went, proved a decided success. Perhaps the doctor availed himself of the occasion to throw some other less tangible bait into the sea of his young companion's soul, deeper than that vast one around them which one day should give up its dead.

However that might be, Tom reported to Rusha that he had had capital sport, and that the doctor was a glorious fellow; but when, on further inquiry, he repeated a part of the talk that had occupied them, she found that it did not all relate to their sport.

The Rochfords and Darrylls had only time afterwards for an exchange of brief calls, in which the young ladies pledged themselves to renew the acquaintance which had had so informal a commencement, Angeline laughingly remarking that remoteness of residence interposed no obstacle to their meeting.

A day later there came a letter from Ella, urging and demanding Rusha's immediate return. "The season promised to be unusually gay, if it was war times, and she wanted to consult Rusha about their wardrobes, and a variety of other collateral matters."

"What in the world keeps you in that dull, dreary, out-of-the-way corner of the world, shut up in an old farm-house, passes my comprehension!" wrote the younger sister; and she supplemented the burden of her letter with various urgent messages from her mother, which, being transmitted through Ella's medium, doubtless lost nothing in emphasis; and to set the matter beyond all discussion, fortified the whole with a post-script, which at the last moment she obtained from her father — "What are you up to, Rusha and Tom, off there in Berry Plains? Come home, children, come home." A rapid, half-

legible scrawl at the best, but it was honored at sight on 'Change now-a-days.

And it was evident enough that, however they might laugh about Rusha's fine-spun fancies and vagaries, the family always felt the loss of its strongest element in her absence.

Rusha looked sad as she folded up the letter. It almost seemed to her that she would like to stay at Berry Plains forever. But she was mistaken here. When Nature should put off the pomp and glory of her present mood, and she should be thrown more upon herself and her companions, that eager, active soul of Rusha's would have hungered for larger life and wider horizons than the old farm-house and its kindly inmates afforded.

Two days after this, the old carryall stood at the gate ready to convey the Darrylls to the depot. When the time of leave-taking came, Rusha stood at the door with her wistful face and the tears in her eyes.

"I've been so happy here," she said, "that I dread to go out of this sweet calm into the tumult, and jar, and fever of the great city; but there is no help for it."

And the Bacons — mother and daughters — stood in the door and watched the old carryall over the hills, and as long as they watched they saw the wistful face looking back.

And so Rusha went out from Berry Plains, and there was mercifully hidden from her sight the great fires of trial through which she would have to pass in the home that awaited her.

CHAPTER XVII.

"WELL, girls, I must say this is a little too much. Just look at that clock!"

One morning, some five months after Rusha's return from Berry Plains, Mrs. Darryll saluted her daughters in this fashion as they entered the dining-room. The little bronze clock on the mantel afforded point and emphasis to the mother's objurgatory tones.

Both of the girls had a tired, listless air, and Rusha exclaimed, meanwhile rubbing her eyes, —

"Goodness! I had no idea it was so late."

"Well, what can you expect when one is out until three o'clock? Just give me a cup of coffee, and I'll be as good as new;" and Ella seated herself at the table and touched the bell.

"I wish I could say as much," replied Rusha, taking the next seat, "but I always feel wretchedly enough for the whole day after such a grand party. The truth is, I'm not made of stuff to stand dissipation."

Rusha put the truth exactly. Ella could stand a whole campaign of late hours and fashionable dissipations, while Rusha, though apparently in as good health as her sister, had that finer nervous organization which could not admit of heavy drafts of excitement.

"Your father was dreadfully put out," continued Mrs. Darryll, as her daughters settled themselves to the late breakfast, which, despite her reproofs, she had given orders should be kept warm for them, "because you wasn't down this morning. You know he always likes to see you at breakfast."

"Well, pa's turned into a regular bear now-a-days," remarked the younger of the sisters, breaking a fresh roll of bread.

"Ella, don't speak so of your father, child," responded her mother.

"Well, ma, you know it's true, now, so there's no use denying it. It's as much as one's life is worth to make the slightest demand on his pocket."

John Darryll's temper had not improved with his fortunes; but simple justice to the man must allow that he had by no means reached the sanguinary frame of mind which his daughter's statement implied.

Mrs. Darryll, who always took her husband's part to his children, and reversed this habit when they were the subject of complaint on his part, came now to the defence with, —

"Well, you ought to consider that your father has a great deal on his mind just now. His business worries him, and gold is going up awfully, and I s'pose the poor man don't really know how to make both ends meet."

"Nonsense!" said Ella, with a toss of her head. "He can't make that go down with me. He's making money all the time, and the richer he gets the stingier he grows. Hasn't he had, with all the rest, a Government contract lately? And don't everybody grow rich who has Government contracts, I'd like to know?"

"More shame to them, then!" interposed Rusha, who thus far had brought no forces to the discussion.

"Well, now don't, Rusha, for pity's sake, go into the morale of the thing. The fact is all that concerns me; and I say it's a perfect shame for pa to be such a miser when he's making money, hand over fist."

Whether Mrs. Darryll had a little secret sympathy with her daughter, or thought that she could set up a plea that would be more likely to avail in the father's behalf, she now changed her grounds of defence.

"He's fretted a good deal about Andrew, too. They don't seem to get on well together, and I'm afraid matters will come to an open rupture betwixt them yet."

"What has gone wrong now?" asked Rusha.

"O, dear, I don't know. Everything, seems to me. Your father complains that Andrew's lazy, reckless, extravagant, always off, throwing away his time and money with a set of fast friends, when he ought to be attending to his business, and that he can't place the least dependence upon him."

"Pa always makes matters out a great deal worse than they are, you know," commented Ella.

"I can't make out, for my part, who is to blame," continued Mrs. Darryll. "Your father comes down so hard on Andrew, and if I speak to the boy he gets so excited, that I'm glad to let both alone."

"I'm afraid that there's a great deal of truth in what pa says," added Rusha, looking serious. "I'm not satisfied with Andrew's looks and ways. What is the reason, I should like to know, that he is never at home now-a-days? And where does he spend his time when he's off?"

"Boys must sow their wild oats, you know," pleaded the mother, with her habit of smoothing over everything that was wrong in her own family. "I can't really believe Andrew would do any harm, but he's got in with those wild young fellows, and they lead him off to clubs and suppers, and one thing and another. I do wish he'd make up his mind to settle down and grow steady."

"But you know a great city like this is the last place to lead a young man like Andrew to do that. I suppose, from hints that Tom has dropped me, that we women have no idea of the temptations which beset youth of his age on every side, and home is their best safeguard, and Andrew seems to get away from that more and more."

"Pshaw! I don't believe Andrew is going into anything worse than having a good time, like other young men of his age. Don't you croak, Rusha. Ma, I want to tell you about our party." This was from Ella, whose habit was to make an abrupt plunge from disagreeable subjects into pleasant ones.

"Did you have a good time, girls?" asked the mother, not sorry to have a topic supplanted which enhanced a secret feeling

of uneasiness, the more it was discussed, while she was always alive to her daughters' social enjoyments and triumphs.

This was a theme to kindle Ella's eloquence. "O, mother, you have no idea. It was a perfect rush; and such a splendid affair!" and she went on, dilating with great fervor on the magnificence of the dresses, the costliness of the banquet, the flattering attentions which had overwhelmed her and her sister; and the mother listened with her pleased smile to the rhapsody, when in the midst of it all the front door was banged sharply to, and a moment after Andrew burst into the dining-room.

"Why, you here, girls?" in a tone that indicated no pleasant surprise. "I thought you'd be out riding this morning."

"If you had condescended to remember where we were last night, you probably would not have been so confident in that agreeable expectation," replied Ella, with a little asperity, not exactly liking her brother's tone.

I think any keen reader of countenances would have found some change for the worse in that of Andrew Darryll during these last six months. It was a change not likely to be apparent to his family, for it had not become the fixed habit of his face. But something of the clear, open look was gone. There was some restlessness in the eyes, and something half-defiant, half-reckless, in his dominant expression, which his whole manner carried out. He always sported a cane, always dressed in the height of the fashion, and affected a "dandified" air, which did not improve him.

"Well, 'fast young man,'" commenced Ella, playfully, a moment later, "what's brought you home at this time of the day? Some secret, I know, that you didn't intend Rusha and I should share; but you're too late now, so there's no help, but to out with it."

Andrew had taken a chair, and was restlessly balancing his cane on his forefinger. He was evidently in no mood for jokes.

"That's a fact," he said; "I meant to get the old lady when you girls weren't round; but you'd pump it out of her now — so here goes. I want some money, mother."

"Why, Andrew!" Mrs. Darryll was taken completely by surprise at this request, as her daughters were also.

Andrew rose up, striking his cane hard on the floor.

"It's a fact. I must have it right off, and there's no use mincing matters."

"But why don't you go to your father for it?"

"Because I haven't time to go through with a storm before I can get it, and because it is my own affair, and I don't choose to have him know anything about it."

"What shall I do, girls?" appealed the bewildered mother to her daughters.

"Look here, old lady; it's none of their business—I must have the money without delay."

"I think you might at least have the decency to tell ma what you intend to do with it, before you demand her money quite so much in the style of a highwayman," spoke up Rusha, her quick temper roused at Andrew's manner.

"You interfere if you dare, now, Rusha Darryll!"

There was a threat in his eyes that, for the moment, daunted her—and Rusha Darryll was no coward.

"How much money have you got—to the last dollar?" This question was addressed to his mother.

"I've only got two hundred dollars in the world, and your father gave me that for family expenses," in a piteous way.

"Two hundred dollars! Confound the old miser for cutting so close! I want at least double that. But fork over what you've got."

"Seems to me you are carrying things with a pretty high hand, Andrew!" said Mrs. Darryll, partially recovering herself, and not moving from her chair.

"I say, old woman, where's that money? I'll have it out of you by fair means or foul, and if you know what's good for yourself you'll hand it over!"

His look frightened his mother. Language like this had never been addressed to her before. A sort of coarse freedom obtained in the manner of the young Darrylls towards their

parents, which, to finer natures, might savor of disrespect, but of defiance and insolence—never.

"I believe the fellow's gone crazy!" said Ella, really pale, she was so shocked.

But the poor mother was frightened now past all self-control.

"The money is in the box on the table there. O, what does it mean that my child should talk to me like that!" and she burst into tears.

Andrew seized the box and tore out the "greenbacks," and was hurrying out of the room. But just as he reached the door, Rusha sprang before him, her whole face hot with indignation.

"Andrew Darryll, the man who will insult his mother and frighten her into giving him money in the way you have done, is a coward and a brute!"

He looked, for the moment, as she stood there in her courage and scorn, as though he could have knocked her down; but there was something in her eyes that quelled him, and partly brought him to his senses.

"A man that's desperate can't use soft words," he muttered, and dashed by her.

When Rusha returned, she found her mother sobbing, and Ella trying to soothe her.

"I don't understand it. What does it mean?" asked the younger of the elder sister.

"It means, Ella, that it's no use to shut our eyes. I've feared for a long time that Andrew was going wrong, and now, after what we have witnessed, there's no doubt of it. This comes of his clubs and carousals, and being away from home day and night with a set of fast young men, who will drag him down to ruin."

"But did you see and hear how he looked and spoke to me—his mother?" sobbed Mrs. Darryll.

"Yes," penetrating to the core of the matter much quicker than her more practical parent and sister, "I saw it all, mother, and I saw, too, that he had been drinking some, and was desperate. Probably he has borrowed the money, or—" She

stopped here, though she was strongly excited; and words were not apt to frighten her.

"Or what?" said Ella.

"Or has been gambling."

"My boy, my Andrew, a drunkard and a gambler!" exclaimed Mrs. Darryll, with a fresh burst of tears.

"There have been sons whose mothers loved and trusted them as you do yours, who have turned out to be a disgrace and a shame to them. I don't want to make you feel worse, mother, but we ought to see the danger that is closing round Andrew."

"But what can we do?" said Ella, who was now really alarmed.

"I don't know as anything, for he seems beyond the reach of our influence. Father ought to know this at once."

"Dear me, Rusha, think what an awful storm there would be!" pleaded the shrinking mother.

"I know it, ma; but better a storm than to have Andrew lost, soul and body."

It was a singular fact that whatever they might think of her "romance," they always deferred to her penetration, decision, and good sense, in any crisis which demanded the exercise of these qualities.

Mrs. Darryll, with her usual lack of moral courage, deprecated so strongly a resort to her husband regarding Andrew's conduct, that Rusha, knowing her father's rashness and growing infirmities of temper, felt there was a good deal of force in her mother's reasoning. His harshness might only drive Andrew into worse courses, she reflected; and she finally yielded so far as to promise that she would not immediately acquaint her father with what had transpired.

"But I still persist that I very much doubt whether this is the wisest course. Andrew needs some stronger force than we can bring to bear, to change the whole tendency of his present life. These late suppers — these fast companions — this absence from home — these carousals, and dissipations, and general recklessness — mother, where will they all lead to?" asked the eldest daughter, solemnly.

And Mrs. Darryll, tearful and distressed, hoped "Andrew was only sowing his wild oats, and would come out right at last," and avowed her intention of giving that delinquent youth "such a talking to as he had never had in all his life;" and at this moment, some calls that could not be refused ended the painful family conference.

Andrew Darryll next presented himself at home, somewhat sobered — a little ashamed, with a very confused memory of all that had transpired, and a general determination to "bully it out."

Rusha, however, had not such absolute faith in the power of her mother's "talk," that she did not lay hold of that young man with her usual impetuosity, and administer to him such a verbal scathing as he had never received from the tongue of any living woman.

As for his preconceived notion of "bullying it out," Andrew found, as he afterwards expressed himself, that Rusha proved "too much" for him.

She cut him right off when he commenced, with, —

"That sort of talk may serve you with your poor, shocked, frightened mother, when you burst into the house, and in ways a burglar would scorn, scare her into giving you money, but it won't do with me. When I think, Andrew Darryll, what language you used to her this day, it makes my blood boil. O, I wish I was a man, to horsewhip you as you deserve!"

She looked as though she could almost do it, small, delicate woman as she was, standing there with eyes and cheeks on fire.

Andrew quailed before the spirit he had roused. She was a girl, it is true, but then she had an immense moral advantage on her side.

"Take a fellow's head off, will you, for what he said when — when he wasn't himself. Don't believe it was half as bad as you tell for, either."

"*Drunk*, were you?" The tone was calmer now, but the emphasis on the first monosyllable made him wince. "I'm glad to know, on your own confession, that you were not sober when you so outraged your mother and sisters."

"Making it out ten times worse than it was!" muttered Andrew. "Twon't go down me."

He wished he had taken some other line of defence, when Rusha went over the whole scene, compelling him to listen until he was really humbled and ashamed.

"I'd no idea it was so bad, Rusha. The truth is, if you must have the whole, I'd got in debt, and I didn't dare go to the governor, and—and the matter was pressing, and drove me into getting tight, and doing all the rest. On my honor, I didn't know what I was about."

The first sign of repentance melted her anger.

"O, Andrew, I guessed as much. What are you coming to?" her lips quivering.

He seemed a good deal touched, and went about searching for this excuse and that; but they were of the sort that all wrong doers make, who have not strength to resist evil, and could not satisfy her.

"Do you remember, Andrew, the promise you made me less than a year ago, on your sick bed? And here you are now."

The memory seemed to touch him with remorse, but it must have been of a transitory sort, for he still went seeking excuses for himself, and affirmed that he was no worse than the rest of the fellows, and through all, his brow did not once wear the clear, open look that it used to.

"O, Andrew, if I knew what to do—if I could only save you!" she cried, half to herself, the tears dropping on her cheeks.

He started a little, and looked at her.

"Save me from what?"

"From all the wrong and ruin into which I see these late nights, these boon companions, and this general recklessness, will surely plunge you."

"I guess I shall come out as well as other men. I'm no worse than the rest of them, and mean to look out. There, don't cry, Rusha. I'll go and make my peace with the old lady. I s'pose I was a brute, but, hang it, I didn't know what I was about!"

She drew a long sigh. His manner did not half satisfy her; but after all, he had yielded so much that she was afraid to pursue the matter further then, and weaken the force of what she had already said. But she would "bide her time," feeling that anything she might say would fail in her brother's present mood to reach deeper than the shallows of his nature.

And he went out on his errand of conciliation with his mother, feeling that this would be an easier matter with her than with Rusha; but almost as the door closed, it opened again, and Andrew Darryll's general impression of the part Rusha had borne in the affair concentrated itself in his "I say, Rusha, you're a brick!"

She was too pained to appreciate this coarse flattery, and only answered, with a little flicker of a smile.

The young man did not, however, find it quite so light a matter as he had fancied, to get over his transgression with his mother. Pain at the indignities which her son had heaped upon her, and alarm at her daughter's representations, made Mrs. Darryll unusually severe.

Whether the constantly recurring "I couldn't believe that a child of mine would ever dare to address me in that way!" was likely to have any lasting influence, might be questioned. But Andrew insisted that she ought to pay no more regard to what he had said than to the wind's blowing, when it had no more meaning. As for the drinking and the borrowed money, he treated that lightly, affirming that a great many good men had done both, once in their lives, and it was hard to treat him as though he was "the greatest sinner out," for a single offence—arguments which had weight with the fond, weak mother.

Afterwards, the young man took with exemplary patience a long lecture, which made up in length what it lacked in force, and in the end, Mrs. Darryll forgave her son in her heart, if not in words.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"I've about made up my mind that I shall take a trip to Oil City, the last of this week," said Mr. Darryll, settling himself back in his easy chair, after dinner, the hour following that meal being usually his most complacent one, although that gentleman's humor had grown to be a sensitive index of the condition of the stock board.

"Why, father, what can have put such a notion into your head?" interrogated Mrs. Darryll, who was never quite easy at suggestions of leaving home on the part of any member of the family.

"Well, the fact is, they want me to go into a new company that is just being started, and which promises to be a good thing. But I don't like to come down in a large way, unless I'm certain of the ground I stand on; and after thinking it all over, I've about concluded that the best thing is to go on and see for myself."

"O, pa, I wish you'd take me along with you. Do now," spoke up Rusha's eager voice.

"Go to Oil City!" put in Ella, before her father had time to reply. "Well, I must say, Rusha, if any fancy of yours could surprise me, this last one certainly would. What in the world can attract you there?"

"O, I should like the new experience, and to see real, genuine human nature with the polish off. The whole thing would be full of fresh adventure and delight to me—such a contrast to our dead level, city life. O, pa, if you only will say I may go!"

"I hope your father hasn't quite lost his senses yet," interposed Mrs. Darryll, in that tone of sensible practicality which

had so often dashed its cold water on Rusha's pretty enthusiasms.

"No, my daughter," said her father, in the softened voice of which his eldest child certainly had the largest benefit; and it might be that this desire to accompany him on a journey which promised so much of fatigue and discomfort, touched the father beneath the shrewd, hard business man, for he treated Rusha's suggestion with neither the rebuke nor the ridicule that her mother and sister had done.

"You have no idea what you'd have to encounter on the way; and then, when we got there, what would you do—sweeping round with your fine dresses in the dirt, and grease, and mud, without so much as a sidewalk in the whole town?"

"I wouldn't wear fine dresses, pa. I'd put on bloomer when we got beyond civilization," added Rusha, more for talk sake than anything else, for she saw the case was hopeless.

"I've no doubt she would," added Ella, with a pantomime that said unutterable things. "Our Rusha would be just up to that very deed!"

"What a mercy it is, then," laughed the elder sister, on whom the pantomime had not been lost, "that you and mother are always around to keep me in the orbit of a proper young lady; else I might fly off on a tangent at any time!"

"I realize that fully," laughing too; but after all, there was more truth than jest in her remark.

Guy and Agnes brought some new forces to the badinage on Rusha, and Mr. Darryll settled himself to his paper, from which he was roused half an hour later by the entrance of Andrew and Tom.

"Any letters after I left the office, boys?"

"I looked over the last batch that came in," answered Andrew, lighting a fresh cigar. "Nothing important, except that Crawford has been taken sick, and won't be up before next week."

"And just the time when he can't be spared, for I've made my plans to go day after to-morrow."

"Can't the journey wait?" inquired Andrew, puffing at his cigar.

"No, sir. I've got other irons in the fire. You'll have to take his place, Andrew, and keep books, safe, and keys, while I'm gone."

"Confounded dull for a fellow," muttered Andrew. "Keep him tied tight from morning to night at the office."

"No help for it, sir," said the young man's father, decidedly. "Besides, a little taste of hard work wouldn't hurt any of you boys, and I can't trust such responsibilities out of our own hands, now Crawford's gone."

Andrew did not demur further. He only asked, —

"Going into some fresh speculations, governor?"

Something in the name or the tone did not seem to please John Darryll. He always, in his talk, both in his family and on 'Change, pronounced himself "down" on most of the great speculating manias which have been of late like evil spirits entering into men's souls, and making their last state worse than their first.

Naturally cautious in all his financial enterprises, he had been particularly severe on the desperate risks which many of the men with whom he was thrown in business relations constantly incurred. The losses and failures never escaped him; and he was constantly holding these up to view in the hope that they would prove beacon lights to the young men when they should enter the field for themselves.

There had of late been a good deal of sharp discussion on these very matters betwixt the father and the eldest son. Andrew was always quoting instances against his parent of men who had made, to use his words, a "big thing out of a small pile," and affirming that "a fellow, if he only understood the ropes, could turn his hundreds into thousands as easy as you could toss your hand up, sir; and what was the use of delving and slaving all your life, when a little sharpness would turn a man out a snug little sum any time, so that he could lie back on his oars the rest of his days, and have smooth sailing as he went along?"

Talk of this sort always irritated John Darryll to the highest degree. He denounced in the strongest possible terms all such financial operations as "gambling, fraud, and embezzlement," and insisted that nine hundred and ninety-nine speculations of the kind Andrew quoted were sure to burst up, and involve those concerned in failure and ruin; indeed, he had evinced so much excitability when this topic was discussed, that Ella, with her usual love of peace, had said to her eldest brother, —

"Why can't you let pa alone on these speculations? Let him think what he pleases, and you do the same, only keep still about it, for he'll be sure to go off like a bombshell every time the subject is touched on. If folks only could learn to let disagreeable topics alone!"

And it never occurred to Ella at that time, any more than to the rest of her family, that any personal interest might lie at the bottom of Andrew's advocacy of these easy methods of making money, or that when he did not talk, he might act on his own views of the matter.

"I'm going to see the thing for myself before I put my hands in," replied John Darryll to his son's question about the object of his journey to Oil City. "If the thing promises well, I may do something with it; but they needn't throw out any bait, for I shan't nibble; I'm too old for that."

"Eames has just made a good thing out of his last speculation in Erie. He put up a margin — stock went up, and he just drew in a haul of fifty thousand dollars. Snug little sum that!"

"I'd like to do that thing," said Guy. "Cracky!"

"You would, would you?" turning sharply upon the boy. "And the chances would all be that you'd lose every dollar, and go to the devil yourself before you got through!"

"O, pa — now!" interrupted Mrs. Darryll, warningly.

"It's a fact," stoutly maintained her husband. "I tell you, more young men have been driven by speculation, than by any one thing in the world, into all sorts of desperate crimes, and ended up at last in a felon's cell. I know all about the way

these things are managed, and how easy it is to draw a young fellow in who thinks he knows more and sees farther than his betters. If one of my boys, after all I've said, should ever disregard my advice, and run his neck into some hap-hazard speculation, he might go to ruin for all I'd see him out — that's all."

"Now, boys, take your father's advice, and keep clear of all these dangerous places, if you want to turn out well in the world," said Mrs. Darryll to her sons, in very much the same tone that she used to promise them "a stick of candy if they would be good children, and not make a noise."

"But I say," continued Andrew, "all business is speculation, get to the bottom of it. It's the same thing, only one man is more cautious and shrewd than another; but it's a race for money all the same, and devil take the hindmost. Each one is trying to get ahead of his neighbor, whether it's on the sly, or all above board; whether it's in a government contract, or a petroleum company, or a banking house, it's all the same thing — make the most you can out of your man, whether he happens to be one individual or the public in general."

"Is it true, pa, what Andrew says?" asked Rusha.

"Well, yes, I suppose it is — pretty much. Of course every man must look out to feather his own nest in the world — I'm not talking against that; but business is one thing, and reckless diving into all sorts of wild speculations is another. The market is full of these just now, and people are rushing in, neck and heels; but there will be an awful bursting up one of these days."

"But, pa," said Rusha, at the bottom of whose thought lay always the right and wrong of any question, "that way of doing business which you speak of seems to me so utterly selfish a one. Surely Christianity, or the highest morality even, requires some regard to the interests of one's fellow-man, even in business."

Andrew burst into a loud, disagreeable laugh.

"Now that is too good, Rusha. A pious and moral business! Tell that to your grandmarm!"

Guy joined in his brother's rather poor attempt at wit.

"Yes, Rusha, you are green!" said the boy of sixteen; but he was extinguished for that time by his sister's remarking, in her most frigid tones, that doubtless his years and experience would protect her from any of the ill effects of her verdancy.

This was as unkind a cut as Guy, who, on occasions, affected the disagreeable smartness of boys of his age, could well have received, and was another of the lessons which all Rusha's family were so slow in learning, that, notwithstanding the amount of badinage which she would take good-naturedly, there was a point beyond which it was not safe to drive her; and when this was passed she could always turn upon the offender in a way that effectually silenced him.

That Mr. Darryll's warnings had very little effect upon his eldest son, was proved by his remarking to Tom, as they went out together, that the "governor was an old foggy, any way, and that he wasn't up so early in the morning but there was a thing or two in business that he didn't know yet, and that some folks had cut their eye teeth in this world besides John Darryll."

This conversation transpired about three weeks after Andrew's rupture with his mother and sister. Since that had been healed — thanks to Rusha's courage and spirit — nothing unusual had occurred on the part of the elder son and brother to awaken the anxiety of his family. Rusha, who now observed him pretty narrowly, did not feel at ease regarding the young man; yet she could find no fresh cause to justify her solicitude. He was still absent from home much of the time, and when there, seemed absorbed and reticent, with occasional rough explosions of mirth, which, it struck his sister, did not have quite a natural ring about them. Sometimes, too, it seemed to her that she caught a glimpse of some half-dogged, half-desperate expression on his face, which came back and haunted her afterwards, and yet was not tangible enough to prevent her from wondering whether the whole thing was not a mere chimera of the imagination that was always troubling her.

It is true that her father grumbled away in the old fashion about Andrew's laziness and frequent absence from business; but John Darryll's fault-finding had become chronic in his family, and was accepted as a matter of course, the only result being a sort of tacit understanding betwixt all the members that "pa" must be kept in as good humor as possible, provided this did not cost too much — a party, a new bonnet, or anything of that sort, being always regarded as sufficient motive, by anybody but Rusha, to brave his displeasure.

During these weeks, too, the season was unusually gay, and the family much absorbed in social excitements, so that the sisters saw comparatively little of their brothers.

A feeling of deeper confidence had, however, been growing up betwixt Rusha and Tom, since their return from Berry Plains. Constantly encouraged and stimulated by his sister, the young man had actually set about preparing for college, to which his father gave a willing assent; and Tom, being a rich man's son, with plenty of time on his hands, and all the temptations of a great city to beguile him into indolence and pleasure-taking, deserved a great deal of credit for resisting these as well as he did.

Naturally bright and intelligent, as were all the Darryll sons and daughters, Tom had still habits of study to establish; and this was a great effort to one who had no aid from the daily regimen of school or college, but whose hours were entirely at his own disposal.

Rusha opened her sanctum to him, and if it had not been for her constant example and encouragement, Tom's ambition towards scholarship would long ago have failed him before indolence and pleasure, those two lions that lie in wait along all paths of human endeavor. Poor Tom battled with them single-handed sometimes, but they never totally overcame him — thanks to that sister of his, to whom, though he or she might never know it, he would, in a large sense, owe whatsoever his future might bear of strong, worthy, successful manhood.

Tom's awakening interest in the new world of study, the

kindling of all the activities of his intellect before that vast field of knowledge which opened its mysteries and beauties before him, were fostered by Rusha in a thousand ways. They read the same books and discussed the same themes together in the little retired sanctum, that was to her the dearest spot on earth.

And the change that was being gradually wrought in Tom Darryll did not end here, else its work would have been most partial and imperfect. It went deeper than that, and slowly assimilated with his whole character. His moral nature was quickened; new questions stirred themselves in his soul; things that once never awakened a thought within him began now to assume new relations to his deepening susceptibilities; and little by little, and here and there, his conscience grew more sensitive, and life began, with much of obscurity and vagueness, to open out before him with some new, vast meanings and responsibilities.

And it was pleasant and touching to see the young, eager minds grappling with the great questions which underlie all human life, and which, once lost sight of, as Paul said, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

Of course Rusha was leader here, and Tom followed the deeper nature, the finer conscience, and forgot, for the time, all the little weaknesses and absurdities that were so natural to his age and experience, and became simple and earnest. And in these brother-and-sister talks how much seed was dropped in the clefts and deep places of his soul, that should spring up afterwards in noble aspiration, and steadfast faith, and higher loyalty, only God and the good angels of Tom Darryll knew.

Rusha, too, was growing, without much outward help and with many drawbacks — growing so slowly that neither she nor those around her suspected it, among the constant chafings and irritations of the sensitive, finely-strung soul, across whose chords the winds of life swept, making deep voices, sometimes of sweetest harmonies, but, alas! oftener of saddest discords.

The acquaintance with the Rochfords, which had opened so auspiciously, had been doomed to sudden disappointment. The

doctor had gone to the war, and Angeline had accompanied him as hospital nurse. The house was still kept open, for Sicily, who had gone, meanwhile, to reside with some relatives in the country, came down frequently to the city, as she had a general charge of her brother's and sister's beneficiaries.

But her visits were always crowded with business, so that Rusha never saw her; and whatsoever wholesome influences their society might have exerted, at this time, on her ardent, impressible nature, was entirely lost to her, and she had to make her own way as best she might out of the mistakes and mischiefs of her early training, out of false and ignoble views of life, out of all sorts of social sophistries; and she went on blindly, "stumbling often, but never content to lie there"—went on, not seeing the Hand that was leading her.

CHAPTER XIX.

"WHAT in thunder does this mean?"

Adam Crawford sat before the iron safe in John Darryll's private office one morning, somewhat less than a week after that gentleman's departure for Oil City, when this expletive dropped from his lips—the strongest that any possible amazement or horror could have drawn from the man. For Adam Crawford was at that moment in a state of such blank amazement and terror as he had never experienced before in his life.

He sat there alone in Mr. Darryll's small, private office, behind the desk, where the great iron safe always stood, and to which nobody ever had access, except the owner and the book-keeper, unless the keys, in some unusual contingency, were placed, for a short period, in Andrew's charge. A set of these lay upon the top of the chest; the heavy door was swung open, revealing the great ledgers and piles of papers on one side, while on the other was the vault, which now was uncovered, containing many thousands in gold and greenbacks.

Some small debts falling due on this morning, the book-keeper, in whom Mr. Darryll reposed absolute confidence, had opened the vault, when his eyes were arrested by the sight of several empty bags, which he had seen Mr. Darryll place there just before his departure for Oil City, remarking that he should probably use them in a new investment on his return.

Each one of the bags had contained five thousand dollars in gold. Adam Crawford lifted up one and then another of these—it was empty, and dropped away from his nerveless hands, for the strong man was weak as a little child.

Mr. Darryll had selected his book-keeper from a host of applicants on account of his "honest face," and the man was a

shrewd reader of countenances. Adam's would have borne witness for him anywhere — an honest, open, manly face, whose character compensated for its rather marked homeliness, but to be trusted, his employer averred, to the antipodes with uncounted gold.

Andrew Darryll sat at the desk that morning, writing, with somewhat unusual diligence; for, as he told one of his friends, who stopped in to invite him to a ride on the Bloomingdale Road, "the old man was expected back in a day or two, and there'd be a regular blow up, if he didn't put matters through before that time."

So, although he had not seen the inside of the office for two previous days, he was apparently absorbed in his work when the book-keeper came to the outside door and spoke with a white face, —

"Darryll, I say, we've been robbed!"

The voice was not loud. Andrew kept on at his writing. You could hear the rapid scratch of his pen in the stillness. It seemed strange that the tones did not reach him.

"Darryll," the key a little raised, "see here — we've been robbed!"

Andrew turned round sharply.

"What's that you say, Crawford?"

"The gold in the safe vault has gone!"

What Andrew said here, or whether he said anything at all, Adam Crawford could never recollect, although he afterwards tried many times. But he remembered that they both returned to the safe, and Adam pointed to the empty bags, and they two counted them over. There were four whose entire contents had been abstracted. The others lay undisturbed. Then the two young men looked at each other, face to face, eye to eye.

"There were five thousand dollars in each of those bags. I heard your father say so the day that he placed them there," said Crawford.

"Yes, here is the mark," replied Andrew, turning the side

of the bag towards him. Then the young men looked at each other again, face to face, eye to eye.

"Who do you suspect is at the bottom of this business, Crawford?" asked Andrew.

"I can think of no man — God is my witness — of no living man! Can you?" watching young Darryll's face in a kind of vague hope of some clew.

"Not one."

"But we must ferret out the villain who has done this."

"Yes, Crawford," said Andrew, "that is the first step — we must ferret him out;" then, after a little pause, "You've had the keys about you ever since you got back?"

"Night and day; except the one that I gave them to you, when I went out of town — you remember?"

"Yes, the money was all safe then, for I came here in the morning, and placed this package of greenbacks in the vault. The safe must have been broken into after that."

"But how was it done, Darryll? if we could only get on the scoundrel's track!"

And Adam Crawford remembered afterwards how many improbabilities they started — how they discussed one person and then another, but never found a single individual or circumstance on which there was the slightest ground for basing a suspicion of the crime.

Andrew, however, maintained the opinion that some experienced burglar had watched the building, and broken into that and the safe at night; indeed, it was impossible that any but a most skilful robber could have opened the vault, whose lock, like that of the outer safe door, it seemed must have baffled any degree of ingenuity on the part of one who attempted to pick it.

Then the young men examined all the doors and window fastenings; but there was not the faintest trace of disturbance among all these. Then they came back again, and sat down before the open safe, and decided that the only thing to do was to put the matter into the hands of some shrewd detectives, and await Mr. Darryll's return.

"But I dread to see the man's face," said Adam Crawford.

"So do I. Won't there be a storm, though!" and the book-keeper remembered that as Andrew said this, he shuddered; but that did not surprise him at the time, for he was half bewildered himself with the shock which the sudden discovery of the crime had occasioned him, and just as Andrew Darryll ceased speaking, his father walked in. Something in the faces of both the young men struck him at once.

"What has happened?" he asked, stopping short.

The son and the book-keeper each waited a moment for the other to reply. Then Andrew spoke:—

"Father, the safe has been opened, and you've been robbed of twenty thousand dollars!"

For the next week the robbery, whose consummate skill and secrecy seemed to set all discovery at defiance, was the engrossing topic in the Darryll family.

Of course it got into the papers, and a large reward was offered for the perpetrators. All the people who called, talked over the details, with that relish for the secret and horrible which seems to inhere in our common human nature. Mr. Darryll never returned home without being assailed by the feminine portion of the family with inquiries as to whether they had yet got any clew to the criminals. Indeed, betwixt their indignation and curiosity, the Darrylls, especially the younger ones, could never let the subject rest; and all the circumstances connected with the robbery, which, beyond the fact itself, were of the most barren character, were discussed at every meal, as though the whole thing was entirely new to each person.

The loss of twenty thousand dollars did not in reality affect John Darryll, although one might have thought, to hear the man talk, that it came very near ruining him—an insinuation that Andrew always repelled with contempt, affirming that the governor often made more than that in a single day's operation.

Still, beyond the loss of the money, the manner of its disappearance was one that gave the prosperous broker a good many

sleepless nights. He racked his brain trying to find some individual on whom he could fasten a suspicion; but the more he contemplated the matter, the more inexplicable it became.

The best detectives in the city had been on the scent a week, without starting the slightest trail of the thief—it seemed impossible that any one unacquainted with the rooms could have broken into them and the safe, and left no trace of their entrance in door, or window, or lock; and during the three days in which it had been satisfactorily determined that the crime had been committed, the keys of safe and vault had been alternately in the possession of Andrew and the book-keeper.

At one time, for want of some better subject, a strong suspicion had attached to the office-boy, who swept the rooms and kept the fires—a little, dark, open-faced lad, whose mother was a widow, an honest, hard-toiling woman, driven nearly to frenzy by the suggestion that her son was concerned in the crime. But after the boy had borne the rigid examination to which he was subjected by the detectives, they both, at the close, acquitted him of the slightest complicity in, or knowledge of, the crime.

"The fellow that got into that vault must have been a confounded sharp rascal! Beats everything hollow that I ever heard of in that line," said Mr. Darryll, as he stood one morning by the grate-fire after breakfast, with his hat in his hand, ready to start down town. "There's Thorp, now, one of the smartest hands in the city to run a thief down—I was talking with him last night, and he says he never knew a job done up quite so smooth as this one was. How the rascal got into the office and picked that safe, as well as I could have done it myself, locked up everything just as he found it, and went off, baffles me. Thieves don't usually work in that way."

"The rogue was probably used to it," remarked Andrew, drawing on his gloves.

"But burglars don't usually take all that pains. Thorp insists that the scoundrel was thoroughly versed in the premises."

"Pa, now," said Ella, more for the sake of saying something than because she entertained any real suspicions of him,—for

the whole family indulged in all sorts of chimerical fancies, and some of their absurd suggestions would have done credit to the wildest flights of a sensation novelist, — “you don’t really suppose Crawford could have done it, do you?”

“Nonsense!” muttered Andrew.

“No, child, no. I’d stake my life on that fellow’s honesty. Why, I’d sooner believe I got up myself in a nightmare, and took the money out and threw it in the sea. That’s a comfortable way of accounting for it at least.”

“I guess you must have taken it, Andrew!” said Agnes, with her girlish titter, turning on her brother. “You had all the keys, you know, so it would have been very easy; and if Crawford didn’t steal the money, why, of course *you* did!”

“I never thought of that,” said Ella, who always was ready for a jest. “Come, now, old fellow, just own up that you did it!”

“Not quite ready for that yet!” answered Andrew, and he laughed out loudly. Afterwards they all remembered that laugh, though at the time nobody thought anything of it.”

“I never thought much about a thief before,” — it was Rusha speaking now, — “but somehow I cannot help feeling a perpetual curiosity about this one. I suppose it is because no crime ever came quite so near home to me before.”

“It’s come home to my pocket,” interrupted her father. “Zounds! I wish I could get hold of the scoundrel!”

“And it’s come home to my wardrobe, too, for ma says, now you’ve met with such a loss, I must go without the new velvet cloak she promised me this winter. But, indignant as I am, I can’t help wondering what sort of a man this thief was! Was he old and hardened in sin, or was he young, and was this his first crime, committed under some dreadful stress of temptation? Had he a pleasant home, and a father and mother, and brothers and sisters, who loved and trusted him, and who have not to this day the slightest suspicion of his crime, and to whom the knowledge of it would come down with just that awful, crushing blow that it would on all of us, if one of our

boys had done such a thing? It’s singular, but I wake up sometimes in the night, and these questions rise up and haunt me until it’s hard to go to sleep again.”

Rusha’s speech was addressed to no one in particular, but looking up suddenly at its close, her eyes encountered Andrew’s. His dropped in a moment, but not until she had seen something in them — was it remorse, or shame, or anguish? — something which she unconsciously felt at the time, but did not understand until afterwards.

“That’s all moonshine, Rusha,” said her father, a little roughly. “The rascal doesn’t deserve any pity, and won’t get any if he falls into my hands — that’s settled. If we can once get hold of him, he’s booked for the penitentiary for pretty much all the rest of his days. That’s the way to serve these fellows.”

“I don’t dispute it, pa; only those words keep coming into my thoughts, ‘No man liveth to himself;’ and it is a law of all human life that the innocent shall suffer for the guilty. It is likely that this wretch, too, has somebody that loves him — somebody to be crushed and heart-broken for his crime!” and again looking up, Rusha’s eyes encountered Andrew’s, and again his dropped.

“Stuff and nonsense,” said her father. “The upshot of it is, if the villain’s got any family, they’re probably hardened cases, and leagued with him in his crimes; so all that pity is wasted. The only way is to put these fellows right straight through, which I shall, in this case, only let me have a chance at him. But this won’t do for me!” glancing at his watch, and starting off, followed a little later by his eldest and youngest sons.

It happened, that very morning, that Thorp, the detective, who had thus far been unsuccessful in getting hold of any clew to the robbery, was on Wall Street, and came suddenly upon an old friend, a former chief of police, and a man who seemed to have an almost miraculous gift of tracing a crime up to its source. A long experience in the service had made him a singularly acute reader of men, and once given the smallest clew of character or circumstance, he would follow up and uncover the most complicated and thoroughly devised plot of villany.

Possessed of consummate self-control of countenance and manner, capable of assuming, for the occasion, any character that he chose, understanding the forms of temptation which appealed strongest to the weaknesses of different classes of men, and combining all these qualities with a silent, but alert observation that seemed almost supernatural, it was not singular that the criminal seldom escaped on whose path officer Hatch was started.

The policeman had just returned from the West, where he had succeeded in unravelling a peculiarly adroit and successful piece of villany, in the discovery of which all his predecessors had failed.

As the two detectives stood talking together on Wall Street, Mr. Darryll happened to pass by, and he paused to inquire of Thorp whether he had struck any trail yet, and, receiving a reply in the negative, hurried away.

The sight of the broker suggested Thorp's next remark — "That's a troublesome piece of business I've got on hand just now, and thus far it's completely baffled me. I wonder what you'd make of it, Hatch?"

"What kind of work was it?" asked the other.

"A twenty thousand dollar business. Office entered, iron safe broken open, and money abstracted, all in the neatest, completest way, sir — not a pane broken or a lock disturbed."

"And you haven't got on the scent yet?"

"Not after a week's hanging round. A singularly 'cute piece of work;" and the detective briefly sketched the facts of the burglary.

"Burglars don't do up business in that smooth fashion," remarked Hatch, when the other was through. "And why not help himself to the whole pile, when he had such a chance?"

"That's precisely the point I don't understand. Altogether a singular affair," replied Thorp.

His companion went over rapidly in his mind the principal points of the case. "Broker absent — two sets of keys, in possession of son and book-keeper — office-boy."

"Look here, Hatch," said Thorp, as a bright idea struck him,

"if you've no special business on hand, s'pose you step into the office a moment, and see if you can find an end to the rope?"

The policeman assented, and they walked into the office, where the safe was shown, and the circumstances of the robbery related again by John Darryll himself.

A few glances of Hatch, apparently careless ones, took in the book-keeper, from the hair of his head to the toe of his boot, and in these the detective had settled in his own mind that whoever had robbed that safe, Adam Crawford was not the man. The office-boy underwent the same silent interrogation, with a like result; and while the three men stood talking together by the safe, in the inner room, Andrew Darryll walked in. He nodded pleasantly to Thorp, with whom he had frequently talked over all the details of the robbery, and after some slight business with the book-keeper, joined the men a moment, and Hatch stood quietly watching the young man, conversing, meanwhile, in a way that would not have attracted anybody's attention, but with a keen scrutiny that took in every line and shade of expression on young Darryll's face.

"The thing was well done — we'll have to concede that," said detective Thorp. "But that safe was not picked by a common house-thief, for one of that sort would have helped himself to the whole pile, and not been so careful to smooth over all his tracks. A new hand at the trade, probably."

"I took it for an old one; the thing was done so nicely," said Andrew, with a light laugh; but detective Hatch caught something in it nobody else did. He spoke now: —

"Perhaps the fellow had got into a fix, and made some speculation, or something of that sort, and wanted twenty thousand to help him out of it."

He was apparently speaking to the elder Darryll, but the whole power of his covert gaze was bent on the younger's face. He saw a light start, a little shadow of pallor there, and the whole thing lay bare to Morgan Hatch!

"Well," said Thorp to his companion, as they went out, "struck the track in there?"

"Yes."

Thorp darted an amazed glance into his companion's face; but that countenance was used to reticence. "Not that book-keeper?" he said.

"No."

Then in a moment it flashed across Thorp whom his companion meant. The surprise was so sudden that he stood still a moment; but as soon as he had leaped to this conclusion, the detective saw, with the quick discernment of one used to these things, how all the parts fitted into one another, and explained the unusual circumstances which had puzzled him whenever he turned the crime over in his thought. "Hatch, you're a stunner!" hitting his companion a smart blow on the shoulder. Then, after a moment's pause, "But to find out the motive — that's the next step, you know."

"Clear enough," said Hatch. "This one was just the sort of material to get his neck into trouble. Rich man's son 'round town — fast — keeps horses — gets into bad company of men and women — all sorts of extravagance and dissipation — falls into debt — runs into speculation to help him out of it — promises large, but don't pay at first — goes into the gambling deeper — needs more money, and at last gets desperate — keys in his possession — easy enough to abstract the money — hopes to pay it before it's missed; and there you have the whole thing. I've had so many such cases to deal with, that I can read them like a book."

"I've dealt with scores of 'em," said Thorp, "but somehow this one threw dust in my eyes. I've got the end of the rope now, — thanks to you, Hatch, — be a thunderbolt to the old man, though!"

"Serves these rich men right!" said Hatch, decidedly — "ought to keep a sharp look out for their sons, and not leave them to run into the fire."

"Well, I shall see this job through now," said Thorp. "My young gentleman little thinks what a storm is brewing for him!" and the two men parted at the corner of Broadway.

Less than a week after this, Mr. Darryll met the detective on

the street. "I've been expecting news from you before this time, Thorp," he said.

"The job was done up smoother than such matters usually are," answered the wary policeman.

"The more I think of it," said the gentleman, "the more I am convinced that the party concerned was of the better sort — a gentleman robber. But whoever he proves to be, when you get your grapples on him, fix him tight, sir."

"You don't want him treated gently on account of reputation, or previous good character, or anything of that sort?" asked Thorp — with a motive, perhaps.

"No, sir!" growing excited — "I've no weak sympathy for that kind of scoundrels. Deal with him just as the law provides, without fear or favor. If it was my own son, sir, who had been guilty of such a high-handed rascality, I should want him chucked right into the Tombs."

John Darryll turned on his heel; but the next time he saw the detective, he remembered what he had said.

Of course, you must have already forestalled who was the perpetrator of the crime, and it is not necessary that I should dwell on it, or on the series of evil doings which culminated at last in this sin. Alas, that it is so common a one — that the columns of our daily papers are blackened with the headings of these, and that at the time I write this, there is such an appalling activity in crime in high places; and alas for the broken hearts and blighted households upon which this horror falls, a thousand times darker than death!

The policeman, with his long experience in these matters, had touched on the main points of Andrew Darryll's downward career. At each of them the young man had paused a moment; but he had no moral barriers strong enough to withstand the flood-tide of temptation which set toward him, and he, too, went down.

Gambling overwhelmed him with debts, and he could see no way through them except by rushing into speculations which seemed to promise an easy path out of his present straits.

Of course, he was usually made the dupe of others ; and driven to desperation, he borrowed money, and put up one margin after another.

These debts became due at the time when an unusually large venture seemed to promise immense profits. He said to himself, with that sophistry which has beguiled so many souls to death, that he would borrow the money of his father ; and he meant, or thought he did, to repay all that he had stolen. And so, desperate, maddened, he played and lost.

And yet Andrew Darryll was not alone to blame in this matter. At the door of his father and his mother lay a part of the guilt, little as either suspected it. Had not John Darryll, by his daily life and example, taught his son that the making haste to be rich—the getting and holding of money was, after all, the great dominant object of life, instead of laying broad and deep as life itself those principles of honest integrity, uprightness, beating against which no worldly temptation shall prevail? Had not the weak mother taken for granted that which no mother has any right to do—that *her* son could not go very far out of the way? Had she not the flexible soul under her moulding influences from its birth? Had she sought to make the young conscience sensitive in all directions during these formative years—the love of right, the loyalty to truth and honor deeper than life itself?

Andrew Darryll's mother would have laid down her life for him ; and yet she was "found wanting" here!

She had placed no high ideal of living before his eyes ; she had not watched his besetting sins, and fortified him where he was weakest ; but the paramount tendency of her teaching and example, the spirit of the household, had been such as to make him regard the world, its opinions, its standards, its honors, as the greatest and best thing in life, and an occasional solemn shake of the head and a small seasoning of "pious talk" could not counteract the effect of general example and daily life, and out of the world that she had served so faithfully for her own and her children's sake, was Mrs. Darryll to reap her reward.

CHAPTER XX.

THE Darryll family was in an unusual mood of excitement and hilarity that afternoon. The ladies were preparing for a grand fancy ball, which was to come off that evening at the residence of one of their fashionable friends. The affair was intended to outshine all others of the kind for the season, and the feminine Darrylls, even to Rusha, had been quite carried away with the prospect in store for them.

Agnes had found it a comparatively easy matter to persuade her mother into excusing her from school on the day of the ball, and they were all assembled in Mrs. Darryll's room in a bustle of eager preparation.

Elegant dresses were scattered over bed, chairs, and table, and diamonds flashed, and rubies blazed on the dressing cabinet, and the eager discussion and the pleasant hum of chatter went on over everything else.

"It's too bad," said Agnes, with a natural, girlish longing for display, "that all my jewelry should be tabooed, because I've got to be a flower-girl. I think you might have selected some more important character for me, Ella."

"Now don't pout, child, or it will spoil your expression for the evening. Your part just fits your years and your face. When both get a little older, your turn will come for more decided characters."

"And what character is Rusha to take?" inquired Guy, who, with Tom, had just lounged into the room.

"O, of course, it is something nobody but Rusha would have thought of. She's to be Ruth gleanng among sheaves—a character which doesn't afford the slightest opportunity for elegant costume. I'm not certain, however, but it will suit her style,"

glancing doubtfully at her sister, who stood before the mirror, in a cloud of dark floating hair.

"That's a capital hit," asserted Tom. "Just the thing for Rusha."

And in the midst of all this hum and flutter, the front door opened and shut so heavily that they heard it above their chatter, and a moment after footsteps ascending the stairs.

"Why, is that your father home so early!" exclaimed Mrs. Darryll, as she caught the sound.

The next moment the door opened, and John Darryll stood there, looking on his family, but with such a look as none of them had ever seen on his face before. It was ashen gray, as though some sudden shame or terror had shocked all the life out of it. His lips were set and white.

He stood there, several moments, looking at his wife and his children without speaking one word, but with that awful something in his face; and then he turned and went down stairs with slow, heavy steps, that had a terrible sound to the listeners — he, the brisk, alert man!

They looked at each other with scared faces. "What does it mean?" one asked, and then another.

"Something dreadful has happened, children! I never saw your father look like that," said Mrs. Darryll. "I'm all of a tremble!"

"O, dear — how pa did glare at us all! I never was so frightened in my life," exclaimed Agnes, beginning to cry.

"I can't conceive for my life what it all means," added Tom. "You don't think he's burst up, and lost the last dollar, do you?"

"No," said Rusha, shaking her head, and her face looking paler from out its cloud of loose floating hair, "I don't think it could be that, but it was something he had not the heart or the courage to tell us."

"He's gone down into the sitting-room, and I heard him lock the door," said Guy, who stood nearest the hall.

"He didn't expect to find us up here in his room, I s'pose,"

added Ella, standing still in the middle of the floor with a heap of fine draperies across her arm. She was intending to personate Cleopatra that evening.

"We must not waste words standing here. Something terrible has happened to pa, and we must find out what it is," said Rusha, decidedly.

"It makes me shudder to think of facing that look of his!" replied Mrs. Darryll, in a piteous tone.

Rusha went over to her mother, and laid her hand entreatingly on the latter's shoulder.

"There is nobody else to whom he will be so likely to tell the truth as to you, ma; and now that some dreadful trouble has come upon pa, you will want to help him bear it."

Rusha had touched the right chord. Wifely and motherly affection would have roused the timid woman into defiance of the whole world; and when her sons and daughters united their entreaties to Rusha's, she yielded, and went down stairs, trembling in every limb, to meet her husband.

The young people huddled together about the door, listening for every sound, and the gay finery, heaped all around the chamber, made a strange contrast with their serious faces.

They heard their mother vainly turn the door knob, and then her piteous voice came up to them, —

"John — John, do let me come in!"

"Go away. I can't see you know. Leave me to myself;" and there was some suppressed anguish in the voice which chilled the breathless listeners.

Then again they heard the mother's supplicating cry, —

"John, what is the matter? I must come in. Do open the door."

Then John Darryll spoke out roughly, as he had never spoken to the wife of his youth, —

"Woman, I tell you to go away, and leave me to myself. It's of no use to stand calling there. I want to be alone — that's enough."

Mrs. Darryll came up stairs, and if her face was white, so also were those that awaited her.

"Something awful has happened to your father, children — O, what is it!" and then the poor frightened woman burst into a passion of tears.

"It can't be that he's gone suddenly crazy!" said Tom, a little under his breath.

"No, it isn't that, ails pa," answered Rusha, promptly. "Some terrible blow has come upon him. If we could only find out what it is."

"There's nobody in the world can do so much with pa as Rusha," interposed Ella. "Perhaps, if she was to go down, he would let her in."

"O, I cannot — I cannot," with a little deprecatory movement and shudder. But they all beset her now, insisting that she was the only one who could succeed with their father, and entreating her to go down and see what she could do with him. And at last they all prevailed, and Rusha said she would go.

But it was a touching sight — that face of hers, with its anxiety and fear, as it went down the long, winding stairs to meet the unknown dread that awaited her there. As she drew near the sitting-room door, she heard her father's steps going restlessly back and forth — back and forth.

"Pa, it is I — Rusha. Do not send me away too!"

"How dare you persist in coming here, when I tell you I will not see one of you?"

"Because, pa, we know that some terrible thing has happened to you, and we don't want you to bear it all alone. Surely your wife and your children should share the trouble with you, whatever it is. Don't send me away, pa, for I cannot go. I must stand here pleading, until you let me come in."

"Child," said her father, with a slight softening of his voice, "you don't know what you are asking. Go away, Rusha, for I cannot face any one of you with the truth."

"But we must meet it sooner or later. I will be brave, pa, only let me come in, and put my arms about your neck, and have you tell me so" — her sudden tears surprising her here.

After a moment or two, John Darryll went to the door, unlocked it, and drew his daughter in. It seemed as though his face had aged a score of years in the last few hours. So they stood looking at each other.

"O, how can I tell you!" Out of his lips like a sharp groan the words slid.

"I can bear it; only be quick, pa!" she answered, in such a voice as a wounded man might say it, waiting for the surgeon's knife.

He took her hands in his.

"Can't you read it in your father's face, Rusha?"

"I only see something terrible there. Has all the property gone?" her thoughts naturally pointing this way as the only misfortune which could thus overwhelm her father.

"No. I could have borne that better."

What trouble could take deeper hold of John Darryll than that!

"O, father, it isn't anything about Andrew!" She knew then she had reached the truth.

"Tell me, father!" her cold fingers clutching his tightly.

And his own anguish making him, for the moment, forgetful of hers, John Darryll thrust the truth fiercely at his daughter.

"It was Andrew stole the money from the safe, and he's gone to the Tombs this afternoon for his crime!"

Rusha's shriek was not loud, but the family, huddled together up stairs, heard it, and they knew that the iron had entered her soul. She staggered back against the wall, and covered her face with her hands. So the truth broke upon her in a moment! All Andrew's conduct for the last two or three months rose up in dreadful confirmation of what her father had declared. Yet it was natural that her heart should struggle fiercely against the truth, and she shrieked out now, —

"I don't believe it, father! There is some foul wrong here."

"It's too true, my poor child! The proof is clear as daylight, and the villain has confessed the crime himself. O, what a fool I have been not to see — and yet he was my own

son — how could I suspect it of him!" groaned the father, as he paced the floor.

"Have you seen him?"

"No, not since the arrest — that happened when I was out; at my own office, too, before all the clerks!"

Rusha grasped the chair and steadied herself, for everything grew dark and dizzy as the awful sin and shame that had fallen on their house rushed upon her. What happened for the next quarter of an hour she nor her father ever seemed able to recollect.

At last she said to him, lifting up the pale, drooping face over which, during the last hour, a storm of grief and agony had swept, —

"Father, they will have to be told!"

"I can't do it. Think of your mother, Rusha!" groaned the strong man.

Then the father and daughter looked at each other again, silently; but each knew what was in the thought of the other. At last she said — "I think I could do it, father, if you will walk with me to the stairs. O, dear God! — dear God! help me! — help us all!"

And, in a blind way, John Darryll's heart echoed this prayer as, poor man! it had never echoed one in all his life before.

At last she rose up, and said she was ready. He led her to the stairs, blaming himself all the time for laying on her slight shoulders the burdens that his man's strength could not carry, but yet unable to gird his courage for the task. When they reached the stairs, however, he said, looking in her face — "It is too bad, my daughter, to put this on you; I will do it myself."

But she saw that he hoped she would refuse his offer, and she shook her head, and went up stairs in a blind, groping way.

It was hard to face them all when she opened the door, and to meet the anxious, wondering gaze, that asked what nobody had courage to; for each saw with the first glance that she brought no comfort.

Rusha went straight over to Mrs. Darryll. "Dear mother, we will all help you to bear it," she said, in a tone whose very pity made all their hearts stand still.

"But what is it, Rusha? Has John lost his last dollar?" cried the pale, trembling mother.

"No; it is worse than that; it is about Andrew."

"About Andrew!" Every voice in the room took up the chorus.

"What has happened? Is my boy killed?" the mother cried out, sharply.

"It is worse — O, a thousand times worse than that!"

They were all thunderstruck into a moment's silence, and Rusha knew that it must come now. "*Andrew is in the Tombs! It was he who robbed the safe!*"

For a moment not one of her audience could comprehend the awful truth. The first sound they heard was an hysterical laugh from Ella, as her nerves gave way under the shock.

Then Mrs. Darryll sprang up, with a fierce light in her eyes. "It is a lie — a foul, shameful lie!" she shrieked. "My boy never was a thief!" and she sank down in strong convulsions on the floor.

And with the sound of that heavy fall, John Darryll knew that the truth was out at last, and forgetting everything else, he rushed up to the help of his wife.

What that night was to the Darryll family, you can imagine better than I can write — imagine all the excitement, and agony, and shame that filled it.

The heaps of splendid finery, scattered on all sides, formed a strange background to the white faces which moved amongst them, utterly unmindful of the things, which, a few hours ago, had completely held possession of their souls. Sometimes one would break out in passionate sobs, sometimes another; then they would all huddle together in a strange quiet, completely paralyzed by the dreadful tidings.

They insisted that they did not believe Andrew was guilty long after they did; for somehow a thousand circumstances

they would never have thought of, rose up in this new light to corroborate his crime. They remembered how loud he had been in his denunciations of the guilty party, and yet how frequently he had left the house when the robbery had been the subject of conversation; above all, they recalled that little jest of Ella's, which had touched the core of the truth; and Rusha remembered, with a sick pang, the look which had dropped so guiltily away from hers on the morning when she had that talk about the unknown criminal and his family. No wonder it was more than he could bear! As for Mrs. Darryll, she lay in a heavy stupor all that night, for they were obliged to administer opiates to keep her quiet; but she moaned restlessly, and would frequently start up and cry out for her boy in a way that was pitiful to hear.

And while the truth had fallen with the crash of a thunderbolt upon the souls of his brothers and sisters, they could not help dwelling with mingled feelings of pity and horror upon the wretched youth, locked up in his lonely cell at the Tombs.

It is not necessary to follow the successive steps which led detective Thorp to the arrest of Andrew Darryll. To use the figure of the policeman, "after he had once struck the trail of the fox, it was an easy matter to hunt him down."

The young man had gambled deeply, and his fast habits of life had involved him heavily in debt. In order to escape from the pressure of his creditors, he had plunged into numerous speculations, which promised to quadruple his money. One by one the fair bubbles had broken, and at last, goaded to desperation, he was enticed into putting up a margin of twenty thousand dollars—a sum which he could only obtain by robbing his father.

Andrew Darryll was the victim of sharper villains than himself, and from day to day he was beguiled into the belief that a "sudden turn in the tide would land him triumphantly on the shores," at which time he always promised his conscience to return the money which he had "borrowed" of his father.

But the toils were all the time closing around the miserable

youth. The one creditor to whom he had been obliged to confide his guilt, in order to secure a brief respite from his persecutions, was at last frightened into betraying him, and the facts were so clear at the time of young Darryll's arrest, that he saw there was no use in attempting to deny his crime, and on his own confession he was committed to the Tombs.

All these things Andrew's horrified brothers and sisters learned that night, as they could gather it from their father. What a different evening from the gay, brilliant scene on which all their imaginations had been regaling that day—that day, that had such a different and terrible ending! There was the guilt of Andrew's crime, which, of course, shocked every one of them; and then there was added to it all the shame, the publicity, and the disgrace of the thing.

"And it will all be in the papers to-morrow," sobbed poor Ella, in a corner of the sofa, off from which she had been obliged to toss a heap of elegant laces and draperies in order to bestow herself there. "I wish we could all run off, and hide ourselves in a cave for the rest of our days!"

As for John Darryll, all parental affection seemed turned to bitterness in the case of his son; and when Rusha, who carried herself with more steadiness and courage than any of the others, through all this awful scene, inquired what he intended to do, he answered, fiercely—"I intend to make that young rascal taste a little of the suffering he has brought down on all our heads. He shall find how good it is to lie in prison for a while. I presume he expects that I'll get him out to-morrow morning; but he'll learn the old man's made of tougher stuff than he's thought of. To rob me and then throw dust in my eyes, as he has done! the young rascal; but he shall smart for it before he gets through!"

"O, pa," pleaded Rusha, "you'll withdraw the prosecution, for all our sakes; you won't let Andrew go to prison?"

And so pleaded, for the culprit, every son and daughter of John Darryll. But the father was inexorable; he would promise nothing; indeed, it almost seemed as though in his

grief and rage he took a stern delight in the thought of the punishment that was to come down on the head of the son who had so dishonored him. "That's what he's counted on all the time — that family pride would step in and save him; but he'll find it won't go down with me," John Darryll would only answer to the tears and entreaties of all his children; and at last he ended by peremptorily ordering them all to their rooms.

"There's one thing," sobbed Agnes, as she placed her arm around Ella, for this common grief seemed to draw the whole family closer together — "when ma comes back to herself, she won't let poor Andrew go to prison."

"I don't know, Agnes; if Rusha can't do anything with pa, there's little hope for anybody else."

What a miserable time it was under the stately roof that night! How the thought of the dark, low cell, where the eldest son and brother lay in dishonor and crime, drove sleep from the eyes of every one of them.

In the morning Mrs. Darryll awoke to a full realization of the position of her son. The poor mother was almost frantic; but her husband, although he tried to soothe her in every possible way, could not be prevailed upon to make any promises for taking active measures to release Andrew immediately from the consequences of his crime.

"The punishment that he has brought down upon his own head is the only thing that will bring that wretched boy to his senses," was all that John Darryll could be induced to say.

So the breakfast, at which Mrs. Darryll was unable to be present, passed off silent, and almost untasted, while the family underwent a fresh humiliation in seeing from the faces of the servants that they already knew what had transpired.

Mr. Darryll stood before the grate-fire, drawing on his gloves, and shrinking, for the first time in his life, from the ordeal of going out and facing his fellow-men on every side, knowing that they would look at him and whisper among themselves that he was the father of a thief.

And while he thought of this, the fires of his wrath burned

fierce against his son, and drank up for a while all the springs of parental love that still lay strong and deep in his soul.

Suddenly Rusha broke out into a fit of passionate crying. Nobody spoke for a few moments, understanding too well the cause of her grief, and at last she sobbed out — "O, pa, I was thinking of the time when Andrew and I were little things, and you used to give us a ride every morning in the wheelbarrow from the wood-shed to the old barn-door. What a merry time we used to have, and what a pretty little fellow he was, with his dimpled, laughing face, and the yellow curls shaking all around it! O, if we had looked forward to this day, and seen where he is now — where he is now! —" her sobs choking her.

John Darryll walked to the table, and there rose before him, as in a vision, the sweet face of his eldest son, as it laughed up to him from the old wheelbarrow, in the days when he was a proud and happy father. All his sternness, all his hot anger vanished before that picture, and he leaned down his head on the table, and the strong man cried like a child, and one by one his children went out, as though by some instinct, and left him and Rusha alone together, and she stole up to him, and put her arm around his neck.

At last, he drew her down to him. "Rusha, my daughter, you are the greatest comfort your father has in the world," he said, and the words that grew out of his great anguish were the sweetest he had ever spoken to her, and then he leaned down and kissed her cheek, and went out without speaking another word; but Rusha knew for all that, that her father would withdraw the prosecution, and that Andrew was saved from prison.

CHAPTER XXI.

DURING the three days which followed that night, which would never cease to come back sometimes and haunt, with its awful horror, the memory of the Darrylls, nothing was heard from Andrew. The prosecution was withdrawn, and the young man was, of course, set at liberty; but no one of his family wondered that he had not the courage to show his face in the home he had so disgraced, while his brothers and sisters still regarded him with feelings that alternated betwixt indignation and shame, pity and horror.

During this time the story became public, and was a prolific theme of discussion in all quarters where the Darryll family was known. The facts were paraded in the papers, and although the name was suppressed, everybody knew who was the guilty party.

Of course the comments which the crime elicited were as varied as the natures who made them; but there was a pervading lack of charity in most of these. Somehow, people never seemed to realize that they each stood in the slippery places of the world, and that the sudden storm might come down and overwhelm them in all their fancied ease and security, just as it had the Darrylls. And then all that great class of envious and jealous persons—all those who half unconsciously feel that the prosperities and successes of others are a wrong done to themselves, experienced a secret complacency in the humiliation which had overtaken the Darrylls.

What a very small leaven of sympathy there was in the buzz of talk that went to and fro—how much unacknowledged satisfaction in the virtuous horror with which the fashionable friends of the Darrylls commented on Andrew's crime, and on

the confusion and shame which he had brought down on his family—how many of them seemed to delight to hold the whole responsible for the guilt of one, and how many “hoped that now the Darrylls had had such a lesson they would take warning, and not carry themselves in future with so many airs; or hold their heads quite so high above people who, if they hadn't quite so much money, had, at least, the virtue of honesty!”

And in all this indignant talk one could easily see that the head and front of the Darrylls' offence was in enjoying and making a display of the wealth, which, had the others possessed it, they would certainly have done to an equal extent.

But all this time the family was, happily, unconscious of the animadversions heaped upon it. Mrs. Darryll had been confined to her room since the terrible shock, and none of her daughters had been outside the door, shrinking from the curious gaze of people, and speaking to each other in low voices, and walking about the house in that intangible shadow of disgrace which is worse than the shadow of death!

As the days went by, however, and Andrew did not present himself, the question what had become of him began to be uppermost in the thoughts of all his family. Mr. Darryll once hoped that “the young rascal would never darken his doors again;” but his wife cried out, in a voice of sharp entreaty,—

“Don't, John, don't ever say that again, unless you want to break my heart outright!” and he never was heard to repeat this remark; indeed, Rusha did not believe her father really meant it at the time, and suspected that he felt a secret anxiety about his recreant son which would have been relieved by seeing him return to his home.

As for Rusha, her solicitude regarding her brother increased with every day of his absence. She felt that he had reached a great crisis of his life, and that if he did not turn now, suddenly and absolutely, from his evil courses, Andrew Darryll was lost. She understood, and, to a degree, sympathized with the feelings which kept him away from his home, and she knew, too, that in his humiliation and misery he would be likely to turn and

drown these in the wine-cup, and the society of boon companions; and so, following the "fearful logic of evil," he would sink lower and lower until he was utterly wrecked. She saw, too, how much, at this time, the young, weak soul required the bracing influences of family love and forgiveness — how he needed its strength and shelter around him when he went out into the world once more, with his soiled youth and blighted name, to live down both, if it might be.

How her heart yearned over him, until she forgot the grief he had brought upon them all, in pity for him; and over and over she said to herself, "We must save him! O, we must save him!"

And one night, when she lay awake revolving all these things in her mind, and wondering whether Andrew might not leave the city at once, and seek to bury himself away from the knowledge of them all, a suggestion of his going to Europe, suddenly flashed across her with the force of conviction. The more she turned the matter over in her thoughts, the more probable it seemed to her.

She remembered that he had often of late talked about a "fellow's seeing a little of the world," and dropped hints of going to Paris, and things of that sort, which, at the time, nobody minded, but which now recurred to her with new meaning. Rusha reflected that Andrew would thus escape from much that would be gall and bitterness to his soul if he remained at home — that he had friends abroad, who, as he was esteemed "a good fellow" among them, would regard his crime as a venial one, and be likely to use their influence to get him into some commercial house among themselves. Perhaps he had already started, Rusha thought, and then it flashed across her again, that the steamer sailed on the next day.

If she could only ascertain — only see him once before he left; but there seemed no way of doing this. If she suggested the matter to any of her family, they would probably regard it as visionary, and in case her father was sufficiently impressed to visit the steamer, Rusha feared that an interview betwixt parent and child would be prolific of more mischief than good, for

though the father in John Darryll had triumphed over his wrath sufficiently to spare his son from the consequences of his crime, he still manifested great bitterness when he alluded to him.

The young girl lay tossing on her bed thinking over all these things, and unable to see a path out of any of the difficulties. But Rusha Darryll was not one to easily abandon a desire when it had once taken possession of her, especially when affection and duty brought their impelling forces to its achievement; and she at last resolved to confide her suspicions to nobody, but take matters entirely into her own hands.

She laid her plans to take the cars that very morning, and go down to the pier whence the steamer sailed, and ascertain whether Andrew's name was amongst the list of passengers; if it was, he should not leave without seeing her; and so at last, exhausted in mind and body with all this harrowing thought, Rusha fell into a heavy sleep.

The next morning there came out of the front door and stood a few moments on the steps, the figure of a woman with her face hidden behind a thick veil. Some doubt must have seized her there, for she stood irresolute a few moments, one gloved hand, unconsciously, at play with the railing.

At last she turned away, and entered the house, and went straight to Mrs. Darryll's room, startling the lady by her singular disguise.

"Mother," said Rusha, throwing aside her veil, "I did not expect to tell you what I am about to do, because I feared, in the first place, that you would disapprove of it, or, in the second, if my plan should fail, that you would be disappointed. But at the last moment my heart misgave me. If I should succeed, you might have sent some message by me; so I have come back to tell you what nobody else in the world suspects. Mother, I am going in search of Andrew!"

Poor Mrs. Darryll! These last days had made sad ravages with her face, bearing witness how heavily the blow had fallen on her heart. She lifted her head up from the cushions of her easy chair, her eyes full of eagerness, her hands trembling: —

"O, Rusha, where is he — what have you heard?"

"Nothing as yet. Do try and be calm, mother;" and Rusha sat down by Mrs. Darryll, and told her of the strong impression which had seized her during the night, and how she had resolved that the next steamer should not go out without ascertaining whether Andrew was on board.

Perhaps Rusha's earnestness and conviction infected her mother; at all events, contrary to the former's expectation, Mrs. Darryll entered eagerly into the project.

"And O, if you see Andrew," she sobbed, "tell him his mother loves him still — that she'll stand by him if all the rest of the world deserts him — that he's her dear, darling boy, no matter what he's done, nor what trouble comes to him, and that all the world can't turn her away from him, and that he may be certain, wherever he goes, and whatever comes, that there's one place in the world that will never change, and that will always be ready and waiting for him, and that is his mother's heart. You'll tell him, Rusha?"

And through it all there was not one reproach for the sin and woe he had wrought!

"Yes," said Rusha, trying to command herself amid her tears; but she thought if those words did not heap coals of fire hotter than any reproaches on Andrew Darryll's soul, then he must be dead to all love and all shame.

"And look here, Rusha," as the daughter rose up, and her mother pressed a purse into her hand; "you must give this to Andrew, for he's going off there among strangers, and he'll want it. Your father gave it to me, that very day, to get a new watch, that I fancied down town; but I don't want it now, and Andrew shall have it. Tell him mother sent her forgiveness and blessing with it."

Rusha held the purse doubtfully a moment, but she looked at her mother, and could not remonstrate. As she reached the door, Mrs. Darryll called her back and kissed her. "It's for Andrew!" she said.

An hour later, Rusha Darryll stood on the deck of the

steamer, which was to start that noon for Liverpool. The small, lonely, veiled figure had made its way, as best it could, through the crowd of cabmen, through the piles of goods, through all the noise, and bustle, and confusion which always attend the departure of a steamer for Europe. But these once passed, and, trembling and exhausted, her feet landed on the steamer, poor Rusha's heart failed her. The whole purpose which had brought her here seemed now to grow visionary as a myth, and she really had not the courage to go up to the office and put the question on which everything depended.

So she wandered among the elegant saloons, glancing through the folds of her veil at strange faces, and at groups of people, all of whom were too much absorbed to notice her, while her heart sank lower every moment, as the figure for which she searched seemed to vanish farther away.

But as she reached the end of the large saloon, and was about retracing her steps, a voice struck her which made her start, a voice just outside the door. There was a low, murmured reply, and then again those familiar tones coming through the half-opened door. Rusha burst through it, and sprang out on the guards. There stood Andrew by the railing, with his back towards her, talking with some young girl, whose head was bowed down as though she was weeping.

"O, Andrew!" not a loud cry, but one full of hungry pain and joy as it broke from her lips. The young man sprang up as one suddenly shot; so did his companion, and faced Rusha a moment with her bewildered gaze — a young, rather pretty girl, in a somewhat showy dress and bonnet.

"Rusha!" the name dropped from Andrew's lips mechanically, and his whole face was white as though sudden death had blanched it. At that word his companion hurriedly disappeared; and, in the strong joy and bitterness of the moment, Rusha did not think of her. She sprang forward and clung to her brother, trying to speak, but all the while her sobs choking her.

As for him, there was no doubt he was strongly affected as

the sobbing, trembling figure clung to his side. Which spoke first, nobody knew, but Andrew's earliest inquiry was in a whisper: —

"Who told you? — how did you find me out here, Rusha?"

"Nobody; it must have been my own heart, Andrew!"

"Who came with you?" glancing around in a hurried, frightened way — the way, alas, of guilt!

"I came alone. O, Andrew, did you think I could let you go off so without coming to find you!"

He did not speak for a moment. She felt the strong young frame shake to and fro by her side; then, anybody, whose eyes were not dimmed as hers by thick weeping, might have seen the blood blaze up suddenly into the pallor of his face.

"You know, Rusha, what I have done — what I am?" whispered Andrew Darryll.

"Yes, I know all, Andrew." Her tones keyed to his. She felt him lean heavily against her, as though there were some strength and comfort for him in her very presence.

"I supposed you would never want to see me afterwards."

"O, Andrew, did you think that I — that we all loved you so little as that?"

I think that Andrew Darryll never realized the extent of his crime until that moment — nor realized, too, what this family love was, against which he had so sinned, and which was yet, out of its great fulness, so ready to shelter and forgive all. It completely overcame him. He burst into a fit of miserable crying: —

"O, Rusha, I wish I was dead!" but through all, his grasp never let her go, as though she was the one anchor to which his weak soul could cling in all the world.

Perhaps it was as well that no words came to Rusha just then. She only cried with him.

At last he whispered — "How did they bear it at home? Tell me the whole."

And she did, every word — seeing he asked her, and it was in her very nature to be truthful — every word — from the

moment that her father came up stairs and looked in, with that awful face of his, upon their bustle and gayety; and although she saw what torture it cost him to hear of the wretchedness he had brought upon them all, something in her brother's face told her to go on.

When she was through, he asked hurriedly — "But the prosecution was withdrawn next day?"

He was completely broken down when she came to tell him of that little, homely scene in his childhood, which she had recalled, of his sitting by her side in the old wheelbarrow, and riding back and forth in childish glee from the great barn-door to the wood-shed; and in a great stress of shame and remorse the words were sobbed out, —

"If I had only died then, Rusha!"

But after all, she was not sure that the thing which struck deepest into Andrew Darryll's soul were not those last messages of his mother's. How she got through with them she never could remember.

"O, Rusha," the young man groaned out at last, "if I had only known how you all loved me, I should not have been what I am to-day!"

"Perhaps we never any of us knew until now. Come home and try us!"

Every nerve in his frame quivered as from a sudden shock. "Rusha, do you think I am so lost to all feeling for you, to say nothing of myself, as to go back and encounter what I must in my own land, among my own people, whom I have so dishonored?"

In his whole life, Rusha Darryll had never heard her brother speak with so much force and dignity. There was weight, too, in his reasoning. Rusha felt that, looked at from almost any point of view, this going abroad seemed almost the best thing that Andrew could do.

A few questions drew out all his plans. He was going, as she suspected, to Paris, where he said he had some friends, and could get into some business.

"But it is a dreadful wicked city — no Sabbaths, no God. O, Andrew, my poor brother, what will become of you?"

"They haven't all saved me here," he answered, bitterly enough.

"But, Andrew, you will remember us at home — you will think at least of your poor broken-hearted mother; and you will remember, too, that one of your sisters will never rise up in the morning, never go to her sleep at night, without praying God to keep you through all the fiery temptations in which I know your daily life will lie. Do say you will not forget it, Andrew, or it seems to me I shall die."

He bent down his head on the railing — "Rusha, if anything in this world can save me, it will be the thought of you."

And it argued well for the depth of Andrew's repentance that in all this he did not seek to excuse himself. He told Rusha the whole story, insisting throughout that he had intended to refund the money, before its withdrawal should have transpired, and making her shudder in every limb when she found how close to suicide his despair and desperation had goaded him.

His eyes glared even now with a fierce light, and his whole frame shook, as the memory of that awful temptation rushed over him.

At last the bell rang. There was little time remaining. "You will give my love to them all at home, and ask them all to forgive me — especially mother!" his lips quivering over the name, and all the old smartness and swagger gone from Andrew Darryll.

"Yes, dear boy. Now take good care of yourself. O, here is ma's purse, and a little change of mine that I happened to have by me. You'll need it all over there, Andrew."

"I don't feel as though I ought to take it, Rusha. I mean to carve out my own way now."

But she pressed it on him.

"And you'll be sure and write?" trying to keep her voice brave and cheerful, although it was one of those finely-toned

instruments, in too close harmony with her feelings not to betray her. "And you'll remember — O, Andrew, you know what I mean?"

"Rusha, after the solemn promise that I made you long ago on my sick bed, can you have any faith in me when I tell you now that I mean to *try*?"

She stroked his hair without speaking one word.

"Rusha — little Rusha, you are the best sister a brother ever had!"

"I wish I had been a great deal better one."

As Rusha said these words, she caught a glimpse of the strange face that she remembered now to have seen in conversation with her brother, and this time it looked anxiously out of the saloon door and then vanished.

"Andrew, who is that girl you were talking with?"

He looked at her and was dumb. How could Andrew Darryll let his delicate, pure-hearted sister glance down any deeper into the black gulf of his sin and shame! But his look told her all. This last shock seemed more than she could bear. A sick faintness went over her, and she dropped her face into her hands and groaned aloud.

And Andrew Darryll felt in that hour that all his sins had found not only him out, but those who loved him best, to overwhelm them with shame and agony.

"Rusha," he faltered, "she is not so bad as many of them, and she only came down here to say good by to me. We shall never see each other again."

Rusha wrung her hands. "Her house is the way to hell!" speaking the first words that came to her. "And you are going off to that wicked land where these things are not looked upon as sin. O, what will become of you, Andrew!"

The last bell was ringing. The people were all hurrying off; and in the great shock and bewilderment of her anguish, Rusha turned to go without another word.

A beseeching voice followed her. "Rusha, will you leave me so?"

Then she turned. The love, stronger than life, deeper than all her loathing and horror, triumphed still. She sprang upon her brother's neck, and covered his face betwixt her hot tears with kisses. Then — there was no more time to spare — she turned and went away.

But after she had gained the pier, she came suddenly face to face with the girl — the girl with the rather pretty features and the showy dress — who was just stepping off the plank, and had probably found time for a last parting word with Andrew Darryll.

Rusha stood still, and in the wrath, and loathing, and horror of that moment, she longed to fly at the girl and stamp her in the dust, or tear her in pieces. Such emotions had never before raged through the soul of Rusha Darryll; but you must remember she was thinking of her brother, and laying his sin at this girl's door.

She was fairly frightened when she came to herself, and she stood on the pier and watched the steamer sweep out into the river, and thought with a sinking heart of him who was carrying far away, to a strange land, the name he had left soiled and dishonored among his own people; and so, with her blinding tears choking her, she turned and went home.

Poor Rusha! It had been one of those mornings which never leaves as it found us — which takes some of the freshness and joy out of life, and sobers and saddens us for all the years that are to come.

That Rusha's whole family was electrified with the tidings which she carried home that day, is saying very little. They were all deeply impressed and affected with her last interview with Andrew, and from that hour Rusha's judgment and presence had new weight with the whole household.

Her father did not, in so many words, approve or disapprove of her visit to the steamer; still, when she had finished her relation, and he drew her to him, while her mother and most of the others were sobbing or crying silently, and said, in a voice not just steady, "My daughter, you have been a good girl!" everybody knew what he thought and felt.

Perhaps Andrew Darryll had chosen the best course that he could, in going abroad and seeking to build up a new name. While his crime was still fresh in the thought of all men, he must have had to encounter much that would have stung and galled him on every side, and from which all his father's wealth and the position it afforded could not save him; and to his own family his presence could have been nothing else than a constant shame and reproach, for, as Rusha had said, "No man liveth to himself." And though in the new life to which he went, the young, weak soul must walk the paths of fiery temptations, still these could hardly be more dangerous than the old associations which he had left behind.

"Sometimes," said Rusha, after she had told all she had to tell, and they had talked it over for hours, "sometimes I've almost wished that pa had never made this fortune, and that we were just poor folks, living on in the old way, in the little home, a happy, unbroken family, just as we were before any of this grief and misery came upon us. It was the money, after all, that was at the bottom of poor Andrew's going wrong, and when I've thought of that, I've asked myself, *Whether it Paid* — after all, *WHETHER IT PAID*."

Her words had, in their present softened mood, a weight with father and mother, brothers and sisters, that they could not possibly have carried in any other. For a little while nobody answered her, and at last Agnes spoke up in a half timid way, —

"But you know, Rusha, the money's got us a great many nice things."

At any other time they would certainly have laughed; but nobody saw the joke now.

"I know it has, Aggie, child," answered the elder sister. "I am not undervaluing the uses of money. I love the new beauty, grace and elegance, with which it has surrounded us. I see how it has enlarged our lives on every hand, opening to us new avenues of being and enjoyment, and for all this I do not think God blames us; but we didn't take the

new fortune right at the beginning—at the beginning,” she repeated to herself.

“What did we do, or fail to do?” asked Tom, very seriously.

“The riches were God’s gift, and we never acknowledged this. We never thought that a great power for good had fallen into our hands, nor sought to do any in the world with it. We only thought of what it would get for us in all directions—thought of ease and display, of splendor and luxury, and where our fortune would place us in the regard of others; but if one of us ever remembered to thank God for the new wealth, or to say, ‘What wilt thou have me to do with all this?’ I have never heard of it, and during all these dreadful days my eyes have seemed slowly to open, and the question has risen up, and followed, and haunted me everywhere, and my soul could not answer what it asked—*Whether Darryll Gap Paid?* *WHETHER IT PAID?*”

They were all silent, and in that tender, solemn moment, as never before, and as perhaps it never would again, this question of Rusha’s waited at the gates of the souls of every member of the family—*Whether Darryll Gap Paid?*—*WHETHER IT PAID?*

CHAPTER XXII.

“I’ve come to the conclusion,” said Ella Darryll, one day, addressing whatever members of her family happened to be present at the time, “that the best thing we can do about this matter of Andrew’s is just to brave it right out. Of course it was a dreadful thing; nobody can feel the disgrace of having a brother in the Tombs, and his name in every one’s mouth as a thief, more than I do. But we can’t shut ourselves up in the house the rest of our lives, for all that, and we’ve got to put a bold face on the whole thing, and go right out into the world as though nothing had happened; and the sooner we do it the better. It isn’t the first time, by any means, that folks have had to live down disgrace; and we owe it to ourselves to let the world see we’re not crushed yet.”

“I think there is a good deal of truth in what you say, Ella,” said Rusha, thoughtfully.

There undoubtedly was. The world, especially that sort of one in which the Darrylls moved, is always more or less influenced by appearances, and the very people who might condemn most loudly their want of a proper appreciation of Andrew’s guilt, would, very likely, be those who would court their society most assiduously.

Ella, too, had that kind of imperiousness of character, which, though it does not usually assimilate with a fine and sensitive nature, has a good deal of power among men and women, as it requires a certain sort of courage to set one’s self in opposition to it.

“It’s the only thing that’s left us to do,” continued the latter; “and for my part, I think four weeks are quite long enough to seclude ourselves from all mankind. I’m tired of it, too; and

all we have to do is to act as though nothing had happened, and of course nobody will allude to the thing in our presence.

"We will order the carriage and go out this very morning, Rusha; won't you go, too, ma?"

"I don't feel much like it," replied Mrs. Darryll, in a sort of languid, undecided way.

"O, now — come, ma; you'd better go with us," added Rusha. "The fresh air will do you good; and besides, you know the best way to make other people forget what Andrew has done, is not, by secluding ourselves, to constantly remind them of it."

The daughter felt that her mother's thoughts needed, if possible, to be diverted into some other channel; and she knew that the argument which would be most likely to have weight with Mrs. Darryll, at this time, would be one that afforded a prospect of some benefit to her eldest son.

"I s'pose likely it would be the best thing we could do for that poor, dear, foolish boy!" answered the mother, with a good deal more animation than her previous answer had displayed.

"And I'm not certain," continued Ella, still further strengthened in her opinion by the readiness with which her family had acted on it, "but the best thing we can do now is to go the whole figure, and give a great party — have a real smash, you know, which will be a sort of tacit proclamation to the world, that we don't intend to let Andrew's affair take us down a particle. It strikes me that this will be just doing the thing up brown. What do you say, Rusha?"

"I do think a good deal of the world's respect, but on the whole I think more of my own, and if one is to be retained at such a sacrifice of the other, as giving a great party at this crisis, why, the world must go."

"I can't see, for the life of me, what connection giving a party has with your self-respect, or the loss of it," added Ella, a little crest-fallen.

"How can you help 'seeing,' Ella, the ill taste and vulgarity,

to put it on no higher grounds, of giving a grand party just at this juncture! It would be outraging the moral sense of every really worthy and honest person in the community. For my part, I had rather the world should know that I felt too deeply my brother's guilt and shame to indulge in anything of that sort at this time."

"Well, I didn't expect to enjoy the thing; I only suggested it as a matter of policy," rejoined Ella, half in self-defence, for Rusha had put the matter in a light that left it no longer open to discussion.

As she was descending the stairs an hour later, dressed for her ride, Rusha met Tom, who had just come in.

"What does all this mean?" asked the young man, a good deal startled at her appearance, as he had not been present at the family decision that morning.

"It means, Tom, that we've resolved to seclude ourselves no longer on account of Andrew. We've the ordeal of braving the world to go through, and the longer we put it off, the harder, of course, it will be. People will make their comments either way, and it is as well, perhaps, to let them see at once we shall not be influenced by them."

"That's so."

"But I dread going out, for all that."

"I understand it, Rusha. You feel just as I did that first day about going down town. It seemed to me that I never could look anybody in the face; but it passed off after a while. Never you mind, only be brave."

She smiled her thanks on him for the kindly advice, and went on down stairs without speaking a word. But before she reached the landing, she turned back and called her brother, for he was not yet out of hearing. Tom came at once.

"O, Tom," in a swift, agitated voice, "I want to say to you that you stand in poor Andrew's place now; that you are the eldest son; that the birthright which he has in a sense betrayed has fallen on you. You will be faithful to it? You will not wring our hearts some day as he has done? It would kill me

if you should—I could never go through another scene like that on the steamer. I know I should die!” clinging to him and crying as the awful memory came back on her.

Tom was visibly affected. The tears were thick in his eyes too. “Rusha,” he said, “I will try to stand to you all in poor Andrew’s place; but you do not believe that I shall turn out like him—you have more faith in me than that?”

“Yes, I have, Tom; only, after such a terrible thing, it is natural we should all tremble for each other; but you know how it was in ancient times—when the eldest brother lost his birthright by death, or worse, the next took his place. And now Andrew’s mantle has fallen on you. O, Tom, wear it more worthily!”

Just then she heard the carriage wheels on the curbstones, and Ella’s voice calling her. She put her wet cheek to Tom’s a moment, and then went down, and her brother went to his room, with Rusha’s words deep in his soul; and he sat down and thought for the next hour just as he had never, in his loud, careless youth, done before—the thoughts that, at his age, are the seed which, ripening along the slopes of the years, bear, in the summer of manhood their harvests of brave, true words and deeds.

The trial through which they had passed had not been without its influence upon the Darryll family, in various ways, and, on the whole, for the better. Even Guy, who had formerly made Andrew his model, no longer affected the fast young man in his manners; and when he was tempted to grumble at the new interest which his father manifested in all his habits and resorts, and his stern interdiction of all late hours—even Guy remembered his eldest brother, and was silent.

This common grief had drawn them all closer together, and indicated itself in a new gentleness and thoughtfulness of manner, each towards the other; but the leaven was working in Rusha’s heart and soul as it could not in any of her family. Every moment of that terrible interview on board the steamer had made a vital impression on her; but one memory had taken

a deeper hold than all the others. It was one that she could share with none of her people. How could she tell her young brothers and sisters, how could she tell her father and mother, of that deep mire of guilt with which Andrew Darryll had slimed his soul? Heart and tongue would fail her to speak of it.

But Rusha Darryll could not thrust away from her the thought of those last moments with Andrew, though she verily believed it defiled her memory to recall them. And the old shuddering and recoil always came back upon her when she remembered the face of the young girl who had followed her off the vessel.

And at last, through all the inevitable pain and horror with which this scene returned to her, there grew in Rusha’s thoughts, so slowly that she was unconscious of it herself, a kind of shuddering interest and pity for this girl, as young as herself, linked with her in the needs of a common womanhood, with one God and one eternity waiting at the end for them both.

And this girl, carrying all that dreadful burden of sin and guilt on her young soul, had been once an innocent, pure-hearted, happy little child like herself. Rusha wondered if she had ever had a chance in the world—a father, or mother, or any friend to tell her what was right or wrong. Perhaps, after all, she was not so much sinning as sinned against. She knew that she could still love her brother, with a love mighty as life itself, through all her knowledge of his share in the guilt; and why should she visit so much heavier condemnation on this girl, who was not, perhaps, in the Eye whose gaze sounds the depths of all human souls, the guiltier of the two?

Rusha used to awake from thoughts like these. She was afraid—poor child!—that their existence proved something wrong in herself—the common verdict of society, the conventionalisms amid which she had been brought up, so utterly ignored these lost souls among her sex, that it almost seemed a sin even to pity them. But one day Rusha remembered Who had not forgotten even these when He came with His glad tidings for “the uttermost” of men and women—the glad

tidings which have rung down ever since their silver sweetness through all the tumult and travail of the ages!

And with that thought some new feeling struggled up into life beneath all the associations and conventional opinions which overlaid her sentiments on this subject. The old, revolting horror with which she had shrank on board the steamer from the thought of that young, lost thing, was superseded by a kind of yearning pity — a wish that she could do something for her help and succor, and a sort of hope that she might, so, in a measure, atone for her brother's guilt.

Other thoughts followed in the train of this one. What right had she to visit on the head of this girl a condemnation so much heavier than she did on her brother? What an awful sin lay at the door of her own sex in all matters of this kind! How would gentle, pure-hearted girls marry men whose victims they held in such utter abhorrence as to regard it a shame to so much as speak of them! Did not woman owe something to womanhood here, bruised, fallen, defiled though it was?

And so the fire burned secretly in the soul of Rusha Darryll, and the questions laid bare betwixt her own soul and God had no answer, until suddenly there came a time to prove what fibre was in them — whether they were of the sort that would only infloresce in beautiful fancies and dreams, or whether they would ripen into strong, noble deeds.

CHAPTER XXIII.

RUSHA was down town one day on some shopping expedition, and, quite unusually, alone; some trifling engagement of one sort and another having prevented any of her family from accompanying her.

Having despatched her errands, she had just resumed her seat in the carriage for the drive home, and the coachman was closing the door, when she caught a glimpse on the sidewalk of two young girls in showy bonnets, who the next moment had disappeared among the crowd; but in that swift glance Rusha had identified the girl with the "rather pretty features," whom she had seen on board the steamer.

With that swift impulsiveness which, whether for good or evil, you have seen was a part of her nature, she burst open the door, and bounded out from the carriage, calling back to the bewildered coachman — "Stay there until I return;" and she hurried up Broadway.

She was quite breathless when she overtook the girls at last, and too excited to consider her form of address. She laid her hand on the shoulder of the younger, saying — "Won't you come with me a moment? I have something of importance to say to you."

The girl thus addressed started in amazement, and glanced up at Rusha's face. It was evident that she, too, recognized her, by her scared look, as she shrank back, and faltered out, in a frightened way — "You must excuse me from going with you; I haven't time this morning."

"O, but I beg that you will not refuse me; it is something, as I said, very important to us both, and I may never have another chance to see you. Do come! You will not be sorry, I think."

Rusha's eagerness gave a force to her manner which it was hard to resist. It fairly compelled the girl against her own will, for there was certainly reason enough why she should shrink from an interview with the sister of Andrew Darryll.

But with Rusha's hand on her arm, the girl was constrained to yield; and she did without uttering another word, leaving her companion standing on the sidewalk, watching them both, in blank amazement.

The first thing was to secure some place for a private interview; but where was this to be found? Not at her own home, certainly, where there would be no security from observation. Rusha turned the matter rapidly over in her thoughts. It certainly seemed at first to present a formidable difficulty; but now, when she had gained the chief point, she would not be daunted by a lesser one. At last she remembered a quiet restaurant, not far off, where she, with her mother and sister, often ordered lunch when they were down town. It was easy to secure a room here, wholly to themselves.

Her mind made up, Rusha led the way rapidly, and her companion followed, not speaking a word. What would Rusha's family have done if they could have seen and understood!

So they were alone together, in the quiet little alcove chamber — this girl and the sister of Andrew Darryll! There was no doubt the former was a good deal alarmed, for her cheeks looked pale through their delicate rouge. Each took a seat mechanically, and turned and looked at the other. When she had wanted words, these had never failed Rusha Darryll; but now they seemed to forsake her, as she turned and looked at that girl, and realized the dreadful gulf betwixt them — a gulf across which she feared at the moment her hands would reach no succor nor deliverance — that girl, sitting there, with no more years than her own; but with that dreadful burden of guilt and shame on her soul. Every other feeling merged itself in the great tide of pity which surged over Rusha Darryll.

She opened her lips to speak, and instead she broke down and burst into tears, crying as though her heart would break.

"What has happened — what is the matter?" asked her companion, fairly trembling all over with alarm.

"Nothing," answered Rusha, as soon as she could command her voice; "only I was thinking that you were once a pure, innocent, happy little child, just as I was, and then I thought of what you are now — O, of what you are now!" and leaning her head on the table, she sobbed again passionately.

Something went over the girl's face — a quick flash — not exactly pain, nor terror, nor remorse, but all these together, and then Rusha heard a cry — a wail — a sound such as she had never heard in all her life before, and that she felt she must hear some time again through all her life that was to be, for she knew it was that girl's lost womanhood wailing out its remorse, and anguish, and despair.

She would have been less than woman if she could have listened unmoved; but having the heart of Rusha Darryll, that cry went down to the very quick of its pity. She forgot what the girl before her was — forgot the wrong she had done to her and hers, and only felt as, after all, woman should feel for woman, however lost and defiled; and when she heard that dreadful weeping — such a wild, awful misery in every sob — Rusha could not speak a word, but cried too. At last the other shrieked out, —

"O, I wish I was dead — I wish I was dead!"

It was awful, the way she wrung her hands.

"No, you don't; no, you don't," said Rusha, turning towards her, her face all adrip with tears. "You want to live to repent."

"Repent!" said the girl, and her voice seemed to echo far down the dreary depths of her soul. "As if there was any repentance for such as *I* am!"

"Yes, there is," the trembling eagerness of her voice surmounting her tears. "I tell you there is — and yet not I, but He who came into the world to speak forgiveness and welcome to just such as you are — and all the world cannot take that away from you."

"But they do take it away from us!" she said, turning fiercely upon Rusha. "You know there isn't a decent woman in the world that would be seen speaking to me to-day — there isn't one who, knowing what I am, would take me into her kitchen and let me work from morning until night for bread and shelter, and so give me a chance for a better life!"

"Yes, there is. Don't say that. There is nothing that I would not do — nothing I possess in the world which I would not give to save you."

The girl saw it in Rusha's face, for in that fine exaltation of pity to which she had been carried, Rusha Darryll meant every word that she said.

"Do you know who I am?" asked the girl, her voice shaded with shame or fear.

"Yes, Andrew told me; and — and it is the thought of him, too, that has made me long to find you and help you out of this dreadful life."

The girl was moved now. She leaned her face down on her hand, and a groan slid out of her lips — such a slow, wretched groan!

Then Rusha went over and sat down by her side, and took her hand as friend and equal might take another's.

"Tell me, what is your name?"

"Jane Maxwell."

"You must be very young yet — not so old as I, perhaps?"

"Not yet twenty-two."

And so Rusha drew out of the girl the story of her life. I suppose it was not an uncommon one. She had been left orphaned at an early age, and the distant relatives into whose hands she had fallen had not been kind to her. There was but one person in the world whom she had loved, and that was a widowed aunt, whom poverty alone prevented from taking the child to her home, and being in all respects a mother to her.

At last she went to learn a trade — you must remember what her training had been; and she was a foolish, giddy, light-hearted thing at the best, and with a face just pretty enough to be a snare to her.

She was thrown among circumstances which stimulated all her vanity and love of admiration, active enough at any time, and there was no one to warn her of dangers lying in wait all about her youth. At last the rather pretty face and coquettish ways attracted a man younger in years than he was in vice, and — you have the whole story.

Wise, after his master, the devil, in all the arts which could win the faith of a simple, country girl, this villain succeeded in inducing the girl, under solemn promises of matrimony, to elope with him.

His object gained, in a few weeks he tired of his victim, and Jane Maxwell awoke to a sense of the height from which she had fallen. Maddened, desperate, alone in a great city, the feeling of lost self-respect eating with its slow fire into brain and heart, no friends to take in the poor bruised soul, bind up its wounds, and save it from plunging into lower deeps. There is no need that the rest should be told — if it were only as I said, a less common one.

For the man who had wrought this girl's ruin — his character and position in the world were in no wise affected by it. Fair women — good women, as the world goes — smiled on him, showered on him flattering attentions, and at last he took to wife, with bridal feast and splendid ceremonial of marriage rites, the daughter of a retired banker on Fifth Avenue. If that, too, were only less "common"!

And yet, so surely as there is a God sitting in Heaven, and keeping His long watch over the wronged and the lonely, that girl's lost womanhood shall rise up in awful condemnation against the black crime which went unrebuked among men and women!

Rusha Darryll listened to the poor thing in silence, her whole soul torn within her betwixt pity, indignation, and horror.

When Jane Maxwell was done, Rusha rose up, and in the great passion of her pity, with the tears flowing over her cheeks, she seized both of the girl's hands. "What can I do for you, my poor child? I am ready for anything. O, I must — I will save you!"

Jane Maxwell looked at her a moment — a look that Rusha never forgot; then she cried out — “Are you a woman or an angel, sent of God to help me?”

“Nothing,” said Rusha, with another burst of tears, “but a poor sinner like yourself. I dare not think that in your case I should have been any wiser — any better. But O, believe me, as though I was that angel sent of God direct from Heaven, to tell you that there is a way of escape out of this horrible life. You would be glad to leave it, wouldn’t you?” voice and face full of beseeching, as though for her own life.

“Yes, I would — God knows I would,” sobbed Jane Maxwell. “But I haven’t a friend in this whole city, and you don’t know the snares that lie all around such as I am; and when one’s self-respect is lost — when that is all lost —” She did not get any farther.

“See here!” interposed Rusha, her faculties all alert, her thoughts clear, bright, active — “you must get straight out of this city. Fly from it, I beseech you, as you would from fire and from death close upon you. I entreat you, for the sake of the lost womanhood you may yet regain, for the sake of your immortal soul, leave this city before the day is over. Is there nobody in the world to whom you can go?”

A ray of hope, the first Rusha had seen there, struggled into the face, all broken up with tears. “Yes, if I could go back to aunt Hetty, and lay my head in her lap, and tell her all that I’d been, I know *she* wouldn’t send me away; *she’d* help me to become a good woman again; but then *she’s* a poor widow, you see, and I couldn’t throw myself a burden on her, when she has to work for her own living. I used to think I should make money enough at my trade some day, to pay off the mortgage on the little house, which would set aunt Hetty up like a queen, for it’s been the nightmare of her life since uncle died; but that can never be now; never — never!” the old despair coming into her face again, and its wail mounting into her voice.

“How much was the mortgage?” asked Rusha, quickly.

“Just fifteen hundred dollars. I had a letter from her the

other day, — for she don’t know what I’ve become, — and she said she’d paid up the interest so far, but it was the last year that she could strain soul and body to do it, and the house would have to go, and she should have no shelter for her old age. It almost broke my heart to read that!” crying drearily again.

Rusha turned and walked quickly up and down the room, not speaking. Fifteen hundred dollars was a sum that she could never command at one time. What she did must be done quickly, and how was she to raise this money on the instant? But the girl sitting there *MUST* be saved. Suddenly it flashed across her that the diamond set she wore that morning — her father’s Christmas gift — cost just that sum. She knew a jeweler to whom she could dispose of the diamonds at their value, and who would keep her secret. She turned back to the girl in a moment. “Jane Maxwell,” she said, standing still before her, “will you promise me, as before God, that if I will raise this money for your aunt, you will not linger another day — not another hour, in this city — that you will not so much as return to the place whence you came, nor see one of your old companions — that you will break away from them now and forever, and take the very next train to your aunt?”

And Jane Maxwell made her promise. I think no one who saw her face at that moment would have doubted that she meant to keep it.

“Stay here; I shall not be gone long.” Rusha went out, pausing in the hall a moment to tear the diamonds from her ears, and feeling that the flame of the jewels would burn, as it were fire, into her own soul, whenever she looked at them, remembering that they might have saved that girl from death.

Rusha was hardly absent ten minutes; when she returned, she walked straight up to Jane Maxwell. “There is the money,” she said, “to pay your aunt’s mortgage. You see I have trusted you, Jane — fully, absolutely — in spite of all which you know they say of women once lost — that they can never be believed; that, as they can have no faith in their own promises, so neither can others. It is not likely that we shall

ever meet again ; but remember this : I call God to witness betwixt you and me, standing here this hour together, that because of my brother's sin, and for your own sake also, I opened the door to you for escape — I showed you the way to take up your soiled womanhood, and make it pure, and good, and noble again, and that if you turn back to the ways which He has told you take hold on death and hell, the sin will lie at your own door ; I have done all that lies in my power to save you."

She spoke solemnly, as an angel might, standing there, made calm by the very heat and glow of her emotions.

And as though an angel was speaking as Jane Maxwell listened, and when she answered she spoke as solemnly as Rusha.

"You *will* trust me — you *do* believe me!" — her face ashy pale, but looking straight at her companion.

"Yes, I do, Jane — I believe you will do what you say ;" and forgetting who she was, she bent down and kissed the girl.

Then Jane Maxwell sank down at Rusha's feet in a great, passionate fit of weeping.

"Will you kiss me — *me*, the poor, vile, degraded thing that I am — knowing, too, what I have been to your brother? Now I know that you are an angel, for no mere woman would have done that!" and she clung sobbing to her feet.

A few moments later, Rusha went out. The coachman had been chafing with impatience for more than an hour ; but when he looked in his young mistress's face, he saw she had been crying, and said nothing, although he pondered the matter through all the drive home, without getting any new light. I do not know, reader, what you may think of all this, but I do know that Rusha Darryll will not be ashamed of that morning's work when she stands before God and His angels!

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE Darrylls had braved the world and come out victorious, the inward conflict being known only to themselves ; so results had proved the wisdom of the course which Ella had advised for the family.

There was a fresh buzz of gossip and animadversion when the Darrylls first reappeared among people, and their ten thousand friends wondered "how they could have the face to show themselves outside of their own door ;" but it often chanced that those who were loudest in their denunciations were the first to affect the society of the Darrylls ; and those who could not, shook their heads lugubriously, and remarked that "the old man's money would carry them through. What a burning shame it was that riches would sustain one in any crime in this world!" and all the old stock talk of that sort, in which, no doubt, was considerable truth, with an admixture of other elements.

The family gravitated back into the former channels of thinking, feeling, living. The old forces and habits resumed their attractions over each, and, to a superficial observer, Andrew's crime and its effects had wrought no change in the character of the household. It is true that the mother-heart of Mrs. Darryll never ceased to yearn after the eldest of her sons, and indeed he was held in a kind of pitying, shuddering remembrance by all.

Mr. Darryll was absorbed in making money, as before, and everything seemed to prosper to which he set his hand. Ella was once more deep in a whirl of fashionable gayeties, and Agnes restive under school discipline, with the example of her elder sister constantly before her eyes. Tom was shooting up

into slender young manhood, holding diligently by his studies in spite of the strong tide of circumstances which set against them.

Rusha's favorite brother was certainly the most promising of John Darryll's sons, and he grew day by day in some new thoughtfulness and manliness, which justified his sister's pride in him.

Guy grumbled inwardly at the "sharp eye the governor kept on all his movements;" but he confined the expression of his sentiments to Tom, who did not manifest any active sympathy with them.

As for Rusha, you will not suppose, for a moment, that she held herself in that fine exaltation of feeling and deed, to whose height we have seen she had risen for one hour of her life.

Alas! she had one of those natures that have a fatal tendency to sink into moods and depressions. She was by no means a symmetrical, well-balanced character. She did not understand the laws of her own being. She was chafed, restless, disgusted with herself and everybody about her, groping her slow way out of illusions of all sorts, dragged down by the gravitation of her family, and in a dim way conscious of all this, and yet not knowing how to resist the attraction; sensitive to all atmospheres, whether physical or personal; her mood taking its tone from the color of the day, or the state of the weather; lacking internal harmony, full of swift irritations and little petulances; and so, though she was of a vastly profounder and more lovable nature than Ella, she was at times a much less comfortable home companion, for the things which overcame the elder sister did not have a feather's weight with the younger; and Ella's health and spirits were always of that strong, buoyant sort, which inheres in temperaments like hers; and there was often some ground afforded by Rusha's conduct for the comment, which, nevertheless, partook of the younger sister's usual extravagance of remark, —

"I declare, Rusha, you are such a bear to-day, there is no living!"

"Am I as cross as Ella says, Tom?" asked the young girl,

turning to her brother, as her sister left the room, after the delivery of one of these unflattering opinions.

He looked at her a flash of covert amusement in his eyes at her downright way of getting at the matter.

"Pretty cross — that's a fact; but somehow I never mind it."

Rusha sat down, rested her cheek on her hand, her face in a shadow — partly thoughtfulness, partly self-reproach.

"It isn't right, Tom, and I know it, to be the fretful thing I am. But you see it's the *living* that tries me. I suppose it does everybody, more or less; but my sympathies, ideas, tastes, are so goaded and outraged, and these dark, dreadful moods come upon me like an armed man, and I seem to have no power to resist them, and I sink down, down where there is neither warmth nor light, into damp, crawling mists, whose chill strikes to the very marrow of all my hopes and aspirations; and I am so dreary, so wretched at such times, without any faith in God or hope in man, that it almost seems as though the best thing I could do was to lie right down and die!"

"O, Rusha, I tell you," said Tom, a good deal impressed with the suffering of a temperament which, with his widely different mental constitution, he could only dimly comprehend; "it's the blue devils got hold of you. That lies at the bottom of the whole thing, — depend on it. Awful fellows they are too; had a touch of 'em sometimes myself. Don't they make the world look black, though?"

"No, Tom," shaking her head sadly, and realizing how far this kindly but bungling attempt at comforting her was from reaching the core of the grief; "it isn't what you say, nor it isn't so much in the world, as it is in myself that the trouble lies. I know it all the time, and sometimes I think I should really be better if I had no high ideals for myself or anybody else, but was just satisfied with things as they are, like mother and Ella. Sometimes I really envy them, and wish I was like them."

"I don't, though — Jehoshaphat!" said Tom.

His tone and glance were unmistakable. They brought out Rusha's laugh, in all its native merriment, the swift changes

of her moods indicating the fine, intense, but undisciplined nature that through all these things was still coming into the light — into the light, as one might have seen by her next remark.

"And then, Tom, when I think of all the blessings that surround me — how I have wealth, leisure, luxury of every sort — how many there are in the world who really envy me, it seems so ungrateful to go around moody, cross, disgusted generally. You know who it is that says to us, 'Be ye *thankful*;' and I am sure that means a cheerful, grateful spirit."

"I never thought of it before — yes, I see it must, Rusha."

"O, dear!" drawing the monosyllables out on a long sigh. Tom partially understood what it meant, and his next remark showed that some new leaven had been working in him too.

"I suppose, Rusha, people who really want to be good are generally less satisfied than those who don't trouble themselves about it at all."

"It's very consoling to my self-love to have you put it in that light, Tom, you dear fellow, only," — an arch smile flashing again out of the gravity of her face, — "I don't believe it would be easy to convert Ella to that theory! But, Tom, the truth must stand against me — that is no sufficient excuse for my moods and tempers. If I had only found the key to them!"

Still, as you see, "poor Rusha" — so many of her life's

"Sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh,"

and she not comprehending the laws of her own being, nor knowing that deeper love and faith which would have soothed into harmony so many of the grating discords.

Less than a week after the above conversation the Darryll family mustered in strong force one evening at the opera, in order to hear some new prima-donna that Ella insisted their "whole set was raving about."

The next morning, at breakfast, while the whole affair was under discussion, Ella suddenly broke out with, —

"What in the world is the reason, Rusha, that you always

wear your mosaics now-a-days? I noticed last night that you didn't have your diamonds on, when it was, of all places, the one to show them off; and it was just so at the bridal reception we attended together. People who own diamonds are expected to show them."

"Well, you wear yours enough for both of us."

In her embarrassment Rusha had spoken the first words that suggested themselves to her. They were no sooner out than she saw the weakness of her defence. Ella naturally availed herself of it.

"Well, that is smart! The argument would apply equally well, to everything I do wear. Now, that is not the reason, Rusha, that you have left off your diamonds!"

She saw that everybody at the table, attracted by the imperativeness of Ella's tone, was listening. She was not good at disguises, and the truth might as well come out now as ever.

"I — I've disposed of them!"

Surprise held everybody at the table silent for a moment or two.

"Disposed of your diamonds, Rusha — pa's Christmas gift!" rejoined Ella.

"Well, I never!" ejaculated Mrs. Darryll; and she laid down her knife and fork.

"Rusha," said her father, sternly, "what have you done with your diamonds?"

She burst out suddenly into passionate weeping.

"I cannot tell you, pa," she sobbed; "only something came to my knowledge which compelled me to let them go, when it would have been an awful sin to keep them; and I shall be glad I did just what I did all my life, and when I come to lie on my death bed, it will be the sweetest memory I have, although I can never tell you what it is — never — that lies betwixt God, and one other, and me!"

There fell a great silence around the breakfast-table. Each stared at the other in a kind of blank amaze, and then the whole family looked towards Mr. Darryll to speak. He was

evidently, like the others, perplexed and impressed. Rusha's act was so unprecedented a one that he did not know how to deal with it. It was on too vast a scale to be treated as a folly or a rashness, and her way of setting the act in the light of a solemn duty prevented him from coming down on her with a storm of indignation, as on some unparalleled disobedience. But she ought to have consulted him; she had clearly no right to part with her diamonds without asking his permission.

On the impulse of this thought, Mr. Darryll opened his lips to address her sternly, but then Rusha was his favorite child, and the part she had acted in Andrew's affair had not only increased his affection, but vastly enhanced his respect for the judgment of the eldest daughter. And as all this suddenly swept across the father, he answered, half against his will, —

"Well, Rusha, I always supposed you were a girl of sense until this morning. I don't know what to make of all this. Have you gone suddenly crazy, my child?" for he heard her sobs again, and they touched some tenderness down deep in the heart of John Darryll.

"O, no, pa; letting those diamonds go was the sanest thing that ever I did!"

And then, because she could not bear that they should all witness her agitation, she rose up and left the room.

"John, what does it all mean?" ejaculated Mrs. Darryll, turning to her husband.

"I don't know what that girl is coming to — giving away her diamonds!" exclaimed Ella, the momentary impression which her sister's speech and manner had made vanishing before this appalling fact.

"Now, I say," said Tom, "I think you'd better not plague her about it. Rusha isn't anybody's fool — I should think we'd all had proof enough of that not long ago; and what she's done she's had a good reason for, strange as it looks, I'll be bound."

Nobody volunteered any reply to this remark; but it must have coincided with some secret feeling of the father, for in a few moments he added, —

"Well, the thing's done, and it can't be helped. You'd better not bother her any way about it. Mind what I say, now."

John Darryll's fiat was by no means absolute in his own household, but thereafter none of her family alluded to the diamonds. Something in Rusha's manner that morning at the breakfast-table made each feel that any attempt to draw from her her secret would be useless.

At last, after long waiting, there came letters from Andrew. He had succeeded in obtaining a situation in a banking house in Paris, where English was required, and his position, he affirmed, was, in every respect, quite as pleasant as he had dared to hope.

On the whole, the tone of the letters was encouraging, even to Rusha, who knew Andrew's inherent moral weaknesses, and where his perils lay, better than any of the rest of the family. Still his repentance seemed genuine. Nothing but that, it seemed, could have wrung such confessions from the youth, boastful, arrogant, conceited, which went to make up so much of all their memories of Andrew.

No one of the family was forgotten in these letters; and it was evident that, in this land of strangers, Andrew was learning something of the worth of the home by whose love and care he had set so lightly, until his own act had debarred him from them.

Mrs. Darryll considered Andrew's reformation an absolute certainty, and Rusha could not bear to insinuate a single fear into the mother-love that poured itself out in the letter which she wrote by the return steamer.

Indeed, that steamer carried letters from every member of the family, even to Agnes, who gave up a school sleighing-party, on which she had set her heart, in order that she might write to "poor Andrew."

Mr. Darryll, who found it harder than any of the others to forgive his son's crime, affirmed, when his wife suggested his writing, "that it wouldn't do Andrew any harm to chew his cud of remorse a little longer." But he thought better of it at the last moment, for, as his wife was closing her letter, he came

suddenly to her side, and, taking up the pen, said — "I think I'll add a postscript to that." And its conclusion was — "Now, Andrew, keep out of the way of temptation; and be a good boy, my son, the rest of your life, if not for your own, for father's sake."

When the letters were all finished, the young people read theirs to each other, and Rusha's was unanimously pronounced the best of the whole.

But there was an enclosure that no eyes must see, saving Andrew Darryll's. Rusha had decided that it was her duty to relate to her brother all which had transpired in her interview with Jane Maxwell. In no other way could his sin in its heinousness be brought home to his soul. And if that story, which had cost his sister so much shame and agony, did not probe to its depths the heart of Andrew Darryll, then his sister felt there was no more for her to do, and for him there was little hope.

CHAPTER XXV.

ALL this time the war was going on. Afar off there came up to the North, alike through the pleasant summer air and the fierce riot of winter storms, that long under-wail of agony and death. It rose above all the greed and din of marts where men were making new "haste to be rich" — above all the mirth with which the people held carousal during the nation's sweat and travail for life — a cry that smote with fear the heart of the hardest and most sordid of men, and pierced with terror through the vanities and ambitions of the weakest and most selfish of women; and all this time the awful cloud of fire and death moved slowly along its appointed path of four years, and in all our Northern homes the death-knell was rung of the bravest and dearest. It was one of those times of great perplexity and gloom, into whose dark cloud we passed so often — the Army of the Potomac had disappointed the fondest hopes of the people, and instead of returning home laurelled heroes, amid the pomp and rejoicing of victory, lay wasting away the slow months, and their own souls together, among the marshes of Northern Virginia.

Mistake, mismanagement, and corruption were working their mischiefs in all our affairs, and it seemed worse than vain that the nation had poured out the treasure from its coffers, the best blood from its veins, like rain.

Of course the disaffected, and all those who judge of a cause by its present and visible prosperity, had their day then. How they heaped contempt on the government, and on the man with the strong soul, and simple, child-like heart, at its head — the man who bore the great burdens of his country through that long night of her grief and shame, and laid them down just as

the day he had watched for so long came up in the east, filling all the earth with its new light!

When every family in the land talked of the war, of course the Darrylls came in for their share; and even Ella discussed military affairs and politics with as much fervor as though this was not "something a woman had no business to meddle with."

The elegant breakfast-table used to witness some warm altercations betwixt the various members of the family, Rusha having no reliable support, unless it was Tom, who, in every discussion, manifested a growing tendency towards his elder sister's view of the subject.

At the close of one of these discussions, which had been unusually animated and prolonged, all parties having taken some part in it, Ella said, pushing away her coffee cup, —

"Well, now, come to the real point, Rusha, you are not fool enough to expect that the North ever can conquer the South?"

Rusha had arisen from the breakfast-table, and leaning one arm on the mantel, rested her head upon it. Her cheeks wore the bright bloom which any excitement always quickened in them; her brown eyes, their fine, strong fire; yet the voice which had trembled a moment before, was quiet enough now, as she answered, steadily, —

"Yes, Ella, I am fool enough to believe that, in my soul, just as firmly as I believe that yonder sun will set to-night."

"Well, such infatuation surpasses my comprehension. I can only say it is amazing!" answered Ella, with emphatic solemnity.

"That is simply because you do not see the forces that are on our side!"

"What forces, I should like to know! I see great armies, that can't, or won't, or don't fight, but lie down there on the banks of the Potomac, inactive through whole seasons. I hear plenty of talk about the inexhaustible resources of the North, but you know well enough that our men have been beaten more than once in fair fight with the enemy."

"I freely concede it, Ella; more than once or twice. But that does not shake my faith."

"That's because it's of the same fanatic sort that's driven us into this war — faith in our forces, indeed!"

"Yes, in the invisible forces of Truth, and Right, and Justice — in the eternal God Himself, who rules among the armies of men."

"But how do you know He is on our side; the South think He's on theirs!" pursued Ella.

"Simply because He is the God that He is — that's how I know."

Ella did not seem to find any reply to this remark, and after a moment Rusha exclaimed, with that quick, passionate transition of tone and manner which inhered in her temperament, —

"It's got to be more than I can bear. I've half a mind to run away!"

"What's that now, Rusha?" asked her father.

"Pa," turning suddenly upon him, "would you like to hear the friend you loved best on earth held up constantly to ridicule, reproach, condemnation, every time his name was spoken?"

"Well, no; I can't say it would be especially agreeable," opening his paper.

"And I love my Country better than any friend, better than my own life even. I'd go out now and lay that down gladly to help her in this bitter need, and it hurts and harrows my very soul to hear you talk as you do every day. I can't stand it any longer, and I won't!"

"I suppose you mean by that, that I shan't have liberty to express my opinions in my own house!" said Mr. Darryll.

"No, pa, not that. The house is yours, and of course I can't bridle your tongue; but, as I said, I can't stand this sort of talk any longer. I can run off, for I'm of age."

"Where will you go?" laughed Guy.

"I'll go down to the hospitals, and turn nurse. That will be the best thing I ever did in my life."

"O, my dear child!" said her mother, in an alarmed tone.

"Nonsense!" muttered her father. Yet he, in common with the rest of her family, had a feeling that it would not do to goad

Rusha too far, else there was no knowing — she might make her threat good.

"What is the use of feeling everything you say, Rusha — of entering into it heart and soul, as you always do? Now, for my part, I can talk all day without getting excited; but the most abstract matter seems to you a thing of life and death."

"That's because she's a finer strung instrument than you, Ella."

"O, dear!" a little nettled at this remark of Tom's. "Well, if this 'fine stringing' throws one into such qualms over a little breakfast-table discussion, I'm devoutly thankful I'm not so delicately tuned!"

They all laughed at this speech; but Tom continued, —

"O, Ella, you're bright and witty, and all that, but you can't see through a mill-stone!"

No great speech on the surface; but, after all, it would take a fathom line to sound it.

On the very same day, as Rusha was returning home from a drive with her mother and Ella, she suddenly caught sight of Dr. Rochford and his sisters, standing on the front steps, and evidently taking leave of a party of friends. Rusha was off the seat with her usual impetuosity.

"Do stop the carriage!" she cried out, to the amazement of both ladies. "There are the Rochfords. I would not fail to see them for the world."

"O, is that it!" exclaimed Ella, settling herself back resignedly among the luxurious cushions. "If you can possibly wait for the space of half a minute, we shall be at home, and avoid the awkwardness of stopping right in the middle of the street."

Rusha was too much absorbed to care for the irony that lurked in her sister's tones.

The carriage had hardly drawn up at her own door before she bounded out of it, and sprang across the street, stopping the Rochfords just as they were re-entering the house. The character of her reception afforded ample proof that the physician and his sisters shared Rusha's pleasure at this unexpected meeting.

Angeline Rochford's face, to which the young girl's gaze went first, with a thrill of anxious and half-awed interest, looked pale and thin, coming from its long service at the hospitals, but serenely and happier than she had ever seen it before, Rusha thought.

They had entered the parlor now, all in a busy hum of chatter, when suddenly the thought of their last parting, and the old, careless, happy life at Berry Plains, swept over Rusha, with the thought, too, of all the shame and agony through which she had passed since that time. The swift rush of memories overcame her. She broke down in the midst of some allusion to that time, and, surprised and ashamed, found herself bursting into tears.

Of course the Rochfords were acquainted with Andrew's crime, and they understood at once the secret of Rusha's grief; but it was of too delicate a nature to admit of any sympathy, although each one would have given much to be allowed to offer it. In a moment she recovered herself.

"Do forgive me. It is very weak; but I was thinking of those beautiful days at Berry Plains, and how happy we all were; and — and what has happened since!" the husky voice, the refilling eyes, showing the danger of going farther.

"But I have always found," said the doctor, coming as near to her sorrow as he felt he had any right to do, "that enjoyment always failed with me of its highest purpose, if it did not make me stronger to endure."

She flashed up to him the sudden brightness of her smile.

"I know what that means. I have never forgotten what you said to me that day by the sea-shore, and afterwards it grew to have a new meaning to me."

Then she changed the theme from herself, and was full of eager curiosity about the hospitals, and the life there, which her friends were quite ready to indulge to any extent.

"I have thought of you sometimes with real envy," she said to Angeline, "and contrasted my own aimless, selfish life with your heroic, self-sacrificing one, until I have felt almost ready to die with shame. I have longed to join you in your work

down there; I'm not very strong, but perhaps I could be of some use."

Angeline Rochford looked at the young, fair, delicate girl, and thought of her splendid home, and remembered the awful scenes amid which, as hospital nurse, she was daily called to pass—of work which taxed every resource of body and soul to the uttermost. She recalled the ghastly faces, the awful wounds, the writhing forms, the fierce shrieks. What could the dainty girl, sitting there in her costly wrappings of fur and velvet, do among scenes like these?

"O, child, you don't comprehend—you could never stand it!" she exclaimed.

"You don't know the spirit I am of, Miss Rochford;" and there flashed up something in Rusha's face, as she said these words, which made the doctor think that "she had the heroism in her—the heroism that would not fail, though it were called to pass through the dreadful ordeal of the hospitals."

Afterward they talked far into the day. Angeline Rochford had a world of new experiences to relate, and Rusha was never tired of listening and asking questions.

It appeared that she was only home on the briefest of visits. Business had summoned the doctor north, and he had insisted on his sister's accompanying him, feeling that her nerves needed a respite from the constant strain which was brought to bear on them, and he was meanwhile making the most of his short visit by earnest appeals among his friends in behalf of the sick and wounded soldiers.

"O, if pa could only hear you!" Dr. Rochford, when this fact had somehow leaked out during the conversation. "He grows terribly excited when he gets started off on politics and the general management of the war; but for all that he has sympathy for the soldiers that I am sure you could reach, if you will come over and talk with him awhile this evening."

The doctor's engagements were numerous and pressing, but Rusha's earnestness prevailed, and she went away with his promise to give them half an hour that evening.

"Fletcher," said Sicily, after Rusha had disappeared, "her father's wealth isn't going to spoil that girl."

"I think not. This last sharp grief has wrought a great change in her. I see it in her face—I feel it in the tones of her voice even."

"Poor girl!" added Angeline, "how my heart did ache for her when she burst into those tears! I understood what lay at the bottom of them. It must be a terrible thing to have a brother disgrace one!" throwing a glance of fond pride in the direction of Fletcher.

"There are no griefs which strike down to the quick of one's love and pride like these family disgraces. It seems hard that our growth should be attained through these bitter trials. God help us all," answered Dr. Rochford, thinking how our common humanity needed just that prayer.

He was faithful to his promise; and it happened that he met the whole Darryll family in his call that evening. Fletcher Rochford's soul was fired with one purpose during his visit home, and this was to rouse his countrymen into a sympathy which should take some form of practical benevolence for the wounded and dying soldiers in the Washington hospitals.

Possessing naturally rare graces of speech, the man's whole soul was now stirred into an eloquence and pathos which, it seemed, must move stones themselves, as he depicted the harrowing and melting, the sublime and touching scenes through which he had so lately passed.

During that call he held every one of the Darrylls spell-bound. Agnes leaned her head on her mother's shoulder, and sobbed like a child, as she listened to the heart-rending stories, and each of her brothers coughed suspiciously behind their pocket-handkerchiefs.

Even Ella was lifted quite out of herself into the grand swell of new emotions of awe and pity; and John Darryll forgot the government and his grumbling, and felt something akin to the stern joy of sacrifice and heroism.

When the doctor ceased, Mrs. Darryll spoke with unusual decision, —

"Father, you must do something for those men. What if it was one of our boys now!" and she thought of Andrew.

"Yes, pa," said the children's voices, one and all. "You must do something right off for those men."

John Darryll made no answer, but he went to the light, took out his pen, and wrote a moment; then he handed Dr. Rochford a slip of paper.

"There is my check for a thousand dollars."

This substantial tribute to the doctor's eloquence was the strongest possible proof of the power which it had exercised over John Darryll.

When the doctor was gone, Rusha walked over to her father, and put her soft cheek down on his hair, —

"O, you are a dear, good father!" she said, "the best father in all the world!"

"Yes, John, I must say that was generous in you," added her mother; "but I'm glad over every cent of it."

"So am I," subjoined Ella, forgetful for once of the dresses and jewels about which her thoughts and imaginations did so delight to flower.

Such sort of praise, in the bosom of his own family, was something quite new to John Darryll, and it must be confessed, very pleasant, and, added to the novel satisfaction he experienced in a really generous act, he was in an unusually affable mood for that evening.

Tom and Rusha, by some secret law of affinity, soon found themselves a little apart from the others.

"What a wonderful talker the doctor is!" exclaimed the former. "I never had anything fire me up so in my whole life."

"And when one thinks of that fair, sweet, delicate Angeline Rochford passing her days among such awful scenes! And yet, Tom, I envied her the serene peace of her face — the face, it seemed to me, that had grown like an angel's!"

Tom mused a moment without speaking. Then he looked up, —

"Rusha, when one hears of a woman like that going out from her home, and sacrificing every ease and comfort of life, it puts a fellow like me to shame."

"It puts *me* to shame," added Rusha.

"Did you hear, too, about that young fellow that lost his arm? He was not so old as I, either!"

Suddenly she comprehended the drift of his remark. She caught him by the arm, —

"O, Tom, you must not think of *that*! They want older and stronger men than you."

It was natural — so very natural — that it should seem to her that he was the last one to go; and yet it must have seemed very much like this to every woman who gave her husband, her son, her brother to the war.

Tom did not answer, but stood there, with an unusually serious expression on his young face.

With a quick instinct that it was wisest to change the subject, Rusha said to him the first thing which entered her mind.

"So you think Dr. Rochford a wonderful man, do you?"

Tom roused himself.

"Yes; what do *you* think of him, Rusha?"

"O, a great many things — all of them good."

Tom looked at her with a little smile growing on his lip, and a thought behind the smile.

"Do you remember, Rusha, what I said to you last summer at Saratoga — that I knew one man in the world whom you would like?"

"Yes, I do, Tom, and how the remark surprised me. You promised to tell me who that man was some time!"

"I should think you would be good enough Yankee to guess, after this evening!"

She did; he saw that, the next moment, by the sudden thrill of color in her face.

"What can have put that idea into your head, Tom?" she asked, with a laugh.

"Well, wasn't it true, now? Come, own up!"

Her answer went a long ways aside from the question, and was delivered with an oracular solemnity that was amusing.

"Tom, I have pretty much made up my mind that I shall never be married."

"O, that's because the right fellow hasn't come along. Girls always talk so," his tone slightly unsympathetic.

"And I don't think he will be very likely to. Looking abroad in the world, I see the women who have the loftiest and finest ideals of your sex, of manly nobleness, and gentleness, and loyalty, find them where most beautiful things are found — in poems and stories."

"But, after all, that isn't an answer to my question!" pertinaciously returning to the first charge.

But he did not succeed in getting any more definite one from Rusha that night.

CHAPTER XXVI.

SOME weeks after Dr. Rochford's brief visit to New York, Rusha and Ella Darryll attended a large party. The latter was, of course, in her element — dancing, playing, flirting with her various admirers, and always having a train of these wherever she moved. She was looking uncommonly well that evening, too. The excitement of a party always gave that peculiar sparkle and brilliancy to eyes and cheek which brought out her beauty to the finest advantage.

With Rusha it was entirely different. She did not keep her best face for parties; indeed, it was quite apt to wear there its dreariest, coldest look, and in consequence, Ella often passed for far the handsomer of the two sisters, which in reality she was not.

Something, made up of all the influences of the place, the music, the crowd, the flashing of lights, the hum of voices, the glare of splendor, grated harshly on Rusha's mood that evening. That gloom, and dreariness, that general sinking of soul, which she had so pathetically described to Tom, swept its cold tide over her now.

Wearied and disgusted with the frivolous chatter of a group of young gentlemen and ladies among which she had been thrown, Rusha managed to detach herself from her company and ensconce herself on an ottoman, where, with her face locked up in a strange stillness, and a little paler than usual, she looked out on the scene.

"What a miserable farce life was!" she said to herself. "Just as pitiable as the scene before her, where the faces were all masks, hiding heartaches and burnings underneath; hiding worse than that — petty ambitions, and small jealousies, and envies, and hatreds.

"What did all these people make of life; what heroisms exalted, what purposes sanctified it; what outlooks did they ever take into that eternity that was closing them in on every side, and that so surely as there was a God in heaven who could not lie, held such close and long relations with time? What right had they to be in the world wasting their time on such miserable frivolities — what right had she, indeed, to be here, who was no better than they, only a mere discontented dreamer?"

"After all, she didn't see that she could make anything better out of life than these people whom she despised. What was the use of struggling against her fate? Perhaps the best thing was to get up and return to her party, and join in the pretty, shallow talk that really went no deeper than a parrot's."

Then she wished that she knew some true, noble souls of men or women — that she could sit and listen to some stimulative, inspiring talk from warm, earnest, helpful natures. Then she thought of the Rochfords; of Angeline, with the hair tucked smoothly behind her ears, and that sweet, delicate face of hers underneath. It was probably bending over some sick man's couch at that moment. She saw the long room with the ghastly lights, and the rows of hospital beds, just as Angeline Rochford had described them to her.

"And sometimes," she had said, "they will lift up their heads and look at me, an indescribable look, as my dress brushes past, and murmur, 'God bless you,' and the words seem the sweetest I ever heard in my life."

There was a strange little quiver about Rusha's mouth as she remembered this. If anybody that she had soothed or helped would only look up in her face and say just those words!

Then again she thought of Andrew, and the old hot pain of that awful night when they first learned his crime, came back to her, making her wince with a sudden stricture about her heart. What was he doing that night, she wondered, in the strange, far-off, wicked city to which his sin had driven him! Perhaps it was as well that she did not know.

The cloud, the lights, the press of her thoughts, gave her a sudden sense of suffocation. Leaning back, with a little gasp for breath, her eyes fell upon a painting opposite — a painting with some strong, weird life, and joy of freedom in it that appealed strangely to her mood just then, although at any time the fierce power of the whole scene must have thrilled her.

It was night, on a kind of wild, barren plain, or moor. Overhead, great, desolate, wrathful clouds rushed to and fro. Over all the wide moor, with its matting of grayish-green grass, there was a fierce riot of winds. What a strong joy there was in the spirit of the whole picture, as the winds trampled and beat the gray tresses of grass! On one side of the plain stood a solitary tree. The storm tore into it, clutching at the boughs, tearing away its handful of leaves in awful wrath. Just beyond was an emigrant wagon. The wind had caught up a single fold of the white canvas, and fluttered it triumphantly in the air.

A woman, with a baby in her arms, looked out of one side of the wagon on the night, with a chill of terror in her face. On the other side a man sat, trying to guide the horse in the teeth of the wind, his whole expression concentrated in one of grim resolution; evidently he was just that sort of stuff of which pioneers are made.

The sight of that picture was like a rush of strong, fresh breeze into Rusha's thought. It seemed to carry her out on the wild swell of its dark and stormy spirit — away from all the glare, and vanity, and hollow falseness of the scene around her, into its own wild, riotous freedom. She envied the man and woman out there alone on the stormy moor, with no roof but that canvas one.

In the midst of all this Ella's laugh broke close at hand — Ella's light, pleasant laugh, with some feeling in it — Rusha could not determine just what.

A voice followed it — "Now, really, Miss Darryll, will you refuse me so small a favor, when your doing so will spoil the evening's pleasure for me?"

"O, dear! that miserable Derrick Howe again!" thought Rusha.

"Mr. Howe, you certainly have the most wonderful art of saying what you do not mean — one who did not know better might really think you were in earnest," answered Ella, with pretty coquetries of fan and bouquet.

"Think I was in earnest! Do you really suggest that I am otherwise?" asked the young man, as though his life depended upon Ella's opinion.

Again that light, pleasant giggle of laughter.

"Of course I do, Mr. Howe; else you might possibly induce me to break my word and grant your petition — it being one of my weaknesses never to know how to refuse people."

"What does that fool want of Ella?" thought Rusha, surprised and annoyed at the whole spirit of the interview, and feeling certain that if Ella knew who was sitting close behind her, speech and manner towards her companion would undergo a sudden transition.

"Then, Miss Darryll, let me make one appeal to that tender corner of your nature, and if you believe that I was ever in earnest — that I ever spoke a truthful word in my life, or that I hold my honor dearer than that life, believe me now."

Young ladies said that Derrick Howe had an "irresistible way" with him. Whatever power or graces he possessed, he brought them all to bear now in tone and glance.

Both evidently had an effect on Ella. There was more talk of this sort, more coquettish dallying with glove, and fan, and bouquet, and at last it transpired that all this sentimental nonsense turned upon a rose-bud which Derrick Howe had besought of Ella, and that young lady had refused to grant him.

But he gained his point at last. Ella's vanity and love of admiration were too strongly flattered not to yield in the end, these being the weaknesses of her sex, on which Derrick Howe had learned to play so skilfully. She reached over her bouquet to him, saying, —

"I can't break my word, Mr. Howe; but if you take the flower, why, of course, you are responsible."

He selected the half-blossomed rose, and transferred it to the

button-hole of his coat with an air that plainly said the flower was to him the most important thing in all the world. Then he drew a little nearer to his companion, and dropped his tone slightly, with a kind of tender earnestness in it.

"Miss Darryll," he said, "I have been waiting, for months, for an opportunity which circumstances have not afforded me until now."

"An opportunity for what, Mr. Howe?" inquired the lady, with an interest that was not simulated this time.

"Simply to inquire whether I had been so unfortunate as to offend you inadvertently?"

"O, no, certainly not," said Ella, with an emphasis which added fuel to several emotions that were battling in the soul of her sister at that time.

"And yet — pardon me — if it had proceeded from any other source, I should not probably have given it a second thought — but I cannot be deceived here. There has been for a long time some slight constraint in your manner, and it seemed to me a reluctance to accept any small attentions from me, though your kindness of heart might not allow you absolutely to decline them. I have, indeed, of late, refrained from calling at your house, lest my visits should be an intrusion."

Ella's fingers fluttered irresolutely among her flowers, the light of her diamond rings flashing and wavering along the motion.

"O, Ella, Ella, be careful!" murmured Rusha away down in her heart.

"Mr. Howe," said the soft voice at last, "I wish you would be content with my assurance that I am not offended with you, and for anything you may have observed in my conduct — I am not responsible for it."

"But — forgive me again; it is a matter of too much importance on my part to be let go so easily — what is this shadow that has come betwixt us — this something that stopped our friendly correspondence so suddenly, and that has been to me a subject of serious thought for more hours than you will be likely to suspect?"

Ella's fair face drooped irresolutely behind her fan.

"Do be frank with me now, Miss Darryll," pleaded Derrick Howe, in his most beguiling tones. "It is my right to know."

There was a little hesitancy. Ella evidently was seeking for the smoothest way in which to put a disagreeable fact. Rusha was on the very point of springing up and hurling the truth at him without any mollification, but the time and place held her back.

"Papa is a man of very strong and sometimes unreasonable prejudices — and — and — Mr. Howe, do excuse me from the rest," her embarrassment partly feigned, partly real, but certainly very pretty.

"I see," answered Derrick Howe. "I have incurred Mr. Darryll's dislike. Whatever may be his grounds for it, I trust they exist neither in my name nor my family," a little shade of pompousness in his manner, for these were Derrick Howe's strong or weak points, as they are apt to be with men or women whose capital in life is the wealth or the influence of their progenitors.

"O, the coxcomb!" thought Rusha. But he did not appear to strike her sister in this light.

"O, nothing of that sort, Mr. Howe! That, of course, in your case, would be quite impossible. But papa's prejudices are, as I said, as unreasonable as they are strong, and his family have no choice but to submit."

And Ella looked the submissive, and amiable, and oppressed daughter, to a degree that her sister, familiar with her imperious style at home, would hardly have conceived possible.

"Deeply as I regret the fact of Mr. Darryll's dislike, and absolutely certain as I am that nothing in my own life or character can afford him the slightest ground for this, still, if I can once be assured that his daughter in no wise shares her father's feeling, the keenest pang of all will have been spared me."

"O, then you may be absolutely assured, so far as that goes," voice, smile, and glance of Ella Darryll adding their threefold weight to this remark.

At that moment supper was announced. Derrick Howe gave his arm to Ella, and the two moved towards the dining-room, a handsome pair certainly.

The numb, dreary feeling which had held possession of Rusha a short time before, was succeeded now by some strong emotion, with a live nerve of pain smiting all through it.

Amazement, alarm, indignation, were forces about equally balanced in her thoughts. As for Derrick Howe, she did not give him credit for a particle of sincerity in the whole interview. She believed that he was merely testing his power over Ella Darryll, and that he would hug his self-love at this fresh proof of his influence over another young and fascinating woman.

But when it came to Ella, her emotion was a compound one. She believed here, too, that love of admiration had been the underlying motive of all her sister's coquetries with Derrick Howe; still she could not have gone so far unless she had taken some especial interest in the gentleman. And here the pang smote swift and sharp, for Rusha, with her strong, clear, native truthfulness, could not help seeing that Ella had deceived her. She had most positively avowed to her an indifference towards Derrick Howe, which, unless she was a downright liar, — you know Rusha was not of that sort of material that minces and smooths over the truth, — she was far from feeling.

Flirtations, coquetries, all sorts of little arts, Rusha expected of Ella; indeed, as the world went, she was not disposed to be hard on her for these, thinking nobody would be very much harmed by them; but the whole sentiment of the conversation to which she had just listened, implied a great deal on both sides that the words did not.

She was angered, too, for her father's sake. Not that John Darryll would have been unwilling that Derrick Howe should know just the place he occupied in the former's opinion, but Ella had implied that her father was severe and tyrannical, and that she was under mortal restraint, which latter was as far as possible from the truth. So jealousy for her father's honor added new fuel to the flame of Rusha's indignation — an indignation

that was only biding its time to come down heavily on Ella's head, while beyond this, and deeper than Rusha was conscious at the time, the hurt went. For Ella had turned a new side to her sister that night. Rusha could never trust her as she had done. Hereafter there must lurk a doubt and a fear of Ella's truthfulness, whether of deed or word, in her sister's mind.

All these thoughts were at work within her as the crowds swept by towards the supper-room. She sat there — all the light and glow of her face quenched, a still face, wearing a pale, sort of locked-up look! What a contrast from the radiant gayety of Ella's at that moment!

A gentleman, passing at the time, observed her; a married man, almost her father's age, and one of his business acquaintances.

Some gentleman had appropriated the other's wife for the supper, and seeing Rusha unattended, he paused, and offered her his arm. She took it mechanically, and strove to bring her thoughts back to the time and occasion, playing with some thrums and ends of thoughts in order to entertain her companion, a bald-headed, rubicund-faced man, a kindly soul enough, but of the hard, practical sort — just one to make Rusha's mood grimmer than ever.

The truth was, she was half desperate when she got amongst that buzzing crowd again, and listened to the commonplaces which her cavalier dealt out to her with cream and cake. He was not particularly graceful in this new office, and managed to jostle her cup of coffee, so that a few drops fell on her dress, at which the poor man was evidently distressed.

"No matter," said Rusha; "there are darker stains here, and on finer stuff, too, to-night."

"To what do you allude, Miss Darryll — I have not seen them?" asked the rubicund-faced gentleman, glancing around on the company, with an expression compounded of blankness and amazement.

"They are on all our souls," answered Rusha, with a grim look about her mouth, "black and deep, and not all the perfumes of Araby can wash them out!"

The stare of amazement and alarm with which her cavalier greeted this speech of Rusha's, struck her so ludicrously that she laughed outright — a laugh keyed half to amusement, half to bitterness, and in no wise calculated to lessen the gentleman's bewilderment.

"I beg your pardon, sir," she said, beginning to realize the impression she was creating. "A hidden thought of mine slipped out then. I suppose we should all startle each other if we were to bring, at this moment, our secret feelings to the light."

The gentleman made some conventional reply. He evidently could not sound Rusha's thought, and she went on, seeking to redeem herself by talking of ordinary matters. That she did not wholly succeed, was apparent by the gentleman's remark, a little later, to a friend of his, a gorgeously attired matron, who was sipping coffee, and chatting with his wife.

"Isn't that eldest daughter of Mr. Darryll somewhat peculiar?"

"Well, it does strike me," answered the lady, conspicuous in old laces, "that I have heard she was something of a blue-stocking."

"Ah, that explains it!" exclaimed the gentleman, with a tone of satisfied conviction.

"What a shocking affair that matter of Andrew's was!" continued the lady, in a complacent undertone — the Darrylls' name having struck a new key-note of gossip. "I never supposed they could bear up under it so well."

Poor Rusha — it was her fate to be misunderstood.

Some time after midnight the Darrylls' carriage arrived, and Ella came to her sister in the dressing-room, all in a flutter.

"Who accompanies you home to-night?"

Rusha mentioned the name of the gentleman who, a few moments ago, had "solicited that honor."

Had Ella been less preoccupied she would have observed that her sister's manner indicated, to use the former's metaphor, "a storm brewing."

"Well, you just go on without me. I have agreed to drive home with some friends."

Ordinarily, Rusha would not have given this intelligence a second thought, but her suspicions were alert now, and it struck her, as Ella lightly vanished, that the latter had made a surreptitious engagement to drive home with Derrick Howe. Every pulse seemed on fire at the suggestion.

"I will frustrate that plan, at any cost," she said, setting her teeth hard; and, with her determination taken on this point, she descended the stairs.

When she arrived at the carriage door, she declined entering it, saying to the gentleman who offered to assist her, —

"Thank you. I shall wait here for my sister."

He wondered that she had not done so in the dressing-room, but begged her pardon, adding, "I supposed she was not to ride with us;" and so they stood there on the pavement, chatting gayly for the next five minutes.

At last Ella, supposing that their own carriage had disappeared, and the way was clear, came out. Rusha was right. Derrick Howe was by her side. She sprang forward, and met the amazed couple on the lowest step.

"Ella," she said, quietly, laying her hand on her sister's arm, "we have been waiting for you. You had better return in our own carriage to-night."

Derrick Howe flattered himself on his thorough self-possession; but, for once, he was confounded.

Ella stood irresolute, too thoroughly taken by surprise to speak a word. Of course it would not do to desert the lady so.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Darryll, but your sister has allowed me the pleasure of accompanying her home," answered, in its blandest tones, the voice of Derrick Howe.

"Then I am compelled to tell you, Mr. Howe, that she did it at the risk of her father's displeasure, and that, with his knowledge, she would not have dared give you this promise. Come, Ella."

Derrick Howe was dumfounded. There was not another

woman in the world who would have presumed to defy him to his face in that fashion. He who fancied that the house and daughter of John Darryll ought to regard themselves as immensely honored by his attention — he, Derrick Howe, with his position, and his ancestry! What could he do? He could not knock down the fair, brave girl standing there! It was a losing game. As for Ella, she was so overwhelmed betwixt discovery and her sister's courage, that the imperious girl was, for once, utterly subdued.

Rusha, too, had an immense force on her side, for Derrick Howe was one of those matters on which even Ella dared not brave her father's anger.

"I think I had better return with my sister. Good night, Mr. Howe;" and she turned towards the carriage more crest-fallen than Ella Darryll had ever been in her life.

CHAPTER XXVII.

By the time the carriage reached home, Ella Darryll's rage was at white heat. For the first time in her life she had been cowed into submission, and that, too, by her sister.

This reflection was a most galling one to her pride, and the latter was greatly exasperated by the fact that Derrick Howe had been a witness of her discomfiture. Indeed, she was for the moment so stung with shame and wrath at the whole thing as to lose all thought of her father, who was a force that Rusha could at any moment summon to her aid. The truth was, the imperious girl was amazed at herself, and at the power before which her spirit had for once quailed.

The sisters ascended the stairs without speaking a word, but there was a storm seething in Ella's soul, which broke out the moment Rusha and herself were inside the chamber.

"Rusha Darryll, how dare you insult me as you did to-night?"

"Ella Darryll, how dare you say what you know you have this night?" The voice not without agitation, but still, hearing it, you would somehow have felt that the moral force was on the side of this speaker.

"Will you explain what you mean — and then I'm ready to answer you?"

"Simply that I heard every word you and Derrick Howe said to each other in the drawing-room before supper. If you had just taken the trouble to look around, you would have found me close by you on a corner of the sofa!"

Had a bombshell burst at Ella's ears, she could hardly have been more amazed. It gave Rusha an immense advantage at the outset; but passion for the moment swept down on its

current every other feeling with Ella Darryll. It made her desperate.

"I don't care if you did. What business of yours was it?"

"I think it was decidedly business of mine, when I heard his own child turn against my father, and this, too, before that miserable man, Derrick Howe," her voice reaching its climax of scorn in that name.

"Rusha Darryll, that is a base lie!"

"We will leave others to decide that question, Ella. I can repeat the conversation word for word, and I think there will be no doubt in the mind of any unprejudiced auditor that it is I who speak the truth," her voice growing steadfast as the other's grew fierce.

Ella's next speech leaped away from this point, as blind passion is apt to do, to the one which was prominent in her own thoughts: —

"One thing is certain; I shall hate you, Rusha Darryll, to the last day of my life, for what you did to-night!"

"I cannot help it, Ella. I should do the very same thing again under the same circumstances."

Of course, talk of this sort could not go on forever. Ella's accusations and anathemas, dashing themselves fiercely as they might, against Rusha's determination, could not move her. She knew where she stood, and it was evident that she had the best of the argument.

With each reply Ella felt her ground giving way; and when Rusha said at last, —

"Well, there is no use in degrading both of ourselves by going on in this way any longer. The question comes straight down to this — 'What do you intend to do in the future with regard to Derrick Howe?'"

"Just what I please. I shall not certainly submit to any dictation from you in respect to my conduct," the tone still defiant enough, but it was that of one who felt the props swaying beneath her.

"Very well, then, there is no more to be said. My course is clear enough."

"I suppose I am to receive that as a threat. You do take high airs on yourself, Rusha Darryll!"

Ella sneered through this speech; but, after all, the sneering was a failure.

"You are simply to take it as I mean — that to-morrow morning I shall put the whole thing out of my hands by telling you everything that has occurred to-night — everything, Ella."

Ella Darryll was a proud girl, and her temper had flamed into such passion that night, as it had never done before. Indeed, her provocation had been great, and perhaps her sister's conduct in the matter had not been altogether judicious. But as her anger cooled, the girl began to realize her position, and it was certainly an unpleasant one.

John Darryll could be managed and defied in a good many ways; but when it came to possible husbands for his daughters, he was inflexible, and there was no one of the "hangers on," as he contemptuously termed most of the daintily-gloved gentlemen who aspired to be Ella's lovers, for whom he had conceived so hearty an aversion as for Derrick Howe.

Rusha's story would, of course, only make the man furious, and there would not be one of her family who would not side with him; so Ella would have to take the brunt of his anger alone.

Whatever influence Derrick Howe might have acquired over Ella, Rusha saw that it was not, at this time, strong enough to inspire her to any great sacrifice for his sake, and that wounded pride and self-love, not regard for him, had been at the bottom of her anger. This preception caused at once a revulsion in her feelings; so, without waiting for Ella's reply, she burst out, affording her sister the first advantage she had done that night.

"O, Ella, has that miserable, conceited, worthless creature made all this trouble betwixt us? Do you — can you care for him?"

"You are all so prejudiced against him — nobody else dislikes him — nobody else sees him in the light that you do;" and here she broke out into a fit of sullen sobbing.

You know how quick Rusha's feelings were touched — they were a harp on which a cunning hand could always play skillfully; though, to do Ella justice, there was no thought of that in her tears: they were the natural reaction of overstrained feeling; but the sight of them moved Rusha.

"If I could only know," she said, in a doubtful, distressed tone, "that you did not really care for the man. And yet how can I believe it after what I heard to-night?"

"You make a great matter out of a little flirting, Rusha."

"No, Ella," her voice gaining steadiness, "it was not flirting. I know the difference. The spirit of the whole interview implied something beyond that — something on which any man would have a right to found any hopes he pleased. You know, as well as I, that all your tones and looks to-night afforded Derrick Howe reason to believe that you — O, I can't think of the whole thing. It's too galling!" her voice breaking out into angry impetuosity again, as was very likely to be the case with Rusha Darryll.

Ella said nothing, but sobbed and sobbed on drearily, sitting there in her elegant dress, and neither the sight nor the sound was pleasant to her sister.

At last Rusha rose, and paced up and down the chamber. It was her old habit in any excitement, whether of joy or distress. Now her face had the perplexed, anxious look which blurred out half its youth.

"I wish I knew what to do in this matter."

She did not know she had spoken out her thoughts, thus giving Ella the key to her new frame of mind, for Rusha was doubting within herself now, whether it was her duty to carry the whole matter to her father; and the prospect of this grew appalling to Ella in just the proportion that her passion abated.

At last Rusha turned suddenly, and stood still before her sister.

"O, Ella, is there to be any new trouble in our family after all we have gone through so lately — after all that!"

"I'm sure I don't want to make any," sobbed Ella, dread of

consequences and the knowledge of the decision that was pending in Rusha's mind quite subduing her replies.

There came another pause, during which Rusha stood still, looking at her sister; and the looking helped Ella's cause.

"Ella," she said at last, the steadiness in her voice a little broken up with some lingering tenderness, "you cannot tell how my whole soul shrinks from making any fresh division in our family, or having any new root of bitterness springing up to trouble us. But for all that, if I see my duty plain before me, I shall not shrink from doing it."

"What duty?" asked Ella, although she understood perfectly what her sister meant.

"The duty of laying the whole matter before you to-morrow morning, and arresting the consequences of your own folly before it is too late."

"You talk as though I was engaged, or ready to elope with Derrick Howe any moment!" added Ella, growing indignant.

"No, I don't; but I am afraid of the man, and one dreadful lesson has taught me to sift things to the bottom, with those I love and would save. And much as I dislike Derrick Howe, I must admit that he has some 'witchcraft of art,' some personal magnetism, which gives him a certain power over my sex. I tremble when I see you are drawn into it, and long to drag you away as I would from fire or death."

"Fire or death! O, Rusha!"

"Yes, I repeat it. I would rather see you in your grave than that man's wife!"

"Why, you talk as though he were the prince of villains!"

"I do not mean that, but I do mean that I regard Derrick Howe as a man without honor or principle of any sort. I believe him selfish to the core — that he never knew the thrill of one generous feeling, or was ever governed in his life by a single worthy motive. I know that to tickle his miserable self-love, he would not hesitate a moment to win the heart of any woman, and then break it without a pang of remorse. He has no respect for womanhood — no idol but himself. He is inca-

pable of any other affection, and as for truth, honor, goodness, I know that in his secret soul he sneers at all these things as at some old wives' fable."

"I think you are hard on him, Rusha; but, whether you are or not, I heartily wish I'd never seen the fellow!" and a little impressed by all her sister had said, and indignant with him for all the trouble he had made her, — for she was of an ease-loving nature in all respects, — Ella really meant what she said at the moment.

There was a flash of joy on Rusha's face.

"O, Ella, if I knew you would always feel like that, then the matter need never be spoken of betwixt us again."

Each was in a temper of mind now to reason calmly with the other, which could not have been the case without the previous explosion.

"What is it that you are so afraid of with regard to me and Derrick Howe? Do you think he is flirting with me, and seeking to draw me on to love him, simply to show his power, or that the fellow really has serious intentions?"

"I don't feel assured," answered Rusha, reflectively. "I know that he has assumed just that air, and smiled just that way, upon a thousand women," quite losing sight of the bitter pill this must be to her haughty sister's self-love. "But your father's money would throw a heavy weight into the scales in your favor."

"There are many rich fathers who would be glad to have Derrick Howe their son-in-law," said Ella.

That there was truth in this, Rusha could not deny, but Ella's cause was not served by her sister's partial admission of the fact.

"Well, if it be as you say, then Derrick Howe will certainly marry the lady who can bring him the largest fortune, or the best position. You may be settled on that point."

Ella said nothing, unless her looks made a faint protest.

"But, Ella, we are wasting words. I have a final proposition to make."

"Well, say on."

"You must solemnly promise me that from this hour you will utterly renounce all acquaintance with Derrick Howe, beyond the most formal recognition, when this is unavoidable — that you will, under no circumstances, accept any courtesies, or enter into any conversation with him — you must pledge yourself to all this, or —" She paused a little, almost startled at the authoritativeness of her tones.

It must have been humiliating enough to her haughty sister to hear them, but beyond loomed her father's wrath.

"Go on," and Ella set her teeth.

"Or I shall go at once to pa with the whole. If my terms seem hard, what I have witnessed this evening justifies them. There must be no tampering with danger in a matter where all your future may be at stake. So, Ella, this is my ultimatum!"

Ella waited a moment. "When Mr. Howe sees me, he will certainly insist on an explanation of your conduct to-night, and as a lady I ought not to refuse to give it."

"Send him to me: I will take all the responsibility. O, Ella, you do not care for — you are not in love with this man!" a quick fear alive in her voice again.

"No; and never shall be," answered the young lady with an emphasis which was half anger; but it must be admitted in her defence, that Ella had had a good deal to try her that night.

"Then, Ella, give me your promise, and I will never mention Derrick Howe's name to you again so long as we both live."

What could Ella do? It was not the thought of Derrick Howe, for he had never sounded any deep feeling in the girl's nature, but it was sorely wounded pride, which made her chafe against giving this promise. Still, there Rusha stood, immovable as fate, and the small bronze clock on the mantel was murmuring away the few hours which remained of the night.

"Yes, I promise all that you have asked," replied Ella, at last, feeling that delay might alarm Rusha, and her moment of grace expire.

"Then let this be the seal of all which has passed betwixt

us to-night;" and Rusha bent down, kissed her sister's cheek tenderly, and went out.

Whether she had done wisely or not, the future was to test. It was in her nature to reach conclusions swiftly, and to act promptly on them; and in any question of right or wrong, she was sure to see, with clear vision, where the truth lay. But she was swift and impetuous, and the fiery blood of her youth had not been calmed by slow years of experience. If she had erred in this matter, the fault was rather in her youth than in herself.

Derrick Howe paced up and down the room at his hotel that night, puffing his cigar, and pausing occasionally to turn out a glass of wine from the choice old "dozen" on the table. His tastes were epicurean in cigars and wine, as they were in women, or horses, or anything else; and Derrick Howe had so far managed to support all his luxurious habits, although the capital of the small fortune which he had inherited, dwindled frightfully every year; but he had a sort of feeling that the world owed Derrick Howe a living, for condescending to exist in it at all; and as for husbanding his fortune, or seeking to enhance it by his own energy and industry, that belonged to those vulgar, plodding people who had the misfortune to be born without the traditional honor of such a family as the Howes to maintain.

But it must be admitted that the choicest cigars and the costliest wines failed, on this night, to afford their usual solace to Derrick Howe. The truth was, that young man's self-love and vanity had suffered a rebuff such as they had never done before in his whole life. He really began to doubt his own identity — whether he were the all-potent Derrick Howe that he had always regarded himself.

His cogitations went on something after this manner, though he occasionally relieved himself with audible exclamations, which, I regret to say, were pretty freely seasoned with oaths; but then there could be worse things than that said of Derrick Howe, without losing him the favor of the fashionable young

ladies who dropped beaming smiles upon him whenever he approached them.

"By George! I wouldn't have believed that girl would have had the courage to defy me in that way! As though it wasn't an honor and a condescension for me, Derrick Howe, to wait on one of that Darryll tribe home, anyhow! She'd better think where they sprung from, and that ten years ago her father was selling soap and tallow candles in some one-horse village grocery. And to put on airs in that way! She carried it through splendidly, though — no fuss about it, but cool and self-possessed as a roused princess. By Jupiter! it took you down, Derrick Howe! You may as well own up — sold for that time!"

The more he thought the matter over, the more it rankled, and the bitter sting in the whole thing was the clear fact of the case that Rusha Darryll considered him beneath her sister — him, Derrick Howe!

He might sneer as much as he liked about the airs that "Mushroom" always took on, and the newly-fledged Petroleum dynasty; but for all that, the hard, undisguised fact stood there before him, forcing him to most unwilling and unflattering conclusions.

It somehow weakened the man's self-confidence, and in the same degree advanced the Darryll family in his regard. That very day he would have felt that he conferred an everlasting honor upon John Darryll by taking his daughter to wife, and bestowing his name upon her; but it appeared that her sister did not regard it in this light at all.

He really began to feel a little uncertain of that which had seemed to him as secure as the sun in the heavens — his own position! And Derrick Howe had been so fêted and flattered by silly girls and women, that he always conceived every one elated by triumph who received the honor of any special attention on his part. A rejection of this was a wholly new experience to him, and, it must be confessed, gave Ella Darryll a new interest and value in the eyes of the man. During the last

year he had begun to realize that his rapidly diminishing coffers must be replenished from some source, and the way to this, which presented itself as the easiest and most feasible, was to marry a fortune.

His wife's money would, of course, enable him to lead the life of gentleman-like, luxurious indolence, to which his antecedents and his tastes entitled him, while, of course, any woman who had the good luck to secure Derrick Howe for her husband would be glad enough to pay the price of a fortune for the honor. Perhaps even Derrick Howe would not have put the facts to himself in just their bare ignobleness, but they would not the less control his whole conduct. He simply intended to make a good matrimonial speculation, and, as he coarsely termed it, he kept now in all society "a general eye to the main chance;" for Derrick Howe, in spite of all his graces of manner and gallant airs, was inherently coarse fibred, as I suppose every man or woman is, who is deficient in moral quality.

But Derrick Howe had fastidious tastes to gratify; and, indispensable as money was, there were other accessories which he strongly desired in a wife. He admired wit, style, beauty. He wanted these to grace the elegant home which his wife should bring him; and, when indolently canvassing the matrimonial qualifications of the young ladies whom he met in society — for Derrick Howe did everything, even his thinking, indolently — he had always numbered Ella Darryll as among that small, eligible company of maidens whom he might yet condescend to honor with the offer of himself. Indeed, Ella Darryll was the sort of woman after Derrick Howe's own heart — stylish, brilliant, attractive; although this would all have gone for nothing more than to serve an agreeable flirtation, had not the father's gold backed the daughter's accomplishments.

This regard to future possibilities had always been at the bottom of the young man's attentions to Ella Darryll; but the rebuff which he had experienced that night satisfied him that, however he might regard the honor which he conferred on the rich speculator's daughter, her family would be strenuously opposed to his

suit. An obstacle here was something he had never counted on; indeed, it was an unprecedented fact in Derrick Howe's acquaintance with women, and at once invested this one with a new value in his eyes. Any opposition would only give a new flavor to a wooing he had hitherto regarded as problematical.

"I suppose the old miser keeps a tight grip on his money-bags," he muttered, and he felt a stronger hankering after them than he had ever experienced before. "He probably intends to keep his daughters out of the reach of all fortune-hunters, and that Rusha has had her lesson, and will carry it out, too, by Jove! But two can play at that game; and Ella Darryll's worth a fellow's making some effort for, and, in case the thing's put through, my precious father-in-law will have to come down with his forgiveness, and his figures, too! I swear, Derrick Howe, you may never have a luckier chance, and you'd better go in for that!" and he brought his hand down so hard on the table that the cut glass rung again.

So, Rusha's act that night seemed to have stimulated the very evil she had intended to avert; but, of course, she could not have foreseen that. At the best, we all go stumbling along in the mirk and mists of this life, and cannot see the consequences of our own acts to ourselves or others, but through all mischief and mistake it is sure to come right at last with those who trust God; else were life a failure, and annihilation a grace.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

RUSHA heard Tom's quick step on the stairs; and her heart sprang. She had been listening for it for the last hour, for she was certain, whatever tidings he came to bring, he would come to her with them first.

So Rusha Darryll had been sitting in her own room, dreaming pleasant dreams of Tom's future, such as love and pride always delight in, and not allowing herself to indulge a moment's doubt as to the success of his examination. Still, the smiling eagerness of her face was shaded with a little anxiety as she turned it towards him when he bounded into the room, but his first look answered all doubts.

"O, Tom, I have no need to ask you! I see it's all gone right. Take my congratulations."

"How do you know it's all gone right?" seizing her by the waist, and whirling her round two or three times, a sort of ebullition for his triumphant excitement. "How do you know but I made a dead failure?"

"Dead failure, with that face! Old fellow, you can't deceive me! Now don't keep me waiting, Tom."

"Well, then, here goes. I pulled through strong; didn't fail on a single question. Tutor said if I kept on as I had done, I could be booked for 'Sophomore' either at Yale or Harvard by next fall."

"O, Tom, isn't that splendid? How proud I am!" and she clapped her hands.

And then the two young things sat down and talked as youth is apt to, standing on the threshold of man and womanhood, and looking off to the pleasant landscapes of the future, not seeing the steep ways that lie among the soft slopes of the hills, and

not dreaming that the mists which hang there, transfigured by the sunlight, will prove, on entering them, dark and boding clouds in which dwell mighty storms. All this the brother and sister, sitting there and launching out their argosies of high hopes on the hour, never dreamed of, nor that wreck and drowning awaited theirs, as it has all who have gone before.

"Which shall it be, Harvard or Yale?" inquired Rusha.

"I haven't decided yet. I've talked with plenty of fellows on both sides, and of course they cry up their own ship. But there's no use being in a hurry."

"Not the least, Tom; and then there's the profession, you know!"

"Time enough for that, too," he answered. And after this he grew thoughtful, listening to his sister, who went on winding the festoons of pretty fancies about his future in a love and pride that were quite touching.

She remembered afterwards, although it did not strike her at the time, because her enthusiasm was at such fever heat, that he listened with a serious, half absent smile; and at last he said suddenly, looking at her, —

"It would be a dreadful disappointment to you, Rusha, if anything should turn up, after all, that should keep me from entering college?"

This speech at once arrested the swift-flowing stream of her visions.

"Why, Tom Darryll, what can have put that idea into your head? As though anything could turn up now to prevent it!"

"I don't suppose there will. I shall never give up now, unless it is for so good a reason that you will admit its force too; for, Rusha, I do not forget that I owe all this day's success to you — that I should never have reached it without your constant aid and stimulus. I don't believe many brothers can say so much of their sisters."

She was not usually prodigal of embraces, but she had pretty feminine caresses for those whom she carried in her inmost heart. She laid her soft cheek down against Tom's slightly bearded lip.

"O, Tom, you don't know how sweet that praise is!"

After a while they heard their father and Guy come in, and Rusha went down stairs and announced Tom's success with a little flourish of trumpets.

"Here comes our student, pa, with his laurels fresh upon him!"

"Is that so, Tom?" said Mr. Darryll, looking pleased enough, as did all the others; for, though the father had originally devoted all his sons to a business career, Andrew's failure had been a severe check to his ambition on that score, and he was quite ready to allow his other boys to indulge their own proclivities, and not insensible to the honor of having some "scholars in the family."

"Tom, do come over here, and let me take a good look; I'm really proud of you," said his mother.

"O, come now, I don't want a fuss over it all. 'Twon't pay, this trip," said Tom, trying to look a little bored; but for all that, he went and stood by Mrs. Darryll, a slender, goodly youth, that any mother's heart might be proud of.

"Wasn't it tough, coming up to the scratch on that examination?" asked Guy, surveying his brother with a little additional respect.

"Well, it would lay a fellow flat, unless he was sound on the goose."

Tom's scholarship had not yet surmounted his vernacular in his own home.

At this point they all went out to dinner in an unusually affable mood, for every one of the family felt that Tom's success reflected some credit on the others; but in the general pleasure more than one glance went to a seat that had long been vacant at the table — the seat that had been Andrew's! So this pleasure must have its skeleton at the feast too!

"Tom," said Rusha, some two weeks after the examination, "something has been on your mind of late. What is it?"

"O, pshaw! don't bother a fellow," the tone having just that irritation which confirmed her remark.

But she was too persistent to be daunted so easily, and Tom had of late grown, almost unconsciously to herself, to be the darling of Rusha's heart; her affection made her keenly alive to any change in his feeling or manner, though nothing of this sort had been apparent to the rest of the family. She had been constantly watching him for the last five minutes, as he stood by the window in the little alcove-study up stairs, which was the favorite resort of both, while he absently twirled his cap round the head of his cane, and such a strange seriousness settled on his face as made him look several years older.

Her question had drawn him out of his absorption with a start, and he was about to leave the room in order to avoid any further inquisition, when his sister sprang before him:—

"O, Tom, you are not going to put me off this way!"

"Of course I am. When a fellow can't look sober a moment without a girl's prying into his affairs, he'd better take himself off!"

She looked a little hurt. "I might have expected Andrew or Guy would answer me in that way, but not you, Tom."

Tom looked half convicted, half provoked.

"I don't want to fret you, Rusha, but—hang it, why didn't you keep still?"

"Because I have done that, Tom, as long as I could, for I've seen clearly, during the last week, that something was on your mind, and that it was always uppermost too, no matter what you were saying or doing. I can't be deceived easily. You haven't been yourself of late, and whatever the trouble is, I thought you would share it with me."

"We can't always share our troubles, you know," said Tom Darryll, admitting by this general remark all that Rusha's personal one had claimed.

"But, Tom," a flash of fear in her face, "this trouble is nothing wrong—nothing you would be ashamed or afraid to tell me?"

Tom Darryll drew himself up with something of manly dignity and force in his look and manner that Rusha had never

seen there before. "Rusha," he said, "whatever the trouble is, it is one that I am not ashamed of before God—be assured of that!"

"O, Tom, forgive me—what a relief that is!—and now do let me help you bear this!" She had drawn close to him, her pleading eyes on his face.

"It would do no good, Rusha. Even you cannot help me here," voice and manner quite softened now.

"I wish you would try me, though."

He looked at her a moment, with something in his thought which she could not probe. "Not yet," he said; "I know you are made of the real stuff, Rusha—of the sort that holds good through the hardest strain. One of these days, it may be I shall give it a trial. O, Rusha, if it comes to that, you will not fail me?"

"If it comes to what, Tom?" her face full of perplexed alarm.

"No matter. Perhaps it will never amount to anything;" and with this ambiguous answer, he hurried away.

All day long Rusha turned over his words in her thought, but their ambiguity baffled her. She was sure that something which had vital issues was at work in Tom's soul; but though she must content herself to rest in ignorance of the nature of his secret, she could brace all doubts and fears against that look of his, when he said, "Rusha, I am not ashamed of it before God!"

A week went by without any allusion on either side to the matter, and one evening Rusha met Tom in the front hall, on his return home. "O, come up stairs. Don't wait a moment," she said, in a little flurry of excitement. "I've something to show you." He followed her up stairs, hardly speaking a word; and when they reached the little study, she pointed him triumphantly to a marble statuette on the mantel, which must have been, to any artist's eyes, the central grace and charm of the little studio, although, as Rusha had had the sole arrangement of this room, there were choice bits of painting—a rare flush

of sunset facing a long glitter of sea waves, and fine engravings, and delicate bronzes, and quaint brackets scattered about; but after all, the artistic life of the room centred itself, as I said, in the statuette on the mantel.

A woman's face in its early youth, with such fine delicacy of moulding in every feature, such tender, womanly sweetness in every lineament, and instinct with so much grace of heart and character, that it fairly thrilled one's eyes with tears to look upon it.

"O, isn't it beautiful, Tom!" said Rusha, tossing aside the curtain, so that the sunset flashed a stream of gold over the whole, and she gazed with hungry eyes on the tender glory of the face whose spirit her own heart gave her the key to interpret. "Do you know who it is, Tom?"

"Of course I do — Shakspeare's Ophelia."

"The marble there," she continued, half addressing herself, "grasps and holds my very conception of her. How often, when I read Hamlet, the tender radiance of that face has seemed to shine up to me from the page — until I have wondered whether Ophelia was dearer to Shakspeare's soul than to mine; and still, if one looks long and deep enough, there will be found, through all the haunting sweetness of the face, some lingering hint of sadness — a faint foreshadowing of the awful tragedy of the fate beyond; and that makes me think how exquisitely those words suit it.

'Nature is fine in love: and where 'tis fine
It sends some precious instance of itself
After the thing it loves!'

O, morning sunrise, and joy of Hamlet's life, in what awful gloom you went down at last!"

"But I always think of Ophelia, not as Hamlet's love, but as Laertes's sister," said Tom. "That is the reason I like her best of all Shakspeare's women!"

She saw at once the association that was in his own mind, and the grateful glance which beamed on him was eloquent in thanks beyond all reach of words.

"Yes," said Tom, drawing a little closer to her side, "I think, Rusha, you would be just such a sister as Ophelia. Do you remember that parting with Laertes, when he went to France?"

"Do I remember my alphabet? But why do you ask that question, Tom?"

"Ophelia was brave to the last. And yet, Rusha, France was farther from Denmark, and the journey was more dangerous in that day, than it is now to —"

"To what, Tom?" for he stopped suddenly.

"To the Southern battle-fields, Rusha!"

"O, Tom, what does that mean?" a quick terror leaping into face and voice.

He drew her close to him. "Don't you know, Rusha, that I said the time might come to test you?"

She wrenched herself away, her white face testifying for her that there was one trial she could not bear.

"What is it, Tom? Be quick!"

"I have enlisted in the army to-day, Rusha!"

She sank down into a chair, too weak to stand, but seeing with her quick comprehension the whole thing.

"You are not going to the war, Tom! It isn't to be so much as named. I never will consent!" her words fighting wildly against the thought.

It was a long time before Tom could compel her to listen to him; but he did at last, sufficiently to convince her that this was no mere fit of boyish enthusiasm with him, but a steady purpose, which had been maturing for weeks in his mind, and to which he had at last brought all the forces of his will. But if she listened, it was only to oppose him.

"You are not fit for the service. You know you never could stand the marches, the hardships, the life of a soldier. It is absurd to think of it, at your age. Let others go who are able to bear it."

So Rusha's love, and perhaps her selfishness, pleaded against his resolve, and Tom could not move her, not even when he said, —

"Where would our country be—the country you said you were ready to die for, Rusha—if all women had talked as you do?"

"And I will stand by my words. I am ready to die for my country, but not to give you up a useless and unnecessary sacrifice. But one thing is certain—pa will never give his consent, and you are not of age. You cannot go without that."

"Rusha," said Tom, with a kind of sorrowful reproach she had never heard in his voice before, "I had expected something better of you than this. I thought you would be brave, and stand by me to the last, and, though I knew just what I'd got to face from the rest of the family, I felt sure of you; and now you, too, have failed me!"

His words smote her to the quick, but she clung still to the old defence, making herself believe that it was the only right one. The talk ended at last with Tom's saying, —

"Well, Rusha, it was your own words that kindled the first feeling of patriotism in me, and made me conscious that I had a country to love and serve. I thought you'd be on my side when I told father; but I see I've got to weather that gale all alone, and the sooner it's over the better;" and he went down, leaving Rusha sitting there alone with the tears on her cheeks.

She listened for his footsteps all the way down, and hoped he would turn back, and felt somehow that it was not right to leave Tom to brave her father alone; but then, as she told herself over and over, she never could help him to go to the war, and just kill himself without doing anybody any good—"her own dear, noble, darling Tom!" and so she sat there, shivering in the warm room, until the night came and shut her up in its darkness, and then she, too, went down stairs.

She found her mother protesting and crying, and her father just where she had expected.

"Do you know what Tom's been and done?" screamed Agnes, as soon as her eldest sister entered the room.

"Yes, I know it all."

"I hope you haven't encouraged this nonsense?" said her father, turning angrily upon her.

"No, father; though I honor Tom's motives from my heart, I have strenuously opposed his joining the army, because of his youth. He never could endure the life there."

Tom stood alone by the mantel. His face was pale, but it had some force and character which impressed his family in spite of themselves. He spoke up now: —

"Rusha has had nothing to do with the matter. I never consulted her until to-night, and she was down on me like all the rest of you."

"A pretty piece of business, sir," broke out his father, wrathfully enough. "I'd like to know how long you think you could stand being out in all sorts of weather, and the long marches, and sleeping in the mud, and starvation to boot? I fancy twenty-four hours would take the romance out of you pretty thoroughly."

"O, pa, don't be hard on poor Tom," broke in Rusha. "His desire to serve his country is a most noble one, although I think he has made a mistake."

"Well," paying no attention to his daughter's remark, "the upshot of the matter is, that I shall go down to-morrow and swear that you're unfit for service. Next time, sir, you'll remember to consult me before you put your neck in such a scrape."

"I did think, Tom, you had more sense," added Ella.

"And I should never have another moment's peace of my life, Tom," sobbed his mother. "I should see you shot dead before my eyes, or starving to death in those dreadful Southern prisons, or having your legs sawed off in a hospital—" Poor Mrs. Darryll's imagination quite overcame her here, and she sobbed harder than ever.

"Other mothers have been patriotic enough to give up sons as young and as dear as I," persisted Tom, in a most unsympathetic tone, it must be admitted. "If everybody thought and felt as you do here, there wouldn't be a country to fight for long; that's a dead certainty."

"Tom, you're nothing but a boy, and you've got the war

fever," said his father, angrily. "It generally attacks one about your age; but it's a comfort that it doesn't last long."

"And to think," interposed Ella again, who numbered among her favored admirers several graduates of West Point, "that the foolish fellow was going in as a mere private, taking all the hardship and misery without a particle of honor or glory! If he was an officer, now, it would be quite a different matter."

Tom took this family fire bravely, for the most part silently, standing by the mantel, his face in a dark shadow, that might be sullenness, but which Rusha felt was something nobler than that, and her brother was never quite so handsome in her eyes as at that moment. She waited for him to speak, but he did not seem inclined to self-defence; so she came to the rescue.

"I think that was Tom's greatest 'honor and glory,' that he was ready to go in as a mere private. I never was quite so proud of him as I am this hour."

"There, pa, didn't I tell you so?" said Ella, with triumphant significance. "I knew Rusha would take Tom's part."

"You are mistaken for once, Ella. I think Tom has acted hastily, rashly, in this matter. As he was not of age, it was certainly his duty to consult father before he enlisted. But the great sacrifice of home and comfort, of health and life, that he was ready to make for his country's sake, is a greater glory to him than all the honors and commissions in the world."

Perhaps this reasoning had some force with John Darryll, for his tones were certainly mollified as he said, —

"Well, the long and short of it is, Tom won't be his own master until he's twenty-one, and by that time he'll thank me for doing just what I shall in this matter."

"See if I do!" said Tom, bringing down his hand on the mantel in a way that spoke the hard defiance he had too much respect for his father to utter in any other way. So Tom's dream of going to the war ended.

When Rusha went up stairs that evening, she found her brother sitting there alone in a brown study, his forehead propped up on his hand.

"Come," she said, "let's have a little feast of Hamlet, Tom, with Ophelia smiling down on us from the mantel there."

"If you like, Rusha," the tone not unkindly, but only a dreary acquiescence in it.

"O, Tom, you are not going to take it so? It is really for the best."

"It may seem so to you, Rusha, but I cannot see it in that light."

"Don't discuss it now," with a little deprecatory gesture. "But, Tom, you will take the disappointment bravely, and go back to your studies just as though you had never had this purpose?"

"I shall go back to them, Rusha, and do my best; but for all that my heart will not be there — remember that; my heart will not be there."

Something in his face, as he said these words, made her feel that the purpose was vital with him, that it held in it all the strength and fire of his youth, and that it was one of those abiding things which no denial could change.

And from that time, although the matter was seldom, if ever, alluded to betwixt the brother and sister, Rusha was haunted by a feeling of secret uneasiness and dissatisfaction. She had a conviction that Tom felt she had not been true to her highest self, and, although she believed, as she had from the beginning, that he had neither the age nor the strength for any real service to his country, still, now that the sacrifice had come right home to her, she put away the thought with a quick terror, realizing, as she never could before, what the suffering must be to other women who had given to the war gifts precious to their souls, as Tom was to hers.

And though in her case reason and judgment indorsed in a large sense the verdict of her feelings, she felt, had it been different, how awful the surrender must be. Was she equal to it? Was all her love of country, all that exaltation of sacrifice, to which, in their fervor of patriotism, her feelings had sometimes seemed to mount, a mere poetic enthusiasm, which would

not face the ordeal through which thousands of her countrywomen had passed?

Rusha's shuddering soul used to ask these questions, whose plummet line sounded the great deeps of her life. She had often thought if she were a man she would go to the war, but if Tom — Tom, with all the promise of his young manhood — with the boy-look hardly yet vanishing from the face that was moulding itself into lines of strength and maturity — if Tom were to go to the war, what would become of her!

Poor Rusha! The thunder of battle-fields, the black, swirling banners of smoke, the dying faces of men lying low on trampled grasses, haunted her always; and that awful question of duty-that-might-be stalked through all her days and nights — a question that Rusha Darryll was not of the sort to push aside or lay to sleep. And meanwhile she clung to Tom with some new yearning fondness, which touched his young sensibilities, and developed in him also some new tenderness of nature and manner.

CHAPTER XXIX.

TIME moved on with the Darryll household, as it does with all of us, and each assimilated nourishment, after its own kind, and developed and matured its own moral individuality, "for good or for evil."

Among other things, of more or less interest, that happened to the family, Tom made choice of his future *Alma Mater*.

To use his own words to Rusha, "several of the best fellows in his class 'talked Yale to the skies,'" while its comparative proximity to his home made a balance decidedly in its favor with all his family. So, in due time, Tom entered college, his absence making a great blank in Rusha's life, although frequent letters and flying visits went far to keep up the old bond betwixt the two, for the feeling which united the brother and sister struck its infinitesimal rootlets into deeper soil than that of relationship.

As the spring advanced, the plan for the summer's campaign had become a prominent topic of conversation, especially with Ella and Agnes, but all this was suddenly cut short by a serious and protracted illness of Mrs. Darryll.

The danger passed; a long, slow convalescence followed, so that it was midsummer before any of the family left home, Tom — for it was vacation now at Yale — assuming with Guy the charge of the girls at the Springs, whither it was arranged Mr. and Mrs. Darryll should shortly follow with Rusha. The eldest sister was the subject of a good many sincere condolences on the part of her brothers and sisters for this sacrifice of herself, as each one regarded it, to her mother.

"How strange it is," she answered, on one of these occasions, with a little perplexed smile at the kindly buzz of young voices

which went on around her, "that people oftenest get praise in this life when they merit it least! Here is a case in point. You all think I deserve a great deal of credit, and look upon me as a sort of martyr, when I don't merit the least particle of your sympathy. My decision to stay at home with ma hasn't cost me a pang. I wouldn't exchange the next two weeks with you in that hot, tiresome, fashion-ridden Saratoga. Ugh!"

"Do hear the girl now!" said Guy, with whom this place had agreeable associations of horse-racing, and a good time in general. "As though Saratoga wouldn't be head and shoulders above every other place in this country for the next six weeks!"

Rusha looked at her brother a moment, with that half perplexed, half absorbed expression which was one of the phases of her face.

"I thank the Lord, Guy," she said, in a tone which left no doubt either of the reverence or fervor of her feeling, "that He made us to differ!"

A general explosion of laughter followed this speech.

"You've got it this time, Guy!" said Agnes, merrily.

"That's like nobody in the world but you, Rusha!" Tom gave her a pretty sharp blow on the shoulder, but there was some hidden approval in it.

"As for being like Guy," added Ella, "I must say that youth doesn't, at present, embody my ideal of the virtues or the graces!" Here there was a compound snicker at Guy's expense. "But I don't think I should see any particular cause for thanking the Lord if He made me to differ from everybody else in the world, and you do that, Rusha!"

"You mean He has made her of a little extra stuff—that's all," answered Tom, who of late always took up the gauntlet in his sister's defence.

So the household talk would go; with a good deal of bluntness and more or less of sparring, it is true, but at bottom, the old family love that held them all so close in its strong bond, and that would make these days like lamps shedding down on all the manhood and womanhood to come the tender, sacred light of youth and home.

In due time, the young people took their flight to Saratoga, leaving a strange silence in the house that was always so full of life and bustle of one sort and another—a silence not ungrateful to Rusha, as it fell with singularly soothing effect upon spirits too apt to be haunted by a vague restlessness. She enjoyed too, at this period, the society of her father and mother, just as she had never done before.

As it was midsummer, Mr. Darryll was less harassed with business cares, and passed more time than usual at home; and as their fashionable friends had all left the city, Rusha was troubled with no outside friction. At the end of two weeks, Mrs. Darryll's physician considered her sufficiently recovered to take the journey for that change of air which, now the dead summer heats were coming on, she greatly needed.

The day before they left, Mr. Darryll returned home a little after midday, surprising Rusha on the stairs, who was busy as a bee with those ten thousand things that one finds to do in the last hours that precede a journey.

"Where is your mother?" was his first question.

"She's just returned from a little ride, and is now lying down."

"How did she bear it?"

"O, bravely. I could see it did her good, and she will be better prepared for the journey to-morrow."

"Come in here, Rusha. I want to see you alone a few minutes;" and he turned towards the sitting-room.

She darted up a quick glance of apprehension into his face. One's fears are apt to take the alarm easily after they have passed through a terrible shock; but there was nothing wrong in her father's look now. She went and sat down by him, leaning forward and looking up to him with a little smile on her face—a young, fair face, of which any father might have been fond and proud.

Perhaps some thought of this kind was in John Darryll's mind, for he smiled a little and patted it.

"I think you must have had a dreary time, daughter," he said, "with two such prosy old people as your mother and myself."

"O, no, pa; I think you are a great deal more agreeable than

most young folks I happen to know — that is, when you are in a good humor," her native truthfulness not letting her color the real fact, even for love's sake.

Mr. Darryll laughed pleasantly. Then he put his hand in his vest pocket, and drew out something in very dainty wrappings of silver paper.

"Can you guess what this is, Rusha?"

"No, pa, I'm sure I can't," those sweet, bright eyes of hers full of amazed curiosity, for John Darryll was not much in the habit of doing such things. "A present for me?"

"Yes, it's just that. I suppose I've been making a fool of myself to get it."

"O, no, you haven't either, anything of that sort. But I'm just crazy to see it."

He untied the wrappings with a deliberation that was tantalizing. I think he enjoyed enough the sight of her eager, pleased face to be willing to prolong it. First a small white box disclosed itself; inside of this was an oblong jewel case.

Rusha held her breath; her father touched the spring; there was a sudden leap and flash in her eyes, and then she saw the whole; on a leaf of velvet, white as a heap of fresh snowflakes, lay the clusters of diamonds, with a fiery beat and quiver of light at the heart of each — the set altogether finer than the one she had given away.

"O, pa, are those for me?" her face all broken up.

"For you, my child. You didn't deserve them, I know, after the trick you served me about those others; but as you were going to Saratoga, and women are all silly enough to want to show off their gimcracks there, I concluded to throw away a little more of my money on these."

"O, pa, pa!" and she was clinging to him and sobbing.

He had hardly suspected that she would take it in this way, but he could not know what memories the sight of those diamonds had suddenly quickened in his daughter's thoughts.

"Come, come," he said, a little troubled by the continued sobbing; "I was prepared for a very different kind of thanks from these."

"O, pa, you don't know how I thank you," she managed to say at last; but even then her thanks were not so much for the diamonds, as for this proof of his confidence in her — a proof which touched her to the quick.

"Well, then; dry up your tears, and make yourself look as nice as you can in them, only don't get rid of these in such a foolish, mysterious way as you did of the others — mind what I say, now."

There flashed suddenly across Rusha an impulse to tell her father where the diamonds had gone. She was apt to do vital things swiftly, as you have seen; the only wonder being that her impulses so seldom, in any great emergency, led her wrong. It seemed to her that this gift deserved to purchase her confidence, and that she owed it to her father now to tell him how she had disposed of her jewels.

John Darryll was not, as you know, a man of a fine and sympathetic nature. The best side of him was his family one, and Rusha usually found the truest part of that. His wife honestly believed herself a Christian woman, and would have been horrified at anybody's doubting it. The sons and daughters she had borne were growing up into manhood and womanhood about her; and all this, one would suppose, must have softened her nature — must have tended to make it broad, tender, pitiful for all sins, especially those of the young and fallen of her own sex, and yet — I hate to write it of her, but it is the truth — her eldest daughter felt somehow that it would be easier to go to the hard, bustling, business man and tell the story of Jane Maxwell; that somehow she would be likely to find with him a deeper appreciation of what she herself had done for the girl than she would meet with her mother. On this feeling Rusha spoke: —

"Pa, I want to tell you where my diamonds went."

"I have always thought it my right to know, child."

The diamonds lay in her lap, pouring out from fountains which never failed, the burning joy of their life. Rusha laid her clasped hands on her father's shoulder, and leaned her face on that, so she could not see his while she talked. And in this

way she told him the whole story, faltering sometimes, but never quite losing control of her voice.

That morning Rusha would not have believed that all the world could have hired her to confide Andrew's sin, and her interview with Jane Maxwell, to her father; now she almost forgot to whom she was talking, losing all thought of herself in the strong feeling which her story inspired.

Her father interrupted her but once, and that was with a start and a half smothered curse on Andrew, when he first comprehended who the girl was that Rusha had met on the steamer; then he sat quite silent, drinking in every word that followed.

"That was where my diamonds went, pa!"

When he spoke, which was not for several moments, it was in a voice unlike any she had ever heard from him before.

"Well, my child, I shall not blame you. The chances are, that your diamonds were lost, so far as doing the girl any good, went."

"But, pa, had not Andrew wronged her, and did I not owe her some reparation?"

"That is not the way the world has of looking at these things."

"The world has always had a way of looking at things from a wrong stand-point, pa."

He did not seek to carry the argument any further. I think just then, however his future talk and life might deny it, John Darryll was convinced of the truth of Rusha's words.

"Well, you meant right, child; only, if you were as old as your father, you wouldn't be quite so ready to trust human nature. I've but little doubt your diamonds were thrown away."

"I have, pa. You didn't see that girl's face when she thanked me. But in either case I am not responsible. I did what I could."

Just then Mrs. Darryll walked into the room, and Rusha held up her diamonds.

"See, ma, what a present I've had from pa!" But Rusha did not tell her mother then nor thereafter where the others had gone.

CHAPTER XXX.

THIS year's season at the Springs was not just like the last to any of the Darryll family, although its younger portion, throwing themselves into the general tide of gayeties, perhaps scarcely realized the change. But the mother's health rendered a certain degree of quiet indispensable, in her own apartments at least, and the first glamour was worn off, and all the old haunts were somehow associated, more or less, with Andrew.

We all know, or shall have to, some time, each for his own soul, how the memory of a secret, abiding sorrow clings to one everywhere; its live nerve of pain is always exposed, always quivering. It seems sometimes as though everything in earth and air conspired to add some fresh pang to that one sore hurt in our souls — to hold it up always before our thought — to haunt us at all times — a living grief, sadder and sharper, O, my reader, than any dead one!

For Rusha Darryll nothing in this world could be just what it had been a year ago. In their secret and silent ways the forces of grief had nourished and strengthened the best part of her nature. Wealth and luxury had not, with their slow but certain paralysis, warped and deadened her finer self; and from the outset the danger to her had lain in this direction.

One morning Tom and his sister stood at the window watching the crowds that flocked down to the Springs for an early draught of the waters. On the outside it was a pleasant sight; the groups of figures, in slow, graceful motion; the elegant dresses, the strong, bright, picturesque life of the scene.

The brother and sister had been discussing all this in a desultory sort of way, when the latter, after a moment's pause, drew her head in.

"What are you thinking of?" said Tom, catching the passing look on her face.

"It just struck me that it must have been over some such scene as the one yonder, that Solomon's soul broke out in that mournful 'Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher. All is vanity!'"

"Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?" answered Tom, with a kind of suspicious gravity.

A little out-tinkle of her merriest laugh, a half-surprised glance, flashed up to his face.

"What are you laughing at?"

"Why, Tom, the idea of your repeating Scripture! I didn't know that you read your Bible so much."

"I have, enough to find that in it."

At that moment Guy burst into the room, accompanied by his two sisters, and they all established themselves at the other window. Then ensued a very Babel of voices. The trio went into an animated discussion over the dress, accomplishments, and personal attractions of one and another in the crowd beneath them.

Ella was in raptures over one lady's jewels, and another's laces, and somebody else's robe, and seemed to have a marvellous intuition of the value of each, so that Rusha whispered, in an undertone, to Tom, —

"I think one might say to Ella what Jaques does to Orlando, — 'Have you not been acquainted with goldsmiths' wives?'"

He laughed.

"Capital, Rusha! What a set of magpies they are, though!" and then they kept still, listening to the chatter.

But the share that Guy bore in it was what amazed Rusha. He seemed to be perfectly posted up in regard to all the belles, and discussed the merits of each in a way that, considering his youth, grated on his sister's ears.

Outspoken as usual, she turned on him: —

"Guy, what right has a little whipper-snapper like you to go on in that way? One would think, to hear you talk, you had played the gallant for the last ten years!"

"He has played the gallant up here pretty thoroughly for the last two weeks," laughed Ella, before her brother could defend himself.

"I believe," he spoke up now, "that girls, after they get pretty well along into their twenties, think that a fellow ought to wear a bib until he's eighteen!"

"Good for you, Guy!" laughed Tom. "That's to pay you, Rusha, for calling him a 'little whipper-snapper'!"

Rusha took it good-naturedly.

"It was a fair hit, Guy, but I shan't subside under it. What does Ella mean by your playing the gallant?"

Ella undertook to explain.

"Why, you see, Rusha, there's a fearful dearth of beaux here this summer. Of course, there isn't a Southerner to be seen, and so many young men are off to the war, that it's really hard to raise enough for an agreeable dance; so men are at a great premium at all the balls."

"You've no idea, Rusha," put in Agnes, "how well Guy can play the agreeable. He can hold a lady's fan and bouquet, and take her out to supper, after the most approved fashion. Tom and he are in immense demand here."

I suppose most sisters would have laughed over all this. Probably Rusha would in most moods; now, with a little impatient stamp of her foot, she exclaimed, —

"I am disgusted with — I am ashamed of my sex!"

"Why, because some of them happen to fancy your brothers?" asked Guy, rather indignantly.

"If you choose to put it in that light. But when one thinks of the little appreciation of the true worth and dignity of womanhood which exists among women, as we see them here, for instance — when one feels what woman's aims and life should be, and looks at what they are, why, it's just sickening!"

"Now, Rusha," struck in Ella, "what do you want to be down on your sex like that for? If it was on the men I wouldn't say a word, for you can't make them out worse than they are; but with us, poor women, it's altogether different."

"Is that true, Ella? Are men likely to be any better until woman makes them so? Who is it, after all, that makes society? — who is it that creates all its decrees, controls all its verdicts? — who is it that has her hand on all the great, hidden springs which govern human life and actions, and looking at women here, for a specimen, who is so faithless to her trust?"

"I don't understand what you mean. You know I never could go into your heroics, Rusha."

"I mean," nothing daunted by the satire in Ella's term, "this living*merely on the surface of things, for dress, display, admiration, a buzzing butterfly existence, whose chief aim is to catch a beau, or a husband!"

"Now, that is too bad, I do say, Rusha!" put in Agnes, with a little girlish show of spirit.

"Go on, *I* say," said Tom. "I like it."

She was in the mood for obeying him.

"We all know it's so, and why not call things by their right names? How many women honestly believe that they are in the world for any other purpose than to get a husband, by fair means or foul?"

"Well, now, Rusha, isn't it natural enough to expect to get married? You don't intend to start out on a raid against matrimony, with all the rest?"

"You know I mean nothing of the sort, Ella. But I do mean that no woman is really worthy to enter into the relation who is not capable of living, and with true use and dignity, her own life outside of it."

"Then it just comes straight down to this, and it's all you can make of it. A woman isn't worthy to be a wife until she's first learned how to be an old maid!"

Such a clapping of hands as ensued from Guy and Agnes, when Ella made this point! It was impossible for Rusha not to join in the laugh, though it did turn against her; but when the noise had subsided, she took up the subject again, seriously enough.

"If you like that epithet better than any other, keep it. No

opprobrium of that sort ever killed a truth yet, and I know mine is one of those stubborn things. No woman, I say, is fit, in this age at least, to be either wife or mother, who has not so high an ideal of the marriage relation that she will not enter it solely and entirely for the name and the position which it will bestow on her, but will have the moral courage to go on her own way alone, self-poised, living a life to some true and noble end, for some sweet and generous use, and, for all she does not find in this world, 'waiting God's good time'!"

"Now, just answer that, Ella Darryll, if you can!" said Tom, with some exultance in his voice.

"Well, granting, for argument's sake, that it's all true, it is a settled fact that women never will attain to this exalted, angelic state in this world. They'll just be human to the end of the chapter, and love to dress, to dance and to flirt, to marry and to be given in marriage; so what's the use of fretting one's self over it? Will you ever learn, Rusha, not to carry the world on your shoulders?"

It always came out in every talk, the hard, selfish, material philosophy of the one sister, in strong, sharp contradistinction to the loftier sentiment, the deeper insight and broader aspiration of the other.

"Well, Tom, what do you think of it all?" for Ella had vanished with this last remark, to put in practice, in some of its various forms, the faith which she professed, while Tom stood looking out thoughtfully, but evidently not seeing the landscape.

"I was thinking, Rusha, that if women have got to become all you say they must, before men are improved, there's a mighty small chance for us, poor fellows!"

"Well, Tom, the world is advancing all the time into light and truth; you believe that?"

"Yes."

"And no doubt there are a great many just such noble women in the world."

"I wonder where they keep themselves!" with a little quizzical glance.

She answered it.

"You may have been particularly unfortunate in your knowledge of the sex, you see!"

"I do know one who I think has in her the elements of just such a woman, only she failed me once!"

Her face showed in its quick flash of pain that she took in his whole meaning.

"O, Tom, I thought you had given up all that long ago," she stammered.

His face wore the look which she remembered that night, when he stood by the mantel, under the avalanche of opposition which his family poured down on him.

"Rusha, did you think it took no deeper hold of me than that — after what I said, too?"

"And — and, Tom," her soft fingers at work nervously with the ruffles of her morning dress, "if pa should give his consent now, you would still go?"

The answer came promptly, and with a strong ring in it, —

"Yes, to-morrow!"

For a while she did not speak; at last she looked up, those sweet eyes of hers shining through their tears.

"Tom," she said, "it has been in my thought ever since, and — I cannot tell how — but I have grown to feel of late, that if I could once come to know it was my duty, I could bear to see you go!"

She was almost repaid, at that moment, for all the pangs it had cost her to reach these words, by the rare smile which he bent down on her face.

"That is like my own brave sister!"

"But, Tom, you know it's useless to think of this," clinging to that last plank. "Pa will never be brought to give his consent."

"Not as a private, certainly. But what if I went as an officer? That would put the whole matter in a different light with all of them."

Rusha saw it at a glance. Even Ella had a girl's romantic

admiration for military "shoulder straps." She began to see that this test might be awaiting her also. She did not answer him, because the thought, coming nearer, overwhelmed her.

He went on in that rapid, earnest way, which showed how deeply his heart was in it all.

"There may come a time when I shall want you to stand by me, to help me through, Rusha."

She shut her eyes, a sudden sickness creeping over her, and her answer was low, as though some heavy feeling lay upon and crushed it down.

"I hope, Tom, the Lord will give me strength to do what He shall show me is my duty."

A very different answer from that one she had made him six months before, showing how the hidden leaven had been working in her soul also, "till the whole was leavened."

I do not think there was much comfort then in Tom's fervent — "I felt you would come out all right at last."

Afterwards he went on to talk, with all the ardor of his quick, impatient youth, of his great longing to enter the army, of his eagerness to do some service for his country, of his solemn conviction that his duty lay there, and, through it all, it was plain enough that he relied on her sympathy and assistance in overcoming his father's prejudices and constraining his consent into what Tom called "the one hope and ambition of his life."

Rusha listened silently, all ardor of patriotic feeling, all delight of sacrifice, gone now, only that cold sinking about her heart!

At last Tom waited for her to speak; it was after he had concluded with — "You know, Rusha, money will do anything in this world. Father could easily get me a lieutenancy, or captaincy, or some office of that sort."

"But, Tom, there is no need of being in a hurry, you know!" catching at any straw.

"But there is, though! If a fellow once makes up his mind, heart and soul, what's the use of hanging round, I say? He'd better be at work."

"There will be no use in attempting anything, though, until mother gets strong again. The very suggestion might throw her back into the fever, and there would be an end of the whole thing."

Tom saw the force of Rusha's argument.

"Well, I shall wait in hope — in faith, too — that the good time's coming."

At that very moment they both caught sight of a trio of army officers emerging from the park. Tom gave them one keen glance, and then cried out — "Those are fellows from Yale!" and he was off in a trice. And Rusha stood at the window, and the fair summer landscape lifted up its smile of still peace into her face. Hers would have answered it sometimes, but she did not see it now — she only saw the dread and anguish that were coming!

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE advent of Tom Darryll's college friends proved particularly opportune for that young man at this juncture. They were a trio of brave young officers, who had entered the army, as so many of our youth did, solely for their country's sake; and this heroism seemed to have transformed at once their idle, self-indulgent youth into strong, stalwart manhood. They had seen some hard service, too, and their patriotism had gained that deep, steady glow which comes from the test of camp and battle-field.

Ella's and Agnes' fancies, after the manner of young girls, took fire at once over Tom's friends. And far less attractive society than that of their young classmate's sisters would have possessed an agreeable zest to the young officers, who had been so long beyond sound of a woman's voice that they had found some new sweetness in it. So all parties were disposed to make the most of the brief furlough.

Even Rusha found at last "some men at the Springs worth talking to," and was never tired of asking questions about army life, with an eagerness whose secret motive nobody could probe. There is, after all, a great power in words; and it seemed to diminish the chances and dangers of war when the young captains talked of a bullet wound as a "little scratch," and marching up under a heavy fire "a walking up bravely to the music, sir."

Then, sun-browned and worn with the life of camp, and march, and the hot fight of the field, as were these soldiers, they had escaped unharmed, every one of them sound in limb and stronger in soul.

"Why might not Tom be all this?" Rusha reasoned, striving to brace up her heart to the surrender that must come.

John Darryll flattered himself that he was above being influ-

enced by appearances in any serious matter; but of course the man was greatly mistaken, as most people are in their estimation of themselves. It was one thing to enter the army a mere private, without any name, or position, or honors of any sort, and quite another to be an officer, with the prestige, and power, and all that.

I suppose none of us are above being influenced more or less by such considerations. Certainly John Darryll would have set his face strongly against his boy's entering the army in any position; but in case it should come to that, he would have an immense choice of place.

At all events, Tom read his father shrewdly enough to manage that he and the young soldiers should be thrown frequently together, and when they were, the army was certain to be the topic of conversation — a subject in which Mr. Darryll, like all his countrymen, took an absorbing interest of one sort or another; and nobody could hear the young soldiers talk without being more or less infected with their enthusiasm. Guy manifested this fact in his remark after the officers had taken leave one day, each having appropriated one of his sisters for a walk in the park.

"I say, those are all-fired plucky fellows. It makes one feel it's a fine thing to go to the war, and wear shoulder straps, and all that — Jupiter!"

"Come, now, don't you go to getting the fever too," added his father. "Tom's only got well over his."

"O, it's one thing to go to the war and turn in with the rank and file, and pretty much of another to be an officer, and ride a fine horse, and have a lot of men under your command, and all that. I say, 'twould be sort of jolly!"

"Foolish boy!" said his father. "You might find some day that all the glitter and tinsel wouldn't save your head from being shot off. What then?"

But after all, the tone was very different from the one which had answered Tom when he talked about going to the war as a private.

"Well, there wouldn't be much fun in that; but then a fellow

may not get a scratch. Plenty of 'em come back safe and sound," was the reply of John Darryll's youngest son.

No more was said at that time, only Tom muttered to himself, as he went out — "There went in the entering wedge!"

After this there was some secret betwixt Rusha and Tom, which made them, perhaps unconsciously, cling to each other with some new habit of tenderness. Rusha could not but discern how the young soul beside her panted with suppressed eagerness to be at its work; and there were times when her brother's enthusiasm would fairly carry her out of herself, and she would lose sight of the peril and the dreadful possibilities that lay in wait, in the joy and glory of the struggle.

But this was only at times. She was a woman, and, above all ambitions and exaltations, the heart which was the deepest part of her, would make itself felt. Sometimes the thought of what Tom was to do, of where he might be in a little while, would come over her with such a pang as fairly to take away her breath. Indeed, whether she was conscious of it or not, she carried with her always now the dread of some trial to come. Its shadow haunted her gayest moments — and you know she could be gay, with a bright, hearty, child-like *abandon*, which infected everybody who was brought within her sphere more than all Ella's high spirits.

Nobody suspected the secret pain she carried about with her — not even Tom, except partially, for it only manifested itself in a restlessness if he was long out of her sight, and a liking to be always at his side. And through all this appointed way the character of Rusha Darryll was gaining self-poise, and bracing itself for the hour of surrender that she saw waited for her in the future — the hour which she had not yet courage to open her eyes and look in the face.

In due time the season was over, and the family returned home — Mrs. Darryll with recovered health. Tom's purpose had not transpired, but Rusha gave a prophetic start when she heard her father say one evening, —

"Well, Tom, I s'pose you'll be off next week — college comes together then, I see."

There was a moment's silence; then Tom spoke up with a ring in his voice which cut sharp as steel through Rusha's soul, —

"You and I must have a private talk before that."

"What sort of a talk?" said the father, looking a little surprised.

"One of the kind that must speak for itself."

"I believe you're trying to get up a sensation, Tom," laughed Agnes. "What possible secret can you and pa have together?"

Tom did not answer the jest. He looked grave enough as he said, —

"There's no time better than the present, father. I'd like to talk it all over with you this evening."

So it was coming! After tea Rusha went up stairs, and sat down in a dark corner of the little alcove, trying to realize the truth, and what life would be to her when Tom was gone to the war.

In a few minutes he ran up and found her here, his whole face on fire with eagerness: —

"We're to have the talk right off," he said, "in father's room. O, Rusha, I must, I *will* carry it this time!"

Her heart leaped up then, and caught at a hope that her father would prove inflexible; but Tom was too excited to notice her looks now.

"There he comes!" he exclaimed, catching the sound of a mounting footstep. "I must be off now;" but, with his hand on the door-knob, he turned, and came back to her — "Rusha, you believe that there is a God who hears prayer, and answers it?" he said.

"Of course I do, Tom."

"Well, then, I want you to ask Him to turn father's heart to this matter, while I go in there!" and he went away.

Could she do this thing that he had asked her?

Huddled up there in a heap on a corner of the lounge, while the soft darkness grew about her, Rusha Darryll put to herself this question, battled with this great hour of surrender that had

come to her too, at last — that, in one shape or another, comes some time to all of us!

Could she pray the prayer Tom had asked, when that meant that he should go out of her sight, it might be forever — go out to peril, to certain suffering, perhaps to death? It seemed to her in that moment that all the wives, and sisters, and mothers who had ever given up the beloved to the war could not have felt and suffered as she did.

She tried to think of God, to brace up her soul with thoughts of right and duty; but the light and the props all failed her now, and she sat there, waiting, a cold heap, on a corner of the lounge, just as Tom had left her, when he came back.

She knew her first glance would settle the question of his success or failure; but it had grown so dark by this time that she could not see his face. He came right up to her, manner and voice full of excitement that was close on triumph.

"Rusha, you must go to father this very minute!"

"I, Tom?"

"Yes; strike while the iron's hot, and you'll bring him over. Nobody else can do it. He was hard as flint at first, but I stood it out boldly, and I can see he's come down a good many pegs."

Her voice found its life again.

"You don't mean, Tom, that I must go in and intercede with pa to let you go to the war?"

"That's just it. If you'll help me now, Rusha, we'll bring the matter through betwixt us. I'm sure of it!"

"O, Tom, I can't!" she shrieked out. "I had rather give up my life than do this thing that you ask me!"

Tom sat down.

"I shall lose all, Rusha, if you fail me now," he said, with a kind of solemn sternness. "My fate is in your hands. Ask your own soul whether you have a right to betray it."

Whether Tom was right or wrong in putting her to this hard stress I do not know — whether she was right or wrong in feeling, as she did, that if she failed him now, her deepest hold on

him would be gone forever, I cannot tell; but it certainly did strike home to her with a singular force of conviction that it was her duty to do what Tom asked; and there was some fibre knit up in the soul of Rusha Darryll which always made her look a duty straight in the face.

For a little while she neither stirred nor spoke. At last she rose up.

"Are you going?" asked Tom, catching eagerly at the folds of her dress.

"Yes," in a little hard, dry whisper.

He put his arm around her, and walked with her to the door. If he could have seen her face then, I think he would have called her back; but he never knew the look it carried out of that door!

John Darryll was pacing up and down the room, with his hands behind him, a pretty sure indication that his mood was ruffled.

"What the deuce has got into that boy's head about going to the war? He seems resolved to run his head into the cannon's mouth!"

"It doesn't seem to be in his head merely, but in his very life and soul," the quiet tone contrasting with her father's excited one.

"You don't mean that you've come here to tell me I'd better give in, and let him go?" a little more wrathful than ever.

"I've come in to tell you, pa, that it seems to me the only thing you can do. You know I opposed it at the first, but I see Tom's whole soul is set on this thing—that it isn't a mere boyish fancy for the parade and show of war, but something that has taken possession of his whole nature, and there's no use going against it."

"But do you know what going to the war means, you foolish child? It means getting one's head blown off, or one's limbs shot away, and a good many other things as bad, or worse!" hurling the dreadful words at her in that sort of blind anger that vents itself on the first object; and yet there lay something, at that moment, at the bottom of John Darryll's temper that largely excused it.

If the man had known how deeply each word hurt his child, he certainly would not have spoken so. It took a moment or two to steady her voice.

"I know all that, pa, and I am not certain but I would find it a great deal easier to give up my life than to let Tom go; but he is so bent on it, that, if he is forcibly kept away, I tremble lest something wrong should come of it. If Andrew now had taken a notion for the army, it might have saved him from all that followed."

"Likely enough; but there isn't the same danger in Tom's case:" still his tone showed that the last argument had weight with him.

"No, thank God! still it's always dangerous to go against a young man's settled convictions of duty, and Tom believes in his soul that his work lies that way. I wish he did not; but if, in consequence of our opposition, he should lose all ambition, or come to any harm, we should always blame ourselves."

"The fellow don't know what he's about; pretty place to put me in!" muttered John Darryll, pacing the room harder than ever.

"But other fathers let their sons go to the war," pursued the girl. "And I am certain that Tom will enlist the day he is twenty-one; and your influence might do something for him now. You know the rank a man holds in the army makes a vast difference in the way of comfort."

That was a part of the matter which John Darryll would be certain to see in its strongest light.

"There's your mother! Do you s'pose she can ever be brought over into letting Tom go to the war?"

"I suppose so; because people generally do what they can't help," the grieved, hopeless tone striking her father now. Indeed, Rusha had, all this time, been talking one thing while her heart was pleading another.

A great deal more was said on both sides. John Darryll was not a man easily moved from his opinions, but the thought of Andrew, and a lurking fear that it might turn out with Tom

as Rusha had said, if he brought all the forces of his opposition to bear against him, had its weight now.

That last talk, too, had impressed Mr. Darryll with the vital earnestness of his son in the matter at stake.

At last Rusha returned to Tom. He sprang up.

"Well, Rusha?"

"You will go, Tom!"

"Has he really consented?"

"Not in so many words; but I see it will come to that!"

"O, Rusha, I am the happiest fellow alive!" catching her up and twirling her round — his old habit in any exuberance of joy.

Still dark, so that he could not see her face!

"Let me sit down, Tom. I can't bear that now," the burden of weariness and pain in her voice striking him even in that moment.

"Poor Rusha, I shall not forget what you have done — not forget that in the whole world there is no sister like you!"

Her heart was too sick, then, to find any sweetness in the praise. It was striving to steady itself against those old words which have been a plank let down into the deep waters where many souls have begun to sink; "What time I am afraid I will trust in Thee!"

But she could not bear the strain of his triumphant mood.

"I will tell you about it to-morrow, Tom; leave me a little while — I am so tired — there's a good fellow!"

He kissed her, and went away. Tom Darryll thought he knew all that it had cost his sister to do what she had done that night; but he did not know then, nor ever afterwards.

CHAPTER XXXII.

EVENTS proved the truth of Rusha's prediction. It is useless to enter into the varied family discussions which followed, or the varied forms of disapprobation which Tom's going to the war encountered. Mr. Darryll did not withdraw his verbal opposition to his son's "war fever," as he continued to designate Tom's purpose to enter the army; and the mother made all sorts of protestations and dismal prophecies, ended usually by a fit of weeping; but for all this Tom did not return to college when his term opened.

Then, too, there was no recurrence of that hail-storm of reproach which had poured itself on Tom's head when he announced his intention of entering the army as a private. Letting alone all prospects of comparative ease and comfort, which could not fail to have their weight with affection, there was nothing to revolt one's pride in any sort of official rank; on the contrary, an ample area for the indulgence of that feeling might be afforded by Tom's military position.

Ella had, as I said, a girl's admiration for military "shoulder straps," and a large proportion of the young men who enjoyed her favor wore these, "and," as she privately expressed it to her mother, "though Tom was a great fool to get that war crotchet into his head, still, if he was bent on carrying it out, there was something in being an officer; and the fellow would look handsome in officer's dress — no question of that."

As for Rusha, after the thing was once settled — for from that night of her talk with her father, it had been with her a foregone conclusion that Tom would go to the war — there had come a reaction — as there usually does after some awful strain of feeling, else we could not exist at all. A quieter mood

superseded; the awful possibilities of war seemed to fall into the background of her thoughts, ceasing to haunt her with their terrors. She caught, to a degree, the contagion of Tom's enthusiasm, for he made her, as before, the recipient of all his ambitions and purposes, as well as of his prospects of success in the one thing which had taken such possession of his whole being, while every day his hopes seemed to find some fresh evidence of their near fulfilment.

Long before he would admit it, even to himself, John Darryll had made up his mind that Tom would enter the army.

The man had more faith in the power of money than in anything else in the world, and he resolved that its influence should be brought to bear, in securing some official appointment for his son.

In the first place, Tom had in himself all the pre-requisites for a good officer; the bright, prompt, native energy; the swift perception, with a great deal of latent executive force; and there was little doubt that, with his whole soul in the work, had he entered the army as a private, and opportunity been afforded him, he would have risen by force of his own merit.

But parental pride and affection impelled John Darryll to forestall all that. A man of his wealth could have influence in a thousand indirect ways that would reach high quarters, and this without doing, as the world goes, anything reprehensible.

To go into all the moral relations of the course which the broker took to secure his son's advancement would require a good deal of subtle analysis, to which John Darryll certainly was not given — suffice it, whether right or wrong, the end was attained, while nobody, in the domestic circle or out of it, dreamed of questioning the legitimacy of the means employed; and there came a day when Tom Darryll went home to his family wearing the "army blue" mounted with captain's bars.

Ella's prophecy was verified. The young officer wore his uniform with such manly freedom and grace, with such a joyful consciousness too, of new purpose and responsibility, as though he had at last found his own place, and knew it, that none of

his family could look at him without a certain feeling of pride and pleasure, which, for the time, obscured all fear for his future.

Ella and Agnes went into raptures over their brother's dress, and Guy expressed, in his coarse fashion, his sense of his father's general managing ability.

"I tell you the governor knows how to pull the wires! He's fixed that captaincy up snug for you, Tom;" and the youth looked with a decided hankering on his brother's "straps," and wondered if they would not be equally becoming to him also.

Mrs. Darryll and Rusha took the whole in a less voluble way; but mother and sister pride had its rights that would not be denied, and that, for the hour, seemed to push far into the background the perils that lay in wait. They looked at the slim, lithe figure — at the strong, alert step — at the face full of the joy and fire of youth, — and thank God! it is not in human nature to be always sad, — and it did not seem possible that all this strong, quick young life could be brought low in a little while by that devouring death which waited in ten thousand forms down yonder on the battle-fields.

And the hours which followed were, in a large sense, peaceful ones to all the family — no terrible, haunting fears stalking through the days and nights, and yet a kind of vague forecast of separation which might fall any time, smoothing that family friction which inhered in the Darryll household. As for Rusha, she could hardly let Tom go out of her sight in these days. There were times when the consciousness that he panted so ardently to be away, came over her with a terrible pang; still, with a nature so susceptible as was hers to all generous enthusiasms, she could not but imbibe something of the spirit she had first awakened, and looked at army life through the *couleur de rose* atmosphere with which Tom always invested it.

Among several brigades which were ordered to reënforce at once the depleted Army of the Potomac, Tom's regiment was included. So the day came at last to the Darrylls, which, keeping its appointed time in the years of God, came to so many households throughout the land — a day which held for loving

hearts that farewell and parting whose bitterness had some taste of the bitterness of death.

Rusha had tried sometimes to look forward to this day, and to brace her soul to go through it bravely, as a soldier's sister should; but when the time came, her nice little programme all failed her. She was just the fond, tearful sister, clinging to Tom with a love and fear which, it seemed, could never relinquish him, and unable to support her mother through the trying crisis.

It is a great mercy that last moments are always hurried ones—that the great griefs of life darken down suddenly and take us unawares, and we go through them often in a sort of maze, like one in a dream.

In the midst of all the last things which were to be done, they had time only for a hurried parting, and Rusha left unsaid many things she had kept for the last moments. One thing, however, she did find time for. A few days previous, all his sisters had, at Tom's request, sat for their photographs, and Rusha slipped hers in betwixt the leaves of her Bible, and watched her chance for a few private words, which happened at last when her mother had left the room a moment to supervise the close bestowal of some small jars of fruit among Tom's clothes, and each of the girls was off on some little pet scheme which involved the young captain's pleasure or comfort.

Rusha went to him now, putting her cheek down to his, a wet cheek, a voice all broken up with grief.

"Tom, there is one thing I want you to promise me!"

"Anything in the world, Rusha."

"Here is my Bible, and the little picture always to be kept inside where I have laid it, so you cannot come at the one without the other. And I want you to carry this book always around with you, and promise me that no day shall ever come and go—no matter what the hurry, and confusion, and care may be—no matter whether you are in the camp, or on the march, or in the midst of the dreadful battle-field, that you will not look inside this Bible, and read at least a single passage, if it is no more."

"Yes, I'll promise you all that," said Tom, taking the little Bible; and I think just then he could say no more.

"It will be a help to you, Tom, as you will sooner or later find. The verse will come back to you some time when you least expect it, and you will see some new meaning, and comfort, and sweetness in it, and wonder you never felt it before. I used to think the Bible was dreadful dull reading, and stuck to it as a matter of duty, going through with a chapter every day as a sort of penance, but lately—I can't tell how, I've found something new in it, and passages and verses here and there start up to me with a wonderful new life, and strength, and beauty—passages that I'd read a thousand times before without finding anything in them; it's like touching some secret spring, and lo! a great treasure starts into view. And so it will be with you in some hour of loneliness, or hardship, or trouble; the words will come back and enter right into your secret pain or grief—the very comfort of God!"

"Where are some of these verses, Rusha?" asked Tom, regarding the little book with a mixed sort of look, half perplexity, half wistful reverence.

"I've marked a few, Tom, that have done me good; but after all, I suppose you'll find them out best for yourself. Nobody has the same experience in these things, I fancy, and I might pass, unheeding, right by the words that would unlock their hidden riches to you; only it's true what I say, and some time you'll prove it so."

Tom put the volume away in his breast pocket, a small brown volume, in antique binding, his own name flashing a line of light across the cover.

"I shall read the verse and look at the face there once every day, Rusha!"

At that moment the girls returned. This was her last chance for any private talk with Tom.

The young captain bore himself with a show of courage through what followed. It had been previously arranged that his father and brother should accompany him to the cars and see him off; but this the women could not do.

It was the cruelest hour of Tom Darryll's life when his mother and those three sobbing girls gathered about him for the last kisses. All the excitement and glory of war, all the fierce rush of battle and the joy of victory, vanished away then. If he could only have sat down among them and cried too, he thought! but Tom felt that to do this would be to disgrace forever, not only his manhood, but his profession; and at that moment there floated across his thought those grand old words in which is the essence of the old knightly chivalry, that "doublet and hose ought to show itself courageous to petticoat."

Tom's mother had her right — the last kiss — but Rusha's words were the last his memory carried away, "God go with you, Tom. The day that sees any harm come to you will never see me lift up my head again!" And he went out, carrying his strong, brave youth to the chances of war, as our noblest and dearest went through all those dreadful four years, not knowing whether it was for life or death.

And afterwards there came to the splendid home, as there came to the lowliest roofs throughout the length and breadth of the land, holding them all in one common bond, the eager, breathless waiting — the watching day by day for tidings from the war — the searching of the paper for any mention of that one regiment among the hosts lying darkling down there on the Potomac — the one regiment in which Tom was captain, and which was all the world to them!

But however the others might miss him — however the maternal heart of Mrs Darryll might carry its yearning for her boy by night and by day, his absence could come home to nobody else in just the same sense that it did to Rusha. The moral affinities betwixt her nature and Tom's made her feel the wrench of the parting, and the absence that followed, in a way that none of the others could. She never realized until he had gone, what this brother of hers had been to her; how close were the intimacies of their thought and feeling, and how much comfort and inspiration their interviews had given her. The little alcove-library, so closely associated as it was with Tom,

oppressed her with a feeling of almost intolerable solitude, and she used to cast about in a vague, perplexed way to get rid of the ache and loneliness which at times nearly overwhelmed her.

Rusha Darryll had, like all young girls, her ideal of a lover. That this would be fashioned somewhat after the idiosyncrasies of her own temperament, was a matter of course; but he was something fine and grand and loyal — an incarnation, in short, of every manly virtue and every shining grace of mind and person.

The men whom she met in society in no wise realized this ideal. They gave her a general sense of chagrin and disappointment which sometimes developed itself in sweeping denunciations of the whole sex.

Yet Rusha Darryll's ideals and fancies had a stubborn tenacity of life, and the sweet perfumy dreams of youth still clung around her heart, filling it at times with those vague, indescribable hopes and yearnings which always belong to a girlhood like hers — a girlhood whose dew and bloom linger late in their budding, but round out at last into a riper and completer rose of womanhood.

After Tom's departure, that vague sense of something wanting to perfect her life, an inward craving for some finer and deeper sympathy, made themselves felt as they had never done before. Sometimes visions of a new life which was to complete and sanctify her own, trailed in shining draperies of gold and purple before her, and seemed to wait, with all sweet witcheries of youth and hope, along the enchanted coasts of her future.

But here, as everywhere, the old doubts and gravitations assailed the soul of Rusha Darryll. Her mother, with her eminently practical habit, regarded all romance as an absurd impossibility, and treated the loves of poets and books as something fit only to dazzle the brains of silly girls, and lead them into all sorts of fatal mistakes.

Deep as was Mrs. Darryll's affection for her husband, it was totally devoid of sentiment, and she spared no pains to instil into the minds of her daughters her favorite theory that an

engagement should be entered into with the same common sense, and in fact "with the same eye to the main chance," that one should exercise respecting any other of the relations of life.

It cannot be denied that Mrs. Darryll made a good many sensible arguments on this point, and that want of judgment and of wise discernment are at the bottom of a large proportion of the unhappy marriages in the world. But it was Mrs. Darryll's habit of treating the whole thing just as she would any other bargain, of viewing it simply as an arrangement to be entered into on account of its social respectability, and for its mere extraneous advantages of wealth and position which always made the finer instincts of her eldest daughter recoil.

Yet for all that, it had its influence, especially when Rusha looked abroad in the world, and saw with that clear penetrative gaze of hers, that always went straight to the core of things, what matrimony was to most of the men and women around her.

You have seen that it was the girl's misfortune that she had always been thrown among people whose characters and aims were of the most worldly sort — mere fashionable people — no better no worse, than others of their class; and this, added to the materializing influences of her home, was enough to shake her faith in her own intuitions and ideals of love, as in everything else.

"Was there not, after all," she would ask herself, "a great deal of truth in what her mother said about the sort of men that existed only in novels and in the brains of love-sick girls — was not her own ideal of brave, generous, lofty manhood, of knightly strength and tenderness, 'without fear and without reproach,' another of the beautiful impossibilities and sorceries of the imagination that had played her false so often — something that her heart and fancy might always crave, but would never find? If there were any such men in the world, where did they keep themselves? — not in their set, at least; and did not that pride itself on its exclusiveness, on its riding the topmost wave of metropolitan wealth and fashion?"

Rusha counted over her admirers — she had a good many — she might have had a good many more, had not the native transparency of her character prevented her from taking delight in conquests for their own sake. Still, her own attractions, combined with her father's wealth, always procured her plenty of lovers, or those she knew only required a slight degree of encouragement to become so, and some of these had awakened a passing interest or fancy in the girl.

Not one, however, had wrought more than a transient impression; but in the new yearning for sympathy, in the void and ache which Tom's absence made, Rusha was fain to turn somewhere for the sympathy her soul craved.

It was a dangerous time with her — a time which has wrecked the life of many a young girl, making a burden and a bitterness of all the years which remained before she could lay them down in the grave, that waits to hold at last all our sorrows and joys, our loves and griefs.

It is true that Rusha's meditations used to close, generally, with a little shudder, as she drew a picture of her future with some of her admirers. Who amongst them could give her soul the fine sympathy that it craved? — who could comprehend, out of the fulness of his own nature, her perplexities and needs, her enthusiasms and aspirations, her longings and her struggles? Who could steady her faith, and inspire her courage, and strengthen her weakness? — who be to her at once a rest and a stimulation, a trust that would never falter, and a tenderness that would never fail?

Asking these questions, and a great many others, she would shake her head, that dreary, hopeless look on her face which showed the want and pain beneath.

It is true that there often flashed across those meditations a thought of Fletcher Rochford, and of that afternoon when they had stood together on the sea shore, with the strong tides of the ocean coming in at their feet, and the glory of the sunset in the west. She would never forget that hour, nor what Dr. Rochford had said to her there.

Always, too, with a little smile, or just a hint of a blush, she recalled what Tom, the dear fellow! had said. There, certainly, was a man with lofty aims and true purposes consecrating his whole life. She could never forget his look that day, nor the warm, joyful tenderness that thrilled his smile when he spoke of God, and the love which underlaid, redeemed, and glorified all human life—all its perplexities, and mysteries, and sorrows. The harp of this man's affections might lie deep in his nature; but Rusha Darryll never doubted it was there, nor that the right touch, sweeping over its chords, would waken voices of deep immortal music—music whose richness might fill a whole life with courage, and faith, and joy.

But if she thought of the possibility, she certainly never did of the probability, that this would ever fall to her lot. With all her approbateness, Rusha Darryll was not vain, and self-conceit was not in the texture of her character. She held, indeed, a doubtful estimate of herself in all respects, and a real inward humility which one might not always have suspected, for despite all her transparency of mood and impulse, "something in the girl and her manner were a little at variance."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

MATRIMONY is always a theme of interest to young girls, and of course the various gentlemen of their especial circle, particularly those whose calls and attentions afforded good evidence of some ulterior purpose, were frequently the subjects of domestic discussion.

It was amusing to hear the sprightly talk—the buzz of young bright voices, although the unsuspecting victims of this merciless verbal dissection would have been utterly confounded, could they have once been enlightened as to the manner in which they were disposed of. For the talk went on after the manner of young women on such a theme, with all its extravagance, ridicule, hyperbole—saying, of course, a great deal more than was meant, talk that would have made the inflated self-conceit of some of its subjects undergo a terrible collapse.

One was disposed of as "an insufferable bore;" another was extinguished as that "horrid old thing;" and each had his separate and unflattering cognomen, while, waxing merry over their chatter, the sisters would relate all sorts of amusing little side scenes, placing their admirers in all kinds of ridiculous juxtapositions and relations which they themselves have not the remotest suspicion of having occupied.

Mrs. Darryll used to sit and smile over all this breezy talk. What mother is ever insensible to the admiration which her daughters inspire! This one used sometimes, however, when the merriment waxed too explosive, and the execution too wholesale, to come to the rescue, with a little deprecating, "Girls, how you do go on! It's dreadful to pull people to pieces in this way."

"O, well, ma," Rusha would answer, with a little prick of

that sensitive conscience of hers, "you know we always put them together again in the end."

On the occasion of one of these talks, Ella suddenly turned to her sister, with, —

"Rusha, don't you think it would be nice to have a wedding in the family?"

"That depends on circumstances," was the rather non-committal response.

"Well, I think it would now," continued the younger sister in an animated voice, dropping into her lap some graceful trifle of embroidery with which she was making a pretence of sewing. "There is always so much excitement and sensation in a wedding, and of course ours would come off in splendid style. There would be the bride's trousseau, and all the elegant gifts, and the receptions, and afterwards the bridal tour to Europe, for that is the fashion now — really, the whole thing would be delightful!"

"No doubt it would," said Rusha, with only a qualified degree of sympathy. "But matrimony doesn't end with the honeymoon — if it only did, I agree with you that it would all be very charming."

"Well, whether it does or not, of course we've all got to plunge into it, sooner or later; and you are the oldest — you must set the example!"

"But what if I haven't settled in my own mind, as you seem to have done, that matrimony is an absolutely compulsory duty with any woman!"

"Why, of course it is, one time or another," added Ella, decidedly. "You don't expect to be an old maid, do you, Rusha?"

"I shouldn't wonder. I certainly had far rather be one, than rush into matrimony, simply to have a new handle to my name, or because it is a time-honored custom, 'a measure full of state and anxiety,' as Beatrice calls it; and I believe half woman-kind are wooed and won for no better reasons than these."

"Well, you'll do as you please," answered Ella, decidedly;

"but for my part I shall get married one of these days. If a woman isn't, everybody is sure to think it's because she hasn't had a chance, no matter if she's had scores of offers."

"I think it would be very little to any woman's credit to have a 'score of offers,' but still less so to accept one for no better reason than to let the world know she'd had it."

"Well, then," changing a little the grounds of her argument, "I think it's dismal, anyhow, to be an old maid. It's more respectable and dignified to get married, and have a husband and an establishment of one's own — now isn't it, ma?" for during the latter part of this conversation Mrs. Darryll had entered the room.

"Well, I suppose it's natural for girls to expect to get married some time, and it's all proper and right, certainly," was the guarded rejoinder. "But there's one thing — your father isn't in any hurry to marry his girls off his hands. He'll be glad to keep you in the home nest as long as you want to stay."

This was the greatest flight of metaphor which Mrs. Darryll's fancy ever attempted.

"Of course he would — dear pa!" said Rusha. "And I go farther than Ella, and think that matrimony is not only the pleasantest, but that it is the dearest, sweetest, and most sacred relation of womanhood, only it must be of the right sort — of the right sort."

"Of course," answered Mrs. Darryll. "But then young girls are apt to look at the whole thing in a wrong way — through pretty romantic notions and fancies that are never to be found in this world — never! I went through all that in my youth, and I know."

Rusha looked up at her mother with one of those wistful, perplexed glances that were always haunting her face. She wondered if the dreams and visions were like her own, and if she, too, should ever get to be such a commonplace, practical woman as her mother, and talk in just that way of her own youth!

"I, for one, mean to look out and make the best bargain I

can," continued Ella, "and I set my mark pretty high, too; but then, of course, I know it's useless to expect impossibilities. But I must have a man who is good-looking and fascinating, and has money and position. I won't take less than that."

"That's combining a good many desirable qualities, though," answered her sister, "and not very easy to concentrate in one person."

"Well, I don't know. I think you might find them all in one of your lovers."

"Which one?" with a great show of interest.

"Mr. Apthorp. I'm sure he has money and position, and he's fine-looking, and certainly he's agreeable. Any girl would think he was a catch. I should really like him, now, for a brother-in-law."

"But I don't suppose the thought of such a relation ever entered the fellow's mind—at least," correcting herself, "I am not certain of it."

"Now you know better, Rusha Darryll!" said Ella, turning squarely upon her sister. "The fellow is certainly smitten with you. I've watched him, and I can tell. No man can deceive me on that score. All he needs is proper encouragement on your part; and I don't believe that you'll ever have a better chance."

Of course these remarks at once stimulated the maternal interest and anxiety of Mrs. Darryll. A list of interrogations ensued respecting the young man's antecedents, position, and wealth, to which Ella responded in a satisfactory manner, while Rusha sat still and listened with an unusual quiet in her face.

"I wonder what your father would think of the young man!" murmured Mrs. Darryll, reflectively, arranging the books on the table.

"I think pa would like him," answered the younger sister, who had borne the principal share in the talk. "He's in every respect a desirable son-in-law. Mrs. Cyril Apthorp, too, sounds very nicely. You'd better think twice, Rusha."

"O, Ella, do hush!" laughing and blushing.

But the elder sister obeyed the younger's advice, not only thinking twice, but an infinite number of times. You have seen in just what a mood Tom's absence had left her. She wanted something stronger than herself to lean against, to cling to, after the nature of woman.

Young Apthorp was certainly unexceptionable in all tangible respects, and her natural love of admiration was stimulated, and she did feel a certain thrill of gratitude towards him for his preference.

Rusha Darryll would never gauge a man's attentions to herself for any more than they were worth; but young Apthorp had certainly indicated his preference for her society, above all others, in ways that any woman could but interpret as pointing to one result.

Rusha liked to chat with him, preferred him certainly to any man in their set, going over the list in her mind. Still, he never awakened anything more than a passing emotion; never inspired her thoughts; never roused her feelings; all the great gamut of her emotions lay dumb and unresponsive beneath his touch. He was good, and nice, and intelligent, and all that—she could not place her finger on a flaw, only—her face settling into a great doubt.

But, after all, was not her mother right? Was she not looking at the world, and at manhood, through the prisms of that troublesome imagination that would transfigure everything, giving it "a glory and "a radiance not its own?"

If she could only make up her mind to like young Apthorp! She might never have so good a chance again, as Ella said, and it would be a very delightful thing to have a lover, and be the dearest, sweetest, most precious thing in all the world to him. The tears came into her eyes as she thought of that.

Rusha Darryll was no coquette; but I think, for the month that followed, she did flirt with young Apthorp, there being at the bottom of this one grain of salt that redeemed the flirting from all heartlessness or deceit. She was trying to like her lover. For the man was really this, and Rusha sometimes

thought she had succeeded. When he was away she did manage to invest him with some grace and ideal charm that always vanished on his appearance, for he was sure to resolve himself straight into the kind, gentlemanly, agreeable Cyril Apthorp, just what any woman ought to love, only she didn't—that was all. How many times she chided herself in her own room for this! And yet the bare fact remained, and she could not help herself.

Cyril Apthorp brought her flowers, gave her beautiful books, and Rusha watered and cherished the one, and enjoyed the other, but really it was for their own sake—not for the giver's. His attentions were so marked as to become a matter of comment in their own set, and a target for all sorts of pretty family jests.

In all this there was a great deal that was pleasant. Rusha's vanity—I dislike to give it so harsh a name—certainly enjoyed the incense that her lover's devotion offered to it; but beneath all this the heart of the woman lay silent, giving back no sound, no throb of passionate tenderness stirring its calm—no touch revealing one strain of all its vast harp of eternal melodies!

There came an evening when Rusha went out of the parlor, her face unbent with tremulousness and doubt, that emphasized itself about the lips into something like grief.

The faces of her sisters, as they met her at the sitting-room door, were in marked contrast with her own, their eyes and lips in a twinkle of mirth.

"Has he proposed—O, has he proposed?" they cried out simultaneously, with voices that aimed at tragedy, but somehow fell short of it; and they danced back and forth before her.

Mr. and Mrs. Darryll sat by the table, looking on, and evidently enjoying the whole scene.

"Girls, be still. Aren't you ashamed to go on so!" the faintest little smile, in which was no element of triumph, just articulating itself about her mouth.

"I know he did, now!" persisted Ella, with immense unc-

tion. "I just left the parlor to give you a good chance, and I'm dying to hear all about it!"

"So am I," added Agnes, with a girlish curiosity that became her years. "Do tell us, Rusha!"

She sat down by the fire. "It's altogether too sacred a thing to treat in this way;" the trouble in her face still. "Such a matter belongs only to him and me."

"Rusha Darryll! you are the oddest girl alive. As though it wasn't all in the family, and we hadn't a right to know! But then, of course, it isn't to be expected you'd take an offer like any other born woman!" said Ella, with some asperity, which had its rise in baffled curiosity.

"Of course you'll tell your own family." Mrs. Darryll came to the rescue. "I'm sure it would not be to the young man's credit to desire you should keep it from us."

Her mother's remark set the matter in a different light. In a sense it was certainly true, and Rusha was not then in a mood to balance matters nicely; for she had that high sense of honor which her family was always disposed to regard as slightly hypercritical. So the facts transpired, and they amounted to this—Cyril Apthorp had paid Rusha the highest compliment a man can pay a woman; and she had not accepted him.

"I couldn't love him, pa; I tried to, hard as ever a woman did, but there was no use!" and she turned to Mr. Darryll, with such an earnest apology in her tones, while these and her face showed that both were on the point of breaking up into tears.

"Nobody wanted you to, child. I'm not ready to give up any of my girls," said her father in his very kindest manner. But for all that, Rusha knew that no one of his daughter's suitors would have been so acceptable in her father's eyes, as the one she had just declined.

"It was all my own fault;" the grieved tone still uppermost in her voice: "but though I liked him better than any of the others, I never could get beyond a friendly regard for him."

"It's my opinion," said Ella, oracularly, "you'll live to see the day you'll regret it. You've got some foolish crotchet in your head about love and romance, and all that, but I miss my guess if you haven't let good luck slip to-night."

"That may be, Ella, but I shall never regret doing what my heart and conscience told me was the only right thing. It's something else that troubles me!"

"What is that?" Spite of its mirthful beginning, the conversation had settled down into gravity enough now, on all sides.

"I can't rid myself of the feeling that all this time I've been encouraging Cyril Apthorp. I was trying to like him, of course, or I should never have done this; but the fact remains, and I do not feel comfortable over it."

"Encourage a man! That is an awful crime! No doubt you are the first woman who ever did that, Rusha!" said Ella, with her careless laugh, just touched with a little contempt.

"And that is not all," continued Rusha, half to herself. "I am sure that my refusal was a real blow to him. It struck deep, I saw, and he will not be likely to get over it very soon." This time there were tears in her eyes.

"Don't you trouble yourself on that score, my dear," said her mother, consolingly. "There never was a man who broke his heart for a woman!"

"Don't you remember what your favorite Rosalind says?" added Ella: "'Men have died from time to time, and worms eaten them, but not for love!' Shakspeare gauged the affections of his own sex at their precise value."

"I suppose it's so," said Rusha, drawing a long sigh of relief. "I'm sure I hope Mr. Apthorp will forget all about it in a little while."

She had her feminine love of admiration — she took the natural pleasure of her sex and her girlhood in the conquest she had made, but she was perfectly sincere in what she said to-night. Sink your line and plummet into the depths of her nature, and you would always find the tender, pitiful heart the deepest and truest part of it.

Still, I think that Cyril Apthorp would have felt a certain gratification could he have known just what a vacuum the loss of his society made in Rusha's life at this juncture. There had been a certain excitement in it, and the knowledge that she was loved with a true and loyal love — that she was the dearest and most precious thing in the whole world in the eyes of an honorable man could not but be pleasant to her, a perpetual offering to her approbateness, a perfumy incense to her self-love, which has won the hand, at least, of many a woman.

The result of all this was, that at last Rusha sat down and confided the whole to Tom — a curious little episode for him to read down there in camp on the Potomac; but then life is always springing strange episodes and unexpected events upon us.

Tom wrote back in unqualified commendation of the part Rusha had acted, and, with the valor of a newly-fledged officer, affirmed himself ready to shoot the next man who dared solicit any part or lot in Rusha Darryll. She belonged to him absolutely, and he was not going to yield an inch of his right to any living man.

As for love, Tom affirmed he had long ago made up his mind that it was nine-tenths a humbug, and he had dedicated himself to old bachelorhood. When the war was over, and he had finished his studies, Tom had forestalled a house of his own, over which Rusha was to preside. What happy times they would have in some little Arcadian retreat among hills and waterfalls, where Tom was to set his cottage, hung with verandas, and draped with flowering vines! All sweet persuasions of music, all inspirations of paintings, all the life and joy of books, should be theirs; and Tom drew such pictures of their perfect happiness together, that Rusha's eyes thrilled with happy tears. What a dear, enchanted life it would be, with the noisy, harassing world left far behind, as one leaves "the memory of storms that die below the horizon!"

She looked off through the future years, and saw the fair picture shining through them, and did not know that it was only

another mirage, hanging fair and beautiful along the slopes of her youth, but that it would fade and fade, and that in its stead would come the heat and the burden of the noonday.

At the very time that Rusha was up stairs, devouring Tom's letter, Ella happened to be down town with a party of friends, on some shopping expedition, such as ladies delight in; for it was one of those days of early spring in which the prophetic soul of the year seems suddenly to flash up through cloud and storm, in golden smile and softly-brooding air, "trying a chord here and there, before she commences the grand harmony of the seasons."

The little party was all in high glee, with nothing heavier on their minds just then than a buzzing commentary on the spring fashions; for gossamer fabrics, and flowers, and laces made a gorgeous display in the store windows that morning. Suddenly one of the company proposed that they should visit a picture gallery near at hand; some gems of oil paintings were on exhibition, which were talked about in their set.

"O, yes; I remember," said Ella, "Rusha was raving about them this morning, and I promised her I'd go down town with her after lunch. But the paintings will bear a second visit."

Did Ella Darryll's fate await her that morning in the picture gallery? It is best for us all to go softly through life, not knowing what any hour may bring forth to us.

Certainly, Ella Darryll would not have mounted the stairs with that light laugh and that gossipy hum of talk, if she could have known what was inside. Yet it was no more than Derrick Howe. He was idling away an hour among the pictures, with a party of gentlemen, his graceful lounging attitude making him conspicuous among the others.

Ella Darryll and he had not met since that memorable evening, which rankled still in his thought, and which had given to Derrick Howe's self-love the severest blow it had ever received. He had never felt quite so assured of himself since that time, and though he had often debated the matter in his thoughts, he could never, as he phrased it, quite "screw his courage up to

the point of calling on Ella and demanding an explanation of her sister's conduct." The prospect of being "snubbed by that purse-proud speculator" was not pleasant.

The two met squarely this morning. There was a little flash of confused annoyance on Ella's face, but she was a fashionable young lady, and had her expression under tolerably good control.

It was her nature to dislike whatever gave her trouble. Certainly Derrick Howe had his full share of this feeling as the young lady drew herself up and responded with a distant hauteur to his greeting, wishing at that moment that he was in "Jericho."

For Ella had made her promise in good faith, and she swept past the young man now with the air of a princess, with her graceful figure, with the rustle of her rich dress, all of which Derrick Howe was just the man to appreciate and admire.

"I'll speak to that girl before she leaves the gallery — hang me to the next lamp-post if I don't!" he muttered, sauntering after the party.

Circumstances were certainly in his favor. The gentlemen of his company were acquaintances of Ella's friends, and soon bestowed themselves among the young ladies.

Ella Darryll devoted herself to the pictures, a little fluttered internally, notwithstanding. A little way off Derrick Howe watched his opportunity.

"Whose is that?" asked Ella of one of the gentlemen, pointing with her parasol to a little gem on the walls, a bit of sea coast, and a mass of broken rock, and great waves storming against it in a white frenzy of wrath.

Somebody passed her at that moment and jostled the parasol from her hand. It was picked up and restored to her in a moment. Derrick Howe could do these things with an air.

Ella had received the parasol and bowed her thanks graciously before looking up. She recognized the gentleman. It was certainly an embarrassing position for the lady. Derrick Howe went on perfectly at his ease, criticising the pictures and talking as though nothing in the world had happened.

The others joined in the conversation, and Mr. Howe con-

tinued to address occasional questions and remarks to Ella, to which she must respond, or else, by her silence, attract the attention of the others.

He exerted himself to the utmost that morning, with success, one might suppose, from the peals of laughter which followed his sallies of wit — wit that had just that glitter about it which tickles light, foolish girls, but that has no real depth or sparkle, after all.

Ella found herself laughing, too. Then there stole across her Rusha's authoritative ultimatum, and her own promise, "That you will in no case accept any courtesies or hold any conversation with him."

Just then, however, her indignation pointed at Rusha instead of Derrick Howe.

"What can I do?" she questioned herself. "There is no help for it. Of course I can't run away and make myself a fool!" and so she staid on, and Derrick Howe talked at her and to her, and when her lady friends were in raptures over him, her vanity could not but take a certain pleasure in the marked deference which he paid before them all to her lightest word, always replying to any general remarks of hers, even when they were not addressed to himself.

When at last the time came to leave, Mr. Howe shook hands with each of the ladies; and when it came Ella's turn, she could not refuse hers. His time had come now. He held the gloved fingers a moment.

"This morning has been the first happy one which I have had since the most unaccountable termination of our last interview, my dear Miss Darryll," his softest tones, his blandest manner. How could Ella Darryll resent them?

"Of course Rusha would say I had broken my word, and that it was my duty to tell her the whole thing," reflected Ella, as she rode home that day. "But where's the use? It would only bring down a storm on my head; and I'd like to know what business she had to force such a promise from me! Of course, having given, I intended to keep it; but I couldn't fore-

see what happened this morning. In future I shall avoid Derrick Howe for the sake of peace. I think it's too bad I should be tyrannized over in this fashion; and it's all pa's and Rusha's absurd prejudice. Nobody else thinks him a fool or a villain. What would my elder sister say if she could have seen that look at parting?" a little shiver here, then a little smile of gratified vanity. "Any of the girls there would have gone home in raptures over it; but it must never happen again — never. There's my promise."

Derrick Howe paced up and down the picture gallery.

"All I want is time and opportunity — time and opportunity, by George!" he murmured; and his voice had a hard triumphant chuckle in it.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

As the spring advanced, the usual topic of the summer's migration came up, in due form, for family discussion.

Ella, of course, took it for granted that they would adhere to the prescribed forms, commencing with Newport, then flitting briefly to the mountains, and culminating at last among the gayeties and glories of Saratoga. This was the only course ordained by fashion and display, and these were the only divinities which the soul of this girl worshipped — the scales never having fallen from her eyes, so that she could look up and see the Juggernaut's car, nor the grinning idol that sat thereon, with the great wheels grinding beneath them something finer and better than the quivering flesh and bones of men and women. "I say unto you, my friends, be not afraid of them that have power to kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do."

Ella was going on swimmingly, dilating on all the prospects of the summer's campaign, the talk divided in about equal proportions betwixt her wardrobe and her plans, when Rusha suddenly broke into these glowing visions with her decided, "Of course, Ella, you'll do as you have a mind, but one thing I'm settled on — I shall keep clear of all fashionable watering-places, and of gayety and dissipation in general, for the next summer."

"Rusha Darryll, you always do manage to throw a wet blanket on one's plans. What new tack have you taken now?"

Irritation was apt to develop itself in Ella, in the use of somewhat mixed and coarse metaphors.

"I can't forget," with a little restless tap of her foot on the rug, "that I have a brother, a few hundred miles off, who is

liable to be shot dead any hour: and while that is the case, I will never disgrace myself by rushing into a round of dissipation and revelry, such as we've had for the last two summers. I've a little self-respect left, and a little conscience too, though both have gone through some toughening processes; but, at least, they'll keep me clear of Newport and Saratoga this summer."

"Well, you know I never did approve of Tom's going to the war; but as he was bent on it, I can't see why we should make martyrs of ourselves in consequence. It wouldn't do him any good, certainly."

Mr. Darryll laid down his paper, and the rest of the family disposed themselves in various listening attitudes, bringing, thus far, no forces to the debate which was going on, rather sharply, betwixt the sisters.

"Of course, Ella, our going or staying will, as you say, do the poor fellow no good; but there is a ghastly discrepancy in our wasting the summer in all sorts of frivolities while that death-bolt hangs over Tom's head."

"O, Rusha, don't!" groaned Mrs. Darryll.

"Well, if we follow your advice, and shut ourselves up here to boil and roast through the dog-days, there won't be much of us left by next fall; we may settle on that," replied Ella, in a dismally resigned tone, which meant, however, anything but acquiescence in her sister's views.

"But all the world does not chance to be included in Newport and Saratoga, as your remark implies; and in case we do not go there, we are not shut up to your alternative of boiling and roasting in town."

"O, I see now!" a tone pendulous betwixt triumph and contempt. "You want to go off and shut yourself up again, with the rest of the family, in that dreary, forsaken old corner of creation, Berry Plains. It's strange I didn't perceive what you were driving at. But you won't catch this child! Why, I should go distracted with *ennui*, and throw myself off from the first rock into the sea, before the week was over!"

"No," said Rusha, in no wise affected by the tragical fate which her sister predicted, "I should not want to go to Berry Plains. Tom and I were there together," her voice faltering a little, "and it was before Andrew —" dropping the burden of her sentence here, and taking up a new one, with a repeated, "No; I should not want to go to Berry Plains!"

Ella waited a moment.

"Well, what is your plan, Rusha?" her voice softened a good deal.

"Really, I have none formed. It strikes me that it would be the nicest thing to go off to some quiet place, where we could combine delightful scenery, and fresh air, and freedom of every sort."

"I think I should like that now, of all things," added Mrs. Darryll, whose nerves had never quite reacted from several shocks which they had sustained during the past year. "I must say I never can stand again those little boxes of rooms, and all the tiresome dress and parade of your fashionable watering places."

"As for country farm-houses, they're a humbug," put in Guy, to whose youth, quiet and retirement were only synonymes for dulness. "We shall be taken in by some old skinflint, who'll give us feather beds to sleep on, and boiled pork and cabbage for dinner! Go to bed, too, and get up, with the chickens! That trip won't pay."

Rusha laughed.

"The whole country outside of New York is not in quite so benighted a condition as you and Ella seem to take for granted. If it were, I should suggest that we all start out as missionaries at once. But I admit there are difficulties in the way of combining all we want in a private boarding-house."

"And who is going to scour the country round to hunt it up?" pursued Guy, very glad to invoke any spectres in the way of a plan which met his cordial disapprobation. "The governor, I reckon, has got other business on hand, and it wouldn't be safe to put it on me!"

"If we only owned a country-seat now!" spoke up Agnes. "How nice it would be to go there about three months out of the year — so *distingué*, too!"

She had a little school-girl affectation of spicing her talk with French phrases and synonymes.

"Yes, I must say, I should like that of all things," added Ella, complacently.

Suddenly Rusha bounded off her seat, her face all in a fresh light.

"O, pa, I've thought of the very thing!"

"What is it, child?" and again everybody listened.

"We can take some house of our own, a pretty little cottage, furnished or unfurnished, as the case may be, and have our own home and our own servants all the summer, without anybody to molest us."

This proposition did not meet with universal favor. Various objections were started, which Rusha disposed of, while Mrs. Darryll openly, and her husband secretly, inclined to the elder daughter's suggestion.

"A good many of the first people do rent cottages by the sea shore for the summer, and with our carriage and servants, and everything in the best style, I don't know as the plan would be bad," condescended Ella, at last.

"I think now it would be nicer than the hotels," subjoined Agnes. "But where in the world should we go? *That's* the question."

Then Rusha found her voice again.

"There isn't but one place in the world to be thought of, and that is the mountains. Just think of living amongst them, of standing face to face with all their beauty and glory, for a whole summer. O, pa, it must be the mountains!"

"Too far off," said Guy. "Be a real bore, too, before the season's over. Want to go to the sea shore, where we can find folks, and have a good time."

"We can have the sea all the year round," persisted Rusha; "and as for 'folks,' my greatest trouble most of the time is to

get out of their way. We must go to the mountains," her whole soul on fire with the prospect; and when Rusha Darryll set her heart on anything, she generally carried her own point, though in the first place it might encounter the opposition of her whole family.

Ella's suggestions all leaned in favor of the sea shore, her strongest objection to the mountains being founded on a general vague impression of the loneliness and ruggedness of the country in their vicinity; but Rusha put that to flight by citing the names of several families who had rented houses under the shadow of the White Hills — names which had immense weight with her sister.

So all serious opposition narrowed itself down to one point, and this was the remoteness of the mountains. Rusha admitted the force of this objection, losing nothing by it in the end, for, when her mother said, —

"If it was on the Hudson, for instance, your father could run up every Saturday night, and have the change and the fresh air, —"

The daughter answered, —

"Yes; but you know the doctor said last summer that he wished he could put the city a thousand miles off from pa for at least three months."

"I'd like to see the man who could get my business out of the knot it would be in by that time," said her father, in a tone of rather unusual pleasantry.

Of course the decision was not made that night, nor for a good many to come; but it became, thereafter, a theme of constant discussion at breakfast and dinner, indeed, whenever the family met together. Rusha's enthusiasm fairly infected the others. Such pictures as she drew of life up there among the New Hampshire hills — pictures with the very dew and freshness of the mountains upon them — of a life bewitched with its own freedom and rioting, intoxicated amid scenes of beauty and grandeur!

They were practical people who listened to her talk, but

somehow, despite themselves, the gold and glow of Rusha's roused imagination wrought a kind of transfiguration in the minds of all who heard her. The fiery intenseness and vitality of her nature fairly seized others against their own will; and the mountains were the mightiest joy and glory of Rusha's life. They had stirred and lifted her soul to their own heights, as even the vast, restless, solemn sea had never done.

In their presence all pettiness, weariness, disgust, even all those yearnings that haunted and made so much of the bitterness of her fine, aspiring youth, were swallowed up, and a solemn exultation and joy filled her whole being, as the rivers fill the sea.

She could never forget that first week in New Hampshire. It lifted itself out from the other memories of her life, as the mountains lifted themselves up in kingly majesty from the plains at their feet. She was not conscious herself, until she had left them, of that great tidal swell of feeling, which, going down, had left the days, for a while, like bare flats of sand, reaching away into dreary weeks.

Long before anybody had admitted in words that the mountain house was a settled plan, Rusha had the details all arranged, and she managed to weave the fine bloom of her fancy over the most prosaic of these, while she was too thoroughly in earnest to be in any wise conscious of the glamour her imagination poured over everything.

Mrs. Darryll, too, found a certain pleasure in making arrangements for "the cottage," excusing herself for anything that looked like a flight into the field of fancy, by always commencing with, "Of course it is very doubtful whether it will ever come to anything more than talk."

The younger sisters began to invest the whole thing with a certain romance, and to find all sorts of material for sport and adventure in the prospect of the change.

Guy talked, with a slightly swaggering air, about bringing down a bear occasionally in that "unexplored region," and Agnes dwelt with rapture on the life and duties of a dairymaid, and the becoming picturesqueness of white aprons, hopelessly

confounding the character with that of a gypsy and a hamadryad; for neither her history nor her mythology had attained much limpidness at this period.

Even Ella fell into the current of partiality which set so strongly towards the White Mountains, and allowed that, as all the world went there, if a place could be found on the stage route of the grand hotels, the experiment might not prove so bad, after all.

While the matter was pending, Mr. Darryll had a sudden business call to Boston, and there chance threw in his way some gentlemen from Concord who were familiar with the mountain region. A few inquiries developed just the sort of information that he desired. One of the gentlemen knew of a small cottage-villa that had been put up for a summer residence by an Englishman, a little outside of the main route from Littleton to the Willey Notch, and about midway between the two.

The house was a little summer nest, containing about half a dozen rooms, with a general physiognomical resemblance to the little cottages one finds sprinkled along the Canada side of the Falls, and which are so suggestive of cosyness and home. They had attracted Mr. Darryll more than anything else in his visit to Niagara. The owner was about to return to England, and the cottage could be leased for a term of years. Such a chance, however, would be likely to be "snapped up," to use the vernacular of Mr. Darryll's informant, "in a few days; for everything of that sort went at a high premium near the mountains."

John Darryll turned over the whole thing in his mind for a single night, and the result was, that the next morning found him on the train for Littleton, accompanied by his New Hampshire friend.

A little two-story nest, with green verandas closing it on every side, hung in a very wilderness of beauty on the slope of a hill, less than half a mile from the main road. Such a revelry of green life and beauty as there was all about this dainty cage—such fresh, dewy stillness and coolness and wildness; on one side, a little waterfall pouring over a gray lap of rock,

and always haunting the air with its sweet chord of falling waters; such cool glooms and rich green on the side of the savage forests, while far beyond the sweep of the fair valleys and reaches of pasture rose the Mount Washington range—peak after peak lifting itself towards the sky, wearing the splendors of sunlight or the terror of storms; while along those gray stairways of crags the gaze climbed and climbed, and the soul, entranced, followed after, until both rested at last on that height where Mount Washington unveils the awful sadness of its forehead. On the other side stood that royal mountain, Lafayette, with its princely hills clustered in homage about it—the grand old face scarred with the path of its streams, now looming spectral and terrible through its swathing clouds of mist, and now standing out in all its rugged, solemn strength and majesty in dazzling pomps and effects of sunlight.

John Darryll walked from angle to angle of the piazza, taking in from one point and another all the ravishing glory of this picture. Even to his world-hardened soul, the scene had something to utter.

"What would Rusha say to all that?" he muttered once to himself.

At last he went over the house, and coming out of the front door, as the result of all his investigations, he said to his companion,—

"If money will fix it, I'll have my family up here in three weeks."

There was no time to be lost. Mr. Darryll thought "luck was on his side that day," for on his return to Concord he found the owner of the mountain cottage, stopping over night in the city. A bargain between the two men was soon completed. Mr. Darryll obtained a lease for a term of years, and, this business having been completed, the very next morning found him on his way home.

Of course the news he carried took his whole family by surprise. Nothing else was talked of thereafter; and the man had to sustain an amount of interrogations that was appalling to one so little given to description of any sort as was John Darryll.

The comment of each was characteristic; but when her father concluded with, —

"You'll all think I did a capital thing; but as for Rusha, when she comes to see the mountains round, I expect she'll be carried right out of herself," —

"The mountains, pa, are they really in sight, though?" cried the voice, full of an ecstasy of delight.

"Well, I should think they were, as many as you can take in — wait and see — that's all."

She got right up then, went over to his side, and though she was the oldest of his children, she gave him what none of the rest ever did — a real hearty hug.

"Nonsense, child, nonsense!" said the man; but the words and the little attempt at gruffness were transparent enough.

Mrs. Darryll's questions all took, of course, the most practical drift; but when she came to learn the actual capacities of the "country-seat," as her daughters ambitiously termed the English cottage, she was thoroughly dismayed.

"No matter, ma; we are to live in a bird's nest, and we must stow as thick as the robins."

Rusha's clause was rather poetical than practicable, and the lady shook her head despondently.

"The robins have all out doors besides," she said.

"And so will you, when you get up there," rejoined her husband, promptly; and there being no help for it, Mrs. Darryll set herself to solving the problem of the utmost economy of space — a perplexing one, it must be admitted, when there are six of one's own family, and at least three servants, to bestow in a house whose utmost capacity did not exceed seven rooms.

"It is out of the question; it never can be done, ma," said Ella, in tones of doleful decision.

But necessity will surmount apparent impossibilities; and when, after turning the material which they had on every side, the largest chamber was assigned to the three girls, and a closet opening out of it to Guy, and the barn-loft pressed into a lodging for the man servant, the matter was settled.

"It'll be awful tight squeezing, ma," said Agnes, looking

half pathetically around the spacious drawing-room, in which they might almost have set the mountain cottage.

"It won't be worse, anyhow, than the cells we've had to put up with at the watering-places," said Guy, consolingly.

Busy times ensued. The Darrylls were eager to get out of town as soon as possible, as it was now approaching June.

There was all the cottage furniture to be bought and sent away, and the task of selection devolved on the girls. They went into it heartily. There was a novel pleasure, and a sort of romantic adventure, in the whole thing that appealed strongly to their youth. Both the young ladies had good taste enough to see the essential vulgarity of any attempt at display in the present case, and their choice of cottage appointments did them credit. Soft, cool mattings, with pretty light sets of furniture to match in browns and greens, and easy, portable chairs, and pearl-colored hangings, with just a touch of warmth in the borders, and linen curtains with dark green margins, and brackets for angles, and a moderate supply of choice engravings, with three or four of Rusha's pet pictures, made up the prominent belongings of the mountain nest.

These were despatched under the charge of a man and woman servant, who were to have the cottage in complete readiness for the advent of the family. Rusha was busy as a bee all this time, her face in a bright warmth of activity, which made it a pleasant thing to look at.

"O, ma!" she said, coming home thoroughly tired out with a day among furniture warehouses, "you don't know how I enjoy it all. I expect to be happier this summer than I have ever been in my life before."

"There's one thing — we shan't want to take any elegant dresses, living up there in the woods," said Agnes. "I'm going to wear nothing but white aprons, and delicate lawns, and just the dearest little gypsy hat with a golden brown plume. It will be so picturesque — only I don't suppose the people around there will be capable of appreciating anything of that sort; still, it must create a sensation!"

"Aggie," added Rusha, with a pleasant little laugh, "your vanity is so transparent one can't find the heart to ridicule it."

"As for elegant dresses," added Ella, "I shall take the very best I have. With the Crawford on one side and the Profile on the other, there's no danger of our being buried up all summer. Whenever it gets dull at home, we shall have the hotels in reserve, and we shall be sure to meet hosts of friends there during the season. Otherwise my consent never could have been obtained to this mountain plan."

The very day before the Darrylls left the city, Ella, being down town, chanced upon a party of friends, who were also just on the point of their summer flight. She was dilating on the mountain project, when who should come along but Derrick Howe — "the very one man in all the world," Ella thought, "whom she did not wish to see at that moment." Graceful and self-possessed as usual, he paused, lifted his hat, and joined the ladies, with whom he was on familiar terms.

Ella's talk had stimulated the curiosity of the young girls, and she was just launching out on a full tide of sparkling description of their home and their life to be, when the young man appeared. She was compelled to proceed by the entreaties of the others, and Derrick Howe, with the profoundest regrets at his intrusion on their talk, offered at once to withdraw.

But he was besieged by the ladies in a chorus of "O, do remain and hear, Mr. Howe. You will be so interested!" And of course he staid.

What could Ella do but go on with her talk? The mountain project had a dash of originality and romance in it which would be certain to attract young, pleasure-loving people, and Ella enjoyed the theme, and Derrick Howe listened, and asked questions with the others, and looked very handsome toying with his gloves.

"O, it must be perfectly charming!" exclaimed one of the young ladies. "Such a glimpse of gypsy life makes the prospect of watering-places dull enough; only, what will you do for society?"

"O, the cottage is within a few hours' ride of both the hotels. Whenever it gets dull, I shall go there."

Derrick Howe spoke up now: "I have been promising myself the tour of the mountains this summer." (He had until that moment entertained no remotest thought of this kind.) "It is possible I shall have the pleasure of meeting you at one of the hotels during the season."

"O, how nice that will be!" put in one of the girls, who admired Mr. Howe.

"O, yes, very," replied Ella, feeling that she must say something, and those words coming first.

When her friends took leave, Derrick Howe loitered a moment behind the others, and taking Ella's hand, lifted it to his lips before she could prevent the movement.

"Miss Darryll," he said, — and the man knew precisely how to say and do this in the most effective manner, — "the thought of meeting you will be all I shall live on this summer!"

He bowed over the tightly-clasped hand, and was gone.

"I'm sure I wasn't to blame; I couldn't help it; I shouldn't have allowed it had I known," muttered Ella, her conscience, which was not apt to be troublesome, giving her a twinge as she thought of Rusha. "I shall look out and keep clear of him at the mountains. And there's no use in telling anybody what has passed. How handsome the fellow did look, though!"

And Derrick Howe went on revolving in his mind all that had transpired, and hugging himself with the thought, "Luck's on your side this time, old fellow. Just get that girl away from her family up there at the mountains, and your chance will come. Now look out sharp for it."

And the opposition he had met trebled the value of the prize in the eyes of Derrick Howe.

At that very moment, Rusha, at home in her chamber, was packing her trunks for the day following, her lips in an unbent smile of sweet content, not dreaming that the skeleton would follow them also to that fair home that waited in its still peace for them among God's everlasting hills.

CHAPTER XXXV.

IN a morning of early June the carryall which had conveyed the Darryll household from Littleton, where they had passed the night, drew up before the front gate of the cottage. A morning in early June, "then, if ever, a perfect morning."

All the joy of sunshine, all the rarest beauty of sky and earth, seemed to have formed a conjunction at this hour to welcome them to their new home. That vast panorama of mountain grandeur stood up in all its solemn strength and majesty before them, the very temples and courts of the Eternal God. Pinnacle after pinnacle rose serene and clear in that June light, while a few mists clung in silver dimples down among the ravines and jagged places of the hills, or ran in a fine, tender bloom of peach and gold along the slopes. A sudden solemnity came upon the face of each one who tumbled eagerly out of the carriage and turned for a first look. Each mountain stood there a strong, vital personality; and though the Darrylls had driven all the way out from Littleton in voluble merriment, they went all around the piazzas, taking in one view and then another in a hush of silence, so impressed with the power and mystery of glory about them that words did not come to these people until they had gotten inside the house.

Here everything was in the perfection of order to receive them. Each article had been bestowed in its appointed place by thoroughly trained domestics, and every room, in its bright purity and perfect harmony of cool color, made a picture in itself.

Then the tongues were loosened. They went from room to room in a kind of voluble rapture, exhausting their breaths and their adjectives over each one; for in all respects, whether

in itself or its royal panorama of landscapes, the cottage utterly surpassed the limits of their imaginations.

Rusha took the whole, as was to be expected, somewhat differently from any of the others.

She went about from angle to angle of the upper and lower piazzas, feeding her entranced gaze on some new, rich surprise of landscape; now marking the winds toss the gray hairs of mist across the dark splendor of the forehead of Lafayette, and now steadying her glance on the far-off dome of Mount Washington, as it stood towering alone over all that power and glory of hills.

Voices called her inside. "O, do come and see this, Rusha!" — "Make haste and look here;" and to each she answered, "Yes, I'm coming. I'll be there in a moment," and staid on, finding it impossible to tear her enchanted gaze away. At last her father came to the door and called her, and she went in, her face transfigured with a rapture nobody had ever seen there before.

"O, pa," she said, speaking out her first thought, "I believe we've all made a mistake and got into heaven!"

Everybody laughed, and Guy answered, —

"I've always heard 'Jordan was a hard road to travel;' but I must say, if this is heaven, we've got along here by pretty comfortable stages!"

Everybody laughed again, even Mrs. Darryll, though she tried to look sober, thinking Guy's wit was a little wicked.

Then Rusha went about the house, surveying the rooms, peering into every nook and cranny with the others, enjoying it all, and yet mostly like one in a dream, the glory of the vision outside calling to her soul all the while.

They could not hold her amongst them long. She was out on the piazzas again, her face going in a trance of silent rapture, from one landscape to another, until the ecstasy became a real pain.

She could bear no more; she must get away by herself from all human sight; and impelled by this longing, she darted down

the steps into a narrow lane on one side of the house ; following this for a short distance, she struck into a little wood-path, which led her up into a green thicket just on the edge of the forest. Here, in the cool darkness, sweet fragrances of the woods clung to the air, the morning winds frayed out the edges of the maples and birches overhead, making a soft lisp of sound which one would not be likely to hear for the singing of the birds and the dripping of water from some small stream near at hand. Rusha threw herself down here on the grass, and sobbed like a baby for the next half hour. It seemed that her heart must break out of its great burden of joy, if it were not for this relief of tears ; and when, at last, she rose up and turned homeward, it was with a heart, like her face, quieted and peaceful as a little child's.

In the weeks that followed, the Darrylls settled down to their new life among the mountains — a life in utter contrast with all their previous experience. No doubt its novelty lent some fresh charm to everything about them ; but it did seem as though they had left the loud, restless world far behind, and were locked up in some enchanted valley, whose gates were those eternal mountains which shut them in on every side.

The strong tonics of mountain air gave fresh vigor to every pulse, while the absolute seclusion and rest fell like balm upon each tired sense, and went deeper than that into every tired soul that would open its doors wide enough to let the blessing enter in and abide there.

The young people lived mostly out of doors ; fairly bewitched with the wildness and roughness of the region ; hunting into all its recesses, finding new secrets and rich surprises of scenery with every hour — now it was a spring, with a little trickle of tune under some green wall of thicket, now a blasted trunk, across which some vine had flung its fiery scarf of wild bloom ; now it was some heap of rare mosses clinging to broken rocks ; and now it was some unexpected nook or dell on which they would chance in the woods, a very forest lyric of peace and beauty. They would come home every day, their fair young

cheeks alive with fresh bloom, bringing spoils of wood and thicket and forest, like conquerors. Indeed, the little house fairly rioted and ran over with wood blooms, and sprays of vines, and wild berries, and clumps and tufts of forest growths, among which were daintily hung birds' nests, and eggs streaked and mottled, and all sorts of curious things.

Guy was knight errant for his sisters, and always carried his gun, and was on the lookout for the traditional bear of that region, whose history had as reliable a basis as some delightful old legend of mythology. It was a pleasant sight to stand on the piazza, as Mrs. Darryll did in the summer mornings, and see the little party start off on some search for a new wood-path, or some exploration into the wild recesses of the forests — the girls in their pretty sun-hats, with long plumes that fluttered triumphantly in every breath of wind, the soft, crisp folds of fine-hued cambric brushing away the dew that still sanded the grasses ; and the mother would stand there on the piazza, shading her pleased eyes from the sun, and watch them, believing that in all the world there were no daughters so fair or lovely as her own. I suppose, however, all mothers think that.

Guy generally brought up the rear, well provided with knives, and small hoes, and various-sized baskets to contain the forest trophies. He was indispensable on these occasions ; and Guy was at heart a "good fellow," when the conceits and smartnesses of his stripling youth dropped off from him.

The absence of his elder brothers seemed to have brought to the surface whatever was best in him of manliness and self-reliance, and given him some new sense of responsibility and dignity ; while during his father's absences in the city, the duties of "head of the family" devolved, in some sense, upon the youngest son.

But if those first weeks at the mountain cottage were happy ones to the collective Darryll household, if never a sigh or a longing went back to the great city they had left far away with all its whirr of exciting pleasures, you can think something of

what this life was to the oldest daughter. Her soul drank in its new freedom with a strange sense of liberty and exultation, like that of some bird, caged from its birth, which has suddenly burst its bars, and found the green woods and its native air.

The care or doubt which had haunted her expression passed out of it now, and in its stead there came an illumination of child-like brightness and absolute content, which filled her face with a new beauty.

Her family recognized this in their homely fashion by remarking, —

“Rusha, you’ve been growing good-looking every day since we came to the mountains — that’s a fact!”

And those mountains were a perpetual feast to the long-fasting soul of Rusha Darryll. In that grand vestibule of majesty and beauty in which their home was planted, she could lift her eyes on every side to the mighty temples which her Father had built, and worship Him with a new love and joy. Her eyes had the anointing which the others had not, and could “see beyond the land into the landscape.”

The mountains and the girl knew each other. She grew into a loving intimacy with all their moods. When the swift wing of the tempest swept in awful darkness along the crags — when the vast seas of vapor moved down and gathered in the hills, until their pinnacles loomed up fair and spectral, like the turrets and spires of some city in the heavens — when the mists hung in play their silver fleeces along the slopes, and, touched with sunlight, flickered into a foam of fine gold — when the noontide glory hung upon the hills, or sunrise and sunset poured their fiery splendors upon every cliff, — the soul of Rusha Darryll watched and waited, and received its blessing.

And though her rambles with her sisters were many, she had more by herself. She would plunge off into the silent woods, and, in some cool depth of shade and savage wildness, throw herself down on a mat of mottled gray and green mosses, and read and dream away the hours. Sometimes her book would be a volume of Ruskin, transmuting all the world into a new

mystery and harmony of light and grace and color. Sometimes she would lose herself among Starr King’s “White Hills,” until the very pages seemed to heave and glow under her with the forms and splendors of mountain and cataract. And sometimes — oftenest, perhaps — the reading would be fragmentary enough — passages here and there of her favorite poems — passages that held in them some immortal essence of truth and beauty, while she read alternately from the two volumes opened before her, and each interpreted the other to her soul; and she found that the volume of man and the volume of nature had alike their end and best meaning in God.

Yet the rumors from the world outside, which reached the Darrylls in their happy sequestration, were painful enough. We all know what a miserable summer was that latest one of the war — men’s hearts everywhere failing them for dread. The terrible battles of the Wilderness, which shook all our homes, while the birds sang in the sprouting May boughs, had come and passed, dropping its shadow of death upon many a threshold; and still Richmond stood, bristling and defiant, before the armies of Grant.

Then followed that terrible drought which drank up the springs, and the earth lay panting and shrivelled under the fierce heats, until famine loomed up in the distance, gaunt and awful, following on the heels of war.

Of course the Darrylls had their days and nights of agonizing suspense, when the Union armies were knocking vainly at the gates of Richmond, amid that awful hail of death which brought low so much of the land’s brave young life.

But Tom Darryll had escaped, though he had been in the thickest of the battle, and came out — to use his own words to Rusha — “without a singed hair, but not the same man that he went in. He could never be that again.”

Letters went back and forth constantly betwixt the brother and sister. How strange it seemed to Tom to read down there, amidst all that din and havoc of war, about the blissful quiet of the home among the silent New Hampshire hills! He entered

into every detail with the greatest eagerness, and seemed to find almost as much delight in the dear little "mountain nest," as he called it, as any of the rest.

Early in July, when the tide of fashionable travel set stronger than ever towards the White Hills, Ella learned that a party of her city friends were passing a week at the Crawford, and were importunate that she should join them at the hotel.

The old instincts resumed their sway, making this a temptation which the girl could not resist; and, to tell the truth, as the novelty wore off, their seclusion and quiet had become a little monotonous to Ella, and she hailed the prospect of a brief return to her old life. It is true, as she was packing her finery for the trip, a thought of Derrick Howe flashed across her, and the not very remote probability of their meeting at the hotel.

To do her justice, she had scarcely thought of him since their parting. "If he should turn up," mused Ella, "how provoking it would be! But I can't bury myself up here all summer because of that possibility, and in case I should come across the fellow, there's nothing left to do but to keep him at a proper distance."

But Ella did not consider that the signal manner in which she had failed in this already, afforded small hope of her being able to do it in circumstances where Derrick Howe would have everything so greatly to his own advantage. So she sprang lightly into the carriage that afternoon, for Guy was to drive her over to the hotel, and she rode away by his side smiling and confident, not dreaming that she was going to meet her fate.

And that afternoon Rusha sat at the window and looked out on Mount Lafayette, its top swathed in a cloud of radiant vapors, while "beneath, it stood out sharp and clear, full of strength, passion, and expression."

A soft light filled the eyes of the girl as she gazed. "Maybe I've thought too hardly of it," she murmured, forgetting herself in voluble thought, as was somewhat her habit when alone. "It's a beautiful world, after all. I didn't suppose anybody could be so happy in it as I've been for the last month!"

Then her thoughts went to Tom. "O, my brave young knight," with a quiver of joy and tenderness all through her words, "how nobly you buckled on your armor and went out to the battle, which in some shape is appointed to us all, whether we be men or women! But O, Tom, Tom, my heart is sick to see you! If you were only here now, the measure would be full, and I could only say, 'Dear God, it is enough. Give me no more, lest I die!'"

"Should you indeed say that, Rusha?" asked a voice at the door behind her.

She turned around with a little smothered cry, and there stood Tom, in his "army blue," smiling, in the doorway!

CHAPTER XXXVI.

TOM'S brief furlough allowed him only five days at home; but what cannot be lived in five days? Whatever lost opportunities the Darrylls might have to regret, they certainly could never reproach themselves for not making the most of the present time. Tom, of course, was the hero of the occasion; and Rusha and he were inseparable, though they had little opportunity for their old and intimate talks, for whatever locality the young soldier happened transiently to occupy, that was sure to be the point of concentration for his whole family.

He was looking finely. That hard, out-door life down there on the Potomac had bronzed his cheek and broadened his shoulders, and given to face and bearing a new vigor and manliness. He had crossed the Rapidan with Grant in those pleasant May days, and been through that awful storm of fire and death which followed, and which, though it had spared him, not so much as singeing his garments, had yet made him feel, when he came out of it, as though he had left all his youth behind. Certainly each one of those lurid days and nights had burned away some dross from his soul; but out of their fires would come a steadier and stronger fibred manhood.

They used to sit far into the night listening to his stories with a shuddering eagerness, and wondering they had him back among them alive and well. "As for sleep," Rusha, who had a family reputation for wakefulness, averred, "*that* could afford to wait. They'd nothing in the world to do but make up losses on that side when Tom was gone."

Then, of course, there was all the ground to explore, for Tom must not let a single fine point go unvisited. Fortunately, the best views were within easy riding or walking distances, and the

young officer was as eager to go as Guy and the girls were to be his pioneers.

He was as charmed with the mountain retreat as it was possible to be, and drank in all its delights and marvels of landscape with a spirit which satisfied even Rusha.

"Isn't this better than Saratoga, Tom?" she said to him one day, coming out and taking his arm as he was pacing up and down the veranda for a few moments alone.

"Better!" He lifted up his face to the hills, whose foreheads were covered by purple gauzes of mist, shaking back and forth in the soft afternoon wind. "The mountains answer more eloquently than I."

She clasped her other hand upon his arm, and looked up into his face with her sweetest smile.

"It was all my doings — their coming up here. You see I like to take the credit to myself."

"Do you s'pose I shouldn't have known, whether you did so or not, that it all originated with you? I wonder, dear girl, if anything good or beautiful ever happened to us that you didn't manage to be at the bottom of it all!"

Her face, in a quiver of delight and fondness, looked up to his.

"O, Tom, Tom!" She could not get any farther just then, leaning her head against his shoulder, and for a little while they continued their walk in silence around the veranda.

She cleared her voice to speak at last — "After you were gone away, I remembered, Tom, — and the memory cost me a good many sharp pangs, — that I'd been impatient and fretful, and said things to you I ought not, more than once. It seemed to me I could never forgive myself for it then."

"Don't you fret that dear, little, sensitive soul of yours over it again as long as you live." Tom had grown affectionate, in speech at least, since he went to the war. "Mind what I say, now. You've never been anything but the greatest comfort and blessing to me in the world."

Her face, looking up, thanked him again with such thanks as few faces have in this world.

Then Tom drew out of his bosom the small Bible, a good deal faded with use, and held it up before her.

"It went through all the fights with me!" he said.

"Did you find time to do what I asked?"

"Every day; and I found," dropping his voice, a strange solemnity creeping over his young face, "that what you said was true about the strength and comfort. Sometimes in those awful days, when a fellow couldn't see for the thick storm of shells whizzing round him, and the men were dropping dead every minute where they stood, and the next breath his turn might come, some of the words in here would come back to me and cling to my thoughts, and I'd find it was as you said, there was some life in them that it took the hot breath of the battle to kindle. I tell you it makes a fellow think, to stand next door to another world, if he never did before."

"O, Tom, how can I ever thank God enough for sparing you to me — to us all!"

"I s'pose the best way to thank Him, after all, is to serve Him — to please Him," he answered.

What a great leap that was — what a school the battle-field had been for his soul, as it has for the souls of so many of our young men during the past year — so many in this world or the next!

"That's the only way, and we must all find it out for ourselves." Then in a moment — "Were you much afraid, Tom?" a woman's question always.

"Well, you see, a fellow's completely carried out of himself. A hot excitement gets possession of him, and he only knows that he's got to turn in and fight, come life or death. He can't feel much beyond that, not even when a man stands at his side one moment and drops dead the next, and he himself is likely to be in another world with a breath more. But in the marches, and before the battle began, I had time to think, and to feel, too; and life seemed a very small thing just then, beyond what use a fellow made of it to serve him in his dying hour. I hadn't got the sort of record I'd have liked by a long ways, and it didn't

make me feel any more comfortable to look back; and then — you know a man can't say much about these things — some of those passages I read in here came back to me, as though God's voice had spoken them directly to my soul. I went into the battle on their strength and comfort, and if I'd never come out of it, I think I should have gone into the other world on some hope and rest I'd found inside of this!" laying his other hand over the book.

"O, Tom, I am so glad — so glad!" her eyes swimming in tears, her whole face alive with a tremulous gladness which told how deep Tom's words had gone.

At that moment Agnes came out on the veranda — "You're not going to be Rusha's special property this time, you needn't flatter yourself!" with a laugh. "Some other folks have rights, too."

"Take some of them now, then," offering her his other arm; and they continued their walk.

"I tell you now, it's pleasant," said Tom, "for a fellow to have such a good-looking girl on each side of him, and nothing to do but to take his ease. He'll never appreciate it, though, until he's had a little of just such peppering and salting as I've undergone for the last six months."

"O," said Agnes, suddenly, "it's almost time for Guy to be back with Ella. He only rode over to intercept the stage. Suppose we go down and meet them?"

Her proposition was acted on without delay. They sauntered down the road, waiting only to get their hats, and were rewarded by a sight of the carryall before they had proceeded half a mile from the house. A waving of handkerchiefs and hats at once saluted it, but as it drew nearer it proved to have only a solitary occupant.

The surprise and disappointment were audible enough, especially on the girls' part, and Guy was assailed when he drove up to them, as though he was responsible for not bringing his sister.

He was quite equal to his own defence, however, which

amounted to just this — Ella was not in the stage, neither was there any message from her.

"It is too provoking," said Agnes, with her girlish impetuosity; "and she won't get here until to-morrow now, and then have only two days more for Tom."

"She couldn't have got your telegram, Guy," said the young officer rather inclined to solve difficulties than to waste time in lamentations over them.

"That's it, you may depend; and yet I can't see how it's happened. I telegraphed from Littleton yesterday morning, and it don't seem as though there could have been any mistake in the thing. We must try it again; that's all. Rufus will drive in town to-morrow morning —" commenced Guy.

"We won't trust to telegrams at all in a case like this," interposed Rusha. "We'll just send Rufus over to the Crawford to-morrow. But then I can't help thinking how sorry Ella will be when she comes to find these lost three days of your visit, Tom."

Tom was sorry, too. Ella was his sister, and because of that he loved her dearly; indeed, his brief army life had afforded him some new knowledge of his own capacities in family affection.

Still the loss and disappointment would have been a far different thing if Rusha, instead of her sister, had been absent at this time; and only then, perhaps, could Tom have realized how much of the blessedness of this coming home he owed to this sister of his.

No love or longing, however, could hold back those long, golden days of midsummer, gladly as each would have detained them. Mr. Darryll arrived on the following day; so that, with Ella, the family circle would have been as complete as possible.

Rufus did not make the journey from Littleton in his usual good time; hence the family resolved themselves into a committee, in order to decide whether he had better ride over to the Crawford House and bring Ella back that night. But more than half Tom's furlough was now expired. She had not

arrived, as had been hoped, in that day's stage, and her absence was now laid solely to the charge of the telegraph, which was anathematized by the family in general.

The domestic conclave resulted in the despatch of Rufus for the Crawford a little before sundown. The ride of twenty-four miles, which included the journey both ways, must occupy at least five hours.

Rufus accomplished the trip in this time, but returned without Ella. She had that morning ascended Mount Washington with a party of friends, and the whole company had, while at the Summit House, taken a fancy to descend on the other side and pass the day at the Glen; so they could not possibly return before the next evening.

Rufus could not make certain about the telegram. There was a vague impression that one of the nature he described had been transmitted; and if so, there was no doubt that the young lady had received it.

At all events, to clinch the matter this time, Rufus had telegraphed both to the Summit House and to the Glen, and there was no help for it. Ella's part in Tom's furlough must now be limited to a single day.

In the midst of the disappointment, each fell back on the old solution — the telegram, through some inadvertency, had failed to reach the girl.

That last day of Tom's furlough went as though its hours were hurried off by some remorseless fate. Everybody of course gravitated to his orbit, letting all other interests wait on him.

The evening came, and again the stage did not bring Ella. Once more the carryall was despatched in all haste to the Crawford House. The party had not yet returned, and it appeared that they must have altered their plans, as the telegram to Ella had been answered at the Glen, with the information that no such party were stopping at the hotel.

Perplexity and disappointment took about equal possession of the Darrylls. Ella's last chance for seeing Tom was gone now,

and the possibility of its being a last chance, in the profoundest and deepest sense, could not but flash across all their thoughts, and then be dismissed with a shudder. The father was irritated, and that always made him unreasonable. His blame must fall on something more sentient than telegraph wires this time.

"That girl never knows what she's about when she gets off on a frolic with her fashionable friends. Of course there'd be no telling where to find her, or what she was about. Pretty scrape this! You ought to have had more sense than to let her go," turning upon his wife, as though it was the easiest matter in the world for that pliant mother to dominate her grown-up daughters.

"Now, pa, don't be hard on anybody," put in Rusha, who was walking up and down the room. "I'm sure it will be bad enough for the poor child when she comes home and finds what she's lost, without our adding reproaches for what she couldn't help."

"Yes," subjoined Tom, feeling that the circumstances would give his request a weight, just now, that it would not have at any other time, "don't blame Ella when she gets back. Tell her, next time she won't get rid of me so easily. When beaux are round, brothers are always a nuisance," turning off whatever disappointment he might feel with a jest. "Come here to the window, Rusha, and see the effect of the moonlight on that bank of mist up there in the hollow of the mountain."

Of course she went. "How beautiful it is!" she murmured. "Soft and glistening as the white veil of a bride; and a little farther up, on that jutting crag, the vapor lies, a heap of orange blossoms to complete the figure. Don't you see them?"

"Yes, with a long pull of my imagination!" laughed Tom. Then Rusha grew grave again. "O, Tom, before that moon has waxed and waned, where will it find you?"

"Down there in camp, I suppose, watching the long rows of tents that have a wonderfully picturesque effect in moonlight, and remind me of nothing in the world but snow-drifts piled on midsummer grass. It will find me, too, thinking of you all here at home, and fancying just what you are about. What a com-

fort it is that I shall be able to locate you all now — to see in my fancy the rooms, and the verandas where you are sitting and walking, as I never could have seen them even through your letters. Our little cottage will cling to me everywhere now."

Her eyes smiled upon him with their sweetest fondness. Then in a moment he went over and threw himself down on an ottoman at his mother's feet, and laid his head in her lap.

"You must spoil me for this one night, just as you used to when I was a little shaver."

She was ready enough to do it, smoothing the thick brown hair with her hand, while the family gathered around in its softest mood, as the shadow of parting, hanging over loving hearts always brings to the surface their finest and deepest feelings.

They had all realized in this visit of Tom a new gentleness and thoughtfulness that seemed to twine their graceful wreaths about some column of strength in his character.

"I declare he seems to grow beautiful every hour!" said Agnes to Rusha, as the sisters retired late that night. Certainly he grew dearer to them every hour.

The parting came early next morning, for Tom must be in time for the train at Littleton. The wrench, however, was not so hard as the previous one. We get used to almost everything in life; and then Tom had really been to the war, and come back sounder and heartier in every respect than he went.

They could not think that it might be otherwise a second time. Then his hopefulness infected them all. Tom fervently believed that Grant would be in Richmond before the fall election, which was then filling all men's minds. You could not listen to the high, confident hopes of his young soul, without in some degree catching his spirit.

There had been some talk of accompanying the gentlemen as far as Littleton, Mr. Darryll returning to New York with his son. But Rusha vetoed all that. She could not bear to have their leave-taking transpire in the midst of a curious crowd.

So they went no farther than the gate, and took their clinging farewells with only God's solemn mountains looking down on them.

They watched him as long as they could, his face turned back and smiling on them; and so it passed, in the pleasant summer morning, smiling out of their sight.

It seemed a dreadfully barren house to which they turned back; but Rusha said, with a smile which her lips held through a little treachery of voice, "Now we're not going to give it up, and carry long faces all day, because Tom's gone. I think that would be ungrateful to God, who has given him back to us safe and sound for such a precious surprise and delight as this visit has been to us all."

Her words had their effect, and I think those who watched wisely would have found that, more and more, God was in the thought and life of Rusha Darryll.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THERE was but one man in the world who could have fully explained the mystery of Ella's absence and silence all this time, and that man was Derrick Howe.

He had come to the mountains, this summer, resolved, to use his own figure, on playing a desperate game — if he won the cards, the prize would be a heavy one, and he was not likely to be punctilious about the means, when an end he so greatly desired was in view.

Yet you must not think that Derrick Howe was consciously a villain. He honestly believed himself a good fellow — better, in fact, than the most of men. In his relations with Ella Darryll he certainly regarded himself as the aggrieved party, and he believed that he had just as good a right to the hand and fortune of that girl as any other man. That any of her family should oppose his suit appeared simply in the light of a monstrous injustice to himself — one which it was his right by any means in his power to circumvent.

With this purpose, as I said, he had come to the mountains with a large party, among which were several of Ella's friends. They did not know it, but he was really at the bottom of the invitation which brought Ella to the Crawford House, where she was received with voluble rapture by a company of dashing girls, who thought they greatly honored the mountains by airing their graces and importing here their city manners.

In order to forestall all emergencies, Derrick Howe had prevailed upon the young ladies of his set to keep his presence, with several other gentlemen of the party, a profound secret. The girls readily entered into the joke, and he persuaded the young men to go off with him on an expedition into the woods,

the real object of all this precaution being to keep the entire Darryll family in ignorance of Mr. Howe's whereabouts, as he had foreseen the strong probability of some of its members accompanying Ella to the Crawford. His plan succeeded admirably. Guy would have encountered Derrick Howe without a suspicion of any sort, he having, at the most, only a vague sort of an impression that the young gentleman was "one of the strings of Ella's bow that the governor was down on;" but he would have been certain to mention his name among the party at the Crawford, and "the train would have been fired at once," to borrow Derrick Howe's rhetoric again. But Guy rode home, after his dinner at the Crawford, in blissful ignorance, carrying no tidings to the elder sister, that could arouse her out of the sweet security into which the mountains had lulled her thought and feeling.

Derrick Howe did not discover himself to Ella Darryll until he had ascertained that the field was quite clear. The girl was utterly confounded when that gentleman walked into the parlor with his friends, and greeted her in his most cordial manner, while the young ladies who were in the secret, grouped themselves in a picturesque tableau around her, to enjoy a surprise which they fancied must be of a most agreeable character.

But it seemed as though, at that moment, some good angel must have rung a warning in Ella Darryll's soul, for the girl actually shivered and turned pale, acknowledged Derrick Howe's greeting with a chilling bow, and in a few moments made her escape to her chamber with the young lady who shared the apartment with her.

"I wish I had never come here! I really must go home to-morrow morning!" she exclaimed, passionately, throwing herself down on the bed.

Her companion was quite appalled at this announcement, and Ella felt she had now gone too far to retreat, and, in her perplexity, she needed some confidante, into whose sympathizing ear she could pour the tale of her griefs. So, under a promise of inviolable secrecy, she told her story, which was truthful in

so far that the speaker had no idea that it was not a faithful mirror of facts.

How far it was intrinsically so, could, perhaps, be best ascertained from the impression which it made on the listener, though something must be allowed for her predilections in favor of Derrick Howe.

The girl received a general impression that the Darryll family, individually and collectively, had conceived an absolute and altogether unreasonable aversion towards Mr. Howe — that the bare suggestion of his name was a signal for the most violent domestic explosion — that Ella had undergone much persecution on account of a variety of harmless attentions from that irresistible young gentleman; and while she acknowledged his graces of mind and manner, his presence filled her with an indefinable terror and dread; and that, moreover, she had been compelled, for fear of her father and sister, to enter into bonds to keep the family peace by avoiding Derrick Howe as though his very presence carried with it some blasting moral plague.

Whether this was, or was not, exactly the impression which Ella intended to convey, as she went over the story in a breathless, excited manner, this was the general idea which her friend received.

Ella finished by bursting into tears. She really felt frightened at the thought of being under the same roof with Derrick Howe. She remembered his words on their last meeting in New York, and had a conviction that he had come to the mountains solely on her account. She remembered her promise to Rusha, and her conscience convicted her of breaking it. She could not easily have analyzed her own feelings, but she had a vague fear of something connected with Derrick Howe — she could not tell what.

Her companion, a well-meaning girl enough, acted her part as sympathizer and counsellor, in accordance with the hasty conclusions to which she had jumped. She insisted that Ella's return would reduce the whole party to a state of indescribable misery, and besought her, in pity to her friends, to spare them

such an infliction. She treated the Darryll prejudice regarding Derrick Howe as one of those unaccountable delusions to which the paternal and maternal mind have had an inherent proclivity from time immemorial.

She was eloquent in the praises of that victim of the fatal blindness of others—she sympathized, after the fashion of a romantic young girl, with the sufferings which Ella had undergone from family tyranny, but agreed that a promise, which amounted to a vow, could only be adhered to by an absolute avoidance of Derrick Howe on all occasions; indeed, Ella herself made so strong a point of this, that she could not be induced to dress for supper, until her companion had satisfied her that she should be established betwixt her brother and her friend, and that it would be the easiest matter in the world for Ella to keep the young man at the utmost limit of social recognition.

So Ella went down that night in her own strength, primed with a determination never to give Derrick Howe the slightest favor, or accept a courtesy of any sort from him. He did not invade her sphere. The truth was, he had been a good deal surprised and chagrined at her reception; but the repulse only inspired him with a stronger determination to leave no stone unturned in the achievement of his purpose. He exerted himself to be agreeable to the rest of the party with even a little more than his usual success, and the most attractive elements were soon clustered about himself.

This could not be altogether agreeable to Ella. With her brilliant spirits and her good looks, she was used to bearing the palm among a small clique of girls, and she found herself compelled to gravitate a little with the others, or form the nucleus of a party in her own corner.

She tried this, and found it bored her. From the other side of the room there came peals of laughter and the merry click of tongues. "What a good time they were having over there!" Ella thought. "And how provoking it was that she must be kept out in the cold with the fag end of the party."

Some of the girls strayed over to her side.

"What makes you stay here? Mr. Howe is so funny. I've really lost my breath laughing over his comic adventures." So the changes rung.

It was certainly a hard case for Ella. So she compromised; allowing herself to be led over to the others with an inward reservation that she would not be drawn into Derrick Howe's talk. That young man was, meanwhile, watching every movement of hers, and secretly congratulated himself on the small concession she made in joining his group.

He still avoided directly addressing her, but exerted his utmost possibilities in showing off himself to the others. For it was, in reality, doing no more nor less than this. He had that superficial wit which is at a premium in light, fashionable society, and all the gifts of small talk, added to certain graces of manner, which the young always gauge far above their worth. Ella did listen and sometimes laughed, in spite of her resolutions.

Music struck up at last, and dancing commenced. Ella did her part here; so did Derrick Howe, who was regarded by the young ladies as the greatest prize among their partners.

Ella had plenty of engagements—but nobody went through the figures with such a grace as the man whom she was under bonds to avoid. She began to wish it were otherwise, to hope that Derrick Howe would invite her for the next set on purpose to let the others hear her refusal.

Governed at all times by the opinions of her own world, never gauging persons by their intrinsic value, but holding them at precisely the estimate of a certain class of people, Ella could not resist the influence which Derrick Howe's social popularity carried with it.

"All the other girls are crazy to dance with him," thought Ella, "and though I certainly don't wish to do that, I should like to have them know that I could."

During the early part of the evening, however, Derrick Howe assiduously avoided her. Ella's vanity had no opportunity to triumph by declining any courtesies on his part.

He was shrewd enough to discern that he could most easily overcome her coldness by making himself of chief consequence in the eyes of those around her.

Already a reaction was taking place in Ella's mind, and the repugnance with which she had first encountered Derrick Howe, was superseded by one of anger towards her father and Rusha.

Meanwhile the young man was biding his time. He could not, of course, discern the process of Ella's thoughts, but he was certain, as the evening wore on, that she was inwardly less crustaceous towards him.

Several times, as he stood near her in the pauses of the dance, Ella expected that he would address her. But he did nothing of the kind, only devoted himself to the lady by his side. She began to be angry with herself for repelling him in the beginning — to feel, too, that he was the only man in the party whose attentions were really worth having.

The evening had nearly closed, when Mr. Howe suddenly turned towards Ella as though nothing had transpired betwixt them, and asked her opinion on some trifling matter at that moment under discussion. The smile with which she answered was in marked contrast with her manner when they first met. It encouraged him to ask her hand for the next set, which was forming at that moment.

Ella hesitated. Derrick Howe cursed himself for his precipitancy; but vanity triumphed over conscience. He was the most desirable partner for the dance, and Ella was eager to show him in her train, and he led her off in triumph.

Outside, the moonlight lay folding the earth and the mountains in its white, solemn trance of beauty. A few miles off Rusha Darryll had put aside the curtains, so that the light might fill the room like a very blessing of God; and so she had gone to her sleep. If she could only have known what was going on that hour not far away — if she could only have known!

Ella Darryll felt that she had done wrong, and the feeling made her uneasy, defiant, desperate. She grew angry with Rusha. What business, she asked herself, had her sister to extort a promise from her that she would never speak to Derrick

Howe! It was a perfect outrage, to begin with. And then it was an absolute impossibility to keep it under the present circumstances. She had not asked him to come to the mountains, but here he was, and she must be civil to him, despite her father's and sister's prejudices.

She really worked herself up into the belief that she had been abused, and that, having broken the ice once, there was no use of trying to keep up any further coldness towards Derrick Howe, in speech or manner. She had come to the Crawford to have a good time, and she would let matters take their own course, in spite of anything.

This conclusion was all Derrick Howe desired. He had now the "time and opportunity" he had coveted, and he made the most of them. Of course they had all sorts of out-door excursions, amid which Mr. Howe was conspicuous — in short, the very life and centre of the party.

You have seen that he was just the sort of man to please the fancy of a girl like Ella Darryll; and he soon regained, or rather redoubled the old impression he had made on her.

Intimacies develop rapidly in the careless freedom of out-door life and excursions; and it seemed as though some fate, which she did not long struggle against, were constantly bringing Derrick Howe and Ella in juxtaposition. He was at her side when the party rode up Mount Willard in the morning, and in the afternoon when they went down into the Notch; and he was so agreeable that Ella could not have wished it otherwise.

If her conscience offered a reproof, she silenced it with, "I can't help myself now. If pa and Rusha ever find it out there'll be an awful storm, but a little more or less talk won't make any difference, and now, I'm in for it!"

Her room-mate, to whom she confided all this, was sympathetic to the last degree, enjoyed the progress of affairs, and firmly believed that Ella Darryll was the victim of family prejudice and cruelty.

The former certainly intended to keep her promise inviolate, but she was no match for Derrick Howe; and he managed to extract from her an admission that Ella's coldness at their first

meeting proceeded from no fault of hers — it was all owing to her family.

In short, before two days were over, Derrick Howe and Ella Darryll had walked and rode, had laughed, chatted, flirted together, and were really on a more intimate footing that they had ever been in their lives before.

But the man's nicely laid plan came very near miscarrying. One morning, as Mr. Howe was sauntering up and down the parlor, waiting for Ella and her friend to present themselves for a stroll through the gate of the Notch to a little fall which hung its white staircase of waters between gray banks of rock, the brother of Ella's room-mate hurried in, —

"Where are the girls, Howe? Here's a telegram for Ella Darryll."

"What is it about?" his suspicions taking the alarm at once.

"I happened to be at the desk and took it. It's from her home. That's all I know about it, of course," with the envelope in his hand.

"It may be a case of life or death, though — something, in short, that should be broken carefully to her. As Miss Darryll is my friend, I beg that you will do for her what I should ask you to, under the same circumstances, for my own sister — read the telegram before you deliver it."

It was putting the matter in a very plausible way. The young man was not very likely to probe beneath the surface.

"You read it, Howe," placing the telegram in the other's hand.

The message simply announced Tom's arrival, and, in consequence, urged Ella's return by the next stage. Derrick Howe saw in a moment all his schemes frustrated. "How was he to head this off?"

His friend waited.

"Bad news, Howe?"

"No; only another plot to separate us, and break her heart, and blast my life!"

His friend stared. Derrick Howe had gone too far to retreat now; and in an instant — helped of the devil — the plan shaped itself in his mind.

"I want a few minutes' private talk with you," taking the arm of the young man, and they sauntered off into a little wood-path together.

Derrick Howe's companion was a good-hearted, jovial fellow, without any great mental acumen of any sort. The two young men sat down on the rocks, and there Mr. Howe confided to his friend the story of his passion for Ella Darryll, and of the cruel persecution of her family from the commencement of his suit. He averred that "the telegram was of a piece with the rest of their conduct, being nothing less than a peremptory summons home, because they had got wind of his presence at the Crawford." Ella was represented as the suffering victim of her father's despotism, secretly responding to her lover's regard, but in mortal terror of her family.

This was the only opportunity that Mr. Howe could find, during the season, to see his idol; and he actually worked himself up into a passion, and declared himself ready to blow his brains out, if Ella was dragged away from him at this time, as she would inevitably be, unless he had a friend able and willing to help him.

The young man had taken in all the bearings of this story with the profoundest interest. At its close, shaking off a crust of ashes from his cigar, he delivered himself thus: —

"Burning shame, Howe! Splendid girl, that Ella Darryll! Like to step in myself if it wasn't too late. But I'm ready to help a fellow, heart and hand, out of such a fix, if you'll just say how it is to be done."

Derrick rose up and shook his friend's hand. His "My dear fellow, you have bound me to you for the rest of your life!" was certainly dramatic.

But, when it came to details, the only test of this friendship which Derrick demanded, was, that his companion should suppress all information respecting the telegram. The latter was to leave for New York on the following day, and if anything further transpired regarding the despatch, there could be but one conclusion — he had forgotten to deliver it.

There was a faint demur in the young man's tone, as he said,—
 "I'm ready to go any lengths for you, Howe, and I suppose the circumstances justify the proceeding, but—hang it! it doesn't look like doing just the honorable thing on my part."

A little more talk on the other side, setting the father's cruelty and the lover's despair in an intenser light, succeeded in banishing all scruples from the young man's mind. It was his duty to stand by his friend, he thought, and he agreed to say nothing about the telegram.

Derrick Howe passed that day in the sole effort to make himself agreeable to Ella Darryll. The young man was playing a desperate game, and he knew that it involved heavy risks.

So he laid his plans. Of course the next day would bring some further summons, either by telegraph, or through a direct messenger from the cottage, and Derrick Howe accordingly proposed that they should the following morning make the ascent of Mount Washington. Of course everybody agreed to this, and the party started off on the adventure in high glee.

Time was now all that Derrick Howe wanted. He was Ella's cavalier on every occasion, and he saw that every hour gave him new influence over the girl.

"If he could only keep her three or four days more from her family!" setting his teeth hard as he concocted his plans.

At the Summit House he proposed, what had been his original intention, that the party should descend the mountain on the other side. The whole company were now wrought up to that excited, hilarious state when they were ready for any adventure which promised novelty and merriment.

So it was settled, Derrick Howe purposely giving a wrong address for the whole party, so that any fresh telegrams for Ella should miscarry.

He succeeded in keeping the party for two days on the other side of the mountain, and then made a divergence in favor of the Profile.

So he had found, or rather stolen, his "time and opportunity." With "witchcrafts of his wit," with whatever powers and

arts, nature or the devil had possessed him, he had succeeded in making Ella Darryll believe herself thoroughly in love with him.

I am not certain that he had won her heart, but it really amounted, for present purposes, to the same thing, if she thought he had. She had persuaded herself that both she and Derrick Howe were the innocent victims of family injustice; and without actually committing himself, he had, by all his words and acts, tended to confirm her in this opinion. He was as adroit in declaring his love as he had been in managing his whole plot, which certainly required a good deal of skill to consummate successfully.

The party had been out, just at sunset, for a sail on Profile Lake, that "embodied sympathy" of the mountains, as Starr King poetically calls it. The lake was in its tenderest, most pensive mood at that hour, "taking into its own being, and holding there still and perfect, all the colors and forms which wrought the miracle of the landscape around."

The scene and hour wrought their spell on even the light, gay party that had drifted down in search of some fresh novelty and merriment.

Whatsoever of fancy or sentiment Ella Darryll's youth held, it had been awakened in these last days; and her company landed from their sail on the lake in a singularly sobered mood, and moved up to the point which commanded the clear, strong Profile keeping its watch on the mountain top, "with a suggestion partly of fatigue, partly of melancholy."

The sunset filled the solemn Stone Face with a light that made it almost awful, giving it that rapt radiance of expression "which seems to belong only to the noblest human countenances in their sublimest moods."

Ella Darryll stood leaning on Derrick Howe's arm, and gazed and gazed. He watched her face, thinking, if not in so many words, yet in spirit, that perhaps this hour had brought the time and tide which would lead him on to a large slice of the fortune of John Darryll.

"Ella," the melodious voice deepened into a tender melancholy, "I wish this hour could last forever!"

She glanced up into his face — a face that women generally called handsome. It certainly looked its best at that hour. The girl's eyes were full of tears.

"Do you wish so, Ella?"

She drew a sigh.

"What is the use, Mr. Howe, of wishing in vain?"

The rest of the party had sauntered on. When could Derrick Howe have a better time? If he could only manage to make Ella commit herself by some sort of promise that should give him a hold on her before that home telegram should reach her, which he had been running away from all these days!

He cursed the Fates inwardly that he had not a little longer time, but he made a "virtue of necessity," and told his love. Of course Derrick Howe did that well. If ever man made woman believe that life without her must be to him a dreary blank, an intolerable misery, that in his eyes she was the embodiment of all superlative grace, and sweetness, and beauty, then of a certainty Derrick Howe did that thing.

And Ella listened, her self-love flattered, her fancy fired, her woman's heart, for, despite all her faults and superficialities, she had more or less of one, deeply touched.

And when her lover pleaded in those eloquent tones of his for some word or sign on which he might hang a faint hope for the lonely future, she murmured that "if it were not for the hopeless opposition of her family," and broke down into passionate sobs.

This was enough. The man took the rest for granted. All that he said afterwards, was artfully calculated to stimulate the girl's indignation against her family, while he represented her and himself as the innocent and suffering victims of the most cruel injustice and prejudice.

Poor Ella! When Derrick Howe besought her, after all this, not to blast the rest of that long summer by taking herself away from him, and refusing to join the party which were next week to start for a tour up Lake George, what could the girl do?

She reflected that it would never do for her to extend her

journey without first returning home and gaining the consent of the powers that reigned there.

A little finesse would probably succeed in obtaining full permission for the lengthened trip, if none of her family knew who was to form the principal feature of the party.

She shrank at the thought of this wholesale deception, but Derrick Howe was at her side with his eloquent pleading, and at last she said she would go.

When they reached the Profile she found the telegram announcing Tom's arrival. Of course she must return home the next morning.

Derrick Howe made the most of what time remained, implying by the tender devotion of his look and speech that Ella and he consciously belonged to each other.

Ella's manner — tearful, bewildered, and half reciprocal — allowed him to put the interpretation that he chose on the relation, though she neither denied nor accepted the one he claimed.

Do you think Derrick Howe was a villain in all this? He by no means regarded himself as one. I am not certain but the man had a code of honor of his own.

"Why," he would have asked, with a show of plausibility, "had he not as good a right as any other living man to woo and win Ella Darryll? It was a bargain in which she certainly would be as much the gainer as himself."

He had as good a right, too, to a son-in-law's share of her father's money as anybody else, and a fellow was a deuced fool who wouldn't go in for the girl he wanted, and win her, too, if he was smart enough, because her family happened to oppose it!

He had a general intention, if, indeed, he ever thought of the matter at all, of making Ella Darryll a good husband, and believed himself in love with her, at least more so than with any other woman.

What was there dishonorable in all this? He — Derrick Howe — a villain!

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

ELLA's welcome home partook of the somewhat mixed nature of the emotions which had agitated the bosom of her family for the last few days.

Her arrival was, of course, a relief to the general solicitude felt in view of her mysterious absence, but this was hardly made prominent in the Babel of tongues which ensued from the assembled household.

"Where have you kept yourself?" "What have you been about?" "Do you know that Tom has come and gone without your seeing him?" were the inquiries thrust at her on all sides, in partly amazed and partly reproachful tones.

Still, it was the keenness of disappointment, rather than any conviction that Ella was to blame, which wrought the indignation in feeling or manner.

Ella's defence was, of course, a true one, so far as it went, and when she had made it, her family could find nothing on her part to which they could attach any blame, though there was, somehow, an undefined inclination in the domestic jury not to wholly acquit her. The most they could do was to convict her of injudiciousness in leaving the Crawford House without first writing home; but Ella's reply completely pulverized that objection. She had expected to return to the hotel before a letter could reach her family, and, of course, when she had once left, it was impossible to return without her party.

Somebody faintly insinuated that "she had no business to go at all;" but her prompt "Who of you wouldn't have done it under the same circumstances?" met a silent affirmative in each consciousness that prevented any further pursuit of that point. In the end, as at the beginning, the telegraph wires and their irresponsible operators had to bear the brunt of the offence.

"Such a play at 'hide and seek' with half a dozen telegrams would be hard to match; I'm ready to bet a round sum on that."

Thus Guy delivered himself at last; and though nobody was ready to take him up, perhaps each one felt that, on the whole, it was about as sensible a way as any other of disposing of so vexatious a matter.

Still, however slight the causes, the result remained, and to a family like the Darrylls was one not easily overlooked. Tom had come and gone, and Ella had not seen him!

The girl felt this keenly, and altogether her emotions were not of a nature to be envied.

It is true she had succeeded in putting it out of the power of her family to fasten upon any tangible point for blame in her conduct; but that did not lessen her secret knowledge that they were ignorant of the real facts of the case, or of what must be their horrified amazement did they but have a suspicion that Derrick Howe was at the bottom of her absence.

Ella had, of course, no suspicion of the real part he had played in the matter, or that he had not been, during this whole time, as ignorant of Tom's furlough as herself; but her own conscience would make itself heard now; she could not get rid of a feeling of guilt in the presence of her family, and the result was, that she broke out suddenly into a fit of passionate crying—something very unusual with the careless, high-spirited girl.

"If I'd only seen Tom," she sobbed. "If I'd only staid at home! I'm as wretched as I can be!"

Tears were something which Rusha Darryll could never stand. The sight of them always wrought a revulsion in that soft little heart of hers, and the sobs now brought the elder sister round squarely on the younger's side.

"I think we're all very hard on Ella," she said. "I'm sure, from her own showing, she wasn't at all to blame; and we should any of us have done just the same under the circumstances. It's hard enough for her to feel that she's missed Tom, without our adding to the grief by any reproaches. Poor child!"

I think Ella must have secretly winced under this kindness, knowing what she did; but it effected a diversion in her favor.

The sound of her weeping, and a doubt whether, after all, they had not been unjust towards her, made each follow Rusha's example, and seek to excuse and comfort Ella.

But all the kind words fell short of the real cause of her grief — a cause which, proud and imperious as she was, she shivered at the thought of her family's suspecting. She was frightened whenever she remembered Derrick Howe, and how far she had gone with him. She told herself over and over again, when she reflected on it, that it was nothing more than a flirtation — that, of course, no engagement existed betwixt them.

But after all she found her thoughts constantly recurring to him, dwelling on the tenderness of his looks and words and manner. She was restless, and filled with an uneasy longing to be again in his society.

Then, Derrick Howe was a man after Ella Darryll's own heart. If I only repeat here what I have said before, it is because I wish to make of it a strong point, in order that you may be able to judge of her fairly in what follows.

Every woman has some heart, I suppose; and although it may be shallow, and largely absorbed in self, or what affection it has to give bestowed on an unworthy object, still, it is only simple justice to take into account that affection, and what it is to her.

Ella could not make her home seem anything but dull and distasteful. She dreaded, yet longed to get away from it again among her gay friends, and the fascination of Derrick Howe's society, which latter seemed to her the only thing in the world that could make her happy. The knowledge, too, that she had done wrong, and the secret which she carried hidden from all her family, made her uneasy in their presence, and gave her a lurking feeling that resembled somewhat in kind the timidity of conscious guilt.

This was altogether a new experience to her, and Ella Darryll was not herself at this time. She was absent, restless, depressed. Her family were conscious of all this, but attributed it in a gen-

eral way to her regret at missing Tom, and to her not feeling quite well — the result, as everybody supposed, of all the gay excitement she had just gone through.

So they were all kinder than ever towards her; and perhaps that very thing only made her the more miserable, as one is apt to be who trembles at the thought of discovery before one's dearest friends.

There came a time when the meaning of Ella's conduct revealed itself to her family, and they wondered, as we all do, when it is too late, at their own obtuseness; but now nothing transpired to awaken a suspicion on any side.

For several days Ella did not allude to the contemplated trip to Lake George. If she put the question to her own soul, whether she was most anxious to go or to remain at home, I doubt whether the girl, in the state of mind which then possessed her, could have answered it.

Her emotions were of a composite character. She panted at times to get away, and yet she shrank instinctively from placing herself again under the influence of Derrick Howe. I think she had become timid of late, or rather, her courage had never before been put to so strong a test. Some dread of coming evil oppressed her. Certainly she was to be pitied.

Meanwhile, Derrick Howe was not idle. He feared constantly the revulsion of feeling which Ella would be likely to undergo when removed from his influence to that of her own family, and in order to neutralize the latter before it should have gained the ascendancy, he persuaded her young friend at the Crawford to write her at once, and permit him to enclose a letter.

It was a lover's letter, of course, full of honeyed and passionate phrases, asserting, in varied forms of intenseness, that the writer was only dragging a miserable existence through the days, and counting the hours that intervened before his idol should redeem her promise by joining them for the trip to Lake George. You may smile over all this, but sensible women have been wooed and won by "drinking in the honey" of less musical vows than those of Derrick Howe.

At any rate, after the almost sleepless night which followed the reception of his letter, Ella surprised her family by announcing her promise to accompany the party at the Crawford on their contemplated trip to Lake George.

This did not meet with much approval at first. Mrs. Darryll always entered a little demur when any of her family talked of leaving home, and averred that Ella's mountain trip had done her more harm than good, and Lake George would only be farther off, and the same excitement and wear and tear over again.

"I think it's funny," said Agnes, "that you haven't spoken of this Lake George plan before. Now, how did you know but Rusha and I might like to go too?"

Something came and went in Ella's face that nobody saw, but she said, quietly enough, —

"I didn't suppose it was necessary to speak of it, as neither of you was there to receive invitations; besides, I was not certain I wanted to go until my letter came. They will all be so disappointed if I refuse now."

"I count myself happy in not having the trouble of declining the invitation. Money wouldn't hire me to leave the mountains this summer," was Rusha's characteristic rejoinder.

But nobody had any objections of a positive kind to urge, and, for want of these, it was at last settled that Ella should go. She was to be absent only a week. The anxious mother made this a condition of her consent, and added thereto all sorts of injunctions regarding health and prudence during the journey.

Only two days remained before Ella should join her party, and during this time, as they afterwards remembered, she seemed in a feverish absorption with her preparations for the journey. But the night preceding Ella's departure, Rusha was suddenly awakened out of a sound sleep by a figure in white standing by the bedside.

"Ella, is that you?" a good deal startled — the faint moonlight in the room making her partially discern the figure.

"I feel badly, Rusha. Something is troubling me. Let me

get into bed with you," speaking in an excited, half-coherent way, so unlike Ella Darryll.

Rusha made room on the couch, and her sister sank down beside her in a strange, frightened sort of shiver.

"Why, what is the matter? Have you been dreaming, or are you sick, Ella?"

"No, it is neither of these. But I feel as though I didn't want to go on this journey to-morrow. It seems as though something terrible will be sure to happen if I do."

"Why, Ella, how strange!" a little impressed herself. "But it's all because you are nervous still, about that matter of the telegrams. Don't you see?"

But Ella did not answer. She was crying.

It was in Rusha's nature to put her arms around her sister, saying all kind and loving words that would be most likely to comfort her. Ella clung to her as she never had done before in her life. At last she said, —

"Don't you think, Rusha, I had better stay at home, after all?"

Rusha hesitated a moment. She was half inclined to urge her sister to give up the trip; indeed, she had never regarded her going very cordially. But Ella's spirits seemed to need a change, and it would be lonesome for her all summer at the cottage. The mountains would never be the company to her sister that they were to herself. Then, as Ella was pivotal in this matter, it seemed hardly like treating the party fairly to decline accompanying it at the last moment.

All these considerations gave their coloring to Rusha's reply, and no angel leaning down in the midnight whispered to her soul that great issues of all their future lives hung upon her answer.

"Well, really, Ella, I hardly know what to say. It seems superstitious to regard the feeling seriously, or as a presentiment of evil. Turn over now and go to sleep, and leave the whole thing for the morning to settle. Light always clears the cobwebs from one's brain. If you prefer to give up Lake George then, do so by all means."

This seemed to satisfy Ella, and in a little while both the sisters fell asleep.

In the morning Ella's spirits returned, and she seemed, on the whole, inclined to the trip, though Rusha fancied her sister still felt some internal reluctance to really getting off.

The impression which Ella's conduct had made the night before on the elder sister induced the latter to confide the whole to her mother, adding a doubt as to the wisdom of Ella's leaving home at this juncture—a doubt which Mrs. Darryll shared, although both ladies agreed that there seemed no sufficient grounds for changing her mind at the last moment, and that her friends would regard themselves as very unfairly treated.

But when, in this indecision, the mother and sister sought Ella, they found that a letter from her friends at the hotel, full of hilarious anticipation at the prospect of the journey, had infected her again, and that whatever her doubts might have been, she was now quite eager for the trip.

They little suspected that the note which Derrick Howe had enclosed was at the bottom of the sudden transition in her feelings.

She started off when the time came in eager spirits. At the very last moment, Rusha rushed down to the gate and called out to her,—

"Now have a good time, Ella, and enjoy yourself all you can for the next week."

Rusha thought some expression gathered in Ella's eyes. Was it doubt or pain? She could not tell, for the carriage drove off at that moment.

The week of Ella's absence had worn itself into two, and still the party from the mountains lingered at Lake George. Not that the whole time had been passed here. They had made various excursions in the vicinity, and flitted down to Saratoga every day or two, but this had been their rallying point.

For two weeks Ella Darryll had been completely under Derrick Howe's influence. It seemed impossible for the girl to resist this. He had obtained almost absolute ascen-

dency over her will. He was careful always to assume in their talk that they belonged to each other by the sacredness of a betrothal which none had the right to interfere with or deny.

If Ella at first shrank from all the consequences which this assumption involved, she soon virtually accepted it; indeed she had sunk into a state of comparative passivity, letting the rapids of these two weeks bear her whither they would, and managing to exclude pretty thoroughly all disagreeable thoughts from her mind, while Derrick Howe had contrived to give her very little time for reflection.

But of course things could not go on in this way forever, much as Ella might desire it.

The party had already, through his influence, doubled the period allotted for the Lake, and Derrick Howe saw that what he did must be done quickly, or all his deeply-laid plot, which had carried nicely so far, must go for nothing.

If Ella was allowed to slip from his hands at that time, the probability was, he should never have another good chance, "and he was not going to be such a fool as to let his prize go, if he could snap it up by one desperate effort," reasoned Derrick Howe.

In the gathering of the summer evening, he walked on the shores of the Lake with Ella Darryll leaning on his arm. They were to leave late on the morrow.

Derrick Howe's manner had never been quite so tender—in voice and look there had never been just that insinuating sadness which filled them to-night.

His talk went out to the separation close at hand—to the dreary future which lay before them both, apart from each other—to the cruel prejudices which were to blight the lives of both—and Ella listened, her emotions all wrought up to a pitch of intense feeling, until she believed herself and her lover the most wronged and outraged of mortals.

She could only sob on his arm, and he could only entreat her, with soft caresses, to spare him the agony of seeing her tears,

when, of a sudden, he spoke as though impelled by some new idea, which, until that moment, had never entered his thoughts.

"Why should we, who so love and belong to each other, inflict this long wretchedness on ourselves? Have we a right to do it, Ella, when the remedy lies open to us? Or do we owe everything to others, nothing to ourselves?"

"What remedy do you mean, Derrick?" and for a moment she ceased to sob, lifting up her flushed face in the moonlight, looking so fair that I think Derrick Howe kissed it, that time, at least, solely for itself.

Then he leaned down and whispered something in Ella's ear.

She started back with a look of fright, and dropped his arm. "O, Derrick, don't, don't! Think of my family," she broke out in passionate denial.

Derrick Howe had foreseen what fears and scruples, on Ella's part, he would have to surmount; but everything was staked on the success or failure of this night, and he was sworn "to come out winner if man could do it."

It was a long time before he could get Ella to listen to him. I think most men would have given up the point, whatever that might be, as hopeless, she insisted so absolutely on the impossibility of considering it for one moment.

An elopement and a surreptitious marriage — for Derrick Howe's talk had come to that at last — was something that shocked all Ella's ingrained tastes and natural conventionality, and deeper than all these was the thought of her family.

But her resistance only added fuel to the flame of Derrick Howe's purpose. He made the most of all the circumstances that he saw would weigh in his favor — the separation to-morrow, his own misery, and the probability that, despite all their efforts, this parting would be a final one.

He drew such a picture of the rage of Ella's family when the fact should transpire, as it inevitably must, that he had been of the party, both at the mountains and the Lake, that the girl fairly shuddered at the prospect of returning home. And then there was the engagement. Would she have the courage to

avow it to her family, and encounter the wrath and persecution which must be the result? or must she wear out her sweet youth and break her heart, and his own too, with the burden of its secret love?

She owed much to her family, he granted; but was not her lover's the prior claim now — now that they had given themselves to each other?

How eloquently the man pleaded, believing himself in earnest too, and for the time, perhaps, never once thinking of the broker's money-bags.

Then he turned the other side of the picture towards her — a glowing one enough to poor Ella's fevered imagination — of their happiness together, with no one to interfere betwixt them; of his life-long tenderness and devotion; and how, the step once taken, her parents must inevitably accept the fact, and be reconciled to it. That was always the way with people who indulged unreasonable prejudices; and then, too, Ella would have his strength to lean all her fears on; he would have the right to defend her; while, if she left him now, she must encounter her family's cruelty alone: he could not stand between his idol and any wrong she might suffer — a thought that would add tenfold to his own anguish.

Hour after hour the man went on, weaving all the eloquence and sophistry of which, he was master, into his talk, with artful appeals to whatever was best or weakest in his listener's head or heart.

The midnight came and went as they walked by the banks of the Lake, and the stars of God kept their appointed watch over the man and woman there.

And though Ella continued, amid her sobs, to resist, passionately as ever, all Derrick Howe's entreaties and arguments, the man felt at last that he was gaining ground.

Harrowed and excited, the poor, foolish girl was brought face to face with her own fate, to make her choice, when she was least capable of doing it; and at last her feelings, as was natural, wound themselves up to a pitch of desperation. She dreaded to

return home. She shuddered at the storm which, sooner or later, she knew, must fall upon her there. How could she resist the combined domestic forces? and would they not compel her to give up her lover?

She remembered what Rusha, single-handed, had once accomplished; and how would it be possible for her to remain at home with the whole family arrayed against her?

And then, on the other hand, if she really had courage to take the final step, would it not all be comparatively easy? Her husband could stand between her and the rage of her family, and after the first shock was over, they would, of course, have to accept the facts.

And there all the time was Derrick Howe, pouring his sweet flatteries, and persuasions, and sophistical arguments into her ear. She grew desperate; yet it was long before she virtually yielded—longer still before she could be brought to speak that final word which should seal her destiny to-morrow.

If Derrick Howe had had the ground a little less completely to himself—if there had been anybody at hand to break, by a single word, the chain of influences he had woven around her, Ella Darryll would have been saved!

But after parting with her at the door of the hotel, there came a flash of triumph over the man's face, and something behind that hard and defiant.

"You've gained the battle, Derrick Howe," he muttered, "but it's been the hardest night's work *you* ever did!"

Then he looked up to the sky, and far off in the east he saw the dawn of that new day that was to work "for weal or for woe" the future of Ella Darryll!

CHAPTER XXXIX.

"DON'T you think, ma, Ella is too bad? She promised to be home in a week, and here it is more than two since she left. It's so lonely without her!"

Agnes Darryll threw down the book she had been reading, and raised herself from the lounge as she thus addressed her mother.

The day was a sultry one, even among the mountains, and Mrs. Darryll had been dozing in her easy-chair by the open windows. Her daughter's talk, however, roused her, and she answered in a half querulous, half languid fashion, plying a huge palm leaf,—

"Yes; that child had no business to stay so long. But when she gets off on a frolic she never knows where to stop. Your father's blaming me because I gave my consent to her going at all, and I can't much wonder. After all the trouble and expense he's been at to get such a home for the summer, it seems a shame for his children not to stay and enjoy it."

Whether Agnes would have stood on her sister's defence did not transpire, for at that moment the carriage rolled up to the gate, with Mr. Darryll and Guy, who had just returned from Littleton.

They came in tired, heated and dusty.

"Well, this is a roaster, I tell you!" was Guy's comment, as he disgorged his pockets of sundry papers and pamphlets he had collected at the post-office.

"Any news from the world outside, Guy?" asked Agnes.

"Not much. Rusha has letters from Tom and Ella," producing these from another pocket.

"Pretty work this," said his father, in a sort of growl, for

he had reached that time of life when a long, hot, dusty ride is not just the thing to improve a man's spirits — "I shall write to her this very night, to send herself home, instead of any more letters. I thought I got this house with the express understanding that my family should remain in it this summer;" and he left the room, and everybody knew he would resume his good humor with his slippers and his supper.

Meanwhile, Guy marched up stairs, and found Rusha buried among "Friends in Council," those delightful books whose honey-dew she was fond of gathering in quiet, idle moods, such as a day like this was likely, with her, to superinduce.

Guy held up the letters with a roguish feint of not giving them to her. She was off her seat in a moment: —

"O, Guy, please, now!" Letters had the attraction for her that somehow they seem to hold for all her sex.

"Guess first," playfully keeping the addresses too far out of her sight for her to distinguish them.

"Let's see. Tom and Ella? It's time I heard from both of them."

"You've earned them;" and Guy placed the letters in her hands. "Give us the news at supper," he added, as he left the room.

Rusha hesitated a moment, but Tom's letter carried the point and was opened first. It was in one of his brightest moods, playful and tender, yet here and there spoke out same grave thought, some earnest feeling, which, intertwining its life with Tom's youth, was nourishing that up into the strong and noble manhood that he prophesied.

A tender light was on Rusha's face, a faint smile, in which was a little hint of sadness, lingered on the bloom of that rare and beautiful mouth, when she turned to Ella's letter.

As she opened this, another, enclosed, fell into her lap; but she did not pause even to read the address, presuming that her sister's would explain the contents of the other.

The very first line of Ella's, however, blurred out the smile from Rusha's face; a strange, amazed stare superseded. Yet

all the while she kept reading on — on — like one held and fascinated by some horror.

When she had finished she took up the other letter, gazed at it in a bewildered way, as one is apt to, all of whose faculties have been, for the moment, stunned by some sudden shock. The letter was addressed to her father in a man's hand.

Rusha rose up and went to the mirror. What an ashy face looked out to her there! "Ella married to Derrick Howe?" she murmured to herself. "I think I must be dreaming;" and she put her hand to her forehead, with an expression of doubt and helplessness that was touching.

The ringing of the supper-bell, a moment later, roused her, and she went down stairs, groping her way carefully along the banisters like one in a dream.

They were just going out into the dining-room. "Pa," said Rusha, in a voice not loud, but somehow it made them all pause and look at the speaker, "Ella is married — married to Derrick Howe!"

It was the crashing of a thunderbolt in their midst. The whole group stood riveted in their places, staring at her.

Her mother spoke first, in a low, frightened tone. "Rusha has certainly gone crazy!" This seemed a more probable version of the truth than the statement her daughter had made.

"No," she said, in a slow, doubtful way, as though she was not certain her mother might not be right, "I don't think it can be that. But here are the letters," instinctively turning towards her father.

"Let me have them," and he strode towards her.

John Darryll was a nervous man. He fairly tore the letters out of his daughter's hands. He went to the window, and every eye watched him, and every voice was silent, while he ran over the letters, not only Ella's, but the one addressed to him by his new son-in-law, Derrick Howe. Then he looked up.

"It's a fact," he said. "She is married to Derrick Howe!"

And then he laid the letters on the table, and struck his clinched hand upon them, and cursed the newly wedded pair

with an oath that was terrible to hear. — No sheet-anchor, you see, when troubles thickened upon him.

It would, of course, be impossible to tell what happened after this, or how each one took the blow. If you have ever been deceived, circumvented, your pride and affection outraged by anybody that was a part of yourself and that you trusted as implicitly as you loved, you will understand something of their feelings at this sudden revelation of Ella's duplicity. If you have never had any such experience, thank God! And yet, to quote Milverton, "All sorrow is a possession," and I am not certain that we can any of us enter far into a grief which we have not, in some sense, lived.

Amazement, horror, indignation, held possession of each of them, as they slowly realized the truth, and, for a time, these feelings held the mastery over any grief which, after all, would have its day. For the deed went down to the very quick of their pride and affection. That Ella could do her family this wrong and shame was the uppermost thought with all of them.

Viewed from the stand-point of the world, there was, of course, no disgrace attached to Ella's marriage, outside of the irregularity of an elopement, which would make its nine days' buzz of gossip in the fashionable world. Socially Ella Darryll had not lowered herself by wedding Derrick Howe. There was, probably, in her own set, hardly a girl who would not envy her the matrimonial prize she had drawn. But if there was any comfort in that fact, the Darrylls were not conscious of it at the time.

Easily biased in any direction, Mrs. Darryll had partaken of her husband's and Rusha's strong prejudice in the young man's disfavor, although she had seen very little of him herself; and this feeling was shared by every member of the family.

It was a sad sight to see the little group discussing, with closed doors, lest the servants should overhear, the bitter trouble that had fallen into their midst — the mother, almost frantic, calling for her child, the sisters in tears, and the father and son trying to control themselves for the womens' sake, but white with rage all the time.

"To think of her running off from such a home, and such a father as she's had, to marry that inhuman wretch! O, my poor, miserable, wicked child! I'd rather have laid you in the grave!" sobbed her mother.

"And I've lost my sister, and got him for a brother-in-law — that old, awful, horrid thing!" and with this climax Agnes went into another passion of tears.

"I wish I could get my hands on the villain!" blazed up Guy, with the quick heat of his years. "There wouldn't be much of him left. I'll do it, sir, hang me if I don't! I'll take the next train, and when I come up with him there won't be a sound bone left in his body."

"O, Guy, what good would that do? It wouldn't bring Ella back," said Rusha, from the corner where she too was crying.

And his father's curt, "Yes, Guy, don't make a fool of yourself," considerably dampened the youth's belligerent ardor.

Of course everything in Ella's past conduct which could throw any light on the present conjunction of affairs, was gone over now. Rusha remembered and related all that had transpired at the party, when she had so boldly confronted Derrick Howe and compelled Ella to return home without him. But, with a morbid consciousness, the girl now bitterly condemned herself for not laying the whole matter at once before her father. Nobody, however, hearing the courage and promptness with which she had acted, was disposed to blame her.

They all conjectured at once, what Ella's letter did not state, that Derrick Howe had been with her at the mountains, and her loss of spirits and reluctance at leaving home the second time were now explained. That, as her letter affirmed, she had, at the time of her departure, no idea of the consummation into which Derrick Howe had persuaded her, they were all convinced, as also that the young man had been at the bottom of her absence during Tom's visit; which thought only added fresh fuel to their rage against him.

Yet Ella's letter to her sister had, under the circumstances,

been a model one. The only justification which she attempted for the step she had so reluctantly taken, was her love for Derrick Howe, and the utter hopelessness of ever reconciling her family to him, so long as there was a possibility of separating them.

The haughty girl humbly implored her family's pardon, and entreated her sister, in language that plainly indicated her feelings must have dictated it, to make her peace with her father.

No fault, either, could be found with Derrick Howe's letter to his new father-in-law. He pleaded his own cause with dignity and eloquence. Indeed, it did not tally at all with his plans, not to have the breach with his wife's family healed as early as possible.

His love for Ella, and the misery of a future for them both, apart from each other, were put in their strongest light, and he avowed himself ready, by a life of devotion to his bride, and by every regard to the new relations with her family which his marriage involved, to atone for the one wrong which he had done them.

Derrick Howe did not believe all those fine speeches would be wasted; but they were, or worse — only served to increase the family indignation against him.

John Darryll's prejudices were obstinate things, and Rusha's likes and dislikes were vital, though they usually were founded in reasons that justified them; and her clear intuitions had sounded Derrick Howe as deeply as her father's shrewdness.

"What a miserable time she will have with that wretch!" she broke out again from the corner where she was crouched, with her pale face settled drearily on her hand, sharing in the family sentiment that hanging and quartering were too good for her sister's husband.

"Serve her just right," growled the father; and there was not a deprecating voice in the room.

And again Rusha spoke. "But, pa, we may as well look facts in the face. What are we to do? Who is to answer that letter?"

"I shall take that business on myself, and finish it up, too, in a few lines. That precious rascal will find that he hasn't got into clover quite as smoothly as he expected;" and the rich man laughed bitterly.

"Yes; I see all that plainly enough. It was the money that bought Ella her husband and us this fresh misery!" She spoke under her breath, but for all that everybody in the room heard her.

"O, dear! It always scares me when you say that, Rusha," broke in Agnes. "It makes me feel as though pa ought to give all his money to the missionaries!"

It was a proof that the grief which had fallen on the Darrylls was an overwhelming one, that even this suggestion of Agnes elicited no smile from any quarter.

It was a proof, too, how deeply Ella had outraged the feelings of her whole family, that during that miserable night not one of them entered a plea in her behalf.

Even Mrs. Darryll shared strongly the indignation of her husband, and was willing that her daughter should reap some of the bitter fruits of her folly.

No doubt that in the end mother-love would assert itself, and that if a day ever came when Ella should return to her home the victim of her husband's neglect and wrong, she would find, of all the world, her mother's heart ready to welcome and shelter her.

But this feeling was, for the time, latent in Mrs. Darryll's bosom; and when her husband took all the responsibility off their hands, and sternly forbade Rusha's replying to her sister's letter, the lady never entered one demur; still, it was touching enough, when, of a sudden, the truth seemed to come home with all its terrible force to the mother's inmost soul.

"He has stolen my daughter! I shall never have my child again! O! how can I live without my Ella!" she sobbed piteously.

It was touching, too, the way the eldest and youngest daughter tried to comfort her.

"Ma, I'll never marry the best man in the world. I'll stay at home with you and pa always," averred Agnes, with solemn emphasis.

So there was another grief for the family to carry, another loss to draw into closer union what remained together.

Yet the world, meddling with all this, as it is certain to do with what it knows nothing about, would have little sympathy for the Darrylls.

Why should they keep up a pretence of anger, it would be sure to ask, and not receive Ella and her husband without any further show of opposition? She had married well, certainly, and although an elopement was not justifiable, of course, still, after it was done, the only thing that remained was to make the best of it. Indeed, what right had the family, from the beginning, to oppose the marriage of the young people, and make the elopement necessary at all?

That this would be the common talk of their acquaintance, the family clearly discerned, and of course, like all family troubles, this one could never be explained, and the cause and justice of their indignation shown to the world — the world always springing to hasty conclusions, always judging from its own prejudices and superficial knowledges.

Yet, I wonder if there does not come a time to all of us, men and women, no matter how cowardly and conventional we are, when we, in a sense, burst our chains, and put this great, dreaded world beneath our feet, feeling how little, after all, its verdict is worth, and how it can never reach down where our life really is!

Mrs. Darryll was a strong illustration in point. Her own rights — her outraged feelings — would assert themselves in spite of all the buzz and condemnation of Mrs. Grundy.

Ella and that husband of hers, whom she could only think of with horror and loathing, should find the doors of their home closed against them.

Yet there was a terrible blank in the household. Andrew, Tom, and Ella took away so much from the bright, noisy young

life of the family, and there was plenty of sadness and heartache in the little nest among the mountains, which looked as though it must be as free from all care and human grief as those other nests which the singing birds hung in the trees around it.

Then there came the hard task of writing the truth to Tom, a task which devolved on Rusha, and every page of the long letter was blistered with her tears.

His reply was just what a young man's would be, shocked with amazement and indignation, with grief, too, at the imposition which Ella had practised on her family.

"After Andrew, too!" condensing in those mournful words the cruelest thought of all.

But it was a comfort to the family, whether acknowledged or not, that Tom fully approved of his father's course in the matter. Ella had brought down her punishment on her own head.

And so the stately summer, "filling the circuit of its pomp and glory," moved on among the hills. Outside, men's minds and talks were full of the impending nominations for the Presidency, and the very air seemed hurtling with excitement; and so the great drama of the century moved on its appointed path, bearing with it all those unwritten dramas of love and grief in the households of a great nation, as well as the one of which I am trying to tell you.

CHAPTER XL.

Down there in the hospitals the day was drawing to a close at last. Surgeons and nurses had their hands full, and hearts too, if they dared let these latter gain, for a moment, the mastery. The men were busy bringing in the wounded and dying, and depositing these, with a sort of bungling tenderness, on the mattresses, whose long, narrow rows occupied both sides of the room.

The day had fainted down under the dry, dead heats, unusual even for the latitude of Washington; the rays blazing through the hot air, and fairly blistering the earth: if a wind stirred outside, it was like a breath from the desert, bringing neither life nor coolness with it.

Inside, the spectacle was ghastly enough; one shrinks from pausing before it—the mutilated limbs, the groans and cries, and the faces with the awful shadow of death upon them, and yet there were brave, pitying souls of men who bore the sight without flinching, and tender women in their midst, who, for “four years rested the stricken nation upon their hearts.”

To all the agony of that time was added the stinging consciousness of defeat. At the very moment of victory, delay of some sort in the support of Burnside had changed the crowning success into a triumph for the enemy.

Nobody could tell, in the amazement and horror of the time, where the blame lay; perhaps nobody can now; but the result was clear enough. Though the immense army-train, which Grant had despatched across the James, had completely deceived Lee regarding the point of intended attack, the purpose of the ruse had not been accomplished, for the Union army had gained nothing, and lost nearly five thousand men.

Dr. Rochford had just finished dressing a wound, upon whose immediate care hung a human life as upon a thread, and he was turning to another bad case close at hand, when his glance dropped upon the couch opposite him. They had laid some one there during his last operation; his glance went with that swift promptness to which long experience had trained it, from the officer's uniform to the face turned up to the light in white unconsciousness; then the doctor started; another look flashed down, and he knew who lay there.

A little quiver which nobody saw under the bearded lip, then, with that swift professional instinct of his to help and to save, the doctor sprang forward, and tore away the garments from the breast, for he had already divined where the hurt was; a wound large and ragged and ugly, the long tearing of a minie ball into the smooth, white flesh, on the left side, so very near the heart!

The doctor took it all in with a glance, and then he knew all there was to know. His hand dropped down with a kind of hopeless gesture on the coverlet, and he stood still, looking at the young, silent, white face of the officer there: this held now some wonderful likeness, which he had never felt before, to another wild, appealing face, lifted to him out of the darkness of the night, and that had, somehow, held his memory ever since with some sweet, secret mystery of magnetism.

“Poor boy! poor boy!” he said. There were tears in his voice, there were tears in his eyes also; all around him lay the wounded and dying, needing his help; but for once, Fletcher Rochford forgot them. Suddenly Angeline grasped his arm in a breathless hurry.

“There are some terrible cases in the next row. O, Fletcher, make haste, or the men will die!”

He looked down on the face moved out of all its sweet serenity by the grand demands of the occasion, then, without speaking one word, he pointed to the face on the pillow.

Angeline Rochford's eyes followed her brother's gesture. In a glance she discerned who lay there. She covered her face

with her hands a moment; the next it looked up in a great hope and fear.

"Is there a chance for his life?"

"Not one, not one!" the words dry and stifled in his throat.

She leaned over and smoothed the bright brown hair from the young, white face, that looked younger than ever, lying there in that awful whiteness that is the image of death.

Her hot tears dropped fast on his cheeks. "O, Tom," she murmured, "Tom, what would they say at home to see you lying here!"

The doctor was feeling the pulse.

"Must he go out like this, without any word or sign for us to take back to them?" appealed his sister.

"I hope he may revive for a few moments, but I feared the result too strongly to attempt forcing down any cordials," bathing the blue temples with ice-water.

Suddenly there came a change, and a gasp for breath. Tom Darryll opened his eyes, and looked with bright intelligence into the faces of the brother and sister.

"Do you know me, Tom?" asked the doctor, bending over him.

"Dr. Rochford and Miss Angeline. Am I hurt? O, yes, I remember now. A bad wound, is it, doctor?"

"A very bad one, Tom!" In the presence of the death standing beside them there, he would not hold back one jot or tittle of the truth.

The quick, bright glance went from one face to the other. The grief in both answered the question in his eyes.

"Has it come to this?" asked Tom Darryll; then his whole face quickened, and he cried out, "O, my father, and mother, and Rusha, Rusha—" He got no farther than that dearest name of all.

"Tom," said the doctor, mastering his voice as he best could, for his profession had not hardened the native softness of the man's heart, "Tom, it is the Lord only who can comfort you and them now!"

The young officer looked up eagerly, and as the thought penetrated his soul, a new, solemn calmness gathered over his face. His eyes closed a moment. When he opened them, there was a smile on his lips more beautiful than any smile which, in their flush of youth and health, they had ever worn.

"Yes," he said, "He comforts me now — He can comfort them also!"

Angeline bent over him, straining back her sobs to catch every word.

"And, Tom, you are ready to go, seeing He calls you?"

"Yes, ready. It came sudden, you know, and it comes hard, too, for a young fellow like me to give up life like this; but it isn't the first time I've looked it in the face."

And now Dr. Rochford leaned over and spoke, with that solemn radiance upon his face which only visited it at the rarest and greatest heights of his life.

"Tom, I look forward to the time when I shall lie where you do, as the fairest, sweetest, as the happiest and joyfulest, as the one triumphant moment of my life! There are times when I count the years that are past, and thank God that by so many that are gone I am nearer Him; and now I can almost find it in my heart to envy you!"

The eyes, bright with their last brightness, looked up in the doctor's face, and again that smile of marvellous beauty upon the dying lips. Tom understood. In a moment he roused once more.

"Will you find my Bible, on my right side, and the picture in it? I should like to see that the last thing."

The doctor searched and found it. They set it before him, with the picture inside, smiling down on him in the sweet gladness of its youth. Tom gazed on it with unutterable tenderness in his look.

"Poor Rusha!" he said. "The book was her gift, and I owe all that's good in me, all the blessedness of this hour, under God, to her alone. Tell her I said so; and tell her I charged her never to fret herself with a thought that she sent me to the

war, or that it was through her means I came to this. You'll tell her, doctor?"

"Every word; God is my witness — every word, Tom."

"Tell the boys, too, I left 'em good by, and a charge to take Tom's place to father and mother. They mustn't be too hard on Ella —" And again the faintness of the death drawing near overcame speech and consciousness.

Contrary almost to the expectation of those who watched by the bedside, Tom rallied again.

"Give my love to each one at home. It'll come hardest on mother and Rusha. Poor Rusha, she'll have nobody to talk to and comfort her after I'm gone!" his last thought and anxiety going after her, the dearest love, you could see now, of his life.

"Tom," said the doctor, solemnly, "I'll do all I can to take your place to Rusha."

Tom's smile thanked him; and then a messenger from the surgeons pressed up.

"There are fresh cases coming in all the time, and the doctors have more than they can do, and the men will die if their wounds are not dressed."

And Dr. Rochford answered — "I'll be there in a moment."

"Don't wait for me, doctor. You may save some poor fellow's life, and it's too late to do mine any good."

Under the circumstances, this was a command that Fletcher Rochford could not disobey. He leaned down and kissed the cold lips.

"Good by, Tom; we shall meet and know each other in a little while — at the farthest, a very little while."

"Good by!" It was the final one, but the voice rang out clear and exultant.

So Dr. Rochford turned away, and left his sister watching alone with death by the bedside. It was the hardest moment of his life, but the dying sent and the living called him.

Tom's eyes closed, and Angeline thought he was lapsing into

unconsciousness, until she saw his lips move in a secret prayer. When he looked at her again, the last dimness was gathering in them. His hand groped for hers.

"How good God was to bring you both to me at this time! I shall thank Him for it again when I get home." And a little while afterwards he murmured, "'There is no other name given under heaven whereby man can be saved.' Rusha said I should find some new meaning and sweetness in these passages, but they open widest and sweetest at such a moment as this."

"And, Tom," said Angeline, anxious to lay up in her memory every dying word to carry far away to the north, and drop their dew and balm into the broken hearts there, "*He* is all your trust and peace now?"

"All. I have been trying to follow Him during these last months, and so He has come to me now."

The death-shadow gathered its awful darkness over his face. Angeline had watched by too many dying bedsides not to know it.

Tom's voice grew fainter. "Put the book and the picture a little closer, so I can see it to the very last," he said.

She moved them nearer. She put her wet cheek down to his, and prayed softly, and he listened with his eyes still clinging to the picture, and his hand clasped in hers.

When she paused at last, he whispered, faintly, "Go on," and a calm came upon her. She paused again; "and he did not speak. She called him, and he did not awaken!"

In a few minutes the doctor returned. Angeline looked up, a smile struggling through her tears.

"It does not look like death," she said, and then he knew!

Truly it did not, the doctor thought, as he gazed on the still peace of the young, dead face; the faint smile clinging still to the bearded lip, while just over it shone down that other pictured face in its radiance of youth and hope. What awful darkness of grief was waiting to settle down upon it! and then, as Dr. Rochford thought of this, the memory of Tom's words came back to him — "She will have nobody to comfort her!"

She had loved the dead boy lying there better than all the world beside — the doctor knew that, and there was no one of the stricken household to help the desolate girl through the hour of her great anguish.

"Angeline," said the doctor, suddenly, "you heard me say I was going north next week. I shall start to-morrow morning."

She understood what that meant. Then the brother and sister leaned over and closed the eyes softly, as Tom's own mother and sister could have done, and left the young soldier lying there, and went to their work again.

The Darryll household was but one among the many whose flower of youth and pride dropped suddenly. Everywhere it was the bravest and the best-beloved who went down as the ploughshare drove along the soil of those awful four years.

"How long, O God, how long!" Dr. Rochford's soul had asked, as all our souls did, travelling through the years with that cry, and beyond another winter, among the blossoms and singing birds of another spring waited His answer of victory and peace!

CHAPTER XLI.

MR. DARRYLL hurried into his office that morning with his sharpest business face and air. A large amount of work must be settled up that day, as, in the evening, he was to start for the mountains for a long vacation, all his previous ones having been of the intermittent sort.

A telegram, which had been brought in a few moments before, lay among the letters on his desk. He tore this open first, throwing a glance, meanwhile, along the others, and his office clerk waited at his elbow for orders. Suddenly the man's hand dropped down on the table as though a swift paralysis had smitten it. His face turned to an ashen pallor; the clerk sprang forward, fearing the man would fall, and met the stare of the first shock, and heard the groan — "My boy is killed!"

Three days later, Rusha Darryll opened the front door of the cottage, and came out on the veranda. She walked with a slow, faint step, like that of an old woman, and there was something in her face, as she lifted it up and looked at the mountains, which would have brought tears into any eyes. Yet there was no suggestion of these in hers. White, drawn, rigid, with something almost defiant in its look, it faced the mountains a moment, and then she went down the gravelled walk, still with that slow, faint step, all the spring of its youth gone, as though age had suddenly come down and palsied it.

Two days before, her father had brought the tidings. They seemed to have stunned, frozen the life within her. In all this time she had not shed one tear. A hard, silent, unutterable agony of despair had taken possession of her. She had heard Guy and Agnes sob like one in a dream. Even her father's ashen face, and her mother going from one fainting fit into

another, had failed to move her. All power of emotion seemed paralyzed within her. All the springs of her hope and trust failed now. God seemed no more the kind and loving Father on whose tender care she could lean the deepest sorrows and darkest mysteries of her life, but a Fate dark and pitiless as the Greeks'. In its anguish her soul did not call on Him, and through the darkness she did not hear His voice.

She sat still, in a sort of death in life, one consciousness only, ever present with her. Tom, her joy, her love, her dear delight, was dead. She should never see him more — never hear his voice speak to her again! Yet, thinking over all this, she did not shed one tear.

At last the stricture of heart and brain became intolerable. It would probably have killed her in a little while. And so, with a sort of blind instinct, she had groped her way out of the darkened house into the light and warmth of the summer day.

Nature and the soul of this girl were, as you have seen, in finest sympathy. Her dumbest grief, her sharpest pang, had always found here the mystery of comfort and healing.

But now all these failed her. The mountains, to which she lifted those eyes, dry and aching with their burden of unshed tears, stood there in their strength and silence, with no help for her. The sunlight, filling the day with its light and gladness, only mocked her. She went on, like one half awake, the slow, heavy steps taking the way, from mere force of habit, down to the thicket in the edge of the woods, where she had come in that first blissful hour of her summer at the mountains — the summer that had fallen into this thick darkness!

She heard the birds singing just as they did that day, and the happy humming of the water in the crevices of the rock. She laid her head down on the cool grass, the hard, despairing agony still holding brain and heart. Who should loosen it? She looked up to the peaceful sky, and found no answer there.

"O God," prayed the dry, unquivering lips, "you have taken away my life, my love, my darling! I want nothing more in your world here. Smite me, too, and let me die now, and be buried by his side!"

No cry for mercy, no love, no resignation in her prayer, only desperation and a longing for the forgetfulness of death!

And she sat there, with her hands folded, and her drawn, rigid face above them, waiting for the answer; and the stream trilled on, and the winds laughed among the leaves overhead, and that was all; and swaying up and down, her thoughts went with the lines of a song she had seen somewhere, —

"Through heart wreck and home wreck
Thy happy swallows sing."

It might have been half an hour after Rusha had passed out of it that the cottage gate was opened softly again, and Dr. Rochford stood still a moment, regarding the house with a kind of sorrowful earnestness. The darkened windows, the utter silence, told him that the news had preceded him. His glance swept the glory of the landscape around, — one of those glances that did it recognition and reverence, — and then he went up to the house.

It was a long time before his summons was answered. The servant seemed disposed to guard the house vigilantly from all intrusion. "There was nobody at home to receive company," she said, evidently supposing he was some guest who had rambled off from the hotels. "Two days before they had had news of Master Tom's death, and they were in very deep grief."

The maid's manner would have been inhospitable, if a quivering of her lip over the last words had not excused all that.

Dr. Rochford hesitated a moment. He felt a strong desire to communicate Tom's messages first to the dearest of his sisters; and if he announced himself and his errand, that would, of course, be impossible. On the impulse of this feeling he spoke: —

"I think, if you will give this to Miss Rusha, she will grant me an interview."

The girl did not so much as glance at the card.

"Miss Rusha is not at home. I saw her go off into the woods

yonder, half an hour ago. She is quite too cut up to be able to see anybody, sir."

This was virtually a dismissal. The doctor turned away without further parley, and the door closed. He had observed the direction in which the girl's gesture pointed, and in a moment he had made up his mind to go in search of her young mistress. So he followed the road, and struck up into the little wood-path, praying — it was his habit to do this in the little things as well as the great ones of life — that he might not lose her.

Rusha Darryll, sitting there motionless, with her dry, glittering eyes on the hands clasped in her lap, heard a footfall near her. She turned slowly, and the absence of all the swift, nervous gesture, so natural to her, indicated to a keen observer, like the doctor, how deep the hurt had gone. She saw him looking down on her with a great solicitude in his eyes. A little surprise stole into the blank of her face. There was a movement of the muscles about the set lips. She tried to say something, but there was a dry, husky sound, without any audible articulation.

"Rusha!" exclaimed the doctor, startled out of all formalities of salutation by the look in her face.

The bright, dry eyes kept themselves on his still.

"Do you know?" she managed to ask now.

"Yes. I knew before you did. I was with him!"

A little tremor then ran over the death-like calm of her face. He must do something to break that up at once. He wondered, with her fine, nervous fibre, that she had borne the strain as long as she had. It must end soon in madness or death; and as he looked and realized all the agony she must have undergone, to set that starkness in the swift mobility of her face, there came a dew of tears into the strong man's eyes.

She looked at him. There was a faint quiver on her lip he thought.

"How came you here?" she said; but there was no active curiosity, such as one would look for under the circumstances.

No matter if his answers seemed cruel, if they only roused her out of this.

"Tom left me some last messages for you. I thought that I could bring them better than I could write them. So I have come," sitting down beside her on the grass.

Her face moved a little out of its blank then. It was the first real sign of life he had seen there.

"It was very kind. It was more than that. I wish I could thank you," she said.

He took her hand.

"How long have you been like this, my child?"

She put her hand to her head, in a doubtful way.

"I don't know, but it is ever since I heard — that seems a whole lifetime ago."

It was likely to prove a "whole lifetime" in its effects on a temperament like hers. She must have read his anxiety in his eyes, for she said, pushing away her hair from her forehead — the old habit, only a little slower, —

"I wish I could cry; but I can't shed a single tear. I don't think I ever shall again."

"Rusha," asked the doctor, "have you carried this greatest grief to God?"

She shook her head, the dreary despair darkening all over her countenance.

"I can't find Him!" Then she looked up again suddenly. "Sometimes those words that you said to me down there on the sea shore have come back, and ring through my thoughts — 'O God, if there be a God!' They made me shudder then, but I have been asking myself that question all these days and nights!"

She evidently thought them many more than they were.

"Tom did not ask that when death came and stood face to face with him. He only smiled like a conqueror, and said, 'God comforted him, and would comfort you also!'"

Her face moved now. Better see it torn up into any wild passion of grief than in that dead rigidness.

"O, did Tom say that?" she gasped, and there was a change in her voice.

"Yes; and went to rest in that thought, in peace and triumph, surer of God's love than he was of yours—even of yours!"

"O, if I could only believe, only know that—that God loved him, that Tom was really happy with Him now—that I should go and see him one of these days! But it is all so dark, and cold, and hard. Help me, Dr. Rochford, if you can!"

Her face, in its struggle and agony of appeal, was pitiful to behold. It moved some deep in the soul of Fletcher Rochford that had never been stirred before. He judged wisely of the best way to answer her. He took the soft, small hands in his, as if they had been the hands of a little child, and he went over that whole last hour of Tom's life, and she hung breathless upon every word, as though it was for her own life, her face starting more and more out of its frozen look, until the doctor knew that the springs would break up in a little while, and thanked God for the knowledge.

The moment that he paused, the long strain gave way. The reaction was terrible. It would have frightened a man less prepared for it than was Dr. Rochford. Such a wild passion of tears and sobs as shook the delicate body, the tender soul! He did not try to check, hardly to soothe them. He knew that it was the great physician Nature's way of healing for her; but his utter impotence of help, in that dreadful hour, left him only more time for pity for the poor, anguish-riven soul before him—a pity which held some element of yearning tenderness such as he had never felt for all those suffering souls and bodies of men and women by whom Dr. Rochford had watched and waited.

It took a whole hour for the storm to expend itself. During this time he had hardly spoken to her, except sometimes in a low whisper, much like a mother's 'Hush,' with his hand touching her hair, or arm, and the words did not go farther than "My child—my poor child;" and past all her utter loss of

self-control, the inevitable consequence of the unnatural calm which had held her so long, Rusha felt the pity of the doctor's voice, even though she could not have repeated his words.

As the passionate grief quieted, it left her weak as an infant. He had been on too many battle-fields for the last year and a half not to be familiar with all sorts of expedients for emergencies, and he had that swift promptness of eye and hand to which life is always affording occasion. He laid Rusha Darryll down on the grass, and improvised a cup out of two mullein leaves, filled this with cool water from the spring, and bathed her temples.

She was too exhausted to observe or wonder much—to be anything, in short, but obedient as a child, and the old child-like lines had come back to her face now—the hardness and immobility all gone.

Once she looked up in his face, and said,—

"I thought I should die just now!"

"O, no, Rusha. This has saved you from a brain fever. It was a cruel remedy, my child, but I knew it was the only one."

Then he bent down, smoothing the rumpled hair with a touch that many a poor, crippled man had affirmed was soft as his own mother's.

"Rusha," he said, "do you remember what I told you of a promise I made Tom, just before he left us?"

She looked up; no dry glitter in her eyes, only a soft mist of tears. The lip struggled with a softness, too, sweeter than even its smile.

"I remember," she said.

"But I cannot keep it, unless you grant me the right, not even though dying, he gave me his!"

There was a silent moment, not only as regarded words, but any movement on her part. Then she turned her face away, but she put her hand in his.

"Some time I shall try to thank you," she said.

There was no need of further speech on either side. He took her act for just what it meant, and quietly, but at once, set

about fulfilling the conditions which his covenant with the living and the dead involved.

The first article in Dr. Rochford's medical creed was to give nature, as far as possible, the charge of his patients; and he used often to aver that he wore his professional laurels unworthily; that the "wonderful cures" for which men gave him credit were due mostly to the great Mother to whose hands he had committed them.

He saw now that Rusha Darryll, in her present exhaustion of body and mind, needed perfect rest. For three days and nights she had not slept at all. The only wonder was, that life and reason had borne what had been laid on them so long; but, for all its sensitiveness, a good deal of endurance inhered in a nervous enfibrement like hers. The first thing now was to get her home — not an easy matter in her present condition, and half a mile to get over. The doctor considered a moment, then brought from the spring a fresh draught of water, into which he poured some drops from a bottle of the case he always carried with him.

It seemed cruel to disturb the white, tired face on the grass; but like a great many other apparently cruel things in life, it would be mercy in the end, and the doctor spoke — the voice gentle as possible, but firm for all that.

"Now, Rusha, you will listen to what I say?"

"Yes," the monosyllable weak and weary enough.

"It is important that you should get home at once, and have the rest that you need. I do not like to leave you long enough to go for a carriage, and there is no one within call. This draught will give you strength for a few minutes, and you must try to get home on it. If you cannot, I must carry you."

He knew that this ultimatum would be likely to impel her to the utmost exertion, and that there were also, as she had proved in more than one trying crisis of her life, great latent forces in her will. A moment before, it had seemed to Rusha Darryll as though, if her life depended on it, she could not have lifted her head from the bed of dried grasses where it lay, so utter was the exhaustion that followed that long weeping; but as the

draught began to take effect, she made the effort, and with the doctor's help tottered to her feet.

Too exhausted now, for any will or purpose of her own, she was obliged to let him think for her, and followed his suggestions implicitly. It was a long walk home for both of them. The doctor expected every moment that her strength would utterly fail her. Indeed, she could not have stood a moment without his support.

At last they reached the house, and at the door they met Mr. Darryll, who, having learned of his daughter's absence, had become seriously alarmed, and was just starting out in search of her.

The strongest proof of the grief which had overwhelmed the family was afforded by the fact that Rusha's condition for the last three days had not awakened their apprehension.

Dr. Rochford was shocked to see how the brisk, bustling man had aged. His look of amazement on recognizing the physician changed to one of alarm as he saw his daughter. Dr. Rochford explained and prescribed in a few words. They must get her to bed without delay; he trusted no serious consequences would follow if she could have plenty of rest, but that was imperative.

Then Rusha spoke, clinging to her father — "He was with Tom at the last, and he has come away here to tell us all about it!"

The strong man's face worked as he turned and fairly clutched the other's hand; but Rusha was clinging to her father with a sort of drowning grasp. So he pointed the doctor to the open parlor door, and then, lifting his daughter, carried her up stairs, while the physician found a glass and prepared her a sleeping draught, which he gave to the servant whom he summoned.

In a few minutes Mr. Darryll returned and closed the door. The doctor's orders had been implicitly obeyed, but that had not quieted the father's newly-aroused anxiety.

"Rusha and Tom were the dearest of my children," he said hoarsely, as he grasped the doctor's hand again. "Am I to lose both of them?"

The doctor's reply allayed the father's worst fears, and then the two men sat down together, and Fletcher Rochford told Mr. Darryll all there was to tell of that last hour of his son's life — a harrowing story for any father to hear; and yet what peace lighted all its darkness, and took the worst sting from its bitterness!

It was, indeed, a "house of mourning" to which the doctor had come. There were others all over the land shrouded in just that same darkness of death, but that did not make the anguish of this one less bitter.

The doctor had to go over the scene again by poor Mrs. Darryll's bedside, with Guy and Agnes listening this time, the two young things quite broken-hearted with grief. Death was something new to both of them. It had never entered their household before; and though it had touched others all around them, still each of us knows how different that is from the death that comes to our own homes and hearts.

Some delicate insight, or some rare gift of speech, gave Dr. Rochford a wonderful power over the hearts and minds of those who went mourning and would not be comforted.

Those whom he had helped to lift up from a great deep of sorrow, frequently embodied, in a homely way, their sense of his power, by remarking that "he somehow knew just the right word to say, and when to say it." But there was that in the man's personality which must have made itself felt anywhere.

Grief had brought the Darryll household into a state of moral susceptibility such as nothing else could have done. The pride, and shows, and pomp, all the material things in which their souls had found delight, must, at this hour, take somewhat of their true value in the eyes of the mourners.

The doctor did not preach any sermon, nor go into any long moral dissertations; but each one felt, as never before, that there was some secret in life and death which they had not taken account of, and that it had made Tom's dying hour what they would have their own.

Dr. Rochford had intended to leave the next morning; but

Rusha was not yet awakened, and her father, though she had passed a comfortable night, feared some serious result from all she had undergone, and the doctor, on his part, was not without apprehensions.

Then Mrs. Darryll's condition required medical attendance, and everybody clung to the doctor, and he could not resist the united entreaties of the family; so he engaged, at last, to remain for a day or two, not suspecting how much he, too, needed the change and rest, nor how his naturally fine constitution had been taxed to its utmost capacity of endurance.

During the morning of the next day, the doctor went out on the verandas for an interview with the landscape. Half an hour later, Agnes came to him.

"She is awake," she said, with some doubt in her face. "But when I found her eyes wide open, looking at me, and asked 'Have you just waked up, Rusha?' she answered, 'O, no; I've been awake for two hours.' It seemed strange, but I didn't go to pa with it, lest it should alarm him. He's been up stairs every few minutes this morning, looking at her."

"I will see her at once," answered the doctor, withholding any expression of his opinion, if, indeed, Agnes' remarks had afforded him sufficient data for forming one.

He followed the young girl up stairs into her sister's chamber. There he found Rusha lying white and still, looking strangely like the dead young face he had left down there in the hospital, and with something of the same calm about it, the doctor thought. Her pulse was faint, but regular, and she smiled a little as she looked up and gave him her hand.

Agnes hovered over her anxiously a few moments, and then, reassured by the doctor's look, went out.

"You are feeling better?" he asked.

"O, yes; I have been lying here this morning, and seeing farther and farther into those words of Tom that God would comfort me. I think that awful darkness and despair will never come upon me again. Nobody knows how I loved him," her lip quivering here, "how my heart will ache for him; how

lonely and desolate at times life will seem without him; but I shall always feel now that God loves us both, and that sometime it will all be made plain!" soft tears shining in her eyes.

"And, Rusha," said Fletcher Rochford, deeply moved, "you must think of him still, as living in a far finer, completer existence than this, and nobler and happier than he could ever be here, even with you; and how, if he could speak to you now, he would urge you not to grieve for him."

A long sigh fluttered out of her lips. She pushed back her hair from her forehead in a way that, as I said, was a habit with her, and that would always, to those who had grown into loving intimacy with her ways, come to have some sweet association with herself.

How lovely she looked lying there with her sweet, pale, tranquil face, — the face of one who has loved and learned, — under the shadow of its dark, fine hair!

The doctor gazed, and as he gazed there came over him something which in all his life he had never felt before — a thrill of such exceeding tenderness for the girl lying there that he longed to take up the pale, sweet face, and kiss away all the sorrow that haunted it.

In that moment the face lying there grew beautiful and precious and sacred beyond everything else in the world; and his heart yearned, and thrilled, and longed for it, to have always in the secret places of its tenderness — a tenderness that out of its abundance would never be satisfied with giving!

If he could only put his cheek down to hers, and tell her this, and they could thank God together that it was so, the man thought, as that great, mysterious tidal of new emotion rose, and swelled, and swayed over his whole being! He knew then what his soul had gone seeking so long, and that here he had found it.

But he did not move nor speak to tell her. I do not think he could at that moment. The soft, supple hand lay in his without a closer clasp to teach her what it had become to him. And so in a moment the door opened, and Mr. Darryll came in.

CHAPTER XLII.

To use Mr. Darryll's own words to Dr. Rochford, he felt, on seeing her that morning, "as though his daughter had been returned to him from the dead." Indeed, there was no doubt but, for the latter's arrival at that time, Rusha's condition must have resulted fatally to her reason or her life; while, contrary to the fears of all those who partially understood her case, she suffered no relapse.

To most persons, the rapidity of her recovery would have been a sort of miracle; but she had a physician who understood, as few men could, the mystery of her fine, nervous organization, and its action on her physique. So he left to nature the work of healing which lay beyond his utmost skill. He insisted upon his patient's keeping out doors as much as possible, both for the stimulus of the fresh air, and even the ground scents.

So they carried her out on the veranda, and laid her down on a lounge in one corner, amid the cool shadows of the rose vines, where there was an outlook on Lafayette.

The days were at their very finest now. Everybody who can feel it, knows that no year goes over the earth without having its flood-tide of inspiration; a time certain to come in the late summer or autumn, when the days move past in a very trance of splendor — when the whole earth is suffused and idealized with a new radiance and beauty — still, serene, brooding days that seem touched with the very peace and splendor of heaven, and to touch our hearts also with their own peace and blessedness. This time had fallen now to the year; and Rusha Darryll lay out there in the joy and beauty and stillness, her pale face

filled with such a peace that her family used to come and look at it with a kind of wondering amazement.

I think, however, nobody wondered more than Rusha at this time. She could not understand the change that had come over her soul—the quiet, the blessedness, after all that anguish. It was as though she had come into another state of existence, as though the voice of God Himself had spoken its eternal “Be still” to her soul.

She told herself over and over again that Tom was *dead*; but somehow the words seemed afar off, and did not hurt her any more. She could only feel that he had gone away for a little while, where everything was well with him—where he was more blessed and happy than he had ever been before, and that he was coming back to her again, and there was afterwards to be no more separation forever.

No doubt that the reaction from that awful strain of body and mind had much to do with her present calm; but something underlay it all, deeper than that—something given of God. She would lie there, her eyes on the grand old mountain, hiding its face away in masses of smoky cloud, and then uncovering the glories of its presence, as in a vision, to her gaze.

And here Fletcher Rochford came often to look upon the sweet face lying there, and wonder if it was not the face of an angel. Strong, self-possessed man as he was, this new love had come with a might and taken possession of him with a power and suddenness which was a new revelation to himself.

Dr. Rochford wondered sometimes if he was the same man he had been. All the poetry and ideality that his stirring, executive life had held in leash, asserted themselves mightily now.

Love must always take its character from the nature which gives birth to it. It had been the doctor's habit from his boyhood to idealize woman. There was something at the core of this man's nature which affiliated with all that was best and finest in the old medieval devotion to women. I think the humblest and weakest of these felt something of this in any

casual intercourse with the doctor, and was unconsciously elevated by the feeling; indeed, he was always certain to bring out the best possibilities of any one brought strongly under his influence.

The women of history, the women of Shakspeare, were living personalities to him. They incarnated his own lofty ideals of purity, sweetness, and nobleness, and his thoughts and imagination dwelt among them, familiar, almost, as he dwelt among his own sisters, blessed in both, blessed above all in the mother of his boyhood, and the memory she had left behind her.

And she who had wrought all this magic in the soul and heart of the strong, tender nature, lay there on the veranda, with her pale, silent face turned oftenest to the mountains, waiting for the healing of sky and earth.

Here one and another would come, hanging anxiously over her lounge; and here, oftener, perhaps, than any of the others, impelled by a sweet magnetism too mighty for his will to resist, came also Fletcher Rochford, gazing down on the pale face until its power and loveliness grew upon him more than he could bear, and he would go away, carrying it with him, into the deep silence of the woods, as to an altar.

So one day went by, and then another. It seemed cruel and useless to talk of leaving just at present; and had the case been different—had the family clung less tenaciously to him—even the strong will of Fletcher Rochford would have found it hard to resist the power that held him still under the shadow of the White Mountains.

To everybody who questioned her Rusha had much the same answer during these days. “Better, thank you, only very tired,” her voice touched with weariness, and the faint smile on her lips fading into sleep, light as an infant's, even while she spoke.

For she slept much during these days. The tired brain, the strained nerves, the heart that had ached out its pain, needed all that slumber to come back into newness of life.

One afternoon, when Dr. Rochford came out from Mrs. Darryll's sick room, he found Guy sitting by the lounge fanning

his sister, for the heat had fallen suddenly, as it is apt to among the valleys of the New Hampshire hills.

"She's been asleep for the last hour," whispered Guy, not the old, careless, self-assertive Guy of a week ago.

"Every moment of such sleep is a new lease of life to her. But I'll take your place a while, if you please, Guy. I heard your father say there were replies to some business letters which could not be put off any longer, and it will do your mother good to have you with her just now."

Guy rose without a word, and placed the palm-leaf in the doctor's hand. So he sat there, waving it softly over the cheek turned towards him, and watching the faint flush that had begun to gather into its paleness, and thinking that he would like to sit so forever, and smiling to himself as he thought what a brave, manly wish that was for a fellow who had any purpose or any work to do in the world — a very lover, after all, you see!

Suddenly she stirred and opened her eyes. They looked at him, startled and wistful, a moment; then a faint smile about the lips answered his.

"You are looking better, Rusha," he said.

"And I am feeling so. Quite like my old self, indeed."

"That last sleep has done this for you. I was certain you would wake up quite renewed."

The little hand going up and brushing back the hair again — not the late listless gesture, but all the old swift life in it.

"I'm tired of lying here," she said. "I think I should like to sit up a little while;" and he thought a child might have said it with just such pretty simplicity; but then, you must remember, he was in love.

"You may, certainly." He lifted her up, and arranged the pillows carefully. He was used to work of that sort.

"Is that comfortable?"

"O, delightfully so!" settling her head amongst the pillows.

"How nicely it does feel!"

A few moments' silence, her consciousness strong and clear, taking in all that had happened — he saw by her face.

"How is mother? Can I go to her?"

"As well as we could reasonably hope. You shall see her to-morrow."

She was ready to talk now, and he satisfied all her natural anxieties about her family, and then directed her gaze to the mountains, which were in one of their tender moods. It was pleasant to watch her face deepen and brighten as she gazed.

He spoke in a moment: —

"Those words have been ringing up and down my thoughts ever since I came here — 'As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord encampeth round about those who love him.'"

"O, yes. I have remembered that, too. It is wonderful how all those Bible passages come back and fit into all one's phases and experiences, never wearing out, through all these thousands of years."

"Never! Gaining rather, I think, in depth and meaning, as the heart of man gains in depth also and wisdom."

She was silent a moment over that. Then she looked up quickly.

"How good you have been to me — to us all. What should I have done without you, Dr. Rochford?"

"Found somebody better in my stead, I hope."

She looked incredulous. And then, thinking it best she should not talk much yet, and understanding the natural restlessness of her active temperament, he said, —

"Let me be a little better still, and read to you a while."

"O, yes; thank you. I shall like it of all things."

There was a book-case in the sitting-room. The doctor went in here, and returned in a moment, bringing several volumes with him. He deposited these on the lounge.

"Won't you take your choice?" he asked.

But she preferred him to do that. So he took up one volume after another, watching her face occasionally. There was a copy of Tennyson's "Idyls." He paused there.

"A book above all price or naming!" he said.

She did not answer, but he saw that he had touched the right chord. He ran over the leaves of the book.

"Which is your favorite?" she asked; and he held up the open volume for answer, and the page read, "GUINEVERE."

She looked up now, her eyes rained over with tears. "It was Tom's favorite, too. He will never read that to me again, Dr. Rochford — never — never!"

"Rusha, you know what he said. Shall I read it in his stead?"

She put her hand over her eyes a moment. When she drew it away, her face was all in a tremble, but it was not all of sorrow.

"In his stead," she answered.

Dr. Rochford was a fine reader. Indeed, his sisters used to say he had a marvellous gift in that direction; but then, they thought he had this in many others.

Be that as it may, his voice entered now into the very heart of the Idyl, and brought out the fine life and individuality of every line. The remorse of Lancelot, the awful despair of Guinevere in the lonely convent, and the love and agony that wrenched the heart of King Arthur in that last interview, when his soul rose from its suffering into its sublime exaltation of forgiveness, wrought themselves by turns into the magic of the doctor's voice as he read — read as no man could who had not the soul and heart to enter with living sympathies into all the sin, and suffering, and divine victory of the poem.

Rusha listened to the close, her very breath held on her parted lips, her eyes, with all their radiant depths alive now, on the doctor's face, her thought and imagination losing themselves in a conception of sorrow that went so far beyond her own.

And at last, like the sweet ringing of distant bells, like the swinging to and fro of the last notes of some "benedicite," falling with its very dew of blessing upon the rapt soul, the doctor's tones shut in upon that last line that closes the last Idyl into the very flowing of God's eternal calm and completeness, —

"To where, beyond these voices, there is peace."

Then they looked at each other — this man, so loving this woman, with all the mystery of beauty in her face shining upon him now. He spoke first: —

"No drum-beat of victory in that last line, and yet it is the immortal triumph of the soul. And then one remembers that all the raging and tumult, all the sorrow and agony, of life may be swallowed up in a little while in this eternal peace of God!"

"A blessed thought — a sweet and most blessed thought," she murmured, covering away her eyes from his face a moment. I think he was glad to have her then.

In a little while she turned towards him again.

"King Arthur," she said, "was, from the hour I read the Idyl, my ideal hero. No poet, it seems to me, whether ancient or modern, has risen into the conception of so lofty and yet so tender a character, merely human. One may say, without irreverence, 'It is God-like' both in its purity and pity."

"And how far it transcends all the old gods and heroes of the Greeks! Through all the grace and beauty of their mythology, there does not shine down upon us a conception of a character like this. It could not enter into their thoughts. Christ had to come and live and die before man could fashion an ideal like King Arthur, the self-sacrifice and tenderness crowning all the strength."

In the silence that followed these words, but that did not lack its own language, Mr. Darryll came out on the veranda. Rusha stretched out her hands towards him.

"O, pa, do come here!" her face full of light up there among the pillows.

"Why, my child, how well you look! No, doctor, thank you; keep your seat;" and he took one on the corner of the lounge.

"The doctor has promised I shall have my freedom to-morrow," she said, almost joyfully.

Rusha's father looked at her with a feeling that did not express itself in many words, great as his delight was over her manifest improvement.

Nobody had ever seen John Darryll with so old and broken-down a look and air as he had worn for the last week. The death of his noblest boy had gone down to the roots of his love and ambition. It had taken hold of his life. Rusha saw it all with a great pang.

"What have you been doing, pa?" she said.

"Writing some business letters, my child. They had to be done," in a weary tone, showing how little interest the brisk, alert man had in his work. The old habit might constrain him still, but he must feel now through it all, that the pride of his sons was gone; that there was no Tom to make money and heap together riches for any more.

Rusha, with her true instinct, saw the feeling, and answered it, taking his hand and chafing it in her soft ones.

"You have a good many left to live for, pa. You know there's mother and me and all the rest of us!" not adding the other two names, because of the two living ones beyond that must be left out.

"I know it, my child, and I shall try to bear it for your sakes," a spasm of pain working across his face.

How Rusha pitied him! What covenants she made with herself to be always thoughtful and tender towards her father, not only for her brother's sake, but because of that other brother and sister who had helped to bring the age into his face that had come there within the last year. And with that thought came another, that brought a sudden trouble into her eyes.

"What is it, my child?" asked her father.

How kind and watchful he had grown of late!

"There are Andrew and Ella, pa. They must both be written to now. You know what Tom said!"

"I can't do it—I can't do it," with all his old hasty movement, and yet something in his voice that was like an appeal for pity.

"I will take all that on myself, pa, in a day or two," her voice fairly choked with sympathy for him.

But the doctor knew that her nerves would not bear such a strain for weeks. Why could he not spare her that, too—he

who could tell, as nobody else could, just how those last messages had been spoken? So Dr. Rochford said to the father and daughter,—

"I brought his last words to you; let me send them also to his brother and sister."

And again John Darryll thanked him with no words, only a grasp of his hand; and again Rusha turned upon him the gratitude of those eloquent brown eyes.

That night Dr. Rochford related in his letters to Andrew Darryll and Ella Howe all that he had witnessed by their brother's death-bed.

CHAPTER XLIII.

I HAVE said that Fletcher Rochford had something in him of all that which we most honor and love in the old knights and heroes of chivalry. From his boyhood there had been something in that long service of Jacob for Rachel which enchanted his imagination, and the tales of loyal devotion to their ladies, which make the poetry of the old chronicles, had always a charm for him.

His dreams of wooing and winning a woman for his wife had always taken their coloring from his heart and fancy — always had in them something of the poetry and romance whose springs lay in his inmost nature.

But the hour that held the best gift of his life had waited for him long, and it came when he least looked for it, opening wide to him in a moment that great mystery of love which had brooded long in the silence of his soul.

Yet the very might of this man's tenderness made him humble, doubtful of himself and of his power to win the woman of his heart's choosing. He used to look at the sweet, delicate face, sweeter than ever now in the shadow of its sorrow, and wonder whether he should ever be so blessed as to call it his very own, to gaze at it, cherish it, caress it at his will, to have it smile up to him in absolute trust and abiding love, and to read at some time, in its own eloquent and radiant language, that he, of all the world, was its crowning blessedness and joy. But he looked forward to months or years before that could be given him. He would have thought it sacrilege to her womanhood to have told Rusha Darryll at this time of the new revelation that had come to him, and would have regarded it as simple justice, that, stung and outraged by the man who could talk to her of love in the very presence of death, she denied his suit.

Still, with instincts that went so straight as Rusha Darryll's did to the truth, I think that, at any other time, some suspicion of the doctor's real feeling must have haunted her, unconsciously, perhaps, for she was not vain, and would be much more likely

to fancy a man like Dr. Rochford in love with some other woman than herself. But with all his habit of self-control, there was something in his manner and voice with her not just like that which he carried towards friend or patient. His sisters would have discerned the difference.

His presence was an unutterable comfort to Rusha, his kindness and interest giving her a constant sense of rest and gratitude; but she thought it all sprang from the promise that the doctor had given Tom — this, and nothing more. So she was not surprised or embarrassed in any way, taking all his care and attentions much as she would have taken Tom's. Had not Dr. Rochford come to her in his stead?

But human plans, though laid with the wisest skill and foresight, seldom transpire according to our programme. Life is full of surprises, of events that change our purposes, and beyond that, we are such mysteries to ourselves; we can never count on our feelings; some great tidal of emotion will rush over our souls, bearing out upon them, as upon the rush of a mighty river, our most sacred feelings, our longest hoarded secrets — and our wills are as weak to hold them back as our voices are to hold the winds in their might.

During the three or four days that followed, Rusha's strength waxed so rapidly that from drives she became equal to short walks into the woods, and among the still old country roads, where, in case of fatigue, it was always easy enough to improvise seats out of the stone walls, or mossy boulders, or at worst the wreck of some old tree struck down by the lightnings, or wrenched up from its roots by the storm.

Nobody thought it strange that Dr. Rochford always accompanied her in these walks, for she was not strong enough to go alone, and neither her father nor brother was a physician.

Quiet, peaceful, blessed hours they were, touched, but not gloomed, with the shadow of death; hours that seemed to take her soul into their calm and peace. The faint color came back to her cheeks, and the bright, playful changes to her face; and still it seemed to her that Tom was only gone away, and that dreadful word *death* was robbed of its sting and terror.

In these daily walks the soul of the man and woman opened to each other. How fairly they were chorded together! Nature, art, books seemed to have so many like meanings and utterances for both! Dr. Rochford was more and more struck with the grasp of Rusha's mind, and the range of her bright, alert thought.

He wondered how, with a life so little calculated to discipline her faculties, or develop the best possibilities of her intellect, she had assimilated so much of the finest and best thoughts of others, whether it was of the past or present.

What a rare, fine, clear mind it was! — how greedy for all forms of cultivation! — what a joy it would be to watch its development, to stimulate its activities in all high and worthy directions! All this and a great deal more, the doctor thought, in those days out of whose grief had grown the new gladness of his life.

In the household everything had gravitated back into its old way. The days come and go, and we take up, we know not how, the little interests and duties of life, when we felt that all these had slipped away from us forever. The Darryll family was no exception to this rule. It was not possible to the youth of Guy and Agnes to be always sad, and though, of all the brothers and sons that went down under the red hail-storm of our war, none was mourned with a bitterer grief than Tom Darryll, still it can be said of these, as it was of all the other households, "The grief did not kill them."

Even the poor, broken-hearted mother could not forget that her husband lived, that other children remained to her; and in a thousand undiscerned ways the living loves asserted their claims beside the dead.

Dr. Rochford had made up his mind to leave the next day. It must be confessed the idea had seemed to him as much like leaving heaven as anything he could conceive of in this world; but the man had a will, and he brought it to a focus on this resolution, "If the folks would only stop urging him to stay; that was the hardest of all, as though there were not other surgeons down in the hospitals that needed a vacation; in love, too, very likely — poor fellows!"

That last day, however, Rusha was so much improved that

he suggested a new walk to her — one he had hunted up the day before, when a great tumult of thought and feeling carried him out into the sympathy and silence of nature.

But Fletcher Rochford did not add this when he described to Miss Darryll the walk through the back pastures to a hill which crowned them, from the summit of which they could get a view of the whole White Mountain range, not finer than that from the veranda, perhaps, but bringing out new features and profiles.

He should like to show it to her; but though the walk was not more than a third of a mile from their own door, still it was steep clambering; he doubted her strength for the enterprise.

She felt strong enough to climb Mont Blanc that very morning, she answered. With the help of the doctor's arm over the steep places, it was the very exercise she needed.

Mr. Darryll was present at this conversation; but the man had such unquestioning faith in Dr. Rochford's judgment, that, had the latter proposed for Rusha's benefit a ten-miles' walk, it is doubtful whether her father would have demurred.

So they started off, the doctor's pockets and arms provided with shawls, overshoes, and umbrella, all of which preliminaries Rusha's memory had a fatal tendency to let slip at such a time.

They went up through the pastures in the still, dreamy September air, that made a luxury of every breath, her little sunhat, as usual, a-tilt on her head, her fingers tying and untying the ribbons, for she had a thousand absent habits of that sort, little graceful, individual ways and movements which were a part of herself, and would become so in the knowledge and memory of one who loved her.

There were hidden streams and treacherous, miry places among the long grass, over which he had to lift the girl, and steep places, where she needed his arm for a moment; but for the most part she kept her way bravely, the heightening color of cheek and lip making manifest that each breath of the mountain air was to her the very elixir of life. As they gained the summit of the hill the doctor asked, for the twentieth time, perhaps, "Are you tired, Miss Rusha? Ought not you to rest a while?"

"Not yet, thank you, doctor. We are so near the summit now, and I am impatient for the view."

"Keep your eyes on the ground, then, until I give you permission to lift them."

"Mayn't I even look at you, doctor?" all the old playfulness of her manner restored for a moment, as she darted a half arch, half defiant glance up to his face.

His smile answered hers. "O, yes; you may look at me or the ground, whichever shall be the more agreeable; but that is your limit of choice."

In a moment more they gained the summit of the hill. Everything combined to make this a delicious haunt in which to dream away hours that would not seem, in such air and sunlight, to belong to this world. A wide opening betwixt the trees let them into a vast aisle of coolness and shadow. There was a great gray boulder which the storms had gnawed, and which served for a chair of state.

At the foot of this Dr. Rochford spread the blanket-shawls, and seated the young lady, and disposed himself beside her.

They listened a moment to the birds singing overhead, and the slow swinging of the winds through the mysterious tides of air. She drew a long breath, and looked at him.

"O, this is beautiful, Dr. Rochford."

"Then look all around you, and tell me what that is!"

She lifted her eyes now, and gazed over the landscape. The view was one which men go thousands of miles, by sea and land, to behold, and carry the hour in which the vision is given them, "a thing of beauty, and a joy forever."

There, making a semicircle around the horizon, was the whole range of the White Mountains, in one view; every peak and slope standing with its own strong, individual character in the clear, delicious air. And yet, not mere mountains, as they sometimes are when you see them most strongly defined. They were in one of their ideal moods, soft, radiant, poetical, a tender glory enchanting them.

With her indrawn breath Rusha's eyes went round and round the horizon, and the doctor's eyes went from the mountains to her face.

At last she spoke. "I think we are in the very court-room of the kings."

"Yes," he answered, "we are in the presence of the monarchs of the earth. It is good to be here, and pay them loving homage."

So they talked, the inborn poetry of both their natures stirred within them by this scene, and the hours slipped away, and the landscape took on new variations of mood; and, as they grew intimate with it, they found new magical effects in light and shadow, new mysteries of expression in the mountains, and the clouds went and came overhead, and I think that morning was to Fletcher Rochford and Rusha Darryll the happiest of their lives. And they had sat there for hours then, and yet the scene was still fresh to them. He asked, —

"Which is your favorite mountain, Miss Rusha?"

Her gaze went over to the right, straight to Lafayette.

"That is the finest, if not the grandest, of the group," she said. "No other looks to me, speaks to me, just like that one, *my* mountain above all the others. O, see there!" a quick change in her voice and face.

The doctor looked, and saw a gray, smoky cloud, around which hung snowy gauzes of mist, drifting just upon the summit of Lafayette. There it clung, heaving to and fro — a sight that one would not be likely to find more than once in a lifetime.

"I think the mountain is at its worship," she said, "and that is the smoke of its incense going up into heaven." Her figures on the mountains always took the form of personification. They were real, vital presences to her.

After a while she drew away her gaze with a long breath.

"I suppose we must leave this some time, though I can't bear to think of that now."

"Have you any idea how long we have been here?" asked the doctor.

"Not the slightest; an hour, perhaps."

He took out his watch and showed her. Instead of one hour, it was four. Her look of amazement was comical.

"It can't be possible, doctor. There must be something wrong about your time."

"I wish I could think so," replacing his repeater. "But for three years my watch hasn't failed me by the space of one minute."

He added soon after, — a new train of ideas being now started for both of them, —

"I always like to have last days the pleasantest ones, and this at the mountains has been a crowning one for me."

"I am so sorry that you must go," speaking out her first thought, "that I try not to think of it; I do not know how we could have lived through the last week without you. You will never know what you have been to us at this time. I shall tell Tom of it some day;" the feeling that he was living somewhere had taken such hold of her that instinctively she always spoke of him in that way.

Certainly her words could not be otherwise than pleasant to him; and yet, after their first sweetness, they left a great bitterness in his thought, and the bitterness grew and grew until it became an intense pain.

She would not speak to him with this perfect freedom of thought and feeling if it had not been for his promise to Tom — a promise to which all his heart and soul rose up in passionate denial at that moment.

He never could be a brother to Rusha Darryll. He must have her in a finer and closer bond than that, or none at all — have her as a portion of himself, set apart and belonging to him as she could to no other human love, chiefly and supremely his own, or else a longing and a memory of anguish through all his life to come. And the man looked at her as she sat there in the sweetness and beauty of her maidenhood, and his soul was at flood-tide, and the waves beat and beat against the strong man's will, as the ocean rolls and rolls against the rocks at high tide; and as they bear these down at last, so the might of his love bore down the strong mastery of his will, and because he could not help it; and wondering as though it were another man, and not himself, speaking, Fletcher Rochford said, —

"Rusha, you must give me back the promise that I made to Tom, and that he died believing. I cannot stand to you in his stead — I cannot be your brother!"

She started and stared at him, her face fairly frightened with her shock of surprise.

"What do you say — what do you mean, Dr. Rochford?"

And looking straight in her face, and holding her eyes by some mysterious magnetism of his own, the doctor answered, —

"Because, Rusha, I find that I cannot act the hypocrite any longer — because I love you with a love so far exceeding that of any brother's, that it is a love which I can have for but one woman in all the world!"

Her listening face grew white under his. Without uttering one word, she dropped it into her hands, while the truth that had come so strangely, so against Dr. Rochford's will, entered into and took possession of her soul. And he sat by her side, silently waiting — waiting less, I think, in hope than in fear. His face was white, too. Was not more than his life at stake in that hour?

At last — it seemed a long time to her — what must it have been to him — she heard his whisper, —

"Rusha, are you glad, or sorry?"

Then she took down her hands, and turned her face towards him; no blushes on it, but crowned with such a solemn triumph and joy as no mortal eyes had ever seen on it before.

"I am glad! God alone knows how absolutely, unspeakably glad!" she said.

He put his arms around her; he drew her to him with the new right which her words gave him; he turned up the sweet face to his, and kissed its lips and eyes for the first time.

"O, my God, I thank Thee!" he said, and he held her close, and she leaned her head down on his shoulder, and it seemed that there was no speech in language, the silence was so eloquent between them.

At last she spoke. "How long have you known this?"

"Since the morning after I came here. I was in your room, standing by your bedside, just after you woke up, and in a moment the truth came to me. I wonder now how I carried it so long; and yet I expected to go away without telling you. I came up the hill this morning without faith enough or courage

enough to face my destiny; but my love was mightier than I, and mastered me."

Again she sat still in the shelter of his arms, trying to think it all over. At last she said, in a half-awed tone, —

"It is wonderful; and yet it does not seem altogether strange, as I should have fancied it must."

"That is the way with all God's best gifts," he answered. "The soul takes them naturally amid all the wonder and gratitude. Should it not be so with this dearest, best gift of all?"

So, betwixt many lapses of sweet silence, the talk grew in this first betrothal hour. Once her breath came quickly as she sat there, while his hand smoothed softly her beautiful brown hair.

"What is it, dear love?" he asked.

"I was wondering whether Tom knew this, and thinking he must be glad over it even in heaven."

"If he does not know it now, he will in God's own good time. We are willing to leave all that with His love and wisdom, knowing that He will judge and do best."

"Just as He wills;" voice and face in that perfect security of trust which is given to some hours of our weak human lives.

Of a sudden she leaned over, and folding her hands on his knee, looked up in his face, soft blushes all alive in hers now, making it, if possible, lovelier in his sight than ever.

"To think that I never suspected until this morning — I must have been blind and a fool!"

"Don't slander yourself in that way, my child," And then he took her face between his hands. "Little face," he said, "beautiful face, above all faces of women or of pictures in the world — mine own, to belong to me always — God be my witness, that I will deal tenderly and lovingly by it — that so far as in me lies, I will never bring a shadow or a grief into it so long as we both live!"

The tears were in her eyes at the solemn tones in which he made his covenant; but she looked up the next moment with that child-like simplicity which was one side of her character, —

"Do you really think I am beautiful? I never supposed I was."

Dr. Rochford had taken off his glasses long ago; so Rusha had the full benefit of his eyes — wonderful eyes they were, too, when his soul was alive in them. He gave her a glance now which, I think, would have answered her question to the satisfaction of any living woman, as to what she was in the eyes of the man who gave her that look.

"When I think," he spoke, a little later, "that this blessed hour is only a promise and foretaste of all the blessed hours that are to come — that from henceforth we are never to be divided — that in all our joys and sorrows, we are to be one, — it seems as though my whole life henceforth must be a continual *Te Deum*."

And for answer she said, clinging to him a little shyly, —

"I can't think we shall ever have any more sorrows, or that, if they come, they will seem such, now."

Her next speech broke out suddenly: —

"I want you to promise me one thing. It is the first I have asked since —"

"Our betrothal. Don't stop, dear child, before the right word. Well, you shall have the promise, if it is in the power of mortal man to keep it."

"That you will not go away to-morrow."

What could the man do? Nobody would suffer now at the hospitals. He made himself believe that the duty here was the higher of the two.

"And now I have my first petition to make," after he had had granted hers.

"What is it?"

"That you will drop that everlasting 'doctor,' and put in its stead 'Fletcher.'"

Her face demure and doubtful. "It will come hard at first, but I'll try — Fletcher;" her lips taking the name with a dainty awkwardness, as though the sound of her own voice frightened her.

It was late in the afternoon when they looked off again to the mountains. The sun had touched the cloud of gray smoke on the forehead of Mount Lafayette, and it burned now as though it were a fire kindled on that vast altar height.

"Look!" she cried. "See what the cloud has become since we saw it last!"

"Just what our lives have, irradiated by this new love," he answered.

But the day began to wane at last, and the dews fall early and heavy among the mountains, and they must go down.

"O, dear!" she sighed as they rose up, "I wish this day would last forever."

"No, my darling," he made answer; "think of all the days that are to come as dear and blessed as this one!"

So they went down the hill as they were to go down that other longer hill of life together. When they reached home they found the windows open, and the family concentrated in the parlor, for the first time since the doctor's arrival. Even Mrs. Darryll had been persuaded to leave her room for an hour.

"Well," said Agnes, looking up as they entered, "I thought impending starvation would drive you home. I begin to find that you, doctor, are just as much mountain-struck as Rusha."

It was the first jest she had attempted since they had learned of Tom's death.

Dr. Rochford did not answer; he led Rusha right up to her father, who was sitting by his wife's side.

"Tom gave me his dying charge to be a brother to her; but she has to-day granted me a dearer right and name. Will you also, Mr. Darryll, give your daughter to me, and I will take Tom's place, and be to you a son in name and in deed?"

Amazement fairly took the man's breath away, as it did everybody's else in the room. Certainly no one of them had expected this; but at last the father comprehended the meaning of the doctor's speech, and his amazement became joy. John Darryll rose up; he took his daughter's hand.

"She is the best daughter, the dearest child, that ever a father had," he said, and the tears shook in his voice. "In the whole world, you are the only man to whom I could say gladly, 'I give you my daughter;'" and he placed Rusha's hand in the doctor's.

CHAPTER XLIV.

It would seem little less than sacrilege to open wide the gates and enter into the sacred joy of those days that followed the betrothal of Fletcher Rochford and Rusha Darryll.

The old life had passed away, in a large sense, to the souls of this man and woman. The union betwixt these two fine, broad natures grew deeper and closer in its mysterious oneness as they came into closer knowledge and intimacy.

Most friendships and loves are so one-sided in this world! They only embrace a narrow area of thoughts, tastes, and sympathies in common. Outside of that, the two are strangers to each other. There are wide realms of eternal silence and mystery, where the two souls can never meet, where one never hears the voice of the other calling to it.

But the affinity betwixt the man and woman of whom I am telling you, was not of this partial and limited character. It seemed to reach and hold in its immortal bond, intellect and heart, thought, sympathies, aspirations, making of the twain that eternal oneness, which, given to man and woman, is the crowning blessedness of life — the one precious gift "whose value is above rubies, which cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof."

So each day was a kind of renewal, or rather intensification of the first surprise and blessedness of the betrothal. The old mythology, that gave blind eyes to Love, discerned only a partial truth, for no eyes but Love's ever behold the angel side that is in us, dimmed, blurred, defaced by the weakness and sin of our humanity.

It was something to be in the atmosphere of a love like this; something of its exaltation of calm and joy communicated itself

to the household in those days — days such as Rusha verily believed had never smiled out of heaven with such lavish glory of life since Adam and Eve walked together in the still beauty of Eden.

Mrs. Darryll, though she stood in some awe of her prospective son-in-law, could not but take a mother's pride and delight in the thought that Rusha was "to make such a match," the old natural feelings stirring a moment, but mostly smothered in a sigh, an aching sigh for the dead, a bitterer one for the living.

Guy and Agnes had, of course, their young curiosity alert, and their little jokes over the lovers, sometimes forgetting themselves and growing loud and gay among these, and then, with a sudden remembrance, settling back into silence, as though the right of their youth had been a wrong to the dead.

On one of these days, which idealized and transfigured all nature, Guy and Agnes watched, from one of the side windows, the lovers, as they went down the road to some new landscape picture which the doctor had chanced on the day before.

He was always finding pretexts of one sort and another to keep Rusha out of doors.

Agnes drew in her head with a little long-drawn breath, and the feeling that had been at work, as she gazed, found expression in, —

"After all, I think it must be real nice to be in love and have a beau!"

"That depends upon who is the beau, I should say. Capital one the doctor must be!"

"O, he's perfectly splendid!" put in Agnes, with immense emphasis. "I should be in love with him myself, if he wasn't to be my brother-in-law."

That name seemed somehow to touch both of the young souls with a stab of pain.

"Last night," continued Agnes, her blue eyes blurring with tears, "when you were gone into Littleton, and I was sitting there by the window, feeling so lonely, and thinking of poor, dear Tom, the doctor came to me, and put his arm around me. 'My

little sister that is to be,' he said, 'I can't wait any longer before I take my rights;' and then he sat down, and we had such a nice long talk together. O, it was beautiful! I thought I should always stand in fear of him, he seems so good and grand — just like some hero in a novel, that one wouldn't like to have round in common, every-day life, though."

"But the doctor isn't one of your dressed-up, pattern heroes. He's made of the real stuff that'll stand every-day wear and tear, and they're the only heroes worth having, by George!"

Agnes Darryll was a girl still, but these sorrows had left her with some new thoughtfulness and womanhood.

"Guy," she said, in her kindest way, "I wish you'd try to leave off some of that slang talk. Don't you know Tom did before he went to the war? and the doctor never uses it, either"

"Well, it comes to a fellow like second nature, hang it — there it goes again. I never shall be Tom to any of you, Aggie," a little tremor on his lip, where there was a little furze of brown beard already.

"You'll be a good old Guy, anyhow," answered Agnes, with a sudden rush of affection, "and we sort of seem all that's left to each other now!" the bright eyes blurring over again with tears.

"That's so!" something struggling in his face that brought it out in a new character. "I mean to try to be a better son and brother than I should ever have turned out if Tom wasn't where he is, and if Andrew hadn't —" that last sentence, as usual, left for silence to point.

While this talk was going on in the house, — talk which told what training the summer's sorrow had done for the two young lives there, — the doctor and Rusha had turned aside from the main road, and wandered down a steep foot-path to the bank of a small river, with a soft whisper and titter of its waters among the stones, while it hurried with some pleasant secret to the distant sea.

Here the roots of some mighty tree had been torn up years ago, and left to disfigure the landscape; but a wild clematis vine

had taken pity on it, and smothered it in green caresses, and showered over it the white glory of its blossoms, until it sat, a very crown of beauty on the bank.

The doctor commenced laying away carefully the vines from one side of the stump.

"What are you going to do?" asked Rusha, standing by and gazing with her smiling eyes.

"Only putting away the draperies so that my Queen can sit on her throne," he said.

"But you'll spoil the throne, and besides, it's sacrilege to sit there!"

He answered, by placing her, with that strong, gentle touch of his, on the smooth place he had cleared from the top of the stump, without breaking so much as a single tendril. Then he sat down on the grass beside her, in the cool splendor of the September morning, and a very trance of silence came upon them both; yet her face was alive all over, and quickened with the thought and feeling that were throbbing underneath it.

So Fletcher Rochford gazed up into the face of his Queen, the great tenderness in his eyes just touched with reverence—that reverence which the nature of a lofty as well as loving man gives to the woman of his heart.

The river lisped and tittered along on its way to the sea, and Rusha still sat silent, her unconscious fingers at play with the spray of clematis, and her face in a trance of happiness on which tremulous shadows came and went, and Dr. Rochford gazed and gazed, and felt he could have gazed forever at the rare, delicate, dreaming face above him. At last she stirred suddenly, and her eyes met the love and worship in his. Her own answered that with a fine flush gathering in her cheeks.

"What have you been thinking of, my Queen?" he asked.

"O, a good many things, doctor!"

The Christian name always had a second thought. Out of old habit the professional title came first; but the other could afford to wait—in its time it would have precedence forever.

"I saw that in your face, but I did not find the key-note."

One of those long-drawn, fluttering breaths that always preceded some inmost revelation of herself.

"I remember, for one thing, I was wondering why God had given me this great, unutterable happiness of love, and denied it to so many other women, so much better than I am."

He lifted his eyebrows in a way that implied absolute scepticism over that last clause, but his remark answered hers in a general way.

"I believe that the denial of which you speak, hard as it is for our own sex, is still harder and sadder for yours!"

"I have often thought," she continued, the shadow growing in her face, which still retained its inherent peace and brightness, "that of all the dreadful mysteries of human life, this one of love is the strangest and saddest. Look at marriage as it is in the world. How many seem united for no other purpose than their mutual misery! How the natures that could make each other blessed and happy, seem never to be brought together, to be held apart by some cruel destiny! How many of the fine and noblest hearts of my own sex go through life starved and aching, whether they be married or not, for a love that is given to the weakest and the shallowest of women—women who have not souls deep enough to receive the tide, and the love is turned back on itself, and the great fountains grow dry or turn to bitterness! Think of all the women, too, to whose starved and shrunken souls a true love would come like dew and bloom, expanding and exalting their whole natures!"

"When I think of all the possibilities that lie in so many souls of my sex, like music asleep in sweet harps that no master hand ever touches,—when I think of the loneliness, and heartache, and desolation, that, for lack of the tenderness that stimulates and idealizes, fall to the lot of most women,—I feel like saying, 'Dear God, what does it all mean that Thou hast bestowed this upon me?'"

"Dear Rusha," he said, finding and stilling the hand that kept its nervous toying with the clematis spray, "I have been asking myself just such a question all these last days!"

"It does not fit you so well as me — but for those others — how did you answer it?"

"As I have learned to all the other mysteries of life — even this saddest one — by trusting that God will make it all right at last. 'If we do not believe Him, yet He abideth faithful — *He cannot deny Himself*.'"

How her eyes thanked him for those words then, though she did not speak one herself!

He went on. "And then we are always forgetting — it is natural enough — how small a part of existence time is to any of us; how soon these merely finite circumstances and relations are all to be broken up; and how very small and incomplete they must look to Him who has eternity in which to work out His own purposes towards each soul of us. He has given to me, O dearly beloved, a happiness whose fulness and completeness I should never have dared to ask of Him, or to dream of, in this world. Shall I doubt that He will give as much in some way, and in some finer, future life, to the souls of men and women around me?"

Her faith sprang up to meet the stature of his.

"I will leave the doubt and the fear for others with Him, and take mine own gift, as He tells us, thankfully," she said; and here the thread of the conversation was broken a while.

She took it up again in her swift, abrupt way, "coming always out of her silences with some new treasure of fancy or feeling," the man at her feet thought.

"Fletcher, I am afraid," she said — her voice paused there, as though it, too, was half afraid of itself.

"Of what, dear child?"

"That this happiness of ours is too complete and blessed to last in a world like this."

She paused here; but, without answering, he signed to her to go on.

"Looking abroad upon human life, I see how dreams fade and promises fail, and hearts once bound up in each other fall apart, until the life narrows and darkens, and settles away at

last into every-day wear and tear, and petty details, and chafing on every side — all the warmth and brightness faded out of it — nothing left but the bare sands and the black, oozing mud, after the tides are gone out. And though our future together wears to my gaze, now, the very peace and joy of Paradise, I sometimes wonder whether that, too, is only a mirage — whether the daily gravitation will not bear us down also, as it seems to the souls who have gone before us — whether there is any possibility of carrying beyond the honeymoon the poetry and idealization of love!"

Solemn questions, which the future could alone fully answer; but Rusha Darryll's soul was always asking solemn questions.

"Dear child," said the doctor, getting up, and smoothing the fine, brown hair, "our faith must come to help us out here again. Let us take the present good without darkening it by fears for our future. God can take care of that also. Then, too, my observation, which you know has not been a narrow one, has satisfied me that people start out on their married life with too little capital of common sense; the love that exalts, the poetry that idealizes, must, after all, have its foundation in that. If one side of our lives has a tendency, as it certainly does, to gravitate downwards, we must guard ourselves the more carefully, letting no grace of our betrothal, no courtesies of bridal or honeymoon, be forgotten or lost in the daily house-life that lies beyond. Married people are so apt to let these slip, and first grow common and then cross to each other! But, little soul, don't fret yourself in any wise. We'll try and keep clear of those rocks on which so many a stately craft has gone to wreck; and then, too, we shall not have a wide range of interests apart, as too many husbands and wives have. We meet on common ground, in our love of all forms of artistic culture, of nature, of books, of human life even. We shall study and grow, and I hope do some good together; and for the rest, I think I have something tough enough to stand all the test and strain of daily life. I think the face beneath this hair," and he turned it up to his gaze, "will never grow less fair or precious to me;

but whatever the world may say of it, I shall see there some new beauty and sweetness every day for all the days to come."

A little laugh, sweet as the song of a brown-throated swallow.

"When it grows old and gathers wrinkles, and the hair round it is gray?" she said.

"When it is all that, for to me it will wear an eternal youth!" he answered.

A lover's talk, you see.

She was silent so long, that he came round and settled himself on the grass again to see her face. She took up the talk once more, very near where he had left it off.

"But it was not of myself, doc—Fletcher, so much as of you, that I was speaking. I see all the time that you are thinking of me as something better and nobler, a thousand times, than I am. I cannot deny that this is very sweet; and yet I tremble when I think how different is this real Rusha from the Rusha of your loving. There are my dark moods, my miserable selfishnesses, my quick temper, my fretfulnesses—"

"There, that's enough; you've done full duty at the confessional," he interrupted, playfully.

"But the half hasn't been told you," she insisted; and if there was a little surface of jest, it played upon solid foundations of earnestness. "I fear these fatal faults of mine will drag me down to their lower depths, and that I have not strength and persistency enough to keep by your side in that finer atmosphere and those higher levels to which I at least aspire."

"Rusha," said the doctor, gravely enough this time, "do you suppose I have no faults?"

She looked at him a moment doubtfully.

"I suppose you must have, for you are human, like the rest of us; but I have yet to make a discovery of the first one."

"Well, then, take my word for it, Rusha, the faults are terrible facts, and I look to you to help me—to make me, by your life, example, affection, a better, nobler man."

Her look of amazed helplessness struck him so comically that the man had to make an effort not to laugh.

"I see," he said, "it will be the old discipline over again—just the sort of atmosphere and companionship to foster the worst faults in me!"

"What do you mean, doctor?" He was evidently beyond her depth now.

"I mean that, take me at the best, I'm a selfish fellow, Rusha, naturally dominant, exacting, self-assertive, loving to possess power, preëminence in all things. Sore tussles, and long and many, have I had with these besetting sins of mine. And you will not see, little blind worshipper, how my temptations lie in that direction, nor help me to overcome them. It has always been my misfortune that the women I loved best have been those who could not or would not see my failings, and whose whole influence has been of just the sort to foster my pride and vanity, and all the dangers that lie in their wake."

"I don't believe one word of all this, Fletcher," with a little decided shake of her head. "You never could blind me, nor those other women of whom you speak. You deal hardly with yourself because your ideal is so lofty."

His smile brightened down upon her, interfused with exceeding tenderness, the most beautiful thing, Rusha thought, she had ever seen in her life. Others had thought so, weary, desolate, hardened souls of men and women, old and young, looking up from sick and dying beds, oftenest surrounded with squalor and misery, when the warmth and light of that smile had entered their poor, dark, frozen hearts, to them, too, the "most beautiful thing they had ever seen." But the smile now was different from all these—only Dr. Rochford's sisters had had glimpses of such a one.

"Setting up idols and worshipping them! It is the way of your sex from our first mother downwards. But, my little girl, there is one Ideal, only, set for us all, men and women alike, and you know what He said and what He thought of seeking after mere personal distinction, eminence, aggrandizement of any sort! 'Meek and lowly of heart,' that was what He was—what He bade those be who loved Him."

Her face grew still and solemn a moment with that thought; then it flashed up into one of its most inspired moods.

"Yes," she said, "that Christ Ideal is the only one; and yet, how dim and blurred are the outlines, when we seek for them in this world! Many bear the name—so few copy in daily living the original. Look at the churches, with their pride, their coldness, their petty ambitions and rivalries. Professing to reveal Christ to the world, and to share His spirit, how little good they do, how much they leave undone! If they did their duty—these churches, who call themselves Christ's—would the poor be neglected and forgotten as they are? Would the little children be left to come up in vice and wretchedness to manhood and womanhood, cursing themselves and others? Would poor, lost girls go homeless, haunting the streets of the great cities, with none to pity or to rescue them? Would there be all this aching, and grief, and sin in the world if the men and women who profess Christ believed in the brotherhood of humanity, and acknowledging the tie, followed His example of doing good, forgetting their social ambitions, their selfishnesses of every sort, and living, as far as they could, the life that He did among men!"

And the doctor answered her:—

"Great is the faithlessness—great is the sin of the churches. Sometimes, through the lapse of all these ages, I seem to hear the thunder of the awful curse rolling down its long path of centuries to our own day and generation, 'Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees!'"

She shivered a little, even in the soft warmth of the September noon.

"Yet," she said, "despite all they fail to do, we will not deny the salt that has not lost its savor, nor the good for God and man which the churches have wrought in the world. Sweep them away, and what would become of our land? Our school-houses and our civilization would not save us, any more than their art and their culture did the Greeks, nor their jurisprudence and philosophy the Romans."

And again the doctor answered her. "When I have been most impatient and disgusted with myself, I have found a real comfort in the thought that God had faith in me, patience with me, and I must therefore have both for myself. He, too, has His long patience with the world—His hope for it as it goes stumbling on through the ages before Him, with its burden of wrong and misery. Poor old world! God is over it. Let us take courage, and be of good heart, my Rusha."

So the talk that went into these deep places of time and eternity, drifted back to themselves at last, and went out to a future that seemed to the lovers "fair as the garden of the Lord." What lights shone along the mornings of that future, what stars smiled along those evenings, what plans they laid for study and growth in all directions, how both souls thirsted for that blessed time when they should have their own home and their own lives together, closing all, as we closed everything through those four awful, glorious years, with "When the war is over."

And her face did not lose its brightness even when he told her that two more days must be the outermost limit of the furlough which he had granted himself.

"I shall be lonely after you are gone, Fletcher," she said; "but yet I do not think it can ever be the loneliness and desolation of those old days before I knew you, and went aching and athirst, not knowing what either meant. It seems as though, if we were at different ends of the earth, I should still feel and know your presence, as if something of yourself would interfuse the very air about me. O, Fletcher, how rich and complete your love has made my life!"

This time he did not answer with any words. He turned up softly and reverently the sweet face, thrilled all over with the feeling which she had just put into speech for him, and the kiss he pressed on the quivering lips was like the sign and seal of a new betrothal to them both.

CHAPTER XLV.

RUSHA was right. The old loneliness and depression did not overcome her even when Dr. Rochford went away. Not that I want to claim too much for her here. There were times when the thought of Tom brought back the sharp and bitter ache which the living bear for the dead; there were times when a fear for him, loved with a different, in some sense a dearer love than that she had given Tom — for him who might be at that moment in the hot carnage of battle — seemed to tear her heart with its sudden pang. But it steadied the moment after in the courage and the calm that God gives more or less to those who love and trust Him.

Meanwhile, the glory of the year was departing. The color and warmth of the days passed into chills and glooms of sky and earth. The mountains sank away, and were buried over with gray clods of cloud, and the cold, white mists crept along the land.

Still the family lingered at the mountains, dreading somehow to go back into the great clamoring world, and into the splendid home where everything would remind them of all the young lives gone out of it.

"Half of the children!" Mrs. Darryll would moan sometimes to herself, in a way that was pitiful enough; but Rusha would always come round to her mother's side with a little caress, and a, —

"Now, mother, don't say that, when you know you have another son in dear Tom's place!"

And the mother, clinging to her — they all clung to Rusha now-a-days — would smile a little, sad, fond smile, and murmur, —

"Dear child, I should have died if it hadn't been for you."

Days with blinding rains and fierce winds shut down upon them, and they built fires on the cottage hearths, and sat in their warm glow, and Rusha dreamed by their light, the old dreams of her childhood, shaded and brightened with something she had lived of sorrow and joy; for somehow our experiences always work themselves into the texture of our dreams.

So the Darrylls lingered at the mountains until late in October; and then, business rendering it impossible for the head of the family to make any further journeys northward, they prepared to return to the city.

Rusha watched the dismantling of the walls and the general preparations for departure with a feeling of almost keen regret. If among these mountains the greatest sorrow of her life had come to her, so had also its greatest joy; and they were invested with a mysterious sacredness in her eyes. Thoughts of this sort — thoughts which took in the past and the future — were crowding heavily upon her one day, when she had darted out of the gate in a lull of the high wind to gather some leaves on a steep bank opposite the house — a cluster of ferns with a crimson heat curling along their edges, and golden maples with tawny freckles, and green ones veined with scarlet, and a handful of huckleberry boughs, a very heap of radiant color.

"I shall carry back something of you, my mountains!" she said, surveying her handkerchief of frost-bitten leaves, much as somebody else might a heap of jewels.

"Rusha!" Did the wind moaning like some wild thing among the valleys, pawing up and down the mountains like some monster in wrath, pause suddenly, and take up into its tones that tremulous whisper?

"Rusha!" This time the voice was closer, but no voice of winds ever held that human sound with such burdens of unutterable feeling; she turned, staring all about, and there he stood — the handkerchief dropped from her hands, and the winds seized it.

"O, Andrew! Andrew!"

They hung upon each other's necks, and they kissed each other over and over — she fairly moaning out her delight amid her sobbing; and he, — if he cried more softly, the tears were hardly less.

"How did you get here?" she said, at last.

"The letter came that told me about Tom, and I was on my way home with the next steamer."

"You dear boy!" and then, again, only tears and kisses. "How good — how good it seems!"

"Have they seen you at the house?" her very next question.

"No. I got out of the stage half a mile off, and walked up, thinking I would take my own time and way to show myself. I caught sight of you when I was on top of the hill over there in the road. O, Rusha, it made my heart leap!"

"Sit right down here. You musn't go in yet. We must have a talk together first."

It was more than two years since Andrew had seen the face of one of his household, and the thoughts of both could not but go back to that dreadful parting on the steamer. How much had happened since then! Tom had gone, and Ella, too, another way, and Rusha had taken up another life into her own; but this last Andrew learned first from other lips than hers.

She looked him over and over with her hungry eyes, as he did her. The two years had made a wonderful change in him; but, after all, the change was less in looks than in manner; the old braggart air was all gone! It was true he was Andrew still, with the slang cropping out here and there; but he was in every wise developed and improved — some new power had been at work with him.

"You did just the best thing in the world!" she said, somewhere, in the eager, breathless talk that did not pause for hours. "We shall all be so glad to welcome you home, Andrew!"

"I was the oldest of the boys. I saw that my place was here, now Tom was gone — here, to live down the past, and do some credit to the future. I do not come back as I went, Rusha."

"I knew you would not, Andrew. Tom and I always had faith in you."

"I hadn't much in myself sometimes; but —" he rose and stood before her, his voice and eyes settling into solemn earnestness — "look me in the face, Rusha." She looked up. "Do you believe that I am going to tell you the truth?"

"Every word, Andrew."

"During these two years I have been in the midst of fiery temptations; but the thought of you and what you did once have saved me. Rusha, in all this time I have done no deed, I have entered no place, which I should blush to acknowledge to you!"

Her happy tears flowed like rain.

A month ago she thought that the storm had passed over her life, leaving in its track only desolation and death; and this was what God had kept for her a little beyond!

Andrew was not disposed to talk much of himself. It seemed as though he would never get through with questions about each of his family. There was all Ella's marriage to go over with again, for Andrew knew little beyond the bare fact; and in the midst of these domestic recitals there came down, suddenly, one of those swift, thick squalls of wind and rain which are so frequent among the mountains, and which drove them both into the house before they knew exactly what they were about.

Andrew Darryll stood in the front hall, actually trembling, and white as a scared child, at the thought of seeing his mother.

Rusha, agitated quite as much as himself, in a little different way, paused with her hand on the door-knob, turned back, and whispered, —

"You must expect to find mother a good deal changed, Andrew. All these troubles have told on her;" she did not think how he must wince under those words, "and any shock of surprise might overcome her at present. I'll go in first and smooth the way a little for you;" and she went in, leaving the young, strong man standing there.

"Where have you been, my child?" asked the lady, as her daughter entered. "The dinner bell has rung twice already."

Mrs. Darryll was sitting before the bright wood-fire, wrapped in a heavy shawl. The mountain chills began already to try her severely.

"Mother," said Rusha, going up softly and laying her hand on the lady's shoulder, "something has happened which will surprise you very much, and make you and all the rest of us so glad! O, dear! what a fool I am!" for she found herself crying.

"O, Rusha, what is the matter?" cried the poor lady, the tears alarming her beyond all assurance of words.

"Only be quiet, mother, and you shall know. The very best thing in the world has happened to us all!"

"But what makes you cry, then?" staring at her daughter.

The door stood ajar, so Andrew had heard every word that passed betwixt his mother and sister. He could bear it no longer. Impetuous, as were all the Darryll sons and daughters, he burst open the door now, and rushed in.

"Mother, don't you know your boy?" he cried.

She looked up, doubting a moment whether Tom had risen from the dead and stood beside her; then, as she gazed, the truth overcame her mightily — her cry brought Guy and Agnes into the room, and — with the blessedness of that hour who shall dare to intermeddle?

"I say, Andrew, old boy, it's bully to have you back here again!"

Guy concentrated, after his own fashion, in this expression, the general feeling of the family, as they all sat around the wood-fire that evening. It was to be their last at the mountains, and their hearts were all softened with one of those moods that only great experiences of life, sorrowful and joyful, can bring to us. Their memories went back and forward, gathering up the bitterness and the sweetness of these months; and meanwhile, the wind raved outside like some wild, homeless thing let loose in the darkness, and the swift clouds, going back and forth, shook down, every few minutes, wild storms of rain.

"And I tell you, it seems bully to be back here among

you all once more — the very happiest hour of my life, I do believe!"

Andrew sat next to his mother. She could never grow tired of feasting her eyes on the tall, manly figure of the son that had come back to her from a grave darker and colder than the one where we lay our beloved, with that last farewell, not of words, but of tears and kisses. Agnes sat on the other side — her head on her brother's knee, only lifting it every few minutes to look in his face, a kind of half-awed wonder in her own, as though she could not get used to him yet, or the fact that he was really there!

"It does seem splendid to have another brother here; but, somehow, *you* don't seem just like the Andrew you did when you went away."

"I trust not, Aggie," with a quick flush of memory all over his face, that made the brown head go down quickly on his knee. "I should hope I haven't brought back quite the old Andrew to you."

This was the first allusion he had made to the past — a memory that, like Enceladus, could never be utterly laid asleep, but that must stir uneasily sometimes, and turn in sharp pain under the mountain that the years should gather upon it.

"O, dear," thought poor Agnes, "how could I say that now! I'm always running my neck into a noose!"

Guy, who comprehended the state of things, came to the rescue with, —

"What'll the governor say, Andrew, when he finds we've brought you down among us? Whew! it will be worth something to see his first stare!"

"I went up to the house straight from the steamer, and found you were all here at the mountains. There was only just time for me to take the train going north, and if I'd gone down to the office, I must have waited another day; so I just put for the depot. I thought father could wait better than you."

"And it will be so nice to have you go back with us!" darting upward her brown head again. "Why, I begin to feel that

the dear old times have come round once more, and everything is just as it used to be."

Agnes' words seemed fated this evening to touch live, quivering nerves of pain. They thought of the lonely grave by the restless Potomac, where the brave, alert young life had gone down to its sleep—they thought of the girlish face and the graceful step that had moved in their midst, and the places were empty now!

"No, Aggie," said her mother, softly, "it can never be as it used to!"

Andrew leaned forward. He saw his mother's tears falling quietly into her lap.

"But, mother," he said, "you've got two boys left, you know, and one means to be as good as two of the old ones."

"She's got more than two," interposed Agnes, after a most emphatic self-admonition. "You didn't know that, did you, Andrew?"

"O, yes, I knew; Rusha told me all about that; but I didn't s'pose you'd be quite ready to count Derrick Howe as one of us."

"O, you're altogether at sea! Of course I shouldn't think of ever calling *him* one of ma's boys!" an indignant repudiation of any such possibility in her tones. "Ask Rusha whom I mean."

Andrew turned towards his eldest sister. There was a little lurking color in her cheeks, but for all that, her face was a study in its glow of happiness at that moment.

"What is she driving at, Rusha?"

And Agnes and Guy laughed, and even Mrs. Darryll seemed to enjoy it.

"Somebody else must tell him; I can't;" and the suspicion of color in her cheeks became a certainty.

"Yes, Andrew," said Mrs. Darryll, "I have another boy, and we have come already to feel that he is one of us, and to love him very much; and Rusha has given him to us."

"Who the old Harry is he? Out with it, so I can shoot

him!" beginning to see light at last, and not relishing the sight at all.

"Bend down here, so I can whisper his name to you," said Agnes, with a little wicked look of triumph towards her sister.

"Now I say I object to any privacy. Trot him out plump and square," put in Guy.

"Well, then, the name of your future brother-in-law, Andrew Darryll, is *Dr. Fletcher Rochford!*"

Andrew sprang right up on his feet.

"Knock me down with a feather!" he cried. "Is *he* the fellow?"

"'Tain't anybody else," answered Guy, while Rusha, quietly enjoying the scene, thought that it *must* be in the masculine nature to take to slang as ducks do to water; and then she thought of Dr. Rochford, and concluded that he was here, as in everything else, "an exception to all rules."

"Well, Rusha," said Andrew, surveying his sister with a variety of feelings, difficult to analyze; but I think pride and pleasure were uppermost, "I must say you've won a trump. I won't admit there's a fellow in the world quite good enough for you; but if there is, Dr. Rochford is the man. How in the world did it come about?"

Nobody could answer this question very well.

"Come, don't keep a fellow waiting!" cried Andrew. "Just show up the facts."

"Andrew," said Agnes, in a little grave undertone, "it don't do to joke about it like that. This engagement isn't just like others. It all came around through dear Tom, you know."

He was sobered in an instant, and there was little more said on the subject then; but Rusha met her eldest brother's eyes a good many times that evening, and there was in them a look half curious, half awed.

They lingered around the fire, loath to leave it that last night; the sorrow and the joy of that summer had sanctified the cottage among the mountains to them all.

"How strange it will seem," said Agnes, with her eyes on

the burning logs, and a great seriousness on her young face, "to go back to our city home once more, and to all that noise and gay life! But there's one thing — we shan't go into society this winter, of course. You see, Andrew, we haven't got on our mourning yet. Pa couldn't bear to see it, and we concluded to leave all that until we got back to the city."

A long silence here. At last Mrs. Darryll reminded her children that they must be up early to-morrow morning in order to reach Littleton in time for the down train, and there was a long two days' journey before them.

"Rusha," said Andrew, meeting her at the head of the stairs, "you'll tell me all about this to-morrow, won't you?"

"All I can, Andrew."

"He don't know, though he may think he does, what a wife he is going to get. O, Rusha, was there ever a sister in the world like you? How often I said that to myself over the water, after I got that first letter!"

She knew then what he was thinking of; but her eyes and her throat were too full of tears for her to answer with either then.

He saw that, and put down his cheek to hers softly with a "Good night," and left her. Was this the old, careless, blustering Andrew?

"It was just like a conversion;" Agnes told her sister when they were alone that night.

"It is one, Aggie!" answered Rusha, with solemn joyfulness.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE winter which followed was, perhaps, on the whole, the happiest which the Darrylls had ever enjoyed under the roof of their splendid home. One might almost have fancied that dying blessing of Tom's lingered with its still peace in the family atmosphere, so softened had this become.

It is true that two places were silent at table and hearthstone, that Andrew carried in their midst a name tarnished with the sin of his youth — and this the world took care, in its own way, that neither he nor his family should forget.

Through it all, Andrew had, of course, the hardest part to bear in the consciousness that he had brought the disgrace on himself and his household. There was hardly a day through that winter in which he was not sorely tempted to throw up the life here and go abroad again where the shadow of his crime did not pursue him. The thought of his family alone prevented his doing this; but, no doubt, the bitter lesson was needed, and perhaps out of it alone could come, at last, a worthy and stalwart manhood.

No one suspected what it cost Andrew to endure the rude or covert stare, the whisperings, the nudges, and significant looks that betrayed among strangers and acquaintances a consciousness of his guilt, and that made him wince with the thought that he was marked among men.

John Darryll tried to make everything as easy for his son as possible. The reconciliation had been complete between the two, from the hour in which Andrew had stepped forth from the midst of the family group, newly arrived from the mountains, and said, —

"Father, I have come home for Tom's sake, to be a son to you."

Mr. Darryll had taken Andrew again into business, making a show, even, of trusting him, before the clerks, with the chest keys and piles of gold and bank notes; but though all this touched Andrew deeply, the necessity for such display was a humiliation that galled him to the quick.

At home there was never any allusion to the past, some added delicacy of speech and manner alone proving that the memory existed; but then the family bearing had softened a good deal towards each other since sorrow and death had visited the household, and whatever bitterness and chafing Andrew's soul brought from the world outside, the doors of his own home shut him in to an atmosphere of entire forgiveness and love. Had it been otherwise, he never could have gone through the dreadful ordeal of living down his bad name and building up a new one — no light thing under the most favorable circumstances.

No question but he was greatly improved, though he was far enough from perfect still. The old nature and habits lay in wait always, to spring up and gain the mastery at some unguarded moment; but Rusha, who watched her brother with ceaseless though unobtrusive anxiety, never failed to discern the change that had been wrought in him — never for a moment lost faith in its permanency.

Though, as Agnes said, "the family were mourning, and did not go into society that winter," there was plenty of life inside. There would have to be all this wherever Rusha Darryll abode, and Guy and Agnes were brimming over with the natural vitality of youth; so the gap in the household did not make gloom and silence there.

Mrs. Darryll roused herself into an active interest for the soldiers that winter. Indeed, Agnes told Rusha that "Ma never seemed so happy now-a-days, as when she was making up a box for the hospitals."

It was true, sorrow had widened the nature of Mrs. Darryll as nothing else could have done. It was ready now to take in "other mothers' boys," where before there had been small room for anything outside of her own family.

Rusha's best happiness all this time was in Dr. Rochford's letters, which came with wonderful promptness and regularity, considering what a burden of care and work was on the man's hands every day.

Dr. Rochford had shared the general surprise and disappointment at the strength and resources of the South; but he saw

that both now were well nigh exhausted, and that the vast fabric built on the lust of power and oppression, must fall to its foundations. It seemed as though he heard a little way off the glad bells of victory ringing in the new peace better than the old; and just beyond these, and haunting them as with an immortal sweetness, he heard other bells, ringing in a new day of such blessedness that even his steadfast heart grew almost sick with impatience.

And over this, and over much more, dear and sacred in those letters that came from the secret places of the man's deep, tender heart to the maiden of his love, bent the face of Rusha Darryll through all that winter, the last of our war.

One day, about the middle of the season, Rusha had run down stairs on some errand. It was growing dark in the front hall already, for the days were just beyond their shortest, and there was a heavy fall of snow outside. Rusha's dress had swept round the lowest column of the balustrade, when something — a figure in black — sprang out of the twilight in one corner, and rushed upon her, fairly gripping hold of her arm.

Calmer nerves than Rusha Darryll's would have been severely startled by such an occurrence in that semi-darkness. She cried out sharply, a faint terror going over her from head to foot.

"Sh — sh," said the figure, evidently alarmed, too. "Don't you know me, Rusha?"

The tones were strangely familiar. Had the fright been less, she would have recognized them at once. Though she did not, they quieted her, so that she stood still, gasping out, —

"No, I'm sure I don't. Who are you?"

"Look and see!" the long veil, that had evidently been used to disguise the face, thrown back with a swift movement.

"O, Ella — Ella!"

"I couldn't bear it any longer, Rusha," the swift words trembling out of unsteady lips. "Nobody else must know I am here — at least not at present."

The sisters looked in each other's faces, in that waning light. The tears were in their eyes — the old family love mighty in the hearts of both.

"I have so much to hear and say! I must see you all alone, Rusha," said Mrs. Derrick Howe, still keeping that cautious undertone, in strange contrast with her old imperious manner.

"Come into the parlor, then. We shall be safe there on such a night;" and she led her into the great rooms, amidst whose splendor, Ella in her pride and beauty had reigned queen so many times.

There seemed some awful Nemesis in her coming back in that secret way on that stormy night. Rusha wondered if she thought of it!

They went into a corner and settled themselves on a divan there, their hands in each other's.

"How did you get in here?" was Rusha's first question.

"There was an old night-key in one of my trunks. I never knew how it came there, but it answered my purpose. O, Rusha, how good it does seem to be at home again!"

Then she laid her head down in her sister's lap, and sobbed passionately. Of course the sobs shook Rusha's very soul, but she never was so utterly at a loss for any words of comfort, as she found herself now. She could only cry too, and mutely caress her sister, thinking all the time, bitterly enough, of Derrick Howe, and wondering whether he had driven her sister out to find shelter in her own home on that stormy night. Rusha's strong prejudices hardly did the young man justice.

Ella's first remark dissipated all suspicion of that sort. Her husband had left the city for a few days, and she could no longer restrain her hunger to hear and see something of her family. They had been visiting some cousins of Mr. Howe since their return to town, a month before, and Ella had managed to elude everybody's observation and slip out of the house and get into an omnibus. She had had no settled plan about disclosing herself to her family, and had stood frightened and shivering in the hall for ten minutes before Rusha appeared and decided her course.

How unlike the gay, careless Ella of six months ago, seemed all this! But after the necessary explanations which her coming involved, Mrs. Howe did not appear to be inclined to dwell on her own estate. Her eager interest seemed to centre on her

family. She was full of solicitation about each, her questions fairly running ahead of Rusha's answers, and hurrying from one to the other.

She was quite overwhelmed with surprise and manifest delight when she came to hear of Andrew's return, and the change that had been wrought in him. Then, and not until then, she spoke of Tom's death, which, all that time, had been uppermost in the thoughts of both.

"O, Rusha, I shall never forget the night that Dr. Rochford's letter came! I believe that my husband feared I should go mad, for several days that followed."

And Rusha knew, well enough, that the sharpest pang of that time must have been the remembrance of Tom's last visit home, and the consciousness that, afterwards, he had lived just long enough to learn the wrong that Ella had done him and all her family.

At last the servant came in to light the parlors. It was quite dark now, and Ella sprang into a little alcove, where she was secure from observation.

"The gentlemen have all got home, Miss Rusha," said the man as he went out, "and your father has been asking for you."

She felt Ella's start, even where she sat. The moment the man disappeared Mrs. Howe sprang up.

"I can't see any of the others. I must go now, Rusha," in a wild, half-coherent way.

Rusha put her arm around the trembling figure, forgetting everything else in pity for Ella.

"You shall not leave this house to-night," she said, in calm, resolute tones. "You will have to see them some time, Ella. The sooner it is over, the better for all. Go up stairs with me now."

"I can't, Rusha! My courage has all failed me! If it wasn't for pa!" the usual bright color all gone from her cheeks.

"He will not be harsh to you after what Tom said."

This was all that Rusha dared promise. She knew her father's inveterate prejudices so well; and Ella had roused all these.

With those words, something of the old spirit seemed to come back to her sister. She lifted her head and said she would go

up, with a little of the haughtiness that reminded Rusha of the Ella of old. But this disappeared as they reached the sitting-room door. All the family were inside; and it must be confessed that it was a humiliating ordeal to meet their first start and stare of amazement. She drew back.

O, Rusha, I can't — I can't meet them all!" and she fairly wrung her hands.

"Well, you needn't. Step right in here to ma's room, and I'll send somebody to you." Rusha felt that, under the like circumstances, her courage also must have failed her.

A minute later she went into the sitting-room. The gentlemen were established in various lounging positions around the fire, looking at the papers, and waiting for the dinner bell. The mother and Agnes sat on one side. Altogether it was a bright vision of home comfort and luxury on that stormy night.

Rusha took it all in before she spoke, thinking of Ella, waiting out there in the dark.

"You must all prepare yourselves for a great surprise. I hope it will not be a painful one."

She stopped, her heart was beating so fast. All the faces were turned on her in curious amazement. Then she spoke: —

"Ella is in the other room! I have been with her for the last hour." The words were an electric shock to everybody. Each exclaimed or questioned. Rusha answered her father's "Is she alone?"

"All alone." And she went on to explain, as briefly as possible, how Ella had come. Then she went over to her father and laid her hand on his. "You will go and bring her in, father — for Tom's sake, you know?"

It was so dark now that he could not discern any figure in the chamber, but his voice sounded very kindly.

"Are you there, my child?"

The next moment Ella was sobbing on her father's neck. And while they watched and waited in the sitting-room, the door opened, and John Darryll entered, leading his daughter.

At the desire of her family, Ella remained with them several days. That it was delightful enough to be back in her own

home, none of them could doubt. That some uneasiness or anxiety was hidden under every other feeling, they all perceived, though she never acknowledged this. She was not very much changed, after all, they thought, with the exception of somewhat less high spirits, and a less imperious manner than formerly.

Mrs. Howe discerned plainly that her husband was an unwelcome topic in the household, and that he would only be tolerated there for her sake.

It must have been galling enough to a pride like Ella's to feel this; and the wonder was, that with her spirit, she bore it as well as she did. She spoke of Derrick Howe as a wife would of her husband, and tried to make a point of his affection and care; but for all this, the reconciliation was not perfect, as it had been in Andrew's case; and though every one was glad to have the absent daughter in their midst once more, still each felt that she could never be one of their own, as formerly — that Derrick Howe stood between them.

The Darryll nature was persistent — its likes or dislikes obstinate things always; and Derrick Howe counted without his host when he fancied that his family, his position, and his irresistible self would secure for him, in a little while, a cordial welcome into the bosom of his wife's family. Ella knew its temper better; and the care with which each side avoided any allusion to her marriage, proved the strength of the feeling regarding it.

Only once, when she was alone with Rusha, did Mrs. Howe approach the matter; and that was the day after her return, when she had learned through Mrs. Darryll of Rusha's engagement, the matter not having been alluded to the preceding evening, probably out of regard to Ella's feelings.

She came up to Rusha's room a good deal excited by all she had heard; and her mother's, and the whole family's pride and delight in the betrothal, must have afforded a contrast to her own, certain to chafe sorely the haughty spirit of Ella Darryll; and it was hardly in human nature that her congratulations would not take some color from these feelings. Rusha could understand and forgive all that.

"I'm so taken by surprise that it still seems as though I must have dreamed the whole thing!" looking curiously at her sister. "Yet, I believe, after all, that Dr. Rochford is the only man in the world who would suit you."

"I think he is," said Rusha, a very joy of gladness in her face and voice.

Ella saw this with a good many feelings. If they were not wholly glad ones, she herself would not have analyzed them; so we will not, remembering that a nobler nature than hers might have found it hard to bear just what she was now doing.

"You love him, then, Rusha? I never expected you would admit that, of any man."

"I do, of this one."

"Well, then," said Ella, "now you have come to understand what love is, you may, perhaps, regard my own conduct with less severity, and, feeling what you would bear and sacrifice for Dr. Rochford, wonder less at what I did for Derrick Howe."

Ella had gone too far. Despite herself, there had been a little indignant reproach in her voice, as though she still regarded herself as injured by her family.

It is possible Rusha might have borne this, but the comparison betwixt Dr. Rochford and Derrick Howe seemed little less than an insult to the former. It made the old wrath at Ella's conduct leap into hot life. She turned upon her, as Rusha Darryll, when roused, could turn.

"No, Ella, never!" she said. "My love for Dr. Rochford has never taught me that I could bring shame and grief upon my family, and break the heart of the mother who would have died for me, and outrage the care and tenderness of all the years of my life. The love of Fletcher Rochford has taught me something better than that — thank God!"

It was hard on Ella, I grant. If Rusha had thought twice, she would not have said so much; but the words could not be recalled, and perhaps Ella needed them all.

At any rate, Rusha pitied her the next moment, when she saw her sister growing red and white by turns, partly with

anger, no doubt, for she made a bitter retort, which, in words and spirit, were quite the old Ella.

"I've no doubt that your love is something superfine, such as ordinary women could never feel or understand. I should fancy only that sort would suit Dr. Rochford!"

She was frightened after the words were out — remembering, too, some facts which she had learned, and some hints which her husband had dropped about the importance to their own interests of a reconciliation being brought about with her family — though, to do Ella justice, her seeking them the day before had been prompted by other and less selfish motives. With all her faults, she had the strong family love of her race. The fright caused a revulsion in her feelings — she did the one thing which was sure to appease Rusha's wrath — burst into tears.

A moment later there was a soft hand on Mrs. Howe's shoulder, and a tremulous voice was saying, —

"Ella, for Tom's sake, let there be peace betwixt us!"

So Ella understood, at last, that a voice from those dead lips made a plea for her that the living ones could never have done, and that it would not do to count too far on that, even with her mother, for Mrs. Darryll's manner showed plainly that she had not forgotten, though she had warmly received her daughter.

And now the question, what was to be done with the unwelcome son and brother-in-law came up in family conclave to be disposed of; one of those stubborn facts that could neither be ignored nor got around — it must be met face to face.

It went sorely enough against the Darryll grain to think of welcoming Derrick Howe in their midst, as one of them, when each felt that he had done the family, personally and collectively, an unattonable wrong; and there was no doubt that Agnes expressed one side of the general feeling when she said, —

"Of course we'd receive our sister back when she came to us; but I don't see as that's any reason why we should make up with that mean Derrick Howe, who stole her away. I never can speak to him, anyhow."

"Bravo, Agnes! That's the way to face the music!" heartily indorsed Guy. "Let the fellow slide, I say."

But, though these sentiments met with secret sympathy in the feelings of all to whom they were addressed, the others had sense enough to perceive that it would not do to take counsel of their prejudices.

It cost Rusha an effort to speak, but when she did, she spoke wisely.

"However we may feel, though, it only remains to us to make the best of this matter, and have, at least, a surface reconciliation betwixt all parties. I dislike Derrick Howe as much as ever; but disagreeable as the fact is, it remains one still, that he is Ella's husband, and now we have received her, we must accept the relation; and the sooner it's done, the better."

Everybody had listened attentively while Rusha spoke. At last, with a face of most unqualified annoyance, her father said, —

"It's a mighty bitter pill to swallow, but I think Rusha has the best of the argument."

Mrs. Darryll's acquiescence was of the same sort.

"I suppose it will have to be so, father; but there is one thing, that Derrick Howe will never seem like a son to me, never!"

And Andrew, sharing the family repugnance towards his brother-in-law, remembered his own past, and kept silence.

In accordance with this reluctant decision, Ella, when she returned to her home, took an invitation to dine, with her husband, at her father's, on the following day.

Derrick Howe came with his wife at the time appointed. He certainly never took more pains to make himself agreeable than on that memorable occasion; but I think he felt, at the close, that his success had been indifferent. There was, of course, no allusion to the past, and there was an effort at cordiality on the part of his wife's relatives, but it got no farther than a formal politeness.

"Hang it!" he muttered to himself, as he handed his wife

into her father's carriage on their return home, "what airs they do take on! I've a good mind to cut the whole concern!"

If Mrs. Howe overheard this remark, she was wisely oblivious to it. She had learned that the elegant and fascinating being for whose sake she had forsaken and outraged her family was somewhat another person in his marital relations from the one he had been in his courting days.

Derrick Howe had never been, perhaps he never would be, positively unkind to her, but she had discerned already that his own ease and comfort were the paramount considerations of his life.

Imperious as she was, her natural love of peace, which was only one form of selfishness, impelled her now to always avoid a rupture with her husband. And the honeymoon was hardly yet over, and the glamour with which she had invested her lover had not wholly worn off. But when her eyes should be opened, she would be shrewd enough to discern where her power lay, and that was in her father's wealth.

So long as there was a chance there, whatever he might have done under other circumstances, Derrick Howe would never push his wife to any extremities, or give her any cause to return to her family; and, on the other hand, Ella would have borne considerable before she would have humiliated herself to accept this alternative; so that, although time was likely to develop plenty of friction between the two, it would not probably end in open disruption.

Notwithstanding his chagrin at the close of his first dinner at the Darrylls, Derrick Howe made a point of presenting himself at his father-in-law's office quite frequently during the month that followed.

The truth is, his own resources were exhausted, and it would not do to make the honeymoon interminable which he had been invited to pass among his own relatives.

Derrick Howe was at considerable pains to inform his father-in-law that he was desirous of entering into some business, before John Darryll could be made cognizant of the fact, and, of course, this state of things did not permit any assumption on

the part of the young man. The broker was, at first, little disposed to render him any aid, either of money or influence; but then, there was Ella, and it must come to that sooner or later.

Mr. Darryll talked over the matter with his family. His house was about to establish a branch in Paris, and wanted a business agent there. The situation would not involve any large responsibility, and Derrick Howe had a smattering of the continental languages.

So the situation was offered to him, accompanied with a salary which, though it would enable the young pair to live in moderate gentility abroad, was not at all in accordance with Derrick Howe's luxurious habits and ideas. But, for want of anything better, he was obliged to accede to his father-in-law's proposition.

Ella's fancy caught eagerly at the prospect of going abroad, and though they were obliged to start suddenly, she made a point of displaying herself in the family carriage, at church and on Broadway, to prove to her thousand friends that the reconciliation betwixt herself and her relatives was complete.

With that impending separation, the old affection was certain, in a great degree, to gain the mastery over every other feeling.

They were all as kind to her as possible, and it must have seemed to the eyes of strangers that the family breach was quite healed.

The day before she started, Mrs. Darryll said to her daughter, —

"Ella, my child, if you should ever get unhappy over there, or if anything ever happens, come back — the heart and home of your mother are always open to you."

Ella was deeply touched — the parting was so near now; but she knew what her mother meant, and her secret thought was significant of her relations with her husband.

"That may serve me in good stead, some time, to tell Derrick!"

Had she discerned already that her chief power over him lay in her father's "money-bags"?

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE summer had come again, and the great drama of the century had been brought to its close in a way that no man had looked for.

The four years — the "awful years, the glorious years" had passed, the years of a great nation's sweat and agony for life.

The bells had rung at last their "*Io triumphe*" of peace over all the land; and in the pleasant spring days, the North had held its long jubilee, and fairly gone wild with the sacred joy of victory. But suddenly down in the midst of all the vast rejoicing, fell the darkness and crashed the thunderbolt. The morning hymn of the nation's baptismal into a new life, was changed, in a moment, to the mighty death-wail which shook it from sea to sea; its white, floating robes of victory turned suddenly to sackcloth and ashes; for the brave, simple, heroic heart had been smitten down and the evil had filled up the measure of its wrath.

But all that had passed now, and the nation, shaken for a moment with its storm of grief, had steadied itself again. It is not my work to write of that time nor how these people lived through it. I hope I have made each one clear enough for you to conjecture how the different natures would be likely to carry themselves through the joy and the grief of that crisis.

So June had come again to the mountains, and with it the Darrylls had come also.

A playful, frolicsome spirit had come to the surface in these days. They seemed to break loose from their city life and customs with the joy of wild animals.

We can never count on our moods, and this was a passing one; and the fun of the young people, and the chasing each

other about the verandas, amid shouts and laughter, did not last long.

There was graver if happier business on hand, for the wedding had been appointed up here late in the June, Rusha having settled all this according to her own taste, and everybody else finding it suited theirs.

A quiet wedding it was to be, in every respect — only the two families present, and a few friends who were to ride over in the morning, from the hotels, to witness the ceremony.

So the last evening of Rusha Darryll's girlhood had fallen. Angeline and Sicily Rochford had arrived the day before, the doctor having been enabled to accompany them as far as Boston, where Guy had gone to meet and bring the ladies on without delay, as business detained their brother in the city.

The meeting between the ladies of both families, so soon to be united in the best beloved of their members, was one of the things which can never be written.

The fair face of Angeline Rochford, coming out thin and worn from its long hospital service, was invested with a sacred beauty to the whole Darryll family. That was the last face which had hung over Tom's dying bed, and, gazing on it, his eyes had grown dim in the shadow of death.

That evening the doctor and Andrew had arrived together. Supper had waited for them, but this was served in an informal fashion, for the very atmosphere of the cottage was breezy with the stir and bustle which precedes a wedding. Rusha had stolen out from all this, trusting that, in the general absorption, nobody would miss her, for her thoughts wanted a little silence in which to steady themselves; the old life she was leaving, and the new life that was coming, bearing heavily upon her heart that night. So she came out on the veranda, and stood there with her face turned up to the sky and mountains.

The day had been unusually warm for those latitudes, and even now, the air had a soft moistness in it, and the winds which rioted among the thick leaves, made a pleasant sound, like that of waves on the beach.

Overhead, the stars shone betwixt the clouds, which spread out gray and silver fleeces along the blue; and while Rusha stood still and gazed, a soft, crystal light began to pervade the sky, and touch with its mystery of glory the crest of pines on the top of the opposite mountain. Just over this rested a black cloud, with a white radiance growing along the outer edges, bringing out in sharper contrast that black gulf at the centre.

And so the light grew and grew, as one might fancy it would in a vision, spreading down the mountain till it reached the hem of its garment; and the girl stood there by one of the pillars, watching behind and below in the darkness, as those who love God watch and wait in the darkness and griefs of this world for the joy and rest that are to come.

And at last, over the summit, came the moon, with a slow, royal, serene movement, while the clouds wrapped their silver banners around her, and trailed their pennons along the mountains, and caught in drooping folds among the trees.

Slowly and royally the moon swept on, the clouds closed their white-plumed forces around her path, and she looked down on the awful mountains, and on the valley asleep at their feet, and on the girl, more and greater than all these, who stood on the veranda with her face upturned, and a solemn brightness pervading it, almost as though God had spoken to her.

Her thoughts had gone far away into the years — to that night when her father came home, and told them he had sold Darryll Gap, and they began to realize, for the first time, that they were rich people. How the old scenes and the faces there crowded down upon her!

And then, the new life came up — the splendor, the pride, the gayety — her memory leaping along scene after scene, until it paused before another night — that dreadful one, when they first learned of Andrew's crimes. Her heart grew sick for a moment, thinking of it and of all that followed.

And then, later, how the days flashed before her! There was Ella's marriage, with all its pains and bitterness; and a little

beyond that awful darkness, when the news came of Tom's death, and her life stood still; and she went down into the blackness of the night, not knowing what a morning lay close beyond. How God had changed all that horror and agony into such blessedness and joy as she had never dared to dream of!

She saw now how His hand had been leading her, alike through the serene days, and the dreadful eclipses to the crowning gladness of this night, and a verse from that sweet old psalm of Whittier's sang itself through her thought:—

"That more and more a Providence
Of love is understood,
Making the springs of time and sense
Sweet with eternal good."

And while she stood there, Dr. Rochford came out softly on the veranda, and, leaning over, caught, before she saw him, the light on her face.

"I thought I should find you here," he said, his hand on her shoulder.

"You must forgive me for running off, Fletcher, but there was so much on my heart to-night, that I had to come out here for strength and steadfastness."

"I understood all that. But what have you been thinking, feeling, while you have been out here?"

"Many things; perhaps the chief, a thank-offering to God that He had made the last night of my girlhood such a one as this."

"It is a very 'Laus Deo,'" he answered.

They stood still, looking at the moon and the clouds, and the stars among them, and then he drew her arm in his, and walked up and down the piazza, and the hum of voices and the stream of lights inside did not disturb them.

"Do you suspect, my little girl, how very good it seems to see you, now that it is more than four months since we parted?"

"I think I know something about it!" a little quiver of a smile around her lips, losing itself in something grave a moment afterwards. "How much has happened since those stormy

March days when you brought up to us all the war had left of dear Tom, and we laid him away to his pleasant sleep at Greenwood!"

"How much! The nation has added its sublimest chapters to its history during these last four months," he said.

"And the war is over, and you have come again, and you will never more have to hurry back as you did that last time."

"Nevermore, Rusha, nevermore!"

They walked up and down the veranda, silently, a while, and the moon shone on them, and the stars. At last the doctor said, looking on her with something in his eyes which she did not quite understand,—

"Andrew and I have grown better acquainted in our ride to-day."

"I thought that illness of his made a strong bond betwixt you and him long ago!"

"It did, of one sort; but this is of a finer and stronger kind. O, Rusha, I have been learning to-day just what a dear, noble little girl is to be mine own to-morrow."

"What has Andrew been telling you?" with her quick glance up in his face, bent on her with some tenderness and reverence, which even she had never seen there before.

"He has been telling me that you saved him once, and how! O, my darling, even I should not have dreamed that heroism of you!"

She knew, then, what he meant, and that Andrew had been confiding to his elect brother-in-law the story of Jane Maxwell, and all about that miserable time. The blushes fairly scorched her face. She buried them in her hands.

"O, how could he do it! how could he do it!" she murmured.

The doctor drew her away.

"Rusha, should it shame or distress you to find that I know the proudest, noblest deed of your life, and knowing it, love you even better than before?"

"Anybody would have done the same for that poor girl—at least anybody ought to. Do not praise me, Fletcher."

"I could not if I tried, dear child."

He said no more, then, walking in silence to give her fluttered spirits time to calm themselves.

At last she spoke. "Fletcher," a little doubt or reluctance in her voice.

"Go on."

"You can never understand what a comfort it has been to me to know that your sisters accepted what is to be, so heartily, and have given me such a welcome into their hearts and home!"

"Did you doubt that for one moment?"

"I doubted whether they would be willing to lose such a brother as you."

"That is a graceful bit of compliment, Rusha, but, if it be as you say, my sisters have had wisdom to discern that the wife I am to take is the one woman in all the world for me. When Angeline and Sicily first learned of our betrothal, their answers, though far apart, were alike. 'She is the only woman in the world, Fletcher, of whom I could be glad to know this.'"

Her face flashed out in sudden light, —

"O, did they say that?"

"Those very words."

Afterwards he went on to talk of their future, and of his plans.

The home, in New York, where the Rochfords had lived so long, and to which the doctor would take his bride, was to be arranged for their reception under the joint auspices of Angeline and Sicily, whose taste in matters of this kind was universally allowed to be exquisite.

Angeline Rochford had promised a brother surgeon, and old classmate of the doctor's, that she would not delay longer than the late fall the wedding-day which she had promised him at the hospital where they had worked and sorrowed and loved together.

The bridal pair were to sail for Europe immediately after the wedding, making the Continental tour, on which it had been arranged Sicily should accompany them. All this was entirely

new to Rusha. You can imagine with what greedy interest she drank in every word.

"Then we shall be left in the dear old home together, unless" — the doctor paused here.

"Unless what, Fletcher?" the eager, half peremptory way that always amused him, and that he had purposely waited for now.

"Unless I conclude that our wedding will not be complete without a bridal tour abroad, also. You and I will not enjoy it less because the honeymoon is over?"

Her face was worth going far to see.

"O, Fletcher, do you really think of that!"

"I do, my dear child. I want to give some further attention to my profession at Paris; and when we are once across, there will be Rome to talk of, and Germany and the Rhine, but for the present we must be content with Canada and the Adirondacks."

And Rusha listened, clinging to her lover, and in the still summer night, her thoughts went afar off, and walked in wonderful visions of that world across the sea. The doctor's voice recalled her at last.

"Rusha, there is something I want to ask you!"

"Then by all means do it."

"This Jane Maxwell — was she a girl with a light figure, a pretty face, and brownish hair?"

"She was just that, Fletcher," her cheeks aflame again.

"Then I have seen her!"

She stood still.

"Where — when — how?"

"In the hospitals. She was down there last winter, and worked for the poor fellows with her whole soul. Many a one will remember her, with blessings, to his dying hour. I had a suspicion — one is not certain how he comes by these things, but I suppose my long experience among sicknesses of body and soul has something to do with the matter — I had a suspicion that this girl's history had some secret in it of sorrow and struggle."

"O, Fletcher, this is the best of all. Thank God!—thank God!—on this night of all others, too!" she could get no farther.

He drew her a little closer.

"Yes, dear girl, it is a wonderful reward. Under God, you saved her. It seems a very dew of blessing, breathed from heaven, upon our bridal!"

At that moment her father came to the front door.

"Come, children, you've been out here long enough," he said.

"Doctor, as you're to have her for all the evenings to come, you must spare her to us this one."

They must have heard him inside, for in the stream of light, and the buzz of merry talk, one or two playful voices lifted themselves — "Don't you lovers stay out there sentimentalizing in the moonlight any longer. We just want you inside."

"We're coming," answered the doctor.

Just as they reached the door, they turned a moment and gazed on the night. The moon looked down upon them from thin clouds that floated like silver hair about her face, and the stars made the sky holy with their beauty; underneath, like a bride adorned for the altar, the June night lay in garments of white moonbeams.

"*Laus Deo*," said the doctor again, and they went in together.