

FRESH LEAVES ^{from}
WESTERN
WOODS.



BUFFALO,

GEO. H. DERBY & CO.

FRESH LEAVES

FROM

WESTERN WOODS.

BY

METTA VICTORIA FULLER.

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GEO. H. DERBY AND CO.

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COWLES

THE broad and blooming West, so rich in sylvan adornment, and so prolific in wild flowers of rare odor and unrivaled beauty, is becoming equally noted for the redolent blossoms of genius which prank the hearth of its prairie homes. Each year adds to the number of the latter, which are expanding with wonderful rapidity, and displaying an opulence of foliage almost astonishing. The leaves which they early fling to the winds retain, in many instances, perennial verdure and fragrance, and are too lovely to be trodden under foot in the retreats of rural industry. Such, it appears to us, is the quality of those gathered herein, and presented to the public.

PUBLISHERS.

TO

MY SISTER FRANCES,

These Leaves

ARE

AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

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FRESH LEAVES
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THE TEMPTER.

CHAPTER I.

THE Serpent lay coiled amid the flowers of Eden. A soft and subtle, but terrible smile gleamed out from his luring eyes, as he curled his glittering form gracefully in the deep moss, and looked out over Paradise. The sun had set. A stillness that was deeper than death—a stillness fearful and profound, hung over Earth. Two forms of wonderful beauty, with hands clasped together and features pale and still, went silently from that bright, holy Eden. They were Adam and Eve. The burning eyes of the Serpent rested on them with a calm, cold, horrible delight, till the four gates of Paradise were closed, shutting them out for ever from its glory. Four cherubims, with

flaming swords, swept down through space, and stood upon the gates, guarding the tree of life. A huge black cloud sailed up from where the sun had set, and spread over the heavens its gloomy and threatening wings. A mighty wind rushed on before, bending the golden-laden trees, and laying the fair flowers low. The stillness, so intense, was broken. The birds of the air hooted and screamed, and the beasts of the earth went howling and raging through that once peaceful and beautiful garden. The Serpent saw, and heard, and smiled—but the smile ended in a shudder, as he felt the presence of an awful curse hanging in the hot, dark air around him. He knew that he was made a crawling and loathsome thing, and he shuddered—but he knew that he had power to bruise the heel of the offspring of Woman, and he smiled. His companion came gliding through the luxuriant moss and coiled herself at his side, a foul but glittering thing. He turned in disgust from her cunning and treacherous wiles; and, hating the curse which himself had brought upon her, he fled hissing away through the furious storm which was desolating Eden.

* * * * *

Two brothers stood together in a field waving with yellow corn. They were slender and graceful, and oh! so youthful and beautiful. Locks of dark

hair waved in rich masses over the white brow of the elder. His eye was black and flashing, and his mouth was curved into proud and passionate lines. All manliness and beauty was developed in his tall form and perfect features.

The younger was just as beautiful, but a thousand times more soft and womanly in his almost childish loveliness. His deep, blue, liquid eyes looked out so winningly through thick, drooping lashes of gold; his cheek was warm and crimson-tinted; and his hair fell in bright curls upon his polished shoulders. His lips were full and red, and wreathed with a sweet expression of tenderness; and his forehead looked pure like an infant's.

The brothers were conversing earnestly together; and saw not the glowing eyes fixed on them with malicious exultation, as, hid amid the golden grain, the Serpent looked and listened. The proud eyes of the elder grew darker and more flashing, and his haughty lip quivered as he spoke. There was some bitter feeling in his heart, which the low, pleading voice of his brother could not appease. The Serpent knew that the fire of jealousy was kindling in his bosom. So he distilled a subtle venom from his fangs through the air which surrounded the youths, and lay still, watching with hateful satisfaction its influence on the high passions of the elder. He saw his

form dilate with rage, his face grow pale, his eyes flash fire, his teeth closed tightly in the lower lip—he saw the other kiss his forehead and strive to soothe him—he saw the uplifted weapon, the blow, the falling form—and then he glided silently away and left them alone, the murdered and the murderer.

Abel was dead. The bright, innocent, beautiful boy lay lifeless on a bed of yellow grain. There was no breath on the pallid lip, no light in the closed eye, no quiver of the fallen and fringed lid—but, sunken in the fair and delicate temple was that ghastly wound, flowing with bright, red blood.

There was death—death on Earth!

How terrible was the conviction which crept into the cold, still heart of Cain! as he stood with folded arms and gazed on the brother he had slain. All his furious passion was stilled in a moment, as white and motionless as marble he remained, his strong gaze staring on that sweet, pale face, and his ashen lips parted in horror. Then he cast himself on the ground beside him, and called upon his name with phrenzied wildness—but there came no reply. He covered his cheek with kisses, and clasped him to his bosom, but there was no return of his caresses. He put his hand on the still heart—it did not beat. He placed his ear to those cold lips—they did not breathe. Then he put back the silken tresses from

the bloody wound, and gazed upon the crimson tide ebbing slowly forth, till, with a shriek of anguish and despair, he pushed away the lifeless form, and rushed far away over hill and valley into the depths of a mighty wilderness.

As if pursued by that phantom of horror, he fled, onward and onward with rushing steps through the gloomy shadows. Hours passed by, and he still fled on, when suddenly he paused. A wild thought that he might hide his crime from the avenging eye of his God came into his heart, and back, quickly as he had come, did he retrace his steps. It was the sunset hour when he reached the spot where his brother lay. He twined his arms about that cold and beautiful form, and dragging it to the brink of the river which skirted his broad fields, he cast it hastily in the deep waves. There was a splash, a bubble, a closing together of the parted water, and the river flowed on, bright and peaceful as before.

Cain sat down on the flowery bank, and washed the blood-stains from his hands, and cooled his burning brow in the pure waves flowing musically over the grave of his murdered brother. But the stain upon his soul he could not bathe away—the fever in his heart the bright waves could not cool. A strange fascination drew him back to the place where the earth had drank up the blood of Abel. Suddenly,

as he stood there, a glory and a brightness filled the air, too dazzling and terrible for his guilty eyes; and a voice—the solemn voice of the Almighty—broke the stillness, with that fearful question, so thrilling to his startled soul—

“Where is thy brother?”

“Am I my brother’s keeper?” was the faint reply.

“What hast thou done? Thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground—” and solemnly and fearfully the curse for his great sin was pronounced by the dread voice of the Lord God.

The glory and oppressive brightness vanished, and Cain was left alone—with the brand of a murderer set upon his brow, burning for ever deep into his brain.

“Ha! ha! ha!” laughed the Serpent in his ear.

The murderer started, but the rustle of the retreating mocker through the ripe grain alone met his ear.

* * * * *

Adam and Eve sat together beneath the pleasant shade of a broad palm tree, waiting for the return of their children. Bread, and honey, and milk, with luscious fruit, stood ready for their simple evening meal, beneath the shadows of the waving leaves.

“Our children tarry late,” said Adam, softly kissing the fair forehead of his wife.

“Praise God forevermore, that even amid darkness

and many trials, he hath thus blessed us in our beautiful offspring,” murmured Eve, raising her bright head from the bosom of her husband, and turning her soft eyes toward the path through which her boys came every evening to their home.

Lovelier, far lovelier than our wildest dream, was the first mother, with her rare and radiant form, her motions of exceeding grace, her rich, long, flowing tresses, and face so fair and faultless, so sweetly proud and pure, so winningly subdued. Her wistful, earnest gaze lighted up with joy as she saw, through the long line of fig-trees skirting the path, the graceful form of her first-born child advancing through the shadows, which, chequered and quivering, were shifting o’er the avenue. But the gladness shining clearly ’neath her silken lashes, seemed broken and troubled as she leaned further forward, and continued—

“Where is my golden-haired, my glad-eyed Abel? Cain cometh alone—and see! his step is slow and his proud head bent. It is not thus that our children are wont to greet us.”

And Adam, too, looked forth intently, as, with heavy steps and drooping brow, their boy drew near.

Springing from her low seat, Eve ran to greet him.

“My child, where is thy brother? Why art thou so silent, why so pale, so sorrowful? Where is thy brother?—have the wolves, the lions so terrible,

devoured him while watching his flocks? Speak! tell me, where is Abel?"

"Mother! I have murdered him!"

"Cain!"

"Cain!"

Shrieked the mother, and broke, quivering, from the blanched lips of the father.

"Nay! curse me not—I am already cursed! Look! look upon the brand that God hath set upon my guilty brow. I am henceforth a wanderer and an outcast. No more to hear the words of tenderness, no more to linger by the side of those I love—I go! Father! mother! farewell."

"Stay, my child,"—gasped Eve; "O God, take not both my treasures, my children, from me!"

"Nay, let him go—he is unworthy," said the cold, stern tones of the father, made desolate in the pride of his manhood, and frozen into pitiless, unforgiving sternness by the depth of his great sorrow.

With no other word, the murderer turned and disappeared. Low, like a crouching thing upon the ground, did Adam sink, his powerful frame convulsed with mighty emotions, and his voice, broken and hollow, murmuring,—

"Oh! God! must thus our sins be visited upon our offspring? Thy wrath is greater than we can bear—take away the cup of thy bitterness, Lord God!"

Beside him knelt his wife, her white arms wound around him, her beautiful face buried in his bosom, as, chokingly and broken, the words struggled up from her stricken heart:

"My children! my children! Alas, my Abel! never, never to see thee, to hear the music of thy voice, to mark the bounding of thy graceful step, to feel thy warm kiss on my cheek—to lose thee thus, my child! And he, too—my dark-eyed Cain—to be thus cursed, thus guilty, thus a wanderer upon earth! Why, why was I thus tempted—why must our sin, our curse, go down unto our children? Oh, God! be——"

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the Serpent, through the twilight.

Shuddering, those two desolate beings clung closer to each other.

CHAPTER II.

"THOU wilt wed with me, my Zumah?"

"Nay, Aal, I love thee, but I fear thee."

"Thou *must* be my wife, Zumah. Then thou shalt live as did thy parents in Paradise. No sin shall stain thy fair young brow. Thou shalt eat of the tree of life, though the flaming swords of the cherubim point even from the gates of Eden. Greater than the cherubim am I—greater than any, save God himself, the maker of all things. Beautiful art thou as the rose in blossom—thou shalt be as wise as the angels. Thine eyes are brighter than stars—like them shall they shine for ever. Knowledge that is boundless, beauty that is fadeless, a home in the garden of Eden, shalt thou have."

"Thy words are sweeter than the dropping of honey, and thine eyes allure me with a strange fascination; thy form is taller and fairer than any of my brothers—I love thee when thou art with me, but I dread thee when away."

"Maiden, thy speech is folly. Think of the promises I make thee."

"Even so did the Serpent tempt my mother."

"Thou art cruel, Zumah—thou canst not love me. Do I tempt thee when I offer thee heaven? Wilt thou not love me, not wed me?"

"Oh! if I dared——"

"Thou must dare. Look into my eyes, my lily, my fragrant flower—look into my eyes and love me."

The fair young maiden did look, long, long, into those black, glowing, fascinating orbs—gazed as if falling into a dream; for their power had spelled her and she could not turn away.

"Dost thou love me, Zumah?"

"I do—I do," murmured the maiden, almost in a whisper, as slowly she sank forward, with her eyes still fixed on his, till she lay powerless and spell-bound in his arms.

"Mine, maiden, mine!" was hissed through the teeth of the tempter, as his gaze glowed searchingly, with fearful exultation, upon the pallid face of the victim, lying insensible in his grasp. Rapidly the form of the tormentor changed, till a hateful serpent twined itself around the young girl's form, who lay in its foul coils, all pale and still and beautiful, all cold and white and pure.

"Thou shalt atone for the curse thy mother brought

upon me—the paradise I promised thee shall be a hell, thy life an endless torture,” muttered the destroyer.

“Nay, the maiden is sinless, and innocence shall ever be more strong than the power of a fallen angel,” uttered a solemn voice. “Leave her! till Zumah hath sinned can she never be harmed.”

“Baffled! by the Eternal One I would have rivaled!” The coils of the Serpent unwound, and he glided, hissing and maddened, away, leaving the daughter of Eve insensible, among the dewy flowers of evening. The breeze brought back the breath to her pale lips and, with a shudder, her large eyes unclosed, but nothing, save the stars of heaven, met their fearful gaze.

* * * * *

“CURSES! curses! curses! for ever, on all the children of earth! My power shall they feel through all time—they shall give themselves up to me for slaves through all eternity! I will be with them when they know it not—I will win them over to my dark embrace ere they know the form of the spirit which tempts them. Invisible and immaterial in form, my spirit shall lurk ever where they least expect to find me, and when they deem them safe, my fangs shall drag them down, down to that black home where fallen

angels dwell in horrible despair! I will smile—I will whisper—I will win—I will laugh—I will taunt—I will torture! I will sparkle in the maddening wine-cup! I will throb in the fiery pulse of youth! I will haunt the revel! I will steal away the treasures from the home of innocence! I will burn and blacken the white brow of virtue! I will howl, and rage, and shriek, amid the rich, red blood, and the angry carnage of the battle. Hell shall play with Heaven to win Earth—who will be the winner—who?”

Thus muttered the Serpent to himself, one thousand years before the Flood. And the game began. For a thousand years that game was played. Winning! winning! winning all on earth, the Serpent raised his burning, withering eyes to heaven in the guise of woman's loveliness, and won down angels from their starry thrones to lose their holiness within his fiery folds. Earth was a mighty prize—slowly, surely it was won! Unheeded the play went on, amid the revel and the dance—amid scenes of indescribable magnificence—amid splendor unrivaled—bright, bewildering, dazzling, deceptive!

There was a midnight festival within a gorgeous palace. So bright, so glittering was the scene, an Angel left awhile his home on high, and circling down through the golden stars, he walked with folded wings amid the throng of guests. A million lamps sparkled

like suns, in hall, and bower, and terrace. Ceilings of jeweled, pearl and gold, and walls of mirroring steel, reflected back their light on beautiful forms in flowing robes, gliding and circling with an undulating grace through the dreamy mazes of the dance. Or else, the waving of the flowery foliage, and the breath of the whispering breeze, brake their rich sparkle into a thousand changing and fantastic shapes, lovely in shifting light and shade. And here and there they gleamed upon long avenues, where the tempting board was spread with costly luxuries. Vessels of gold and silver, wrought into rare devices, were heaped with viands, and the jewels in the wrought wine-cups sparkled brighter than their brimming contents.

But there were brighter things than these in heaven, and the Angel glided through them untempted by their beauty, yet wondering, and admiring the skill and genius of man. But as he went, he met the lovely princess in whose honor this great festival was given. He paused to gaze on her. So beautiful! his heart thrilled at her glance.

Her hair fell down in wavy tresses to her white, sandaled feet, as glossy and as ebon as the raven's wing. The jeweled sleeve, looped up to her fair shoulder, revealed an arm, polished and perfect; the velvet robe, heavy with richness, swayed around a form of most exceeding grace, and soft, full loveli-

ness. Her brow was high and white, and looked so pure, and her sweet mouth was curved exquisitely, in playful, tender smiles. Her eyes! one could not look beneath those half-drooped lids of snow, and their dark, sweeping fringe, into the dreamy, brilliant wells glancing from out the shadow, one moment unbewildered.

Advancing with light steps to where the Angel stood, she said —

"Welcome, most honored guest. By thy folded wings, thou art an Angel. Tarry with us till the morn."

She twined her snowy arm in his, and turned her bright face up to his bewitchingly, and spoke to him low, musical words. The Angel returned never again into heaven!

But the beautiful princess had a rival. It was not long ere the deluded Angel, loathing the arts of the peerless creature who had won him from the sky, turned coldly from her alluring caresses. Every feeling of her ambitious, passionate nature was wrapped up in the bright being she had won to dwell with her, and now, when she saw the change that had come over him, her wild heart vowed that nothing, nothing should win him from her side. She feared no rival, for was not her beauty greater than any maiden's in her kingdom? But she saw that his love was

languishing, and allurements that might almost chain the stars she practiced in his presence. The siren voice, the wreathing arms, the glorious eyes, the winning lips, the dream-like step, the wavy motion — oh, all was beautiful, most beautiful! But passion had died in the Angel's heart. A longing — intense, earnest, uncontrollable — for the purity he had lost, dwelt ever in his restless bosom. His wings were for ever folded — he could not unfurl them — he could never rise to his holy home. But he yearned to meet a being on earth that was like unto his lost companions, spotless and pure, and knowing not of sin.

There was one such on earth, and the Angel met her. She was a shepherdess, dwelling apart from all, among her sunny, vine-clad hills. Not so bewildering was her loveliness as that of the proud princess; but soft, and spiritual, and pure. Her brow was clear as pearl, circled with bands of braided, golden hair; her step timid and graceful; her eyes shadowy and soft; her voice like tinkling waves of music, clear, low, and swellingly sweet.

There was a sympathy of spirit between her and the Angel. Every day he wandered forth to meet her, beside a deep, cool well in the shadow of two hills. Her gentle eyes would grow brilliant at his approach, and the color would come and go softly on her beautiful young cheek. Their communion

was of things holy and lovely — the wonderful stars, the heaven he had deserted, all things bright and good were in their converse, as they sat with clasped hands alone in a fair, fresh valley, by the dimpling waves of the flower-circled well. But a dark, flashing eye was at length a watcher of their meetings. The princess had stolen after him, to ascertain the mysterious cause of his daily wanderings. Rage, and jealousy, and revenge burned silently in her heart, when she saw that she was rivaled in her wild and passionate love for the Angel — rivaled by an humble shepherdess! She stifled the first burst of her wild anger, and, eve after eve, followed the steps of her false lover to the valley, and sat beneath the screening vines, and listened to their words, and meditated revenge. She saw them kneel together, night after night, amid the dewy flowers, and pray to the great God to take away the stain of sin and earthliness from their joined souls, and give them wings to seek the skies.

"Now, dearest," murmured the Angel, one fair eve, "to-morrow, at the midnight hour, I will be here. And something tells me that our faith and prayers will be repaid — that golden pinions will be given thee, and mine once more be free. Be ready to leave earth. Farewell."

He left his young bride kneeling on the turf, with

an exquisite sense of happiness thrilling her lyre-like heart, and glided away among the shadows sleeping in the vale.

"Thou wilt enter heaven through the gates of death!" muttered the princess, stealing noiselessly away toward the little cot that stood half revealed in the soft moonlight.

A little silver goblet filled with milk — the simple meal of the shepherdess — sat on a table by the casement. Taking from her vestment a jeweled vial, she let fall just one drop into the milk, and glided rapidly away.

Another evening came, and with a high and thrilling heart and bounding step, the Angel sought the vale. Close to the water's side his love reclined, and the gleam of her white robe brought gladness to his heart. She did not rise to greet him, she spoke no word of welcome.

"My love, my angel, come with me to heaven!" he said, and stooped and kissed her fair, pure brow.

He started, and drew back, and gazed with a long-stricken gaze upon his bride. Cold — cold and motionless! so sweetly like a pleasant slumber, yet so cold. Dead! she had crept there to die! alas! alas!

"And art thou dead, my bride! Who has done this, my beautiful? Gone, before me, pure angel, to thy home! I wonder if I will know thee amid the starry

throngs of heaven? yes, for the fairest and brightest there. Well! earth shall chain me not — I will die too! — mine is the strongest wing, and I will overtake thee ere thou dost reach the sky! My beautiful! here let our bodies rest."

Almost before the murmur of his voice faded away, the Angel raised her pale form in his arms, and leaping in the wave, sank silently beneath its glittering surface.

A fearful shriek rang on the air, as the princess sprang to drag him from the grave himself had sought — but it was too late! Dark, deep and still slept the well — lifeless and cold slept the Angel and his bride beneath it.

* * * * *

And still the mighty game was played, and still the Serpent won. Vice decked her hideous form in glittering robes, and wore a smiling mask, and walked abroad. Terrible wickedness came forth unshrinking to the light of day; and foulest crimes lurked in dark, hidden places. A polluted and abandoned thing was Earth — there was no purity upon her brow.

One soul alone, of all the countless thousands in the world, remained holy. In vain the Serpent strove to lure him from his sinlessness, to gain him for his own — Noah was pure. The Serpent won his game

at length, and claimed his fearful prize. So an ark of Gopher-wood did Noah make, and, according to the bidding of the Lord, he and his family, and two, or even, of every living thing went in. And then the floods came down — oh terrible!

The rivers swelled and fretted — the mighty seas bounded like maddened things, and broke away and rushed upon the world — the torrents leaped and thundered from high rocks — and down — down — down through the thick air the angry waters fell. Shrieking in mad despair, bright forms of youth, withered and foul old age, corrupted childhood, vile, degraded manhood clothed in the garb of splendor, all, rushed with fearful footsteps for the hills, dropping the treasures they had grasped in their wild hurry, and strewing the pathway with the riches hindering their flight.

The waters rose and filled the valley. Many a gorgeous fabric and rare device of art lay buried in the floods, yet still they rose, high, high over glittering palace, and splendid temple, and mighty tower. Most fearfully sublime, most grandly terrible, was this destruction of earth's glory!

In vain — in vain the pale and frightened throng climb the high mountains — the waters overtake them. In vain the eagle screams, and battles upward with his weary wing through the dark, drenching torrent.

Only heaven is above — only one vast sea below — only death, death all around!

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the Serpent, as his huge form lashed the angry waves, and his burning eyes gloated on the destruction of every living thing.

"Ha! ha! ha!" he chuckled, "I have won! I have won! Ye are mine! ye are mine! ye are mine! foul seed of woman, ye are mine! I played for Heaven once, and lost — I played for Earth, and won! *Mine — MINE!*" he shrieked and shouted to the pale wretches struggling in the deep waves.

Ever and anon that hateful laugh broke through the tempest — ever and anon that exulting cry rang out upon the roaring, rushing, furious wilderness of waters.

A wreck — a ruin — a lifeless thing — a charnel house was earth. Most solemn punishment of sin!

CHAPTER III.

EARTH was repeopled!

Upon her brow she wore two emerald glories, each set with five bright jewels—the plains of Sodom and Gomorrah and their ten glittering cities.

The sun looked down and smiled on their magnificence; and in his smile there sparkled gorgeous temples, arches, and domes, and lofty palaces, beautiful fountains, gardens, and terraces, and broad-paved streets, trod by a countless throng.

Riches unbounded, splendor unparalleled, rare devices of art, and wonderful works of beauty, surrounded the new generations of men. Though earth withheld some of her former treasures—though the glorious stars seemed dimmer and more distant,—though the flowers were not so brilliant, nor the murmuring streams so clear—though a thousand nameless things were less beautiful than of old, still nothing seemed wanting of glory and display.

A thousand fathoms down in the cold depths of the ocean the Serpent floated, amid rich wrecks of

former greatness. Far below the hollow roaring of the surf above, he spoke:

“I will visit earth again. Many years have passed since my form has trailed over its flowers. I have lived in the sweeping wave, have existed so exultingly in the element that gave up the seed of woman into my power. Amid desolate ruins I have floated the years away; but my spirit has been busy with the new creation. I have breathed venom on the soft south wind, and evil passions and wild fury into the swift chariot of the tempest. I will go and see how the poison has spread. But most I go to behold the beautiful wonder—the fair woman whose name I hear sung softly on the shore at twilight, and talked of by rude fishermen, or told of on swift-winged vessels far from the land. The beautiful—Alda, the beautiful! We must know each other. Oh! how I love to steal into the pure, fresh hearts of these innocent young creatures, and rifle the honey from the bright flowers of purity, and nurse into life a host of wild and evil passions in the once peaceful bosom, and waken hateful dreams that will never again sleep, till by slow degrees the pure and beautiful, the fairest work of God, is made a fit companion for myself. The earth is waxing full of glory, and *I* must not be idle.”

A soft and glowing flood of light lay trembling on a scene of brightness. It was a luxurious apartment,

the sleeping room of Alda the beautiful. A massive lamp of richly wrought gold, burning fragrant oils, hung in the center of the lofty ceiling. Around it, a circle of alabaster fountains cast up their crystal contents, which, meeting in glittering arches, descended in shining columns into basins constructed with elaborately-arranged wires, giving forth at the touch of the falling water a peculiar and exquisite melody. Of rare mosaic were the floor and ceiling, and windows reaching from one to the other alternated with carved columns of costly wood. A raised marble divan, cushioned with rich silken fabrics, extended around the apartment. Upon this couch, in a soft slumber, lay the mistress of this splendor. She was, indeed, most beautiful. She was very young, and her loveliness was as fresh as that of a bright flower radiant with morning dew. A world of inexpressible beauty hovered around her childish mouth, and the lashes of those closed and half-transparent lids lay thick and dark upon a cheek where rare, rich tints, like clustering roses, lay. Around the slight and exquisitely graceful form flowed a redundant wealth of tresses of soft, dark brown, gleaming with wavy gold where they broke away in masses about her jeweled robe. Polished and dimpled shoulders lay like sculptured loveliness above the rich and sparkling bodice; and fair, round arms twined themselves uncon-

sciously amid bands of shining hair. A tiny foot, with a gemmed sandal, peeped out below her flowing drapery.

A pair of scorching eyes, from amid the flowers and foliage of the terrace, looked in through the low casement on her slumbering sweetness. Alas! alas! if that young maiden is pure as she is beautiful! for the cunning of the tempter is lurking in her pathway! Upon that high, white brow, and in the penciling of those delicate features, he reads a proud, and passionate, and ambitious heart beating in that young bosom.

"As beautiful as Eve! like Eve she falls—but lower, lower!" murmured the Serpent.

Already an evil influence seemed diffused through the perfumed atmosphere, for the maiden was restless in her dreams. The delicate brows were knit, the lashes trembled, and the red lips parted, with an uneasy murmur. Then she started from her sleep, and rising from the divan, her brilliant eyes flashed proudly, and she smiled a bright, triumphant smile.

"Away! away! dark dreams!" she murmured passionately; "is it not to-night I go to meet the beautiful prince? Yes—thy loveliness, Alda, has won thee a tribute even from him, the greatest in the empire. I have seen him in his graceful pride, when he sat on his fiery steed so fearlessly—I have seen him when he mingled, the brightest there, among the revelers at the feast—I have seen him when he

braved the wild beasts at the amphitheatre — and for his pride, his bravery, and his beauty do I wildly love him. And now I am to meet him—perchance to be his queen. A queen! a queen! I will be nothing less—ho! maidens, robe your queen in her bride's attire!"

Clapping her tiny hands, a dozen handmaids entered, bearing her rich array, and soon attired her in magnificence befitting the great triumph awaiting her. The robe flowing down to her feet was of snowy silk, embroidered with seed pearls in rich devices, and fastened at her slender waist by a zone of diamonds which shone one blaze of light. Her luxuriant hair was wreathed into massive braids, and caught gracefully here and there with costly jewels. She wore no wreath nor diadem, for to her lover's hand was reserved the right to adorn her peerless brow with the ruby garland of a favorite, or the honored crown of a queen. Delicious perfume was sprinkled over her attire.

With proudly-heaving bosom, and glowing cheek, and flashing eye, the young girl stood before a mirror of polished steel, and gazed upon her bewildering loveliness. Intoxicating emotions, new and strange, were swelling in her heart. Wild visions of future triumph and power were mingling with the softer pulsations of love.

But the appointed hour drew nigh. A glittering chariot, drawn by twelve snowy steeds, was in waiting;

and, resplendent with jewels, and pride, and beauty, Alda was borne through the illuminated streets of the city to the palace of the young prince. The death of the king had placed him on the throne, but before he was anointed, he was to choose of all the lovely maidens of the land, a queen. The moment of destiny had come to the ambitious maiden!

Alone, unveiled, and trembling, she stood before the prince. With drooping eyelids and a step of wavering grace, she advanced, and kneeling at his feet, raised her magnificent eyes to his with a smile—oh! such a smile!—so soft, so winning, so irresistible!

Thrilled by her matchless loveliness, and won by that bright smile, the young monarch bent and kissed her snowy forehead, and placed amid her shining braids the coveted crown.

"Arise! O queen, thou hast found favor in our sight. The day after to-morrow, at the royal feast, thou shalt share our scepter and our throne."

"Most gracious lord, my king, thanks! thanks! not for thy crown, but for thy precious love!" murmured the young girl in dreamy, musical tones, raising again her passionate eyes to his face, and remaining on her knees before him.

The prince was fascinated. He raised her from the gold cloth of the pavilion, and, taking her fair hand in his, led her out from the receiving-room.

The vision of love and ambition was realized!

Alda, the beautiful, sat upon the throne, and the princes and the people bowed down before her loveliness. The wealth of half the treasury, the income of half the kingdom, was at her disposal. Never was there a queen of such unequalled charms and splendor. But every offering to her vanity, every new accession of power, but heightened her ambition. To have a thousand lovers who dared not touch her jeweled robe—to dazzle the world by her gorgeous display—was not enough of triumph for the proud, imperious, brilliant creature. She aspired to be more than a queen, and announced herself as a divine being from the skies, sent down to rule and be worshiped by every faithful subject. As a goddess, she robed herself in dazzling splendor, and stood in a gorgeous temple to be worshiped by the people. The dress she wore on these occasions was of azure silk, embroidered with diamonds, to represent stars; and up on her brow she wore a crown, in imitation of the crescent moon, and called herself the Goddess of the Night. All were her enthusiastic worshipers; and the costly offerings they laid upon her shrine were greater in value than the riches of the treasury. Oracles gave she them out of the corruptness of her own hollow heart, and her votaries grew, in obedience to them, each day more wicked and corrupt.

But the king was jealous of her power. It exceeded his own greatness, and took the hearts, and the riches, and the obedience of his people from him. He, too, loved the glorious goddess—for her cunning would permit no rival for her lord's affections. He was not willing to have her assassinated to end the rivalry, neither could he brook her growing and almost absolute power.

One day it was announced that the goddess whom they adored had been translated to the skies. The king clothed himself in sackcloth, and sprinkled ashes on his head, and sat three days mourning in his palace. Then a new queen was chosen, and the fickle people soon forgot their beautiful goddess—but not the wicked oracles which she had given them.

In a lonely but rich apartment in the king's palace, Alda was imprisoned. Music, and flowers, and birds, and slaves surrounded her, and the monarch came every day to while away an hour with her; but to be thus thwarted in her ambition, thus compelled to abide in loneliness through those hours that once were full of triumph, was bitter humiliation to the proud girl. How she raved, and threatened, and caressed, and entreated—now beautiful, with scorn upon her curling lip, and anger flashing from her haughty eyes—now putting on such sweet, and winning, and almost irresistible endearments and caresses—now

cold, and silent, and imperious as a marble statue of pride. But all in vain; the monarch was wisely careful of his own interests.

Burning and implacable revenge now dwelt in the girl's bosom. A subtle poison, murdering its victim by slow degrees, she procured, and placed in a goblet of wine, before the daily visit of the monarch; and, under pretence of friendship for the new queen, sent her a bracelet of rare and beautiful workmanship, but which was certain, though painless, death to the wearer. Then, having no object for which longer to live, and seeing that evil passions and violent grief had faded her own wonderful loveliness, she prepared a quick poison, and, drinking the fatal draught, ended her existence before either of her victims.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the worker of her ruin, as his glowing eyes again peered in through the low casement, upon the lifeless form of the once glorious and passionate creature.

Then the Serpent changed himself into the form of an idol, and sat himself up at the corner of the streets, and all the people fell down and worshiped him. And the idolators went away with horrible wickedness in their hearts; and deeds that would make the listener shudder to hear, and fearful acts of depravity did they commit. And to some the Serpent came in the form of gold, to tempt them;

and some of sparkling wine; and some of jealousy, and rage, and covetousness, and every evil passion. No wickedness was there, before or since, like to the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah.

A terrible punishment did they suffer for their sins; for the Lord God was wroth with them. An awful gloom fell upon the cities, lit up by the ghastly glare from one lurid cloud which hung over all the plain — and glowing lightning played over the heavens, and dense fumes of burning brimstone filled the suffocating air. The inhabitants ran to and fro, and gnashed their teeth, and tore their hair, and called wildly on their senseless idols to save them from their coming doom. Their riches and their pride of heart availed them not. The forked fire darted its red tongues hissing through the air, and molten lava fell upon the shrieking throngs.

And when the sun arose on the next morn, where were the ten bright cities of Sodom and Gomorrah? A smoking ruin — a blackened heap of ashen desolation. O! earth! earth! how did thy crown of jewels burn and deface thy lovely brow.

And the Serpent hissed, hooted, howled in his horrible glee, and lashed his huge form to and fro, and taunted the dying wretches — and, when the ruin was completed, fled away to the depths of the vast ocean.

CHAPTER IV.

THE wise men of Egypt were gathered together in deep council. They had been summoned to prove their wisdom equal with that of God—to mock the greatness of His power by working great wonders—even the miracles which the Lord himself had commissioned to be shown before Pharaoh. Suddenly in their midst appeared, rising up out of the marble floor, a most mysterious vision. Encompassed round about with a dense mass of whirling, circling fumes, they could not tell the form of the spirit which addressed them. But from the vapor came a voice, sweeter than flowing honey, and softer than the dropping of night dew;

“O, learned men, O, ye most wise magicians, my power is far greater than thine—yea, it is more mighty than any in the universe. The wisdom which ye seek I can give ye—fall down and worship me, and I will give my power to work wonders into your hands.”

And all the magicians fell prostrate before the vision, and worshiped him.

Then they went in before Pharaoh, in whose presence stood Aaron, with the rod which the Lord had given him. And Aaron cast down his rod, and it became a serpent. Then the wise men cast down their rods, and they became serpents. And they worshiped the spirit again, and besought of him greater power, to do as did Moses, and turn the waters of the river into blood.

The spirit answered—“Give me an oath to give up your souls into my keeping, and I will bestow on ye all that ye shall ask of wisdom and greatness.”

Then the magicians took the oath, and, by the power of the spirit, they worked many of the wonders which God gave Moses the wisdom to perform. But when they could no longer do Pharaoh's bidding, and prove themselves equal in skill to the Lord, and went out from his presence to the vision for more power, it had vanished. Then they felt their souls quake with fear, and they were troubled, because of the strange spirit they had worshiped.

“Ay, ay,” chuckled the Serpent that night on his coral pillow, “such learned souls are won right easily. How I love to measure my power by God's, even though I am compelled ever to be defeated. Methinks I was ambitious once—O yes, and I am

now; and, when the end of this fair earth comes, I wonder whose kingdom over human souls will be the greatest—the God who created, or the Serpent who banned them. Ha! ha! I must work right busily—winning, winning ever!”

* * * * *

Where the soft south wind came stealing to his brow, laden with the sweet scent of spices from the trees which shaded the porch where he sat, and the flowers which twined around its pillars of hewn stone, was a venerable man. His brow was beaming with loftiness and dignity; his eyes were deep and calm, and his mouth was beautiful even in old age, with a holy smile of peaceful serenity. Down upon his bosom flowed his long, white beard, and gently, in the sweet, cool air, waved the snowy locks back from his temples. It was beautiful to see that good old man, full of years, and honors, and wisdom, blessed with the affectionate reverence of a whole nation, surrounded with riches, and splendor, and love, sitting in the calm enjoyment of his years on the pillared porch of his magnificent dwelling. While he sat there in gentle musing, with the soft south wind caressing his mild brow, a woman glided around the corner of the porch, and, nearing him with graceful steps, stood hesitating with an attitude of soft timidity

before him. A woman—yet she looked almost a child—so fresh, and fair, and youthful, in her loveliness. Her eyes were dewy violet, large, soft and languishing, with pearly lids and a sweeping fringe of gold. Her small, sweet, loving mouth was bright and glowing as the inner heart of a perfumed rose; and dainty dimples peeped out a moment and hid again amid the bloom of her fresh, delicate cheek. Like a golden-tinted cloud, a rich mass of shining hair fell down in glittering waves about her slight and pliant form. There was a sweetness in the uncertain, timid smile, a purity upon the childish brow, an innocence in the blue, limpid eyes that told of girlhood's sinlessness. With glance bent bashfully upon the floor, and one white foot advanced in hesitating gracefulness, she stood before the venerable man.

“Fair stranger, for such thy garb and sunny locks betoken thee, why seekest thou our presence?” he kindly asked.

“O, thou great king—O, thou most wise king Solomon, I pray thee pardon my presumption. I am a simple Moabite maiden. I have come from another country to behold the one whose great renown is mighty among the princes of the earth. I have left my kindred and the shadows of the household tree, to come and serve thee. Though I may not

hope to win thy esteem because of our different worship, let me at least be thy faithful servant."

The words fell trembling from her lips like drops of liquid music, and, clasping her small hands beseechingly, she raised her pleading eyes softly to the old man's face.

The man, whom God had endowed with wonderful wisdom, and whom all the sages of the earth did reverence to, was flattered more by the modest words of the lovely maiden, standing there in youthful grace, than by all the offerings from the nations of the world.

"Draw nearer, maiden; thy speech is sweet. Let me closely behold thy countenance, for it is very fair."

A bright blush deepened on her cheek, as she approached him with downcast eyes. Then, as if actuated by an irresistible impulse, she bent suddenly forward and pressed her warm, moist lips upon his forehead. Then falling on her knees, she held her clasped hands toward him, as if supplicating forgiveness. The monarch took those two small, dimpled hands in his own withered ones, and, looking down into her blushing face, said softly—

"I have many wives, but none that I deem so young and beautiful as thou. I love thee, gentle Moabitess. Forsake, then, the worship of false gods, and thou shalt be the favored wife of Solomon."

Tears came into the soft eyes of the maiden, and she spoke low and half reproachfully.

"Kindred and country have I forsaken to look on thee, O king. Therefore let me serve thee as a servant, in peace, and beseech me not to forsake the worship of my fathers. If it please thee, let me die to prove my love for thee, but urge me not to prove false to my idols."

In deepening wonder and admiration, the monarch gazed upon the young face glowing with enthusiasm. His heart thrilled anew with the quick pulse of youthful feelings, and his self-love was flattered by this proof of affection from one so young, so pure, so beautiful. He raised her to her feet. She threw her white arms around his neck, and, burying her fair face in his bosom, burst into a gush of tears.

"Weep not, beloved, thou shalt be my bride," said Solomon, tenderly, folding his arms around her, and smoothing those shining waves of flowing hair.

"Oh! I dare not, dare not wed thee! for fear my idol will curse me," said the maiden, with a shudder, turning her tearful eyes with mournful fondness to his face.

"Fear not! the great God whom I worship, will protect thee," and he kissed the white brow of the weeper.

"Nay, nay, this must be my protection," replied she, breaking away from his arms, and taking a small

golden image from her bosom; she held it to her lips, and, closing her fair eyelids, while a soft, devotional smile hovered around her mouth, murmured a low, mild prayer.

"I love thee but the more, that thou art true to thy faith, mistaken though it is," said the monarch gently. "And, dearest, I will not ask thee to renounce thy worship, but only to wed me, to be the wife of Solomon."

As if she gathered inspiration from her prayers, the maiden's face grew radiant and bright; and, in answer to his words, she held toward him the little image in her hand, with a smile a thousand times more eloquent than words.

Solomon hesitated. Him whom God had gifted with wisdom beyond all other men—who had served the Lord his Creator all the years of his life, was tempted to false worship by the beauty of a woman. He admired her truthful clinging to the religion she had been taught was right—he loved her youthful loveliness—he was fascinated by her pure face and innocent, artless ways. What harm was it, if he deceived her by the appearance of a worship that he did not feel? His God would know that it was done in mockery, and the beautiful maiden would be his.

He looked, till the power of resistance was gone, into those beseeching eyes. She placed the idol in

his hands. He knelt, and, pressing the image to his heart, he implored it to bless him, and make him happy with his bride, and not to harm her that she loved one who had been of another faith.

"Now I am thine own, my king," said the young girl timidly, when he arose. "I do no longer fear to esteem thee."

He took the bright young creature to his aged arms, and fondly kissed those red and dewy lips. And she, half fearfully, but with bewitching tenderness, twined her round, lily arms about his neck, and laid her velvet cheek, glowing with crimson, against his wrinkled temple, and talked to him in such sweet, artless tones as stole away his very soul. And he, forgetful in her caresses of the great sin by which he had won her, listened to her musical accents, and noted her innocent ways, and almost deemed her a bright, wayward, irresistible child. Thus, with the south wind, heavy with perfume, playing around them, and lovely things in nature a witness to the scene, they sat together—youth and old age—bright tresses of gold, and locks of snow mingling in one—like spring just bounding from the arms of winter.

Though everything was beautiful to mortal eyes, how would one, gifted with a spiritual sight, shudder at that fair scene. The greatest monarch of the world, the wisest man whom God ever gifted with an

intellect, the good man and the poet, thus yielding to the blandishments of the Tempter.

Though his form was far away in the rolling sea, yet the spirit of the Serpent was busy in that scene.

"This is a glorious triumph," was his thought; "I chose a fitting instrument to execute my purpose. Even this great prodigy of intellect yields at the first temptation. Oh! deeply rooted are the seeds of virtue in this most wonderful race, who are my playthings! This innocent child, here, would find it difficult to analyze the *reason* for her feelings—she suspected not the spirit that was restlessly urging her to this strange conduct, and so she deemed it *love*! Pho! love! so do I love Solomon!"

Oh! thou sneerer—oh! thou scoffer—oh! thou taunter of our race! great is thy power, and many are thy victories! But the hand that formed us, fashioned thee, also—and we may not know His wisdom.

* * * * *

A man of glorious presence walked in the wilderness. Mingling together in his form were all the elements of manly and spiritual beauty. His large, slow-moving eyes were a clear gray, earnest, and pure, and tender. His high, white brow was placid and unshadowed, and a white gleam of something spiritual

and inexpressible lingered upon its polished greatness like a halo. His mouth slept in the still repose of perfect beauty, and floating round it, as it were an atmosphere, was an expression of ineffable tranquillity, and holy, thoughtful sweetness. Parted from his pure temples, his brown hair floated free in waving curls, catching a gleam of gold upon their curving richness, around his white and polished throat. His form was moulded into manly grace; and his bearing was one of singular dignity, repose, and lofty meekness. Alone, in the dim wilderness, he walked with musing step and countenance of sweet tranquillity. Soft shadows flitted over him and lay around him in fantastic shapes. The shining foliage above him rustled musically in the breeze, and tiny insects filled the air with a low hum of joy. And, as he paced to and fro over the green turf, these things were his companions. Then the solemn twilight crept, with invisible footsteps, through the wood; and the bright stars came out and sent soft messengers of light, with silver-sandaled feet, to read the expression of his matchless brow, and look within his calm, clear eyes, and rest a moment on the perfect lip. And when he wearied of his musing mood, and laid him down upon the mossy earth and slept, these silent messengers still hovered round to watch his gentle slumber.

And still, on the next day, that immaculate form

was roaming beneath the shadows in the deep green wilderness. There was no cooling stream or fountain near to moisten his lip, nor fruit upon the trees to tempt his taste.

And night again succeeded day, and day succeeded night, thus on and on till forty days had passed. Yet still the glorious stranger stayed, as held by some strange power, a wanderer in the wilderness. No food had passed his lips. His face was a shade paler, and his brow contracted with the intense pangs of hunger. He bore his suffering calmly, and murmured not at the pain which tortured him.

Yet was he not alone — for a dark eye was ever on him, marking, with eagerness, his every step, and watching every change upon that heavenly countenance. And when it saw the anguish, subdued but deep, upon that holy face, a fierce sparkle of exultation lit up that evil eye.

Then the dark spirit with the watchful eye, took the semblance of a form, and stood before the stranger, and tempted him. He led him to the pinnacle of a temple, and the top of an exceeding high mountain, and offered him the riches and glory of the world, if he would but fall down and worship him.

In vain, in vain to strive to win the Son of God, O Serpent! Angels have yielded to thy tempting. But let not thy daring eyes rest on that glorious brow!

Away! away! back, spirit, to thy loathsome form, deep in the ocean floating.

Baffled in his wild, daring thought, the tempter disappeared. And lo! bright angels circled down on glittering pinions, and, with pure worshiping, and holy awe, and gentle hands, they ministered to the immaculate being, who, alone and solitary in the dim shadows and the musical air, had fasted forty days and forty nights in the deep recess of a mighty wilderness.

Ah! boaster, amid furious waves, be still! Pure angels' holy hands, not thine, allayed the sufferings of the Son of God.

CHAPTER V.

DARKNESS covered the face of the earth—thick, heavy, palpable darkness. Impenetrable gloom shrouded the city of Jerusalem. A blackness that could be felt, hid from the eyes of mockers the most disgraceful scene that ever stained the souls of men with foul and hideous crime.

Oh! awful day—oh! day of agony! when all the anguish of a dying world throbbed out its death-throe in one sinless breast. How, at the inglorious sight of that wild human throng torturing and mocking the Son of God, did the sun withdraw his light, and hide his shuddering face in a black veil of mourning, and the pure stars shrink, pale and trembling, from the brow of heaven!

Peace! ye infuriate throng! hush the wild storm of passion in your misguided breasts! And doth this solemn darkness fill ye with trembling? and do your tumultuous ravings sink lower and lower to a fearful

whisper—your maddened hearts quail with a nameless dread—your souls quail with a terrible thought of future vengeance? Too late! the deed is done, the penalty incurred which ye so eagerly entreated: "*Let his blood be on us and on our children!*" Ye shall be wanderers, outcasts—a despised, insulted, hated, down-trodden race. Ye have crucified your Immanuel! Ye have mocked your King in the hall of Pretorium; have robed his perfect form in the insulting purple; have pierced his glorious brow with cruel thorns; have hailed him with coarse jests and sneering cries; have given him the bitter gall; have pierced his delicate limbs with agonizing wounds!

Oh! pitying darkness, thou didst do well to shroud the scene! There was one who sat near the foot of the cross, whom the palpable gloom weighed down with fear. He would have risen, but his powerless limbs would not support him. His arms were folded over his bosom; his drooping head was buried in the folds of his mantle. A cold, leaden stillness put its hand upon his spirit's throbbings. A giant thought pressed down his heart, and lay upon his brain. Shuddering at the chill, slimy touch of a huge form, invisible in the darkness, the crowd gave way, and a low, hateful voice whispered in the ear of the unhappy man:

"Henceforward our destinies are somewhat united.

I place this ring upon thy finger — when I am near, or when my will has had an influence on thy destiny, the ring will glow with a burning, lurid light. It matters not who I am — I have been in the garden of Eden, and my influence has the human race oft felt. I am its best friend — ha! ha! at least, I make them deem me so. I love this scene. Farewell! we shall meet as often as once a century — ha! ha!”

A deep groan struggled upward from the bosom of the wretched doomed one, and he strove to cast away the ring which he felt burning around his finger — but he could not move it.

The tormentor glided away as he had come, under cover of the darkness. From the sixth hour to the ninth the gloom prevailed. And when the terrible scene was ended, and that wretched man sitting at the foot of the cross rose up and went away, a fearful change had come upon his pride of manliness. His noble brow was furrowed with deep lines — the glossy curls of raven hair, that lay upon his temples, were streaked here and there with gray, and the proud fire of his eagle eye was gone. But, with a powerful effort, he shook off the first great anguish of despair, wrapped his mantle with its wonted grace around his noble form, and walked with slow, heart-heavy steps toward his princely dwelling. There was a sound of

mourning in its marble halls. Wailing and lamentation met his ear. A nameless thought of evil chilled his pulse, and past the servants, who knew him not, he was so changed, he hurried to the chamber of his wife. Motionless he stood a moment at the entrance. The scene within had almost palsied him, and he could only stand and gaze with vacant glance, like one who saw, but comprehended not.

His gentle wife was kneeling, in the first great agony of grief, by a low couch — her white face hid among its silken drapery — mute, tearless, almost lifeless. At its foot stood two beautiful young girls, his children, clasping each other in a cold embrace, and weeping as if every sob came from a breaking heart.

Upon the pillow lay his youngest child, his pet, his pride, his treasure, his only boy — his bright, buoyant, matchless child, his beautiful one, the light of his eyes — dead! The pure, high brow, so princely in its youthful perfectness, was chill and pale — the snowy lids were fixed and still, hiding for ever from those loving hearts the brilliant flash of those dark, radiant eyes, whose witching glance was sunlight to the threshold of that palace home. The blood that, bright and beautiful, gleamed through his dimpled cheeks, had faded and grown cold, never again to bound, with childhood's crimson gladness, to that tiny tracery of blue veins lying beneath the clearness of its polished surface.

The small, plump hands were folded motionless upon his infant breast, and those tiny feet, whose soft, quick sound upon the chamber floor was music to each ear, might never bound with gay delight to meet his father's coming step.

The eyes of the unhappy parent turned instinctively to the ring upon his finger. It glowed and sparkled like living flame, with a light that almost blinded him.

"Oh God!" burst from his ashen lips.

The weeping girls started at the sound, but the mother heard not—heeded not.

"Father! oh father!" sobbed his daughters, coming forward, and each taking one of his cold and dewy hands.

But still he moved not from the threshold, nor gave one other token of his mighty grief. The fair young creatures clinging to him were frightened at his aspect.

"Comfort our mother!" pleaded the soft voice of the elder.

Slowly he advanced, and bending over that almost insensible form, he raised her in his arms.

"Wife!"

"My husband!"

They were in each other's clasp; and great, round tears rolled over the face of the proud man, in answer to the wild, passionate sobs breaking from her who lay upon his bosom.

The two young girls advanced timidly toward their parents. "Father! mother! are we not left to you—and do we not love you?"

"Heaven bless you, my bright children! Partner of my bosom! in our affliction let us not forget that God is merciful"—and the strong man strove to be calm—"daughters, come, too—ye are all left me!" and opening his arms, the four weepers were twined in one embrace.

Then the father, for the first time, approached the couch, and laid the soft curls back from the beautiful brow of the dead, and gazed long upon the sweet, pale face, and kissed the childish mouth, yet red with the last heart-beat, and took the tiny hand of dimpled snow in his, while the mourners turned away and hid their faces.

They scarcely knew that man with the calm, stern expression of sorrow on his face, the furrowed brow, the raven hair threaded with gray, as him who went so full of pride and joy that morning from them.

* * * * *

A TEMPEST on the ocean! ah, hapless mariners! Yet one there was who stood upon the deck of that small ship and gazed through the deepening gloom, with a calm joy, upon the furious storm. The spray that dashed upon his face, the howling, shrieking wind, the tossing waves, the angry deep below, to him were a delight. He smiled to hear the crash of thunder, and the lightning's flash was joy. And its lurid gleam, falling at quick intervals upon his form, betrayed his strange appearance. A long robe flowed about his withered but majestic form. His long white hair floated upon the wind, and his snowy beard hung almost to his knees. The impress of two centuries was on his lofty and care-stricken brow; and beneath its hanging arches gleamed out a pair of eyes, wild, dark, and glittering with a deep, strange glow. He had lived on till he had seen his kindred, one by one, laid in their graves, his nation scattered, and his city desolate—each tie which bound him to the world unfastened—and he had but one longing, one unspeakable desire: to follow his lost ones to the tomb—to die, and be at rest.

Earnestly he besought the God of his fathers, amid the anger of the tempest, for the death for which he yearned.

The storm grew wilder in its fury—a mountain wave swept over the rocking vessel,—a hundred pale

and sinking forms were disappearing beneath the foaming billows. A lurid glare of lightning, in almost constant flashes, revealed that old man with the snowy beard, his white hair floating for an instant on the wave. Then, with a cry of gladness, that rung strangely above the tumult of the storm, he sank! Down—down—his senses in a whirl, and pain giving way to a delicious sense of dizzy, whirling dreams and ringing music in his brain—when suddenly a voice that seemed familiar, was in his ear, saying—"Not yet! not yet!"

Then he became insensible. He felt not the strong hold which dragged him on for many miles through the deep waves, and laid him down at length, breathing, but senseless, on a rocky shore. He knew not of the malicious eyes that watched him, till the first faint quiver of his own eyelids. He heard not the splash of the huge form in the ocean, but he knew that the Serpent was his deliverer, for, his faint glance wandering to the fatal ring, his shuddering sight beheld the curious glow that oft and oft, in those two centuries, had brought him woe.

Nearly two centuries from that fearful day, when Christ was crucified, had passed by, when the Wandering Jew was left by fate upon the coast of Greece.

Sick, sick at heart, and weak with suffering, he lay for hours upon the cold, wet rock, uttering low groans

of anguish and despair. The clouds had cleared away, and the mighty deep grown calm. The moon looked down upon the old man's pillow, silvering his long, white beard, and shining coldly and pitilessly upon his sad and desolate countenance.

Morning came at length, and the old man rose, and, with weary steps, went forward on his endless journey. A low-browed cottage rose before him, not far from the shore. A young girl, fair and fresh as the rose-tinted dawn, stood at the threshold, twining her dark hair over her slender finger. He approached, and, saying he had been shipwrecked, supplicated for her charity.

He was a Jew, but the heart of the maiden was kind, and she gave him a seat by the vine-clad casement, and placed the simple morning meal before him. Wine, too, she brought to refresh the aged wanderer, and then went, singing, to her morning tasks.

The old man wept at her kindness, blessed her sweet face, and departed.

That night, a burning spot of red came out upon the maiden's bosom. She drooped, sickened, died. Before another day she was a blackened corse. Brothers and sisters, father, mother, caught the infectious disease, and died—friends followed. Over the land, from valley to city, the pestilence spread—farther,

farther, like the wind, it swept over every known portion of the globe. Death—death! was everywhere—sudden, certain, loathsome death! It was no time for love—it was no time for partings—it was no time for prayer. The maiden with her brow of snow and lips of red—the lover with his hoping heart and eagle eye—the mother with her tender glance—the babe upon her yearning bosom—the proud, ambitious sire—the man of fame—in cottage and in palace—in desert place, and lonely valley, and populous city—all felt the desolating scourge.

Oh! terrible! to thus be made the instrument of punishment to the increasing wickedness of earth! What should he do—where should he go? Building himself a little boat, the Wandering Jew, who had traveled to the extremest north of Asia, placed a few days' sustenance in it, and, with no oar, nor aught to guide him, entered his slight vessel, and drifted out into the ocean, at the mercy of the waves. For a week a gentle wind wafted him onward, when he came in sight of land. A mighty country was stretched out before him, great as the one he left. Was it inhabited? His boat drifted upon the gravel of the shore—his feet were on the soil of the new earth. A forest lay before him. He entered it; and his heart thrilled within him, at the surprising loveliness of nature. The air was full of melody from warblers

with bright, glancing wings — the tall trees towered upward to the sky, covered with rich, green foliage — bright, beautiful flowers, with dewy eyes, peeped out from mossy shelter — a musical stream went singing on to mingle with the glancing waters of the ocean. The heart of the lonely man was gladder than it had been for a hundred years. For, in a paradise like this, if he was doomed to live till time was ended, he could, at least, be a curse to no one but himself — the beautiful of earth, and a still place to pray for mercy in, would be his. Onward he went, with joyful steps, when suddenly he paused. What saw he, in that dim and mighty wilderness? A Jewish temple.

Yes! there it stood — glittering among the forest trees — magnificent almost as the one that fell with the fall of Jerusalem. The entrance door was open. He went in. Silver, and gold, and precious stones were shining on the altar, and the pillars, and the roof. Rich silken curtains fell before the inner sanctuary — the sanctum sanctorum.

An aged priest was in the temple. He spoke to him in the Hebrew. They sat and conversed together. The holy man honored him as a prophet sent by Heaven to their nation — the lost tribes of Israel.

He led him farther on to where some of the inhabitants had built them habitations. The people

received him as a holy messenger. He told them of the coming of a Messiah — of his crucifixion — of the persecution of their people. The tidings filled them with grief and wonder.

They besought him, earnestly, to stay with them, and did him reverence and honor. And he remained; for a century, the ring upon his finger forgot its hateful sparkle.

But the curse was upon him.

The same fearful pestilence, which he had sown through the world, appeared among his brethren. With a wretched heart and an aching brain, he again constructed a frail, light skiff, and committed himself to the sea. But perish he could not, and the winds bore him again to Asia's shores.

CHAPTER VI.

IT was a gala-day in Rome. The seats of the immense amphitheater were crowded with thousands of eager spectators. What pleasant and exciting spectacle had drawn together this vast throng of human beings? The emperor, himself, and his gorgeous court sat under a canopy of crimson velvet, in a splendid pavilion, to witness the scene.

Fifty wild beasts and three hundred *Christians* had been provided for the day's entertainment!

Fair, delicate ladies looked on approvingly. Mothers brought their young children to the joyous sight. There was one among the spectators who looked on, pale, shuddering, and aghast. It was the old man with the flowing robe, the strange, deep eyes, and the beard of streaming snow. Who shall ever tell the feelings of remorse, the loathing of life, the great thought of punishment endured, which agitated that

enduring bosom? Who shall whisper me fearful secrets of five centuries, lying buried in that desolate heart? Oh! how every shriek of anguish from the unhappy sufferers pierced to his brain! how every pale, imploring face tortured his soul with memories of that awful hour, when the Messiah of their faith suffered all of their agony in his immaculate person! how every despairing gaze which chanced to rest upon his face, renewed the curse burning within his soul. He almost expected that those three terrible hours of darkness would again hide this horrible scene.

The fearful sport went on. Pale women, with their helpless babes clasped to their bosoms, were given to the lions' jaws. Young maidens, white with horror, with clasped hands, closed eyes, and streaming hair, were tossed into the arena. Men, faint and weak with torture, were armed with a single dagger to prolong the excitement, and made to battle with starved, furious beasts.

The ring on the old man's finger glowed with intense light. It almost blinded him to look upon it. Amid the shrieking of victims, and the howling of fierce animals, he could distinctly hear a whisper, that had long been familiar to his shuddering ear:

"I am here — I am here! to exult in this scene of my devising. Is it not a pleasant sight? Thou, too, methinks, once lent a helping hand to bring about this

glorious result. Mark! how the elect of God meet, unshrinking, their fate. Ha! for every wretch that enters that arena this day, shall I have a dozen of the souls of these spectators. Dost not thou rejoice with me in my triumph, good friend?"

"Friend! tempter! serpent! tormentor! away! Give me a little peace," muttered the Jew.

"Peace! ha! ha! have I not been thy bosom friend for centuries? Nay! by thy beard of snow, I leave thee not."

"Be quiet, then."

"Will it oblige thee, friend?"

"It will."

"Faith! if it were for nothing but to lay thee under a new obligation to thy master, I would comply," and again the tormentor laughed maliciously.

The old man groaned.

New victims were each moment thrust into the arena. One hundred and fifty had met their fate in the morning drama; and the number of those remaining was rapidly diminishing. Some fainted the moment they appeared upon the scene, and were brought to consciousness by the horrible pangs of being torn apart alive. Others fought with the energy of madmen, in the hope of winning freedom by their bravery. Some came with pale, calm faces, and brows that almost seemed to glow with haloes

of glory, so holy and resigned was their expression; and met their fate without a murmur, with prayer upon their meek, white lips.

The cruel scene was well nigh ended. Only one victim, a young girl who had been retained for the closing scene, on account of her rare beauty, now remained.

The satiated animals were taken away, and the mangled bodies of the dead borne off in carts. Those who were only wounded, or not yet dead, were finished by daggers.

When all was ready, the entrance at one side of the amphitheater was opened, the maiden thrust in, and the door closed.

The spectators held their breath in wonder and awe, as they gazed upon her. Beautiful as a star, white as marble, calm as the hush of midnight, she stood in the arena. They could scarcely tell she breathed, as with her small hands clasped over the snowy vesture which covered her still bosom, her sweet face uplifted slightly toward heaven, and a cloud of ebon tresses sweeping around her perfect form, down even to her feet, she stood mute, placid, holy, before the silent throng. Why was the old man so strangely agitated, as he gazed upon her? She was the very likeness of his eldest child, his glorious daughter, the bright being who had slumbered

in the dust for near five hundred years. There were the delicate features, the exquisite brow, the black, shining, luxurious hair, the sweet, pure mouth, the graceful throat and swelling, slender form, and the proud, spiritual, dark eyes.

The hush through the vast multitude was deathly intense. The opposite entrance was unclosed, and a huge lion, furious with the pangs of hunger, appeared with glaring eyeballs within the enclosure, still held by his strong keepers, who waited the signal from the emperor. The eyes of the maiden turned slowly to the restless animal. Calm — white — still — a close observer might have noticed a slight trembling of the long, rich lashes, a scarcely perceptible heave of the beautiful breast.

The hard hearts of the crowd were melted — not into pity, but into sympathy with that calm bravery, that, whatever might be its cause, awakened their admiration.

"A pardon — a pardon — good emperor! let her live!" shouted a thousand voices.

The eyes of the monarch were resting eagerly upon her loveliness. "Take her away!" he cried; "bring another to the sacrifice! cannot a morsel be found to stay the lion's hunger?"

"Here! here is a Jew! will you have him?" answered back those who surrounded the aged wanderer.

"Aye! throw him in," responded the emperor.

The old man was tossed into the circle below, and the people gazed with a mixture of curiosity and contempt upon the strange being thus unceremoniously condemned to a cruel death. The maiden was led away, and the signal given for the release of the howling beast.

He had crept half around the circle, with his fiery eyes fixed on the sea of faces above him, before he perceived the victim. He paused — gave a low, deep growl, and commenced bounding around the arena, giving, at every leap, a repetition of that peculiar howl.

The spectators leaned forward.

In lessening circles, the huge animal bounded around the ring, nearing the object of his anger or fright at every circuit, till the space between them was limited to a few feet. Here he paused, crouched low for a spring, bounded up, and fell dead at the old man's feet.

The king of the forest, a huge, fierce beast, the particular favorite of the emperor, lay lifeless at the feet of the aged Jew, the strange man in the black robe and white beard.

"A miracle! a miracle!" shouted the crowd.

"Let him die!" cried the monarch fiercely.

Instantly a cloud of javelins and arrows darkened the arena, but the object of their wrath was uninjured.

The entrance was burst open by a band of soldiers, who, as they proceeded to seize him, the Wandering Jew put quietly aside, and disappeared among the multitude.

* * * * *

The robes of Paris were dyed crimson with blood! in her right hand, she held aloft the fatal axe, red with slaughter! her voice was loud with blasphemy, her eyes were red with evil passions, her heart was black with infidelity! She erected an altar to the Goddess of Liberty, and sacrificed upon its scarlet fires all things that were pure and holy.

Who aided her in this monstrous work? who was an enthusiastic votary at the altar of the goddess? who added to the list of her victims, till the life-blood, which flowed at her feet, had nearly risen and extinguished, with its swelling streams, the unholy fires which burned upon the shrine?

A little child played once in a gay garden. The sky was bright, and the air pleasant; the birds warbled, and the flowers were fair and sweet. The child saw a brilliant butterfly hovering on beautiful wings among the fragrant blossoms, and away he sped in pursuit of the tiny treasure—away! away! Now it was almost within his eager grasp, and again it was far beyond. At last it was his! His small fingers

pressed tightly those radiant but delicate wings, lest the little flutterer should escape. But the bright insect grew still, and, when he relaxed his hold to give it freedom, it fell into his lap, dead. The glittering hue, which had made it so beautiful, was clinging like particles of fine dust to his fingers. The little boy burst into tears. Long and bitterly he wept at his unthinking cruelty in destroying the gay butterfly. His joyous spirit was saddened, and the sunlight did not seem so pleasant, nor the flowers so sweet, as they had done. And this little boy, who wept at the death of a butterfly—who went and buried it carefully between two green leaves in the corner of the garden—was Robespierre!

Yet the Serpent selected this tender-hearted child, as the instrument of his cunning—the greatest actor in the fearful drama of which the Tempter was the inspiration—France the theatre—a nation, the performers.

Oh! how the Serpent gloated in those days of terror, over the appalling vice of which he was the instigator.

Ever, in that season of blood and crime, an old man walked to and fro through the streets of Paris. No one knew from whence he came, nor what was his mission. It was he in the black, flowing robe, and sad, strange countenance. Many remarked him. Some thought he mourned for murdered friends—

others, who noticed the fiery ring which glowed upon his finger, deemed him a conjuror. In mere excess of wanton cruelty they would fire upon the meek, calm stranger, or thrust their bayonets into his person—but they never seemed to injure him. When this became known, many deemed him an evil spirit.

He was present at the great bonfire of the Sacred Writings in the streets of the city; and when the king and queen were guillotined; and heard the blasphemer who rode through the streets defying God, and who, that night, died of the sting of a small, strange fly. All these things seemed to deepen his melancholy, and at every fresh horror he would glance nervously at the strange ring he wore.

After the death of Robespierre he seemed less uneasy and dejected. The ring which he wore was a plain jet, and the spirit which urged him ever to and fro through the scenes of cruelty in the city, appeared to have left him.

When Napoleon heard of him, he sent for him.

"Did I not meet you in the burning deserts of Africa, and the snows of the north of Europe?" Napoleon asked.

"Yes, sire; and we will meet again."

"Where?"

"On the Island of St. Helena, sire," replied the venerable man.

Shortly after, he disappeared.

The general wondered at his words, but they were afterward understood by him.

* * * * *

A gorgeous iceberg floated slowly through the chill waves of the Arctic sea. The sun shone cold and bright upon it. Vast, glittering, sublime, it towered upward toward the clear, blue heavens. Innumerable corruscations of light glanced from its ragged surface—splendid rainbows hovered upon its summit—beautiful fret-work of frozen gems and chaste drapery of snowy pearls gleamed here and there upon its majestic form, caught up in fantastic loops by shining pillars and fastened upon them with radiant icicles.

But what was that dark shape upon its almost invisible summit, standing among the rainbows and the glitter of the ice? It was a human being. Yes! with folded arms and lofty form, and flowing hair streaming backward on the wind, he stood upon the pinnacle of the iceberg—the Wandering Jew—with the weight of nineteen centuries upon his heart.

Oh! the majesty of some of the scenes of earth! This was one. Build ye, frail sons of earth, your temples and your towers, and boast of your beautiful handiwork. Lavish labor, and gold, and time, and talent upon them. They are very grand—they are

wonderful—but you never saw that tower of ice rearing its glittering form toward the deep, blue sky, sparkling like jewels incrusting in pure pearl, its foundation the restless waves of the mighty deep, its builder God, its inhabitant the strange old man of nineteen hundred years.

The green, dark waves dash up against the glittering mass and the cold wind waves the white locks of the aged wanderer wildly back upon the clear, sharp air.

There is something else, resistless as the snowy locks of the old man, that comes upon his sight, borne forward by the gale—his hollow and mournful eyes rest sadly upon it—what is it?—a ship, a gallant ship, like a strong man stricken in his pride and glory by the hand of sickness, helpless upon the bed of that chilly northern sea it lays—its graceful sails rent and tattered, its beautiful machinery broken and shattered—dismasted, dismantled, it floats helplessly onward to its grave. See! a pale and famished band crowded eagerly upon the deck, their straining eyes all riveted with intense earnestness upon that calm, majestic tower of sparkling ice.

Do they wonder at its sublime magnificence? do they admire its glorious beauty? are there murmurs of delight on those compressed and ashy lips?

No! no! those eager faces grow white with terror; those pale lips quiver with the unspoken fear; those

startled eyes distend with the sight of their certain doom—hunger, thirst, cold, all other suffering is forgotten—those pallid forms sink by one impulse on their knees—their hands are raised to heaven; one low, wild, wailing accent of despair rises upon the gale! Oh! iceberg! grand and gorgeous iceberg! you hear it not—you have no heart, no pity, no relenting! Smiling, and still, and proud you stand, as if no souls were wild with agony to see your splendid might!

Onward, onward, surely, swiftly comes the helpless ship to its own destruction. They meet—the iceberg and vessel! there is a harsh, grating sound; a loud, long, terrible shriek—a rush of waters—a commotion of the deep—a solemn silence—and the iceberg stands calm in its greatness as before, with its jeweled forehead lifted to the sky! but loving smiles, and warm, bright tears, and choking utterance will never more welcome the fated hearts that sank with the ill-starred PRESIDENT!

A SEQUEL TO THE TEMPTER.

“**R**ESPITE! RESPITE! O, God of Abraham! respite for one day,” moaned the man of nineteen hundred years, as he sank to the earth and bowed his withered forehead upon the dust. “O, God! let me forget myself for one day—let this burning soul within me cease to burn! let this weary heart cease to throb up against a weight of nineteen centuries—let me sleep—let me sleep and forget!—respice, O, God! respice!”

It was the blackness of a stormy midnight through which the tones of the old man struggled—the wild wind lashed the waves with terrible power, and drove them almost to his feet, as he crouched upon the shore of the seething sea. A little distance away, faintly glimmered through the gloom the thousand lights of an immense city.

The wanderer was alone amid the terrors of the tempest—pressed down—down—down to the earth, with a feeling like the consciousness of tons of iron upon his head—dying—dying away!—yet living an endless life of death! He *could* not perish! the red lightning *would* not blast him—the mad waves *would* not rush upon him, and sweep him to destruction!

Was it the spirit of God, or the spirit of the Tempter that was in the fierce wings of the storm as they hurried by?—for the pleading voice of the old man smote upon the ears of the spirit, and it checked the rushing of the storm instantly, and it folded its wild pinions and was calm—the waters fainted on the shore—the banners of the clouds hung motionless above—the thunder shook, and murmured, and grew still.

The prostrate man trembled in the silence, but dared not raise his head. Suddenly, through the darkness, wavered a lurid light—he shook with fear and agony, for it was the ring burning upon his hand that shone thus through the midnight.

“Respite! respice!” pleaded the enduring sufferer.

“Call not upon the name of the Most High,” said the mocking voice of the arch-fiend, “am I not here, whom thou hast served so faithfully and long? And as just guerdon for thy services, thou shalt have what

thou hast desired. Forgetfulness of the past, but not death, shall be thine — thou shalt still live, but it shall be a new life — thou shalt be a babe in the cradle — a boy among his books — a youth with his dreams — aye, and a lover with his hopes; — and it shall not be known to thee for many years that thou hast lived in the past, and are to live long in the future. Yet, remember, the spell is still upon thee — thou hast a mighty work to do for me, and thou shalt not cease from the performing till all be done. This fair and glorious land — this pride, and jewel, and crown of Earth, with its floating banner of Liberty, its sunshine and its richness, its millions of proudly-beating hearts; this land with its knowledge, and freedom, and sunshine, must be mine — must be mine as all the rest of the Earth has been twice before — and thou shalt be the minister royal of my negotiations. It shall be bought with a price — it shall be bought with GOLD! The spell and the power shall be given unto thee and unto Gold. Yet for a time this knowledge is banished from thee — respite is given thee for many years. Servant, fulfill thy desire!"

Again the terror of the storm was abroad, and the clouds rushed on. The old man fainted, and moaned, and died — and the waters swept over him, and bore him away with them to his grave in the restless bosom of the deep.

That night — while the tempest yet shuddered without — in a costly palace, among a thousand other costly palaces, in the heart of a great city — in a splendid chamber, there was hurrying to and fro, and anxious faces, and sighs, and anguish, and tears. A life was given, and a life was taken away — a warm, tiny, new creature wrapped up in soft, dainty coverings, was placed in the arms of the father — his proud lips were pressed with a thrill of rapture to its velvety cheek, and tears of happiness sparkled in his dark eyes — but a faint voice summoned him to the draped couch, and the infant was resigned to its nurse.

"My husband!" murmured that feeble voice, "ah! my husband, I am leaving you! God bless you and my baby — *our* baby, Vernon."

"Melanie—Melanie! hush—hush—hush! you are not dying — you cannot be dying, my beloved!" whispered the husband, with white lips, turning suddenly very pale, and bending over her with his deep eyes darkening with intense inquiry and solicitude.

The large, spiritual eyes of the sufferer turned slowly to meet his — they were dim already with death, but holy, and heavenly, and full of tenderness — her small, white hand that he had clasped in his feebly, feebly returned the pressure — again there was a low tone hovering on those pale, sweet lips — the last, last tone — and the stricken man bent lower down to hear it:

"Kiss me, Vernon,—good bye—come to me in Heaven."

Quivering with agony his lips trembled upon those dying ones, and were sanctified by the last faint sigh that came up from the death-throb of that young heart.

The awe-struck attendants lifted away the powerless and almost insensible man from the bedside; they lifted him away, and laid him upon a sofa, and bathed his pale forehead, and wept with pity at the dark sorrow which rendered him so helpless. And there, upon the silken couch with all its fair surroundings, lay the beautiful, dead creature of his idolatry—the fair, rare, passionate poetess—the beautiful young wife—the mother of an hour, whose delicate, and fragile life was required a sacrifice at the altar of the little babe sleeping its first slumber in its fairy-like, rosewood crib. Mournful—very mournful!

All over the pillow lay the long, moist, shining hair, thrown back from the sweet, pure brow of the dead—dark and motionless, the lovely lashes rested upon her placid cheeks, vailing for ever the eyes that were a wonder and a glory to look into. A faint smile sat upon her beautiful lips, like an angel with folded wings, keeping watch by the gates of music—all fair, all exquisite, all still; but the spirit was not there—the beautiful young poet-bird had perished in the midst of her eloquence and love.

And the strong man—the partner of her bosom—the proud, high, worshiping husband, lay moaning and struggling with his agony—his pale brow, beaded with the sweat of suffering, was buried in the cushions of the sofa—his hands were writhing together—his soul was black with sudden sorrow.

And the wee, tiny, breathing thing who had been purchased with so fearful a price, lay slumbering in its unconscious ignorance in those dainty coverings and beautiful robes, embroidered by the hand that lay so still and white upon the sweet, cold bosom of the mother. And the attendants, with their tearful faces and whispered tones, moved noiselessly about between the living and the dead.

And still the wild storm shuddered and shrieked without the palace of mourning—desolation within and abroad! The wind fled by with a hollow groan or angry shriek; the clouds battled together with swords of lightning, and the white blood poured from their wounded bosoms upon the terrified earth; the ocean went mad with terror, and leaped upon the shore with a cry of despair, and dashed its forehead against cruel rocks with a sullen moan; the darkness shrank back from the flash of the lurid weapon of the sky; and much mighty conflict and strong battle of elements, and many strange sounds of wailing and woe were in that terrible midnight.

Such was the night and such the scenes, when Vernon Mytalena first opened his poet eyes to the light of our world.

* * * * *

The child of destiny grew up in that beautiful palace, with no companion but his father and one old servant. There were no friends, no visitors, no flatterers in the train of the proud and desolate man—who walked from morn till midnight, like one in a dream, through the gloomy splendor of his lofty halls. From the hour when they laid his fair, bright, glorious bride in her dark, lonely chamber of enduring sleep—from that hour, he cast aside all sympathy, all hope, all the blessings of life—and locked up the rich casket of his mind's jewels from the world, and gave himself up to the desolation of his heart. He had no kith or kin in all the earth, save the little babe who bore his name—and that—oh! that had been purchased with so costly a price, that he could not bear to look upon its strange, fair, infant face. An orphan himself, he had wedded an orphan bride. And a peerless, superb, rarely-gifted pair were they! *She* had no equal in the world for divine loveliness of face, and passionate poetry of heart, and exquisite grace of thought and motion—she was all love, and loveliness, and music, and inspiration—she had large, eloquent

eyes; sweeping, shadowy lashes; rich cheeks; a soft, sweet mouth; a spiritual smile; and oh! such beautiful, shining hair, parted away from her pure forehead, and waving, floating, glittering, down to her small, fair feet. *He* was a man that it was a blessing to look upon—a splendid spirit in a fitting frame. He had a regal brow, caressed for ever by dark wavelets of glossy hair; his eyes were always beautiful, but they changed with the changing of the lights and shadows in his soul—now proud, now dreamy, now mournful, now burning; he had a fervid and eloquent lip, restless with flitting expressions of tenderness, and sadness, and pride, and he had a smile that was ineffably winning and sweet.

It was while he was a sad and dreamy wanderer in the City of the Sea, that he found his young bride. Sometimes, to while away his lonely hours, he painted portraits of the fair faces he chanced to meet, and, as the fame of these was sung in marble halls, one day a lady came to him, and begged him in low, musical accents to picture her upon canvas, so that she might not be entirely forgotten when she went down to the grave. She had no friends, she said, nor was any human being allied to her by the ties of blood, and, when she perished, no one would remember her, and all thought of her would die away, save that called up when strangers looked upon her pictured

semblance. Her voice thrilled to his inmost spirit with its rare, mournful music; her dress was exceedingly rich, and of peculiar style; and, when she put aside her vail with her delicate, slight hand, that vision of loveliness stole upon his eyes which was to be thenceforth and for ever part of his existence.

"Would he do this kindness for her—would the Signor Vernon Mytalena?"

Would he? his fingers trembled to do their beautiful task, before the embodiment of such loveliness vanished and left the world dark to him—for he half expected that she would melt away like his dreams of angels.

The young girl threw aside her rich, velvet mantle and flowing vail, and sat down before him with a smile of delight. She took the gold comb from her hair, and let it fall in rich waves about her slight, beautiful form, and, folding her white hands on her knee, watched his movements with childish curiosity. But, as he grew absorbed in the inspiration of his work, and all the wild rapture and love of his thrilled soul expressed itself in his fine, eloquent face, the look of innocent wonder and pleasure in her large eyes unconsciously changed to the same expression of his earnest and fervent gaze. Wrapped up in him, as he was in her, she never moved her glance from his face—but the love, the surprise, the enthusiastic joy

of his countenance was perfectly reflected—no, not reflected, was absorbed in her own beautiful features. Bent a little forward in an attitude of rapt attention, and entirely forgetful of anything but the new and glorious spirit she had discovered, the light of her deep eyes stole down like starlight into the still waters of the painter's soul.

And thus they loved! There were no heart-aches, or jealousies, or unwilling friends, or coquetries, or doubts! Each saw that the other was their impassioned ideal, with rapturous surprise—they knew that they loved each other, and the poetry, the beauty, the music of their spirits mingled together and made wild bliss. The picture was finished in a few days, and the beautiful original invited the artist to visit at her home. She was a Jewish orphan. She lived entirely alone, with the exception of her servants. Splendor and beauty were within her palace halls. The peculiar grace and poetry of her soul seemed breathed into every thing within her influence. Her home was a Paradise. One might wander till they were bewildered, through its magnificent apartments, glowing with pictures and statues, and lighted by a soft, warm light, stealing in through domes or silk-curtained, balcony windows; all the atmosphere dreamy with perfume and the low, fitful music of wind-harps.

Yet, with her loving heart and spiritual dreams, she had dwelt here alone for years, nor heard the whisper of tenderness, nor felt the touch of worshiping lips upon her young forehead. Her name was Melainie.

How wildly then, and how passionately, her heart sprang out at the call of another's love. How her sweet soul wondered at its perfect happiness, and gave itself up to this blissful reality of a life-long, wordless dream.

And Vernon, with his loneliness, his knowledge and scorn of the world, his boundless capability of loving, his fine poet taste, and fervent heart—oh! was he not favored of heaven, to have the blessing of this rare, young creature for his bride, bestowed upon him?

They were wedded soon. Vernon was an orphan, and there were none to say that he should not take to his bosom a Jewish bride. Thus they were all in all to each other—and had, as it were, a world of their own—a rich and glorious world it was, full of visions, and music, and love, and fancies. Vernon's home was across the sea, in our own fair land; it was not so superbly beautiful a place as was his bride's palace, but it was very splendid, still; and they left the City of the Sea for a time, to spend a few bright months in the home of *his* infancy.

And here, their bright, brief, mingled history came to a close. Here their strange, wild happiness, their trembling hope of another joy, their tremulous fear, their faint presentiment of evil was all brought to a sudden termination—here the desolation and the darkness came upon one heart, and the hand of death upon the other.

The babe was in the cradle, and the mother in the grave. In utter gloom and night of heart, the mourner turned away from sympathy—turned away from the face of his child, and shut himself up in the chamber where she died; or knelt before that picture himself had painted; or paced to and fro through gloomy corridors, wearying the night out with the solemn sound of his slow, heavy steps.

Months and months passed away, and the infant began tottering, with its small feet, over the carpet, and could lisp out "papa"—the word that the faithful old servant had taught him. Still the father heeded not his boy, and would not look upon him. One day, the child wandered from its nursery, and, delighted with its liberty, clapped its tiny hands and went gleefully from room to room, filled with wonder at what it saw, till it reached the apartment where hung the portrait of his Jewish mother. With a cry of delight, he stopped as his eyes caught that lovely form, and gazed earnestly upon it. The yearning in

his infant heart, to be caressed by such a beautiful being, to be treated tenderly by a mother's love, was, perhaps, instinctive. Creeping close to it, he endeavored to clasp its robe, and, when it did not stoop down and take him in its arms, the tears gathered in his large, soft eyes, his little lip quivered, and he raised his hands pleadingly toward those of the picture.

"Papa — papa — papa!" he said, imploringly.

"Papa" was the word that expressed everything lovely to him — such was the lesson his nurse had taught him, when his father had refused to be in his presence.

At this moment, Vernon entered the room. He had not seen his child before for months. It was speaking *his* name. He looked upon its face; the features were his own — but those soft, tearful eyes, so spiritual and deep — they were Melanie's — they were Melanie's!

Something stirred through the depths of his sorrow then, and thrilled his heart with a strange emotion. He caught the babe in his arms, and pressed it again and again to his bosom. For the first time since his great desolation came upon him, he wept.

"I am your papa," he said in a low voice, trying to smile.

The child repeated the words after him, and looked into his face with smiling wonder, and put up his

dimpled hand, and played with the raven curls that were already streaked with gray.

"And that" — he said, in a still lower tone, pointing to the radiant picture, "*that* is your mother, my child."

"Mother," said the little boy, and held up his lips to kiss it. The weeping man raised him up to the portrait, and then hurried with him from the room. Finding the servant, he inquired of her the name of his boy.

"Your own name, sir," replied the wondering old woman.

From that time, henceforward, little Vernon was constantly with his father. Years passed away, and each day was like unto the past in the history of the two. When the father paced his chamber with uneven steps, now in stern stillness, and anon melting into words of mournfulness, murmuring passionate bursts of mournful poetry, while hot, large tears stole fast and silent down his cheeks, and the words of his tenderness and sorrow trembled on his quivering lips; at such moments, the little boy sat in the deep window, or nestled in a corner of the sofa and repeated in a low voice to himself, the murmured and broken sentences of his parent, his large, soft, earnest eyes fixed with a wondering, pitying look upon that pale, fine face. And when the mourner would at length

notice the earnest expression of that beautiful, young countenance, he would catch the tiny form to his bosom, and mighty sobs would shake and convulse it. Then they would go together into the sacred apartment where hung the glorious semblance of the lost one, and the father would kneel before it, and his little one would lean up against him, and together they would weep and adore.

Strange dreams, for one of his age, crept over the child of destiny — strange, wonderful, vague, poetic dreams. Waking or sleeping, his thoughts were of his beautiful, bright mamma, who smiled upon him but never stirred — and who, his papa told him, was in heaven — and of that papa, dark, and sad, and wild. From his fair parents, and from the statues, pictures, vases, and rare gems of art, that filled his palace-home, his ideas of the beautiful were fashioned.

As he grew older, and capable of comprehending the mystery of death, and the pictured semblance of his angel mother, and to understand her history as it fell from the quivering lips of the mourning man, the parent began to take upon himself the education of the child.

Little Vernon was by nature an artist, and it was a relief to the weary man to instruct his boy in an art to which he himself had once been so passionately devoted. In the languages, too, and belles-lettres, he

was versed, and a great portion of those hours, he had once spent in quiet and dark despair, were now passed happily in the instruction of his child.

And very peculiarly gifted with wonderful loveliness and talent was this child; his nature seemed utterly averse to all things coarse and unrefined; his deep, shadowy eyes were full of beautiful visions, looking out beneath their dark lashes sweetly and sadly upon the world; his little heart beat softly to low, spiritual melodies; his young soul was mournful with great, earnest thoughts; his slight fingers wrought with the pencil images of strange radiance and power for one so young.

* * * * *

Twelve years of weariness, since the marble and flowers were placed above the beautiful form of Melanie, and he who mourned for her, and wore out life with ceaseless grief, was placed by her side in the dark chamber of the dead, with silver threads in his raven hair, and lines of sorrow across his fine, high forehead.

The orphan dreamer was alone in that great, grand palace — alone, save the old servant, and the picture of his mother. Before her dear, dear semblance, he poured out the passionate grief of his young heart. It was now all the world to him; and, if he wandered

forth by day through long corridors and splendid apartments, it was only to return to that one little room and weep. At night, that beautiful face looked down upon him through the mist of all his dreams.

There was something, in the circumstances of his life, peculiarly adapted to the development of his wild, poetic nature. And so sensitive, so gentle, so refined, so given up to his own singular thoughts, so gifted was he, that luxury and splendor seemed *necessary* to his life and happiness. The beautiful things which surrounded him seemed part of his existence. But the hand of destiny clasped tight his delicate fingers, and drew him away—away—away from these.

A base and skillful impostor, coming, in pretence, from the sunny south, came with his perjured hirelings, and false deeds, and swore a wrong against the innocent man in his grave, and took away his home from the young orphan, and forced him, penniless and friendless, inexperienced and helpless, into the world of which he knew so little.

There was one thing the poor child begged of the cruel man who had robbed him of his own fair home—it was the picture of his mother! He kissed the foul hand of the wretch, and sunk down upon his knees, and pleaded for that picture—it had become an object of love, of reverence, of adoration, to him—it was his only friend—it was something pure

and holy—it embodied heaven and the angels to him—it was dearer than any earthly thing.

The cold-hearted villain refused with a sneer—what! give him *that*!—that was a glorious thing; it would sell for thousands of dollars!—and the boy went out alone into the world, ignorant of the necessities of poverty, and with his high heart full only of grief, beauty, and wonder.

By bitter, bitter experience, he learned its ways!

Bravely he struggled on, giving love and tenderness unto all, leaning naturally upon others for sympathy, and full of eager ambition and hope!—but no one answered unto the yearning of his spirit for delicate affection and trust. Cold and sure, the frost of unkind words blighted the sweet flowers of his bosom; keen wants and careless chidings hushed the flowing music of his heart; contempt and scorn turned into bitterness the sweetness of the waters of his soul.

But dreaming, and soft, and spiritual as was his nature, the world could not crush it. But it changed it. The love was turned to pride; the murmuring words to the curve of disdain upon his brightly-beautiful lip; haughty defiance came at length to sit upon his princely brow, oftener than the radiant visions that once illuminated its whiteness with a strange and earnest light. The yearning of his soul for tenderness, struggled with a lava tide of burning thoughts, that

rolled and dashed against the aching barrier of his restless bosom. His powers of mind grew more intense. Blended with the darkness and pride of his soul were mingled fancies of inexpressible loveliness, and broken flashes of radiance, and tones of musical songs.

So he struggled up toward manhood — a wonder of genius and beauty, yet cursed by poverty — and the fine strings of his heart stretched to their utmost tension by a weight of bitterness; and his bosom throbbing, and his eye flashing, and lips compressed, save when the thought of his mother melted his beauty into an ineffable sweetness and tenderness.

* * * * *

A massive silver chandelier shed down a flood of gorgeous light upon a fair apartment in a palace standing opposite to that which was once the home of the young artist, Vernon Mytalena. There were many rich articles of luxury lying in its fair glow — soft, sinking sofas, pleasant cushions, and footstools of rare velvet, and heavy draperies of the same, falling over tall windows, till their gold fringe swept the bright, tufted carpet. There was a lute lying on the floor, and a harp in a corner; and, upon the walls, were superb mirrors, and a few exquisite paintings. This apartment was not quite unoccupied — upon the

crimson coverings of a sofa, a young girl had fallen asleep. Her rosy, tapering fingers pressed her white temple, as her small hand nestled amid the glorious wealth of hair that shadowed her sweet face, and, floating round her lovely arm, like sunlight round a Parian pillar, broke away over her shoulder and slept in a thousand shining rings upon her form and over her velvet couch.

One who has ever seen in a vision, an angel resting upon a crimson cloud after sunset, with its eyes softly closed, and its misty robes flowing in grace about it, and a glory through all the air, will realize the beauty of May Grove as she slumbered on the glowing sofa in her snowy dress, with the rich light dreaming around her.

There was a low rap upon the half-opened door, but the young girl did not awake, and, thinking the room was deserted, a young man entered, and, with a slow step, wandered around with his eyes resting upon the paintings, till suddenly startled at the discovery of the beautiful slumberer, he paused before the sofa, and sank involuntarily upon his knees.

The intruder was perhaps twenty-three. He was eminently handsome; but his eloquent mouth had a haughty curve, and his brow was as cold as it was beautiful. There was a girlish tenderness and sweetness in the drooping of his dark lashes, but the eyes

beneath them were proud as Lucifer's. Yet, as those eyes rested upon the young sleeper, they grew soft, and angel-like, and pure, and his lip forgot its bitter sneer—he clasped his hands together in surprise and rapture, and bent earnestly forward, gazing upon her with hushed breath.

With a softly-heaving bosom, and a starrily placid face, the young girl dreamed; but the dark eyes that lingered so intensely upon her, had power to open her closed lids, as sunlight opens twin violets. Softly and slowly she raised her long lashes, till her large, shadowy eyes met those bent upon her. A passionate smile parted her dewy lips, and holding her white arms toward him, she murmured in a sweet, mild voice,

“You have come to me at last, glorious embodiment of the love, and beauty, and poetry of my soul! You are here in my presence, my own one, my beautiful! Come to the heart that has so long pined for you—mine, and mine only.”

The young man looked earnestly into those beautiful eyes—his soul throbbed with emotion as her words named him her own—but he saw that she yet slept, though his intense gaze had opened, as if by fascination, those lovely lids: and, though he would have given worlds to have replied as passionately to her pleading, he only gently kissed the small

hand extended toward him, and replied, “Lady, forgive me, I deemed the apartment deserted. You are dreaming, lady, I will retire.”

As she comprehended his words, the dreamy eyes of May Grove brightened full with a confused light, and a rich blush broke over her soft, fresh cheek. Starting up with a beautiful motion, that made her thick tresses glisten like waves of gold, she smiled through her tears and embarrassment, and said,

“Dreaming? surely, a wild, wayward dream. It was a foolish, maiden fancy, was it not?”

The heart of the stranger burned within him to tell her that *he* did not think it an idle fancy, but the earnest and irresistible truth—that he was hers entirely and only, even as he felt that she was created for him—but he dared not say so, for it was not the way of the nineteenth century to say such things, before he had had an introduction to his spiritual love—so he only said again,

“I regret disturbing your dream, lady. Mr. Grove gave me permission to examine his paintings, and, if I desired, to copy from them.”

“I am not disturbed at all, I assure you,” replied the young girl; but her glowing cheeks, and drooping lashes told plainly that she *was* disturbed, whether pleasantly or not. “Mr. Grove is my father—I am May Grove.”

"And *I* am Vernon Mytalena, and an artist."

"*Are you?*" questioned the child-like creature, with a smile of delight, raising her soft eyes with pleased inquiry to his face. "You are Vernon Mytalena? I have spent hours admiring your works, and thinking how I should love one who could thus create such beautiful images. Your picture of the Madonna hangs in my own chamber, where I can always look at it when I wake at night—it looks so ineffably sweet and gentle in the dim light of the night-lamp, that I ever have dreams of angels, or else of—of the one who conceived it. Strange!" and again those radiant eyes rested on his countenance. "I always dreamed of you just as you are—only—only not quite so proud. But that I think makes you more beautiful—and I am sure you could not be haughty to those you loved."

Proud! there was not much pride in his soul then, nor anything but wonder, and pain, and love—wonder, at her surpassing loveliness and perfect purity—pain, that he was a struggling aspirant after fame and wealth, and she the daughter of a vain millionaire. Love, the instantaneous love that had sprang into being from every fiber of his wild, dreaming, beauty-fevered spirit, when the sleeper in her dreams pleaded for him to come to her heart, and held out her soft arms to encircle him. He could have told her then that *he*

had also dreamed of *her*—that he knew the mystery of her blushes and surprise—he could have spoken most eloquently of spiritual love—but it would have been wild and foolish, and he repressed the words on his restless lips, and walked with the bright young creature from painting to painting, insensible, for the first time, to their beauties—but listening, gazing, absorbed in his new vision of love and loveliness.

"Oh!" cried the young girl, suddenly, "come into this apartment, there is a picture here—none know its author or origin—the most wonderfully, surpassingly-beautiful creation the human mind has faculties to conceive of. I thought there was something about you that reminded me of it—and now I know it is your eyes—you have her eyes—the very same—so beautiful!"

She led the way into another magnificent room, and Vernon followed with a quick thrill at his heart—he thought of his mother! He had heard that the one who had deprived him of his birthright, had disposed of his palace and articles of *vertu*, and returned to the south: and, burning with the joyful thought that he might again look upon the only thing he prized on earth, he had hurried to his former home, but the picture had been purchased, he could not ascertain by whom.

So fearful was he now of disappointment, that he

hardly dared look up, as pausing before it, May asked —

“Is it not wonderful!”

Slowly he raised his glance, and again upon his soul, in all its loveliness, the face of his mother smiled upon him. A thousand memories, and dreams, and thoughts of by-gone tears, and mourning, and of hours spent in silent worship of that radiant form — all the strange visions, the love, and the beauty, and the shadowy, dreamy hue of his childhood came upon him; and with it a crushing sense of his struggle with the world, his rejected sympathies, his hardening heart. His face grew pale, and his lip quivered, and kissing it wildly, he sank upon the floor and sobbed, and his proud form shook with long-repressed, long-growing agony.

“Is it his love — is it his love?” murmured May Grove to herself, and her own cheek whitened to the hue of a lily.

Why should *she* tremble if it *was* his love?

At length he raised his proud head from his hands, and turning his dark eyes, with a look of unutterable sadness, to the face of the pale young girl, he said in a low voice —

“My mother — my own beautiful mother.”

May Grove had not yet learned to repress sympathy — her soft eyes filled with tears, and, wishing to

soothe his sorrow, she laid her fair hand upon his raven curls, and stooping, kissed his forehead with her tremulous lips.

All the fountains of tenderness in the strong man's bosom were sweetly stirred — how could he ever have bitterly cursed the world, when one so beautiful, so innocent, and loving, and pure was dwelling in its midst?

“Heaven bless you, dear one!” he said earnestly, and rising, he took her quivering hand and led her to a seat. Sitting at her feet, for the first time, he poured forth in a low, sad, touching voice the history of his life — his strange, overshadowed, but happy infancy; the gloom and mourning of his father for the loss of the beautiful creature whose portrait hung there before them; and the death of that father; the base scheme which had robbed him of all that was dear, and sent him ignorant and helpless to struggle with the world; of that long, long, weary struggle, when daily his loving sympathies, his gorgeous fancies, his eloquent ambitions were crushed in the battle of life. And then the words he could no longer repress, gushed forth in an impassioned torrent of feeling — how the pride and bitterness his soul had learned, was melted before her presence; and how he felt that *she* only, could waken his heart once more to wild happiness, or freeze every impulse for ever, leaving him a desolate, cold, and passionless form to stand in the halls of

existence, as a proud marble statue stands in the halls of the happy.

Bright tears stood on the drooping lashes of the young girl; her heart was startled, and thrilled, and stirred. There was a moment of intense silence after the last word trembled from the lips of the speaker — then the white arms, which had pleaded for him in her dreams, were folded softly around his neck, and sobbing, and murmuring broken words of joy, May Grove nestled her sweet face in the bosom of Vernon Mytalena.

* * * * *

The burning stars of heaven came out into the night, and looked down into the gardens of Paul Grove — smiling dreamily upon their dewy flowers, and rustling foliage, and white statues, and silver-singing fountains. The drooping clusters of blossoming vines hung their graceful heads tenderly to the whisper of caressing leaves; and dim, cool shadows deepened the placid beauty of the starry air — the gardens were lovely as a faint vision — all perfume, flowers, silver gleams, cool spray, shifting shades, and murmuring melodies.

May Grove stood by a fountain. Her thick tresses floated on the sighing wind, and her dainty hand played with the falling water.

She was waiting for her lover.

Presently a step coming down a myrtle avenue broke on her listening ear; and tossing back her wild hair, she bent half forward to listen, while a rich flush and a soft smile mantled her face. As the step drew nearer, she turned to meet the approaching form, but shrank back again and leaned against the marble fountain-nymph, murmuring —

“My father!”

“May — my daughter,” said a cold, stern voice, “for what are you here in the damp night-air alone, and unattended. Not to meet some cunning aspirant to your father’s gold?”

A flush shot into the young girl’s cheek, and she raised her eyes, with a proud glance to his face.

“Has your child no tenderness, no charm, no virtue to please the hearts of others, that you for ever think they seek her gold, not her?” she asked, with a bitterness unusual to her soft lips.

“Oh! yes, all these, my child — your mother had! but I married her for her dower, for all that! and men love riches now, quite as much as in my youth. But come — my choice for you is made, and the happy lover awaits you in the drawing-room. A worthy match — young, handsome, and rich.”

May turned pale, and asked in a low voice —

“Who is he, my father?”

"Young Terence Endicott."

"*Him*, father! I scorn him as I would a viper."

"He is very handsome, and so rich you will forget your idle prejudice, and marry him with joy."

"Never — never — never!"

"No girlish eloquence if you please, my dear; he is *my* choice, and you *must* obey the dictate. Fortunes depend not on the caprice of girls."

"Oh, father, we are rich enough already; and have gold to spare to the gifted and suffering."

"Gifted and suffering! who learned you this? — not I. Come, Terence will not bear neglect. Be gay, be bright, and bend your queenly pride to his, for he is haughty as Satan himself."

"And almost as evil. I pray you spare me, father, *I love another!*"

"Another! do you? well, unlove him, then. How rich is he?"

"Penniless, but worthy all our gold."

"Humph! worse than nonsense! I thought I had kept you so close from all such whining pretenders that you, at least, would stand as a model daughter, whose happiness and glory was secured by a father's care. Only to-day I bade my servants kick a presumptuous painter from my presence, who came to me, as haughty as a lord, to claim your hand. Poor painter! how impudent! how absurd!"

"It is him I love, my father!"

"May! are you mad? Never let me hear you say that again. Come instantly. Remember, I am your father!"

He seized the slight hand of the trembling girl, and dragged her away from the fountain toward the illuminated mansion. With a smothered curse, Vernon Mytalena emerged from the shade of the myrtle-vines, and stood out in the dim light, with flashing eyes, and compressed lips, and dilated form. "Aye! withered up and base old miser! so he did tell his grinning slaves to insult me in his halls — and, as I live, he shall repent the foul indignity. Oh, May! May! pride! poverty! and agony! Would that I had never loved! then there would have been nothing now to restrain the bitterness and the anger of my soul against the world — no soft eyes winning me away from revenge — no sweet voice hushing the tumult of my passions — none of this struggling with tenderness and sternness — none of this anguish I scorn to feel. *She* is sitting, with a breaking heart, in the midst of a splendid mockery — and I! — I will go again to my solitary room and wear out the midnight with my restless heart beating loudly upon its silence. Sweet mother! starry, angel mother, be with me."

With an uneven step he hurried to his small room. As he entered it and cast open the shutters to the

night air, a flood of faint starlight gleamed sweetly over the beautiful pictures which alone relieved the nakedness of the poor apartment, save a few books, and a writing table by the window. Resting his elbows on this table, he sat long hours of that fair night with his burning face buried in his hands—the silence broken only by his heavy breathing and the quick throbbing of his excited breast.

At length he was startled by a light touch upon his bowed head, and looking up, May Grove stood before him in her white dress, and jeweled hair, and pale face. She had glided in at the low window, and, as he started up, she said in a hurried voice, with clasped hands,

“I am come to tell you why I did not meet you to-night at the fountain. Do not think I meant to slight you—I wished to be there so much—but my father—”

“May!” exclaimed the painter in a voice so startling that she stopped at once, “even *you* must never mention your father’s name in my presence. I can bear *almost* anything else for your sake—but not that!—not to be spurned from the presence of the parent of my idol, by the feet of grinning lackeys. By my mother’s beauty, and my father’s passionate blood—no! I knew why you did not meet me—I heard what passed between you and *him*—I saw him

drag you away!—and then I came home, and have sat here ever since, with a fire burning in my bosom of whose wild torture I never before conceived. Everything has perished in that fire of agony—my dreams of beauty, my hopes of fame, my devotion to my sweet art, my love of poetry and eloquence—all, all have melted down into one hard, stern mass within my bosom—one lump of rich, bright gold lighted up and sparkling in the glow of a burning revenge! This night, a vision has come unto me—I have felt almost as if I were no longer a mortal man, but an eternal spirit, unto whose power was given the jeweled key that unlocked the rarest treasures of the earth! Poverty, away! Scorn, insult, contumely, how will ye smile to kiss my feet! May! to-morrow, I go to the land that my eyes have seen this night as in a vision!—and I return not to thee, nor to love, till wealth, that will purchase the world, is mine—till gold, that will make *his* heap show like a pebble at the mountain’s base, comes at my bidding—till men look upon my glory with awe—till power, and kingdoms, and grandeur are mine! I see it, feel it, know it all, plain as the day, and my soul is changed within me.”

Fainter and fainter grew the young girl at his quick, round-dropping, energetic words, till, when he ceased, she clasped his feverish hands in her own

cold, trembling ones, and, bowing her forehead upon his bosom, she moaned in the sudden desolation of her wild love,

"You will leave me then—leave me alone to struggle—and at length be offered up on the altar of that passion for gold! You — you — you are mad, too, with that baneful poison! Love, and beauty, and purity, and all God's beautiful gifts you have given up! Yet have you mocked my trust by breathing of eternal devotion — oh! I am so desolate!"

"Gold will purchase all these things, May—it will eat out the stain upon my honor—it will make men bow to the proud spirit they now spurn."

"Will it buy such love as is all in all to such as you and me? You are not yourself now, Vernon—I can not believe you are in your calm, firm, reasonable mind—you are excited by what has passed to-day. You will think more soberly to-morrow—say that you will, my own Vernon!"

"I shall be gone to-morrow, May."

"And you *can* go, and forsake me in my time of trial — leave me helpless in the hands of the cruel — forget the passionate love you have sworn to me — all this for what I would so readily sacrifice for you. This night I have stolen from splendid halls to seek you in your lowly room, and tell you that I was ready to give up all and flee with you — home, friends,

magnificence, my father, my jewels, my sweet haunts of loveliness, where I have dreamed the young years of my life away, all, all—and welcome anything—sorrow and trial — so it was shared with you. And my heart was glad within me when I thought how we would go far away from those who have been cruel to us, and, with our own gifts, win the fame and the fortune that would make them proud to welcome us back. Your beautiful art — my poetry and music — and our blessed love! we could have been so happy! Our souls could have grown so grand, and brave, and strong—Earth would have been more beautiful from the proud triumph, and the beauty, and the love of our tried souls. This would have been true greatness. O, Vernon! Vernon! turn back now from your wild thoughts, and go with me."

The young man clasped her to his bosom so tightly that she hardly breathed — his cheek was blanched, and his forehead sweated with pain — for, in the wild whirlwind of passion that had swept over his soul, the star of love still burned like a glory in the night of his stormy spirit.

"No — no — no! it cannot be now—it is too late! the inspiration of my art has fled from me — the ambition for fame has gone with it—there is nothing left but my strong will to gain riches, and my love for thee. No — no — I have seen strange things in my

tortures this night — things have been revealed to me like prophecies — I see a future that will rival the glory of Solomon, the gorgeousness of the princes of old — I see my destiny, and shall I turn away from it? I cannot! But only be true to me, my own one, resist your father's will — be true some months or years, and oh! the reward shall come. I swear to you that for every ingot of gold that I lay up, shall be laid up a burning thought of love and thee! Think you, I could see your delicate fingers toiling for bread—your beautiful form wasting away from want? My May! it was the agony of these thoughts that so stirred up my strong soul, that in obedience to my *will*, as it were, these visions of my destiny came up before me. Do not think I am mad, May. I am just as calm now as I shall be till my purposes are wrought out. Only promise to be true, to forget not till you hear from me — will you promise?"

"Then you will leave me!" gasped the young girl.

"It is beginning to grow light—the night will soon vanish, and the day that parts us be here — this is our last hour! Speak to me, May! say one word of sweetness to linger in my ear till I come to claim you — will you not say one word?"

But the young girl had fainted in his arms. He passed through the window with his pale burden, and stood a moment in the gray twilight gazing upon her

beautiful forehead, and closed eyes, and disheveled hair—tearlessly gazing upon her pallid and exquisite loveliness — then, sealing their mute parting with one kiss of agony upon her stirless lips, he hurried through the deserted streets till he reached her father's gardens, and, laying her light form upon the dewy turf, by the fountain, he sprinkled the cool spray upon her sweet, white face.

He waited till the breath of life once more quivered faintly over her lips, and, ere those sad eyes unclosed, or those lips murmured his name, he was gone!

* * * * *

"They kneel upon the sloping sand,
As bends the human knee,
A beautiful and tireless band,
The priesthood of the sea!"

With a murmur on their lips, and a dimple on their faces, and a glow upon their bosoms, the waves stole up and knelt upon the shore of the Pacific.

Upon a rock that jutted out into the sea, a solitary man sat gazing upon the purple glory of the water where the sun had just dropped into its bosom. The soft wind fluttered the raven hair floating about his fine forehead; the spray bathed his bare feet, and the gorgeously-tinted sky smiled into the dreamy eyes that were fixed, with a forgetful gaze, upon it.

Guided by a hand that he felt but did not see, through prairie and wilderness, and over mountains and through strange scenes of danger, and beauty, and fear, the man of destiny had wandered alone this mighty distance—had been rescued from every peril—hurried from every danger. Where he slept at night, there were always springs of cool water on the prairie—always fruit in the wilderness—the Indian saw him not, and wild beasts avoided him—slowly, safely, and surely his feet had traveled to the land he had seen in a vision! It was Vernon Mytalena that sat upon the rock at sunset, musing upon days of past happiness—alone, alone in the loneliness that surrounded him.

For weeks he had been here, spending his days in the mountains, and descending at evening to wander by the seaside. There were berries, and fruits, and fishes for food, but he had not yet beheld a human face or heard a voice. The powerful knowledge that his destiny would not be interfered with by death, kept him from fear—but oh! the appalling loneliness that had grown so painful to him.

The everlasting dirge that the ocean murmured almost maddened him, yet was strangely fascinating, and he could not break away from its spell. And now, as he sat there, lost in thought, with its sad, sweet music breaking in ceaseless cadence upon his

ear, a dream, as it were, of by-gone ages, crept over him, and, blended with that melody, he saw a thousand scenes go slowly by him, in which it seemed that he, himself, had been an actor. Their voices sounded to him like the echo of a thousand years gone by. He heard the murmur of the waters of Kedron, and saw the starry lake of Galilee; then, sensations like those of drowning crept over him; and again he seemed to be floating in a frail bark far from land. The twilight darkened and the moon rose up, and still he was in this trance, and, when he at length started from it, it seemed as if he had lived long years since the sun set; and there was a weight upon his heart that oppressed him. Yet wherefore?—he knew not; and, if a half-thought flashed over him, he lost it before he knew its shape, and was more sadly bewildered than before.

Oh! then, how he pined for the soft hand of passionate, young May amid his curls, and her sweet voice in his ear! Not even all the glittering gold that had burst upon his sight in the last few weeks, would have been worth as much to him as one low word from her, one touch of her bright lips. But even this feeling, in a measure, passed away, at the wild throb to avenge the stain that burned upon it—and, with quick steps, he descended from the rocks and paced the shore till midnight. * * *

Till daylight, aye, till he had worn life out with restless motion, would Vernon Mytalena have trodden those sands, had he known what was passing many thousand miles away that night.

The whole magnificent mansion of Paul Grove was gorgeously lighted and garlanded with flowers, and eloquent with music, and laughter, and gay words. Silken robes floated, and bright jewels flashed—fine forms bent courteously, repartee sparkled. The world was so proud and happy to shine at the wedding of May Grove and Terence Endicott.

At the end of a suite of splendid parlors, that had been thrown into one, a snowy silk curtain drooped in rich folds before a small temple where the rites of marriage were to be solemnized. As a wreath of white roses drew up this curtain in graceful loops to the ceiling, revealing the occupants therein, the whispering and laughter died away, and, with breathless curiosity, the assembly gazed.

The bridegroom was handsome, and a smile of triumph lighted up his face; but the smile was too sinister and haughty, where it played around his lips, to inspire love and trust in the young creature who stood by his side—for the clear eyes of the spirit were hers, and she shuddered when he took her hand. There was a rich crimson on the cheeks of the bride, and a beautiful, unnatural brilliancy in her large eyes, that

came and went several times during the ceremony. But when he turned, at the conclusion, to kiss her forehead, the color and light faded away entirely, and she sank motionless into the arms of her husband.

"What susceptibility! what sensitiveness! what soul!" said the flattering crowd; but there was a pang, sharper than a dagger, at the heart of the father, as he took his child into his arms and bathed her face with the perfumed water that was held for him. But his heart was too calloused to feel reproach any longer than till those mournful eyes unclosed again and looked into his face.

He whispered a few words in her ear, but she turned away with a low, half-suppressed moan.

Presently she grew stronger, and, leaning on the arm of her parent, received the congratulations of the crowd, with a faint smile that deepened into one of bitterness, as the mocking forms were one by one gone through with. But they did not read the nature of the smile; and the eyes, that might have spoken too much, were shaded by the low drooping of long lashes.

When the supper hour came, and the refreshment rooms were thrown open, the bride had disappeared suddenly.

"Detain the bridegroom from coming, while we search for her," cried many voices, and, while gay

forms gathered around Terence Endicott, many hastened to the gardens in search of the absent bride.

They found her in a few moments, lying upon the earth, in a dim, sweet place by a fountain side; and, silent and pale with horror, they brought her in and laid her upon a sofa, before the father and husband. The delicate lace, and rich silk, and pearls, and flowers of her bridal-dress were dripping with blood, and a small, gold penknife fell from the folds that lay upon her stained bosom, as they laid her down. The father, who had driven her to this desperate deed, fell down upon his knees beside her, his form shaking with fear and the agony of remorse. The lover was pale as death, but he found time, even in that dreadful moment, to whisper in the ear of the parent,

"Let them think that some rival has done this."

The old man, in this sudden shock, caught the idea eagerly.

"Who has done this?" he cried aloud, in a shrill, painful tone. "Who has murdered my darling on her wedding-night, out of foul envy? Who is there that would not see my beautiful child happy, but must murder her, because of hate?" and he filled the air with wailings and cries like a child. But, aye, old man, you would have given all your gold then to have seen your daughter smile or speak!

"Who has done this?" repeated the pale-faced throng. "Alas! alas! what a wedding! How terrible!"

The desperate young creature had not completed her resolve, for the physicians, who gathered round, pronounced her still alive; and, when she was borne to her chamber, and the wound examined, they said she would live, with tender care.

Then the heart of the old man, her father, broke with joy—he died.

* * * * *

A pale, sweet face looked out of a chamber upon a fair, fresh scene. The window opened to the floor, and a little balcony led out of it. Beneath, rose a green park, and stately trees, fountains, and flowers; a grove was in the distance, and a silver lake. The mansion was magnificent, and the grounds were beautiful enough to stir the heart of the saddest one to joy.

But loveliest of all was the pale lady who sat upon the balcony. She was very young, but white and sad, and robed in widow's weeds. Her beautiful golden-brown hair was put away behind a widow's cap, but many a long, bright tress stole out and waved upon her bosom. The snowy lids and thick lashes had a mournful way of shadowing her sad, spiritual eyes. A beautiful little babe, of a few months old, nestled

in her arms — a little girl, with bright eyes, bright hair, bright cheeks, laughing in her mother's lap like a young joy clinging to a sorrow — a sunlit-gleam on a pale cloud — a star in the faint arms of night.

The lady was singing, in a low, clear, musical voice, a song so sad, and touchingly, wildly, sweetly mournful, that, if a servant chanced to pass beneath the balcony, he stopped and listened with great tears rolling down his cheeks.

"Poor thing! poor thing!" they muttered to themselves, and to each other, "she used to sing it so much before master died, and she sings now more than ever. I do n't believe she married the one she loved — the master was not good enough for her—he was haughty and angry. She has always been so meek, and kind, and sweet to us — poor lady! And when he was brought home that time from the hunt, all bleeding and pale with that great gash in his forehead, and she tended him so kindly for weeks, never leaving him till he died, how he used take her hand and look up so pitiful-like, and ask to forgive him for something he had done to grieve her, and then she would weep and kneel down by the bed and pray for him. And now she seems so lonely, poor creature, with no one to love but her baby, and always singing that sad song."

It was May Endicott who sat in widow's weeds, holding her infant, and chanting that mournful song.

It was "Allan Percy" that she murmured for ever to herself:

"Slumber thou still, my innocent — mine own,
While I call back the dreams of other days;
In the deep forest I feel less alone
Than when those palace splendors mock my gaze,
Fear not! my arm shall bear thee safely back;
I need no squire, no page with bended knee,
To bear my baby through the wild wood track
Where Allan Percy used to roam with me.
Lullaby!

"Here I can sit, and, while the fresh wind blows,
Waving the ringlets of thy shining hair,
Giving thy cheek a deeper tinge of rose,
I can dream dreams that comfort my despair;
I can make visions of a different home,
Such as we hoped in other days might be —
There no proud earl's unwelcome footsteps come
There, Allan Percy, I am safe with thee.
Lullaby!

"Thou art mine own — I'll bear thee where I list,
Far from the dull, proud town and donjon keep;
From my long hair the pearl chain I'll untwist,
And with a peasant's heart sit down and weep.
Thy glittering, brodered robe, my precious one,
Changed for a simpler covering shall be;
And I will dream thee Allan Percy's child,
And think poor Allan guards thy sleep with me
Lullaby!"

As her sweet voice trembled on the mournful "Lullaby," a servant entered with a missive.

"They say this is for you, lady, it is directed to May Grove."

Laying her babe quickly in the cradle, the mother sprang and, taking the letter eagerly from the silver tray, hurried with it on to the balcony, and tore away the seal with trembling fingers. For the first time in long months a rich flush, like that of girlhood, shot into her cheek, her lips quivered, and grew red, and her dark lashes brightened with tears as she read. Then she pressed it to her bosom and read it over, and over again.

"Oh! May, May," were the words it bore, "my darling, my precious one, how shall I write to you—what shall I say? It is so long since I have heard a human voice till now—so long since I have written or spoken to anything but the ocean, and the wind, and the trees, that I know not what to tell you; only that with every grain of gold I have gathered, I have treasured a thought of thee, with every jewel, I have laid up a hope for the future. My wild visions are more than realized—all the monarchs of the earth have not so much riches as I! The land that I saw in my dreams, I have found. Gold is in the plains, and in the mountains in abundance for thousands of kings; for months I have done nothing but gather

lumps of gold, and hide them away in a secret cave far from the place where I found them. If a million men were searching for it they could not find my stronghold, and all the rest I am willing to proclaim to the world. Rare jewels I found in one valley, and gathered them up by handfuls. When even *my* wildest ambition was surfeited, I traveled farther down the coast, and at last met a vessel, and have communicated my discovery, and have now this chance of writing to you.

"Oh! what *shall* I say to you! shall I tell you how I have sometimes been almost mad with loneliness—how I have yearned to hear you speak—how passionately I trust that you have been true to me through silence and desertion. It is but a little while longer now, and you will be mine! In the next vessel I shall come!"

"Oh! my beautiful, my peerless May! how like a princess you will be when my gold and gems are woven into radiant shapes to heighten your loveliness. When I sit you upon a jeweled throne, and stand by your side, how mockingly will I spurn those who have once slighted me—spit upon me—striven to crush me!"

"Sometimes I have had strange trances come over me since I came here—visions of things done and seen hundreds of years ago, creep over me. I have been alone so long that I attribute it to that—your

presence will soothe away feverish thoughts — we will once more be happy — oh! so happy! Speedily I shall hasten to your side, oh! loved one! Almost as soon as my letter I shall come to thee — good-bye for a little time.”

But there was a sharp pang of pain, mingled with the rapture of the young mother. Would he love her as well, now that she had been compelled to wed another? would he be kind to her sweet babe? — had not this strange infatuation changed and hardened his soul, and ruined his spiritual beauty. All these things her heart gave her an answer to. Did he not leave her to the mercy of her father, and that man — and should she not rather blame *him*, than he her? Was not her babe too sweet and beautiful for any one to help loving it devotedly? — could three years ruin the glorious spirit whose equal she had never met? And the young widow smiled, and was happy.

With her head drooped gracefully to her hand, and a soft color glowing on lip, and cheek, she sat, and dreamed, forgetful of all around her — till suddenly, startled by a step at her side — *he* — her glory, her dream, her spirit-love stood before her, with a passionately happy face.

Oh! that was a meeting of great joy, for one of Earth.

* * * * *

Babylon was a splendid city! — so was Tyre, and so was Rome! In ancient days there was much magnificence — stories of oriental gorgeousness have been told us in glowing words, like diamonds dropping upon golden wires! — but there was a city that triumphed over Babylon, and Rome, and Tyre — there was an era that was richer in splendor than the days of old — that was a land that rivaled the charmed and glittering east!

The development of a thousand arts, and sciences had made that city like a sybil's dream. Air, earth, and water, and fire were easy instruments of skill to make life one swift hurry from pleasure to pleasure. Happiness was as refined, as fragile, as delicate as the brief being of the etherealized creatures who enjoyed it. Life was shortened, but the pleasures of life were condensed.

No clumsy palaces, nor solemn-looking towers or temples rose to sight. Exquisite edifices elaborately graceful, sprang up in the midst of orange, and magnolia trees, and wound about with silvery streams that here and there leaped down in mimic falls and played upon delicately-arranged instruments, whose little wheels moved golden wires to melody. There were light barges upon dimpling lakes; there were silken-curtained carriages floating through air; there were luxury and idleness, and gorgeousness in the city of

pleasure; and, a few miles away, dark men toiled ceaselessly in dreary mines, for shining ore.

Like the moon among the stars, one palace shone out amid all others. Standing amid lovely terraces, and fragrant trees, like a beautiful statue in gracefully-arranged drapery, and perfect in its proportions as an exquisite piece of sculpture, it was a rare combination of the rich and chaste. The inside of this elegant structure was like a picture, or a poem of a spiritual mind, it was so magnificent, yet so *intellectual* in its arrangements. No one but a woman, a dreamer, and a poetess, could have fitted up those labyrinthian apartments with such bewildering splendor, yet such exquisite and vision-like effect.

In an inner apartment of this palace, upon a rose-colored, silken lounge, a lady lay sleeping away the long hours of the summer day. Her shining hair was braided with jewels, and her small hands and lovely arms were covered with rare ornaments, and her little foot flashed with gems, as it stole out from the hem of her dress. This beautiful sleeper was May Mytalena, the wife of the proud man who had all things at his command but a crown, and who aspired to even that. She was as lovely as in her girlish days, but very delicate and slight. Her hands were transparent, and her forehead and temples looked too pure and spiritual for earth. Her cheek had a rare,

faint, hectic glow that was ineffably sweet, and her loving lips were tinted with the same soft color.

She was restless in her sleep, and murmured to herself, and a bright tear crept out from beneath each lid, and hung quivering upon the dark, closed lashes.

Poor May! she had always been too spiritual for life. In her girlhood, the base spirit of her miserly father had jarred her sensitive soul — then she was torn away from her dreams of love, and holiness, and beauty, and wedded to a man whose heart was sunken in selfishness and vice — then, when she was at last united to the ideal of her spirit, after a brief space of exquisite happiness, she was doomed to watch the bloom and perfume fade from their flowers of love — and, instead of the bright waters for which her soul thirsted, apples of silver and gold were served to her yearning heart — and, while the great spirit of Vernon Mytalena bent all its energies to bringing men and riches to his feet, she silently pined away for want of spiritual sympathy.

While the tears still sparkled on her lashes, a young girl softly stole into the room, and sat down on a heap of cushions on the floor by her mother's side.

Maud Endicott was beautiful, but her beauty was like her father's, haughty and dark. A slight, small form; dark, passionate eyes; bright, scornful lips; a

queenly bearing, and a musical voice, with raven hair folded like a crown, and richly jeweled, an oval face, small hands, and magnificent attire, made her most princess-like. She could love and hate alike — and she looked upon her pure and fragile mother with a deep affection, that made her haughty, impulsive spirit beautiful and meek in that calm, gentle presence.

Wondering at her mother's tears, the young creature kissed them away, waking the sleeper from her mournful dreams.

"There were tears on your cheeks, dear mother," she said tenderly, "were your dreams so sad?"

The invalid heaved a deep sigh, and, raising her large eyes to her daughter's face, replied —

"Would you like to have me tell you all my life, now, Maud? You know something of my history, now; but I shall not be here long to tell you the rest, and, if you are ready to hear, I will talk with you about it, that you may perhaps have more knowledge of life to guide you, when your mother's careful hand has mouldered to dust."

"Do not speak of *that*," said Maud with tearful eyes, nestling her head down on the sofa by her mother's bosom, and preparing to listen with silent interest.

In a low, eloquent, impressive tone, broken now and then by sudden emotion, the pale lady told her tale of life; and, by the tears that streamed down the

cheeks of Maud, at the cruelty of May's father, and her parting with her lover; by her start and shudder at the incidents of May's first wedding-evening; by her breathless eagerness, when hearing of her own father's character and fate, she showed how deeply she sympathized in the story.

"Maud!" said the mother, in an earnest tone, as she paused near the end of her narrative, "I know not whether I shall dare to tell you the rest, or not. If I thought it would make you unhappy, I would be still — if I thought it would enable you better to meet evil, I would speak — though the words would come bitter and slow enough from my heart."

"Then do not distress yourself, dear, dear mother."

"Perhaps you had better know all, my child; but do not be startled at anything I say. It has always been a gift of mine to read, with a kind of spiritual sight, almost every thought that passes through the bosoms of others. If it had not been for this, I might, perhaps, have seen less to grieve me in life — I might not now be pining away in a yearning after pure spirits.

"My child, you know you are very beautiful; and that gems and splendor become your queenly style; you are ambitious to shine the brightest and the proudest star in all the throng. I have told you how the once grand and gifted soul of my husband

has gradually become absorbed in ambitious dreams of power, and a baneful passion for gold—gold. In place of the tender love he once bore for me, he has now only the desire to see me moving in the throng, or enthroned in stately pomp, blazing with jewels, and bright with pride. In this he is disappointed; my nature and ill health unfitting me for the task; and lately, has woke up to a sudden sense of *your* beauty and queenliness—his love has turned from me to you—and, when I am dead, which will soon be, he will seek you for a wife.”

“Oh! mother!” murmured the young girl.

“I have told you this,” said the mother calmly; “that you may understand the love he will proffer you—it is not pure, it will not make you happy—it is only a kind of triumph in your beauty. Then I implore you, by the purity of your young heart, by all your impulses of affection, by my unhappiness, not to wed yourself to one who will clothe you as his idol, and place you upon a shrine of gold, and call his cringing followers around to worship you. Have a higher ambition, my daughter; be better, be nobler than this, or you will never meet me in the spirit-world to which I shortly go.”

“I have always loved him as a father; how could you think I would do this thing,” murmured the weeping girl.

“Because I think I know your heart, my daughter; and you are too young and beautiful not to be dazzled by the ambition to be the queen of all this fair, great land. But you will remember what I have said; and promise me to wed for love, not power, will you not, my child?”

The answer of the young girl was interrupted by the entrance of Vernon Mytalena, who came and sat down by them, and, holding the thin hand of the mother, looked into the beautiful face of the child.

Tears, and care, and struggling passions had altered the inspired dreamer more than his lovely wife; his glorious beauty had fled—his once eager, eloquent lips were habitually compressed, his eyes were sunken, and his brow contracted—yet was he a noble and splendid man, whose words, and tone, and manner were full of a quiet, haughty consciousness of power, which few would care to dispute.

As he sat and looked into the face of Maud, those words of her mother—“be the queen of all this land,” burned in her thoughts, and, unconsciously, she gazed upon him and wondered how long it would be before he grew old, and how much gray there was mingled with his raven locks, and whether it would be possible to love a man like him. Suddenly she was conscious of the large eyes of her mother reading her soul, and,

with a burning blush, she buried her face in her mother's bosom, whispering,

"I promise—I promise what you ask."

* * * * *

There was a splendid pageant in the streets of the great western city. There was a costly hearse draped with rich hangings, and bearing a superb coffin solemnly—a coffin fit to enshrine the fair form of the great man's wife—the inner one of solid silver, and the outer of polished ebony with gold plates, and inscription set in mosaic; and all this drawn by twelve slow-stepping, jet-black steeds, and, walking at the head of each, a servant in sable livery. There was an immense procession of splendid carriages covered with funeral trappings, and all the pomp, and show, and ceremony, and richness possible. The tomb was magnificent, in a sweet, solemn spot, where she had, before her death, requested it to be.

There *were* great tears of sorrow dropped around the grave of the sweet, dead lady, but they fell not from the eyes of the chief mourner. He was becomingly calm and stern, and held upon his strong arm the faint form of the young girl who mourned most passionately for her mother.

Could it be that Vernon thought, in that solemn hour, of the first time he ever looked upon the radiant

face of the bright dreamer now lying white and still in all this fearful state? No matter! she died as many a dreamer dies—her heart wasted away as does many a poet's heart. Yet he *must* have felt something of his old spirit coming back to him—he must have seen again vividly the beautiful, neglected picture of his mother—have started with a remembrance of his father, and of how different was his devotion to his bride—have thrilled with a memory of his youthful inspiration—have sickened one moment with the thought of his hollow, mocking life.

But even with all these thoughts, was not a brighter and a prouder than she, clinging in beautiful sorrow to his arm—was there not richness and show enough here, to atone for all the want of love?

And thenceforth the troubled heart of the spiritual May rested sweetly in the grave.

* * * * *

Maud Endicott sat upon a sofa opposite a large mirror, blushing, and trembling, and striving to appear calm. She was alone, but evidently awaiting a visitor. She was dressed with elaborate richness and care. A small tiara of costly gems sparkled above her forehead—that forehead so sweet, and smooth, and classic. There were bands of emeralds half hiding the exquisite arms from the small wrist to the white

shoulders, from which the looped-up tissue of lace waved lightly back. Her dress was of green velvet, with a rich black silken tissue floating over it, caught here and there with emerald brooches. Where her thick, raven hair was folded over her head, a sweet crimson rosebud nestled, relieving the splendor of attire almost too heavily rich for a young girl.

Suddenly the little foot that patted the carpet so restlessly grew still, and, playing with her jeweled fan, she affected not to perceive the intruder who entered softly, until he was by her side.

"Maud!" he said, and sat down by her side, and took her beautiful hand in his.

She shuddered slightly as he did this; yet, with the strange contradiction of the human heart, it was for him she had attired her loveliness to such advantage.

"*My father!*" she said with infinite tact, withdrawing her hand to arrange a fold of her dress.

"Why do you call me by that hateful name?" he replied impatiently — "call me anything but *that!* Will you not speak to me as 'Vernon,' as 'friend?' — will you not some time consent to address me as your *husband?*"

"Why do you still trouble me with words like these?" asked the beautiful girl, in a low voice, while the color deepened in her cheeks, and her proud eyes were turned to his reproachfully.

"Trouble you! am I so hateful to you Maud? — so poor, so aged, so infirm, so vile, that you slight me thus? or, do you love another?"

"No — no — no!" said the young girl quickly.

"Then *will* you not love me, Maud?"

The haughty man was kneeling before her, clasping both her hands in his, and with his dark eyes earnestly reading her face. He had mused so long upon her beauty and pride, and striven so hard to win her, that the passionate affection of his youth was almost stirred again within his heart — he felt that she must be his. Had she yielded at first to his pleading, he would have esteemed her only as the beautiful crown of his pomp and pride; but his nature was one too passionate and strong to yield to opposition — and that the haughty young creature should dare to refuse his hand, but awakened him to a sense of her charms, and made him the more determined in his wish.

There was a flash of triumph in Maud's eyes when she saw him at her feet — a thousand youthful lovers would not have flattered her so much; and, looking into the face upturned to hers, she was almost startled by the wonderful beauty that again lit it up in that moment of anxiety. She forgot her promise to her dead mother, and thought that she might love him — surely his soul was one to inspire respect and

awe, and now he looked as tender, and as earnest, and far more fascinating than any youthful lover. But, true to her own nature, so naturally aspiring and designing, with the thought that she might accept his proffered glory, came a fuller consciousness of her power over the great man, and how she could wield it to bring the fulfilling of her wildest dreams of ambition.

"Will you not answer me?" he asked more earnestly.

"Even if the preference of my heart is given to you, I must show respect to the memory of my mother," she answered, with averted eyes.

"If *we* say that it shall be, will the world dare to dictate as to what is right?" exclaimed Vernon passionately.

"It might be, that they would not wish to disapprove," said the fair girl, turning her large eyes full upon his — "if you were their monarch, and I your queen."

"You would love to be a queen, would you, my peerless one?" said the lover with a smile, for he admired the aspiring spirit of that youthful, glorious woman.

Maud did not reply in words; but she answered his smile with one most soft and bewildering, and, bending over, touched her bright lips gently to his

forehead. Then, blushing at the deed, she covered her eyes with her fair hands, which were taken softly away and showered with kisses, while he said, in a gay, proud tone,

"These tiny fingers would sway the scepter, would they, my eloquent one? Well fitted they are for such a task. And this form, too, and that haughty spirit, were made for a throne. And, if I should promise you a crown, would you not be mine, and wear it?"

"Yes!" said the young girl, slowly, "when the crown is gained."

"Thank you a thousand times, my dear one; but why must we wait till the scepter is ours?"

"The people might murmur at this sudden marriage, Vernon; but now you have their respect. Gold alone will not purchase a kingdom, in this age, dearest; intellectual power and grandeur must be added to its magic. Am I not right?"

"Perhaps you are, sweet Maud — but if my joy must be delayed till this triumph is achieved, I shall labor most perseveringly to accomplish our ambition. *Then* you will accept the crown I lay at your feet — you will be mine, most beautiful one; will you not?"

With a radiant smile, the glowing face of Maud drooped upon his shoulder, and she whispered in his ear —

"That day, I will be your queen."

And, when she raised her face again, the mirror opposite reflected its expression of triumphant happiness. Then the thought of her mother's words came full upon her heart, and she shuddered with a sudden presentiment.

* * * * *

With a heavy tramp—tramp—tramp, Vernon Mytalena paced his gorgeous sleeping-room, wearing out the night with his slow, dragging steps. His arms were folded tightly over his breast, and he muttered to himself in painful tones—

"If this burning thought would not haunt me for ever, I think I might be happy. Is not all that I ever craved, mine, or soon to be mine? yet the veriest slave is not so wretched as I am now! Sleep has fled away. Oh! this dreadful, dreadful oppression that weighs me down—this thought that is never defined—this presentiment that has no shape—this memory, and knowledge of things unseen, unknown, far down the vista of the past—these haunting images of sweet, pure, Jewish faces smiling upon me in marble halls, or sleeping in the shadow of the cedars of Lebanon—this flitting of forms, and scenes before me, vanishing ere I have grasped their shape—this weight, this curse, this iron hand upon my bosom, till every

breath comes struggling—I shall go mad—I shall go mad!

"Oh! the torture of being mocked by doubt, by fear, by unknown evil! I can brave the world—death—battle—hate—anything but this haunting spirit which I have no hope to conquer or subdue, because I know not its form, because I can not war with a shadow, though that shadow freeze me by slow degrees, and rest heavier than lead upon my soul.

"Oh, Miriam, for one soft touch of thy hand upon my feverish brow! Miriam! Miriam did I say?—what brought that name to my lips—what brought that vision of a pure, proud, spiritual girl before my eyes? Yet I knew her—I loved her—our vows were plighted by the starry waves of Galilee. What did I say? it must have been in my restless dreams that I have seen her so often. I think I am *mad!* it must be! How absurd! that I should fancy myself in Palestine, with a Jewish maiden's black eyes smiling into mine—ha! ha! how absurd! I *am* mad—ha! ha! ha!"

And trying to dissipate his wretched thoughts by a pretence of mirth, the unhappy man laughed to himself and paced his room with faster steps. Then, as the tenor of his thoughts changed, he spoke again.

"My conspiracy is admirably arranged—all goes well—it will be but a little scheming, a little blood

shed, a few millions of my gold, and a third of this great Republic will be in my hands — and I its king! And who, after that, shall dare to place a limit to my power—the rest of this Republic, the rest of the world will be in my hands ere years have fled—such greatness, such glory, such splendor!—I shall go wild with ambition. Yet I must be calm—a fearfully great mind and strong, cool energies alone can accomplish this—but I should not fear, I should exult in the power of mind required, did not this feverish dream, that will not be shaken off, at times unman me with its mocking face.

“But even that dream shall yield! nothing can daunt me but death, and that I *know* will allow me to fulfill my schemes. Why, Miriam, look not so reproachfully — Miriam again! well, I will try to sleep and drive her phantom face away. To-morrow I must be calm and strong, and I need repose. But no, I will not sleep; I will write, write, write, till the time of action comes! it eases my restless soul to bind it to the task of writing, and perhaps if I put my plans upon paper more fully and analyze them more closely, I shall be more calm and prepared.”

For the rest of the night he wrote rapidly, and just as day was breaking, threw himself exhausted on his couch, and sank quickly into a disturbed slumber.

It was not long before, from a small closet, a man

crept out and stood in the room, his eyes burning with malice, as he regarded for a moment the sleeping conspirator.

“Poor fool!” he said, with a bitter sneer, “it is dangerous to trample even a serpent under your haughty heel. *One* enemy can rival ten million friends, sometimes; and an ill-used servant can take a world from the hand of his master. Ha! a third of the Republic will be yours when you awake!” and gathering up the manuscripts which were scattered over the table, he stole from the room.

Yet this man was only a hateful lackey, whom Vernon had angered by some little word or deed.

And while the conspirator slept on his costly couch, dreaming of coming glory, the lightning fingers of the telegraph were deciphering to the astonished great men at the seat of government, the daring and skillful plot which his mighty brain had fashioned and nearly consummated.

* * * * *

“Maud! do you love me?”

There was a breathless silence.

“Maud *do you love me? me, alone* — destitute of power, and splendor, a wanderer, an outcast, would you love me still? Speak, quick! this is the hour to try your soul.”

The speaker was Vernon Mytalena, who had burst into the apartment where she sat sweeping a golden lyre with her jeweled fingers, and sank at her feet. His face was very pale, his eyes burning, his brow contracted with an expression of doubt and agony.

Maud started, and the bright crimson died away from her cheeks at his strange manner, and pallid face.

"That is a strange question to ask of me, is it not? you frighten me, you seem so earnest," she said with an attempt to smile, as a quick presentiment of evil rushed over her.

"This is no time to trifle, Maud—what I must know is, if you love *me*!"—and flinging his arm around her waist, he drew her down toward him, and looked into her face with his burning, intense eyes. "Maud!" he continued in a low, distinct tone, "all is lost—friends, fortune, power—I must flee—even now the officers are in pursuit of me. It was for *you* I grasped so high, and will you not share the fall with me?"

The young girl made no reply. The color had all died away from her beautiful marble face; there was a great struggle in her bosom.

"Every instant that I linger, Maud, perils my life. I have but one chance of escape—there is a passage leading from our palace, under the round, and opening into a cave upon the ocean shore. There is a small vessel there that I provided for this emergency.

There are provisions, and water, and a few men to man it—we will flee to some remote nook, till the tide of fortune again bears me back to the splendor I now leave. Will you go?"

The beautiful girl turned away her eyes from that pallid and painfully disturbed face. Love and ambition struggled in her proud heart. Where were her queenly dreams of fame and glory—where her glittering crown—where the worshipers at her shrine of beauty? Could she find all these in the lonely spot to which they would flee?—with only that one disappointed man to admire, and flatter, and love her—with no whispered adulation to charm her ear—no eyes to droop before her eloquent scorn. Then she thought of her mother—"She would bless me for clinging to him in the time of desolation," her heart murmured to itself.

"Do you not hear the tread of many feet about our palace—do you not hear the tumult in the rooms below? there is but one instant for you to speak!"

The excited man held both her hands with a grasp that almost crushed them, and his burning eyes watched her quivering lips.

"No—no—I cannot go!" she murmured at last, as the tumult below grew louder and more loud.

One deep groan burst from the breast of the unhappy conspirator, and, flinging her hand from him he

strode to the door. Maud summoned courage to look at his face; it was as proud as in its most glorious scenes of triumph, and a thousand times more grand in its defiance of despair. He flung open the door leading into a long passage and, as he passed through, Maud fell fainting upon his bosom, with her feeble arms clasping his neck.

"Forgive, forgive! I could not live without you—death, or poverty, or despair, I share it with you," she murmured, as her eyes closed in insensibility.

Lifting her in his arms like a little child, he pressed one passionate kiss upon her forehead, and fled with her along the dark passage and down a flight of steps, and again through a damp and midnight vault, on, on, till the sound of surging waves smote faintly on his ear.

In another moment, he stood in a dim cave, and the ocean lay at his feet, flashing and foaming against the sharp rock. A little vessel lay dreamily in the dim light upon the deep water close to this rock, and a dozen men were rowing silently about, filling casks with water from a gushing spring, and stowing away boxes of provisions in their small ship. They gave a low huzza when their leader appeared.

"We feared they had prevented your coming," said one.

"No—no—my men, I am safe; and, if you get

me from this place unharmed, there is a brave box of glittering gold for you, stowed away in yonder nook," said Vernon, pointing to a recess in the cave, as he sat down by the spring and bathed the fair forehead of the young girl in the cool water, and smoothed back the dark tresses that had fallen from the gold network which chained them.

"And a poor lady is to go with him; how sweet she is," they murmured to each other, as they stole glances of reverential admiration at her beautiful face.

When the light and life came back to the deep eyes of Maud, instead of a lofty palace, with luxury, and magnificence, and pomp, she found herself lying on a heap of rude cushions, her head supported on the bosom of her lover, and only the humble vessel for a home, and rocks and waves for the only surroundings, in the place of fretted domes, and carpets rich and soft.

"My poor—poor Maud!" moaned the wretched man.

"I am happy here," was her low reply, as she nestled her pale face closer to his bosom; but she sighed as her glance fell upon the jewels and silken attire that glittered around her form.

The day was fast deepening into twilight, and, under cover of the night, they were to put out from their hiding-place, and trust themselves, in their frail

bark, to the mercies of the sea. The twilight deepened into intense darkness, as Vernon and Maud sat together awaiting their fate. There were no stars visible, and the sailors muttered to themselves that there would be a storm. But the box of gold was a greater matter with them than the fear of death, and they went bravely to work, and the vessel was soon gliding over the waves.

It was not long till the wind began to moan, and the sails to shiver, and the waves to murmur impatiently. The night deepened and the storm grew wilder; sharp flashes of lightning revealed the sea, glittering with foam and tossing terribly. Maud clung in mute terror to the bosom of her lover; one of his strong arms circled her waist, and the other clasped tight the mast, to prevent the blast from lifting them into the sea.

And the flashes of lightning grew more vivid and frequent, and the thunder muttered, and the wind shrieked, and the waves moaned. Though the storm was grand beyond expression, there was nothing in it so sublimely beautiful as the two forms who stood revealed in the constant gleams of light. The strong, great nature of the conspirator, perverted and darkened as its glory had been, now shone most grandly in this hour of fear and danger. His noble face was almost inspired with its look of calm courage, and

almost stern contempt of fear; softened into beauty by the tenderness with which he looked upon the young creature, whose pleading, eloquent eyes rested upon his face, to read there whether to hope or despair. The wild blast fluttered her silken robe, and her long hair streamed like a black banner around her slight form; her jeweled hands, and arms, and forehead flashed with a mocking brilliancy, as if they laughed at the terror of the scene.

The vessel shuddered and staggered, and again leaped boldly from wave to wave. As the storm grew more terrible, the lovers clung closer to each other. One moment they stood heart to heart and lip to lip—the next they were riven apart for ever, and were gasping in the furious wave that, sweeping over their little vessel, carried all its crew to destruction. A flash of light revealed to Vernon the bright form of the young girl sinking in the angry sea; he had one glance at her white face; he heard her shriek his name in a sharp tone of agony, and the next moment all was dark. The vessel, the stern men, the beautiful girl, were gone for ever.

Oh! that was a horrible, horrible night to Vernon Mytalena. He *could not drown!* On and on he was borne by the rushing waves—he sank—he rose—he struggled—he gasped—he suffocated—yet still he could not drown!

The storm went by; the moon came out and looked down upon the tired ocean, whose bosom yet heaved as if the breath came hard and heavily,—she smiled upon the waves, and they answered back her smile. Yet still the form of that strange man floated on the glittering deep. The wildest thought cannot reach to the extremity of his suffering through those dreadful hours. Once more he knew himself. *The man of twenty centuries knew himself!* The fearful scene of the crucifixion of Christ; the three hours of darkness and terror that followed, when the vail of the temple was rent in twain; his first great anguish of remorse; the perishing away of his beloved kindred; the fearful plagues he had brought upon mankind; the heavy, iron, slow-rolling years that had passed over him; his prayer for a short respite; the manner in which it was granted; the wearisome future; oh! how horrible was that night!

His Miriam floated in the air above, with her pure eyes sorrowfully fixed upon his face, as she circled above him in shining robes and disappeared among the stars; his May paled and pined away before him, and sank into the sea; his Maud's death-shriek rang through his brain, and he saw her face on every passing wave.

Then the voice of the Serpent was once more in his ear—

“The respite thou didst plead for, I have given thee; and, in return, the work I trusted thee to perform thou hast well done. The seeds of idleness, and luxury, and death, thou hast planted, and the harvest shall be rich. Rejoice! for it hath shortened the days of thy probation—it hath hurried the great reward of my followers. Ha! ha! my own power is shortly to be chained for a thousand years, and did I not well to multiply my works in good season, by making thee my friend and servant! Ha! ha! thou hast done nobly, and goodly fruit shall spring from the seeds thou hast planted—anarchy, and treason, and war—splendor, effeminacy, and guilt—O, Sodom and Gomorrah—O, Tyre and Sidon, blush with shame! behold, there shall a grèater arise than ye—‘it shall be more tolerable for ye in the day of judgment’—ye will not be mine so entirely. What! art thou not grateful for thy long respite?—art thou not glad that I command thee? Yet will I promise thee that fire, earth, air, and water shall harm thee not, that thou shalt still be saved for thy mission—thou wilt have a few years yet to grow old. Farewell! a few times more will we meet. I hear my friends in the deep sea laughing at our meeting—they rejoice with those who rejoice—ha! ha!”

And again, from away down in the ocean's depths, the Wanderer heard that hateful laugh ringing up

through the waves with its terrible "ha! ha! ha!" And when the sea left him, at last, lying faint and weary upon the burning sands, surely never one day so fearful a change had wrought in the destinies of mortal man. His empire was a ruin — his vast riches had passed away — his bride was in the deep — two thousand years was on his heart — a curse was on his head — the splendor and glory of his hopes was a dream — his respite was a mockery! Slowly he lifted his fainting form from the barren shore, and commenced again his weary wanderings, murmuring, in a broken voice, with head bowed upon his breast — "Surely the great God will soon be merciful!"

THE SILVER LUTE:

OR

THE GIPSY SINGER.

A MERRY party were gathered round the tall May-pole, which, decked with flower garlands and streaming with gay ribbons, arose from the center of the village green. Happy swains were there, contented for the while but to gaze upon the group of buxom, rosy-cheeked maidens, who were busy wreathing coronets for their May Queen. Bursts of laughter, and strains of lively music, rang out upon the air, fragrant with the perfume of early blossoms.

Gladness sat upon every youthful brow, and happiness upon each red and smiling lip; while the furtive and tell-tale glances which stole from the bright eyes of the blushing maidens, told much to embolden the bashful swains, who dared not breath

the illy-concealed secret, which look and one unwittingly betrayed.

The last rays of the departing sun streamed upon the festive scene; the brightest, perhaps, in the whole of merry England, which is not now as it was then. For England then was "merrie England;" when the free and hardy outlaws roamed through the depths of dark forests; when the barons regaled their honest peasantry with staunch old ale and good substantial beef; and when the world boasted not another such a race as were the hardy subjects of "Queen Bess."

A roving horde of Gipsies were now upon the green, a short distance from the revelers, throwing their tambourines, jingling their silver bells, and dancing and singing to the great annoyance of those villagers who were not engaged around the May-pole.

A little apart from the rest, was a Gipsy woman, apparently some twenty-eight or thirty years of age, though she might have been younger. A short scarlet cloak, depending from her shoulder, together with a bright purple handkerchief, twisted around her head, gave her a singularly wild and fantastic appearance. She was a very handsome woman, her dark though clear complexion suiting well her brilliant eyes and raven hair.

Her form was stately, and there was an expression

of pride on her still beautiful lip. She held a silver lute, of rare and exquisite workmanship, and the fingers were taper and small, that wandered among the chords, as she sung a plaintive melody in a low and touchingly sweet voice.

Her only listener was a child, about six years of age, habited as a peasant, though her delicate form and sweet intellectual face, might well belie her humble garb. The song of the Gipsy woman seemed to touch a strange chord in her heart, for her bright lips were parted with the intenseness of feeling, and the light of some new enthusiasm was in the large, languishing eyes, which were cast upon the ground, as a pearly tear broke from the long lashes which shaded them. The woman too, seemed agitated; but she still continued her low, sad melody till she saw that the feelings of the child were wrought to the highest pitch of excitement, when, suddenly ceasing, she said, in tones of winning softness:

"Come with me, sweet one, and I will always sing to you, and this too, shall be yours, all your own;" and she pointed to the lute which she held.

The child looked wonderingly upon the speaker, who was smiling sweetly, though in her restless eye the deepest anxiety was depicted, and then turned her gaze wistfully upon the lute, whose notes had so enchanted her.

"Isodene! Isodene! hast thou not well nigh forgotten thy high duties?" and half a dozen smiling maidens approached and placed in the hands of the child the coronet of flowers which she was to bind on the brow of the May Queen.

The child turned away reluctantly and joined the gay group, which in a moment more were dancing merrily upon the bright green sward.

"Isodene!" repeated the woman slowly and musingly; "yes, yes, it must be so." Placing her hand upon her brow, she remained for a few moments in deep thought; then arising, she approached a group of peasantry who were watching the progress of the dance, and said,

"Can any one tell me who is yon dark-eyed little lass, whom they call Isodene?"

"Aye, that we can," responded one of their number. "She is the child of our neighbour Leinfin, and his dame Margary. A sweeter, kinder little angel never lived; and right proud they are of her, though some do not stop to say that she is no kith nor kin of theirs. And well they might, for those dainty limbs and fairy motions become not lowly blood like ours."

The Gipsy woman appeared satisfied, and turning away, resumed her seat upon the smooth, rich turf, gazing listlessly upon the blithesome group of revelers who thronged around the May-pole.

With the first dawn of light, the Gipsy horde were on their way, leaving the village green still and alone, which the day before teemed with a glad and noisy throng. But the strange woman with the lute, lingered behind. Noon came, and she was still in the village, wandering around, though she never lost sight of the low-roofed cottage where dwelt Isodene.

When at length old Leinfin and his wife left with their little stock of thread and vegetables, which they daily disposed of farther up the village, the Gipsy woman approached the cottage, which was left in the care of little Isodene, and beckoning her to her, said,

"Come, pretty one, and sit beneath this tree, whilst I sing again to you."

The child approached the singing woman, and smiled as she obeyed, while the Gipsy, touching the lute first sang a wild, broken Gipsy song. When she had finished, she placed her arm around the child, and drawing her towards her, asked,

"Are you fond of music, sweet one?"

"Oh! very, very," answered she enthusiastically; "I wish you would sing again the song that you sung yesterday; it seems to me as if I had heard it before, a long time ago, in a dream, or sometime—"

"Are your parents kind to you?" continued the woman.

"Oh yes! but sometimes they are very harsh, and

say that I am not their daughter; afterward they are pleasant again, and bid me not repeat what they said while they were angry. I told you, because I love you."

"Well dear, if you love me, are you not willing to go with me? You shall have fine clothes and see fine countries, and I will always be very kind to you, and teach you to play upon the lute. Will you not go?"

"I love you very much, and I love the pretty lute; but I cannot leave my parents."

Again the slender fingers of the Gipsy woman touched the lute, and a low and witchingly sweet prelude rose upon the quiet air. Then the voice of the player mingled with the exquisite strains, and swelled into a fuller tone of harmony, as the broken words of a childish melody, with which mothers are wont to quiet their children, rose upon the air. As she sang, the Gipsy's eye fell upon the little Isodene, who had slid from her embrace, and now lay crouched at her feet, with quivering lip and tearful eye, her whole soul wrapped in the music spell which chained her senses.

Stooping down, she smoothed the ringlets from the fair brow of the child, as she whispered,

"Will you go with me?"

"I cannot leave my parents," was the answer.

A fear stood in the Gipsy's eye, and her hand and voice trembled, as she sang a mournful strain, as of a mother grieving for her lost child. It seemed to operate with magic effect upon the heart of little Isodene, who arose, and placing her hand in that of the woman, looked up confidingly, as she said

"I will go with you, and you shall be my mother."

"Haste, then, sweet one, before your parents return; and remember, you must not be called Isodene, but Zaila, the Gipsy's daughter."

"And may I not call you mother, and may not this pretty lute be mine?" said the child eagerly.

"Yes, yes, every thing you wish. But we must haste from here before your parents return," was the reply.

It was not without many tears, however, that little Isodene, now, Zaila, left for ever the home of her childhood; but she was too young to grieve long, and was soon laughing and chatting merrily, as she ran by the side of her new-found friend. Never having been far from the cottage of her parents, every thing she beheld was full of interest, and it was with childish delight and eagerness, that she chased the gay butterflies, or plucked the fair flowers which brightened her path. Occupied with every thing around, she felt not the fatigue of her long walk, till twilight appeared, and her conductress still journeyed on. As the darkness increased, she crept closer

to the side of the Gipsy, and clasping her hand tighter, said,

"Dear mother, I am very tired and lonely; I wish we could be there now; do n't you?"

"Be where, child?"

"To our new home in the green woods, where every thing is pretty."

"Well, sweet one, we soon shall be," replied the Gipsy; but finding that sleep was overpowering the wearied child, she took her in her arms, where she soon fell into a gentle slumber.

We will not attempt to picture the grief of old Leifin and his wife, when search for their child proved unavailing; nor how the memory of the sweet and gentle little Isodene lingered in the hearts of the honest villagers, but follow her new fortunes as those of Zaila the Gipsy.

When Zaila awoke, she found herself lying upon a pallet spread on the ground, over which was erected a tent to shield her from the night dew. The tears came into her eyes at the thought of the pleasant home she had forsaken; but the remembrance of the lute and kind face of her Gipsy mother, soon banished them, and creeping to the opening of the tent, where she heard voices, looked out. Mute with wonder, she gazed upon the curious and mixed up scene before her. The whole band of Gipsies which she had seen

upon the green the day before, were collected there in the dim forest. Large fires were casting their flickering light around; and, while some of the women were busy preparing for a feast the many delicacies which they had stolen from the country roundabout, the rest of the party were drinking, singing, dancing, and indulging in every species of boisterous mirth. The child shrank back, for their rude revelry, and wild, uncouth looks frightened her, and called in a low, half-fearful tone, for her mother.

In a moment the watchful Gipsy was by her side, soothing her with kind words, and, having first brought to her a plate of dainty food, she folded her arms about her, and lay down to sleep.

When Zaila next awoke, the sun was shining in cheerily at the tent door. Her mother had arisen, and was busy preparing a suit of Gipsy apparel for her little charge. When she had attired her in these, and stained her skin of a darker hue with the juice of a nut which she carried with her, the Gipsy led Zaila to the banks of a little lake near which they were encamped, and bade her view herself in its clear depths.

"And how does my sweet daughter like her Gipsy looks?" said the woman, as she smoothed back the silken ringlets from Zaila's brow, and tied a large straw hat upon her head, bidding her run and gather flowers to form a wreath for it.

The scenery around was wild and beautiful, and the heart of the child leaped for joy as she bounded down into the green hollow to pluck the sweet blossoms, upon which the dew was yet glistening.

It was strange with what a yearning tenderness and fond anxiety, the Gipsy woman watched over the child of her adoption; how she studied each look, and motion with most affectionate solicitude, and shielded her from every blight which might fall upon her. Not a rude jest or coarse remark, did she ever allow to be uttered in the presence of the gentle child, who was looked upon as a visitant angel, by the wild and uncultivated creatures who formed the tribe. Nor was the lute woman, as they called her, regarded with less veneration, her word being law, and the same reverence being paid to her that they would pay to a superior being. Zaila was learned to be an ardent admirer of nature, for the Gipsy woman never failed to point out each half-hidden beauty, and lovely tint of the surpassingly beautiful scenes through which they daily passed. The music of the birds and trees and breezes, filled her heart with delight, and she never tired of gazing upon the softened loveliness of meadow and brook, or the lofty grandeur of rocks, cataracts, and towering mountains. Thus did she grow up with a warm and imaginative heart; the most delicate fancy and finest sensibility; a pure and

lovely being, full of gentle sympathies and kindly impulses.

The passion for music which she had shown when she first heard the song of her she now called mother, had grown into perfect enthusiasm. Assisted by the instruction of her mother, she was soon able to call forth the most soft and exquisite strains from the lute, which was now resigned to her. She also possessed an uncommonly sweet voice, which daily cultivation had brought to a still greater degree of perfection.

As the graces of Zaila's mind, so did those of her person each day more fully develop, till, at length, when she reached the years of maidenhood, a creature of more perfect loveliness could scarcely be imagined.

Always attired in some wild yet tasteful way, with her long raven tresses wreathed with flowers, and her lute in her hand, she looked like some sylph of the wildwood come to weave her spell of enchantment and vanish. Her eyes, of the darkest possible hue, were large and languishingly soft; all the depth and tenderness of her nature beaming through the silken lashes which shaded them, and laid upon the rich color of her cheek, as the dark fringe of a pearl-cloud canopy lays upon the glowing bosom of sunset. Her beautifully-formed mouth, ever wreathed with pride or tenderness, gave a spirited expression to the sweet repose of her classic features. Hands and feet of

fairly delicacy belonged to a slight but exquisitely-proportioned form, which bent into a thousand graceful attitudes, with the play of her fancy, as the gentle wild-flower bends to the breath of the evening zephyrs.

Proud, indeed, was the smile in the eye of the mother, as she gazed upon this child of her adoption, whose beauty and goodness well repaid her devoted and idolizing love. Wandering, as they were, amid new and strange scenes, Zaila gradually forgot those of her early childhood, or if ever a dim recollection of the past came upon her mind, the suggestion of her parent, that it was some half-remembered dream of other days, satisfied her.

The fame of the wondrous loveliness and talent of the young Gipsy singer had spread over half of Europe; the door of prince and peasant was willingly thrown open to her.

In one of their rambles through England, the Gipsy horde, to which Zaila was attached, encamped near one of the most beautiful and stately castles in the country. A message was sent for the singer and her lute to appear at the castle. Against her usual custom, Zaila's mother refused to accompany her, and not till she heard that the lord of the castle was absent, would she approach.

When they arrived, they were shown from the grand entrance-hall into an elegant apartment fitted

up as a lady's boudoir. Fountains, whose showers of snow-wreathed spray gave a delicious coolness to the air; exotics, of the most beautiful forms and brilliant colors; rare singing birds of gorgeous plumage; books, in richly bound and glittering vellum; everything in the most splendid and costly profusion, served to make it a little paradise of luxury.

Before the entrance of those whom they were to entertain, the Gipsy took the lute from Zaila's hand, and sang the same plaintive melody that won the heart of little Isodene, now her child. While she was singing, Zaila seated herself upon an ottoman at her feet, and, with her hand upon her brow, remained in deep thought. When the song was finished, she looked up into her mother's face —

"Mother," said she, "it must be a strange fancy of mine, but there comes upon my memory, like the vision of a dream, the remembrance of a scene like this; with a fond, and tender, and beautiful being hanging over me, humming the very words which you have just concluded. And her face was like yours, dear mother, only younger and lovelier; there was a tall, noble-looking man, too, who ever had kind words and smiles for you and me. It is very strange, is it not?"

"Pooh! child, it is only your romantic dreamings; you must not indulge in them," said the woman, but her face was pale and agitated.

"But mother—" here Zaila was interrupted by the entrance of a lovely girl, a fitting occupant for the splendid apartment which seemed to be her home.

"Shall I sing of love or romance, fair lady?" said Zaila, running her finger lightly over her lute-strings.

"It were the only subject worthy our attention; for war's sounding themes better befit the hardier sex," said the lady, smiling.

And Zaila sung a ballad, entitled "Love and Beauty," in which she adroitly mingled a few compliments to the listener.

With expressions of admiration at the perfection of the singer in her art, the lady drew a ring from her finger, and placed it upon Zaila's, childishly toying with the small hand which was held out to her.

"Are you the wife of Count Lelingford, the lord of this castle?" said the Gipsy, as they were about withdrawing.

This was said in a careless tone, but there was a wild anxiety in the look of the speaker, that attracted the attention of the lady as she replied, "that she was only his neice."

The Gipsy moved away, muttering, "Not yet, not yet, but the time shall come—" and, suddenly checking herself, she turned, with a forced smile, to the lady, apologizing for her inquisitiveness.

A short time after this, as their encampment was

fixed on the border of a forest, Zaila took her lute to wander as was her wont, in search of flowers. Attracted by the beauty of the scenery, she wandered on, heedless of the distance, till suddenly she emerged into a scene of such wild loveliness, as chained her spellbound to the spot. On one side, a huge mass of black, towering rocks rose up against the bright, blue sky, and, from their topmost heights, there dashed a roaring cataract, which, leaping from crag to crag, whirled round and round as it reached the bottom, dashing the feathery spray high in the air, and then glided smoothly on into the bosom of a silvery stream which wound through a little glen, whose rich turf was spotted with wild flowers. The bright sun, which was just peeping out from beneath a dark cloud in the western horizon, threw his glittering beams upon the rock, changing the tumbling waters and white spray into a thousand varying tints of rainbow splendor. But there was *one* object, in that wild and beautiful scene, that Zaila noticed not. Concealed from sight by a huge tree, stood a young courtier, attired as a hunter, with his bow and arrow flung upon the ground, and his faithful dog lying at his feet. He, too, had been admiring the landscape, but, when his eye fell upon the lovely Gipsy, all else was forgotten. With hands clasped in delight, and her red lips parted, she stood gazing upon the brilliant scene.

Her hat was off and hanging on her arm, and her unconfined tresses floated like a shadowy veil around her slight figure, some of them even kissing the dainty foot, half buried in the bright, green turf. The warm sunset heightened the bright vermilion of her cheek, and the soft sparkle of her liquid eye, while nothing could equal the attitude of untaught grace in which she stood.

But suddenly was Zaila's rapt contemplation broken in upon, for an enormous wild boar came bounding through a neighboring thicket, and rushed directly toward her. A single shriek broke from her lips, and, dropping lute and flowers, she stood still with affright, while the raging animal neared her at each frantic bound. Pale and motionless as a statue, her feelings were too powerfully excited to allow her to seek relief in insensibility or flight. An age seemed to be condensed in the moment that elapsed, before an arrow, sent with unerring aim, pierced the heart of the monster, and laid him dead upon the ground. In a few moments, and recovering from her fright, she was gathering up her fallen flowers, when the young hunter presented himself before her.

"And is it to you, Sir Knight of the Bow and Arrow, that I am indebted for my gallant rescue?" she said, gracefully presenting her hand in token of her gratitude.

"Happy, indeed, am I," replied he, removing his plumed cap, "if my poor hand has been of any service to such a beautiful maiden as thou; and shall pay a due meed of thanks to that kind fortune which has procured a tribute of gratitude from such sweet lips. But, surely, thou wouldst have been taken for the goddess of this fair spot, with silver lute and flower-garlands, had not thy shriek betrayed that thou wert of mortal mould."

"Nay, sir Knight, no sylph of the wildwood, but plain Zaila, the Gipsy singer. Now, who art thou?"

"Henry, the Hunter of the Forest," he said, smiling at her simplicity; "but, if thou art the wondrous Gipsy singer, I have a request to make."

"Oh! a song of course," said Zaila, and, seating herself at the foot of a gnarled and twisted oak, she threw off her hat and tuned the lute.

As strain after strain of the sweet gushing melody quivered among the strings, and, rising, was echoed by tree and rock, mingling with the dash of the cataract and murmur of the brook, she forgot time, and place, and listener, in the delight of her theme.

And there stood the young hunter, rapt as was she, in gazing upon the face of the beautiful enthusiast—in whose cheek the color was brightening, as the silken lashes rested tremblingly upon its rich velvet, or,

raising, revealed the liquid light of the eye, whose earnest gaze seemed asking a new chord of melody from the music choirs of heaven.

As she arose from her seat on the turf, Zaila's eye encountered the respectful but admiring gaze of the hunter, and a blush suffused her brow and bosom, and her glance sought the ground, as she strove to conceal her embarrassment, by dallying with the ribbon on her hat.

"The slender fingers of many a high-born dame and noble lady have I seen wandering among the lute-strings; but no hand was so delicate as thine, nor strains so divinely sweet," he said, in tones of undisguised admiration.

Used, as she was, to praise and flattery, his tones thrilled her heart with new and undefined emotions, and, in her agitation, she dropped her hat at his feet. In a moment, he was on his knee before her, presenting it to her; but not till he had disengaged the ribbon which bound it, and, with her flowers, placed them in his bosom. This action brought all Zaila's self-possession to her aid, and, with flashing eye and haughty tone, she demanded that which he had taken.

"Nay, fair maiden, I meant thee no offence; but surely I shall be compelled to disbelieve thy profession of gratitude, if thou dost still refuse so slight a token of remembrance to one who loves thee wholly.

For, here on my bended knees, I swear that no other image than —"

He ceased, for she, to whom he was pouring forth his ardent vows, was bounding lightly away, gaily singing —

"I'm a merry, merry Gipsy lass,
And no other would I be.
Nor king, nor titled courtier,
Shall breathe his vows to me."

So, taking his bows and arrows, he departed, to dream of the lovely enchantress who had woven her spell around the chain of his destiny.

But, though Zaila thus lightly fled from the vows of the handsome and noble-looking courtier, yet she could not so easily cast his image from her mind; for hers was a heart overflowing with the wealth of young and ardent affections, and which could not be contented with the love of a parent, idolizing though it was. So, it was no wonder that the words and looks of one like him, should open a new fountain in her heart, whose pure and holy waters should never cease to gush forth with a sad and mournful music. Zaila knew that his rank was far above hers, and that, probably, long before this, he had ceased to think of the humble songstress of the grove. Still was the remembrance of him ever clouding the sunshine of her heart, till her soft cheek grew more transparent,

her fawn-like step less agile, and the languishing light in her dark eye more earnest and tremblingly tearful; yet was she but more spiritually beautiful. At last the sad music which was trembling on her heart-strings formed itself into words, and was breathed from her lips in numbers of pensive and mournful sweetness. Then, indeed, did every heart acknowledge the wondrous powers of the lovely songstress; but she heeded not their praise, and only longed to be free from their flatteries.

The Gipsy woman could not but note the sorrow that was preying upon her child; and, when at length she won from the blushing maiden the confession of her love, she replied—

“Aye, aye, the time will come, when he shall be proud to claim thee as his bride! it will not be long till the fulfillment of that for which I have so long suffered.”

Zaila looked with wonder upon her parent as she said this; but she questioned her not, for she felt that her destiny, perhaps, was to be a strange one, and the dim recollection of a thousand long-past incidents crowded upon her mind.

And now there came a message from the queen, requesting Zaila to be present at court, and give a concert to the assembled nobles of the land. Great as was the distinction, Zaila would fain have declined

the invitation, had not her mother bade her accept it. With her own hand, her mother attired her for the festival, and, as she fastened the last rich braid of hair in its place, whispered—

“You will not return the same as you are now.”

Zaila replied not, save by an inquiring glance, and departed with a secret hope of seeing the young hunter who had saved her life.

The spacious and lofty musician's hall was filled with the noblest personages of the land; but there was no haughty “ladie” present, whose proud lip deigned not to bestow a meed of praise upon the youthful songstress, as she timidly entered, and was led, with downcast eyes, into the presence of the queen. Never, perhaps, had she looked so exquisitely lovely, as when she blushing received the token of the queen's favor, in the shape of a magnificent diamond bracelet, which her majesty clasped with her own hands upon her small wrist. A robe of crimson velvet set off her dark complexion and graceful form to the utmost advantage; while her raven tresses, which usually fell in rich profusion on her swan-like neck, were parted into glossy braids, and negligently fastened by a gold pin. Her rounded arms were bare, being shaded only by a pall of richly-worked lace, and her tiny foot was thrust into a dainty slipper of embroidered satin.

When Zaila seated herself, she glanced inquiringly around in search of a never-to-be-forgotten one; but the face of the young hunter greeted her not, and, with a feeling of disappointment, she turned to her lute. If expressions of admiration had not been murmured before, when her slender fingers wandered among the lute-strings, calling forth the most thrilling strains of witching melody, and mingling with them the soft, clear tones of her sweet voice, then it was that their power could be traced in the still and scarcely-breathing auditory. But, when voice and lute ceased, a perfect shower of applause, and clapping of tiny hands, and throwing of flowers, might have rivaled a like scene in a Parisian theater.

While Zaila was singing, a deep groan sounded through the hall, and a nobleman, who had just entered, fell insensible into the arms of his servants, and was borne off.

In the confusion which followed, Zaila heard the name of "Count Lelingford" frequently mentioned; but, though it sounded familiar to her, she could not recollect where she had heard it.

The company had departed from the musician's hall, and Zaila was in one of the suites of rooms belonging to the maids of honor, who were curiously questioning her, and praising her performance, when a servant entered and said, that the Count Lelingford

requested a private interview with the Gipsy singer, who had been performing in the concert hall. Full of conjectures, Zaila entered his presence, and the first glance at his face doubled her doubts, for the face seemed as familiar as the name.

"Thy name?" said he, as soon as they were alone.

"Zaila," was the reply.

"Hast thou any parents?"

"I have a mother."

"And what is her name?"

"Our tribe call her the Lute Woman."

"Thou sayest thou art a Gipsy; wast always one?"

"'T is so my parent tells me."

"Thou canst not then remember of being other than thou art now?"

"Sometimes there comes a vague remembrance of a quiet village, and lovely cottage home, and of a Gipsy enticing me away with the music of her lute. But my mother says 't is but a dream."

As Zaila said this, the agitation of the count increased to such a degree, that it was with a scarcely-audible voice he asked —

"And that, then, is all thou knowest of it?"

"Some months ago, we were traveling in the north of England, when we paused at a lofty castle. The lord of the domain was absent, but I remember of my mother asking a very lovely lady who invited us

there, if she were his wife. I knew that while we were there the place seemed familiar to me, as one which I sometimes dream of as having been the home of my infancy; and immediately there came upon me the recollection of a beautiful and richly-dressed lady, who hung over me with all a mother's fondness, and of a proud and stately man, who was all kindness to her and me. The moment I beheld your face, the scene at the castle was brought to my mind, for, surely, it is like his who called me daughter. It is very strange that such foolish fancies will present themselves to me; my parent frowns when I repeat them."

"Who — where is she — thy mother?" hurriedly uttered the count. "Pardon me, but was she ever kind to thee?"

"My mother, though cold and distant to others, has ever been the kindest and most idolizing of parents. And, though sometimes gloomy and abstracted, yet was she ever gentle to me; and never did she dispute my will save once. That was, that I should attend the concert this evening. In this, she seemed to have some especial object, for she selected my attire, and bade me wear it. Before I left, she opened a small box which I had never before seen, and took from thence this chain and miniature, which she placed around my neck, and this ring upon my finger."

"Let me see the ring," said the count.

Zaila drew it from her finger, and handed it to him. It was a plain gold ring, on the inside of which was inscribed the word "Isodene."

"God of heaven, it is too true! My wife! my child!" and Count Lelingford fell back upon his chair, and would have again sunk into insensibility, had not Zaila hastily summoned a servant with cordials.

Upon the restoration of the count, he ordered the servants to withdraw, and, when they were again alone, exclaiming

"O, Isodene! my own — my long-lost child!" he threw his arms around her, and pressed her to his bosom.

"Thy child?" said the perplexed and wondering Zaila.

"Yes, Isodene, 't is true; thou art my child, and she, thy Gipsy mother, is my wife. Come, sit by me, and I will tell thee all."

Mechanically did Zaila obey, and the count commenced —

"I shall not long dwell upon the scenes of my youth. Suffice it to say, that I was ever haughty and passionate; the hatred and fear of those school-mates whom I considered below me in wealth or rank, and over whom I delighted to exercise that power which, as a son of a count, I felt myself authorized

to claim. But, among my classmates, there was one to whom I was sincerely attached, and whom I felt to be my equal in every respect. His name was Edward, the young Duke of Elmainge. When we had finished our education, we set out together on a tour through Europe. The second country which we visited was Spain, and there we became acquainted with the beautiful daughter of one of Spain's proudest nobles. Never, before, had my eyes rested upon so lovely and fascinating a creature as was Isodene, only daughter of Don Elverado, the most powerful noble in the Spanish court. The first time we met was at a masquerade, given by her father; and, before the evening was half over, her beauty and grace had completely captivated me.

"We met again, and I found that my love was returned. Half phrenzied with joy, I sought her father's consent to our union, but the haughty nobleman gave me a decided negative. This was indeed a damper to our hopes; but, determined that Isodene should be mine, I persuaded her to elope. For the sake of my love, she left her country, home, and friends, taking only her lute, which was the gift of her dead mother.

"My friend journeyed on, while I, proud of my beautiful bride, returned home, and spent a season at court, when, my father having died, we retired to

his country-seat. It was the castle you spoke of as having visited. Here did I and my sweet bride spend four of the happiest years that ever blessed the life of mortals. Surrounded with books, and birds, and flowers, and with her cherished lute, myself, and her infant, for companions, my wife's heart seemed constantly thrilling with rapturous delight. I, too, was equally happy. Her purity and goodness seemed to have dispelled all my evil disposition, and gave room only for the exhibition of the good qualities which I possessed.

"At length my friend returned from foreign countries, and his first act was to seek out the little paradise of which I had sent him a most glowing description. You were then about three years old, and the very picture of your mother. Being warmly welcomed, my friend prolonged his stay at the castle from weeks to months, till he had almost become one of our little circle. He was always paying the most devoted attention and gallantries to my wife, who received them as coming from her husband's friend, and in that light it was that I also viewed them. Gradually did Elmainge advance hints as to the sincerity of my wife in her professions of devotion to me; and alluding to the favor which she had shown him previous to our marriage. Finding that I repelled his insinuations with indignation, he desisted

for the time; but not till he had aroused not only jealousy toward my wife, but hatred toward him. At length he advanced, seemingly, plausible proofs of the perfidy of her whom I had esteemed as almost an angel, and then, like a coward as he was, he fled from my presence. Improbable as it would have seemed in my calmer moments, I then believed that my wife had never loved me, but had wedded me with her affections fixed upon another.

"In a paroxysm of rage, I sought her apartment, and charged her with perfidy. Terrified at my furious aspect, and horror-struck at the charges made against her, she fell insensible at my feet. When she awoke to recollection, she defended herself with all the truth of artless innocence; but, too enraged to listen to anything, I bade her begone. Now was all the haughtiness of her Spanish blood aroused; and turning proudly, and without a tear, she took her child, and was about to depart; but, determined that she should be fully punished, I snatched you from her arms, and again bade her go. All a mother's tenderness rushed upon her heart, and, for the sake of her child, she deigned to kneel at my feet and beg, with tears and entreaties, for her sweet, her only child — but I was unyielding. She then asked for her lute, which I gave her, and she departed for ever. Determined that the child of one like her should

never be called my daughter, I had you carried to a peasant, whom I paid liberally for taking care of you; hoping that, as his child, you would be happier than as heir to misery and rank. Broken-hearted and desolate, with all my visions of happiness crushed at a blow, I strove, by a life of gayety and dissipation, to lose the keen sense of my misery. It was not long till thoughts of my rashness, in judging my wife thus hastily, forced themselves upon my mind; and, with them came the conviction of her innocence. At this time, I received word from Elmainge, stating that the whole story which he had told me was falsehood; that he had seen and loved the beautiful Isodene; and that, maddened because she preferred me, he had devised this plan to destroy our happiness. When I received this information, I was carried insensible to my bed, and only awoke to such wretchedness as words cannot describe.

"The image of my gentle, suffering, deserted wife, thrust from her home, her child, and happiness for ever, was always before my mind. I hastened, as soon as I was able to leave my bed, for you, determined at least to do justice to her child. But, as if fortune had deserted me, my daughter had disappeared but a few days before: supposed to have been stolen by a band of Gipsies.

"I have never known a peaceful moment since. It

was your great resemblance to your mother, that led to this discovery this evening.

"Let us go to your mother, dear Isodene, even now, and on my knees will I implore forgiveness for my injustice; for I hope, that my sweet child has already forgiven her wretched father."

Freely did the weeping Isodene, now no longer Zaila, award forgiveness to her parent; and, late as it was, they started for the Gipsy camp, in search of the lute woman. The Gipsies were holding their midnight revelry, but her they were looking for, was not there, and, upon inquiring, they found that she had departed some hours previous.

"Oh!" said Isodene, bursting into tears, "I now know why it was that she wept, and clung to me so passionately, upon my departure. Poor mother! I am afraid we shall never see her again."

Knowing that search would prove unavailing, they turned despairingly away, and Isodene forsook her Gipsy mode of life for ever.

A month from this time, a brilliant assembly thronged Count Lelingford's lordly castle, to celebrate the finding of his lovely daughter. All the pageantry of gilded wealth, and rank was glittering there; but Isodene was not happy; two hearts, the dearest to her on earth, were yet wanting, and she sat with her small hand upon her bright brow, and tears in her dark

eyes. At this moment her father approached with a young nobleman, and announced Henry, the young Duke of De Mountfort.

Isodene looked mechanically up; her cheek turned ashy pale, and, murmuring "Henry," she fell fainting into her father's arms.

An hour afterward she stood alone by her lover's side, with her hand resting confidently in his, and with the hat ribbon wound playfully around his waist and fastened to her wrist by the bracelet clasp.

Her heart was overflowing with happiness; and when Henry left to answer to the call of some coquetish lady, who wished to lead with him the dance, Isodene sought the garden, and seating herself by a fountain, whose falling waters filled the air with lulling music, she murmured:

"Would that my dear mother were here, I should then want nothing to complete my happiness!"

Scarcely had she ceased speaking, when a form started up in the moonlight, and the Gipsy was before her. Long and affectionate was the conference between mother and daughter, and then the woman turned to go. In vain were all Isodene's tears and pleading; she would have departed, had not the tall form of Count Lelingford arrested her steps. The countenance of the woman changed not, as haughtily she bade him stand aside.

"Nay," said the penitent husband, hurriedly, "not till I have made thee all the reparation in my power, for the injuries done thee."

Passionately, earnestly, eloquently, did he plead forgiveness for the wrong he had committed.

"You plead in vain," said she, coldly. "When, in a moment of passion, because a false and lying *friend* had whispered falsehood in your ear, you thrust me from my home, my husband, and my child, did you think I could ever again love you? No! When, from the moment that you won me from my parent's mansion, only to thrust me alone and friendless upon the world, with all the purest and holiest feelings of a woman's heart outraged—from that moment my love was changed to scorn. But I still loved my child, and bitter were my moments till three years afterward, when I recognized *my* daughter, the descendant of Spain's proudest nobles, in a peasant's garb; though I rejoiced that she was absent from one, unworthy the name of parent. By the influence of a mother's face and voice, I drew her from home—resolved that she should be a Gipsy, and know no other parentage. But the knowledge that she loved one of higher rank, and that that was the only way to secure her happiness, decided me to again give her up to one not worthy of calling her his child. She is now yours, and I go."

"Thou hast been well avenged," said the count, in accents of deep agony.

"Mother," said the beautiful Isodene, in a determined tone, winding her arms around her parent's neck, and looking tearfully up into her face, "mother you *must* stay! if you do not, I will give up all my new-found wealth, and rank, and go with you, if it be to death. Look upon my father's care-worn face, and say if he has not suffered enough; would it not be too severe to again blast his hopes, and tear his wife and child from his arms. Oh mother! do but say forgive."

She took her mother's hand and kissed it, and placed it unresisted into her father's.

Such tender, pleading eloquence! who could resist it? The proud heart of the Gipsy relented, and she consented to be again called the wife of Count Lelingford.

It was not long till the sound of mirth and revelry again sounded through the lofty halls of Lelingford Castle. And when the lovely Isodene stood before the altar and placed her hand in that of the young Duke of De Mountfort, a proud and happy father and smiling mother stood by, to breathe their blessings on the head of the young bride.

The Silver Lute was again restored to its original place, in the little boudoir; but Isodene, the wife of De Mountfort, now claimed it as her own; and often

did the murmur of the fountains mingle with the tones of witching melody, which had won her love and happiness as Zaila the Gipsy Singer.



THE LOST GLOVE.

CHAPTER I.

A LITTLE girl was sitting in the September sunshine, that fell in checkered gleams across the old wooden steps, in front of a decayed and tottering building, in one of the by-streets of the Empire city. The sunlight seemed like a pleasant visitor, as it crept from her little naked feet and ragged dress up over her dimpled arms and shoulders, and nestled amid the shining curls, hanging in disheveled profusion around her sweet and childish face. But, as it grew more inquisitive, and stole under her drooping lids to discover the color of her downcast eyes, it betrayed two bright, sparkling, but sorrowful-looking tears, just creeping down to the edge of those silken lashes.

Just at that moment, a young man, who was passing by, stopped short in his hasty walk, to gaze for

a moment on the sunshine, the tears, and the beautiful little creature before him. He was a poet and a painter; and, struck by the exquisite grace and beauty of her face and attitude, perfect in their unconscious and unstudied loveliness, he sought to impress the image upon his memory.

"What a glorious picture I have stumbled on," said he; "I must have that picture—tears, sunshine, and all. It will win me fame."

The little maiden threw up the lashes glittering with moisture, and, perceiving a stranger, with an artless but sad smile, held out her hand and said:

"Please, sir, just a sixpence for my mother."

The stranger looked at the little pleading hand, and forgot the beautiful face. It was just such a hand as he had dreamed of, had sought for, but had never before found. Even though belonging to a child, its tiny proportions were most exquisitely developed—rounded, delicate, dimpled, tapering, perfect! In the rapture of an artist's joy, the young man caught the beautiful little hand in his and pressed it to his lips. The child looked surprised and frightened, but she said, meekly,

"Only a sixpence, sir," in her childish, musical voice.

"Certainly, certainly," replied the artist, for the first time comprehending what she said, and emptying a handfull of dimes in her lap.

"Oh! thank you!" said she, her large, blue eyes darkening with a flash of delight; "you are very kind, sir."

"I should like to paint your portrait, pretty one; and I will give you as much more money, if, when I come for you to-morrow, you will go home with me, and let me take your likeness."

"What is that?" asked the wondering child.

"Oh! I will show you to-morrow—something very pretty."

"Well, I will go, sir, if mamma will let me."

The artist, all enthusiasm at his precious discovery, stepped gayly down the street, and the little girl bounded away in the opposite direction to buy a loaf of bread for her sick mother.

"See here, Mr. Baker!" said she, joyfully, springing into a little bakery, where a hard-featured man stood behind the counter—"I may have the bread, now, for mother, may n't I?" and she held out her little hand, grasping tight the shining pieces of silver.

"Eh! where did you get that, little girl? Of course you can have the bread, when you can pay for it."

"Given to me, sir."

"Humph! on account of your bright eyes, I suppose. Catch me giving bread, or money, either, to folks, because they are pretty;" and, laying out a loaf of bread, he took one of her dimes in exchange.

"Oh!" exclaimed the child, her eyes falling on a few oranges ranged in the window, "I'll take an orange, too—it will please mother so."

Another dime was taken; and, with the loaf of bread and the orange, she flew back to her comfortless and destitute home.

"See here, mother, what I've brought you!" she exclaimed, gayly, bounding into the wretched apartment; but she stopped short, and, letting fall her treasures, sprang to the bedside, where, pale and motionless, a woman lay dying, alone and unattended.

The ashy lids were closed over sunken eyes; her colorless lips were parted, and the breath came slow and struggling from her scarcely-heaving bosom.

"My mother! my poor mother!" shrieked the child, winding her arms around the emaciated form of her parent, and covering her cold, clammy brow with kisses.

"My child!" said the mother, faintly—"I am dying, my Stella."

"Oh! mother!" sobbed the little girl. And these two words, and the tone in which they were said, coming, as they did, from the heart of a child, were fraught with an agony of grief and suffering.

"Stella," continued the dying woman, "this ring, (with a strong effort, taking it from her finger and giving it to the child,) keep it always—never, never

part with it—it may some time bring you friends. Stella—God bless thee, my poor orphan!" and, clasping her child convulsively to her bosom, she heaved a deep sigh, and sank back upon her pillow—dead.

All that night, the little girl sat alone on the wooden steps, now drying her eyes to look up at the bright stars, where she thought her mother had gone; and again sobbing and wailing most touchingly, till, just as the rosy tint of dawn crept over the great city, from mere exhaustion she fell asleep on her hard pillow.

That day, the artist did not come. An affair of importance called him from the city for a couple of weeks; and, when he returned, and still full of the thought of the little maiden, went to look for her, she was gone, and the old house was untenanted.

A month afterward, he sailed for glorious Italy.

CHAPTER II.

EIGHT years after this occurrence, on a pleasant evening of October, soon after sunset, a gentleman was promenading through Broadway. Just in advance of him, tripping gracefully over the pave, was a young girl of light and elegant form, in a tasteful, but rather plain dress, and close cottage hat. He was admiring her graceful and gliding step, when he suddenly paused. She had dropped one of her gloves. He picked it up. It was a dainty little creation of white kid, just the least bit in the world soiled by contact with the pavement.

"Exquisite!" muttered he, hurrying after the fair loser, with the commendable intention of returning it, and, perhaps, making the acquaintance of a lady who wore *such* a glove.

But he was a moment too late; for, just as he was overtaking her, she turned suddenly and mounted the steps of an elegant dwelling. Balancing her pretty feet on the edge of the marble door-sill, she stood for

half a moment with her hand on the polished knob. The hand was ungloved, white as snow, and beautiful as it could be. She opened the door without ringing the bell, and disappeared in the hall. Of course, she resided there.

The gentleman placed the little glove in his pocket, took down the number of the residence, and walked away.

It was twilight when he reached his lodgings; and going immediately to his room, he threw himself into an arm-chair by the window, and sank into a reverie; from which he was awakened by the presence of a visitor, whose unceremonious entrance put to flight a whole cloud of angels in white kid gloves, and little, mortal hands without them.

"Why, I say, Ernest, how do you do?—do n't you hear me?"

"Is it possible! I beg your pardon! my old chum Hal——, how are you?" exclaimed the dreamer, springing from his chair, and shaking his friend most sensibly by the hand. "Why, how you have changed! eight years have improved you vastly, I must confess."

"I can return the compliment, with interest," replied Hal, gazing admiringly upon his friend's elegant form, and strikingly handsome, and intellectual countenance. "European polish has done much, even for you. But how have you fared? how succeeded? have

you realized half your young dreams of glory? has the artist been as successful as the poet? — for we have occasionally been favored here with some of your luxurious fancies, done up admirably, in beautiful verse."

"I fear you flatter me, Hal; but with regard to my painting, I have been almost as successful as I could wish — that is, for one who pursues it merely for his own amusement."

"Quite an accomplished amateur, eh?"

The two friends sat down to converse upon old times, and the happy present, and the promising future.

Ernest Dunmore had indeed not spent eight years in travel, in cultivating his fine taste, and intellectual gifts, without returning to his country an exceedingly refined, and fascinating man.

"By the way, Hal," said he, suddenly interrupting his friend in a glowing description of his anticipations of the future, "can you tell me what young lady resides at No — Broadway?"

"Why, Isidore Allen, our city belle. Have you seen her? She is a beautiful creature — bewitches all of us. And that just reminds me that I came with a pressing invitation from the Bentleys, for you to attend a grand party there to-night. Miss Allen will of course be there."

"Then I shall, certainly!" was the animated reply.

"Why, Ernest, you must have seen this paragon of beauty. In love, so soon, after resisting all the bright eyes, and bewildering smiles of foreign perfection for eight years!"

"Indeed, you are mistaken. I am not certain that I have seen this belle of yours — at least, I have not seen her face."

"Well, you shall see her to-night. The ladies have heard of your arrival, and are on tip-toe to behold the wonderful Mr. Dunmore, the poet, the painter, and the millionaire."

"How very flattering!" returned Ernest, smiling a quiet, but perfectly satisfied smile, as he turned to the mirror to arrange his toilet for the evening. What gentleman, possessing grace, accomplishments, intellect, and the advantages of personal beauty, and great fortune, would not be a little inclined toward a pleasant feeling of vanity? None, certainly — at least, not Mr. Ernest Dunmore.

It was late in the evening when Hal Hazleton and his friend entered the brilliant and crowded rooms of the Bentleys. A lady was at the piano. It was Miss Allen, and the gentlemen edged through the throng, and reached the instrument just as the sweet voice of the belle was trembling on the concluding stanza. She was certainly a beautiful creature, just nineteen,

with glorious, dark eyes, sweeping lashes, an exquisitely-curved mouth, and finely-chiseled features — a graceful form, too; but her hand — a shade of disappointment darkened the fine face of Earnest—it was a very pretty hand, slender and tapering; but it was not *the* hand—it could not wear *such* a glove.

"A radiant creature! is n't she?" whispered Hal, as she rose from the piano.

"Very pretty," was the disappointed reply.

"*Very pretty!*" was the rather indignant ejaculation. "She is peerless, unequaled, divine!"

"But her hand!" At this moment, the lady turned toward them, and Hal presented his friend, Mr. Ernest Dunmore; and soon the two most distinguished personages present—the belle and the artist-millionaire—were promenading through the brilliant assembly. Ernest found his bright companion really bewitching. She was witty, learned, brilliant, beautiful—he would certainly have been fascinated, had it not been for the little kid glove that was lying on his heart, and the perfect little hand he had seen on the door-knob. As it was, his heart thrilled and palpitated slightly beneath its tiny treasure, and he colored twice, and stammered once—the accomplished Mr. Dunmore.

The belle was unusually charming. She thought she had made a decided and most agreeable conquest. She had quite a passion for paintings. Ernest would

have a room prepared for the exhibition of his works to his friends, by the day after to-morrow, and he would be happy to wait on her there, and hear her opinion: no doubt her criticisms would be of value. And they separated, mutually pleased. Poor little glove! what will be thy fate?



CHAPTER III.

ISIDORE ALLEN was slowly promenading through the exhibition-room, leaning on the arm of Ernest Dunmore. He was more than ever enchanted by her grace, her fine taste, and her loveliness. She was very enthusiastic, and her observations showed correct judgment and cultivated taste. Ernest sighed, as he stole a glance at her hand—it certainly was *not* a perfect one—and thought of the glove so carefully laid—on his dressing-table.

"This," said Ernest, as he withdrew the cloth which hung over a painting, "I consider my master-piece."

"Beautiful! beautiful!" said Isidore, and the tears sprang uncalled into her dark, soft eyes, at the loveliness of the picture. Ernest perceived them, and thought them the dearest tribute that could be paid to his powers as an artist.

It was a picture of the little girl, the sunshine, and the old wooden steps. There was the childish, graceful attitude; the little, pleading hand extended so prettily; the dancing curls of gold, and the tearful fringes thrown up from her large, mournful, beautiful

eyes, and, over all, the rich, warm, glowing light, slumbering softly over the brightly-sorrowful picture.

"Precisely!" exclaimed Isidore, after regarding it an instant; "it is the very likeness of Stella May, my dressing-maid. One would think it copied from her, just as she looked eight years ago, when mamma brought her home as my companion and assistant."

"Indeed!" said Ernest, while a flash of surprise, and delight beamed over his face; "will you not tell me something of your Stella May?"

"With pleasure; for I look at her always in connection with some romance or another; she is so peculiar, such a strange being. I was only a child myself, when, one day, mamma was visiting several poor people, to whom she frequently afforded assistance, when she noticed a little girl sitting in the doorway of an old building, weeping bitterly. She spoke to her kindly, but the little girl only raised her head a moment, and then sobbed more wildly than ever. 'My mother—my dear mother—they have buried my mother!' was all she could make her say. Touched by her grief, and anxious to know if she was left friendless, mamma entered the house, which she found entirely deserted, and unfurnished. What little wretched furniture had remained, had been seized by the neighbors, in payment for various articles which they had given the woman before she died. The mother

had been buried by the poor-officers, and the child was left unpitied, unprotected, homeless, and destitute. Mamma took the little mourner into her carriage, and brought her home. For days she refused all consolation, weeping all day, and sighing all night, as if her young heart had broken with its grief. But we were all very kind to her, and, gradually, she became more contented; and when, at length, she smiled, or warbled to herself notes of music that she had heard, child as I was, I loved her for her beauty, and sweetness. We knew there must be some unusual circumstance connected with her, for she had a ring, engraven on the inside, with her name, 'Stella May;' and then, she was so naturally lady-like, and refined, so tasteful, and intelligent, it seemed as if the very spirit of grace breathed, and lived in every thing she said or did. Mamma congratulated herself on having found such a treasure of a companion for her daughter; and, as for me, Stella was my dependence — for she assisted me in all the tasks imposed upon my youthful patience by a dried and withered specimen of a governess. Though three years the youngest, she was more ready than I in every branch of study, which mamma allowed her to pursue, merely to gratify me. Music, of course, was not included. But for this she had such a passion, and seemed so utterly wrapped up in it, that I really felt grieved not to have her share in my

lessons. She never said anything about it; but, the tears would start to her eyes when I left her for the practice-room: so, at length, I persuaded mamma to let her take lessons, too. And such a musical talent as she has, is really wonderful! — she performs the most divinely on the harp of *any* one I ever heard! Then she has such an exquisite taste in dress! I do not pretend to exercise the least judgment with regard to the arrangement of my wardrobe — she so far excels me in all such matters. Then she is so sensitive, so proud, yet so grateful for kindness! Really, she is quite a wonder of a dressing-maid! I do believe, if she were to be brought out — despite the advantages of fortune — she would throw me quite into the shade."

"That would be impossible, Miss Allen. But do you never introduce this fair wonder to your friends?"

"Ah, I see!" said the lady, laughing, "you would like to catch a glimpse at her rare beauty! Very well! — as you are an artist, and she looks so very much like this painting of yours, I will humor you, if possible. But she has too much native delicacy to ever yield to my solicitations to appear in the parlor; so I shall have to bring her here. Mr. Hazleton will call for us to-morrow?" she said, as that gentleman approached.

"Certainly; I shall only feel too much honored." And the three continued on their way round the room.

CHAPTER IV.

THE next day, as the snowy fingers of Stella May were wreathing the dark hair of her mistress into shining braids, Isidore said,

"Would you like to visit the exhibition-room of our new artist, this afternoon, Stella?"

"Yes, lady, very much," replied the young girl; "but—"

"Nay, Stella, you must go, just to oblige me. There is a picture there that I admire very much, and I know you would love to see it."

"Indeed, lady, I cannot tell you how much I love everything beautiful — my harp, my flowers, and my own beautiful mistress," said the young maiden, in a trembling and slightly mournful voice; "but such things make me sad and unhappy, when I know I ought to be grateful and contented. But I will go."

How wildly the heart of Ernest Dunmore throbbed and palpitated, when his eyes met those of Stella May. The brightest dream, the loveliest fancy, the sweetest vision of his poet's soul, looked on him through those eyes; the one embodiment of all his

heart had longed for, and not found, lived, breathed before him! The pure, girlish, spiritual brow; the deep, dreamy, shadowy eyes; the sweet mouth, beautiful in its expression of subdued repose; the eloquent color, coming and going in her cheek, just as the thoughts came and went in her soul. There was a proud reserve mingled with the ineffable grace of her manner, that no princess could surpass. Ernest almost forgot to notice her hand, till she raised it to smooth back a truant curl that had stolen from the confinement of her straw hat. It was *the* hand he had looked for eight years! She wore but one glove; where was its mate? Ernest smiled, and his heart gave a bound against the little white treasure that had again found its way to his vest-pocket. And he had once held that beautiful hand in his—had pressed it to his lips; would he ever clasp it again? For Ernest Dunmore was a proud millionaire, and Stella May was a dressing-maid!

They paused first before a lovely picture of sunset — an Italian scene. Stella gazed at it with a flushed cheek and brightening eye.

"Do you love Italy? would you like to visit it, Miss May?"

"I have dreamed of it ever," replied the young girl, raising her soft eyes innocently to her companion's face.

There was something peculiar in his earnest gaze, and the silken lashes drooped slowly toward the deepening color in her cheek. Isidore Allen observed the manner of both, and, when Stella raised her eyes, she curled her full lip very slightly, but it called the crimson to that gentle brow, and a flash of pride to those deep, beautiful eyes. Isidore was sorry in a moment—she was usually so kind and considerate; but Ernest had excited her ambition, and she was jealous—of her dressing-maid. But she knew Mr. Dunmore to be proud and fastidious, and the next moment she smiled at her own vain fears.

“And now for the picture I told you of, Stella,” said Isidore, as the four paused in front of the veiled painting.

“Only a sixpence, please, sir, to buy bread for my mother,” repeated Ernest, keeping his eyes fixed on the maiden’s face, as he drew aside the curtain.

Stella gazed at it a moment, and then up into the face of the artist, with a look of wondering inquiry. Their eyes met, and Stella burst into tears. Perhaps it was the memory of her mother—perhaps it was his thoughtless and cruel reminding of what she had been—that so affected her. The artist was embarrassed. It was a delicate subject to make apologies for; and his friend Hal and Miss Allen both looked surprised, but he rallied, and said frankly:

“Forgive me, Miss May, if I have wounded your feelings. It was unintentional; and, indeed, I am very happy to meet again the little girl who, you see, I have never forgotten.”

“Then this is a portrait of our Stella, is it?” said Isidore, caressing the young girl, to remove her injured feelings.

“Let us return, Miss Allen; I do not feel well,” said she, in a low tone; and they retired.

That evening, there was no company in the parlor, and Stella came down, at Isidore’s request, to play for her.

“Oh! that Mr. Dunmore could picture her thus lovely upon the canvass,” thought Isidore, as she watched her beautiful companion, who was leaning over the harp, lost in her own sweet melody. Her rounded arm gleamed out from its falling sleeve, like moulded snow, as the small fingers of that lovely hand swept over the quivering strings; like the shadow of a fluttering rose-leaf on a lily, the soft color hovered on her cheek; and her bright, spiritual eyes were cast upward with a dreamy, clear, forgetful look, as her bright lips trembled with the rich gush of music thrilling up from a soul full of beauty and melody.

The two maidens were both so absorbed that they did not hear the ring of the door-bell, nor notice the gentleman who stood, hat in hand, just inside the

parlor. It was Mr. Dunmore. He, too, was charmed into silence, and stood mute and motionless till the last quiver of the harp died away, and Isidore, perceiving him, exclaimed laughingly,

"Spell-bound, Mr. Dunmore?"

Stella started and blushed crimson, and, rising hastily, would have retreated from the apartment, but Ernest detained her by begging for another song. She recovered her self-possession immediately, and complied gracefully with his request.

The evening passed away delightfully. Ernest was a man of rare accomplishments and inexhaustible sources of amusement and information. It was the first time Stella had ever met with such a person; books and her own high thoughts had been her only companions. It was no wonder, then, that, listening eagerly to every accent of his fine voice, and drinking in the enthusiasm of his dark, soul-lit eyes, she forgot herself, her circumstances, all the sadness of her life.

But she was doomed to a quick waking from her dream: Isidore saw it all, and displeasure flashed from her eyes, as she saw that she was rivaled by the sweet loveliness of the young orphan.

"Stella, you may retire, now," she said quietly, and stingingly.

The young girl's cheek grew deadly pale, but she arose with the proud dignity of a queen, and, bidding

Mr. Dunmore good evening, left the apartment. A flush of indignation mounted to the white forehead of Ernest, as she disappeared, and his manner became cold and constrained.

Isidore saw she had made a misstep, had forgotten her position as a lady, and, for the first time in her life, felt humbled. She strove to be gay and brilliant, but she failed, and in a few moments her visitor left.

Who can tell the deep misery in the desolate orphan's heart, as she threw herself on her couch and strove to hush its wild throbbing? A cloud had ever cast its dim shadow on the happiness of that young heart, and now the cloud had burst in a wild storm of anguish, that threatened to annihilate every flower of hope she had ever cherished. Sensitive to an extreme, proud and delicate, to be thus repulsed and scorned before *him*, and by the only one who had ever appreciated her since they bore her mother away to the pauper's burial-place. Long after midnight she sobbed herself to sleep.

The next morning, Stella was ill; but she said nothing, though her head ached intensely, and her face burned with fever. Isidore's heart reproached her with her cruelty; but she knew that an apology only would deepen the wound, so she told her kindly that she might keep her room, if she was not well. Solitude was grateful to the orphan's heart.

CHAPTER V.

THREE weeks passed away, and Ernest Dunmore had called but once on the belle. Hopeless of ever winning his regard, she had renewed her flirtation with Hal Hazleton — for whom, perhaps, after all, she had the most affection, if he was not quite so *distingue*.

The Allens were all out to a brilliant bridal party. Stella had gone down to the deserted parlors, and, seating herself by the splendid center-table, buried her face in her hands. Half an hour passed by, and she still sat motionless; but by-and-by the words struggled up from her aching heart, broken and almost incoherently:

"And this is fate — my fate! while Isidore is so happy — cherished, loved, worshiped, even by *him*. Oh! I am so utterly wretched — so very unhappy!"

"Would to be loved, cherished, worshiped, make *you* happy, dear Stella?" said a rich, manly voice, in tones of thrilling tenderness, as an arm stole round her waist, and lifted her to her feet.

"Ernest!" murmured the frightened girl, hiding her beautiful young face in his bosom.

"Stella! vision of my dreams! radiant spirit-love of mine! beautiful embodiment of all the poet or the painter ever yearned for! I am thine — all thine — my Stella!"

There was a hush through the lofty apartment, broken, at last by a low sob, coming up from a heart too full of happiness.



CHAPTER VI.

IT was a beautiful June morning, radiant with sunlight, and heavy with perfume where, occasionally, the air floated over a dewy garden in the midst of the close, populous city. There was a wedding at the church that morning, and it was crowded with the *elite* — drawn thither out of curiosity to get a glimpse of the bride of Ernest Dunmore, the millionaire. It was rumored he had chosen Miss Allen's dressing-maid to be the partner of his wealth and accomplishments. There were many smiles, some sneers, and still more wondering remarks. But they were all hushed, when the bridal-party entered and walked up the aisle. A suppressed murmur of admiration was all the sound, as every eye was riveted on the rare loveliness of the bride's young face. There was no bashfulness, no awkwardness to ridicule — only a beautiful timidity, as softening and as graceful as the veil that floated round her, as she stood by the side of her betrothed before the altar. Isidore Allen and Hal Hazleton were their attendants.

The priest, in his clerical robes, stood up and commenced the ceremony, when they suddenly thought — who should give the bride away? At this important moment, a noble-looking man, still in the prime of life, stepped forward and gave away — *his daughter!* It was no time for explanation, and the ceremony proceeded.

Stella May was the wife of Ernest Dunmore.

The bride and groom immediately changed places with their attendants, and the whole fashionable world stared in mute surprise as the good man pronounced Isidore Allen and Harry Hazleton man and wife.

"My daughter! God bless you, my beautiful child! and may you be happy with your young heart's choice!" and the stranger folded Stella in his arms, and kissed her white brow fondly.

Something told Stella it was indeed her father, and she wound her fair arms around his neck, and pressed her warm lips to his cheek.

"Stella!" said Ernest in surprise, "perhaps this is a mistake!"

"Let this be the proof," said the stranger, taking a gold locket from his bosom, containing two miniatures — one, evidently a likeness of himself, the other the very counterpart of the bride.

"Your mother looked just as you do now, when I married her," said Mr. May, regarding his bright

daughter, with eyes dim with tears. "But we parted in bitterness, and were both proud; and when I repented, and went to search for her, she had gone, none knew whither. I have at last learned her mournful fate; but I am happier than I have been for many years, to-day, my daughter. Heaven bless those who have been kind to you!" and he looked gratefully at Isidore, who whispered to her husband:

"I always knew Stella May would have a romance."

"And so we must go south, first, and roam amid the orange flowers and myrtles around your father's romantic home, must we?" said Ernest Dunmore, as he handed his bride into the carriage, "and go to Italy afterward?"

"If he wishes it, Ernest. But, really, in the confusion I have dropped one of my gloves."

"Oh! never mind, dear," said Ernest, taking a little white glove out of his vest pocket, and handing it to his wife, with a very demure countenance, "this will answer."

"The glove I lost last fall!" said the bride, with a look of wonder.

"Ahem!" said Ernest.

THE LIVING STATUE.

A STAR — a dream — a passion-flower — was beautiful Nina Forrest! A poet — a thrilling and exalted one — was her father: a wild and radiant creature — such as those that sometimes make us say, "surely, angels thrill us with their presence yet," — was her mother. Italy, passionate Italy, was her birth-place — starry skies, and whispering winds, and rare bright flowers, were her companions — a lute was her idol — a marble palace, hid away in the loveliest valley that the burning skies of her native land ever looked upon, was her home.

It was midnight. What had Nina to do with sleeping dreams, in that still and beautiful hour? It was now, that her cheek grew crimson, and her heart throbbed feverishly, and her whole being quivered

with the intenseness of unutterable emotions, answering back, silently, the murmur of the waves that flowed brightly by her home—the tremble of rich starlight—the perfume of orange flowers—the dim, deep, awe-inspiring shadows of distant mountains, and the wild, faint whisper of the caressing wind. She leaned from the balcony of her chamber, and looked up, dreamingly, to the silver and sapphire sky, with her large, black, spiritual eyes. Rich, curving lashes laid back till they met the delicate arch of her white brow—thick tresses of ebon hair rippled like shining waves around her form—a rare, soft color wavered in her young cheek—a trembling eloquence was upon her restless, crimson lips.

A wanderer and adventurer, who had strayed into the valley, was hidden amid the shadows of Nina's bower. With breathless eagerness his fine head was inclined forward, and his dark, gray eyes deepened and burned as he gazed upon the surpassingly-beautiful vision that, like the personification of an exquisite dream, leaned gracefully upon the marble balustrade.

"Oh! Venice! Venice!" he murmured, "how would your enthusiastic throngs grow mad with delight to look upon the image of one so inconceivably lovely. A world's applause and a deathless name would he win, who could mould the pulseless marble into the likeness of aught so beautiful. Nina Forrest—the

peasants tell me that is your name—you must be won—must be the bride of Laurens Delano: not that there is room in my wild heart to love, as those eyes tell me you would love—my soul is all given to ambition, to a hope of immortal fame—but that I may mould from that exquisite form and radiant features, a creation of stone that shall win me immortality!"

With a throbbing pulse, and eager gaze, he watched the maiden, till her head drooped gently upon the snowy arm resting on the balustrade, the dark-fringed lids closed slowly over her starry eyes, the breath swelled softly, and evenly in her beautiful bosom—she was asleep. Silently, and cautiously the young sculptor crept from the orange-bower, and, with fearless daring, climbed up, by the vines and pillars, till he stood beside the fair slumberer upon the balcony.

The rich moonlight lay like a spiritual day upon the earth, and in the air. He bent silently over the living vision of beauty, and mused upon her bewildering loveliness; while his spirit thrilled, not with love, nor a sense of bliss, but with the thought of the fame he would win, if he succeeded in transferring those perfect proportions to marble.

The crimson of excitement had gone down from her lily cheek, and left it clear and white; and every lovely feature was perfect in its sweet repose.

Laurens Delano knelt down by the sleeper, and,

taking her small, soft hand in his, he pressed it passionately to his bosom. With a sighing breath, and parted lips, the young girl unclosed her large eyes, with a slow flash of surprise upon the stranger at her feet.

Ambition is almost as strong an incentive as love; and the Signor Delano was artful and talented. In a low and eloquent voice, he murmured wild, broken expressions of admiration and endearment — angel-dream, and star-vision, and sweet, living reality, he called her — as the planet of his destiny, he addressed her — should that destiny be wild, and mad as the thunderstorm, or sweet and placid as a night when the evening-star was queen of the jeweled sky?

All this was in glowing Italy, where love springs instantaneously into perfect existence. If Nina Forrest was gifted with the passionate sensibility which makes the eye swim and darken with tears, the cheek flush, and the lip quiver with the unspoken emotion called up by a passing form of nature's loveliness, how would her wild young spirit respond to these first words of passion that had ever fallen upon her ear!

The yearning of her spirit, and the thrilling of her heart, found a bewildering and sweet utterance in the language of another addressed to herself; and her soul yielded instantly to its fascination.

The dark ringlets of Laurens Delano mingled with

the raven curls of Nina — his warm breath was on her forehead — and, trembling like a frightened bird, she nestled to his bosom, and, in wild warbles of broken music, breathed out her timid, and delicious joy. Three nights from then, she threw herself into the arms of her lover, and went with him to his distant home, leaving the starry bowers, and marble halls of her parent's palace lonely, mournful, and desolate.

* * * * *

The sculptor, Laurens Delano, was pacing with a hasty step to and fro through his studio. The implements of his art were scattered around, and a statue, nearly finished, stood on a pedestal. It was evidently intended as a likeness of his wife, but it did not please him; he was impatient. It lacked the expression of passionate spirituality, the ethereal delicacy and yet fervor of her beauty, the rare, and ineffable loveliness of her features. It was very beautiful — but it was not the perfect embodiment of the image in his mind — it was not *such* a creation of genius as would crown his brow with an imperishable wreath of glory. He was vexed and excited almost to madness, to think that his hand should fail to execute what his mind conceived — he laughed bitterly at his want of success, and stamped his feet upon the floor in anger. Suddenly a strange thought entered his troubled breast,

and calmed his fretful mood. His brow burned, and his fine lip curled with an exulting smile. No one had been permitted to behold his bride — he had kept her entirely secluded, that none might know but that his master-piece was an ideal creation. *Herself* should personate the marble form he wished to sculpture — she should be a *living statue* that would win him immortality. He had heard of a subtle and curious potion, to be procured in Venice, that would suspend all appearance of life for three days. For three days, then, should his exhibition-room be open, and his beautiful bride should mock the gaze of admiring throngs with her rare, and ravishing loveliness. It was true, there was a risk in the wild attempt — she might die in her long trance, and his soul be stained with a fearful crime — but he loved her only that she promised to bring glory to his brow, and even death, when weighed in the balance with fame, was found wanting. While the sudden thought yet thrilled from his soul to his fingers, he applied himself to his purpose. First, he carved out a pedestal in the fashion of a balcony, whose balustrade, covered with vines and flowers, should conceal all of her form but her exquisite bust. Then he fashioned a light and graceful coif with flowing waves of hair, that should cover her own raven tresses. Then purchased the subtle draught.

Nina was reclining on a heap of cushions in a dim,

cool, pleasant apartment, whose perfumed air was musical with the murmur of a fountain, and whose octagonal sides were of trellis-work shadowed with luxurious foliage. It was morning. By her side, upon the floor, was a silver salver, holding fruit, and a goblet of wine.

Sipping from the goblet, she waited for her husband. He came; and, asking her if the wine was pleasant, he sat by her side and held her hand.

"Laurens! do you love me, Laurens?" she asked, raising her large eyes to his face with a smile. "I feel so dreamy and pleasant, and all in a thrill of strange sensations. I should like to hear your low, deep voice whispering its dear eloquence in my fascinated ear. Hold my head against your bosom, while I sleep, and dream of you."

The sculptor took the bright being in his arms, and smoothed down her silken hair; caressing her and murmuring sweet words of tenderness, as if all his soul was melting into love, and flowing out in his low, impassioned tones; gazing down, all the while, with deep, intense eyes into her radiant face.

A soft languor weighed down the fair eyelids of the young wife, but a radiant smile hovered around her lips, replying to his caresses.

With that beautiful smile still lingering over her rare countenance, she sank into a deep, deep sleep.

One would not think her living, so motionless grew her bosom, and so perfectly colorless and marble-like her face.

Laurens Delano gazed upon her for a long time after this strange trance had crept over her vital energies—gazed as if he could not take away his eyes from the exquisite loveliness of the still, white form he held. Then he pressed a burning kiss upon the pallid forehead of his young bride, and bore her from the room.

* * * * *

Throng after throng of eager visitors poured into the room of the sculptor, to behold the gem of art—the rare master-piece, the triumph of his profession—the sleeping maiden of Laurens Delano.

Some gazed in breathless admiration, as if a tone would waken that perfect form to life—some murmured low exclamations of surprise and delight—some burst into raptures of applause, and cast wreaths and costly gifts at the feet of the young sculptor, who sat, apparently heedless of everything else, leaning his head upon his hand, gazing upon the object of his triumph. There was the sleeping maiden, with her rounded and polished arm twined about a slender column, and her beautiful head drooping upon the arm. One could almost see the smile creep out and dimple

around her small, sweet mouth, and the white bosom swell with a living heart. Never before was marble moulded into anything so spiritual, so delicately.

Strange as it may seem, though Laurens Delano had clasped that fair creature in all the radiance of life to his breast, with scarcely an emotion of tenderness, yet now that he saw her there, still, and white, and mute, he loved her with a wild, deep fervor. It seemed to him that his hands *had* moulded that lovely form—that she was in reality the creation of his mind—the embodiment of his genius. And, as this, he loved her; he began to wish that she had life—had the power to love, and answer unto the vague yearning of his soul. He forgot that she was a reality; that she would wake from this deep trance, after a lapse of many hours. His cheek flushed at the praise of the crowd, and he felt the laurel wreath upon his brow—but he was not satisfied—fame was not the bewildering angel he had deemed it—then, even in the moment of his fullest triumph, came the yearning for a being like that statue, to share in his glory. And, motionless almost as it, he sat through the first day, never turning his deep eyes from that form.

All that night, with the dim light of a solitary lamp falling over it, he gazed upon it; and, when the throng was admitted the next morning, they

found him sitting in the same position that he occupied on the preceding day. Some smiled, and remarked about his conduct—but he did not heed them.

There was another person present, who was as wrapped up in admiration of the statue as the sculptor. All through the hours for exhibition, on both days, he remained not far from Signor Delano, completely and intensely absorbed in the beauty of the statue. He was a young American—a poet—with a pale, intellectual countenance, and mournful, proud, large eyes. He, too, loved what he deemed to be a lifeless form of marble—worshiped it, because it was the ideal of all the beautiful images in his soul.

The third and last day of the exhibition arrived: the sculptor and the poet were side by side—so close, that each might hear the throbbing of the other's pulse. The room was crowded with visitors—all eyes were bent on the sleeping maiden—a breathless hush filled the apartment; they fancied they could see the rosy tint shoot up into her cheek—it seemed so real. And reality it was—it was no fancy. The straining eyes of Laurens Delano marked that color; and, as a comprehension of the truth forced itself, at last, upon his mind, a wild gasp shivered up from his bosom. He would have rushed to the statue, and dropped the curtain over the niche where it stood—

he would have cleared the crowded room, before it was too late—but he had no power to rise.

More earnest and intense grew every gaze—more deathly the stillness, that was broken with no sound, save the quick fluttering breath of the multitude. Softly the bosom of the statue began to heave—the lips parted—a warm glow stole over its cheek—the long lashes quivered on their crimson resting-place—the white lids slowly unclosed—the dark, soft eyes of the vision rested on the spectators.

“O heavens! where am I?” she exclaimed.

These words aroused the poet. He sprang to her side, took the form from the pedestal, and, before the astonished crowd had moved a finger, had disappeared through a private entrance.

At that moment, Delano fell upon the floor in mighty convulsions; his strong nature was a wreck. There was no groan, no gasp, no sigh; the crimson life-torrent gushed out over his white lips—he was dead!

* * * * *

Many thousand miles away from the studio of the sculptor, Nina and Clare Mather were silently blessing each other, with the power of their love.

Though their home was in the chilly north, yet Nina blossomed more sweetly than any of the rare

exotics which surrounded her. A rich glow of sunset stole blushing through curtains of crimson silk, and, creeping over the costly carpet, rested lovingly upon the radiant form of the beautiful Italian. She was sitting on a heap of cushions, with her lute in her lap, and her bright head resting upon the knee of her poet-husband. With a wild and bewildering sweetness, her dainty fingers swept over the strings of her lute, and her voice gushed out in tones whose exquisite melody was eloquent of love; and ever as she sang she raised her large, soft, passionate eyes to meet the fond, deep gaze of her husband; and her bright cheek dimpled with a beautiful smile, as his loving fingers thriddled her black, flowing hair. Nina had learned to speak our language, but she chose to sing in her own beautiful tongue; and, doubtless, the words of her song were very sweet—for the heart of the poet throbbed quicker at her music, and his face was eloquent of happiness, as she laid aside her lute, and he drew her, tenderly, close to his side on the sinking velvet of the sofa.

And, as the crimson gleams of sunset stole out as silently as stars, and the dim, dreamy shadows of night came in, the poet and his bride sat together—while the faint murmur of words of tenderness crept softly through the pleasant apartment.

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER I.

“**T**INK—tink—tinkle!” rang out the little silvery-toned bell through the boudoir of Isabel Linn. The white hand of that peerless lady replaced the soft-toned bell upon an antique-mosaic flower-table, and she relapsed into her former attitude of elegant repose. The boudoir befitted nothing but the beautiful being who was its mistress. It was a small room of circular shape—looped, like a tent, from the center of the arched roof, with rich curtains of rosy silk sweeping down the sides, and caught back from the glittering mirrors, lovely statues, soft pictures, slight tables, and rare vases, placed between slender pillars of marble. In every unoccupied recess, luxurious heaps of velvet cushions, the same soft color as the drapery, were thrown. The lady herself reclined on

a low, yielding sofa, nearly concealed beneath the splendid dress which floated over it, but whose rose-color still softened the dazzling whiteness of the bare arm, and the rich glow of the round cheek nestled upon it. It was evening — and a lamp, tinted with the same softening tinge, flooded the beautiful apartment with a dreamy and eloquent light, that made the fair ornaments, the sweet pictures, the perfumed flowers, the young statues, and the elegant lady appear more fair, and sweet, and young, and elegant still.

The lady was evidently dressed for an assembly. Her fine, voluptuous form was draped in rich crimson satin, with an overdress of exquisite lace, rare and delicate. Ornaments of gold and rubies caught the lace upon her snowy bosom, and held it up from her exceedingly lovely arms; and from them it waved back and fell around — like — like nothing; for nothing was ever so beautiful! Her black hair was twisted with rubies, and wound around her head in magnificent folds. Her style of beauty was so brilliant, that all the jewels, upon her hands, and arms, and bosom, and hair, seemed part of her loveliness, and were not misplaced. If the rubies were bright, her lips were as red, and her eyes as flashing; and the beautiful contrast of her raven hair, waved back from her high, white forehead and haughtily-curved neck, was still more dazzling. After ringing the silver bell, she sank into her former

listless attitude, and, when a servant entered at the door, she said, without raising her eyes,

“When Mr. Cleveland Merefort calls, show him in here.”

The servant departed, and she was again alone with her thoughts. That they were pleasant, was shown by the gay smile which broke gradually over her face — the rich lips parting, the fair cheeks crimsoning, and the dark eyes shining like deep waters beneath their drooped lashes. Isabel Linn was not young — she was thirty-five, and looked twenty-five; but she was peerlessly and voluptuously beautiful; more splendidly so than a younger lady could be. A strong will and powerful passions breathed in all her attitudes, and glances, and features — the motion of her firm but graceful foot, the curve of her delicate nostrils, the superb turn to her full, red lips, the sleeping fire in her large, slow-moving eyes, made her a fascinating and fearful creature. But she had made it a study through all her life, till she had attained a wonderful degree of self-possession. There was something that breathed of power and passion in the very calmness of her slow, graceful motions. And now, though there were a thousand emotions making her heart throb, she stirred not one of her delicate fingers, nor the small slipper just revealed beneath her flowing dress.

Presently the door again opened softly. Her bosom heaved quickly, and a deep flush broke over her cheek, and, with a smile of ineffable brightness, she slowly raised her deep, bewildering eyes toward the door. But she paused in the welcome that rose to her lips, and the flush went back from her face — for it was not yet *him* who had come.

A young girl stood timidly within the room, hesitating whether to go or remain, for the lady did not bid her enter. She was sweet and fair — not more than fifteen — with a slight form, and hair like an angel's wing, changing, and bright, and golden. There was something in her gentle hesitation very different from the proud repose of the beautiful woman before her. Her dress was of delicate white, and some bright roses lay on her bosom — her face was the purest thing out of heaven!

"You may come," at length said the lady.

The maiden glided in, and sat down on a cushion by the sofa.

"Effie, my daughter!" said the woman, with unusual tenderness, for she was chary of the affection she bestowed on her only child; but love was busy at the mother's heart, and love softens the manner toward all. Wild, wild dreams of love were waking in her bosom, and changed her cold bearing unconsciously.

"Mother," said the fair girl, hesitatingly, raising

her sweet face, and then dropping her eyes till the silken lashes touched the cheek, where a delicate glow was wavering out into a blush; "mother," — and her cheeks were crimson — "You know I am but a child, only fifteen; and I have never yet kept anything from you, and may I not tell you how very, very happy I am? and how my heart is still trembling with its new delight? You know—"

The bashful girl paused, and the mother, wondering if that mere child could have found a lover, laid her white hand on those brown curls to reassure her.

"You know Cleveland Merefort, mother?"

"Yes! yes! what of *him*?" suddenly exclaimed the mother, withdrawing her hand, and fixing her burning eyes intently on the blushing face before her; "what of *him*, Effie Linn?"

"Oh, mother! you will not be offended, you cannot be; he is so good, and manly, and gifted! I could not think it a harm to love him. He is so beautiful and gentle, and loves me so earnestly — I am sure he does" — murmured the timid girl, as her cheek grew pale, and the tears sprang instantly to her soft eyes.

"Indeed! did he tell you this? did he say he loved *you*?" asked the lady, in a tone of withering contempt.

"Or are you only guessing at all this happiness?"

"He *did* tell me, that he loved me," was the proud and earnest reply; "and I knew that it was truth he

uttered, for his eyes were solemn, and looked into mine so gently, and his lips trembled as he spoke these happy words, and, when he drew me close to his heart, I felt it beat so rapidly, and —

"Effie—Effie—Effie!" almost shrieked the woman.

"You frighten me, mother! you look so fearful! What have I done? Is it wrong to love him? Tell me, dear mother, is it?" pleaded the quivering voice of the young girl, shrinking from the intense gaze of those dilated and burning eyes.

"Do not look at me so!" she still pleaded, as that motionless look, and the spot of livid red on the cheeks of her mother, made her tremble.

"Effie Linn, remember!" was uttered in the distinct tone of deep passion, "you will *never* marry that man — never! Receive no more vows of love from him! cast him off — forget him — or you are no child of mine! remember!"

"Cast him off? never — never!" murmured the young creature, whom this sudden shock to her sweet happiness startled from a whole world of life-dreams to a sense of utter misery; and, with these words, she slid from the ottoman insensible upon the rich carpet, whose gay hues mocked the pallor of her cheek.

Again the bell sounded a sharper summons than before; and to the servant who appeared, the lady spoke in a cold, calm tone.

"Summon her maid, and assist my daughter to her room — she is not well."

The maid came, and they bore the fainting girl from the apartment. The moment they disappeared, Isabel Linn passed her hand over her forehead, as if to feel if all traces of her passion were smoothed away. The game she had to play was now more difficult, and at this moment required all her skill.

Resuming her former position, with her feet half hidden in a cushion, and her head nestled in the high corner of the sofa, she arranged her glittering dress around her, she folded her small hands, quietly smiled a dreamy smile, and fixed her languishing eyes with a still look upon the carpet.

Five minutes afterward, Cleveland Merefort stood within the room. He glanced around the exquisite boudoir, with a look of surprise, mingled slightly with embarrassment. He was a very handsome man, of thirty, with a polished and frank bearing — with a singularly fascinating smile, though he seldom smiled — dignified almost to coldness — evidently gifted — evidently a most perfect gentleman. There was a kind of sadness in his eyes and reserve in his manner, which told of passionate feeling repressed and hidden — a kind of mournfulness in his smile which went quick to the heart — a kind of pride that mingled with his reserve, which made him deeply interesting; and all

these things said that he was evidently a talented *poor* man. And this was, perhaps, the reason why he had never loved or married hitherto.

"Mr. Merefort," said the lady, raising her dark eyes slowly, with a sweet smile upon her lip, and holding out her small hand, without rising from the sofa.

As he advanced toward her with slight confusion, her heart told her that this consciousness was not, as she had fondly hoped, an evidence of her power, but was owing to the thought that Effie had revealed the new relation in which he stood to her. *This* then was the mortifying cause of his frequent calls and delicate attention. The deference of his services were those he paid to his future mother, instead of—oh! she could have gnashed her teeth in bitterness! but it would not do then, and she looked up so eloquently.

"Sit here," she said, retaining his hand a moment, and motioning to the ottoman where Effie had sat.

The gentleman felt grateful and gratified; for he had no doubt now but that she was prepared to receive him as her son-in-law; and previously, notwithstanding her marked kindness to him, he had entertained a fear that his poverty would be an objection to his claiming the hand of the daughter of the rich widow Linn.

"Is Miss Effie well this evening?" he asked, taking the seat she assigned him close by her side.

"A little indisposed—nothing serious," was the

reply; "she retired to her room a few moments ago."

"Indeed!" was the remark, in a disappointed tone.

"I have not ordered the carriage for an hour yet," continued Mrs. Linn, sweetly, "and we will have a quiet chat, which will be charming, will it not? By-the-by, do you fancy the arrangement of my boudoir?"

"It is delightful—a fairy palace," replied her visitor, glancing through the elegant apartment with a pleased eye. "How very kind she is to give me this opportunity to speak," thought he; and the beautiful lady, whom he had always admired, appeared doubly brilliant and lovely to him then.

But if he had the opportunity, he had no way to improve it; for the fascinating woman reclining on the sofa before him, in her splendid attire, with the rosy light falling over her, fixed her large, dark eyes upon him, and murmured, in a low voice of music, a thousand eloquent things; leading his thoughts even from the subject which engrossed them.

She spoke of beauty, and he felt how very beautiful *she* was. She spoke of love; and he realized that she was capable of intense love; that passionate emotions throbbed beneath the bosom heaving in those rich folds of satin and lace. Burning words of poetry fell in liquid cadences from her lips; and he wondered at, and then was carried away by her irresistible eloquence. He was a worshiper at the shrine of beauty,

genius, poetry, love; and here before him was a lovely, nay, a glorious woman, radiant with one and gifted with another, breathing the third, and glowing and blushing with the last. The ball, and even the sweet Effie in her lonely room, were forgotten. He bent forward with smiling eyes and heightened color to listen; his own eloquence, so often concealed by reserve, was awakened, and he rivaled her in the utterance of beautiful sentiments. Oh! it was a feast of intellect and passion.

In the midst of all this, the carriage was announced; and the splendid siren, with a gay laugh at their forgetfulness of time, took the arm of her companion, and they were whirled away to the ball; while young Effie lay moaning upon her restless pillow.

It was late when the two entered the brilliant hall. Many eyes were centered upon them. They were certainly the most striking couple in the room.

Mrs. Linn was the leader of the *ton*, and the handsome Cleveland was even more interesting than usual; something sparkled through his dignity that was very pleasing. He was always a favourite in society, for though poor, he was noble, fine-looking and peculiar. The mammas and daughters all liked him as a visitor and companion; but the former warned the latter to beware of anything more; which fortunately was unnecessary — the reserve and particular taste of the gentleman keeping him from any declarations, which

might alarm parents, and please young ladies. Cleveland was a fine waltzer, so was the superb widow. They waltzed till every eye was upon them, it was so beautiful. They floated around in the music, perfume, and light. The lace dress waved and the satin glistened about that lovely form; her cheek was glowing, and her rubies flashing. Cleveland himself was enchanted; it was perfectly entrancing to hold that magnificent creature, and to circle, and glide, and float away in that bright atmosphere, breathing with bewitching melody. He felt his companion, dizzy with the motion, press closer to him, and he wished that it was Effie that was sharing this delight; and he whirled on till the bright head sunk on his bosom, and then he was obliged to seat his beautiful partner. No, no, he did not wish it was Effie, was his after-thought, not Effie with all those eyes upon her, bold and admiring; he was almost sorry it was Effie's mother. But he forgot this presently, and after a time they waltzed again. It was a brilliant party, and this couple, for two, were delighted. It was late when they drove home, but the spirits of Mrs. Linn were hardly yet fatigued. "You will call to-morrow?" she said, as Cleveland left her at the door. The flattered man consented with pleasure, to come to a private tea with Effie and herself in the boudoir — for Mrs. Linn added this to her invitation.

CHAPTER II.

THE lady did not wake her maid when she reached her room, but, unfastening her heavy ornaments, she laid them aside, and threw herself upon her couch; though very weary, she did not sleep. Her feelings were of very mingled character; triumph, for she saw that she impressed Cleveland Merefort; bitterness, that he had not paid homage to her power before, but had dared to pass her by, and bestow his love on a mere sweet child; anxiety, for the result of the game she played; and, taxing her ingenuity to know best how to manage Effie, and compel her to resign him of her own consent.

She lay sleeplessly till long past sunrise, busy with her thoughts, and then, throwing on her morning-gown, she sought the chamber of Effie. The fair girl lay upon the bed, dressed in the same attire, and with the same roses lying withered on her bosom as on the evening previous. She had not undressed, but was now sleeping nervously. Her eyelids were stained with tears; her cheek was feverish, as she moaned and muttered in her dreams.

Her mother sat down by the bedside, and looked upon her. A thrill of remorse shot through her heart as she gazed; but it was momentary — she herself could not be the sacrifice, her child must be. She reasoned that her love was strongest, for it was the love of her passionate, and developed nature. No! — Effie must be the sacrifice!

The eyes of the maiden opened presently, as if she was awakened by the gaze fixed upon her.

"Oh! mother," she murmured pleadingly.

"My darling child, did what I said last night distress you so much? I was afraid that you were suffering, and have come thus early to talk with you about it."

"You have come to take back those cruel words — to take them all back! I know you have, you speak so kindly," said Effie, eagerly.

"Not to take them back," said the mother, in the gentlest tone, "but to give you reasons for what I said — good reasons, that will reconcile you to them."

"Reconcile me!" replied the fair girl mournfully, laying her small hands together tightly on her bosom.

"Effie, I will take you into my confidence. You dare not betray the trust of your mother — you can not rival her! *I love Cleveland Merefort as never woman loved.* Speak, my child! your mother's happiness is in *your* keeping."

"Do I not, too, love him, wildly, devotedly? Mother, it would kill me to give him up! — mother — mother — mother!"

"Listen, Effie. I would not be selfish. I do not wish to be selfish; but I am older than you, and know the heart better. I *know* that with you it is but a school-girl affection — in two years you will smile at the idea of dying for love! But with me it is life, hope, being, all! If I thought that you would suffer in all as I have already suffered since you told me that he loved you, I would sooner perish than require it."

"But, mother, he loves *me* — shall I wrong myself and *him*?"

"Act coldly to him, and he will forget you; only consent, and I can *make* him love me."

The young girl hid her eyes and moaned — "Mother — mother!"

"Listen again, Effie — I have not told you all — you cannot dream how utterly my hopes are fixed on this. Effie, I will reveal my heart to you — this is my *first* love, as it is my last. From my infancy till I was married, I suffered the pangs of poverty; I was beautiful — but beauty was a mockery! — for I was poor! I longed for the means of gratifying my tastes — for arraying my loveliness in jewels, and silks, and laces. I longed to be a belle — to be admired. Oh!

I forgot that there was anything to be prized, but wealth. In vain my mother warned me. At your age I married a man whom I could not like — but he was rich — very, very rich. What mattered it, if he was old, and ugly, and ignorant? — he was rich as Croesus. I was his wife — I lived in splendor, and was courted, flattered, and envied. I was beautiful and wealthy, but I was miserable. I hated your father — I could not endure his caresses. If he had not loved me, I should have been grateful to him for the luxury that surrounded me; but his love — the love of one so ignorant, and withered-up, and vile — was dreadful. Yet all the ten long years he lived with me, I was compelled to conceal this; for, should he know it at his death, but my third of his immense wealth would be mine. He was blind to my dislike, and at his death left all to me. *At last* I was free — free as the wind — with all things at my command. You, Effie, were my child, and everything you asked was yours — you have always been gratified in every wish — but all this time that I loved you, and cherished you, *could* I dream in what way you were to rise up and crush me?"

Again the young girl moaned helplessly.

"At last I have loved! — with all the intensity of sentiments and passions, hoarded up and stifled for long years, I love. To say I love, is an empty term.

I feel that my very reason is bound up in this feeling. Effie, *could* you be happy, married to this man; and your mother, perhaps — I feel so — and she pressed her hand to her forehead — “perhaps a maniac, or, happily, in her grave? Never! And I would not have said this — I would have suffered and died — but that I am convinced that your happiness is not really concerned in this. Remember, you are a mere child — just from your books and aprons — it cannot be! But you say nothing — you forget that I am your mother, that my life is in your childish hands! you will marry Cleveland Merefort!”

The woman, who had always been so cold, and proud, and calm, that the young girl had almost feared her, was now on her knees before her child. It was enough, and too much.

“Mother, rise. I did not speak, because I could not — but I am resolved. I can not, after what you have said, marry that man. I only hope that he will love you. Go — go, if you please, mother! I want to be alone.”

“Bless you, my child! my darling, noble child! Of course, your own good sense will suggest what is the proper manner for you to observe toward Mr. Merefort. Try and forget this, dearest, and I will at length be happy.”

She kissed the cold brow of her daughter, and left

the room. Well satisfied with the result of this skillful appeal to the heart of poor Effie, and fatigued with all this excitement, she again sought her couch, and slept, undisturbed, for many hours; while the one, whom she had called on to make this bitter sacrifice, was pacing her room with the slow, heavy steps of misery.

It was after dinner, before she summoned her maid to assist in dressing.

“Which is the most becoming, Margaret, this green velvet, or this black one?”

“The green velvet makes Madame look *magnifique*, the black very charming; the black makes Madame’s eyes look very bright and her lips red.”

“I will wear the black this evening, Margaret, as I do not wish to look magnificent in my boudoir.”

So, when the maid had finished attiring her, her mistress was herself pleased with the plain, elegant, black velvet, and with the delicate network of gold thrown over the back of her glossy hair, together with plain gold bracelets. She stood long, studying this style in her mirror. Her hair was done up high in folds, and shown blackly through the chaste and glittering network; the bodice of her dress was close and plain; her arms, bare to the dimpled elbow, looked rounder and snowier than was their wont, in the broad circlets of gold which bound them. Her dress

gave a pensive, touching air to her brilliant beauty; her eyes did indeed look darker and deeper, and their curved lashes longer, and her bright lips fresher and dewier. A crimson thread would almost have destroyed the effect of this simple elegance. She decided that her dress, at least, was perfect.

Mrs. Linn was in her boudoir, but no Effie, when Cleveland entered. The two sat down at the little table which had been brought in and set with a dainty repast in delicate taste. The young man looked anxious, till his hostess informed him that her daughter was still indisposed, and could not appear. He then looked both anxious and disappointed.

"Is she seriously ill?" he asked, earnestly.

"Only a very little indisposed, yet she thinks she had better keep her room to-day."

"She must be really unwell, if she will not come down to see me," thought her lover, and the expected pleasure of his visit vanished. He was silent and grave. In vain, the winning woman exercised her powers of fascination; they fell unappreciated upon him, except that he thought that the sweet lady before him was too young and lovely to wear the title of *mother* to a man of his age, and he smiled to himself at the fanciful thought.

Thinking this, he looked at her more earnestly, and thought her more beautiful than ever, for her brilliant

charms were softened into a more pensive style; and the wild, impassioned love she secretly cherished, lent a melting, glowing sweetness to her tones and actions. Her eyes were almost bewildering, but there was something about them that did not, could not touch his heart like the clear, pure, innocent ones of his soul's sweet choice.

This little tea-party was a failure. Cleveland continued silent and sad, and rose at last to leave. The widow was chagrined, but she did not at all despair.

As Cleveland returned through the parlors alone, having begged his hostess not to trouble herself to accompany him, he saw Effie half concealed in the embrasure of a window in one of the apartments. He advanced immediately in surprise, and held out his hand.

"And you are well enough to be standing here, and would not even come a moment to see me at tea," he said, reproachfully, gazing fondly into her lovely face.

The poor girl could not speak that moment. She had not known he was there, but dared not say so; and, if she had known it, what would it avail? She turned very pale.

"Forgive me, dearest, you do indeed look faint and ill," he continued, with anxious tenderness. "You are not going to be really so sick? oh, I hope not!"

"I am not very unwell," she said, at length, in a faint, cold tone, withdrawing from the arm he had extended when she turned so white. "I have a slight headache."

It was so unlike her usual confiding sweetness, that he knew that she was ill or offended.

"Oh! my darling Effie, you do n't know how I wanted to see you last night; and to-night I was so glad—I thought you would be with your mother, and we would have such a happy evening. I was so anxious, I could not remain—I fear your mother thought I was hardly polite. Oh! dearest, I wished to steal to your chamber and see if you were so ill, and kiss your poor forehead, if it ached, before I came away;" and he would have pressed his truthful lips upon her pure brow, but again she shrunk away.

Her heart beat almost to bursting—she would have given worlds to have received that earnest kiss. She thought of her mother, and her promise.

"Mr. Merefort!" she said, in a constrained tone.

"Effie!" was the sad and grieved reply. "Effie!" he continued, "have I offended you unconsciously? Believe me, I do not know in what manner. Tell me, that I may atone. You are very much altered to-night, dearest."

"Not at all, Mr. Merefort; pray, do not think I am offended," she replied in the same constrained tone.

She did not dare to raise her eyes, to meet his look of surprise.

"Good evening, Effie," he said, in a wounded tone.

"Good evening," was the chilling reply.

The next moment he was gone, and the unhappy girl sank down upon the floor and buried her face in her hands. Her heart was almost broken!

And she must still play this terrible part—wound his love, estrange his affections, when her own heart was yearning wildly—and she must see him give that love to another—see him at the altar—it was a martyrdom to her heart more cruel than death. But she had resolved, and promised to play her part—and she *would not* fail—it must be done.

CHAPTER III.

WEEKS and weeks had passed away. In vain had the lover striven to ascertain the cause of the change in Effie's manner. At first, he pleaded to know, when by chance he met her; then his wounded pride and affection kept him silent; and at length he ceased to speak to her except in the most formal way. But he suffered almost as much as she; he endured the agony of suspense, and the torture of her chilling demeanor. She saw that he suffered; and the noble, patient, heart-weary girl would have revealed all to him for *his* sake, but that her duty to her mother seemed sacred. So she only hoped that he *might* forget her and be happy. But she could not look upon his proud, but mournful face without almost betraying herself, and at length she avoided him altogether.

Yet he still visited at the house of Mrs. Linn. He was irresistibly attracted by the siren. At first, he

imagined that the mother knew of his attachment to her daughter, and sympathized with him in her neglect; then again he concluded that she knew nothing of it, but that he was a favorite of hers; perhaps that she loved him! No, no, he could not think that; but there was something about her that attracted him to her side, and made him wish for her sympathy and gentleness. Not that he was not yet true to his Effie — he was — he was! He loved her with the intense fervor that a reserved, proud, intellectual man of thirty will love for the first time a sweet, pure, gifted girl. But this very love made him seek the mother; he had a faint hope that through her he might at least discover the cause of this strange falsity on the part of his affianced. She was so soothing, so gentle, so beautiful, so eloquent, that, unconsciously, he was deeply interested in her, and could not pass a day out of her society; it was a balm to his suffering heart.

She saw all this, and acted accordingly. She saw just how far he was in her power, and she had a hope. It was a longer struggle to gain him from his disappointment than she had anticipated, but she did not despair. To her, it was happiness to have him come and sit by her, if he only listened to her words — for Effie was out of the way, and he was hers alone — if his mournful thoughts did still wander away after

the beloved false one. She stifled all pangs of remorse — she lived but for one thing: to gain the love of Mr. Merefort.

One morning, Isabel Linn sat in a beautiful apartment, opening into the conservatory. The room was dim, and fresh, and pleasant. She was attired with studied carelessness, and looked very lovely. A book was in her hand, which she laid aside with a flush of joy, as Cleveland entered; he came across the rich carpet, and sat down upon a low seat beside her luxurious arm-chair. He was more than usually sad — he sat for some time without speaking, while Isabel looked upon him with tender eyes.

"Do you believe there is such a thing as true and constant love?" he asked, suddenly, raising his dark eyes intently to her face.

Those beautiful orbs of hers seemed to melt away in tenderness, as she looked into his, without answering in words.

"You are sad this morning," she said softly. "I would that I could banish that mournfulness from your face for ever."

"You may, perhaps, alleviate it," he replied, slowly.

"Then tell me," she said, with a sweet smile, bending toward him.

"Let me confide to you the secret of this sadness," he said.

She held out her delicate, fair hand, and he pressed it in both his, as he said rapidly—

"I loved your daughter, Mrs. Linn — I was betrothed to her; I loved intensely and purely, and thought she returned it. I believed the gentle words that trembled on her lips and the blush on her cheek, when she told me that her love was like to mine. But for many weeks she has slighted me: I have not even seen her recently. The change was so sudden, so entire, I could not but believe that she loved me still as ever, but that some fatal misunderstanding existed. Tell me, do you know aught of this? and, if you do not, will you be so very, very kind, as to learn for me the reasons of this change?"

Mrs. Linn listened with a soft smile, and, when he raised his eyes earnestly to hear the answer to his questions, she smiled still more, yet kindly, gently, pityingly.

"Can it be that a man of your experience and knowledge of life would trust his happiness to a mere child?" she said, with a burst of gentle surprise. "Effie has but just left her studies, Mr. Merefort; and, of course, the offer of love you made was accepted; young girls can not know themselves, and are invariably flattered by the first attentions they receive. Doubtless her conduct now is but a foolish caprice — some other admirer has appeared, and you are forgotten. I only regret that your noble and true

love was given so carelessly, to such a child. But it would not be manly to let a school-girl make you unhappy."

Cleveland bit his lips with mortification and agony. Could it be possible he had been such a very simpleton?

"But I would not have a worn-out, second love. So you think there is no such thing in life as earnest, true, unchanging love?" he asked, bitterly.

"How *could* I think so?" she asked, in a low, sweet tone, and, turning those large, dark, passionate eyes slowly to his, she bent forward still farther, and made no other reply.

Her companion knew not what to say. He was fascinated by that eloquent face, yet his heart was still true to another.

"Yes!" she said, earnestly, after a while; "I *know* that there is a love, which is hardly a love, it is so much of worship, thought, life — but it is not the shrinking love of a trifling, timid child. It is the passionate devotion, the wild idolatry, the burning affection of older, stronger, more fully-developed natures. It is the love that comes at the time when the heart knows itself and others; when its thoughts are matured, its impulses strengthened, its gifts cultivated, its affections deepened into steady, fervent, intense power; when the spirit, and the beauty and

the genius of life are at the zenith of their glory. It is passion — it is hope — it is life — it is *all*! it is fearfully, madly deep and strong! it does all, dares all, sacrifices all to its own intensity! It fears not! it shrinks not! it gives all or none!"

She bent further forward, as she paused, and laid her soft hands on the dark curls of the man before her, and pressed a quick, warm kiss upon his forehead. Then, folding those hands mutely over her bosom, she drooped her head, while a crimson blush burned on her cheek, where the long lashes trembled in drooping confusion.

There was a moment's silence, while Cleveland gazed upon the blushing, beautiful, impassioned creature who had thus revealed her love to him. Had he indeed been mistaken in looking for unselfish love from a very young girl? did this splendid woman love the most devotedly? It would seem so — for, while one would not make a sacrifice of pride to explain the cause of her estrangement, or perhaps had even no pride and no cause, the other had sacrificed pride and more, and now sat trembling and subdued before him. While he still thought, a tear dropped down from those long, jetty lashes, and fell on his hand. The spell was completed. He sank upon his knees, and took the small hands from her bosom, and pressed them to his own.

"May I look for that love and devotion from my beautiful Isabel?" he asked.

The superb head was on his shoulder — broken, murmuring words of tenderness fell from her lips — and then, blushing, radiant, smiling, confused, bewildered, she glided from the room, and left him kneeling, entranced, and dreaming by her chair.

"Come to-night," she said, as she left him.

For a long while, Cleveland knelt there, with his head drooped upon his hand. His heart beat so violently, that he could not think calmly. When his pulses grew more subdued, he realized that he did not yet love the beautiful creature who had just left him — but he thought he *might* do so — and, for her sake he would try. Of Effie he thought with a curling lip — *she* was unworthy; yet there was still a desolation and gloom in his heart. It would yet take all the beauty and the skill of Isabel Linn to complete the triumph which had sent her, quivering, joyous, blushing, happy, to her chamber, to hide her tumultuous bliss in solitude.

By-and-by, the young man arose and stepped out into the conservatory, to soothe his mingled feelings among the flowers. There, close by the door, lying among the bright blossoms, pale and still, was the broken-hearted and devoted Effie. She had seen all that had passed within; and, when she heard that

last, low, earnest question of Cleveland's, and saw him sink upon the floor and clasp her mother's hand, the strong purpose which had upheld her gave way, and she fell, insensible, among the fair flowers — none of them so lovely yet so blighted as herself.

Her lover looked upon her, for a moment, motionless. She had grown very thin since he saw her last; traces of heart-suffering were on her transparent forehead, and pale lips, and wasted form. In a moment, *he felt* that he had wronged her — that she was and had been very unhappy — and for what cause? He resolved now to know, if it was not too late. He took her in his arms, and bore her into the drawing-room — took a chased-gold bottle of salts from the table, and sat down on the sofa, supporting her head on his breast, and chafing her hands, and applying the salts to her nostrils. Still she did not stir, though her pulse beat faintly in her delicate wrist. A glass of wine stood on a small stand, near by — some of this he poured between her lips — and, after a few anxious moments, she gave a faint sigh, then breathed gently, and unclosed her eyes.

The face of her lover bent above her — his deep eyes were looking with unutterable tenderness upon her.

"Cleveland, is it you? do I rest *here*?" she uttered faintly, and, with a blissful smile, she pressed her head

closer on his bosom, half clasped him with her arms, and closed her eyes again.

"I did not think I should ever nestle here again — yet you love me still! you have come to me to tell me how entirely I am yours!"

The young man replied to her low murmur, with fervent kisses on the sweet brow that had grown so pale and spiritual. She loved him yet — he knew it, now — yet, like a sharp dagger, came the remembrance of the past scene! it was that which had taken the breath from the young lips of Effie. What *should* he do? He was false to her, if it was but for a moment, and she knew it — aye, and another knew it, and rejoiced in it. His brow contracted with pain. Oh, how he longed to have this mystery cleared away, for he felt there *was* a mystery! He waited anxiously for the fair creature, he sustained, to gain strength to tell him all.

Suddenly the young girl pressed her hands upon her temples!

"I feel such agony here!" she exclaimed — and, before her supporter could prevent her, she sprang from him and stood in the center of the apartment.

Her eyes were now wide open and brilliant, and her cheeks were red, and clear, and hot, and her forehead pale.

"Mother! mother! mother!" she moaned, clasping

her hands piteously, "do not be so cruel! See! how you lure him away from me! Ah, mother! you look like a beautiful serpent enchanting him! I see your great eyes burning down into his! I told you I would die, mother, if you took him from me! and look!" pressing her hands on her heart — "there is such a pain here, that I know I am dying! Dying — dying, mother! and you killed me!"

Cleveland shuddered at the unnaturally brilliant eyes that were fixed upon him with a gaze of reproach and feverish agony — he shuddered at that wild look and burning form — his Effie was delirious! But he would not summon help yet — he wished to hear from her raving lips the whole of this mystery. The young girl now came a step toward him, and the expression of her face changed — her large eyes were troubled, and tender, and pleading!

"My own Cleveland! do not look so coldly upon me! for sweet mercy's sake! turn away that bitter look! I did not mean to be cold to you — believe me, I did not; and, when I saw you look so despairing, oh! Cleveland, my heart was breaking! slowly, slowly breaking! But she bade me do so, dearest — she compelled me! I plead to the stars, and they did not listen! I prayed to the angels, and they heard me not — cruel! cruel! cruel! It is terrible, to see you look so — do I not shrink and quiver before your gaze?"

Oh, Cleveland, I shall shriek out, if you do not pity me and forgive! See, I am at your feet — at your feet, Cleveland!”

The young girl was kneeling at his feet, with her pale, thin hands outstretched to him — her whole face was brilliant with fever, and softened by its pleading expression. It would have touched a heart of stone to have seen that burning, beautiful, mournful face! If the mother had witnessed it, it might have smote her heart! The lover's breast hardly held its bursting emotions. “Oh, curses on that beautiful deceiver! curses on my silly self!” he exclaimed, in the bitterness of anger and remorse.

“You curse me, Cleveland?” said the poor girl, in a reproachful voice, clasping his knees, and hiding her wild, sad face.

“Curse you for my own mad folly? Dearest, look upon me! see! I am beseeching you to listen to me! I love you so tenderly — so dearly!”

He took her up from the floor, and supported her in his arms, trying to soothe her and make her comprehend him.

“Is it indeed you, Cleveland? have you come to take me from my dreadful mother? Ah! she deceived you so terribly that it broke my heart! Let us sit down and talk about it.”

They sat down on the sofa, and he held her.

“Hark! I hear the flowers in the conservatory laughing and singing, because you love me yet, and will take me away! I am so happy — my heart is all in a flutter — my brain is burning — do you hear them laugh? Ah! they are moaning — it is not you — you must be my poor mother. Yes, it is you, Cleveland! I hear your deep voice — my mother's voice is sweeter, but it is deceitful. I do not love her; do you, dearest? Now I remember, you told her you would love her, and it made my heart ache; but we will love her together, and — are you here, dear? it is so dark, I can not see you!”

Here she sank against him more heavily, and murmured inarticulately. He had heard enough to set his soul on fire; and, very much alarmed at the illness of his Effie, he laid her carefully on the sofa, felt her throbbing temples, and hurriedly rang the bell.

“Call Mrs. Linn,” he said to the servant.

In a short time, Isabel came back into the apartment, with a soft blush and a look of inquiry.

“Your daughter is ill,” he said, almost sternly.

The haughty woman turned pale, and would have stammered out a question, but, passing her with a cold bow, Cleveland Merefort hurried into the streets, and paced them with restless steps.

Effie loved him yet — oh, joy! but Effie was very ill, and would not probably live — oh, unutterable agony!

CHAPTER IV.

IT was the crisis of the fever!

Profound silence was in the marble mansion of Mrs. Linn. In one of the lower apartments, with his face buried in the arms which were folded over a chair, knelt Cleveland Merefort — waiting in intense anxiety for the messenger who should bear the fatal or joyful tidings — moving not, scarcely breathing in his suspense.

In the chamber above, the sick girl lay sleeping. The nurse, physician, and mother were gathered around her bed. Wasted, and pale, and still, she lay on the white pillows; the breath just trembled on her pallid lips.

The mother sat with her head drooped on her hands, watching the face of her child. God forgive her! but, as she looked upon that sweet but deathly face, there was a hope in her heart, which she dared not acknowledge to herself, that the crisis might *not* be favorable! deeper emotions than those called up

by the situation of her child agitated her, though her face was pale and calm. She feared — indeed, she *knew* — that the man she loved must know all, for his stern look, and the incoherent ravings of Effie, convinced her of this.

Very, very fallible and slender, therefore, were the hopes she entertained of now succeeding. A tempest of varying passions — love, anger, sorrow, mortification, revenge — every feeling by turns burned in her bosom.

After a long, weary watch, the sleep of the invalid was broken. She unclosed her eyes; in an instant, the doctor was bending over her.

"She will live, madam," he said, after a moment of suspense.

"Ah, heaven be praised!" said the nurse; and, approaching Mrs. Linn, she whispered, "There is a young gentleman down stairs, in a dreadful fret to hear from our dear young lady — shall I send word, that she is better, and will get well?"

The mother started and changed countenance.

"I will go myself, and tell him this happy news," she said; and, kissing her daughter's forehead, she hurried from the room.

It was a great effort for her to appear calm, as she entered the room where Cleveland was yet kneeling. But she need not have striven so hard, for he had

that moment forgotten his position toward her. When she entered, he sprang up.

"Tell me instantly, Mrs. Linn — oh, speak! is she dying?"

"The crisis is past — the physician pronounces her out of danger!"

The lover clasped his hands fervently.

"And now, dear one," said the lady, with the smile of an angel, "now, that this anxiety is over, we can again spend a charming hour together. Sit here—I want to talk of all that has happened since we were separated by this unfortunate illness."

Mr. Merefort declined the seat she proffered, with a cold, impatient air.

"Can I not be permitted to look upon the poor sufferer — my Effie?" he asked.

Isabel did not blush, nor frown, but replied, with her everlasting, beautiful smile,

"Ah, I scarcely know! any excitement might—"

"But she shall not see me — I will not speak," interrupted the lover eagerly. "Believe me, I will be discreet."

The lady ground her teeth secretly, but smiled again.

"Come, then; but I will not answer for you to the doctor," she said.

He followed her with a beating heart; and, silently

entering the sick room, stood by the bedside, concealed by the curtain.

Oh, his darling, beautiful, suffering Effie! He would have given a fortune, had he possessed it, to press that wasted form to his breast, and see a smile on that pale, pure cheek. Still, and colorless, and exquisitely lovely she lay — so motionless and pure, like a rare statue, only more spiritual, more transparent.

"Doctor," she said, faintly, as they all gazed on her, "have I been very ill?"

"Yes, my dear lady; but you must not speak now."

She moved her eyes slowly, till they fell on her mother's face.

"You here, my dear mother?" and, as her eyes still wandered, they rested on the countenance of her lover, who, in his agitation, had advanced within sight; a faint, sweet smile shone then from those large eyes — "and you, too, Cleveland? then mother has repented. You are mine! bless you, bless you, mother!" she almost whispered, she was so weak.

No one heard her, but the two interested. Mrs. Linn turned white.

"The young lady must cease talking," here interrupted the doctor.

Effie made an effort to extend her hand to her betrothed, as he was turning away; he took it, held

it a moment tenderly, looking down into those loving, languid eyes, with mournful interest; then turned away, and left the house, despite the still placid invitation of the lady to remain.

After he departed, Mrs. Linn's tender smile vanished. She went to her room, closed the door, and paced hurriedly to and fro. The mask of sweetness was thrown aside, and it was frightful to see her in the paroxysms of mortification and disappointment. She tore her magnificent hair, till it hung in disheveled masses around her haughty form; she bit her convulsed lips till they were stained with blood; she snatched off her jewels and flung them away; she stamped her delicate feet till they were blistered; she tore the muslin drapery from her beautiful arms, and the folds of silk and linen from her swelling, passionate, wild, mad heart! She threw herself prostrate on the floor, with her black locks and torn garments streaming around her. Then she arose, and lifted up, in threatening grandeur, her clenched hand. Splendid, yet, degrading sight! passions that, cultivated and restrained, would have made her sublime in womanly power, now raging uncontrolled—wrecking and convulsing their fair tenement! One moment she was a hateful fury, debased by anger and malice, grinding her teeth and tearing herself; the next, she was terribly, touchingly beautiful—as anguish, and sorrow, and

regret, at this blighting of her first, strong love, agitated her. Then the dark eyes were thrown upward, in an intensity of agony, their long lashes trembling on the contracted brows; then her burning lips quivered, and her small hands pressed her throbbing bosom; then the attitude of that superb form was eloquent of despair.

Half the night the excited woman gave herself up to this uncontrolled outbreak of her emotions. What dreadful thoughts suggested themselves during that time, who shall say? That she *did* curse her daughter for falling ill, for getting well, is true—but whether darker thoughts of yet making that recovery impossible, brooded in her blackened soul, the events that followed only witnessed to. We know that such things have transpired, and Isabel Linn was willful, passionate, unprincipled, uncontrolled—she loved her daughter's affianced, and hated that daughter.

Completely exhausted, Isabel at length threw herself on the bed, and fell into a muttering slumber. It was late the next day when she awoke. She sprung from her couch, and hastened to the mirror. It gave back her features pale and haggard; her lips were blood-stained, her eyes heavy—there were actually two or three wrinkles on that beautiful face!

"It will never do to indulge in this," she murmured. "I look ten years older than I did yesterday."

So she washed her complexion in as many soothing creams as Henry the Third was once in the habit of doing, and applied rose-balm to her wounded lips, and gathered up her disheveled hair in a French twist; then throwing herself again on the bed, brooded an hour over her dark thoughts, before she rang for her breakfast and her dressing-maid.

From that time forward, for several days, the haughty, cold, and indifferent manner of Isabel was changed for one of gentleness and suavity, at least, before Cleveland, who came every day, as Effie grew stronger, to sit beside her couch, sometimes silently holding her hand, sometimes reading to her, and sometimes whispering dear words which brought a faint hue of happiness to the cheek of the invalid. Isabel even took the lover to her boudoir one day, and humbled herself before him, confessing, with penitential sorrow, that she had been the cause of Effie's illness, but that she had no idea that so mere a child was really so interested — that her own wild love blinded her, but that now she saw the wrong, and had made a great effort, for her child's sake, to smother her own feelings, and she thought she had conquered them — when Effie was well enough, they would have a wedding — she could smile now, to see her *two* children wed one another.

Cleveland pitied and forgave her, and went away with a heart full of joy, to talk to his betrothed about it; and the invalid, too, smiled and blushed, and seemed a great deal better.



CHAPTER V.

CLEVELAND MEREFORT was threading his way through one of the miserable by-streets of his native city. Though he was not a rich man, he had a heart and a purse for the suffering; and now, with his fine, intellectual face beaming with kindness, he was on a visit to one of the poor men he had at some time employed, who was now sick. As he turned a corner in the dirty street, a lady, in a plain, dark dress and thick veil, glided before him, without perceiving him. He watched her with interest, wondering if she, too, was bent on a charitable errand—for that she was elegant and fastidious he saw, though she was in this low part of the city. Her whole demeanor, despite the plain dress, was so haughty and graceful, that he at once was almost sure that the lady was Mrs. Linn.

After preceding him for a short distance, she paused a moment, and then entered, with a hesitating step, a dingy house, which, the young man at once recollected, was the abode of a necromancer, and dealer in love

and *hate* philters. Convinced that it was Mrs. Linn, he strove to conjecture her errand, but was at a loss. He proceeded on his mission of mercy, and then wended his way to the residence of his dear invalid.

Effie was now so strong that she came down every day and sat in the easy chair, in the back drawing-room—the pleasant room that opened into the conservatory.

As he was now in the habit of doing, Cleveland entered the hall without ringing the bell, and going first into the front drawing-room, he paused a moment, when he saw that the inner door was half open, to look, unperceived, upon the fair sufferer.

She sat by the open window, with her head resting on her pale hand. She wore a pale blue morning-dress—her hair was pushed back wearily from her forehead, and a slight flush of anticipated pleasure, probably, was on her clear, soft cheek. As we said before, her face was the purest thing out of heaven!—and now, spiritualized yet more by suffering, it was unearthly in its loveliness.

While the lover, with suspended breath, was feeding his soul on this rare beauty, he saw, through the partially-closed door, Mrs. Linn enter behind Effie, holding something, wrapped in paper, in her hand. Her bonnet and veil were cast aside, but it was the same dark breath. She paused at a stand where

stood some cooling drink for the invalid, and pouring some of this from the cut-glass pitcher into a silver cup, she dropped the contents of the paper into the goblet. Had it not been that her hand trembled so violently, and that she grew so deathly pallid, he would have supposed, of course, that it was some powder prescribed. But her face wore such a strange expression, and she pressed her hand to her heart, as if to strengthen some purpose, that immediately the thought of the visit to the necromancer flashed over him. He grew quite faint at the thought, and leaned against the wall, still watching the inner room. When the mother grew more calm, she went to her daughter and kissed her cheek.

"You are a little feverish this morning, I fear," she said kindly.

"No, Mother, I feel better — almost well," was the reply.

"I will roll the stand here, where you can drink when you are thirsty," continued the lady, and, doing as she said, she left the room, remarking—"Cleveland will be here soon, I suppose."

The sweet girl blushed, and, as the door closed after her parent, ere the blush faded, Cleveland entered and called it back again.

He sat a moment or two, conversing pleasantly.

"So you are almost well, are you, dearest? I

heard your mother say you must drink this beverage; so, as you are well enough to tease now, I shall give it all to the canaries and lap-dog," and the lover arose and took the silver cup in his hand. He said this playfully, and the invalid smiled brightly.

"Very well, Sir Torment," she responded, "you will fail to tease me there — I am happy to be rid of it. Doubtless there is some bitter potion in it, left by our *Æsculapius*."

"Nevertheless I shall feed it to your pets," he said, "if only to try the effect of the good doctor's drugs on them."

And laughing, he emptied the contents of the cup into the china dishes on each side the gilded cage of the golden warblers, and the rest into the porcelain plate of little Fidele. Then he filled it again from the pitcher, and watered a portion of the plants in the conservatory, and set the goblet back with a gay face.

CHAPTER VI.

"EFFIE, dear, can not you trust me? can not you place entire confidence in what I say? Believe me, it is only necessity that urges me—a pressing necessity, which I keep from you, for your own happiness."

"I do trust you, Cleveland; but it is so strange, when we were to have been married in a few weeks, to propose so strange a step! Tell me *all*, Cleveland, or I can not decide.

The lovers sat in a little sylvan temple, which the costly taste of Mrs. Linn had caused to be erected in the center of the grounds. It was a lovely September afternoon. They supposed they were entirely alone—but, Isabel, coming herself to summon the young couple to tea, heard the eager questions of the gentleman, and paused to listen outside the doorway, which was made of marble in the shape of two sweet statues, with their hands linked together overhead.

"Oh, Effie, Effie! I can not tell you anything, except that the reason is good. Do not hesitate,

then—be mine to-night—and to-morrow we will be far away on our journey to a southern home. When I tell you, Effie, that it is for your own safety and welfare, you will not refuse me."

"Leave my home, my mother, for ever—be married secretly—go to the south—conceal from my mother where I am? Oh! Cleveland, it is not possible! it can not be—"

"Speak, dearest! what do you suspect?"

"You have not by accident committed—you have not—tell me, have you committed some terrible crime?"

"Oh! Effie, then you do not confide in me, when I tell you that I have done nothing wrong. You will not place yourself in my keeping now, under circumstances a little darkened; yet, in a few weeks, you will trust your happiness to me. If you can not consent *now* to give all to me, I can not accept the gift at a more fitting time. I have told you that I have done all this for *you*. I have made sacrifices for your happiness. I would willingly tell you all now, only that I assure you it is better that you should not know. Effie, do you believe me?"

"I do, I do! But my mother—my lonely, desolate mother—my home—to leave them for ever!"

"Do you love them better than him you have promised to wed?"

The young girl burst into tears.

"Dearest, my own sweet one," pleaded the lover, "it is cruel, I know, to tear you away from them. It is natural that you should hesitate. I hardly, myself, realized this, the necessity was so very great. Yet you must go; you must be mine to-night. And, if you will not feel satisfied without, you shall know the cause: though, I assure you, you would be happier in ignorance. Yet, rather than that you should suspect me of any crime, I will tell you all."

"No, no!" interrupted the lovely girl, "tell me nothing! I will trust to the words you have spoken. Heart and soul are yours already, and, if you say so, to-night I will be yours!"

And she hid her blushing face in his bosom, trembling and confused.

At this moment, Mrs. Linn stood in the temple. A scornful smile was on her lip, and her eyes flashed fire.

"So, my grateful, loving little bird is going to fly away, is she? I shall have to fasten her cage-doors to-night. Can Mr. Merefort explain the meaning of this sensible freak?"

Effie lifted up her face, which was pale now, instead of blushing, and stood with her eyes cast down. She had always feared her mother, and as she heard her speak in that distinct and hissing tone, she clung closer

to her lover. She felt that those great, fiery eyes would annihilate her if she looked up.

"I can not explain, Mrs. Linn," said the young man firmly, "you have given your child to me, and I claim her now."

"I retract the promise then," was the disdainful reply. "I did not anticipate this; it was not part of the contract. Can you tell what one so miserably, wretchedly poor as you, is to do with that dainty, delicate, luxurious child? You are very discreet, Effie!" she added, with an accent of bitter scorn.

"Mother!" said that fair girl, with unusual firmness, "*you* chose riches, and how are you repaid? My choice is love!" and her small hand sought that of her lover.

"Bless you Effie," said the young man, folding his arms around her.

"Effie will stand without your aid, if you please," said the mother haughtily.

The proud man pressed her closer, looked up at the excited woman with a calm smile: "Henceforth her home is here," he said with dignified tenderness.

"It is a home which ill befits the daughter of Isabel Linn," was the sneering reply. "*I have a presentiment* that my dainty child will not *live* very long, under such gentle care!" And a flash of dark triumph made the beautiful fiend look awful.

Cleveland looked steadily in those triumphant eyes, and said with slow and distinct emphasis,

"*I have a presentiment* that she will live longer even in *my* humble home, than under the care of her affectionate mother. That the potions received from David, the necromancer, are not healthy for such delicate creatures, let the late death of your flowers, your canaries, and your lap-dog testify!"

Effie looked up with a startled and frightened look, turning as white as a lily, as she met her mother's gaze.

For a moment the betrayed and discomfited woman stood motionless, growing paler and more pale, her great, dark eyes were distended and her lips parted; then pressing her hands over her mouth, as if to repress the thrilling scream which burst forth, she sunk slowly down to the floor.

"My mother!" murmured Effie, kneeling beside her, as she saw a crimson torrent of blood gush from the lips of the magnificent but fatally-thwarted woman.

The bloodvessel which burst, proved fatal; the physician, speedily summoned, could not save her; and ere the morning broke, she was dead.

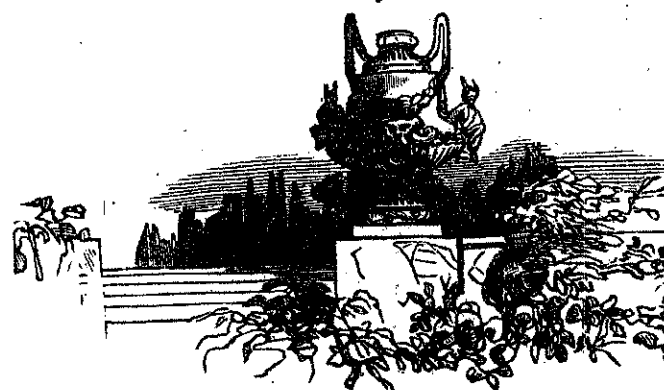
"Forgive — forgive!" she faintly whispered, some hours before she expired. And Effie and Cleveland heard her, and pressed her cold hands.

Her death was an accident — so people thought — caused by falling, and receiving an internal injury.

When the bright form of Isabel Linn was shrouded for the coffin, bitterly, bitterly Effie wept over it. She had already forgotten the great crime her mother had meditated against her; and Cleveland shuddered and wept too, for his Effie's sake.

The life of Isabel had been a mockery; for she worshiped riches and was rewarded accordingly. She was buried with funeral pomp; and that was the end of all.

No, not yet the end; nor yet quite a mockery: for Isabel was a mother! — mother to the pure, the angel-like and surpassingly-lovely wife of the gifted Cleveland Merefort; the sweet woman who lived so many years to dispense mercies, with her delicate hands.



EDITH MANFRED.

PART FIRST.

"A DIM, religious light" floated through the little chapel that stood amid a group of grand old trees in the spacious grounds of Manfred Mansion. It was morning, and the marriage ceremony was being performed in the chapel.

The bride was a fair, slight, delicate creature of nineteen, and looked wonderfully beautiful as she stood at the altar, beside the tall, elegant, intellectual man who held her trembling little hand. She was the frailest, softest being that ever wore bridal flowers, and exceedingly lovely; her form was like a spirit's, in its dress of gossamer lace, and was shadowed by a long, rich veil, floating from her beautiful hair, dark-brown and silken, that was parted simply over her pale forehead, and done up in glossy bands around

her head. Her large, blue eyes rested upon the floor, and their long black lashes on her flushed cheeks. There was more than one among the guests, who, wrapt and silent, gazed upon her spiritual expression and fragile beauty, who almost forgot that she was of earth, and turned away, at the close of the evening, with a sigh, and with a feeling that one so gentle and delicate was not long for the cherishing of love below. But no one could have thought at that happy hour, that there was a strange, mysterious drama to be acted out with the help of that blissful, and beautiful creature.

The relatives of the bride stood near her. The mother was a pale, sweet woman, youthful in appearance, and aristocratic, though gentle. She looked upon her daughter with the yearning, tearful, careful expression of natural love. The father gave away the bride. He was a noble, and rather handsome man, with merry, hazel eyes, and a laughing mouth. Though an Englishman, living in America, he was neither haughty nor insolent, but humorous, refined, educated, and altogether an interesting man.

Close clinging to her mother's hand, a little girl of eight years old, looked up with wondering smiles and tears, to the timidly happy face of her beautiful sister. Then she turned her eyes to the proud man who was to take her sister from her, and whispered to her

mother, with an expression of childish feeling in her face: —

"Mamma, if brother Herbert marries Edith, can 't he marry me sometimes too?"

This child looked like her father; her dancing curls of gold promised to deepen to soft brown, and her dark eyes had the same merry and intelligent expression that always beamed from his. She was his pet; but Edith was his wonder — his idol — his tender thought — almost his religion. These, then, were the relatives; the small chapel was filled with the few friends who lived near — there not being more than a dozen neighbors in the surrounding country.

When the solemn rites were concluded, Edith raised her eyes to her husband's face, with an expression of happy and immeasurable love. That soft, pure glance seemed to fill the place with its tender radiance, and, timid though it was, it fell like corroding poison on the soul of one of the guests.

He was a dark-looking man of thirty, with a countenance developed with many virtues, and more vices — passionate, gentle, fierce, sensual, spiritual — a strange blending of uncommon and splendid gifts, and low desires. In the depths of his gray-blue eye, in the curving of his mouth, in his massive forehead, and heavy brow, lay an expression of mighty power, for good and evil.

Once, only, he had sued for the hand of Edith Manfred. She had gently refused him, when he knew that her affections belonged to none other; a man of his perceptions could not but understand the almost loathing of her shrinking manner, though, with intuitive gentleness, she strove to conceal it.

He accepted her refusal, and went away, never troubling her again; and, though she felt, at the time of his proposal, how strongly he loved her, yet she now supposed him to have forgotten his hopeless passion.

But when she turned away her beautiful eyes from her husband's face, by chance she met the fixed gaze of her old lover, and she shuddered and turned pale. He smiled as he saw the effect of his glance. She turned yet paler at that mysterious and not loving smile, and pressed closer to her chosen one's side. But those who observed the change, attributed it to natural emotion.

Before the guests departed, the bride-cake was cut, and distributed.

"I have found the ring, and, of course, will be married first, will I not, Mrs. Herbert Delaney?"

Again the bride started — partly to hear her new name, and partly at the tone and manner of the deep voice and look; the fortunate finder was her old lover, Burt McSweeney.

PART SECOND.

NOTHING could exceed the happiness of the young bride, during the first three weeks of the marriage. Herbert had taken her to the city, and placed her in a fashionable boarding-house. They were to remain there during the winter; affording him an opportunity to withdraw from business, as a popular lawyer: the parents of Edith were so unwilling to part with her, that he had consented to make his home with them.

When a young man, and Edith was a mere babe, Mr. Manfred, from fancy, or a deeper reason, left England for our country, and chose the beautiful situation where he now resided, adding all that wealth could, to make it the most elegant country-seat in the state. They lived very retired, himself and his gentle and lovely wife, so that Edith had seen but little of the world at the time she was married.

A purer, sweeter, more enthusiastic young creature never existed, than the lovely Edith. Three weeks after her marriage, she sat in a luxuriously-furnished

room on the first floor of their boarding-house. She sat near the window, but was not looking out; her eyes were drooped in a reverie, and her expressive face wore a look of the most unutterable bliss and joy. Since she came to the city, she had been in a bewilderment of happiness. Every thing she saw was novel and delightful—the leisure hours of her husband were spent in showing the wonders of the city. This task to him was exceedingly pleasant, for not only did her rare beauty and grace excite the most profound admiration, but a new phase of happiness was revealed to him, through the genius, taste, enthusiasm, and childish, artless enjoyment of his young wife. And to be with him, and have such a world of scenes and new emotions and thoughts to enjoy, made her heart light and happy, and her sweet face radiant. It was not foolish, thoughtless happiness, but pure and rational; and the radiance was such as shines forth from but few of the beautiful faces on earth—for to but few is given Edith's power of loving, or her innocence, or her genius.

When Herbert was absent during those happy days, she would sit for hours dreaming over his coming, his words, his looks, the past, the future; and the days were not long enough for her to dream, and muse, and love. Sometimes the feeling would come over her that she was too happy; and she would

cover her innocent face with those little, soft hands, and pray that she might not love too much.

Thus passed the time till the day she sat by the window, awaiting the return of her husband. Presently he came, and she bounded to meet him. There was the wonted kiss, and the fair creature led him to the sofa.

"Edith," he said, as they sat down, "I must leave you in a few moments, to be gone three days. It is too, too bad, is n't it, dear Edith? but I hope these ugly business arrangements will some time be completed, and then —"

He did not finish, but holding her dear face softly in his hands and bringing it close to his own, looked tenderly into the eyes already brimming with tears.

"I shall not have the heart to go, if I see tears," he continued; "and you know I would not leave you a moment, but from necessity. You should go with me, dearest, but it is bitter cold, and I shall be too busy to take care of you."

"But I have never even thought of your going away, Herbert," said the young wife, with an effort to smile.

"See! the cars leave in twenty minutes," he said, taking out his watch. "I shall surely be home at three o'clock day after to-morrow. And there is an old acquaintance of yours in the city, who will call on

you; I gave him our address; it is Burt McSweeney," and he rose to go.

"Burt McSweeney," said Edith, with an involuntary shudder.

"Do n't you like him, my love?"

"No, Herbert, I always had a dread of him; I do not know why. I presume it is foolish, but I can't help it. Oh, Herbert, I feel so dreadful to have you leave me now!"

"Dreadful!" said the husband with a smile, pressing the fond creature to his side. She clung to him as if the parting was for years.

There was a passionate embrace, and the young man hurried from the room, while Edith sank weeping upon the sofa.

Suddenly the door again opened, and Herbert re-entered; a sharp pang of agony had thrilled through his heart as he left the presence of his wife—a feeling he did not understand—only it prompted him to return and look on her again. She sprang toward him, and again there was a quick, close, convulsive embrace—and he was gone.

The next day, as Herbert had mentioned, Burt McSweeney called on Mrs. Delaney.

She received him with gentle politeness, inquiring after her friends, and anxiously after her loved parents. He, in turn, was formal, polite, and rather kind. His

manner was peculiar, yet fascinating. There was not a smile to make her turn pale, nor a look to make her shudder; she thought him far more pleasing than ever before, and almost forgot her former involuntary dread. He had so much to say to her about her friends, that as he rose to go, she begged him to sit longer, and tell her of every thing that had transpired since she left Manfred mansion, adding in conclusion, "I am very lonely without Herbert."

He resumed his seat, and said with a smile, "Then you have already learned not to live without him?"

"Oh! I could not part from him long," replied the young wife, turning her large eyes upon the peculiar face of her visitor. Again he smiled, and, after half an hour's further conversation, rose and retired.

The night of that day was remarkably cold. There was a brisk, piercing, intense air, full, as it were, of icy needles stinging the poor to death. It was one of those still, dark nights that chills the wanderer, makes the insurance company think of fires, and causes the poverty-stricken to suffer and die. That night Edith Manfred prayed fervently for her absent husband, and then nestling among the warm pillows, slept soundly and sweetly.

Toward three o'clock in the morning, the cry of fire rang through one of the streets of the city. A crowd gathered—the firemen came—it was the fashionable

boarding-house in which young Edith slept. Out into the freezing air, hurried the half-clad inmates; for it was a terrible night for fire; and, giving up all hope of saving that building, the firemen directed their efforts toward those adjoining.

There were not many boarders in the house; it accommodated but a certain number; and, as they grouped together for a moment, they looked upon each other to see if all were there.

Suddenly arose the cry from among them, "The bride! the bride! Mrs. Delaney! she is not here! she is lost!" The crowd took up the terrible burden, shouting her name in terror; but there was no reply.

Hundreds surrounded the now all-in-a-blaze building. A daring fireman mounted to her window; but it was of no avail, for the flames burst from it and drove him back. The fire seemed to have originated in her chamber.

The ladies of the house, fainting with terror, were borne away. But, long after the house was consumed, a crowd of persons, pale and agitated, stood around the spot where it had been, talking, in low tones, of the terrible fate of the beautiful bride; and many were still there when the morning came, idly looking on the smoking ruins.

"Married but three weeks, I am told, and very young!" said one of the bystanders.

"And her husband away—how will he take it?" added another.

The next moment, a man forced his way through the crowd, and stood by the speakers. It was Herbert. He had returned in the morning instead of afternoon train. "What! a fire!" he exclaimed in surprise. "Can any one tell me where my wife, Mrs. Delaney, was taken?" he asked of one of the men in sudden agitation.

The man was a rude, coarse fellow, but even he turned white in sympathy with the husband.

There was profound stillness in the whole crowd. Struck by this and the frightened appearance of the men, with a terrible presentiment, Herbert leaned, nearly fainting, against the person behind him.

"It is thought—that the fire—came from the lady's—"

"What?—what?—what?" shrieked Delaney.

Awed and terrified by his intense gaze, the poor man made no reply.

"Speak!" cried Herbert, "speak!"

"Mrs. Delaney was—burned!"

At this moment, a friend of the sufferer stepped up, and, hastening to his side, exclaimed:

"For heaven's sake! be a man, Delaney."

"Great God!" was the reply, in a voice so hollow and awful, that the stoutest man there shivered as he

heard it. As he spoke, he fell into the arms of his friend, convulsed, and was borne away.

That same afternoon, just at sunset, a traveling carriage dashed up to the door of Mr. Manfred.

"Oh, papa! mamma! Edith's come! I see Herbert!" shouted the little Annabel, bounding up the steps. Before the glad parents reached the door, Herbert staggered in, but there was no Edith!

His burning eyes met those of the wondering parents; he leaned silently against the wall, pale and changed, with a wild, almost insane expression upon his hollow countenance.

"Where is our daughter?" asked both the parents, turning toward each other.

He looked at them, and, with a fearful smile, replied slowly—

"She—is—dead!"

PART THIRD.

A YEAR after these events, the Manfred family returned to England. They could not endure the place of such memories.

The mother looked feebler and less proud than hitherto; the father was now gray and old. Life and joy seemed to flow quickly in but one bosom, that of the little, merry, beautiful Annabel; though even she was saddened by the grief of those around. Herbert went with them; and he was the most changed of all. His sparkling wit, his brilliant face, the glory of his hopes were changed. He had recovered from the first shock of his desolation, and the illness that followed — but he was a grave, silent man. A cloud, that could not be dissipated, enveloped the sun of his cheerfulness; only a faint twilight glimmer struggled through the gloom — it was his gentle sweetness. And, in the midst of this darkness of the mind, this sadness of the soul, shone out a bright, particular star, that carried him onward — Edith in heaven.

The old ancestral halls of the Manfred castle again received the last descendants — the stricken parents and the radiant child, destined to be the sunlight of the hearth, and, with them, the man they loved as a son.

Weeks and months passed away slowly. It was necessary that Herbert should occupy his time and mind, to prevent his grief from injuring his health: and, under his direction, the old place grew bright and beautiful. The most of his quiet hours were passed in the library; and here the young Annabel would find him absorbed in books, or lost in thought. Then she would tease him away from them; she would even make him sometimes smile at her willful caprice. Over her parents, she exerted the same happy influence, and something, that was almost gaiety, at times came over the group. Every day, their only remaining child became dearer to the bereaved parents; and, as she approached maidenhood, an affection, the most intense, because shadowed by sorrow, was centered in her.

Annabel was a bewitching creature, with a heart brimful of love and joy, with a crimson cheek and a laughing, dark eye, and chestnut curls, and a bright, saucy, yet loving, lip; in sweetness and purity like Edith, yet different — more proud, and not so spiritual. So was her face something like her lost sister's;

when she was pensive, it was much so. Herbert used to look at her and sigh heavily.

If there was any thing which would call out the sympathies of her warm and passionate nature, it was the continual sadness upon the brow of Delaney, long after her parents began to smile, and even to plan for the future. Every delicate attention, every running tear, every tender little action of the child — she was yet a child — went to soothe the dark soul of her brother. When he was present, her eyes followed his, her sweetest smiles were for him, she sat by him at the table, she gathered flowers for his window.

In return, he taught her the most of her accomplishments — music, drawing, riding, the languages, book-knowledge — he was her teacher in all.

She looked particularly charming, riding her splendid steed, her long curls floating on the air, and her fair cheeks glowing. Herbert was always with her, when she went out. He was a fine musician, and she had a great natural talent for music — and they sang and played much together.

He was a profound scholar, and the roguish, careless Annabel, at thirteen, was a wonderful proficient in every thing he taught her — educated and accomplished.

She used to beg him to read to her from the volumes of poetry on the library shelf — listening, with

tearful eyes, to the beautiful passages pronounced in his eloquent and touching way.

He was a most dangerously-fascinating companion to the susceptible young girl — to whom, besides her parents, he was her all of love and society. Yet, strangely enough, Herbert never thought of this danger, as grateful to her for her kind, and soothing, and joyful influence, he bestowed upon her all he had to give of gratitude, affection, and care.

About this time, Delaney went to London to transact some business for Mr. Manfred. It was five years that day, since the terrible event which had desolated his heart, that he walked through the streets of the immense city. Thinking of this, he forgot where he was, till suddenly he paused before the large glass window of a mantaumaker's shop. The door, from the show-room into the apartment where the girls were sewing, was open, and, as he looked up, full of thoughts of the past, there, as if the embodiment of his fancy had risen up, sat Edith.

So he thought for the moment that his eyes rested on the pale face bent low over the rich garment. But that beautiful vision suddenly laid down her work and disappeared into a back apartment, leaving Herbert, with his heart standing still, gazing upon the door through which she had disappeared.

For several moments, he stood motionless, and then

passed on muttering, "Insane! insane! to think it was my dead Edith! my Edith in heaven! Yet how like her! oh God!"

The sudden sight of one so closely resembling the radiant creature, filled him with anguish almost insupportable. It was as if he had seen her rise from the grave before him.

Again and again, as long as he remained in London, he returned to the same place, to look again upon the woman who was so much like his angel; but he never saw her more; and he began to think, at last, that it was a mere phantom of his brain. Yet, long after he returned to Manfred castle, that pale, sweet face haunted him day and night, and he became sadder and more depressed than he had been for many months before. Then, at the sight of a sorrow from which she could not win him, the first cloud came over the sunny spirit of Annabel.

PART FOURTH.

IT was near the seventeenth birthday of their daughter, that Mr. and Mrs. Manfred consulted together about a darling plan that had long lain quietly in each of their hearts, and promised them joy. They wished Herbert to wed Annabel. They feared that he might some time leave them, and that then the heart of their only child would break. For, with a mother's eyes, Mrs. Manfred had discovered the secret of Annabel's heart, through her glances and her blushes, and she knew that the very soul of her daughter was wrapped up in the fascinating man who had been her companion from childhood. She knew that Herbert loved the bright girl with a brother's love, and she hoped with more; but she feared that he would never offer to marry her. Yet she felt it would be best for the young couple to be united, for her parents might die, and, then, who would be Annabel's protector?

That day, at the end of the conference with her husband, they sent for Herbert to come to their room, and

the matter was proposed. He was evidently startled and grieved.

"No, no, never! my Edith! I can not!" he exclaimed, as he hastily paced the apartment.

"You will listen?" said the mother, and she revealed to him the entire love Annabel cherished for him, and pictured the position of their darling, so young, so beautiful, so unprotected, should her parents be suddenly called away.

For half an hour, the parents waited, in silent expectation, as he hastily tramped through the room; and then he approached, and with eyes full of tears, took a hand of each, pressed them warmly, and replied:

"Yes—yes—Annabel must be my wife," and then passed quickly from their presence, leaving them satisfied that their children both would yet be happy.

Herbert went down to the library, and taking a book, threw himself on a sofa, and was soon lost in earnest thoughts.

A light step broke upon his musing mood; he looked up; it was Annabel. "They are right," he thought, as he marked the color deepen on her cheek, and her moist, dark eyes quiver and droop. There was, too, a melancholy shade over her bright face.

"Come here, dear Annabel," he said, in a low tone; and she obeyed, and sat by his side; and, for a long time, he read to her from a volume of poems—read

of love! At length twilight compelled him to lay aside his book, and, through the dim atmosphere, looking upon the beautiful face lying on his shoulder, he saw it was bathed in tears.

He took up the soft little hand from her lap, and pressed it gently in both his; and, unable any longer to repress her grief, the young girl sobbed aloud.

He took her close to his bosom, and, laying his cheek against her dark curls, he whispered in her ear—

"Annabel, will you be my wife?"

The weeping girl shrank away from his arms—her heart that moment was revealed to itself—yet was she unspeakably happy; bashfulness and bliss broke over her young face, and Herbert saw the whole of her loving heart, and saw that it was his.

"I have but a grief-stricken heart to give in return for your young and joyous one; I am not fit to be the husband of one so bright and fair; but oh, Annabel! if I can, by care and devotion, make you happy, you shall have all I have left of love from the grave of poor Edith!"

In a few weeks, Annabel was seventeen. On the morning of that day, nine years before, Herbert had wedded the spiritual, ill-fated Edith, and the little sister had asked—"If he could not marry her, too?"

Now, that same sister and himself stood together at the altar, in a little chapel, the counterpart of the

other. It was in the afternoon, and there were no witnesses except the household. A golden, autumn sunlight flooded the place, and a beautiful stream outside murmured gently, as it were, a bridal hymn.

The bridegroom was very pale and composed; the bride agitated. The ceremony had but just commenced, when a vision appeared at the chapel door—pale, thin, but almost as beautiful as ever, there stood Edith! Her mother shrieked out, and the bride fainted in terror; for her sister, she thought, had risen from the dead to rebuke her!

But Herbert heeded not the fair creature who fell at his feet. His thoughts ran back to the phantom he had seen in the mantaumaker's shop, and he knew—what?—Edith's eyes had met his; they sprang toward each other; and oh! the untold rapture of that meeting, after nine years of absence, mourning, and agony!

The parents soon felt that she was no spirit, and the loved, lost child was folded in their arms. In that moment, all forgot for what they had gathered in the chapel—all but Annabel, who had risen from the floor, and stood leaning against the altar—speechless, quivering, burning with agony, her hands clasped over her forehead, and her wild, dark eyes turned to the faces of Edith and Herbert. A lingering illness followed this sudden reversion of feeling; for several

weeks, she was confined to her bed. But, when she did recover, the sparkling Annabel was much changed. She was a proud girl, and, for the world, she would not have stayed near Herbert.

"Mother!" she cried, one day as she sat in her invalid's chamber—"have I not an aunt in London, who once invited me to spend a year with her?"

And when she was sufficiently strong to bear the fatigues of travel Annabel went to London.



PART FIFTH.

"TELL me over again the strange incidents of our separation—I never tire of hearing them from those dear lips," said Herbert—as he sat by his wife, fondly holding her hands, a year after the events detailed in the last chapter.

The wife smiled a sweet, but half-sad smile, and told, even for the twentieth time, her little history.

"I was awakened from my sleep, that dreadful night, by the glare of flames in my room. I would have shrieked, but, at that moment some one bent over me, and told me to fly—the building was on fire! I was too terrified to recognize him—I thought it was you, for I had just dreamed that you had returned; and flung myself into his arms. In two moments, my self-possession returned—and oh! the fear and despair with which I found my mouth was bandaged, and I was being carried off in the arms of Burt McSweeney!—the man I had from childhood feared and disliked!—who I knew loved me to death, to crime,

and to desperation! I would not cry out—I could not free myself; but I could not faint—though terror and anguish made me sick and weak, I would not give way to faintness; but strove with a strong mastery over the emotions that shook me!"

"My noble Edith," interrupted Herbert.

"Can I ever tell you about the rest of that awful night, and the long, long day that followed?" continued Edith. "When the bandage was removed from my mouth, and I was put down from his hateful hold, I was in the poor cabin of a little vessel bound for England, the captain of which had been hired by Burt to keep his secret. My captor was obliged to return on shore to finish his preparations for the voyage, and it was after daylight that he came back to tell me with horrible minuteness the supposed circumstances of my loss, and the despair and anguish of my husband. He then again went out, after bringing in breakfast, and fastened the cabin door, as the vessel could not leave till night. All day I sat in mute and motionless agony—then the vessel began to move—then we were out on the ocean—night darkened around—there was no escape! Oh, Herbert! at last I knelt to pray to God. An hour—two—three—and still I knelt and prayed frantically. Some one came to the door—opened it—came up to me, as, with my face buried in my hands, I prayed in agony!

My heart leaped, as the person spoke — it was not he! — it was the captain, who said: ‘The lady’s lover has been taken very ill, and wants to see her.’

“Was it in answer to my prayer? I went up with my informer, and saw the strong man in spasms, and pitied him, and pitied myself! Then I begged and implored the captain to turn back with me: I offered gold uncounted; but he only smiled — McSweeney’s purse was more substantial than my promise. For a whole week the suffering man kept his bed — it was a fearful week to me — and he was very ill. At length he crawled one day upon deck to enjoy the fresh air. The water was quite rough — he was weak — and a pitch of the vessel threw him overboard. How I shuddered when they told me he was swept away with all his many crimes upon him! and how I rejoiced that I was free from his power — his love, or his hate!

“But oh! how I pined during the remainder of that long voyage. I was then the only passenger, and when Burt was drowned, his purse went with him. At length we reached England, but the evil captain refused to take me back, for fear of punishment. I was then alone and desolate in a great city, and penniless! I went to different vessels to beg a passage home; but my youth and beauty were then a curse; I found that my story was not believed; and, with a breaking heart I flew away from disgusting smiles and leers

“With life and love who could despair? My garments were yet good, and I procured employment in the shop where you once came so near finding me. I wrote home — the letter must have miscarried; I wrote again — but by that time you had left America. You were near me, but I knew it not. Madam B — was pleased with my industry, and I worked only for her. Day and night I toiled to lay up means to pay my passage home; but wages were very low, and I could do but little more than support myself. Thus passed away nine long and bitter years, when one day a roll of silk came folded in a printed paper. As I glanced over it, I caught my father’s name and yours: it was a business advertisement, and gave your address. I fainted in my chair — the mistress thought I was ill; but the next day I started for home, for love, for you!”

She looked up with a kind of mournful smile as she concluded, that despite her present happiness, revealed the gloom and sorrow that so long had pressed upon her. The husband clasped her to his heart, and kissed her over and over again — her who had toiled so many years, strengthened by holy feelings.

“And you,” he asked, “my slight, my frail, my shrinking, delicate Edith — why was it that this suffering and toil did not kill you?”

She raised her beautiful eyes to his, and said, softly, “I loved you Herbert, and I prayed; when my fingers

ached and my brain was dizzy, I prayed; ever and ever, in all sorrow, to our Heavenly Father I looked for strength. And, dearest Herbert, ought we not to be grateful?"

He was just doing as he always did, at the conclusion of her tearful story — kissing her sweet lips — when a carriage and four dashed through the park and stopped at the door.

He and Edith went out to welcome the visitors. A rather gay and foppish man, handsome, and withal intelligent, handed out a beautiful girl in a white vail and blushes.

The bridegroom was an English nobleman — the bride was dear Annabel — more beautiful, more happy than ever — but more quiet, and somewhat London-like in the aristocratic repose in which she extended the fingers of her white glove to Herbert. To Edith she was affectionate and gentle — to her parents the same dear girl as ever.

INNOCENCE.

"The shadows lay along Broadway
 'Twas near the twilight tide —
 And slowly there, a lady fair,
 Was walking in her pride;
 Slow walked she, but viewlessly
 Walked spirits at her side.

"Peace charmed the street beneath her feet
 And Honor charmed the air;
 And all astir looked kind on her,
 And called her good and fair." — WILLIS.

A WARM-LOOKING, delicate hat, and a splendid cloak, softened the proud face, and enveloped the peerless form of one of Broadway's most beautiful daughters. Along the crowded street with a step as gliding and as haughty as the measure of a royal melody, she passed; and it was like the sound of a pure note amid a hurrying march of discord, to look upon her, walking in her beauty.

Like a drop of ottar of roses on the bosom of a muddy stream, fragrant and uncontaminated, she floated calmly down the waves of the great thoroughfare.

It was dusk, as she ascended the broad marble steps of her palace-home. Leaving her dirty overshoes, and rich furs, and warm, quilted mufflings in the care of a servant, the fair lady went through the lofty parlors into the cheerful, and cozy-looking library. Here the darkness without, and the warm glow of the anthracite within, were struggling for the mastery; a mad and a merry chase they had of it, despite of the entrance of the lady fair. Never minding the graceful little shiver with which she sunk into the arm-chair, close up by the shining grate, out sprang the crimson fire-light, and pursued the night-shadow all over the room, treading with as little reverence upon the quaint bindings of old philosophers, as upon the gilded names of modern rhymers, standing in rows upon the well-lined walls. Now the shadow took refuge in the drapery of the recesses, and the fire-light was there in an instant; and anon it mocked its pursuer, resting quietly upon the rosy lips of some beautiful portrait, with its dark hands over the smiling eyes of the pictured charmer; but, with the quickness of jealousy, the light was there, caressing the soft cheek that glowed tenderly at its touch.

The lady sighed softly, and, at that moment, the fire-light, darting by her, revealed the soft sigh to be a happy one; for a beautiful, complacent, tender smile was melting over the bright maiden's countenance.

Lights were brought in, and the fanciful struggle was ended; the shadow retreated through the window, and only returned to peep in occasionally to enjoy the nonentity of the fire-light, which had crept back to the grate, quite abashed by the gaze of the brilliant lamp.

The lady crossed the apartment, and sitting down at an antique, costly, little writing-table, took up a gold pen, and smoothing a sheet of scribbling paper, held the pen above it so that a little rainbow from the diamond point fell upon the one dear name written carelessly on the page. After musing a moment, with a half-blush she wrote a few words that seemed like a note of invitation; and after reading it over she said softly to herself, "that is the style," and taking a very plain and elegant sheet of white note-paper from a large quantity that lay beside her, she copied the billet she had written. Again and again her rapid and graceful pen repeated the same words upon sheet after sheet of the delicate white paper, only varying the names of those addressed, to answer to a long list of aristocratic names lying at her little left hand.

"And walking there, was one more fair,
 A slight girl lily pale :
 And she had unseen company
 To make the spirit quail ;
 'Twixt want and scorn she walked forlorn
 And nothing could avail."—WILLIS.

Perhaps an hour after the proud beauty of Broadway glided onward to her home, a young girl followed on her steps; the poor hood was thrown down over her face, and her thin shawl wrapped closely around her slight and shivering form. She seemed to shrink away from the glare of the street-lights, and the brilliancy of the shop-windows; and she never cast a glance at the beautiful creatures who swept by her in velvety comfort, clinging to the arms of proudly tender husbands, and brothers, and lovers, and fathers.

With a hurried and irregular step she wandered along, till pausing a moment before the same marble mansion into which the daughter of wealth and honor had disappeared an hour before, she pressed her hand tightly over her heart, and stood as if waiting for strength to enter. Then ascending to the door she opened it without ringing, and again paused in the hall. There was no rude servant to forbid the pale intruder an entrance, for John was taking a nice bit of turkey and gossip with the housekeeper in the basement. Flinging her scanty shawl and hood upon

the floor, she stood revealed, in the light of the lamp, as a very youthful, and exceedingly beautiful young girl,—beautiful, though her cheek was thin and colorless, and her lip compressed and pale. The black hair was pushed back from her wan temples, her large eyes were burning with an expression—not of mildness in the least—but of deathless resolution; and every pallid and exquisite feature bore the same strange, inexplicable look—it might be of hardened sin, or calm revenge, or of desperate and injured innocence. And so much did this look triumph over that of suffering, that the wretched thinness of her frame, and the meager pallor of her face were not suggestive of the miserable condition of starvation.

As if perfectly familiar with the place, she softly opened the parlor door, and glancing within and finding it deserted, she stole noiselessly through that room and another, until she came to the library; here she listened a moment and then silently opening that door, entered and closed it. The lady still sat at the curious writing-table, penning those little notes, with her back to the intruder. *Her* cheeks were glowing richly, and *her* form swelled with soft fullness the embroidered silken dress, her hair was folded softly over her white forehead, and her young lip was crimson with life's wine.

The steady, burning gaze of the pale creature at

the door, must have affected her like magnetism, for, though there was no noise, she turned slowly around, while the color as slowly faded from her cheeks.

"*You* here?" she asked, with a look of more contempt than one would have thought would have sat upon those lovely features; and rising to her feet, she waved her hand imperiously.

The motion was not obeyed, and she tried in vain to look coldly into those burning and resolute eyes, shining upon her with a dangerous light, from the place where the pale intruder stood. With all the strength of her will she could not prevent her gaze from quailing, and her face from blanching, beneath those eyes.

"Yes! Madeline Seymour," was at length the slow response, "I am come to demand of you, *justice*. Are you *ready* and willing to yield it?"

"Mary Seymour forfeited all right to ask that question, or any other, of any virtuous woman, when she flung herself outside the pale of their pity and protection," scornfully replied the lady. "Have I not forbidden you the entrance to a house which was once, and still might be, had it not been for your strange criminality, a happy and pleasant home for you?"

A wild, red flush burned a moment on the thin cheek of the girl, and her great dark eyes flashed forth an indignant lightning that made the beautiful cousin

shrink — that *should* have blackened her white bosom, and withered it, even as it heaved in anger under its weight of jewels — blackened its outside semblance of purity till it was as dreadful as the color of the heart within. But both, in a moment, were more calm; and as the red went back from the cheek of the intruder to her heart, giving her strength to speak, she spoke in a tone so solemn and startling that her listener sank, shuddering, into a chair.

"Enough, enough of such words, Madeline! You *dare* not trifle with me now; and your own heart the best knows how false, how entirely, utterly false! is the accusation you have heretofore made against me, and would still make — *aye*, make to me *now*, while your cheek whitens, and your lip trembles with fear, and your heart pants with its sense of guilt, Madeline!" And the speaker came close to the listener, who was making a powerful effort to be calm; — "Send for Herbert Clark, — send for my betrothed husband, and confess before him that, because I was a poor orphan in your father's house, with none to save and protect, that you have irreparably injured me! Confess, that when you saw *him*, the noble, gifted, and flattered man of wealth, prefer my humble beauty, and hapless, but, thank God! virtuous heart, to your own brilliant charms, and fascinations, and compliments, that then your poor cousin and dependent became hateful in

your eyes — because unconsciously your rival — because inexpressibly happy in the belief that, for the first time, she was loved, and tenderly cared for, but unendurably wretched under the petty, but pitiless persecutions of your jealousy! Send for him and confess that, maddened by your own unrequited passion, you laid the most cunning and cruel of plots; the most artful, black, and unholy device to injure and ruin a poor, friendless, but pure and innocent girl — and she your cousin! Confess that you succeeded in your plan — that you even darkened *his* faith in my purity — that you took from me *all!* my spotless name, and the heart that was vowed to mine — that you turned me thus helpless upon the streets, pitilessly dooming me to those crimes under the false accusation of which I suffered! Tell him, that I have borne cold, and sickness, and hunger, and persecution, and yet am true to myself and him, even though he has thus forsaken me! Tell him that I am *dying* now, and only wish my memory to be done justice to, now that no other earthly reparation can be made! Will you do this, Madeline? Shall I ring the bell for a servant? He must be gone quickly, for in a little time even this small mercy can not be shown to me." And the pale creature reached out her wasted hand to grasp the bell-rope, while her solemn eyes looked for an answer into the face of her cousin.

Madeline had risen to her feet, all feeling of remorse and guilt had vanished, in the fear that Herbert would be apprised and convinced of her crime, now that she had played a game so fearful, and had won at last; even in that moment she was in great danger of losing all and being overwhelmed in disgrace; for she knew that he was coming that evening to see her — she met him in her promenade, and told him to come in unannounced to the library, and assist her in writing the wedding cards! She feared that the solemn assertions of the sufferer, so sharpened and irresistible with the arrows of truth, would bring conviction to the soul of the man who had worshiped the beautiful and impassioned young creature, the wreck and shadow of which now stood before her — a wreck and shadow yet mighty in the power and grandeur of injured innocence. With a defiant brow, and a voice husky with anger and terror, she asked —

"Will you leave, now, this instant, Mary Seymour, before I summon help? I will not trouble myself to answer your silly, weak demand."

"Had you rather wither under my dying curse, than do what I have required of you?" slowly asked her interrogator, whose deep and searching eyes had never turned away for an instant.

The haughty syren was appalled by the manner of this question, but she laughed convulsively as she took

up one of the notes from the writing-table, and, holding it toward her companion, said scornfully —

“Read *that*, and see if you deem me so silly as yourself! Will I tell the man, who in three days is to be my husband, that I have done this thing that in your raving you accuse me of? Now, that *he is mine at last*, shall I throw him from me? — the game was too difficult to play, my artless cousin.”

Mary glanced at the card, where the names of those she had most loved, and who had most injured her, were united, and once again a sharp thrill of anguish, as of old, went through her heart. But for such feeling it was too late — too late.

“Will you send for Herbert, Madeline?” she asked, in a more excited manner than she had yet been betrayed into.

“Fool!” was the reply, hissed through the white teeth of the beautiful Madeline.

“Then I will no longer ask you to do this for my sake, but for your own — for, Madeline, *I am dying now!* I shall not live half-an-hour! and you are my murderess! You will make me no atonement for the injuries you have done me, and I carry this accusation to the judgment bar of God — that you are my murderess! When you meet me there, it must be to answer for the life you have taken, Madeline!” — here her voice sank to a strange and thrilling whisper —

“do you know that I have not eaten any food for five days and nights — that I am dying of *starvation?*”

The beautiful demon was not yet entirely a demon, though her passionate and unprincipled heart had prompted her to all this selfishness, and as that hollow whisper smote upon her ear, she exclaimed —

“Good God! Mary, is this so? You shall have food, now, immediately; — but oh! tell me that you forgive me! I did not think of this! I never thought of your starving! Oh, it is horrible!”

“It is *too late*; nothing now can save me, for the death-cold is upon me. Tell me, will you do this thing I have asked?”

“Never! I can not! I would rather die! But food, food, food, — you must not perish! I will hasten to bring you nourishment; — you *must* not die, for I can not be a murderess!”

And the terror-stricken creature turned to summon assistance: but there in the door, which he had silently opened, stood Herbert Clark, pale and stern, his dark eyes lowering upon her.

She gave one shriek, and would have sunk to the floor, but the power of his glance upheld her; and, when he simply uttered “food!” with a mechanical step she obeyed him, and passed from the room.

Then, with a cry of manifold anguish and joy, the strong man — who had just escaped from the spell of

the syren — sprang to the side of the dying victim, and folded her to his bosom, just as she was fainting to the earth. One last look of unspoken love gleamed on him from those closing eyes, and with the effort she made to utter his name, the young sufferer perished. Vain was the pleading agony of his tenderness; vain the wildness of his kisses and the groan of his despair; the mighty effort of the struggling spirit in that wasted and miserable tenement to establish its innocence in *his* eyes, had bent till it suddenly broke the bow of life, and the arrow of the soul passed quivering into the "shadow land."

That was a terrible night that Herbert and Madeline passed by the side of the beautiful dead, lying in her pale and delicate beauty; and the fearful silence of those snowy lips, was, to them, more hard to endure than the loudest reproaches.

The shadow again crept in to look on, and the fire-light was too sad to chase it away. Once, only, the light flashed wildly—when Madeline laid a heap of daintily-written notes within the grate.

Broadway is still made beautiful by the gliding steps of one of her most aristocratic fair ones. A charm still purifies the atmosphere wherever that cold, and pure, and virtue-patronizing lady passes; and those who would turn with a shudder from the poor wanderer they met that chilly night, still gaze with

admiration upon the stainless brow that frowns with becoming severity upon the shadow of a reproach!

And all the world wonders at, and applauds the angel charity and goodness that prompted the sinless Madeline to forgive her cousin before she died, and to go to the trouble of the funeral.

