LOIS CARROL;

OR,

HER TWO SELVES.

190904.

BY

SUSA S. VANCE.

MERCANTILE LIBRARY NEW-YORK.

PHILADELPHIA:
J. B. LIPPINCOTT & CO.
1874.

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1874, by
J. B. LIPPINCOTT & CO.,
In the Office of the Librarian of Congress at Washington.

MERCANTILE LIBRARY NEW-YORK.

LOIS CARROL;

OR,

HER TWO SELVES.

CHAPTER I.

"When will talkers refrain from evil-speaking? When listeners from evil-hearing?"—HARE.

DID two women ever spend an hour together for the purpose of having a confidential conversation, that it was not the worse for some other poor woman who was unfortunate enough to be absent? Here is an example:

"Tell Miss Carrol that I am very sorry, Fannie, that she is too busy packing for me to see her to say good-by, and that I regret she is going away to-morrow. Could you not possibly induce her to make you a longer visit?"

"I have tried to persuade her," replied Fannie, "but she says she is obliged to go to-morrow, as her guardian will come for her."

"By the way," said Fannie's visitor, "do you not think that Lois Carrol has changed wonderfully since

she was in Louisville before? I think New Orleans must have had a strange effect upon her."

"Changed! how do you mean?" asked Fannie.

"Why, she hardly seems to me the same Lois she was a year ago. You know she used to be so bright and gay, and enjoyed society so much. I used to think her head would be turned with all the admiration she received."

"And she was even more admired in New Orleans than here," said Fannie.

"But now," said the visitor, "she seems as coldly indifferent to everything and everybody as it is possible to be, and really I don't think she is as pleasant as she used to be."

"Yes, she is changed, and I don't think she is as agreeable as before," Fannie admitted, with a half-guilty consciousness of having said something treasonable towards her friend and guest; "but then, though she does have queer moods sometimes, she is very beautiful, you know." In Fannie's opinion, as in that of most plain women, *beauty* was compensation for all the evils to which flesh is heir.

"Yes, she is pretty," assented the visitor, reluctantly, "in an odd, weird kind of style, but I must say I don't exactly admire the style myself" (being herself of the stern order of beauty, with Roman nose, regular features, and nothing uncommon-looking about her). "I would be ashamed to go along the street and have people stare at me as they do at her, with her pale straw-colored hair, and large, wild-looking dark eyes."

"But they are not so wild-looking now," said

Fannie, "as they used to be: lately there is a dreamy, far-away look in them that I cannot make out, and I fancy she must have had some unpleasant experience during her stay in New Orleans, in spite of her great success in society; but I can never induce her to talk much about her visit to New Orleans."

"Perhaps her cousins were not good to her?"

"Yes," said Fannie, "they must have been kind to her, because she always speaks so affectionately of them; and if she had not liked them, she need not have made such a long visit."

"Perhaps she had a love-affair that——"

"Oh, no," replied Fannie, quickly anticipating what her visitor had intended saying; "it is impossible to imagine Lois under any such circumstances! In the first place, you know, she is so proud and unsusceptible; and in the second place, how could she ever be disappointed in love, when everybody who sees her, it seems to me, falls in love with her?"

This compliment was paid by Fannie to her absent friend, partly by way of making amends for having expressed herself so freely in regard to that friend's affairs, and partly because she really looked upon Lois as something wonderful and incomprehensible.

"Perhaps," said the visitor, making her last guess at the problem that she seemed to consider her especial business to solve, "she is unhappy about going to live with her guardian, and being domesticated in a new and strange home."

"I fancy," replied Fannie, "that Lois will be able to hold her own anywhere. She does not seem to be worried or unhappy about anything in particular, but

her whole nature seems to have been changed just in the course of this one short year. She has grown so quiet and reserved, and is often so absent-minded, that nothing seems to interest her."

Though Fannie's visitor was obliged to take her leave without solving the problem, she felt a great satisfaction in having said or insinuated as much against Fannie's friend as she could in the course of a morning's call.

CHAPTER II.

THE PROBLEM.

"EVERY heart knoweth its own bitterness;" and the bitterness is greater, I think, when its cause is least suspected by others. Look at Lois Carrol (she is such a beautiful picture that it would repay you for the trouble) sitting in that dejected attitude, her whole figure expressing listlessness, surrounded by a perfect forest of laces and rich silks of the loveliest shades heaped up in glowing piles. Some of my fair readers would say, "How could a woman be otherwise than happy when she is the possessor of all these treasures?" And some of my readers who are *not fair* would say, looking at the shimmering golden hair flowing over a lovely blue silk gown that is thrown carelessly across the chair on which Lois's plump arm is resting (for she is sitting on the floor in front of a large packing trunk), and at the lovely head drooping

on the arm, "How could a woman be otherwise than happy who has the exquisite fairness that lends a charm by radiation, as it were, to the richest or the coarsest toilette? As for these stacks of rich silks and heaps of fine laces that surround the store-house, standing open, waiting for them, you might walk in softly, covetous fair reader, and take them all away (though far be it from me to tempt you to commit such a wicked deed!), and Lois, though she is very fond of them sometimes, would not care now, for they are of no importance in comparison with the subject that now fills her mind, and has thrown her into such a seemingly sad revery.

As it is usually considered an unpardonable offense for an author to fail to describe the appearance of his heroine, and as we have such a fine opportunity afforded by her sitting so immovably quiet, we had better take a survey of Lois, though I think by-and-by you will be more interested in her character, which is still more uncommon than her appearance.

For strange her appearance certainly is, made so partly by her very light hair, which is of such a curious color that I can find no word to describe it. *Yellow* will not do, because that word is too *rank* to convey an idea of it, and it was not the colorless hue of flaxen hair; but I will come nearer describing it when I call it a pale golden,—a color that comes of a mingling of yellow and white, with the white slightly predominating,—the kind of hair whose glories are sung by the poet, portrayed on canvas by the artist, but rarely seen in real life, except on very young children. It was never worn in stiff ringlets or prim plaits, but was

usually all caught up into a picturesque mass of large, loose waves.

Looking at her face in repose, with the eyes cast down, you would probably say, "It is a sweet, innocent face, with a pretty, transparent complexion." But when once you caught a glimpse of the glorious eyes, lighting up the countenance with an indescribable brilliancy, you would find it a face not easy to forget. As the chameleon is said to change color to suit any object on which it rests, so Lois's eyes changed according to her changing moods. Sometimes they had the soft tenderness of blue eyes; then again, when they grew too expressive for blue, you would say they must be gray; but when she became excited or angry, they flashed like black eyes. This seeming change of color with the varying emotions of the soul they lighted was caused by the peculiarity of the pupil, which was so large that it left little room for color, and its dilation and contraction constantly changed their shade and expression. Very odd they looked, along with the dark brows and lashes, contrasting so strangely with the pale hair that framed them.

Lois has risen, so now you have an opportunity of seeing that she is of medium height, with slender but well-rounded figure. She crosses the room as though walking in her sleep, to get something from her bureau, but, catching sight of her face in the mirror, it seems to arouse her. She leans forward on the marble slab, and, looking into the earnest eyes reflected there, says, "No, no, Lois; don't look at the picture, dear: it is very weak and childish of you to think of *all that* so much. Why not put the subject from you to-night for

good,—yes, in two senses of the word: forever, and for your *best good?* You go to-morrow to a new home, begin a new life by leaving this subject behind you." Then, after almost lapsing into another "brown study," she rouses herself, and says, "Come, my child," in a patronizing, protecting tone; for she had been so long without the motherly love that demonstrates itself in tender appellations and caresses, the possession of which, with her peculiar temperament and loving heart, would have been to Lois so great a happiness that she was obliged to supply the place of mother or older sister with the better part of her own nature, often rebuking herself severely for the misdeeds that were prompted by the instincts of the worst side of her nature.

PUBLIC LIBRARY NEW-YORK

"Come, my child," she said; "since you have promised me never to think about all that again, the best thing for you to do is to destroy the only object that would give you an excuse for thinking of it." Then, unlocking a box from a drawer, she takes from it something that would make the eyes of Fannie's friend glisten with inquisitiveness. But Lois soon puts it beyond the power of gratifying anybody's curiosity, by taking a photograph from the velvet case, stretching forth her hand towards the flames, and resolutely throwing the picture into them. But, while thus keeping her promise to banish it from her sight, memory exerts so powerful an influence that she falls back on the sofa with a great sob, and buries her face in the cushions.

Now, "strong-minded female" reader, I hear you say, "Foolish, sentimental little thing!" but before you

make that stern comment, I beg leave to inform you that Lois is only nineteen years old, and that probably by the time she has attained your mature age (for, if you are "strong-minded," I think it likely you are on the shady side of thirty, according to the reckoning of your mother or old nurse), she may have become as strong-minded, calm, passionless, and prim as yourself. Which God forbid, for her own sake, poor dear!

CHAPTER III.

"And with my years my soul began to pant
With feelings of strange tumult and soft pain;
And the whole heart exhaled into one want."
BYRON.

WHEN Lois first left school, at the age of eighteen, the world seemed to her the brightest of rosy visions. So gorgeous was the coloring, that she was very much astonished when it began to wear off in spots, like a thin coating of pink paint, and show the sombre gray beneath, before she had a year's acquaintance with it. It is well with those people who can themselves wash the bright hues off before the bitter tears of experience come to perform the necessary office, and philosophically content themselves with coming down to the uniform sombre tints of the strata under the gay surface which charmed their youthful fancy, consoling themselves with thinking that gray is a color that

wears well and is warranted to wash, and that pink is, after all, a shade likely to fatigue the eyes.

Lois, left an orphan at the age of eleven, was sent by her guardian to a boarding-school, to remain until she was eighteen; seven long weary years, the winters filled with work and the summer vacations with very little play, because they were always spent at school. In the absence of the other girls, there was no way for her to amuse herself except by reading such books as were approved by her teachers. But as this provision admitted her to quite a fine library, it really gave her much quiet pleasure, and she soon began to look upon books as her best friends. She fell into a droll way of talking to them, that would have caused any one accidentally overhearing her to think her a fit subject for the lunatic asylum. One was her "red darling," another her "precious blue," and another her "dear green Dickens," which was rather inappropriate, considering that Dickens is not by any means "green." But in this instance the color of the binding alone decided the name.

Sometimes during the long summer days she would have the library all to herself, with nothing to do but select her book, throw herself in an easy-chair, and lose herself completely in what she was reading: grieving with the heroine in all her sorrows, and enjoying all her pleasures as if they had been her own; sometimes living over a long life of fifty years, with all its vicissitudes, just in the course of one summer day. If her excellent teacher had suspected how intensely interested and excited she always became over her book, it is likely she would not have permitted

her to read so constantly; but Lois was a quiet child, who rarely talked of what most deeply stirred her feelings. Sometimes on those pleasant days spent in the library, when she was the happy monarch of all she surveyed,—namely, the book-cases and easy rocking-chair,—she would say, "Now, Lois, select your book, and we'll have what Mrs. Hoffman calls an *intellectual feast.* Here is an abundance of viands to tempt your appetite; so help yourself, my dear. Here are Dickens's works,—what part does he play in the feast? I think I will have him for my Worcestershire sauce;—Thackeray shall be my pepper, George Eliot shall be my salt, and the historians are my bread,—only I am naughty enough to think bread commonplace, and not to take it when I can get cake. Here is Sir Walter Scott, who is my pound-cake, and Bulwer my sponge-cake,—not quite so heavy as pound-cake. Shakspeare is my fruit-cake, made up of a great variety of rich ingredients. It can be kept for any length of time, brought out on any occasion, and so long as a piece remains it is good. Alexandre Dumas I think should be the wine of the feast, because he gets into the head and intoxicates,—the reason, I suppose, that Mrs. Hoffman objects to my reading his works. Victor Hugo is a stronger wine and of much finer quality, but if taken in large quantities is apt to give one delirium tremens. Now for the sweet things:—here is Moore, who is my honey, culled from the sweetest flowers that grow in 'Araby the blest'; Owen Meredith, my strawberries and cream; Tennyson, my bunch of rare grapes, delicate, luscious and pure,—my favorite fruit. Byron would have been a rich,

ripe peach, only it was dipped in brandy, and so became a brandy-peach, spoiling it for my liking, though many persons seem to prefer peaches that have been through this process." And so Lois would go through the library, making each author represent some viand. It was hard to make a selection from this tempting feast, and sometimes she would feel like some unreasonable child who wishes to be helped to everything on the table at once.

Lois found, before she had lived very many years, that it was a strong need of her restless, ardent nature to have a ruling passion for something or somebody, and if her parents had lived she would have been devotedly attached to one or the other of them,—most likely the one who was the most affectionate to herself, as is the way with human nature in general. She did not exactly understand herself, and was sorely puzzled sometimes to know what it was she lacked, or what kind of food would best satisfy the craving of her hungry soul. While very fond of her books, often calling them her best friends, they never smiled back at her when she told them how much she loved them, but continued staring at her with their shining gilt eyes, in mute insensibility. The only duty that her teacher had seemed to think she owed her, was to fill her little head with as much book-knowledge as she felt herself compensated for in the quarterly allowance that was paid to her regularly by Lois's guardian. And the only duty her guardian had given evidence of owing her, was to see that she received the amount of learning he considered an equivalent for the money paid her teacher, taking care that she was always

as physically comfortable as he deemed it proper a school-girl should be. So she had grown up morally like a weed, with a soul entirely untrained for the inevitable struggle with the cold winds that must blow upon all the plants in God's garden between the intervals of sunshine. And the only chance for her of battling successfully with them lay in the native strength of the firm but slender stem: its tender greenness gave promise of excellent fruit some day, unless they blighted its beauty, and left "nothing but leaves."

It seems strange that her teachers and school-mates always considered Miss Carrol an unusually cold and undemonstrative girl. The teachers took little notice of her except to remark her extreme beauty, which they could not help doing; and the native grace of all her movements was occasionally noticed by the girls, but they always spoke of her as an odd, quiet, and proud girl. But there was one among them, Fannie Howard, who took a great fancy to her. She was an extravagant admirer of beauty, and would sit and watch Lois for hours.

Mentally, Miss Carrol was very much Fannie's superior, but she could not help being attracted by her evident admiration, her good nature and kind heart. The self-sacrificing disposition, which was always ready to exert itself in behalf of her friend, gradually found the way to Lois's affections, or rather, to speak more correctly, to her affectionate toleration, for Fannie Howard was not the sort of a girl, by any means, on whom she could concentrate her affections with the enthusiastic devotion so common among school-girls.

Lois's heart was not like the enchanted purse in the Arabian tale, that contained endless stores of gold, which could only be taken out in small quantities—two or three pieces each day; but her heart held an inexhaustible mine of wealth, that could only be gotten possession of by some great conqueror. And if the conqueror was never to come who was wise enough to find the one and only entrance to this great storehouse of treasure, the mine would remain undiscovered and unworked forever beneath the soil.

Such riches are not scattered promiscuously every day, from these rare deep natures; and the passers-by are not fortunate enough to receive each a coin. Lois had a faint consciousness that there were hidden riches as yet untouched among the secrets of her heart. She had never seen the glitter of the bright yellow gold, and had no idea of how valuable and beautiful it was, though she felt instinctively that she must guard strictly the entrance to it, knowing that if any one (whether worthy or unworthy) ever learned the *sesame* for opening it, the whole must surrender unconditionally.

Lois also possessed in her own right a large amount of more tangible wealth, which was apt to prove more attractive to most people and to be more assiduously sought after than the ideal gold of which we have spoken. But when she first left school and entered society, she did not trouble herself much about either, only guarding the hidden riches a little more zealously, and spending the material treasure much more lavishly.

CHAPTER IV.

"The charms of youth at once are seen and past;
And Nature says, 'They are too sweet to last.'"
SIR W. JONES.

MISS CARROL made her first appearance in society in Louisville, Kentucky, where, after finishing the prescribed course of study at school, she went to visit her friend, Miss Howard; and, to quote Fannie's words, "Lois was a *grand success*," in which her kind-hearted friend delighted almost as much as if it had been a triumph of her own. And Lois enjoyed the gay parties given in her honor, and the great amount of attention and admiration she received at them, as was natural in so young a girl. Her spirits recovered from the depression that had saddened her school-days, and her fresh buoyant spirits brightened the rather pensive character of her beauty.

The perfect refinement of her nature prevented her wit from acquiring a sting, and her merry trills of laughter would bring a smile to the saddest countenance. Yet such was the inherent sweetness of her disposition and the strength of the quiet virtues born in solitude, that this universal admiration did not arouse her vanity. It was given so freely and unsought that it seemed to Lois only the natural heritage of youth and beauty, and she attributed it more to the kindness of her new friends than to any merit of her

own. And her unconsciousness heightened her charms, and precluded the possibility of her head being turned by her triumphs.

She made a visit of several months to her friend,—months of more supreme happiness than she had ever known or dreamed of before. She was so busy receiving invitations, paying and receiving visits, preparing for parties and balls, and sleeping off the effects of them the next day, as well as occupying all the odd moments in considering what shades were most becoming to her, and what color her next ball-dress should be, that even her beloved books were neglected, and almost forgotten, in the constant occupation and feverish excitement of the novel but fascinating life. It seemed that in her case the order of things was being reversed,—that as the first part of her youth had been dreamy and full of work, she received compensation by having all her play now that she was "grown up." "For," she said, "could blindman's-buff possibly be as jolly as the *German?*" She had had no blindman's-buff, or any other childish games, in the time that now seemed so long ago, before she went to school, not only because she had no playmates, but because her mother was an invalid. Almost the only recollection she had in connection with her mother, was of a sour-faced nurse who stood at the door of the darkened sick-room, saying, "You must be quiet, miss, and speak only in a whisper about the house, so as not to disturb your poor mother." Lois had heard so often the stupid saying that "school-days were the happiest part of life," that she had anticipated entering a dreary, forlorn world when the "happiest days"

were over. Her surprise at this fairy scene was great, and she moved as though on enchanted ground, not stopping to think that she could not dance through life as though it were one big ball-room.

But we will not dwell long on this part of her life: happiness is apt to be monotonous when seen "through the eyes of another." The fresh unsullied enjoyment of youth is the prettiest thing in the world to the unselfish observer, but the bright spring that gives this enjoyment is too intangible for words to picture it, and we cannot avoid giving a deeper interest to the spicy variety of the misfortunes sprinkled through our neighbors' lives. It is not half so interesting or exciting to hear that friend Brown has come home, eaten a hearty dinner and gone to see the play,—all of which items he excessively enjoys,—as to hear that he has been thrown from his horse while riding in the park, and broken his leg in two places. Then you have the pleasure of carrying the news across the street to Mrs. Jones. "Oh, Mrs. Jones!" you say, with big exclamation-marks after each sentence, expressed by the tone of your voice. "Oh, Mrs. Jones! did you hear of neighbor Brown's dreadful accident? His horse ran away in the park and threw him violently against the stone basin of the fountain, breaking his leg and bruising him dreadfully. He has been carried home on a litter, and a consultation of surgeons called."

And then you have the delicious sense of importance that being able to impart news always gives, and you enjoy hearing Mrs. Jones exclaim, "Merciful goodness! You don't say so!" with a horror-stricken expression on her face (which she considers the proper

thing), though she is secretly glad, for, while you are giving the particulars, she is thinking how she will astonish Mrs. Smith, her right-hand neighbor, with the news, and how she will improve upon your account of poor Brown's sufferings, by throwing in a judicious groan here and an additional broken bone there.

I have known sentimental people, who, when in trouble, could almost find consolation in the consciousness that they were objects of romantic interest, and who could behave themselves like model martyrs when they knew their friends were watching to see how well they bore their misfortunes. When I say *misfortunes*, I do not mean poverty, because that is seldom interesting either to the looker-on or the victim, and I think the liking for it an entirely cultivated taste that can only be cultivated successfully by a few saints of whom the earth is not worthy.

CHAPTER V.

THE DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

LOIS CARROL had always dreaded the idea of going to live with her guardian and his wife, who was her aunt, as one of the greatest evils connected with orphanage. She had never seen the latter but once in her life, and that when quite a child; but she judged from her aunt's letters, and the conversation

of her guardian when he made her an occasional visit, that they were rather coarse people, who, though wealthy, had no claim whatever to the refinements of life. So the thought of making her residence with this family, in a secluded country home, where all the members of the household would naturally be obliged to live in intimate relation to each other, was always a painful shadow resting upon the close of Lois's school-life, until something happened which promised to postpone her going among them. During the last vacation spent at school in New York, she was very much surprised to receive a visit one day from a cousin of her mother's, Mrs. Norton, who lived in New Orleans, and who was passing through New York on her way from Saratoga. They were mutually impressed in each other's favor, and Lois gladly promised to accept an invitation to spend her first winter as a young lady with her cousin Mary, in New Orleans, though, of course, her guardian's consent must first be obtained. Mrs. Norton was not forgetful of this promise, but her return South was protracted to a later day than usual. She, however, wrote to Mr. Harrison from New York, requesting his consent to taking Lois home with her when she passed through Louisville in November. Her guardian replied that, although he and his wife would be very much disappointed at having to forego the pleasure of seeing their dear niece for so long a time, they would be glad to have her enjoy the advantages of society in New Orleans, under such elegant and superior chaperonage as they knew she would have with Mrs. Norton.

So Lois was delighted at the prospect of having

this one gleam of brightness across her life, with which memory could illuminate the future dreary, monotonous years that spread out before her in the country home.

I must apologize for being under the painful necessity of taking you into such a disagreeable place as the railroad cars, where I suppose you would hardly go voluntarily. I have no doubt that traveling may have been very pleasant in the good old days, before we had the questionable blessing of steam cars, when we used to go creeping along in stage-coaches at such a luxuriously lazy pace that we had ample time not only to get a full appreciation of a picturesque landscape, but almost to be able to count the silvery little fish as they gracefully darted about in the clear brook winding along the side of our road.

PUBLIC LIBRARY NEW YORK

There has been so much written about the pleasures of such traveling, that it has grown to be a tradition among all civilized people that traveling is one of the most delightful things in the world. And so, to follow out this idea, they will spend any amount of money for the privilege of being imprisoned for two or three days at a time in dirty, stuffy little cells, called sleeping-cars, while they pretend to others, and try very hard to persuade themselves, that they are enjoying themselves extremely, although they are unable to carry on conversation with their companions, or to appreciate the view from the window, because rivers, valleys, and mountains all go spinning by at such a rapid rate as to set the head swimming and the eyes aching.

It is very delightful, I admit, to be able to see new cities and strange faces, but it is being on the way in the cars that I have the moral courage to declare so very disagreeable. I must say that I can enjoy myself just as well sitting at home comfortably in a rocking-chair, while I have my little brother's tin horn blown in my ear, a cinder rubbed into my eye, and imagine that I am traveling.

But neither cinders nor noise kept Miss Carrol from looking happy and pretty as she sat leaning forward, her head turned to one side, in order to hear her cousin Mary's voice above the roar of the cars. Dr. Norton sat opposite to them, with a *Louisville Courier-Journal* spread out on his knees. He had rather a handsome, genial face, and you would have judged, from his general appearance and from the grayish tinge of his hair, that he was about forty years of age. He was not reading his paper, but listening to his wife, who was telling Lois of the pleasant time she intended giving her in New Orleans. "You know, dear, we will have an opera-box for the whole season, and occupy it two or three times every week; this, with two reception-evenings,—Wednesdays and Fridays,—though, will not allow us much time for balls and parties."

"But I like the opera so much better than balls," said Lois. "I have only been once in my life, and that in New York last winter. I was almost wild with delight, and astonished Mrs. Hoffman and the girls by going into ecstasies on my return. The sweet strains of 'Trovatore' haunted me for days afterwards, and every unoccupied moment found the words of 'Oh I

have sighed to rest me!' coming involuntarily to my tongue. I believe if I were turned to a pillar of salt, like Lot's wife, music like that would quicken me." And Lois drew her veil closely around her head, for she was in a fair way to look like a statue of soot and cinders very soon.

"Why, my dear child, New York operas should not be mentioned in the same day with the New Orleans opera," said Dr. Norton, who was very enthusiastic on every subject, and especially on that of the superiority (as he thought) of everything Southern over everything Northern. "You know we have a regular opera troupe every winter, composed of the best singers Europe can afford. Why, you should just hear Michot, our present tenor. His singing is worth going wild over. He is magnificent! and as for Arnal, the soprano, she is perfectly glorious!"

"And I think Dumestre, the baritone, is very fine!" said Mrs. Norton, who sometimes caught a portion of her husband's contagious enthusiasm; "his voice is so clear and deep, and so full of pathos, that it often brings the tears to my eyes."

"Dumestre is a splendid-looking man, too," said Dr. Norton; "I hope you will see him first in 'L'Africaine,' Lois,—his acting in that is uncommonly good, and his singing the best I have ever heard, though I have seen the best actors and finest singers in Europe."

"Now, Roger," said his wife, "I thought you said you liked that baritone singer we heard the other evening in New York better than any you had ever heard?"

"Oh, better than any in New York, my dear. Of

course I meant that to be understood," he said, a little impatiently, for he was annoyed when his wife reminded him of his contradictions, and often wished that she had not quite such an inconvenient memory. He himself had entirely forgotten that in the enthusiasm of the moment he had pronounced the baritone of the New York opera the best in the world, when, of course, he could not be compared with Dumestre.

"I suppose," said Mrs. Norton, wisely changing the subject, since she saw her husband was vexed,—"I suppose, Lois, your cousin Julia will be wishing to have you spend part of the time with her, but I want you to remember that I am not going to spare you to her."

"You mean cousin Julia Warrington; I had nearly forgotten her. Do tell me what kind of people she and her husband are."

"Poor Julia, I feel sorry for them both. You know it was entirely a mercenary match on her part; indeed, she does not pretend to care anything for her husband, and I don't wonder that she shows the real state of her feelings; because, though he is very good and kind to her, he looks like an Egyptian mummy, and does not care at all for the things she likes. I don't think she is very happy, though she does get all her things made at Olimpe's. She is such a handsome woman, that it is a thousand pities she should be tied to that old man."

"Nonsense, Mary!" said her husband; "I should think you would have learned by this time that your sympathy is quite thrown away on Julia. She has everything she loves best in the world,—plenty of money, a handsome house, a fine carriage and horses,

a box at the opera, gay dresses, expensive trinkets, etc. Her husband is as patient as possible with all her freaks and moods, and anybody can see that he is a broken-hearted, disappointed man. I hope Julia will not insist upon Lois making her a visit of any length, because I don't think,—excuse me, my dear," he continued, turning to Lois, "but I really do not think she is a proper companion for a young girl just entering society. Between ourselves, Julia is an outrageous flirt, and she could not behave as she does anywhere else but in New Orleans. Not that New Orleans customs are not better than those of Northern cities, when they are not abused. Fast young ladies take advantage of the customs there, and fast married ladies take advantage of them here."

"Oh, Roger!" remonstrated his charitable wife, "I do think you are too hard upon Julia. I am sure she does not mean anything by having a little fun; and she is such a brilliant woman that the men will admire her in spite of herself."

"In spite of herself, indeed! Why, she wouldn't rest until she had me bring Forlis to see her. I told her that she couldn't make a fool of Henri Forlis, and I ought to know him if anybody does, because we have been just like brothers for the last five years. You will like him, I know, Lois, for I think he is the most perfect gentleman that ever breathed." All of the enthusiasm of Dr. Norton's nature (which was no small amount) was always brought out at the mention of his friend Forlis's name, and, as he proceeded to describe him to Lois, half of the superlatives furnished by the English language were called into use in his

praise. "Wouldn't it make Julia jealous, though," he said to his wife, "if Forlis should take a fancy to Lois? What a joke that would be!"

"But," replied Mrs. Norton, "it is so unlikely that Lois should reciprocate such a fancy. Mr. Forlis has been married twice. Do you like widowers, Lois?"

"What a Bluebeard!" said Lois, laughingly. "No, I am sure I could never marry a man who had been married before. I should be afraid of the phantom bride who would be continually brought before me in words such as these: 'My poor Sarah was very amiable; she never resented any little slight, or dwelt upon every hasty word! Poor Sarah never managed so, and she had a great reputation as a housekeeper! Sarah was so unselfish, she never considered her own pleasure at all!' and if there were two 'dear departeds,' I am sure I should be overwhelmed with the memory of their virtues, and despair of ever equaling them. Oh, no; I'll be first, or none!"

Her cousins laughed, and said she would certainly like Forlis, in spite of his two bereavements, which his good taste, if nothing else, would prevent him from referring to. "He is with us a great deal," said Mrs. Norton, "and is really as agreeable a person as you can find for an intimate friend anywhere. He has abundance of common sense in addition to his uncommon virtues, and is as true as steel."

"And then he has such a very pleasant nephew," said Dr. Norton: "witty, handsome, and considered in society an excellent match."

"He comes up to see us occasionally, with his uncle," said Mrs. Norton, as her husband returned to

his paper, "but I don't think he cares much for society; he is older in his ways than his uncle, Mr. Forlis. Roger, I see him with those D'Obrie girls a great deal; I should not be surprised if he were engaged to one of them, though I cannot understand what possible attraction such girls could have for him."

"Are they not pretty?" asked Lois.

"No; they seem to me of the ordinary, plain, dark type of Creole girls; but the families have been always very intimate, and if he is engaged to one of them, the match was made by the parents, I expect, because they have adjoining estates on the Gulf, and it would be in every way a convenient arrangement. That is so often the way with the French, you know. Oh, Roger," she called, making an effort to attract the attention of her husband, who had become engrossed in endeavoring to read an article that struck him in his paper. By the way, dear reader, do you know anything more tantalizing than attempting to read in a railway car, when the road is rough and the speed great? Just as you are in the midst of a most interesting sentence, a sudden jolt causes you to lose your hold of the paper; the conductor comes for your ticket, you lay the paper aside, another member of your party takes it up, while you are longing to know the conclusion of that interesting sentence but do not like to disturb them. Thus it was with Dr. Norton: he tried to finish that sentence when addressed, lost his place, made a dozen wrong guesses as to its termination, tried in vain to extract a sensible idea from his drunken paper, and wished that he had a New Orleans journal

instead; thinking, though he did not ask himself the reason why, that he could read it with more comfort, simply because it was a Southern paper. "These Northern papers are always printed on such stiff, crackling paper," he said to himself.

"Roger," again called Mrs. Norton, "is Edgar Treville engaged to either of those D'Obrie girls?"

"Do you mean those Creoles who have the opera-box that corresponds to ours, on the opposite side of the house?"

"Yes; you know he is with them a great deal."

"I don't think Treville can be engaged to either of them," answered the doctor, laying down his paper as if he meant to have no more to do with it, "because Forlis would have told me, and besides, it would have been formally announced. You know, Lois, we retain the old European custom of announcing engagements immediately in New Orleans. They are considered much more sacred with us than in Kentucky, and for that reason our young ladies cannot be such wretched flirts as the Northern girls. They are especially strict about that among the French population of Louisiana, who consider it almost a disgrace to break an engagement. So you must beware, Lois," he said, laughing; "you must be as careful not to enchant the engaged men as if they were married."

"I think it an excellent custom," said Lois, "because it is a safeguard to keep people from entering lightly into engagements, and breaking them for slight reasons. Do you like the Creoles, Cousin Roger?"

"Very much; I lived in Paris for several years before I was married, and learned to love the French so

much that I would not care to live among any other people. They are so refined and intelligent! I would live in Paris now if I were independent of all professional ties; and as the Creoles (that is, the Louisiana French) are the next best thing to the Simon pure of Paris, I am very glad my practice lies in New Orleans. I think life would be insupportable living either among Yankees or rough Western people."

Lois thought, as she looked out of the window at the rather dreary landscape which flitted by, that if she had her choice she would live in New York, where she had been to school, and got passing glimpses of the rush and whirl of life in a great city, or in delightful Louisville, where the people were so very kind and attentive. But all the world seemed bright to her now, and she thought that it would be pleasant living anywhere. How much happier the life of a young lady was than that of a school-girl! People cared so much to please her now, and these cousins were so good and thoughtful of her comfort. Doubtless, their friends in New Orleans would prove exceedingly agreeable acquaintances, and she saw a wide field of enjoyment opening before her in their society. New people had for her now the same charm that new books had in her school-days. As she studied each face and character, trying to decipher each lineament and classify each varying phase, she had the same eager expectation as when she cut the leaves of a new book, and wondered as the delightful development of the story grew upon her.

She flattered herself that she understood human nature so well, from all the books that she had read,

that she could stand in her safe stronghold of superior knowledge and look down with an amused smile on the weaknesses and inconsistencies of those around her, as an audience looks on and laughs at a comedy, without taking any part in it.

If we had the power the Egyptian sorcerers pretend to possess, of reading our whole past and future lives mirrored in a single drop of ink, there would be many happy moments completely spoiled for us,—moments filled with the pleasure of anticipation and building bright "castles in Spain." No matter if experience soon teaches that the gay tints of anticipation fade in dull hues of reality, and brilliant homes of imagination crumble at a touch, we accept the inevitable with greater resignation after it comes to us, and console ourselves with rebuilding the ruined mansions more delightfully than before.

But if we had certain knowledge of evil that must befall us in the future, it would embitter hopelessly the present, and even the most determined optimist would cease to hope and dream. If Lois could have had the curtain drawn that veiled her future, as she sat in the cars that day, thinking how pleasant life was, and being carried along directly South at the rate of twenty miles an hour, the intense desire of her heart would have been to reverse that rapid movement, and turn her face in any other direction.

But a bright smile played around her lips as she leaned from the window, and looked with dreamy eyes at the dilapidated plantations and fine old tropical-looking forests rolling by in the twilight. It was late in November, but the dark-green foliage was hardly

tinted with brown. Though old winter is reputed to be stern and hard-hearted, it seems as if, when he passes over the earth on his annual visit, he feels a tender compassion for the long-suffering Southern Land, and touches her very gently with his rough fingers, thinking that already her chastisement has been sufficiently severe, for being the mother of warm-hearted, hot-blooded sons.

Even the graceful gray Southern moss, hanging from the grand old trees, swaying to and fro with each passing breath, seemed weighted with sorrow and sympathy for its native land; and the wind, moaning so piteously through its long tresses, seemed like a requiem for the brave soldiers whose graves dotted the sward beneath.

But now, over the sunny plains where the battles had raged so fiercely and the passionate throb of a dying nation's despair had sounded on the ear, the whistle of the engine was the only sound that broke the solitude; and to the joyous heart of youth that seemed only a triumphant accompaniment to its God-given reveries.

CHAPTER VI.

"But deeds and language such as men do use,
And persons such as Comedy would choose,
When she would show an image of the times,
And sport with human follies, not with crimes."

BEN JONSON.

"I HOPE you slept well, dear Lois, and have entirely recovered from the fatigue of last evening!"

"Oh, Cousin Mary! such a glorious time as I had last night could not weary me! I could have danced on for five hours longer."

"By the time you are my age, dear," said Cousin Mary, "balls will seem so much alike to you that you cannot tell them apart."

"Ah, if they are so tiresome to you, I shall always feel very selfish and inconsiderate when I keep you out late, Cousin Mary."

"Indeed you need not have any feeling of the kind, Lois. I shall get up an interest in the balls this winter for your sake. Last night was not by any means like the balls that have stupefied me in other years. Do you not suppose I felt proud of chaperoning a pretty little girl who was the observed of all observers? I had more attention paid me than ever before in my life. But I saw through it all," she said laughingly; "I know all those gallant gentlemen asked me to dance to find out something about you, and procure

an introduction to the queen of the evening. I was strongly tempted to make a mystery of you, for the fun of the thing, but could not think of a story sufficiently romantic to suit your style. Then I enjoyed seeing some of our most famous belles grow jealous of the ranks of your admirers, while some of them were actually wall-flowers for the first time since they came out. However, my dear child, you will get flattery enough to make you vain without my talking to you in this strain. Now run up-stairs, child of earth with the golden hair, and dress for the opera as soon as you can. The hair-dresser is waiting for you,—tell her to dress your hair in the same light, fleecy curls which looked so prettily last night."

Lois sped gayly along, humming an air from Trovatore, her favorite opera, which she expected to hear that evening, wishing that the ordeal of dressing was passed and she was listening to the sweet strains of the prima donna of whose talents and musical abilities she had heard so much. She had only been in New Orleans three or four days, and her only appearance in its beau monde had been made at the ball the previous evening.

Lois found the hair-dresser, an old mulatto woman, who spoke a curious mixture of bad French and worse English, sitting in her room, impatiently waiting for her; looking, with the brush and comb in her hands, like an ogress ready to use them as implements of torture on Lois's delicate head. She loosened Miss Carrol's hair and began to ply the brush most vigorously among its glossy curls, her tongue moving in unison, as if connected by an invisible cord with the brush.

Hagar was a privileged character in the dressing-rooms of many of the most fashionable ladies of New Orleans; and probably this will account for the fact that these same ladies, whether acquaintances or not, knew a great deal of each other's private affairs.

"So many of de ladies, mademoiselle," she said to Lois, "have ask me question about you to-day. Dere was Madame Herbert, I dress de hair for her dis morning, so she go visiting; and she say, 'Hagar, I see Mrs. Norton's pretty cousine at de ball last night; have you dress her hair yet?' I say, 'Yes, madame, vraiment, I make her a lovely coiffure for de ball.' And den she make you many compliment. All de ladies dis morning say dat Mademoiselle Carrol was charmante and ravissante; and I tell dem all, 'No wonder, when I take more than de whole hour to make de coiffure.' Mademoiselle Wilson ask me if your own hair vas de gold color, or if it vas de pretty braids. I tell her dat it is de kind of hair dat I loves in mon cœur, dat it make all de coiffure witout braids."

And in this way she continued, much to Lois's amusement, until the hair-dressing was nearly finished, when Hagar became so communicative about Miss Smith's personal affairs that Lois felt obliged to check her. "Don't you think, Hagar," she said, "that those curls would look rather better if they were divided and made more fleecy?"

"I find dem beautiful, mademoiselle, just as dey are," said Hagar, feeling very much injured. "De ladies always leave it to my own discretions to make de coiffures, and don't never make suggestions to me. Dey know dat Hagar always learn de latest modes to

arrange de hairs. Don't she always go to Madame Charles and Ogers, to take de lessons in all de modes?"

"You dressed my hair exquisitely yesterday evening, Hagar; try and see if you can't get those curls to look as they did then."

"Was it not magnifique, mademoiselle, for de ball? I will make de hairs light like it was den. All de ladies say, 'Hagar, you make de coiffure charmante for Mademoiselle Carrol;' and dey say dey watch with great inquietude for her at de opera ce soir. Tout le monde make mademoiselle so many compliments, dat I was proud dat I have arrange de hair of her."

At last Hagar put on the finishing touch and took leave, to Lois's great relief. She stood before the pier-glass after her toilette was made, disposing a spray of pink fuchsias among the bright downy curls, and conversing in her odd way with the beautiful Lois reflected in the mirror. "Now please, little girl," she said, "don't let it all turn your foolish head; make up your mind that the admiration you receive shall have no effect upon you." And then she turned with a small hand-glass, and looked at the back of her head, to see if Hagar deserved as much credit as she gave herself for the "coiffure." But all thought of Hagar was lost in involuntary admiration of the exquisite effect produced by the wavy tresses, floating over a round marble-like neck, whose extreme whiteness was heightened by the dark-blue sapphire necklace clasped about it.

She smiled with delight as she turned again to obtain a front view of the graceful figure, that was clad in some soft-floating, pale, sky-blue material.

Her cheeks glowed, and her eyes flashed as she looked at them.

"Oh Lois," she said, "how naughty you are! You know you love to be beautiful!"

"Of course I do," said the sparkling eyes in the glass.

"Then, my dear," looking sternly and seriously at the lovely image in the mirror, "you are very wrong if you take any credit to yourself for it. Undoubtedly you are beautiful; I should be blind not to see it; but give God the praise, who created the beauty. Vanity will spoil the finest mind, and self-consciousness mar the effect of the most agreeable features. Let no rehearsal of your charms from admiring lips cause you to congratulate yourself, except on possessing a gift from God, which must be used for good purposes. You can take credit to yourself for making that pretty bonnet the other day, which Fannie admired so much, because you designed that entirely yourself; but you had nothing in the world to do with your good looks, any more than that pretty picture hanging up there had to do with its own beauty."

"Come, Lois," called Cousin Mary from the stairs, "Roger and Mr. Forlis are waiting for us." So she hurried down, finding Mr. Forlis waiting to hand her into the carriage, where Mrs. Norton was already seated.

She had met this agreeable Frenchman at the ball of the previous evening, and gratified her cousin Roger by liking him very much. The polished gentleness of his manner, when conversing with Mrs. Norton or herself, was exceedingly attractive; but

Lois could not help being a little shocked, as well as amused, by the animation with which he entered into the flirtation with her cousin Julia Warrington, while the tender friendship which existed between Dr. Norton and himself called only for admiration. She began to feel very much at home with this family friend after their pleasant drive to the opera-house, and she was escorted by him up the steps.

"Are you easily embarrassed, mademoiselle?" he asked.

"Why do you wish to know?" said Lois, wondering what he meant.

"Because, if you are, you should endeavor to gain complete command of yourself before we enter. We are rather late; and as you are a stranger, and one whose first appearance has been a decided success and has been the subject of discussion all day in the beau monde, you may expect to encounter on your entrance many curious glances, and even stares."

Lois found that Mr. Forlis's apprehension had some foundation. When she entered the opera-box, and took her seat in front, beside Mrs. Norton, who had preceded her, she felt as if every pair of eyes in the house was fixed upon her; and, but for Mr. Forlis's thoughtful consideration in engaging immediately in interesting conversation, she might have been uncomfortable. The glances directed towards her by the gentlemen were charged with admiration, and those of the ladies with curiosity, for they were anxious for a good view of the young lady who had caused the gentlemen to neglect them in such an unusual manner

the previous evening. The curtain had not yet risen, and there was a buzz of conversation all through the house.

"Parbleu! but that niece of Norton's is lovely!" said one exquisite to another, lounging against the windows, and looking at Miss Carrol through opera-glasses from the opposite side of the house.

"Niece of what Norton?" asked the other.

"Dr. Norton; don't you see her in his box over there?" indicating the direction by a slight movement of the left eye-brow.

"Oh, that's Miss Carrol, a cousin of his wife's,—her first season out. I heard some fellows talking about her at the Chalmette to-day; and Jennings, especially, was raving over her. So I thought I would drop in to-night, as I heard she would be here, and take a look at her. Lend me your glasses a moment."

After sweeping his glance over the house through them, he rested it upon Dr. Norton's box, exclaiming, "What a charming little witch that is! I don't wonder Jennings and the other fellows could talk of nothing else at the club this afternoon. Look how Forlis is bending over her! Sly rascal! he has gotten ahead of us all from his intimacy with the doctor. I think I'll get friendly with him, too, or make up to Forlis, and get him to take me to see her. She is the most bewitching little fairy I have ever seen."

Miss Carrol was also the subject of conversation between two ladies at a short distance from these gentlemen, and their arms ached from holding their glasses so long in one position to look at her.

"What do you think of the Kentucky girl, Mollie?" asked one.

"She certainly understands the art of dressing becomingly," said Mollie, "but I don't see anything to go into such ecstasies about."

"Almost any blonde would look pretty with all that light blue crêpe around her and that beautiful sapphire set of ornaments. Do you think she rouges?"

"I did think so at first," said Mollie; "but I examined her closely with my glasses a moment ago, and saw her change color two or three times while she was talking to Mr. Forlis."

In spite of her escort's effort to engross her attention, Lois found time to give a swift glance around the house. Every one who has been in the beautiful opera-house at New Orleans, on an evening when a popular opera was to be given, will understand the impression that bright scene would make upon a young and ardent girl like Lois.

Such a gorgeous spectacle as the glittering, horse-shoe-shaped tiers, rising one above another, with the brilliant lights showing the gayly-dressed ladies in full ball costume, with ample room to display their beautiful toilettes, which rivalled the rainbow in variety of hues, made her almost believe herself suddenly transported to fairy-land, and could hardly be without its intoxicating effect upon her, after her quiet life of retirement. So, when Mrs. Norton called her attention to the two ladies who were so evidently studying her appearance and making comments to each other upon her, she looked at them deliberately, spread out her dress to show its beauties to the utmost advantage,

and threw her rose-colored opera-cloak over the back of her chair, to heighten by contrast the effect of the pale-blue of her dress.

The worse side of her nature had full possession of her; she talked incessantly until the curtain rose. Mr. Forlis thought she looked like a person under the influence of some exciting drug, and Dr. Norton's box divided the attention of the audience with the opera.

Directly after the curtain had fallen the first time, a gentleman touched Dr. Norton on the shoulder and delivered a message from Mrs. Warrington, who requested that he would bring his party into her box awhile, there being no person with her but her husband.

As Lois passed around through the hall on Dr. Norton's arm, he whispered, "Do you know why Julia has sent for us to come into her box?"

"For the pleasure of our gracious company, of course," said Lois.

"Not at all," answered the doctor, glancing at his wife and Mr. Forlis, who were walking in front of them, and lowering his voice a little more. "She can't endure to see Forlis with us; she wishes to engross his society completely, and you can have a great deal of sport if you will tease her by absorbing his attention, and keeping him from her."

Lois laughed, but said nothing; she had just time to wonder why Dr. Norton so evidently disliked her cousin Julia, when they turned into a closed box, containing half a dozen seats, a comfortable little sofa in the corner, and a very handsome lady sitting alone in front. She was richly attired in amber-colored satin,

which contrasted well with her fine, dark complexion. A mass of raven-black hair fell in heavy curls around her head, and was relieved by no ornament save a scarlet cactus, which shone like a star in that luxuriant wealth of tresses. She looked like a brilliant queen of the East, and so regal was her beauty that our little party seemed dazzled at their entrance.

"Alone in your glory?" said Mrs. Norton. "Where is Mr. Warrington?"

"There he is, over on the sofa; you know opera-music always puts Frederick to sleep."

And, glancing towards the corner, they saw the outline of a tall, thin figure stretched wearily upon the sofa. He was soon awakened by the sound of their voices, and rose slowly, rubbing his eyes, to see his wife arranging her guests as she had decided doing before they entered: with her two cousins in front, Dr. Norton and herself next, and Mr. Forlis behind her, where she could talk to him over her shoulder.

It was a favorite position; she knew very well that the pose of her stately head, and her fine, black eyes turned towards one over her creamy shoulders, were irresistible.

"Why, Warrington," said Dr. Norton, jocosely, "I am glad to see that you enjoy the opera so much; your appreciation of it speaks well for your musical taste, old fellow!"

Mr. Warrington did not reply, except by a simple greeting, and looked almost as if he would go to sleep again, as he stood there batting his eyes, while he was thinking that he did not exactly like Norton's familiarly-playful way of calling him "old fellow," for there was

more truth than humor in the appellation, as he was certainly sixty, and presented a striking contrast to the blooming youthfulness of the lady who sat before him and bore his name. She had once told a friend, in jesting confidence, when asked the reason why she had married him, "that the old, dried-up fellow made such an excellent background, throwing out her beauty into full relief!" However, the "background" made himself rather inconvenient just then, as he seated himself beside Mr. Forlis, and prevented any interchange of pleasant little whisperings with that gentleman. She would have preferred her husband completely in the shade over on the sofa, for she was now obliged to make the conversation general. During the next entre-act some one suggested that they should promenade in the foyer, and Lois was amused to see her cousin Roger offer his arm to Mrs. Warrington immediately upon their rising to leave the box; and his bland smile assured her that it was to prevent his friend Henri from doing so. Mr. Forlis thus became Lois's escort, and he drew her attention to all the celebrities and belles in the crowd of people who passed and repassed them. Lois, in her turn, was gazed at quite as earnestly as politeness permitted, and even a warmer color came to her cheek, and a brighter light to her eyes.

In a few minutes Dr. Norton signed to the two to come and share with the rest of their party a vacant sofa he had found at the other end of the hall.

"Here is room for you and Mr. Forlis, Lois," said Mrs. Warrington, indicating a place beside herself.

"No, they must not crowd you, but sit at the other

end by Mary," said Dr. Norton. "I am Lois's medical adviser, and must not let her risk taking cold from the open window by you."

Lois understood the little game he was playing for her amusement, and, as she took her assigned seat, thought that his attachment to Mr. Forlis really made him jealous of Mrs. Warrington.

When the curtain had fallen on the last act, Mrs. Warrington invited the party to accompany her home, to what she called an impromptu opera-supper. She said she wished to have an unceremonious affair of the kind before their party was increased by the new beaux that Lois would naturally soon have about her. "'Twill be such fun to get our own supper, you know, for the servants will all have gone to bed. Mr. Warrington will cook the oysters, and Mr. Forlis and I will make some salad by the delightful receipt you gave me, Mary, the last day we dined with you."

"She does give the nicest little suppers in the world," whispered Dr. Norton to Lois, as they descended the steps slowly among the crowd. "And I am glad we are going, because we will see Julia in one of her jolliest moods over the champagne, — such excellent wine as she has, too. Now is a splendid opportunity of teasing her, by your monopolizing Forlis."

Lois thought, as they drove through the crowded streets on their way to Mr. Warrington's house, that she cared little for this monopoly, but liked to see these curious people playing at cross-purposes a little longer.

Though only the outline of the house was visible

when they stopped at the door, on Rampart Street, Lois could see that it was large and handsome; and, by the dim light of the parlor, where they only stopped long enough to leave their wraps, before going to the dining-room, that it was furnished in a style of elegance in keeping with the general appearance of the house. Mr. Warrington preceded the others to the dining-room, and when they entered he was lighting the gas-burners with a taper almost as long and thin as himself.

"Bring out the spirit-lamp, Frederick," said his wife when they were seated, "and I will light it while you get the oysters and other things."

Mr. Warrington brought the lamp, bottle of alcohol, and matches, and placed them before his wife. Then he disappeared for a few minutes into the upper regions, from whence he brought a small key-basket, whose contents jingled at every step. He looked like a methodical old housekeeper, very much out of place in a swallow-tail coat and white cravat, as he selected a key from the basket, and went slowly into the pantry. He came back in a few minutes, bringing a tray on which were piled cans of oysters, sardines, and paté, celery, and plates of cracker-biscuits. After depositing his load on the table, he returned to the pantry, bringing plates, glasses, knives, forks, spoons, and several bottles of champagne. Pushing up his sleeves and displaying a distressing extent of long, lank wrist, he proceeded to open the oysters in such a business-like way, and with such a blank, unchanging countenance, that Lois could almost believe that she was watching an automaton instead of a man, and wondered if any expression ever came into that quiet face.

When they first went into the dining-room, Dr. Norton had managed to have Lois and Mr. Forlis seated together at the upper end of the table, opposite Mrs. Warrington, who appeared perfectly unconscious of his stratagem, and was in one of her gayest moods, making herself so agreeable by her lively sallies of wit and gay repartees that the attention of all the party was concentrated upon her. Dr. Norton was sitting beside her, helping her, as he said, "play at cooking," over a spirit-lamp. Mrs. Norton, on her other side, asked to be excused while she whispered to Julia—no doubt something in her maternal way in reference to Julia's dress being "trop décolletée," and to suggest drawing the lace a little over her shoulders; but Julia answered, "There is no use in your whispering to me, Mary, Dr. Norton would hear it on the other side, for everything that is said to me goes in at one ear and out at the other."

They all laughed, and Dr. Norton said, jestingly, that he was surprised to hear her confess so candidly the exact truth. Lois glanced over at Mr. Warrington to see if he allowed himself to relax a muscle in amusement at his wife's witticisms; but no, he was not taking the slightest notice of the conversation going on at the table, but was using his knife now in opening sardine-boxes, having finished the oysters and paté.

They were all checked suddenly in their mirth by the loud scream of a child overhead, and Lois saw an instantaneous change, that she could not have believed possible five minutes before, come over the stolid countenance of Mr. Warrington. It was a tender, anxious, loving, and frightened expression all in one,

—the sort of look that she remembered to have seen on the face of a canine pet, when some one attempted to molest its puppies. He stood for an instant with his head bent forward in the position which indicates that every other sense is merged in that of hearing, while they all heard a door opened in the room above, and the patter of little feet in the upper hall.

"Papa! papa! I want my papa!" screamed the child. Mr. Warrington dropped the knife and box of sardines on the table, and hurried out of the room with a speed that seemed surprising in one who was accustomed to such slow motions.

"Yes, darling, yes; papa is coming!" he called out to the little white figure that now appeared on the stairs, and could be seen through the open door from the table in the dining-room; and papa made long strides up the stairs, taking three or four steps at a bound; but "darling" continued to cry, "I want papa!" until clasped in its father's long arms, then, while his little head nestled on the tall man's shoulder, he sobbed out, "Me waked up all in de dark, by myself, and wanted my papa so bad!"

When the two had disappeared from the staircase into the upper hall, Lois asked her cousin Julia, who had sat perfectly still all the while, and looked bored by this interruption of their conversation, what child that was.

"Oh, it is Freddy," she said; "I suppose his nurse went out and left him alone. She is a pretty Irish girl,—I never could endure ugly servants,—who is such a belle and so much admired ('like mistress, like maid'), that she will leave Freddy, when we go out in

the evening, for a chat with her numerous beaux in the kitchen. Old Fred is so ridiculously foolish about the child, that he spoils him dreadfully. It is likely that we will not see him again to-night, and will be obliged to cook these oysters ourselves. Now isn't that a bore?" she said, pouting her beautiful lips. "Frederick should not encourage the child in such bad habits —sitting by him until he goes to sleep, holding his hands, and telling him fairy-stories. Yes, he actually does. Imagine old Fred telling fairy-tales!"

They all laughed and thought it a good joke, except Lois, who was thinking that she would never consider "old Fred's" face wooden or expressionless again. To her, it would ever be illuminated and the hardness softened by the look that came over it just before he left the room.

"Mr. Forlis," said Mrs. Warrington, "can you not take that vacant chair and assist me with these oysters?"

She passed around to the side-table and took "old Fred's" place, where Mr. Forlis followed her immediately, in spite of Dr. Norton's manœuvres to effect a different arrangement, and assurances that he understood that sort of thing as well as her husband, and better than Mr. Forlis. Mrs. Warrington's fine eyes sparkled triumphantly, as she graciously declined the doctor's kind offers, and accepted those of Mr. Forlis instead. She said she could now improve the opportunity of learning from Mr. Forlis how to make a delightful salad-dressing he had told her of knowing, and would give them the treat of tasting it when compounded.

So Dr. Norton was obliged to acknowledge to himself that Julia also understood the art of teasing, and to content himself with expatiating upon the merits and demerits of the opera-singers, with only his wife and Lois for an audience. He did not become so engrossed in this topic of discussion, however, as not to notice that there was more flirting than cooking going on at the side-table. So he broke off abruptly in the midst of a panegyric upon Michot's singing, to interrupt the delightful tête-à-tête going on over the oysters.

"Oh, Julia, I forgot to tell you," he said, interrupting a lady perhaps for the first time in the whole course of his polite career,—"I met a General Marly yesterday at the Chalmette, who was inquiring about you and wishing to know your street and number. He said he met you at the Virginia Springs last summer."

"Yes, I believe I remember him," said Julia. "Rather portly and consequential, was he not? always breaking into conversations with other people with an air that said, 'I am the great General Marly, of the army of the Potomac, bosom-friend and companion of General Lee, Stonewall Jackson, and Bishop Polk! therefore I can do anything!'"

"I can't say about that," said the doctor, not noticing the hint; "but he called you 'that magnificent Mrs. Warrington,' and said you were 'very gay and jolly at the White Sulphur.'"

"Yes," said Julia, with a little defiant toss of the head, "you know it is quite the orthodox thing to flirt at the Springs; it is necessary to make the waters palatable; and I did my duty to the fullest extent. It

is the regular occupation of the place, quite as much as playing ten-pins and dancing the German."

Mrs. Warrington always confessed her faults very candidly, even to her husband. She was clever enough to understand that it not only disarmed her enemies, but that, by depreciating herself, she caused her friends to believe her better than she was generally supposed to be.

The oysters were now ready to be served; and Mr. Forlis remarked that Mrs. Warrington reminded him of a child playing at house-keeping, as she helped each person to every dish on the table. But Mrs. Warrington played her rôle more artfully than a child,—she knew that her beautiful arms, so plump and exquisitely rounded, showed to the best advantage as she reached across for the plates.

It is doubtful if a board was ever surrounded by a merrier party than that of Mrs. Warrington's that night. She herself was unusually brilliant; and her wit was as sparkling as her excellent champagne, when it came leaping gleefully out of the bottles, murmuring a gurgling laugh, as though rejoicing at being permitted to contribute to the general mirth. She felt it necessary to make an unusual effort to please (though there was no trace of effort either in her manner or language), while her beautiful young cousin was sitting near her looking like an exquisite white water-lily, whose fairness caused her own dark but rich olive skin to seem all the darker by contrast. Mrs. Warrington was conscious, for the first time in her life, as she glanced at the lovely golden hair, and saw the arch, tremulous beauty of Lois's mouth, that she was thrown

into the shade. Her Cleopatra-like beauty might shine pre-eminently in a crowded ball-room, but the youthful grace of the tender blossom beside her was irresistible in this little circle. She saw that Mr. Forlis, while giving her his hands to help, let his eyes and thoughts wander from their task. So she called up all her powers of conversation to interest and dazzle. Surely she, a mature woman of the world, could never be beaten on her own chosen field by an unformed girl with a white skin and baby lips. Granting that this constituted superior beauty, surely she could be mistress of the field in conversation. She had often boasted of having Indian blood in her veins, and charged her very dark complexion to Pocahontas, whom she affirmed to have been her maternal ancestress, to which pretty fiction few of her friends gave credence. Her cousin, Mrs. Norton, though not handsome, possessed a face remarkable for sweetness of expression; and her gentle manners and becoming, matronly bearing, gained not only the admiration, but respect, of every one with whom she associated.

Lois was too much amused and entertained all the while by her cousin Julia's facetious remarks, to think of trying to rival her; and was almost annoyed when obliged to withdraw her attention in order to bestow it upon Mr. Forlis, who asked her opinion of New Orleans thus far, how she liked the opera and opera-house, with many other questions, that soon drew her into conversation with him, gradually falling into a lower tone, as that on the other side of the table was continued by Mrs. Warrington with flagging spirits.

Finally it died out entirely, and Mrs. Warrington

resolved to interrupt the tête-à-tête as unceremoniously as Dr. Norton had hers, by asking Mr. Forlis what had become of his nephew.

"He has been in Mobile for the last week," he replied, "and I had not seen him for a week before he went. I believe he grows quieter and more reserved every day."

"I heard some one say that he and the eldest Miss d'Obrie would make a match," said Dr. Norton. "Do you think it at all likely, Henri?"

"No," answered Henri; "because he told me not long since that he did not dream of anything of the kind; and when I asked him why he frequented the house so much, he said it was because they had been friends and playmates from childhood, and he had a great regard for all the family. However, since his father is anxious for the match, and the D'Obrie family is a very fine one, I should not be surprised if Edgar married into it, to please him. I think it would be just as well for him to do so, as he has never had the usual number of love-affairs of most young men, and it is time for him now to marry and settle down for life."

At this moment Mr. Warrington re-entered the room and remarked, as though it were a statement of great importance, in which every member of the party took deep interest, that Freddy was at last asleep.

He seated himself beside Lois, who, seeing his look of weariness, took his plate, and offered to help him to some oysters within her reach.

"No, thank you," he said; "I do not care for any."

"You will have some of this paté then, will you

not?" she asked; and when he shook his head slowly and looked as if thinking of something else, she said, "Are you not going to eat something?"

"No," he replied; "I am such a wretched dyspeptic that I never eat at night. No, thank you, Roger, no wine for me."

He looked into the glass of sparkling champagne, and said, as if talking to himself, in a voice that sounded as if it came from the bottom of a deep well, "Sometimes I fancy that the fable of the poets is true, and each bottle of wine contains an invisible imp, who comes dancing out when the cork is drawn and the champagne poured into the glasses. When his company is only endured for a little while, he proves a jolly, frolicsome fellow; but if allowed to remain longer, he may be mischievous and even dangerous. Each bottle of brandy contains a demon, who escapes, when he finds opportunity, from his prison, all ready for deeds of wickedness. He takes a survey of his surroundings the first thing, sees how many of his bosom friends have collected about him, and he flashes and sparkles with delight if he sees congenial spirits whom he can tempt to deeds of blood and horror."

They all looked at Mr. Warrington in astonishment; and Lois thought such queer, weird fancies became his appearance. Dr. Norton suppressed a shiver, and said,—"Why, Mr. Warrington, you have not yet shaken off the influence of the fairy-tales with which you have been entertaining Freddy up-stairs."

"Ah! that is perhaps true," said Mr. Warrington; and a hard look came into his face as he rose from his chair, and took the key-basket from the sideboard.

He passed out into the pantry, and the key was heard turning in the lock a few minutes afterwards. The party dispersed almost immediately, and in less than an hour the lights were all out in the house. But there were enough empty champagne-bottles in the dark dining-room to have liberated imps sufficient to people all the dark rooms in the house.

CHAPTER VII.

"It is the part of a prudent man to conciliate the minds of others, and turn them to his own advantage."

CICERO.

MRS. NORTON understood and practiced true hospitality. Dr. Norton was a man who threw a large portion of his warm heart into his profession, and loved it, as he did his friends, enthusiastically. Its duties compelled him to be at his office early in the morning, and his wife was always ready to bear him company at the breakfast-table before his leaving, but she peremptorily declared her wish that Lois should not thus shorten her hours of slumber.

"You will soon find, my dear child," she said, "that nothing is so destructive to health, comfort, and beauty as an insufficient amount of rest; and no matter what time you retire, I hope you will continue to sleep until you feel completely rested. I consider it the best pre-

ventive of wrinkles in the world. Look how well my skin has been preserved by it, and I am in my thirty-sixth year! I always rise early in the morning now, because my duty as a good wife calls me to it, but I make up for this by taking a nap in the day. The doctor says that this will add ten years to my life."

Lois could not help acknowledging that something had preserved her cousin's florid complexion wonderfully well, for her plump face had not the suspicion of the tell-tale lines of age.

"For my part," said Mrs. Norton, unwilling to relinquish the subject until Lois was fully impressed with its importance, which, indeed, was quite a hobby of hers, "when I go to visit my friends, I would rather they allowed me plenty of time for sleep in the morning, when I have been prevented from retiring early at night, and then give me a cold breakfast, than to feel positively obliged to rise, only half rested, in order to be ready for a warm breakfast, which I cannot enjoy properly when stupefied by loss of sleep. And the worst of it is, that instead of recovering from this stupidity as the day advances, it increases until the evening, when you are quite unfitted for the ordinary recreations of society. Now, Lois, take your choice for the winter, when your strength will certainly be taxed by the demands of young-ladyhood in these days of dissipation,—which will you prefer, sleep or warm breakfasts?"

"Warned by your example, dear cousin, I shall certainly say—sleep. I remember some of the haggard, ghastly-looking young ladies at the concerts in New York. At the close of the season, no arts of the

toilette were sufficient to conceal the havoc that its late hours had made in their youthful bloom, and I have no desire to rival them in this respect."

"Then, my dear Lois, we will make a very comfortable agreement,—you shall not rise until you feel inclined to do so, and I will not trouble myself about your morning meal."

Notwithstanding which agreement, Lois observed that no breakfast could be warmer or more delicious than the one served herself and her cousin, in the pleasant sitting-room adjoining their chambers, the morning after the opera-supper at Mrs. Warrington's.

It was eleven o'clock when the things were cleared away; and Mrs. Norton was settled comfortably on a sofa, occupying herself by looking over the illustrations of a new book, while Lois was seated at a table, a short distance from her, examining some invitations which they had received that morning. Mrs. Norton looked the very picture of rosy health and contentment, as she half reclined in a luxuriously comfortable attitude. She would have answered very well as a representation of "Present" in the well-known picture, and Lois would have suited admirably as "Future," sitting at the moment with her hands clasped on the table, gazing up at a picture on the opposite wall. A stream of light came through the opening in the rose-colored curtains, falling just across her head, and turning into pure gold in the deep waves of long hair flowing over her shoulders, and deepening the pink tint of rounded cheek and tiny hands. It only needed the stately presence of Mrs. Warrington, with her rich,

dark beauty, to complete the trio, and form a picture of "Past."

Mrs. Norton soon finished her task, and laid it aside. "Well, Lois," she said, stopping to draw a long sigh of contentment, "you have not yet told me your opinion of our cousin Julia."

"I admire her very much," replied Lois; "but last night, in spite of her sparkling wit and regal elegance, I thought more about Mr. Warrington, and I mean to call him Cousin Frederick hereafter."

"You strange child! why, few people ever waste a thought on that 'antiquated book-worm,' as he is commonly called."

"That is no argument against my doing so. I have a fancy for 'book-worms,' though I did not know the name could apply to him. I was interested in him principally because I could not understand him, and fancy that he may conceal deep feelings beneath that cold, repulsive exterior. Tell me, Cousin Mary, is he unhappy, do you think?"

"I don't know why he should be," said Mrs. Norton. "He has as many pleasures, and more elevated ones, than his wife. He is a fine scholar, and his extensive library is an unfailing resource. He is passionately fond of his child; while Julia has only dress and society."

"I don't see that her condition is so pitiful," said Lois; "but does his wife take no interest in her boy?"

"When he has a handsome new suit of clothes she takes him out walking with her, and buys bonbons as a bribe to induce him to say that he loves her best;

but no amount of candy will induce him to admit that he loves any one better than dear papa."

"Then has she no care of the child at home?" asked Lois.

"No; 'old Fred,' as she calls her husband, and the Irish nurse take entire charge of him. I will tell you a secret about Mr. Warrington, Lois, which may account, in part, for his dreamy look. Soon after he was married he began to take opium for violent neuralgia, and the practice so grew upon him that we feared he might be that most pitiful of all human ruins,—an opium-eater."

"Did it not mortify his wife excessively?"

"No; she did not appear to mind it much. She was very intimate then with a friend of her mother's, —a Mrs. Hermine,—who called, with her husband, to go out with Julia every evening. Mr. Warrington was supposed to be engrossed in some deep study in the quiet recesses of his own library. He has published some wonderfully learned 'monographs,' I believe they are called, upon cuneiform inscriptions and kindred subjects, and all oddities of appearance and manner are charged to them. But he was roused from the fatal dream by the dawning intelligence of his child; and when he found that he depended on him not only for love, but for daily care, he made a noble effort and shook off the deadly habit at once. I cannot help being astonished at his success, while I admire his courage and patience."

"Is it an interesting child?" asked Lois.

"Yes; he is a bright, handsome boy, with unusually engaging ways, though old-fashioned and precocious

in his speech. His father brought him into the parlor to see me, the other day when I called there; and Mr. Forlis, who was also present, remarked upon the beauty of Freddie's eyes, saying that they exactly resembled his mother's. This pleased Julia, of course, so much that she called the child to her, lifting him into her lap and taking a good look at him, probably for the first time in his life. The child submitted with an air of restraint and forced politeness, but evidently longing to regain his father, who was ready to take him for a drive. Mr. Warrington consults the doctor constantly as to what diet and course of life will best suit his boy, and follows all his directions implicitly."

"Cousin Mary," said Lois, "do you really *love* Cousin Julia?"

"Well, yes, dear," said Mrs. Norton, "I really do love her *now*. I should be sorry to see you grow to be so accomplished a woman of the world as she is; but she has many fine traits of character. It is unfortunate that she does not love her husband and child, and in bad taste for her so openly to parade her indifference to them; but there is much in her early education to excuse her deficiencies. When we first came to New Orleans to live, the doctor's practice was small, and his absorption in his medical studies great. Julia hardly came near us, though she is a niece of my mother's, and never invited us to any of her entertainments. Roger, who felt very bitterly toward her on that account for awhile, said it was because she was waiting to see what position we would take in society, before she committed herself in regard to us. A series of family afflictions prevented my accepting the invi-

tations we had when we first came here, and the doctor did not care to go into society without me, so we rarely met her abroad. The doctor did not get his books here until we had fully decided to remain, and Mr. Warrington first showed his kindness to us by giving my husband the entrance to his library, which, among its treasures, has many fine medical works, the property of a deceased brother. The doctor met Mrs. Warrington occasionally in his visits to the library, and our intercourse became more frequent, until, for the last five or six years, we have been rather intimate; yet I pity her more than I love her. She came to me once for sympathy, when she was in what she calls one of her 'black moods,' and said that I was the only real friend she had in the world, and that she would rather come to me when in trouble than to any one else. She put her head upon my shoulder that day, and cried as if her heart would break. Such a tempest of passionate sobs and tears I never saw before, and I think they unloosed the barriers to my affections, and she *wept* herself fully into my heart. I know she often has such bursts of overpowering emotion, and I am constantly feeling sorry for her, even when I see her in her gayest moods. And you see her early history—" Here Mrs. Norton was interrupted by the entrance of a servant, who announced that Mrs. Warrington was down in the parlor, and wished to know if she could come up.

"Yes; tell her that we are in the sitting-room," said Mrs. Norton. They heard the rustle of heavy silk on the stairway, and the next minute, while their faces wore the half-guilty expression often seen on people on the sudden appearance of one who has just

formed the subject of conversation, Mrs. Warrington entered. She wore a dress of rich, dark, wine-colored satin, and seemed to have joined the party for the express purpose of completing the picture of "Past, Present, and Future." Her quick eye immediately caught the effect, and she exclaimed, "Lois, you must be sitting for your picture, with the rosy light from those curtains falling so prettily over you; and that floating mass of wavy hair is all your own, too, is it not? Your complexion stands the daylight splendidly, while I dare not go on the street without a veil."

These compliments were signs to Mrs. Norton that Julia wanted a favor of Lois, and she wondered what it could possibly be. Lois answered that she thought "brunettes had decidedly the advantage of the blondes at night, when the gas-light brought out all their charms."

"That would be very consoling to me," said Mrs. Warrington, "if I could agree with you. However, I intend having such a beautiful new dress for the next ball that people will be too busy looking at my toilette to notice the defects of the wearer. Now I shall not tell you what it is, but a point-lace over-dress that I bought this morning at Olimpe's is part of it. By the way, Mary, I would like to see if yours is of much finer quality than mine, though I am almost sure it is, for there is not a piece of lace in New Orleans that can compare with that over-dress of yours the doctor brought you from Paris. Would you mind ringing the bell and sending for it?"

Julia knew perfectly well that Mrs. Norton never

allowed any hands but her own to touch her treasures of lace, and it was with the quiet satisfaction of one who has accomplished her object that she saw Mrs. Norton leave the room, eager to bring them, in order to give ocular evidence of their superiority.

"Lois," said Mrs. Warrington, as soon as the door closed, "I came especially this morning to find out when you are going to pay me a visit; for, of course, I will consider it very unfair if you do not spend half your time in New Orleans with me. I saw last night how youth and beauty can brighten up a lonely house, and I am impatient for the time to come when I shall enjoy the brightness you will bring ours. Mr. Warrington, who seldom remarks anything of the kind, was actually known to repeat a verse of poetry aloud last night in reference to you; it was Tennyson's:

"'Queen rose of the rose-bud garden of girls,
Come hither, the dances are done,
In gloss of satin and glimmer of pearls,
Queen lily and rose in one;
Shine out, little head, sunning over with curls,
To the flowers, and be their sun.'

Now if you can bring such pleasant fancies to the mind of 'old Fred,' I am sure you will fairly dazzle and enchant some of my young gentleman friends, and you must certainly come next week. It would be better for you to spend the first part of the winter with me, because my house is not only larger than this, and more suited to entertainments, but it is so much more central for society. The doctor is compelled to live in this neighborhood, because you know it is the place for physicians. In cities they all cluster

together, just as the churches do; but you would have a great many more visitors with me than you will out here on Prytania Street."

"I have promised Cousin Mary to spend the whole time with her," said Lois; "and, indeed, my guardian, Mr. Harrison, expressly said, in his letter giving me the required permission to come, that it was to Mrs. Norton's care alone that he would commit me. I should be obliged to write to him again if I went anywhere else, and will do so, and come to you, if he will allow me, the latter part of the winter."

"Now that is all nonsense about Mr. Harrison's permission; for I know, judging from his letter to Mary, that he is the best-natured man in the world, and would not mind your coming to me without asking him. He has transferred you to Mary's guardianship for the season, and all I have to do to induce her to agree to your coming is to persuade her that you will really enjoy yourself more with me. Do you know that the doctor is actually as much in love with his wife as the day he married her? and that Darby and Joan style is not particularly entertaining to young people. Mr. Warrington, too, joins heartily in this invitation; he has heard that you are fond of books, and is anxious to show you some of his literary treasures. But I do not intend you shall gratify any possible bookish taste you may have: you've had enough of books in your school-days to last you for awhile, and I intend to form a league with you against the peace of society this winter. We can just take New Orleans by storm," and Julia's dark eyes flashed magnificently. "Only think of the full houses we two would draw on our

reception days, and the grand dinner-parties and 'Germans' we would give. You have not seen my ball-room yet, have you? Well, I must show it you, and hope you will soon be dancing a grande galop in it."

Mrs. Warrington conversed with the greatest rapidity, scarcely stopping to take breath, lest Mary should return before she had presented all the plausible inducements possible for the beguiling of her guest away from her.

"And then we should have the fun of being envied and hated by all the women for taking their beaux and lovers away from them. I always think it a sign of superiority in a woman when she is disliked by her own sex, and you will find that most of the men think so, too. I love dearly to tease people, don't you, Lois? I call it '*stirring them up*,' because I never let my victims escape until I have succeeded in getting them completely roused."

"I never tried such an amusement," said Lois; "but I don't think my taste will run in that way."

"Now, don't tell me that, child, and try to look so demure all the time, while I can see the mischief sparkling in your eyes sometimes, though you try hard to hide it. You may play the saint with other people, because that pensive look just suits your style, and it will doubtless bag your game; but you and I must understand each other fully, if we are going to form a combination. I must tell you how much fun I had in 'stirring up' Madame Durand, the other day," she continued, with a mischievous laugh. "I congratulated her upon her daughter's engagement to Mr. Harden, who is a notorious gambler, and anything but a desir-

able parti. She informed me, indignantly, that her daughter was not engaged to him, and hardly had any acquaintance with him. 'I beg your pardon, madame,' I said; 'but I felt sure, when I saw them together in Mrs. Tilton's conservatory the other evening, that Mademoiselle Durand must be engaged to him, as he was leaning tenderly over her, and kissing her hand in such a lover-like fashion!' Of course, the old lady was furious, and used some very strong French expressions. She said that she was going home immediately to talk to the méchante about it; and I laughed to myself all the evening, as I thought what a scolding that pert, black-eyed Durand girl would get."

Meanwhile Mrs. Norton had taken down from the topmost shelf of her wardrobe a long, green box, from which she drew the precious lace over-dress, valuable as a proof of the constant affection and thoughtfulness of her husband, but doubly valuable now, since her cousin Julia had condescended to praise it,—a condescension with which Mrs. Warrington rarely gratified her cousin or friends, when their dress or adornments were the objects of her criticism. Mrs. Norton unfolded the lace and looked at it lovingly before she took it to Julia for inspection. She returned to the room just as Mrs. Warrington had finished the narrative that explained to Lois her cousin Julia's idea of fun.

"Has your over-dress a border like this, Julia?" asked Mrs. Norton, spreading out her own, whose very existence Mrs. Warrington had forgotten by this time. "Look how very delicate the tracery of this vine is!"

"Yes, it is perfectly exquisite!" said Julia; "but I

think that mine, as a whole, is of rather a prettier pattern. Suppose you come and see it to-morrow; by that time Olimpe will have sent it home. And then," she whispered to Lois, as she took leave, "I can reconcile Mary to the idea of your coming to me very soon."

"Now, what shall I do?" thought the foolish Lois, when her two cousins had gone down-stairs. "I have no doubt that I would have a glorious time if I went there for awhile."

"Glorious time, indeed!" said the wiser self. "Could you not see, silly child, that she wanted you for a selfish purpose? Everything that is *new*, in a contracted set of fashionable people, is attractive at first, and you would find any popularity you might have, dearly purchased, if acquired under her tuition. Does not your instinct tell you that you would be safer here, in this home of comparative quiet and true affection? Ask your cousin Mary to say to-morrow that she cannot allow you to leave her, or to transfer her charge to another, without your guardian's consent."

CHAPTER VIII.

"'Tis strange to see the humors of these men,
These great aspiring spirits that should be wise."
DANIEL: *Tragedy of Philotas.*

ABOUT a fortnight after Mrs. Warrington's unsuccessful visit to her cousins, she was walking to and fro in her parlors, arrayed in an evening dress, waiting for them to take her up as they drove by, en route for the opera. "Old Fred" had been off duty for several days, because he had taken it upon himself to dismiss the pretty Irish belle in "high life below stairs," for neglecting little Fred, and so was obliged to act as nurse himself until a steady woman could be procured to take that position. It may have been that sitting beside the little crib telling fairy-tales to his boy, while the soft little hand was pressed tenderly within his own, was more to his taste than going to sleep over an opera he had heard two dozen times. He was now posted as sentinel outside the front door, but had a most unsoldierlike appearance, rolled up into a sort of knot, against the corner of the house, in the moonlight. He had just finished the story of "Jack and his Beanstalk" up-stairs, with numerous original variations of his own, principally of a scientific character, which, together with his monotonous voice, had the desired effect of putting the child to sleep. Perhaps he was thinking of the airy structures he used to build on just

such moonlight nights as this on the banks of the Red River, where laid his father's plantation; but the beanstalk leading to them, that he had once thought strong and real enough for the feet of an active climber, had long ago crumbled away, and left only a heap of white ashes on his heart, while the castles themselves were gradually receding into space, and growing fainter and fainter to his dim vision every year. Now that they were going so fast and far, he liked occasionally to trace their outlines, and note in the pale ruins what they once had been. His thoughts were brought suddenly to a close by the stopping of a carriage before the door, and he rose and went to the woman who had once been the queen of his castles in Spain, but was now only "the tyrant of his brown-stone dwelling," and attended her to the carriage.

What business had this man, ugly and awkward enough to represent an ogre in the fairy-tale, to do with air-castles and beautiful princesses? Often the tenderest hearts and most vivid imaginations belong to the plainest exteriors. And for the reverse of this, take, as an example, the beautiful, queenly woman for whom he was holding open the gate. The heart beneath that exquisitely-shaped crimson satin bodice would have been as hollow as the round glass ornament in her hair, had it not contained the image of herself; and everything slipped off of its surface as easily as from the shining gew-gaw.

The highest flight her imagination ever took, was when she had a happy idea in reference to a new fancy dress, or designed a beautiful pattern, with

Cupids among flowers, that was to serve for embroidery on a flounce.

But when she considered it necessary to express love that she did not feel, by a tender look from under lovely long lashes, that raised themselves coyly from cheeks dyed with a forced blush, her handsome eyes, melting with liquid sweetness, could be trusted to do it exceedingly well. Eyes, lips, and cheek had attained perfection in the art, after a training of fifteen years.

* * * * * *

It was entirely a family-party that occupied Mrs. Norton's box that night, consisting only of herself, her husband, and two cousins, because the open boxes were only capable of seating four persons; but no sooner had the curtain fallen the first time, than they were surrounded by a swarm of black coats. Mr. Forlis was the first to arrive, and in order to bring him around to her side of the box, Mrs. Warrington said, "Mr. Forlis, I have not seen that handsome cousin of yours—ah, I mean nephew, but indeed I never can think of him as being younger than you—since his return from Mobile. Is he making a hermit of himself, or is he about to sacrifice himself at the shrine of Miss d'Obrie?"

"You are nearer right in the first supposition than in the second; Edgar seems to care less for society every day. I have asked him several times to go with me to see Miss Carrol, but he always says that he never finds popular ladies interesting. But," said Mr. Forlis, quickly, noticing that Lois was hearing what he said, "I told him there were exceptions to every

rule, and he could change his mind immediately upon seeing your cousin. And now, Miss Carrol," turning to her, "when you meet this misanthropic nephew of mine, you must punish him for the treason he has uttered against you, and teach him that all beauties are not stupid."

When the curtain had fallen on the second act, Lois exclaimed, "Oh dear, I thought I would be spared that annoyance this evening!"

"What is it, my dear?" asked kind Mrs. Norton, quickly.

"Being bored by Mr. Fortinbras," said Lois; "I see him on the other side of the house, staring in this direction."

"I hope he may go astray before he reaches us," said Dr. Norton. "He is the most pompous, tiresome little man in the world, and his talk is a perpetual stream of verbiage."

"I think he is really good sport," said Mrs. Warrington, who had a keener sense of the ridiculous than any of the others. "I always feel inclined to ask him how many hours he spends every day studying the dictionary, to get up such elaborate speeches as he does. I shall reserve the question until he really bores me, and then extinguish him quite."

"He has a set of stereotyped, high-sounding phrases," said Lois, "that he uses on all occasions, and generally starts subjects of conversation with a view of bringing them in apropos. There is a regular formula to which I have been treated each time I met him, and I dread it as I would an avalanche."

"I shall throw him off the track this evening," said

Mrs. Warrington, "and avert the avalanche from your devoted head, if possible."

"I do not think even your powers are equal to that," said Mrs. Norton; "he is equally at home on any track, and polysyllables roll from his tongue in all directions. But he is never malicious, and I always listen to him attentively, because it seems to gratify him so much, and this little pleasure I cannot deny him."

"How good you are, Cousin Mary," said Lois; "and since you are all so much more patient and charitable than I am, I shall always send him to you when he wearies me."

Just as she finished speaking, a small gentleman, redolent of hair-oil and extract of violet, stepped up to the box. His hair, moustache, and whiskers were of a greenish-yellow color; his cravat and complexion of the same, and probably Nature intended it for variety when she made his eyes of a yellowish-green. He only needed a coat spotted with the two colors to be mistaken for a frog in an upright position, to which his features bore a remarkable likeness; and the resemblance was heightened by his manner of walking, with arms uplifted and hands hanging.

"Good-evening, ladies," said Mr. Fortinbras, dangling his fingers very near Lois's head. "I am overwhelmed with inexpressible happiness at seeing you. I have been impatiently anticipating this sublime pleasure all the evening, but I was preceded by such a galaxy of New Orleans beaux and brave sons, who encircled your loge, that it prevented my venturing to put in an appearance until I perceived that the

crowded ranks were diminishing. I am especially charmed to observe your radiant sanitary conditions, after you have passed through such an incredible amount of fatiguing dissipation as during the past week."

"Doctor," said Mr. Jennings, who had come up and bowed during Mr. Fortinbras's long speech, "you should have seen the jolly row in front of the opera-house a moment ago."

"What was it, and how did it happen?" said the doctor.

"I witnessed that battle," said Mr. Fortinbras, who always thought it his duty to answer questions, no matter to whom they were addressed, thinking that he could be better relied upon to give valuable information and could relate a story in language so much superior to that of any one else; "and, doctor, I will be pleased to give you the intelligence you desire in reference to it. It occurred between two native Hibernians, who became belligerently inclined on account of having imbibed too freely of some intoxicating liquor. They struggled violently for the duration of several minutes, and fought as valiantly as the Horatii and the Curiatii, and—"

"If you said they fought like two cats, 'twould be more to the purpose," said Mr. Jennings, smiling mischievously. There was a tacit agreement among all the young men that Mr. Fortinbras was to be "taken down," as they expressed it, on all occasions. He had never been popular with them; because, whenever he was present, he engrossed the conversation with his silly platitudes, uttered in such a pompous way that, to

himself, they doubtless appeared the height and depth of wisdom. This was irritating to brighter but more modest men, and but for the perfect armor of self-conceit which encased the lucky little fellow, serious quarrels might have ensued. All shafts of ridicule fell harmless at his feet, from his inability to understand anything that touched his personality unpleasantly. Mr. Fortinbras gave Mr. Jennings a surprised look from his large, protruding eyes, which said, very plainly, "Young man, I am astonished at your presuming to suggest epithets to me,—Demosthenes Fortinbras,—and vulgar expressions, too, with which I would not sully my lips." But, turning to the rest of the party, he continued, as if there had been no interruption,—"as the Horatii and Curiatii; and the combat raged furiously, until the smallest of the contending parties inserted his teeth into the flesh of the other in about this locality." He brought his right hand around with a swing, intended to be very dramatic, and clapped it upon his left arm. "But the victim of this atrocious cruelty discovered that he was powerless to release himself from his assailant, and gave a cry of wild despair which brought up the guardians of the peace to the rescue, who conveyed the frantic Hibernians through the surging crowds to a place of confinement."

Dr. Norton drew an audible sigh of relief as the prosy narrative ended, and Mr. Fortinbras walked with a stately, frog-like bearing to Lois's side, a glow of satisfaction illuminating his features at his successful oration. He leaned forward, with his elbows upon the railings, and looked down with a smile of bland

complacency upon Lois, who involuntarily shrank back a few inches in her chair.

Mr. Jennings, despairing of being able to exchange a word with Lois while the irrepressible little man was near her, walked away, and Mr. Forlis took his place.

"Miss Carrol," said Mr. Fortinbras, "I have understood that you have literary tastes, and occupy yourself with the perusal of the published productions of great minds. That is such an unusual recommendation to a young lady of the period, that I was immediately immensely impressed in your favor, and determined hereafter to gravitate in your direction as frequently as professional interest permitted, to discuss with you the lucubrations of our favorite authors."

"Ah," thought Lois, "I am sorry I have any sort of attraction, if this is a specimen of the material that 'gravitates' towards me."

"Now, I have no doubt," continued Mr. Fortinbras, "that we would discover a mutual admiration of kindred spirits, and that you have gone into ecstatic raptures over my favorite novelist,—Miss Augusta Evans."

"I should judge that you were a great admirer of her books, which are mostly copied from classical dictionaries, translated from common English into words of ten syllables, which language you doubtless understand better than I can pretend to do."

Mr. Fortinbras supposed this a compliment, and was bowing low as Mr. Jennings rejoined them, saying, "Mr. Fortinbras, your friend, Mr. Moor, requested me to ask you to join him for a few moments. He is

anxious to consult you in a matter of consequence, or he would not disturb you."

Mr. Fortinbras was delighted with the opportunity of showing his importance, and went away swelling into a greater resemblance than ever to a well-known amphibious animal. (I use this phrase advisedly, knowing that if my good friend should recognize his portrait in these pages, which cannot begin to do him justice, he would be much better pleased with the comparison than if I simply made use of the word *frog*, of only four small letters.)

As soon as he was out of sight, they were obliged to give vent to their long-suppressed laughter, and Mrs. Norton said, "Fie, Mr. Jennings! you are playing him a trick, I am afraid."

"No, indeed," he said; "Mr. Moor is really waiting for him, at my request, however; and it is a piece of self-sacrifice for which I shall ever feel grateful to my friend."

"And so shall we, I am sure," said Mrs. Warrington; "I meant to quiz him, but his cool vanity surprised me into forgetting it. His conceit is as endless as his talk. He reminds me of one of those jugglers who draw yard after yard of paper-ribbon from their mouths that no more comes from their throats than Mr. Fortinbras's words come from brains. He has them all crumpled up in his mouth, as the jugglers have the ribbon; and, indeed, it looks large enough to hold an unabridged dictionary."

"He is perfectly absurd, and the most conceited creature I ever saw," said Dr. Norton, who always went to extremes in his likes and dislikes: his friends

had no faults and his enemies no virtues. "I really think he ought to be put in an insane asylum."

"Miss Carrol," said Mr. Jennings, "I came to ask you to walk with me in the foyer, but Mr. Fortinbras was making himself so exceedingly agreeable that I could not think of tearing you away from him; and now it is too late, as the singing is commencing. But I shall come for you at the next entre-act, if you will permit me. Au revoir."

"I will suspect," said Mr. Forlis, "that Miss Carrol is trying to keep up the reputation the Kentucky ladies have for flirting, if she encourages that young Mr. Jennings. He is engaged to Miss Savage."

"Is this really true?" said Lois. "I thought Cousin Julia was joking when she spoke of it just now. I must beware, indeed, lest I gain the enmity of a Savage!"

"And Lois," whispered her better self, "you must refrain from flirting for better reasons than that."

Lois knew that the slightest encouragement would have an effect upon him in his present state of mind; and resolved that, when he came for the promised promenade, she would devise an excuse for not going with him, and keep him at a distance hereafter. But some words spoken in a distinctly audible tone by a young lady passing, who regarded her fixedly with an unamiable expression of countenance, arrested her attention:

"Who is that girl with the dyed yellow hair, sitting by Mrs. Warrington, in Dr. Norton's box?" said the voice.

"Hush!" said her companion, "she looks this way

and will hear you; that is—" but the rest of the sentence was whispered.

It was not only evident that Miss Carrol was "the girl with dyed hair," but that the speech was intended for her ears; and when Lois found that Miss Savage was the speaker, she concluded that it would be an unnecessary self-denial to forego her walk with Mr. Jennings out of consideration for the possible feelings of so rude a person. As she rose to take his arm a few minutes after, when he came for her, there was a gleam in her bright eyes that caused Mrs. Warrington, who watched her pass out, to say to herself, "I knew from the first that she was full of mischief; and if I were to break lances with her, it would be—"Greek meet Greek."

CHAPTER IX.

"My lady's tongue is like the meadow blades,
That cut you stroking them with idle hands."

MRS. WARRINGTON gradually glided from the habit of paying sociable calls on her cousins in the morning, to that of being regularly with them on their reception evenings, when she found that the élite of New Orleans crowded their parlors. It had come to be understood that, as "old Fred" was prevented by his domestic duties from escorting her, Mr. Forlis should

offer his services on these occasions. And they were so often accepted, that Mrs. Norton was surprised one day to see Mrs. Warrington come in alone before lunch-time. Lois had been down on Canal Street, shopping, for some time; and on her return home, passed a house where Dr. Norton had just paid a professional call, and was about to enter his carriage. As he was not immediately engaged, he proposed driving home with her to luncheon.

On entering the sitting-room they saw, instead of a tempting repast spread out ready for them as usual, Mrs. Norton with her face buried in her handkerchief, seemingly in deep grief.

"Has anything happened, dear Mary? What is the matter, my darling?" impetuously said the doctor, throwing his arms about her. "What has distressed you? tell me quickly, love."

"Nothing, only I am very foolish," said Mrs. Norton; choking down the rising sobs.

"I am sure," said her husband, "that Julia Warrington has been with you this morning; has she not, dear?"

"Yes; she has just gone," said Mrs. Norton, drying her eyes quickly, and going into her chamber to finish her cry in solitude, rather than be the cause of a tirade against Julia. But the storm came, nevertheless, though only Lois had the benefit of it.

"It is simply outrageous in Julia to treat Mary so!" said Dr. Norton, beginning to walk the floor; "and she pretends to be so fond of her too; but it is my opinion that she has not a single particle of feeling: it looks very much like it for her to behave in this way. Mary

is uniformly kind, attentive, and affectionate to her; and always ready to attribute good motives and to find good traits in her character, when no one else will do so."

Lois did not understand the strange scene till the doctor's next words threw some light upon it.

"But she shall refrain from her favorite amusement of 'stirring people up,' as she calls it, in this house, for I will not have my gentle wife troubled by her. Julia can be the most fascinating woman in the world when she chooses, but sometimes she is a demon incarnate. But I shall pay her back in her own coin, and annoy her in return. A word of mine will be quite sufficient to detach Henri from her side for a little while." The doctor took up his hat and gloves, and, as he was leaving the room, asked Lois if she would not go and soothe her cousin Mary. "I am really too much vexed to go to her myself, for I always wound her feelings if I say anything against Mrs. Warrington, no matter how much she deserves it."

And Lois heard him giving vent to *his* feelings in rather strong language as he went down to his carriage. She would have felt inclined to laugh at the doctor's impetuosity, if she had not felt too much sympathy for her cousin Mary, to whom she hurried immediately to see if anything could be done for her. Mrs. Norton was lying on the sofa, with red eyes, and her frame shaken by occasional long-drawn sighs. Lois knelt beside her, and putting one arm round her said, "Tell me, sweet cousin, what it is?"

"I am very sorry Roger saw me crying," said Mrs. Norton, "and I know it is very foolish to give a second

thought to anything Julia says, but I cannot help it sometimes. She intimates such horrible things."

"She only does it to tease you, ma belle," said Lois, caressing the white hand she held, and pressing a kiss on the flushed cheek of Mrs. Norton; "but what did she say this morning?"

"It really does not amount to much, when I come to repeat it; and, very fortunately, it did not move my composure while she was here to enjoy my agitation. She said she saw Roger last Saturday in a shop with pretty Mrs. Davis, and that he went about shopping with her all day, looking the very picture of devotion the whole time. Julia asked me if he told me of it when he came home that evening; and when I answered 'No,' she said she thought I would never hear of it, unless she told me. It was not so much what she said, you know, Lois, but her significant tone, that made it seem so unpleasant."

"Cousin Julia does make such mountains out of mole-hills," said Lois, "and I am so delighted you did not betray any emotion while she was with you. Let me tell you the whole foundation of her story. You know that Eleanor Markam, an old school friend, has sent to me from Natchez to purchase her trousseau for her, and I have been giving up an hour of my precious morning slumber in order to accomplish the necessary shopping. I went to Olimpe's on Saturday for some purchases, and Cousin Roger, as you know, escorted me down that far. The checks Eleanor sent were made payable to the doctor's order, which fact I had forgotten until we reached the shop; so he came in with me to sign them. Mrs. Davis happened

to be there at the time, and I seized the chance to ask her opinion as to the quality of some lace. You know I am not experienced in such matters, and she has most excellent taste. The doctor had gone to the book-keeper's desk for a pen; and when he returned with the checks, I asked his opinion also of the lace. We were all three of us looking at it together, when I caught a glimpse of Cousin Julia passing the window, into which she had been looking, probably, for some minutes. Beyond the ordinary courtesy which a good doctor certainly extends to his patients, there was not a word passed between them but about her health and the lace. The whole interview lasted five minutes, and I feel as if I owed Cousin Roger an apology for mentioning anything so trivial. You are not well, dear cousin; our late hours have shaken your nerves, or you would not have allowed such a malicious falsehood to trouble you. She has a perfect passion for teasing people, but she might spare her best friend, which you certainly are."

"I did not exactly believe her at the time," said Mrs. Norton, ashamed of her emotion; "but she told it so plausibly that I could not help imagining how unhappy I would be if Roger really were to prefer the society of anybody else to mine; but I am wrong to talk so, when I know how fully I am blessed with the best treasure a woman can have,—her husband's devoted and constant affection. I feel quite differently since I have had some sensible talk on the subject. I love you more than ever, dear Lois; kiss me again, and promise me that you will never let Julia persuade you not to love me."

"No one can ever do that, sweet cousin. I could not have loved my own mother more, if I had been permitted to grow up with her and learn to know her worth. Now I shall bathe your head, draw the curtains, and go and look after our lunch; a cup of tea will do you a world of good."

Lois did not see Mrs. Warrington again until about a week after this, when they met in the dressing-room at a large ball, where they found themselves alone for a few moments. Julia's face had a look of concern, as she advanced to greet her cousin.

"Oh, Lois," she said, "I am so sorry to hear the bad news that is reported this evening! You have not heard it, though, I suppose, as it is very natural that no one would like to tell *you!*"

"What news?" asked Lois, quickly. "It cannot concern me."

"Yes; but I don't know that I ought to tell you," answered Julia, with such a pitiful look that her cousin almost believed it genuine, and for that reason was so much the more alarmed; "because it might distress you sufficiently to mar your enjoyment for the evening."

"Tell me immediately, please," said Lois; "it would be worse to keep me in suspense if you are in earnest."

"I rather think, though, that you deserve to feel a little badly," said Mrs. Warrington, speaking in a provokingly slow tone, "because it is entirely your fault, and, if she dies, you should look upon yourself as her murderess."

"As whose murderess?" Lois almost screamed.

"Hush!" said Julia, putting her hand over Lois's mouth; "if you will be quiet, I will tell you."

Her young cousin's trembling frame and white, compressed lips gave her as keen delight as the taste of blood does the vampire. "You know you have been making a fool of young Jennings lately, permitting him to be your constant escort regardless of the misery he was causing his fiancée, that lovely Miss Savage. The troubles of her heart have wrought upon her so that she is dangerously ill, and is not expected to live through the night; indeed, she may be dead ere this; and at whose door then does the guilt of her suffering lie?"

Lois did not wait to hear any more, but broke away from Mrs. Warrington, whose look just then reminded her of an enraged tigress. Her trembling fingers could scarcely open the door to rejoin her cousin Roger, who awaited her in the hall. "Tell me quickly," she said, with almost breathless agitation, "is Miss Savage really dying?"

"Yes," he replied; "but why should that make you so unhappy, Lois?"

"Because she was engaged to Mr. Jennings, and they say her heart is broken by his neglect. You know he has often been with us lately."

Lois sank upon her chair with a face as white as her dress, and an expression of great trouble upon it.

"Calm yourself, my dear child," Dr. Norton hastened to say; "your informant was certainly mistaken. I was called as a consulting physician this evening to the house of Mr. Savage. I know but little of his family, but my patient is a girl of twelve, sent home from boarding-school with a sore throat, which has rapidly developed into diphtheria, and she will doubtless

die before the morning. The elder sister whom I saw must be Mr. Jenning's reported fiancée. Her appetite is as good and her temper as disagreeable as usual; so her heart, if she owns one, has not suffered from any possible flirtation of yours; though, perhaps, her temper has. She asked me this evening when that 'yellow-haired cousin' of my wife was going home."

"Ah, I feel so relieved!" said Lois, taking a long breath. "I am so glad that Julia was mistaken."

"This, then, is her revenge for the defection of Forlis," said the doctor; "and in the future, my child, remember that she does not understand the meaning of truth, and is often *willfully* mistaken."

"How could she have behaved so?" said Lois, indignantly. "I understand how she tortured dear Cousin Mary now, and shall try to prevent it in future. But let us go down immediately, and I will show her by my gayety that I am not as much stirred up as she expected. But it has had one good effect upon me," she said, as they descended the stairs; "I will hereafter avoid the very appearance of flirting. You know I have been flirting with Mr. Jennings lately, because once at the opera Miss Savage vexed me, by loudly proclaiming that my hair was dyed."

"That is right, my child," said the doctor; "I never approved of it, though, of course, I would not interfere with your amusement by saying——"

"Will Miss Carrol give me this waltz?" asked a gentleman friend, as they neared the entrance to the ball-room.

"Yes." Miss Carrol had made no engagement, and the color soon returned to her cheeks and the bright

smiles to her lips, as she circled away in the exhilarating dance. She was dressed entirely in white that evening, with pearl ornaments, and the only color about her was the coronet of her golden hair, the brown flash of her eyes, and the pink tinting of cheek and lips. She was, truly, "the observed of all observers," and her merry peals of girlish laughter came ringing out from the little court she held at one end of the room when her dance was over. She had never been so beautiful as at that moment,—the reaction from the excitement she had undergone up-stairs, together with the intoxication of her triumphant entrance, and the adulation received from all about her, had entirely dissipated the gentle sadness which the loneliness of her former life had stamped upon her features, and their pensive beauty had disappeared in the full glow of womanly loveliness.

To Mr. Forlis she came as a new revelation, and he stood watching her as if spell-bound. She was still laughing, and making whimsical replies to the small wit which passes for the genuine article in the excitement of the ball-room, when she became aware, with an inexplicable feeling of consciousness, that a pair of large, searching dark eyes were fixed upon her, under whose penetrating gaze she felt such an uncomfortable sensation that her own eyes were involuntarily drawn in the direction whence it came. They met those of a dark, grave-looking man, of perhaps thirty years of age, who was leaning against a door at a short distance, evidently amusing himself by watching, with almost a cynical expression, the energetic efforts of each man to obtain a look or word from the new belle, and

the condescension with which she dealt out smiles. Although she had grown accustomed to feeling complacent and self-possessed under the gaze of a great many eyes, these vexed her more than she would have been willing to acknowledge to herself. They said so plainly, "You are a vain, silly child; and, as for those men, I feel a great contempt for them, because they make fools of themselves to gratify your vanity."

For an instant she was almost angry: she felt that he had no right to annoy her with such an unpleasant stare; although, had it been one of admiration, she would not have objected so seriously.

It required no great effort to continue hearing and answering such speeches as were made to her, which she endeavored to do with an appearance of interest; but she was intensely conscious all the while that the stranger at the door was observing every action, word, or smile. She knew, a few minutes later, without looking up, that he moved away, and left the room.

"Who was the gentleman who stood leaning there a moment ago, and honored me with such an unpleasant stare?" she asked.

"That wath Edgar Treville," said a gentleman who lisped, "the nephew of Mithter Forlith; but I am thure that Mith Carrol thould not object to being looked at. A man would be inthenthible, indeed, who could path her by without obtherving her."

"Yes, he is an odd fellow," said Mr. Jennings, "who cares very little for society, and seldom allows his handsome person to grace a ball-room, though he is eminently fitted to shine there, as indeed everywhere else." Jennings was willing enough to praise

Treville, who he saw had incurred Miss Carrol's displeasure, and thereby put himself beyond the chance of becoming his rival in her gracious favor.

"Yeth," said the man to whom the letter S was a continual stumbling-block, "he really dantheth remarkably well, although he very theldom indulgeth in thuch a thing, and the ladieth conthider it quite a rare pleathure to be athked by him to walth."

Later in the evening, when Lois had finished a quadrille, and was talking to Mr. Jennings, who persisted in his devotion under any amount of discouragement, Mr. Forlis entered, accompanied by his nephew, Edgar Treville. They took their stand near Lois, and it was not necessary that her vanity should be very active to carry the conviction to her that they were talking of her at that moment, but it told her, by interpreting Mr. Forlis's expression, that his criticism was favorable. It was not so easy to judge what were the thoughts of the younger man, so cold and proud-looking, of whom she had heard so much ever since she had been in New Orleans.

"How delightful it would be to humble that haughty Treville," thought naughty Lois; "and I shall do it if I have the opportunity, which I am bound to have, of course, as Mr. Forlis will certainly bring him up and introduce him directly. I suppose that was what they came in for." And she glanced around to see if they were moving towards her. Her eyes met those of the nephew, but she dropped her head immediately.

A blush overspread her face, caused by the belief that he was reading her thoughts with those strange, haunting eyes, that seemed to look into her very soul.

She had the guilty consciousness that all her thoughts were not such as he could perceive without increasing his seeming contempt. Instead, however, of coming forward for the expected introduction, they turned and walked to the other end of the room, busily talking.

"So that is the little girl you have described to me in such glowing terms," said Edgar. "Well, I must acknowledge that your description is not overdrawn. Her beauty is marvelous, and her hair is of such a curious, lovely color. It can hardly be called yellow, but looks like burnished gold, with a stream of moonlight falling on it."

"Really, Edgar, you are becoming poetical; but her character is as lovely as her appearance. I suppose you will come with me now and be introduced to her."

"Her features and form are alike exquisite enough to excite a poet's dream, and to bewilder a sober philosopher like myself. So much the greater reason, mon oncle, that I should not know her. She is probably as conscious of her charms as we are,—is doubtless a coquette of the first water,—and I do not care to enroll myself among the ranks of devoted subjects I saw around her awhile ago."

"You are a selfish fellow, Edgar," said Mr. Forlis, as they walked away; "you are not willing to receive an occasional smile from a pretty woman, unless you can engross them all. I think every beautiful face is a gift from God to the world, and that every man who looks upon it has a share in the good gift, inasmuch as he has a right to admire it. I suppose when you marry, you will shut your wife up in a harem."

"I certainly shall, if I find her at all inclined to flirtations," replied Edgar, laughing.

Mr. Forlis that evening asserted his right to admire according to his inclination, and his independence of Mrs. Warrington's wishes, for the first time since their flirtation began. He devoted himself during the entire evening to a rather good-looking stranger, whose tall form and bright complexion happened to please his fancy. He was not insensible to the agreeable fact that, on account of his own great height and dark style, he and the slender young lady with fair hair and light-blue eyes made a singularly handsome couple when dancing together.

No one would have supposed that Mrs. Warrington noted his wandering allegiance, as she flirted more outrageously than usual with every other man in the room. Dr. Norton, wishing to guard against her compromising herself by such behavior, went, at his wife's suggestion, and asked Julia to promenade with him. She could hardly refuse without seeming rude, so she complied, reluctantly leaving a dashing Colonel somebody, who hid his disappointment at this sudden interruption of his interesting flirtation, behind an enormous moustache. But she felt a consolation in thinking she could inflict upon Roger Norton the same disquietude she was secretly enduring in regard to the new and violent fancy of Mr. Forlis for the tall, fair stranger. So she relieved her mind as soon as she took his arm, by expressing her disgust at the conduct of the mutual friend whom they had begun to consider almost in the light of their own particular property.

"Is it not outrageous for Henri Forlis to flirt so

desperately with that ridiculously-tall girl? She looks like a May-pole, with all those flowers streaming around her in such a wretchedly-tasteless way."

"Why should not Henri dance with any one he pleases? I don't suppose he finds the arrangement of her flowers a sufficient reason for declining her society, when he likes her," said Dr. Norton, feeling great exultation in Mr. Forlis's courageous resumption of his independence, which he attributed partly to his own influence. He had always disliked the flirtation between his friend and Julia, though he did not in the least blame the former.

"But you will not think he ought to pay her the slightest civility, when I tell you she is a *Yankee*," said Mrs. Warrington, exulting in her turn; for she knew that she was speaking the word used by Southern people generally as a term of the strongest reproach, and would thus draw the doctor into partnership with her in her extreme dislike to the stranger.

"Is it possible that Henri could so lose his self-respect as to become interested in a Northern woman? No; I am sure he is not aware of the fact; for I have heard him express himself as bitterly on that subject as I do myself; and, indeed, the perfect congeniality of all our opinions has been the foundation of our great friendship; but 'tis doubtless a simple ball-room flirtation, that will cease when he discovers her nationality."

"That will certainly be very soon," said Julia, "for she has that disagreeable, nasal, Yankee whine to perfection, and I have no doubt that she is one of those Northern adventuresses who come down here and

pretend to be of some consequence at home, that they may wheedle rich men into marrying them."

"If that is the case," said the doctor, "she will think Henri's fortune a tempting morsel, ready for her to snap up, and she will make every effort to continue the acquaintance."

CHAPTER X.

"There are eyes which need only to look up, to touch every chord in a breast choked by the stifling atmosphere of stiff and stagnant society, and to call forth tones which might become the accompanying music of a life."—JEAN PAUL.

IT was quite apparent, they agreed, a few evenings after, that the Yankee lady—Miss Shanks—was an adventuress of the description Julia had mentioned, when they saw her in a conspicuous opera-box, which Mr. Forlis had procured for her, with that truant Frenchman playing the part of her devoted cavalier. Her mother sat beside her as chaperon, and also as a grim, lank prophecy of what her daughter's slender limbs and high cheek-bones would become when her pretty, fair skin had assumed those inevitable traces of the ravages of time, called wrinkles, and her blonde curls had lost their glossy, sunny color.

Congratulate yourself, fair reader, if your mother is still handsome at fifty. It is always pleasant when agreeable looks are the accompaniment of fine mental and moral traits, and the objects of our affection are

comely to the sight; but it is also, in the case of so near a relation, certainly a comfort to have such a favorable representation of your own possible future.

It was an amusing sight to see those quondam enemies—Dr. Norton and Mrs. Warrington—in close conference, condoling with each other in the most pathetic language over their common misfortune, and expressing their sorrow that their friend had fallen into the clutches of the Northern invader.

It was altogether rather an unpleasant evening for all the occupants of their box. It was impossible for Mrs. Norton to enjoy herself when she was aware that a single cloudlet hovered over her husband's horizon. Mr. Forlis was his chosen friend from boyhood, and it was a positive grief to him to be in the slightest degree estranged from him. And Lois had her vanity wounded afresh by the barbarous insensibility of Mr. Edgar Treville, who sat with the D'Obries just opposite. He did not seem to be in the least impressed by her charms, although he had so fine an opportunity of observing her. He had been the only gentleman in the room at her last ball whom she did not know, or who did not seek an introduction to her. Strange to say, however, her respect for him rose just in proportion to his seeming want of interest in her; and she found herself speculating upon the character of his intellect and the nature of his tastes. "I would not like him, though, I am sure," she said to herself, "so I will not think any more about him." But it was very questionable whether the next object that forced itself upon her was half so interesting. For Mr. Fortinbras, who had condescended lately to bestow a great deal of his

elegant society upon her, stood before her and croaked out, in his nasal tones, "Fair princess, I await your commands. Shall I accompany you into the foyer, where we can commune with each other in an uninterrupted interchange of the cogitations and sentiments of our souls?"

Lois had hitherto tolerated the little man with his ridiculous ways, but could not bear to leave her post of observation just now for any such "interchange," so she declined his invitation rather ungraciously.

"Mr. Fortinbras, do come around into the box," said Mrs. Warrington, anxious for a little amusement as a relief to the bitterness she had been expressing in unwarrantable terms against "that intriguing Yankee woman." "Take this seat," she continued, "and tell me, please, what you have been reading lately."

"I have been unable, recently, to find anything to suit my taste," he replied, "as I have perused all the old works of any celebrity, and I now feel myself under the necessity of weeping for new literary worlds to conquer. I disdain to bring my mind down to the level of the low standard of the majority of books of the present day. If you are a constant reader, Mrs. Warrington, I can doubtless count upon your distinguished sympathy in regard to the unfortunate circumstance that I have just mentioned. I have, however, during the past week, been amusing myself with light literature, and have finished Rawlingson's Herodotus. 'Tis simply for relaxation I read such works."

"I should suppose," said Mrs. Warrington, in such an exact imitation of his nasal tone and pompous manner, that it was only by a great effort that the

others were able to maintain their gravity, "that you require something of that description to relax your mind, after having it under such immense tension as it must be subjected to in the hours you devote to hard mental labor."

"Well, really, it scarcely requires any effort for me to study, and it is relaxation from the fatigues of professional life that I need," said Mr. Fortinbras, in an affected, blasé tone. Inwardly he was surprised to find that the handsome Mrs. Warrington was so much more intellectual than he had ever considered her, and so capable of appreciating himself. He mentally offered her an apology for the injustice he had done her in supposing her to be simply a giddy woman of fashion, with too much levity to appreciate a man of his calibre and talents. "In whose works are you most interested at present, madam?" he asked. "Perhaps I could be of service in making some valuable suggestions to you. I have had the advantage of a large experience in directing a judicious course of reading for a number of friends."

"Your exceeding kindness overwhelms me with gratitude," replied Julia, with a mischievous side-glance at Lois; "but I feel almost ashamed to mention the titles of the books I have been interested in lately, for I feel sure I would excite your contemptuous pity. I have just been reading some of the jolliest, wickedest French novels that I ever ought not to have read. Now," she said, with a merry laugh, "I see that I have forfeited your esteem forever, and I assure you that it almost breaks my heart. Have you met the distinguished Boston lady who is staying at the

St. Charles Hotel? Her name is Miss Shanks." Julia was growing very tired of the pompous bore, whom she now considered very slow fun, and an idea flashed into her mind of a way in which she could rid herself of him, and effect another purpose at the same time.

"Yes," said the stone with which she meant to kill two birds; "I had the honor of an introduction to that lady several evenings past."

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Warrington, "I remember hearing her mention that the only gentleman in New Orleans possessing conversational powers sufficient to induce her to listen, was a Mr. Fortinbras. I suppose she must have referred to you, and I can tell you that is no small compliment, coming from a clever Boston woman."

Mr. Fortinbras's face lighted up with a bilious blush of pleasure, and he very soon left them, saying he was afraid Miss Shanks would consider herself slighted, and never forgive him, if he did not go and converse with her.

Our party laughed when they saw him enter the box occupied by Miss Shanks, and take the seat beside her which Mr. Forlis offered him. Mrs. Warrington sat in silent expectation until the singing began, anticipating the entrance of the truant. But Mr. Forlis felt as guilty as a deserter to the enemy, who in a fit of idle search after diversion has left his own friends; and he had not the moral courage to face them when weary with wandering, lest he should find them in the humor of court-martialing him for his crime. So, instead of going to receive sentence from Mrs. Warrington's sharp tongue, he joined a knot of men in the foyer.

Lois missed him as much as any one. As none of the others were extremely fond of music, she had no one to give her the sympathy in her delight over the unusually fine singing, that would have formed half the pleasure in hearing it. It is so natural for us to glance around when we are filled with enthusiastic admiration, to see if our enjoyment is reflected upon the faces of others. Some of the most beautifully-plaintive strains in the opera of Le Prophéte were being exquisitely rendered by Madame Zuist's rich contralto voice, and Lois's keen appreciation of the lovely harmony needed vent in the interchange of expressions of delight with some one else. She did not care to hear it praised in Dr. Norton's energetic superlatives, that really meant nothing more than the habit of talking in a hyperbolical strain, which weakened the effect of his language greatly. That would have taken all the beauty from it. But with a slight, quick movement, she turned involuntarily towards the D'Obrie box, and found that Treville was looking deliberately, with satisfied eyes, fully upon her, and in their expression she seemed to find the fullest sympathy. She forgot to rejoice that the proud, cold man seemed at last conscious of her presence and beauty, and only rejoiced that she had met with an appreciation and love of music as deep as her own. She blushed as she turned again towards the stage, and he bent his head over the programme he held in his hand, as if to conceal the feelings called to his own face, while he tried to reason away the impression that encounter of glances had given him. "As a general thing," he said to himself, "these beautiful, fairy-like creatures are 'shallow-

hearted' and narrow-brained, but surely a *soul* looked from those lovely eyes. It is a *rara avis* undoubtedly, and there is so much the greater reason why I should not allow my uncle to persuade me to make her acquaintance. It would never do for me even to dream of falling in love. I will ever be shut out entirely from *that*, in the lonely life that I must lead. 'Tis strange how seldom one sees the rare combination of beauty, goodness, and intellect. Must it be attributed (as everything we cannot understand is) to a wise and just dispensation of Providence, that ugly women usually have the superior mental powers? I think the reason really is in the difference in education. When two children start in life, one a beauty and the other ill-favored, and with the same amount of natural intellectual gifts, the latter is educated and trained to trust entirely to her wit and cleverness to make for herself a position in the world, while the beauty has her vanity fed and nurtured from her very cradle, until it naturally grows out of all proportion with her other qualities, and she cares only to acquire the knowledge that will assist her in gaining the admiration to satisfy it. After all, I expect it will be safest to marry a plain woman, because they may make the best wives and mothers. But if this is the part of wisdom, I surely cannot be blamed, while listening to this exquisite music, if I feast my eyes upon that vision of loveliness opposite, whose expressive countenance seems to mirror all the best feelings of my heart. She seems a vision of music embodied, and her eyes meet mine so restfully, that I could fancy she was reading my heart as an open book."

When the opera was over, Mr. Fortinbras returned in time to offer Miss Carrol his arm to the carriage. "Have you any engagement for to-morrow morning?" he asked, before parting with her.

"Yes," said Lois, glad to escape the infliction of his society, "Cousin Mary and I are going out visiting."

"Then I hope you will be at liberty the day after to accord me an interview, which will necessarily be of great importance to me. And will you allow me the privilege of communicating with you alone, to discuss a subject of immense moment? Doubtless you will acknowledge the reasonableness of my request, and you will find that it will be an extraordinary epoch in the existence of us both."

Lois hid a smile of amusement under the veil which she threw over her head, and gave her consent to the "important interview" to purchase a temporary relief from him, as he had inconsiderately kept the rest of the party waiting during his long speech.

"Certainly he must wish me to reserve for him the first dance at Madame Du Boisson's ball next Tuesday," said Lois; "for what other subject of equal importance can the little creature have in his head?"

"He meant, of course," said Mrs. Warrington, recovering from an immoderate fit of laughter, "that the distinguished Mr. Fortinbras intends to condescend to offer Miss Carrol his heart and hand, in the most serious and formal manner. He wishes her to be fully sensible of the honor he thus confers upon her, and has not the slightest doubt but that both will be accepted with thanks. He will spend the day, to-morrow, rehearsing attitudes before the mirror,

and looking out the most high-sounding and effective words for the momentous occasion. Oh, I know it will be rich! Lois, do let me come and hide behind the curtains. I would not miss such fun for anything in the world. It reminds me of the nursery-song," and Julia sang,—

"The frog went courting,
And he did ride,
Sword and pistol by his side.
He went to the Lady Mouse's house,
Said he, 'Miss Mouse, will you marry me?'

Here we are at my door, so I must say 'good-night.' Look for me the day after to-morrow, when I am coming to see 'Miss Mousey' 'blush and hang her head.' Then I'll laugh like the old rat did, 'to think his niece would be a bride!'"

Mrs. Warrington was the first to arrive at Miss Mousey's house on the morning of the great interview that was to decide the fate of Mr. Fortinbras. For some reason, she was not in such gay spirits as when she had last parted from her cousins, though she anticipated much amusement from the coming farce. The first thing she did on entering was to draw the curtains before the bay-window, where she insisted that Mrs. Norton should hide with her. Lois could not but feel as if there was something dishonorable in this; but Julia insisted that such pomposity and absurd conceit absolved one from ordinary conditions, and faithfully promised not, by word or sign, to betray their presence. "For," she said, "anger is the prerogative of weak minds, and the poor fellow might

not perceive the joke. It would hurt him a great deal more to have his pride wounded than to be disappointed in love. The latter he will doubtless soon forget; but 'twould be a life-long injury to discover himself an object of ridicule."

While waiting, Mrs. Norton said to Mrs. Warrington, "What annoyance have you had, dear Julia, since I saw you last?"

"How quickly you notice things, Mary! You are so thoughtful of the comfort of other people that you read feelings very correctly. I really cannot understand how it is possible for any human being to attain such a point of unselfishness. Well, I meant to tell you what provoked me, so that you could repeat it to Dr. Norton. Perhaps his devoted affection may give him influence over Henri Forlis to prevent him from rushing headlong upon such a horrible fate as I see in store for him, if he continues to pay such extravagant attentions to Miss Shanks."

"Do you mean that he goes a great deal with the Yankee girl?" asked Mrs. Norton.

"Yes, with that flamingo," said Julia, in the most scornful tone. "I know she has any amount of the cunning of her tribe, and will not stop short of an engagement with him. Poor boy! I saw them riding out together on the shell-road yesterday evening; he was bending very tenderly toward her, reining in his horse to keep pace with hers, and I could see very plainly she was using all her arts to enchant him."

"One would think," said Lois, laughing, "to hear you talk, Cousin Julia, that Mr. Forlis, instead of being an exceedingly wary and acute man of the

world, was an orphan child of sixteen, ready to fall a prey to the first artful woman who had designs upon his fortune."

"Well, he is really as unsuspicious as a child," said Mrs. Warrington, "and readily deceived. Poor fellow! he thinks every woman an angel. Has he not been a very slave to me for a year past?"

"Then, Cousin Julia," said Lois, with a merry twinkle in her eye, "he must, indeed, retain much of the unsuspiciousness of extreme youth, if he thinks you an angel!"

"Come, little girl," said Mrs. Warrington, "you are usurping my privilege and stealing my thunder. Sarcasm is my own particular weapon. You must play the saintly game,—fold your hands, cast down your eyes, and part your hair meekly in the middle, and you will look like the 'blue-cloak Madonna,' that lovely Mater Dolorosa which every one raves about. Men like to marry good little women, with doll-baby faces. So let me give you a piece of serious advice, my dear, as you have yet to find your husband, and your face is your fortune: confine yourself to the demure rôle. That was what I did until I found what I wanted,—position. Mr. Warrington used to think me angelic, and was expecting every day to see beautiful white wings grow from my shoulders; now, I am sure he would not be surprised any day if I developed a fine pair of sharp horns. I wish you could see the pages of romantic poetry he wrote me then, but I am saving it for my first book. If Henri Forlis marries that Yankee, I'll write a book for a new sensation, and put 'old Fred' and him in it. Marry first, Lois, and then be

sarcastic; men like to flirt with sharp-tongued women; so now I can display my natural colors with impunity. But hark! is it a horse's hoofs I hear?" she asked, with a mock tragic air. "Yes, it is he," and she began singing "Frog went a courting, and he did ride" in a low tone, as they all went to peep through the blinds and see Mr. Fortinbras alight. Then came a step on the pavement, and a sudden ringing of the bell.

"Do you feel in great trepidation, Miss Mousey?" asked Mrs. Warrington.

"Afraid of being asked for the galop at the next ball; that is doubtless the amount of these great preparations. But hurry out of sight," said Lois, "for I hear Arthur going to the door. I will take an attitude and begin to string this harp. Rats, to your holes!"

The older cousins ran around to the bay-window, hastening to conceal themselves behind the curtains.

"Upon my word," said Lois, laughing, but slightly vexed also at the situation in which she was placed, "that is the most undignified thing I ever saw two staid matrons do!"

"Good-day, Miss Carrol," said Mr. Fortinbras, who entered, as she finished speaking, to find her bending gracefully over the harp, as though to tune the strings for playing. "Ah, I am overjoyed to observe that you are looking so unmistakably and beamingly happy. You are as radiant as the morning itself. I hope, dear Miss Carrol," and he here bestowed upon her one of the tenderest smiles he had rehearsed the day before, "that it may not be attributed solely to the glorious condition of the atmosphere this charming day. Did you know that blue was my

favorite color, and did you not assume this flowing robe and these coral ornaments in compliment to my taste? It gives me a thrill of deep emotion to think you did so." He took a seat and talked awhile upon indifferent subjects. It was well, he thought, not to make too sudden a disclosure of his love, for fear that it might overwhelm her with emotions so exhilarating in their effect as to prove injurious to a delicate organism. He had known exciting and joyful news, when suddenly told, to produce congestion of the head or heart; and, to prepare her, he thought he would lead gently up to the great topic. "I trust, Miss Carrol," he said, "that you are fully sensible of the solemnity of this occasion. I assure you that I laid aside all disposition to levity as I crossed this threshold, and now seriously approach the actual motive which caused my determination to request this interview. I am aware that you are not wholly unprepared for the revelation I am about to make. You must have perceived by my words and looks at the opera, which I hope fell not on barren ground, that I did not occupy an equivocal position towards you. Doubtless the quick perception of your sex has led you to consider what a serious responsibility an engagement of marriage constitutes, and in forming the resolution of entering into one, you must have impressed upon yourself the necessity of fulfilling conscientiously all the obligations of a wife."

"I have not the slightest expectation of becoming engaged," said Lois.

"Pause a moment, dear Miss Carrol," said Mr. Fortinbras, holding his hands out in protest against her words; "I understand that it is your unassuming

modesty which causes you to express yourself thus; it meets with my entire approbation, I assure you. But wait an instant until I make my intended communication, which will doubtless bring a change o'er the spirit of your dream. My heart was irresistibly drawn to you at our first meeting; and, since that memorable period, I have been more and more charmed by your irreproachable and admirable conduct under all circumstances; so I have, in fact, arrived at the conclusion that you are just the style of woman to fill the position of companion remarkably well to a man of cultivated tastes. And I must inform you, Miss Carrol, that I shall not look upon my wife simply as the mistress of my establishment, but I would elevate her to the station of partner of the innermost sentiments of my heart. This sacred place I offer to you, Miss Carrol, the acceptation of which I trust you will never regret. Place the utmost confidence in my solemn asseveration that I will endeavor, to the utmost of my ability, to be to you a magnanimous spouse."

These words were spoken with the air of a conquering Napoleon bestowing a kingdom upon a subject; only Mr. Fortinbras considered the empire of his heart thus offered far superior to the everyday presents of thrones which Napoleon the Great was in the habit of giving his relations.

"I am very sorry, Mr. Fortinbras," said Lois, "that——"

"Sorry, no doubt," said Mr. Fortinbras, interrupting her, "that I had not given you more decided intimation of what my intentions were. Yes, I can understand and appreciate your natural agitation."

"But you misunderstand me," said Lois; "I regret exceedingly that——"

"Yes," said Mr. Fortinbras, in what was meant to be a tender, caressing tone, "I also regret the short period of our acquaintance; but in the words of the immortal Festus,—

> 'We should count time by heart-throbs,
> Not by figures on a dial!'"

There came the sound of muffled laughter from behind the curtains, so painfully audible to Lois that she felt almost sure he must also have heard it. "Did I not hear the intonation of a human voice in the vicinity of this attractive piece of architecture called a bay-window?" asked Mr. Fortinbras. "It is possible that the blinds are not properly closed. Shall I make myself useful?" To Lois's great consternation he was going towards the very spot where her cousins were concealed; so she said hastily, "No, thank you, Mr. Fortinbras; please do not trouble yourself. I think it must have been only rats; so listen to me instead of looking for them; you have not given me the opportunity of telling you before how entirely you have mistaken the nature of my feelings towards you. Choose some more intelligent woman for the partner of your life; and believe that I shall always be glad to know of your happiness."

Mr. Fortinbras looked at her in amazement. The possibility that "Miss Mouse" might not look upon his suit with favor had had no part whatever in the Frog's calculations. "But, my dear Miss Carrol," he said, "permit me to arrest you in such rash words.

Pause, I entreat you, and defer your reply, until I have allowed you sufficient time for reasonable consideration, to which I would willingly accede. Perhaps our short acquaintance renders you uncertain as to the state of your own affections. Deliberate at least a week before you refuse the heart and hand of Demosthenes Fortinbras! No other woman in New Orleans has ever had them at her disposal!"

"Thank you, Mr. Fortinbras; time could not in the least soften my refusal. Forget all about the offer, and let us be just as before, good friends, certainly."

For once in his life Mr. Fortinbras had not a word to say; one only escaping his lips as he closed the gate after him,—"Incomprehensible!" and he rode away looking as dejected and mortified as the frog in the song might have appeared, when deprived of the gay trappings with which he went wooing.

Mrs. Warrington scarcely waited for the door to close on the tiresome suitor, before she issued from the curtains. Her keen sense of the ludicrous completely overcame the last vestige of her dignity; and she sank on the floor, regardless of the damage that might be done her elegant Lyons velvet walking-suit, and laughed herself into such a weak state that she needed assistance to rise. Mrs. Norton also forgot her usual serenity of deportment enough to join heartily in the mirth of the others, and the house echoed with their peals of laughter.

"I am utterly exhausted!" exclaimed Mrs. Warrington. "Why didn't you cut short that prosy harangue, Lois, and send the absurd creature away, before we

were suffocated? Catch me standing behind closed curtains again for any of your lovers!"

"Lois, do ring and hasten our luncheon," said Mrs. Norton. "As we cannot give a feast to celebrate the betrothal of 'Miss Mousie,' we will drink to the better luck of Monsieur Frog in his next courtship, in some of Armand's best coffee!"

"Then I will hurry home to rehearse the scene to Mr. Forlis. I am sure he will call to-day. I'll first take off Mr. Fortinbras, and then Miss Shanks. By the way, what a delightful couple they would make. There, I have found a field worthy of my abilities!—Henri shall be saved, and Mr. Fortinbras shall marry her in the spring!"

"Now, Julia, don't make Henri angry," said Mrs. Norton, "by ridiculing a person who must have some attraction for him."

"Oh, I'll be very careful, and arrange my tactics in such a way that he will never suspect me of malice. I will begin, you know, by praising her,—saying she has a fine complexion and pretty eyes, but that it is a pity such a lovely girl should be so awkward, and angular about the elbows! After that, perhaps I may venture to say that her long neck reminds me of a flamingo, and that Mr. Fortinbras will suit her admirably as a foil. Henri will doubtless have heard and seen how much they admire each other. By the way," she said, looking back from the gate, "don't forget to tell Roger of our scheme, and enlist his assistance. I know he dislikes the creature as much as I do. Adieu!" and gracefully kissing her hand, Mrs. Warrington disappeared.

CHAPTER XI.

"*1st Gent.* Our deeds are fetters that we forge ourselves.

"*2d Gent.* Ay, truly; but I think it is the world that brings the iron."

But Mr. Forlis did not give Mrs. Warrington an immediate opportunity of rehearsing any scene for his amusement. His apparent infatuation for Miss Shanks continued, and he was her constant escort at balls, operas, and theatres. It was not disregard of the affection of his old friends that caused this seeming alienation; but he postponed from day to day the unpleasant task of receiving, in words, the disapprobation he saw plainly written in their looks. Dr. Norton missed the constant stimulus of his society greatly, and groaned audibly over "the poor victim," as he persisted in calling his quondam friend. Lois, too, missed the kindly mentor who had always been ready to sympathize with her in each passing mood. He had told her so much of the nephew to whom he was so devotedly attached, and anticipated so much congeniality of sentiment between them when they became acquainted, that she was daily expecting a visit for the purpose of introducing him to her. Mr. Fortinbras's little episode had been very annoying, and she began to weary of the attention and constant presence of the type of men who surrounded her. Mr. Forlis had always a pleasant bow and smile when

they met; but, at the opera, where she constantly encountered the nephew, there was nothing but a grim unconsciousness of her presence.

One tantalizing morning, when the fickle sun just peeped between the heavy clouds often enough to torment people by showing what he could do in the way of shining if he condescended to gratify them, Mrs. Norton and Lois found it necessary to go down town for some shopping. After they had spent about an hour in the shops, comparing different fabrics and holding important consultations over them, they found that the clouds had grown so dense and angry-looking as to put a cessation to the capricious playfulness of the solar monarch, and hardly leave a suspicion that "behind the clouds the sun was still shining." The wind began to blow fiercely, and there was every evidence of the approach of a storm.

"I think, Lois," said Mrs. Norton, "that the best thing will be for us to go to Roger's office, and he will send us home in his carriage; or we might wait there until the storm is over. It is not far; and, if we hurry, we can reach there without getting wet."

They walked rapidly for a little while, encountering only a few large drops of rain; but, as they reached the crossing, the storm of wind and rain burst fully upon them. Lois's slight form staggered from its violence, and she was thrown partially against two gentlemen, whom they recognized as Mr. Forlis and his nephew, each with a large umbrella and Spanish cloak. "Edgar, you take charge of Miss Carrol, and I will take Mrs. Norton, and we must hasten to get them out of this storm," said Mr. Forlis. "Ladies,

there is no place where it is pleasant for you to stop just here, and the nearest place is about two squares below, —Ergot's jewelry store; we must take you over there."

"Miss Carrol," said Mr. Treville, "please take my arm, and let me shield you as much as possible with my cloak. I see my uncle has fairly wrapped Mrs. Norton in his."

Lois was forced to cling closely to her protector to escape the fury of the tempest, and he was obliged to almost lift her across the wide street. Her heart beat rapidly from a variety of emotions, and every trace of cynicism had disappeared from her escort's countenance. It was a regular battle with the elements; and Lois could but admire the strength and dexterity with which her pilot warded off the severest blows from her. So well did cloak, umbrella, and manly arm do their part, that they at last reached the jeweler's establishment with nothing damaged but their hats.

When the four were safely lodged under shelter, an introduction took place between Lois and Mr. Treville, Mr. Forlis expressing great astonishment that they had not met before. "It is the most curious thing, Edgar, to think that you are not acquainted with my friend here; you know we are so much alike that I always expect and receive your sympathy and approbation in my friendship." But the kind protector had gone with the cloak and umbrella, and Lois found herself walking through the handsome establishment by the side of the stoic of the ball-room. Mrs. Norton had wished Mr. Forlis to see a beautiful solitaire she admired particularly, and the obliging proprietor had requested them to look at his treasures. The elder

lady was deeply interested in the shining beauties, and engrossed her escort entirely; so it was necessary for the younger couple either to pretend to sympathize with the diamond-lovers, or find topics of conversation for themselves. Lois was rather breathless from the conflict with wind and rain; so she seated herself in a little nook, somewhat out of sight, and began to examine her damaged hat, endeavoring to press the bent frame into shape again.

"I presume you are heart-broken over the injury sustained by your charming bonnet," said Mr. Treville to her. "Will you accept my sincere condolence in such a severe misfortune?"

"Thank you," replied Lois, coldly, vexed by the satirical tone; "I owe it to you that the injury is not irreparable. One scarcely needs condolence over so slight a misfortune."

The rain still poured in torrents; and Lois felt that there was no possibility of their leaving the garrison for an hour, certainly, even if she had recovered strength again to contend with the storm; but an awkward silence ensued, in which it seemed as if she could hear the beating of her own heart. At length Mr. Treville ceased looking at her so intently, and spoke: "I suppose, mademoiselle, you have spent a very pleasant winter in New Orleans."

"Yes; I have enjoyed it very much," said Lois, unbending a little from the cold dignity she had assumed. "I suppose you have been absent from the city, as I have not seen you anywhere."

Lois was betrayed into untruthfulness, partly from the desire to say something to keep up the conversation and relieve their embarrassment, and partly to show that she had not remarked his evident avoidance of her. But she felt her blushes deepening beneath his steadfast gaze, and knew that he was reading her falsehood.

"I was only absent for two weeks, early in the winter, and have seen mademoiselle frequently at places of amusement since, though I have never had the pleasure of an introduction to her."

"Whose fault was that?" asked Lois, naively, but dropping her eyes and blushing deeper than ever, fearing she might be thought bold.

"I knew," he said, evasively, lest a direct answer should accuse himself, "that Miss Carrol was always surrounded by such a throng of acquaintances that one less would be rather acceptable to her. Young ladies of the species belle remind me of flowers over which swarms of bees hover; only the insects that buzz about your shrines are more harmless than bees."

"Is it then a misfortune to be a belle?" said Lois; "and do you mean to imply that they are only sought by brainless men?"

"Well, yes," he said; "a man of intellect seldom cares to find himself in a crowd of flatterers and parasites, where the only conversation can be unmeaning compliments or silly badinage."

"Then I suppose," said Lois, ironically, "that a popular young lady can never have the honor of Mr. Treville's acquaintance, and must pass through her little life of fleeting bellehood without the solace of his society."

"I was not speaking of myself," he said, biting his lips to hide his vexation. "I have neither the time nor the inclination to be a society-man, though I do not wish to be a cynic."

It would have been hard for any man to be one in the presence of such bewitching beauty as was that of Lois just then. She wore a blue walking-suit, of the exact shade to bring out the marvelous whiteness and purity of her delicate complexion; and the force of the wind had loosened her hair, so that several long wavy tresses floated around her shoulders, while the dampness had formed it into little rings about her blue-veined temples and small shell-like ears. The excitement caused by the adventure in the storm, together with this unexpected meeting with a man about whom she had felt much curiosity, flushed her face, and brought a sparkle to her beautiful eyes. She sat upon a low seat, and as she looked away into the street, Treville had a three-quarter view of her face, and he could not help wishing that he owned a painting of her in that position, holding her little hat in her hands, while the dainty pink fingers wove themselves in and out through its pale-blue strings.

There was a greater charm for him in her perfectly-unstudied loveliness now, with her bright hair wildly, but picturesquely, disheveled, than in the ball-room, where her toilet had been exquisite and her grace too perfect and imperial not to seem acquired for effect. But at this moment her appearance was more child-like, with the light of day falling on her fair infantile hair and complexion, and her face upturned toward his when speaking; and yet, at the same time, something

more womanly in the earnest expression of her deep, strange eyes. But those sweet, silent moments, spent in gratifying his artistic taste by gazing at the beautiful creature before him, were too dangerous even for a philosopher; and he said, "I must tell you truly, Miss Carrol, why, until this winter, I have avoided society. I have one of the best and noblest of fathers, who has always indulged me in every taste and fancy, but has rather dreaded giving up his only child to the demands of fashionable life; so I could not leave him in loneliness at home, while I enjoyed the gayeties of the world. He and his half-brother, my good uncle Henri, who has the same charm of manner and generous kindness as my father, have been my only companions for years. My father thinks, this winter, that the requirements of our plantation oblige him to remain there, while I attend to the business here; and, at his request, I have been occasionally to places of amusement with the daughters of his old friends. So, since circumstances have, in a measure, kept me from society heretofore, my quiet life with men older than myself has had the effect of making me rather shy of it now; and also, I am afraid, a little critical. But give me a candid confession: do you not really sometimes tire of it all," he asked, looking down at her earnestly, "and feel there is something better in life than dressing and waltzing?"

"Yes," said Lois, in a half-sad tone, gazing dreamily out of the plate-glass door opposite at the heavy rain, and forgetting that she had intended not to agree with him in anything; "but a woman is seldom at liberty to choose her own life, and must follow out the wishes

of her friends." Lois was sincere, at the moment, in what she was saying; but if she had received, three hours before, a command from her guardian to come to the retirement of the back-woods of Kentucky, her distress would have been great.

"What sort of life would you choose, Miss Carrol?" he asked, forgetting that their short acquaintance scarcely warranted so personal a question.

"I am really not wise enough to choose at all. I have simply *drifted*. But after all, 'Man proposes and God disposes.'"

"Ah!" thought Edgar Treville, with a deep sigh, "that I had not permitted my good father to dispose of my life! But it is too late to repine now, since my honor is involved; and my affection for my father must keep me true."

It still continued raining, and Mr. Forlis had walked with Mrs. Norton to see some choice mosaics at the end of the long show-room.

"Have you seen the pictures in the gallery above this?" said Mr. Treville; "I think our friends must have gone up, as they are out of sight. Let us follow them, for I would like to show you a landscape painted by a French friend of mine, and which my father is going to purchase for me."

They ascended the staircase near them, and soon found themselves upon the sofa, before the picture of "Sunset in the Valley of Chamouni." The light of the morning was so subdued by the driving rain, that the dimness of evening seemed over the gallery, and there were no other visitors but themselves. And Edgar Treville talked of art, nature, the Alps, Switzerland,

and Paris, as Lois had never heard them talked of before. The dashing ball-room belle was gone, and all the gentleness of her refined womanhood shone out. It is doubtful if prisoners ever so enjoyed captivity before, and time flew by on winged feet. When Mrs. Norton sought their retreat, it was to tell them that the sun was shining, and making prettier diamonds of the rain-drops than any of the ostentatious glass cases inside could boast of containing. "I hear the carriage we sent for," she said, "rolling up to the door, and you gentlemen must both come home with us to luncheon. Mr. Treville, we have not seen you for an age. Have you forgotten what excellent friends we found in your father and yourself, last summer at Point Clear?"

"You are very kind indeed, madame, to remember us at all. My father did hope to call with me at your invitation, but went early in the winter, for his health, to Florida; since then he has been at 'Deer Range,' looking after cotton, while I have had his business as well as my own to attend to in town, which left me with little leisure for society."

"Well, to propitiate me, and show that your professed friendship last summer was not all profession, you must come with me now." Mrs. Norton had, with her caressing ways, a pleasant imperiousness which generally gained her point; so she continued: "We will go by the doctor's office; and, patients permitting, he will follow us. He will be delighted to see Mr. Forlis again." No excuse having availed the gentlemen, they soon found themselves en route for the office.

"Mr. Forlis, I will not flatter you by telling you

how much Roger has missed you. Seeing you for an hour, at least, was part of his daily programme; and 'tis really a fortnight since he has had that pleasure. You have not only deserted us, but your office also."

"I plead guilty, my dear madame; but I have had a client whose affairs were troublesome, and I have been obliged to have frequent consultations. A good deal of real estate is in question, and I have driven her out to inspect it; then, as she was a stranger in town, I have shown her some of our 'lions.'"

"Do tell this to the doctor, Mr. Forlis," said Mrs. Norton; "he really has been wounded by your seeming desertion of our party. Human affection is too rare and precious a thing to be trifled with, and he is really an instance of true and faithful friend."

"I am fully conscious of this, my dear madame, and prize, more than I can tell you, my life-long friend, —your husband. Here, we are just at his office; I will go in and see if I can find him, and make the amende honorable on the spot."

Mr. Forlis disappeared within the office, from which he soon returned bringing the doctor, who had, fortunately, no engagement which prevented him accompanying them home. He was in the best of spirits, and evidently fully satisfied with Mr. Forlis's explanation. Seldom has a merrier party sat round a lunch-table; and the champagne flowed freely, while Mr. Forlis gave the doctor an amusing account of their adventure in the rain, and grew eloquent in describing the beauty of the jewels at Ergot's.

Lois sat quietly, but exceedingly contented, near Edgar Treville, whose flow of brilliant conversation

astonished her. That grave, dark man, whom she fancied too misanthropic for the enjoyment of daily life, was in the most merry mood imaginable, and his humorous anecdotes and witty speeches were the life of the party. Mrs. Norton wondered so much over his seeming remissness in calling since their intimate acquaintance of the past summer, that he told her she should have no further cause for complaint, as he would speedily renew the pleasure of the morning. The doctor had a hasty summons to the bedside of a patient, and Mr. Forlis accompanied him on his route down town, leaving his nephew to follow at leisure. The Chamouni picture had caused much conversation on Alpine scenery, and Mrs. Norton produced some fine sketches the doctor had made during his student-life abroad, and Edgar Treville promised to bring some of his own at his next visit.

CHAPTER XII.

"To hear with eyes is part of love's rare wit."

SHAKSPEARE.

Lois had long been looking forward to the evening when the opera of Lucia di Lammermoor would be performed; and, as usual, flitted about the house humming over its melodies, or rehearsing them on the harp for her cousin's benefit; but, when the evening came, Dr. Norton was suffering from a severe headache,

caused by the sleepless nights he had spent lately in his practice, and his wife insisted on remaining at home to nurse him. Mr. Warrington had procured for his little son a superior nursery governess, as well as a faithful colored nurse, and was again in attendance upon his wife; so that Mrs. Norton wrote for them to call for Lois. She was very glad to spend the evening in a closed box, where she hoped to enjoy the opera in undisturbed quiet; and was very careful to take the least conspicuous seat. "Old Fred," on his usual sofa, was soon in dreamland, and his wife was waiting impatiently for the end of the first act, during which she had yawned repeatedly.

"I do hope somebody will come and take us out," she said. "I do not care a particle for the opera, and only come to meet people and hear them talk."

Lois was too much engrossed in the singing to reply; but, in a few moments, the door opened, and tranquillity seemed to fly out at the other end of the box, as a large man with a swagger came in and bowed to Mrs. Warrington.

"Good-evening, Colonel Saurwein," said Julia; "allow me to introduce you to my cousin, Miss Carrol, of Kentucky."

"Very happy, I'm sure," said the colonel, in a thick English voice that betrayed unmistakably his nationality. Mrs. Warrington ceased yawning, and brightened up immediately, now that masculine eyes had come to admire her beauty and applaud her wit. She was so delighted at being relieved from her ennui, that she did not consider how unappreciative was the present specimen of the male sex, who really seemed

to have little attention to spare from his enormous moustache, which he stroked continually. Lois thought, as she looked at his bald head, and then at the huge appendage from his upper lip, that Dame Nature must have been very partial, not to have made a more equal distribution of hair.

"My good fairy must have told you," said Mrs. Warrington to the new-comer, "that I was growing weary and half-smothered in this box, and sent you to take me out."

"I shall be delighted, I'm sure," said the colonel, but with an ennuied look. "An awful bore, don't you think, this eternal din? I've heard so much better, you know, in England, that all the singing in this country fatigues me enormously."

Lois wondered to hear him declare himself an Englishman, his name and appearance were so thoroughly German; and she supposed that he must have come to the opera simply to prevent the enjoyment of others. She looked over to the box where Edgar Treville was sitting, as usual, by the D'Obrie girls, and moved to where he could see her for the first time, hoping the happy idea might occur to him of being her escort, instead of this hideous colonel, who said, "Perhaps, ladies, we could escape this disgusting noise if we went into the foyer. Will you come also, Miss Carrol?"

"No, thank you; I prefer remaining here. I am so unsophisticated as to enjoy this music!"

"My cousin has not been long from school," said Mrs. Warrington, "and has been sitting there for the last hour, so absorbed in the music that I have not been able to get a word from her."

"How fortunate, so fresh and young, you know, to enjoy such twaddle and rant as that!" And the colonel caressingly stroked his heavy moustache, as if it was the only thing that made life endurable.

"If you will not come with us, Lois," said Mrs. Warrington, "let me at least awaken Mr. Warrington to sit by you, that you may not look so solitary."

"No, no," said Lois, "please do not; I would not have him disturbed for the world; and I enjoy listening to the music alone."

"Ah, sweet simplicity of youth! dream while you may, Lois," said Mrs. Warrington, playfully tapping her with her fan as she departed, leaning on the colonel's arm.

Lois, left alone in the box with her sleeping friend, withdrew into the shade to lose herself in pleasant thoughts; while her cousin was making vain efforts to find some topic of conversation that was not "awfully disgusting" and "frightfully American" to the companion of her promenade. As they were seeking variety and, possibly, coolness, in a saucer of ice-cream, she saw Mr. Fortinbras approaching.

"Ye gods!" she said to herself; "the idea of having two such men as these on my hands at once! Nature cannot support me under the affliction; and I must get rid of the colonel, while I *stir up* old Fortinbras sufficiently to induce him to propose to Miss Shanks."

She greeted him very affably, and offered him a seat beside her, saying to the colonel, with a bland smile, "Shall I be very troublesome if I ask you to bring my opera-cloak from our box?" and shrugging her beautiful shoulders, "ice-cream is delicious, but chilling."

"Not at all, madame," said the colonel; "for the pleasure of serving you will compensate for the pain of leaving you." And he went off well pleased at having shown before "these beastly Americans" how neatly an Englishman could turn a compliment and oblige a lady.

"Mr. Fortinbras, it has been an age since I have heard how sped your wooing of Miss Shanks. I can only see how she appreciates you, and long to know when the knot is to be tied between so intellectual and congenial a pair. You do not let the idea of her being a Yankee prey on your spirits,—'As the husband is, the wife is,'—and you will soon make her as true-hearted a Southerner as yourself."

"I can hardly presume," said Mr. Fortinbras; "I have known the fair lady so short a time——"

"What is time?" interrupted Mrs. Warrington. "I laugh at the grave old father! In the words of the immortal Festus,—

> 'We should count time by heart-throbs,
> Not by figures on a dial!'"

And she looked at him with a mischievous, significant smile. Dull of comprehension as the little man was, it immediately occurred to him that she was quoting the very words he had used the other day in addressing Miss Carrol.

"If I do not deceive myself, madame, you are now alluding to one of the most painful passages in my life's history," said Mr. Fortinbras, blushing a deep yellow-red color, that showed sudden anger, wounded feeling, and pride; and, as Mrs. Warrington looked

more and more conscious of his having conjectured the truth, he asked, "May I be permitted to inquire from what source you have derived that information, madame?"

"Can you not imagine?" she replied, keenly enjoying his confusion and irritation. She was willing enough to let him suppose that his confidence had been betrayed by Lois, from whom she wished entirely to detach him. She knew his pride was the most vulnerable point of attack, and she was perfectly unscrupulous in the means employed to wound it.

"It was simply thoughtlessness and the love of a joke that caused my young cousin to repeat that conversation, and pray do not let her know I have told you. She did not mean to be dishonorable; but, entre nous, Lois has not the depth to appreciate such a character as yours. Miss Shanks was saying the other day that 'few people understood Mr. Fortinbras's real worth;'" here Julia lowered her voice confidentially, "and speaking of souls of the higher type, reminds me that Miss Shanks is a noble woman, and if you would make my jest, when I first saw you this evening, a reality, you would have an excellent wife,—one capable of appreciating all your finer qualities."

Just then Mr. Forlis passed by with the lady in question on his arm. "The scheming viper!" was Mrs. Warrington's inmost thought, but she suggested to Mr. Fortinbras that Miss Shanks looked wistfully at him in passing; and, as Colonel Saurwein had returned with Mrs. Warrington's cloak, Mr. Fortinbras hastened to ask Miss Shanks to take ice-cream with him.

After the exit of her cousin and the colonel, Lois turned again toward the stage, taking advantage of the quietness that reigned about her to give her attention once more to the opera.

She became so absorbed in its progress that she did not notice the entrance of Colonel Saurwein, seeking Mrs. Warrington's cloak. She was always so wrought on by music that it made her tremble with exquisite delight. It seemed to appeal directly to that strange inward self, which she understood so little, and to penetrate the subtlest windings of her soul; some pathetic harmonies searching out a corresponding chord in her nature that vibrated with inexplicable sadness,—a feeling so near akin to joy that, when the music swelled the next moment into triumphant strains, it rose with them to a rare ecstasy that so completely filled her whole being that all else in the world was forgotten, even her own identity. The lingering echoes of the last sweet melody were dying away, and Lois was sitting, still under the influence of it, with her head bowed upon her breast, until after the curtain had fallen. She was suddenly recalled to herself by a large bouquet that was laid softly in her lap. Mignonette, heliotrope, jasmine, and tea-roses, grouped artistically with geraniums, formed a combination of sweet scents, and, as she looked up from them, she saw Edgar Treville standing just outside the railing.

"I am afraid I have rudely disturbed your dreaming," he said; "but getting a glimpse of you awhile ago, as Mrs. Warrington rose, without the usual '*swarm*,' I could not resist the temptation of offering

my flowers. They came from Deer Range this morning. I planted them myself, watched them, and gathered them for you to-day. May I come in?"

"Certainly," she said; "and flowers and music, you know, combine delightfully in day-dreams. Both give me great pleasure, and I thank you very much for these lovely treasures."

While he was making the circuit to reach the door, though she knew her presence in the house was known to no one but her cousins, she found herself trembling with a strange apprehension lest some one else, finding out her retreat, should step in before he came. But he was soon standing by her side, saying, "Will you think me too presuming, Miss Carrol, if I ask you to let me move your chair a little more in the shade of these curtains?"

"Why, am I not entirely hidden already?" she said; but rising, involuntarily, to comply.

"For a very selfish reason," he replied; "I wish to conceal you from sight for a little quiet conversation. It is the only chance I may have for a long while. I see Mr. Jennings searching the house for the Norton party; and if you are once discovered, the bees will be swarming soon." Then he led the conversation back to the point where it had been left off at the jeweler's the day of the storm.

But Lois only dared criticise him to herself when her face was hidden, as she bent down over her flowers, which were arranged in no formal florist's pyramid, but loosely bound together in a graceful bouquet.

"What fine eyes he has, when he looks at one so pleasantly," she thought, as he talked to her in a voice

modulated to a low tone to avoid disturbing Mr. Warrington, who looked pale and weary, asleep upon the sofa.

"What a very sweet smile she has," thought Edgar; "and how I would love to be able to gaze upon it every day of my life,—of course only as I like pretty pictures; and there can be no danger in artistic admiration."

Colonel Saurwein's return with Mrs. Warrington soon sent Treville away; and, after his departure, Lois and her cousins were alone. "What is the attraction to your huge colonel, Cousin Julia?" she said.

"*Capillary attraction*, I suppose, my dear," said Julia; "he certainly thinks that red moustache perfectly enchanting, and I find it a very formidable rival. I have an ambition to draw his attention away from it, and interest him in myself. I did startle him once or twice; so that, for the space of a moment, he actually forgot to stroke his darling. He told me that I was the first woman he had met in America worth talking to for half an hour. What do you think of my conquest?"

"If he is worth captivating, you are surely the person to do it; but I do not see how you found patience to endure him so long."

Lois's dreams were haunted that night by a pair of luminous brown eyes, looking earnestly, yet gravely, at her; and when, in the restlessness of troubled slumber, she would arise to shake off the impression, she chided herself for her folly in thinking so persistently of one whom she supposed never gave her a thought.

A gentleman in the French part of the city spent the same night upon his balcony smoking cigarettes,

thinking intently, and trying to form good resolutions and drive away a tempting sprite that was whispering in his ear. He smoked constantly, either to exorcise his visitor, or from the engrossment of tumultuous thought,—unconsciously; but at last he took the cigarette from his mouth, and spoke aloud: "If I were free to follow my own inclination, am I the man to attract such a bright young creature? She thought me at first a misanthrope and perhaps a pedant; is it worth while to change her thoughts? Constant association with my father has rendered me graver than other men of my years, and I would not bring a cloud over the sky of such a gay-hearted child. She is most lovely,—the winning tones of her sweet voice and that pleading look from those up-turned eyes fascinate me still, and I am not yet recovered from the strange intoxication of her presence. I must seek it no more; such winning grace will steal into the innermost recesses of my being. My uncle says that her mind and character are as charming as her appearance; but I must not think so. I must call all that seeming artlessness, womanly wiles; that bewitching sweetness, practiced coquetry; that innocent smiling, heartless mirth; and believe the fair, golden-haired girl a finished woman of fashion. I have never yet felt my pulse beat quicker for the presence of woman; and the tender, respectful devotion I bear my honored father is the dearest love of my heart. I thought, to-night, as I listened to her musical voice and low replies, that, for the first time, I understood that line in Locksley Hall:

'And her murmur thronged my pulse with the fullness of the spring.'

Pledged as I am, this is dangerous ground; with the entanglement of our affairs, marriage, but with one person, would be ruinous to me; and I must banish the bright vision that has kept me dreaming the night-hours away—

'Shine out, little head, sunning over with curls,'

but not for me thy gay shining; ring out, merry peals of girlish laughter, your tinkling melody, but not for me the fairy music; droop, tender eyes of violet hue, hid beneath such long, dark lashes, but not for me their pathetic beauty or their dewy loveliness. Honor is more to me than an artist's dream; and, if not altogether fancy-free, yet I am heart-whole, and I will fling the dream aside as I do my cigar."

Here he flung the freshly-lighted taper, with the cigar, into the garden beneath, and watched it as it faded and gradually died away into ashes amid the shrubbery.

"And so perish my day-dream; henceforth, little girl, we are strangers. At the opera, if we should pass each other in the foyer, 'Good-evening; I hope you are enjoying yourself,' will amply suffice for our short acquaintance; and if in the street, I must forget that day when you fled to me for shelter from the storm, and nestled like a weary bird beneath my arm, and say only, 'Good-day, mademoiselle; we are having pleasant weather.' But my promise to Mrs. Norton? her kindness to my father last summer merited an earlier acknowledgement. I am afraid it has come to this: I must choose between two evils,—must consider that a conventional promise, and break it, rather than

endanger a serious and sacred one, the violation of which would cause most miserable consequences."

Treville had been pacing up and down the balcony. As he turned in his walk toward the east, he saw a rosy-gray streak along the horizon, and was astonished to find that the whole night had slipped away while he was coming to this conclusion.

CHAPTER XIII.

"She only said, 'My life is dreary,
He cometh not,' she said."

TENNYSON.

THE next morning, Lois was sitting by the window, seemingly sketching from a little marble bust before her, but really in a profound reverie. Her cousin Mary had been writing at her desk near, but was closing it as Lois asked, in the light tone in which one speaks when the subject is of little interest, "I wonder if Edgar Treville cares for that Miss d'Obrie he escorts to the opera so frequently, except as a friend?"

"Oh, no," answered Mrs. Norton; "I am almost sure he does not. I saw them both very often at Point Clear last summer. Edgar seemed to take little interest in any one but his father, to whom he was perfectly devoted. He occasionally went out fishing with some gentlemen friends, but father and son were rarely apart. The D'Obrie's are their next neighbors in the

country, and they have many business arrangements together. I saw the father paying more attention to both mother and daughters than the son, and suppose it was for old acquaintance' sake. I sometimes thought though, in spite of her efforts to conceal it, that the eldest Miss d'Obrie cared for Edgar. He treated her with the careless kindness people show to their childhood's friends, but she was dull and distrait in his absence, while she brightened up wonderfully when he came in. Mr. Treville was ill one day, and I had the opportunity to render him some little service under the doctor's direction. When he recovered, I saw a great deal of both father and son, and liked them exceedingly. After that, I observed them more attentively, and could not help thinking that Miss Adéle liked Edgar particularly."

"Is she clever?" asked Lois, in a firmer and more assured tone.

"No, she is not intellectual; but a lovely girl with an affectionate heart. I have been intending all winter to go and see Madame d'Obrie and the young ladies. You know it is a custom among the Creoles for newcomers to call upon the older inhabitants, instead of the reverse as with us."

"Is not that Mrs. Warrington down-stairs?" said Lois.

"Yes; she is coming up with the doctor. He probably met her down town, and asked her to come to lunch. I am sorry he made me promise not to tell her about Mr. Forlis and Miss Shanks; but he says she is such a tease she deserves to be tantalized a little herself."

"Bon-jour, mesdames," said Julia, opening the door,

and executing a sidelong courtesy. Her face was flushed, she seemed in very high spirits, and danced up to each cousin giving them an affectionate kiss.

"Lois, love," she said, "why are you sitting there so pensively studying that Hebe? Her joyous face does not resemble your own; do you despair of sketching, that you look so listless? Wake up, ma petite, and put on your guessing-cap, and tell me where I have been to-day. Mary, you might guess for hours and not come near the truth!"

"To Olimpe's?" asked Mrs. Norton, smiling at Julia's gay mood.

"Oh, no!" said Mrs. Warrington, "you guess that because I generally go there every time I am out. I looked in the window to-day, and she has some lovely things that you and Lois must see. But guess again, —'Ergot's'—indeed! you are stupid this morning, and I cannot keep it any longer; I must tell you: I have been to see Miss Shanks!"

"Oh, Julia!—how could you?" said Dr. Norton, looking at her as though he thought she had suddenly become insane. "You are the very one who spoke so bitterly of her, and called her 'an angular female,' and various other opprobrious epithets. Do you mean to say that you have changed your opinion?"

"Not in the least," said Julia. "I dislike her more than ever. It was only necessary for me to hear her talk through her nose in that sharp, twanging voice, with perfect familiarity of Henri Forlis,—to make me hate her outright."

"Then why in the world did you call upon her?" asked Lois.

"To carry out a little plan of my own," said Julia. "I wish, from motives of the purest benevolence, to make her console poor, disconsolate Fortinbras for your cruel rejection of his suit. Don't look so curiously at me, Lois; study that little Hebe you have before you. Depend upon it, I kissed the Blarney stone before I went in, and repeated to her all the prettiest compliments I could imagine, as coming from Mr. Fortinbras. Oh, it was such fun! and her implicit belief in my stories was something rich to see!"

"How naughty of you, Julia," said Mrs. Norton, "to tell such fibs; you might be caught in them."

"You don't suppose I am quite simple enough for that, do you, Mary? I cover up every track. I assured her that it was almost a breach of confidence in me to tell her of Mr. Fortinbras's sentiments, and that she must not let him know I had breathed a word of them to her; but that he was very bashful, and needed a word of encouragement from her before he would aspire to her hand!"

"And what did she say to this fiction of yours?" said the doctor.

"She blushed, simpered, and looked down, as if she had been a coquettish little beauty of sixteen,—the great old step-ladder!"

"Oh, Cousin Julia, what a ridiculous comparison! I am sure I think she is rather handsome," said Lois.

"Handsome!" said Julia. "I can't imagine how you can think so. Her neck is like a crane; and the absurd lowness of her dresses and shortness of her sleeves and gloves exhibits a vast quantity of bone. Such taste I never beheld before! She wore a morning-

dress of brownish-red, with large green patterns crawling over it like caterpillars. I fairly shuddered as I looked at it."

"Thinness and bad taste are her misfortune rather than fault, and she may have charms of mind and manner in spite of them."

"I did not discover them," said Julia; "but, at any rate, she shall not marry Henri Forlis, as is evidently her intention. I found out to-day that she owns some property here, left her a short time ago by an uncle. But her affairs are in a very complicated condition, and Mr. Forlis is attending to them for her. Now, of course, a New Orleans lawyer would be a most eligible parti as a husband, and, Henri being one of the most prominent in his profession, she has determined to enchant him. I wish I had known she was coming here to look after her inherited acres and some one to manage them for her, and I would have locked Henri up in my attic until she had gone away."

"What shocking things you say, Julia!" said Mrs. Norton. "I think that the poor creature's ears must be burning."

"If words could accomplish such a thing, I would gladly burn them off," said Julia. "However, I told her that Mr. Fortinbras was an excellent man of business, and much richer than Henri. Her own nasal tones would prevent her from perceiving his; indeed, I think Heaven designed them for each other from the similarity of their voices. But when they marry, I should not like to live in the same house with them!"

Mr. Forlis had given his friends the true reason why he was first thrown so frequently into the society of

Miss Shanks; but he had not thought it necessary to tell them that, if business first brought them together, choice and a certain congeniality kept up the intimacy; for, really, he had not yet acknowledged it to himself. In truth, though the rounded contour of youth was hers no longer, she was tall and finely-formed, and possessed a certain kind of cleverness, as well as natural tact, that led her to suit her conversation to the taste of the person with whom she happened to be for the moment. She was rather a good amateur artist, had been much abroad, and could discuss with Mr. Forlis the great master-pieces of art he loved so passionately. She had spent days and weeks copying in the Louvre, Dresden Gallery, and Munich, and understood and appreciated their treasures. She also spoke French very well, the nasal tone, so objectionable to Mrs. Warrington, rather assisting in its perfect pronunciation; and they always conversed in that language. Mr. Forlis found so much pleasure in her society that for the next two months he saw very little of his old friends, but he always gave business as the reason, when they chanced to meet. He occasionally joined Lois for a moment upon the street or at a concert, to ask for her health, her music, and sketching; but the old affectionate interest, which had given such a charm to Lois's daily life when she first came to New Orleans, had gone; and though she longed to ask for his nephew, she could not venture to put the question in their hurried intercourse. The thought that he might imagine her interested in one who sought her so seldom, sent the crimson tide rushing to her cheeks. She tried to persuade herself that she was

indifferent to his studied avoidance, and to find consolation in the throng of suitors who still clustered about her; but the perplexing thought constantly returned, Why should Mr. Treville assume such an air of respectful devotion and entire contentment with her society, and then avoid her for weeks? She pondered over every word and look during those memorable interviews, and wondered if in them she could have given any cause for offense. But faithful memory gave no clue, and she could but believe him capricious and forgetful.

She cherished the flowers he gave her the night Lucia was performed, and took an innocent, childish pleasure in wearing some of them in her hair the next opera-night. She thought he would certainly recognize them as a portion of his own bouquet, and soon be at her side. But he sat immovably between Madame d'Obrie and her daughter, with his eyes upon the stage. Lois thought he looked haggard and care-worn, and that it must be business complications that were preying upon his spirits, and changing the animated companion of her last evening in that box to the silent, moody man before her. The usual throng of gentlemen came about Mrs. Warrington, and among them the huge colonel, who, as usual, made himself interesting by caressing his moustache and abusing everything American. But Lois longed for the evening to be over; even Madame Zuist's sweet voice could not solace her in the disappointment she felt in not having Mr. Treville among her little court. He had told her the night before that Sonnambula was a favorite opera of his father's, and he hoped to persuade

him to come to town for its performance. But Lois looked in vain for the white-haired Frenchman, of whose gallantry and elegance she had heard so much from Mrs. Norton, Mr. Forlis, and his son. The promised call was not made, and for weeks she wondered what could have changed Mr. Treville so strangely. She tried to be indignant, and declare to herself her intention of thinking of him no more. It was easy to assert this in words, but she could not help involuntarily making a comparison between Edgar Treville and the gay triflers who devoted themselves to her. Many of them were amiable, agreeable, and often pleasant companions for an idle hour, but after that she wearied of them all. There were none among them who could awaken the larger possibilities of her nature, or bring to light feelings of whose existence she was unconscious before. After all, she began to think that young-ladyhood was not such an enchanting state, and life in the fashionable world not quite so brilliant a scene as her youthful fancy had painted it. It was often with a sense of uselessness that she submitted her beautiful curls to the arrangement of Hagar's skillful fingers, and listened to her rapturous delight over them with a poorly-concealed disgust. The fear of attracting Mrs. Warrington's watchful eyes led her to enter into all the amusements with the zest of old; but the bright robes that she threw aside at night on retiring seemed almost hateful to her, and the expiring sweetness of the withering flowers that she tossed upon the table came mournfully to her, and seemed to say, "See what satires we are upon the life you lead!"

When she sat in the drawing-room, surrounded by

a circle of admirers, trying to amuse them by uttering many gay, airy nothings, a voice in her heart seemed to echo back the empty words in derision.

At times, the same strange, troubled feeling stole over her which had haunted her in the lonely school-days. It was a gloomy, inexplicable consciousness of something lacking in her existence. She often reproved herself for her fits of melancholy, and said, "Why should you be unhappy, Lois, surrounded by all the comforts and luxuries of life, when hundreds of poor, suffering fellow-creatures, with poverty for their only heritage, continue cheerful amid all the hardships and privations of their lot?" But there is a hunger of the heart even more cruel than physical want, and the soul can be starved in the midst of abundance. Her spirit seemed like a solitary bird out at sea, far beyond the sight of land, winging its way over trackless wastes of water, fluttering its weary wings in vain for a resting-place from the restless waves and boisterous winds of the ocean, with no mate near to answer back its despairing cries, or soothe the lonely wanderer with the promise of peace at last. Sometimes it cried out in its dispiriting isolation, "Am I ever to pursue my course thus alone, perhaps through a long lifetime, to the gates of eternity, finding no haven wherein I can rest my tired feet? Or will God, in pity for the soul He has made and endowed with this longing for companionship, send a wiser fellow-voyager to cheer my way with words of hope, and guide me to some green shore where I may drink of the quiet waters of content, and then journey through a lighted pathway to the land of the 'hereafter?'"

Mrs. Norton could not help observing Lois's melancholy moods and forced cheerfulness; and though she made unusual exertions to shake off her abstraction in the presence of the doctor, he, too, thought her greatly changed. With the propensity of medical men to attribute everything to physical derangement, he questioned her as to her health; but could elicit nothing but the fact that her slumber was restless and broken, and she often tossed restlessly upon her pillow until the day dawned. But Lois could give no reason for this; and, indeed, she knew no cause that could be put into words, and assented to the doctor's decree that it was the effect of over-wrought nerves, and she must take more exercise in the open air, and go to fewer parties. She had plunged more eagerly into gayeties of late, to endeavor to drown the murmurs of her unquiet spirit, and had astonished her friends by her bursts of feverish vivacity; but the incomprehensible sadness had returned more oppressively when the inevitable reaction came.

Whenever the door-bell rang she started, trembled, and almost held her breath with intense expectation, until Mr. Jennings, Colonel Saurwein, or some other uninteresting person was announced; when the bright glow of expectation faded from her cheek, and an irrepressible expression of disappointment came over her face. She was afraid even to ask herself the cause of her weariness, for if a strictly truthful answer had been given she would have felt under the necessity of censuring herself as unmaidenly and foolish.

One day, when their reception was nearly over, Mr. Forlis came in, and, taking a vacant seat by Lois, was

telling her in his old confidential way of various little matters in which they were mutually interested. The bust of Hebe belonged to him, and the sketch of it, which Lois had made for him at his request, had been lying finished for some weeks unclaimed by its owner. But he said he had come for it now, and it was only the press of business that had caused his seeming negligence. Lois could but feel, in the cordial warmth of his admiration and thanks when she gave him the picture, that she was amply repaid for the pains she had taken to make the sketch a true copy of the original.

"You have made one little change, mademoiselle," he said. "My Hebe, crowned with flowers, is the embodiment of smiling contentment, physical comfort, and soulless joy. But yours has an air of pensive sadness stealing over her mirth, as if the perception had dawned upon her that flowers must sometimes fade and fruits decay. Do you know that the same change is creeping over you? I have watched you at the opera, and fancied that your gayety had not its former *abandon*, and you have unconsciously shown this in your sketch. What is it, mon amie?" he asked, looking pleasantly down upon her as she sat in the bay-window.

Lois blushed, and confessed to being a little weary of dissipation, and not finding much congeniality in the friends who clustered about her.

"By the way," said Mr. Forlis, "has my nephew been here lately? I have never in my life seen so little of him, though business calls us to the same court-room nearly every week. His father is guardian

to the Misses d'Obrie, and I am lawyer to the estate, whose affairs the war has left in rather a complicated condition. I looked across the room at Edgar to-day, and thought I had never seen him so gloomy and grave. My friends call me romantic, and perhaps you will think the charge true when I tell you that I had hoped Edgar and you might have a mutual fancy for each other. Your tastes are so congenial, and there is really great similarity in your characters. But he is so absorbed in melancholy just now, that I cannot get him to enter into my plan at all. He is not in the least sentimental; but when I broached the matter to him, he said that the path of duty in his case led far away from happiness, and he must not dare to think of love in these troubled days. We walked up the street together, and I begged him to come in for some of your music to brighten up his spirits; but he refused, saying it was impossible for him to allow himself that pleasure. But I must not bore you with my discomforts; can't you give me one song upon the harp before I go?"

Lois, always willing to give pleasure by the exercise of her accomplishment, took the opera of Trovatore from the stand and was soon losing herself in those beautiful strains. But she sang,—

"Oh I have sighed to rest me,
Deep in the quiet grave,"

with such exquisite pathos, that even her unimaginative cousin Mrs. Norton was touched, and began to think her little Lois was a curious enigma, as far

beyond her power of deciphering as Egyptian hieroglyphics. To give her a delightful season, by bringing around her all the charms of fashionable life, had been her study ever since they left Louisville in November: but now the spring-time had come, and her fair flower was drooping. She could not think Lois capricious or eccentric, so she began to devise new plans for cheering her household. The doctor's spirits had also been flagging of late. He had been intensely occupied with his practice, which was apt to wear greatly upon his mind and health if he did not have something to divert his thoughts in his hours of relaxation. Mrs. Norton turned over various projects in her mind for dissipating their ennui, and finally decided upon giving a ball. Lois gratified her cousin very much by brightening up at the announcement. She thought, "Surely Edgar Treville and his father must accept the invitation. It is now two months since his last and only visit: the day we met in the storm. May not his excuse have been true, and it is business that engrosses him so entirely? He said his father's absence from town gave him an unusual pressure; and he has neglected even the uncle to whom he is so particularly attached. But, if he comes, I shall not take the slightest notice of him beyond a formal bow; and if he should ask for a dance, I will have too many engagements to grant his request. How strangely indifferent he must be to ladies' society, and yet how perfectly respectful, even tender, is his manner, and with what watchful care does he anticipate every want! The reason that his society is much more agreeable and fascinating than that of any one else,

is that he never flatters, but by looks and devoted attention, and spends the time that others fill with compliments in sensible and reasonable conversation."

Lois entered into the preparations for the ball with all her old eagerness, and, after the cards were sent out, dwelt in imagination upon the pleasure there would be in disdaining to show any favor to Edgar Treville, and refusing to accept any of his invitations to dance. Mrs. Norton sent cards to Miss Shanks in compliment to Mr. Forlis, and joined in Mrs. Warrington's loudly-expressed wonders as to whether he would be her escort.

Hagar and Mrs. Norton were surprised, when the important evening came, to find that Lois took so much of her old interest in the coiffure and toilette. Her dress was of delicate puffed pink crépe, with an occasional spray of roses nestling amid its folds, and her cousins declared that she looked like a fresh moss-rose-bud herself.

Not all the animation of spirits with which she at first entered into the enjoyment of the ball prevented her from glancing frequently at the main entrance during the hours before midnight; but when the long-expected guest came not, her spirits began to flag, and she grew languid and inattentive to the lively play of repartee that was going on about her; so that some of the less-infatuated of her admirers began to think that the brilliant Miss Carrol was suffering in spirits, if not in health, from the gayeties of the season.

Miss Shanks came, escorted by Mr. Fortinbras; and, soon after eleven, Mr. Forlis came alone, to the great joy of her cousins. Lois heard him tell Mrs. Norton

that his nephew had gone down to the plantation before the cards were sent out, and probably had not received his, or he would have sent regrets, or come up for the ball. His father had not been well, but he expected them both in town the next day.

After that, Lois felt the evening had nothing more to bring her. Her feet kept mechanical time to the music, but the pall had settled upon her spirits. Her cousin Julia took her up for a little conversation with Miss Shanks while Mr. Fortinbras was dancing with some one else, but she forgot even to be amused with those nasal tones, which were so exactly like Mrs. Warrington's frequent imitations. She did remember sufficiently not to betray the least emotion at Julia's double-teasing upon the subject of Mr. Fortinbras, and said a few commonplace but kindly expressions of interest to that worthy little man. Miss Shanks was perfectly self-possessed, and afforded not the least opportunity for more open warfare on the part of Mrs. Warrington; and Lois was soon summoned away to fulfill an engagement for a waltz, chiding herself for listlessness, yet longing for the guests to leave her at liberty to seek her room, for the relief of solitude and tears. But Mr. Forlis lingered after the departure of the others, as in old times, for a parting word with his old friends. The gay assembly had dwindled down to six persons,—Mr. and Mrs. Warrington, the Nortons, Lois, and himself. He had told Lois, while dancing with her, that a curious robbery had taken place in his rooms the previous week. Her sketch of Hebe had been upon an easel on his writing-table since the day of his last visit, and had been greatly admired by

chance guests. But he had not told any one but his nephew whose drawing it was, and yet the day before he left town it disappeared from its frame. "Can you suppose," said Mr. Forlis, laughingly, "that the grave philosopher, Edgar Treville, has turned thief? Is it love of art or the artist, Miss Carrol, that has prompted such a deed?" Lois blushed, but would not allow herself to suppose such a thing possible. Some mischievous person doubtless wished to play a little trick upon Mr. Forlis, and Hebe would soon return, probably with a moustache traced about the mouth. "Wasn't that the style in which gentlemen often played practical jokes?" she said.

Dr. Norton delighted his wife by being in a more jovial mood than she had known him for a long time; and Mr. Forlis's face also beamed with quiet content.

"One more glass before you go, Henri," said Dr. Norton, laying his hand upon his friend's shoulder. "We have seen so little of you lately, and this is so refreshingly like 'auld lang syne,' that I dread to have our little party break up, fearing we may not all be collected together again soon."

"Don't fancy anything quite so unpleasant, my dear doctor," said Mr. Forlis. "I hope we all have many happy days in store for us; and happiness for me certainly includes the society of the present company," bowing low, as he spoke, to the ladies, and placing his hand on the doctor's arm.

"To prevent the fulfillment of my apprehension," said Dr. Norton, "it would be a good plan for us all to agree upon a meeting somewhere, which reminds me that it is just the right season for those delightful

excursions to the lake we all enjoyed so much last spring. You remember, Mary, how pleasant you found it, wandering among the lovely flower-gardens out there."

"Not to mention the zest with which you gentlemen enjoyed the fish-dinner," said Mrs. Warrington; "and the glorious boat-rides by moonlight, in which I delighted particularly. Do let us go very soon," she said, eagerly.

"Yes," assented Mr. Forlis, with all his old enthusiasm; "I never enjoyed anything more than those parties. I've been very busy lately with some perplexing business; but I see my way clear to its successful termination, and think myself entitled to a little holiday. I will be ready to go whenever it is convenient to the rest of you."

"Let us say Friday, the day after to-morrow," said the doctor; "and, Lois, shall we not invite some young gentleman for your especial escort? Now we shall have a fine opportunity of discovering who your favorite is. Name him quickly, belle cousine; we are dying of curiosity."

"I really do not wish for any one else," said Lois; "it will be much pleasanter to have only a family party. Of course, I look upon you, Mr. Forlis, as the doctor's best friend, and so one of the family."

"We shall be very glad, mademoiselle, to have you all to ourselves; but do not let the doctor make you afraid to confess if there is any particular friend whose society would make the excursion more agreeable to you. We will not betray your confidence."

"Indeed," said Lois, "since you force me to acknowledge the truth, I must say I am tired of young gentlemen altogether. They consider it necessary to pay such elaborate compliments, that I am impatient to be relieved of their society."

"The little hypocrite!" thought Mrs. Warrington.

CHAPTER XIV.

"In the Spring a fuller crimson comes upon the robin's breast;
In the Spring the wanton lapwing gets himself another crest;
In the Spring a livelier iris changes on the burnished dove;
In the Spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love."

TENNYSON.

WE must go back a little to the day Mr. Forlis mentioned to Lois, as having received a call at his rooms from his nephew. Mr. Forlis's genial temperament made him as great a favorite in his family as among his friends, and he was on the most intimate terms of confidential intercourse with them. The conversation had turned that day upon matrimony, and the elder gentleman was urging it upon his nephew, and said to him, "I wish you could be induced to cultivate the acquaintance of my little friend, Miss Carrol. I thought, the day we were caught in the storm, that you certainly would be attracted by her winning sweetness and lovely manners, if not by her exquisite beauty. I will freely confess to you that, if I were a marrying man, and twenty

years younger, I should enter the lists myself, and endeavor to bear her off from the crowd of suitors who press about her. But she looks upon me now as a sage mentor; consults me often, as she would an elder brother; and I cannot allow this pleasant state of things to be disturbed by falling in love with my pupil. You are fastidious in the extreme, Edgar, and I assure you that every requirement of your fastidiousness is fulfilled in this dainty little creature. Your artist's eye must be struck by her perfect beauty, and your sense of music and poetry by the soft tones of her voice and the grace of her every motion. Are you made of stone, Edgar, that you are so insensible to her charms? She is well-educated and accomplished, dances like a fairy, sings like a nightingale, and sketches like this," holding up the Hebe from the easel. "I did not mention the artist when you first admired it, because I think it is a point of honor, when a lady does such a favor for a gentleman, that he should refrain from mentioning it to others, lest he should seem to boast of superior favor shown to him; but you have always been my second self, and I know the confidence is sacred to you. I am quite serious in begging you to call upon Miss Carrol, and take your father also to see her,—they would soon be the best of friends."

"I am not insensible to her loveliness, Uncle Henri; but I dare not allow myself to contemplate it. My plans do not admit of my falling in love, as the common phrase is; so I cannot accept your invitation, and call at Mrs. Norton's, as you request."

The morning after the ball, Mrs. Norton and Lois,

in spite of the fatigue of the previous evening, were obliged to pay a visit at the St. Charles Hotel, to see an old Kentucky friend, of whose arrival in the city they had then heard. Lois went languidly through with the duty, and hoped, as they walked along the hall to the staircase, after the visit was over, that her cousin Mary would not be struck with the desire to go shopping when she saw the show-windows gay with bright fabrics for spring wear.

"How are you?" said Mrs. Norton, shaking hands with some one on a lower step who was obscured for a moment from the view of Lois, who was behind her cousin. But she recognized instantly the clear, manly voice that replied, "I am glad to see you, Mrs. Norton, and hope you are well?"

"Thank you, yes; and how is your father, Mr. Treville? Mr. Forlis told me he had not been well, and that you were at Deer Range with him."

"I left him early this morning quite himself again. Good-day, Miss Carrol," he said, as Lois came in sight; and Cousin Mary wondered why two people usually so impassive should blush so deeply simply over shaking hands. But it put the idea into her head of asking Mr. Treville to go to the lake; and she said, while Lois stood in haughty silence, "We are very fortunate in meeting you to-day; we are going on a little excursion to-morrow, with your uncle and my cousins, the Warringtons. Will you not join our party?"

He seemed to hesitate; and a crimson glow came over his clear, olive skin, which was reflected in Miss Carrol's face as he glanced at her.

"I would like very much to go," he said, "and truly appreciate your kindness in thinking of me, especially as I have not yet apologized for my seeming rudeness about your ball last evening. The invitation was sent to my lodgings, and not forwarded with my business letters from the office; so it only reached me to-day; and I now express my regret for both."

"Now, Mr. Treville, as you could not come to the ball, make amends for it by accepting the present invitation. Don't mention business as an excuse; for you can certainly leave for one day, if your health requires it. It is not polite to tell people they look badly, but to ease your conscience for deserting your office to-morrow, I will say that you do not look nearly so well as last winter. You were pale and care-worn when we met you a moment ago. Perhaps," she continued, with her pleasant air of maternal solicitude, "rowing on the lake and having the fresh air will do you good."

"It would be impossible, madame," he said, after a quick glance at Lois, in which he seemed to see a momentary look of entreaty in her eyes, "to deny myself the pleasure of going, when you are so extremely kind. Really weighty matters call me to my office; but, at your command, I will leave them there."

"I never saw a gentleman in my life," said Lois, as Mr. Treville turned to her, "but those of elegant leisure, who did not try to impress upon his friends that he was of such importance to the business world, that all its mighty wheels would stand still if he withdrew from the scene of action one day."

"You are severe, mademoiselle; we certainly should take some lessons from the ladies, and learn to spend time profitably by turning over laces and ribbons at Olimpe's."

"I see," said Mrs. Norton, laughing, "that I must separate you children, to keep you from quarrelling. Show her the rose-gardens at the lake, to-morrow, instead of exchanging sharp sayings now. Good-morning, Mr. Treville."

"Au revoir, mesdames. I will meet you at the depot to-morrow," he said, as he escorted them to the ladies' entrance of the St. Charles.

Lois went to the window many times that evening to see if the skies promised well for their pleasure the next day; and as she looked forth again in the early morning, she was delighted with the stream of warm sunlight that threw a bright golden stripe over the blue carpet.

It was one of the most glorious days of spring, the loveliest season of the year in New Orleans, and the perfection of weather, because it made people unconscious of their physical existence. In winter, the chilling winds and lowering skies make us shiver with cold; and the extreme heat of summer does not allow us to forget our languor in any enjoyment. But when we neglect to consult the thermometer, or to be engrossed with care for the comfort of our bodies, our spirits find leisure for a little holiday, and can soar away unrestrained by the earth-clogs of daily life. Lois felt, to the utmost, the charm of the day, and resolved to cast aside every disquieting thought. She had reproached herself for allowing those sarcastic

words to escape her at the St. Charles, and determined never to repeat them. "Every woman must learn self-restraint and concealment, and I will begin now; but to-day I shall enjoy to the full every pleasure about me. It is a duty I owe these kind cousins, who have planned the trip for my health and enjoyment."

As Edgar Treville drove to the depot that afternoon, the winter in his heart seemed to have vanished, and the ice-bound portals were wide open, loosened by the balmy breath of spring. He, too, had resolved, let the consequences be what they might, to enjoy himself that day in the sweet smiles of her whom he could no longer refrain from acknowledging as his heart's queen. No matter if she spoke, as yesterday, sarcastic words, he would change them to honeyed speech by the might of his true love's alchemy.

"Am I always to deny myself the purest pleasures of life?" he said to himself; "even my uncle confesses that his pulse beats quicker for her presence, and thinks me a man of marble because I pretended to be unconscious of it. I wonder how I could have deceived him so, when every fibre in my being thrills when she is near? But to-day I shall cast prudence to the winds, and sun my tired heart in the light of her loveliness. I will snatch a few moments of happiness before I dash the cup aside for a life-time," and he felt a wild throb of pleasure as he caught sight of her little blue-robed figure, on the platform at the station-house.

He found it was indeed a family party that he joined. Dr. Norton was never quite satisfied unless, as now, escorting his wife, and Mr. Forlis was with Mr. and Mrs. Warrington. Their little boy was peeping shyly

from the folds of Lois's dress, his fair skin and chestnut curls making a pretty picture there; and when Edgar Treville seated himself by her side in the car, little Fred still kept her hand in his, gently kissing it occasionally, and looking at her with the fond tenderness of childhood. It seemed to form a bond of union between him and Mr. Treville, in whose arms he was soon sleeping. Then Mr. Warrington joined them; and both conversed more easily than at first, from the presence of a third party. Mr. Warrington always unbent in Lois's presence; her kindness to his idol boy had won his heart long ago, and he then forgot to be the prosy pedant his wife always called him. They talked of literature and art, but all very gayly, and Mrs. Warrington looked back rather curiously as Lois's merry laugh rang out at some witticism of the gentlemen. But Mr. Warrington did not expect to go all the way with them. He had brought his little darling out to visit his old nurse, who lived in a cottage near the railroad and where the cars stopped, half way to the lake. Freddy, in spite of the well-known charms of a day with his nurse, was half disposed to resist being taken from Lois. He stood on the seat beside her with his little arms about her neck, his fair curls clustering among her golden locks, and was only persuaded by her parting kisses and promise of a speedy return to him, to go with his father. Edgar watched her as she caressed the beautiful boy, and thought of those golden-haired Madonnas of Titian he had admired so much abroad. His quick eye detected the change a few months had made in the dazzling beauty who had first attracted his attention at the Christmas

ball, and the shadow that maturer thought had brought upon the face had but softened and deepened its loveliness. He found himself involuntarily repeating the hackneyed lines of Wordsworth:

"A spirit, yet a woman, too,"

and the gentle quietness of her management of her baby-lover, who remained kissing his hand to her on the platform until they were out of sight, was particularly pleasant in the eyes of Edgar Treville.

"Too bad, isn't it, in Mr. Warrington to leave our party and throw me upon the escort of Mr. Forlis," said Mrs. Warrington. "I cannot understand why he should bring Fred to visit that coarse old woman."

"Because she was so kind and took such good care of him in that dreadful spell of illness he had last year," said Mrs. Norton.

"Well, she was amply paid for it, and to this day Mr. Warrington is always doing kind acts for her. He got her son a situation on the railroad, with the use of that cottage attached to it, and I believe purchased half of the pretty furniture that fills it."

"I am sure it is quite natural that she should be very fond of Fred, then, as well as grateful for his father's kindness," returned Mrs. Norton.

In about half an hour they arrived at the shore of Lake Ponchartrain, and walked up a short distance along a road bordered by pretty white cottages, with their yards filled with flowers, from which the lake-breeze wafted to them the sweetest fragrance, to a large airy hotel. They procured a parlor, with windows overlooking the gardens and conservatories, and

a balcony out over the lake, and then strayed in pairs out among the flowers.

"This is your first visit to our lake, is it not, mademoiselle?" said Mr. Treville to Lois, as he took her parasol and led the way to the rose-garden; "then you must allow me to show you some of its beauties. Can your native Kentucky produce anything like these?"

"Oh, no, indeed!" said Lois; "I never saw such tropical luxuriance, and such a wealth of flowers. These huge trees I could scarcely imagine were roses, but for their countless bloom."

Mr. Treville had woven a garland for her of the Lamarque and blush tea-rose; and Lois declared, as he threw it around her neck, that she was almost smothered with sweetness, and faint from the full perception of their exceeding beauty.

And thus they spent the next hour, wandering in and out of the conservatories, among the shrubbery, and at last down to the lake,

"To watch the crisping ripples on the beach,
And tender, curving lines of creamy spray."

There is something so dreamy in the splash of the waves upon the shore, that Lois stood, in silence, watching the white crests break at her feet. Treville was so lost in admiration of her grace, and the fair freshness of her flower-crowned girlhood, that he could not speak.

Was it possible that she could love him? he wondered. He had not enough egotism to think so; and yet it was as inevitable that he should be attracted to

her as that her lovely face should be reflected in the sun-lit waves. A wild desire rushed over him, which required all his strength of will to master, to clasp her in his arms, and beseech her to love him.

"I would give up all," he thought,—"all promise that the future might bring me,—to touch her lips for one supreme moment! After that, well,—

'Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay.'

But I must shake off this infatuation," he thought, turning his eyes away from her, "and begin talking about something to break this dangerous spell."

"Miss Carrol," he said, aloud, "we are going on the lake this evening; but I am really afraid to let you enter the boat."

"Why?" asked Lois, raising her large eyes, full of wonder.

"Because I have always suspected that you were an Undine,—a water-sprite in disguise,—and am fearful that, if we trust you on your native element, your fellow-spirits may claim you again. I shall be watching all the while for the king of the mermen to rise on the water, dressed in emerald green, trimmed with diamonds and pearls, ready to snatch you from us, and bear you under the waves to his sea-palace for the fairest ornament of his court."

Her merry laugh rang over the garden, as she said, "What an odd fancy! is it because the water-sprites have no souls, that you compare me to them?"

"I don't mean to say that I think you soulless, mademoiselle," he replied, with a smile, half jestingly and half gravely; "but I think it possible that you may be heartless."

"Edgar!" called Mr. Forlis, from the balcony, "will you and Miss Carrol come and join our consultation? We are undecided whether to go out rowing before dinner, or by moonlight; what do you say?"

"I should think," said Treville, "that must depend upon the time the return-train leaves to-night."

"We have none of us thought to inquire, and I suppose the schedule has been changed since last summer. Will you please ask in the hall or the office?"

"Certainly," said Treville, and was gone in a moment.

"Mr. Forlis," said Mrs. Norton, "we will miss Mr. McCall on the lake, will we not? Do you remember how beautifully he used to repeat poetry for us, which sounded all the prettier for the romantic surroundings?"

"Apropos of poetry," said Mrs. Warrington, putting her hand into her pocket, "this is the very opportunity to read you a poetical gem, stolen and brought to me by a little bird from a young lady's boudoir." Here she looked at Lois with sparkling eyes and one of her mischievous smiles, that notified her cousin to prepare to be tormented for the amusement of the company, although she had no idea of the particular form in which the torture was to be applied. Julia now unfolded a paper, and, in an affectedly-sentimental tone, began to read some little verses that Lois recognized as some of her own rough, school-girl productions.

"Oh, Cousin Julia!" she said, impulsively, "do spare me such a humiliation just now!"

But Mrs. Warrington read to the end, and then

refolding the sheet, said, "I have no doubt this love-sick maiden really expects to find some day her ideal hero: a man strong as a rock, without any of the ordinary imperfections of flesh-and-blood men, who will lavish unceasing devotion upon her; and, as the romantic love-stories say, 'Guide her safely through all the shoals and perils of life.' I think it very unsafe to indulge much in such sentimental nonsense, and if this young woman intends going through life with such lofty ideas, I know she will be very miserable. Lois, I hope you are attending to my oration; it is for your especial benefit. And let me tell you my opinion of marrying for love, as novels call it. My dear child, 'tis like starting across the Atlantic in an open boat, stored with cream candy by way of provisions."

By this time Lois had glided behind the lace curtains into the balcony, to hide the burning blushes her annoyance had brought to her face; and Mr. Forlis's indignation was so great at Mrs. Warrington's treachery, that he longed to pour out his sympathy to her there. Just then, Mr. Treville returned, and said they would have ample time to go rowing by moonlight, as the last train did not leave till half-past ten o'clock, and he would hasten to engage a boat if they were willing to go.

"You missed a great deal, Mr. Treville," said Julia, "by being absent a moment ago, but I expect I can read this lovely poem over again for you. It will be doubly interesting to you, since you escorted our fair young poetess out here."

"I am very sorry to have missed it," said Treville,

understanding her little gesture towards the balcony where Lois was; "but with your permission I will take this sheet, and read it at leisure before I return it to the owner. The clerk informed me that several other parties were expected, and it would be necessary to engage a boat immediately." And taking the paper from Mrs. Warrington, he passed through the opposite door, on his way to the boat-house. When he had completed his arrangements there, and was returning through the garden, he leaned against a tree and read the contents of the little package. Across the back of it was written, "Composed in answer to the question of my friend, Fannie Howard, at school;" and then a date, about two years back. Opening it, the lines were as follows:

"You ask for the picture of one I could love;
The latch of the door of my heart I will move,
And show you the image engraven therein,
The one who my heart's best affections could win.
I think not alone of his outward mien,
But if you wish will let fancy dream
To paint the form that could please my eye,
Then tell of his goodness by-and-by.
Five feet nine is the size I admire,
Or even, perhaps, an inch or two higher;
A broad, clear brow, and a large, dark eye,
Full of the soul's light and poetry,
Sometimes dreamy, and sometimes bright,
Always fill'd with a cheerful light;
A smile ever joyous to cheer the sad,
And a willing hand to make the poor glad.
Not wealth or title that is great,
I deem he needs to be my mate;
But rich in knowledge, and grand in soul,
Must he be, my whole heart to control.

Not that I'd be worthy of him, ah, no!
But my daily study might make me so;
And his only weakness then would be,
Stooping low down to love little me."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Treville, "she has a soul, though—that beautiful water-nymph. But is this simply a girl's ideal hero, or did she paint from life? But a child of fifteen or sixteen cannot have had much experience. Ah, I am afraid that I have not the slightest claim to approximating to so noble a character as she has described here. I only know that I could love her with all my heart; and I believe the knowledge that she is still farther beyond my reach, has increased my infatuation for her."

He was conscious the moment after, without turning towards the house, that she was coming down the terrace into the garden, for he intuitively recognized her footfall on the path. He was subdued by a delicious poetical influence that had taken full possession to-day of a nature usually too philosophical to indulge in anything of the sort; and he did what, a few months previously, would have caused him to pronounce himself a foolish, love-sick boy. As he could find no original poetical words in which to express his feelings, he employed some of Tennyson's,—

"She is coming, my own, my sweet:
Were it ever so airy a tread,
My heart would hear her and beat,
Were it earth in an earthy bed;
My dust would hear her and beat,
Had I lain for a century dead;
Would start and tremble under her feet,
And blossom in purple and red."

Lois, unable longer to endure Mrs. Warrington's ridicule, had come down from the balcony to the garden to look for her parasol, but was startled to find Mr. Treville leaning against a large tree, holding in his hand the very paper that had caused her so much annoyance; and she eagerly stretched forth her hand to reclaim it from him.

"Please give me that little package of nonsense," she said; "it was never intended but for the eyes of one person, my most intimate school-friend; and such girlish folly is scarcely deserving the notice it has attracted."

He immediately returned to her the paper, which she tore into small pieces and flung into the lake. Edgar saw and sympathized with her emotion, and longed to comfort her; but he said, "I owe you an apology for reading them, but I cannot regret having had such a glimpse of your true nature, and can almost forgive Mrs. Warrington for her treachery, as it has procured for me this pleasure. It has shown me that the mermaid has a heart; and blessed, indeed, will be the man who wins that noble treasure for himself. But I doubt if there exists one who is worthy of it."

The cloud soon passed from Lois's brow, her gayety began to return, and at the elegant dinner soon after served to them she rivalled her brilliant cousin Julia in wit and repartee, in which Edgar Treville also took an animated part.

But later, when they were gliding over the smooth surface of the lake, and Lois was seated beside Treville, they appeared in no mood for talking. She was

leaning slightly over the side of the boat, trailing her slender white fingers through the water, and shaking the sparkling drops off to make ripples in the moonlight. They seemed to be listening to the fitful discourse that was going on among the others, but in reality were completely absorbed in their own thoughts, if an expression implying vigorous mental action may be used, when they were simply filled with a supreme consciousness of their proximity to each other. But this was so all-engrossing that they could find room for no other idea. What cared they for the politics discussed by Dr. Norton and Mr. Forlis? What difference did it make to them who was their next president? Did he not know that *she* was his queen? and did she not know—but it is unfair to betray the maiden's secret, only half guessed by herself. Our grandmothers say that no woman should give her heart unasked. But Lois had never found floating over water so delightful as on this night; had never thought the dark-blue dome overhead sprinkled with its brilliant gems so beautiful, and thought the faint music wafted to them from the musicians' boat the sweetest she had ever heard.

In fact, *something* had changed the whole aspect of life, and even the air she breathed seemed lighter.

When they returned to the pier, and Lois stepped to the edge of the boat to spring ashore, Treville came quickly forward before any one could anticipate him, and said in a low tone, only heard by Lois, "I cannot trust you to any one else; my rival, the king of the mermen, is doubtless watching to snatch you from me, and I must circumvent him."

The words escaped him involuntarily, and he meant no presumption by them; but she knew that he need fear neither his imaginary rival nor any other.

There was a fear, however, of which she did not dream, that he had been putting away from him all day, every time that it importuned him for a hearing.

CHAPTER XV.

"O, let the solid ground
Not fail beneath my feet,
Before my life has found
What some have found so sweet;
Then let come what come may,
What matter if I go mad,
I shall have had my day."

TENNYSON.

THE day of pleasure was over, all too soon, and in less than fifteen minutes they were whirling back to the city again. At the half-way station, Mr. Warrington came upon the train carrying in his arms little Fred, who was only half roused from his midnight slumbers. The child was curled up in his father's long arms, and his bright face peeped from them as a squirrel from the bare branches of a gnarled old oak.

"I want to sit by my cousin Lois," said the boy.

"Oh, yes," said Lois; "let me take him here, and he shall rest his poor tired head on my lap. Now, darling,

are you comfortable?" she said, as she threw her white Shetland shawl over him.

Mr. Treville had given up his seat beside Miss Carrol, and sat with Mr. Warrington facing her, admiring the tender way in which she cared for the almost motherless child.

When they thought the little fellow nearly asleep, he raised his head suddenly and cried out, "Oh, papa, my poor Joujou! we have left my dear little Joujou!" and his piteous tone soon became a low cry, which his father tried to soothe with a look of helpless distress.

"We tan't do back for Joujou, tan we, papa?" asked the little boy, brightening up for a moment at the possibility.

"No, my dear, the train will not stop for us; but we will send for him to-morrow, if you will not cry now," said his father.

"Listen to me, dear Freddy," said Lois. "Don't you know that Joujou has been in town all winter, and a little visit to the country will do him good. Your nurse will give him a nice warm place to sleep in, and to-morrow the breeze from the lake will be so pleasant for him."

"Is sea-breeze dood for puppies, papa? Den I am glad I left Joujou. But he is so lonely at nurse's house."

"You can write him a sweet little letter to-morrow, Freddy," said his cousin Lois, "and ask him how he enjoys the country, and if he has caught any rabbits or rats."

"Oh, won't that be nice!" said Fred, clapping his hands with glee. "Papa, will you write it for me?"

"Yes, my child," said Mr. Warrington; "I will come up to the nursery, and we will write the letter before breakfast;" delighted at the happy fiction that had restored the serenity of his boy.

"And will Joujou answer my letter?" asked Fred of Lois, when she had finished wiping the tears from his cheeks.

"Yes," she said, after a moment's hesitation, looking at Mr. Treville with one of her sweet, bright smiles. Then turning to Mr. Warrington, and speaking in French, which the child did not understand, she said, "You can write the letter for him, and send it to me by the first delivery in the morning, and I will try to imagine myself a puppy, and answer it. In that way we can keep him pacified for a few days, until you can conveniently send for the precious Joujou."

By this time the train had reached the depot, and Lois said to the boy, as she kissed him at parting, "Good-night, dear Freddy; the next time I see you you must tell me all about your letters, and what Joujou thought of the country."

The following morning Mrs. Norton went down to Canal Street, on an expedition that to many feminine minds is the grand aim and end of existence, shopping; and Lois sat in the library, writing. For a half-hour the only sound audible was the moving of the pen over the paper; then came a prolonged tinkling of the door-bell.

Edgar Treville had told Lois that he was coming very soon to pay the long-promised visit; and she had dressed with unusual care this morning, hoping he would call then. The circling waves of air that were

set in motion by the ringing of the bell seemed, contrary to the order of natural philosophy, to have touched her heart instead of the drum of her ear. She tried very hard to continue her writing in spite of her trembling; but a few commonplace words, pronounced in the hall, produced the same curious effect as the bell, only intensified, and the pen refused to stir.

"Are the ladies at home?" Edgar Treville was asking.

"Mrs. Norton is out," replied Arthur; "but Miss Carrol is in the library. Would Mr. Treville walk in?"

Certainly he would; and he hoped that he had not disturbed Miss Carrol by interrupting her writing.

"Oh, no," said Lois; "I have just finished, and must show you, this elegant canine correspondence that Mr. Warrington and I have gotten up for Fred's amusement. Here is a letter I received this morning addressed to 'Joujou Warrington, care of Miss Carrol.' It is really funny when we remember that the grave and learned savant, Mr. Warrington, is its author. Shall I read it to you?"

"Yes; please," said Edgar, smiling. "I think that was such a pretty original idea of yours to comfort that weeping little fellow. No one less kind would have thought of it."

Lois took up a tiny pink three-cornered note, with the picture of a dog's head upon it for a crest, and read:

"'My dear Joujou: I am so sorry that I came away and forgot you last night; but Cousin Lois says it is

good for your health to spend a few days in the country, and breathe the fresh air from the lake. I hope Jimmie is kind to you, and that the old cat will not fight you. I advise you not to tease her kittens, for she might give you a hard box on the ear if you trouble them. Tell nurse to be good to you, and give you good dinners for my sake.

"'Write me a little letter as soon as you get this, and tell me if you are well and happy; how you have played all day; and if you caught any rats or rabbits.

"'Papa will send for you very soon to come back to your affectionate master,

"'FREDERIC A. WARRINGTON, JR.

"'To Joujou, my dear dog.'

"And here is the answer I have just written," said Lois:

"'My dear master Fred: I felt very highly honored to get your kind letter to-day; but I had to steal Madame Nurse's spectacles to read it. I must tell you what a splendid jolly time I am having,—though I miss my dear master very much. I had a nice little bed in the corner last night, and a delightful breakfast this morning. Of course I want to see you very much; but hope you will let me stay here a few days. The air is so fine, and the bones are so good, that I shall get quite fat. Old Mrs. Cat is not very polite; she scratched me in the face this morning so hard that I was afraid she would spoil my beauty, and called me "a miserable aristocrat," because I ate all the chicken, and left her the other meat. Please ask your papa to

look in his dictionary, and see what that means, for me.

"'I intend to watch pussy, and see how she catches mice so quickly. She claps her paw upon them the moment they put their heads out of their holes, and takes them off to her kittens to play with. I have not had a chance to catch one; but have had good fun with the mosquitoes. I pretend to be asleep, and sit right still, until they get on my nose, when I open my mouth wide and swallow them down directly. Give my love to your papa, and my most respectful, humble regards to your majestic mother.

"'I remain ever your dutiful and loving

"'JOUJOU.

"'P.S. I saw a funny little donkey running out of the lettuce-bed, but Jimmie said it was a rabbit.'"

"Those are charming productions," said Treville, laughing, "and I have no doubt that yours will delight Master Fred. What an imagination you have, to put yourself in the place of a little terrier! I hear the door-bell ring, quel dommage! Very likely there will be a swarm of young gentlemen here in a few moments, though this is not your reception-day. I see, Miss Carrol, the only way to have a quiet chat with you is to find you at the lake, where it is better to risk the jealousy of your marine lover—the king of the mermen—than to be interrupted by Mr. Fortinbras."

"They said that he was so grave," thought Lois, as she refolded the tiny letters; "and he really looked so

at first; but I am sure, now, that he is not stern, or he could not bring his mind down upon a level with this baby nonsense, or enter so merrily into this scheme for the amusement of my little cousin. I no longer stand in awe of him, but I like him all the better." She was just asking his advice and opinion of a crayon copy she was enlarging from a photograph of Mrs. Norton, when the door opened, and there entered two figures, whose appearance dissipated all their pleasant anticipations of an agreeable chat over pictures. The visitors were two young ladies, dressed in the height of the spring fashion, carrying lace parasols in one hand, and silver card-cases in the other. They seemed afraid to move their heads either to the right or left, for fear of disarranging the marvelous structures of hair, ribbons, and artificial flowers that were piled upon them. Only to look at those elaborate edifices was enough to start one off into a painful fit of wondering as to their possible construction, which seemed as great a mystery as the building of the pyramids of Egypt. The foremost young lady could not have succeeded in putting her head into a bushel basket, and her dress was suffering under a profuse eruption of green and red flowers. The contrast between their gorgeous apparel and Miss Carrol's simple white linen morning-dress, with pale-blue sash and necktie, was so great that Treville's eye dwelt admiringly upon it. Lois introduced the young ladies as Miss Savage and Miss Brand.

"We met your uncle, Mr. Forlis, at the last place where we called," said Miss Brand, in an affected, drawling tone; "he is such a fearfully jolly man, you

know—he, he, he!—and he said you had such an awfully nice time at the lake yesterday—he, he, he!"

Lois wondered why there should be anything to provoke laughter in an "*awful*" time; but she found that this young lady had the habit of rounding all her periods with giggles, and that grave or ludicrous subjects met the same treatment in her conversation. It had the effect of spreading a very few ideas over a large space, and filling up all the blanks and pauses, as she supposed, most agreeably. She drawled her words for the same purpose, and by the aid of he, he, he's! could spin out what she called conversation by the hour; but when her visits were over, the unhappy recipients of them might vainly endeavor to recall a syllable she had uttered. Miss Savage sat by in moody silence, sucking the ivory carving on the top of her parasol. She always took her friend with her to do the talking when they went visiting, and looked upon her gestures with wonder. Miss Brand threw one hand out stiffly before her, and then the other, brandishing the articles it contained in the most vehement manner, and continued: "And did you have a glorious time and a gorgeous dinner, Miss Carrol?"

"Yes, we found it pleasant, and here are some of the beautiful roses we brought home with us," pointing to a vase on her writing-table.

"I went with a fearfully nice party there once," said Miss Brand; "but that kind of fun isn't my style, he, he, he! The beastly dampness from the lake takes all the jolly curl out of one's hair. Now,

Mr. Treville," she said, balancing the tower of Babel on her head coquettishly on one side, while she giggled unrestrainedly, "don't laugh at us poor ladies for being such slaves to fashion; curls are so awfully pretty! There was a nobby little fellow with us that jolly time we went,—Mr. Mott. Do you know him, Miss Carrol, and isn't he just jimpsy?"

"Yes," said Lois, "I am well acquainted with Mr. Mott, but I do not quite understand you. To me he seems a cultivated, agreeable person."

"He, he, he! ha, ha, ha!" screamed Miss Brand. "Now that is a terribly good joke. 'Jimpsy' means a nobby fellow, and I know you think he is that. He thinks you are fearfully gorgeous and jolly, and I shall tell him you think he is the same."

"Do not tell him that I think him anything unpleasant," said Lois, "for I am indebted to him for many kindnesses."

"Miss Brand was paying him a compliment, I believe," said Mr. Treville, smiling.

"Now, Miss Carrol, that is really too thin—he, he, he! You don't really mean you never heard of 'jimpsy' before? It is such a jolly, awfully convenient word, you know. When you think any one is howling nice, you can just say that they are jimpsy,—he, he, he!"

Lois, finding Miss Brand's language almost unintelligible, turned to Miss Savage, hoping she could speak more unadorned English.

"I see you at the opera often, Miss Savage; do you enjoy the music?"

"Oh, it is atrociously pokey!" she replied, "and I

only go to see the jolly people, and talk a little with the beaux."

"Now, Jennie, you dear old duckey—ha, ha!" said Miss Brand, "that is really transparently thin. You know—he, he, he!—that you think Dumestre terribly howling handsome."

"Yes, he does howl," said Miss Savage, curtly, rising rapidly to take leave, rather than be called upon to take part in the conversation. She and Miss Brand went away, after the latter had brandished her parasol frantically in token of adieu, and she screamed back to them until completely out of sight.

"I never suffered under such a hail-storm of slang before in my life," said Lois, when she returned to the library.

"Do you wonder now, Miss Carrol," said Treville, smiling, "that I have not sought society more? But may we return to the pictures? I am anxious to see your crayon." And as Lois uncovered the easel, he continued, "How beautifully you have caught Mrs. Norton's expression, and brought out so fully many charms in her face the photograph does not reveal! Instead of the whole bust, I should drape lace across the shoulders, thus," and he sketched rapidly the desired effect upon a sheet of paper. "If it were not asking too much, and you did not crayon so rapidly, Miss Carrol, I should ask for a copy of this. My father has the greatest respect and affection for your cousin; and you have reproduced here just the kindly, sympathetic look she had when she so graciously ministered to him last summer. If you will give me one, I may yield to my uncle's importunity, and restore

him his prized Hebe. But I have another favor to ask. I have heard that you have illustrated 'The Pleasures of Hope,' one of the most exquisite poems in the English language. May I not see it now?"

But just then Mr. Warrington walked slowly in. He said he happened to be on the street, and thought he would come in to thank Lois for her happy device of the letter to Joujou, which had quieted his dear boy so immediately. Lois told him the reply had gone by the post some time since; and she was delighted to do anything for a child so bright and winning, and whom she loved so dearly, as she did Fred.

Mr. Warrington thanked her warmly for her praise of his darling, and said, "I also wished to see you, Lois, on a little matter of business," smiling rather awkwardly, as if unaccustomed to the effort. "But do not leave, I entreat you, Edgar; the business is not private, and perhaps you can help this young lady decide whether she would like best for us to give her a dinner-party or a German. Do sit down again, I beg you."

But Treville had already stayed such a long time for a first visit, that he thought no excuse would answer for remaining. After his departure, Mr. Warrington returned to the subject of the party, and asked for Lois's decision.

"Which would Cousin Julia like best?" she asked.

"It doesn't make any difference to her; she is always ready for a frolic of any kind, and you are to have your uncontrolled choice."

"Then," said Lois, "since a dance is more of a frolic

than a dinner-party, let us say we will have a German." A vision of herself whirling in the waltz with Edgar Treville, rising suddenly before her mind, had as much to do with her decision as her dislike to large formal dinners.

"And there is something else that I wish you to choose, Lois, if you please—an escort. You know, in dancing the German, you are obliged to keep the same partner, I believe, most of the evening; and if he should happen to be stupid, it would spoil all your pleasure. I have my heart set upon your enjoying yourself fully, and I mean to manage so that you shall dance with the person most agreeable to you, and no one will know that you had a word to say in the matter. Does Mr. Treville dance well? He is a fine fellow, as was his father before him,—cultivated, gentlemanly, and intelligent. Do you think we might put him down as your escort?"

"If it is agreeable to him, I am quite willing, for I have heard that he dances uncommonly well," said Lois, endeavoring to speak in a careless tone; she succeeded very well, but was glad she sat in a darkened portion of the room, that Mr. Warrington could not see the burning blush she felt spreading over her whole face and neck.

"Edgar will be delighted, I know," said Mr. Warrington; "I will simply make the suggestion, and he will ask you himself to dance with him. Will Tuesday night next be a pleasant time for you?"

"Yes," said Lois; "any night will suit me that is agreeable to Cousin Julia. I know I shall enjoy it exceedingly." She forgot entirely how much she had

been bored by the last German she had attended, and the next two days seemed long to her impatience.

The early post on Monday brought a note addressed to Miss Carrol, in a fine, firm, manly hand, devoid of the least superfluous flourish. She had never seen the writing before; but the thick, cream-tinted paper and vigorous superscription seemed so characteristic of Mr. Treville, that she felt sure it must be his. How long it takes to open a letter when we are very anxious to know the contents! The paper becomes so obstinately stiff, that trembling fingers make clumsy work of it. When Lois had torn the envelope in pieces, in her haste to remove it, her first thought was to turn to the signature, which, as she supposed, was, "Edgar Treville." It was only a short note, asking the pleasure of being her partner at Mrs. Warrington's German; but when she joined her cousins after answering it, her face was brighter and her laugh more joyous than it had been for many weeks. Dr. Norton congratulated himself on the success of his treatment, and insisted still on the daily walk or drive.

Lois took an almost childish delight in preparing a dress for Tuesday evening. It was of some misty soft material, of a pale Nile-green color, caught up with bunches of water-lilies. It was finished by Tuesday morning, and she came into the sitting-room to receive her cousin Mary's criticism, and found there Mr. Warrington. Both admired the costume greatly, and Mrs. Norton thought it quite too pretty for a German, and wished Lois to reserve it for some grander occasion; but she smiled and said she thought she had not time to make any other arrangements, and must wear that

spring-like green. Tuesday evening, while they were still lingering over the dinner-table, little Fred Warrington came in with Joujou and his nurse, the latter bearing a small box, of which she seemed very careful. After both dog and master were duly caressed and welcomed, and the dog's good looks attributed to his country trip, Fred took the box from Nanette and presented it to Lois, saying it was a little gift from him, which he hoped she would wear at their party that evening; he was going to sit up and see her dance one waltz. Lois opened the morocco casket, and upon its white velvet lining appeared a beautiful set of emerald trinkets, necklace, bracelets and brooch. Their brilliant sparkle was almost dazzling as the sunlight fell upon them, and Fred clapped his hands with delight as Lois put them on, and waltzed around with him. Joujou barked, and they were all like merry children over a new toy.

It was the finishing touch to the beautiful costume, and Lois wondered whether Edgar would notice it as she shook out the lovely sea-green folds, standing in the ladies' dressing-room at Mrs. Warrington's that evening.

"Mr. Treville wishes to know if Miss Carrol is ready," said a servant who had just entered.

"Yes," said Miss Carrol, "as soon as I have buttoned my glove," which simple thing seemed to require a long time to accomplish in spite of her haste, and the sound of a delightful waltz coming up the stairs. She stepped out into the brilliantly-lighted hall where Treville was leaning against one of the windows awaiting her, and she seemed to him like a radiant vision from

fairy-land. For an instant he was too much rapt in admiration to speak, then he exclaimed, "Now I know beyond a doubt that you are a water-nymph. Is it the fair Undine herself, or only a sea-maiden from her train who has stolen the jewels and lilies of her queen? I shall take good care of you and not trust you out of sight for a moment, lest you go back to your diamond-palace under the waves. But let us enjoy to the fullest extent this evening's pleasure, and join that waltz."

"How very lovely your young cousin looks this evening, Mrs. Norton," said Mr. Forlis, as he watched her dancing with his nephew. "I think I have never seen anything more exquisite than her dress."

"Do they not make a remarkably fine couple?" said Mrs. Norton.

"Yes, I never saw Edgar look so well as he does to-night, and so animated too; how his whole face lights up when he bends towards his beautiful partner!"

Among a houseful of people, Treville was only conscious of one presence that evening. And Lois was afraid that she was only dreaming, and would awake directly to find the whole scene unreal. But the arm that held her in the dance was firm, and the eyes that looked into hers with such ardent love unmistakably beaming in them, were brighter than those which had haunted her dreams two months before.

If Mrs. Norton had read Mademoiselle d'Obrie's heart aright, it was well that she was far away upon her mother's plantation, instead of being here to witness the complete absorption of Mr. Treville and Miss Carrol in each other. For Edgar had forgotten her

CANTILE LIBRARY NEW-YO

very existence, and even that of persons around him; and found his whole world in the glorious eyes whose owner sat beside him, and blushed so charmingly every time that he spoke to her.

Lois saw little Fred watching her first waltz, and gave him the promised kiss after it, but not without provoking playful comments from her partner, who told her that he envied the pretty boy; and when she was chosen by some other gentleman in the German figures, he followed her with his eyes until her return, watching jealously every word and smile bestowed upon another. But when again he was circling with her in the intoxicating waltz, in which their feet kept perfect time, he felt as if he were floating in the air instead of treading on the solid ground. He did not stop to consider what would be the consequence of giving himself up so entirely to this mad love; he only cared now to know that her lovely face was there, a few inches from his own, and that the beautiful floating locks of bright hair brushed gently across his cheek as they whirled in the giddy round.

Although he had been accustomed to acting only with the premeditation of a philosopher, Lois Carrol charmed him into forgetting to weigh well every action, with reference to its probable result.

If the chidings of honor and duty made themselves heard for a moment, he silenced them with the plea that it was impossible for him longer to deny himself the joy that made other men's lives so bright. His heart asserted, to-night, a privilege which had always been denied it, was in the ascendency over his mind, and cried out vigorously for justice. Why might he

not take a passing sip from that cup which so often extracted the stings from the most painful of earth's sorrows?

It is hardly possible to imagine the delight that was kindled in Lois's heart when she found that she had the power of softening into tenderness the noble face which had once seemed so proud and cold. There was no air of demand or assumption in his manner toward her, but on the contrary his large, expressive, dark eyes were filled with a gentle, beseeching adoration, which is the most powerful appeal possible to a proud, shy woman. Mrs. Warrington had her hands full this evening, for, aside from her duties of hostess, it required a great deal of time, thought, and management to keep Mr. Forlis and Miss Shanks separated. The tall damsel had not yet despaired of resuming her sway over that gallant Frenchman. Mr. Fortinbras was a more desirable parti, on account of his larger fortune and superior business connections; but even worldly wisdom must acknowledge that Mr. Forlis was the most agreeable companion, and it required all Mrs. Warrington's finesse to prevent this strong-minded female from monopolizing the attention of her former friend. Still, she had found opportunity to observe the blissful state of affairs over in the corner where Lois and Mr. Treville sat, and now thought the time had arrived for her to disturb this happiness. She wished her entertainments to be grand successes in general,—that the lights should be brighter, the flowers more profuse and fragrant, the supper more recherché, and the toilettes more beautiful than those of any other parties of the season in New Orleans;

but this being attained and acknowledged, she could not resist the temptation of breaking up any little individual scheme of enjoyment her guests might have. When she saw a happy couple tête-à-tête in the corner of a room or conservatory, she felt the same irresistible propensity that the old cat of Joujou's acquaintance did for clapping her paw upon every mouse that peeped from its hole, and they speedily felt the sting of her tongue and the annoyance of her interruption.

As soon, then, as she had Mr. Forlis safely disposed of, by giving into his charge a very uninteresting young lady, who did not dance, but had an appreciation of the good things of the supper-room, and knowing that he was safely out of Miss Shanks's reach for one hour at least, she began devising a way to annoy Mr. Treville and her cousin Lois.

She had been dancing with Mr. Fortinbras, who had condescended to take her again into his good graces as mistress of the pleasantest house in town, but she had grown very weary of his prosy harangues, and was anxious to get rid of him. She stopped in her promenade at the end of the ball-room, and said, "Mr. Fortinbras, I saw Miss Shanks looking wistfully towards us a few moments ago. I am afraid she is growing jealous of me. Do go and relieve her mind, by assuring her that I am the quietest and most sensible old married woman possible, and only wish all of my guests to be as happy as I can make them. I have always heard that conversation was the forte of Boston ladies; they like to talk of life in the abstract, as I think they call it, and you must go and

let Miss Shanks know that we have at least one gentleman in New Orleans society who can meet her on her own ground, and perhaps foil her with her own weapons."

"I would prefer, madame," said Mr. Fortinbras, drawing his thin lips into a reptilian expression, "to repose in the bliss of your smiles, here at the feet of your bright eyes."

"Oh, Mr. Fortinbras!" said Mrs. Warrington, assuming a horror-stricken expression, "I hope you do not mean to insinuate that I have crow's-feet around my eyes. I really flattered myself that that distinctive mark of old age had not yet disfigured me;" and she beamed mischievously upon him those flashing black eyes that had already captivated half of the men in New Orleans. Mrs. Warrington enjoyed fully his confusion, and the general laugh at his faux pas; and Colonel Saurwein showed his appreciation of the joke by a gruff haw-haw, and, "Oh, by Jove! 'tis the best thing I've heard in America!"

"Come, Mr. Fortinbras," said Mrs. Warrington, taking his arm. "Gentlemen, I know you will excuse me; my duties as lady of the house compel me to find partners for all the wall-flowers." Then, to Mr. Fortinbras, "There is one young lady to whom you have not yet been introduced, and if you will not console Miss Shanks, I think you will find in Miss Brand a congenial spirit. She has an uncommon flow of strong, vigorous English, and I think you admire that." She knew he would be glad to escape from his present position at any price, and consigned him, without a struggle, to the clutches of Miss Brand

That young lady was armed with a hot-house bouquet and a fan, which she threw out before her alternately in her eccentric gestures, as she began the conversation with the crest-fallen Mr. Fortinbras. Mrs. Warrington only waited to be assured that "her rooms were stunning, her floors waxed jimpty smooth, and her whole party jolly nice," before she returned to Colonel Saurwein, who was her partner for the evening.

"Do you know, colonel," she said, "I have always regretted so much that you do not become better acquainted with my lovely cousin, Miss Carrol, of Kentucky? Since you first met her, she has lost many of those school-girlish whims and fancies which I know repulsed you then; I think that if her powers were drawn out by a cultivated mind, in the way that you understand so well, you could almost imagine her an English woman. She is quite sensible, in spite of youthful follies, and has had as good an education as the limited advantages attainable in this country permit. I have often thought if she would confine her attention to the society of gentlemen of mature years, instead of dissipating it on a crowd of brainless boys, she would improve more rapidly. Now here is a field for you, and if you will be willing to sacrifice yourself to the good of another, we might manage to change partners for a portion of the evening. I, too, must also make a sacrifice in giving up the best dancer in the room; but I am anxious for my cousin to have the benefit of some of your valuable hints. Tell her how the English girls conduct themselves in society."

Colonel Saurwein thought it would certainly be a

meritorious act of self-denial on Mrs. Warrington's part to give him up; but everything in America bored him, and he thought perhaps a change of partners might be a momentary relief, so he wished to know how it could be brought about.

"Oh, that can be easily managed!" said Mrs. Warrington. "You will choose Lois in this figure, when it comes our turn, and I will decorate Mr. Treville's shoulder with my rosette. You take a seat beside Miss Carrol when the dance is over, and I will engage Mr. Treville in conversation here. Then it will be very easy, you know, to avoid changing back again."

Five minutes later, the colonel's place was occupied by Treville, who was a much pleasanter partner than the ponderous Englishman. Mrs. Warrington began at once that odious process she called "stirring up," upon her new companion, but with little outward success, though she attacked at once his most vulnerable point. "I am so glad to see, Mr. Treville," she said, "that you have succumbed at last to the arts of the most finished coquette I know. Half the men of our set have been, metaphorically, sighing at her feet all winter, and it is reported that she has refused the most eligible matches in the city. Do you recollect some old-fashioned poetry about a woman's receiving such homage—

> 'Ye may fling back the gift again,
> But the crushed flower will leave a stain.'

And really it has made the greatest difference in Lois, being such a belle; all her girlish simplicity is gone."

While Treville listened with all the grace of a polished Frenchman, he really gave her but half of his attention. The rest was given to Lois, dancing under the depressing shadow of Colonel Saurwein's enormous moustache, and half the sting of Julia's words was taken away when he saw how soon Miss Carrol became weary of the companion forced upon her. Mrs. Warrington had accomplished her purpose of teasing them, but she had also done something of which she little dreamed. Lois felt even more certain than before that Edgar Treville loved her, while his gaze followed her and said so plainly that he longed to be with her, even though talking to so fascinating a woman as Mrs. Warrington. And Treville, as he saw her gentle, modest deportment with the huge stranger, felt how cruelly false was the charge brought against her by her cousin. But he skillfully evaded all the polished wiles of the latter, until the announcement of supper gave him an opportunity of going, without excuse, to Miss Carrol as her proper escort for the evening.

Treville found a secluded retreat for Lois in the bay-window of the dining-room, where he thought he would bring her refreshments, and have a quiet, uninterrupted talk. But the last idea was soon put to flight by those two destroyers of peace, Mr. Fortinbras and Miss Brand, who seated themselves just near enough to preclude the possibility of any other voices but their own being heard within an area of two yards.

If she disturbed others with her loud tones for the benefit of Mr. Fortinbras, her trouble was all lost, for

he hardly understood a word that was uttered, and his speeches were almost as unintelligible to her.

"Did you go to the jolly races yesterday, Mr. Fortinbras?—he, he, he!" she was saying. "I went, and had an awfully splendid time. It was gloriously hot though. Didn't you suffer a howling jolly lot with the heat?—ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"I never attend races," he said, looking at her as if he thought her some novelty in the animal line, that had just escaped from a menagerie; "and the aerification from the earth's surface had not sufficiently progressed after the profuse rain of the morning, to admit of my venturing upon equestrian enjoyments in the dangerous humidity of the atmosphere."

"Ha, ha, ha! he, he, he!—how terribly funny you are, Mr. Fort!" she said; "you must excuse my cutting off such a big lot of your name, but it is really too howling long to lug it all in at once—he, he, he! I'll call you by the other end of it some other time. Oh, those delicious old races! they were fearfully jolly, and we did have a high old time! The horses ran frightfully nice, you bet!"

"You must allow me to correct the grave mistake under which you are laboring, Miss Brand," said Mr. Fortinbras, drawing himself up sternly into what he considered a very majestic attitude, "for I *never* bet. It is against my established principles, I assure you, to join with the common herd in a practice so derogatory to the dignity of Demosthenes Fortinbras."

Here Miss Brand went off into such a prolonged giggle that she soon collapsed into a quivering heap, and each separate cork-screw curl of the enormous

bunch on the top of her head bobbed up and down as if performing an Irish jig. She threw her hands out straight before her, stabbing Mr. Fortinbras with her fan, and dashing her bouquet into his face, exclaiming, "I shall go into conniption-fits—he, he, he!" and upsetting a saucer of ice-cream upon the immaculate purity of his broadcloth, which had never before been sullied by a suspicion of dust.

Treville and Miss Carrol were so fortunate as to be far enough in the shade of the curtains to be able to indulge unrestrainedly in laughter at the scene.

"Oh, my poor dear Mr. Bras—he, he, he! I beg your pardon, I vow—ha, ha, ha!" Miss Brand had only recovered long enough to pronounce these words, and repeated, "He, he, he! I shall go into fits!"

"Are you subject to them, Miss Brand?" said Mr. Fortinbras, in the utmost consternation. "What kind of fits, spasms or epilepsy? Do let me summon assistance at once."

"Oh, Mr. Fort, Mr. Fort, you will kill me outright! I shall die, I know I will, slain by your jolly wit—he, he, he! ha, ha, ha!" and then Miss Brand sank into another spell of hysterical laughter, which alarmed Mr. Fortinbras, and he supposed that she was really going to have one of the fits she mentioned. He produced a vinaigrette from his pocket, and held it toward her nose with the utmost solemnity of manner. He had wild visions of the way prescribed in novels for such cases, throwing water over the fair patient, cutting stays, etc.; and, brave little man that he was, he trembled as he thought that the necessity might arise for him to support that head, crowned with such

a grizzly, unearthly tower, upon his shoulder. "Oh, Miss Brand, shall I pour some water over your face? will you drink a glass of wine? do let me aid you in recovering."

"Look here now, Mr. Fort, you know I am not so jolly silly as to faint in this gorgeous crowd," she said, tossing back her head, at the imminent risk of displacing the leaning tower, and trying to subdue the rising giggles; "but when you are so ridiculously howling funny, how can a fellow help laughing himself to death on the spot?—he, he, he! ha, ha, ha! Every last single thing you say is so transparently thin, that it is downright gauzy. Ha, ha, ha! Oh, dear life! I have upset the things on your fearfully splendid clothes. It is howling funny that I am so distractingly awkward, but I am really jolly sorry! What in all creation can I say to make you amends for such a jolly row? He, he, he, he!"

"If you wish to know, Miss Brand," said Mr. Fortinbras, with increasing solemnity of manner,—indeed, he had not smiled once during the tragic scene,—"what reparation you can make for this slight damage to my apparel, that is really not worth mentioning. Grant me the trifling favor, though, of giving me the definition and derivation of your favorite word, 'howling.'"

"He, he, he! well, if you wish to know where I derived that gorgeous old word, why I caught it from an immensely howling nice Louisville beau—a terribly splendid tall Dr. Deane, who came down here last week. He has the jolliest, sweetest curly hair you ever saw on the whole creation—he, he, he, he! I

saw him at those delicious races the other day, and—don't tell him I said so, for worlds—but he did cut such a rousing swell!—he, he, he!"

"Cut him!" exclaimed Mr. Fortinbras, aghast. "Oh, dear! I hope sincerely that he did the poor fellow no material damage. I wonder, Miss Brand, that you can find the heart to laugh at so fearful a catastrophe!"

"Oh, Mr. Fortinbras, do get out!" said Miss Brand, making her usual frantic start at him with her fan.

"Certainly, madame," he said, rising stiffly, with an expression of indignation and wounded pride. "Such a request has never before been made of Demosthenes Fortinbras in the whole course of his honorable existence, and he will never again place himself in a position where language so emphatic, and even vulgar, can be addressed to him. Hoping you may have no recurrence of your fits, I bid you a very good-evening." After a low bow, and a wave of his hand in her direction, meaning to imply that he consigned her forever to the part of the world whose unfortunate inhabitants were eternally shut out from intercourse with Demosthenes Fortinbras, he turned and left the room, swelling with frog-like indignation.

For once in her life, Miss Brand forgot to giggle, and looked after him with blank amazement in her round, white eyes; for she had not the least idea of his taking her words literally, when she playfully told him to "get out." Catching sight of Miss Savage at a short distance, she called, "Oh, Jennie, ducky

dear! do hear what a fearfully jolly time I've had with that curious conglomeration, Mr. Fortinbras. Ha, ha, ha! He is the howlingest absurdity I ever met; but I'll go raving mad if I talk of him now. He is fearfully pokey, and I'm charmed he's gone. Now we can have a jolly chat in this cunning corner—he, he, he!"

"Well, Tilly, you've never finished telling me about that howling Dr. Deane, from Louisville," said Miss Savage; "that glorious medical you met at Mrs. Brown's ball."

"Oh, yes, and at those jimpty races, too. He is just the most outrageously handsome man in the world! All the Louisville girls have gone mad, and here we are dying with love of him."

"Does he reverse?" asked Miss Savage, with eager solicitude.

"Oh, yes, terrifically!" said Miss Brand, solemnly, as if the importance of the subject now broached made laughter inadmissible. "He can dance deliciously to the right for a few turns, and then reverse in an awfully magnificent way."

"He must be a stunner!" said Miss Savage; "but I shall never catch him. You are so gushing, Tilly, and have such a gift of gab, that you cut me out entirely. I've got a howling lot of money, and if I keep my mouth shut and wear fearfully nice clothes, I reckon I'll pass in a crowd. But men do talk such distracting twaddle about highfalutin' things. What do you say, Tilly, when they ask your opinion of one of those disgusting old pictures, with nothing in it but little patches of blue sky and dirty-looking mountains?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the ready Miss Brand. "I say that it is awfully jolly, glorious; but when it happens to be a ridiculous sort of sad picture, I always put my handkerchief to my eyes, and say—he, he, he!—that my feelings overcome me. Let's get some more of that good ice-cream; I spilled mine on Mr. Fortinbras's Sunday clothes."

The German continued for two more blissful hours; but when they were over, the time seemed all too short to one happy pair, who would have liked to whirl on forever in that last delicious waltz—the beautiful "Blue Danube." When Treville handed Lois into the carriage, and her cousins were discussing the success of the evening, he pressed her hand, and said, in a soft, low tone, "I must see you again soon. Will you go with me day after to-morrow to the Catholic cathedral? It is a saint's day, and the music will be unusually fine. Ah! thank you! then I will come for you about half-past ten o'clock. Good-night!" She drew her hand gently away, softly saying, "Yes, good-night!"

There was little in the words spoken, but the tones of his voice were very eloquent, and each fond intonation was quickly interpreted by the light of love that was springing up in her own heart.

CHAPTER XVI.

"She is beautiful, and therefore to be wooed;
She is a woman, and therefore to be won."
KING HENRY VI.

EARLY Thursday morning, while Lois Carrol's cheek still pressed her pillow, there came a sudden gale of wind that shock the blinds noisily, and sent large drops of rain dashing against the windows, which roused her from the half-unconscious state in which she was lying.

It was an unpleasant awakening, for no sooner were her eyes fully opened, and her head raised and supported on the right arm, listening to the blast without, than the thought rushed upon her mind of the disappointment the rain would cause her, by preventing the expected visit to the cathedral.

"But perhaps he will come at any rate," she said, unwilling to give up the idea of seeing Edgar, which had kept her so happy since the German.

She rose and dressed, with the expectation of being summoned to the parlor, and as she put on her lilac ribbons she hummed the "Blue Danube," to dispel the depressing influence of the rain, whose patter on the windows seemed rudely to contradict her words. Mrs. Norton had noticed Lois's great fancy for the air of this favorite waltz of Strauss's, which she had been constantly singing and playing since the German, and

congratulated her husband on the success of his treatment, which she supposed had brought back the roses to her cousin's cheek and the music to her lip. She did not know that in Lois's heart there was always an accompaniment to the lovely melody of Edgar Treville's looks, words, and tones, that came back to her with strange vividness.

By the time the clock struck eleven, she had gone so often to the window and looked out upon the dismal scene in the street, where the rain was still pouring, and little rivers coursing their way down each side of the pavement, that she was ashamed to go again, lest her cousin should notice her restless anxiety. At length, having vainly endeavored to concentrate her mind upon music, book, or drawing, she laid them all aside, and said, "I think I will go down into the conservatory, and water the flowers."

"Then be careful, dear, not to soil your white dress and those lovely ribbons. The shade is so becoming to you that you should keep them for great occasions, and not waste their beauty on this rainy day."

"I always like to wear my prettiest colors on a dismal day, Cousin Mary. I think it keeps up the spirits of the family to know that I think them worth dressing-up for, as well as for strangers." But though this was really her usual practice, Lois thought wearily, as she went down-stairs, that if he did not come it made no difference what became of the beautiful morning-dress, that was donned with a view to pleasing his eye.

"Arthur," she said, in passing a servant in the hall, "if any visitor should happen to call, please say that I am in the conservatory."

"Yes, ma'am," said Arthur, secretly laughing at the possibility of any one being mad enough to come visiting through such torrents of rain, and saying to himself, "Miss Lois hab a mighty heap of beaux, but I don't think any of dem will get here dis day." But he was mistaken, for a few minutes later found him ushering in Mr. Edgar Treville through the drawing-room into the conservatory, and saying to himself, "Dis darkey am of de opinion that a man is crazy to come out in dis rain to see any young lady, even if she is as pretty as our Miss Lois." For Arthur was a faithful servant from Kentucky, and thought that all his mistress's relatives belonged to the family.

Mr. Treville would have been very glad if it had been only the state of the weather that had caused his hesitation about making this visit. It certainly would be an excuse, for no lady would venture out needlessly in such a rain, and he would decide, and then reconsider his decision, in a vacillating way, very unlike the usual promptness of action and strength of purpose that distinguished him. He knew that nothing would be done at the office,—the country clients expected later in the day would not brave such a tempest, and he might as well dispel his ennui by making a visit.

"What matter if I do love her," he said; "I have no reason to think that she cares for me except as a passing acquaintance, and that tender look in her eyes when she danced with me may be one of the arts of a finished coquette, as her cousin, Mrs. Warrington, called her. No, I cannot believe that; she is good

and true, but a half-hour's chat together this rainy day will harm neither of us. So I will indulge myself once more."

The sound of the wind and rain had prevented Lois from hearing the carriage stop, or the opening door; and when Edgar stepped over the thick carpet to the conservatory, and saw her standing among the flowers unconscious of his presence, he stopped involuntarily to watch her exquisitely-graceful attitude. Her hands were listlessly clasping the frame of a large cape jasmine, and gleamed like its own white blossoms among the dark-green leaves. She had been picking some of the floral treasures, but, lost in reverie, one had fallen at her feet, and one had lodged among the snowy ruffles of her dress; her eyes had in them a far-away look, as she gazed through the branches into the dreary street, and her face had a sad expression Treville had never seen upon it before. At first it seemed a womanly melancholy, and then changed into a look of childish grieving. Two large, round tears started from her eyes and rolled slowly over her cheeks, and the glistening eyelashes gave to the sweet, sorrowful face a charm that was perfectly irresistible. Could she have expected him, and was it possible that she was now regretting his absence? This thought, and the sight of her tears, put all his prudence to flight, and shattered all the resolutions so laboriously formed. He rushed forward and clasped her hands in both his own, causing her to start violently at his sudden appearance, then a crimson glow spread over her face, and her head drooped as if in shame for her tears.

"I cannot bear to see you look so grieved," he said, impulsively; "why is it?"

It did not occur to her at the moment that she need not tell him her reason, because it seemed that his large, piercing, dark eyes were reading every thought of her heart.

"I am very childish," she said; "but I was lonely."

"May I stay, then, and share, if I cannot cheer your loneliness?" he asked, leading her to a seat half hidden behind two tall Daphnes. "And first let me tell you what a charm I have carried with me to dissipate sadness, ever since Tuesday night,—the memory of a sweet face and voice, that I love to the point of unhappiness now."

"Unhappiness!" said Lois, looking up for the first time at him, and half-smiling, with the tears still on her lashes. "I thought love had a very different effect, and usually made people happy."

"If I had any assurance that mine was not hopeless," he replied, "I would indeed be the happiest man in the world; but the uncertainty is torturing, and I cannot bear it longer,"—speaking the last words more to himself than to her; "but I am so unworthy of the noble woman whom I love, that I am afraid to ask her to become my wife. Would it be presumptuous for me to do so?"

"Why do you ask me?" said Lois, shyly; "do I know your friend?"

"Yes," he said; "but I think you do not fully appreciate her. Shall I tell you what she is like? She has glorious, large, dark eyes, full of tenderness and truth, and a bright crown of fair golden hair.

She has a peculiar beauty, that is seldom seen except in pictures of ideal creatures—fairies and water-nymphs; but, what is still more rare, her face is truly the index of her soul. Shall I tell you who she is?" He had spoken rapidly and impetuously, without making an effort to stop the tide of his words. His heart was again in the ascendency, but heart and mind were both impelled in one direction by an irresistible force, and he would have given his life to hear from her lips that she loved him.

"I don't think," said Lois, trying in vain to steady her voice, "that I know any one who answers to that description."

"I told you that you did not appreciate her; her name is—Lois Carrol." He paused a moment, and Lois turned away her head, trembling perceptibly. "I know that I am not worthy of her," he continued, in a gentle tone, "but I think there is no man in the world who is; and I trust to the great strength of my love to win her. If she will be mine, her happiness shall be the study of my life. Will you not try to love me a little, Lois?" he asked, pleadingly, passing easily from speaking in the third person to the second; and taking her soft little trembling hand, and pressing it to his lips. "Will you not give me a small portion of your heart, and let me endeavor to win the rest for myself?"

"I cannot give you a portion of it," she murmured very softly, "because it is all your own." Lois was entirely devoid of those little arts of coquettish deception that have the traditional reputation of assisting Cupid's arrows, and she knew no reason why she should not acknowledge the intensity of her love.

"Is it, my darling?" He was so wild with joy that he clasped her in his arms, and held her there, disregarding her request to be released. "Tell me again that you love me, dearest, and I will give you liberty. Look up at me, and say, 'Edgar, I love you;'" and he held her out at arm's-length, to see in her truthful eyes a confirmation of the words. But she looked down at the Daphne flowers scattered upon the ground, and blushed deeply as she said, "Edgar, I do love you."

They had not noticed that it had left off raining some time ago, and, just as Lois finished speaking, a ray of sunlight fell across that end of the conservatory, lighting up their faces simultaneously as they looked at each other.

"I hope it is typical of our future, Lois," said Edgar; "and now you must at least let me keep prisoner this dear little hand, so much like a timid, fluttering white dove, which I hope will soon be mine."

Hours passed away as they sat talking of the future and the past; and Edgar told her that the first time he ever saw her, at the Christmas ball, he had been irresistibly attracted to her. "The reason why I did not see you for a long time, Lois," he said, "was because prudence forbade me to think of marriage. My business affairs are complicated by the liabilities left upon my dear father by the war, and for a while I dared not allow myself to think of you or come in your presence. I saw you at the opera frequently, surrounded by a throng of admirers; but I feared to join them, though none of them could have admired you half so passionately as I did. I am afraid if you

thought of me at all, you considered me rude. After the night when I found you in Mrs. Warrington's box at the opera, I knew that I loved you so deeply that it was impossible to forget you. I saw you wearing my flowers the next night, but was obliged to repress the passionate inclination that bade me learn whether it was merely a girlish fancy that dictated the choice, or for the sake of the giver that you wore them. I could not, without the greatest rudeness, refuse the invitation of a lady to whom we are under so many obligations as to Mrs. Norton; and that morning at the St. Charles sealed my fate. After that I ceased to struggle against the charm that you have for me, Lois, and now I rejoice in my love for you, and would not exchange life with you, darling, for any career that the world might offer me." Here they were interrupted by Arthur with a message from Mrs. Norton, asking Mr. Treville to stay to dinner.

"I had no idea it was so late," he said; "and now that it has ceased raining I must really be at my office."

Arthur went away, showing his white teeth at the thought of a gentleman who could spend most of the day with a young lady having dinner remind him of his office.

"Edgar," said Lois, "before you go, let me ask one favor. I shrink so much from the comments of idle tongues, and while our happiness is so new I cannot bear to have it disturbed by them. Tell of it, if you choose, to your father, and Cousin Mary shall be my only confidante for the present. I must soon return to Kentucky, and there, you know, I have a guardian

whose consent must be asked after awhile; but let us have a little peaceful rest in our mutual affection before the world knows of it. In most cases I like the old French custom of announcing engagements and celebrating betrothals; but I cannot bear just yet to think that my private affairs are discussed at the clubs as they would be if it was generally known. Do not think that I ask this," she added, smiling, "that I may have liberty to flirt; you will never have cause to complain of me in that respect."

Treville's face had undergone a sudden change while she was speaking, which she did not note, as her head was turned away. The light had died out of his eyes, while a careworn expression had come instead, and a paleness had spread even to his lips, although he was glad that she made the exact request he had been wishing himself to make, but feared to broach.

"Certainly, my sweet Undine," he said, affecting a light tone and endeavoring to conceal how ardently he also desired it. It was necessary, he told himself, to deceive her about one thing, but to his frank, upright nature the necessity was very hateful. "Your wish shall be my law," he continued, "and there are those jealous kinsmen of yours, the water-sprites, that I must first propitiate before I bind the sea-maiden in golden fetters."

"I hope," he thought, "that my difficulties will soon be smoothed away. They must be! It would be too cruel if they were not; this sweet creature would suffer as well as I, and I must think for her now. Heaven forbid that I should bring a blight

upon her happiness, which is dearer to me than all the world besides. Since what has passed to-day, there is only one alternative."

Those who are young and beloved are naturally sanguine; and, long after he was gone, Lois stood in a sort of dream, forgetful of dinner, singing the "Blue Danube," and thinking that her life would doubtless glide as harmoniously as its lovely melody, and as smoothly as the shining river. Why should it not? she thought; to what had she to look forward, in the future, but brightness and happiness, with Edgar's love?

CHAPTER XVII.

"A woman's hopes are woven of sunbeams; a shadow annihilates them."—GEORGE ELIOT.

MRS. WARRINGTON sat in her dressing-room before a full-length mirror, necessarily out of mischief for the moment, because Hagar, the coiffeuse, was arranging her masses of heavy black hair for a fancy ball. It was to be the grandest entertainment of the season, given by Mrs. Elder, a lady who had lately inherited a fortune, and moved from an obscure part of the city to a large, handsome house, with an elegant ball-room. She found that, on entering a new residence in the fashionable quarter, new obligations devolved upon her; and she had begun existence in an entirely different sphere. One fact seemed very singular to the poor, dull woman,—all the young people in the neighborhood took a sudden and violent fancy to her, and seemed to think no compliments were too extravagant to lavish upon "dear, sweet Mrs. Elder." Miss Brand had said, on being shown the fine ball-room at her own request, "Oh, gracious—he, he, he! but this would be a glorious place for a German, or a jolly masquerade! Now, dear Mrs. Elder, I always knew you had the most fearfully good heart in all creation; and if you would only give a splendid old fancy ball,—ha, ha, ha!—your terrific jolly goodness would be proved to the world! Pshaw! it is all fiddlesticks for people to talk so much about those old foreign missions, when there are so many jolly howling sad hearts at home that need to be cheered up, and to learn how to have a nice old time—he, he, he! I think it is your mission, darling, generous Mrs. Elder, to make the young people of New Orleans bless you forever, by giving them a howling gay ball in this awfully lovely sweet house of yours. What glorious flirtations we could have in these bewitchingly pretty bay-windows!—and the supper-room is just magnifique!"

Mrs. Elder thought that if society, of which she had always stood so much in awe, had decided upon her mission, and made its decision known to her through its mouth-piece,—this Miss Brand, who wore such fine, showy clothes, and spoke in such intensely fashionable lingo,—that there was nothing for her to do but carry out its dictates. So it was not long before her invitations were out for a masquerade; and Miss Brand laughed, and told Miss Savage "that it was terrifically funny how she had gotten round that jolly stupid old Mrs. Elder, and made her give a bal masque."

All the beau monde was going,—why should it not? It was true Mrs. Elder's antecedents had been neither fashionable nor elegant; and when she lived in a quiet way in narrow quarters, society had not recognized or even heard of her existence; but now that an immense fortune had come to her, and she had the good taste to purchase such a splendid establishment and to keep it up in style, she must be supported, patronized, and fully adopted into the select circles of the Crescent City.

Although we have spoken of Mrs. Warrington as unoccupied with any active mischief while submitting to Hagar's combing, she was preparing the way for new schemes and plots for maliciously disturbing the peace of some hapless victim by starting the hair-dresser upon her favorite topic of family secrets. She languidly threw out suggestions in the direction towards which her curiosity prompted, and, with carefully-concealed interest, managed to find out everything she wished to know, and thus gather material for future strategy, as well as amusement, from the broken English and French of the coiffeuse, while undergoing the tiresome process of hair-dressing.

At last Hagar stumbled, by chance, upon such a delicious morsel of gossip that Mrs. Warrington raised herself from her languid posture, her eyes sparkling with poorly-hidden eagerness, and said, "Did she really say that he was engaged to the oldest of those stupid girls?"

"La, yes, madame," replied Hagar; "she have been engaged to him ever since early in de winter; but Madame Dalbret do say dat he is cold like one

icicle, and don't never care to be wid his fiancée, making his father do all the courting; and dat she heard he dance always wid the beautiful belle at your ball, and she is so terriblement jealous."

"How does Madame Dalbret know anything about it, Hagar?"

"Why, madame, is she not first cousin to de fiancée of which we have speak?" Hagar had a habit of forcing people to acknowledge that she understood the exact state of affairs by always putting her information in the form of a question asked negatively. "And was she not on her plantation near dem, so she could see the young demoiselles very often? But ma fois! how she does chatter, dat young Madame Dalbret, which is so etourdie; she give me yesterday de whole histoire of all her relation, even to de five or six cousin."

"I expect that she was joking with you, however, Hagar, when she told you of that engagement."

"Why, madame, have she not just been married from de country, where she live always on de plantation, dat young innocente? She don't know nothing about joke, and is simply folle after de ball and de opera."

"I will have a rare bit of fun to-night," thought Mrs. Warrington, who had not been unmindful of Lois's happy absorption in Mr. Treville's society the day at the lake and the night of the German. "That is all nonsense about there being any jealousy on account of his attention for one night. Hagar invented that herself, for doubtless she stayed here and saw them dancing together, and does not understand how the

German required only one partner for the evening. But the fact of the engagement will be a delicious morsel to tease her with this evening, if she has cherished any sentimental foolishness about that grave young man. But she will recognize my costume, and not give the slightest credence to anything said by me, unless I disguise myself in something more than a mask. I will send immediately for a domino. Ha-gar," she said aloud to the hair-dresser, who had now finished her task and was leaving the room, "will you please see Felix on your way out and say that I wish to see him?"

After the lapse of an hour, Mrs. Warrington stood before her mirror, transformed into such a magnificent Diana that it seemed a pity for her costume to be covered with a domino and her face with a mask. The skirt of her dress, reaching a little below the knee, was covered with green moss and edged with fur. A beautiful gold quiver hung across her shoulders, fitted with silver arrows; the front of her hair was dressed in a high coronet, above which swung a silver crescent, arranged by Hagar's skillful fingers in such an ingenious way, on almost invisible wires, that it glanced in the air as though without support, while the back part of her hair hung almost to the hem of her dress in a mass of rich, black waves. But what was needed to give to the costume the most exquisite finish, her inventive genius had supplied. While she was always clad in grave colors for the street, in her evening toilettes she aimed at the outré. She was determined that the dress for Mrs. Elder's masquerade should not only be the most costly in the house, but the most

unique, and she had certainly effected her purpose with the chaussure that completed her costume to such perfection. At the first glance one would have supposed that it consisted simply in a pair of gold sandals, strapped on her beautifully-shaped, tiny, bare feet, with diamond buckles clasping the straps where they crossed, and would have wondered at the daring of even Mrs. Warrington in disregarding so entirely the rules of modesty. But she was too shrewd not to know exactly how far to go in everything; and a second glance detected the fact that it was only a pretty deception, and that she was decorously shod in a pair of flesh-colored kid boots, with marvelously-natural toes and veins painted on them. They fitted so smoothly that it was almost impossible to perceive where the shoes ended and the flesh-colored silk hose began. When Mrs. Warrington had surveyed herself from head to foot and ascertained that everything was arranged to her complete satisfaction, she exclaimed, "Ah, no character in the world would have suited me better than this one, only I intend to be a little more sensible than Diana was in the selection of my game, and spend my time to-night in hunting for amusement and fun. I also intend to run to earth a certain golden-haired dear, who fancies her secret so safe; but if ever two people were madly in love with each other, they certainly are. She thinks the romance of her life has come, and has surrendered her heart to the conquering hero. But I know I can disenchant my little lady to-night, and show her that this world is not a fairy-land where she can play supreme Titania. And my next arrow must be directed to a long-necked crane of my

acquaintance, to whom I owe a deeper grudge than to Lois. I can tell just what tip will be most poisonous to her constitution also, and I have only to place it in my quiver, find my hunting-horn, and away to the chase."

When Mrs. Warrington arrived at the scene of action, she sent her husband immediately to look up Mrs. Norton before she began the pursuit of her game. He was simply dressed in the academic gown of an English master, and the flowing black robes concealed the thinness of his tall, gaunt figure so well that the disguise was perfect, and he was soon lost in the throng of gayer costumes that crowded Mrs. Elder's spacious rooms. Then Julia darted about here and there among the maskers, exchanging a repartee with every one she met, and sending many chance shots at half-recognized acquaintances, becoming so fascinated in this congenial occupation that more than an hour had elapsed before she found the principal object of her pursuit. At last her eyes glistened as they fell upon two figures standing under the shadow of the staircase, seemingly perfectly absorbed in each other's society, the gentleman leaning tenderly over the lady and almost whispering in her ear. They both wore masks, but no dominoes, and their figures were unmistakably recognized by Mrs. Warrington as those of Lois Carrol and Edgar Treville. Julia knew Lois's costume, which was unanimously acknowledged to be the most beautiful in the room.

She represented a white lily, for which her fair style was so exquisitely suited, and her dress was conceived and executed with great ingenuity. The lower

skirt, reaching to the shoe-tops, was bordered with a row of large natural lilies. The over-skirt, of a glossy, rich, white material, was cut in separate leaves, shaped like those of the flower she represented, and edged by an imperceptible wire, with which they were turned out at the bottom, giving the whole outline the exact form of a lily. The bodice was of pale-green satin, ending a few inches below the waist in slender points like the calyx of the flower, one of whose snowy, sweet blossoms was fastened on the bosom, and one among the golden waves of her hair. A pair of tiny green satin boots completed the costume. Lois wore a mask of white satin, but the beautiful fair neck and arms were very suggestive of a face of surpassing loveliness. Edgar Treville knew each of the beautiful features so well, that he was contented to stand by and enjoy the music of her sweet voice and the gentle witchery of her presence.

Mrs. Warrington sat upon a sofa opposite to the happy pair, watching them for a few moments, as the cruel cat does the helpless mouse, until it suits her to spring forward and devour it. "Ah, my pretty lily!" she thought, "take your taste of the delight of loving for a moment longer, and then you will droop and wither, as when an untimely frost passes over the bosom of your native lake. When the great goddess Diana sets out for the chase, she does not care how many flowers she tramples down by the way, and in fact this particular Diana rather enjoys crushing out their beauty and fragrance." She rose, and walking languidly towards them, dropped into a chair beside Mr. Treville, saying, in a weak, feigned voice, support-

ing her head upon her hand, "Would you be so kind, sir, as to pardon my interruption, and to procure me a glass of water? The heat of the crowded ball-room is almost stifling, and I am nearly fainting," giving a slight gasp as she spoke.

"With pleasure, madame," Edgar replied, immediately leaving Lois, and was soon lost in the throng.

"Can I do anything to help you, madame?" asked Lois, gently leaning over the languid lady, and quietly fanning her with a bunch of lilies carried in an ivory holder she had suspended from her waist. "Had I not better remove your mask, if the air oppresses you so much?"

"Oh, no!" said Julia, rising with astonishing quickness for an ill person; "but come, help me out into this balcony; that will revive me more than anything. Here, let us take a seat in this corner, quite out of sight, and stay with me a few moments till I recover."

"But the gentleman," said Lois, "who went for the water, will be unable to find us."

"Never mind," replied the gray domino. "I feel much better already. This cool breeze is so refreshing; and I have a piece of information to communicate to you before you see him again, of the utmost importance. In return for your kindness, I must tell you this, lest a blight should come upon your youthful happiness."

"You mistake me for some one else," said Lois, yet trembling, as the mysterious form beside her bent forward to whisper these strange words.

"No, fair lily, that is impossible; you are the Kentucky belle, Miss Carrol, and the plumed cavalier by

your side, who is trifling with you, and deceiving you wholly, was Mr. Edgar Treville."

"Deceiving me!" cried Lois, forgetting that she had not intended to betray her identity.

"Do not speak so loudly, young lady," said the gray domino, laying her hand upon Lois's arm. "Stay; do not leave me; I am a true friend, and must explain my words. Be calm, and listen to me, and if when you have heard all, you are incredulous, I can give ample proof of its truth. My heart ached with pity as I saw you listening to the false vows that gay Lothario was doubtless pouring into your ears, and I resolved that my interest in one so young and beautiful was strong enough to conquer my distaste to the office of informer."

Julia spoke in a tone of tender, sympathetic compassion, and was in the very element she most loved,—playing a deceitful rôle. Some women are born with a natural talent for acting, and if circumstances prevent them from following their true vocation upon the stage, they satisfy their propensities in real life. It requires talent of a much higher grade to be a successful actress here; but long experience had enabled Julia to assume different characters as readily as the heroines of the play change their costumes. When Mrs. Warrington first spoke, Lois thought she was about to repeat some malicious slander against Edgar, which she intended to refuse indignantly to hear; but the woman in gray seemed to feel such a tender commiseration for her that she at least must be sincere in believing the story, whatever it might be, and perhaps she had better hear it, that she might stamp it as

calumny, started by malicious tongues. So she said, "Please tell me, quickly, what you mean." Her mysterious companion bent impressively over her, and said, "You love Edgar Treville; but know that he has no love to give you in return,—he has been engaged for several months to Mademoiselle Adéle d'Obrie."

Though the slip of ivory Mrs. Warrington wore in her mouth to disguise her voice prevented very distinct utterance, yet the deep tones thrilled to Lois's heart, cutting like a keen-edged knife, and leaving her quivering with intense agony. She looked blankly before her, so stunned by the blow, that she forgot the presence of the woman beside her.

Then came a reaction; she shook off the blighting influence of that plausible voice, which spoke such cruel words, and exclaimed, "It is not true; I will not believe it!"

Edgar, who loved her so deeply, who only three days before had told her that she was all the world to him, false, and betrothed to another! It was impossible; and she shrank from the tall, gray woman as from a pestilence. But while she had been silent under the shock, Julia had caught sight of a solitary figure stepping out upon the balcony, and her quick eye was bright with recognition and the instantaneous resolve to carry her fun a little further than she had first intended. She knew who that lonely-looking girl was, when she saw that she wore the costume of one of those irrepressible "Daughters of the Regiment" who will persist in going to fancy-balls in such troops, notwithstanding their commonness.

Hagar had given her so accurate a description of

Miss d'Obrie's dress, that she was able to single it out from among the large family of regimental daughters that was in the house; and taking Lois by the arm to prevent her escaping, she said, "Only come with me as far as the other end of this balcony, and I will prove to you that I have spoken truly, and save you wasting the precious treasure of your heart's first love upon a worthless object." Without a word Lois yielded to the compulsion of the arm upon her own, and was led to where Miss d'Obrie was standing.

"I beg your pardon, fair daughter," said the gray domino, "for interrupting your pensive meditations by the liberty I take in asking a personal question. But I know your kind heart and tender regard for the feelings of others; and the happiness" (she meant unhappiness) "of two persons depends upon your answering me truly. This is no ordinary masquerading joke; but believe me, when I tell you that it is of the utmost importance to the honor of one you love. We know that you are Mademoiselle Adéle d'Obrie, so you will not refuse to tell a true friend if you are engaged to Mr. Edgar Treville?"

There are some timid, shrinking people, to whom it is only necessary to speak in a certain commanding tone, and with an assurance of confidence in their compliance, to compel their obedience; Adéle d'Obrie was a girl of this sort, and in her fright at the mysterious address of the masked woman before her, she tremblingly replied, "Yes, I am engaged to Mr. Treville." Her voice, though shaken, carried an unmistakable ring of truth in it, that sent a fiery arrow of conviction to Lois's heart.

They all three stood looking at each other from behind their masks, silently for a moment, and then turned away one by one, Lois going first, through the hall and up the stairs like one in a dream, Mrs. Warrington disappearing in the crowd of the ball-room, and Adéle, finding she was to have no explanation of this singular interview, went in search of her mother.

"Why do you tremble so, my child?" asked Madame d'Obrie, as her daughter caught her arm.

"Oh, mamma, do let us go home; such a strange woman spoke to me out on the balcony, and frightened me!"

"Foolish child! do not be so nervous; it is very common for maskers to play jokes upon each other; and you should not allow yourself to be startled by an impish-looking costume or mask, because this is your first fancy ball."

"It was not their appearance, mamma, that alarmed me; but the strange manner in which one of them spoke to me. I will tell you what she said when we go home. Instead of their being horrible-looking, one looked like a fairy dressed as a lily."

"Oh, that is the blonde, Miss Carrol, from Kentucky; did she say anything to you? I saw Edgar with her in the hall, and asked Mr. Forlis who she was, and he said he had seen her that moment going up to unmask, so he did not mind telling me that it was the famous belle, of whom we have heard so much. But, my dear child, you look so pale and frightened, that we had better go home at once, or I am afraid it will be commented upon."

In passing through the parlors, Mrs. Warrington's

quick ears caught the intonation of a nasal voice belonging to a tall, formidable-looking Minerva, which caused her to stop and draw nearer to the corner where the goddess of wisdom was seated. Julia had judged correctly that this was Miss Shanks, looking so majestic with her bright, shining spear, shield, and helmet, and the gentleman beside her, Mr. Fortinbras, with a wig of long ambrosial curls falling around his head, and a peculiar costume, which he conceived to be of the style worn by Romeo, whom he took particular pains to tell everybody he represented. But, unable to find his Juliet, he had contented himself with Minerva, who, in spite of the difference in their periods of living, he considered a much more suitable companion for a man possessing the mental capacity of Demosthenes Fortinbras than a love-sick maiden. However, he was a little uncertain as to what would be expected of him, and often forgot that the severe and imperial Minerva should not be addressed as though she were Juliet. He was just saying to Miss Shanks (who was independent enough to wear white kid gloves, without having any authority for supposing that they were a proper portion of Pallas Athenæ's toilet), "O that I were the glove upon that hand, that I might touch that cheek!" when a gray domino stepped up close beside her, and said, "May I whisper a few words in the ear of the noble goddess of wisdom? They will interest as well as warn her against an impending danger." Putting her mouth close to Miss Shanks's ear, she whispered, "Beware of Henri Forlis; he is a trifler and ,male flirt, and ridicules you constantly among his old friends. He says your property

is more attractive than your person, but even that cannot win him from his unfortunate attachment to that fascinating, but hateful Mrs. Warrington."

Minerva drew back stiffly, sitting silent for a moment staring at the officious gray domino, and then said in a stern voice, "You labor under some mistake; it does not interest me to hear of such wicked doings at all, and you do not know me, if you suppose I need warning against any man."

Mrs. Warrington concealed her anger, and said, "Your disguise is very thin; you are Miss Shanks, and need warning against the arts of Mr. Forlis."

"Mr. Forlis is my lawyer, paid for his services, and no art of his will be used against his client," said Miss Shanks; "if he rescues my property from unlawful claimants, any one is welcome to his affections, if married women are so lost to decency as to care for them."

It was Mrs. Warrington's turn to shrink back now in rage; her arrow had been turned to her own bosom, and before she could recover self-possession enough to draw another from her quiver, Miss Shanks had taken Mr. Fortinbras's arm and left her, the only seeming effect of the warning upon her being the throwing of an additional shade of friendliness into her deportment towards the little man.

"What's the row, Miss Carrol?" asked Miss Brand, as Lois entered one of the dressing-rooms—"You do look so tremendously pale and awfully jolly sad! He, he, he! you haven't gone and been so ridiculously foolish as to get sick in the midst of this howling nice ball?"

"I do not feel well," said Lois, going to an open window, and dropping into a seat where she could lean her head into the cool air outside.

"You scared me so when you came in—he, he, he! you looked just like a howling jolly ghost, when you took off your mask,—he, he, he! You made me so outrageously nervous, for I thought somebody must be dead, or some such awful foolishness. Had I not better go to Mrs. Elder and get you something to take,—do you feel very absurdly sick?"

There came no answer from the silent figure in the window. Lois, absorbed in her own tumultuous thoughts, had not heard Miss Brand, who thought Miss Carrol was surely deaf; and touching her on the shoulder, said again,—"Shall I go and ask Mrs. Elder to come up to you? Everybody has unmasked now, and gone down, and I am crazy to see who some of those jolly old masks were, but I don't like to leave you looking so howling white."

"No, thank you," said Lois; "I need nothing but this cool air, and beg that you will not stay longer from the bright scene down-stairs."

"Well, I can speak to Mrs. Elder about you with the jolliest ease in the world, and she won't mind a snap about it, because we are regular old cronies, and she is howling fond of me. As soon as she moved into this glorious house on our own dear street, I went for her, and took the old thing in completely,—ha, ha, ha! Shall I go?"

"Never mind about Mrs. Elder," said Lois, without looking around, "but if you see my cousin, Mrs. Norton, please ask her to come to me. She is dressed as a

Quaker lady. But she has probably unmasked before this, and you will soon find her."

In a few moments the lovely Quaker was bending over Lois with great solicitude, and asking what she could do for her relief.

"I am very sorry to interrupt the enjoyment of your evening, dear Cousin Mary, but I do not feel well enough to stay any longer," said Lois.

"Do not mention it, my dear child. I have seen all the beautiful costumes, and it is becoming to my character to retire early. What is the matter, ma petite? your hands are like ice, and your face shows great suffering. I will order the carriage immediately; but in the meantime had you not better lie upon the sofa?"

"Thank you; the fresh air from the window revives me so much that I will wait here."

So Mrs. Norton left her to summon the carriage, pitying the evident headache, but little suspecting the terrible tragedy that was going on in the heart of her young cousin.

Lois had not yet had an opportunity of telling her cousin, as she intended, of Mr. Treville's offer that day in the conservatory. Some medical friends of the doctor's who had dined with them remained for the evening, and claimed all her attention. Before breakfast the next morning some visitors had arrived from Kentucky, old friends not seen for years by Mrs. Norton, and there had not seemed to be an unoccupied moment amid the preparations also for the ball. Dr. Norton had been called away for a professional visit; and, as Lois leaned back in the carriage alone with her cousin for the first time in three days, the thought flashed

upon her that the opportunity for which she had so much longed had at last arrived. But, ah, what a blight had fallen upon her dream of happiness! She must lock the fatal secret in her own bosom, and even her devoted and sympathizing friend, Mrs. Norton, must not know that it was aught but physical suffering that had paled her cheek and sent the blood rushing to her heart with such a painful load of anguish.

Mrs. Norton had that rare, but delightful, trait of respecting people's individuality and not intruding conversation, queries, and remedies, when silence was most evidently desired; so she allowed Lois to rest her aching head undisturbed in the corner of the carriage, and when they arrived at home clasped her arm around her waist and gently supported her to her room. "Now, my dear, shall I assist you to undress and bathe your head in eau de Cologne, or shall I send Elise to you?" she said.

"Thank you, dear cousin, for your kindness," answered Lois, whose one desire was to be left alone to battle with her mental agony; "but I do not need assistance from any one, and you know nothing helps my headaches but quiet."

"Good-night, then, dear one," said Mrs. Norton; "may gentle sleep soon come and drive your pain away;" and, pressing a kiss upon Lois's throbbing brow, she left her. But the expression of those beautiful eyes haunted her sympathizing cousin, and she wondered if anything had occurred at the ball to wound Lois's feelings or trouble her heart. She told the doctor, on his return soon after, that Lois looked like a stricken deer reeling from a fatal blow, when

she found her in the dressing-room, and Dr. Norton immediately said, "You may depend upon it that your amiable cousin Julia has been torturing her. I caught a glimpse of a magnificent Diana, concealed by a gray domino, which was not assumed unless some mischief was on hand that needed the more perfect disguise. I cannot imagine why she seems to have such a dislike to Lois. Forlis's friendship is not conspicuous enough to arouse her jealousy, and she certainly cares nothing for the marked preference Edgar Treville has lately shown Lois, which I really think will come to something serious after awhile. Certainly in character, intellect, and fortune he is everything that is desirable."

While her kind friends were thus discussing her prospects, Lois had turned the key in the lock of her door and thrown herself upon the floor, where she spent the first half of the night in a passionate outburst of feeling, all the more violent for the self-control she had been obliged to exercise for so long. She had walked and spoken like a person in a stupor since leaving Miss d'Obrie on the balcony; and, when she threw herself upon the floor, she knew not what she was doing; but she did not feel the hard contact; she seemed benumbed to everything but inward throbbings. Bitter tears came now at the delusion which had blighted the life that had been so happy a few hours ago.

She had only *really lived* three, short, blissful days, during which she had begun to think the world a paradise; but now this poor young creature found herself at the end of her joys. To a woman of a resentful

disposition, under the same circumstances, violent indignation at the wrong done her would have been the first feeling to come; but Lois was not ready to drag her idol in the dust by pronouncing him ignominious. To a nature like hers that would be the hardest thing in the world to do, much harder than voluntarily giving up all her prospects of happiness in life. George Eliot has said that "With the sinking of high human trust, the dignity of life sinks, too; we cease to believe in our own better self, since that also is part of the common nature which is degraded in our thought; and all the finer impulses of the soul are dulled."

Lois was suffering now from the shock of the painful revelation she had just had, which raised in her mind an indistinct vision of her future life as being solitary and loveless; but she had not one reproachful thought against Edgar. She knew that he had not intended deliberately to wreck her happiness, but that his own depended upon her, and that he had fully intended to overcome every obstacle that might be in the way of marrying her. She remembered now all his words and actions with a new vividness; and all through the long night, when her sobs had ceased, and she lay silent in the darkness, with wide-open eyes, and heavy heart beating against the cold, hard floor, she was readjusting her mind to look at the occurrences of the past week from a changed point of view, and was learning to give to his words a new meaning. She understood now why he had avoided her so long, and knew that he had been drawn gradually into an attachment for her against his will,

strong though that evidently was. But for her tears that morning in the conservatory, he might have kept his honor unsullied by false vows; and she felt that they had tempted him, beyond the power of resistance, to his impetuous love-making. And had not Mrs. Norton, in that chance meeting at the St. Charles, insisted upon his accompanying them to the lake until a refusal would have been positive rudeness? Ah, that delicious evening in the gardens and on the water! It pierced her heart with pain to think of it now. It was because they were thrown so much together that day that their souls became filled with love for each other, and his feelings grew from under his control. Poor Edgar! he, too, would suffer if they were obliged to be separated. And a pathetic mixture of childish romance with her womanly tenderness made her now grieve more for his sorrow than for her own. Orphaned in her childhood, and lonely in a land of strangers during her girlhood, joy had come to her now as an unfamiliar guest; and it was natural that its stay should be short; but the wonted loneliness would only be doubly desolate for that glimpse of a brighter life. Then came the thought: "Why need we be separated,—have our happiness forever sacrificed on account of his formal engagement to that dull little French girl, who is not Edgar's equal, and she cannot make his life contented in her society? He cannot love her; and if she cares for him, it is with the routine affection we give to those who have been our companions in youth. They were doubtless betrothed by their parents, as a business arrangement, perhaps, as their estates adjoin each other on the gulf;

and Edgar doubtless knew of some honorable way in which the affair might be compromised, or he would never have asked me to be his wife. He left for the country the next morning, and perhaps even now he is free. Those few moments at the ball are all of his society I have had since." "But this is wild dreaming," asserted the voice of her better nature. "How could there be real happiness for you and him built upon the ruins of broken faith, and, perhaps, the blighted life of another? Miss d'Obrie may love as truly, as deeply, as Lois Carrol; indeed, what woman who knew Edgar Treville could help surrendering her heart to him, if bidden to do so by those who claimed her obedience? Has he not every manly virtue to win and secure faithful affection?"

"But, ah, it is hard, so hard, to give him up!" sobbed selfish love. "God help me!" she cried, springing to her feet, frightened at the victory almost won by the tempting voice, and beginning to walk the floor, agitated and trembling, as though she could rush away from it; and feeling as if she found refuge from the temptation in motion. But it was impossible to escape from a tempter that dwelt in her own bosom; and the conflict continued as she walked.

"Oh, God!" she cried, at last, sinking upon her knees; "help me, guide me aright!"

Her voice was choked with sobs,—she could no longer find words to supplicate; but her soul was lifted up in a silent, fervent appeal for a ray across the darkness,—that she might be saved from the eager prompting of her own heart to consider only its selfish claim to happiness. Then, wearied by the conflict

that had ended in no decision, she sank, at last, to sleep.

The tired revelers from Mrs. Elder's ball were just taking leave of their equally worn-out hostess, and resuming their masks to hide their haggard faces from each other, when the light of gray dawn came stealing into Lois's apartment, revealing a crushed lily on the floor. Her pale, sad face rested against the bed, and her eyes were closed in slumber; but an occasional sob, or long-drawn sigh, broke the stillness of the room.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Better thou and I were lying, hidden from the heart's disgrace,
Rolled in one another's arms, and silent in a last embrace!

Cursed be the social wants that sin against the strength of youth,
Cursed be the social ties that warp us from the living truth!

* * * * * * * *

Am I mad, that I should cherish that which bears but bitter fruit?
I will pluck it from my bosom, though my heart be at the root!"

TENNYSON.

IT was late when Lois awoke that morning, with a dull, shrinking sense of some misery to be recalled, from which her mind recoiled, and courted peace and oblivion. But it is impossible to retard the rapid course of thought; recollection was inevitable, and

the next instant the remembrance of all that had passed the evening before rushed over her with cruel distinctness; and the heart-cutting comparison between this morning's awakening and that of the day before, urged itself upon her. Her first thought *then* had been, "I will see Edgar to-day." But now she had only regained consciousness to continue the greatest struggle her life had known. "Oh, why could I not have slept on forever!" she cried, as the inexorableness of her hard position filled her with anguish; "but I am afraid there is no way to elude the difficult problems of life; and I must arrive at some determination how to solve mine before I sleep this night."

But deciding to leave the matter in abeyance until she had seen Edgar Treville, she rose, and changed her dress for a morning-wrapper, putting her ball-dress away out of sight, that her cousin might not discover how she had spent the night. She impatiently flung away the drooping lilies that were now hateful to her, because they were so painfully suggestive of the love that had sprung up in her heart, and half whispered to her one of the deepest secrets of human blessedness, only to fade away, leaving her more desolate, with the legacy of its remembrance to haunt her, than she had been before it came into existence.

When at last she joined her cousins down-stairs, their anxious solicitude nearly overcame her composure. Mrs. Norton said, "If I had dreamed that you were suffering from your head half as much as your looks now tell me you were, I should certainly have come to you in the night, dearest."

Lois was indeed as white as the fair linen of her dress, but assured the doctor, in answer to his inquiries, that the violence of her pain was over, and only the extreme debility remained, to show that she had suffered through the night with neuralgia. "Then," said Mrs. Norton, "after you drink some strong coffee, I think you had better lie down again, and get some sleep; that is really a better medicine for you than any the doctor prescribes. I will not allow you to be disturbed by visitors,—indeed, you have already had one before you came down-stairs. Mr. Treville called to inquire how you were, and left this box of flowers. Arthur came in to learn from me if you were ill, and I sent word that you were suffering from an attack of neuralgic headache last night, and were not yet down."

Lois was very glad of the excuse to return to her room and sofa, for her forced calmness was nearly shaken by this proof of Edgar's affection. The box was filled with damp moss, and in it were arranged most beautiful roses, jessamines, and oleanders, as fresh as if just from the garden. The little note that accompanied the box was eagerly seized by Lois, and said,—

"MA MIGNONNE:

"It was an old childish fancy of mine, that the roses of Deer Range were sweeter than those growing elsewhere, and I have gathered these for you from trees planted years ago by my mother, hoping they may bring to you some of the rare fragrance that for me dwells among them. Let them tell you also of the

devoted love that fills the heart of your friend, for one fairer than the flowers, lovelier than the morning.

"E. T."

Lois arranged the roses in vases about her room, and their sweetness was the only consolation of her lonely day. She kept the little note in her hand, and the touch of it seemed to bring her strength for the difficult task before her. She could not think, but laid all day upon the sofa, brooding in her loneliness over the misery that forced her to give up an affection whose sweetness would pervade her life, as the odor of the flowers did her room. Mrs. Norton came up to bring her some refreshments at luncheon, and a small package that had been left at the door for her by a colored man, with inquiries for her health. It proved to be Rogers's "Italy," a book valuable from the extreme beauty of its illustrations by Turner, and which Lois knew only from Ruskin's glowing description. Mr. Treville had told her that he intended to send it to her, and some of the lovely pictures came to her now like messengers of hope and comfort. There was one upon which she gazed long, called "Datur hora quieti," in which the peace and purity of heaven seemed descending in the serenest rays upon earth. Lois seemed to catch some of its spirit, and dressed for dinner, resolving to put aside her sorrow until she had seen Edgar, as she hoped to do that night at the opera.

Mrs. Norton was very much surprised to find that she felt equal to going out that evening, and feared that it would scarcely be prudent. But Lois said,

"You know, dear cousin, that Rigoletta will be performed to-night, and we have been intending to see it without fail. My headache is long since over, and the languor that it has left may be dissipated by the fresh air; so, if the doctor can go, there is no reason why we should be disappointed."

"Well, Lois, you must wear a rose-colored dress, to bring some life into your pale cheeks," said Mrs. Norton, gently kissing her.

In listening to any other opera this evening Lois could not have kept her thoughts from wandering; but there is something so mournful in the story of Rigoletta, and the music is so passionately plaintive, that it seemed to blend with her own sorrow and sense of her personal lot. That wild cry of despair came from her own heart, but was uttered by other lips. Dwelling on her own grief had given her a strange affinity for sadness, which made it easy for her to be overcome by those pathetic strains; and they took complete possession of her soul, and carried her along with them, until all else in the world was forgotten, except the one feeling of desolation, in which she was entirely absorbed.

She was like a harp with only a solitary string left, which was being so forcibly touched that it thrilled with a powerful vibration.

She was so shaken with unrestrained emotion, that the tears rolled down her cheeks; and it happened fortunately that they occupied a closed box, or careless eyes might have observed and commented upon her agitation.

At last the mournful wail died away, and as Lois

turned, her eyes were irresistibly drawn towards the D'Obrie box, at a short distance; it seemed as if the strains that had filled her ears had suddenly merged themselves in the sad gaze of Adéle's eyes, that were steadily fixed upon her. What was it that altered the current of Lois's feelings, and changed her absorbing sense of self-pity into tender compassion and deep sympathy for the woman whom she had unwittingly wronged by taking the place, that by right belonged to her, in the heart of her affianced husband? It was, perhaps, that the large eyes, looking like those of some gentle persecuted animal, were filled with hungry, unsatisfied love, and the pale face showed suffering as great as her own. That one glance, which seemed almost like a passionate appeal from Adéle, made Lois feel strangely akin to this sister-mortal, from whose life she was taking all the joy; and showed her, as by a sudden flash of light, that she must renounce a happiness for herself, which would surely be poisoned if she persisted in claiming it, by remorse at the injury inflicted upon another.

Last night, when she had thought that Edgar's marriage with Adéle d'Obrie would be entirely loveless, it had not seemed so very wrong to prevent its consummation. But now she was convinced that those eyes belonged to a tender heart, which had suffered agony from neglect.

Lois Carrol had received no moral or religious training during her whole existence, and was only prepared for this great life-struggle by the reiterated admonitions to choose good rather than evil that were whispered by the voice of her better self. The strength of the

fortification that it might have raised against evil was now to be severely tested, and in this dark vortex of passion she was liable to often lose sight of the weak helm that was her only guide.

"Why do you look so sad, my darling?" asked a well-known voice close beside her; and, looking up with a start, she found that Edgar Treville had entered the box, and taken the seat vacated by Mrs. Norton, who was walking in the foyer with her husband. Lois had been too much engrossed with her own thoughts to observe that any change was going on. "Why, Lois, your cheeks are wet with tears, and you are paler than your own lilies last night! Why is it, ma mignonne? Are you not going to shake hands?" he said, lifting hers from her lap to his lips as he bent over her.

"I think it was the extreme pathos of the music," Lois said, as quietly as she could.

"But how you are trembling, ma petite! do not grieve over these fictitious woes, or pity the tragic death of the opera-singer, who will be upon the stage again to-morrow night in all her paint and gorgeous dressing. I know you are not well enough to be here, though, for you look weary and worn, dearest," he said very tenderly.

Lois indeed felt as if that beloved voice, with its strange subduing power, was breaking down all her defenses, and a thrill, half of pleasure, half of pain, passed over her at being called "darling," in those low, deep accents, and reading in the fond eyes that she was "dearest" to his heart. While he talked on, seeing that she was only in a mood to listen, she asked

herself if she might not forget for this one evening everything but the sweet consciousness of his love and the delight of his presence with her. To-morrow, parting was inevitable; but why let that embitter these few precious moments they might borrow from grief?

She felt herself being drawn into a strong current that would carry her gliding along on a soft stream of joy, and she felt a mighty temptation to give up the struggle. Ah, how easy it would be to float with the pleasant current of her inclination to choose happiness in the place of sorrow! And, then, that solemn promise she had made to Edgar to love him only and always, and the quaint words of the legend, "Faithful ever, doubtful never," which she had repeated after him, with no witness but the flowers, that memorable day! Was it all a dream? If difficulty beset their path, could not his strength remove it, and, in honor or dishonor, did she not belong to him? Ah, she would trust all to him, yield to his will, and all would be well. But one glance at the sad, colorless face of Adéle d'Obrie, with its beseeching look, dispelled the fallacious chain of reasoning Lois had allowed herself to use, and brought to her recollection other vows that were more binding than hers, on account of their priority. It would be wicked to allow them to be broken, and she could not be so base and lost to all sense of honor as to rob that life of all its brightness. If she did so, she knew she would ever be haunted by Adéle's reproachful gaze, and that look of pain would pierce her soul with remorse. She would cling no longer to the thought of Edgar's love for her, and all her strength

should be used to escape from a temptation whose power she knew would daily become more great. What was it he was now saying? How could she truthfully answer the question as to why she had left the fancy ball so abruptly the evening before without waiting for his return? "I tried in every way to find out what had become of my lily, or even that mysterious gray domino. My uncle had seen you on the stairs shortly before the unmasking, but could tell me nothing further. Ah, your headache was too painful for you to remain longer; so you missed the best part of the evening. Your cousin, Mrs. Warrington, looked very finely as Diana. I never before appreciated her noble form and splendid carriage; she was quite the belle of the evening; but I have a strange feeling of repulsion to her, if you will excuse me for speaking thus of a relative of yours. I was looking for you as unobtrusively as possible, when she came up to me, and made such very annoying criticisms upon some of my friends that I was glad to leave her as soon as possible. Do I weary you, mon ami?" said Edgar, as Lois made no reply.

"Oh, no; I am strangely stupid from the effects of a suffering night," she answered, "but I am very glad to hear you talk."

"I did not stay long after I found there was no hope of your reappearance, which I learned from Miss Brand. Her costume was one of the most amusing I noticed; it was that of a 'big sunflower.' She asked me if I did not think her dress 'howling splendiferous;' but ridiculous would have seemed to me a more appropriate term. I did not get up from Deer Range

until the evening of the ball, and had only time to look up a dress I had made for some tableaux years ago before I joined you there. Miss Brand told me that she had found a pale lily in the dressing-room and sent it home; so I left directly."

"Edgar," said Lois, gathering all her strength for the effort, "I heard some painful news that night, which affected me so deeply I could not remain at the ball. The suffering is still too recent for me to tell you of it now, but I must to-morrow, if you will call. Your lovely flowers and book have been to me silent comforters all day, which I spent alone in my room; and I cannot tell you how grateful I am for your thoughtful kindness."

At this moment Dr. and Mrs. Norton entered the box, and, after a little conversation with them, Edgar left.

The last act of the opera was beginning; but Lois heard no more of it that night. Treville had taken her hand at parting, and his look had been so full of tender, anxious devotion that when he closed the door after him she felt its echoes in her heart like the coffin-lid that shuts out all that was left to us of earthly hope. Edgar, her lover, she knew was henceforth dead to her, and when she saw him again it must be only as the affianced husband of another.

Mrs. Norton noticed her dreamy mood, and feared it had hardly been prudent to allow her to come out that evening, and, as they were descending the stairs, slipped her strong arm around her waist to support her trembling form. When they reached the landing at the head of the first flight of stairs, the trembling

increased so much that she feared faintness would ensue. Lois's face, too, had become even paler than before, and the pupils of her eyes dilated in a way they had when she was excited. Mrs. Norton followed the direction in which they were turned to see what it was that could cause her excitement, but saw nothing that to her mind was a satisfactory explanation. The only persons in the crowd immediately about them whom she knew, were Mr. Treville and Miss d'Obrie, that poor girl who had lately looked so morbidly discontented; and there was nothing in the trivial incident of meeting those two that would agitate Lois. Perhaps, after all, it was that chill breeze from the open door that made the child shiver, and she would tell her to fasten her cloak up around her throat. But in youth people sometimes learn their life-lessons in very trivial language; and to Lois, Adéle d'Obrie's passing glance was as replete with an expression of deep meaning as it had been in the opera-box. It was the entire absence of any appearance of envy or indignation in the simple girl's sad, dejected look, which had a great deal to do with producing that strange influence over Lois and drawing out her sympathy, when it would seem natural that two women occupying their relative positions would feel a great antipathy for each other. Now, while Adéle was leaning on Treville's arm, instead of expressing triumph, her eyes seemed to say, "He is by my side, but his heart is with you." It was only for a second that they stood thus face to face on the landing, and Edgar, busy finding an opening through the crowd, did not even perceive the chance meeting; and yet

that short space of time was freighted with weighty consequences to the lives of three people.

When Lois Carrol stood in the parlor the next morning, just before the time appointed for Mr. Treville's visit, she could not realize that only thirty-six hours had passed since she left Mrs. Elder's house the night of the ball. It seemed as if the suffering of a whole lifetime had been compressed into those few hours; her eyes were still heavy with the weight of unshed tears, and her heart heavier with its untold sorrow.

In her fanciful dreams and visions of her own possible future, there had never been any great difficulties in the way of happiness to be overcome, or misfortunes to be borne by herself.

The imagination of an untrained young nature, that is both dreamy and ardent, naturally falls into the habit of planning happiness for itself, without taking into consideration that Fate has a powerful voice in the matter,—a voice that so often makes itself heard to disenchant us at the moment when we flatter ourselves that we have the whole control of affairs in our own hands. And there is no doubt that Novalis was to some extent mistaken when he said, "Character is destiny."

Lois Carrol had supposed that there would probably be some few thorns in her path through life, though her mind had dwelt principally upon the roses that would doubtless predominate; and now, when she found that the blossoms had withered, she was obliged to readjust her mind to the idea of pressing on through the thorns; but she meant to do it bravely,

without another murmur. She was to go through with the hardest possible duty this morning. She could not think calmly of all she had to renounce; but one thought possessed her,—honor called her lover away from her, and her voice must be strong to urge obedience to its dictates. Her own hands must destroy the fair fabric of her youthful joy, for its foundations were reared on the unhappiness of another.

When Edgar entered the room, Lois held out her hand to him, without looking up. He did not take the trembling white fingers, but clasped her in his arms, in spite of her cold resistance.

"Are you not well, Lois, that you look so pale? Why do you shrink so from me, darling? You will give me one kiss,—I cannot be denied my right."

"No," she said, regaining her liberty, and taking several steps from him. As she looked at him, her eyes were bright with an excitement which had suddenly brought a burning flush to her pale face. "I cannot permit such a greeting; loving words and caresses from you belong to another. You must forget me entirely after to-day, and give your affections where your hand was long ago promised,—to Adéle d'Obrie."

He was so completely overcome by surprise, that he did not attempt to interrupt her while she continued: "I do not blame you, or suppose that you have been deliberately treacherous to either Miss d'Obrie or myself; you were doubtless carried away by the impetuosity of your feelings; but this state of things cannot continue, and I asked you to come this morning, to tell you so, and to say farewell. Fortunately, my cousin was so engrossed with her guests that I had not had an opportunity of making her my confidante, as I intended doing; so no human being knows that a word of love has passed between us. The world will still call you honorable, and you can fulfill your engagement to Miss d'Obrie."

"Never, Lois!" said Edgar, excitedly, grasping her hands, and drawing her down on the sofa beside him. "Do not hate me, darling, because I have allowed you to hear that painful news from other lips. I hoped to be able soon to tell you myself the whole truth, when I thought I could also tell you that that unnatural engagement was at an end. But you must listen to my justification of such seemingly unpardonable conduct, and not condemn me unheard. The unfortunate engagement of which you speak was arranged between my father and Madame d'Obrie, some months since, but I have never pretended to care for Adéle more than as an old friend from childhood. I intended to tell you of the tissue of circumstances that brought it about, and the morning after I spoke to you in the conservatory I went down to the country to tell my father that I should be obliged to withdraw from it at once. But I found him feeble from a recent attack of illness, and was afraid to agitate him by broaching the subject. I have lived among books and men so exclusively, that never till I met you, Lois, did I dream what a mighty influence a woman could exert over a man's life. This is my only plea,—that in my ignorance I permitted my father to make a promise for me, that it would now be wicked to fulfill. Mademoiselle d'Obrie's father died many years ago,

leaving my father guardian to his two daughters; and, as our estates were adjoining, we were brought up in the closest intimacy. I had no sister, and since my mother's death they have been almost my only lady friends. During the years I spent at Paris, the two families lived together at Deer Range; the war came in this period, and though my father exerted himself in every way possible to prevent the ruin of their estate, it was almost inevitable. My father also lost very heavily, though his own losses he can bear with equanimity; but it is a most galling thought to him that he will be obliged to return the Misses d'Obrie's estate to them reduced to less than half its value. The younger of the ladies comes of age this year, and my father is then to give up his trust, and it has preyed upon his mind so much as to seriously endanger his health. Deer Range belonged to my mother, and he has only a life-interest in it; beside this, a large property has been left to me by an aunt, recently deceased, in Normandy. Moved by my father's distress of mind, I agreed to this plan, as the only way of saving his honor and enabling him to deliver up his friend's property to his orphan children undiminished in value; for my property would more than make up the deficiency. I have never addressed to Miss d'Obrie a single vow or protestation of affection; and the marriage was to be purely, on my part, one of convenience. I thought of my dear father's happiness only, when I gave my assent to the plan he has dreamed over for years as the only way in which his honor could be saved, and not until I knew you did I imagine what a frightful sacrifice I was making of

myself. Miss d'Obrie is gentle, kind, and amiable; but my pulse does not beat quicker when she approaches, and beyond the kindliness of childish memories in common there is not a tie between us. These reverses of fortune are due solely to the vicissitudes of the war, and my father is not in the least to blame for them; but he thinks that his honor is involved, and instead of sacrificing myself to its demands, I intend to give up my entire fortune. My father himself has lost everything, and he shall have Deer Range for his own, while my French property is ample for the portion of each of the D'Obrie young ladies, and the jointure of their mother. You see before you, then, Lois, an impoverished man; but I have a strong arm to work for you, and a brain that will delight to toil for you. I will have nothing to offer you but my heart; but you will not refuse it, dearest, if you love me."

Lois trembled so that she could not speak for some minutes. She felt that the real struggle had only just begun; it was so hard to resist that pleading face hovering over her, while his warm, gentle grasp was on her hand.

Her heart was filled with one ardent wish during that moment,—it was that she might never have heard of that other engagement,—that she might have gone on and married him in ignorance of doing wrong. "But then," her next thought was, "that would not have made it right for him." No; she must break this spell, and keep only one object in view.

"Edgar," she said, drawing away her hand, and going to the window, "do not try to persuade me to

persuade yourself to do wrong, for it would be wicked to deceive Adéle d'Obrie."

"She does not care for me," he said, going impetuously to where she stood, and taking her hand again. "She, doubtless, like myself, regards the affair as purely a matter of business. She has already had several fancied lovers; but gave up the last one at her mother's command. If I tell my father that I love you, I know that he will willingly and easily procure my release. The engagement is not known out of the family, and you must have heard of it from one of them, for I have not even told my uncle. I can withdraw from it, as quietly as I entered it, and the world will be ignorant that it ever existed. I think it a false sense of honor that compels a man to marry a woman for whom he has no attachment, and be obliged to act a lie all his life. I could not wrong her by marrying her without confessing that my heart belonged to another; and then her pride would cause her to break the engagement."

"But she does love you," said Lois, with gentle earnestness; "it was very evident to me when I saw you together. She has believed for months that you were going to marry her; and would it not be cruel to have deceived her?"

"Even if she did care for me,—and she could not love as we do, Lois,—it is not in her nature to feel deeply,—would it seem just to sacrifice the happiness of two persons for that of one?" he asked eagerly. "Is it of no consequence to you what I would have to suffer?"

A deep flush again came over her face, and her lips and eyelids quivered. After all, might he not possibly

be right? She almost wished that she could think so; but she answered, "Edgar, I do feel for you," and a large tear trembled on each eyelash; "but don't let us argue ourselves into the belief that wrong is right. It would be weak and selfish for us to gain happiness for ourselves through giving misery to another."

"You do not love me, Lois," said Edgar, bitterly, beginning to walk backwards and forwards before her, "or you would understand that I cannot marry her. It would be wrong to take solemn vows at the altar that I knew I could not fulfill. Adélé has always seemed to me as a sister; there would be something unnatural in such a union, and equally as much misery would come of it for her as for me."

Lois felt that her sense of right was becoming very much confused under the influence of this arguing; and, making a great effort to shake it off, she called up before her mind a vision of Adéle's sad face, just as she had seen it the evening before, to strengthen her purpose.

"But, Edgar," she said, in a beseeching tone, for she was almost despairing of being able to induce him to see his duty in the same light in which she saw it, "you should have thought of that before you made the engagement; it is too late now; it is made, and your only object in life should be to fulfill it. You will act nobly, I am sure, when your infatuation for me is over; and I hope"—her voice trembled so that she was obliged to stop an instant to control it—"I hope it will be over soon. I am going away, to Kentucky; and then you will think calmly about it, and acknowledge to yourself that we were right to part.

It would be better to say farewell now, Edgar, and leave me." She went towards him slowly, holding out her hand, with a face full of anguish.

"No; I will not leave you!" he cried, passionately, turning and clasping her in his arms; "you are mine, Lois; we are fitted for each other, and God intended us to make each other happy. Your love is not strong, like mine, or you would think as I do."

"I will never be your wife, Edgar Treville!" she exclaimed, drawing back her face, and looking at him with flashing eyes that appeared black, because they were full of a determination grown firmer now that she was obliged to resist strong opposition. "Love is impossible without respect; and do you think that I could respect a husband who I knew had acted dishonorably? or could you have any regard for a wife who had encouraged you in dishonorable conduct? Let me go; you have no right to hold me thus!"

He released her immediately, with a gesture of despair; for he began to understand that all he could say would be of no avail to change her purpose, though he shrank from the agonizing thought of parting.

"Our happiness would be embittered, Edgar," continued Lois, a little more gently, "if we had to reproach ourselves forever with the thought that it was wrung from the crushed heart of another. You have no more right to care for me now than you would if you had met me after you had been married to her; for really an engagement should be held almost as sacred as a marriage vow."

He had never before seen her eyes glowing with such passionate earnestness; it was impossible for

him not to feel a deep admiration for the rare, grand sight before him, of one woman renouncing her own claims and pleading the cause of another; and, as a full appreciation of her nobleness stole over him, it awoke a corresponding chord in his own nature. Could he feel the same reverence for what was lofty in her character, if it was degraded by a compliance with his wishes which was contrary to her sense of right? And could she feel the esteem for him that should be the basis of every wife's love for her husband, if through his act and his influence she learned to disregard the finer instincts of the soul?

Shrink as he would from the thought, the conviction was forcing itself upon his mind that, with the view she took of the subject, a union with him would be a sort of desecration.

Lois was becoming weary with this outward continuation of a struggle which had been going on without intermission in her own breast for the last two days. She had been arguing as much against her own wild instinct to seek only happiness for herself, as against his; and after that momentary silence, she exclaimed, in a voice almost of agony, "Is it not enough that you have ruined my life,—for I would rather die than marry you, situated as you are,—that you should wreck her happiness, too? The only chance of peace for us both, Edgar, will be in your fulfilling your pledge to Adèle. The only pleasure I can ever feel will be in knowing that I was not mistaken in your integrity."

She had happened to make use of the most effective appeal now; and Edgar cried out, in anguish, "Oh,

Lois, forgive me, darling! it tortures me to hear you say that you will suffer! Only say that you forgive me for all the misery that I have caused you and will cause you, and I will do anything you like, though it may be worse than death to me."

"Yes, Edgar," she said, trying hard to repress a sob that was choking her voice, "I will forgive you with all my heart and soul, if you will promise to fulfill your engagement with Adéle d'Obrie."

"I will try, for your sake. But Lois," he said, in a low pleading tone, "you will give me one farewell kiss, dearest, before we part forever?"

"Life will seem brighter to you after you are calmer," said Lois, holding out her hands to him.

A drowning man catches at a straw, and when Edgar saw her face soften again into tenderness, he caught at the possibility of her relenting even now. "Lois," he said, putting his arms around her, "is your purpose fixed and unchangeable?"

"Yes, unchangeable," she answered, and her voice sounded hard and cruel to herself.

During that moment, when he gazed down into her upturned eyes for a long, last look, their faces were as full of despair as might have been those of two people during the great deluge, who clung to the last dry crag that was to be seen over the vast expanse of ocean, while the merciless cold waters crept up slowly over their limbs, bringing with it certain death, from which there was no possible escape.

Then their lips met in a long, lingering farewell, and the next minute the door closed after him. Lois stretched her hands towards the door, and her heart

cried out to him; her lips moved, but no sound came from them; she heard the click of the gate shutting, and knew that he was gone.

CHAPTER XIX.

"Yet one house was dim and darkened:
Gloom and sickness and despair
Dwelling in the gilded chambers,
Creeping up the marble stair;
Even stilled the voice of mourning,
For a child lay dying there."

ADELAIDE PROCTOR.

MRS. NORTON saw Lois, through the open door of her sitting-room, passing up the stairs with that peculiar pallor on her face that she supposed characterized nervous headaches, and as solitude seemed the only remedy she cared for then, did not speak to her, to apprise her of the presence of some morning visitors. Just as these were leaving, she saw an old family servant of the Warringtons' at the door. "Well, Luisa," she said to her, "have you a message for me? How are they all at your house to-day?"

"Mighty poorly, ma'am," said Luisa; "which I mean to say that Master Warrington's little boy is very ill, ever since twelve o'clock last night." Mrs. Warrington's servants always seemed to forget that she had any partnership in the child, and, like every one else, spoke of him as his father's boy. "Me and master

was up all night nursing, and the doctor did not go away till ten o'clock this morning. We had blisters, and all kinds of medicines; but it seems as if nothing did our poor lamb any good."

"I am very sorry to hear that dear little Fred is ill. What is the matter with him, Luisa?"

"Pneumonia, ma'am, the doctor says, and he oughter know if anybody do. Master Warrington, he told me just yesterday morning before breakfast, when I came to take him to the nursery, that he had been awake with him nearly all that night,—he coughed and choked so badly, and I thought it was the whooping-cough, that is about among the children now. And Miss Julia, she's a mighty fine mother, I don't think; going off to a tea-fight when her child is most a strangling, and not coming home till the day dawns. And now she's in the parlor with a big colonel, who's got such a big moustache that I think he'd better bring along a darkey to help him carry it. He looks as if he was pretty much worn out with a fetching of it himself, or with something that makes him mighty tired. But Miss Julia is sitting there a simpering and a simpering with him while that blessed child is up-stairs nearly dead in his father's arms. Master is very poorly, and he is most grieving of himself crazy; so I made bold enough to come round and see if you couldn't help us."

Luisa had used the privilege of talking freely, generally accorded to old servants in the South, and Mrs. Norton had been making preparations for leaving home all the time she was telling her story; when ready to start, she left a message for her husband and Lois that

she would probably be absent all night, unless little Fred should be decidedly better.

Dr. Norton was obliged to dine alone that day, Lois sending him word that her headache made quiet necessary for her, and, before the solitary meal was finished, a messenger arrived calling him to a professional consultation at Mr. Warrington's with Dr. Chapin, their family physician for many years.

Early the next morning a note came from Mrs. Norton, saying they had spent a painful night watching the fever and delirium of the dear child, who was easier now, though very feeble. She asked Lois if she felt well enough to come to her, as her presence would be a great comfort to the suffering boy. He was now quite conscious, and relieved of the great difficulty of breathing, and had called repeatedly for "Cousin Lois." This roused Lois immediately from useless brooding over her own sorrow, and, distressed for the suffering of her noble little favorite and his doting father, she hastened to the house. Dr. Norton had sent a message to his wife that she must endeavor to prevail upon Mr. Warrington to leave the child in their care and seek rest for himself, for his health was so frail that he could not long endure the continual demand upon his strength. It was three nights since he had slept at all, and his distress and anxiety had been so great that he had scarcely thought of food, only taking an occasional glass of wine to support his failing frame. Lois found him in the library as she entered from the open street-door unannounced, poring over some large medical works. "How is dear Fred?" she said to him. Mr. Warrington started and looked

at her over his spectacles. "Is that you, Lois? I am very much obliged to you for coming; my poor child has asked for you repeatedly. He is relieved of the great oppression upon his chest that has been such agony for us to witness, but is so very feeble that I am greatly alarmed about him. He is dozing now, and I slipped out of the room for a moment to see if I could not find out from these books something of the nature of the disease and its treatment, that I might make myself a more competent and intelligent nurse. Dr. Chapin is a fine physician, but he gives me no satisfaction as to whether this extreme weakness is the effect of severe remedies or one of the symptoms of pneumonia." Mr. Warrington seemed himself too feeble to lift the heavy books from their places on the shelves, and Lois begged him to allow her to assist him in finding the desired information, also giving him Dr. Norton's message. "Indeed, my dear cousin," she said, "you must take rest and refreshment yourself, or you will not be able to do anything further for our darling little pet. I am going to him immediately, and will do all I can for his relief if you will only lie down." His pale, weary face, tottering form, and heavy eyes had made him look so much older that Lois felt as if her cousin's caution was very necessary, and she hastened to tell her cousin Mary of the need of enforcing its observance. As she was passing along the upper hall to the nursery, she heard voices on the stairs, and, turning, saw her cousin Julia in an exquisite morning toilette talking to the handsome Dr. Chapin. Her hair was arranged with studied carelessness, and she was resting her head in a

pretty, seemingly-weary attitude against an open window on the landing. In one hand she held a silver spoon, and in the other a medicine-bottle; but Lois could see at a glance that there was no sign of sleeplessness in those fine, dark eyes, and that the utmost care had been expended upon that artistic and elaborate arrangement of disheveled hair. The silvery tones of her voice were in such painful contrast to the broken accents of her grief-stricken husband that Lois turned from the unconscious pair in repugnance, and entered the darkened room where the child of such devoted love and strange, unnatural neglect was lying, hovering on the borders of another world. He lay with closed eyes upon the snowy pillows, as white as they, his curls tossed back from his high forehead, and the long, dark lashes sweeping the cheek, the only color about him. He had always been a child of uncommon beauty and intelligence, and his fair proportions were not wasted by the rapid course of disease. Mrs. Norton sat by him with one finger on his pulse, and holding a watch to count its feeble movement. She also looked worn from a night spent in anxious watching and active employment in battling with the fierce distemper that contended for the life of the idolized boy.

"Cousin Mary," said Lois, gently kissing her, "you are very tired; let me take your place now."

"Yes, dear," said Mrs. Norton; "but first get me the bottle of medicine from Julia. I can't imagine why she snatched it up just as the doctor was coming in. Then she forgot to put it down again, and has been going about with it in her hands ever since."

Lois went out to Mrs. Warrington, and, with a

bow to the gallant doctor, took the bottle and spoon from her cousin without interrupting their animated conversation. "Has there been any change for the better in Fred since you wrote this morning?" she said, on returning to the nursery.

"I am afraid not," said her cousin, "though he is so much quieter now. Last night I never saw a child suffer more intensely than he did; but now he seems sleeping from pure exhaustion."

"Do leave him with me now, then," said Lois, "and try to get a little rest. If there is any change in Fred, I will call you or Mr. Warrington."

"Call me directly, Lois; but, if possible, let us refrain from disturbing his father. I thought last night that he would really lose his mind from distress at seeing Fred's agony. He has disease of the heart, and Dr. Norton says that any great excitement may be fatal to him. Give Fred a spoonful of this medicine if he wakes, and I will be back in half an hour." And Mrs. Norton left the room, after a few more directions to Luisa, to seek much-needed rest. Lois watched the white face on the pillows with painful anxiety, the sleep seemed so like death; but presently the boy opened his eyes and stretched out his arms to her, saying, "I am so glad you have come, Cousin Lois, I have so many sings to tell you. Kiss me now, please," trying vainly to raise himself up on the bed.

"Yes, darling," said Lois, bending over him with a full heart; "but Fred is too weak to get up, and must take this medicine to make him stronger." And, raising him gently on the pillows, she put the spoon to his mouth.

After swallowing it with some difficulty, he said, "Cousin Lois, did you ever die?"

"No, dear," she answered, startled at the strange question. "What made you ask that?"

"Betause I am going to die, and I want to know if it is very bad."

"What makes you think you are going to die, Freddy?" said Lois, trying to speak calmly.

"Why, I heard Dr. Chapin tell mamma so. And she put her handkerchief to her eyes. I sought it must be very dreadful, betause I never saw her cry before. Is it as bad to die as to take nasty medicine, Cousin Lois?"

"No, darling," she answered, sinking on her knees to be nearer the dear little face looking up imploringly to her own. "I hope the doctor was mistaken, because we don't want you to go away from us; but if you do die, dear Freddy, it will only be falling asleep for a little while to wake up in a beautiful new home."

The child moved his face closer to hers and listened eagerly while she told him in his own baby language, which did not tax the little brain with interpreting, of the bright, happy land where he was going.

"I would be very glad to go there," said the child, looking towards his father, who had crept quietly into the room and now stood at the foot of the bed in a subdued stream of light from the window, which showed how his face looked aged and his eyes dull and heavy. An unnatural strength and animation had come to the child, and he started up from the pillows, repeating, "I would like very much to go there if God will only let my papa go with me."

"I wish I could, my darling," said the father in anguish, forgetting in his agitation that his boy should not be excited, and, going to the other side of the bed, he laid his wrinkled face on the pillow by the side of the young, fair one.

Fred put his arm around his father's neck, while he said to Lois, "I fordot to tell you, dear cousin, to take care of Joujou for me when I go away."

"Yes, I will, Freddy," said Lois, with a heavy heart; "but now you will try to go to sleep, won't you, so you will be better to-morrow?"

"I will go to sleep when I've kissed papa," said Fred. And Mr. Warrington bent over the little face, from which the flush had died away, for the cold, damp dews of death were gathering. It was the last effort of affection, and the little arms relaxed from their grasp, the light faded out from the sweet, dark eyes, and the baby-spirit that had shone through them had gone to the home of which Lois had told him. When Mr. Warrington touched the waxen lips, he started up groaning, and looked at the little white face with wild eyes; then, putting his hands to his head, he tottered feebly from the room.

"Poor Mr. Warrington!" said Mrs. Norton to Lois, late that afternoon, when they stood at the upper hall window talking in the subdued, whispering tone into which people naturally fall in a house of mourning. "I have been in the library several times, but he will not take any notice of me. He still sits leaning against one of the pillars, looking like a marble statue. I had hoped Dr. Norton would have been in before this to rouse him from this dangerous stupor; but I

think you had better try, Lois, if you cannot persuade him to drink a cup of coffee. He needs something very much. That silent grief is so terrible; it almost breaks my heart to look at him. Perhaps the sight of you might bring the tears to his eyes. You know Freddy loved you so dearly, and anything is better than that stony air of blank agony now on his face." Lois saw on the hat-rack in the hall a little black velvet Scotch cap with a bright plaid brim, which Fred often wore in his walks and rides with his father, and, taking it tenderly in her hand, she went into the library. Mr. Warrington was sitting near one of the pillars supporting the gallery, his face as white as the marble, gazing into vacancy, and his breath coming in short, faint gasps. Lois glided to a low seat by his side and laid the cap on his knee, where it would interrupt his gaze. At first it seemed to him only a little black and red spot; but when it had gradually grown into recognizable shape under his eyes, he snatched it up and covered it with kisses.

"My precious little boy!" he exclaimed. "What have I to live for now that he is gone? Oh, why can I not go with my darling! But may God forgive me for crying out against it, and teach me to say 'Thy will be done!'" and the tall man bowed his head upon the table before him, and sobbed like a child, while Lois, imagining that he would rather be left alone, hastened from the room, and went to order for him the much-needed refreshment. When this was prepared, she returned with the man bearing the tray, which he placed upon the table and retired, supposing Lois could best induce his master to partake of the

food before him. He was in the same attitude in which she had left him, his head bowed forward upon his hands, in which the Scotch cap was still clasped.

"Cousin Frederick!" said Lois, softly, "do drink a cup of coffee, and try to eat something; you must be faint for want of food." But she received no answer, and something in the rigid appearance of his form alarmed Lois so much, that she came nearer and touched the long hands. They were cold as ice, and she hastily recalled the servant to lift the stiffening figure, and send for the doctor to advise restoratives. The thought of Dr. Norton's caution flashed upon Lois, and although she bathed the marble-like forehead, and rubbed the cold hands, she feared that it was too late to revive him.

Mr. Warrington would build no more vain, illusive castles in Spain. His weary spirit had fled to join that of his child in mansions not built with hands, whose beauty and glory no earthly imagination can fully depict.

Dr. Norton entered and released Lois from her hopeless task, saying, "Poor Warrington, it is all over with him! What I feared has taken place, for he has long suffered from chronic heart-disease, and this shock has been too much for him."

The arrangement of the double funeral naturally falling upon Dr. Norton, as the only relative in the city, his wife begged that those who had been so much to each other in life might not be separated in death, —that father and son might rest in the same coffin. But her husband said that Mrs. Warrington must be consulted about this, and Lois went into her room for

the first time since the fact had been announced to her that she was now a childless widow. It was a painful effort, for surely the most cold-hearted must be bowed down by grief at such a time, and the suddenness of the stroke that had taken from her in one day both husband and child must have overwhelmed her with anguish. Mrs. Warrington was lying upon the bed with her face buried in the pillows, but raised it as Lois entered, and said,—"I do not wish to be disturbed; do not speak to me or ask me about anything if you can avoid it. I am willing to allow Dr. Norton to make any arrangement he chooses, so that he does not annoy me by questions." Lois was retiring immediately, but her cousin called her back, saying, "Lois, are you, or is Mary going down town to order my mourning?"

"I think I had better attend to it," said Lois; "Cousin Mary is very tired."

"Well, I would greatly prefer your taste to Mary's, and I wish you would go immediately, before the shops close. Get everything at Madame Olimpe's,—her things are the most stylish in town,—and have them put in my bill. Be sure only to have the very best quality; shabby mourning is odious. The crépe veil must be long, though that is not fashionable now, but I am so tall that sweeping drapery is much more becoming to me than to shorter people. A crépe dress over bombazine, with heavy folds, will be more suitable; and then——"

But Lois interrupted her by saying, "Cousin Julia, I will only select one suit for the funeral, and after that you can choose the rest yourself; your taste is far

better than mine," and, shocked by such heartlessness, was turning to leave the room.

"Wait one moment, Lois; you can take the carriage, if Dr. Norton is not here, and bring me up several bonnets, to see which I like best. Be sure they are all pretty shapes, not too broad just along here," putting her hands to the side of her head. "If there is anything annoys me beyond endurance, it is a clumsy-looking bonnet. I prefer the coronet shape. You need not look so shocked, Lois, because I am particular; one need not make a fright of one's self, even in affliction. I am obliged to have these things to show suitable respect to the memory of my husband and child, and they might as well be good as mean-looking. Don't forget a box of two-button black kid gloves, No. 6, and one of inch-black-bordered handkerchiefs. Tell Olimpe you wish to send up various styles for Mary to select from, for me. Tell the servants, if Mrs. Owen, that tiresome cousin of Mr. Warrington's, from Port Gibson, should come, that she must not come into my room. She was sent for to come down to little Fred, but I am too ill to see anybody but you, when you come from Olimpe's with the things."

Lois could hardly believe it possible that any one could be so utterly heartless, and went to order the carriage, indignation struggling with the grief that filled her heart at the death of the lovely child and his grief-stricken father. She could not speak of it, even to Mrs. Norton, and simply told her of her cousin's wish that she should drive to Olimpe's and that Mrs. Owen should not be allowed to come to her.

Mrs. Warrington threw herself again among the

pillows, to continue the mental debate Lois's entrance had interrupted, as to whether she had better carry out "old Fred's" intention of going abroad for the summer, or visit the Virginia Springs and Cape May. Before Lois came in she had inclined to Europe, if she could secure the company of Doctor and Mrs. Norton, Mr. Forlis, and Lois. But something in the pained, grief-worn aspect of the latter's face had banished this idea. "That child would doubtless think that I ought to spend half my time moaning and groaning over old Fred's death, and leave her at liberty to flirt with Henri Forlis as much as she chooses. No, I will wait till I lighten my mourning, and then find a jolly party going to Paris, and have a fine time. But I'll leave New Orleans for a few months, immediately,—this house must be unhealthy, and I don't believe I will ever come back to it."

"I never saw Mrs. Warrington look so radiantly beautiful," said Mr. Jennings to Colonel Saurwein, as they stood together at the door of the church, into which the funeral procession had just passed. "Did you get a good look at her face, as her heavy veil fell aside a moment in passing us?"

"Yes; and by Jove, she is a glorious woman! All that black drapery is very becoming to her, but it did not strike me that she looked very much distressed for her book-worm of a husband."

"I hardly think she is heart-broken at his loss, nor for that of her noble little boy. She is now an uncommonly rich and handsome widow, with no incumbrances," said Jennings.

"Is she very rich?" asked the colonel, eagerly; but recollecting himself, stroked his moustache with a look of indifference that was rather clumsily ostentatious.

"Yes," answered Jennings; "report says her fortune is enormous. Warrington was one of the richest men in the State, and he has no near relations. That fine-looking man, upon whose arm Mrs. Warrington is leaning, is her first cousin and Mrs. Norton's brother —Dr. Rutherford, from Kentucky. But let us go into the church; that music is decidedly fine."

Lois leaned upon Mr. Forlis's arm as they walked into the church, and never had his gentle, unobtrusive kindness been more truly acceptable; and Edgar Treville, who stood near them, could but envy his uncle the opportunity he had of rendering it to her, when her need was so great. Her own heavy sorrow, added to the trying scenes through which she had passed this week, had left their impress upon her face, and her dark dress heightened, by contrast, the marble pallor of cheek and brow. Mr. Forlis could feel the trembling of her slight figure, and knew that there was one sincere mourner at that funeral service, though she dared not then give way to the luxury of tears.

"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord: for they rest from their labors," sang the choir, and Lois felt that she would gladly exchange all the tumult of life for the blessedness of that peaceful rest. Much of her depression came also from physical fatigue, but she was only conscious of an intense longing to share the quiet sleep of the inmates of the coffin over which she bent for a farewell look at the dear child, whose warm affection had made much of the pleasure of her stay

in New Orleans. Mr. Warrington's grateful kindness was a pleasant memory, though the shock of his death hardly allowed her to think of him yet. With her eyes bent down, she stood motionless, unconscious of the fixed gaze of Edgar Treville, who, leaning against one of the stalls of the choir, looked upon her with hungry eyes, as if he too were gazing his last upon his best earthly treasure. No coffin-lid would shut her from his sight, but he knew that from henceforth she was lost to his heart and life. The requiem chanted by the choristers seemed to be the dirge of his love, and the beautiful marble image upon which his eyes were fixed, the ghost of the brilliant, joyous-hearted girl who had won his truest affection. But the solemn rites are ended, and only a low organ-peal breaks the stillness of the church, as the funeral procession goes slowly down the aisle.

Colonel Saurwein and Mr. Jennings rode in the same carriage to the cemetery, and resumed the conversation interrupted by the service. "What strange fashions you have in America," said the colonel; "burying two people in the same coffin."

"I thought it quite a pathetic sight," said Mr. Jennings: "that beautiful boy, lying beside the gray-haired father. It seemed like the stories you read in books. Did you notice that Scotch cap in Mr. Warrington's hand? They say that he died weeping over it, and afterwards they were unable to release it from his grasp. Well, poor Warrington! he was a generous, noble-hearted fellow, and we shall miss his liberal donations to everything that is going on; but I think his happiness died with his child, and it is a

mercy he so soon followed him. His handsome widow will soon be a ruling belle. I wonder where she is going this summer?"

CHAPTER XX.

"A soul by nature pitched too high,
By suffering plunged too low."
KEBLE.

MRS. NORTON and Lois accepted no invitations for the next week, and attended no places of amusement, on account of their cousin's bereavements. Lois excused herself to all visitors, although her kind friends thought this an unnecessary piece of self-denial on her part. But Lois said it was her first opportunity, since she came to New Orleans, of obtaining rest, and she intended devoting her leisure to finishing a picture she had begun long since, as a present for Dr. Norton's birthday, which came next month. This was a crayon portrait of his lovely wife, enlarged from a photograph; and, as it was kept a secret from the doctor, Lois had her easel in her own room, and was very glad of an excuse for denying herself to the many persons who called upon them at that time. To feign cheerful looks, and keep up an artificial conversation with people in whom all her interest seemed to have disappeared, with this fierce pain gnawing at her heart, seemed impossible. Mr. Forlis claimed the right of a family friend, and came to the sitting-room without ceremony; but, even

with him, Lois found it difficult not to be dreamy and abstracted. There were many of his looks and tones that forcibly reminded her of his nephew, and his very courtesy often brought a pang. He was, however, the doctor's friend pre-eminently; and, when professional duties permitted, it was expected that the gentlemen should be engrossed in the half-artistic and scientific arguments in which they both delighted. But they missed the bright look of eager interest with which Lois had always listened to their discussions, and thought that the sad deaths at Mr. Warrington's had cast a premature shadow upon the fair girl who had witnessed them. Joujou would sit by her side, and gaze up into her mournful eyes, as if he fully shared and appreciated her grief; and his silent sympathy often startled Lois from her reverie to caress the lonely little animal, who missed the attention and petting he had received from his affectionate master. But, in the restlessness of his sorrow, he had turned to Lois, and was scarcely willing to leave her, sitting all day by her easel, like Mrs. Browning's "Flush," immortalized by our queen of poets,—

"Roses gathered for a vase,
In that chamber died apace,
Beam and breeze resigning,—
This dog only waited on,
Knowing that, when light is gone,
Love remains for shining.

"Other dogs, in thymy dew,
Tracked the hares and followed through
Sunny moor or meadow,—
This dog only crept and crept
Next a languid cheek that slept,
Sharing in the shadow.

"And if one or two quick tears
Dropped upon his glossy ears,
Or a sigh came double,
Up he sprang in eager haste,
Fawning, fondling, breathing fast,
In a tender trouble."

It is very easy, when we are specially happy, to leave the thought of our joy in abeyance for awhile, and place ourselves at the service of our friends, listening patiently to the recital of their ill- or good-fortune, and exchanging gossiping items of news about chance acquaintances; but grief is a tyrant, and more exacting than joy. He requires his slaves to bend steadily beneath his yoke, and is jealous of passing words or smiles which cause them to relax under the heavy burden. Lois found in the little dog the only companion that her sorrow admitted. To mention it to Mrs. Norton would seem to bring a shade of reproach upon Edgar Treville; for, in spite of all the excuses that her heart constantly made for him, the simple fact that he had asked her to be his wife, when his hand was pledged to another, would seem to one who knew not the circumstances the most dishonorable conduct. So Lois bore up as bravely as possible, and allowed the sadness, which she could not banish altogether from her brow, to be attributed to the natural gloom cast over the family by the sudden death of their friends. But when more than a week had passed, and the sadness seemed to deepen, as well as Lois's unwillingness to see the gentlemen who called each evening to increase, Mrs. Norton could but feel that there must be some additional cause that had cast a shadow over the gay spirits which had enlivened the house so

much during the winter. She noticed also the sudden cessation of Edgar Treville's visits, and heard, through inquiries made of Mr. Forlis, that, while often on the plantation, in town he was more of a recluse than ever. But she had too much tact, as well as genuine kindness of heart, to ask questions of any one, or do anything more than shield her young cousin from observation less kindly than her own. The doctor, as usual, declared that it was want of out-door exercise, and declaimed loudly upon the folly of the present generation of women, who stayed in the house all day, sewing themselves ill, or putting out their eyes and losing their color "poring over miserable books." He declared his intention of taking Lois in his carriage daily, or, finding time, to go with her on horseback somewhere; but Lois knew too well the constant demands of his profession to dread the leisure when he would find it possible to do this. His wife was very careful, by no word or hint, to allow him to suspect her own feeling that Lois had, in some way, received a heart-wound, with which she was battling with all the strength of her nature; for she knew his impetuous disposition too well not to understand that he would consider it his duty to look into the matter; and woe to the luckless offender, if he had knowingly annoyed or troubled a lady under his protection! Times had altered greatly since the days of her courtship, when it took Dr. Norton three years to woo and win her from her beautiful Kentucky home; and she hardly realized that "Young America" was not quite so slow in coming to a conclusion now.

Lois's heart was a sealed book, which had only been

opened and read by one person; and now, when Mrs. Norton thought that she deciphered a few lines faintly traced, as the beginning of a love-story, the whole tragedy was in reality written there, and Loïs supposed that *The End* was printed in ineffaceable letters. Day after day she was obliged to read over the brief history, but had no power to destroy the leaves that contained the fatal record. Some tear out the pages upon which such memories are traced, and replace them with blank sheets, ready to receive new and equally-transient impressions. They can again

"Bask tenderly beneath tender eyes;
Glance lightly on their removing;
And join new vows to old perjuries,—
But dare not call it loving."

These counterfeit passions fill the lives of many; but to finer, stronger natures, like our heroine's, "love strikes one hour," and

"Those never loved,
Who dream that they loved once."

The crayon portrait which had given her an excuse for solitude was finished, framed, and ready for the birthday presentation; and Lois sat near her cousin in the library, one morning, with a book before her, in which she did not seem to be very much interested. Mrs. Norton was ostensibly embroidering, but in reality working at a tangled skein in her own mind, and trying to unravel it by an occasional rapid glance at her cousin. Lois, being unaware that she was observed, had taken her eyes off her book, and was

looking before her with the far-away, dreamy gaze that sees no object on which it falls, but is usually a sign of vivid mental vision. Now that she was no longer actively occupied with care for others, and was left to a less counteracted sense of her personal lot, she became once more absorbed in the thought of her own dreary, solitary life; and she wondered, in a passive sort of way, if it would ever be animated by a purpose, or exalted by a duty in which she would take pleasure.

Her sorrow was too fresh for her to begin to find the peace that would come from her noble, unselfish sacrifice; and the great struggles of life are not so easy, that a woman of her ardent nature could soon become accustomed and resigned to the inexorable certainty that the chief relation of her life had been a mistake.

Lois's beautiful face was undergoing so many subtle changes that it hardly furnished Mrs. Norton with the clue to the enigma she wished to solve, without putting a direct question to her reserved and reticent cousin.

At one time the face before her was animated by a look of proud, stoical endurance; then again, it wore the hopeless expression that might have been on the face of one who had drifted out upon the ocean, in a frail bark, without sails or oars.

At last Lois felt that Mrs. Norton's eyes were fixed upon her inquiringly, and it seemed due to her constant and unobtrusive kindness to make some response to these silent questionings. But how much, in justice to another, could she tell? Was half-confidence better than none? Could she trust her own heart, that if

the barriers were partially removed the full tide of feeling might not break down all obstacles, and her cherished secret be no longer in her own keeping? Something must be done, for she felt that she could not longer remain in New Orleans, where memory was constantly touching some forcible reminder of the past, and retain her self-control.

Taking a low seat by Mrs. Norton, she drew gently from her hands the embroidery upon which she had been working, and said, "Cousin Mary, this warm morning makes us both languid; let us put work away for a little while, and talk. I cannot thank you half enough for all your goodness to me, and you must not think I do not fully appreciate all you and Cousin Roger have done to promote my enjoyment since I left Louisville with you last autumn. But I think I ought to go back to Kentucky now instead of waiting until you are ready for the Virginia Springs. Dr. Rutherford and his wife are going to Kentucky next week, and I should like to take advantage of the opportunity to go with them. I long for cooler air and the quiet of the country, and my guardian sends me occasional reminders that I am making you a very long visit. If I go next week, this will furnish me with a good excuse for declining Cousin Julia's pressing invitation to visit her now. She says I will draw visitors to her lonely house, but of course this is nonsense, and she has far more company now than I care to see. Will you not, dear cousin, bear with my seeming fickleness, and persuade Cousin Roger to let me off, unquestioned, from my summer trip?"

"I will do anything, my dear child, to promote your

happiness, though it will be very painful to us to give you up. But tell me, dearest, has any one here wounded your feelings, or annoyed you seriously in any way? We miss your merry laugh and sweet singing about the house, and I do not believe you have touched either harp or piano since little Fred died."

"Cousin Mary, I have been troubled;" and hiding her face with her hands, and resting her head against her sympathizing friend, Lois continued: "For a few short hours I knew the happiness of loving and being beloved by one worthy of the affections of any woman; but an insurmountable obstacle prevents the course of this true affection from running smoothly, and I have renounced it forever. I cannot recover calmness here, where everything reminds me of my loss, and I cannot even pour out my heart to you, for the secret is another's. Add to your other kindnesses, then, by letting me go unquestioned, and bury my dead out of sight. Cousin Harry will be here again to-night, and you must prepare the doctor for my securing him as an escort back to Kentucky. No mother could have been more thoughtful than you of my comfort in every way, and I shall never make you understand how deep my love and gratitude are to you. Kiss me, and bear with my weakness, and let me go next week."

Mrs. Norton put her arms around the lovely girl, who had entwined herself so entirely into her heart and life, and said, "'Tis very hard, dear Lois, to give you up, even for a little while. I expected you to make half the happiness of my summer. Can't you meet us at the Springs later in the season? The com-

pany is always so delightful there, and the gayety will help you to banish thought."

"Thank you, dear cousin; that is not what I need. I shrink from society, and long for the solitude of the Kentucky woods, where I can fight against the memories that crowd upon me, and conquer the unrest which banishes sleep from my pillow. The Virginia Springs, with their crowds of gay guests, are the last places I care for now."

"Well, dear, you shall have your own way, and I know Harry will be delighted to take charge of you to Louisville, where you can stay with Fannie Howard until Mr. Harrison comes for you."

"My guardian proposed this in his last letter, when he urged my leaving New Orleans before the summer began; and he says his family are very anxious to renew our youthful acquaintance, and impatient at the length of my stay here. So I will go and write to him that I am coming to Louisville next week." And with another kiss to Mrs. Norton, Lois left the room.

Dr. Norton remonstrated in his impetuous manner against Lois leaving them, particularly while she was looking so pale and thin. "It is those neuralgic headaches, which you contracted in the miserable climate of New York, that has robbed your cheek of its bloom, Lois; and you ought to stay here until our soft warm air cures you entirely. A month or two longer, and you will be all right; and then those famous sulphur waters of Virginia will be just the tonic you need to build up your strength. I cannot imagine what Mr. Harrison was thinking of when he sent you to a

Northern school. I am afraid you suffered from the atrocious climate."

"Why, Roger, you surely do not think New York unhealthy?" said Mrs. Norton, who always had a suppressed longing to live in the great metropolis, which seemed to her, after her yearly visits, a paradise upon earth. Vainly had she endeavored to induce the doctor to take up his residence there, by using every opportunity that offered to praise New York and disparage New Orleans. But her husband would not even discuss the subject; and the slightest hint on her part always made him declare very emphatically that he would never live among "Yankees." "The air is so much drier there than here," continued Mrs. Norton. "Every one acknowledges that the moisture in the atmosphere of New Orleans is productive of much neuralgia and rheumatism. However, I do not think Lois's headaches the result of either. Want of sleep will always cause an ache of some kind, and I have not been able to persuade her to adopt my plan of making up lost rest in the day-time."

"Look at the invalids who flock annually in such numbers to Florida!" said Dr. Norton, excitedly, pointing out of the window in a downward direction, as though that peninsular State lay in his small front yard, which was about fifteen feet square, and could only have accommodated a very limited flock of invalids. "Nearly all of them come from the North, and not a few from New York. The year before I was married I spent the winter there with an aged relative, and was never more tired of anything in my life. I met Northern people at every turn."

"Yes; and a great many consumptives from New Orleans go to Florida," said Mrs. Norton; "though I think it would be far better for them to try the invigorating dryness of the air of Minnesota."

"My dear Mary, the influence of climate over health is a point upon which doctors disagree most widely, and I don't think you can throw much new light upon it," said the doctor, choosing the usual masculine way of ending a discussion, by proclaiming the utter incompetency of the feminine mind to form an opinion in the matter.

"Dr. Blundrer sends his patients to Minnesota," he continued, "and they all die the first winter. There was your friend Mrs. Sneed, who went there by his advice, and you know the cold killed her directly."

"Oh, that was because she stopped at Memphis for a while on her way, and you know that city is even more unhealthy than New Orleans."

"I have never said that I knew anything of the sort about New Orleans, Mary," replied Dr. Norton, emphasizing each word by bringing his gold-headed cane down upon the window-sill; "the death-rate is no higher here than in New York."

Lois had been an amused listener to the discussion, and said, "Cousin Mary, you are such a good wife that you ought to be glad to live in New Orleans, even if you think it unhealthy. The worse the climate, the more patients apply to the doctor, and his fame increases with his practice." Her rare smile was contagious, and the next instant the other two faces relaxed with laughter at the heat into which the little argument had betrayed them.

"Certainly; I would be willing to live on the coast of Africa if it would be to Roger's interest," said Mrs. Norton, penitently,—not giving up her opinion, however, but implying her continued belief in it by her martyr-like resignation.

Lois went away to write the letters to her guardian and her friend Fannie Howard, feeling that any atmosphere, whether healthy or otherwise, was oppressive to her where she would be liable to hear the names of Edgar Treville and Adéle D'Obrie, and dreading the meeting with them chance might bring her any day if she remained in the same city.

A few days later she had said adieu to her kind cousins, and was whirling towards the North. The last person in New Orleans upon whom her eyes fell was Edgar Treville, leaning against one of the pillars of the station-house, and a faint sensation came over Lois as she saw how white and stern he looked. Yesterday she had returned the beautiful copy of "Rogers's Italy" he had sent her, and the pain it caused her to do so helped her to understand how much it would offend him. But she was resolutely endeavoring to banish the unhappy past from her memory, and would not allow herself to retain so pleasant a memorial of the congeniality of their tastes. She felt that she was leaving behind her both happiness and misery, paradoxical as it may sound; but the sight of Edgar Treville's fixed face, that was becoming more and more indistinct in the distance, made misery her present companion. She was beginning a new period of her life, with the inheritance from the past of only a burden of sorrow with which she was to make a fresh

start and go out into the world among strangers. But she knew she must be outwardly calm and self-possessed, and conceal the fierce struggle in her breast with her unseen, shadowy foes, by a face guarded and unruffled.

She was passing over the same road on which she had traveled to New Orleans five months ago, and through the same villages, towns, plantations and forests; but they were greatly changed in their aspect. Nature had done more for them now than in the autumn, by dressing them up in the fresh, gay colors of spring. But these scenes now appeared to Lois dreary and blank, because she had no sympathy with them. She seemed shut out from the brightness of spring, and it jarred upon her.

Most people—that is, all but the intensely matter-of-fact and practical—view objects as much by the inward light they bring to bear upon them as they do by the outward help of the solar rays, and the first of these sources of illumination is governed so entirely by one's good- or ill-fortune that its gleams are always varying in hue, from a ghastly blue to a brilliant rose.

Lois turned to the book Dr. Norton had placed in her hands at parting, to endeavor to find at least momentary forgetfulness. "The Coming Race" was on the title-page; but whether satire or prophecy was intended by the story of the Vrilya, Lois, in her present abstracted mood, could not tell. So she laid aside the volume to respond to Joujou's mute caresses, just as a boy, with morning papers, came into the car. He placed in her hands a box directed to her in a handwriting Lois knew too well, and, opening it, she found

one of those lovely bouquets, arranged in fresh moss, which she always associated with the thought of Edgar Treville and his country home. The fragrant messengers cheered while they pained her, for they seemed to speak of forgiveness as well as remembrance; and just now the former was what she felt a longing to ask from the pale face that was mirrored in her last look at New Orleans. And so the day wore on to its close, until the gathering gloom began to settle down over hills, valleys, and rivers. Lois watched the slanting beams of the departing sun touching the tops of the tall trees with a caressing good-night kiss; and she thought that she must say "good-night" to her past life, which had been warmed by ardent love and tenderness, and brightened by hope and trust, until it had seemed for awhile all aglow, as that landscape had been by the light that had died away only five minutes since.

The radiant golden and crimson clouds, piled up in airy heaps, faded gradually into soft pearl color, then into dusky gray, until at last a purple pall was hung over the distant hills. The moon arose, and the silvery lustre that she shed over the earth showed its aspect in striking contrast with the one presented an hour ago. The light was so faint that it hardly penetrated the thick, dark forest through which they were passing, and the ground was only flecked by a few pale gleams among the gloomy shadows. Lois thought, as she turned away from the window, "that scene is now, doubtless, as my future will be."

Miss Howard had received Lois's letter and Dr. Norton's telegram announcing her intention of spend-

ing a few days in Louisville, and was at the station the morning of their arrival, awaiting them. Her first exclamation told Lois that the change that had passed over her inner life had left its traces upon her face, for Fannie said, "What made you leave your roses in New Orleans, Lois? But, after all, paleness is very becoming to you, and I have not seen anything so pretty since you went away."

"Nonsense, Fannie!" Lois replied. "Two days spent in a sleeping-car will make any one both pale and ugly."

Lois found a letter from her guardian awaiting her at Mr. Howard's, saying that he would not be able to come for her until the next week, and she would doubtless be glad of the longer time in which to see her friends and recover from the fatigue of her journey. "So you see," she said, after reading the letter aloud to Fannie, "that I will be obliged to inflict you with my presence longer than we expected."

Fannie was charmed, she said, with the infliction, and was soon making inquiries as to what sort of "time" Lois had spent in New Orleans; demanding the most particular description of the Mardi Gras, Comus and his mystic crew, with all the amusing and fantastic costumes that had passed before her eyes as she witnessed the procession from Dr. Norton's office. And then Fannie must hear about the balls, operas, and dinners, with the toilettes worn at each of them. Lois was glad that her curiosity did not extend beyond the costumes and dancing-partners, and satisfied it as fully as possible, but could make no mention of the German at Mrs. Warrington's, of the day at the lake, or of the masquerade at Mrs. Elder's.

On the afternoon of the same day when we overheard a conversation between Miss Howard and one of her fashionable visitors, which possibly gave us a curiosity to know something more of Lois Carrol's history, Fannie entered her room, and said, "Now, dear, you will certainly go with me to the German to-night. I made the engagement before I knew you would be here, and I am so anxious to have your company. Don't settle yourself down so comfortably on that sofa, unless you will let me get out a dress for you. Wear that rose-colored crépe you showed me; it will light up your pale cheeks, dearest, and I can assure you that you will be the belle of the ball."

"No, dear Fannie; please let me off this evening. I really do not feel equal to dancing to-night, and this dressing-wrapper is much more comfortable than crépe and silk. You must go and enjoy yourself enough for two, and I will share your pleasure to-morrow, when you tell me about it. I have been to two parties this week for your sake, and if I indulged in another, should be too tired to travel to-morrow."

"But, Lois," returned Fannie, "it is only a short trip to Woodford County, and you do not go till the afternoon. You shall sleep all the morning if you are tired, and I will do your packing for you. I shall not half enjoy even the delights of the German, if I know you are at home alone, having a dull time; and I am obliged to go, as I am to lead. But I am afraid you think our Louisville parties rather poor, after the glories of New Orleans; but this will really be one of

the nicest affairs of the season here. Mrs. Hamilton always gives such elegant Germans, and to-night we expect three Memphis beaux,—Messrs. James, Massey, and Jacobs,—all fascinating gentlemen. Besides them, I am very anxious for you to meet General Merton. He was out of town when you were here before; but I have often talked of you to him, and he is very anxious to meet you. Every lady who visits Louisville is obliged to go through at least the form of a flirtation with General Merton."

"Even flirtation cannot tempt me to-night, dear Fannie; and if you will excuse me, I will look after my trunks, and then go to bed early."

"Let Lena pack your dresses, dear Lois; or I will attend to it to-morrow."

"Poor Lena is not well to-day, and I will not give any one the trouble of looking up my scattered things," said Lois, resolutely. "You must go, though, and tell me what you think of the Memphis gentlemen, to-morrow. So good-night, dear Fannie. I hope you will have a delightful evening."

We know, though her friend Fannie had no suspicion of the fact, how Lois spent the evening. She opened a picture of Edgar Treville, which he had given Mrs. Norton the summer they were together at Point Clear, and she had taken from her cousin's album in her first days at New Orleans,—attracted by the clear-cut profile and striking beauty of the photograph. Now it required all the force of her native strength of will to summon up the resolution to destroy it, and after she had done so she forgot the empty trunk she had expected to fill, and, throwing

herself upon the sofa, gave way to an uncontrollable burst of tears. And so the evening passed, until she heard gay voices, announcing that her friend had returned from the German; and rising quickly, she turned down the gas to the lowest point, lest her wakefulness should attract attention.

Fannie, next day, amid her glowing descriptions of the dance, expressed her decided opinion that it was "a shame" for Lois to bury herself in the backwoods of Kentucky, and that she gave her up most unwillingly to such a doleful fate. But Lois looked forward with longing to making her home among the green fields and shady woods, thinking there she could best regain the quiet mind and peace of heart that she had lost. She found herself often repeating Mrs. Browning's lines on the poet Cowper, whose truth many restless natures know so well:

"The pulse of dew upon the grass kept his within its number,
And silent shadows from the trees refreshed him like a slumber."

She had not seen her aunt Mabel Harrison since her early childhood, when her father had indulged in fancy farming in the same neighborhood as Mr. Harrison; and the remembrance was so dim that she could scarcely recall any impression now, when she began for the first time to think curiously of her father's half-sister. She knew she had a large family, and she hoped that among them she could find some occupation and duty that would lead her away from herself. It was, therefore, with feelings of pleasure and relief, that she obeyed the summons to the parlor that morning to meet her guardian.

After a glance at Mr. Harrison, one would no more have doubted his calling than if the word "Farmer" had been traced on his brow. He wore a neat, gentlemanly suit of clothes; and had the sleek well-to-do rustic air that hangs about the appearance of most Kentucky farmers, and which seems to testify that "blue grass" is not only very fine for fattening stock, but has mysterious properties which affect the physical condition of the cultivators of those rich acres.

He had not seen Lois for nearly two years, and was somewhat struck with the difference in her appearance. He could not explain, however, in what respect she had changed, as the alteration was almost entirely in the expression of her face, which had calmed down from one of exuberant girlish brightness to a composed, womanly serenity.

"You look much more like your mother, Lois, as you grow older," he said, "though I suppose you have very little recollection of her, as you were so young when you lost her. She had a handsome profile, and a very fine head;" but Mr. Harrison looked away from Lois in a ruminating manner, as though thinking more about head of oxen and sheep than of this young lady, with whom he found it rather difficult to converse, on account of a lack of kindred subjects.

"How is Aunt Mabel? and are the children well?" asked Lois, wisely refraining from any attempt to specify her cousins; for she had a faint impression that, even if she could remember all their names, calling the roll would be rather fatiguing because of their great number.

"Thank you, they are very well. Mabel and the

three oldest girls are busy getting up grand wardrobes for their summer trip," said Mr. Harrison, inwardly congratulating himself upon having now struck upon a topic that would doubtless interest his ward. "They have been looking forward to it for nearly two years, and I have heard nothing for a month past but of fashions, and flounces, ribbons, ruffles, suits, and sewing-machines. Piles of goods lie about on every table and chair, and my wife and daughters sit on the floor and cut out with mysterious-looking patterns all day. Not a word can you get out of them on any sensible point, and at night they are too tired to give me my usual quota of music. It is even worse than a dinner-party."

"Are dinner-parties such terrible things in Kentucky?" asked Lois, smiling, and thinking the summer trip to which her guardian alluded doubtless meant going over to Lexington to spend a couple of weeks, or taking a round of agricultural fairs in the adjoining counties.

"Indeed they are!" said Mr. Harrison. "When we have one on hand, the whole household is turned regularly upside down. We have very aristocratic society in Woodford County, and keep up faithfully every custom derived from our old Virginia ancestors." Here he straightened himself up from his lounging position, and tried to make his portly figure look as commanding as possible, and continued, "I like the dinners myself and the pleasant company they bring together, but it is the lengthy preparations the ladies consider necessary that is so annoying. They begin two weeks beforehand, and upset everything in the house and on the farm. Mabel, she talks and gives

directions until she is hoarse, all the old servants come up from the cabins to help, and such a baking of cakes, such roasting and stuffing of meats, such killing of chickens, such sending off of boys in all directions on messages, and such general derangement of all the usual order and comfort of life, you can't imagine, unless you went through with it four times a year, as I do."

"But does not the pleasure of the great day itself compensate for all this previous trouble?" asked Lois, much amused.

"Not altogether, to tell the truth about it," he said in a confidential tone, which implied that he did not dare do it at home. "I consider that the loading a table for twenty people with food enough for half a county, is foolishness and waste. Not half of these great dishes are touched, for there are limits to human capacity in eating as in everything else; and if it is cold weather, we have to live on cold meat for a month afterwards, besides bountifully supplying the negroes. But the great bother of the important day is locking up the dogs and the children."

"Why lock them up?" exclaimed Lois.

"Because there is such a host of them, that if they were not locked up they would get into the moulds of ice-cream, jellies, and pies, and trip up the troops of servants who are hurrying back and forth from the kitchen with dishes."

"How many have you?" asked Lois, referring of course to the children.

"Eight dogs and ten children," answered Mr. Harrison, "besides three grown-up ones; and two of them are

the finest pointers in the county. I was offered a large price for them the other day, but I would not part with them for a small fortune unless I intended to give up hunting. Mabel does not like them, and I did not let her know of this offer. But I have an especial servant to look after them, so that the family shall not be troubled with them."

"With the dogs or the children?" asked Lois, with a twinkle of fun in her eyes.

"Oh, the dogs, my dear!" said Mr. Harrison.

"I don't quite understand this consequence of dinner-party preparations,—are the dogs and the children all locked up together?"

"No; we have to separate them, for together their noise would be great enough to frighten off all the guests. We put them in different parts of the house, and keep them quiet with sweet cakes and pieces of raw meat."

"What queer tastes!" said Lois, mischievously. "Have the children a fancy for raw meat?"

"No, no!" said Mr. Harrison, quickly, anxious to correct the mistake that his children were young ogres; "it is the dogs who eat the meat; and I always try to find an opportunity of slipping out after dinner, and looking in to see how they are coming on. I can assure you it is all terribly hard; but the preparations for this summer trip are even worse, for the children are now banished to the woods."

"Where do they expect to go?" asked Lois.

"They start in two weeks for Cape May, and hope the arrangement will suit you. We know how fond you are of traveling around, and Mabel begged me

particularly to write to you about it; but I was much occupied with business just then, and forgot it till now. The girls are anxious for you to give them some new ideas and city styles about their finery, and hope you are ready to go back with me this evening. My sister is going to take charge of the children, and one of my bachelor neighbors has promised to take good care of the dogs; so that we shall be free from all incumbrances this summer, and mean to have a merry time."

"Oh, Mr. Harrison! will I be obliged to go?" said Lois. "I have had enough of traveling and gayety for the present, and would like to rest awhile in some quiet place."

"Why, Lois, I thought you would be delighted with the idea," said Mr. Harrison, thinking his ward's expression of intense weariness rather curious for a young lady who had spent so triumphant a season in the gay society of New Orleans, where, as he had learned from Mrs. Norton's letter, she had been the acknowledged belle.

"I dread the thought of a fashionable watering-place," said Lois; "and I have been dissipating so much in New Orleans, that I really need quiet and country air to recuperate after a winter's fatigue there."

"A young lady tired of balls and parties!" said Mr. Harrison, feeling almost as uncomfortable as if he had just witnessed the death of a valuable dog. "Will a country-place in Virginia suit you? I don't know how Mabel will forgive me; but, if you really prefer not accompanying us to Cape May, I have a

niece going to spend the summer with an old friend of ours in Clarke County, and she will be delighted to have your company, I know. But it is a quiet place among the mountains, and I am afraid you will be lonely there, and pine for the gayety of New Orleans."

"Oh, no; I shall be very glad to go there, if you think your friends can accommodate me, and Aunt Mabel will excuse me from the Cape May trip," said Lois, thinking, with a shudder, of the great effort she would be obliged to make to appear happy and contented, as became a young lady in society, at the balls and hops of the famous sea-side resort of the fashionable world.

"Of course, my dear, we wish to place no constraint upon you; and, if you prefer Clarke County and quiet to Cape May, you can go at once. My friend Matthews is a fine farmer; and though they have nothing equal to our blue-grass lands, I have no doubt you can be quite comfortable there."

"But can I go without engaging board?" asked Lois.

"Oh, yes; for Mrs. Matthews wrote to ask me if I could not send her some boarders for the season, and it is in consequence of this that my niece, Mrs. Carter, is going there. She will start to-morrow from here; so instead of returning with me, as I expected, to Woodford County, you had better call upon her at the Galt House, and arrange to accompany her. She has two little boys and their nurse; and I think you will not have to change cars more than once till you reach Harper's Ferry. Mrs. Matthews is an uncommonly

fine woman, and I know you will find her daughters pleasant companions; so I will telegraph from the hotel to Matthews that you are coming, and ask him to meet you in Winchester. He lives ten miles south of that place, in the beautiful valley of Virginia."

Lois was soon on her way to call upon Mrs. Carter, whom she found an intelligent and agreeable lady, very glad of a companion for her two-days' trip; and while Mr. Harrison sent the telegram to Mr. Matthews and also one to his wife, informing her of their change of plans, Lois laid in a large stock of books for summer reading. Her guardian was to remain in town till the next morning, to see them safely settled on the train; and Lois felt very grateful to him for his kindness in so readily allowing her wishes to alter the programme they had made for her summer. "I think, Lois," she said to herself, "that the country home among the mountains, where we are going, will be just what you need to follow the course of discipline that I intend to prescribe for you. Each hour shall have its regular duty; so there shall be no leisure for painful memories to distract your peace of mind. Abstruse study is excellent training; and we will see how learning can fill a woman's heart when love is denied it, and try, by diligent work, to break up the habit of brooding over the past. Drawing leaves the mind too much at liberty, and we had better take mathematics instead. There is nothing like a stiff problem for engrossing every thought; and I shall inflict an hour's study for every moment spent in repining. Life has duty now instead of pleasure, and I must train you to understand and fulfill its requirements. You shall leave

your ball-dresses in Fannie's care, and fill their trunk with books." And thus musing, Lois Carrol made ready for her journey.

CHAPTER XXI.

"Hast thou, o'er the clear heaven of thy soul,
Seen tempests roll?
Hast thou watched all the hopes thou wouldst have won
Fade one by one?
Wait till the clouds are past; then raise thine eyes
To bluer skies."

ADELAIDE PROCTOR.

ALMOST five months had passed since Lois Carrol said adieu to her Louisville friends and came with Mrs. Carter to Virginia. The old country-seat of the Matthews family—Elmscourt—had been to her a quiet home; and, following the strict course of study she had marked out for herself, she had found no leisure for morbid dreaming or unhealthy regrets.

Soon after she left New Orleans, Mrs. Warrington, in one of her most teasing moods, called at Mrs. Norton's upon some business arrangement with the doctor. After this was concluded, and he had gone to his office, she began, as usual, the tormenting process habit had made second nature to her. She speedily discovered that Lois was her cousin's most sensitive point just then, when the pain of parting from her was so recent; and she had indulged in various uncomplimentary allusions to the absent one, bringing the warm flush

of annoyance to Mrs. Norton's sensitive face. At last, when she could endure the offensive remarks no longer, she said, "Julia, why do you attempt to tease me about Lois? I love her as if she were my own child or sister; and I cannot allow you to say such things of one of the most gentle and tender-hearted girls I ever knew. Great as is her beauty, one almost forgets its charm in the superior attractions of her mind and heart. I watched her in society most carefully, and saw nothing of what you call 'her bold-faced flirtings with other people's lovers,' and cannot imagine what you mean, or to whom you refer. She received several very advantageous offers, made through Dr. Norton; but I never saw her extend to any of them an encouragement beyond the ordinary courtesies of society."

"And did not your motherly feeling and sisterly watchfulness, Mary, tell you that Edgar Treville was receiving great encouragement in his love-making to your innocent, courteous child. He has long been engaged to Adéle d'Obrie, and would break his proud father's heart if he did not marry that first-class fortune; and yet our golden-haired lassie was over head and ears in love with him. Adéle may be rich, but she is neither pretty, intelligent, nor interesting, and Lois thought it would be no harm to cut out such a piece of stupidity in the affections of her affianced husband."

"O Julia, how can you speak so coarsely of your mother's own niece!—an orphan, too, from early childhood! Lois never dreamed of such a thing; and really she saw very little of Mr. Treville."

"I tell you, Mary, Lois was deep; but I spoiled my lady's game the night of Mrs. Elder's masquerade. The first of the evening I wore a gray domino over my Diana costume, and saw our peerless lily almost in Treville's arms, in a corner of the hall. I pretended faintness, and, while he had gone for a glass of water, told her that her seeming lover was engaged to Adéle d'Obrie. Very fortunately I spied this young lady on the balcony, and went up to her with Lois, and asked her to confirm the report of her engagement to Edgar Treville, which she immediately did. If ever I saw a crushed lily that was one; and I don't think she had another flirtation while she was here. This was doubtless the reason why she would not go to the Springs with you. It was more sentimental to bury her sorrows in the wild woods of Virginia, as I hear she is doing now."

Such light was thrown upon the cause of Lois's mysterious depression by Mrs. Warrington's story, which doubtless had some foundation in truth, that Mrs. Norton made no answer in her grief and anxiety, and her tormentor soon after left. She could not give herself the relief of confiding in her husband; his impetuous disposition might lead him to make inquiries that would cause her dear child annoyance, so she could only wonder, in pained silence, how the affair would terminate. But in the mean time, she resolved not to wound Lois by letting her know that she understood now the whole of the half-confidence she had made her before leaving; and carefully kept all mention of Edgar Treville from her numerous letters.

It was the evening of the twenty-first of September,

and Lois sat alone on the picturesque vine-covered porch of Elmscourt, watching for the return of the boy who had been sent to the little village of White Post, two miles distant, for the mail. This was only a tri-weekly occasion at this secluded place, and Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday were marked days in the quiet calendar of the family. Lois hoped to-night for her cousin Mary's regular letter; and in spite of the system of training she had vigorously imposed upon her weaker self, her willful heart *would* leap with strange anxiety whenever she caught sight of the familiar handwriting upon an envelope, and her fingers would tremble when she broke the seal. She always ran her eyes in breathless haste over the pages, in search of a well-known name, though it had never yet appeared on one of them. Her mind was haunted by a faint, lingering hope, which all her philosophy could not banish, that some happy chance would intervene to prevent what she dreaded to hear, yet looked for in each letter and newspaper that came to her. It could hardly be called a hope,—it was only the possibility to which the mind will involuntarily cling, to defer the cold blank of certainty and the oncoming of despair; the sort of possibility that makes a bereaved mother hang over the marble form of her child, and listen eagerly for the sound of its heart-beat, when all beside know that its pulsations are stilled forever.

And so Lois waited for her letters, and watched the evening glow that lighted up the beautiful landscape spread like a panorama before her. "Elmscourt" was an old-fashioned stone house, situated upon the summit of a high, gradually-sloping hill, from which could

be seen the Alleghany range of mountains on one side, at a distance of thirty miles, and the Blue Ridge on the other, only ten miles away. The latter name seems peculiarly appropriate to the azure line of peaks, whose color changes from bright blue when seen in the golden light of morning, to deep violet when the evening shadows gather about them. There are no lofty, lonely summits towering in awful grandeur and inaccessible sublimity above their fellows; no rugged rocks, steep cliffs, and foaming mountain-torrents here, to delight the soul and conjure up images of majestic beauty; but the soft shades and gentle undulations of outline are pleasing to the eye, and tranquillizing in their effect upon the feelings. Rich, beautiful valleys lay between, whose waving forests were now slightly tinted with brilliant autumnal hues. Here and there a solitary maple burned a bright spot of scarlet upon the greensward, or a golden tulip-tree lifted its tall graceful form,

"The stately monarch of those sylvan palaces;"

and occasionally, in open spots among the trees, there was a gleaming of waters, and the Shenandoah River was visible in the distance, "lacing the meadows like a silver band."

This lovely scenery had been a constant source of pleasure to Lois during the time that she allowed herself for out-door exercise; and she could have spent hours in gazing on the subtle changes which cloud and sunshine make in mountain scenery, dressing up the familiar landscape in beauties ever fresh and new. But though she often felt tempted to spend half the

day wandering about among the trees and flowers, and idly dreaming over their loveliness, she found it too dangerous to her peace of mind. Constant and even wearying mental occupation had become necessary to her, and it was only at the sunset hour that she allowed herself leisure to study Nature's charms. Each of the trees about the porch, where they sat at evening, had become familiar friends,—the mimosa, with its tremulous leaves and pale-pink fringes of flowers, the English walnut, the acacia, and the magnolia, filling the air with its heavy fragrance and delighting the eye by the richness of its dark-green leaves. With Joujou for her only companion, she had wandered among them, and had caught some of the serenity which seems to dwell among the trees in lonely places; and now that she was the only boarder left in the establishment, she tried to find in them friends and teachers.

But the sharp clatter of hoofs was heard coming up the stony lane from the turnpike, and the one event in their monotonous life at Elmscourt was approaching. She longed for, yet dreaded, her letters; and now she was daily expecting the summons from her guardian to meet them on their way home. Their summer at Cape May had been lengthened by a visit to Saratoga, Niagara, Canada, and New York, and they were now in Washington, where Lois had declined joining them, preferring the quiet of Elmscourt and the kind friends she had found in the Matthews family.

Mrs. Matthews, a handsome, motherly-looking lady, in the prime of life, received and opened the post-bag, distributing its contents as they came to hand. "Only

two for Miss Carrol this evening," she said, as she handed them to Lois. The upper letter was postmarked "Sewanee, Tenn." And Lois, knowing that Mrs. Warrington was spending the summer at that delightful resort among the mountains, was curious to know why she should favor her at this late day with a letter; and opened it first, though not without a sinking of heart,—Mrs. Warrington's written, as well as spoken words, were apt to cover stings. It was as follows:

"MA PETITE COUSINE:

"You have retired from the world even more fully, I hear from Mary, than I have,—I get occasional glimpses from my mountain-top, but you never do; so I will take compassion on your loneliness by letting you share the one I got the other day from an old acquaintance I was happy enough to meet,—Colonel Saurwein. He unfolded a budget of news, some items of which may interest you.

"But first, I must tell you why I climbed these mountains and buried myself among the long-coated clericals, who seem the principal male habitues of this plateau. I clung to New Orleans until I was worn almost to a shadow by the heat. So many pleasant people were doing the same that I could not tear myself away from the city until my looks demanded the sacrifice, and I was reduced to such a skeleton that I became a literal bone of contention among numerous admirers. As I intend to go abroad as soon as it is time to wear second mourning, and get some ravishing Parisian toilettes, it is necessary for the success

of my plans to keep up my looks, certainly. I joined a party coming here for the pure air, water, and healthy climate, that is certainly found abundantly on this eminence; so I renounced the *world* for awhile in favor of some *flesh* for the bones aforesaid. As for the *devil*, you know I play that wherever I go; though I have had small chance of doing it here after my usual fashion. Two bishops, and I can't count how many clergymen, have been here this summer. Two or three of the latter chancing to be bereaved widowers, it was only right that I should attempt to console them, which I did so effectually that they begged me to continue my good offices for life. A secular tutor in the university is still my devoted admirer and attendant, and is so useful that I do not intend allowing him to get to the proposing-point until I am ready for Europe. He makes love in two or three different languages, and has composed Greek hexameters in praise of my eyebrows which *sound* delightfully. Why did you run away from New Orleans so suddenly, instead of making me the long-expected and talked-of visit? As I was out when you called, I had no chance to tell you how nicely the things suited you ordered for me from Olimpe's. I did not see you after that day when you insisted upon having old Fred and little Fred laid together in that exceedingly touching manner. Do you know, between ourselves, that it was all just as pathetic as the tale of the 'Babes in the Wood,' and reminded me most forcibly of the green-and-yellow picture of those unfortunate children painted in little Fred's story-book? I considered it quite kind of you and Mary to come and officiate as

'Robin Redbreasts' on that painful occasion. It was so much better than having that prying cousin of old Fred's in the house."

Lois laid down the letter for a moment. "Is the woman utterly devoid of feeling," she wondered, "that she can write thus of the death of an affectionate husband and lovely child?" But she took the letter again, and read on,—

"But enough of the doleful; let me come to my colonel's news,—and first in importance are the marriages. That of Mr. Fortinbras to Miss Shanks interests me greatly, and I shall always feel a personal affection for that distinguished couple, because my own diligent efforts greatly assisted the match. I would gladly have given away the bride if I had been in town, and am sure the ceremony must have been as good as a play. Henri Forlis took the part of bride's father, and his French politeness must have been the salient feature of the interesting performance.

"The next is that 'howling terrific' Miss Brand. She has married a Captain Hoyle, of the Seventh Cavalry regiment. I hope he will not be so much enamored by his wife's bewitching manners and fascinating mental powers as to be blind to a few charming little faults she has,—that her gallant soldier may have the power, through the might of his martial love, to change her slang into regulation army-talk, which would be a great improvement on her present style.

"The third marriage is that of a young lady, with neither Miss Shanks's graces nor Miss Brand's gifts, in

whom you doubtless feel little interest. Her charms are said by gentlemen to be purely golden ones, but you can surely guess the happy bridegroom, when I tell you that Adéle d'Obrie was married last week, and went——" Lois sprang suddenly to her feet, and the letter floated down to the floor, as she raised her hands and passed them over her face. The dreaded blow had fallen at last; and though she had thought herself prepared for this worst stroke of fate, she was at first so stunned and oppressed that she only felt an instinct to rush away somewhere to find solitude and fresh air. The atmosphere in the porch seemed fiery and stifling, and she started down on the pavement with tottering footsteps.

"I hope you have heard no bad news, Miss Carrol," said kind Mrs. Matthews, who had been sitting near, and noticed the deathly pallor that had suddenly spread over the countenance which had been so blooming a few minutes before; but she received no answer from the stricken girl, who had quickened her pace, and was soon lost among the trees on the other side of the lane. Mrs. Matthews picked up the scattered sheets of heavily-black-bordered note paper; and, as she folded them to replace in the envelope, wondered if the closely-written pages had brought Miss Carrol sad intelligence, or if it was the natural carelessness of youth that led her to wander out in the heavy dews of September.

When Lois reached a place far enough in the shade of the trees to be out of sight of the house, she sat down upon a fallen trunk, trembling violently, and clasped her reeling head in her hands. She shrank

from the first maddening pressure of the truth, and moaned low like one in physical pain. In spite of the stern decree of her stronger to her weaker self that no thought of Edgar Treville should enter her mind, and the obedience to it which had been enforced with some success, the very fibres of her soul had clung to the sweet consciousness that his heart was hers, though his hand was pledged to another. Time brings so many strange chances, that she had allowed a hope to spring up almost unperceived in her mind that some of them might occur to prevent a union that would bring happiness to neither party. But now this hope was destroyed, and no thoughts must henceforth even linger on the memory of him who was now the husband of another. A sense of utter loneliness came over her,—an overpowering feeling of desolation, and a feeling of separation more effectual than that of the grave. If death had taken from her sight the beloved of her heart, she could, at least, have permitted herself to cherish his memory; but now she must be denied even that, since it had become a sin to think of him.

She had thought the destruction of his picture would help her to banish him totally from her mind; but, in spite of herself, memory was bringing back each feature of his noble face with more lifelike distinctness than could be effected by any photography. Instead of perceiving the trees and the grass sprinkled with red and yellow leaves before her, she saw Edgar's large, brown eyes gazing at her, filled with an expression of ardent, tender love. Oh, it was so hard, with the image of those loved eyes before her, to think of him as Adéle's husband!

She was not aware that the heavy dews of evening were falling about her and the shadows of night creeping over the landscape, until a messenger from Mrs. Matthews approached her to suggest that it was rather late to be out in the cold air. Lois found that she was shivering, and, mechanically folding about her the shawl that he brought, followed the messenger into the house. Fortunately, she met no one in the hall but an old servant sent to summon her to the tea-table, and, glad to hide her wretchedness in the solitude of her own room, she sent excuses to the family for not joining them, and night closed over her as she fought her life's battle alone.

The next morning, when Lois came down to the breakfast-table, there was no change in her calm, quiet manners; but it seemed as though her face had lost since the day before the soft bloom that the pure, salubrious mountain-air had brought back to it, and it looked like a piece of white marble. Mrs. Matthews was a lady of too much refinement and delicacy of feeling to question Miss Carrol in relation to the disquieting news she had evidently received in the letter dropped on the porch the evening before, and which she now restored to her with the other, whose seal was yet unbroken; but she felt it right to suggest to such a young lady a few womanly cautions in regard to her health, and said, "I think, dear Miss Carrol, you must ramble about in the woods this season before sunset. The night-dew is chilly here among the mountains, and I found a little fire in my room quite comfortable last evening. Do join us there whenever you feel inclined to do so."

"Thank you," said Lois; "this weather is to me perfectly delightful."

"I hope it will last," said Miss Lizzie Matthews, "until you have had your ride over the river. I think that was planned for Friday of this week."

"Is there no way in which I can escape from that engagement," asked Lois, "without giving offense to any of the party?"

"I think not," answered Miss Lizzie. "The excursion was planned for your especial benefit, and deferred until the leaves were changing, that you might see our mountains in their fullest beauty; and you have such an appreciation of fine scenery that I am sure you will enjoy it. They expect to ride up to a place called 'Freezeland,' because it is so cold there all the year round; and the view is really grand, extending over several counties of Virginia and part of Maryland. The meeting of the waters of the Shenandoah and Potomac Rivers at Harper's Ferry is also visible from there, and I have no doubt but that you will be amply repaid for the fatigue of the ride."

"How far is it?" asked Lois. "Black Prince, the horse I have generally ridden this summer, has the bad habit of falling into a tiresome trot when he goes a long distance."

"You can have Restless, my riding-horse," said Miss Matthews, "if you prefer him to Black Prince. I think his gallop is delightful. But Freezeland is only fourteen miles from here. You lunch there and come back before night. They think of stopping also at the pretty village of Front Royal, which nestles between the Shenandoah River and the foot of the

mountains. They cultivate delightful grapes there in great abundance, and you can fancy you are among the 'vine-clad hills' of France."

Thursday evening the family again sat on the porch awaiting the mail; and this time Lois received the letter expected from Mrs. Norton. She held it unopened in her hand and glanced at the post-mark. "How strange!" she exclaimed; "this letter was mailed on the 13th, and has been on its way here ten days!"

"So has mine," said Mr. Matthews, looking at the back of a letter his wife had just handed him from the bag; "it comes from the 'Old Sweet Springs,' and is of the same date as yours. In these days of railroads that is a long time; but those Southern Virginia mails were always irregular."

"This is quite a coincidence!" said Lois. "My letter also is from the 'Old Sweet Springs.'"

"You are both more interested in the outsides of your letters than in their contents," said Mrs. Matthews.

"You know I always save my letters to read on Sunday," said Mr. Matthews, quietly putting it away in his pocket.

"You must be a rare instance of a man without curiosity," said Lois, "if you leave your letters unopened for three days. The news this one contains must already be some weeks old."

"It will have to keep a few days longer," said Mr. Matthews, gravely, starting down the steps. "It has been my custom for more than twenty years never to bother about letters during the week. I'm always too busy."

Lois had often been amused by the singular manner in which the people in the neighborhood clung to many old-fashioned ways, not because they were good or desirable, but because their fathers followed them, or they did so themselves "before the war," the one era from which everything was dated. The almanac that hung in the parlor was three years old, time was noted on a sun-dial in the circle before the front porch, and railroads were considered as uncomfortable inventions for increasing the expenses of the farmers in sending their wheat to market. For most Virginians past middle life, time has seemed to stand still since the day when they felt as if everything but honor was lost to them, and they stand amid the ruins of their former prosperity, dismayed and sorrowful over the wreck of their fair hopes and the change that has come over all their olden traditions.

Lois had gone to her own room before she opened her cousin Mary's letter, which began thus:

"MY SWEET CHILD: I wish for you always, and I have not enjoyed our tour through the mountains and sojourn at the different springs half as much as if you were with us. But I have obediently drunk the waters; and made many delightful acquaintances among the people, from all parts of the South, who have crowded to them this summer. Last week we came to the 'Old Sweet,' to me, one of the pleasantest of all. Edgar Treville is——"

But Lois did not turn the leaf to read further; the letter trembled for a moment in her grasp, and then she threw it passionately from her. Of course it was

but a repetition of that stern fact she kept constantly before her weaker self. "Edgar Treville is married," and, weary of dwelling on it, she took up a book, hoping to find therein diversion of thought.

Lois was obliged to rise quite early the next morning to prepare for her ride to the mountains; and when she, with her escort, joined the party of young men and ladies awaiting them upon the turnpike at the foot of the hill, the rosy reflection of the sunrise was just tinting the mountains. Her own especial cavalier was Mr. John Landon, a young neighbor of only nineteen years of age, who seemed to Lois a mere boy, but who had been useful and kind to her all summer, accompanying her frequently in her rides, and who had planned this excursion for her pleasure. The three other young ladies who composed the party were exceedingly healthy-looking, ruddy-faced specimens of girlhood, full of animal spirits, and ready for all kinds of fun and frolic. Lois wore a riding-habit of dark-blue cloth, and a high beaver hat, from which floated a blue veil. Her cheeks had not yet recovered their faint bloom of pink, and the exquisite fairness of her complexion, and pensive cast of her features, made her seem like an inhabitant of another sphere to these bright-looking country-girls. They were loud in their exclamations of delight at her appearance, and one of them frankly said, "Oh, Miss Carrol, you are the prettiest thing I ever saw in my life!"

There was something extremely invigorating in the fresh air of morning, and the quick motion of a spirited horse was pleasant to Lois always; but she could join but little in the boisterous merriment of her compan-

ions. Practical jokes play a large part in the social intercourse of some young people, and teasing remarks about their supposed lovers. The present party was composed of intimate friends, living in the same country-neighborhood, and they called each other by the most peculiar nicknames, which Lois thought must have been selected originally by some coarse-minded enemy. One young lady, of pleasing appearance, was called "Pussie Palton," and her escort "Piggie Dalton." Girls were called "Joe" and "Jack," and boys "Duckie" and "Pidgie," so that it was hard to understand who was meant when the names were mentioned. Lois's escort was at home from the University of Virginia, on a vacation, and seemed a quiet youth, who was evidently more accustomed to having tricks played upon himself than to inflicting them upon other people, and it was a great relief to her that he was willing to ride silently by her side, leaving her to be soothed by the quiet loveliness of the scenery through which they were passing. His friends called him "Dumpty," and every now and then one of them would ride up to him and say, "Now, Dumpty, I understand you are paying attention to Miss Pokie Purcell. Ah! I see you blush, so the affair is serious I am sure." Poor "Dumpty" was indeed blushing celestial rosy-red; but he replied, "Upon my word and honor, Minnie, I view Miss Pokie as Shakspeare viewed the moon!"

At last they reached the first fork of the Shenandoah River, and here came a delightful opportunity for the young ladies to show off many pretty affectations and pretended fears of the water. They shivered

and screamed and tittered in well-simulated terror, though probably they had forded that very stream twenty times during the summer. They hung back on the bank for additional persuasions from their escorts before venturing in, or they would start back when half-way over, proclaiming that they were too frightened to go farther. Mr. Landon assured them that there was no danger, and that the water was unusually low for that season of the year; but it required a great expenditure of eloquence before they could be induced to follow him across.

Lois had raised the skirt of her habit a little, as it nearly swept the ground, and plunged into the stream without the slightest hesitation, only begging her escort to return and aid, if possible, the timid creatures, whose fears were uttered in such piercing screams, and who were frantically dashing backward and forward. She waited under the brow of the hill, watching the efforts of Mr. Landon to bring the others over. One robust young lady, whose teasing remarks to him during the ride had seemed to Lois almost insulting, now clung to him as if they were the dearest friends. She professed to be unable to guide her horse through the stream, so he took the bridle to lead it over, when she clasped her hands over her eyes, saying, "If I must, I'll follow you blindly!"

One young man, who was called "Minnie Merton," seemed not only to share in the fears of the ladies, but to wish to heighten them if possible by his exclamations: "This is a dreadful ford! a cart was washed down on to the rocks in this very place, before the war. The floods are violent here; and you see

the ruins of that bridge it swept away! I wonder if we can escape with our lives from this frightful place!"

"Minnie, don't talk in that way, while the ladies are in the middle of the river," said Mr. Landon. "We all know the ford so well, that there is no danger of our getting into those deep holes. They are at some distance down below us;" and rejoining Miss Carrol, he told her that the picturesque remains of the old stone bridge were one of the ruins left by the war, and not relics of a former flood. "So many of the large blocks which formed the arches have fallen into the water, that it has made the direct passage through the stream rough and uneven, and it is to avoid this that we go down a little from it, and then return to meet the road on the other side."

By this time the party were all over, and Minnie Merton rode up to them, saying, "Dumpty, do you see those heavy black clouds rising so rapidly? We must be going to have our equinoctial storm, and it will spoil our excursion. I was caught out on the mountains last September, in a frightful storm, and the rain was such a cold one for the season that I nearly froze to death; upon my word and honor I did."

John Landon knew his friend's propensity to relate alarming adventures, and endeavored to change the conversation by admiring the beautiful horse "Restless," upon which Lois was riding. "He reminds me of a horse my brother Chubbie had once, called 'Byron,' who was just as finely formed, and the most sagacious animal I ever saw. Before the war, my two brothers, Chub and Chew, were great gallants in

Clarke, and very fond of going to parties. But Byron had no fancy for being tied to a tree all night, waiting for his master, and would never stay at any house later than twelve o'clock. When midnight came without his master, he unfastened himself from the tree and galloped home alone. Now as Chub had no relish for walking home, after a few lessons of this kind he took leave regularly just before the hour."

"What became of such a sensible creature?" asked Lois.

"He died for his country," said Mr. Landon. "My brothers were in more than forty battles and skirmishes, and yet escaped unhurt. Chub had three horses killed under him; his hat, and once the heel of his boot shot off, while he was not touched. Byron was killed at the second battle of Manassas. I was a little boy then, but I cried bitterly when the news came."

"I had two brothers killed in the war, and my mother had five younger brothers, whom she had brought up after her mother's death. They were every one of them killed before two years were over," said Minnie Merton. For the first time Lois looked with some interest at this brother of heroes, and wished very much that she could find something heroical in his appearance; but though not more than eighteen years of age, the constant use of tobacco had brought his complexion to the exact shade of the leaf when first cured. He wore a limp hat, slouched down over his face, and his shoulders were drawn upward, throwing his head forward, and giving him quite a hang-dog look.

"John," he said, when they reached the second branch of the river, "didn't I tell you that it looked

like a storm was coming up? See how those black clouds have spread."

"It does look something like it," said another gentleman of the party, "and a right keen wind has blown up."

"Now isn't that a dreadful pity!" said Minnie Merton. "We ought not to think of going up on the mountain if there is a chance of a storm, because if the wind was high while we were on that narrow road, we might be swept off into the terrible chasm below, and every bone in our bodies would be crushed to atoms."

"Oh, oh!" shrieked both the Misses Gardener at once. "Don't mention it, I beg of you! I would not go for worlds!" They then proposed that they should all stop at the "Union," a little tavern in Front Royal, where they had an aunt boarding, and remain there till it was decided whether they could continue their ride. Their advice was favorably regarded by the rest of the party, and by the time they reached Front Royal there was no longer any doubt as to the intentions of the weather. The sky had grown darker, and large drops of rain began to fall.

There was no other resource than taking refuge in the little tavern; and they were met at the door by a landlord with a red face, red hair and eyes, and a red-hot breath strongly charged with the fumes of tobacco and alcohol. He asked the ladies into a small stuffy parlor, which seemed to have all the heat and odors of last summer shut up in its close recesses.

"Is my aunt, Mrs. Bailey, here, Mr. Webb?" said Miss Gardener.

"No, miss, she went day before yesterday over to Fauquier, to visit some friends over there I b'lieve, miss," replied the landlord, taking a puff at his beloved pipe between each word. "But I hope you'll stay here, miss, till the rain is over, miss; take cheers, ladies, and make yourselves comf'table," he said, waving his fat, red hand to them as he left the room, the gentlemen accompanying him to accept his invitation of taking "something warm," to sustain them under their disappointment and the depressing effect of the weather. Lois was very glad of their absence; she thought it affliction enough to endure at once, to be shut up in a small room with those Misses Gardener and that other stupid girl who spoke very seldom, being painfully conscious of grammatical deficiencies which it was too late in life to begin to try to correct.

Lois sat for a long time looking out at the storm, but at last she rose and said, "Don't you think we could have a window and the shutters open? the air is so close here;" trying to move the rusty springs as she spoke.

"Oh, don't, don't!" exclaimed Miss Gardener. "I am so afraid of lightning, and I am almost frantic in a thunder-storm! When I am at home, we shut up the whole house, and get upon the feather-beds, for fear we will be struck. I always put my fingers in my ears, to keep out the dreadful noise. Ain't you afraid in a gust, Miss Carrol?"

"Not at all," answered Lois; "and I think, in the mountains particularly, thunder-storms are very fine. The echo repeats the roll of the tempest, and you

often see several different flashes of lightning at the same time!"

"How fearful!" said one of the young ladies. "I never dare to look out, and always bury my face in a pillow."

Lois could not help fearing that the race of hero-spirits was certainly dying out in the very spot which had given so many noble names to the records of time; but this fright was really pretended, a mistaken idea being then fashionable that it was womanly and interesting to betray excessive alarm over each little occurrence of daily life.

"Were you not terrified in fording the river this morning, Miss Carrol? I thought the rush of water would almost take away my breath, and it took half an hour before I could muster up courage to plunge into the stream boldly, as you did."

"I suppose the gentlemen are familiar enough with the ford to know if there had been really any danger, when, of course, it would have been a useless risk to venture over merely for the pleasure," answered Lois. "The scenery was so pretty along the banks, that I rode quietly over, without thinking of fear."

The young ladies, finding they could expect little sympathy from one so indifferent as Miss Carrol, seemed to forget all about her, retired to the opposite corner of the room, and began a half-whispered conversation among themselves, of which the only words distinguishable were "Now, don't; I'll never forgive you if you do!" accompanied with little shrieks and giggles, pushes, and rolling off the chairs, and hasty trips to the door, to see if the young men were coming.

Mr. Webb finally made his appearance. "Leddies," he said, "there is no chance of your getting away from here for a long time. S'pose you go up-stairs to a room, and make yourselves comfortable. Dinner 'll be ready for you in a little while."

The two Misses Gardener picked up the basket of lunch that had been placed on the table, and carried it between them, as if unwilling to lose sight of it, and Lois followed them up-stairs.

The Gardener sisters sat down upon the side of the bed, unpacked the lunch-basket, and began to make a meal, inviting the others to join them, without, however, incurring the delay of going through the form of waiting for them. Lois was not unwilling to accept their invitation, after her long ride; and there sprang up over the informal meal a relation as friendly as was possible between people so ill-matched. But there was little common ground between them. The conversation of the country girls consisted of many family words and original phrases, that were Greek to the uninitiated; and every few moments, when some indiscreet expression might have revealed their meaning, the one who uttered it received various pushes, and nudges with the elbows, and "Hush, now; you stop that!" in a variety of laughing tones. The young lady called "Miss Pokie" had a gesture that particularly annoyed Lois during lunch-time. She was sitting upon the bed, eating the leg of a chicken, while Lois sat on a chair near her; and whenever she wished to give additional emphasis to a sentence, she would say, "Now, you mind that!" and bring down the hand containing the bone heavily upon Lois's knee.

When two hours more had passed, and the rain had ceased, Lois suggested that they should go down-stairs and see if they could not go home directly; for she was growing very tired, and was heartily sorry that she had been thrown into contact with this awkward party.

On their way through the lower passage, she was horrified by a glimpse she had, accidentally, of the interior of the bar-room, which was opposite the parlor. There were all the young men of her party except Mr. Landon, with flushed faces, holding glasses in their hands, and singing, "We won't go home till morning!" Minnie Merton was standing clasping the back of a chair for support with one hand, while with the other he held up before the light a glass full of liquor, whose dark reddish-yellow color showed how free it was from dilution, and how drunk he must be if many more just such drinks had preceded it.

Miss Carrol passed on out into the porch alone, feeling intensely the unpleasantness of her position, longing for a sight of John Landon's honest face, and resolving to start home immediately, if she could find him. As she gazed around, looking vainly for him, her eyes fell upon a gentleman seated at the farther end of the porch, reading a newspaper. His appearance was such a pleasing contrast to those rough, red-faced country beaux, that her eyes took in all the details of the difference at once. His face was almost entirely shaded by his hat, and a silky, dark beard and moustache concealed the mouth and chin; but there was an unmistakable air of distinction and refinement

about him. He wore a plain suit of dark-gray clothes, fitting perfectly, snowy linen, and the neatest possible pair of boots on his slender, well-shaped feet. A leather portmanteau, resting against his chair, showed that he had just been left by a passing train. Lois missed seeing the eager, searching gaze that he bent upon her the next moment, because she was looking in the direction of the door, through which were coming all the members of her party, except John Landon. He was still unaccountably absent.

"Miss Carrol," said Miss Gardener, "we have decided, since it is already four o'clock, to stay here all night, and have a jolly dance. Oh, we'll have such fun! You'll stay, won't you?"

Minnie Merton walked across the porch with a slightly unsteady gait, and seated himself on the top step, leaning his head against the post with a very imbecile expression, and began singing, "We won't go home till morning."

"I certainly will not think of staying," Lois replied to Miss Gardener; "I would consider it very improper for us to remain here alone without the protection of some older woman. Can any one tell me what has become of Mr. Landon?"

"Oh, he's all right, Miss Carrol," said Minnie Merton, in a thick, husky voice; "and don't you be talking nonzense now. As for proteczion, why, ain't I strong enough to protect the whole lot of you? I've got more muscle in these arms than ten men," and he made the attempt to give a very hard blow to his left arm with the clinched fist of his right hand; but it ended in a very feeble one, which seemed to surprise

him a good deal, for he examined his fist curiously, without speaking again for several minutes.

"I don't see a bit of harm in our staying," said the eldest Miss Gardener, tossing her head pertly. "Our aunt boards here, and everybody knows who we are; and nobody thinks anything of the kind improper here, do they, Pokie?"

"No, indeed," said the young lady addressed; "and if Miss Carrol is too particular with her city airs for our company, she can go home alone."

"That I will gladly do, if I can find Mr. Landon," said Lois, advancing to the steps where Mr. Merton sat, and looking forth down the platform toward the station-house. The rest of the party had returned into the parlor, and each moment Lois felt that the difficulty of her position increased. To stay at such a place all night, when it seemed as if every man was already half intoxicated, with a set of well-meaning but utterly heedless young girls, appeared to her almost madness; yet the weather was still threatening, the river was doubtless much swollen by the heavy rains; and, even if she started at once, it would be impossible to reach Elmscourt before night. But she resolved to attempt it, if she could find her escort; so she said to Mr. Merton, "Tell me at once where Mr. Landon is."

"Locked up down the street, all safe to keep till to-morrow. So you zee, Miss Carrol," he said, laughing disagreeably, "there's no prozpect of your gettin' away this evening, and you're bound to stay now. We'll have a splendid danze, you and me. Come along; 'We won't go home till mornin'!'" He caught

Lois by the arm, and began dancing to the tune of his song. But, in an instant, the strange gentleman who had been sitting reading a newspaper rushed forward and grasped him by the collar. "Let go that lady's arm, you scoundrel!" he said, sending Merton, whirling like a top, to the other end of the porch.

If it had not been that Minnie was too much accustomed to intoxication not to have acquired, as a second nature, the act of managing his locomotion better even in that state than when sober, he might now have received a very hard fall. But he clung to the railing, and pulled himself up by it; then, sidling along against the wall like a frightened dog, with his eyes fixed upon the slender hand stretched towards him, which had proved so strong, he passed them, and darted through the door.

There was something in the tone of this stranger's voice that was thrillingly familiar to Lois; and, when she turned in gratitude towards him, he lifted his hat from his head, and came to her side, bending upon her a pair of eyes that had found their way to her soul long ago.

"Edgar Treville!" she exclaimed, in amazement, becoming so agitated that she was obliged to catch at the railing, in her turn, for support. Edgar took her arm, and placed her gently in a seat, saying, "What can I do for you? Consider me your protector." He was obliged to speak in the polite tone of a simple acquaintance, because there was a knot of rough men gathering about the door, who were regarding the pair with looks of curiosity.

"I am anxious to leave this place as soon as possible," said Lois, "so that I can reach Elmscourt before dark; but my escort is said to be locked up somewhere, and I do not know what to do."

"I see that you are placed in a very unpleasant position," said Mr. Treville, "and this house is certainly an unsuitable place for a lady. If you will accept of my services, in the place of your friend, I shall be very glad to accompany you. I am on my way to Mr. Matthews's myself, and will look after the horses immediately, if I can leave you here for a moment."

By this time the lively party had all collected in the parlor, singing merry glees, and Lois was left undisturbed until Mr. Treville returned with Restless, and a horse for himself. She had no time to think of the strange occurrrences of the day or the mysterious appearance of Mr. Treville, but only felt the pleasure of being cared for and protected by a strong arm.

"I have made all needful inquiries about the road," said Mr. Treville, "and think we will have no difficulty, as the rain has ceased, if we start immediately."

They were soon galloping off together down the road, and proceeded in silence for more than a mile. It was just occurring to Lois, since her mind was relieved from the fears occasioned by her uncomfortable position at the little tavern, that she was now placed in one that was equally embarrassing, if not so painful. It would be impossible, she thought, for them to sustain anything like an unrestrained conversation during this long ride.

As they approached the bank of the first stream,

the narrowness of the pass brought them close together, and Treville said, "Lois, are you not going to give me a word or look of welcome? I am overjoyed, my darling, to be with you again."

She rode on for a moment in silence, looking directly before her, as though she had not heard him, then she turned towards him a pale, bewildered face, and said in a trembling voice, "What does this mean, Mr. Treville? Where is your—wife?" She hesitated an instant before pronouncing that last word, as though it tortured her to be obliged to utter it.

"I have no wife, Lois," he replied, looking astonished; "but I have come to Virginia to try to win one."

Lois's heart gave a great bound, and the color came back to her cheeks. What did it mean? Edgar was free then; but how could it be?

"And Adéle d'Obrie?" she said, in a questioning tone.

"Is married," he said, "to Mr. Dolonde, of Mobile. But here we are at the river, and the bridge is a mass of ruins; how are we to cross?"

"We ford this stream and another on the way to Elmscourt," said Lois.

Her mind had been so much confused by the exciting events of the day, together with the conflicting feelings occasioned by the unexpected meeting with Edgar Treville, that she now thought, on seeing the river, that this was the dangerous ford. The stream looked very much swollen, and she tried to remember what she had heard in the morning of the best way to avoid risks in crossing.

Treville saw her troubled look, and said, "Shall I lead your horse over?"

"Thank you; I am not in the least timid," answered Lois, riding forward into the water; "and I remember now, I was told this morning that to keep clear of some deep holes, we must first go up the stream a short distance, and then return to the road on the other side."

In this way they were soon across, and started off again in a sweeping gallop.

"Twilight is coming on already," said Edgar. "I had no idea that it was so late; but it grows dark earlier on cloudy evenings; and I think we must defer all conversation till to-morrow, when we can take up the broken thread of our lives from the day I left you in the conservatory. Now we will have to give our attention to the road, and this is the second branch of the river you mentioned."

Lois drew up her riding-skirt mechanically, wrapped it over her feet, and then started directly across. This would make the fourth time that she had forded the river to-day, and she had grown so accustomed to it that she could continue her train of thought without being anxiously interested in her horse's footing. But how strangely deep the water was becoming, and they occasionally stumbled over large stones. Edgar was very close to her, and said, "Do you remember crossing in this place to-day, Lois?" The increased volume of the stream had altered the looks of the banks greatly; but it suddenly flashed upon Lois's mind that she had made a mistake, and this was the dangerous ford, where the middle path was particularly

unsafe. "I remember," she exclaimed; "we cannot get over here, but must go up the stream first!"

"It is too late for that now," said Edgar; "we could not stem this current. Let us keep as closely together as possible. We are half-way over, and if there is any peril, I hope we have passed it."

But while he uttered these words of encouragement to Lois, his mind was far from being easy, for the bed of the river was so uneven that it seemed impossible for the horses to maintain their footing. Had he been alone, it would have seemed an undertaking of little difficulty to ford an unknown river; but now he could not help feeling apprehensive for the dear life beside him. However, the bank looked near, and a few moments' further struggling would doubtless bring them to land again. But suddenly the horses' feet seemed to slip off of the sharp edge of a large stone, and they could not recover their footing.

"Hold tightly to your saddle, Lois," cried Treville, throwing off his heavy coat to be in readiness to fling himself from his own, if she were swept off by the current. Their horses were strong-limbed and powerful, and probably had experience of all kinds of rivers during the war, and they now struck out vigorously, and began to swim. It seemed that they had not simply fallen into a hole, from which a few strokes would bring them to firm ground, but, by mistaking the directions, were in the deepest part of the river. The water had risen up around Lois; and when Treville looked at her, his heart sank at the thought of the danger that threatened her; for he knew that if the strength of their horses failed, there would hardly be a chance for

their lives, encumbered as she was by her heavy riding-habit, and unnerved as she might be by her fears. But he was somewhat reassured by her look of brave, though rigid calmness.

"That is right, Lois!" he cried. "Hold firmly to your saddle, and trust to your horse. I hope the worst will soon be past,—the shore is very near now."

Yes, it looked only a few yards off, but distances are so very deceptive on water that the space diminished with agonizing slowness. Their poor beasts seemed to be putting forth their last exertions, and many of the strokes were rendered futile by the strong current.

Now a new danger threatened them. They had entered that portion of the stream where the water flowed with such great force that they felt themselves being carried along down with it; and they knew not at what moment they might be dashed violently against the stone base of the old bridge.

Lois's small hands were becoming weakened by the long-continued grasp of the pommel; she knew that they must soon relax their hold, and that then only death was before her.

A cry of anguish rang out over the water. "Oh, Edgar, have we only met to perish together!"

His heart sank with agony as he heard it, and saw the great rush of turbid water between them; but he called to her, "Courage, Lois; I am coming to you. Do not despair, but cling to the saddle a few moments longer!" He thought that if she could only keep her seat as firmly as she was still doing, till he could swim to her, there might be some hope for them. But by the time he had disengaged his feet from the stir-

rups, his purpose was changed. The violent current which had seemed the evil most to be dreaded was in reality saving them; for before Treville could throw himself from his horse, the force of the stream had washed them much nearer the shore, and the horses found a secure footing.

"Now, Lois," he called, "the danger is over, and our horses can easily struggle through the shallow water, swift as it is, since they are no longer obliged to swim."

He was right, for the brave beasts had been considerably rested by that uplifting and bearing onward by the water, which required no exertion of their own; and at the end of another five minutes they had pulled up on a rather steep bank, and now stood upon firm ground, trembling in every limb, while their riders felt their hearts swell with the sense of security and gratitude.

"Thank God!" exclaimed Treville, dismounting, and going to the side of the drooping Lois. "Are you very much frightened, darling?" he asked, taking her cold hand.

"No, not very much," she answered in a faint tone. "I am so thankful that we are both safe."

"I am afraid you are very weary, Lois. Do you feel strong enough for us to continue?" asked Edgar. "It is growing very dark, and the horses are somewhat rested now."

"Yes," she answered, "I feel very well now. Let us be starting as soon as possible; but we must first find the road. It runs down by the side of the stone bridge."

"I see the ruins of the old bridge," said Treville, leaning over the water, and looking around the trees that grew on the bank, "so we will just follow that direction."

A short ride through thick undergrowth on the side of the cliff, over slippery stones that threatened to send them whirling back into the terrible element from which they had only just escaped, brought them into the road.

It was growing so dark that they could distinguish clearly only the outlines of the objects around them; and they made haste to leave the river behind, feeling with each measured swing of the gallop that their journey was progressing, and that they were that much nearer to shelter and comfort.

They spoke but little while they rode the remaining six miles, because they were both overwhelmed with awe, at having been so short a time ago face to face with death; but Edgar occasionally came close to her side to utter words of solicitude and endearment. She reassured him each time by saying that she was well, and not very tired. But the excitement and fatigue of the day had wrought upon her so as to produce curious fancies in her mind, while her temples throbbed with pain. Sometimes she almost believed that it had all been a wild dream, in which joy and terror were strangely mingled, as they often are in our sleeping thoughts; and then she would glance anxiously around at the manly figure beside her to ascertain its reality, and dissipate the expectation that she would soon awake.

Again, when she had listened for a long time to the

monotonous, unceasing sound of the horses' hoofs on the rocky road, each stroke had worn itself, as it were, into her brain, until she began to feel as though they had been riding thus for years, and would continue on —on—perpetually for ages to come.

But after what seemed to her to be several long hours, she perceived through the darkness that they had arrived at the open avenue that led to Mr. Matthews's house. They had concluded that it was best to give the reins to the horses, and allow them to pick their own way over the road that was so familiar to them; and they now turned, without guidance, from the pike into the lane.

"Is this right, Lois?" asked Treville.

"Yes," she answered, joyfully; "ten minutes more will bring us to the house."

He was soon lifting her trembling form from the saddle, and they found kind friends up waiting anxiously for Lois's return. They were quickly made to somewhat understand the state of affairs, and gave Lois the tender care she so much needed, while Mr. Treville was welcomed with that wealth of hospitality which has survived all change of fortunes in the beautiful valley of Virginia.

The next morning, when Lois awoke from a long, heavy sleep, she knew, by the way the sun was shining into her room, that it was quite late; but it was so delicious to rest in such comfort after the terrible excitement of the previous day, that she was afraid if she moved it might break the spell, and bring back the unhappy certainty of life-long loneliness and sorrow. Her mind, however, was active while she lay so

quietly, recalling gradually all the events of yesterday, which seemed now more than ever like a dream.

Was it really true that Edgar Treville was there, in the very same house? While she asked herself this question wonderingly, her eyes fell upon Mrs. Norton's letter, which had been folded and laid on the table in her absence. Perhaps that would explain everything that seemed now so unaccountable to her. She reached out and drew it to her, and read eagerly what two days before she had cast vehemently away, taking up the sentence as it continued on the opposite page: "Edgar Treville is here, on his way to see you; and he is writing now to Mr. Matthews, to announce his coming, so that he may have a room secured." "Then," thought Lois, "that must have been the letter that Mr. Matthews reserved for Sunday reading. How it would have changed my plans, if I'd only known it! I should not have gone on that wretched excursion. But let me see what Cousin Mary says," and she resumed: "He arrived yesterday, and intended to leave to-morrow for Clarke County; but I expect he will be detained for several days by the poor state of health in which he finds his father, who preceded him to this place two weeks ago. I must wait till I see you, my dear child, to tell you how glad I am at the course events have taken, and how much I rejoice at the happy lot that I hope is now in store for you. As you have received none of Edgar's letters, because Julia Warrington deceived him about your address, and as he has just been interrupted in his writing and called to his father's bedside, he requested me to explain everything to you. I will first tell you how

he became free from that unhappy engagement with Adéle d'Obrie. Madame d'Obrie is a very calculating woman, who has a great regard for wealth, and, knowing how much the Treville estate had depreciated in consequence of the ravages of war, she was very glad to seize the opportunity of breaking the engagement, when a richer suitor for her daughter's hand presented himself to her, during a visit they were making in Mobile. This was Emile Dolonde; and I am sure Adéle has in him a kind and affectionate husband. They were married immediately, and have gone on a wedding-tour to France, to visit the bridegroom's parents. Edgar and his father went to the wedding, and the best of feeling prevails among all parties. Adéle was always completely governed by her mother, and never had any voice in her own affairs; but she is a person of a loving disposition, and will always cling to the one nearest to her. Mr. Treville, senior, is very anxious to see you, and delighted that such a prospect of happiness is before his son. They are the most devoted pair I ever saw, and Edgar's affection for and attention to his father are beautiful. The latter told me of the noble conduct of his son in giving up his French property to make good to the D'Obrie estate the losses it had sustained while under his father's care; and each seems to try and outdo the other in affectionate regard. Directly after Adéle's marriage, Mr. Treville came here in search of health, while Edgar went to Sewanee, thinking that we were there, and you with us. At Sewanee he saw Julia Warrington, and she deceived him cruelly by telling him that you were in Kentucky with your guardian, although she knew perfectly well that it was

not true. So he proceeded to Woodford County; but found Mr. Harrison's house closed, and was unable to learn anything of the family, except that they had gone in the summer to Cape May. Then he came directly here, intending to see his father, and start again to look for Mr. Harrison and his ward; but of course when I saw him I gave him correct information as to your whereabouts. You need not be surprised, however, if you do not see him or hear from him for a week, because I am afraid his father will be so ill as to require his constant attention. I can only add that I hope soon to tell you how fondly you are loved and cherished by your affectionate cousin,

"MARY NORTON."

Lois felt this letter to be the best restorative possible, and, after reading it over twice, was ready to partake of the breakfast kind Mrs. Matthews had sent up to her. She dressed quickly, for she longed to be down-stairs as soon as possible, and she passed Joujou on the steps, failing to caress him for the first time since he had been bequeathed to her by Fred Warrington.

Edgar Treville was sitting alone in the parlor, with his head resting on his hand, in a deep reverie; and when Lois glided into the room, he was unaware of her presence until she stood before him and spoke.

"Edgar."

"Lois!" he said, rising and holding out his arms. She was folded to his heart, and for a moment neither could speak. Then he made anxious inquiries as to whether she had suffered in health from yesterday's

terrible ride, and found an answer in her blooming cheek. Lois told him of Mrs. Norton's letter, asked about his father, and was glad to learn that he had recovered.

For a long time the happy lovers sat side by side, communicating all the thoughts, feelings, and events of their lives since they had parted in the spring. Finally Edgar said in a very earnest tone, "Now, Lois, I am going to propose something that I entreat you not to consider unreasonable, dearest. It is that we may be married immediately, in this quiet, lovely place."

"Oh, Edgar!" exclaimed Lois in astonishment, while her hand trembled in his grasp; "that would be impossible, without the consent of my guardian, and away from my friends."

"But I have arranged a plan for overcoming these difficulties," he said. "Your cousins, Dr. Norton and his wife, and my father all promised to come immediately, if I obtained your consent and telegraphed them. And as your guardian is now in Washington City, I can go there to-morrow and see him. You know it is only a short run from here. You can give me a letter to him, and I have one already from our kind friend Dr. Norton, introducing me to Mr. Harrison. So you will say yes, will you not, darling?"

Her cheeks grew alternately white and pink, as she sat silent for some minutes, and he waited in breathless eagerness for her answer.

"Not so soon, Edgar, please," said Lois, at last. "I had not thought of it."

"Lois, if you love me, darling," said Edgar, pleadingly, "let us be married with as little delay as possible, before any fresh difficulties can arise to separate us. We have been the same as engaged for the last five months, so the thought cannot be new to you; and you can never know the anguish I felt when I thought we were parted for life." Lois thought that she understood it perfectly, by the distress that she had herself undergone. "So, if you love me, dearest," he continued, "you will give me happiness now after all that I have suffered. I cannot bring to you so large a fortune as I had, but have to offer instead a heart filled with even greater devotion than when we stood in the conservatory together last April. I complied with your wish to leave you then, Lois, though it cost me agony, so will you not grant my request now?"

Lois thought while he spoke that she would endeavor all her life, by appealing to him for guidance, to make him feel that she looked up to him with reverence as her mental superior (although there had been one unhappy time when she had seen clearest, and pointed out to him the path of right), thus establishing the natural relation that should exist between husband and wife.

"So far as preparing a trousseau is concerned," he resumed, interpreting her silence favorably, "why, we don't care for such things, Lois. You are not trivial like other women, although you have the natural taste to be always prettily attired; and I love to see you so; but I do not believe you give much thought to dress. I hope I do not seem conceited, when I say that I think my bride will care more for her husband than for her wedding-dress. So there is nothing to

prevent it except your own disinclination; but you will consent, darling, will you not?"

Her beautiful eyes were turned away, and the blood rushed up to cheek and brow and neck as she answered,—

"Let it be so."

Treville was very much surprised when Lois told him that she had inherited a great deal of property in Kentucky from her parents.

"I never dreamed of such a thing, Lois," said Edgar; "I loved you for yourself alone; and you are so rich in beauty of person and nobleness of mind, that you need no fortune. Mrs. Warrington, as you know too well, has a very stinging way of probing people's feelings. She asked me one day last spring if I knew that you were quite dependent upon Dr. and Mrs. Norton. I told her that they were happy people to have anything so lovely dependent upon them."

Lois could not help the hot flush of annoyance from rising to her face, as she said, "I must learn not to believe a word Cousin Julia says. She never scruples to use the cruelest falsehoods to effect her purpose, and particularly to wound those who should be her friends. Why do you suppose she has always hated me so bitterly, Edgar?"

"Don't let it trouble you, dear Lois. You were young and beautiful, and the sensation you made in New Orleans drew many of her old admirers from her train. My uncle, Mr. Forlis, did not hesitate to say how lovely you were, and how superior to any belle who had ever reigned there before. This probably made her jealous, and anxious to do all she could to

prevent your success. She told me at Sewanee that you were going to marry a son of Mr. Harrison's; but that I did not believe."

The next day, when Mr. Treville asked Lois where they should travel when they were married, before they returned to New Orleans, she said, "To any place, Edgar, that will suit you."

"Oh, it makes no difference to me where I go, dearest," he said tenderly, "so you are with me."

As a general thing, when people are willing to go "anywhere," it is a sign that they are either extremely happy or intensely wretched. You can, without doubt, easily judge which it was in this instance.

CONCLUSION.

"Old, and yet ever new, and simple and beautiful always,
Love immortal and young in the endless succession of lovers."
LONGFELLOW.

IT was a bright autumn day, two years after the quiet wedding at Elmscourt, when Mrs. Warrington accidentally met Mrs. Edgar Treville on Canal Street, in New Orleans.

"How fortunate that I have met you, Lois," said Julia, "for I am very anxious to go to the matinée to-day, and don't like to go alone. Will you not come with me?"

"I am sorry that I cannot do so, Cousin Julia," said Lois, in a tone which showed that her words were

meant more for cool politeness than to express regret; "but as Mr. Treville will return this afternoon from Deer Range, where he has been for the last few days, on a visit to his father, of course I must be at home to receive him."

"What nonsense, Lois! Can't you exist for two days without seeing him? And what difference would a few hours make? Well, if you will not go, I will walk about a square with you, as it is on my way. Do you mean to say that you are so foolish as to be still in love with Edgar Treville?"

"He is my husband," answered Lois, proudly.

"Well, everybody don't use that word as a term of endearment, by any means," said Mrs. Warrington, laughing. "I think you and Mary are very stupid with your husbands, and I have come to the firm determination never to marry again,"—but Julia mentally added, "since Henri Forlis is not to be won." "I am so free as a widow," she continued to Lois, "and enjoy so thoroughly my flirtations and the homage I receive, that I could not possibly relinquish it all. I wish you and Edgar had not so completely demoralized Mr. Forlis by furnishing him with what seems to be such a fascinating place to spend his evenings. Tell him that I shall expect him in my opera-box to-night, where there will be a seat reserved for him; and that I say he had much better come than to sit in the chimney-corner at your house, like a superannuated old grandfather, looking on at the scene of domestic bliss. Ta, ta."

Lois was glad when Mrs. Warrington disappeared around the corner, for Julia's light gayety and insincerity always grated upon her. She was left alone to hurry home,—eagerly counting the hours before she would see her husband's bright smile. A change has come over her face since we saw her last, two years ago. It is far lovelier than it ever was before, because a softened light is shed over it by a habitual expression of contentment, and look of answering tenderness.

As Lois's charming little home was next door to Mrs. Norton's, she had the advantage of her cousin's agreeable companionship whenever they felt inclined to seek each other. And they owned an opera-box together, where they often met, and enjoyed exceedingly pleasant evenings.

But those in which Edgar and Lois most delight are passed at their own happy fireside, spent in the communion of their own thoughts, or reading aloud some interesting book.

The hours of the days are never lonely to Lois, though she has almost entirely discontinued her old, strange habit of talking to herself.

A great deal of her leisure is spent now in the agreeable occupation of prattling pretty loving nothings to a tiny brown-eyed Lois, in a language that will ever be a living tongue, to the end of time.

THE END.

POPULAR WORKS

PUBLISHED BY

J. B. LIPPINCOTT & CO.

PHILADELPHIA.

Will be sent by mail, postpaid, on receipt of the price.

Gideon's Rock. A Novel. By Katherine Saunders, author of "The High Mills," etc. With a Frontispiece. 16mo. Extra cloth. $1.

"A simple, touching story, that goes straight to the heart of the reader."—*Philadelphia Evening Bulletin.*

"It is a masterpiece." — *London Times.*

The High Mills. A Novel. By Katherine Saunders, author of "Gideon's Rock." Illustrated. 8vo. Paper. 75 cents. Extra cloth. $1.25.

"In all the portraiture, description, dialogue and incident of the book there is a fresh originality, a vivid dramatic power, a knowledge of the mystery of life, that few possess. Here is a writer who will be, perhaps, as great as George Eliot."—*New York Evening Mail.*

"In many respects one of the best and most powerful works of fiction that have been lately issued." — *Boston Journal.*

Hester Kirton. A Novel. By Katherine S. MacQuoid, author of "Rookstone," "A Bad Beginning," "Chesterford," etc. A new edition. 16mo. Ornamented cloth. $1 25.

"It is altogether one of the best publications of the day."—*Philadelphia Age.*

"By far one of the best novels that have been sent to us this season."—*New Orleans Times.*

Rookstone. A Novel. By Katherine S. MacQuoid, author of "Forgotten by the World," "Hester Kirton," "Patty," etc. Illustrated. 8vo. Paper cover. 75 cents. Extra cloth. $1.25.

"Well constructed and clearly told. We recommend it to novel readers."—*Philadelphia Press.*

"It is admirably written and excellent in tone."—*New York Evening Mail.*

Seed-Time and Harvest; or, During my Apprenticeship.

From the Platt-Deutsch of Fritz Reuter. 8vo Paper cover. $1 Extra cloth. $1.50.

No German author of the present time is more popular in his own country than REUTER. He is pronounced by a competent German critic to be deservedly "the most popular German writer of the last half century."

REUTER is especially noted as the *rare humorist, the genuine poet and the fascinating delineator* of the lives of his *Platt-Deutsch* neighbors, and as such is probably more beloved than any other German author of the day. The tale in question is one of his best and most important works, giving its readers, with its other entertainment and profit, a charming acquaintance with the quaint, interesting *Platt-Deutsch* people.

"Fritz Reuter is one of the most popular writers in Germany. . . . The charm of his stories lies in their simplicity and exquisite truth to Nature. He has 'the loving heart' which Carlyle tells us is the secret of writing; and Reuter is not graphic merely, he is photographic. His characters impress one so forcibly with their reality that one need not to be told they are portraits from life. Even the villains must have been old acquaintances. . . . It ('During my Apprenticeship') is one of the best of Reuter's stories, exhibiting his turn for the pathetic as well as for the humorous."—*New York Evening Post.*

"It has a freshness and novelty that are rare in these times."—*Philadelphia Evening Bulletin.*

The Sylvestres; or, The Outcasts. A Novel.

By M. DE BETHAM-EDWARDS, author of "Kitty," "Dr. Jacob," etc. Illustrated. 8vo. Paper. 75 cents. Extra cloth. $1.25.

"It is an exceptionally vigorous and healthy as well as happy tale."—*Philadelphia North American.*

"It is one of the author's best."—*New York Home Journal.*

"A capital novel."—*Pittsburg Gazette.*

"The story is well constructed, and the descriptive passages with which the work abounds are worthy of the highest praise. The sketches of scenery are painted with the touch of an artist."—*Philadelphia Ev. Bulletin.*

Myself. A Romance of New England Life.

12mo. Extra cloth. $2.

"This is really a capital story. The characters are drawn with a free and sharp pen, the style is fresh and lively and the plot quite unhackneyed."—*Boston Courier.*

How will it End? A Romance.

By J. C. Heywood, author of "Herodias," "Antonius," etc. 12mo. Extra cloth. $1.50.

"It is a fascinating novel, which must exert a good influence, and one that should be widely read."—*Wilkes's Spirit of the Times.*

Doings in Maryland; or, Matilda Douglas.

"TRUTH STRANGER THAN FICTION." 12mo. Extra cloth. $1.75.

It is a very perfect story—simple, noble and without that straining for literary effect which constitutes the best attainable definition of the sensational."—*New York Home Journal.*

PUBLICATIONS OF J. B. LIPPINCOTT & CO.

Dorothy Fox. A novel.

By Louisa Parr, author of "How it all Happened," etc. With numerous Illustrations. 8vo. Paper cover. 75 cents. Extra cloth. $1.25.

"The Quaker character, though its quaintness and simplicity may seem easy enough to catch, requires a delicate workman to do it justice. Such an artist is the author of 'Dorothy Fox,' and we must thank her for a charming novel. The story is dramatically interesting, and the characters are drawn with a firm and graceful hand. The style is fresh and natural, vigorous without vulgarity, simple without mawkishness. Dorothy herself is represented as charming all hearts, and she will charm all readers. . . We wish 'Dorothy Fox' many editions."—*London Times.*

"One of the best novels of the season."—*Philadelphia Press.*

"The characters are brought out in life-like style, and cannot fail to attract the closest attention."—*Pittsburg Gazette.*

"It is admirably told, and will establish the reputation of the author among novelists."—*Albany Argus.*

How it all Happened.

By Louisa Parr, author of "Dorothy Fox," etc. 12mo. Paper cover. 25 cents.

"It is not often that one finds so much pleasure in reading a love story, charmingly told in a few pages."—*Charleston Courier.*

"Is a well-written little love story, in which a great deal is said in a very few words."—*Philadelphia Evening Telegraph.*

"A remarkably clever story."—*Boston Saturday Evening Gazette.*

John Thompson, Blockhead, and Companion Portraits.

By LOUISA PARR, author of "Dorothy Fox." 12mo. With Frontispiece. Extra cloth. $1.75.

"Extremely well-told stories, interesting in characters and incidents, and pure and wholesome in sentiment."—*Boston Watchman and Reflector.*

"These are racy sketches, and belong to that delightful class in which the end comes before the reader is ready for it.

"The style throughout is very simple and fresh, abounding in strong, vivid, idiomatic English."—*Home Journal.*

"They are quite brilliant narrative sketches, worthy of the reputation established by the writer."—*Philadelphia Inquirer.*

"Very presentable, very readable."—*New York Times.*

The Quiet Miss Godolphin, by Ruth Garrett; and

A CHANCE CHILD, by EDWARD GARRETT, joint authors of "Occupations of a Retired Life" and "White as Snow." With Six Illustrations by Townley Green. 16mo. Cloth. 75 cents. Paper cover. 50 cents.

"These stories are characterized by great strength and beauty of thought, with a singularly attractive style. Their influence will not fail to improve and delight."—*Philadelphia Age.*

St. Cecilia. A Modern Tale from Real Life.

Part I.—ADVERSITY. 12mo. Extra cloth. $1.50.

"It is carefully and beautifully written."—*Washington Chronicle.*

"A tale that we can cheerfully recommend as fresh, entertaining and well written."—*Louisville Courier Journal.*

Blanche Gilroy. A Girl's Story. A Novel. By MARGARET HOSMER, author of "The Morrisons," "Ten Years of a Lifetime," etc. 12mo. Extra cloth. $1.50.

"Its tone is excellent."—*Philadelphia Age.*

"It is a love-story of the intense and tragical sort, with a deep plot and any amount of stirring incident. The characters are drawn with much distinctness and vigor, and the story sweeps on to its end amid a rushing whirl of cross-purposes with decoying fascination. It must be said, too, that the secret of the interest is in the characters and their destinies, since the language of the narrative is neither florid nor exaggerated."—*Boston Advertiser.*

The Holcombes. A Story of Virginia Home-Life. By MARY TUCKER MAGILL. 12mo. Extra cloth. $1.50.

"The subject is a charming one."—*Winchester Times.*

"This book is written from an elevated point of view, both as to its society and scenery. . . . We find it an interesting story. . . . The tone of this work is admirable, and we shall be glad to hear again from the author."—*Philadelphia Age.*

Left to Herself. A Novel. By Jennie Woodville. 12mo. Extra cloth. $1.50.

"Such a spicy mixture of ingredients as this book contains cannot fail to make an exciting story; and as the plot is well conceived, the characters well drawn and the interest well sustained to the end, without degenerating into the melo-dramatic, we are disposed to recommend to others a book which we ourselves have found captivating enough to burn the midnight gas over."—*Philadelphia Evening Bulletin.*

"Amid the flood of mediocrity and trash that is poured upon the public in the shape of novels, it is the pleasantest duty of the critic to discern real merit, and this we recognize in 'Left to Herself.'"—*The Philadelphia Age.*

"We predict for it a large sale in this section, and anticipate that it will be favorably received by the reading public of the whole country."—*Lynchburg Republican.*

Was She Engaged? A Novel. By "Jonquil." 12mo. Extra cloth. $1.50.

"A pleasant, bright and sparkling story."—*Baltimore Gazette.*

"This entertaining love story comes to us fresh from the pen and the press, in clear, readable type that would make a far less enticing work pleasurable. We feel assured that those who are fond of the purely emotional in character or literature will find ample entertainment from its pages. The story is written in the first person, and is a narrative vastly superior to a great mass of so-called novels. There is not a particle of rant from cover to cover. No passion is 'torn to tatters.' No impossible incidents are introduced, and yet the interest is maintained throughout. The pure, sweet character of Lucy, so well displayed against the more energetic but less poetical Rosamond; the sunlight and shadow of these two, enhanced by the dark and designing character of Sarah, combine to produce prominent impressions."—*Philadelphia Press.*

"Every one seems to be going for 'Was She Engaged.'"—*Boston Saturday Evening Gazette.*

Lost and Saved. A Novel. By Hon. Mrs. Norton. New Edition. 12mo. Cloth. $1.25.

"Remarkably well written; . . . very readable."—*Philadelphia Press.*

"The best novel that Mrs. Norton has written."—*Baltimore Gazette.*

PUBLICATIONS OF J. B. LIPPINCOTT & CO.

Eleonore. A Romance. After the German of E. VON ROTHENFELS, author of "On the Vistula," "Heath-flower," etc. By FRANCES ELIZABETH BENNETT, translator of "Lowly Ways." 12mo. Fine cloth. Ornamented. $1.50.

"A vivid reproduction of German life and character."—*Boston Globe.*

"A bright, readable novel."—*Philadelphia Evening Bulletin.*

"The plot is developed with remarkable skill."—*Boston Saturday Evening Gazette.*

Tom Pippin's Wedding. A Novel. By the Author of "The Fight at Dame Europa's School." 16mo. Extra cloth. $1.25. Paper cover. 75 cents.

"We must confess that its perusal has caused us more genuine amusement than we have derived from any fiction, not professedly comic, for many a long day. . . . Without doubt this is, if not the most remarkable, certainly the most original, novel of the day."—*London Bookseller.*

"It is fresh in characterization, and is as instructive as it is entertaining."—*Boston Evening Traveller.*

Irene. A Tale of Southern Life. Illustrated; and HATHAWAY STRANGE. 8vo. Paper cover. 35 cents.

"They are both cleverly written."—*New Orleans Times.*

"These stories are pleasantly written. They are lively, gossippy and genial."—*Baltimore Gazette.*

Wearithorne; or, In the Light of To-Day. A Novel. By "FADETTE," author of "Ingemisco" and "Randolph Honor." 12mo. Extra cloth. $1.50.

"Written with exceptional dramatic vigor and terseness, and with strong powers of personation."—*Philadelphia North American.*

"It is written with vigor, and the characters are sketched with a marked individuality."—*Literary Gazette.*

"The style is clever and terse, the characters are boldly etched, and with strong individualities."—*New Orleans Times.*

"Simply and tenderly written."—*Washington Chronicle.*

Steps Upward. A Temperance Tale. By Mrs. F. D. GAGE, author of "Elsie Magoon," etc. 12mo. Extra cloth. $1.50.

"'Steps Upward,' by Mrs. Frances Dana Gage, is a temperance story of more than ordinary interest. Diana Dinmont, the heroine, is an earnest, womanly character, and in her own upward progress helps many another to a better life."—*New York Independent.*

"We are sure no reader can but enjoy and profit by it."—*New York Evening Mail.*

Minna Monté. A Novel. By "Stella." 12mo. $1.25.

"A domestic story possessing great spirit and many other attractive features."—*St. Louis Republican.*

"We have in this little volume an agreeable story, pleasantly told."—*Pittsburg Gazette.*

Folle-Farine. A Novel. By "Ouida," author of "Idalia," "Under Two Flags," "Strathmore," etc. 12mo Fine cloth. $1.50.

"Ouida's pen is a graphic one, and page after page of gorgeous word-painting flow from it in a smooth, melodious rhythm that often has the perfect measure of blank verse, and needs only to be broken into line. There is in it, too, the eloquence of genius."—*Phila. Eve. Bulletin.*

"This work fully sustains the writer's previous reputation, and may be numbered among the best of her works."—*Troy Times.*

"Full of vivacity."—*Fort Wayne Gazette.*

"The best of her numerous stories."—*Vicksburg Herald.*

Idalia. A Novel. By "Ouida," author of "Strathmore," "Tricotrin," "Under Two Flags," etc. 12mo. Cloth. $1.50.

"It is a story of love and hatred, of affection and jealousy, of intrigue and devotion. . . . We think this novel will attain a wide popularity, especially among those whose refined taste enables them to appreciate and enjoy what is truly beautiful in literature."—*Albany Evening Journal.*

A Leaf in the Storm, and other Novelettes. By "OUIDA," author of "Folle-Farine," "Granville de Vigne," etc. Two Illustrations. Fifth Edition. 8vo. Paper cover. 50 cents.

"Those who look upon light literature as an art will read these tales with pleasure and satisfaction."—*Baltimore Gazette.*

"In the longest of these stories, 'A Branch of Lilac,' the simplicity of the narrative—so direct and truthful—produces the highest artistic effect. It required high genius to write such a tale in such a manner."—*Philadelphia Press.*

Cecil Castlemaine's Gage, and other Stories. By "OUIDA," author of "Granville de Vigne," "Chandos," etc. Revised for Publication by the Author. 12mo. Cloth. $1.50.

Randolph Gordon, and other Stories. By "Ouida," author of "Idalia," "Under Two Flags," etc. 12mo. Cloth. $1.50.

Beatrice Boville, and other Stories. By "Ouida," author of "Strathmore," "Cecil Castlemaine's Gage," etc. 12mo. Cloth. $1.50.

"The many works already in print by this versatile authoress have established her reputation as a novelist, and these short stories contribute largely to the stock of pleasing narratives and adventures alive to the memory of all who are given to romance and fiction"—*New Haven Journal.*

PUBLICATIONS OF J. B. LIPPINCOTT & CO.

Tricotrin. The Story of a Waif and Stray. By "OUIDA," author of "Under Two Flags," etc. With Portrait of the Author from an Engraving on Steel. 12mo. Cloth. $1.50.

"The story is full of vivacity and of thrilling interest."—*Pittsburgh Gazette.*

"Tricotrin is a work of absolute power, some truth and deep interest."—*N. Y. Day Book.*

"The book abounds in beautiful sentiment, expressed in a concentrated, compact style which cannot fail to be attractive and will be read with pleasure in every household."—*San Francisco Times.*

Granville de Vigne; or, Held in Bondage. A Tale of the Day. By "OUIDA," author of "Idalia," "Tricotrin," etc. 12mo. Cloth. $1.50.

"This is one of the most powerful and spicy works of fiction which the present century, so prolific in light literature, has produced."

Strathmore; or, Wrought by His Own Hand. A Novel. By "OUIDA," author of "Granville de Vigne," etc. 12mo. Cloth. $1.50.

"It is a romance of the intense school, but it is written with more power, fluency and brilliancy than the works of Miss Braddon and Mrs. Wood, while its scenes and characters are taken from high life."—*Boston Transcript.*

Chandos. A Novel. By "Ouida," author of "Strathmore," "Idalia," etc. 12mo. Cloth. $1.50.

"Those who have read these two last named brilliant works of fiction (Granville de Vigne and Strathmore) will be sure to read *Chandos.* It is characterized by the same gorgeous coloring of style and somewhat exaggerated portraiture of scenes and characters, but it is a story of surprising power and interest."—*Pittsburgh Evening Chronicle.*

Under Two Flags. A Story of the Household and the Desert. By "OUIDA," author of "Tricotrin," "Granville de Vigne," etc. 12mo. Cloth. $1.50.

"No one will be able to resist its fascination who once begins its perusal"—*Phila. Evening Bulletin.*

"This is probably the most popular work of Ouida. It is enough of itself to establish her fame as one of the most eloquent and graphic writers of fiction now living."—*Chicago Journal of Commerce.*

Puck. His Vicissitudes, Adventures, Observations, Conclusions, Friendship and Philosophies. By "OUIDA," author of "Strathmore," "Idalia," "Tricotrin," etc 12mo. Fine cloth. $1.50.

"Its quaintness will provoke laughter, while the interest in the central character is kept up unabated."—*Albany Journal.*

"It sustains the widely-spread popularity of the author."—*Pittsburgh Gazette.*

The Old Mam'selle's Secret. From the German of E. Marlitt, author of "Gold Elsie," etc. By Mrs. A. L. WISTER. Sixth edition. 12mo. Cloth. $1.50.

"A more charming story, and one which, having once commenced, it seemed more difficult to leave, we have not met with for many a day."—*The Round Table.*

"Is one of the most intense, concentrated, compact novels of the day. . . . And the work has the minute fidelity of the author of 'The Initials,' the dramatic unity of Reade and the graphic power of George Eliot."—*Columbus (O.) Journal.*

Gold Elsie. From the German of E. Marlitt, author of "The Old Mam'selle's Secret," etc. By Mrs. A. L. WISTER. Fifth edition. 12mo. Cloth. $1.50.

"A charming book. It absorbs your attention from the title-page to the end."—*The Home Circle.*

"A charming story charmingly told."—*Baltimore Gazette.*

Countess Gisela. From the German of E. Marlitt, author of "Gold Elsie," etc. By Mrs. A. L. WISTER. Third edition. 12mo. Cloth. $1.50.

"There is more dramatic power in this than in any of the stories by the same author that we have read."—*N. O. Times.*

"It is a story that arouses the interest of the reader from the outset."—*Pittsburgh Gazette.*

"The best work by this author."—*Philadelphia Telegraph.*

Over Yonder. From the German of E. Marlitt, author of "Countess Gisela," etc. Third edition. With a full-page Illustration. 8vo. Paper cover. 30 cents.

"'Over Yonder' is a charming novelette. The admirers of 'Old Mam'selle's Secret' will give it a glad reception, while those who are ignorant of the merits of this author will find in it a pleasant introduction to the works of a gifted writer."—*Daily Sentinel.*

The Little Moorland Princess. From the German of E. Marlitt, author of "The Old Mam'selle's Secret," "Gold Elsie," etc. By Mrs. A. L. WISTER. Fourth edition. 12mo. Fine cloth. $1.75.

"By far the best foreign romance of the season."—*Philadelphia Press.*

"It is a great luxury to give one's self up to its balmy influence."—*Chicago Evening Journal.*

Magdalena. From the German of E. Marlitt, author of "Countess Gisela," etc. And THE LONELY ONES ("The Solitaries"). From the German of Paul Heyse. With two Illustrations. 8vo. Paper cover. 35 cents.

"We know of no way in which a leisure hour may be more pleasantly whiled away than by a perusal of either of these tales."—*Indianapolis Sentinel.*